

I gave it him –

On the motivation of the ‘Alternative Double Object Construction’ in English

1 Introduction: Three ways of saying *x gave y to z* with two pronominal objects

- (1) *His Dad pulled the arrow off the door and GAVE IT TO HIM.* [BNC ABX 1076]
 (2) *He wanted more time and the rebels GAVE HIM IT.* [BNC HH5 1555]
 (3) *I got the map from his secretary, and when I GAVE IT HIM he spread it out on his desk.* [BNC H0D 808]

- three types of ditransitive constructions with two pronominal objects:
 1. the PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT CONSTRUCTION/PREP; cf. (1)
 2. the CANONICAL DOUBLE OBJECT CONSTRUCTION/REC>TH; cf. (2)
 3. the ALTERNATIVE DOUBLE OBJECT CONSTRUCTION/TH>REC; cf. (3)
- both double object constructions are relatively rare, in comparison to PREP, and moreover restricted in terms of specific socio-linguistic parameters (cf. Siewierska & Hollmann to appear for an overview):
 - TH>REC seems to be restricted to British varieties of English
 - REC>TH seems to be more common than TH>REC in American and Australian English (but PREP prevails)
 - distribution of constructions in England: cf. the map on the right hand side, taken from the *Linguistic Atlas of England (Give it me/me it/it to me!)*; circles indicating ME dialect areas have been added by me
- frequency in corpora (LSWE): data given by Biber et al. (1999: 929)

	CONV	FICT	NEWS	ACADEMIC
PREP	90	70	10	<5
REC>TH	40	<5	<5	<5
TH>REC	20	10	<5	<5

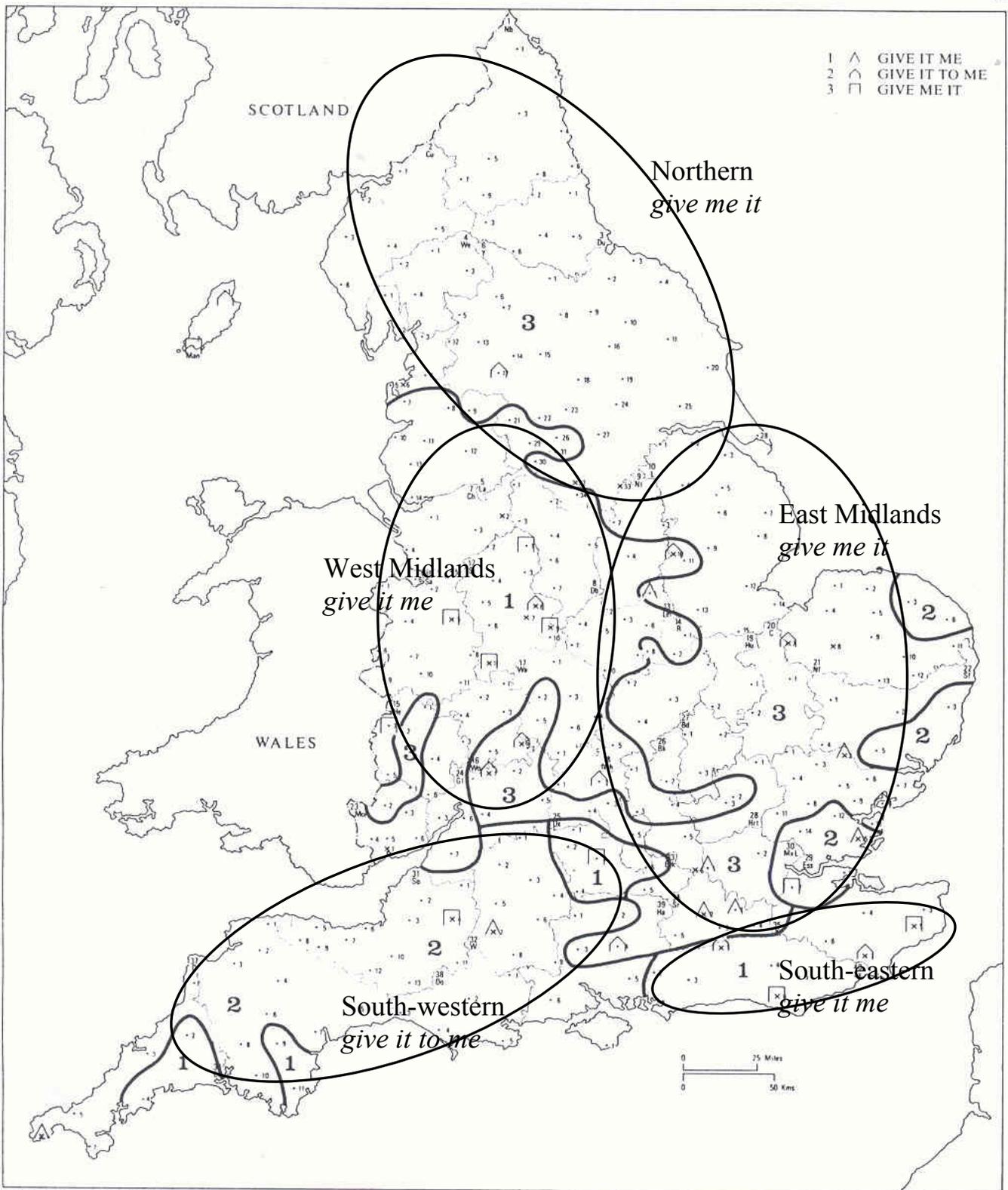
Table 1: Double object constructions with pronominal objects per million words (quoted from Siewierska & Hollmann: to appear)

- Siewierska & Hollmann (to appear):
 “The statistics from Biber et al. (1999: 929) show that register is the deciding factor. [...] in the LSWE the recipient-before-theme order is twice as frequent as the theme-before recipient pattern in conversation though, interestingly enough, not in fiction, where the theme-before-recipient pattern in fact prevails.”

The three constructions in dialects of English
 (from the *Linguistic Atlas of England*)

GIVE IT ME

SI



GIVE ME (no *it*) 34Sr * 5

The word order alone is taken into account, the direct and indirect object actually used being ignored

- QUESTION: Why do some varieties of English allow the ‘Alternative Double Object Construction’ (i.e., TH>REC order)?

- *gave him it*: corresponds to the canonical order of recipient and theme in English
- moreover: REC > TH order is preferred cross-linguistically, esp. in languages with no morphological case system (cf. Primus 1998)
- How is the ‘Alternative Double Object Construction’ motivated?
- PARADIGMATIC MISMATCH: TH>REC conflicts with the canonical order of recipient and theme
- question will be addressed from a comparative and diachronic perspective
 - (a) look at other Germanic languages (esp. German; Section 2)
 - (b) look at earlier stages of German and English (Section 3)
- three explanatory principles will be postulated:
 - (a) STRUCTURAL ANALOGY (paradigmatic factor)
 - (b) PATTERN FREQUENCY (syntagmatic factor)
 - (c) LAW OF INCREASING CONSTITUENTS (syntagmatic factor)
- additional (diachronic) principle: INERTIA

2 The order of pronominal objects in Continental West Germanic

2.1 A ‘paradigmatic mismatch’ in German and Dutch

- similar asymmetry in German:

DAT > ACC with lexical NPs, but ACC > DAT in sequences of pronouns
- (4) Er gab *einem Bettler* *eine Münze*.
 he gave a beggar.DAT a coin.ACC
- (5) ?Er gab *eine Münze* *einem Bettler*.
 he gave a coin.ACC a beggar.DAT
- (6) Er gab *es ihm*.
 he gave it.ACC him.DAT
- (7) ?Er gab *ihm es*.
 he gave him.DAT it.ACC
- similar: Dutch (Donaldson 1997: 59)
- (8) Ik heb *het hun* beloofd. (TH > REC)
 I have it him believed
- (9) Ik heb *hun de informatie* gegeven. (REC > TH)
 I have him the information given
- ‘paradigmatic mismatch’ seems to be of a rather general nature

2.2 Explaining the paradigmatic mismatch in German

2.2.1 An explanation in terms of PATTERN FREQUENCY

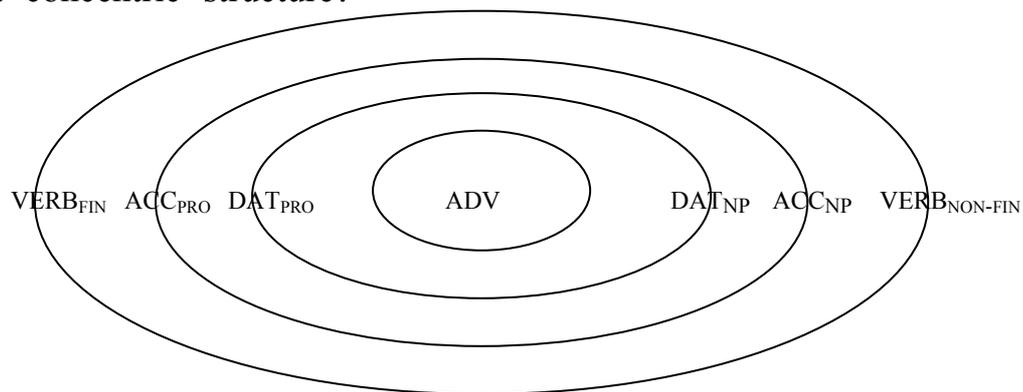
- structure of the German main clause (topological description)

FOREFIELD	V _{fin}	MIDDLE FIELD			V _{non-fin}
		PRON	most ADV's	lexical ARG's	
Ich	habe	es ihm	gestern		gegeben
Ich	habe		gestern	einem Bettler eine Münze	gegeben



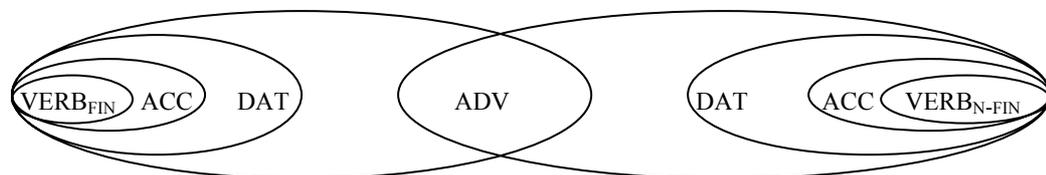
- a 'concentric' structure?

(10)



- better: a 'bi-polar' structure

(11)



- does the verb 'attract' the accusative/direct object?
- possible explanation: PATTERN FREQUENCY
- different types of frequencies:
 - TOKEN FREQUENCY: frequency of *give, it, me* etc.
 - STRING FREQUENCY: frequency of *<give it>*, *<give me>* ...
 - PATTERN FREQUENCY (one var.): frequency of *<V it>*, *<V me>* ...
 - PATTERN FREQUENCY (two var.): frequency of *<V NP_{ACC}>*, *<V NP_{DAT}>* ...
- pattern frequency of *<V ACC>* and *<ACC V>* will always be higher than that of *<V DAT>* and *<DAT V>*, **irrespective of the order of ACC and DAT in the Middle Field!**
- REASON: most transitive verbs are *monotransitive*; the dative is, with a few exceptions, licensed only if there is an accusative whereas accusative NPs are often the only verbal complements in the sentence
- RESULT: establishment of RECURRENT PATTERNS, which tend to occur *en bloc*; therefore, elements of a recurrent pattern 'attract each other'

(12) Ich <habe ihn> gestern getroffen. → recurrent pattern <V_{FIN} ihn>
 I have him yesterday met.
 ‘I met him yesterday.’

(13) Ich <habe ihn> ihr vorgestellt. → recurrent pattern <V_{FIN} ihn>
 I have him.ACC her.DAT introduced
 ‘I have introduced him to her.’

(14) ?Ich habe ihr ihn vorgestellt. → no recurrent pattern
 I have her.DAT him.ACC introduced
 ‘I have introduced him to her.’

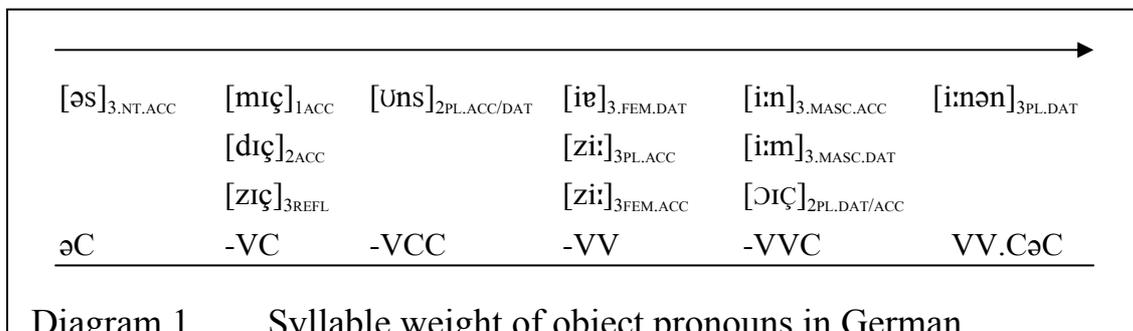
- PROBLEM: cannot account for the linearization of pronominal objects in subordinate clauses, where TH>REC is likewise the normal order

(15) dass ich es ihm gestern gesagt habe
 that I it him yesterday told have
 ‘...that I told him it yesterday.’

- Is the order of elements primarily determined in main clauses and then transferred to subordinate clauses?

2.2.2 A second aspect: The ‘law of increasing constituents’

- phonological observation: accusative pronouns typically have less phonological substance than dative pronouns
- consequently, it is expected that accusative pronouns will precede dative pronouns, according to the ‘law of increasing constituents’ (cf. Behagel 1932)



- generalization holds in most (but not all) cases
- What is the status of phonological weight (cause or effect)?
- inverse correlation between TOKEN FREQUENCY and phonological weight (cf. Zipf’s law)
- accusative pronouns are more frequent than dative pronouns (because the presence of a dative argument usually requires the presence of an accusative argument)
- phonological lightness is the consequence of frequency
- effect: *supports* the tendency for accusative pronouns to be placed before dative pronouns

- chain of causality:
high frequency → less phonological weight → left-marginal position
- summary: three ‘explanatory principles’
 1. STRUCTURAL ANALOGY
 2. PATTERN FREQUENCY
 3. LAW OF INCREASING CONSTITUENTS
- moreover: a universal tendency towards REC>TH

favours REC>TH	favours TH>REC
ANALOGY	PATTERN FREQUENCY
universal tendency REC>TH	LAW OF INCREASING CONSTITUENTS

Table 2: Factors favouring REC>TH and TH>REC in German

3 A diachronic perspective: English and German

3.1 From Old to Modern German

- no major changes since Old German times
- (16) Old High German (Notker, c1000)
 daz ih mih iro intsaget
 that I me.ACC them.FEM.GEN.PL abstain from
 ‘that I abstain from them’ (Behagel 1932: 73)
- (17) also sie in got bevolhen hat
 so she him.ACC god.DAT ordered has
 ‘So she recommended him to god.’ (Behagel 1932: 73)
- (18) Early Modern German (Niclas von Wyle, 15th cent.)
 warumb solt ich mich dir nit geben
 why should I me.ACC you.DAT not give
 ‘Why should I not give myself to you?’
- (19) tete sich ir flyßig enpfehlen
 did REFL.ACC her.DAT eager(ly) recommend
 ‘...recommended himself eagerly to her.’ (Behagel 1932: 73)

3.2 Old English

- similar to German
ACC > DAT for pronouns, DAT > ACC for lexical NPs
 - in main clauses/V2
- (20) West Saxon, 950-1050
 & hæfde hit him wel neh twelf monæð
 and had it him well near twelve months
 ‘...and kept it for himself for about twelve months.’ (AS Charters 91, 174)
- (21) West Saxon, 11th cent.
 ...gelæste hit him georne
 ...should.pay it him eagerly
 ‘...(he) should pay it to him readily.’ (Laws of Aethelred VI, 25,2)

- in subordinate clauses and sentences introduced by a conjunction:

(22) West Saxon

& cwæð þæt se papa hit him forbodden hæfde
& said that the pope it him_{DAT} forbidden had

‘...and said that the Pope had forbidden it him.’ (AS Chronicles 1048, 8)

(23) He(þe) bæd langes lifes, and þu hit him sealdest ...

he (you) asked long.GEN life.GEN and you it him gave ...

‘He asked you for a long life, and you gave it to him ...’ (Paris Pslt. 20, 4)

(24) Nu hit wære cyn þæt þu hit him wræce mid þinre handa.

now it would.be proper that you it him avenge.SJ with your hands

Paris Psalter 9, 34/35

3.3 Middle English

- two important developments
 1. change from OV/verb-second to VO word order
 2. syncretism of accusative and dative in the pronouns
- dialects react differently to these ‘challenges’
- TH>REC is retained

(25) Thou that knowest the vse of an argument, I pray the schewe yt me.

MED, s.v. *ūse*, a1500, dialect not classified

(26) ‘Gossip’, quod þe wolf, ‘forZef hit me’.

MED, s.v. *god-sib*, a1300, dialect not classified

(27) he wule hit me forZeuen

MED, s.v. *mīld-herted*, a1225, dialect not classified

- REC>TH is newly created (or did it exist in the relevant varieties even in Old English times?)

(28) ...telle me it

MED, s.v. *rāġe*, a1500; dialect not classified

(29) A pure man ... prayed þaim to giff hym it.

a pure man ... prayed them to give him it

‘A pure man prayed them to give it to them.’

MED, s.v. *thirst*, c1450, Alph. Tales

- note: REC>TH is also attested in (conservative) OV-dialects

(30) Gode faith me it tauZte

MED, s.v. *tēchen*, c1400, W-Midlands

(31) he wil me it allowe

MED, s.v. *tēchen*, c1400, W-Midlands

- hypothesis on the development from Old English to Modern English (simplified):

