1 Double object constructions

Ditransitive verbs
 Just as there are intransitive verbs (jump) that have only one participant, and transitive verbs (kick) that have two, there are ditransitive verbs that have three. Give, send, introduce, ... 

In English, there are often two forms that such verbs can take:

(1) John gave a book to Mary.
(2) John gave Mary a book.

The double object construction
 At first glance, these two forms feel like they mean the same thing. So, there have been many attempts in the syntactic literature to try to derive one from the other. Something like:

(3) John gave a book to Mary.

(4) John gave Mary a book

Meaning differences
 However, there is a problem with this—they don’t really seem to mean the same thing. Observe (Oehrle 1976)

(5) a. The boss sent John to Chicago.
    b. # The boss sent Chicago John.

(6) a. The teacher taught French to the students.
    b. The teacher taught the students French.

(7) a. John gave Mary a child.
    b. John gave a child to Mary.
Have vs. go

The PP type seems to have a kind of ‘motion’ meaning—The boss caused John to go to Chicago, the teacher caused French to head studentwards.

The double object type seems to have more of a ‘have’ meaning—#The boss caused Chicago to have John, the teacher caused the students to have French.

Causehave, causeloc

Harley (2002) proposes that these two forms are actually underlyingly different—one is effectively ‘cause to be located’ and the other is effectively ‘cause to have.’ She also proposes that the verbs (give, send, etc.) are composites, made of two pieces but pronounced as a single word.

(8) Bill CAUSE [a book LOC to Mary]
(9) Bill CAUSE+LOC\(i\) [a book \(t_i\) to Mary]
(10) Bill CAUSE [Mary HAVE a book]
(11) Bill CAUSE+HAVE\(i\) [Mary \(t_i\) a book]

Lexical decomposition

In the process, Harley proposes that these “verb pieces” are common to some other verbs as well. In particular, she proposes that get is BECOME+HAVE, have is BE+HAVE.

She interprets HAVE and LOC as prepositions—which, incidentally, connects this up with the previous discussion of interpreting have as underlying be plus a fused preposition. Have is \(be+HAVE\). (Note: HAVE \(\neq\) have.)

2 Idioms: Richards (2001)

Idioms

There is some interesting evidence for this from idioms, which was observed by Richards (2001).

Idioms here are things whose meaning is not derivable from its component parts. For example, kick the bucket. The assumption about these meanings is that
they can be assigned to (a fairly small, but complex) part of the structure. So, for *kick the bucket*, the VP can get a special meaning just when the V is *kicked* and the NP is *the bucket*.

**Idiom = (originally) close**

The further point about idioms is that the only way you can get the idiomatic meaning is if there really was, e.g., a VP [*kick the bucket*] initially—even if things get moved around afterwards. Without getting into great detail, observe how idioms can fall apart:

(12) The cat is out of the bag.
(13) The cat is likely to be out of the bag.
(14) The cat is likely to be out of the bag.
(15) The cat wants to be out of the bag.
(16) The bag is what the cat is out of.
(17) The bag is what the cat is out of.

**Getting the sack**

Richards (2001) is particularly looking at the relationship between idioms, *give*, and *get*. *Have* and *want* sometimes work, not always.

(18) a. Billy gave Susan the boot/sack/finger.
    b. Susan got the boot/sack/finger (from Billy).
    c. ? Susan wanted the boot/sack/finger (from Billy).
(19) a. Billy gave Susan the creeps.
    b. Susan got the creeps (from Billy).
    c. Susan had the creeps.

**The idiom is not just in the noun**

When Mary gives John the boot, the idiomatic meaning does not arise simply due to a special interpretation of the noun. Some nouns do—so *white elephant*, purportedly meaning something like ‘expensive object of little value.’ Those nouns get the idiomatic reading wherever you find them—not so for the boot.
(20)  a. John is buying another white elephant.
b. White elephants have ruined many a company.
c. A white elephant’s legacy is often financial ruin.

(21)  a. * I was sorry to hear about the boot.
b. * The boot has ruined many an employee’s Christmas.
c. * The boot’s legacy is often severe psychological problems.

It’s too systematic to be V+NP

We could suppose that give the boot, get the boot, etc., are each their own idiom, like kick the bucket. But that’s not interesting, we wouldn’t expect such a systematic relationship.

However, back to the previous discussion, what if the idiom were actually HAVE the boot?

HAVEding the boot

(22)  John CAUSE Mary [HAVE the boot/sack/finger].

This also tells us why the idioms fall apart when the double object form isn’t used—there’s no HAVE, just LOC.

(23)  # John gave the boot/sack/finger to Mary.

Wanting to HAVE the sack

Harley (2004) observes that want+NP also seems to involve HAVE (not, as several had proposed, have).

(24)  John wants a beer.
(25)  John wants a kiss.
(26)  John wants the sack.

LOC idioms

There are also idioms with LOC (these I think have to be NP+LOC, which is a kind of complication, but if we allow for that, this makes sense):

(27)  a. Laura gave birth to Nolan.
b. * Laura gave Nolan birth.
c. * Nolan got/has/wants birth.

(28) a. The Romans gave way to the Visigoths.
b. * The Romans gave the Visigoths way.
c. * The Visigoths got/have/want way.

3 Acquisition: Viau (2007)

Order of acquisition

Viau (2007) examined corpora for 22 English-speaking children, specifically looking for the “age of acquisition” (first clear use) of a number of verbs: *get*, *have*, *want*, ditransitive verbs (like *give*) in their “prepositional” form and in their “double object” form, as well as the directional use of *to*, and causative verbs.

Summary of forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primitive</th>
<th>Instantiation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HAVE</td>
<td>DO-dative</td>
<td>[x CAUSE [z HAVE y]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>get</em></td>
<td>[BECOME [x HAVE y]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>have</em></td>
<td>[BE [x HAVE y]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>want</em></td>
<td>want [x HAVE y]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>PP-dative</td>
<td>[x CAUSE [y GO z]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>directional</em> to</td>
<td>[x GO XP-location]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUSE</td>
<td>DO-dative</td>
<td>[x CAUSE [z HAVE y]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PP-dative</td>
<td>[x CAUSE [y GO z]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>causative verbs</td>
<td>[x CAUSE [y BECOME XP-state]]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So: Everything with *HAVE* should be acquired around the same time, everything with *GO* should be acquired around the same time, everything with *CAUSE* should be acquired around the same time.

Predictions

Specifically:

- DO-datives had previously been shown to precede PP-datives.
- Causative verbs should be not later than DO-datives.
• Causative verbs should precede than PP-datives.
• *get, have, want* should be not later than DO-datives.
• Directional *to* should be not later than PP-datives.

**Summarized/simplified results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>get</th>
<th>want</th>
<th>Causative</th>
<th>have</th>
<th>DO-datives</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>PP-datives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1;11.1</td>
<td>1;11.7</td>
<td>2;0.4</td>
<td>2;0.7</td>
<td>2;1.6</td>
<td>2;4</td>
<td>2;4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become</td>
<td>want</td>
<td>become</td>
<td>be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• U1 causative verbs sig corr with U1 of DO-datives, PP-datives.
• U1 of *get, have, want* sig corr with each other.
• U1 of *to* sig corr with PP-datives.

### 4 Crosslinguistic considerations

**DOC relies on HAVE**

One of Harley’s (2002) major points is that the existence of a double object construction like this relies on a language having both **LOC** and **HAVE**, and she proposes that some languages simply lack **HAVE**.

A language that lacks **HAVE** will necessarily lack *have*, although some languages seem to have **HAVE** and lack *have*. (Clear?)

#### 4.1 Examples

**Irish**

Irish does not have a double object version of *give*. Possessor lower than possessee, recipient lower than theme.

(29) Tá an peann ag Máire.
    be the pen at Mary
    ‘Mary has the pen.’
(30)  * Tá a₁ pheann-fhéin ag chuile₁ bhuachaill
is his pen-self at every boy

(‘Every boy has his pen.’)

(31)  * Thug Míleóa a₁ pheann-fhéin do chuile₁ bhuachaill
gave Milo his pen-self to every boy

(‘Milo gave every boy his pen.’)

Diné

(32)  Diné lį́’ b-ee hóló.
man horse he[B]-with exists
‘The man has a horse.’

(33)  * Diné lį́’ y-ee hóló.
man horse he[Y]-with exists
(‘The man has a horse.’)

(34)  a. Diné lį́’ y-ee hóló.

b. Diné lį́’ b-ee l’ hóló.

Diné does not have a double object version of give. Possessor lower than possessee (originally, Y-order).

Japanese

(35)  John-ga/ni zibun-no uti-ga aru
John-NOM/DAT self-GEN house-NOM exist
‘John has his house.’

(36)  a. Bugs-ga Daffy-ni piza-o age-ta
Bugs-NOM Daffy-DAT pizza-ACC give-PAST
‘Bugs gave Daffy a pizza.’

b. Bugs-ga piza-o Daffy-ni age-ta
Bugs-NOM pizza-ACC Daffy-DAT give-PAST
‘Bugs gave a pizza to Daffy.’
Japanese

For a couple of reasons, Japanese is taken to be a language without *have*, but nevertheless with HAVE. There does seem to be a double-object version of *give*, and using it can disrupt idioms.

(37) a. Taroo-ga hi-ni abura-o sosoida.
   Taro-NOM fire-DAT oil-ACC poured
   ‘Taro made things worse.’

b. # Taroo-ga abura-o hi-ni sosoida.
   Taro-NOM oil-ACC fire-DAT poured
   (‘Taro made things worse.’)

Japanese

Complex fact about numeral classifiers show that –*ni* is higher than –*o* in the first order, –*o* is higher than –*ni* in the second (it didn’t just “scramble”).

(38) a. Bugs-ga tomodati-ni 2-ri piza-o age-ta
   Bugs-NOM friends-DAT 2-CL pizza-ACC give-PAST
   ‘Bugs gave two friends pizza.’

b. * Bugs-ga piza-o tomodati-ni 2-ri age-ta
   Bugs-NOM pizza-ACC friends-P 2-CL give-PAST
   (‘Bugs gave pizza to 2 friends.’)

Romance

Romance languages certainly have *have*, thus HAVE. No obvious double-object construction, but tests that show whether recipient or theme is higher work in both directions.

(39) a. Una lunga terapia psicoanalitica ha restituito Maria a se stessa.
   ‘A long psychoanalytic therapy restored Maria to herself.’

b. Una lunga terapia psicoanalitica ha restituito se stessa a Maria.
   ‘A long psychoanalytic therapy restored herself to Maria.’

(40) a. Marie a donné soni crayon à chaquei garçon.
   ‘Mary gave his pencil to every boy.’

b. Jean a présenté chaquei institutrice à sesi élèves.
   ‘Jean introduced every teacher to her students.’
4.2 Universals

The universals part

A number of specific examples here, but the main points about possible variation are these:

- Possession of the “have” sort relies on having HAVE.
- Double-object constructions (with recipient higher) rely on HAVE.
- Having have requires having HAVE.
- Some languages don’t have HAVE (Irish, Diné).
- Some do even without having have (Japanese).

References