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THE STATUS OF MARKER GEI IN MANDARIN CHINESEAbstract

In contemporary Mandarin Chinese, the morpheme gei which is a full verb meaning "give" may be used either as an agent marker or as an object marker. This phenomenon is rare in relation to other languages. However, we will see that the verbs meaning "give" turn often into an agent marker in other Chinese dialects and even in other languages. Special semantic reasons will be given to explain why gei is also an object marker in Spoken Chinese in Beijing. The constraints on gei's use show us that gei is rather a mock marker vs. the real markers ba (the object marker) and bei (the agent marker) in Mandarin Chinese. Our study shows that in the gei V le construction, gei is a marker of neutral voice sentences ; the occurrence of gei is only permitted when the verb is non-oriented. This is due to the neutralization of the agent/patient distinction in Mandarin Chinese.

0. Introduction

In this article, two types of gei constructions in Mandarin Chinese will be studied. In the first one, gei behaves either as an object marker (O.M.) or as an agent marker (A.M.). In the second type, gei is considered as the marker of a neutral voice sentence. Here Mandarin Chinese is based on spoken Chinese in Beijing but does not correspond to the traditional notion which is too vague. Section I will present the double status of the marker gei and will explain with dialect data how this phenomenon is not a linguistic accident. In section II, syntactic and semantic constraints concerning gei in contemporary Mandarin Chinese will be observed. The following questions will be addressed : when is gei equivalent to ba and under what conditions is gei to be interpreted as bei? In section III, we are going to consider a gei construction in the following sequence : gei V le <1>. Here gei can not be explained either as ba or as bei but rather as a marker of a neutral voice ; that is to say, the orientation of the verb or the voice is not indicated in this type of sentences. Therefore, we will call them "non-orientated V sentences".

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I. Double status of the marker *gei*

1.1. In the past few years, many studies have been done on the two Chinese markers *ba* and *bei*, but those on the *gei* which can sometimes replace *ba* and sometimes *bei* are really rare. In Mandarin Chinese, *gei* is a verb meaning "give" and is also a grammatical marker indicating the "voice" just like *ba* or *bei*. This fact is amazing since *ba* and *bei* mark two voices which are completely opposite. Usually, people call *ba* the object marker (O.M.), and *bei*, the agent marker (A.M.). Generally, the O.M. implies the active voice, and the A.M. involves the passive voice. In fact, in spoken Chinese the occurrence of the A.M. *bei* is not as frequent as *gei* (or *rang*/*jiao*, variants of A.M.)^{<2>}. First of all, let us look at two pairs of examples :

- (1a) lang gei yang chi le (Gei=Ba)
 wolf Gei sheep eat Asp.
 The wolf has eaten the sheep.
- (1b) yang gei lang chi le (Gei=Bei)
 sheep Gei wolf eat Asp.
 The sheep has been eaten by the wolf.
- (2a) xiao wang gei che xiu hao le (Gei=Ba)
 Xiao Wang Gei car repair Result. Asp.
 Xiao Wang has repaired the car.
- (2b) che gei xiao wang xiu hao le (Gei=Bei)
 car Gei Xiao Wang repair Result. Asp.
 The car has been repaired by Xiao Wang.

Without any difficulties native speakers will interpret the same morpheme *gei* in different ways. In (1a) and (2a), *gei* replaces *ba*, the O.M. ; in (1b) and (2b) *gei* plays the role of *bei*, the A.M..

Two questions should be asked :

1. Why could a single morpheme have two grammatical functions completely contrary?
2. Why has the word meaning "give" been chosen?

1.2. These questions lead us to examine other Chinese dialects. If we compare them to Mandarin Chinese in Beijing, we can obtain a partial answer.

Table 1.

Dialects	Full verb "give"	A.M.	Sources
Yueyu : Kuangzhou	畀	畀	Zhan Bohui(1981)
Kejiahua : Meixian	分	分	Zhan Bohui(1981)
Minyu : Xiamen	互	互	Zhan Bohui(1981)
Chaozhou	分	分	Yuan Jiahua(et al.1983)
Hainan	分	分	Yuan Jiahua(et al.1983)
Fuzhou	乞	乞	Yuan Jiahua(et al.1983)
Yongchun	互	互	Lin Liantong, Chen
	乞	乞	Zhangtai(1989)
Xiangyu : Hengyang	得	得	Li Yongming(1986)
Ganyu : Gao'an	hou 3a	hou3a	Hashimoto(1987)

Wuyu : Wenzhou	丐	丐	Zhengzhang
			Shangfang(Informant)
Pingyang	k'a 4a	k'a 4a	Hashimoto(1987)
Jiangsu : Suzhou	拨	拨	Yuan Jiahua(et al.1983)
Nantong	ha 3a	ha 3a	Hashimoto(1987)
Rugao	te 3a	te 3a	Hashimoto(1987)
Yangzhou	给	给	Hashimoto(1987)
Anhui : Shouxian	xe	xe	Hashimoto(1987)
Jixi	xā	xā	Hashimoto(1987)
Taihu	t'ai	t'ai	Hashimoto(1987)
Hefei	给	给	Hashimoto(1987)
Hubei : Hankou	把	把	Zhan Bohui(1981)
Gansu : Yumen	给	给	(Survey of Gansu Dialects(1960)
Anxi	给	给	(as above)
Qinghai : Xining	te 4	te 4	Hashimoto(1987)

Table 2.

Dialects	Full verb "give"	O.M.	Sources
Yueyu : Kuangzhou	界	将	Zhan Bohui(1981)
Kejiahua :	分	将	Zhan Bohui(1981)
Minyu : Xiamen	互	甲 / 将	Zhan(1981) / Yuan(1983)
Chaozhou	分	对 / 将	Zhan(1981) / Yuan(1983)
Fuzhou	乞	将	Yuan Jiahua(et al.1983)
Yongchun	乞	共	Lin and Chen(1989)
Xiangyu : Hengyang	得	把	Li Yongming(1986)
Ningxiang	把	把	Yang Shifeng(1974)
Wuyu : Wenzhou	丐	逮	Zhengzhang Shangfang (Informant)
Hangzhou	把	把	Chao Yuenren(1956)
Shaoxing	拨	则	Chao(1956) / Zhan(1981)
Jiangsu : Suzhou	拨	拿	Zhan Bohui(1981)
Hubei : Wuchang	把	把	Chao Yuenren, Ding Shengshu(1948)
Hankou	把	把	Chao and Ding(1948)
Sichuan : Youyang	递	给	Yang Shifeng(1984)
Zhongxian	把	把	Yang Shifeng(1984)
Gansu : Yumen	给	把	Survey of Gansu Dialects(1960)
Hebei : Handan	给	给	Zhan Bohui(1981)

In Table 1, twenty-three dialects are classified from the South to the North. In all these dialects, the full verb meaning "give" is, at the same time, the A.M. without exception. What is crucial is that while the pronunciation of these morphemes could be quite different from one dialect to another, all these morphemes have two grammatical functions—that of the full verb which means "to give" and that of the A.M. With such data in hand, we can confirm that in Mandarin Chinese in Beijing, gei meaning "give" and gei as an A.M. is not at all a linguistic accident.

This parallelism which seems to be so regular in Table 1 disappears in Table 2. With limited documents I could obtain, most of dialects show that the verb "give" and the O.M. are distinct. However, in Table 2, we can see that the dialects of Hubei and that of Ningxiang utilise the same morpheme for the verb "give"

and the O.M. According to the report written by Chao Yuenren and Ding Shengshu (1948), out of 64 dialects in Hubei, 47 use the verb "give" as the O.M. In Yang Shifeng's report (1974), out of 75 dialects in Hunan, 23 use the verb "give" as the O.M.

From Tables 1 and 2, we can make two comments :

- There must exist inherent relations between the verb meaning "give" and an agent marker.
- However, the parallelism between the verb "give" and an object marker is not certain, particular reasons for this may be in operation.

1.3. The first comment above tells us that the verb "give" is often a favorite candidate for an A.M. Many linguists (Hashimoto (1987), Yuan Jiahua (1983), Zhan Bohui (1981) among others) have pointed out that in several Chinese dialects, the agent marker is derived from the verb "give", but no one has explained how or why. In my opinion, the key factor resides in the fact that the verb "give" has more of a chance to become a lexical causative which is generally one of the important devices or sources of agent markers. This fact is not only shown in Table 1, but is also indicated by Hashimoto (1987) who discovered that other South-East Asian languages also have this phenomenon : the verb "give" or "give back" can be transformed into an A.M. B. Comrie (1976) has also showed that the Mongolian dative can be used as a passive agent.

Four arguments can be developed in favour of the point of view that the relations between the verb "give" and a lexical causative on the one hand, and those between a lexical causative and a A.M. on the other, are very close. We will see that the causative is the key link between the verb "give" and the A.M.

A.-Semantically, in a dative construction, a verb such as gei always involves three actants, i.e. a person gives another person something. This type of construction could be easily turned into the extended meaning, "give somebody the chance to do something". This semantic and syntactic property helps the verb gei become a lexical causative.

B.-In some Chinese dialects, the verb "give" and the lexical causative take the same morpheme. The following are two examples:

- (3) Hubei Zhongxiang : nong de gei ni shenmezi dou kan bu jian
do De make you nothing all watch Neg. see
make you see nothing
- (4) Hunan Hengyang : qi kou zui duo, mo de qi tingdao
he mouth the most many, Neg. make he hear
He likes to talk too much, don't let him
hear it.

In Mandarin Chinese in Beijing, we find also this kind of use, i.e. where gei is interpreted as a lexical causative :

(5) wo gei ni cai ge miyu
I gei you guess Cl. riddle
I let you guess a riddle.

(6) bu neng gei ta zhidao
Neg. can gei he know
Don't let him know (it).

In some dialects, there are no special agent markers at all; therefore, the lexical causative plays the role of the agent marker :

(7) Shandong Yantai : wode shu jiao ta nazou le
my book Jiao he take away Asp.
My book was taken away by him.

(8) Shandong Tancheng : ta jiao gou yao de zhi zhahu
he Jiao dog bite De just yell
He was bitten by the dog and cried out.

These synchronic evidences (ex.(3)-(8)) display a plausible track which might connect the verb "give" and the A.M. In other words, these examples allow us to reconstitute possible steps whereby there is a change in function of gei in spoken Chinese in Beijing.

C.-Diachronic data also support this assumption. The first gei which are interpreted as bei by several linguists are, in my opinion, rather lexical causative than bei. This means that the interpretation seems to be more natural when gei is treated as a lexical causative. Here are some examples :

(9) qianwan bie gei ta zhidao (Honglounmeng, 21.the 18th century)
anyway Neg. Gei he know
Don't let him know under any circumstances.

(10) lian women jia ye mei zhexie zahua gei haizimen tingjian
(Honglounmeng, 54)
even our family also Neg. these indecent words Gei children hear
Even in our family, we don't let children hear these indecent words.

(11) jiushi tian, ye shi gei qiyun shihuan zhe (Ernuyingxiongzhuan, 3. the 19th century)
even sky, also be Gei destiny handle Asp.
Even Heaven is controlled by destiny.

(12) buliao gei dangmian doulou liang le (Ernuyingxiongzhuan, 5)
unexpectedly Gei to sb.'s face uncover light Asp.
Unexpectedly, the situation was brought to light in his presence.

In examples (9)-(11), gei can be replaced by the typical lexical causative jiao/rang, but the gei in (12) is not clear-cut since bei and jiao/rang could be intersected. Note that (9) has the

same word order as (6), even though the latter is a contemporary example. In our data, earlier gei in most of the examples are the equivalent of the lexical causative. Only some later gei could be interpreted as bei like (12). This analysis implies that contemporary gei retains at least three functions : that of the verb "give", the A.M. and the lexical causative. This is certainly the case when we consider contemporary data. This article will not consider gei which functions as a lexical causative.

D.—Finally, other languages whose origins are quite different from Chinese show a similar phenomenon. As M.Cl. Paris (1989) has pointed out, "donner" and "rendre" in French, and "get" in English can also mark the causative and/or the passive :

- (13) donner à réparer
- (14) rendre heureux
- (15) I got him to go.
- (16) He got arrested.

In the French examples, "donner" and "rendre" are verbs meaning "give" and "give back". These verbs in some cases function as lexical causatives ; in English, if "get" marks the causative in (15), "get" indicates the passive in (16). These examples permit us to consider the inherent relations between the verb "give", a lexical causative and an agent marker.

We can see from the preceding four points that due to the causativation, a verb "give" is able to change into another grammatical function : the agent marker.

1.4. We are now ready to explain how gei also functions as an O.M. In 1.2., we stated that particular reasons may exist for explaining the relations between the verb gei and the O.M. As we have observed, in spoken Chinese in Beijing, gei has a double status : it functions both as an A.M. and an O.M. If the verb "give" has been seen as an A.M. in other dialects, the double status of the verb "give" can only be found in Hankou, one of the dialects of Hubei. Why has gei developed in two completely opposite directions? If relations between gei and A.M. seem to be more or less universal, how can we explain gei's function as an O.M.?

I would suggest the following explanation : the verb meaning "give" proves to have a strong tendency to develop into two contrary meanings : "to give" or "to receive". This statement is not at all ad hoc when we have a look at different languages :

—In English, the verb "to take" has two meanings : give or take away.

- (17) Take him another book. (take=give)
- (18) He took my book. (take=take away)

—In French, for instance, "louer" is bi-directional : rent out or rent.

- (19) Il loue un appartement à Pierre.
 a. He rents out an apartment to Pierre.
 b. He rents an apartment from Pierre.

According to Benveniste (1966), the radical "dō-" provides a large number of derived nominals to Indo-European languages. These derived words mean in French "don"(gift) or "donner"(give). But in Hittite, "dā-" means "take away" but not "give" contrary to other members of the same language family.

In different Chinese dialects, the same morpheme may have two meanings : give or receive.

- 得 Beijing : /receive/
 Hengyang (Xiang) : /give/
 乞 Yongchun (Min) : /receive/
 Chaozhou (Min) : /give/

In fact "give" may mean "take" without specified directions and is able to develop in two different directions. The examples above show that the semantic property of the verb meaning "give" allows it to have two opposing grammatical functions.

With the analyses above, we can assume that gei in Mandarin Chinese seems to be special when compared to other languages. Gei is not only a full verb but also an A.M. and an O.M. What seems to be generally true is the fact that causativity permits the verb meaning "give" to change into an agent marker. The lexical property of this kind of verb allows gei to develop in two opposite directions.

II. Syntactic and semantic constraints of gei as A.M./O.M.

2.1. Since gei can replace bei, an A.M. and ba, an O.M., we must ask in what conditions gei has the function of bei and when gei plays the role of ba. The supposition that gei can be equivalent to bei and to ba means that a sentence can be interpreted in two distinctly opposing ways. For example :

- (20) wo gei ta pian le
 I Gei he deceive Asp.
 a. I have deceived him.
 b. He has been deceived by me.

In (20a), gei is interpreted as an O.M. and the translation has to be in an active construction ; in (20b), gei is considered as an A.M. and the passive construction is required in English. How can we determine the constraints of gei in its interpretation? We will study in 2.2. two situations : Agent /+A/, Patient /+A/ ; Agent /-A/, Patient /-A/. The symbol /+A/ presents the semantic feature "animate". An NP with feature /+A/ and an NP with feature /-A/ do not have the same sensitivity to the

function of an agent or of a patient. When the agent and the patient do not have the same feature, the interpretation can be simpler, we will observe it in 2.3. In 2.4. and 2.5., comparisons between gei and ba/bei will be studied.

2.2. When an agent and a patient have the same feature, the interpretation is often clear. But this is not always true for the semantic feature "human"(/+H/), the subdivision of "animate". Without context gei can be understood either as ba or as bei :

- (21) ta gei xiao wang xia le yi tiao
 he Gei Xiao Wang scare Asp. one jump
 a. He gives Xiao Wang a start. (Gei=Ba)
 b. He was given a start by Xiao Wang. (Gei=Bei)
- (22) ta gei xiao wang zhuazhu le
 he gei Xiao Wang catch Asp.
 a. He caught Xiao Wang. (Gei=Ba)
 b. He was caught by Xiao Wang. (Gei=Bei)
- (23) ta gei xiao wang tui le chuqu
 he Gei Xiao Wang push Asp. out
 a. He put Xiao Wang out. (Gei=Ba)
 b. He was put out by Xiao Wang. (Gei=Bei)

One may wonder how Chinese people manage to understand each other. The fact is that no sentence can exist without a context. Within a given context, only one interpretation is possible:

- (24a) sunnuer gei nainai chan chulai le (Gei=Ba)
 granddaughter Gei grandmother support with hand out
 Asp.
 The granddaughter helped her grandmother out (of the room).
- (24b) nainai gei sunnuer chan chulai le (Gei=Bei)
 grandmother Gei granddaughter support with hand out Asp.
 The grandmother was helped out (of the room) by her granddaughter.
- (25a) ta gei haizi diu le (Gei=Ba)
 he Gei child lose Asp.
 He lost his child.
- (25b) haizi gei ta diu le (Gei=Bei)
 child Gei him lose Asp.
 The child is lost by him.
- (26) wo gei zheiwei bi wo xiao de ye nuzi jiongzhu le (Gei=Bei)
 (Ai Wu, example cited by Li Linding(1980))
 I Gei this compare I jiong De wild woman embarrass Asp.
 I was embarrassed by this wild woman who is younger than me.

In examples (24) and (25), native speakers would not

misconstrue the meaning even though the word order is different. This fact proves that the relations between agent and patient are not reversible with regard to the verb, the verb "chan" (support sb. with one's hand) implies that the stronger helps the weaker. In the case of the relationship between a nurse and a patient, "chan" will have the same impact as in a normal case. In relation to the verb "diu", it is possible that an adult loses his child, but not the contrary. In example (26), the context of the sentence shows us that gei is equivalent to bei, other interpretations (i.e. ba) being impossible. If the context is not sufficiently clear, people then will use ba or bei instead of gei.

When an agent and a patient have both the feature /+A/, their relations are also not reversible :

(27a)=(1a) lang gei yang chi le (Gei=Ba)
wolf Gei sheep eat Asp.
The wolf has eaten the sheep.

(27b)=(1b) yang gei lang chi le (Gei=Bei)
sheep Gei wolf eat Asp.
The sheep has been eaten by the wolf.

(28a) mao gei haozi daizhu le (Gei=Ba)
cat Gei mouse catch Asp.
The cat caught the mouse.

(28b) haozi gei mao daizhu le (Gei=Bei)
mouse Gei cat catch Asp.
The mouse was caught by the cat.

We do not need to explain why gei replaces ba in one case and bei in the other when we consider the relations between a sheep and a wolf, or between a mouse and a cat. Therefore, we can assume that ba and bei are real voice markers in Chinese but gei is not.

If an agent and a patient have both the feature /-A/, the meaning of a sentence can also be clear :

(29a) zhen gei shou zha le (Gei=Ba)
needle Gei hand prick Asp.
The needle pricked the finger.

(29b) shou gei zhen zha le (Gei=Bei)
hand Gei needle prick Asp.
The finger was pricked by the needle.

(30a) feng gei men chui kai le (Gei=Ba)
wind Gei door blow open Asp.
The wind blew the door open.

(30b) men gei feng chui kai le (Gei=Bei)
door Gei wind blow open Asp.
The door was blown open by the wind.

In examples (29) and (30), the relationship between a needle and a finger with respect to the verb "prick", and that between the wind and a door with respect to the verb "blow open" is fixed. Note that the occurrences of (29b) and (30b) may be more expected since the action is not voluntary.

With examples (24)–(30), we can postulate that the primary relations between agent and patient may exist in all languages despite the difference of the word order. This observation leads us to reconfirm that gei is rather a neutral marker in Mandarin Chinese whose word order is based more likely on semantic relations than on grammatical ones. In this way, we have shown that the answer to the status of gei does not completely lie in gei itself, but in devices which command the word order in Chinese. The fixed or primary relations between agent and patient may be presented by means of word order in all languages. Many people have pointed out that there may exist an animate hierarchy in relation to an agent. The Chinese data, among others, supports this statement.

2.3. Let us consider the case in which the semantic feature of agent and that of patient are mixed. We have two situations : 1. an NP/+A/ is generally an agent vs an NP/-A/ ; 2. an NP/-A/ is necessarily an agent in a sentence with verb only devoted to an animate/ human being (i.e. frighten, embarrass, suffer etc) vs an NP/+A/. We call, for the moment, these verbs "experiencer verbs". Now let us consider some examples :

- (31a) xiao wang gei bi diu le (Gei=Ba)
 Xiao Wang Gei pen lose Asp.
 Xiao Wang lost his pen.
- (31b) bi gei xiao wang diu le (Gei=Bei)
 pen Gei Xiao Wang lose Asp.
 The pen was lost by Xiao Wang.
- (32a) xiao wang gei yaoshi suo zai wu li le (Gei=Ba)
 Xiao Wang Gei key lock at room in Asp.
 Xiao Wang locked the key in the room.
- (32b) yaoshi gei xiao wang suo zai wu li le (Gei=Bei)
 key Gei Xiao Wang lock at room in Asp.
 The key was locked in the room by Xiao Wang.
- (33a) qiangsheng gei xiao wang jingxing le (Gei=Ba)
 shoot-sound Gei Xiao Wang waken Asp.
 The shots made Xiao Wang wake up.

- (33b) xiao wang gei qiangsheng jingxing le (Gei=Bei)
 Xiao Wang Gei shoot-sound waken Asp.
 Xiao Wang was awakened by the shots.
- (34a) zhei bing gei xiao wang hai ku le (Gei=Ba)
 this illness Gei Xiao Wang suffer bitter Asp.
 This illness made Xiao Wang suffer so much.
- (34b) xiao wang gei zhei bing hai ku le (Gei=Bei)
 Xiao Wang Gei this illness suffer bitter Asp.
 Xiao Wang was made to suffer by the illness.

Examples (31)–(32) illustrate situation 1 where the NP/+A/ is an agent; in (33) and (34), the NP/-A/ plays the role of an agent presenting situation 2. The first case shows us that the word order is not a determinate factor in interpreting the sentences but the relationship between an agent and a patient is. In the second one, the situation is the same. What is different in these two cases is that, gei in being equivalent to ba, has in fact the function of a lexical causative in second case (see examples (33a) and (34a)). The English translation allows us to consider this fact more clearly.

The examples above ((24)–(34)) demonstrate that within a given context, only one interpretation is possible due to the primary relations between an agent and a patient. The word order is not determinate in Chinese. We have also seen that gei is not a real marker since it can not indicate the direction of an action. People must have recourse to real markers (ba/bei) when necessary.

2.4. Now let us compare gei and ba. Under what conditions can gei replace ba? It is certain that gei is not always equivalent to ba. Gei may have the following semantic and syntactic behaviors when it is equivalent to ba:

–In experiencer verb sentences, gei can replace ba:

- (35) zhei ju hua gei/ba wo kan hutu le
 this Cl. sentence Gei/Ba I see confuse Asp.
 This sentence made me confused.
- (36) gei/ba ta shuo ji le
 Gei/Ba he speak irritate Asp.
 He was irritated (by this talk).

–When the marked NP can not be deleted, gei has to be interpreted as ba. This constraint is similar to that of ba:

- (37a) xuexiao gei/ba ta kaichu le
 school Gei/Ba he expel Asp.
 The school expelled him.

(37b) *xuexiao gei/ba 0 kaichu le
 school Gei/Ba 0 expel Asp.

(38a) ni gei/ba ta hai le
 you Gei/Ba he harm Asp.
 You harmed him.

(38b) *ni gei/ba 0 hai le
 you Gei/Ba 0 harm Asp.

One can easily notice that the marked NP in the examples above always have the feature /+H/. In fact, in our data, the marked NP is often a human being when it is gei which is the object marker; the marked NP has often the feature /-A/ when ba is the object marker. This certainly is a tendency since our data could be limited and would require a statistical study. However, the fact that the number of examples in which gei is equivalent to ba is relatively rare proves that ba which often marks an NP/-A/ has a dominant use in Chinese. We can explain this phenomenon by the semantic approach: originally, ba meant "take", and gei came from the verb "give". The favorite object of "take" must be an NP/-A/ and the receiver of "give" may be an NP/+A/.

In the following cases, gei and ba can not be reversible:
 -When ba is equivalent to "na" (verb meaning "take"):

(39) bie ba/*gei qiangkou dui zhe ren!
 Neg.(imperative) Ba/*Gei muzzle aim Asp. person
 Don't put the muzzle on a person!

(40) bie ba/*gei wode hua dang er pang feng
 Neg.(imperative) Ba/*Gei my words as ear side wind
 Don't take my propositions lightly.

-When gei may mean "for":

(41) gei ta dang qiang shi
 for he as gun use
 be used for cannon fodder

(42) ba ta dang qiang shi
 Ba he as gun use
 use him as cannon fodder

In examples (41) and (42), gei and ba have different grammatical functions, in (41), gei is a preposition meaning "for" and in (42), ba is an O.M. Certainly, ba has a variety of other uses that gei has not.

2.5. Finally, let examine gei when it is used as bei. First of all, we have to repeat that gei as A.M. is used in oral sentences and bei, usually in written sentences. Three notes must be made regarding the comparison between gei and bei:

-When gei is an agent marker, it can not be deleted just like bei :

- (43) ta gei/bei da le
 he Gei/Bei beat Asp.
 He is beaten.

- (44) ta 0/0 da le
 he 0/0 beat Asp.
 He beats (sb).

Examples (43) and (44) are surely different. In this case, gei has similar behavior as bei.

-When gei is used as bei, the sentence needs to be marked by the past aspect particle le (or by other context expressing "the past"). If the sentence is not marked in this way, gei is necessarily equivalent to a lexical causative. Compare these sentences in which bei can not be replaced by gei :

- (45) zhei ge dui bei/*gei chengwei A dui
 this Cl. group Bei/*Gei call as A group
 This group is called group A.
- (46) zhei zuo lou bei/*gei ri ye shou zhe
 this Cl. building Bei/*Gei day night keep watch Asp.
 This building was being watched day and night.
- (47) yifu bei/gei yu linshi le
 coat Bei/Gei rain drench Asp.
 The coat is drenched by the rain.
- (48) ta bei/gei che zhuang si le
 he Bei/Gei car run into die Asp.
 He was killed in a road accident.

The evidence above shows that when gei is used as an agent marker, the past particle le is necessary. The reason lies in the fact that gei may have other grammatical functions when the sentence is not marked by a past particle.

-When the use of gei makes the sentence confused, bei is preferred:

- (49) ta zong bei ren kai wanxiao
 he always Bei people make joke
 He is always made fun of by other people.
- (50) ta zong gei ren kai wanxiao
 he always to/for people make joke
 He always tells jokes to other people.

Examples (49) and (50) have different meanings. In the first one, bei is an A.M. expressing the passive voice. In the second, gei is not an A.M., it keeps dative use and means here "for somebody".

In this section, we have noticed that understanding

processus does not completely call upon the word order in Mandarin Chinese. Primary relations between an agent and a patient are determinate factors. We have also shown that gei in relation to ba/bei is not a real voice marker, but rather a neutral marker. The real voice markers indicate the direction of a verb, but gei is simply a grammatical word, a mock marker. This point of view helps us to study the real status of gei in the second gei construction : gei V le.

III. Non-oriented verbs and *gei-V-le*

3.1. Since we have confirmed that gei is a mock voice marker in Mandarin Chinese which does not indicate the direction of a verb, explanations concerning gei itself can not completely answer the question we originally posed. Therefore more analyses have to be made to understand why this phenomenon is permitted in Chinese. We will see that in gei V le construction, the verb is never oriented.

First of all, we have to determine what we mean by non-oriented verbs in Chinese, second, we will present syntactic behavior of gei in this kind of sentence. Concluding remarks will then be made to indicate the real status of gei in Mandarin Chinese.

Let us look at some examples about gei V le construction :

- (51) zhei hui gei jue ding le (Ma Ji(1990) in a comic dialogue)
this Cl. Gei decide Asp.
That time, the decision was made.
- (52) ni zenme gei chi shang le (Chen Peisi and Zhu Shimao (1985)
in a comic sketch)
you how Gei eat up Asp.
How come you're eating this?
- (53) ni zhi dangmianr gei nong qi le, wo jiu fangxin le (Ernu-yingxiongzhuan, 39 XIX th.century)
you only to sb.'s face Gei do complete Asp., I will feel relieved Asp.
If only you could arrange this, I would feel relieved.
- (54) huran mengxiang bu dao lai le zheme ge ren, shuang shou gei baozhu le (Ibid, 31)
suddenly dream Neg. Suff. come Asp. such Cl person, pair hand Gei catch Asp.
One can not imagine that a person suddenly appearing who could catch this with two hands.

These examples above are gei V le construction, (51) and (52) are contemporary Chinese, while (53) and (54) are spoken Chinese in Beijing from the XIX th. century. This fact shows that this construction is not a new one and has lasted until today. In this kind of construction, the object of the verb is always absent, and gei can not be interpreted either as ba or as bei.

3.2. In gei V le construction, the verb is never oriented. For the moment, we define an oriented verb in the following way : when the same verb indicates ONLY one voice in spite of the position (preverbal/postverbal) of an NP, we say that the verb is oriented (see (55) and (56)) ; when an NP can be either preverbal or postverbal in relation to the same verb and this position change implies a voice change, this verb is considered as non-oriented. In the first case, impersonal (the weather for instance) verbs are included. In the second case, the verb can be considered as active voice in English when an NP is postverbal and as passive voice in English when an NP is preverbal (see (57) and (58)). In this way, we could use a very loose conception of "ergativity" for this kind of verb :

(55a) taiyang chulai le
sun come out Asp.
The sun has come out.

(55b) *chulai taiyang le
come out sun Asp.

(56a) xie bingjia
rest sick leave
be on sick leave

(56b) *bingjia xie
sick leave

The examples above refer to the first case where the verb is oriented. Consider the second case in which the verb is non-oriented :

(57a) chi le pingguo
eat Asp. apple
have eaten the apple

3.3 Now let us observe the syntactic behavior of the gei V le construction. It has the following properties :

-Gei is completely optional ; with gei, the sentence proves to be more oral. Let us compare some examples :

(59a) zhei shi gei nong zao le
this affair Gei do bad Asp.
This is an embarrassing situation.

(59b) zhei shi nong zao le
this affair do bad Asp.
This is an embarrassing situation.

(60a) (wode haizi) ni gei jiaoyu hao le
(my child) you Gei teach good Asp.
(My child) was given a lesson by you.

(60b) (wode haizi) ni jiaoyu hao le
(my child) you teach good Asp.
(My child) was given a lesson by you.

The above examples show that gei is a real mock marker since its function is only to make the sentence more vivid and oral.

-In gei V le construction, the sentence often is marked by the past aspect marker le or by other morphemes or construction which are capable of marking the past aspect (for example : the structure shi...de). Compare these examples :

- (61) ta gei wang le
he Gei forget Asp.
He forgot it.
- (62) shi wo gei nong huai de
be I Gei do bad De
It was I who broke that.
- (63) bie danxin, zhei shi wo gei ji zhe
Neg. worry, this thing I for remember Asp.
Don't worry, I'll keep it in mind.
- (64) ni gei cha cha
you for check check
Check it please.

(61) and (62) are the gei V le construction. The constraint whereby the past aspect particle is required in this construction is similar to that of the bei construction. If the sentences are in the present or the future, gei has to be interpreted as a lexical causative or as a preposition meaning "for" (see (63) and (64)).

-In gei V le construction, the verb is always non-oriented. Look at these examples :

- (65) qingkuang bian le
situation change Asp.
The situation changed.
- (66) *bian qingkuang le
change situation Asp.
- (67) *qingkuang gei bian le
situation Gei change Asp.
- (57b) pingguo chi le
apple eat Asp.
The apple has been eaten.
- (58a) xie hao xin le
write good letter Asp.
have written the letter
- (58b) xin xie hao le
letter write good Asp.
The letter has been written.

We may consider that in examples (57) and (58), the verb is non-oriented since the same NP being in preverbal or postverbal position, implies a voice change. Due to the different position of

the NP, the voice of the verb can be interpreted as active or passive.

In different languages and Chinese dialects, the orientation of a verb is marked with different devices. We know that at least three devices exist : phonetic, syntactic and semantic. According to the reference of J.A. Matisoff (1976, p414), in Guangdong dialect, the alternation between homorganic final stop and nasal could indicate the orientation of a verb. Matisoff shows in the same article that in Lahu, the tonal change or devoicing of the initial consonant can also indicate the orientation of a verb (p417). C.Pilot-Raichoor (1991) <3> tells us that in Badaga, the consonant variation (voiced/unvoiced) for a limited group of verbs is able to give the orientation of a verb. Mei Tsu-lin (1990) affirms in his article that in Middle Chinese, the voiced and unvoiced change can make the orientations of a verb different. He also indicates in the dialect of Fuzhou, the same morpheme "shang" has two ways of pronunciation : aspirated and unaspirated ; this alternation gives evidence of the orientation of a verb.

The morpho-syntactic device is more apparent. With different grammatical markers, the orientation can be given. For example the markers ba and bei in Chinese imply an active and a passive construction respectively. Certainly, this refers only to global situations and here we shall not treat them in detail. Zhu Dexi (1983) points out that zhe and suo were useful in ancient Chinese for indicating the orientation of a verb in a complex NP. We can understand better why contemporary Chinese has only the unified marker de if we consider that there may exist a tendency towards the neutralization of orientations of verb. In Indo-european languages other markers (for instance, auxiliaries) for the orientation of a verb are called upon.

It seems that the most complex device is the semantic one. In Chinese, the non-oriented verbs constitute a large group and until now, no one has compiled any statistics on the subject. We agree with Mei Tsu-lin that the neutralization of the preverbal agent/patient distinction may take place in Middle Chinese and contemporary Chinese presents rather the mixed results of all these syntactic changes. All we can confirm in this article is that there is a tendency for neutralization of agent/patient distinction to be reinforced. This problem will be taken up in another article as it is not the object of our analysis at this time.

Note that in the gei V le construction, the verb is always non-oriented ; oriented-verbs (e.g. directional verbs, verbs coming from adjectives, some disyllabic verbs) are excluded.

- (68) women biye le
we graduate Asp.
We finished our studies.
- (69) *biye women le
graduate we Asp.
- (70) *women gei biye le
We Gei graduate Asp.
- (71) deng guan le
light turn off Asp.
The light was turned off.

- (72) guan deng le
turn off light Asp.
turn off the light
- (73) deng gei guan le
light Gei turn off
The light was turned off.
- (74) yifu linshi le
coat drench Asp.
The coat is drenched.
- (75) linshi le yifu
drench Asp. coat
drench the coat
- (76) yifu gei linshi le
coat Gei drench Asp.
The coat is drenched.

According to our definition, the verbs bian and biye are oriented verbs and these verbs can not be used in gei V le constructions (see (65)–(70)). In (71)–(76), the verbs guan and linshi are non-oriented verbs and therefore the sentences can accept a mock marker gei.

–Negation is not admissible in this construction except in an imperative sentence :

- (77) *wo mei gei chi le
I Neg. Gei eat Asp.
- (78) ni bie gei chi le
you Neg(imperative) Gei eat Asp.
Don't eat it please.

3.4. The point of view that the mock marker gei is sensitive to the property of the verb (oriented and non-oriented) allows us to explain why ba and bei may sometimes be omitted but sometimes not. Let us look two examples (cited by Zhu Dexi (1982)) :

- (79) ta bei daibu le
he Bei arrest Asp.
He was arrested.
- (80) yifu quan gei linshi le
coat all Gei drench Asp.
The coat is totally drenched.

Apparently, gei plays the role of bei in marking the passive, but they do not have the same behavior. Bei is obligatory ; gei however is optional :

- (81) *?ta daibu le
he arrest Asp.
He arrested (somebody)
- (82) yifu quan linshi le
coat all drench Asp.
The coat is totally drenched.

It is clear that (81) is not equivalent to (79), but (82) has the same meaning as (80). The reasons are given in precedent sections, daibu must be an oriented verb and linshi is a non-oriented verb (see 3.2.). This fact shows that our presupposition as to the orientation of a verb works well. Let us now examine other examples. Mei Tsu-lin (1990) stated in many ba constructions, ba is optional but in some sentences, ba is obligatory :

- (83) ba juzi chi le
 Ba orange eat Asp.
 have eaten the orange.
- (84) juzi chi le
 orange eat Asp.
 The orange was eaten.
- (85) ba ta shuofu le
 Ba he convince Asp.
 have convinced him (He has been convinced).
- (86) ta shuofu le
 he convince Asp.
 He has convinced (somebody)

Example (83) has the same meaning as (84) and ba is optional, but (85) is completely different from (86) and this time ba is obligatory. If we only focus our study on the ba construction, we can not explain this phenomenon in a satisfying way. In the light of the orientation of verbs, we can see that the reasons lie on the fact that the verbs chi and shuofu do not have the same properties : chi is a non-oriented verb and shuofu an oriented verb. Consequently, in (83) ba is optional (ref. (84)), and in (85) ba is necessary to mark the object which is preverbal (ref. (86)).

IV. Concluding remarks

In this article, we have studied the status of gei in Mandarin Chinese in two cases, gei as an A.M. or an O.M. and gei as a mock marker in the gei V le construction. By making a comparison between spoken Chinese in Beijing and other dialects, we have concluded that the verb meaning "give" used as an agent marker is a generalizable phenomenon ; the causativity makes this change possible. As for gei used as an O.M., it proves to be particular. As to why gei in Mandarin Chinese can be both an A.M. and an O.M., semantic and lexical reasons were developed to show that these kinds of verbs are susceptible to development in contrary directions ("give" or "receive"). When it becomes a grammatical marker, the direction of this kind of verb can be neutralized and no longer indicates any direction (see Benveniste (1966) and M.Cl. Paris (1989)).

A study concerning gei's constraints showed that gei is rather a neutral voice marker vs. ba and bei. We have seen that

analyses of gei itself is not sufficient to explain why with the same marker, people interpret a sentence in different ways (active/passive). In fact, primary relations between the agent and the patient are pertinent and the word order is secondary.

In the gei V le construction, the status of gei is clearer : it is a mock marker and it can be only used in a non-oriented V sentence. When the verb is oriented, gei's use is impossible. Mei Tsu-lin (1990), in his important article, explains the tendency towards the neutralization of the preverbal agent/patient distinction in Middle Chinese. We confirm his point of view in the light of contemporary data.

NOTES

- <1> Abbreviations - A.M. = agent marker. - Asp. = aspect particles : *le, zhe, guo*. - Cl. = classifier. - De = possession- marker/manner -marker. - Neg. = negation marker. - O.M. = object marker. - Result. = result particles.
- <2> Our contemporary data are based specially on Zhang Xinxin & Sang Ye (1986) : *Beijingren* "People of Beijing".
- <3> Cf. in this volume.

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