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The rise of a high transitivity marker 到 *dao* in contemporary Chinese

Co-evolvement of language and society*

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Transitivity has been approached from various discourse functional points of view. In this paper, we describe the emergence in standard Chinese of a marker of high transitivity, 到 *dao* 'reach', in syntactic contexts where it has not been attested before (e.g., 帮助到你 *bangzhu dao ni* 'help you'). We argue that this emergence is associated with a number of factors: the semantic properties of the main verb, dialectal influences, and recent social trends towards consumerism and an emergent "yuppie" identity in contemporary Chinese urban life. We take the innovative uses of *dao* to be an instance of linguistic structure co-evolving with societal change.

Keywords: transitivity, *dao* '到', language change, Emergent Grammar, grammaticalization

关键词: 及物性 "到" 语言变化 动态语法 语法化

1.   Introduction

1.1   Transitivity

In traditional western grammar, transitivity is understood to be a property of the verb and the clause in which it appears: a verb is deemed transitive if it takes an object, intransitive if it does not. Hopper and Thompson (1980) and Thompson and Hopper (2001) expand this traditional distinction, emphasizing the discourse dimension of transitivity[1] and the non-discrete nature of the opposition transitive/intransitive. For them, transitivity encompasses a cluster of properties which statistically exhibit a co-varying relationship: features of high transitivity tend to co-occur, as do exponents of low transitivity. Moreover, in narrative discourse, high transitivity is shown by Hopper and Thompson to correspond to foregrounding, thus contributing to the description of the main event, whereas low transitivity is associated with background information, which functions as backdrop to the main event line.

In addition to linguistic features encoding narrative structure, discourse linguists have explored transitivity from social and ideological perspectives. A number of proposals from such diverse fields as anthropological linguistics (Duranti 1994), Critical Discourse Analysis (Fowler 1991, 1996, Fowler et al. 1979), and corpus linguistics (Stubbs 1996) have been made, linking transitivity to dimensions of social reality and cultural practices. Duranti (1994), for example, shows that, while lexical agents are rarely marked in Samoan discourse, when they are, the context is usually one of praise or blame. Moreover, speakers who use transitive clauses with their lexical agents specified tend to be those who enjoy higher political and social status in the Samoan community. Duranti concludes that the expression of agency and transitivity is closely related to contexts of moral assessment and to social relations within the community.

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) tradition and its allied fields, such as Systemic Functional Grammar and corpus-based social linguistic studies, present a similar, 'language-in-use' perspective, this time examining event encoding and language ideology (Fowler et al. 1979, Lee, 1992, Simpson 1993). These perspectives claim that, by carefully analyzing texts, discourse linguists can show "how language mediates and represents the world from different points of view" (Stubbs 1996:128). This approach in many ways resonates with Halliday's work. Halliday (1985/2004) demonstrates that transitive, passive, and intransitive clauses in English can highlight different types of causation; and related grammatical processes such

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1. In this paper we use the terms 'transitivity' and 'Transitivity' interchangeably depending on the context.

as nominalization and passivization have different semantic functions in so far as reification and (optional) expression of agency is concerned. For a corpus-based study, Stubbs (1996) investigates the so-called ergative verbs in English as defined by Halliday and compares how geography and environmental texts — two different genres of discourse — attribute knowledge and points of view to agents. His analysis suggests that transitive clauses with an explicit agent specified, like the following, are more likely to appear in texts on environmental issues.

(1)   Young people moved away.

(2)   Many migrated.

By contrast, agentless clauses containing an ergative verb, as in the following examples, are often found in geography textbooks.

(3)   The area … lost population.

(4)   The industries … closed.

(5)   The population has increased slowly.

He concludes by echoing the views of Halliday and proponents of CDA that

> all linguistic usage encodes representation of the world. It is always possible to talk about the same thing in different ways, and the systematic usage of different syntactic patterns encodes different points of view. (Stubbs 1996: 130).

In the case of contemporary standard Chinese, while most purely syntactic research on verbal expressions tends to focus on static argument structure and associated patterns, there is an increasing awareness in sociolinguistics of the relationship between emerging linguistic phenomena and recent dramatic socio-economic changes. For example, linguistic research has largely confirmed both journalistic and popular perception of a rapid expansion of the uses of the passive marker 被 *bei* (Liu and Zhao 2009, Xing 2004), while various news outlets have gone so far as to declare *bei* the "character of the year" (Xinhua News Agency, February 16, 2010[2]), and 2010 "the year of the passive" (NPR News March 19, 2010[3]), or that we have entered "the era of the passive tense" (*sic.*, China Digital Times[4]). The fact that standard Chinese is undergoing an explosive era of change is hardly news (cf. Liu and Tao 2011). Yet there is a lack of systematic examination of the factors that may have contributed to these changes and exactly how they have been integrated

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2. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-02/16/c_13176690.htm.

3. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124913011.

4. http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2012/12/word-of-the-week-era-of-the-passive-tense/.

into the linguistic system. The sort of close work that is required can be found exemplified in a recent analysis of changes over the past decade in conversational openings in service encounters (Sun 2012).

In this paper, we describe the emergence of a high transitivity marker 到 *dao* 'reach' in contemporary standard Chinese in syntactic contexts where it is either not obligatory or not needed at all. We argue that such a phenomenon is associated with a number of factors: semantic properties of the main verb, dialect influence, as well as social factors related to consumerism in contemporary China. We take this to be an instance of linguistic structure co-evolving with societal change.

1.2   *Dao*

Dao 到 in Mandarin Chinese is a versatile lexeme that can be used in a variety of syntactic contexts. Its basic use is as a motion verb, meaning 'to reach, to get to, to arrive', as illustrated by the following example:

(6)   星期日人家全家到河边玩. [5]
Xinqiri renjia quanjia   DAO hebian   wan
Sunday other whole.family DAO river.bank relax
'On Sunday their whole family went to the river area to relax.'

Another use of *dao* is as a preposition, indicating a temporal or a spatial scope, as shown in (7) and (8) respectively.

(7)   到吃饭的时候
DAO chifan   de   shihou
DAO eat.meal MOD time
'At the time of the meal'

(8)   搬到床上
Ban   DAO chuangshang
move DAO bed:up
'Move (something) to the bed.'

Finally, *dao* following a verb can introduce verbal or clausal complements of various types. One such case is illustrated in (9), where there is a clause serving as a complement:

(9)   我能感觉到他的心和我的心一样咚咚地跳.
Wo neng ganjue DAO ta   de   xin   he wo de   xin   yiyang dongdongde

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5.   Gloss conventions used: 1SG: first person singular; 1PL: first person plural; 2SG: second person singular; 3SG: third person singular; BA: *ba*-construction; BEI: *bei*-construction; MOD: modifier/relativizer; PRF: perfective; PRT: particle; NEG: negation; CLF: classifier; POSS: possessive.

1SG can   feel   DAO 3SG MOD heart as   1SG MOD heart same   pounding
tiao.
beat
'I can feel that his heart was beating just as heavily as mine.'

However, in current Mandarin, *dao* can also be found more widely between a verb and its object in ways which fit none of the above descriptions of its syntax.

For example,

(10) 很高兴为您服务. 请问有什么可以帮到您? [help DAO you] (SE)⁶
      Hen gaoxing wei ni fuwu. Qing wen you shenme keyi bang DAO nin?
                                please ask exist what can help DAO 2SG (honorific)
      'Very glad to serve you. May I ask if I can be of any assistance?'

(11) 我们传媒集团它是有户口的, 就是我们可以给到我们员工. [give DAO our
      employees] (TV)
      Women chuanmei jituan ta shi you hukou de, jiushi women keyi gei DAO
      women yuangong.
      1PL can give DAO 1PL employee
      'Our media group is registered as resident, which means we are able to offer
      city residency to our employees.'

(12) 那你为什么欣赏他, 和你想成为他,
      Na ni weishenme xinshang ta, he ni xiang chengwei ta,
      他身上有哪些优点会吸引到你? [attract DAO you] (TV)
      ta shenshang you naxie youdian hui xiyin DAO ni?
      3SG person have any merit can attract DAO 2SG
      'Why do you admire him and even want to be a person like him? What is it
      about him that attracts you the most?'

(13) 我觉得我们更多地关注到今天来求职的动机上. [focus on DAO
      motivation] (TV)
      Wo juede women gengduo de guanzhu DAO jintian lai qiuzhi de dongji
      shang.
      more closely.MOD focus DAO today come seek.job MOD motivation on
      'I think we should pay more attention to the motivations of job applicants
      today.'

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6. Sources of the examples used in this paper are marked as follows: SE: service encounters; TV: reality TV shows; and IN: internet language use. Those unmarked are from the LCMC corpus, unless otherwise noted. Also, to save space, only the relevant portions of the text are given morpheme-by-morpheme glosses.

In none of the above cases is *dao* required, according to the grammar of standard Chinese. The verbs in 帮您 *bang ni* 'help you', 给我们员工 *gei women yuangong* 'give our employees', 吸引你 *xiyin ni* 'attract you', and 我们更多地关注 *women geng duo di guanzhu* 'we focus more on', are all followed by direct objects, and so are transitive by traditional definition. In each case, however, *dao* can be omitted with no consequences for grammaticality.

In the Chinese linguistics literature, most previous research on *dao* has focused on the basic uses in the standard language outlined earlier. Only a few studies have touched upon the morpheme's extended uses in some Mandarin dialects, a topic that we will return to in Section 6.

Here, we argue that, as a marked phenomenon, the addition of *dao* after the verb elevates the degree of transitivity of the clause. In Hopper and Thompson (1980), a number of parameters are proposed to characterize different degrees of transitivity. Among the markers of high transitivity, 'agency' refers to the potency of the agent performing the action, where high in potency correlates with higher degrees of transitivity; and 'affectedness' refers to the degree of the object being affected, and the higher the degree of affectedness, the higher the transitivity scale. We argue that *dao* in its extended use, often simultaneously through the subjective increase of the potency of the agent and through an enhanced sense of successful, effective performance of the action named by the verb, helps create a higher degree of transitivity and thus increases the psychological impact in the interpersonal sphere. We wish to note that since we are dealing with dialogic data instead of narrative data where connected events persist, as analyzed by Hopper and Thompson, we cannot expect all of the features of high transitivity to show up in each and every given utterance of interest; nevertheless, features such as high potency of the agent and high degree of affectedness of the object, or strong sense of success of the action or event can still be shown to accompany the use of the non-compulsory *dao*. We contend that along with other factors such as dialect influences, this type of extended use correlates with factors that are prominent in the new social reality in contemporary China, which is very much pertinent to its attention to identity building.

2.   Data and methodology

So far the contexts where we found the most cases of extended uses of *dao* are service encounters, reality TV shows, and internet language use.

Service encounters involve customer services of various kinds, often in telephone interaction. Typical of this sub-genre of conversation are calls to mobile phone services, travel agencies, call centers for the online transactions of goods, and so forth.

Reality TV shows are for the most part programs that deal either with practical issues, such as job-seeking, and dating, or offer pure entertainment, as when popular personalities engage in on-stage competitions. Sometimes these reality shows can be seen to resemble service encounters in that they involve participants manipulating their language and performing certain acts related to hypothetical jobs in order for the contestants to win over the judges in the TV shows and secure potential employment.

Internet language is also used for a variety of purposes; we have mostly looked into online forums, blogging, and news posting. While it may be argued that this genre is distinct from the other two genres in being written, not oral, and thus less, or completely non-, interactive in real time. Internet language does often possess the quality of striving to be novel in order to be notable.

In order to ascertain that the "extended use" of *dao* described above is indeed an emerging phenomenon, we have sought to compare the ratio of expanded use observed in more recent data with the earlier use found in the Lancaster Corpus of Modern Chinese (LCMC, McEnery and Xiao 2004), a one-million-word bank of written Chinese from the 1990s based on the design principles of the Brown family corpus (Francis and Kucera 1964). We readily acknowledge that the data types compared are vastly different, but due to the lack of comparable data in different eras, this is a compromise that we had to make.

3.   Describing the emerging uses

The emerging uses can be roughly divided into three major sub-types, depending on a number of features. In classifying the extended uses in the V-Dao-O structure, we have relied on three factors: morphosyntactic features of the main verb, semantic features of the main verb, and our own perception of the novelty of the V-Dao-O combination. Clearly, due to the fluid nature of the combinations, some of the boundaries between the categories we devise may seem fuzzy. However, we recognize this as a likely feature of the data, not as a disadvantage of our approach. Using the criteria just outlined, we group the extended uses into the following three types.

3.1   The first is optional use.

In this type, the V-Dao-O combination may not be viewed as completely novel, as the string has been used elsewhere; yet, in these contexts, *dao* is not required. These examples show that there is an emerging tendency to use the overt *dao* which has otherwise been optional. There are thirteen cases of this nature in our collection.

(14)   夏娇阳: 大家有没有**发现**到,
       Xia Jiaoyang: Dajia you meiyou faxian DAO,
                     everyone ever NEG discover DAO

       薛凌一直在讲他家庭生活的困难, 但薛凌始终在微笑.
       Xue Ling yizhi zai jiang ta jiating shenghuo de kunnan, dan Xue Ling
       shizhong zai weixiao.
       'Xia Jiaoyang: Did anyone notice that while Xue Ling was talking about the
       difficulties of his family life, he kept smiling the whole time?'

(15)   …可能不是完全能**满足**到你自己的一个诉求.
       … keneng bu shi wanquan neng manzu DAO ni ziji de yi ge suqiu.
          perhaps NEG COP completely able.to satisfy DAO 2SG self MOD one CLF
       '… may not able to meet your own demand.'

(16)   陈默: 但是我建议您不要骗人, 像刚才马丁**说**到的,
       Chen Mo: Danshi wo jianyi nin buyao pianren, xiang gangcai Mading shuo
       DAO de,
                                                       like just:now Martin
       speak:of DAO PRT

       哪怕是你在其他地方查到的资料, 你可以想办法把它用真实的方式表述
       出来. (TV)
       napa shi ni zai qita difang chadao de ziliao, ni keyi xiang banfa ba ta yong
       zhenshi de fangshi biaoshu chulai.
       Chen Mo: 'But I suggest you shouldn't deceive people. As Martin has just
       spoken of, even with data you uncovered somewhere else, you could still
       find a way to present it faithfully.'

(17)   今天呢, 就是我没有想到, 自己就是会**进**到就是前一百强. (TV)
       Jintian ne, jiushi wo meiyou xiangdao, ziji jiushi hui jin DAO jiushi qian yibai
       qiang.
                                               self just may enter DAO
       something:like TOP 100 strong
       'I never dreamed that today someone like me would advance to the TOP 100.'

In (14), 发现 *faxian* 'discover' is ordinarily not followed by *dao* due to the fact that it contains a morpheme *xian* 'realize' in it, even though adding *dao* is not impossible. For the other verbs, 满足 *manzu* 'to satisfy', 说 *shuo* 'to say, speak of', and 进 *jin* 'to enter', they are erstwhile low in transitivity; the addition of *dao* expresses a heightened sense of perceptual accomplishment or a sense of striving to guarantee "effective action".

3.2 The second category is what we call 'relatively novel uses'.

In this category, V-Dao-O has rarely been seen before but is starting to gain wider acceptance. There are ten such cases in our collection. These relatively new uses seem to be associated with particular lexical items to be discussed below.

3.2.1 *One common item is* 入 *ru 'to enter', resulting in a V-Ru-Dao-O structure.*

(18) 我在我们学校引入了有短信投票系统,
      Wo zai women xuexiao yinru le you duanxin toupiao xitong,
      …但是能把这些东西引入到我们学校,
      … danshi neng ba zhexie dongxi yinru dao women xuexiao,
       but able:to BA these thing introduce DAO our school
      效果也是非常的好. (TV)
      xiaoguo yeshi feichang de hao.
      'I have implemented an SMS voting system at our school; … but if we manage to introduce these sorts of things into our school, they will have a great impact.'

(19) 薛寒冰: 我想找一个地方, 真正地开始, 把我以前的自己翻过去一页, 然后呢, 真正把我自己投入到这个地方全力以赴, 谢谢. (TV)
      Xue Hanbing: Wo xiang zhao yige difang, zhenzheng de kaishi, ba wo yiqian de ziji fan guoqu yi ye, ranhou ne, zhenzheng ba wo ziji touru DAO zhege difang quanliyifu, xiexie.
      really BA 1sG self immerse DAO this place wholeheartedly
      'Xue Hanbing: I'm looking for somewhere I can restart my life, turn over a new leaf, and devote myself wholeheartedly to whatever it may be. Thanks.'

(20) 我希望在实习期间向我的老板证明我的价值,
      Wo xiwang zai shixi qijian xiang wo de laoban zhengming wo de jiazhi,
      然后融入到他这个企业当中. (TV)
      ranhou rongru dao ta zhege qiye dangzhong.
      then immerse DAO 3sG this business inside
      'I want to prove my value to my boss during my internship and then immerse myself in his enterprise.'

(21) 54条就把这个人权非常明显地写入到了法条当中去. (TV)
      Wushisi tiao jiu ba zhege renquan feichang mingxian de xie ru DAO le fatiao dangzhong qu.
                                        write enter DAO PRF law inside go
      'Clause 54 has unmistakably inscribed the human right issue in the law.'

The fact that *ru* 'to enter' attracts the use of *dao* may be explained by the former's inherent directional meaning. Since *ru* entails a change of location, it is natural to specify the end point of the motion with *dao*. However, what is interesting here is that the *ru*-centered items do not necessarily indicate a concrete physical location; they often indicate only semi-physical entities, such as (immersion in) an enterprise, as shown in (20). At the same time, we can observe that 'effectiveness' of the action of 'inscribing into', figures prominently with the use of *dao*, even though the metaphorical agent, 54 条 wushisi tiao 'Clause 54', is inanimate. What is also interesting is the alternation forms in (18) where the first one without a *dao* and the second one with a *dao*, reflecting the fluid nature of the new usage.[7]

3.2.2 *Verbal expressions with an abstract sense of reaching.*

There is a range of verbal expressions that seem to share this feature. For example, 影响 *yingxiang* 'influence' can be seen as an abstract form of reaching from one person to another, and 感染 *ganran* '(emotional) touch' can be seen as an affective form of reaching. Because of the implication 'reach', albeit abstract (mental or emotional), already inherent in the main verbs here, *dao* is not required; however, the overt use of *dao* makes the reaching component more explicit and enhances the 'effectiveness' of the action or thoroughness of some mental processes such as 考虑 *kaolü* 'considering' denoted by the main verb. This is illustrated by examples like the following:

(22) 张绍刚: 一定要**考虑**到职位自身的含金量以及你和那个职位的契合度. (TV)
Zhang Shaogang: yiding yao kaolü DAO zhiwei zishen de hanjinliang yiji ni he nage zhiwei de qihedu.
        must consider DAO position self MOD quality
'Zhang Shaogang: We must take into consideration the quality of the position itself, as well as your suitability for the job.'

(23) 张绍刚: 当你回答Susan的问题的时候, 旁边有一个老板突然把手里的话筒举到了嘴边, 你就立刻…?, 他的这个动作立刻会**干扰**到你. (TV)
Zhang Shaogang: Dang ni huida Susan de wenti de shihou, pangbian you yige laoban turan ba shouli de huatong judao le zuibian, ni jiu like, ta de zhege dongzuo like hui ganrao DAO ni.
        3SG POSS this gesture immediately may interfere DAO 2SG
'Zhang Shaogang: While you were answering Susan's questions, another boss suddenly raised his microphone, and you immediately stopped talking. That action of his abruptly interfered you.'

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7. We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to us.

(24)　刘同: 你没有**感染**到我. (TV)
　　　Liu Tong: Ni meiyou ganran DAO wo.
　　　　　　　　2SG NEG affect DAO 1SG
　　　'Liu Tong: You haven't managed to affect me.'

(25)　陈默: 这个举动不仅没有**影响**到这家药厂的销售,
　　　Chen Mo: Zhege judong bujin meiyou yingxiang DAO zhejia yaochang de
　　　xiaoshou,
　　　　　this move not:only NEG impact this pharmaceutical company MOD sales

　　　当然他有损失, 但是没有**影响**到他未来的销售. (TV)
　　　dangran ta you sunshi, danshi meiyou yingxiang dao ta weilai de xiaoshou.
　　　　　　　　　　　but NEG impact DAO 3SG future MOD sales
　　　'Chen Mo: This measure has not only failed to affect the sales of the
　　　pharmaceutical company — of course, they have suffered some losses — but
　　　it won't affect its future sales, either.'

(26)　田春雨: 导师当初说每天会**接触**到很多新的东西,
　　　Tian Chunyu: Daoshi dangchu shuo meitian hui jiechu DAO henduo xin de
　　　dongxi,
　　　adviser then say everyday may encounter DAO many new MOD things

　　　很有挑战的动作, 然后就是每天都是做有挑战的事. (TV)
　　　henyou tiaozhan de dongzuo, ranhou jiushi meitian doushi zuo you tiaozhan
　　　de shi.
　　　'Tian Chunyu: My mentor told us then that every day we would encounter a
　　　lot of new and challenging things; we just needed to meet the challenges.'

(27)　赵彦彦: 我在中间我学会了人生规划, 包括我走到了这里, 今天走到了这
　　　里, 都是那次培训**起**到了一些作用. (TV)
　　　Zhao Yanyan: Wo zai zhongjian wo xuehui le rensheng guihua, baokuo wo
　　　zoudao le zheli, jintian zoudao le zheli, doushi naci peixun qi DAO le yixie
　　　zuoyong.
　　　　　　　　　all thanks.to that training exert DAO PRF some effect
　　　'Zhao Yanyan: During that period of time I learned how to make life plans.
　　　That I have come this far is also a direct result of that training.'

3.3　Highly innovative uses.

These are the most conspicuous uses, where *dao* is least expected. In these cases the omission of *dao* is the norm; yet, with the use of *dao*, a strong sense of affectedness, success, and/or attainment is conveyed. There are twelve cases of this type in our collection, including the following seven:

(28) 宋思缘(白领, 工作有近十年): 在企业面试的时候, 答应给的薪资并没有**给**到. (TV)
Song Siyuan (bailing, gongzuo you jin shinian): Zai qiye mianshi de shihou, daying gei de xinzi bing meiyou gei DAO.
promise give MOD salary actually NEG give DAO
'Song Siyuan (a white-collar worker with ten years' experience): When it came to the interview, the salary that had been promised was not offered.'

(29) 刘惠璞: 但是理性方面我能**帮助**到你. (TV)
Liu Huipu: Danshi lixing fangmian wo neng bangzhu DAO ni.
              but rationality aspect 1SG can help DAO 2SG
'Liu Huipu: But I can help you with thinking it through rationally.'

(30) 王鹏:但是我正常**处**理到客户的时候, 还是一样没办法. (TV)
Wang Peng: Danshi wo zhengchang chuli DAO kehu de shihou, haishi yiyang mei banfa.
              but 1SG normally deal:with DAO customer MOD time
'Wang Peng: But normally when I deal with customers, I'm still unable to handle the situation well.'

(31) 李响: 在舞台上尽量多的**征服**到我们的十八位行业先锋的支持和信任的话,
Li Xiang: Zai wutai shang jinliang duo de zhengfu DAO women de shiba wei hangye xianfeng de zhichi he xinren dehua,
              at stage on try most MOD convince DAO 1PL POSS eighteen CLF industry pioneer MOD support and trust if

那么一百家知名企业的大门马上为你打开, 随便选, 工作都是你的了……(TV)
NAME yibai jia zhiming qiye de damen mashang wei ni dakai, suibian xuan, gongzuo doushi ni de le……
'Li Xiang: If you try your best to win from these eighteen industry pioneers on the stage as much support and trust as you can, then the doors of a hundred well-known enterprises will be open to you; you'll be in a position to choose the job you want.'

(32) 陈默: 所以想看一下你在以前婚礼的这个执行的这个岗位上面**积累**到的一些经验能不能帮你操作更大的活动. (TV)
Chen Mo: Suoyi xiang kan yixia ni zai yiqian hunli de zhege zhixing de zhege gangwei shangmian jilei DAO de yixie jingyan nengbuneng bang ni caozuo gengda de huodong.
accumulate DAO MOD some experience

'Chen Mo: So I want to find out whether the experience you accumulated from your previous job arranging weddings will help you in organizing larger events.'

(33)   李凯歌:而刘同老师他**给**到的, 可以是事业之前先期的爱情. (TV)
Li Kaige: Er Liu Tong laoshi ta gei DAO de, keyi shi shiye zhiqian xianqi de aiqing.
but NAME teacher 3SG give DAO PRT
'Li Kaige: But what Teacher Liu Tong was able to give was love before her career.'

(34)   李响:我们的英国专场即将启动, 我们将去到伦敦, 把更优秀的求职者请到这个舞台上来. (TV)
Li Xiang: Women de yingguo zhuanchang jijiang qidong, women jiang qu DAO Lundun, ba geng youxiu de qiuzhizhe qing DAO zhege wutai shanglai.
1PL will go:to DAO London
'Li Xiang: Our British special is about to get underway. We'll be heading to London to attract more outstanding job-seekers onto this platform.'

Some of the more robust cases include (29) with 帮助 *bangzhu* 'help', which also appeared in (10), the uses of 给 *gei* 'give' (in exx. 11, 28, and 33), and of 吸引 *xiyin* 'to attract' (12). Each of these verbs involves some sort of positive semantic connotation. That is, the non-agent human mentioned or implied in the clause can be seen as the beneficiary of the action. For example, in (11) above, in the clause 户口…可以给到我们员工 *hukou keyi gei dao women yuangong* 'city residency can be given to employees', is offered as the object given to the employees, who are the recipients of the legal right of residence (*hukou*) guaranteed by the employer. Similarly, when the customer service representative offers help with the expression 帮到您 *bang dao nin* 'help you' in (10), the customer is clearly the beneficiary of the offer of help from the service representative.

    An apparent counter-example is (31), involving the verb 征服 *zhengfu* 'to conquer'. Normally the object of *zhengfu* would be a victim affected by the negative action of the agent. However, a close analysis of the example shows that the opposite is true in this case. Here the object of the conquering action is the support and trust (支持和信任 *zhichi he xinren*) from the business leaders. Given the positive connotation of the associated objects ('support and trust'), the affected entity, which is the subject 我们 *women* 'we' in this case, is obviously a beneficiary.

    Taking the above examples together, we see that the optional use of *dao* often occurs in clauses expressing events of 'giving' or 'offering' (e.g. help), which entail a beneficiary, whether it is the addressee of the utterance or a third party. This seems to suggest that the expansion of *dao* into less expected settings correlates with the (assumed) intentions of speakers to seek to be perceived as assuring effective,

goal-oriented action facilitated by positive interactive pragmatic motivations. For other cases, we can note that the expansion of *dao* includes verbs that have meanings almost identical to that of *dao*. For example, this is the case of 去 *qu* 'to go to' in (34).

4.   Interim summary

We have so far discussed three sub-types of "evolving *dao*": 1) "optional", where frequency appears to have increased; 2) "novel", where the semantic implication of 'reach, attain' in the main verb helps to accommodate *dao*. Whether the meaning of 'reach' is concrete or abstract, the use of *dao* essentially brings out the hidden component of the meaning in the main verb; and 3) "highly innovative", in the sense that there are no inherent semantic properties that requires the use of *dao*. This type of innovation, we argue, is motivated by interactive pragmatics, often the prototypically service-provider speaker's desire to appear to offer assurance of effective action. These innovative uses of *dao* highlight the status of the addressee or a third party as the beneficiary of a positive action or event originated from the action of the speaker. This is realized often in the form of an assurance of successful accomplishment/arrival at goal implied by the agent(-speaker) when *dao* is used innovatively. We claim that, even though the boundary among of the three categories of new uses can be fuzzy sometimes in terms of the scales of innovation, a general distinction among the three types can be fruitfully established where the first type being the least innovative, the third type the most, and the second type somewhere in between.

In the next section, we will suggest that these innovations are indeed emerging phenomena. We make this claim on the grounds of diachronic comparative data.

5.   A comparison with LCMC

In order to demonstrate the rising status of V-Dao-O as an innovative syntactic structure, we make use of the Lancaster Corpus of Modern Chinese (LCMC, McEnery and Xiao 2004), which preserves written Chinese of the 1990s and slightly earlier.[8] Since there is no fixed corpus of contemporary Chinese that can be consulted to examine the status of the V-Dao-O structure in a more systematic way, we have decided to rely on our collection of examples from contemporary data as indirect evidence for comparison with the LCMC data.

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8. According to McEngery and Xiao (2004), the exact dates of the texts are +/− 2 years of 1991.

Statistical evidence is provided in Table 1. As we can see in Table 1, in the LCMC corpus, there are about 1010 cases of *dao*. In most of these cases, *dao* is used as a main verb of motion, as shown below.

(35) 一位带着北京经济学院校徽的大学生到了咨询台前, 他很有礼貌地点了点头.

Yiwei daizhe Beijing jingji xueyuan xiaohui de daxuesheng DAO le zixun tai qian, ta henyou limao de dian le dian tou. DAO help desk

'A student wearing the badge of the Beijing School of Economics came to the help desk and nodded politely.'

It is also very frequently used as a preposition:

(36) 以后回到上海, 在街道厂当工人,

Yihou huidao Shanghai, zai jiedao chang dang gongren,

到30多岁才结婚.

dao sanshi duo sui cai jiehun.

DAO 30 age more then only marry

'After returning to Shanghai, he became a street factory worker and didn't get married until his 30s.'

(37) 美国将把从南朝鲜撤军的人数降到最低限度.

Meiguo jiang ba cong Nan Chaoxian chejun de renshu jiang DAO zuidi xiandu.

number reduce DAO minimum limit

'The United States will decrease to the minimum the number of troops withdrawn from South Korea.'

Another major use of *dao* is as a post-verbal particle of 'successful result':

(38) 普通老百姓能以高于国家牌价1倍的价格买到一台彩电已经算不错的了.

Putong laobaixing neng yi gaoyu guojia paijia yi bei de jiage mai DAO yi tai caidian yijing suan bucuo de le.

buy DAO one CLF color:TV

'(TVs were so hard to find that) a commoner who managed to buy a color TV at a price twice the prescribed government tag was thought to have done quite well.'

Only a few cases show some signs of extension. Most of these cases involve the use of 涉及 *sheji* 'to extend to, to reach, concern', which is similar to the *ru* 'to enter' cases in 3.2.1 and the 进 *jin* case in 3.1, in that there is a sense of reaching inherent in the main verb. What is interesting here is that 涉及 *sheji* 'to extend to' itself contains a morpheme that already indicates the meaning of 'reaching', which is 及 *ji* 'to'.

So the use of *dao* here can be considered more of an enhancer than an obligatory marker. For this reason we consider the whole structure to be an extension from the normal V-O structure. This is illustrated by the following extract:

(39)   大家眼里只有道教和佛教.
　　　 Dajia yanli zhiyou daojiao he fojiao.
　　　 有些论著**涉及**到历代的祭祀和丧礼.
　　　 Youxie lunzhu sheji DAO lidai de jisi he sangli.
　　　 some works touch:upon DAO dynasties MOD sacrifice and funeral
　　　 'Taoism and Buddhism are what most people pay attention to. (However,) some works do touch upon issues of sacrificial ceremonies and funeral formalities.'

Other than this sort of example, there is very little sign of extension in the 1990s data of the type demonstrated by the contemporary V-Dao-O structures. For example, there were no cases of 帮(助)到 *bang(zhu) dao* 'help+Dao' or 给到 *gei dao* 'give+Dao' in the LCMC corpus, both of which are rather common in contemporary data, especially in the spoken data, and so far we have no way of verifying the status of these use in the 1990s spoken data.

The types of *dao* patterns and their frequency distribution in the LCMC dataset are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of *dao* in the LCMC corpus.

Usage Types	N	%
Main Verb	281	27.8%
Preposition	545	54%
Complement Marker	171	16.9%
Extended Use	10	1%
Other	3	0.3%
Total	1010	100%

The numbers here demonstrate the rarity in the LCMC of sub-types of the V-Dao-O structure that is increasingly common in some genres of contemporary discourse. We note that the relevant genre-types (e.g. TV shows) are not well represented, if at all, in the LCMC corpus. Though there is not a sufficient amount of data in our collection of contemporary Chinese to match that of the LCMC and allow for a systematic and direct comparison, we believe that the figures presented here still offer a useful perspective on the rising status of the V-Dao-O structure in certain genres of Chinese over the past two decades.

6.   Discussion

Our data, especially viewed in comparison with the 1990s data, show that the V-Dao-O phenomenon is very much a late 20th — early 21st century innovation. This is most strikingly seen in the low percentage (0.3%) of the extended use in the LCMC corpus. The overall change has been the increased transitivity of the verbal expression, in the sense that a formerly less overtly expressed sense of high potency of the agent and/or the affectedness, success, and attainment of the verb action have become more explicitly encoded through the use of *dao*.

We hypothesize that there are both language-internal and language-external factors that drive the emergence of this structure. We discuss these factors below.

6.1 Language-internal factors

In terms of language-internal factors, as we have hinted at in the previous sections, a lot of the structures that do incorporate *dao* have an inherent meaning of 'reaching'. This includes both those of physical (e.g. 引入 *yinru* 'to lead', 进/进入 *jin/jinru* 'to enter') and of metaphorical (mental/emotional) motion along a path. The latter would include verbs such as 影响 *yingxiang* 'to influence' and 感染 *ganran* 'to affect'. The role of the sense 'reach/attain' is also seen in the early 1990s data, where the most notable extension is found with the verb form 涉及 *sheji* 'to extend to', another item with the inherent meaning of 'reaching'.

We suggest that this kind of extension, where the main verb has the inherent meaning 'reaching', constitutes the most natural entry point for the extended use of *dao*, as there is no conflict of meaning between the main verb and *dao*, *dao* simply making this part of the meaning explicit, amplifying, or even upgrading it [涉及 > 涉及到]. As *dao* is used with more and more verbs of this type, it may have expanded to other verbal expressions where the implication 'reaching' is not so strong, or may even be totally lacking (e.g. 说 *shuo* 'speak of').

There is also clear evidence that *dao* is spreading beyond the "V + ( ) + O" structure. For example, the following two examples were found on the internet:

(40) 首先王婷她问我的问题就跟到我的职业有关, 我对她印象比较深刻. (IN)
      Shouxian Wang Ting ta wen wo de wenti jiu gen DAO wo de zhiye youguan,
      wo dui ta yinxiang bijiao shenke.
        3SG ask 1SG MOD question just with DAO 1SG POSS profession related
      'First of all, the questions Wang Ting asked me were about my profession.
      She impressed me greatly.'

(41) 如果一个女生在一群人面前对到一个男生说:亏我还曾经喜欢过你……? (IN)

Ruguo yi ge nüsheng zai yi qun ren mianqian dui DAO yi ge nansheng shuo: kui wo hai cengjing xihuan guo ni

if a CLF girl in a crowd front to DAO one guy CLF say

"What if a girl says to a guy right in front of a whole bunch of people: 'Beats even me why I ever liked you! …'?"

In both cases, *dao* is used between a preposition and its object.

In addition to verb (V-O) and prepositional phrases, passive structures in *bei* were also found to include innovative *dao*.

(42) A: 你有没有**被融化**到?

   Ni you meiyou bei ronghua DAO

   2SG have NEG have BEI impact DAO

   'Did you feel deeply about it?'

   B: 有, 真的, (TV)

   You, zhende,

   Yes, I really did.'

(43) 看到布莱尔和Chuck结婚的时候真的有**被感动**到, (IN)

   Kan DAO Bulaier he Chuck jiehun de shihou zhende you bei gandong DAO,

   see reach Blair and Chuck marry MOD time really have BEI move DAO

   'When I saw Blaire's and Chuck's wedding, I was really moved.'

This kind of passive structure, where *you* is used as an aspect marker, shows traces of southern dialect influence (Kubler 1982, Cheng 1990, Matthews and Yip 2011). The issue of dialect influence is discussed next.

6.2 *Dao* in regional dialects

As we just saw in (42) and (43), some regional dialects, especially in the south, exhibit patterns similar to those now observed in standard Mandarin. Another example we believe should be connected to southern dialects of Chinese is given below:

(44) A: 两位都向你介绍了自己, 有打动到你吗?

   Liang wei dou xiang ni jieshao le ziji, you dadong DAO ni ma

   have move DAO 2SG

   'Both of them introduced themselves to you. Did you feel moved?'

   B: 有.

   You

   'Yes, I did.'

A: 有**打动**到更多的是第一位还是第二位?(TV)
    You dadong DAO geng duo de shi diyi wei haishi dier wei
    have move DAO more MOD COP first place or second place
    Who moved you more, the first or the second person?'

The use of 有 *you* 'have' as an aspect marker, three times in (44), is found widely in southern forms of Chinese, such as Taiwan Mandarin, Minnan, and Cantonese (Kubler 1982, Cheng 1990, Matthews and Yip 2011). It is not, however, a feature of standard Mandarin.

In addition to southern dialects and the Minnan-influenced Taiwan Mandarin, some regional northern dialects have been described as displaying the lexeme *dao* in various types of extended use. However, as these descriptions have generally been short on detail, we will mention only a few of them here.

Yu (1990) reports that in Chongqing Sichuan, what is written as 倒 *dao* can indicate stative, perfective, and potential meanings.[9] Among the environments where this occurs is between V and O. Some of his examples include:

(45) 动员**倒**一些人.
      Dongyuan DAO yixie ren
      persuade DAO some people
      '(Someone) succeeded in persuading some people (to participate).'

(46) 没满七岁还是报**倒**名了.
      Mei man qi sui haishi bao DAO ming le
      NEG reach seven age still register DAO enrollment PRF
      'At less than seven, (the person) managed to register.'

(47) 一个桶就装**倒**了二十斤油.
      Yi ge tong jiu zhuang DAO le ershi jin you
      one bucket even contain DAO PRF twenty jin oil
      'A bucket is big enough to hold twenty jin/gallons of oil.'

These data seem broadly comparable with the extended uses of *dao* in contemporary standard Mandarin in that they can be argued to encode 'potency', 'accomplishment', and/or attainment.

Chang (2008) also notes that in the Nanjing dialect, *dao* (到) can function as a perfective aspect marker, correlating with a high degree of affectedness and/or high level of potency on the part of the agent.

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9. It is not clear from the cited sources whether or not the different uses of dao has distinctive phonological forms.

(48) 这阵子多亏**到**你, 要不然我还不晓得忙到哪天去. (Chang 2008, ex. 40)
Zhe zhenzi duokui dao ni, yaoburan wo hai bu xiaode mang DAO na tian qu
this while thanks:to DAO 2SG
'All this time I managed only because of your help. Otherwise, I don't know
how long it would have taken me to finish.'

Similar cases are reported by Yang (2006) of *dao* (倒) in Xiangfan, Hubei, where it
is shown that *dao* is mostly used as a stative marker. However, in some cases when
used in a V-Dao-O environment, *dao* can help indicate a sense of completion of
action and/or attainment or success, as illustrated below.

(49) 我听倒过这种声音的.
Wo ting DAO guo zhe zhong shengyin de
1SG hear DAO EXP this type voice PRT
'I have indeed heard this kind of voice before.'

(50) 我瞅倒过这本书了的.
Wo qiu DAO guo zhe ben shu le de
1SG see DAO EXP this CLF book PRF PRT
'I did have a glance at the book.'

We believe that the so-called perfective and potential markers in these dialects
are in line with the development of *dao* in standard Mandarin, in that perfectivity
or completion of events is also one of the parameters for high transitivity in the
Hopper and Thompson (1980) sense. It is likely that dialect influences, especially
from southern China may have had some impact on the spread of *dao* in standard
Mandarin. However, we hypothesize that this kind of spread will not be possible
without the external factors that trigger the change. We now turn to the sort of
social factors that we believe to be playing a role in facilitating such changes.

6.3 Extra-linguistic factors

We maintain that the extension of *dao* to contexts beyond structures having the
implication 'reach (successfully)' can be seen as accelerated by non-linguistic fac-
tors, which we believe include socio-economic factors and associated cultural
practices. Specifically, the process can be described as follows: as the economy,
starting in the late 1980s, takes center stage in contemporary Chinese society,
commercial competition has stimulated the emergence and now dominance of
consumerism and commercial ideology, which, we hypothesize, give impetus to
the use of consumer-friendly language. Indeed, rapid economic growth and the
market economy have been identified as leading forces motivating changes in
values, ideology, and attitudes toward consumerism (Bao 2008, Gerth 2010). In

such an environment, friendliness to customers becomes one of the driving forces behind both commercial conduct and language change, and this is most directly observed in service encounters. The extended use of *dao* can be seen as one of the results of this societal change.

Evidence for the link between the rise of consumerism and language behavior change can be gathered from different sources. Sun (2012), for example, notes that over the decade (mid-1990s to 2009) telephone-based customer services in China have improved tremendously. Specifically, she shows that the opening routines of service phone calls now include the adoption of institutionalized, more elaborate expressions as well as an increased range of interactional tasks performed (including greetings and the immediate self-identification of the commercial side of the interaction). These were lacking a decade ago, suggesting an overall attempt to increase the quality of customer care over time.

Another widely noted example is the appearance of novel uses of terms of address such as 亲 *qin* 'dear' for customers, first used by the online retail giant 淘宝网 *Taobao* and now extended to even formal written contexts such as university admissions letters (Li 2009, Zhou & Tan 2009). Such a usage is highly innovative, given the socially conservative society that China is often been portrayed to be, where linguistic expressions of intimacy are generally not considered appropriate in the public sphere. Viewed with this lens, the rise of V-Dao-O expressions is not so surprising, as many of them help maximize the positive effect of the verbal action on the addressee or a related third party and demonstrate a sense of friendliness or eagerness to serve, in other words, a desire on the part of the speaker or writer to provide efficient and effective services.

Our preliminary survey further indicates that this high transitivity marker, which may have originated in the service industries, has been picked up by urban, typically well-educated, white-collar middle class workers, a group akin to the *yuppies* on the American social scene a decade or two ago: young, urban, professional upwardly mobile high-earners who enjoy an affluent, big-city lifestyle (Zhang 2005). Media critics have noted that most participants in the relevant TV shows have higher education and/or a certain level of training in management and/or customer service (Chen 2011). Also, those who appear on practical reality TV talk shows and who use the internet for blogging and forum discussion tend to be active participants in modern urban life (Chen 2011). Younger generation consumers are seen as the driving force of certain sectors of both China's and the world's economy (Gerth 2010). We hypothesize that they are also the driving force behind the language innovation we are witnessing.

Trendy, novel use of language is an important way to project a 'new-style, upmarket' identity (Liu and Tao 2009). Zhang (2005) documents how language devices such as phonological variation are used to identify in-group members in

certain professions among yuppies in Beijing. In other words, what we are witnessing is that professional groups strive both to identify their members and be recognized by others via the display of special linguistic features — phonology, lexicon, and grammatical patterns. Thus, we would like to suggest that the high transitivity marker in question can also be seen as an identity marker that emerges from a service-oriented interactive context and is a side product of contemporary Chinese discourse. Such an identity, we conjecture, is most likely assumed by urban white-collar or middle-class workers equipped with a higher education and sometimes with extensive training in consumer service.

An episode from a job-centered reality TV show, 职来职往 *Zhilaizhiwang* 'Job Hunters', recorded in March 2013, can be taken as an illustration. The main protagonist fits the aspiring yuppie profile just outlined: educated, trained in service and possessing middle-class aspirations. In seeking a job as a TV host, Mr. Hu, the participant, is required to demonstrate his communication skills by attempting to sell some soft drinks products to members of the audience in order to impress the special guests on stage who are large business owners capable of offering jobs to the contestants.

Figure 1. The TV show scene

Figure 2. Example 51.a), greeting.

Figure 3. Example 51.b), bringing up a product.

What is interesting here is that both before and after Mr Hu's sales pitch, where he is answering questions and providing background information about himself, no tokens of extended *dao* usage can be found. However, only in his sales pitch to the audience, Mr. Hu uses *dao* as a high transitivity marker a number of times. Excerpts from this part of his staged sales talk are given below.

(51) Hu Yanpeng, 26, a job seeker in *Zhilaizhiwang*, a job-themed TV reality show jointly run by Jiangsu Cable TV and Chinese Education TV.
胡延鹏(求职者, 26岁, 毕业于韩国釜山新罗大学经济管理系, 曾从事电视购物主持人工作, 想找主持人工作)
Hello, 大家好, 依然是你的好朋友鹏鹏, 在这里问候到电视机前的观众朋友们了(0:27:57)……大家都知道, …但是我今天带到的就是小洋人品牌的妙恋果粒多(0:44:40),而且…我个人的理解是, 可能说话快的话, 整个就是现场的气氛, 包括到看电视人的气氛, 都会感受到我是在跟人分享这款东西, 不是在强买强卖的这种感觉.

In this episode, the segments containing *dao* are the following:

a) 问候到电视机前的观众朋友们
wenhou dao dianshiqian de guanzhong pengyoumen
extend:greeting DAO TV front MOD audience friends
'Greetings to all of you watching the show.'
b) 我今天带到的就是小洋人品牌的妙恋果粒多
wo jintian dai DAO de jiu shi Xiao Yangren pinpai de Miaolian Guoliduo
1SG today bring DAO MOD just COP X. Y. brand MOD PRODUCT NAME
'Today I have brought along some Miaolian Guoliduo, Xiao Yangren brand.'
c) 包括到看电视人的气氛, 都会感受到我是在跟人分享这款东西,
baokuo DAO kan dianshiren de qifen, dou hui ganshou DAO wo shi zai gen ren fenxiang zhe kuan dongxi
include DAO watch TV MOD mode all able:to feel DAO 1SG be with persons share this CLF product
'From the reaction of our audiences, I feel that I am truly sharing this product with you (rather than asking you to buy it).'

This extract helps demonstrate that some uses of the innovative *dao* are closely tied to consumerism and self-presentation as a supplier of products and/or services. The use can also be taken as enhancing the establishment of an identity of aspiring yuppies in contemporary China.

   To summarize this section, our discussion and a single episode of a TV show suggest that both internal and external factors may have contributed to the rise of *dao* in contemporary Mandarin. The internal factor identified is the semantic component of "reaching" in some of the main verbs. The external factors identified

are socio-economic factors such as consumerism, which promotes customer/addressee-friendly language (i.e. in the sense of the implied 'goal-oriented, assured delivery of services to the customer'). In addition, potential dialectal influence from southern Chinese (especially of the Hong Kong and Taiwan varieties) provides a fertile ground for growth in standard Mandarin. We propose that all these factors work together to contribute to the change involving the rise of *dao* as a high transitivity marker.

7.   Notes on Yu in the V-Yu-O structure in pre-Han Chinese

Finally, we would like to touch briefly on a phenomenon in pre-Han Chinese reminiscent of the behavior of contemporary *dao* we have described here. In pre-Han Chinese, the morpheme *yu* (于/於) has been described as introducing object-like arguments after the verb. For example,

(52)   胡不相畏?不畏于天！(诗经: 小雅)
       hu bu xiang wei   bu wei   yu tian
       who NEG of   afraid NEG afraid YU heaven
       'Who am I not afraid of? I am not afraid of Heaven!' (The Book of Odes)

Dong (2006) claims that minimal pairs like the following (her p. 5, exx [17], [18]) differ in terms of transitivity: (53a), where 于 intervenes between the verb and the object is lower in transitivity than (53b), where the object NP is contiguous with the verb.

(53)   a.   告于寡君 (左传: 襄公8 年)
            gao   yu guajun
            announce YU self
            'announced to myself' (Zuo Zhuan)
       b.   告唐惠侯 (左传: 宣公12 年)
            announce NAME
            'announced to Marquis Tanghui' (Zuo Zhuan)

Since the verbs in question are all "transitive" and, as such, their direct object arguments would not be marked, scholars have long debated the role of *yu* here. Dong (2006) argues that *yu* in these contexts actually introduces a non-object adjunct. More crucially, she argues that *yu* in the verb phrase is a marker of low transitivity in the sense of Hopper and Thompson (1980). While Dong does not elaborate on the relevant parameters in Hopper and Thompson (1980) that can be applied

to the Chinese case, thus making it difficult to judge the validity of her claims,[10] what is interesting about *yu* in pre-Han Chinese and *dao* in contemporary Chinese appears to be the following: a) both *yu* in pre-Han Chinese and *dao* in contemporary Chinese originally contain the motion sense of 'reach'; b) both can be used between a transitive verb and a nominal that immediately follows it; c) however, these two morphemes seem to have opposite functions: *yu* correlates with low transitivity, according to Dong (2006), while we argue that *dao* marks high transitivity. In our view, this apparent paradoxical situation can be resolved when a number of factors are taken into consideration.

First of all, both our study and Dong's taken together suggest that argument-marking is not strictly a matter of morphosyntax and semantics; it often has to do with subjectivity, namely how the event is viewed by the speaker/writer. The speaker/writer can view the entity named by the grammatical object phrase as either a directly affected entity or a marginally affected one by manipulating the marking of transitivity through the use of the marker *yu* in pre-Han Chinese. The same principle applies to the use of *dao*, where just the opposite is true. That is, the presence, as opposed to the absence, of *dao* highlights the affectedness/attainment/success of the action.

A second important observation made by Dong and other scholars which helps reconcile the apparent paradox is that the appearance of *yu* in the V-O structure is very much a pre-Han Chinese phenomenon, which by and large disappears by the start of the Common Era. As Dong (2006) notes, once *yu* no longer has this function, other syntactic configurations start to appear (e.g., the occurrence of locative and other adpositional phrases in preverbal positions), while prepositions and other morphosyntactic markers emerge to replace multi-functional 於 *yu*. The precise mechanism of such an evolution may be subject to finer studies, what this does tell us is that (i) the Chinese language is, like every other living language, constantly in a state of change, and (ii) language systems are capable of exhibiting relatively drastic changes, as we see from pre-Han to later Chinese. Thus it is not in the least surprising that markers such as *dao* can emerge in the same kind of syntactic environment as *yu* in the "V+ ( ) + O" context in pre-Han Chinese.

Finally, even if Dong's assertion that *yu* in pre-Han Chinese marks a low transitivity is true, it does not preclude the possibility for *dao* in contemporary

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10. This is not the place to debate the merits of Dong's proposal that the presence of yu between the verb and object decreases the transitivity of the clause. Clearly the matter is not simple and may have to do with features of the object not included in Hopper and Thompson's (1980) Transitivity parameters. (For a more nuanced analysis of object marking and its interaction with information structure, see Dalrymple and Nikolaeva (2011) -We thank an anonymous referee for drawing our attention to this work.).

Chinese to be a high transitivity marker given the vast differences between pre-Han Chinese and contemporary Chinese.

In summary, both pre-Han Chinese and contemporary dialects offer evidence in support of Hopper and Thompson's (1980) original insight that, within languages, transitivity is a variable attribute of verbs and clauses, and the contemporary Chinese data exemplifies the dynamic nature of transitivity — a property which we believe to be entirely in line with the spirit of Hopper and Thompson (1980).

8.   Conclusions

In this paper we have described the recent emergence of a high transitivity marker *dao* in standard Chinese in syntactic contexts where it is either optional or not expected at all. To best explain this phenomenon, we assume a co-evolution through which linguistic structure reflects social change. As China has undergone and continues to undergo rapid socio-economic changes during the past few decades, linguistic innovation fueled by the proliferation of traditional and new media becomes commonplace, as evidenced by the spread of the well-documented *bei*-passive and other constructions (Liu and Tao 2011). We also suggest that identity formation can be an important sub-part of a broad transformation behind the use of innovative syntactic structures.

We have also briefly examined 1) uses of *dao* found in some of the non-standard dialects, and 2) the use of 'detransitivizing *yu*' in pre-Han Chinese, comparing it to *dao* in contemporary Chinese, given the many similarities between the two. Our examination shows that some dialect uses are very much in line with what we are witnessing in standard Mandarin, providing further support for our observation about motion/reaching verbs becoming grammaticalized as markers of high transitivity. The pre-Han Chinese data suggest that, while *yu* and *dao* appear to share the same basic meaning as verbs of goal-directed motion and can appear in the same syntactic environment, they serve opposing functions in terms of transitivity marking. These facts show that the Chinese language is constantly evolving, whether viewed through a historical telephoto lens or a diachronic macro lens.

Much can clearly be gained by analyzing emerging linguistic phenomena in a dynamic society like that of contemporary China, and it seems equally fruitful to compare contemporary standard Mandarin with both regional dialects and earlier forms of Chinese.

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