

MTT meets Construction Grammar: the Treatment of Argument Structure

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Abstract

Construction grammar offers a valuable tool for handling certain tricky cases that provide a challenge to MTT. In this paper, two such cases are examined, viz. ‘hybrid’ uses of non-motion verbs in motion constructions and omissions of motion verbs resulting in verbless sentences. Finally, the procedure of how to incorporate a construction into the MTT framework is substantiated by means of verbs denoting a physical transfer (giving).

Keywords

valency structure, Construction Grammar, verb omission, motion verbs, zero construction

1 Introductory remarks

When I first came across Construction Grammar, I could not detect anything impressing in it. After all, for somebody familiar with MTT, Ch. Fillmore’s revelation that there exists a broad zone of semi-regular and non-compositional phenomena in between syntax and phraseology did not come as a surprise since Russian linguists had been studying such phenomena quite intensely long before the rise of CxG. Not only had part of the apparatus of Lexical functions been designed to cope with them, but terms such as ‘syntactic phraseme’ had been coined to the same purpose, and the strict division of labour between the grammar and the dictionary was already blurred by Apresjan’s ‘small syntax’ or ‘grammar of the dictionary’. Only on reading Goldberg’s seminal work on argument structure (Goldberg 1995) I realized that CxG could perhaps offer an effective tool to capture certain generalisations about the syntax and semantics of huge verb classes that could not be handled in an appropriate way within the MTT framework. In particular, this holds for hybrid and often occasional argument structures resulting from the merger of two different constructions such as *He sneezed the napkin off the table*, *The truck rumbled down the street* or *I cannot imagine my way through the dark labyrinth of its distortion* (Goldberg 1995: 9-10). An MTT adherent will have a hard time

when analysing the structure of such sentences since there is no LF or Surface-syntactic relation that would do the job, nor would it make sense to add new meanings to the verbs involved in the dictionary. In this respect, CxG may be said to be more flexible than MTT in that it accounts for the syntactic elasticity of natural languages.¹ Therefore, it seems advisable to import at least some elements from CxG into MTT, without any risk of an “unfriendly take-over” of the latter by the former.

Before tackling our subject, some terminological remarks may not be out of place. To begin with, “a construction is posited in the grammar if it can be shown that its meaning and/or its form is not compositionally derived from other constructions existing in the language” (Goldberg 1995:4). Due to this all-embracing definition, virtually everything (from a morpheme up to an idiom or a clause) is an instance of a construction (Goldberg 2006:5). The type of construction to be analysed here can be best described as a generalized argument structure (roughly equivalent to a government pattern in MTT) plus some abstract meaning representing a class of verbs; for example, the central sense of the English ditransitive construction is defined as ‘X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z’, which is reminiscent of the left half of a semantic explication in an MTT dictionary. Moreover, appropriate constraints are added in order to filter out unacceptable combinations. Verbal lexemes may now be inserted into such a construction if they meet its argument structure and the constraints. Different clauses may be combined according to inheritance links between the corresponding constructions (see below, ex. 2, 6, and 8). Most crucial is the non-derivational character of all constructions: unlike MTT (but like many other contemporary syntactic theories), *John gave an apple to Mary* is not derived from *John gave Mary an apple*; this point cannot be elaborated here due to the lack of space. CxG arguments correspond to MTT Semantic actants in a given construction, whereas CxG participants may be equated with Semantic actants in the dictionary. MTT Circumstantials roughly coincide with adjuncts in CxG, and theta roles (semantic cases) such as agent or recipient are called roles in CG.

2 Three case studies

Goldberg (1995: 11) presents a series of different uses of the verb *kick*, all of which require different translations in Russian:

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|---|--|
| (1) Pat kicked the wall. | <i>Pat pnul nogoj stenu / udaril nogoj po stene.</i> |
| (2) Pat kicked Bob black and blue. | <i>Pat ispinal Boba nogami do sinjakov.</i> |
| (3) Pat kicked the football into the stadium. | <i>Pat zakinul mjač na stadion.</i> |
| (4) Pat kicked at the football. | <i>Pat udaril mjač nogoj.</i> |
| (5) Pat kicked his foot against the chair. | <i>Pat pnul stul nogoj / udaril nogoj po stulu.</i> |
| (6) Pat kicked Bob the football. | <i>Pat kinul / brosil / pasoval mjač Bobu.</i> |
| (7) The horse kicks. | <i>Lošad' ljagaetsja.</i> |
| (8) Pat kicked his way out of the operating room. | <i>Pat probilsja pinkami iz operacionnogo zala.</i> |

This series serves ideally to illustrate the author’s overall approach: “The verb is taken to be an *n*-place relation “waiting” for the exactly correct type and number of arguments”. In the

¹ As is stressed in (Raxilina 2010:50-58), this does not hold for Apresjan’s 1967 (and hence pre-MTT) monograph “Experimental’noe issledovanie russkogo glagola”, where the author anticipated many of the fundamental ideas of CxG.

case at hand, she posits eight distinct argument structures. Moreover, examples 2, 6 and 8 provide instances of what she calls inheritance² links of constructions: the transitive *Pat kicked Bob black and blue* would be analysed as X DIRECTS ACTION at Y, and the whole clause inherits an additional argument from the resultative construction X CAUSES Y to BECOME Z. In 6, the construction X CAUSES Y to MOVE [to] Z inherits from the ditransitive construction X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z an additional argument for the recipient *Bob*. And finally, 8 presents an insertion of the verb X KICKS Y into the intransitive motion construction X MOVES [to] Y. For lack of space, details will not be discussed here. However, it should be emphasised that due to her focus on Construction syntax, (Goldberg 1995 and 2006) does not offer full-fledged lexical entries. In this way, we may but surmise what the lexical description of the ‘rich semantics’ of *kick* looks like; in particular, it remains unclear whether or to what degree polysemy has to be avoided in the dictionary.³

For an MTT adherent, these multifarious English uses of *kick* would be analysed in terms of polysemy, changing government patterns and Lexical functions. The details remain disputable; for instance, should the recipient *Bob* in 6 be assigned the role of an actant or a circumstantial (free adverbial, adjunct) as, e.g., in *Mary baked Jim a cake*? Is the resultative phrase *black and blue* in 2 to be treated as an instance of a separate Lexical function or just as a resultative subtype of the LF Magn?⁴ And should we consider 8 a kind of syntactic phraseme with a frozen part (*his way* has to be coreferential with the subject) and two open slots for the indication of the agent and the source, path and/or the goal of the movement? As for 7, this use of *kick* is probably best handled as an instance of lexical conversion.

The Russian equivalents show a striking divergence with the English originals: instead of one single verb, we find not less than eight different lexemes (let alone their possible polysemy) and one paraphrase (example 8). The overall pattern is pretty obvious: the closest equivalent of *kick* in its primary meaning would be *pnut'*, which, however, turns out to be a mismatch in six out of eight sentences. Instead, informants prefer either the semantically less rich *udarit'* ‘hit’ and the synonymous pair *kinut'* / *brosit'* ‘throw’, or they employ prefixed verbs (*ispinat'*, *zakinut'*) or a nominalisation (*pinkami*); finally, the kicking horse is rendered by a specialised verb (*ljagat'sja*). In other words: in neither case do we use a syntactic extension of the type described by Goldberg. This is most striking in example 6 which exhibits a pattern widespread in English (a caused-move construction is changed into a ditransitive construction): the literal Russian equivalent **Pat pnul mjač Bobu* would be unacceptable, the appropriate verb being *kinut'* which allows for a dative in its government pattern both in literal and figurative meaning, cf. *Kin'te mne spasatel'nyj krug!* ‘Throw me the life-saver!’, *Ona kinula mne pis'mo* ‘She sent me a letter’. As for the insertion of a verb of motion into a resultative construction illustrated by 2, Russian also offers a specialized word formation device: e.g. *Dan talked himself blue in the face* (Goldberg 1995: 9) would yield a translation with the

² For details, see Goldberg (1995 : 72-84). It goes without saying that this term has nothing in common with Mel'čuk's inheritance principle, see (Mel'čuk 2004 : 12).

³ In Goldberg (2006 : 42) the author states that “*Kick*, for example, only has two profiled participant roles; the recipient argument in *She kicked him the ball* is added by the construction.” This would be perfectly in line with my assumption that in the MTT approach *him* should be treated as a circumstantial (see below).

⁴ The ‘canonical’ value of the LF Magn in the given case would be an intensifier such as *mercilessly*, or, in Russian, *bespoščadno*, an idiom like *bit' ne žalet'*, etc.

prefixed reflexive verb⁵ *dogovorit'sja/dobol'tat'sja do...* Thus in all cases examined, Russian does not manifest the same syntactic elasticity as English simply because it does not need it: it may rely solely on lexical differentiations due to its richer verbal morphology (prefixation, reflexivisation). All this boils down to the statement that these examples can be easily handled in the Russian dictionary so that no need for a special construction grammar-like component arises.

Can these contrastive findings be generalized? English sentences such as *She sneezed the napkin off the table* quoted in the beginning likewise do not lend themselves to a Russian translation in one single sentence but have to be split up into two clauses. There exist, however, certain groups of Russian verbs that show the same behaviour as Goldberg's English examples. As is pointed out by (Raxilina 2000: 375), the following verbs denoting various sounds can combine with adverbials associated with the idea of motion:

- (9) *Diližans uخال / xljupal / skripel čerez derevnju* 'the carriage groaned / gurgled / creaked through the village'

This is reminiscent of English examples such as *The truck rumbled down the street* discussed by Goldberg. Such cases should be strictly kept apart from verbs where both motion and sound production are equally part of the meaning proper, cf. *splash* as in *She splashed through the water*. In the MTT approach, one might be tempted to assign the PP *čerez derevnju* in (9) the status of a circumstantial, but against the implied sentence *Diližans exال čerez derevnju* this looks pretty counterintuitive. On the other hand, nobody would probably be inclined to posit a second meaning and a different government pattern for a verb like *skripet*' and treat it as a motion verb with an additional valency for the path; therefore, MTT has to shape a different solution for such cases. The same holds for verbs that describe the manner of movement by means of metaphorical physical activity (Raxilina 2000: 374):

- (10) *Diližans pilil / česal / molotil čerez derevnju* 'the carriage cut (litt. sawed) / bolted (litt. scratched) / threshed through the village'

Again, there is no sense in creating separate dictionary entries for these uses unless we agree that they function as conventionalized metaphors and as such regularly govern spatial prepositions. Thus we may conclude that even in an MTT framework we do need some equivalent of a goal-directed motion construction that can account for such transitions of non-motion verbs into verbs describing both an intransitive motion and its accompanying circumstances such as the sounds produced by it or a characterization of its speed, etc. It goes without saying that we must equip this device with appropriate filters that will rule out, e.g., the following series of examples (all after (Raxilina 2000: 375)) **Poezd svistel čerez derevnju* 'The train whistled through the village', **Mal'čik govoril čerez derevnju* 'The boy spoke through the village'. As Raxilina points out, the verbs involved here denote communicatively meaningful sounds and therefore can no longer combine with mere verbs of motion. It could be added that in the case of *svistet*', the information transfer arises only as a secondary,

⁵ Note that the reflexive *himself* in the original wording is motivated otherwise: unlike in Russian, it does not function as a word formational device but signals the coreference of patient and agent in a transitive sentence, cf. English nonreflexive resultatives such as example 2 above.

derived meaning,⁶ whereas in the primary meaning the concepts of sound and motion are perfectly compatible, cf. *Veter svistel čerez pustynnye polja* ‘the wind whistled through the empty fields’, *Par svistel čerez otverstie* ‘the steam whistled through the vent’: these examples are comparable to example 9 in that the whistle does not communicate anything,⁷ moreover, the nouns ‘wind’ and ‘steam’ evoke themselves the idea of motion. Of course, the two concepts of motion and information transfer are perfectly compatible if the path is expressed explicitly by some circumstantial, cf. *Vsju dorogu čerez derevnju oni boltali, peli, peredraznivalis*. Therefore, the real obstacle in the cases discussed above is the absence of any overt indication of a movement besides the preposition.

For the sake of completeness, let us add that the communicative event may itself be conceived of as a kind of abstract movement, cf.

- (11) Komu on tam svistel čerez plečo Erika? ‘Who did he whistle at over Eric’s shoulder?’
smotra.ru/clubs/1/blog/119256/

This question may refer to a situation where neither of the actors (Eric and the whistler) moved even one step; the only thing to be perceived as moving is the sound of the whistle. Again, the PP *čerez plečo Erika* has to be analysed as a circumstantial in an MTT framework.

Metaphorical uses of verbs denoting a physical action such as 10 require an atelic predicate (Raxilina 2000: 374), or, in Vendlerian terms, an activity: this accounts for the ungrammaticality of **Diližans vzmaxnul čerez derevnju* ‘the carriage swept through the village’ (*vzmaxnut* ‘denotes an achievement). Obviously, this is only part of the story: there must be a host of other restrictions at work which block for example verbs like *kovat* ‘forge’, *šlifovat* ‘grind’ etc. On the whole, it seems to be a fair assumption that this metaphorical type of derived motion verbs is much more restricted and more language-specific than the combination of sound and motion illustrated in 9 and should therefore be handled in the dictionary. Of course, this does not preclude a ‘construction-like’ component where the argument structure of intransitive motion verbs would be systematised.

To sum up, what we are looking for is a kind of generalized case frame (or else: government pattern) attributed to some abstract meaning of motion that would specify the conditions for the insertion of a non-motion verb. It seems to be advisable not to determine which subtypes of motion are involved in the given type of insertion. For example, the fact that sound-producing movements (cf. example 9) are rather associated with vehicles does not provide a sufficient motivation for creating a subtype that excludes walking.

3 Verb omissions

⁶ This has a direct impact on its argument structure since now a valency for the addressee in the dative is added, cf. *svistel’ sobake* ‘to call the dog by a whistle’; this construction may also express disapproval, cf. *Publika mne svistela* ‘the auditory booed me’. Note that such derived meanings otherwise tend to be realised by prefixes in Russian, cf. *osvistyvati* ‘boo’.

⁷ Interestingly, German seems to be more flexible than Russian in this respect: cf. *Durchs ganze Dorf hindurch hat der Junge bloß geplappert* litt. ‘the boy chatted through the whole village’, which sounds acceptable to some speakers. However, if the bipartite adposition *durch...hindurch* is replaced by *durch*, the example becomes meaningless.

There is also an independent reason why our abstract motion construction should be shaped in as general terms as possible. Many languages allow for the omission of motion verbs in certain situations. In German, Polish and Czech for instance, this occurs in the narrative register if the narrator wants to depict a chain of events in more lively colours, cf.⁸

- (12) *Za każdym razem efekt jest ten sam: kot ∅ na drzewo, lub przez wąską szparę do piwnicy, a ja zziębnięty ... wracam na miejsce startu* ‘Every time the effect is the same: the cat [climbs] up the tree, or [slips] through a narrow crack into the cave, and I get back to the starting point, completely exhausted’
 zapiskibronislawy.bloog.pl/kat,0,m,2,r,2010,index.html 23.8.2010
- (13) *Rankiem budził Siostrę i mnie, celując w nas gorącymi, pachnącymi bułeczkami... My ∅ do szkoły, On ∅ do łóżka* ‘In the morning he used to wake up my sister and me and aim at us with hot fragrant buns ... We [went] to school, he [went] to bed.’
 www.idn.org.pl/fson/kwart18/strpl.htm 23.8.2010

As can be seen, the variable in question must be some abstract pro-verb since in 12 we would need two different overt verbs to fill in the gap. The velocity of the sequence varies: in 12 we are rather dealing with a rapid course of action, in 13 the speed remains unspecified. Moreover, both examples demonstrate that this technique does not necessarily refer to single events but may also involve habitual activities. And finally, the sequence often involves two or more actors whose interplay may be best characterized in terms of action and reaction. In the discourse register, the omission of motion verbs is restricted to set phrases such as *A ty do kogo ∅?* ‘Who do you want to go to?’ Contrary to this, colloquial Russian freely allows for verb omission in the discourse register, cf. *Ty kuda ∅ bez šapki?* ‘Where [are you going / running / dashing etc.] without your cap?’, *Ja ∅ v teatr zavtra* ‘I [will go] to the theatre tomorrow’, *Ja vot tol’ko čto s ulicy* ‘I just [came in] from the street’, *Xorošo by ∅ pod duš* litt. ‘It would be great [to go] under a shower’.⁹ The exact meaning of the missing verb (e.g. the manner of motion) is most often left open, and the same holds, as is shown by the examples, for grammatical categories (tense and mood). Narrative uses are of course also attested, cf. *Potom ∅₁ drugoj kostjum i bystro ∅₂ na scenu* ‘Then he [changed into] another dress and quickly [returned] on stage’ (Mažara 2010:236).

In the Russian tradition, such omissions are usually treated under the label ‘zero motion verb’. This term is highly misleading since it suggests that what we are dealing with is a lexical unit; however, nobody has ever attempted to formulate an appropriate explication so far, let alone a full-fledged dictionary entry. In Weiss 2011a I have argued against the concept of zero verbs. I will not summarize the whole discussion here, but it should be emphasised that we would end up not with one, but at least three distinct ‘zero motion verbs’, since besides the type just examined, we find also contexts referring to undirected motion and (more importantly) to causation of motion. The former type may be illustrated by *Neudačnaja zima // Vot i na lyžax ∅ malo kak-to*¹⁰ ‘An unpleasant winter / I also did little skiing’, the latter by *Ja takie pis’ma ∅*

⁸ For more Polish examples see Weiss (2011b, 2011c), for Czech parallels Mažara (2010) and MacShane (2000).

⁹ Abundant material (though without sufficient context) is quoted in Širjaev (1973 : 299-304).

¹⁰ Here, the missing motion verb would be spelled out as *katajsja* whose basic meaning is ‘drove around’.

zakaznym vsegda ‘I always [send] such letters by registered mail’ (both examples from (Širjaev 1973)). What is more, we would have to cope with serious problems when delimitating the borders of this lexical hypercategory. For instance, how should we treat a missing verb such as *postupit*’ in *Ona ø v prošlom godu v institut* ‘She enrolled at the university last year’? Is this still a (metaphorical) motion verb, given that the primary meaning of *postupit*’ is ‘to step’?

The problems are aggravated by the fact that missing motion verbs are not the only group captured by the term ‘zero verb’ in Russian tradition. Other zeroes are postulated for verbs of communication, verbs of hitting/physical damage and physical transfer (giving). Hence, a considerable amount of overlap zones arises. To name but one: a verb such as *send* combines in one of its meanings ‘caused motion’ and ‘physical transfer (cause to receive)’ – but then the question arises which zero is represented in the abovementioned example *Ja ej takie podarki ø zakaznym vsegda*, a ‘zero give’ or a ‘zero cause to move’? Note that this overlap is not a case of semantic ambiguity or vagueness, but merely of semantic cumulation. In a dictionary we must however posit distinct units without any overlap. We can of course create an additional, hybrid zero verb, named e.g. ‘physical transfer by caused motion zero verbs’. This is the way chosen by (Wiemer 1996) who created a new hybrid group called verbs of addressing, which would account for the combination of motion and communication typical for these verbs. But when proceeding like this, we risk to end up with a proliferation of zero verbs that would still have more or less fuzzy boundaries. To mention a last candidate: (Širjaev 1973) proposed zero verbs called ‘glagoly rečemyslitel’nogo dejstvija’ (verbs of speaking and thinking’) to cover such ambiguous cases as *Ja ø o drugom sovsem* ‘I am speaking / thinking of something else’. One wonders what is won by creating such semantic monsters.

It is about high time to search for an alternative solution. What has Construction Grammar to offer in this respect? Recall what has been said above when discussing verbs of sound production employed as motion verbs: what we need is a generalized case frame (or else, argument structure) and some abstract complex of semes representing the meaning of motion. Now, all specialists of verb omission unanimously stress the importance of the remaining structure for the reconstruction of the missing verbal meaning. This remainder has to be composed by at least two elements; to be more precise, it should comprize at least one actant plus another actant or circumstantial (Weiss 2011a:142). A richer syntactic structure is realised in *Ja takie pis'ma ø zakaznym vsegda*, where four different constituents are involved. In many cases (including those quoted above), this syntactic remainder provides a case frame that allows to approximately identify the missing information. This is highly reminiscent of A. Goldberg’s approach to Constructions grammar. Not surprisingly, the omission of motion verbs (but only these!) in Russian is mentioned as a separate construction in Goldberg (2006: 8) who quotes an unpublished manuscript by Chindarabam; her examples are *Kirill v magazin* ‘Kirill goes/will go to the store’ and *Kirill iz magazina* ‘Kirill just got back from the store’.¹¹ But the Construction approach was already proposed before as a possible solution in Saj (2002: 107, 110, 111), who, however, did not elaborate his point. In addition, this author quotes Knjazev (2001: 35), who had anticipated the idea that in the case of zero verbs, not the

¹¹ This type is erroneously paralleled with the omission of the copula. Unlike missing motion verbs, the latter is restricted to the present tense, and there are a host of other arguments against the parallel.

verb requires the presence of certain case forms, but contrariwise “the presence of the latter evokes the vague image of a verb of motion, speech, physical action, etc.” What has not been discussed so far in the pertinent Russian literature is Goldberg’s concept of inheritance links (see above) which enables us for instance to account for such cases as 6 (*Pat kicked Bob the football*) in terms of two constructions, viz. CAUSE-MOVE and CAUSE-RECEIVE. In Russian, we may zero out the verb in a football reportage, obtaining for example : *Pat* $\emptyset_1$ *Bobu*, *a tot* $\emptyset_2$ *v vorota* ! ‘Pat [passes the ball] to Bob, and Bob [hits] the goal’.¹² In this case, the missing information represents a combination of the abovementioned two constructions. The same holds for the omission of *poslat* ‘send’ as in *Ja jej* $\emptyset$ *podarok včera* ‘I sent her the present yesterday’. In a similar vein, the following ambiguity can be systematically predicted when traced back to Goldberg’s analysis of the polysemy of the ditransitive construction:

- (14) ...no nam nužno ponjat’, čto my polučim vzamen ... Vot my xotim uznat’ — a oni nam čto $\emptyset$? ‘...but we have to understand what we’ll get for it ... We want to know what they [are offering/will give] us. (V. Putin)

Since the given argument structure fits into both constructions X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z (cf. give) and X INTENDS to CAUSE Y to RECEIVE Z’ (offer), the missing verb can be reconstructed in both ways.

At this point it should be added that the predictive power of Goldberg’s approach exceeds MTT in one respect: for sentences such as *She baked me a cake* or *Joe painted Sally a picture* which also exhibit the pattern of the ditransitive construction X INTENDS to CAUSE Y to RECEIVE Z, she formulates semantic constraints in order to single out deviant examples such as *Crush me a mountain!*, *Rob me a bank!* (Goldberg 1995: 36, 124-129, 141-151) and limit metaphorical extensions as in *The music lent the party a festive air*. In the MTT framework the “free” dative in these examples (except the last one) most likely represents a circumstantial (Mel’čuk 2004:279), but to my knowledge no MTT adherent has so far attempted to capture similar constraints in order to filter out unacceptable circumstantials.

In view of the abovementioned arguments it seems to be a sound proposal to introduce a limited set of zero constructions into MTT.¹³ The appropriate place where to do this is undoubtedly the zone dubbed ‘small syntax’ (“Malyj sintaksis”) by Ju. Apresjan. As early as in (Apresjan 1986: 63), he states: “some standard rules concern limited groups of verbs with neatly distinguishable common characteristics, for example identical syntactic or pragmatic features, coinciding constructions, etc.” As far as I see, this proposal has never been applied to whole classes of verbs with common government patterns; instead, the ‘small syntax’ component has become the target domain for many detailed studies of syntactic idioms mostly carried out by L. Iomdin. In Weiss (2011a:152) I argued for the establishment of ‘hyper-entries’ (to be distinguished from ordinary dictionary entries) in this zone to cover zero constructions for the most salient types of verb omissions, i.e. verbs of goal-directed

¹² Besides this, there is a special construction restricted to press coverage, mentioned in Saj (2002 : 108): *Mostovoj na Karpina* ‘Mostovoj [passes the ball] to Karpin’. In an MTT Framework, this would be an idiom with an own dictionary entry.

¹³ As is argued in Weiss 2011, the major part of all verb omissions in colloquial Russian is contextually induced and cannot be described by means of a zero construction.

motion, communication, hitting, and giving (“glagoly predostavlenija”). Thus, most of the former ‘zero verbs’ would be treated like this. In the said paper, however, only the zero construction for verbs of giving was substantiated. The corresponding government pattern looks as follows:

Semantic actants	X = agent	Y = recipient / beneficiary	Z = object
Syntactic actants	1. S _{nom}	2. S _{dat}	3. S _{acc}

The semantic explication (*tolkovanie*) was not spelled out explicitly, but it seems fairly obvious that it should roughly follow the formula ‘X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z’. This zero variant is realised if the surrounding context contains no lexical specifications typical for overt verbs, such as *dat* ‘give’, *podarit* ‘donate, make a gift’, *odolžit* ‘lend, borrow’ or *prisudit* ‘award’.¹⁴ All this is in line with Goldberg’s approach. Yet, one is tempted to go one step further and include the zero construction into the overall intransitive construction (CAUSE-RECEIVE) with its core meaning of a “successful transfer between a volitional agent and a willing recipient” (Goldberg 1995: 151). This would allow accounting for all commonalities shared by the verbs of giving on the level of the ‘small syntax’. Moreover, it would enable us to cover cases with a recipient used as circumstantial (cf. *She baked me a cake*) and to formulate the pertinent constraints. This would however imply that we also incorporate all other subtypes of the ditransitive construction distinguished in (Goldberg 1995: 38), notably X INTENDS to CAUSE Y to RECEIVE Z (cf. *leave, grant*), X CAUSES Y not to RECEIVE Z (cf. *refuse, deny*) and a group described as “Verbs of giving with associated satisfaction conditions” such as *guarantee, promise*. Note that Russian equivalents do not always fit into the case frame presented above: for example, *otkazat* ‘refuse’ governs a prepositional phrase for the object (cf. *Direktor otkazal ej v podderžke* ‘the boss refused her his support’, and the two verbs *udostoit* and *nagradit*, whose meanings are pretty close to the “regular” *prisudit* ‘award’, take a recipient in the accusative and an object in the genitive and instrumental, respectively.

If we turn now to the remaining candidates for Russian zero constructions, we recognize other important examples discussed by Goldberg, notably X MOVES [to] Y, X CAUSES Y to MOVE [to] Z and X TAKES ACTION at Y; to these should be added X COMMUNICATES with Y and Y COMMUNICATES with Y on Z, both of which play no significant role in her two monographs. If we proceed in the same way as with the verbs of giving, all abovementioned zero constructions will be considered instances of these constructions. The arguments in favour of this solution are the same as in the case of the verbs of giving: zero constructions exhibit the same argument structure as “normal” constructions with slots for overt verbs, and the semantics of the whole construction represents an abstract invariant that cannot be replaced by any existing overt verb. Moreover, the introduction of said constructions into the ‘small syntax’ would give us access to many fruitful generalizations, to mention but those concerning the transformation of verbs denoting sounds or physical actions into motion verbs illustrated in examples 9 and 10. Note that not only polysemy, but also homophony is not excluded in Construction Grammar; therefore, the fact that for example the case frame S_{nom} –

¹⁴ This list of verbs raises the question of whether the meaning of the whole construction should not be equated with the basic meaning of the hypernym ‘give’. This would however require a separate study.

do S_{gen} in Polish covers both X MOVES [to] Y and X COMMUNICATES with Y is not an obstacle.¹⁵

All this causes far-reaching consequences for the overall MTT architecture that cannot be discussed here. Obviously, the weight of the ‘small syntax’ component would significantly increase, and the role of the dictionary proper would have to be reexamined in order to limit redundancy. Polysemy remains crucial in both components: if Goldberg’s constructions can be polysemous, does this reduce polysemy in the dictionary? As was mentioned in the beginning, Goldberg’s work is of no help here since she carefully avoids formulating proper dictionary entries. But the decisive argument in favour of the incorporation of selected constructions into MTT is provided by a principle that has always been respected by MTT theoreticians: every generalization should be represented on an appropriate level of description, or else: if we agree that there are phenomena that cannot be adequately handled either in the dictionary or in the syntactical component, they have to be located in a separate module, i.e. the ‘small syntax’.

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¹⁵ In sentences with an omitted verb, this homonymy is however avoided in colloquial Polish; only in internet communication is it gaining ground. For details see (Weiss 2011b, c).

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