Chapter 5

From clause towards discourse:
the system of VOICE

5.1 Introduction

Unlike the systems of TRANSITIVITY, MOOD, THEME, and INFORMATION, the system of VOICE is not a universal phenomenon. According to Matthiessen, "while many languages have a textual system of VOICE for "distributing" participants in the clause as message, there are certainly languages that do not have such a system" (Matthiessen in press: 492). It is thus not an assumption of the present study that there exists a VOICE system in the grammar of Chinese. The first question in this chapter is thus not what exists in the Chinese VOICE system; instead the question is whether, apart from the systems of THEME and INFORMATION, there is another textual system in Chinese that distributes participants in the clause as message.

A system of VOICE in general is taken as a way of modelling the resources for "assigning variable discourse status to participants (and other elements) within the clause" (Halliday 1997: 2). This means that this system is mainly concerned with the textual mode of meaning. On the other hand, as Matthiessen (in press) has pointed out, a system of VOICE can be "metafunctionally complex". It involves the assignment of textual statuses (textual); the assignment of modal responsibility to one element of the clause and possibly also some kinds of assessment, like adversative, of the Subject (interpersonal); and variation in the degree of transitivity of the clause (experiential).

In this chapter some previous studies of the passive voice in Chinese in general, and the *ba-* and *bei-* constructions in particular, will be reviewed in Section 5.2. In Section 5.3, eight short discourses will be analysed in order to examine whether the *ba-* and *bei-* constructions are textually motivated. In Section 5.4, the variants of the two constructions and how they regulate the flow of information will be examined. In Section 5.5, the difference between the systems of THEME and VOICE will be explored in order to find out whether the *ba-* and *bei-* constructions are strategies in the systems of THEME or VOICE.

In addition, the differences between these two constructions and SOV (Subject ^ Complement ^ Predicator) and OSV (Complement ^ Subject ^ Predicator) constructions will be examined. Then in Section 5.6, a system of VOICE in Chinese will be proposed. Finally, as the *ba-* and *bei-*constructions are increasingly productive in the Chinese language, the direction and range of their extended functions will be explored in Section 5.7.

5.2   Studies of passive voice in Chinese

The issue of voice in Chinese has attracted much attention. In general the *bei-*construction is widely regarded as the counterpart of the English passive voice (Tsai 1972; Tsao 1982; Li & Thompson 1981; Tiee 1990; Fong 1994; to name just a few). The marker *bei* in this construction is commonly regarded as the 'passive marker' and is thus translated into the English proposition 'by'. However, instead of the *bei-*construction, the OSV construction in Chinese is believed by others the closest translation equivalent of the English 'passive' (Chu 1979; Tsao 1982; Yu 1972, 1981). Lin (1981) suggests that while the *bei-*construction is a 'passive' construction, its 'active' counterpart is the 'diposal' *ba-*construction instead of the unmarked SVO construction. In contrast, Hsueh (1989) argues that the *bei-*construction is not a 'passive' construction and the *ba-*construction not a 'disposal' one. These two constructions are simply considered 'mirror images' of each other. Due to the limitations of space, it is impossible to discuss every study in detail here. Instead, three studies will be reviewed because they represent the most common point of view on the issue. On the other hand, their arguments reveal the controversial nature of the issue.

5.2.1   Fong's point of view – word order

According to Fong (1994),

> ... the notions of active and passive refer to the agent-recipient relationship between the nominal group and the verbal group in the clause. When the subject of a clause is an agent of the verb, the clause is an active one. In contrast, when the subject is a patient, it is a passive one. (Fong 1994: 319-325; my translation).

The subject is always encoded in the first nominal group in a clause, which is also the topic and always conveys some known information. In this way Fong considers the constructions (1) to (3) 'active' and (4) to (5) 'passive':

(1) N (agent) ^ verb ^ N (recipient), i.e. the SVO construction;

(2) N (agent) ^ N (recipient) ^ verb, i.e. the SOV construction;

(3) N (agent) ^ *bǎ* ^ N (recipient) ^ verb, i.e. the *ba*-construction;

(4) N (recipient) ^ N (agent) ^ verb, i.e. the OSV construction; and

(5) N (recipient) ^ *bèi* ^ N (agent) ^ verb, i.e. the *bei*-construction.

However, Fong does not mention the difference between the *ba*-construction and the 'N (agent) ^ N (recipient) ^ verb' structure nor the differences between the *bei*-construction and the 'N (recipient) ^ N (agent) ^ verb' structure in his study. In addition, Fong makes no distinction between the notions of 'Subject', 'Topic' or 'topical Theme', and 'Given'. As a result, he does not allow the possibility of the 'subject' or the topical Theme conveying new information. This standpoint contradicts many examples in the corpus.

5.2.2 Tiee's point of view – sense of passivity

Tiee (1990) argues that the 'subject' of a 'passive' clause must be a "recipient" of the verb and has been handled or disposed of in certain ways by someone:

> Thus, the passive voice can easily be understood from the context without the
> speaker/writer having to mark the sentence with *bèi* or an agent... Very often
> Chinese speakers use sentences that carry *the sense of the passive voice* but are
> not overtly marked by *bèi* or an agent. The listener/reader knows from the
> context that the sentence is passive. (Tiee 1990: 299; my italics)

Then Tiee distinguishes two types of 'topicalised' clause, namely passive and active. He argues that "the passive shows a kind of recipient-agent relationship between the subject and object in a disposal nature, whereas in the topicalised active sentence the object is fronted simply for focus, clarity or contrast" (Tiee 1990: 299). The probe of a passive topicalised clause is that "either the passive marker or an appropriate agent or both can

easily be inserted into the passive but not in the active" (Tiee 1990: 300). Examples (5.1) to (5.4) are part of the examples provided in Tiee's study to support the above argument but they are based on my analysis. The clause in (5.1) is a topicalised passive clause and the insertion of an agent into it produces a clause that is grammatically acceptable as in (5.2), whereas the insertion of an agent into a topicalised active clause as in (5.3) produces a clause that is ungrammatical as in (5.4).

(5.1)

tā de wénzhāng s/he POSS article	yǐjīng already	dēng chù-lái le. publish go-come ASP
Goal	VADV	Process: material

(His/her article has already been published.)

(5.2)

Tā de wén zhāng s/he POSS article	yǐjīng already	bèi DISP: rec	------- person	dēng chù- lái le. publish go-come ASP
Goal	VADV		(Actor)	Process: material

(His/her article has already been published by someone.)

(5.3)

tāmen they	dōu all	dǒng understand	nǐ de huà you POSS speech
Senser	VADV	Process: mental	Phenomenon

(They all understood what you said.)

(5.4)

*nǐ de huà, you POSS speech	bèi DISP: rec	tāmen they	dōu all	dǒng understand
Phenomenon		Senser	VADV	Process: mental

(They all understood what you said.)

Based on Tiee's examples we can see that in terms of transitivity all the 'topical passive' clauses are transitive material clauses, whereas all the 'topical active' clauses are non-transitive material, mental, verbal or relational clauses. To put it another way, Tiee

suggests that apart from the *bei*-construction, transitive material clauses with the OSV structure are also passive. In addition, the *bei*-construction is used in material clauses but not in the other clause types.

However, like Fong (1994), Tiee (1990) also does not mention the difference between the *bei*-construction and the OSV structure. In addition, though he is right to claim that the *bei*-construction is used in material clauses, he fails to observe that its productivity extends from material clauses to the other clause types as well.

Tiee further points out that though topicalised active clauses may appear to have the same form as 'passive' clauses in written Chinese, they can be distinguished from 'passive' clauses in spoken Chinese. "In the topicalised active sentence, there is a distinct pause after the direct object, represented in romanised script with a comma" (Tiee 1990: 301). However, as we observed in the previous chapter, the pause exists after most of the 'marked' topical Themes (including the OSV construction), disregarding the process types, and even in an OV clause.

Again based on the examples in Tiee's study, we can say that what he refers to as "unmarked topicalised passive" (unmarked here means without passive marker *bei*) is a single participant clause where the sole participant is the Goal as in (5.5):

(5.5)

zhèxiē yīfú these clothes	*dōu* all	*xǐhǎo* *le.* wash-well ASP
Goal	VADV	Process: material

(These clothes have all been well washed.)

Tiee obviously does not distinguish the ergative point of view from the transitive one. Without this distinction, he is bound to distinguish between the participant as Actor and the participant as Goal in a one-participant clause (see Section 4.4.7 for further discussion). However, it is always difficult if not impossible to do so because many, if

not all, verbs in Chinese can be used in both intransitive and transitive processes. This means that we have to rely on what Tiee calls "the sense of passive voice", an assumed instinct possessed by all native speakers of a language. Even if we succeeded in arguing that the sole participant in a clause is Goal, we have no way of determining which of the following four structures applied in an elliptical clause: (1) (Actor) ^ Goal ^ Process; (2) Goal ^ (Actor) ^ Process; (3) (Actor) ^ (bǎ) ^ Goal ^ Process; or (4) Goal ^ (bèi) ^ (Actor) ^ Process. Unless we define all these possible structures as 'passive', it is unconvincing to treat the one-participant clause as 'unmarked topicalised passive' in Chinese.

5.2.3   Hsueh's point of view – no VOICE in Chinese

Hsueh (1989) argues that the bei-construction is not a 'passive' construction nor the ba-construction a 'disposal' one, instead regarding these two constructions as merely "mirror images" of each other. Further, Hsueh considers that the difference between them is nothing more than a shift of emphasis, from the Actor in the ba-construction to the Goal in the bei-construction.

To reach the above conclusion, Hsueh tries to show first, that not every bei-construction is 'passive' in meaning; second, that not every clause with a 'passive' interpretation is formed with bèi; and third, that this construction has a peculiar semantic implication of its own. The following examples are employed by Hsueh to show that not every bei-construction clause is 'passive' in meaning.

(5.6)

wǒ I	ràng BEI	tā he	nèime such	yī shuō, one say	dào then	bù zhīdào NEG know		gāi must	zénme how to	bàn le. do ASP
Senser		Actor	Manner	Process: Active	VADV	Process: mental				
	Cause: reason									
							Actor		Manner	Process: material

(I do not know what I should do now, after listening to him.)

(5.7)

lǎo Zhāng old Zhang	*bèi* BEI	*tā tàitài* his wife	*kū* cry	*de* CC	*méi le zhǔyì.* NEG ASP idea
Carrier/Possessor		Actor	Process: behaviourial		Process: Attribute/Possession
	Cause: reason				

(Old Zhang was completely at a loss because of his wife's crying.)

(5.8)

tā s/he	*bèi* BEI	*nèi shǒu gēr* that MEAS song	*chàng* sing	*de* CC	*liú yǎnlèi.* shed tear
Sayer		Goal	Process: material		Process: behaviourial
	Cause: reason				

(S/he shed tears due to the singing of that song.)

The following examples are quoted by Hsueh to show that sometimes clauses with a passive interpretation cannot even be expressed with *bèi* (or its equivalents *jiào*, *ràng*, and *gěi*).

(5.9)

diànhuà telephone	*yǐjīng* already	*dǎ le.* hit ASP
Goal	VADV	Process: material: intransitive

(The phone call has already been made.)

(5.10)

nèi jié kè that MEAS class	*zhǐ* only	*shàng le* held ASP	*sānshí fēnzhōng.* thirty minutes
Goal	VADV	Process: material: intransitive	Extent: duration

(That class was held for only thirty minutes.)

(5.11)

tā s/he	shēngjí le promote ASP	méi-yŏu? yes/no
Goal	Process: material: intransitive	Negotiator

(Has he been promoted?)

All the clauses claimed by Hsueh not to have a passive meaning are not transitive material clauses. Furthermore, the clauses that he claims have a passive sense, but cannot be encoded by the *bei*-construction, are in fact intransitive clauses (from a transitive perspective) or middle voice (from an ergative perspective).

As the system of VOICE can be 'metafunctionally complex,' I would suggest that VOICE has to be examined and described not only in the environment of the textual metafunction but also in the environment of the ideational and interpersonal meta-functions as well. To put it in a more exact way, VOICE is a way of modelling the resources in a language, and its primary function is to control the flow of information in a text (textual metafunction); as a secondary system, it is basically employed in a certain clause type instead of in all clause types (ideational metafunction); and each type of VOICE is strongly associated with the role of a particular element in the clause that is assigned with modal responsibility (interpersonal metafunction).

5.2.4 Functions of the *ba*-construction

Generally speaking, many previous studies have shown interest in the nature, especially in terms of constraints, of the object and the verb-complement of the *ba*-construction in order to specify the conditions that must be met to produce a 'grammatically correct' clause. These studies have also attempted a definition that will not 'generate' or include any 'ungrammatical' *ba*-construction clauses, in Wang's (1987: 72) terms, a definition "to generate all and only all the acceptable *ba*-sentences." However, in the present study my greater interest is in the function of the *ba*-construction.

The most common functions that have been observed are that the *ba*-construction is a kind of emphatic or contrastive structure (c.f. Lin 1981; Sun & Givón 1985) or a stylistic

variation and means of focussing (Tiee 1990). However, what the meanings of 'emphatic or contrastive structure' and 'stylistic variation and means of focussing' are has not been clarified.

Adopting a functional approach, Li (1971: 163) suggests that:

> ... the function of *ba* in terms of FSP (Functional Sentence Perspective) is to put sentence focus on the verb by moving an object which is a patient into the thematic portion of the sentence, thus isolating the verb in rheme position and that it "uniquely communicates a particular configuration of logical relations and particular distribution of information" (1971: 177).

Tsao (1983: 107) also mentions that its function is "to bring into focus the verbal complex by moving the object of the verb to the front and placing it after *bá*."

Similarly, Ho (1993: 109) considers the *ba*-construction as a kind of 'marked dislocation' which means "dislocation realised by a number of special constructions that serve to free the sentence-final position and move an item to the position intermediate between the theme and the verb." Ho also notes that "front shifting an NP to the pre-verbal position" is only one of the many functions of the *ba*-construction. He suggests that fronting through the *ba*-construction is usually motivated by the consideration of both 'focalisation' of the information and 'thematisation' of the preposed noun phrase. This thus involves a 'two-step fronting': (1) through the *ba*-construction, i.e. the object which usually occupies clause-final position is moved to precede the verb in order to focalise the verb; and then (2) if the speaker wants to assign thematic status to the preceding object, he can thematise it by moving it to clause-initial position while leaving a pronominal copy after the operative marker *bá*.

Halliday & McDonald (in press: 364) regard the *ba*-construction as an option in the Chinese VOICE system, "a structure whereby in a transitive material clause the Process gains unmarked information focus by being located at the end of the clause."

5.2.5   Functions of the *bei*-construction

Lin (1981: 248) argues that the main reasons for using the passive voice in Chinese are to emphasise the agent of the verb and to show that both the agent and the patient are animate. However, we do observe in the corpus that the agent and the patient need not be animate. For instance, when the agent can affect the action on its own or an adverse situation can be inferred, it can be inanimate. Other linguists have noted that the function of this construction is to mark the object of the verb as the topic by its occupation of clause-initial position (Li & Thompson 1981; Ho 1993). Ho (1993), on the other hand, regards this construction as a special construction of a 'focalising devices' for regulating the information structure, but not the thematic structure.

Fong (1994: 318-325) regards the *ba*- and *bei*- constructions as two options of VOICE. The *ba*-construction is regarded as the active voice in Chinese and the *bei*-construction is its passive counterpart. According to Fong, the common word order in Chinese is topic being followed by focus. The topic represents the known information and the focus the new information. The function of the *bei*-construction then is to give emphasis to a particular element of the clause by placing it in clause-initial position.

Halliday (1956) and Halliday & McDonald (in press) consider the *bei*-construction as one of the options in the Chinese VOICE system, the 'passive' voice, in which the Goal is retained as 'unmarked' Theme.

5.2.6   Conditions of the use of the *ba*- and *bei*- constructions

Without specifying the meaning of 'emphatic', Lin (1981: 240-241) suggests some conditions under which the *ba*-construction is preferred and of these, two conditions are related to the sense of emphasis:

(1) it is used in imperative clauses in order to strengthen the command; and

(2) it is used to stress that the object is unique in character or represents a special case.

Li & Thompson (1981: 487) cite two conditions under which the *ba*-construction is preferred. They express the conditions by means of a continuum as follows:

bǎ	*bǎ*	*bǎ*	*bǎ*
impossible	unlikely	likely	obligatory

indefinite or non-referential object	definite and highly prominent object
no disposal	strong disposal

According to Li & Thompson (1981), "the more obvious in the speech context and more immediate to our discussion" the greater the prominence of the object and "the more the verb elaborates or specifies how the direct object is being handled or dealt with" the stronger the 'disposal' of (Li & Thompson 1981: 484).

Some linguists, however, assert more definite conditions by distinguishing 'optional' from 'obligatory' ones (cf. Wang 1987). According to Wang (1987: 60), an 'optional' situation means "the situation in which there is a corresponding SVO construction, and the object fronting with *bǎ* is optional", whereas an 'obligatory' situation means "the situation in which there is no corresponding grammatical SVO construction, i.e., the object after the verb will result in an ungrammatical sentence." Here Wang interprets "no corresponding SVO construction" in a very strict sense, i.e. comparison of the *ba*-construction with its corresponding SVO structure does not allow the addition or omission of even a single word. However, Wang adds, this "is not to say that there is no other SVO construction to express the same meaning" (Wang 1987: 60). This means that if we do not interpret the concept of correspondence in as strict a sense as Wang does, the alternative 'unmarked' form is always available as an option.

Similarly, Wang (1998) lists four circumstances under which the *ba*-construction must be used. However, all the examples used by Wang to support his argument have unmarked equivalents that are also grammatically acceptable if we allow some minor additions or omissions.

Hopper & Thompson (1980) relate the conditions favourable to the employment of the *ba*-construction to the concept of transitivity. They suggest that the *ba*-construction is highly transitive and that the 'subject' has to behave actively or volitionally while the 'object' has to be definite or referential. Wang (1987: 72), adopting Hopper and Thompson's 'transitivity hypothesis', suggests that the *ba*-construction is a highly transitive construction but rejects their constraints on the 'subject' and the 'object'. He proposes the following transitivity constraint: "if two similar sentences (a) and (b) differ in that (a) is higher in transitivity according to any of the features... then, if one sentence cannot be accepted in the *ba*-construction, it must be the one that is lower in transitivity" (Wang 1987: 75).

For the *bei*-construction alternative 'unmarked' SVO structures are always available as options in the system of VOICE. However, its semantic constraint of carrying an adverse, negative or unfavourable meaning has been widely addressed. And the relaxation of this constraint in contemporary Chinese and especially in certain registers has been acknowledged (cf. Chu 1979; Li & Thompson 1981; Tsao 1982, 1983; Ho 1993).

5.3   The *bei-* and *ba-* constructions and textual motivation

Halliday (1997: 2) notes that "what is common to all VOICE systems is that they are resources for assigning variable discourse status to participants (and other elements) within the clause." The present study adopts his position as the starting point for exploring the issue of VOICE in Chinese.

There are a total of 56 *bei*-constructions and 99 *ba*-constructions in the Chinese corpus. It is impossible here to analyse all the contexts in which the two types of construction are employed. The present study will examine eight short discourses in the corpus instead to show that the employment of these two constructions is textually motivated. This means that they are not only able to distribute participants in a clause as message, but their existence in a discourse is to regulate the flow of information.

Discourse (1) is a dialogue between Poirot and Dr Constantine, a Greek doctor. They are talking about the murder that happened on the train on which they were travelling. It is

quite common for the Sayer to be given the status of Theme in a clause complex of parataxis projection. Here the *bei*-construction in (5.18) regulates the information flow so that the Sayer of the projected clause, which is Poirot in this case, can serve as the Theme of the clause – in other words, its existence is textually motivated.

- Discourse 1

5.13	*báiluó* Poirot	*shěnsī zhe shuō,* thoughtful ASP say	"	*bù huì shì zìshā ba – e?"* NEG possible be suicide NTR: ass

	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

5.14			(topi.) Theme	Rheme

(Poirot thoughtfully said, "Might it be a case of suicide?")

5.15	*nà wèi xīlà yīshī* that MEAS Greece doctor	*zhāng kǒu fēng xiào le jǐ shēng,* open mouth cynical laugh ASP several sound,

	(topical) Theme	Rheme

5.16	(he)	*wèn dào,* ask say	" *[[yī gè rén zìshā,]]* one MEAS person suicide	*	→

	(topical) Theme	Rheme			

5.17			(topical) Theme	Rheme

* *huì   cháo   zìjǐ   shēn shàng cì   shàng shí   dāo*
  possible towards oneself body upon stab upon   ten knife

  – shíèr   dāo,   shènzhì   shíwǔ   dāo   ma?"
  twelve knife   even   fifteen knife   NTR: int

(The Greek doctor laughed cynically several times, and (he) asked, "Does a man who commits suicide will stab himself in ten, twelve or even fifteen times?)

5.18	*báiluó* Poirot	*bèi wèn de dèng yuán le yǎnjīng,* DISP: rec ask CC stare circle ASP eye

	(topical) Theme	Rheme

5.19	(he)	*zhǐ tǔ chū yī jù,* only vomit out one sentence	"	*yǒu rúcī cánrěn?"* have such crude

	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

5.20			(topical) Theme	Rheme

(Poirot was asked untill he opened his eyes widely, (he) only said, "Is it so crude?")

Discourse (2) is part of a narration about how the murdered man related to a kidnapping case in America. In this discourse, Mr and Mrs Armstrong, as 'known' information, is the topical Theme in (5.21) and (5.22), whereas their daughter is the information focus. Then the topical Theme switches from the parents to their daughter as the discourse moves on because the daughter was the one who was kidnapped and naturally is thus given thematic status in the following clauses. Here the *bei*-construction in (5.23) makes it possible to assign her the role of topical Theme in the clause in an 'unmarked' way, as otherwise the clause would be a 'marked' one or the role of topical Theme would be assigned to an unknown entity, viz. *rén* (people). Once again we can say that the *bei*-construction here is textually motivated.

- Discourse 2

5.21	*tāmen fūfù* they husband-wife	*dìngjū měiguó,* stay America	
	(topical) Theme	Rheme	
5.22	(they)	*shēng yǒu yī míng ài nǚ.* born have one MEAS love daughter	
	(topical) Theme	Rheme	
	Given	New	
	(They stayed in America, (and) they had a daughter that they loved.)		

5.23	*zhè míng zhǎng shàng míngzhū* this MEAS palm upon pearl	*zài sān suì shí bèi_ rén bāngpiào,* at three year time DISP: rec people kidnap	
	(topical) Theme	Rheme	
5.24	*bìng* and (textual)	*lèsuǒ yī bǐ qí gāo de shūjīn.* extort one MEAS strange high NOM random	
	(topical) Theme	Rheme	
	(This daughter was kidnapped by someone at three year of age who demanded an extremely large amount of ransom.)		

In Discourse (3), Poirot explained how Cassetti, the kidnapper, escaped the law. In this monologue, *tā* (he, referring to Cassett) remains the topical Theme of every clause throughout the whole paragraph and the *bei*-construction in (5.31) is obviously employed to make this possible, i.e. to keep this referent in clause-initial position – in other words, the *bei*-construction here is also textually motivated.

Discourse (4) is taken from the beginning of the novel.   It serves to introduce a new character into the story, Mary Debenham.   The whole narration is about what had happened to her and naturally she is the topical Theme of the whole text. Furthermore, the text exhibits a very typical Theme-chain structure in Chinese; the elliptical Theme/Subject serves as a reference to create a cohesive link between the clauses. Again, the *bei*-construction in (5.36) enables the chain to continue through the elliptical Theme/Subject. This means that the *bei*-construction here is also textually motivated.

- **Discourse 3**

5.25	*dànshì* but	*tā* he ⟶	*jītún le dà bǐ bù yì zhī cái,* hoard ASP large MEAS NEG righteous ASSOC money
	(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

5.26	*jiāyǐ*
	further
		tā
		he ⟶
			*shǒutóu yòu zhuā-jǐn le xǔduō shèhuì xiǎnyào * ⟶*
			hand-head again hold-tight ASP many society prominent
			
			  * *dì bǎbǐng,*
			  ASSOC unfavourable evidence

	(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

5.27	⟶		*lìyòng tāmen dì yíngxiǎnglì,* make use of their POSS influence
	((topical) Theme)		Rheme

5.28	⟶	*tā*
		he
			*zuìhòu jìngnéng yǐ jìshù shàng zuì zhèng bù zú * ⟶*
			finally able with technical upon sin evidence NEG enough
			
			  * *ér tuō shēn fǎ wài.*
			  then escape body law outside

	(topical) Theme	Rheme

(But he piled up an enormous amount of unlawful money, and he also held a large amount of unfavourable evidence of those socially prominent figures, (he) made use of their influence, then (he) was acquitted on some technical inadequacy.)

5.29	*jǐnguǎn rúcǐ, ruò* even that, if	*bù shì* NEG be	*tā* he ⟶	*jiǎohuá duō duǎn,* tricky many way
	(textual)	(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

Theme of (5.31)

5.30	⟶		*méng guò le shèhuì ěr mù,* deceive through ASP society ear eye
	(textual, interpersonal, & topical) Theme		Rheme

Theme of (5.31)

5.31	*tā* he ⟶	*zǎo bèi dàjiā jǐ wàn dāo guǎ le.* early DISP: rec everybody give ten thousand knife cut ASP
	(topical) Theme	Rheme

(Even though, if he was not tricky enough, (and he) succeeded to deceive the surveillance of the populace s/he would have been lynched by the populace.)

- **Discourse 4**

5.32	*mǎlì dàiběnhàn* Mary Debenham	*dǎcóng* since	*tóu* first	*tiān* day	*xīngqīsì* Thursday	*líkāi* leave	*bāgédá* Baghdad	*yǐlái,* till now

(topical) Theme	Rheme

5.33	⌐------>	*jiù bùcéng shuì hǎo.* then NEG: pf sleep good

((topical) Theme)	Rheme

(Mary Debenham, since she left Baghdad on Thursday till now, had never had a good sleep.)

5.34	*dào jiěrkùkè de chē sháng zài mósuěr de bīngquǎn, yǐjí zuóyè zài chē shàng,* to Kirkuk ASSOC car upon, at Mosul ASSOC guest house, and last night at car upon,

(topical) Theme

_____ *dōu shuì de hěn bù tàshí.* (she) all sleep CC very NEG solid

Rheme

(In the train to Kirkuk, in the guest house at Mosul, and last night on the train, (she) did not sleep properly.)

5.35	------> (she)	*zhēng zhe yǎnjīng,* open ASP eye

(topical) Theme	Rheme

5.36	------> (she)	*bèi chē shàng guō qiáng de nuǎnqì mèn de fāhuāng,* DISP: rec car upon too strong NOM heating bore CC mad

(topical) Theme	Rheme

((She) opened her eyes, and (she)was bored to death by the overheated train.)

5.37	------> *tā* she	*pá qǐ shēn lái,* crawl up body come

(topical) Theme	Rheme

5.38	------> (she)	*wǎng wài kuīkàn.* toward outside peer

(topical) Theme	Rheme

(She got up, and (she) peered out.)

Discourse (5) is an interview conducted as part of Poirot's investigation. He asks the secretary of the murdered man why he went to Persia. So the secretary naturally assigned himself the status of topical Theme in his response to the question. This is made possible in (5.42) by the *bei*-construction in an 'unmarked' way, as otherwise the clause would be a 'marked' one or the topical Theme would be given to an unknown entity, viz. *rén* (people). Once again we can say that the *bei*-construction here is textually motivated.

- Discourse 5

5.39	"nǐ	zài nǎlì yǒu hē guìgàn?"
	you	at there have what doing

	(topical) Theme	Rheme

("What were you doing there?")

5.40	"wǒ	běnlái shì cóng niǔyuē qù kànkàn [[kāicǎi shíyóu de]]
	I	originally EMP from New York go see-see exploit oil SUB
		shēngyī jīhuì de.
		business opportunity EMP

	(topical) Theme	Rheme

("Originally, I went there from New York to see if there was any opportunity in the oil exploiting business.)

5.41	nǐ	dàgài bù xiǎng tīng wǒ zhì fāngmiàm de fèi huà ba.
	you	perhaps NEG want listen I this aspect ASSOC useless talk NTR: ass

	(topical) Theme	Rheme

(You perhaps don't want to listen to all this useless talk.)

5.42	fǎnzhèng, in fact,	wǒ yǔ yǒurén I and friend	zài shēngyī shàng bèi rén shuǎ le."
			at business upon DISP: rec people trick ASP

	(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

(In fact, my friend and I were tricked in it.")

Discourse (6) is a description of how Poirot conducted a simple experiment; the focus of the text is thus on the actions that he carried out. Here apart from one 'unmarked' material clause (5.43), clauses (5.44) to (5.47) are variants of *ba*-construction clauses. As a result, the information prominence is assigned to the Process/Predicator in each clause, that is if we disregard the three circumstances in (5.44), (5.45) and (5.47) at the moment; the issue of the circumstance in the *ba*-construction will be discussed in Section 5.4.6.2. This means that the four variants of the *ba*-construction in this discourse are employed so that the Processes are the focus of information. In short, their employment is textually motivated.

Discourse (7) is part of the second interview in the investigation. Poirot asked MacQueen, the secretary of the murdered man, whether a train door leading to the platform was bolted, so whether or not it was bolted is the information being negotiated throughout this discourse. And the *ba*-construction in (5.54) enables this information to remain as the focus of information. That means, once again, its employment is also textually motivated here.

Discourse (8) is part of a dialogue between Poirot and Edward Henry Masterman, the valet of the murdered man, where Poirot asks Edward about his duties as valet. The valet's service was thus the focus of the information. Here the *ba*-variant (*jiāng*) in (5.56) and the *ba*-construction in (5.57) are employed to enable the particular information – what he performed – to remain as the focus of information in the clause-final position.

- Discourse 6

<table>
<tr><td>5.43</td><td colspan="2">báiluó
Poirot</td><td colspan="7">jiāng   liǎng quān tiěsī zhǎn-píng, ...
DISP: op two   MEAS wire extend-flat</td></tr>
</table>

(topical) Theme	Rheme

Given	New

<table>
<tr><td>5.44</td><td>ránhòu
then</td><td>(he)</td><td>jí jǐnshèn de jiāng fénhuà de zhǐpiàn fàng............
very carefully NOM DISP: op burnt ASSOC paper piece put

           zài yī quān tiě sī shàng,
           at   one MEAS wire upon</td></tr>
</table>

(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

(Poirot flattened two humps of wire,then with great care, (he) put the charred scrap of paper onto one hump of wire.)

<table>
<tr><td>5.45</td><td>(he)</td><td>zài jiāng lìng yī quān tiěsī fù ⟵........................
again DISP: op another one MEAS wire cover

         zài shàng tóu,
         at   upon   head</td></tr>
</table>

(topical) Theme	Rheme

<table>
<tr><td>5.46</td><td>(he)</td><td>yòng xiǎo qiánzī jiā hǎo. ⟵..................................
use   small pliers clap good</td></tr>
</table>

(topical) Theme	Rheme

((he) again put another hump of wire on top of it, (and he) used a pair of small pliers to clamp it properly.)

<table>
<tr><td>5.47</td><td>tā
He</td><td>jiāng liǎng quān tiěsī qīngqīng fàng ⟵...........................
DISP: op two   MEAS wire slightly   put

       zài diǎnrán de jiǔjīng dēng shàng.
       at   burning NOM spirit   lamp upon</td></tr>
</table>

(topical) Theme	Rheme

(He carefully put two humps of wire on top of the burning spirit lamp.)

- Discourse 7

5.48	*"nǐ* you	*jìdé* remember	*mén* door	*shì* EMP *shūan- shàng* bolt-upon *de* EMP *ma?"* NTR: int
	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
		(topical) Theme		Rheme
	(Do you remember if the door was bolted?)			

5.49	*màikūn* MacQueen	*xiǎng le xiǎng.* think ASP think
	(topical) Theme	Rheme
	(MacQueen thought for a while.)	

5.50	*"è, shì de,* er, yes,	*wǒ* I	*jìdé* remember		*hǎo xiàng shì shūan-shàng de.* good like EMP bolt-upon EMP
5.51	(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
				Topical Theme	Rheme
	(("Er, yes, I remember that it seemed to be bolted.)				

5.52	*zhìshǎo* at least	*mén de báshǒu shàng* door ASSOC handle upon	*yǒu gè tiě gùn shì chà-shàng de* have MEAS iron rod EMP insert-upon EMP
	(Interp.)	(topical) Theme	Rheme
	(At least, there was an iron bar that fitted across the handle.")		

5.53	*"nǐmen* you	*shàng chē zhīhòu,* arise car afterward
	(topical) Theme	Rheme
	Theme of (5.54)	

5.54	(You)	*yǒu-méi-yǒu bǎ che mén shūan-hǎo?"* have NEG: pf DISP: op car door bolt-good?
	(topical) Theme	Rheme
	("After you got back to the train, did you bolted the door?")	

- Discourse 8

5.55	*"nǐ de zhīwù* you POSS duty	*dōu shì shénme?"* all be Q-what		
	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
	("What are your duties all about?")			
5.56	" (My duty)	*jiāng tā de yīzhuāng zhěnglǐ gu- hǎo.* ⟵·······⌐ (is) DISP: op he POSS clothes tidy hand-good		
	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
	("(My duty is) to tidy up his clothes and to hand them (in the wardrobe) properly.)			
5.57	*xiānshēng,* Mr,	(my duty)	*bǎ tā de jiǎ yá pào-hǎo.* ⟵·······┘ (is) DISP: op he POSS false teeth water-good	
	(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	
	(Sir, (my duty is) to put his dental plate in water,)			
5.58	(my duty)	*zài kànkàn dāngwǎn tā hái yǒu shénme biéde fēnfù."* (is) again see that night he still have Q-what other order		
	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
	(and to see if he had any other order.)			

Based on the first five discourses, we can see that the employment of the *bei*-construction enables a certain participant to occupy the thematically prominent position so that:

(1) the Sayer of the projected clause can serve as the topical Theme of the clause;

(2) the information focus of a previous clause can become the topical Theme in the following clauses, and follow the change of topic in the discourse;

(3) a particular participant can remain the Theme of the whole discourse;

(4) a topical Theme/topic chain is able to continue in the discourse; and

(5) the Subject of a question in an initiating turn can remain the Subject in the responding turn.

In contrast, based on the last three discourses, the employment of the *ba*-construction enables the Process/Predicator to become the focus of information, i.e. to be assigned prominence of information by occupying clause-final position. The above list of observations is not an exhaustive one; however, the conclusion is unescapable. Though the two constructions have different effects on the flow of information in the texts, their employment is textually motivated – in other words, they assign variable discourse status to participants within the clause and, as a result, they regulate the flow of information as the text unfolds.

5.4   Variants of the *ba*- and *bei*- constructions and the flow of information

Both the *ba*- and *bei*- constructions have several variants. As both constructions are textually motivated, we will examine how their variants affect the flow of information in this section.

For every *ba*-construction and its variants, the status of topical Theme is always given to the Actor in a material clause; whereas for every *bei*-construction and its variants, it is always given to the Goal. This means that their variants will not affect the assignment of thematic status. In contrast, the variants of both constructions might effect the assignment of the information focus. Their effect on the information focus is the central concern in this section.

A general feature of the verb in the *ba*- and *bei*- construction is that the verb must be preceded by an adverb or followed by at least one grammatical element (including the reduplicated verb itself). The following patterns are found in the corpus:

- **Pattern 1: Process ^ particle *le***

This pattern indicates a completed action or a change in status. The Process in both *ba*- and *bei*- constructions is assigned information prominence as in (5.59) and (5.60) respectively.

(5.59)

wǒ I	*bǎ* DISP: op	*zhèxiē shìshí* these facts	*dōu* all	*yǐnmán le.* conceal ASP
Actor		Goal	VADV	Process
Subject		Complement	Adjunct	Predicator
Theme	Rheme			
Given	⟵————————— New			

(I concealed all these facts.)

5.60

fǎnzhēng, in fact,	*wǒ yǔ yǒurén* I and friend	*zài shēngyì shàng* at business upon	*bèi* DISP: rec	*rén* people	*shuǎ le.* trick ASP
HCON	Goal	Circumstance: matter		Actor	Process
	Subject	Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given		⟵————————— New			

(In fact, my friend and I were tricked on the business by someone.)

The referent encoded in the Goal in the *ba*-construction can also be assigned thematic prominence as in the invented example (5.61). Here the absolute Theme is picked up anaphorically by the pronoun *tāmen* (them) serving as Goal.

(5.61)

zhèxiē shìshí, these fact,	*wǒ* I	*bǎ* DISP: op	*tāmen* them	*dōu* all	*yǐnmán le.* conceal ASP
	Actor		Goal	VADV	Process: material
	Subject		Complement	Adjunct	Predicator
(absolute)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given		⟵————————— New			

(These facts, I concealed all of them this morning.)

In the *bei*-construction, the Actor (marked by *bèi*)can be ellipsed when it is an unknown entity or known in the context as in (5.62), whereas in the *ba*-construction, the Goal (marked by *bǎ*) cannot be ellipsed as in (5.63). This difference can be explained from an ergative perspective (see Section 5.6).

(5.62)

fǎnzhēng, in fact,	*wǒ yǔ yǒurén* I and friend	*zài shēngyì shàng* at business upon	*bèi* DISP: rec	(people)	*shuǎ le.* trick ASP
HCON	Goal	Matter		(Actor)	Process
	Subject	Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given		New			

(In fact, my friend and I were tricked on the business.)

(5.63)

*wǒ I	*bá* DISP: op	(these facts)	*dōu* all	*yǐnmán le.* conceal ASP
Actor		(Goal)	Extent	Process
Subject		(Complement)	Adjunct	Predicator
Theme	Rheme			
Given	New			

(I concealed all these facts.)

In additon, the co-verb *gěi* can be placed in front of the main verb in the *ba*- and *bei*-constructions to enhance the sense of disposal as in (5.64) and (5.65):

(5.64)

dàgài perhaps	*shì* EMP	*luójiàde* Cassetti	*bǎ* DISP: op	*tā* him/her	*gěi chūmài le.* GEI betray ASP
VADV		Actor		Goal	Process
Modal Adjunct		Subject		Complement	Predicator
(interpersonal)		(topical) Theme		Rheme	
Given			New		

(Perhaps Cassetti betrayed him/ her.)

(5.65)

chē car	*tīng xi-lái le,* stop down-come ASP,
Actor	Process
Subject	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme
Given	

	bèi DISP: rec	*fēng xuě* wind snow	*gěi fēng-zhù le.* GEI block-stop ASP
(Goal)		Actor	Process
(Subject)	Adjunct		Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme		
	New		

(The train stopped because it was blocked by the snow.)

- **Pattern 2: Process in reduplicated form**

This pattern indicates the repetition or the short duration of an action such as (5.66). In this pattern the Process is the focus of information in both *ba-* and *bei-* constructions.

(5.66)

tā s/he	*wèile* in order to	*gěi ziji* to oneself	*liú-xià* leave-down	*bù zài xiànchǎng de zhèngjù,* NEG at the spot ASSOC evidence
Actor		Beneficiary	Process: material	Goal
Subject	Adjunct	Complement	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	⟵——————————— New			

(S/he, in order to leave himself/herself with the alibi of not being at the place,)

	shāowǎn a bit latter	*lái-dào* come-reach	*fángjiān lǐ,* compartment inside
(Actor)	CON	Process: material	Circumstance: spatial
(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator	Adjunct
((topical) Theme)	Rheme		
(Given)	⟵———————— New		

(_____ came to the compartment a bit later,)

	bǎ DISP: op	*shízhēn* the hand of the clock	*wǎng hòu* toward backward	*bō le bō.* move ASP move
(Actor)		Goal	Location: spatial	Process
(Subject)		Complement	Adjunct	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme			
(Given)	⟵——————————— New			

(___ move the clock a little back.)

There are only two occurrences of this pattern in the corpus and both of them are *ba-* constructions. This pattern, however, is grammatically acceptable in the *bei-*construction as in the invented example (5.67).

(5.67)

shizhēn the hand of the clock	*bèi* DISP: rec	*tā* him/her	*wăng hòu* toward backward	*bō le bō.* move ASP move
Goal		Actor	Location: spatial	Process
Subject	Adjunct		Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	⟵ New			

(The clock was moved a little back by him/her.)

- **Pattern 3: Process ^ circumstance (*zai* + nominal group of place)**

This pattern indicates the location where the process takes place as in (5.68).

(5.68)

wŏ I	*bă* DISP: op	*wŏ de lŭxíngdài* I POSS baggage	*guā* hang
Actor		Goal	Process: material
Subject		Complement	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme		
Given			

zài liăng biān xiāngtōng de nà shàn mén shàng le. at two side through NOM that MEAS door upon ASP
Location: spatial
Adjunct
Rheme (continued)
⟵ New

(I handed my baggage in at the door that gave access to the next compartment.)

(5.69)

wǒmen de chē our POSS car	yòu again	géi DISP: rec		dǔ block	zài zhèlǐ at here	le. ASP
Goal	VADV		(Actor)	Process: material	Place (deictic)	
Subject	Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator	Adjunct	
(topical) Theme	Rheme					
Given	⟵ —————————————————— New					

(Our train was blocked here again.)

(5.70)

wǒ I	guà le hang ASP	wǒ de lǚxíngdài I POSS baggage
Actor	Process: material	Goal
Subject	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Given		

zài liǎng biān xiāng tōng de nà shàn mén shàng le at two side through NOM that MEAS door upon ASP
Location: spatial
Adjunct
Rheme (continued)
⟵ ————————— New

(I handed my baggage in at the door that gave access to the next compartment.)

Unlike the first two patterns, the circumstance of location instead of the Process occupies clause-final position here. When we compare the 'unmarked' structure in (5.70) with the *ba*-construction in (5.68), we find that they have the same Theme, i.e. the Actor, *wǒ* (I). In spoken Chinese we can still rely on the prosodic contrast to indicate where the New is.

However, in written Chinese we usually make the assumption that clause-final position marks the information focus unless the New is structurally marked (see Section 4.4 for details). In this case the 'unmarked' structure and the *ba*-construction shown in the above examples have the same New i.e. the Location, *zài liǎng biān xiāngtōng de nǎ shàn mén shàng* (at the door that gave access to the next compartment). The *ba*-construction thus seems to achieve nothing textually in comparison with the unmarked structure. This observation certainly needs an explanation if we argue that the unmarked structure and the *ba*-construction represent two different options in the same textual system or subsystem because we assume that different options in a system realise different meanings.

The observation can be explained in terms of the 'diminuendo effect' of prominence (for details, see Matthiessen 1988 and Section 4.2.1 of this thesis). As mentioned in Section 4.2.1, textual waves are non-discrete, whereas the carrier of a representational element is represented by constituency. We therefore have to impose experiential-like discreteness by drawing constituency boundaries in the wave-like organisation of a message. Concerning the news prominence, a left-facing arrow is drawn from the element of the tonic prominence to indicate it. Though the constituent occupying clause-final position attracts the greatest news prominence, the penultimate position still attracts some prominence. This means that inspite of not occupying the most information-prominent position, the Process in both *ba-* and *bei-* constructions still attracts more prominence than the Process in an 'unmarked' SVO structure by occupying the penultimate position. In the same way, the 'diminuendo effect' of the prominence also sheds much light on the thematic status of the Goal in the *ba*-construction as well, that is, inspite of not occupying the most thematically prominent position, the Goal in a *ba*-construction is comparatively more thematically prominent than in an 'unmarked' SVO structure. Similarly this also sheds some light on the debate about the status of Goal in the *ba*-construction in traditional grammar, viz. whether the Goal is the 'subject', the 'topic' or the 'second topic' of the clause (see e.g. Tsao 1979, 1987; Hsueh 1989). The above explanation can also be applied to the circumstance of Location which indicates the destination as in Pattern 4; the circumstance of Extent which indicates the time duration or the frequency

of occurrence as in Pattern 5; and the circumstance of Manner which indicates the degree and manner of action as in Pattern 6.

- **Pattern 4: Process ^ postverb + (nominal group of place) + (verb 2)**

This pattern indicates a process which is marked with completive phase, either directional as in (5.71) and (5.72) or resultative as in (5.73). This is the most frequent pattern of the *ba*-constructions in the corpus.

(5.71)

huóbó tàitài Hubbard Mrs	*bǎ* DISP: op	*báiluó* Poirot	*lā- dào* pull-reach	*yīpáng* aside
Actor		Goal	Process: material	Location: spatial
Subject		Complement	Predicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	⟵————————————— New			

(Mrs Hubbard pulled Poirot aside.)

(5.72)

ránhòu, then		*jiāng* DISP: op	*màozǐ* hat	*fàng-jìn* put-into	*hé lǐ.* box inside
HCON	(Actor)		Goal	Process: material	Location: spatial
	(Subject)		Complement	Predicator	Adjunct
(textual)	((topical) Theme)	Rheme			
(Given)		⟵————————————— New			

(Then, (he) put the hat into the box.)

(5.73)

tā s/he	*qīngsōngde* cheerfully	*shuō,* say
Sayer	Manner	Process: verbal
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Given	←——————— New	

(he said cheerfully,)

" *wǒmen* We	*bù fǎng* NEG matter	*bǎ* DISP: op	*chuānghù* window	*guān-shàng.* " close-upon
Actor	VADV		Goal	Process: material
Subject	Adjunct		Complement	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	←——————————— New			

(we might as well shut the window.)

	shuō zhù, say ASP
(Sayer)	Process: verbal
(Subject)	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme
(Given) ←—— New	

((While he) was saying,)

	jiàng DISP: op	*chē chuāng* car window	*guān le shàng-qù.* close ASP upon-go
(Actor)		Goal	Process: material
(Subject)		Complement	Predicator
((topical) Theme)		Rheme	
(Given)	⟵──────── New		

((he) shut the train window.)

In the corpus the nominal group of place in this pattern need not be a concrete place; it can be an abstract one as in (5.74).

(5.74)

jiǎdìng suppose	*zhě yī huǒ rén* this one MEAS people	*shì* EMP	*bèi* DISP: rec	*sǐ shén* dead god	*jiū- dào* draw-reach	*yīkuàier* together	*de* EMP
HCON	Goal			Actor	Process: material	Location: spatial	
	Subject		Adjunct		Predicator	Adjunct	
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme					
Given	⟵──────────── New						

(Suppose that this group of people was drawn together by the devil.)

(5.75)

nǐ you	*bǎ* DISP: op	*wǒ* me	*diū- jìn* throw-into	*quāntào?* trap
Actor		Goal	Process: material	Location: spatial
Subject		Complement	Predicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	⟵──────── New			

(You wanted to throw me into the trap?)

- **Pattern 5: Process ^ (*le/guo*) + numerical expression + measure word**

This pattern indicates the time duration of the action (i.e. Extent: duration) as in (5.76) or the frequency of occurrence (i.e. Extent: frequency) as in (5.77).

(5.76)

hèqiūlǐ báiluó Hercule Poirot	*xiǎoxīnyìyìde* carefully	*bǎ* DISP: op	*zìjǐ nà zuǒ réndānhúzǐ* himself that MEAS moustaches	*zhěnglǐ le yī fān.* handle ASP one MEAS
Actor	Manner		Goal	Process: material
Subject	Adjunct		Complement	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	←——————————————— New			

(Hercule Poirot handled his moustache carefully for a while.)

(5.77)

yùhàirén the deceased	*bèi* DISP: rec	———	*cì le* stab ASP	*bù xià shí-èr dāo.* NEG down twelve knife
Goal		(Actor)	Process: material	Extent: frequency
Subject	Adjunct		Predicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	←——————— New			

(The deceased was stabbed not less than twelve times.)

Pattern 6: Process ^ (*de*) + stative verb/clause

This pattern indicates the degree of action (i.e. Manner: degree) as in (5.78) and (5.79) or the manner of action (i.e. Manner: quality) as in (5.80). The word *de* denotes overtly that what follows it concerns the degree or manner of the action; however, it is an optional element in the two constructions.

(5.78)

báiluó Poirot	*qīngqīng* slightly	*jiāng* DISP: op	*fáng mén* room door	*xù yǎn de* false cover CC	*zhǐ shèng yī tiáo fèng,* only leave one MEAS crack,
Actor	Manner		Goal	Process: material	Manner: degree
Subject	Adjunct		Complement	Predicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme				
Given	⟵————————————— New				

(Poirot opened his compartment door a crack,)

	xiàng wài toward outside	*ku kàn* peep
(Actor)	Location: spatial	Process: material
(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme	
(Given)	⟵——————— New	

(and (he) peeped outside.)

(5.79)

[[*tā zài hùzhào sháng shūxiě de*]] *míngzì* she at passport upon write SUB name	*bèi* DISP:rec	*yī kuài yóu diǎn* one MEAS oil spot	*nòng de móhú le.* make CC messy ASP
Goal		Actor	Process: material
Subject		Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme		
Given	⟵————————————— New		

(Her name on the passport was made messy by a spot of oil.)

(5.80)

wǒ I	bǎ DISP: op	zhè jiàn shì this MEAS matter	gàn de do CSC	xiàng [[nǔrén zuò de]] luàn cì yī tōng. like woman do SUB massy stab one through
Actor		Goal	Process: material	Manner: quality
Subject		Complement	Predicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	⟵————————— New			

(I wanted to make the matter look like being done by a woman, stabbing in a messy way.)

- **Pattern 7: Ditransitive clause**

In a ditransitive clause there exists a third participant, the Beneficiary, which is also known as the indirect object in traditional grammar and is always marked by the coverb *gěi*. In the case of an unmarked SVO construction, the Beneficiary can occupy clause-final position, i.e. Actor ^ Process ^ Goal ^ *gěi* + Beneficiary, or the position in front of the Process, i.e. Actor ^ *gěi* + Beneficiary ^ Process ^ Goal. Similarly, in a ditransitive *bǎ/bèi* construction the Beneficiary can occupy clause-final position, i.e. Actor ^ *bǎ/bèi* ^ Goal ^ Process ^ *gěi* + Beneficiary as in (5.81) and (5.82). In this way, the *gei* + Beneficiary construction looks very much like the circumstance of Location denoting place in Pattern (3), destination in Pattern (4) and direction in Pattern (5)[9]. Conversely, it can precede the Process, i.e. Actor ^ *bǎ/bèi* ^ Goal ^ *gěi* + Beneficiary ^ Process as in (5.83).

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[9] Different types of Participant and Circumstance lie on a cline (see Halliday 1994; Martin, Matthiessen & Painter 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen 1999), with Beneficiary lying closer to Circumstance than Actor and Goal. This means that, like the Circumstance, the Beneficiary lies nearer at the peripheral position in a 'figure'.

(5.81)

yào-bù-yào want-NEG-want	*wŏ* I	*bǎ* DISP: op	*lǚxíngdài* baggage	*ná xià-lái* take down-come	*gěi nǐmen?* for you
Cause	Actor		Goal	Process: material	Beneficiary
Adjunct	Subject		Complement	Predicator	Complement
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given				New	

(Do you want me to take down the baggage for you?)

(5.82)

tā he	*jiāng* DISP: op	*yī fēng xìn* one MEAS letter	*dì* hand	*gěi le báiluó.* to ASP Poirot.
Actor		Goal	Process: material	Beneficiary
Subject		Complement	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given			New	

(S/he handed a letter to Poirot.)

In (5.82) the particle *le* does not follow the main verb *dì* but the coverb *gěi*, separating *gěi* from the Beneficiary. One might conclude that *gěi* is the postverb of *dì* in this case so that the aspectual particle *le* follows the whole verb complex *dì gěi* (hand to). However, *gěi* in the above example is still interpreted in this study as the coverb which introduces the Beneficiary, just like all the other ditransitive clauses in the corpus, and the new position of *le* exhibits the verb-like nature of the coverb in Chinese. The aspectual particle *le* can in fact occupy the position right after the main verb in the above example.

(5.83)

yào-bù-yào want-NEG-want	wǒ I	bǎ DISP: op	lǚxíngdài baggage	gěi nǐmen for you	ná xià-lái? take down-come
	Actor		Goal	Beneficiary	Process: material
Adjunct	Subject		Complement	Complement	Predicator
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given			New		

(Do you want me to take down the baggage for you?)

There is another type of *bǎ/bèi* ditransitive construction which is also known as 'compressed sentence'. This type of construction has the particular structural formula Actor ^ *bǎ* ^ Goal ^ Pro- < *gěi* + Beneficiary> -cess ^ (complement)

(5.84)

nǐmen you	zhǐ only	yào have to	bǎ DISP: op	zhè kùai shǒupà this MEAS handkerchief	ná take	gěi tāmen to they	kàn. see
Actor	VADV			Goal	Pro-	Beneficiary	-cess
Subject	Adj.			Complement	Pre-	Complement	-dicator
(topi.) Theme	Rheme						
Given			New				

(You only need to show this handkerchief to them.)

(5.85)

tā de zìxíngchē s/he POSS bicycle	bèi DISP: rec	tā s/he	jiè le lend ASP	gěi wǒ to me	tà ride	jǐtiān. several days
Goal		Actor	Pro-	Beneficiary	-cess	Extent: duration
Subject	Adjunct		Pre-	Complement	-dicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme					
Given		New				

(His/her bicycle was lent to me by him to ride for a few days.)

Unlike in the previous type of ditransitive clause, the Beneficiary in (5.84) cannot precede the main Process *ná* (take) here because the Beneficiary is the Actor of the following Process *kàn* (see). And sometimes the Pro- < *gěi* + Beneficiary> -cess constituent in the clause can be followed by an Adjunct as in (5.85). In both cases the Beneficiary, together with the 'complement', always occupies clause-final position. This type of ditransitive clause is very common in the *ba*-construction but not in the *bei*-construction in the corpus.

- **Pattern 8: The *shì...de* construction**

This pattern indicates a strong sense of emphasis, showing that the speaker strongly believes in the truth of the proposition encoded in the clause as in (5.86).

(5.86)

"nǐ you	*shì-fǒu* yes/no	*zài cāixiǎng* at guess
Senser	VADV	Process: mental
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Given		

(Do you think that)

luójiādé xiānshēng Cassetti Mr	*shì* EMP	*bèi* DISP: rec	*rén* people	*hàisǐ* murder	*de?"* EMP
Goal			Actor	Process: material	
Subject		Adjunct		Predicator	
(topical) Theme	Rheme				
Rheme (continued)					
←——————————— New					

(Mr Cassetti was murdered by someone?)

In this construction *shi* always precedes the *bá* or *bèi* marker as in (5.86) or any modifier of them as in (5.87), whereas *de* usually, if not always, occupies clause-final position in a clause simplex as in (5.87) and sometimes in a clause complex as in (5.86) and (5.88). In the latter case *shi* and *de* occur in two successive clauses in the complex.

(5.87)

wǒ I	*shì* EMP	*bù yīnggāi* NEG should	*bǎ* DISP: op	*chuānghù* window	*kāi zhe* open ASP	*de.* EMP
Actor				Goal	Process: material	
Subject		Mod. Adjunct		Complement	Predicator	
(topical) Theme	Rheme					
Given	← ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ New					

(I should not leave the window opened.)

(5.88)

móushā shíkè murder time	*kěnéng jiào wǎn,* possible comparative late
Carrier	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
Subject	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme
Given	←⎯⎯⎯ New

(The time of the murder might be later,)

ér and	[[*nà zhī shǒubiǎo suǒzhǐ de*]] *shíkè* that MEAS watch point SUB time	*shì* EMP	*bèi* DISP: rec	*rén* people	*dòng gùo shǒu jiǎo,* move ASP hand foot
CON	Goal			Actor	Process: material
	Subject		Adjunct		Predicator
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given		←⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ New			

(and the time indicated by the watch has been manipulated by someone)

	gùyì deliberately	*wéi wǒmen* for we	*zhìzào* create	*cuò jué* wrong feeling	*de.* EMP
Actor	Manner	Beneficiary	Process: material	Goal	
Subject	Mod. Adj.	Complement	Predicator	Complement	
(topical) Theme	Rheme				
Given	⟵————————————— New				

(in order to deceive us.)

- **Pattern 9: Process ^ postverb + (complement) ^ *de* construction**

This pattern looks like a combination of Pattern (5) and Pattern (9). As with Pattern (5), all the processes in this construction are composed of the [verb + postverb] structure as in (5.89).

(5.89)

rúguǒ if	*shǐ zhēn* watch needle	*díquè* really	*bèi* DISP: rec	*rén* people	*bǒ guò de* move ASP EMP
HCON	Goal	VADV		Actor	Process: material
	Subject	Mod. Adj.	Adjunct		Predicator
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			
	Theme				
	Given				

(If the hand of the watch was really moved by someone,)

<< *wǒ* I	*zhǐshì* only	*shuō* say	*rúguǒ>>* if
Sayer	VADV	Process: verbal	Verbiage
Subject	Mod. Adj.	Predicator	Complement
Topical Theme	Rheme		
Given	⟵——————— New		

(<< I only said if >>)

nàme then	[[*tā bō de*]] *nà gè shékè* s/he move SUB that MEAS time	*yīdìng* must	*yǒu* have	*tèbiè yìyì.* special meaning
HCON	Carrier/ Possessor	Process: possessive		Attribute/ Possession
	Subject	Predicator		Complement
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
	Rheme (of the previous clause)			
	⟵————————————————— New			

(then the time that s/he moved it to must have special implications.)

As with Pattern 9, *de* in this pattern always occupies clause-final position as in (5.90) and it is always possible to add *shì* before the *bǎ* or *bèi* marker.

(5.90)

"mén shuān door bolt	*shì* EMP	*ānzhuāng* install	*zài lí mén bǎshǒu hěn gāo de shàngfāng* at away door handle very high NOM top	*de,* EMP,
Medium		Process	Location: spatial	
Subject		Predicator	Adjunct	
(topical) Theme		Rheme		
Given		⟵——————— New		

(The bolt is installed high above the handle,)

yīncǐ thus		*wánquán* totally	*bù kěnéng* NEG possible
CON	(Goal)	VADV	Pro-
	(Subject)	Adjunct	Adjunct
(textual)	((topical) Theme)	Rheme	
	(Given)		

bèi DISP: rec	[[*tā guà zài mén bǎshŏu shàng de*]] *dà shŏutídài* she hang at door handle upon SUB big sponge-bag	*dàngzhe de.* " obstruct EMP
	Actor	-cess: material
	Adjunct	predicator
	Rheme (continued)	
	⟵———————— New	

(so it is impossible to be masked by the sponge-bag that she hung on the handle of the door.)

- **Pattern 10: Separate clause as complement**

Past studies have noted the constraint in past studies that the main verb of both *ba-* and *bei-* constructions must be followed by a grammatical element. In addition, numerous examples have been constructed to illustrate what the 'grammatical element' can be. However, many of these invented examples are individual clauses, isolated from their discourse context. In the present study, when this constraint is examined in the context of discourse, there are some interesting observations to be made. There are eight instances in the corpus in which there is no grammatical element following the main verb; five instances are *bei-*constructions as in (5.91), (5.92) and (5.94) and three are *ba-* constructions as in (5.93).

The question thus arises, whether these eight instances can be interpreted as counter examples to the constraint mentioned? The answer is negative but the constraint needs some modifications. First of all, all of these instances occur in clause complexes, with seven not occurring in the last clause of the complex. The only instance where it occurs in the last clause (5.94) refers to an unreal situation. Though not conclusive, this seems to suggest that: (1) when the proposition of the clause is concerned with something that has happened, i.e. is real, its main verb is always followed by a grammatical element; (2) when the *ba-* or the *bei-* constructions occurs in the first clause of a clause complex, the following clause of the clause complex can function as the 'grammatical element' and thus fulfil the constraint; and (3) when the proposition encoded in the clause concerns something that has not happened, i.e. is unreal, the above constraint does not hold.

(5.91)

zhè *míng* *zhǎng* *shàng* *míngzhū*	*zài* *sān* *suì* *shí*	*bèi*	*rén*	*bǎngpiào,*
this MEAS palm upon pearl	at three year time	DISP: rec	people	kidnap
Goal	Location: temporal		Actor	Process: material
Subject	Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	⟵————————————————— New			

(This daughter was kidnapped by someone at three years of age,)

bìng *and*			*lèsuǒ* extort	*yī* *bǐ* *qí* *gāo* *de* *shújīn.* one MEAS strange high NOM random
CON	(Goal)	(Actor)	Process: material	Range
	(Subject)	(Complement)	Predicator	Complement
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
(Given)		⟵————————— New		

(who demanded an extremely large amount of ransom.)

(5.92)

dāran *le,* *diquè* of course NTR: ass, really	*yǒu* exist	*zhēn de* real NOM	*kǒnghè xìn* threaten letter
VADV	Process: existential	VADV	Existent
Adjunct	Predicator	Mod. Adj.	Subject
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	
	⟵————————— New		

(Of course, there were some really threatening letter)

	jǐnggào warning	*luójiādé* Cassetti	*xiǎoxīn tā de xìngmìng,* careful he POSS life
(Sayer)	Process: verbal	Receiver	Verbiage
(Subject)	Predicator	Complement	Complement
((topical) Theme]	Rheme		
(Given)	← —————— New		

(which warned Cassetti to be careful of his life,)

dànshì but		*yǐ* already	*bèi* DISP: rec	*màikūn* McQueen	*fénhuǐ,* burn
PCON	(Goal)	VADV		Actor	Process: material
	(Subject)	Mod. Adj.	Adjunct		Predicator
(textual)	((topical) Theme)	Rheme			
(Given)		← —————— New			

(but which were burnt by McQueen)

qiě and		*yǐ zhèxiē jiǎ zào de kǒnghè xìn* with these false make NOM threaten letter	*lái dàitì.* come replace
CON	(Goal)	Actor	Process: material
	(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator
(textual)	((topical) Theme)	Rheme	
(Given)		← —————————— New	

(and replaced by these false threatening letters.)

(5.93)

xiōngshǒu Murderer	*cóng zìjǐ fángjiān* from oneself room	*liū-jìn* flee-into	*luójiādé de fángjiān ,* Cassetti POSS room
Actor	Location: spatial	Process: material	Location: spatial
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme		
Given	←————————————New		

(The murderer stole into Cassetti's compartment from his/her compartment,)

	shā le kill ASP	*tā,* him
(Actor)	Process: material	Goal
(Subject)	Predicator	Complement
((topical) Theme)	Rheme	
(Given)	←———— New	

(___ killed him,)

	zì lǐtōu from inside	*bǎ* DISP: op	*fángmén* door	*fǎn suǒ,* against lock
(Actor)	Location: spatial		Goal	Process: material
(Subject)	Adjunct		Complement	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme			
(Given)	←—————————— New			

(___ locked the door from inside)

	shuān shàng bolt upon	*suǒ liàn.* lock chain
(Actor)	Process: material	Goal
(Subject)	Predicator	Complement
((topical) Theme)	Rheme	
(Given)	←———— New	

(___ chained it.)

(5.94)
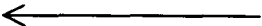
yīnwéi   *tā*   *yǔ*   *āmǔsīzhuàng*   *jià*   *de*   *quānxi,* because   she   with   Armstrong   family   ASSOC   relationship,
(textual) Theme

tā she	*dāngrán* of course	*shì* be	[[*zuì yóngyì* *bèi* *rén* *huáiyí* *de*]] *rén.* most easy DISP: rec people suspect SUB person
Carrier	VADV	Process: categorising	Attribute
Subject	Mod. Adj.	Predicator	Adjunct
(topical) Theme	Rheme		
Given	←———————— New		

(Because of her relationship with the Armstrong family, she, of course, will be the person most suspected by the others.)

tā she	*huì* perhaps	*bèi* DISP: rec		*xùnwèn,* interview
Goal	VADV		(Actor)	Process: material
Subject	Mod. Adj.	Adjunct		Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
Given	←———— New			

(She will be interviewed,)

	shènzhì *kěnéng* even possible	*bèi* DISP: rec		*bǔ.* arrest
(Goal)	VADV		(Actor)	Process: material
(Subject)	Modal Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme			
(Given)	←———— New			

(___ even arrested.)

- **Pattern 11: Relative or rank-shift clauses**

The *ba-* and *bei-* constructions are also found inside relative and rank-shifted clauses as in (5.95). In this case, the process of the clause may not be the focus of information.

(5.95)

[[*zhè gè bèi shā de*]] this MEAS DISP: rec kill SUB	*móushā le* murder ASP	*wǒ de xiǎo wàishēngnǚ.* I POSS little niece	
Actor	Process: material	Goal	
Subject	Predicator	Complement	
Topical Theme	Rheme		
(Given)	⟵──────── New		

(The person who was killed murdered my little niece.)

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 give the thematic and information focus in the variants of *ba-* and *bei-* constructions respectively.

Table 5.1: Thematic and information focus in the variants of the *ba-*construction

construction/condition	initial/Theme	post-initial	final/New
1. Process ^ *le*	Actor	Goal	Process + aspect
2. Process in reduplicated form	Actor	Goal	Process + *le* + Process
3. Process ^ *zai* + place word	Actor	Goal	Process + Complement
4. Process ^ postverb ^ (place) ^ (Process 2)	Actor	Goal	Process + Complement
5. Process ^ (*le/guo*) ^numerical expression + measure word	Actor	Goal	Process + Complement
6. Process ^ *de* + stative verb/clause	Actor	Goal	Process + Complement
7a. The ditransitive (simple clause)	Actor	Goal	Process + Beneficiary
7b. The ditransitive (with complement)	Actor	Goal	Process + Beneficiary + Complement
8. The s*hi ... de* construction	Actor	Goal	Process + *de*
9. Process ^ postverb ^ *de*	Actor	Goal	Process + Complement
10. Clause as complement	Actor	Goal	Process

Table 5.2: Thematic and information focus in the variants of the *bei*-construction

construction/condition	initial/Theme	post-initial	final/New
1. Process ^ *le*	Goal	Actor	Process + aspect
2. Process in reduplicated form	Goal	Actor	Process + *le* + Process
3. Process ^ *zai* + place word	Goal	Actor	Process + Complement
4. Process ^ *dao* + place word ^ (*lai/qu*)	Goal	Actor	Process + Complement
5. Process ^ (*le/guo*) ^numerical expression + measure word	Goal	Actor	Process + Complement
6. Process ^ *de* + stative verb/clause	Goal	Actor	Process + Complement
7a. The ditransitive (simple clause)	Goal	Actor	Process + Beneficiary
7b. The ditransitive (with complement)	Goal	Actor	Process + Beneficiary + Complement
8. The *shi... de* construction	Goal	Actor	Process + *de*
9. Process ^ postverb ^ *de*	Goal	Actor	Process + Complement
10. Clause as complement	Goal	Actor	Process

The number of occurrences and percentages of the variants of *ba-* and *bei-* constructions in the corpus are given in Table 5.3. The number of instances of the *ba*-construction (99) is much higher than that of the *bei*-construction (56). This may be due to the semantic constraint of the *bei*-construction of mainly using this in an adversative context. The most common structure among the variants of the *ba*-construction in a Chinese translation of an English-language novel like this one is Actor ^ *bǎ* ^ Goal ^ Process ^ postverb ^ (place) ^ (Process 2), whereas, the most common structure among the variants of the *bei*-construction is Goal ^ *bèi* ^ Actor ^ Process ^ *le*.

Table 5.3: Number of occurrences and percentages of *ba-* and *bei-* constructions

construction/condition	operative voice		receptive voice		TOTAL	
1. process ^ *le*	4	4.0%	16	28.7%	20	12.9%
2. process in reduplicated form	2	2.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.3%
3. process ^ *zai* + place word	14	14.1%	4	7.1%	18	11.6%
4. process ^ postverb ^ (place) ^ (verb 2)	44	44.6%	10	17.8%	54	34.9%
5. process ^ (*le/guo*) ^numerical expression + measure word	3	3.0%	4	7.1%	7	4.5%
6. process ^ *de* + stative verb/clause	7	7.1%	3	5.4%	10	6.4%
7a. ditransitive (simple)	10	10.1%	0	0.0%	10	6.4%
7b. ditransitive (with complement)	6	6.1%	0	0.0%	6	3.9%
8. the s*hi* ... *de* construction	2	2.0%	6	10.7%	8	5.2%
9. process ^ postverb ^ *de*	3	3.0%	2	3.6%	5	3.2%
10. clause as complement	3	3.0%	5	8.9%	8	5.2%
11. the relative or rankshifted clause	1	1.0%	6	10.7%	7	4.5%
TOTAL	99	100.0%	56	100.0%	155	100.0%

At this point we have concluded that the employment of the two constructions is textually motivated and we have examined how their variants affect the information flow. But how do we know that the two constructions are options in the system of VOICE instead of THEME? In Section 5.2 we also reviewed research showing that the SOV structure is widely regarded as 'active' and the OSV structure as 'passive'. How do we know that these two constructions are options in the system of THEME instead of VOICE? The central concern in the next section is thus the differences between VOICE and THEME, between the *ba*-construction and the SOV structure, as well as between the *bei*-construction and the OSV structure.

5.5   The systems of THEME and VOICE

In his article 'Towards a closer relationship between the study of grammar and the study of discourse' Halliday (1997) states that

> what is common to all VOICE systems is that they are resources for assigning
> variable discourse status to participants (and other elements) within the clause.
> In other words, they help to control the information flow. (Halliday 1997: 2)

However, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the system of THEME also helps to control the information flow. So what are the differences between VOICE and THEME?

Although both are textual resources which control the flow of information through assigning discourse statuses to participants and/or other elements in terms of thematic and informational prominence, they are different in at least three ways.

First, VOICE is a secondary system while THEME is a primary one. The VOICE system is secondary, as Matthiessen (in press: 492) points out, because it has evolved as "strategies for distributing textual statuses within a clause." In addition, it is secondary because it has a narrower distribution across process types than the THEME system. Unlike THEME, which is a resource for all process types, VOICE is basically a resource applicable in transitive material process.

Second, VOICE provides alternative options for making participants the 'unmarked' topical Theme (cf. Matthiessen & Halliday 1997:23). In contrast, the central systemic terms of THEME are 'marked' and 'unmarked' topical Themes. For example, when the Goal of a transitive material clause occupies clause-initial position, it is textually 'marked'. In contrast, the Goal in a *bei*-construction is textually 'unmarked'.

Third, VOICE can only assign subjecthood to a participant, whereas THEME assigns thematic status to participants, circumstances or the Process. These concepts of 'primary' system, 'markedness' and assignment of subjecthood serve to distinguish the various constructions as options in the systems of VOICE or THEME.

5.5.1   The *ba*-construction vs. the SOV structure

One of the reasons that the *ba*-construction has attracted so much attention is its distinctive SOV order. This has been widely taken as an issue of language change, i.e. whether Chinese has been undergoing a change from SVO to SOV (Li 1975). In past studies, the *ba*-construction has attracted much more attention than the SOV structure due to its higher relative frequency compared with the SOV structure in most texts. The reason may also be due to the unjustifiable belief that either (1) the *ba*-construction is the sole representative of the SOV structure in Chinese, or (2) the SOV structure is an elliptical case of the *ba*-construction (Sun & Givón 1985). Language change is not the concern of this study; instead, my main concern is to decide whether the *ba*-construction and the SOV structure represent alternative options in the same system or two separate options in different systems, namely VOICE and THEME.

The first question to be addressed is whether the SOV structure is an elliptical case of the *ba*-construction. If the answer is affirmative, then there should be no differences in terms of meaning and syntactic constraint between the two constructions. But the fact is that they are different in meaning and operate under different syntactic constraints. Li (1990: 2) points out that "the SOV structure is not equivalent to the subject-BA-object-verb construction." He employs the following examples to show that the two constructions are not equivalent in meaning.

(5.97)

tā	*fàn*	*chī*	*le.*
s/he	meal	eat	ASP

(S/he has had the meal.)

(5.98)

tā	*bǎ*	*fàn*	*chī*	*le.*
s/he	DISP: op	meal	eat	ASP

(S/he finished the meal.)

Li argues that in the above examples, the SOV structure as in (5.97) emphasises the fact that the Actor of the clause has had the meal, implying that he is not hungry, whereas the *ba*-construction as in (5.98) focuses on the completion of eating.

As for the structural constraint, there are at least three differences between the two constructions. First, there must be a 'grammatical element' following the main verb in the *ba*-construction, whereas this constraint does not apply to the SOV structure. This is quite clear in 'negative' clauses such as in (5.99) and (5.100).

(5.99)

tā	*fàn*	*méi-yǒu*	*chī.*
s/he	meal	NEG: pf	eat

(S/he did not have the meal.)

(5.100)

* *tā*	*méi-yǒu*	*bǎ*	*fàn*	*chī.*
s/he	NEG: pf	DISP: op	meal	eat

(S/he did not have the meal.)

Second, the negative particle *méi-yǒu* in any negative clause precedes the Process in the SOV structure as in (5.102), just like the 'unmarked' SVO clause as in (5.101). In contrast, the negative particle precedes the dispositive marker *bǎ* in the *ba*-construction as in (5.103).

(5.101)

S		NEG	V	O
nǐ	*hái*	*méi-yǒu*	*fā*	*yuèlì.*
you	yet	NEG: pf	distribute	calendars

(You have not distributed the calendars yet.)

(5.102)

S	O		NEG	V
nǐ	*yuèlì*	*hái*	*méi-yǒu*	*fā*
you	calendars	yet	NEG: pf	distribute

(You have not distributed the calendars yet.)

(5.103)

S		NEG	*ba*	O	V	
nǐ	*hái*	*méi-yǒu*	*bǎ*	*yuèlì*	*fā*	*chūqù.*
you	yet	NEG: pf	DISP: op	calendars	distribute	out

(You have not distributed the calendars yet.)

Third, the question marker *yǒu-méi-yǒu* in any A-not-A interrogative clause precedes the Process in the SOV structure as in (5.105), just like the 'unmarked' SVO clause as in (5.104). In contrast, the question particle precedes the dispositive marker *bá* in the *ba*-construction as in (5.106).

(5.104)

S	Q-	V	O
nǐ	*yǒu-méi-yǒu*	*fā*	*yuèlì?*
you	have NEG: pf	distribute	calendars

(Have you distributed the calendars?)

(5.105)

S	O	Q-	V
nǐ	*yuèlì*	*yǒu-méi-yǒu*	*fa?*
you	calendars	have NEG: pf	distribute

(Have you distributed the wall calendars?

(5.106)

S	Q-	*ba*	O	V	
nǐ	*yǒu-méi-yǒu*	*bǎ*	*yuèlì*	*fā*	*chūqù.*
you	have NEG: pf	DISP: op	calendars	distribute	out

(Have you distributed the wall calendars?)

Furthermore, when both the Actor and the Goal, i.e. the Subject and the Complement in the interpersonal clause grammar, in the SOV structure are animate, it is difficult to establish whether it is a SOV structure or an OSV one without referring to the context of the text, especially when both the Actor and the Goal are encoded in personal pronouns

as in (5.108). In this case, the clause is more likely to be interpreted as an OSV construction. But this confusion will not arise in the *ba*-construction because of the marker such as in (5.109):

(5.107)

S	V	O
tā s/he	*dǎ le* hit ASP	*wǒ* me
Actor	Process: material	Goal

(S/he hit me.)

(5.108)

O	S	V
tā him/her	*wǒ* I	*dǎ le.* hit ASP
Goal	Actor	Process: material

(Him/her, I hit.)

(5.109)

S	*ba*	O	V
tā s/he	*bǎ* DISP: op	*wǒ* me	*dǎ le.* hit ASP
Actor		Goal	Process: material

(S/he hit me.)

For the above reasons we can conclude that the SOV structure is not an elliptical case of a *ba*-construction. At this point we are ready to address the question whether the *ba*-construction and the SOV structure represent alternative options in the same system or two separate options in different systems.

The SOV structure has a wider distribution across process types than the *ba*-construction. For instance, the verb of perception *tīng-shuō* (hearsay) can appear in the SOV structure as in (5.111) but not in the *ba*-construction as in (5.112).

(5.110)

wǒ I	tīngshuō guo hearspeak ASP	nèi jiàn shì. that MEAS matter
Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon

(I have heard about that matter.)

(5.111)

wǒ, I,	nèi jiàn shì that MEAS matter	tīngshuō guo. hearspeak ASP
Senser	Phenomenon	Process: mental

(I have heard about that matter.)

(5.112)

* wǒ bǎ I DISP: op	nèi jiàn shì that MEAS matter	tīngshuō guo. hearspeak ASP

To put it in another way, the SOV structure is available not only in material clauses, but also in other clause types. In contrast, although the *ba*-construction is sometimes available in other clause types, it is primarily availabe in transitive material clauses (see Section 5.7 for detail). The SOV structure is thus a resource in the THEME system instead of an alternative option or an elliptical form of the *ba*-construction in the VOICE system. In short the two constructions represent two separate options in different systems.

5.5.2   The *bei*-construction vs. the OSV structure

In both *bei*-construction and OSV structure, the thematic prominence of a message is assigned to the Goal, whereas the news prominence is assigned to the Process. At first glance the only difference between the *bei*-construction and the OSV structure is just a structural one, namely the existence of the marker *bèi*. So the first question to be addressed in this section is whether the OSV structure is an elliptical case of the *bei*-construction. If the answer is no, then the second question is whether the *bei*-construction and the OSV structure represent two alternative options in the same system or two separate options in different systems.

The OSV structure is not semantically equivalent to the *bei*-construction. Let us compare the meaning of the SOV structure in (5.113) and of the *bei*-construction in (5.114).

(5.113)

tāmen de duìhuà,	*wǒ*	*tīng-dào le.*
they POSS talk,	I	hear-reach ASP
Phenomenon	Senser	Process: mental

(Their talk, I heard.)

(5.114)

tāmen de duìhuà	*bèi*	*wǒ*	*tīng- dào le.*
they POSS talk	DISP: rec	I	hear-reach ASP
Phenomenon		Senser	Process: mental

(Their talk was heard by me.)

Here (5.113) simply states the fact that the Senser of the clause has heard 'their talk', whereas (5.114) implies that 'their talk' is not intended to be heard by the Senser. In addition, the semantic adversative constraint of the *bei*-construction does not exist in the OSV structure (Li & Thompson 1981; Halliday & McDonald in press).

As for structural constraints, there are at least three differences between the two constructions. First, there must be a 'grammatical element' following the Process of a *bei*-construction clause as in (5.115). This constraint does not apply to the OSV structure as in (5.116). The difference is quite obvious in the negative clause as in (5.117).

(5.115)

fàn	*méi-yǒu bèi*	*tā*	*chī-wán.*
meal	NEG: pf DISP: rec	s/he	eat-finish
Goal		Actor	Process: material

(The meal has not been finished by him/her.)

(5.116)

fàn meal,	*tā* s/he	*méi-yǒu chī.* NEG: pf eat
Goal	Actor	Process: material

(S/he did not have the meal.)

(5.117)

* *fàn* meal	*méi-yǒu* NEG: pf	*bèi* DISP: rec	*tā* s/he	*chī.* eat

Second, the negative particle *méi-yǒu* in any negative clause precedes the Process in the OSV structure, just as in the 'unmarked' SVO clause, whereas the negative particle precedes the marker *bèi* in the *bei*-construction, just as in the *ba*-construction.

Third, the question particle *yǒu-méi-yǒu* in any A-not-A interrogative clause precedes the Process in the OSV structure, whereas it precedes the dispositive marker *bèi* in the *bei*-construction.

Thus the OSV structure is not an elliptical case of the *bei*-construction and we can move on to address the question whether the *bei*-construction and the OSV structure represent alternative options in the same system or separate options in different systems.

The OSV structure has a wider distribution across process types while the *bei*-construction is basically restricted to transitive material process. For instance, the verb of perception *gǎn dào* (feel) in (5.118) can appear in an OSV structure but not in a *bei*-construction as in (5.119).

(5.118)

shè jiàn shì, this MEAS matter,	wǒ I	gǎn-dào hěn kāixīn. feel-reach very happy
Phenomenon	Senser	Process: mental

(This matter, I felt very pleased.)

(5.119)

| * zhè   jiàn   shì   bèi   wǒ   gǎn- dào   hěn   kāixīn.
this   MEAS   matter   DISP:rec   I   feel-reach   very   happy |

This indicates that the OSV structure, just like the SOV structure, is an option in the THEME system instead of an alternative option in the VOICE system or an elliptical form of.the *bei*-construction.

At this point we can conclude that apart from THEME there is a secondary system which has evolved to control the flow of information particularly in transitive material clauses in Chinese discourse. And I am content to call it the system of VOICE as most of linguists do[10]. In addition, I have identified the SOV and the OSV structures as resources in the THEME system while the *ba-* and *bei-* constructions are resources in the VOICE system. In the following section, the nature of the VOICE system in Chinese will be examined.

---

[10] Another possible name is DISPOSAL because the primary opposition in the system is between [neutral] and [dispositive]; the relationship between the Actor and the Goal in both *ba-* and *bei-* constructions shows a kind of disposal nature (see Wang 1947; Chao 1968; Li 1974; Li & Thompson 1981; Wang 1987; Tiee 1990; Song 1996; and Section 5.2 and 5.6 of this thesis). The *bei*-construction also shows a kind of 'patient-agent' relationship between the Subject/the Goal and the Complement/the Actor. Its 'active' counterpart is the *ba*-construction. However, the verb form does not distinguish between 'active' and 'passive' in Chinese, and so the *bei*-construction realises the option [receptive] instead of [passive] while the *ba*-construction realises the option [operative] instead of [active] in the system.

5.6 The system of VOICE

According to Halliday, the transitivity system of a language embodies two models (or two perspectives), namely transitive and ergative. The transitive perspective is a specific one which sorts our experience into a limited number of process types. Each type specifies how the participant(s) are involved in the process. In contrast, the ergative perspective is a general one which generalises the interaction between the participant(s) and the process across the process types (see Halliday 1994; Matthiessen 1995; Halliday & Matthiessen 1999; Matthiessen in press). As Matthiessen (in press) has pointed out, "these are ideational models of patterns in the transitivity system in the first instance; they are not just (lower-ranking) case marking patterns."

Viewed from the transitive perspective, a participant, the 'Controller' in Matthiessen's terms, controls the unfolding of the process. It is the sole participant in an 'intransitive' clause. This unfolding process, however, may extend to impact on another participant, namely the Impacted. The Controller and the Impacted are the two participants in a 'transitive' clause. In material processes, these two participants are manifested as the Actor and the Goal respectively. Sometimes, there may be a third participant, namely the Beneficiary, who is the one benefiting from the process. A clause with three participants is called a 'ditransitive' clause. The Beneficiary is regarded as peripheral to the Actor + Process + Goal nucleus of a 'transitive' clause. This peripheral nature is indicated by the fact that the Beneficiary is always preceded by a coverb *gěi* in Chinese. There are two possible sequences in a ditransitive clause: Actor ^ Beneficiary ^ Process ^ Goal as in (5.120) and Actor ^ Process ^Goal ^ Beneficiary as in (5.121):

(5.120)

tā s/he	*gěi* *wǒ* for me	*mǎi* *le* buy ASP	*yī* *běn* *shū.* one MEAS book
Actor	Beneficiary	Process: material	Goal

(S/he bought a book for me.)

(5.121)

tā s/he	mǎi le buy ASP	yī běn shū one MEAS book	gěi wǒ. for me
Actor	Process: material	Goal	Beneficiary

(S/he bought a book for me.)

In this study, the ditransitive clause is treated as a special type of transitive clause. Four general types of process have been identified from this perspective, namely material, mental, verbal and relational (see Chapter 2 of this thesis).

According to Matthiessen (in press), the transitive perspective works particularly well in material clauses in English, in which the sense of transitivity is high (in terms of Hopper & Thompson's (1980) transitivity hypothesis). However, the power of generalisation of this perspective seems to be limited in other clauses. In contrast, since verbs or verb complexes in Chinese do not distinguish active and passive, most of them can be used in both intransitive and transitive clauses. Given a one-participant clause, it is sometimes extremely difficult to determine whether a participant is the Actor or the Goal of the process. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether the clause is 'intransitive' or an elliptical case of 'transitive'. This creates a fuzzy area in the language.

Viewed from the ergative perspective, the process unfolds through one participant. To put it in another way, this participant is the one through which the process is actualized, called 'Medium' (Halliday 1994; Matthiessen 1995; Halliday & Matthiessen 1999; Matthiessen in press). The Medium and the process form the nuclear domain of the figure. This actualisation process through the Medium is sometimes caused by another participant, namely the Agent, which can be considered 'external' to the Medium + Process nucleus. This perspective has obviously greater explanatory power for one-participant clauses in which the sole participant cannot be interpreted as actively controlling the unfolding of the process as in (5.122) to (5.124). In Halliday's terms, the one-participant clause is a 'middle' clause, whereas the clause in which an Agent is identified is an 'effective' clause.

(5.122)

chuán boat	*kāi le.* open ASP
Medium	Process

(The boat has departed.)

(5.123)

píngzĭ bottle	*pò le.* break ASP
Medium	Process

(The bottle broke /The bottle has been broken.)
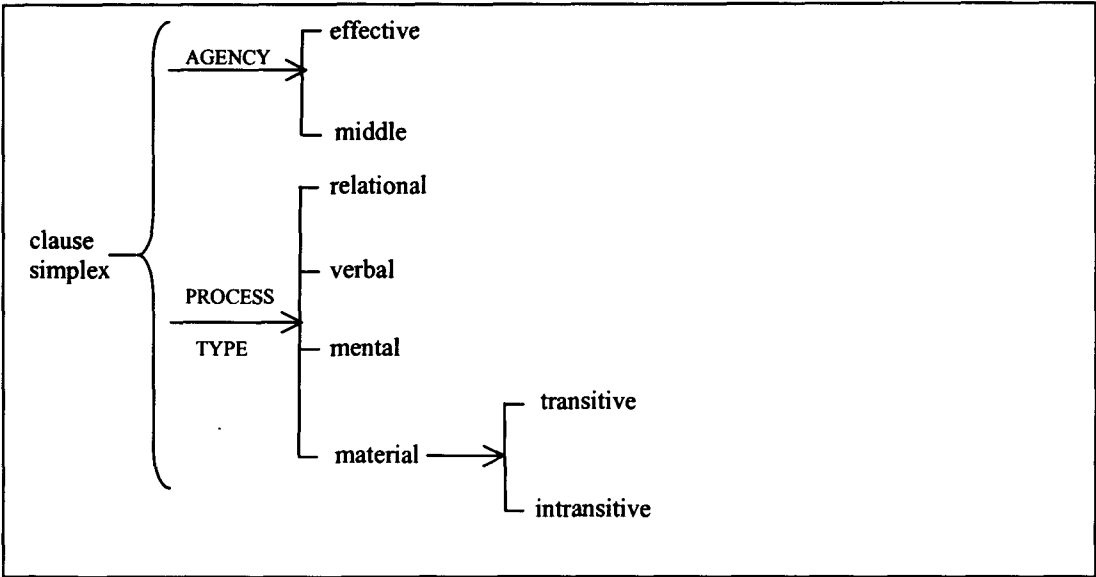
(5.124)

wūzĭ house	*dǎo le.* fall ASP
Medium	Process

(The house fell.)

Thus the core question from the transitive perspective is whether the action carries over to affect an additional participant and, as far as the VOICE system is concerned, the primary opposition is between 'transitive' and 'intransitive'. In contrast, the central question from the ergative perspective is who or what brought the happening about and the primary opposition is between 'middle' and 'effective'. This can be formulated systemically as in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Transitivity system from transitive and ergative perspectives

```
                          ┌─ effective
          AGENCY ─────→ ┤
        ┌               └─ middle
        │
        │                 ┌─ relational
clause ─┤                 │
simplex └┐      PROCESS    ├─ verbal
         │      ───────→ ┤
         │       TYPE     ├─ mental
         │                │                    ┌─ transitive
         │                └─ material ──────→ ┤
         └                                     └─ intransitive
```

5.7.1 Neutral voice

Unmarked transitive material clauses in Chinese have the structure Actor ^ Process ^ Goal. This is known as 'neutral' voice in this study, following Halliday and McDonald's (in press) terminology. The Goal can, however, occupy clause-initial position and is thus given thematic prominence as in (5.125).

(5.125)

| O	S	V	
yú, fish,	*wǒ* I	*chī* eat	*le.* ASP
Goal	Actor	Process: material	

(The fish, I ate.)

This is commonly known as the OSV structure, 'topicalisation' and 'left-dislocation', being interpreted by some linguists as 'passive'. However, VOICE concerns the assignment of candidates to 'unmarked' Theme whereas 'topicalisation' or 'left-dislocation' are strategies for giving an element the status of 'marked' Theme (see also Matthiessen & Halliday 1997; Halliday & McDonald in press). In addition, Halliday & McDonald (in

press) have observed that the OSV structure carries the predicted prosody of contrast. Furthermore, negation, yes/no interrogative and relative clause formation can operate freely in this structure but not in the *bei*-construction (Keenan 1985 and Section 5.5.2 of this thesis). The OSV structure is thus considered a 'purely' thematic device in the THEME system but not in the VOICE system. Similarly, the Goal can also precede the Process but follows the Actor, i.e. Actor ^ Goal ^ Process, and is commonly known as SOV structure. This is a textual device in the INFORMATION system but not in the VOICE system (see Section 5.5.1).

5.7.2   Dispositive voice

Apart from the neutral voice, the *ba-* and *bei-* constructions have been identified as resources in the system of VOICE (see Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2). Halliday & McDonald (in press: 378) formulate the Chinese VOICE system as in Figure 5.2. In their model, the primary options of VOICE are 'neutral', 'dispositive' and 'passive'.

Figure 5.2: Halliday & McDonald's description of VOICE
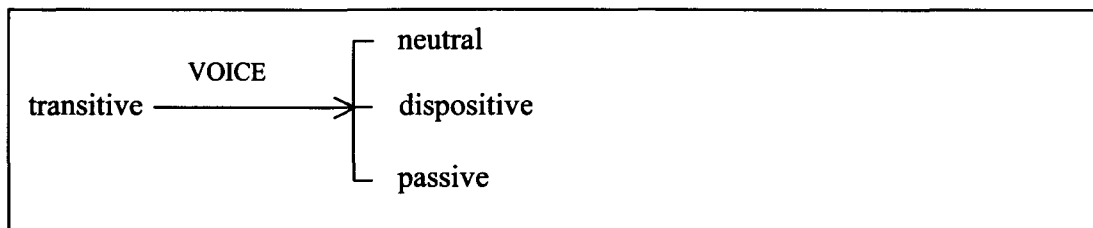
As mentioned in the previous sections, *ba-* and *bei-* constructions are very similar to each other. First, from a historical point of view both *bǎ* and *bèi* underwent the same change, i.e. from functioning as full-fledged verbs into the coverbs of specific voice marker; see Chao 1968; Ding et al 1979; Li & Thompson 1981; Lin 1981; Tsao 1982, 1983; Wang 1987; Hsueh 1989; Tiee 1990; Ho 1993; Wang 1998; Halliday & McDonald in press.

Second, the data show that these two constructions are similar to each other in the following structural respects:

(1) The Processes in the two constructions have similar properties. They can follow or precede a similar set of possible 'grammatical elements' (Wang 1955; Chao 1968; Henne et al 1977; Li & Thompson 1981; Lin 1981; Li 1990; Tiee 1990; Halliday & McDonald in press and Section 5.4 of this thesis).

(2) Both constructions have the same general word order of Participant 1 ^ coverb + Participant 2 ^ Process + (circumstance).

(3) The negative particle *méi-yŏu* in any negative clause precedes the markers *bǎ* and *bèi* in both constructions instead of the Process, unlike in the case of the neutral voice.

(4) Similarly the question particle *yŏu-méi-yŏu* in any A-not-A interrogative clause precedes the markers *bǎ* and *bèi* in both constructions instead of the Process, unlike in the case of the neutral voice.

Third, these two constructions have many semantic similarities:

(1) The 'object' of the *ba*-construction has similar semantic properties to the 'subject' of the *bei*-construction. The following table shows the characteristics of the 'object' in the *ba*-construction that have been noted in the previous studies.

Table 5.4: Nature of the 'object' in the *ba*-construction in the previous studies

|	definite	generic	specific	pre-existing or referential
Lu (1955)	***			
Wang (1959)			***	***
Chao (1968)	***			
Li (1971)	***			***
Teng (1973)	***			
Ding (1979)	***			
Li & Thompson (1981)	***	***		
Wang (1987) *he prefer to call the 'object' affectedness'	***		***	
Tiee (1990)	***		***	
Ho (1993)	***			***
Fong (1994)	***			***

(2) Similarly the 'subject' of the *ba*-construction has similar semantic properties to the 'object' of the *bei*-construction (see Ding et al 1979; Hopper & Thompson 1980; Li & Thompson 1981; Hsueh 1989; Tiee 1990).

(3) Most of all, if we define the term 'disposal' broadly, we can say that both constructions carry a very strong sense of 'disposal' (Wang 1947; Chao 1968; Li 1974; Li & Thompson 1981; Wang 1987; Tiee 1990; Song 1996).

Based on the similarities between the two constructions, I propose that the primary opposition in the system of VOICE in Chinese is between 'neutral' and 'dispositive'. The choice of 'dispositive' leads to two further options, namely 'receptive' and 'operative'. The 'receptive' voice is realised by the *bei*-construction, which is comparable, but not identical, to the English 'passive', whereas the 'operative' option is realised by the *ba*-construction, which has no counterpart in the English 'passive'. They are called 'operative' and 'receptive' instead of 'active' and 'passive' because, unlike in English, the verb form does not distinguish 'active' and 'passive' in Chinese.

In addition, the choice of 'receptive' leads to another two options, namely 'agentive' and 'non-agentive'. In the case of 'agentive', the Actor is specified in the clause and the syntactic structure is Goal ^ *bèi* + Actor ^ Process + (Complement). In the case of 'non-agentive', the Actor is not specified and the structure is Goal ^ *bèi* ^ Process + (circumstance). Unlike in the system of VOICE in English, the receptive marker *bèi* remains in the clause in both 'agentive' and 'non-agentive' cases. Thus the VOICE system in Chinese can be formulated systemically as in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: The system of VOICE
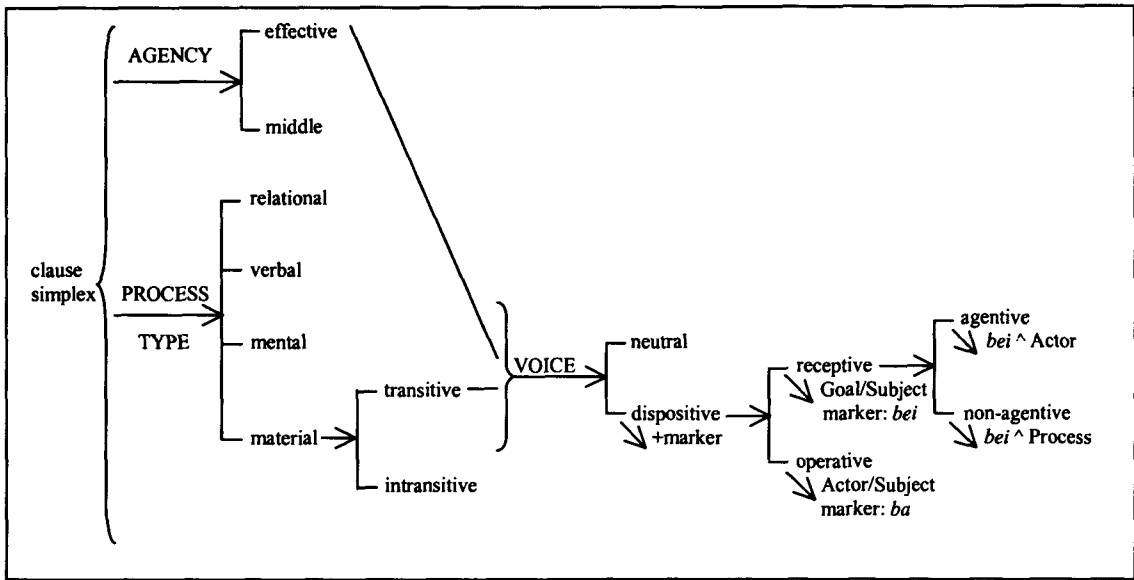
5.7   The *ba-* and *bei-* constructions beyond transitive material clauses

Though the *ba-* and *bei-* constructions are highly transitive, and the processes in both constructions are mostly encoded by transitive verbs, a few intransitive verbs are used in them. The following example is taken from Li (1990: 79):

(5.126)

tā s/he	*bǎ* DISP: op	*yǎnjīng* eyes	*kū hóng le* cry red ASP
Actor		Goal	Process: material

(He cried so much that his eyes became red.)

Li explains that though *kū* (cry) in Chinese is usually intransitive, it is used as a transitive verb in the above example. In this study I look at the issue from another point of view and interpret the above example as an indication of an increasing productivity of the *ba-* construction. This means that the employment of this construction has been extended beyond the transitive material process into the behavioural process. Halliday and McDonald (in press) note that until recently the *ba-*construction was largely restricted to material clauses, and to a few verbal and mental clauses marked for completive phase. Its

extension to processes of other types, especially in written Chinese, further weakens the original concrete sense of *bǎ* as a lexical verb. In this section, the main concern is the direction and the scope of this extension.

In the corpus the *ba*-construction is used in intransitive material clauses as in (5.127). The Process *xiàng qián qīng le guò-lái* (leaned forward) in this example is obviously an intransitive material one. In contrast, there is no instance in the corpus of a *bei*-construction being used in intransitive material clauses.

(5.127)

zhěng gè rěn whole MEAS person	*jīngshén* spirit	*wéizhī yī zhèn,* respond one shake		
	Carrier	Attribute/ Process		
	Subject	Predicator		
(absolute)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
(His whole person was filled with spirit,)				
(s/he)	*jiāng* DISP: op	*shēnzī* body	*xiàng qián* toward in front	*qīng le guòlái.* lean ASP come
Actor		Goal	Location: spatial	Process: **material: intransitive**
Subject		Complement	Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
(His body leaned forward.)				

The data also show that both the *ba-* and the *bei-* constructions have been extended into both verbal processes as in (5.128) and mental processes as in (5.129), (5.130) and (5.131).

(5.128)

wǒ I	yǐ already	bǎ DISP:op	wǒ de pò àn lùndiǎn I POSS break case argument	xiàng gèwèi toward everyone	fēnxī shuō-míng wán le, analyse say-clear finish ASP
Sayer	VADV		Verbiage	Receiver	Process: **verbal**
Subject	Adjunct		Complement	Complement	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme				

(I have already analysed and told you my point of view towards the case,)

wǒ I	xiǎng think	wǒ I	yě also	gāi should	gōngchénggàotuì le. retire from the case ASP
Senser	Process: mental				
		Actor	VADV	Process: material: intransitive	
interpersonal metaphor		Subject	Adj.	Predicator	
(interpersonal)		(topical) Theme	Rheme		

(I think I should retire from the case.)

(5.129)

Wǒ I	dǎo even	bǎ DISP: op	tā him/her	wànghuái le forget ASP
Senser	VADV		Phenomenon	Process: **mental**
Subject	Modal Adjunct		Complement	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme			

(I even forgot her.)

(5.130)

(tā) (she)	bèi DISP: rec	chē shàng guò qiáng de nuǎnqì car upon too strong NOM heating	mèn de fāhuāng. bore CC mad
(Senser)		Phenomenon	Process: **mental**
(Subject)		Adjunct	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme		

(S/he) was bored to madness by the overheated compartment.)

(5.131)

luójiādé Cassetti	*shì* EMP	*shénme shijiàn* Q-when time	*bèi* DISP: rec	*rén* people	*kànjiàn* see	(he)	*hái* still	*huó zhe* live ASP	*de?* EMP
Phenomenon		Temporal		Senser	Proc.: **mental**				
Subject		Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator				
						Actor	VADV	Proc.: material	
						Subj.	Adj.	Predicator	
(topic.) Theme	Rheme								

(When was Mr Cassetti seen alive?)

Among the relational processes in Chinese, the data also show that the *bei*-construction has been extended into categorising processes as in (5.132).

(3.132)

ruò if	*fēi* NEG (be)	*húxū de chángdù yǔ jiá gǔ de xiàntiáo,* moustache ASSOC length and cheek bone ASSOC shape
HCON	(Process: existential)	Existent
	(Predicator)	Subject
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme
Theme of the following clause		
(If it is not the length of his moustache and the shape of his cheek,)		

(he)	*hěn róngyì* very easy	*bèi* DISP: rec	*rènwéi* regard as	*yīngguó qīngnián shēnshì.* Britain youth gentleman
(Carrier)	VADV		Process: categorising	Attribute
(Subject)	Modal Adjunct		Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme			
((he) could very easily be regarded as a young English gentleman.)				

The number of occurrences and percentages of the two constructions in different process types are given in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Relative frequency of *ba-* and *bei*-constructions in different process types

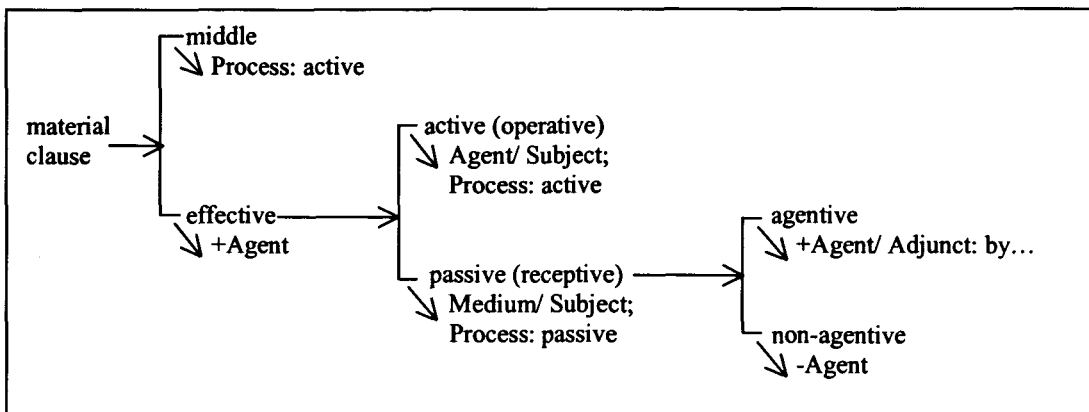| process types	no. of *ba*-constructions		no. of *bei*-constructions	
material (transitive)	99	84.63%	56	65.88%
material (intransitive)	1	0.85%	0	0.00%
mental	2	2.55%	10	11.77%
verbal	14	11.97%	13	15.29%
relational (existential)	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
relational (attributive-circumstantial)	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
relational (attributive-possessive)	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
relational (attribute-ascriptive)	0	0.00%	2	2.35%
relational (attributive-categorising)	0	0.00%	4	4.71%
relational (identifying)	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
TOTAL	117	100%	85	100%

In the corpus both constructions are strongly associated with the transitive material process type. However, both have been extended into other process types as well. The scope of this extension in the *bei*-construction (34.12%) is greater than in the *ba*-construction (15.37%). In addition, both constructions have mainly been extended into the verbal and mental process types: in the case of the *bei*-construction, 15.29% and 11.77% respectively and in the case of the *ba*-construction, 11.97% and 2.55% respectively. Lastly, only the *bei*-construction but not the *ba*-construction has been extended into the relational ascriptive and categorising process types; whereas only the *ba*-construction but not the *bei*-construction has been extended into the intransitive material one.

5.8   Contrastive analysis of the system of VOICE in Chinese and English

In this section, I will examine the similarities and differences between the systems of VOICE in the two languages. As in the previous chapters, I will approach the system from the three angles: from above, around and below. In addition the relative frequency with which the various options in the system networks have been chosen in the corpus will also be compared.

The system of VOICE in Chinese was explored in the previous sections. The system of VOICE in English is illustrated in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: The system of VOICE in English from an ergative perspective
            (adapted from Halliday 1994: 169)

```
                    ┌─ middle
                    │   ↘ Process: active
material            │                        ┌─ active (operative)
clause       ──→    │                        │   ↘ Agent/ Subject;
                    │                        │      Process: active            ┌─ agentive
                    └─ effective ───────→    │                                 │   ↘ +Agent/ Adjunct: by...
                        ↘ +Agent             │                          ──→    │
                                             └─ passive (receptive) ──→        │
                                                 ↘ Medium/ Subject;            └─ non-agentive
                                                    Process: passive               ↘ -Agent
```
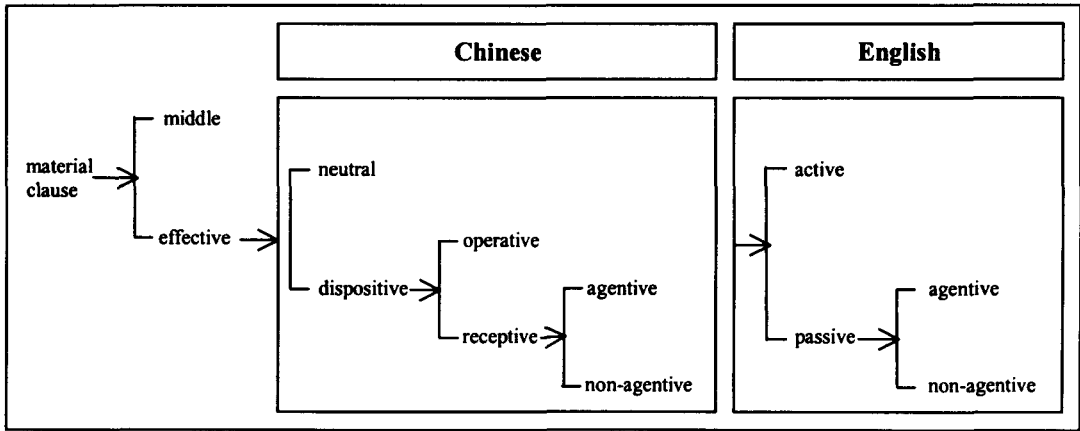
5.8.1   Approaching the system from around

The VOICE systems in both languages resemble one another at the most general level. In both systems, the primary contrast is between 'middle' and 'effective', with differences arising in 'effective' clauses. In Chinese, 'effective' clauses are either 'neutral' or 'dispositive'. The choice of 'dispositive' leads to the options of 'operative' and 'receptive'. Finally, 'receptive' clauses can be either 'agentive' (explicit) or 'non-agentive' (implicit). In English, 'effective' clauses are either 'active' or 'passive'. 'Passive' clauses are either 'agentive' or 'non-agentive'. The differences are illustrated in Figure 5.5. In short, neutral and receptive voices in Chinese closely resemble, but are not identical, with active and passive voices in English respectively. The operative voice in

Chinese does not have a counterpart in English.

Figure 5.5: Contrasting the options in the system of VOICE in Chinese and English

5.8.2   Approaching the system from below

The grammatical realisations of different voice types in the two languages are illustrated in Figure 5.6 One of the significant differences between Chinese and English is that in Chinese the verb is not inflected for voice and the verb form is always the same in all options. In English the 'active' verb is the 'default' form while the 'passive' verb is formed by 'be + V-en'. In English therefore the Process differentiates between 'Process: active' and 'Process: passive', as shown in the realisation statement in Figure 5.6. Examples from the two corpus are given in Table 5.6.

Figure 5.6: Contrasting the realisation of different VOICE types in Chinese and English

Chinese	English
middle .... ↘ Medium ^ Process	**middle** ↘ Medium ^ Process: active
effective: neutral .... ↘ Agent ^ Process ^ Medium	**effective: active** ↘ Agent ^ Process: active ^ Medium
effective: dispositive: receptive: agentive ···· ↘ Medium ^ *bèi*+Agent ^ Process	**effective: passive: agentive** ↘ Medium ^ Process: passive ^ by+Agent
effective: dispositive: receptive: non-agentive··· ↘ Medium ^ *bèi* ^ Process	**effective: passive: non-agentive** ↘ Medium ^ Process: passive
effective: dispositive: operative ···················· ↘ Agent ^ *bǎ*+Medium ^ Process	**(no counterpart)**

Table 5.6: Example of different voices in Chinese and English

Chinese	English
Middel *jiǔ shí yīkè, lièchē zhǔnshí* nine o'clock fifteen minutes train punctual *shǐ-chū le yuètái.* depart ASP platform	**Middle** At 9.15 punctually the train pulled out of the station.
Effective: neutral *tāmen fūfù dìngjū měiguó.* they husband-wife stay America	**Effective: active** They lived in America.
Effective: dispositive: receptive: agentive *tā zǎo bèi dàjiā jǐ wàn dāo guǎ le.* he early DISP: rec everybody give ten thousand knife cut ASP	**Effective: passive: agentive** He would have been lynched **by the populace.**
Effective: dispositive: receptive: non-agentive *tā huì bèi xùnwèn,* she perhaps DISP: rec interview *shènzhì kěnéng bèi bǔ.* even possible DISP: rec arrest	**Effective: passive: non-agentive** She would have been questioned – arrested, perhaps.
Effective: dispositive: operative *tā jiāng liǎng quān tiěsī qīngqīng fàng* he DISP: op two MEAS wire slightly put *zài diǎnrán de jiǔjīng dēng shàng.* at burning NOM spirit lamp upon	He held the whole thing over the flame of the spirit lamp.

The realisation statements for middle voice and effective: neutral/active voice are the same in both languages, with differences arising in the dispositive voice in Chinese and the passive voice in English.

The closest counterpart of the English passive voice in Chinese is the receptive voice. In English 'agentive' passive clauses are realised by Medium ^ Process: passive ^ by+Agent. In 'non-agentive' passive clauses, the Agent is absent (Medium ^ Process: passive). In Chinese 'agentive' (explicit) receptive clauses are realized by Medium ^ *bèi*+Agent ^ Process, in which '*bèi*' is the receptive-marker. In 'non-agentive' (implicit) receptive clauses only the Agent, but not the receptive-marker, is ellipsed (Medium ^ *bèi* ^ Process). Thus the receptive marker is present in both 'agentive' and 'non-agentive' clauses. In short, the passive voice in English is indicated by word order and verb form. In contrast, the receptive voice in Chinese is indicated by word order and receptive-marker.

The operative voice in Chinese has no counterpart in English. It is realized by Agent ^ *bǎ*+Medium ^ Process, in which '*bǎ*' is the operative-marker. The Agent can be left implicit under at least two conditions: (1) when it is understood in context, especially in the environment of Theme-chain structure; and (2) when its presence is of no significance to the information exchange in the discourse. In contrast, the Medium, which follows the operative-marker, cannot be absent because the Medium and the Process form the nucleus of the figure and so there is no implicit option in the 'operative' voice.

In addition, there is a further subtle difference between the two languages in the system of VOICE. The passive-marker 'by' in English is a preposition. The prepositional phrase in English can be analysed as a minor Process and interpreted as a miniature clause (see Halliday 1994; Matthiessen in press). In Chinese, the dispositive-markers, *bǎ* and *bèi*, are coverbs, which are a subclass of verb (cf. Chao 1968; Halliday & McDonald in press). Both *bǎ* and *bèi* can sometimes be used as full verbs. In this respect, the coverbal phrase in Chinese is more clause-like than the prepositional phrase in English. For instance, the negative and yes/no interrogative particles precede the main verb in English. In contrast,

they precede the operative and receptive markers instead of the main verb in Chinese.

5.8.3   Approaching the system from above

Contrasting the two VOICE systems from above, we will first focus on three semantic features, namely the sense of 'agency', the sense of 'passivity' and the sense of 'disposal', before focussing on the flow of information. Figure 5.7 shows the semantic differences between the various options in the two VOICE systems.

Figure 5.7: Semantic differences between the two VOICE systems

Chinese	English
middle voice (-Agent)	**middle voice** (-Agent)
effective voice (+Agent)	**effective voice** (+Agent)
effective: neutral voice (+Agent, -disposal)	**effective: active voice** (+Agent, -passive)
effective: dispositive: receptive voice (+Agent, +disposal, +passive)	**effective: passive voice** (+Agent, +passive)
effective: dispositive: operative voice (+Agent, +disposal, -passive)	**(no counterpart)**

The primary difference arises from the sense of 'disposal' conveyed in Chinese which is absent in English so that the neutral voice in Chinese is subtly different from the active voice in English. Similarly, the receptive voice in Chinese is different from the passive voice in English.

However, as mentioned in the previous sections, the primary function of the VOICE system is to manipulate the flow of information through distributing participants in the clause as message. That means VOICE is a textual 'mediating' system, as Matthiessen (in press: 574) calls it. Figure 5.8 shows how different participants are assigned different thematic and new prominence in the various options of the two VOICE systems.

Figure 5.8: Contrasting the two VOICE systems in terms of thematic and new prominence

Chinese	English
middle voice ·· Theme/Medium; New/Process	**middle voice** Theme/Medium; New/Process
effective: neutral voice ··· Theme/Agent; New/Medium	**effective: active voice** Theme/Agent; New/Medium
effective: dispositive: receptive: explicit voice ··· Theme/Medium; New/Process	**effective: passive: explicit voice** Theme/Medium; New/Agent
effective: dispositive: receptive: implicit voice ··· Theme/Medium; New/Process	**effective: passive: implicit voice** Theme/Medium; New/Process
effective: dispositive: operative voice ·················· Theme/Agent; New/Process	**(no counterpart)**

The difference between the receptive voice in Chinese and the passive voice in English arises from the focus of information. In Chinese, the new prominence is assigned to the Process while it is given to the Agent in the case of English. Furthermore, the operative voice in Chinese provides an 'unmarked' combination – Theme/Agent and New/Process – which is not available in the English VOICE system. Similarly, the 'explicit' passive option in English offers an 'unmarked' combination – Theme/ Medium and New/ Agent – which has no counterpart in the Chinese VOICE system. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in addition to position, new prominence is marked by pitch prominence in spoken language.

In the case of the ditransitive clause, both languages provide the alternatives of either assigning the Medium or the Beneficiary the status of information focus in the effective: neutral/ active voice. In the passive voice in English the information focus falls on the Agent in the 'agentive' case or on the Beneficiary in the 'non-agentive' case. In Chinese the information focus falls on the Beneficiary in both the operative and the receptive voice.

5.8.4   Relative frequency of various options

The number of occurrences and the relative frequencies of dispositive voice in Chinese and passive voice in English are shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Relative frequency of 'dispositive' in Chinese and 'passive' in English

	Chinese		English
	dispositive		
	operative	receptive	passive
number of clauses (N)	99	57	382
(N) per total number of clause complex in the corpus	1.88%	1.08%	6.54%
(N) per total number of clause simplex in the corpus	0.983%	0.57%	3.85%

The number of occurrences in the corpus of the dispositive voice in Chinese is much smaller than of the passive voice in English. Among the options of the dispositive voice in Chinese, the number of occurrences of the receptive voice is much smaller than of the operative voice. Given that the receptive voice in Chinese is the closest equivalent of the passive voice in English, the data indicate a significant difference between them in terms of both the number of occurrences and their relative frequencies. This reflects the difference in systemic probabilities, i.e. the systemic categories are not the same in the two languages. Semantically, the receptive marker (*bèi*) in Chinese embodies a sense of adversity, which is not present in the passive voice in English. Thus, while the passive voice in English is quite frequent in certain text types, it is not so frequent in Chinese (although it is becoming more common, especially in certain text types, such as technical or scientific articles). Furthermore, while the implicit option of the passive voice is the 'unmarked' one in English, the implicit option of the receptive voice is the 'marked' form in Chinese (cf. Halliday & McDonald in press).

5.9   Conclusion

This chapter is treated as a transition between the study of clause grammar and the study of text semantics. In this chapter, the system of VOICE is taken as a way of modelling the resources for assigning variable discourse status to participant(s) within the clause. This means that this system is mainly concerned with the textual mode of meaning. However, it can be distinguished from the system of THEME in at least three ways. First, VOICE is a secondary system while THEME is a primary one. Second, VOICE provides alternative options for making participants the 'unmarked' topical Theme. In contrast, the central systemic options of THEME are 'marked' and 'unmarked' topical Themes. Third, VOICE can only assign subjecthood to a participant, whereas THEME assigns thematic status to participants, circumstances or the Process.

Since VOICE is not a universal phenomenon, I cannot take the assumption that there exists such a system in Chinese and present an account of it in a way like presenting the system of THEME in the previous chapter. Thus the first issue that I have to address is not what exists in the system of VOICE in Chinese; instead I have to answer the question whether, apart from the systems of THEME and INFORMATION, there is a secondary textual system in Chinese, which distributes participants in the clause as message. In other words, I have to take a painstaking step to show that there are some resources in the language, which are textually motivated, with the function of assigning variable discourse status to participant(s) within the clause, but which are distinguishable from the resources represented in the system of THEME.

Based on the result of the analysis of eight short discourses, I reached a tentative conclusion that the *ba-* and *bei-* constructions are textually motivated. The next step was to examine the thematic and information focus in the eleven types of variant of the two constructions in order to investigate how these constructions affect the information flow. Then I distinguished the *ba-*construction from the SOV structure and the *bei-*construction from the OSV structure. At this point I was ready to examine and present an account of a system in Chinese which I am content to call it the system of VOICE, though another possible name is DISPOSAL. The system of VOICE in Chinese is presented as a system

with an entry condition of 'effective/ material: transitive', in which the primary opposition is between 'neutral' and 'dispositive'. The choice of 'dispositive' leads to two further options, namely 'receptive' and 'operative'. The 'receptive' option is realised by the *bei*-construction, whereas the 'operative' option by the *ba*-construction. In addition, the choice of 'receptive' leads to another two options, namely 'agentive' and 'non-agentive'. In the case of 'agentive', the Actor is specified in the clause and the syntactic structure is Goal ^ *bèi* + Actor ^ Process + (Complement). In the case of 'non-agentive', the Actor is not specified and the structure is Goal ^ *bèi* ^ Process + (circumstance).

As the *ba*- and *bei*-constructions are increasingly productive in the Chinese language, I have examined the direction and range of their extended functions. In the corpus both constructions have mainly been extended into the verbal and mental process types. On the other hand, only the *bei*-construction but not the *ba*-construction has been extended into the relational ascriptive and categorising process types; whereas only the *ba*-construction but not the *bei*-construction has been extended into the intransitive material one. In general, the scope of these extensions in the *bei*-construction is greater than in the *ba*-construction.

Lastly, as the previous chapters, I have compared the system network of VOICE in Chinese and in English from the three angles: 'above', 'around' and 'below', as well as the relative frequency with which the various options in the system network have been chosen in the corpus. Neutral and receptive voices in Chinese closely resemble, but are not identical with, active and passive voices in English respectively. The differences between the receptive voice in Chinese and the passive voice in English arise from the focus of information, the sense of 'disposal' and the sense of 'adversity' which are conveyed in the receptive voice in Chinese but absent in the passive voice in English. The operative voice in Chinese does not have a counterpart in English. In the corpus the number of instances of the dispositive clause in Chinese is much smaller than of the passive clause in English. Among the options of the dispositive voice in Chinese, the number of instances of the receptive clause is much smaller than of the operative clause.