Chapter 1

Introduction

Mandarin Chinese is a language that has abundance of compounds. According to the grammatical functions of their components, compounds can be labeled as nominal compounds, verb-verb compounds, subject-predicate compounds, verb-object compounds, and so on. Verb-verb compounds, because of their intriguing nature, have attracted more attention than all the other types of compounds. More specifically, it is the second elements of V-V compounds, such as shang ‘up’ (e.g. gan-shang ‘to catch up’), xia ‘down’ (e.g. zuo-xia ‘to sit down’), lai ‘to come’ (e.g. hui-lai ‘to come back’), qu ‘to go’ (e.g. hui-qu ‘to go back’), etc., that lure many linguists into the study of them (e.g. Kimura 1984, Shi 1993, Huang and Chang 1996, Liu 2000).

Diao ‘to fall’, a morpheme which also can be the second element of V-V compounds, though is often listed in the discussion of V-V compounds (e.g. Chao 1968, Cheng 1989, Cheng 1997, Li & Thompson 1981, Packard 2000, Tang 1999), little investigation has focused on it. The reason why post-verbal diao has never been intensively examined may result from its late appearance and its regional use in Mandarin Chinese when compared to other second elements of V-V compounds. The Scripta Sinica (a corpus of Chinese classics managed by Academia Sinica Computing Center) shows that the post-verbal diao did not appear until Chin dynasty. Chao in A Grammar of Spoken Chinese (1968) mentions, “Forms like si diao le for si le ‘have died off’ have been trying hard to become translation borrowing from Wu into Mandarin, but so far they are limited to speakers of Mandarin whose first dialect was Wu.” (p.466) Pu (2000) also reports that the post-verbal diao is used in colloquial language for the southern people in Mainland China, but in literary language for the northern ones.
1.1 Motivation

The frequency of the use of post-verbal *diao* in Taiwan Mandarin is rather high and has a tendency of increase. According to *Changyong Yuci Diaocha Baogaoshu* [A survey on frequently used words] (a book published by the Minister of Education), post-verbal *diao* ranks as the 502\textsuperscript{nd} frequently used suffix in 1995 but the 269\textsuperscript{th} in 1998. Moreover, in most modern Chinese dictionaries, there would be an entry of *diao* stating that it may follow a verb to be its complement and to represent the result of action. These facts suggest it is time and it is necessary for us to study post-verbal *diao* thoroughly.

1.2 Research Questions

Let us consider the following two sentences first:

(1) Ta ca-diao heiban shang de tuhua.
    he wipe-DIAO blackboard on POSS drawing\(^1\)
    ‘He wiped off the drawing from the blackboard.’

(2) Ta zheng ge ren dou sha-diao le.
    he whole CL person all stun-DIAO LE
    ‘He was totally dumbfounded.’

For native speakers of Chinese, the meanings of *diao* in (1) and (2) are apparently different: *diao* denotes “to be removed” in the former sentence, but an inchoative state in the latter sentence. From these two sentences, we can detect that post-verbal *diao* has various meanings, though modern Chinese dictionaries list only one entry. The

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\(^1\) Some abbreviations are used in the Chinese sentence gloss in this thesis: DIAO for *diao*, POSS for possessive, CL for classifier, LE for *le*, PROG for progressive, ASP for aspect, BA for *ba*, and PASS for passive.
first question is about the versatility of the semantic content of post-verbal *diao*. We are curious how many different meanings post-verbal *diao* may encode.

The second question we would like to discuss is the syntactic status of post-verbal *diao*.² Though many linguists have mentioned post-verbal *diao* when they studied V-V compounds, they have listed it under different grammatical terms. For instance, Chao (1968) refers to post-verbal *diao* while discussing directional complements; Cheng (1989) takes it as an example of resultative complements while in his later study (1997), a phase marker; Li & Thompson (1981) places it in the category of phase type under resultative verb compounds; Packard (2000) regards it as an attainment resultative. Based on our observation, post-verbal *diao* may have different syntactic status. For example:

\[(3)\] Ta tui-diao naxie yingchou.
he decline-DIAO those social appointment
‘He declined those social appointments.’

\[(4)\] Ta tui-bu-diao naxie yingchou.
he decline-not-DIAO those social appointment
‘He could not decline those social appointments.’

\[(5)\] Pingguo lan-diao le.
apple rotten-DIAO LE
‘Apples were rotten.’

\[(6)\] * Pingguo lan-bu-diao.
apple rotten-not-DIAO

As these sentences show, some V-*diao* compounds like *tui-diao* ‘to decline’ in (3)

² Syntactic status refers to directional complement, resultative complement, phase marker, and so on.
allow the infixation of the potential form *bu* ‘not’ to form compounds like *tui-bu-diao* ‘can not decline’ in (4), but some compounds like *lan-diao* ‘to be rottern’ in (5) do not allow the infixation of potential forms as (6) shows. Since the infixation of potential forms is a prominent feature to distinguish different syntactic status, this difference implies that *diao* has more than one syntactic status.

As we know, syntax is the realization of semantics, thus it is natural to expect the semantic content and the syntactic status of post-verbal *diao* have correlation with each other. The mapping between the results of these two questions will construct three types of V-*diao* compounds, whose emergence can resort to the grammaticalization of post-verbal *diao*. From a grammaticalization perspective, not only can we easily comprehend the different semantic content of post-verbal *diao*, but we can also justify its different syntactic status. In other words, grammaticalization may help us to draw a complete picture of post-verbal *diao*.

To sum up, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the semantics and syntax of post-verbal *diao*, and then look for a way that is able to connect and account for its different meanings and different syntactic status.

### 1.3 The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction inclusive of the reason why we conduct the study of post-verbal *diao* and the questions we want to tackle in the thesis. Chapter two presents the basic concepts of resultative complement, phase marker, and aspect marker. Some previous researches of post-verbal *diao* are reviewed in this chapter, too. Chapter three concentrates on the question of what kind of verb can co-occur with *diao*. Chapter four shows that there are three types of *diao*, each of which has a distinctive meaning and syntactic status.
Chapter five discusses the situation type and the argument structure of V-diao compounds. Chapter six demonstrates the grammaticalization process of post-verbal diao. Chapter seven concludes the study and points out some issues for further study.