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Bǎ 把-construction

The *bǎ*-construction, generally recognized as one of the most studied constructions in Mandarin or Chinese more generally is the neutral term for the pattern containing the morpheme *bǎ* 把 (the DP following *bǎ* is referred to as the *bǎ* nominal).

1. Subject + . . . + *bǎ* + DP + . . . V . . .
The following examples illustrate some of the possibilities:

2. a. 我把他騙/打了。
Wǒ bǎ tā piàn/dǎ le.
1SG BǍ 3SG cheat/hit ASP
'I cheated/hit him.'
    b. 他把菜炒爛了。
Tā bǎ cài chǎo-làn le.
3SG BǍ vegetable stir.fry-mushy ASP
'He stir-fried the vegetable mushy.'
    c. 我把他愛得要死。
Wǒ bǎ tā ài-de yào sǐ.
1SG BǍ 3SG love-GET want die
'I love him to death.'
    d. 酒把他喝得醉醺醺的。
Jiǔ bǎ tā hē-de
wine BǍ 3SG drink-GET
zuìxūnxūn de.
drunk.drunk DE
'The wine made him drunk.'

This construction has attracted much attention due to its complexity—a tall mountain that everyone wants to conquer. The basic facts seem straightforward; but there is much more than the basics. Native speakers know how to use this pattern; yet, clear descriptions of its usage and constraints are elusive—a huge gap between what a native speaker can do and what a linguist can achieve. Non-stop efforts have been made to describe and explain the properties of the construction from every possible perspective, as attested by the huge quantity of publications. A single search in December, 2010 in the database of China Academic Journals using the key words *"bǎ" zìjù* 把字句 'the *bǎ*-construction' generated 1421 entries. Outside this database, there have been massive articles, books, conference proceedings, and reports on this construction. Research has been undertaken from the perspective of various formal theoretical frameworks (for a recent work, see Huang *et al.* 2009, chapter 5, largely based on Li 2006, and the references cited there), discourse, functional grammar (e.g., Jing-Schmidt 2005 and the references cited there), cognitive studies (e.g., Dai 2005 and the references cited), 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/linguistic comparisons (e.g., Tang 2003, 2010 on a more restricted counterpart with *zoeng* 將 in Cantonese; Li 2006; Teng 1982; Yang 2006 on the broader use of the corresponding *ka* in Taiwanese, the comparison with two types of German prefixes in

Blumenfeld 2001, etc.). Within the very limited space, the references cited in this work will only be a tiny dot in the entire landscape. Efforts will be made to cite the more common ones. Unfortunately, it is also impossible to include all the common ones. Nor will it be possible to summarize the generalizations and main threads of the relevant researches. To make this short piece comprehensible and meaningful, I will build on the recent work on *bǎ* by Huang *et al.* (2009: chapter 5) and focus on the main characteristics and grammatical analyses.

1. The Patterns

Bǎ, with the original meaning in Archaic Chinese of 'to conduct, to lead (for *jiāng* 將), to take, to hold, to grasp' can be traced to as early as the 5th to 3rd century BCE. It was used in V1 in a serial verb construction 'V1+O+V2'; then it was grammaticalized and became a preposition or an object marker some time between the 7th and 9th century (Bennett 1981; Choonharuangdej 2003, Li and Thompson 1974; Peyraube 1989, 1996; Sun 1996; Wáng Lì 1958; Yang 1995; Ziegeler 2000; among others. See Peyraube 1996 for a very good summary and review on the available theories about the evolution of this construction). In modern Chinese, the *bǎ* sentences are essentially a single clausal "disposal" or "cause-result" construction or simply the *bǎ*-construction, taking the form in (1) (see, among many others, Bennett 1981; Bisang 1995; Chappell 1991; Chén 1983; Her 1990; Huang 1986; Jiǎng 1977; Li and Thompson 1974, 1975, 1976; Lord 1993; Méi 1990; Peyraube 1989, 1994, 1996; Shibatani 1976; Sun 1995 1996; Wáng Lì 1947/1954, 1954, 1958; Wei 1997; Wú 2003; Xing 1994; Yè 1988; Ziegeler 2000). The "…" part of the *bǎ*-construction in (1) basically is the preverbal or postverbal constituent helping to make acceptable *bǎ* sentences, roughly of the following types:

3. a. V + result (including result, extent, location, phase complements);
   b. V + directional complement;
   c. V + (*yī* 一 'one' +) V;
   d. V + measure phrases (including duration/frequency and verbal classifier phrases);
   e. V + object (the object can be one of a double object structure or bear a possession/part-whole relation with the *bǎ* nominal) (see, e.g., Cheng and Ritter 1988; Sybesma 1999 for the position of the possessor and small clause analysis);
   f. V + aspect marker; and
   g. Adv + V (the Adv can be a directional PP or a manner Adv or *yī* 'one' indicating abrupt action or immediately following the occurrence of an action).

Regarding (3f), the relevant aspect markers mainly are the perfective *le* 了 and the durative *zhe* 著, which are considered as phase markers in the *bǎ*-construction by Sybesma (1999) (also see Kimura 1983; Guō 1997; Yè 2004; among many others). Frei (1956, 1957), Mei (1978), Cheng (1988), among others, note the relative difficulty of the experiential marker *guo* 過 licensing *bǎ* sentences. However, it is not impossible, as in *Děng māmā huílái, zánmen jiù shuō bǎ jǐ jiā dōu bàifǎngguo le*…等媽媽回來，咱們就說把幾家都拜訪過了…'When mother comes back, let's just say that we've already visited all these families…' (Jing-Schmidt 2005:164) or *Tā méi bǎ háizi màguo ma*? 他沒把孩子罵過嗎? 'Has he never scolded the kids?' Also see *bǎ* examples with *guo* in Wáng Jūnhǔ (1988), Wáng Huì (1993), among many others.

The main concerns of linguists studying the construction have always been: under what conditions is a *bǎ* sentence possible or impossible; is there is a unified account that can accommodate all the patterns in (3); and if such an account exists, what is it? Before turning to these issues, we should consider three more relevant patterns. First, in addition to (3a)–(3g), an "adversity" usage as in (4) has been observed: Wáng Lì (1947/1954) noted that an extended use of the *bǎ*-construction is to express something unfortunate or unhappy; this usage developed in the Yuán and Míng dynasties. Similarly, Lǚ (1955) noted the "unfortunate" *bǎ*.

4. 他把個賊跑了。
   Tā　bǎ　ge　zéi　pǎo　　le.
   3SG　BǍ　CLF　thief　run.away　ASP
   'A thief ran away on him.'

Cheung (1992) and Tang (2010) observe that such an adversity or unfortunate use is not possible in the corresponding construction in Cantonese. Huang *et al.* (2009:159) reported a much wider use of adversity *bǎ* sentences among Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin because of the common adversity usage of the corresponding *ka* structure in Taiwanese. The much broader use of the *bǎ*-construction in Taiwanese Mandarin allows patterns like the one below, which has the nominal following *bǎ* carrying only the affected meaning and not related to the verb thematically.

5. 他竟然把我擊出一支安打!

   Tā   jìngrán   bǎ wǒ jīchū yī
   3SG surprisingly BǍ 1SG hit   one
   zhī āndǎ!
   CLF hit
   'Surprisingly, he got a hit on me.'

Secondly, the *bǎ*-construction bears great similarity to the passive → *bèi* 被-construction, which can also express some notion of "affectedness". The comparison of the two constructions has been fruitful and has been the subject of many works through many decades; see Huang *et al.* (2009: chapter 5) for a recent example and the many references collected in Her *et al.* (2009).

Finally, a *bǎ* sentence always has a non-*bǎ* counterpart (but the reverse is not true). For instance, the sentences in (2a)–(2d) can correspond to the ones below.

6. a. 我騙/打了他。
      Wǒ piàn/dǎ-le   tā.
      1SG cheat/hit-ASP   3SG
      'I cheated/hit him.'
   b. 菜他炒爛了。
      Cài   tā   chǎo-làn   le.
      vegetable 3SG stir.fry-mushy ASP
      'The vegetable, he stir-fried (it) mushy.'
   c. 我愛他愛得要死。
      Wǒ ài   tā ài-de   yào sǐ.
      1SG love 3SG love-GET want die
      'I love him to death.'
   d. 他酒喝得醉醺醺的。
      Tā jiǔ hē-de   zuìxūnxūn de.
      3SG wine drink-GET drunk.drunk DE
      'The wine made him drunk.'

(6a) is the canonical SVO, corresponding to S *bǎ* O V. In (6b), the object is topicalized; (6c) repeats the verb. (6d) involves the so-called object-preposing structure: 'wine' is the object of drinking and is preposed to the position between the verb and the subject. Even the sentence in (4) has a non-*bǎ* counterpart—SVO:

7. 他跑了個賊。

   Tā   pǎo-le   ge zéi.
   3SG run.away-ASP CLF thief
   'A thief ran away on him.'

This consistent correspondence to a non-*bǎ* sentence makes it unnecessary for *bǎ* to play a role in the argument structure of *bǎ* sentences (in contrast to the Taiwanese Mandarin pattern illustrated by (5)). That is, *bǎ* should not assign a thematic role to the subject of the *bǎ* sentence or the *bǎ* nominal.

2. Functions and Properties

If a *bǎ* sentence always has a non-*bǎ* counterpart, why is the *bǎ*-construction in the common repertoire of the daily language? What is the function of *bǎ* and what differentiates the *bǎ*-construction from its non-*bǎ* counterpart? The issues have been explored from all possible perspectives, such as discourse, prosody, syntax, and semantics. For instance, expressing certain information structure has been suggested to be the main function of the *bǎ*-construction. Tsao (1987) argues that the *bǎ* nominal is a secondary topic (also see Tsao 1977). Wáng Lì (1947/1954, 1958/1985), Ding (1993), Shào and Zhào (2005), among others, note that the *bǎ*-construction has the effect of emphasizing the verb (action) and the complement of the verb (result). Based on a corpus study, Liu (2007) concludes that the *bǎ* form is more likely to be used under two conditions: when the *bǎ* nominal carries old information but is not highly topical, and when the *bǎ* nominal carries new information and is heavy (has a greater length). Jing-Schmidt (2005), also basing herself on corpus studies, argues that the *bǎ*-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 Shěn 2002; Guō 2008; Wáng Shèngbó 2009 among many others for the emotive and discourse function of the *bǎ*-construction).

For those that take the *bǎ* nominal as old information or topic, the nominal is generally definite or must be specific if it is indefinite. Mei (1978) suggests that the *bǎ* pattern is used to mark the *bǎ* nominal as presupposed information, specific in reference. Teng (1975) notes that a *bǎ* nominal can be indefinite but it must be "actual". Sybesma (1999) summarizes the various usages as "strong DPs" as in Barwise and Cooper (1981). Zhāng (2000) notes that the *bǎ* nominal must be total: 'some' nominals are impossible: *tā bǎ yīxiē qián yòng le* *他把一些錢用了 'He used some money.' However, Zhāng (2010) cites many examples demonstrating that a non-specific nominal is possible, even including V-N idiomatic expressions such as *lí hūn* 離婚 'depart-marriage = divorce', *bǎ hūn lí le* 把婚離了 '*bǎ* marriage departed = divorced'.

Prosodically, Wáng Lì (1958) suggests that the fronting of the object enables prosodic pausing so that longer clauses will not sound lengthy and clumsy. Feng (2001) attributes the many constraints on the *bǎ*-construction to prosodic factors.

Others relate the *bǎ*-construction to typological word order studies in Chinese (e.g., Chao 1968; Sun and Givón 1985; Li and Thompson 1974, 1975), as support for the increasing prominence of SOV word order, for instance. The preverbal and postverbal distinction has been considered a deciding factor for the distribution and interpretation of a nominal. A preverbal *bǎ* nominal tends to be definite and a postverbal object nominal tends to be indefinite. S+V+O word order focuses on the O, while S+*bǎ*+O+V, focuses on the V (plus what follows it).

The syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of the *bǎ*-construction have been the focus

of an enormous amount of literature because of the challenging issues of how the relevant properties can be adequately described, which has led to the proliferation of the terms labeling this construction.

3. Labeling and Accounts

As the *bǎ* nominal is often the object of the verb, the *bǎ*-construction has been regarded as an inverse object construction, in which the object of a transitive verb has been preposed (see, for instance, Lǚ 1955/1984). Chao (1968:342–343) used the term "pre-transitive", illustrating the point with the following example:

8. 別把鑰匙忘了。
   Bié   bǎ yàoshi wàng le.
   don't BĂ key   forget ASP
   'Don't forget the key.'

Chao also notes that some "defective" transitive verbs do not make good *bǎ* sentences. More generally, stative and perception verbs usually do not make acceptable *bǎ* sentences. Compare (9) to (2a) above.

9. *我把他喜歡/愛/看見了。
   *Wǒ bǎ tā xǐhuān/ài/kànjiàn le.
   1SG BĂ 3SG like/love/see   ASP
   'I liked/loved/saw him.'

As an attempt to distinguish the effects of verb types and also incorporate the generalization that some preverbal or postverbal element is generally required in a *bǎ*-construction, a notion commonly used is "high or low transitivity"—describing whether verbs express a high or low degree of transitivity or affectedness (see, for instance, Thompson 1973; Y.C. Li 1974; Teng 1975; also the term "accusative" construction). "Transitivity" can be defined as "the carrying over of an activity from an agent to a patient" (Wang Mingquan 1987:72) (cf. Hopper and Thompson 1980 for the gradation of transitivity; also see Tsunoda 1985; Lipenkova 2011; among others). Peter C.T. Wang (1970) claims that what matters is the added adverbial, not the verb. Peter C.T. Wang and Wáng Shèngbó (1983) note that

perception and emotion verbs can make acceptable *bǎ* sentences.

However, it should be noted that the *bǎ* nominal is not always the object of the verb. *Tā* 他 'him' in the following sentence is the subject, not object, of the drinking.

10. 這酒把他喝得醉醺醺的。
Zhè jiǔ   bǎ tā hē-de   zuìxūnxūn   de.
this wine BǍ 3SG drink-GET drunk.drunk DE
'This wine got him [to drink himself] very drunk.'

There have also been proposals suggesting that the main function of the *bǎ*-construction is to express "bounded events/situations" and therefore the constraints on this construction are due to the aspectual property of this pattern (see Cheng 1988; Liu 1997; among others). The challenge to such an approach is that some verbs can appear with aspect markers or other preverbal/postverbal constituents to express bounded events/situations but nevertheless do not form good *bǎ* sentences, such as (9). In addition, as noted in Li (2006: section 5.2.2.3), *bǎ* sentences can express unbounded events/situations and co-occur with the progressive aspect marker.

Probably the most influential label for the construction has been *chǔzhì* 處置 'disposal', created by Wáng Lì (1947), which highlights the core meaning of *bǎ* sentences—"how a person is handled, manipulated or dealt with, how something is disposed of, or how an affair is conducted" (Y.C. Li 1974:200–201; translation of Wáng's description). The sentence we saw in (2b), describing the event of stir-frying making the vegetable mushy illustrates the most typical use of the *bǎ*-construction.

Expansion of the term allows "disposal" to be used whether the event is purposeful or not (e.g., Wáng Huán 1983) and whether the effect is physical or mental (Li and Thompson 1981), to include sentences like the one we saw in (2c).

→ Wáng Lì 王力 himself added the term *jìshìshì* 繼事式 'consequent construction' (describing an event that results from a previous event. Also see Lǚ 1955; Hsueh 1987; among many others). Chao (1968) notes that the term "disposal" has to be taken in a very broad and abstract sense if it is to apply to all cases. However, the term "disposal construction" has been defended and continues to be used, for example by Mei (1978); Li and Thompson (1981); Tiee (1986); among many others. A similar term is "executive construction" by Hashimoto (1971).

Another related and widely used term is *zhìshǐ* 致使 'causative', capturing the intuition that a *bǎ* 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 (Mǎ 1987:429, 433; Sybesma 1999:178; also see Mangione 1982; Rhys 1996; Ding 1993, 2007; → Resultatives). Indeed, Cuī (1995: section 3.2) concluded from a corpus study of *Hónglóu mèng* 紅樓夢 (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*) by Cáo Xuěqín 曹雪芹 (published in the late 18th century and written in the vernacular of the time), and *Nánrén de yībàn shì nǚrén* 男人的一半是女人 (*Half of man is woman*) by Zhāng Xiánliàng 張賢亮 (published 1985) that *bǎ* sentences with result expressions make up 86.3% and 87.4% of all uses of *bǎ* 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), Sybesma (1999), the causative *bǎ*-construction. Sybesma accommodates all the patterns in (3) under the notion of "causative" and argues that *bǎ* spells out the head of a phrase labeled as CAUS (to denote causation) in the phrase structure (also known as "little *v*"), when the verb does not move to this head. This proposal captures the generalization that a *bǎ* sentence always has a non-*bǎ* counterpart and that some preverbal or postverbal constituent is needed to express the resultant state. Li (1995) takes "cause" to be essential to the construction; he suggests that there is a separate "causal hierarchy" in addition to a thematic hierarchy. The causal hierarchy aligns with the syntactic hierarchy so that the subject of a *bǎ* sentence is associated with a causer reading and the *bǎ* nominal tends to be associated with a disposal or affected reading.

The causative approach, like the disposal analysis, also needs to be interpreted as generously as possible to distinguish the possible from the impossible cases, such as the acceptable and

unacceptable sentences in (2a) and (9). The following example does not have an obvious causative meaning, either.

11. 我把他看了一眼。
    Wǒ bǎ tā kàn-le yī yǎn.
    1SG BǍ 3SG see-ASP one eye
    'I took a look at him.'

Furthermore, even though in a causative analysis the postverbal complement often expresses result and the subject of the complement phrase generally is the same as the *bǎ* nominal, this need not be the case, as seen in the following examples adapted from Chao (1968:347):

12. a. 你把飯吃飽!
    Nǐ bǎ fàn chī-bǎo!
    2SG BǍ rice/meal eat-full
    'Eat the rice/meal full till you are full!'
    b. 你把那些話說的有點太大意。
    Nǐ bǎ nàxiē huà shuō-de
    2SG BǍ that.CLF.PL word say-DE
    yǒudiǎn tài dàyì.
    somewhat too carelessly
    'You said those words somewhat too carelessly.'

Some quite abstract representations might also be needed in order to accommodate cases like (14), where a preverbal adjunct like 'finally' can make an otherwise unacceptable *bǎ* sentence acceptable (cf. Jing-Schmidt 2005:81):

13. 我*(終于)把他看見了。
    Wǒ *(zhōngyú) bǎ tā kànjiàn le.
    1SG finally BǍ 3SG see ASP
    'I *(finally) saw him.'

It is not clear how the addition of the adverb 'finally' could significantly change the phrase structure of the sentence especially in regard to the projection of 'cause' or 'result'. However, note that the passive counterpart of (14) is quite acceptable without 'finally': *tā bèi wǒ kànjiàn le* 他被我看見了 'He was seen by me.' This contrast and other similar ones suggest that although the *bǎ*- and passive constructions share the meaning of affectedness or a new state

being brought about, there is more expressed by the *bǎ*-construction, which could be some very broad notion of "cause" not necessarily represented in the phrase structure, and also the prosodic/discourse factors mentioned in section 2.

4. CONCLUSION

The core cases of the *bǎ*-construction are clearer—the construction expresses cause-result, a bounded event, an entity being acted upon. It is the broad extension along many different dimensions of the usage that has defied a unified account so far. As briefly shown so far, it seems that counterexamples can always be found, challenging all the accounts proposed so far. Speakers' judgments also differ because of the influence from the corresponding constructions of their dialects (cf. Cantonese vs. Taiwanese vs. Běijīng Mandarin) or because of speakers' different degrees of tolerance in accepting extensions. A fuller understanding of this construction would require a multi-thronged approach integrating the insights from the syntactic, semantic, discourse/pragmatic and prosodic, and comparative dialectal studies.

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Audrey Li

Bái 白 Language

1. General

1.1 *Geographic distribution*

The Bái 白 language is primarily spoken by the Bái people in Yúnnán Province, chiefly located in Dàlǐ 大理 Autonomous Prefecture. It is also spoken by other ethnic groups (such as the → Lìsù 傈僳, → Yí 彝, → Nàxī 納西) living in that area with the Bái. Besides the majority of the Bái