

A study on the diachronic evolution of the new "bei" construction and its covariation with social change

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Abstract. Based on 188 authentic instances collected from 2007 to 2026, this study systematically investigates the diachronic evolution of the new "bei" construction in Chinese. It reveals a functional shift from an instrument of social critique to cognitive evaluation, and further to affective expression. The findings suggest that the new "bei" construction not only reflects the implicit manipulation of individuals by external powers but also mirrors the passive experiences of being defined, categorized, and emotionally affected amid social change. Serving as a linguistic mirror of society, this construction encapsulates public criticism and self-reflection on power abuse, institutional loopholes, identity misclassification, and psychological manipulation, thereby demonstrating the dynamic covariation between language and social reality.

Keywords: new "bei" construction, diachronic evolution, linguistic mirror of society

1. Introduction

Since around 2007, Chinese has seen the emergence of a new passive construction that takes nouns, adjectives, intransitive verbs, and other non-verbal elements as its predicates, rather than transitive verbs:

(1) 为什么你总是被PUA?

(Why are you always being psychologically manipulated?)

(2) 兄弟们,我被美到了!

(Brothers, I was deeply struck by the beauty!)

(3) 嗨,你被中产,你知道吗?

(Hey, you've been classified as middle-class—did you know?)

(4) 有人把真相扒光,放在网上,结果被失踪了.

(Someone exposed the truth completely online, and as a result was officially declared missing.)

These examples illustrate the full diachronic range of the "bei" XX construction from its early innovative uses to more recent extensions. However, despite the construction's apparent productivity and semantic evolution over nearly two decades, existing research remains largely synchronic.

Research on the Chinese "bei" XX construction has evolved from formal syntactic generation [1] to usage-based constructionist approaches, yet it remains fragmented by competing synchronic mechanisms. While some scholars attribute the construction to constructional coercion [2, 3] or lexical coercion [4, 5], others refute these views via metonymy [6], snowclone theory [7], or memetics [8]. Although these studies

successfully capture the construction's synchronic semantic features—such as involuntariness, deception, and external causation—they overwhelmingly treat it as a static construct of online cognitive operations (e.g., conceptual integration or control cycles). Consequently, the literature lacks a diachronic perspective that would explain how the construction emerged as a gradual historical process rather than a sudden structural innovation.

A critical limitation of the existing literature is the absence of diachronic corpus data covering the period from 2019 to 2026. While Wang Yagang's [7] snowclone model proposes a temporal process of incubation, stabilization, modification, and re-stabilization, this framework remains a descriptive cycle rather than an empirically grounded historical account, as this framework has not been updated with new "bei" XX instances from the past seven years. Similarly, Liu Fen's [9] notion of decategorization, along with other cognitive and pragmatic explanations, is framed in static terms that cannot capture how the construction's coercive, ironic, and critical readings have continued to accumulate layer by layer through actual language use over time, shifting from occasional creative usage to an entrenched syntactic-semantic pattern. Without systematic collection and analysis of newly emerging "bei" XX expressions from 2019 onwards, current theories risk reifying the construction as a timeless cognitive template, thereby missing the crucial interplay between ongoing social change and grammatical reorganization that the construction so vividly reflects.

In view of this, the present study aims to address the following core research questions:

(1) Over the nearly two decades from 2007 to 2026, what diachronic evolutionary trajectory have the semantic-syntactic features of the new "bei" construction undergone? Does its evolution exhibit identifiable stage-based characteristics?

(2) What correspondence exists between the diachronic evolution of this construction and concurrent social changes in China? That is, to what extent do the functional shifts of this construction across different phases reflect the migration of focal concerns in public discourse?

To address these questions, the specific objectives of this study are as follows: to systematically collect authentic instances of the new "bei" construction from 2007 to 2026; to build a diachronic corpus of this construction; to adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to delineate the trajectory of its formal expansion and semantic evolution; and on this basis, to explore the interplay between linguistic change and social transformation, thereby providing a diachronic dimension grounded in actual language usage data for the study of this construction.

2. Theoretical basis

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical foundation for generating the new "bei" construction. Section 2.1 examines force dynamics in the passivization of intransitive elements, while Section 2.2 discusses Construction Grammar accordingly.

2.1. Force dynamics from the cognitive perspective

One of the fundamental aspects of the passive is event structure. An event that can be expressed using a passive construction is perceived by the speaker as one that approximates the prototype of transitive events. The prototypical transitive event structure [10, 11] involves two entities that are distinct from each other, from their environment, and from the observer. The two entities stand in an asymmetrical relationship to one another, and their interaction takes place in physical space. The interaction consists of the first participant moving toward and making contact with the second participant. The second participant is affected and responds by either changing its state or moving.

Langacker [11] uses the billiard-ball model to describe a prototypical transitive event structure. This model is shown in Figure 1 [12]:

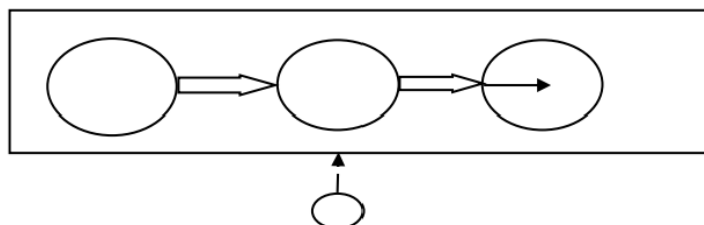


Figure 1. Billiard-ball modell und Bühnenmodell [12]

An observer sees two or more discrete objects that interact energetically through physical contact. The observer of the action is separate from the environment and from the participants. The energy, represented by external arrows, is transferred from one participant to the next. The internal arrow represents the change in the second participant. The leftmost, or first, participant is the energy source, and the rightmost, or second, participant is the energy sink. In more general terminology, these correspond to the roles of agent and patient. This type of event is most commonly represented by an active clause, which encodes the agent as subject and the patient as object.

In the billiard-ball model (or the action chain), speakers view the world as containing discrete objects located in various places. These objects can move and interact with one another, most prototypically through direct physical contact. This physical contact often involves the transfer of energy from one object to another. The billiard-ball model is an archetypal conception that belongs to the speaker's worldview. It is not merely a linguistic model but possibly one that underlies human cognition [12].

2.2. Force dynamics, transitivity, and passivization

The transfer of energy is closely related to transitivity and in fact constitutes its essential characteristic.

Apollonius [13], as the first researcher, introduces the concept of verb transitivity. He holds the view that transitive verbs indicate a transfer of action from one person or thing to another, that is, that an exerting force is transferred to an object.

According to Langacker [11], a full verb denotes an energetic interaction that encodes an event structure. The prototypical transitive event structure consists of an interaction between an agent and a patient, in which the agent transfers energy to the patient, who absorbs it and thereby undergoes a change of state. The essence of transitivity thus lies in the effective transfer of energy: one participant transfers force to another, thereby bringing about a change of state in the latter.

Peng Xuanwei [14] characterizes transitivity as an oppositional state marked by the vector properties of different exerting forces. This shows that exerting forces play an important role in characterizing transitivity. Furthermore, he distinguishes between active and passive based on vector direction. The active denotes an entangled state in which the ket-vector is manifest and the bra-vector is latent, as in the sentence *The cat catches the mouse*. The passive indicates an entangled state with a manifest bra-vector and a latent ket-vector, as in the sentence *The mouse is caught by the cat*.

He also emphasizes that the intensity of forces forms a continuum from weak to strong. For example, the sentence *她把房子给拆* ("She demolished the house") expresses a strong force, whereas the sentence *把西门庆吃得酩酊大醉* ("Ximen Qing was made dead drunk by them") represents a medium force, and the sentence *我被他们拖走了* ("I was dragged away by them") represents a weak force.

Hopper and Thompson [15] emphasize that the concept of the prototype highlights the relationships between elements within a sentence and in discourse. The transitivity model they proposed forms the foundation for the work of Rice [10]. Rice [10] agrees with the central claims of Hopper & Thompson but argues that the values of their parameters do not correlate with the traditional indicators of transitivity. Rice contends that in a given language (particularly in English), there are more than ten factors that can make a sentence less transitive.

Hopper and Thompson [15] propose a global view of transitivity. They argue that transitivity depends on a range of factors relating to properties of the clause. Accordingly, transitivity is a property of the clause, rather than of a single event or verb. Hopper and Thompson [15] also distinguish themselves from generative, functional, and other semantic approaches to transitivity by emphasizing that transitivity is a scalar and gradient concept. Consequently, Hopper and Thompson [15] list ten parameters of transitivity, each of which can take high or low values. These are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. The transitivity parameters of Hopper and Thompson

Parameter	HIGH	LOW
PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants	1 participant
KINESIS	action	non-action
ASPECT	telic	atelic
PUNCTUALITY	punctual	non-punctual
VOLITIONALITY	volitional	non-volitional
AFFIRMATION	affirmative	negative
MODE	realis	irrealis
AGENCY	A high in potency	A low in potency
AFFECTEDNESS OF O	O totally affected	O not affected
INDIVIDUATION OF O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

2.3. Construction grammar

Goldberg proposed Construction Grammar, a framework grounded in Frame Theory and experience-based linguistics, and in her 1995 work she defines a construction as follows [16]:

C is a CONSTRUCTION iff_{def}. C is a form–meaning pair < F, S, such that some aspect of F, or some aspect of S, is not strictly predictable from C's component parts or from other previously established constructions.

She argues that a construction is defined as a form-meaning pair and is characterized by its unpredictability, meaning that its overall meaning cannot be predicted from its component parts or from other existing constructions. Constructions are considered the fundamental units of language, whereby both phrases and morphemes can be regarded as constructions.

According to Goldberg's definition, passive structures can become entrenched as constructions due to their high frequency, and importantly, their meaning cannot be derived from their component parts. For instance, the meaning of an impersonal passive is not simply the sum of its lexical components.

In the interaction between a construction and a verb, each argument role of the construction fuses with the corresponding participant role of the verb, thereby generating concrete expressions. In this context, fusion serves to capture the semantic constraints imposed on both the participant roles associated with the verb and

the argument roles of the construction, rather than referring to the fusion of gaps within a single lexical entry [16].

However, argument structure can alter the semantic roles of the verb. When constructional meaning and lexical meaning come into conflict, constructional coercion enriches the lexeme by removing conflicting components of the word meaning through pruning or shading, or by adding compatible semantic elements, thereby adapting it to the constructional meaning [16-19]. For example, the verb "sneeze" is monadic and only has the agent role of "sneezers". Yet, in the interaction between the caused-motion construction and the verb "sneeze", the semantic roles of patient and goal are added, yielding the sentence: Sam sneezed the napkin off the table. In this sentence, "the napkin" functions syntactically as the object and semantically as the patient, while the prepositional phrase "off the table" serves syntactically as an oblique, with "the table" functioning semantically as the goal.

As with nouns, verbs lexically determine which aspects of their frame-semantic knowledge are obligatorily profiled [16]. This profiling facilitates the interaction between a construction and a verb by expanding the verb's range of usage, as it is the lexical meanings grounded in world knowledge that first enable such interaction. For instance, the verb "sneeze" profiles the production of an airflow that represents a dynamic force, which allows this monadic verb to be embedded into the caused-motion construction.

In the interaction between a verb and a construction, a specific participant role can be shaded. The passive construction defocuses the highest-ranking participant role of a verb, allowing it to be realized at most as an adjunct [16], a process that presupposes a thematic hierarchy that determines the ranking of the participant roles:

Agent, Causer > Recipient, Experiencer > Instrument > Patient, Theme > Location, Source, Goal

The roles listed in the thematic hierarchy are general argument roles [20], which represent superordinate types in relation to the participant roles of a verb. Since participant roles are typically instantiations of such general roles, the hierarchy establishes a partial order that does not relate all roles to one another. Consequently, the passive applies only to verbs that have at least two roles, where one role is ranked higher in the hierarchy than the other.

3. The diachronic evolution of the new "bei" construction from 2007 to 2026

To ensure the scientific rigor of data selection, this study systematically compiled 188 authentic instances of the new "bei" construction dating from 2007 to 2026. The corpus data were drawn from multiple sources, including the CCL and BCC corpora, newspapers and magazines, as well as online and social media platforms. The corpus covers diverse domains such as social criticism, internet culture, and psychological experience, thereby capturing how the new "bei" construction instantiates different types of force-dynamic mechanisms across the action, speech, and cognitive-affective domains. An overview of its developmental phases is presented in Table 2.

The Table 2 clearly illustrates the developmental process of the new "bei" construction from 2007 to 2026 through diachronic changes in quantitative distribution and the weighting of force types (action domain, speech domain, and cognitive-emotional domain). The first phase (2007–2013) is dominant, with 108 cases (57.4%), and is characterized by expressions of social criticism dominated by the action and speech domains, such as "bèi jiùyè" ("being forced to be employed"). The second phase (2014–2019) comprises 45 cases (23.9%), during which the proportion of the cognitive domain rises markedly to 40%, indicating a shift toward the examination of identity and state. The third phase (2020–2026) contains 35 cases (18.6%), with the cognitive-emotional domain dominating at 50%. This marks the completion of the functional shift of this

construction from an external tool of criticism to a core means of expressing passive psychological experiences and emotional states (e.g., "bèi PUA", "being psychologically manipulated").

Table 2. Developmental phases of the new "bei" construction (2007–2026)

Phase & Metrics	The first Phase (2007–2013)	The second Phase (2014–2019)	The third Phase (2020–2026)
Number of attestations	108	45	35
Proportion of total corpus	57.4%	23.9%	18.6%
Proportion in action domain	40%	30%	40%
Proportion in speech domain	40%	30%	10%
Proportion in cognitive-affective domain	20%	40%	50%
Phase characterization	Phase of social criticism: action and speech domains are dominant	Phase of cognitive expansion: marked increase in the cognitive domain	Phase of affective generalization

3.1. The first phase (2007-2013): the cognitive criticism period

The first phase (2007–2013) marks the emergence and consolidation of the new "bei" construction as an instrument of social critique. Its core characteristic lies in the interlocking operation of three types of forces: the actional domain, the linguistic domain, and the cognitive domain. On the one hand, expressions such as "bèi héxié" ("being censored") or "bèi juānkǎn" ("being forced to donate") reveal the coercive pressure exerted by external power on individual action (actional domain). On the other hand, phrases such as "bèi zìshā" ("being declared suicidal") or "bèi shīzōng" ("being declared missing") show how linguistic acts forcibly interpret or attribute a certain state of affairs (linguistic domain). At the same time, formulations such as "bèi xiǎokāng" ("being declared well-off") or "bèi péixùn" ("being considered as trained") illustrate how authorities and structures actively construct knowledge about a person's condition (cognitive domain).

Furthermore, an expression like "bèi jiùyè" ("being declared employed/being forced into employment") demonstrates the construction's polysemy. It can signify either the forced bringing about of employment (actional domain) or the mere attribution or assertion of a state (linguistic or cognitive domain). All attested instances from this phase revolve around the core semantic meaning of being caused by external forces and are consistently characterized by a strongly negative, ironic tone. Together, they condense into the emblematic formula of critique of the "bèi Era", becoming a sharp linguistic tool through which the public deconstructs the abuse of power and formalism.

During the first phase (2007–2013), the "bei" construction achieved implicit criticism of hidden power mechanisms by passivizing nouns, adjectives, or intransitive verbs. Syntactically, the passive construction with "bei" normally requires transitive verbs; yet during this phase, originally intransitive verbs or nouns such as "jiuye" (employment), "cishan" (charity), and "xiaokang" (moderate prosperity) were increasingly integrated into novel passive expressions. It is precisely by violating conventional collocations that listeners are forced to infer the implicit agent behind "bei". In this way, the construction reveals how ostensibly autonomous actions

(such as employment or donating) or intrinsic states (such as happiness or moderate prosperity) are unilaterally and coercively defined or manipulated by external forces.

At the level of the new construction, however, this sentence structure fully adopts and preserves the semantic framework of the traditional "bei" construction, which necessarily requires the transmission of force with strong transitivity. There must be an external force (agent) that acts unilaterally and coercively on the patient through abstract social forces such as discursive attribution, institutional coercion, or normative evaluation. As a result, the patient is forced, against its will, to enter a certain state, to be assigned a certain identity, or to perform a certain action:

(5) 谁的收入被增长了?

(Whose income has been 'increased' — falsely so declared to the outside?)

(6) 泰州教师被捐款,人在屋檐抬头难.

(Teachers in Taizhou were forced to donate — under the eaves, it is hard to lift their heads.)

The first example above illustrates how an agent (such as a statistical authority or the media) exerts linguistic force through a speech act. This force first acts upon the propositional information of the claimed income increase and is ultimately transferred coercively onto the subject-patient (income/shōurù), which is thereby forced to be attributed with the resultative state of "having increased". Thus, the constructional meaning of the entire "bei" sentence can be summarized as follows: the income is declared by the agent (the information transmitter) to be in a state of increase. The construction as a whole exhibits an unreal quality: the so-called increase in income is not a fact but a linguistically constructed, fictitious outcome. The entire process centers on the unilateral and coercive transfer of linguistic force that is characteristic of the "bei" construction.

In the second example above, an external, implicit agent exerts a coercive force on the patient (the teachers from Taizhou), thereby forcing them to donate. Precisely because the strength of this coercive force is sufficiently great, it leads the patient, despite the utmost reluctance, to perform the corresponding action (the donation). The entire "bei" sentence thus conveys a strong sense of being forced and coerced.

These examples illustrate how language mirrors society by revealing underlying power dynamics, coercion, and euphemistic manipulation. In (5), the passive construction "whose income has been increased" ironically exposes a false official claim, reflecting how language can obscure the real agent of action and mask economic injustice. In (6), the phrase "were forced to donate" directly indicates compelled participation, while the metaphor "under the eaves, it is hard to lift their heads" conveys systemic pressure and helplessness, showing how everyday expressions capture social hierarchies and the suppression of dissent. Thus, language not only describes social reality but also encodes critique, inequality, and the lived experience of those in constrained circumstances.

3.2. The second phase (2014-2019): the cognitive expansion period

The second phase marks the advance and deepening of the new "bei" construction from the realm of macro-social critique into the domain of micro-personal life. With social development, the focus shifts to issues of economy and personal rights, such as "bèi píngjūn" ("being averaged"), "bèi zhōngchǎn" ("being declared middle class"), and "bèi gǔdōng" ("being made a shareholder"). This highlights new passive experiences, including the alienation of statistics, imposed consumer identity, and the misuse of personal data. At the same time, examples such as "bèi mǎnyì" ("being defined as satisfied") and "bèi xìngfú" ("being defined as happy") illustrate passive experiences in which an individual's state is forcibly determined and evaluated by social authorities. In this phase, while retaining its critical function, the "bei" construction increasingly extends its semantic scope into personal life.

In the second phase (2014–2019), the "bei" construction underwent a syntactic expansion, allowing nouns, adjectives, or intransitive verbs to follow "bei". This innovation forcibly integrated originally non-verbal elements—expressing identity or state—into a passive structure, endowing them with a new meaning: the classification or identification of the individual through external forces. Such unconventional combinations quickly attracted public attention due to their novelty, prompting people to inquire into the hidden manipulative forces behind this structure. In this way, formalized actions, subjective decisions, as well as institutional and legal loopholes and deficiencies within the social system, are exposed and questioned in a subtle and ironically critical tone:

(7) 嗨,你被中产,你知道了吗?

(Hey, you've been labeled as middle class — did you know that?)

(8) 2019年初,常有不法分子冒用别人身份证,"被股东","被法人"等问题为社会广泛关注.

(In early 2019, criminals often used other people's ID cards without authorization, and issues such as 'being falsely registered as a shareholder' and 'being falsely registered as a legal representative' became widely concerning to society.)

The emergence of the construct "bèi zhōngchǎn" (be labeled as middle class)—formed with the Chinese character "bei", meaning "passively subjected to"—can be attributed to multiple interrelated factors in recent years. These include the widening income gap, rising living costs, and shifts in social mobility driven by China's urbanization and economic development.

Although some groups are statistically categorized as middle-income based on indicators that do not align with public perception, they struggle to identify with a middle-class identity. The reasons for this include high levels of indebtedness (e.g., from mortgages and education costs), job insecurity, and an actual quality of life that falls short of expectations.

This term reflects not only the passive acceptance of class labels by individuals but also a collective sense of self-irony and critical reflection on the contradiction between the symbolic meaning of the "middle class"—which implies stable living conditions, purchasing power, and social status—and social reality.

Example (8) highlights a troubling social issue in early 2019, in which criminals frequently misused others' ID cards to fraudulently register businesses, leaving innocent individuals passively "forged as shareholders" or "forged as legal representatives" without their knowledge or consent. These problems, succinctly expressed in Chinese through the passive "bei" construction ("bèi gǔdòng", "bèi fǎrén"), drew widespread public concern as they exposed major loopholes in identity verification and business registration systems. The passive phrasing effectively underscores the victims' lack of agency, while the broad social attention reflects growing anxiety over identity theft and its potential legal and financial repercussions for ordinary citizens.

The use of the passive "bei" construction in examples such as "bèi zhōngchǎn" ("being labeled as middle class") and "bèi gǔdòng" or "bèi fǎrén" (being forged as shareholders or legal representatives) reveals how language reflects individuals' lack of agency in contemporary Chinese society. While "bèi zhōngchǎn" expresses a collective sense of irony and disillusionment—as people who are statistically categorized as middle-income struggle to identify with that label due to debt, job insecurity, and unmet expectations—the fraudulent registration cases expose institutional vulnerabilities in which ordinary citizens are passively victimized by identity theft and systemic loopholes. Together, these "bei" expressions serve as linguistic mirrors of social reality: they not only highlight the gap between symbolic social statuses and actual living conditions but also underscore public anxiety over powerlessness, whether caused by economic pressures or by legal and bureaucratic failures. Thus, the passive construction has evolved beyond grammar into a vehicle for social critique and self-reflection.

3.3. The third phase (2020-2026): the affective generalization period

The third phase is a flourishing period of the digital economy, in which new constructions denoting the transmission of mental energy are experiencing explosive growth. Their semantics have evolved from representing passive endurance to describing inner emotional experiences triggered by impulses, thereby forming a complete spectrum of emotional meaning—from negative trauma to positive resonance. There is an example below:

(9) 为什么你总是被PUA?

(Why are you always being psychologically manipulated?)

The emergence of the linguistic phenomenon "bèi PUA" (to be psychologically manipulated) is rooted in the clarification of individual psychological dilemmas during China's period of social transformation, as well as in the rise of critical online discourse. With the acceleration of urbanization and consumerist thinking, the instrumentalization of interpersonal relationships has intensified, and hidden mechanisms of control in professional and emotional life have become more frequent. This has led the Western concept of "PUA" to expand from its narrow definition as a "pickup technique" to a symbol of psychological manipulation through power imbalance. At the same time, social media has propelled topics such as gender equality and mental health into public discussion, creating an urgent need among the population for a concise term to name this hidden experience of oppression. The Chinese "bei" structure inherently carries the passive meaning of "enduring", which precisely provides a syntactic context for this abstract form of social harm. Thus, "bèi PUA" brings together foreign cultural critique, local social anxieties, and grammatical structures. This expression has become a linguistic tool that condenses collective emotions and deconstructs power relations, thereby reflecting the critique of psychological violence in the internet age. (Why are you always being gaslighted/manipulated?)

Among these constructions, the structure "bèi + X + dào le" has gained great popularity on the internet and exhibits high productivity. It not only reflects individuals' urgent need to express their emotional experiences in the whirlpool of social change through linguistic innovation, but also reveals the growing trend of liberal and humanistic currents that, against the backdrop of grand societal narratives, place individual feelings at the center of focus:

(10) 兄弟们,我被美到了!

(Guys, I'm blown away by the beauty!)

The emergence of new passive constructions such as "bèi měi dào le" (to be overwhelmed by beauty) is first based on a deep fusion of their argument structure with that of the prototypical psycho-causative "bei" sentence (e.g., "wǒ bèi gǎndòng le"/"I was moved/moved to tears"). Both contain an external stimulus and an internal experiencer. Semantically, the stimulus exerts a psycho-causative force on the experiencer, ultimately leading to a change in his or her inner psychological or emotional state. The new construction inherits this prototypical constructional meaning. The sentence structure "bèi + X + dào le" employs "dào le" to specifically mark the aspect of state realization, emphasizing the completion of this psychological process of influence and its effect.

Attributive adjectives such as "měi" (beautiful) or "kě'ài" (cute) do not themselves possess typical causative force. The fact that they can enter the new construction "bèi + X + dào le" is crucially due to the mechanism of metonymy. Specifically, it involves a metonymic relationship of attribute stands for effect—that is, from an object's property (such as beauty) to the strong psychological effect that this property triggers in the perceiver. Thus, "bèi měi dào le" (literally: "to have been caught by beauty") does not literally mean to have been affected by the property of beauty, but rather describes the intense feeling of being overwhelmed, joyful, or delighted that is triggered by the sight of an object's beautiful quality.

4. Conclusion and outlook

Based on a diachronic analysis of 188 authentic instances collected from 2007 to 2026, this study systematically traces the evolution of the new "bei" construction across three distinct phases. The first phase (2007–2013) marks the emergence of the construction as a powerful instrument of social critique, predominantly operating through the action and speech domains to expose coercive power mechanisms, as seen in expressions such as "bèi héxié" ("being censored") and "bèi zishā" ("being declared suicidal"). The second phase (2014–2019) witnesses a cognitive expansion, during which the construction shifts its focus from macro-social issues to micro-personal domains, including economy, identity, and legal rights, as exemplified by "bèi zhōngchǎn" ("being labeled as middle class") and "bèi gǔdōng" ("being forged as a shareholder"). The third phase (2020–2026) represents an affective generalization, in which the construction increasingly encodes passive psychological experiences and emotional states, moving beyond external coercion toward internal emotional resonance, as illustrated by "bèi PUA" ("being psychologically manipulated") and "bèi měi dào le" ("being overwhelmed by beauty"). This diachronic trajectory reveals a fundamental functional shift: from critiquing external social forces to expressing inner affective experiences, thereby forming a complete semantic spectrum that ranges from negative trauma to positive resonance.

Looking forward, future research should expand in several promising directions. First, the construction's productivity in emerging digital contexts—such as short-form video platforms, live-streaming interactions, and AI-generated content—warrants continuous monitoring to capture novel instances and evolving usage patterns. Second, while the present study has identified the increasing prominence of the cognitive-affective domain, further investigation is needed to understand how positive emotional experiences (e.g., "bèi měi dào le") are integrated into a construction historically associated with victimization and coercion, and whether this signals broader semantic bleaching or diversification. Third, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparisons would be valuable to determine whether similar passive constructions in other languages (e.g., the English "get-passive" or the Japanese "rare-ru" passive) exhibit comparable diachronic shifts from social critique to affective expression. Fourth, real-time corpus updating and longitudinal sociolinguistic surveys could help establish more direct correlations between linguistic change and specific sociopolitical events, economic transformations, or shifts in public sentiment. Finally, integrating computational methods such as sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and network analysis could provide scalable, data-driven insights into the construction's semantic evolution and its resonance across different online communities. Together, these avenues promise to deepen our understanding of how grammatical structures not only reflect but also actively participate in shaping social reality and collective emotional landscapes.

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