

## The Use of *Da4/Xiao3/Bu4Dong4Zuo4* in PTT: A Corpus-based Account

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In this paper, we used a corpus linguistics technique called ‘probe’ (Hunston, 2002: 62) to observe some transitive verbs in Mandarin. ‘Probe’ is the use of “searches [other than your keywords] to find sets of words or expressions that cannot easily otherwise be called to mind”. Such a method could be used whether or not one has a list of verbs in mind.

We searched for *da4/xiao3/bu4dong4zuo4* ‘big/small/no action’ (大動作/小動作/不動作) using data from the PTT corpus, a Bulletin Board System (BBS) in Taiwan (accessed through <http://lopen.linguistics.ntu.edu.tw/copens/>). There were as many as 1,062 instances of *da4dong4zuo4*; 985 *xiao3dong4zuo4* and only 88 instances of *bu4dong4zuo4*. Among the two, *da4dong4zuo4* often serves as an adverb to some highly transitive verbs. These verbs usually require a volitional participant (see (1a)) as the agent (cf. Verhoeven, 2010), but this agent may not always be needed (see (1b)). The transitive verbs that we found with *da4dong4zuo4* were 召開 *zhao1kai1* (32), 澄清 *cheng2qing1* (16), 搜索 *sou1suo3* (14), 宣布 *xuan1bu4* (14), 抗議 *kang4yi4* (11), 反擊 *fan3ji4* (10), 驅離 *qu1li2* (10), 約談 *yue1tan2* (7), 搜查 *sou1cha2* (7), 反應 *fan3ying4* (7), 進行 *jing4xing2* (6), 處理 *chu3li3* (6), 刊登 *kan1deng1* (6), 開除 *kai1chu2* (5), 開鋼 *kai1zha2* (5), 宣示 *xuan1shi4* (5), 公佈 *gong1bu4* (5), 傳喚 *chuan2huan4* (5), 偵辦 *zhen1ban4* (5), and 做 *zuo4* (5), albeit these transitive verbs can also be used intransitively (居民大動作抗議). Some VO compounds were also seen: 登報 *deng1bao4* (6), 提告 *ti2gao4* (5), and 表態 *biao3tai4* (5).

- (1) (a) 警方 大動作 <偵訊> 女子 交往過 的 3 名 男友  
*jing-fang da dong-zuo zhen-xun nu-zi jiao-wang-guo de 3 ming nan-you*  
police big action interrogate woman date-EXP DE 3 CL man
- (b) 其實  $\emptyset$  不用 這麼 大動作 <反對>  $\emptyset$   
*qi-shi  $\emptyset$  bu-yong zhe-me da dong-zuo fan-dui  $\emptyset$*   
actually no-need so big action oppose

Its ‘antonym’, *xiao3dong4zuo4*, has no parallel use (cf. Jones, 2016). *Xiao3dong4zuo4*, in contrast, often appears a countable noun in nominalized form, as in (2a), serving as the patient of a volitional agent. It is often the patient of some ACTIVITY verbs such as *zuo4* and *gao3* (cf. Li, 2016: 91) (see (2b)). In (2c), *xiao3dong4zuo4* has become a verb.

- (2) (a) 每 個 人 說 謊 的 時 候 都 會 有  
*mei ge ren shuo-huang de shi-hou dou hui you*  
every CL people lie DE moment all can have
- 些 小 動作  
*xie xiao dong-zuo*  
some small action
- (b) 不要 <搞> 什麼 小 動作  
*bu-yao gao shi-me xiao dong-zuo*  
Do not do any small action

- (c) 他 就 開始 小 動作  
*ta jiu kai-shi xiao dong-zuo*  
 3sg then start small action

As for *bu4dong4zuo4*, it is an unconventional use of *dong4zuo4* because it has slowly become an intransitive verb *bu4dong4zuo4*, as in (3) below, like *xiao3dong4zuo4* in (2c) above.

- (3) (a) 投了 60 元 後 按 洗衣鈕 洗衣機 遲遲不動作  
*tou-le 60 yuan hou an xi-yi-niu xi-yi-ji chi-chi bu dong-zuo*  
 put-PERF 60 dollar afte/press laundry-buttonlaundry slowly no action
- (b) 他們 不動作 我們 也 拿 他 沒 辦法  
*ta-men bu dong-zuo wo-men ye na ta mei ban-fa*  
 3PL no action we too take\_BA 3sg no means

(b') \*他們動作我們也拿他沒辦法

For (3b), we tried to remove the negator *bu4* but this created an ungrammatical sentence in (3b'). This shows that the “volitional negation” of *bu4* (cf. Pan et al., 2016: 146) in *bu4dong4zuo4* has become one lexicalized intransitive verb, instead of *bu4+ dong4zuo4*. In addition, we also found several categories of its left-one collocates of *bu4dong4zuo4*: (a) entities that are motionless (鏡頭, 打手, 倒數 (the countdown event)); (b) adverbs that tell the unexpected (long) duration, manner, etc. of the motionless event (遲遲, 久, 一直, 再, 邊, 才, 卻, 則, 但是, 都, 也, 能, 還, 絕對, 如果); (c) verbs that tell the actions that lead to motionless action (耍帥, 選擇); and (d) questions that ask why a supposedly moving entity is not moving or motionless (為何, 幹嘛).

*Dong4zuo4* is originally a noun that means ‘behavior or action’ or ‘activity’. In the Revised MOE Dictionary (<http://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/cbdic/index.html>), *da4dong4zuo* is defined only as the ‘major change in work in Mainland China’, whereas *xiao3dong4zuo4* has two meanings, namely (a) improper little actions, such as picking the nose, shaking the legs while sitting, etc; and (b) the improper little actions used to reach a certain goal, such as speaking behind a person, etc. *Bu4dong4zuo4* has no entry. From our analysis, we saw other characteristics of *dong4zuo4*, some of which can tell us more about its (in)transitivity of collocated verbs, and its collocate types.

## References

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