

A Functional-Constructional Study
of the Ditransitive Clause

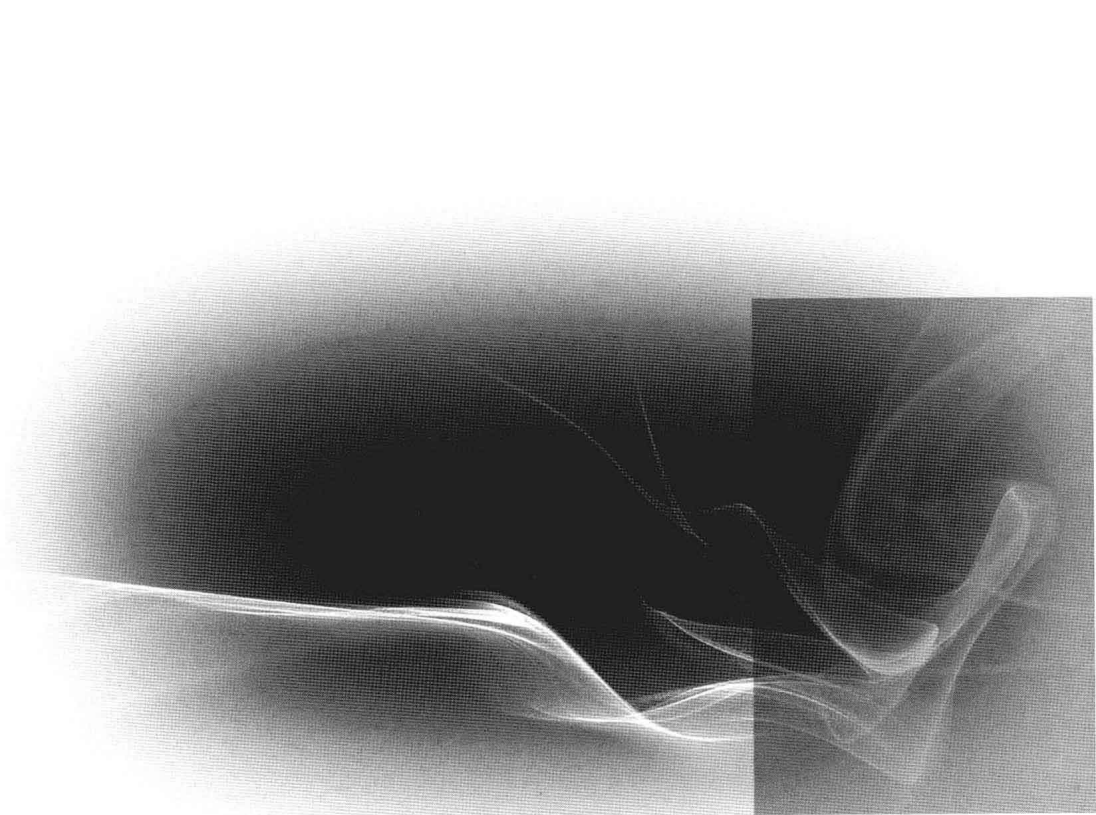
双及物小句的
功能—构式研究

张跃伟 / 著



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序

听到张跃伟博士即将出版他的著作《双及物小句的功能—构式研究》，本人感到十分高兴。张跃伟在厦门大学攻读博士学位的过程中，本着科学的态度，持之以恒，大量阅读有关系统功能语言学和构式语法的书籍和论文，研究能力有了很大的提高。在确定了博士论文的选题之后，张跃伟博士通过各种渠道与国内外学者取得联系，与他们探讨论文中所涉及的问题，积极展开研究，不放过任何一个微小的细节。令我印象深刻的是，张跃伟在论文写作中克服各种困难，不厌其烦进行了数次的修改，精益求精，不断完善。

语法包括了句法和词汇，句法只是语法的一部分。句法指的是句子中形式的组合关系。在过去的 70 来年中，句法研究有了很大的发展。除了转换生成语法外，系统功能语言学对语言描写也产生了很大的影响。系统功能语言学把形式看作表达意义的手段，强调句法的交际功能。形式和意义之间的关系被看作体现的关系。

张跃伟博士的这本著作涉及的是双及物小句。作为英语中的一种主要句式，双及物小句受到了人们长期的关注，各种语言学理论从不同角度对它进行了探讨，但把系统功能语言学理论和构式语法思想结合起来对双及物小句进行研究的并不多见。此外，张跃伟博士的论文能基于真实的语料，从系统功能语言学的角度，吸取构式语法的思路，提出研究双及物小句的功能—构式框架，重点从经验元功能、语篇元功能和构式三个方面研究双及物小句在语篇中的功能特征，探索双及物小句表达经验意义的维度以及双及物小句的使用与信息结构的联系，从而说明双及物构式的使用有其特定的规律，并具有功能和认知上的动因。因此，该书一方面提供了研究双及物小句的新视角，另一方面丰富了构式语法研究的内容。该书的另一个特

点是借助语料库中的真实语料,这使该研究更能真实反映双及物小句的使用情况,更具有说服力。

可以说,张跃伟博士的详细、深入的研究不仅让我们了解到双及物小句的句法特征,而且让我们认识了双及物小句在语篇中的功能作用。这对于功能句法研究具有很好的参考价值。本人期待张跃伟博士在今后的研究工作中能出更多的成果。

杨信彰

2012年8月28日于厦门大学

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This work purports to give a comprehensive usage-based account of the ditransitive clause from a functional-constructional perspective. On the one hand, following the functional line of research advocated by systemic functional grammar (henceforth SFG), the present study aims to account for the ditransitive clause both experientially and textually. On the other hand, to shed more light on the unique features of the ditransitive clause (construction), this study attempts a constructional approach to the ditransitive clause, exploring the semantic interaction of ditransitive verbs and the ditransitive construction, the ditransitive constructional polysemy and its metaphorical extensions.

The present research will show how both the insights of SFG and Constructional Grammar (henceforth CxG) can enhance our understanding of the ditransitive clause. This chapter consists of six sections, which deal with the background, rationale, objectives, methodology, data collection, and overall organization of this work, respectively.

1.1 Background of the Study

The acts of “giving” are not hard to encounter in human experience.

As a matter of fact, such acts, which may be more concrete (i. e. *giving someone a book*) or more abstract (i. e. *telling someone a story*) in nature, are considered to be basic and central to human experience in terms of the roles they play in social life. To put it another way, social activities cannot be imagined without expressing the idea of actual transfer of physical objects in the first place or metaphorical transfer of non-physical objects in the second. Concomitantly, it is not beyond our expectation that there are ubiquitous linguistic expressions of these acts.

On the other hand, the linguistic construals of the various “giving” meanings build a good ground for many questions of theoretical interest. Actually, this common phenomenon has long been a hot topic of linguistic investigation, which is labeled as “ditransitive clause” or other similar terms such as “ditransitive construction” or “ditransitive argument structure construction” (cf. Goldberg 1995), “Double Object Construction” (cf. Larson 1988), “Dative Alternation”^① (cf. Green 1974), etc. Obviously, the spawn of such a wide range of terminology suggests that there are different theoretical frameworks for the ditransitive issues.

Traditional descriptive grammar (Kruisinga 1932; Jespersen 1927; Quirk *et al.* 1985) is concerned with the grammatical categories such

① According to Levin & Rappaport Hovav (2005), in English *dative alternation* involves verbs that have two argument realization patterns, namely the double object variant (e. g. *Martha gave Myrna an apple*), and the *to*-variant (e. g. *Martha gave an apple to Myrna*). However, despite the prevalence of this term, it must be pointed out that the term *dative* is not unproblematic, due to the fact that the dative case is no longer a part of modern English usage, though it exists in old English. Thus, for an *objective pronoun* like *me* in *He gave me that*, it can at most be claimed to behave in a dative manner.

as “object”, “direct object”, “indirect object”, ^①and “ditransitive verb”. For instance, Kruisinga (1932: 159) points out that the indirect object usually expresses the person or thing that is benefited by the action (e. g. *do*, *spare*, *allot*). Jespersen (1927) proposes that both direct object and indirect object be defined as primarily semantic functional categories. More importantly, Quirk *et al.* (1985) associate ditransitive verbs with ditransitive complementation or ditransitive clause pattern “SVO_iO_d”, ^②which subsumes a wide range of potential formal realizations. As to be demonstrated (see Section 2.1), the Quirk grammar sets a lower threshold for ditransitive verbs, in the sense that there is a broad understanding of the notion of object, e. g. noun phrase, *wh*-clause, *that*-clause, *to*-infinitive. However, as Mukherjee (2005: 8) points out, although some of the so-called ditransitive verbs (e. g. *inform*, *convince*, *advise*, *remind*, *say*) recognized by Quirk *et al.* (*ibid.*) can be used somewhat ditransitively in a broad sense, they can never occur in the basic ditransitive pattern. That is, these verbs never occur in the ditransitive realization of the two objects as two noun phrases (i. e. S + V + O_i: NP + O_d: NP), which results in their dubious status of ditransitive verbs.

Taking these factors into consideration, the present work will take a comparatively rigid stance on ditransitive verbs and thus adopt the multi-layered narrow definition of ditransitive verb offered by Mukherjee (2005: 65):

A ditransitive verb (DV) is a trivalent verb that requires a subject (S), a direct

① Note that direct object and indirect object are also referred to as the first object and the second object, respectively (cf. Pinker 1989; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005).

② “SVO_iO_d” is short for “Subject-Verb-Indirect Object-Direct Object”.

object (O_d) and an indirect object (O_i) for a complete syntactic complementation. It is necessary for all clause elements to be realizable as noun phrases (NPs): this realization (S: NP-DV- O_i ; NP- O_d : NP) is called the basic form of ditransitive complementation. If a verb is attested in the basic form of ditransitive complementation in actual language use, it is also considered a ditransitive verb in all other forms of complementation. All ditransitive verbs and ditransitive complementations are associated with an underlying proposition that represents the situation type of TRANSFER with three semantic roles involved: the ditransitive verb denotes an action in which the acting entity transfers a transferred entity to the affected entity.^①

As stated above, there are both semantic and formal criteria for defining ditransitive verb, thus excluding those dubious members and avoiding a very heterogeneous group. As is to be seen below, this idea is essentially the same as that advocated in CxG.

Unlike the traditional grammar, Cognitive Grammar (henceforth CG) places much emphasis on the conceptualization of the event of transfer of possession (cf. Langacker 1991, 2008). Of this cognitive camp, particularly noteworthy is the version of CxG represented by Goldberg (1995), which attempts a constructional account of the ditransitive construction. Under this account, special attention is paid to the interaction, the relative independence and compatibility between verbal meaning and constructional meaning.

According to Functional Grammar (Dik 1989, 1997), which is a monostratal theory in its basic architecture, each argument in a clause is assigned a Semantic Function (i. e. Agent, Patient, Recipient) and a Syntactic Function (i. e. Subject, Object). This is illustrated for dative alternation in (1)-(2).

① Interpreted in this way, a ditransitive verb can also be referred to as a verb of causation of possession.

- (1) a. *Pedro gave his e-mail address to Aisha.*
 Ag Pat Rec
 Subj Obj
 b. *Pedro gave Aisha his e-mail address.*
 Ag Rec Pat
 Subj Obj

Last but not least, SFG gives priority to the relevant ditransitive process types (i. e. material process, verbal process, behavioural process, mental process and relational process) and their participant functions in the transitivity system, though without explicit mention of either “ditransitive clause” or “ditransitive verb”.

In some sense, the enumerated approaches have shed some light on the ditransitive issues within their own theoretical frameworks. However, each approach, when considered in isolation, appears somewhat fragmentary due to its own concern. In light of such considerations, it is of great necessity to propose a “plural” model, which draws on the merits of each school.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

In SFG, there is no explicit mention of either “ditransitive verb” or “ditransitive clause”. At first glance, this might come as a surprise in view of the interest the relevant linguistic phenomenon has aroused in other schools of research. A close examination shows that the avoidance of these terms is natural. One reason may be that these two terms, as well as their counterparts like “transitive verb” or “transitive clause”, “intransitive verb” or “intransitive clause” are preferably used by the traditional approach to grammar (e.g. Quirk *et al.* 1985), based

on different types of clause complementation and valency feature of the verbs involved. One of their central concerns is with drawing structural analogies between different formal realizations at the level of functional categories. In this respect, the sense of “functional” (which is often dubbed as such) in Quirk-grammar is totally different from that in SFG, which is characterized as meta-functional.

As is well-known, in SFG the concept of semantic motivation of syntax is prioritized to an extreme degree and grammar itself is heavily semanticized. Thus, it is held that syntax cannot be understood separately from semantics and pragmatics, because to a very large extent it is semantically and/or pragmatically motivated. Accordingly, in line with this main motif, SFG provides a semantically-oriented “syntactic” analysis of the clause. In this new analytic framework, the central concern is not the formal structures themselves, but how the clause is semantically motivated to construe the metafunctions.

In this light, it is not surprising that in SFG there is hardly any space for purely syntactic grammatical categories (most of which are labeled in terms of grammatical relations). A case in point is that in the explication of clause as exchange, a new analytic framework is preferred over the traditional one, as in Figure 1. 1.

the duke	gave		my aunt	that teapot
Subject	‘(past) Finite	give’ Predicator	Complement	Complement
Mood		Residue		

Figure 1. 1 Interpersonal-Functional Analysis of the Ditransitive Clause as an Exchange (Based on Halliday 1994: 80)

By contrast, the traditional (especially the Quirk) analysis of this same clause can be represented as follows:

the duke	gave	my aunt	that teapot
S	V (ditransitive)	O _i	O _d

Figure 1.2 Traditional Analysis of the Ditransitive Clause in Terms of Clause Type “SVOO”

As shown above, in the SFG analytic framework, all elements of the clause are being interpreted in functional terms; that is, they are essentially meaning-oriented. In contrast, in the traditional analytic framework, all elements of the clause are being ascribed purely grammatical functions (in terms of arbitrary grammatical categories). Thus, the term “Subject” used in SFG shall be interpreted in a way radically different from “grammatical Subject” in the traditional grammar. Similarly, it is natural for SFG to prefer the more semantically-flavored “complement” over the traditional “object”, including both “direct object” and “indirect object”, which implies a purely grammatical function.

Within SFG, the clause is assumed to play a central role in modeling experience, in other words, in representing patterns of experience. Thus, the experiential function is fulfilled by the grammar of the clause, or more specifically, the transitivity system, which construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types (Halliday 1994: 106-107). As to the act of giving (also termed the transfer of possession), it can be linguistically construed as a material process (e. g. *I gave my love a ring that has no end*), or a verbal process (e. g. *John told Mary a story*), or a behavioural process (e. g. *she threw him a parting glance*^①), or a relational process (e. g.

① Refer to subsection 4.2.1 for the reasons that this type of clause is classified as a ditransitive behavioural clause.

it cost him a pretty penny), or a mental process (e. g. *she envied him his ability to distance himself*). The SFG treatment of the ditransitive clause displays a unique character — transitivity is characterized in terms of the clause, rather than the verb, hence a top-down portrayal of the ditransitive clause. Nevertheless, this shall not preclude the recognition of the pivotal importance of the ditransitive verb, since it does play a central role in the experiential construal.

Thus, in SFG, the semantic analysis of the clause is concerned with allocating various participant functions (or semantic roles) in each particular process type. For example, for a material “giving” process, there are participant roles of Actor, Beneficiary (which is further divided into Recipient and Client), and Goal. For a verbal “giving” process, there are participant roles of Sayer, Beneficiary (which is also referred to as Receiver), and Verbiage. For a relational (attribute) “giving” process, there are participant roles of Carrier, Beneficiary, and Attribute. However, in SFG there is no positing of abstract level of syntactic structure to account for the ditransitive clause. This is expected, since SFG is functional and semantic rather than formal and syntactic in orientation. In this respect, SFG distinguishes itself from other non-SFG approaches in which syntax, semantics and morphology are considered to be three distinct levels. ^①

① The lack of such an abstract syntactic structure in the SFG description of the ditransitive clause is natural when the theoretical assumptions are taken into account. In SFG, language is essentially defined as a resource for meaning potential. In accordance with this dominant motif, it is postulated that there are three basic strata, namely semantic, lexicogrammar, and phonological. Thus, SFG is functional and semantic rather than formal and syntactic in orientation, and gives priority to *system* for paradigmatic relations, rather than to *structure* for syntagmatic relations.