

The benefactive construction in Moulmein Sgaw Karen¹

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

It is generally recognized that the Karen languages are tonal S-V-O languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family (Benedict 1976; Shafer 1974; Weldert 1987). Sgaw Karen, the language investigated in this analysis, represents the largest subgroup within Karenic (Jones 1961:v) with sizeable populations living in both Burma and Thailand.

This paper examines the syntactic and semantic features of the benefactive construction in Sgaw Karen with exponent *ne*² (<'get') which contains three core participants: the agent, undergoer and beneficiary (or recipient), e.g.:

AGENT - VERB - **NE²** - BENEFICIARY - UNDERGOER

- (1) θo¹kha¹ so³ ne² na⁶ na³ tə-phlə⁵
monk carry BEN 2sg basket one-CLF
'The monk carried the basket for you.'

This is compared with the construction having identical function in Mandarin formed with exponent *gei*³ (<'give') and where appropriate, with internal and external datives in English.

Dative and benefactive constructions have been the focus of several recent papers such as Hermann (1979) which contrasts Thai and Mandarin; Zhu (1979, 1983) on Mandarin; and Green (1974), Thompson (1989) and Wierzbicka (1986) on English. With reference to this ongoing debate concerning the semantic and pragmatic features coded by these constructions, the verb classes and predicates permitted in the case of Sgaw Karen are defined in broad semantic terms, and constraints on the animacy of the participants are examined. Data are taken from texts and elicited work with a speaker of Sgaw Karen from Hpa-an, whose dialect can be classified as Moulmein Sgaw.

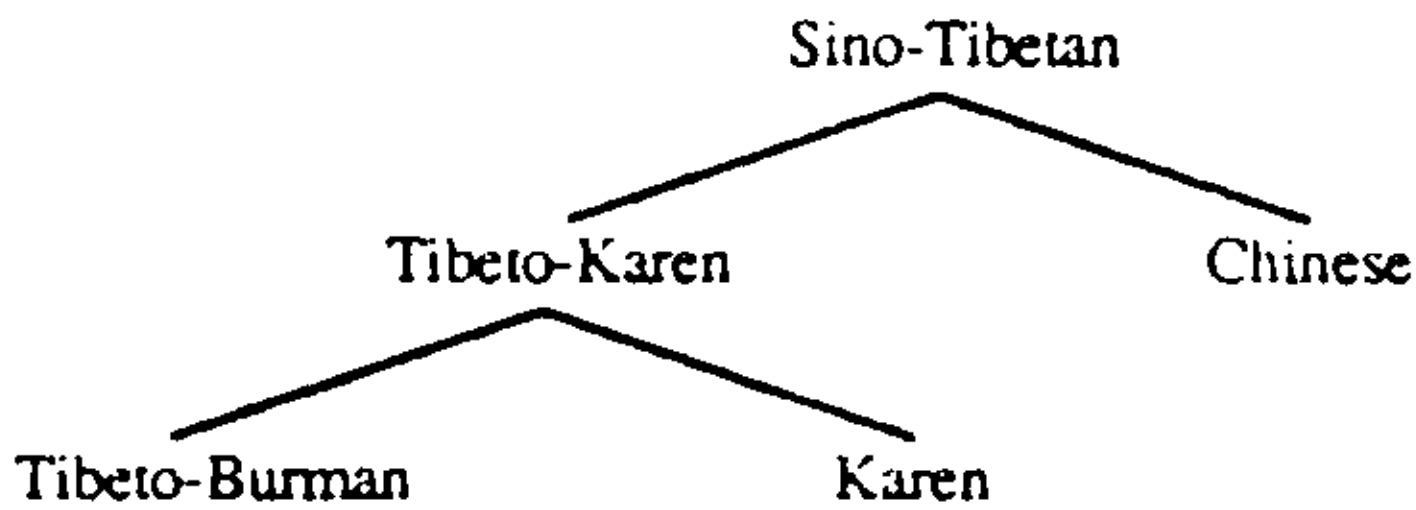
¹ This paper was first presented at the 24th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics held in Thailand from 7 - 11 October, 1991 at both Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok and Chiangmai University in Chiangmai.

1.2 Language classification within Sino-Tibetan

Karen is a minority language spoken in large areas of Burma and Thailand. It is generally held that the Karen group of languages belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan, although its exact genetic position has been a topic of debate. One of the reasons for its problematical status is the fact that Karen has basic S-V-O word order, unlike other Tibeto-Burman languages which are S-O-V.

Benedict's 1972 taxonomy, for example, originally gave Karen a more independent status, placing it on the same level as Tibeto-Burman under the superordinate grouping of "Tibeto-Karen". See Figure 1:

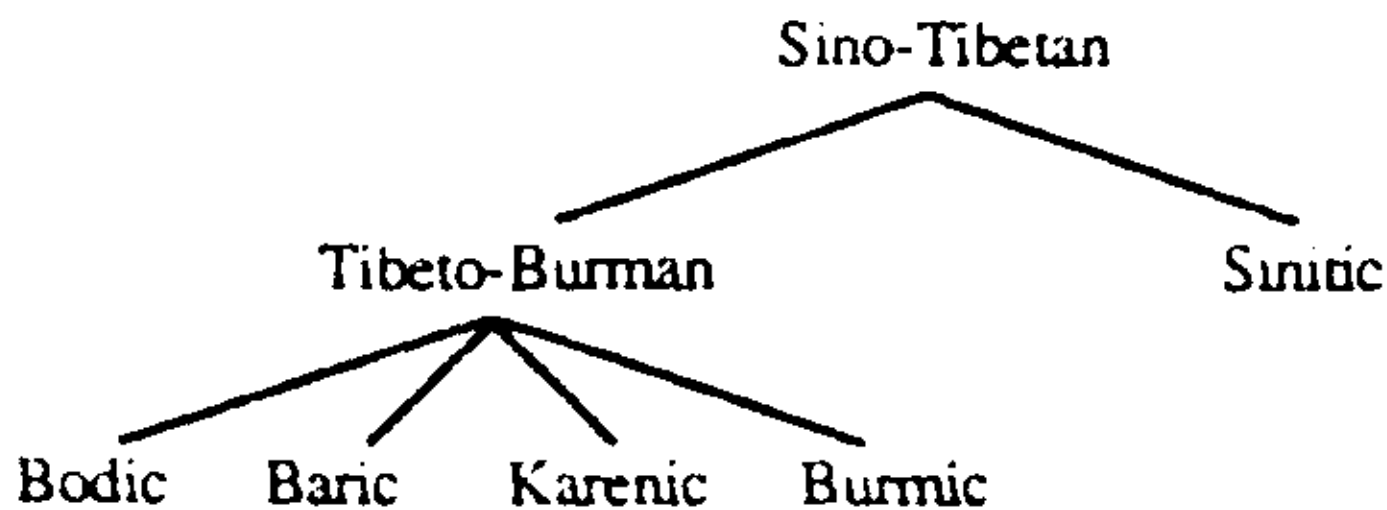
FIGURE 1:



Hale (1982) follows Shafer (1974) in subdividing Tibeto-Burman into the four main groups of Bodic, Baric, Karenic and Burmic; while Benedict, in a reanalysis of Sino-Tibetan language affiliation (1976), groups Karen within Tibeto-Burman. In Weidert (1987) and Matisoff (1991a), Karen is similarly classified as a subgroup of Tibeto-Burman.

We use Shafer's classification (1974) of Karen as representative of this second approach, with the caveat that details of the subgroupings differ considerably among the analyses listed above:

FIGURE 2:



1.3 Classification of Karenic languages

Official records number speakers of Karen at 2,122,825 in Burma (1983) and 265,611 in Thailand (1986). These figures are from Bradley (1990) who suggests that the combined population for both countries is

closer to four million, with the smaller official tallies being due both to underenumeration—many Karen live in areas not under direct government control—and the exclusion of some smaller groups of Karen speakers.

Within Karenic, three major subgroupings have been identified. These are called *Sgaw*, *Pho*, and *Bwe* by Jones (1961); *coastal*, *mountain*, and *delta* by Shafer (1974); and *northern*, *central*, and *southern* by Bradley (1990). Within Sgaw Karen, which represents the largest subgrouping within Karenic (1.6 million speakers), there are further subdivisions into Moulmein and Bassein dialects (Jones 1961). This study is based on the Moulmein dialect of Sgaw, with data from Alfred Saw Keh, a speaker from the town of Hpa-an (Pa'an) in eastern Burma, not far from the border with Thailand.²

1.4 Typological features of Sgaw Karen

Sgaw Karen is an S-V-O tonal language of the isolating or analytic type characterized by features such as classifiers, modifiers generally following the modified element, and a large set of modal and aspectual particles. As is typical for most of Sino-Tibetan, Sgaw Karen possesses few, if any, inflectional morphemes. This should not be taken to mean that Sgaw Karen is lacking in complex morphology (see the description of the pronominal system below). Moreover, there are a number of morphemes which are undergoing grammaticalisation, and taking on case- and aspect-like functions, such as the benefactive marker *ne*² (related to and homophonous with the verb 'to get'), which is the subject of the present study.

This dialect of Sgaw Karen has a phonemic inventory of 27 consonants (including semi-vowels) and 9 vowels. The consonants are displayed in Table 1:

² I am very grateful to Mr Alfred Saw Keh for his many hours of assistance in preparing this study.

Alfred Saw Keh is a native speaker of Moulmein Sgaw Karen and is bilingual in Burmese and English. In Burma, he is Head of the English Department at Hpa-an College, Kayin State, but is presently undertaking graduate studies in the School of Education, La Trobe University. Note that his hometown of Hpa-an lies in a predominantly Pho Karen area to the north of Moulmein. His family is thus typically multilingual, particularly the female members who also speak Pho Karen.

I worked with Mr Keh from May to June, and from July to November in 1989 and again in October - December 1991.

From this point on, wherever I use the term "Sgaw Karen", the Moulmein dialect is intended, which (1) respects the consultant's classification of his dialect and (2) is confirmed by my analysis of the consonantal, vocalic, and tonal systems, which tally closely with those described for Moulmein Sgaw Karen by Jones (1961:63), with minor differences ascribable to subdialectal variation.

TABLE 1: **Consonants of Moulmein Sgaw Karen (HPA-AN dialect)**

p	t	c	k	ʔ
ph	th	ch	kh	
b	d	ʃ		
	θ	s	ɕ	(x) - χ h
		sh	(j)	(ɣ) - R ³
m	n	nj	ng	
	l			
	r			
w		j		

For the 12 stop consonants, there is not just a simple voiceless aspirated-unaspirated contrast but a three-way distinction with the voiced member for stops found in bilabial, alveolar and palatal positions, a feature which is not uncommon in Tibeto-Burman (see Matisoff 1989 on Lahu). There is no voiced velar stop. Note, however, that words with palatal stops are infrequent: e.g., the voiced palatal stop is often found in loans of Burmese origin such as /ɟa¹/ 'tiger'.

The 7 fricatives include an aspirated-unaspirated contrast for the alveolar position, as well as a voiced-voiceless opposition for the uvular position (with velar allophones for both). The palatal glide /j/ is strongly fricativized in several Sgaw words such as *jɔ³* 'deep', which is why it is tentatively placed in parentheses among the fricatives.⁴

The 8 sonorants include 4 nasals, 2 glides, a lateral, and a trilled /r/ which typically occurs as C2 in consonant clusters but also acts as an allophone of /d/ in syllable-initial position, e.g. *dɔ⁴* ~ *rɔ⁴* 'and'.

Vowels form a symmetrical system, distinguished for height, with three front, three mid and three back phonemes. See Table 2.

TABLE 2: **Vowels of Moulmein Sgaw Karen (Hpa-an dialect)**

Front	Central	Back
i	ɨ	u
e	ə	o
ɛ	a	ʌ

³ For typographical convenience, the symbol [R] is employed to represent the voiced uvular fricative.

⁴ Lahu /ɣ/ is similarly to be considered the voiced homologue of /ʃ/, and is also fricativized before certain vowels. [Ed.]

Matisoff has observed (1989:147) that many languages of East and Southeast Asia which are typologically similar to Sinitic can be described as possessing omnisyllabic tone systems where the tones consist of bundles of prosodic features including phonation type, pitch and contour. Sgaw Karen fits this description well with six tonemes or contrasting tones. In citation form, most syllables including stressed syllables in polysyllabic words are typically marked for tone.⁵ See Table 3.

TABLE 3: **Tones of Moulmein Sgaw Karen** (Hpa-an dialect)

Tone Number	Phonation type	Y.R.Chao system	Example
1.	High level, plain phonation	44	kɔ ¹ 'difficult'
2.	Falling, breathy	31	kɔ ² 'country'
3.	Low falling contour, creaky	21	kɔ ³ 'throat'
4.	Mid-level pitch, glottalized	3-?	kɔ ⁴ 'call out'
5.	High pitch, glottalized	5-?	kɔ ⁵ 'gossip'
6.	Low pitch, murmured	11	kɔ ⁶ 'withhold'

Jones (1961) collapses the tone system into an economical three-way contrast, with each tone possessing two allotones: one glottalized and one plain. As a consequence of this, he treats the glottal feature exclusively as a segmental phoneme occurring both syllable-initially and syllable-finally. Since, however, up to 6 different morphemes for the identical segmental syllable can be distinguished on the basis of tone (one example being given in Table 3), I have chosen to treat glottalization separately as a phonation feature and to analyse Moulmein Sgaw as a language with six tonemes.

Unstressed syllables do not have a tonal value. This is indicated in the examples by the absence of a numeral following the syllable.

Tone sandhi occurs, particularly (as one would predict) in fluent passages of conversational discourse. At this stage of research, the author has not yet fully investigated these tonal morphophonemics, hence all morphemes are cited with the tonal values they have in isolation.

As for many other Tibeto-Burman languages, the syllable structure is basically CV, but with consonant clusters of *obstruent + resonant* being permitted in syllable initial position, e.g. *pva*⁶ 'person', *θra*⁵ 'teacher', *pli*⁶ 'be afraid'.

In the texts and data elicited so far, the combination of *obstruent + /j/* has only been attested once, in *phya*¹ 'market'.

⁵ Thanks to David Bradley for advice on tone properties.

As can be seen, the canonical syllable shape does not allow for final consonants (but see Jones 1961 for a different treatment). Syllables may also begin with a glottal stop, as in $ʔo^1$ 'drink'. Note that the restricted inventories of Sgaw initial consonant clusters and final consonants are typical of Sino-Tibetan languages. Following Matisoff's schema (1989), the syllable canon for Sgaw Karen can be described as

$$[C1(C2)] \overset{T}{V} \text{ (where C2 = semivowel or liquid)}$$

There are three series of pronominal forms in Sgaw Karen, depending on syntactic function:

- (i) Subject and possessive forms are identical, except in the third person. Cross-linguistically, this is not an uncommon feature (see Allen 1964).
 - (ii) Direct object and oblique forms are identical.
 - (iii) There are special focus forms which are used, e.g., in topic position.
- The pronominal system of Sgaw Karen is presented in Table 4 to assist in reading the examples which follow.

TABLE 4: **Pronoun system of Moulmein Sgaw Karen** (Hpa-an dialect)

Singular:

	SUBJ/POSS	OBJECT/OBLIQUE	FOCUS
1.	$jə$	ja^6	$jε^1$
2.	$nə$	na^6	$nε^1$
3.	$avε^1$	$ɔ^6$	$avε^1$

The possessive form for 3sg is $ʔə + Noun$, while that for 3pl is $avε^1θe^5 + Noun$.

Plural:

	SUBJ/POSS	OBJECT/OBLIQUE	FOCUS
1.	$pə$	pva^6	pve^6
2.	$θɿ^1$	$θɿ^1$	$θɿ^1vε^1θe^5$
3.	$avε^1θe^5$	$avε^1θe^5$	$avε^1θe^5$

Note that there are many other forms for third person besides those listed here. The first person singular pronoun has a familiar form $khva^1$ which contrasts with the formal $jə - ja^6$ listed above. In addition, sociolinguistic factors such as relative social status, age and kin relationship will determine whether a title of respect or a kin term will be preferred over these pronominal forms.

2. Analysis of the Benefactive Construction in Sgaw Karen

2.1 Syntax

AGENT - VERB - **NE²** - BENEFICIARY - UNDERGOER

- (2) $\theta\circ^1kha^1$ so^3 ne^2 na^6 na^3 $tə-phlə^5$
 monk carry BEN 2sg basket one-CLF
 'The monk carried the basket for you.'

The Sgaw benefactive marker—**ne²**—is preposed before the noun which designates the beneficiary of some event or action coded by the predicate of this construction. Example (2) can be simply described as having a beneficiary which is the addressee (2sg pronoun), that is, the person for whom the agent (the monk) carries the basket.

The noun phrase labelled as 'beneficiary' can be considered a kind of indirect object corresponding to the 'recipient' in semantically related dative constructions. Cross-linguistically, indirect objects typically precede direct objects (or 'patients', 'undergoers', nouns marked by accusative case) in most languages, particularly when realised as full nouns as opposed to pronominal forms (see Mallinson and Blake (1981:161-168). Sgaw Karen is no exception in this regard: the syntax of the benefactive construction requires the noun phrase denoting the beneficiary to follow the verb and immediately precede the direct object noun phrase, labelled 'undergoer' in this study. Mallinson and Blake (1981) relate this ordering to the topicalization hierarchy, due to the tendency for indirect objects to be higher on both scales of animacy and definiteness.

The benefactive exponent **ne²** is related to a full verb which means 'to get', exemplified in (3):

- (3) $d\circ^4$ $d\circ^1p\ddot{a}^2$ $v\epsilon^2$ $\theta\theta^1$ na^6 ta^2 $l\theta^1$ **ne²** $v\epsilon^1$ ne^5 $h\epsilon^1ke^6$
 and brother 3 CLF thing REL get thing return
 so^3 $v\epsilon^1$
 carry thing
 'and the three brothers returned carrying the things which they had got.'

[The Three Brothers]

This verb can also function as a modal verb in clause-final position meaning 'can', exemplified by its negated form in (4). Note that there is a discontinuous negative morpheme in Sgaw Karen with constituents $tə\dots ba^5$ surrounding the verbal element:

- (4) ta²pu⁶ kh^o1 pha⁴ jo³ ji¹ th^o5 da¹ke⁶ ve¹ tə
 hole as very deep INT climb again thing NEG
 ne² ba⁵
 get NEG
 'As the hole was extremely deep. (the rabbit) could not climb out
 again.'

[The Rabbit and the Tiger]

The benefactive marker ne² must strictly follow the main verb; otherwise it will be interpreted with its full verbal meaning 'to get', as shown by the contrast between (5) and (6):

- BENEFACTIVE ne²
 (5) a^we¹θe⁵ ne² ne p^wa⁶ thi¹k^o2 ta²θəble¹
 3pl get BEN 1pl country independence
 'They got the country's independence for us.'

- VERBAL ne²
 (6) a^we¹θe⁵ ne² p^wa⁶ lə thi¹k^o2 ta²θəble¹ ə^ro²
 3pl get 1pl for country independence sake
 'They got us for the sake of the country's independence.'

Jones (1961:49,55) analyses ne² in its benefactive function as a verb which is the object of a preceding primary verb. He states that a predicative construction as an 'object extension is infixed, so to speak, into the verb construction after the primary verb, including any aspectuals it may have' (p. 55). One of his examples is γ^o? ne ja li 'crying for me already', which has the morpheme-by-morpheme analysis: 'cry-get-me-already'.⁶ Hence, although he translates it as 'for' in English, his view is quite different from the one taken in this paper since he treats this secondary function of ne² as verbal.

Similarly, Solnit (1987:148,157) treats the verb p^é 'to transfer' as a particle (a 'verb complex final particle') when it appears post-verbally with benefactive (or malefactive) meaning, adding an extra participant role to the clause.

This raises the question of whether or not ne² is an enclitic to the main verb.⁷ First, we need to distinguish constituency as a clitic from that of

⁶ The same sentence from my consultant is h^o5 ne² ja⁶ li¹, with a slight dialectal difference whereby the / γ / of Jones' Moulmein speaker corresponds in a regular manner to the / h / of my speaker from Hpa-an. Contrast the initial consonant of the verb 'to cry'.

⁷ I thank Lon Diehl for raising this question. In the Western Kayah dialect of ṁokhr^osh^{ié} the benefactive is formed by a discontinuous postverbal phrase VERB + pe⁵⁵ + OBJECT + ne⁴⁵

a compound verb such as $ma^6 ne^2$ 'to obtain, get' where ne^2 'get' has equal status syntactically with ma^6 'to do, act, cause'. If the benefactive exponent ne^2 'for' were a clitic to the preceding main verb, we would not expect other constituents to be permitted to separate the two.

This is not, however, the case. Aspect markers and adverbs can occur in this position between the main verb and the benefactive marker ne^2 :

- (7) $\lambda v \varepsilon^1$ ba^3-kvi^3 ne^2 ($*kvi^3$) ja^6 $ta^2 ru^2 kha^1$
 3sg put away-PFV BEN ($*PFV$) 1sg winter
 $ku^1 kha^6$
 clothes
 'S/he's put away my winter clothes for me.'

If ne^2 were joined to the verb as an enclitic or suffix then the aspectual marker should have both in its scope and not just the main verb. According to this reasoning, kvi^3 would have to follow the combination of ba^3-ne^2 'put away-for', which (7) shows is not permitted.

Secondly, adverbials may also occur in this position between main verb and benefactive marker, as shown by (8):

- (8) $\lambda v \varepsilon^1$ pho^1 $khle^1$ ne^2 ($*khle^1$) ja^6
 3sg cook quickly BEN ($*quickly$) 1sg
 'S/he cooked it quickly for me.'

Both these syntactic arguments support the view that ne^2 is not bound to the preceding main verb, and thus does not form a constituent with it.

Hence, in this analysis, I view the benefactive marker ne^2 as forming the larger syntactic unit of the benefactive phrase, with its following NP designating the beneficiary. Moreover, as head of the benefactive phrase, ne^2 signals the semantic role of the NP as beneficiary of the event as well as its non-core-argument status syntactically.

The use of ne^2 'to get' as an exponent of the benefactive is not typologically surprising. In other languages of the area, we find similar types of basic verbs of transferral being used in this secondary grammatical function. In Mandarin, the benefactive marker is gei^3 which is formally and semantically related to the verb 'to give' (cf. Zhu 1979, Chappell forthcoming). In fact, Teng (1975) states that it has the same semantic content. In Thai, the marker of the benefactive $hâj$ is similarly related to the verb 'to give' (cf. Hermann 1979:107) while the verb $dâj ráp$ 'to get,

(J. Fraser Bennett, pers. comm.), with both the verb 'to transfer' and the verb 'to get' being used in this secondary grammatical function.

obtain, receive' is the exponent of the benefactive passive (see Panakul 1991:2).⁸

The syntactic form in Mandarin differs from Sgaw Karen in placing the benefactive noun phrase before the verb:⁹

AGENT - **GEI³** - BENEFICIARY - VERB - UNDERGOER

- (9) *Di⁴di gei³ wo³ dai⁴ yi-he² tang²*
 brother BEN 1sg carry one-CLF sweet
 'My younger brother carried a box of sweets for me.'

In Mandarin, the co-occurrence of benefactive *gei³* with the full verb *gei³* is semantically awkward for most speakers but not impossible:¹⁰

- (10) *?Gei³ ta¹ gei³ tang²*
 BEN 3sg give sweets
 '(Someone) gave her/him some sweets for her/him.'

This is not the case, however, in Sgaw Karen, where both verbal and benefactive *ne²* may freely co-occur, as example (5) above shows.

2.2 Verb classes

In this section, I consider which verb classes are compatible in the benefactive construction in Sgaw Karen and compare the semantic and syntactic features of the predicate with Mandarin Chinese.

Using Vendler's scheme of verb classes (1967), the benefactive construction in Mandarin Chinese can be described as only permitting telic predicates (Chappell, forthcoming). Telic predicates may be either transitive or intransitive syntactically, but must code a goal or endpoint as part of the overall meaning. Hence, in Mandarin, example (11) is possible but not (12):

⁸ For a discussion of *gěi* and *hǎj*, as well as similar benefactive grammaticalizations of verbs of giving in other languages (e.g. Lahu *pí*, Yao *pun*, Vietnamese *cho*, Khmer *qaoy*), see Matisoff 1991b:427-31. [Ed.]

⁹ There are two further constructions in Mandarin which have *gei³* as their exponent. One has *gei³* as enclitic to the main verb directly preceding the recipient or 'indirect object'. This construction is closest in syntax to the benefactive in Sgaw Karen but is restricted to coding transferral. The second is a serial verb construction with *gei³* as the second verb. I will not discuss either here (for a description, see Zhu 1979, 1983 and Chappell forthcoming).

¹⁰ Chao (1968:331-332) claims that it is possible in the Beijing dialect of Mandarin to find the three uses of *gei³* co-occurring: *Ta¹ gei³ ta¹ gei³-gei le* 'He took it, and to someone's benefit (or harm), gave it away'.

TELIC PREDICATE

- (11) ʋo³ gei³ ta¹ mai³ cai⁴ qu⁴
 1sg BEN 3sg buy vegetables go
 'I went/am going to buy vegetables for her.'

ATELIC PREDICATE

- (12) ?ʋo³ gei³ ta¹ qu⁴
 1sg BEN 3sg go

Example (11) contains a telic predicate, that is, one that has a goal or endpoint (buying the vegetables), whereas (12) contains an activity verb. In Mandarin, we would need to substitute wei⁴ 'for the sake of' in place of gei³ to obtain a semantically acceptable sentence, as in (13), since constructions with wei⁴ are not subject to the semantic constraint of telicity for the predicate:

- (13a) ʋo³ wei⁴ ta¹ qu⁴
 1sg for:sake 3sg go
 'I went for his sake.'

- (13b) ʋo³ wei⁴ ta¹ qu⁴-le Nan²ji²
 1sg for 3sg go-PFV Antarctic
 'I went to the Antarctic for his sake.'

We¹³, unlike gei³, can be used in contexts where the beneficiary may be unaware of what the subject is doing on its behalf. Example (13a) could be interpreted e.g. as (13b) 'Because of him I went to the Antarctic' (perhaps to prove my devotion). This wei⁴ construction is similar to the Sgaw Karen use of lə ... ɾɔ² 'for the sake of', which will be discussed below. Benefactives in Sgaw Karen appear to be less restricted than in Mandarin, co-occurring with both telic and atelic predicates, as in (14) and (15):

TELIC PREDICATE

- (14) Jə θəkɔ⁴ lɛ⁶ ne² ja⁶ shu¹ phya¹
 1sg friend go BEN 1sg to market
 'My friend went to the market for me.'

ATELIC PREDICATE

- (15) Jə θəkɔ⁴ lɛ⁶ ne² ja⁶
 1sg friend go BEN 1sg
 'My friend went for me.'

Similarly, in a context where you eat a piece of cake instead of your friend but for your friend's benefit (perhaps because s/he is on a diet), we can use *ne*² in Sgaw Karen but not *gei*³ in Mandarin (only *wei*⁴):

(16) *Jə kə ʔɔ⁵ ne² na⁶ ko⁵khe⁴*
 1sg IRR eat BEN 2sg bread/cake
 'I will eat the cake for you.'

(17) *ʋo³ wei⁴ ni³ chi¹ dian³xin¹*
 1sg for 2sg eat snack
 'I'll eat the snack for your sake.'

The reason for the exclusion of atelic predicates in Mandarin, specifically the verb classes Vendler (1967:97-121) labels 'activity' and 'state', is that tangible benefit for the benefactive NP is difficult to interpret in atelic contexts (cf. Chappell, forthcoming). This is no doubt related to the semantics of the Mandarin full verb *gei*³, which seems to imply that a specific gain results. The logic goes like this (with reference to example (17): "If you eat my snack for me, what am I left with (even if in the long term this will be good for my health and figure)?" There is clearly no immediate (let alone tangible) benefit as a result of this event. To sum up this section so far, Mandarin requires a specific gain result for the benefactive NP, whereas for Sgaw Karen, where the exponent has its lexical source in the verb *ne*² 'to get', there is no such semantic prerequisite.

Furthermore, example (16) is more likely to be used in the context where the addressee has requested beforehand that I eat the cake, whereas in (18), with *lə ...ʔɔ²* 'for the sake of', it is more likely to be the subject who has taken the initiative to eat the cake for the sake of the addressee's health:

(18) *Jə kə ʔɔ⁵ ko⁵khe⁴ lə nə ʔɔ²*
 1sg IRR eat bread/cake for 2sg sake
 'I'll eat the cake for your sake.'

This construction in Sgaw Karen appears to be virtually unrestricted as to the verb class contained in its predicate.

Verbs of transferral, creation and destruction are all permitted. This includes verbs of transferral for both directions (giving and getting), as in (19) and (20) respectively:

- (19) *pva⁶pve⁶sha¹ta² sha¹ ne² ɔ⁶ hi⁵ tə-phlə⁵*
 person:buy:sell:thing sell BEN 3sg house one-CLF
 'The business person sold him a house.'
- (20) *ɔ[?]pha¹ti² pve⁶ ne² ɔ⁶ hi⁵ tə-phlə⁵ vi⁶li¹*
 3sg:uncle buy BEN 3sg house one-CLF COMP
 'Her uncle bought her a house.'

Note that there are two possible inferences for example (19): it could be interpreted as either the agent 'selling a house to him' or 'selling a house for him'. This is interesting, since Hermann (1979) makes a similar but stronger claim for Mandarin *gei³* and Thai *hâj*. She claims that these exponents build polysemous constructions, each having three possible interpretations: 'for a person', 'to a person', and 'instead of a person.' These three meanings are viewed in this study rather as contextual inferences of the core benefactive meaning, specifically, that the event or action represents something which the benefactive NP wants to come about.

Verbs of creation such as *kve⁴* 'to write' and *pho¹* 'to cook' are exemplified in (21) (and in Ex. 36, below).

- (21) *Təba⁵ θa¹pe⁶nɔ⁵ kve⁴ ne² ja⁶ li³ tə re⁶*
 NEG forget write BEN 1sg letter NEG good
 'Don't forget to write me letters!' OR: 'Don't forget to write letters to me!'

Example (21) refers either to letters both intended for and addressed 'to me', or to letters that are for 'my benefit' in the sense that receiving personal letters from friends is normally considered a desirable event.

Verbs of creation such as 'write' also have a second inferential possibility (as for *sha¹* 'sell' in (19) above): *proxy action*, e.g. writing a letter instead of someone else or *on their behalf*, as in the unfortunate case of a friend with a broken arm:

- (22) *Jə sɿ¹ ka² xo¹ // kve⁴ ne² ja⁶ li³ tə-be⁵*
 1sg arm broken because write BEN 1sg letter one-CLF
 'Write a letter for me because my arm is broken.'

Nonetheless, the end-effect similarly represents something that is desired by the beneficiary in the same way as wanting to be the potential recipient of a letter, as in (21).

Some of the components of meaning of (21) are also present in a related dative construction in Sgaw Karen, where the recipient or indirect

object is found in a prepositional phrase at the end of the clause. The dative in Sgaw Karen has the following form:

	AGENT	-	VERB	-	UNDERGOER	-	TO	-	RECIPIENT
(23)	$\theta ra^5 m \ddot{a}^5$		$k v \epsilon^4$		$l i^3 t \bar{e} - b e^5$		shu^1		$j \bar{e} . ? o^5$
	teacher:female		write		letter one-CLF		to		1sg:place
	'You [lit.woman teacher] wrote a letter to me.'								

The analogous construction in English is termed "external dative" by Green (1974), given the peripheral syntactic nature of the constituent containing the indirect object noun or "recipient". However, both the English and Sgaw Karen dative constructions exemplified above lack the benefactive feature (the feature of 'dative interest' or 'dative control'), namely, that the end-effect is one which is desired by the recipient. They are instead neutral statements of fact. Note that pronouns require co-occurrence of the locative verb $?o^5$ 'to be' in Sgaw Karen when preceded by the allative preposition shu^1 'to', as in (23).

With respect to verbs of destruction, an interesting contrast with the English internal dative arises. The English dative with ditransitive verbs has the identical word order to Sgaw Karen benefactives with the indirect object (or recipient) preceding the direct object or undergoer. This construction has been termed the "internal dative" by Green (1974) and Wierzbicka (1986) and is exemplified in (24). Unlike Sgaw Karen, there is no overt morphological marking for this dative:

ENGLISH INTERNAL DATIVE

AGENT - VERB - RECIPIENT - UNDERGOER

(24) The child wrote Santa Claus a letter.

Wierzbicka (1986:125) claims that, for English, the internal dative may only be used when (1) there is a tangible and specifiable effect on the 'target' (indirect object) and (2) this effect does not involve 'a drastic change of state' such as destruction of the direct object. This latter restriction results from the speaker's attention essentially being focussed on the indirect object. The indirect object or noun which receives dative marking in many European languages (see section 2.3 below) functions, in fact, as an alternative topic to the subject (cf. Thompson 1989 for a discourse analysis of the topicworthiness hierarchy for English datives and Neumann, in press, 1992, for German datives). Hence, the following examples from English are semantically awkward (if not unacceptable) by virtue of focussing on the effect on the direct object rather than on the internal dative NP, that is, the indirect object (acceptability judgements and examples from Wierzbicka 1986:125-126):

(25) ?Break me a stick. ?Kill me a spider. *They killed me a sister.

In contrast to this, such events can be coded by the benefactive in Sgaw Karen:

(26) *Ma⁶θi¹ ne² ja⁶ sho⁶ tə-be⁵*
 make:die BEN 1sg chicken one-CLF
 'Kill me a chicken.'

(27) *Ma⁶θε⁵pha⁴ ne² ja⁶ la⁶pha⁴ thi¹-khva⁴*
 make:break BEN 1sg tea cup
 'Break me a teacup!'

Both imperative utterances in (25) and (26) are understood as effects desired by the beneficiary, and for this reason are acceptable. This feature leads to our discussion of the kind of noun required to fill the role of beneficiary in section 2.3, showing a parallel with dative constructions in European languages.

2.3 Animacy of Benefactive Noun Phrase

Dative constructions in many European languages are closely related semantically to the benefactive constructions under discussion here in Sgaw Karen and Mandarin. In terms of syntax, ditransitive verbs and verbs of motion are found in the predicate, permitting expression of the three core grammatical roles of agent, direct object and indirect object (cf. Dixon 1973, Wierzbicka 1986, Thompson 1989 for discussion of English datives).

Within a given language, there can be a variety of dative constructions: ethical datives, datives of interest, datives of pertinence, experiencer datives, *dativus commodi/incommodi* (cf. Bally 1926, Neumann 1987). However, in general it is true to say that the dative case is used to mark the noun which is animate and is the indirect experiencer of the coded event. The noun in the dative case is thus typically affected in some way by an event directly involving the direct object. For this reason, in German, for example, the dative case is restricted to animate referents in all its free uses (Neumann 1987:20). The same applies to French datives (Bally 1926). Moreover, since the dative designates an experiencer, this noun must normally refer to a living person (or being) and not a dead one, as (28) shows for German (example from Neumann 1987:162-163):

(28) *Der Mann schüttelt dem Jungen [*dem Toten] die Hand*
 the man shakes the boy:DAT [*dead:man:DAT] the hand
 'The man shakes the boy's [*the dead man's] hand.'

Therefore, it is not surprising to find that in Sgaw Karen, the benefactive noun is typically animate. It is odd to say (29) for example, since normally we do not buy food for the house but for the people who live in it, that is, (29) is marginally acceptable in Sgaw Karen insofar as 'the people who live in house' is implied:

- (29) ?pə pve⁶ ne² hi⁵ ta²?⁵
 1pl buy BEN house food
 'We bought food for the house.'

Compare this with (30), where food is bought for the 'house spirit' rather than for the 'house':

- (30) pə pve⁶ ne² hi⁵ta² tə-χa⁵ ta²?⁵
 1pl buy BEN house:thing one-CLF(for spirits) food
 'We bought food for the house spirit.'

In fact, it is preferable to use the form *lə... Rɔ²* 'for the sake of; for' with inanimate and abstract nouns in Sgaw Karen:

- (31) pə pve⁶ ta²?⁵ lə pəhi⁵ əRɔ²
 1pl buy food for 1pl:house 3sg:sake
 'We bought food for our house.'

Similarly with abstract nouns such as *thi¹kɔ²* 'country' (in the sense of 'motherland' or 'fatherland') and *ta²ba¹* 'religion', it sounds more natural not to use *ne²*:

- (32) aʋε¹θe⁵ khɔ⁵ θi¹θa⁴ lə thi¹kɔ² əRɔ²
 3pl suffer death for country 3sg:sake
 'They died for the sake of their country.'

The discontinuous constituent *lə...Rɔ²* 'for the sake of' may be preposed before the main verb, with its form reduced to the postposition *Rɔ²*.

- (33) aʋε¹θe⁵ ne⁵ ta²ba¹ Rɔ² khɔ⁵ θi¹θa⁴
 3pl TOP religion sake suffer death
 'As for them, they died for their religion.'

Note the importance of the postposition *Rɔ²*. If it is omitted in (30), the meaning changes to 'As for them, their religion died'. Finally, both *ne²* and *lə... Rɔ²* may co-occur as in (6) above, with *ne²* marking the animate NP and *lə... Rɔ²* the abstract NP.

2.4 Semantic polarity of the end-effect

Essential for the analysis of this construction as a benefactive is the feature of the desirable nature of the event for the beneficiary. However, the event coded by the benefactive cannot simply be defined in terms of positive vs. negative value. More precisely, the event needs to be one that the benefactive NP wants to happen and perhaps has even requested. Thus, although many events with an adversative interpretation (e.g. Ex. 37 below) will be potentially excluded by this condition unless a special interpretation and context can be found, this does not mean that all adversative events are incompatible with the benefactive:¹¹ Consider example (34):

- (34) *Jəpho¹mɿ⁵ ma⁶θɛ⁵pha⁴ ne² ja⁶ ta²ʔ⁶ tə-tɿ¹*
 1sg:daughter make:break BEN 1sg object one-CLF
 'My daughter broke a statue for me.'

An event such as breaking a statue is normally considered unfortunate, particularly if it is a religious one. In the benefactive construction in example (34), it is interpreted, however, as something the beneficiary, in this case, the speaker, wanted the daughter to do. This feature is clearly evident in the related imperative form:

- (35) *Ma⁶θɛ⁵pha⁴ ne² ja⁶!*
 make:break BEN 1sg
 'Break it for me!'

In contrast to (35), consider the following pair of examples that code events which are generally viewed as desirable and undesirable respectively:

- (36) *Jə.və⁶ pho¹ ne² ja⁶ ha¹kho¹ ta²ʔ⁵*
 1sg:husband cook BEN 1sg evening food
 'My husband cooked dinner for me.'
- (37) *?Jə.və⁶ ma⁶u¹ʔ⁵ ne² ja⁶ ha¹kho¹ ta²ʔ⁵*
 1sg:husband make:burn BEN 1sg evening food
 'My husband burned dinner on me.'

¹¹ Note that in other Sino-Tibetan languages, such as Mandarin, *gei³* can be used as a marker of the adversative passive in some dialects. In Yue (Cantonese) *pei* is used as an exponent of both the recipient in dative constructions and as a passive marker. The case is similar for *hou* in Minnan (Hokkien) which marks passive and goal. Hermann notes (1979:110) that *háj* in Thai can also function as an exponent of the causative.

As can be seen, while it is possible to express both events (cooking and burning dinner) by means of the benefactive in Sgaw Karen, there are certain semantic ramifications. To begin with, the same event as in (37) has a different nuance of meaning when expressed by a simple S-V-O sentence, a fact which is important for explaining the use of the benefactive with this kind of event:

- (38) *Jə.wa⁶ ma⁶u¹ʔ⁵ ha¹kho¹ ta²ʔ⁵*
 1sg:husband make:burn evening food
 'My husband burned dinner.'

The event coded by (38) is understood as an accidental one whereas in (37), responsibility attributed to the subject and dissatisfaction on the part of the would-be beneficiary can be simultaneously expressed, thus permitting interpretation as an 'ironic benefactive'.

3. Conclusion

This study of the benefactive construction in Sgaw Karen has examined both its syntax and semantics in a cross-linguistic framework. With regard to its syntax, I have argued that the morpheme *ne²* forms a constituent with the following benefactive NP and cannot be considered an enclitic to the main verb. From the semantic perspective, I have shown that the benefactive construction occurs with a larger range of verb classes and predicate types than is the case for comparable constructions in Mandarin Chinese and English. The predicate need not be telic in Sgaw Karen as it must be for the corresponding *gei³* benefactive in Mandarin, nor are predicates coding a 'drastic change of state' such as destruction of the direct object excluded, as is the case for the English internal dative (cf. Wierzbicka 1986).

Nonetheless, Sgaw Karen, like many other languages, shows a close semantic relationship between dative and benefactive constructions. Cross-linguistic evidence shows that animacy of the dative NP ("recipient") or the benefactive NP ("beneficiary") is a semantic constraint for language families as divergent as Tibeto-Burman and Indo-European. Moreover, in benefactive constructions (and in many dative constructions such as the "dative of interest" in German), a salient semantic feature is that the event coded in the predicate must be one that the beneficiary wants to happen. We proposed this feature to characterize the event type in preference to the putative stronger claim of the 'fortunate or desirable nature of the event'.

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