

Chapter 4

Post-verbal uses

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the post-verbal uses of *ba*. There are two main post-verbal uses: (1) argument marking, and (2) possibility marking (including ability). Compared to pre-verbal functions of *ba*, the post-verbal functions are multiple. Basically, the word order found in post-verbal uses is NP V *ba* NP.

I will first discuss the argument marking functions (§4.2) and then the possibility marking functions (§4.3), §4.4 describes the ability function and §4.5 summarizes the findings.

4.2 Argument marking

Post-verbal *ba* can be used to encode the addition of a participant into an event. It is most common with verbs of emotion, verbs of speech and *ne* 'get'.

4.2.1 Applicatives

An applicative is a syntactic construction where an oblique argument is given core status and there is some marking in the verb complex. The applicative meaning appears to be derived from the transitive *ba* 'touch'.

88) *mu hε t^hɔ dɔ? s^ha s^hε? ba wε*
sun come climb and afternoon poke touch 3
N V V CONJ N V APPL PRO

The sun came up and burnt them. [Mason_Mk 4:6]

In this new function *ba* has lost some of its verb status, such as the ability to be negated:

89) **mu hε t^hɔ dɔ? s^ha s^hε? tə ba wε*
sun come climb and afternoon poke not touch 3
N V V CONJ N V NEG APPL PRO

Example (89) is ungrammatical since *ba* has been negated. By negating the other verbs *hε tʰɔ* and *sʰa sʰε*, the sentence would be grammatical.

It would be grammatical to negate as follows.

- 90) *mu tə-hε tʰɔ dɔʔ sʰa tə-sʰεʔ ba wε*
 sun not-come climb and light not-poke APPL 3
 N V V CONJ N V APPL PRO
 Sun does not come up and light can't poke. [Con 10/10/11(1)]

The applicative function can also be seen with verbs of emotion as the following example.

- 91) *θa.do.tʰɔ ba zɔ.ja.koʔ dɔʔ zɔ.jo.ha lɔ*
 get.angry touch James and John Pf
 V Name CONJ Name Pf
 They were angry at James and John. [Mason_Mk 10:41]

- 92) *muʔ ba bwa koʔ lɔ*
 pleasure touch people also Pf
 V N ADV Pf
 [We] have been pleased by them also. [Harvest 18]

When *ba* is added to verbs of emotion it marks the object noun phrase as the Stimulus for the emotion.

Applicatives also occur with verbs of speech:

- 93) *bwa lə ə gə.do.ə ba θaʔ.sɔ.sɪ tə-ya*
 people who 3s speak.bad touch holy.spirit one-CLF
 N REL PRO V N QNT
 People who speak badly to the Holy Spirit. [Mason_Mk 3:29]

- 94) *je.fuʔ siʔ ba ɔ poʔ jə-kʰi tə.ge*
 Jesus say touch 3s follow 2s-hip Pf
 N V PRO V N Pf
 Jesus said to him/them, "Follow me". [Mason_Mk 1:18]

- 95) *jə-ε.dɔʔ tε ba na lɔ*
 1s-want say touch 2s Pf
 V V PRO Pf
 I want to tell you. [P&T 7]

- 95) *jə-ε.dɔʔ tɛ ʃa na lɔ*
 1s-want say touch 2s Pf
 V V PRO Pf

I want to tell you. [P&T 7]

- 96) *tɛ ʃa bwa lə ə da.ye.da.glo*
 say touch people who 3s about
 V N P PRO N

Tell us about him. [P&T 31]

As the above examples reveal, we see that this function adds a Recipient to the object position. In all of the examples, *ʃa* can be omitted without affecting the semantic significantly.

ʃa is not limited to verbs of emotion and speech. It can occur in almost any transitive clause marking the object as the recipient or stimulus based on the semantics of the verb. In example (97) the recipient/object of the verb clean is marked by *ʃa*, and in example (98) the stimulus/object of the verb dream is marked by *ʃa*.

- 97) *dɔʔ ma kə.s^hɔ ʃa bwa.kə.ŋɔ lɔ*
 and do clean touch people DECL
 CONJ V V N Pf

And clean the people. [Mason Mk 4:38]

- 98) *jə-mi.mɔ ʃa lə jə-ɔ ʃa nə-ŋa bɔ*
 1s-dream touch at 1s-eat able 2s-flesh Pf
 V P V V N Pf

I dreamt about me eat your meat. [P&T 11]

4.2.2 Receive *ne ʃa*

This section is an extension of the applicative use of *ʃa*. The following examples are collocations of *ne* and *ʃa*. In modern Sgaw these two verbs cannot occur independently, as can be seen in the following examples.

- 99) **jə-ʃa t^hwi tə-diu*
 1s-touch dog one-CLF
 V N QNT

*I touch a dog. [Con 9/8/11 (1)]

- 100) ?jə-*ne* t^hwi tə-*d̥u*
 1s-get dog one-CLF
 V N QNT
 ?I got a dog. [Con 9/8/11 (2)]

Example (99) shows that *ba* cannot occur as the only verb in a sentence – it requires a second verb, for example ‘go’. The second example (100) is likely to be understood as meaning ‘receive’ but this is a very unusual way to say ‘receive something’. A much better way is to use both *ne* and *ba* together, as the following example shows:

- 101) jə-*ne* *ba* t^hwi tə-*d̥u*
 1s-get APPL dog one-CLF
 V APPL N QNT
 I got a dog (from somebody). [Con 9/8/11 (3)]

- 102) pə-kə-*ne* *ba* xu.bu.yu.kli
 1pl-IRR-get APPL rice.seed
 V APPL N
 We will receive rice seed. [Harvest 23]

- 103) t^hoʔ.mi.p^ho tə-*d̥u* *ne* *ba* ə.k^hwɛʔ lə kə-ge
 piglet one-CLF get APPL permission COMP IRR-back
 N QNT V APPL N P V
 o.θə.koʔ ə.buʔ.ə.d̥i lə
 visit 3.relatives DECL
 V N Pf

The little pig received permission to go visit his relatives. [P&T 30]

- 104) lə.k^hi pə-*ma* *ne* *ba* xu.θaʔ ə.wɛ.ne lə
 later 1pl-do get APPL rice that DECL
 SUB V V APPL N DET Pf
 Later we received that rice. [Harvest 24]

- 105) me ə-*ne* *ba* da.ne tə.p^ha p^hɛ.lɛ
 be 3-get APPL things PL where
 SUB V APPL N QNT Q
 Where do they get those things? [Mason_Mk 6:2]

4.3 Possibility

Post-verbal *ba* also encodes the semantic domain of possibility. This section looks at three related types of participant external possibility which are permission, circumstance, and opportunity.

Many of the following examples are ambiguous with respect to their possibility. Only the discourse context can identify the specific modality intended by the speaker.

4.3.1 Permission

Permission can be defined as those enabling conditions exist *socially* that *allow* an agent to complete the predicate action.

106) *jə-le ba s^hu tfo*
2s-go PERM GOAL school
V Vv P N

I am allowed to go to school. [Con 12/8/11 (1)]

107) *nɔ.nɔ nɔ ba θo.le lɔ*
sister drive PERM car Pf
N V Vv N Pf

Sister is allowed to drive car (by somebody) [Con 12/8/11 (1)]

In example (106) the discourse context implies that someone has allowed me to go to school. In (107) sister could not drive until somebody gave permission to do so. The use of *ba* in these contexts emphasizes there was a restriction on the action, but now someone have permitted the action to happen.

4.3.2 Circumstance

Circumstance (what Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994:178 call root possibility) describes the situation where the enabling condition exists *physically* that *allows* the agent to complete the predicate action.

108) *də.nɔ.nɔ lɔ ba lə klɛ ə.θə.ɛ*
some fall CIR LOC road beside
QNT V Vv P N LCLZR

Some happened to fall along the path. [Mason_Mk 4:3]

Example (88), repeated below also has a circumstance reading:

109) *muu hε tʰɔ dɔʔ sʰa sʰεʔ ʃa we*
 sun come climb and hurt poke CIR 3
 N V V CONJ V V Vv PRO

The sun came up and (was able to) burn them. [Mason_Mk 4:6]

4.3.3 Opportunity

Opportunity is defined as *unexpected* enabling conditions exist for the agent to complete the predicate action. This is an extension of circumstance that Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994) do not discuss. In the following example *ʃa* is added to the sentence to show the speaker's contra-expectation to the action.

110) *jə-pʰɔ ʃa tʰwi*
 1s-touch OPP dog
 V Vv N

I touched the dog! [Con 16/5/11 (2)]

In this example, the speaker has the opportunity to touch the dog. For some reason, he is able to touch the dog. For example the dog may be dangerous or expensive that it would not have possible to touch it.

A situation is defined as an opportunity if you have a great experience, or something that you wanted to do happens, or something you think you cannot do happens, or something that you could never think you would experience, or something is so great/good that you cannot believe what you have seen or done. There is a hint of boasting in these sentences.

To discuss about the opportunity marking system more, let's see an example using *ʃa* as an opportunity marker again.

111) *dī.θoʔ ə-kə-tʰoʔ ʃa ɔ lɔ*
 PURP 3-IRR-touch OPP 3 DECL
 SUB V Vv PRO Pf

In order to touch him, Mason_Mk 3:10]

112) *jə-nə.mu* ***ba*** *ə-boʔ.ba*
 1s-kiss OPP 3-cheek
 V Vv N

I happened to kiss his/her cheek. [Con 4/4/11 (2)]

Examples (111) and (112) show the use of *ba* in the post-verbal position. These sentences can be interpreted in several ways. For example, (112) can mean 'I kissed his/her cheek' or 'I happened to kiss his/her cheek' or 'I get/got the opportunity to kiss his/her cheek'.

Consider the following example:

113) *jə-mi* *ɔ* ***ba*** *tʰɔʔ.mi.ŋa* *ne* *nɛ* *sɛ.kɔʔ*
 1s-if eat OPP pork TOP 2s also
 SUB V V N TOP 2s ADV
nə-kə-ɔ ***ba*** *ɔ* *lɔ*
 2s-IRR-eat OPP 3s Pf
 V Vv PRO Pf

If I can eat the pork, you will also be able to eat it. [P&T 22]

Here the speaker is saying if he/she gets the opportunity to eat pork, the hearer will also get the same opportunity. This opportunity meaning then extends into experience. The difference in meaning is primarily one of past or future events. Opportunity tends to be associated with future, non-realized events and experience tends to be associated with past or completed actions.

It is interesting that Burmese the dominant language uses the word *jaʔ* 'get' to express the ability and opportunity functions. Let's look at the example below.

Burmese
 114) *ko.ko* *ze* *θwa* ***jaʔ*** *dɛ*
 N N V OPP Pf
ko.ko market go Vv Pf
 Ko Ko got to go to the market.

This example shows the similarity between Sgaw and Burmese in their manner of coding opportunity.

Table 10: Comparison of Sgaw and Burmese opportunity markers

Language	Source Verb	Position of the opportunity marker	Other functions apart from the opportunity marker
Burmese	get	Post-verb	Duty
Sgaw	touch	Post-verb	Ability Permission Circumstance

4.3.4 Experience

Closely related to the previous section is *ba* functioning as a marker of experience. Consider example (115):

- 115) *da.na tə.p^ha du t^{hi} ba ɔ*
 spirit.evil PL until see EXP 3
 N QNT SUB V Vv PRO

When the ghosts saw him, [Mason_Mk 3:11]

In this example the spirits see him not because of their ability but because of opportunity, and thus the spirits experience the event. The following examples are more ambiguous.

- 116) *dī.θoʔ ə-kə-t^{hi} ba bwa lə ə-ma da i*
 similar 3-will-see EXP people who 3-do thing this
 SUB V Vv N P V N DET

In order to see who did this thing [Mason_Mk 5:32]

- 117) *nə-mi tɛ dəʔ pə-kə-θe.ŋa ba θə*
 2s-if say and 1pl-will-know EXP Pf
 P V CONJ V Vv Pf

If you say, then we will know. [P&T 8]

- 118) *ə.wɛ lɛ t^{hi} ba lə pə.dɛ.p^ho tə-diu*
 3s go see EXP LOC bunny one-CLF
 PRO V V Vv P N QNT

S/he went and saw a rabbit. [P&T 32]

119) *kə.sʰɔ̃ tə-diu pʰu? ba ə.θa?*
 elephant one-CLF frighten EXP oneself
 N QNT V Vv RFLX

An elephant was frightened. [Elephant 10]

120) *pə-ɔ̃ ba θə.ko? pʰɛ.ne lɔ*
 1pl-eat EXP together there Pf
 V Vv ADV DEM Pf

We also ate there. [Harvest 19]

The examples above have been glossed to show that the subject of the clause experiences something. They could also be interpreted as ability or opportunity. For example, (120) could be translated as ‘we were able to eat there’ or ‘we had the opportunity to eat there’.

I have chosen to highlight the experience meaning in these examples, as ability is coded by a slightly different construction.

4.4 Ability

ba with the ability meaning occurs clause final, not immediately often verb complex but because it is a type of modality it is discussed here. Ability is defined as the enabling conditions exist *in the agent* to complete the predicate action. Gilmore (1898) describes *ba* as “ability considered with reference to the sufficiency of the subject”. He notes that *ba* is a verb that occurs at the end of the sentence (or clause) preceded by the verb expressing the event with its subject, and object if it is transitive.

In Sgaw ability typically is coded by clause-final *ba*. There are several other verbs which mark ability. Gilmore (1898:38) lists *kɛ* ‘ability with reference to physical health or inclination’, *ne* ‘ability with reference to effectiveness of effort’, *kʰlu?* ‘ability with reference to leisure’, *ba* ‘ability with reference to accomplishing the end proposed’, and *bwɛ* ‘ability with reference to the sufficiency of the subject’. Apart from these verbs, there is also the verb *θe* ‘know’ which can have an ability sense:

121) *jə-lɛ tʃo θe*
 1s-go school able
 V N V

I can go to school. [Con 12/8/11 (2)]

The verb *θe* in example (121) can be replaced with *ba*:

122) *jə-lɛ tfo ba*
1s-go school able
V N V

I can go to school. [Con 12/8/11 (3)]

In both cases, whether you use *θe* or *ba*, the noun ‘school’ is optional if the context is known by the speaker and the hearer. So, the simple sentence structure involving the ability marker *ba* is N V N *ba* or N V *ba*. When the object of the main clause is not present (either due to the verb being intransitive or the object being omitted) the linear order of ability is the same as post-verbal *ba*. Thus these constructions may at times be conflated and so the meaning may be ambiguous.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has described the post-verbal functions of *ba*. There are two main types – argument marking and possibility marking.

The receive function is derived from the applicative function – the receive meaning is restricted to occurring with *ne* ‘get’, whereas the applicative meaning is unrestricted.

Modality marking and the relationships between the different kinds have been extensively researched (e.g. Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994, de Haan 2006, Auwera & Plungian 1998, Traugott 2011). The studies by Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca and Auwera & Plungian have been instrumental in understanding the different types of modality and more specifically possibility.

Sgaw *ba* encodes agent-oriented modalities. Agent-oriented modalities⁹ “report the existence of internal and external conditions on a agent with respect to the completion of the action expressed in the main predicate” (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994:177). The definitions of the different modality meanings were based on this broad definition.

Post-verbal *ba* encodes non-epistemic possibility:

⁹ Agent-oriented modality is similar to non-epistemic possibility and necessity as defined by Auwera & Plungian 1998.

Permission describes the situation where the enabling conditions exist *socially* that *allow* the agent to complete the predicate action;

Circumstance (root possibility) describes the situation where the enabling conditions exist *physically* that *allow* the agent to complete the action;

Opportunity describes the situation where the enabling conditions *exist*;

Experience describes the situation where enabling conditions have been met and the predicate action has been completed; and

Ability describes the situation where the enabling conditions exist *in the agent* to complete the predicate action.

The links between the different post-verbal modality functions are shown in Figure 16:

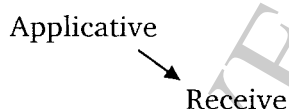


Figure 16: The development of post-verbal *ba* with respect to argument marking

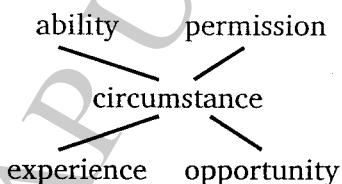


Figure 17: The development of post-verbal *ba* with respect to possibility marking

As can be seen in Figure 16, in the argument marking system, there is a function of *ba* as an applicative, which later extends its function to the verb *ne* 'receive'. In the second system (Figure 17), the possibility marking system, there are more functions of *ba*. There are no arrows included since it is hard to know which function has evolved first or which functions are derived. However, based on cross-linguistic studies, it can be hypothesised partially as Opportunity is derived from 'circumstance' while 'circumstance', an participant external possibility has extended to 'permission',

a participant external possibility, and ‘ability’ a participant internal possibility. On the other hand, opportunity gives way to have an experience function.¹⁰

Perhaps, as in the grammaticalization of Mandarin Chinese verb ‘arrive’ *dao*, this ability function of *ba* might have come from the verb sense ‘arrive, reach’ (come to be). Further detailed studies of other Karen language may help determine the directionality of the changes.

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¹⁰ This will be discussed further in Chapter 6.