

Is There L1 Influence?— Evidence from L2 Acquisition of *Ba* and *Bei* Constructions

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Abstract

Based on the contrastive analysis hypothesis (Weinreich 1953; Stock, Bowen and Martin 1965; among others), the present study aims to investigate the L2 acquisition of the Chinese *ba* and *bei* constructions by L2 learners of Chinese. The subjects were Japanese- and English-speaking students of the Mandarin Training Center of National Taiwan Normal University. In addition, there was a group of native controls. Two tasks (i.e., the grammaticality judgment task and the picture-cue production task) were conducted to achieve the goal of understanding L2 learners' knowledge of the properties associated with the *ba* and *bei* constructions. The results showed that both groups of L2 learners correctly judged and produced *ba*-sentences in most cases, suggesting that the absence of the *ba* construction in the subjects' native languages does not influence L2 learning. However, it was not the case in their acquisition of the *bei* construction. Moreover, it was found that the grammaticality judgment task and the picture-cue production task had a significant impact on the interpretation of the *ba* construction, but in the case of the *bei* construction what L2 learners correctly judged in the grammaticality judgment task could not necessarily be produced in the picture-cue production task, suggesting that comprehension precedes production.

Key Words: L1 influence, task effect, *ba*-construction, *be*-construction, Mandarin Chinese, second language acquisition

1. Motivation

The *ba* and *bei* constructions, two peculiar structures in Chinese, have been widely discussed in the field of linguistic research. Studies of the *ba* construction can be traced back to Wang (1947), who defined the *ba* construction as the 'disposal construction' because it is used to express how something or someone is disposed of or handled through the action of the verb. Li & Thompson (1981) and Hashimoto (1988) state that the *bei*-construction is confined primarily to the expression of an adverse situation, one in which something unfortunate has happened. Studies on the acquisition of the *ba* and *bei* constructions are limited to only certain researchers.

These studies, however, suffered from the same insufficiency that they failed to explain the developmental procedures of children's acquisition of the *ba* construction. A more recent work was Fahn's (1993) study, which explored the developmental orders and factors influencing the acquisition of the *ba* construction. Some researchers (Izumi & Lakshmanan 1998; Liu 1998) have conducted the study on the L2 acquisition of the passive construction, particularly English passives by Japanese or Chinese speakers to inspect the issue of L1 transfer and Universal Grammar (UG), advocated by Chomsky (1981). But none of the studies are dedicated to exploring the Chinese *bei*-construction by L2 learners; therefore, it seems interesting to inspect the similar issue by designing an experiment on the opposite way.

As we all know, the main distinction between the L1 and L2 acquisition lies in the fact that L2 learners have been equipped with the previous known language, i.e., L1 knowledge, which has been widely discussed in SLA. Arguing that both L1 and L2 acquisition proceed largely in terms of a set of fixed developmental sequences, some researchers attach no importance to the role of the L1 (Dulay & Burt 1974). On the other hand, others assume that L1 exerts a considerable impact on L2 learners (Kellerman & Smith 1986; Gass & Selinker 1992; among others). Odlin (1989) puts forth that transfer, the carryover of the previous knowledge into L2 learning, occurs in all linguistic subsystems. L1 transfer, for instance, has figured prominently in the acquisition of syntax (e.g., Flynn and Espinal 1985), and semantics (e.g., Ard & Homburg 1992). In cases where the L1 and target language patterns are identical, positive transfer will occur so that learning takes place easily, but in cases where they are different, this will result in interference or negative transfer; therefore, learning difficulty arises and errors resulting from negative transfer are likely to emerge (Ellis 1986). Consequently, it would be noteworthy to observe whether L2 learners' carryover of their L1 knowledge to L2 acquisition in essence occurs.

On the basis of the theoretical framework sketched above, the present research is designed to address the following questions:

- 1) Will the L2 learners correctly judge and produce the *ba* construction, a structure which is absent in their L1 and carry over their L1 knowledge into the L2 acquisition of the Chinese *bei* construction?
- 2) Will L2 learners perform significantly differently between the two tasks?

This paper is organized as follows: section 2 first discusses the linguistic properties of the *ba* and *bei* constructions in Mandarin Chinese and reviews some previous studies of the two constructions. Section 3 presents the methodology and materials adopted as well as procedures, followed by the presentation of the overall results of the experiment. Section 4 further interprets the findings of the present study for the theoretical implications from the SLA. Finally, some concluding remarks of the present study and suggestions for future research concerning the two constructions are given in section 5.

2. Linguistic Properties and Previous Empirical Studies of the *Ba* and *Bei* Constructions

2.1 Properties of the *Ba* Construction

It has long been found that the *ba*-NPs need to be constrained by their theta-roles (Li 1974). Following Guo (2000), the thematic properties of the *ba*-NPs can be divided into four categories, namely, Patient as in (1), Source as in (2), Goal as in (3), and Beneficiary as in (4), each of which is associated with the sense of ‘disposal,’ a concept first proposed by Wang (1947):

- (1) Ta ba wo xia-huai le.
he BA I scare-terrible ASP
‘He had me extremely frightened.’
- (2) Ta ba neige zhuantou bianzuo jinzi. (Li 1974)
he BA that brick change as gold
‘He turned that brick into gold.’
- (3) Lili xiang ba diannao mai huijia.
Lili want BA computer buy home
‘Lili wants to buy the computer home.’

- (4) Zhei ge hushi zongshi ba bingren zhaogu de hen hao.
this CL nurse always BA patient take care of DE very well
'This nurse always takes care of the patients so well.'

In addition to the constraints on *ba*-NPs, linguists have also noticed that not every type of verb is compatible with the *ba* construction (Li 1974, Li 1997, Guo 2000 among others). It has also been suggested by Li and Thompson (1981) that the focus of the *ba* construction is on the *result* of the action, and by Li (1997) that the semantic property of *accomplishment* (i.e. a clearly-defined end point) has to do with the *ba* construction. Activity verbs, such as *da* 'hit,' *xie* 'write,' and *tuei* 'push' however generally results in an acceptable sentence, as in (5):

- (5) Wo ba meimei da le yi dun.
I BA young sister hit ASP one CL
'I hit young sister.'

Sentence (5) describes the situation when 'young sister' is manipulated. Activity verbs are compatible with the *ba* construction if the disposal meaning is interpreted, particularly with the help of some added phrases/clauses such as the extent clause or the result/completion verbs. The accomplishment verbs are also called resultative verb compounds in Mandarin because they are normally polysyllabic and composed of two verbs, one an action verb and the other a result verb (cf. Gao 1997):

- (6) Tamen ba diannao xiu-hao le.
they BA computer repair-good ASP
'They have repaired the computer.'

Sentence (6) is perfectly acceptable because the 'disposal' sense or the result of disposal has been overtly specified in the second morpheme of the compound, i.e., "the computer is in good condition."

2.2 Properties of the *Bei* Construction

Chinese has two passive types, the direct passive whose subject is coindexed with the object of the main verb and the indirect passive whose subject is apparently not related to an object position in the predicate (Huang 1999). The direct passives typically marked with the morpheme *bei* are illustrated respectively as follows:

- (7) a. Jiejie ma le ta.
 elder sister scold ASP him
 ‘His/Her sister scolded him/her.’
 b. Ta bei jiejie ma le.
 he/she BEI elder sister scold ASP
 ‘He/She was scolded by (his/her) elder sister.’

It is noteworthy that the passivization of Chinese is realized by the presence of *bei*, not by the affixation of the verb form. The indirect passives are shown in (8):

- (8) a. Zhangsan bei Lisi daduan le yitiao tui. (Huang 1999)
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi break ASP one leg
 ‘Zhangsan had a leg broken by Lisi.’
 b. Wo bei ta zhemo yi zuo, jiu shenme dou kan-bu-jian le.
 I BEI he thus one sit then everything all can-not-see ASP
 ‘As soon as he sat this way [on me], I couldn’t see anything.’

The agentive NP within the *bei*-phrase in Chinese passives, irrespective of direct or indirect, is allowed to be absent without the company of *bei*, which should be obligatorily present:

- (9) a. Lisi bei wo da le.
 Lisi BEI I beat ASP
 ‘Lisi was beaten by me.’
 b. *Lisi da le.
 Lisi beat ASP
 ‘Lisi hit (someone).’

- c. Lisi bei da le.
 Lisi BEI beat ASP
 ‘Lisi was beaten (by someone).’

The same obtains with the indirect *bei*-construction. Following are the examples of indirect passives, including inclusive and exclusive ones as in (10). The comparison among sentences in (10) likewise provides further evidence that the existence of *bei* is completely indispensable for the passive reading but the agent following *bei* does not necessarily appear in the passive sentence:

- (10) a. Tamen bei qiang zou le zui xihuan de wanju. (Huang 1999)
 they BEI rob away ASP most like POSS toy
 ‘They had the toys that[they] liked most robbed [from them].’
 b. *Tamen qiang zou le zui xihuan de wanju.
 they rob away ASP most like POSS toy
 ‘They robbed the toys that[they] liked most.’
 c. Wo bei zhemo yi huang, tou dou yun le.
 I BEI thus one shake head all dizzy ASP
 ‘As soon as he shook this way [on me], I felt dizzy.’
 d. *Wo zhemo yi huang, tou dou yun le.
 I thus one shake head all dizzy ASP
 ‘As soon as I shook this way, I felt dizzy.’

The Chinese direct and indirect *bei*-constructions allow the post-verbal elements following the passive verbs, which signifies that the case absorption does not obligatorily occur in Chinese. Namely, the verb still retains its case-assigning ability after passivization (Goodall 1991). This can be evidenced by the direct and indirect passive, in which the post-verbal element is permitted as in (11):

- (11) a. Zhangsan bei Lisi da le ta yi xia. (Huang 1999)
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi beat ASP him one beat
 *‘Zhangsan was beaten him one beat by Lisi.’

- b. Ta bei jingcha moshou le zhizhao. (Shi 1997)
 he BEI police confiscate ASP license
 *‘He was confiscated license by the police.’
- c. Ta you bei Tangmu jichu-le yi-zhi anda. (Huang 1999)
 he again BEI Tom hit-ASP one safe-hit
 *‘He again was hit one safe-hit by Tom.’

In addition, both the Chinese direct and indirect *bei*-construction has often been considered to carry adverse meanings (Li & Thompson 1981, Hashimoto 1988). In particular the adversity imposed by the exclusive passive, the adversative passive is far stronger, as can be seen in the following direct passives cited from Li & Thompson (1981):

- (12) a. Qiong ren chang bei dizhu ya-po.
 poor person often BEI landlord oppress
 ‘The poor are often oppressed by the landlords.’
- b. Lingzi bei ta si - po le.
 collar BEI him tear -broken ASP
 ‘The collar was torn by him/her.’
- c. Nei jian shi bei ta faxian le.
 that CL matter BEI him discover ASP
 ‘That matter was discovered by him/her.’
- d. Women de hua bei ta ting dao le.
 we GEN speech BEI him hear arrive ASP
 ‘Our conversation was overheard by him.’
- e. Ta bei wo kan jian le.
 he BEI I see ASP
 ‘He was seen by me.’

The same as the direct passive, the indirect passive—both inclusive and exclusive is used essentially for the adversative usage:

- (13) a. Ta bei Xiaoming da shang le tou.
ta BEI Xiaoming hit hurt ASP head
'He had the head hurt by Xiaoming.'
- b. Kanshou bei fanren pao le. (Hashimoto 1988)
jailer BEI criminal run away ASP
'The jailer suffered from the running-away of the criminal.'

To sum up, since the *ba*-construction is a new construction to both English and Japanese speakers, it is predicted that they may have difficulty acquiring it. In addition, following the Contrastive Analysis (CA) Hypothesis, we may predict that it is likely that English speakers will be confronted with more learnability problems than Japanese speakers when learning Chinese passives, in particular the indirect ones. Whether our prediction is on the right track will be evidenced by the later experiment.

2.3 Empirical Studies of Acquisition of the *Ba* and *Bei* Constructions

This section reviews some previous studies of the acquisition of the *ba* and *bei* constructions: two studies pertain to language acquisition of the *ba* construction (Jin 1992, Fahn 1993) and two for the passives (Tseng 1997, Liu 1998).

2.3.1 Jin (1992)

Given the process of syntacticization as a phenomenon of language typological transfer from topic prominent (TP) to subject prominent (SP) languages, Jin (1992) investigated the opposite process of pragmaticization in L2 acquisition from SP to TP by adult English learners of the *ba* construction. Her 46 subjects were further divided into four levels of proficiency. Two types of tasks were used to test L2 learners' comprehension and production in this study: The grammaticality judgment task included 30 stimulus sentences; the production task involved 11 sentences in the translation test and a story retelling based on a wordless cartoon. The results of the grammaticality judgment task showed that the *ba* construction showing certain grammatical features and being structurally dependent (i.e., Cluster I)

was acquired earlier. On the contrary, *ba* sentences that were more pragmatically controlled and were contextually dependent (i.e., Cluster III) were acquired later. This tendency was also supported in the translation test, where the average score for Cluster I was the highest while that for Cluster III was significantly the lowest. The production task, additionally, demonstrated that the occurrences of the *ba* construction increased as the proficiency level went higher, indicating that lower-level learners made more errors at the structural level than higher-level learners. These findings also demonstrate a learning difficult hierarchy of the *ba* construction. That is, Cluster I features are the easiest while Cluster III features are the most difficult ones.

2.3.2 *Fahn (1993)*

Fahn (1993) examined 100 children from 2;6 to 7;5 years old. The subjects were divided into 10 groups at half-year intervals, with each group consisting of 10 children. The results showed that there were no gender differences among the subjects. However, children of different ages differed as to how well they mastered the constraints on the *ba* construction. Fahn also found that age five was a crucial point for the development of progressives, verb selection, and modifier constraints while age six was an important demarcation point for the compound verb and definiteness constraints. In addition, Fahn found that the topic or the *ba*-NP was usually kept in a topic chain by young children, and this tendency increased with ages. Moreover, deletion of topics and *ba*-NPs decreased as children became older, whereas Pronominalization increased in the *ba*-NP chain but decreased in the regular topic chain. Finally, it was argued that constraints on the definiteness of the *ba*-NP would not emerge until children have acquired the distinction between definite and indefinite articles (given the theory of conservatism). Fahn also argues for Cumulative Complexity (Brown 1973) and Developmental Law (O'Grady 1987), which predict that the constraints on compound verb and definiteness are acquired later than constraints on progressives, verb selection and modifiers because the former are more complex than the latter.

2.3.3 Tseng (1997)

To capture children's tacit knowledge of the *bei*-construction, Tseng (1997) conducted three experiments (two for comprehension and one for production) employing four tasks — the imitation task, the act-out task, the production task, and the grammaticality judgment task. Thirty (15 boys and 15 girls) kindergarten children were further divided into two groups based on their age. The results showed that both groups of subjects got a rather low frequency of misinterpretation in imitation and act-out task, suggesting that children must be equipped with knowledge of the *bei*-construction. Furthermore, children's performance on resultative verbs was better than that on action verbs; the performance on nonreversible sentences outweighs the reversible ones. The results of the production task showed that the overall percentage of elicitation of the *bei*-construction was 76.6%, implying that the children did not have much difficulty with the *bei*-construction. It was also found that the hierarchy of active form preference was: action verbs = experiential verbs > resultative verbs. Among the elicited *bei*-sentences, the overall tendency for the *bei*-sentence elicitation is: action verbs = resultative verbs > experiential verbs, which further confirmed the effect of transitivity. However, it was found that younger children did not perform quite differently among the three types of verbs, suggesting that younger subjects were unable to completely sort out the semantic and pragmatic constraints specifically pertaining to experiential verbs and the pragmatic functions that the *bei*-construction is to fulfill.

2.3.4 Lui (1998)

By examining 80 junior and senior high school students' acquisition of the English passive, Liu (1998) attempted to investigate the role of L1, and the effect of number of years of learning. A grammaticality judgment task and a translation task were used to tap the subjects' competence. The test sentences were designed according to the five properties: word order, L2 complexity, case absorption, adversity and long-distance passivization. The overall results showed that J3 performed the worst while S3, the best though sometimes S2 even did a better job than S3, indicating that learners who have learned the target language for a longer period of time will have a better command of English. Moreover, it was evident

that case absorption, one of the different properties did pose some learnability problems for the subjects; therefore, the fact that L1 might interfere with L2 is essentially consolidated. However, other results did not show the obvious effect of L1 transfer since the correct responses of other properties, such as word order and adversity, were even higher than those of long-distance passivization, which was the only property similar to L2. Hence, Liu claimed that the transfer hypothesis was only partially supported. Judging from the results of the five properties showing that learners got the lowest percentage in case absorption whereas they obtained the highest score in adversity, she further argued that adversity, a semantic property, was easier to be triggered than syntactic properties.

In conclusion, Jin's (1992) study revealed some methodological flaws. For example, the number of stimulus sentences in the grammaticality judgment task was unbalanced concerning different types of *ba*-NPs. Most of the test sentences consisted of definite *ba*-NPs, with very few of them containing generic or indefinite NPs. Fahn (1993) gives us a comprehensible discussion of children's development of the Chinese *ba* construction, but certain methodological problems (such as using only comprehension-based tasks and having a small size of subjects) were also revealed in her study. Tseng (1997) revealed the semantic and pragmatic constraints on the children's use of the Chinese *bei*-construction, but there were some problems with her experiment as well. For example, her findings for the effect of verb transitivity were not fully based on the results of the four verbs. Liu (1998) gave us a general picture of the high school learners learning English passives, which can be a guideline for the English teachers in teaching this construction. However, upon a closer examination of the correct responses to the five properties, we can find that S1 performed much better than S2 in L2 complexity and S2 also did a better job than S3 in both long-distance and adversity. These phenomena seem to be contrary to Liu's claim that the number of years of learning affected students' language proficiency.

The above results and evidence were mainly derived from the studies done on the first or second language acquisition of the *ba* and *bei* constructions, few investigations have been directly related to the comparison of the two constructions in the field of SLA. This inspires us to investigate whether the results obtained from

the L2 acquisition of the two constructions will be similar to those of the previous studies.

3. Research Design

This section presents the experimental methods and the results of two studies (Study I: the *ba*-construction and Study II: the *bei*-construction). Sections 3.1 and 3.2 report the subjects and the methodology and sections 3.3 and 3.4 describe the test materials and experimental procedures.

3.1 Subjects

A total of 66 people were asked to participate in Study I: 22 native speakers of Japanese, 22 native speakers of English and a control group of 22 native speakers of Chinese. The L2 learners were full-time students in the Mandarin Training Center (MTC) of National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU). The subjects of the three groups were of similar ages in average (i.e., around 25). As for the gender of the subjects, the number of male and female subjects was similar, too. Likewise, in Study II, the mean age of the two experimental groups was quite similar: the Japanese group is 26.64; the English group, 25.4. The discrepancy was insignificant.

3.2 Methodology

How data is collected in a study is one of the important issues concerning SLA. For some theorists, it is more desirable to study spontaneous or natural production of the subjects by using naturalistic observation. However, a drawback of observation without instrumentation is that certain language features might not be studied for they occur infrequently in normal conversation. Therefore, in both studies, we utilized two tasks: a grammaticality judgment task (henceforth the GJ task) and a picture-cue production task (henceforth the PP task).

The GJ task in the two studies was used to test the L2 learners' intuition (i.e., competence) concerning the linguistic properties of the *ba* and *bei* constructions. In the GJ task, the subjects were asked whether a given utterance was well-formed or not. In addition to the GJ task, we also adopted the PP task to evaluate the subjects' *performance* in both studies. In the PP task, a series of pictures designed to evoke

certain structures under investigation were presented to the subjects. Based on the context and ingredient provided in the picture-cues, the L2 subject needed to produce the target structure.

3.3 Materials

Study I aims to investigate the acquisition of the constraints on the *ba*-NPs and post-*ba* verbs. Through the two sets of materials (i.e., *ba*-NP types, sub-classes of transitive verbs), as can be seen in Table 1, we can verify the grammatical status of the *ba* construction in L2 learners' grammar:

Table 1: Test Sentences Used in Study I

Type	Subtype	Example
<i>Ba</i> -NPs	Patient	Lili ba Sidong tui jin che li. Lili BA Sidong push in car inside 'Lili pushed Sidong into the car.'
	Source	Ta ba na ben shu mai le. he BA that CL book sell LE 'He has sold that book.'
	Goal	Ta ba na ben shu mai le. he BA that CL book buy LE 'He has bought that book.'
	Beneficiary	Baba yao mama ba Xiaoming chuan-shang Father ask mother BA Xiaoming put-on yifu. clothes 'Father asked mother to put the clothes on Xiaoming.'
Post <i>Ba</i> -verbs	Stative	a. *Ta ba xiao gou ai le. he BA little dog love LE 'He loves the puppy' b. Ta ba xiao gou ai de yao si. he BA little dog love DE want die 'He loves the puppy so much that he wants to die.'
	Achievement	a. Ta ba qian ying le. he BA money win LE 'He has won the money.' b. Ta ba qian ying le jiu chū mai dongxi. he BA money win LE follow go buy thing 'He won the money and then went shopping'

	Activity	<p>a. Xiaohua ba Xiaoming da le. Xiaohua BA Xiaoming hit LE 'Xiaohua hit Xiaoming.'</p> <p>b. Xiaohua ba Xiaoming da de liuxie le. Xiaohua BA Xiaoming hit DE bleed LE 'Xiaohua hit Xiaoming to the degree that Xiaoming was bleeding.'</p>
	Accomplishment	<p>a. Ta ba tade beizi da po le. he BA his cup hit break LE 'He broke his cup.'</p> <p>b. Ta ba tade beizi da po le suoyi chü he BA his cup hit break LE so go mai yi-ge xinde beizi. buy one-CL new cup 'He broke his cup so he bought a new one.'</p>

The test sentences used in Study II are listed in Table 2:

Table 2: Test Sentences Used in Study II

Direct	Indirect
Preverbal <i>bei</i> -phrases	
<p>1. Chuanghu bei nage nanhai dapò le. window BEI that boy break ASP 'The window was broken by that boy.'</p> <p>2. Zhege hushi chaoxing le bei the nurse awake ASP BEI bingren. Patient 'The nurse was awakened by the patient.'</p>	<p>3. Meigeren dou bu xihuan kandao ziji choulou everyone all not like see self ungly de yimian bei bieren. GEN aspect BEI others 'No one likes to have his own demerits seen by others.' (inclusive)</p> <p>4. Jingcha zhemo yipao bei daitu, lian dou police this way run BEI rascal face all lùdiao le. green ASP 'As soon as the rascal ran this way, the police looked panic.' (exclusive)</p>
Agent Deletion	
<p>5. Lisi bei sha le. BEI kill ASP 'Lisi was killed.'</p> <p>6. Sidong de shou bei tangshang GEN hand BEI burn le. ASP 'Sidong's hand was burned.'</p>	<p>7. Zai zheci kangyi shijian zhong, Shida bei in this protest event inside NTNU BEI daibu le liangge xuesheng. arrest ASP two students 'In the process of protest event, NTNU had two students arrested.' (inclusive)</p> <p>8. Baba jintian da Majiang, shouchi father today play Majiang gambling luck hencha ta you bei zimo le. very bad he again BEI self-draw ASP 'When playing Majiang today, Father had a bad gambling luck and lost it.' (exclusive)</p>

Case absorption	
9. Laoshi bei xuesheng ma zang hua. teacher BEI student scold dirty words 'The teacher was scolded by the student through dirty words.'	11. Lisi bei Zhangsan maizou le ta zui xihuan BEI buy ASP he most like de naben shu. GEN that book 'Lisi had Zhangsan buy the book which he liked most.' (inclusive)
10. Didi bei fucun xun le brother BEI father lesson ASP jiju, jiu bu gaoxing le. some words, then not happy ASP 'After my brother was lessoned by my father, he became unhappy.'	12. Jintian zai qiuchang shang tou qiu shi, today in playground on throw ball when Xiaoming you bei Xiaohua jichu le again BEI hit ASP yizhi quanleida. one homerun 'Today in the playground, Xiaoming had Xiaohua hit a home run again.' (exclusive)
Adversity	
13. Naizhi mao bei Xiaoming that cat BEI tisi le. kick to death LE 'That cat was kicked to death by Xiaoming.'	15. Wangmama bei ren kuajiang xiaohai. BEI person praise children 'Mrs. Wang had her children praised by other people.' (inclusive)
14. Ta bei Lisi ai. He BEI Lisi love 'He was loved by Lisi.'	16. Zhangsan bei Lisi pao huijia. BEI run home 'Zhangsan had Lisi run home.' (exclusive)

The questionnaire was administered in two parts: the GJ task and the PP task. In Study I, the GJ task consists of 32 sentences and the PP task, 18 test sentences. In the test sentences in the GJ task, each subtype of *ba*-NPs (i.e., Patient, Source, Goal, and Beneficiary) was exemplified by definite, generic and indefinite NPs respectively to test the definiteness constraint even if the *ba*-NP presented in the example sentences were all definite. Notice that indefinite NPs are argued to be incompatible with the *ba*-form, so we exclude them in the elicitation of the subjects' production. Each subtype of *ba*-verbs in the GJ task was exemplified with two sentences. However, given the subjects' attention span, the test sentences in the PP task were inclusive of only one sentence in each subtype. In Study II, the GJ task consisted of 24 test items and 8 fillers were randomized. Each type was examined for the four properties given in Table 2 with one or two tested items for each.

3.4 Procedures

After several revisions of the pretest, we began with our formal tests by consulting the staff in the MTC for information on the L2 learners to choose qualified subjects and asked for their participation. In order to keep the subjects' performance in the production task from being affected by the sentences hinted in the comprehension task, the picture-cued production task was given first and then the grammaticality judgment task. It took them on average about 35-45 minutes in total to complete the two tasks. Both the tapes and test papers were collected and graded immediately when the subjects finished it.

After the data were transcribed, there came scoring and statistical analyses. In the GJ task, the full mark for each test property was one point, thus the point for each sentence depends on the number of the test items in each category. In the picture-cued production task, the frequency of the sentences involving each property was counted. Finally, statistical analyses (one-way ANOVA, Paired-sample *t*-test, post hoc Scheffe tests and Chi-Square analysis) were performed separately on the two tasks for both studies.

4. Discussion

4.1 L1 Influence

Weinreich (1953:1) claimed that 'the greater the difference between two systems, i.e. the more numerous the mutually exclusive forms and patterns in each, the greater is the learning problem and the potential area of interference.' Unlike Weinreich, researchers such as Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin (1965) thought that predictions are not binary: similarity/difference = ease/difficulty. They proposed a more complicated version to predict learning difficulties with the example of an English speaker learning Spanish.

Table 3: Hierarchy of difficulty (Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin 1965)

Type of Difficulty	L1: English	L2: Spanish	Example
1. Split		x x < y	por for < para
2. New	Ø	----- x	marking grammatical gender
3. Absent	x	----- Ø	<i>Do</i> as a tense carrier
4. Coalesced	x	> x y	his/her is realized as a single form <i>su</i>
5. Correspondence	x	----- x	-ing = -ndo as a complement with verbs of perception

In essence, transfer, in its narrower sense, is considered as the imposition of native language surface forms to a second language context, but whether L1 transfer occurs in L2 acquisition has been in dispute for a few years. In this study, we apply the contrastive analysis hypothesis to predict learning difficulties, mainly by following Stockwell, Bowen and Martin's (1965) *hierarchy of difficulty*. As stated earlier, the *ba* construction is a Chinese-specific structure and is absent in Japanese and English. According to the *hierarchy of difficulty*, a form which is absent in L1 but present in L2, such as the *ba* construction, should be difficult to acquire.

The experimental results showed that Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin's (1965) *hierarchy of difficulty* did not gain support because the L2 subjects scored as the native controls for most cases. Precisely speaking, in the GJ task, no significant differences were found across three types of sentences (Scheffe, *ba*-NPs: Japanese vs. Chinese: $p = .058$; English vs. Chinese: $p = .720$; post-*ba* verbs: Japanese vs. Chinese: $p = .235$; English vs. Chinese: $p = .535$; *ba* occurring with other constructions: Japanese vs. Chinese: $p = .443$; English vs. Chinese: $p = .929$). In the PP task, the L2 subjects also showed native-like performance except in the Japanese subjects' responses to *ba*-NPs (Chi-square Analysis, *ba*-NPs: Japanese vs. Chinese: $p = .001$;

English vs. Chinese: $p = .142$; post-*ba* verbs: Japanese vs. Chinese: $p = .826$; English vs. Chinese: $p = .264$; *ba* occurring with other constructions: Japanese vs. Chinese: $p = .057$; English vs. Chinese: $p = 1.000$). Hence, the *ba* construction, on the whole, did not seem to cause difficulty for the L2 subjects. In other words, the absence of the *ba* construction in Japanese and English did not interfere second language learning and the prediction of Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin (1965) is thus not supported¹.

As known, English direct passives are thoroughly different from the Chinese direct ones with regard to the four properties and so are Japanese direct passives except for the property of preverbal *bei*-phrases. Now let us see if the differences between native and target languages do lead to negative transfer by L2 learners. The comparison of three groups' responses to the direct passive in the GJ task is shown below:

Table 4: The Responses to Each Property for the Direct Passives in the GJ Task

Group	Type	Chinese	
Preverbal <i>bei</i> -phrases	Japanese		ES vs. JS (no significant difference)
	English		
The deletion of the agentive NP	Japanese		ES vs. JS *
	English	**	
Case absorption	Japanese		ES vs. JS (no significant difference)
	English		
Adversity	Japanese	*	ES vs. JS (no significant difference)
	English	*	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

¹ As one of the reviewers pointed out, the present argument that L1 plays a vital role in CSL learners' interlanguage might be too strong. Some difficulties that L2 learners encounter may result from the complexity of the target language itself. With regard to the L2 acquisition of the *ba* construction, it was found that this peculiar construction in Mandarin Chinese did not appear to be too challenging for our subjects, indicating that L1 influence was not significant. However, this was not the case in the subjects' L2 acquisition of the *bei* construction, showing that L1 influence may be constrained by the construction type.

Table 4 shows that there was a significant group effect for only the deletion of the agentive NP ($F(2, 72)=9.635, p=.000$) and adversity ($F(2,72)=5.750, p=.005$). The English speakers were significantly less successful in judging the sentences involving the agent deletion than the Japanese ($p=.028$) and Chinese speakers ($p=.000$). It is suggested that since the agent role in the English passive has to be deleted together with the preposition, *by*, the English speakers apply this knowledge to the omission of the agent phrase with *bei* in Chinese so that they stick to the existence of the agent phrase when *bei* is present. However, the Japanese learners can behave as well as the Chinese group; therefore, L1 interference is significant only for the English group on the deletion of the agentive NP, but not for the Japanese speakers. This result could be attributed to the fact that Japanese, similar to Chinese, is a [+pro-drop] language, it is thus quite common to omit either the subjects or objects; hence, the Japanese group can accept more sentences without the agents than the English speakers. With regard to adversity, both the Japanese and English speakers performed statistically differently from the native speakers ($p=.022$ for English group; $p=.013$ for Japanese group), indicating that both the English and Japanese speakers, more or less, transferred their L1 semantic knowledge into L2 learning. However, negative transfer was not obvious relating to preverbal *bei*-phrases and case absorption for there was no group effect on the two properties.

As a matter of fact, the conditions which favor or disfavor transfer can be accounted for by Kellerman's (1979) *reasonable entity principle*, which states that "language transfer is promoted in cases where the product results in a more systematic, explicit and logical interlanguage." (Gass & Selinker 1992:8). Presumably, the use of an overt NP enables the English speakers to more specifically and explicitly express themselves, it is thus more transferable. Some previous studies also show that the overt NP seems to be easier to be elicited than the covert one by the English speakers. In her study of the pro-drop parameter, Chen (1999) found that the English learners did produce more overt subjects than covert ones while the Japanese speakers did not show such distinction. As for adversity, since our subjects are high beginners, their semantic knowledge is still shaky and unstable so that interference is somewhat more obvious. As pointed out by Tseng (1997) that children in the acquiring process of the *bei*-construction will first develop syntactic structures and

then acquire semantic constraints, followed by pragmatic constraints.

On the other hand, since preverbal *bei*-phrases and case absorption are related to X-bar and Case theory respectively, the fact that learners' L1 does not interfere L2 learning concerning preverbal *bei*-phrase and case absorption shows that X-bar theory and Case theory seem easier to be reset by L2 learners. Hulk (1991) reports that Dutch speakers learning French quite easily reset the Head Parameter, which provides the evidence of easy accessibility of X-bar theory. In Chen's (1999) investigation of L2 acquisition of Chinese relativization, it has been found that X-bar theory is not difficult to be acquired by L2 learners. Besides, Rutherford (1989) claims that the strictness of word order increases the relative ease of L2 acquisition, indicating the rapid attainment of X-bar theory. Liu (1998), on the contrary, contends that Chinese speakers learning English have great difficulty tackling Case theory. Consequently, whether Case theory really causes learnability problems is hard to ascertain. For the Japanese learners, since preverbal *bei*-phrases is similar to the *ni*-phrase in Japanese passives, positive transfer thus seems to result.

Now let us further examine the picture-cued production (PP) task to see if the same finding can be obtained. Table 5 is the contrast of occurrence to the direct passive in the PP task:

Table 5: The Comparison among the Three Groups for the Direct Passive in the PP Task

Type	Group	Chinese	
Preverbal <i>bei</i> -phrases	Japanese		ES vs. JS (no significant difference)
	English		
The deletion of the agentive NP	Japanese		ES vs. JS**
	English	**	
Case absorption	Japanese		ES vs. JS **
	English	**	
Adversity	Japanese		ES vs. JS (no significant difference)
	English		

**p<.01

Table 5 shows that the result is only partly in line with that in the GJ task. It has been observed that in the PP task a significant group difference existed for the deletion of the agentive NP (Chi-Square-value=33.115, $p=.000$) as well as case absorption (Chi-Square-value=17.487, $p=.000$), but not for adversity. Parallel to the finding in the GJ task, the English speakers also significantly produced fewer sentences with the deletion of the agent phrases than both Japanese ($p=.009$) and Chinese controls ($p=.000$), suggesting that the English speakers were still affected by their mother tongue. Most of the sentences produced by them were those with the agent phrases, such as *Lisi bei (you) ren sha le*. But the Japanese speakers' performance is still close to control groups', which further supports the influence of their [+pro-drop] parameter. Besides, as in the GJ task, the English speakers' performance on preverbal *bei*-phrases is equivalent to both Japanese and Chinese controls, confirming the easy handling of X-bar theory, from which negative transfer cannot be obviously observed. As to case absorption, the Japanese group still produced as many sentences with the post-verbal elements as native speakers, further justifying the fact that Case theory is not so difficult to L2 learners, as found in the GJ task. However, the English speakers, though accurately judge the sentences involving case absorption, could not produce as many sentences with post-verbal elements as the Japanese and native speakers. Instead, they tended to omit the item following the verb as in *Didi bei fuqin xun le*. This suggests that even though the English group were equipped with knowledge that the accusative case is not necessarily absorbed by the Chinese passive verb; namely, an NP can appear after the passive verb in the *bei*-construction, they still tended to produce the sentences without the post-verbal elements, which they were more familiar with and which are also correct sentences in Chinese. Another inconsistent result pertains to adversity, a semantic property, which could be explained by the fact that in the PP task, an unconscious situation, the native speakers under the influence of the translation from English were apt to produce the *bei*-construction to non-adverse situations, which they considered incorrect in the GJ task so that no significance was reached between the experimental groups and the Chinese controls. Just as Chao (1968) puts forward that more and more non-prototypical *bei*-sentences which carry none adverse implications are produced under the effect of translation

from other European languages, such as English.

Furthermore, aside from the differences between the native and target languages, we now move to the similar parts and see if the similarity indeed brings about positive transfer. As mentioned above, it has been recognized that Japanese and Chinese have the property of preverbal *bei*-phrases in common as far as the direct passive is concerned. With respect to the indirect passive, which is only available to Japanese and Chinese rather than English, the properties of the preverbal *bei*-phrases and case absorption are identical in Chinese and Japanese. Accordingly, if L1 does play an important role in L2 acquisition, Japanese speakers will perform well on these items. The responses to the similar properties in the GJ task are listed in the following table:

Table 6: The Responses to the Similar Properties between Japanese and Chinese in the GJ Task

Property	Type	Significance
Direct	Preverbal <i>bei</i> -phrases	
Indirect	Case absorption	
	Preverbal <i>bei</i> -phrases	**

**p<.01

As can be seen in Table 6, the Japanese speakers' performance is quite close to the native controls' except for the indirect passive involving the preverbal *bei*-phrase ($p=.000$), suggesting that they have positively carried over their L1 into L2 learning on some properties. The exception of the indirect passive involving preverbal *bei*-phrases could be ascribed to their misinterpretation of the exclusive ungrammatical sentence, namely, '*Jingcha zhemo yi pao bei daitu, lian dou liudao le.*' The reason why most of the subjects considered the ungrammatical sentence grammatical might be that the *bei*-phrase ostensibly precedes the verb, '*liudao le*', that will easily lead them to misunderstand that the *bei*-phrase, still similar to the *ni*-phrase in Japanese, is preverbal, but actually the *bei*-phrase in the sentence occurring after the verb, *pao* is post-verbal.

In addition, positive transfer can be seen in the PP task, where we found that the Japanese speakers' performance is quite native-like regarding each similar property, demonstrating that positive transfer does exist in our present study. The fact that the *ni*-phrase in Japanese precedes the passive verb makes the Japanese learners produce the preverbal *bei*-phrases with a high percentage. Meanwhile, it is the presence of the verb complements in the Japanese indirect passives that promotes the Japanese learners' acceptance and production of the Chinese passives with the post-verbal elements.

In view of the above findings, it is evident that L1 transfer has been borne out in the present study. This corroborates the previous claim that under the influence of L1, Japanese ESL learners of English initially assumed that the passive auxiliary *be* in English, similar to the Japanese *rare*, could function not only as an auxiliary /non-thematic verb but as a thematic/lexical verb, thus allowing both the direct and indirect passive in English (cf. Izumi & Lakshmanan (1998) and Liu (1998). Furthermore, Liu (1998) by investigating the Chinese speakers learning English passives also found that L1-L2 differences did give rise to some difficulties for L2 learners. The similar result is meanwhile obtained under the investigation of the pro-drop parameter by Phinney (1987) and Hilles (1986), who claim that Spanish learners of English carry over their L1 value of the parameter to L2 learning. In a word, these studies along with our present study lend further support to the significant role of L1 in L2 acquisition.

4.2 Methodological Effects

In the research of L2 acquisition, the validity of different task formats has always been a heated issue (cf. Thomas 1993). Therefore, in order to avoid the possible bias caused by a single experiment and to explore the similarities and differences between competence and performance, two experimental tasks (i.e. the GJ task and the PP task) were designed in the present study to investigate the L2 learners' knowledge of the *ba* construction and the *bei* construction.

Now, let us examine the validity of the two tasks for the *ba* construction by looking at the group effects displayed in Table 7:

Table 7: Results on Group Effects in Comparison with the Chinese Control

TYPE	TASK GROUP	GJ	PP
Definiteness of the <i>ba</i> -NP	Japanese	*	**
	English		
Theta-roles of the <i>ba</i> -NP	Japanese		**
	English		
<i>Ba</i> -verb without added phrases/clauses	Japanese		
	English		
<i>Ba</i> -verb with added phrases/clauses	Japanese		
	English		
Retained-object construction	Japanese		
	English		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

As shown in Table 7, the English learners' performance in the GJ task showed no marked difference when compared with the native speakers of Chinese. Their responses were consistent with those found in the PP task. The L2 subjects' performance is consistent with the mere exception in the Japanese subjects' reaction to the theta-roles of the *ba*-NP. To put it in detail, it was found that the Japanese subjects produced fewer *ba* sentences than expected concerning the variable of NP theta-roles in the PP task. But their correct judgment in the GJ task regarding the same types of sentences did not reveal marked differences when compared with the native speakers of Chinese. Such a discrepancy will be attributed to the complexity of verbs in the test sentences. That is, the subjects were aware of the thematic status of the *ba*-NPs, but they failed to produce these sentences because they were unfamiliar with the usage of verbs.

Shown in Tables 8 and 9 is the summary of the group effects found in response to both the direct and indirect passive in both tasks:

Table 8: The Results of Group Effects in Comparison with the Chinese Controls for the Direct Passive

Tasks	Groups	Preverbal <i>bei</i> -phrases	The deletion of the agentive NP	Case absorption	Adversity
GJ Task	Japanese				*
	English		**		*
PP Task	Japanese				
	English		**	*	

*p<.05, **p<.01

Table 9: The Results of Group Effects in Comparison with the Chinese Controls for the Indirect Passive

Tasks	Groups	Preverbal <i>bei</i> -phrases	The deletion of the agentive NP	Case absorption	Adversity
GJ Task	Japanese	*			**
	English	*			**
PP Task	Japanese		**		**
	English	**	**	**	**

*p<.05, **p<.01

Judging from the acquisition of the direct passive in Table 8, the Japanese group's performance seemed to be quite native-like in both tasks with the exception of that on adversity, the semantic property in the GJ task, but not in the PP task. This reveals L2 learners' unstable semantic knowledge at the initial stage and the inconsistent result in the two tasks could be ascribed to native speakers' performance in the PP task. Particularly, the English group have difficulty with the deletion of the agentive NP in both tasks while on case absorption they do a satisfactory job as Chinese controls in the GJ task, their performance in the PP task, however, was far from native-like. In other words, the fact that no group effect was found in the GJ task, but not in the PP task suggests that the GJ task is slightly easier than the PP task for the English group, but the distinction is not obvious for the Japanese group.

Nonetheless, for the indirect passive, as revealed by Table 9, the Japanese speakers could be as proficient as the Chinese groups in judging the deletion of the agentive NP, yet their production was still in big contrast with native speakers'. With respect to preverbal *bei*-phrases, Japanese speakers' inaccurate judgment can

be ascribed to the misinterpretation of the ungrammatical sentences. Meanwhile, for all that the English group could obtain the accurate judgment on some properties as the Chinese controls, their frequency of production on all properties was statistically less than the native speakers' in the PP task. It appears that the task effect was more obvious for the indirect passive since more grammatical mechanisms are required for the construction of the indirect passive. That is to say, to produce a more complex structure is far more difficult than to judge it. As a result, the overall tendency further confirms that learners often can comprehend what they cannot produce; that is, comprehension, for the most part, runs ahead of production. As Tseng (1997:65) noted, "Just as the vocabulary that we comprehend exceeds that we may ever produce in speech, the grammatical constructions which we understand are of a greater variety and a greater complexity than we may ever produce."

In general, our findings comported with the study conducted by Liu (1998), who found that the adult L2 learners performed better on the comprehension task (i.e., the grammaticality judgment task) than on the production task (i.e., the translation task). Kuo (1995) also stated that though children did not produce any *jiao* and *rang* Chinese passives in spontaneous speech, it does not imply that they cannot comprehend these kinds of passives since decoding is, more often than not, easier than encoding, which is compatible with our study and the previous studies (Ringbom 1992).

5. Suggestions for Further Study

Given the empirical nature of the present study, some questions remain unanswered and they may thus motivate future research in this area.

In Study I, from the experimental results, we found that the Japanese and the English speakers scored like the Chinese controls both in the GJ and PP tasks. Such a phenomenon argues against the literature concerning the prediction of the contrastive analysis hypothesis. However, we have to notice that all of the L2 subjects were full-time students in the Mandarin Training Center of the National Taiwan Normal University, and they happened to have learned the *ba* construction about three weeks before they participated in this experiment. Therefore, one may wonder whether the native-like performance of the L2 subjects, all of whom have

received formal SL teaching, is under the influence of *instruction effects*. As claimed by many SLA theorists (Zobl 1985), instruction may speed up the rate of acquisition and improve the quality and level of second language ultimate attainment. Therefore, it will be nice to give this same group of subjects follow-up research one year later, to see whether their performances are still consistent with those of the Chinese controls².

It can be noted that Study II offers some insight into the role of L1 and the methodological effects. Actually, the following issues still deserve further improvement and probably different results will be found. Owing to the rarity and the complexity of the indirect passive, taking the advanced learners into consideration as subjects would probably yield different results. Last but not least, it would be more instructional and fruitful to design a bi-direction experiment undertaken by both Japanese learners of Chinese and Chinese learners of Japanese or English learners of Chinese and Chinese learners of English, which can further shed light on more factors involving L2 acquisition.

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² As another reviewer pointed out, the subjects had learned the *ba*-construction before the present experiment. One possible way, as suggested by the reviewer, is to add another task to examine the process of learning of the subjects before and after the instruction of the *ba* construction is given.

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母語會影響嗎？ 從外籍學生習得華語「把」字句和「被」字句談起

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摘要

本研究旨在根據對比分析理論(Weinreich 1953; Stock, Bowen and Martin 1965; among others)，探討以華語為第二語言的外籍學生習得「把」字句和「被」字句的情形。受試學生分實驗組與控制組兩組：實驗組為國立台灣師範大學國語教學中心的日本學生和美國學生，控制組則是在台的中國學生，進行兩個測驗(一是文法判斷題、另一是圖片引導題)了解受試學生對華語「把」字句和「被」字句的認知和使用。研究發現，實驗組學生大多能順利判斷且正確使用「把」字句，顯示外籍學生並未因其母語無相對應之「把」字句結構而受影響。但是在「被」字句的習得方面，母語影響則是顯著的。題型效應方面，研究發現，文法判斷題和圖片引導題皆對受試學生「把」字句的表現有顯著的影響，在「被」字句習得方面，研究發現外籍學生在文法判斷題之表現優於圖片引導題，此亦說明第二語言習得的過程中學習者對句構之理解應優先於其使用。

關鍵詞：母語影響、題型效應、「把」字句、「被」字句、華語、第二語言習得