

# SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS OF THE BENEFACTIVE CONSTRUCTION in Moulmein Sgaw Karen<sup>1</sup>

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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 subfamily (Benedict 1976; Shafer 1974; Weidert 1987). Sgaw Karen, the language investigated in this analysis, represents the largest subgroup within Karenic (Jones 1961:v) with sizeable populations living in both Myanmar (formerly Burma) and Thailand.

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

An example of this construction is provided below:

SGAW KAREN BENEFACTIVE CONSTRUCTION WITH *NE*<sup>2</sup>

	AGENT -	VERB	- <i>NE</i> <sup>2</sup>	- BENEFICIARY -	UNDERGOER
(1)	<i>θo<sup>1</sup>kha<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>so<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>ne<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>na<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>tə-phlə<sup>5</sup></i>
	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*<sup>3</sup> (<'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; Thu (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 broadly semantically defined and, in addition, constraints on 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.

### 1.2 Language classification within Sino-Tibetan

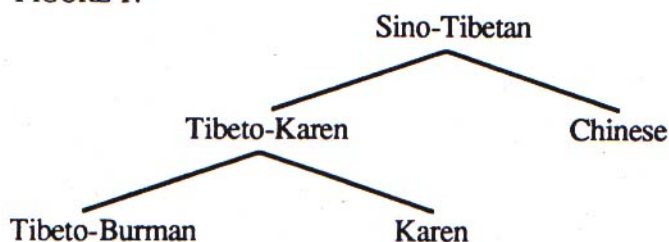
Karen is a minority language spoken in large areas of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) and Thailand. It is generally held that the Karen group of languages belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan, although its position within Sino-Tibetan has been a topic of debate. One of the reasons for its problematical status is the fact that Karen has basic word order, unlike other Tibeto-Burman languages which are mainly 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 grouping of Tibeto-Karen. Consider Figure 1:

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was first presented at the 24th International Conference of Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics held in Thailand from 7—11 October at both Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok and Chiangmai University in Chiangmai.

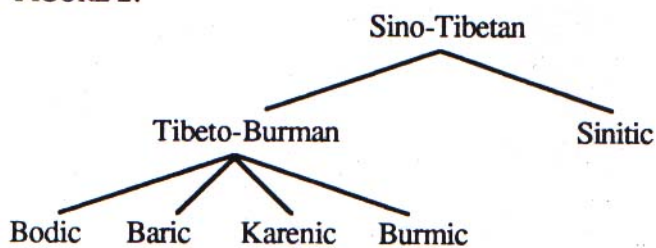
FIGURE 1:



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

We use Shafer's classification (1974) of Karen as representative of this second approach with the caveat that subgroupings of Tibeto-Karen and names for language groupings will differ 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 as a result of both underenumeration - many Karen live in areas not under direct government control - and exclusion of some smaller groups of Karen speakers.

Within Karenic, three major subgroupings have been identified by Jones (1961:v) Sgaw, Pho and Bwe, Shafer (1974) - coastal, mountain and delta - and Bradley (1990) - northern, central and southern. Within Sgaw Karen, which represents the largest subgrouping within Karenic of 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 Karen with data from Alfred Saw Keh, a speaker from the town of Hpa-an (Pa'an) in eastern Myanmar, not far from the border with Thailand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I am very grateful to Mr Alfred Saw Keh for his many hours of assistance in preparing this study of Karen benefactives. Alfred Saw Keh is a native speaker of Moulmein Sgaw Karen and is bilingual in Burmese and English. In Myanmar, 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 - June and from July - November in 1989 and again in October - December 1991. From this point on in the study, wherever I use the term "Sgaw Karen", the Moulmein dialect of the language is intended, which (1) respects the consultant's classification of his dialect and (2) is confirmed by my analysis of the phonemic and tone system which tallies closely with that described for Moulmein Sgaw Karen by Jones (1961:63), with expected differences involving regular correspondences given that the speakers involved in each case come from different towns in this dialect area (see my comments in the phonological description below).

#### 1.4 Typological features of Sgaw Karen

Sgaw Karen is an S-V-O tonal language of the isolating or analytic type characterised 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 description of pronominal system below). There is however, a number of morphemes which are undergoing grammaticalisation to take on case-like and aspect functions such as the exponent of the benefactive construction *ne*<sup>2</sup> which is related to and homophonous with the verb ‘to get’. This is the subject of the study presented below.

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

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

p	t	c	k	□
ph	th	ch	kh	
b	d	ɟ		
	θ	s	□	(x)~χ
		sh	(j)	(ɣ)~R <sup>3</sup>
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: For example, the voiced palatal stop is often found in loans of Burmese origin such as /ja<sup>1</sup>/ ‘tiger’.

The 7 fricatives include one aspirated-unaspirated contrast for the alveolar position as well as one 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 *jo*<sup>3</sup> ‘deep’ accounting for its tentative placement in parentheses under fricatives.

The 8 sonorants include 4 nasals, 2 glides, a lateral and a rhotic, trilled /r/, which typically occurs as C2 in consonant clusters but also acts as an allophone of /d/ in syllable-initial position, for example as in *do*<sup>4</sup> ~ *ro*<sup>4</sup> ‘and’.

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

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

TABLE 2: **Vowels of Moulmein Sgaw Karen** (HPA-AN dialect)

Front	Central	Back
i	ɨ	u
e	əo	
ɛ	a	ɔ

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.<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 3: **Tones of Moulmein Sgaw Karen** (HPA-AN dialect)

Tone Number	Phonation type	Y.R.Chao system	Example
1.	High level, plain phonation	4-4	<i>kɔ̌<sup>1</sup></i> ‘difficult’
2.	Falling, breathy	3-1	<i>kɔ̌<sup>2</sup></i> ‘country’
3.	Low falling contour, creaky	2-1	<i>kɔ̌<sup>3</sup></i> ‘throat’
4.	Mid-level pitch, glottalized	3-□	<i>kɔ̌<sup>4</sup></i> ‘call out’
5.	High pitch, glottalized	5-□	<i>kɔ̌<sup>5</sup></i> ‘gossip’
6.	Low pitch, murmured	1-1	<i>kɔ̌<sup>6</sup></i> ‘withhold’

Jones (1961) collapses the tone system into a 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 above), 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 which is indicated in the language examples by the absence of an arabic numeral following the syllable.

Tone sandhi occurs, particularly as one would predict, in fluent passages of ‘he conversational discourse. At this stage of research, the author has not yet fully investigated the mechanism of tone change, hence all morphemes are given their tonal values for citation forms.

As for many other Tibeto-Burman languages, the syllable structure is a basic CV one with, however, consonant clusters of *obstruent* + *lateral/glide/rhotic* being permitted in syllable initial position: Examples are *pwa<sup>6</sup>* ‘person’; *θra<sup>5</sup>* ‘teacher’ and *pli<sup>6</sup>* ‘be afraid’.

In the texts and data elicited so far, the combination of *obstruent* + /j/ has only been attested once only for *phya<sup>1</sup>* ‘market’.

<sup>4</sup> 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  $\square o^1$  ‘drink’. Likewise, the restricted nature of both consonant clusters and the number of consonants permitted in syllable-final position is a typological feature of Sino-Tibetan. Following Matisoff’s schema (1989), the syllable canon for Sgaw Karen can be described as

$$[C1 (C2)] \overset{T}{V} \quad \text{where } C2 = \text{approximant.}$$

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

- (i) Subject and possessive forms are identical, excepting 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, for example, in topic position.

The pronominal system of Sgaw Karen is provided below to assist in reading the language 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.	$awε^1$	$ɔ^6$	$awε^1$

The possessive form for 3sg is ? + Noun while that for 3pl is  $awε^1$  + Noun.

Plural:

	SUBJ/POSS	OBJECT/OBLIQUE	FOCUS
1.	$pə$	$pwa^6$	$pwe^6$
2.	$θi^1$	$θi^1$	$θi^1 wε^1 θe^5$
3.	$awε^1 θe^5$	$awε^1 θe^5$	$awε^1 θe^5$

Note that there are many other forms for third person than listed here. The first person singular pronoun has a familiar form *khwal* which contrasts with the formal  $je \sim ja^6$  listed above. In addition, sociolinguistic factors such as relative social status, age and kin relationship will also 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 -	NE	BENEFICIARY - UNDERGOER		
(2)	$θo^1 kha^1$	$so^1$	$ne^2$	$na^6$	$na^3$	$tə-phlā^5$
	monk	carry	BEN	2sg	basket	one-CLF
	‘The monk carried the basket for you.’					

The exponent of the benefactive construction in Sgaw Karen –  $ne^2$  - 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’ in this study 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 *ne*<sup>2</sup> is related to a full verb which means ‘to get’, exemplified in (3):

- (3) *dɔ<sup>4</sup> dɔ<sup>1</sup>pɩ<sup>2</sup>wɛ<sup>2</sup> θə<sup>1</sup> Ra<sup>6</sup> ta<sup>2</sup> lə<sup>1</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> wɛ<sup>1</sup>ne<sup>5</sup> hɛ<sup>1</sup>ke<sup>6</sup> sɔ<sup>3</sup> wɛ<sup>1</sup>*  
 and brother 3 CLF thing REL **get** thing return 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...ba*<sup>5</sup> surrounding the verbal element.

- (4) *ta<sup>2</sup>pu<sup>6</sup> khɔ<sup>1</sup> pha<sup>4</sup> jo<sup>3</sup> ji<sup>1</sup> thɔ<sup>5</sup> da<sup>1</sup>ke<sup>6</sup> wɛ<sup>1</sup> tə ne<sup>2</sup> ba<sup>5</sup>*  
 hole as very deep INT climb again thing NEG **get** NEG  
 ‘As the hole was extremely deep, (the rabbit) could not climb out again.’  
 [*The Rabbit and the Tiger*]

The benefactive marker *ne*<sup>2</sup> must strictly follow the main verb as otherwise it will be interpreted by its verbal meaning ‘to get’, shown by the contrast of example (5) with (6):

BENEFACTIVE *ne*<sup>2</sup>

- (5) *awɛ<sup>1</sup>θe<sup>5</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> ne pwa<sup>6</sup> thi<sup>1</sup>kɔ<sup>2</sup> ta<sup>2</sup>θəble<sup>1</sup>*  
 3pl get BEN 1pl country independence  
 ‘They got the country’s independence for us.’

VERBAL *ne*

- (6) *awɛ<sup>1</sup>θe<sup>5</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> pwa<sup>6</sup> lə thi<sup>1</sup>kɔ<sup>2</sup> ta<sup>2</sup>θəble<sup>1</sup> əRɔ<sup>2</sup>*  
 3pl get 1pl for country independence sake  
 They got us for the sake of the country’s independence.’

Jones (1961:49,55) analyses *ne*<sup>2</sup> in its benefactive function as a verb which is the object of a preceding primary verb: He states (1961:55) that a predicative construction as an ‘object extension is infixes, so to speak, into the verb construction after the primary verb, including any aspectuals it may have’.

One of his examples is *yo? ne ja li* ‘crying for me already’ which has the morpheme-by-e morpheme analysis: ‘cry-get-me-already’<sup>5</sup>. Hence, although he translates it as ‘for’ in English, his view is quite different to the one taken in this paper since he treats this secondary function of *ne*<sup>2</sup> as verbal.

Solnit (1987:148,157) similarly treats the benefactive marker in Eastern Kayah (Red Karen) *pè* as a postverbal particle or ‘Verb Complex final particle’ which adds an extra participant role to the clause, namely, the benefactive (or malefactive), grouping it with postverbal aspect particles.

This raises the question of whether or not *ne*<sup>2</sup> is an enclitic to the main verb.<sup>6</sup> First, we need to distinguish constituency as a clitic from that of a compound verb such as *ma<sup>6</sup>ne<sup>2</sup>* ‘to obtain, get’ where *ne*<sup>2</sup> ‘get’ has equal status syntactically with *ma<sup>6</sup>* ‘to do, act, cause’. If the benefactive exponent *ne*<sup>2</sup> ‘for’ is a clitic to the preceding main verb then we would expect other constituents not 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*<sup>2</sup>:

- (7) *Awe<sup>1</sup> ba<sup>3</sup>-kwi<sup>3</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> (\*kwi<sup>3</sup>) ja<sup>6</sup> ta<sup>2</sup>Ru<sup>2</sup>kha<sup>1</sup> ku<sup>1</sup>ka<sup>6</sup>*  
 3sg put:away-PFV BEN (\*PFV) 1sg winter clothes  
 ‘S/he’s put away my winter clothes for me.’

If *ne*<sup>2</sup> were joined to the verb as an enclitic or suffix then the aspectual marking should have both in its scope and not just the main verb. According to this reasoning, *kwi*<sup>3</sup> should, then, follow the combination of *ba<sup>3</sup>-ne<sup>2</sup>* ‘put away-for’ which (7) shows is not permitted.

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

- (8) *Awe<sup>1</sup> pho<sup>1</sup> khle<sup>1</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> (\*khle<sup>1</sup>) ja<sup>6</sup>*  
 3sg cook quickly BEN (\*quickly) 1sg  
 ‘S/he cooked it quickly for me.’

Both these syntactic arguments support the view that *ne*<sup>2</sup> 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*<sup>2</sup> 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*<sup>2</sup> 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*<sup>2</sup> ‘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

<sup>5</sup> The same sentence from my consultant is *h<sup>5</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> ja<sup>6</sup> li<sup>1</sup>* due to slight dialectal difference whereby the velar fricative of Jones’ Moulmein speaker corresponds in a regular manner to the glottal fricative of my speaker from Hpa-an. Contrast the initial consonant of the verb ‘to cry’.

<sup>6</sup> I thank Lon Diehi for raising this question. Data from two other Karenic languages which belong to the Kayah subgrouping and are currently under investigation show similar exponents of the benefactive to Sgaw: David Solnit (pers. comm.) describes the Karenic language grouping of Eastern Kayah as using the verb *pè* ‘to transfer’ in the function of a verb particle to mark the benefactive in postverbal position: VERB + *pè*. In the Western Kayah dialect of *m<sup>3</sup>kh<sup>3</sup>r<sup>3</sup>shié*, the benefactive is formed by a discontinuous postverbal phrase VERB + *pe*<sup>55</sup> + OBJECT + *ne*<sup>45</sup> (J. Fraser Bennett, pers. comm.) with both the verb ‘to transfer’ and the verb ‘to get’ being used in this secondary grammatical function.

this secondary grammatical function: In Mandarin, the benefactive marker is *gei*<sup>3</sup> which is formally and semantically related to the verb ‘to give’ (cf. Thu 1979, Chappell forthcoming). In fact, Teng (1975) states that it has the same semantic content. In Thai, the marker of the benefactive *hai* is similarly related to the verb ‘to give’ (cf. Hermann 1979:107) while the verb *daayrap* ‘to get, obtain, receive’ is the exponent of the benefactive passive (see Panakul 1991:2).

The syntactic form in Mandarin differs from Sgaw Karen in placing the benefactive noun phrase before the verb:<sup>7</sup>

- |     |                         |                         |                       |                         |                          |                         |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|     | AGENT - VERB -          | <b>GEI</b> <sup>3</sup> |                       | BENEFICIARY - UNDERGOER |                          |                         |
| (9) | <i>Di<sup>4</sup>di</i> | <i>gei<sup>3</sup></i>  | <i>wo<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>dai<sup>4</sup></i>  | <i>yi-he<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>tang<sup>2</sup></i> |
|     | brother                 | Ben                     | 1sg                   | carry                   | one-CLF                  | sweets                  |
- ‘My younger brother carried a box of sweets for me.’

In Mandarin, the co-occurrence of benefactive *gei*<sup>3</sup> as in (10) with the full verb *gei*<sup>3</sup> is semantically awkward for most speakers but not impossible:<sup>8</sup>

- |      |                          |                       |                        |                         |
|------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| (10) | ? <i>Gei<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>ta<sup>1</sup></i> | <i>gei<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>tang<sup>2</sup></i> |
|      | BEN                      | 3sg                   | give                   | sweets                  |
- ‘(Someone) gave her some sweets for her

This is not the case, however, in Sgaw Karen, where both verbal and benefactive *ne*<sup>2</sup> 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):

- |      |                       |                        |                       |                        |                        |                       |
|------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
|      | TELIC PREDICATE       |                        |                       |                        |                        |                       |
| (11) | <i>Wo<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>gei<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>ta<sup>1</sup></i> | <i>mai<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>cai<sup>4</sup></i> | <i>qu<sup>4</sup></i> |
|      | 1sg                   | BEN                    | 3sg                   | buy                    | vegetables             | go                    |
- ‘I went/am going to buy vegetables for her.’
- |      |                         |                        |                       |                       |
|------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|      | ATELIC PREDICATE        |                        |                       |                       |
| (12) | ? <i>Wo<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>gei<sup>3</sup></i> | <i>ta<sup>1</sup></i> | <i>qu<sup>4</sup></i> |
|      | 1sg                     | BEN                    | 3sg                   | go                    |

<sup>7</sup> There are two further constructions in Mandarin which have *gei* as their exponent. One has *gei*<sup>3</sup> 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 *gei*<sup>3</sup> as the second verb. I will not discuss either here (for a description, see Zhu 1979, 1983 and Chappell forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> Chao (1968:331-332) claims that it is possible in the Peiping (Beijing) dialect of Mandarin to find the three uses of *gei*<sup>3</sup> co-occurring: *Tai gei<sup>3</sup> tai gei<sup>3</sup>-gei le* ‘He took it., and to someone’s benefit (or harm), gave it away’ as one possible interpretation.

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 *wei*<sup>4</sup> ‘for the sake of’ in place of *gei*<sup>3</sup> to obtain a semantically acceptable sentence, as in (13), since constructions with *wei*<sup>4</sup> are not subject to the semantic constraint of telicity for the predicate. *Wei*<sup>4</sup> unlike *gei*<sup>3</sup> can be used in contexts where the beneficiary may be unaware of what the subject *wo*<sup>3</sup> ‘I’ is doing on their behalf. Example (13) could be interpreted as: ‘because of him that I went to the Antarctic, for example, to prove my devotion’. The *wei*<sup>4</sup> construction is similar to the use of *lə ... Rə*<sup>2</sup> ‘for the sake of’ in Sgaw Karen which will be discussed below.

- (13) *Wo*<sup>3</sup> *wei*<sup>4</sup> *ta*<sup>1</sup> *qu*<sup>4</sup> (*Wo*<sup>3</sup> *wei*<sup>4</sup> *ta*<sup>1</sup> *qu*<sup>2-le</sup> *Nan*<sup>2</sup>*ji*<sup>2</sup>)  
 lsg for:sake 3sg go lsg for 3sg go-PFV Antarctic  
 ‘I went for his sake.’ (‘I went to the Antarctic for his sake.’)

Benefactives in Sgaw Karen appear to be less restricted than in Mandarin, co-occurring with both telic and atelic predicates in (14) and (15) respectively:

- TELIC PREDICATE  
 (14) *Jə* *θək*<sup>4</sup> *lɛ*<sup>6</sup> *ne*<sup>2</sup> *ja*<sup>6</sup> *shu*<sup>1</sup> *phyə*<sup>1</sup>  
 lsg friend go BEN lsg to market  
 ‘My friend went to the market for me.’

- ATELIC PREDICATE  
 (15) *Jə* *θək*<sup>4</sup> *lɛ*<sup>6</sup> *ne*<sup>2</sup> *ja*<sup>6</sup>  
 lsg friend go BEN lsg  
 ‘My friend went for me.’

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

- (16) *Jə* *kə* □<sup>5</sup> *ne*<sup>2</sup> *na*<sup>6</sup> *ko*<sup>5</sup>*khe*<sup>4</sup>  
 lsg IRR eat BEN 2sg bread:cake  
 ‘I will eat the cake for you.’
- (17) *Wo*<sup>3</sup> *wei*<sup>4</sup> *ni*<sup>3</sup> *chi*<sup>1</sup> *dian*<sup>3</sup>*xin*<sup>1</sup> (\**gei*<sup>3</sup>)  
 lsg 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 (cf. Chappell forthcoming). This is no doubt semantically related to the lexical source of the Mandarin benefactive exponent in the verb *gei*<sup>3</sup> which leaves its semantic imprint in the form of a constraint that a specific gain result. 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 that gain for the benefactive NP result whereas for Sgaw Karen where the exponent has its lexical source in the verb *ne*<sup>2</sup> ‘to get’, there is no such semantic prerequisite.

Furthermore, example (16) is more likely to be used in the context where the addressee ‘you’ has requested beforehand that I eat the cake, whereas in (18) with *lə ... Rə*<sup>2</sup> ‘for the sake of’ it is more likely to be the subject, ‘I’, who has taken the initiative to eat the cake for the sake of the addressee’s health.

- (18) *Jə kə □ ɔ̃ ko<sup>5</sup>khe<sup>4</sup> lə nə Rɔ̃<sup>2</sup>*  
 1 sg IRR eat bread :cake for 2sg sake  
 ‘I’ll eat the cake for your sake.’

The 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 (away) and getting as in (19) and (20) respectively:

- (19) *pwa<sup>6</sup>pwe<sup>6</sup>sha<sup>1</sup>ta<sup>2</sup> sha<sup>1</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> ɔ̃<sup>6</sup> hi<sup>5</sup> tə-phlə<sup>5</sup>*  
 person:buy:sell:thing sell BEN 3sg house one-CLF  
 ‘The business person sold him a house.’
- (20) *ɔ̃□pha<sup>1</sup>ti<sup>2</sup> pwe<sup>6</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> ɔ̃<sup>6</sup> hi<sup>5</sup> tə-phlə<sup>5</sup> wi<sup>6</sup>li<sup>1</sup>*  
 3sg:uncle buy BEN 3sg house one-CLF COMP  
 ‘Her uncle bought her a house.’

Note that there are two 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 as Hermann (1979) makes a similar but stronger claim for Mandarin *gei<sup>3</sup>* and Thai *hai*. She claims that these exponents build polysemous constructions, each having three possible interpretations, specifically, ‘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 *kwɛ<sup>4</sup>* ‘to write’ and *pho<sup>1</sup>* ‘to cook’ are exemplified in (21) and (36) which will be discussed below.

- (21) *Təba<sup>5</sup> θa<sup>1</sup>pe<sup>6</sup>nɔ̃<sup>5</sup> kwɛ<sup>4</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> ja<sup>6</sup> li<sup>3</sup> tə Re<sup>6</sup>*  
 NEG forget write BEN lsg letter NEG good  
 ‘Don’t forget to write me letters!’ OR: ‘Don’t forget to write letters to me!’

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

Verbs of creation such as ‘write’ also have a second inferential possibility, as for *sha<sup>1</sup>* ‘sell’ in (19) above, of proxy action, that is, of writing a letter instead of someone else or on their behalf, for example, in the unfortunate case of a friend with a broken arm:

- (22) *Jə sɪ<sup>1</sup> ka<sup>2</sup> χo<sup>1</sup> // kwɛ<sup>4</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> ja<sup>6</sup> li<sup>3</sup> tə-be<sup>5</sup>*  
 lsg arm broken because write BEN lsg 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) *θra<sup>5</sup>mɪ<sup>5</sup> kwɛ<sup>4</sup> li<sup>3</sup> tə-be<sup>5</sup> shu<sup>1</sup> jə.□o<sup>5</sup>*  
 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 wanted by the recipient. They are instead neutral statements of fact. Note that pronouns require co-occurrence of the locative verb  $\square o^5$  ‘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, 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)  $Ma^6\theta i^1$      $ne^2$      $ja^6$      $sho^6$      $t\grave{a}-be^5$   
make:die    BEN    1sg    chicken    one-CLF  
‘Kill me a chicken.’

(27)  $Ma^6\theta e^5pha^4$      $ne^2$      $ja^6$      $la^6pha^4thi^1-khwa^4$   
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 the discussion of the kind of noun required to fill the role of beneficiary in section 2.3, showing a parallel to dative constructions in European languages.

### 2.3 Animacy of Benefactive Noun Phrase

Dative constructions in many European languages are closely semantically related to the benefactive constructions under discussion here in Sgaw Karen and Mandarin. In terms of syntax, ditransitive verbs and verbs of movement 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: ethic dative 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 Neuman 1987 : 162-163):

- (28) Der Mann schüttelt dem Jungen [\*dem Totem] die Hand  
 the man shakes the boy:DAT [\*dead:man:DAT] the hand  
 ‘The man shakes the boy’s [ 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)  $\square pə$   $pwe^6$   $ne^2$   $hi^5$   $ta^2 \square \mathcal{J}^5$   
 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)  $pə$   $pwe^6$   $ne^2$   $hi^5 ta^2$   $tə-\chi a^5$   $ta^2 \square \mathcal{J}^5$   
 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  $lə \dots R\mathcal{J}^2$  ‘for the sake of; for’ with inanimate and abstract nouns in Sgaw Karen:

- (31)  $pə$   $pwe^6$   $ta^2 \square \mathcal{J}^5$   $lə$   $pəhi^5$   $əR\mathcal{J}^2$   
 1pl buy food for 1pl:house 3sg:sake  
 ‘We bought food for our house.’

Similarly with abstract nouns such as  $thi^1 k\mathcal{J}^2$  ‘country’ (in the sense of ‘motherland’ or ‘fatherland’) and  $ta^2 ba^1$  ‘religion’, it sounds more natural not to use  $ne^2$

- (32)  $awε^1 θe^5$   $kh\mathcal{J}^5$   $θi^1 θa^4$   $lə$   $thi^1 k\mathcal{J}^2$   $əR\mathcal{J}^2$   
 3pl suffer death for country 3sg:sake  
 ‘They died for the sake of their country.’

The discontinuous constituent  $lə \dots R\mathcal{J}^2$  ‘for the sake of’ may be preposed before the main verb with its form reduced, however, to the postposition  $R\mathcal{J}^2$

- (33)  $awε^1 θe^5$   $ne^2$   $ta^2 ba^1$   $R\mathcal{J}^2$   $kh\mathcal{J}^5$   $θi^1 θa^4$   
 3pl TOP religion sake suffer death  
 ‘As for them, they died for their religion.’

Note the importance of the postposition  $R\mathcal{J}^2$  : If it is omitted in (30), the meaning changes to ‘As for them, their religion died’. Finally, both  $ne^2$  and  $la\dots R\mathcal{J}^2$  may co-occur together as in(6) above with  $ne^2$  marking the animate NP and  $la\dots R\mathcal{J}^2$  the abstract NP. ct

#### 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 as opposed to negative valency. 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 will be potentially excluded by this condition, as (37) unless a special interpretation and context can be found, this does not mean to say that all adversative events are incompatible with the benefactive:<sup>9</sup> Consider example (34):

- (34)  $Jəpho^1m\ddot{i}^5$        $ma^6\theta\varepsilon^5pha^4$        $ne^2$        $ja^6$        $ta^2R\mathcal{J}^6$        $tə-t\ddot{i}^1$   
 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)  $Ma^6\theta\varepsilon^5pha^4$        $ne^2$        $ja^6$   
 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)  $Jə.wa^6$        $pho^1$        $ne^2$        $ja^6$        $ha^1kho^1$        $ta^2\Box\mathcal{J}^5$   
 1sg:husband      cook      BEN      1sg      evening      food  
 ‘My husband cooked dinner for me.’
- (37)  $?Jə.wa^6$        $ma^6ul\Box\mathcal{J}^5$        $ne^2$        $ja^6$        $ha^1kho^1$        $ta^2\Box\mathcal{J}^5$   
 1sg:husband      make:burn      BEN      1sg      evening      food  
 ‘My husband burned dinner on me.’.

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

- (38)  $Jə.wa^6$        $ma^6u^1\Box\mathcal{J}^5$        $ha^1kho^1$        $ta^2\Box\mathcal{J}^5$   
 1sg:husband      make:burn      evening      food  
 ‘My husband burned dinner.’

<sup>9</sup> Note that in other Sino-Tibetan languages, such as Mandarin,  $gei^3$  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  $hai$  in Thai can also function as an exponent of the causative.

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 from within a cross-linguistic framework. With regard to its syntax, I have argued that the morpheme *ne*<sup>2</sup> forms a constituent with the following benefactive NP and cannot be considered an enditic 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 *gei*<sup>3</sup> 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 shares a common semantic feature of semantically related dative and benefactive constructions in many other languages: Cross-linguistic evidence shows that animacy of the dative NP (“recipient”) or the benefactive NP (“beneficiary”) is a semantic constraint for language groupings as divergent as Tibeto-Burman and Indo-European. Moreover, in benefactive, also 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. This feature was proposed to account for the event type in preference to the putative stronger claim of the ‘fortunate or desirable nature of the event’.

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