

*I Love Me Some Jiminy Glick:*  
**The Semantic Contribution of ‘Some’ in Personal Dative Constructions<sup>1</sup>**

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## 1. Introduction

The personal dative (PD) is a non-argument dative that highlights subject involvement (Christian 1991; Webelhuth and Dannenberg 2006; Conroy 2007; Horn 2008, 2010), as in “I ain’t got me no money” or “I wanta watch me a little TV” (Sroda and Mishoe 1995). Its use is most closely associated with Southern and African-American Vernacular English, but the construction, in a few of its forms at least, has spread into mainstream usage. The *I (Just) Love Me Some {X}* subconstruction in particular has been popularized by American football player Terrell Owens’ boast, “I love me some me.” In two recent articles on the personal dative, Laurence Horn (2008, 2010) explores this particular subset of uses. Horn suggests that the ‘some’ of this form of the construction is semantically empty, serving only to satisfy an indefiniteness constraint. In this paper, I argue that this use of ‘some’ in PD constructions with ‘love’ is in fact semantically motivated: it acts as an indefinite quantifier, and it invites a construal of the direct object as a consumable mass entity that the subject wishes to experience over multiple consumption events.

## 2. Overview of the Personal Dative

The PD is a non-argument dative construction in which a pronoun co-referential with the subject occurs in the post-verbal dative slot:

- (1) **I made me a promise** to Bubba (COCA, 6/1/10).
- (2) **I loves me some home-smoked turkey** with some grits and poached eggs or a turkey leg sandwich later in the afternoon (COCA, 6/1/10).
- (3) **I learned me that** in school (COCA, 6/1/10).

Semantically, desire for or satisfaction at acquiring the object, intentionality, subject affect, “experiencerhood”, and positive affect are typically associated with the PD (Christian 1991; Webelhuth and Dannenberg 2006; Horn 2008, 2010).

I propose that there is a notion of acquisition associated with the personal dative, and that its core semantics are a GETTING schema plus a focus on subject affect (Rotschy McLachlan ms.). We have made the case in Rotschy McLachlan and Queller (2010) that the personal dative evolved out of the CREATION/ACQUISITION subset of the ditransitive construction (Goldberg 1995). What begins in the ditransitive as a recipient/beneficiary reflexive dative pronoun marking the third argument in the construction is reanalyzed as an affect-marking ethical dative, so that the examples above (1-3) are possible.

The notion of acquisition, then, is a semantic shift from the CAUSE-OBTAIN schema that Goldberg identifies as the core semantics of the ditransitive (1995). This semantic shift accompanies the syntactic shift from the three-argument accomplishment verbs that are required by the ditransitive to the two-argument, stative verbs that are typical of the PD. As two-argument

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verbs such as ‘want’ and ‘need’ do not include the notion of a receiver, the hearer is forced to re-interpret the semantics of the construction in terms of GETTING—a notion that requires only a subject who acquires and an object that is acquired. This analysis is motivated by the types of verbs that occur with the PD, which are almost exclusively verbs of possession or acquisition or those like ‘want’ and ‘need’ that embed the notion of possession (Horn 2008, 2010; Rotschy McLachlan 2011). My argument in this paper focuses on ‘love’ and its interactions with ‘some’.

### 3. Problems with the analysis of ‘some’ as semantically empty

In his analyses of the PD, Horn (2008, 2010) suggests ‘some’ in the *I (Just) Love Me Some {X}* subconstruction is semantically empty and is simply fulfilling an indefiniteness constraint on the construction. He suggests that as a result of the popularity of the construction, the core semantics have been bleached so that “I love me some me” is essentially reducible to “I love myself”.

There are two empirical problems with this analysis. First, the claim that the use of ‘some’ is required to fulfill an indefiniteness constraint on the PD only holds if there is, in fact, an indefiniteness constraint. I Googled ten prototypical PD verbs in the first person with various determiners. While ‘a’ or ‘an’ were most frequent, ‘the’ or ‘that’ were preferred to ‘some’ in all but two variations. In ‘love’ PDs, in contrast, ‘some’ was by far the most frequent overall. This suggests that the overall preference for ‘a’ or ‘an’ may not be a preference for indefiniteness in general, and so not an adequate explanation for the prevalence of ‘some’ in the *I love me some {X}* subconstruction.

A second problem is that the referents of direct objects in ‘love’ PDs are different than those in other PD constructions. In 36 of 185 PD tokens from COCA, direct objects referred to familiars of the subject. None referred to famous people. However, in PD constructions with ‘love’, human referents of direct objects are overwhelmingly entertainers. In Google and Twitter searches of “*I love me some*” (September 5, 2010), of the first 200 and 50 tokens respectively, all individual human direct object referents were celebrities.

The fact that the difference in determiners occurs in conjunction with different types of direct objects suggests that an explanation of the frequency of ‘some’ based on the semantics of the direct objects might provide a better explanation than an independent syntactic requirement.

### 4. The semantics of ‘some’ in PD constructions with ‘love’

The view that ‘some’ is simply a syntactic placeholder to fulfill the requirements of the construction seems unsatisfactory given the data. I propose instead that ‘some’ in the *I (Just) Love Me Some {X}* pattern acts as an indefinite quantifier, and it forces a construal of the direct object as a consumable item that, in accordance with the PD’s core semantics of GETTING, the subject desires to acquire and experience over multiple consumption events.

In order to make sense of the role ‘some’ plays here, it is critical to understand the compositionality of the *I {Just} Love Me Some* sub-construction as a whole. In order to accommodate the notion of acquisition that is part of the constructional semantics of the PD, we understand the ‘love’ of this construction to indicate not deep affection for a familiar, but a sense of pleasure derived from the object—‘love’ in the sense of ‘desire’.

In conjunction with these semantics, ‘some’ can be understood as contributing a sense of indefinite quantification, where the subject desires to acquire an unspecified but presumably large quantity of the direct object over multiple consumption events. This combination suggests a craving for an intensely desirable object. As Horn points out (2010), the partitive reading of ‘some’, where the subject desires to acquire a subset of the direct object (some but not all), is not

readily available on most readings, even with direct objects that could reasonably be construed that way in other contexts. With human direct objects, this becomes even more clear:

- (4) a. ?**I love me some him**, but not all of him.  
 b. **I love me some him**. I just can't get enough of him.

In (b), ‘some’ is coercing a reading in which the human direct object is a mass comparable to chocolate or other consumables. This reading is in fact consistent with the way we experience celebrities—not as individuals for whom we have deep affection, but as commodities that we can purchase and “consume,” in a metaphorical sense, for our entertainment.

In the following example, it is implied that the speaker has experienced Jiminy Glick multiple times and would take any opportunity to experience him again; in fact, he seems to crave more of him.

- (5) **I love me some Jiminy Glick**. [...] I got so excited talking about Jiminy Glick that I said, and I meant it, that if a genie gave me one wish, I would wish that Glick was a real person. He wouldn't have to be my friend or anything, or even still alive, but it would be worth the one wish just so that Jiminy Glick had existed at all. (Google, 5/25/10).

In keeping with the notion of consumability, instances of *I Love Me Some {X}* where X is the name of an individual celebrity often occur in the context of a subject commenting on the quality of the celebrity's work, highlighting the aspects of the person which allow for the construal of the person as a commodity.

- (6) **I love me some Kerry Washington**. She is beautiful, talented, and stylish, but when is she coming out with new projects? (Google 9/5/2010)

In examples such as this, the focus is on the speakers' experience of the direct object referents and the value of the entertainment they produce for consumption.

Perhaps equally common, however, are comments on the attractiveness of direct object referents. Consistent with sense of acquisition and the notion of consumability, references to sexuality and the sexual “yumminess” of the direct object referent are prototypical.

- (7) (Mmmmmmm, **I love me some Johnny Depp** with a smile. Not as good as Johnny Depp wearing just a smile, but I'm a beggar and this is what I got (Google 9/5/2010).

### 5. Semantically consistent use of ‘some’ in other PD constructions

This use of ‘some’ is not unique to PD constructions with ‘love’. In fact, it is used consistently, with the more prototypical PD verbs as well. Example (9) conveys a similar sense of craving for an indefinite quantity of a consumable object, even when the implied referent of ‘that’ is a person.

- (8) **I'm gonna get me some of that**.

Less entrenched examples occur as well:

- (9) Holy crap. Paradise, anybody??? **Can I get me some Matt Farrell???** I think I've read that book (and all the others) at least a hundred times. (Google 9/6/10)

As in the examples with ‘love’, these focus on the consumable aspects of the direct object referent, suggesting a craving for more experiences of them. Tellingly, as with ‘love’, searches of “*I { want / need / get / had } me some*” turn up examples which have celebrities as direct object referents, but none in which the direct object referent is a familiar of the subject.

### 7. Semantics of other determiners in PD constructions

Further evidence that this reading is due to the contribution of ‘some’ and not the semantics of the personal dative itself or the verb is that it is difficult to get the same reading with other determiners.

(10) I love me **some** / **a** / **that** Michael Jackson.  
 ‘Some’ implies that the referent of ‘Michael Jackson’ is a sort of commodity: I can’t get enough of his music. ‘A’ seems to suggest that I love someone of the same type that he is, but not him in particular. ‘That’ suggests an appreciation for the individual as a person; it seems felicitous here to substitute the name of someone I know personally. Googled examples of “*I love me {a / that}*” appear to confirm these intuitions, turning up types and demonstratives respectively.

## 6. Conclusion

Rather than being simply syntactic filler, ‘some’ acts as an indefinite quantifier. In combination with the ‘desire’ sense of ‘love’ and the PD constructional semantics of GETTING, ‘some’ coerces a construal of the direct object as a consumable mass entity that the subject craves over multiple consumption events. Seen in this light, T.O.’s slogan, “I love me some me”, is not simply reducible to “I love myself.” Instead, it is an artful and humorous boast in which T.O. makes use of the *I {Just} Love Me Some {X}* construction to present himself as a celebrity commodity so desirable that even he can’t get enough of himself. This is entirely consistent with the broader patterns of usage of the subconstruction and core GETTING semantics of the PD. This analysis of ‘some’ explains the spread of the PD construction into ‘love’ PDs not only in terms of a faddish popularity, but as a bona fide member of the PD network, with consistent, and more importantly, motivated semantics.

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