

Ban of cooccurrence of a categorially distinct multifunctional particle

Shangyan Pan

University of Connecticut

In this talk, I examine the ban on the cooccurrence of the multifunctional Mandarin particle *gei* (lexical verb ‘give’, prepositional dative, benefactive marker, passive marker, etc), which I dub the **gei-gei* constraint. While similar bans are well known in both phonology (cf. *OCP*; Leben 1973; Goldsmith 1976; o.a.) and syntax (Bošković 1997, 1998, 2021; Richards 2001, 2010; o.a.), the **gei-gei* pattern is striking because the constraint persists even when the two particles have **distinct syntactic functions and categories**. I argue that the different uses of *gei*, despite their functional and categorial diversity, are the same acategorial element: the root $\sqrt{\text{GEI}}$ and an acategorial argument introducer. Their surface categorial differences arise solely from the syntactic contexts. This proposal thus puts the **gei-gei* constraint fully in line with other “syntactic OCP” phenomena. **Puzzle.** The Mandarin particle *gei* is highly polysemous: in addition to being a lexical ditransitive verb ‘give’, the identical exponent can also function as a benefactive marker (1a), a prepositional dative (1b), a passive marker (1c), and an affected object marker occurring with the canonical passive particle *bei* (1d) (Ting & Chang 2004, Lin & Huang 2015, Kuo 2021, a.o.).

- (1) a. Jack **gei** mama xi-le yifu. c. Jack **gei** che zhuang-le.
Jack for mom wash-ASP clothes Jack GEI car hit-ASP
‘Jack did laundry for mom.’ ‘Jack was hit by a car.’
b. Jack song-le yi-shu-hua **gei** Emma. d. Jack bei che **gei** zhuang-le.
Jack gift-ASP one-CL-flower to Emma. Jack BEI car GEI hit-ASP
‘Jack gifted a bouquet of flowers to Emma.’ ‘Jack was hit by a car.’

Pan (to appear) argues that the preverbal *gei* in (1a) is a HighAppI⁰ (Pylkkänen 2008), introducing a benefactive argument ‘mom’ in its specifier position. When the predicate is ditransitive (1b), *gei* in the postverbal position functions as a prepositional dative licensing a recipient indirect object (IO) as its complement. However, when these two instances of *gei* cannot occur in the same clause:

- (2) Wo wei/??**gei** Emma dai-le yi-ben-shu **gei** Jack.
I for Emma bring-ASP one-CL-book to Jack
‘I brought a book to Jack for Emma.’

This is not an issue of the number of arguments in a sentence, as (2) is grammatical with a different benefactive marker *wei* in the preverbal position. Similarly, though *gei* can be a passive marker (1c) and an affected object marker (1d) separately, the two cooccurring in the same sentence is ungrammatical (3). This means that the **gei-gei* constraint applies between several distinct *gei* variants and is not construction specific.

- (3) *Jack **gei** che **gei** zhuang-le. (4) Wo zai **shuli** **shu-li** de neirong.
Jack GEI car GEI hit-ASP I PROG organize book.in POSS content
Intended: ‘Jack was hit by a car.’ ‘I am organizing the content of the book.’

The construction in (2-3) is thus puzzling because: (i) Mandarin does not have a relevant low-level PF cooccurrence constraint even for adjacent PF identical elements in the same clause as the example in (4) demonstrates, so the ban on the cooccurrence of *gei* in (2-3) cannot be purely phonological in nature, especially since the two *geis* are not even linearly adjacent in the relevant cases; (ii) the two instances of this homophonous element in (2-3) have different functions and do not share the same syntactic category. Therefore, they are syntactically distinct and cannot be explained by “syntactic OCP” constraints.

Proposal. I propose that the constraint against cooccurring instances of *gei* can indeed be explained as a classic “syntactic OCP” effect because all *gei* functional variants in fact contain an identical

provides an implication of a further divide between functional and lexical categories in the application of “syntactic OCP” effects.

Reference:

- Bošković, Željko. 1997. Superiority effects with multiple *wh*-fronting in Serbo-Croatian. *Lingua* 102(1). 1–20.
- Bošković, Željko. 1998. Wh-Phrases and Wh-Movement in Slavic. Comparative Slavic Morphosyntax Workshop Indiana University, Bloomington, ms.
- Bošković, Željko. 2021. *On the Nature of the Syntax-Phonology Interface: Cliticization and Related Phenomena* (North Holland Linguistic Series: Linguistic Variations). Brill.
- Bošković, Željko. 2014. Now I’m a Phase, Now I’m Not a Phase: On the Variability of Phases with Extraction and Ellipsis. *Linguistic Inquiry* 45(1). 27–89.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2021. Minimalism: Where Are We Now, and Where Can We Hope to Go. *Gengo Kenkyu (Journal of the Linguistic Society of Japan)* 160. 1–41.
- Chomsky, Noam, T. Daniel Seely, Robert C. Berwick, Sandiway Fong, M. A. C. Huybregts, Hisatsugu Kitahara, Andrew McInnerney & Yushi Sugimoto. 2023. *Merge and the Strong Minimalist Thesis* (Elements in Generative Syntax). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldsmith, John Anton. 1976. *Autosegmental phonology*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Thesis).
- Kuo, Pei-Jung. 2021. Three applicative GEs in Mandarin Chinese. *The size of things I*. Berlin: Language Science Press. 265–283.
- Leben, William Ronald. 1973. *Suprasegmental phonology*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Thesis).
- Lin, Tzong-Hong Jonah & Yu-Shan Huang. 2015. Structures of the Mandarin *gei* constructions. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 24(3). 309–338.
- Pylkkänen, Liina. 2008. *Introducing arguments* (Linguistic Inquiry Monographs). 49. MIT Press.
- Richards, Norvin. 2001. A Distinctness Condition on Linearization. *Proceedings of the 20th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*. Cascadia Press.
- Richards, Norvin. 2010. *Uttering Trees*. MIT Press.
- Roberts, Ian. 2024. Form Copy, Agree and Clitics. *Probus*. De Gruyter Mouton. 36(1). 17–29.
- Saito, Mamoru. 2024. On Minimal Yield and Form Copy: evidence from East Asian languages. *The Linguistic Review*. De Gruyter Mouton. 41(1). 59–84.
- Ting, Jen & Miller Y.-L. Chang. 2004. The category of *gei* in Mandarin Chinese and grammaticalization. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics* 2(2). 45–74.
- Wood, Jim & Alec Marantz. 2017. The interpretation of external arguments. In Roberta D’Alessandro, Irene Franco & Ángel J. Gallego (Hrsg.), *The Verbal Domain*, 255–278. Oxford University Press.