

The expletive interpretation of Ethical Dative: a syntactic approach¹

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Abstract

Natural languages contain elements that do not contribute to the propositional meaning of a sentence. Among these, certain forms, such as the Ethical Dative (ED), are less studied. The ED serves the specific function of identifying a person who is affected by the event described by a sentence. This is exemplified by the Italian sentence "Tommaso *mi* ha camminato fino al parco da solo" (literally, 'Thomas **ED** has walked to the park alone', meaning 'Tommaso walked to the park alone'). ED does not change the truth-value conditions associated with the sentence in which it occurs, thus being 'expletive' in a sense. In this paper, I will argue that the interpretative nature of these expletive elements depends on their syntactic configuration. More specifically, I will describe key aspects of ED and I will propose a syntactic analysis for it. Specifically, I will argue that this non-core / non-argumental dative is introduced as the head of an Applicative Phrase generated outside the thematic domain of the syntactic tree, in the CP domain. This hypothesis accounts for its expletive nature and various other properties. Additionally, I will reference the Speech Act Phrases theory to explain the preference of the ED for the first and second singular persons.

1. Introduction

Languages display two different types of dative DPs: those that are part of the thematic grid of predicates – i.e., the core/argumental dative DPs – and those that are not – i.e., the non-core/ argumental datives – which do not seem to participate in the sentential semantics, being expletive (Hale and Keyser 2002; Horn 2008). The former might realize the argument of ditransitive constructions, such as with verbs like "give", while the latter are usually freely added to sentences, referring in some way to an entity who takes part in the event described by the sentence. Among the non-core datives, one of the most puzzling kinds is the Ethical Dative (ED), which is a clitic pronoun (Perlmutter 1971, Rivas 1977, Jaeggli 1982) occurring

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in several languages. It is usually considered an instance of dative case and has the specific function to pick out a person who is affected by the event expressed by a sentence (Salvi et al. 2001; Roberge and Troberg 2009), encoding the role of affectee (Berman 1982).

The origin of the term "Ethical Dative" is Latin. It was designated "dative" due to the grammatical case it typically accompanied (Ernout and Thomas 1953: 72). However, the reasoning behind the term "ethical" remains unclear². For example, in a sentence like (1), *mihi* is the Latin realization of the 1st person dative clitic³.

- (1) 'Quid *mihi* Celsus agit?' (Latin; Roberger and Troberg 2009: 255)
 how me.Dat Celsus.Nom act.3SG
 'How does Celsus do? (and this affects me)'

Even though the pragmatic meaning of ED is cross-linguistically similar, i.e., encoding the role of affectee (Berman 1982), its occurrence is different in each language. Let's consider some examples among them⁴:

- (2) a. Tommaso **mi/ti/gli/le/ci/vi** ha vinto il primo premio! (Italian)
 Thomas ED.to me/you/him/her/us/you has won the first prize
 'Thomas won the first prize (and this affects me / you/ him /her/us/you)'
 b. Juanita ya **le** camina (Spanish, Cuervo 2003: 27)
 Juanita already ED.to her walks
 'Juanita can already walk (and this affects her)'
 c. Dan ne'elam **li** pit'om me ha ófek (Hebrew, Berman 1982:36)
 Dan disappeared ED.to me suddenly from the horizon
 'Dan's gone and disappeared all of a sudden (and this affects me)'
 d. Je **te** bois dix pastis en trois minutes. (French, Leclere 1975)
 I ED.to you drink ten pastis in three minutes
 'I can drink ten Pernods in three minutes (and this affects you)'
 e. Ziya:d biʔad'dʕi: **-li/lak** kil waʔt-o ne:yim
 Ziad spend-me.Dat/you.Dat all time-his sleeping
 'Ziad spends all his time sleeping (and this affects me/you)' (Lebanese Arabic; Haddad 2014: 65)

As the examples above show, the occurrence of ED does not affect the propositional meaning of a sentence and, therefore, it can be taken off without changing its meaning, rather, it adds an extra participant whose relevance is beyond the grammatical meaning. In this respect, an expletive item must be considered an element that does not impact the truth-value conditions

² I attempted to trace the use of the term "ethical" back to Latin but was unsuccessful. The choice of this term remains puzzling, as it does not appear in many etymological dictionaries, such as those by Ernout and Thomas (1953) and de Vaan (2008), among others.

³ The particular abbreviations which I will use in this paper are: PL=plural; SG=singular; CL=clitic; ED=ethical Dative; CD=coreferential dative; Ben=Benefactive; Dat=dative case; Nom=nominative case.

⁴ It has been claimed that also varieties of Vernacular American English (cfr. Christian 1991) display some structures resembling the ED, such as "I drank **me** a German beer" (Franco and Huidobro 2008). See the original work for the discussion. See also Horn (2008) for a detailed discussion.

associated with a sentence. In the whole paper I will refer to “expletive” in this sense. This does not mean, in principle, that expletive elements do not exhibit their own features or interact with other syntactic phenomena. In fact, it is well known that syntax includes many expletive items, such as ‘there’ or ‘it’ in English, and these items have their own locality conditions, among many other syntactic features. The difference is that ED is not mandatory from a syntactic point of view and it plays a role in the syntactic structures. ED merely fails to provide a semantic contribution to the propositional layer, instead playing a role beyond grammatical meaning (*à la* Tsiakmakis and Espinal 2022). All in all, ED represents speakers’ subjectivity evaluation on the event described by a sentence highlighting the perspective of the affectee of the situation. These datives, termed ‘non-actantial’ by Delbecque and Lamiroy (1996: 106-107), do not directly contribute to the verb’s valency as well but serve an expressive purpose by establishing a connection between the event and the participants in the conversation, in which it represents an exterior onlooker (see also Leclerc 1975; Berman 1982). For instance, in (2 a) the fact that Thomas won the first prize has a certain relevance for the hearer of the utterance, or any other patient of the event depending on which person ED displays.

Some authors, such as Delbecque and Lamiroy (1996:106-107), state that ED primarily occurs in the first or second person and it is commonly found in informal speech. In (2 c-d-e), ED is realized as a dative clitic of 1st and 2nd singular person indeed, however the case in (a-b) shows that it is also allowed in 3rd person (*gli/le*), at least in Italian and French.

Crucially, Italian ED seems to display some properties that distinguish it from other instances of ED in different languages, such as Italian ED cannot occur in bare intransitives – where the direct object of a transitive construction is missing – contrary to what happens in languages as French (cfr. Boneh and Nash 2012):

- (3) a. Helene lui chante *(sous ses fenetres).
 Helene ED.to him/her sang (beneath his windows)
 ‘Helene sang beneath her/his window (and this affects his/her)’
 b. Maria mi ha finalmente cantato!
 Maria ED.to me has finally sang
 ‘Mary finally sang (and this affects me)’

In this paper, I will focus on ED in Italian, due to its unique features and the lack of extensive studies on the topic. Specifically, I will present several syntactic and semantic features of Italian ED (Section 2.1) to distinguish it from other types of non-argumental datives in the rich Italian dative system, such as Benefactive and Co-referential datives (Section 2.2). I will then demonstrate that ED exhibits distinctive grammatical behavior that warrants its own syntactic analysis, adapting the Applicative Phrase framework (Section 3). More specifically, I will propose a syntactic hypothesis where ED is introduced as a head in the CP domain of the sentence (Section 3.1), from which it can interact with the pragmatic references to the speaker and hearer of the sentence, involving the respective Speech Act Phrases.

2. Description and identification of ED

The first goal of this work is to identify tools to distinguish Ethical Datives from other forms of non-core dative clitics in Italian. It is well known that Italian is a language rich in clitics, many of which are in the dative case (Salvi et al. 2001; Russi 2008). Often, it is challenging to determine which clitics are Ethical Datives and which are instances of other non-core dative clitics, such as Benefactives (Ben) and those co-referential (CD) with the subject⁵:

- (4) a. Tommaso *ti* ha vinto il primo premio! (ED)
 Thomas ED.to you has won the first prize
 'Thomas won the first prize (and this affects you)'
- b. Laura *ti* ha stirato le camicie (Ben)
 Laura Ben.for you has ironed the shirts
 'Laura has ironed the shirts (for you)'
- c. *Ti* sei bevuto una birra (CD)
 CD.you are.2SG drunk a beer
 'You have drunk a beer'

In the previous sentences, the same clitic of the second singular person *ti* ('to you') can occur with three different meanings: Ethical, Benefactive, and Co-referential datives. The question that arises is how we can recognize whether a dative clitic is Ethical or not, given the same morphological shape. To pursue this goal, I will analyze these three types of dative clitics and then compare them to identify a specific tool to select only the Ethical Dative instances (for a similar line of reasoning, see Masini 2012).

2.1 What Ethical Dative is: some core features

Italian ED was already attested in the first novel written in Modern Italian, i.e., *I Promessi Sposi* (Manzoni 1842):

- (5) "Che *ti* fanno i bergamaschi? Spediscono a Venezia
 What ED.to you did the people from Bergamo They.send to Venice
 Lorenzo Torre, un dottore, ma di quelli!"
 Lorenzo Torre a doctor but of those
 'What did the people from Bergamo do? They send Lorenzo Torre, a great doctor, to Venice! (and this affects you)'

The first core feature of ED is that it does **not change the propositional meaning** of a sentence, as it does not belong to the thematic grid of the verb (Franco and Huidobro 2008). This can be easily observed in examples such as (2 a) and (5), where the presence of an ED does not affect the truth-value conditions of the sentence and, as evidence, it can be removed without changing the meaning. Therefore, we must assume that ED does not contribute to the

⁵ There are many types of non-core datives in different languages. Consider, among others, the case of Polish. According to Wierzbicka (1988), Polish has 31 different subtypes of non-core datives. I will not discuss them here, as it is beyond the scope of this paper. For a comprehensive list of functions of dative clitics in Italian, see Russi (2008).

propositional meaning of a sentence, being an instance of an expletive phenomenon⁶ as described above:

- (6) a. Ieri *ti* ho incontrato Gianni in dipartimento
Yesterday ED.to you I.have met John in department
'I met John in department yesterday (and this affects you)'
b. Ieri ho incontrato Gianni in dipartimento
Yesterday I.have met John in department
'I met John in department yesterday'

As sketched above, ED identifies a person who is affected by the event expressed by a sentence. It is noteworthy that while the 3rd sing. person and the 1st and 2nd plural forms are not categorically excluded (2), they appear significantly less frequently. In fact, ED is traditionally restricted to the speaker and the hearer in the 1st (*mi*) and 2nd (*ti*) singular person. Consequently, some scholars do not recognize those forms as acceptable in many languages (Delbecque and Lamiroy 1996; Roberge and Troberg 2009; see Michelioudakis and Kapogianni 2013 for an overview). Some cases in Italian seem to confirm this preference, as witnessed by the following imperative sentences:

- (7) a. Non *mi* ti far bocciare! (Serianni 1988 in Masini 2012: 2)
neg ED.to me Cl.you make fail
'Do not fail (and this affects you)!'
b. *Non *gli/le/ci/vi* ti far bocciare
neg ED.to him/her/us/you Cl.you make fail

Therefore, the second peculiarity of ED is a sort of preference towards the **1st and the 2nd singular person** since they are more frequent than either the 3rd singular person or the plural forms.

Another peculiarity of the ED is **its obligatory clitic nature**. As is well known, clitics can also be expressed by means of a corresponding noun, pronoun, or prepositional phrase (D'Alessandro 2017). This can be seen in both core (8 a-a') and non-core (8 b-b') dative clitics:

- (8) a. Gianni *gli* ha regalato un orologio
John CL.to him has gave a clock
'John gave him a clock'
a'. Gianni ha regalato un orologio *a lui*
John has gave a clock to him
'John gave him a clock'
b. Laura *gli* ha stirato le camicie
Laura CL.to him has ironed the shirts
'Laura has ironed the shirts for him'

⁶ ED can also be interpreted as a marker of mirativity. See Di Caro, Massaro, and Molinari (manuscript).

1 b'. Laura ha stirato le camicie *a lui*
 2 Laura has ironed the shirts to him
 3 ‘Laura has ironed the shirts for him’

5 In (8 b), the presence of “gli” suggests that Laura has ironed the shirts for the benefit of
 6 someone that is not either the hearer or the speaker of the utterance, instantiating a case of a
 7 Benefactive clitic. Benefactives introduce an applicative argument, which is the beneficiary or
 8 maleficiary of the action described by the verb (Folli and Harley 2006; see Section 1.2.).
 9 Typically considered a non-core dative, it is one of the most common uses of a dative clitic in
 10 Italian. Crucially, this strategy is ruled out if the clitic is an ED:

12 (9) a. Tommaso *ti* ha vinto il primo premio!
 13 Thomas ED.to you has won the first prize
 14 ‘Thomas won the first prize (and this affects you)’
 15 b. *Tommaso ha vinto il primo premio *a te!*
 16 Thomas has won the first prize to you

18 The ungrammaticality of (9 b), in which ED ‘*ti*’ is realized by an overt PP, stems from such a
 19 constrain (see Lo Cascio 1970 for the Italian case). It is worthy knowing that Italian just
 20 misses a clitic form for the 3rd plural person dative – which must be realized by the pronoun
 21 “loro” (‘they’) or PP *a loro* (‘to them’) –, and, as expected, ED is not allowed in these cases
 22 (Masini 2012), further showing that ED is strictly dependent to the clitic nature of the
 23 pronoun:

25 (10) *Tommaso ha vinto *loro / a loro* il primo premio!
 26 Thomas has won *they / to them* the first prize

28 The clitic constrain is also attested in other languages belonging to different families, such as,
 29 among many others, Hebrew (Borer and Grodzinsky 1986), French (Kayne 1975), and
 30 Spanish (Cuervo 2003) (see also Strozer 1976:145, Jaeggli 1982; Boneh and Nash 2012;
 31 Michelioudakis and Kapogianni 2013)⁷:

33 (11) a. *ha-yalda xatza lo et ha-kviš* (Hebrew; Cuervo 2003:182)
 34 the girl crossed CL.DAT.M ACC the-street
 35 ‘The girl crossed the street on him’ (when he was babysitting her, for instance)’
 36 a'. **ha-yalda xatza le-Roni et ha-kviš*
 37 he-girl crossed Roni.DAT ACC the-street
 38 ‘The girl crossed the street on Roni’
 39 b. Elle *lui* a démolit sa maison (French; Kayne:1975:169-70)
 40 ‘She demolished his house on him’
 41 b'. *Elle a démolit sa maison *à lui*

⁷ Non-core full á-DPs are acceptable only in non-canonical positions in French, such as those involving movement (i.e., interrogatives, A-bar positions, etc.). However, in their original work, Boneh and Nash focus solely on certain cases of Benefactive datives and not on ED. See the original work for a detailed discussion.

- 1 'she demolished his house on him'
- 2 c. *Me* le dieron un helado al niño (Spanish; Cuervo 2003: 175)
- 3 CL.1.DAT CL.DAT gave an ice-cream the kid.DAT
- 4 'They gave the kid an ice-cream on me'
- 5 c'. **Me* le dieron un helado al niño *a mí*
- 6 'They gave the kid an ice-cream on me'
- 7

8 Thus, the third peculiarity of the ED is its obligatory clitic nature.

9 Another feature of the ED is the **non-obligatory co-reference** between the ED and the
 10 grammatical subject of the sentence. This can be observed in (9), where the subject of the
 11 sentence, *Thomas*, is not co-referential with the second singular person of the ED⁸. Moreover,
 12 ED seems to be forced to not refer to the subject of the sentence, yielding ungrammaticality
 13 when it does (12 a), unless the auxiliary shifts to 'to be' (12 b):

14

- 15 (12) a. **Tu_i* *ti_i* hai camminato fino al parco
- 16 you ED.to you have.you walked to the park
- 17 b. ?*Tu_i* *ti_i* sei/*hai vinto il primo premio!
- 18 you ED.to you are.you/have.you won the first prize
- 19 'You won the first prize (and this affects you)'
- 20

21 The fifth feature is the possible occurrence of the ED in sentences with **ditransitive**
 22 **constructions**. Typically, it is impossible to have both a dative clitic and an indirect object in
 23 Italian ditransitive constructions (13 a) unless they refer to each other (13 b). However, ED
 24 constitutes an exception to this pattern (13 b):

25

- 26 (13) a. **Laura le_i* ha regalato un libro *a Giulio_k* (*a lei_i*)⁹
- 27 Laura CL.her.3rdSG.Dat has gave a book to Giulio to her
- 28 b. *Laura gli_i* ha regalato un libro *a Giulio_i*
- 29 Laura CL.him.3rdSG.Dat has gave a book to Giulio

⁸ However, there are some cases where co-referentiality with the subject appears to be mandatory, as demonstrated in the following sentence:

- i. a. (Le vacanze) Giovanni_i *se_i* / **mi* / **ti* ... le sogna
- (the vacation) John to-himself/myself/yourself CL.them dreams.
- (As for a vacation) John dreams about it. (Burzio 1986: 41)

However, according to Burzio (1986), "it may not seem too implausible to treat these cases as idiosyncratic, essentially like idioms". Moreover, he suggests that they display a sense of benefactive value. Unfortunately, it is not clear how *se* can add a benefactive sense to the sentence above and, therefore, I want to suggest to treat these cases as special cases of ED. As a proof, the clitic cannot be realized as a full DPs, contrary to what happens in benefactive constructions (see below), but in line to what happens with ED:

- ii. * (Le vacanze) Giovanni_i le sogna *a se stesso* (Burzio 1986: 41)
- (the vacation) John CL.them dreams to himself.

⁹ I include here a prepositional phrase "a lei" ('to her') that is coreferential with the Benefactive dative clitic "le" ('to her') to enforce a reading of the clitic distinct from the ED interpretation. For a detailed discussion on Benefactive clitics, see Section 1.2.

1 c. *Ti* ho regalato io le scarpe nuove *a Giulia*!
 2 ED. to you I.have given I the shoes new to Giulia
 3 'It was me who gave new shoes to Giulia (and this affect you)'
 4

5 The sixth characteristic is that ED is restricted in its distribution. It cannot be embedded in
 6 **relative clauses** (14 a) and it cannot undergo any form of **A'-movement** (Michelioudakis and
 7 Kapogianni 2013), such as in wh-fronting questions¹⁰ (14 b). Other types of dative clitics,
 8 such as benefactives, are permitted in these contexts (14 a' - b'):

- 9
 10 (14) a. *Il postino che *ti* ho incontrato ieri è Gianni (*ED)
 11 the mailman that ED.to you I.have met yesterday is Jonh
 12 a'. Le camicie che *mi* hai stirato sono perfette (Ben)
 13 the shirts that Ben.to me you.have ironed they.are perfect
 14 'The shirts you ironed for me are perfect'
 15 b. *A chi hai camminato fino al parco giochi? (*ED)
 16 to whom you.have walked until the ground.park
 17 b'. A chi hai stirato le camicie ieri? (Ben)
 18 to whom you.have ironed the shirts yesterday
 19 'To whom did you iron the shirts yesterday?'

20
 21 Finally, an interesting pattern emerges when we examine the interaction between **passives**
 22 and dative clitics specifically investigating whether they can appear before the verb and
 23 whether the movement of the Theme to the preverbal position is influenced by the dative
 24 clitic itself. On the one hand, when the theme is left *in situ*, ED degraded in passive
 25 constructions (Naudé 1997), whereas both core and benefactive datives are allowed (Rooryck
 26 1988; Folli and Harley 2006; Boneh and Nash 2012)¹¹:

- 27
 28 (15) a. Lucia *mi* ha vinto il primo premio (ED_Active)
 29 Lucia ED.to me has won the first prize
 30 'Lucia won the first prize (and this affects me)'
 31 a'. ^{2/}**Mi* è stato vinto il primo premio da Lucia (ED_Passive)
 32 ED.to me is been won the first prize by Lucia
 33 'The first prize was won by Lucia'
 34 b. Lucia *mi* ha consegnato la posta (core dative_Active)
 35 Lucia CL.to me has delivered the mail
 36 'Lucia delivered the mail to me'
 37 b'. *Mi* è stata consegnata la posta (da Lucia) (core dative_Passive)
 38 CL.to me is been delivered the mail (by Lucia)

¹⁰ Roberge and Troberg (2009: 266) discusses Italian data where wh-movement in ED constructions is allowed. However, my Italian speaker informants do not agree with this judgment, indicating that ED cannot undergo such movements.

¹¹ According to Folli and Harley (2006), the interaction between the movement of the Theme to the subject position in passive constructions and the presence of dative clitics degrades the grammaticality of the sentence in the case of benefactives. As this issue does not impact the argumentation in this paper, refer to the original work for a detailed discussion.

1 ‘The mail was delivered to me by Lucia’
 2 c. Il giardiniere **gli** ha tagliato l’erba (Benefactive_Active)
 3 the gardener CL.to him has cut the.grass
 4 ‘The gardener cut him the grass’
 5 c’. **Gli** è stata tagliata l’erba (dal giardiniere) (Benefactive_Passive_
 6 to.him is been cut the.grass (by.the gardener)
 7 ‘The grass was cut to him (by the gardener)’ (F&H 2004: 126)

8
 9 On the other hand, constructing passive forms moving the Theme across the clitic to the
 10 preverbal subject position results in degradation in benefactive (16 a)¹², whereas it gets better
 11 in ED construction (16 b):

- 12
 13 (16) a. *L’erba **gli** è stata tagliata dal giardiniere (Ben_F&H 2004: 127)
 14 the.grass to.him is been cut (by.the gardener)
 15 b. Il primo premio **mi** è stato vinto da Lucia! (ED)
 16 the first prize ED.to me is been won by Lucia
 17 ‘The first prize was won by Lucia (and this affects me)’
 18

19 To summarize the main features of Italian ED, we can state the following: (i) ED does not
 20 alter the propositional meaning of a sentence as it does not belong to the thematic grid of the
 21 verb; (ii) ED predominantly appears in the 1st and 2nd singular persons, although it also occurs
 22 in the 3rd singular person and plural forms; (iii) ED obligatorily displays the clitic form and
 23 therefore cannot occur in the 3rd plural person form, as Italian lacks a corresponding clitic for
 24 this; (iv) ED is not required to be co-referential with the grammatical subject of the sentence;
 25 (v) ED can appear in sentences with ditransitive constructions; (vi) ED does not undergo A’-
 26 movement, such as wh-fronting questions, and, finally (vii) ED can appear in passive
 27 structures where the theme moves across the dative clitic to a preverbal subject position, but
 28 degrades when the theme remains *in situ*. A comprehensive analysis of ED should consider all
 29 these features and derived them in a unitary way. Section 3 will delve into this analysis.
 30 Before that, further examination is needed to distinguish ED from other non-core dative
 31 clitics, such as benefactive and co-referential datives, which show the same morphological
 32 shapes.

33 34 **2.2 What Ethical Dative is not: a comparison with Benefactive and Co-** 35 **referential Datives**

36
 37 Italian displays a complex system of non-argumentative dative clitics that serve various
 38 functions (Salvi et al. 2001; Russi 2008). Among these, the ED, as discussed above, stands
 39 out. However, ED is often subject to confusion due to its morphological and pragmatic
 40 similarities with other non-argumentative dative clitics, such as benefactive and co-referential
 41 datives. As seen in sporadic examples from previous sections, ED displays an own

¹² The acceptability of the sentence appears to improve when the theme is moved to a focus position. Refer to F&H (2004: 125-27) for the grammatical judgments.

distinctiveness. Here I will systematically discuss them and I will consider some additional data reinforcing the distinction between ED and other non-argumentative datives.

Let us begin with the examples previously examined that distinguish ED from the benefactive. For instance, in sentences (8 b-b') – repeated here as (17) – we observed that just ED must be expressed with a clitic, whereas the benefactive can also occur with a full prepositional phrase introduced by 'a' ('to') or 'per' ('for') (see Masini 2012 for Italian and Boneh and Nash 2012 for French):

- (17) a. *Tommaso ha vinto il primo premio **a te!** (*ED)
 Thomas has won the first prize to you
 b. Laura ha stirato le camicie **a lui** (Ben)
 Laura has ironed the shirts to him
 'Laura has ironed the shirts for him'

I recall that benefactive clitics introduce an applicative argument representing the beneficiary or maleficiary of the action described by the verb (Folli and Harley 2006). A clitic with a Benefactive function can represent all singular and plural persons without any preference for the 1st and 2nd singular persons, unlike ED. This can be explained by the intuitive assumption that the action described by a verb can benefit or damage anyone. Additionally, the benefactive can also be realized using the 3rd plural pronoun "loro" ("to them") which is not possible for ED.

- (18) a. Laura **mi/ti/le/gli/ci/vi** ha stirato **loro** le camicie
 Laura Ben.for me/you/her/him/us/you has ironed Ben.to.them the shirts
 'Laura ironed the shirts for me/you/her/him/us/you/them'
 b. *Tommaso ha vinto **loro / a loro** il primo premio!
 Thomas has won **they / to them** the first prize

Needless to say, the Benefactive is also compatible with left or right dislocation (Cecchetto 1999), whereas ED is not:

- (19) a. Laura **mi/ti/...** ha stirato le camicie **per me / per te**
 Laura Ben.for me/you... has ironed the shirts for me / for you
 'Laura ironed the shirts for me / for you'
 b. *Tommaso **mi** ha vinto il primo premio **per me!**
 Thomas ED.tome has won the first prize to me

Moreover, Benefactive can also appear in relative clauses (20 a') and undergo forms of A'-movement (Michelioudakis and Kapogianni 2013), appearing in wh-fronting (20 b'), unlike ED (20 c) (I repeat here the sentences in (14)):

- (20) a. *Il postino che **ti** ho incontrato ieri è Gianni (*ED)
 the mailman that ED.to you I.have met yesterday is Jonh
 a'. Le camicie che **mi** hai stirato sono perfette (Ben)

- 1 the shirts that Ben.to me you.have ironed they.are perfect
 2 ‘The shirts you ironed for me are perfect’
 3 b. *A chi hai camminato fino al parco giochi? (*ED)
 4 to whom you.have walked until the ground.park
 5 b'. A chi hai stirato le camicie ieri? (Ben)
 6 to whom you.have ironed the shirts yesterday
 7 ‘To whom did you iron the shirts yesterday?’
 8

9 Finally, the Benefactive cannot occur in sentences with ditransitive constructions, even
 10 though we can imagine a situation where someone gives a gift to another person for the
 11 benefit of a third party. However, this is not possible, whereas ED can occur in such
 12 constructions, as discussed in (13))
 13

- 14 (21) a. *Laura *le_i* ha regalato un libro *a Giulio_k* (*a lei*) (Ben)
 15 Laura CL.her.3SG.Dat has gave a book to Giulio to her
 16 b. *Ti_i* ho regalato io le scarpe nuove *a Giulia_k* (ED)
 17 ED. to you I.have given I the shoes new to Giulia
 18 ‘It was me who gave new shoes to Giulia (and this affect you)’
 19

20 These examples should be sufficient to consider ED and Benefactive as two distinct
 21 phenomena – I do not repeat here the differing behaviors in passive structures already
 22 observed in (15) and (16). Let us now consider the differences with other non-argumentative
 23 dative constructions, specifically the co-referential dative.

24 In Co-referential Dative (CD) constructions, the dative clitic refers to the subject of
 25 the sentence (Boneh and Nash 2011). Similar to ED and Benefactives, CDs are a type of non-
 26 core dative. One of their primary characteristics is that they do not change the truth-value
 27 conditions of a proposition ((4 c)) repeated here as (22)) and, in fact, the meaning remains
 28 unchanged (‘expletive’ in the sense assumed in this work):
 29

- 30 (22) *Ti* sei bevuto una birra
 31 Cor.to you are.2SG drunk a beer
 32 ‘You have drunk a beer’
 33

34 Similar to ED, CDs have a restriction on the clitic form, resulting in ungrammaticality when
 35 expressed through a corresponding prepositional phrase:
 36

- 37 (23) *Hai bevuto una birra *a te / a te stesso*¹³
 38 you.have drunk a beer to you / to yourself
 39

40 Unlike ED, CDs must be co-referential with the grammatical subject. This requirement
 41 renders a sentence like (24) ungrammatical, where the CD ‘ti’ (2nd singular person) is not co-

¹³ For the change of the auxiliary from *to be* to *to have* see Burzio (1986).

referential with the 3rd singular person subject. In contrast, ED does not exhibit this restriction, as illustrated by the sentence in (9 a) repeated here as (24 b):

- (24) a. *Luca_i *ti*_k è bevuto una birra
 Luca.3rd.SG Cor.you.2ndSin is drunk a beer
 b. Tommaso *ti* ha vinto il primo premio!
 Thomas ED.to you has won the first prize
 ‘Thomas won the first prize (and this affects you)’

CDs differ from ED in other respects, such as the behavior with ditransitive verbs. While ED is permitted in such contexts (see above), CDs are not (I repeat here the sentence (13 c) as (25 b)) :

- (25) a. *Tu *ti* sei regalato un libro a Laura
 you CD.to you you.are given a book to Laura
 b. *Ti*_i ho regalato io le scarpe nuove *a Giulia*_k
 ED. to you I.have given I the shoes new to Giulia
 ‘It was me who gave new shoes to Giulia (and this affect you)’

Finally, CDs can occur in relative clauses, while ED cannot:

- (26) a. La birra che *ti* sei bevuto era buona
 the beer that CD.to you you.are drunk was good
 ‘The beer that you drank was good’

Based on these contrasts, Co-referential Datives cannot be considered instances of Ethical Datives. All in all, in this section we discussed various data that help to distinguish ED from other types of non-argumentative dative clitics. ED exhibits its own distinct characteristics, as showed above. It is important to note that the comparative focus of this section was primarily on identifying ED, rather than providing a comprehensive description of other dative clitics, which display a complexity only briefly touched upon here. Undoubtedly, ED possesses a unique grammatical identity, distinct from any other clitic. In the next section, I will thus present a comprehensive analysis of ED, with the goal of considering all their features and deriving them in a unified manner.

3. A syntactic proposal for ED: the Applicative Phrases approach

We have seen that ED is a noncore element that can be added to a sentence without affecting its propositional meaning, being an expletive item in the current definition of ‘expletive’ (see chapter 1). Recall that ED introduces a new individual in the sentence, preferably either the speaker or the hearer of the utterance. Previous analyses attempted to explain the licensing conditions of non-core datives in the absence of semantic selection or theta-role assignment. More specifically, it has frequently been proposed that this additional individual is introduced into the syntactic spine by an applicative head, which selects and licenses the non-core dative

(Marantz 1993; Pylkkänen 2002, 2008; Cuervo 2020). For instance, Cuervo (2003)¹⁴ proposes that Spanish dative arguments are always licensed syntactically and semantically by applicative heads. Similarly, Roberge and Troberg (2009) and Boneh and Nash (2010) adopt a comparable approach to French. Consequently, the first hypothesis that I want to pursue is that ED is an instance of an *Applicative Phrase*. Following Pylkkänen (2002), I assume that such an element is indeed a syntactic head (see also McGinnis 2008; Roberts 2010). From this assumption we will consider ED as the Head of an ApplP getting the dative case associated to these heads (McFadden 2004; Pylkkänen 2008; Cuervo 2020).

Crucially, Cuervo also proposes that the variety of meanings that a dative clitic displays relies on (i) what the complement of the applicative head is and (ii) what the applicative phrase is a complement of. We can ask which kind of ApplP the ED corresponds to. In fact, again following Pylkkänen (2002), an ApplP could be either high or low (see Baker 1996 for a similar approach)¹⁵. High ApplPs describe a relationship between an individual and an event; low ApplPs describe a relationship between two individuals, one of which is introduced by the applicative, while the other is the direct object of the verb, such as in ditransitive constructions. A simple way to distinguishing these two types of ApplPs is to observe the relation with stative and unergative constructions. More specifically, Pylkkänen (2002) shows that only high ApplPs are compatible with these two types of constructions: (i) low applicative heads cannot occur if the direct object is absent since they denote the relationship between the direct object and the indirect object of a verb; (ii) low applicative cannot occur with verbs that are completely static since they imply a transfer of possession.¹⁶ High applicative heads do not have these limitations. Crucially, ED seems to depart from such twofold pattern since it cannot occur in stative constructions with both the verbs *to have* and *to be* ((27 a-a') – following the low applicatives – but it can occur in unergative ones (27 b)¹⁷ – following the high applicatives (see Folli and Harley 2006 and Boneh and Nash 2011 for similar considerations)¹⁸:

- (27) a. *Luca *mi/ti/gli/le/ci/vi* ha due macchine
 Luca ED.to me/you/him/her/us/you has two cars
 a'. *Luca *mi/ti/gli/le/ci/vi* è affamato
 Luca ED.to me/you/him/her/us/you is hungry
 b. Tommaso *mi/ti/gli/le/ci* ha dormito tutto il pomeriggio

¹⁴ Many other works follow the Applicative phrase hypothesis, see, among many authors, Roberge and Troberg (2009); Boneh and Nash (2010), etc.

¹⁵ I do not address the numerous proposals in the literature regarding the syntactic and semantic nature of high and low applicatives here. For further discussion, see McGinnis (2008) and Wood (2015), among many others.

¹⁶ I will not explore here the reasons why the compatibility with stative and unergative verbs is a test to distinguishing high and low ApplP. For deepen this topic, see Pylkkänen (2002).

¹⁷ This observation seems contradict what Masini (2012) observes on the distribution of ED in Italian. She affirms that ED is compatible with almost any type of argument structure, but the following data seem to contradict it.

¹⁸ It is indeed a notable observation that some languages have been found to deviate from the traditional high-low applicative phrase paradigm. A prime example of this is the work of Wood (2015), which proposes the concept of high-low applicatives in Icelandic. For a more in-depth examination of this phenomenon, I recommend consulting the original research.

Thomas Ben.for me/you/him/her/us has slept all the afternoon
 ‘Thomas slept all afternoon long for my/you/his/her/our/your benefit’

This departs from what Cuervo (2003) observes in Spanish, where ED is accounted for as high applicative taking dynamic an agentive event (e.g., *caminar* ‘walk’, *bailar* ‘dance’) as its complement being supported in stative constructions as well. Capitalizing on the difference between Spanish and Italian¹⁹, we can observe that ED in Italian is just restricted by the kind of actionality the verb assumes (*statives*, *activities*, *accomplishments*, and *achievements*) (Vendler 1967)²⁰ – being unacceptable just in the stative predicates – and no limitations are found with regard to the temporal reference (the *tense*), or to the different aspectual condition (perfective and imperfective)²¹:

- (28) a. *Luca *mi* è affamato (*stative)
 Luca ED.to me is hungry
 b. Tommaso *mi* ha camminato tutto il pomeriggio (activities)
 Thomas ED.to me has walked all the afternoon
 ‘Thomas slept all the afternoon long (and this affects me)’
 c. Lucia *mi* ha digerito tutto senza problemi (accomplishments)
 Lucia ED.to me has digested all without issues
 ‘Lucia digested everything without issues (and this affects me)’
 d. Lucia *mi* è partita all’alba (achievements)
 Lucia ED.to me is left at.the.dawn
 ‘Lucia left at the dawn (and this affects me)’
 e. Tommaso *mi* ha studiato tutta notte (past tense)
 Thomas ED.to me has studied all night
 ‘Thomas has studied all night long (and this affects me)’
 f. Tommaso *mi* studierà tutta notte (future tense)
 Thomas ED.to me will.study all night
 ‘Thomas will study all night long (and this affects me)’
 g. Tommaso *mi* stava studiando la poesia quando... (imperfective)
 Thomas ED.to me being studying the poem when

¹⁹ Note that Italian and Spanish display other differences in clitic’s domain. For example, it is well known that the 3rd dative singular person precedes the impersonal clitic in Italian whereas it follows it in Spanish (see Pescarini 2011 and the references therein):

- (iii) a. Le si parla. (Italian) (Pescarini 2011: 1)
 CL.to-her CL.one speaks
 ‘One speaks to her’
 b. Se le habla (Spanish)
 CL.one CL.to-him/her speaks
 ‘One speaks to him/her’

²⁰ The different actional values can be obtained by opposing punctual vs. durative events, telic vs. atelic and static vs. dynamic predicates. Stative predicates are those that are [+ durative] [- telic] [+ static]; activities [+ durative] [- telic] [- static], accomplishments [+ durative] [+ telic] [- static], and achievements [- durative] [+ telic] [- static].

²¹ In this part I will follow Bertinetto (1994) and Bertinetto (1999) distinctions, and sub-distinctions, between actionality temporal reference and aspectual condition.

1 ‘Thomas was studying the poem (and this affects me) when....’

2 h. Tommaso *mi* ha studiato la poesia in sole due ore (perfective)

3 Thomas ED.to me has studied the poem in just two hours

4 ‘Thomas has studied the poem in just two hours (and this affects me)’

5
6 Crucially, such a ban forces us to dismiss Boneh and Nash's (2012) analysis of French non-
7 core datives as well, in which non-core datives are treated as secondary subjects to a stative
8 predication. To be honest, their analysis mostly focuses on cases of Benefactive datives and,
9 in fact, cannot be extended to the case of EDs. All in all, it seems that the Italian case displays
10 some unique properties. To the best of my knowledge, the limitation with the stative predicate
11 has not been observed early on in the literature, including Masini's (2012) work, which
12 deeply investigates the distribution of such clitics.

13 We thus cannot totally apply Pylkkänen's distinction between high and low
14 applicatives to ED. Pylkkänen's tests have been thought for ApplPs inside VP; the fact they
15 cannot be applied to sentences with ED may suggest that they are not in such positions. I want
16 here to follow this intuition, and suggest that ED is generated in a higher position, namely in
17 the CP domain, above TP. Boneh and Nash (2011) moved a similar proposal by discussing
18 some French clitics. They suggest that there are two different types of high ApplPs: one that
19 is upon RootP and one that is upon VoiceP, being both outside VP – the domain of high and
20 low ApplP described by Pylkkänen. A similar proposal has been advanced by Michelioudakis
21 and Kapogianni (2013), where ED is merged above v*P/VoiceP. My analysis proposes that
22 ED can be even higher than this, namely outside the thematic domain of the sentence, giving a
23 formal analysis to what Masini (2012) just alludes to when she states that “the Ethical Dative
24 and Conversational Dative assign the trait of involvement (affectedness) to a “higher” level,
25 presumably at the level of the clause, linguistic act, or even conversational exchange.”
26 (Masini 2012; my translation). The next section will be dedicated to the discussion on the
27 advantages of this approach.

28 29 **3.1 Ethical Dative and the CP-domain**

30
31 The assumption that ED is the Head of an ApplP generated in the CP domain of the clause
32 can provide a unitary analysis for the numerous features characterizing ED, that are: (i) ED
33 does not alter the propositional meaning of a sentence as it does not belong to the thematic
34 grid of the verb; (ii) ED predominantly appears in the 1st and 2nd singular persons, although it
35 also occurs in the 3rd singular person and plural forms; (iii) ED obligatorily displays the clitic
36 form and therefore cannot occur in the 3rd plural person form, as Italian lacks a corresponding
37 clitic for this; (iv) ED is not required to be co-referential with the grammatical subject of the
38 sentence; (v) ED can appear in sentences with ditransitive constructions; (vi) ED does not
39 undergo A'-movement, such as in wh-fronting questions, and, finally (vii) ED can appear in
40 passive structures where the theme moves across the dative clitic to a preverbal subject
41 position, but degrades when the theme remains *in situ*. Let us consider them.

42
43 More generally, it has been proposed in literature that non-core datives might be merged
44 outside the thematic domain of the syntactic tree, specifically outside and above the v/V

phrases (Boneh and Nash 2011; Wechsler 2020 and the references therein). From there, the ApplP “cannot introduce a new argument, and its function is restricted to assigning the interpretable feature [affectedness]” (p. 13). I will draw inspiration from this spirit, suggesting that the Italian ED is even higher, being externally merged in the CP domain. Assuming that CP consists of an array of functional heads, as in the cartographic approach (see Rizzi 1997 and subsequent works; Cinque and Rizzi 2010), I propose that ED is merged in a position inside such a complex field, more exactly, in a position between FinP and TP²² (I consider here a simply version of the CP-domain):

(29) [_{CP} ForceP ... (TopP*) ... FocP ... (TopP*) ... FinP **ApplP**...[_{TP} ...]]²³

It is important to note that the theoretical framework one adopts does not affect the core essence of this proposal. For instance, within a minimalist approach, there is no impediment to the presence of a functional head that takes the TP as its complement, which is indeed the case in standard transitive affirmative sentences (Chomsky 2001). Since Ethical Datives are clitics, they inherently function as heads (see Roberts 2010, and the references therein). More interestingly, if ED is directly generated outside the TP, then we can easily explain why it is not an argument of the verb and, consequently, why it doesn’t affect the propositional meaning of the sentence resulting *expletive* in this sense. It should be noted that, assuming the theory of phases as formulated by Chomsky (2001, 2008, 2013), EDs are merged in a different phase than vP. This further explains why they do not affect the thematic core of the verb. Crucially, in this proposal the expletive interpretation of the dative clitic is due to its syntactic position inside the sentential spine.

Another direct consequence is that ED can co-occur with ditransitive verbs. In fact, if a verb cannot select more than two internal arguments and one external argument (Hale and Keyser 1993), ED can exist in a ditransitive construction only if it does not introduce any argument since the verb has already saturated its maximal valency.

Assuming that EDs are Heads of ApplPs (*a la* Roberge and Troberg 2009), we can also explain their clitic behavior (EDs can’t be PPs or overt pronouns) and, at the same time, why they get Dative case (McFadden 2004; see below). In Cuervo’s approach, EDs cannot be represented as full dative PPs (or DPs in her analysis) due to their “defective” nature: they are heads that take an argument without projecting a specifier (hence the unavailability of a full dative DP). In my analysis there is no need to introduce such an ad hoc stipulation, since the ED is alike some other functional heads populating the left periphery of the sentences (cfr. Rizzi 1997). This is similar to what Jaeggli (1982:18) proposes on ED, i.e., it represents a

²² Another possibility is that ED is introduced as the head of a Focus Phrase (FocP) or Topic Phrase (TopP). However, I will not pursue this route, as it fails to explain the origin of the dative case, unlike the Applicative Phrase (ApplP) hypothesis. Moreover, it has been recently proposed by Di Caro, Massaro, and Molinari (submitted) that ED is introduced even higher in the structure, adjoined to the left peripheral head JP. The essence of this hypothesis is closely aligned with the principles underlying the current proposal, as both emphasize the high position of ED. For a more comprehensive analysis, please refer to the original work. Here, I adopt a simplified version of the cartography of the left periphery, focusing on the crucial aspect that the CP is a complex field. See Greco (2020b: chapter 5) for a more detailed discussion.

²³ Here, I adopt a simplified version of the cartography of the left periphery, focusing on the crucial aspect that the CP is a complex field. See Greco (2020b: chapter 5) for a more detailed discussion.

category of clitics that does not originate in object position, challenging Kayne's (1975) movement theory of clitics - where clitics are initially generated in NP position and then moved obligatorily to the verb. Accordingly, ED does not exhibit alternation with any other post-verbal object position, provide compelling evidence that they are generated "by the base in their clitic position" (Jaeggli 1982:18). The non-argumental status of a dative is also highlighted by the impossibility to be doubled by a full DP (Franco and Huidobro 2008, in line with Strozer 1976 and Jaeggli 1986) (I repeat here the sentence (9):

- (30) a. Tommaso *ti* ha vinto il primo premio!
 Thomas ED.to you has won the first prize
 'Thomas won the first prize (and this affects you)'
 b. *Tommaso *ti* ha vinto il primo premio *a te*!
 Thomas ED.to you has won the first prize to you

Moreover, this also takes into account the impossibility to have an ED of the 3rd plural form, since Italian does not display any clitic of such, but only the stressed pronouns "*loro*".

Treating EDs as heads of high(er) ApplP also allows us to consider their inability to occur in stative constructions (see sentences in (28)). More specifically, EDs maintain the core property of high applicatives as discussed by Pytkänen (2002, 2008) – namely, (i) being merged (somewhere) above the VP and (ii) linking an entity to an event by some relation. However, if there is no event to be related to, as in stative constructions, ED cannot appear in such contexts. Assuming that "affectedness" is the semantic relation introduced by ED (see Berman 1982; Kliffer 1993, Shibatani 1994; Masini 2012; Michelioudakis and Kapogianni 2013 among many others)²⁴ between an individual – such as the speaker or the hearer of the utterance – and an event, we can interpret ED as follows:

- (31) ED: Appl_{affectedness} = $\lambda x.\lambda e.$ affectedness (e, x)

This condition can only be applied if there is an eventive verb phrase complement that ED can take. Following a well-established tradition (Ramchand 2008), we can assume that stative predicates do not display such an event and, coherently, "there is no dynamicity/process/change involved in the predication, but simply a description of a state of affairs" (Ramchand 2008: 33). ED cannot therefore select them, as evidenced by copular sentences (Moro 1997; Greco et al. 2020): ED can never occur in either canonical (32 a) or inverse copular sentences (32 b). In contrast, ED does occur with other raising verbs, such as "to become" (32 a'-b'), which display an eventive predicative structure absent in copular constructions.

- (32) a. *Gianni *mi* è il presunto colpevole
 John ED.to me is the alleged culprit
 a'. Gianni *mi* è *diventato* il presunto colpevole
 John ED.to me is become the alleged culprit

²⁴ A detailed semantic analysis of ED is beyond the scope of this paper, which primarily focuses on its syntactic aspects. For a more comprehensive discussion, readers should refer to the extensive literature on ED cited here.

- 1 'John became the alleged culprit'
- 2 b. *Il presunto colpevole **mi** è Gianni
- 3 the alleged culprit ED.to me is John
- 4 b'. Il presunto colpevole **mi** è **diventato** Gianni
- 5 the alleged culprit ED.to me is become John
- 6 'The alleged culprit became John'

7

8 The hypothesis proposed here also accommodates the behavior involving both the missing

9 coreferentiality ED-subjects and the passivization. Let's start with the latter, even though the

10 two phenomena are linked. We saw above that ED appears in passive constructions regardless

11 of the position of the theme, either *in situ* or in preverbal position, with a better result in the

12 latter condition. Crucially, benefactives are ruled out in this condition, whereas the ED is still

13 available (I repeat here the sentence (16):

- 14
- 15 (33) a. *L'erba **gli** è stata tagliata dal giardiniere (Ben_F&H 2004: 127)
- 16 the.grass to.him is been cut by.the gardener
- 17 b. Il primo premio **mi** è stato vinto da Lucia! (ED)
- 18 the first prize ED.to me is been won by Lucia
- 19 'The first prize was won by Lucia (and this affects me)'

20

21 According to Folli and Harley (2006), in benefactive when the theme moves over the dative

22 clitic it causes a locality violation since the dative intervenes between the subject position and

23 the theme. This follows from the fact that dative's base position in benefactives c-commands

24 the theme's base position. According to the current analysis, this does not happen with ED,

25 where there is not such a crossing violation. This is possible only if the clitic in itself is firstly

26 merged above the subject position. More specifically, two distinct pre-verbal landing site

27 positions for Italian subjects have been proposed in literature in order to put together both

28 their structure requirements (ex. EPP) and the discourse properties: one high position linked

29 to specific discourse properties – such as "D-linking" in Pesetsky (1987),

30 "presuppositionality" in Diesing (1992), or referred to as "criterial" in Rizzi's 1997 framework

31 (yet below the CP field) – and one low position associated with agreement ("AgrS" as per

32 Cardinaletti's 2004 definition). Leaving aside the disputes regarding these proposals, if we

33 assume that ED is merged above the subject positions – particularly above the AgrS or

34 whatever head is responsible for the subject agreement – this implies that ED is not

35 constrained to be coreferential with the grammatical subjects. In that configuration, ED is not

36 c-commanded by the subject and, therefore, does not receive agreement from it resulting free

37 from the coreferentiality requirement. Moreover, given the discourse conditions usually

38 associated with the preverbal higher subjects, such as the "quasi-topicality" effect noted by

39 Chomsky (2002), this may account for the preference of ED to be associated with the

40 preverbal subject, in contrast to what happens with the postverbal subject as shown in passive

41 constructions – when the theme is left *in situ* (I reported the data discussed above in 16-17):

- 42
- 43 (34) a. [Il primo premio _i] **mi** è stato vinto [_{t_i}] da Lucia! (pre-verbal subj.)
- 44 the first prize ED.to me is been won by Lucia

1 'The first prize was won by Lucia (and this affects me)'

2 b. ?/***Mi** è stato vinto il primo premio da Lucia (post-verbal subj.)

3 ED.to me is been won the first prize by Lucia

4 'The first prize was won by Lucia'

5
6 This relation with the preverbal subject can be further strengthened by the co-occurrence of ED
7 and topic constructions, such as Clitic Left Dislocation (Cecchetto 1999), where the
8 topicalized element is signaled by the co-reference with a resumptive clitic "lo" immediately
9 after the ED clitic:

10
11 (35) Il primo premio *me lo* hanno dato a Lucia

12 the first prize ED.to me Cl.it they.have given to Lucia

13 'They gave the first prize to Lucia (and this affects me)'

14
15 ED is indeed natural in such contexts, further suggesting its involvement in the discourse
16 properties of the sentence.

17 In a similar vein, the analysis proposed above also predicts that ED does not appear in
18 causative constructions since they exhibit an infinitival complement characterized by an
19 "impoverished functional structure," i.e., lacking the C-I phase (Roussou and Manzini 2024).
20 This impoverishment also affects pronominal clitics, causing their inability to remain in the
21 subordinate clause and forcing them to climb to the matrix causative verb (Guasti 1993;
22 2017):

23
24 (36) a. Ho fatto vincere il primo premio **a Lucia**

25 I.have make.1SG to.win the first prize to Lucia

26 'I make Lucia win the first prize'

27 b. **Le** ho fatto vincere il primo premio

28 Cl.to her I.have make.1SG to.win the first prize

29 'I make her win the first prize'

30
31 Crucially, ED cannot appear in causative constructions at all (37 a), whereas other dative
32 clitics, both argumental (36 b) and non-argumental (benefactive) (37 b), can:

33
34 (37) a. ***Ti** ho fatto vincere il primo premio a Lucia

35 ED.to me I.have make.1SG to.win the first prize to Lucia

36 b. **Le** ho fatto stirare le camicie dalla mamma

37 Ben.to her I.have make.1SG to.iron the shirts by.the mom

38 'I make mam to iron the shirts for her'

39
40 This patter can be easily taken into account if we assume that ED is introduced in the CP
41 domain directly: if the structure is CP-lacking, as in causative (Roussou and Manzini 2024
42 and the references therein), there is no space for ED et all and the rescue to the movement to
43 the matrix clause is not available. On the other hand, this does not affect other cliticizations as
44 in Benefactive or argumental ones.

The hypothesis explored in this paper aligns with the spirit of Joutteau and Rezac (2008)'s proposal for French ED, despite the latter lacks of a formal analysis. Specifically, both studies posit that these constructions originate outside the domains responsible for thematic roles and syntactic movement (Case / A-movement). Pursuing this line, we can see that ED cannot control PRO as Jaeggli (1986: 31) shows for Spanish (a) and Joutteau and Rezac (2008: 104) for French (b):

- (38) a. [PRO*_i/ARB cuidar_{la} tanto] me_i le arruino la vida
 Look.after.her so.much ED.to me 3S.DAT ruined the life
 a mi hija (Spanish)
 to my daughter
 . 'The fact that one (PRO-ARB) took so much care of her ruined my daughter's life.'
 . * 'I taking so much care of her ruined my daughter's life.'
- b. [PRO*ARB/*_i/*_j/*_k/ l trop se protéger] te_j me_j
 too much 3SE protect ED.to you ED.to me Cl.2P
 nous_k lui_i a ruiné le caractère. (French)
 S.DAT has ruined the nature
 'Protecting herself too much ruined her character.'
- c. [PRO*ARB/*_i/k Proteggendola troppo] loro_k me_i l'hanno rovinata,
 pretec.her too much they ED.to me Cl.her.have ruined
 la mia bambina (Italian)
 the my daughter
 'They ruined her protecting her too much, my daughter'

Note that other clitics, either dative or accusative, can control PRO, only ED fails in this respect:

- (39) a. Gli_i ho regalato un libro da PRO_i leggere in estate (core_dat)
 Cl.to him I.have given a book to to.read in summer
 'I gave him a book to read during summertime'
- b. L_i'ho visto PRO_i mangiare la pasta (core_dat)
 Cl.him.I.have seen to.eat the pasta
 'I saw him eating the pasta'

Assuming that ED is outside the thematic domain takes into consideration also this fact.

The high position of ED also predicts the impossibility of undergoing any type of A'-movement (Michelioudakis and Kapogianni 2013), such as in wh-movement, since the high position of ED does not provide any coherent contexts where locality conditions on

movement can be fulfilled (such as selection or similar principles²⁵). Finally, this is also consistent with the enclitic nature of ED in infinitival clauses:

- (40) *Mi è capitato di incontrar-ti Gianni al mercato*
 Cl.to.me is happened to meet-you.ED Gianni in the market
 ‘It has happened to me to meet Gianni in the market (and this affects you).’

If ED serves as the head of an ApplP, it may become a suffix of the infinitive verb through Head-to-Head movement, wherein the non-finite verb moves towards the Fin^o, preceding the ED: [ForceP ... [FinP [incontrar-_i [AppP [ti] ... [TP ti]]].

Crucially, the “high” position of ED should not be viewed as an isolated phenomenon in Italian. In fact, it has been independently proposed for other expletive functional words, such as (i) negation – in both Surprise negative sentences (Greco 2020b; Halm and Huszár 2021) and negative exclamatives (see, among others, Espinal 1997; Zanuttini and Portner 2003; Delfitto and Fiorin 2014; Villalba 2004) – and (ii) coordination structures (Poletto 2005). Specifically, the following Italian surprise negative sentence simultaneously exhibits all these expletive elements (in italics), that are coordination, negation, and ED.

- (41) *E non mi è scesa dal treno Maria?! (Greco 2020a: 776)*
 and NEG CL.to me is got off-the train Mary
 ‘Mary got off the train! (and this surprised me and affects me)’

The meaning of this sentence can be fully paraphrased as ‘That Maria got off the train is a surprise.’ Despite the presence of the negative marker “non” (“not”), the sentence remains affirmative and negation must therefore be considered ‘expletive’ – according to the definition I gave in chapter 1 – since it does not give a contribution to the truth-value conditions associated to the sentence. Moreover, the sentence is introduced by a coordination that lacks a left branch phrase and does not seem to coordinate anything (Poletto 2005),

²⁵ Italian displays several elements proposed to be externally merged in the CP domain, such as “perchè” (Eng. ‘why’). Rizzi (2001) proposes and supports the idea that “why” is externally merged in the specifier of an Interrogative Head (INT^o), which is intrinsically endowed with a Wh-feature and located in the CP-field. Crucially, the interrogative adverb can move to other CPs, as illustrated in the following sentence:

- (iv) *Mi chiedo perché hai detto che Luca è arrivato*
 Cl.to me wonder.1SG why you.have. said that Luca is arrived
 a. ‘I wonder why you have said that Luca has arrived’
 b. ‘I wonder why_i you have said [ti that Luca has arrived]’

In this sentence, “why” can refer to either the matrix verb “say” or the embedded verb “arrive,” via movement to the higher CP. This demonstrates that elements merged in the CP can indeed move, contrary to what I proposed for ED. However, it is important to note that “why” has a different syntactic status, being a maximal projection adjoined to the CP. In contrast, ED cannot move in such a manner and is interpreted only within the clause where it is merged:

- (v) *Ti ho chiesto a Gianni che cosa ha preso*
 ED.to you I.have asked to John that thing has got
 ‘I asked John what he did get (and the fact that I asked John affects you)’

ED can only refer to the matrix clauses, where it appears, and not to the subordinated one.

instantiating another case of expletive item since it fails in its propositional role. In Greco's analysis of surprise negative sentences, negation is externally merged in the CP-domain after the v*P-phase has closed and the entire TP has raised to focalization. This accounts for the sentence's affirmative meaning, as negation loses its ability to reverse the polarity of the proposition (see the original works for a more detailed discussion). Similarly, Poletto (2005) proposes that the expletive coordination can appear in the fronting position as a topic marker occupying a functional projection in the CP field that is parasitic on focalization. Crucially, these elements interact with the presence of ED. Specifically, although ED is optional, it makes surprise negation sentences more natural (Greco 2020a) and seems to enforce the expletive reading of negation in negative exclamatives.

- (42) a. Quanto non ha camminato Gianni! (Exclamative_no ED)
 how.much neg has walked John
 . How much John has not walked! (he refuses to walk for most of the time)
 . How much John has walked! (he walked for most of the time)
- (43) b. Quanto non *mi* ha camminato Gianni! (Exclamative_with ED)
 how.much neg ED.to me has walked John
 . * How much John has not walked! (he refuses to walk for most of the time)
 . How much John has walked! (he walked for most of the time)

The negative exclamative in (42 a) is ambiguous between a standard negation reading, where it reverses the polarity of the sentence, and an expletive negation reading, where it does not reverse the polarity but instead provides a universal evaluation of an event (e.g., John walked a lot). This ambiguity arises because standard and expletive negation in Italian share the same negative morpheme *non* ('not'). Crucially, in the negative exclamative in (42 b), the presence of ED forces the interpretation towards the expletive negation reading, ruling out the standard one. According to Greco (2021), the different readings in negative exclamatives can be traced back to the twofold derivation of negation: when the negative marker "not" is integrated into the TP-domain – as traditionally assumed in the literature (Zanuttini 2001 and references therein) – it results in a standard negation reading; when it is positioned higher, specifically in the CP-domain, it results in an expletive negation reading, as seen in the surprise negation sentence above²⁶. All in all, the activation of the CP field appears to be crucial for deriving

²⁶ One could argue that the occurrence of negation may be problematic for the proposal advanced here, as negation always precedes ED, even when it is standard negation:

- (vi) a. Non mi ha camminato un secondo Gianni
 neg ED.to me has walked a second John
 'John did not walk at all'
- b. *Mi non ha camminato un secondo Gianni
 ED.to me neg has walked a second John

Assuming the derivation of ED proposed above, (b) should be expected to be grammatical. However, we must consider some independent constraints that the negative sentence must follow, such as the clitic-like nature of negation, which requires phonological adjacency to verbs (Zanuttini 1996-1997). Nothing, except elements already adjoined to verbs, can intervene between them and we can assume that this phonological requirement rules out the sequence in (b), but not in (a). Clitics "are word-like in their grammar, but phonologically must lean for support" (Matthews 1991: 217; Roberts 2010) and this explains why they must be adjacent to the verb.

the expletive reading of functional words and the analysis proposed here for ED aligns well with this tendency. Crucially, dative clitics, negation, and coordination seem to fail in their usual semantic contributions, but they do not lose their syntactic nature.

Overall, analyzing ED as a higher Applicative Phrase has the beneficial outcome of accounting for many of the characteristic features of ED discussed earlier. However, one property of ED does not seem to follow from the syntactic representation in (29), such as their preference to be realized by the first and second singular persons (i.e., 'mi' and 'ti'). There is no a priori reason to expect such behavior. In the next section, I will delve into this point.

3.3 Ethical Dative and Speech Act phrases

It is notable that while the third singular person and the first and second plural forms are not categorically excluded, they appear significantly less frequently in ED. Consequently, some scholars do not recognize them as acceptable forms (Delbecque and Lamiroy 1996; Roberge and Troberg 2009; see Michelioudakis and Kapogianni 2013 for an overview) and some cases seem to confirm such a preference, as witnessed by the following sentence (I repeat here the sentence in (7) as (44)):

- (44) a. Non *mi* ti far bocciare! (Serianni 1988 in Masini 2012: 2)
 neg ED.to me Cl.you make fail
 'Do not fail (and this affects you)!'
 b. *Non *gli/le/ci/vi* ti far bocciare
 neg ED.to him/her/us/you Cl.you make fail

This preference can be traced back to some independent principles, among which it can be important to consider the relationship between the speaker and the hearer concerning both attention-seeking and bonding. More specifically, it has been suggested (Speas and Tenny 2003) that certain pragmatic information, such as some markers in languages like West Flemish and Romanian (Haegeman and Hill 2014), are syntactically represented by a functional predicative structure, i.e., a Speech Act Phrase (SAP) (Cinque 1999). SAPs dominate the left periphery of a sentence, instantiating the interface between syntax and conversational pragmatic. This realizes what Kratzer (1999) introduced in her famous paper on the "interpersonal" value of some expressions that indicates the speaker's attitude or commitment towards the utterance's content and/or their relationship with the interlocutor. They can be described as "conversational", presupposing direct contact between the speaker and the interlocutor. Therefore, they would be inappropriate in formal discussions. In their seminal work, Speas and Tenny (2003) propose that a SAP comprises at least three sub-phrases: the speaker, the utterance content, and the hearer. Ethical Datives, in this context, function specifically to highlight a person – either the speaker or the hearer – who is affected by the event described by the sentence. An intuitive explanation for the preference of ED towards the first and second singular persons is to adopt Speas and Tenny's hypothesis. One can assume that the speaker and the hearer of an utterance are operators capable of binding a variable realized in the [Head, ApplP] position, which corresponds to our Ethical Dative. If the Speaker binds this variable, the ED will exhibit first-person agreement; if the Hearer binds

the variable, the ED will exhibit second-person agreement (see the original work for the binding mechanism underling SAPs) .

(45) [_{SAP} Speaker_i Hearer_j [CP ... *mi*_i / *ti*_j [TP ...]]]

This syntactic explanation could elucidate why ED exhibits a restriction favoring these two persons. For what concerns the 3rd singular person, it can be proposed (Michelioudakis and Kapogianni 2013) that some logophoric operators are present, which ensure the correct interpretation of third-person pronouns as reported speakers or hearers in indirect speech (see the original works for a more detailed description of these operator–variable relationships).

Notably, in the analysis proposed here, ED is introduced by the ApplP rather than by SAP, which differs from the proposals of other scholars (see, among others, Delbecque and Lamiroy 1996). This approach has the advantage of accounting for all the syntactic and semantic phenomena caused by ED, which might otherwise be difficult to consider only from an SAP point of view. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the reference to SAPs is just one hypothesis that can explain the preference for first and second singular persons (see, for example, Ross 1970 for a critique of this idea) and the pragmatic interpretation of ED. This further specify the role that ED plays beyond the grammatical meaning. However, regardless of the theory one assumes, it is incontrovertible that there are crosslinguistic differences between first and second person versus third person (Bloomfield 1938; Halle 1997). As Speas and Tenny (2003) state, “only the participants in the speech act – the speaker and the addressee, represented by first and second person – have true grammatical person” (p. 330).

4. Conclusion

Natural languages contain elements that do not contribute to the propositional meaning of a sentence. In this paper, I referred to these elements as "expletives." Among these, certain forms, such as the Ethical Dative, are less studied. The ED serves the specific function of identifying a person who is affected by the event described by the sentence. This is exemplified by the Italian sentence "Tommaso *mi* ha camminato fino al parco da solo" (literally, 'Thomas *ED* has walked to the park alone', meaning 'Tommaso walked to the park alone'). In this paper, I described key aspects of the Italian ED, distinguishing them from other non-core dative such as Benefactive and co-referential datives, and I proposed a syntactic analysis for it. Specifically, I showed that (i) ED does not alter the propositional meaning of a sentence as it does not belong to the thematic grid of the verb; (ii) ED predominantly appears in the 1st and 2nd singular persons, although it also occurs in the 3rd singular person and plural forms; (iii) ED obligatorily displays the clitic form and therefore cannot occur in the 3rd plural person form, as Italian lacks a corresponding clitic for this; (iv) ED is not required to be co-referential with the grammatical subject of the sentence; (v) ED can appear in sentences with ditransitive constructions; (vi) ED does not undergo A'-movement, such as in wh-fronting questions; (vii) ED can appear in passive structures where the theme moves across the dative clitic to a preverbal subject position, but degrades when the theme remains *in situ*; (viii) ED in Italian is restricted by the kind of actionality the verb assumes, being unacceptable in stative predicates; (ix) ED does not control PRO; (x) ED

1 naturally occurs in sentences with expletive functional words, such as negation and
2 coordination and, finally, (xi) ED cannot appear in causative clauses, neither in the matrix
3 clause.

4 To derive all these features in a unified manner, my analysis relied on the well-known
5 Applicative Phrase framework, proposing the following schema:

6
7 (46)
8 [_{CP} ForceP ... (TopP*) ... FocP ... (TopP*) ... FinP **ApplP**...[_{TP} ...]]
9

10 I argued that a non-core/non-argumental dative can be introduced as the head of an
11 Applicative Phrase generated outside and above the thematic domain of the syntactic tree,
12 specifically in the CP domain. This positioning accounts for its expletive nature and various
13 other properties. Additionally, I referenced the Speech Act Phrases theory to explain the
14 preference of the ED for the first and second singular persons as well as their pragmatic
15 contribution.

16 From this perspective, I further confirm that expletive elements – i.e. those that do not
17 contribute to the propositional meaning of a sentence – do not exist in the conventional sense,
18 as their interpretative nature depends on their syntactic configuration, consistent with previous
19 proposals for negation and coordination in Italian. A broader definition of 'expletiveness'
20 should be then considered, i.e. the one where an element does not impact the truth-value
21 conditions associated with a sentence. This does not mean, in principle, that expletive
22 elements do not exhibit their own features or interact with other syntactic phenomena. ED just
23 plays a semantic role in a different domain, beyond grammatical meaning. All in all, ED
24 represents speakers' subjectivity evaluation on the event described by a sentence highlighting
25 the perspective of the affectee of the situation.
26

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