Abstract

There are two main questions about post-verbal *diao* we dealt with in the present study: one is its meanings, and the other is its syntactic status. We 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.

Post-verbal *diao* usually co-occurs with transitive and unaccusative verbs to form compounds. 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. 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; 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 which have an incremental theme.

Grammaticalization is taken to account for the polysemy and the multiple syntactic status of post-verbal *diao*. Because except specialization, *diao* follows all of the principles (i.e. Layering, Divergence, Persistence, and De-categorialization) proposed by Hopper (1991), we suggest it is in the process of grammaticalization.