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* **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)

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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

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Some uses of 'give' constructions in Sinitic languages

○ Lexical 'give'

○ Dative and benefactive 'give'
  ○ Lord (1993); Lord, Yap & Iwasaki (2002)

○ Causative and passive 'give'
  ○ Nedjalkov (1993); Yap & Iwasaki (2003)

○ Unaccusative 'give' / Adversative 'give'
  ○ Matthews, Xu & Yip (2005); Chen (2011); Lin (2011); this study

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Lexical 'give'

(5) a.   Mandarin

gěi   tā   yī   běn   shū

give   3SG   one   CL   book

'Give him a book.'

給他一本書

b.   Min (Hui'an 惠安 dialect)

khɔ$^{5\text{-}4}$ i^1 tsit$^{8\text{-}4}$ pun$^{3\text{-}2}$ tsheʔ^7

give   3SG   one   CL   book

'Give him a book.'

與伊一本冊

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Benefactive 'give'

(6) a. <u>Mandarin</u>

wǒ *gěi* *tā* *fānyì*

1SG give 3SG translate

'I translated (it) for him.'

我給他繙譯

b. <u>Min (Hui'an dialect)</u>

*ua³ *khɔ⁵⁻⁴* *i¹* *huan¹⁻⁶iak⁸*

1SG give 3SG translate

'I translated (it) for him.'

*我與伊繙譯

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Causative 'give'

(7) a. <u>Mandarin</u>

給他休息幾天

gěi tā xīuxi jǐ tiān

give 3SG rest several day

'Let him rest for a couple of days.'

b. <u>Min (Hui'an dialect)</u>

與伊歇幾日

khɔ⁵⁻⁴ i¹ hioʔ⁷ kui³⁻² let⁸

give 3SG rest several day

'Let him rest for a couple of days.'

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Passive 'give'

(8) a.   Mandarin

yīfú   gěi   yǔ   lín   shī   le

clothes   give   rain   drip   wet   PFV

'The clothes got wet in the rain.'

衣服給雨淋濕了

b.   Min (Hui'an dialect)

$sã^{1-6}khɔ^5$ $khɔ^{5-4}$ $hɔ^4$ $phaʔ^{7-8}$ tam^2 khu^0
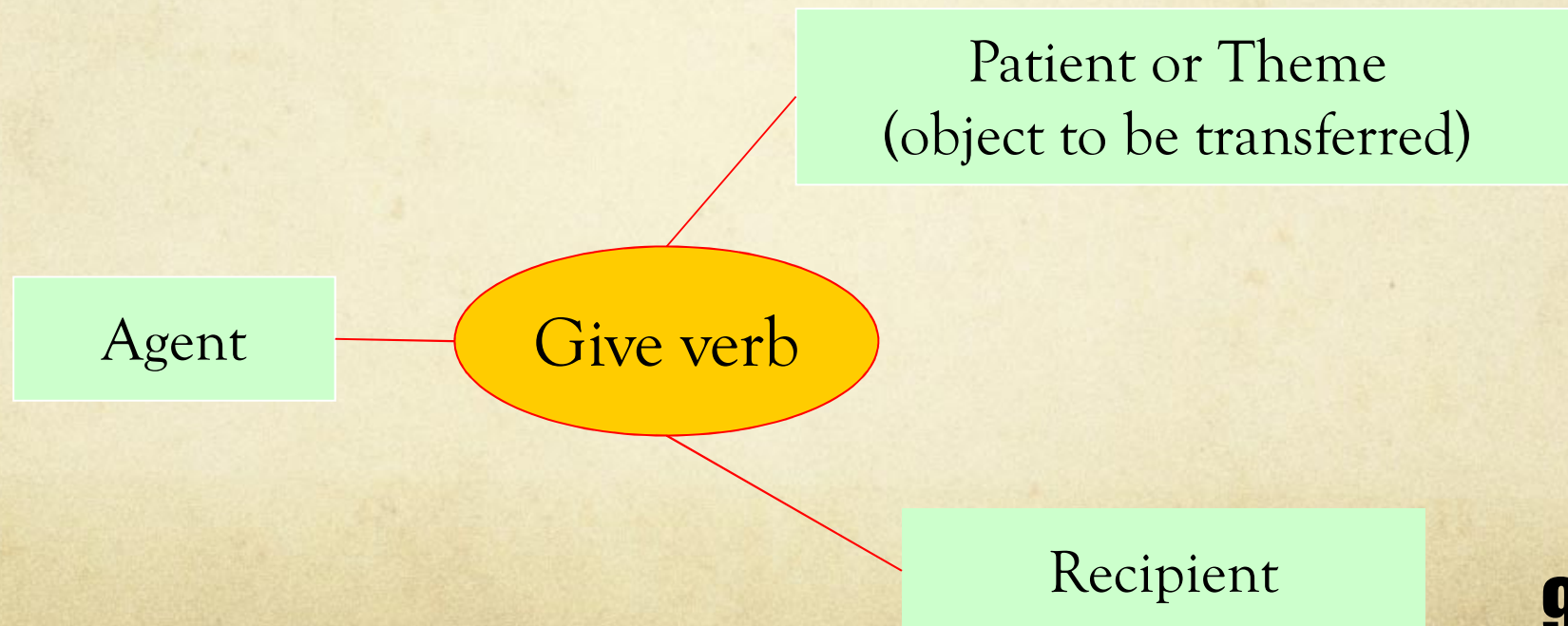
clothes   give   rain   hit   wet   go

'The clothes got wet in the rain.'

衫褲與雨拍澹去

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Types of valence-reduced constructions

○ 'Give' constructions

   ○ canonically 3-place predicates

   ○ pervasive among Sinitic languages, similar to most languages.

Patient or Theme
(object to be transferred)

Agent

Give verb

Recipient

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3P/2P causative 'give' constructions

- 3P or 2P constructions

- Permissive causative: weak causative

(9)a. 我　　畀　　渠　借　　　車
　　　ngo5　bei2　keoi5　ze3　　　ce1
　　　1SG　GIVE　3SG　borrow　car
　　　'I let him/her borrow a car.'
　　　(Cantonese)

(b).　我　　畀　　渠　　睏覺
　　　ngo5　bei2　keoi5　fan3gaau3
　　　1SG　GIVE　3SG　　sleep
　　　'I let him/her sleep.'

agent　　　recipient　action　(theme)
　　　　　　(pivot)

S1:　agent₁
S2:　　　　recipient
　　　　　　agent₂　　　　　　(patient)

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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

xiǎotōu   *gěi*   *(tā)*   *pǎo*   *le*

thief   give   (3SG)   run   PFV

'The thief ran away.'

小偷給(他)跑了

b. Min (Hui'an dialect)

tshia^{8-4}-a^3   *khɔ^{5-4}*   *i^1*   *tsau^3*   *khu^0*

thief –DIM   give   3SG   run   go

'The thief ran away.'

賊仔與伊走去

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.'

花儿給(他)死了

b. Min (Hui'an dialect)

hue¹ *khɔ⁵⁻⁴* *i¹* *si³* *khu⁰*

flower give 3SG die go

'The flower died.'

花與伊死去

Type 2: attested in some Southern Min varieties and some Mandarin varieties

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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.'

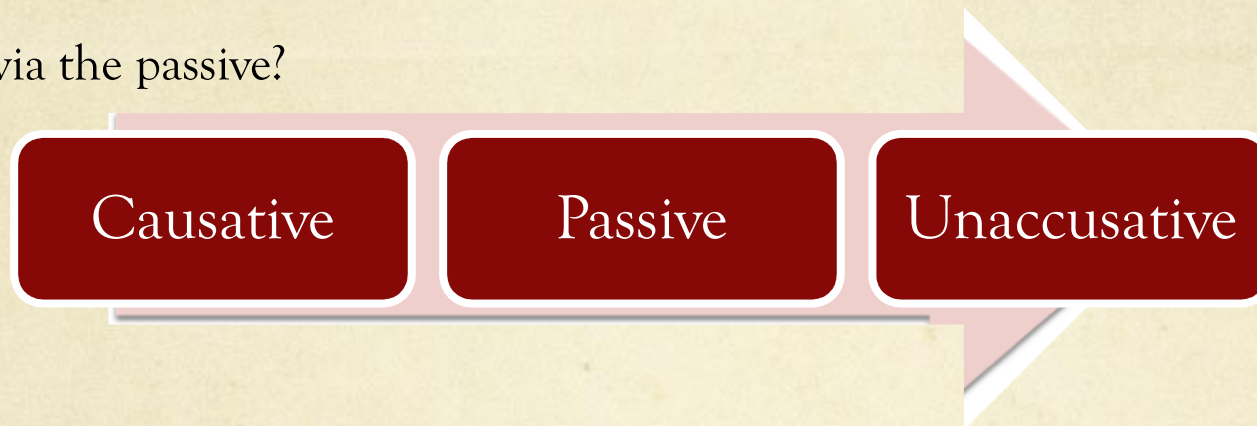| Adversative intransitive predicates	Min: Hui'an	Min: Jieyang	Hakka: Meixian	Yue: Cantonese	Mandarin: Harbin
Escape	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Break	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Sink	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Collapse	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Stop	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Die	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Wither	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Extinguish	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Fade	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Leak	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Turn sour	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Turn bad/Rot			✗	✗	✗
Turn smelly	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Turn dry	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Turn black/wet	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Turn soft/hard	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

Types of valence-reduced constructions: diachronic perspectives

Chronological period	15th c (early Ming)		16th c	Late 17th c	18th c	Late 19th c
Title of text	三遂平妖傳	水滸傳	金瓶梅	醒世姻緣	紅樓夢 (scroll 1-60)	兒女英雄傳 first ⅓
Lexcial 'give'+dative	10	9	15	425	307	109
Benefactive 'for'	0	0	0	27	76	117
Goal 'towards'	0	0	0	6	31	26
Permissive 'let'	0	0	0	6	27	2
'give' ~ 'let'	0	0	0	1	11	0
'give' ~ 'for'	0	0	0	0	9	0
'for' ~ 'let'	0	0	0	0	5	0
'let' ~ causative	0	0	0	0	2	0
Causative	0	0	0	0	1	0
Passive	0	0	0	0	0	4
Others	0	0	0	0	3	5
Total	10	9	15	465	472	263

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How did unaccusative 'give' emerge?
Lin (2011)

Is it via the passive?

| Causative | Passive | Unaccusative |

Or did it emerge more directly via the causative?

Causative → Passive

Causative → Unaccusative

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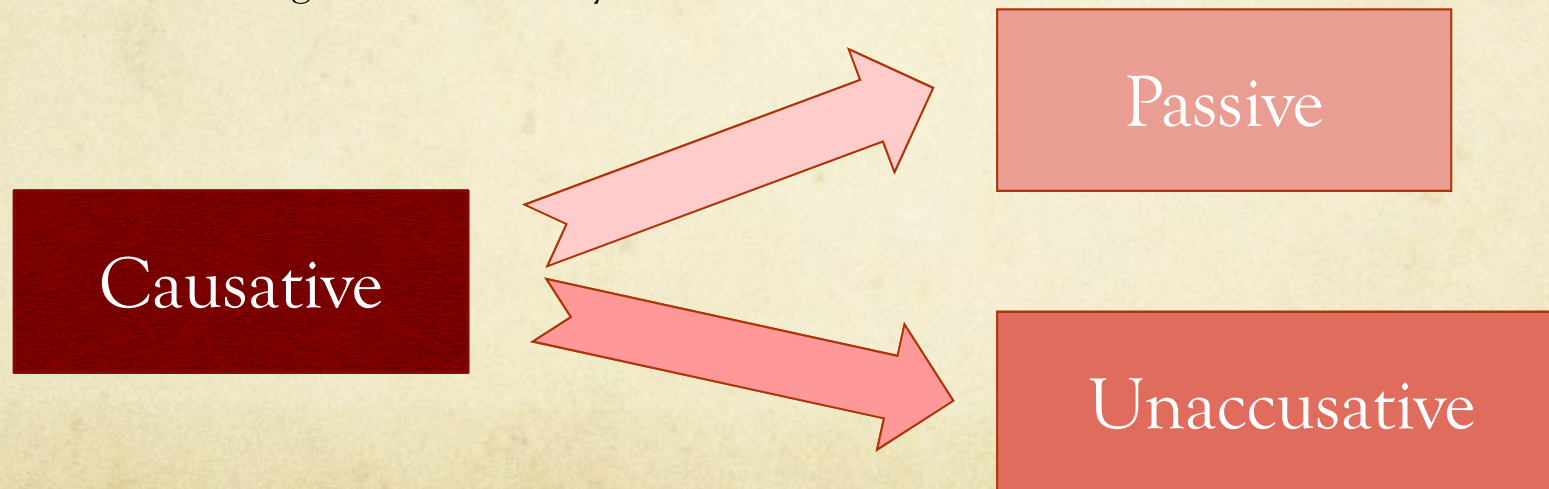
Previous studies

○ Causative > Passive

- Keenan (1985); Hashimoto (1988); Chin (2011)

○ Causative > Reflexive > Passive

  ○ Nedjalkov (1993); Knott (1995); Yap & Iwasaki (2003)
  ○ 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)

Causative > reflexive > passive
from Cantonese

(12)   Permissive causative

媽咪　　畀　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　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).'

(14)   Reflexive passive (non-intentional agent = affected patient)

渠　畀　人　惜　一　啖

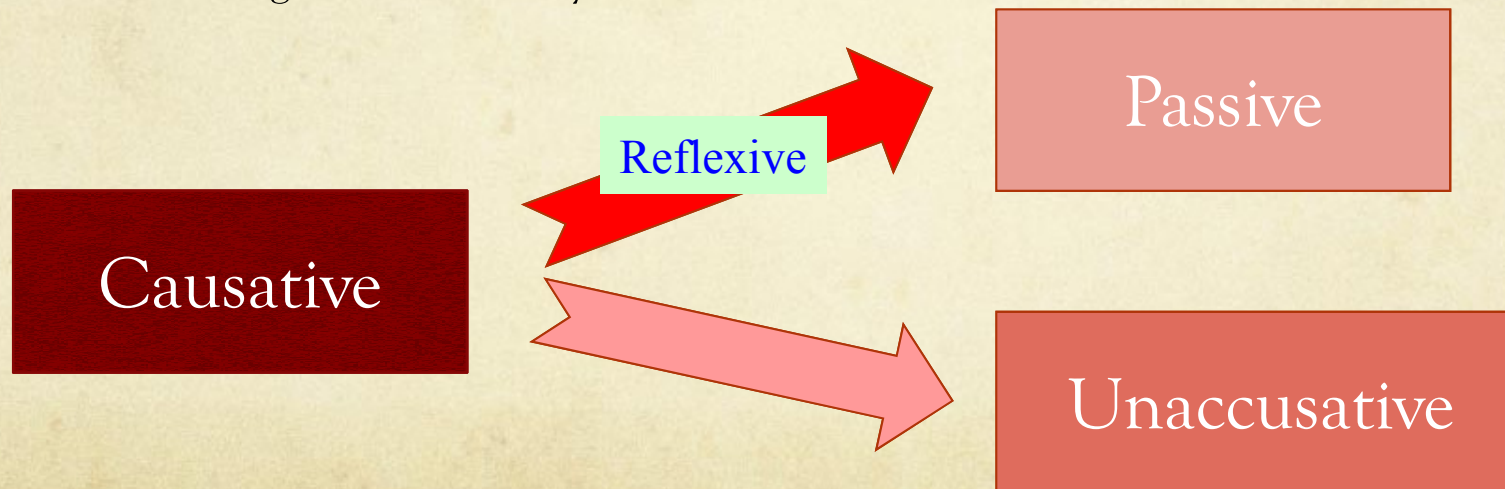*keoi5* **bei2 jan4** *sek3 jat1 daam6*

3SG　give　human　kiss　one　CL

'He was kissed (by somebody).'

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How did unaccusative 'give' emerge?
(the present study)

○ Is it via the passive?

| Causative | Reflexive | Passive | ? | Unaccusative |

○ Or did it emerge more directly via the causative?

Causative

Reflexive → Passive
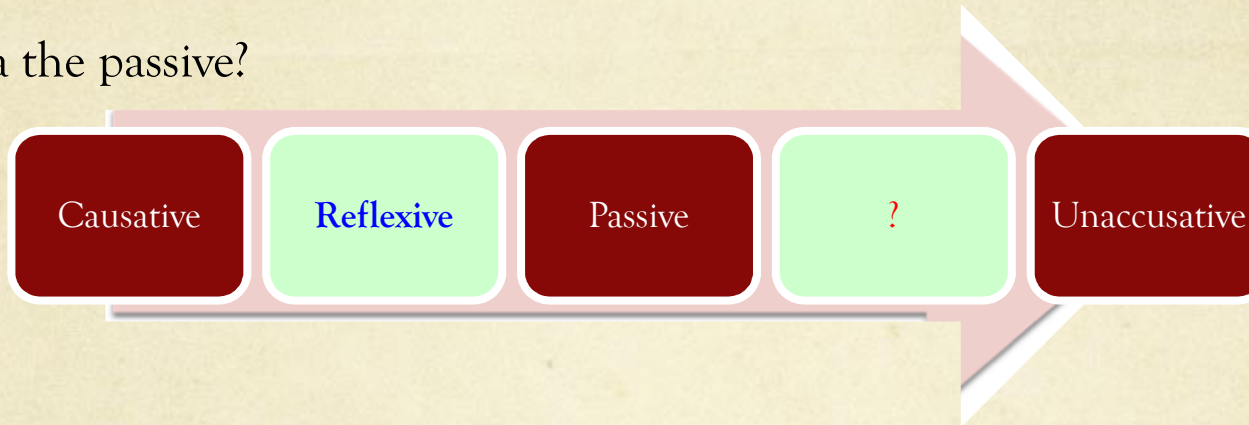
Causative → Unaccusative

Causative > Unintentional causative > unaccusative

> 警察　給 小偷　跑 了
> Jǐngchá gěi xiǎotou pao le

○ Inadvertent causative 'let' (-intentional)

15(a). 警察　給 小偷　跑 了
Jingcha gei xiaotou pao le
'The police let the thief run away (unintentionally)!'

○ Inadvertent causative 'let' (+topicalization –intentional +adversative)

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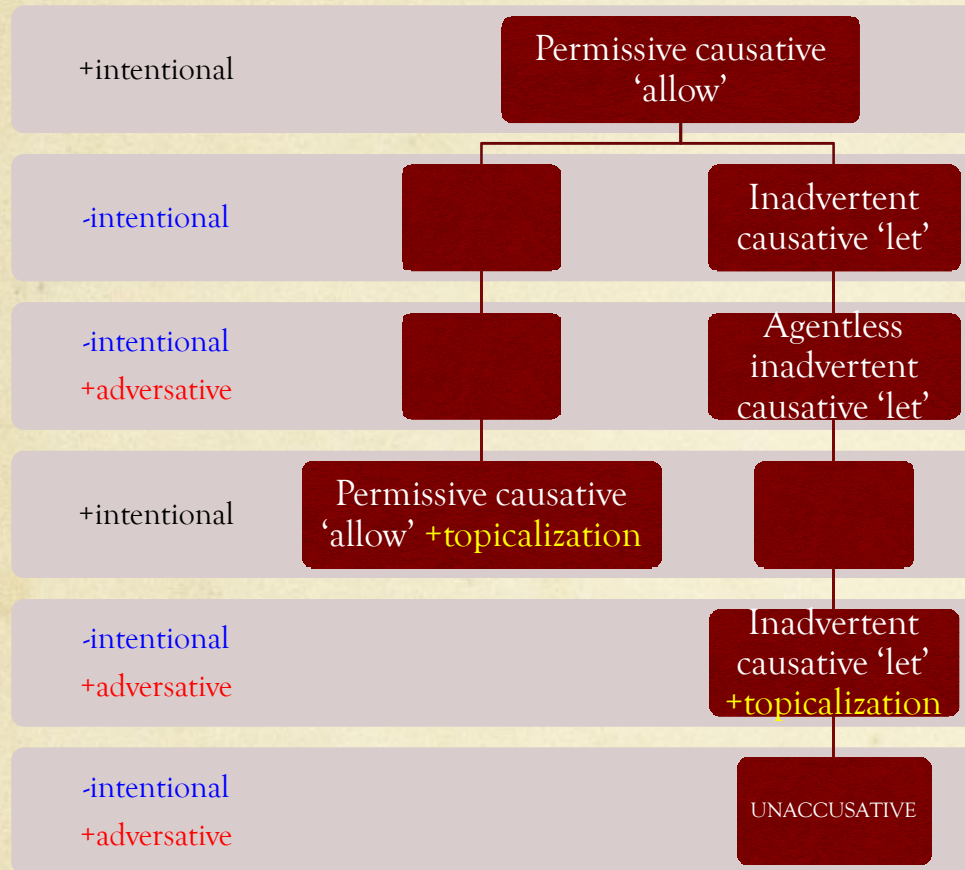*Xiaotou, gei (ta) pao le*
'The thief ran away!'

○ Agentless inadvetent causative 'let' (–intentional +adversative)

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

○ Unaccusative (–intentional +adversative)

(b). 花ㄦ 給 (他) 死了
Huar gei (ta) si le
'The flower died!'

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Causative > Unintentional causative > unaccusative

+intentional	Permissive causative 'allow'
-intentional	Inadvertent causative 'let'
-intentional +adversative	Agentless inadvertent causative 'let'
+intentional	Permissive causative 'allow' +topicalization
-intentional +adversative	Inadvertent causative 'let' +topicalization
-intentional +adversative	UNACCUSATIVE

警察　　給 小偷　跑 了
Jǐngchá gěi xiǎotou pao le

警察　給 小偷　跑 了
Jingcha gei xiaotou pao le

給 小偷　　跑 了
Gei xiaotou pao le

小偷，　給他 跑 了
Xiaotou, gei ta pao le

小偷，　　給 (他) 跑 了
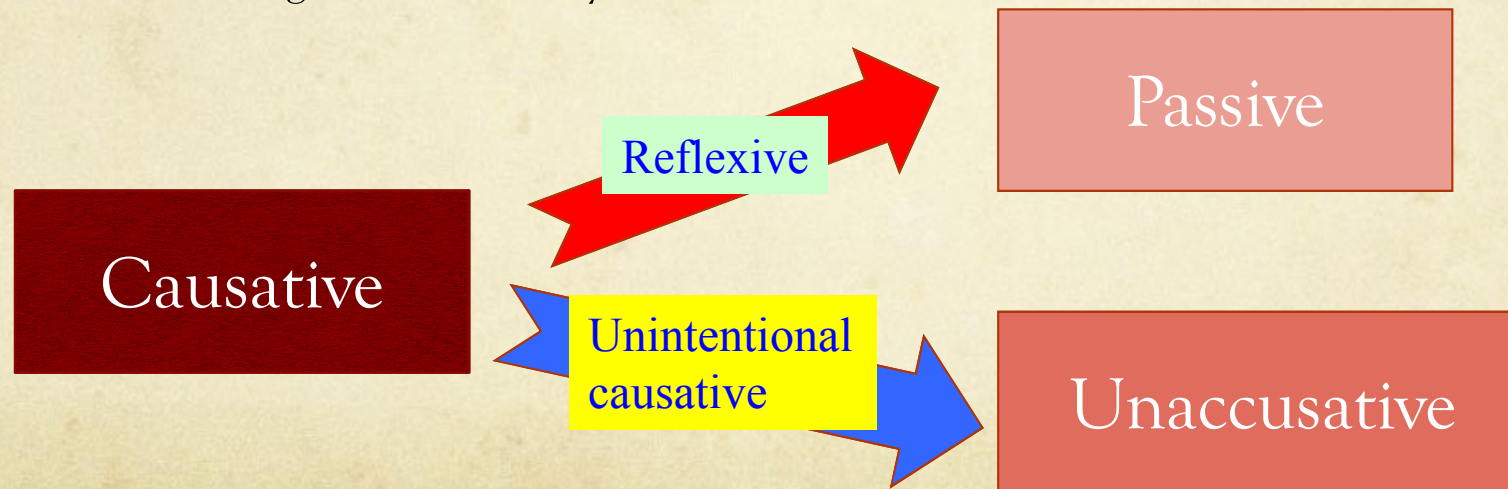Xiaotou, gei (ta) pao le

花　給 (他) 死了
Hua gei (ta) si le

Not through passive
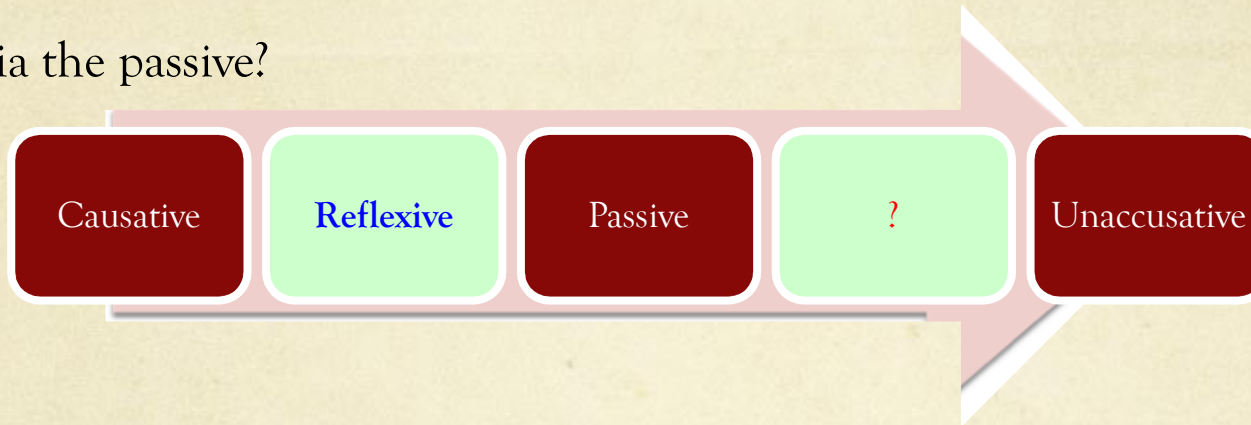
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How did unaccusative 'give' emerge?
(the present study)

Is it via the passive?

| Causative | Reflexive | Passive | ? | Unaccusative |

Or did it emerge more directly via the causative?

Causative

Reflexive → **Passive**

Unintentional causative → **Unaccusative**

(Benefactive) > disposal > unintentional causative > unaccusative

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.'

(Benefactive) > disposal > unintentional causative > unaccusative

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)

c.　gei　mama　feng　　le
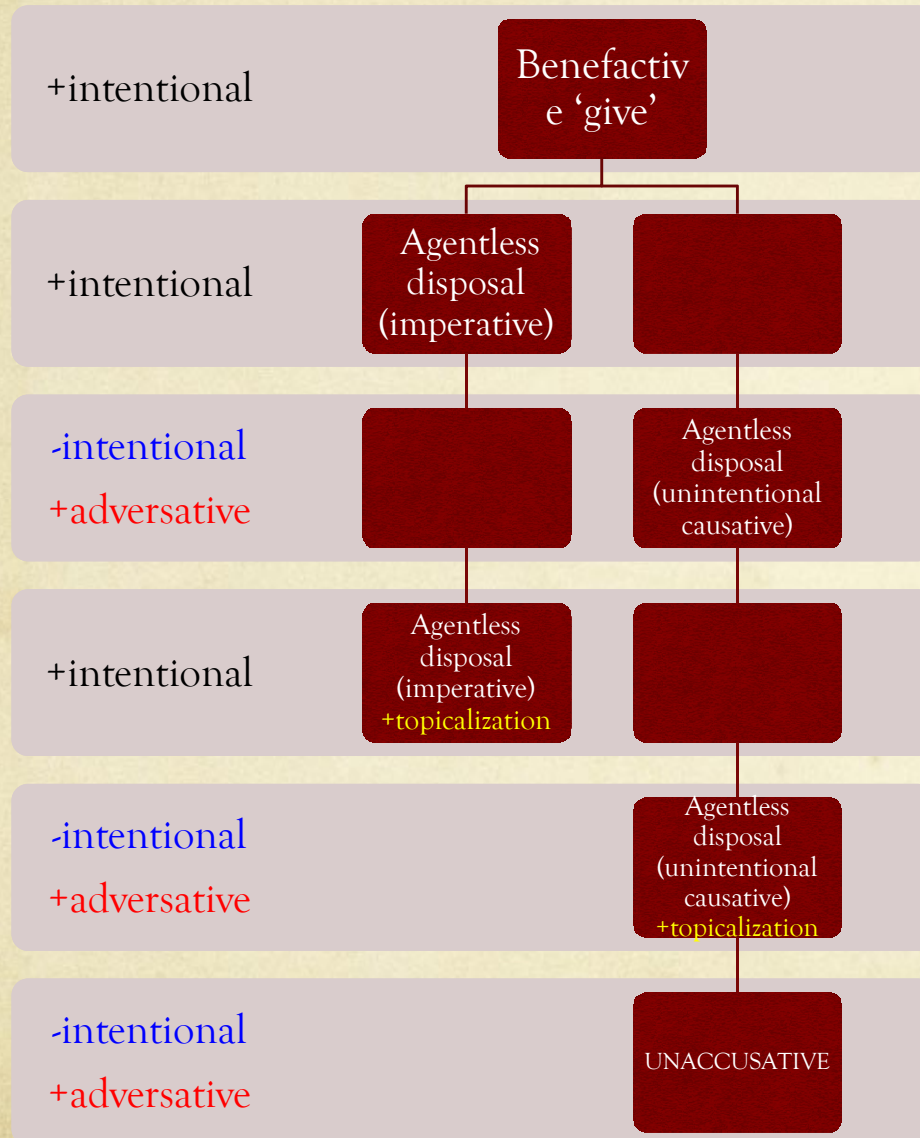　　give　mother　go.crazy　SFP
　　'(It) drove Mum crazy.'

Disposal (unintentional causative) + TOPICALIZATION

c.　mama,　gei　ta　feng　　le
　　mother　give　3SG　go.crazy　SFP
　　'As for Mum, it drove her crazy.'

Unaccusative

(19)b.　mama　gei　ta　feng　　le
　　　　mother　give　3SG　go.crazy　SFP
　　　　'Gosh, Mum went really crazy!'

Disposal > Unintentional causative > Unaccusative

+intentional	**Benefactive 'give'**	給 你 熬 粥 Gei ni chi zhou
+intentional	**Agentless disposal (imperative)**	給 粥 吃 了 Gei zhou chi le
-intentional +adversative	**Agentless disposal (unintentional causative)**	給 粥 糊 了 Gei zhou hu le
+intentional	**Agentless disposal (imperative) +topicalization**	粥, 給 他 吃 了 Zhou, gei ta chi le
-intentional +adversative	**Agentless disposal (unintentional causative) +topicalization**	粥, 給 他 糊 了 Zhou, gei ta hu le
-intentional +adversative	**UNACCUSATIVE**	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?

Causative	Reflexive	Passive	?	Unaccusative
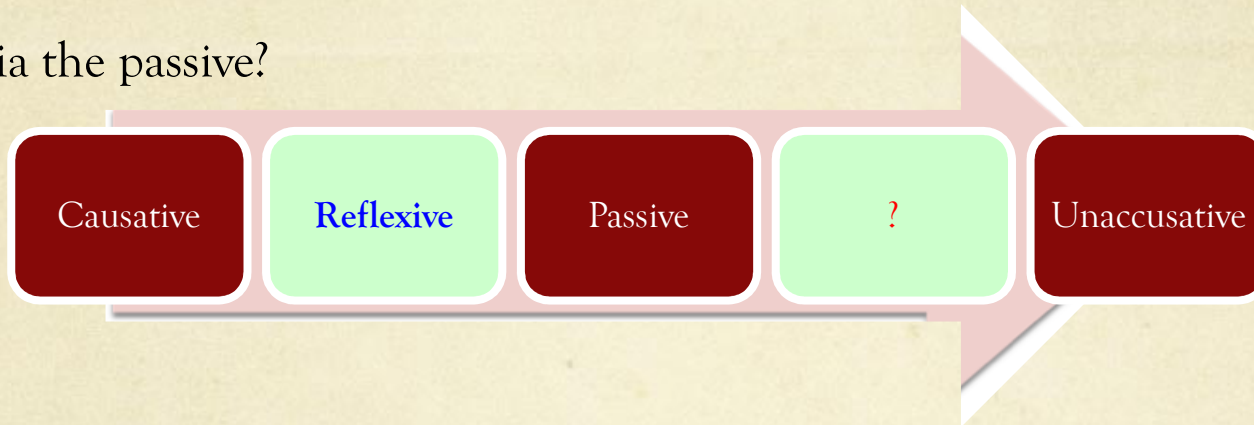
○ Or did it emerge more directly via the causative, or disposal?

Causative

Reflexive → **Passive**

Unintentional causative → **Unaccusative**

Disposal

Unintentional causative →

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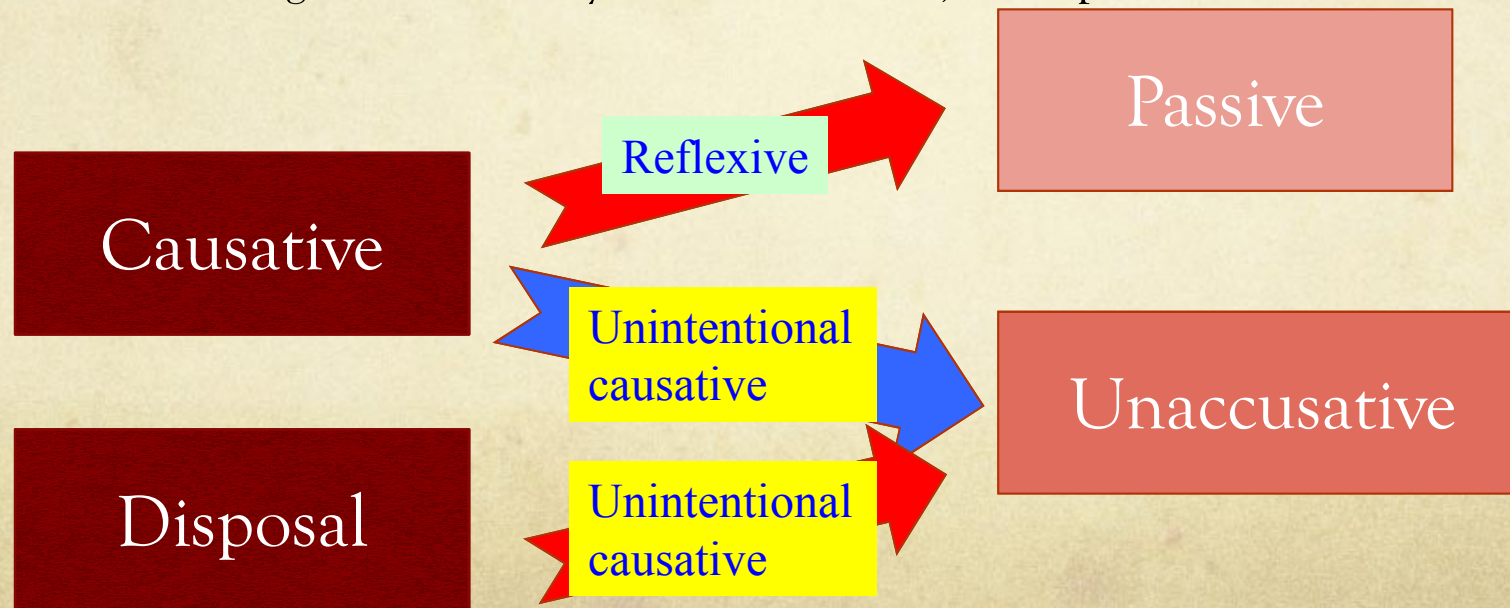
Types of valence-reduced constructions:

2. *ba* **disposal constructions—Mandarin**

○ 3-place predicate

(20) 他　把　書　給　我
    ta　*ba*　*shu*　*gei*　*wo*
    3SG　BA　book　give　1SG
    'He gave me the book.'

○ 2-place predicate

(21) 他　把　門　關了
    ta　*ba*　*men*　*guanle*
    3SG　BA　door　close.PFV
    'He closed the door.'

○ 1-place predicate

(22) 偏偏　　把　老李　病了
    pianpian　*ba*　*laoli*　*bingle*
    unfortunately　BA　PN　sick.PFV
    'Unfortunately, lao-Li got sick.'

Lexical *ba* 'to hold'

(23)　臣　　　左手　　　把　　其　　袖，
chén　　zǔoshǒu　bǎ　qí　　zòu
courtier　left.hand　BA　3SG　sleeve

右手　　　揕　　其　　胸。
yòushǒu　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.)

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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.)

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Loan character? Dialectal factor?

Disposal usage

- 3-P Disposal

- 2-P Disposal

- Causative disposal

(25) 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.)

(26) 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)

See next slide.

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Causative disposal

(27) 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.)

(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　　喫。
Biérén de érnǚ,　　 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, 17th century)

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Emphatic, Expletive BA

1-P

(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)

2-P

(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!'

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Expletive BA in Mandarin

(33) 我　　把　你　　笨蛋！
Wǒ bǎ nǐ bàndàn
1SG BA 2SG fool
'You fool!' (< 'I take you for a fool.')

? 'hold' > 'regard' > Expletive

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Expletive BA in Modern Jin Dialect

○ Jin: Yuncheng variety 山西 運城

(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！
bǎ 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　bǎ　Fèng　yātóu　bìngle
athwart　but　BA　PN　girl　sick-PFV
'Unfortunately (lit. 'but things have gone awry'), Little Fèng is sick.'

(《紅樓夢》1784)

Diachronic Development of 把

Chronological period	Early Ming 14th c	Mid-Ming 15th c	Late Ming 16th c	Ming/Qing 17th c	Early Qing 18th c
Title of text	三遂平妖傳				紅樓夢
lexical 'hold'					7
Lexical 'give'					4
utensil					
Disposal					1063
Passive BA					
Weak causative BA	16				
Emphatic, explective marker BA					3
classifier					51
Total	216				1128

Types of valence-reduced constructions: typological perspectives

3. *tsiɔŋ* disposal constructions — Hui'an

○ 3-place predicate

○ 2-place predicate

○ 1-place predicate*

(37) 伊 **將** **冊** 與 我
i ***tsiɔŋ*** ***tsheʔ*** *khɔ* *ua*
3SG TSIONG book give 1SG
'He gave me the book.'

(38) 伊 **將** **門** 關 起來
i ***tsiɔŋ*** ***bŋ*** *kuin* *khai*
3SG TSIONG door close RVC
'He closed the door.'

(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

- 2-place predicate

- 1-place predicate*

(40) 冊 **共 伊** □ 與 我
    tsheʔ ka i thueʔ khɔ ua
    book KA 3SG take give 1SG
    'Give me the book.' (patient focus)
    Lit. 'The book, give it to me.'

(41) 門 **共 伊** 關 起來
    bŋ ka i kuin khai
    door KA 3SG close RVC
    'Close the door.' (patient focus)
    Lit. 'The door, close it.'

(42) *老李 **共 伊** 病 去
    lauli ka i pin khu
    PN KA 3SG sick PVC
    'Lau-Li got sick.'

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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*

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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).

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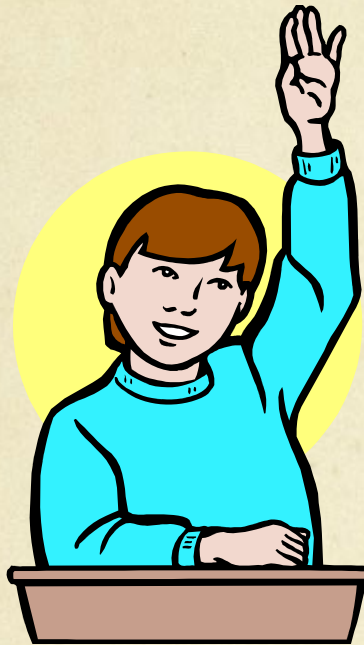
Thank you!

Q&A

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…

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