Valence-reducing phenomena in Chinese

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Definition

Languages often have **3-place** predicates, such as ditransitive constructions.

**2-place** predicates are also common, such as transitive verb constructions.

3-place predicates are often reducible to **2-place** predicates, for example, when causative constructions are passivized.

Less commonly attested but found in some Sinitic varieties, **2-place** predicates can be further reduced to **1-place** predicates.

(1) Mama *gei*le wo yige pingguo mother give-PFV 1SG one.CL apple ‘Mother gave me an apple.’

(2) Wo gang *chí*le nage pingguo 1SG just eat-PFV that.CL apple ‘I’ve just eaten that apple.’

(3) Nage *pingguo gei* wo *chí*le that.CL apple GIVE 1SG eat-PFV ‘The apple was eaten by me.’

(4) Pingguo *gei* lan*le* apple GIVE rot-PFV ‘The apple has become rotten.’

(attested in some Mandarin varieties such as Xi’an Mandarin)
Objectives

To examine valence-reducing phenomena in some varieties of Chinese from typological and diachronic perspectives.

**Typologically:**
- To identify various types of valence-reduced constructions
  - ‘give’ constructions
  - disposal constructions

**Diachronically:**
- To trace the development of these two valence-reducing constructions
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’

(5) a. Mandarin

gěĭ  tā  yī  běn  shū

give  3SG one  CL  book

‘Give him a book.’

b. Min (Hui’an 惠安 dialect)

khō̄5-4  iʰ  tsit8-4  pun3-2  tsheʔ7

give  3SG one  CL  book

‘Give him a book.’
Benefactive ‘give’

(6) a. Mandarin

wǒ  gěi  tā  fānyì

1SG  give  3SG  translate

‘I translated (it) for him.’

b. Min (Hui’an dialect)

*ua³  khọ⁵⁴ i¹  huan¹-sixak⁸

1SG  give  3SG  translate

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

(7) a. Mandarin

gěi tā xīuxi jǐ tiān

give 3SG rest several day

‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

b. Min (Hui’ an dialect)

khɔ⁵⁴ i¹ hio⁷ kui³² let⁸

give 3SG rest several day

‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’
Passive ‘give’

(8) a. Mandarin

yīfú  gěi  yǔ  lín  shī  le

clothes  give  rain  drip  wet  PFV

‘The clothes got wet in the rain.’

b. Min (Hui’ an dialect)

sā¹⁶khɔ⁵ khɔ⁵⁴ hɔ⁴ phai⁷⁸ tam² khu⁰

clothes  give  rain  hit  wet  go

‘The clothes got wet in the rain.’
Types of valence-reduced constructions

- ‘Give’ constructions
  - canonically 3-place predicates
  - pervasive among Sinitic languages, similar to most languages.
3P/2P causative ‘give’ constructions

- 3P or 2P constructions
- Permissive causative: weak causative

(9)a. 我 界 渠 借 車

*ngo5 bei2 keoi5 ze3 ce1*
1SG GIVE 3SG borrow car
‘I let him/her borrow a car.’
(Cantonese)

(b). 我 界 渠 睏覺

*ngo5 bei2 keoi5 fan3gaau3*
1SG GIVE 3SG sleep
‘I let him/her sleep.’

agent recipient action (theme)
(pivot)

S1: agent$_1$
S2: recipient agent$_2$ (patient)

Permissive causative: weak causative
2-place passive ‘give’ constructions

- ‘Give’ constructions can be realized as 2-place predicate constructions via passivization
- valence-reducing phenomenon
- fairly productive in Sinitic languages, but is quite rare among the languages of the world.
- more grammaticalized in northern Sinitic varieties (e.g. Mandarin), where agentless ‘give’ constructions are possible.
1-place unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

Although quite rare typologically, ‘give’ constructions can also form 1-place predicate constructions. We refer to them as unaccusative ‘give’ constructions. Matthews, Xu & Yip 2005; Chen 2011; Lin 2011; Chen, Yap & Xu 2012

These valence-reduced unaccusative ‘give’ constructions can be classified into two types:

- Type 1: ‘escape’-type intransitive verbs (reversible change-of-state)
- Type 2: ‘die’-type intransitive verbs (irreversible change-of-state)

Type 1 unaccusative ‘give’ constructions are attested more widely among Sinitic languages (e.g. Min, Wu, Hakka, Cantonese, some Mandarin varieties).

Type 2 unaccusative ‘give’ constructions are more rare, and are attested in some Southern Min and Mandarin varieties.
Type 1 Unaccusative ‘give’ (‘escape’-type)

(10) a. Mandarin

\[ \text{xiāotōu} \ gěi \ (tā) \ pǎo \ le \]

thief give (3SG) run PFV

‘The thief ran away.’

b. Min (Hui’an dialect)

\[ tshaia^{8-4-3} \ khuo^{5-4} \ i^1 \ tsau^2 \ khu^0 \]

thief–DIM give 3SG run go

‘The thief ran away.’

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

(11) a. Mandarin

huār  gěi  (tā)  sǐ  le

flower  give  (3SG)  die  PFV

‘The flower died.’

b. Min (Hui’an dialect)

hue¹  khọ⁵⁴  i¹  si³  khu⁰

flower  give  3SG  die  go

‘The flower died.’

Type 2: attested in some Southern Min varieties and some Mandarin varieties
Types of valence-reduced constructions

1. ‘Give’ constructions

Examples of Hui’an ‘give’ constructions with different valencies:

- 3-place predicate: *lexical give/causative*
  
  與伊一本冊
  ‘Give him a book.’

- 2-place predicate: *passive*
  
  (我)與伊罵
  ‘(I) got scolded by him.’

- 1-place predicate: *unaccusative*
  
  花與伊死去
  ‘The flower died.’
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adversative intransitive predicates</th>
<th>Min: Hui’an</th>
<th>Min: Jieyang</th>
<th>Hakka: Meixian</th>
<th>Yue: Cantonese</th>
<th>Mandarin: Harbin</th>
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### Types of valence-reduced constructions: diachronic perspectives

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<tr>
<th>Chronological period</th>
<th>15th c (early Ming)</th>
<th>16th c</th>
<th>Late 17th c</th>
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<th>Late 19th c</th>
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<td>Title of text</td>
<td>三遂平妖傳</td>
<td>水滸傳</td>
<td>金瓶梅</td>
<td>醒世姻緣 (scroll 1-60)</td>
<td>兒女英雄傳 first ⅓</td>
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<td>Lexcial ‘give’+dative</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>472</td>
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</table>
How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?
Lin (2011)

- Is it via the passive?
- Or did it emerge more directly via the causative?
Previous studies

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

- **Causative > Reflexive > Passive**
  - non-intentional agent = affected patient

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

- Further investigation needed
  - Lin (2011)
    - (i) Causative > Passive > Adversative (= Unaccusative)
    - (ii) Unintentional Causative > Adversative (= Unaccusative)
Permissive causative

Mummy GIVE 3SG self walk go.to.school
‘Mummy allows him to go to school by himself.’

Reflexive causative (intentional agent)

3SG GIVE mother kiss 3SG one CL
‘He allowed Mother to kiss him (one kiss).’

Reflexive passive (non-intentional agent = affected patient)

3SG give human kiss one CL
‘He was kissed (by somebody).’
How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?
(the present study)

Is it via the passive?

Or did it emerge more directly via the causative?
Inadvertent causative ‘let’ (-intentional)

15(a). 警察 給 小偷 跑 了
Jīngchá gěi xiǎotou pao le
‘The police let the thief run away (unintentionally)!’

Inadvertent causative ‘let’ (+topicalization –intentional +adversative)

16(a). 小偷， 給 (他) 跑 了
Xiaotou, gei (ta) pao le
‘The thief ran away!’

Agentless inadvertent causative ‘let’ (–intentional +adversative)

(b). 給 小偷 跑 了
Gei xiǎotou  pao le
‘Oh, no! The police let the thief run away (unintentionally)!’

Unaccusative (–intentional +adversative)

(b). 花 ㄇ 給 (他) 死 了
Huar gei (ta) si le
‘The flower died!’
Causative > Unintentional causative > unaccusative

+intentional

Permissive causative ‘allow’

-intentional

Inadvertent causative ‘let’

-intentional

Agentless inadvertent causative ‘let’

+intentional

Permissive causative ‘allow’ + topicalization

-intentional

Inadvertent causative ‘let’ + topicalization

-intentional

UNACCUSATIVE

Not through passive

警察 給 小偷 跑 了
Jǐngchá gěi xiǎotou pao le

給 小偷 跑 了
Gei xiaotou pao le

小偷, 給他 跑 了
Xiaotou, gei ta pao le

Hua gei (ta) si le
How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?
(the present study)

- Is it via the passive?

- Or did it emerge more directly via the causative?
Agentless disposal (imperative)

(17)a. gei zhou chi le
give porridge eat SFP
‘Eat the porridge.’

Agentless disposal (imperative) +
TOPICALIZATION

(18)a. zhou, gei ta chi le
porridge give 3SG eat SFP
‘As for the porridge, eat it.’

Disposal (unintentional causative)

b. gei zhou hu le
give porridge overcook SFP
‘The porridge got burnt.’

Disposal (unintentional causative) +
TOPICALIZATION

b. zhou, gei ta hu le
porridge give 3SG overcook SFP
‘As for the porridge, it got burnt.’

Unaccusative

(19)a. Zhou gei ta hu le
porridge give 3SG overcook SFP
‘The porridge got burnt.’
Agentless disposal (imperative)

(17)a.  
\[ \text{gei zhou chi le} \]
give porridge eat SFP
‘Eat the porridge.’

Agentless disposal (imperative) + TOPICALIZATION

(18)a.  
\[ \text{zhou, gei ta chi le} \]
porridge give 3SG eat SFP
‘As for the porridge, eat it.’

Disposal (unintentional causative)

c.  
\[ \text{gei mama feng le} \]
give mother go.crazy SFP
‘(It) drove Mum crazy.’

Disposal (unintentional causative) + TOPICALIZATION

c.  
\[ \text{mama, gei ta feng le} \]
mother give 3SG go.crazy SFP
‘As for Mum, it drove her crazy.’

Unaccusative

(19)b.  
\[ \text{mama gei ta feng le} \]
mother give 3SG go.crazy SFP
‘Gosh, Mum went really crazy!’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposal &gt; Unintentional causative &gt; Unaccusative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+intentional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentless disposal (imperative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-intentional +adversative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou, gei ta  hu  le</td>
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<tr>
<td>+intentional +topicalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>-intentional +adversative</td>
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<tr>
<td>-intentional +adversative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

給你熬粥
Gei ni chi zhou

給粥吃了
Gei zhou chi le

粥，給他吃了
Zhou, gei ta  chi  le

粥，給他糊了
Zhou, gei ta  hu  le

粥，給他糊了
Zhou gei ta  hu  le (Harbin variety)
How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?
(the present study)

- Is it via the passive?

- Or did it emerge more directly via the causative, or disposal?
Types of valence-reduced constructions:

2. *ba* disposal constructions—Mandarin

- **3-place predicate**
  (20) 他 把 書 給 我
  \[{}^3\text{SG BA book give 1SG}\]
  ‘He gave me the book.’

- **2-place predicate**
  (21) 他 把 門 關了
  \[{}^3\text{SG BA door close.PFV}\]
  ‘He closed the door.’

- **1-place predicate**
  (22) 偏偏 把 老李 病了
  \[{}^{unfortunately}{}^3\text{BA PN sick.PFV}\]
  ‘Unfortunately, lao-Li got sick.’
Lexical *ba* ‘to hold’

(23) 臣 左手 把 其 袖，

臣 zūoshŏu bă qí zòu
courtier left.hand BA 3SG sleeve

右手 撃 其 胸。

yòushŏu zhèn qí xiōng
right.hand strike 3SG breast

‘I used my left hand to hold his sleeve and my right hand to strike his breast.’

(《戰國策・燕策三》4th -2nd century B.C.)
Lexical *ba* ‘to give’

(24) 轎夫 只 許 你 兩 個 ……

*jiàofū zhǐ xǔ nǐ liǎng gè*

driver only allocate (< allow) 2SG two CL

卻 要 把 四 個 人 的 夫錢。

*què yào bǎ sì gè rén de fūqián*

but oblige BA four CL people ATTR driver.fee

‘Only you two are allocated to me as drivers…

but I need to give the wages of four drivers!’

(《京本通俗小說·拗相公》Sung/Yuan period, 10th-14th c.)
Disposal usage

3-P Disposal

(25) 休 把 嬌姿 與 菩薩
xiū bā jiāozī yǔ púsà
NEG BA pretty.lady(<lovely figure) pass Bodhisattva
‘Do not pass pretty ladies to Bodhisattva.’
(《敦煌變文集》, p. 631, late Tang period, 9th c.)

2-P Disposal

(26) 仰山 便 把 茶樹 搖
Yǎngshān biàn bā cháshù yáo
PN then BA tea.tree shake
‘Yǎngshān then shook the tea tree.’
(《祖堂集》, Five Dynasties, 10th century)

Causative disposal

See next slide.
Causative disposal

(27) 把 妮子 縛了 兩 隻 手
*bā Nízi fù-le liǎng zhī shŏu*

BA PN ligature-PFV two CL hand

‘(He) has Nízi’s two hands ligatured.’

(《清平山堂話本 · 簡帖和尚》Ming period, 14th - 17th c.)

(28) 那 日 把 棉花 不見了 兩 包
*nà rì bǎ miánhuā bújiànl-e liǎng bāo*

that day BA cotton lose-PFV two CL

‘On that day, two packs of cotton were lost.’

(《金瓶梅》 mid-Ming period, 16th century)
Passive BA

(29) 別人的 兒女，把你去騙酒噢。
\textit{Biérén de érmǔ, bǎ nǐ qù piàn jiǔ chī}
Others ATTR male.female BA 2SG go swindle wine drink
‘Other people were swindled by you in the ways that their wine was drunk by you!’

(清 李漁《蜃中樓・姻阻》early Qing period, 17\textsuperscript{th} century)
(30) 我 把 你 個 老猢猻！
Wǒ bǎ nǐ gè lǎohúsūn
1SG BA 2SG CL monkey
Lit. ‘Let me (do something to) you! (Such a dead) monkey!’
‘You (dead) monkey!’
(《降桑椹》, Yuan period, 14th century)

(31) 我 把 你 個 老猢猻 (幹掉)！
‘I’ll (kill) you, you dead monkey!’

(32) 我 把 你 個 老猢猻 (打一頓)！
‘I’m (going to hit) you, you dead monkey!’
Expletive BA in Mandarin

(33) 我 把 你 笨蛋！

_Wǒ bǎ nǐ bàn dàn_

1SG BA 2SG fool

‘You fool!’ (< ‘I take you for a fool.’)

? ‘hold’ > ‘regard’ > Expletive
Expletive BA in Modern Jin Dialect

Jin: Yuncheng variety 山西 运城

(34) 我 把 你 個 賊羔！
Wǒ bǎ nǐ gè zéigāo  (if rendered in Mandarin)
1SG BA 2SG CL thief
‘You (good-for-nothing) thief!’

(35) 把 他 家 的！
bā tā jiā de  (if rendered in Mandarin)
BA 3SG family SFP
‘Your (good-for-nothing) family!’
Adversative BA

(36) 偏 又 把 鳳 丫頭 病了。

*piān yòu bā Fèng yātóu bìngle*

'Unfortunately (lit. 'but things have gone awry'), Little Fèng is sick.'

(《紅樓夢》1784)
## Diachronic Development of 把

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<tr>
<th>Chronological period</th>
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<th>Mid-Ming 15th c</th>
<th>Late Ming 16th c</th>
<th>Ming/Qing 17th c</th>
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<td>紅樓夢</td>
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<td>Emphatic, expletive marker BA</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of valence-reduced constructions: typological perspectives

3. tsiɔŋ disposal constructions — Hui’an

- 3-place predicate

  (37) 伊 將 冊 與 我
  i tsiɔŋ tsheʔ kho ua
  3SG TSIONG book give 1SG
  ‘He gave me the book.’

- 2-place predicate

  (38) 伊 將 門 關 起來
  i tsiɔŋ by kuin khai
  3SG TSIONG door close RVC
  ‘He closed the door.’

- 1-place predicate*

  (39) *將 老李 病 去
  tsiɔŋ lauli pin khu
  TSIONG PN sick PVC
  ‘Lau-Li got sick.’
Types of valence-reduced constructions: typological perspectives

4. Resumptive pronoun *ka i* disposal constructions—Hui’an

- **3-place predicate**
  
  (40) 冊 共 伊 □ 與 我
  
  *tshe? ka i thue? kho ua*
  
  book KA 3SG take give 1SG
  
  ‘Give me the book.’ (patient focus)
  
  Lit. ‘The book, give it to me.’

- **2-place predicate**
  
  (41) 門 共 伊 關 起來
  
  *by ka i kuin khai*
  
  door KA 3SG close RVC
  
  ‘Close the door.’ (patient focus)
  
  Lit. ‘The door, close it.’

- **1-place predicate**
  
  (42) *老李 共 伊 病 去
  
  *lauli ka i pin khu*
  
  PN KA 3SG sick PVC
  
  ‘Lau-Li got sick.’
Conclusion

- This paper has examined two syntactic constructions: the GIVE construction and the disposal construction.

- We found that part of the development of these two constructions can be constructed in terms of valence reduction.

- One of the grammaticalization pathways for the GIVE construction involves valence reduction from 3-place predicate constructions (3-P) to 2-P to 1-P.

- That is, from lexical GIVE > permissive causative GIVE > unintentional causative GIVE > unaccusative GIVE.

- The extension to unaccusative GIVE is, however, quite rare even among Sinitic languages.
Conclusion

- The disposal BA construction typically involves only 3-place and 2-place predicates in most Sinitic languages.

- However, in some varieties such as Mandarin, the BA disposal construction can involve 1-place predicates as well.

- Diachronic evidence for BA constructions reveals both valence increment and valence reduction:
  - valence increment: 2-place (ba ‘hold’) > 3-place predicate (ba ‘give’)
  - valence reduction: 2-place (disposal) > 1-place (emphatic/expletive)

- Our analysis suggests the following semantic extensions for BA disposal constructions that undergo valence reduction:
  - Lexical verb ba ‘hold’ > disposal ba > emphatic/expletive ba
  - ? Lexical verb ba ‘hold’ > expletive ba
Conclusion

Crucially, for both GIVE and disposal BA constructions, valence reduction to 1-place predicate involves a semantic-pragmatic development that gives rise to (inter)subjective speaker stance, with adversative or emphatic/expletive readings.

Worth noting is that both unaccusative GIVE and emphatic/expletive disposal BA constructions highlight the emotions of the speaker (i.e. speaker affectedness).
Thank you!

Q&A

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References—contd.


References—contd.


