

The Mandarin *ba*-construction

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Introduction. This paper examines the Mandarin *ba* construction. Modern Mandarin is a subject-verb-object (SVO) language, as is shown in (1a), a canonical transitive sentence, but the *ba*-construction exhibits a surface word order of subject-*ba*-object-verb (SOV), as in (1b). The atypical word order and argument structure and numerous syntactic and semantic restrictions have made it the subject of extended debate.

- (1) a. Xi-Xi he-le niunai. (canonical SVO sentence)
Xi-Xi drink-ASP milk.
'Xi-xi has drunk milk.'
- b. Xi-xi **ba** **niunai** he-le. (*ba*-construction)
Xi-xi **BA** **milk** drink-ASP
'Xi-xi has drunk up the milk.'

The puzzle. Recent analyses treat *ba* as a functional head projected at different positions on the verbal spine of Mandarin Chinese, for example: above vP (Huang et al., 2009) and as v (Sybesma, 1999). The common underlying assumptions of these analyses are: 1) the NP after *ba* (the *ba*-NP) and the following VP form a constituent excluding *ba*, as in [*ba* [NP VP]]; 2) *ba*-sentences are derived from non-*ba* sentences, like passives and actives. Though these analyses can account for some basic properties of *ba*-constructions, they fail to derive the right word order when manner adverbs modify the VP (Huang et al., 2009; Sybesma, 1999) and are unable to account for all the data, such as the "retained object" type where a third NP occurs at the complement of V, after the movement of the logical object from this spot.

No analysis so far correctly captures the semantic and syntactic properties of the *ba* construction. Any proposed syntactic structure, to be descriptively adequate, has to derive the observed linear order of *ba* sentences with respect to adverb placement and also account for the semantic properties, such as the affected interpretation of the *ba*-NP (Wang Li, 1945; Sybesma, 1992, 1999), the aspectual restrictions on the predicate (telicity) (Young, 1993; Sybesma, 1999) and the definiteness of the *ba*-NP (F. Liu, 1999).

My analysis and proposal. My investigation of the word order issue that challenges previous analyses leads me to question the underlying assumption that the *ba*-NP and the VP form a constituent. Applying constituency tests, I propose instead that *ba* and the *ba*-NP form a constituent [[*ba* NP] VP]. I examine the argument structure and aspectual properties of the complex *ba* predicate (ten cases, which I group into five structural types). Based on the constituency and aspectual properties of the complex *ba* VPs and the argument structural differences between *ba* sentences and canonical SVO sentences, I propose that *ba* and the *ba*-NP merge at the specifier position of an FP between VoiceP and vP. This structure is base generated, rather than derived; there are [telic] and [definite] selecting features on F. Evidence for my claims is threefold.

First, my research has found that *ba* predicates are Accomplishments and Achievements, and therefore telic; telicity is a vP-level property. I claim that the head of FP holds a telicity feature that agrees with a telic *ba* VP, based on Kratzer's (2002) analysis of Finnish case. Second, *ba* and the *bei*-passive can co-occur, and the morpheme *bei* (the passive) always precedes *ba*. As passive is well established as a Voice, *ba* must therefore be between Voice and v. Third, when *ba* appears with ditransitive verbs, it does not add an argument, but allows the theme NP of double object constructions (DOCs) to merge in a higher position. Pylkkänen (2008) argues that DOCs are low applicatives, situated in VP, whereas high applicatives are below both causatives and passives but above VP. This is consistent with the observed order of the Mandarin causative, passive and *ba*. My proposal accounts for the syntactic behaviour of all five VP types in *ba*-constructions, the semantics of *ba* constructions (telicity of VPs and the affectedness interpretation of *ba*-NPs), and the word order issue.

Implications. These facts, and the observations that *ba* allows an extra NP in the canonical object position (the defining property of applicatives) suggests that *ba* can mark a high applicative in the sense of Pylkkänen (2008). Further support for this idea comes from the availability of benefactive, malefactive, instrumental, and locative interpretations of the *ba* NP. The telicity of the *ba* VP and the definiteness of the *ba* NP may well be formally linked. Finally, ordering relations among *ba*, the *bei*-passive, and the causative (*shi/rang*) implies that the Mandarin Voice system occupies several functional heads.

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