

Ditransitive Constructions in Cantonese: The Give-construction as the Non-Prototypical Example

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1. Introduction

- The default definition for a ditransitive construction is almost invariably ‘a construction like the give-construction’.
- While the give-construction is the most representative example of such constructions in most languages, this is definitely not the case in Cantonese. In fact, in Cantonese, the give-construction is the *only* construction that deviates from other ditransitive constructions.

2. The Syntax of Ditransitive Constructions in Cantonese

- Following Malchukov et al. (in preparation), a ditransitive construction is assumed to be one with the following argument structure:

(1) V <Agent, Recipient, Theme>

- There are two ways to code the recipient and theme arguments in Cantonese.

(2) V < NP < NP (Double Object Construction)

ngo	gaau	keoi	zungman ¹
1.sg	teach	3.sg	Chinese ²
		Rpt	Th

‘I teach him/her Chinese.’

(3) V < Theme-NP < BEI < Recipient-NP (Serial Verb Construction)

ngo	dai	bun	syu	bei	keoi
1.sg	pass	CL	book	BEI ³	3.sg
			Th		Rpt

‘I passed him/her a/the book.’

¹ All examples in Cantonese are romanized following the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (2003). romanization scheme. Tones are omitted if they are not relevant to the present discussion.

² Symbols and abbreviations used in this paper:

x < y = x precedes y; 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; CL = classifier; perf = perfective aspect; prt = sentence-final particle; REL = relative clause marker; Rpt = recipient role; Sg = singular number; Th = theme role.

³ There is no consensus in the literature on the categorial status of *bei*. Some argue that *bei* should be best treated as a verb (Yip and Matthews 2007), while others think that it is a preposition (Tang 1993; Xu and Peyraube 1997). Matthews and Yip (1994:60-62) give a general overview of the problem in Cantonese. Ross (1993) discusses the same problem in Mandarin in greater detail. We adopt the position that *bei* should best be treated as a verb, and structures like [V NP *bei* NP] are serial verb constructions. We will leave the gloss for *bei* in a [V NP *bei* NP] structure as BEI.

- The two types of construction in (2) and (3) are not alternative constructions.
 - Each ditransitive verb is associated with one construction or the other, but not both.
 - There does not seem to be any ditransitive verb which can freely appear in both constructions without causing any change in meaning.
- A classification of ditransitive verbs is shown in (4). It is based on the syntactic realization of the recipient and theme roles:

(4) a. Verbs which can only appear in the [V < NP < NP] structure (double object construction):
Bei ‘give’, *gaau* ‘teach’, *fat* ‘fine’, *sau* ‘collect’, *man* ‘ask’, *daap* ‘answer’, *him/zaang* ‘owe’

b. Verbs which can only appear in the [V < Theme-NP < BEI < Recipient-NP] structure (serial verb construction)
Dai ‘pass’, *cyun* ‘pass’, *paai* ‘distribute’, *waan* ‘return’, *zaau* ‘refund’, *maai5* ‘buy’, *maai6* ‘sell’, *zou* ‘lease’, *ze* ‘lend’, *daai* ‘bring’, *lo* ‘take’, *gei* ‘mail/send’, *sung* ‘give as a gift’, *dinjau* ‘e-mail’, *cyunzan* ‘fax’, *deu/paau* ‘throw’, *ling* ‘carry’, *teoi* ‘push’, *gyun* ‘donate’
- We will only focus on the first type of ditransitive constructions, i.e. those formed with verbs in (4a).

2.1 Structural Order of Arguments (*give* vs. others)

- Cantonese, and Chinese languages in general, do not have case-marking or agreement morphology.
- The relation between the head verb and its dependents is not coded in any way.
 - The structural order of the two post-verbal arguments seems to be the only mechanism to tell the arguments apart.
- Complication: the theme argument or the recipient argument cannot be associated with a fixed position with reference to the verb.
- The key problem is that the order of the arguments in a *give*-construction is *different* from that in other ditransitive constructions.
- The *give*-construction in Cantonese is the *only* ditransitive construction that displays a peculiar order of arguments:

(5) ‘Give’

a. Theme-NP < Recipient-NP

ngo bei-zo bun syu ngo gaaze
 1.sg give-perf CL book 1.sg elder.sister
 ‘I gave the book to my elder sister.’

b. *Recipient-NP < Theme-NP

*ngo bei-zo ngo gaaze bun syu
 1.sg give-perf 1.sg elder.sister CL book

(6) Other ditransitive constructions

a. 'Teach'

(i) Recipient-NP < Theme-NP

ngo gaau siupangjau zungman
1.sg teach children Chinese

'I teach children Chinese.'

(ii) *Theme-NP < Recipient-NP

*ngo gaau zungman siupangjau
1.sg teach Chinese children

b. 'Owe'

(i) Recipient-NP < Theme-NP

ngo zaang ngo go tungsi 3000 man
1.sg owe 1.sg CL colleague 3000 dollar

'I owe my colleague 3000 dollars.'

(ii) *Theme-NP < Recipient-NP

*ngo zaang 3000 man ngo go tungsi
1.sg owe 3000 dollar 1.sg CL colleague

(7) Summary of facts

	<i>bei</i> 'give'	<i>gaau</i> 'teach'	<i>zaang</i> 'owe'
Linear Order of Arguments	Th < Rpt	Rpt < Th	

2.2 Effect of Grammatical Weight

- In addition to having a unique ordering, the post-verbal arguments in a *bei* 'give'-construction behave differently under the effect of weight⁴.

2.2.1 Heavy Theme-NP

(8) 'give' + heavy theme-NP

a. Heavy NP remains in the same position

ngo bei-zo jat bun jau cung jau hau
1.sg give-perf one CL also heavy also thick

ge jyujinhok gaufosyu keoi
GE⁵ linguistics textbook 3.sg

'I gave him/her a thick, heavy linguistics textbook.'

⁴ That *bei* 'give' might behave differently under the effect of weight was pointed out by Tom Wasow.

⁵ It is rather difficult to gloss *ge*. Very generally, it can be considered a kind of associative marker. In this example, for instance, the noun 'linguistics textbook' is associated with the property of being heavy and thick. The whole phrase *jat bun jau cung jau hau ge jyujinhok gaufosyu* 'a thick, heavy linguistics textbook' is an NP.

Ge also marks possession, as in *keoi ge si* 'his/her matter/story'. When it does, the structure can be interpreted as a noun being associated with a possessor.

- b. Heavy theme-NP becomes phrase-final

ngo bei-zo keoi jat bun jau cung jau hau
 1.sg give-perf 3. sg one CL also heavy also thick

ge jyujinhok gaafosyu
 GE linguistics textbook

'I gave him/her a thick, heavy linguistics textbook.'

- c. Heavy theme-NP remains in the same position, with another instance of *bei* following it

ngo bei-zo jat bun jau cung jau hau
 1. sg give-perf one CL also heavy also thick

ge jyujinhok gaafosyu bei keoi
 GE linguistics textbook BEI 3. sg

'I gave him/her a thick, heavy linguistics textbook.'

- (9) *ngo bei-zo bun syu bei keoi
 1.sg give-perf CL book BEI 3.sg

- For other ditransitive verbs, the weight of the theme-NP does not, however, affect the order of the two post-verbal arguments.

- (10) 'owe' + heavy theme-NP

- a. Heavy NP remains in the same position

ngo zaang keoi gei bun soeng nin sap jyut ceotbaan
 1.sg owe 3.sg few CL last year ten month publish

gwaanjyu gingzaihok ge syu
 about economics GE book

'I owe him/her a few books about economics which were published in October last year.'

- b. Heavy theme-NP switches position with recipient-NP

*ngo zaang gei bun soeng nin sap jyut ceotbaan
 1.sg owe few CL last year ten month publish

gwaanjyu gingzaihok ge syu keoi
 about economics GE book 3.sg

- c. Heavy theme-NP in non-canonical immediately post-verbal position, with another instance of *bei* preceding phrase-final recipient-NP

*ngo zaang gei bun soeng nin sap jyut ceotbaan
 1.sg owe few CL last year ten month publish

gwaanjyu gingzaihok ge syu bei keoi
 about economics GE book BEI 3.sg

(11) 'teach' + heavy theme-NP

- a. Heavy NP remains in the same position

ngo gaau keoi jat cin lin cin ge gudoi honjyu
1.sg teach 3.sg one thousand year ago GE ancient Chinese

'I teach her the kind of ancient Chinese which was used 1000 years ago.'

- b. Heavy theme-NP switches position with recipient-NP

*ngo gaau jat cin lin cin ge gudoi honjyu keoi
1.sg teach one thousand year ago GE ancient Chinese 3.sg

- c. Heavy theme-NP in non-canonical immediately post-verbal position, with another instance of *bei* preceding phrase-final recipient-NP

*ngo gaau jat cin lin cin ge gudoi honjyu *bei* keoi
1.sg teach one thousand year ago GE ancient Chinese BEI 3.sg

2.2.2 Heavy Recipient-NP

- This is not a factor that affects the ordering of post-verbal arguments in a ditransitive construction:

(12) 'give' + heavy recipient-NP

- a. Heavy recipient-NP remains in the same position

ngo bei-zo bun syu go go ngaamngaam
1.sg give-perf CL book REL CL just

haang jap lai ge leoizai
walk enter come GE girl

'I gave a book to the girl who just walked in.'

- b. Heavy recipient-NP in non-canonical position

*ngo bei-zo go go ngaamngaam
1.sg give-perf REL CL just

haang jap lai ge leoizai bun syu
walk enter come GE girl CL book

- c. Heavy recipient-NP in canonical position, preceded by another instance of *bei*

ngo bei-zo bun syu *bei* go go
1.sg give-perf CL book BEI REL CL

ngaamngaam haang jap lai ge leoizai
just walk enter come GE girl

(13) ‘owe’ + heavy recipient-NP

a. Heavy recipient-NP in canonical position

ngo zaang co ngo gaaklei san lai go go tungsi gei bun syu
1.sg owe sit 1.sg side new come REL CL colleague few CL book

‘I owe the new colleague who sits next to me a few books.’

b. Heavy recipient-NP in non-canonical phrase-final position

*ngo zaang gei bun syu co ngo gaaklei san lai go go tungsi
1.sg owe few CL book sit 1.sg side new come REL CL colleague

(14) ‘teach’ + heavy theme-NP + heavy recipient-NP

a. Heavy recipient-NP in canonical position

ngo gaau go go ngaamngaam haang jap lai ge
1.sg teach REL CL just walk enter come GE

leoizai honjyu
girl Chinese

‘I teach the girl who just walked in Chinese.’

b. Heavy recipient-NP in non-canonical phrase-final position

*ngo gaau honjyu go go ngaamngaam haang jap lai
1.sg teach Chinese REL CL just walk enter come

ge leoizai
GE girl

2.2.3 Heavy Recipient-NP and Heavy Theme-NP

- When both the theme-NP and the recipient-NP are heavy, the give-construction once again behaves differently from a typical ditransitive construction.

(15) ‘give’ + heavy theme-NP + heavy recipient-NP

a. Heavy NPs remain in canonical positions (same behaviour as ‘give’ + heavy theme-NP and ‘give’ + heavy recipient-NP)

ngo bei-zo jat bun jau cung jau hau
1.sg give-perf one CL also heavy also thick

ge jyujinhok gaaufosyu go go
GE linguistics textbook REL CL

ngaamngaam haang jap lai ge leoizai
just walk enter come GE girl

‘I gave a thick, heavy linguistics textbook to the girl who just walked into the room.’

- b. Heavy NPs switch positions (same behaviour as ‘give’ + heavy theme-NP)

ngo bei-zo go go ngaamngaam haang
 1.sg give-perf REL CL just walk

jap lai ge leoizai jat bun jau cung jau hau
 enter come GE girl one CL also heavy also thick

ge jyujinhok gaaufosyu
 GE linguistics textbook

‘I gave a thick, heavy linguistics textbook to the girl who just walked into the room.’

- c. Inserting another instance of *bei* between a heavy theme-NP and a heavy recipient-NP (same behaviour as ‘give’ + heavy theme-NP and ‘give’ + heavy recipient-NP)

ngo bei-zo jat bun jau cung jau hau
 1. sg give-perf one CL also heavy also thick

ge jyujinhok gaaufosyu *bei* go go
 GE linguistics textbook BEI REL CL

ngaamngaam haang jap lai ge leoizai
 just walk enter come GE girl

‘I gave a thick, heavy linguistics textbook to the girl who just walked into the room.’

(16) ‘owe’ + heavy theme-NP + heavy recipient-NP

- a. Heavy NPs remain in canonical positions (same behaviour as ‘owe’ + heavy theme-NP and ‘owe’ + heavy recipient-NP)

ngo zaang co ngo gaaklei san lai go go tungsi
 1.sg owe sit 1.sg side new come REL CL colleague

gei bun soeng nin sap jyut ceotbaan gwaanjyu gingzaihok ge syu
 few CL last year ten month publish about economics GE book

‘I owe the new colleague who sits next to me a few books about economics which were published in October last year.’

- b. Heavy NPs switch positions (same behaviour as ‘owe’ + heavy theme-NP and ‘owe’ + heavy recipient-NP)

*ngo zaang gei bun soeng nin sap jyut ceotbaan
 1.sg owe few CL last year ten month publish

gwaanjyu gingzaihok ge syu co ngo gaaklei san lai go go tungsi
 about economics GE book sit 1.sg side new come REL CL colleague

(17) ‘teach’ + heavy theme-NP + heavy recipient-NP

- a. Heavy NPs remain in canonical positions (same behaviour as ‘teach’ + heavy theme-NP and ‘teach’ + heavy recipient-NP)

ngo gaau go go ngaamngaam haang jap lai ge
 1.sg teach REL CL just walk enter come GE

leoizai jat cin lin cin ge gudoi honjyu
 girl one thousand year ago GE ancient Chinese

‘I teach the girl who just walked in the kind of ancient Chinese which was used 1000 years ago.’

- b. Heavy NPs switch positions (same behaviour as ‘ask’ + heavy theme-NP and ‘ask’ + heavy recipient-NP)

*ngo gaau jat cin lin cin ge gudoi honjyu
 1.sg teach one thousand year ago GE ancient Chinese

go go ngaamngaam haang jap lai ge leoizai
 REL CL just walk enter come GE girl

(18) Summary of facts

	<i>bei</i> ‘give’	<i>gaau</i> ‘teach’	<i>zaang</i> ‘owe’
Effect of Weight on Post-verbal Arguments	Heavy NP (regardless of semantic role) in phrase-final position	All arguments must be in canonical positions. Weight does not affect the order of post-verbal arguments.	

2.3 Relativization

- Example (19b) shows how the theme-NP in a monotransitive construction is relativized in Cantonese.

- A gap is left in the canonical position of the argument, and the head follows the relative clause. The head is preceded by (i) the gapped clause, (ii) the relativization marker *go*, which is identical in form with the demonstrative pronoun for ‘that’, and (iii) the classifier of the head noun.

(19) a. A monotransitive construction

ngo kamjat gin-dou go jan
 1.sg yesterday see-able CL person
 ‘I saw a person yesterday.’

b. Relativization of the theme-NP in a monotransitive construction

ngo kamjat gin-dou go go jan lai-zo
 1.sg yesterday see-able REL CL person come-perf
 ‘The person that I saw yesterday came.’

- With respect to relativization, the arguments in a give-construction behave just like those in any other ditransitive construction.

- In all ditransitive constructions, it is the theme argument that patterns with the theme argument in a monotransitive construction – when the theme argument is relativized on, the gap strategy is employed.
- The recipient argument, however, cannot be relativized using the gap strategy. A resumptive pronoun must fill the canonical position of the recipient argument, which is after both the verb and the theme-NP in the case of ‘give’, and immediately following the verb in all other cases.
 - The structure becomes ungrammatical if the resumptive pronoun is omitted.

(20) a. A ditransitive construction – ‘give’

ngo kamjat bei-zo bun syu keoi
 1.sg yesterday give-perf CL book 3.sg
 ‘I gave a book to him/her yesterday.’

b. Relativization of the theme-NP in a give-construction

[ngo kamjat bei keoi go bun syu] laan-zo
 1.sg yesterday give 3.sg REL CL book break-perf
 ‘The book that I gave him yesterday is torn/damaged.’

c. Relativization of the recipient-NP in a give-construction

[ngo kamjat bei bun syu **keoi** go go jan] lai-zo
 1.sg yesterday give CL book 3.sg REL CL person come-perf
 ‘The person who I gave a book to came.’

d. Relativization of the recipient-NP in a give-construction without any resumptive pronoun

* [ngo kamjat bei bun syu go go jan] lai-zo
 1.sg yesterday give CL book REL CL person come-perf

(21) a. A ditransitive construction – ‘teach’ [Repeating (6a(i))]

ngo gaau siupangjau zungman
 1.sg teach children Chinese
 ‘I teach children Chinese.’

b. Relativization of the theme-NP in a give-construction

[ngo gaau go baan siupangjau go di zungman] hou sam
 1.sg teach that CL children REL CL Chinese very difficult
 ‘The (kind of) Chinese that I teach that group of children is very difficult.’

c. Relativization of the recipient-NP in a give-construction

[ngo gaau **keoi-dei** zungman go baan siupangjau] hou cungming
 1.sg teach 3-PL Chinese that CL children very smart
 ‘The group of children to whom I teach Chinese are very smart.’

d. Relativization of the recipient-NP in a give-construction without any resumptive pronoun

*[ngo gaau zungman go baan siupangjau] hou cungming
 1.sg teach Chinese that CL children very smart

(22) a. A ditransitive construction – ‘owe’ [Repeating (6b(i))]

ngo zaang ngo go tungsi 3000 man
 1.sg owe 1.sg CL colleague 3000 dollar
 ‘I owe my colleague 3000 dollars.’

- b. Relativization of the theme-NP in a give-construction
 [ngo zaang ngo go tungsi go 3000 man] hai toi-min
 1.sg owe 1.sg CL colleague REL 3000 dollar be table-top
 ‘The 3000 dollars which I owe my colleague are on the table.’
- c. Relativization of the recipient-NP in a give-construction
 [ngo zaang **keoi** 3000 man] go go tungsi zau-zo
 1.sg owe 3.sg 3000 dollar REL CL colleague leave-perf
 ‘The colleague to whom I owe 3000 dollars has left.’
- d. Relativization of the recipient-NP in a give-construction without any resumptive pronoun
 *[ngo zaang 3000 man] go go tungsi zau-zo
 1.sg owe 3000 dollar REL CL colleague leave-perf

(23) Summary of facts

	<i>bei</i> ‘give’	<i>gaau</i> ‘teach’	<i>zaang</i> ‘owe’
Relativization	Th – gap (primary strategy) Rpt – resumptive pronoun		

2.4 Question-Formation

- Both the theme and recipient arguments in a ditransitive construction can be questioned.
- In all cases, the question words are in situ and they appear in the position of the questioned phrase.

(24) a. A ditransitive construction – ‘give’

ngo bei-zo bun syu keoi
 1.sg give-perf CL book 3.sg

‘I gave a book to him/her.’

b. Questioning the theme-NP in a give-construction

nei bei-zo **matje** keoi
 2.sg give-perf what 3.sg

‘What did you give him/her?’

c. Questioning the recipient-NP in a give-construction

nei bei-zo bun syu **bingo**
 2.sg give-perf CL book who

‘Who did you give the book to?’

(25) a. A ditransitive construction – ‘teach’ [Repeating (6a(i))]

ngo gaau siupangjau zungman
 1.sg teach children Chinese

‘I teach children Chinese.’

b. Questioning the theme-NP in a ditransitive construction

nei gaau siupangjau **matje**
 2.sg teach children what

‘What do you teach the children?’

c. Questioning the recipient-NP in a ditransitive construction

nei gaau **bingo** zungman
 2.sg teach who Chinese

‘Who do you teach Chinese to?’

- (26) a. A ditransitive construction – ‘owe’ [Repeating (6b(i))]
 ngo zaang ngo go tungsi 3000 man
 1.sg owe 1.sg CL colleague 3000 dollar
 ‘I owe my colleague 3000 dollars.’
- b. Questioning the theme-NP in a ditransitive construction
 nei zaang nei go tungsi **matje**
 2.sg owe 2.sg CL colleague what
 ‘What do you owe your colleague?’
- c. Questioning the recipient-NP in a ditransitive construction
 nei zaang **bingo** 3000 man
 2.sg owe who 3000 dollar
 ‘Who do you owe 3000 dollars to?’

(27) Summary of facts

	<i>bei</i> ‘give’	<i>gaau</i> ‘teach’	<i>zaang</i> ‘owe’
Question-Formation	Either Th or Rpt		

2.5 Pro-drop

- Cantonese allows pro-drop, even though the head verb never shows any agreement with any of its arguments.
- The pro-dropped phrase has to be one that has been referred to in previous discourse. In other words, it must have topic status.

- (28) a. Pro-drop in a give-construction – theme-NP
- (i) nei bei-zo di syu bingo aa?
 2.sg give-perf CL book who prt
 ‘Who did you give the books to?’
- (ii) go pangjau
 CL friend
 ‘(My) friend’
- (iii) ngo bei-zo go pangjau
 1.sg give-perf CL friend
 ‘I gave (them) to a friend.’
- (iv) ngo bei-zo di syu go pangjau
 1.sg give-perf CL book CL friend
 ‘I gave the books to a friend.’
- b. Pro-drop in a give-construction – recipient-NP
- (i) nei bei-zo matje keoi aa?
 2.sg give-perf what 3.SG prt
 ‘What did you give him/her?’
- (ii) ngo di gau syu
 1.sg CL old book
 ‘My old books’
- (iii) *ngo bei-zo ngo di gau syu
 1.sg give-perf 1.SG CL old book
- (iv) ngo bei-zo ngo di gau syu keoi
 1.sg give-perf 1.SG CL old book 3.sg
 ‘I gave him/her my old books.’

- The theme-NP can be pro-dropped in a give-construction.
- The recipient-NP cannot be pro-dropped in a give-construction.
- Pro-drop in other ditransitive constructions:

(29) a. Pro-drop in a ditransitive construction – theme-NP

- (i) nei gaau bingo zungman aa?
2.sg teach who Chinese prt
'Who do you teach Chinese to?'
- (ii) jat baan m seoi ge siupangjau
one CL five year-old GE children
'A group of five-year-old children'
- (iii) ngo gaau jat baan m seoi ge siupangjau
1.sg teach one CL five year.old GE children
'I teach a group of five-year-old children (Chinese).'
- (iv) ngo gaau jat baan m seoi ge siupangjau zungman
1.sg teach one CL five year.old GE children Chinese
'I teach a group of five-year-old children Chinese.'

b. Pro-drop in a ditransitive construction – recipient-NP

- (i) nei gaau di siupangjau matje aa?
2.sg teach CL children what prt
'What do you teach the children?'
- (ii) zungman
Chinese
'Chinese'
- (iii) #ngo gaau zungman
1.sg teach Chinese
'I teach Chinese.' (but not 'I teach (them) Chinese.')
- (iv) ngo gaau di siupangjau zungman
2.sg teach CL children Chinese
'I teach the children Chinese.'

- The theme-NP in a ditransitive construction with the verb *gaau* 'teach' can be pro-dropped.
- The recipient-NP cannot be pro-dropped in a ditransitive construction with the verb *gaau* 'teach'.

(30) a. Pro-drop in a ditransitive construction – theme-NP

- (i) lei zaang bingo 3000 man?
2.sg owe who 3000 dollar
'Who do you owe 3000 dollars to?'
- (ii) ngo go tungsi
1.sg CL colleague
'My colleague'
- (iii) ngo zaang ngo go tungsi
1.sg owe 1.sg CL colleague
'I owe my colleague (3000 dollars).'
- (iv) ngo zaang ngo go tungsi 3000 man
1.sg owe 1.sg CL colleague 3000 dollar
'I owe my colleague 3000 dollars.'

- b. Pro-drop in a ditransitive construction – recipient-NP
- (i) lei zaang lei go tungsi matje?
 2.sg owe 2.sg CL colleague what
 ‘What do you owe you colleague?’
- (ii) 3000 man
 3000 dollar
 ‘3000 dollars’
- (iii) #ngo zaang 3000 man
 1.sg owe 3000 dollar
 ‘I need 3000 dollars more.’ (but not ‘I owe (him/her) 3000 dollars.’)
- (iv) ngo zaang ngo go tungsi 3000 man
 1.sg owe 1.sg CL colleague 3000 dollar
 ‘I owe my colleague 3000 dollars.’

- Again, it is possible to pro-drop the theme-NP of a ditransitive construction, but not the recipient-NP.

(31) Summary of facts

	<i>bei</i> ‘give’	<i>gaau</i> ‘teach’	<i>zaang</i> ‘owe’
Pro-drop	Th only	Th; Rpt can be pro-dropped syntactically, but meaning changes	

3. Conclusion

- We have looked at the syntax of the theme argument and the recipient argument in ditransitive constructions in Cantonese in a number of phenomena.

(32) Summary of All Properties

Property \ Verb	<i>bei</i> ‘give’	<i>gaau</i> ‘teach’	<i>zaang</i> ‘owe’
Linear Order of Arguments	Th < Rpt	Rpt < Th	
Effect of Weight on Post-verbal Arguments	Heavy NP (regardless of semantic role) in phrase-final position	All arguments in canonical positions	
Relativization	Th – gap (primary strategy) Rpt – resumptive pronoun		
Question-Formation	Either Th or Rpt		
Pro-drop	Th only	Th; Rpt can be pro-dropped syntactically, but meaning changes	

- The syntax of the give-construction contrasts with that of other ditransitive constructions - the give-construction is *not the prototypical ditransitive construction* in Cantonese.
 - In two respects, it is the *only* exception to the behaviour of ditransitive constructions in the language:
 - ◆ It is the theme argument, but not the recipient argument, that immediately follows the verb 'give'. Cantonese as a language does *not* have an exceptional order of non-subject arguments in ditransitive constructions, the verb *bei* 'give' in this language, and this verb *only*, does.
 - ◆ In all other ditransitive constructions, the recipient argument is the argument that is adjacent to the verb. The theme argument is the final one in the construction. This order is just as the one identified for ditransitive constructions in many other languages.
 - ◆ 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 clause. Weight does not seem to affect the other ditransitive constructions.
- When it comes to relativization, question formation and pro-drop, the give-construction behaves in similar ways to other ditransitive constructions. The difference is between the theme argument and the recipient argument in a ditransitive construction, rather than between the give-construction and all other ditransitive constructions.

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