CAUSATIVE AND RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN MANDARIN CHINESE

A multiperspectival approach

Abstract

This study is an exploration of the causative and resultative constructions in Mandarin Chinese, particularly the *ba* construction. Within the approach of Meaning Determination with Semantic-Epistemic Operations, the meaning of *ba* is distinguished from that of *na* (take) and that of *jiang* (hold up). The word *ba* is classified as a stance verb in the present study. It can be used to express concrete physical holding and guarding or abstract control. It can also be used metaphorically to express causation. Our classification of *ba* as a stance verb challenges the serial verb and disposal analyses. The fact that there are similarities between the senses of *ba* and *na* as well as the nebulous differences between them has led to *ba*'s analysis as a serial verb; its connotation of a state of controlling has resulted in the analysis of the subsequent process as `disposal´. We claim that in the *ba* construction, *ba* is used either abstractly as in the agentive and experiential senses or metaphorically as in the causative sense. Following Bender (1998, 2000), we regard *ba* as the syntactic head subcategorizing for a subject, an object and a verbal complement. By analyzing *ba*'s discourse functions, we provide a pragmatic approach to analyzing complex predicates. The higher predicate verb *ba* in the *ba* construction is `light´ in the sense that it denotes a kind of relation, such as causation and control, between the subject and the object as well as the rest of the sentence. This predicate is used to recount a situation which is not marked for aspect, as do permissive, instructive and causative verbs such as *shi*(make), *rang*(let) and *jiao*(order). Due to its role in `recounting´, the predicate *ba* links to the event that has been recounted to make the recounting complete. This event is expressed by a verbal composite of a process and a resulting state. Since the recount predicate denotes a relational state with an entity as its grammatical object, the event recounted has a control relation to this entity, hence its role as the `co - predicate´. Using Lambrecht's (1994) idea of focus, I show that the focus of the *ba* construction can be instantiated into a relational pragmatic category with the focal information nesting in the verbal complement.

Using LFG formalism, I demonstrate that the functional structure is shown as being able to (i) accommodate the grammaticalized information of semantics and pragmatics relevant to the *ba* construction and (ii) present their relationship in a non-complicated and precise way.

KEY WORDS:

stance verb, polysemy, light verb, complex predicate, verbal complement, focus, Mandarin Chinese *ba* construction.

The thesis is written in English.