Modeling the role in discourse of the Mandarin utterance-final particle *ba*

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Abstract: While there has been some research into the nature and function of the Mandarin Chinese utterance-final particle *ba*, none has identified a sufficiently explicit core function from which all of the particle's various effects may be adequately derived. Furthermore, while previous research has made use of various theoretical frameworks in analyzing the particle, none has yielded a satisfactory falsifiable, formal account of the particle's function within discourse. Using corpus data to gain a comprehensive view of the particle's distribution, this investigation seeks to identify such a core function, within a theoretical framework aimed specifically at establishing an explicit model of the particle's role in discourse. I identify a core function which I refer to as distribution of authority, and I illustrate in detail the manner in which this function is able to account for the behavior of the particle. The core function which I identify raises questions as to the scope that lexical meaning may have, as the particle appears to have encoded in its meaning certain information regarding not only the speech act with which is associated, but the manner in which the speech act is to be handled in discourse.

1. Introduction

The Oxford University Press English-Chinese Chinese-English dictionary (Manser 1999) lists the following entry for the Mandarin Chinese utterance-final particle *ba*.

> 吧 ba (助) 1. [used at the end of a sentence to indicate suggestion, request, or command]: 帮帮他 --. Let's give him a hand. 2. [used at the end of a sentence to indicate agreement or approval]: 好--，我答应你了. OK, I promise. 3. [used at the end of a sentence to indicate doubt or conjecture]: 他今天大概不来了 --？ He is not likely to come today, is he? 4 [used to indicate a pause suggesting a dilemma]: 走--，不好，不走--，也不好. It's no good if we go; if we don't, it's no good either.

The above entry provides at best a scattered representation of the particle's usage, proposing several disparate functions which lack any apparent commonality. Does *ba* possess multiple irreconcilable functions, or can a single underlying function be identified? Although some researchers have previously proposed underlying core functions for the particle *ba,* none have identified a function which can account for the full range of the particle's effects. In this paper, I attempt to identify a core function from which all observed surface effects may be explicitly derived. I base my analysis upon corpus data, in order to establish a comprehensive picture of the particle's distribution. After identifying a core function, I illustrate the derivation of the particle's various effects, as determined by contextual factors. The basic function which I establish for the particle has interesting implications with regard to the scope of lexical meaning, as the particle appears to encode information which operates on an unusually high level in discourse.

2. Previous research

Past research has taken a number of different angles in analyzing the particle *ba*. In the following section, I will review and assess previous attempts to identify a core function, as well as previous theoretical frameworks which have been utilized in analysis of the particle.

2.1. Previously posited core functions

Past researchers have often attempted to identify a core function common to all occurrences of the particle *ba*. None has been successful, however, in establishing a formally defined function which can account for the full breadth of the particle's distribution. Below is a review of existing claims.

2.1.1 Interaction enhancement: "context connection" and "audience seeking"

Authors Chu and Li (2004) seek to identify the function of *ba* through a remove-and-compare strategy. Removing the particle from three of their examples, they observe that the *ba*-less utterances sound isolated and uncooperative, like asides in a stage production. The authors conclude that *ba* is used to enhance the interaction of the speaker and the hearer, and assert that this enhancement of interaction is composed of two elements: a "context connection" function and an "audience seeking" function (Chu & Li 2004:4).

The authors then address the removal of *ba* from their other examples, which they find to be less straightforward. The authors observe that without *ba*, these examples do seem to lack the connection to the context, but maintain the quality of seeming particularly aimed at the hearer. The authors hypothesize that this quality comes from those parts of the utterance which contain the second person pronoun *ni,* as the first three examples did not contain the pronoun. The authors test this hypothesis by removing those parts, as well, and find that this measure does, in fact, make these more complex examples comparable to the first three in terms of coherence with context and naturalness of tone.

The authors conclude that it was indeed the second-person pronoun which was maintaining this sense of the utterance being particularly directed at the hearer. They hold that this does not refute the hypothesis that *ba* also serves this function, and support the claim by replacing *ba* in the utterances from which they have removed the phrases containing the second-

person pronoun *ni*. They conclude that these utterances do in fact have a renewed sense of being directed at the hearer, and that *ba* can therefore be said to have an "audience seeking" function, which may be diluted if the second person pronoun is also present.

The "context connection" claim will be addressed below, in the assessment of Chu's relevance theory framework. The claim of "audience seeking" as a core function is exceedingly vague, and in the absence of a more specific definition seems to describe a characteristic inherent in any utterance, regardless of the presence or lack of *ba*—or of the second person pronoun, for that matter. All utterances in normal discourse, after all, will be directed at a hearer. As such, this cannot serve as a satisfactory explanation of the particle's function. The "audience seeking" claim does, however, appear to be based in a useful intuition that the particle *ba* contributes to an utterance a dimension of increased addressee involvement. This intuition proves central to the core function which I propose below.

2.1.2. The speaker uncertainty hypothesis

Chu (1998) describes *ba* as a "modality particle" and posits as the particle's core function one of Lyons' (1977) subjective epistemic modality meanings: "speaker's uncertainty about the content of the proposition contained in the utterance" (Chu 1998:135). Notably, Chu also claims that "as a sentence-final particle, *ba*'s modality function is interpreted as superposed over the entire sentence or clause" (1998:139).

Chu maintains the speaker uncertainty claim in subsequent papers, including a brief mention in Chu and Li (2004), and a more in-depth treatment in Chu (2009). In the latter paper, Chu provides the following examples of the manner in which *ba* "interacts with the propositional content" of an utterance. He then uses the core function of speaker uncertainty to derive each of the differing specific interpretations.

> (1) nimen jintian wanshang chu qu ba?
>   2pl.   today   evening out go BA
>   "You're going out tonight, aren't you?" [1]

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[1] I have altered many of the glosses in this section, in order to maintain consistency with my own. However, due to the functional nature of *ba*'s meaning, nuances of translation are often dependent upon the particular theory of a given researcher. As such, for the purposes of presenting these theories faithfully, I have preserved all translations as given in the sources.

(2) women zou ba!
    1pl   go BA
    "Let's go!"

(3) A: women wanshang qu kan dianying, ni qu bu qu?
        1pl   evening go see movie 2sg go neg. go
        "We are going to the movies tonight. Are you going (with us)?"
    B: hao   ba
       good BA
       "OK..." (as uttered in English with a rising intonation)

(4) A: wo juan   yibai   kuai
         1sg donate one-hundred class.
         "I'll donate a hundred bucks."
    B: zhe shi zuo   haoshi, ni yinggai duo juan   yi dian
       this cop. do good-deed 2sg should more donate one bit
       "This is to help the needy. You should give more."
    A: na wo jiu juan   liangbai   ba
       that 1sg just donate two-hundred BA
       "Well, in that case, I'll donate 200."

(Chu 2009:285-286)

Chu points out that the differing interpretations of *ba* are manifested in the English counterparts found in the given translations: the tag question "aren't you", making example (1) what Chu calls a "softened question", the "Let's …" making (2) a suggestion, the rising intonation of "OK" expressing hesitation in (3), and the expression "Well …" in (4), which Chu describes as representing "willy-nilly agreement". Chu holds that these various interpretations of the particle are united by the common factor of hesitation or uncertainty about either the content or form of delivery of the utterance to which *ba* is attached. For instance, Chu holds that the tag question in (1) indicates that the speaker lacks confidence about the statement. The "suggestion sense" in (2) indicates the speaker's discomfort in issuing the command. The rising intonation in (3) indicates that the speaker is uncertain that he or she should comply with the request. Finally, Chu claims that *well* in (4) indicates the speaker's hesitation in making the decision.

The intuition behind the speaker uncertainty hypothesis is by no means unfounded or unshared by many speakers of Mandarin. When asked the difference between a given *ba* utterance and its *ba*-less counterpart, native speakers often explain that the *ba* utterance is "less certain." Chu's analysis is far from thorough, however, and even in this handful of examples, the application of the speaker uncertainty hypothesis seems to be forced. Granted, it is at least

acceptable in examples (2)-(4) to claim that addition of *ba* contributes an effect of uncertainty. Examples (3) and (4) both express what I will refer to below as "reluctant acquiescence", and the contribution of *ba* in (2) can be understood as a softening effect, which could conceivably be attributed to speaker uncertainty—although, as we will see below, is more accurately attributed to other mechanisms. It is in examples such as (1) that the hypothesis begins to show clear problems, as the speaker of (1) seems not to be expressing uncertainty, but rather making an inquiry—as Chu himself observes in describing the utterance as a "softened question". Because this utterance—which in the absence of the particle would be a simple declarative—behaves much like a question, a claim that the particle serves only to express speaker uncertainty is clearly inadequate. In my analysis below, I will present many more such examples from the corpus data. I will examine in detail the weaknesses of the speaker uncertainty hypothesis, as well as the connection between speaker uncertainty and the new core function which I postulate. We will see that *ba* can, in fact, be used at times to express speaker uncertainty. However, this effect is limited only to certain instances of the particle, and as such must be derived from a different, more widely applicable function.

Chu (1998) also uses the speaker uncertainty proposal to address what he calls the "pause-particle *ba*," which appears in the following examples. Note that Chu refers only to the first *ba* in (5) as a pause-particle.

(5)   hao ba, jiu zheme ban ba
       good BA, then this-way do BA
       "All right, (we'll) do it this way."

(6)   zhe jian   shi, ta ba, bu   ken zuo; wo ba, bu   hui   zuo.
      this class. matter 3sg BA neg willing do 1sg BA neg know-how do
      "As to this job, he/she doesn't want to do it and I don't know how to do it."

(Chu 1998:138)

Chu explains (5) with the observation that the difference between *hao* and *hao ba* is equivalent to the difference between straightforward agreement and qualified agreement. As such, *ba* can be said to add a note of uncertainty to the speaker's agreement to "do it this way." In explaining cases such as example (6), Chu claims that the pairing of the two instances of *ba* can be interpreted either as alternatives or conditionals, and that this is due to the fact that "they are actually derived from the speaker's uncertainty" (Chu 1998:138).

Once again, Chu's application of speaker uncertainty to these examples is neither thorough nor satisfactory. As I have already touched upon the inadequacy of the speaker uncertainty hypothesis, however, a more important object of assessment is Chu's apparent suggestion that there exist distinct categories of the particle *ba*. Chu does not provide an explicit definition for "pause-particle *ba*," merely describing it as "in the middle of a sentence," in contrast to sentence-final *ba* (1998: 137). Furthermore, he does not claim a separate function for this "pause particle", but rather attempts to apply to it the function of speaker uncertainty. It would seem, then, that Chu's classification of the "pause particle" is largely descriptive and not based in a functional distinction. Evidence against any functional distinction inherent in *ba*'s sentence position can be seen in the case of *hao ba* "okay", which occurs in example (3) as well as example (5). Although the particle occurs "in the middle of a sentence" in (5) and utterance-finally in (3), there is no notable difference between its apparent effects in the phrase. Although the interpretation of (5) is context dependent (see section 5.4.), the phrase *hao ba* can certainly be construed in this example as representing the hesitant or reluctant acquiescence seen in example (3). We will see in section 5.4. that the behavior of the particle in phrases such as *hao ba* is quite consistent with its behavior in typical utterance-final instances, and as such does not seem to merit a separate categorization.

On the other hand, instances of *ba* such as those seen in example (6) do indeed present a unique problem for analysis of the particle. This appears to be due not to the fact that the particle occurs sentence-medially, but rather to the fact that the particle attaches in these cases to phrases which cannot stand alone as utterances, and so cannot be analyzed as full speech acts. In this sense, "pause-particle *ba*" may in fact be a valid distinction. This matter will be discussed further below.

2.1.3. The soliciting agreement hypothesis

Authors Li and Thompson (1981) select as *ba*'s main function what they term "soliciting agreement," a function which they compare to that of tag questions such as "don't you think so?" and "wouldn't you agree?" in English. Hudson and Lu (2003), in accordance with Li and Thompson, state that *ba* functions mainly to solicit agreement or confirmation, adding that it functions to soften the tone of a sentence, contributing a note of supposition and compliance.

Li and Thompson, citing the same utterance (2) used by Chu (2009), hold that their "soliciting agreement" function accounts appropriately for the fact that *ba* often marks what they call first person plural commands. When the subject is second person, the authors assert that the "soliciting agreement" function logically results in an effect of advice, as below:

(7) ni he   shui ba
    2sg drink water BA
    "Why don't you drink some water?" (Li & Thompson 1981:308)

As can be inferred from the authors' translation of (7), they interpret the utterance as a suggestion, which seeks the input of the hearer. Similarly, the translation "Let's go" in (2) has the effect of a suggestion, as well. The authors further illustrate their point with the following example:

(8)
a) ta   bu hui zuo zhe yang   de   shi
   3sg neg. will do this manner part.   thing
   "S/he wouldn't do such things."

b) ta   bu hui zuo zhe yang   de   shi ba
   3sg neg. will do this manner part. thing BA.
   "S/he wouldn't do such things, don't you agree?" (Li & Thompson 1981:309)

In contrast to (8a) the authors hold that (8b) cannot be interpreted as spoken in anger, as *ba* creates an "accommodating and conciliatory tone" (Li & Thompson 1981:309). Note that this is consistent with Hudson and Lu's observation that the particle adds a note of supposition and compliance.

Li and Thompson emphasize the importance of context in understanding the function of soliciting agreement, providing the following example:

(9)
a) wo   he ban bei
   1sg   drink half glass
   "I'll drink half a glass."

b) wo he ban bei ba
   1sg drink half glass BA
   "I'll drink half a glass, ok?" (Li & Thompson 1981:308)

The authors observe that while (9a) can be the response to "How much do you want to drink?", (9b) can only occur in a context where the speaker has reason to solicit agreement from the addressee that half a glass will be acceptable. For instance, the authors provide the example of a speaker who has been toasted repeatedly at a banquet and uses (9b) as a plea to drink less this time.

Proponents of the soliciting agreement hypothesis have not provided any in-depth analysis or extensive support for the function of soliciting agreement, nor have they provided a formal definition. Additionally, the hypothesis meets with some trouble in those cases in which the particle does appear to be serving to express speaker uncertainty. Nonetheless, while the soliciting agreement hypothesis is not sufficiently explicit or comprehensive to serve as a formal explanation of *ba*'s function, it shows valuable insight into the particle's role in discourse. Indeed, the particle's usage can often be described as one of seeking agreement. My analysis will seek to make more explicit the underlying mechanisms behind this usage.

Notably, the concept of soliciting hearer agreement incorporates that crucial dimension which is missing from the speaker uncertainty hypothesis: the dimension of addressee involvement. This dimension, which seems also to have inspired the abovementioned "audience seeking" hypothesis, is taken a step further in the case of soliciting agreement, as the latter hypothesis implies not only the existence of hearer involvement, but *active solicitation* of hearer involvement on the part of the speaker. As we will see below, this dimension of addressee involvement can help to account not only for the question-like behavior observed in example (1), but also for the "accommodating" and "compliant" tones noted above by Li and Thompson (1981) and Hudson and Lu (2003), respectively. The dimension of addressee involvement thus represents an important commonality between the soliciting agreement hypothesis and the core function which I propose below.

2.2. Previous theoretical (and other) frameworks

Moving beyond the positing of a core function, past researchers have additionally looked to analyze the particle *ba* within a number of different frameworks. While some of these frameworks provide important insight into the manner in which the particle should be analyzed, none yields a satisfactorily detailed or formal account of the particle's role in discourse. Below is a brief review and assessment.

2.2.1. Hudson and Lu: cognitive domains and information status

Hudson and Lu (2003) stress the importance of examining *ba* in multiple domains. In addition to the "functional", they seek to explore "interactional" and "informational" domains, as well. In comparing *ba* to the Japanese *ne*, they place significant focus on *ba*'s role in the nature of the interaction itself, stressing the "importance of considering cognitive domains and information status in analyzing sentence particles" (Hudson & Lu 2003:202). Within this domain, the authors make a number of additional observations regarding distribution.

The authors first of all point out apparent restrictions regarding the social context in which *ba* is used. Specifically, they observe that *ba* is used in close relationships, adding a tone of familiarity and friendliness. In contrast, the particle is not commonly used when there is a social or psychological distance between speaker and hearer, or when a speaker is attempting to sound objective or scientific. Along this vein, the authors observe that *ba* is rarely used in academic lectures, proposing that this is because use of the particle would indicate uncertainty about the content of the lecture.

The authors also point out that *ba* is not felicitous when uttered as the initial urging for a sleeping or unconscious addressee to rise. This, they hold, suggests that *ba* always asks for and expects some kind of reaction from the addressee. (Hudson & Lu 2003:201).

Perhaps most notably, the authors examine *ba* with relation to information status. They cite Kimura and Moriyama (1992), who analyze *ba* according to the speaker's reliance on hearer information. Kimura and Moriyama hold that *ba* has a basic meaning of "suspension of a true-or-false judgment or avoidance of conclusion", and that this yields two different results depending upon whether the speaker "relies on hearer information"—if the speaker does not rely on hearer information, the effect of *ba* is one of "supposition", and if the speaker does rely on hearer information, the effect of *ba* is one of "seeking of agreement or confirmation" (Hudson & Lu 2003:205). In the latter situation, "the speaker may be understood to be demanding that the hearer have identical information to that of his/her own" (Hudson & Lu 2003:206).

Hudson and Lu also observe that *ba* can be used in a context where the hearer can be assumed to have no knowledge of the topic at all.

(10) A: duoshao qian?
        how-much money
        "How much is it?"

    B: liang kuai qian ba
        two class. money BA
        "Two dollars, I'd say." (Hudson & Lu 2003:207)

However, the authors observe that use of *ba* would be infelicitous if the information were readily accessible to the speaker. Hudson and Lu hold that speakers of sentences such as that uttered by B in (10) are "engaged in soliloquy, asking 'confirmation' from themselves, so to speak, rather than from another person" (Hudson & Lu 2003:208).

Hudson and Lu provide a number of important observations. As indicated by their suggestion that *ba* seeks a response, they too have detected the dimension of addressee involvement. More significant, however, is their attention to the contextual factor of information status. As we will see below, the amount of information possessed by both speaker and hearer proves to be highly significant in determining the specific effects of the particle in a given context. This is consistent with Kimura and Moriyama's observation that the nature of the particle's effect varies depending upon hearer information. In fact, Kimura and Moriyama's observation that *ba* results in "suspension of true or false judgment or avoidance of conclusion" proves to be highly insightful. The core function which I propose for *ba* can in a sense be considered an elaboration upon this concept. Note that my proposed core function will also account for Hudson and Lu's observation that *ba* can be used when the hearer is known to lack relevant information, but is generally infelicitous when the information in question is readily available to the speaker. Additionally, my proposal can account for the observation that the particle is rarely used in academic lectures or other contexts in which the speaker wishes to sound objective or scientific—as use of *ba* in my model implies that a speaker has less authority to make a given assertion.

2.2.2. Chu and Li: relevance theory

Chu and Li (2004) analyze *ba* in light of Wilson and Sperber's (1986) relevance theory, a direction which is continued in Chu (2009). Chu (2009) draws from Wilson and Sperber (1986) the following definition of relevance: "An assumption is relevant to its context if and only if it has some contextual effects in that context" (Chu 2009:295-296, from Wilson & Sperber 1986).

Additionally, Chu takes from Wilson and Sperber the following extent conditions (Chu 2009:296, from Wilson & Sperber 1986):

(11)
Extent Condition 1: An assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effect in this context is large.
Extent Condition 2: An assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is small.

In applying relevance theory, Chu and Li (2004) essentially observe that in the absence of *ba*, their example utterances seem isolated and uncooperative, and they take this as evidence that *ba* serves the function of creating a connection between the sentence and its context. Chu (2009) provides the following demonstration of *ba*'s contribution to increasing the relevance of an utterance:

(12) A: xianzai   ji   dianzhong?
         now how-many o'clock
       "What time is it?"
     B: i) ni zai chifan ba!
         2sg at   eat   BA
       "You are eating, aren't you?"
        ii) ni zai chifan
          2sg at   eat
       "You are eating."
        iii) ba   dian   ban
           eight o'clock half
       "Eight thirty."   (Chu 2009: 296-297)

Allowing that the relevance of either response is dependent upon whether the hearer has a means of connecting the act of eating to the time of day, Chu observes that B's response (12i) could be expressed in English as "You are eating, aren't you?", whereas B's response (12ii) would simply be "You are eating". Chu takes this as evidence that the former has a higher degree of relevance to the context.

In assessing this analysis, we must first attempt to determine what exactly Chu means by "relevant". When determining the level of relevance of two other possible responses to the question in (12), he states that they "are less relevant [than a response of the actual time] in that they are less direct responses to the question" (2009: 297). He continues that responses (12ii) and (12i) are "even less direct". I will operate under the assumption that Chu's assessment of

"relevance" here refers to the amount of effort required to process a given utterance specifically as a response to A's question. Under this assumption, it is clear why Chu would assess (12ii) and (12i) as less relevant than (12iii). Assuming a scenario in which the addressee can link eating to the time of day, B's assertion can be considered relevant in that the information which A seeks can presumably be inferred from the information provided by B. However, the need for such an inference does increase processing effort.

The problem lies not in Chu's claim that (12ii) and (12i) require more processing effort than (12iii), but in his later claim that the use of *ba* makes (12i) more relevant than (12ii). He provides no support for this claim, outside of the observation that (12ii) and (12i) correspond to the English translations of "You are eating" and "You are eating, aren't you?" respectively. This is, of course, far from a satisfactory explanation. Nonetheless, assuming a context in which the act of eating provides a hint as to the time of day, intuition does more readily admit (12i) (in both English and Mandarin) as a response. What remains to be seen is whether this is in fact an indication that *ba* serves somehow to increase the relevance of the utterance.

It should first be noted that if the information contained in B's utterance cannot be presumed to allow for an inference as to what time it is, use of *ba* does not, in fact, make the utterance any more relevant as a response to A's question. If we assume that A eats at differing times every day, and that his act of eating therefore provides no hint as to what time of day it is, no amount of processing effort will yield a particularly helpful inference from the information provided in either (12ii) or (12i). Chu's use of the respective English translations illustrates this point as well. If the fact of eating no longer allows for an inference regarding the time, "You are eating, aren't you?" will not answer A's question any more effectively than will "You are eating." If we define relevance in this case as potential to provide the requested information with little processing effort, then neither response can be considered relevant.

It would seem, then, that it is not the level of relevance which *ba* serves to increase. Returning, however, to the context in which the act of eating can, in fact, be linked to the time of day, recall that (12i) does seem intuitively to be a more acceptable response than does (12ii). It seems, therefore, that although *ba* is not serving to influence relevance, it does serve to increase the felicity of the utterance in this context. It would of course be unreasonable to suppose from this claim that *ba* has a function of making an utterance more felicitous. Rather, once again this

result represents not a core function but an effect achieved in a particular context. The analysis below will seek to explain this particular effect in light of my own proposed core function.

2.2.3. Han: disturbance of neustic

Han assesses *ba* in light of Lyons' (1977) use of the concepts of neustic, tropic and phrastic. Lyons, in turn, takes these concepts from Hare (1970). According to Lyons (1977), the phrastic represents the propositional content of the utterance, the tropic corresponds to the type of speech act the utterance is used to perform, and the neustic is identified as that part of the sentence which expresses the speaker's commitment to factuality, desirability, etc. of the propositional content. The effect of *ba*, Han claims, is to influence the neustic of an utterance. Han proceeds to examine systematically the effects of *ba* on declarative, imperative, and interrogative utterances respectively.

For both declarative and imperative utterances, Han holds that the presence of *ba* serves to weaken the neustic—that is, to weaken the speaker's commitment to the proposition of the utterance. Han provides the following example of a declarative appended with *ba*:

(13)
  a) zhangsan shi laoshi
     Zhangsan cop. teacher
    "Zhangsan is a teacher."

  b) zhangsan shi   laoshi ba
     Zhangsan cop. teacher BA
    "(I think) Zhangsan is a teacher (am I right?)" (Han 1995:103)

Han observes that the addition of *ba* communicates something like the following: "Although I believe Zhangsan is a teacher, I do not claim to have any direct evidence to prove that my belief corresponds with an actual state of affairs; I therefore hesitate to assert bluntly that 'Zhangsan is a teacher.'" (Han 1995:103) Han also observes that the use of a declarative with *ba* does not presuppose hearer knowledge. Han represents the example (13a) in terms of Hare's (1970) schema as follows:

(14) I-say-so(it-is-so(Zhangsan is a teacher))
    neustic   tropic   phrastic   (Han 1995:104)

The *ba*-utterance (13b), on the other hand, is represented as follows, with a neustic of "I-think-so":

(15) I-think-so (it-is-so(Zhangsan is a teacher))   (Han 1995:105)

According to Han, this representation demonstrates the weakening of the illocutionary force of the utterance as a result of *ba*.

For the imperative, Han gives the following example:

(16)
  a) ni kuai zou
    2sg fast   go
     "Move!"

  b) ni kuai zou ba
    2sg fast   go BA
    "(I think) you'd better hurry up!"   (Han 1995:107)

Han states that the addition of *ba* turns the command into a less forceful utterance, communicating something like "I am not forcing you to hurry away at all, and I am not even assuming that you are able to do so, I am only suggesting that perhaps you should go quickly" (Han 1995:108). Han represents the imperative examples as (17) and (18) respectively.

(17) I-say-so(so-be-it(you go))
(18) I-think-so(so-be-it(you hurry up))   (Han 1995:107-108)

Again, Han concludes that *ba* serves to weaken the I-say-so neustic and, as a result, the illocutionary force of the utterance. Han formulates the generalization that overall, *ba* disturbs the neustic of an utterance, regardless of the type of main clause (see section 2.3. below for Han's analysis of the third syntactic category, interrogative + *ba*).

Han also addresses *ba's* apparent violation of Grice's Cooperative Principle, as utterances ending in *ba* seem to be less explicit than they could be. Han does not elaborate on this observation, but cites as an explanation Leech (1983) and the Politeness Principle, which according to Leech serves as a complement to the Cooperative Principle, regulating utterances so as "to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (from Leech 1983, found in Han 1995:120). Han concludes that a speaker's use of *ba* must be motivated by this Politeness

Principle, allowing the speaker to express a degree of politeness "by adding a question-like element to the utterance" (Han 1995:120).

Han's analysis also shows a good deal of insight, and my own analysis will in some ways run parallel. The division of *ba* utterances according to syntactic mood proves to be a valuable starting point in accounting for differing interpretations of the particle—although as we will see, it will be more useful to speak of these utterances in terms of speech acts, rather than syntactic moods. That being said, Han's analysis does touch upon *ba*'s relation to speech acts in its inclusion of the "tropic". While Han's analysis lacks the dimension of addressee involvement, and as such cannot account for the particle's question-like behavior, its implication of the particle in speaker commitment to factuality and desirability is a useful insight, and is reflected in my own analysis. Indeed, weakening of speaker commitment to an utterance can be considered a necessary consequence of the function which I propose for *ba*.

The claim that use of *ba* is motivated by a need for politeness is somewhat more complicated, as corpus data indicates that *ba* can be used in a wide variety of contexts, not all of which are cordial or even entirely civil. However, the connection between *ba* and effects of politeness will be addressed in section 6.2.2. below, in the discussion of the particle's social implications.

2.3. Problematic example

An interesting example which has proved particularly problematic to previous researchers is the following, presented by Chao (1968: 807):

(19) ni   daodi   yao   shenme   ba
     2sg   after-all   want   what   BA

Li and Thompson (1981) observe that *ba* generally cannot be appended to an utterance already marked as a question, but admit this counterexample as a viable exception. They translate (19) as "Tell me, what do you want" and explain that the most natural context in which such an utterance might occur would be one in which two people are quarreling, and one finally says (19) in exasperation. The authors use an additional translation of "OK, don't you think you should let me know what in the world you want?" to capture the full effect of the utterance. In accordance with the main function that they have selected for *ba,* the authors state that the particle here clearly solicits agreement that the hearer should make his or her wishes clear.

Chu (1998), on the other hand, originally translates (19) as "What do you want, after all?" and criticizes the interpretation of Li and Thompson (1981), stating that the second translation, "OK, don't you think you should let me know what in the world you want," does not adequately capture the contribution of *ba*. The aspect of the translation which most closely parallels the effect of *ba*, says Chu, would be the "OK," as long as it is spoken with a "suspended intonation" to indicate impatience. Chu holds that in this case, *ba* communicates "I have insisted that you don't need what you say you need, but now if you are still not convinced, I concede unwillingly that you might need it" (1998:134).

Linking this example to his proposal of "speaker uncertainty" as the main function of *ba*, Chu explains that to make utterance (19) meaningful, in the course of an argument a speaker needs to have been unable to convince his hearer of something, after which he finally gives up and concedes unwillingly with, "What do you want, after all?" Chu holds, therefore, that it is unwilling concession that is being communicated by *ba* (1998:134). Importantly, Chu also observes that as a sentence-final particle, *ba* operates not only on the propositional content, but over the entire clause to which it is attached. So, *ba* in (19) affects not only the proposition of "what you want," but rather the entire question. Chu therefore concludes that the speaker's uncertainty applies to the act of asking the question itself, and that this is perceived as unwillingness to concede (Chu 1998:136).

Chu and Li (2004) explain (19) in a slightly different light. They hold that an appropriate context for the utterance would be a wife asking her husband what he wants to eat that night, to which he responds with first one answer, then another, changing his mind constantly. The authors explain that the wife cannot have faith that her husband can give a precise answer, so when she asks (19), this *ba* has the role of expressing "hesitation at this question itself" (Chu & Li 2004:8). This account differs from that of Chu (1998) in that it lacks the interpretation of unwilling concession. However, it maintains the application of *ba*'s uncertainty function to the entire speech act.

Finally, Han examines (19) as an instance of the third and final syntactic category: interrogative + *ba*. Han observes that in contrast to a simple interrogative, an interrogative appended by *ba* a) shows strong determination to make the hearer comply, b) gives the hearer no choice in responses, other than to supply the missing information, and c) indicates that the speaker is in fact angry, and the hearer had better comply if he or she wants to avoid trouble. Han

concludes, therefore, that the effect of *ba* in this case is actually to strengthen the illocutionary force of the interrogative to that of a Directive (Han 1995:111-112).

The matter of example (19) is a fascinating problem on which the analysis below will attempt to shed light.

3. The present investigation: methodology

In order to achieve a more comprehensive perspective with regard to the usage and distribution of *ba*, I collected tokens of the particle from approximately 3 hours of the Taiwanese television program *Lanqiu Huo* "Hotshot," as well as from two mainland Chinese films, *Yingxiong* "Hero" and *Yinghan* "The Underdog Knight". The majority of tokens—67—were drawn from the television program, while the movies "Hero" and "Underdog Knight" yielded 5 and 23 tokens respectively, for a total of 95 tokens.

It should be noted that the three sources did exhibit differences in the distribution and usage of *ba*. The television show exhibited a much greater frequency of the particle than did either of the films. "Hero" not only yielded the fewest tokens of the particle, but also showed the least variety, yielding only instances of Type E (see classification below), whereas both of the other sources yielded instances of nearly all categories enumerated below. It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine what factors account for these differences in distribution, although the manner in which usage of *ba* may be influenced by various sociolinguistic factors is a question which certainly merits further investigation. For the current purposes, it will be considered sufficient that each of the collected examples represents a felicitous use of *ba* in Mandarin Chinese.

Several informants[2] were consulted in order to confirm the grammaticality and felicity of the examples, as well as to confirm my interpretations of the utterances' meanings. During the first phase of informant interviews, I simply presented informants with a sample of collected utterances—first without original context provided, then with context—and asked them to translate each utterance both with and without *ba*. All informants were highly fluent in English, but this was a very difficult translation task, particularly due to the highly functional nature of

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[2] I consulted three different informants, two of whom have spoken the standard dialect of Mandarin since early childhood, and one of whom is a native speaker of a regional Chinese dialect who acquired the standard dialect after entering college. The former two informants are university Chinese language instructors. The latter informant is a university professor and linguist.

the particle's meaning. Informants were generally better able to express the particle's contribution through description rather than translation. In the tradition of Matthewson, I treated informants' translations—as well as descriptions—as "a clue rather than a result" (2004: 389), with the major purpose of this first phase being to check that my own intuitions were accurate. The second phase of interviews occurred after I had selected and translated a number of examples for use in my analysis. During the second phase, I provided informants with these examples and my own translations of them, each accompanied with a brief description of the effect that I had attempted to capture through translation. All translations and descriptions were reviewed and confirmed by informants before inclusion.

In order to facilitate analysis, I first sought to organize the corpus data into categories. Han chooses to divide *ba* utterances according to the syntactic mood of the utterance to which the particle is attached—declarative, imperative, and interrogative. Categories formed according to this method form a fairly comprehensive picture of the distribution of *ba*. However, analysis of the data indicates that the function of *ba* is better understood in terms of speech acts. Note that this distinction between syntactic mood and speech act is an important one. As observed by Hausser, "When we talk about syntactic moods we are talking about formal properties of linguistic surface expressions. These are to be kept clearly distinct from the speech acts in which a linguistic expression may function" (1980: 72). Hausser cites the example of "Could you pass the salt?", a syntactic interrogative which nonetheless is conventionally used as a request rather than a question. This lack of one-to-one correspondence between syntactic mood and speech act highlights the importance of distinguishing between the two concepts.

In the case of *ba*, we will see that it is on the level of the speech act that the particle can be understood to operate, rather than syntactic mood. We will see below, for instance, that the particle's meaning projects beyond syntactic elements such as negation—as indicated in examples such as (45) and (46).[3] Because the function of *ba* appears to operate on a level which is not syntactic, I instead categorize the corpus data according to the speech act performed by the utterance to which the particle attaches. I further divide the data into the following categories according to various contextual factors and the overall effect of the full *ba* utterance:

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[3] See Roberts et. al. (2009) for discussion of projective meaning.

Table 1

Type	Speech act of utterance to which *ba* attaches	Details	General effect of *ba* utterance
Type A	Assertion	Assertion represents inference based upon available evidence. Hearer possesses more information than speaker.	Seeking confirmation
Type B	Assertion	Assertion regards matter of opinion. Both hearer and speaker have sufficient information to form opinion.	Seeking agreement
Type C	Assertion	Assertion represents a supposition by the speaker. Hearer is known to lack the relevant information.	Expressing uncertainty
Type D	Assertion	Assertion denotes a state of affairs which the speaker trusts or desires to be the case. Hearer possesses more information than speaker.	Seeking confirmation
Type E	Directive	Directive denoting action on the part of the hearer, or of both speaker and hearer.	Request, suggestion, command
Type F	Commissive	Commissive denoting action on the part of the speaker	Suggestion

It must also be noted that ultimately, these categorizations are simply a tool to ensure that the posited function of *ba* is applicable to a comprehensive range of contexts and interpretations. In reality, categorizing every *ba* utterance occurring in natural discourse would most likely prove very difficult. The influence of countless contextual factors may cause utterances to fall between categories, in multiple categories, or in new categories altogether. This is to be expected, and is not a problem for our purposes, as the classifications are in fact only a means to an end, and are not intended to be theoretically significant**.**

4. A new core function: distribution of authority

Following examination of the corpus data, I have formulated a new core function of *ba*, from which I believe the various observed surface effects will prove more readily derivable.

I will frame this theory within Portner's (2004) model of discourse. Portner observes, in the tradition of Stalnaker, that assertions—the conventional force of declaratives—denote propositions, and that use of an assertion results in addition of the denoted proposition to the Common Ground. The Common Ground (CG) is understood to be the set of propositions mutually assumed by the conversational participants.

Portner further observes, in the tradition of Roberts (1996), that interrogatives, when used with their conventional force of "asking", result in the addition of a set of propositions to the Question Set. The Question Set (QS) is understood to be the set of questions for which conversational participants have agreed to seek an answer—a set of sets of propositions (Portner 2004: 3).

Expanding upon the preceding assumptions, Portner goes on to propose a parallel model for imperatives. He suggests that imperatives denote properties, and he proposes that use of an imperative—with the conventional force of "requiring"—adds this property to what he calls a To Do List (TDL), a function from each conversational participant to a set of properties.

As mentioned above, for the purposes of modeling the function of *ba*, it is most useful to deal in speech acts rather than syntactic mood. So within Portner's model, it can be understood that the speech acts of assertion, asking, and requiring all result in addition of a discourse object to what I will call a target discourse domain. Acts of assertion add propositions to the CG, while acts of asking add sets of propositions to the QS, and acts of "requiring" add properties to the TDL of a conversational participant.

4.1. Authority

It is the updating of the CG and TDL which I propose that the particle *ba* serves to influence. Specifically, I propose that in acts of assertion and requiring, *ba* functions to involve the addressee in the admission of a proposition or property to the CG or TDL, respectively. In this sense, the function of *ba* can be understood as a kind of buffer, suspending addition of a given discourse object to the target discourse domain, pending hearer approval.

To be more explicit, I propose that the core function of *ba* can be understood as a kind of distribution of authority. I define *authority* in discourse as follows:

(20) Discourse authority: license to contribute input with respect to

   admission of a discourse object to a target discourse domain.

Let us examine this concept of authority as it pertains to specific speech acts.

Assertive authority

As stated above, use of an assertion adds a proposition to the CG. However, in light of the fact that the CG is by definition the set of mutually assumed propositions in a given discourse, it follows that a proposition cannot truly enter the CG without acceptance by the addressee. This acceptance—or "uptake"—may be explicit or implicit, but as long as the addressee makes no objection, we can assume that uptake has occurred, and that the proposition has been accepted to the CG. On the other hand, if the addressee does make some objection, the proposition cannot be considered to have entered the CG. The updating of the CG, then—like all of discourse—is a cooperative enterprise. I propose that any move to update the CG invokes a certain amount of what I call assertive authority:

(21) Assertive authority: license to contribute input with respect to
   admission of a proposition to the CG

A speaker possesses assertive authority to the extent that his use of an assertion is guaranteed to result in addition of the denoted proposition to the CG. Assertive authority consists, therefore, of knowledge that the denoted proposition is true, and ability to make the proposition a common assumption in the discourse without opposition by the addressee. It follows that the speaker who holds the most authority to make a given assertion will be the speaker who is most informed with regard to the propositional content.

A speaker who makes an unqualified assertion can be said to invoke full assertive authority. Alternatively, a speaker may distribute some assertive authority to the addressee, by acknowledging the capability of the addressee to determine admission of a given proposition to the CG. It is precisely this function of distributing authority which I propose is served by the particle *ba*. In appending the particle to an assertion, a speaker explicitly acknowledges the capacity of the addressee to contribute input regarding the admission or rejection of the given proposition, granting the addressee some authority in the updating of the target discourse domain.

This might be understood as placing upon the addressee some responsibility for determining the fate of the denoted proposition.

Note that speaker certainty about the truth of his assertion's propositional content stands as a kind of precondition for assertive authority. If a speaker is uncertain of the truth of a proposition, he cannot invoke full assertive authority because use of an unqualified assertion would be infelicitous, due to violation of the Gricean maxim of quality (see Grice 1975). In order to be cooperative, such a speaker must indicate uncertainty in some way—an act which will necessarily reduce the amount of authority invoked. In English, for instance, a speaker may use an existential epistemic modal—such as *possibly*—to signal a reduced level of certainty through a manner implicature. A speaker may also use pragmatic tags such as "I think", signaling a reduced level of certainty on a pragmatic level.

We can begin to see here the reason that the function of *ba* is frequently associated with that of expressing uncertainty. Expression of uncertainty does result in reduction of a speaker's perceived assertive authority, as does use of *ba*. As we will see below, *ba* can even at times serve the specific purpose of expressing uncertainty. However, it will become clear that a function of speaker uncertainty fails to account for use of *ba* in a great many other contexts. I will demonstrate the manner in which distribution of authority can account more satisfactorily for use of *ba* in these contexts.

Directive authority

As we will see below, the particle *ba* can also be appended to what Portner calls acts of "requiring"—that is, updating of the addressee TDL. The concept of invoking authority in acts of requiring is arguably more intuitive than that of invoking authority in making an assertion. Portner, too, refers to "authority" in acts of requiring, observing the following:

> Distinctions among subtypes of imperatives—orders, requests, permissions, etc—
> should not be understood at the level of conversational force. That is, they all
> share the force of Requiring, as they all conventionally add a property to the
> Addressee's To-Do List. Rather these differences have to do with the pragmatic
> or sociolinguistic basis for the speaker's attempt to add a property to the
> addressee's To-Do List. Orders occur when the basis is social authority. Requests
> occur when no social authority is invoked …
>
> (Portner 2004: 4-5)

In accordance with Searle and Vanderveken (1985), I will use the term "directive"—rather than "requiring"—to refer to an act of updating the addressee TDL. Note that my use of the term "directive" is not fully synonymous with that used by Searle and Vanderveken, as I use it specifically in reference to utterances which serve to update the TDL of an addressee, and do not, for example, include acts of "asking". (The relationship between what I call directives and what I call questions or acts of asking will be explored in section 5.5 below.)

According to Portner, "We may think of the Common Ground and To-Do List as being the public, or interactional, counterparts of the individual agent's beliefs and desires" (2004: 8). That is to say that while the CG corresponds to the beliefs of a given conversational participant, the TDL corresponds to the desires of that conversational participant. Assuming that Portner means for a given TDL to correspond specifically to the desires of the conversational participant to whom that TDL belongs, it seems that this description could benefit from a bit of amendment. While the contents of a given individual's TDL may correspond to that individual's desires, they may just as well correspond to the desires of an interlocutor, as in the case of properties added by means of a command. It seems, therefore, that the TDL is better understood in terms of what Searle refers to as the propositional content condition for directives: the speaker predicates a future act of the hearer (1975: 271). I propose that much as the CG can be understood as the set of propositions mutually assumed by discourse participants to be true, the TDL should be understood as the set of properties mutually assumed by discourse participants to represent future actions of the participant to whom the TDL belongs**.** Considering the contents of the TDL to correspond to future actions, rather than to desires—as Portner describes—may reduce complication arising from the fact that properties of a given TDL may correspond to the desires of any number of conversational participants, whereas each property of the TDL invariably corresponds to a future action of the TDL's owner.

With this understanding of the TDL, we can conclude that just as the updating of the CG is necessarily a cooperative enterprise, so too is the updating of the TDL. In the case of a directive, a speaker may move to update the TDL of an addressee, but without the acceptance of that addressee, the property in question cannot be added to the TDL. A move to update the addressee TDL therefore invokes a certain amount of what I call directive authority.

> (22) Directive authority: license to contribute input with respect to
> admission of a property to the addressee TDL

A speaker possesses directive authority to the extent that his issuance of the directive is guaranteed to result in addition of the denoted property to the TDL of the addressee. Directive authority therefore consists of knowledge that the addressee is capable of putting the denoted property into effect, and ability to make the property an assumed future action of the addressee without opposition by that addressee. It follows that a speaker will possess directive authority to the extent that he possesses social or physical power to determine the actions of the addressee. This observation is consistent with Portner's (2004) claim that the specific classification of a given directive—or act of "requiring", in Portner's words—is determined by the amount of "social authority" invoked.

In issuing an unqualified directive, a speaker can be considered to invoke full directive authority. In accordance with Portner's observation above, such directives are likely to have the effect of commands. Alternatively, a speaker may distribute some of the authority invoked in issuing a directive by acknowledging the capability of the addressee to determine admission of the property to the addressee TDL. Once again, I propose that it is precisely this function which is served by the particle *ba*. In appending the particle to a directive, a speaker explicitly acknowledges the capacity of the addressee to contribute input as to the admission or rejection of the denoted property, again granting the addressee some authority in the updating of the target discourse domain. By using *ba*, the speaker places upon the addressee some responsibility for determining the fate of the denoted property**.**

Just as assertive authority has a precondition of speaker certainty, directive authority has a precondition of speaker knowledge that the addressee is capable of putting the denoted property into effect. This is also what Searle refers to as a "preparatory condition" of directives. It follows that a speaker should be able to reduce directive authority by questioning satisfaction of this precondition, and at least in English, we find this to be the case, with indirect requests such as "Can you pass the salt?".

Commissive authority

Finally, in an act referred to by Portner (2004) as a promissive, a speaker can also update his own TDL by committing himself to a future action. In keeping with Searle and Vanderveken, I will refer to these acts as commissives. Authority in uttering a commissive is defined as follows:

(23) Commissive authority: license to contribute input with respect to
admission of a property to the speaker TDL

Commissive authority is closely comparable to directive authority. A speaker possesses commissive authority to the extent that his issuance of a commissive guarantees addition of the denoted property to his own TDL. Commissive authority therefore consists of the speaker's knowledge that he is capable of putting the denoted property into effect, as well as the speaker's ability to make the property an assumed future action without opposition by the addressee. It follows that a speaker will possess commissive authority to the extent that he possesses social or physical power to determine his own actions—or, rather, to the extent that the addressee does *not* possess social or physical power to determine the speaker's actions**.**

As with directive authority, a speaker can invoke full commissive authority by issuing an unqualified commissive. Alternatively, a speaker may distribute some of this authority to the addressee by acknowledging the possibility for addressee input in updating the target TDL—a function which can once again be served by *ba.* By appending *ba* to a commissive, the speaker grants the addressee some authority in determining whether the denoted property will become an assumed future action of the speaker.

Note of course that commissive authority, when distributed to an addressee, would be referred to as directive authority, and that directive authority accordingly becomes commissive authority when distributed to an addressee. The specification of authority type is really only useful, however, for the purpose of understanding the mechanisms of authority with respect to each speech act. Generally, authority can be understood as given in the overarching definition (20) above.

4.2. Function of *ba*

From the above definitions, we can draw a general core function for the particle *ba*, applicable to the full range of speech acts to which it attaches.

PROPOSAL:

24) *ba*: distribution of discourse authority to addressee, by explicit
acknowledgment of addressee's capacity to contribute input with
respect to admission of the denoted discourse object to the target
discourse domain.

Note that distribution of authority will logically result in reduction of a speaker's perceived individual commitment to an utterance, accounting for this effect observed by Han. Furthermore, as we will see particularly in section 5.2, placing upon the addressee responsibility for determining the fate of a discourse object often results in an effect of seeking agreement, in accordance with the soliciting agreement hypothesis.

5. Application to corpus data
5.1. Type E-F: directives and commissives

Recall from Table 1 that *ba* utterances designated Types E and F correspond to instances in which *ba* is appended to directives or commissives. I will first illustrate the derivation of these types, as it is relatively straightforward in comparison to that of Types A-D.

Type E

The function of distributing authority is particularly apparent in Type E *ba* utterances. These utterances seek to add a property to the TDL of the addressee, and as such correspond to directives. Below are representative examples from the corpus:

(25) [Doctor informs a young man that there is nothing they can do to save his grandmother, and advises the young man to go into the grandmother's room.]

ni kuai jinqu ba
2sg fast enter BA
"Go in quickly."
(*Hotshot*)

(26) [Coach addresses two players who are about to play a match against each other.]

kaishi ba
begin BA
"Begin."
(*Hotshot*)

(27) [Speaker instructs a woman to leave his room.]

> ni zou. [He raises his voice.] zou ba!
> 2sg go   go BA
> "Go. Go!"
>
> (*Hero*)

The contribution of *ba* to utterances such as these is often described as a softening effect. Without the particle, the utterances tend to have a harsher, less polite tone. Addition of *ba* to a directive can often be understood as reducing the forcefulness from that of a command to that of a suggestion or request. Note, however that in cases such as example (27), which is spoken very harshly, the use of *ba* seems to be fairly conventionalized, perhaps a formality of sorts. Such a situation is conceivable in English as well: after having told an addressee to "get out", a speaker might raise his voice and say, "Can you please get out!", making use of an utterance which, like (27), is conventionally used as a request, but which may in this case be highly forceful.

In keeping with Portner's analysis above, a command can be understood as corresponding to an unqualified directive, by which full directive authority is invoked. A request or suggestion, on the other hand, occurs when the speaker distributes some authority to the addressee. That is to say, a request or suggestion occurs when the addressee is given some say in the matter.

The effect of Type E *ba* utterances is easily derived from the core function of redistributing authority. While the *ba*-less counterparts of these utterances represent unqualified directives, addition of *ba* serves as acknowledgement of the addressee's ability to determine the admission of the given property to her own TDL. The effect is what seems to be a "softer" directive. The derivation of this effect can be understood as follows:

(28)

Step 1: S has issued a directive denoting a property P.
Step 2: S is therefore moving to add P to A's TDL.
Step 3: S has appended his directive with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding P to A's TDL.
Step 5: S is moving to make P a mutually assumed future action of A, but has granted A some authority in determining whether P should be accepted as such.
Step 6: S is making a suggestion or request.

This derivation can also be applied to instances such as (29), in which the speaker TDL stands to be updated in addition to that of the addressee.

(29) [Speaker runs over to addressee with the following proposal.]

women   yiqi   qu chifan ba
 1pl   together go   eat   BA
"Let's/how about we go eat together."

(*Hotshot*)

In this case, once again the speaker moves to establish a property P as a mutually accepted future action of someone, distributing to the addressee some authority in determining whether P is to be accepted to the target TDL. The only difference lies in the fact that both speaker and addressee TDLs stand to updated, rather than the addressee's alone.

It may not be immediately clear from the derivation of Type E utterances that the distributing authority hypothesis represents an improvement upon previous theories. In fact, most existing theories are able to account plausibly for these particular occurrences of the particle. That is, speaker uncertainty, soliciting agreement, and weakening of speaker commitment all represent logical explanations for the isolated effect seen in Type E utterances. It is failure of these theories to account for the full range of the particle's effects, however, which makes distribution of authority a more effective explanation. This will become clearer in the derivations to come—particularly in Types A-D.

Type F

The function of distributing authority can also be applied in the case of Type F *ba* utterances. Recall from Table 1 that *ba* utterances designated Type F represent instances in which *ba* is appended to a commissive. These utterances seek to update the TDL of the speaker. Utterances of Type F can be seen in Li and Thompson's example (9b) above, and in the corpus example (30) below.

(30) [The speaker utters the following as she aims a gun at the man who is attempting to stop her from robbing a museum.]
wo bang ni chengwei yingxiong ba
1sg help 2sg become   hero   BA
"How about I help you become a hero."

(*Underdog Knight*)

The effect of Type F *ba* utterances is generally one of suggestion, or of seeking permission. Either of these effects can be derived as follows:

(31)

Step 1: S has issued a commissive denoting a property P.
Step 2: S is therefore moving to add P to her own TDL.
Step 3: S has appended her commissive with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding P to S's TDL.
Step 5: S is moving to make P a mutually assumed future action of S, but has granted A some authority in determining whether P should be accepted as such.
Step 6: S is making a suggestion or seeking permission.

Reluctant acquiescence

Commissives in particular highlight an important subset of *ba* utterances which occur when it is mainly the hearer, rather than the speaker, who is responsible for proposal of the denoted property. One such instance can be seen in example (4) from Chu (2009), reiterated below:

(4) A: wo juan yibai kuai
1sg donate one-hundred class.
"I'll donate a hundred bucks."
B: zhe shi zuo haoshi, ni yinggai duo juan yi dian
this cop. do good-deed 2sg should more donate one bit
"This is to help the needy. You should give more."
A: na wo jiu juan liangbai ba
that 1sg then donate two-hundred BA
"Well, in that case, I'll donate 200."

When Speaker A in the above example moves to add a certain property P to his own TDL, Speaker B denies admission of this property, suggesting that P should be amended. Speaker A then issues a second commissive, the nature of which both conversational participants know has been influenced by the suggestion of Speaker B. The general effect of Speaker A's *ba* utterance can therefore be understood as reluctant acquiescence, or as described by Chu (2009), "willy-nilly agreement". The derivation of this effect differs slightly from that of a commissive which does not represent an act of acquiescence by the speaker.

(32)

Step 1: S has issued a commissive denoting a property P.
Step 2: S is therefore moving to add P to his own TDL.
Step 3: S has appended his commissive with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding P to S's TDL.
Step 5: S is moving to make P an assumed future action of S, but is distributing to A some authority in determining whether P should be accepted as such.
Step 6: As made clear by context, S already knows that A wishes P to be added to S's TDL.
Step 7: Conventional distribution of authority is thus uninformative, as uptake is guaranteed.
Step 8: Use of *ba* is therefore metalinguistic: S is drawing attention to the fact of A's responsibility for addition of P to S's TDL.
Step 9: S is acquiescing reluctantly to the addition of P to S's TDL.

Although no examples are available from the corpus data, it was confirmed by an informant that, as we might expect, a parallel phenomenon exists in the case of directives. For instance, while a Type E *ba* utterance such as (33) could be uttered as a suggestion or request that the addressee go somewhere, it could alternatively be made in response to an addressee's persistent requests for permission to go somewhere, in which case it could express a speaker's reluctant acceptance of the addressee's future action.

(33) ni qu ba
      2sg go BA
      "(How about you) go."
      "Go (if you must)."

The derivation for such an utterance would be as follows.

(34)

Step 1: S has issued a directive denoting a property P.
Step 2: S is therefore moving to add P to A's TDL.
Step 3: S has appended his directive with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding P to A's TDL.
Step 5: S is moving to make P an assumed future action of A, but has granted A some authority in determining whether P should be accepted as such.
Step 6: As made clear by context, S already knows that A wishes P to be added to A's TDL.

Step 7: Conventional distribution of authority is thus uninformative, as
        uptake is guaranteed.
Step 8: Use of *ba* is therefore metalinguistic: S is drawing attention to the
        fact of A's responsibility for addition of P to A's TDL.
Step 9: S is acquiescing reluctantly to the addition of P to A's TDL.

5.2. Types A-D

While the core function of *ba* remains the same, the ultimate effect of the particle is quite different in utterances of Type A-D. Recall from Table 1 that *ba* utterances of these types correspond to instances in which the particle is appended to assertions. Such utterances can be divided into two major categories, based upon whether the addressee possesses the information expressed in the given assertion.

Type C: uninformed addressee

I will begin with Type C *ba* utterances. Utterances of this type occur when the addressee can be assumed to lack the information denoted by the proposition, and often serve as responses to questions from the addressee.

(35) [Speaker, who has never played basketball formally, is answering the
     question of how well he plays.]

        yinggai bu cuo ba
        should neg. bad BA
        "Should be pretty good, I'd say."
                                        (*Hotshot*)

(36) [Speaker utters the following as she and an interlocutor look around
     in puzzlement at a flooded room.]

        keneng shi   zuowan   xia yu ba
        maybe cop. yesterday-evening fall rain BA
        "Maybe it rained last night?"
                                        (*Hotshot*)

It is these types of utterances in which use of *ba* can generally be interpreted as reflecting uncertainty on the part of the speaker, and which are therefore most likely responsible for the claim of speaker uncertainty as the particle's core function (e.g. Chu 1998, 2009). Type C utterances furthermore serve as the primary evidence against the soliciting agreement hypothesis,

as the most apparent effect in these cases is genuinely one of uncertainty, rather than of soliciting agreement. Ultimately, however, the uncertainty conveyed by *ba* in Type C utterances represents only a surface effect—a fact which will become more apparent as the effects continue to diverge in subsequent examples.

So let us examine the above examples in light of the core function of distributing authority. Recall that use of *ba* serves to acknowledge the hearer's authority to admit the denoted proposition to the CG, and that assertive authority is possessed by the conversational participant who is most informed with respect to the proposition in question. In the case of both (35) and (36), the speaker is already aware of the fact that the addressee does not possess the information necessary to evaluate the truth of the proposition. As such, acknowledging the addressee's authority to admit to the CG the propositional content of this assertion is effectively an admission of uncertainty on the part of the speaker. The effect of uncertainty can be derived as follows:

(37)

Step 1: S has asserted that p.
Step 2: S is therefore moving to add p to the CG.
Step 3: S has appended his assertion with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding p to the
   CG.
Step 5: S is moving to make p a mutual assumption in the discourse, but
   has granted A some authority in determining whether p should be
   accepted as such.
Step 6: As made clear by context, A is uninformed with respect to p.
Step 7: As made clear by context, S knows that A is uninformed with
   respect to p.
Step 8: S is therefore indicating that he too is uninformed with respect to p.

As we can see, the speaker is, in this case, ultimately expressing uncertainty through use of *ba*. However, he is choosing to do so by placing some authority on the hearer, essentially communicating the fact that the hearer can judge for herself. The logic of what may seem to be an overly complex derivation will become clearer in the examples to follow, the contexts of which much more obviously merit distribution of authority to the hearer.

Types A, B, D: knowledgeable addressee

In contrast to Type C, the speaker of a Type A, B, or D utterance assumes the addressee to have the information necessary to determine whether p should be admitted to the CG. Note that it is these examples which are most consistently conducive to a description of "soliciting agreement". In the examples to follow, the addressee is in fact unambiguously more informed than is the speaker. As the conversational participant who holds the most assertive authority will be the participant who is most informed with respect to the propositional content of a given assertion, it should be immediately clear that a speaker cannot have assertive authority in a context in which he possesses less information than does the addressee. The speaker may well be uncertain in such a context, but this fact becomes moot in light of the fact that the addressee already possesses the relevant information. Let us look at some Type A examples to illustrate this fact.

Type A utterances involve assertion of a proposition about which the speaker has some evidence with which to make an informed inference, but about which the addressee is more fully informed. Below are examples from the corpus data:

(38) [Speaker A has lost a basketball match to another player, Yuan
        Daying, the previous day. He addresses a mutual friend of himself
        and Yuan Daying.]

    zuotian   yuan daying yinggai   le-huai-le   ba
    yesterday Yuan Daying should extremely-happy BA
    "Yuan Daying must have been overjoyed yesterday, huh?"
                                                        (*Hotshot*)

(39) [Speaker A is questioning a basketball player about how he managed
        a certain difficult technique.]

    ni   lian   hen   jiu   le   ba
    2sg practice very   long-time part. BA
    "You must have practiced for a long time, (right?)"
                                                        (*Hotshot*)

If *ba* were to serve a core function of expressing uncertainty, neither of these examples would be felicitous in the given contexts. Consider example (39b), the *ba*-less counterpart of (39):

(39b) ni   lian   hen   jiu   le
      2sg practice very long-time part.
      "You practiced for a long time."

Even without provision of context, (39b) is likely to strike one as strange. Because the utterance represents an assertion regarding the activities of the addressee himself, it would be unusual for the speaker to be able to be informative in making such an assertion. Sure enough, it is clear from the original context that the addressee is well aware of whether or not he has practiced for a long time, and the speaker is simply guessing that he has done so based upon her observation that the addressee has managed the difficult technique.

If *ba* were simply indicating uncertainty, its use in (39) could perhaps be merited based upon the fact that the speaker is, in fact, not certain of the truth of her assertion. However, the utterance would still be infelicitous in that it is uninformative—it would be entirely unnecessary for the speaker to assert to the addressee, "Perhaps you practiced for a long time," when the addressee is already fully informed as to how long he practiced. If *ba* were contributing speaker uncertainty, neither the *ba* utterance nor its *ba*-less counterpart would be utterable at all. It is for this reason that the fact of speaker uncertainty is rendered irrelevant in these contexts by the fact of addressee knowledge.

Instead, *ba* can be understood to serve a function of distributing authority—passing on to the addressee responsibility for adding a proposition to the CG. Because the speaker is less informed with respect to p, she is clearly unqualified to invoke assertive authority. Use of *ba* thus licenses use of the assertion by making explicit the distribution of assertive authority to the addressee, who is more qualified to invoke this authority in the context. As can be gleaned from the translations above, this use of *ba* has an ultimate effect not of expressing certainty, but of seeking confirmation. The derivation of this effect can be understood as follows:

(40)
Step 1: S has asserted that p.
Step 2: S is therefore moving to add p to the CG.
Step 3: S has appended his assertion with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding p to the
        CG.
Step 5: S is moving to make p a mutual assumption in the discourse, but
        has granted A some authority in determining whether p should be
        accepted as such.
Step 6: As made clear by context, A is informed with respect to p.

Step 7: As made clear by context, S knows that A is informed with respect
  to p.
Step 8: As made clear by context, S is less informed with respect to p than
  is A.
Step 9: S is therefore seeking confirmation from A that p.

Type B *ba* utterances differ from those of Type A in that they involve matters of opinion, rather than of fact. Examples from the corpus include the following:

(41) [Speaker is showing a photograph of a childhood friend to an
    interlocutor.]

    hen   ke'ai   ba
    very adorable BA
    "(She is) adorable, don't you think?"
                                    (*Hotshot*)

(42) [Speaker comments on his addressee's arrogant proposal.]

    dongfang xiang   ni tai kuang'ao le   ba ni
    Dongfang Xiang 2sg too arrogant part. BA 2sg
    "Dongfang Xiang, you're awfully full of yourself, don't you think?"
                                    (*Hotshot*)

The overall effect of Type B utterances is slightly different from that of Type A— in this case, addition of the propositional content to the CG represents establishment of subjective agreement rather than of objective fact. Tamina Stephenson observes, in her analysis of personal taste predicates (such as *fun* and *tasty*), that if a speaker states that a certain cake is tasty, "[his] assertion serves as a proposal to add to the common ground the proposition that the cake is tasty, which, if successful, will have the same effect on the common ground as adding the proposition that the cake tastes good to the entire group of conversational participants" (2007: 21). It is questionable whether all Type B *ba* utterances should be qualified as containing personal taste predicates, but Stephenson's observation still holds true—assertion of a subjective proposition, like that of an objective one, can count as a move to make the proposition a mutual assumption in the discourse. The difference lies in the fact that objection by the addressee amounts not to an assertion that the proposition is not true, but to an assertion that the proposition is not true with respect to her own personal taste.

This difference is reflected in Stephenson's use of a "judge" parameter for personal taste predicates. The existence of this parameter causes a proposition to be interpreted as specifically pertaining to the taste or experience of a particular individual. To the extent that the propositional content of a Type B *ba* utterance is also true only with respect to the beliefs of a given conversational participant, these utterances too can be understood to possess a kind of "judge" parameter.

Note, however, that while an unqualified assertion of opinion will have the speaker as "judge" (unless it is clear in the context that the speaker is reporting on the opinion of someone else), the judge of a Type B *ba* utterance is best interpreted as being the hearer. In the case of (41), while one can infer that the speaker believes the proposition "x is adorable", as the speaker has moved to make this proposition a mutual assumption in the discourse, the speaker's use of *ba* indicates that the purpose of uttering (41) is in fact to elicit from the hearer confirmation that the proposition "x is adorable" is true as pertains to the hearer's judgment. If the propositional content of Type B *ba* utterances can thus be considered to possess a parameter by which the addressee is specified as "judge", then as long as the addressee possesses sufficient information to form an opinion with respect to the proposition, the addressee can be considered to be more informed than is the speaker (assuming that the speaker is not already apprised of the addressee's opinion). As such, incorporation of the judge:A (i.e. judge: addressee) parameter yields a derivation which is nearly identical to that of Type A:

> (43)
> Step 1: S has asserted that p.
> Step 2: S is therefore moving to add p to the CG.
> Step 3: S has appended his assertion with *ba*.
> Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding p to the CG.
> Step 5: S is moving to make p a mutual assumption in the discourse, but has granted A some authority in determining whether p should be accepted as such.
> Step 6: As made clear by context, A has sufficient information to form an opinion with respect to p.
> Step 7: A is therefore informed with respect to p (judge:A).
> Step 8: As made clear by context, S knows that A is informed with respect to p (judge:A).
> Step 8: As made clear by context, S is less informed with respect to p (judge:A) than is A.
> Step 9: S is therefore seeking confirmation from A that p (judge:A).

To the extent that the speaker's own belief is inferable from the utterance, one might describe the ultimate effect of a Type B utterance as one of seeking agreement rather than of seeking confirmation. This is not, however, a terribly important distinction. More important is the fact that, as we can see above, the contribution of *ba* to Type B utterances can also be accounted for by derivation from the proposed function of distributing authority.

Type D *ba* utterances resemble Type A utterances in that their propositional content can be evaluated objectively. Type D utterances differ only in the fact that the speaker does not possess any apparent information by which to make an informed inference, and instead seems simply to be asserting what he hopes to be the case.

(44) [The speaker enters a public bus, speaking on his cellphone.]

zan lia   zuowan   na shi mei bei   ni   laogong faxian ba
1pl two yesterday-evening that matter neg. pass. 2sg.poss. husband discover BA
"Our doings last night were not discovered by your husband, were they?"
(*Underdog Knight*)

(45) [The speaker has just informed her addressees of a decision she has made, after which she utters the following.]

meiyou   yijian   ba
neg.have objection BA
"No objections, correct?"
(*Hotshot*)

(46) [Daying, the addressee, has just taken a significant fall. The speaker is among his concerned friends.]

daying, ni mei shi ba
Daying 2sg neg. issue BA
"Daying, are you okay?" (lit. "Daying, you're okay, aren't you?")
(*Hotshot)*

If Type D *ba* utterances were to represent unqualified assertions, they would be immediately uncooperative, as they would by definition violate the second Gricean maxim of quality: do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Grice, 1975: 308). As with Type A utterances, the speaker may well be uncertain, but this is secondary to the fact that the addressee already possesses the information necessary to evaluate the truth of the proposition,

whereas the speaker does not. The speaker is thus entirely unqualified to invoke assertive authority, a fact which makes very logical the use of *ba* to make explicit the distribution of assertive authority to the addressee. The ultimate effect of Type D utterances is still one of seeking confirmation, and the derivation is nearly identical to that of a Type A utterance.

(47)
Step 1: S has asserted that p.
Step 2: S is therefore moving to add p to the CG.
Step 3: S has appended his assertion with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding p to the CG.
Step 5: S is moving to make p a mutual assumption in the discourse, but has granted A some authority in determining whether p should be accepted as such.
Step 6: As made clear by context, A is informed with respect to p.
Step 7: As made clear by context, S knows that A is informed with respect to p.
Step 8: As made clear by context, S is uninformed with respect to p.
Step 9: S is therefore seeking confirmation from A that p.

It is in these latter examples that the necessity of the dimension of addressee involvement becomes clearest. Expression of speaker uncertainty is irrelevant in cases such as these, and weakening of speaker commitment, similarly, cannot capture the full effect of seeking confirmation. In the case of Types A, B, and D, "soliciting agreement" represents a fairly accurate approximation of the effects of seeking confirmation and seeking agreement. However, the soliciting agreement hypothesis does not address the underlying mechanisms leading to derivation of this effect. We can see, therefore, the manner in which distribution of authority provides a more satisfactory explanation.

5.3. "Question-like element": *ba* utterances as questions

It can be seen in the above analysis that in the case of Type A, B, and D *ba* utterances—when the addressee is sufficiently informed to determine admission of the denoted proposition to the CG—use of *ba* amounts to an invitation to the addressee to add this proposition to the CG. In light of this fact, the mechanism behind the "question-like element" observed by previous researchers (Han 1995) becomes clearer. Because the speaker is less informed than is the addressee, *ba* utterances of these types serve as acts of seeking information, much like questions. However, while these *ba* utterances do exhibit some characteristics shared by questions, they

possess clear characteristics of assertions as well—even in light of the fact that it is only the speaker who stands to gain information.

So let us examine the relationship between *ba* assertions and questions. It is perhaps best to consider questions and assertions to exist on a continuum such as that represented below.

(48)
    a. ni   lian   duojiu   le?
          2sg practice how-long part.
          "How long did you practice?"
    b. ni   lian   hen   jiu   le   ma?
          2sg practice very long-time part. y/n.part.
          "Did you practice for a long time?"
    c. ni   lian   hen   jiu   le   ba.
          2sg practice very long-time part. BA
          "You (must have) practiced for a long time, right?"
    d. ni   lian   hen   jiu   le.
          2sg practice very long-time part.
          "You practiced for a long time."

Utterances (48a) and (48b) can be considered conventional questions. (48a) represents the set of propositions denoting each amount of time that the addressee might have practiced, whereas (48b) represents a set of two propositions: yes and no, the sets of worlds in which the addressee did and did not practice for a long time, respectively. According to Portner's model, the two questions above would enter the QS, the set of questions the conversational participants have agreed to answer. That is, the conversational participants have agreed to select from the given set of propositions a single proposition which will be added to the CG. It follows that if the addressee is able to answer the question, he will do so with an assertion, and the proposition denoted by this assertion will be added to the CG, an addition which will be informative with respect to the speaker of the question.

Conversely, (48c) and (48d) represent single propositions. However, while (48d) represents a move to add a proposition directly to the CG—invoking assertive authority—(48c) solicits a move on the part of the addressee to admit the denoted proposition to the CG. Like a question, it seeks a contribution from the addressee which will be informative with respect to the speaker. However, unlike a conventional question, a *ba* utterance evokes a single proposition rather than a set. Note that the use of an assertion in a *ba* utterance effectively commits the speaker to having, to some extent, the belief expressed in the assertion, and does represent a

move to add the proposition to the CG. Unlike an unqualified assertion, however, a *ba* utterance invites the addressee to approve the addition.

Note that this similarity between *ba* utterances and questions may suggest an explanation for the fact that *ba* generally cannot be appended to questions. This will be explored further in the discussion of our problematic example, in which *ba* is appended to an interrogative.

5.3.1. Answering *ba* assertions

Just as it is Types A, B and D utterances which behave most similarly to questions, it is these types of *ba* utterances which are most likely to be interpreted as genuinely seeking a response from the addressee. As illustrated above, addressees of Type C utterances lack the relevant information, and as such, use of *ba* serves more as an indication that the speaker too is uncertain, rather than as an act of seeking information. If the addressee does have the relevant information, logic dictates that a speaker is more likely to be seeking this information from the addressee.

This only applies, however, if the speaker is genuinely uninformed. If a speaker uses a *ba* assertion denoting a proposition which is already mutually known by both interlocutors, additional conversational implicatures will be generated. Take, for instance, example (49), described by Chu (2009) as being comparable to "rhetorical questions".

> (49) [Mother had failed to get her son to wear warmer clothes when he went to a ballgame in the afternoon. Later in the evening the son came home coughing and sneezing.]
>
>   ganmao   le ba!
> catch-cold part. BA
> "You've caught cold, have you?"

In this case, the propositional content of the utterance can be considered already a part of the CG as the fact of the addressee's cold is apparent from extralinguistic evidence. The propositional content entailed by the utterance is therefore uninformative with respect to either conversational participant. As such, we can infer that the mother's assertion of (49) ultimately serves a different purpose—that of drawing the son's attention to the fact that he should have listened to her advice. As with any case of conversational implicature, it would be less cooperative for the son to respond to the literal meaning of his mother's utterance by confirming that he has a cold. Instead,

he would be expected to respond to her implicated meaning of "I told you so". Note that Chu uses this example as evidence that *ba* functions to connect an utterance to its prior context. It should be clear from the above explanation that this is not a function of the particle—rather, the sense of "I told you so" is an implicature inferable from the fact that a literal interpretation of (or response to) the *ba* utterance would be uninformative.

This explanation can be applied also to example (12) (reiterated below), used by Chu (2009) to support his relevance theory analysis:

> (12) A: xianzai ji dianzhong?
>   now how-much o'clock
>   "What time is it?"
>   B: i) ni zai chifan ba!
>   2sg at eat BA
>   "You are eating, aren't you?"
>   ii) ni zai chifan
>   2sg at eat
>   "You are eating."
>   iii) ba dian ban
>   eight o'clock half
>   "Eight thirty."

Under the assumption that Speaker A's eating is apparent to both conversational participants, it is clear that the propositional content of (12i) and (12ii) is already part of the CG. Because the utterance therefore cannot be informative, it can be inferred that Speaker B's intention is not to admit a new proposition to the CG, but to call attention to an existing assumption which will provide the answer to Speaker A's question—assuming, of course, that the fact of A's eating can be linked to the time of day. This implicature, which allows (12i) and (12ii) to serve as relevant responses, can be made with or without the particle *ba*, a fact which highlights once again the point that the particle is not serving the specific function of making the utterance more relevant. Rather, as usual, *ba* is serving its core function of distributing—or in this case acknowledging— addressee authority, resulting in an effect of inviting confirmation.

Chu's observation that (12i) is more felicitous than (12ii) may be due to the fact that *ba* can be understood to have the effect of pointing out that the hearer is already in possession of information from which the time can be inferred, a move which may serve as justification for failing to provide an explicitly relevant response. That is, use of *ba* may facilitate generation of implicatures which allow the utterance to be understood as relevant. The derivation of this effect could be understood as something like the following:

(50)
Step 1: S has asserted that p.
Step 2: p is already part of the CG.
Step 3: S is therefore moving to call attention to the fact of p.
Step 3: S has appended his assertion with *ba*.
Step 4: S has therefore distributed to A some authority in adding p to the CG.
Step 5: p cannot be added a second time to the CG.
Step 6: S is therefore moving to call attention specifically to A's knowledge of p.
Step 7: S is presumably attempting to be cooperative and relevant.
Step 8: A's knowledge of p must therefore provide an answer to A's question.

While the precise mechanisms behind this increased felicity are beyond the scope of this paper, the important observation is that our new core function of *ba* can be successfully applied to this example, and can additionally suggest a plausible explanation for the increased felicity of (12i).

5.4. Non-sentential *ba* utterances

Recall now Chu's (1998) claim that the function of *ba* is superposed over the entire sentence or clause to which it attaches. While I have argued against the specific function which Chu proposes for *ba*, the above analysis provides strong support for the claim that the particle operates over the entire utterance to which it attaches. Specifically, we see that the particle functions on a pragmatic level, operating over speech acts rather than sentences.

This fact is particularly salient when the particle attaches to short, non-sentential phrases, in utterances such as *hao ba*, *shi ba*, and *dui ba*. Corpus examples of the latter two can be seen in (51) and (52) below:

(51) [Speaker interrupts addressees' previous conversation to bring up a matter about which he is apparently agitated.]

wo tingshuo dongfang xiang   canjia   qiudui le, shi ba
 I   hear   Dongfang Xiang participate team part. cop. BA
 "I hear that Dongfang Xiang has joined the team, isn't that so?"
                                                    (*Hotshot*)

(52) [A player expresses confidence that his coach will be able to convince another
player to join the basketball team.]

[ta]   juedui   you   zige   qu shuofu   ta jiaru de.   dui   ba, jiaolian.
[3sg]   absolute have qualification go convince 3sg join part. correct BA coach
"[She](the coach) is absolutely qualified to convince him to join. Right, coach?"
(*Hotshot*)

While *dui* and *shi,* to which *ba* attaches in the above utterances, cannot be considered full
sentences, they can stand alone as utterances, and could serve as affirmative responses to (51)
and (52) respectively. As a response to (51), the copula *shi* would be translated as "Yes/that is
so" and can be interpreted as encoding the information "Dongfang Xiang has joined the team".
Similarly, as a response to (52), *dui* "correct" can be interpreted as encoding the information "I
(the coach) am qualified to convince him to join". As such, these utterances can be considered to
denote full propositions, and can accordingly be analyzed in much the same way as Type A-D *ba*
utterances—that is, utterances in which *ba* is appended to an assertion.

The phrase *hao ba* is classified by Chu (1998) above as an instance of what he calls
"pause-particle *ba*". I will discuss below the fact that there does indeed appear to be a separate
usage of *ba*, to which my analysis cannot readily be applied. *Hao ba* does not, however, appear
to be part of this category. As mentioned above, and discussed further below, the separate usage
of *ba* occurs when the particle attaches to fragments which cannot be considered to correspond to
full speech acts, and cannot stand alone as utterances. *Hao*, in contrast, can stand alone as an
utterance—best translated as "Okay"—and can easily be considered to correspond to a full
speech act. Like *shi* and *dui*, the information which *hao* encodes is determined by the content of
the utterance for which it serves as a response. Although *hao* may be used as a response to a
wide variety of utterances, it might be considered the directive/commissive counterpart to *dui* or
shi, as *hao* can be used in response to a move to update the TDL, whereas the latter two phrases
cannot. Perhaps as a result of this, we see in *hao ba* the same dual effect observed in directives
and commissives: the phrase can express reluctant acquiescence, or alternatively,
suggestion/seeking permission. As observed by Chu in his analysis of example (5), *hao ba* can
be used to express hesitant acquiescence, as in the corpus example (53) below. However, corpus
data also revealed an instance of the alternative effect, given in (54), in which *hao ba* represents
an effort on the part of the speaker to elicit from the addressee acceptance of the speaker's
commissive.

(53) [Speaker has just been convinced by her interlocutor to wake him up each
morning in return for a place to live. She displays clear hesitation.]

   hao ba, na wo jiu jiao ni hao   la
okay BA then 1sg just call 2sg okay part.
"Alright, then (I guess) I'll just wake you up."
<div align="right">(Hotshot)</div>

(54) [The speaker's car has allegedly struck a man, and the man's friend is causing a
scene. The speaker seeks to resolve the issue.]

wo gei ni yi dian qian dai ta qu yiyuan, hao ba
1sg give 2sg one bit money take 3sg go hospital good BA
"I'll give you a little money to take him to the hospital, ok?"
<div align="right">(Underdog Knight)</div>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the precise mechanisms behind these non-sentential *ba* utterances. It is important to note, however, that these phrases can represent full speech acts, and as a result behave very similarly to Type A-F *ba* utterances. As such, I hold that they can be analyzed in the same manner.

5.5. Problematic example: interrogative +*ba*

As reviewed above, previous researchers have taken various approaches in analyzing the unusual *ba* utterance given in example (19) and reiterated here.

(55)
    a. ni daodi   yao shenme ba
       2sg after-all want what   BA
       "What on earth do you want!"

    b. ni daodi   yao shenme
       2sg after-all want what
       "What on earth do you want?"

As can be seen in section 2.3. above, Chu (1998, 2004) interprets the above example as reflecting hesitation. Interestingly enough, this interpretation appears to reflect the "reluctant acquiescence" alternative which I describe in section 5.1.. Informants did not readily admit such an interpretation, however, and accordingly, it is clear from the interpretations of Han (1995) and Li and Thompson (1981) that the general preferred reading for (55a) is rather one in which the speaker is expressing anger and exasperation. Furthermore, the utterance is clearly interpreted by

most speakers as possessing the force of a directive. As discussed above, Han claims explicitly that (55a) meets the felicity conditions of a directive, and Li and Thompson translate the utterance first as "Tell me, what do you want"—a clear directive—before providing a second translation of "OK, don't you think you should let me know what in the world you want?" in an attempt to capture the full contribution of *ba*.

While the observation that the speaker of (55a) seems to be expressing anger and exasperation is noteworthy, some of the exasperation detected in the utterance is likely contributed by the use of *daodi*, and as such exists in (55b) as well. The most crucial difference, therefore, lies in the fact that (55a) yields a directive interpretation, whereas (55b) is generally interpreted as a simple question.

Note once again that unlike Searle and Vanderveken (1985), I treat the act of questioning as distinct from the speech act which I describe as a directive. As stated above, I use the term directive to describe a move to add a property to the TDL of the addressee, whereas a question is considered to be a set of propositions which is added to the Question Set—the set of questions which the conversational participants agree to answer. Admittedly, the line separating questions from directives is a fine one. After all, in asking a conventional question, a speaker intends to influence the addressee to produce a response containing the desired information.

I propose that the relationship between a question and a request for information can be understood as equivalent to the relationship between a direct/literal speech act and an indirect speech act. Consider the following assertion:

(56) I don't know what on earth you want.

The literal speech act performed by (56) is certainly that of an assertion denoting the proposition that the speaker does not know what the addressee wants. This being said, it is apparent that (56) can also be used to perform the indirect speech act of a directive—a speaker could easily utter (56) with the intent of making the addressee tell him what she wants. If it is clear from the context that the speaker feels his state of ignorance to be undesirable, the hearer can easily infer that the speaker's intention is to make her remedy this state of ignorance by telling him what she wants.

A question can similarly be considered a separate speech act which can be used to perform the indirect speech act of a directive. As observed by Roberts,

> When interlocutors accept a question, they form an intention to answer it, which intention is entered into the common ground. If a cooperative interlocutor knows of this intention, she is committed to it, i.e. she herself (ostensibly) has an intention to answer the question. Then Relevance … will lead her to attempt to answer it as soon as possible after it is asked.
>
> (1998: 4)

According to Roberts' analysis, utterance of a question constitutes a move to establish in the discourse a mutual intention of answering that question. By accepting a question, an addressee commits herself to the intention of seeking an answer. If the answer to the question is readily available to the addressee, she will be expected to provide it. It follows that if the speaker knows the addressee to be in possession of the answer to the question, the speaker's intention can be understood as requesting the addressee to provide this information. A speaker can, however, utter a question for which he does not expect the addressee to be able to provide a ready answer, in which case the literal speech act of asking and the indirect speech act of requesting information become more easily distinguishable.

Having established this distinction, the question which must then be addressed is that of why (55a) yields a directive interpretation, whereas its *ba*-less counterpart yields a clear interpretation as a question.

Han concludes that when *ba* is appended to an interrogative, rather than weakening illocutionary force—as with declaratives and imperatives—it instead serves to strengthen illocutionary force. This is a satisfactory observation of what appears to be the difference between (55a) and (55b), but it requires that the postulated function of *ba* vary between syntactic moods. More ideal would be an explanation which allows the function of *ba* to be consistent regardless of the utterance to which it attaches.

As such, I propose another explanation. There is no doubt that utterance (55a) seems to possess more force than does (55b), and as I have established above, this difference seems to stem from the interpretation of (55b) as a question and (55a) as a directive. The natural conclusion is that addition of the particle *ba* has transformed the question into a directive. However, I argue that this is not the case. I argue instead for the possibility that *ba* is in fact never able to attach to questions, and as a result, its presence in (55a) rather increases the salience of the indirect directive. A comparable example in English might be the following, uttered after a prolonged effort by the speaker to ask the given question of the addressee:

(57) What on earth do you want, please.

Just as *ba* generally is not licensed with questions in Mandarin, *please* generally is not licensed with questions in English. *Please* serves instead as a strong indicator that an utterance is a conventional polite request, a type of directive. Accordingly, in example (57), use of *please* serves as a signal that the speaker means business, and that the utterance *What do you want?* is no longer a question, but a move to require that the addressee provide an answer. It would be inaccurate, however, to claim that the function of *please* is one of adding force to an interrogative. On the contrary, intuition indicates that *please,* much like *ba*, serves to reduce the forcefulness of a directive by reducing the authority which the speaker invokes in uttering it. Indeed, if assumed to be a contraction of *if you please*, we see that *please* serves explicitly to distribute authority to the addressee. As such, it is more sensible to suppose that in a case such as (57), *please* serves its normal function, and its unusual presence in this environment signals unequivocally the utterance's intended interpretation as a directive. Note, of course, that I do not claim to have analyzed *please* to any extent. This example serves merely as an illustration by way of potential cross-linguistic comparison.

I argue that in cases such as (55a), *ba* plays the same role. Because the particle cannot attach to questions, its presence signals the fact that the preceding utterance is meant to be interpreted in its indirect sense, as a directive. The particle can then be assumed to serve its normal function of distributing authority, being only an indication—rather than the source—of the apparent strengthening of force.

Note that I have not accounted for *ba*'s apparent inability to attach to interrogatives formed with the yes-no question particle *ma.* In light of my analysis of (55), one might attempt to claim that particle interrogatives are somehow unable to yield directive interpretations. However, because it would appear that *ba* cannot attach to any utterances containing other utterance-final particles (Chu 2009), it seems likely that there exists some constraint in Mandarin against use of two particles which operate over full speech acts. This matter is beyond the scope of this paper, but merits further exploration[4].

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[4] A more in-depth attempt to explain this phenomenon can be found in Han (1995). I do not, however, assess this aspect of Han's analysis in this paper.

6. Future directions and broader implications

6.1. To be explained: "pause-particle *ba*"

Perhaps most prominent among the questions left unanswered in my analysis is that of the "pause-particle *ba*". Recall that Chu (1998) postulates the existence of this "pause-particle *ba*", which he observes to occur sentence-medially rather than sentence-finally. We have established that Chu's first example, *hao ba*, does not seem to merit this categorization. I have not, however, addressed the phenomenon exemplified in (6) and reiterated in (58) here:

> (58)   zhe jian   shi,   ta ba, bu   ken zuo; wo ba, bu   hui   zuo.
>   this class. matter, 3sg BA neg willing do 1sg BA neg. know-how do
>   "As to this job, he/she doesn't want to do it and I don't know how to do it."

As mentioned above, what seems to be unique about such examples is the fact that the phrases to which *ba* is attached cannot stand alone as utterances, and as such cannot be said to perform a full speech act. This latter point is highlighted by the single comparable example which did occur in the data:

> (59) [Speaker emerges from a building with interlocutor, apparently after a discussion
>   has taken place.]
>   duibuqi, zhe ge   shi   ba
>   sorry   this class. matter BA
>   "I'm sorry, regarding this matter—"
>   (*Underdog Knight*)

When shown this example, informants observed immediately that the utterance was incomplete, and that the speaker was most likely going to follow with some kind of excuse. In all *ba* utterances with which we have dealt up to this point, the particle has operated on full speech acts, and its effects have been analyzed accordingly. In cases of this pause-particle *ba*, however, it is far more difficult—if not impossible—to apply the same function, as there is no completed speech act upon which the particle can act. As such, I have indeed considered these instances of the particle to belong to a separate category, and have excluded them from my analysis.

I can speculate as to the connection which pause-particle *ba* may have to utterance-final *ba*, in light of the function which I have proposed. As we have seen above, use of *ba* with assertions often serves as a means of checking for confirmation from the hearer. It is possible that pause-particle *ba* represents a grammaticalization of this surface effect of checking for

confirmation, and that the particle evolved to serve the function of checking that the hearer is following the flow of a narrative. This is, of course, mere speculation, and is by no means a full or satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon of pause-particle *ba*. Further investigation is certainly merited in order to determine the mechanisms behind these instances of the particle.

6.2 Related cross-linguistic phenomena: tag questions and hedging

It is apparent from the observations of previous researchers (e.g. Li and Thompson 1981), as well as from many of the English translations given above, that the function of *ba* often bears a striking resemblance to that of tag questions in English. In the following sections I discuss briefly the connection between these two phenomena, as well as the connection of both to the social function of hedging.

6.2.1 Tag questions

Tottie and Hoffman (2006), building upon the work of Janet Holmes and John Algeo, seek to categorize instances of tag questions found in corpora of British and American English, providing the following examples:

a) Informational tag, representing a genuine request for information:

(60) "You're getting paid for this, are you?"

b) Confirmatory tag, in which the speaker is not certain of what he says, and so seeks confirmation:

(61) "I'm gonna try to go walking for a little bit. I don't need a jacket, do I?"

c) Attitudinal tag, which serves to emphasize what the speaker says, and does not expect involvement or reply on the part of the addressee:

(62) "Yeah she'll be in trouble, won't she."

d) Facilitating tag, used when the speaker is certain of the truth of what he or she says, but wants to involve the addressee:

(63) [Teacher to student]
　　 "Right, it's two, isn't it?"

e) Peremptory tag, which follows a statement of generally acknowledged truth and is intended to close off debate:

(64) "Well we come to that conclusion, didn't we?"

f) Aggressive tag, which functions as insult or provocation:

> (65) A: Well I thought you were staying to tea so I put six eggs on.
> B: Oh aye yeah alright
> C: You put what?
> A: Put six eggs on, didn't I?

These categorizations certainly do not provide any unifying theory of tag questions, and the distinctions seem to be based largely upon varying speaker intention, rather than any fundamental differences in type. Nonetheless, we can glean from these examples some idea of the uses to which English tag questions are often put, and unsurprisingly, we find many parallels with Mandarin speakers' use of the particle *ba*.

A closer look at tag question utterances reveals that in fact, they exhibit the same hybrid nature which we see particularly in Type A, B, and D *ba* utterances—that is, they possess characteristics of both assertions and questions. While none of the researchers cited above have posited a core function of tag questions, this is perhaps due to the fact that the most basic function of tag questions is immediately apparent from their structure—they are questions. As such, the hybrid effect which we see in tag question utterances can in fact be derived compositionally. A tag question utterance consists of an assertion followed by a question. As such, much like *ba* utterances, these utterances serve to assert a proposition, but distribute to the addressee some authority in confirming its truth.

A full analysis of the connection between tag questions and the particle *ba* is well beyond the scope of this paper. However, the similarities noted here indicate that deeper understanding of either of these phenomena may provide valuable insight into the workings of the other, and as such, such an investigation may certainly prove worthwhile.

6.2.2. Hedging: social implications of *ba*

The act of "hedging" is described by Holmes as softening or attenuating of an utterance out of consideration for the feelings of the addressee (1995: 74). Holmes cites a number of devices which can be used as hedges in English, including "fall-rise intonation, tag questions and modal verbs, lexical items such as *perhaps* and *conceivably,* and pragmatic particles such as *sort of* and *I think*" (1995: 74-75).

Just as tag questions are listed among these hedging devices, we find that *ba* can serve a similar social function. As mentioned above, the effect of *ba* upon an utterance is frequently described as one of "softening". In light of *ba*'s function of passing authority to the addressee, it is easy to see the connection which may be made to hedging. Use of *ba* serves, after all, as an explicit show of consideration for the addressee, acknowledging the addressee's capacity for input. As such, when *ba* is used with an intention of showing consideration for the addressee, it may easily be considered an act of hedging.

Note that the function of hedging is not applicable to all *ba* utterances. Particularly in utterances of Types A, B, and D, use of *ba* often indicates a genuine seeking of information. In contexts such as these, the speaker passes authority to the addressee not out of politeness, but because that addressee is genuinely more informed, and as such is more qualified to add the denoted proposition to the CG.

The function of hedging becomes more applicable when it comes to *ba* utterances of Type C. As observed above, the effect of *ba* in Type C utterances may be one of expressing genuine uncertainty. However, this show of uncertainty may be used primarily to attenuate an utterance, often to show humility. Acknowledging addressee input in these cases represents a show of consideration for the addressee out of politeness. Note that many of Holmes' hedging devices—such as *perhaps, sort of* and *I think*—are commonly used to express speaker uncertainty, a fact which highlights again the close connection between distribution of authority and expression of uncertainty, particularly in the social functions which these devices may serve.

Finally, the function of hedging is perhaps most clear in instances of Type E-F. As Portner observes, what I describe as discourse authority corresponds in the case of directives and commissives to what Portner describes as "social authority". Issuing an unqualified directive, in particular, has obvious social implications, and appending a directive with *ba* shows clear consideration for the hearer by reducing the social authority which the speaker invokes in issuing the directive. Similarly, use of *ba* with a commissive may often serve as an act of hedging, as the speaker of such an utterance shows consideration for addressee input before committing himself to an action.

Having established the connection between *ba* and hedging devices—also classified by Holmes as "politeness devices"—we can now address the claim made by Han that use of *ba* is motivated by a Politeness Principle. As we see above, some uses of *ba* do seem to be motivated

by a desire to hedge as a show consideration for the hearer. It is safe to say that these instances of *ba* may be associated with a Politeness Principle. However, this principle can only be applied to those instances of *ba* which reflect an intention on the part of the speaker to show politeness—an intention which, as we have seen, is by no means behind every use of the particle.

6.3. Broader implications for lexical meaning

The preceding analysis sought to establish for the particle *ba* a core function from which the broad range of observed surface effects might be derived. The analysis was successful in establishing such a function—that of distributing discourse authority—and was able to account for nearly all observed instances of the particle. The nature of the function, however, has broader implications with respect to the nature and scope of meaning itself. What I have established for the particle *ba* amounts to a conventional meaning, from which specific interpretations may be derived according to contextual factors. However, rather than operating within the realm of semantics, this "meaning" of *ba* is much better described as operating on a firmly pragmatic level. Furthermore, the particle's meaning not only operates over full speech acts, but contributes a cooperative dimension to an utterance, serving to manage speaker-hearer interaction, fundamentally influencing the power dynamic in discourse. Importantly, while use of the particle can have clear social implications, the interactional dimension on which the particle operates must be kept clearly distinct from the social dimension. The core function of the particle is rooted in the dynamics of discourse itself, and social implications of the particle's use are no more central than is speaker uncertainty, seeking confirmation, or any of the other observed surface effects.

What does this mean for the nature and scope of meaning? The information apparently encoded in the particle *ba* operates on a level in discourse to which lexical meaning is not frequently applied. The particle's meaning appears to manipulate not only the speech act with which it is associated, but the manner in which that speech act is to be treated within the discourse. This suggests that the scope of lexical meaning may perhaps be broader than has conventionally been believed.

A logical next step, then, will be to determine whether other instances of this level of lexical meaning may be identified cross-linguistically. Evidentials—specifically, what Davis et al. describe as *grammaticized* evidentials—provide another example of lexical meaning

operating on a pragmatic level. According to Davis et al., "evidential morphemes … encode something about the speaker's source of evidence for the information being offered" (2007: 2). It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess the precise role of evidentials in discourse, but it is clear from preliminary examination that while evidentials do serve a pragmatic function, there are significant differences between the function of evidentials and that of the particle *ba*. Perhaps most importantly, evidentials lack the dimension of hearer involvement which allows *ba* to influence and manage speaker-hearer interaction, a fact which suggests that evidentials cannot be operating on quite the same level in discourse. This being said, it does seem likely that evidentials can influence the authority with which an utterance is made—note that Davis et al. acknowledge the status of evidentials as "illocutionary force operators" (2007: 9). As such, it may be useful to seek a more comprehensive model of the role of evidentials in discourse, in order to make possible a clearer comparison to the particle *ba*, which may prove illuminating.

As discussed above, the most salient cross-linguistic counterpart to *ba* comes in the form of English tag questions. Unlike evidentials, tag questions do incorporate the dimension of hearer involvement, and although they exhibit a somewhat different distribution and usage from that of *ba*, tag questions appear to serve a similar function of distributing authority to the addressee. Because tag questions are diverse in form, we cannot readily claim them to be another example of this particular level of lexical meaning. However, it is quite conceivable that this type of function can in other cases be encoded in single words or particles. This question certainly merits further investigation, in order to assess more thoroughly the implications which phenomena such as the particle *ba* may have for the concept of meaning.

7. Conclusion

In this investigation, I identified for the Mandarin utterance-final particle *ba* a core function of distribution of authority. I attempted to present an explicit model of the particle's role in discourse, illustrating in detail the manner in which various possible surface effects may be derived from my proposed core function. I also addressed the connection of the particle to the English phenomena of tag questions and hedging. Finally, I discussed the broader implications which the particle's function appears to have for the scope of lexical meaning, suggesting that further investigation of similar cross-linguistic phenomena may prove the scope of lexical meaning to extend well beyond currently accepted boundaries.

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