Zhuo Jing-Schmidt. *Dramatized Discourse: The Mandarin Chinese* ba-*Construction*. Studies in Functional and Structural Linguistics 56. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005. xxii, 337 pp. Hardcover $176.00, ISBN 9-02-721565-0.

Based on her doctoral dissertation, Jing-Schmidt has contributed the first monograph on the *ba*-construction to the linguistics literature in English. The book has filled a chasm in the discourse aspect of the Mandarin *ba*-construction, and presents a great step forward to understanding this unusual construction. Readers interested in the *ba*-construction or Mandarin grammar in general will enjoy the findings about one of the most studied constructions of Mandarin from this book.

Chapter 1 (pp. 1–11) presents a general introduction to the orientation of the book. Emphasizing communication as the goal of language, this study has adopted a data-driven approach, using *ba* sentences found in textual discourse rather than decontextualized introspective sentences. To avoid the deceptive practice of viewing a syntactic structure in isolation from discourse (p. 9), examples of the *ba*-construction are rendered in chunk in order to have a clear discourse context. The chunk is given in Chinese characters, accompanied with free translation into English. The focus part is underscored in the bilingual chunk, and the *ba*-construction is then repeated with a three-lined presentation, including Chinese characters, *pinyin* (without tone markers), and morpheme-to-morpheme glosses.

Chapter 2 (pp. 13–15) provides a sketch of the sources of data. The database for synchronic study includes three pieces of Lao She's works from the 1940s and 1950s: the first sixteen chapters of a novel, corpus S (which is the primary source of data); two modern plays, corpus W and corpus C; and a nonliterary work, corpus M, from the first eight chapters of a university textbook. The database for diachronic study consists largely of corpus Y from the Yuan dynasty, corpus J from the Ming dynasty, and corpus H from the Qing dynasty. Much of the chapter gives justification for using written literary works as data for linguistic analysis.

Chapter 3 (pp. 17–66) describes the syntactic structure of the *ba*-construction in terms of compositional properties. Two entirely different syntactic relationships are noted (section 3.1): (i) *ba*-Obj-VP and (ii) *ba*-Subj-VP. The former has six variants, and the latter has two. These are: *ba*-Obj-V-Complement, *ba*-Obj-V-Aspect_marker, *ba*-Obj-Adverb-V, *ba*-Obj-V-Or(-V2) [Or=recipient Object], *ba*-Obj-V-Op [Op=partitive Object], and *ba*-Obj-V-Ot [Ot=transformation Object]; Ø-*ba*-Subj-VP [Ø=null sentential subject] and T-*ba*-Subj-VP [T=sentential topic]. The chapter then discusses concurrence of the *ba*-construction with mood (indicative, imperative, interrogative, and subjunctive in section 3.2) and modality (3.3), the use of the construction in three kinds of sentences: negative (3.4), pas-

sive (3.5), and causative (3.6). Other issues covered are using the *ba*-construction as subordinate (3.7) and word order of Mandarin (3.8).

Chapter 4 (pp. 67–112) presents a critical review of some previous studies on the *ba*-construction. Examining L. Wang's examples (1947) in his treatment of *ba* sentences as the disposal construction, Jing-Schmidt criticizes Wang's generalizations for being short of explanatory power and his examples for lacking communicative reality. In discussion of Li and Thompson's analysis within the disposal framework, Jing-Schmidt shows that grammaticality of *ba* sentences can be achieved with additional modification on the VP, which, however, contributes no disposal effect (cf. example [4] below). Jing-Schmidt points out that Chao (1968) failed to define the notion of "pretransitive verbal construction" properly in his study of the *ba*-construction and overlooked the attitudinal aspect of the construction. Detailed review of the concept of transitivity is undertaken as regards "cardinal transitivity," "prototypical transitivity," and "prototypical action and major biactant construction." The causativity approach to the *ba*-construction is briefly addressed. Jing-Schmidt considers the common problem shared in these studies to be the treatment of the *ba*-construction at the propositional level with the singular focus on sentence grammar based on isolated data (p. 107).

Chapter 5 (pp. 113–124) advances a discourse-based approach to the *ba*-construction under two language-external controlling principles involving communicative goals and human psychology. In the system of discourse dramaticity, the *ba*-construction is regarded to feature high dramaticity, whereas non-*ba* sentences have low dramaticity (p. 114). Dramaticity is construed in terms of cognitive salience, on one hand, and subjectivity and emotionality on the other.

Chapter 6 (pp. 125–210) explicates in great detail cognitive salience observed in the *ba*-construction at the clause and trans-clause levels. Intra-clausal factors concerning the number of participants, verbal dynamism, verbal modification, salience of event and participants, and information structure are investigated in 304 *ba* clauses from corpus S. An equal number of non-*ba*-clauses are taken from the same source from the start of the novel for statistic comparison to the *ba*-construction samples. Interclausal properties of the *ba*-construction are also statistically studied as regards foregrounding and textual linking. A number of predictions about these factors and properties are made and supported by the data: high discourse dramaticity of the *ba*-construction implies that events expressed by the construction tend to involve more than one participant (p. 126); tend to use dynamic verbs (p. 135); tend to attract more verbal modifiers (p. 139), particularly those signifying change of state (p. 140); tend to have an accessible subject (p. 168); and tend to have a specific *ba*-NP (p. 169). Cognitive salience is predicted to be marked more likely by constructions sensitive to the foreground-background distinction (p. 194), and a *ba*-clause tends to be foregrounded by cohesion markers (p. 197).

Chapter 7 (pp. 211–240) expounds subjectivity and emotionality embedded in the *ba*-construction. Conceptual metaphors, intensifiers, mood, and modality are addressed with the same statistic mode as in chapter 6. Two more predictions are forwarded: conceptual metaphors are more likely to appear in *ba* clauses (p. 214), and intensifiers are employed more in *ba* clauses (p. 219). Finally, the chapter discusses different trends in using *ba* clauses in two different genres: corpus S (304 tokens) and corpus M (133 tokens).

After the interim conclusion in chapter 8 (pp. 241–244), chapter 9 (pp. 245–295) hypothesizes the *ba*-construction to have arisen adaptively under pragmatic forces rather than general grammaticalization. The origin of the construction is taken to be the serial verb construction *ba*-O-V-L [L=locative NP] instead of V1-O1-V2-O2 [V1=*ba*, O1=O2] (p. 249). Diachronic data suggest that reanalysis of the serial verb construction occurred in the Tang dynasty (618–960 A.D.) (p. 255). Rapid urbanization taking place in the Song dynasty (960–1279) fostered the shift of narrative styles from archaic to colloquial (p. 263), which, in turn, accelerated subjectification of the *ba*-construction (p. 295). Emergence of the intransitive type of *ba*-construction (structurally *ba*-Subj-VP) is observed by the fourteenth century. Based on the four literary works in the diachronic database, the regulation and systemization of the *ba*-construction is discussed with a number of statistic presentations. Finally, chapter 10 (pp. 297–300) closes the monograph with remarks on limitations of the present work.

Notwithstanding its high quality, the ambitious and radical approach adopted in the book has undermined this research work to some extent. The inclusion of a diachronic study of the *ba*-construction in an otherwise synchronic analysis is not necessary. Since Jing-Schmidt is not concerned with the grammatical status of *ba*, how the construction has evolved to its modern form and functions has little bearing on the dramaticity hypothesis. More important, the diachronic development of the *ba*-construction, cast in the far-reaching record of written texts over millennia, deserves a separate in-depth study in its own right. The diachronic chapter, one sixth of the monograph, can address the history of the *ba*-construction only cursorily. The claimed contradiction, in the light of the pragmatization of the *ba*-construction, to the general belief that linguistic objectification ensues from cultural progress and literary (p. 295) needs to be substantiated and corroborated. More worthy efforts could have been directed toward statistic studies of other corpora in the database of modern texts.

Jing-Schmidt declares on several occasions in the book that the *ba*-construction signals "a meaning of discourse dramatization, a meaning whose effects in communication are best seen at the pragmatic level of discourse rather than the semantic level, taken strictly, let alone the syntactic level" (p. 291). Under this radical approach, the pragmatic domain has become the primary, if not exclusive, field for studying the *ba*-construction. The focus of diachronic investigation is placed on the construction as a whole rather than the head of the construction,

ba, for it is inadequate to treat *ba* as a grammaticalized object marker or case marker (pp. 291–292). What has been overlooked is the possibility that grammaticalization can shift the meaning of *ba* from lexical to grammatical, namely to express resultative (as discussed in Ding 2001; 2007). If syntactic studies without taking pragmatics into consideration are problematic, as criticized in the book, the inverted approach can only be equally inadequate.

The aptness of the term "discourse dramaticity" and derived terms such as "dramatization" is questionable. Although the Byzantine nature of the *ba*-construction must be acknowledged, the intrinsic meaning/function of the construction does not warrant a new rubric term. Under the vague notion of "discourse dramaticity," other constructions, such as the passive in (1), the causative in (2), and the topic-comment in (3), would also fare well on the grounds of either cognitive salience or subjectivity.

(1) *Simiao gei xiongxiong da-huo shao-le zhengzheng san-tian san-ye.*
    temple Pas flaming big-fire burn-Pft entire three-day three-night
    "The temple had been burned by the fierce fire for three entire days and nights."

(2) *Wo kan zhe ge hao xiaoxi yiding hui rang haizi que-yao qi-lai.*
    1sg look this Cls good news certainly will Caus child bird-jump Ich
    "In my view this good news will certainly let the child dance like a happy bird."

(3) *Qiufan ya, yifu quan gei tuo-diao, ji-shi ren ji zai limian.*
    prisoner Prt clothes all Pas take off few-ten person crowd at inside
    "The prisoners, all their clothes were taken off; scores of them crowded inside."

This term is informative only in its exclusive focus on pragmatic aspect of the *ba*-construction, for Jing-Schmidt has refuted disposal as the central meaning of the *ba*-construction. Nonetheless, the disposal meaning can be construed as patient resultative (roughly, affectedness acting on the object of *ba*) and challenges to the disposal analysis from sentences such as (4) can be reconciled under another type of resultative: agent resultative (roughly, affectedness acting on the subject of *ba*). (See Ding [2007] for detailed account of these and other types of resultative found in the *ba*-construction.)

(4) *Ta ba xiao-mao ai de yao si.*
    3sg BA small-cat love Ext want die
    "S/he loves the kitten so much that s/he wants to die."

Thus the disposal meaning can be readily translated to the linguistic notion of resultative, as defined by Nedjalkov and Jaxontov (1988), with fine distinction on the entity being affected. It is possible to speak of a well-defined resultative meaning of the *ba*-construction (cf. Dai 2005; Hu 2005) that is yet compatible to the notion of high dramaticity.

Jing-Schmidt's treatment on the scope of the *ba*-construction is also remarkable. The starting point of the construction is set to be marked by *ba*, which

means that the *ba*-construction is syntactically taken as a phrase. No wonder it is difficult to construe the meaning of the *ba*-construction at the sentence level.

It is curious that subjectivity and emotionality are rendered as a unit in explaining discourse dramaticity, as emotionality by itself is not discussed and often left behind when exploring subjectivity in the *ba*-construction. The empirical data suggest that subjectivity and emotionality as a strategy in creating discourse dramaticity does not possess the same degree of force as cognitive salience, although this is not pointed out in the book. Because of the weaker forces, only two predictions about the *ba*-construction are available as far as subjectivity is concerned. Furthermore, a percentage as low as 16 percent is reported for the use of modal verbs in *ba*-clauses in the sample, which is presented with a conspicuous absence of statistic comparison to non-*ba*-clauses, however.

On account of the use of databases, Jing-Schmidt's study is empirical, and, therefore, it is open to verification by future research. However, the statistic significance of this empirical study remains to be proven, as statistical principles do not seem to have been in place with regard to sample selection and sample size. This is a potential problem particularly in the diachronic study, where a piece of work from a certain dynasty is regarded as representative of that dynasty.

The empirical data from corpus S have provided not only vivid discourse contexts of the *ba*-construction, but also complex syntactic structures of sentences, which may involve causativity, passivization, complementization, relative clauses, and clause compounding. The only commonly found syntactic combination absent from the corpus (based on the cited examples) is the occurrence of the *gei*-passive in the *ba*-construction, for example

(5) *Da-huo   ba   simiao   gei   shao-hui   le.*
     big-fire   BA   temple   Pas   burn-destroy   Pft
     "The big fire has burned off the temple."

The interesting combination of the *ba*-construction with other constructions may pose challenges to syntacticians who have analyzed merely the structure of these constructions in their canonical form in isolation.

There are also a few problems in organization. A veil has been drawn over the grammatical status of *ba* until *ba* is referred to as an auxiliary verb in the diachronic chapter. Similarly, what is subsumed under "non-*ba*-clause" in the statistic comparison in the two main chapters (6 and 7) becomes clear only in chapter 8. "Non-*ba*-clause" includes the four word orders SOV, OSV, SVO, and VS. It is unclear whether special constructions such as the passive and the causative are also counted toward the first 304 non-*ba*-clauses. Instead of the general comparison between *ba*-clauses and non-*ba*-clauses, a more beneficial methodology would be comparison of the *ba*-construction with other specific constructions in Mandarin. Between the *ba*-construction at the high level and canonical

sentences at the low level, a refined scale of discourse dramaticity may emerge for other frequently used constructions.

A few typos are found in Chinese examples and English texts. The former involve misprint of homophonous characters such as 做 *zuo* "do" in lieu of 坐 *zuo* "sit" (p. 3). Although they do not hinder the reading, their corrections will be welcome when the book is reprinted or published as a paperback.

(This review is based on an earlier online version, which appeared at *http://linguistlist.org/issues/17/17-648.html*)

Picus Sizhi Ding

Picus Sizhi Ding is an assistant professor in linguistics at the University of Hong Kong. His research centers around languages of China.

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ABBREVIATIONS | | |
|---|---|
| 1Sg | First person singular pronoun |
| 3Sg | Third person singular pronoun |
| Caus | Causative verb |
| Cls | Classifier |
| Ext | Extential marker |
| Ich | Inchoative marker |