



Which comes first in the double object construction? Diachronic and dialectal variation

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Which comes first in the double object construction?

Diachronic and dialectal variation

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ICEHL 18, Leuven

PDE recipient patterns:

- (1) Jim gave the driver £5. (V-O_i-O_d)
- (2) Jim gave £5 to the driver. (V-O_d-O_p)
- (3) a. ?Jim gave £5 the driver. (V-O_d-O_i)
b. Jim gave it him. (V-O_p-O_d)
- (4) Jim gave to the driver £5. (V-O_p-O_d)

- (1) vs. (2) often treated as a binary variable
- (4) may involve Heavy NP Shift, but (3) does not.
- a variable with three or even four main variants

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PDE beneficiary patterns

- indirect object ~ recipient (O_p typically with *to*)
- indirect object ~ beneficiary (O_p typically with *for*):

- (5) Jim cooked his Dad supper. (cf. (1))
- (6) Jim cooked supper for his Dad. (cf. (2))

- We include both kinds of alternation, with *to*- or with *for*-phrase.

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Our three strands

1. Penn parsed corpora for broad outlines of history
 2. wide range of other corpora for detailed study of dialectal or genre variation
 3. grammatical tradition 16th-19th centuries
- Each strand has advantages.
 - Each presents different methodological challenges.

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ME, eModE, IModE

- PPCME2, PCCEME, PPCMBE to trace from early 12C to early 20C
- searched with CorpusSearch 2
- only targeted patterns with both object arguments explicitly present and both arguments after the verb
- any verb in at least 1 pattern
- any kind of NP object
- corpus parsing nearly always accepted

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Data

- have full data on V-O_i-O_d and V-O_d-O_i (N = 4272)
- data on V-O_d-O_p and V-O_p-O_d will need much more manual intervention (majority of PPs dominated by IP not actually O_p or don't correspond to O_i)
- consider filtering out all hits with verbs not **ever** recorded as alternating
 - 'alternating': once with O_d + O_i and at least once with O_d + O_p (any order)

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Corpora

- only British English data, as V-O_a-O_i 'poor' for most Americans (Haddican 2010)
- 12 corpora analysed (4 tagged and/or parsed)
- because coverage by period (and other considerations) not always comparable, mostly need to report findings corpus by corpus
- decision taken to confine research to examples with one argument = *it*, for reasons of time and sanity

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Corpus	Period	Size (million)	Contents
CEEC	1410-1695	2.16	letters
HC EModE (v2)	1500-1710	1.74	multi-register
Salamanca Corpus (DL)	1500-1951	1.25	dialect literature (drama, verse, prose)
CED	1560-1760	1.22	speech-based registers (trials, witness dep.)
ARCHER 3.2	1600-1999	1.96	multi-register
HC Modern British (v1)	1700-1914	0.95	multi-register
Corpus of Late C18 Prose	1761-1790	0.30	letters
CONCE	1800-1900	0.99	multi-register
Corpus of Late Modern Prose	1861-1919	0.10	letters
HARES-Cambridge Sampler	1970s-1980s	0.18*	spoken, interviews
FREDS	1970-1999	1.01	spoken, interviews
DECTE	1960s-1970s, 1990s, 2001-11	0.8*	spoken, interviews
total of 12 corpora	1410-2011	12.67 m	written, speech-related, spoken

Steps taken

- global list of 65 verb lemmas constructed from lists in Ozón (2009, based on earlier lists), Siewerska & Hollmann (2007), Gerwin (2013), early grammarians (added *procure*); *do*, *dye* excluded – no great loss
- for each verb lemma
 - all spelling variants in all corpora identified
 - all additional variants in *OED* and *EDD*
 - comprehensive list of alternative spellings used for regex string searches

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Steps taken

- similar procedure to identify all spelling variants of the pronoun *it*
- string search with concordancer for each verb lemma in each corpus, using all alternative spellings and tags where available
- for each corpus, searched concatenated outputs for any form of *it* within 5 words of verb lemma
- pruned output manually for relevant constructions

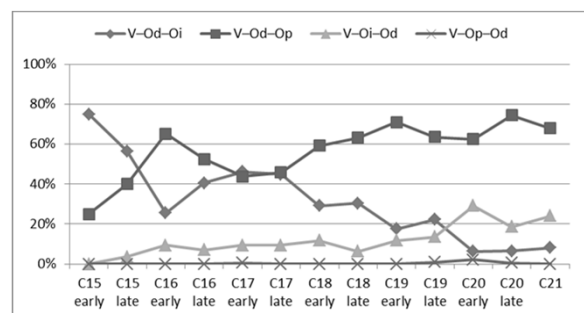
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Limitations of *it* data

- N = 1462 after manual pruning
- literature agrees: variation significantly affected by length of NPs, weight, topicality, or NP = pronoun
- very skewed subset of possible data:
 - *it* is pronominal, light, short and topical
 - will strongly favour structures which place it to left of heavier, longer, more information-rich NPs
- even so, interesting diachronic trends

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Any NP so long as 1 of them = *it*



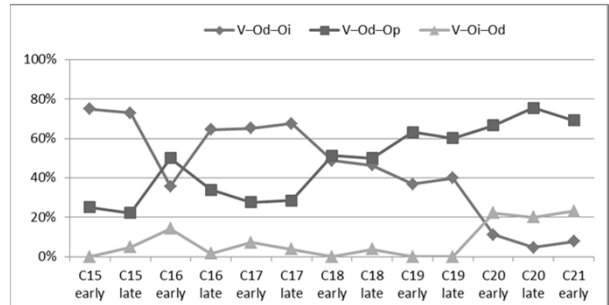
20

$O_d = it$, $O_i/O_p = \text{pronoun}$

- N = 1462
- to control for weight etc. distortion:
 - removed 136 examples with *it* as O_i or O_p
 - removed 489 examples where O_i/O_p was lexical NP or non-personal pronoun
- N = 837 for dataset where both arguments are personal pronouns

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Two pronominal objects, $O_d = it$



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Corpus	Period	Contents
CEEC	1410-1695	-
HC EModE (v2)	1500-1710	-
Salamanca Corpus (DL)	1500-1951	North-Scots; North (East, West); Midlands (East, West); South (East, West)
CED	1560-1760	-
ARCHER 3.2	1600-1999	-
HC Modern British (v1)	1700-1914	-
Corpus of Late C18 Prose	1761-1790	mostly North-west
CONCE	1800-1900	-
Corpus of Late Modern Prose	1861-1919	-
HARES-Cambridge Sampler	1970s-1980s	Cambridgeshire - ?South-east
FREDS	1970-1999	North (NE, NW); Midlands (EM, WM); South-east; South-west; Scotland-Lowlands; Scotland-Highlands; Hebridean Isles; Wales; Isle of Man
DECTE	1960s-1970s, 1990s, 2001-11	North-east

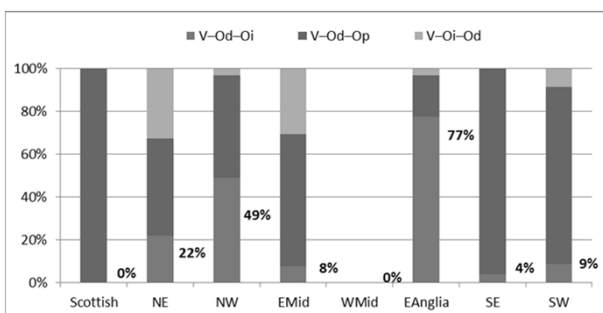
PDE dialect distribution

- some stereotyping in literature: “the North”, etc. (Trudgill 1984, Hughes et al. 2012)
 - NW but not (typically) in NE (Gast 2007, Haddican 2010, Kortmann et al. 2013)
 - urban areas levelling out V-O_d-O_i? (Cheshire et al. 1993)
- our data confirm the above

but (i) some areas missing, (ii) skewed by date (e.g. East Anglia only 15-17C)

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Dialect data (heterogeneous)



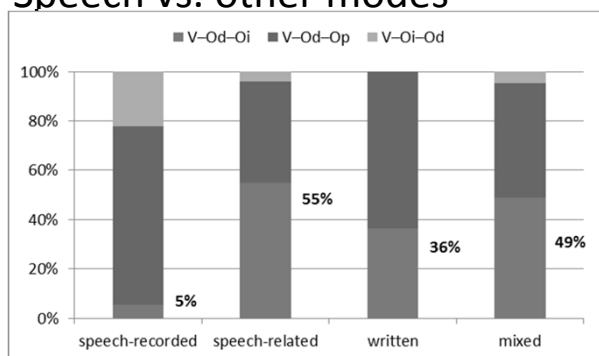
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Genre

- 24 different genres in database
- 21 with two-pronoun data
- genres classified into
 - written-based
 - speech-related
 - speech-recorded (only late 20C)
 - mixed
- distribution of data: heterogeneous and patchy

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Speech vs. other modes



Lemmas

- dative alternation influenced by verbal semantics
- of our 65 lemmas, 38 appear in our *it* data
- of those 38 verbs, 23 occur in V-O_d-O_i
- of those 38 verbs, 14 occur in V-O_i-O_d (7 only once)
- Mukherjee's classification of ditransitives (2005): typical, habitual, peripheral
- of the 837 tokens, 49% involve either GIVE or SEND, with all 3 patterns attested
- another 9 lemmas also appear in 20+ tokens

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The top eleven

- *bring, deliver, give, lend, pay, read, return, send, show, take, tell*
- none have "standard" V-O_i-O_d as preferred pattern
 - 3 don't have it at all (*read, return, take*)
- 7 have "non-standard" V-O_d-O_i as preferred pattern (*deliver, give, lend, pay, send, show, tell*)
- 4 have V-O_d-O_p as preferred pattern (*bring, read, return, take*)

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Early grammarians

Norms and Usage (1586-1900)

- 170 works
- syntactic variation
- change over time
- regional differences
- attitudes

Syntactic variation

- barely discussed before 18C, increasing awareness during 18C and even more during 19C
- 2 topics: omission of preposition, verb government
- explicit discussion of V-O_d-O_i in ca. 20 works
- Elphinston (1765):
 - emphasis; nouns vs. pronouns; pronoun status

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Diachronic change

- Crombie (1830 [1802]): change 18C – 19C
 After verbs of *giving, telling, sending, promising, offering*, and others of like signification, the thing is very generally placed before the person. In the time of Swift and Addison this rule was not uniformly observed. We find authors of that period saying indiscriminately, "Give it us," and "Give us it;" "Tell him it," and "Tell it him;" "He promised me it," and "He promised it me." In Scotland these two modes of expression still obtain. In England they are now reduced under one general rule. We say, "Give it me," "Tell it him," "He sent it us." (p.271)

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Regional differences

- no reference to dialects, not even in ‘provincial’ works but
- Scottish authors criticise V-O_i-O_d as ‘Scotticism’, ‘bad English’, ‘improper’
- corrected to V-O_d-O_i
In the construction of verbs of ‘giving’, ‘sending’, ‘telling’, the personal adjunct is placed last: ‘give it me;’ ‘tell it him;’ ‘he sent it us;’ The form ‘**give me it**’, is a Scotticism. (Bain 1863: 181)

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Attitudes

- criticism of V-O_d-O_i: only 3 works
- rather, recommend preposition be supplied (V-O_d-O_p)
- V-O_d-O_i normal usage still in late 19C
So also in Modern English a dative noun or pronoun precedes an accusative noun, as in *he showed me his pictures*; but if **both are pronouns**, the accusative pronoun precedes: *give it me!* (Sweet 1903 [1898]: II.16)
- Elphinston 1765: V-O_d-O_i in all styles, in the familiar even *say it me*

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What to do about *it*?

- literature suggests possible discrepancy between history of *it* patterns and general history
- not enough data to test this; may be justified [?]
- could “explain” lingering V-O_d-O_i by
 - formal generative model (e.g. personal pronoun as clitic) or competing grammars
 - multivariate analysis of conditioning factors
- another factor: of our 837 tokens, 395 (47%) have V-O_d-O_i (O_d= *it*)
- of these, 259 have *V it me* (45 GIVE *it me*)

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What to do about *it*?

- partial prefabs rather than (or as well as!) examples of fully productive syntax?
 - cf. idiom *get it over with*, but with some possibility of other NP in place of *it*
 - scope for Construction Grammar analysis with hierarchy of increasing specificity (micro-cxn, etc.)?
- in any case, need for more data on general history of **all four variants** (1)-(4) between ME and present

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Presentation available

- slides and bibliography available at
<http://tinyurl.com/DD-download>
- work-in-progress: comments welcome, but please don't quote

Thank you!

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