Conditions for the emergence of unaccusative ‘give’ in Sinitic languages: Evidence from Hui'an (Southern Min)

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Overview

• Objective of present study

• Two types of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

• 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?
Background: Sinitic languages
Background: Sinitic languages & Southern Min

- Sinitic languages (or Chinese languages)
  one of two primary branches of Sino-Tibetan
  Varieties of Sinitic languages include Mandarin, Min, Wu, Hakka, Hui and Gan.

- Southern Min (or Minnan)
  a Chinese dialect group, mainly spoken in the south of Fujian province, Guangdong province, southern Hainan Island, the south of Zhejiang province, and also in Taiwan, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia
Background: location of Hui’an
Some uses of ‘give’ constructions

- 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’

1a) Mandarin

\[ .textView = \text{給他一本書} \]

\[ \text{給} \quad \text{他} \quad \text{一} \quad \text{本} \quad \text{書} \]

gěi   tā   yī   běn   shū

give  3SG one CL book
‘Give him a book.’

1b) Min (Hui’an dialect)

\[  textView = \text{與伊一本冊} \]

\[ khɔ̄5-4 \quad i\textsuperscript{1} \quad tsit\textsuperscript{8-4} \quad pun\textsuperscript{3-2} \quad tshe?\textsuperscript{7} \]

give  3SG one  CL  book
‘Give him a book.’
Dative ‘give’

2a) Mandarin

\[ \text{liú gěi tā yàoshí} \quad \text{cf. yàoshí liú gěi tā} \]
leave give 3SG key (more commonly used)
‘Leave the key to him.’

2b) Min (Hui’ an dialect)

\[ \text{so}^{3-2} \text{si}^{2} \text{ lau}^{2} \quad \text{khọ}^{5-4} \quad i^{1} \]
key leave give 3SG
‘Leave the key to him.’
Benefactive ‘give’

3a) Mandarin

\[ wǒ  gěi  tā  fānyì \]

1SG give 3SG translate
‘I translated (it) for him.’

3b) Min (Hui’an dialect)

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

1SG give 3SG translate
‘I translated (it) for him.’
Causative ‘give’

4a) Mandarin

\[
\text{gěi tā xīuxī jǐ tīan}
\]

‘Let him rest for a couple of days.’

4b) Min (Hui’ an dialect)

\[
\text{khọ⁵⁴ i¹ hioʔ⁷ kui³² let⁸}
\]

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

5a) Mandarin

\[ yīfū \ gěi \  yǔ \ lín \ shì \ le \]

clothes  give  rain  drip  wet  PFV

‘The clothes got wet in the rain.’

5b) Min (Hui’an dialect)

\[ sā^{1-6}khɔ^{5} \ khɔ^{5-4} \ hɔ^{4} \ pha^{7-8} \ tam^{2} \ khu^{0} \]

clothes  give  rain  hit  wet  go

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

6a) Mandarin

*xiǎotōu  gěi  tā  pǎo le

thief  give  3SG  run  PFV

‘The thief ran away.’

6b) Min (Hui an dialect)

tshia\textsuperscript{8-4-a\textsuperscript{3}}  khō\textsuperscript{5-4}  i\textsubscript{1}  tsau\textsuperscript{3}  khu\textsuperscript{0}

thief–DIM  give  3SG  run  go

‘The thief ran away.’

Type 1: also attested in Wu, Hakka, Hui and Gan
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)

hue¹  khɔ⁵-⁴  i¹  si³  khu₀
flower  give  3SG  die  go
‘The flower died.’

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

• PLURAL SUBJECT

8) Hui’an dialect
   \textit{en}^1 \textit{huai}^2 \textit{khɔ}^5-4 \textit{i}^1 \textit{si}^3 \textit{khu}^0
   PL those give 3SG die go
   ‘Those people died.’

• SECOND PERSON SUBJECT

9) Hui’an dialect
   \textit{lui}^3 \textit{si}^4 \textit{khɔ}^5-4 \textit{i}^1 \textit{go}_5 \textit{khu}^0, \textit{si}^a^0
   2SG be give 3SG stupid go SFP
   ‘Are you stupid?!’
How did unaccusative ‘give’ emerge?

- Previous studies on the emergence of unaccusative ‘give’

- Semantic and syntactic reanalysis involving valence reduction

- Correlation between word order, topic-comment structure, and unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

- Resumptive pronoun disposal (or pre-transitive) constructions
Previous studies

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

- Matthews et al. (2005) examined why passive and unaccusative constructions are both marked by the ‘give’ morpheme \( k'e? \) in the Jieyang dialect from syntactic and semantic perspectives.

- They suggest that passive and unaccusative constructions in the Jieyang dialect share thematic and aspectual properties, which motivate the extension of passive constructions to unaccusative ones.

- They further note that morphosyntactic parallels between passive and unaccusative constructions are also found in a number of other languages such as Latin, Italian, Albanian, and the English interlanguage grammars across different L1 backgrounds.
Valence reduction: 3-place > 2-place > 1-place predicate

- Lexical ‘give’ (Huang 2008-2009)
  - 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 Min, Wu, Hakka and Hui, etc.

- Type 2 Unaccusative ‘give’
  - another 1-place predicate construction
  - Attested in Southern Min varieties such as the Xiamen and Hui’an varieties in Fujian, and the Chaozhou, Shantou, Jieyang and Chenghai varieties in Guangdong

Examples from Hui’ an dialect

- $ua^3 \ kho^5-4 \ i^1 \ hio^7 \ kui^3-2 \ let^8$
  1SG give 3SG rest several day
  ‘I let him rest for a couple of days.’

- $s\tilde{a}^1-kho^5 \ kho^{5-4} \ h\tilde{o}^4 \ pha^7-8 \ tam^2 \ kho^0$
  clothes give rain hit wet go
  ‘The clothes got wet in the rain.’

- $tsha\tilde{t}^8-4-a^3 \ kho^{5-4} \ i^1 \ tsau^3 \ kho^0$
  thief-DIM give 3SG run go
  ‘The thief ran away (i.e. escaped).’

- $hue^1 \ kho^{5-4} \ i^1 \ si^3 \ kho^0$
  flower give 3SG die go
  ‘The flower died.’
Correlation between word order, topic-comment structure, and unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

- Sinitic languages with unaccusative ‘give’, e.g. Min, Wu, Hakka, Hui and Gan, have a higher frequency of patient NP subjects than those without unaccusative ‘give’ such as Mandarin and Cantonese (Li and Chang, 1997; Hirata, 1998; Liu, 2000, 2001; Hu and Lin, 2008).

- The SVO word order hierarchy: Liu (2000, 2001)
  Cantonese (strong SVO) > Mandarin/Hakka/Hui/Gan (moderate SVO) > Wu/Min (weak SVO)

- Cantonese: prefer VO constructions
  \[\text{10) 打 開 道 門}\]
  \[ta2 hoi1 tou6 mun4\]
  \[hit open CL door\]
  ‘Open the door.’
Correlation between word order, topic-comment structure, and unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

- Mandarin: opt for disposal (or pre-transitive) constructions
  11) *ba*-type disposal construction
  
  貓 把 魚 吃 了  (Mandarin)
  
  māo bǎ yú chī le
  
  cat OM fish eat PFV
  
  ‘The cat ate the fish.’

- The frequency hierarchy for the *ba*-type disposal construction
  Cantonese (low usage) < Hakka/Gan/Hui (moderate usage) < Mandarin (high usage)

Correlation between word order, topic-comment structure, and unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

- Min and Wu: prefer topic-comment constructions (in particular, the subtopic construction)

12) 我 蘋果 食 了 咯  (Hui’an)
   $ua3 \ phi\theta-4-k\phi3 \ tsia?8-4 \ liau3 \ l\phi0$
   1SG apple eat finish SFP
   ‘I have eaten up the apple.’

- Compared to the main topic construction, the subtopic construction better facilitates the rise of the resumptive pronoun disposal (pre-transitive) construction.

13) Resumptive pronoun disposal construction
   紙 共 伊 掙 咧 口面  (Hui’an)
   $tsua^3 \ ka^5-4 \ i^1 \ k\phi k^7-8 \ le?7-8 \ khau^3-2-ben^2$
   paper OM 3SG throw at outside
   ‘Throw the piece of paper outside.’
Correlation between word order, topic-comment structure, and unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

- Some Sinitic languages such as Mandarin and Hakka:
  - topicalized patients prefer the main topic position
  - less frequent use of the subtopic construction
  - a weaker facilitation for the rise of the resumptive pronoun disposal construction

- The frequency hierarchy for topic-comment constructions
  Min and Zhejiang Wu (strong subtopic-type topic-comment orientation) > Northern Wu > Hakka/Hui/Gan > Mandarin (moderate topic-comment orientation) > Cantonese (weak topic-comment orientation)
Correlation between word order, topic-comment structure, and unaccusative ‘give’ constructions

- The distribution of the topic-comment construction, resumptive pronoun disposal construction and unaccusative ‘give’ construction in Sinitic languages

Cantonese< Mandarin< Gan/Hui/Hakka< Northern Wu< Zhejiang Wu/Min

|-------lower to higher prominence of topic-comment constructions-------|
|-----------------------------main topic-----------------------------|
|-----------------------------subtopic-----------------------------|
|-----------------------------Type 1 unaccusative ‘give’----------------|
|special disposal construction-|

|T2|

(T2=Type 2 unaccusative ‘give’)

23
Resumptive pronoun disposal construction

- Some structural parallel can be observed between the resumptive pronoun ‘disposal’ (or pre-transitive) construction and the passive ‘give’ construction, as highlighted in (14a) and (14b) respectively.

14a) $by^2_i \ ka^{5-4} \ i^1_i \ kuin^1 \ khai^0$

door OM 3SG close RVC
‘Close the door.’

14b) $ua^3_h \ kh\varsigma^{5-4} \ i^1_{i\neq h} \ b\tilde{a}^5$
1SG give 3SG scold
‘I got scolded by him.’
Resumptive pronoun disposal construction

- More striking are the structural parallels between this special type of ‘disposal’ (or pre-transitive) construction and the unaccusative ‘give’ construction, as highlighted in (15a) and (15b) respectively.

15a) \[ \text{door OM 3SG close RVC} \]

‘Close the door.’

15b) \[ \text{flower give 3SG die go} \]

‘The flower died.’
Resumptive pronoun disposal construction

- Another similarity: the highly grammaticalized status of their resumptive third person pronoun $i$.

16) 迄 (兩) 領 共 伊 收 咦 房咧 
   \(\text{hit}^7-8 \ \text{le}^4 \ \text{liā}^3 \ \text{ka}^{5-4} \ \text{i}^1 \ \text{siu}^1 \ \text{le}^{27-8} \ \text{pay}^2-\text{le}^{20}\)
   that two CL OM 3SG put.away at room-LOC
   ‘Take that piece/those two pieces (of clothing) into the room.’

- We suggest that the existence of ‘disposal’ (or pre-transitive) constructions such as (15a) paves the way for the emergence of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions such as (15b) in Southern Min varieties such as the Hui’an dialect.
Typological observations

- Table 1. Functions of ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages
- Table 2. Types of disposal constructions in Sinitic languages
Table 1. Functions of ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Tunxi Hui</th>
<th>Shanghai Wu</th>
<th>Hui’an Min</th>
<th>Chaozhou Min</th>
<th>Taiwanese Min</th>
<th>Meixian Hakka</th>
<th>Hong Kong Cantonese</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaccusative (1)</td>
<td>Attested in Xiuning variety</td>
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<td>Unaccusative (2)</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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Table 2. Types of disposal constructions in Sinitic languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of disposal construction</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Tunxi Hui</th>
<th>Shanghai Wu</th>
<th>Hui’an Min</th>
<th>Chaozhou Min</th>
<th>Taiwanese Min</th>
<th>Meixian Hakka</th>
<th>Hong Kong Cantonese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Agent NP) OM + Patient NP + VP</td>
<td>pa 把</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pa</td>
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<tr>
<td>tsiaŋ 將</td>
<td>tsiaŋ</td>
<td>tsiaŋ</td>
<td>ciong</td>
<td>tsiaŋ</td>
<td>tsiaŋ</td>
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<td>pa tsiaŋ</td>
<td>tsiaŋ pa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pau 帮</td>
<td>nɔ 拿</td>
<td>ka共</td>
<td>ka</td>
<td>t’uŋ同</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Patient NP₁ + OM + 3SG₁ + VP</td>
<td>nɔ hì</td>
<td>ka i</td>
<td>kai i</td>
<td>ka i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OM₁ + patient NP₁, OM₂ + 3SG₁ + VP</td>
<td>tsiaŋ ... ka i</td>
<td>tsiaŋ ... kai i</td>
<td>ciong ... ka i</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zero-marked topic-comment construction (Topic NP, VP)</td>
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<td>✓3</td>
<td>✓2</td>
<td>✓1</td>
<td>✓1</td>
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<td>✓3</td>
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</table>
Conclusion

- This study examines the conditions for the rise of unaccusative ‘give’ constructions in Sinitic languages from a cross-dialectal perspective.

- Our analysis reveals that, the development from causative > passive > unaccusative involves valence reduction, i.e. 3-place > 2-place > 1-place predicate.

- We claim that the emergence of the unaccusative ‘give’ construction found in some Southern Min varieties facilitated by the high frequency usage of constructions with patient NP subjects, in particular the subtopic construction and the resumptive pronoun disposal construction involving the use of a highly grammaticalized resumptive pronoun, which interestingly is rather rare among Sinitic languages.
References


Lin, H., 2011. Pure unaccusatives with $HOO \ I$ in Taiwan Southern Min. Lingua 121, 2035-2047.


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