

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-IO-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 structure '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. *zàochéng* (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

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