

The most interesting attempts to provide a clearer, more precise grammatical account for the properties of the *ba* construction, in place of a vague notion of "affectedness," are the aspectual approach represented by Liu (1997, also see Szeto 1988, Yong 1993; cf. Zou 1995 for an aspect phrase selected by *ba*) and a structural approach that links the *ba* construction to accomplishment structures proposed by Sybesma (1999). We **examine** these two approaches below, **discuss** their insights and **evaluate** how **effectively** they tackle the complexity of **the** *ba* construction.

## 5.2. An aspectual approach

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

- (134) ta ba yige dahao jihui cuoguo-le.  
 he Ba one-Cl big-good opportunity wrong-pass-Le  
 'He let a great opportunity pass.'

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

### 5.2.1. The analysis

Liu (1997) argues that a *ba* sentence requires its predicate to denote a bounded event or situation - "bounded situations" **are** as defined in (135), **which is** a revised version of boundedness by Dahl (1981) in (136).

- (135) Bounded situations do not have internal stages that are static or stages that can be viewed as such.

Dahl's definition of boundedness

- (136) A class of situations or a characterization of a situation (e.g., a sentence) is bounded if and only if it is an essential condition on the members of the class or an essential part of the characterization that a certain limit or end-state is attained.

The constraints on possible types of NPs and VPs of a *ba* sentence are manifestations of obligatorily expressing a bounded event/situation. Using the term "event" to refer to denotations of predicates, presented in perfective or imperfective aspect, and "situations" to refer to denotations of uninflected predicates, Liu argues that the notion of boundedness can be expressed in two ways: it can be bounded on the basis of the situation denoted by the uninflected predicate (situation type or situational aspect, see Vendler 1967, Dowty 1979, Tai 1984, Teng 1986, Chen 1988, Smith 1991, Yong 1993), or it can be bounded when a situation of an appropriate type is presented in a certain aspect (viewpoint aspect). If the terminal point or resultative state is included in the meaning of the uninflected predicate, then the situation alone will guarantee boundedness. If, however, the terminal point or resultative state is included only when the situation is presented in an appropriate aspect, then a bounded event depends on both the situation and the aspect it is presented in. An appropriate aspect is a completive aspect *-le* or a durative aspect *-zhe* (see the discussions in section 2.4.6). According to Liu, the notion of "bounded situations/events" captures the fact that *ba* sentences generally take the following forms (Liu 1997: 62, (30a-i)):

- (137) a. V + complement

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

According to Liu, all patterns in (137) except those with aspect markers, i.e. (d) and (h), contain predicates which express bounded situations. Evidence for this claim comes from the fact that none of these patterns can occur with the durative marker *zhe*, which is a marker that "presents a continuous and stable situation without regard to endpoints (Smith 1991). It basically marks a situation as stative or resultative" (Liu, 1997: 66). Some of her examples showing the incompatibility of the durative marker *zhe* and the predicates in (137a-c, e-g, i) are repeated here (see Liu's examples (52a-g) in pp.68-69).

- (138) a. \*wo ba wenti kan qingchu-zhe.  
 I Ba question see clear-Zhe  
 'I'm seeing the question clearly.'
- b. \*ta ba jia baochi-zhe-de hen ganjing.  
 he Ba home keep-ZHE-DE very clean  
 'He keeps his home very clean.'
- c. \*wo ba damen shang-zhe suo.  
 I Ba gate put-on-ZHE lock  
 'I'm locking the gate-.'

That such predicates express a bounded situation can be understood along the lines presented in section 2: a result (including resultative complement, directional complement and PP or object) or a number expression provides an end point to the event. For instance, a sentence like *wo bu-hui ba ta ti-tong* 'I will not kick him hurt', the result *tong* 'hurt' provides an end point to the action of kicking. In *wo ba ta ti sanxia/sanjiao* 'I kicked him three times/three kicks', the number expression 'three times/three kicks' provides a terminal point for the action of kicking. An adverbial modifier can also provide an endpoint (137i). Liu uses examples such as the following to illustrate this pattern: (her (59a-b) pp.70-71)

- (139) a. ta zhengzai ba dongxi wang wuli ban.  
 he in-progress Ba things towards room-in move  
 'He is in the process of moving things into the room.'
- b. ta ba tou yi tai.  
 he Ba head one raise  
 'He raised his head up.'

Liu further argues that the constraints on possible *ba* NPs (specificity, existence, see section 5.1.3) can be derived from a dependency relation between the *ba* NP and the predicate "there is a dependency between the *ba* NP argument and the predicate, and boundedness and specificity are different manifestations of a property that holds of the dependency. The dependency can be characterized in terms of a very simple notion in semantics. The idea has been explored in Krifka

(1989) and Dowty (1991), where the way the aspect of telic predicates depends on their NP arguments is captured in terms of a structure-preserving function - a homomorphism" (pp.88-89). Liu suggests to take "the meaning of a *ba* predicate to be a homomorphism that maps the *ba* argument denotations into the domain of events, and the structure that is preserved in this case is the 'all of' relation. For example, *xiewan* 'write and finish' in *ba zhefengxin xiewan* 'write and finish the letter' maps *zhefengxin* 'this letter' to the event writing and finishing this letter. The 'all of' relation that is preserved in the mapping makes sure that all of the letter - the entire letter - is mapped to all of the event, i.e., finishing the letter...When applied to the predicate, the 'all of' relation characterizes the event as bounded since only events that are bounded can enter into the 'all of' relation. Unbounded events like 'know Japanese' cannot be quantified because such events do not have boundaries - beginning point and terminal point - and it does not make sense to consider an 'entire' event of knowing Japanese. Only events with boundaries (both end points) provide a domain for universal quantification. Similarly, when it comes to NP denotation, the 'all of' relation makes sure that the individuals can be quantified by 'all of'. And only G(eneralized)-specific NPs denote individuals that can be quantified by 'all of'" (pp.89-90)

The notion of "G-specific" Liu proposes differs from the notion of "specific" used in other works. According to Liu (1990), G-specific NPs are the NPs that can be scope-independent in object positions. They can occur with the universal quantifier *dou* 'all' in Chinese. The forms they take are given in (140), in contrast to the non-G-specific NPs in (141) (Liu 1997:86):

- (140) definite NPs: demonstrative NPs, pronouns, names  
 universally quantified NPs: *suoyou de* N 'all of the N'  
   *meige* N 'every N'  
*most* N: *daduoshu de* N 'most N'  
   *dabufen de* N 'most N'  
*some* N: *mo xie* N 'certain N'  
 bare numeral Det: *two* N: *liangge* N 'two N'

- (141) decreasing NPs: *shige yixia de* N 'fewer than ten N'  
 modified numeral Det: *shilaige* N 'about ten N'  
   *san wu ge* N 'three to five N'

According to Liu, the 'all of' relation dictates that only the type of NPs in (140) can be a *ba* NP.

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

- (142) a. \*ni neng zai yige zhongtou-nei kan naben shu-ma?  
           you can at one-Cl hour-in read that-Cl book-Q  
           'Can you read that book in an hour?'  
       b. \*wo xiwang zai yige xingqi-nei mai naliang che.  
           I hope at one-Cl week-in sell that-Cl car.  
           'I hope to sell that car in a week.'

Moreover, they are compatible with the durative marker *-zhe*. 'Read that book', thus, contains internal stages that can be viewed as static and cannot denote a bounded event:

(143) wo zheng kan-zhe naben shu (ne).  
 I Prog read-Zhe that-Cl book Par.  
 'I am reading that book.'

Because such a telic predicate does not express a bounded situation, an aspect marker to express the notion of boundedness is necessary in a *ba* structure (to create a bounded event through the presentation of a situation **from** an appropriate viewpoint). This captures the fact that the verb does not occur in the bare form.

(144) a. wo ba na-ben shu kan-\*(le).  
 I Ba that-CL book read-Le  
 'I read that book.'

b. wo ba naliang che mai-\*(le).  
 I Ba that-Cl car sell-Le  
 'I sold that car.'

Finally, Liu explains why the durative marker *zhe*, such as the one in (145) below, can make a *ba* sentence.

(145) qing ni dai-zhe shoutao.  
 please you wear-Zhe gloves  
 'Please wear gloves.'

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

In brief, the requirement that a *ba* sentence must express a bounded event/situation is responsible for the constraints on possible types of NPs and VPs in the *ba* construction.

### 5.2.2. The issues

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

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

The main argument against an "affectedness" account given by Liu is that a sentence like (134), repeated here, does not have an "affectedness" interpretation:

(134) ta ba yige dahao jihui cuoguo-le.  
 he Ba one-Cl big-good opportunity wrong-pass-Le  
 'He let a great opportunity pass.'

However, given the loose notion of "affectedness," it is very difficult to make a decisive claim that (134) does or does not have an "affectedness" interpretation. Recall that a sentence such as *wo ba yaoshi wang le* 'I forgot the key' in (115a) in section 5.1.1.3, for instance, is an acceptable

*ba* sentence. 'The key' in this sentence is no more or less "affected" than 'a great opportunity' in (134). Indeed, Lü (1955: 128) assumes the following sentence, almost identical to (134), to be a disposal (affectedness) sentence as well:

- (146)    *ba*    *jihui*                      *cuo-guo-le*  
           Ba    opportunity                wrong-pass-Le  
           '(Subject) missed the opportunity.'

Nonetheless, if an aspectual approach can capture the constraints on *ba* constructions without resorting to the vague notion of "affectedness," the analysis is much more desirable. We show below, however, that this attractive analysis falls short empirically and that the tests it relies on to determine boundedness are not adequate. We illustrate these problems in the following subsections.

### 5.2.2.1. Tests for predicates of bounded situations

Recall that in order to account for why an aspect marker *le* is required in some cases, Liu claims that an activity verb plus a definite NP such as 'that book/car' does not express a bounded situation in Chinese, even though the verb phrase is telic. The tests used were the (un)acceptability of a co-occurring time expression 'in an X-amount of time' and the compatibility with the durative marker *zhe* (cf. (142-144)).

Consider the test using the time expression 'in an X-amount of time'. Such a test would lead us to expect that, if the object NP is replaced by some other types of NPs which allow the co-occurrence of 'in an X-amount of time', a *ba* sentence should be acceptable without *le*. However, this is not the case. For instance, (142) can be made acceptable by replacing the definite NP with a quantified or a number phrase:

- (147) a.    *ni*    *neng*    *zai*    *yige*    *zhongtou-nei*    *xiugai*    *quanbu-de*    *wenzhang-ma?*  
           you    can    at    one-Cl    hour-in    correct    all-De    article-Q  
           'Can you correct all the papers in an hour?'
- b.    *wo*    *xiwang*    *zai*    *yi-fengzhong-nei*    *mai*    *yiliang*    *che*.  
           I    hope    at    one-minute-in    sell    one-Cl    car.  
           'I hope to sell a car in a minute.'

Nevertheless, these expressions still cannot occur in a *ba* sentence with a bare verb. The aspect marker *-le* is still required.

- (148) a.    \**wo*    *ba*    *quanbu-de*    *wenzhang*    (dou)    *xiugai*  
           I    Ba    all-De    article    all    correct  
           'I correct all the papers in an hour.'
- b.    *wo*    *ba*    *quanbu-de*    *wenzhang*    (dou)    *xiugai-le*  
           I    Ba    all-De    article    all    correct-Le  
           'I correct all the papers in an hour.'
- (149) a.    \**wo*    *ba*    *yiliang*    *che*    *mai*.  
           I    Ba    one-Cl    car    sell  
           'I sold a car.'

- b. wo ba yiliang che mai-le.  
 I Ba one-Cl car sell-Le  
 'I sold a car.'

One may argue that Liu probably is wrong in stating the requirement of *le* for instances like (143) (see section 2.5 regarding the occurrence of *le*) and such instances probably should simply express bounded situations after all, just like their English counterparts. However, this raises the question of what **is a** valid test to determine if a predicate expresses a bounded situation. Specifically, it is not clear why the contrast between (142) and (147) should exist, if the time phrases 'in X amount of time' is taken as a test for bounded situations. In brief, it does not seem to be adequate to rely on some notion of "boundedness" to account for the usage of *ba* sentences.

Another test Liu uses to determine if a predicate expresses a bounded situation is compatibility with the durative marker *zhe*. Specifically, the predicates in (137a-c, d-g, i) cannot occur with *zhe*; therefore, they express a bounded situation. Were this test to apply consistently, this approach would have been quite precise and clearly defined. However, such a test is not always reliable: incompatibility with *zhe* does not guarantee a *ba* sentence and compability with *zhe* does not **necessarily brand** a *ba* sentence **for rejection**, either. Liu (1997:67) quotes Yeh(1993)'s observation that *zhe* marks a contingent state, not an absolute state. In other words, *zhe* does not occur with individual-level predicates but only with stage-level predicates. It, therefore, does not occur with verbs like *zhidao* 'know' or *xing* 'be surnamed as'. Although *zhe* does not occur with an individual-level predicate, such a predicate does not normally occur in a *ba* pattern:

- (150) a. \*ta xihuan-zhe wo.  
 he like-ZHE me  
 'He is liking me.'
- b. \*ta ba wo xihuan(-zhe).  
 he Ba me like-ZHE  
 'He likes/is liking me.'

Note that one cannot simply say that such verbs express an "absolute state", not a "contingent state", **and this** is why *zhe* cannot occur with **them** and **they** are not acceptable in a *ba* sentence independently. **To see why**, recall the discussion in section 5.1 regarding "imaginary" or "emotional" affectedness. For instance, a stative verb like *hen* 'hate' does not occur with *zhe* and, generally, does not occur in a *ba* sentence. However, strong modification makes a *ba* sentence acceptable:

- (151) a. \*ta hen-zhe wo.  
 he hate-ZHE me  
 'He is hating me.'
- b. \*ta ba wo hen(-zhe).  
 he Ba me hate-ZHE  
 'He hates/is hating me.'
- cf.
- c. ta ba wo hen-de ya yang-yang-de.  
 he Ba me like-De tooth itchy-itchy-De  
 'He hated me so much that his teeth became itchy.'

Moreover, as noted in section 2.8, when a *de* complement (137b) is a descriptive complement, it cannot occur in a *ba* sentence, as illustrated in (65). Such predicates cannot occur with *zhe* either:

- (152) \*ta jintian-de gongke xie-zhe-de hen kuai.  
 he today-De homework write-Zhe-De very fast  
 'He was writing today's homework fast.'

Finally, it is not quite true to claim that *zhe* is possible in a *ba* sentence only when it is in an irrealis mode. The following examples show that such *ba* sentences can be a complement to *kan* 'see', which is not an irrealis:

- (153) wo qu ta-jia shi, kan ta ba haizi bao-zhe,  
 I go he-home when see he Ba child hold-Zhe  
 hai ba lanzi na-zhe, haoxiang yao chu-qu-de yangzi.  
 and Ba basket take-Zhe like will out-go-De appearance

'When I went to his home, I saw him holding the child, holding the basket, as if he was going out.'

In brief, the two tests Liu uses to determine if a predicate expresses a bounded situation, incompatibility with *zhe* and compatibility with the time expression 'in X-amount time', do not work adequately. This account, consequently, loses an important foundation: [the ability to determine](#) whether a predicate expresses a bounded situation so that the acceptability of a *ba* construction can be determined.

#### 5.2.2.2. Empirical adequacy

Regardless of the validity of the tests to determine boundedness of a predicate, empirical problems exist.

##### 5.2.2.2.1. Bounded events/situations not acceptable as *ba* sentences

Liu's main claim is that a *ba* sentence always expresses a bounded event/situation. If a predicate expresses a bounded situation or is presented in the appropriate aspect to express a bounded event, it should be acceptable as a *ba* sentence. However, many instances exist [where](#) bounded events/situations [are expressed, but they](#) do not make acceptable *ba* sentences.

First, there are predicates [that](#) express bounded situations [but](#) fail to make an acceptable *ba* sentence. For instance, the most typical bounded predicates (accomplishment verb phrases) are [V + result] expressions (137a); yet they do not always make an acceptable *ba* sentence:

- (154) a. ta zhexie wenzhang dou kan-de hen shengqi.  
 he these article all read-De very angry  
 'He got angry from reading all these articles.'
- b. \*ta ba zhexie wenzhang dou kan-de hen shengqi.  
 he Ba these article all read-De very angry  
 'He got angry from reading all these articles.'
- (155) a. wo zhe-ping-jiu he-zui-le  
 I this-Cl-wine drink-drunk-Le  
 'I have drunk the wine drunk.'

- b. \*wo ba zhe-ping-jiu he-zui-le  
 I Ba this-Cl-wine drink-drunk-Le  
 'I have drunk the wine drunk.'

Indeed, it seems possible to find counterexamples for all the patterns in (137). We have already discussed cases which illustrate the unacceptability of [V-*de*] (137b) in a *ba* sentence (section 2.8). Let us demonstrate the same point with a few more examples. The pattern (137c), V+ retained object, for instance, is illustrated in (156a-b), which are unacceptable as a *ba* sentence:

- (156) a. \*tufei ba ta baifang-le fuqin.  
 bandit Ba him visit-Le father  
 'The bandit visited his father.'

- b. \*women ba ta tanlun-le xiaohai.  
 we Ba him discuss-Le child  
 'We discussed his child.'

Take (137f) *as* another instance. For Liu (1997: 56), when a verb occurs with a quantified phrase (number phrase), it expresses a bounded event. A quantified phrase can be a duration or a frequency phrase. That is, if a verb is followed by a duration or frequency phrase, the predicate expresses a bounded situation and *is predicted to* occur in the *ba* form. However, counterexamples, again, are not difficult to find.

- (157) a. wo renshi ta san-nian-le.  
 I know him three-year-Le  
 'I have known him for three years.'

- b. \*wo ba ta renshi san-nian-le.  
 I Ba him know three-year-Le  
 'I have known him for three years.'

cf.

- (158) wo ba ta qipian/nuedai san-nian-le.  
 I Ba him cheat/maltreat three-year-Le  
 'I have cheated/maltreated him for three years.'

Finally, although *-le* can be used with a predicate which does not express a bounded situation in the appropriate (perfective) aspect in order to establish a bounded event, there are many instances which show that the addition of *-le* still fails to make an acceptable *ba* sentence.

- (159) a. \*ta ba na-difang likai-le.  
 he Ba that-place leave-Le  
 'He left that place.'

- b. \*ta ba qiu-sai canjia-le  
 he Ba ball-game participate-Le  
 'He participated in the ball game.'

- c. \*ta ba na-ge canting baifang-le.

he Ba that-Cl restaurant visit-Le  
'He visited that restaurant.'

d. \*ta ba wode mingling fucong-le.  
he Ba my order obey  
'He obeyed my order.'

e. \*ta yijing ba mei-jian-shi dou zhidao-le  
he already Ba every-Cl-matter all know-Le  
'He already knows everything.'

f. \*ta ba zhe-zhi-mao zhaogu-le.  
he Ba this-Cl- cat care-Le  
'He cared for this cat.'

In brief, many instances exist which are not acceptable in **the** *ba* form, although they conform to the patterns listed in (137) and do express a bounded situation/event.

#### 5.2.2.2.2. Non-bounded events/situations acceptable as *ba* sentences

On the other hand, there are cases which do not express bounded events/situations; yet, they are acceptable as a *ba* sentence. This is especially true with the pattern in (137i) [Adv + V]. Recall that a preverbal adverbial may contribute to make a *ba* sentence acceptable. The examples given by Liu are (139a-b). The addition of **an** appropriate adverbial makes a predicate denote a bounded situation.

What is relevant is that such a preverbal adverbial can be a manner adverb which does not make the VP express a bounded situation. 'Carefully', for instance, can occur preverbally without making the predicate bounded, as illustrated by the acceptability of a progressive marking:

(160) ta zheng-zai zixi-de nian-zhe na-pian wenzhang.  
he right-at carefully read-Asp that-Cl article  
'He was carefully reading that article.'

It can also occur in a command, in contrast to a postverbal descriptive phrase (see (127a-b) in section 5.1):

(161) zixi-de nian!  
carefully read  
'Read carefully!'

The pattern of 'completing within a certain amount of time' is unacceptable:

(162) \*ni zai yige zhongtou-nei zixi-de nian naben shu-ma?  
you at one-Cl hour-in carefully read that-Cl book-Q  
'Did you read that book carefully in an hour?'

The unacceptability of (162) indicates that *zixi-de nian* 'read carefully' is not an accomplishment. The possibility of a progressive in (160) and the acceptability of a command **in** (161) indicate that *zixi-de kan* remains an activity verb phrase. However, such an unbounded predicate, with static internal stages, can occur in the *ba* form:

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

Recall also that the sentence given by Chao (1968: 348) quoted as (62f) also does not contain a bounded predicate:

- (62) f. ta ba jiu bu-ting-de he.  
 he Ba alcohol not-stop-De drink  
 'He drank/was drinking without stop.'

It is even possible to for the durative marker *zhe* to occur with the verb ([this example is not in the irrealis mode either](#)):

- (164) ta ba jiu bu-ting-de he-zhe.  
 he Ba alcohol not-stop-De drink-Zhe  
 'He was drinking without stop.'

Furthermore, for Liu, the example in (153) discussed earlier regarding the use of *zhe* as a durative marker in the past time, rather than in the irrealis mode, also presents a problem for the notion of bounded situations/events. This example is repeated below:

- (153) wo qu ta-jia shi, kan ta ba haizi bao-zhe,  
 I go he-home when see he Ba child hold-Zhe  
  
 hai ba lanzi na-zhe, haoxiang yao chu-qu-de yangzi.  
 and Ba basket take-Zhe like will out-go-De appearance

'When I went to his home, I saw him holding the child, holding the basket, as if he was going out.'

Such examples illustrate the empirical problem that expressions which do not express bounded situations/events can still be acceptable as a *ba* construction.

In short, to claim that a bounded event or situation makes an acceptable *ba* sentence is both too weak and too strong empirically. There are cases of bounded events/situations unacceptable as a *ba* pattern and cases of non-bounded events/situations acceptable as a *ba* pattern.

#### 5.2.2.4. The *ba* NP

Recall that Liu further derives the specificity (G-specificity) constraint on *ba* NPs by resorting to an 'all of' homomorphism relation between a bounded predicate and a *ba* NP. She claims that a *ba* NP must participate in all in the event from the beginning to the end point. That is, a *ba* NP must be able to quantified by 'all of'. An important test used is the occurrence of *dou* 'all': only an NP that can occur with *dou* can be a *ba* NP (cf. (140-141)). For instance, the *ba* NP in the following sentence is interpreted as specific and is a participant of the event from the beginning to the end. It can co-occur with *dou*.

- (165) wo hui ba san-ben shu dou fang-zai zhuo-shang.  
 I will Ba three-Cl book all put-at table-on  
 'I will put all three books on the table.'

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

The problem, however, is that the constraints on *ba* NPs are not as rigid as we *would* wish for. There are many examples which do not fall within the account. For instance, the example (62f) by Chao just quoted *above* does not seem to require the alcohol to be presented in an 'all of' relation. Moreover, it is not clear what it means that the *ba* NP must be able to be quantified by 'all of'. When a *ba* NP is a singular NP, is it also quantified by 'all of'? Note that the addition of the universal quantifier *dou* 'all' is not possible when the individual to be quantified over is singular. Independently, a singular NP just cannot be quantified by *dou*.

- (166) a. wo ba ta xiang-de yao-si.  
I Ba him miss-De want-die  
'I missed him so much (that I want to die).'
- b. \*wo ba ta dou xiang-de yao-si.  
I Ba him all miss-De want-die
- c. ta (\*dou) xiang-de yao-si.  
he all miss-De want-die  
'He missed so much (that he wants to die).'

- (167) a. wo ba zhe-pi-ma qi-le yici.  
I Ba this-Cl-horse ride-Le once  
'I rode the horse three times.'
- b. \*wo ba zhe-pi-ma dou qi-le yici.  
I Ba this-Cl-horse all ride-Le once
- c. zhe-pi-ma (\*dou) qi-le yici.  
this-Cl-horse all ride-Le once  
'This horse was ridden once.'

There are also instances which are clearly listed in Liu's category of non-G-specific NPs (141), not allowing the occurrence of *dou*, but do appear in a *ba* construction. Expressions such as *budao aifen-zhi-yi* (less than 1 percent), *san dao wu ge* 'three to five' in the following sentences are such examples.

- (168) a. anzhaomingba budao baifenzhiyi-de  
according rule you only can Ba less-than 1 percent-De  
  
yingyu na-lai gei yuangong feng hong.  
profit take-come to employee distribute bonus

'According to the rules, you can only take less than 1% of the profit to distribute to the employees as bonus.'

- b. \*budao baifenzhiyi-de yingyu dou gei yuangong feng hong-le.

less-than 1 percent-De profit all to employee distribute bonus-Le  
 'Less than 1 % of the profit was all distributed as bonus to the employees.'

- (169) a. wo zuiduo zhi neng ba san-dao-wu-pian xiugai-hao-de wenzhang  
 I most only can Ba three-to-five-Cl corrected-De article  
 na-chulai gei ni kan.  
 take-out for you read

'I can only bring at most 3 to 5 corrected articles for you to read.'

- b. \*san-dao-wu-pian xiugai-hao-de wenzhang dou gei ni kan.  
 three-to-five-Cl corrected-De article all for you read  
 '3 to 5 corrected articles are for you to read.'

On the other hand, there are also instances allowing the occurrence of *dou* which are not acceptable as a *ba* form. The examples in (154a-b) we saw earlier, for instance, demonstrate the acceptability of *dou* with an NP which cannot be a *ba* NP:

- (154) a. ta zhexie wenzhang dou kan-de hen shengqi.  
 he these article all read-De very angry  
 'He got angry from reading all these articles.'

- b. \*ta ba zhexie wenzhang dou kan-de hen shengqi.  
 he Ba these article all read-De very angry  
 'He got angry from reading all these articles.'

Summarizing, although Liu's account based on the notion of "boundedness" is quite attractive, it falls short empirically. It does not account for why some *ba* sentences are acceptable with an unbounded predicate and some other *ba* sentences are unacceptable with a bounded predicate. The derivation of the properties of *ba* NPs from a homomorphism relation with a bounded predicate may capture the core cases (cf. the continuum in (130)); however, the facts are not as clean and clear as the analysis predicts.

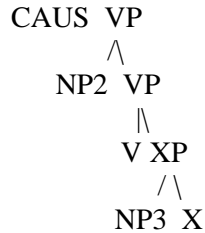
### 5.3. An event-structural account

The recent work by Sybesma (1999), revised from his 1992 dissertation, is a very interesting work that incorporates the interpretation of and the semantic (pragmatic) constraints on the *ba* construction into the syntactic structure. This represents the best syntactic structural effort to account for the properties of the *ba* construction. Unfortunately, the complexity of the *ba* construction still evades an adequate structural description.

#### 5.3.1. The analysis

Sybesma proposes that *ba*-sentences are always CAUS-sentences in some abstract sense. The VP (comprising the V after the *ba* NP and the embedded XP) does not have an external argument. The subject of the sentence (NP1 in (170) below) bears the role of the causer; in other words, it bears a semantic relation to the head CAUS (not to the VP).

- (170)
- $$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{CAUSP} \\
 / \quad \backslash \\
 \text{NP1} \quad \text{CAUSP} \\
 \quad \quad \wedge
 \end{array}$$



In this structure, NP1 is the subject of the sentence. NP2 and NP3 are related by NP-movement, NP3 being the trace. The head of the CAUSP (for CAUS Phrase) is either phonologically filled by way of insertion of *ba* or by movement of the head of VP (Sybesma 1999, p. 170). The latter derives a non-*ba* sentence with an accomplishment VP. The former derives a *ba* sentence. Because *ba* is only a phonological filler, interpretations are the same for structures derived by verb-raising or *ba*-insertion. That is, a *ba* sentence does not carry a special meaning. It is just like a non-*ba* sentence with an accomplishment predicate. Both express a result or an endpoint: the VP embedded under CAUS must be unaccusatives, which are "characterized by the fact that they involve an end point" (p. 178). The *ba* NP is the subject of the underlying result small clause (the end point) and is the theme that undergoes a change of state or location.

This structure, according to Sybesma, can be paraphrased as "the subject causes the *ba*-NP to undergo the event denoted by the VP." Revised slightly to be distinct from the lexical causative cases, such as those with causative verbs *shi* 'make' or *rang* 'let', the structure is interpreted as "the subject of the sentence (the causer) brings about a new state of affairs which results from the event denoted by V" (p.178). Importantly, the *ba*-NP is not independently mentioned and is only semantically dependent on the embedded predicate. It is part of the resulting state. This is a departure from the "affected/disposal" tradition: a *ba*-sentence is no longer viewed as primarily aimed at disposing of the *ba*-NP. The paraphrase applies to all causatives and accomplishments, or simply, all are accomplishments. That is, the structure in (170) is the structure for both *ba* and accomplishment sentences. When verb-raising takes place, it is an accomplishment sentence; when *ba* is inserted, it is a *ba*-sentence.

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

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

### 5.3.2. The issues

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

### 5.3.2.1. A *ba* sentence and the non-*ba* counterpart

The main claim of this approach is that a *ba*-sentence and a non-*ba* accomplishment have identical structures, which only differ in whether verb-raising takes place or a dummy *ba* is inserted. It is not clear that *ba*-sentences and non-*ba*-accomplishments are indeed identical. Liu (1997:60), while reviewing Sybesma (1992), observes that "this hypothesis runs into difficulty both ways: there are *ba* sentences with non-accomplishments and sentences of accomplishments which nonetheless cannot occur with *ba*, as seen in [171] [172] respectively:"

- (171) women    dou        ba        Laowang    dangzuo    laoshi.  
 we        all        Ba        Laowang    take-as    teacher  
 'We all consider Laoang as our teacher.'
- (172) \*wo        dasuan    mingtian    ba        nei-ben-shu    kan.  
 I        plan        tomorrow    Ba        that-Cl-book    read  
 'I plan to read that book tomorrow.'

According to Liu, in (171), *dangzuo laoshi* 'take as teacher' is not an accomplishment but an achievement; on the other hand, in (172), *kan nei-ben-shu* 'read that book' is a typical case of accomplishment, and yet it does not license *ba*. These cases, therefore, suggest that the *ba* predicate cannot be equated with accomplishments.

Liu's reservations concerning equating a *ba* predicate with an accomplishment are legitimate. However, these two cases may not be really serious problems because Sybesma can try to expand his system to include the achievements that can appear in a *ba* pattern (after all, (171) does involve a result clause *zuo laoshi* 'as a teacher') and because the unacceptability of (172) need not be specific to the *ba* pattern (cf. the discussion on the *ka* counterpart in Taiwanese). Nonetheless, these considerations do point out the importance of not totally equating a *ba* predicate with an accomplishment. These two do not always have the same structures or the same requirements. Otherwise, all *ba* predicates would be accomplishments and all accomplishments would have a *ba*-counterpart. The former hypothesis would exclude cases like (171). With respect to the latter, there are many accomplishments that do not allow a *ba* counterpart. Some of such examples are those discussed in the previous section (154-159). In these cases, we see that *kan-de hen shengqi* 'read and get angry' and *he-zui* 'drink-drunk' (accomplishment) can occur in a non-*ba* sentence but not in a *ba* sentence. This contrast is not expected if *ba* and accomplishment sentences have identical structures and interpretations. It is not expected if *ba* is simply a dummy inserted to the CAUS head position when verb raising does not take place. In other words, (155a-b), for instance, should be derived by the raising of the compound verb *he-zui* 'drink-drunk' and, when this compound is not raised, *ba* is inserted. (155b), therefore, should be as acceptable or as unacceptable as (155a). Of course, Sybesma can distinguish non-*ba* accomplishments from *ba* cases by specifying that a *ba* NP is always "the subject of the small clause complement of the verb" (p. 179). Taking this step, however, would require making a special statement for the *ba* construction, rather than making a more general claim that the *ba* construction is just an accomplishment and all accomplishments, even all transitives, have the same structure and interpretation (Sybesma 1999, chapter 7).

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

Considering the *ba* construction alone, then, one may argue that Sybesma's analysis can be adopted as long as we specify that a *ba* NP must be the subject of the result clause. However, this still faces challenges. There are cases of *ba* sentences that are quite acceptable but where *ba* is not interpreted as the subject of the result clause. In the earlier examples (102-103), quoted from Li and Thompson (1981, 469), for instance, the result clause 'he won't even eat his meals'/'wants to die' does not take the *ba* NP as its subject. Instead, it is interpreted as referring to the subject of the matrix clause.

(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 examples are not isolated ones. They are quite common. (151c) discussed earlier is another example, where the subject of the result clause is the matrix subject:

(151) c. ta ba wo hen-de ya yang-yang-de.  
 he Ba I like-De tooth itchy-itchy-Par.  
 'He hated me so much that his teeth became itchy.'

More such examples are illustrated below. In (173a), the result clause has a lexical subject that is the same as the matrix subject. The result expression *hui* in (173b) is interpreted as taking the matrix subject as its subject *wo hui youyong* 'I am capable of swimming.' In (173c), the result expression *dong* should take the matrix subject as its subject, rather than the *ba* NP; the *ba* NP is the object of the result expression: *ta dong-le wenzhang-le* 'He understood the article'. The result expression *tou* 'thorough' in (173d) is more like a degree modifier of the verb, the hatred being thorough, rather than being a predicate of the *ba* NP. Similarly, the "result" expression *hen zixi* 'very careful' in (173e) modifies the verb, rather than functioning as the predicate of the *ba* NP. If *hen zixi* can have a subject at all, it is the action, not the *ba* NP, that functions as the subject: *ta de kaolu hen zixi* 'his thinking is careful' cf. *\*zhe shi hen zixi* 'this thing is careful'.

(173) a. wo ba ta ma-de wo-ziji dou shou-bu-liao!  
 he Ba him scold-De myself all put-not-up  
 'I scolded him so much that I could not stand it myself.'

b. deng wo xian ba youyong zhende xue-hui  
 wait I first Ba swimming really study-capable  
 yihou zai gen ni bi.  
 after then with you race  
 'Let me first really learn to swim and then I will race against you.'

c. xian rang ta ba wenzhang nian-dong yihou zai  
 first let him Ba article read-understand after then  
 wen ta wenti ba!  
 ask him question Par.  
 'Let him first understand the article and then ask him questions.'

d. ta yiding hui ba ni hen-tou-de.

he definitely will Ba you hate-thorough-particle  
 'He will definitely hate you thoroughly.'

- e. wo ba zhe-shi kaolu-de hen zixi.  
 I Ba this matter think-De very carefully  
 'I thought about the matter carefully.'

To be noted, however, is that the *ba* NP is still the object of the verb in these cases. This indicates that it is acceptable for a *ba* NP to be simply the object of the verb without being the subject of the result clause (cf. the generalization in (29) that a *ba* NP is a V-object or a V'-object).

### 5.3.2.3. Absence of a result clause

The above section shows that, although a *ba* sentence may contain a result/extent expression, such an expression need not interpret the *ba* NP as its subject. This casts doubt on the appropriateness of Sybesma's analysis outlined in (170). A further problem is that a result expression need not even exist. As shown earlier, there are cases expressing an unbounded event - without an end point - such as the examples discussed earlier in section 5.2.2.2.2 concerning unbounded events, as in (163-164) (repeated below) and (62f).

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

- (164) ta ba jiu bu-ting-de he-zhe.  
 he Ba alcohol not-stop-De drink-Zhe  
 'He was drinking without stop.'

### 5.3.2.4. Placement of adverbials

The fact that a *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart only differ in whether V is raised to CAUS or *ba* spells out CAUS in the structure (170) also faces problems with the placement of adverbials. As mentioned, some adverbials can occur before or after the *ba* NP. However, such adverbials do not occur postverbally (see the discussions in section 4.1-4.2). If *ba* is only a filler inserted when verb-raising does not take place, it is not clear why the relevant adverbial cannot occur postverbally, when it can occur after *ba*.

In brief, it is doubtful that a *ba* construction is the same as sentences with accomplishment predicates in sharing the structure in (170) with their only difference being in whether CAUS is filled by a raised V or an inserted *ba*. There are many accomplishments that do not have a *ba* counterpart and a *ba* sentence need not be an accomplishment. The two patterns are not always identical in acceptability and interpretation. A *ba* sentence, therefore, needs to be distinguished from simply accomplishments. Moreover, it is not true that a *ba* NP is always the subject of an unaccusative predicate (the result). There are cases where the result clause takes the matrix subject as its subject and instances which denote unbounded events; i.e., a result clause is not a constituent within the *ba* sentence. Finally, the distribution of adverbials in a *ba* sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart fails to be accounted for.

## 5.4. Affectedness revisited

We discussed in section 4 the structural properties of the *ba* construction. Structurally, a *ba* NP must be a V-object (inner object) or a V'-object (outer object, assigned an "affected" theta-role by a complex predicate that consists of V and its object). This over-generates greatly, however. Not all objects can be a *ba* NP. Constraints also exist on the types of Vs or VPs allowed in a *ba*

sentence. The issue is how these constraints can be captured. We discussed in sections 5.1-5.3 approaches from different perspectives: (i) a semantic-pragmatics approach that relies on a vague notion of "affectedness," (ii) an aspectual approach that requires a *ba* sentence to express a bounded situation or event and (iii) an event structure approach that subsumes *ba* sentences under those with accomplishment predicates. All three approaches are **completely** satisfactory when only the canonical cases of the *ba* construction are considered, i.e., those containing a result expression with a *ba* NP as the subject: *wo ba cai chao-de hen lan* 'I stir-fried the vegetable quite mushy'. These are also the kind of *ba* sentences most frequently used and most readily accepted by speakers. The problem, however, is that the "non-canonical" cases, those not having the pattern [V + result] are also widely used. The acceptability of **some such** sentences is also more heavily subject to individual variations or uncertainty.

The aspectual approach and the event structure approach are both too weak and too strong. Both approaches have the problem of over-generation. They cannot predict why many accomplishments or many sentences of bounded situations/events cannot be acceptable *ba* sentences. At the same time, both approaches fail to generate those *ba* sentence that express unbounded situations/events and, in the case of the event structure approach, those cases that the *ba* NP is not the subject of the result expression. The "affectedness" approach is harder to evaluate because the notion of "affectedness" is so vague, especially when imaginary effects are included. This approach, however, does differ from the other two in this respect: while the latter express the constraints on the *ba* pattern in terms of event structures or aspectual structures (explicit linguistic representations), the former expresses the constraints without explicit linguistic representations. They are within the realm of world knowledge, speaker intention, hearer perception etc. Recall Li and Thompson's explanation of why sentences like (102) and (103), repeated here, are acceptable.

(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.'

They stated that the use of the postverbal expression in (102) 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." The added expression *yao si* '(he) wants to die' in (103) hypothetically creates an image that such intense love must have some effect on the 'small cat'. Accordingly, the disposal idea is implied by the verb together with the added expression.

Although such explanations are vague and depend greatly on speakers' interpretations, they seem to be the nature of the constraints on the use of *ba* sentences. Again, take variations of (103) for instance. We find the following contrast:

(174) a. Lisi ba xiao-mao ai-de feng-le.  
 Lisi Ba small cat love-De crazy-Le  
 'Lisi loves the kitten so much that he is going crazy.'

b. Lisi ai xiao-mao ai-de feng-le.  
 Lisi love small cat love-De crazy-Le

'Lisi loves the kitten so much that he is going crazy.'

- (175) a. \*Lisi ba xiao-mao pa-de feng-le.  
Lisi Ba small cat fear-De crazy-Le  
'Lisi fears the kitten so much that he is getting crazy.'
- b. Lisi pa xiao-mao pa-de feng-le.  
Lisi fear small cat fear-De crazy-Le  
'Lisi fears the kitten so much that he is getting crazy.'

(174a) is much better than (175a) as a *ba* sentence. The two sentences, however, are identical with respect to aspectual structures or event structures or whatever other linguistic structures available for explicit representations. Further note that their non-*ba* counterparts are equally acceptable.

Such instances abound: many sentences are identical with respect to represent-able linguistic structures and they are equally acceptable as a non-*ba* sentence; yet, they, again, differ greatly in acceptability as a *ba* sentence:

- (176) a. wo ba ta da-le yixia.  
I Ba him hit-Le a bit  
'I hit him a bit.'
- b. wo da ta da-le yixia.  
I hit him hit-Le a bit  
'I hit him a bit.'
- (177) a. ??wo ba ta zhaogu-le yixia.  
I Ba him care-Le a bit  
'I took care of him a bit.'
- b. wo zhaogu ta zhaogu-le yixia.  
I care him care-Le a bit  
'I took care of him a bit.'
- (178) a. women ba ta shuo-le yici.  
we Ba him say-Le once  
'We said to him (mildly scolded him) once.'
- b. women shuo ta shuo-le yici.  
we say him say-Le once  
'We said to him (mildly scolded him) once.'
- (179) a. \*women ba ta taolun-le yici.  
we Ba him discuss-Le once  
'We discussed him once.'
- b. women taolun ta taolun-le yici.  
we discuss him discuss-Le once  
'We discussed him once.'

The contrast between the pairs of sentences, (176) and (177), (178) and (179), is a puzzle under any structural account, either an aspectual structure or an event structure *account*. On the other hand, an advocate of the "affectedness" approach may claim that it is easier to interpret the one being hit as the one affected than the one being taken care of and that it is easier to interpret the one being scolded as the one affected than the one being discussed. Although it is impossible to verify such an account, it, nonetheless, points to the inadequacy of a clearly-defined structural account.

More examples illustrating the futility of a clearly-defined structural account:

The following two sets of sentences only differ in the noun used as a *ba* NP: *zhe-dun-fan* 'this-Cl-meal' vs. *zhe-pan-cai* 'this-Cl-dish'.

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

(181)    \*deng    wo    ba    zhe-pan-cai    chi-bao    yihou    zai    chu-qu.  
           wait    I     Ba    this-Cl-dish    eat-full    after    then    out-go  
           'Wait till I eat-full this dish (I get full from eating this dish, I will go out.'

The acceptability of (180) is especially surprising. Normally, *ba fan chi bao* 'Ba meal eat-full', along with *ba jiu he zui* 'Ba wine drink-drunk', has been marked unacceptable as a *ba* predicate and has been used as a typical example to support the claim that a *ba* NP must be the subject of a result clause. Indeed, *ba zhe-dun-fan chi-bao* 'Ba this meal eat-full' is not acceptable in all contexts. There seems to be a contrast between the following two sentences:

(182)a.    wo    hai    mei    ba    zhe-dun-fan    chi-bao-ne!  
           I     still    not    Ba    this-Cl-meal    eat-full-Par.  
           'I haven't finished the meal yet!'

          b.    \*wo    ba    zhe-dun-fan    chi-bao-le.  
               I     Ba    this-Cl-meal    eat-full-Le  
               'I finished the meal.'

However, it is not clear how these sentences can be distinguished structurally. Equally challenging to a structural account is the fact that (180'), which has the identical pattern as (180) and contains the other famous predicate *ba jiu he zui* 'Ba wine drink-drunk', is still not acceptable as a *ba* sentence:<sup>1</sup>

(180')    \*deng    wo    ba    zhe-ping-jiu    he-zui            yihou    zai    chu-qu.  
           wait    I     Ba    this-Cl-wine    drink-drunk    after    then    out-go  
           'Wait till I eat-full this meal (I get full from eating this meal, I will go out.'

Structurally, these cases are identical, *so it is* simply not clear how a structural account can accommodate such different acceptability of *ba* sentences.

<sup>1</sup> It is possible to speculate that the contrast between (180) and (182c) is due to different degrees of lexicalization: *chi-bao* 'eat-full' is more lexicalized and takes *fan* as its object, in contrast to *he-zui* 'drink-drunk' which only originates as a bi-clausal structure. Some analysis along the lines of the generalization in (29) can be explored.

We also saw earlier in section 3 examples like the following which only differ in the *ba* NP used, which were subsumed under the notion of "affectedness."

(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.'

(120) ??ta ba wo wen-le fangxiang.  
 he Ba me ask-Le directions  
 'He asked me directions.'

The following two sentences only differ in the use of the adverb:

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

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

It may be easier to understand that, if one reads a book carefully, it is more likely that every word in the book will be read; but this is less likely to be the case when one reads a book quietly. There is more connection with ("effect" on) the book by careful reading than quiet reading. Of course, such "explanations" cannot be verified. However, they also defy the structural accounts proposed.

The following sentences only differ in the duration phrases used:

(184) ta ba wo hen-le yi-beizi.  
 he Ba me hate-Le one-life  
 'He hated me for a whole life.'

(185) ??ta ba wo hen-le yi-xiazi.  
 he Ba me hate-Le one-while  
 'He hated me for a while.'

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

(186) ta ba wo sha-le fuqin.  
 he Ba me kill-Le father  
 'He killed my father.'

(187) \*ta ba wo yao-le fuqin.  
 he Ba me invite-Le father  
 'He invited my father.'

Many such examples exist, like those discussed in section 5.1, which all point to the same generalization: the constraints on possible *ba* NPs and predicates cannot be easily characterized in clearly defined structural terms.

## 6. Conclusion

The *ba* construction has been one of the most challenging topics in the literature on Chinese grammar. We have shown that, to understand the difficulties of this construction, we need to separate its form from its usage. Formally, it is clearer what structure a *ba* sentence should take. It has the structure represented in (92) in section 4.2, which places all the constituents of a *ba* construction in appropriate positions and can correspond to a non-*ba* sentence without structural problems. A *ba* NP is always related to the V or V'. When it is a V'-object (outer object, object of a complex predicate), the theta-role it receives is an affected theta-role. The definition of an "affected" theta-role, however, was not made clear in the literature and was not further elaborated in this work either. This is related to the difficult part of this construction: the appropriate usage of a *ba* sentence, which has been most controversial. The usage part has essentially been defined by the constraints on possible *ba* NPs and VPs: what NPs are allowed as a *ba* NP and what components are acceptable or necessary to make a VP in a *ba* sentence. The discussions in section 5.2 and 5.3 show that accounts for such constraints based on bounded events/situations or event structures fail empirically, even though they provide very attractive options.

If the comparison between the Taiwanese *ka* construction and the Mandarin *ba* construction is any indication, it shows that a *ba* sentence carries a special meaning, even though *ba*, unlike *ka*, no longer assigns an "affected" theta-role independently. Although such a special meaning is clear in the canonical cases ('he stir-fried the vegetable mushy'), it becomes less and less clear as the speakers expand and deviate from the core cases. This probably is what contributes to the uncertainty and variation in speakers' judgment with the more deviant cases, which is also the spirit of the continuum discussed by Li and Thompson, illustrated in (130) in section 5.1. We take this to be an indication that the construction is strongly influenced by discourse, pragmatic and idiolectal factors and the notion of affectedness is a fuzzy and loose notion which may be interpreted differently by different speakers. Further evidence for the non-grammatical nature of the constraints on the usage of *ba* sentences was supported by minimal pairs like those discussed in section 5.4, where all pairs of sentences share the same grammatical structure, including the same aspectual structure or event structure, and all have equally acceptable non-*ba* counterparts. If we want to capture the fact that all *ba* sentences have a non-*ba* counterpart and that sentences with identical structure can have different acceptability as a *ba* form, we are forced to recognize the effect of world knowledge, speaker intention etc. on the use of this construction. In other words, we should recognize the existence of different contributing factors characterizing this construction and separate form from usage, distinguish basic structures from the constraints on when the structure is used.