Chapter 7

Conclusion

The second elements of V-V compounds attract Chinese linguists’ attention all the time. Due to its late appearance and regional use, however, post-verbal *diao* has received little investigation. With its highly increasing frequency of usage, it is necessary to carry out a close examination on post-verbal *diao*.

Post-verbal *diao* always follows a verb to form a compound, but not every verb can go with *diao*. The first question arouses our curiosity is what kind of verbs can co-occur with *diao*. After modifying Chen’s (2003) classification and adding the result of our own observation, there are ten kinds of transitive verbs usually being the preceding verb in a V-*diao* compound: (a) cutting verbs (b) giving verbs (c) psyche verbs (d) throwing verbs (e) consuming verbs (f) separating verbs (g) hitting verbs (h) killing verbs (i) deleting verbs (j) clearing verbs. When it comes to intransitive verbs, we find that unaccusative verbs occur with *diao* more often than unergative verbs do. We suggest this is because *diao* is usually associated with something taken away from the speaker, which is a disfavored situation for people. In other words, people would not voluntarily create this kind of situation. Therefore, unergative verbs which bear agentive argument are natural rarely selected to go with *diao*. From another perspective, we show that verbs of every situation type, i.e. State, Activity, Accomplishment, Semelfactive, and Achievement, can co-occur with *diao*.

There are two main questions about post-verbal *diao* we dealt with: one is its meanings, and the other is its syntactic status. The discussion starts from the functions of post-verbal *diao* in situation type. By using the adverb *butingde* ‘nonstop’ to test sentences containing V-*diao* compounds, we find that all of these sentences become telic ones after adding *diao* into them. In other words, *diao* has the ability to provide
an endpoint to V-diao compounds. According to Smith (1997), endpoints can be divided into two kinds: initial endpoint and final endpoint. When diao occurs with a State verb, it offers an initial endpoint to the V-diao compound, while it occurs with an Activity, an Accomplishment, a Semelfactive, or an Achievement verb, it offers a final endpoint to the V-diao compound. Based on the different meanings diao has, we distinguish it into three types: the first type denotes ‘to be removed in a downward direction’, the second type ‘to be removed’, and the third type indicates an inchoative without bearing semantic content. Corresponding to its three different semantic content, diao also has three different syntactic status: resultative complement, phase marker, and aspect marker. The allowance of appearing in a two-clause sentence pattern and the compatibility with potential infixes de and bu are the two criteria we adopt to discriminate these three syntactic status. At last, we combine the semantic content and syntactic status diao has and argue that when diao acts as a resultative complement, it means ‘to be removed in a downward direction’, when it acts as a phase marker, it means ‘to be removed’, and when it acts as an aspect marker, it bears a grammatical meaning indicating inchoative.

After discussing the preceding verbs and post-verbal diao respectively, we turn our attention to V-diao compounds. Recall diao has the ability to provide an endpoint to V-diao compounds, that is, every V-diao compound should be telic. As Smith (1997) claims, Accomplishments and Achievements are the two situation types with [+telic] feature. Then a question naturally arouses in our mind: Will V-diao compounds be Accomplishments, Achievements, or both? The outcome of our inspection shows that when diao goes with State, Semelfactive and Achievement verbs, the V-diao compounds will be Achievements, when diao goes with Activity and Accomplishment verbs, the V-diao compounds will be Accomplishments. Except the situation types of
V-diao compounds, we are interested in their argument structures as well. In most cases, the argument structure of a V-diao compound is a composition of the argument structure of the preceding verb and that of diao. However, diao will suppress the Goal argument when co-occurring with three-place transactional verbs like mai ‘to sell’ and gei ‘to give’; it will create an argument for the V-diao compound when the argument of the preceding verb and that of diao are incompatible; it will suppress an argument of the preceding verb and create a new one for the V-diao compound when occurring with verbs like xie ‘to write’, shuo ‘to speak’, shui ‘to sleep’, etc. which have an incremental theme.

In the end of our study, we take grammaticalization to account for the polysemy and the multiple syntactic status of post-verbal diao. Hopper (1991) proposes five principles to help linguists judge whether a form is in the process of grammaticalization with synchronic data. The five principles are Layering, Divergence, Specialization, Persistence, and De-categorialization. Because diao follows four out of the five principles (i.e. Layering, Divergence, Persistence, and De-categorialization), we suggest it is in the process of grammaticalization. At last, the cline of post-verbal diao is recommended as follows.
Resultative complement > phase marker > aspect marker

Besides what we have discussed in the present study, there are still some related topics worth exploring. For instance, the headness of V-V compounds has long been a controversial question for linguists. Some think the first verb is the head, some the second verb, and still others think there is no head (or both of the two verbs are the head). The investigation of the headness of V-diao compounds may help us understand how the head of a V-V compound is determined. Another untouched yet meaningful question is why post-verbal diao enters grammaticalization. Metaphorical
transfer and pragmatic strengthening are most often regarded as the motivation of grammaticalization. To explore the factors that trigger the grammaticalization of post-verbal *diao* may shed light on the study of grammaticalization. Due to the limitation of time, these interesting topics are left for further research.