Syntactic alternations, schematization, and collostructional diversity in world Englishes

Jason Grafmiller & Melanie Röthlisberger

KU Leuven

Quantitative Lexicology and Variational Linguistics

Aim

Explore how a usage-based construction grammar approach can explain patterns among distributions of syntactic alternates across varieties of English (VoEs) at different stages of evolutionary development

Dative alternation:

(1) a. You showed me the box. <ICE-CAN:S1A-004>
b. You showed the box to me.

Particle placement alternation:

(2) a. Nobody kicks up a fuss these days. <ICE-HK:S2B-023>
b. Nobody kicks a fuss up these days.

Dynamic Model[1] of post-colonial Englishes

1. Foundation
2. Exonormative stabilization
3. Nativization
4. Endonormative stabilization
5. Differentiation

focus on 9 VoEs situated within later stages of the Dynamic Model

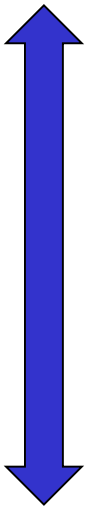
1. Schneider (2003, 2007, 2014)

Grammatical variation in the Dynamic Model

structural innovations situated at the interface between lexis and grammar

most cross-varietal variation

more concrete



- collocational routines: associations of verbs and specific lexical arguments[2]
- collostructional routines: associations of verbs and complementation profiles[3]
- predictors of complementation patterns ('alternations')[4]

more abstract

least cross-varietal variation

2. Schilk (2011); 3. Mukherjee and Gries (2009); 4. Bernaisch et al. (2014)

Alternations, constructions, and nativization

- similar cross-varietal patterns in distributions of syntactic alternates
  - Outer circle VoEs favor *to*-dative
  - Outer circle VoEs favor joined V-Particle order (*pick up the book* >> *pick the book up*)

- relatively little variation in influence of individual factors on alternate choice[7]

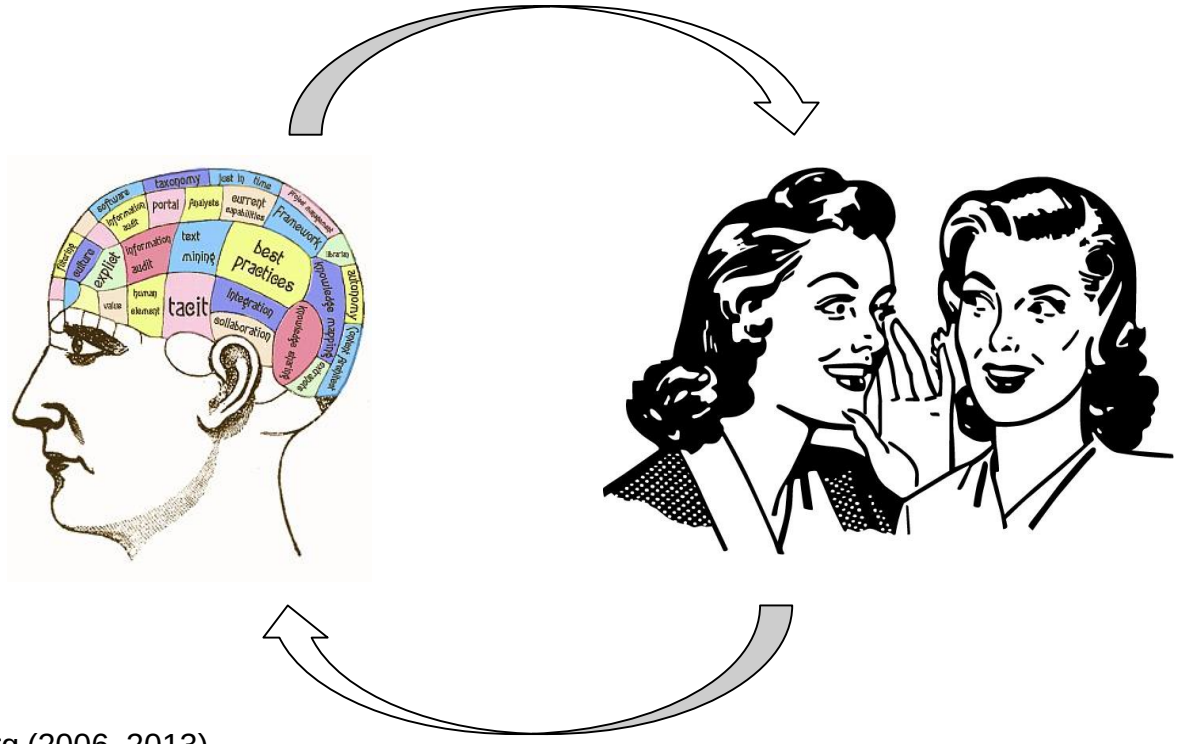
- why should developing VoEs exhibit similar patterns in alternation preferences?

7. Bernaisch et al. (2014); cf. Szmrecsanyi et al. (to appear)

Construction grammar[2]

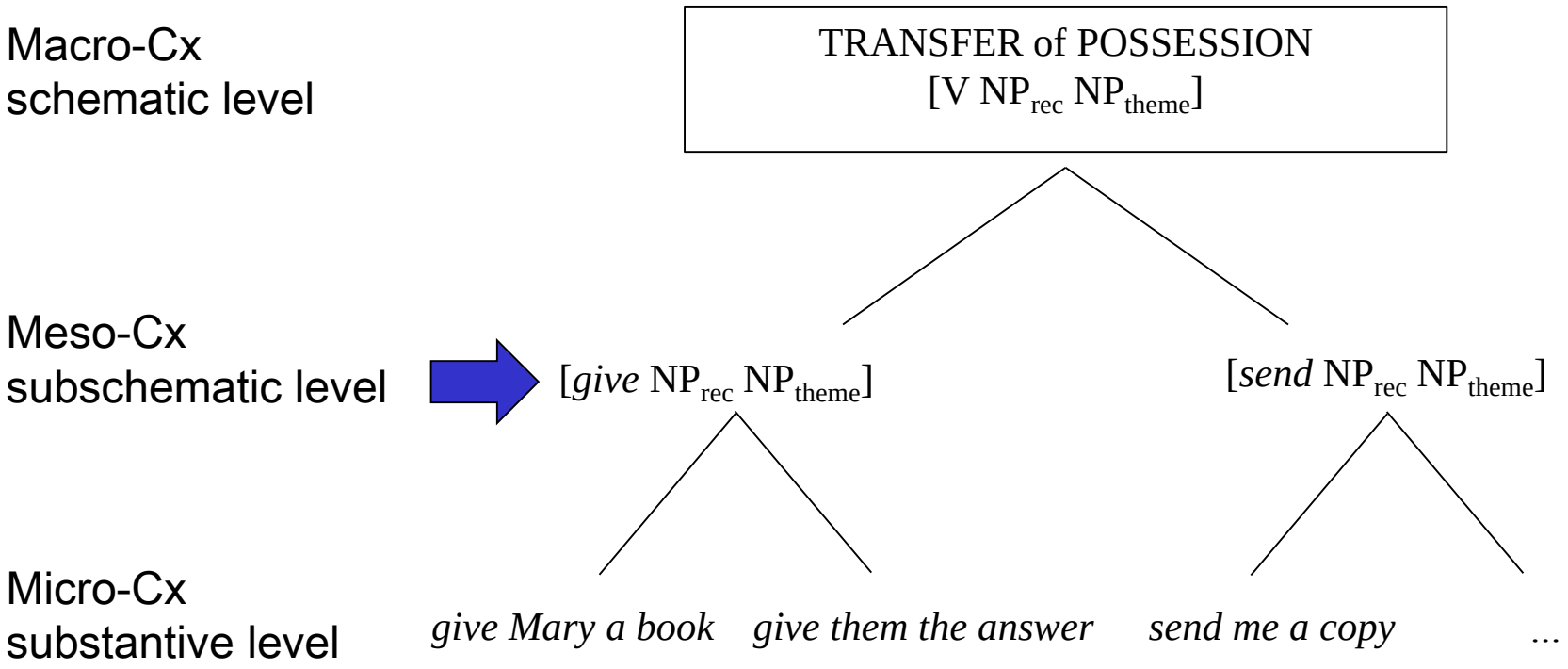
Constructions: arbitrary pairings of form and meaning

- the basic units of grammatical knowledge
- language usage shapes language structure



2. Goldberg (2006, 2013)

Taxonomic networks

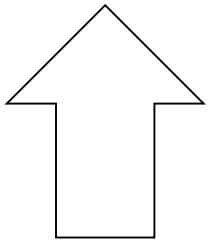


structural innovations in VoEs occur often at the partly schematic, partly substantive level

(Hoffmann 2014)

Entrenchment and abstraction

[V NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]



generalize to macro level

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

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

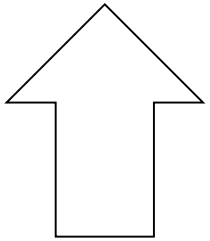
[*send* NP_{rec} NP_{theme}]

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

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

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

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



generalize to meso level

The teacher gave us the answer

You've given them too much already

I gave Mary the book

Bill gave the kids a hand

It gave the people hope

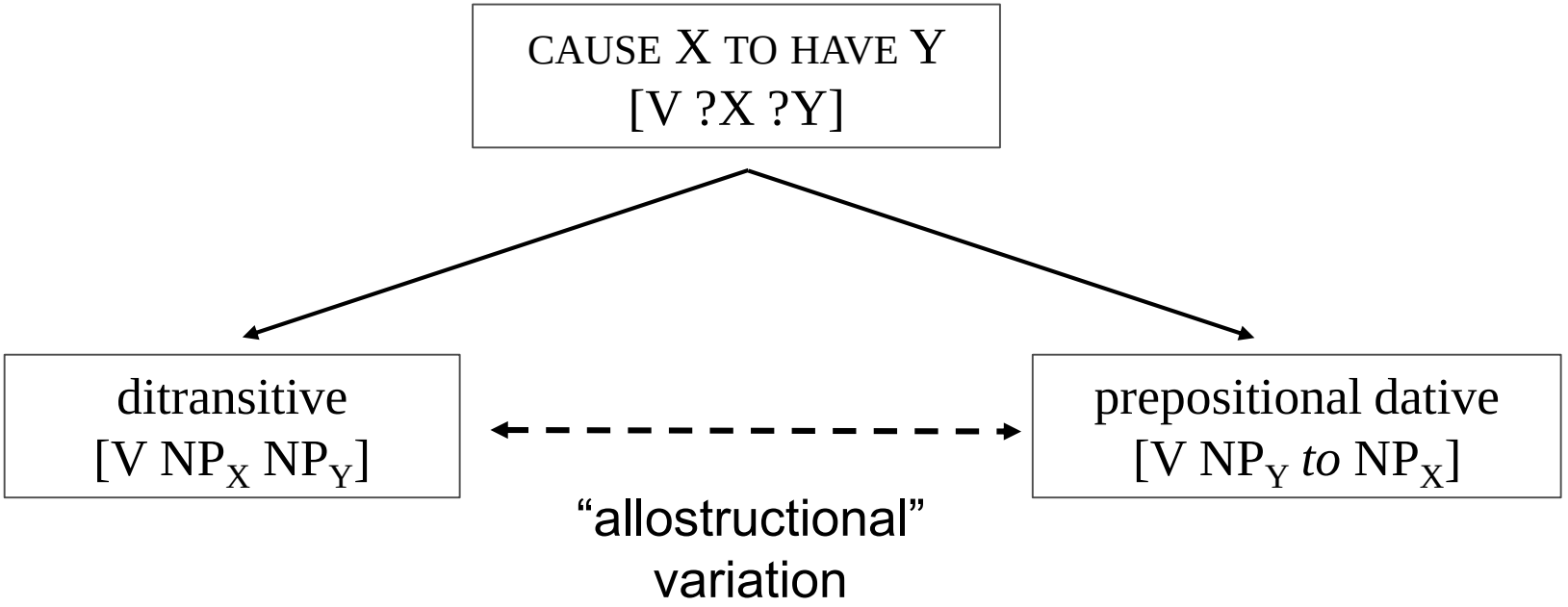
We gave them a warning

He will give me my dues

The noise is giving some of us a headache

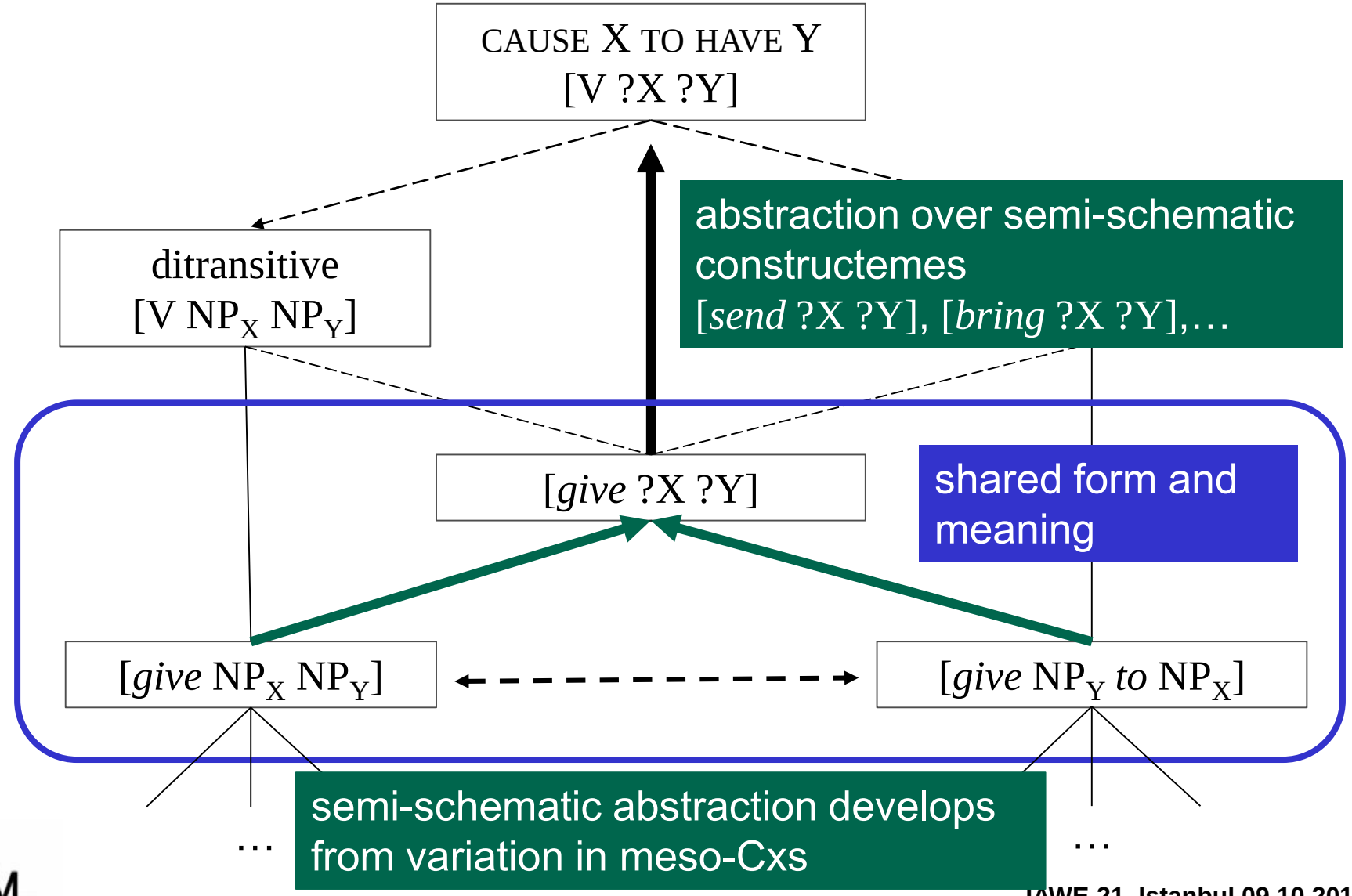
“Constructemes”

- syntactic alternations represent an additional level of abstraction/schematicization[6]



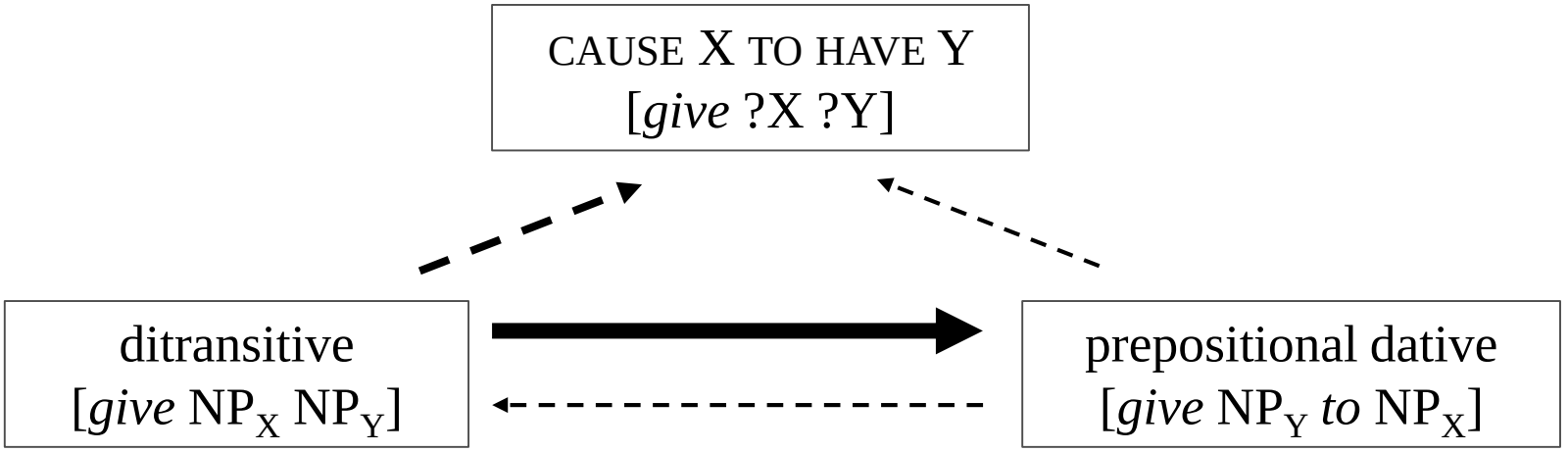
6. Cappelle (2006); Perek (2012)

Inheritance in Constructemes



Asymmetric generalization potential

- recognizing allostructional variation requires sufficient experience with interchangeable types in BOTH alternates



most verbs common to DO Cx also found in the PD Cx

few verbs common to PD Cx also found in the DO Cx

Alternation patterns across VoEs

- VoEs in the earlier phases rely more on specific meso-constructions
  - higher token frequency of specific, partially substantive Cxs
  - more and stronger collostructional associations between specific lexical items and one or both Cx alternates
- VoEs in later phases rely on abstract fully schematized macro-Cxs
  - higher type frequency → more varied lexical fillers
  - fewer and weaker collostructional associations between lexical items and Cx alternates

Empirical investigation

- corpus study of 9 VoEs at 3 phases of development
- two alternations:
  - Dative (*N* = 9110 tokens)
  - Particle placement (*N* = 9152 tokens)

- quantitative analyses of lexical and collostructional associations
  1. type frequency counts
  2. distinctive collexeme analysis
  3. covarying collexeme analysis

ICE corpus data

- DM Phase 5 (Differentiation):

  British E (ICE-GB)
  Canadian E (ICE-CAN)
  New Zealand E (ICE-NZ)
  Irish E (ICE-IRE)

- DM Phase 4 (Endonormative stabilization):

  Jamaican E (ICE-JA)
  Singapore E (ICE-SIN)

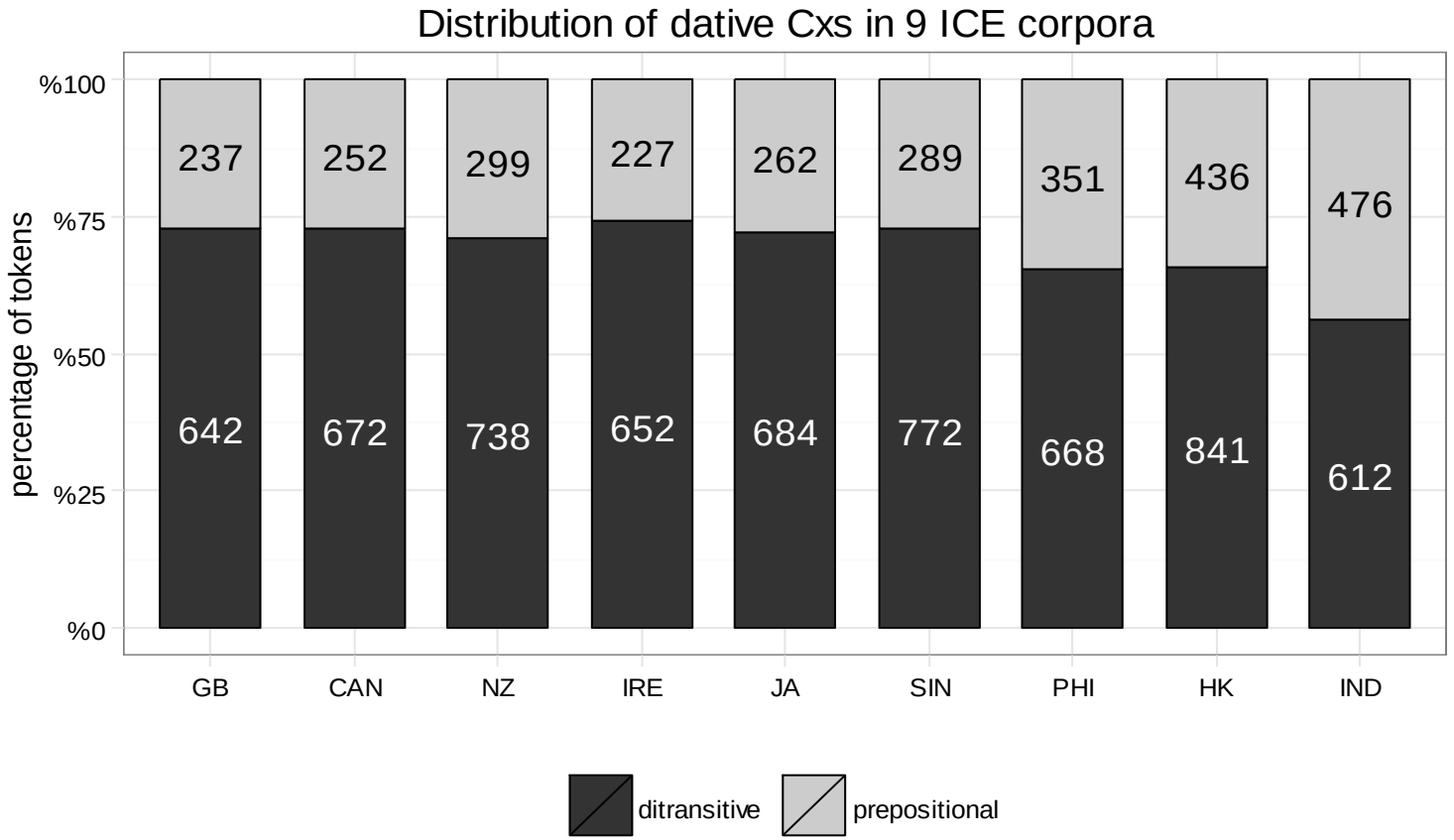
- DM Phase 3 (Nativization):

  Hong Kong E (ICE-HK)
  Indian E (ICE-IND)
  Philippines E (ICE-PHI)

Dative alternation

(3) Pat gave me the book.
(4) Pat gave the book to me.

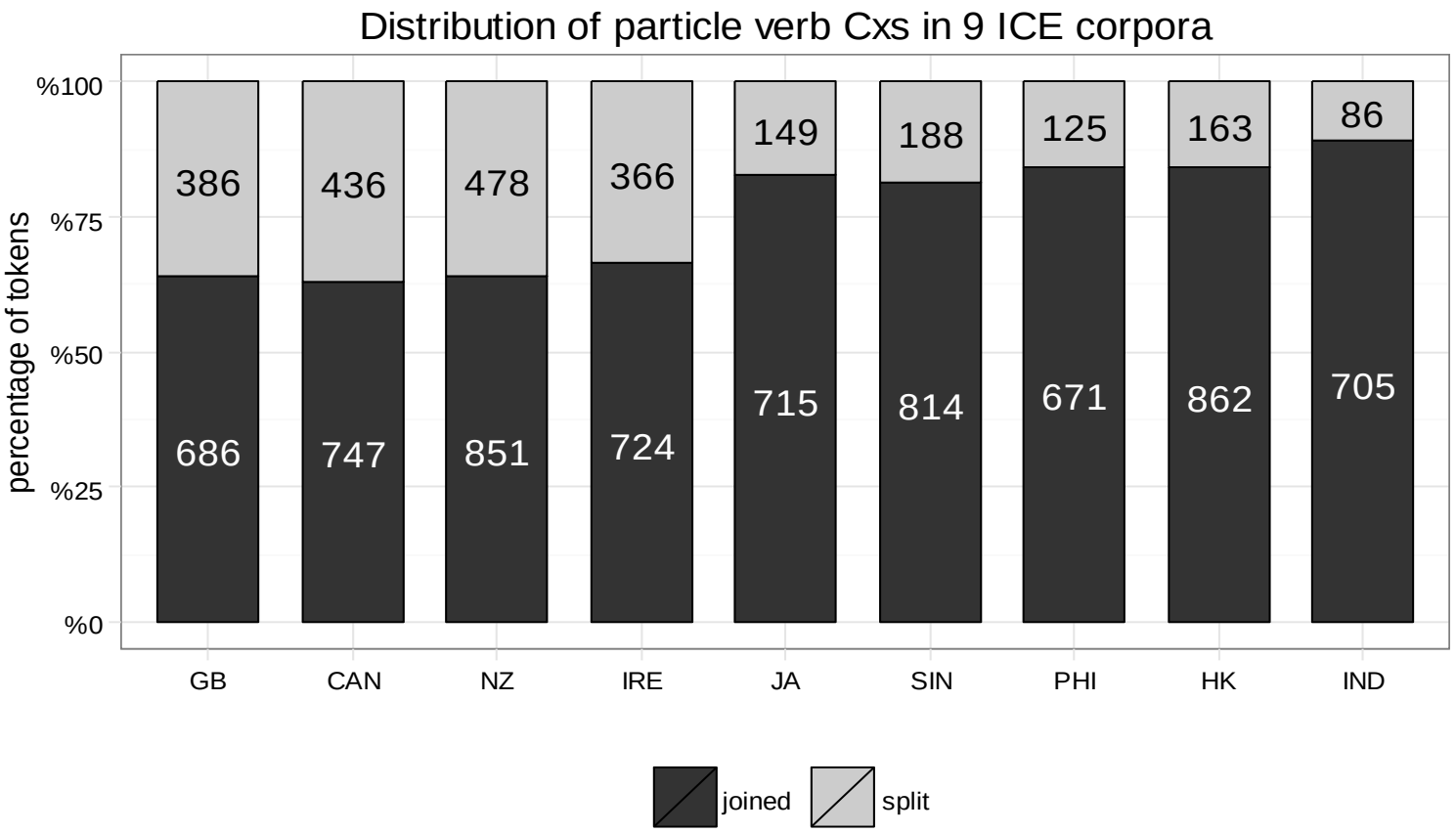
DITRANSITIVE: [V NP NP]
PREPOSITIONAL DATIVE: [V NP *to* NP]



Particle placement alternation

(5) Pat picked the book up. SPLIT: [V NP P]

(6) Pat picked up the book. JOINED: [V P NP]



Type frequency asymmetry

- Count the number of verbs occurring in both alternate Cxs in proportion to all verb types in each respective Cx

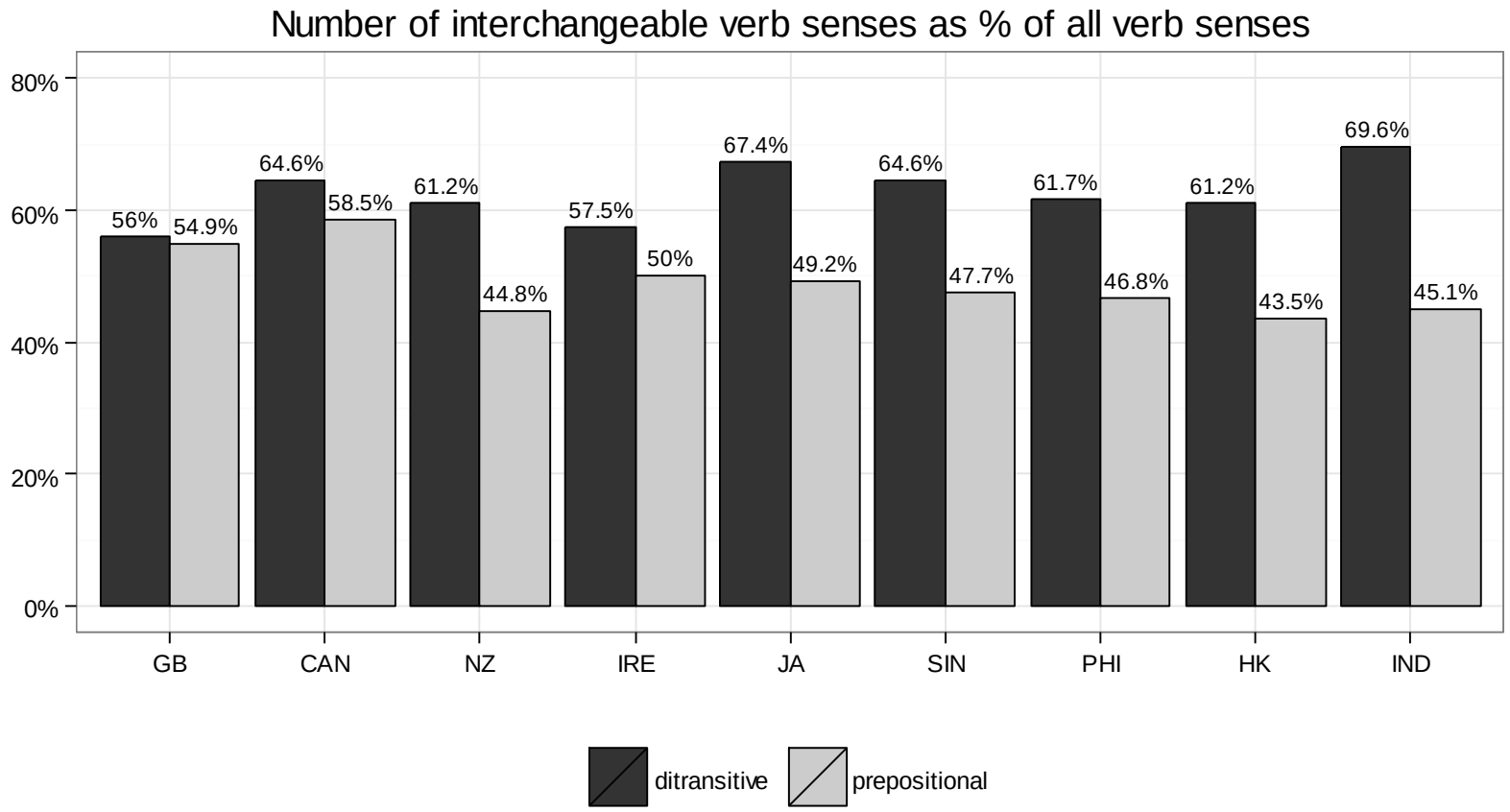
Variety	verbs found in both dative alternates	Total # of verbs in ditransitive	Total # of verbs in *to*-dative
GB	N = 28	50 (28/50 = .56)	51 (28/51 = .55)
JA	N = 31	46 (31/46 = .67)	63 (31/63 = .49)
…	…	….	…

Type frequencies

- high proportions of interchangeable verb types in BOTH alternates and/or greater parity across Cxs reflects greater potential for abstraction
  - little asymmetry in Phase 5 VoEs
- unequal proportions of interchangeable verb types reflect uneven distribution of semantic labor
  - greater asymmetry in Phase 3 VoEs

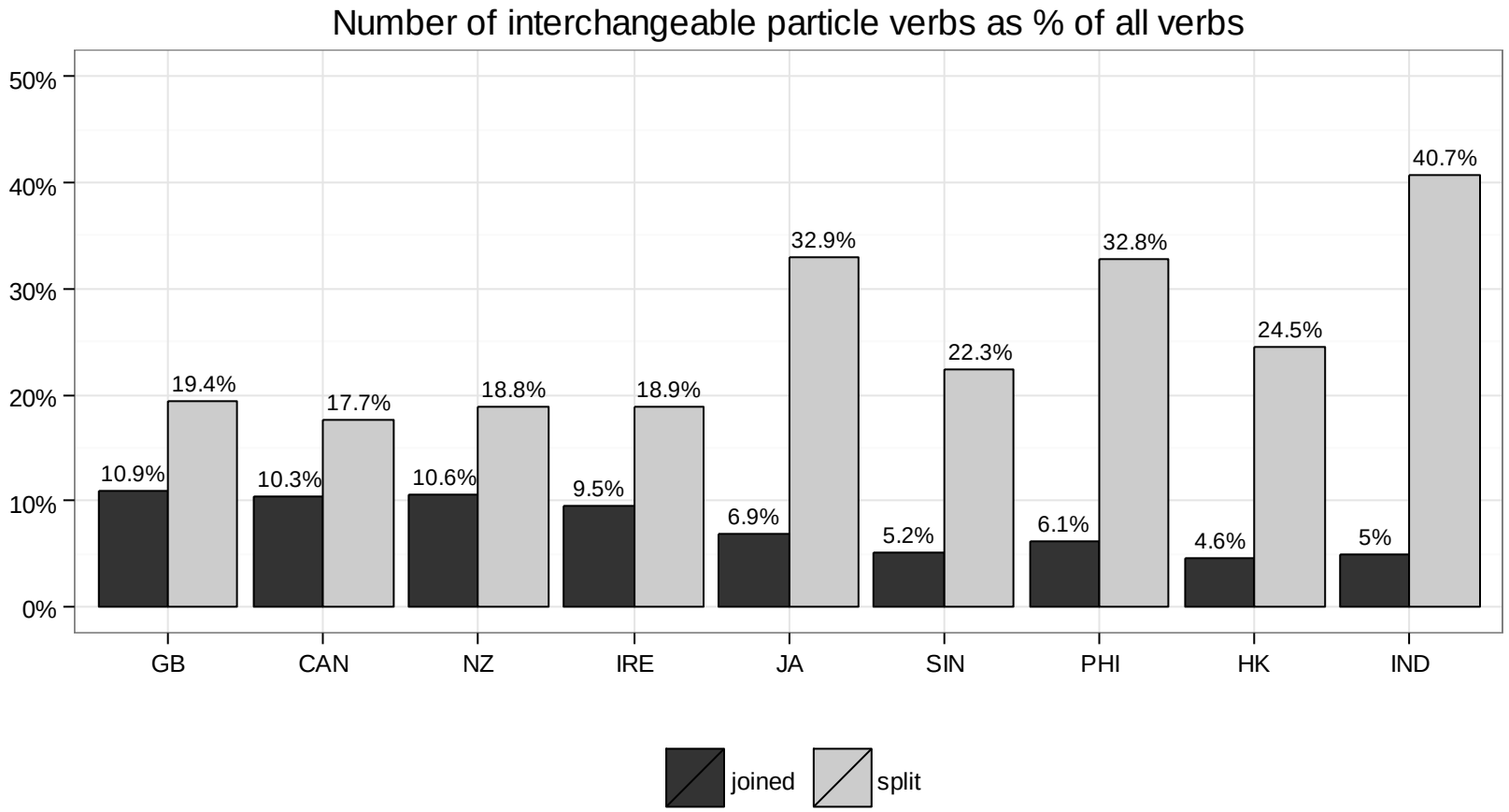
Dative verb senses

- Phase 3 VoEs show the largest allostructional asymmetry in use of specific verb senses
- Phase 5 VoEs spread the load more evenly



Verb particle combinations

- Phase 3 VoEs show the largest allostructional asymmetry in use of specific verb-particle combinations
- large difference between Phase 5 and Phase 3



Distinctive collexeme analysis[8]

- identify distinctive lexical fillers

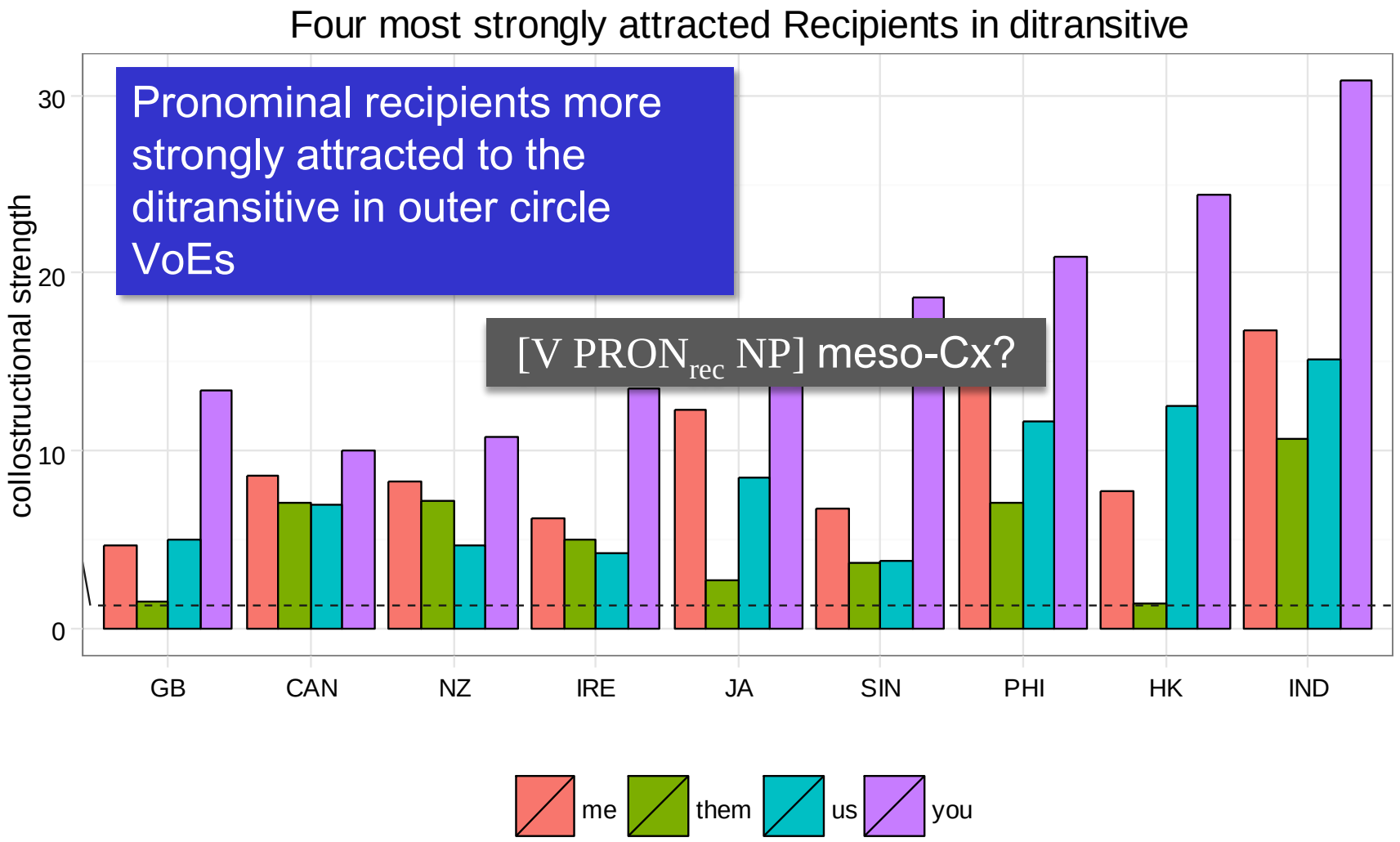
Compare observed to expected frequencies

	give	Other verbs	
Ditransitive	3916 (3393)	2365 (2888)	6281
to-dative	1005 (1528)	1824 (1301)	2829

Phase 3 VoEs should show greater number of significant collostructional associations AND greater allostructional asymmetry than VoEs at later phases

8. Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004)

Distinctive ditransitive recipients



Covarying collexeme analysis[9]

- measures association between lexical items in two syntagmatic slots
  - Verb-Direct Object, Verb-Theme, Verb-Recipient,

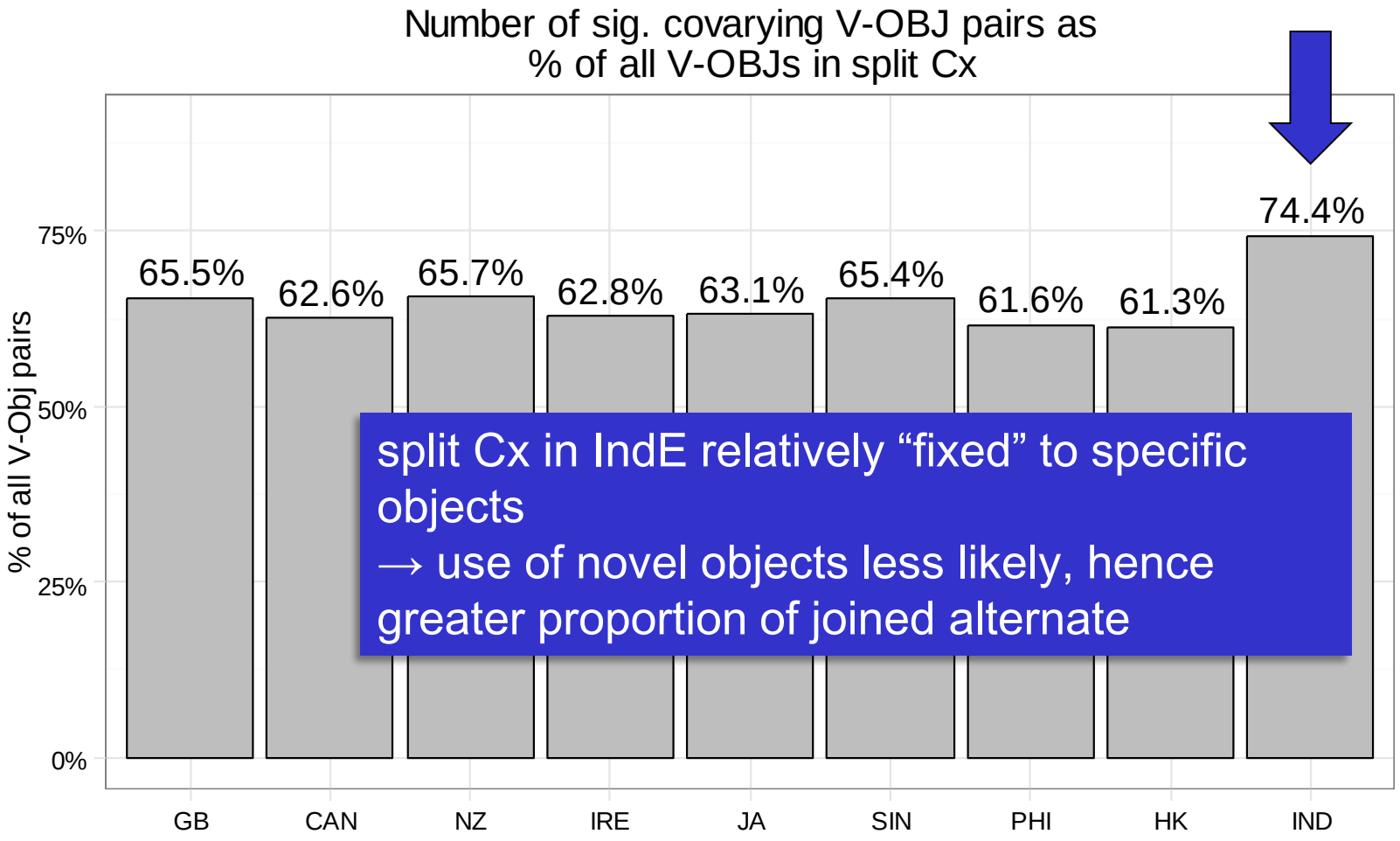
Compare observed to expected frequencies of *take off* and *day* in the split V-NP-Part Cx

	take off	Other verbs	
day	13 (1)	7 (19)	20
Other objects	104 (116)	2266 (2254)	2377

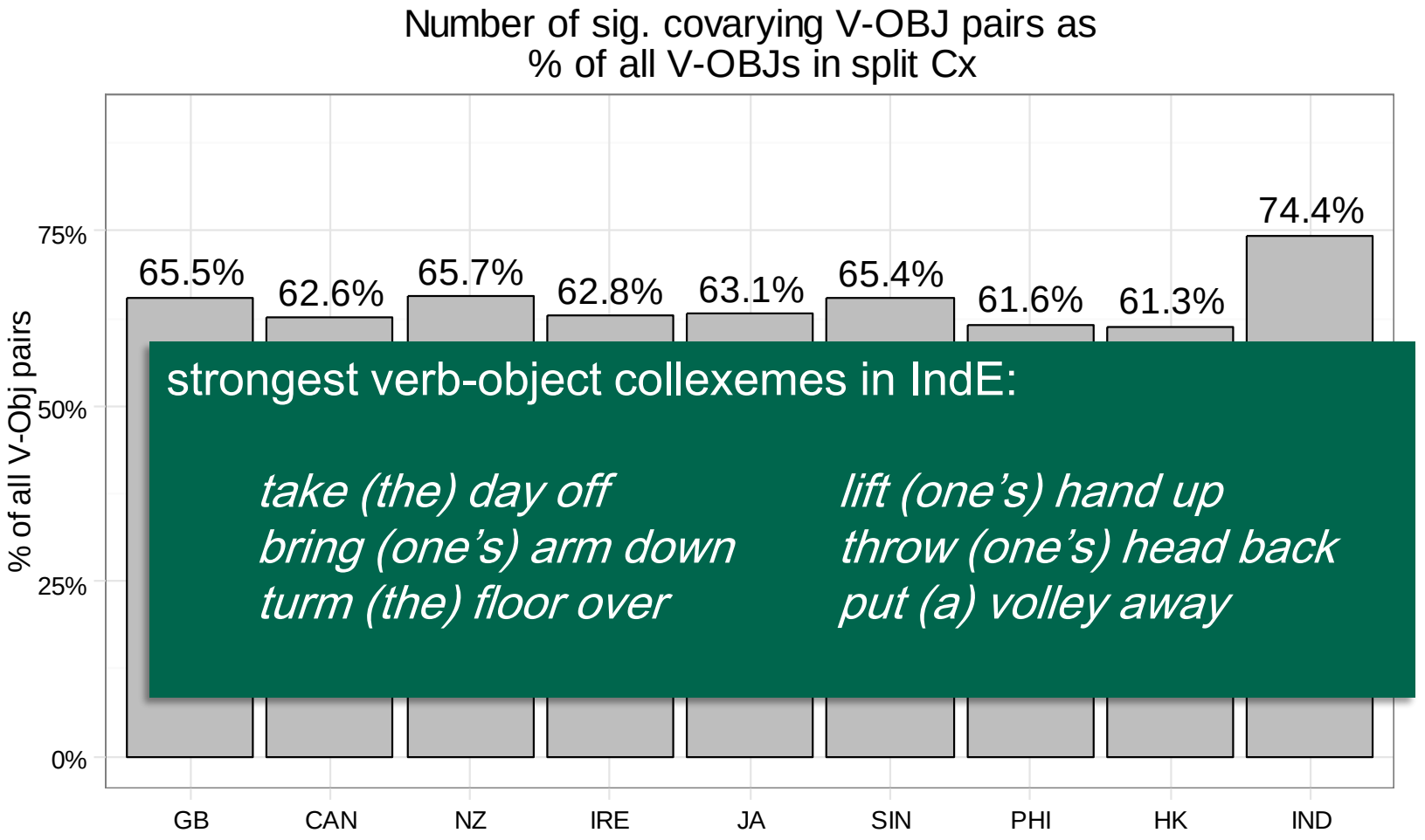
Phase 3 VoEs should show greater number of significant associations AND greater allostructional asymmetry than VoEs at later phases

9. Stefanowitsch and Gries (2005)

Verb-object associations in particle verbs



Verb-object associations in particle verbs



Summary

- less advanced varieties show somewhat more allostructional asymmetry in uses of specific lexical items
  - fewer interchangeable verbs
  - stronger collostructional associations

- innovation at meso-Cx level → regional development of partially fixed collocations/-structions

- lexical patterns not the whole picture, but one possible dimension contributing to emergence of regional (probabilistic) allostructional variation

Thank You!

for further information:

jason.grafmiller@kuleuven.be

melanie.rothlisberger@kuleuven.be

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