

Task: [3] Syntactic alternations in English

Syntactic alternation involves a change in the way a verb realizes its arguments in syntactic constructions. Let us take the verb *give* as an example.

- (1) a. John gave Mary some flowers.
b. John gave some flowers to Mary.

In (1a), *give* is followed by the indirect object (*Mary*) and next by the direct object (*some flowers*). All of its arguments are nominal phrases (NP)¹. In (1b), the objects swap positions. Now, *some flowers* occur immediately following the verb *give* and *Mary* is preceded by the preposition *to*. The presented alternation is called *dative alternation*. Formally, we notate it

- (2) a. NP₁ [John] V² [gave] NP₂ [Mary] NP₃ [some flowers]
b. NP₁ [John] V [gave] NP₃ [some flowers] *to*-NP₂ [to Mary]

Some of the other common syntactic alternations in English are:

- (3) *Benefactive alternation*
a. Mary baked her mother a cake. NP₁ V NP₂ NP₃
b. Mary baked a cake for her mum. NP₁ V NP₃ *for*-NP₂

- (4) *Spray/load alternation*
a. John loaded the truck with hay. NP₁ V NP₂ *with*-NP₃
b. John loaded hay on the truck. NP₁ V NP₃ *on*-NP₂

and

- (5) *With/against alternation*
a. Brian hit the stick against the fence. NP₁ V NP₂ *against*-NP₃
b. Brian hit the fence with the stick. NP₁ V NP₃ *with*-NP₂

Instruction: There are many verbs in English that occur in the presented constructions. Allocate the verbs below to the correct alternations they can occur in.

sell, pour (drink), hammer, hit, pass, smear, teach, hang, make (tea), slap, smack, spray, splash, cook, dance, paint, pack, show, knock, lend

¹ NP - noun phrase - (Pol.) wyrażenie rzeczownikowe

² V - verb - (Pol.) czasownik

Type of alternation	Alternating verbs
<p><i>Dative alternation</i></p> <p>NP V NP <i>to</i>-NP and NP V NP NP</p>	(5 verbs)
<p><i>Spray/load alternation</i></p> <p>NP V NP <i>with</i>-NP and NP V NP <i>on</i>-NP</p>	(5 verbs)
<p><i>With/against alternation</i></p> <p>NP V NP <i>against</i>-NP and NP V NP <i>with</i>-NP</p>	(5 verbs)
<p><i>Benefactive alternation</i></p> <p>NP V NP NP and NP V NP <i>for</i>-NP</p>	5 (verbs)

KEY:

<i>Dative</i> alternation	<i>Benefactive</i> alternation	<i>Spray/load</i> alternation	<i>With/against</i> alternation
lend, pass, sell, show, teach	cook, dance, pour (drink), paint, make (tea)	pack, spray, smear, hang, splash	hammer, hit, knock, slap, smack

1 point for each correct answer