The Grammaticalization of "dao" in Mandarin Chinese

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Abstract—An examination to *dao* (arrive) in different syntactic environments helps to reinforce the multi-functionality of Chinese verb *dao* and the grammaticalization of it. Examples from Chinese suggest that 1) *dao* has changed to a preposition in Dao-NP-VP when V is *lai* (come) or *qu* (go); 2) *dao* is still a verb in V-Dao, the main function of which is directional complement or resultative complement; 3) *dao* has grammaticalized to a complement marker in V-Dao-C if *dao* precedes a predicate structure. It is found that *dao* has developed from a notional word to a functional word, but it has not totally grammaticalized to be a typical functional word and is still on the process of further grammaticalization.

Keywords—dao; grammaticalization; multi-functionality; path

I. Introduction: Aims and Organization

Grammaticalization is subject to the influence of the overall structural change of a language in a particular period of time. In this article, we explore this theoretical issue by analyzing the multi-functionality of Chinese verb *dao* and the grammaticalization of it. *Dao* is originally an independent verb, which means arriving. Having been used in Chinese with high frequency, *dao* owns more multi-functional roles besides independent verb. In *Eight Hundred Words of Modern Chinese Language*, Lv Shuxiang[6]151 defines that *dao* is both an independent verb and directional verb. Three usages can be found in the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary (the seventh edition)*: verb, adjective, and noun[13]266. *Dao* may change over time into more functional roles such as a verb and preposition[11]1-10, [4]144-145, an auxiliary[5]50-56, and a complementary marker[16]49-61.

The functional role of *dao* is controversial in the academic circle, so this paper investigates the multi-functionality of the Chinese verb *dao* from lexical source to various functional roles from a grammaticalization perspective. The following questions will be concerned:

(1) Is *dao* in Dao-NP-VP a preposition?
(2) Is *dao* in V-Dao a verb or a preposition?
(3) Is *dao* in V-Dao-C a complement marker?

This paper is organized into five sections. Section 2 gives some background to the concept of grammaticalization. Section 3 defines the functional roles of *dao* in three syntactic environments, offering the answers to three questions above, and introduces a new usage of *dao*, while Section 4 sums up the previous discussion, focusing on describing a grammaticalization path for *dao*. Section 5 provides a conclusion.

II. Grammaticalization: Definitions and Concepts

The term 'grammaticalization' goes back to Meillet [7]131 and is traditionally understood as a process whereby a lexical item is reanalyzed as a grammatical morpheme or construction. This syntactic reanalysis is accompanied by a semantic reinterpretation of a very specific, lexical meaning into a more general, grammatical one. The relevant process is referred to as semantic bleaching, erosion, or reduction, or as desemanticization etc.[2]579 Later, Givon places great emphasis on the dynamic process by suggesting 'today's morphology is yesterday's syntax.'[1]43 Today, many scholars question the classic definition and hold that the study of grammaticalization should be widened. Therefore, they have redefined the term 'Grammaticalization refers to that part of the study of language that focuses on how grammatical forms and construction arise, how they are used and how they shape the language.' [9]1 All these definitions may have differences in expression, but they both confirm that grammaticalization belongs to the diachronic evolution process of language.

As for the motivations of grammaticalization, scholars hold different views in their works. The main relevant elements are semantic changes, pragmatics, psychology, language contact, cognition, and change of syntactic environment, etc.

III. The Grammaticalization of Chinese Verb *Dao*

A. Verb ⟶ Verb-direction(i)[1] ⟶ Preposition

In this part, we try to answer the first question: Is *dao* in Dao-NP-VP a preposition? Let's read the following two sentences:

(1) a. 我们强烈要求<u>到</u>学校去参观。
    We strongly demand a visit to school.
            (*People's Daily*, 2006-01-28)
  b. 两位"妈妈"则坚持每天<u>到</u>学校看望孩子。
    Two mothers insist on visiting their children at school every day.
            (*People's Daily*, 2006-01-28)

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[1] Verb-direction(i) refers to the former verb of conjunction predicate structure.

Dao in (1a) is followed by the verb *qu* (去), while *dao* in (1b) is followed by the verb *kan wang* (看望). We need to define whether *dao* in (1a) and (1b) is still a verb, or it has been changed to a preposition.

1) The functional role of dao in Dao-NP-VP

Shi Yuzhi[11]1-10, Zhang Wangxi[15]1-11 and Tong Guobin[14]89-94 regards *dao* as a preposition in some syntactic environments. Here's an example listed by Shi Yuzhi.

(2) a. 他到北京了。
   He has arrived in Beijing.
   b. 他到北京去了。
   He has gone to Beijing.

Shi Yuzhi regards that *dao* in (2a) is a verb and in (2b) a preposition. When *dao* appears simultaneously with the strong moving verbs like *lai* and *qu*, the displacement meaning of the whole sentence will be expressed by *lai* (来)and *qu*. Meanwhile, the directional characteristic of *dao* is enhanced, but the displacement meaning is reduced. So, *dao* has been grammaticalized to a preposition.

Zhu Dexi[17]174 defines preposition as follows: 1. A pure preposition can only be used in conjunction predicate structure, and it can't be the only predicate in one sentence; 2. A preposition can't be repeated and be followed by *le* (了), *zhe* (着) and *guo* (过). *Dao* in (2b) comply with the definitions given by Zhu. We agree with Shi Yuzhi's view that *dao* in (2a) is a verb and in (2b) a preposition.

2) Motivation of grammaticalization

For most of the time, grammaticalization is first induced by the change of syntactic position of a full word. Functional words are mostly grammaticalized from verbs and adjectives. A verb in Chinese is usually put in the structure of SVO as a predicate. In this structure, only one verb acts as predicate, which is the core constituent of the sentence, so the action or state this verb expresses is real and notional. When the verb is no longer in the structure of SVO, it is not the only verb in the sentence, because another verb replaces its position to be the predicate of the sentence. This verb whose property of verb gets weak is no longer the main verb in the sentence (like *dao* in 2b), but used as a secondary verb in serial verb construction. When a verb frequently used as a secondary verb, its grammatical position will be gradually fixed, its meaning will become more and more abstract. If it keeps going, its grammatical function will change from the constituent of the predicate to the modifier or complement of the sentence. The further bleaching of word leads to the grammaticalization of verb, from lexical unit to grammatical unit. So, in the process of grammaticalization, the change of syntactic position and the influence of the structure is very important.

Here's an example provided by Tao Zhenwei[12]155-157:

(3) a. 到汉中过张鲁
   go to Hanzhong and launch an attack towards Zhang lu
   b. 到学校去开会
   go to school and have a meeting

Tao Zhenwei claims that *dao* in (3a) has been degraded to a secondary verb and in (3b) has been grammaticalized to a function word. Two verbs in serial verb construction express the time sequence of actions. The meaning of *dao* in (3a) has been bleaching, which can be understood as the preposition *wang* (往), because the phrase *dao Hanzhong* doesn't mean that they have arrived in Hanzhong, but Hanzhong is the destination of their action. When *dao*'s grammatical position is fixed, the function of *dao* is reanalyzed and the serial verb construction is changed to adverbial head noun structure. The grammaticalization keeps going, *dao* in (3b) is no longer the constituent of the predicate, but the modifier of the sentence.

The conclusion can be drawn for defining the functional role of *dao* in Dao-NP-VP. When *dao* appears simultaneously with *lai* and *qu* in one sentence, *dao* is placed before the verbal phrase, emphasizing the grammatical features of preposition. *Dao* has changed to be a preposition in (1a). When *dao* appears simultaneously with other verbs, it hasn't been fully bleaching, but still remains the meaning of motion, expressing the syntactic function of verbs like *dao* in (1b).

B. Verb-direction(ii)[2] ⟶ Directional Complement ⟶ Resultative Complement

In this part, we try to answer the second question: Is *dao* in V-Dao a verb or a preposition? Let's read the following three sentences:

(4) a. 游客爬到树上拍照
   Tourists climb up the tree to take photos.
   (*People's Daily,* 2013-06-03)
   b. 写给总书记的信收到了。
   The letter to secretary-general has been received.
   (*People's Daily,* 2018-02-17)
   c. 咱说到就做到。
   We must keep our words.
   (*People's Daily,* 2011-12-20)

Dao in the previous sentences appears after a verb, we need to define whether *dao* in (4a), (4b) and (4c) is still a verb, or it has been changed to a preposition.

1) Controversial argument towards dao in V-Dao

Scholars hold different views towards the functional roles of *dao* in V-Dao. Some claim that *dao* in V-Dao is a preposition[7]57; here V, the main verb of a sentence, can be replaced by most verbs, and *dao*, a preposition, refers to the ending point of a certain action. Liu Ziyu[5]52-53 argues that *dao* in V-Dao is a verb with two reasons: 1. By checking the meaning of *dao* in historical documents and mandarin Chinese, when V in V-Dao is a walking verb, *dao* is a verb expressing the real action. *Dao* means to reach a place, especially at the end of a journey. 2. The construction V-Dao-O can be changed to predicate-complement structure by adding *de* (得) or *bu* (不). For example, when inserting *de* or *bu* into the phrase *pa dao shu shang* (爬到树上), we are certain that both *pa de dao shu shang*and *pa bu dao shu shang* are acceptable and understandable. Expanding a construction by adding *de* or *bu* is

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[2] Verb-direction(ii) refers to the latter verb of conjunction predicates structure.

an important characteristic of predicate-complement structure. We agree with Liu Ziyu that *dao* in V-Dao is a verb.

Huang Borong and Liao Xudong[3]71 in *Modern Chinese* point out that verb-direction expresses the direction of motion. Zhu Dexi[18]128 defines that directional complement is a complement acted by verb-direction and is read in a light tone. Then, we come to a conclusion that *dao* in (4a) is regarded as verb-direction, in (4b) as directional complement and in (4c) as resultative complement.

2) Motivation of grammaticalization

The change of syntactic relations causes the change of semantic meaning, leading the notional words to grammaticalize, and finally play the functional role of a construction. So the change of semantic meaning is one of the important factors of grammaticalization. In the process of grammaticalization, a notional word grammaticalizes into a function word, generally because it usually appears in some syntactic position that is suitable to express some grammatical relation, then leading to the bleaching of semantic meaning and further realizing the fixation of syntactic position, finally turning to a function word.

Let's examine *dao* in the following two syntactic positions: V(walking)-Dao+place and V(non-walking)-Dao+place.

(5) a. ⋯⋯，需要<u>跑到</u>县城去领取包裹。
　　　…, need to pick up the package in town.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*People's Daily,* 2018-05-26)
　　b. ⋯⋯，及时将父亲<u>送到</u>德州的一所大医院。
　　　Father was sent to one of Dezhou's big hospital in time.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*People's Daily,* 2018-06-06)

Dao in (5a) is a verb-direction and the verb *pao* (run) is a walking verb. The notional verb *pao* expresses the motion meaning, while *dao* points out the motion direction of the agent, but the displacement meaning is still remained. *Dao* in (5b) has been grammaticalized. *Dao* doesn't point out the motion direction for agent, but the ending point of the patient. Thus, *dao* has been grammaticalized from verb-direction to directional complement.

Metaphor is a cognitive approach of using one concrete concept to understand another abstract concept. The cognitive principles determine that the direction of metaphoric transfer is from the concrete to the abstract. When metaphorization enters into grammaticalization, it also motivates unidirectionality in change. Heine et al. (1991) argue that there is unidirectionality in metaphorical mappings as follows[10]17-24:

Person > Object > Space > Time > Quality

In following constructions, the meaning of *dao* gradually becomes more abstract from top to bottom, which can demonstrate the drive of metaphoric mapping in the grammaticalization.

(6)　a.　V-Dao + place
　　　我<u>回到</u>了北京。
　　　I went back to Beijing.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*People's Daily,* 2006-01-28)
　　b.　V-Dao + time

一年一场风，从春<u>刮到</u>冬。
The wind blows the whole year, from spring to winter.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*People's Daily,* 2018-06-07)
　　c.　V-Dao + quantity
有的地区地下机井甚至<u>打到</u>了七八百米深。
The underground well in some districts have been dug to 700-800 meters.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*People's Daily,* 2015-06-03)

Dao in (6a) is a directional complement, expressing the arriving meaning. *Dao* in (6b) and (6c) demonstrate the result of the action in time and quantity. Thus, *dao* has been grammaticalized from directional complement to resultative complement.

C. Resultative Complement ⟶ Complement Marker

In this part, we try to answer the third question: Is *dao* in V-Dao-C a complement marker? Let's read the following two sentences:

(7) a. 每次都<u>吃到</u>撑。
　　　Sb. eats sth. to be totally stuffed.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*People's Daily,* 2017-06-15)
　　b. ⋯⋯，被这种壮阔的场面"<u>感动到</u>起鸡皮疙瘩"。
　　　…, I was deeply moved by the magnificent scene.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*People's Daily,* 2016-12-21)

C in (7a) is a word and C in (7b) is a predicate structure. We need to define whether *dao* in (7a) and (7b) is a complement marker.

1) Dao in V-Dao-C: a complement marker

Liu Ziyu[5]50-56 argues that the predicate structure after *dao* is an emphasis to the degree or state of the result. C is no longer the result of V-Dao, and *dao* has a closer relationship with V. There's no such lexical meaning of *dao* left in this structure that *dao* has grammaticalized to a structural particle. Zhang Yisheng[17]49-61 think that when X in A-dao-X changes from substantive object to predicate object or complex sentences, the transitivity of *dao* is gradually reduced. *Dao* is grammaticalized to a function word, a complement marker. Zhang put forwards two functional criterions for marker word *dao*: 1. *dao* is a complement marker, closely combined with its former verb; 2. *dao* can't be followed by *le*, otherwise, *dao* is not a marker, but a verb. Then, we come to a conclusion that *dao* in (7a) is regarded as resultative complement and in (7b) as complement marker.

2) Motivation of grammaticalization

Hopper and Traugott[9]39 insist that the main mechanisms of grammaticalization are reanalysis and analogy. Reanalysis occurs in horizontal combination level of language and refers to the same surface structure. After the reanalysis, the internal structure of the language combination redraws boundaries for pragmatic or other reasons, which changed phoneme, lexical, combination way of syntax from the bottom. Reanalysis is considered to be the most important mechanism of grammaticalization, but it doesn't mean that it always causes grammaticalization. The grammaticalization is just one of the consequences of reanalysis. Reanalysis can derive new syntactic structures, for example, C in [V+[*dao* C]] construction originally refers to the result of *dao*, when C

expresses the degree or state of V-Dao, dao will be syntactically closer to V, and finally the construction is reanalyzed to [[V dao]+ C]. Here's some instances.

(8) a. 我把自己逼到没有退路。
I let myself in such life without a turning back.
(*People's Daily*, 2017-04-14)
b. 爱树爱到骨子里
frantically love trees
(*People's Daily*, 2017-03-03)
c. ……危险到一只鸟撞过来就会要了阿汤的命。
It is dangerous to such an extent that Tang will be killed if a bird hits him.
(*People's Daily*, 2015-07-24)

According to Zhang Yisheng's criterion discussed above, *dao* in (8a, 8b) can be followed by *le*, which means that *dao* is a verb, remaining the motion function and tense aspect property. C in (8c) is a predicate structure. *Dao* in (8c) attaches to the preceding verb, which can't be followed by *le*, so its transitivity is reduced and has been totally grammaticalized to a complement marker.

D. Resultative Complement ⟶ Preposition

1) A Buzzword: gei dao (给到)

This part introduces a new expression which is popularly used recently. Let's take a look at the following examples:

(9) a. 我这边给到平台的资金成本要达到 30%。
The cost of funding I gave to the platform reaches to 30% .
(*People's Daily*, 2018-05-21）
b. ……，能够给到别人一种健康的感觉。
It can give others a healthy feeling.
(*People's Daily*, 2018-05-21)

Gei has the arriving meaning of *dao*, so *dao* is the component of semantic redundancy, and then becomes a preposition.

2) Motivation of grammaticalization

Language contact is one of the motivations of grammaticalization, especially on new grammaticalization phenomenon. This contact includes connections between language and another language or dialects of a language itself. Language contact can enrich language expression. In order to enrich language expression, people will use language creatively to generate the grammaticalization. *Dao* in (9a, 9b) expresses more vividly, which is often used in Cantonese, but now emerges in Mandarin. *Dao* in *gei dao* has been grammaticalized from resultative complement to preposition.

IV. THE MULTI-FUNCTIONALITY OF *DAO* AND ITS GRAMMATICALIZATION PATH

A. The Multi-functionality of dao

Through the changing process from the lexical verb in Pre-qin dynasty to the complement marker in Chinese structure V-Dao, *dao* has experienced a series of semantic change and grammaticalization process. Answers to three questions I proposed at the beginning of this article are: 1. *Dao* in Dao-NP-VP becomes a preposition; 2. *Dao* in V-Dao is a verb; 3. *Dao* in V-Dao-C is a resultative complement when C is a noun phrase; *Dao* in V-Dao-C is a complement marker when C is a predicate structure. There is not only one grammaticalization path for *dao* because *dao* hasn't been totally grammaticalized to preposition, but it has been gradually developed to a function word.

B. The Grammaticalization Path of dao

According to what have discussed, we reconstruct three grammaticalization path of *dao* in synchronic perspective as follows:

The first path: Verb ⟶ Verb-direction（the former verb of conjunction predicate structure）⟶ Preposition.

The second path: Verb ⟶ Verb-direction（the latter verb of conjunction predicate structure）⟶ Directional complement ⟶ Resultative complement ⟶ Complement marker

The third path: Verb ⟶ Verb-direction（the latter verb of conjunction predicate structure）⟶ Directional complement ⟶ Resultative complement ⟶ Preposition

V. CONCLUSION

It is widely acknowledged in the general grammatical theory that the cline is one of the grammaticalization features. The development of language can be described by the process of grammaticalization, moving in the direction of "word > function word / enclitic morpheme > suffix". The grammaticalization of *dao* is not the same direction, for example, *dao* as a complement marker is not grammaticalized from the function word. The preposition function and complement marker function of *dao* are formed because of the different developing direction of lexical verb. In the process of grammaticalization, the motivations are the change of syntactic environment, semantic change, metaphor mapping, and reanalysis.

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