

## Arrive or achieve? the morphosyntax of *dao* in Mandarin Chinese

**Introduction:** As a multifunctional item in Chinese, *dao* can occur in various syntactic environments. It can serve as a verb or a preposition and it can be combined with another verb to form a chunk, *V-dao*. The last usage of *dao* exhibits intriguing morphosyntactic properties: *dao* cannot occur independently. It is flexible in terms of C selection: CP or DP and the  $\theta$  role of an DP argument can be location or a theme, see (1). In addition, this *dao* seems to be optional for some verbs but not others, both in motion and non motion events, as in (2) and (3).

**Research questions:** Why *dao*, as the verb of ‘arrive’, can occur in such diversified syntactic contexts? Why *dao* is optional in some cases but not in others? Is it possible to give a unified account for the multifunctional *dao*?

**In the literature,** the multifunctionality of *dao* has been attributed to its different categories. *Dao* is argued to be a directional verb/preposition (Lin, 2019; Liu, 1998; Lv, 1980; Zhu, 1982; a.o), or a completive marker/particle/linker (Chao, 1965; Dong, 2017; Xuan, 2008; a.o). Such accounts are insufficient in capturing the universal semantic core among its different usages: the achievement of a target, be it a location, an entity or a state.

**Proposal:** Under the framework of Distributed Morphology (DM, Halle et al., 1993; Marantz, 1997), we propose *dao* realizes two syntactic entities: it is the PF exponent of a feature bundle

[PATH, PLACE]. It is inserted at PATH during late merge and undergoes head movement to  $v$ , as in (4). Such a derivation accounts for *dao*’s ability to take a locative argument and its flexibility in terms of category, compared with the intransitive ‘arrive’ in English. *Dao* in *V-dao* chunk is the realization of a light verb ( $v$  categorizer):  $v_{ACHIEVE}$ , which has the argument structure in (5).

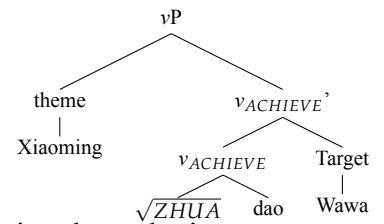
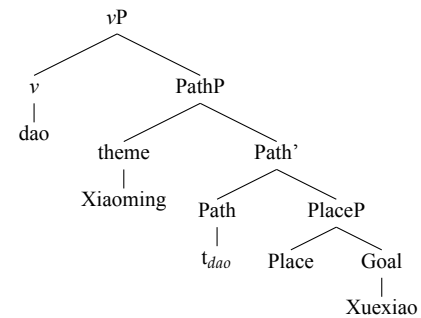
The  $v$  requires a root to discharge its categorial function. That’s why *dao* is involved in word formation and never occurs independently. The root names the action by adjoining to *dao* (Harley, 2005), indicating *dao*’s matrix status in the chunk. With the semantic feature ‘achievement’, *dao* encodes a transitive achievement event which is punctual, telic and agentiveless. The flexibility of C selection is attributed to the denotation of the target, which can be a locative DP(goal), an individual DP(theme) or a clausal CP (state).  $v_{ACHIEVE}$  signifies the syntactic encoding of telicity. However, if such an endpoint is entailed in the lexical semantics of a verb, *dao* is optional.

**Theoretical implications:** The bipartite analysis of *dao* is a reflection of the root inertia property in Chinese (Hu, 2020). The proposal of  $v_{ACHIEVE}$  shed light on the universal event template of a directed motion and a change of state event (Acedo-Matellán, 2016; Beavers, 2012, 2013; Ramchand, 2008; Snyder, 2001; Talmy, 1985). The

availability of  $v_{ACHIEVE}$  also accounts for the cross linguistic variation in expressing the endpoint of an event: semantic entailment or syntactic encoding. This is in line with the spirits of Borer Chomsky Conjecture (BCC, Baker, 2008) and the analyticity parameter proposed in (Huang, 2014).

**Keywords:** *Dao*, motion event, achievement event, analyticity, Distributed Morphology

- (1) a. Xiaoming zou-dao xuexiao le. (DP location)  
Xiaoming walk-dao school SFP  
‘Xiaoming walked to school.’  
b. Nana zhao-dao le shouji. (DP theme)  
Nana find-dao PFV phone  
‘Nana found the phone.’  
c. Ta ku-dao dajia dou hen bunaifan. (CP)  
He cry-dao everyone all very annoyed  
‘He cried everyone annoyed.’  
(2) a. Xiaoming zou\*(-dao) le xuexiao.  
Xiaoming walk-dao PFV school  
‘Xiaoming walked to school.’  
b. Xiaoming hui\*(-dao) fangjian le.  
Xiaoming return-dao room SFP  
Xiaoming returned the room.  
(3) a. Xiaoming meng\*(-dao) le NaNa.  
Xiaoming dream-dao PFV Nana  
‘Xiaoming dreamt of Nana.’  
b. Xiaoming chi\*(-dao) le huoguo.  
Xiaoming eat-dao PFV hotpot  
Xiaoming ate the hotpot.



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