Speaking for the Silence: a Voice Splitting Analysis of Mandarin *gěi*

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GEI AND PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

Gěi is a **multifunctional word** typically analyzed as the verb **give** (a).

Gěi is used to **introduce arguments** to a verbal predicate including recipient (c,d), experiencer (i), beneficiary (k), and in non-canonical passives (f) and causatives (h).

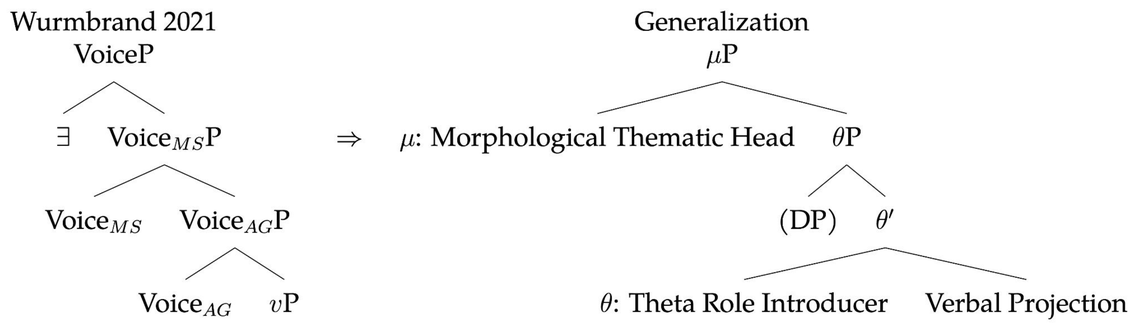
Some constructions (b,f,h,j) systematically **disallow progressive aspect** with *gěi*.

– Can the uses of *gěi* be captured by a single semantic entry?
(No: Li and Thompson 1989, Her 2006; Yes: Lin and Huang 2015; Badan 2021)

– Why does *gěi* differ in compatibility with progressive across constructions?

SPLITTING THEMATIC DOMAINS

Wurmbrand (2021) argues for a split VoiceP:
– Voice$_{AG}$: introduces Agent(/Initiator) argument position
– Voice$_{MS}$: introduces morpho-syntactic properties (e.g. passive morphology, case)
– Existential closure: open variables are existentially closed.



We extend this bipartite structure to other theta role licensing heads:
– θ: introduces theta role argument position
– μ: introduces morpho-syntactic properties associated with theta role

GEI AS A MORPHOLOGICAL THEMATIC HEAD

Gěi is a **μ-head, underspecified** for which thematic licensers it combines with and can **project above** agent-, causee-, experiencer-, recipient-, benefactor- licensing heads.

Gěi **relates** an event to its **commencement**: an instantaneous event which begins an event.

$$\begin{aligned}
\textsc{comm}(e, e') &= \neg\exists t_i[t \subset \tau(e)] \wedge e \leq e' \wedge \neg\exists t'_i[t' \subseteq \tau(e') \wedge t' < \tau(e)] \\
[\![gěi]\!] &= \lambda f_{\langle v,t\rangle} \lambda e_v . \exists e'_v [\textsc{comm}(e, e') \wedge f(e')] \\
[\![\textsc{prog}]\!] &= \lambda f_{\langle v,t\rangle} \lambda t_i . \exists e_v [t \subset \tau(e) \wedge f(e)]
\end{aligned}$$

THE FUNCTIONS OF GEI

a. **Verbal *Gěi***
Zhāngsān (zhèngzài) gěi Lǐsì yī-gè lǐwù.
Zhangsan PROG give Lisi one-CL gift
'Zhangsan { gave / is giving } Lisi a gift.'

b. **Inchoative *Gěi***
*Zhè-běn shū (*zhèngzài) gěi Zhāngsān.*
this-CL book PROG GEI Zhangsan
'This book is (*being) for Zhangsan.'

c. **Suffix *Gěi***
Zhāngsān (%zhèngzài) jì gěi Lǐsì yī-fēng xìn.
Zhangsan PROG send GEI Lisi one-CL letter
'Zhangsan {sent / *is sending} a letter to Lisi.'

d. **Postverbal *Gěi***
Zhāngsān (zhèngzài) jì yī-fēng xìn gěi Lǐsì.
Zhangsan PROG send one-CL letter GEI Lisi
'Zhangsan {sent / is sending} a letter to Lisi.'

e. **Converbal *Gěi***
Zhāngsān (zhèngzài) chàng yī-shǒu gē gěi Lǐsì tīng.
Zhangsan PROG sing one-CL song GEI Lisi listen
'Zhangsan {sang / is singing} a song for Lisi to listen to.'

f. **Passive *Gěi***
*Zhāngsān (*zhèngzài) gěi (Lǐsì) cháoxiào-le.*
Zhangsan PROG GEI Lisi laugh-PFV
'Zhangsan was laughed at (by Lisi).'

g. **Canonical Passive (*Bèi*)**
*Zhāngsān (zhèngzài) (*gěi) bèi (Lǐsì) cháoxiào.*
Zhangsan PROG GEI PASS Lisi laugh
'Zhangsan {was laughed / is being laughed} at (by Lisi).'

h. **Causative *Gěi***
*Zhāngsān (*zhèngzài) gěi Lǐsì chī zhè-gè píngguǒ.*
Zhangsan PROG GEI Lisi eat this-CL apple
'Zhangsan made Lisi eat this apple.'

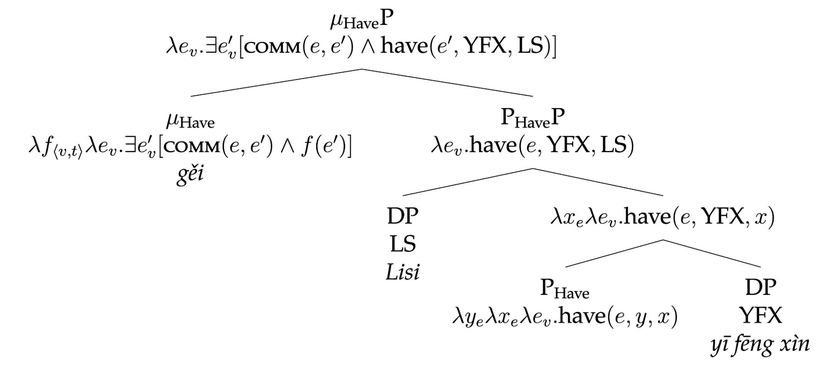
i. **Canonical Causative (*Ràng*)**
*Zhāngsān (zhèngzài) (*gěi) ràng Lǐsì chī zhè-gè píngguǒ.*
Zhangsan PROG GEI CAUS Lisi eat this-CL apple
'Zhangsan {made/is making} Lisi eat this apple.'

j. **Experiential *Gěi***
*Zhāngsān (*zhèngzài) gěi Lǐsì pǎo-(le).*
Zhangsan PROG GEI Lisi run-PFV
'Zhangsan {ran / *is running} out on Lisi.'

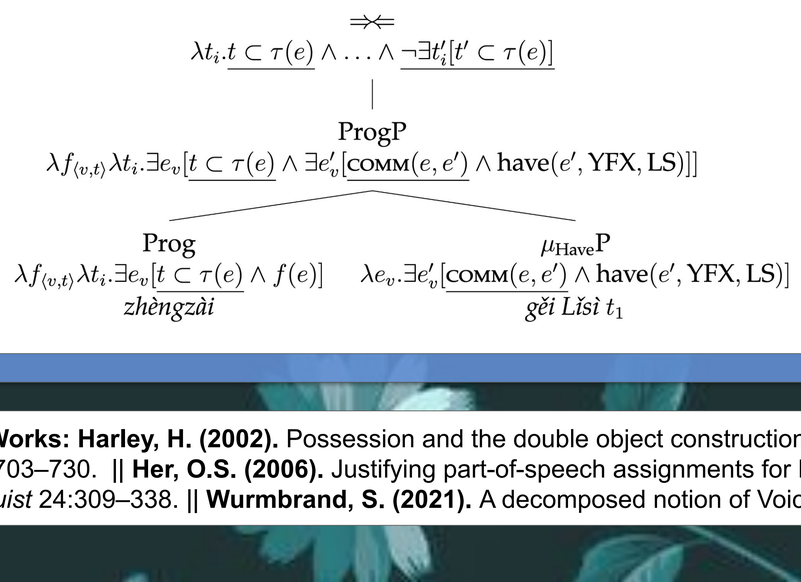
k. **Benefactive *Gěi***
Zhāngsān (zhèngzài) gěi Lǐsì xiě zuòyè.
Zhangsan PROG GEI Lisi write homework
'Zhangsan {did / is doing} homework for Lisi.'

INCOMPATIBILITY WITH PROGRESSIVE

In (a,b) *gěi* combines with the projection of theta-licenser P$_{HAVE}$ (Harley 2002). **μP** denotes the commencement of a having event.

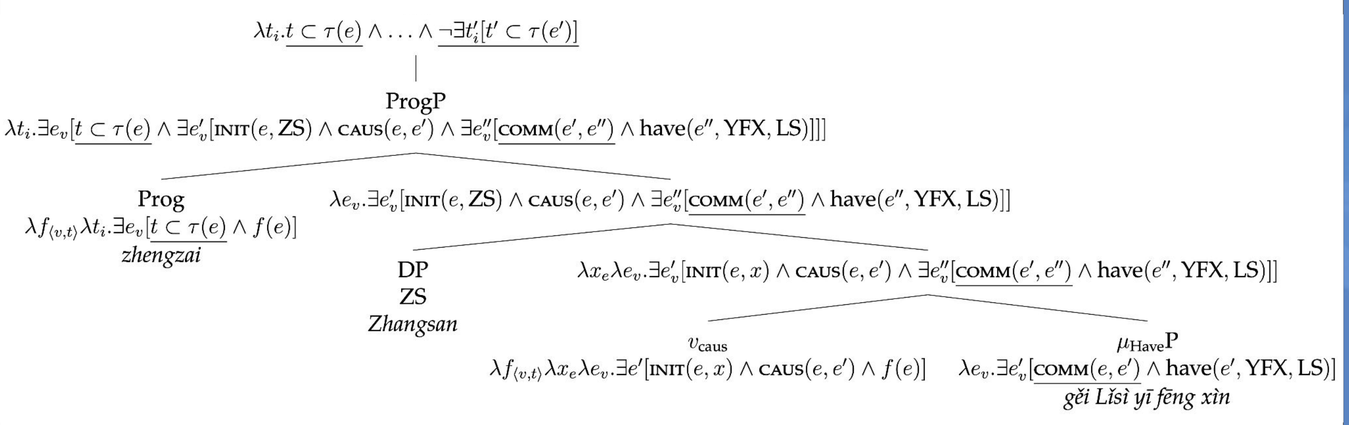


The **μP cannot directly combine with progressive aspect (b),** as it would denote a proper subinterval of an instantaneous event — an impossible interval and thus a **contradiction**.



COMPATIBILITY WITH PROGRESSIVE

In (a), the **μP** is merged with a causative *v*-head, which introduces a **new causing event** which causes the commencement event. This **causing event can be durative**, and thus is **compatible with progression modification**.



We propose that (d) and (e) are compatible for similar reasons — progressive modifies the **higher** event denoted by the matrix predicate, not the commencement. (f), (h), and (j) are incompatible because the **commencement event is the highest denoted event**, causing a contradiction when combining with progressive. The canonical *bèi* (g) and *ràng* (i) are also **μ-heads**, but **only select passive and causative projections** and **do not impose** a commencement denotation.

For now, we stipulate that the benefactive (k) projects above the progressive aspect, though this requires further research.

Selected Works: Harley, H. (2002). Possession and the double object construction. *LIVY* 2:31–70. || **Harley, H, and Jung, H.K. (2015).** In Support of the P$_{\text{Have}}$ Analysis of the Double Object Construction. *Linguistic Inquiry* 46:703–730. || **Her, O.S. (2006).** Justifying part-of-speech assignments for Mandarin gei. *Lingua* 116:1274–1302. || **Lin, T.-H.J., and Huang Y.-S. (2015).** Structures of the Mandarin gei constructions. *J East Asian Linguist* 24:309–338. || **Wurmbrand, S. (2021).** A decomposed notion of Voice.