

**Ditransitive GIVE-construction in three Hainan Min-Chinese:  
Interaction between inherited structures and contact-induced changes**

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Ditransitive *GIVE*-constructions in Sinitic languages can be classified into two types: (1) the “canonical” [V-IO-DO] construction (i.e., “give me a book”), which is found in Mandarin, Northern Chinese and Southern Min-Chinese; and (2) [V-DO-IO] construction (i.e., “give a book me”), which is common in Southern Chinese (Hashimoto 1976). Hainan Min-Chinese is a variety of Southern Min-Chinese consisting of various dialects. It has undergone intense language contact with the indigenous Kra-Dai languages (Hlai and Be) and other Chinese varieties on the Hainan Island for more than one millennium (Liu 2006). Cao (2008) claims that Hainan Min differs from other Southern Min varieties in employing the [GIVE-DO-IO] construction, as well as using the verb /ʔio/ ‘take’ as a *GIVE* verb. Zhang (2011) further argues that this is the result from the omission of dative markers in prepositional dative constructions (i.e., “take a book (tə) me”) under the pressure of contact with [V-DO-IO]-type Cantonese.

This paper presents evidence from three Hainan Min dialects (Haikou, Qionghai, Gangmen) showing that [GIVE-IO-DO] (Southern Min) construction is strongly preferred, and that the [GIVE-DO-IO] (non-Southern Min Southern Chinese) construction is still in its infancy of development. By comparing ditransitive *GIVE*-constructions in the three Hainan Min dialects, with reference to other Southern Min varieties, early modern vernacular Southern Min texts, other Southern Chinese varieties and the indigenous Be language, I have identified the origin and the historical strata of *GIVE* verbs. In present-day Hainan Min, *bun* ‘distribute’, *ʔio* ‘take’ and *khi* ‘beg/give’ all coexist as *GIVE* verbs. I argue that Hainan Min inherited *khi* and [GIVE-IO-DO] construction from Southern Min, while the sememe {GIVE} of *bun* and *ʔio* were introduced through language contact with Hakka (Sinitic) and Be (Kra-Dai) respectively at different stages of historical development.

Previous studies have also proposed an implicational universal about ditransitive constructions in Sinitic languages: “**absence of [GIVE-IO-DO] constructions**  $\supset$  **absence of R-type GIVE verbs**” (Zhang 2011; Phua 2015; Phua and Xiang 2020). R-type *GIVE* verbs refer to *GIVE* verbs that introduce recipient argument (Li and Wu 2015; cf. Margetts and Austin 2010). It is further postulated that for a verb meaning *TAKE/HOLD/DISTRIBUTE* to be used as a ditransitive *GIVE* verb in the [GIVE-IO-DO] construction, it has to undergo DO-fronting and preposition incorporation to be a R-type *GIVE* verb (Li and Wu 2015; Xia 2017). These proposals are challenged by the Haikou and Gangmen dialects of Hainan Min, which use *bun* ‘distribute’ and *ʔio* ‘take’ as ditransitive *GIVE* verbs in the [GIVE-IO-DO] construction, as they do not allow *bun* and *ʔio* to introduce recipient argument without preposition in between. Preposition incorporation is either in progress (Haikou dialect), or has not begun (Gangmen dialect). I argue that these unusual syntactic behaviors of *bun* and *ʔio* are due to the fact that they did not undergo the development from *DISTRIBUTE/TAKE* verbs into *GIVE* verbs through DO-fronting and preposition incorporation. Instead, the polysemous patterns of *bun* (‘distribute’/ ‘give’) and *ʔio* (‘take’/ ‘give’) were copied into Hainan Min at the time of contact, despite that the corresponding morpheme of *ʔio* in Be only appears in [GIVE-DO-IO] construction. *bun* and *ʔio* replaced the native *GIVE* verb *khi* and occupied its position in the inherent [GIVE-IO-DO] constructions, making Hainan Min a rare exception to established patterns. The findings illustrate examples of polysemous pattern being transferred in contact situation regardless to the mismatch in syntactic structures, and it is mapped onto the inherent structures in the recipient language without causing change in word order.

**keywords:** ditransitive construction, language contact, Hainan Min-Chinese

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