SOME ARGUMENT-STRUCTURE PROPERTIES OF ‘GIVE’ IN THE LANGUAGES OF EUROPE AND NORTHERN AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Haspelmath (forthcoming) provides a typology of the expression of the object arguments of the verb ‘give’ using three basic types, according to whether the recipient, the gift, or neither is overtly marked differently from patients of monotransitive verbs:

- indirect object, e.g. ‘Mary gives the book to John’
- primary object, e.g. ‘Mary gives John with the book’
- double object, e.g. ‘Mary gives John the book’

In addition, he allows a mixed type for languages that permit more than one of these types, such as English, which has both indirect object and double object constructions. A quick glance at the map accompanying his text shows that Europe and Northern and Central Asia are dominated by the indirect object type, with exceptions being largely geographically peripheral or, as in the case of Ket, in a language that is otherwise typologically unusual for its location: For instance, the primary object type is found in Nivkh, the double object construction in Ainu and Ket, and the mixed type in English (and in some other neighboring Germanic languages not included in Haspelmath’s sample).

While not challenging Haspelmath’s basic finding, and indeed in part following up on passing observations made by Haspelmath, this paper aims to show that consideration of a broader range of morphosyntactic features than just the overt marking of recipient and gift leads to a more differentiated picture of argument-structure properties of ‘give’ in what otherwise seems a very homogeneous area. In particular, many languages show features that indicate a less marked, morphosyntactically more central status of the recipient. Properties to be discussed include the following:

a) Differences between full noun phrases and pronouns as object arguments of ‘give’, as when Maltese has the double object construction with pronoun objects, alongside the indirect object construction elsewhere.

b) Verb-object agreement, including the use of resumptive pronouns, which often gives preference to resumptive dative pronouns agreeing with the recipient over resumptive accusative pronouns agreeing with the gift, as in Spanish.

c) Passive verb forms, which may give preference to promotion-to-subject of the recipient rather than of the theme, in the indirect object construction (e.g. Japanese) and in the double object construction (e.g. English).

d) Constituent order, with the possibility of having the recipient rather than the gift closer to the verb in the double object construction (e.g. English, Mandarin Chinese) and perhaps even in the indirect object construction.

e) Stem suppletion according to features of the recipient rather than of the gift, as in Old Basque, Tsez (East Caucasian family), Yukaghir, and Japanese.

REFERENCE