Causative, passive or causal passive? When *gei* meets Voice alternation

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Introduction: Besides being a ditransitive verb, Mandarin *gei* is well known to be a semi-lexical item which hosts a causative, passive or a so called affected '*gei*-VP' construction. Notably, causative and passive *gei* share the same structural description and is potentially ambiguous but when agentive adverbials appear, such ambiguity dissolves in (1). Affected *gei* share the same form with short passive but different in terms of *C*-selection, as in (2): *gei* can be operated on unaccusative verbs and brings a passive effect with a covert causer and affected meaning (Shen & Sybesma, 2010), resembling the causal passive marker-*gda* found in Buryat (Privoznov, 2019).

(1) a.   Xiaoming gei Nana da le yi quan.
             Xiaoming GEI Nana hit PFV one punch
             'Xiaoming have Nana punched him.' **(causative or passive)**

      b.   Xiaoming guyi gei Nana da le yi quan.
             Xiaoming deliberately GEI Nana hit PFV one punch
             'Xiaoming deliberately let Nana punched him.' **(causative only)**

      c.   Xiaoming gei Nana guyi da le yi quan.
             Xiaoming GEI Nana deliberately hit PFV one punch
             'Xiaoming got punched by Nana deliberately.' **(passive only)**

(2) a.   Xiaoming gei/(bei) guyi da le yi quan.
             Xiaoming GEI/(PASS) deliberately hit PFV one punch
             'Xiaoming got punched deliberately.' **(short or causal passive)**

      b.   Xiaoming gei/(*bei) shengbing le.
             Xiaoming GEI/(PASS) sick SFP
             'Xiaoming got sick.' **(causal passive only)**

Research questions: Is there a structural distinction between causative and passive *gei* in (1)? How come the same morpheme gei both marking valence reducing (demote the agent in (2a)) and valence increasing (add a covert causer in (2b))?

In the literature, the multifunctionality of gei can be viewed as a result of it occupying more than one position on the causative-unaccusative spectrum and meaning LET, AFFECT and OCCUR respectively (Huang, 2013); being a polysemous item makes it flexible in terms of a control/raising analysis and θ assignment, thus the ambiguity and verb se- lection. However, *gei* as AFFECT requires raising analysis as they are incompatible with agentive adverbials in (1c), but the starting point of movement is unclear with a gapless complement. *Gei* as OCCUR does not encode causativity in syntax, conflicting with the fact that some agentive adverbials can exist to modify the covert causer, as in (2a).

The proposal: We will reconsider the issue from the contextualized approach to argument structure (Kastner, 2017; Marantz, 2013, 2022; Myler, 2016; Wood, 2015,

2016; Wood & Marantz, 2017), shifting the multifunctionality of *gei* from its lexical property to its syntactic context. We argue that *gei* is a causative functional head whose semantic denotation is shown in (3). This CAUSE head, which spells out as *gei*, bares several contextual allosemies and gets interpreted under different syntactic contexts. The interpretations among LET, AFFECT and OCCUR are contextually dependent on two factors:

(i) Whether an active/passive Voice is projected above this v;

(ii) The complement of this v is a VoiceP or a VP.

The accounts: There is structure distinction between causal and passive *gei*, not due to *gei* but Voice alternation (Alexiadou et al., 2015), which determines whether we have a causer externally merged as an outer subject, as in (4a), or an affectee internally merged from an (outer) object position, as in (4b), thus the different interpretation of *gei*. Short passive and causal passive *gei* are the same in nature as they require the same realizational context, namely a passive Voice head is projected above, see (4b) and (4c). The complement size explains its verb selection (unaccusativity) and the passive Voice above signifies the covert external force and the affected meaning.

(3) $\|Gei\|$: $\lambda f_{vt}.\lambda e.\exists e'.f(e')$ & cause(e, e')

(4) a. $gei \rightarrow v_{CAU}$/ [EA Voice$_{ACT}$ [*gei* [VoiceP]]]
     b. $gei \rightarrow v_{PASS}$/ [Voice$_{PASS}$ [*gei* [VoiceP]]]
     c. $gei \rightarrow v_{CAU-PASS}$/ [Voice$_{PASS}$ [*gei* [VP]]]

Theoretical implications: Compared with the lexicalist approach, the contextualized analysis is not just telling the same story of *gei* from a different perspective, but is advantageous in figuring out why and how *gei* come to be multifunctional and in drawing on the insight from the ambiguity and the disambiguity of *gei* in syntax. Furthermore, it is possible that the ditransitive *gei* is the same causative *v* head when it is conditioned by a HAVE component (Harley, 2002). The same logic can also be extended to other usages of *gei* such as the benefactive, converbal, etc.

Keywords: Causative, Passive, *Gei*, Argument structure，Contextual approach

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