The Grammatical Constructionalization and Cognitive Mechanisms of 
*Gěi* (GIVE) Construction in Mandarin

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GIVE constructions have been frequently-used and figure significantly in many languages. On the basis of construction grammar (Traugott & Trousdale 2013), this study investigates the constructionalization and constructional change of *Gěi* (GIVE) constructions in Mandarin Chinese by retrieving two corpora, and pinpoints the diachronic evolution of ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction, the cognitive motivations and mechanisms behind. Data have been extracted from CCL and BCC in terms of five Chinese historical periods (Ancient stage> Middle Ancient stage> Early Modern stage> Latter Modern stage> Contemporary stage). The results come as follow.

Firstly, ‘Gěi’ (GIVE) can function as a verb, preposition or auxiliary in Mandarin. ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction has evolved from the ditransitive construction ‘GIVE-O-DO’ in the Early Modern stage. The prototypic constructional meaning of ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ was benefactive in Yuan Dynasty (A.D. 1271~1368). In the succession of constructional changes, ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction has involved a gradual semasiological variation. The constructionalization of ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction has developed a constructional hierarchical network (Traugott 2007) and seven constructional meanings: benefactive(33%), enabling(17%), helping by replacing(25%), directional(12%), imperative(2%), passive(7%) and assisting(4%).

Secondly, the verb phrase in ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction has no direct semantic relation to the preposition-object construction ‘GIVE-O’, which leads to non-compositionality and high productivity of ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction, enhances the degree of schematicity, and influences the directionality of its grammatical constructionalization. Nevertheless, some particular verb phrases (e.g. *zāochéng* (make), *kànkàn* (look)) come to be the frequent collocations in this construction to convey conventional meanings. Moreover, in the constructionalization of ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction, the verb ‘Gěi’ (GIVE) has been grammaticalized as a preposition; the semantic role of the object has extended from the beneficiary; and the giving has become more abstract. The new “form-meaning” pairing of ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction has selected the semantic meanings of its components, and gained unique constructional meanings and various syntactic functions.

Last but not least, the constructionalization of ‘GIVE-O-Verb’ construction has been driven by the grammaticalization of ‘Gěi’, the constructional coercion, and conceptual nesting (Talmy 2000). The cognitive mechanisms in the process of constructional change involve the analogization in the local change of the form and neo-analysis in the expansion of semantic scope. The study offers several possible explanations for constructionalization of *Gěi* (GIVE) constructions from a cognitive, functional and diachronic perspective.

References