

2.5. Verbs

We have so far discussed almost all the individual components of the *ba* construction listed in (1a-b) except the V. Because the V interacts closely with the co-occurring preverbal or postverbal X and, because when types of verbs are considered, such as the classification by Vendler (1967), Dowty (1979), Smith (1991), it is the verb phrase, rather the verb itself, that is significant, we, therefore, will not further elaborate on the properties of Vs alone except bringing up the issue of transitivity regarding the types of verbs. A common observation is that a resultative complement can make a *ba* sentence acceptable, regardless of the transitivity of Vs. That is, the V in a *ba* pattern as in (1) can be intransitive as noted in section 2.3.3, in which case the *ba* NP can be interpreted as the subject of a resultative complement. This is illustrated below.

- (66) a. ta ku-de women dou bu-gan xiao-le.
 he cry-De we all not-dare laugh-Le
 'He cried so much that we did not dare to laugh.'
- b. ta ba women ku-de dou bu-gan xiao-le.
 he Ba we cry-De all not-dare laugh
 'He cried so much that we did not dare to laugh.'
- (67) 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.'
- (68) a. tianqi re-de gou dou bu-jiao-le.
 weather hot-De dog all not-bark-Le
 'The weather is so hot that the dogs are not barking.'
- b. tianqi ba gou re-de dou bu-jiao-le.
 weather Ba dog hot-De all not-bark-Le
 'The weather is so hot that the dogs are not barking.'
- (69) 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 examples seem to be good examples demonstrating that an intransitive V with a resultative complement can make an acceptable *ba* sentence, with the *ba* NP interpreted as the subject of the resultative complement. Closer examination of a wider range of data, however, reveals that the generalization may not be quite true. There are many instances where a result expression does not make a *ba* sentence with an intransitive verb acceptable. For instance, the following

sentences contain a resultative complement after an intransitive verb;⁴⁰ yet, a *ba* sentence is still not acceptable.⁴¹

(70) 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
 'He was so serious that we did not dare to laugh.'

(71) 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.'

Why does a resultative complement make a *ba* sentence acceptable in cases like (66-69) but fails to do so in cases like (70-71)? This contrast is especially puzzling **in light of** the fact that, with a lexical causative **matrix** verb, the two sets of sentences are equally acceptable:

(66) c. ta ku-de shi women dou bu-gan xiao-le.
 he cry-De make we all not-dare laugh-Le
 'He cried so much that we did not dare to laugh.'

(70) c. ta yansu-de shi women dou bu-gan xiao-le.
 he serious-De make us all not-dare laugh
 'He was so serious that we did not dare to laugh.'

(71) 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 we could not hear him.'

(66c), (70c) and (71c) are the lexical causative counterpart of (66b), (70b) and (71b) respectively. While the *ba* sentence in (66b) is acceptable, (70b) and (71b) are not, even though their lexical causative counterparts are equally acceptable. Such contrasts indicate that the unacceptability of

⁴⁰ Adjectives in the traditional literature have been grouped with verbs (stative verbs) especially when they occur as the predicate of a clause. We continue to use **the term** verb to include predicative adjectives.

⁴¹ 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 in (70c) and (71c). 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) that assumes "extent" and "result" to be the same.

(70b) and (71b) cannot be due to some reason of interpretation.⁴² Why, then, are they unacceptable? We would like to suggest that a *ba* sentence 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. To clarify this point, let us first consider the following contrast and then return to clarify the above remarks:⁴³

- (72) a. ta ku-zai women shen-shang.
 he cry-at we body-on
 'He cried at us.'
- b. tianqi leng-zai women shen-shang.
 weather cold-De we body-on
 'The (cold) weather made us cold.'
- c. *ta yansu-zai women shen-shang.
 he serious-at we body-on
- d. *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 (72a-b) and (72c-d) indicate that these verbs differ in the possibility of having a goal/recipient of the action/event. There is a recipient of the crying or the coldness of the weather, as indicated by the acceptability of (72a-b). On the other hand, the seriousness and a small voice does not have a recipient, as indicated by the unacceptability of (72c-d). What the contrast between (72a-b) and (72c-d) shows is that there are "pseudo-intransitive" verbs, in contrast to "real intransitive" verbs. (72c-d) contain real intransitive while (72a-b) involve pseudo-intransitive verbs. The latter can take an implicit object (goal/recipient), but not the former. That

⁴² Sybesma (1999, 178), for instance, argues that both the *ba* construction and the lexical causative construction have the same CAUSE morpheme and they only differ in categorial selection: a CAUSE in the *ba* construction selects a VP as its complement and a CAUSE spelled out as a lexical verb (lexical causative) selects a CP/TP as its complement.

⁴³ *Re* 'hot' in (68) is just like *leng* 'cold' and can occur in the pattern in (72). *Zou* 'walk' seems to be less acceptable in this pattern:

- (i) ?ta zou-zai tui-shang.
 he walk-at leg-on

However, *tui* 'leg' is a participant of walking. Independently, *tui* can be an argument of *zou*:

- (i) a. ni yinggai zou-zou ni-de tui.
 you should walk-walk you-De leg
 'You should walk your legs (let your legs walk).'
- b. ni-de tui neng zou-ma?
 you-De leg can walk-Q
 'Can your legs walk?'

this distinction may be on the right track can be supported by a minimal contrast between the following sentences:

- (73) a. xiaohai wan-de fumu kaixin/shangxin-si-le.
 child play-De parents happy/sad-dead-Le
 'The children played so much that the parents were extremely happy/sad.'
- b. xiaohai bing-de fumu danxin-si-le.
 child sick-De parents worried-dead-Le
 'The children were so sick that the parents were extremely worried.'

The (b) sentence can have a goal/recipient but not the (a) sentence, as shown by their contrast in the acceptability of a co-occurring location/recipient phrase.

- (73)a'. *xiaohai wan-zai fumu xin-shang.
 child play-at parents heart-on
- b'. xiaohai bing-zai fumu xin-shang.
 child sick-at parents heart-on
 'The children's sickness is in the parents' hearts.'

Not surprisingly, a contrast exists between these two cases in acceptability as a *ba* sentence, even though both allow a lexical causative:

- (73) c. *xiaohai ba fumu wan-de kaixin/shangxin-si-le.⁴⁴
 child Ba parents play-De happy-dead-Le
 'The children played so much that the parents were extremely happy.'
- cf. lexical causative
- c'. xiaohai wan-de shi fumu kaixin/shangxin-si-le.
 child play-De make parents happy/sad-dead-Le
 'The children played so much that the parents were extremely happy.'
- d. xiaohai ba fumu bing-de danxin-si-le.
 child Ba parents sick-De worried-dead-Le
 'The children were so sick that the parents were extremely worried.'
- cf. lexical causative:
- d'. xiaohai bing-de shi fumu danxin-si-le.
 child sick-De make parents worried-dead-Le
 'The children were so sick that the parents were extremely worried.'

In other words, contrary to the claim in the literature, truly intransitive verbs cannot occur in the *ba* pattern. The fact that *ku* 'cry', *leng* 'cold', *bing* 'sick' etc. 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 a goal or recipient argument is **implied**. The distinction is manifested in the (im)possibility of a postverbal *zai* locative phrase which expresses the goal/recipient of the action/event. We may, therefore, conclude that a postverbal result expression itself is not

⁴⁴ This sentence can be acceptable with the interpretation that the parents are the toys for the children to play with. Both *kaixin* 'happy' and *shangxin* 'sad' are used in this example to show that even an unfortunate event cannot be acceptable as a *ba* sentence here. See Lü 1980, B. Wu 1987 for discussions on the *ba* construction expressing unfortunate events.

sufficient to [license](#) a *ba* pattern. The *ba* NP must be related to the verb. Because such a *ba* NP is not 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 (29) in section 2.3.3, repeated below, that a *ba* NP always thematically related to the verb:

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

Viewing this along the lines of a V'-object, we may clarify the nature of a V'-object: 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. Such a 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:

(74) a. tufei ba ta sha-le fuqin.
 bandit Ba him kill-Le father
 'Bandits killed his father.'

cf. a'. tufei sha-le ta fuqin.
 bandit kill-Le he father
 'Bandits killed his father.'

b. *tufei ba ta baifang-le fuqin.
 bandit Ba him visit-Le father
 'Bandits visited his father.'

b'. tufei baifang-le ta fuqin.
 bandit visit-Le he father
 'Bandits visited his father.'

An outer V'-object may bear a possession relation with an inner V-object, which is true with both (74a) and (74b). 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 outer object, the contrast between (74a) and (74b) would not exist. The minimal difference between the two choices of verbs and the resulting contrast in acceptability as a *ba* sentence, again, points to the close relation between [the](#) outer object and [the](#) V.

This generalization has important implications for how a *ba* NP is derived. For instance, it has bearings on the debate between Goodall (1989) and Huang (1992a), 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 (75) where the *ba* NP corresponds to the subject of a resultative complement. The works mentioned [debated whether](#) the *ba* sentence in (75a) is derived from (75b) and (75a') from (75b') by the raising of the subject of the resultative complement to become the *ba* NP (see Sybesma 1999: 158-159 for relevant examples and section 2.2.2 for relevant discussions):

(75) 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).'

- a'. ta ba huli wen-de luchu-le yiba.
 he Ba fox ask-De reveal-Le tail
 'He interrogated such that the fox revealed its secrets.'
- 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).'
- b'. ta wen-de huli luchu-le yiba.
 he ask-De fox reveal-Le tail
 'He interrogated such that the fox revealed its secrets.'

The proponents of the raising analysis such as Goodall and Sybesma argue [for raising on the basis of the fact](#) that *tieshu kai hua* 'iron tree open flower' and *huli luchu yiba* 'fox reveal tail' are idiomatic expressions indicating that a highly unlikely event has happened and that the truth has come out respectively. In contrast, Huang argues that the relevant *ba* sentences involve a control structure and the seemingly idiomatic expressions [actually just involve](#) figurative speech, with 'iron tree' possibly referring to an 'iron-hearted father' and 'fox' referring to a sly person.

One needs to be cautious of what conclusion can be drawn from [this](#) data. Such data 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 (75) 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.

Our generalization in (29), in principle, prohibits the derivation of a *ba* NP raised from within a resultative complement, because a *ba* NP must be a V-object or a V'-object. (29), however, does not preclude the possibility of a *ba* NP being derived by a raising process. It is just that the raising must apply to a V-object or a V'-object and not the subject of a resultative complement; otherwise, sentences such as (70b), (71b) and (74a) would be acceptable. The analysis of (75a-b) should, then, not be the one proposed by Goodall, according to which the *ba* NP is raised from the subject of the complement clause. Instead, Huang's analysis is [more](#) adequate, according to which the idiom-like expressions are not true idioms but figurative expressions. That this conclusion is correct [is](#) supported by the fact that *tieshu* 'iron-tree' and *huli* 'fox' can [occur](#) independent of their predicate (and retain the figurative interpretation), as in (75c-c'), unlike true idiomatic expressions whose components are not allowed to be generated independently without losing their idiomatic interpretation such as (75d-d):

- (75) c. ta ba tieshu shuifu-le ma?
 he Ba iron-tree persuade Question
 'Did he persuade the iron tree (the iron-hearted one)?'
- c'. ta ba huli wen-wan-le ma?
 he Ba fox ask-finish-Le Question
 'Has he finished interrogating the fox (the sly one)?'
- cf.
 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 (75a, a') cannot be derived by directly raising the subject of the complement clause to the *ba* NP position does not argue against a general raising analysis which says that a *ba* NP can be raised from a V-object or V'-object position. We will show in section 4 that our proposal for the structure of the *ba* construction forces us to allow such a raising process, which will be supported by facts involving true idiomatic expressions.

Having discussed the syntactic properties of each of the components of a *ba* construction as in (1a-b), we should be able to establish appropriate syntactic structures for the *ba* construction. Before we proceed, however, we would like to bring in one more set of data --- comparisons with the Taiwanese counterpart, the *ka* pattern, which will help with the characterization of the relevant structures **in Mandarin** because of their close similarities and important differences.

3. Cross-dialectal comparison with Taiwanese

A Mandarin *ba* sentence has a counterpart in Taiwanese, with *ba* replaced by *ka*, illustrated by the Mandarin example in (76a) and its counterpart in Taiwanese in (76b):⁴⁵

(76) a. ta ba wo ma san-ci le.
 he Ba me scold three-times Le
 'He scolded me three times.'

cf.

b. i ka gua meN saN-pai a.
 he Ka me scold three-times Particle
 'He scolded me three times.'

The two constructions share the form [Subject + *ba/ka* + NP + VP] and most of the important 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 is allowed in more contexts than a *ba* sentence.

There are three major differences between the Mandarin *ba* construction and the Taiwanese *ka* construction.⁴⁶ The first major difference is that, in contrast to the prohibition against a bare verb in Mandarin *ba* sentences (i.e., the X-factor, a postverbal or preverbal element required to accompany a bare verb, such as those listed in (63-64)), Taiwanese easily allows a bare verb to occur in the *ka* construction when the verb takes an affected object (see section 5.1). The following perfectly acceptable *ka* sentences, for instance, use only a bare verb after the *ka* NP.

(77) i ka gua pha/peN/meN.
 I Ka me hit/cheat/scold
 'He hit/cheated/scolded me.'

⁴⁵ The sound symbol *N* in the Taiwanese examples represents nasalization of the preceding vowel.

⁴⁶ In addition, *ka* in Taiwanese can be a beneficiary marker, which is not available for *ba*.

The second difference is that it is not always possible for a *ka* sentence in Taiwanese to have a non-*ka* counterpart, in contrast to Mandarin which always has a non-*ba* counterpart for a *ba* sentence. For instance, the following *ka* sentences do not have a non-*ka* counterpart.

- (78) a. li m-hoN 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.'
- b. li na kaN ka gua tsao, gua teo ho
 you if dare Ka me leave I then let
 li ho-khuaN.
 you good-look
 'If you dare to leave on me, I will show you the consequence.'

In these cases, *ka* is necessary to give an interpretation to the *ka* NP, which is not at all related to the thematic structure of the verb. In other words, **one** difference between *ka* and *ba* is that the former, but not the latter, can assign a thematic role to the *ka* NP independently.

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

- (79) *ka tsit-te ba, li siN tshe-tseh-le.
 Ka this-Cl meat you first cut-cut-Particle
 'Cut the meat first.'

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

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| (80) | <i>ba</i> structures | <i>ka</i> structures |
| i. | bare verbs disallowed | bare verbs allowed |
| ii. | non- <i>ba</i> counterpart always available | non- <i>ka</i> counterpart sometimes unavailable |
| iii. | a <i>ba</i> NP is thematically related to the following V or V' (a V-object or V'-object) | a <i>ka</i> NP need not be thematically related to the following V or V' and can be thematically related to <i>ka</i> |
| iv. | <i>ba</i> and the <i>ba</i> NP preposable as a unit | <i>ka</i> and the <i>ka</i> NP not preposable as a unit |

The comparisons between *ba* and *ka* constructions will help us determine appropriate syntactic (phrase) structures for these constructions.

4. Structures

The important syntactic facts that need to be captured by an adequate phrase structure for the *ba* construction are

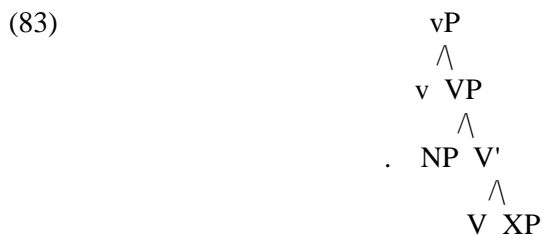
- (81) i. a *ba* sentence has a non-*ba* counterpart,
 ii. *ba* and the *ba* NP normally do not form a unit syntactically, but they do so in some cases.
 In both cases, however, **no element can intervene between** *ba* and the *ba* NP,
 iii. what follows *ba* is a VP that contains an X and a V, and
 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 (see the discussions in section 2.2). When *ba* heads its own projection, its complement should be a maximal category (the bare phrase structures in the Minimalist Program, see Chomsky 1995). (82) is therefore a potential partial structure for a *ba* sentence, 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 discussed extensively 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. Indeed, if the label *baP* is replaced by vP or VP, the structure is a regular verb phrase like Chomsky's vP structures or Larson's VP shell structures. 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.

(84) 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:

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

In other words, *ba* may be taken as the spell-out of a small v in Chomsky's sense (or a higher V in Larsonian VP shell structures). 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 (82) seems to capture the properties in (81). We saw how the *ba* and non-*ba* counterpart are derived. *Ba* heads a projection and nothing can intervene between *ba* and the *ba*

NP if *ba* assigns Case to the *ba* NP and Case assignment obeys an adjacency condition (Stowell 1981). However, 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*:

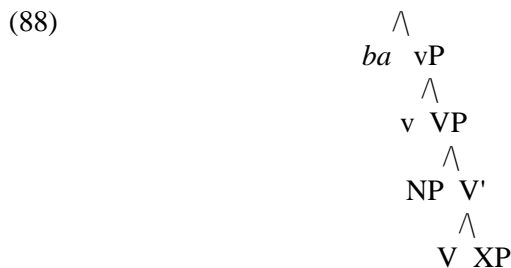
- (86) a. wo xiaoxin-de ba beizi na-gei-ta.
 I carefully Ba cup take-to-him
 'I gave the cup to him carefully.'
- b. wo ba beizi xiaoxin-de na-gei-ta.
 I Ba cup carefully take-to-him
 'I gave the cup to him carefully.'

If (82)/(83) is the structure, it means that a manner adverb should be able to adjoin to either V' or some node higher than the *ba*P in (83) or vP in (84). Such adverb placement possibilities predict that the non-*ba* counterpart, after V raised to v, such as (87a-b) below, should be acceptable. However, (87b) is not acceptable.⁴⁷ An adverb must occur to the left of a verb.

- (87) 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 (86b) and (87b) casts doubt on the adequacy of a structure like (82)/(83), with v spelled out as *ba* or as the landing site of V-to-v raising.

The distribution of adverbs illustrated in (86) and (87) indicates that *ba* must be higher than the landing site of the raised main verb; i.e., higher than vP in (83):

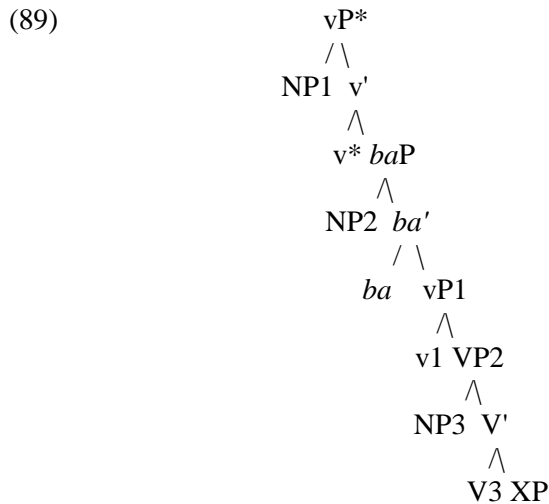


In such a structure, an adverb is adjoined to vP (or an intermediate projection v', or some other node higher than vP). For a non-*ba* sentence, an adverb appears on the left of the main verb after

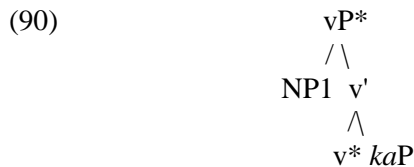
⁴⁷ One may argue that the distribution of adverbs can be captured by an analysis that assumes adverbs must be licensed by a head that is lexically filled. When *ba* occurs, an adverb can be licensed by the main verb occurring in the lower V position or by *ba* in the higher v position. When V-to-v-raising 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.

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).

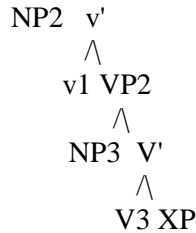
The structure in (88) solves the problem with adverb placement. However, it raises the question of where the *ba* NP must be positioned. It certainly cannot be the NP in (88). The *ba*-NP and *ba* can never be separated by any element. The structure in (88) would wrongly allow the main verb to occur 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.⁴⁸



In this structure, vP1 is the verb phrase that follows the *ba* NP; NP2? is the most likely candidate to host a *ba* NP and NP1, the external argument of the sentence. To derive the correct word order, *ba* is raised to v*, V3 is raised to v1. (A non-*ba* sentence only has the projection up to vP1.) 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 a *ba* construction, and accommodates the facts regarding the distribution of adverbials in a *ba* construction and a non-*ba* counterpart. This structure, however, seems to suggest that *ba* is very much like a verb in the sense that both are dominated by a v (v1 for V and v* for *ba* in (89)). On the other hand, we mentioned earlier in section 2.2 that *ba* is not a verb. Are these two facts in contradiction with each other? They are not, if we consider the behavior of *ka* in a *ka* construction, the Taiwanese counterpart of the Mandarin *ba* construction. Recall that, in contrast to a *ba* sentence which always has a non-*ba* counterpart, a *ka* sentence need not have a non-*ka* counterpart. Correspondingly, *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 which were serial verb constructions. The structure in (89) reflects such properties faithfully. (89), thus, should be adopted for the *ka* construction:



⁴⁸ This is the structure adopted in work in progress by James Huang, Audrey Li and Yafei Li.



Adverbials are placed at the *v* level (for instance, adjoined to *v'*). A *ba* NP (NP2) in this structure is not within the maximal projection of *ba*, 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) makes it possible to cliticize *ba* to the *ba* NP, making the two behave as a unit (81ii), which, if true, also accounts for why *ka + NP do not behave as a single unit* in Taiwanese (80iv).

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 their thematic-assigning capability. This difference is reflected in the presence of a *v* projection for *ka*, but not for *ba*. The two structures, (90) for *ka* sentences and (92) for *ba* sentences, accommodate the generalizations in (80).

Note that the structure in (92) 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 a *ba* NP is an inner object (object of *V*) or an outer object (assigned a theta-role by *V* and its complement). In other words, the *ba* NP is generated in either NP3 (*V'*-object) or XP (*V*-object) position in (92). On the surface, a *ba* NP occurs in NP2 position in (92). This indicates that a *ba* NP must be derived by a raising process (see the discussion regarding (75) in section 2.5). The raising, however, can only originate from a *V*-object or *V'*-object position; it cannot originate from the subject position of a complement clause. Note that the *ba* NP, NP2, is still within the extended maximal projection of *V* (*v*P). 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 is 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).⁵⁰

A raising analysis to derive the *ba* NP is supported by the fact that an object NP of a verb+object [*V + NP*] idiomatic expression, as in (93a-d), can become a *ba* NP, as in (94a-d).

- (93) a. ta zhan-qu-le pianyi
 he take-go-Le advantage
 'He took advantage.'
- b. ta kai-wan-le dao
 he open-finish-Le knife

⁵⁰ Such a prohibition can be phrased as follows: an NP within the thematic domain of a head cannot be raised to a position within the thematic domain of another head.

'He finished the operation.'

c. bie you-huai-le mo
don't hu-bad-Le -mor
'Don't humor badly (humorous in the wrong way).'

d. 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.'

(94) a. ta ba pianyi zhan-qu-le.
he Ba advantage take-go-Le
'He took advantage.'

b. ta ba dao kai-wan-le.
he Ba knife open-finish-Le
'He finished the operation.'

c. bie ba mo you-huai-le.
don't Ba -mor hu-bad-Le
'Don't humor badly (humorous in the wrong way).'

d. 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 (80). What is left is the contrast between the acceptability of a bare verb for a *ka* sentence and the unacceptability of such a form for a *ba* sentence. Why is it, then, that a *ba* sentence in Mandarin cannot allow a bare verb? It is possible to trace this constraint 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 by the contrast in the following pairs of sentences.

(95) a. *wo zuotian zhe-ge zhuozi ca.
I yesterday this-Cl table wipe
'I, this table, wiped yesterday.'

cf.

b. wo zuotian zhe-ge zhuozi ca-le.
I yesterday this-Cl table wipe-Le
'I, this table, wiped yesterday.'

c. *zhe-ge zhuozi, wo zuotian ca.
this-Cl table I yesterday wipe
'This table, I wiped yesterday.'

cf.

- d. zhe-ge zhuozi, wo zuotian ca-le.
 this-Cl table I yesterday wipe-Le
 'This table, I wiped yesterday.'

Why is it, then, that the focus of the literature has been on the unacceptability of a bare verb in a *ba* sentence 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:

- (96) 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.'

Crucially, however, the bare verb in these cases occurs with a negation or modal word. Phonologically, they form a unit. In a corresponding *ba* sentence, however, a modal or a negation must occur before *ba*. The inability of a negation or modal word to follow *ba* and directly precede the V makes it impossible to test if, indeed, a *ba* sentence has different constraints than a non-*ba* sentence concerning the acceptability of bare verbs. There is, however, a context where the sharpness of the contrast between a *ba* sentence and a non-*ba* sentence with respect to the acceptability of a bare verb is greatly reduced: the context of listing.

- (97) 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.'

Moreover, there are some two-morpheme verbs which are difficult to decompose into an [activity + result] compound but **which** can occur in a *ba* pattern without an X:

- (97) c. ta keneng ba ta qiang-jian ma?
 he can Ba she force-rape Question
 'Was it possible that he raped her?'
- d. ta keneng ba ni xiao-kan ma?

- he can Ba you small-look Question
'Is it possible that he despises you?'
- e. ta bu ba wo ying-bi cai kuai!
he not Ba me force-force then strange
'It would be strange if he doesn't force me!'
- f. wo bu hui ba ta yi-wang de!
I not will Ba it miss-forget De
'I won't forget it!'

Typical [activity + result] compound verbs, including those with the result part grammaticalized to become an aspect-like suffix (cf. 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 *qiang-jian* 'rape', *xiao-kan* 'despise', *ying-bi* 'force' and *yi-wang* 'forget' in (97c-f) do not allow such an infix. (97c-f) seem to demonstrate that bare verbs can occur in a *ba* pattern, just like (97b).

Despite these examples, it, in general, is still marginal for a bare verb to appear in a *ba* pattern. In addition, (97b) is not consistently accepted among native speakers and the verbs in (97c-d) still consist of two morphemes. These considerations are in sharp contrast to Taiwanese which readily allows a bare verb in a *ka* construction. One may propose to subsume the strong tendency to avoid a bare verb in a *ba* pattern to some more general phenomenon such as certain interactions(sp.) between prosody and syntax as suggested by Feng 1995, which may be specific to Mandarin, but not Taiwanese. We will not speculate further for a solution here for lack of a better understanding of the contrast except pointing out that such a contrast cannot be a difference of interpretation: both *ba* and *ka* sentences must have an "affectedness" interpretation (see further discussions in section 5.1).

4.5. Over-generation

The investigation of each of the components of a *ba* sentence (1a-b), coupled with the cross-dialectal comparison between a *ba* sentence in Mandarin and a *ka* sentence in Taiwanese suggested the structure in (90) and (92). They capture the properties of *ba*-sentences as in (81i-iv) and the relation between a *ba* sentence and a *ka* sentence, in contrast to their non-*ba*/non-*ka* counterpart, when available, as in (80i-iv).

Our proposal may have answered the question of what structure adequately represents the *ba* construction. However, it has not addressed the issue that has been the focus of attention of most linguists interested in this construction: the conditions on when a *ba* sentence can be used. Note that the structure proposed in (90) or (92) greatly over-generates. The following are just some of the many unacceptable *ba* sentences that can be generated by the structure proposed.

- (98) 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. *ta ba na-difang dao-le.
he Ba that-place arrive-Le

'He arrived at that place.'

- d. *wo ba jiu he-zui-le
I Ba alcohol drink-drunk-Le
'I got drunk from drinking.'
- e. *ta yijing ba mei-jian-shi dou zhidao-le
he already Ba every-Cl-matter all know-Le
'He already knows everything.'
- f. *tufei ba ta baifang-le fuqin.
bandit Ba him visit-Le father
'The bandit visited his father.'

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, Tsai 1987), semantic-pragmatics (transitivity, disposal, affectedness, see L. Wang 1945, 1947, H. Wang 1957, Chao 1968, Hashimoto 1971, Thompson 1973, Y. 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). We will show in the next section that, although all these approaches accommodate the core cases of *ba* sentences fairly well, all structurally formulated solutions fail to adequately account for the range of data that must be considered. We will show that the constraints on the use of *ba* sentences can be better dealt with in semantic-pragmatic terms rather than in precise structural terms.

5. Constraints

Among the approaches based on information structure, semantic-pragmatics, aspect and event structures, we will concentrate on the last three and show how each of them accounts for the constraints on the core instances of *ba* sentences but attempts [at](#) precise grammatical formulations [inevitably](#) fail.⁵¹

5.1. A semantic-pragmatic account

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, a *ba* sentence is a construction denoting "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 other postverbal or preverbal elements (the X in (1)) in a *ba* construction. For instance, even though in many cases the *ba* NP is the object of the main verb in preverbal position,⁵² as

⁵¹ We will not discuss the approach based on information structures because it is hard to find convincing accounts of this type in the literature based on a clearly defined theory of information structures. Moreover, as shown in the text, the choice of the *ba* NP, the choice of verbs and the type of X in (1a-b) affect the acceptability of a *ba* sentence. It is difficult to see how this can be captured by an account based on notions of topic-comment or presupposition-focus.

⁵² Chao (1968:343) sometimes refers to the *ba* sentence as a "Pretransitive" construction. This construction is "a special form of the V-V series [which] has a first verb, the pretransitive, and an object, which ordinarily would be the object of the V-V series. For this reason, this object of the pretransitive is often regarded as a form of the inverted object." This definition of the *ba* construction is closest to the structural description given in (92) and the generalization in (29) (a *ba* NP must be a V or V'-object).

illustrated in (99), the "special meaning" of the *ba* construction prevents all transitive verbs from preposing their object as a *ba* NP, such as (100).

(99) 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.'

(100)a. *wo ba ta xihuan-le.
I Ba him like
'I like him (now, became fond of him).'

cf. b. wo xihuan ta-le.
I like him-Le
'I like him (now, became fond of him).'

The intuition regarding the unacceptability of sentences like (100a) is that such sentences do not express the handling or manipulation of something (recall the original meaning of *ba*); 'he' is not manipulated or dealt with by 'my liking him'. The *ba* NP is not affected by 'my liking him'. This contrasts with (99a) which expresses the notion that the *ba* NP 'the orange' was manipulated: it was peeled.

Such an intuition is behind the terms for this construction that have been quite widely used in the literature: the "disposal" or "executive" construction (*chuzhi shi*, see L. Wang 1954). These terms are to capture the intuition that the *ba* construction, ideally, is to describe something being "disposed of" or some action was taken on the *ba* NP. In the words by L. 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 by Y.-C. Li [1974:200-201]). According to Teng (1974), this interpretation property accounts for why it is most common for the *ba* NP to be a Patient (affected) NP. Frei (1955) and Teng (1974) refer to this construction as the ergative or accusative construction to highlight the fact that the "object" of *ba* generally is a patient (affected). In a word, *ba* is a marker of the thematic role "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 of the verb exerted upon the object (see, for instance, L. Wang 1954, H. Wang 1957, Chao 1968, Hashimoto 1971, Thompson 1973, Y.-C. Li, 1974, Li and Thompson 1981, Tsee 1986, M. Wang 1987). The "affectedness" interpretation can be better understood by 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: (101a) expresses that the pot is affected and (101b), the water.

(101) 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 some entity that is "affected," "manipulated," or "dealt with." Extensions have been made to accommodate more *ba* 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) explain that sentences such as (102-103), which contain emotive or psychological (stative) verbs normally not occurring in a *ba* pattern, are acceptable when the postverbal intensifier is added. The intensity of the emotion can imply disposal. In (102), 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" (p. 469). The added expression *yao si* 'want to die' in (103) "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" (p.469).

(102) 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.'

(103) 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 an image must be on the speaker's mind only, because the *ba* NP, the one that is missed in (102), need not even know that he is missed. Thus, (102) can be followed by (104a). The subject, the one that misses the *ba* NP in (102), need not know the extent, either, as illustrated by the acceptability of (104b).

(104)a. ni keneng bu zhidao-ba!
 you probably not know-Par
 'Probably you don't know.'

b. ta keneng bu zhidao ta yijing ba ni xiang-de feng-le.
 he probably not know-Par he already Ba you miss-De crazy-Le
 'Probably he doesn't know that he already missed you so much that he **went** crazy.'

In brief, among all the different terms to label the *ba* construction, there seems to be an intuition expressed in the majority of works that this construction expresses some loose notion of "affectedness" --- the *ba* NP being affected in some way. The "affectedness" need not be physical: it can be emotional or simply imaginary.

Such a special meaning is so typical of the *ba* construction that it can make a distinction in interpretation between a *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart. This can be illustrated by the behavior of idiomatic expressions. The following examples show that an object part of a [V + O] idiomatic expression can become a *ba* NP:

(105) a. ta ba pianyi zhan-qu-le.
 he Ba advantage take-go-Le
 'He took advantage.'

- b. ta ba dao kai-wan-le.
 he Ba knife open-finish-Le
 'He finished the operation.'
- c. bie ba mo you-huai-le.
 don't Ba -mor hu-bad-Le
 'Don't humor badly.'
- d. ta ba wanxiao kai-de-guohuo-le.
 he Ba joke open-De-excessive-Le
 'He overdid the joking.'
- e. 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.'

The use of the *ba* construction in these sentences seems to favor an understanding that something is affected or disposed of (in a loose sense). For instance, (105a) states that the advantage has been taken by him (abstractly). (105b) says that the operation has been performed. In a way, *dao* 'knife' is equated to 'operation' and *kai* 'open' to 'perform (operation)'. In (105c), even though *youmo* is a transliteration of the English word *humor*, it seems possible to understand the sentence as this: the humorous stuff that he will be telling/acting (i.e., the -mor that he hu-ed) goes bad. In (105d), the joke that he made has gone overboard. (105e) can be interpreted as the pee gets peed fast. All of them imply a very loose notion of "affectedness/disposal."

In addition to the effect on the general interpretation of this pattern, the notion of "affectedness/disposal" provides some understanding of the constraints on the types of *ba* NPs and predicates, which include a V and an X in (1a-b).

5.1.3. Constraints on *ba* NPs

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

5.1.3.1. Existence

There is a strong tendency that the entity denoted by the *ba* NP exists in the speaker's conceptual world before the activity/event takes place. If it does not exist, generally a *ba* NP is not acceptable. Let us clarify these remarks by the following pairs of examples:

- (106) a. *ta ba zhuyi xiang-dao-le
 he Ba idea think-arrive-Le
 'He thought of the idea.'
- b. ta ba diannao mai-le
 he Ba computer sell-Le
 'He sold the computer.'

The contrast between (106a) and (106b) can be accounted for in the following manner: an idea does not exist before it is thought of but a computer must exist before it is sold.

The existence can simply be a conceptual existence, rather than a physical one. For instance, the concept of what a hole should be can exist before the hole is dug up and takes the desired shape. In contrast, if one breaks a hole, one normally does not have a pre-conception of the hole.

(107) 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.'

In the world we know, a hole comes into existence as a result of breaking, which is incompatible with the existence requirement of a *ba* NP. This is especially clear when words expressing the lack of intention like 'unintentionally, carelessly' are added to (107b).

(107) c. *ta bu-xiaoxin ba dong da-po-le.
 he not-careful Ba hole hit-break-Le
 'He broke the hole carelessly (unintentionally).'

More generally, **no** creation verbs are quite compatible with a *ba* NP, unless, the *ba* NP expresses a conceptual existence before the event/action takes place. This is why a *ba* sentence is not acceptable with verbs like *faxian* 'discover' or *faming* 'invent':

(108) 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.'

Similarly, the unacceptability of sentences like (109a-b) can be attributed to the existence requirement. Generally, the object of seeing or hearing comes into the existence only after the seeing or hearing. A *ba* sentence is not acceptable.

(109) a. *wo ba ta kan-dao-le.
 I Ba he see-arrive-Le
 'I saw him.'

b. *wo ba ta ting-dao-le.
 I Ba he listen-arrive-Le
 'I heard him.'

In contrast, if my intention is to touch him (as in a game), the following sentence can be acceptable because the existence of 'him' is in my mind before my touching him.

(109) c. wo ba ta mo-dao-le! wo ying-le!
 I Ba he touch-arrive-Le I win-Le

'I touched him! I won!'

5.1.3.2. Specificity

A great majority of the literature on *ba* constructions claims that a *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 (see the discussions in section 5.2 on the revision of such a claim). Examples frequently quoted are those *ba* NPs (i) which are a bare NP and cannot be interpreted as indefinite and (ii) *those* which are a number + classifier expression and cannot be interpreted as indefinite. Bare NPs and number+classifier expressions can be interpreted as indefinite in some other contexts such as a postverbal object position:

Bare NP:

- (110) a. qing ni ba bi gei wo.
 please you Ba pen give me
 'Please give me the pen.' ---definite reading
 *'Please give me a pen.' ---indefinite reading unavailable

cf.

- b. qing ni gei wo bi.
 please you give me pen
 'Please give me the pen.' ---definite reading
 'Please give me a pen.' ---indefinite reading

[Number + classifier + noun] expressions generally are interpreted as non-specific and therefore unacceptable as a *ba* NP:

- (111) a. *qing ni ba san-zhi bi gei wo.
 please you Ba three-Cl pen give me
 'Please give me three pens.'

cf.

- b. qing ni gei wo san-zhi bi.
 please you give me three-Cl. pen
 'Please give me three pens.'

- (112) a. *ta ba shi-duo-ben shu mai-le.
 he Ba ten-more-Cl book buy-Le
 'He bought ten-plus books.'

- b. ta mai-le shi-duo-ben shu.
 he buy-Le ten-more-Cl book
 'He bought ten-plus books.'

(111a) and (112a) are not acceptable because 'three pens' and 'ten plus books' generally cannot be interpreted as specific.

When such expressions are interpreted as specific, such as adding the universal quantifier *dou*, they can serve as a *ba* NP:

- (113) qing ni ba san-zhi bi dou gei wo.
 please you Ba three-Cl pen all give me
 'Please give me all three pens.'

Sybesma (1999, 142) notes that, in the terms of Barwise and Cooper (1981), the *ba*-NP must be strong.⁵³

In these two subsections, we stated that "existence" and "specificity" are strong tendencies regarding a *ba* NP. 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 the notion of "affectedness." We attempt to describe the general applications of "affectedness" next.

5.1.3.3. Affectedness

The "disposal" interpretation is also claimed to be responsible for the unacceptability of having a *ba* NP like (114a), in contrast to the one in (114b): a language is not manipulated or dealt with when one reads things in that language. A sentence can be tackled with (figuratively) by reading it in entirety.

- (114) a. *wo ba Zhongwen nian-le san-xiaoshi-le.
 I Ba Chinese read-Le three-hour-Le
 'I read Chinese for three hours.'
- cf.
- a'. wo nian Zhongwen nian-le san-xiaoshi-le.
 I read 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, it may help capture the contrast between the acceptability of sentences like those in (115a-b) and the unacceptability of those in (115c-e): it is easier to think of 'a key' being affected, because of its displacement by being forgotten, dropped or lost (115a) and a ball game being claimed by winning (115b). (115b) can be further contrasted with (115c) which is harder to be interpreted as "affected" if one simply participates in a ball game. For (115d-e), it is harder to think of a place being affected when one arrives at or leaves the place.

- (115) a. wo ba yaoshi wang/diu/yishi-le
 I Ba key forget/drop/lose-Le
 'I forgot/dropped/lost the key.'
- b. wo yiding neng ba qiusai ying-le.
 I certainly can Ba ball-game win-Le
 'I certainly can win the ball game.'

⁵³ Chao (1968, 344) notes 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 1955b] 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."

- c. *ta jingran ba qiu-sai canjia-le
 he unexpectedly Ba ball-game participate-Le
 'Unexpectedly, he played the ball game.'
- d. *ta ba na-difang dao-le.
 he Ba that-place arrive-Le
 'He arrived at that place.'
- e. *ta ba na-difang likai-le henjiu-le.
 he Ba that-place leave-Le long time-Le
 'He left that place for a long time.'

The "affectedness" interpretation also helps determine the syntactic position a *ba* NP originates in. It has been suggested that a *ba* NP is an outer object when it is not an inner object of the verb, as discussed in section 2.3.2. The so-called outer object receives an "affected" theta-role. The clearer the "affected" interpretation, the easier it is to make an "affected NP" and an acceptable *ba* sentence.

In (116a), killing a person's father naturally affects this person (particularly in a patriarchal culture) and, therefore, a *ba* sentence is quite acceptable. On the other hand, visiting someone's father normally does not affect that person and a *ba* sentence is not acceptable (116b). (116c) and (116d) illustrate the same contrast in affectedness and acceptability.

- (116) 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.'
- c. women ba ta guai-zou-le xiaohai.
 we Ba him swindle-off-Le child
 'We swindled off his child (and he was affected).'
- d. *women ba ta tanlun-le xiaohai.
 we Ba him discuss-Le child
 'We discussed his child.'

As mentioned earlier, the contrast between the pairs of sentences above is important in another sense: it shows that bearing 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 which is interpreted as "affected," along the lines of the discussion on the constraints of the thematic relation between a *ba* NP and the V/V' in section 2.5.

For double object structures, the choice of a direct object or an 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*:

- (117) a. wo jiao ta Zhongwen.
I teach 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.'

Y.-H. A. Li (1990) argues that the use of *gei* expresses transaction. (117a) does not allow the occurrence of *gei* because a language cannot be transferred to someone. That is, a language cannot be given to someone. On the other hand, the secret of success can be given to someone. The possibility of transaction is expressed by the possibility of using *gei*. This is correlated with the use of *ba*: if something can be transferred, it can be affected in terms of its location being changed.

The same is true with 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 can not be the indirect object because it is the direct object that is transferred, not the indirect object, as illustrated by (117c-d). The cases where an indirect object of a double object structure can be a *ba* NP are verbs like *wen* 'ask', *fa* 'fine', *qiang* 'rob', *tou* 'steal', *hua* 'spend, cost'. These are verbs that do not occur with *gei* and the direct object cannot be a *ba* NP. The "affected" interpretation seems to be the driving force for the use of the indirect object of such verbs as a *ba* NP. The indirect object of *fa*, *qiang*, *tou* and *hua* expresses someone that is fined, robbed, stolen something from or whose money has been spent, all qualified as someone that is affected.

- (118) ta ba wo fa/qiang/tou/hua-le shi-kuai qian.
he Ba I fine/rob/steal/cost ten-dollar money
'He fined/robbed/stole/fined/cost me ten dollars/ten dollars from me.'

An indirect object of such double object structures without *gei* cannot always become a *ba* NP, however, 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 (119), he may be affected emotionally by being asked so many difficult questions. An "affectedness" interpretation obtains and a *ba* construction is available.

- (119) 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 much less likely that asking for directions would affect the person being asked.

- (120) ??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 it is made clear that asking for directions affects the one being asked, such as being emotionally disturbed by such questions.

- (121) 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 rang wo chu-chou!
 Ba I ask-Le direction let me embarrass

'He obviously knows that I am not clear about the directions; yet, he still asked me directions in public, making me embarrassed!'

- (122) zhen lan!!! ta (jingran) ba wo wen-le fangxiang!!!
 really lousy he surprisingly Ba I ask-Le directions
 'A disaster! (How dare he) He asked me directions.'

5.1.4. Constraints on predicates

According to Li and Thompson (1981), 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" (p.489). The function of X in (1), then, is to add to the verb the special "disposal" meaning in order to make an appropriately interpreted *ba* sentence. Different verbs may themselves have different strengths of "disposal." A verb like *sha* 'kill', *da* 'hit', *pian* 'cheat' etc. is easier to have an interpretation according to which its object is affected by the killing, hitting and cheating (stronger disposal interpretation). In contrast, for a verb like *xihuan* 'like', *liaojie* 'understand', *renshi* 'know', it is harder to have such an interpretation (much weaker disposal interpretation). The former, those verbs higher in transitivity and disposal interpretation, generally just need a perfective aspect marker *le* to indicate that the action is carried out and the effect is inflicted on its object. That is, these verbs can appear in a *ba* sentence with the simple addition of a perfective aspect marker *le*. The latter, those low in transitivity and weak in disposal interpretation such as stative verbs, generally are **more difficult** to make **into** a *ba* sentence, even with the help of an X factor. For instance, the addition of a resultative complement, number phrases/aspect marker, Adv, etc. does not make a good *ba* sentence with such verbs in the following cases:

resultative complement

- (123) a. *Lisi ba ta xihuan-de hen gaoxing.
 Lisi Ba he like-De very happy
 'Lisi likes him so much that he is very happy.'

cf.

- b. Lisi xihuan ta shi-de ta hen gaoxing.
 Lisi like he made-De he very happy
 'Lisi likes him so much that he is very happy.'

number phrases/aspect marker

- (124) a. *ta yijing ba Lisi renshi-le sannian-le.
he already Ba Lisi know-Le three-year-Le.
'He already knew Lisi for three years.'

cf.

- b. Lisi, ta yijing renshi-le sannian-le.
like he already know-De three-year-Le.
'Lisi, he already known for three years.'

Adv + V

- (125) a. *wo ba zhe-shi yi-liaojie, jiu lai-le
I Ba this-matter once-understand then come-Le
'I came as soon as I understood this matter.'

cf.

- b. wo yi-liaojie zhe-shi jiu lai-le
I once-understand this-matter then come-Le
'I came as soon as I understood this matter.'

However, it is not impossible to find instances with the low-transitivity stative verbs making a good *ba* sentence with the help of an appropriate X, such as (68-69) discussed in section 2.5 (the adjectival verb *re* 'hot', *leng* 'cold' are stative verbs) and the following one from Li and Thompson (1981: 470, example (30)).

- (126) 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, i.e., it fits in a non-physical, imaginary affectedness interpretation.

Such a "disposal/affectedness" account probably can also accommodate the fact noted in 2.4.8 that a descriptive phrase is the only type of elements that can occur in a postverbal position but does not make a good *ba* sentence. The examples are (65a-b), repeated here.

- (65) a. ta jintian-de gongke xie-de hen kuai.
he today homework write-De very fast
'He wrote today's homework fast.'
- b. *ta ba jintian-de gongke xie-de hen kuai.
he Ba today homework write-De very fast
'He wrote today's homework fast.'

The form [V + de + descriptive] is interpreted like a descriptive adjective. There have been debates in the literature on whether the verb or the descriptive phrase (the postverbal adjective) is the main verb of the sentence structurally (see C.-T. Huang 1982, 1988, C.R. Huang 1987, Li 1985, 1990, among others). What we claim here is that, semantically speaking, 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 (stative verb) with respect to situation types. For instance, just like an adjective cannot occur in a command, neither can [V + de + descriptive]:

- (127) 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:

- (128) 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.'

The form [V + de + descriptive] is not an accomplishment or achievement verb phrase either because it does not have an end point and it does not occur in the pattern of completion in a certain amount of time:

- (129) *ta zai yi-ge-xiaoshi-nei gongke xie-de hen kuai.
 he at one-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, this pattern tends not to accept a *ba* form, just like other adjectival predicates or stative verbs, as we saw earlier.

In brief, the addition of a postverbal or preverbal element is to make the affectedness interpretation more salient and render a *ba* sentence more acceptable. The strength of the "disposal/affectedness" interpretation of verbs interacts with the need of the X-factor. For verbs with strong "disposal/affectedness" interpretation, an aspect marker is sufficient. For verbs with weak or no "disposal/affectedness" interpretation, an X may not be sufficient to draw out an affectedness interpretation and a *ba* sentence is still unacceptable. Such a vague notion of disposal/affectedness plays an important role in the acceptability of *ba* sentences. Indeed, the notion of "disposal/affectedness" has dominated the approaches to the constraints on the *ba* construction. The vagueness of the notion also leads to the claim that the acceptability of a *ba* sentence sometimes is not absolute. It is only relatively better or worse as a *ba* sentence. This conception can be best summarized by Li and Thompson's (1981: 487) conditions on the use of the *ba* construction as a continuum:

(130)	<i>ba</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>ba</i>
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	impossible	unlikely	likely	obligatory

	indefinite or nonreferential object		definite and highly prominent object	
	no disposal		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" (p.484). They further provide support for their continuum in (130) on the basis of statistics: the more elements *that* are added to elaborate the nature of disposal, the more likely *are* the sentences *to* appear in the *ba* form. For instance, in their data that produced 83 *ba* sentences, none of them were verbs that were reduplicated or only followed by *zhe* (which have little "disposal" meaning added, according to them). Only 6 or 7 percent out of 83 sentences were sentences ended with just *V-le*. They also suggest that the continuum may capture the fact that speakers tend to disagree on the acceptability of certain *ba* sentences, especially those that are less clear on their disposal nature, i.e., those in the middle of the continuum.

In short, although it is doubtful that there are obligatory *ba* sentences (all *ba* sentences can have a non-*ba* counterpart), the continuum in (130) does express explicitly the complexity of *ba* sentences: whereas speakers can agree quite readily on the best examples and the least likely examples for this pattern (the two extremes), the judgment is not clear especially on those cases that fall between the two extremes.

5.1.5. Summary

A great majority of the literature on *ba* constructions focuses on the usage of *ba* sentences by expounding on the notion "affectedness/disposal," which states that the *ba* NP is the NP that is disposed of, dealt with, manipulated, affected in some way (physical or non-physical imaginary), is responsible for the requirements on the types of *ba* NPs and predicates required in this pattern. As described in this section, 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 common world, 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 comprehensible. 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? 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 affected and unacceptable as a *ba* sentence? Under both situations, the *ba* NP, the one that is missed or taken after, does not even need to be aware that he/she is missed/taken after.

- (131) 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.'

- (132) 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.'
- cf.
- c. xiaohai xiang ta xiang-de yao si.
 child resemble 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 (131b), he is always in control and he will not be the affected one even in non-physical, imaginary sense. Such an "explanation," however, will always be fuzzy, uncertain, unpredictable and even circulatory in some cases. However, this does highlight the fuzziness and uncertainty of some uses of this construction. As mentioned, speakers often disagree on their judgments of *ba* sentences, especially those fall in between the two extremes in (130). Moreover, the same speaker may also make very different judgment according to different contexts. For instance, although a sentence like (133a) below is judged not quite acceptable normally, it 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'. Under such circumstances, (133b) can be uttered with total disgust and disbelief, as noted earlier.

- (133) a. ??ta ba wo wen-le fangxiang.
 he Ba I ask-Le directions
 'He asked me directions.'
- b. ta (jingran) ba wo wen-le fangxiang!!!
 he surprisingly Ba I ask-Le directions
 '(How dare he) He asked me directions.'

The vagueness and uncertainty, in a way, then, seem to be also an advantage: they reflect the complexity in describing the usage of this pattern. They reflect the uncertainty in speakers' judgments of many such sentences. It gives us a clue as to what the clearest acceptable and unacceptable *ba* cases are and to what would be more unsettling, allowing for more speaker variations and contextual variations. On the other hand, the weakness remains that it is extremely difficult to characterize the properties and claim in precise terms what may *a priori* be called an acceptable or unacceptable *ba* sentence.

It, therefore, would be very desirable to clarify and eliminate the fuzziness and uncertainty in characterizing this pattern, if possible. Indeed, there have been proposals claiming that the notion of "affectedness/disposal" is unnecessary. Within such proposals, the *ba* construction is not unique. It can be subsumed under other more common structures. Constraints on the *ba* construction can be derived from some better-defined structural or semantic properties. These alternative proposals offer insight into this construction from different perspectives and contribute to our understanding of the complex properties of this pattern. Unfortunately, it is the complexity of this pattern, reflected by the continuum in (130), that makes precise structural accounts for this pattern fall short empirically. Above all, there exist many minimal pairs with identical grammatical structures that exhibit different degrees of acceptability as a *ba* sentence because of

different contextual information involved. **It is difficult to make** such contextual information precise in grammatical terms. **This** casts doubt on whether the usage of this pattern can be captured grammatically.