

# The Syntax of Double Object Constructions in Cantonese

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This paper first demonstrates that Cantonese as a language does not have an exceptional order of non-subject arguments in double object constructions; rather, the verb *bei2* 'give' in this language, and this verb only, does. It is the only exception to double object constructions in the language in two respects. First, it is the theme argument, but not the recipient argument, that immediately follows the verb 'give'. In other double object constructions, the recipient argument is the argument that is adjacent to the verb. Second, under the effect of weight, the arguments in a *give*-construction are the only ones that can switch positions such that the heavy NP is in final position in the phrase. Weight does not seem to matter in other double object constructions.

The paper then shows, within the Lexical Functional Grammar framework, that the differences between a *give*-construction and other double object constructions in the language are constituent-structure differences. At argument-structure and functional-structure, ditransitive verbs behave in similar ways. They all require two arguments – a Theme and a Goal/Recipient.

They also exhibit similarities in terms of f-structure phenomena such as relativization and question-formation. When it comes to relativization, the theme argument in a double object construction is relativized using the gap strategy, just as the theme argument in a monotransitive construction is relativized.

The recipient argument, on the other hand, can only be relativized if there is a resumptive pronoun filling its canonical position. In terms of question-formation, either the theme argument or the recipient argument can be questioned. Possible analyses are proposed to capture these observations. These proposals may go in at least two directions. First, the peculiar c-structure properties of the verb *bei2* can be lexically specified, in the lexical entry of the verb. Another possibility is to make use of VP rules which constrain the c-structure. A single VP rule with different constraints on the NP nodes, or two different VP rules for the verb *bei2* and other ditransitive verbs respectively, can be written. All of these proposals are then evaluated, with the most plausible analysis selected.

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