Original Research Article

Verb Complementation in China English: The Case of "Give"

Lixin Xia[1*], Yun Xia[2]

[1]Laboratory of Language Engineering and Computing of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou 510420, China

[2]Nanfang College of Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou 510420, China

*Corresponding Author
Lixin Xia

Abstract: The present paper aims to reveal the differences across different English varieties in the use of the verb complementation patterns. To that end, a corpus-based methodology was adopted to compare the complementation profiles between China English, British English and Indian English. Through a comparative analysis of the data, it was found that there were marked differences between them in verb complementation. For the pair of China English and British English, the Type IP and Type IIIP patterns were significantly underused in China English. In addition, speakers of China English tended to use the Type III patterns less frequently than their British counterparts. For the pair of China English and Indian English, there was a significant difference in the use of Type III and Type IIIP patterns. China English speakers did not use them as frequently as their Indian counterparts. By contrast, Indian English speakers underused the Type I patterns. The paper argues that linguistic transfer and cultural influences might be the underlying reasons to lead to these differences.

Keywords: Verb complementation; structrual nativization; China English; corpus linguistics.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of World Englishes, more and more attention has been given to structural nativisation. It is generally acknowledged that new forms and structures emerge in the local English varieties when the English language is used locally [1-6]. Studies on structural nativisation started in the 1970s, focusing on new ditransitive verbs, verb complementation, and collocational patterns found in world Englishes, such as Indian English, Singapore English, Jamaican English, etc. which locate at the "Outer Circle" [7] of the English varieties.

Researchers later found that "structural nativisation not only refers to entirely new and innovative forms and structures in individual varieties, but also covers quantitative differences between varieties of English in the use of forms and structures that belong to the common core that is shared by all Englishes [1]". They find clear and identifiable differences by using various corpora. However, China English has received less attention from this perspective. Therefore, the present study will examine quantitative differences between China English, British English and Indian English in the use of the verb complementational patterns.

In order to fulfill the research objectives of this present study, the verb "give" is chosen as the research object. The reasons to choose the verb is that previous studies [2, 8] used the verb, and the verb complementational profiles of the verb in British English and Indian English can be used directly in this study to further compare the differences between China English and British English. Next, it is considered to be "the most prototypical ditransitive verb" [2]. Thirdly, the verb occurs with a high frequency in China English Corpus which makes a comparative study possible. Finally, the giving event involves predictable structural meanings [9].

In the present study, the following research questions will be addressed:
- Are there any differences between China English and British English in the use of verb complementational patterns? If so, what are they?
- Are there any differences between China English and Indian English in the use of verb complementational patterns? If so, what are they?
- Which complementational patterns are used most frequently by the three English varieties?

In this present study, we will look at the differences across different English varieties with verb complementation. The plan of the paper is as follows. In section 2, relevant studies will be reviewed. The methodology for the present study will be introduced in Section 3. In Section 4, data on verb complementation in China English will be presented and discussed. Finally, conclusion will be drawn in Section 5.

Relevant Studies

Mukherjee and Hoffmann [2] use the subcorpora of the International Corpus of English (ICE) to investigate the differences between Indian English and British English in the use of the verb "give". They found remarkable differences between British English and Indian English. First, the verb "give" has more occurrences in Indian English (1797) than in British English (1064), which may show that speakers of Indian English are more likely to use it to express the giving event. Secondly, Type II and Type III patterns of "give" occur more frequently in Indian English than in British English. Thirdly, Type I pattern has a much greater frequency in British English than in Indian English.

Ai & You [8] conducted a similar study on the profiles of verb complementation in China English by using the data from an online discussion forum. They reported that there are sharp differences between China English and British with verb complementation. Speakers of China English overuse Type I pattern, which accounts for 71% (355) of all the instances of the use of the verb "give" (500). On the contrary, some patterns are less frequently used, such as Type III, or even never used, such as Type IP, in China English.

These studies reveal the quantitative differences between varieties of English in the use of verb complementation. However, Ai & You's [8] study was based on the data from Chinese learners of English. In the continuum of learner's English and China English, their production could locate somewhere at the learner's language side. It is necessary to look at the actual data from China English. Therefore, this paper intends to collect data from more proficient Chinese speakers of English, whose production would locate somewhere at the side of China English in the continuum, and make an investigation into the verb complementational patterns in China English.

METHODS

In this study, a comparative and corpus-based analysis of verb complementation will be done to identify and explain the differences between China English, British English and Indian English. To that end, we built the Corpus of China English (CCE). The source of the data and research procedures will be given below.

Source of the Data

The linguistic data on China English come from the CCE, and the statistical data on British English and Indian English come from Mukherjee and Hoffmann's study [2]. The CCE has more than 13.9 million tokens. It comprises of written texts by Chinese speakers of English. They include Chinese journalists, magazine writers, novelists, scholars, and others who write in English. They are proficient English speakers, and their production can be regarded as China English. The corpus covers four genres: magazine, newspaper, fiction and academic, each of which has about 3 million tokens.

Procedures

Data extraction and analysis in the study followed the procedures below:

First, the software AntConc. 3.4.4 was used to extract all the concordance lines of the lemma "give" from the CCE. It amounts to 12,738 lines, out of which 400 were sampled. And then, they are coded manually according to the patterns of the ditransitive verbs specified by Mukherjee and Hoffmann [2].

Second, the frequency and distribution of complementational patterns in China English were analyzed in comparison with those in British English.

Third, the frequency and distribution of complementational patterns in China English were analyzed in comparison with those in Indian English.

Fourth, the frequency and distribution of complementational patterns in China English and in Indian English were analyzed, with a focus on closeness to those in the "standard" British English.

Fifth, the log-likelihood and significance values for all the above data will be calculated by the log-likelihood ratio calculator developed by Liang, Li and Xu [10]. Just by imputing the numbers of tokens and the numbers of hits of the verb "give" in the corpora into the calculator, the log-likelihood and significance values will be given. And then the data can be explained statistically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As one of the most prototypical ditransitive verbs in English, the verb "give" was chosen for this study. In this section, its complementation profiles will be presented, and analyzed.

Categorisation of Verb Complementation

The ditransitive verb "give" can have three argument roles, i.e. the "agent = X, the "recipient" =Y, and the "patient" =Z, meaning "X causes Y to receive Z". The complementation of "give" was categorized into five types in Mukherjee and Hoffmann's study [2]. For ease of comparison, their categorization [2] was adopted with examples from the Corpus of China English.
(1) a. Type I (S) GIVE [Oi:NP] [Od:NP]
 b. Sorry, I cannot **give** you a written statement, Director Tong.
(2) a. Type II (S) GIVE [Od:NP] [Oi:PPto]
 b. If we have homework, we must **give** it to our form teachers.
(3) a. Type III (S) GIVE [Od:NP] ~~Oi~~
 b. The provincial authorities have **given** the okay.
(4) a. Type IV (S) GIVE ~~Oi Od~~
 b. Examples are not available in the CCE.
(5) a. Type V (S) GIVE [Oi:NP] ~~Od~~

b. Examples are not available in the CCE.

For Type IV, both objects are omitted, as in "It's better to give than to receive". For Type V, the direct object is omitted, as in "They didn't give her they had just given Mary". However, no uses of Type IV and V were found in the 400 samples from the CCE.

Frequency of "give"

The number of occurrences of the lemma "give" in CCE, ICE-GB, and ICE-India is shown in Table 1. The frequency for ICE-GB and ICE-India is cited from Appendix 2 in Mukherjee and Hoffmann's work [2].

Table-1: Frequency of "give"

CCE	ICE-GB	Log.	Sign.	ICE-India	Log.	Sign.
12,738	1064	-21.00	0.000	1797	-603.4	0.000

Both ICE-GB and ICE-Indian have one million tokens. The relative frequency of the lemma "give" is 916 in CCE. From Table-1, it is shown that the verb "give" is significantly underused in China English compared with either British English or Indian English as the p-values are less than 0.05. However, it is significantly overused in Indian English with the p-value being 0.000.

Frequency and distribution of complementation patterns in China English, British English, and Indian English

The frequencies and percentages of complementational patterns of the verb "give" in China English, British English, and Indian English are shown in Table-2. The data for British English and Indian English are adapted from Appendix 2 in Mukherjee and Hoffmann's work [2].

Table- 2: Frequencies and percentages

Type	China English		British English		Indian English	
	F.	*%*	*F.*	*%*	*F.*	*%*
I	181	45.25	441	41.45	439	24.43
IP	28	7	96	9.02	137	7.62
II	79	19.75	142	13.35	337	18.76
IIP	19	4.75	42	3.95	91	5.06
III	82	20.5	266	25	570	31.72
IIIP	11	2.75	66	6.2	182	10.13
IV	0	0	11	1.03	29	1.61
V	0	0	0	0	12	0.67
Sum	400	100	1064	100	1797	100

Figure-1 shows the distribution of the complementation of "give" in China English, British English, and Indian English. The longitudinal axis is in percentage.
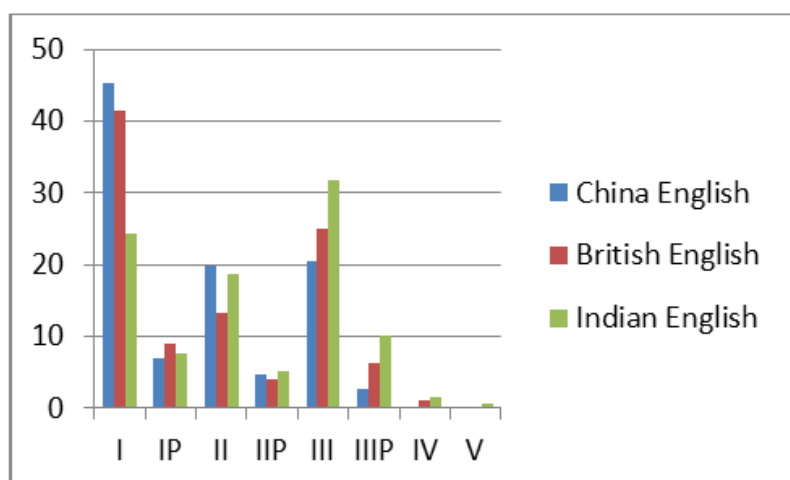

Fig-1: Complementation of "give"

From the data above, we can try to answer the research questions one by one. The answer to the first research question is definitely affirmative. As seen in Figure-1, the most striking divergence between China English and British English is the use of passive structures. Type IP, Type IIP, and Type IIIP denote the passive forms of the ditransitive verb "give". Both Type IP and Type IIIP are used less frequently in China English than in British English. The difference is significant with the p-values being 0.0003 for Type IP and 0.000 for Type III P. Although Type IIP is used more frequently in China English than in British English, it is not significant statistically (p=0.822). This means that speakers of China English tend to use passive structures less frequently in their writings compared with speakers of British English. In the Chinese language, the passive voice is less frequently used, and is usually achieved by the use of the lexical items "bei" and "ba", etc. Chinese speakers of English might transfer it to China English.

The second remarkable difference between China English and British as visualized in Figure 1 is the use of Type III in which only the direct object is made explicitly. This pattern is significantly underused in China English (p=0.000). That is to say, speakers of China English use this pattern less frequently than their British counterparts.

The third outstanding difference is the use of Type IV in which both the direct object and indirect object are not made explicitly, as in the sentence "We need your help. Please give generously." This pattern does not occur in the Corpus of China English at all. This may suggest that speakers of China English tend to consider "give" as the most prototypical ditransitive verb.

The only pattern that speakers of China English use significantly (p=0.003) more often than British English speakers is Type II, in which the patient precedes the recipient. This may suggest that speakers of China English value more highly the thing than the recipient. According to Olavarria de Ersson and Shaw [11], European cultures place a higher value on individualism, and Asian cultures on collectivism. Therefore, "when offered the choice between two syntactic structures that focus either on what is provided or on the recipient to express more or less the same thing, BrE speakers would be likely to profile the recipient more frequently in their use of language" [11]. On the contrary, China English speakers would profile the patient instead of the recipient because Chinese culture sees the individual less important than the collective. From the perspective of meaning-to-structure mapping, there are two ways to express the same giving event: causing a change of state (possession) and causing a change of place (movement to goal). For the same giving event, China English speakers choose the movement meaning with the prepositional dative structure more frequently than British English speakers.

The answer to the second research question is strongly positive. The great difference between China English and Indian English lies in the use of Type III and Type IIIP patterns as shown in Figure-1. China English speakers use these structures less frequently than their Indian counterparts with p-values both being 0.000.

The second striking difference between China English and Indian English as visualized in Figure 1 is the use of the Type VI and Type V patterns. They do not occur in CCE.

An interesting observation was made after the log-likelihood and significance values are calculated. The results show that except Type I, all the other patterns are significantly underused in China English with the p-values all being 0.000. Though the percentage of Type I pattern in China English is greater than that in Indian English, the difference is not statistically significant (p=0.253). This phenomenon is probably attributed to the fact that the lemma "give" is significantly underused in CCE compared with that in ICE-India as shown in Table-1.

There is no easy answer to the last research question. The Type I pattern seems to be the common core shared by all English varieties. It is true that it is used most frequently in both China English (45.5%) and British English (41.45%). However, it is used much less frequently in Indian English (24.43%) than in the other two English varieties. Moreover, it is even used less frequently than the Type III pattern (31.72%) in Indian English. As shown in Table-2, the Type III pattern has the highest percentage (31.72%) in all the patterns in Indian English.

The Type II pattern occurs all most at the same rate in China English (19.75%) and Indian English (18.76%). However, it occurs less frequently in British English (13.35%). As discussed above, because of the influence of Asian cultures, speakers of Asian Englishes prefer to use the "movement to goal" structure in which the patient is made prominent. In the same way, British English speakers tend to use the possession structure in which the recipient is made prominent because they consider the individual as the core.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to the various corpus-enquiry softwares and tools, it is possible to operate on large volumes of data in order to reveal the linguistic features of a language. Based on the data from the CCE, and the results of previous studies [2, 8], the present paper made a comparative study between different English varieties in the use of complementational patterns. The major contributions of the study can be summarized as follows.

First, it shed new light on differences between China English, British English and Indian English in the use of verb complementational patterns. In the field of world Englishes, no literature has been found on verb complementation in China English. Ai & You' study [8] reveals verb complementation in Chinese learners of English. Second, the Corpus of China English has been built for the purpose of the present study. It is well designed, and is a valuable resource for the study on China English, natural language processing and information technology and management engineering. Third, it has explored the verb complementational profiles in China English from the perspective of structural meaning, which is a methodological contribution to the study of China English.

The findings of this study suggest that speakers of China English show a preference for certain complementation patterns. To further prove the findings, it is necessary to study more ditransitive verbs. Furthermore, research can be done to examine the differences between China English and other English varieties which locate at the "Expanding Circle" in verb complementation [7].

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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