Pronouns and intersubjectivity in Lebanese Arabic gossip

Youssef A. Haddad *

*Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures, University of Florida, 357 Pugh, PO Box 115565,
Gainesville, FL 32611-5565, USA*

Abstract

Lebanese Arabic allows the use of optional 1st and 2nd person dative pronouns. These are pronouns embedded in sentences without being linked to any participant roles. Their task is to express a positive or negative attitude toward the events depicted in utterances. In this paper, I present examples of such pronouns as used in gossip constructions. I show that these pronouns allow the speaker to communicate changes of footing or participation roles as animator, author, and/or principal during a speech event. I also analyze them within Cognitive Grammar, suggesting that they allow the speaker to move the speech participants from the offstage region where they function as conceptualizers to the onstage region where they are conceptualized as attitude holders. By so doing, the speaker explicitly anchors the event of gossip construction to the attitudes of the speech participants. In this sense, the pronouns become cultural tools of social influence.
© 2013 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Dative pronouns; Gossip; Footing; Cognitive Grammar; Lebanese Arabic

1. Introduction

It is generally agreed that language and culture are interrelated. Studying one without the other is possible; however, studying them as dimensions of each other is more enriching. Sherzer (1987:296–307) holds that ''in order to study culture we must study the actual forms of discourse produced and performed by societies and individuals.'' He defines discourse as contextualized text, whereby context is ''the social and cultural backdrop'' of language users. Sherzer places special emphasis on optional grammatical categories as cultural tools. These categories ''provide speakers with conscious and unconscious decisions, choices, [and] ways of expressing meaning''; he adds that the only way to uncover the full meaning of these categories is through studying them in discourse.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the use and function of an optional grammatical category, namely, optional 1st and 2nd person dative pronouns, in Lebanese Arabic (LA) as employed in gossip. More specifically, the purpose is to examine how 1st and 2nd person dative pronouns are incorporated into gossip events, not merely as referential markers, but more importantly as tools of social influence in order to enhance the broad function of gossip as a vehicle for and enforcer of social norms.

For the purpose of this paper, I define gossip as a speech event in which two or more individuals – normally a gossip initiator, or a speaker, and one or more interlocutors or hearers – talk about a narrative or gossip event that involves a third party and evaluate it against the cultural norms of their community as either positive or negative. When a speaker shares a gossip event with a hearer, he also communicates his attitude toward the gossip event as socially acceptable or

---

* Tel.: +1 352 273 2958.

E-mail addresses: yah@ufl.edu, yhaddad100@gmail.com.

unacceptable. By so doing, the speaker tries, consciously or unconsciously, to exert social influence on the hearer, inviting her to embrace the shared attitude.[1]

Social influence – also known as normative influence – involves "conformity with the positive expectations of 'another,' who could be 'another person, a group, or one's self'" (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955:629 in Wood, 2000:540). It usually takes place in social interactions in which the position of the participants (speaker and hearer) and the pressure they exercise on each other, rather than the validity of the exchanged information, plays a central role (Wood, 2000:540). Conformity normally involves "movement from one's own position to a contradictory position"; we normally "conform to others when perceived or real pressure from them causes us to act differently from how we would act if alone" (Gilbert et al., 1998:162).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents LA constructions with optional dative pronouns in general and introduces the specific gossip constructions (GCs) that will be examined in the rest of the paper. Section 3 provides an overview about gossip and its social functions. Section 4 presents more gossip data. In order to understand how 1st and 2nd person pronouns may be used as tools of social influence, it is important to understand the roles of speaker and hearer in a speech event about gossip. This is why section 4 also provides a discourse analysis of the gossip data and places them within Goffman's footing of talk, focusing on the participation roles of speaker and hearer as animators, authors, and/or principles. Section 5 analyzes GCs within the framework of Cognitive Grammar. It presents GCs as abstracted schemas, focusing on the symbolic nature of 1st and 2nd dative pronouns and on the functions they serve as tools of social influence. Section 6 is a conclusion.

2. Dative pronouns in Lebanese Arabic: an overview

Under normal circumstances, sentences contain predicates and their participants. For example, sentence (1a) below depicts a buying event and relates it to three participants: a buyer, *John*, a purchased item, *a bike*, and a recipient, *his son*. Languages, however, may license structures that contain, in addition to the participants, a non-participant; that is, a nominal entity that is not selected by the predicate and that does not participate in the event. Consider sentence (1b) from Southern American English, for example. This sentence is minimally different from (1a) in that it contains a non-participant in the form of a non-reflexive pronoun (*him* rather than *himself*). Sentences (1c–e) are similar examples from Webelhuth and Dannenberg (2006:34–36 (6a–b, 16b)). The boldface pronouns in these sentences are non-participants in the sense that their deletion does not alter the reality or truth condition of the depicted events; for example, if *him* in (1b) is deleted, the buying event will not be affected. However, the pronouns make a pragmatic contribution; they indicate that "the speaker assumes that the action expressed has or would have a positive effect on the subject" (Horn, 2008:181). See also (Maldonado, 2002:41) for the same observation about similar datives in Spanish.

(1) a. John bought a bike for his son.
     b. John bought **him** a bike for his son.
     c. She_i bought **her**_i a house.
     d. They_i cut **them**_i some logs.
     e. Cindy sent **her** a letter to Sue yesterday.

Note that any change in the events or selected participants may cause different reactions. For example, imagine a possible world in which John in (1b) had to buy a bike for his neighbor instead, probably because he had broken his neighbor's bike by accident. Imagine also that the speaker knew about the event and knew that John was not happy about it. In this case, the speaker would not use the non-participant *him*. This observation is in line with Horn's who holds that sometimes a construction with a non-participant pronoun may seem to depict an event that has a negative effect on the subject; closer examination, however, shows that it is "often more positive than it may initially appear." Horn provides this example from the 2007 Toby Keith song lyric: *I'm gonna get my drink on/I'm gonna hear me a sad song*; he adds that in this case "the sad song is not encountered accidently but deliberately sought out" (2008:180).

This paper is mainly concerned with structures that contain non-participants in the form of dative pronouns whose deletion does not alter the truth condition of the sentence. Let us call these structures unselected participant constructions; see (Haddad, 2011) for a syntactic analysis of structures like (1b), and (Bosse et al., 2012) for a recent analysis of a category of unselected participant constructions that they call affected experiencer constructions in German, Albanian, Japanese, and Hebrew. The focus is on such constructions in LA.

---

[1] Throughout this paper I will refer to the speaker as 'he' and to the hearer as 'she'. The choice of pronouns and their referents is only for convenience. Otherwise, the paper will be full of instances of 'she or he' and 'herself or himself'. The choice is not a statement about who initiates gossip more or less in the Lebanese society or any society. If it is a statement at all, it is a departure from the stereotype that women gossip or initiate gossip more often than men do.

LA licenses several types of unselected participant constructions. Sentences (2) through (5) are examples from Syrian Arabic, a related dialect of the Levant, by Al-Zahre and Boneh (2010:1–3 (1, 5a–c)). These are identical – except for minor pronunciation differences – to their LA counterparts. Sentence (2) is a coreferential dative construction, structurally similar to (1b) in that the unselected participant is coreferential with the subject. In terms of meaning and function, however, the effect of the dative pronoun in (2) is the opposite of the effect of the unselected participant in (1b); whereas the pronoun in (1b) emphasizes the significance of the event, the pronoun in (2) indicates that the achievement depicted by the predicate is unimportant.

(2)   Coreferential Dative Construction
       Salma raʔset-**l-a**   šway
       Salma danced-**DAT-her** a little
       'Salma just danced a little; it's a minor issue.'

The unselected participant construction in (3) is a possessive dative construction in which the dative pronoun refers to the possessor of the glasses. Sentence (4) is an affected dative construction; it contains an unselected pronominal participant coreferential with an internal argument that is affected by the event. Sentence (5) is an interested hearer construction; the pronoun refers to the hearer.[2]

(3)   Possessive Dative Construction
       Sa:mi kasar-**l-o**   l-nadˤdˤa:ra:t la-ʕali
       Sami broke-**DAT-him** the-glasses   for-Ali
       'Sami broke Ali's glasses on him.'

(4)   Ethical or Affected Dative Construction
       ʕali ʕamyitfalsaf-**l-a**   la-Salma
       Ali   is philosophizing-**DAT-her** for-Salma
       'Ali is philosophizing on Salma; this aggravates Salma in a certain way.'

(5)   Interested Hearer dative
       ʃifti-**ll-ik**   ʃaʔfit ʃab
       I.saw-**DAT-you.S.F** piece guy
       'I saw one of these guys!'

The focus in this paper is on Lebanese Arabic unselected participant constructions that are similar but not identical to (5). These are structures that contain 1st or 2nd person dative pronouns as non-participants, and they may be employed in gossip as tools of social influence. I will refer to this subcategory of unselected participant constructions as Gossip Constructions or GCs; (6) and (7) are actual examples that I was involved in as a hearer with two different speakers:

(6)   Context: The speaker and I were at the pool in the apartment complex where the speaker and her family lived. We were talking about the phenomenon of stay-at-home husbands/fathers and working wives/mothers. The speaker said that she knew a few families who fitted the description. She pointed at a man lying in the sun on the other side of the pool and said:
       ʃu:f ha-l-ʕatˤi:le   masalan.   kil yo:m   byinzal   3a-l-pool
       see this-the-loser for.example. every day go.down to-the-pool
       w-byinʔaʕ-**li**   ħa:l-o bi-l-ʃams ʃi   tlet   se:ʕa:t,
       and-soak-**me.DAT** self-his in-the-sun some three hours,
       te:rik-**li**   mart-o tiʃtiɣil w-ttˤaʕmi-i.
       leaving-**me.DAT** wife-his work   and-feed-him
       eh ru:ħ ʕmil-lak   ʃaɣle tinfaʕ-ak
       EH go   find-you.DAT job   benefit-you
       'Take this loser for example. He comes to the pool every day and stays for about three hours, while his wife works and provides for him. *Addressing the man as if he can hear her:* Why don't you do something useful!'

---

(7) Context: Recent events in Lebanon involved civilians protesting against government corruption and shutting down main streets and highways by burning car tires. At first, the behavior was 'justified', but then people started protesting and burning tires for just about any reason. The speaker and I were watching the news about a man who burned tires and shut down the street where he lived because construction workers nearby, along with their machinery, were making lots of noise. The speaker said:

xid-**lak**   ha-l-ħa:le.   sˤa:r   kilma: wa:ħad
take-**you.DAT** this-the-sitation. happen whenever someone
txe:naʔ huwwe w-mart-o   byinzal byiħriʔ-**lak**
fought he   and-wife-his go.down burn-**you.DAT**
dulebe:n w-byiʔtaʕ   l-tˤari:ʔ. xayy-i   balad
two.tires and-shut.down the-road. brother-my country
matˤʕu:b ʕle-e. ʃi ʔali:l   l-ʕa:lam   ʕam-tihʃol.
hopeless.   no.wonder the-people are-fleeing.
'Look at this situation. Whenever someone has a fight with his wife, he burns a few tires and shuts down a street. There is no hope for this country. No wonder people are emigrating.'

What is special about GCs? And how do they contrast with the unselected participant constructions in (2) through (5)?

GCs contain datives that are part of the speech event but are not linked to the narrative or gossip event in any thematic way. In this sense, they are different from coreferential, possessive, or ethical dative constructions as exemplified in (2), (3), and (4) respectively. The dative in each of these constructions is linked to a participant in the narrative event; e.g., the subject.

Here it is worth noting that in some languages similar 1st and 2nd person datives are sympathetically, though not referentially, linked to a narrative event participant (e.g., the object). Spanish sympathetic datives are a case in point; for example, in (8) the dative clitic *me* depicts the speaker as a speech participant that shares the affectedness experienced by Valeria; however, the speaker himself is not a participant in the narrative event (Maldonado, 2002:39; e.g. (116)).

(8) Adrián **me** le arruinó la   fiesta a Valeria
     Adrian **me** her ruined the party for Valeria
     'Adrian ruined Valeria's party for me.'

The datives in the GCs in (6) and (7) are only spuriously similar to the sympathetic dative in (8). Both types of datives refer to the speaker or hearer as an evaluator of the narrative event. However, unlike Spanish sympathetic datives, which have to be ''in a (abstract) possessive relationship with some participant in the event'' (Maldonado, 2002:40), LA GC datives do not have to be linked to any participant in the gossip event. That is, they are evaluative of the whole event without necessarily being sympathetic to any participant within!

Note also that subject-oriented or coreferential dative constructions like (2) above may be used in gossip. Although the dative in (2) does not refer to the speaker or hearer, the dative is still used by the speaker as an evaluative tool. In this respect, it is similar to GC datives. However, coreferential datives are different in a central way, which is why I exclude them here and defer their analysis for future work. Coreferential datives like the one in (2) express the attitude of the speaker toward an event as minor, insignificant, or otherwise by considering the characteristics, capabilities, etc. of the subject of that event. For example, the event in (2) is considered insignificant because Salma, rather than someone else, is the agent. Speaker/hearer-oriented datives of GCs, however, express the attitude of the speaker toward the gossip event by evaluating it against the cultural backdrop of the community. In other words, the speaker believes that the events in (6) and (7) are unacceptable regardless of who did them. This latter, more general cultural aspect is the main focus here.

Finally, GCs are similar to interested hearer dative constructions like (5) above in that the dative in both types may refer to the hearer. However, only GCs *have to* involve speech participants that are not coreferential with the gossip participants. In other words, interested hearer dative constructions may be used in gossip about oneself; for example, the speaker in (5) is both a speech event participant and a gossip or narrative event participant. In this case, the dative may be used by the speaker to serve a personal interest, namely, to make the hearer accept the speaker's evaluation of the narrative event as positive, not necessarily because cultural norms dictate that it should be evaluated as such, but rather because the speaker himself was involved in it and is thus affected by it. My focus, on the other hand, is on constructions in which speech participants are (self-appointed) cultural representatives or police. They use the narrative or gossip events, consciously or unconsciously, to enforce or negotiate cultural norms. The next section tries to make this point clearer.

3. Gossip and cultural norms

As a child growing up in Beirut,[3] Lebanon in the late 70s early 80s, I frequently heard my mother inviting or being invited over by one or more of the neighbors in the building where we lived to have a cup of coffee and, I quote, 'talk about people'. The Lebanese Arabic expression is: *tˤlaʕ-i/nzal-i niʃrab ʔahwe: w-niħke: ʕa-l-ne:s*. That was a time when most married women were housewives, so coffee breaks – which were usually around 9:00 a.m. and/or 4:00 p.m. – would normally take place around other activities, such as cooking or doing laundry.

With regard to men, the 70s and 80s were a time of small businesses, which were usually small stores on the ground floor of five-to-seven-story residential buildings. My father was a tailor; he had a small store on the same street where we lived. Also on that same street were a butchery, a small bakery, a car repair store, a grocery store, etc. Owners of different stores would also have coffee breaks in front of one of the stores, and they too would talk about people. Of course, part of the men's conversation was about their wives and how they had nothing better to do than to drink coffee and talk about people!

The aforementioned gatherings are what Bergmann (1993:71) calls ''Coffee-klatch,'' where *klatsch* is a German word that means gossip (Wert and Salovey, 2004:129–130). Gossip has always been an important part of Lebanese society. As a matter of fact, it is an important part of any society, or as Dunbar (2004:100) puts it, ''without gossip, there would be no society.'' And while defamation may be one of the purposes of gossip, it is certainly not the sole purpose; sometimes, it is not even the reason why people get involved in gossip at all. Social bonding is one of the main purposes of gossip (see, for example, Boxer and Cortés-Conde, 1997; Dunbar, 2004). Another important purpose of gossip is ''providing information and thus promoting cultural learning,'' as Baumeister et al. (2004:112–113) put it.

How does gossip promote cultural learning? Riley (2007) defines culture as ''established, categorized, and circulated'' knowledge in society. This knowledge varies from one individual to another in the same society. The amount of knowledge individuals acquire, and thus their personal cultures, is contingent on their participation in society and on ''the interactional opportunities available to them'' (39).

Riley (2007:40–41) goes on to define cultural knowledge as comprising three broad categories: ''*know-of, know-that, know-how.*'' The know-of category deals with current events: *Who got married to whom – Who died – Who started a new business – Which team won the super bowl*. The know-that category, on the other hand, is the ''*relatively permanent background knowledge*''; it includes things as the following: *Seafood is good for you – Love thy neighbor – This symbol* 🚹 *on a restroom means it is for ladies*. Finally, the know-how category is ''pragmatic or procedural knowledge''; it is made of the individuals' ''skills, capacities and competencies, their effective mastery of . . . how to do and say things in the ways things are said and done''; some examples are *How to ask someone out – How to drive – how to disagree*.

Gossip plays a principal role as a disseminator of cultural knowledge. According to Riley, it ''provides the main mechanism for the management and distribution of knowledge and information'' (2007:50). In addition, gossip is ''the most important channel for the constant reaffirmation of shared values'' (Riley, 2007:49) or even redefining these values (Jones, 1980 in Sadiqi, 2003:251–255). By relating information about an acquaintance's or community member's behavior (the way she or he was dressed, the way she or he addressed her or his spouse in last week's birthday party, etc.), the gossipers are either establishing or reaffirming what is acceptable and unacceptable as a behavior in their community. For example, if the gossipers agree that the skirt Jill wore to the wedding was way too short, they have established that wearing a similar skirt to a wedding is inappropriate.

In this sense, the *know-of* becomes subservient to the *know-that* and *know-how* aspects of culture. Stated differently, ''gossip essentially involves codes of conduct [Riley's know-how] and moral rules [know-that] embedded in concrete stories [know-of]'' (Sabini and Silver, 1982; in Baumeister et al., 2004:112–114; see also Foster, 2004:85). In a research study on gossip, Baumeister et al. (2004) asked their subjects to spell out what they had learnt from the gossip they were involved in. The vast majority of the answers (93%) were generalizations or maxims like the following: '''Just don't drink'; 'Don't forget your true friends'; . . . 'Don't fall for guys who will treat you badly, no matter how charming they are''' (Baumeister et al., 2004:119).

These maxims indicate that the dissemination of cultural *know-of* and the negotiation of cultural values through gossip contribute to the construction of the more permanent forms of cultural knowledge. More specifically, they help create what Durkheim refers to as social facts. Riley defines social facts as ''cognitive constructs which provide the rules and material for our daily behaviour'' (2007:49; see also Sinha and Rodriguez, 2008:360). He adds that gossip is instrumental in the constant attempt at ''defining and refining what we mean by (and how we feel about or value) special social facts'' (2007:49).

Abiding by these social facts is not an exclusively win-win situation, however. Being a member of an alliance is sometimes costly; it means that individuals often have to place the interest of the group over their own individual interests.

---

[3] More specifically, I grew up in the Metn region, in what has come to be known as Grand Beirut.

There are always selfish members of society, however, who would place their individual interests first. Dunbar (2004) calls these members free riders and describes them as disruptive to a society, as ''they take the benefits of sociality but decline to pay all of the costs'' (106). As society grows bigger, free riders become more dangerous because they ''benefit from having large numbers of naïve individuals [those who have no knowledge of the free rider's behavior] whom they can exploit (Enquist and Leimar, 1993)'' (Dunbar, 2004:106). Dunbar adds that ''the control of free riders is largely dependent on memory of past events . . . Only when we advise potential victims of the danger they face are we exercising any kind of social censure'' (2004:107).

Gossip distinguishes the loyal members of the group from free riders and brings the former together through the sharing of social facts as embedded in concrete stories; ''what begins as a trusted exchange in the private becomes at the group level the knowledge, norm, and trust boundaries of tribes, clans, and cultures'' (Foster, 2004:85). In this sense, ''gossip serves as a policing device that cultures employ as a low cost method of regulating members' behaviors, especially those that reflect pursuits of selfish interests that come at a cost to the broader community'' (Baumeister et al., 2004:115).

Our ability as humans to establish social facts and negotiate them depends crucially on our ability to share experiences with others – through gossip – and in the process to see things from other people's perspective. This means that the establishment of social facts depends on intersubjectivity (Sinha and Rodriguez, 2008:357), whereby intersubjectivity is understood as ''*the sharing of experiential content (e.g., feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and linguistic meanings*'' among two or more participants (Zlatev et al., 2008:1). As Dunbar (2004:108) puts it, ''the ability to see the world from another person's point of view is a fundamental prerequisite for successful social interaction . . . it allows us to recognize that someone else might be at risk of exploitation by a free rider even though we ourselves are not.''

Thus, gossip becomes what Sinha and Rodriguez call ''intersubjectively shared and constructed narrative'', or as Sadiqi (2003) describes it, first-person narrative ''characterized by emotional involvement.'' Through such narrative ''the world and identity of the subject can simultaneously be explored, renewed, and consolidated'' (Sinha and Rodriguez, 2008:374). See Gallagher and Hutto (2008) for a discussion of the importance of narrative encounters to our understanding of others and of social norms.

This section was an attempt to underscore the importance of gossip in society and to show that gossip serves more than just pastime activity or defamation. Gossip is an informal, albeit important, method of social policing through the establishment and negotiation of social facts. A prerequisite of this function is intersubjectivity. We will see in the following sections that a GC dative may be considered as an index of intersubjectivity used to make gossip more effective.

4. Gossip constructions in Lebanese Arabic

As I mentioned in the introduction, LA licenses 1st and 2nd person dative pronouns as unselected participants in GCs. These dative pronouns are optional; they may be deleted without altering the truth condition of a gossip event.

The GCs I introduced in (6) and (7) in section 2 are anchored to a negative attitude, but not all GCs have to be evaluated as negative (unacceptable, unfortunate, etc.) In fact, GCs may also be about events judged by the speaker as positive (praiseworthy, delightful, etc.). Sections 4.1 and 4.2 discuss positive and negative GCs respectively. The GCs used in these sections are constructed examples tested against native speakers' intuitions.

It is important to note that discussing the two types of GCs in separate sections is for expository purposes only. 1st and 2nd person dative pronouns may be used indiscriminately with either type. The pronouns themselves do not designate the attitude; rather, they overtly anchor the attitude to the speaker or hearer.

Before we proceed to the following subsections, a word about the roles of the speaker and hearer is in order. *Speaker* and *hearer* are complex terms that involve multiple sub-roles or footing (Goffman, 1981; Levinson, 1988; McCawley, 1999). The speaker and hearer do not assume the same participant roles all the time; rather, they ''constantly change their footing'' (Goffman, 1981:128).

A GC may be embedded in a speech event that involves multiple participants. For the purpose of this paper, I will limit the number of participants to two: a speaker and a hearer. I use the term speaker to refer to the initiator of gossip; in Levinson's (1988) terms, this is the person who assumes the production role. I use the term hearer to refer to the official or ratified participant (Goffman, 1981), or the person who assumes the reception role (Levinson, 1988).

According to Goffman, a speaker may assume one or more of the following roles:

- Animator or ''the sounding box from which the utterances come'';
- Author or ''the agent who puts together, composes, or scripts the lines that are uttered'';
- Principal or ''the party to whose position, stand, and belief the words attest'' (Goffman, 1981:226).

Ideally, a speaker can be all three, but he does not have to be. For example, if I read another linguist's paper at a conference because she could not physically be there, I am only the animator of that paper; I am neither the author nor the

principal. If I answer questions on behalf of my colleague, trying to say what she would say if she were there even if I do not agree with her views, I am the animator and the author of the answers, but I am not the principal.

The speaker of the GCs under examination is always an animator and an author. However, the speaker's role as a principal is not as straightforward, as we will see in the discussion below. I will ignore the possibility that the speaker may be the animator of a GC that was composed by another author.

The hearer of the GCs analyzed here is always a ratified participant. That is, I will ignore the role of overhearers, people who accidently hear two individuals gossiping, and of eavesdroppers, people who intentionally listen to a GC although they are not supposed to. In addition, the GC hearers presented below are always channel-linked, where channel-linkage is "the ability to receive the message" (Levinson, 1988:174). And the GC hearers are always addressees; that is, they may assume the speaking role in response to the speaker (Goffman, 1981:133).

4.1. GCs: events judged as positive

Consider the scenarios and GCs in (9) and (10). In both cases, the speakers talk about events that they consider laudable. In (9), Speaker B, the animator and author of the GC, considers the fact that Jamil travels all the time and that he only wears expensive clothes as indicators that he is doing very well. In (10), Speaker B considers the fact that Samir threw a big wedding party that involved good food, a singer, and a belly dancer praiseworthy. These sentences are normally said with a tone of enthusiasm expressed via a rising intonation, the expression *wallah* 'by God/in fact', and such facial expressions as wide open eyes, raised eyebrows, and pouting of the lower lip.

(9) Talking about Jamil who A and B know started a new job a few months ago
    A: ki:f-o   žami:l ha-l-ʔiye:m?
       How-he Jamil these-the-days?
       'How's Jamil these days?'
    B: žami:l! kil   ʃahar bise:fer-**l-i/ak**
       Jamil! every month he.travels-**DAT-me/you.S.M**
       ʕa-balad ʃikil   w-ma   byilbis-**l-i/ak**
       to-country different and-NEG he.wear-DAT-**me/you.S.M**
       ɣe:r   aħla tye:b
       except best clothes
       'Jamil! He travels all the time now and he only wears expensive clothes.'
    A: miʃ ʔali:l walla! bravo   ʕl-e:, ʃa:tˤir!
       NEG little by.God! well.done on-him, smart!
       'This is a big deal. Good for him; he's smart!'

(10) Talking about Samir who recently got married:
    A: ki:f ke:n ʕirs-o   la-sami:r?
       how was wedding-his DAT-Samir?
       'Was how Samir's wedding?'
    B: wallah   sami:r ʕimil-**l-i/ik**   ħafle bi-ʔote:l
       by God Samir made-**DAT-me/you.S.F** party in-hotel
       xams nju:m … ʔakel tˤayyib, mutˤrib w-raʔʔa:sa
       five   stars … food delicious, singer and-belly.dancer
       'He threw a party in a five-star hotel; the food was good, and there was a singer, and a belly dancer.'
    A: Bravo! ya ʃi   miħriz ya bala:
       Well.done! Either something of.value or without
       'Good for him! One should always throw a good party; otherwise, it's better without one.'

Both examples contain an unselected participant in the form of a speaker-oriented or hearer-oriented dative pronoun (in boldface). The use of speaker-oriented dative pronouns indicates one or more of the following:

 (i) The speaker expresses his positive attitude (real or imaginary) toward the gossip events. He assumes the roles of animator, author, and principle, without making any overt statement about the hearers' attitude toward the same events.
(ii) The speaker is familiar with the hearer's attitude toward the gossip events; in this sense, the speaker is telling the hearer what she would like to hear. Note that the speaker may or may not share the same opinion. Here the hearer is

the primary principal, while the speaker is the animator and author, and maybe a secondary principal. This is so because the speaker's words mean to express the position, stand, and belief of the author.[4]

(iii) The speaker tacitly invites the hearer to agree with him in a non-face-threatening fashion; that is, the hearer may still be able to politely disagree. For example, the hearer in (9) might believe that Jamil should not waste his money on expensive clothes and trips. In this case, her response would be similar to (11), which may lead to further negotiation of values and what is considered acceptable.

(11)   ma   bti∫ti?id   ?inno ?afdˤal ydˤib   ?i:d-o   ∫way
        NEG you.think that   better he.hold.back hand-his a.little
        w-yiftaħ   ∫ɣil la-ħa:l-o   w-ħa:j   yi∫tiɣil ʕind l-ʕa:lam?
        and-he.open work for-self-his and-enough he.work for   the.people?
        'Don't you think that he should save a little and start his own business; he has worked for other people
        long enough?'

Hearer-oriented dative pronouns, on the other hand, are usually used under the following circumstances:

(i) The speaker is fairly certain, based on prior experience and conversations, that the hearer shares the same attitude toward the events. In a sense, the speaker would be saying to the hearer: "I consider the events praiseworthy, and I know that you will agree with me." In this case, the speaker is animator and author, while both speaker and hearer are principals.

(ii) The speaker uses the hearer-oriented pronoun as a more aggressive way to make the hearer agree with him. In other words, the speaker is telling the hearer: "I consider the events praiseworthy, and I am not giving you a chance to disagree." In this case, if the hearer, say in (10), disagrees with the speaker's response, she normally starts with a disclaimer like in (12):

(12)   la: byaʕmil-**l-i**   w-la: byaʕmil-**l-ak**.
        NEG he.make-**DAT-me** and-NEG he.make-**DAT-you**.
        kil   wa:ħad byaʕmil la-ħa:l-o
        every one   he.make for-self-his
        law matˤraħ-o kint   se:farit   ʕa-Paris la-∫ahr   l-ʕasal
        if   place-his I.was I.travelled to-Paris for-month the-honey
        Almost literally: 'He throws parties neither for me nor for you; everyone throws parties for himself (i.e., I don't agree
        that throwing a big party was a good thing, and I think you shouldn't agree either). If I were him, I would have
        travelled to Paris for a honeymoon.'

Again, a response like this may lead to further negotiation and redefinition of values and expectations. Now we turn to negative GCs.

4.2. GCs: events judged as negative

Speaker/Hearer-oriented dative pronouns may be used in GCs that express a negative attitude toward gossip events, as examples (6) and (7) in section 2 illustrate. In this case, the sentences must be said with a sneering tone of resignation expressed via the vocative *ya ?ixti/xayyi* 'VOC my.sister/brother', a falling intonation, and a dismissing gesture with the hand.

Observe the GCs in (13) through (15). The topic of the gossip event in (13) is a man whose recent blood work results show that he has a high level of cholesterol. Speaker A blames the outcome on the man's eating habits. He believes that one should be more careful about her or his diet. Note that both the man's results and his eating habits may turn out to be false information, and that the speaker may or may not know that. The relevant point here is that the gossip event may take place in a possible world and that the speaker is using it to express his opinion about what is acceptable or unacceptable. Note also that the hearer's response involves reassessment of her eating habits as a result of the speaker's comment.

---

[4] See McCawley (1999) for a similar distinction between primary and secondary principal.

(13) A: ya   ʕixt-i,   ma: biye:kil-**l-i/ik**   ɣe:r
          VOC sister-my, NEG he-eats-**DAT-me/you.S.F** except
          maʕe:le . . .   eh ki:f ma raħ yitʕlaʕ maʕ-o   l-cholesterol !
          fried (food). . . so how NEG FUT rise   with-him the-cholesterol !
          'He only eats fried food; it is only expected that his cholesterol will go up.'
      B: wallah ʔana le:zim xaffif   ʔakl l-maʔe:le   kame:n
          by.God I   should cut.down eating the-fried.food too
          'In fact, I should cut down on fried food as well.'

In GC (14), the topic of the gossip event is a young man Jamil who might have mentioned his desire to get married and settle down. The speaker has come to know about this desire; the speaker also knows – firsthand or through other gossip conversations – that Jamil has gone out with different women recently. To the speaker, Jamil's desires/plans and behavior are contradictory. The speaker seems to believe that Jamil – or any person who wishes to get married – should be more restrained regarding relationships. The hearer agrees with the speaker that Jamil's behavior is unacceptable.

(14) A: Jami:l byidˤhar-**l-i/ak**   kil   yo:m maʕ binit
          Jamil   he.goes.out-**DAT-me/you.S.M** every day   with girl
          ʃikil w-biʔil-**l-i/ak**   baddo   yitjawwaz
          different and-he.tells-**DAT-me/you.S.M** he.wants he.marry
          w-yistaqirr!
          and-he.settle!
          'Jamil goes out with a different woman every day, and he claims that he wants to get married and to settle down.'
      B: ʃu   ha-l-saxa:fe!
          what this-the-silliness!
          'This is ridiculous.'

Note that the GC in (14) is based on the fact or other gossip that Jamil was seen with other women who may turn out to be just friends or colleagues. In this case, the speaker is just assuming that Jamil is involved in intimate relations with each of these women. That is, the gossip event does not match the actual event. Still, the speaker depicts a possible world in which the gossip event may take place, and he is passing a judgment on it and setting a standard of behavior that the society considers acceptable or unacceptable.

Sentence (15) is similar to the two previous sentences in that it involves negative gossip. The topic of the gossip is a shop owner who complains about bad business, but it seems – truly or not – that he does not tend his shop as well as he should and thus he is to blame for that. The speaker believes that this is unacceptable. The general value is that one's business is sacred and one should work hard to maintain it and get benefit out of it.

(15) ya   xayy-i,   byiftaħ-**l-i/ak**   l-maħal l-dˤihir
      VOC brother-my, he.opens-**DAT-me/you.S.M** the-store the-noon
      w-bisakkir-**l-i/ak**   l-se:ʕa tle:te . . . w-ʃu:
      and-he.closes-**DAT-me/you.S.M** the-time three . . . and-what
      bʕil-li/lak?   ma: fi: ʃiɣil!
      he.says-DAT-me/you.S.M? NEG there work!
      'Brother (used as a sign of resignation), he opens the store at noon and closes at 3:00, and he complains that business is not good.'

In terms of footing, the roles of the speaker and hearer in positive GCs in section 4.1 readily apply to the roles of the speakers and hearers in (13) through (15).

The GCs in (16) and (17) also involve negative gossip. However, this time the speaker pretends that he is talking directly to the subject or main participant of the gossip event. In this case, the participant of the gossip event is not talked about in the 3rd person; rather, she or he is a 2nd person recipient in absentia in the sense that the message is directed to her or him, but she or he is not channel-linked. In this case, the non-participant pronoun can only be a speaker-oriented dative pronoun. Note that the hearer in this case is still a ratified participant, an addressee and a target: a ratified participant in the sense that she is expected to hear the GC; an addressee because she has the right and ability to reply and is probably expected to; a target because the speaker may be trying to influence her way of thinking and expect her to agree with the projected attitude.[5]

---

[5] See Levinson (1988:178–179) and work cited within for a contrast between addressee and recipient.

(16) ya   ħmaːr,   l-baʕiːd,   btisˤrif-**l-i**   kil maʕaːʃ-ak
      VOC donkey, the-far (one), you.spend-**DAT-me** all money-your
      ʕa-ʔakl   l-hawa, w-ʔilak   ʕeːn titˤlub   masˤaːre
      on-eating the-air and-you.have eye you.ask money
      min   ʔimm-ak !
      from mother-your !
      'You donkey – by *you* I mean the person we're gossiping about – you spend all your salary on nonsense, and you
      have the guts to ask your mother for money.'

(17) ya   ħabiːb-i ya ʕayn-i, ʔizaː baddak   tinjaħ,
      VOC love-my VOC eye-my, if   you.want you.succeed
      dris-lak   kilimteːn baʕd l-madrase; ma   tˤadˤiː-**l-i**
      study-you.DAT two.words after school;   NEG you.spend-**DAT-me**
      kil baʕd l-dˤihir ʕamtilʕab-**l-i**   games
      all aftetrnoon   you.playing-**DAT-me** games
      w-ʕamtiħdˤar-**l-i**   TV
      and-you.watching-**DAT-me** TV
      'Sweetheart, if you wish to pass your classes, study a little after school; don't spend all afternoon playing games
      and watching TV – This is outrageous.'

In (16), the participant of the gossip event is a young man who spends his salary irresponsibly – or so the speaker believes – only to ask his mother for money so that he can survive the month. The speaker considers this behavior reprehensible. He pretends he is reprimanding the young man for his behavior. Calling someone a donkey in Lebanese Arabic is a very offensive way to say she or he has done something idiotic. This is why the speaker uses the term *l-baʕ iːd* 'the distant or far one' to signify that the hearer is not a recipient; rather, the participant of the gossip event is.

Sentence (17) is similar to (16). In this case, the main participant of the gossip event is a student who seems not to be doing well at school because he does not do his homework; rather, he plays video games and watches TV. The speaker reprimands the student the way a parent would, using endearing words – probably used sarcastically. Like in (16), the speaker considers the behavior unacceptable and he makes a point about it through gossip.

In the following section, I analyze GCs and the use of speaker/hearer-oriented datives within the framework of Cognitive Grammar. The choice of Cognitive Grammar is based on the observation that the LA GCs under examination are conventionalized structures that can be represented abstractly as schemas; they employ pronouns that are used symbolically – rather than purely referentially – in order to achieve a pragmatic purpose. A major premise of Cognitive Grammar is that grammar is "symbolic in nature" and that "constructions (rather than 'rules') . . . [are] the primary objects of description"; in addition, constructions are defined as linguistic units that are "conventionalized in a speech community" (Langacker, 2009:1–2, and much earlier work). "All linguistic units are abstracted from *usage events*, i.e. actual instances of language use" that involve a speaker and a hearer (Langacker, 2001:144). The semantics of these conventionalized linguistic units is always understood in context; that is, in Cognitive Grammar "there is no clear line between semantics proper and pragmatics" (Maldonado, 2002:3–6). This and other premises and analytical tools that will be discussed in the next section make Cognitive Grammar a suitable framework for analyzing GCs.

5. Personal pronouns and (inter)subjectivity: a Cognitive Grammar approach

I begin this section with a quote by Foster (2004:86):

> One of the conditions for gossip to be influential is that people must agree on the norms for behavior and what constitutes acceptability. . . Such people are repositories of group norms, and their opinions therefore have more weight in shepherding conformity. Conformity is essential for the survival of the group as whole.

This condition in turn requires two other conditions, intersubjectivity and collaboration, which are instrumental for establishing norms. I begin with intersubjectivity and conclude this section with collaboration.

Norms for behavior are rules regulating conduct or social facts. According to Sinha and Rodríguez (2008:306), social facts "consist of manners of acting, thinking, and feeling external to the individual." The authors continue that for a social fact to hold, it requires the participation, in the sense of Goodwin and Goodwin (2004), of more than two individuals.

Note that the relation between social facts and social behavior is not always straightforward. Two societies may arrive at two different social facts based on the same social behavior. For example, in some countries, it is conventional for women to cover their hair or faces, but it is acceptable for them to breastfeed their babies in public. Other countries may have a pretty liberal social dress code in the sense that there are very few restrictions on how people – both women and

men – may or may not dress, but women may have to carry out campaigns to promote women's right to breastfeed in public (see, for example, Riordan, 2005).

So how do two people or a whole community agree on a social fact based on a social behavior? Dunbar (2004:100) holds that social facts require the ability to understand other people's minds and to interpret other people's behavior ''in terms of the belief states of the mind that is behind the behavior.'' Dunbar calls this ability the 'intentional stance'; Sinha and Rodriguez (2008), among several others, call it intersubjectivity, and they hold that ''intersubjectivity is the fundamental basis of . . . 'social facts''' (357).

In the rest of this section, I analyze the phenomenon of GC through the theories of (inter)subjectivity in the framework of Cognitive Linguistics as proposed by Traugott (2003, 2009) and Langacker (2007) and much earlier work. Although Traugott's and Langacker's approaches diverge in important ways (see Cuyckens et al., 2009 for a comparison), they complement each other when it comes to accounting for the dative pronouns in the GCs under examination and their choice of referent.

Lyons (1982:102) defines subjectivity as ''the way in which natural languages . . . provide for the locutionary agent's expression of himself and his own attitude and beliefs.'' Building on Lyons (1982), Traugott (2003) holds that intersubjectivity is the way a language allows its speakers to express their awareness of their own and the addressee's attitudes and beliefs. Intersubjectivity follows from our ability to view ourselves as intentional and mental beings with goals, beliefs, and thoughts, and our ability to perceive others as intentional and mental beings who may have different goals, beliefs, and thoughts (Tomasello, 1999:14–15; Verhagen, 2005:3–4).[6]

When examined from the perspective of the aforementioned definitions, optional dative pronouns in GCs may be defined as linguistic markers that index (inter)subjectivity à la Traugott (2009:32). They are the result of what Traugott calls semantic polysemy, whereby an element acquires a pragmatic (inter)subjective meaning in addition to – or in place of – its original meaning. In the case of the dative pronouns under examination, the two meanings they have are the following: (i) datives as purely referential markers, and (ii) datives as (inter)subjectivity markers that profile a speech participant as an attitude holder.

Langacker (1987) approaches the subjective and the objective in a linguistic context from a different perspective, a perspective that will allow us to formalize what is going on in GCs and the speech events that contain them.

Consider the gossip stage model in (18) that I propose based on (Langacker, 2008:354–360). Building on Langacker's work and on Taylor (2002/2010), I will refer to the gossipers (speaker and hearer) and the speech event or interaction they are involved in, as well as the immediate circumstances, such as the time and place of speaking, as the Ground. The gossip event (i.e., the gossip narrative or GC itself) and the attitude that the speaker attaches to it are conceptualized or realized against an appropriate domain of instantiation or, in this case, the cultural backdrop of the society where the gossip event is claimed to have taken place (see Taylor, 2010:346–349).

(18)   The Gossip Stage Model
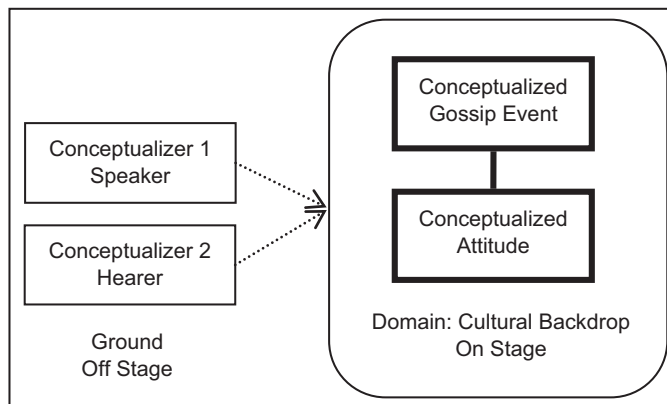
The GCs in the previous section each involve a speech event and its participants – i.e., the Ground à la Langacker (1987:126). Each GC also involves a gossip event and an attitude attached to it. The speakers and hearers are the conceptualizers or the subjects of conceptualization, each with her/his own attitudes and beliefs and their knowledge of the collective attitudes and beliefs of the culture. They occupy the offstage region in the sense that they are not the center

---

[6] Another view is Langacker's approach to subjectivity. According to Langacker, an expression is not inherently/semantically subjective or objective. Rather subjectivity arises from the focus on the observer's perception, and objectivity arises from the focus on the object being observed. See (Cuyckens et al., 2009) for an overview. This idea is employed below and will become relevant shortly.

of attention. The gossip event and the attitude attached to it, on the other hand, are the objects of conceptualization or the objective. They occupy the onstage region in the sense that they are the center of attention; thus, the boldface rectangles.

According to Verhagen (2005), subjectivity (the offstage region) and objectivity (the onstage region) do not always coincide. That is, the hearer and speaker as conceptualizers, as well as their thoughts and beliefs, may not be a mirror image of the real world or of each other's – though they can be the mirror image of a possible world. The speaker may invite the hearer ''to jointly attend to an object of conceptualization in some specific way, and to update the common ground by doing so'' (4–7). In our case, the object of conceptualization is not only the gossip event but more importantly the speaker's attitude toward it. The speaker invites the hearer to attend to this attitude as an object of conception, to consider it as valid, and to adopt it. This remark is in line with the following observation by Langacker (2009:266):

> [I]f a conceptualizer adopts an epistemic stance toward an event or situation, that itself constitutes an event or situation at a higher level of organization. . . . That is, the situation of a conceptualizer adopting an epistemic stance toward a process can itself function as an object of conception toward which an epistemic stance can be adopted.

In Goffman's terms, the speaker as a principal may use certain linguistic devices (words, expressions, etc.) in order to invite the hearer to adopt his attitudes and beliefs. In Langacker's (2009:130–131) terms, the onstage gossip event is one of the entities or propositions (small squares in (19)) that the speaker as conceptualizer accepts as valid. Collectively, these propositions constitute the speaker's dominion or ''view of reality.''

(19)   Speaker's Dominion
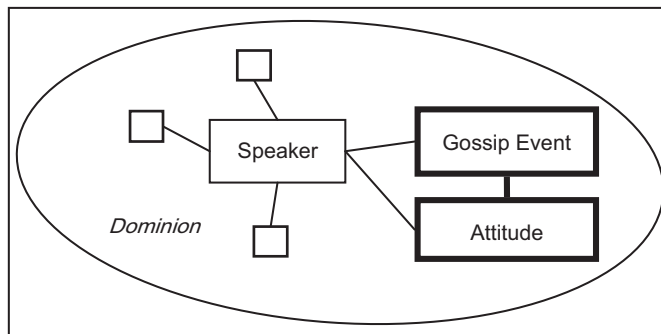
The dominion also includes the speaker's attitudes toward the propositions and all underlying beliefs. As (19) schematically illustrates, when a speaker profiles a gossip event, he also profiles an attitude, positive or negative, via his tone of voice and body language (hand gestures and facial expressions). In addition, the speaker presents, albeit in the background rather than the foreground, the cultural values that are linked – or that he believes should be linked – to the gossip event and that should be inferred from the attitude. All these attitudes and beliefs, as we will see shortly, may be attributed to a generalized experiencer, or a default member of the culture who is left unspecified and unprofiled.

By sharing the gossip event with the hearer, the speaker places it, along with the attitude he expresses toward it, in the hearer's field, or ''scope of potential interaction,'' as (20) demonstrates. The hearer then considers whether she wishes to accept or reject the gossip event and/or the attitude, as a part of her dominion. This tension is presented as a broken line in (20). The result may be acceptance or rejection depending on, among other things, how much influence the speaker tries to put on the hearer.

(20)   Hearer's Dominion
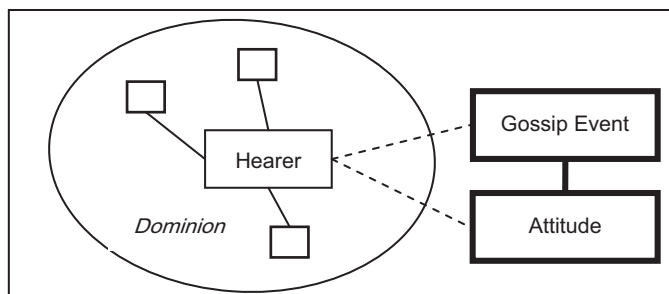
The whole cycle, including the introduction of the gossip event and attitude into the hearer's field, the tension this induces, and the result (acceptance or rejection), is what Langacker (2009) calls the control cycle. He further holds that

> we can see the control cycle as being utterly ubiquitous in our own experience. . . . At the cognitive level, we entertain new ideas, assess them for their possible validity, and resolve the matter by either accepting them in our conception of reality or else excluding them. (Langacker, 2009:259–260)

Note that conversely the speaker may profile a proposition in order to spell out – or put in words – how the hearer would attend to the object of conceptualization. That is, the hearer becomes the primary principle, while the speaker is a secondary principle, as well as an author and an animator. To be precise, when a speaker profiles a gossip event and an attitude, three scenarios are possible:

a. The speaker knows that both he and the hearer share the same attitude. His purpose behind sharing the gossip event is only to disseminate knowledge and reinforce the attitude he attaches to the gossip event and the implied cultural value.
b. The speaker knows or suspects that the hearer has a different attitude; he tries to exert social influence on the hearer so as to make her conform to the profiled attitude.
c. The speaker knows what attitude the hearer has, and he wishes to conform to the same attitude.

All three scenarios may be performed by using three types of constructions: (i) general gossip structures or GCs without dative pronouns, (ii) GCs with speaker-oriented dative pronouns, and (iii) GCs with hearer-oriented dative pronouns. The difference is in effectiveness due to differences in profiling. In the following, I discuss the differences among the three types with respect to the three scenarios in (a) through (c). I begin with (a). The focus throughout is on the speaker's perspective, since the speaker is the speech participant who makes decisions regarding the use of dative pronouns.

If the speaker knows – correctly or incorrectly – that the hearer has an attitude similar to his about events like the gossip event that he wishes to share, he may use all three types of GCs interchangeably. The reason is that in this case the speaker only intends to make the gossip event public and probably to reinforce an existing attitude and an already agreed-on cultural norm.

When a speaker profiles a gossip event without using a speaker-oriented or hearer-oriented dative pronoun, he and the hearer remain offstage. And although the speaker is responsible for the positive or negative attitude he non-verbally expresses – that is, via intonation and gestures – toward the gossip event, he is not profiled as a specified experiencer or attitude holder. Rather, the attitude is attributed to a generalized experiencer or a generalized attitude holder. More specifically, it is presented with the assumption – or pretense – that the positive or negative attitude that the profiled gossip event induces is the attitude that anyone in the community has toward events like this. This scenario is presented schematically in (21).

(21)   GC without dative: Speaker knows hearer shares same attitude[7]

_____
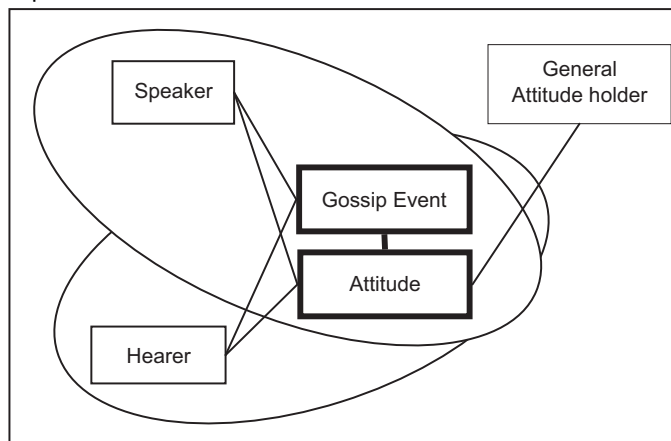
[7] Here and below I present gossip events and the attitudes attached to them as inseparable. That is, if the speaker and hearer accept one as part of their respective dominion, they also accept the other. This approach is adopted merely for convenience in order to make the schematic presentations easier to read, especially that the discussion in this paper does not question the truth condition of gossip events; i.e., both speaker and hearer accept the gossip events as valid. Instead, the discussion focuses on the speaker's and hearer's attitudes toward the gossip event. In reality, however, a speech participant may accept one without accepting the other. For example, the hearer may accept a gossip event in terms of its truth condition without accepting the speaker's attitude toward it and vice versa.

In (21), the profiled gossip event belongs to the dominions of the offstage speaker and hearer. The profiled attitude is attributed to an unprofiled generalized experiencer or attitude holder. If the speaker uses a speaker-oriented dative pronoun, however, he profiles himself as a specified experiencer and focuses himself onstage as a specified attitude holder. If the speaker knows that the hearer shares a similar attitude, the use of the speaker-oriented dative pronoun is no more than an open confirmation that the speaker supports the attitude and the implied values. As (22) demonstrates, the speaker achieves this open confirmation by profiling himself onstage as an attitude holder and by anchoring the onstage gossip event to himself as part of the foreground rather than the background.

(22)   Speaker-oriented GC: Speaker knows hearer shares same attitude
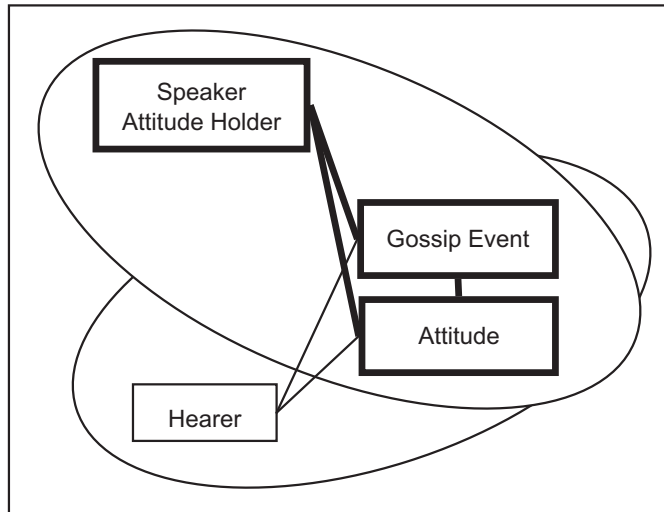
The difference between the GC without a dative pronoun in (21) and the GC with a speaker-oriented dative pronoun in (22) resembles the difference between sentences (23) and (24) (from Langacker, 2009:145; (44a–b)):

(23)   His crude jokes are {embarrassing/surprising/amusing}.

(24)   His crude jokes {embarrassed/surprised/amused} me.

According to Langacker (2009:116, 135–145), in both sentences the speaker is responsible for what is being said. However, in (23) but not in (24) – and, by analogy, in (21) but not (22) – "the speaker's role is . . . defocused." The speaker remains offstage, presenting his assessment as if "any conceptualizer would arrive at the same assessment."

Proof that the analysis is on the right track comes from the fact that an overhearer may criticize the speaker in (22), but not in (21), as an attitude holder. Consider sentence (25), for example; the speaker criticizes Samir for going out every night.

(25)   Samiir kil   layle byishar-**l-i**   bi-matˤraħ ʃikil
       Samir every night stay.out/party-**DAT-me** in-place   different
       'Samir parties too much.'

If someone who cares about Samir happens to overhear the speaker criticizing him, the overhearer may say something like (26).

(26)   leːʃ miːn-ak inta ta-yishar-**l-ak**
       why who-you you in.order.to-he.stay.out-**DAT-you**
       ʔaw ma   yishar-**l-ak**
       or   NEG he.stay.out-**DAT-you**
   'Who are you to judge him?'

Notice that the overhearer in (26) does not question the truth condition of the gossip event. Rather, she tries to discredit the speaker as an attitude holder by questioning the very use of the dative. This kind of response is only possible if the speaker is profiled as an attitude holder. In other words, if (25) is uttered without the speaker-oriented dative, (26)

becomes an infelicitous response. In this case, the overhearer may only criticize the speaker as a disseminator of knowledge; e.g., (27).

(27) leːʃ miːn-ak inta ta-tiħki   ʕl-eː   la-l-zalame
      why who-you you in.order.to-talk about-him to-the-man
      'Who are you to gossip about the man?!'

In addition to GCs without dative pronouns and GCs with speaker-oriented dative pronouns, the speaker may use a GC with a hearer-oriented dative pronoun. In this case, the dative is an open recognition of the hearer's attitude. That is, the speaker profiles the hearer as an onstage attitude holder, as (28) illustrates.

(28) Hearer-oriented GC: Speaker knows hearer shares same attitude
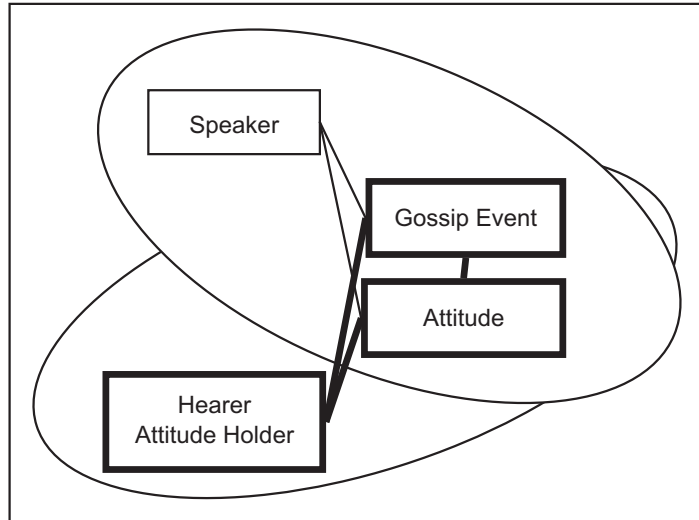
It is important to note here that although the speaker in (28) is offstage, he is not completely defocused. By anchoring the profiled attitude to the hearer, the speaker makes an implied statement about his own attitude. That is, unlike in GCs without datives, where the speaker may avert responsibility for the attitude by anchoring it to a generalized attitude holder, GCs with hearer-oriented datives hold the speaker accountable for the attitude he attributes to the hearer. For example, observe (25) again, repeated as (29) with a hearer-oriented dative.

(29) Samiir kil   layle byishar-**l-ak**   bi-matˤraħ ʃikil
      Samir every night stay.out/party-**DAT-you** in-place   different
   'Samir parties too much.'

If the same overhearer in (26) happens to hear (29), she may respond as follows:

(30) leːʃ miːn-ak   inta w-iyyeː ta-yishar-**l-ak**
      why who-you   you and-him in.order.to-he.stay.out-**DAT-you**
      ʔaw yishar-**l-o**
      or   he.stay.out-**DAT-him**
      'Who are you and he (the hearer) to judge him?'

In (30), the overhearer discredits, not only the profiled hearer as an attitude holder, but also the speaker.

Thus far, we have assumed that the speaker believes that he and the hearer share the same attitude. Alternatively, the speaker may not know or anticipate the attitude of the hearer. Sometimes, the speaker might even know or suspect that the hearer has a different attitude toward events like the gossip event he wishes to profile. In this case, the speaker may choose to influence the hearer into conforming to a new attitude. There are three ways to achieve this goal. The least effective way is by using the GC without a dative pronoun in (21), repeated here as (31) with additional details.

(31)   GC minus dative: Speaker controls hearer's attitude
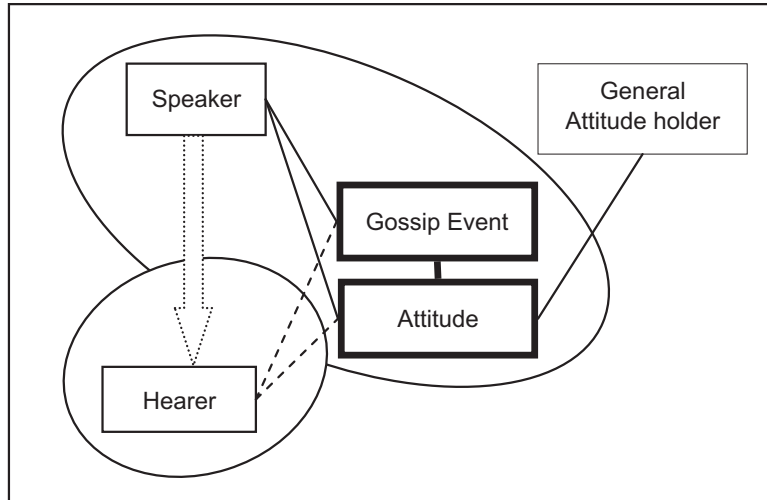
This use of the GC in (31) to influence the hearer involves minimum risk: minimum face threats or confrontation. By anchoring the attitude to a general attitude holder, the speaker allows for negotiation and disagreement with minimum damage. In other words, the speaker uses minimal force (presented by the dotted double arrow in (31)) to control the hearer and shape her attitude. If the hearer accepts the speaker's attitude, no further action is needed. However, if she rejects the attitude or even confronts the speaker, the latter can always attribute the attitude to the community or a generalized experiencer: *Don't blame me for it; this is what everybody thinks!* Further negotiation of values and what is considered culturally acceptable or unacceptable may follow.

If the speaker wishes to use a more aggressive tactic to counter, (re)channel, or (re)shape the hearer's attitude, he may use a GC with a speaker-oriented dative pronoun like (22). The speaker uses the dative to influence the hearer and make her accept the profiled attitude – or at least to make it harder for her to openly oppose the attitude. This scenario is presented schematically in (32).

(32)   Speaker-oriented GC: Speaker controls hearer's attitude
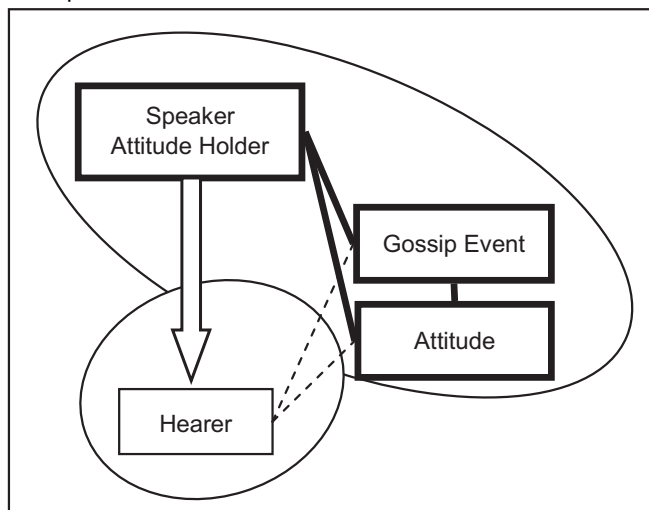
Compare the solid double arrow in (32) to the dotted double arrow in (31). Here the speaker uses more force to control the hearer's attitude. By profiling himself as a specified experiencer and attitude holder, the speaker anchors the attitude he expresses toward the gossip event to his person rather than to a generalized experiencer or community member. This means that the hearer cannot reject the profiled attitude and the implied values without rejecting or confronting the speaker.

Alternatively, a GC with a hearer-oriented dative pronoun like (28) above may be used by the speaker if he wishes to influence the hearer and invite him to accept the profiled attitude as part of her dominion. This scenario is presented schematically in (33).

(33)   Hearer-oriented GC: Speaker controls hearer's attitude
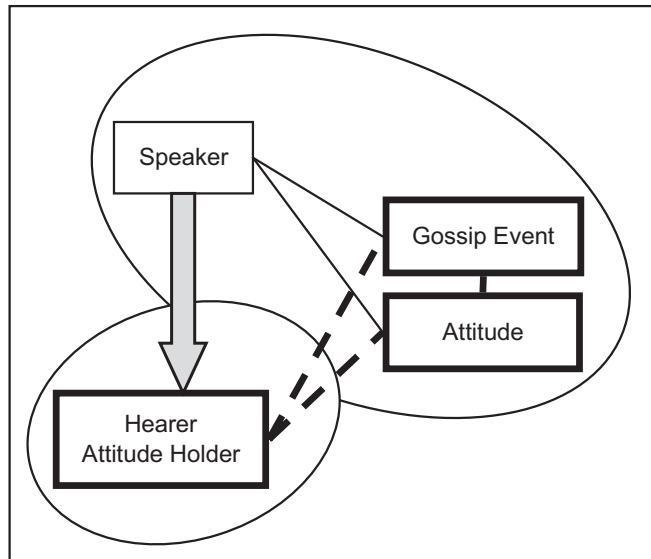
As the gray double arrow indicates, profiling the hearer as an attitude holder is the most aggressive tactic that the speaker may use to influence the hearer and exercise control over her attitude. Here is why: By attributing an attitude to the hearer, the speaker also implies that he has the same attitude. If the hearer wishes to express or adopt a different attitude, she will have to not only reject the speaker's attitude, but also deny the claim that the speaker makes about her.

Now we turn to the third scenario. Sometimes the speaker knows that the hearer has a different attitude; instead of trying to invite her to conform to a profiled attitude, however, he chooses to adopt her attitude. This may be an honest attempt to conform on the part of the speaker. Alternatively, he may simply be telling the hearer what she would like to hear in order, for example, to be tactful, to avoid losing face, etc. Again, there are three options. The first involves the use of a GC without a dative pronoun. This scenario is illustrated in (34).

(34)   GC minus dative: Speaker adopts hearer's assumed attitude
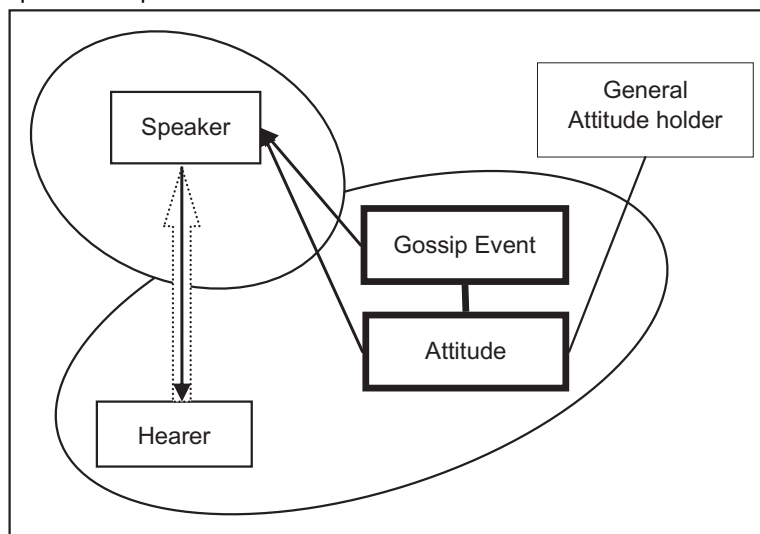
By not using an optional dative pronoun, the speaker in (34) conforms tacitly rather than explicitly to the assumed attitude of the hearer – i.e., without focusing himself as an attitude holder. The single solid arrow connecting the speaker to the hearer indicates that the speaker allows himself to be influenced by the hearer. The dotted double arrow stands for the influence the hearer has over the speaker.

Alternatively, the speaker may choose to conform to the hearer's attitude more explicitly via the use of a hearer-oriented GC, as (35) illustrates.

(35)   Hearer-oriented GC: Speaker adopts hearer's assumed attitude
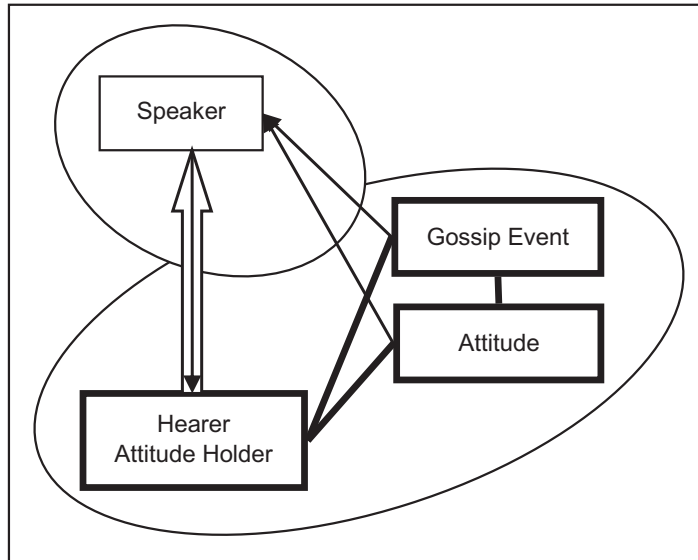
In (35), the speaker anchors the hearer to a positive or negative attitude and profiles her as an attitude holder. In this way, the speaker implies that he shares the same attitude. Because the speaker acknowledges the hearer's attitude by profiling her as an attitude holder, (35) is a stronger conformity statement than the GC without dative in (34). At the same time, because the speaker as an attitude-holder remains offstage, (35) is a weaker conformity statement than (36) below.

(36)   Speaker-oriented GC: Speaker adopts hearer's assumed attitude
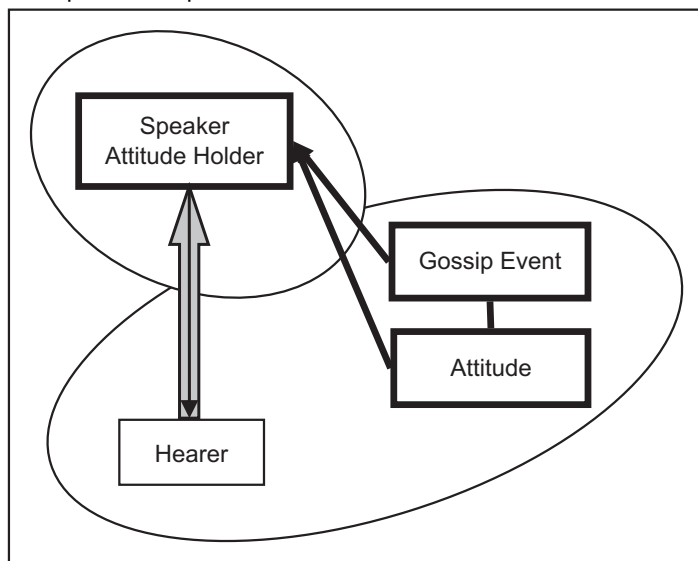
The gray double arrow in (36) indicates that a speaker-oriented dative pronoun is the strongest, most explicit statement of conformity on the part of the speaker. In this case, the speaker explicitly anchors an attitude to himself only because he knows that the hearer has it.

In all the scenarios and schemas presented in this section, the speakers express an awareness of and sensitivity to, not only the attitudes and beliefs of the hearers, but also the collective attitudes and beliefs of the community: what is considered culturally acceptable or unacceptable, etc. The speakers and/or hearers may not always agree with these collective attitudes and beliefs, and as such they use GCs in order to negotiate them and redefine them.

What is interesting for our purposes is that GCs without the optional dative pronouns are also possible tools that speakers may use to achieve their goal. In fact, not all languages present gossip events the way LA speakers do, and even LA speakers do not always – or all – employ optional pronouns when they gossip, thus the term 'optional'. As we saw, however, these pronouns do make a difference.

If no dative pronoun is used, the speaker's goal to influence the hearer's attitude, or even to conform to it, will be subjectively construed. Langacker holds that an entity ''is construed with maximal subjectivity when it remains off-stage and implicit, inhering in the very process of conception without being its target. It is construed with maximal objectivity when it is put onstage as an explicit focus of attention'' (1999:149).

I suggest that by using non-participating dative pronouns in a communicative interaction, the speaker moves offstage entities – i.e., the speaker himself, or the hearer, not as agents, affectees, or other participants, but as non-participating carriers of attitudes and beliefs – to the onstage region where they are now the focus of perception. They are no longer merely the conceptualizers lying at the margin of awareness; rather, they, along with their attitudes in general and toward the gossip events in particular, are now the conceptualized. In this sense, the use of GCs is not purely informative, but rather argumentative à la Verhagen (2005:9–10), building on Owings and Morton (1998) and Anscombre and Ducrot (1989). That is, it is ''an attempt to *influence* someone else's thoughts, attitudes, or even immediate behavior.''

These pronouns transform the personal into the shared by moving the personal from the Ground and by profiling it onstage. To elaborate, Verhagen (2005:35) observes that ''using language involves cognitive coordination in the sense of mutual attempts to influence other people's minds and behavior,'' which he attributes to the argumentative nature of language. He further observes that certain elements may be used to make this influence stronger. For example, both *barely* and *not* may be used in order to make the hearer or reader arrive at a negative inference; however, *not* is more effective than *barely*.

Applying this observation to GCs, we can say that gossip may in general be considered argumentative rather than simply informative; that is, it is used to influence the thoughts and attitudes of the hearers, sometimes by simply reaffirming them. However, on a continuum, LA GCs without datives may be considered less effective in this respect than speaker-oriented GCs. By using a speaker-oriented dative pronoun, the speakers place themselves as carriers of specific attitudes and beliefs onstage, making an overt statement about their convictions. This explicit stand makes it harder for the hearers to challenge or counter the speakers' opinions.

At the same time, hearer-oriented GCs are even more effective and also riskier in that they are the most confrontational. By using a hearer-oriented dative pronoun, the speaker explicitly attributes a certain conviction to the hearer. In this way, the speaker makes it harder for the hearer to reject the conviction without confrontation.

This observation is supported by the intuition of the LA native speakers I consulted. I presented seven LA native speakers with three types of GCs along with a positive or negative attitude: (i) GCs without dative pronouns, (ii) speaker-oriented GCs, and (iii) hearer-oriented GCs. I asked them which type they thought would be the hardest to openly disagree with. They ranked them as (iii), (ii), (i), with (iii) being the most difficult to openly disagree with.

Conversely, if GCs of the type examined here are used by the speakers as an indicator of their conformity to the hearers' beliefs and attitudes – i.e., the speakers are not expressing their attitudes or beliefs; rather, they are expressing what they think are the attitudes and beliefs of the hearers – then speaker-oriented CGs express a higher level of conformity compared to hearer-oriented GCs. A similar observation was made by the LA native speakers I interviewed.

An important question follows: If using optional dative pronouns involves so much risk – losing face, confrontation – why use them? At the beginning of this section, I cited Foster (2004) who holds that gossip is influential to the extent that people agree on the social facts or norms of a their community. I also mentioned that this agreement follows from (inter) subjectivity, which I discussed above, and collaboration, which I turn to now.

Collaboration in gossip means that the speakers, along with their gossip narratives and attitudes toward the gossip events, are not challenged by the hearers. In a research project that involved school students, Eder and Enke (1991) found that gossip initiators normally present their story in such a way that hearers are forced to agree with the point of the gossip. Their study shows that if the hearers do not challenge the point made by the gossip initiator right after it has been made, then the point will not be challenged at all during the speech event. This type of collaboration is important because it ''may also boost the effectiveness of gossip as social learning'' (Baumeister et al., 2004:117) and its effectiveness in reconfirming or redefining social facts.

Of course there is always the possibility that the hearers may not accept the point made by the gossip initiator, in which case the use of GCs becomes what Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997:282) call ''a high risk game,'' and the question is: Why do gossip initiators play this game? The reason is that, as Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) would put it, if the gossip initiator is successful, the outcome is the much-sought after result of conformity.

6. Conclusion

Taylor (2010:20) states that ''language is essentially and inherently symbolic in nature. Linguistic expressions symbolize, or stand for, conceptualizations.'' In this paper, I examined gossip constructions in Lebanese Arabic, and I showed that 1st and 2nd person dative pronouns may be used in a symbolic way that goes beyond the merely referential. They allow the speaker to move the speech participants from the offstage region as conceptualizers to the onstage region as conceptualized. This move allows the speaker to anchor the attitude he expresses toward the gossip event to himself or to the hearer as an attitude holder. Such anchoring may be used to exert social influence on the hearer in order to make her conform to a profiled attitude. Alternatively, it may be used by the speaker as an expression of conformity with the hearer's implied or anticipated attitude. Either way, the outcome is a reconfirmation, redefinition, or even creation of social facts.

Acknowledgement

References

Al-Zahre, Nisrine, Boneh, Nora, 2010. Coreferential dative constructions in Syrian Arabic and Modern Hebrew. Brill's Annual of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics 2, 248–282.

Anscombre, Jean-Claude, Ducrot, Oswald, 1989. L'argumentation dans la langue. Mardaga, Liège, Bruxelle.

Baumeister, Roy F., Liqing, Zhang, Vohs, Kathleen D., 2004. Gossip as cultural learning. Review of General Psychology 8, 111–121.

Bergmann, J.R., 1993. Discreet Indiscretions: The Social Organization of Gossip (J.J. Bednarz, Trans.). Aldine de Gruyter, New York (original work published 1987).

Bosse, Solveig, Bruening, Benjamin, Yamada, Masahiro, 2012. Affected experiencers. Natural Language and Linguistics Theory 30, 1185–1230.

Boxer, Diana, Cortés-Conde, Florencia, 1997. From bonding to biting: conversational joking and identity display. Journal of Pragmatics 27, 275–295.

Cuyckens, Hubert, Davidse, Kristin, Vandelanotte, Lieven (Eds.), 2009. Introduction. Subjectification, intersubjectification and grammaticalization. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, pp. 1–28.

Deutsch, Morton, Gerard, Harold B., 1955. A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 51, 629–636.

Dunbar, R.I.M., 2004. Gossip in evolutionary perspective. Review of General Psychology 8, 100–110.

Eder, Donna, Enke, Janet Lynne, 1991. The structure of gossip: opportunities and constraints on collective expression among adolescents. American Sociological Review 56, 494–508.

Enquist, Magnus, Leimar, Olof, 1993. The evolution of cooperation in mobile organisms. Animal Behaviour 45, 747–757.

Foster, Eric K., 2004. Research on gossip: taxonomy, methods, and future directions. Review of General Psychology 8, 78–99.

Gallagher, Shaun, Hutto, Daniel D., 2008. Understanding others through primary interaction and narrative practice. In: Zlatev, Jordan, Racine, Timothy, Sinha, Chris, Itkonen, Essa (Eds.), The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 17–38.

Gilbert, Daniel T., Fiske, Susan T., Lindzey, Gardner, 1998. The Handbook of Social Psychology, vol. II. McGraw-Hill, Oxford/New York.

Goffman, Erving, 1981. Forms of Talk. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Goodwin, Charles, Goodwin, Marjorie H., 2004. Participation. In: Duranti, Alessandro (Ed.), A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology. Blackwell, Maldan, MA, pp. 222–244.

Haddad, Youssef A., 2011. The syntax of Southern American English personal datives: an antilocality account. Canadian Journal of Linguistics 56, 403–412.

Horn, Laurence R., 2008. ''*I love me some him*'': the landscape of non-argument datives. In: Bonami, O., Hofherr, P., Cabredo, (Eds.), Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics, vol. 7. pp. 169–192, http://www.cssp.cnrs.fr/eiss7.

Jones, Deborah, 1980. Gossip notes on women's oral culture. In: Cameron, Deborah (Ed.), The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader. Routledge, London/New York, pp. 242–250.

Langacker, Ronald W., 1987. Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, vol. 1, Theoretical Prerequisites. Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Langacker, Ronald W., 1999. Losing control: grammaticization, subjectification and transparency. In: Blank, Andreas, Koch, Peter (Eds.), Historical Semantics and Cognition. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 147–176.

Langacker, Ronald W., 2001. Discourse in Cognitive Grammar. Cognitive Linguistics 12, 143–188.

Langacker, Ronald W., 2007. Constructing the meanings of personal pronouns. In: Radden, Günter, Köpcke, Klaus-Michael, Berg, Thomas, Siemund, Peter (Eds.), Aspects of Meaning Construction. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 171–188.

Langacker, Ronald W., 2008. Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction. Oxford University Press, New York.

Langacker, Ronald W., 2009. Investigations in Cognitive Grammar. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin.

Levinson, S.C., 1988. Putting linguistics on a proper footing: explorations in Goffman's participation framework. In: Drew, P., Wootton, A. (Eds.), Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order. Polity Press, Oxford, pp. 161–227.

Lyons, John, 1982. Deixis and subjectivity: *Loquor ergo sum?* In: Jarvella, Robert J., Klein, Wolfgang (Eds.), Speech, Place, and Action: Studies in Deixis and Related Topics. Wiley, New York, pp. 101–124.

Maldonado, Ricardo, 2002. Objective and subjective datives. Cognitive Linguistics 13, 1–65.

McCawley, James D., 1999. Participant roles, frames, and speech acts. Linguistics and Philosophy 22, 595–619.

Owings, Donald H., Morton, Eugene S., 1998. Animal Vocal Communication: A New Approach. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Riley, Philip, 2007. Language, Culture and Identity: An Ethnolinguistic Perspective. Continuum, London.

Riordan, Jan, 2005. Breastfeeding and Human Location. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Canada.

Sabini, John, Silver, Maury, 1982. Moralities of Everyday Life. Oxford University Press, Oxford, England.

Sadiqi, Fatima, 2003. Women, Gender and Language in Morocco. Brill, Leiden/Boston.

Sherzer, Joel, 1987. Discourse-centered approach to language and culture. American Anthropologist 89, 295–309.

Sinha, Chris, Rodriguez, Cintia, 2008. Language and the signifying object: from convention to imagination. In: Zlatev, Jordan, Racine, Timothy, Sinha, Chris, Itkonen, Essa (Eds.), The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 358–378.

Taylor, John R., 2002/2010. Cognitive Grammar. Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York.

Tomasello, Michael, 1999. The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, 2003. From subjectification to intersubjectification. In: Hickey, Raymond (Ed.), Motives for Language Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 124–139.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, 2009. (Inter)subjectivity and (inter)subjectification: a reassessment. In: Davidse, Kristin, Vandelanotte, Lieven, Cuyckens, Hubert (Eds.), Subjectification, Intersubjectification and Grammaticalization. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, pp. 29–71.

Verhagen, Arie, 2005. Constructions of Intersubjectivity. Discourse Syntax and Cognition. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Webelhuth, Gert, Dannenberg, Clare J., 2006. Southern American English personal datives: the theoretical significance of dialectal variation. American Speech 81, 31–55.

Wert, Sarah R., Salovey, Peter, 2004. A social comparison account of gossip. Review of General Psychology 8, 122–137.

Wood, Wendy, 2000. Attitude change: persuasion and social influence. Annual Review of Psychology 51, 539–570.

Zlatev, Jordan, Racine, Timothy P., Sinha, Chris, Itkonen, Essa (Eds.), 2008. Intersubjectivity: what makes us human?. The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 1–14.