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The Ditransitive Construction of the Synonyms 'Give', 'Offer', and 'Provide': A Corpus-Based Study of Twenty English Varieties

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ABSTRACT

While synonymy has been extensively studied, few studies have examined the ditransitive construction of synonyms across English varieties. Informed by construction grammar viewing pattern-meaning combinations as constructions and using a 1.9-billion-word corpus of texts from 20 countries, this article analyzes four different ways of expressing ditransitivity by the synonyms *give*, *offer*, and *provide,* which share the core sense of 'giving'. This analysis enables the exploration of syntactic variation between standard and variant patterns across 20 English varieties. The results show that the double-object pattern (e.g., *give me a book*) is preferred over its prepositional variants (e.g., *give a book to me*); while this pattern is standard for *give* and *offer*, it is not true of *provide*. As regards the varieties, ditransitive patterns are similar across the synonyms, except

provide which alternates frequently among four syntactic variants across the varieties. The cluster analyses also show that, despite belonging to the same concentric circle, the varieties differ in the ditransitive patterns of the synonyms. Overall, the results demonstrate that semantic similarity tends to contribute more to syntactic frames than regional factors. This article offers several implications for teaching synonymy and ditransitivity from constructional and World Englishes perspectives.

Keywords: ditransitive construction, construction grammar, synonymy, standard and variant patterns, English varieties

Introduction

The meanings of synonyms (or near-synonyms) can be disambiguated by their co-textual and contextual features[1]. These features have been applied as synonym-distinguishing criteria in corpus-based research on synonymy (e.g., Phoocharoensil & Kanokpermpoon, 2021). With respect to co-textual features, synonyms are distinguished by their syntactic properties (e.g., collocation and colligation). For instance, the verbal synonyms *affect* and *impact* are syntactically different in that *impact* typically functions as a phrasal verb followed by *on*. This syntax is not common for *affect* (Thienthong, 2020). In terms of contextual aspects, synonyms differ in their interplay with genre, register, and style (Murphy, 2003). For example, the synonymous nouns *sleep* and *slumber* typically occur in different genres; *sleep* is prevalent in general texts, whereas *slumber* is common in fiction (Thienthong, 2020). This evidence indicates that despite their similar meanings, synonymous words are not entirely substitutable, given their co-textual and contextual constraints. However, previous corpus-based research on synonymy (e.g., Phoocharoensil & Kanokpermpoon, 2021) has not paid specific attention to the ditransitive constructions of synonyms across English varieties.

Ditransitive constructions have been extensively studied, given that they involve complex co-textual and contextual factors (e.g., Bresnan et al., 2007; Engel et al., 2021; Gerwin, 2013; Hovav & Levin, 2008). Basically, ditransitive constructions involve a ditransitive verb, a direct theme object, and an indirect recipient object (Gerwin, 2013). Some common ditransitive verbs include *give*, *offer*, and *provide*, which are the target synonyms closely investigated in the present study. They are worthy of investigation because, despite being near-synonyms, they display at least four different syntactic realizations of ditransitivity. According to Collins (n.d.), *give*, *offer*, and *provide* are grouped together as synonyms that convey a core meaning – 'giving'. In many contexts, they are substitutable, as exemplified in Examples 1-3.

(1) We are, however, more than happy to **give** you information about these programs while on tour.[2] (CA)

(2) She or he will be able to **offer** you information and advice, and refer you to the support or service best suited to your needs. (IE)

(3) Today I am pleased to **provide** you information about the most visited websites. (PK)

The examples of *give*, *offer*, and *provide* illustrate that they share a similar meaning, that is, 'giving'. Considering their co-textual and contextual information (e.g., genre), it is possible that they can be interchanged; their syntactic configurations are not constrained by any grammatical elements, such as subjects, direct objects, and indirect objects. However, prescriptive grammar references impose different patterns for *give*, *offer*, and *provide*. They are illustrated in Examples 4-7.

(4) I was hoping you would **give** me a job. (Oxford Learners' Dictionaries, n.d.-a)

(5) They decided to **offer** Jo the job. (Oxford Learners' Dictionaries, n.d.-b)

(6) We are here to **provide** a service **for** the public. (Oxford Learners' Dictionaries, n.d.-c)

(7) We are here to **provide** the public **with** a service. (Oxford Learners' Dictionaries, n.d.-c)

The verbs *give* and *offer* in Examples 4 and 5 have the same syntactic pattern realized by two noun phrase (NP) constituents, whereas *provide* requires *for* (Example 6) and *with* (Example 7) before the direct objects. This means that these three verbs are not substitutable, according to their prescribed syntactic patterns. However, there are no uniform syntactic realizations of *give*, *offer*, and *provide* between standard usage and actual language use. In standard usage, it is prescribed that the patterns '*GIVE someone with something', '*OFFER someone with something', and '*PROVIDE someone something' are not syntactic (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c)[3]. In actual contexts of language use, however, there is syntactic variation in standard usage across varieties of English, as exemplified in Examples 8-10.

(8) …this information has **given** you **with** a couple of ideas on how to ameliorate the evilness of vehicle insurance. (HK)

(9) Although they **offer** you **with** options to choose from, you're still going to need to make a selection .... (PH)

(10) Google is apparently going to **provide** them information on your IP. (IN)

The syntactic structures in Examples 8-10 are deemed incorrect in accordance with standard syntactic patterns. This evidence indicates that the ditransitive synonymous verbs *give*, *offer*, and *provide* have multiple competing structural variants, some of which deviate from their standard features in

natural language use. However, this ditransitive phenomenon has not received sufficient attention in synonymy and inter-varietal research. The present study addresses this research gap by investigating the ditransitive construction of the synonyms *give*, *offer*, and *provide* across 20 varieties of English. This problem is worth addressing, especially from a teaching perspective, given that ditransitive constructions involving the verbal synonyms *give*, *offer*, and *provide* are very common in English. Moreover, they pose challenges for Thai learners because they can be configured by various syntactic patterns and constrained by their co-textual and contextual information. In pedagogy, addressing synonymy and transitivity concurrently through a constructional framework and from a World Englishes (WE) perspective can help develop students' multidimensional linguistic knowledge and prepare them for international communication, respectively.

Literature Review

Synonymy, Ditransitivity, and Construction

From a constructional perspective that unites syntax and semantics, synonymy and ditransitivity emerge as interrelated linguistic phenomena. Constructions, underpinned by construction grammar (CxG), are defined as conventionalized pattern-meaning combinations (Goldberg, 2006). In terms of meaning, constructions are characterized by a shared or core meaning (Bergs, 2010; Hunston & Su, 2019). This semantic aspect is in line with synonymy which refers to a semantic relation of lexical items (i.e., words and phrases) sharing identical or similar senses. Two or more lexical items with an identical or similar sense are considered synonymous in relation to one specific sense (Murphy, 2003). In terms of patterns, constructions have co-textual information, such as syntax (Bergs, 2010). This formal aspect of constructions aligns with the syntactic notion of ditransitivity, which involves ditransitive verbs and two complements (Goldberg, 2006). In fact, ditransitivity encompasses both structural and functional properties (Mukherjee, 2005). Therefore, synonymy and ditransitivity can be captured and described through the CxG framework.

Constructions are a combination of pattern and meaning. Patterns combine with meanings in that they are united by a shared semantic core (Bergs, 2010) and grouped together based on a common sense (Hunston & Su, 2019). This advantage can keep independent formal expressions as individual constructions (Bergs, 2010). In ditransitive constructions, they are semantically described in terms of participants or participant roles. These semantic roles (or thematic roles) are determined by ditransitive verbs, such as *give*, *offer*, and *provide* (Herbst, 2014). These three verbs are grouped together

as synonyms which share a common sense of 'giving' (Collins, n.d.). Based on the core meaning, the 'giving' construction contributes a caused possession meaning that 'NP_0 causes NP_1 to have NP_2' (Hovav & Levin, 2008), where NP_0, NP_1, and NP_2 have semantic roles as AGENT, THEME, and RECIPIENT/BENEFICIARY, respectively (Gerwin, 2013; Goldberg, 2006). The theme role is usually inanimate and the recipient/beneficiary role usually animate (Gerwin, 2013). Even though *give*, *offer*, and *provide* share a common sense of 'giving', they differ in their semantico-pragmatic features with respect to their co-textual and contextual information (Bergs, 2010).

Constructions are characterized by a pairing of pattern and meaning. In most cases, there is a one-to-many correspondence between meaning and pattern. In other words, a single meaning is often expressed by a set of patterns (Hunston & Su, 2019). Hunston (2002) defines a pattern as a sequential string of grammar words which co-occur with and depend on a given lexical item. The 'giving' construction is realized by a number of lexis-pattern combinations involving a ditransitive verb, a direct NP object, and an indirect NP object. The NP objects are flexible in sequence, alternating between two structural frames: double-object construction (DOC) and prepositional-object construction (POC) (Zehentner, 2017). They are interpreted as synonymous because they have the same semantic roles (Hovav & Levin, 2008; Mukherjee, 2001). The POC construction is instantiated with a range of prepositions, including *to*, *for*, *with, from,* and *at*. Depending on the DOC and POC, the order of the thematic roles is usually reversed; the recipient/beneficiary precedes the theme in the DOC (Example 11), while the recipient/beneficiary follows the theme in the POC (Example 12) (Gerwin, 2013). However, these orders are not always fixed. In the *provide* pattern with the preposition *with*, for example, the thematic roles follow the same order; the recipient/beneficiary precedes the theme in both the DOC and POC (Mukherjee, 2001), as illustrated in Examples 13 and 14, respectively. This considerable syntactic variation renders ditransitive constructions an interesting area of investigation across regional varieties of English.

(11) I found that the three-finger grip **gave** me some advantage in controlling the pick, …. (IE)

(12) … when it comes to furniture, so this **gives** an advantage **to** you right away. (NG)

(13) Every animal we care for **provides** us an opportunity to learn more about their biology and ecology. (PH)

(14) This short article will **provide** you **with** some ideas to help you age group gracefully. (MY)

Variation in Ditransitive Patterns

It is widely accepted that "English today is a conglomerate of a vast array of different varieties of English" (Seyranyan & Westphal, 2021, p. 76). This diverse, pluralistic nature of English is often captured and described in the WE paradigm using three concentric circles: the Inner, the Outer, and the Expanding. The Inner Circle (IC) is represented by the USA, the UK, and Canada, for example. In these countries, speakers primarily use English as a native language. The Outer Circle (OC) represents countries, such as India, Singapore, and Malaysia, where English has some official status. The Expanding Circle (EC) includes, for example, China, Thailand, and Taiwan. English in these countries is primarily learned as a foreign language (Kachru, 2005). Kachru's (2005) three-circle model implies that there is variation in linguistic properties across different varieties of English. However, the IC and OC varieties have been extensively researched, due to the availability of natural texts.

Corpus research has shown that there is no uniform use between standard and actual linguistic features across different varieties of English. In theory, standard linguistic rules and forms are codified and promoted through language authorities, such as textbooks, grammar books, dictionaries, and usage guides. These language references are more or less based on native varieties of English. Thus, learners are often expected to be correct, standard-like, and native-like. In practice, however, language users may use variant forms that deviate from their standard forms. Scholars acknowledge that every language is dynamic; therefore, language does undergo linguistic change and variation (Friedrich & Figueiredo, 2016). These linguistic phenomena can be investigated through a large corpus of natural texts to provide an attested account of variation among varieties of English. As regards linguistic variation, Hunston (2002) argues that patterns are an important area of investigation into natural language use across regional varieties. This is because patterns can be used to quantify the occurrence and expression of particular meanings. The investigation of pattern-meaning combinations can be accommodated in constructions.

The availability of large corpora enables the exploration of linguistic variation in ditransitive constructions across regional varieties of English. Research has shown that there are both language-internal and -external factors that modulate variation in the co-textual and contextual features of ditransitive constructions. With respect to language-internal factors, the semantic features of ditransitive verbs are associated with syntactic patterns (Diessel, 2023). For instance, the standard pattern of *inform* is 'NP_0 inform NP_1 about/of NP_2'. However, Indian speakers of English use the DOC

pattern 'NP_0 inform NP_1 NP_2' by employing an analogy with the ditransitive verb *tell* because the two verbs are semantically related (Mukherjee & Schilk, 2012). Supporting this evidence, Yi et al. (2019) show that ditransitive verbs with semantic similarity uniquely contribute to predicting the selection of syntactic frames. For example, *give* and *sell*, sharing the 'giving' sense, tend to have the same syntactic frame. In addition, Engel et al. (2021) found that pronominal recipients among other factors (e.g., definiteness and animacy) favor the DOC pattern over the POC pattern. Nonetheless, language-internal factors that constrain the choice of syntactic frames are not given sufficient attention in textbooks.

Literature on language variation shows that language-external factors (i.e., contextual information), such as registers and varieties, influence the selection of syntactic forms. A study by Engel et al. (2021) indicates that the POC form is more likely to appear in written informal and spoken formal language than in conversational language. However, these language-external factors have weaker effects on the choice of syntactic forms than language-internal features. As regards English varieties, Gerwin (2013) examined pronominal ditransitives in four British dialects and found that the choice of the POC pattern, regarded as the standard variant, is declining, while the innovative use of the DOC pattern is on the rise. In addition, there is variation in ditransitive constructions in American English. For instance, Zehentner (2017) notes that while previously occurring in the POC pattern with *to* and *for*, *provide* is at least acceptable in the DOC pattern in present-day American English.

Overall, previous research confirms that language variation is a fundamental phenomenon that is instigated by both co-textual and contextual factors. This linguistic diversity poses challenges to English language teaching (ELT), especially in norm-dependent countries. In response to this sociolinguistic reality, researchers have proposed WE-oriented teaching methods. Fuchs (2016) suggests that ELT should cater to the communicative needs of learners. For local communication, teachers should teach students local norms while also raising their awareness of global variation. For international communication, teachers should expose students to linguistic forms that are of "an international minimal standard". Ranta (2022, p. 316) adds that students in EC contexts should learn standard features as currently there are "no feasible, endonormative models of English" in these contexts. They should also be exposed to a wide range of English varieties and prevalent cross-varietal features. To identify features of varying frequency, corpus-based methods are a viable approach, employed to explore various linguistic phenomena, such as linguistic variation (e.g., Fuchs, 2016), ditransitivity (e.g., Engel et al., 2021; Gerwin, 2013), and synonymy (e.g., Phoocharoensil & Kanokpermpoon, 2021).

Synonymy and ditransitivity have been extensively studied in corpus-based research, yet they are rarely examined together in a single investigation. In fact, both synonymy and ditransitivity that involve syntactic and semantic aspects can be concurrently addressed in ditransitive constructions. The literature reviewed above shows that ditransitive constructions display multiple syntactic patterns and vary considerably between standard and actual syntactic forms. Researchers confirm that syntactic patterns are an important linguistic aspect for investigating variation across varieties of English. To address these issues, this corpus-based study aims to investigate 6,068 types (24, 529 tokens) of ditransitive patterns of three synonyms across 20 varieties of English to answer the following research questions:

1) To what extent do the ditransitive patterns of the synonyms *give*, *offer,* and *provide* vary between prescribed standard usage and actual language use?

2) What are the distributions of the ditransitive patterns of the synonyms *give*, *offer,* and *provide* across 20 varieties of English?

Methods

Corpus and Subcorpora

We used an approximately 1.9-billion-word corpus of Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) (Davies, n.d.-a; Davies & Fuchs 2015). The corpus comprises different types of online general texts (e.g., magazines and newspapers) collected between 2012-2013 from the websites and blogs of 20 different countries (Davies, n.d.-b). These countries were classified into two IC and OC groups (Kachru, 2005) and further into sub-groups based on their regions (Collins, 2023). The use of the GloWbE corpus enabled the investigation of syntactic variation between prescribed standard usage and real language use and between the IC and OC varieties of English. The US and GB varieties were treated as the standard reference varieties. Moreover, the size of the GloWbE corpus enabled the retrieval of low-frequency patterns that are relevant to the study. Table 1 details the GloWbE corpus, which comprises 20 subcorpora of English varieties, along with the number of words. For reasons of brevity, we used the two-word label for the varieties in the present study.

Table 1

Classification and Word-Count of the 20 Regional Varieties

Kachru Classification	Regions	Countries	Codes	Words
Inner circle	America	United States*	US	386,809,355
		Canada	CA	134,765,381
	Europe	Great Britain*	GB	387,615,074
		Ireland	IE	101,029,231
	Oceania	Australia	AU	148,208,169
		New Zealand	NZ	81,390,476
Outer circle	South Asia	India	IN	96,430,888
		Sri Lanka	LK	46,583,115
		Pakistan	PK	51,367,152
		Bangladesh	BD	39,658,255
	South-East Asia	Singapore	SG	42,974,705
		Malaysia	MY	42,420,168
		Philippines	PH	43,250,093
		Hong Kong	HK	40,450,291
	Africa	South Africa	ZA	45,364,498
		Nigeria	NG	42,646,098
		Ghana	GH	38,768,231
		Kenya	KE	41,069,085
		Tanzania	TZ	35,169,042
	Caribbean	Jamaica	JM	39,663,666
Total	-	-	-	**1,885,632,973**

*Reference standard variety

As shown in Table 1, all subcorpora contain more than 35 million words. The GB variety has the largest number of words (387,615,074 words), closely followed by the US variety (386,809,355 words). The TZ variety has the lowest number of words (35,169,042 words).

Data Extraction

Corpus Query

We performed a number of steps to extract the relevant data from the corpus. First, we identified ditransitive patterns headed by the target synonyms and complemented by two NP arguments. Based on the standard references and reviewed literature on ditransitive constructions, we based our investigation on two core DOC and POC constructions. The POC is realized by three prepositions *to*, *for*, and *with*. In total, we investigated each of the three verbs on four ditransitive patterns, which are the syntactic realizations of the ditransitive construction, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Ditransitive Patterns Under Investigation

Verb		Object		Preposition		Object
Give/Offer/Provide	+	NP_i	+	∅	+	NP_d
Give/Offer/Provide	+	NP_d	+	to	+	NP_i
Give/Offer/Provide	+	NP_i	+	with	+	NP_d
Give/Offer/Provide	+	NP_d	+	for	+	NP_i

Note. ∅ = no preposition, NP_d = direct object, NP_i = indirect object

Second, we formulated corpus searches to obtain a representative number of pattern tokens. We used the lemmas of the three synonyms GIVE, OFFER, and PROVIDE, meaning that we considered all their word-forms as long as they had the internal structure of verbs. We also restricted NP_i to pronominal objects (e.g., *me*, *you*, *us*, and *them*), following Gerwin (2013), who states that NP_i is virtually always a person or animate entity. As for NP_d, we retrieved direct objects preceded by any determiner (e.g., *a*, *some*, *any*, and *all*), as exemplified in Examples 15-17.

(15) Our presence at the council **gives** us **the** opportunity to express ourselves…. (AU)

(16) I am hoping that you can **give** us **some** information about the animal that we just found in our sound. (AU)

(17) It is the Glory of God to **give** **all** things **to** us in the best of all possible manners. (US)

Finally, we searched for the target patterns using the corpus queries (Examples 18 and 19). The verb *give* and the preposition *to* are a case in point. These queries enabled the retrieval of both DOC and POC patterns. By using the capitals, we were able to retrieve all forms and types of verbs, determiners, and nouns.

(18) GIVE me|you|us|them|her|him DET NOUN

(19) GIVE DET NOUN to me|you|us|them|her|him

Close Reading

To obtain a representative overview of structural alternatives and for reasons of manageability, we randomly selected 1,000 instances (i.e., types) of the concordances for each pattern of the three verbs. The data were deemed sufficient to address the research questions, following De Clerck et al. (2011). The corpus outputs revealed four patterns that reached the cut-off threshold, three of which were DOC patterns and one POC pattern. The selected instances were independently analyzed for ditransitivity by the first two

authors and double-checked by the third author. Disagreements were discussed and resolved.

We read and filtered the concordances closely to ensure that they were the variant ditransitive patterns under consideration. We considered ditransitive patterns contained in simple sentences (Example 20), finite clauses in both dependent (Example 21) and independent statuses (Example 22), and non-finite clauses (Examples 23 and 24). Even though non-finite clauses do not have overt subjects and finite verb forms, they have the internal syntax of verbs that take two objects as their complements.

(20) They **give** me food, shampoo, clothes - everything I need except freedom. (AU)

(21) This set of notes covers the basics of ratio analysis, including ratios which **provide** you information on …. (TZ)

(22) I can't **provide** you **with** the full web link because eBay policy will not allow me to. (GB)

(23) **Giving** them names and personalities required the development …. (KE)

(24) They either came into the room to rape me again or to **give** me food. (ZA)

We excluded certain fixed patterns from our analysis. This is because they do not fulfill the recipient or beneficiary function; the recipient is not the participant that receives the theme. In other words, fixed patterns are non-variant structures of the three synonyms. We inspected the fixed patterns by searching for their corresponding structural counterparts. Examples 25-27 were disregarded as there were no corresponding patterns.

(25) I shall definitely **give** them another go. (AU)

(26) I'll **give** them another try. (AU)

(27) You are motivated to **provide** them a try. (BD)

Final Dataset

The corpus searches yielded a total of 6,364 types of ditransitive patterns. Of these types, 296 instances (4.65%) were excluded from analysis because they did not meet the criteria. This left us with 6,068 qualified types (95.35%) of ditransitive patterns under investigation. Table 3 presents the distributions of qualified and non-qualified ditransitive patterns across the three verbs.

Table 3

Summary of Qualified and Non-Qualified Pattern Types

Pattern	Qualified (%)		Total
	No	Yes	
Give			
NP_i + NP_d	69 (6.90)	931 (93.10)	1,000 (100)
NP_d + to + NP_i	30 (3.49)	830 (96.51)	860 (100)
NP_i + with + NP_d	34 (53.97)	29 (46.03)	63 (100)
NP_d + for + NP_i	28 (14.66)	163 (85.34)	191 (100)
Total	161 (7.62)	1,953 (92.38)	2,114 (100)
Offer			
NP_i + NP_d	42 (4.20)	958 (95.80)	1,000 (100)
NP_d + to + NP_i	6 (3.17)	183 (96.83)	189 (100)
NP_i + with + NP_d	1 (1.92)	51 (98.08)	52 (100)
NP_d + for + NP_i	2 (1.54)	128 (98.46)	130 (100)
Total	51 (3.72)	1,320 (96.28)	1,371 (100)
Provide			
NP_i + NP_d	41(4.10)	959 (95.90)	1,000 (100)
NP_d + to + NP_i	12 (4.96)	230 (95.04)	242 (100)
NP_i + with + NP_d	21 (2.10)	979 (97.90)	1,000 (100)
NP_d + for + NP_i	10 (1.57)	627(98.43)	637 (100)
Total	84 (2.92)	2,795 (97.08)	2,879 (100)
Grand total	**296 (4.65)**	**6,068 (95.35)**	**6,364 (100)**

Note. NP_d = direct object, NP_i = indirect object

As shown in Table 3, the largest number of qualified patterns was observed for *provide* (n = 2,795), followed by *give* (n = 1,953) and *offer* (n = 1,320). Notably, these three synonyms are common in that they prefer the DOC pattern. Also relatively frequent is the *with*-POC pattern headed by provide and the *to*-POC pattern by *give*.

Data Analysis

We used descriptive statistics, namely frequency and percentage, to summarize the distributions of ditransitive patterns across the three synonyms and 20 varieties of English. Since the sizes of the subcorpora were not equal, absolute frequencies were normalized to 1,000,000 words to ensure a meaningful comparison.

We also performed hierarchical cluster analyses via SPSS (Version 26) to classify 20 varieties of English into groups or clusters to examine group similarity and differences based on the normed frequency counts of each synonym's ditransitive patterns (see Appendix). Specifically, we employed an agglomerative algorithm that allowed clustering to emerge from the data, that is, the number of clusters was not specified beforehand. During the clustering

procedure, we selected Ward's method as a linkage method and squared Euclidean as a distance measurement to minimize within-cluster variance (Crowther et al., 2021).

The clustering procedure produced a hierarchical tree-like dendrogram that visually represents the number of steps in the solution. These steps show the clusters of cases being combined and the distance coefficients at each step, with smaller clusters at the bottom and the final single cluster at the top (Crowther et al., 2021). In the present study, since our main interest was in similarity and clustering, we used dendrograms to illustrate the clusters of 20 varieties and scree plots to determine the number of clusters. In this way, we were able to describe in greater detail which varieties were similar or different regarding the use of the synonyms and their ditransitive patterns.

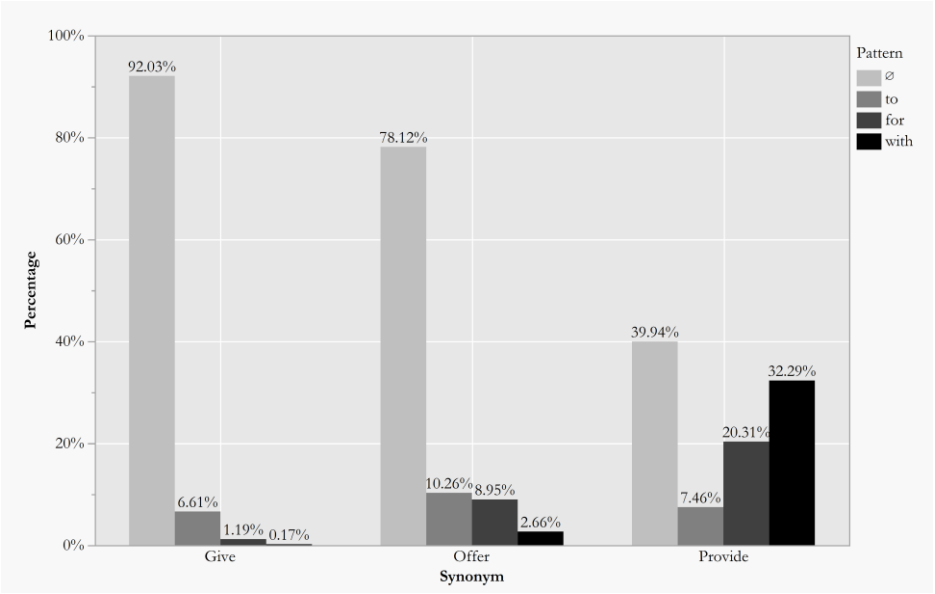
Results and Discussion

Distribution of Ditransitive Patterns

This section presents the distributions of ditransitive patterns across the synonyms *give*, *offer*, and *provide*, regardless of variety. The results of pattern tokens show that *give* occurs the most frequently (n = 16,669), followed by *provide* (n = 5,794), and *offer* (n = 2,066). In their relative frequencies, the patterns preferred by these three verbs are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Distributions of Four Ditransitive Patterns Across the Synonyms



We can see that the DOC pattern is the most frequent for encoding two objects across the ditransitive patterns and the three synonyms, with 'GIVE + NP_i + NP_d' being by far the most preferred variant (Example 28), closely followed by 'OFFER + NP_i + NP_d' (Example 29). These two patterns account for 92.03% and 78.12%, respectively, which are much more frequent than their competitors. These results may not be surprising, given that the DOC pattern is the preferred variant when the recipient/beneficiary constituent is pronominal. They are congruent with those of several studies, such as Bresnan et al. (2007), Gerwin (2013), and Engel et al. (2021). The preference for DOC patterns with pronominal objects can be explained by "the harmonic alignment effects". In other words, the earlier slot in the following utterance is likely to be occupied by a discourse-given, definite, animate, and short element (Bresnan et al., 2007). These properties are characteristic of personal pronouns.

(28) Sir, **give** me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. (CA)

(29) Therefore I **offer** you some advice based on my own experience. (AU)

Of particular note is the predominant use of the non-standard pattern '*PROVIDE + NP_i + NP_d' (Example 30) at the expense of other standard variants. This pattern variant accounts for 39.94%, while its standard counterpart 'PROVIDE + NP_i + with + NP_d' amounts to 32.29% (Example 31). The pattern 'PROVIDE + NP_d + for + NP_i ' occurs at 20.31% (Example 32). These results show that the non-standard variant of *provide* outnumbers the standard patterns, confirming that *provide* behaves syntactically like *give*. This result might be attributed to the semantic feature of the 'giving' construction characterized by the three synonyms (i.e., *give*, *offer*, and *provide*) under consideration. Abundant evidence shows that language users' choice of syntactic frames is associated with semantic features among other pragmatic and structural factors (Diessel, 2023). This means that semantic similarity influences the selection of syntactic patterns. Supporting this premise, a study by Yi et al. (2019) confirms that ditransitive verbs with similar meanings are more likely to exhibit the same syntactic behavior than those with less similar meanings. Therefore, as *give* and *provide* have a shared sense of 'giving', they tend to appear in the same syntactic frame.

(30) We will **provide** you some information about possible things to do. (GB)

(31) They can **provide** you **with** more information and guidance on the process. (NZ)

(32) …our courses **provide** enough information **for** you to study them at home. (IE)

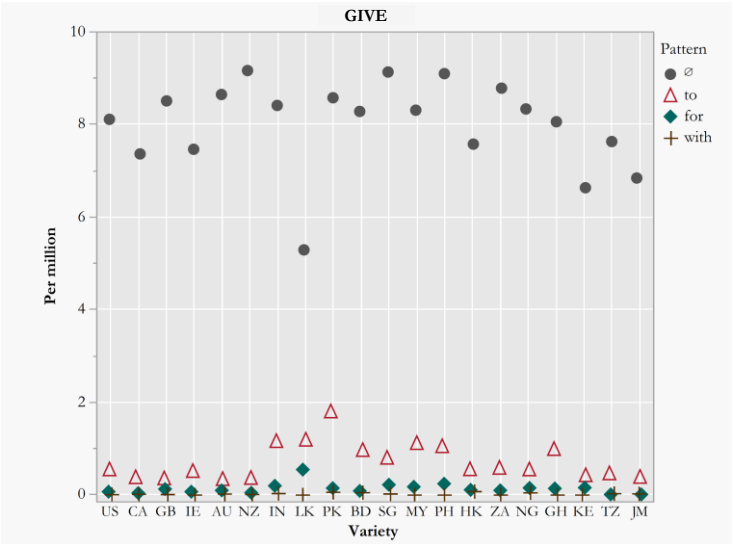
Notably, the POC pattern 'VERB + NP_d + to + NP_i ', which is the standard pattern of the three verbs, is not frequently used (7.46%). Moreover, it comes as no surprise that the POC pattern with *with* does not frequently occur with the verbs *give* (n = 29, 0.17%) and *offer* (n = 55, 2.66%). The fact that the standard *to*-POC pattern is not frequent may be explained by both language-internal and -external factors. With respect to language-internal features, variant DOC patterns can enhance local coherence, defined as "underlying relations that hold between assertions (or propositions)" (Grabe, 1984, p. 110). Local coherence relates to the old-to-new flow of information, that is, relevant old information typically appears early in the following sentence as it refers back to previously mentioned content (Engel et al., 2021). There seems no doubt that pronominal indirect objects (e.g., *me, us,* and *you*) that represent previous entities are likely to trigger the use of the DOC pattern. As regards language-external factors, diachronic evidence (e.g., Gerwin, 2013; Zehentner, 2017) shows that the *to*-POC pattern has gradually lost ground, while the DOC variant has gained acceptance over time.

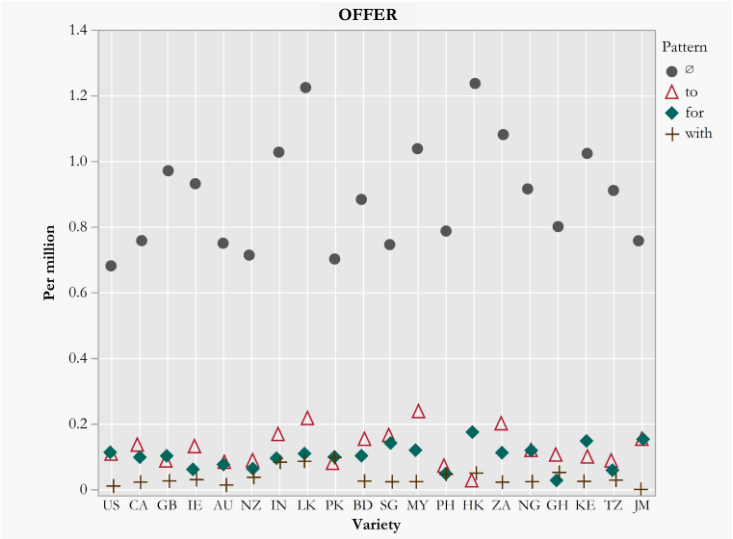
Varietal Distribution of Ditransitive Patterns

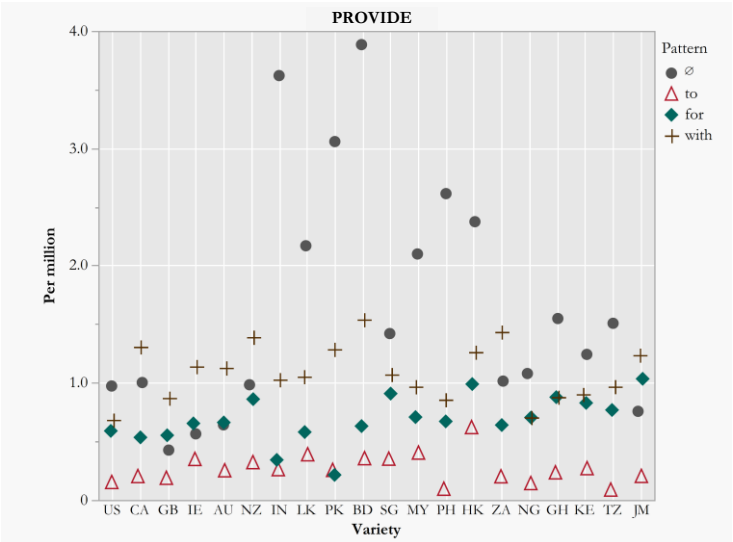
This section reports on the distributions of each synonym's ditransitive patterns across the 20 varieties of English, as illustrated in Figure 2. For reasons of space, we provide the results of the cluster analyses of each individual pattern in Appendix, which are represented by dendrograms.

Figure 2

Distributions of Ditransitive Patterns Across the 20 Varieties







The overall results in Figure 2 show that there is not considerable variation in the ditransitive patterns of *give* and *offer* across the varieties, whereas *provide* varies markedly in its ditransitive patterns (Examples 33-35). These findings suggest that *give* and *offer* are more stable in their syntactic use across the varieties, indicating that their patterns are likely constrained by their semantic values rather than by regional factors. In contrast, *provide* is more flexible in its syntactic patterns across the varieties. Mukherjee (2001) reports that the *for*-POC is by far the most frequent pattern, followed by the *with*-POC pattern, while the *to*-POC is the least frequent. Similarly, it is observed that *provide* occurs most frequently with *for*, followed by *with* and *to* in order,

whereas the DOC pattern appears only once. While the POC syntax of *provide* is common, Mukherjee (2005) notes that the DOC pattern of *provide* is acceptable in the US variety and is becoming widespread. This evidence suggests that *provide* in actual use is syntactically compatible with both POC and DOC patterns, offering speakers at least four syntactic choices for constructing ditransitive sentences with the core sense of 'giving'. There is no doubt that *provide* varies considerably in its syntactic patterns across different varieties, with the DOC pattern used more frequently than the POC variants in many of the varieties.

(33) Can someone **provide** me some link, so then I can read more about him. (BD)

(34) The website is only **providing** these links **to** you as a convenience. (JM)

(35) I am **providing** you **with** some links now which people can read for detail. (PK)

Generally, the DOC pattern is clearly preferred over the POC variants across the varieties, predominantly for *give* and *offer*. In contrast, the *to*-POC pattern, despite being the standard variant, is not favored by the three verbs across the varieties. These results indicate that language-internal factors, such as semantic features, tend to exert stronger influence than regional varieties on the syntactic choices of ditransitive patterns (Diessel, 2023). In this way, the inherent semantics of ditransitive verbs can contribute to predicting the selection of syntactic frames (Yi et al., 2019). This evidence is supported by Mukherjee and Schilk (2012), who observe that speakers of the IN variety are inclined to use the DOC pattern of *inform* by drawing an analogy with *tell*, given that they are similar in meaning. In the case of the *to*-POC pattern, it is disfavored similarly across the varieties because it is constrained by the given discourse where pronouns typically occur early in utterances independently of prepositions.

It is noteworthy that more than half of the varieties, predominantly from the OC countries, prefer the non-standard DOC pattern for *provide* (Example 36). The prevalent use of this ditransitive pattern is observed among the Asian countries. This syntactic choice may be motivated by the semantic value of *provide*, which expresses the sense of 'giving' shared by the anchor verb *give* (Yi et al., 2019). This suggests that the presence or absence of prepositions does not change the semantic type of ditransitive verbs. In contrast, the IC varieties, except the US variety, favor the standard *with*-POC pattern. Strikingly, the US variety, which is the standard reference, clearly prefers the non-standard DOC variant to the standard POC patterns (Example 37). These results indicate that there remains variation among the syntactic patterns of *provide* across the varieties, lending empirical support to previous studies. In the present-day US variety, Zehentner (2017) notes that

the DOC syntax of *provide* is increasingly acceptable. It is notable that the ditransitive structure of *provide* is influenced by its semantic feature, leading to the syntactic economy characterized by the DOC pattern. This syntactic phenomenon is not true for the GB variety, which prefers the *with*-POC pattern the most (Example 38). This result is in line with Gerwin (2013), who finds that the POC pattern is by far the most favorable variant. This prepositional variant may have spread to the other IC varieties, namely CA, IE, AU, and NZ.

(36) …we will be able to **provide** you some insights as to the different options. (NG)

(37) This season will **provide** them an opportunity to stake their claim…. (US)

(38) Upon your response, I shall then **provide** you **with** more details. (GB)

It can be seen that *provide* varies more considerably in ditransitive patterns than *give* and *offer* across the varieties. Similarly, our cluster analyses of the 20 varieties (see Appendix) demonstrate extensive variation in the ditransitive patterns of the three synonyms across the concentric circles proposed by Kachru (2005). For example, in the case of the standard *with*-POC pattern of *provide*, six IC varieties are classified into three distinct clusters, with two varieties in each cluster. These clusters also include OC varieties from different regions. These results seem to point to actual language use that is perhaps influenced by other linguistic factors, rather than by whether speakers use English as a first or second language (e.g., Ranta, 2022). Thus, it is evident that the status of English, be it native or non-native and standard or non-standard, tends not to determine the similarity or difference regarding the choice of ditransitive patterns headed by *give*, *offer*, and *provide.*

Conclusion

The present corpus-based study has investigated the ditransitive constructions of the three synonyms *give*, *offer*, and *provide,* delving into their syntactic variation between standard usage and variant use and across 20 varieties of English. The results show that the DOC pattern is the variant preferred by the three synonyms for encoding two complements. While this syntactic variant is regarded as the standard pattern for *give* and *offer*, it is generally not for *provide,* as prescribed by standard grammar references. The results also reveal that *give* and *offer,* which occur most frequently in the DOC, do not exhibit considerable variation across the varieties. In contrast, *provide* displays the opposite trend, alternating frequently between its ditransitive variants. Notably, the OC varieties, especially from Asian countries, tend to prefer the DOC. Regarding the IC varieties, while the US variety favors the

DOC, the others prefer the *with*-POC. Moreover, our cluster analyses show that the ditransitive patterns of the three synonyms are variable across the 20 varieties, despite the fact that the varieties belong to the same concentric circle.

The present study has some limitations that should be addressed for future research. First, the study restricted the investigation of indirect objects (i.e., recipient/beneficiary) to personal pronouns. Evidence has shown that since personal recipients are short and definite referents which are usually discourse-given, they are likely to occur early in following utterances (Bresnan et al., 2007). Given this linguistic context, the results may be skewed toward the DOC. Therefore, it is recommended that future research investigate other types of recipients other than personal pronouns to capture a broader range of syntactic variation. In addition, future research should extend the current inquiry by examining other specific senses of ditransitive verbs (e.g., abstract, communication, and transfer) and language-internal features of both themes and recipients, including pronominality, definiteness, animacy, and structural complexity (e.g., Engel et al., 2021). Examining these linguistic features could provide deeper insights into their influence on the choice of syntactic patterns that characterize ditransitive constructions.

The results of the present study suggest some important pedagogical implications from linguistic and WE perspectives. As regards linguistic aspects, given that one single meaning can be expressed by several words and patterns, teachers in grammar or syntax courses should apply CxG into explicit instruction on interrelated linguistic features: synonymy and ditransitivity. This dual focus can enhance students' multidimensional linguistic knowledge (Diessel, 2023). Informed by CxG, teachers should emphasize pattern-meaning combinations, where a single meaning is realized by a set of patterns. In this present case, the core meaning of 'giving' expressed by *give*, *offer*, and *provide* can be realized by four ditransitive patterns. In practice, teachers should start out with three sets of model sentences for each synonym, with each set containing four variant patterns. Then, teachers should have students analyze the model sentences by focusing on the ditransitive patterns, and theme and recipient constituents, and compare the results across the patterns and synonyms. This instruction may progress from more typical (high-frequency) to less typical (low-frequency) patterns, as determined by corpus-based occurrence frequency.

From a WE perspective, rather than adhering to a single model of English, teachers should adapt their instruction to students' needs of English in different contexts (Fuchs, 2016). For students who use English primarily for communication within their own country, they would benefit from ELT that conforms to local norms of English and prioritizes linguistic features recognized by members of their speech community. For example, speakers

that use CA, GB, IE, AU, and NZ varieties should emphasize the *with*-POC pattern of *provide* over the DOC. In countries where English has no official status or there is no codified local norm of English, teachers should teach students standard features while also exposing them to competing variant forms (Ranta, 2022). For example, students should learn both the *with*-POC and DOC patterns of *provide*. For international communication, students should be exposed to prevalent cross-varietal patterns, such as the DOC pattern of *give*, *offer*, and *provide*. The emphasis on these typical features would prepare students for real-world international communication.

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Endnotes

[1] This article equates synonymy with near-synonymy or partial synonyms because absolute synonyms are very rare. All synonyms are truly near-synonyms. For reasons of simplicity, this article uses synonymy.

[2] For ease of reference, the target synonyms and prepositions are highlighted in **boldface** and the heads, including determiners, of direct and indirect objects are <u>underlined</u>.

[3] The asterisk * is used to indicate an ungrammatical or unacceptable pattern as prescribed by standard grammar references.

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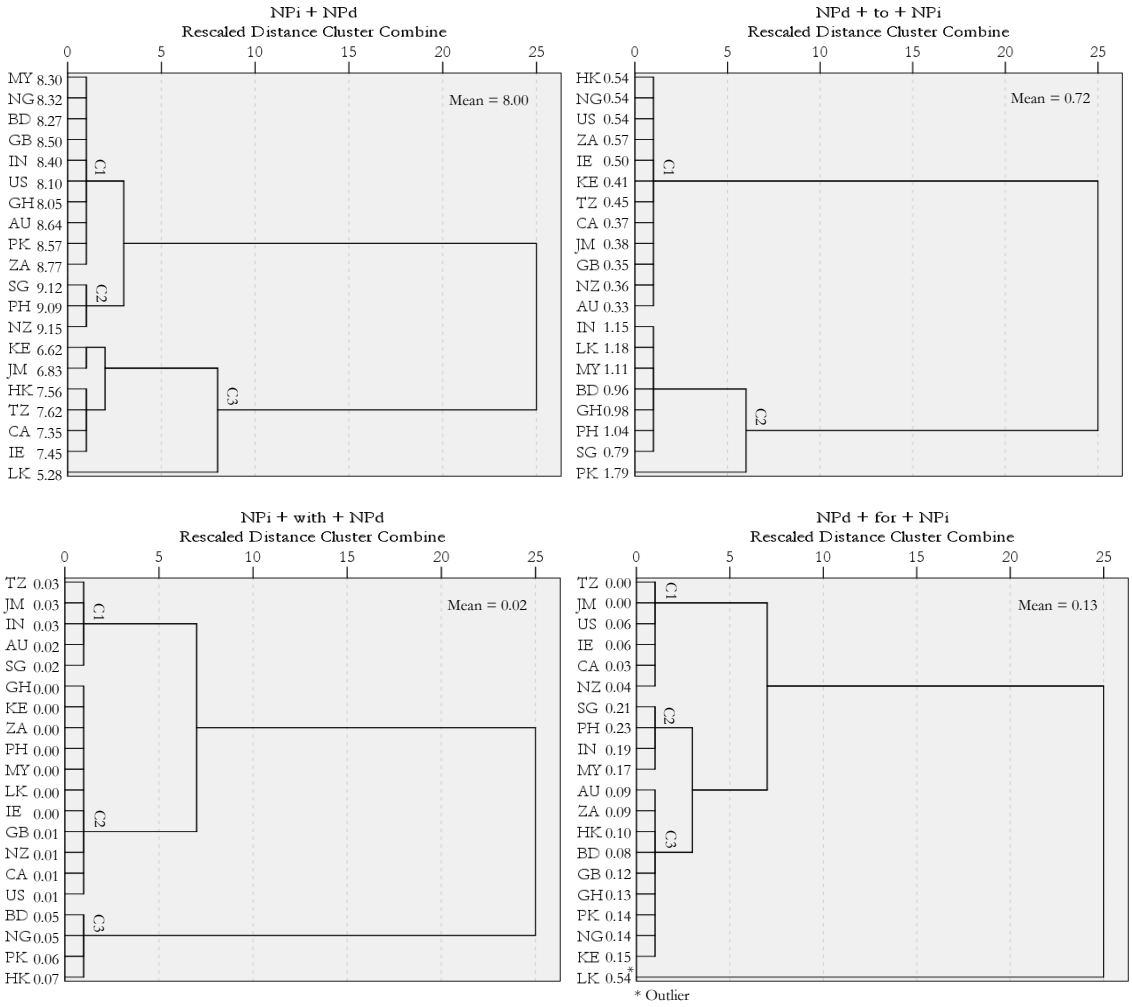
Appendix

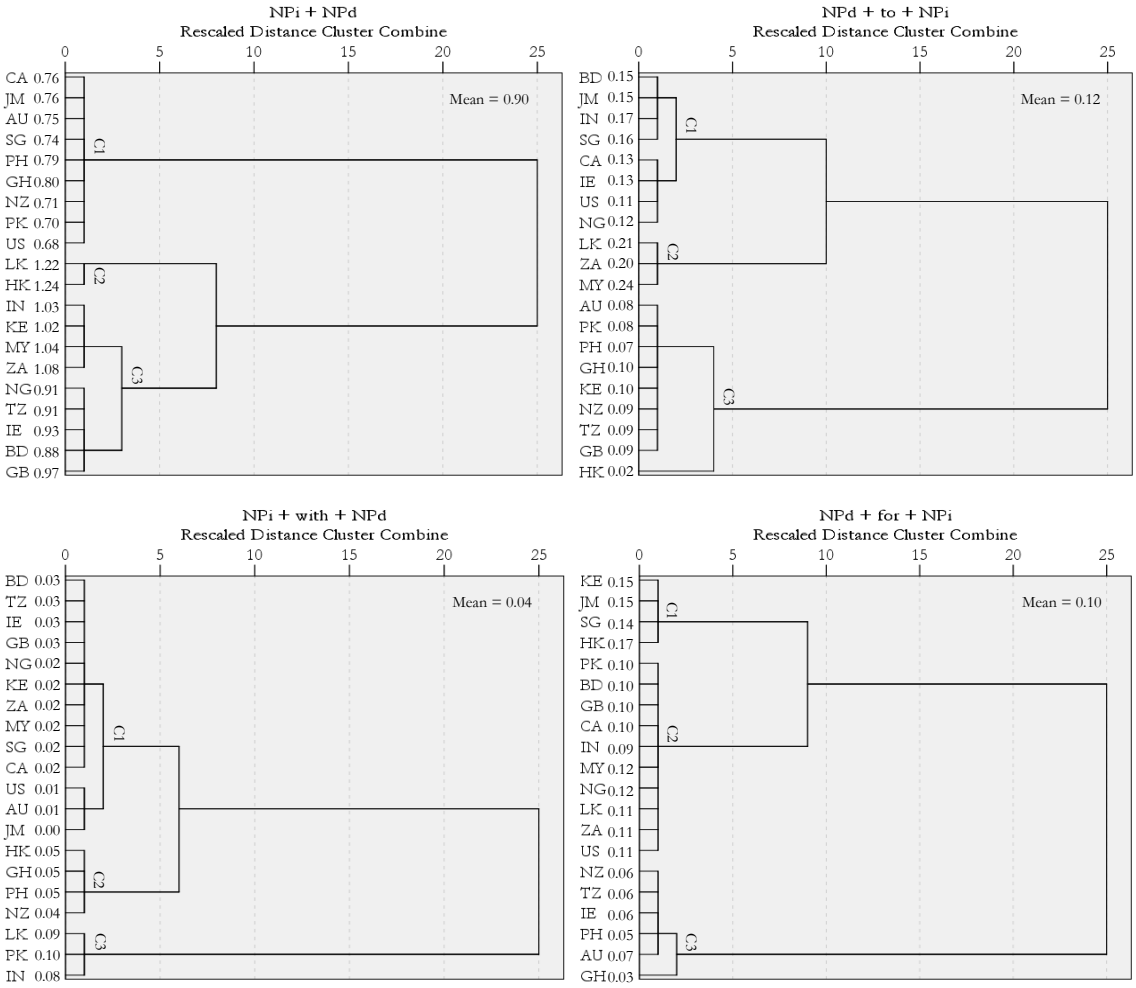
Hierarchical Cluster Analyses for Ditransitive Patterns

The results of the cluster analyses are illustrated in dendrograms, which depict which varieties of English are clustered together based on the normed frequencies of ditransitive patterns. Those varieties within a cluster have similar normed frequency values (per million) as displayed on the vertical axis. On the horizontal axis is the distance measure, which indicates that the greater the distance, the greater the dissimilarity between the varieties.

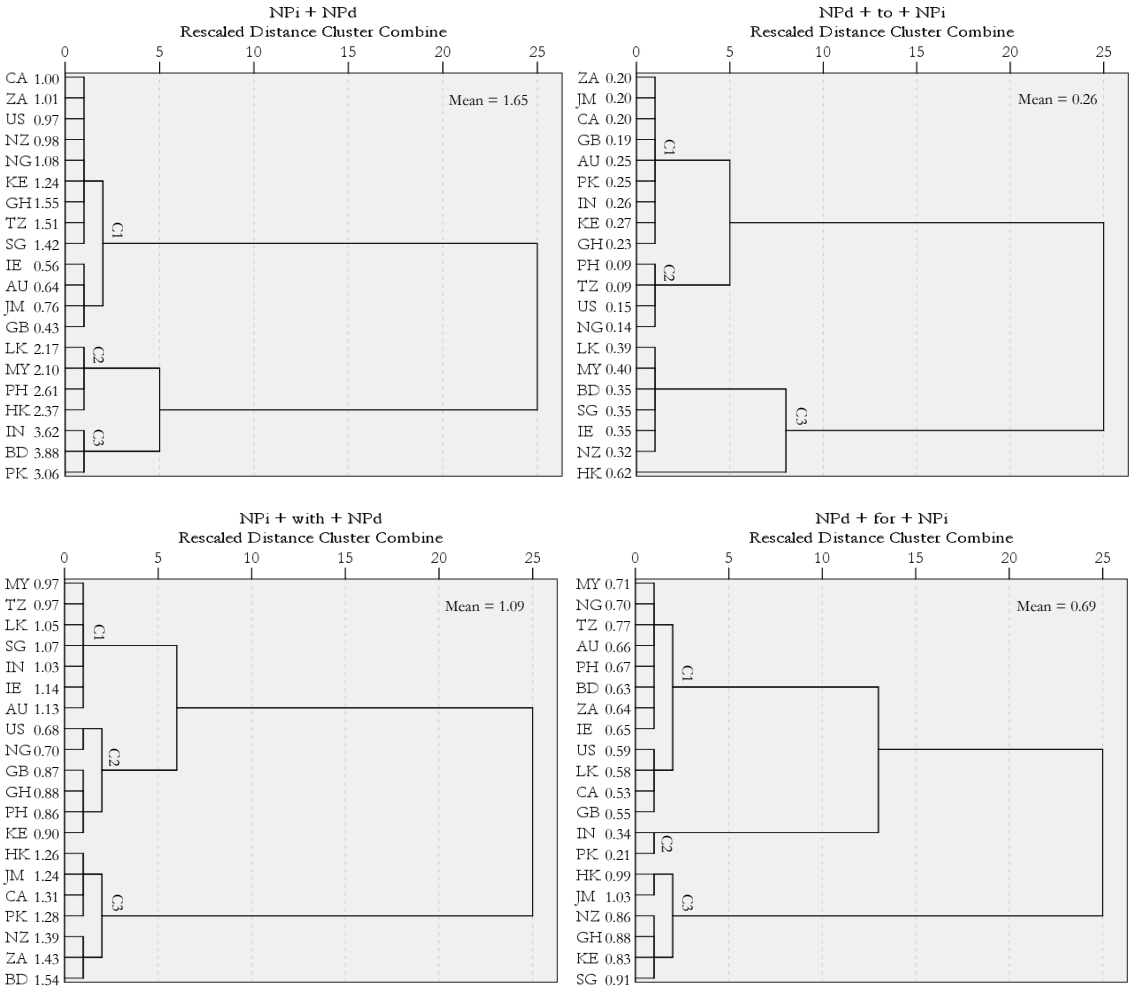
Give



Offer


NPi + NPd
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
CA 0.76
JM 0.76
AU 0.75
SG 0.74
PH 0.79
GH 0.80
NZ 0.71
PK 0.70
US 0.68
LK 1.22
HK 1.24
IN 1.03
KE 1.02
MY 1.04
ZA 1.08
NG 0.91
TZ 0.91
IE 0.93
BD 0.88
GB 0.97
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 0.90
NPd + to + NPi
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
BD 0.15
JM 0.15
IN 0.17
SG 0.16
CA 0.13
IE 0.13
US 0.11
NG 0.12
LK 0.21
ZA 0.20
MY 0.24
AU 0.08
PK 0.08
PH 0.07
GH 0.10
KE 0.10
NZ 0.09
TZ 0.09
GB 0.09
HK 0.02
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 0.12
NPi + with + NPd
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
BD 0.03
TZ 0.03
IE 0.03
GB 0.03
NG 0.02
KE 0.02
ZA 0.02
MY 0.02
SG 0.02
CA 0.02
US 0.01
AU 0.01
JM 0.00
HK 0.05
GH 0.05
PH 0.05
NZ 0.04
LK 0.09
PK 0.10
IN 0.08
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 0.04
NPd + for + NPi
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
KE 0.15
JM 0.15
SG 0.14
HK 0.17
PK 0.10
BD 0.10
GB 0.10
CA 0.10
IN 0.09
MY 0.12
NG 0.12
LK 0.11
ZA 0.11
US 0.11
NZ 0.06
TZ 0.06
IE 0.06
PH 0.05
AU 0.07
GH 0.03
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 0.10

Provide


NPi + NPd
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
CA 1.00
ZA 1.01
US 0.97
NZ 0.98
NG 1.08
KE 1.24
GH 1.55
TZ 1.51
SG 1.42
IE 0.56
AU 0.64
JM 0.76
GB 0.43
LK 2.17
MY 2.10
PH 2.61
HK 2.37
IN 3.62
BD 3.88
PK 3.06
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 1.65
NPd + to + NPi
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
ZA 0.20
JM 0.20
CA 0.20
GB 0.19
AU 0.25
PK 0.25
IN 0.26
KE 0.27
GH 0.23
PH 0.09
TZ 0.09
US 0.15
NG 0.14
LK 0.39
MY 0.40
BD 0.35
SG 0.35
IE 0.35
NZ 0.32
HK 0.62
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 0.26
NPi + with + NPd
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
MY 0.97
TZ 0.97
LK 1.05
SG 1.07
IN 1.03
IE 1.14
AU 1.13
US 0.68
NG 0.70
GB 0.87
GH 0.88
PH 0.86
KE 0.90
HK 1.26
JM 1.24
CA 1.31
PK 1.28
NZ 1.39
ZA 1.43
BD 1.54
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 1.09
NPd + for + NPi
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine
0 5 10 15 20 25
MY 0.71
NG 0.70
TZ 0.77
AU 0.66
PH 0.67
BD 0.63
ZA 0.64
IE 0.65
US 0.59
LK 0.58
CA 0.53
GB 0.55
IN 0.34
PK 0.21
HK 0.99
JM 1.03
NZ 0.86
GH 0.88
KE 0.83
SG 0.91
C1
C2
C3
Mean = 0.69