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Volume 56

Dramatized Discourse: The Mandarin Chinese *ba*-construction
by Zhuo Jing-Schmidt

Dramatized Discourse

The Mandarin Chinese *ba*-construction

Zhuo Jing-Schmidt

University of Cologne

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To my daughter:

Tabia Yishui Schmidt

Table of contents

Preface	XI
Acknowledgments	XIII
List of figures and tables	XVII
Notational conventions	XIX
Abbreviations	XXI
 CHAPTER 1	
Introduction	1
 CHAPTER 2	
Database	13
 CHAPTER 3	
The syntax of the <i>ba</i> -construction: Overview	17
3.1 Compositional properties of the <i>ba</i> -construction	17
3.2 The <i>ba</i> -construction and mood	44
3.2.1 Indicative	44
3.2.2 Imperative	46
3.2.3 Interrogative	48
3.2.4 Subjunctive	51
3.3 The <i>ba</i> -construction and modality	52
3.4 The <i>ba</i> -construction and negation	54
3.5 The <i>ba</i> -construction in passive sentences	55
3.6 The <i>ba</i> -construction in causative sentences	56
3.7 The <i>ba</i> -construction as subordinate	58
3.8 Mandarin word order and the <i>ba</i> -construction	60
 CHAPTER 4	
Previous approaches	67
4.1 Disposal	67
4.2 Transitivity	82

- 4.2.1 Overview 82
- 4.2.2 What is transitivity? 94
- 4.3 The causativity approach 105
- 4.4 The problem 107

CHAPTER 5

The hypothesis of discourse dramaticity 113

- 5.1 The system of discourse dramaticity 114
- 5.2 The human factor 115
 - 5.2.1 Cognitive salience 117
 - 5.2.2 Subjectivity and emotionality 120
- 5.3 Redundancy 123

CHAPTER 6

Cognitive salience as discourse dramaticity 125

- 6.1 Cognitive salience at the clause level 126
 - 6.1.1 Cognitive salience and the number of participants 126
 - 6.1.2 Cognitive salience and verbal dynamism 135
 - 6.1.3 Cognitive salience and verbal modification 138
 - 6.1.4 Cognitive salience of event and salient participants 167
 - 6.1.5 Cognitive salience ant information structure 180
- 6.2 Cognitive salience at the trans-clause level 194
 - 6.2.1 Foregrounding properties 195
 - 6.2.2 Textual linking 197

CHAPTER 7

Subjectivity and emotionality as discourse dramaticity 211

- 7.1 The nature of linguistic subjectivity and emotionality 211
- 7.2 Conceptual metaphors 211
- 7.3 Intensifiers 219
 - 7.3.1 Intensifying adverbs 220
 - 7.3.2 Intensifying quantifiers 223
- 7.4 Mood and modality 226
 - 7.4.1 Mood 226
 - 7.4.2 Modality 228
 - 7.4.3 The potential construction versus the modal verb *neng* 233
- 7.5 Frequency variation across discourse types
as additional evidence 237

CHAPTER 8	
An interim conclusion	241
CHAPTER 9	
The pragmatization of the <i>ba</i> -construction	245
9.1 Evolution and a functional view of syntactic change	245
9.2 Serial verb construction as source of change	248
9.2.1 Formal pressure towards change	250
9.2.2 Functional re-adaptation and its formal repercussions	256
9.3 Regulation and systemization	270
9.3.1 Data	270
9.3.2 Results	272
9.3.3 Discussion	280
9.4 Inadequacies of the OM postulation	289
9.5 Subjectification	293
CHAPTER 10	
Final remarks	297
Notes	301
References	309
Text material	327
Author index	329
Subject index	333

Preface

The ideas presented in this book originated from my observations of several grammars of the Chinese language. What struck me most was the common isolating style in which syntax was described to students. Among the many syntactical phenomena, the *ba*-construction has been the most controversial. The way it is generally dealt with causes confusion and frustration in me both as native speaker and as a student of linguistics.

What is missing is a coherent explanation for the many peculiarities, synchronic and diachronic, that are observed of this construction. In the absence of a unitary explanation, observations scatter like pearls unconnected by a steady string. As a result, the construction has received a veil. For students acquiring Chinese as a foreign language, the Mandarin *ba*-construction appears to be a mystery or even an enigma. Quite often, these students are discouraged by the piles of “constraints” imposed on the use of *ba*, fearing that they may never master it.

But syntax is not dead piles of constraints. Syntax functions in the service of communication – a vital activity in human existence.

The abstract and mostly atomistic fashion in which the *ba*-construction is presented in textbooks and in linguistics has a hypnotic effect: It forces one to forget that syntax is a device of communicating people’s different intents. Who, in real life, doesn’t try to best express his ideas by choosing the most suitable sentence among many possibilities? Thus, if the most obvious is denied, it is hard not to feel that there must be something very wrong with much of what has been done with syntax.

This book, therefore, is more concerned to explain why exactly the Mandarin *ba*-construction is used where it is used than to describe the constraints in isolation. To do so, I consulted real textual occurrences of *ba*-sentences along with their contexts as much as possible. The examination of sentence structure in context permitted me to identify the common semantic-pragmatic ground on which all the uses are based. Thus I was able to postulate that semantic-pragmatic substance which motivates all the textual occurrences. The postulation of an invariant meaning for the *ba*-construction versus its “syntactic

variants” provided me with a unitary explanation. With the invariant meaning pinned down, the seemingly disconnected arbitrary constraints become analyzable.

Meanwhile, language is used by people. Therefore, to consider the “human factor” as a relevant aspect of linguistic analysis is inevitable. Specifically, human cognition and psychology offer a powerful tool with which to tackle the issue of bridging linguistic meanings with actual uses. In this book, cognitive salience of events on the one hand and speaker’s subjectivity and emotionality on the other are taken to be the motivating strategies of conceptualization and communication.

By now, the reader has surely realized that my treatment of the *ba*-construction is about the interface between syntactic forms and pragmatic considerations. I hope that those who read this book will come to notice many things about the *ba*-construction they never noticed before. I hope that the discoveries they make through this book will help clarify some of the confusions they encounter.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank all those scholars whose studies of the Mandarin *ba*-construction have made it possible for this book to be born in a new light. Without the previous work they contribute to the subject, my exploration of the issue would have been much limited.

I would also like to thank my students of “Introduction to Chinese Linguistics” and “Chinese III”, which I taught at the University of Cologne. Their constant attention and their endless curiosity have contributed enormously to our classroom discussions of grammar and language use, which, in turn, have always deepened my thoughts on linguistic analysis. To be precise, the practical question they have most frequently raised, namely, “When to use construction X versus Y, and why?” has been a great motivation for me to struggle toward more satisfactory answers by rising above sentence grammar which is taught in most textbooks.

My deep appreciation goes to the two anonymous reviewers of the first draft of this book. Their critique and suggestions have been essential to the improvement of this work.

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I welcome this opportunity to thank Professor Dr. Robert Kirsner of UCLA. His graduate course G238 in Form-Content Analysis kindled my interest in linguistic analysis and broadened my intellectual perspective. Moreover,

Dr. Kirsner's passion for linguistics and learning in general has been an enduring inspiration for me. I wholeheartedly thank him for the many valuable comments and the inspiring discussions he offered me with regard to the manuscript throughout the entire editing process.

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I am endlessly grateful to my husband, Dirk Schmidt. His love, his understanding of who I am, and his grudgeless support have ensured that I could

devote myself to this dissertation. His contribution to this project cannot be measured or described by words.

I owe a lifelong debt to my parents, Professor Lifeng Yang and Professor Ruifeng Jing who live in China. They have taught me the preciousness of learning and they made me eager to acquire knowledge. Their powerful patience, on the other hand, has been the most enduring nutrition that sustains my heart. I also thank my two loving sisters, Yang and Ting, for their presence in my parents' life during my long absence.

I have dedicated this book to my five-year-old daughter, Tabia Yishui, as a probably unwanted "present". However, I insist on giving her the present because her birth has transformed me and given my life clarity. Her beautiful existence makes me unafraid of difficulties in my work and in my life.

Z. J. S.

Recklinghausen, March 2005

List of figures and tables

Figures

- 6.1. Perfective versus imperfective constellation from speaker's perspective
- 9.1 Change in total frequency of *ba* versus *jiang*
- 9.2 Change in frequency of *ba* versus *jiang* as full verb
- 9.3 Change in frequency of *ba* versus *jiang* as instrumental
- 9.4 Change in frequency of *ba* versus *jiang* as in the BA-construction
- 9.5 Development of the attitudinalthetic use
- 9.6 Development of other uses (verbal suffix and adverb) of *jiang*
- 9.7 Change in frequency of *na* as verb and as preposition
- 9.8 Change in frequency of *yong* as verb and as preposition

Tables

- 3.1 Structures of the *ba*-construction
- 3.2 Features that correlate with the relative position of verb and object
- 4.1 Parameters of cardinal transitivity
- 6.1 Choice of sentence type versus number of participants in corpus S
- 6.2 Choice of sentence type versus verbal dynamism in corpus S
- 6.3 Choice of sentence type versus number of VM units in corpus S
- 6.4 Number of VM units per clause across sentence type in corpus S
- 6.5 Types of VM in use with the *ba*-construction
- 6.6 The Mandarin aspect system
- 6.7 Frequency of aspect markers in *ba*-clauses in corpus S
- 6.8 Choice of sentence type versus discourse familiarity of subject in corpus S
- 6.9 Specificity of the *ba*-NP in corpus S
- 6.10 Definiteness of the *ba*-NP in imperatives in corpus S
- 6.11 Frequency of *ba*-imperatives versus non-*ba*-imperatives in corpus S
- 6.12 Familiarity degree of NPs in *ba*-clauses in corpus S
- 6.13 Properties of foreground-background distinction
- 6.14 Choice of sentence type versus sequentiality of event in corpus S

- 6.15 Choice of sentence type versus realness of event in corpus *S*
- 6.16 Frequency of *ba*-clause versus non-*ba*-clause in CR in corpus *S*
- 6.17 Distribution of CR in *ba*-clause in corpus *S*
- 7.1 Choice of sentence type versus metaphor type in corpus *S*
- 7.2 Percentage of each metaphor type within each sentence type
- 7.3 Choice of sentence type versus use of intensifiers in corpus *S*
- 7.4 Modal verbs in *ba*-clauses in corpus *S*
- 7.5 Total number of *ba*-clauses in corpora *S* and *M*
- 9.1 Total number of occurrences of *ba* versus *jiang*
- 9.2 Total number of occurrences of *ba* versus *jiang* as full verb
- 9.3 Total number of occurrences of *ba* versus *jiang* as instrumental
- 9.4 Total number of occurrences of *ba* versus *jiang* as in the
BA-construction
- 9.5 Total number of occurrences of *ba* versus *jiang* as in the attitudinal
thetic sentence
- 9.6 Total number of occurrences of *jiang* as verbal suffix and adverb
- 9.7 Total occurrences of *na* as verb and as preposition
- 9.8 Total occurrences of *yong* as verb and as preposition
- 9.9 Frequency of *ba* versus *jiang* in CC in corpora *J* and *H*

Notational conventions

1. (x): x is an optional element.
2. Single quotation marks ‘ ’ are used for meanings.
3. *Italics* are used for
 - (a) short linguistic forms cited in the text;
 - (b) emphasis in quotations.
4. Asterisk * is used for
 - (a) ungrammatical or semantically anomalous forms;
 - (b) forms which are well-formed in isolation, but which create ill- formed discourse in context.
5. Question mark ? is used for semantically or pragmatically questionable uses.
6. Chinese characters: Simplified Chinese characters are used in the examples.
7. Spell sound: *pinyin*, the standard pronunciation system of Mandarin Chinese adopted in the People’s Republic of China, is used in examples. All tone markers are left out because they are irrelevant to the analysis conducted here.
8. Glosses and translations: Each Chinese element is glossed with the most literal English equivalent possible.
9. Hyphens:
 - (a) for linking two syllables of a compound word such as *hao-chi* ‘good-eat’ or ‘tasty’;
 - (b) for linking main verb and a verbal modifier such as *da-si* ‘hit dead’.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
ADV	Adverb
ASSOC	Associative
AUX	Auxiliary
BENEF	Benefactive
CAUS	Causative
CL	Classifier
COM	Complement
COML	Completive
CR	Conjunctive relation
CRS	Currently relevant state
DISM	Dismissive
DISS	Dissipative
DUR	Durative
EXP	Experiential
EXT	Extentative
GEN	Genitive
INCL	Inclusive
INS	Instrumental
NOM	Nominaliser
NP	Noun phrase
O	Object
OM	Object marker
P	Particle
PASS	Passive
PFV	Perfective
PN	Proper name
PRD	Predicate
PROH	Prohibitive
Q	Question

REL	Relative
RES	Resultative
S	Subject
T	Topic
V	Verb
VP	Verbal phrase
VQ	Verbal quantifier
VR	Verbal reduplication
1sg.	First person singular pronoun
2sg.	Second person singular pronoun
3sg.	Third person singular pronoun
1pl.	First person plural
2pl.	Second person plural
3pl.	Third person plural

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This study offers a data-driven discourse analysis of the *ba*-construction of Mandarin Chinese.¹ The analysis concerns the synchronic function of the *ba*-construction on the one hand and the historical development of this function on the other. This double task is pursued on the basis of the fundamental confidence in understanding language as “a uniquely human instrument of communication” (Diver 1995: 43). Communication is defined as “a social activity requiring the coordinated efforts of two or more individuals” (Gumperz 1982a: 1). Communication can be understood either in the narrow sense of immediate face-to-face interaction in the form of direct exchange of messages and responses or in the broad sense that language is directed by a sender toward a recipient (immediate or eventual) for a meaningful interpretation (see Schiffrin 1987: 5–6).

If language is designed for communication, it follows that language is goal-directed and always occurs in a specific context. That is, speakers of a language normally do not walk about making random statements that are irrelevant to the given context in which the speakers are situated, however grammatically well-formed these statements may be. In fact, the communicative function of language determines that whatever is said or not said and how something is said are governed by the communicative intent of the speaker. That is, “we communicate with some end in mind, some function to be fulfilled”, as Bruner (1985: 36) puts it. The interpretation of a verbal utterance is to recognize the intent in the given context in which the utterance occurs. This idea was articulated by Austin (1962) who introduced the theory of speech acts in his *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin argued that when people speak, they are necessarily performing social acts by the use of language. Searle (1969), following Austin, proposed that people, upon hearing an utterance, interpret it by going from the sound of it to the intent encoded by the sound. That is, people hear others talk in terms of social acts. If the purpose of language is to express an intent, then the crucial task in analyzing language is to reconstruct that intent. Diver saw the reconstruction of the speaker’s intent as key to the analysis of linguistic constructions. He wrote (1995: 53):

One step in the analytical procedure [...] will be to pin down the nature of the intent. In fact, more generally, pinning down the nature of the intent is the solution of the problem as a whole, the motivation for the configuration of the sound waves is largely to be found in an intent, an hypothesized intent, on the part of the speaker.

If our job is to identify the speaker's intent conveyed by means of a construction, then we cannot ignore the context in which the construction is used to convey that intent. The necessity of taking into consideration discourse environments of the construction under investigation becomes compelling. Discourse environment is the linguistic representation of the real-world context in which a sentence is intentionally uttered. It consists of linguistic elements that form a coherent structure beyond a single clause.²

Based on the above considerations, the present study will not take as the primary target of examination decontextualized introspective sentences composed by the linguists, as, for instance, (1)–(2) below:

- (1) 张三把李四批评了。
Zhang-san ba Li-si piping-le.
 PN BA PN criticize-PFV
 'Zhang-san criticized Li-si.'
- (2) a. 我把张三打了。
Wo ba Zhang-san da-le.
 1sg. BA PN hit-PFV
 'I hit Zhang-san.'
- b. 我打张三了。
Wo da Zhang-san -le.
 1sg. hit PN -PFV
 'I hit Zhang-san.'

[Li & Thompson 1974b:203, tone markers in the original are omitted here; glosses are mine, Z.J.S.]

Rather, we will provide an analysis on account of real occurrences of the *ba*-construction in texts together with the contexts in which it occurs, as, for examples, (3a, b)–(8a, b) below from the corpus S. The *ba*-clauses in the excerpts are underlined:

- (3) 小崔，傻瓜脸气得一青一红的，正和李四爷指手画脚的说：
“看见没有？刚刚把车拉出去，又净了街！叫人怎么往下混呢？
一刀把我宰了，倒干脆！这么笨据我，简直受不了！” (p. 69)
 'Xiaocui, whose pumpkin face turned alternately blue and red in anger,

is speaking to Lisiye with exaggerating gestures: “Don’t you see? As soon as I pulled out the rickshaw, they cleared the street! How can you make a living this way? Kill me with one stab of a dagger! That’s rather neat. Slashing me like this is utterly unbearable.”

- a. 刚刚把车拉出去

Ganggang ba che la chu-qu
just BA rickshaw pull out-go

- b. 一刀把我宰了

Yi dao ba wo zai le
one dagger BA 1sg. slay PFV

- (4) 祁老者在院中叫瑞全:

“瑞全，好孩子，把洋书什么的都烧了吧。都是好贵买来的，可是咱们能留着它们惹祸吗?” (p. 39)

‘Old Qi called Ruiquan from the yard: “Ruiquan, good child, go burn all the Western books and the like. They all cost a lot of money, but can we keep them for them to cause trouble?”’

把洋书什么的都烧了吧

Ba yang shu shenme de dou shao-le ba
BA Western book what NOM all burn-PFV P

- (5) 他开始替她想: 假若她留在北平，她将变成什么样子呢?

说不定，她的父亲还会因求官得禄而把她送给日本人呢!想到这里，他猛的做了起来。教她去侍候日本人? 教她把美丽，温柔，与一千种一万种美妙的声音，眼神，动作，都送给野兽? (p. 47)

‘He starts to think for her. If she stays in Peking, what will become of her? Her father will possibly give her to the Japanese in exchange of a well-paid post! This thought made him suddenly sit up. Let her go serve the Japanese? Let her give all her beauty, tenderness, and a thousand and a myriad kinds of wonderful voice, gaze, and movement to the beasts?’

- a. 她的父亲还会因求官得禄而把她送给日本人呢

Ta-de fuqin hai hui yin qiu-guan-de-lu er ba ta
3sg.GEN father yet will for ask:post:get:money thus BA 3sg.
songgei ribenren ne
give Japanese P

- b. 教她把美丽，温柔，与一千种一万种美妙的声音，眼神，动作，都送给野兽?

Jiao ta ba meili, wenrou, yu yi qian zhong yi
make 3sg. BA beauty tenderness, and one thousand kind one

wan zhong meimiao de shengyin, yanshen, dongzuo, dou
 myriad kind wonderful assoc voice gaze movement all
 songgei yeshou?
 give beast

- (6) 她的语声忽然变得清亮了:“你为什么不早说!走,我跟你去!”
 “咱们俩走着去吗?”
 “不会叫汽车吗?”
 “铺子都关着门哪!”
 “就是铁门,我也要把它砸开!走!” (p. 56)
 ‘Her voice suddenly becomes clear and high: “Why didn’t you tell me earlier? Let’s go. I’ll go with you!”
 “Are we walking there?”
 “Can’t we get an automobile?”
 “All the stores have closed their doors.”
 “Even if it were an iron door, I would crash it open! Come on!”’

就是铁门,我也要把它砸开!

Jiu shi tie men, wo ye hui ba ta za kai!
 even be iron door, 1sg. too would BA it crash open

- (7) 大家都觉得这不是买木耳的好时候,而都想责备她一半句。可是大家又都知道她是一片忠信,所以谁也没肯出声。见没人搭话,她叹了口气,象蜗牛似的把头缩回去。(p. 145)
 ‘They all feel that it isn’t the best time for shopping for wood-ears and wish to criticize her a bit. But everyone knows that her behavior is out of a good heart, so no one says a word. Seeing that no one responds to her, she gives a sigh and shrinks her head back like a snail.’

象蜗牛似的把头缩回去

Xiang woniu shide ba tou suo hui-qu
 resemble snail like BA head shrink back-go

- (8) “中国还能打得过日本吗?”
 外国人都说,大概有三个月,至多半年,事情就完了!”
 丁约翰很客观的说,到仿佛他不是中国人,而是英国的驻华外交官。
 “怎么完?”
 “中国军队叫人家打垮!”
 大赤包听到此处,一兴奋,几乎把酒瓶掉在地上。“冠小荷!你听见没有?”

虽然我是个老娘们，我的见识可不比你们男人低！把胆子壮起来，别错过了机会！” (p. 94)

“Will China ever defeat Japan? The foreigners all say that in about three months, at most a half year, the matter will be finished!” Ding-John says very objectively, as if he were not a Chinese, but an English ambassador.

“How is it finished?”

“The Chinese army gets smashed.”

Upon hearing this, Big-Red-Pepper gets so excited that she almost drops the wine bottle onto the floor. “Guan Xiaohé! Did you hear it? Although I’m a woman, I’ve got no less insight than you men! Boost your courage and don’t miss the chance!”

- a. 几乎把酒瓶掉在地上

Jihu ba jiu ping diao zai di shang.
nearly BA wine bottle drop on earth top

- b. 把胆子壮起来

Ba danzi zhuang qi dian lai.
BA gallbladder strengthen up a:bit come

Sentences (1)–(2) are neatly formed and perfectly grammatical. However, compared to the *ba*-clauses in (3)–(8), they are meager and anemic, devoid of human voice shaped by human intentions, motivations and emotions. They are simply out of context. Though they may well illustrate how individual constituents, namely the subject, the verb and the object, are sequentially organized into a grammatical sentence, they do not allow any inquiry beyond the syntactic structure as to, for example, why a speaker would want to utter a sentence like (2a) and not its apparent syntactic variant (2b) if they were indeed semantically equal, as many assume. To a question like this, an analysis based on isolated introspective sentences provides no answer except the superficial observation of the appearance, as stated by Li and Thompson (1974b: 203):

It is important to note that the *bǎ*-construction has become the preferred form in Modern Chinese when the verb is polysyllabic. As we have mentioned earlier, many of the present-day SVO sentences have monosyllabic verbs such as *dǎ* ‘hit’, *mà* ‘scold’, *ài* ‘love’... etc. However, even such remaining SVO sentences are now facing the competition of an alternate SOV form, [...] On the other hand, if the verb is morphologically complex or modified, the *bǎ*-construction is usually preferred and often the only acceptable form.

Appearance, however, is no explanation: The syllabic structure and the morphological complexity of the verb do not explain the motivation underlying the actual choices speakers make between the *ba*-construction and its SVO alter-

nate. Wishy-washy words like “usually” and “often” in the linguist’s vocabulary suggest the existence of murkiness in the analysis and leave the impression that a speaker’s preference of one structure over another may be arbitrary at times. This illusion of arbitrariness is most ardently preached in the generative treatment of the *ba*-construction. Sybesma (1999: 132), for instance, declares to the reader:

[...] I will capitalize on the less-well-acknowledged fact that, generally speaking, every *ba*-sentence has a counterpart without *ba*, with (in all relevant respects) the same meaning.

Clearly, Sybesma regards the *ba*-sentence and its non-*ba* counterpart as synonymous. It may be true that every *ba*-sentence has a counterpart without *ba*, but it is an error to say that the two have the same meaning and vary freely in any context. In fact, the claim of “free variation” has been invalidated, time and again, by sign based analyses of linguistic constructions. In her *Introduction to Meaning as Explanation: Advances in Linguistic Sign Theory*, Contini-Morava (1995: 11–13) summarizes the studies that formidably challenge the notion of free variation. She emphasizes the existence of semantic contrast as an explanation for the conveying of particular messages in communication. In keeping with the communicative nature of language, structural preference must never be considered arbitrary. The reason is straightforward: apparent variation is always motivated by the speaker’s communicative intent and the speaker’s intent is not only relevant but central to linguistic analysis.³

As a matter of fact, none of the *ba*-clauses in the above examples (3)–(8) can be replaced with a so-called syntactic variant without the particular communicative intent being either weakened or even distorted. In fact, in each of these sentences the expression of intention, emotion or stance is systematically accomplished by means of linguistically real and analyzable structures that construct a coherent discourse: The subjunctive mood, the universal quantifier *dou* ‘all’, the hyperbolic quantifiers *yi-qian* ‘a thousand’ and *yi-wan* ‘a myriad’, the conceptual metaphor *yeshou* ‘beast’, the simile *woniu* ‘snail’, the modal adjunct *jihu* ‘almost’, the cohesive evaluative markers *dao* ‘rather’ and *jiu...* ‘even if’, et cetera, are not used arbitrarily. They help to constitute the respective discourse environments in which the *ba*-construction occurs. In this sense, these correlating linguistic elements can be understood as contextualization cues with the aid of which we are able to interpret the respective utterances as expressions of indignation, request, determination, identity, etc., in short, as speech acts. Clearly, our interpretation of these messages immediately

dwells on the coherent discourse structures formed by the *ba*-construction, the correlating contextualization cues and the larger context in which the *ba*-construction occurs. As far as the larger context is concerned, we can see from the excerpts that the *ba*-clauses are used in describing theatrical excitement, as in (3a, b), (5a, b), (6) and (8a), in issuing compelling commands, as in (4) and (8b), or in depicting elaborate scenes, as in (7). In any case, the context of the *ba*-clause can be characterized as “dramatic”. The non-interchangeability of the syntactic forms exactly reflects the coherent construal of the discourse environments.

By the same token, even the two introspective sentences (2a) and (2b) are not readily interchangeable in a given context, although they are statements of the same fact. Because human beings normally do not make arbitrary statements of facts, we shall imagine that (2a) and (2b) are meaningful expressions uttered for specific communicative purposes in certain contexts. Unsurprisingly, the contexts in which they may occur are indeed very different. For instance, (2a) and (2b) can be used as answers to the respective questions (2A) and (2B) below, which can be reconstructed in imagination:

- (2) A. 你怎么这么高兴?
Ni zenme zheme gaoxing?
 ‘You look so happy. Why?’
- a. 我把张三打了。
Wo ba Zhang-san da-le.
 ‘I hit Zhang-san.’
- B. 你好象心里有鬼，干什么坏事啦？
Ni haoxiang xinli you gui, gan shenme huai shi la?
 ‘You have a guilty look, what crap did you do?’
- b. 我打张三了。
Wo da Zhang-san-le.
 ‘I hit Zhang-san.’

Both (2a) and (2b) state the fact of the speaker’s hitting Zhang-san. However, sentence (2a) can be identified as a braggart. That is to say, it gives a self-glorification account of the fact, showing that the speaker is proud of his deed. In sharp contrast, sentence (2b) is a low-key concession that is likely to be reluctantly made in front of a perceptive and strict parent or educator. The speaker is forced to admit committing an act that he feels bad about and does not wish to profile. It is clear that the choice of sentence types is not arbitrarily made here; rather, it reflects the way the speaker defines the discourse situations and produces according reactions. In short, the choice of the respective sentences

types is motivated by the speaker's intent in the given situations. For this consideration, the present study will attempt to identify the intent underlying the use of the *ba*-construction. We will do so by seeking the semantic-pragmatic property with which the syntactic difference between the *ba*-construction and its apparent variation may be correlated.

In this study, we shall argue that discourse dramaticity is the semantic-pragmatic property to which the choice of syntactic structures is sensitive. When the speaker's communicative intent favors high discourse dramaticity, the *ba*-construction is chosen; when the speaker's communicative intent prefers low discourse dramaticity, a non-*ba*-construction is chosen according to the concrete "background of expectation" (Sasse 1987) in the given context. Thus, synchronically, the *ba*-construction is used as a dramatizing strategy to draw the hearer's attention to the events being communicated. By virtue of this dramatizing function, the *ba*-construction stands in semantic-pragmatic opposition to other syntactic forms in Mandarin Chinese including the fundamental SVO, the contrastive OSV and SOV, and the fossilized VSthetic sentences. To be precise, the use of the *ba*-construction as a discourse dramatizer gives the instruction to the hearer that the speaker is making an investment of his own perspective, his emotion or attitude in the proposition and wishes to be so interpreted by the hearer. The function of discourse dramatization is realized by a number of correlating linguistic strategies. These are: (1) the grammatical representation of cognitive salience of the event being communicated and (2) the expression of subjectivity and emotional intensity by means of lexical, grammatical and stylistic tools. The validation of this argument shall reveal the inadequacies of treating the *ba*-construction on the clausal level only, as previous approaches uniformly do.

Diachronically, the syntactic change from a serial verb construction to the dramatizing *ba*-construction is no mysterious "drift" through time, as has been assumed. The change is structurally triggered and pragmatically motivated and is subject to functional selection within the synchronic system of grammar at each historical stage of development. From an evolutionary perspective, the development of the *ba*-construction constitutes an adaptive change whereby a minor structural change in syntactic representation triggers radically diverged communicative behavior (cf. Lieberman 1984, 1991). This behavior has a selective value towards enhanced social advantage by virtue of enhanced pragmatic value. The new communicative function in turn reinforces the structural elaboration of the *ba*-construction, which leads towards high expressiveness and dramaticity. Both internal (formal) and external (social) factors shape the path

of the development, which shows a strong tendency of semantic-pragmatic enrichment in the sense that a propositional meaning has come to express subjective messages (see Traugott 1982, 1989, 2003). The discussion of the diachronic development of the *ba*-construction will invalidate the notion of an “object marker”, which has been imposed upon the morpheme *ba* by previous approaches, synchronic and diachronic.

Given our assumption that structural preference is always motivated by the communicative intent of the speaker, we view linguistic constructions as signs with indexical meanings, which the speaker uses to make instructions for the hearer to make appropriate inferences in communication. This view gives rise to our hypothesis of an invariant instructional meaning for the *ba*-construction that reflects the intent underlying the use of this construction. It is in the representation of this particular semantic substance that the *ba*-construction contrasts to other syntactic structures. The postulation of the invariant instructional meaning assures a semantic ground on which the interaction between syntax and pragmatics becomes linguistically analyzable. This is to say, we do not treat pragmatics as “radical pragmatics” independent of grammar and syntax; rather, pragmatics is solidly anchored on language structures with which meanings are conveyed (cf. Sadock 1984). The respective instructional meanings postulated for the *ba*-construction and its syntactic variants will explain the interrelations between the superficial phenomena observed with the *ba*-construction such as the presupposition of the subject and the object, the morphological complexity of the verbal phrase, the use of the perfective aspect marker *le*, etc., which otherwise seem mysterious and unrelated to one another.

This study points to an ultimate goal, which is to show that a syntactic structure viewed in isolation from discourse is deceptive, and that an analysis of isolated syntax reveals neither the function of the structure nor the motivation for structural change through time. Such an approach dissociates language from its speakers, whose experience is the very content of linguistic expressions. Because “that language is a perfect symbolism of experience, that in the actual context of behavior it cannot be divorced from action and that it is the carrier of an infinitely nuanced expressiveness are universally valid psychological facts” (Sapir 1949: 11), an explanatory analysis of syntactic structures must take into account the human factor and study the syntax-pragmatics interface. The functional aspect of linguistic structures is key to both the synchronic analysis of actual uses and the diachronic study of syntactic change. In other words, if a framework enables us to penetrate the “what and why” of a structure synchronically, then the same framework will empower our diachronic explanation of

that structure. To be precise, the concern with the interaction between syntax and pragmatics, or, more directly, the concern with the pragmatic function of syntax, shall answer both synchronic and diachronic questions with respect to the *ba*-construction, and in that spirit, any other linguistic structure. This is the commitment we will make with this study.

An overview of chapters is in order. Chapter 1 as an introduction informs the reader of the basic assumptions about language and syntax in particular on which the present study is based and offers the reader a clue of what to expect in this book; Chapter 2 outlines the database with a remark on the adequacy of the use of literary texts as the primary database; Chapter 3 introduces the *ba*-construction of Modern Mandarin in a syntactic overview with a wealth of examples as the raw material with which the characteristics and uses of the *ba*-construction are illustrated. A discussion of the controversy with regard to Mandarin Chinese word order is intended to shed light on the functional complementarity of sentence types in Mandarin Chinese. Chapter 4 reviews previous studies of the *ba*-construction on the synchronic level and discusses the unsolved problem. Attention is given to the disposal approach, the transitivity approach and the causativity approach, three influential analyses that predominate the understanding of the *ba*-construction in the literature. Chapter 5 provides the hypothesis of the system of speaker's instruction to discourse dramaticity where the *ba*-construction contrasts to its syntactic variants. The hypothesis is made within the tradition of the form-content analysis that treats linguistic constructions as signs carrying invariant instructional meanings which reflect the speaker's communicative intent. Two strategies, namely (1) cognitive salience and (2) subjectivity and emotionality, are predicted on the basis of the hypothesis of discourse dramaticity; Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 aim to validate the two strategies that directly bear on the hypothesis. Chapter 6 explores linguistic cues correlating with the *ba*-construction in the representation of cognitive salience on the clause level and the trans-clause level. Chapter 7 confronts the phenomenon of linguistic subjectivity and emotionality inherent in the discourse context where the *ba*-construction is used to describe events. The analyses are carried out on account of quantitative textual data on the relevant linguistic properties predicted by the hypothesis. Frequency counts across two discourse types serve as extra evidence; Chapter 8 is an interim conclusion summarizing the synchronic analysis conducted in the previous chapters. Chapter 9 is devoted to the description and explanation of the diachronic development of the pragmatic function of the *ba*-construction. The notion of a "drift" and the notion of a grammaticalized object marker as a result of the drift are invalidated. Instead, a rich history of interwoven struc-

tural changes and functional innovations is reconstructed on the background of the given sociocultural contexts. The development of the *ba*-construction as a syntactic device for discourse dramatization is an adaptive process of language in use. Chapter 10 contains concluding remarks and a brief statement of future goals.

CHAPTER 2

Database

The database for the synchronic analysis consisted of the following corpora: the corpus *S*, which is the core of the database, consisted of the first 16 chapters (165 pages) of Lao She ([1945]1999), a Modern Mandarin novel about the fate of a multi-generation Peking family during the dire time of the Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945. The novel is written in the voice of the third-person narrator, it is however packed with constructed first-person dialogues. The corpus *W* (Lao She [1940]1999) and the corpus *C* (Lao She [1957]1999), which consisted respectively of 58 pages and 105 pages of two modern Mandarin plays, were sporadically consulted. Apart from the narrative texts, corpus *M* (Yang & Gan 2000), which consisted of the first eight chapters of a contemporary introductory philosophical textbook for university students, provided data on the distributions of the *ba*-construction in the non-fictional type of discourse.

For the diachronic analysis, we used two types of text material. The first type was purported for the token-based non-quantitative examination of the *ba*-construction in the earlier phase of its development where large bodies of colloquial narratives are unavailable. The second type was intended for the quantitative study of the grammatical regulation and systemization of the *ba*-construction in relation to its rivals in the later phase of development where colloquial texts abound. The first type of data contained a mixed source of historical textual examples either adopted from previous studies or cited from historical texts including Bian and Zhou (1999), Zhang (2000), and Guan (2000). The second type of data consisted of four corpora: corpus *Y* contained ten vernacular plays of the Yuan dynasty, corpus *J* contained the first 16 chapters of a vernacular novel of the Ming dynasty, corpus *H* contained the first 16 chapters of a renowned novel of the Qing dynasty, and corpus *S* was the same as the main corpus used for the synchronic analysis. In Section 9.3.1, we will describe this part of the historical data in more detail.

Since the central idea underlying this study is the communicative nature of language, it is necessary to discuss the adequacy of the database on which the hypothesis, namely that the *ba*-construction signals high discourse dramaticity,

is presented and validated. Specifically, we shall ask the question: Is literary discourse an adequate source of data?

The answer is affirmative insofar as literary discourse resembles speech in its communicative nature. The broader sense of communication, as has been mentioned in Chapter 1, suggests that literary discourse is necessarily communicative because it is directed toward intended and eventual recipients, that is, the readers, within the shared symbolic system and is intended for meaningful interpretations. In fact, not only is literary discourse communicative in the broad sense of communication, many thinkers have expressed the idea that literary discourse actually resembles conversational discourse in its very mechanism. E. Sapir (1949: 11) observes:

The history of writing is in essence the long attempt to develop an independent symbolism on the basis of graphic representation, followed by the slow and begrudging realization that spoken language is a more powerful symbolism than any graphic one can possibly be and that true progress in the art of writing lay in the virtual abandonment of the principle with which it originally started. Effective systems of writing, whether alphabetic or not, are more or less exact transfers of speech.

Goffman (1974), who uses examples drawn from novels or dramatic productions throughout, judges them a fruitful source of material by saying that “their deepest significance is that they provide a mock-up of everyday life, a put-together script of unscripted social doings and thus are a source of broad hints concerning the structure of this domain” (1974: 53).

Searle (1969) claims, “The literary is continuous with the non-literary. Not only is there no sharp boundary, but there is not much of a boundary at all”, for, he argues (1969: 59–64):

[F]ictions and non-fictions contain the same illocutionary acts such as making statements, asking questions, giving orders, making promises, apologizing, thanking, and so on. Anyone [...] who wishes to claim that fiction contains different illocutionary acts from nonfiction is committed to the view that words do not have their normal meanings in works of fiction. The difference between fictions and non-fictions, then, is that the author of a work of fiction pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts.

Searle regards the identifying criterion for whether or not a text is a work of fiction as necessarily lying in the “illocutionary intentions” of the author. He concluded that “there is no textual property, syntactical or semantic, that will identify a text as a work of fiction”.