

UNIT THREE

Dative constructions with direct and indirect objects

A In Chinese, verbs like 给 **gěi** 'give', 送 **sòng** 'give as a present', 借 **jiè** 'borrow'/'lend', 还 **huán** 'give back'/'return' and 赔 **péi** 'compensate'/'pay for' entail the use of a direct and an indirect object, thereby forming a dative sentence:

他给她一束花。 **tā gěi tā yī shù huā**
(一束花 **yī shù huā** direct object, 她 **tā** indirect object)
He gave her a bunch of flowers.

朋友送我一瓶酒。 **péngyou sòng wǒ yī píng jiǔ**
(一瓶酒 **yī píng jiǔ** direct object, 我 **wǒ** indirect object)
My friend gave me a bottle of wine as a present.

他借了图书馆一批书。 **tā jiè le túshūguǎn yī pī shū**
(一批书 **yī pī shū** direct object, 图书馆 **túshūguǎn** indirect object)
He borrowed a number of books from the library.

她还了我们一张邮票。 **tā huán le wǒmen yī zhāng yóupiào**
(一张邮票 **yī zhāng yóupiào** direct object, 我们 **wǒmen** indirect object)
She returned a stamp to us.

保险公司赔了他们一笔钱吗? **bǎoxiǎn gōngsī péi le tāmen yī bǐ qián ma**
(一笔钱 **yī bǐ qián** direct object, 他们 **tāmen** indirect object)
Did the insurance company give them a sum of money in compensation?

我没(有)欠他什么东西。 **wǒ méi(yǒu) qiàn tā shénme dōngxi**
I did not owe him anything.

Note: The verbs 送 **sòng**, 还 **huán** and 赔 **péi** may be suffixed by 给 **gěi** without any change in meaning:

朋友送给我一瓶酒。 **péngyou sòng gěi wǒ yī píng jiǔ**
My friend gave me a bottle of wine as a present.

她还给我们一张邮票。 **tā huán gěi wǒmen yī zhāng yóupiào**
She returned a stamp to us.

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保险公司赔给他们一笔钱吗？ **bǎoxiǎn gōngsī péi gěi tāmen yī bǐ qián ma**
Did the insurance company give them a sum of money in compensation?

Note: The verb 借 **jiè** usually means 'to borrow', but when suffixed with 给 **gěi**, it means 'to lend':

他借我两镑钱。 **tā jiè wǒ liǎng bàng qián**
He borrowed two pounds from me.

他借给我两镑钱。 **tā jiè gěi wǒ liǎng bàng qián**
He lent me two pounds.

B Many verbs may be suffixed by 给 **gěi** to produce dative (two-object) constructions:

邮递员递给我一封信。 **yóudìyuán dì gěi wǒ yī fēng xìn**
The post(wo)man handed me a letter.

她寄给你一张明信片。 **tā jì gěi nǐ yī zhāng míngxìnpiàn**
She sent you a postcard.

房东租给我一套房间。 **fángdōng zū gěi wǒ yī tào fángjiān**
The landlady let a flat to me.

小贩卖给我半斤李子。 **xiǎofàn mài gěi wǒ bàn jīn lǐzi**
The pedlar sold me half a catty of plums.

她交给李老师一张条子。 **tā jiāo gěi lǐ lǎoshī yī zhāng tiáozi**
She handed a note to teacher Li.

爷爷买给孩子们几盒录像带。 **yéye mǎi gěi háizimen jǐ hé lùxiàngdài**
Grandfather bought the children several video tapes.

张小姐转给我好几盒录音带。 **zhāng xiǎojiě zhuǎn gěi wǒ hǎo jǐ hé lùyīndài**
Miss Zhang passed quite a few cassette tapes on to me.

陈叔叔带给我弟弟一本中文字典。
chén shushu dài gěi wǒ dìdì yī běn zhōngwén zìdiàn
Uncle Chen brought my younger brother a Chinese dictionary.

C A dative construction with 给 **gěi** may be expressed as a serial construction (see Unit 5), with the first verb governing the direct object, and the second verb, 给 **gěi**, relating to the indirect object:

观众献了一束花给演员。 **guānzhòng xiàn le yī shù huā gěi yǎnyuán**
The audience presented a bouquet of flowers to the actor.

领事馆发签证给他。 **lǐngshìguǎn fā qiānzhèng gěi tā**
The consulate issued him with a visa.

D Dative constructions generally involve verbs of physical action, like 给 **gěi** 'give to', 递 **dì** 'hand to', 交 **jiāo** 'hand to'/'submit to', 还 **huán** 'return to', etc. However, verbs like 告诉 **gàosu** 'tell', 通知 **tōngzhī** 'inform'/'notify', 教 **jiāo** 'teach' and 叫 **jiào** 'call'/'address as', all of which involve some form of communication, can also form dative sentences:

我朋友告诉我一个秘密。 **wǒ péngyou gàosu wǒ yī gè mìmì**
(秘密 **mìmì** direct object, 我 **wǒ** indirect object)
My friend told me a secret.

秘书通知他一件事。 **mìshū tōngzhī tā yī jiàn shì**
(一件事 **yī jiàn shì** direct object, 他 **tā** indirect object)
The secretary notified him about something.

她教她女儿英语。 **tā jiāo tā nǚ'ér yīngyǔ**
(英语 **yīngyǔ** direct object, 她女儿 **tā nǚ'ér** indirect object)
She taught her daughter English.

大家叫我老王。 **dàjiā jiào wǒ lǎo wáng**
(老王 **lǎo wáng** direct object, 我 **wǒ** indirect object)
Everybody calls me Lao Wang.

Note: This kind of dative construction cannot incorporate 给 **gěi**:

One cannot say:

*她告诉我一个秘密。 **tā gàosu gěi wǒ yī gè mìmì**
*她告诉一个秘密给我。 **tā gàosu yī gè mìmì gěi wǒ**
(lit. in both sentences: She told me a secret.)

E Dative constructions may be used in both 把 **bǎ** and 被 **bèi** sentences:

邮递员把那封信递给我。 **yóudìyuán bǎ nà/nèi fēng xìn dì gěi wǒ**
The post(wo)man gave me the letter.

别把那个秘密告诉他。 **bié bǎ nà/nèi gè mìmì gàosu tā**
Don't tell him that secret.

那瓶酒被她送给一个朋友了。
nà/nèi píng jiǔ bèi tā sòng gěi yī gè péngyou le
That bottle of wine was given by her to a friend.

Exercise 3.1

Identify the direct and indirect objects in the sentences below:

- 1 我送朋友一只手表。 **wǒ sòng péngyou yī zhī shǒubiǎo**
I gave my friend a watch.
- 2 他递给同学一杯牛奶。 **tā dì gěi tóngxué yī bēi niúǎi**
He passed his classmate a glass of milk.
- 3 经理交给秘书一批文件。 **jīnglǐ jiāo gěi mìshū yī pī wénjiàn**
The manager gave the secretary a stack of documents.
- 4 病人借了医生一本杂志。 **bìng rén jiè le yīshēng yī běn zázhì**
The patient borrowed a magazine from the doctor.
- 5 他把那把(雨)伞还给他的邻居。 **tā bǎ nà/nèi bǎ (yǔ)sǎn huán gěi tā de línjū**
He returned the umbrella to his neighbour.
- 6 老师借给我一本书。 **lǎoshī jiè gěi wǒ yī běn shū**
The teacher lent me a book.
- 7 我的一个朋友告诉我一个秘密。 **wǒ de yī gè péngyou gàosu wǒ yī gè mìmi**
One of my friends told me a secret.
- 8 学生问老师一些问题。 **xuésheng wèn lǎoshī yīxiē wèntí**
The student asked the teacher some questions.

Exercise 3.2

Form dative sentences with the Chinese words and phrases given below:

- 1 The consulate issued me with a visa.
领事馆 **lǐngshìguǎn** 一张签证 **yī zhāng qiānzhèng** 给我 **gěi wǒ** 发 **fā** issue
- 2 My friend lent me a video tape.
朋友 **péngyou** 借给 **jiè gěi** 一盘录像带 **yī pán lùxiàngdài** 我 **wǒ**
- 3 I borrowed an umbrella from him.
一把(雨)伞 **yī bǎ (yǔ)sǎn** 我 **wǒ** 他 **tā** 借了 **jiè le**
- 4 She brought a pair of shoes for her friend.
朋友 **péngyou** 带给 **dài gěi** 一双鞋 **yī shuāng xié** 她 **tā**
- 5 The driver handed me a ticket.
我 **wǒ** 司机 **sījī** 递给 **dì gěi** 一张票 **yī zhāng piào**
- 6 The children gave the queen a bouquet of flowers.
女王 **nǚwáng** 孩子们 **háizimen** 一束花 **yī shù huā** 献给 **xiàn gěi**

Exercise 3.3

Complete the Chinese sentences below with 'verb + 给 **gěi**' as appropriate in each case:

- 1 我 _____ 朋友一张圣诞卡。
wǒ _____ péngyou yī zhāng shèngdànkǎ
I sent my friend a Christmas card.
- 2 爸爸 _____ 孩子一个玩具。
bàba _____ háizi yī gè wánjù
The father bought a toy for his child.
- 3 邻居 _____ 我们一只小狗。
línjū _____ wǒmen yī zhī xiǎo gǒu
The neighbour gave us a puppy.
- 4 小李 _____ 她的同学一本杂志。
xiǎo lǐ _____ tā de tóngxué yī běn zázhi
Xiao Li passed a magazine to her classmate.
- 5 小贩 _____ 我一瓶酒。 **xiǎofàn _____ wǒ yī píng jiǔ**
The pedlar sold me a bottle of wine.
- 6 姐姐 _____ 客人一杯茶。 **jiějie _____ kèrén yī bēi chá**
My elder sister poured out a cup of tea for the guest.
- 7 王女士 _____ 我们一间办公室。
wáng nǚshì _____ wǒmen yī jiān bàngōngshì
Miss Wang let an office to us.
- 8 秘书 _____ 每个人一张通知。
mìshū _____ měi gè rén yī zhāng tōngzhī
The secretary handed out a notice to everybody.
- 9 我同事 _____ 我一封信。
wǒ tóngshì _____ wǒ yī fēng xìn
My colleague passed a letter on to me.
- 10 姐姐 _____ 妹妹两镑钱。
jiějie _____ mèimei liǎng bàng qián
15: (The) elder sister lent two pounds to (the) younger sister.

Exercise 3.4

Translate the following into Chinese:

- 1 Please lend me two yuan/dollars.
- 2 My friend borrowed a sweater from me.
- 3 The students gave a present to the teacher.
- 4 Don't call me Old Zhang.
- 5 I'll give that pen back to you tomorrow.
- 6 What shall we buy him?
- 7 Did you pass the dictionary on to him?
- 8 I didn't tell them that secret.