Double object construction with an “inanimate dative”

—In comparison to the construction with an “animate dative”—

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1. Object and purpose of the analysis

The object of the analysis in this dissertation is German double object construction with an “inanimate dative”.

“Double object construction” means a sentence in which both dative and accusative object appear as example (1). In this case, I identify the dative like seiner Freundin shown in (1) as ”animate dative” and those like der Suppe, der Gefahr in (2) as “inanimate dative”.

(1)  Er schenkt seiner Freundin einen Ring.
     he gives his girlfriend(dat.) a ring(acc.)

(2)  a. Sie fügte der Suppe etwas Salz bei.
     she added the soup(dat.) a little salt(acc.) by(particle)

          b. Er setzte seinen Freund der Gefahr aus.
                  he set his friend(acc.) the danger(dat.) out(particle)

Many studies have been made on German double object construction, however, the object of the investigation are mostly the sentences whose dative referent is a person or an animal. Previous researches have pointed out that the animacy of the dative referent relates to the features on the double object construction, but there have been only few studies on the inanimate datives, as (2) shows. In many cases, the sentences with inanimate dative are treated only exceptionally or there is even no consideration for classification of animate and inanimate datives.

Therefore, I will try to clarify the overview for the inanimate dative in double object construction with
this study, describing its morphological, informational and syntactic preferred features with accuracy, in order to contribute to the investigation of German double object construction.

2. Investigation Method

In this section, I will explain how to go over the investigation of German double object construction with an “inanimate dative”.

First of all, I will make a demonstrative investigation through a comprehensive analysis, not giving much priority to a theoretical analysis based on the typical verbs. That is, I will not pay much attention to make an effort to identify the invisible abstract structures theoretically - e.g. the structure of a structural dative case or an inherent dative case – from few typical verb-examples. The analysis will be done demonstratively based on the samples of the verbs that apply to the structure. These samples, including not only typical ones but also peripheral ones, are collected as exhaustively as possible.

Secondary, I will analyze the sample data being used in a real situation from Corpus. In the previous dative studies, it was a common method to collect exemplary samples and extract the regulation of the system from them inductively. Especially “inanimate dative” is not a major usage of the dative and therefore it seems to have been difficult to collect the samples. Nowadays, the progress of the Information Technology made possible to collect much data easily with “E-corpus”. Then I will collect and analyze the samples being used in real usages regarding the double object construction with an inanimate dative in this study.

Third, in terms of the characteristic of the double object construction with an inanimate dative, its frequency will be investigated and analyzed. In this study, I will show the tendency about pronounhood, definiteness, word order in the middle field of dative and accusative for the each verb.

Though it is an important task for a linguistic study to extract the regulation of the system behind a language phenomenon, we also should not forget another important task to understand the actual situations in which the language is being used. At this point, the investigation - how often a language form is used - is necessary.

3. Contents of this dissertation and summary of the chapters

This dissertation consists of five chapters including introduction.

Chapter 2:

Overview of the previous studies regarding double object construction / confirmation of the following points;

Dative in a double object construction is typically animate, but can be also inanimate in many cases. “Animate dative” object gives a tendency to be definite, realized with a pronoun, while no characteristic clarified in terms of “inanimate dative” yet. For “animate dative”, “dative – accusative” order is being considered as “unmarked”, no previous effective studies known in terms of “inanimate dative” yet. For
dative in a double object construction, there appear to be "structural" and "inherent" cases that show different behaviors in some syntactic situations.

Chapter 3:
Investigation for the frequency of "double object construction with an inanimate dative" usage:
In this chapter, the frequency for the usage of the double object construction with an inanimate dative will be investigated with the materials being used, so that we can prove that it has been used with definite frequency as a regular usage.

Chapter 4:
Result of "double object construction with an inanimate dative" analysis adopted from corpus:
Here I show the tendency of the dative-NP and accusative-NP in respects of the of 1) pronounhood, 2) definiteness, 3) word order in the middle field of dative and accusative and 4) syntactic phenomenon that distinguish the structural dative and the inherent dative.
I examined the features in the sentences with each verb in detail, and then the data between the verbs are compared. As a result, I found that the verbs with similar tendency have the same semantic structure. I classified the verbs into four types:
The first semantic type is "Addition" (abgewinnen, anfügen, beifügen, beimengen, beimessen, beitmischen), as (3) shows. Dative object are dominantly definite, accusative object indefinite, realized with a noun. With these verbs, "dative – accusative" order is being regarded as unmarked.

(3) Sie fügte. der Suppe etwas Salz bei.

she added the soup(dat.) a little salt(acc.) by (particle)

Second, (4) shows the semantic type, "Comparison" (gegenüberstellen, voranstellen, entgegengesetzt).

(4) Er hat der Autorität eine andere gegenübergestellt.
he has the authority(dat.) another one(acc.) confronted

Dative object are usually definite, accusative object appear as definite or indefinite, they both realized almost with a noun. Here, "dative – accusative" order is being regarded as "unmarked".

Third, I call the semantic type as (5) "Affiliation" (anghedern, zuordnen, zuschreiben). Dative and accusative object gives a tendency to be definite, realized with a noun, "accusative – dative" order is being considered as unmarked.
Lastly, there is the semantic type "Control" (ausliefern, aussetzen, entringen, überlassen, unterwerfen, unterziehen, verschließen, verschreiben). Dative and accusative object gives a tendency to be definite, realized not with a "personal" pronoun, but accusative objects with some verbs are often a reflexive pronoun. In this case, "accusative – dative" order is accounted as unmarked.

(6) Er setzt seinen Freund der Gefahr aus.
he set his friend (acc.) the danger (dat.) out (particle)

Chapter 5:

Characteristic of the investigation method in this study / next themes in order to clarify the entire model of the double object construction in German.