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THE "LIGHT VERB" CONSTRUCTION IN ASIAN ENGLISHES: CORPUS-BASED EVIDENCE OF CONTACT- INDUCED LANGUAGE VARIATION

Andrew Moody

Much of linguistic theory has been developed with the premise that language contact is an exceptional phenomenon and is not especially useful in determining the structures that are foundational to a language. As a result, variation that occurs within contact environments is frequently excluded from attention when developing grammatical descriptions of English. This exclusion, however, does not account for the demographic realities of who English speakers are and it overlooks the historical importance of contact. Language contact, as conceived by theorists like Thomason and Kaufman (1988), is neither rare nor exceptional. It is with this in mind that I begin to look for normative differences between multilingual and monolingual Englishes. As various historical examples have demonstrated, the processes at work within language contact that produce variation and ultimately change in a language reflect more general tendencies and movements within that language (Milroy, 1992). The results reported today suggest that further investigation into the structural characteristics and norms of various Englishes is likely to inform about the structure of English generally. Specifically, I begin with a structure that is closely related to the expression of transitivity within the language, the ditransitive "light verb" structure.

Description of the Three Corpora

This study was conducted using three electronic corpora representing one monolingual English variety and two multilingual varieties. The monolingual corpus is the International Corpus of English—Great Britain (ICE-GB) (1998). The ICE project was first proposed by Sidney Greenbaum in 1988 (Greenbaum, 1988) and is characterized by the “Common Corpus Design,” which designates that each corpus be composed of 500 texts of approximately 2,000 words each: 300 texts (60%) from specified spoken genres such as “face-to-face conversations” and “phone calls,” and 200 texts (40%) from specified written genres such as “social letters” and “student examination scripts.”

The first of the two multilingual corpora, the ICE-East Africa Corpus (ICE-EA) was compiled in Kenya and Tanzania and attempts to follow the ICE “Common Corpus Design,” but instead include 250 spoken texts (200 spoken and 50 “written as spoken”) from Kenya and Tanzania. The written component is comprised of 400 texts, 200 from Kenya and 200 from Tanzania. ICE-EA represents English contact with more than 150 languages spoken in Kenya and Tanzania. The second multilingual corpus used in this study is the Kollhapur Corpus of Indian English, which was originally designed to offer comparison with the Brown Corpus of American English and the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus of British English, both forerunners of the ICE Common Corpus Design. The Kollhapur Corpus documents the language contact of English in India, where more than 350 other languages are spoken. For purposes of comparison, Table 1 presents the sizes of the three corpora.

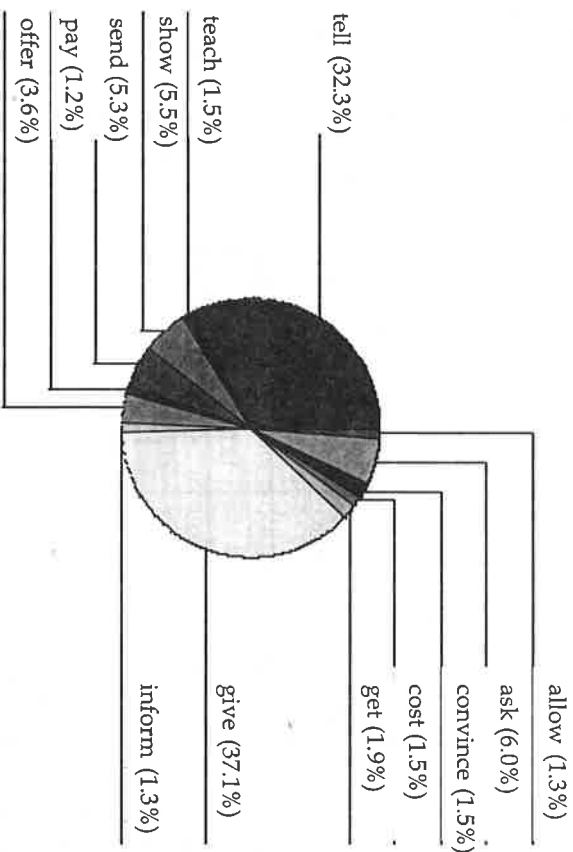
Table 1: The Three corpora used in this study

Name	Size	Description
International Corpus of English—Great Britain (ICE-GB), 1998	1,061,264 words	follows the ICE “Common Corpus Design” of 500 texts of approximately 2,000 words each: 300 (60%) spoken and 200 (40%) written texts from specified genres
International Corpus of English—East Africa (ICE-EA), 1999	1,407,208 words	attempts to follow the ICE “Common Corpus Design,” but instead includes 250 spoken texts (200 spoken and 50 “written as spoken”) from Kenya and Tanzania; the written component is comprised of 400 texts, 200 from Kenya and 200 from Tanzania
Kollhapur Corpus of Indian English	1,106,677 words	designed to offer comparison to the Brown Corpus (American English) and the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus (British English) with 500 written texts

Double-object Verbs in the Monolingual Corpora

A search of the ICE-GB was conducted for all “verbs” within “verb phrases” which are marked “ditransitive.” The search yielded 1,820 results. Of those 1,820, six verbs which were not marked as “main verb” were eliminated, leaving a core of 1,814 tokens. 85 lexical items account for these 1,814 ditransitives in ICE-GB. In order to compare ICE-GB with the two unpaired multilingual corpora, only those lexical items which accounted for 1% of the tokens (e.g. 18 tokens) were used. Hence the list of 85 lexical verbs was reduced to a list of 13 verbs, each occurring more than 17 times as a ditransitive verb within the corpus. The 13 most frequent ditransitive verbs and their frequencies of occurrence are listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: 13 Most Frequent ditransitive verbs from ICE-GB (n=1515)



Double-object Verbs in the Multilingual Corpora

Because the other two corpora are not parsed, it is impossible to search with any certainty for all ditransitive constructions. Instead, the analysis of the other two corpora is limited to ICE-GB’s 13 most frequently used ditransitive verbs. From this point, then, the study shifts attention away from all ditransitive construction in the other two corpora, and instead focuses on the uses of the 13 lexical items, each one of which accounts for no less than

1% of the ICE-GB's ditransitive constructions. Lexical searches were conducted for the 13 most common ICE-GB ditransitive verbs in ICE-EA and Kolhapur. This yielded a result of 107,734 verb phrases. Each of these verb phrases, then, was checked to determine whether or not it was ditransitive. The results of that analysis are listed below in Table 2 as both percentages and ratios of the number of occurrences compared to the number of words in each corpus.

Table 2: Distribution of the 13 ICE-GB verbs across all three corpora

	Great Britain		East Africa		India	
	(n=1516)	1:700	(n=1751)	1:804	(n=1474)	1:751
allow	19 (1.25%)	1:55,856	5 (0.3%)	1:281,94	7 (0.47%)	1:158,096
ask	91 (6.00%)	1:11,662	178 (10.17%)	1:7906	56 (3.80%)	1:19,762
convince	22 (1.45%)	1:48,239	19 (1.09%)	1:74,064	17 (1.15%)	1:65,098
cost	23 (1.52%)	1:46,142	9 (0.51%)	1:156,35	13 (0.88%)	1:85,129
get	29 (1.91%)	1:36,595	12 (0.69%)	1:117,267	8 (0.54%)	1:138,335
give	563 (37.11%)	1:1885	405 (23.13%)	1:3475	340 (23.07%)	1:32,595
inform	20 (1.32%)	1:56,063	72 (4.11%)	1:19,545	31 (2.10%)	1:35,699
offer	54 (3.56%)	1:19,653	36 (2.06%)	1:39,089	27 (1.83%)	1:40,988
pay	18 (1.19%)	1:58,959	27 (1.54%)	1:52,118	14 (0.95%)	1:79,048
send	80 (5.27%)	1:13,266	28 (1.60%)	1:50,257	13 (0.88%)	1:85,129
show	84 (5.54%)	1:12,634	68 (3.88%)	1:20,694	38 (2.58%)	1:29,123
teach	23 (1.52%)	1:46,141	44 (2.51%)	1:31,982	18 (1.22%)	1:61,482
tell	490 (32.30%)	1:2166	848 (48.43%)	1:1659	892 (60.52%)	1:1241

The initial analysis of the ditransitive forms does suggest that the three corpora express differing norms of usage generally. The two most frequent ditransitives in ICE-GB, "give" and "tell," are represented similarly in ICE-EA and Kolhapur. However, the occurrence of "give" is about 38% fewer in the two multilingual corpora, occurring only once every 3,475 words in ICE-EA and once every 32,595 words in Kolhapur. This trend of less frequent use of ditransitive constructions occurs in eight of the 13 lexical verbs analyzed:

allow, convince, cost, get, give, offer, send, and show

Of these eight, "allow," "get," "offer," and "send" are used over 50% less frequently in both the ICE-EA and the Kolhapur corpora.

Only two verbs are used more frequently as ditransitive verbs in the multilingual corpora. The rate of ditransitive occurrence of "tell" is about 31% greater in the ICE-EA corpus and about 75% greater in Kolhapur. Likewise, the rate of ditransitive usage of "inform" is 57% higher in the Kolhapur corpus and 187% higher in the ICE-EA.

The last three verbs show mixed patterns in which "ask," "pay," and "teach" each appear more frequently in the ICE-EA corpus, but less frequently in the Kolhapur corpus.

Dative Alternation in the Corpora

The first phase of this study compares the frequency of ditransitive verb phrases across the three corpora, by simply counting the number of times that each of the 13 lexical items appears within a ditransitive verb phrase. However, it must be noted that the use of these lexical items as a ditransitive verbs often represents a linguistic choice, a choice that is typically referred to as the "dative alternation." As important as the instances of ditransitive verb phrases are the instances in which the ditransitive was not chosen, and the indirect object was instead placed inside a dative prepositional phrase. One way to approximate how frequently the ditransitive form is chosen is to compare the frequency of the ditransitive with the total number of times that each lexical verb appears in the corpus. Table 3 shows the frequency of occurrences of each of the 13 ICE-GB verbs as a percentage of the total number of times that the verb occurs within the corpus. To the degree that a dative alternation is possible, this statistic gives us an idea of how frequently the ditransitive form was chosen over another form of the same verb.

Table 3: Ditransitive verbs (DV) as a percentage of all instances of the verb (representing *dative Alternation*) within the three corpora

	Great Britain			East Africa			India		
	DV	Total	%	DV	Total	%	DV	Total	%
	n=1,061,264			n=1,407,208			n=1,106,677		
Allow	19	335	5.67	5	426	1.17	7	224	3.13
Ask	91	520	17.50	178	979	18.18	56	702	7.98
Convince	22	53	41.51	19	75	25.33	17	64	26.56
Cost	23	70	32.86	9	63	14.28	13	42	30.95
Get	29	3,689	0.79	12	2,024	0.59	8	1,161	6.89
Give	562	1,129	45.81	405	2,301	17.60	340	1,477	23.01
Inform	20	69	28.99	72	194	37.11	31	83	37.35
Offer	54	228	23.68	36	295	12.20	27	201	13.43
Pay	18	468	3.85	27	587	4.60	14	269	5.20
Send	80	346	23.12	28	338	8.28	13	261	4.98
Show	84	543	15.47	68	884	7.67	38	636	5.97
Teach	23	142	16.20	44	249	17.67	18	120	15.00
Tell	490	810	60.49	282	1,758	48.24	292	718	40.67
Totals	1,515	8,502	17.84	1,751	10,176	17.21	874	5,958	14.67

Seven of the 13 verbs show lower rates of use as ditransitive in the two multilingual corpora. Those verbs are:

allow, convince, give, offer, send, show, and tell

The first verb, "allow," has a lower rate of ditransitive usage in the ICE-EA corpus, but not so low a rate in the Kolhapur corpus. For each of the other verbs, however, there is a clear similarity in their appearance as ditransitives in the multilingual corpora, and this similarity contrasts sharply with the ICE-GB. For example, "convince" is used as a ditransitive at nearly the same rate in the two multilingual corpora: 25.33% in ICE-EA and 26.56% in Kolhapur. These rates, however, contrast sharply with the monolingual rate of 41.51%. Similarly, the difference between the use of "give" in the two multilingual corpora — 17.6% in ICE-EA and 23.01% in Kolhapur — is only 5.41 percentage points, yet the difference between Kolhapur and ICE-GB is 22.8 percentage points. Careful examination of each of the other four verbs, "offer," "send," "show," and "tell" suggests that the norms for their usage in East Africa and India are more similar than the norms for their use in England.

Two of the verbs, "inform" and "pay," have higher rates of ditransitive usage in the multilingual corpora. Like most of the verbs with lower rates discussed above, the difference between the two multilingual corpora for the

verb "inform" is only 0.24 percentage points, yet the difference between ICE-EA and ICE-GB is 8.12 percentage points.

Three of the verbs show similarity to ICE-GB rates of ditransitive usage in one of the multilingual corpora, but not in the other. "Ask" is used as a ditransitive in ICE-EA 18.18% of the occurrences, and in ICE-GB 17.50% of the occurrences, with a difference between the two of only 0.68 percentage points. However, Kolhapur uses the verb as a ditransitive only 7.98% of the occurrences, a difference of 9.52 percentage points. Similarly, the occurrence of "get" in ICE-EA more closely resembles ICE-GB than it does Kolhapur. The Kolhapur use of the verb "cost" closely resembles the ICE-GB use, with only 1.91 percentage points of difference between the two. ICE-EA uses the verb a much lower rate, a full 16.67 percentage points lower than Kolhapur.

Only one verb, "teach," shows similar rates of ditransitive usage across the three corpora.

"Give" as a Light Verb

The third phase of this project examines the ditransitive uses of the verb "to give" to investigate that rate at which the verb appears as a light verb within ditransitive verb phrases. The light verb construction is a well-known construction to theorists who are interested in the syntactic-semantic interface. The light verb construction is a verb-complement construction in which the verb supplies two or, as in the case of this study, three arguments and the verbal-noun complement supplies the theta-roles for the predicate. Typically, there are several English verbs which frequently appear as light verbs: "give," "make," "take," and "have." (1)-(3) are three examples of light verb constructions, and more about the effects of these constructions on theta-marking and argument selection can be found in several of the theoretical studies listed in the reference section (i.e. Abelle, 1988; Brugman, 2001, and Stroik, 2001).

1. The audience gave a collective groan. (from XTAG Research Group)
2. We had a big discussion about closing the libraries. (from XTAG Research Group)
3. The professors made comments on the paper. (from XTAG Research Group)

While the light verb construction is certainly found in English, it is often much more frequently found in other Asian languages, most notably Chinese and Japanese. The Japanese "suru" construction is the most typically discussed light verb construction. The Chinese (*Putonghua*) "ba" and "gei" constructions are also sometimes discussed as light verb constructions. References to the Chinese light verb construction can be found in the reference section (e.g. Lin, 2001 and Miyagawa, 1989).

The following examples from ICE-GB illustrate the light and non-light verb uses of ditransitive "give":

4. Without fail, on every visit, Pete took it in his arms, gave it a cuddle, ruffled its fur, then passed it back again. (w2b-004 036)
5. Stephen straightened unsteadily and gave him a great push. (w28-015 098)
6. And Lewis gave him a look as if to say ... (s2a-009 121)
7. Thousands suffer from marasmus, hunger's most acute form, which wastes the bodies of its victims to virtual skeletons and gives them an ethereal look, as though they are clinging to life by a thread. (w2e-002 044)
8. If played badly, it can have drastic consequences, particularly if it gives your opponent an easy smash! (w2d-013 167)

(4)-(6) illustrate the "give" light verb construction. In (4) and (5), the 2nd argument, the indirect object in traditional grammar, is theta-marked as an AFFECTED participant; "it" is cuddled and "him" is pushed. The light verb hypothesis accounts for the intuition that these sentences are related to the underlying forms "Pete cuddled it" and "Stephen pushed him." In (6), the second argument is theta-marked as a DIRECTIVE; to give him a look is to look at him. This use of give contrasts with the non-light verb use of "give a look" in (7), where the "them" is not theta-marked as a DIRECTIVE, but as a BENEFACTIVE, instead receiving it theta-role from "give." Likewise, "the opponent" in (8) is not smashed, as would happen in the light-verb reading of this example.

Similarly, in each of the light verb constructions cited from the Kolhapur Corpus, (9)-(11), the second argument is theta-marked as an AFFECTED participant, as in the case of (9) and (10), or a DIRECTIVE, as in the case of (11)

9. If I take such sweetmeat home, my mother will give me a good beating. (903,386-903,399)
10. Cut a new piece of fuse wire, twist it round the top screw in clockwise direction, and give the screw a turn. (11,517-11,538)
11. Do you want to give me a patient hearing, or are you so impatient as to turn away from me? (699,972-699,991)

The ditransitive "give" light-verb construction can be found in all three of the corpora examined, and does not anyway represent an ungrammatical or aberrant construction in English. However, Table 4 points out that the frequencies at which the construction appears within the three corpora is quite different. A simple examination of all the ditransitive "give" construction in the three corpora yield very different rates of appearance for the light-verb "give" construction. It appears more than five times more frequently in the

The "Light Verb" Construction in Asian Englishes: Corpus-Based Evidence

East Africa corpus and more than 10 times more frequently in the Kolhapur Corpus. In terms of the differences between the light verb construction in these corpora, the difference is not in the forms that appear, but in the norms that regulate how frequently they may appear.

Table 4: Occurrences of "give" as a ditransitive light verb as a percentage of all ditransitive occurrences across three corpora

	Great Britain		East Africa		India	
	n=562	1.779%	n=405	10.12%	n=340	18.82%
10			41		64	

Conclusions and Future Directions

There is clearly variation in the norms which govern the use of ditransitive verbs in each of these corpora. Unfortunately, I am not yet prepared to make a definitive statement about light verb construction in these Englishes, but I do believe that the different norms of the verbs' frequencies warrant further investigation of this construction.

At the beginning of this paper I suggested that there is a monolingual bias in linguistic theory building, and that this monolingual bias has prevented us from taking account of all the types of variation that may occur within multilingual varieties of English. This monolingual bias gives preference to the grammaticality of forms, and instead looks for aberration, ungrammaticality, or error as a result of language contact. The different norms of ditransitive "give" within the light verb construction, however, in no way fulfill these expectations of language contact, and would likely go overlooked by linguistics expecting multilingual varieties to be aberrant. In order to more fully account for the difference of norms in multilingual varieties, monolingual preferences for grammaticality should be abandoned.

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FACING PROBLEMS IN GETTING STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE? TRY T.H.I.S.

Koh Soo Ling

The year is 2003. Students are tired of learning the same old thing. They are listless and are looking at their watches for the period to end. The dedicated teacher has prepared her lesson but the students do not seem to respond...

Does this happen in your classroom? Well, it happened in mine until I tried T.H.I.S. (Thought, Heart, Imagination, Sense). Basically, T.H.I.S. is a task-based approach that I use to encourage my students to be actively involved in the English class. This session will start by demonstrating how everyday materials, elements of culture, music and course books can be adapted or replaced to motivate students to actively participate in class. As the paper is based on classroom research done on ESL students, I will refer to examples of students' work and explain how these examples can be used to generate all the four skills. A key area of discussion will be the importance of pair work, group work and hands-on activities.

Task-based learning basically consists of hands-on learning and debriefing. The focus is to encourage learning by doing, to involve students in the acquisition of language skills and to foster a relational and process oriented atmosphere so that students are able to share their experiences in the learning of the English language.

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