

## On the Nature of *Give*-idioms\*

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**Chang, Kyungchul. 2009. On the Nature of *Give*-idioms.** *Linguistic Research* 26(3), 129-146. This article explores the nature of those *give*-idioms which have the variable X, as in *give X the boot* ('dismiss'). It is argued that these idioms are a phrase-level (or V') category, and that the verb and noun phrase combine to form a predicate. The resulting complex predicate is a basically semantic unit between whose parts an object is interposed. The article proposes an analysis of the unit as a concrete form of constructional idiom. The form is stored in the lexicon as a V' with a specific meaning and is combined with an object at phrasal syntax to form a discontinuous VP. Other syntactic and semantic elaborations on this particular VP are considered cases of overgeneralisation that should be banned by a usage-based model of grammar. (Catholic University of Daegu)

**Key Words** *give*-idiom, complex predicate, constructional idiom, lexicon, phrasal syntax, usage-based model of grammar

### 1. Introduction

Those *give*-idioms which are illustrated in (1) have received special attention in the recent literature (Chang 2007; Jackendoff 2002; Richards 2001). They behave as semantic units, on the one hand, and have discontinuous parts for an object, on the other. For example, *the boot*, *the creeps* and *the slip* are frozen with *give* and, as glossed, with a 'single' meaning that exceeds the sum of their literal meanings. These combinations, on the other hand, equally allow an (direct) object to be interposed between their parts, verb (V) and noun phrase (NP):

- (1) a. Tim gave Ben the boot. ('dismiss')
- b. John gave Mary the creeps. ('frighten')
- c. Sean gave Mag the slip. ('escape')

Although these idioms have been dealt with for various purposes in the

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\* I am grateful to anonymous reviewers of this journal for their comments and criticisms. Any remaining slips and errors are of course my own.

literature, their internal structure has not been much discussed. They have been used either to support an analysis of the so-called double object construction (Larson 1988) or to organise a larger class with other idioms for their taxonomy (Nunberg et al. 1994). One further extension of the latter is O'Grady (1998) who uses the notion of dependency rather than of constituency for his syntactic analysis.

Only a few studies have made substantial contributions to the issue of what the idioms look like inside. They employ tree structures though having different views on the question of to what extent the structures should be complex (or simple). Jackendoff (2002) argues for a simple VP structure that is stored in the lexicon with a specific meaning and is combined with an object at phrasal syntax. In contrast, Richards (2001) speaks in favour of a complex VP (or 'vP') structure that is represented in phrasal syntax by the abstract components CAUSE and HAVE.

This paper develops an eclectic alternative to the simple and complex VP analyses under the assumptions of Jackendoff & Culicover (2005). It assumes that the *give*-idioms above are fully non-compositional predicates that are syntactically or internally complex. The resulting complex predicates have separable parts between which an object is interposed. The paper offers an analysis of the predicates as a concrete form of constructional idiom. The form is stored in the lexicon as a V' with a specific meaning and is combined with an object at phrasal syntax to form a discontinuous VP. This analysis will reflect the syntactic complexity of the idioms.

The remaining sections are organised as follows. Section 2 sets forth preliminaries of idioms in general and those with *give*. Section 3 is presented to discuss the simple and complex VP analyses of the *give*-idioms. Section 4 proposes an alternative to these two using a complex predicate hypothesis and a usage-based model of grammar and implementing the notion of representation modularity. Section 5 summarises and concludes the paper.

## 2. Preliminaries

### 2.1 Idioms in general

It has been assumed that idioms are not completely determined by their parts

in general. They are basically comprised of more than two words and are usually greater than the sum of the meanings of those words. In (2) below, for example, *kick the bucket*, *bury the hatchet*, and *spill the beans* are all made up of three words and might be spoken literally in a certain context to express a respective action or event of 'kicking', 'burying' and 'spilling'. On the other hand, these multi-word combinations can be used to roughly mean 'die', 'reconcile' and 'disclose', respectively, too:

- (2) a. He kicked the bucket. ('die')
- b. They buried the hatchet. ('reconcile')
- c. She spilled the beans. ('divulge')

The general problem is that such idiomatic expressions do not always behave alike in grammatical behaviour. Where some are accepted as grammatical, others are ungrammatical. As shown in (3), for example, the sentences in (2b) and (2c) can be passivised while the sentence in (2a) clearly does not permit this (see also Jackendoff 1997):

- (3) a. \*The bucket was kicked by him. (equivalent of (2a))
- b. The hatchet was buried by them. (equivalent of (2b))
- c. The beans was spilled by her. (equivalent of (2c))

This contrast in (un-)grammaticality might be captured by Nunberg et al.'s (1994: 491 ff.) distinction between 'idiomatic phrases' and 'idiomatically combined expressions'. According to the authors, while the meanings of idiomatic phrases are basically non-compositional, those of idiomatically combined expressions are in a certain manner "distributed among their parts". They show that this semantic difference affects the (un-)grammaticality of various phenomena containing an idiom, such as modification, quantification, topicalisation, ellipsis, and anaphora.

It might then be under these two types that the idioms displayed in (3) can be classed, particularly with respect to whether or not they can be passivised. Idioms like *kick the bucket* thus might be regarded as idiomatic phrases that are seldom passivised. Those like *bury the hatch* and *spill the beans*, on the other hand, could be taken to be idiomatically combined expressions that permit the process.

One also might commit the distinction to semantic differences. In other words, semantically one is intransitive, and the other transitive. According to Jackendoff (1997: 168), *bucket* in *kick the bucket* "has no independent meaning and therefore no [theta]-role", whereas *bury the hatch* "has a sort of metaphorical semantic composition" (168). That is, the former idiom as a whole is intransitively used to mean 'die', so that it invariably corresponds to the entire verb phrase independently motivated by normal phrase structure (PS) rules. The latter is used transitively to mean 'reconcile a disagreement', so that its parts, verb and noun phrase, separately correspond to the semantic components 'reconcile' and 'disagreement', respectively. Only the second use then licences the process of passivisation.

## 2.2 A (sub-)class of idioms with *give*

Yet, the *give*-idioms in question do not appear to fall under either one of the two classes just introduced. Nor do they seem to invite the above accounts. This is partly because, as given in (4), they usually contain two noun phrases though denoting an idiosyncratic meaning:

- (4) a. Tim gave Ben the boot. ('dismiss')
- b. John gave Mary the creeps. ('frighten')
- c. Sean gave Mag the slip. ('escape')

It might be for this fact that one would, if ever, approach this class of *give*-idioms from quite different directions. One might be to identify idiomatic-*give* as an ordinary ditransitive verb that usually licences not only passivisation but also so-called dative alternation. In (5) and (6) below, for example, the ditransitive verb *give* usually allows one object to alternate with the other and to become subject of a passive clause:

- (5) a. John gave Mary the book.
- b. John gave the book to Mary.
- (6) a. Mary was given the book.
- b. %The book was given Mary. (% indicates marginal acceptability)

The central problem is that the *give*-idioms have no such variations. Their noun phrases, as illustrated in (7), do not participate in dative alternation (see also Richards 2001):

- (7) a. \*Tim gave the boot to Ben. (for (4a))  
 b. \*John gave the creeps to Mary. (for (4b))  
 c. \*Sean gave the slip to Mag. (for (4c))

Neither do they show two possible passive alternations. As compared in (8) and (9), only the first object becomes subject of a passive clause:

- (8) a. Ben was given the boot (by Tim).  
 b. Mary was given the creeps (by John).  
 c. Mag was given the slip (by Sean).  
 (9) a. \*The boot was given Ben.  
 b. \*The creeps was given Mary.  
 c. \*The slip was given Mag.

The issue is then the way of accounting for these characteristic patterns. As seen above, the *give*-idioms show both similarities to and differences from those like *kick the bucket* and *bury the hatch*. Although they equally have idiosyncratic meaning, only the *give*-type requires an additional object. The *give*-idiom on the other hand superficially resembles the ordinary ditransitive use of *give* in that the two consecutive noun phrases are present. They however clearly differ from each other with respect to passive and dative alternations. Additionally, whereas the second NP of a *give*-idiom is fixed with its idiosyncratic meaning, the immediate NP is a position available for many other noun phrases, as shown in (10), if they fall into the acceptable range of theta-roles designated by that idiom, such as patient:

- |      |    |             |  |      |              |           |
|------|----|-------------|--|------|--------------|-----------|
| (10) | a. | Tim         |  | gave | Ben          | the boot. |
|      | b. | The manager |  | gave | the employer | the boot. |
|      | c. | He          |  | gave | her          | the boot. |
|      | d. | :           |  | gave | :            | the boot. |

This complex nature in any way calls for an elaborate approach.

### 3. Previous Accounts

#### 3.1 A family of constructional idioms

One way of dealing with the issue just mentioned is to follow Jackendoff (2002: 167ff.). He is opposed to Chomsky (1981: 146, n.94) regarding the syntactic status of idioms. Jackendoff argues that it would be absurd to claim that the idiomatic expressions in (11) below are listed in the lexicon as a word-level or verb category.

- (11) a. take advantage of NP, make much of NP, take umbrage at NP  
 b. sing one's head off, talk one's head off, drink one's head off  
 c. belch one's way out of the restaurant, drink one's way across the country, sing one's way through dinner  
 d. twist the night away, drink the whole afternoon away, knit two hours away  
 e. water the tulips flat, cook the pot black, drive one's engine clean

Jackendoff's suggestion is that these idiomatic expressions conform to their more general patterns in varying degrees, as given in (12), where uppercase designates 'fixed combination', and lowercase 'free combination':

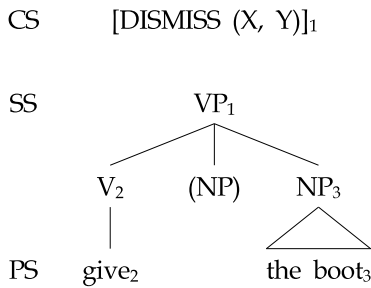
- (12) a. [<sub>VP</sub> V NP [<sub>PP</sub> P np]]: take advantage of np,...  
 b. [<sub>VP</sub> v NP PRT]: v pro's head/butt, v pro's heart out 'v excessively'  
 c. [<sub>VP</sub> v NP pp]: v pro's way pp, 'go pp while/by v-ing'  
 d. [<sub>VP</sub> v np PRT]: v np [time period] away, 'spend np v-ing'  
 e. [<sub>VP</sub> v np ap]: 'cause np to become ap by V-ing'

According to Jackendoff, these patterns form a 'family of constructional idioms' from fully idiomatic to highly compositional types. He also considers that the patterns are stored in the lexicon as a full VP and are unified with many other words and/or phrases, either therein or at phrasal syntax.

### 3.2 A simple lexical VP

Jackendoff (2002) extends his lexical VP analysis to the class of *give*-idioms in question (see also Chang 2007). His basic assumption is that the VP exists in the lexicon, as a whole in syntactic structure, corresponding to its meaning in conceptual structure (CS) and to its sounds in phonological (PS). This tertiary structure is the lexical entry illustrated in (13), where the parenthesis around the first NP position marks its absence or presence with an empty phonological form:

(13) Lexical Entry for *give the boot*



Although the present investigation will adopt Jackendoff's assumptions, his analysis is still questionable with respect to the nature of the lexical VP. It is far from clear in what sense idioms like *give the boot* are necessarily listed in the lexicon as a 'full VP'. Of course, they are a verb phrase in the sense that they consist of three words. They are also semantic units because their intended meaning is greater than the sum of the meanings of their parts. However, this does not guarantee that these semantic units have the full VP status. On the contrary, the meaning they denote is not being completed yet, as commonly assumed for ordinary verb phrases like *dismiss her*, until they combine with a required object, resulting in *give her the boot*. In addition, such idioms, as shown by Richards (2001) and reproduced below from him, share certain properties with those with *get*. The sentences in (14a), for example, have *the boot* in common, and the first to some extent entails the second, too:

- (14) a. Mary gave Susan the boot.

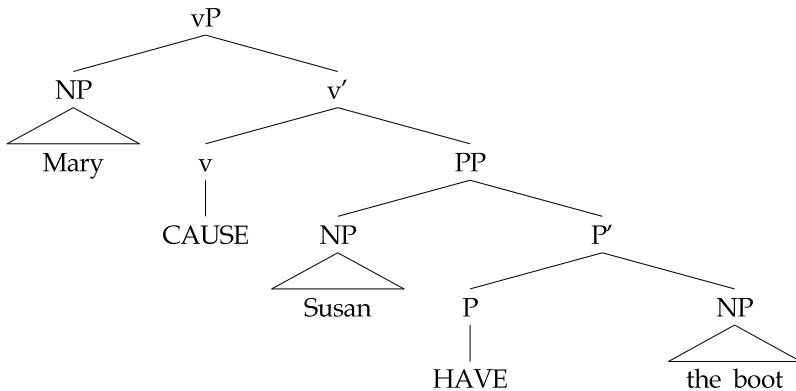
- b. Susan got the boot (from Mary).
- (15) a. Bill gave John flak (about his behaviour).  
b. John took flak from Bill (about his behaviour).
- (16) a. The Count gives everyone the creeps.  
b. You get the creeps (just looking at him)

Then, Jackendoff's lexical VP is too simple to allow for such characteristics. It should have been more sophisticated for the syntax of *give*-idioms. This is the departure for Richards.

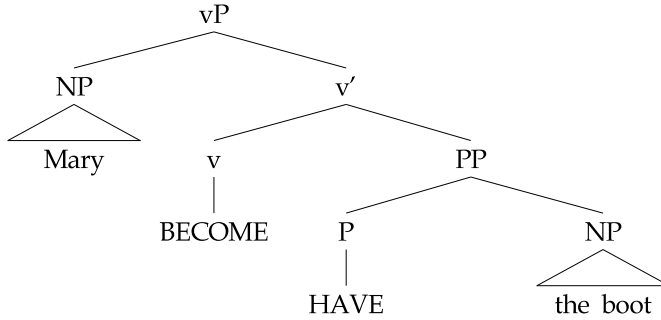
### 3.3 A complex VP (or vP)

Richards (2001) provides a complex VP analysis of the *give*-idioms above. This analysis combines the notion of VP-shell putatively first introduced by Larson (1988), and the idea of lexical decomposition adopted by Harley (1995). The basic intuition is that the verb part of the idioms, namely *give*, is internally complex and therefore decomposable into the elements CAUSE and HAVE which are represented as a separate syntactic head. This approach thus permits a unified analysis of the *give*- and *get*-(or *take*)-idioms, as illustrated respectively in (17) and (18), where both share the *HAVE-the boot* component though differing with regard to the presence or absence of the CAUSE component:

- (17) The vP for *give the boot*





(18) The vP for *get the boot*

The key issue in this analysis is the locus of *give* in the complex VP together with *the boot*. Though this issue is not much discussed in Richards, he might be interested to consider an analysis of raising the HAVE component to add it to the CAUSE component in an abstract sense of so-called 'incorporation' (cf. Baker 1988). This is not only because the verb of *give*, as noticed, consists of those components, but also because the *v* with the CAUSE component is the only position available for that verb. Thus, it would make sense to raise the *Have* component to that *v* node.

The present inquiry however does not follow this line of analysis. Neither does it adhere to Jackendoff's analysis. It rather develops an alternative building on Chang (2008).

#### 4. A Proposal

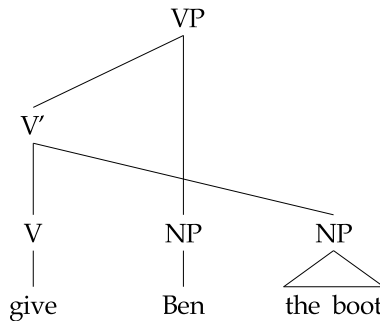
##### 4.1 As a complex predicate

Following Chomsky (1975[1955]) and others, Chang (2008) employs the notion of 'complex predicate' for an analysis of transitive verb-plus-particle (V-P) combinations in English. He regards transitive V-P combinations as complex predicates and defines them as units that form a cline from fully idiomatic to transparently compositional types. He also describes the alternative order of the object required by these units, as illustrated in (19), in the way of interposing it between their constituent parts, rather than moving it over those parts:

- (19) a. He looked the word up.  
 b. He cut the meat up.  
 c. She pulled the blind up.

The *give*-idioms in question are very much like the idiomatic V-P combination in (19). They are semantic units that have syntactically separable parts for an object. In this regard, the present study adopts Chang's description for an account of *give the boot*. The *give*-idiom is considered a complex predicate, and therefore a semantic unit between whose parts an object can be nested. However, the unit would not be a triadic VP structure, as argued for by Jackendoff (2002), but an intermediate V' structure that combines with the object to form a full VP. The result will be the binary discontinuous structure illustrated in (20):

- (20) The Binary Discontinuous VP for *give Ben the boot*



This analysis is formalised below using the architecture of 'representational modularity' that is adopted from Culicover & Jackendoff (2005) but adapted in Chang (2008).

#### 4.2 As a lower generalisation

With regard to the transitive V-P combinations in (19), Chang (2008) points out that they are not always frozen units, but most are partly compositional and even productive. According to him, for example, *cut up* and *pull up* are used to mean 'do X completely' and 'cause X to move upward', respectively. He also considers that each particle of these combinations, while maintaining its intended

meaning, may be enabled to combine with many other verbs, as illustrated in (21):

- (21) a. eat X up, use X up, drink X up, ... ('do X completely)  
 b. toss X up, haul X up, push X up, ...('cause X to move upward')

Chang's assumption is that these transitive V-P combinations conform to their more general pattern(s). The pattern is a 'template' in which a related particle is built with a suggested meaning, and into which a lexical verb can be integrated, such as *V-up*. Building on Langacker's (2002) usage-based model of grammar, Chang suggests that it is this template, rather than its far more abstraction V-P, that is actually listed and fused with a lexical verb in the lexicon. According to Chang, while the highest generalisation is semantically vacuous, the lower counterpart is 'conceptually' much closer to the actual form and meaning of its target expressions.

If this is the case, then Richards' analysis proves untenable. The components of *give the boot* adopted by him, 'CAUSE' and 'HAVE', appear too abstract to arrive at its intended meaning 'dismiss'. It is also difficult to conceive how the content of *give the slip* ('escape') could be captured by these components; the meaning does not seem a typical causation. In addition, though the import of the existing intransitive *get the boot* is closely related to, or part of, that of the transitive counterpart, this does not warrant the need of the abstract components for the latter type. Moreover, the implementation of the components would rather appear counterintuitive in that they are blurring the putatively clear boundary between the *give*-idiom and other compositional expressions like *give her a book*. In this regard, Richards' account should be considered a case of 'overgeneralisation'.

The present inquiry thus follows Jackendoff's semantics. It assumes that the meaning of *give the boot* is the very kind denoted by the verb 'dismiss', rather than the generalised or decomposed sort. This idea is also incorporated into the proposed analysis below.

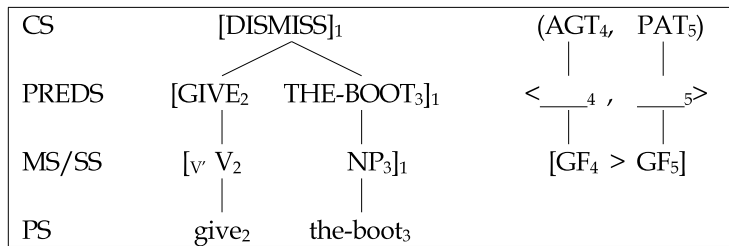
#### 4.3 *Give*-idioms in the lexicon of representational modularity

The proposed analysis of *give the boot* builds on the model of Jackendoff

(2002). In this model, the idiom is a lexical item, not with a word-level category but a full phrase that has a 'tertiary' structure of sound, category and meaning. That is, the sound of the lexical item has its own phonological structure (PS), the meaning of the item having its own conceptual structure (CS), and the category its own syntactic structure (SS). Jackendoff calls this architecture a 'lexical conceptual structure' (LCS) and its design feature 'representational modularity' (see also Culicover & Jackendoff 2005).

Jackendoff's LCS for *give the boot* is however adapted in the present study. It is suggested that the idiom be a more restricted and smaller structure, V'. This is because, like ordinary transitive verbs, it still requires a noun phrase to complete its verbal meaning. The revision is the lexical entry illustrated in (22), where Predicate Structure (PREDS) and Morphological Structure (MS) are added to Jackendoff's version:

(22) The Revised LCS for *give the boot*



Several clarifications of the LCS in (22) are worth making. First, the LCS has two domains: predicate component on the left and argument component on the right. Secondly, the CS in the predicate component represents its target meaning [DISMISS], rather than the decomposed components CAUSE and HAVE. Thirdly, the PREDS enables an alternative exchange of the *give*-idiom with the synonymous verb *dismiss*, using their different 'predicate forms' (see also Dalrymple 2001). Fourthly, the MS accommodates various forms that the verb part will have for inflection, such as *gave the boot*, *giving the boot* and *given the boot*. Fifthly, the (lexical) SS, with the MS, shows the phrasal nature of the whole idiom though not a full VP but a lower V', as well as the NP part complying with the determiner-plus-noun pattern of ordinary noun phrases like *the book*. Sixthly, the PS, for typographical convenience, adopts the conventional English spelling system, rather than a phonological transcription practice, throughout the

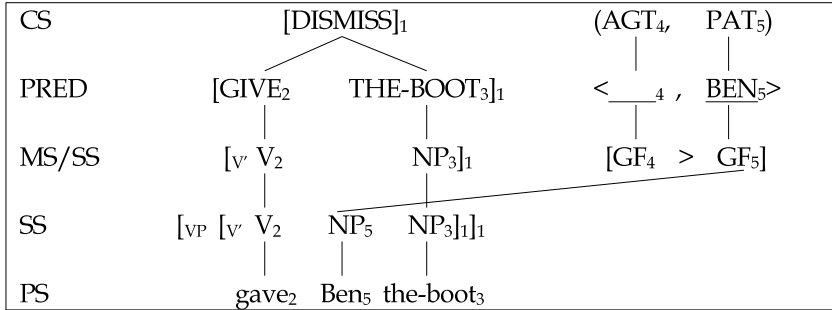
succeeding text. Seventhly, as Jackendoff (2002) and Culicover & Jackendoff (2005) assume, all these modular structures are linked to each other via mapping mechanism. In particular, the idiomatic nature of *give the boot* is indicated by the discrepancy across the structures between the subscript number '1' for the whole and those '2' and '3' for its parts.

There are two further notes to be made on the argument counterpart. First, the argument component adopts Goldberg's (1995) distinction between argument and participant roles that are separate but linked. In particular, the former roles such as AGENT (AGT) and PATIENT (PAT) are determined by the conceptual meaning 'dismiss' while they remain unspecified for now unless they combine with any noun phrases. Secondly, it is in phrasal syntax and via the array of 'grammatical functions' (GFs), that the argument and participant roles of the predicate represented are combined (or fused) with, and mapped onto, noun phrases. It is then questioned what mechanisms are involved in this combining process and how they work.

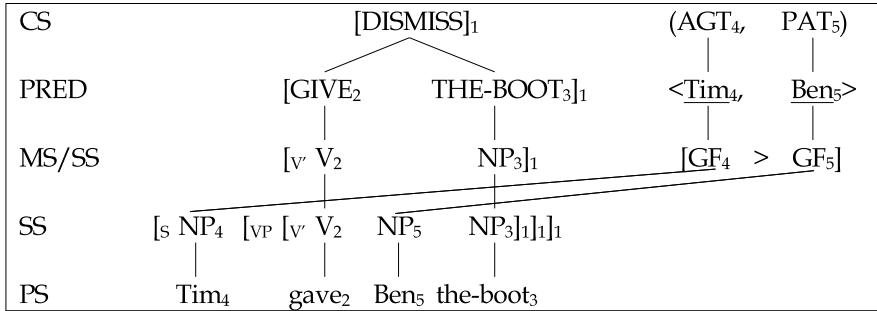
#### 4.4 Constituency and Linear Order at Phrasal Syntax

Phrase structure rules or their tree structures have been assumed to form or represent a verb phrase containing one or two GF noun phrases. They also have been considered internally complex. This idea has been developed from two different directions. One is to assume multiple layers for tree structures, as explicitly shown in Richards' complex VP analysis. The other is to identify the structures as constraints on constituency and linear order, as implicit in Jackendoff's simple VP analysis (see Culicover & Jackendoff 2005 for an explicit implementation)

The present study adopts the second view for the phrasal syntax of *give the boot*. The idiom stored in the lexicon is brought into phrasal syntax via constituency and linear order constraints to combine with the noun phrases it requires. To form *give Ben the boot*, for example, *Ben*, when combining with *give the boot* via constituency constraints, immediately follows the verb part of the idiom via linear order constraints. The result is the VP structure illustrated in (23):

(23) The Verb Phrase for *give Ben the boot*

To form *Tim gave Ben the boot*, *Tim* combines with the VP via constituency constraints, immediately preceding it via linear order constraints. The result is the sentence illustrated in (24):

(24) The Sentence for *Tim gave Ben the boot*

Here we maintain the subscript number '1' for the *give*-idiom and its distinction from those for its parts across the modular structures. This formalism reflects the idiomatic nature of the expression in the lexicon through its verb phrase and sentence at phrasal syntax.

#### 4.5 Advantages

The proposed model of *give*-idioms has three advantages over the previous proposals. First, our analysis proves more restricted than Jackendoff's because it captures the idioms as an intermediate lexical V' rather than a full lexical VP. Secondly, the proposed syntax also turns out simpler than Richards' in that the

offered VP structure, though containing the intermediate V', is still less complicated than his vP tree. Thirdly, the adopted semantics is more realistic than Richards' in that it assumes the intended target meaning.

There is a last but not least note to be made on the third point. The proposed model does not deny Richards' basic intuition that *give*-idioms and other associated constructions in a certain manner comply with their more general pattern(s). What it rather refuses to agree is that the nature of the pattern is semantic and therefore syntactic. As discussed, this position would run counter not only to the usual view on the meaning of *give*-idioms but also the common observation of grammatical differences between them and the double object construction and its grammatical variations.

The proposed model on the other hand will account for those differences in semantic terms.<sup>1)</sup> As defined above, the *give*-idioms in question are complex predicates. They are essentially semantic units that are not completely determined by their parts. Their internal nominals thus are not a true argument that usually receives a theta-role from the verb, but the integral part of the whole idiom (or predicate) which completes the intended meaning of that idiom (see also Jackendoff (1997, 2002) above).

It is because of this that we can predict that the nominal part of a *give*-idiom will fail to participate in ordinary phenomena involving arguments such as passive and dative alternations. For example, the suggested meaning of *give the boot* ('dismiss') will prevent *the boot* from being passivised, as in *\*The boot was given Ben by Tim*, exactly in the same way that the semantic content of *kick the*

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1) This paragraph and the succeeding two benefit from an anonymous reviewer. The reviewer also raises the question of whether the proposed analysis can plausibly be reinterpreted in terms of Government and Binding Theory and more recently Minimalist Programme, with regard to the nature of the proposed V'. Although the present study does not pursue those theories, one relevant point is worth mentioning here. As assumed, the *give*-idiom in question is not a word-size category but a phrase-like construct. As also defined, its nominal part is neither a usual argument that bears a theta-role, nor an ordinary direct object that can possibly undergo passivisation. It is rather the semantically essential part of the idiom that is stored in the lexicon as a V'. It merely occupies the direct object 'position' of that V'. At this stage, for example, *give the boot* is very much like *kick the bucket*. The former idiom however differs from the latter. It must, as ordinary transitive verbs do, take an object and then a subject to form a verb phrase and a sentence, respectively. For this, an object is not placed after the V', as in *\*give the boot Ben*, but it is rather interposed between its parts, verb and noun phrase, following the general pattern of English transitive verb phrases: the (direct) object noun phrase immediately follows the transitive verb, as in *dismiss Ben*. This account would be a possible extension of the proposed analysis to the raised question and other relevant issues.

*bucket* ('die') prohibits *the bucket* from being fronted for a passive, as in *\*The bucket was kicked by him*. This is because both *the bucket* and *the boot* here are solely part of the predicate or its concrete meaning, but not an ordinary object noun phrase that becomes subject of a passive clause. For this, the idiomatic nominal is treated in the predicate component of our model rather than in the argument counterpart.

A similar explanation can also be provided for the fact that the *give*-idioms in question do not undergo the process of dative shift or alternation. Whereas this process usually requires a specific preposition for the (erstwhile indirect) object of a double object construction, the idioms would not permit their object to combine with *to*, as in *\*Tim gave the boot to Ben*. This is because the meaning of a *give*-idiom is not, in Goldberg's (1995) term, "semantically compatible" with that of the preposition, which is widely assumed to denote a path and is often notated PATH. For instance, *give the boot* does not denote a motion or its equivalent that is semantically compatible with the PATH meaning, but an action that, as observed in *\*Tim dismissed to Ben*, fails to accommodate that meaning. In this respect, the conceptual structure in our model such as [DISMISS] may be considered a resource of such semantic restrictions or constraints.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

This paper examined those *give*-idioms which contain the variable *X*, as in *give X the boot* ('dismiss'). It was argued that these idioms are neither a word-level category nor a full VP, whether simple or complex, but an intermediate *V'* that combines with an intervening object to complete its usual meaning. A complex predicate hypothesis and a usage-based model, together with the notion of constructional idiom, were employed to identify the idioms as complex predicates and analyse them as semantic units that are syntactically intricate. It was suggested that, as concrete forms of constructional idiom, these units are stored in the lexicon as a *V'* with a specific meaning and are brought into phrasal syntax to combine with an object. It was also proposed that the object are interposed between the parts of the *V'* to form a discontinuous VP. The sentence with this VP was formalised using the architecture of representational modularity, both theoretical and empirical advantages being added. Taken together, it follows that *give*-idioms are complex, not semantically



but syntactically, and that the moderate nature of the syntactic complexity is best identified as a natural consequence of the lower-level interactions between the lexicon and phrasal syntax.

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