Preface

This book deals with the diachronic changes that ditransitive verbs and constructions may undergo across different languages. It explores the main developmental pathways along which ditransitives evolve from a predominantly semantic and syntactic point of view, by considering the prime factors and functional principles that bring about and influence their directions of change. Given that the functional domain of ditransitivity is characterized by a high degree of synchronic variation in many languages, diachronic research can offer interesting insights on the dynamics of change that determine the emergence and development of alternation between competing constructions. Parallel to that, as this volume shows, the diachronic approach can shed light on the processes that determine the loss of structural alternations, as well as on new meanings and functions that ditransitives may acquire over time.

While a huge amount of studies exists on ditransitives in different languages, especially from a typological perspective, there is very little literature that attempts to explore their diachronic development. The purpose of the present book is to contribute to the discussion. The analyses offered provide different and intertwined answers to the general question on how do ditransitives change by drawing on different functional principles that play a substantial role in the diachronic reorganization of this dynamic domain and by offering a number of original theoretical insights.

The book opens with an introductory chapter by the Editors, followed by nine chapters revolving around three thematic foci, which correspond to the three Parts of the book itself. The first Part addresses empirical and theoretical issues in the definition of ditransitives, highlighting the contribution of diachronic analyses to the debate. The second Part contains different studies on the rise, development, and decay of construction alternation in various languages. The third Part broadens the scope of the discussion with chapters devoted to interesting cases of functional enrichment exhibited by ditransitive verbs and constructions and to the investigation of their possible degree of structural (in)stability over time.

In the volume, different languages are explored, both ancient (Vedic Sanskrit: Dahl's chapter; Latin: Fedriani's chapter) and modern ones, considered at different diachronic stages and from a comparative perspective (see Prandi's chapter). They include Romance languages (Italian: Napoli's chapter and Giacalone Ramat's chapter; Spanish: Melis and Ibáñez Cerda's chapter) and Germanic ones, namely English, explored at various stages during the transition between Old English and Middle English (Broccias and Torre's chapter), Dutch (Colleman's chapter), and German (Van Damme, De Cuypere, and Willems's chapter). The contributions are

rooted in different theoretical frameworks and invoke a variety of theories and perspectives. Each chapter represents a novel contribution based on original data and drawn from historical corpora. These data are analyzed through the lens of various functional principles, including iconicity, analogy, functional substitution vs. differentiation, constructional expansion, assimilation, attraction and diachronic productivity.

The chapters gathered in this volume were originally presented at the International Workshop on *The Diachrony of Ditransitives*, organized by the two Editors, Chiara Fedriani and Maria Napoli, and held at the University of Eastern Piedmont (Vercelli, Italy) on November 29th–30th 2018. The programme featured 14 presentations, including two invited lectures by outstanding experts in the field, Timothy Colleman (Ghent University) and Michele Prandi (University of Genoa). The goal of the Workshop was to promote dialogue on the development of ditransitive verbs and constructions among international scholars, from different perspectives and within different theoretical frameworks. The present book is conceived of as continuing that dialogue and, if possible, expanding it within the scientific community.

Our warmest thanks go to the distinguished researchers who took part in the Workshop and, among them, especially to those who agreed to write a chapter for this book, making our project possible. The Workshop was organized with the financial support of the Department of Humanities, University of Eastern Piedmont, that we gratefully acknowledge.

We owe our deepest gratitude also to the international scholars who were involved in the process of revision of the book, accepting to act as anonymous referees: all the contributions and, as a consequence, the volume as a whole have benefited from their valuable comments and suggestions.

Finally yet crucially, we would like to thank the Editors of the TiLSM series, Chiara Gianollo and Daniel Van Olmen, and De Gruyter's staff, in particular Barbara Karlson, for guiding our project through completion.

Chiara Fedriani and Maria Napoli