A Diachronic Study of the Dative in the Written Czech Language

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the study of the semantics of the dative case in the written Czech language from the point of view of cognitive semantics. Its aim is to apply the semantic configuration of the Czech dative – mainly provided by Janda’s A Geography of Case Semantics (1993) and Janda and Clancy’s The Case Book for Czech (2006) – to a large corpus composed of 8,355 datives belonging to four significant periods in the history of Czech written language: old Czech, middle Czech, new Czech, and contemporary Czech.

1. Introduction

Among the many theoretical works regarding cases and dative semantics that were taken into account for this study, two books are the main core of the conceptual basis of the research – Janda (1993) and Janda and Clancy’s (2006) cognitive semantics approach to Czech cases.

A geography of case semantics (1993) is a theoretical work on two Slavic cases that aims “to test the possibilities of cognitive grammar using data on the dative and instrumental in Czech and Russian” (Janda 1993:3). The second book is not a theoretically oriented work but rather a practical application for foreign students of Czech. However, Janda and Clancy’s division of the Czech dative into three main

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1 The study presented in this paper in English is a brief version of a more detailed work recently published in Spanish (see Gutiérrez Rubio 2015).

2 I would like to gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this research provided by the ESF project Jazyková rozmanitost a komunikace – Language Diversity and Communication (registration number: CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0061).
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semantic groups (2006:60-108) was made according to the principles of cognitive semantics.

The aim of this study is to apply these semantic configurations of the Czech dative to a large corpus composed of more than 8,000 datives belonging to four significant periods in the history of Czech written language. Before this could be done, the semantic configuration exposed in these works had to be reorganised so that it could be systematically applied to real texts belonging to periods others than contemporary Czech.

According to Janda (1993:56), the semantic prototype of the dative in Czech lies in its use in the construction of the indirect object and, especially, in the semantics associated with the verb dát/dávat ‘give’, which (Janda & Clancy 2006:62) represents “a universal experience of human interaction, and it serves as the logical starting point for the meanings of the dative”.3 It follows, therefore, that the verb dát/dávat ‘give’ would be the central member of the core conceptual category of the dative in Czech, which “involves the transfer of an object from one thing or person to another, as in Sally gave the book to John. The thing or person on the receiving end (John) is marked with the dative. You might recognise this as the indirect object” (Janda & Clancy 2006:62). The authors called this primal category DATIVE: A RECEIVER (REC). Janda, in accordance with Lakoff’s categories and cognitive models, points out that, together with this prototypical member of the category, there are other members, which:

[...] are placed in the category according to their relationship to the prototype, which may be very close or peripheral, thus giving the category a radial structure. As a result, rather than an unanalyzable bounded set of presumably homogeneous members, cognitive semantics provides for a hierarchically structured network of interrelated members, joined by their relationships to the prototype. (Janda 1993:4)

Thus, this prototype dát/dávat ‘give’ (1)4 would be semantically extended to different subtypes, primarily via relationships of synonymy, antonymy, and metonymy. In consequence, several submeanings within the category DATIVE: A RECEIVER were proposed. There are synonyms (and near-synonyms) of dát/dávat ‘give’, such as poslat ‘send’ or even koupit ‘buy’ as in (2), antonyms, such as vzít/brát ‘take’, or metonyms,

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3 This is a questionable assertion, though. In her work on the semantics of the Polish dative, Dąbrowska (1997:16ff.) seems to attribute the central meaning of the dative case to what were traditionally called “free” datives or, in her terminology, target persons: “an individual who is perceived as affected by an action, process, or state taking place within or impinging upon his personal sphere”. Additionally, Kuryłowicz (1964:190-191) argues in favour of a localist hypothesis: “[t]he dat. is genetically nothing else than an offshoot of the loc. used with personal nouns. Persons are both physical objects and centres of a sphere of competence or interest”. Other authors argue in a similar vein – Anderson (1971), Miller (1974:244-261; 1986:298) or, in the Czech and Slovak linguistic tradition, Havránek & Jedlička (1981:130) and Miko (1962:184). Newman (1998) also disagrees with the main role of the reception semantics, at least in non-Indo-European languages.

4 In the examples the dative is printed in bold type and the accusative related to the dative – if it exists – in italics.
when in a “giving” or “taking” verb “the direct object is already subsumed by the verb and therefore not overtly expressed” (Janda 1993:21), as we can observe in *aplaudovat* ‘applaud’. Their meanings, of course, differ but their basic conceptual structure happens to be the same as that of *dát/dávat* ‘give’.

(1) da **jim** sto hřiven stříebra čistého
    give **them** a hundred talents of pure silver
    *(Chronicle of Dalimil 39:19)*

(2) Jiří **mi** hned koupil **sukni**
    Jiří **me** immediately bought the skirt [Jiří immediately bought me the skirt]
    *(Němcová 2001:208)*

Apart from this core conceptual category of the dative in Czech, Janda and Clancy (2006:62) propose two further basic categories, which are certainly related to each other on account of the fact that all three share a basic semantic core: “the dative’s capacity to interact with its surroundings”.

The first of them is called DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER (EXP) and, along with DATIVE: A RECEIVER, is a relatively passive submeaning. However, compared to DATIVE: A RECEIVER, which involves above all getting or losing objects, DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER would be some sort of “diluted version” of this, since the dative does not receive objects but just absorbs experiences. DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER is related to the expression of Benefit (3), Harm (4), and Possession (5) and, in general, to the capacity “of appreciating the impact of whatever action or state it is exposed to” (Janda & Clancy 2006:79). This includes when something happens in the outside world “that is causing a change or a feeling in DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER”, including in this semantic group the expression of Age, Environment, Emotions, and Need or even the wider submeaning Beneficiaries and Victims, because “ultimately, anything that happens can happen to someone, and of course that someone will be expressed as DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER” (Janda & Clancy 2006:92).

(3) Pane, pomoz **mi**
    Lord, help **me**
    *(Bible of Kralice, Matthew 15:25)*

(4) že **všem lidem** něco na mně vadi
    that **all people** something on me bothers [that something of mine bothers everyone].
    *(Hrabal 2002:10)*

(5) **pěti bratří** po dlůhých mukách *hrdla zřezachu*
    **to the five brothers** after long martyrdom *the throats cut* [they cut their throats]
    *(Chronicle of Dalimil 39:38)*
A last but significant meaning is the so-called Alleged Beneficiaries and Victims, commonly referred to as the Ethical Dative and that, following Janda (1993:92), I translate into English as “Hey, you know what?” (6)\(^5\).

\[6\] tam vám jsou krásné domy a kostely!  
there you are beautiful houses and churches! [Hey, you know what? There are beautiful houses and churches!]  
(Němcová 2001:111)

The third and last conceptual category of the Czech dative is, in comparison with the previous ones, “relatively active, involving exerting equal, superior, or lesser strength in relation to something else” (Janda & Clancy 2006:62). The authors called it DATIVE: A COMPETITOR (COM) because some sort of “competition” exists between the nominative and dative items. There are three submeanings, depending on which of the items dominates (Domination) (7) and which submits (Inclination/Submission) (8) or if they (2006:96) “participate in a symmetrical relationship as equal competitors” (Matched Forces) (9).

\[7\] už ti učaroval dočista  
already you bewitched completely [he has completely bewitched you]  
(Němcová 2001:72)

\[8\] alespoň bych sloužil svému císaři pánu  
at least I would serve my emperor  
(Němcová 2001:206)

\[9\] a jeho oči se podobaly dvěma kouskům kamence  
and his eyes were similar to two pieces of burning amber  
(Hrabal 2002:23)

2. Corpus

The data was extracted from five works representing four significant periods of the written Czech language – old Czech, middle Czech, new Czech, and contemporary Czech.

For old Czech (stará čeština), the earliest stage in the development of the written Czech language, I analysed an early fourteenth-century chronicle – the Chronicle of Dalimil (Dalimilova Kronika). This is the most significant work from the oldest period of Czech literature (cf. Daňhelka et al. 1988a:8; Šťastný 1991:7), and it is available in eight well-preserved manuscripts and six fragments. However, the analysis is based

\(^5\) In her recent work on this topic, which should represent a significant step forward in clarifying this question, Fried (2011) refers to this last set of meanings collectively as “datives of empathy” (DE), consisting of three different patterns – Contact, Subjective, and Distancing DE.
only on one manuscript, the one most similar to the original source – the so-called Rukopis Vídeňský (Manuscript of Vienna) (see Daňhelka et al. 1988a; 1988b).⁶

The translation of the Holy Gospels by Jan Blahoslav (1523-1571), printed for the first time in 1564, embodies the second diachronic stage of the analysis – middle Czech (střední čeština).⁷ Although it is obviously not an original Czech text, the significance of the translation of the holy scriptures known as the Bible of Kralice (Bible Kralická) is so great that the language of this work, profoundly rooted in Jan Hus’ language tradition, became the model for the future standardised written Czech. The best-known edition of this translation of the Bible was printed in 1613. For practical reasons, an electronic version of this edition was chosen for the analysis.⁸ In order to be sure that the text matches the original version exactly, some fragments were compared with the printed edition.

For the analysis of the so-called new Czech (nová čeština) I opted for The Grandmother (Babička) by Božena Němcová (approx. 1820-1862). The term new Czech is understood as meaning the language after the coming of the Czech National Revival (národní obrození), a cultural movement that from approx. 1775 aimed to revive Czech culture and national identity, including, of course, the Czech (literary) language. The Grandmother, first published in 1855, is an archetype of the Czech literature of the nineteenth century and probably the most representative Czech novel of this period.⁹ For the analysis a reprint of the edition of 1942 was used (see Němcová 2001).

With regard to the Czech language written nowadays, I analysed two short novels. Closely Watched Trains (Ostře sledované vlaky) by Bohumil Hrabal (1914-1997), first published in 1965, is probably the most popular book of one of the most representative Czech writers of the second half of the 20th century. I also consider this work highly appropriate for analysis since in it the literary (written) language and the spoken discourse are mixed in a masterly fashion. For the analysis an edition of Mat’a published in 2002 was used. Because of the unbalanced number of datives documented in Hrabal’s Closely Watched Trains in comparison with the other periods analysed, a second contemporary work was added to the study – The Arrival of the Shy Millionaire (Plachý milionář přichází) by Martin Reiner. This well-known and recognised editor and writer stands for a young generation of Czech authors – Reiner was born in 1964,

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⁶ It cannot be excluded, though, that the selection of the editions of the texts belonging to the three oldest periods could have altered the results to some extent. However, I believe that the relatively small divergences among the diverse editions of the texts are not significant for the analysis.

⁷ I am aware that the term “middle Czech” is not often used by specialists. It was chosen after studying periodisations proposed in several works that specialised in the development of the Czech language (cf. Trávníček 1935; Váň 1964; Lamprecht, Šlosar & Bauer 1977; Oliverius 1979; Pleskalová 2001). Nevertheless, it will be used for the purpose of simplification, representing the period between old Czech and new Czech.


⁹ The large gap between stage 2 and stage 3 in the corpus is motivated by the nearly two hundred years of re-Catholicisation and Germanisation of Czech culture as a consequence of the defeat of the Bohemian troops at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620.
i.e., exactly 50 years after Hrabal – complementing, in my opinion, Hrabal’s contemporary but already somehow “classic” Czech language. For the analysis the first edition of Druhé město published in 2008 was used.

I think that any specialist in the historical development of the Czech language would agree that the three first texts to be analysed are highly representative of the periods that they stand for, since they are all monumental documents not only of Czech literature, but also of the Czech culture of their time. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that it might have been more convenient to analyse a combination of a wider range of shorter texts for each period, which could have led to more convincing results. However, I decided to choose just one (long) text for every stage of the Czech language because of the relevance of the chosen texts and in order to standardise and simplify the analysis. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that the genre of the texts, their plot, and the individual preferences of the authors can unfortunately benefit some subtypes of datives at the expense of others. Especially, this could be the case of the Chronicle of Dalimil, since here we are dealing with a text in verse, and the translation of the Gospels, as will be commented on in detail in the section “Data, Conclusion, and Discussion”. Anyway, no matter what texts were chosen, it would have been impossible to avoid this kind of influence absolutely in one way or another. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that these factors do not represent a danger to the main diachronic conclusions of this study.

On the other hand, and maybe because of the lack of sufficient historical perspective or the huge production of Czech literature in the last hundred years, the decision regarding the last two authors (and especially Reiner’s novel) was less obvious.

3. Conceptual Network of Czech Dative Semantics (and Subsemantics)

In order to apply Janda (1993) and Janda and Clancy’s (2006) cognitive semantics approach to the Czech dative to a diachronic corpus, several changes had to be made. A crucial aspect of the systematic analysis of the semantics of the dative was to draw up a consistent conceptual network of the semantics and subsemantics of the Czech dative. In order to observe in detail the semantic development of the Czech dative across more than 600 hundred years, every dative in the corpus would have to be clearly associated not just with a semantic type (DATIVE: A RECEIVER, DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER OR DATIVE: A COMPETITOR), but with a more detailed subgroup. Moreover, in the oldest texts semantics of the Czech dative that are not included in

10 In fact, in this regard I was advised by Karel Kučera, one of the most prominent scholars in the field.
Janda and Clancy’s work were documented, since the authors focused their research mainly on contemporary Czech. It is also the case of some subgroups, such as the so-called “Relational dative”, that are not archaic in new Czech, but, surprisingly, were not registered by the authors. In addition to this, in some cases Janda and Clancy (2006) assigned the semantics of one and the same verb to two different groups, as can be observed with *stát/stávat se* ‘happen’, included among both DATIVE: A RECEIVER and DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER. All these datives had to be accommodated into a specific group and subgroup according to their semantics.

Although the three main semantics proposed by Janda and Clancy were kept (DATIVE: A RECEIVER, DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER OR DATIVE: A COMPETITOR) as the basis of the semantic structure of the Czech dative, their subtypes were reorganised and systematised into 16 subgroups (6 + 7 + 3) according to their conceptual configuration, forming a clear hierarchically structured network of conceptually related subsemantics:

1) DATIVE: A RECEIVER (REC)
   1a) Receiver Prototype (RP)
   1b) Receiver Synonym (RS)
   1c) Receiver Synonym Reflexive (RSR)
   1d) Receiver Antonym (RA)
   1e) Receiver Metonymy (RM)
   1f) Receiver Antonym + Metonymy (RAM)

2) DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER (EXP)
   2a) Experiencer Benefit (EB)
   2b) Experiencer Benefit for the Self (EBS)
   2c) Experiencer Harm (EH)
   2d) Experiencer Harm for the Self (EHS)
   2e) Experiencer Affected (EA)
   2f) Experiencer Possession (EP)
   2g) Experiencer Possession of the Self (EPS)

3) DATIVE: A COMPETITOR (COM)
   3a) Competitor Matched Forces (CMF)
   3b) Competitor Inclination/Submission (CIS)
   3c) Competitor Domination (CDO)

4. Data, Conclusion, and Discussion

As already mentioned, for this study 8,335 Czech datives belonging to four different periods were analysed. Although all the texts were chosen because of their iconic representation of one of the periods into which the history of written Czech was divided, it has to be admitted that they are different in terms of their theme, style, plot,
and length. These matters could have a certain impact on the final semantic
distribution of the datives excerpted from them, as will be shown later. Even so, I
subordinate all these variables to the capacity of the chosen works to represent a given
stage of the written Czech language.

Figure 1 represents the distribution of the 8,335 datives found in the texts.

Figure 1. Distribution of the datives in the corpus.

It is obvious that the amount of data excerpted from the second and third periods is
much higher than for old and new Czech (in this last case 1,224 datives, i.e. the
addition of the two novels by Hrabal and Reiner). However, and after analysing the
data, I would conclude that there is no divergence in the semantic distribution as a
result of the length of the texts. In other words, I consider that any amount over 1,000
datives is representative enough – since the comparative analysis will always be based
on percentages and not on the total number of datives excerpted – to show the
conceptual network of the Czech dative in a given period. Conversely, the number of
datives analysed in middle and new Czech is probably unnecessary high.

Another point of interest about the distribution of the data is the rate of direct
speech in the corpus. There can be no question that the chosen works do not reproduce
the characteristics of the “real” spoken language of the periods they represent. Still,
there are semantics, such as the so-called Ethical Dative, that belong to the spoken
level of the language and could be present in the texts – as indeed sometimes happens
– when the authors endeavour to imitate spoken language by using direct speech. If I
had opted for texts without a significant portion of direct speech, some of the
meanings would not have been found at all in the study.
One of the main goals of this study is to observe the historical evolution of the three main semantic categories. In Figure 2 the data for all four periods is compared regarding its relative percentages.\footnote{If not specified, all numbers in the study refer to the relative percentage of the total number of datives in a given stage.}

![Figure 2. Rates of the three main semantics of the Czech dative in diachrony.](image-url)

After a first look at Figure 2, it is possible to conclude that there are two main historical periods regarding the semantic distribution of the Czech dative. In the first one, from the first texts to the coming of new Czech, the core meaning is DATIVE: A RECEIVER, which presents its highest values for old Czech (40.4%) and middle Czech (62%). On the other hand, in the second stage, during and after the “regeneration” of the Czech language that occurred during the Czech National Revival, DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER seems to be the leader, with 41.1% for new Czech and 47.7% for contemporary Czech. These high levels are to the detriment of DATIVE: A RECEIVER, which drops in these stages to 35.3% and 28.9% respectively, becoming the second semantic in terms of its importance. On the other hand, DATIVE: A COMPETITOR remains the most homogeneous category and stays almost constant through the whole historical development of Czech (always representing about 25% of the total number of datives in all periods). The explanation for this unexpected high value of DATIVE: A COMPETITOR – in the end, even if not explicitly stated by Janda and Clancy, as we are dealing here with the least significant of the three main meanings of the dative – lies in the extremely elevated rate of the Competitor prepositions (77.2% of all the COM). The most frequent prepositions in the texts are k ‘to, toward, for’ and proti ‘against, opposite, toward’. The preposition k alone represents more than half of all the meanings of DATIVE: A COMPETITOR in all the texts. The frequent use of the preposition k is a constant throughout the historical development of Czech, as can be observed in Figure 3.

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & DATIVE: A RECEIVER & DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER & DATIVE: A COMPETITOR \\
\hline
Old Czech & 40.4 & 32.3 & 27.3 \\
Middle Czech & 62 & 14.3 & 23.7 \\
New Czech & 35.3 & 41.1 & 23.6 \\
Contemporary Czech & 28.9 & 47.7 & 23.4 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
Figure 3 shows that the number of dative prepositions documented in the texts – not the frequency of their use, though – rises through the history of the Czech language. Hence, in the *Chronicle of Dalimil* only two dative prepositions are documented – *k* (180x) and *proti* (46x). On the other hand, in the *Bible of Kralice*, together with *k* (440x) and *proti* (80x), a third preposition appears – *naproti* ‘opposite’, although only once in the text. However, *The Grandmother* presents seven dative prepositions – *k* (568x), *proti* (17x), *naproti* (11x), *kvůli* ‘because of, for the sake of’ (4x), *vstříc* ‘meeting, toward’ (4x), *nablízko* ‘next to, close’ (1x), and *navzdory* ‘in spite of’ (1x). Finally, in *Closely Watched Trains* and *The Arrival of the Shy Millionaire* there are nine dative prepositions: *k* (196x), *proti* (15x), *díky* (12x), *kvůli* (11x), *naproti* (3x), *vstříc, navzdory, oproti* (2x), and *vzdor* (1x).

Next, the rate of all the subsemantics will be shown in Figures 4 to 6 in order to look for an explanation of the main tendencies pointed out above.

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**Figure 3. Rates of Czech dative prepositions in diachrony.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsemantic</th>
<th>Old Czech</th>
<th>Middle Czech</th>
<th>New Czech</th>
<th>Contemporary Czech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>k</em> [%]</td>
<td>20,4</td>
<td>17,1</td>
<td>19,3</td>
<td>19,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>proti</em> [%]</td>
<td>16,3</td>
<td>15,3</td>
<td>18,1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others [%]</td>
<td>4,1</td>
<td>2,8</td>
<td>0,5</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others [%]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,04</td>
<td>0,7</td>
<td>2,1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 4. Rates of the subsemantics of the DATIVE: A RECEIVER Czech dative in diachrony.**

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12 *Díky* ‘thanks to’ is the only preposition with a meaning other than DATIVE: A COMPETITOR, since it belongs to the Receiver Metonymy (RM).
A first conclusion regards the verb *dát/dávat* ‘give’, labelled in this study as RP or a “pure” Indirect Object. Its rates are relatively high in the first three stages (4.1%, 6.8%, and 3.4% respectively) and together with some verbs of communication 13 it is one of the most frequent verbs in these three texts. 14 The data shows that its role as “the logical starting point for the meanings of the dative” seems to be in accordance with its importance in the texts. Nevertheless, in contemporary Czech this submeaning loses strength and its mere 0.9% indicates that its position in the conceptual network of the Czech dative has become peripheral and is not central any more.

Next, the question arises of what is the driving force behind the increase in the frequency of DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER in recent centuries – in the end, the most significant diachronic tendency observed in the texts. If we take a closer look at the data (Figure 5), we observe that the numbers of instances of the Possessive Dative (EP and EPS) are much higher in new and contemporary Czech. Nevertheless, there is one submeaning of DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER that has grown exponentially – the dative

13 Mainly říci/říkat, pravít, povědět/povídat, and kázat.
14 This fact contrasts with the data obtained for old periods of another Indo-European language, Old Greek, since Villar, quoting Chantraine, stated that the verb “give” in Homer was practically marginal in terms of its frequency. (cf. Chantraine, P., Grammaire homérique II, 67. Apud Villar 1981:179).
reflexive pronouns *si/sobě* when expressing Benefit for the Self (EBS), from 1.5% and 0.4% in old and middle Czech to 13.4% and 19.1% in new and contemporary Czech. There is no doubt that the increase in the frequency of EBS (together with other reflexive subsemantics – EPS and even RSR) in recent centuries in Czech is related to the appearance in new Czech of the reduced pronominal form *si*. This new form relegates the old “long” one *sobě* to an emphatic function and to use after prepositions. As a result of this, of the 555 dative reflexive pronouns documented in *The Grandmother*, for instance, 539 correspond to the form *si* (97.1%) and only 16 to *sobě* (2.9%), of which just three (0.5%) are emphatic uses. The data gathered for contemporary Czech is even more eloquent, since no examples of the emphatic reflexive pronoun *sobě* were documented at all.\(^{15}\) The rates documented for both reflexive pronouns are shown in Figure 7.

But what exactly do we mean by EBS? Janda and Clancy (2006:82) assert that Czech speakers can add the dative pronoun *si* to a verb in order to transform its meaning to reflect self-indulgence, what they call Benefit for the Self. For instance, “The verb *užit/užívat* *si* ‘enjoy’ is very representative of the use of *si* to express benefit for oneself. By itself, *užit/užívat* means simply ‘use’, but if we use something self-indulgently, then we use it in order to enjoy it. The verb *žít* ‘live’ can acquire the self-indulgent meaning ‘live it up’ simply by adding *si*”. Janda (1993:213) also pays special attention to this subcategory, unknown in other Slavic languages with the exception of some “sporadic and isolated” uses in Slovak and Bulgarian, “whereas in [new] Czech it is systematically applied” and often also expressing “off in one’s own world” or “according to one’s own wishes/beliefs”. She points out not just its increase in new Czech – as was proved here – but also its progressive grammaticalisation.

\(^{15}\) According to Dąbrowska (1997:62ff.), a similar phenomenon exists in Polish, in this case associated exclusively with the reflexive pronoun *sobie*, since in Polish there is no “short” version of the dative reflexive pronoun. Nevertheless, I am not aware of any frequency of use analysis in the Polish system.
Regarding the second submeaning whose use has notably increased (EP), it seems risky to affirm that its rise is caused by an innovative tendency to mark possession through the dative case instead of through other systems such as the genitive. The only fact that we know for sure is that, in line with the increase in the use of the EP in the last two stages of the study, there was an important rise in the use of the expression of EPS, probably related to the emergence of the already-mentioned pronominal form *si*. While in the Chronicle of Dalimil only 2.4% of all Possessive Datives are reflexive and in the Bible of Kralice not even one is found, in The Grandmother this submeaning reaches 14.2% and in contemporary Czech 23.9% of all instances of the Possessive Dative documented in this work.

Although in this case I cannot venture a reason why such a rise in the use of EP in new and contemporary Czech has occurred, it seems improbable to me that this phenomenon responds strictly to contextual, stylistic reasons or to the plot of the works under analysis and, consequently, it has to be admitted that further research is needed.

Hence, after taking a closer look at the subsemantics, and especially at Figure 5, we should reformulate the statement pointing out that the most significant diachronic fact is the decrease in the use in new and contemporary Czech of DATIVE: A RECEIVER caused by the dramatic rise in these two periods of DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER. In our opinion, this rise of EXP does exist but it is a moderate tendency. The really drastic increase is mainly caused by one specific factor – by what Janda calls “The Reflexive Network” (1993:97ff). It can be clearly observed in Figure 8, which shows the data including all the datives (the same numbers as in Figure 2) in contrast with the percentages excluding the reflexive subsemantics (the one expressed by the reflexive pronouns *si* and *sobě*).

![Figure 8](image)

**Figure 8. Rates of the three main semantics of the Czech dative in diachrony with and without the reflexive subsemantics.**

16 See Eckhoff (2011) for a contemporary overview of the “possessive” dative in Old Russian and, in general, the early Slavic systems.
In this non-reflexive dative network, it can also be observed that COM grows, becoming the second most frequent type in contemporary Czech, ahead of REC. This is due mainly to the constant high numbers of instances of the preposition \( k \). Nevertheless, we are no longer dealing with \( k \) expressing primarily “physical” directional movements, as it used to be in the first stages of the Czech language. The preposition \( k \) has many other connotations in contemporary Czech, very often articulating some sort of “abstract” direction or tendency. This fact supports my suspicion that the most significant diachronic trend is that the Czech dative has gradually lost its capacity to express “substantial movements in the real world”\(^{17}\) in order to articulate more abstract concepts. This would explain why RP, RS, and REC have lost their privileged positions in the semantic network of the contemporary Czech dative and have, to a degree, been replaced by EXP and especially by the inner personal sphere of EBS.

One last question needs to be explained, though: why does such a great divergence regarding REC and EXP exist in the data extracted from the translation of the Holy Gospels by Jan Blahoslav in relation to the other texts? In my opinion, the extremely high and low values of REC (62%) and EXP (14.3%) in the *Bible of Kralice* are caused by the style and the plot of the text. The general tendency remains (high REC, low EXP, and constant COM) but there is an important increase in these trends because of the very common narrative structure in the Gospels in which someone (mainly Jesus) tells something to someone (mainly his disciples).\(^{18}\)

In addition to these main conclusions, there is other interesting information regarding the diachronic analysis of the Czech dative. One concerns what Janda (1993:81) calls the “dative expressing the logical subject of an infinitive sentence”, as, for instance, *jemu* in sentence (10). This archaic kind of dative that implies a modal reading is relatively productive in the *Chronicle of Dalimil* (29 datives, representing 2.6% of all the datives documented in the text), but its use soon declines in such a drastic way that in middle Czech it is probably already considered archaic (0%). In new and contemporary Czech, on the other hand, I have documented just one example in *The Grandmother* (0.03%):

(10) Nebo *jemu* (Jan) zemanómu uvěřití, / nebo se čtí z země jítí,
   or him lords to trust / or with proud from land to go [he has to trust the lords or to proudly leave the land]
   (*Chronicle of Dalimil* 103:13)

\(^{17}\) It has to be noted here that many scholars stand up for the localist origin of the dative and that, in the end, the Indirect Object expressed by the verb *give* (Janda’s prototype of the Czech dative) is essentially nothing but a “physical” transfer of an object from one person to other.

\(^{18}\) Another question that may, at least to a certain extent, influence the final results is the fact that here we are handling a translation and not an original text. Furthermore, Jan Blahoslav, the translator of the Gospels of the *Bible of Kralice*, had the purpose of “creating” a new written Czech language – circumscribed by the humanist thought movement of his time – and even wrote a grammar based on his experiences as a translator, edited by Čejka et al. (1991). It is hard to tell to which extent (if any) these facts can cause the documented divergences.
The opposite case is that of the construction with a passive verb form accompanied by the reflexive particle se (11), which is unknown in the oldest stage, but becomes quite common in the subsequent periods. Although in both cases the logical subject is expressed by a dative and the first construction tends to disappear and the last to increase, Figure 9 clearly shows that the one does not pragmatically replace the other.

Figure 9. Rate of Czech constructions in which the logical subject is expressed by a dative in diachrony.

Apart from this, the analysis of the texts points out that the meaning of the dative with reference to alleged beneficiaries and victims (i.e. the ethical and emotional dative) was unknown in the written old and middle Czech language, including direct speech. With regard to new Czech I consider that its relatively high frequency in The grandmother (17 datives, meaning 0.54% of the total) reflects its established use in this period, including in writing, however – and logically – only in direct speech. No such dative has been documented in contemporary Czech. Although a further study would be needed, I would dare to affirm that this kind of dative is nowadays considered too marked for a literary text, even in direct speech.

References


