

## On the Object Marker *BUE* in Hainan Min<sup>\*</sup>

Hui-chi Lee

*National Cheng Kung University*

This paper focuses on Hainan Min's object marker *bue* and its syntactic structures. Hainan Min *bue* seems to be very similar to Mandarin *ba* because the two markers do not exhibit multiple functions like Southern Min *ka* which can be a patient marker, source marker, goal marker and benefactive marker. However, unlike the word *ba* in Mandarin, Hainan Min *bue* can serve not only as an object marker, but also as a verb. In addition, this paper assumes that the verb *bue* has undergone grammaticalization and has developed from a verb into a preposition. The verbal and non-verbal functions of *bue* share the same semantic properties which carry the selection restriction on objecthood. Because of the animacy preference on objecthood, it is assumed that Hainan Min *bue* is closer to Taiwan Southern Min *chiong* rather than *ka* as a patient marker.

Key words: Taiwan Southern Min, Hainan Min, object marker, *BA* sentences

### 1. Introduction

Research on Hainan Min has been severely neglected for a long time.<sup>1</sup> Zhan (2002) points out that the noticeable weakness of Min dialectal research falls on the unevenness of survey locations. Linguistic surveys of Min dialects mostly focus on areas where

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<sup>1</sup> Yang & Xia (1992) utilized statistical methods to calculate the relative coefficient among Min dialects and reached a conclusion to display the relationship. They categorized Taiwan Min and Quanzhou/Xiamen/Zhangzhou Min in the same subcategory, 'Xiazhang' dialect group. Hainan Min stands alone in the 'Hainan' dialect group. However, both 'Xiazhang' and 'Hainan' belong to the same category, the 'Southern Min' dialect group. Hashimoto (1961) and many of his works selected Wenchang dialect to stand for Hainan Min. In this paper, we employ Wenchang dialect to indicate Hainan Min.

Southern Min, Eastern Min, and Chaozhou/Shantou are spoken. In order to alleviate the limited research on Hainan Min,<sup>2</sup> this paper aims to explore syntactic aspects of Hainan Min and especially focuses on the *BUE* construction.

We found that the word *bue* in Hainan Min<sup>3</sup> can only mark a patient role, as shown in (1)-(4).

- (1) Patient marker *bue*  
 $I^{44}$   $bue^{42}$   $mui^{22}$   $phah^{55}$   $liao^{21}$   $dziak^{33}$ - $e^{44}$   
 3SG<sup>4</sup> BUE door hit PERF one-CL  
 ‘He knocked on the door once.’
- (2) \*Source marker *bue*  
 $*Gua^{21}$   $bue^{42}$   $nang^{22}$   $tsioh^{55}$   $tsi^{22}$   
 1SG BUE people borrow money  
 ‘I borrowed money from other people.’
- (3) \*Goal marker *bue*  
 $*I^{44}$   $bue^{42}$   $gua^{21}$   $ka^{11}$   $ing^{44}$ - $ue^{44}$   
 3SG BUE 1SG teach English  
 ‘He teaches English to me.’
- (4) \*Benefactive marker *bue*  
 $*I^{44}$   $bue^{42}$   $gua^{21}$   $toi^{21}$   $ta^{44}$ - $hou^{11}$   
 3SG BUE 1SG wash clothes  
 ‘He washed the clothes for me.’

<sup>2</sup> One piece of research on Hainan Min syntax can be found in Qian (2002). His data focus on Tunchang dialect.

<sup>3</sup> Hainan Southern Min data are gathered from our field work on Hainan Island. The informants are Hainan Wenchang dialect native speakers who are in their seventies. The same word *bue* is found in both Wenchang and Haikou dialects (see Chen 1996). Following Woon (2004) and Liu (2006), we found that the voiced consonants in Wenchang dialect include /b, b̥, d, d̥, m, n, ŋ, l, dz, g/. The voiceless consonants are /p, t, s, ts, k, h, ʔ/. Vowels include /a, i, u, ε, o, u/. The vowel [ε] is rendered as ‘e’. The tones in this paper are basically rendered as citation tones. In addition, this paper simplifies ‘*bue*’ to be ‘*bue*’ when the letter is capitalized for the convenience of typing. The transcription for Hainan Min in this paper basically follows Woon (2004) and Liu (2006), while the spelling of Taiwan Southern Min in this paper is rendered in Church Romanization codified in Douglas (1873). The transcription of tone systems in Hainan Min are rendered by tone values; Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Min are rendered by tone categories.

<sup>4</sup> The following abbreviations are used in glossing examples: SG=singular; PL=plural (e.g. 3PL=3rd person plural); GEN=genitive; CL=classifier; NEG=negation; PART=sentence-final particle; PERF=perfective aspect.

This finding makes *bue* different from Taiwan Southern Min *ka*, which can function not only as a patient marker, but also as a source marker, a goal marker, or a benefactive marker. Without such multiple functions, the word *bue* behaves more like Mandarin *ba*. The word *ba* in Mandarin has been synchronically and diachronically studied by many linguists. This paper attempts to investigate the syntactic and semantic properties of Hainan Min *bue* construction based on previous efforts and findings on Mandarin or Taiwan Southern Min (e.g. Tsao & Lu 1990, Cheng & Tsao 1995, Tsao 1988, 2005, Lien 2002, Teng 2005). At the same time, we hope the effort spent on the Hainan Min dialect can also help the study of the other dialects.

## 2. Object markers in Hainan Min

This paper shows that there are different markers for patient,<sup>5</sup> source, goal, and benefactive roles. The corresponding source marker in Hainan Min is *kang*,<sup>6</sup> the goal marker is *ti*, and the benefactive marker is *hoi*, as shown in (5)-(7).

- (5) Source marker *kang*  
 Gua<sup>21</sup> kang<sup>44</sup> nang<sup>22</sup> tsioh<sup>55</sup> tsi<sup>22</sup>  
 1SG from people borrow money  
 ‘I borrowed money from people.’
- (6) Goal marker *ti*  
 I<sup>44</sup> ka<sup>11</sup> ing<sup>44</sup>-ue<sup>44</sup> ti<sup>11</sup> gua<sup>21</sup>  
 3SG teach English to 1SG  
 ‘He teaches English to me.’
- (7) Benefactive marker *hoi*  
 I<sup>44</sup> hoi<sup>11</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> toi<sup>21</sup> ta<sup>44</sup>-hou<sup>11</sup>  
 3SG for 1SG wash clothes  
 ‘He washed the clothes for me.’

The source marker *kang*, as in (5), corresponds to Mandarin *gen/xiang* ‘from’. It occurs

<sup>5</sup> There is another word very close to the uses of *bue* in Hainan Min, i.e. *he*<sup>42</sup>. The word *he* is used more colloquially than the word *bue*.

<sup>6</sup> A reviewer pointed out that although Taiwan Southern Min *ka* is not found in Hainan Min, it is etymologically related to *kang* in Hainan Min. The recognition of these two morphemes as cognates brings light on sentences still featuring the use of *kang* in Hainan Min, as in (5), (8) and (9). The same reviewer also pointed out that *kang* is very robust in the present-day Quanzhou dialect (cf. Lin 1993).

in the preverbal position and is interpreted as ‘from’ or ‘with’ in Hainan Min, as shown in (8) and (9).

- (8) Gua<sup>21</sup> beh<sup>55</sup> kang<sup>44</sup> i<sup>44</sup> boi<sup>21</sup> sai<sup>11</sup>  
 1SG will from 3SG buy vegetable  
 ‘I will buy vegetables from him.’
- (9) a. Gua<sup>21</sup> kang<sup>44</sup> i<sup>44</sup> toh<sup>55</sup>-e<sup>44</sup> hu<sup>11</sup>  
 1SG with 3SG together go  
 ‘I go with him.’  
 b. I<sup>44</sup> kang<sup>44</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> toh<sup>55</sup>-e<sup>44</sup> kong<sup>21</sup>-ue<sup>44</sup>  
 3SG with 1SG together talk-word  
 ‘He talked with me.’

As for the goal marker *ti*, as in (6), the distribution of the element *ti* is analogous to the Mandarin dative marker *gei* ‘to’ and the Southern Min dative marker *hoo* ‘to’ which usually appear in the post verbal position, as shown in (10).

- (10) Tsioh<sup>55</sup> do<sup>44</sup>-kia<sup>21</sup> ti<sup>11</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> phoi<sup>44</sup> biat<sup>55</sup> (*Hainan Colloquial*:<sup>7</sup> p.114)  
 lend knife-little to 1SG sharpen pencil  
 ‘Lend a little knife to me to sharpen pencils.’

The benefactive marker *hoi*, as in (7), is similar to Mandarin *ti* ‘for’. When the object profits from the predicate event, only the element *hoi* is allowed to join in the syntactic structure, as shown in (11).

- (11) I<sup>44</sup> hoi<sup>11</sup> (\*6ue<sup>42</sup>) gua<sup>21</sup> mo<sup>44</sup> 6e<sup>44</sup>  
 3SG for 1SG cure illness  
 ‘He cured the illness for me.’

Notice that the benefactive marker *hoi* does not behave completely parallel to Mandarin *ti*. In non-adversative cases, it is more like Mandarin *ba*, as shown in (12).

- (12) a. Mandarin: Ta<sup>1</sup> ba<sup>3</sup>/\*ti<sup>4</sup> wo<sup>3</sup> jiu<sup>4</sup> -le  
 3SG BA/for 1SG save PERF  
 ‘He saved me.’

<sup>7</sup> It denotes Yamaji & Matsutani’s (1941) *Kainantoogo Kaiwa* (hereafter, *Hainan Colloquial*).

- b. Hainan Min: I<sup>44</sup> \**bue*<sup>42</sup>/*hoi*<sup>11</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> kiu<sup>11</sup> liau<sup>21</sup>  
 3SG BUE/HOI 1SG save PERF  
 ‘He saved me.’

Moreover, the two markers *bue* and *hoi* are permitted to co-occur in the same sentence. The benefactive marker *hoi* can occur preceding the patient marker *bue*, as shown in (13).

- (13) Hoi<sup>11</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> *bue*<sup>42</sup> dzia<sup>11</sup> ku<sup>11</sup> dziak<sup>33</sup> tsia<sup>22</sup> ing<sup>44</sup>-ue<sup>44</sup>  
 for 1SG BUE this sentence translate into English  
 ‘(Lit.) For me translate this sentence into English.’

In brief, the four different role markers in Hainan Min are summarized as in (14).

(14) Hainan Min Object Marker

- Patient marker: *bue*, e.g. *I bue mui phah liao dziak-e* ‘He knocked on the door once.’
- Source marker: *kang*, e.g. *Gua kang nang tsioh tsi* ‘I borrowed money from others.’
- Goal marker: *ti*, e.g. *I ka ing-ue ti gua* ‘He teaches English to me.’
- Benefactive marker: *hoi*, e.g. *I hoi gua toi ta-hou* ‘He washes clothes for me.’

### 3. Distributions and grammaticalization of Hainan Min *BUE*

This section demonstrates the distribution of verbal *bue*. In addition to being a preposition, *bue* in Hainan Min can also serve as a transitive verb. The semantic meaning of verbal *bue* can be construed as ‘to hold’ and ‘to take’. The verbal use of *bue* is assumed to be the most fundamental form because it conveys a concrete lexical content. In addition, the construal ‘hold’ of *bue* is considered to be its original meaning. An example of ‘hold’ *bue* is shown in (15).<sup>8</sup>

- (15) Mih<sup>33</sup> dou<sup>44</sup> bo<sup>22</sup>, na<sup>42</sup> *bue*<sup>42</sup> dziak<sup>33</sup>-ki<sup>44</sup> tho<sup>42</sup>  
 things all NEG only hold one-CL cane  
 ‘(He) holds nothing, but a cane.’

As people usually hold something whilst taking it to a given place, the word *bue* started to develop into a change-of-position verb ‘take’. Examples of *bue* ‘take’ are abundant and usually occur in imperative sentences, as shown in (16)–(18).

<sup>8</sup> The following examples in this section are cited from Yamaji & Matsutani’s (1941) but were phonetically collected in 2008.

- (16) Bue<sup>42</sup> dziak<sup>33</sup>-kai<sup>22</sup> phang<sup>44</sup> sa<sup>22</sup>-phun<sup>42</sup> lai<sup>22</sup>  
 take one-CL fragrant soap come  
 'Take a bar of soap (here)!'
- (17) Bue<sup>42</sup> dziak<sup>33</sup>-tsiang<sup>44</sup> tui<sup>21</sup> lai<sup>22</sup>  
 take one-cup water come  
 'Take a cup of water (here).'
- (18) Bue<sup>42</sup> no<sup>42</sup>-dio<sup>44</sup> kiau<sup>44</sup>-i<sup>21</sup> lai<sup>22</sup>  
 take two-CL chair come  
 'Take two chairs (here).'

The 'carrying/taking' notion involves an agent moving an object with respect to a particular location by the action of the whole body moving through space (Talmy 1985). In expressing this notion, Hainan Min uses the verbal *bue* in conjunction with a 'to'-type preposition, like (19) and (20).

- (19) Bue<sup>42</sup> hu<sup>11</sup> ioh<sup>33</sup>-dīam<sup>11</sup> ham<sup>11</sup> ioh<sup>33</sup>-te<sup>44</sup> hioh<sup>55</sup> ioh<sup>33</sup>  
 take go/to pharmacy call pharmacist collect medicine  
 'Take (the prescription) to the pharmacy to ask the pharmacist to prepare some medicine.'
- (20) Lut<sup>55</sup> tsiak<sup>55</sup>, 6ue<sup>42</sup> hu<sup>11</sup> bang<sup>22</sup> lai<sup>42</sup>  
 light candle take go/to room inside  
 'Light the candle. Take (it) to the room.'

The 'taking/carrying' notion and deictic words agree with each other on the scheme of 'change of position'. Along with the movement of an object, the 'taking' notion also involves a purpose for the movement. An agent carrying an object to a certain location can be due to an intention to achieve a particular purpose. It is commonly known that Chinese 'go' can not only serve as an activity verb but also as a function word which heads a purposive clause. Likewise, the configuration 'take + Purposive clause' normally occurs in Hainan Min. The notion of this purpose is syntactically expressed by a clause which is headed by deictic words *hu* 'go' or *lai* 'come' in Hainan Min, as shown in (21)-(26).

<sup>9</sup> It was interesting to find that Hainan Min also has the word *ka* which serves as a verb in a similar fashion to *bue* and also denotes 'take'. The difference between the two 'take' verbs *bue* and *ka* is the manner of the activity. The verb *bue* indicates taking something with one hand, while the verb *ka* indicates taking something with two hands. Therefore, example (18) can be uttered as *ka no-dio kiau-i lai* 'Take two chairs' if the agent uses two hands to take the chairs.

- (21) Tsim<sup>21</sup>-hau<sup>22</sup> keh<sup>55</sup> dziak<sup>33</sup> dziat<sup>33</sup> khiam<sup>11</sup> 6ue<sup>42</sup> hu<sup>11</sup> phak<sup>33</sup> dziat<sup>33</sup>  
pillow separate one day should take go shine sun  
'The quilt and the pillows should be taken to lie in the sun every other day.'
- (22) Kai<sup>21</sup> ta<sup>44</sup>-kai<sup>22</sup> ho<sup>21</sup> kai<sup>22</sup> 6ue<sup>42</sup> hu<sup>11</sup> hip<sup>55</sup>  
choose three-CL good of take go steam  
'Choose three of the good ones and take them to steam.'
- (23) I<sup>44</sup>-kai<sup>22</sup> ta<sup>44</sup>-hou<sup>11</sup>, nang<sup>22</sup> dou<sup>44</sup> 6ue<sup>42</sup> hu<sup>11</sup> tio<sup>44</sup> kak<sup>33</sup>  
3SG-GEN clothes people all take go burn abandon  
'People always take his clothes to burn and throw away.'
- (24) Dzia<sup>11</sup> 6e<sup>21</sup> do<sup>44</sup>-kia<sup>21</sup> dun<sup>44</sup>, 6ue<sup>42</sup> hu<sup>11</sup> bua<sup>22</sup> lai<sup>42</sup>-lai<sup>42</sup>  
this CL knife-little blunt take go sharpen sharp-sharp  
'This knife is blunt. Take the knife to sharpen it.'
- (25) Bua<sup>22</sup> dziak<sup>33</sup>-kai<sup>22</sup> dziak<sup>33</sup>-kai<sup>22</sup> 6ue<sup>42</sup> hu<sup>11</sup> ha<sup>42</sup> hi<sup>21</sup>-lai<sup>22</sup>  
dish one-CL one-CL take go pile up  
'Take the dishes one by one to pile them up.'
- (26) Hue<sup>11</sup>-hue<sup>11</sup> 6ue<sup>42</sup> lai<sup>22</sup> tsia<sup>42</sup>  
hurry-hurry take come eat  
'Hurry to take (it) to eat.'

At the same time, examples like (21)-(26) are assumed to feature a serial verb construction. When the transitive verb *6ue* 'take' frequently started to occur in a serial verb construction, it is assumed that it underwent grammaticalization from a verb to a preposition.

The process of grammaticalization of *6ue* is believed to be similar to that of Mandarin *ba*. The Mandarin *BA* construction has been widely investigated for many years by a considerable number of linguists. Compared to Hainan Min *6ue*, the study of the Mandarin *BA* construction has been thoroughly and effectively executed. There are two competing lines of research in the analysis of the Chinese *BA* construction. One line of research (e.g. Cheung 1976 and Huang 1984) assumes that the *BA* construction is derived from an object-preposing movement. The other line denies the existence of such a movement, but postulates a serial verb construction in which *ba* is the first verb taking the same complement of the second verb. The advocates of the movement approach believe that when the resultative complement merges with the verb, the object of the verb will be triggered to move to a preverbal position because of the complexity of the verb form. The word *ba* is then a marker indicating the preposed object. Unlike the object-preposing approach, the serial-verb approach (e.g. Wang 1958, Li & Thompson

1974, Bennett 1981, Peyraube 1989 and Wei 1997) assumes that the word *ba* originally serves as a verb. It takes a complement and is followed by another verb. The second verb serves as the main verb of the sentence. The serial verb construction in the beginning indicates two verbs co-occurring in one sentence and they respectively take their objects. The construction gradually develops until the first verb takes its object and the second verb takes the same object as the first verb. Since the two verbs share the same complement, the second complement hence becomes phonetically null. Because the position of the second object is not overtly occupied, the verbal complements, such as resultative states, reduplicated verbs, aspect markers, etc., are added to follow the second verb. As a result, due to the complexity of the verb form, it is not easy for the object to overtly stay in the postverbal position. Since the object does not remain postverbal, it occupies the preverbal position and is signified by the word *ba*. This phenomenon led some linguists to propose that the *BA* construction is an object movement structure.

The two approaches have been supported by linguists. However, the debate over the two approaches can be clarified using Hainan Min data. Owing to the variety of Hainan Min data which contains both nonverbal and verbal uses of the object marker *bue*, it is the position of this paper that the serial verb construction approach can better account for Hainan Min's *BUE* construction. It is found that in Hainan Min, unlike Taiwan Southern Min, the preposition *bue* cannot be omitted when a sentence occurs in the configuration with SOV word order, as shown in (27).

- (27) a. I<sup>44</sup> \*(bue<sup>42</sup>) tiu<sup>44</sup>-iom<sup>44</sup>-ki<sup>44</sup> kue<sup>44</sup>-lo<sup>42</sup>  
           3SG BUE radio turn off  
           ‘He turned off the radio.’  
       b. I<sup>44</sup> \*(bue<sup>42</sup>) ta<sup>44</sup>-hou<sup>11</sup> koi<sup>21</sup> lo<sup>42</sup> lai<sup>22</sup>  
           3SG BUE clothes take off down come  
           ‘He took off the clothes.’  
       c. I<sup>35</sup> \*(bue<sup>42</sup>) ue<sup>44</sup> kong<sup>21</sup> dia<sup>44</sup>-dio<sup>42</sup>  
           3SG BUE words say clear  
           ‘He said the words clearly.’

This fact fully supports the serial-verb approach. This paper assumes that Hainan Min *bue* has not grammaticalized to a full-fledged preposition, it may still retain some verbal force in the serial verb construction. As a result, it is not acceptable for *bue* to be omitted even when *bue* serves as a patient marker rather than a verb.

Wei (1997) points out that some ancient Chinese linguistic facts are lost in modern Mandarin but remain in some other dialects. Following Chen (1996) and Woon (2004), it is assumed that the etymon of Hainan Min *bue* is the word *ba* in Mandarin. We



believe that the verbal use of *bue* is a historical remnant. The development of Hainan Min *bue* divides into two streams. It began as a verb and maintains its verbal use in modern Hainan Min. On the other hand, the word *bue* is undergoing a grammaticalization process from a verb to a preposition.

#### 4. Hainan Southern Min *BUE* and Taiwan Southern Min *KA/CHIONG*

In addition to a comparison with the Mandarin *ba*, this section compares *bue* with Taiwan Southern Min data. It is known that Taiwan Southern Min *ka* can basically mark goal, benefactive, source, and patient roles. Hainan Min as a branch of the Southern Min group does not contain a word with these semantic functions like *ka*. Nonverbal Hainan Min *bue* is used exclusively to mark the object as a patient. This phenomenon resembles another Taiwan Southern Min function word, *chiong*. Lien (2002) assumes that *chiong* is a full-fledged preposition which marks the patient role in the disposal construction. He also observes that “the object carries old information and is often specific and its referential property is known to the speaker although it is not necessarily known to the addressee.” This property fits our observation on Hainan Min nonverbal *bue*. For example, in (28), the objects of *bue* are not modified by any overt demonstratives, but the objects *sia* ‘car’ and *mui* ‘door’ are interpreted as specific ones.

- (28) a. Bue<sup>42</sup> sia<sup>44</sup> tsio<sup>44</sup> lak<sup>33</sup>  
           BUE car coat wax  
           ‘Coat the car with wax.’  
       b. Bue<sup>42</sup> mui<sup>22</sup> to<sup>21</sup> lo<sup>42</sup>  
           BUE door lock firm  
           ‘Lock the door.’

In addition, Lien (2002) investigates *Li Jing Ji* (1566 AD), the earliest extant text of Southern Min, and finds that the function of the Southern Min word *chiong* is different from *ka* in its object selection. The object of *ka* often denotes a human, while the nouns following the word *chiong* often denote inanimate objects, as shown in (29) and (30).

- (29) *Ka* Object [+ animate]  
       a. I<sup>1</sup> ka<sup>7 10</sup> a<sup>1</sup>-niu<sup>5</sup> choe<sup>3</sup> muai<sup>5</sup>-lang<sup>5</sup> (Lien 2002:188, (19a-b))  
           3SG KA lady do matchmaker  
           ‘She will be the matchmaker for the lady.’

<sup>10</sup> In *Li Jing Ji*, it is signified as *kang*.

- b. Goa<sup>2</sup> beh<sup>4</sup> ka<sup>7</sup> a<sup>1</sup>-niu<sup>5</sup> seh<sup>4</sup>  
 1SG will KA lady tell  
 ‘I will tell the lady.’

(30) *Chiong* Object [–animate]

- a. Chiong<sup>1</sup> kia<sup>n3</sup> phah<sup>4</sup> phoa<sup>3</sup>  
 CHIONG mirror hit break  
 ‘Break the mirror.’  
 b. Chiong<sup>1</sup> nai<sup>7</sup>-chi<sup>1</sup> tan<sup>3</sup> loh<sup>8</sup> khit<sup>4</sup> i<sup>1</sup>  
 CHIONG litchi throw down to 3SG  
 ‘Throw the litchi to him.’

In modern Southern Min, there is no longer an animate/inanimate constraint on the object of the word *ka*, while *chiong* still tends to take an object with an inanimate interpretation. For example, (31a) is much more natural than example (31b). In addition to the inanimate constraint on objecthood of *chiong*, *ka* is used more colloquially than *chiong*.

- (31) a. Goan<sup>2</sup> kia<sup>n2</sup> ka<sup>7</sup> goa<sup>2</sup> chim<sup>1</sup>  
 1SG-GEN son KA 1SG kiss  
 b. ?\*Goan<sup>2</sup> kia<sup>n2</sup> chiong<sup>1</sup> goa<sup>2</sup> chim<sup>1</sup>  
 ‘My son kissed me.’

Although the discrepancy in objecthood between *ka* and *chiong* becomes vague in modern Southern Min, Hainan Min *bue* maintains some animacy constraint on its objects. When Hainan Min informants encounter a sentence containing an object with a [+human] feature, they tend to utter sentences with VO word order rather than OV sentences. For instance, examples (32a) and (33a) are preferred over examples (32b) and (33b).

- (32) a. I<sup>44</sup> soi<sup>21</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> (VO: preferred)  
 3SG kiss 1SG  
 b. ??I<sup>44</sup> 6ue<sup>42</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> soi<sup>21</sup> (*bue* OV)  
 3SG BUE 1SG kiss  
 ‘He kissed me.’  
 (33) a. I<sup>44</sup> phah<sup>55</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> (VO: preferred)  
 3SG hit 1SG  
 b. ??I<sup>44</sup> 6ue<sup>42</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> phah<sup>55</sup> (*bue* OV)  
 3SG BUE 1SG hit  
 ‘He hit me.’

It is very common for the word *bue* to take a complement denoting an inanimate object, as shown in (34).

- (34) a. Bue<sup>42</sup> mui<sup>22</sup> sat<sup>55</sup> ang<sup>22</sup>  
           BUE door paint red  
           ‘Paint the door red.’  
       b. Bue<sup>42</sup> hiok<sup>33</sup> kuah<sup>55</sup> pian<sup>11</sup>  
           BUE meat cut piece  
           ‘Slice the meat into pieces.’

Moreover, when the verb conventionally takes a complement denoting an object with a [+animate] feature, the configuration with [*bue* OV] is ungrammatical. The SVO word order is required when the predicate implies an animate object. For example, the verb ‘save’ entails that the activity of the predicate contains living objects. In Hainan Min, verbs like ‘save’ can only appear in SVO construction rather than *bue* OV construction, as shown in (35) and (36).

- (35) a. I<sup>44</sup> kiu<sup>11</sup> liau<sup>21</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> (VO)  
           3SG save PERF 1SG  
       b. \*I<sup>44</sup> bue<sup>42</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> kiu<sup>11</sup> (\**bue* OV)  
           ‘He saved me.’  
       (36) a. I<sup>44</sup> ai<sup>42 11</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> -la<sup>11</sup> (VO)  
           3SG harm 1SG PART  
       b. \*I<sup>44</sup> bue<sup>42</sup> gua<sup>21</sup> ai<sup>42</sup> -la<sup>11</sup> (\**bue* OV)  
           ‘He caused harm to me.’

In short, for an object with a [+animate] feature, Hainan Min prefers the SVO word order expressions, while S *bue* OV configuration is still acceptable. On the contrary, when the object carries a [–animate] feature, S *bue* OV configuration is preferred and the word *bue* is necessary. This requirement for objecthood is very different in Southern Min data. First of all, modern Southern Min *ka* has no animacy constraint on objecthood, though *ka* used to restrict its object to denoting a human in *Li Jing Ji*. Second, Taiwan Southern Min *chiong* seems to behave similarly to Hainan Min *bue* in tending to take an inanimate object. However, it is widely known that *chiong* belongs to

<sup>11</sup> The word *ai* equals Mandarin *hai*, the fourth tone. Although it is interpreted as ‘harm’, the usage of Chinese *hai* differs from English *harm*. The activity of *hai* in Chinese implies a living object.

the literary style whereas *ka* is used in the colloquial style. Fourth, in Taiwan Southern Min it is very common to omit the patient marker to form an SOV sentence, as shown in (37).

- (37) a. I<sup>1</sup> (ka<sup>7</sup>/chiong<sup>1</sup>) siu<sup>1</sup>-im<sup>1</sup>-ki<sup>1</sup> kuai<sup>n1</sup>-tiao<sup>7</sup>  
 3SG KA/CHIONG radio turn off  
 'He turned off the radio.'
- b. I<sup>1</sup> (ka<sup>7</sup>/chiong<sup>1</sup>) sa<sup>n1</sup>-khoo<sup>3</sup> thng<sup>3</sup> loh<sup>8</sup> lai<sup>5</sup>  
 3SG KA/CHIONG clothes take off down come  
 'He took off the clothes.'
- c. I<sup>1</sup> (ka<sup>7</sup>/chiong<sup>1</sup>) ue<sup>7</sup> kong<sup>2</sup> chheng<sup>1</sup>-chho<sup>2</sup> -ah  
 3SG KA/CHIONG words say clear PERF  
 'He said the words clearly.'

Lastly, when the object is in a pronominal form, Taiwan Southern Min *ka* can be merged with the pronoun to be *kah*, whereas Hainan Min *bue* does not have a contracted form with its complement, shown as in (38a-b).

- (38) Taiwan Southern Min:  
 a. Gua<sup>2</sup> kah<sup>4</sup> ku<sup>7</sup>-chuat<sup>8</sup> -ah  
 1SG KA+3SG reject PERF  
 'I rejected him.'
- Hainan Southern Min:  
 b. Gua<sup>21</sup> bue<sup>42</sup> \*(i<sup>44</sup>) ki<sup>42</sup>-tuat<sup>33</sup> -lo<sup>42</sup>  
 1SG BUE 3SG reject PERF  
 'I rejected him.'

As for Southern Min *chiong*, it cannot accept the contracted form with its object, either. It also tends to take an object with a [-animate] feature. Hainan Min nonverbal *bue* seems to function like Southern Min *chiong* syntactically and semantically, though they are phonetically distinct from each other.

Hainan Min data shows that the [+animate] feature tends to be incompatible with the word *bue*. This incompatibility is a selection restriction that *bue* holds for its objecthood. We assume that the semantic properties of *bue* make it incompatible with the semantic properties of the [+animate] complement. The semantic meaning of the verb *bue* is to 'take' or to 'hold'. The complement of the verb *bue* undergoes change of location, causally affected by another participant and stationary relative to the movement of another participant. Thus, the verb *bue* takes a patient role as its complement which

fits Dowty's (1991:575, (28)) "Patient Proto-role" entailments.<sup>12</sup> The feature [+animate] often relates to volitional involvement, and according to Dowty (1991), volition is a property of "Agent Proto-role" rather than a patient. As a result, the feature [+animate] does not match the verb *bue*'s complement semantic properties. In addition to semantic properties, Jackendoff (1987) identifies a patient role by distributional tests. He assumes that patients fit into the NP slot in the frames *What happened to NP was...* or *What Y did to NP was ....* According to Jackendoff's distributional tests, the object of Hainan Min *bue* can fit into the NP slot in the above frames and it can obtain the patient role. In brief, we believe that Hainan Min *bue* as a verb takes its object with a patient role. When the verb *bue* is grammaticalized to be a preposition to occur in a disposal construction, the object selection restriction still remains. This explains why the feature of animacy can mostly decide the acceptance of the *BUE* construction in Hainan Min.

## 5. Closing remarks

This paper explores the Hainan Min object marker, *bue*, from a dialectal comparative perspective. In addition, Hainan Min data which were seldom presented in the previous literature are displayed in this paper. We demonstrate that the Hainan Min object marker *bue* can not only serve as a preposition, but also serve as a verb. Hainan Min is assumed to be a branch of Southern Min dialect groups, though the syntax of Hainan Min differs significantly from Taiwan Southern Min. This paper shows that Hainan Min *bue* as a preposition seems to be similar to Southern Min *chiong* in that it serves as a patient marker. This paper also attempts to account for Hainan Min from a diachronic perspective. There has been plenty of research on the Mandarin *BA* construction both synchronically and diachronically. We explain the verbal usage of Hainan Min *bue* by means of the diachronic *BA* construction. The semantics of verbal *bue* is close to the other function words in the *BA* construction, i.e. *yi* 'take', *chi* 'hold', *jiang* 'lead' and *ba* 'hold'. These four function words all serve as verbs in ancient Chinese as well. Hainan Min *bue* is analogous to these words and it is assumed that it was first used as a verb and that it has grammaticalized as a preposition. These function words have lost their verbal uses in modern Mandarin Chinese, while the verbal uses of *bue* retain their verbal functions in modern Hainan Min. The word *bue* exhibits a synchronic layering phenomenon of grammaticalization as older layers of *bue* (e.g. verbal *bue*) persist, while new layers (e.g. prepositional *bue*) continue to emerge.

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<sup>12</sup> Dowty (1991) proposes that "Patient Proto-role" properties include: undergoing change of state, incremental theme, causally affected by another participant, stationary relative to movement of another participant and dependent existence.

In addition, we trace Southern Min data back to the earliest extant text, *Li Jing Ji* (1566 AD), in which the data show that Southern Min *ka* takes an object denoting a human while *chiong*'s object often denotes an inanimate entity. This unique feature of objecthood can also be detected in Hainan Min. The verb *bue* takes a complement whose semantic role is patient. Because the semantic meaning of the verb *bue* is to 'take' or 'hold', it tends to take an inanimate object as its complement. We believe that verbal *bue* has been grammaticalized as a preposition and the nonverbal *bue* preserves its objecthood preference to take an inanimate complement.

Hainan Min *bue* seems very similar to Mandarin *ba* because the two markers cannot exhibit multiple functions. While it is different from Taiwan Southern Min *ka*, Hainan Min *bue* behaves more like *chiong*. It is commonly known that Southern Min *ka* and Mandarin *ba* are not derived from the same etymon. *Ka* is derived from a comitative marker rather than a disposal marker. Lien (2002) proposes that the disposal construction of *ka* is indicated by *chiong* or *liah*. It is natural for the patient marker *bue* in Hainan Min to behave more like Mandarin *ba* and Southern Min *chiong* rather than *ka* since the fundamental meaning and function of *bue* is a verb indicating 'holding/taking' rather than a comitative conjunction.

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Department of Foreign Languages and Literature  
National Cheng Kung University  
1 University Road  
Tainan 701, Taiwan  
hclee6@mail.ncku.edu.tw



## 論海南閩語之賓語標誌結構

李惠琦

國立成功大學

本文探討海南閩語的賓語標誌 *bue* 及其句法語意相關議題。相較於台灣閩南語的「共」字，海南閩語 *bue* 相似於華語「把」字，不能充當多個語意角色標誌。然而，不同於華語「把」字，海南閩語的 *bue* 字除了可以有介詞功能外，還保有動詞的功能。本文認為海南閩語的 *bue* 字正在經歷語法化，從一個實詞過渡到一個功能詞。*bue* 的動詞及非動詞的用法在語意上有其共通性，都對其後所接的賓語有選擇性限制，都傾向連接一個無生的賓語。這個無生賓語的選擇限制，與《荔鏡記》語料相較，海南閩語的 *bue* 較接近於閩南語的「將」。

關鍵詞：台灣閩南語，海南閩語，賓語標誌，「把」字句