On the emergence of unaccusative 'give' constructions in Sinitic languages:
A diachronic and typological perspective

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Overview

• Objective of present study

• Some uses of ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages

• How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?

• Typological observations on unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

• Conclusion
Objective of this study

- To investigate the conditions for the rise of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages

  - What is the function of the unaccusative ‘give’ construction?
  - How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?
  - How robust is the unaccusative ‘give’ construction typologically?
Some uses of ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages

- **Lexical ‘give’**

- **Dative and benefactive ‘give’**
  - Lord (1993); Lord, Yap & Iwasaki (2002)

- **Causative and passive ‘give’**

- **Unaccusative ‘give’ / Adversative ‘give’**
  - Matthews, Xu & Yip (2005); Chen (2011); Lin (2011); this study
Lexical ‘give’

1a) Mandarin

*gěi tā yī běn shū*

give 3SG one CL book

‘Give him a book.’

1b) Min (Hui’an dialect)

*khɔ̃5-4 i¹ tsit8-4 pun3-2 tsheʔ7*

give 3SG one CL book

‘Give him a book.’
Dative ‘give’

2a) Mandarin

liú gěi tā yàoshī cf. yàoshī liú gěi tā
leave give 3SG key (more commonly used)
‘Leave the key to him.’

2b) Min (Hui’ an dialect)

so³²si² lau² khɔ⁵⁴ i¹
key leave give 3SG
‘Leave the key to him.’
**Benefactive ‘give’**

3a) **Mandarin**

\[ wǒ ｇēi ｔā ｆānyì \]

1SG give 3SG translate

‘I translated (it) for him.’

3b) **Min (Hui’an dialect)**

\[ *ua^3 \, khɔ^5-4 \, i' \, huan^1-6iak^8 \]

1SG give 3SG translate

‘I translated (it) for him.’
Causative ‘give’

4a) Mandarin

gěi tā xīuxi jǐ tiān
give 3SG rest several day
‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

4b) Min (Hui’ an dialect)

khō ⁵⁴ _il hio ⁷ kui ³² let⁸
give 3SG rest several day
‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’
Passive ‘give’

5a) Mandarin

\[ \text{yīfū gěi yǔ lín shī le} \]
clothes give rain drip wet PFV

‘The clothes got wet in the rain.’

5b) Min (Hui’ an dialect)

\[ \text{sā}^{1-6} \text{khɔ}^5 \text{ khɔ}^{5-4} \text{ hɔ}^4 \text{ pha}^{7-8} \text{ tam}^2 \text{ khu}^0 \]
clothes give rain hit wet go

‘The clothes got wet in the rain.’
Type 1 Unaccusative ‘give’ (‘escape’-type)

6a) Mandarin
\[ ?\text{xiǎotōu} \ gěi \ (tā) \ pǎo \ le \]

thief give (3SG) run PFV

‘The thief ran away.’

6b) Min (Hui’ an dialect)
\[ tshia^{8-4} - a^3 \ kh∅^{5-4} \ i^1 \ tsau^3 \ khu^0 \]

thief –DIM give 3SG run go

‘The thief ran away.’

Type 1: attested in Min, Wu, Gan, Cantonese and some Mandarin varieties
Type 2 Unaccusative ‘give’ (‘die’-type)

7a) Mandarin

\[ ?huār \ gěi \ (tā) \ sǐ \ le \]
flower give (3SG) die PFV
‘The flower died.’

7b) Min (Hui’ an dialect)

\[ hue^l \ khɔ^{5-4} \ i^l \ si^3 \ khui^0 \]
flower give 3SG die go
‘The flower died.’

Type 2: attested in some Southern Min varieties and some Mandarin varieties
Unaccusative ‘give’ (beyond 3SG resumptive pronoun)

• PLURAL SUBJECT

8) Hui’an dialect
   \text{en}^1 \text{ huai}^2 \text{ kh\text{\textcircled{5-4} i}^1} \quad si^3 \text{ khu}^0
   \text{PL those give EXPL(<3SG) die go}
   ‘\text{Those people died.’}

• SECOND PERSON SUBJECT

9) Hui’an dialect
   \text{lu}^3 \text{ si}^4 \text{ kh\text{\textcircled{5-4} i}^1} \quad g\text{\textcircled{5} khu}^0, si\text{\textcircled{a}^0}
   \text{2SG be give EXPL(<3SG) stupid go SFP}
   ‘Are \text{you} stupid?!’

(give EXPL=adversative marker)
Unaccusative ‘give’ (beyond 3SG resumptive pronoun)

- **PLURAL SUBJECT**

8) Hui’an dialect

\[
\text{en}^1 \quad \text{huai}^2 \quad \text{khɔ}^{5-1} \quad \text{si}^3 \quad \text{khui}^0
\]

PL those ADVERS die go

‘Those people died.’

- **SECOND PERSON SUBJECT**

9) Hui’an dialect

\[
\text{lu}^3 \quad \text{si}^4 \quad \text{khɔ}^{5-1} \quad \text{gɔŋ}^5 \quad \text{khui}^0, \quad \text{siə}^0
\]

2SG be ADVERS stupid go SFP

‘Are you stupid?!’

(ADVERS=adversative marker; it expresses speaker’s subjective stance)
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Adversative intransitive predicates</th>
<th>Min: Hui’an</th>
<th>Min: Jieyang</th>
<th>Wu</th>
<th>Hakka</th>
<th>Hui</th>
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<th>Cantonese</th>
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<td>Turn black/wet</td>
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<td>Turn soft/hard</td>
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</table>
How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?
Lin (2011)

- Is it via the passive?

- Is it more directly from the causative?
Previous studies

- Causative > Passive
  - Keenan (1985); Hashimoto (1988); Chin (2011)

- Causative > Reflexive > Passive

- Causative > Passive > ?Unaccusative
  - Matthews, Xu & Yip (2005); Chen (2011)

- (i) Causative > Passive > Adversative (= Unaccusative)
- (ii) Causative > Adversative (= Unaccusative)
  - Lin (2011)
Causative > reflexive > passive from Cantonese

10) **Permissive causative**

妈咪畀渠自己行路返学

*Ma1mi4 bei2 keoi5 zi6gei2 haang4lou6 faan1hok6*

Mummy give 3SG self walk go.to.school

‘Mummy allows him to go to school by himself.’

11) **Reflexive causative** (intentional agent)

渠畀媽媽惜渠一啖

*keoi5 bei2 ma4ma1 sek3 keoi5 jat1 daam6*

3SG give mother kiss 3SG one CL

‘He allowed Mother to kiss him (one kiss).’

12) **Reflexive passive** (non-intentional agent = affected patient)

渠畀人惜一啖

*keoi5 bei2 jan4 sek3 jat1 daam6*

3SG give human kiss one CL

‘He was kissed (by somebody).’
Causative > Passive > ?Unaccusative
Chaozhou (Jieyang)
(Matthews, Xu & Yip 2005:269-71)

13) Permissive causative ‘allow’
   $1$ bo $k’e?$ ua t’i $tsi$ puŋ tsuŋ
   3SG not.have give 1SG read this CL book
   ‘He didn’t let me read this book.’ (p. 270)

14) Passive
   puŋ tsuŋ $k’e?$ naŋ boi k’uŋ lau
   CL book give person buy RVC PRT
   ‘The book has been bought already.’ (p. 271)

15) Unaccusative
   ts’iô $k’e?$ i to lo?$ k’uŋ
   wall PASS 3SG fall down RVC
   ‘The wall fell down (by itself).’ (p. 269)
How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?
Lin (2011)

- Is it via the passive?

- Is it more directly from the causative?
Causative > Passive > Unaccusative
Chaozhou (Jieyang)
(Matthews, Xu & Yip 2005:269-71)

16) Passive

\[
puy\ tsw\ k’e?\ nay\ boi\ k’u\ lau
\]
CL book give person buy RVC PRT
‘The book has been bought already.’ (p. 271)

17) Unaccusative

\[
ts’iõ\ k’e?\ i\ to\ lo?\ k’u
\]
wall PASS 3SG fall down RVC
‘The wall fell down (by itself).’ (p. 269)

Similarities: Non-agent NP in subject/topic position; adversative reading available
Differences: Transitive vs. intransitive predicate following ‘give + Pronoun’;
However, the passive > unaccusative pathway does not come easy.
Syntactic reanalysis is not straightforward (more later: see Hui’an).
Sinitic varieties with unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

Mandarin // Gan // Hakka // Hui // Wu // Min // Cantonese

|---Causative ---| |------------------------Causative------------------------|
|---Passive ---| |------------------------Passive------------------------|

|- T1- - |
| T1=Type 1 unaccusative ‘give (e.g. xiaotou gei (ta) pao le) |
| -T2- |
| T2=Type 2 unaccusative ‘give’ (e.g. hua gei (ta) si le) |
Causative > unaccusative
Taiwanese Southern Min (TSM)
(Lin 2011: 2037-2038)

- **Causative**
  18)  
  \[ \text{gua}^2 \ hoo^7 \ \text{i}^1 \ jip^8-\text{lai}^5 \]
  1SG allow 3SG enter
  ‘I allowed him to enter.’

- **Adversative (= Unaccusative)**
  19)  
  \[ \text{hit}^4 \ \text{lui}^2 \ \text{hue}^1 \ hoo^7 \ \text{i}^1 \ si^2-khi^3 \ \text{a}^0 \]
  that CL flower ADVS 3SG die-go PRT
  ‘The flower has died.’

- Details of syntactic reanalysis still need to be further spelled out.
Mandarin

20) 給 媽媽 休息 幾 天

\[ \text{給 } \text{mama} \text{ 休息  夾  天} \]
\[ gěi \text{ mama } xīuxi \text{  jiǐ  tiān} \]
give  mother  rest  several  day
‘Let mother rest for a couple of days.’

21) 給 小偷 跑 了

\[ \text{給 } \text{thief} \text{  run  SFP} \]
\[ gěi \text{ xiǎotōu  pāo  le} \]
give  thief  run  SFP
(a) ‘Let the thief get away.’
(b) ‘The thief got away.’

22a) 小偷，給 他 跑 了

\[ \text{thief} \text{  give (3SG)  run  SFP} \]
\[ xiāotōu, \text{ gěi (tā)  pāo  le} \]
‘The thief, (he) got away.’

22b) 小偷  給 他 跑 了

\[ \text{thief} \text{  give (3SG)  run  SFP} \]
\[ xiāotōu \text{  gěi (tā)  pāo  le} \]
‘The thief got away.’

Ambiguous: Unintentional causative vs. Unaccusative

Bridge context

+ topicalization
Causative > Unintentional causative > unaccusative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+intentional</th>
<th>Permissive causative 'allow'</th>
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<td>-intentional</td>
<td>Inadvertent causative 'let'</td>
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<td>-intentional</td>
<td>Agentless inadvertent causative 'let'</td>
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<tr>
<td>+intentional</td>
<td>Permissive causative 'allow' with topicalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>-intentional</td>
<td>Inadvertent causative 'let' with topicalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-intentional</td>
<td>UNACCUSATIVE</td>
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</table>

**Examples**

- 警察 給 小偷 跑 了
  Jingchá gěi xiāotou pao le

- 給 小偷 跑 了
  Gei xiaotou pao le

- 小偷, 給 他 跑 了
  Xiaotou, gei ta pao le

- 花 給 (他) 死 了
  Hua gei (ta) si le
Benfactive > disposal > unintentional causative > unaccusative

23) **Benefactive**

我 給 你 熬 粥

1SG give 2SG boil porridge

‘I boiled porridge for you.’

24) **Disposal (imperative)**

你 給 粥 吃 了

2SG give porridge eat SFP

‘You eat the porridge.’ (Lit. ‘You get the porridge and eat it.’)

25) **Agentless disposal (imperative)**

給 粥 吃 了

give porridge eat SFP

‘Eat the porridge.’
(Benefactive) > disposal > unintentional causative > unaccusative

25) Agentless disposal (imperative) Disposal (unintentional causative)
給粥吃了
gěi zhou chi le
give porridge eat SFP
‘Eat the porridge.’
給粥糊了
gěi zhou hu le
give porridge overcook SFP
‘The porridge got burnt.’

26) Agentless disposal (imperative) Disposal (unintentional causative)
粥，給它吃了
zhou，gěi ta chi le
porridge give 3SG eat SFP
‘As for the porridge, eat it.’
粥，給它糊了
zhou，gěi ta hu le
porridge give 3SG overcook SFP
‘As for the porridge, it got burnt.’

27) Unaccusative
粥給它糊了
zhou gěi ta hu le
porridge give 3SG overcook SFP
‘The porridge got burnt.’
25) Agentless disposal (imperative)   Disposal (unintentional causative)
給粥吃了   给妈妈疯了
*gěi* *zhou* *chi* *le*  
*gěi* *mama* *feng* *le*
‘Eat the porridge.’  ‘(It) drove Mum crazy.’

26) Agentless disposal (imperative)   Disposal (unintentional causative)
粥，給它吃了   妈妈，給她疯了
*zhou*, *gěi* *ta* *chi* *le*  
*mama*, *gěi* *ta* *feng* *le*
‘As for the porridge, eat it.’  ‘As for Mum, (it) drove her crazy.’

27) Unaccusative
妈妈给她疯了
*mama* *gěi* *ta* *feng* *le*
‘Mum went really crazy.’
**Benefactive > disposal > unaccusative**

- **Benefactive ‘give’**
- **Disposal ‘give’ with agent**
  - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
    - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
      - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
        - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
          - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
            - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
              - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
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                  - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
                    - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
                      - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
                        - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
                          - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
                            - **Agentless disposal ‘give’**
"Wǒ gěi nǐ áo zhōu"

"你給粥吃了"
"Nǐ gěi zhōu chī le"

"給粥吃了" // "給粥糊了"
"Gěi zhōu chī le // Gěi zhōu hú le"

"粥, 給他吃了" // "粥, 給他糊了"
"Zhōu, gěi tā chī le // Zhōu, gěi tā hú le"

"粥給他糊了"
"Zhōu, gěi tā, hú le"
Causative > reflexive > passive > adversative (with 2-p or 1-p) > adversative (with 1-p) + topicalization = unaccusative

Southern Min: Hui’an

Causative > reflexive > passive (as in many other Sinitic varieties)

28) Passive

(我) 與 伊 罵
(ua₃h) khɔ̂₅⁴ i₁,h bə₅
(1SG) give 3SG scold
(I) got scolded by him.’

29) Adversative (with 2-place predicate)

與 賊仔 掃去 三百
khɔ̂₅⁴ tʃat₈⁴-a₃ thue₂₈⁴kwu₀ sə₁paʔ²⁷
give thief-DIM take go three hundred
‘The thief took away three hundred.’
Type 1 UNACCUSATIVE > Type 2 UNACCUSATIVE
(the latter more common in Min varieties)

30) Adversative (with 1-place predicate)

與 賊仔 走 去
khɔ̄ 5-4 tʃat 8-4 a 3 tsau 3 khui 0
give thief–DIM run go
‘The thief got away.’

31) Adversative (with topicalization)

賊仔，與伊走去
tʃat 8-4 a 3 khɔ̄ 5-4 i 1 tsau 3 khui 0
thief-DIM give 3SG run go
‘The thief got away.’

32) Unaccusative

賊仔 與伊走去
tʃat 8-4 a 3 khɔ̄ 5-4 i 1 tsau 3 khui 0
thief-DIM give 3SG run go
‘The thief got away.’
32) **Unaccusative**

賊仔 與伊 走 去 花 與伊 死 去

\( tshat^{8-4-a^3} \quad khσ^{5-4i^1} \quad tsau^3 \quad khui^0 \)

thief-DIM give:3SG run go

‘The thief got away.’

\( hue^l \quad khσ^{5-4i^1} \quad si^3 \quad khui^0 \)

flower give:3SG die go

‘The flower died.’

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33) **Unaccusative (with tone incorporation)**

賊仔 與伊 走 去 花 與伊 死 去

\( tshat^{8-4-a^3} \quad khσ^{5-1} \quad tsau^3 \quad khui^0 \)

thief-DIM ADVERS run go

‘The thief got away.’

\( hue^l \quad khσ^{5-1} \quad si^3 \quad khui^0 \)

flower ADVERS die go

‘The flower died.’

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Not common in contemporary Hui’an

Tone incorporation attested only in Southern Min varieties
Causative > reflexive causative > reflexive passive > passive > ??? > unaccusative

34) 他 給 我 看 電影
$tā$  $gěi$  $wǒ$  $kàn$  $diànyĭng$
3SG  give  1SG  watch  movie
‘He allowed me  to watch a movie.’

35) 他 給 警察 看見 他
$tā$  $gěi$  $jĭngchá$  $kànjiàn$  $tā$
3SG  give  police  see  3SG
‘He let the police see him (=catch sight of him).’

36) 他 給 警察 看見 了
$tā$  $gěi$  $jĭngchá$  $kànjiàn$  $le$
3SG  give  police  see  SFP
‘He (was careless enough to) let the police see him (=catch sight of him).’
Causative > reflexive causative > reflexive passive > passive > ?unaccusative

37) 给 警察 看见 了
gěi jìngcha kanjian le
give police see SFP
'(S/he) was seen by the police.'

38) 给 看见 了 vs. 给 小偷 跑 了
gěi kanjian le
gěi xiǎotōu pǎo le
give see SFP
give 3SG run SFP
(a) ‘Let the thief escape.’ (Mandarin)
(b) ‘The thief got away.’ (Min-type)
‘The thief got away.’

39) 小偷, 给 (他) 跑 了
Xiǎotōu, gěi (tā) pǎo le
thief give (3SG) run SFP
‘The thief got away.’

Unintentional causative

+topicalization > unaccusative
Distribution of topic-comment structure and unaccusative ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic varieties

Cantonese // Mandarin // Gan // Hui // Hakka // Wu // E. Min // S. Min

|--------lower to higher prominence of topic-comment constructions--------|
|-------------------main topic---------------------------| |-------------------subtopic------------------|
| | G-disposal | | Resumptive pron. disposal |

|--------Type 1--------| |--------Type 1--------|
|--T2--| |---T2---|

T1=Type 1 unaccusative ‘give’ (e.g. xiaotou gei ta pao le)
T2=Type 2 unaccusative ‘give’ (e.g. hua gei ta si le)
Valence reduction: 3-place > 2-place > 1-place predicate

- Lexical ‘give’ (Huang 2007)
  - a 3-place predicate construction
  - Causer $V_{\text{CAUSE}}$ Experiencer $V_{\text{HAVE}}$ Theme

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

- Passive ‘give’
  - a 2-place predicate construction with affected patient in subject position and ‘give’ now marking the causer as demoted agent
  - Widely attested in Sinitic languages

- Type 1 Unaccusative ‘give’
  - a 1-place predicate construction
  - Attested in some Min, Wu, Gan, Cantonese and Mandarin varieties

- Type 2 Unaccusative ‘give’
  - another 1-place predicate construction
  - Attested in Southern Min varieties (e.g. Xiamen, Hui’an, Chaozhou, Shantou, and Jieyang varieties and Taiwanese)
  - Also attested in some Mandarin varieties (e.g. Beijing, Harbin, Changchun, Xi’an and Guanzhong varieties)

Examples from Hui’an dialect

- $uа^3\ khо^5-4\ i^1\ hіо^7\ kуi^3-2\ leт^8$
  1SG give 3SG rest several day
  ‘I let him rest for a couple of days.’

- $sа^1-кhо^5\ khо^5-4\ hо^4\ paд^7-8\ tam^2\ kуhу^0$
  clothes give rain hit wet go
  ‘The clothes got wet in the rain.’

- $tshaи^8-4-а^3\ khо^5-4\ i^1\ tsau^3\ kуhу^0$
  thief-DIM give 3SG run go
  ‘The thief ran away (i.e. escaped).’

- $hуe^1\ khо^5-4\ i^1\ si^3\ kуhу^0$
  flower give 3SG die go
  ‘The flower died.’
This study examines the conditions for the rise of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages from a cross-dialectal perspective.

Our study identifies the following pathways for the rise of unaccusative ‘give’:

- Causative > Unintentional causative > Unaccusative
- Benefactive > Disposal > Unintentional causative > Unaccusative
- Causative > Reflexive > Passive > Adversative > Unaccusative
Conclusion

- Our study shows asymmetrical distribution in the use of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages, with some Southern Min varieties showing productive use and some Mandarin varieties showing restricted use.

- We suggest that the emergence of the unaccusative ‘give’ construction in some Southern Min varieties is facilitated by the high frequency of constructions with patient NP subjects, in particular the subtopic construction and the resumptive pronoun disposal construction (e.g. Hui’an ka i and Jieyang ke? i), which interestingly is rather rare among Sinitc languages.
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Thank You!