‘Give’ constructions in Thai and beyond:  
A cognitive and grammaticalization perspective

Shoichi IWASAKI and Foong-Ha YAP  
University of California

Many languages of the world can express both benefactive and causative meanings with a single morpheme, e.g. Khasi (a Mon-Khmer language) (Henderson 1976), Austronesian languages, Indonesian (Tampubolon 1983) and Javanese (Horne 1961), Southern Sierra Miwok (a central Californian Indian language) (Broadbent 1964) and Swahili (a Bantu language) (Driever 1976), to name a few. In Indonesian, for example, the suffix -kan exhibits both a causative meaning and a benefactive meaning as shown in (1).

(1) Indonesian suffix -kan
Benefactive: mem-beli-kan ‘to buy X for Y’ < beli ‘to buy’
Causative: me-manas-kan ‘to make X hot’ < panas ‘hot’

This phenomenon can be understood as a consequence of the valence increase required for sentences with causative and benefactive meanings. However, it should be also be noted that in some languages the morpheme employed for these meanings can be traced to the lexical verb meaning ‘give.’ Thus in Lahu the verb pi (`give’) appears in a benefactive construction, as in cho pi ‘chop give’ (=chop for him/her/them), and in a causative construction, as in vsa pi ‘wear give’ (= dress someone), as shown in (2).

(2) Lahu verb pi ‘give’ (Matisoff 1991:427-428)
Benefactive: cho pi
    chop give = ‘chop for him/her/them’
Causative: vsa pi
    wear give = ‘dress someone’

Thai, Vietnamese, and Khmer also employ the word ‘give’ to express these meanings in their periphrastic constructions, but what is particularly interesting about these languages is the fact that the ‘give’ morpheme appears in different positions in a sentence. That is, in these languages, the ‘give’ morpheme appears as an adjunct after a clause in the benefactive sentence, while it appears before a clause in the causative sentence. These are illustrated in (3) to (5) on the next page. In (3a), the Thai benefactive sentence, the ‘give’ morpheme appears after the clause “Deang read a book” and specifies chan as the benefactee. The same structure can be
observed in the Vietnamese and Khmer benefactive sentences. In the causative sentence in (3b), on the other hand, the ‘give’ morpheme appears before a clause, “her child go see a movie,” functioning as a causative verb. The same structure is observed in Vietnamese and Khmer causative sentences.

In other words, the benefactive and causative present a mirror image of each other as schematically presented below. In the subsequent section, we will only consider Thai data to represent the three languages, but for the most part, the same descriptions apply to Vietnamese and Khmer as well.

Benefactive: [clause] GIVE NP

Causative: NP GIVE [clause]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefactive</th>
<th>Causative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thai</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thai</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3a) ๒ีฉ ๒ัน น๒งสูย หลาย ชัย</td>
<td>(3b) มีฉ หลาย ลูก ไม่ดู นัก</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deang read book GIVE me</td>
<td>mother GIVE child go see movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Deang read a book for me.’</td>
<td>‘Mother let her child go see a movie.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vietnamese</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vietnamese</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4a) nỏ go’i tho’ cho tôi</td>
<td>(4b) ông ấy không cho tôi thôi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 sent letter GIVE me</td>
<td>HON 3 NEG GIVE me resign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He sent a letter (to sm) for me.’</td>
<td>‘He wouldn’t let me resign.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Clark 1978:24)</td>
<td>(Matisoff 1991:429)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Khmer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Khmer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5a) kõat teï trœi ?aoy khñom</td>
<td>(5b) khñom ?aoy ?o:pûk teï sîwphû</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Buy fish GIVE me</td>
<td>I GIVE father buy book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘He bought the fish for me.’</td>
<td>‘I had my father buy the book(s)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mirror image of these structural patterns observed in these languages is significant because it allows us to consider possible developmental paths of the morpheme ‘give’ into different functions through structural re-analysis. The purpose of this paper, then, is to first show how structural re-analysis paves the way for new constructions to emerge, and to then consider semantic characteristics of the ‘give’ morpheme and relevant structures of the ‘give’ constructions, to suggest how structure and semantics influence the way in which linguistic changes occur. Our emphasis on structure is important, given the current trend in grammaticalization research which strongly emphasises cognitive and semantic motivations for language changes.

Before we account for the use of ‘give’ in benefactive and causative sentences in Thai, we should note that the benefactive function of ‘give’ has come
about from its lexical verb source via its function as a dative marker. This process is well attested in many unrelated languages and is easily reconstructed (Lord 1993; but see Heine et al. 1991 for a benefactive->dative argument). The idea is that the fundamental function of ‘give’ as a lexical verb is first re-analysed as marking the goal of a transfer object in a serialised or chained clause context, triggering a metaphorical extension to the goal of a transferred favour. This process is illustrated below by some examples from Japanese (which is geographically removed and genetically and typologically distinct from Thai, Vietnamese and Khmer.)

(6) Lexical verb: *yatta* (< *yaru* ‘give’)

    taroo ga hon o katte, hanako ni yatta
Taro NOM book ACC buy:TE Hanako DAT give:PST
‘Taro bought a book (and then) gave (it) to Hanako.’

(7) Auxiliary showing Goal: -*yatta*

    taroo ga hanako ni hon o katte-yatta
Taro NOM Hanako DAT book ACC buy:TE-give:PST
‘Taro bought a book for Hanako.’

(8) Auxiliary showing Benefactive: -*yatta*

    taroo ga hanako ni hon o yonde-yatta
Taro NOM Hanako DAT book ACC read:TE-give:PST
‘Taro read a book for Hanako.’

In (6), two clauses are connected through clause chaining with the first verb marked by the medial verb form, *katte* ‘buy:TE.’ The verb *yatta* ‘gave’ in this sentence is a lexical verb. Being a transitive verb specifying only the agent and patient, *katte* by itself cannot contain the goal argument, so the second clause with *yatta* must be included in the sentence. In (7), the two verbs are concatenated with the second member functioning as an auxiliary verb. This sentence is basically a benefactive sentence meaning ‘Taro bought a book for Hanako’, but the sense of a goal in the process of transferring an object (i.e. the book) is still strong because the verb *katte* ‘buy:TE’ typically involves a manual activity which can easily extend into another manual activity of giving the object to someone, i.e. handing over a thing. (8), on the other hand, clearly indicates the benefactive meaning. In this situation no concrete object is transferred because the verb, *yonde* ‘read:TE’, involves a verbal activity rather than a manual activity. What is transferred in (8), then, is the favour of reading a book. The three Japanese sentences above thus show one possible developmental path of grammaticalization from the lexical verb ‘give’ to a functional word of auxiliary capacity with the meaning of dative and benefactive. The following Yoruba (West Africa) data show another possible development of the lexical verb ‘give’ into more functional words, namely, dative and benefactive case markers (Lord 1993:35-36).
(9) Lexical verb: SPARENT ‘give’
ó .Transparent mi 1-ówó
he give me part.-money
‘He gave me some money.’

(10) Dative/Benefactive marker
ó tā-ā .Transparent mi
he sell-it give me
(a) ‘He sold it to me’
(b) ‘He sold it for me.’

(11) Benefactive marker
é pè é .Transparent mi
call him give me
‘Call him for me.’

In (9), .Transparent is the lexical verb ‘give.’ In (10), it can be interpreted as a dative preposition if the item actually transferred to ‘me’, or it can be interpreted as a benefactive preposition if no actual transfer of the item occurred but the action of selling it on ‘my behalf’ did. The ‘give’ morpheme in (11) is clearly a benefactive preposition because calling someone is an action which can be only interpreted as a favour. In both the Japanese and Yoruba data, the lexical word (verb) has developed into a functional word (an auxiliary verb for Japanese and a preposition for Yoruba). This is consistent with the overwhelming tendency of grammaticalization which develops a more functional word from a more lexical word. Based on this cross-linguistic tendency, it is reasonable to assume that a preposition-like function associated with  yap in Thai has also developed from the lexical verb yap in the evolution of the language. That is:

(12) Lexical verb: yap
ďęŋ yap ŋən chán
Deang GIVE money me
‘Deang gave me some money.’

(13) Dative marker
ďęŋ sūu nāŋsūu yap chán
Deang buy book GIVE me
‘Deang bought a book (and gave it) to me.’