Issues with argument realisation and syntactic variation of GET, GIVE, PUT and TAKE verbs in functionally motivated approaches

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Background: The paper examines the cross-linguistic behaviour of the verbs GET, GIVE, PUT and TAKE and considers issues with their argument realisation and syntactic variation. The focus on these verbs is motivated by the fact that they are high frequency verbs that display complex semantic and syntactic patterns which are interesting to study not only language-externally, but also cross-linguistically (e.g. Newman 1996, Newman 1998, Mukherjee 2005, Diedrichsen 2012, Kopecka & Narasimhan 2012, Lenz & Rawoens 2012, Nolan 2012, Tragel & Habicht 2012).

Aims: Through a number of case studies with data examples across Modern Irish, German, Estonian and Mainland Scandinavian we aim to explore the specification of the mapping at the semantic-syntactic interface across these verbs and how this can account for the degree of syntactic variation found with these verbs. We treat the role of lexical semantics and event structure of the GET, GIVE, PUT and TAKE verbs and how these mediate the realisation of the arguments of these verbs in morphosyntax. We explore the encoding of the significant thematic roles in these 3place syntactic constructions and their associated symmetries and asymmetries, cross-linguistically.

Theory and data: Our theoretical framework is situated within the broad functional paradigm and our analyses are supported by authentic data (including corpus data) from the languages concerned. Our approach is mainly synchronic, although a few digressions to diachronic developments are made.

Results and significance: We find evidence that these verbs manifest considerable variability in cross-linguistic comparisons and in their susceptibility to semantic extension and to grammaticalization. This paper contributes to an understanding of the polysemy, multifunctionality and dynamics of GET, GIVE, PUT and TAKE verbs across languages, their syntactic constructional patterns and information structure.

References
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