

DOUBLE OBJECT AND SERIAL VERB BENEFACTIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN  
CANTONESE

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## Abstract

This paper examines a specific kind of syntactic alternation in Cantonese, involving a single verb benefactive construction, and a serial verb benefactive construction. The former is a ditransitive construction with a single predicate and two contiguous objects (double object construction). The latter comprises a verbal complex of two transitive predicates with non-contiguous objects in a monoclausal construction. Despite these differences in syntactic form, some speakers acknowledge that the two types of sentences accomplish the same function of expressing the benefactive. However, a second level of intuition produces some nuances in meaning, such as the ability of the serial verb construction to express the notion of *ultimate source* and *effort of action*. This paper proposes that, in expressing the benefactive, the Cantonese speaker decides between double object constructions and serial verb constructions. For any communication situation, the choice of one over the other depends on what secondary lexical conceptual semantic nuances the speaker intends. An LFG analysis of these two types of constructions is presented, with a proposal for incorporating a conceptual semantic level following Jackendoff (1990b), Butt (1995, 1997), Hellan (1996) and Bodomo (1993, 1997a) in order to handle the conceptual semantic nuances described.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Much of syntactic description and theorizing are concerned with the differing perspectives in which events that encode the same predicate-argument structures are rendered by speakers. Such syntactic alternations are handled in most grammatical frameworks, including LFG. Two well-known ones are the active/passive alternation and the dative shift. This paper is concerned with the second of these within the context of serializing languages. In particular, we are concerned with the alternating encoding of benefactive constructions by the use of double object constructions (DOCs) and serial verb constructions (SVCs).

The literature on *double object constructions*, henceforth DOCs (Larson 1988, 1990; Jackendoff 1990a), *dative shift*, the *object condition* (Siewierska 1998) and others related to *ditransitivity* has featured much in theories of syntax and semantics. Issues often addressed include (i) the number of NP arguments involved (monadic, dyadic and triadic predicates), and (ii) the ordering relation of the direct and indirect objects.

While this focus of attention on the arguments has produced a lot of results on the nature of benefactive constructions involving double object constructions, it seems that much examination of the nature of the predicate is still required. An issue to be taken up in this paper is that a single predicate construction (the DOC) and a complex predicate construction (the SVC) alternate in the expression of the same concepts/events encoded by the one predicate-argument structure.

The realization that a complex predicate can head a single predicate argument structure in benefactive constructions throws open a lot of issues: one of them is the problem of accounting for the co-existence of the single predicate benefactive constructions and complex predicate benefactive constructions. When and why do speakers choose one over the other?

This paper examines a specific kind of syntactic alternation in Hong Kong Chinese (Cantonese), involving a single verb benefactive construction, as shown in (1) and a serial verb benefactive construction, as shown in (2)<sup>1</sup>:

- (1) *ngo5 bei2-zo2 bun2 syu1 keoi5*<sup>2</sup>  
1.SG give-PERF CL book 3.SG  
'I have given him/her a book.'
- (2) *ngo5 lo2-zo2 bun2 syu1 bei2 keoi5*  
1.SG take-PERF CL book give 3.SG  
'I have taken a book for him/her.'

In (1) we have a ditransitive construction with a single predicate and two contiguous objects (a DOC). In (2), we have a verbal complex of two transitive predicates with non-contiguous objects in what appears to be a monoclausal construction (an SVC).

While expressing the same notion of transfer of ownership, speakers also note the following interesting nuances in meaning (among others):

- (3) i. The book in (1) may belong to the giver but in (2) the book may belong to someone else (the giver may not be the *ultimate source*).  
ii. In addition to just expressing the benefactive, the choice of the construction in (2) may emphasize more the *effort* or insistence of the giver.

This paper proposes that, in expressing the benefactive, the Cantonese speaker makes a choice between double object constructions and serial verb constructions (together with other constructions).

The choice depends on what secondary lexical conceptual semantic nuances the speaker intends. Two of these conceptual nuances are the *ultimate source* and the *effort of action*. In the paper we shall be more concerned with the notion of *ultimate source*.

The paper is structured as follows. The syntactic analysis of the two types of constructions is done in section two. In section three, we show how a conceptual structure representation might be incorporated along the lines of Jackendoff (1990b), Butt (1997), Hellan (1996), Bodomo (1997a, 1997b) and with the view to capturing the conceptual semantic nuances that are not encoded in predicate argument structure. Section four concludes the paper with a recapitulation of the issues raised.

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<sup>1</sup> Symbols and abbreviations used in this paper:

\* = Ungrammatical; 1 = First Person; 2 = Second Person; 3 = Third Person; Ag = Agent; Ben = Benefactive; CL. = Classifier; DEF = Definite Determiner; NEG = Negation Marker; OBJ = Object; OBJ2 = Secondary Object; PERF = Perfective Aspect; PN = Personal Name; PRED = Predicate; SG = Singular; SUBJ = Subject; Th = Theme.

<sup>2</sup> The romanization scheme adopted in this paper is based on the one developed by The Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (2002). There are altogether six tones in this scheme: 1 = high level; 2 = high rising; 3 = mid level; 4 = low falling; 5 = low rising; 6 = low level. The tone is marked at the end of each romanized character.

## 2. SYNTAX

In this section, we shall discuss the syntactic properties of single ditransitive verbs (dative/double object constructions) and serial verb constructions in Cantonese.

### 2.1 Double Object Constructions (DOCs)

As a first example, (5) is the Cantonese rendition of the English sentence in (4). This is the most typical example of a dative construction in Cantonese but also the most controversial in the language.

English:

- (4) *I have given him a book*  
SUBJ            OBJ2 OBJ

Cantonese:

- (5) *ngo5 bei2-zo2 bun2 syu1 keoi5*  
1.SG give-PERF CL book 3.SG  
SUBJ                    OBJ    OBJ2  
'I've given him/her a book'

*bei2* <Ag Th Ben>

As can be observed, there is an interesting contrast between the English and Cantonese constructions in terms of the relative positions of OBJ and OBJ2 (the accusative and the dative). Unlike in most languages, the Theme comes before the Dative/Ben, as can be seen in the above sketches of both c- and a-structure encodings.

Other double object constructions in the language, however, have the normal Benefactive/Theme order, as can be seen in (6):

- (6) a. *ngo5 ze3zo2 keoi5 sap6 man1*  
1.SG lend-PERF 3.SG ten dollars  
'I have lent him/her ten dollars.' OR 'I have borrowed ten dollars from him/her.'
- b. *keoi5 gaau3 ngo5 jing1man2*  
3.SG teach 1.SG English  
'S/he teaches me English.'

In (8), we provide a set of descriptive restrictions guiding the well-formedness of double object constructions in the language. The examples in (7) illustrate these restrictions/constraints.

- (7) a. *ngo5 bei2-zo2 bun2 hung4sik1ge3 syu1 siu2ming4*  
1.SG give.PERF CL red book PN  
'I have given a red book to Siu Ming.'

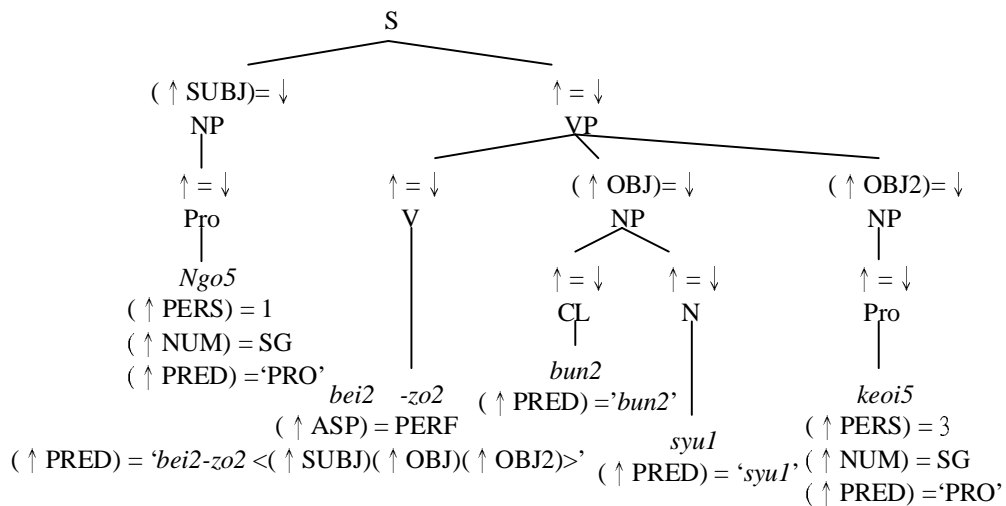
- b. \*ngo5    bei2-zo2    keoi5    siu2ming4  
 1.SG    give.PERF    3.SG    PN
- c. ngo5    bei2-zo2    bun2    hung4sik1ge3    syu1    keoi5  
 1.SG    give.PERF    CL    red    book    3.SG  
 ‘I have given a red book to him.’
- d. \*ngo5    bei2-zo2    keoi5    lei5  
 1.SG    give.PERF    3.SG    2.SG

(8) Restrictions

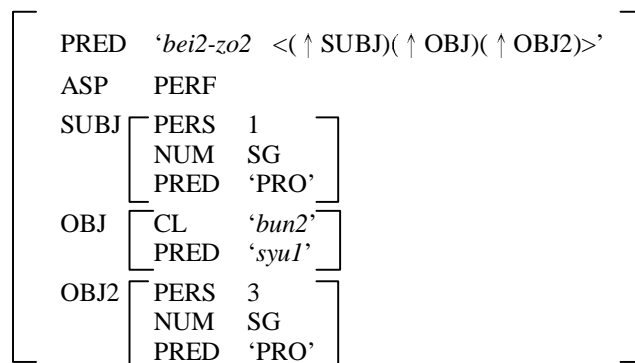
- Theme argument cannot be pronominalized (b).
- Benefactive argument can be pronominalized (c).
- The two non-Agent arguments cannot be pronominalized at the same time (d).

With these restrictions stated we provide below in (9) more elaborate c- and f-structures of our typical benefactive construction in Cantonese:

(9) a. C-structure:



b. F-structure:



With this brief account of double object benefactive constructions we now turn our attention to a brief description of serial verb benefactive constructions.

## 2.2 Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs)

Cantonese is a serial verb language (Killingley 1993, Matthews and Yip 1994, Bodomo and Lam 2001 and Luke and Bodomo to appear). Within a clause two or more verbs may be used to express an event or a set of tightly related events. Serial verb benefactive constructions constitute an alternative rendition of benefactive/dative constructions in the language. The following examples illustrate a typical set of SVCs expressing the benefactive:

- (10) a. *keoi5 lo2-zo2 bun2 syu1 bei2 ngo5*  
 3.SG take-PERF CL book give 1.SG  
 ‘S/he took the book and gave it to me.’
- b. *keoi5 maai3-zo2 hou2do1 je3 bei2 ngo5*  
 3.SG buy-PERF many thing give 1.SG  
 ‘S/he bought me many things.’

As can be seen, the typical second verb is *bei2*, though other verbs can fit the paradigm, as in (11):

- (11) *keoi5 jung6 zil coeng1 zi2zyu6 ngo5 go3 tau4*  
 3.SG use CL gun point 1.SG CL. head  
 ‘S/he is pointing a gun at my head.’

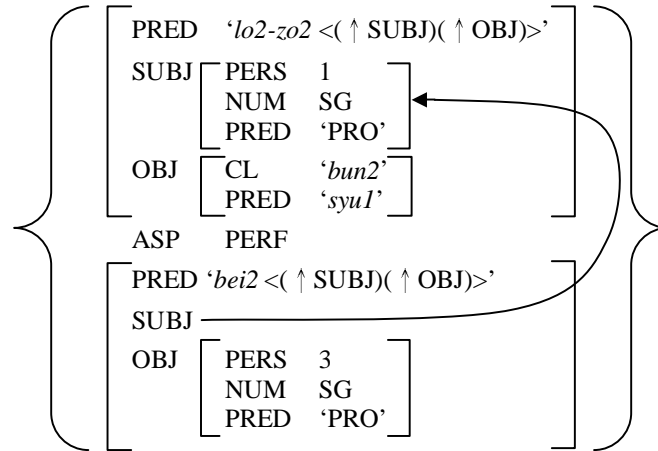
Some constraints on verb serialization in Cantonese are shown in (12):

- (12) Constraints on Serialization (in Cantonese) (Bodomo and Lam 2001):
- a. The subject sameness constraint  
 All the verbs in an SVC must share the same structural or functional subject.
  - b. The polarity constraint  
 All of the verbs in an SVC must have the same polarity, i.e. *either* all are understood in the affirmative or in the negative.
  - c. The connector constraint  
 There must neither be an overt or covert connector in the construction.

As in other languages, representation of the SVC is not without controversy. In short, it is possible to analyse it as a complementation construction (13), as a coordinate construction (14) or as a complex predicate construction (15).

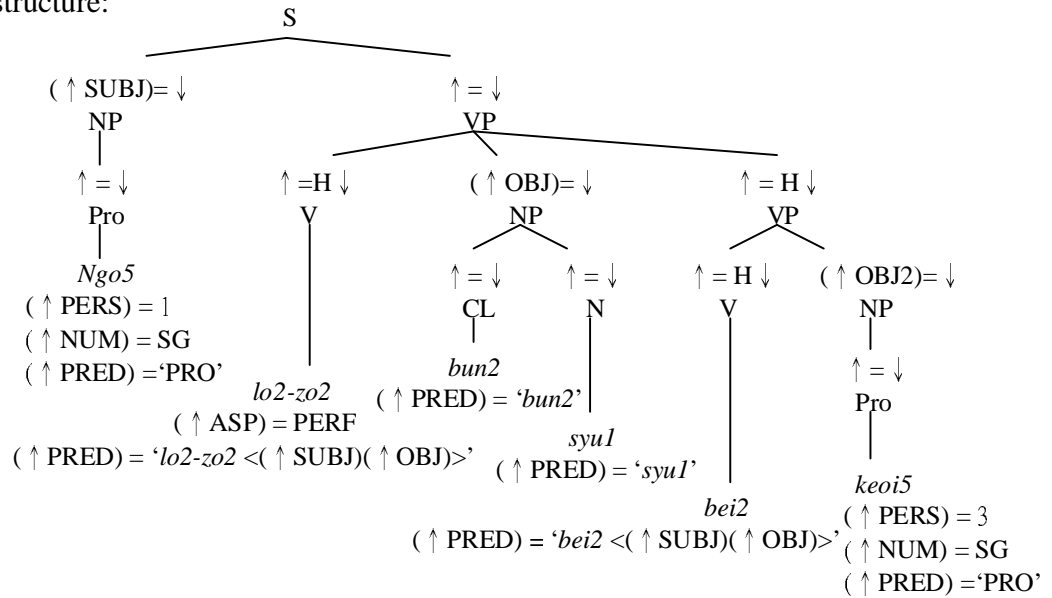


b. F-structure:

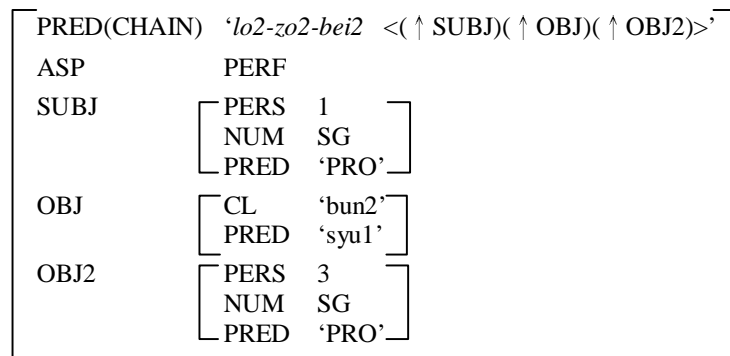


(15) Complex predicate construction

a. C-structure:



b. F-structure:





In this paper we opt for a complex predicate analysis<sup>3</sup>. Even though we are dealing with two verbal forms in benefactive SVC constructions, these verbs do actually undergo syntactic processes as if they were a single predicate item.

### 2.2.1. Negation in the Cantonese Benefactive Constructions

One piece of evidence for a complex predicate analysis comes from the syntax of negation in the language: the two or more verbs are usually under the scope of the same negative node in SVCs and other complex predicate constructions.

(16) Patterns of negation for single predicate benefactive constructions:

- a. *ngo5 mou5 bei2 bun2 syu1 keoi5*  
1.SG NEG give CL book 3.SG  
'I didn't give her/him a book.'
- b. *\*ngo5 bei2 mou5 bun2 syu1 keoi5*  
1.SG give NEG CL book 3.SG
- c. *ngo5 bun2 syu1 mou5 bei2 keoi5*  
1.SG CL book NEG give 3.SG  
'As for my book, I didn't give it to him/her.'
- d. *\*ngo5 bun2 syu1 bei2 mou5 keoi5*  
1.SG CL book give NEG 3.SG

(17) Patterns of negation for complex predicate benefactive constructions:

- a. *ngo5 maai5 fan6 lai5mat6 bei2 keoi5*  
1.SG buy CL gift give 3.SG  
'I buy a gift for him/her.'
- b. *ngo5 mou4 maai5 lai5mat6 bei2 keoi5*  
1.SG NEG buy gift give 3.SG  
'I did not buy any gift for him/her.'
- c. *\*ngo5 maai5 lai5mat6 mou4 bei2 keoi5*  
1.SG buy gift NEG give 3.SG

In both types of constructions, (16) and (17), the negative marker cannot come after the verb(s). This could be taken to mean that, for the case of complex predicates, both verbs must behave as a unit with respect to this fact of Cantonese negation marking<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> We would like to thank Joan Bresnan and Miriam Butt for mentioning other alternatives (Butt, King and Maxwell 2003) in the analysis of complex predicates.

<sup>4</sup> Argument structure composition: *lo2* <Ag<sub>i</sub> Th<sub>j</sub>>; *bei2* <Ag<sub>i</sub> Th<sub>j</sub> Ben> → *lo2..bei2* <Ag, Th, Ben> (argument fusion)

In this section, we have provided a brief description and representation of the two types of syntactic alternations for the expression of basic benefactive constructions. We now turn our attention to the kind of meaning nuances and conceptual structure encodings that underlie the choice of these two syntactic alternations.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL SEMANTICS

We begin this section by drawing a contrast between the two words/predicates and their argument structures for the sentences in (18) and (19):

(18) Give me the salt, please!  
*give* <Ag, Ben, Th>

(19) Pass me the salt, please!  
*pass* <Ag, Ben, Th>

In terms of (classical) argument structure, there is nothing to choose between the two predicates: (i) they are both triadic verbs/three-place predicates, (ii) they have the same thematic roles, and (iii) they have the same thematic role hierarchy following the Thematic Hierarchy (Bresnan 2001:307), stated below in (20):

(20) agent > beneficiary > experiencer/goal > instrument > patient/theme > locative

Yet, in terms of finer conceptual nuances there is a distinction between the two: in the case of the predicate, *pass*, the ultimate source of the salt may not be the overt agent but some other participant(s). It is possible to have the following rough lexical conceptual decomposition for the two lexical items:

- (21) a. *give*: [Participant 1 causes Salt to change possession to Participant 2]  
b. *pass*: [Participant 1 causes Salt to change possession through some other source to Participant 3]

Intuitively, the *pass*-salt event potentially involves more participant sources than the *give*-salt event. It seems clear that when speakers make a choice between these and similar closely related lexical items. They do so based on the finer distinctions between their lexical meanings, and this goes beyond the information categorizations represented in classical predicate argument structures.<sup>5</sup>

We want to claim that just as speakers choose between very closely related items in a lexical semantic paradigm/field based on finer conceptual semantic distinctions, so do they choose between syntactic alternations based on the finer conceptual nuances that such alternations come along with. We have already stated in (1) and (2), repeated below as (22) and (23), that when Cantonese speakers choose between DOCs and SVCs, one of the reasons they do so is to clearly

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<sup>5</sup> Speakers have also mentioned other nuances such as politeness and the fact that one involves a gift and the other may not, thereby introducing issues about the nature of the possession.

indicate the possibility of more source-participants in the event lexicalized by complex predicate serial constructions.

(22) *ngo5 bei2-zo2 bun2 syu1 keoi5*  
 1.SG give-PERF CL book 3.SG  
 ‘I have given him/her a book’

(23) *ngo5 lo2-zo2 bun2 syu1 bei2 keoi5*  
 1.SG take-PERF CL book give 3.SG  
 ‘I have taken a book for him/her’

Now, let us consider the following syntactic alternations in Cantonese in (24) and (25):

(24) *ngo5 ze3-zo2 keoi5 sap6man1* DOC  
 1.SG lend/borrow-PERF 3.SG ten dollars  
 ‘I have lent him/her ten dollars.’ OR  
 ‘I have borrowed ten dollars from him/her.’ (Preferred)

(25) *ngo5 ze3-zo2 sap6man1 bei2 keoi5* SVC  
 1.SG lend-PERF ten dollars give 3.SG  
 ‘I have lent him/her ten dollars.’

In (24), *ze3* is lexically ambiguous: it can mean both ‘borrow’ and ‘lend’. This makes (24) ambiguous, as *ngo5* can be either the Source or Goal/Ben. In (25), however, the lexical item can only have one meaning because the Source is explicitly expressed (with *keoi5* being the Goal, *ngo5* can only be the Source). Notice that the ‘borrow’ meaning is NOT allowed in (25). We claim therefore that a further reason that Cantonese speakers choose between the two alternations is to disambiguate potentially ambiguous sentences and express the participant roles more explicitly. In this case, the Source role comes out more clearly in the complex predicate benefactive construction than in the single predicate benefactive construction.

### 3.1 Conceptual Nuances and Levels of Representation

We have seen that beyond argument structure information such as number of arguments, types of arguments, and the order in which they occur, DOCs and SVCs also involve conceptual categorizations that are not represented in classical argument structure. Some of these conceptual nuances include ultimate source, effort of action, accomplishment, politeness ... etc. Indeed, in earlier works like Butt (1997), Hellan (1996) and Bodomo (1993, 1997a), other conceptual nuances include aspectual features such as stages of conceptualization with regards to complex predicates in Urdu and Dagaare.

The question now is: how should we represent these obvious cases of lexical conceptual nuances, or rather, at what level should we represent these?

One option is to incorporate these nuances into argument structure as follows:

(26) *lo2...bei2* <Ag, Th, Ben> {+ultimate source, +effort, etc.}

However, obviously, with the very structured nature of classical argument structure one cannot successfully incorporate these extra nuances. The above is simply a contiguous listing, a juxtaposition, of the activated conceptual nuances in the event.

The second option, as Jackendoff (1990b) seems to take, is to abstract a level of conceptual structure in place of argument structure. He divides this level into tiers, the Thematic Tier and the Action Tier. The figure in (27) is an example of Jackendoff's representation of the verb *enter* (Jackendoff 1990:46):

(27) 
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{enter} \\ \text{V} \\ \hline \text{<NP}_j\text{>} \\ \text{[Event GO ([Thing ]}_i\text{, [Path TO ([Place IN ([Thing ]}_j\text{)])]}] \end{array} \right]$$

This conceptual structure is built around a basic set of “semantic parts of speech” (Jackendoff 1990:43) including Thing (Object), Event, State, Action, Place, Path, Property, and Amount.

Butt (1995, 1997) takes a third approach and that is to place these conceptual nuances (aspectual features) in an “elaborated argument structure” (Butt 1997:129). An example of such a structure is shown in (28) with the verb ‘make’ in Urdu:

(28) 
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{banaa 'make'} \\ \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{CS ([}\alpha\text{], BE[ ])} \\ \text{AFF}_{+cc}([\ ]^\alpha, )} \\ \text{ASP (---)} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]_E$$

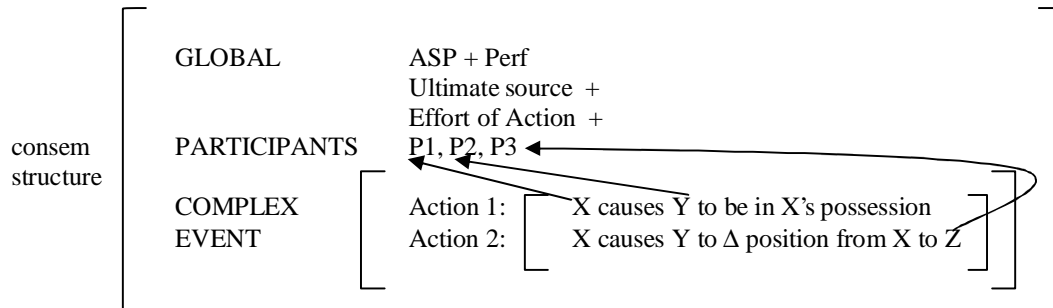
Butt's “elaborated a-structure” as shown above contains Jackendoff's Thematic Tier and Action Tier, the former representing the main semantic content of a lexical item with thematic functions such as GO, BE, CAUSE, etc., and the latter representing thematic/proto-roles (Dowty 1991) such as Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient.

This is understandable because, from an LFG point of view, argument structure is an important level of representation, which is indeed the basis of so many sub-theories with LFG such as the LMT. It would be good to maintain this level in one form or the other and then attempt to incorporate a sub-level of conceptual nuances.

### 3.2 Conceptual Structure with Argument Roles

In the paper we adopt a level of conceptual structure following Bodomo (1997) that incorporates argument roles. In short, this structure, adopting and adapting ideas from Jackendoff (1990b), Butt (1997) and Hellan (1996), contains a three tiered representation with argument structure as one of the tiers: event tiers, participant tiers, and global tiers, as shown in (29):

(29) ngo5 lo2-zo2 bun2 syu2 bei2 keoi5  
 1.SG take.PERF CL book give 3.SG  
 'I have taken the book for him/her.'



The Event Tier in our structure is the level at which lexical conceptual decomposition occurs. It is at this level, similar to the Thematic Tier that primary categories inherent in a denotational (dictionary) meaning of a predicate are spelt out. In this case we have a complex event. This tier links up to a complex predicate in the syntax, comprising *lo2* 'take' (X causes Y to be in X's possession) and *bei2* 'give' (X causes Y to change possession from X to Z).

The Participant Tier is where participants in the event are identified and abstracted for the purposes of linking. This plays the role of argument structure, such that all the sub-theories connected to and dependent on argument structure are still applicable here. So information from Event structure can identify P1, P2 and P3 as Ag, Th and Ben, and the LMT can thus apply giving us:

(30) lo2...bei2 <Ag Th Ben>  
 -o -r +o  
 | | |  
 S O O<sub>θ</sub>

The Global Tier is a bit of a pot-pourri, and is important in capturing all the finer conceptual nuances that run over the entire construction, not just at the predicate level alone. This is a construction level description of events, hence the term GLOBAL. The items here such as aspectual features of inception, duration and termination, attitude, hedgings, politeness and such finer role categorizations like ultimate source, nature of possession and types of goals have scope over the entire construction and link up to syntactic level phenomena such as negation, modality, tense and aspect.

### 3.3 The Ultimate Source

It is precisely at this level that we encode the fact that the complex structure of serial verb benefactive constructions allows the Cantonese speaker to express more conceptual notions, including the *ultimate source* and *effort of action*, which we define as follows:

- (31) a. *Ultimate source* - That point of departure from which an entity moves via transmitters/intermediate sources to a goal  
 b. *Effort of action* - An expression of the persistence with which the actor/agent accomplishes the action

Is there any motivation or necessity for introducing these conceptual nuances and is this the right way to represent these? Both in terms of description and theory, these are motivated. Descriptively, it is clear that speakers do indeed exhibit this notion of differing sources in the *bei2* and *lo2-bei2* events. These ought to be encoded. Theoretically, it is possible to talk of different types of roles (e.g. Jackendoff (1990:261) talks of two types of goals: possessional goals and spatial goals). Jackendoff (1990:46-47) defines Source and Goal respectively as follows: ‘the object from which motion proceeds’ and ‘the object to which motion proceeds’. It doesn’t necessarily have to be ‘the object’ but indeed “objects”. In this sense then there is a theoretical possibility to abstract different types of sources, goals and other kinds of thematic roles. There is the need to encode the ultimate source in our grammar.

Is this the right way to represent it? We have in this paper attempted a preliminary sketch by indicating its presence in the form of a feature structure with a positive value. Being in our Global Tier it has a universal presence with regards to the whole complex predicate benefactive construction.

### 3.4 Cross-linguistic Extrapolations

The observations made in this paper about the choices speakers make between DOC and SVC benefactive constructions also work for a serializing language like Dagaare (Bodomo 2000):

- (32) *̀n dà kò’ó lá à gánè*  
 1.SG PAST give.3.SG FOC DEF book  
 ‘I gave him/her the book.’

- (33) *̀n dà dé lá à gánè kò’ó*  
 1.SG PAST take FACT DEF book give.3.SG  
 ‘I took the book for him/her.’ OR ‘I gave/donated him/her a book.’

The construction in (32) is a DOC while that in (33) is an SVC in Dagaare. Like their Cantonese counterparts, the construction in (32) expresses the *ultimate source* (in this case, the speaker is likely to be the *ultimate source*, or the owner of the book) while that in (33) is more concerned with the *effort* that the speaker made with respect to the *action* described.

English: In reading the abstract to this paper a reviewer remarked that a language like English also has the same oppositions as the Cantonese and wondered what the point was. That is indeed the point! Usually in linguistics something is observed in English and frantic efforts are then made to obtain cross-linguistic confirmations from other languages. We are happy that the observation, even though made with respect to serialization languages, also seems to work well with a non-serializing language like English, as shown in (34) where the rendition in (34b) behaves more like a serial verb benefactive construction in expressing the ultimate source:

- (34) a. She gave me a book.  
b. She took a book for me.

The specific observation we have made for Cantonese in this paper with regards to the syntactic alternation between double objects and serial verbs may generalize to the idea that complex predicates and other more complex constructions serve to express various conceptual nuances that their single predicate counterparts could not express. A study of such alternations and choices governing them would be useful towards more finer-grained representations of linguistic categorizations such as source and goal.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

A careful examination of the syntax and semantics of alternating grammatical constructions such as active/passive and dative shift alternants can unearth some interesting conceptual nuances. In this paper, we have examined a particular syntactic alternation expressing the conceptual notion of transfer of ownership/possession. Transfer of ownership or possession in Cantonese can be expressed by two benefactive constructions, one involving a double object construction as in (1) and the other involving a serial verb construction as in (2).

We have discovered that, in addition to expressing the agent/source, theme, and benefactive/goal arguments in the predicate argument structure of benefactive constructions in Cantonese, there are at least two ancillary conceptual notions that also need to be expressed: the *ultimate source* and the *effort of action*. The desire to express ancillary conceptual notions put into question the ability of argument structure to express all necessary conceptual notions relevant to syntax. After brief syntactic descriptions of the two constructions in section two, we addressed this question of how to represent conceptual nuances. Adapting ideas from Jackendoff (1990b), Butt (1997) and Hellan (1996), we proposed a conceptual structure representation as in (29). This conceptual structure representation has room for argument structure, such that all the sub-theories and principles within LFG, such as LMT, that depend on argument structure can still hold at this level and yet allow room for (i) a lexical semantic decomposition of the contributing predicates in an event, and (ii) a representation of conceptual nuances including aspectual properties such as inception and termination, and (iii) finer-grained categorizations of roles such as the ultimate source.

There are several advantages to such an approach. First, syntacticians have often left finer-grained issues like attitudes, politeness, and nuances like hedgings to the arena of pragmatics, discourse analysis and even socio-linguistics. Our approach proposes a lexicalist treatment of these issues. A second advantage of our approach lies in language learning. We suspect that such conceptual nuances and finer-grained categorization of lexical and syntactic notions will pose problems for learners of any language. Such conceptual nuances involving even single predicates like ‘give’ and ‘pass’ and certainly alternating syntactic constructions as we have studied here would be among the last to be acquired by learners. A focus of interest on these issues among syntacticians would provide more insights for language learning.

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