

Conceptual Manipulation and Semantic Distinctions in Mandarin Verb Complements: The Contrast between *shàng* and *dào**

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0. Introduction

This study investigates the lexicalization of spatial and aspectual components incorporated in Mandarin verb complements (VCs hereafter) *shàng* ‘up’ and *dào* ‘arrive’. The verb complement in Mandarin is well-known as the second verbal element in VV construction. Traditionally, *V-shàng* and *V-dào* are categorized as ‘directional complements’ and ‘phase complements’ respectively (Chao 1968; Li and Thompson 1981). Both VCs *shàng* and *dào*, originally functioning as a main verb (Gao 1995), are similar to the counterpart ‘up/on/above/over’ and ‘arrive/reach’ in English; they have various usages, such as in verb phrases, and prepositional phrases, for example. Although there is no doubt that *shàng* and *dào* are poly-functional, it seems that there is no agreement on to what extent particular uses are related to one another. Most of the previous studies focus on the spatial meanings lexicalized in noun phrases and postpositions; they provide explanations based on a metaphorical approach or cultural values. However, such accounts cannot entirely explain the main function of the post-verbal complements *shàng* and *dào* in VV construction.

In this paper, I explore the subtle distinctions between the satellites *shàng* and *dào*, and provide an explanatory account for their seemingly diverse functions from a cognitive approach. Moreover, this paper aims to offer another perspective on the conceptual properties of spatial and aspectual notions embodied in these two verb complements, and verify evidence that Mandarin treats five framing events as a single conceptual entity.

The organization of this paper is as follows. A brief literature review and the theoretical framework are presented in section 1. In section 2, the data involved the verb complements *shàng* and *dào* are introduced. In section 3, based on Talmy’s (2000) framework and framing event types, I discuss several examples

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and account for how aspectual and spatial concepts are explicitly expressed in *shàng* and *dào* regarding different framing event types. Section 4 shows a summary of findings and conclusion.

1. Previous Studies

The VCs *shàng* and *dào* function both as verbs or post-verbal complements; they are two of the most common VCs based on a corpus¹ search. In previous studies, a set of lexical rules are postulated by Thompson (1973) to explain the VV derivation in Mandarin. However, lexical rules have too many limitations, and they fail to capture subtle distinctions. Teng (1977) generalizes the functions of several verb complements by claiming that *shàng* and *dào* both have the semantic property of “contact,” but differ in which of the ‘movement’ feature of the verb [+/-movement] is involved. However, this account does not explain the possibility that the same verb occurs with different verb complements. It also fails to explain the aspectual functions among verb complements. In addition, Potete (1987) does not attempt to account for the phenomena discussed above and only focuses on the characterization of *dào*. Most studies (cf. Smith 1990; Yong 1997; Kang 2001) agree that Mandarin verb complements denote a new state resulting from the action (V₁). Other approaches, such as collocation patterns of the two elements (McDonald 1994) or a metaphorical approach (Xing 2000), do not exemplify how the intertwined ranges of functions are conceptually incorporated in verb complements.

Therefore, a detailed semantic analysis of *shàng* and *dào* is proposed in section 3. Different from the previous analysis, I adopt Talmy’s (2000) cognitive approach (lexicalization patterns) and discuss the semantic components embodied in each verb complement in this paper. Based on Talmy’s (2000) claim, languages seem to divide into a two-category typology on the basis of the characteristic pattern where the conceptual structure of the macro-event is mapped onto the syntactic structure. Typology is composed of whether the core schema² is expressed by the main verb or by the satellite.³ In general, Mandarin is an example of a satellite-framed language (Talmy 2000), while Spanish is a verb-framed language. Therefore, if this assumption that the concepts are “encapsulated” into the satellite V₂ is valid, the next question is what are the essentially underlying conceptual manipulations incorporated in *shàng* and *dào*, since there are numerous VCs in Mandarin.

2. The Data

In Mandarin, a simple verb is often used with a perfective marker *le* or a verb

¹ Sinica Corpus 3.0 <http://www.sinica.edu.tw/ftms-bin/kiwi.sh>

² The core schema of the framing event is composed of either the association function alone or the association together with the ground entity (Talmy 2000).

³ The term ‘satellite’ refers to a surface element in which a connected set of semantic categories that appear lexicalized in a closed-class type (Talmy 2000).

complement in a sentence. The following examples (1-6) are the primary focus of the present paper.

	Simple V	V- <i>shàng</i> ‘up’	V- <i>dào</i> ‘arrive’
(1)	a. piāo ‘float’	b. piāo- <i>shàng</i>	c. piāo- <i>dào</i>
(2)	a. zhuī ‘chase’	b. zhuī <i>shàng</i>	c. zhuī <i>dào</i>
(3)	a. zhuàng ‘bump’	b. zhuàng- <i>shàng</i>	c. zhuàng- <i>dào</i>
(4)	a. huā ‘spend’	b. huā- <i>shàng</i>	c. * huā- <i>dào</i>
(5)	a. mǎi ‘buy’	b. * mǎi- <i>shàng</i>	c. mǎi- <i>dào</i>
(6)	a. péi ‘compensate’	b. péi- <i>shàng</i>	c. * péi- <i>dào</i>

A closer examination of the data indicates that the semantics and functions of the VCs, *shàng* and *dào*, cannot be illuminated by simply combining the two components (V₁-V₂) together. Scrutinizing the data above, we found that *shàng* and *dào* do not all behave the same way with respect to functioning as a post-verbal complement. Several remarkable similarities and dissimilarities are observed. First, both VCs *shàng* and *dào* can occur in the same environments, as shown in (1-3). Second, it seems that they are in complementary distribution with each other, as illustrated in (4) and (5). Third, previous accounts cannot explain their non-spatial (aspectual) uses, shown in (4) and (6). One question remaining to be addressed is how to predict their diverse occurrences. In particular, what are the overlapping functions they both have, and what are the distinctive functions and conceptual representations exhibited by each?

3. A Finer Look: Contrast between V-*shàng* and V-*dào* Constructions

The goal of this section is to capture the subtle distinctions between *shàng* and *dào* by means of concrete comparison. In the view of this paper, my discussion is primarily focused on V-*shàng* and V-*dào* constructions so that a fine-grained elaboration would clarify these two VCs.

My preliminary proposal is as follows: a) *shàng* and *dào* can occur in the same contexts if the spatial notion, such as path or spatial relation between the Figure and the Ground,⁴ is more saliently construed by the speaker than the aspectual notion; b) the crucial distinction between *shàng* and *dào* is aspectual, that is, *shàng* encodes a telic notion and the inchoative/inception of the resultant state, whereas *dào* merely signals telicity; c) in realization framing events,⁵ *dào* functions as a fulfillment satellite, whereas *shàng* is a confirmation satellite as well as a fulfillment satellite, depending on the first verb. These arguments will be elaborated in the following section.

⁴ The Figure is the salient moving or stationary object in a Motion event whose path or site is the relevant issue. The Ground is the reference object with respect to which the Figure’s path/site is characterized.

⁵ An event of realization is an encompassive category for a pair of related types, fulfillment and confirmation.

3.1. Contexts Where Both *shàng* and *dào* Can Occur

Example (7) illustrates a situation where both satellites *shàng* and *dào* behave alike in a Motion event. The Motion event consists of a transition by the Figure with reference to the Ground. Basically, the Motion event involves the Figure object changing its position in space in relation to the Ground; the spatial relation between the Figure and Ground is also specified. What these two examples, (7a) and (7b), have in common is that they both express the end (telic) point of an event.

- (7) a. Qiqiu piao-*shàng* waitaikong (qu) le
 balloon float-up outer space (go) ASP
 ‘The balloon floated/is floating up to outer space.’
- b. Qiqiu piao-*dào* waitaikong (qu) le
 balloon float-arrive outer space (go) ASP
 ‘The balloon floated/has floated up to outer space.’

The Figure in (7) refers to *qiqiu* ‘balloon’, whereas the primary reference object (i.e. the Ground) is unspecified. Nevertheless, we can locate the movement of the Figure on the basis of the earth-based reference. The support relation of the co-event is particularized as *Manner* to the framing event,⁶ and the core schema is WITH-THE-MANNER-OF. As shown in (7a), the aspectual (telic) information as well as the path notion (i.e. the movement of the Figure) is implicated by the use of *shàng*. That is, the notion of the path is more saliently expressed than the aspectual component in such a motion event with the use of the satellite *shàng*. By contrast, if the VC *dào* is used in (7b), the path notion is not as saliently conveyed as the aspectual notion (telic). The other way to explicate the subtlety is that the employment of *dào* draws one’s attention not only to the ending (telic) of the floating, but also to the final site where the Figure *qiqiu* ‘balloon’ is finally located.

However, it is worthwhile to remark that the function of *shàng* is not limited to specifying the notion of the path only. The satellite *shàng* also specifies the spatial relation between the Figure and Ground in addition to the path notion. Another framing event, an event of coactivity, is given in (8).

- (8) a. Xiaohua zhui gongche
 Xiaohua chase bus
 ‘Xiaohua tries to chase after the bus.’
- b. Xiaohua zhui-le gongche
 Xiaohua chase-PERF bus
 ‘Xiaohua chased after the bus.’

⁶ The framing event serves to schematize a conceptual domain, and it is composed of four components: a Figure, and an activating process, an association function, and a Ground.

- c. Xiaohua *zhui-shàng* (le) *gongche* le
 Xiaohua *chase-up* PERF bus ASP
 ‘Xiaohua caught up with/was running over to the bus.’
- d. Xiaohua *zhui-dào* (le) *gongche* le
 Xiaohua *chase-arrive* PERF bus ASP
 ‘Xiaohua caught up with the bus.’

The use of the satellite *shàng* denotes the spatial relation between the Figure and Ground, and such an event is interpreted as being in a coactivity relation rather than the notion of path. Coactivity is also known as Activity Correlating. It means the first subject performing an activity is associated with the second subject whose activity is correlated with the first. Examples of this can be seen in (8). In example (8), *chasing bus*, the Figure is *Xiaohua* and the Ground is *gongche* ‘bus’. The meaning of the simple verb *zhui* ‘chase’ in (8a) does not convey the realization of the action of chasing. Moreover, the addition of the perfective marker *le* leads to a perfective or past tense reading. Besides using *le*, Mandarin native speakers often use a variety of VCs such as *shàng* and *dào*, as exemplified in (8c) and (8d). Both *shàng* and *dào* denote the notion of telicity in (8c) and (8d), but only *shàng* signifies the temporal concept of *instantaneous change* (i.e. the inception of another change of state resulting from the V_1).

More importantly, in addition to denoting the telicity, *shàng* in (8c) also specifies the spatial configuration between the Figure and the Ground (i.e. *Xiaohua* and the moving bus – a reference object). Two possible conceptions are often associated with the use of the satellite *shàng*. First, it can be the case that the event of the Figure and the Ground has an inchoative aspectual reading – a correlative view is emphasized. Second, it is also possible to construe a situation where the agent *Xiaohua* (the Figure) is jumping onto the bus (the Ground) if the satellite *shàng* is used. For the VC *dào*, only the aspectual (telic) notion is incorporated; there is no spatial concept associated with *dào*.

The last example of the spatial use of VCs in a motion event involves the semantic notion of *contact* (cf. Teng 1977).

- (9) a. Zhangsan *zhuang* le *anquandao*
 Zhangsan *bump* PERF *median*
 ‘Zhangsan bumped into the median.’
- b. Zhangsan *zhuang-shàng* le *anquandao*
 Zhangsan *bump-up* PERF *median*
 ‘Zhangsan drove over/bumped into the median.’
- c. Zhangsan *zhuang-dào* le *anquandao*
 Zhangsan *bump-arrive* PERF *median*
 ‘Zhangsan bumped into the median.’

Regarding the examples shown in (9), (9b) and (9c) are more commonly used than (9a) by native speakers. Example (9a) only describes a past/perfective event that just happened with the use of perfective *le*. Compared with (9c), the VC *dào* is used to specifically emphasize the confirmation of the action V_1 as well as the telic concept. Apparently, it seems that the example (9) is compatible with Teng's (1977) claim that both *shàng* and *dào* contains the semantic component 'contact'. However, there is no need to explain the function of *dào* by using the notion of spatial contact. On the contrary, when the satellite *shàng* is used in (9b), this sentence just explicitly designates the spatial configuration between the Figure (the unspecified car that Zhangsan drove) and Ground (*anquandao* 'median'). This example provides additional evidence for confirming that the satellite *shàng* is a poly-functional VC.

3.2. Aspect: Complementary Distribution

The satellites *shàng* and *dào* do not all behave alike with respect to the notion of aspect. In example (10), satellites *shàng* and *dào* both function as an event of temporal contouring (Aspect). If there is no VC used but a perfective marker *le* is used in (10a), the only meaning expressed by the verb *hua* 'spend' is the perfective or the past meaning of spending. However, if the VC *shàng* is used, not only the completion of the action is evoked, but the **inception** plus the **duration** of V_1 *hua* 'spend' is semantically signified. The focus is from starting, remaining, and intensifying the duration of the V_1 ; in particular, the duration is longer than the speaker's expectation (presupposition). As we observe in (10b), the addition of *shàng* not only denotes an inception of another new state, but it also implies the **duration** of the V_1 . However, this is in contrast to the satellite *dào*, which cannot be used in (10c) since the aspect marker *dào* only denotes the telic notion of the event.

- (10) a. Zhangsan hua-(le) ershi-ge xiaoshi xie qimo-baogao
 Zhangsan spend-PERF twenty-CL median write final-report
 'It took/has taken Zhangsan twenty hours to write the final paper.'
- b. Zhangsan hua-*shàng* ershi-ge xiaoshi xie qimo-baogao
 Zhangsan spend-up twenty-CL median write final-report
 'It took/has taken Zhangsan twenty hours to write the final paper.'
- c. *Zhangsan hua-*dào* ershi-ge xiaoshi xie qimo-baogao
 Zhangsan spend-arrive twenty-CL median write final-report

In a nutshell, the VCs *shàng* and *dào* are incorporated with different aspectual components. The VC *dào* signals a telic notion, whereas *shàng* specifies a telic plus an inception notion, yielding a certain degree of duration. This explains why the example (10c) is ungrammatical if the aspectual marker *dào*, denoting the duration of the event, is used. The contrast between *shàng* and *dào* can be

expanded to reveal their fundamental aspectual complementarity in state change or realization framing events later.

3.3. Realization: Confirmation vs. Fulfillment Satellites

In an event of realization, I demonstrate that *shàng* and *dào* function differently in terms of fulfillment or confirmation. The satellite *shàng* functions as either a fulfillment or a confirmation satellite, whereas *dào* mainly functions as a fulfillment satellite. Additionally, the different roles of the satellite *shàng* depend on the use of the first verb. As illustrated in (11), the referent of the transitive verb *guan* ‘close’ consists of an Agent’s intended activity of closing and the Agent’s further intention that this activity will lead to fulfilling the action – closing the door.

- (11) **Moot-fulfillment verb:** action + goal (i.e. *guan* ‘close’)
Fulfillment satellite: *shàng* ‘up’ (with fulfillment of the goal)

- a. Chumen shi, jide yao ba men guan le
 Go out time remember want BA door close ASP
 ‘Be sure to close the door when you are going out.’
- b. Chumen shi, jide yao ba men guan-*shàng*
 Go out time remember want BA door close-*up*
 ‘Be sure to close the door when you are going out.’
- c. *Chumen shi, jide yao ba men guan-*dào*
 Go out time remember want BA door close-*arrive*

Basically, the meanings of (11a) and (11b) are the same and the use of the satellite *shàng* ‘up’ just further fulfills the goal of the action V_1 *guan* ‘close’. It is plausible to argue that the additional use of the satellite *shàng* conceptually leads to the beginning of the resultant state change. That is to say, without a satellite in (11a), this verb is moot regarding the outcome, and the sentence just expresses an action of “closing the door”. The intended result expressed by the verb *guan* ‘close’ is originally **potential**, but the addition of the satellite *shàng* ‘up’ indicates that the inception of this state change has **actually** been fulfilled in (11b). Therefore, this type of event can also be regarded as a kind of state change, from potential action to actual realization. On the other hand, the VC *dào* in (11c) is not allowed in this construction because the aspectual notion of *dào* does not indicate the inception of the resultant state change.

Let’s look further at the other examples given in (12). First, one remarkable thing to note is the similar meaning illustrated in both (12a) and (12c), but with additional implication signified by the use of *dào* in (12c).

In Mandarin, *pei* ‘compensate’ is an attained-fulfillment verb, and the use of *pei* ‘compensate’ indicates the actual fulfillment of the intention rather than just an implicature of the fulfillment of the further intention or a moot outcome. The fulfillment of the intention is essentially embodied by the verb itself. The pleonastic satellite *shàng* is just used to further denote the resultant state, implying the confirmation of that implicature of V_1 . Thus, this use of *shàng* involves a certain degree of the inception of another state. We can say that the satellite *shàng* is responsible for the reading about the speaker’s surprise feeling toward the amount of money being compensated for. As seen in (13b), the amount of money for the compensation is higher than the ordinary people’s assumption. In general, the VC *shàng* does implicitly express such a notion – the mental space. As discussed above, *dào* does not indicate the beginning of another event or change of state. The reason for the satellite *dào* being incompatible in (13c) is because the satellite *dào* does not function as a confirmation satellite.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, it has been shown that the VCs, *shàng* ‘up’ and *dào* ‘arrive’ in Mandarin mainly differ in three aspects. First, if the spatial notion is more saliently construed than the aspectual notion by the speaker, *shàng* vs. *dào* can occur in the same environment with regard to being VCs. However, the use of *shàng* further specifies the spatial configuration between the Figure and Ground (i.e. path, surface contact, or spatial relation between the Figure and Ground), whereas *dào* only denotes the aspectual notion. Second, with respect to the notion of aspect, *dào* only denotes a telic notion, whereas *shàng* denotes a telic plus an inception of resultant state from the first verb. Third, in a framing event of realization, *dào* primarily functions as a fulfillment satellite, whereas *shàng* is a confirmation satellite as well as a fulfillment satellite, dependent on the first verb.

In summary, I have addressed the issue of the nature of the differences between VCs *shàng* and *dào* in Mandarin. Furthermore, I have also proposed an adequate account for some of these differences from a cognitive perspective. My analysis regularizes the seemingly diverse functions of two VCs, *shàng* and *dào*, occurring in similar syntactic environments, and also captures their subtle semantic distinctions. It reveals that neither postulating lexical rules nor collocation groups will clarify the nuances between the VCs *shàng* and *dào*. On the other hand, this account also serves to justify that there is no single distinct function exhibited by Mandarin VCs. Instead, the meanings and functions of VCs in Mandarin are comprised of a complex of conceptual categories, and each differs by a certain degree of salient manifestation of spatial or aspectual notions.

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