On yi 'one item', lia 'two items', and sa 'three items'

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On *Yí* 'One Item', *Liǎ* 'Two Items', and *Sā* 'Three Items'

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Abstract: In this article, I examine the expression *yí* 'one item', as compared to the expressions *liǎ* 'two items', and *sā* 'three items' in Peking Mandarin. I discuss the character transcriptions of these expressions, give an overview of their previous treatments, and compare the current usage of *yí* with that of *liǎ* and *sā*. Based on the differences between these expressions, I conclude that while *liǎ* and *sā* are words (viz. independent carriers of the meanings 'two items' and 'three items'), the meaning 'one item' is represented in Peking Mandarin both by the expression *yí* 'one item' and by the expression *yige* 'an item'.

0. This article comments on the expression *yí* ʹone item, a specimen ofʹ (e.g. *wǒmen nàr yǒu yí hòu huāyuár* 'we have a back garden there') as compared to the expressions *liǎ* 'two items' (e.g. *nèi liǎ háizi shi dǎjià* 'those two children had a fight'), and *sā* 'three items' (e.g. *wǒ sā duō yuè méi liù niǎor* 'I haven't taken my birds out for a stroll for over three months').

All expressions are described as attested in a corpus of spoken Peking Mandarin that I collected in 2000-2001. The corpus consists of informal and unplanned conversations with 42 native speakers of Peking Mandarin of various age groups. I have tried to record informants who were not exposed to university education and whose language, as a consequence, retained those features that distinguish it from the official educational model, Standard Mandarin. The conversations range in length from 30 minutes to one hour, they are transcribed into the Hànyǔ Pīnyīn system of transcription and are saved as computer texts. In its written form, the corpus comprises 17,844 sentences (for further details on the corpus, see Chirkova 2003: 6-11).

Despite the high frequency of its use, the expression *yí* ʹone item, a specimen ofʹ has so far been only sketchily described in reference literature (Dù 1993, Wiedenhof 1995, Zhōu 1998). This expression is an equivalent in informal speech of the phrase *yíge* 'one item' or its weakened form *yige* 'an item'. In the same way, the expressions *liǎ* 'two items' and *sā* 'three items' are generally considered equivalents of *liǎngge* 'two items' and *sānge* 'three items' respectively. In this article, I discuss the character transcriptions of these expressions (§1), give

an overview of their previous treatments (§2), and compare the current usage of the expression *yí* in the corpus with that of *liǎ* and *sā* (§3).

1. *Yí*, *liǎ*, *sā*: character transcriptions

The expressions *yí, liǎ* and *sā* are typical for an informal style of speech, and are rarely written. Until recently these words did not have well established character renderings. For example, in Chao's article[1] 'A note on *liǎ* (俩), *sā*, etc.' (1936), only the word *liǎ* has a written form, 俩, and the expression *sā* is given in transcription. In fact, as noted by Chao (1936: 33), the character rendering for *liǎ*, 俩, pronounced as *liǎng* and defined as 伎俩 *jìliǎng* 'skill, craft' in the *Jíyùn* 集韵 [Collected rhymes] dictionary, is not semantically related to the word *liǎ* 'two items', which only happens to be written with the same character. Since the publication of Chao's article, *sā* also acquired a written form, viz. 仨. Currently, most dictionaries of Peking Mandarin (cf. Chén et al. 1997, Xú 1996) and even some general dictionaries of Mandarin usage (e.g. Guō 2000) list both words, *liǎ* and *sā*, with their character transcriptions.[2]

The expression *yí* is currently left without a written form and is usually not included in reference books on Chinese or on Peking Mandarin. Based on the character renderings for *liǎ* and *sā*, which are combinations of the 'single standing man' (*dānlìrén*) radical with the numerals *liǎng* 'two' and *sān* 'three' respectively, Wiedenhof (1995: 66, n. 15) proposes a Chinese character spelling for the expression *yí*, viz. 亻一, which consists of the 'single standing man' radical and the character for the numeral *yī* 'one'.

2. Previous treatments

Etymologically, the three expressions *yí*, *liǎ* and *sā* are all fusions of the numerals *yī* 'one', *liǎng* 'two', and *sān* 'three', respectively, with the measure word *ge* 'item'. All numerals from *yī* 'one' to *shí* 'ten' in Peking Mandarin can form such fusions with the measure word *ge*, as described by Chao (1936, 1968: 570-571) and more recently by Zhōu (1998: 137). Chao (1968: 571) notes that

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[1] In quotations from Chao (1936, 1968), the original transcriptions have as a rule been converted into Hànyǔ Pīnyīn. Chao's transcriptions from his (1936) work have been retained in §2 as more adequately reflecting the phonetic details of the change from the expression *liǎngge* to the expression *liǎ* and from the expression *sānge* to the expression *sā*.

[2] For *liǎ* see Chén et al. (1997: 226), Guō (2000: 780), Xú (1996: 246); for *sā* see Guō (2000: 1074), Xú (1996: 345).

such fusions are possible because the intervocalic *g* in the measure word *ge* easily weakens into a sonorant [ɣ] and then disappears, producing such expressions as *sì'e* instead of *sìge* and *wǔ'e* for *wǔge*.

Chao (1936: 37-38) offers the following phonetic details on the change of the expressions *liǎngge* and *sānge* to the forms *liǎ* and *sā*. First, he notes (1936: 37, original transcriptions) that in northern and central Chinese dialects, nasal endings are 'more of the nature of the second element of a diphthong than a stable final consonant.' Therefore, the weak *-ng* in *liang*³ readily becomes only a nasalizing factor of the preceding vowel, resulting in the form *liã*³. The *n* in *san*¹*-ko*⁴ 'three items', on the other hand, easily becomes velarized into *-ng*, and then reduces, as is the case with *liang*³, to the nasalizing factor of the preceding vowel *a*, i.e. *sã*¹. Second, the intervocalic *k* [g] of the measure word *ko*⁴ 'item' weakens into [ɣ] and disappears, with the effect of *liang*³*-ko*⁴ and *san*¹*-ko*⁴ becoming the forms *liã*³*-ə* and *sã*¹*-ə*. Finally, Chao points out that because neither *liã*³*-ə* nor *sã*¹*-ə* are naturally stable sounds in the dialect, they fall into the slots of the nearest phonologically possible syllables, namely *lia*³ and *sa*¹.

Chao also states that in a similar fusion of the numeral *pa*¹ 'eight' with the measure word *ko*⁴ 'item', the ending *-ə* is likewise easily dropped. He states (p. 37) that he had never heard a clear case of *pa*¹⁽²⁾*-ko*⁴> *pa*¹⁽²⁾*-ə* 'eight items' and that this form is realized either as the intermediate weak form *pa*¹⁽²⁾*- gə* or simply as a somewhat lengthened *pa*(:)¹. The reason for the instability and the eventual dropping of *-ə*, in Chao's explanation, is the aversion to a hiatus between a low and a mid vowel, as is also the case with the forms *lia*³ and *sa*¹. In his *Grammar* (1968) he recapitulates this conclusion, pointing out (p. 571) that:

> [w]ith the low vowel *a* in *liǎng*, *sān* and *bā*, the dropping of the final consonant leaves only a lengthened *a* with a centralized vocalic ending, and since such a low diphthong fits badly the rest of the phonological system, it falls into the familiar slot of a simple *a*, thus resulting in the paradoxical form of a shorter phonological shape representing a longer grammatical form.

All other fusions of numerals with the measure word *ge* 'item', namely *i*²*-ə* 'one item', *ssû*⁴*-ə* 'four items', *wu*³*-ə* 'five items', *liu*⁴*-ə* 'six items', *ch'i*¹⁽²⁾*-ə* 'seven items', *chiu*³*-ə* 'nine items', and *shih*²*-ə* 'ten items', are reported by Chao to retain a schwa.

In his *Běijīng kóuyǔ yǔfǎ* Zhōu (1998: 137) gives a somewhat different list of the fusions of numerals with the measure word *ge*. Note also that Zhōu makes no reference to Chao's works. Chao's and Zhōu's lists are compared in Table 1 with dissimilar forms printed in boldface:

	Chao (1936, 1968)	Zhōu (1998)
'one item'	**yí'e**	**yí**
'two items'	*liǎ*	*liǎ*
'three items'	*sā*	*sā*
'four items'	*sì'e*	**sè**/*sì'e*
'five items'	*wǔ'e*	*wǔ'e*
'six items'	*liù'e*	*liù'e*
'seven items'	**qī'e/qí'e**	**qí'e**
'eight items'	**bā'e/bá'e** or **bā**	**bá'e**
'nine items'	*jiǔ'e*	*jiǔ'e*
'ten items'	*shí'e*	*shí'e*

Table 1—Chao's (1936, 1968) and Zhōu's (1998) lists of fusions of numerals with *ge*

The expression 'one item', claimed to have a schwa by Chao, i.e. *yí'e*, is described as having no schwa by Zhōu, viz. *yí*. The expressions 'seven items' and 'eight items' are reported by Chao to exist in the first, *qī'e* and *bā'e*, and in the second tone, *qí'e* and *bá'e*. Zhōu gives them only in the second tone, *qí'e* and *bá'e*. Moreover, the expression *bā'e/bá'e* 'eight items', which according to Chao can either retain or drop the schwa, is said to retain a schwa by Zhōu.

Generally, the numeral *yī* 'one' changes its original first tone to the second tone, *yí*, when followed by a syllable in the fourth tone, as in *yí kuài* 'one piece'. The underlying fourth tone of the measure word *ge* can likewise lead to the change of the original first tone in *yī* 'one' to the second tone, *yí*. The numerals *qī* 'seven' and *bā* 'eight' can also follow this tone sandhi, as pointed out by Chao in his *Grammar* (1968: 571). However, Chao also states that this tone sandhi is present 'in the speech of a slight majority of the speakers.' (ibid.). Hence, Chao's account of the fusions 'seven items' and 'eight items' as *qī'e/qí'e* and *bā'e/bá'e* appears to reflect this phenomenon.

In my corpus, fusions of numerals above three with the measure word *ge* are infrequent. Numerals above two, and accordingly their combinations with the

measure word *ge*, occur on a much smaller scale than the numerals *yī* 'one' (or its weakened counterpart *yi* 'a') and *liǎng* 'two', as well as their collocations with *ge*. The expression *yige* 'an item' is often used to introduce a new specific entity in discourse. Similar to the indefinite article *a/an* in English, it can serve to narrow down the reference of the following noun to a single member of a class. The expression *liǎngge* 'two items' is used when speaking about couples of people and pairs of objects. Compare the frequency of occurrence in the corpus of fusions of the numerals from one to ten with the measure word *ge*:

Fusion	Total in the corpus
yí 'one item'	180
liǎ 'two items'	181
sā 'three items'	25
sì 'four items'	4
wǔ 'five items'	1
liù 'six items'	0
qí 'seven items'	1
bá 'eight items'	1
jiǔ 'nine items'	2
shí 'ten times'	5

Table 2—Frequency of fusions of numerals from one to ten with the measure word *ge*

Interestingly, the fusion *yí* and the fusions from *sì* 'four items' to *shí* 'ten items' are realized as their corresponding numerals, which are, moreover, often lengthened. See, for instance, the expression *wǔ* 'five items' in the next example, which is realized as the lengthened numeral *wǔ* 'five'. None of the fusions in the table bears any trace of an audible schwa. The fusions *qí* 'seven items' and *bá* 'eight items' are pronounced in the second tone. Given that in both cases they are followed by words in the fourth tone, i.e. *qí bài* 'seven prayers' and *bá dà xuéyuàn* 'eight big institutes', my data leave open the possibility that some speakers of Peking Mandarin use the fusions *qī* and *bā* in the first tone, as attested by Chao.

Consider the following sentence with the forms *wǔ* 'five items' and *qí* 'seven items'. Here, the informant tells a story about the Kāngxī Emperor (1662-1723). In this story, a Muslim minister of the Emperor tells him how many times Mus-

lims have to pray during the day. First he uses the expression *wǔge bài* 'five prayers' with the measure word ge in front of the noun *bài* 'prayer' and then continues with the expression *wǔ bài,* with the measure word ge incorporated into the fusion *wǔ* 'five items':[3]

(1) | Zhèi | ge | bài... | zhèi | wǔ | ge | bài | dōu | shi |
     | this | item | prayer | this | five | item | prayer | all | be |

| shìjiè | shang | tǒngyī | de, | dōu | shi | nèi | ge |
| world | up | unify | SUB | all | be | that | item |

| diǎr. | Shuō | yǒu | de | shí | shi | wǔ | bài, | yǒu |
| place | speak | exist | SUB | time | be | five.item | prayer | exist |

| de | shíhou | shi | qí | bài, | shuō | yǒu | de |
| SUB | time | be | seven.item | prayer | speak | exist | SUB |

| shíhour | jiu | shi | wǒ | yīnwei | máng, | méi | gōngfur |
| time | just | be | 1S | because | busy | not.exist | free.time |

| lǐbài, | dàn | wǒ | gěi | ta | bǔshang. |
| pray | but | 1S | give | 3 | make.up.for |

'This prayer... these five prayers are the same in the whole world, all of them take place there. So he said, sometimes I pray five times and sometimes seven times, and he also said, sometimes I don't have time to pray because I am busy, but I will make up for it.'

As shown in Table 2, the expression *yí* is used as often as the expression *liǎ* 'two items' in the corpus. Despite its high frequency in the spoken language, this form is studied much less than the expressions *liǎ* 'two items' and *sā* 'three items'. To my knowledge, *yí* has so far been attested only by Dù (1993: 142), Wiedenhof (1995: 65-66), and Zhōu (1998: 137). Dù, who first directed attention to this usage, described the expression *yí* as appearing invariably in the second tone. Further, he identified it with the numeral 一 *yī/yi* 'one'. Thus, he reported that the numeral *yī* can be directly followed by a nominal phrase (which construction he names the '*yí* + noun' pattern, '一+名' 格式 '*yí* + *míng*' *géshì*)

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[3] See "Abbreviations" at end of article for meaning of SUB, 1S, 3, etc.

without an intervening measure word. In reality, the invariable appearance of the expression *yí* in the second tone suggests that this expression is a fusion of the numeral *yī/yi* 'one/a' and the measure word *ge*. The underlying fourth tone of this measure word, *gè*, has led to the second tone of *yí*, as noted by Wiedenhof (1995: 66). Hence, the expression *yí*, pronounced clearly without a schwa by my informants, is a fusion of the numeral *yī/yi* and the measure word *ge* rather than the numeral *yī/yi* 'one/a' occurring with a nominal phrase without a measure word. In the corpus, this expression appears in the second tone, *yí*, and in the neutral tone, *yi*, in rapid speech. I consider all instances of the use of *yí* or *yi* followed by a nominal expression without an intervening measure word in the corpus as examples of such a fusion.

As already noted, of all fusions of a numeral with the measure word *ge*, only the forms *liǎ* and *sā* have been well documented. Chao, who comments on them in his aforementioned article 'A note on *liǎ* (俩), *sā*, etc.' (1936) and in his *Grammar* (1968), outlines the limitations of their use (1936: 34-36, 1968: 570-571). He also addresses the common misconception that the expression *liǎ* 'two items' written with the 'single standing man' radical, 俩, has a special reference to persons, whereas in fact it can be used both for persons and things (1936: 33, 1968: 570). He concludes (1936: 36) that '*liǎ* and *sā* are the equivalent, in informal style, of *liǎng* and *sān*, respectively, plus a numerary adjunct for individual objects or persons.' He notes that other fusions of numerals with *ge* are possible, but does not comment on them in detail.

Let us now proceed to an overview of the usage of the expression *yí* in the corpus as compared to that of *liǎ* and *sā*. The two following features of fusions of numerals with the measure word *ge* have to be borne in mind for the comparison. First, in Mandarin, a combination of a numeral with a measure word can serve as a nominal or an attributive phrase. For instance, in the next sentence, the expression *liǎngge* 'the two of them, both of them' serves as a nominal phrase. In this example, the informant speaks about her two sisters who did not have a chance to study in their youth.

(2)　　Liǎng　ge　　mìng　bú　tài　hǎo　de.
　　　　two　　item　fate　not　too　good　SUB

　　　'For both of them, life was tough.'

The term attributive phrase refers to words or expressions that serve to modify nominal heads. Consider example (3), in which the expression *sānge* 'three

items' is used as an attributive and modifies the noun *qí* 'banner'. The informant talks about the administrative system of the Eight Banners, *Bā Qí zhìdù* 八旗制度, during the Qīng dynasty (1644-1911):

(3) Zhèi   sān   ge   qí   shi   huángdì qīnzì   zhǎngguǎn.
     this   three item banner be   emperor personally administer

     'These three banners were administered personally by the Emperor.'

Given that the fusions *yí, liǎ,* and *sā* are equivalents of their formal counterparts *yíge* or *yige, liǎngge,* and *sānge,* these fusions can likewise serve as nominal and attributive phrases. Consider, for instance, the following examples, in which the expression *liǎ* serves as a nominal phrase, in sentence (4), and as an attributive phrase in sentence (5).

(4) Nǐ...   nǐmen   liǎ   suìshu   kěnéng   dōu   chàbuduō
     2S   2P   two.item age   possible all   similar

     gǎnshang   nèi   shíjiān   le.
     catch.up   that time   PF

     'You… you two should be of almost the same age, so you witnessed these happenings.'

In example (5), the informant speaks about the time when Peking was occupied by the Japanese. He recalls that then one could exchange eggs for clothes with the Japanese. Note that the word *dàbáiguǒ* is the Chinese approximation of the Japanese word *tamago* 卵 'egg':

(5) Shuō,   tā   nàr   yǒu   yīshang   a,   ná   liǎ
     speak   3   there exist clothes   ah   take two.item

     jīdàn,   dàbáiguǒ,   huàn   liǎ   yīshang,   huàn   diǎr
     egg   *tamago*   exchange two.item   clothes   exchange a.little

     tā   de   dōngxi.
     3   SUB   thing

     'He said, they have clothes there, take two eggs, *tamago*, to exchange for two items of clothing, to exchange for a little bit of their stuff.'

Second, another feature of the fusions of numerals with the measure word *ge* important for this analysis is that such fusions are weakened forms of their respective equivalents. As noted by Chao (1968: 567), a stressed combination of the numeral *yī* and a measure word, in this case *yíge*, differs from an unstressed combination of *yi* with a measure word, *yige*, somewhat as English *one* differs from *a* and *an*, which are also derived from a weakened *one*. In a similar manner, the stressed form of *liǎng* 'two' followed by a measure word, *liǎngge* in this case, means '(exactly) two', while the weakened form *liang* followed by a measure word in its full tone or in the neutral tone means 'a couple of, a few' (Chao 1968: 570). Chao also states that the weakened form of *yi* 'a' followed by a measure word and the weakened form of *liang* 'two, a couple' followed by a measure word occur only after verbs. In the next section, I will demonstrate that the expression *sā* 'three items' is often used as a weakened form of *sānge* '(exactly) three'.

3. *Yí* 'one item' as compared to *liǎ* 'two items' and *sā* 'three items'

3.1. The first notable feature of *yí* as compared to the expression *liǎ* and *sā*, is that while *yíge* or *yige* occur much more often than their informal counterpart *yí*, the expressions *liǎngge* and *sānge* occur less frequently than their informal equivalents *liǎ* and *sā*. Consider the following table:

	Total
yí 'one item, a specimen of'	180
yíge/yige 'one item'/'an item'	1112
liǎ 'two items'	181
liǎngge 'two items'	91
sā 'three items'	25
sānge 'three items'	14

Table 3—Number of occurrences of *yí* versus *yíge*, *liǎ* versus *liǎngge*, and *sā* versus *sānge*

Note that the expression *sā* is not frequently used in the corpus and occurs in only ten out of a total of 52 recording sessions. I counted the number of occurrences of *sānge* 'three items' only in those 10 sessions which have the form *sā*. The expressions *yí* 'one item', *yíge/yige* 'one item'/'an item', and *liǎ* 'two items' and *liǎngge* 'two items' have been calculated for all 52 sessions.

The high frequency of *yíge* and *yige* in the corpus reflects the wide range of their use. The stressed expression *yíge* normally appears as a nominal phrase and in stressed negation, *yíge (yě/dōu) méi yǒu* 'there is not a single one'. The weakened form *yige* 'an item' is usually used attributively.

The expression *yí* can replace both the stressed *yíge* and the unstressed *yige*, as examples (6) through (8) show. In the next sentence, in which the expression *yí* 'one item' is used as a nominal phrase, the informant describes two temples in the outskirts of Peking:

(6) | Yí | jiào | Tánzhèsì, | yí | ge | jiào | Jiètáisì. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| one.item | call | *Tánzhè*.temple | one | item | call | *Jiètái*.temple |

'One is called Tánzhè Temple and the other is called Jiètái Temple.'

In example (7), the expression *yí* is used in the negation *méi yǒu yíge* 'there is not a single one'. The informant answers my question whether Manchu women had the habit of foot-binding.

(7) | Bù, | suǒyǒu | de, | nǐ | kàn | nèi | ge… | duì, | tāmen | qí |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not | all | SUB | 2S | see | that | item | right | 3P | ride |

mǎ	gēn	zhe	zhàngfu	qù	yóuliè,	qù…	qù…	qù
horse	follow	DUR	husband	go	hunt	go	go	go

dǎzhàng	shéme	de,	suǒyǐ	suǒyǒu	de	Mǎnzúrén,
fight	what	SUB	therefore	all	SUB	Manchu.person

Qírén	jiu	děngyú	shi	méi	yǒu	yí	ge
banner.person	just	be.equal	be	not.exist	exist	one	item

qí	mǎ	de…	méi	yǒu…	bú	shi,	shéme	méi
ride	horse	SUB	not.exist	exist	not	be	what	not.exist

yǒu	yí	qí	mǎ	de…	méi	yǒu	yí	ge
exist	one.item	ride	horse	SUB	not.exist	exist	one	item

guǒ	jiǎo	de,	méi	yǒu.
bind	feet	SUB	not.exist	exist

'No, all... you see eh... right, they went on horses to hunt with their husbands, to... to... to fight and to do other stuff, therefore none of the Manchus, that's to say none of the Banner people rode horses... rode..., no, what am I saying, had her feet bound, none of them.'

In the next example, the expression *yí* substitutes the stressed *yíge* in the vivid reduplication *yíge dòng yí dòng de* meaning 'one trench after the other'. The informant recalls that at some point during the time of the Kuomintang (1911-1949), the city of Peking was surrounded by trenches.

(8) Jiu   Guómíndǎng   de   shíhour, jìng shi gěi   wā   de
     just *Kuomintang* SUB   time   all   be   give dig SUB

     ya   yí   ge   dòng yí   dòng de,   shi a,   cáng
     PH   one   item hole one.item hole SUB   be   ah   hide

     dāng   bīng   de   shǐ
     serve.as soldier SUB   use

'So, at the time of the Kuomintang, they were digging all over trench after trench, right?, to serve as trenches for soldiers.'

Such instances where the expression *yí* substitutes the stressed *yíge* are rare in the corpus. The use of *yí/yi* instead of the weakened *yige* 'an item' as an attributive after verbs, on the other hand, is far more frequent. Note also that Dù (1993) mentions only attributive usages of the expression *yí 'one item, a specimen of'*. In most cases in the corpus, informants tend to use *yige* 'an item' on the first mention of a person or thing talked about and the form *yí/yi* on the second mention of this person or thing. Consider the following examples:

(9) Dào   niánye   zǎi   yí   ge   zhū. Zǎi
     arrive year.night slaughter one   item pig   slaughter

     yí   zhū hǎohāor   de   chī diǎr.
     one.item pig good.good SUB   eat a.little

'On the New Year's eve, it was customary to slaughter one pig. They slaughtered a pig to eat one's fill for once.'

(10) Géi   nǐ   shuō   yí   ge   gùshi   ba,   shuō   yí   gùshi
      give 2S   speak one item   story   SUG   speak one.item story

      bu   shuō   le,   tài   lèi   le.
      not   speak PF   too   be.tired PF

      'I'll tell you a story, tell a story and that will be it, I'm too tired.'

Opposite examples, namely the use of the expression *yí/yi* 'one item'/'an item' on the first mention of a person or thing and the use of the expression *yige* 'an item' on the second mention of this person and thing, are also attested in the corpus, but they are far less frequent.

3.2. As discussed in the preceding sections, *yí* occurs in the corpus mostly as an attributive expression. By comparison, the expressions *liǎ* and *sā* are used as nominal phrases much more often than *yí*. Consider the following table:

	yí 'one item'	*liǎ* 'two items'	*sā* 'three items'
Number of occurrences as nominal phrases	4	79	5
Total in the corpus	180	181	25

Table 4—Frequency of *yí*, *liǎ*, and *sā* as nominal phrases

The high frequency of the use of *liǎ* 'two items' as a nominal phrase is due to its frequent occurrence in the meaning 'the two/both [of us, you, them]', e.g. *nǐmen liǎ* 'you two' in example (4).

It is interesting that the addition of *liǎ* is equally possible after singular and plural (with 们 *men*) forms of personal pronouns. For instance, in the following sentence, the informant uses the expression *liǎ* with the third person pronoun *tǎ*, which can be used in Peking Mandarin both when referring to a singular person or object or to numerous persons or objects, and with the singular second person pronoun *nǐ*. In this example, the informant talks about two young Muslims who killed each other in a fight.

(11) Tā   liǎ   mái   yíkuàr   le,   shuō   ní   liǎ   āi
      3   two.item   bury together PF   speak 2S   two.item   be.near.to

zhe   ba.
DUR   SUG

'The two of them were buried together, as people said: "Rest side by side, the two of you." '

An example of the use of *liǎ* 'two items' with the plural second person pronoun *nǐmen* is given in sentence (4).

3.3. Most informants use both the original forms (*yíge/yige*, *liǎngge*, *sānge*) and the fused forms (*yí*, *liǎ*, *sā*) in their speech. Some stick to either original forms or fused forms. For instance, a few young informants use only the expressions *yíge* and *yige* and do not use their fused form *yí*. Several older informants use the expression *sā*, and do not use its original form *sānge*. The following observations refer to those speakers who use both forms. In the case of *yíge* 'one item' or *yige* 'an item' versus *yí 'one item, a specimen of'*, the original form is used in the majority of cases. In the case of *liǎ* and *sā*, on the other hand, informants usually choose to use either the fused form predominantly, or the original form predominantly. In other words, when informants prefer the expression *liǎ* 'two items' or *sā* 'three items', they would use the expression *liǎngge* 'two items' or *sānge* 'three items' only in a few cases, and vice versa. For example, one of my informants (58 years old) has a strong preference for the fused form *liǎ* 'two items'. In the six sessions that I recorded with this informant, he used *liǎ* 42 times and *liǎngge* 2 times.

The original and the fused forms convey different structural and discourse meanings.[4] The fused forms are normally used as weakened counterparts of the original forms. For example, similar to *yíge* versus *yí* (discussed in §3.1), when both *sānge* 'three items' and *sā* 'three items' appear in the speech of one and the same informant, the former appears on the first mention of the thing or person talked about, whereas the latter appears on further mentions of this thing or person. Consider the following sentence, in which the informant speaks about traditional burials in old Peking. He notes that a certain ritual could only be performed if the deceased had three sons: *bìxū děi yǒu sānge érzi* 'he must have three sons'. Four sentences later, still speaking about the same ritual, he uses the form *sā* instead of the form *sānge*:

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[4] I owe this remark and the related generalization in §4 to an anonymous reviewer of the JCLTA.

(12)   Zhè   děngyú   sā   érzi   cái   dádào   zhèi   tiáojiàn.
          this   be.equal   three.item   son   only   reach.arrive   this   condition

       'This means that only with three sons you can meet this requirement.'

The same tendency, viz. to use fusions of numerals with ge as weakened forms of actual combinations of numerals with the measure word ge is equally characteristic to all other fusions. Consider, for instance, the use of the expression *wǔ* 'five items' after the expression *wǔge* in example (1).

3.4. In his *Grammar* (1968: 570), Chao states that there is a common misconception that the word *liǎ*, written with the 'single standing man' radical, 俩, has special reference to persons, even though *liǎ* is grammatically equivalent to its counterpart *liǎngge*, and can be used both for persons and for things. In my corpus, *yí*, *liǎ*, and *sā* confirm this conclusion and can indeed be used both for animate and inanimate objects, for instance, *yí nǚ de* 'a woman' versus *yí dà tīng* 'a big hall', *liǎ shénxiān* 'two immortals' versus *liǎ yuè* 'two months', *sā érzi* 'three sons' versus *sā dìr* 'three places'. However, my informants tend to use the expressions *yí* and *sā* mainly for inanimate objects, whereas the expression *liǎ* 'two items' is used mostly when referring to people (119 instances of 181 occurrences of *liǎ*), which fact argues for a shift in the use of this form from Chao's times.

4. Conclusion

The expression *yí 'one item, a specimen of'* in Peking Mandarin is realized as the numeral *yī* 'one' in the second tone (*yí*) or in the neutral tone (*yi*), without any audible schwa. Other fusions of numerals with the measure word *ge* are likewise realized in the corpus as their corresponding numerals, which are often lengthened. Therefore, these fusions exemplify the phenomenon of a 'shorter phonological shape standing for a longer grammatical form.'

The differences that exist between the form *yí* and the forms *liǎ* and *sā* outlined in the preceding sections may be explained along the lines of Chao's analysis of the form *pa*[1(2)]*-ə* 'eight items'. I propose that, given the phonetic instability of the form *yí'e* 'one item' (this form is not a naturally stable sound in Peking Mandarin and falls into the slot of *yí*), the expression 'one item, a specimen of' is sometimes realized as *yí* (mostly as an attributive phrase) and at other times as *yige* (both as a nominal and as an attributive phrase). The expressions *yí* and *yige* serve as variants of each other in this meaning, i.e. 'one item, a specimen of'.

This analysis accounts for the disproportions of the use of *yí* as compared to that of *yíge* and *yige*.

Moreover, the preference of informants to use either the expressions *liǎngge* and *sānge* or their fused forms *liǎ* and *sā* clearly indicates that the latter are words on their own, which is to say that they are independent carriers of the meanings 'two items' and 'three items' respectively. The meaning 'one item', on the other hand, is represented by two variants: the expressions *yí* 'one item, a specimen of' and *yige* 'an item'.

To those informants who use both the fused and the original forms, these forms convey different structural and discourse meanings. The fused form is usually a weakened equivalent of the original form, which occurs on the second or further mentions of the persons or things designated by the form. The fused form is moreover more likely to be used attributively. The original form is used on the first mention of the persons or things talked about and can function both as an attributive and a nominal phrase.

提要：本文论述北京话里的数词与量词合音形式，并比较 *yí* 和 *liǎ*'俩'、*sā* '仨' 的用法。作者拟谈此形式的汉字标音，概述相关评论，并对作者自己采集的北京话语料库里的 *yí* 和 *liǎ* '俩'、*sā* '仨' 做统计分析。在此基础上，作者的结论是 *liǎ* '俩' 和 *sā* '仨' 可以分别独立表达 '两个' 和 '三个' 的意义，而 '一个' 这个意义在北京话里可以用 *yí* 和 '一个' 两种形式同时表达。

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Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person personal pronouns
DUR	durative aspect expressed by the particle *zhe*
P	plural
PF	perfective aspect expressed by the particle *le*
PH	pause for the hearer expressed by the particle *a* or its variant *ya*
S	singular
SUB	subordination expressed by the particle *de*
SUG	suggestion expressed by the particle *ba*