Why some causative ‘give’ constructions develop beyond the passive to also form the unaccusative: Evidence from Southern Min dialects

Weirong CHEN¹, Foong Ha YAP¹ & Huiling XU²

Hong Kong Polytechnic University¹
& Macquarie University²

Overview

1. Objective of present study

To examine the rise of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions in some Southern Min dialects

2. Previous studies on ‘give’ constructions

- From causative to passive
- From passive to unaccusative

3. Typological observations on the development of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

- Valency reduction
- Competing syntactic constructions
1. Objectives of this study

2. Previous studies on ‘give’ constructions

2.1 Functions of ‘give’ constructions
- Lexical ‘give’
- Dative and benefactive ‘give’
  - Lord (1993)
- Causative and passive ‘give’
- Unaccusative ‘give’
  - Matthews, Xu & Yip (2005); Chen (2011)

2.2 Directions of semantic extensions and syntactic reanalyses
- Causative > Passive > Unaccusative
  - Matthews, Xu & Yip (2005); Chen (2011)
- Valence reduction
  - 3-place > 2-place > 1-place predicate (Huang 2009)
Lexical ‘give’

- Mandarin
  
  \texttt{gei\ ta\ yi\ ben\ shu}

  give 3SG one CL book

  ‘give him one book’

- Min (Hui’an dialect)

  \texttt{kh\5-4\ i\1\ tsit\8-4\ pun\3-2\ tsh.e\7-7}

  give 3SG one CL book

  ‘give him one book’

- Min (Chaozhou dialect)

  \texttt{k’eh\ i\ bung\ tser}

  give 3SG CL book

  ‘give him one book’

Dative ‘give’

- Mandarin \textit{gei}

  \texttt{liu\ gei\ ta\ yaoshi}

  leave give 3SG key (more commonly used)

  ‘Leave the key to him.’

- Min (Hui’an dialect)

  \texttt{so\3-2\si\2\ lau\3\ kh\5-4\ i\1}

  key leave give 3SG

  ‘Leave the key to him.’

- Min (Chaozhou dialect)

  \texttt{lau\ ki\ losi\ k’eh\ i}

  leave CL key to 3SG

  ‘leave the key to him’
Benefactive ‘give’

- **Mandarin**
  
  \( \text{wo gei ta fanyi} \)
  
  1SG give 3SG translate
  
  ‘I translate (it) for him.’

- **Min (Hui'an dialect)**
  
  \( *\text{ua3 kh/5-4 i1 huan1-iak8} \)
  
  1SG give 3SG translate
  
  ‘I translate (it) for him.’

- **Min (Chaozhou dialect)**
  
  \( *\text{ua k'ehi huang-ek} \)
  
  1SG give 3SG translate
  
  ‘I translate (it) for him’

Causative ‘give’

- **Mandarin** gei
  
  \( \text{gei ta xiuxi ji tian} \)
  
  give 3SG xiuxi ji tian
  
  ‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

- **Min (Hui’an dialect)**
  
  \( \text{kh/5-4 i1 hioi 7 kui3-2 let8} \)
  
  give 3SG rest several day
  
  ‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

- **Min (Chaozhou dialect)**
  
  \( \text{k'eh i hiuN-sek kui zek} \)
  
  give 3SG rest several day
  
  ‘Let him rest for a few days.’
Passive ‘give’

- Mandarin
yifu bei yu lin shi le
clothes PM rain drip wet PFV
‘The clothes got wet by the rain.’

- Min (Hui’an dialect)
sa "l-kh 5 kh 5-4 h 4 pha 7-8 tam2 kh 0
clothes give rain hit wet go
‘The clothes got wet by the rain.’

- Min (Chaozhou dialect)
ko saN-k’ou k’eh hou ak tam
CL clothes give rain water wet
‘The clothes got wet (lit. watered) by the rain.’

Unergative ‘give’

- Mandarin gei
- *Unergative
*xiaotou gei ta pao le
thief give 3SG run PFV
‘The thief ran away.’

- Min (Hui’an dialect)
- Unergative
tshia-a3 kh 5-4 i1 tsau3
thief –DIM give 3SG run go
‘The thief ran away.’

- Min (Chaozhou dialect)
- Unergative
kai ts’ak k’eh i tsau k’er
CL thief give 3SG run go
‘The thief ran away.’
Unaccusative ‘give’

- Mandarin *gei
- *Unaccusative
  *hua gei ta si le
  flower give 3SG die PFV
  ‘The flower died.’

- Min (Hui’ an dialect)
- Unaccusative example
  hue1 kh5-4 i1 si3
  flower give 3SG die go
  ‘The flower died.’

- Unaccusative example
  tsang hue k’eh i si k’er
  CL flower give 3SG die go
  ‘The flower died.’

Directions of semantic extensions and syntactic reanalyses (1)

- Causative > Passive
  - Hashimoto (1988)

- Causative > Reflexive > Passive

- Causative > *Reflexive > Passive > Unaccusative
  - Matthews, Xu & Yip (2005)

- Causative > *Reflexive > Passive > Unergative > Unaccusative
  - This study
Causative > Passive
Hashimoto (1988)

- Examples from Cantonese

Causative > Reflexive > Passive

- Examples from Manchu-Tungusic from Nedjalkov 1993

i  bata-be  va-bu-ha
he-NOM enemy-ACC kill-CAUS-PAST
‘He made (somebody) kill the enemy.’

i (bata-de) va-bu-ha
he-NOM (enemy-DAT) kill-PASS-PAST
He is/was killed (by the enemy).’
Matthews et al. (2005) examined why passive and unaccusative constructions are both marked by the morpheme \( k'\text{e} \) in the Jieyang dialect from syntactic and semantic perspectives.

According to their study, morphosyntactic parallels between passive and unaccusative constructions are found in a number of languages such as Latin, Italian, Albanian, and the English interlanguage grammars across different L1 backgrounds.

In addition, passive and unaccusative constructions in the Jieyang dialect share thematic and aspectual properties, which motivate the extension of passive morphosyntax to unaccusative predicates.
Causative > Passive > Unergative (and special disposal construction) > Unaccusative

This study

- Examples from Southern Min (Hui’ an dialect)
  - Causative
    - kh\\text{\textasciitilde}5-4 i1 hio\\text{\textasciitilde}7 kui3-2 let8
    - give 3SG rest several day
    - ‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

- Unergative
  - tshat8-4-a3 kh\\text{\textasciitilde}5-4 i1 tsau3 kh\\text{\textasciitilde}0
  - thief –DIM give 3SG run go
  - ‘The thief ran away.’

- Passive
  - sa\\text{\textasciitilde}4-1-kh\\text{\textasciitilde}5 kh\\text{\textasciitilde}5-4 h\\text{\textasciitilde}4 pha\\text{\textasciitilde}7-8 tam2 kh\\text{\textasciitilde}0
  - clothes give rain hit wet go
  - ‘The clothes got wet by the rain.’

- Unaccusative
  - hue1 kh\\text{\textasciitilde}5-4 i1 si3 kh\\text{\textasciitilde}0
  - flower give 3SG die go
  - ‘The flower died.’

Directions of semantic extensions and syntactic reanalyses (2)

- **Valence reduction**
  - 3-place > 2-place > 1-place predicate (Huang 2009)
    - Causative ‘give’
      - a 3-place predicate construction
      - Possibly a pan-Chinese phenomenon
    - Passive ‘give’
      - a 3-place predicate construction with a demoted agent
      - (hence a ‘2-place-like’ predicate)
      - Widely attested in Chinese dialects
    - Unergative ‘give’
      - a 1-place predicate construction
      - Attested in Wu, Hui, Min, and Hakka dialects
    - Unaccusative ‘give’
      - another 1-place predicate construction
      - Attested in Southern Min varieties such as the Quanzhou and Hui’ an varieties in Fujian, and the Chaozhou, Shantou, Jieyang and Chenghai varieties in Guangdong
Directions of semantic extensions and syntactic reanalyses (2)

**Valence reduction**

3-place > 2-place > 1-place predicate  
(Huang 2009)

- Causative "give"  
  - a 3-place predicate construction  
  - Possibly a pan-Chinese phenomenon

- Passive "give"  
  - a 3-place predicate construction with a demoted agent (hence a ‘2-place-like’ predicate)  
  - Widely attested in Chinese dialects

- Unergative "give"  
  - a 1-place predicate construction  
  - Attested in Wu dialects, and Eastern Min such as Fuzhou variety

- Unaccusative "give"  
  - another 1-place predicate construction  
  - Attested in Southern Min varieties such as the Quanzhou and Hui’an varieties in Fujian, and the Chaoshou, Shannou, Jieyang and Chenghai varieties in Guangdong

**Examples from Southern Min (Hui’an dialect)**

- khù5-4 i1 hio5-2 lei8  
  give 3SG rest several day  
  ‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

- sa17 khù5-4 hò5-1 hò5-4 fhà5-3 tam2 khò5-0  
  clothes give rain hit wet go  
  ‘The clothes got wet by the rain.’

- tshat8-4-a5 khù5-4 i1 trasə3 khò5-0  
  thief–DIM give 3SG run go  
  ‘The thief ran away.’

- hue1 khù5-4 i1 si3 khò5-0  
  flower give 3SG die go  
  ‘The flower died.’

Mechanisms of syntactic reanalysis

- Causative > passive  
  - Patient promotion (movement)  
  - Agent demotion (‘give’ > adposition or case marker)  
  - Via reflexive ‘give’ construction as intermediate stage

- Causative (not passive) > ‘unergative’ causative

- ? Passive > unaccusative

Our proposal:

- Passive & ‘unergative’ causative & a special type of disposal construction > unaccusative ‘give’
Mechanisms of syntactic reanalysis (1)

**Causative > passive**
- Patient promotion (movement)
- Agent demotion
- ‘give’ > adposition or case marker for demoted agent
- Perhaps via reflexive ‘give’ construction as intermediate stage (with optional resumptive pronoun co-referential with the patient in subject position attested in some languages, e.g. Manchur-Tungusic, and in contact languages such as Bazaar Malay and Singapore Colloquial English)

**Causer GIVE Causee ACT-ON Patient**
- Someone GIVE police catch thief
- Situation GIVE police catch thief

**Patient GIVE Causee/Causee AFFECT**
- Thief GIVE police catch
- Thief GIVE someone catch
- ? Thief GIVE situation catch
- *Thief GIVE catch

Singapore Colloquial English: The thief, GIVE police catch (him).

Mechanisms of syntactic reanalysis (2)

**Causative > ‘unergative’ causative**
- NO patient promotion (movement)
- Causee agent in topic position
- Causer agent suppression
- ‘give’ > adposition or case marker for resumptive pronoun which is co-referential with the causee agent
- Dependent on the reflexive ‘give’ construction as intermediate stage (with obligatory resumptive pronoun / co-referential with the causee agent)

**Causer GIVE Causee ACT-ON Patient**
- Someone GIVE police catch thief
- Situation GIVE police catch thief

**Causee agent, (Elided Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronoun, ACT**
- Prisoner, (Situation) GIVE him, run away
- Prisoner, (Someone) GIVE him, run away
- *Prisoner GIVE run away
Mechanisms of syntactic reanalysis (3)

- ? Passive > unaccusative
  - NO patient promotion (movement)
  - Theme of 1-place predicate verb in topic/subject position
  - NO causee agent
  - NO causer agent
  - ‘give’ > adposition or case marker for resumptive pronoun which is co-referential with the theme in topic/subject position
  - Dependent on the reflexive ‘give’ construction as intermediate stage (with obligatory resumptive pronoun co-referential with the theme)

- Patient GIVE Causer/Causee AFFECT
  - Thief GIVE police catch
  - Thief GIVE someone catch
  - Thief GIVE situation catch
  - *Thief GIVE catch
  - Singapore Colloquial English: The thief, GIVE police catch (him,)

- Themei (*Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronouni AFFECTED
  - Flower, (*Situation) GIVE iti, die
  - Flower, (*Someone) GIVE iti, die
  - *Flower GIVE die

Mechanisms of syntactic reanalysis (4)

- OUR PROPOSAL
  - Passive & Unergative (and special disposal construction) > unaccusative
    - NO patient promotion
    - Theme of 1-place predicate verb in topic/subject position
    - NO causee agent
    - NO causer agent
    - ‘give’ > adposition or case marker for resumptive pronoun which is co-referential to the affected patient in topic position, not the case marker for the demoted agent
    - NOT dependent on the reflexive ‘give’ construction as intermediate stage

- Patient GIVE Causer/Causee AFFECT
  - Thief GIVE police catch
  - Thief GIVE someone catch
  - Thief GIVE situation catch
  - *Thief GIVE catch
  - Singapore Colloquial English: The thief, GIVE police catch (him,)

- Causee agenti (Elided Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronoun, ACT
  - Prisoner, (Situation) GIVE him, run away
  - Prisoner, (Someone) GIVE him, run away
  - *Prisoner GIVE run away

- Themei (*Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronouni AFFECTED
  - Flower, (*Situation) GIVE iti, die
  - *Flower GIVE iti, die
  - *Flower GIVE die
Compare special disposal construction and unaccusative ‘give’ construction

- **Special disposal construction with resumptive pronoun**
  - NP patient + object marker + 3SGi + VP
    - Floweri (*Situation) OM iti put on table
    - Floweri (Someone) OM iti put on table
    - *Flower OM put on table

- **‘Unergative’ causative construction**
  - Causee agenti (Elided Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronouni, ACT
    - Prisoneri (Situation) GIVE himi, run away
    - Prisoneri (Someone) GIVE himi, run away
    - *Prisoner GIVE run away

- **Unaccusative ‘give’ construction**
  - Themei (*Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronouni, AFFECTED
    - Floweri (*Situation) GIVE iti, die
    - Floweri (*Someone) GIVE iti, die
    - *Flower GIVE die

Compare topic-prominent construction and unaccusative ‘give’ construction

- **Topic construction (with and without resumptive pronoun)**
  - NP patienti + 3SGi + VP
    - Floweri, iti put on table
    - Floweri, put on table

- **‘Unergative’ causative construction**
  - Causee agenti (Elided Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronouni, ACT
    - Prisoneri (Situation) GIVE himi, run away
    - Prisoneri (Someone) GIVE himi, run away
    - *Prisoner GIVE run away

- **Unaccusative ‘give’ construction**
  - Themei (*Causer agent) GIVE Resumptive pronouni, AFFECTED
    - Floweri (*Situation) GIVE iti, die
    - Floweri (*Someone) GIVE iti, die
    - *Flower GIVE die
Unergative ‘give’ in Hui’ an dialect

- The unergative ‘give’ construction requires a resumptive third person pronoun following the ‘give’ morpheme.

1. a. tshat8-4-a3 kh5-4 i1 tsau3 kh0
   thief-DIM give 3SG run go
   ‘The thief ran away.’

1. b. tshat8-4-a3 kh5-1 tsau3 kh0
   thief-DIM give run go
   ‘The thief ran away.’

- Cf. *tshat8-4-a3 kh6-4 tsau3 kh0
  thief-DIM give run go
  ‘The thief ran away.’

Unaccusative ‘give’ in Hui’ an dialect

- The unaccusative ‘give’ construction requires a resumptive third person pronoun following the ‘give’ morpheme.

2. a. hue1 kh6-4 i1 si3 kh5
   flower give 3SG die go
   ‘The flower died.’

2. b. hue1 kh6-4 si3 kh5
   flower give die go
   ‘The flower died.’

- Cf. *hue1 kh6-4 si3 kh5
  flower give die go
  ‘The flower died.’
Unaccusative ‘give’ in Chaozhou

The unaccusative ‘give’ construction in Chaozhou dialect also requires a resumptive third person pronoun i following the ‘give’ morepheme.

(2) a.  *hue k’eh i si k’er
        flower give 3SG die go
        ‘The flower died.’

Why is the unaccusative ‘give’ construction possible in some Southern Min varieties such as the Hui’an and Chaozhou dialects?

- Availability of a special type of disposal-type construction in addition to the ba or jiang pre-transitive construction
- That is, these Southern Min varieties also make productive use of the ‘NP patient + object marker + 3SG + VP’ pre-transitive construction, as in (2) from Hui’an in which the third person pronoun (3SG) is a resumptive pronoun for the patient NP in topic position.

Hui’an                  Chaozhou
bɔk2 ka5-4 i1 kuin1 khai0 mung kai i kuen k’i lai
  door OM  3SG close  RVC      door for 3SG close up-come
  ‘Close the door.’             ‘Close the door.’
• Topic-prominence is highly productive in these Southern Min dialects.

Summary

• This paper examines how and why some Southern Min varieties (e.g. the Jieyang and Hui’an dialects) develop the relatively rare unaccusative ‘give’ construction, which is not attested in many other Sinitic varieties.

• Our analysis reveals that, in addition to the ba or jiang pre-transitive constructions, some Southern Min varieties also make productive use of a special type of ‘disposal’ (or pre-transitive) construction.

• This pre-transitive construction has the structure ‘NP patient, + object marker + 3SGi + VP’.

• Example from Hui’an

  b$x2 ka5-4 i1 kuin1 khai0
doors OM 3SG close RVC
‘Close the door.’

• Note that the third person pronoun (3SG) is a resumptive pronoun that is co-referential with the patient NP in topic position.
Structural and semantic parallels (1)

- Some structural parallel can be observed between this special type of pre-transitive construction and the passive ‘give’ construction, as highlighted in (3a) and (3b) respectively.

(3) a. $b$_52 $ka$5-4 $i$1 kuin1 khai0
   door OM 3SG close RVC
   ‘Close the door.’

b. ua$3_h$ $kh$f5-4 $i$1 $ba$"5
   1SG give 3SG scold
   ‘I got scolded by him.’

Structural and semantic parallels (2)

- More striking are the structural parallels between this special type of pre-transitive construction and the unaccusative ‘give’ construction, as highlighted in (4a) and (4b) respectively.

(4) a. $b$_52 $ka$5-4 $i$1 kuin1 khai0
   door OM 3SG close RVC
   ‘Close the door.’

b. hue$1_i$ $kh$f5-4 $i$1 $si$3 $kh$0
   flower give 3SG die go
   ‘The flower died.’
We suggest that the existence of pre-transitive constructions such as (4a) paves the way for the emergence of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions such as (4b) in some Southern Min varieties such as the Jieyang and Hui’an dialects.

Cross-dialectal differences

- Pre-transitive constructions involving a patient NP subject with a resumptive pronoun introduced by an object marker, as (5a), are not available in many other Sinitic languages such as Mandarin Chinese, as seen in (5b).

(5) a. \( b \, \text{ka5-4} \, i1 \, \text{kuin1} \, \text{khai0} \)  
  
  door  OM 3SG close RVC  
  ‘Close the door.’

b. \( \ast \text{men} \, \text{ba} \, \text{ta} \, \text{guan} \, \text{le} \)  
  
  door  OM 3SG close PRT  
  ‘Close the door.’
Functions of ‘give’ constructions in different Southern Min dialects such as Hui’an and Chaozhou

- lexical verb ‘give’
- dative marker ‘to’
- benefactive marker ‘for’
- permissive marker ‘allow, let’
- passive marker ‘by’
- unergative marker (resumptive pronoun)
- unaccusative marker (resumptive pronoun)

Table 1. Functions of ‘give’ constructions in different Chinese dialects

| Functions       | Mandarin | Shanghai Wu [pəʔ] | Tunxi Hui | Hui’an Min | Chaozhou Min | Taiwanes e Min | Hakka [pun] | Cantonese | Hui |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| Lexical         | ✔️        | ✔️                 | ✔️         | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Dative          | ✔️        | ✔️                 | ✔️         | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Benefactive     | ✔️        | ✔️                 | ✔️         | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Permissive      | ✔️        | ✔️                 | ✔️         | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Passive         | ✔️        | ✔️                 | ✔️         | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Unergative      | ✔️        | ✔️                 | ✔️         | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Unaccusative    | ✔️        | ✔️                 | ✔️         | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Locative        | ✔️        |                     |           | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
| Instrumental    | ✔️        |                     |           | ✔️          | ✔️            | ✔️             | ✔️          | ✔️        |
Table 2. Types of ‘disposal’ (or pre-transitive) constructions in different Chinese dialects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of disposal construction</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Wu</th>
<th>Hui</th>
<th>Hui’an</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Chaozhou Min</th>
<th>Taiwanes e Min</th>
<th>Hakka</th>
<th>Cantonese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic NP, <strong>BA</strong> NP + VP</td>
<td>pa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic NP, <strong>JING</strong> NP + VP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient NP <strong>KAI</strong> i + VP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JING</strong> Obj NP <strong>KAI</strong> i + VP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero-marking topic-comment construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic NP, VP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A range of syntactic means to mark ‘disposal constructions in Southern Min (e.g. Hui’an and Chaozhou):

- Pre-object: tsiang, pa, pa tsiang (in Chaozhou dialect)
- tui (in Shantou, a variety of Chaozhou dialect)
- Post-object marker: kai i
- Combining pre and post object markers
tsiang + obj.NP + kai i + VP
- Zero marker: topic-comment type of construction:
obj NP + VP
Conclusion

References

References—contd.