

agent (*tā* 's/he' in [52]), not the one affected (*wǒ* 'I' in [52]). Therefore, the agent, which is the *bèi* noun phrase, not the one affected, is the one that immediately precedes the *bǎ* noun phrase.

16.4 Variant Forms

At the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned the existence of variant forms of (1):

- (1) NP₁ *bèi* NP₂ verb
 direct object agent

One important variant form was already pointed out in (3), where the agent noun phrase is absent:

- (3) NP₁ *bèi* verb
 direct object

The most common variant forms involve substituting *bèi* with *gěi*, *jiào*, *ràng*. Thus (53) is well formed with any of the four passive markers:

- (53) *wǒ* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{bèi} \\ \text{gěi} \\ \text{jiào} \\ \text{ràng} \end{array} \right\}$ *tā* *tōu* *—* *le* *liǎng* *kuài* *qián*
 I 3sg steal — PFV two dollar money

I had two dollars stolen by him/her.

Which of the four passive markers is preferred seems to depend on what dialect of Mandarin is being spoken. A distinction can be made, however, between *bèi* on the one hand and the last three markers in (53) on the other. *Bèi* has no meaning of its own. In other words, it is a function word, or a grammatical word. It has no meaning other than the function of occurring in the passive construction. The other three words, *gěi*, *jiào*, and *ràng*, besides being able to serve in the passive construction, are content words with independent meanings. *Gěi* is a verb meaning 'give', and it can also serve as the benefactive marker by immediately preceding the indirect object; *jiào* is a verb meaning 'call, be named, order'; and *ràng* is a verb

meaning 'let, allow'. Hence, when *bèi* is used in a sequence such as

- (54) NP *bèi* (NP) verb

the sentence unambiguously signals a passive construction. If, however, *gěi*, *jiào*, or *ràng* is used in place of *bèi* in (54), the sentence represented by the pattern given in (54) may be ambiguous. For example, (53) with *jiào* could mean, 'I told him/her to steal two dollars'; with *gěi*, it could mean, 'I stole two dollars for him/her'; with *ràng*, it could mean, 'I allowed him/her to steal two dollars'.

jiào and *ràng* also differ from *bèi* in that the former two cannot occur as a replacement for *bèi* in (3), where the agent noun phrase is absent. Thus, (55) is unacceptable:

- (55) **wǒ* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{jiào} \\ \text{ràng} \end{array} \right\}$ *tōu* *—* *le* *liǎng* *kuài* *qián*
 I steal — PFV two dollar money
 (I was stolen two dollars.)

Speakers differ as to whether *gěi* may serve as a variant of *bèi* in pattern (3), where the agent is absent:

- (56) ??*wǒ* *gěi* *tōu* *—* *le* *liǎng* *kuài* *qián*
 I steal — PFV two dollar money
 I was stolen two dollars.

Two other variants of (1) involve the use of *jiào* . . . *gěi* and *ràng* . . . *gěi* in the following form:

- (57) NP₁ $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{jiào} \\ \text{ràng} \end{array} \right\}$ NP₂ *gěi* verb

The following examples illustrate (57):

- (58) Qín *cháo* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{jiào} \\ \text{ràng} \end{array} \right\}$ Hān *cháo* *gěi* *mìe* LE
 Qín dynasty Han dynasty Han dynasty overthrow PFV/CRS

The Qin dynasty was overthrown by the Han dynasty.