

Chinese *Ba*

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1 Introduction

Mandarin Chinese¹ has a special construction referred to simply as the *ba* construction *ba zi ju* ‘sentence with the word *ba*’, taking the form [Subject + *ba* + NP + V + ...].² It is one of the most famous constructions in the grammar of Chinese and has attracted the attention of almost every linguist interested in the grammar of Chinese. Researches have been undertaken from the perspective of formal theoretical frameworks (see Sybesma 1999; Liu 1997; and many other references in this work), discourse, functional grammar (e.g., Jing-Schmidt 2005 and the references cited there), cognitive studies (e.g., Dai 2005 and the references cited there), corpus studies, processing, first and second language acquisition and pedagogical studies, historical developments, grammaticalization (see Her et al. 2009 for a sizable collection of references on these topics), and cross-dialectal/cross-linguistic comparisons (e.g., Tang 2003; 2010 on a more restricted counterpart with *zoeng* in Cantonese; Teng 1982; Yang 2006 on the broader use of the corresponding *ka* in Taiwanese (Southern Min), the comparison with two types of German prefixes in Blumenfeld 2001, etc.). Despite the massive literature, the construction has eluded a satisfactory analysis because of its complex properties and constraints, which often seem to be fuzzy, uncertain, and difficult to characterize. It is generally one of the most difficult constructions for foreign language learners of Chinese (e.g., Xu 2011; Wen 2012). Yet it is an extremely prominent construction, very frequently used in daily speech. In fact, it seems to be gaining even more prominence in so-called Taiwan Mandarin (Mandarin spoken in Taiwan), a trend that is probably related to the fact that the corresponding *ka* construction in Taiwanese is even more extensively used.³

Within the limited space available, I will describe the major properties of each of the components of the structure which must be considered when analyzing this construction. In addition, the comparison between the *ba* construction in Mandarin and the corresponding *ka* structure in Taiwanese will be highlighted. Attempts will be made to clarify the constraints on the usage of the *ba* construction, the center of controversy regarding this construction in the literature. Some recent representative analyses of

the constraints will be briefly reviewed: approaches from the perspective of event structures, aspectual structures, and semantics/pragmatics. It will be shown that these approaches accommodate the typical or canonical cases of the *ba* construction. However, there are many “non-canonical” instances of the *ba* construction which elude precise accounts. It will be shown that a vague semantic/pragmatic notion such as “affectedness” plays a role in the actual usage of this pattern but the vagueness and uncertainty of the notion make it impossible to accommodate the constraints in clear terms. Therefore, the form and usage of this construction should be distinguished.

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the properties of the *ba* construction by examining each of its component. Section 3 turns to the corresponding *ka* construction in Taiwanese, which is quite similar to the *ba* construction but also bears important differences. Section 4 establishes the syntactic structures for these constructions. While sections 2 and 3 include some conditions on the acceptability of the *ba* construction, section 5 focuses on the constraints and some representative accounts for the construction, mainly those based on interpretation/pragmatics, aspectual structure, and event structure. It will be shown that, the latter two can be more precisely formulated, and their empirical predictions can be tested. Unfortunately, they are both too weak and too strong empirically. On the other hand, interpretive-pragmatic accounts seem to capture some of the facts not accommodated by the grammatical accounts; yet they are based on vague and uncertain notions. There exist many minimal pairs which are structurally identical (including identical aspectual and event structure) but differ in acceptability as *ba* sentences. Accordingly, it is important to distinguish form from usage. Form can be represented precisely by syntactic phrase structures, as in section 4. Usage, however, is influenced by pragmatic factors, which cannot be accommodated solely by precisely defined grammatical terms.

2 Properties

Schematically, the *ba* construction has the form in (1a) or (1b): it has a subject NP*, followed by *ba* and “the *ba* NP” (the NP directly following *ba*), followed by a verb and something else, X, before or after the verb.

- (1) a. NP* + *ba* + NP + V + X
 b. NP* + *ba* + NP + X + V

The following questions have often been raised: (i) whether a *ba* sentence always has a non-*ba* counterpart, (ii) the status of *ba*, (iii) possible types of the *ba* NP, (iv) types of Vs allowed, (v) the range of options for the X, and (vi) whether the *ba* construction carries a special interpretation. To begin to understand the issues, let us first describe the important properties of each component of the construction.

2.1 A *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart

First, consider the pattern in its entirety. It will be shown that a *ba* sentence always has a non-*ba* counterpart, sharing the subject. A clear example is shown below:

- (2) a. Ta ba wo pian-le.
 he BA me lie-LE⁴
 'He lied to me.'
- b. Ta pian-le wo-le.
 he lie-LE him-LE
 'He lied to me.'

Because Chinese restricts the number of elements that can occur in the postverbal position (see, for instance, Chao 1968; Huang 1982; Koopman 1984; Travis 1984; Li 1985; 1990; Tang 1990; Sybesma 1992; 1999), a non-*ba* counterpart may place the NP corresponding to the *ba* NP in some preverbal position, such as the pre-subject or post-subject position as a topic or a preposed object, as in (3b) and (3c), corresponding to (3a), or by verb reduplication as in (3d).

- (3) a. Wo ba zhe-shi xiang-de hen zixi.
 I BA this-matter think-DE very carefully
 'I have thought about the matter carefully.'
- b. Zhe-shi, wo xiang-de hen zixi.
 this-matter I think-DE very carefully
 'The matter, I have thought about carefully.'
- c. Wo zhe-shi xiang-de hen zixi.
 I this-matter think-DE very carefully
 'I, the matter, have thought about carefully.'
- d. Wo xiang zhe-shi xiang-de hen zixi.
 I think this-matter think-DE very carefully
 'I have thought about the matter carefully.'

Alternatively, the *ba* NP may correspond to the subject of a complement clause in the non-*ba* counterpart:

- (4) a. Haizi ba wo ku-de tou-teng.
 child BA me cry-DE head-ache
 'The child cried so much that my head ached.'
- b. Haizi ku-de wo tou-teng.
 child cry-DE me head-ache
 'The child cried so much that my head ached.'

2.2 *ba*

Disregarding the optional elements in the construction, the key word *ba* follows the subject.

2.2.1 *The status of ba*

Historically, *ba* was a lexical verb, meaning 'to conduct, to lead' or 'to take, to hold, to grasp'. It was used as V1 in a serial verb construction 'V1 + O + V2';⁵ then it was grammaticalized, labeled as a preposition or an object marker (Wang 1954; Wang

1957; Li and Thompson 1974; Bennett 1981; Ye 1988; Peyraube 1989; 1994; 1996; Sun 1995; 1996; Yang 1995; Ziegeler 2000; Choonharuandej 2003; among others). Indeed, it has been widely accepted that *ba* in modern Chinese has become “grammaticalized”⁶ and does not behave like a verb according to widely used verbhood tests: it cannot take an aspect marker, form an alternative V-not-V question, or serve as a simple answer to a question (see, e.g., Chao 1968; Li and Thompson 1981):⁷

- (5) a. Ta ba ni hai-le.
 he BA you hurt-LE
 ‘He hurt you.’
 b. *Ta ba-le ni hai(-le).
 he BA-LE you hurt(-LE)
 c. *Ta ba-mei/bu-ba ni hai(-le).
 he BA-not-BA you hurt-LE
 d. *(Mei/bu-)ba.
 (not-)BA

Nonetheless, such morphosyntactic tests for verbhood do not apply consistently. A small number of verbs do not behave like standard verbs according to these tests. *Shi* ‘make, cause’ is an example, and is generally regarded as a verb.

- (6) a. Ta shi ni hen kuaile.
 he make you very happy
 ‘He made you happy.’
 b. *Ta shi-le ni hen kuaile.
 he make-LE you very happy
 c. *Ta shi-mei/bu-shi ni hen kuaile.
 he make-not-make you very happy
 d. *(Mei/bu-)shi.
 (not-) make

Regardless of the categorical status of *ba*, what is clear is that the *ba* NP can be the object of the following verb, as in (5a). When the *ba* NP is the verbal object, the object position of the V must be empty:⁸

- (7) a. *Ta ba Zhangsan_i hai-le ta_i.
 he BA Zhangsan hurt-LE him
 ‘He hurt Zhangsan.’
 b. *Ta ba Zhangsan_i hai-le ziji/taziji_i.
 he BA Zhangsan hurt-LE self/himself
 ‘He hurt Zhangsan.’

This constraint does not hold with serial verb constructions, where a true verb takes the place of *ba*, as illustrated below:

- (7) c. Ta shi Zhangsan_i hai-le ziji/taziji_i.
 he make Zhangsan hurt-LE self/himself
 ‘He made Zhangsan hurt himself.’

The contrast between (7a) and (7b) on the one hand and (7c) on the other shows that *ba* in modern Chinese is not like a lexical verb.

2.2.2 The analysis of *ba*

The previous section demonstrates that *ba* has become “grammaticalized” in the sense that it no longer behaves like a lexical verb. The subsequent question is what the “grammaticalized” *ba* is. Almost all the logically possible answers have been proposed:

- (8) a. still a lexical verb (Hashimoto 1971);
 b. a preposition (Li and Liu 1955; Chao 1968; Lü 1980; Travis 1984; Li 1985; 1990; Cheng 1986);
 c. a dummy case assigner (Huang 1982; Koopman 1984; Goodall 1987);
 d. a dummy filler, inserted to fill the head of a CAUS phrase when the verb does not raise to the CAUS head (Sybesma 1999);
 e. the head of a base-generated functional category (Zou 1995; Huang, Li, and Li 2009, ch. 5).

The earlier observation that *ba* in modern Chinese typically does not behave like lexical verbs makes (8a) less attractive. (8b) and (8c) contrast with (8d) and (8e) in constituency. *Ba* should form a constituent with the *ba* NP under (8b) and (8c), not (8d) and (8e): $[[ba\ NP]\ VP]$ vs. $[ba\ [NP\ VP]]$.

The fact is that $[ba\ [NP\ VP]]$ is a possible structure, as illustrated by the coordination test (see Wu 1982).

- (9) Ta ba [men xi-hao], [chuanghu ca-ganjing]-le.
 he BA door wash-finish window wipe-clean-LE
 ‘He washed the door and wiped the windows clean.’

This shows that (8d) and (8e) are more adequate. However, there is a subset of *ba* sentences allowing *ba* to form a constituent with the *ba* NP: the type of sentences that Sybesma (1999, ch. 6) refers to as “canonical *ba* sentences,” whose subject is an animate agent, illustrated below.⁹

- (10) a. Ni xian ba zhe-kuai rou qie-qie ba!
 you first BA this-CL meat cut-cut PAR
 ‘You first cut the meat a bit.’
 b. [Ba zhe-kuai rou], ni xian qie-qie ba!
 BA this-CL meat you first cut-cut PAR
 ‘The meat, you first cut a bit.’

Examples like (10b) show that *ba* cannot always be a head taking the following VP as complement.

Summarizing, *ba* in modern Chinese does not behave like a lexical verb. The test in (9) shows that the constituency structure is $[ba\ [NP\ VP]]$, but (10b) suggests that $[[ba\ NP]\ VP]$ is possible in some cases.

2.3 The *ba* NP

Next, consider the *ba* NP.¹⁰ It has been widely observed that the *ba* NP is sensitive to a myriad of semantic and syntactic restrictions. The following subsections discuss the varieties of the *ba* NP.

2.3.1 *V object*

It is quite common for a *ba* NP to correspond to the direct object of the verb in the non-*ba* counterpart. In addition, it can be an indirect object:

- (11) a. Wo ba ta wen-le yi-da-dui hen-nan-de wenti.
 I BA him ask-LE one-big-pile very-difficult-DE question
 'I asked him many difficult questions.'

cf.

- b. Wo wen-le ta yi-da-dui hen-nan-de wenti.
 I ask-LE him one-big-pile very-difficult-DE question
 'I asked him many difficult questions.'

There are also cases which seem to take an instrument or locative NP as a *ba* NP (See Lu and Ma 1985, 200–201):

- (12) a. Ta yong shou wu-zai erduo-shang.
 he use hand cover-at ear-on
 'He covered his ears with his hands.'
- b. Ta ba shou wu-zai erduo-shang.
 he BA hand cover-at ear-on
 'He covered his ears with his hands.'
- c. Ta zai lian-shang tu-(man-)le hui.
 he at face-on paint-full-LE ash
 'He painted ash on his face.'
- d. Ta ba lian(-shang)¹¹ tu-man-le hui.
 he BA face(-on) paint-full-LE ash
 'He painted his face with ash.'

However, these cases may actually be analyzed as direct objects, because instrument and locative NPs can become objects of verbs (see, for instance, Lin 2001; Li 2011b). In brief, the *ba* NP can be a direct or indirect object of the verb.

2.3.2 *Non-V objects*

The *ba* NP can also be the possessor of an object NP (13a) and (13b), expressing possession or part-whole relations.

- (13) a. Tufei sha-le tade fuqin.
 bandit kill-LE his father
 'The bandit killed his father.'

- b. Tufei ba ta sha-le fuqin.
bandit BA him kill-LE father
'The bandit killed his father.'
- c. Shuiguo, ta chi-le yi-ban.
fruit he eat-LE one-half
'The fruit, he ate half.'
- d. Ta ba shuiguo chi-le yi-ban.
he BA fruit eat-LE one-half
'He ate half of the fruit.'

The *ba* NP is the subject of a complement resultative clause in (14):

- (14) a. Ta ku-de women dou fan-si-le.
he cry-DE we all annoy-dead-LE
'He cried so much that we were all extremely annoyed.'
- b. Ta ba women ku-de dou fan-si-le.
he BA we cry-DE all annoy-dead-LE
'He cried so much that we were all extremely annoyed.'

Sybesma (1999, ch. 6) claims that a *ba* NP is always the subject of a resultative clause. Following Goodall (1987), he claims that a *ba* NP is raised from the subject position of the resultative complement. Because of the locality condition on NP movement, a *ba* NP must always be the subject of the resultative clause, not the object (Specified Subject Condition: Chomsky 1973; 1981). The following examples are from Goodall (1987, 234) and Sybesma (1999, 157–158).

- (15) a. Na-ge nühai ku-de Zhangsan nian-bu-xia na-ben shu.
that-CL girl cry-DE Zhangsan read-not-on that-CL book
'That girl cried so that Zhangsan could not continue reading that book.'
- b. Na-ge nühai ba Zhangsan ku-de nian-bu-xia na-ben shu.
that-CL girl BA Zhangsan cry-DE read-not-on that-CL book
'That girl cried so that Zhangsan could not continue reading that book.'
- c. *Na-ge nühai ba na-ben shu ku-de Zhangsan nian-bu-xia.
that-CL girl BA that-CL book cry-DE Zhangsan read-not-on
'That girl cried so that Zhangsan could not continue reading that book.'

According to Goodall (1987, 234) and Sybesma (1999, 158), these examples show that only the subject can be raised out of the embedded clause to become the *ba* NP, "typical of movement to an A-position."

Let us return to the derivation of the *ba* NP in the following section and sections 2.5 and 5.3. For present purposes, it is noted that it appears the *ba* NP can be related to the object of an embedded clause, illustrated below:

- (16) Na-ge nühai ba shoupa ku-de meiren gan mo.
that-CL girl BA handkerchief cry-DE nobody dare touch
'That girl cried so that nobody dared to touch the handkerchief.'

This sentence is acceptable in the context where the girl kept crying, using the handkerchief to wipe off her tears. The handkerchief became too filthy to touch. Even a sentence like (15c) can be made acceptable: the girl kept crying, with tears continuously falling on the book, to the extent that it became too disgusting to read: *nage nühai ba naben shu ku-de meiren nian-de-xia* 'That girl cried so that nobody could continue reading that book.'

What is important is that a relation is established between the *ba* NP and the following verb phrase. To put it more concretely, the *ba* NP can be an "outer object" or the object of V', related to the subject or object of an embedded clause, as further elaborated next.

2.3.3 Outer object: V' object

The *ba* NP in (13)–(16) cannot be derived by moving the NP from the resultative complement because of the locality condition. Thompson (1973) analyzes it as an "outer object," in contrast to an "inner object" (V object). Alternatively, it is the so-called V' object: the object of a complex predicate consisting of a verb and its complement (Huang 1982; 1988).¹² That is, a *ba* NP can be either a V object (inner object) as shown in section 2.3.1 or a V' object (outer object) as shown in section 2.3.2.¹³ An outer object/V' object receives an "affected" theta-role from V'. For instance, the affected object of 'father-killing' is 'him' in (13b); the affected object of 'eating a half' is 'the fruit' in (13d). In (14b), 'we' were affected by the crying and got annoyed. Similarly, the *ba* NP in (16) is affected by the crying to such an extent that it cannot be touched any more. Some other commonly used examples illustrating an outer object/V' object are (17a)–(17c) below. In (17a), *juzi* 'orange' is the outer object of *bo-pi* 'peel skin'. In (17b), 'the clothes' is the outer object of 'packing into a bundle'; in (17c), 'sadness' is the outer object of 'transforming into power'.

- (17) a. Ta ba juzi bo-le pi.
 he BA orange peel-LE skin
 'He peeled the skin off the orange.'
- b. Wo ba yifu bao-le yige xiaobao.
 I BA clothes pack-LE one-CL bundle
 'I packed the clothes into a bundle.'
- c. Ta ba beitung hua-cheng liliang.
 he BA sadness change-become power
 'He transformed sadness into power.'

An outer object/V' object can become an inner object/V object if the V and its complement can be combined (compounded) and become a V (see Huang 1983 for the fluidity between phrasal and word categories; also see Larson 1988 for V' reanalysis).

- (18) a. Lisi ku-de shoupa hen shi.
 Lisi cry-DE handkerchief very wet
 'Lisi cried and got the handkerchief wet.'

- b. Lisi ba shoupa ku-de hen shi.
Lisi BA handkerchief cry-DE very wet
'Lisi cried and got the handkerchief wet.'
- c. Lisi ba shoupa ku-shi-le. Compounding of V-V
Lisi BA handkerchief cry-wet-LE
'Lisi cried the handkerchief wet.'
- d. Lisi ku-shi-le shoupa. Compound V + object
Lisi cry-wet-LE handkerchief
'Lisi cried the handkerchief wet.'

In brief, the following generalization can be put forward:

- (19) A *ba* NP corresponds to a V object/inner object or a V' object/outer object in its non-*ba* counterpart.

A V object can be a direct object, indirect object, instrument, or locative NP, all possible in the structure [V ____]. A V' object can be an NP in a possession or part-whole relation with the V object, or an NP identified with the subject or object of an embedded result clause, which may well be a *pro*/PRO. A V' object is assigned an "affected" theta-role by a V' consisting of a V and its complement.

A question arising out of (19) is whether and how the *ba* NP is derivationally related to its non-*ba* counterpart. I will return to the relevant issues in section 5. For the moment, it is simply noted that a *ba* NP can form an idiom with the verb, which suggests some movement has taken place. For instance, the O part of [V + O] idioms may occur as a *ba* NP:

- (20) a. Ta ba pianyi zhan-jin-le.
he BA advantage take-exhaust-LE
'He took full advantage.'
- b. Ta zhan-jin-le pianyi.
he take-exhaust-LE advantage
'He took full advantage.'
- (21) a. Ta ba dao kai-wan-le.
he BA knife open-finish-LE
'He finished the operation.'
- b. Ta kai-wan dao-le.
he open-finish knife-LE
'He finished the operation.'
- (22) a. Ta ba wanxiao kai-de-guohuo-le.
he BA joke open-DE-excessive-LE
'He overdid the joking.'
- b. Ta kai wanxiao kai-de-guohuo-le.
he open joke open-DE-excessive-LE
'He overdid the joking.'

If the components of an idiom ([V + O] in these cases) need to be generated as a unit, these examples suggest that movement is involved.

2.4 The X factor

As stated in (1a)–(1b), there is always something preceding or following the V in a *ba* sentence. A bare verb is not acceptable. The question is why the verb cannot be bare and what additional elements are required; that is, what the X in (1a)–(1b) is. This topic has been of major interest in the literature. Various accounts have been provided. Descriptively, Lü's (1955b; 1980) classification of the X into 13 patterns has been the foundation of most of the subsequent works, such as Liu (1997, 68–71) and Sybesma (1999, 135–139). Along the line of the classifications, the following subsections discuss important options for the X.

2.4.1 Expressions of result

A typical element for the X in (1) is a resultative complement. Other options such as motion-directional complements or certain dative/double object structures may also be regarded as result expressions, as described in the following subsections.

2.4.1.1 Resultative complements

First consider a resultative complement, illustrated in (23a)–(23b) below, where *cai* 'vegetable' is interpreted as the object of the verb *chao* 'stir-fry' and the subject of the resultative clause containing the predicate *tai lan* 'too mushy':

- (23) a. Ta chao cai chao-de tai lan le.
 he stir.fry vegetable stir.fry-DE too mushy LE
 'He stir-fried the vegetable too mushy.'
- b. Ta ba cai chao-de tai-lan le.
 he BA vegetable stir.fry-DE too-mushy LE
 'He stir-fried the vegetable too mushy.'

The main verb and the verb of the resultative complement can often be compounded [V + result]_v

- (24) Ta ba cai chao-lan-le.
 he BA vegetable stir.fry-mushy-LE
 'He stir-fried the vegetable mushy.'

Note that the main V can be intransitive, as in (18), where the *ba* NP is a V' object. A *ba* NP need not always be the subject of the resultative clause either. Indeed, although many of the so-called "aspectual" or "phase" expressions attached to verbs (to form complex verbs) were originated as predicates of resultative clauses interpreting the *ba* NP as subject, they no longer function like predicates of resultative clauses in modern Chinese. Below is a brief description of the cases where a *ba* NP is not the subject of a resultative clause.

[V + result] compounding is quite prominent. Some compounded [V + result] expressions have been so commonly used that the result part has become

grammaticalized. For instance, *wan* 'be gone, finish' or *hao* 'good' can be combined with any activity verb simply to express the completion of the activity, and V-*wan/hao* generally makes acceptable *ba* sentences.

- (25) Rang wo xian ba zhexie dongxi/shiqing zuo/kan/ting/da-**wan/hao**....
 let I first BA these things do/watch/listen/hit-finish
 'Let me first finish doing/watching/listening to/typing ... these things.'

The same is true with *guang* 'empty' or *diao* 'fall' used with many activity verbs:

- (26) Ta hui ba dongxi chi/he/yong/na-**guang/diao**.
 he will BA thing eat/drink/use/take-empty/fall
 'He will eat up/drink up/use up/take up all the things.'

These examples show that the result part of [V + result] compounds has lost the lexical meaning. It need not be identical to the verb of a resultative complement clause to take the *ba* NP as its subject. For instance, (27) below containing *wan* 'finish' as the main verb is not acceptable (cf. the V-*wan* expressions in (25)). This *wan* has become more like an aspect or phase marker indicating completion of an activity.

- (27) *zhexie dongxi/shiqing wan-le.
 these things finish-LE

The same is true of other phase markers, indicating that the *ba* NP need not be the subject of a resultative clause.

2.4.1.2 Directional complement

Another type of "result" complement is a directional complement:

- (28) a. Qing ni na shu **lai/qu**.
 please you take book come/go
 'Please bring/take the book.'
 b. Qing ni ba shu na-**lai/qu**.
 please you BA book take-come/go
 'Please bring/take the book.'
- (29) a. Ta reng-**xia** qiu jiu zou le.
 he throw-down ball then leave LE
 'He threw down the ball and left.'
 b. Ta ba qiu reng-**xia** jiu zou le.
 he BA ball throw-down then leave LE
 'He threw down the ball and left.'

The directional expression has also been grammaticalized and can combine with other non-motion verbs, indicating the success or completion of an action or event:

- (30) Ba zhexie-shi **ji-xia(lai)**.
 BA these-matter memorize-down(come)
 'Memorize these matters.'

- (31) Ni qianwan bie ba ta **ai-shang**,
 you absolutely don't BA him love-up
 hui hen tongku-de.
 will very painful-DE
 'You absolutely cannot fall in love with him; it will be very painful.'

Briefly summarizing, although directional complements can be subsumed under resultative complements, they can also become grammaticalized and simply denote completion of an action or event.

2.4.1.3 Other "result" expressions

There are other cases not classified as resultative complements traditionally but behaving like one in *ba* sentences, such as those involving dative objects or placement verbs. One of the objects becomes a *ba* NP and the other stays in the postverbal position. The postverbal complement is very much like a resultative complement. For instance, (32a) below indicates that the book will be on the table and (32b) expresses that the book is given to him, upon the completion of the event.

- (32) a. Qing ni ba shu fang **zai zhuo-shang**.
 please you BA book put at table-on
 'Please put the book on the table.'
 b. Qing ni ba shu song (**gei**) ta.
 please you BA book give to him
 'Please give him the book.'

"Semi-double object structures," illustrated below, behave likewise.

- (33) a. *Ta bao yifu yi-ge xiao-bao.
 he pack clothes one-CL small-bundle
 'He packed the clothes into a small bundle.'
 b. Ta yifu bao **yi-ge xiao-bao**.
 he clothes pack one-CL small-bundle
 'He packed the clothes into a small bundle.'
 c. Ta ba yifu bao **yige xiao-bao**.
 he BA clothes pack one-CL small-bundle
 'He packed the clothes into a small bundle.'

In these sentences, there seem to be two objects but the relevant verbs cannot take both objects in the postverbal position. One of the objects is preposed or is a *ba* NP. The postverbal complement in (33c), again, looks like a resultative complement: the clothes become a small bundle after the packing.

Purposive complements also behave like result expressions. They indicate the purpose of the action, which is similar to a result, and can occur in a *ba* pattern:

- (34) a. Wo na shu (lai/qu) **gei ta kan**.
 I take book come/go for him read
 'I brought a book for him to read.'

- b. Wo ba shu na (lai/qu) **gei ta kan.**
 I BA book take come/go for him read
 'I brought a book for him to read.'

2.4.2 Duration/frequency phrases

Some other expressions that commonly serve as the X in (1a) are postverbal duration or frequency phrases:

- (35) a. Qing ni ba ta kanguan **yi-xiaoshi.**
 please you BA it watch one-hour
 'Please watch him for an hour.'
- b. Ni ba ta da **shi-ci,** ta ye bu-pa.
 you BA him hit ten-times he also not-afraid
 'You hit him ten times and he still will not be afraid.'

2.4.3 V-(yi-)V

Activity verbs can often take the form V-(yi-)V 'V-(one-)V (V a bit)' to express a softened tone or tentativeness. *Ba* sentences are possible:

- (36) Women dei xian ba zhe-wenti **xiang-yi-xiang/kan-yi-kan.**
 we should first BA this-question think-one-think/read-one-read
 'We should first think about/read this question a bit.'

2.4.4 Verbal measurement

A similar construction involves measure expressions indicating the extent of the action:

- (37) a. Ta hui ti ni **haoji-jiao.**
 he will kick you many-foot
 'He will give you many kicks (kick you many times).'
- b. Ta hui ba ni ti **haoji-jiao.**
 he will BA you kick many-foot
 'He will kick you many kicks (kick you many times).'

2.4.5 V object

The postverbal X elements discussed so far mostly are not subcategorized for by the relevant verbs. However, the X can also be a direct object, such as (11), which has the direct object as the X and the indirect object as the *ba* NP. In addition, a *ba* NP can be an "outer object" of a complex verb consisting of the verb and the subcategorized (inner) object (section 2.3.2):

- (38) a. Ta zhi ba shuiguo chi yi-ban.
 he only BA fruit eat one-half
 'He only ate half of the fruit.'

- b. Jide ba juzi bo pi.
 remember BA orange peel skin
 ‘Remember to peel the skin off the orange.’

2.4.6 Aspect markers

Let us turn next to the *ba* construction whose VP only requires an aspect marker after the verb.

2.4.6.1 *Zhe*

Among the cases using an aspect marker to fill the role of X in (1a), the durative marker *-zhe* is a common one.

- (39) Qing ba ta bao/na/qian/fang/gua-**zhe**.
 please BA it(him) hold/take/hold-in-hand/put/hang-DUR
 ‘Please hold (in hand)/put down/hang it(him).’

(39) is to be contrasted with the unacceptable (40):

- (40) *Qing ba ta da/chang/he/ca/nian/gai-**zhe**.
 please BA it(him) hit/sing/drink/wipe/read/build-DUR
 ‘Please hit/sing/drink/wipe/read/build it(him).’

The contrast lies in the types of verbs. Those in (39) involve an end state as a result of the activity. For instance, *gua* ‘hang’ expresses hanging something, resulting in the state of something being in a position at the end of the hanging activity. The activity has an inherent end state. The same applies to the other verbs in (39), all involving an inherent end state. Chen (1978a; 1978b) notes that these verbs contain the notion of “transition” or “path” of motion, resulting in an end state. Let us call this a resultative interpretation. The “durative” marker *-zhe* marks an end state that continues. That is, there is an inception of a state as result of the activity denoted by the verbs and the state continues. In contrast, such a resultative interpretation is not available to (40). Its verbs do not have the “path–end state” interpretation. They only have the progressive interpretation when suffixed with *-zhe* – activities in progress. The distinction between these two can be further illustrated by the following contrasts. One is that the first type of verbs can be more easily compounded with a directional complement (the notion of path is relevant) than the second type (lack of path):

- (41) a. gua-shang na-xia fang-xia
 hang-up take-down put-down
 b. *da-shang *he-lai *ca-qu *nian-xia *ting-xia *gai-shang
 hit-up drink-come wipe-go read-down listen-down build-up

Another contrast is that the first type of verbs, not the second type, can be combined with *zhu* ‘stay’ to mean that an end state holds:

- (42) a. bao-zhu na-zhu qian-zhu fang-zhu gua-zhu
 hold-stay take-stay hold-stay put-stay hang-stay
 b. *da-zhu *chang-zhu *he-zhu *ca-zhu *nian-zhu *gai-zhu
 hit-stay sing-stay drink-stay wipe-stay read-stay build-stay

In brief, the durative marker *-zhe* generally can only be suffixed to the “path–end state” type of verbs to express that the end state holds, making acceptable *ba* sentences.

2.4.6.2 *Le*

In addition to *-zhe*, the completive aspect marker *-le* (the verbal *-le*)¹⁴ may also make a good *ba* sentence. However, its effect is inconsistent. Only some predicates with *-le* make *ba* sentences acceptable, as illustrated below.

- (43) a. Ta ba Lisi pian-le.
 he BA Lisi cheat-LE
 ‘He cheated Lisi.’
 b. Ta jingran ba xiaohai da-le.
 he unexpectedly BA child hit-LE
 ‘Unexpectedly, he hit the child.’
 c. Wo ba shu mai-le.
 I BA book sell-LE
 ‘I sold the book.’
 d. Wo yijing ba men guan-le.
 I already BA door close-LE
 ‘I already closed the door.’
- (44) a. *Ta ba na-difang likai-le.
 he BA that-place leave-LE
 ‘He left that place.’
 b. *Ta jingran ba qiu-sai canjia-le.
 he unexpectedly BA ball-game participate-LE
 ‘Unexpectedly, he played the ball game.’
 c. *Ta ba na-ge canting baifang-le.
 he BA that-CL restaurant visit-LE
 ‘He visited that restaurant.’
 d. *Ta ba wode mingling fucong-le.
 he BA my order obey
 ‘He obeyed my order.’

Moreover, *-le*’s licensing *ba* sentences seems to be an area where speakers’ judgments differ significantly. Though the judgment seems to be more consistent for (43)–(44), sentences like (45a) and (46a) are acceptable only for some speakers. Others prefer to add the expressions discussed in sections 2.4.1–2.4.4:¹⁵

- (45) a. ^{??}Wo ba ge ting-le.
I BA song listen-LE
'I listened to the song.'
- b. Wo ba ge ting-wan-le.
I BA song listen-finish-LE
'I finished listening to the song.'
- (46) a. ^{??}Wo ba ta kuajiang-le.
I BA him praise
'I praised him.'
- b. Wo ba ta kuajiang-le ji-bai-bian-le.
I BA him praise-LE several-hundred-times-LE
'I praised him several hundred times.'

2.4.7 Preverbal modifiers

In addition to the postverbal elements discussed so far, a *ba* sentence can also be licensed by certain preverbal adverbials (the X in (1b)):

- (47) a. Bie ba qiu luan-reng.
don't BA ball disorderly-throw
'Don't throw balls in a disorderly manner.'
- b. Qing ba zhuozi wang ta nabiar tui.
please BA table toward him there push
'Please push the table toward him.'
- c. Ba ta haohaor-de zhaogu, ta jiu hui zhang-de-hao.
BA it good-DE care it then will grow-DE-well
'Take good care of it and it will grow well.'
- d. Ni bu ba wenti zixi-de yanjiu, zen hui zhao-chu daan?
you not BA problem carefully study how will find-out answer
'If you don't study the problem carefully, how can you find an answer?'
- e. Ta ba jiu bu-ting-de he.
he BA wine not-stop-DE drink
'He drank without stop.'
- f. Wo ba ta yi-tui, ta jiu dao-le.
I BA he one-push it then fall-LE
'He fell as soon as I pushed him.'
- (Chao 1968, 348)

Some of such adverbials may be related to the *ba* NP. For instance, *luan* 'disorderly' in (47a) may describe the disorderly end state of the stuff that was thrown in a disorderly manner. However, this is not the case with the others. For instance, *zixi-de* 'carefully' in (47d) cannot describe the *ba* NP: problems cannot be careful. It is the studying that is careful. Section 5 will discuss these cases.

2.4.8 Summary

The facts discussed so far show that *ba* sentences are acceptable in the following contexts.

- (48) (i) V + result
 (ii) V + duration/frequency
 (iii) V + (*yi* +) V
 (iv) V + measure phrases
 (v) V + object
 (vi) V + *le*
 (vii) V + *zhe*
 (viii) Adv + V

(48i)–(48vii) include almost all the types of elements that can occur postverbally in Chinese. The only one that can occur postverbally but does not license the *ba* construction is a descriptive complement (a postverbal manner expression modifying the V), illustrated below.

- (49) *Ta ba jintian-de gongke xie-de hen kuai.
 he BA today homework write-DE very fast
 'He wrote today's homework fast.'

2.5 Verbs

We have discussed all the components of the *ba* construction listed in (1a)–(1b) except the V. The V interacts closely with the co-occurring preverbal or postverbal X. Verbs are often discussed in terms of their types. However, when verb types are considered, such as in the classifications by Vendler (1967), Dowty (1979), and Smith (1991), it is generally the verb phrase that is more significant syntactically, not the verb itself. Therefore, the properties of Vs alone will not be the main concern, except the issue of transitivity. Recall that a resultative complement can make a *ba* sentence acceptable (or [V + result] compounding; see section 2.4.1.1), regardless of the transitivity of Vs. That is, the V in the *ba* construction as in (1) can be intransitive, as noted in section 2.3.3; the *ba* NP can be interpreted as the subject of a resultative complement, illustrated below.

- (50) a. Ta zou-de tui hen suan.
 he walk-DE leg very sore
 'He walked so much that his legs were sore.'
 b. Ta ba tui zou-de hen suan.
 he BA leg walk-DE very sore
 'He walked so much that his legs were sore.'
- (51) a. Tianqi leng-de wo zhi duosuo.
 weather cold-DE I continue shiver
 'The weather is so cold that I keep shivering.'

- b. Tianqi ba wo leng-de zhi duosuo.
 weather BA I cold-DE continue shiver
 'The weather is so cold that I keep shivering.'

These sentences seem to be good examples demonstrating that an intransitive V with a resultative complement can make acceptable *ba* sentences, with the *ba* NP interpreted as the subject of the resultative complement. However, closer examination of a wider range of data reveals that the generalization may not be quite true. There are many instances where a result expression does not make a good *ba* sentence with an intransitive verb. For instance, the following sentences contain a resultative complement after an intransitive verb; yet a *ba* sentence is still not acceptable.¹⁶

- (52) a. Ta yansu-de women dou bu-gan xiao-le.
 he serious-DE we all not-dare laugh
 'He was so serious that we did not dare to laugh.'
 b. *Ta ba women yansu-de dou bu-gan xiao-le.
 he BA we serious-DE all not-dare laugh-LE
 'He was so serious that we did not dare to laugh.'
- (53) a. Ta-de shengyin xiao-de women dou ting-bu-jian.
 he-DE voice small-DE we all listen-not-receive
 'His voice was so soft that we could not hear him.'
 b. *Ta-de shengyin ba women xiao-de dou ting-bu-jian.
 he-DE voice BA we small-DE all listen-not-receive
 'His voice was so soft that we could not hear him.'

This contrast is puzzling in light of the fact that, with a lexical causative verb, the two sets of sentences are equally acceptable:

- (52) c. Ta yansu-de shi women dou bu-gan xiao-le.
 he serious-DE make us all not-dare laugh-LE
 'He was so serious that it made us not dare to laugh.'
- (53) c. Ta-de shengyin xiao-de shi women dou ting-bu-jian.
 he-DE voice small-DE make we all listen-not-receive
 'His voice was so soft that it made us not able to hear him.'

(52c) and (53c) are the lexical causative counterpart of (52b) and (53b) respectively. Why do (50b)/(51b) and (52b)/(53b) contrast in acceptability? It will be shown that the *ba* construction does not allow a truly intransitive verb. A complement expressing a result is not sufficient to make an acceptable *ba* sentence. The verb of a *ba* sentence must at least be able to be linked to the *ba* NP in the sense that the verb takes the *ba* NP as its semantic object, though not necessarily in typical syntactic object positions.¹⁷ To clarify this point, let us first consider the following contrast:

- (54) a. Tianqi leng-zai women shen-shang.
 weather cold-DE we body-on
 'The (cold) weather made us cold.'
- b. *Ta yansu-zai women shen-shang.
 he serious-at we body-on
- c. *Ta-de shengyin xiao-zai women shen-shang.
 he-DE voice small-at we body-on

Even though all the relevant verbs (including the adjectival ones) are intransitive, the contrast between (54a) and (54b)–(54c) indicates that these verbs differ in the possibility of having a goal/recipient of the event. There is a recipient of the coldness of the weather but seriousness or a small voice do not have a recipient. What the contrast between (54a) and (54b)–(54c) shows is that there are “pseudo-intransitive” verbs, in contrast to “real intransitive” verbs. (54b)–(54c) contain real intransitive verbs; while (54a) involves pseudo-intransitive verbs. The latter can take an implicit object (goal/recipient), but not the former. In other words, contrary to the claim in the literature, truly intransitive verbs cannot occur in the *ba* construction. The fact that *leng* ‘cold’, *ku* ‘cry’, and other seemingly intransitive verbs can appear in the *ba* pattern is due to the fact that these verbs are only “pseudo-intransitive” or “quasi-transitive” in the sense that the existence of an affected argument is implied. A postverbal result expression alone is not sufficient to license the *ba* construction. The *ba* NP must be related to the verb. The *ba* NP under consideration need not be a true direct object of the V; it may be subsumed under the notion of an “affected object” or “outer object,” “V’ object,” along the lines of the observation stated in (19) in section 2.3.3, repeated below:

- (19) A *ba* NP corresponds to a V object (inner object) or a V’ object (outer object) of a non-*ba* counterpart.

A clarification regarding V’ object is needed: it is not the case that any V’ can take an object. A thematic relation must still exist between such an object and the V. The thematic relation requirement distinguishes the acceptable and unacceptable *ba* sentences discussed above. More generally, it may also distinguish cases like the following which differ only in the use of Vs:

- (55) a. Tufei ba ta sha-le fuqin.
 bandit BA him kill-LE father
 ‘Bandits killed his father.’
- b. *Tufei ba ta baifang-le fuqin.
 bandit BA him visit-LE father
 ‘Bandits visited his father.’

An outer V’ object may bear a possession relation with an inner V object, which is true of both (55a) and (55b). Despite the same thematic relation between the two objects, the former, with the verb *sha* ‘kill’, is acceptable as a *ba* sentence, but not the latter, with the verb *baifang* ‘visit’. Were any

V' able to take an affected outer object, the contrast between (55a) and (55b) would not exist. This further points to the close relation between the V' object and the V.

The generalization has important implications for how a *ba* NP is derived. For instance, it has bearings on the debate between Goodall (1989) and Huang (1992), which was revisited by Sybesma (1999), concerning whether a *ba* NP should be derived by movement or base generation. The crucial data used in these works are instances like (56) where the *ba* NP corresponds to the subject of a resultative complement. The works just mentioned debated whether the *ba* sentence in (56a) was derived from (56b) by raising the subject of the resultative complement to become the *ba* NP (see Sybesma 1999, 158–159, for more examples and section 2.2.2 for relevant discussions):

- (56) a. Ta ba tieshu ku-de kai-le hua.
 he BA iron-tree cry-DE open-LE flower
 'He cried such that the iron trees blossomed (something very unusual happened).'
- b. Ta ku-de tieshu kai-le hua.
 he cry-DE iron-tree open-LE flower
 'He cried such that the iron trees blossomed (something very unusual happened).'

The proponents of the raising analysis base their arguments on the claim that *tieshu kai hua* 'iron tree open flower' is an idiomatic expression indicating that a highly unlikely event has happened. In contrast, Huang argues that the relevant *ba* sentence involves a control structure and the seemingly idiomatic expression actually is figurative speech, with 'iron tree' possibly referring to an 'iron-hearted father'.

The discussion so far suggests that the data probably only bear on the issue of whether the *ba* NP can be raised from the subject of a complement clause, rather than a more general issue of whether the *ba* NP can be derived by a raising process. It is quite conceivable that a *ba* NP can be derived by movement, but the data in (56) do not provide any positive or negative evidence because of the independent consideration of whether a *ba* NP can originate as the subject of a complement clause at all. The generalization in (19) essentially prohibits the derivation of a *ba* NP raised from within a resultative complement (but it can be related to the complement, part of the V'), because a *ba* NP must be a V object or a V' object. However, (19) does not exclude the possibility of a *ba* NP being derived by a raising process. It is just that the raising should apply to a V object or a V' object and not the subject of a resultative complement; otherwise, sentences such as (52b) and (53b) would be acceptable. Accordingly, the analysis of (56a) should not be the one proposed by Goodall, that is, the *ba* NP raised from the subject of the complement clause. Instead, one should take the idiom-like expressions as figurative speech as in Huang's analysis. That this conclusion is correct is supported by the fact that *tieshu* 'iron tree' can occur without the predicate and retain the figurative interpretation, as in (56c), unlike true idiomatic expressions whose components are

not allowed to be generated separately without losing their idiomatic interpretations, such as (56d)–(56d’):

- (56) c. Ta ba tieshu shuifu-le ma?
 he BA iron-tree persuade Q
 ‘Did he persuade the iron tree (the iron-hearted one)?’
- d. Ta xihuan chi doufu.
 he like eat tofu
 ‘He likes to flirt.’ Idiomatic reading (*chi-doufu* ‘eat-tofu = flirt’)
 ‘He likes to eat tofu.’ Non-idiomatic reading
- d’. ta xihuan doufu.
 he like tofu
 ‘He likes tofu.’ Non-idiomatic reading only

On the other hand, the fact that (56a) cannot be derived by directly raising the subject of the complement clause to the *ba* NP position does not argue against a raising analysis that moves a *ba* NP from a V object or V’ object position. Section 4 will show that the structure of the *ba* construction will force us to allow such a raising process, which will be supported by facts involving true idiomatic expressions of the structure [V + O].

Having discussed the syntactic properties of each of the components of *ba* sentences as in (1a)–(1b), we should be able to establish appropriate syntactic structures for the *ba* construction. However, before we proceed, one more set of data should be introduced: comparisons with the Taiwanese counterpart, the *ka* construction, which will help with the characterization of the relevant *ba* structure in Mandarin because of their close similarities and important differences.

3 Comparison with Taiwanese *ka*

A Mandarin *ba* sentence has a counterpart in Taiwanese, with *ba* replaced by *ka*:

- (57) a. Ta ba wo pian san-ci le.
 he BA me cheat three-times LE
 ‘He cheated me three times.’
- cf. b. I ka gua phen saN-pai a.
 he KA me cheat three-times PAR
 ‘He cheated me three times.’

The two constructions share the form [subject + *ba/ka* + NP + VP] and most of the constraints. A *ba* sentence in Mandarin can always be translated into a *ka* sentence in Taiwanese. However, the reverse is not true. A *ka* sentence does not always have an acceptable *ba* counterpart.

There are three major differences between the Mandarin *ba* construction and the Taiwanese *ka* construction. The first is that, in contrast to the prohibition on a bare verb in Mandarin *ba* sentences (i.e., the X factor, a postverbal or preverbal element required to accompany a bare verb), Taiwanese easily allows a bare verb when the verb takes an affected object (see section 5.1). For instance, the following perfectly acceptable *ka* sentences use only bare verbs after the *ka* NP.

- (58) I ka gua pha/phen/me.
 he KA me hit/cheat/scold
 'He hit/cheated/scolded me.'

The second difference is that it is not always possible for a *ka* sentence to have a non-*ka* counterpart in Taiwanese.

- (59) a. Li m-thang ka gua the-tsa ha-ban.
 you don't KA me earlier off-work
 'Don't get off work earlier (than you should) on me (i.e., your getting off work earlier would affect me negatively).'
- b. Li na kaN ka gua tsao, gua teo ho li ho-khuaN.
 you if dare KA me leave I then let you good-look
 'If you dare to leave on me (i.e., me affected by your leaving), I will show you the consequence.'

In these cases, *ka* is necessary to give an interpretation to the *ka* NP. In formal terms, *ka*, not *ba*, can assign a thematic role to the following NP.

Finally, in contrast to the possibility in Mandarin of preposing *ba* together with the *ba* NP in some cases, it is unacceptable to prepose *ka* with the *ka* NP in any *ka* sentence in Taiwanese:

- (60) *Ka tsit-teh bah, li siN tshet-tshet-le.
 KA this-CL meat you first cut-cut-PAR
 'Cut the meat a bit first.'

In brief, although the Taiwanese *ka* construction and the Mandarin *ba* construction are quite similar, they differ significantly in several respects:

- | | | |
|-------|--|---|
| (61) | <i>ba</i> construction | <i>ka</i> construction |
| (i) | Bare verbs are disallowed. | Bare verbs are allowed. |
| (ii) | A non- <i>ba</i> counterpart is always available. | A non- <i>ka</i> counterpart is sometimes unavailable. |
| (iii) | A <i>ba</i> NP is thematically related to the V or V' (V object or V' object). | A <i>ka</i> NP need not be thematically related to the V or V'. <i>Ka</i> is sufficient for a <i>ka</i> NP to be interpreted. |
| (iv) | <i>Ba</i> and the <i>ba</i> NP are preposable as a unit. | <i>Ka</i> and the <i>ka</i> NP are not preposable as a unit. |

The comparisons between *ba* and *ka* constructions will help us determine their appropriate syntactic structures.

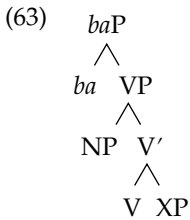
4 Structures

The important grammatical facts that need to be captured by an adequate phrase structure for the *ba* construction are summarized below.

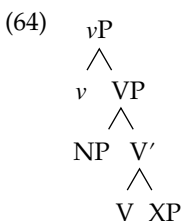
- (62) (i) A *ba* sentence has a non-*ba* counterpart.
 (ii) *Ba* and the *ba* NP normally do not form a unit syntactically, but they do so in some cases. In either case, no element can intervene between *ba* and the *ba* NP.
 (iii) What follows *ba* is a VP that contains an X and a V.
 (iv) A *ba* NP is a V object or a V' object.

4.1 A preliminary analysis

There is evidence that at least, in some cases, *ba* should head its own projection (section 2.2). When *ba* heads its own projection, its complement should be a maximal category (bare phrase structure in the Minimalist Program; see Chomsky 1995). Therefore, (63) is a potential partial structure for the *ba* construction, where the NP in the Spec of VP is the *ba* NP. It is an object of V'. In the case where the *ba* NP is a V object, it is raised to the Spec of VP position.



This structure resembles very much the *vP* structure in Chomsky (1995) or the VP shell structure proposed by Larson (1988) for double object structures, if *ba* is the head of a higher *vP* or VP (see Sybesma 1999 and section 5.3). For simplicity, let us just use Chomsky's *vP* structures in the representations. (If Larson's VP shell structures are adopted, all *vPs* will be replaced by VPs and *vs* by Vs.)



When *ba* appears in the *v* position, the verb is in the V position and a *ba* sentence is derived.

- (65) Wo ba beizi na gei-ta.
 I BA cup take to-him
 'I gave the cup to him.'

Alternatively, *ba* need not appear in the *v* position. In that case, the verb moves up to the *v* position, deriving a non-*ba* sentence:

- (66) Wo na beizi gei-ta.
 I take cup to-him
 'I gave the cup to him.'

In this analysis, *ba* is taken as the spell-out of a small *v*. When *v* is spelled out as *ba*, V-to-*v*-raising does not apply, deriving [*ba* NP V XP]. When *ba* does not occur, V-to-*v*-raising takes place, deriving [V NP XP].

4.2 Revision

The structure in (63) seems to capture the properties in (62). We saw how the *ba* and non-*ba* counterpart were derived. *Ba* heads a projection. The fact that nothing can intervene between *ba* and the *ba* NP can be captured if *ba* assigns case to the *ba* NP and case assignment obeys an adjacency condition (Stowell 1981; Li 1985; 1990). Nonetheless, this structure is not quite adequate. It is especially problematic with respect to the placement of adverbials. Take a manner adverb for illustration. In a *ba* sentence, a manner adverb can occur before or after *ba*:

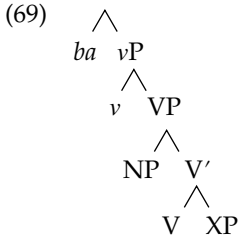
- (67) a. Wo xiaoxin-de ba beizi na-gei-ta.
 I carefully BA cup take-to-him
 'I gave the cup to him carefully.'
 b. Wo ba beizi xiaoxin-de na-gei-ta.
 I BA cup carefully take-to-him
 'I gave the cup to him carefully.'

If (63)/(64) is the structure, it means that a manner adverb should be able to adjoin to either *V'* or some node higher than the *baP/vP*. Such adverb placement possibilities predict that the non-*ba* counterpart, after V is raised to *v*, should be acceptable. However, this is not borne out.¹⁸

- (68) a. Wo xiaoxin-de na beizi gei-ta.
 I carefully take cup to-him
 'I gave the cup to him carefully.'
 b. *Wo na beizi xiaoxin-de gei-ta.
 I take cup carefully to-him
 'I gave the cup to him carefully.'

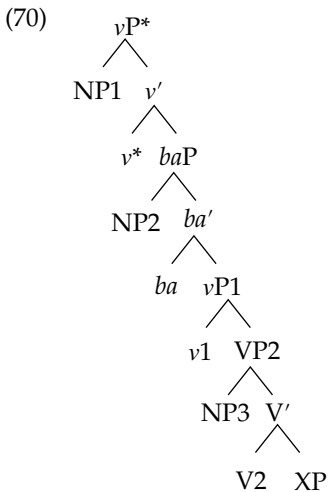
The contrast between (67b) and (68b) casts doubt on the adequacy of a structure like (63)/(64), with *v* spelled out as *ba*. Another concern is the issue of productivity. If *ba* is simply the spell-out of *v*, it is not clear why the *ba* construction is subject to so many constraints, compared with the non-*ba* counterpart.

The distribution of adverbs indicates that *ba* must be higher than the landing site of the raised verb, that is, higher than *vP* in (64):



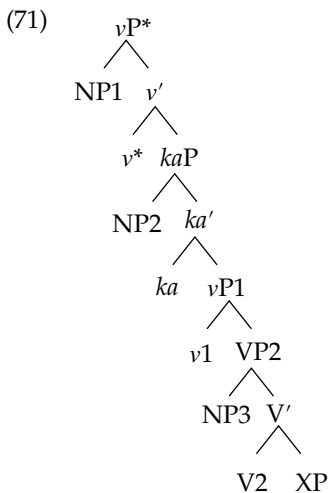
In such a structure, an adverb is adjoined to *vP* (or an intermediate projection *v'*, or some other node higher than *vP*). For a non-*ba* sentence, an adverb appears on the left of the main verb after the main verb is raised from *V* to *v*. For a *ba* sentence, an adverb may appear to the right of *ba* (as well as to the left if the adverb is adjoined to a node higher than the *ba* projection).

The structure in (69) solves the problem with adverb placement. However, it raises the question of where the *ba* NP should be positioned. It cannot be the NP in (69). The *ba* NP and *ba* cannot be separated by any element. (69) would wrongly allow the main verb to occur between *ba* and the *ba* NP. There needs to be an NP position above the raised verb to host the *ba* NP. That is, there should be more structures above *vP*, such as the one below.



In this structure, *vP1* is the verb phrase that follows the *ba* NP; NP2 is the most likely candidate to host the *ba* NP and NP1, the external argument of the sentence. To derive the correct word order, *ba* is raised to *v**, V2 is raised to *v1*. (A non-*ba* sentence

only has the projection up to *v*P1.) This structure spells out the relation between a *ba* construction and its non-*ba* counterpart, their minimal difference being in the projection of a *ba*P shell for the *ba* construction. It accommodates the facts regarding the distribution of adverbials. However, this structure seems to suggest that *ba* is very much like a verb in the sense that both are dominated by a *v* (*v*1 for *V* and *v** for *ba* in (70)). On the other hand, we mentioned earlier in section 2.2 that *ba* was not a verb. Do these two facts contradict each other? They do not, when we consider the behavior of *ka* in the *ka* construction, the Taiwanese counterpart of the Mandarin *ba* construction. Recall that *ka* can assign a thematic role to a *ka* NP but a *ba* NP is always related to the following *V* or *V'* thematically. The thematic assigning property of *ka* reflects the origin of the *ba* and *ka* constructions in serial verb constructions. The structure in (70) reflects such properties faithfully. Thus (70) should be adopted for the *ka* construction:



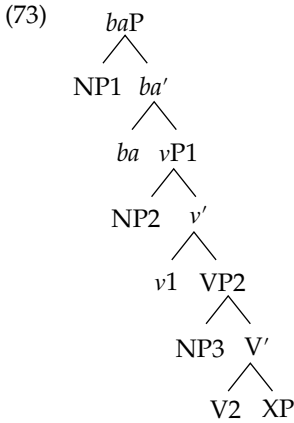
The question is whether this structure still describes the *ba* construction appropriately. Moreover, adopting the same structure for both *ka* and *ba* constructions fails to capture the differences between these two constructions in (61).

The facts that *ka* can assign an independent theta-role and that a *ka* sentence does not always have a non-*ka* counterpart indicate that *ka* in Taiwanese has a more independent status than *ba* in Mandarin. This can be understood as follows: the minimal difference between the two constructions is that *ka* is “more lexical” than *ba*: *ka* can directly assign a thematic role (an affected theta-role) to the *ka* NP. In contrast, *ba* does not assign a thematic role. A *ka* NP can be base generated but a *ba* NP always originates from within the verb phrase. *Ba* in Mandarin is “emptier” than *ka* in Taiwanese.

The independent theta-assigning capability of *ka* should predict that the prohibition on the *V* in a Mandarin *ba* sentence being a true intransitive should not apply to a Taiwanese *ka* sentence. This is correct. The unacceptable cases with true intransitive verbs in the Mandarin *ba* construction in section 2.5 are acceptable as *ka* sentences, illustrated below (cf. (52)–(53)):

- (72) Li-e syaNim Na ka gua se-ka bolang thiaN-u, gua
 your voice if KA me small-extent nobody hear-have I
 e ka li si thaulo.
 will KA you fire job
 'If your voice is so small that nobody can hear you (and affecting my interest),
 I will fire you.'

The differences between *ka* and *ba* suggest that *ba* has lost more lexical properties and is more grammaticalized than *ka*. Structurally, because of the grammaticalization process, v^* disappears in (70) and the external argument NP1 occupies the Spec of *ba*P position, with the *ba* NP occupying the Spec of v P1:



Adverbials are placed at the v level (for instance, adjoined to v'). The *ba* NP (NP2) is not within the maximal projection of *ba*, and therefore not assigned a thematic role by *ba*. The relation between *ba* and the *ba* NP is not thematic, but *ba* still assigns case to the *ba* NP (exceptional case marking; Chomsky 1981). It is also possible that the weakening of the lexical properties of *ba* (grammaticalization) enables *ba* to be cliticized to the *ba* NP, making the two behave as a unit (62ii), which, if true, also accounts for why *ka* + NP does not behave as a single unit in Taiwanese (61iv).

In brief, the *ba* construction in Mandarin can be viewed as a more grammaticalized version of the *ka* construction in Taiwanese. The two minimally differ in thematic-assigning capabilities. This difference is reflected in the presence of a v projection for *ka*, but not for *ba*.

Note that the structure in (73) assumes that the *ba* NP, NP2 in Spec of v P1, can be raised from a lower position. Such a raising analysis is supported, as shown next.

4.3 The *ba* NP

As mentioned, a *ba* sentence always has a non-*ba* counterpart and the *ba* NP is an inner object (object of V) or an outer object assigned a theta-role by V' . In other words, the *ba* NP is generated in either NP3 (V' object) or XP (V object) position in (73). On the surface, the *ba* NP occurs in NP2 position in (73). This indicates that

the *ba* NP must be derived by a raising process. However, the raising can only originate from a V object or V' object position. Note that the *ba* NP, NP2, is still within the extended maximal projection of V (*vP*). That is, it is within the thematic domain of V/V'. Raising the subject of an embedded clause to the *ba* NP position would be like the raising of an embedded subject to the object position of a higher clause, a process generally possible only if the subject is raised to the Agreement of Object position, not the position within the extended maximal projection of V (see Hornstein 1994).

A raising analysis to derive the *ba* NP is supported by the fact that the object NP of a [V + NP] idiomatic expression can become a *ba* NP:

- (74) a. Ta kai-wan-le dao le.
 he open-finish-LE knife LE
 'He finished the operation.'
- b. Ni gankuai xiao-le bian-ba, buyao zai wan-le.
 you hurry small-LE convenience-PAR don't again play-LE
 'Hurry up peeing; don't fool around any more.'
- (75) a. Ta ba dao kai-wan-le.
 he BA knife open-finish-LE
 'He finished the operation.'
- b. Ni gankuai ba bian xiao-le-ba, buyao zai wan-le.
 you hurry BA convenience small-LE-PAR don't again play-LE
 'Hurry up peeing; don't fool around any more.'

4.4 A bare verb?

The proposal discussed so far accounts for almost all the syntactic properties of the *ba* construction in Mandarin, in contrast to the *ka* construction in Taiwanese, as listed in (61). What is left is the contrast between the acceptability of a bare verb for a *ka* sentence and its unacceptability for a *ba* sentence. It is possible to trace the constraint in the Mandarin *ba* construction to a more general phenomenon: in Mandarin, when an object is preposed (i.e., not occurring in the postverbal position), it is generally unacceptable to have a bare verb, as illustrated below.

- (76) a. Wo zuotian zhe-ge zhuozi ca*(-le).¹⁹
 I yesterday this-CL table wipe-LE
 'I, this table, wiped yesterday.'
- b. Zhe-ge zhuozi, wo zuotian ca*(-le).
 this-CL table I yesterday wipe-LE
 'This table, I wiped yesterday.'

Nonetheless, why is it that the focus of the literature has been on the unacceptability of a bare verb in the *ba* construction and attention has not been paid to the parallelism between the *ba* sentences and the object-preposing cases? This probably

is due to the fact that we do see some object-preposing cases where bare verbs are allowed:

- (77) a. Wo zhe-ge zhuozi bu-ca.
 I this-CL table not-wipe
 'I, this table, won't wipe.'
 b. Wo zhe-ge zhuozi hui-ca.
 I this-CL table will-wipe
 'I, this table, will wipe.'

Note that the bare verb in these cases occurs with a modal or a negation word. Phonologically, they form a unit. In a corresponding *ba* sentence, a modal or a negation occurs before *ba*. The inability of a modal or negation to follow *ba* and directly precede the V makes it impossible to test if, indeed, the *ba* and non-*ba* constructions differ in the acceptability of bare verbs. Nonetheless, the context of listing seems to allow bare verbs in both constructions:

- (78) a. Ta yi-zheng-ge zaoshang zhe-ge zhuozi ca, na-ge yizi
 I one-whole-CL morning this-CL table wipe that-CL chair
 mo-de, mang-si-le.
 wipe-DE busy-dead-LE
 'He has been wiping this table, cleaning that chair and what not for the whole morning. He is very busy.'
 b. Ta yi-zheng-ge zaoshang ba zhe-ge zhuozi ca, (ba)
 I one-whole-CL morning BA this-CL table wipe BA
 na-ge yizi mo-de, mang-si-le.
 that-CL chair wipe-DE busy-dead-LE
 'He has been wiping this table, cleaning that chair and what not for the whole morning. He is very busy.'

Bare verbs also occur in the *ba* construction when the verbs consist of two morphemes (but is not decomposable to [activity + result]):

- (79) a. Ta keneng ba ta fang-qi ma?
 he can BA she abandon-abandon Q
 'Will it be possible that he abandons her?'
 b. Ta shi hui ba taitai hu-lue de ren ma?
 he is can BA wife neglect-omit DE person Q
 'Is he a person that can neglect his wife?'
 c. Wo yiding bu hui ba ta yi-wang!
 I definitely not will BA him miss-forget
 'I definitely will not forget him!'

Typical [activity + result] compound verbs, including those with the result part grammaticalized to become an aspect-like suffix (section 2.4.1.1), allow a positive potential infix *de* 'able' or a negative potential infix *bu* 'not' [activity + *de/bu* + result]. However, verbs such as *fangqi* 'abandon', *hulue* 'neglect', *yiwang* 'forget' in

(79a)–(79c), and other similar ones do not allow such infixes. (79a)–(79c) demonstrate that bare verbs can occur in the *ba* construction, just like (78b).

Despite these examples, it is true that bare verbs are not common in the *ba* construction. In addition, (78b) is not consistently accepted by native speakers and the verbs in (79a)–(79c) still consist of two morphemes. These considerations are in sharp contrast to Taiwanese, which readily allows a single-syllable bare verb in the *ka* construction. One may propose subsuming the strong tendency to avoid a bare verb in the *ba* construction to some more general phenomena, such as certain interactions between prosody and syntax as suggested by Feng (1995), which may be specific to Mandarin, but not Taiwanese. I will not speculate further on a solution here for lack of a better understanding of the contrast (but see Li 2013; see further discussions in section 5.1).

4.5 Constraints

The investigation of each of the components of the *ba* construction (1a)–(1b) and the comparison between Mandarin and Taiwanese *ba/ka* constructions lead to the proposed structures in (71) and (73). However, the proposal has not fully addressed the issue that has attracted the attention of most of the linguists interested in the *ba* construction: the conditions on when the *ba* construction is possible. Note that the structure in (71) is too weak and would generate many unacceptable *ba* sentences, such as those below.

- (80) a. *Ta ba dong da-po-le.
 he BA hole hit-break-LE
 ‘He broke the hole.’
- b. *Lisi ba ta xihuan-de hen gaoxing.
 Lisi BA he like-DE very happy
 ‘Lisi likes him so much that he is very happy.’
- c. *Wo ba jiu he-zui-le.
 I BA alcohol drink-drunk-LE
 ‘I got drunk from drinking.’
- d. *Ta ba mei-jian-shi dou zhidao-le
 he BA every-CL-matter all know-LE
 ‘He knew everything.’

The discussions in the preceding sections, especially sections 2.4–2.5, touched upon the reasons why some *ba* sentences are not acceptable. In the literature, there have been many interesting accounts for the relevant constraints. Proposals have been made from the perspective of information structure (topic–comment, presupposition–focus: see for instance Mei 1978; Hsueh 1987; Tsao 1987; Ding 1993; Shao and Zhao 2005), emotive effect/discourse function (Shen 2002; Jing-Schmidt 2005; Guo 2008; Wang 2009; among many others), the notions of transitivity, disposal, affectedness (see Wang 1945; 1947; Wang 1957; Chao 1968; Hashimoto 1971; Thompson 1973; Li 1974; Hopper and Thompson 1980; Li and Thompson 1981; etc.), aspectual structure (Szeto 1988; Yong 1993; Liu 1997), and event structure (Sybesma 1992; 1999). In what follows, it will be shown that, although the available analyses generally accommodate the core cases

of the *ba* construction, the complex range of facts poses great challenges to any satisfactory accounts.

5 Accounts for the constraints

Among the approaches based on information structure/discourse, interpretation/pragmatics (affectedness), aspectual structures, and event structures, let us focus on the last three.

5.1 Interpretive/pragmatic accounts

5.1.1 *The notion of “affectedness/disposal”*

The majority of the literature on the *ba* construction centers on the notion of “disposal” or “affectedness”; that is, the *ba* construction is to express the meaning of “disposal” or “affectedness.” This special meaning is related to the original lexical meaning of *ba* ‘handle, manipulate’. It is responsible for the many constraints on the choice of verbs, the choice of *ba* NPs and the use of postverbal or preverbal elements (the X in (1)). For instance, even though in many cases the *ba* NP is the object of the main verb,²⁰ such as (81), the “special meaning” of the *ba* construction prevents the objects of some transitive verbs from being the *ba* NP, like (82).

- (81) a. Wo ba juzi bo-le.
 I BA orange peel-LE
 ‘I peeled the orange.’
 cf. b. Wo bo-le juzi.
 I peel-LE orange
 ‘I peeled the orange.’

- (82) a. *Wo ba ta xihuan-le.
 I BA him like-LE
 ‘I became fond of him.’
 cf. b. Wo xihuan ta-le.
 I like him-LE
 ‘I became fond of him.’

The intuition regarding the unacceptability of sentences like (82a) is that such sentences do not express the handling or manipulation of something; ‘he’ is not manipulated or dealt with by ‘my becoming fond of him’. The *ba* NP is not affected in the event. This contrasts with (81a), which expresses the notion that something was done to the *ba* NP: ‘the orange’ was peeled.

Such an intuition led to the following widely accepted terms for this construction: the “disposal” or “executive” construction (*chuzhi shi*; see Wang 1954; also see Hashimoto 1971).²¹ These terms are to capture the intuition that the *ba* construction generally is to describe something being “disposed of” or some action being taken on the *ba* NP. In the words of Wang, “The disposal form states how a person is handled,

manipulated, or dealt with; how something is disposed of; or how an affair is conducted" (translated in Li 1974, 200–201). According to Teng (1975), this interpretive property accounts for why it is most common for the *ba* NP to be a patient NP (affected). Frei (1956; 1957) and Teng (1975) refer to this construction as the ergative or accusative construction, to highlight the fact that the "object" of *ba* generally is a patient. Alternatively, the *ba* construction can be viewed as a "highly transitive" construction. The construction describes the particular action made upon its object or a high degree of affectedness exerted upon the object (see, for instance, Wang 1954; Wang 1957; Chao 1968; Hashimoto 1971; Thompson 1973; Li 1974; Li and Thompson 1981; Tsee 1986; Wu 1987; for a later work, see Li 1995). The "affectedness" interpretation can be better understood in the contrast between the following two sentences, which have similar argument NPs. Depending on which NP becomes the *ba* NP, the sentences are interpreted differently. They differ in expressing which NP is affected: (83a) expresses that the pot is affected and (83b), the water.

- (83) a. Wo ba guozi zhuang-le shui.
 I BA pot fill-LE water
 'I filled the pot with water.'
- b. Wo ba shui zhuang-zai guozi-li.
 I BA water fill-at pot-in
 'I filled the water into the pot.'

5.1.2 Extension: non-physical affectedness

However, it is not always easy to understand a *ba* NP as "affected," "manipulated," or "dealt with." Extensions have been made to accommodate more cases.

It has been suggested that "affectedness" need not be physical. It can be psychological or even imaginary. For instance, Li and Thompson (1981, 469–470) observe that sentences such as (84)–(85), which contain emotive or psychological verbs and are normally unacceptable with the *ba* construction, are possible when a postverbal intensifier is added. According to these authors, the intensity of the emotion can imply disposal. In (84), the presence of the postverbal expression greatly exaggerates the degree of his missing you. "It is as if one cannot help thinking that you are affected in some way when he misses you to such an extent that he can't even eat" (1981, 469). The added expression *yao si* 'want to die' in (85) "hypothetically creates an image that such intense love must have some effect on the 'small cat'. Thus, the disposal idea ... is implied by the verb together with the added expression. An implication of disposal is, therefore, sufficient to warrant the use of the *ba* construction" (1981, 469).²²

- (84) Ta ba ni xiang-de fan dou bu-ken chi.
 he BA him miss-DE food even not-willing eat
 'He misses you so much that he won't even eat his meals.'
- (85) Lisi ba xiao-mao ai-de yao si.
 Lisi BA small cat love-DE want die
 'He loves the kitten so much that he wants to die.'

The affected image does not have to be in the mind of the *ba* NP, because the one that is missed in (84) need not even know that he is missed. (84) can be followed by (86).

- (86) Ni keneng bu zhidao-ba!
 you probably not know-PAR
 'Probably you don't know!'

In brief, many terms associated with the *ba* construction, such as "disposal," "executive," "affected," "causative," "pre-transitive," and "highly transitive" are indicative of a widely accepted intuition that this construction expresses some loose notion of "affectedness," that is, of the *ba* NP being affected in some way. The "affectedness" need not be physical: it can be emotional or simply imaginary.²³

Such a special meaning is so typical of the *ba* construction that it can force an "affected" interpretation even on the O part of a [V + O] idiomatic expression when the O becomes a *ba* NP. For instance, in (75a)–(75b), 'knife' in 'open-knife = do an operation' can be interpreted as 'operation', and 'convenience' in 'small-convenience = pee' can be interpreted as 'urine': the operation was performed and urine was urinated.

In addition to the effect on the general interpretation of this construction, the loose notion of "affectedness/disposal" seems to provide some understanding of the constraints on the types of *ba* NPs and predicates, as demonstrated next.

5.1.3 Constraints on *ba* NPs

Because the *ba* NP tends to denote an entity that is affected, it generally should exist before an event occurs in order to be affected (existence condition). It normally cannot be non-specific (specificity condition) and is something/someone that can be affected by the event (affectedness condition).

5.1.3.1 Existence

There is a strong tendency for the entity denoted by the *ba* NP to exist in the speaker's conceptual world before the activity/event takes place. If it does not exist, generally the *ba* NP is not acceptable. This tendency can be illustrated by the following pair of examples:

- (87) a. *Ta ba zhuyi xiang-dao-le.
 he BA idea think-arrive-LE
 'He thought of the idea.'
 b. Ta ba zhuyi gaosu wo le.
 he BA idea tell me LE
 'He told me the idea.'

This contrast can be understood in this way: an idea does not exist before it is thought of; but an idea must exist before it is told to people.

The existence can simply be a conceptual existence. For instance, the concept of what a hole should be can exist before the hole is dug and takes the desired shape. In contrast, if one breaks a hole in something, a preconception of the hole normally does not exist.

- (88) a. Ta ba dong wa-hao-le.
 he BA hole dig-complete-LE
 'He completed digging the hole.'
- cf.
- b. *Ta ba dong da-po-le.
 he BA hole hit-break-LE
 'He broke the hole.'

More generally, creation verbs are normally not found in *ba* sentences, such as (89a)–(89b):

- (89) a. *Ta ba jinzi faxian-le.
 he BA gold discover-LE
 'He discovered gold.'
- b. *Ta ba diandeng faming-le.
 he BA light-bulb invent-LE
 'He invented light-bulbs.'

In contrast, the following sentence with the creation verb 'write up' is fine because the speaker has the article in mind to write up.

- (90) Wo ba wenzhang xie hao-le.
 I BA article write good-LE
 'I wrote up the article.'

5.1.3.2 Specificity

A great majority of the literature on the *ba* construction claims that the *ba* NP must be specific or definite and that it has to do with the meaning of "disposal" or "affectedness": the entity that is dealt with or affected needs to be specific. Examples are bare NPs, which can be interpreted as indefinite in some contexts, but cannot be so interpreted as *ba* NPs. Other typical indefinite expressions cannot serve as *ba* NPs.

Bare NP

- (91) a. Qing ni ba bi gei wo.
 please you BA pen give me
 'Please give me the/*a pen.' Definite/*indefinite reading
- cf.
- b. Qing ni gei wo bi.
 please you give me pen
 'Please give me the/a pen.' Definite/indefinite reading

Typical indefinite expressions tend to be unacceptable as *ba* NPs:

- (92) a. *Qing ni ba san-zhi bi gei wo.
 please you BA three-CL pen give me
 'Please give me three pens.'

- b. *Ta ba shi-duo-ben shu mai-le.
 he BA ten-more-CL book buy-LE
 'He bought ten-plus books.'

Such NPs can be interpreted as definite when occurring with the universal quantifier *dou*, and they can be *ba* NPs:

- (93) Qing ni ba san-zhi bi dou gei wo.
 please you BA three-CL pen all give me
 'Please give me all the three pens.'

Sybesma (1999, 142) notes that, in the terms of Barwise and Cooper (1981), the *ba*-NP must be strong.²⁴

The conditions of "existence" and "specificity" are strong tendencies. They are not exceptionless, as we will see later in the text when discussing event and aspectual structural approaches to *ba* constructions. The exceptions may be vaguely related to how the notion of "affectedness" is understood. Let us first consider the general applications of "affectedness."

5.1.3.3 *Affectedness*

Recall that the *ba* construction has been referred to as the "disposal" construction. It has also been claimed that the "disposal" interpretation is responsible for the unacceptability of having a *ba* NP like (94a), in contrast to (94b): a language is not manipulated or dealt with when one reads things in that language. A sentence can be tackled (figuratively) by being read in its entirety.

- (94) a. *Wo ba Zhongwen nian-le san-xiaoshi-le.
 I BA Chinese read-LE three-hour-LE
 'I read Chinese for three hours.'
- b. Wo ba zhe-juzi nian-le san-xiaoshi-le.
 I BA this-sentence read-LE three-hour-LE
 'I read this sentence for three hours.'

Similarly, one might attempt to use "affectedness" to capture the acceptability contrast in (95a)–(95c): it might be easier to think of 'a key' being affected, because of its displacement by being forgotten, dropped or lost (95a). A ball game probably can be handled by winning it (95b), which can be contrasted with (95c). It might be harder to interpret a game as "affected" if one simply participates in it.

- (95) a. Wo ba yaoshi wang/diu/yishi-le.
 I BA key forget/drop/lose-LE
 'I forgot/dropped/lost the key.'
- b. Ta yiding neng ba qiu-sai ying-le.
 he certainly can BA ball-game win-LE
 'He certainly can win the ball game.'
- c. *Ta jingran ba qiu-sai canjia-le.
 he unexpectedly BA ball-game participate-LE
 'Unexpectedly, he played the ball game.'

The “affectedness” interpretation has been related to the thematic role for the V’ object. As discussed in section 2.3.2, a *ba* NP can be an outer object, assigned an “affected” theta-role by V’. The clearer the “affected” interpretation, the easier it is to make an “affected NP” and an acceptable *ba* sentence. Recall the contrast discussed earlier:

- (96) a. Tufei ba ta sha-le fuqin.
 bandit BA him kill-LE father
 ‘The bandit killed his father (and he was affected).’
 b. *Tufei ba ta baifang-le fuqin.
 bandit BA him visit-LE father
 ‘The bandit visited his father.’

The contrast between the pair of sentences is important because it shows that having some relation, such as a possession relation, to the object of the verb (the inner object) is not sufficient to create an outer object and a *ba* sentence. It must be that the combination of [V + inner object] can take an outer object, interpreted as “affected.”

For double object structures, the choice of the direct object or the indirect object as the *ba* NP also is related to the notion of affectedness. As a rule of thumb, if a double object verb can be combined with *gei* ‘give, to’, the direct object can be a *ba* NP; if it cannot be combined with *gei*, the direct object cannot be a *ba* NP. The following minimal contrasts illustrate the relevance of *gei*:

- (97) a. Wo jiao(*gei) ta Zhongwen.
 I teach(to) him Chinese
 ‘I taught him Chinese.’
 b. *Wo ba Zhongwen jiao ta.
 I BA Chinese teach him
 ‘I taught him Chinese.’
 c. Wo jiao-gei ta mijue.
 I teach-to him secret (of success)
 ‘I taught him the secret of success.’
 d. Wo ba mijue jiao-gei ta.
 I BA secret teach-to him
 ‘I taught him the secret of success.’

Li (1990) argues that *gei* ‘to/give’ indicates transaction. (97a) does not allow *gei* because a language cannot be transferred to someone. In contrast, the secret of success can be transferred. The use of *gei* is correlated with the acceptability of *ba*: if something can be transferred, it can be affected in terms of its location being changed.

The same is true of indirect objects: the notion of “affectedness” also helps determine the acceptability of a *ba* sentence. In the double object structure with *jiao(gei)* ‘teach (to)’, the *ba* NP cannot be the indirect object because it is the direct object that is transferred, not the indirect object. An indirect object can be a *ba* NP when verbs are *fa* ‘fine’, *qiang* ‘rob’, and the like. The indirect object of these verbs expresses someone that is affected by the activity.²⁵

- (98) Ta ba wo fa/qiang henduo qian.
 he BA I fine/rob much money
 'He fined/robbed me much money.'

The indirect object of double object constructions without *gei* cannot always become a *ba* NP, if the "affectedness" interpretation is not present. Take *wen* 'ask', for instance. A *ba* sentence is better only if the indirect object is somehow affected by the asking of questions. For instance, when the indirect object is asked about many difficult questions as in (99), he may be affected emotionally by being asked so many difficult questions (becoming frustrated or embarrassed). An "affectedness" interpretation in the non-physical, imaginary sense obtains and the *ba* construction becomes possible.

- (99) Ta ba wo wen-le yi-da-dui hen-nan-de wenti.
 he BA me ask-LE one-big-pile very-difficult-DE question
 'He asked me many difficult questions.'

In contrast, the following sentence is much less acceptable, because, generally, it is less likely that asking for directions would affect the person being asked.

- (100) ??Ta ba wo wen-le fangxiang.
 he BA I ask-LE directions
 'He asked me directions.'

Nonetheless, such a sentence can be made more acceptable if asking for directions affects the one being asked, such as being emotionally disturbed by the question.

- (101) Ta mingming zhidao wo bu-qingchu fangxiang, que hai dang-zhong
 you obviously know I not-clear direction but still face-crowd
 ba wo wen-le fangxiang-de wenti rang wo chuchou!
 BA I ask-LE direction-DE question let me embarrass
 'He obviously knew that I was not clear about directions; yet, he still asked me direction questions in public, making me embarrassed!'

5.1.4 Constraints on predicates

According to Li and Thompson (1981, 489), the "disposal" nature of the *ba* construction provides an understanding of

why some grammarians and textbook writers have thought that the verb in a *ba* sentence cannot stand alone, but must be either preceded by some adverb or followed by some element, such as a perfective, directional, or resultative verb suffix or a complex stative clause. The reason that *ba* sentences always have verbs with those elements preceding or following them is that such sentences serve to elaborate the nature of disposal.

That is, the function of X in (1) is to add to the verb the "disposal" meaning. Different verbs may themselves have different strengths of "disposal." It is easier for a verb like *sha* 'kill', *da* 'hit', *pian* 'cheat', etc. to have an interpretation according to

which its object is affected by the killing, hitting and cheating. In contrast, verbs like *xihuan* 'like', *liaojie* 'understand', *renshi* 'know' have a much weaker disposal interpretation. The verbs higher in transitivity and disposal interpretation generally just need a perfective aspect marker *le* to make acceptable *ba* sentences. In contrast, it is more difficult for verbs low in transitivity and weak in disposal interpretation, such as stative verbs generally, to make good *ba* sentences, even with the help of an X. For instance, the addition of a resultative complement, number phrases/aspect marker, Adv, etc. does not make the *ba* sentences acceptable with such verbs:

Resultative complement

- (102) *Lisi ba ta xihuan-de hen gaoxing.
Lisi BA he like-DE very happy

Number phrase/aspect marker

- (103) *Ta yijing ba Lisi renshi-le sannian-le.
he already BA Lisi know-LE three-year-LE.

Adv + V

- (104) *Wo ba zhe-shi yi-liaojie, jiu zou.
I BA this-matter once-understand then leave

However, it is not impossible to find instances where a low-transitivity stative verb makes a good *ba* sentence with the help of an appropriate X, such as (50)–(51), discussed in section 2.5, and the following one from Li and Thompson (1981, 470, example (30)).

- (105) Ta ba zhe-shi liaojie-de hen touche.
he BA this-matter understand-DE very thorough
'He understands the matter thoroughly.'

The thoroughness of understanding the matter probably entails that the matter is in control; that is, it fits in a non-physical, imaginary affectedness interpretation.

Such a "disposal/affectedness" account probably can also accommodate the fact, noted in section 2.4.8, that a descriptive phrase is the only type of element that can occur in a postverbal position but does not help to make a good *ba* sentence. For the [V + *de* + descriptive] construction, there have been debates on whether the verb or the descriptive adjective is the main verb of the sentence structurally (see Huang 1982; Huang 1987; Li 1985; 1990; among others). What is important is that the adjective determines the situation type of the verb phrase. It makes the situation type like that of an adjectival predicate, rather than an activity denoted by the V. That is, the verb phrase [V + *de* + descriptive] behaves like a descriptive adjective. For instance, just as an adjective cannot occur in a command, neither can [V + *de* + descriptive]:

- (106) a. *(Ni) hen kuai!
you very fast
'(You) be fast!'

- b. *(Ni) xie-de hen kuai!
 you write-DE very fast
 '(You) write fast!'

They cannot occur in the progressive form, either:

- (107) a. *Ta zheng-zai hen kuai.
 he right-at very fast
 'He is being fast.'
 b. *Ta zheng-zai xie-de hen kuai.
 he right-at write-DE very fast
 'He is writing fast.'

Nor is [V + *de* + descriptive] an accomplishment or achievement verb phrase, because it does not have an end point:

- (108) *Ta zai yi-ge-xiaoshi-nei gongke xie-de hen kuai.
 he at one-CL-hour-in homework write-DE very fast
 'He wrote homework fast in an hour.'

Because [V + *de* + descriptive] is interpreted like a descriptive adjective (stative verb) with respect to situation types, it generally does not make good *ba* sentences, like other adjectival predicates or stative verbs.

Briefly summarizing, the addition of a postverbal or preverbal element X generally makes the affectedness interpretation more salient and renders a *ba* sentence more acceptable. The strength of the "disposal/affectedness" interpretation of verbs is reflected on the relevance of the X factor. For verbs with a strong "disposal/affectedness" interpretation, an aspect marker is sufficient (and in some rare cases, even bare verbs; see section 2.3). For verbs with weak or no "disposal/affectedness" interpretation, an X may not even be sufficient to draw out an affectedness interpretation, and a *ba* sentence is unacceptable. Such an "affectedness" notion of disposal/affectedness has widely influenced the approaches to the constraints on the *ba* construction. Nonetheless, we have also seen that the notion of "affectedness" is abstract and vague. Tentative terms such as "tend to," "may," and "can" are frequently used. The vagueness of the notion has also led to the claim that the acceptability of a *ba* sentence is not absolute. A sentence is only better or worse as a *ba* sentence. This conception can be best summarized by Li and Thompson's (1981, 487) conditions on the acceptability of the *ba* construction as a continuum (the continuum expressed by the line in (109) below):

- | | | | | |
|-------|---|-----------|---|------------|
| (109) | <i>ba</i> | <i>ba</i> | <i>ba</i> | <i>ba</i> |
| | Impossible | | Likely | Obligatory |
| | ----- | | | |
| | Indefinite or non-referential object
No disposal | | Definite and highly prominent object
Strong disposal | |

A definite and highly prominent object is an object that is "more obvious in the speech context and more immediate to our discussion" (1981, 484). These authors further provide statistical support for their continuum in (109): the more elements

that are added to elaborate the nature of disposal, the more likely the sentences are to appear in the *ba* form. For instance, in their data of 83 *ba* sentences, none contains verbs that were reduplicated or only followed by *zhe* (which have little “disposal” meaning added, according to Li and Thompson). Only 6 or 7 percent of the 83 sentences ended with just *V-le*. The authors also suggest that the continuum may capture the fact that speakers tend to disagree on the acceptability of certain *ba* sentences, especially those in the middle of the continuum.

In short, although it is not clear if there are really obligatory *ba* sentences (all *ba* sentences can have a non-*ba* counterpart), the continuum in (109) does express explicitly the complexity of the *ba* construction: whereas speakers can agree quite readily on the best examples and the least acceptable examples for this construction (the two extremes in the continuum), the judgment is not clear and often varies with speakers on those cases that fall between the two ends.

5.1.5 Summary

A great majority of the literature on the *ba* construction focuses on the usage of *ba* sentences from the perspective of “affectedness/disposal,” which states that the *ba* NP is the NP that is disposed of, dealt with, manipulated, or otherwise affected in some way (physical or non-physical imaginary). This notion is responsible for the requirements on the types of *ba* NPs and predicates required in this construction. As shown so far, such a notion seems to capture the basic intuition about this construction and the canonical interpretation of a *ba* sentence. In the clearest cases like *wo ba cai chao-de hen lan* ‘I stir-fried the vegetable very mushy’, we know that the vegetable is affected by the cooking, the result being mushy. Something is manipulated in a certain way. In cases like *wo ba Li xing le*. ‘I take the surname Li (my surname is Li)’, our intuition tells us that this is an unacceptable use because, in the world familiar to us, a surname cannot be affected or manipulated by someone’s having that surname. However, when we go beyond the clear cases, the picture becomes fuzzy. As mentioned, the notion of “affectedness” has to be relaxed to include non-physical or imaginary situations. This creates a great deal of uncertainty. The so-called explanation becomes less clear. For instance, what is the difference between hating someone for life and fearing someone for life that makes one better than the other as a *ba* sentence, as in (110a)–(110b)? What is the difference between missing someone extremely and resembling someone extremely that makes one more affected and acceptable as a *ba* sentence and the other less so, as in (111a)–(111b)?

- (110) a. Wo hui ba ta hen yi-beizi.
 I will BA him hate one-life
 ‘I will hate him for life.’
 b. ??Wo hui ba ta pa yi-beizi.
 I will BA him fear one-life
 ‘I will fear him for life.’
- (111) a. Xiaohai ba ta xiang-de yao si.
 child BA him miss-DE want die
 ‘The child misses him extremely.’

- b. *Xiaohai ba ta xiang-de yao si.
 child BA him resemble-DE want die
 'The child resembles him extremely.'

Of course, one can always create a story to accommodate the difference. For instance, if I am in fear of him (110b), he should be the one that is in control and he will not be affected even in the non-physical, imaginary sense. In contrast, the one that is hated might be more likely to be the one that is affected. However, such an “explanation” is fuzzy, uncertain, unpredictable, and even circular in some cases. Nonetheless, this challenge highlights the fuzziness and uncertainty of some uses of this construction. As mentioned, speakers often disagree on their judgments of certain *ba* sentences – those between the two extremes in (109). Moreover, the same speaker may also make very different judgments according to contexts. For instance, although a sentence like (100) is judged not quite acceptable normally, the same sentence can become acceptable to the same speaker in a context where the *ba* NP ‘I’ was very much disgusted with ‘his asking directions’ – he fully knows that I don’t know about directions and he is trying to embarrass me.

- (112) Ta (jingran) ba wo wen-le fangxiang!!!
 he surprisingly BA I ask-LE directions
 '(How dare) he asked me directions!!!'

In a way, the vagueness and uncertainty of the “affected” account might be considered to be an advantage: they reflect the uncertainty of speakers’ judgments in many such cases. Such an account gives us a clue to what it would take to form the clearest acceptable and unacceptable *ba* sentences and what would be less certain, allowing for more speaker and contextual variations. On the other hand, the uncertainty is also a weakness. It is difficult to characterize the properties precisely and determine what acceptable and unacceptable *ba* sentences are.

Other accounts in the line of discourse/pragmatics have been proposed. For instance, Tsao (1987) argues that the *ba* NP is a secondary topic. Wang (1947; 1958), Ding (1993), and Shao and Zhao (2005), among others, note that the *ba* construction has the effect of emphasizing the verb (action) and the complement of the verb (result). From a corpus study, Liu (2007) concludes that the *ba* form is more likely to be used under two conditions: when the *ba* NP carries old information but is not highly topical, and when the *ba* NP carries new information and is heavy (has a greater length). Jing-Schmidt (2005), also on the basis of corpus studies, argues that the *ba* construction is a device for dramatizing an event in discourse. A speaker dramatizes an event when he wants to draw the hearer’s attention to the situation being communicated – either because (a) the speaker perceives the situation as perceptually striking or at least noteworthy in the sense that it claims the speaker’s attention, or because (b) the speaker wants to display his emotional investment in, or stance toward, the situation being communicated (Jing-Schmidt 2005, 116) (also see Shen 2002; Wang 2009; Guo 2008; among many others for the emotive and discourse function of the *ba* construction).

Despite many attempts, the characterizations tend to be about tendencies or rely on vague notions. Therefore, it would be desirable to look for more precise formulations from other perspectives. Indeed, there have been proposals claiming that the *ba* construction is not unique. It can be subsumed under other, more common, well-defined structures. Constraints on the *ba* construction can be derived from some better-characterized structural or semantic properties. Representative works are the aspectual approach such as Liu (1997; also see Szeto 1988; Yong 1993; Zou 1995) and an event-structural approach that links the *ba* construction to accomplishment structures, as in Sybesma (1999). The following subsections examine these two approaches, discussing their insights and how effectively they tackle the complexity of the *ba* construction.

5.2 Aspectual approach

Adopting the insight of Mei (1978) and Tenny (1987), among others, that affectedness is a property of the verb, Liu (1997, 93) notes that the *ba* construction “may or may not have the property of affectedness.” To support this claim, she gives the following sentence (her (118) on p. 94) to show that a *ba* sentence need not have an affectedness interpretation:

- (113) Ta ba yige dahao jihui cuoguo-le.
 He BA one-CL big-good opportunity wrong-pass-LE
 ‘He let a great opportunity pass.’

Liu argues, instead, that the *ba* construction essentially expresses a bounded event and the constraints on the *ba* construction are due to the aspectual properties of this structure.

5.2.1 *The analysis*

Liu (1997) argues that the *ba* construction requires its predicate to denote a bounded event or situation – “bounded situations” as defined in (114), which is a revised version of boundedness by Dahl (1981).

- (114) Bounded situations do not have internal stages that are static or stages that can be viewed as such.
- (115) Dahl’s definition of boundedness
 A class of situations or a characterization of a situation (e.g., a sentence) is bounded if and only if it is an essential condition on the members of the class or an essential part of the characterization that a certain limit or end state is attained.

The constraints on the types of NPs and VPs of the *ba* construction are manifestations of its obligatorily expressing a bounded event/situation. Using the term “event” to refer to denotations of predicates, presented in perfective or imperfective aspect, and “situation” to refer to denotations of uninflected predicates, Liu argues that the notion of boundedness can be expressed in two ways: it can

be bounded on the basis of the situation denoted by the uninflected predicate (situation type or situational aspect; see Vendler 1967; Dowty 1979; Tai 1984; Teng 1986; Chen 1988; Smith 1991; Yong 1993), or it can be bounded when a situation of an appropriate type is presented in a certain aspect (viewpoint aspect). If the terminal point or resultative state is included in the meaning of the uninflected predicate, then the situation alone will guarantee boundedness. However, if the terminal point or resultative state is included only when the situation is presented in an appropriate aspect, then a bounded event depends on both the situation and the aspect it is presented in. An appropriate aspect is a completive aspect *-le* or a durative aspect *-zhe* (see the discussions in section 2.4.6). According to Liu, the notion of “bounded situation/event” captures the fact that the *ba* construction generally takes the following forms (Liu 1997, 62, exs 30a–30i):

- (116) a. V + complement
 b. V + *de*
 c. V + retained object
 d. V + perfective marker *le*
 e. V + PP (dative or locative)
 f. V + quantified phrase
 g. V + *yi* + V
 h. V + durative marker *zhe*
 i. Adv + V

According to Liu, the patterns in (116), except those with aspect markers in (d) and (h), contain predicates which express bounded situations. Evidence for this claim comes from the incompatibility with the durative marker *zhe*, which is a marker that “presents a continuous and stable situation without regard to endpoints (Smith 1991). It basically marks a situation as stative or resultative” (Liu 1997, 66). Some of her examples illustrating this point are copied below (Liu 1997, 68–69 (52a)–(52g)).

- (117) a. *Wo ba wenti kan qingchu-zhe.
 I BA question see clear-DUR
 ‘I’m seeing the question clearly.’
 b. *Ta ba jia baochi-zhe-de hen ganjing.
 he BA home keep-DUR-DE very clean
 ‘He keeps his home very clean.’
 c. *Wo ba damen shang-zhe suo.
 I BA gate put-on-DUR lock
 ‘I’m locking the gate.’

That such predicates express bounded situations can be understood in terms of what was presented in section 2: a result (including resultative complement, directional complement, and PP or object) or a number expression provides an end point to the event. For instance, in a sentence like *wo bu-hui ba ta ti-tong* ‘I will not kick him hurt’, the result *tong* ‘hurt’ provides an end point to the action of kicking. In *wo ba ta*

ti sanxia/sanjiao ‘I kicked him three times/three kicks’, the number expression ‘three times/three kicks’ provides a terminal point for the action. An adverbial modifier can also provide an end point (116i), as in the following cases (Liu 1997, 70–71, exs 59a–59b):

- (118) a. Ta zhengzai ba dongxi wang wuli ban.
 he in-progress BA things toward room-in move
 ‘He is in the process of moving things into the room.’
 b. Ta ba tou yi tai.
 he BA head one raise
 ‘He raised his head up.’

According to Liu, the adverbial phrase in (118a), ‘into/toward the room’, provides an end point; so does ‘one’ in (118b). Liu further argues that the constraints on *ba* NPs (specificity, existence; see section 5.1.3) can be derived from a dependency relation between the *ba* NP and the predicate:

there is a dependency between the *ba* NP argument and the predicate, and bound-
 edness and specificity are different manifestations of a property that holds of the
 dependency. The dependency can be characterized in terms of a very simple
 notion in semantics. The idea has been explored in Krifka (1989) and Dowty
 (1991), where the way the aspect of telic predicates depends on their NP argu-
 ments is captured in terms of a structure-preserving function – a homomorphism.
 (1997, 88–89)

Liu suggests taking

the meaning of a *ba* predicate to be a homomorphism that maps the *ba* argument deno-
 tations into the domain of events, and the structure that is preserved in this case is the
 “all of” relation. For example, *xiewan* ‘write and finish’ in *ba zhefengxin xiewan* ‘write
 and finish the letter’ maps *zhefengxin* ‘this letter’ to the event writing and finishing this
 letter. The “all of” relation that is preserved in the mapping makes sure that all of the
 letter – the entire letter – is mapped to all of the event, i.e., finishing the letter ... When
 applied to the predicate, the “all of” relation characterizes the event as bounded since
 only events that are bounded can enter into the “all of” relation. Unbounded events
 like “know Japanese” cannot be quantified because such events do not have bound-
 aries – beginning point and terminal point – and it does not make sense to consider an
 “entire” event of knowing Japanese. Only events with boundaries (both end points)
 provide a domain for universal quantification. Similarly, when it comes to NP deno-
 tation, the “all of” relation makes sure that the individuals can be quantified by “all
 of.” And only G(eneralized)-specific NPs denote individuals that can be quantified by
 “all of.” (1997, 89–90) ²⁶

The notion of “G-specific” Liu proposes differs from the notion of “specific” used in
 other works on the *ba* construction. According to Liu (1990), G-specific NPs are the
 NPs that can be scope-independent in object positions. They can occur with the uni-
 versal quantifier *dou* ‘all’. The possible forms are listed in (119), in contrast to the
 non-G-specific NPs in (120) (Liu 1997, 86).

- (119) Definite NPs: Demonstrative NPs, pronouns, names
 Universally quantified NPs: *suoyou de* N 'all of the N'
meige N 'every N'
most N: *daduoshu de* N 'most N'
dabufen de N 'most N'
some N: *mo xie* N 'certain N'
 Bare numeral Det: *liangge* N 'two N'
- (120) Decreasing NPs: *shige yixia de* N 'fewer than ten N'
 Modified numeral Det: *shilaige* N 'about ten N'
san wuge N 'three to five N'

Liu suggests that the "all of" relation dictates that only the types of NP in (119) can be *ba* NPs.

Another important point of this analysis concerns the fact that a bare verb cannot occur in a *ba* sentence. According to Liu, even though 'read that book' and 'sell that car' should be considered telic predicates, they do not denote bounded situations because they cannot be modified by the duration phrase *zai TIME nei* 'in (amount of time)', with the interpretation 'complete/finish something in TIME' (1997, 72).

- (121) a. *Ni neng zai yi-ge zhongtou-nei kan na-ben shu-ma?
 you can at one-CL hour-in read that-CL book-Q
 'Can you read that book in an hour?'
 b. *Wo xiwang zai yi-ge xingqi-nei mai na-liang che.
 I hope at one-CL week-in sell that-CL car.
 'I hope to sell that car in a week.'

In addition, they are compatible with the durative marker *-zhe*. For instance, 'read that book' contains internal stages that can be viewed as static and cannot denote a bounded event:

- (122) Wo zheng kan-zhe na-ben shu (ne).
 I right.at read-DUR that-CL book PAR
 'I am reading that book.'

Because such a telic predicate does not express a bounded situation, an aspect marker to express the notion of boundedness is necessary to make *ba* sentences. This captures the fact that the verb does not occur in the bare form.

- (123) a. Wo ba na-ben shu kan-*(le).
 I BA that-CL book read-LE
 'I read that book.'
 b. Wo ba na-liang che mai-*(le).
 I BA that-CL car sell-LE
 'I sold that car.'

Finally, Liu explains why the durative marker *zhe* in (124) below can make a *ba* sentence.

- (124) Qing ni dai-zhe shoutao.
 please you wear-DUR gloves
 'Please wear gloves.'

She suggests that this type of *ba* sentence must be in the irrealis mode so that the sentence can express a bounded event: the inception of an action is included in the meaning of a sentence when it is in the irrealis mode. *Zhe* provides the meaning of a resultative state: the resultative state holds. The inception and the resultative state combine to make a bounded event.

In brief, the requirement that *ba* sentences express bounded events/situations is responsible for the constraints on possible types of NPs and VPs in the *ba* construction.

5.2.2 *The issues*

This analysis is very attractive, aiming to capture the constraints on *ba* NPs and VPs in the *ba* construction through a simple requirement of "boundedness." The term is defined and does not suffer from the fuzziness of the "affectedness" account.

Unfortunately, it is not clear that the argument given against an "affectedness" account is convincing and whether such an aspectual account is adequate empirically.

The main argument against an "affectedness" account given by Liu is built on sentences like (113), which she claims is fine as a *ba* sentence but does not have the affectedness interpretation. However, given the loose notion of "affectedness," it is difficult to determine decisively that (113) does or does not have an "affectedness" interpretation. Recall that a sentence such as *wo ba yaoshi wang le* 'I forgot the key' in (95a) is an acceptable *ba* sentence, subsumed under the notion of "affectedness." "The key" in this sentence is no more or less "affected" than 'a great opportunity' in (113). Indeed, Lü (1955b, 128) assumes the following sentence, almost identical to (113), to be a disposal (affectedness) construction as well:

- (125) Ba jihui cuo-guo-le.
 BA opportunity wrong-pass-LE
 '(Subject) missed the opportunity.'

Nonetheless, if the aspectual approach can capture the constraints on *ba* constructions without resorting to the vague notion of "affectedness," the analysis would be much more desirable. However, this attractive analysis falls short empirically and the tests it relies on to determine boundedness are not adequate. The following subsections address these issues.

5.2.2.1 *Tests for boundedness*

Recall that in order to account for why bare verbs are not possible in the *ba* construction, Liu claims that an activity verb plus a definite NP such as 'that book/car' does not express a bounded situation, even though the verb phrase is telic. The tests used

were the (un)acceptability of a co-occurring time expression ‘in X amount of time’ and the compatibility with the durative marker *zhe* (cf. (121)–(123)).

Consider the test using the time expression ‘in an X amount of time’. Such a test would lead us to expect that, if the object NP is replaced by some other types of NPs which allow the co-occurrence of ‘in X amount of time’, a *ba* sentence should be acceptable without *le*. However, this is not the case. For instance, (121) can be made acceptable by replacing the definite NP with a quantified or a number phrase:

- (126) a. Ni neng zai yige zhongtou-nei xiugai quanbu-de wenzhang-ma?
 you can at one-CL hour-in correct all-DE article-Q
 ‘Can you correct all the papers in an hour?’
 b. Wo xiwang zai yi-fenzhong-nei mai yiliang che.
 I hope at one-minute-in sell one-CL car
 ‘I hope to sell a car in a minute.’

Nevertheless, the *ba* construction with a bare verb is still not acceptable.

- (127) a. Wo ba quanbu-de wenzhang (dou) xiugai *(le).
 I BA all-DE article all correct LE
 ‘I correct all the papers in an hour.’
 b. Wo ba yiliang che mai*(le).
 I BA one-CL car sell LE
 ‘I sold a car.’

Another test Liu uses to determine if a predicate expresses a bounded situation is compatibility with the durative marker *zhe*. Specifically, the predicates in (116a)–(116c), (116d)–(116g), and (116i) cannot occur with *zhe*, and they express bounded situations. Unfortunately, the *zhe* test is not always reliable: incompatibility with *zhe* does not guarantee a good *ba* sentence, and compatibility with *zhe* does not necessarily mean that the *ba* form is unacceptable. Liu (1997, 67) quotes Yeh’s (1993) observation that *zhe* marks a contingent state, not an absolute state. That is, *zhe* occurs with stage-level, not individual-level, predicates. Therefore, it does not occur with verbs like *zhidao* ‘know’ or *xing* ‘be surnamed as’. However, the correlation is not that clear. For instance, even though a stative verb like *hen* ‘hate’ does not occur with *zhe*, strong modification makes a *ba* sentence acceptable:

- (128) a. *Ta hen-zhe wo.
 he hate-DUR me
 ‘He is hating me.’
 b. Ta ba wo hen-de ya yang-yang-de.
 he BA me like-DE tooth itchy-itchy-DE
 ‘He hated me so much that his teeth became itchy.’

In addition, as noted in section 2.4.8, a descriptive complement cannot occur in a *ba* sentence, illustrated by (49). Such predicates cannot occur with *zhe* either:

- (129) *Ta jintian-de gongke xie-zhe-de hen kuai.
 he today-DE homework write-DUR -DE very fast
 'He was writing today's homework fast.'

Finally, it is not quite true that *zhe* makes good *ba* sentences only when it is in the irrealis mode. The following example shows that such a *ba* sentence can be a complement to *kan* 'see', which is not irrealis:

- (130) Wo qu ta-jia shi, kan ta ba haizi bao-zhe,
 I go he-home when see he BA child hold-ZHE
 hai ba lanzi na-zhe, haoxiang yao chu-qu-de yangzi.
 and BA basket take-ZHE like will out-go-DE appearance
 'When I went to his home, I saw him holding the child, holding the basket, as if he was going out.'

In brief, the tests used to determine if a predicate expresses a bounded situation, namely incompatibility with *zhe* and compatibility with the time expression 'in X amount of time', do not work as well as hoped for. Consequently, this account loses an important foundation: the ability to determine whether a predicate expresses a bounded situation so that the acceptability of the *ba* construction can be determined.

In addition to the challenge of providing valid tests to determine boundedness of a predicate, this analysis also faces empirical problems.

5.2.2.2 Bounded events/situations not acceptable as *ba* sentences

Liu's main claim is that a *ba* sentence always expresses a bounded event/situation. If a predicate expresses a bounded situation or is presented in the appropriate aspect to express a bounded event, it should be acceptable as a *ba* sentence. Unfortunately, boundedness does not seem to always indicate acceptable *ba* sentences.

There are many predicates that express bounded situations but fail to make acceptable *ba* sentences. For instance, the most typical bounded predicates are [V + result] expressions (116a); yet many of them do not form acceptable *ba* sentences:

- (131) a. Ta zhaxie wenzhang dou kan-de hen shengqi.
 he these article all read-DE very angry
 'He got angry from reading all these articles.'
 b. *Ta ba zhaxie wenzhang dou kan-de hen shengqi.
 he BA these article all read-DE very angry
 'He got angry from reading all these articles.'
- (132) a. Wo zhe-dun-fan chi-bao-le.
 I this-CL-meal eat-full-LE
 'I have eaten enough of this meal.'
 b. *Wo ba zhe-dun-fan chi-bao-le.
 I BA this-CL-meal eat-full-LE

Indeed, it is possible to find counterexamples for all the patterns in (116). We have already seen cases which illustrate the unacceptability of [V-*de*] in the *ba* form (116b)

(section 2.4.8). Let us demonstrate the same point with a few more examples. The pattern (116c), [V + retained object], for instance, can yield unacceptable *ba* sentences:

- (133) a. *Tufei ba ta baifang-le fuqin.
 bandit BA him visit-LE father
 'The bandit visited his father.'
 b. *Women ba ta tanlun-le xiaohai.
 we BA him discuss-LE child
 'We discussed his child.'

Take (116f) as another example. For Liu (1997, 56), when a verb occurs with a quantified phrase (number phrase), it expresses a bounded event. A quantified phrase can be a duration or a frequency phrase. That is, if a verb is followed by a duration or frequency phrase, the predicate expresses a bounded situation and is predicted to occur in the *ba* form. However, again, counterexamples are not difficult to find.

- (134) a. Wo renshi ta san-nian-le.
 I know him three-year-LE
 'I have known him for three years.'
 b. *Wo ba ta renshi san-nian-le.
 I BA him know three-year-LE

Finally, although *-le* can make a predicate express a bounded situation and render *ba* sentences acceptable, it does not always do so.

- (135) a. *Ta ba na-difang likai-le.
 he BA that-place leave-LE
 'He left that place.'
 b. *Ta ba qiu-sai canjia-le.
 he BA ball-game participate-LE
 'He participated in the ball game.'
 c. *Ta ba wode mingling fucong-le.
 he BA my order obey
 'He obeyed my order.'
 d. *Ta ba zhe-zhi-mao zhaogu-le.
 he BA this-CL-cat care-LE
 'He cared for this cat.'

In short, many cases are not acceptable in the *ba* form even though they conform to the patterns listed in (116) and do express bounded situations/events.

5.2.2.3 Non-bounded events/situations acceptable as *ba* sentences

On the other hand, there are cases which do not express bounded events/situations but are acceptable as *ba* sentences. This is often the case with (116i) [Adv + V]. Recall that a preverbal adverbial may make a good *ba* sentence. According to Liu, the addition of an appropriate adverbial makes a predicate denote a bounded situation.

However, closer examination of the relevant examples shows that such adverbials do not always make the predicates bounded ones. Take, for instance, Liu's example (118a). Although she translated the predicate as 'moving things into the room', a more appropriate translation would be 'moving things toward the room'. *Wang* 'toward' simply expresses direction, rather than reaching a destination 'into'. The predicate is not compatible with the time expression 'in X amount of time' (the test used by Liu to determine if a predicate expresses a bounded situation):

- (136) *Ta zai yige-zhongtou-nei ba dongxi wang wuli ban.
 he at one-hour-in BA things toward room-in move
 'He moved things toward the room in an hour.'

In other words, the adverbial phrase does not make the predicate denote a bounded situation. Yet the *ba* construction as in (118a) is acceptable.

There are many other adverbial phrases that behave in the same way. Consider preverbal manner adverbs. Such adverbs can help to make good *ba* sentences but do not turn predicates into those expressing bounded situations. For example, 'carefully' can occur preverbally without making the predicate bounded, as illustrated by the acceptability of progressive aspectual marking:

- (137) Ta zhengzai zixi-de nian-zhe na-pian wenzhang.
 he in-progress carefully read-ASP that-CL article
 'He was carefully reading that article.'

It can also occur in a command, in contrast to a postverbal descriptive phrase:

- (138) Zixi-de nian!
 carefully read
 'Read carefully!'

The time expression 'in X amount of time' is incompatible:

- (139) *Ni zai yige zhongtou-nei zixi-de nian na-ben shu-ma?
 you at one-CL hour-in carefully read that-CL book-Q
 'Did you read that book carefully in an hour?'

The unacceptability of (139) indicates that *zixi-de nian* 'read carefully' is not an accomplishment or bounded predicate. The possibility of a progressive aspect in (137) and the acceptability of a command in (138) indicate that *zixi-de kan* remains an activity verb phrase. However, such an unbounded predicate can occur in the *ba* construction:

- (140) Ni bu ba zhe-wenzhang zixi-de nian, zen hui zhao-chu wenti?
 you not BA this article carefully read how will find-out question
 'If you don't read the article carefully, how can you find problems?'

Chao's sentence in (47e) does not contain a bounded predicate, either:

- (47) e. Ta ba jiu bu-ting-de he.
 he BA alcohol not-stop-DE drink
 'He drank/was drinking without stop.'

It is also possible for the durative marker *zhe* to occur with the activity verb:

- (141) Ta ba jiu bu-ting-de he-zhe.
 he BA alcohol not-stop-DE drink-ZHE
 'He was drinking without stop.'

In brief, the claim that the notion of boundedness determines the acceptability of *ba* sentences is both too weak and too strong empirically. There are cases of bounded events/situations unacceptable as *ba* sentences and cases of non-bounded events/situations acceptable as *ba* sentences.

5.2.2.4 The *ba* NP

Another challenge concerns the specificity of the *ba* NP. Recall that Liu derives the specificity (G-specificity) constraint on *ba* NPs by resorting to an "all of" homomorphism relation between a bounded predicate and a *ba* NP. She claims that a *ba* NP must participate in the event from the beginning to the end point. That is, a *ba* NP must be able to be quantified by "all of." An important test used is the occurrence of *dou* 'all': only an NP that can occur with *dou* can be a *ba* NP. For instance, the *ba* NP in the following sentence is G-specific and is a participant in the event from the beginning to the end. It can co-occur with *dou*.

- (142) Wo hui ba san-ben shu dou fang-zai zhuo-shang.
 I will BA three-CL book all put-at table-on
 'I will put all three books on the table.'

This captures many interesting constraints, such as the difficulty of a non-G-specific NP serving as a *ba* NP and that of a *ba* NP occurring with verbs of creation (*manufacture*). Indeed, this accommodates the properties concerning the *ba* NP discussed in section 5.1.

However, the problem is that the constraints on *ba* NPs are not as rigid as we wish for. For instance, Chao's example (47e) quoted above does not seem to require the alcohol to be presented in an "all of" relation. Moreover, it is not clear what it means that the *ba* NP must be able to be quantified by "all of." When a *ba* NP is a singular NP, is it also quantified by "all of"? Note that the addition of the universal quantifier *dou* 'all' is not possible when the individual to be quantified over is singular. Independently, a singular NP normally cannot be quantified by *dou* (unless the NP is analyzed as consisting of parts).

- (143) a. Wo ba ta xiang-de yao-si.
 I BA him miss-DE want-die
 'I missed him so much (that I want to die).'

- b. *Wo ba ta dou xiang-de yao-si.
I BA him all miss-DE want-die
- c. Ta (*dou) xiang-de yao-si.
he all miss-DE want-die
'He missed so much (that he wants to die).'

There are also instances listed in Liu's category of non-G-specific NPs that do not allow the occurrence of *dou* but do appear in the *ba* construction. Expressions such as *budao baifen-zhi-yi* 'less than 1 percent' and *san dao wu* 'three to five' in the following sentences are such examples.

- (144) a. Anzhao guiding ni zhi neng ba budao baifenzhiyi-de
according rule you only can BA less-than 1 percent-DE
yingyu na-lai gei yuangong feng hong.
profit take-come to employee distribute bonus
'According to the rules you can only take less than 1 percent of the profit to distribute to the employees as bonus.'
- b. *Budao baifenzhiyi-de yingyu dou gei yuangong fen hong-le.
less-than 1 percent-DE profit all to employee distribute bonus-LE
'Less than 1 percent of the profit was all distributed as bonus to the employees.'
- (145) a. Wo zuiduo zhi neng ba san-dao-wu-pian xiugai-hao-de wenzhang
I most only can BA three-to-five-CL corrected-DE article
na-chulai gei ni kan.
take-out for you read
'I can only bring at most three to five corrected articles for you to read.'
- b. *San-dao-wu-pian xiugai-hao-de wenzhang dou gei ni kan.
three-to-five-CL corrected-DE article all for you read
'Three to five corrected articles are for you to read.'

On the other hand, there are also instances allowing the occurrence of *dou* but unacceptable in the *ba* construction. For instance, the examples in (131a)–(131b) we saw earlier demonstrate unacceptable *ba* sentences with *dou*.

Briefly summarizing, although Liu's account based on the notion of "boundedness" is quite attractive, it falls short empirically. It does not account for why some *ba* sentences are acceptable with unbounded predicates and other *ba* sentences are unacceptable with bounded predicates. The derivation of the properties of *ba* NPs from a homomorphism relation with bounded predicates also faces challenges empirically.

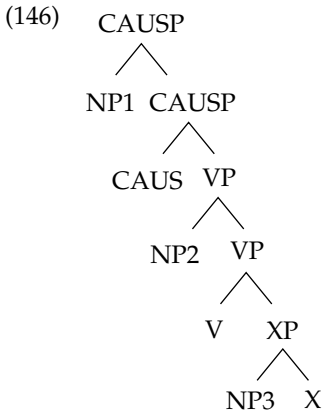
5.3 An event-structural account

Sybesma (1999) is a very interesting work that incorporates the interpretation of and the semantic (pragmatic) constraints on the *ba* construction into syntactic structures. This represents the best syntactic structural effort to account for the properties of the

ba construction. Unfortunately, the complexity of the *ba* construction still make an adequate structural analysis elusive.

5.3.1 The analysis

Sybesma proposes that *ba* sentences are always CAUS-sentences in some abstract sense. The VP (comprising the V after the *ba* NP and the following XP) does not have an external argument. The subject of the sentence (NP1 in (146) below) bears the role of the causer; it bears a semantic relation to the head CAUS (not to the VP).



NP2 and NP3 are related by NP movement, NP3 being the trace. The head of the CAUSP (for CAUS Phrase) is either phonologically filled by way of *ba* insertion or filled by movement of the head of VP (Sybesma 1999, 170). The latter derives a non-*ba* sentence with an accomplishment VP. The former derives a *ba* sentence. Because *ba* is only a phonological filler, interpretations are the same for structures derived by verb raising or *ba* insertion. That is, a *ba* sentence does not carry a special meaning. It is just like a non-*ba* sentence with an accomplishment predicate. Both express a result or an end point: the VPs embedded under CAUS must be unaccusatives, which are “characterized by the fact that they involve an end point” (Sybesma 1999, 178). The *ba* NP is generally the subject of the underlying result small clause and is the theme that undergoes change of state or location.

This structure, according to Sybesma, can be paraphrased as follows: “the subject causes the *ba*-NP to undergo the event denoted by the VP.” Revised slightly to be distinct from the lexical causative cases, such as those with causative verbs *shi* ‘make’ or *rang* ‘let’, the structure is interpreted like this: “the subject of the sentence (the causer) brings about a new state of affairs which results from the event denoted by V” (1999, 178). Importantly, the *ba* NP is not independently mentioned and is only semantically dependent on the embedded predicate. It is part of the resulting state. This is a departure from the “affected/disposal” tradition: a *ba* sentence is no longer viewed as primarily aimed at disposing of the *ba* NP. The paraphrase applies to all causatives and accomplishments. Simply, all are accomplishments. That is, the structure in (146) is the structure for both *ba* and accomplishment sentences. When

verb raising takes place, it is a non-*ba* accomplishment sentence; when *ba* is inserted, it is a *ba* sentence.

This structure derives the constraints on the *ba* construction, according to Sybesma. The apparent specificity requirement on the *ba* NP (the *ba* NP must be specific) and the “affectedness” interpretation of the *ba* NP follow from the fact that the structure expresses a bounded event. “An event is bounded if it contains an object which is affected and quantificationally closed” (1999, 173). The relevant factor for the “affectedness” of the *ba* NP is “change of state” (1999, 175).

Sybesma’s contribution is to try to capture the interpretation and constraints of the *ba* construction with syntactic structures. The notion of “structural dynamism” is central to the analysis: the structure determines the meaning, rather than the theta-theory or thematic structures of individual lexical items. Structures are generated (Generate α) and lexical items are interpreted accordingly. The *ba* in the *ba* construction is simply the realization of a CAUS head in the CAUSP of an event structure. The event structure has a CAUS head subcategorized for a VP that is an unaccusative (without a subject, necessarily involving an end point). When the unaccusative verb is not raised to the CAUS head, it is spelled out as *ba*. The *ba* construction is not unique at all. It is just a variation of a construction with an accomplishment verb phrase, and the verb-raising process is replaced by *ba* insertion. The constraints on possible types of NPs and VPs in the *ba* construction follow from the event structure (bounded event; cf. Liu’s analysis in the previous section).

5.3.2 The issues

Despite its attractiveness in eliminating the vague notion of disposal/affectedness and providing a more concrete structural analysis for the *ba* construction, this analysis still encounters difficulties due to the complexities of the *ba* construction.

5.3.2.1 A *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart

The main claim of this approach is that a *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart (accomplishment) have identical structures, which only differ in whether verb raising takes place or a dummy *ba* is inserted. However, it is not clear that *ba* sentences and non-*ba* accomplishments are indeed identical. Liu (1997, 60) observes that “this hypothesis runs into difficulty both ways: there are *ba* sentences with non-accomplishments and sentences of accomplishments which nonetheless cannot occur with *ba*, as seen in [147] [148] respectively:”

(147) Women dou ba LaoWang dangzuo laoshi.
 we all BA LaoWang take-as teacher
 ‘We all consider LaoWang as our teacher.’

(148) *Wo dasuan mingtian ba nei-ben-shu kan.
 I plan tomorrow BA that-CL-book read
 ‘I plan to read that book tomorrow.’

According to Liu, in (147), *dangzuo laoshi* ‘take as teacher’ is not an accomplishment but an achievement; on the other hand, in (148), *kan nei-ben-shu* ‘read that book’ is a

typical case of accomplishment, yet it does not license *ba*. Therefore, these cases suggest that *ba* predicates cannot be equated with accomplishments.

Some other counterexamples are discussed in the previous section (131)–(135). For instance, if indeed (132a)–(132b) are derived by the raising of the compound verb *chi-bao* ‘eat-full’ and, when this compound verb is not raised, *ba* is inserted, (132b) should be as acceptable or as unacceptable as (132a). Of course, Sybesma can distinguish non-*ba* accomplishments from *ba* cases by specifying that a *ba* NP is always “the subject of the small clause complement of the verb” (1999, 179). Taking this step, however, would require making a special statement for the *ba* construction, against the claim that the *ba* construction is just an accomplishment and all accomplishments have the same structure and interpretation.

5.3.2.2 The *ba* NP as subject of the result phrase

Considering the *ba* construction alone, one may argue that Sybesma’s analysis can be adopted as long as we specify that a *ba* NP must be the subject of the result clause.²⁷ However, this faces challenges. There are cases that are quite acceptable but where *ba* is not interpreted as the subject of the result clause. In the earlier examples (84)–(85), quoted from Li and Thompson (1981, 469), for instance, the result clause ‘he won’t even eat his meals’/‘wants to die’ does not take the *ba* NP as its subject. Instead, the *ba* NP is interpreted as referring to the subject of the matrix clause.

(84) Ta ba ni xiang-de fan dou bu-ken chi.
 he BA him miss-DE food even not-willing eat
 ‘He misses you so much that he won’t even eat his meals.’

(85) Lisi ba xiao-mao ai-de yao si.
 Lisi BA small cat love-DE want die
 ‘He loves the kitten so much that he wants to die.’

Such examples are not isolated ones; in fact, they are quite common. (128b), discussed earlier, is another example where the result clause is predicated of the matrix subject, not the *ba* NP:

(128) b. Ta ba wo hen-de ya yang-yang-de.
 he BA I like-DE tooth itchy-itchy-DE
 ‘He hated me so much that his teeth became itchy.’

More such examples are given below. In none of them can the *ba* NP be the subject of the complement to the verb. In (149a), the subject of the result clause is that of the matrix clause. The same is true of (149b) *wo hui youyong* ‘I am capable of swimming’, and (149c) *ta dong-le wenzhang-le* ‘He understood the article’. *Tou* ‘thorough’ in (149d) is more like a degree modifier of the verb, the annoying being thorough. *Hen zixi* ‘very careful’ in (149e) modifies the verb, rather than functioning as the predicate of the *ba* NP. If *hen zixi* can have a subject at all, it is the action, not the *ba* NP: *ta de kaolü hen zixi* ‘his thinking is careful’; cf. **zhe shi hen zixi* ‘this thing is careful’.

- (149) a. Wo ba ta ma-de wo-ziji dou shou-bu-liao!
 he BA him scold-DE myself all put-not-up
 'I scolded him so much that I could not stand it myself!'
- b. Deng wo xian ba youyong zhende xue-hui
 wait I first BA swimming really study-capable
 yihou zai gen ni bi.
 after then with you race
 'Let me first really learn to swim and then I will race against you.'
- c. Xian rang ta ba wenzhang nian-dong yihou zai
 first let him BA article read-understand after then
 wen ta wenti ba!
 ask him question PAR
 'Let him first understand the article and then ask him questions!'
- d. Ta yiding hui ba ni fan-tou-de.
 he definitely will BA you annoy-thorough-PAR
 'He will definitely annoy you thoroughly.'
- e. Wo ba zhe-shi kaolü-de hen zixi.
 I BA this matter think-DE very carefully
 'I thought about the matter carefully.'

Note that the *ba* NP in these cases is still the object of the verb. It is acceptable for a *ba* NP to be simply the object of the verb without being the subject of the result clause (cf. the generalization in (19) that a *ba* NP is a V object or a V' object).

5.3.2.3 Absence of a result clause

The preceding section shows that, although a *ba* sentence may contain a result/extent clause, such a clause need not take the *ba* NP as its subject. This casts doubt on the appropriateness of the analysis outlined in section 5.3.1. A further problem is that a result expression need not even exist. As shown earlier, there are cases expressing unbounded events – without end points – such as the examples discussed in section 5.2.2.3 concerning unbounded events, as in (140)–(141) and (47e). Other examples, such as (118a) discussed earlier, also denote unbounded situations/events and do not have result complements. (Recall that the translation of (118a) should be 'toward the room', in contrast to Liu's 'into the room'.)

5.3.2.4 Placement of adverbials

The fact that a *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart only differ in whether V is raised to CAUS or *ba* spells out CAUS in structure (146) also faces challenges with the placement of adverbials. As mentioned, some adverbials can occur before or after the *ba* NP. However, such adverbials do not occur postverbally (see the discussions in sections 4.1–4.2). If *ba* is only a filler inserted when verb raising does not take place, it is not clear why the relevant adverbial cannot occur postverbally but can occur after *ba*.

5.3.3 Summary

Briefly summarizing, it is doubtful that the *ba* construction is the same as the structure with accomplishment predicates as in (146), with their only difference being in whether CAUS is filled by a raised V or an inserted *ba*. There are many

accomplishments that do not have a *ba* counterpart, and a *ba* sentence need not be an accomplishment. The two constructions are not always identical in acceptability and interpretation. Therefore, the *ba* construction needs to be distinguished from the one with an accomplishment predicate. In addition, the *ba* NP is not the subject of an unaccusative predicate (the result) in some cases, and there are instances which denote unbounded events. Finally, the distribution of adverbials in a *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart is not expected.

5.4 Affectedness revisited

Section 4 discussed the structural properties of the *ba* construction: a *ba* NP must be a V object (inner object) or a V' object (outer object, assigned an "affected" theta-role by a complex predicate [V + complement]). However, this analysis is too weak in allowing many cases that are not acceptable *ba* sentences. Constraints exist on the types of Vs or VPs allowed in the *ba* construction. The challenge is how these constraints can be captured. Sections 5.1–5.3 briefly introduced potential solutions from different perspectives: (i) an interpretation/pragmatics approach that relies on a vague notion of "affectedness"; (ii) an aspectual approach that requires a *ba* sentence to express a bounded situation or event; and (iii) an event-structure approach that subsumes *ba* sentences under those with accomplishment predicates. All three approaches are quite satisfactory when only the canonical cases of the *ba* construction are considered, that is, those containing a result expression with the *ba* NP as the one that is affected (the subject of the result clause): *wo ba cai chao-de hen lan* 'I stir-fried the vegetable quite mushy'. These are also the kind of *ba* sentences most frequently used and most readily accepted by speakers. However, the problem is that the "non-canonical" cases, those not having the form [V + result], are also widely used.

The aspectual and event-structure accounts are both too weak and too strong. They cannot account for why many accomplishments or many sentences of bounded situations/events cannot be acceptable *ba* sentences. At the same time, both approaches fail to generate those *ba* sentences that express unbounded situations/events or the cases not involving the *ba* NP in the result. The "affectedness" approach is harder to evaluate because the notion of "affectedness" is vague and uncertain, especially when imaginary effects are included (cf. the account for examples like (84)–(85)). The explanations are vague and cannot be clearly tested; however, vagueness seems to be difficult to avoid. Again, take variations of (85), for instance. We find the following contrast:

- (150) a. Lisi ba xiao-mao ai-de feng-le.
 Lisi BA small cat love-DE crazy-LE
 'Lisi loves the kitten so much that he is going crazy.'
- b. *Lisi ba xiao-mao pa-de feng-le.
 Lisi BA small cat fear-DE crazy-LE
 'Lisi fears the kitten so much that he is getting crazy.'

(150a) is much better than (150b), although the two sentences are identical with respect to aspectual structures or event structures. Such instances abound: many cases are identical with respect to linguistic structures and are equally acceptable

as non-*ba* sentences; yet they differ in acceptability as *ba* sentences. Below are just a few more examples.

- (151) a. Wo ba ta ma-le yi tian.
I BA him scold-LE a day
'I scolded him for a day.'
- b. Wo ma ta ma-le yi tian.
I scold him scold-LE a day
'I scolded him for a day.'
- (152) a. ??Wo ba ta zhaogu-le yi tian.
I BA him care-LE a day
'I took care of him for a day.'
- b. Wo zhaogu ta zhaogu-le yi tian.
I care him care-LE a day
'I took care of him for a day.'
- (153) a. Women ba ta shuo-le yici.
we BA him say-LE once
'We said to him (mildly scolded him) once.'
- b. Women shuo ta shuo-le yici.
we say him say-LE once
'We said to him (lectured him) once.'
- (154) a. *Women ba ta taolun-le yici.
we BA him discuss-LE once
'We discussed him once.'
- b. Women taolun ta taolun-le yici.
we discuss him discuss-LE once
'We discussed him once.'

The contrast between the pairs of sentences, (151) vs. (152), (153) vs. (154), is puzzling under any structural account. On the other hand, an advocate of the "affect-edness" approach could claim that it is easier to interpret the one being scolded/lectured in (151)/(153) as the one affected than the one being taken care of (152) or discussed (154). Although it is impossible to verify such an account, it does highlight the challenge of a clearly defined structural account.

There are many other puzzling examples. The two sets of sentences below only differ in the noun used as the *ba* NP: *zhe-dun-fan* 'this-CL-meal' vs. *zhe-pan-cai* 'this-CL-dish'.

- (155) Deng wo ba zhe-dun-fan chi-bao yihou zai chu-qu.
wait I BA this-CL-meal eat-full after then out-go
'Wait till I eat-full this meal (I get full from eating this meal), I will go out.'

- (156) *Deng wo ba zhe-pan-cai chi-bao yihou zai chu-qu.
 wait I BA this-CL-dish eat-full after then out-go
 'Wait till I eat-full this dish (I get full from eating this dish), I will go out.'

The acceptability of (155) is surprising. *Ba fan chi-bao* 'BA meal eat-full', as well as *ba jiu he zui* 'BA wine drink-drunk', has frequently been used to illustrate the result aspect of the *ba* construction, supporting the claim that the *ba* NP is the subject of a result clause. It has generally been regarded as unacceptable. Yet it is fine in (155). Moreover, we find the following contrast – the two acceptable and unacceptable *ba* sentences only differ in the use of the sentence-final particle and the related adverb *hai* 'still':

- (157) a. Wo hai mei ba zhe-dun-fan chi-bao-ne!
 I still not BA this-CL-meal eat-full-PAR
 'I haven't finished the meal yet!'
 b. *Wo ba zhe-dun-fan chi-bao-le.
 I BA this-CL-meal eat-full-LE
 'I finished the meal.'

It is not clear how these sentences can be distinguished structurally. Equally challenging to a structural account is the fact that (158), which has the identical form to (157) and contains the frequently used predicate *ba jiu he zui* 'BA wine drink-drunk', is still not acceptable as a *ba* sentence:

- (158) *Deng wo ba zhe-ping-jiu he-zui yihou zai chu-qu.
 wait I BA this-CL-wine drink-drunk after then out-go
 'Wait till I drink-drunk this bottle of wine (I get drunk from drinking this bottle of wine), I will go out.'

Structurally, these cases are identical. They raise serious questions regarding how structural accounts can accommodate the different acceptabilities.

We also saw in section 3 examples like the following pair, varying only in the *ba* NPs used.

- (99) Ta ba wo wen-le yi-da-dui hen-nan-de wenti.
 he BA me ask-LE one-big-pile very-difficult-DE question
 'He asked me many difficult questions.'
 (100) ??Ta ba wo wen-le fangxiang.
 he BA me ask-LE directions
 'He asked me directions.'

In addition, the following two sentences only differ in the use of adverbs:

- (159) Ni ruguo bu ba shu zixi-de nian, zenme neng dong-ne?
 you if not BA book carefully read how can understand-Q
 'If you don't study the book carefully, how can you understand?'

- (160) ??Ni ruguo bu ba shu anjing-de nian, zenme neng dong-ne?
 you if not BA book quietly read how can understand-Q
 'If you don't study the book quietly, how can you understand?'

Consider another case. The following sentences only differ in the duration phrases used: one expresses a stronger degree of hatred (hatred for life) than the other (just temporary hatred). The former is clearly better than the latter.

- (161) Ta ba wo hen-le yi-beizi.
 he BA me hate-LE one-life
 'He hated me for a whole life.'
- (162) ??Ta ba wo hen-le yi-xiazi.
 he BA me hate-LE one-while
 'He hated me for a while.'

The following sentences show the same "inner object/outer object" structures differing in acceptability only because different activity verbs are used:

- (163) Ta ba wo sha-le fuqin.
 he BA me kill-LE father
 'He killed my father.'
- (164) *Ta ba wo yao-le fuqin.
 he BA me invite-LE father
 'He invited my father.'

Many pairs of such examples exist, having identical structures but differing in acceptability as *ba* sentences. They all point to the same generalization: the constraints on the *ba* construction cannot be easily characterized in clearly defined structural terms.

6 Conclusion

The *ba* construction has been one of the most challenging topics in the literature on Chinese grammar. This chapter shows that, to understand the characteristics of this construction, we need to separate its form from its usage. Formally, it is clearer what structure a *ba* sentence takes. It has the structure represented in (73) in section 4.2, which places all the constituents of the *ba* construction in appropriate positions and can accommodate the non-*ba* counterparts straightforwardly. The *ba* NP is always related to V or V'. When it is a V' object (outer object), it is assigned an "affected" theta-role by V'. However, the definition of an "affected" theta-role has not been made clear in the literature and it has proven to be challenging to identify precise characterizations. The difficulty mainly lies in the appropriate usage of the

ba construction, which has been most controversial. The usage part has essentially been defined by the constraints on the various components of the *ba* construction, such as what NPs are allowed as *ba* NPs and what elements are acceptable or necessary to make a well-formed VP in a *ba* sentence. The discussions in sections 5.2 and 5.3 show that precise grammatical accounts for the constraints based on bounded events/situations or event structures are not empirically adequate, even though they provide very attractive options.

The comparison between the Taiwanese *ka* and the Mandarin *ba* construction shows that *ba*, unlike *ka*, no longer assigns an “affected” theta-role. Nonetheless, in many instances, the *ba* construction seems to still carry the special meaning of “affectedness.” This special meaning is clear in the canonical cases: the *ba* NP is affected. However, it becomes less and less clear as speakers expand and deviate from the core.²⁸ This creates uncertainty and variation in speakers’ judgments as the cases deviate from the core in different ways and degrees. This is also the spirit of Li and Thompson’s continuum (109) in section 5.1. The *ba* construction is strongly influenced by discourse, pragmatic, and idiolectal factors; the notion of affectedness is fuzzy, vague, and subject to individual variation. Further evidence for the non-grammatical nature of the constraints on the usage of the *ba* construction has been supplied by many minimal pairs such as those discussed in section 5.4, where all the pairs have similar structures, including identical aspectual or event structures, and all have fully acceptable non-*ba* counterparts. Because sentences with identical structures may differ in acceptability, we are forced to recognize the effect of world knowledge, speaker intention, etc. on the use of this construction. In other words, we should recognize that the *ba* construction is sensitive to grammatical and non-grammatical constraints and that form should be separated from usage.

SEE ALSO: Analytical Causatives; Bound Variable Anaphora; Bridge Phenomena; Clitic Clusters; Free Relatives; Modal Auxiliaries; Overtly Marked *Wh*-Paths; The Person Case Constraint; Serial Verbs; Syntactic Haplogy; VP-Ellipsis

Notes

1. “Mandarin Chinese,” the official Chinese language, will simply be referred to as “Chinese” in this chapter, except when contrasted with Taiwanese, a Southern Min dialect spoken in Taiwan. All examples are in Mandarin Chinese unless it is stated otherwise.
2. Distinguishing NPs and DPs is irrelevant in this chapter (see Abney 1987 for the proposal of DP structures, and Li 1998; 1999; and others for the NP/DP distinction in Chinese; also see Cheng and Sybesma 2012 for more recent discussions). Nominal expressions will be labeled as NPs consistently.
3. The sentences acceptable as *ka* sentences in Taiwan Southern Min are mostly also accepted by Taiwan Mandarin speakers as possible Taiwan Mandarin *ba* sentences, although they may be unacceptable to Beijing Mandarin speakers. The version of Mandarin spoken in Taiwan has been significantly influenced by Taiwanese phonologically and even syntactically (see, e.g., Kubler 1985; Tse 2000; Zeng 2003; Kuo 2005; Liao 2008; Li 2013).
4. The morpheme *-le* can be suffixed to a verb (verbal *-le*) or occur at the end of a clause (clause-final *-le*). The clause-final *-le* has generally been analyzed as a “change of state” or

“inchoative” marker. The verbal *-le* has generally been regarded as a completive aspect marker. Both *-le*'s can co-occur in a clause. A clause ending in *V-le* may involve the combination of both *-le*'s. It is not clear if the two *-le*'s should be analyzed as one or two different morphemes (see Wang 1965; Chao 1968; Rohsenow 1978; Li and Thompson 1981; Mei 1981; Huang and Davis 1989; Lu 1991; Li 1992; Sybesma 1999; among many others). Because the exact analysis of the two *-le*'s is irrelevant in this chapter, all the occurrences of *-le* are glossed as 'LE'.

The same consideration applies to the glossing of *de* as DE. Other glossary: CL = classifier, PAR = particle, Q = question marker, DUR = durative aspect marker.

5. A “serial verb construction” is not a unified structural notion. It refers to all the constructions with the surface form of more than one verb phrase occurring consecutively. Structurally, a series of VPs can be analyzed as different types of coordination or subordination structures. See Li and Thompson (1981, ch. 2), for instance.
6. Several West African languages have similar constructions and grammaticalization of a morpheme like *ba*, such as Twi or Fong; see Zou (1995) for cross-linguistic comparisons of such structures and grammaticalization processes.
7. There have also been proposals claiming that *ba* is a “coverb” (see, among others, Wang 1947; 1954; Lü, 1955a; Li and Thompson 1974; 1981, chs 9, 15). A coverb is a special category created in Chinese grammatical studies to represent the group of words which were verbs but have gradually lost some of their verb properties. They are so labeled because they no longer have all the properties of typical verbs and yet they have not become true prepositions, either. The term accommodates a spectrum of cases, some having more verbal properties than others.
8. Modern Shanghai and Wuhan dialects can have NP2 as a pronoun coreferential with NP1 in [*ba* NP1 V NP2] (Bingfu Lu, Yuzhi Shi, p.c.).
9. Yafei Li (p.c.) notes that it is not that difficult to prepose *ba* and the *ba* NP in some instances. This is true especially in casual speech. Moreover, it seems that the preposing is best in the contexts where the interpretation of doing something to the *ba* NP is clear.

- (i) Ba na-guo rou, ta chi-de-wan ma?
 BA that-pot meat he eat-DE-finish Q
 'That pot of meat, can he finish it?'

The reviewer points out that “Mullie (1929) already observes postpositions like the following: *Ni chi le, ba fan?* 'Have you eaten, the meal?' *Ni he-le, ba cha?* 'Have you drunk, the tea?'" In these examples, *ba* and the *ba* NP are postposed to the end of the sentences.

10. A clause sometimes can be the “*ba* NP.”

- (i) Wo ba [ta bu-lai] dang-zuo shi hen yanzhong-de shi.
 I BA him not-come take-as be very serious-DE matter
 'I take it as a very serious matter that he does not come.'

This is not common, however (see Li 2011a for clauses with concealed NPs).

11. With the location marker *zai*, present in (12c), a localizer such as *shang* 'top' must be used. The localizer is optional with the *ba* NP.
12. In light of developments in the structure of VPs (Larson 1988's VP shell, for instance) and the almost non-existent status of an intermediate category *X'* in the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1991; 1993; 1995), it is not clear whether the term “V' object” is appropriate. Nonetheless, it works well to express the sister relation between an outer object and a complex predicate consisting of a verb and its complement. I will continue using the term “V' object,” alongside the term “outer object,” for convenience.

13. It is possible to suggest that every instance of the *ba* NP is a V' object (Huang 1982; 1988). What looks like an inner object may actually be an outer object identifying an empty category in the V-object position.
14. The sentence-final *-le* does not seem to make good *ba* sentences.
15. The main aspect markers that occur in the *ba* construction, namely the perfective *le* and the durative *zhe*, are considered as phase markers in Sybesma (1999) (also see Mucun Yingshu 1983; Guo 1997; Ye 2004; among many others). Frei (1956; 1957), Mei (1978), Cheng (1988), etc. note the relative difficulty of the experiential marker *guo* licensing *ba* sentences. However, this is not impossible (see Lu and Ma 1985; Hui Wang 1993; Jing-Schmidt 2005; among many others).
- (i) [?]Ta ba zhexie-haizi ma-guo.
 he BA these-boys scold-ASP
 'He has scolded these boys before.'
- (ii) Ni ceng ba bu gai wang-de shiqing wang-guo ma?
 you ever BA not should forget-DE thing forget-ASP Q
 'Have you ever forgotten matters that should not be forgotten?'
16. It could be that the result clause is an "extent" clause in such cases: the extent of seriousness, the extent of smallness, etc. If an extent clause is different from a result clause, we might conclude that a *ba* sentence is acceptable only with a result clause. However, it is not easy to distinguish "extent" from "result." Note that being serious and being small both can yield a result, as illustrated by the acceptability of a lexical causative. Even in the Taiwanese dialect, which uses different pronunciations for the various *de*'s in different constructions, the same pronunciation is found with both the extent and result *de*. Also see Sybesma (1999), which assumes "extent" and "result" are the same.
17. *tui* 'leg' in (50) can be a participant of walking:
- (i) Ni-de tui neng zou-ma?
 you-DE leg can walk-Q
 'Can your legs walk?'
18. One may argue that the distribution of adverbs can be captured by an analysis that assumes adverbs must be licensed by a head that is lexically filled. When *ba* occurs, an adverb can be licensed by the main verb occurring in the lower V position or by *ba* in the higher *v* position. When V-to-*v*-raising takes place, the lower V is an empty category and cannot license an adverb within the lower VP. Such an approach would require cross-linguistic parameterization, because V raising does not prevent an adverb from occurring in the lower position, as shown in the study of French by Pollock (1989). Moreover, if the analysis by Huang (1992), Soh (1998), and Tang (1998) concerning V raising is correct, an empty verb in Chinese can license a duration/frequency phrase.
19. A reviewer notes that *wo zuotian ca zhege zhuozi* 'I yesterday wiped this table' is also not good, although it is better than (76a). This could be because the sentence is in isolation (Li and Thompson 1981; *le* required in utterances to indicate current relevance). Contextualizing the sentence makes it better. For instance, the following sentence is quite good, even though the *ba* counterpart is still unacceptable:
- (i) Wo zuotian ca zhege zhuozi jingran meiren kandao.
 I yesterday wipe this-CL table unexpectedly nobody saw
 'I wiped this table yesterday; unexpectedly, nobody saw (it).'

- (ii) *Wo zuotian ba zhe-ge zhuozi ca jingran meiren kandao.
I yesterday BA this-CL table wipe unexpectedly nobody saw

20. Lü (1955a), among others, notes that the *ba* construction can be regarded as an inverse object construction, in which the object of a transitive verb has been preposed. Chao (1968, 343) sometimes refers to the *ba* structure as a “pretransitive” construction. According to Chao, the *ba* construction is a special form of the V-V series. The object of the pretransitive is regarded as a form of the inverted object.
21. Another widely used term for the *ba* construction is *zhishi* ‘causative’, capturing the intuition that a *ba* sentence generally denotes that the subject of the sentence (the causer) brings about a new state of affairs resulting from the event denoted by V (Ma 1987, 429, 433; Sybesma 1999, 178; also see Mangione 1982; Ding 1993; 2007; Rhys 1996). Cui (1995, section 3.2) concluded from a corpus study of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin (published in the late eighteenth century and written in the vernacular of the time) and of *Nanren de yiban shi nüren* (*Woman is Half of Man*) by Zhang Xianliang (published 1985) that *ba* sentences with result expressions make up 86.3 percent and 87.4 percent of all uses of *ba* respectively. The notion of causativity or a resultant state being brought about was extensively discussed in many works such as Chappell (1991), Li (1993; 1995; 1999), and Sybesma (1999).
22. A reviewer questioned why a contrast should exist between ‘like’ in (82) and ‘miss’ in (84). What matters is not the difference in the choice of verbs; rather, it is the fact that a postverbal intensifier is added and the intensity of the emotion can imply disposal, as described in the paragraph above (84). Thus, ‘like’ can be made possible in the *ba* construction if the intensity of emotion is expressed through the addition of a postverbal intensifier:

- (i) Ta ba nüpengyou xihuan-de lei-si le.
he BA girl.friend like-DE tired-dead LE
‘He liked his girlfriend so much that she was tired to death.’

23. There exist a good number of works not using the notion of “affectedness.” In addition to those in note (21), Wang himself added the term *jishishi* ‘consequent construction’ (describing an event that results from a previous event; also see Lü 1955a; Hsueh 1987; among many others). Nonetheless, the term “disposal construction” has been defended and continues to be used, for example by Mei (1978), Li and Thompson (1981), and Tiee (1986), among many others.
24. For those that take the *ba* NP as old information or topic, the NP is generally definite or must be specific if it is indefinite. Mei (1978) suggests that the *ba* pattern is used to mark the *ba* NP as presupposed information, specific in reference. Teng (1975) notes that a *ba* NP can be indefinite but it must be “actual.” Zhang (2000) claims that the *ba* NP must be total: ‘some’ nominals are impossible, as in **ta ba yixie qian yong le* ‘He used some money.’ However, Zhang (2010) cites many examples demonstrating that a non-specific nominal is possible, even including V-N idiomatic expressions such as *li hun* ‘depart-marriage = divorce’, *ba hun li le* ‘BA marriage depart = divorce’. Chao (1968, 344) cautions that even an indefinite-looking *ba* NP should still not be interpreted as indefinite:

Attention should, however, be drawn to a class of apparent cases of indefinite reference consisting of a pretransitive with *ig* or *g* before the object; here something quite definite is referred to. Thus: *ta ba ge pibao diu le* ‘She lost a purse’, *ta ba ge zhangfu si le, keshi bujiu you jia le ge zhangfu* ‘She lost a husband but she soon re-married’ ... The advanced position of the object, brought about by the pretransitive, has a stronger effect than the presence of the word *g* or *ig* in deciding the definiteness of reference. As Leu Shwushiang

(LWjuo. 129–130) [Lü 1955a] has noted, there is no reason why forms like *g* or *ig* in Chinese should be limited to indefinite reference because *a* or its equivalent in other Indo-European languages is the indefinite article.

25. Syntactic constraints also play a role in determining which NP can become a *ba* NP. The following sentence, for instance, shows that what is stolen can also be a *ba* NP:

(i) Ta jingran ye ba wode pibao tou-le.
 he unexpected also BA my purse steal-LE
 'Unexpectedly, he also stole my purse.'

However, when an indirect object of the verb *tou* occurs, only the indirect object NP can be the *ba* NP, not the direct object NP:

(ii) *Ta jingran ye ba pibao tou-le wo.
 he unexpected also BA purse steal-LE me

See Li (1990) for the extractability of direct and indirect objects in double object constructions.

26. See Zhang (2000) for a similar observation on the "all of" interpretation of a *ba* NP.
 27. As a reviewer noted, if the *ba* NP must be the subject of the result clause, then, the unacceptability of *ta ba fan chi-bao-le* 'He BA meal ate-full' can be captured, but this leaves the question of why *zhedun fan ba ta chi-bao-le* 'This meal BA him eat-full' is ungrammatical. The examples discussed in this section and earlier also challenge this claim.
 28. This is in the spirit of a prototype approach to this construction. See, for instance, Bybee and Moder (1983) and Rosch (1978).

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