Valence-reducing phenomena concerning GIVE and TAKE 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 chi-le nage pingguo*  
   1SG just eat-PFV that.CL apple  
   ‘I’ve just eaten that apple.’

3) *Nage pingguo gei wo chi-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’**
  - Matthews, Xu & Yip (2005); Chen (2011); Lin (2011); this study
Lexical ‘give’

5) a. Mandarin

\[ \text{給他一本書} \]

\[ \text{gěi tā yī běn shū} \]

give 3SG one CL book

‘Give him a book.’

b. Min (Hui’an dialect)

\[ \text{與伊一本冊} \]

\[ \text{khɔ̃⁵⁴ i¹ tsiŋ⁸⁴ pun³² tsheʔ⁷} \]

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  khɔ⁵⁴  i¹  huan¹-sixak⁸

1SG  give  3SG  translate

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

7) a. Mandarin

\[ \text{gěi tā xīuxi jǐ tiān} \]

give 3SG rest several day

‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

b. Min (Hui’ an dialect)

\[ \text{khọ́5-4 iɨ hioʔ7 kui3-2 let8} \]

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)

*să¹⁶khɔ⁵⁵hɔ⁴ phaʔ⁷⁸ tam² khu¹⁰*

clothes give rain hit wet go

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

9) a. Mandarin

?xiǎotōu  gěi  (tā)  pǎo  le

thief  give (3SG)  run  PFV

‘The thief got away.’

b. Min (Hui’ an dialect)

tshia\(^{8-4}\-a^3\)  \(kh\hat{c}^{5-4}\)  \(i^1\)  tsau\(^3\)  khui\(^0\)

thief –DIM  give  3SG  run  go

‘The thief got away.’

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

10) a. **Mandarin**

?huār  gěi  (tā)  sǐ  le

flower  give  (3SG)  die  PFV

‘The flower died.’

b. **Min (Hui’an dialect)**

hue¹  khɔ⁵⁴  i¹  si³  khui⁰

flower  give  3SG  die  go

‘The flower died.’

Type 2: mainly attested in some Southern Min and Mandarin varieties
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adversative intransitive predicates</th>
<th>Min: Hui’ān</th>
<th>Min: Jieyang</th>
<th>Hakka: Meixian</th>
<th>Yue: Cantonese</th>
<th>Mandarin: Harbin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Break</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>Leak</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>Turn sour</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn bad/Rot</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn smelly</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn dry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn black/wet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn soft/hard</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of valence-reduced constructions

- ‘Give’ constructions
  - canonically 3-place predicates
  - pervasive among Sinitic languages, similar to most languages.

Diagram:
- Give verb
  - Agent
  - Patient or Theme (object to be transferred)
  - Recipient
3P/2P causative ‘give’ constructions

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

11) a. 我畀佢借車
   ngo⁵ bei² keoi⁵ ze³ ce¹
   1SG GIVE 3SG borrow car
   ‘I let him/her borrow a car.’
   (Cantonese)

b. 我畀佢睏覺
   ngo⁵ bei² keoi⁵ fan³ gaau³
   1SG GIVE 3SG sleep
   ‘I let him/her sleep.’
   (Cantonese)

agent  recipient  action  (theme)
      (pivot)

S1:  agent₁
S2:  recipient  agent₂  (patient)
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, Hui, Hakka, Cantonese, some Mandarin varieties).

Type 2 unaccusative ‘give’ constructions are more rare, and are mainly attested in some Southern Min and 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.’
### Types of valence-reduced constructions: diachronic perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronological period</th>
<th>15th c (early Ming)</th>
<th>16th c</th>
<th>Late 17th c</th>
<th>18th c</th>
<th>Late 19th c</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<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</td>
<td>紅樓夢 (scroll 1-60)</td>
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<td>Lexcial ‘give’+dative</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Passive</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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 > Unaccusative
    - (ii) Causative > Unaccusative
Causative > reflexive > passive
from Cantonese

12) **Permissive causative**
媽咪 異 渠 自己 行路 返學
Ma1mi4 bei2 keoi5 zi6gei2 haang4lou6 faan1hok6
Mummy GIVE 3SG self walk go.to.school
‘Mummy allows him to go to school by himself.’

13) **Reflexive causative (intentional agent)**
渠 異 媽媽 惜 渠 一 咲
keoi5 bei2 ma4ma1 sek3 keoi5 jat1 daam6
3SG GIVE mother kiss 3SG one CL
‘He allowed Mother to kiss him (one kiss).’

14) **Reflexive passive (non-intentional agent = affected patient)**
渠 異 人 惜 一 咲
keoi5 bei2 jan4 sek3 jat1 daam6
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?
Causative > unintentional causative > unaccusative

Mandarin varieties

- **Inadvertent causative ‘let’**
  - (-intentional)
  
  15) a. 警察 給 小偷 跑 了
      Jingcha gei xiaotou pao le
      ‘The police let the thief get away (unintentionally)!’
  
  b. 給 小偷 跑 了
      Gei xiaotou pao le
      ‘Oh, no! (The police) let the thief get away (unintentionally)!’

- **Inadvertent causative ‘let’**
  - (+topicalization -intentional +adversative)
  
  16) a. 小偷 (啊) · 給 (他) 跑 了
       Xiaotou (a) · gei (ta) pao le
       ‘As for the thief, (unfortunately) (the police) let him get away!’
  
  b. 小偷 給 (他) 跑 了
      Xiaotou gei (ta) pao le
      ‘(Unfortunately) the thief got away.’

- **Agentless inadvertent causative ‘let’**
  - (-intentional +adversative)
  
  16) a. 小偷 (啊) · 給 (他) 跑 了
       Xiaotou (a) · gei (ta) pao le
       ‘As for the thief, (unfortunately) (the police) let him get away!’
  
  b. 小偷 給 (他) 跑 了
      Xiaotou gei (ta) pao le
      ‘(Unfortunately) the thief got away.’

- **Unaccusative**
  - (-intentional +adversative)
  
  16) a. 小偷 (啊) · 給 (他) 跑 了
       Xiaotou (a) · gei (ta) pao le
       ‘As for the thief, (unfortunately) (the police) let him get away!’
  
  b. 小偷 給 (他) 跑 了
      Xiaotou gei (ta) pao le
      ‘(Unfortunately) the thief got away.’
### Causative > Unintentional Causative > Unaccusative

<table>
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<tr>
<th>+intentional</th>
<th>Permissive causative ‘allow’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-intentional</td>
<td>Inadvertent causative ‘let’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-intentional +adversative</td>
<td>Agentless inadvertent causative ‘let’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+intentional</td>
<td>Permissive causative ‘allow’ +topicalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-intentional +adversative</td>
<td>Inadvertent causative ‘let’ +topicalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-intentional +adversative</td>
<td>UNACCUSATIVE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples:**

- 警察 給 小偷 跑 了  
  Jingcha gei xiaotou pao le

- 小偷, 給他 跑 了  
  Xiaotou, gei ta pao le

- 花儿 給 (他) 死 了  
  Huar 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?
(Benefactive) > disposal > unintentional causative > unaccusative

Mandarin varieties

Agentless disposal

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

Agentless disposal + TOPICALIZATION

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

Causative disposal (unintentional causative)

b. gei zhou hu le
give porridge overcook SFP
‘(Someone) let the porridge get burnt.’

Causative disposal (unintentional causative)
+ TOPICALIZATION

b. zhou, gei ta hu le
porridge give 3SG overcook SFP
‘As for the porridge, (someone) let it get burnt.’

Unaccusative

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

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

Agentless disposal + TOPICALIZATION

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

Causative disposal (unintentional causative)

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

Causative 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!’
Disposal > unintentional causative > unaccusative

我在給他熬粥
Wo zai gei ta ao zhou

給粥吃了
Gei zhou chi le

給粥糊了
Gei zhou hu 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?
Causative > reflexive > passive > adversative > unaccusative
Southern Min: Hui’an

Causative > reflexive > passive (as in many other Chinese languages)

20) Passive

(我) 與 伊 罵

(ua³h) khɔ⁵-⁴ i₁ ɪ≠h bɔ⁵

(1SG) give 3SG scold

‘(I) got scolded by him.’

21) Adversative (with 2-place predicate)

與 賊仔 撈去 三百口

khɔ⁵-⁴ tshat⁸-⁴-a³ thue²⁸-⁴-khu⁰ sɑ¹pa⁷⁷khɔ¹

give thief-DIM take go three.hundred.yuan

‘The thief took away 300 RMB (Chinese dollars).’
Type 1 UNACCUSATIVE  >  Type 2 UNACCUSATIVE
(the latter more common in Southern Min varieties)

22) **Adversative (with 1-place predicate)**

與 賊仔 走 去  
khọ⁵-⁴ tshat⁸-⁴-a³ tsau³ khu⁰

give thief –DIM run go
‘The thief got away.’

23) **Adversative (with topicalization)**

賊仔, 與 伊 走 去  
shat⁸-⁴-a³ khọ⁵-⁴ i¹ tsau³ khu⁰

thief-DIM give 3SG run go
‘As for the thief, (he) got away.’

24) **Unaccusative**

賊仔 與伊 走 去  
shat⁸-⁴-a³ khọ⁵-⁴-i¹ tsau³ khu⁰

thief-DIM give 3SG run go
‘The thief got away.’
24) **Unaccusative**

賊仔 與伊 走 去 花 與伊 死 去

\[ tshat^{8-4-a^3} \ kho^{5-4i^1} \ tsau^3 \ khui^0 \]

thief-DIM give:3SG run go

‘The thief got away.’

\[ hue^1 \ khoo^{5-4i^1} \ si^3 \ khui^0 \]

flower give:3SG die go

‘The flower died.’

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25) **Unaccusative (with tone incorporation)**

賊仔 與伊 走 去 花 與伊 死 去

\[ tshat^{8-4-a^3} \ kho^{5-1} \ tsau^3 \ khui^0 \]

thief-DIM ADVERS run go

‘The thief got away.’

\[ hue^1 \ kho^{5-1} \ si^3 \ khui^0 \]

flower ADVERS die go

‘The flower died.’
Types of valence-reduced constructions

2. *ba* disposal constructions—Mandarin

- 3-place predicate
  
  26) 他 把 書 給 我
  
  3SG BA book give 1SG
  
  ‘He gave me the book.’

- 2-place predicate
  
  27) 他 把 門 關了
  
  3SG BA door close.PFV
  
  ‘He closed the door.’

- 1-place predicate
  
  28) 偏偏 把 老李 病了
  
  unfortunately BA PN sick.PFV
  
  ‘Unfortunately, lao-Li got sick.’
Lexical *ba* ‘to hold, take’

29)臣左手把其袖。

`chén zuŏshŏu bă qí xiù`

courtier left.hand BA 3SG sleeve

右手揕其胸。

`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’

30) 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

31) 休 把 嬌姿 與 菩薩

xiū bǎ 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

32) 仰山 便 把 茶樹 搖

Yǎngshān biàn bǎ 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

33) 把 妮子 縛了 兩 隻 手
bǎ Nízi fù-le liǎng zhī shǒu
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.)

34) 那 日 把 棉花 不見了 兩 包
nà rì bǎ miánhuā bújiàn-lē 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)
35) 別人 的 兒女， 把 你 去 騙 酒 喫。

*Biérén de érnǚ, bà 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!’

(淸 李漁《蜃中樓・姻阻》early Qing period, 17th century)
Adversative BA

36) 偏 又 把 鳳 丫頭 病了。

*piān yòu bǎ Fèng yātóu bìngle*

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronological period</th>
<th>Early Ming 14(^{th}) c</th>
<th>Mid-Ming 15(^{th}) c</th>
<th>Late Ming 16(^{th}) c</th>
<th>Ming/Qing 17(^{th}) c</th>
<th>Early Qing 18(^{th}) c</th>
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<td>Lexical ‘give’</td>
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</table>
Types of valence-reduced constructions

3. *tsiɔŋ* disposal constructions — Hui’an

- 3-place predicate
  37) 伊 將 冊 與 我
     \( i \ tsiɔŋ \ tshe? \ kho \ ua \)
     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.’
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, take’) > 3-place predicate (ba ‘give’)
  - Valence reduction: 2-place (disposal) > 1-place (adversative)
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 reading.

Worth noting is that both unaccusative GIVE and adversative BA constructions highlight the emotions of the speaker (i.e. speaker affectedness).
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References


References—contd.


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Thank you!