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The family of German dative constructions

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The chapter describes the variety of structures with datives in Valency Grammar and then in the framework of Goldberg's Construction Grammar (1995; 2006). It addresses issues related to the semantic roles that can be expressed with dative objects, but also the difference between valency-dependent datives and free datives that appear in usage. The constructionist model offers new avenues for a unified description of constructions with datives, both for valency-dependent and free datives, and even for phraseologisms with a dative object. But German being a morphologically complex language, the constructionist model cannot do without describing the valency properties of the verbs in the constructions. Finally, the study provides evidence for the claim that constructions with a dative build a family.

Keywords: dative constructions, family of datives, free dative constructions, German, semantic roles, valency-based vs. constructionist description

1. Introduction

The chapter describes dative constructions in German. The dative has been studied in detail within the framework of projectionist theories, but most of these studies do not propose a unified view of the dative and they vary according to the researchers (see Wegener 1985; Schmid 1988; Schöfer 1992; Draye 1996; Hole 2014, to name just a few). The main difficulty for the description depends on the fact that dative phrases can appear in similar syntactic structures but with different meanings and with various semantic roles. A further difficulty in traditional research results from the distinction between dative objects belonging to the argument structure of the verb, in which case they are valency-dependent, and so-called *freie Dative*

(‘free datives’) which are not required by the verb valency but which appear in usage. Let us look at a few examples¹:

- (1) *Max gibt seiner Schwester ein Buch.*²
 Max.NOM gives his sister.3SG.FEM.DAT a book.ACC
 ‘Max gives his sister a book.’
- (2) *Mir gefallen weiße Rosen.*
 To me.1SG.DAT please white roses.NOM
 ‘I like white roses.’
- (3) *Ihr ist die Aufgabe zu schwer.*
 To her.3SG.FEM.DAT is the task.NOM too hard
 ‘The task is too difficult for her.’
- (4) *Sei mir fleißig in der Schule!*
 Be to me.1SG.DAT assiduous in the school!
 ‘Be assiduous at school (it is important for me)!’

The elements in the dative case in examples (1) and (2) are valency-dependent, whereas in (3) and (4) they are no constituents of the argument structure of the verb. Because free datives and valency-dependent datives have the same morphological form they cannot be properly distinguished at first sight. Also in Valency Grammar (VG) researchers do not agree on the syntactic status of free datives, which is most of the time defined as an adjunct or sometimes as an argument i.e. as “a subclass-specific constituent of the verb” (Zifonun et al. 1997: 1889; our translation). In the literature we can find different approaches aiming to capture the syntactic and semantic differences for the dative, ranging from a monofunctional analysis of datives (e.g. Wegener 1985; Schöfer 1992; Draye 1996), up to polyfunctional descriptions (e.g. Schmid 1988). In our contribution we aim at showing that Goldberg’s Construction Grammar (CxG) (1995; 2006) constitutes an ideal model for a more unified study of the inventory of German datives as it describes the use of the (dative) object within constructions and in terms of arguments contributed by the construction. However, as we will see, it is also necessary to integrate some valency aspects into the constructionist model (see Herbst 2011,

1. The examples quoted in this chapter are either sentences collected from everyday speech or which we found in the literature or in the main corpus of the *Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (DWDS). In this latter case the source of the example is indicated between brackets.

2. We use the following abbreviations in the glosses: NOM for the nominative case, ACC for the accusative case, DAT for the dative case, SG for singular and PL for plural, MASC and FEM respectively for masculine and feminine; we also use figures for the person number. The dative in the original example is written in standard font and not in italics like the rest of the examples.

2014; Stefanowitsch 2011) in order to describe German datives and the argument structure constructions in which they appear more accurately.³ The main issue in the analysis of datives is to show which datives belong to valency properties and which ones are constructional, and finally where there may be overlap. The semantic links between the constructions with a dative can best be described with reference to Wittgenstein's (1984) concept of family resemblance which allows us to define the different uses of the dative as a family of datives (for an analysis of argument structure constructions in terms of family resemblance see among others Engelberg et al. 2011; Proost and Winkler 2015; see also Guerrero's and Proost's contributions in this volume).

Our chapter is structured as follows: in the following Section 2 we present an overview of dative objects and free datives within the framework of VG and we define the semantic roles dative objects can play. Section 3 zooms in on the constructionist approach and describes the constructions that instantiate the dative. It also focuses on the semantic and syntactic constraints for the use of the dative in constructions. Section 4 shows how constructions with a dative phrase are interconnected and how they build a family of dative constructions. Further, it looks at phraseologisms with datives. Finally, Section 5 brings some conclusions and perspectives.

2. Dative objects and free datives in Valency Grammar

2.1 Valency-dependent dative objects

The dative object has been studied in full length and depth in the framework of VG. This Grammar is considered to be projectionistic (see Jacobs 2008; Welke 2009, 2011) as it claims that it is the verb as the 'valency carrier' (German: *Valenzträger*) which predetermines or licenses its complements (or arguments). Consequently, in VG the verb is defined as the syntactic center of the sentence (Welke 2011: 172) and it can or must be accompanied by one or several complements like the subject or various types of objects. In German, each verb complement is marked by a morpho-syntactic case, i.e. the nominative for the subject, the accusative for the direct object and the dative for the indirect object. A small number of verbs requires the

3. It must be mentioned that VG researchers have started to integrate more frequently the constructionist model into their verb-based approaches with the aim of a more precise description of syntactic structures – especially of those with a free dative (see among others Engelberg 2009; Herbst 2011, 2014; Jacobs 2008; Welke 2009, 2011).

genitive. In the following examples the dative object constitutes an argument of the predicate and is obligatory for the correctness of the sentence meaning:

- (5) *Jetzt graut ihr vor den Beerdigungen ihrer Freunde.*
 Now dreads to her.3SG.FEM.DAT before the burials of her friends
 (DWDS, Die Zeit, 25.07.2011)
 ‘Now she dreads the burials of her friends.’
- (6) *Ihr fehlt ihre Familie.*
 To her.3SG.FEM.DAT misses her family.NOM
 ‘She misses her family.’
- (7) *Ich gebe meiner Schwester ein Buch.*
 I.NOM give to my sister.3SG.FEM.DAT a book.ACC
 ‘I give my sister a book.’

A query in the electronic valency dictionary E-Valbu⁴ uncovers 63 so-called *Satzbaupläne* (‘sentence patterns’)⁵ with a dative object in German. This large number of sentence patterns results from the fact that the E-Valbu quotes the same argument structure of specific verbs several times, depending on whether an argument is optional or not, as illustrated in the following examples:⁶

- (8) $K_{\text{NOM}} - K_{\text{DAT}} - (K_{\text{AKK}})$
Die Wähler glauben den Politikern nicht mehr (jede Wahlversprechung).
 The electors.NOM believe to the politicians.PL.DAT not anymore (any electoral promise.ACC)
 ‘Electors do not believe each electoral promise from politicians.’

4. E-Valbu is an electronic valency dictionary from the Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS) in Mannheim (<http://hypermedia.ids-mannheim.de/evalbu/index.html>). It contains information about the syntactic and semantic properties of verbs and their complements.

5. In VG, sentence patterns (German *Satzbaupläne*) include all the complements which are needed or which can appear with a specific verb. Sentence patterns include information about the optional or obligatory character of single complements as well. *Satzmodelle* or valency patterns on the contrary refer to surface forms without information about optionality (Engel 1996: 199).

6. This detailed list of argument structures aims at facilitating the search for the user. In the examples we use the E-Valbu notation: K_{NOM} , complement in the nominative, K_{AKK} , complement in the accusative, K_{DAT} , complement in the dative, and K_{ADV} , adverbial complement. Brackets are used for optional complements.

- (9) $K_{\text{NOM.}} - (K_{\text{DAT.}}) - K_{\text{AKK.}}$
Luisa hat ihrem Ehemann ein Hemd geschenkt.
 Luisa.NOM has to her husband 3SG.MASC.DAT a shirt.ACC given as a present
 ‘Luisa has given her husband a shirt as a present.’
- (10) $K_{\text{NOM.}} - (K_{\text{DAT.}}) - K_{\text{AKK.}} / K_{\text{NOM.}} - K_{\text{DAT.}} - (K_{\text{AKK.}})$
Ihr Mann verzeiht ihr jeden Wutausbruch.
 Her husband.NOM forgives to her 3SG.FEM.DAT every outburst of rage.ACC
 ‘Her husband forgives her every outburst of rage.’

The long list of sentence patterns with a dative object in the E-Valbu is also due to the fact that all possible patterns are listed, even if they can be interpreted as an extension of more basic patterns, e.g. when they combine a dative construction with a motion construction, as illustrated in

- (11) $K_{\text{NOM}} - K_{\text{DAT}} - (K_{\text{ADV}})$
Er folgte seiner Frau nach Südamerika.
 He.NOM followed his wife.3SG.FEM.DAT to South America
 ‘He followed his wife to South America.’
- (12) $K_{\text{NOM}} - K_{\text{DAT}} - K_{\text{ADV}}$
Anständige junge Männer helfen den Damen in den Mantel.
 Civilized young men.NOM help the ladies.PL.DAT into the coat
 ‘Civilized young men help ladies to put on their coat.’

These more complex examples are an extension of a simple dative construction like in

- (13) $K_{\text{NOM}} - K_{\text{DAT}}$
Ich folge deinem Ratschlag/ Ich helfe dir.
 I.NOM follow to your advice 3SG.MASC.DAT/ I.NOM help to you.2SG.DAT
 ‘I follow your advice’/ ‘I help you.’

No need to say that with the long Valbu-list of instantiations with a dative object, be it optional or not, it is difficult to arrive at generalizations which may be useful for instance in foreign language teaching. Therefore, we prefer to propose a reduced list of more basic valency patterns (*Satzmodelle*) or argument structure constructions with a dative object which can be extended with other arguments or argument structure constructions:⁷

7. For an overview of all valency patterns, see Wegener (1985: 62–63).

- a. K_{dat} :
 Mir *graut*.
 To me.1SG.DAT dreads
 'I dread (something).'
- b. $K_{\text{nom}} - K_{\text{dat}}$:
 Ich *folge* dir.
 I.NOM follow to you.2SG.DAT
 'I follow you.'
- c. $K_{\text{dat}} - K_{\text{nom}}$:
 Ihr *gefallen* *Krimis*.
 To her.3SG.FEM.DAT please detective novels.NOM
 'She likes detective novels.'
- d. $K_{\text{nom}} - K_{\text{dat}} - K_{\text{akk}}$:
 Max *gibt* seiner Schwester
 Max.NOM gives to his sister.3SG.FEM.DAT
ein Buch.
 a book.ACC
 'Max gives his sister a book.'
- e. $K_{\text{nom}} - K_{\text{dat}} - K_{\text{prep}}$:
 Sie *verhalf* ihm
 She.NOM helped to him.3P.MASC.DAT
zum Erfolg.
 to the success.PP
 'She helped him to have some success.'

2.2 Semantic roles

From a semantic point of view, Zifonun et al. (1997) have characterized the dative object as denoting a less strongly involved, animate participant in contrast to other entities which are involved in the process or the action (Zifonun et al. 1997: 1088; see Wegener 1985: 294). However, Primus (2012: 56) claims that involvement can be assumed from all participant entities of an event which leads us to reject this notion of less strongly involvement for the description of datives. More relevant for our study is the definition of semantic roles which, in traditional literature, are related to the dative. The dative often expresses a RECIPIENT, e.g. *meiner Schwester* in

- (14) Ich *gebe* meiner Schwester *ein Buch*.
 I.NOM give to my sister.3SG.FEM.DAT a book.ACC
 'I give my sister a book.'

This semantic role is typical for ditransitive constructions with a subject, a dative and an accusative object. But the dative can also express other semantic roles (Zifonun et al. 1997: 1337; Duden-Grammatik 2005: 825). For instance, it can designate the entity to whose benefit (BENEFICIENT) or disadvantage (MALEFICIENT) the event occurs:

- (15) *Ich öffne dem Passanten die Tür.*
 I.NOM open to the passerby.3SG.MASC.DAT the door.ACC
 ‘I open the door to the person who passes by.’
- (16) *Sie hat mir die alte Vase der Großmutter zerbrochen.*
 She.NOM has to me.1SG.DAT the old vase of the grandmother.ACC broken
 ‘She has broken the old vase of the grandmother.’

But as is well-known from the discussion about ditransitive constructions, in an example like

- (17) *Er schreibt seiner Freundin einen Brief.*
 He.NOM writes to his girl-friend.3SG.FEM.DAT a letter.ACC
 ‘He writes his girl-friend a letter.’

the dative phrase *seiner Freundin* (‘his girl-friend’) can be interpreted in two ways (Helbig and Buscha 2001:264):

- a. either as the RECIPIENT of the letter; in this case we have a valency-dependent dative;
- b. or as the BENEFICIENT:⁸ he writes the letter instead of her writing it, and she is not the RECIPIENT of the letter.

The dative can also designate the EXPERIENCER, the perceiver of the action or the state. For Dowty (1991:577) “EXPERIENCER is sentience without volition or causation”, as illustrated in:

- (18) *Der alten Dame gefallen Katzen.*
 To the old lady.3SG.FEM.DAT please cats.NOM
 ‘The old lady likes cats.’

Sometimes the dative object expresses possession, especially for inherent parts of a person or even of an item, as illustrated in (19) and (20):

- (19) *Er ist seiner Tanzpartnerin auf die Füße getreten.*
 He.NOM is to his dancing partner.3SG.FEM.DAT on the feet stepped
 ‘He has stepped on his dancing partner’s feet.’

8. There is a whole range of alternative terms like BENEFACITOR/MALEFACITOR (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000), BENEFICIARY (Herbst et al. 2013) for instance, but we opt for BENEFICIENT, MALEFICIENT and RECIPIENT.

- (20) *Dieser Fahrer hat meinem Auto einen Kotflügel*
 This driver.NOM has to my car.3SG.NEUTRAL.DAT a wing
ingedellt. (Engel 2004: 304)
 dented
 ‘This driver has dented a wing of my car.’

Often the different semantic roles cannot be strictly distinguished from each other (Zifonun et al. 1997: 1338; Mellado 2012: 18). Also, in the traditional view (e.g. Verhoeven 2010; Welke 2011) the same semantic role can be expressed by different syntactic elements, as a similar event can be described from different perspectives. As an illustration, compare the dative object in (21) or the subject in (22) hereunder, they both express the same EXPERIENCER role in spite of their different syntactic realization:

- (21) *Der alten Dame gefallen Katzen.*
 To the old lady.3SG.FEM.DAT please cats.NOM
 ‘The old lady likes cats.’
- (22) *Die alte Dame mag Katzen.*
 The old lady.NOM likes cats.ACC
 ‘The old lady likes cats.’

This leads Verhoeven (2010) to distinguish between the “EXPERIENCER subject” (as in 22) and the “EXPERIENCER object” (in Example 21). By contrast, Welke suggests making a distinction between “significative-semantic roles” vs. “denotative-semantic roles” (Welke 2011: 146–154, and see also 1988, 2002, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2016). In a denotative-semantic sense the EXPERIENCER is defined as an entity which is involved in a mental, emotional or physical process, and therefore has some similarity with the AGENT.⁹ It mostly denotes a human being [+human]. In this sense, examples (21) and (22) instantiate an EXPERIENCER, either as a dative object (in 21), or as a subject (Example 22).¹⁰

9. That is why Dowty (1991:579) subsumes the semantic role EXPERIENCER in his multidimensional model under the concept of PROTO-AGENTS, which includes a whole series of semantic roles. But in contrast with the AGENT, the EXPERIENCER is not characterized by the feature [+control], characteristic of the prototypical AGENT (Primus 2012: 57–58).

10. As can be noticed, in (21) (as well as in (23) hereunder) the dative object appears in front position even in the unmarked syntactic order.

By contrast, in a significative-semantic perspective a semantic role is connected to a specific form in a syntactic structure.¹¹ In this sense the EXPERIENCER can only be expressed by a phrase in the dative like in example (21) and as a consequence, example (22) does not instantiate an EXPERIENCER-STIMULUS-construction, as the subject and the accusative object respectively express the significative-semantic roles of AGENT (*die alte Dame*) and PATIENT (*Katzen*) with the verb *mögen* ('like'). The prototypical AGENT – which in a significative-semantic sense is always in the nominative case – is, according to Welke (2011: 149), characterized by the properties [+intentional], [+control], [+human] (e.g., *Max schlägt seinen kleinen Bruder*, 'Max beats his little brother'). The verb *mögen* ('like') is admittedly no action or activity verb – as could be expected from the AGENT role (see also Dowty's (1991: 27) definition of the AGENT role and Levin's (1993) classification of verbs with semantic roles) – but, as Welke explains, some related senses can emerge from this role, as "events can be interpreted metaphorically as actions or activities" (Welke 2011: 161; our translation from German). The subject of *mögen* (and in a similar way also of *lieben* 'to love') is prototypically a human being, but these properties can be extended to animals and plants. As the subject expresses a physical or psychic process, it can be understood as a kind of AGENT, but characterized only in a limited way by the property [+control]. Moreover, the property [+intentional] is not a defining characteristic of the *mögen*-subject as one can also like or love someone unintentionally. In the significative-semantic sense example (22) has to be interpreted as a [subject_{AGENT} – accusative object_{PATIENT}] – construction, and example (21) as a [dative object_{EXPERIENCER} – subject_{STIMULUS}] – construction with a focus on the human EXPERIENCER. In some rare examples the EXPERIENCER is not a human being, as illustrated in:

- (23) Dem Haus *fehlt* ein Garten.
 To the house.3SG.NEUTRAL.DAT is missing a garden.NOM
 'A garden to the house is missing.'

Although in some cases there may be a link between AGENT and EXPERIENCER¹² we advocate to keep them as separate semantic roles – unlike Dowty's (1991) claim – as they are characterized by different prototypical properties. This distinction

11. That is why Welke's conception of semantic roles is particularly adequate for constructionist descriptions (see Rostila 2007: 45–51).

12. It must be mentioned that in a denotative sense the distinction between AGENT and EXPERIENCER is de facto not always clear. It is still controversial whether the subject with verbs like *sehen* ('to see') or *beobachten* ('to observe') is an AGENT or an EXPERIENCER (see also the studies by Dowty 1991; Levin 1993; Verhoeven 2010).

is especially relevant for German as in a significative-semantic perspective the EXPERIENCER role can only be expressed with the dative case.

To summarize, a similar event can be described from different perspectives and semantic properties arise from the use of words in sentence patterns. The definition of significative-semantic roles proves useful for distinguishing between examples such as (21) and (22) on the basis of the formal realization of the arguments. In the following sections we show how the different semantic roles we have just described are instantiated in dative constructions.

2.3 Free datives

Section 2.1 has described sentence patterns in which the elements in the dative are required by the verb valency. As already said before, there is another category of datives which do not belong to the verb valency but which appear in usage and are part of the event expressed by a sentence (see also Willems and van Pottelberge 1998: 5). In German grammaticography such dative phrases are called *freie Dative* ('free datives'). Here are a few examples:

- (24) *Marco öffnet ihr die Tür.*
 MARCO.NOM opens to her.3SG.FEM.DAT the door.ACC
 'Marco opens her the door.'
- (25) *Die Mutter wäscht dem Kind die Hände.*
 The mother.NOM washes to the child.3SG.NEUTRAL.DAT the hands.ACC
 'The mother washes the hands of her child.'
- (26) *Komm mir in der Schule pünktlich an!*
 Arrive to me.1SG.DAT in the school on time
 'Be careful to arrive on time at school!'

Free datives can be further subclassified into several categories depending on the meaning they convey and/or the semantic role they play (see Wegener 1985: 49; Duden-Grammatik 2005: 826–828; Welke 2011: 202–213; Ekberg 2012: 14–19). Here we can quote the *dativus commodi*, the *dativus incommodi*, the *dativus possessivus*, the *dativus iudicantis* and the *dativus ethicus* (for an extensive survey of the different types we refer to Wegener 1985; Schmid 1988; Schöfer 1992; Ekberg 2012). In VG or in valency-based studies scholars do not agree whether free datives are arguments or adjuncts. This is especially true for the *dativus commodi* or *incommodi* and the *dativus possessivus* (for a detailed discussion, see among others Domínguez 2005: 64–69; Mollica and Kuhn 2013: 229–235; Welke 2011: 202–205). In the following section, we take a closer look at these different dative objects, the sentence patterns in which they are used and the semantic roles they can play.

2.3.1 *Dativus commodi / dativus incommodi*

The *dativus commodi* (also called ‘sympaticus’) designates the entity (always an animate element, mostly a person) which benefits from an action. More specifically, it expresses the semantic role of *BENEFICIENT*. In German it can most of the time be paraphrased with a *für*-phrase (‘for’), e.g.

- (27) *Max kocht seiner Frau / für seine Frau*
 Max.NOM boils to his wife.3SG.FEM.DAT/ for his wife.3SG.FEM.ACC
eine Tasse Tee.
 a cup of tea.ACC
 ‘Max makes a cup of tea for his wife.’

The possibility to replace the dative object by a *für*-paraphrase is no decisive criterion for its identification as a free dative as some of the valency-dependent datives can sometimes be paraphrased in the same way. In CxG (Goldberg 2006: 42) *für*-paraphrases are considered to be adjuncts, whereas the dative object like *seiner Frau* in example (27) is an argument. So, in CxG the traditional classification between valency-dependent vs. free datives advocated by VG is neutralized in favor of a classification depending on the question whether an element in a pattern is contributed by the construction or not. We deal with this issue in more detail in Section 3.

In contrast, the *dativus incommodi* designates an animate entity which experiences some harm or damage, the *MALEFICIENT*. It can be combined with transitive or intransitive verbs (Wegener 1985: 99) which express a negative or undesired event. Compare the following examples:

- (28) a. *Sie hat mir die Tasse kaputtgemacht.* [transitive verb]
 She.NOM has to me.1SG.DAT the cup.ACC broken
 ‘She has broken my cup.’
 b. *Mir ist die Tasse hinuntergefallen.* [intransitive verb]
 To me.1SG.DAT is the cup.NOM fallen down
 ‘My cup has fallen down.’

As can be seen in both examples, it is often a pronoun which is used for the syntactic realization of the *incommodi*. Although both dative objects in (28a) and (28b) instantiate the *MALEFICIENT*, *mir* is in (28b) the perpetrator of the action, whereas in (28a) the dative object corresponds to the affected person by the action (Wegener 1985: 99). The datives in both examples (28a) and (28b) can also be interpreted as a sort of *EXPERIENCER* as the dative expresses an entity which is physically or emotionally involved in the event (which is also true for the *dativus commodi*). In (28a) it is also clear that in a broad sense the element in the dative is also the *POSSESSOR* of the cup (see further 2.3.2).

2.3.2 *Dativus possessivus*

The *dativus possessivus* designates the POSSESSOR of an inalienable item (most of the time a body part), e.g.

- (29) *Er hat sich die Haare sehr kurz geschnitten*
 He.NOM has to himself.3SG.MASC.DAT the hair.ACC very short cut
 ‘He has cut his hair very short.’

In a broader sense the *dativus possessivus* can also designate the possessor of an alienable object, like a piece of clothing or an accessory, as illustrated in the following example,

- (30) *Seine Mutter bügelt ihm jeden Tag die Hemden.*
 His mother.NOM irons to him.3SG.MASC.DAT every day the shirts.ACC
 ‘His mother irons his shirts for him every day.’

As becomes obvious with this example, there can be an overlapping of the semantic roles POSSESSOR and BENEFICIENT/MALEFICIENT. The *dativus possessivus* can also express ‘inherent parts of items’-relations, like for instance between a car and its parts, e.g.

- (31) *Dieser Fahrer hat meinem Auto einen Kotflügel eingedellt.*
 This driver.NOM has to my car.3SG.NEUTRAL.DAT a wing.ACC dented
 (Engel 2004: 304)
 ‘This driver has dented a wing of my car.’

Traditional researchers disagree on the status of this free dative type. It is defined by Zifonun et al. (1997: 1889) as a subclass-specific constituent of the verb and by Engel (1996: 630ff.) as a complement to the noun. For Wegener (1985: 130), just like for Zifonun et al., the *dativus possessivus* is a verb complement and not an attribute, but it is dependent on the concomitant use of the accusative object (like *Haare* ‘hair’ in example (29) or *Kotflügel* ‘wing’ in (31)). The metonymic relation between the accusative noun phrase designating the alienable or inherent part and the dative object indeed constitutes a necessary condition for this construction.

2.3.3 *Dativus iudicantis*

The *dativus iudicantis* (also called “Standpunktdativ” in German, ‘point of view dative’) designates the person who expresses a judgment, a point of view or “die Norm setzende Bezugsgröße” (‘reference point which fixes the norm’) (Wegener 1985: 55). It expresses the EXPERIENCER. This dative type is not linked to particular verbs, but appears in sentences with a grading particle like *zu* ‘too (much)’ or (*nicht*) *genug* ‘(not) enough’ (Wegener 1985: 53), e.g.

- (32) *Die Aufgabe ist ihm zu schwer.*
 The task.NOM is to him.3SG.MASC.DAT too difficult
 ‘The task is too difficult for him.’

In German, this dative type can always be paraphrased with a *für*-phrase (‘for’-phrase), but not with *statt* (‘instead’) or *zugunsten* (‘to the benefit of’) which is possible with the *dativus commodi*.

2.3.4 *Dativus ethicus*

The *dativus ethicus* expresses an affective attitude (see also Proost’s study of *search-constructions* which involve attitudes, this volume) or “eine innige Anteilnahme des Sprechers oder des Partners [...] an einem Sachverhalt” (‘a profound sympathy of the speaker or the partner towards an event’) (Engel 1996: 238), it corresponds to the EXPERIENCER:

- (33) *Sei mir fleißig in der Schule!*
 Be to me.1SG.DAT assiduous in the school
 ‘Be assiduous at school (it is important for me)!’

In German, this dative type typically appears in the first person singular and in request sentences (Wegener 1985: 50; Mollica 2014). It can be used – just like the *dativus iudicantis* – in structures in which no dative object is foreseen in the verb valency. As a consequence, in VG both dative types are most of the time considered to be adjuncts. The *dativus ethicus* has been described as having the same syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties as modal particles (Thurmair 1989; Wegener 1989).

We want to close this section with a summarizing table of the semantic roles played by the different free dative types in German we have just discussed.

Table 1. Summary of the semantic and pragmatic constraints of free dative objects

Free dative type	Semantic role
Dativus commodi	BENEFICIENT/EXPERIENCER
Dativus incommodi	MALEFICIENT/EXPERIENCER
Dativus possessivus	POSSESSOR
Dativus iudicantis	EXPERIENCER
Dativus ethicus	EXPERIENCER

In the next sections we see how the different semantic roles are interconnected and in which constructions they appear.

3. Construction-based description of datives

In her first book (1995), Goldberg describes constructions as form-meaning pairs whose meaning or form is non-predictable from the meaning of the construction's constituents. This narrow definition is further developed in her second book (2006), as she extends the defining properties of constructions to language units which can be predictable as long as they are entrenched. As we will see, all the syntactic structures with datives are entrenched in German and therefore they can be considered to be constructions. Moreover, very often the dative appears in the function of a dative object in so-called "argument structure constructions". These "are a special subclass of constructions that provides the basic means of clausal expression in language" (Goldberg 1995: 3). Argument structure constructions are entities with a schematic form and an abstract meaning. In their prototypical realization, the meaning of the construction corresponds to the meaning of the verb, which means that there is a fusion between the argument roles specified by the construction and the participant roles required by the verb (Goldberg 1995: 51). The abstract construction specifies which argument roles in the construction are necessarily mapped onto the participant roles required by the verb (Goldberg 1995: 51). This fusion is an illustration of what Goldberg calls the *Correspondence Principle* (Goldberg 1995: 50–51). Further, it is the *Semantic Coherence Principle* which allows to decide which argument roles can be mapped onto participant roles, as a fusion is only possible with roles that are semantically compatible (Goldberg 1995: 50). As an illustration, the valency pattern of the verb *geben* ('give') is the prototypical realization of the ditransitive construction and of the Semantic Coherence and Correspondence Principles.

Goldberg (1995, 2006) discusses the dative either in the context of the ditransitive construction (1995: 89–97) or in contrast with the corresponding prepositional paraphrase with *to*, e.g., *John gave Mary an apple* vs. *John gave an apple to Mary* (1995: 89). It is also an issue in the discussion about the dichotomy between argument (e.g., *He baked her a cake*) and adjunct (*He baked a cake for her*) (2006: 42). But all in all, in the constructionist literature there is no systematic description of the dative and its possible semantic roles. This does not surprise, as morphosyntactic cases like the dative are not expressed in English. Still, Goldberg describes some of the semantic constraints for the definition of the dative, which constitute the starting-point for our considerations. That is why we zoom in on some of her explanations.

In spite of the relevance and contribution of the constructionist approach to the description of argument structure constructions in German, research is still in dire need of more studies based on the constructionist model. But some studies for German can be quoted (among others Rostila 2007; Engelberg et al. 2011;

Mollica and Kuhn 2013; Mollica 2014; Proost 2014, 2015; Engelberg 2015; Proost and Winkler 2015). Our chapter wants to make up for this deficit. It offers a constructionist description of structures with the different dative types in German. In a significative-semantic perspective, dative constructions can be classified in two main categories: the beneficiary/recipient-constructions on the one hand and the experiencer-constructions on the other. Let us look at both categories in detail.

3.1 BENEFICIENT- and RECIPIENT-constructions

According to Welke (in prep.), the BENEFICIENT role is characterized by the properties [attention/affection towards a person] and [with good or bad intentions]. The RECIPIENT role can be considered an extension of the BENEFICIENT role. In a significative-semantic perspective, both the BENEFICIENT and RECIPIENT roles are variants of one single role, but Welke suggests using the term BENEFICIENT for constructions with two arguments and RECIPIENT for constructions with three arguments. Both types of constructions with a dative are argument structure constructions with a different form and meaning. But in a significative-semantic perspective they are linked to each other.

3.1.1 BENEFICIENT-construction

The beneficiary-construction can be realized as a [Nom_{AGENT} – V – Dat_{BENEFICIENT}]-construction or as a [Nom_{EVENT PARTICIPANT} – V – Dat_{BENEFICIENT}]-construction.¹³ The German verbs *antworten* ('to answer'), *danken* ('to thank'), *drohen* ('to threaten'), *dienen* ('to serve'), *helfen* ('to help'), *glauben* ('to believe'), *widersprechen* ('to contradict'), and so on, are used with a dative case and express the meaning [X_{Nom} acts towards Y_{Dat} with good or bad intentions] (see Welke, in prep.), they fuse with the [Nom_{AGENT} – V – Dat_{BENEFICIENT}]-construction as exemplified in (34)–(37) hereunder or with the [Nom_{EVENT PARTICIPANT} – V – Dat_{BENEFICIENT}]-construction (see example (38)):

- (34) *Das Kind hilft der alten Dame.*
 The child.NOM helps to the old lady.3SG.FEM.DAT
 'The child helps the old lady.'
- (35) *Der Einbrecher drohte der ganzen Familie.*
 The burglar.NOM threatened to the whole family.3SG.FEM.DAT
 'The burglar threatened the whole family.'

13. We use the term EVENT PARTICIPANT (German VORGANGSTRÄGER) following Welke (2011: 151).

- (36) *Während des Krieges diente er seinem Land.*
 During the war he.NOM served to his country.3SG.NEUTRAL.DAT
 ‘During the war he served his country.’
- (37) *Die alte Dame dankte dem Kind/dem Schicksal.*
 The old lady.NOM thanked to the child/to the destiny.3SG.NEUTRAL.DAT
 ‘The old lady thanked the child/destiny.’

Prototypically, the dative designates a person, but examples with dative objects instantiating the property [-human] are also possible:

- (38) *Das Rauchen schadet der Gesundheit.*
 Smoking.NOM harms to the health.3SG.FEM.DAT
 ‘Smoking is harmful to health.’

It can be noticed that the property [with good or bad intentions] relates the [Nom_{AGENT} – V – Dat_{BENEFICIENT}]-construction to the experiencer-construction as it implies an emotional component on the side of the AGENT.

There is a small group of verbs, e.g. *ähneln* (‘to resemble’), *begegnen* (‘to meet’), *entgegenkommen* (‘to approach, to come towards’), *folgen* (‘to follow’), *gleichen* (‘to resemble’), which are also used in a dative construction although they do not express an action, a process or a state which presupposes good or bad intentions. Much more do these verbs express a kind of correspondence relationship (Wegener 1985: 280–281):

- (39) *Ich bin ihm gestern begegnet.*
 I.NOM am to him.3SG.MASC.DAT yesterday met
 ‘I have met him yesterday.’
- (40) *Er widerspricht mir ständig.*
 He.NOM contradicts to me.1SG.DAT all the time
 ‘He always contradicts me.’
- (41) *Seine Villa ähnelt der seines Nachbarn.*
 His villa.NOM resembles to that.3SG.FEM.DAT of his neighbor
 ‘His villa resembles that of his neighbor.’

In example (39) the correspondence between both entities (subject and dative object) can for instance be paraphrased in the following way: ‘Yesterday I moved towards the person who, at the same moment, moved towards me’ (see Wegener 1985: 282). In these cases *Welche* (in prep.) characterizes the semantic role expressed by the dative as a RELATUM; it designates an existing relationship between the subject and the object (e.g. following or resembling). There is a fusion between the verbs and the [Nom_{AGENT} – V – Dat_{RELATUM}]-construction (in example (40)) or the [Nom_{EVENT PARTICIPANT} – V – Dat_{RELATUM}]-construction (examples (39) and (41)). This

construction conveys the meaning [The action or event accomplished by X_{Nom} is related to Y_{Dat}].¹⁴

Semantically, the [$\text{Nom}_{\text{AGENT}} - \text{V} - \text{Dat}_{\text{BENEFICIENT}}$]-construction is close to the [$\text{Nom}_{\text{AGENT}} - \text{V} - \text{Acc}_{\text{PATIENT}}$]-construction which is usually realized with a subject in the nominative and an accusative object, e.g. *Max isst eine Pizza* ('Max eats a pizza'). From the semantics of the verbs used in examples (39)–(41) one could expect these constructions to instantiate a subject and an accusative object, but de facto it is a dative object which is used. This results from the valency of these verbs which require a dative object and not an accusative. For this reason Herbst (2011 and 2014) suggests adding the *Valency Realization Principle* to Goldberg's Principles of Correspondence and of Semantic Coherence (Goldberg 1995: 50–52) in the constructionist analysis in order to avoid possible overgeneralizations. This principle guarantees that the formal elements of an argument construction are realized if and only if they respect the valency properties of a verb (Herbst 2011: 355). We can now better understand why it is important to enrich the CxG model with valency properties for an accurate description of such examples.

3.1.2 RECIPIENT-construction: *The ditransitive construction in German*

The ditransitive construction is realized in German with a verb, a subject and two objects: [$\text{Nom} - \text{Dat} - \text{Acc}$] (see also Paszenda's contribution in this volume). In this construction too the dative object constitutes an argument to the verb. The ditransitive construction is associated with the abstract meaning [X_{Nom} causes Y_{Dat} to receive Z_{Acc}], it includes an AGENT, a RECIPIENT and a PATIENT: CAUSE-RECEIVE <agt rec pat> (Goldberg 1995: 49). At the semantic level, the central sense of the ditransitive construction is the idea of "a transfer between a volitional agent and a willing recipient" (Goldberg 1995: 141). A prototypical illustration of this construction is

- (42) *Peter gibt Maria/ihr ein Buch.*
 Peter.NOM gives Maria/her.3SG.FEM.DAT a book.ACC.
 'Peter gives Maria a book.'

14. In a denotative-semantic perspective, a clear-cut classification of the semantic roles which the dative objects play in (34)–(41) is not always possible. According to Wegener (1985) verbs like *folgen* ('to follow'), *helfen* ('to help') and *begegnen* ('to meet') instantiate a CO-AGENT, as they describe an action which can be interpreted as a kind of action-reaction. *Ähneln* and *gleichen* (both 'to resemble'), on the other hand, encode the role CORRESPONDENT, i.e. the dative NP designates the entity for which the comparison is valid. In this case, Dowty (1991) speaks of the PROTO-AGENT (see also Primus 2012: 55–59).

in which *Peter* represents the AGENT, *Maria* the RECIPIENT and *ein Buch* the PATIENT. In the prototypical construction verbs of giving (German: *geben*) are used, they express a real transfer of an object to a RECIPIENT. According to Goldberg (1995: 146), the RECIPIENT has often been defined as having to be animate, but there are numerous examples in which this is not the case, like for instance in *The tabasco sauce gave the baked beans some flavor* (Goldberg 1995: 146). She explains this possibility with a metaphorical mapping, saying that “in the source domain of the metaphor the affected party is understood to be a recipient, and thus an animate being” (Goldberg 1995: 146). The semantic constraint of a “willing” RECIPIENT for the dative, as defined by Goldberg (1995: 146), has been revised by Proost (2014: 37) who shows that this constraint is not always a necessary condition, e.g. with some verbs like *aufdrängen* ‘to impose on s.o.’, *aufzwingen* ‘to force sg on s.o.’. Further, with *take*-verbs, verbs of removal and *add*-verbs, the dative does not always have to be an animate entity.¹⁵

Goldberg (1995: 32) further explains that “it is widely recognized that many ditransitive expressions do not strictly imply that the patient argument is successfully transferred to the potential recipient”. This is for instance the case with the verbs *versprechen* ‘to promise’ or *backen* ‘to bake’, which can be used in ditransitive constructions although they do not express a real transfer, e.g.

(43) *John verspricht Maria ewige Liebe.*
 John.NOM promises to Maria.3SG.FEM.DAT eternal love.ACC
 ‘John promises Maria eternal love.’

(44) *Seine Mutter backte ihm frische Brötchen.*
 His mother.NOM baked to him.3SG.MASC.DAT fresh rolls.ACC
 ‘His mother baked him fresh rolls.’

As a result, the ditransitive construction as defined by Goldberg (1995) is a case of “constructional polysemy” as “the same form is paired with different but related senses” (Goldberg 1995: 33). The prototypical meaning of the ditransitive construction consists in a possessive relation caused by an AGENT between a RECIPIENT and a PATIENT (Ekberg 2012: 6). However, the possessive relation between the PATIENT and the RECIPIENT (or alternatively the BENEFICIENT or MALEFICIENT) does not necessarily have to be concrete. That is why verbs like *versprechen* ‘to promise’ or *backen* ‘to bake’ which are not prototypically ‘giving’ verbs are possible in the ditransitive construction.

15. Proost (2014: 75–77) also shows that the AGENT in ditransitive constructions does not necessarily have to be “volitional”.

In Section 2.3.1 it was shown that the BENEFICIENT and MALEFICIENT roles can also be interpreted as EXPERIENCER. The RECIPIENT role is also closely linked to this role. For instance, with ‘telling’ verbs (e.g., *Max erzählte mir die ganze Geschichte*, ‘Max told me the whole story’) the RECIPIENT can also correspond to the EXPERIENCER of the event (see also Primus 2012: 45).

3.2 EXPERIENCER-constructions

As we saw before, in a significant-semantic sense the EXPERIENCER role can be expressed in different constructions. In a VG perspective, the EXPERIENCER-dative phrase can either be an argument or an adjunct.

3.2.1 EXPERIENCER as argument

As a verb argument it is either realized in a construction with a single argument, namely with the dative object, in a construction with a subject and a dative object, or in a construction with a subject, a dative object with an additional predicative complement. Let us look at these different constructions with some examples.

The [Nom_{EVENT PARTICIPANT} – V – Dat_{EXPERIENCER}]-construction conveys the meaning [X_{Nom} transfers towards Y_{Dat} the emotion, the perception expressed by the verb].

- (45) *Dieser Mann passt mir gar nicht!*
 This man.NOM does not fit to me.1SG.DAT at all
 ‘I do not like that man at all.’

The dative object often appears in front position, even when unmarked, it is then realized in the [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V – Nom_{EVENT PARTICIPANT}]-construction (Wegener 1985: 310), e.g.

- (46) *Ihm gefallen interessante Bücher.*
 To him.3SG.MASC.DAT please interesting books.NOM
 ‘He likes interesting books.’
- (47) *Mir schmeckt die französische Küche.*
 To me.1SG.DAT tastes French cuisine.NOM
 ‘I like French cuisine.’

The EXPERIENCER role can be expressed in a construction with the realization of one single argument, namely in the [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V]-construction with the semantics [X_{Dat} perceives the emotion, the feeling expressed by the verb]. This construction is not very frequent in German and fuses only with a small amount of verbs. This category also includes constructions with a so-called formal subject *es*

‘it’ (see Wegener 1985:270). The pronoun *es* is not referential and does not encode any semantic role (Pittner and Berman 2007: 128), it can be omitted in most cases:

- (48) Mir *graut* (*es*).
 To me.1SG.DAT dread (it.NOM)
 ‘I dread something.’
- (49) Mir *schwindelt* (*es*).
 To me.1SG.DAT feel dizzy (it.NOM)
 ‘I feel dizzy.’

This construction can be extended to a [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V – Pred]-construction with the meaning [Y_{Dat} perceives the emotion, the feeling expressed by W_{pred}], as illustrated in the following examples.

- (50) Mir *wurde* (*es*) *warm*.
 To me.1SG.DAT is (it.NOM) warm
 ‘I felt warm.’
- (51) Ihr *war* (*es*) *übel*.
 To her.3SG.FEM.DAT was (it.NOM) sick
 ‘She felt sick.’

According to Goldberg (1995) constructions can be linked to each other by inheritance links. This applies to the constructions we have just illustrated, namely the [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V]-construction and the [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V – Pred]-construction which are linked to each other by a subpart-relation as the former construction is a part of the latter. At the same time, both constructions exist independently of each other (Goldberg 1995: 78).

German has a further construction with the form [Nom_{EVENT PARTICIPANT} – V – Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – Pred] and the meaning [X_{Nom} transfers towards Y_{Dat} the feeling, emotion or perception expressed in W_{pred}]. This construction is closely related to the formerly quoted [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V – Pred]-construction (see examples (52) and (53)), however its subject is a noun or a pronoun (and not the formal subject *es*):

- (52) *Seine Beförderung* *erschien* dem *Chef*
 His promotion.NOM seemed to the boss.3SG.MASC.DAT
sehr problematisch.
 very problematic
 ‘The boss considered his promotion to be problematic.’
- (53) *Ihre Geschichte* *kam* mir *komisch* vor.
 Her story.NOM appeared to me.1SG.NOM strange
 ‘Her story sounded strange to me.’

In some cases, the predicative complement can be introduced by the conjunction *als*, e.g.

- (54) *Der festgenommene junge Mann gilt der
The arrested young man.NOM is rated to the
Polizei als verdächtig. (E-Valbu)
police.3SG.FEM.DAT as suspect*

‘The arrested young man is considered by the police to be suspect.’

The common denominator between the three constructions we have described in this section is the EXPERIENCER role profiled by the dative object, which constitutes in most cases an obligatory argument of the verb and the construction. Still, this role does not always have to be realized, its expression in the construction depends on the valency of the verb:

- (55) *Das Schloss dient (der Regierung) als
The castle.NOM serves (to the government.3SG.FEM.DAT) as a
Gästehaus. (E-Valbu)
guesthouse*

‘The castle is used by the government as a guesthouse.’

This confirms the claim that the constructionist description must consider the idiosyncratic properties of the verbs.

3.2.2 EXPERIENCER as adjunct

As seen before, the EXPERIENCER role is often profiled by the *dativus iudicantis* and the *dativus ethicus*. However, compared with the constructions we have just described, these datives are used in different types of constructions. The *dativus iudicantis* is not linked to any specific verb, but needs a grading particle in the construction. By contrast, the *dativus ethicus* can only be used in the first (more rarely also in the second) person singular. Consequently, in both cases the datives are adjuncts and not arguments. At the semantic level, both dative types are not “proposition-based datives” (Zifonun et al. 1997: 1089), which means that they do not affect the propositional meaning of the sentence, but rather express an attitude towards the proposition. The distinction between proposition-based and non-proposition-based datives can best be illustrated with the *dativus iudicantis*:

- (56) *Die Jungs haben inzwischen schon zum großen Riesenrad geschickt, was ... hoch
über der Messe emporragt. Und .. es ist ihnen natürlich zu langweilig, die kleinen
Karussells ... mit zu besuchen, die das Schwesterchen ausprobieren muß und sie
lassen sich ihren Obolus geben und sausen schnell zum Riesenrad.*

(DWDS, DGD, PF- _E_00292_SE_01_T_01)

The boys have in the meantime already peered at the great big wheel, which ... rises high over the fair and it.NOM is to them.3PL.DAT too boring, to go to the small roundabouts which the little sister must try and they let themselves give their money and rush to the big wheel.

‘The boys have in the meantime already peered at the great big wheel, which ... rises high over the fair and it is too boring for them to go to the small roundabouts which the little sister must try and they let themselves give their money and rush to the big wheel.’

- (57) *Der alte Job war zu langweilig, obwohl er gut bezahlt wurde. Aber Geld ist nicht alles. Hab mich auch privat verändert.*

(<http://www.zeitzuleben.de/24187-aussteigen-umsteigen-mathias-morgenthaler-marco-zaugg/>)

The old job was too boring, although it was well paid. But money is not all. Have also changed privately.

‘The old job was too boring, although it was well paid. But money is not everything. I have also changed at the private level.’

In both examples we have a similar construction [*X ist zu langweilig*] (‘X is too boring’), in example (57) without a dative, whereas example (56) contains a *dativus iudicantis* with which the mother expresses the opinion of her older children about the small roundabouts. Zifonun et al. (1997: 1344) explains the difference between both examples with the principle of general validity (see Zifonun et al. 1997: 1344). The validity of the proposition in example (56) is restricted to the smaller group of older children, whereas the proposition expressed with example (57) is a general claim.

But this explanation is somewhat biased. The sentence *Der alte Job war zu langweilig* ‘The old job was too boring’ in (57) does not express an absolute judging norm, but a subjective opinion which has no general validity. By contrast, example (56) with the *dativus iudicantis* expresses explicitly for whom the proposition is valid, namely for the older children. As a consequence, the function of the *dativus iudicantis* is to express an entity which remains implicit in the proposition: the EXPERIENCER role is also an immanent element of the proposition (see Mollica 2014: 359–362).

It has often been claimed that constructions with the *dativus iudicantis* can be paraphrased by a *für*-phrase (‘for’), e.g.

- (58) a. *Die kleinen Karussells sind ihnen zu langweilig.*
The small roundabouts.NOM are to them.3PL.DAT too boring
‘The small roundabouts are too boring for them.’
- b. *Die kleinen Karussells sind für sie zu langweilig.*
The small roundabouts.NOM are for them.PP too boring
‘The small roundabouts are too boring for them.’

Although these constructions have a similar meaning, they are not identical. Zifonun et al. (1997: 1345) describes the difference between both constructions as follows:

“[d]er Dativus iudicantis gibt eher den Standpunkt der jeweils genannten Person wieder, die *für*-Phrase eher den Sprecherstandpunkt.“
 [‘the dativus iudicantis rather conveys the viewpoint of the quoted person, the *for*-phrase rather the point of view of the speaker’].

Consequently, constructions with the dativus iudicantis and constructions with a *für*-phrase are not synonymous, but different constructions.

Similar observations can be made about the dativus ethicus. Compare the following examples.

- (59) a. *Sei fleißig in der Schule!*
 Be assiduous in the school!
 ‘Be assiduous at school!’
- b. *Sei mir fleißig in der Schule!*
 Be to me.1SG.NOM assiduous in the school!
 ‘I want you to be assiduous at school!’

While sentence (59a) is characterized by semantic compositionality, the meaning of example (59b) cannot be understood in a compositional way. The dative conveys a kind of affective concern of the speaker and an involvement of the communication partner in the expressed event (see also Mollica 2014 for a detailed description of the German dativus ethicus in a constructionist approach). Consequently, examples (59a) and (59b) are not equivalent, but illustrations of the no-synonymy-principle (Goldberg 1995: 67). For the classification of structures with a dativus ethicus in the category of constructions it is not only the principle of semantic non-compositionality which is at stake, but further the principle of non-predictability of the form. The meaning conveyed by the dativus ethicus can in fact only be expressed by specific sentence types, namely request (59b) or exclamative sentences (Example 60) and by pronouns (prototypically *mir* ‘to me’, first person singular). In both sentences *mir* designates the person who ‘experiences’ a mental, emotional or physical process, therefore it is the EXPERIENCER.

In exclamative sentences the dative expresses the speaker’s position or his opinion (e.g. surprise, fear or emphasis) towards an unusual or unexpected event (Wegener 1985: 51; Thurmair 1989: 197 and Wegener 1989: 69). At the same time, with the use of the ethicus, the speaker wishes to express his/her involvement towards the utterance/statement:

- (60) *Ja, ja, du bist mir ein netter*
 Yes, yes, you.NOM are to me.1SG.NOM a nice
Kerl! (DWDS, DGD, ZW-_E_03070_SE_01_T_01)
 guy
 ‘Yes, yes, to me you are a nice guy.’

In this example the dative does not simply stand for an emotionally involved entity, but more for a kind of judging variant. This means that the semantics of *mir* in (60) lies between the *dativus ethicus* and *iudicantis* as the roles of perceiver and judge are closely related.

Accordingly, the exclamative *ethicus* construction is in a certain way polysemous, as it shares properties of the request *ethicus* (mainly emotional involvement of the speaker and closeness/affinity of the conversation partners) and of the *dativus iudicantis* (the judging variant). The exclamative *ethicus* construction is linked to the other dative constructions through polysemy links which “capture the nature of the semantic relations between a particular sense of a construction and any extensions from this sense” (Goldberg 1995: 75).

On the other hand, in request sentences like (59b) the speaker expresses his personal interest or his emotional involvement towards the realization or non-realization of the action (Thurmair 1989: 196 and Wegener 1989: 65). According to Wegener (1985: 53) the request *ethicus* profiles the *BENEFICIENT* role and is thus linked to the prototypical dative object or *dativus commodi*. This explains why the border between the *dativus ethicus* and the *dativus commodi* is sometimes considered to be vague (Wegener 1985: 53). The instantiation

- (61) *Putz mir bitte die Schuhe!* (Wegener 1989: 71)
 Clean to me.1SG.DAT please the shoes.ACC
 ‘(I ask you to) Clean the shoes please!’

can be interpreted in two ways, dependent on the possessor of the shoes: if the speaker’s shoes are meant we have a *dativus commodi*, if they belong to the addressee, it is a *dativus ethicus* (Wegener 1989: 71). We would even recognize a third interpretation of the example, namely *Putz bitte meine Schuhe*, ‘Please, clean my shoes (and do it for me)’. In this case, the dative corresponds to a *dativus possessivus* (in a broader sense) and it also conveys the meaning of emotional involvement. Still, there is a difference of focus between the following sentences:

- (62) *Sie streichelt ihm die Haare.*
 She.NOM caresses to him.3SG.MASC.DAT the hair.ACC
 ‘She caresses his hair.’

- (63) *Sie streichelt seine Haare.*
 She.NOM caresses his hair.ACC
 'She caresses his hair.'

The *dativus possessivus* in (62) focuses on the *POSSESSOR* and expresses the speaker's empathy towards the entity in the dative (see Mellado 2012: 6). This in turn relates this dative to the *EXPERIENCER* role.

4. The family of datives

4.1 Family resemblance

The description of the different constructions has shown that they all exist independently of each other. In some cases they can be linked to each other by inheritance links. For instance, as we saw in Section 3.2, the [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V]-construction and the [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V – Pred]-construction are linked to each other by a subpart-relation (Goldberg 1995: 78). Moreover, the description of the different datives in the former sections reveals that, depending on the construction, they can instantiate various denotative- and significative-semantic roles. However, in a significative-semantic sense, it is only the *BENEFICIENT/RECIPIENT*, the *EXPERIENCER* and (more rarely) the *RELATUM* with all their (less prototypical) variants which are profiled in the different dative constructions. As all these constructions are characterized by semantic and partially also syntactic similarity they build a large family of constructions, namely the family of dative constructions.

The semantic links remind of Wittgenstein's (1984) concept of family resemblance which can be exploited for the description of German datives (see also Guerrero-Medina and Proost in this volume who both apply a similar family-resemblance concept for the description of the English conative constructions and German *search*-constructions respectively). His concept is sometimes contested in scientific literature, as it is not very clear how it should be interpreted (see among others Wennerberg 2011; Voß 2012). Keller (1995) conceives the family resemblance as a reflexive symmetrical and transitive relation. He illustrates this concept with the example of five daughters who resemble each other in the following way: the first and second daughters have the same eye color, the second and third daughters the same nose form, etc. This implies that each of them resembles the next one. The third daughter is indirectly connected to the first one over the second one (1995: 89). By contrast, Engelberg et al. (2011) describe the family resemblance as an intransitive relation, i.e. a complex relation dependent on several similarity properties between constructions. In line with their view, the dative constructions under study

are similar in the number of arguments, the semantics of the whole construction and the semantic roles played by the dative phrases. However, this does not mean that constructions must instantiate the same number of arguments and exactly the same meaning to be related to each other. This is the reason why we also understand the family resemblance as an intransitive relation; a transitive relation would always presuppose exactly the same similarity relation (a specific property).

The following examples (64)–(74) instantiate different constructions with a different form and meaning. But the common denominator between these constructions is the dative – in spite of the different roles it may instantiate.¹⁶

- (64) *Peter gibt Maria/ihr ein Buch.*
 Peter.NOM gives to Maria/to her.3SG.FEM.DAT a book.ACC
 (ds) RECIPIENT; (ss) RECIPIENT
 ‘Peter gives Maria/her a book.’
- (65) *Seine Mutter backte ihm frische Brötchen.*
 His mother.NOM baked to him.3SG.MASC.DAT fresh rolls.ACC
 (ds) BENEFICIENT; (ss) RECIPIENT
 ‘His mother baked him fresh rolls.’
- (66) *Ich erzähle ihr die Wahrheit.*
 I.NOM tell to her.3SG.FEM.DAT the truth.ACC
 (ds) RECIPIENT/EXPERIENCER; (ss) RECIPIENT
 ‘I tell her the truth.’
- (67) *Ich bin ihm gestern begegnet.*
 I.NOM am to him.3SG.MASC.DAT yesterday met
 (ds) CO-AGENT; (ss) RELATUM
 ‘I have met him yesterday.’
- (68) *Ich helfe meiner Mutter.*
 I.NOM help to my mother.3SG.FEM.DAT
 (ds) CO-AGENT/BENEFICIENT/EXPERIENCER (ss) BENEFICIENT
 ‘I help my mother.’
- (69) *Das Haus gehört ihr.*
 The house.NOM belongs to her.3SG.FEM.DAT
 (ds) POSSESSOR; (ss) BENEFICIENT
 ‘The house belongs to her.’

16. For the sake of clarity we renumber the examples already quoted earlier and we also add the denotative- as well as the significantive-semantic role next to the examples (respectively qualified as ‘ds’ and ‘ss’).

- (70) *Sie streichelt ihm die Haare.*
 She.NOM caresses to him.3SG.MASC.DAT the hair.ACC
 (ds) POSSESSOR; (ss) RECIPIENT
 ‘She caresses his hair.’
- (71) *Ihm gefallen interessante Bücher.*
 To him.3SG.MASC.DAT please interesting books.NOM
 (ds) EXPERIENCER; (ss) EXPERIENCER
 ‘He likes interesting books.’
- (72) *Der alte Job war ihr zu langweilig.*
 The old job.NOM was to her.3SG.FEM.DAT too boring
 (ds) EXPERIENCER; (ss) EXPERIENCER
 ‘The old job was too boring for her.’
- (73) *Sei mir fleißig in der Schule!*
 Be to me.1SG.DAT assiduous in the school
 (ds) EXPERIENCER; (ss) EXPERIENCER
 ‘(I want you to) Be assiduous at school!’
- (74) *Ja, ja, du bist mir ein netter Kerl.*
 Yes, yes, you.NOM are to me.1SG.DAT a nice guy.NOM
 (ds) EXPERIENCER; (ss) EXPERIENCER
 ‘Yes, yes, I find you are a nice guy.’

For the description of the similarity relation between the above examples, denotative- and significative-semantic roles prove to be very useful. On the one hand, significative-semantic roles connect a specific form (syntactic structure) to a specific meaning, thereby making it possible to reduce constructions with a phrase in the dative to three roles, i.e. the BENEFICIENT/RECIPIENT, EXPERIENCER and RELATUM. Denotative-semantic roles, on the other hand, focus on further similarities within the family of datives. The ditransitive examples (64)–(66) express related denotative semantic roles and they are linked to each other through the idea of a transfer, which can be real (64) or not (66). In a significative-semantic sense, these examples instantiate the RECIPIENT role. As we saw before, in a denotative-semantic sense, the RECIPIENT role with communication verbs also instantiates properties of an EXPERIENCER. As a result, the ditransitive construction and the [Dat_{EXPERIENCER} – V – Nom_{EVENT PARTICIPANT}]-construction share some common properties through the EXPERIENCER role, although they differ in the number of arguments. The same can be observed with other experiencer-constructions, which, in spite of their formal differences, are similar to each other and to the ditransitive construction. But as explained above, the ditransitive construction can also express a possessive

relation, which implies that it is linked to constructions which instantiate a POSSESSOR (see examples (69) and (70)), even if the constructions do not instantiate the three arguments required by the ditransitive construction like in example (69). At the same time, because of its ‘interest’ meaning (Fried 2011: 132) the dative of the ditransitive construction shares properties with the *dativus ethicus* realized in examples (73) and (74), which also implies emotional involvement. The semantics of the *dativus ethicus* is also closely linked to that of the *dativus iudicantis* (example (72)). This meaning of emotional involvement is also typical of the *dativus possessivus*. Finally, example (67), which at first sight does not seem to have semantic characteristics of the dative as it instantiates a denotative-semantic CO-AGENT role, is related to other dative constructions through example (68) in which the dative has features both of the CO-AGENT and of the EXPERIENCER OF BENEFICIENT. AS a result, it is also indirectly linked to the experiencer-constructions and partly also to the ditransitive construction.

But dative constructions are not only linked to each other by the similarity of the semantic role they instantiate. They can also be classified in different subgroups according to their “argument status” (Goldberg 2006: 42) in constructions. The dative object can either be an argument to the verb and the construction, or it can be contributed by the construction, or more rarely it can simply be an adjunct. In most beneficiary/recipient-, experiencer- and relatum-constructions discussed above, the dative is an argument to the verb and the construction. Only the *dativus ethicus* and *iudicantis* have the status of an adjunct.

As already said before, traditional linguists do not offer a unified and coherent description of the dative. A study of datives within constructions makes it possible to look at this phenomenon from a different perspective, which can lead to new insights. While projectionistic approaches like VG focus on issues like the syntactic status of free datives (e.g., are these arguments or adjuncts?), the CxG model with its holistic view on constructions also takes into consideration not only its form, but also its function (semantico-pragmatic factors). The constructionist approach further offers more reliable criteria for defining datives in all their complexity. We can for instance remind of the *dativus commodi* or *incommodi* which gets the status of a constructional argument. Moreover, the concept of inheritance links between various constructions, enriched with Wittgenstein’s (1984) concept of family resemblance, offers a more unified description of datives as a family-phenomenon.

Still, a purely constructionist approach cannot explain all linguistic issues related to the dative. The RECIPIENT role typically instantiated by the dative object is sometimes unexpectedly realized by an accusative object which leads to constructions with two accusative objects with different denotative-semantic roles, namely a RECIPIENT and a PATIENT. The exceptional selection of the accusative object for the RECIPIENT role, also in constructions which express a transfer, depends on the

Donalies 2009; Burger 2010; Wulff 2012, to name just a few).¹⁷ Following Fleischer (1997: 3), we use the term ‘phraseologism’ as a generic term for fixed word combinations which also include idioms, i.e. fixed word combinations (see also Burger 2010: 37). We cannot deal with all types of phraseological constructions but we briefly focus on a few phraseologisms with ditransitive structure and with a dative possessivus.

Phraseological ditransitive constructions have the same syntactic structure and express a transfer just like non-figurative ditransitive constructions. However the accusative object is most of the time lexically fixed (for more details see De Knop and Mollica 2016). Here are some examples:

(77) *Peter zeigt seiner Schwester die Krallen.*
 Peter.NOM shows to his sister.3SG.FEM.DAT the claws.ACC
 ‘Peter threatens his sister.’

(78) *Ihr schlechtes Verhalten hat ihm den Rest gegeben.*
 Her bad behaviour.NOM has given him.3SG.MASC.DAT the rest.ACC
 ‘Her bad behavior has been the final straw for him.’

Verbs like *geben* ‘to give’, *zeigen* ‘to show’ or *verpassen* ‘to give, to inflict’, have a ditransitive valency and semantics, independently of their literal or figurative use. The dative object is argument of the verb and the construction. It expresses the RECIPIENT of the transfer. The idiomatic meaning in the phraseological ditransitive construction results from the metaphorical or metonymical use of the accusative object. The fixed instantiations are linked to the ditransitive construction through the so-called *instance links* (Goldberg 1995: 79). According to Goldberg, such a link is present “when a particular construction is a *special case* of another construction; that is, an instance link exists between constructions iff one construction is a more fully specified version of the other” (Goldberg 1995: 79).

Other phraseological constructions with a dative are possible, as illustrated by the following example which instantiates a dative possessivus.

(79) *Sag mir, was dir auf der Seele liegt!*
 Tell me, what.NOM to you.2SG.DAT lies on your soul!
 ‘Tell me what bothers you!’

17. Phraseologisms “can range from free combinations to restricted collocations, figurative idioms, and pure idioms” (Wulff 2012: 292). They constitute a “subset of phrases maximally conventionalized” (Wulff 2012: 292). Gries (2008) discusses a list of defining properties of phraseologisms. A major characteristic for a linguistic unit to count as a phraseologism is “semantic unity, but not non-compositional semantics” (Gries 2008: 6).

According to Mellado (2012: 11), the *dativus possessivus* is frequent in phraseologisms as it expresses emotional participation. But in contrast with non-figurative constructions with the *dativus possessivus*, this element cannot be omitted in phraseological constructions because of its expressivity, as she illustrates with the following example (Mellado 2012: 12).

- (80) *Seinem Vater ist der Erfolg zu Kopf gestiegen.*
 To his father.3SG.MASC.DAT is the success.NOM to head risen
 ‘The success has gone to his father’s head.’

Alternatives without a dative phrase would not be possible (Mellado 2012: 12):

- (80) a. **Der Erfolg ist zu seinem Kopf gestiegen.*
 The success.NOM has risen to his head.3SG.PP.DAT risen
 (Mellado 2012: 11)
- b. **Der Erfolg ist zum Kopf seines Vaters gestiegen.*
 The success.NOM is to the head.3SG.PP.DAT of his father.GEN risen.

Because of a lack of space, our study on phraseological constructions with a dative can only be restricted to these few types. Further research which focuses on the syntactic and semantic constraints of phraseological constructions with a dative object is needed and should be topic of future studies.

5. Conclusion and perspectives

Traditional projectionist theories do not propose a comprehensive and unified view of the semantic and syntactic constraints relevant to datives in German. The descriptive categories that emerge from these theories are mainly based on illustrations of different types of datives. The limitations of such theories become obvious especially with the analysis of the so-called German free datives. In our contribution we have claimed and demonstrated that with its concept of inheritance links between constructions and its postulate of a continuum between syntax and lexicon, CxG offers a better model for the study of structures with noun phrases in the dative and of the syntactic and semantic relationships between them. Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblance has proved to be very useful for the description of the semantic similarity and the connections between all dative types. A constructionist approach offers a homogeneous analysis of the

beneficient-, recipient- and experiencer-constructions which, on the basis of the semantic similarity of the dative phrases, build a family of datives in spite of their syntactic differences. Other syntax theories have not dealt with the many links between the different dative constructions to this extent. But we have further observed that there is also a need to integrate Herbst's (2011, 2014) *Valency Realization Principle* in our analysis in order to take into consideration the idiosyncratic valency properties (see also Boas' 2003, 2011 concept of mini-constructions). Not only is a fine-grained approach which integrates the CxG model, the valency properties and the family resemblance concept useful for a homogeneous study of constructions with dative phrases in non-figurative use, but further for a more accurate analysis of phraseological dative constructions. Accordingly, phraseological dative constructions are not seen as exceptions which have to be relegated to the lexicon, but they can be integrated in the family of dative constructions as a whole.

A unified account of constructions with the dative does not only offer assets in theoretical linguistics, but also opens up avenues for language pedagogy. Teachers of German as a foreign language are well aware of the difficulties encountered by foreign learners with the learning of the dative object and the constructions in which they appear. A more fine-grained description of dative constructions as a family network in Goldberg's (1995, 2006) sense, with the semantic and syntactic constraints can facilitate the teaching of this complex topic.

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