



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

English Department

Syntactic variation, constructional entrenchment and World Englishes Inside the English dative alternation

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Previous research



Mary gave [**John**] [**the apple**]
recipient theme

Mary gave [**the apple**] to [**John**]
theme recipient

Mary gave [**him**] [**the apple**]
recipient theme

Mary gave [**the apple**] to [**him**]
theme recipient

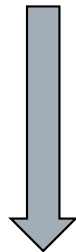


Previous research

Two research paradigms:

Probabilistic grammar
(e.g. Bresnan 2007)

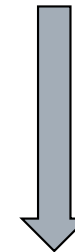
- grammatical knowledge is partially probabilistic
- multiple probabilistic constraints influence the outcome of grammatical variation



stochastic constraints

World Englishes
(e.g. Schneider 2007)

- structural characteristics and sociohistorical background of varieties of English

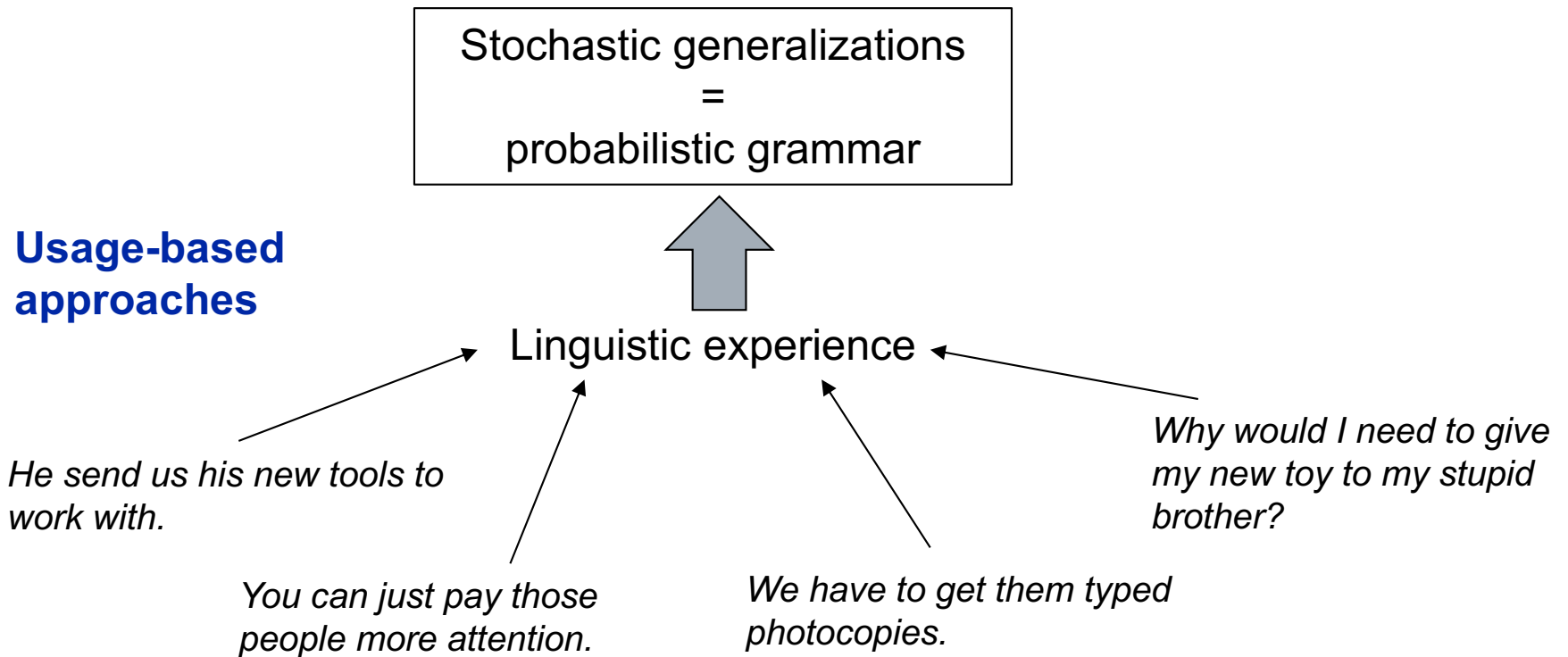


regional variation





Previous research





Research aim

Explore the extent to which regional variation in probabilistic constraints is reflected in regional variation in lexical profiles...



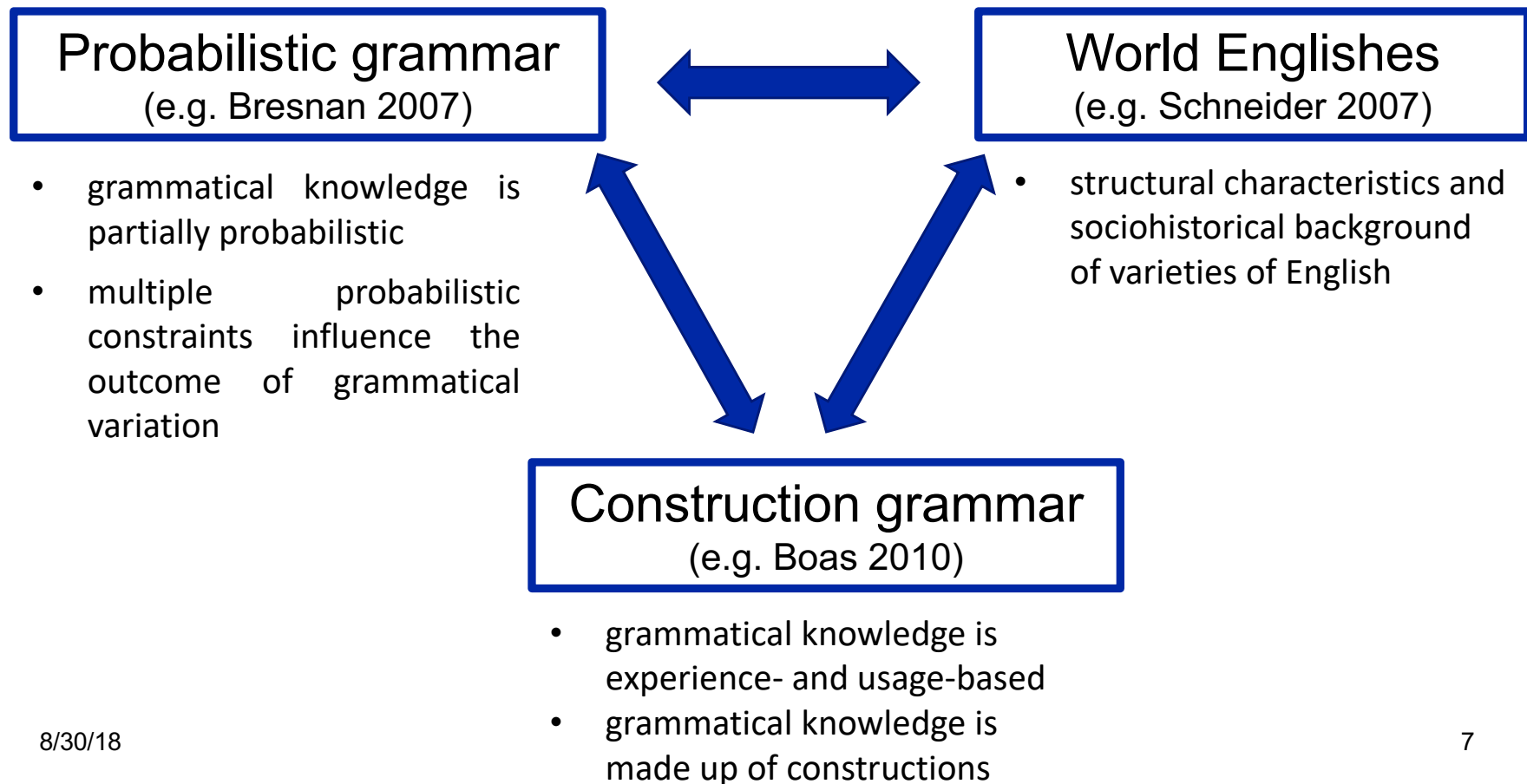
Lexical profiles

- defined as the system of lexical items (e.g. verbs, recipients, themes) that are attracted to a syntactic variant
- measure the strength of association between lexical items and the constructions they occur in (*collocations*)



Theoretical background

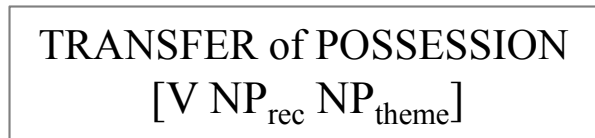
~~Two~~ **Three** research paradigms:





Taxonomic networks

Macro-Cx
schematic
level



Meso-Cx
subschematic
level

[*give* NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]

[*send* NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]

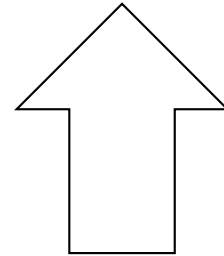
Micro-Cx
substantive
level

give Mary a book *give them the answer* *send me a copy* ...



Entrenchment and abstraction

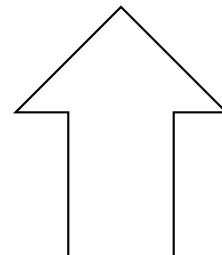
[V NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]



generalize to macro level

[bring NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]
[tell NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]
[hand NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]

[offer NP_{rec} NP_{theme}] [send NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]
[give NP_{rec} NP_{theme}] [show NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]



generalize to meso level

The teacher gave us the answer

I gave Mary the book

You've given them too much already

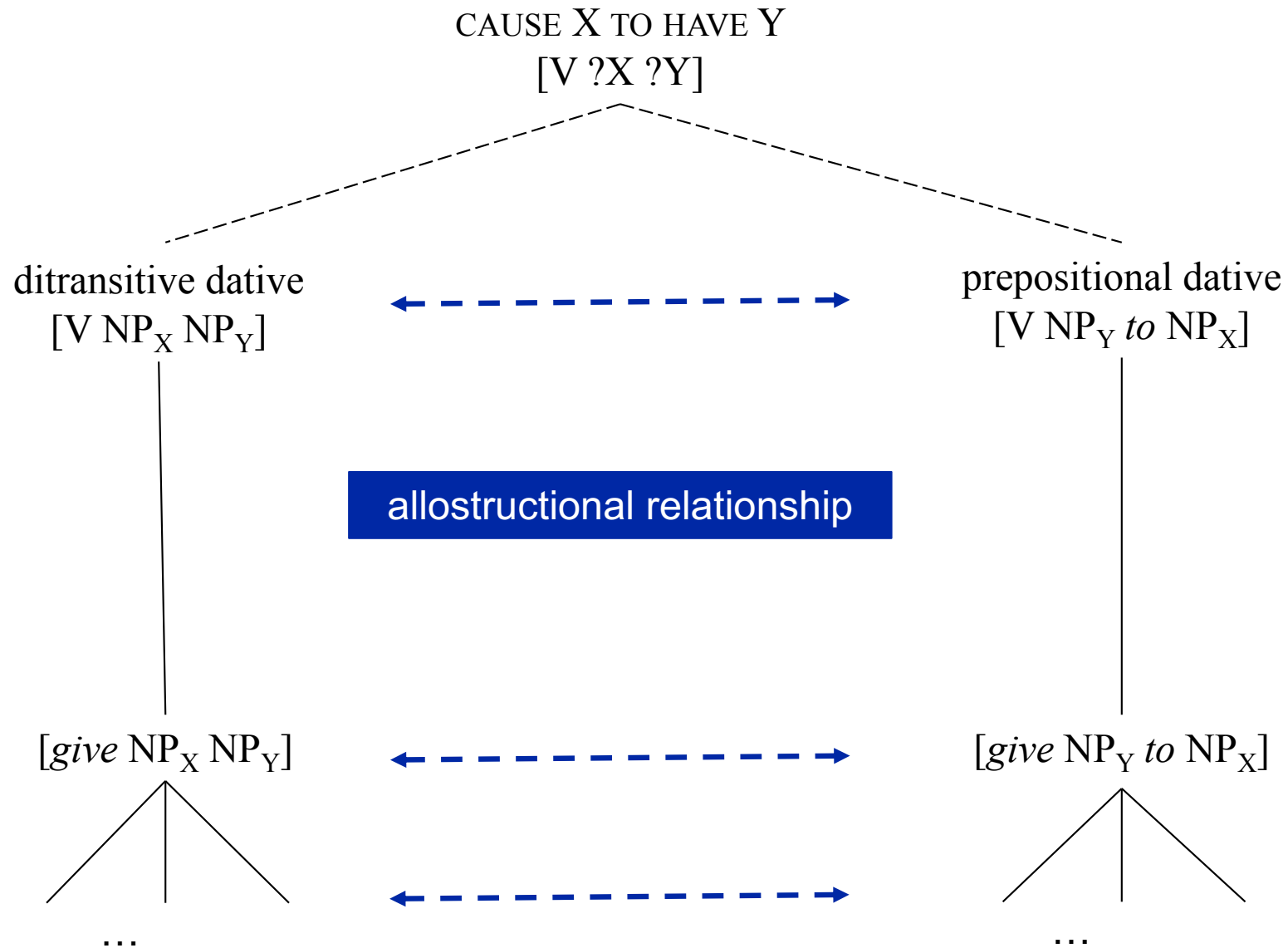
Bill gave the kids a hand

It gave the people hope

We gave them a warning

He will give me my dues

The noise is giving some of us a headache





Research aims

Explore the extent to which regional variation in probabilistic constraints is reflected in regional variation in lexical profiles...

... **on different levels of the taxonomic network**



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Data & Methodology



Corpus data

native varieties / L1

non-native varieties / L2

Canadian English

British English

Irish English

Jamaican English

Hong Kong English

Philippine E

Indian English

Singapore English

New Zealand English

- Corpora**
- International Corpus of English (ICE)
 - Corpus of Global web-based English (GloWbE)



Data extraction and annotation

(e.g. Bresnan et al. 2007)

- retrieval of dative variants using verb list and perl script
- restrict to choice context (incl. pronouns)

$N = 13,171$



Distinctive collexeme analysis

- measure the strength of association between lexical items (verb, recipient heads, theme heads) with the ditransitive vs. prepositional variant
- using the base-ten logarithm of the p -value from the Fisher-Yates Exact test (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2005: 9)
- indicates strength of association and statistical significance



Focus on

Higher-level schemas

- verb collocations

Lower-level schemas

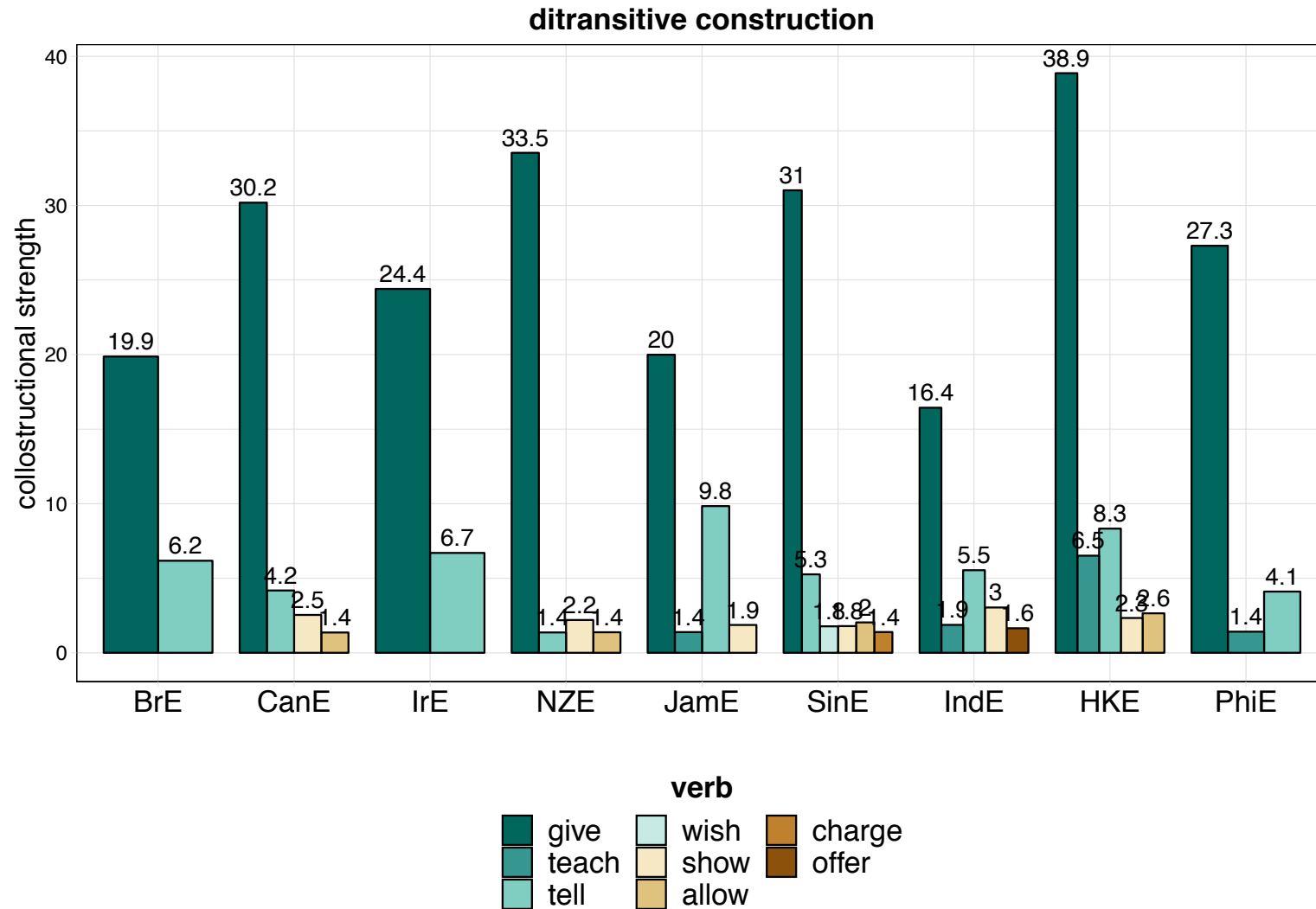
- verb-recipient collocations
- verb-theme collocations
- verb sense collocations



Results

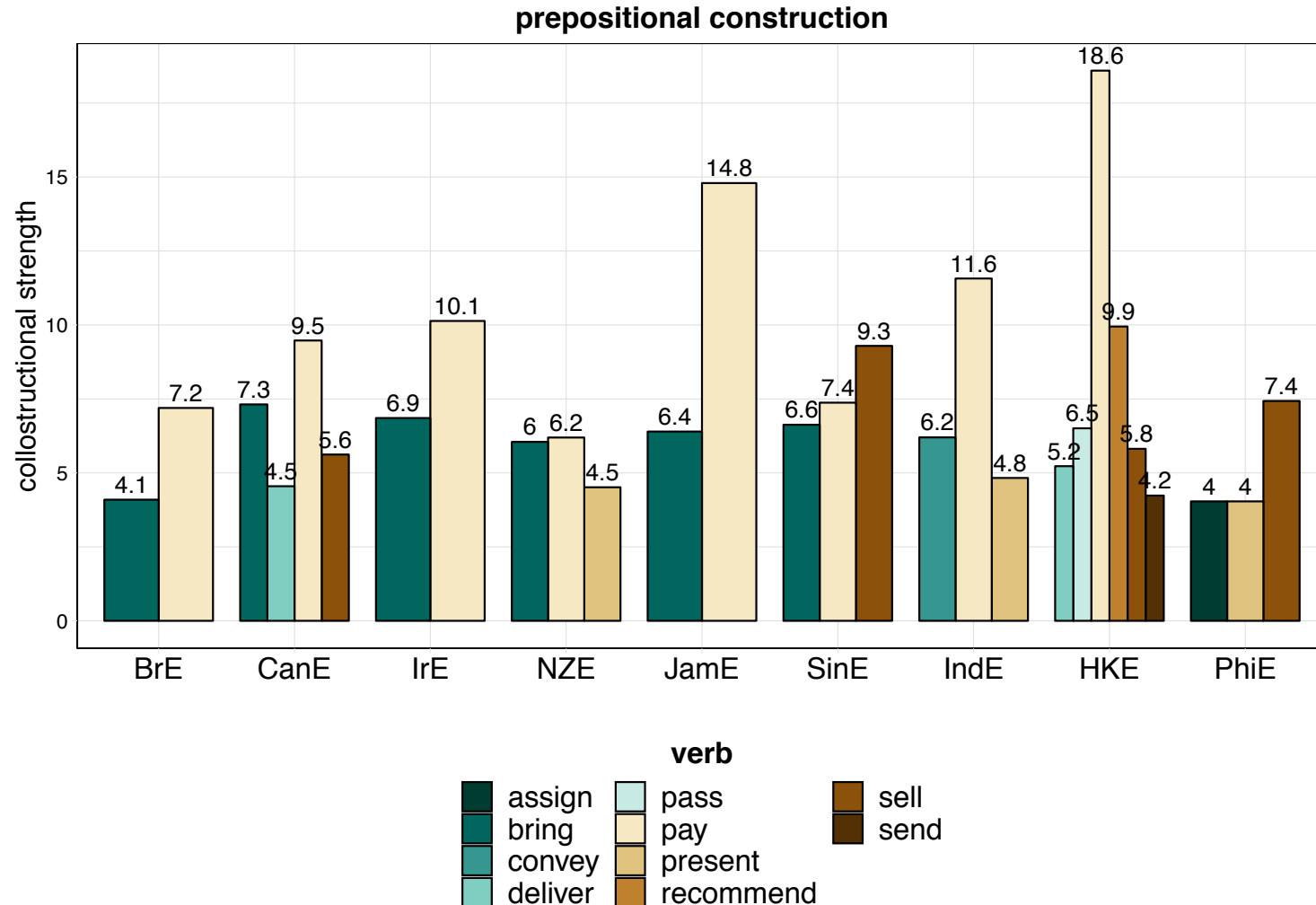


Verbs associated with ditransitive dative





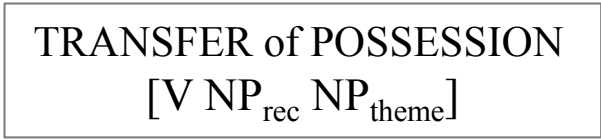
Verbs associated with prepositional dative



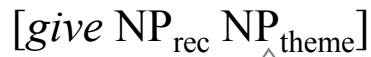


Taxonomic network

Macro-Cx
schematic
level



Meso-Cx
subschematic
level



Micro-Cx
substantive
level

give Mary NP

give them NP

give Mary a book

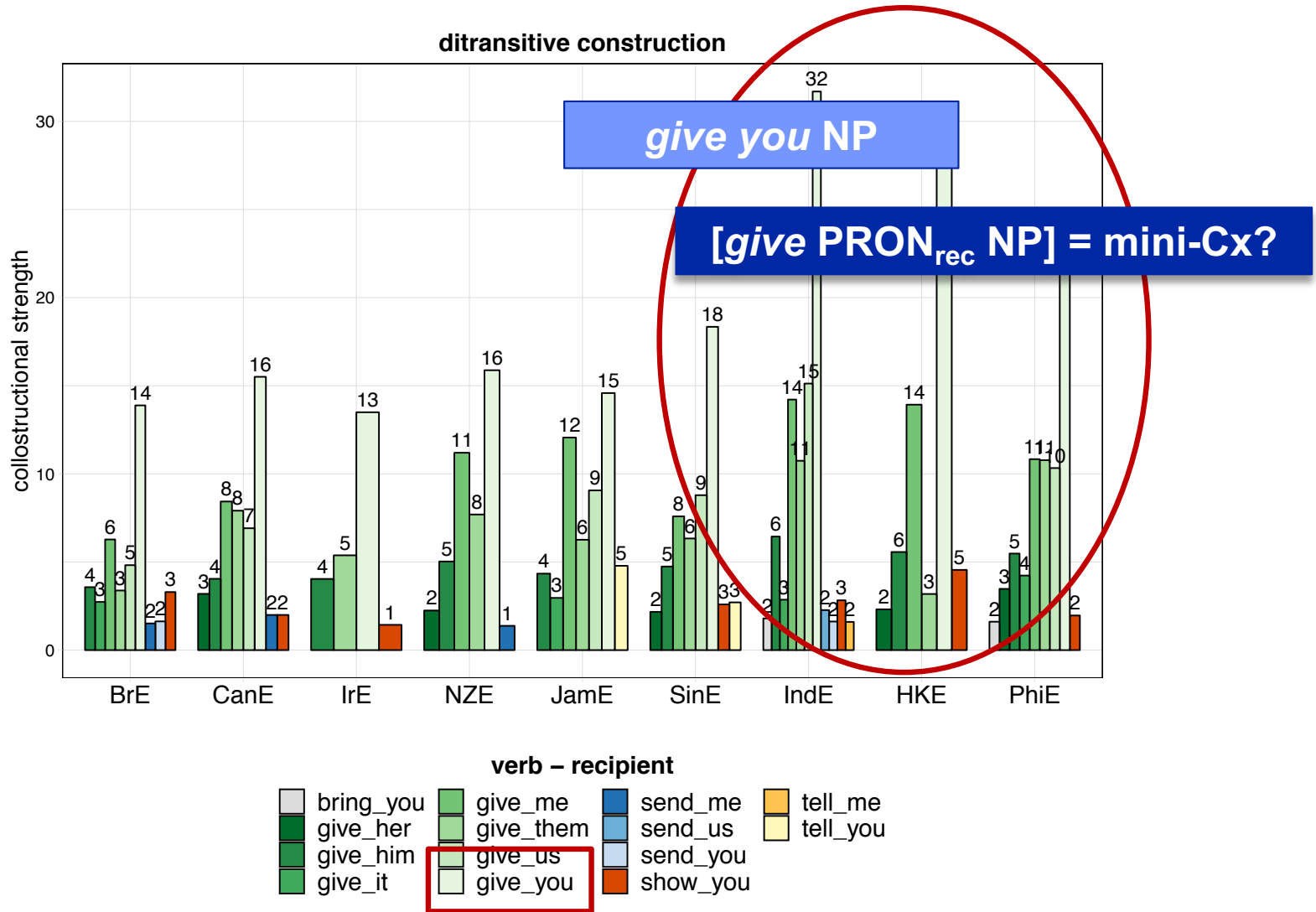
give them the answer

send me a copy

...

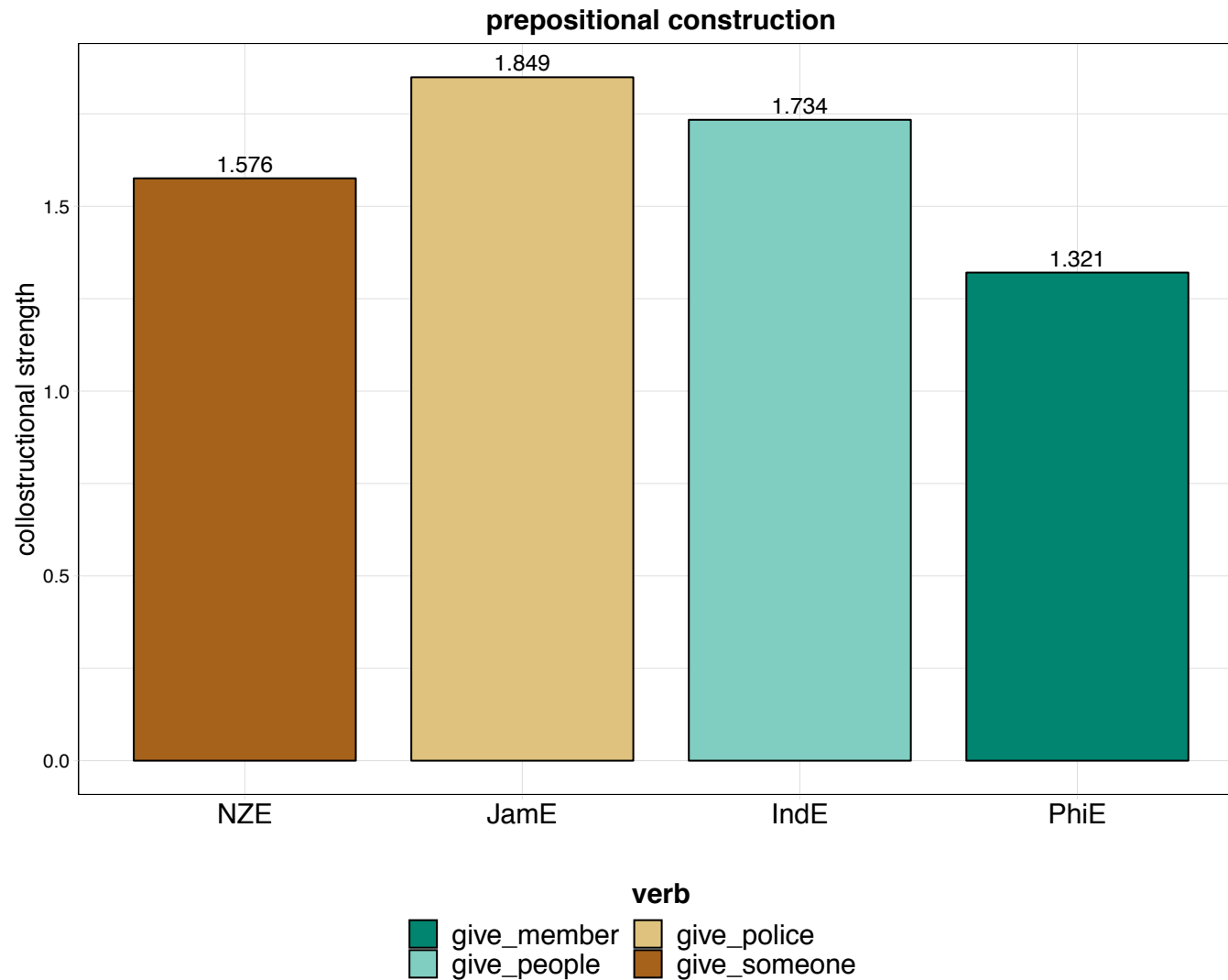


Verb-recipients associated with the ditransitive





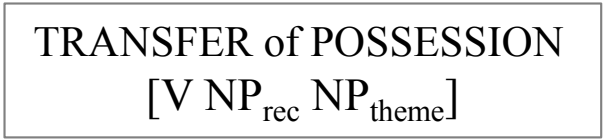
Verb-recipients associated with the prepositional



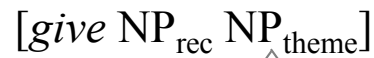


Taxonomic network

Macro-Cx
schematic
level



Meso-Cx
subschematic
level



give NP a book

give NP an answer



Micro-Cx
substantive
level

give Mary a book

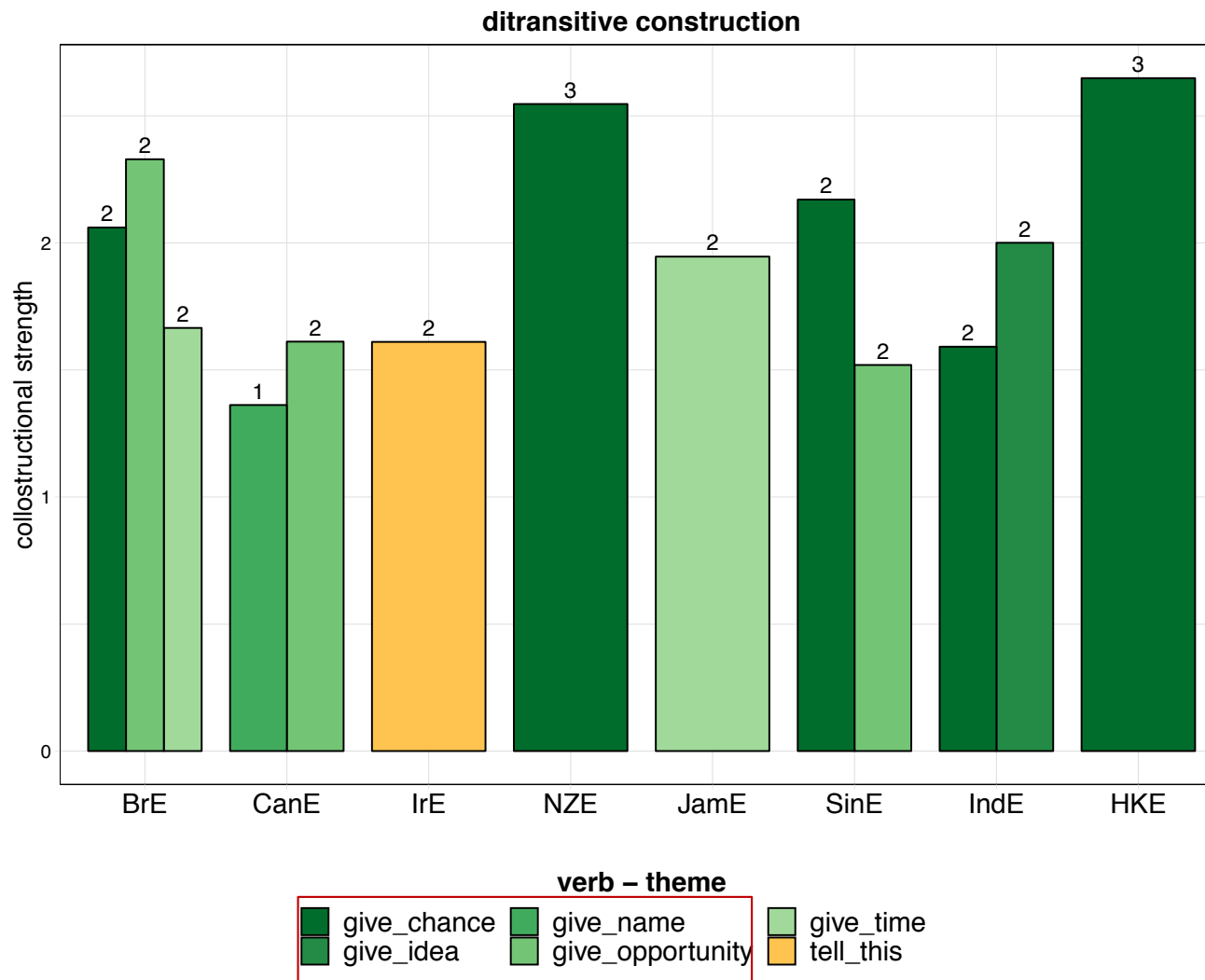
give them the answer

send me a copy

...

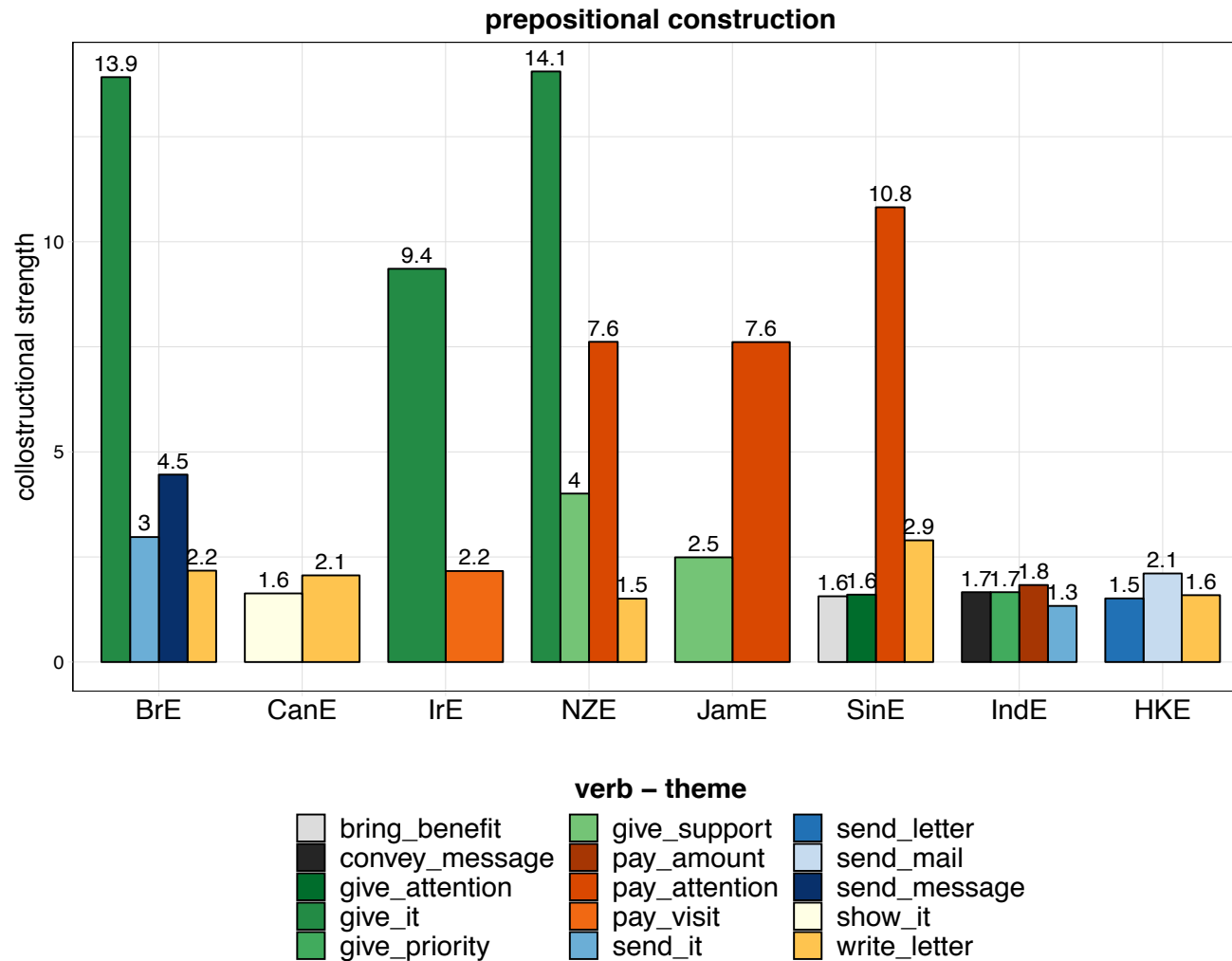


Verb-themes associated with the ditransitive





Verb-themes associated with the prepositional





Summary

- Higher association strength of **verb-theme collexemes** in prepositional dative and **verb-recipient collexemes** in ditransitive dative
- Regional variation in **verb-recipient collexemes**: higher association strength of verb-recipient with ditransitive dative in L2 vs L1



Discussion & Conclusion



Further implications

- Higher association strength of **verb** dative and **verb-recipient collexemes** in ditransitive constructions
- Regional variation in **verb-recipient collexeme** strength of verb-recipient with ditransitive dative

[V NP] = meso-Cx

[give PRON_{rec} NP] = mini-Cx



Research aims

Explore the extent to which regional variation in probabilistic constraints is reflected in regional variation in lexical profiles:

Regional variation in the influence of recipient pronominality \Rightarrow regional variation in the strength of association between pronominal recipients and the ditransitive dative in L2 vs. L1

...on different levels of the constructional network

It is on the more subschematic levels, i.e. verb-recipient (and verb-theme collexemes), that differences in association strength – **regional variation in constructional entrenchment** – becomes apparent.



Take home

We need to

- focus on other elements of the argument structure,
- consider the whole cline of the taxonomic network, from most schematic to more lexically specific constructions and, particularly, meso-constructions
- to assess the extent of **regional variation in constructional entrenchment** more fully



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Thank you!

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