

CONTACT-SPECIFICATION CONSTRUCTIONS in English and German.

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This paper is concerned with sentences such as those under (1):

- (1) a. She kissed him on the cheek. COCA-2018-FIC
b. She shot up from her chair and struck him in the face. COCA-1993-FIC

Firstly, we will present arguments for treating such sentences as representing a construction in its own right in English and describe its formal and semantic properties. Although formally sentences such as (1) – subject-NP V object-NP PP – correspond to the English CAUSED-MOTION CONSTRUCTION (e.g. Goldberg 2006), semantically it does not since the object-NP is not a THEME that is being moved to a GOAL indicated by the PP. Rather, the object-NP is the GOAL of the action expressed by the verb, and the PP a specification of this GOAL, which is why we will refer to the construction as the English CONTACT-SPECIFICATION CONSTRUCTION.

Having established the construction status of such sequences, we will carry out a cross-linguistic comparison between English and German, where there seem to be two corresponding constructions: one with an accusative, and one with a dative object:

- (2) a. Sie küsste ihn [acc] auf die Wange ... DWDS-2013-ZEIT
b. Sie schlugen ihm [dat] ins Gesicht. DWDS-1999-ZEIT

This will involve discussing possible differences in semantic function between the two cases, arguing that the dative lends itself to a BENEFICIARY-interpretation absent from the pattern with an accusative object. An important element of the comparison between the two cases will be establishing the collo-profiles of the verbs occurring in the two patterns.

Since, in the terminology of structuralist contrastive analysis (Burgschmidt & Götz 1974), one could describe the relationship between the two German constructions and the English construction as one of convergence, we will finally attempt to open up a diachronic perspective and show that one can also make out a case for claiming that constructions with a dative-object and an accusative-object existed in earlier stages of the English language:

- (3) a. þa het Quintianus hi [acc] mid handum slean gelome on þæt hleor ... YCOE-996-coelive.o3
'then ordered Quintianus to strike her with the hands repeatedly on her face.
b. ond sette his þa swiðran hond him [dat] on þæt heafod. YCOE-731-cobede.o2
'and laid his right hand on his head'

References

Burgschmidt, Ernst & Dieter Götz. 1974. *Kontrastive Linguistik Deutsch/Englisch*. München: Hueber.

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