

**Katarzyna Sówka**

Department of English  
Wrocław University

## NON-UNIFORM APPROACH TOWARDS DATIVIZABLE VERBS

**Key words:** dative alternation, dativizable verbs, monosemy approach, polysemy approach, verbs of giving

To provide data and support to Levin and Rappaport Hovav (2005) thesis concerning monosemy of dativizable *give* verbs, I will begin with pointing out drawbacks in the polysemy approach towards *verbs of giving*, *future having*, and *verbs of communicated message* in English. This analysis will take issue with the assumptions of the polysemy approach. In order to support observation precluding polysemous meaning of investigated groups of verbs in English, later, I will carefully scrutinize the equivalents of English *verbs of giving*, *future having* and *verbs of communicated message* in German and Polish. Both these languages show the equivalent of the Dative Alternation.

The data provided from other languages will demonstrate that *verbs of giving* and their subtypes inherently involve only possession in their root meanings and exclude any caused movement.

### 1. The striking evidence

#### 1.1 *Verbs of giving/give verbs*

*Verbs of giving* in English i.e. *give, hand, pass, sell, lend, pay* allow two alternate argument realizations, which phenomenon is denominated as the Dative Alternation.

- (1) a. Martha gave the child a candy. (DO)
- b. Martha gave a candy to the child. (PO)

The analysis of the variants in (1), according to the polysemy approach gives the variants two separate meaning realizations. The DO frame (1a) expresses a change of possession between the agent and the beneficiary, whereas PO frame adds prominence to the projection of the object movement to the goal. In the result, *give* lexicalizes two meanings, one of a change of possession and the other of caused motion.

On the contrary, Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2005) claim that *give* verbs and their subtypes are monosemous and convey meaning of a change of possession only, which gives rise to two derivationally related structures. In order to prove the assumption that *give verbs* do not involve movement in their inherent meaning, they implement a set of tests with source, and path phrases to verbs of this manner. As the result, *give verbs* show to reject these types of phrases, what leads to the conclusion that their inherent meaning confines to possession change only, as shown in (2).

- (2) a. \*Josie gave the ball from Marla (to Bill)  
 b. \*Fred gave the ball under/behind/over Molly.  
 (Rappaport Hovav, Levin 2005)

Other *verbs of giving* analyzed with source/goal test phrases adduce more confirmation to the hypothesis concerning their monosemous meaning, as shown in (3).

- (3) c. \*John passed the sugar from Mary (to Bill)  
 d. \*John handed the letter from Mary (to Bill).  
 e. \*John lent the pen from Mary (to Bill).  
 f. \*John sold the car from Mary (to Mark).

### 1.2 *Verbs of future having*

*Verbs of future having* like *allocate*, *offer*, or *grant* constitute intriguing subgroup of *give* verbs, which appeared to be quite controversial for the polysemy approach in reference to arguments distribution in both DO and PO frames. Consequently, they were classified in the same manner as *verbs of giving* which express not only a change of possession, but also caused movement. However, in the scrutiny with source/goal phrases, they reject to bind with the path marking prepositions, thus cannot express motion, as shown in (4).

- (4) a. \*The government allocated the funds from the Ministry of Finance to the Coca-Cola Company.  
 b. \*The jury granted the award from one scientist to the other.  
 c. \*Jack offered help from Mary to Bill.

### 1.3 *Verbs of communicated message*

*Verbs of communicated message* such as *tell*, *show*, *read*, or *quote* do not clearly involve causation of possession schema and for this reason they posed much controversy to the supporters of the polysemy approach. Finally, they were classified as verbs that select not only spatial goals (PO) but also recipients in the DO frame. Nevertheless, the tests with the source/goal phrases refute the movement schema for *verbs of communicated message*, as shown in (5).

- (5) a. \*Mother told/read/quoted the story from her grandmother to her child.  
 b. \*The guide showed the sign over the tourists.

The salient behavior of *give verbs* with source/goal phrases distinguishes them from instantaneous motion events i.e. *kick verbs*. The provided scrutiny with *verbs of giving* in English seems to coincide with Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2005) thesis that the intended goal in the PO frame is not a spatial goal but rather a possessional entity. This type of goal may be realized as a recipient standing at the end of the trajectory that comes into the possession of the theme.

Using Langacker's (1991) conceptualization approach, I assume that the goal in PO frame with *give verbs* is employed as the image of a recipient in the sentence not as a spatial goal.

## 2. Supportive evidence from other languages

English is not the only language that has means to express caused motion. In German, the equivalent of the preposition *to* is present in form of the motion preposition *zu*, which is defined as expressing the direction of movement. The allative quality of *zu* 'to' is highlighted by its occurrence with the movement verbs, as in (6).

- (6) a. Jan                    warf/schoss    Anna (Dat)                    den Ball (Acc).  
       'Jan threw/kicked Ann the ball.'  
 b. Jan                    warf/schoss    den Ball(Acc)                zu Anna (Dat).  
       'Jan threw/kicked    the ball to Ann.'  
 c. Jan                    warf/schoss    den Ball(Acc)                oben/hinten Anna.  
       'Jan threw/kicked    the ball over/behind Ann'

This characteristic of *zu* 'to' implies that if *give* involved motion in its inherent meaning it should appear in the PO phrases cross-linguistically, at least in languages that demonstrate the equivalent of the Dative Alternation. However, unlike *verbs of instantaneous movement*, *verbs of giving* like *give* or *pass* in German exclude the *zu* path marker, failing to form the PO frame, (7a) and (7b).

- (7) a. Jan                    gab/reichte    Anna (Dat)                    einen Welpen (Acc).  
       'Jan gave/passed Ann a puppy.'  
 b.\* Jan                    gab/reichte    einen Welpen (Acc) zu Anna(Dat).  
       'Jan gave/passed a puppy    to Ann.'

The pattern of data presented may suggest that the root meaning of *verbs of giving* is not of caused motion but rather of a causation of possession in German. The distinctive behavior precluding movement is pointed out, even more distinctively when *verbs of giving* appear with path phrases, as shown in (8) below:

- (8) \* Jan gab/reichte einen Welpen (Acc) oben/hinten Anna.  
 'Jan gave/passed a puppy over/behind Ann.'

As for now, Rappaport Hovav's and Levin's thesis concerning monosemous inherent meaning of *give verbs* and their subtypes proves in both scrutinized Germanic languages. In both languages, *give verbs* seem to exclude motion.

In order to find more support to this observation, I will make this cross-linguistic investigation more extensive and demonstrate the schemas of the equivalents of *give verbs* in Polish.

A spatial marker *do* in Polish associated with towards goal movement constitutes a direct equivalent of English preposition *to*, in PO phrases. As in German, Polish allative *do* occurs with *verbs of giving* (9) and it combines with verbs of caused motion, like *kick, throw, send, mail, or bring* occurring in PO phrases, as shown in (10).

- (9) a. Jan dał/podał Annie (Dat) cukierniczkę (Acc).  
 'Jan gave/passed Ann the sugar bowl.'  
 b. \*Jan dał/podał cukierniczkę (Acc) do Anny (Gen).  
 'Jan gave/passed the sugar bowl to Ann.'
- (10) a. Jan kopnął/rzucił Piotrowi (Dat) piłkę (Acc).  
 'John kicked/threw Peter the ball.'  
 b. Jan kopnął/rzucił piłkę (Acc) do Piotra (Gen).  
 'John kicked/threw the ball to Peter.'

Verbs like *sell, lend, and hand* that indirectly express a change of possession are found neither with path nor source phrases in English (2). This scrutiny is confirmed by data from scrutinized languages where *give verbs* do not occur in PO variant (11b), (12b). These observations raise hypothesis that the inherent meaning these verbs connote is of a change of possession or just temporary possession but not of caused motion.

- (11) a. Ich verkaufte/lieh ihm (Dat) mein Auto (Acc).  
 Ja sprzedałem/pożyczyłem mu (Dat) samochód (Acc).  
 'I sold/lent him my car.'  
 b. \*Ich verkaufte/lieh das Auto (Acc) zu ihm (Dat).  
 \*Ja sprzedałem/pożyczyłem samochód (Acc) do niego (Gen).  
 'I sold/lent my car to him.'
- (12) a. Jan reichte dem Boss (Dat) das Aktenstück (Acc).  
 Jan wręczył szefowi dokumenty.  
 'Jan handed the boss the documents.'

- b.\*Jan reichte das Aktenstück (Acc) zu dem Boss (Dat).  
 \*Jan wręczył dokumenty (Dat) do szefa (Gen).  
 ‘Jan handed the document to the boss.’

The test on motion with *verbs of future having* in (4), proved that in English, they do not express movement although acceptable in the PO frame. On the contrary, in Polish and German *verbs of future having* do not occur in the PO phrase but only in the DO structure.

- (13) a. Die Regierung teilte der Klinik (Dat) die Finanzmittel (Acc).  
 Rząd przydzielił klinice (Dat) fundusze (Acc).  
 ‘The government allocated the clinic funds.’
- b.\*Die Regierung teilte die Finanzmittel (Acc) zu der Klinik (Dat).  
 \*Rząd przydzielił fundusze (Acc) do kliniki (Gen).  
 ‘The government allocated funds to the clinic.’
- (14) a. Jan bot Anna (Dat) die Hilfe (Acc) an.  
 Jan zaoferował Annie (Dat) pomoc (Acc).  
 ‘John offered Ann help.’
- b.\*Jan bot eine Hilfe (Acc) zu Anna (Dat) an.  
 \*Jan zaoferował pomoc (Acc) do Anny (Dat).  
 ‘John offered help to Ann’
- (15) a. Jan zeigte Anna (Dat) das Bild (Acc).  
 Jan pokazał Annie (Dat) obraz (Acc).  
 ‘John showed Ann the picture.’
- b.\*Jan zeigte das Bild (Acc) zu Anna (Dat).  
 \*Jan pokazał obraz (Acc) do Anny (Gen).  
 ‘John showed the picture to Ann.’

The salient observation in (13), (14), and (15) is that neither of presented verbs requires the allative preposition. This fact stands for the conclusion that these verbs do not have caused motion in their inherent meaning. What is more, the only structure they take is DO frame with two nominals after the verb that symbolizes possessive relation between the agent and recipient.

Group of *verbs of communicated message* classifies as a subtype of *give verbs* though this specific group consists of verbs that are barely associated with any change of possession. The impression that they lack possession-change meaning schema emerges from the fact that they all convey the meaning of oral or written communication between people, in other words, of the exchange of the information. Consequently, in Polish and German the only structure they form is DO frame, a change of possession schema, as shown in (16).

- (16) a. Jan                      sagte/las                      Anna die Geschichte.  
       'Jan                      powiedział/przeczytał        Annie historyjkę.  
       'John told/read Ann    the tale.'
- b.\*Jan                      sagte/las                      die Geschichte        zu Anna.  
       \*Jan powiedział/przeczytał        historyjkę        do Anny.  
       'John told/read the tale to Ann.'

## Conclusion

In this paper, I gave cross-linguistic support to Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2005) approach to *give verbs* and their subclasses. The aim of my research was to provide more data supporting the thesis that *verbs of giving* are monosemous in their inherent meaning. What is more, they differ from *verbs of throwing* and *sending* in not expressing caused motion. The results have confirmed the proposal that dativizable verbs differ in reference to their monosemous/polysemous meaning and cannot be analyzed and classified in the same manner. Specifically, the assumption made by Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2005) was that if *verbs of giving* were associated with motion they would take the spatial marker *to* cross-linguistically. The result of my analysis has shown that all constructions in provided languages share common distinctive hallmark, they choose the change of possession pattern exclusively for verbs with the inherent meaning of *give*. What is more, all these verbs exclude the path marker, namely the spatial preposition and its equivalents and do not occur in PO pattern, respectively.

This observation constitutes support to Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2005) thesis that the recipients in English are marked in the same way as goals in the PO constructions. Another assumption that emerged in this scrutiny is that the goal in the PO frame with *give verbs* and their subtypes is not a spatial goal but represents a concept of coming into possession projected as the recipient at the end of the trajectory or path.

All data provided in this paper stands for the theory that *give verbs* and their subtypes are monosemous cross-linguistically.

## References

- Krifka M. (1999). *Manner in Dative Alternation*. WCCFL 18, pp. 260–271.
- Langacker R. W. (1991). *Concept, Image, and Symbol. The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*, Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter.
- Larson R. K. (1988). *On the Double Object Construction*, Linguistic Inquiry 19, pp. 335–391.
- Pinker S. (1989). *Learnability and Cognition: The acquisition of Argument Structure*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
- Rappaport Hovav M., Levin B. (2005). *All dative verbs are not created equal*, <<http://wwwcsli.stanford.edu/~beth/pubs.html>>.

---

## Summary

Dative Alternation has given rise to a lot of controversy in the linguistic studies, especially in the reference to the inherent meaning of *give* verbs and its relation to the arguments projection.

The aim of this paper is to provide support to Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2005) thesis that challenges a recently prevailing polysemy approach, which characterizes dativizable verbs of *giving* as having two inherent meanings. To provide data and support to Levin and Rappaport Hovav (2005) proposal concerning monosemy of dativizable *give* verbs, first, I point out drawbacks in the polysemy approach towards *verbs of giving*, *future having*, and *verbs of communicated message* in English. This analysis takes issue with the assumptions of the polysemy approach and supports the monosemy approach to *give* verbs in English. In order to give more support to this observation, later, I carefully scrutinize the equivalents of English *verbs of giving*, *future having* and *verbs of communicated message* in German and Polish. Both these languages show the equivalent of the Dative Alternation.

The data provided from other languages demonstrates that *verbs of giving* and their subtypes inherently involve only possession in their root meanings and exclude caused movement.