The Syntactic Category of (ba)

Mandarin Chinese (ba) participates in several frequently discussed grammatical constructions. However, the syntactic category of ba is controversial. This paper evaluates previous proposals for ba as a preposition, verb, or functional head. I claim that ba can be a causative verb or a topic marker, depending on the construction it is a part of.

Ba constructions all follow one of the two surface forms given in (1-2), with the X representing a resultative complement or an aspect particle – for example, the perfective aspect particle le in (3b) or the complement na ge yang ("that way) in (4) (Li 2006). The most prevalent ba

surface form (3b). Unlike other analyses, Zou s account motivates a mandatory X as per schema (1-2) because *ba* selects for an appropriate phrase and can be extended to all *ba* constructions.

(5) $[B_{aP} [NP wo]_i [B_{a'} [B_a ba] [A_{spP} [NP yaoshi]_k [A_{sp'} [A_{sp} wang-le]_j [VP [NP t]_i [V' [V t]_j [NP t]_k]]]]]$

Counter to Zou s (1995) analysis, *v* assigns accusative case according to the standard Minimalist Program (Adger 2012). However, since the NP after *ba* seems to be an embedded topic, the movement of this NP can be motivated by checking an embedded topic feature on *ba* rather than by case, allowing *v* to assign accusative case as usual.

Another problem with Zou s (1995) analysis is its interpretation of causative *ba* constructions. It relies upon an implausible CausP verb shell and does not attempt to disprove a verbal analysis. This suggests that *ba* is a verb in causative constructions. This is supported by the fact that *ba* can be replaced by causative verbs in these constructions. Additionally, as *ba* was historically a lexical verb (Bender 2000, Ding 1993, Zou 1995), it makes sense to suggest that