The morpho-syntax of aspect in Xiāng Chinese

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Chapter 5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I review some of the crucial claims made in this thesis. In this work I mainly discuss the morpho-syntax of aspect in Chángshā, one of the Xiāng varieties. I pointed out two important properties of aspect in Xiāng: one is that the aspectual particles are often combined; the other is that one particle is used to express more than one aspectual meaning. I focused on the distribution and interpretation of two particles used in the Chángshā dialect: *ka*^{41} and *ta*^{21}, and the fact that they often occur in combination *ka*^{41} ... *ta*^{21}.

There are 4 sections in this chapter. In section 5.1, I review the theoretical frames that are used in my analysis. In section 5.2, I review the variation of the interpretation of *ta*^{21} in different contexts and the analysis I have proposed to account for the multifunction of *ta*^{21}. In section 5.3, I review the distribution and interpretation of *ka*^{41} and the proposed analysis for the use of *ka*^{41} and the *ka*^{41} ... *ta*^{21} combination. In section 5.4, I review the analysis of *tau*^{21}…*tsai*^{24} in Xùpǔ, *zhe* in Mandarin and the relation between *zhe* and *ta*^{21}. In section 5.5, as a concluding thought, I discuss the relevance of the current proposal for aspect in Mandarin and topics for further research.

5.1 Tense and Aspect in Mandarin

In the present thesis, I assume that Mandarin is a tensed language as is proposed in Sybesma (2003, 2007). The value of tense needs to be specified through other elements, which can be temporal phrases, aspectual particles or other elements.

In Mandarin, different aspectual meanings are marked by different markers. Both outer aspect and inner aspect are structurally encoded. Following Sybesma (2017), I assume that one of the distinguishing properties of outer aspect in Mandarin is that the perfective aspect is located in Inner aspect position but interpreted in Outer aspect position. Another important feature of Inner aspect in Mandarin is that it is a three-layered structure: Asp3P, Asp2P and Asp1P. The three inner aspects are syntactically lower than little v and higher than VP. Asp3P is called Realization P, indicating whether an event

is realized. Asp1P, the lowest one in the structure, is called TelicityP, realized by fully lexical elements.

Aspect2P, lies in between Asp1P and Asp3P. According to Sybesma (2017), the main function of Asp2, if filled, is to block the event preceding the endpoint to be accassible to further syntactic operation. Take, for instance, *diào* 'off' in *nòng zāng diào le wǒ de yīfu* 'made my clothes dirty'. With *diào* 'off', the event cannot be presented in the progressive; while without it, it can, as in *tā zhèng zài nòng zāng wǒ de yīfu* 'He is making my clothes dirty.' Asp2P provides a structural way to distinguish achievements from accomplishments: they are not only different in terms of durativity, dynamicity and agentivity, they also are different structurally (Sybesma 2016).

Based on Sybesma (2017) and the observations I have made in Xiāng, I assume that the function of Asp2^{o} is not determined by whether it is filled or not, but on what it is filled with.

5.2 *ta*^{21} $_{\text{PERF}}$, *ta*^{21}$_{\text{PROG}}$

In chapter 2, I provided an analysis to account for the fact that one particle is used to indicate more than one aspectual meaning. Specifically, *ta*^{21} can be used as a perfective marker as well as as a progressive marker. The two readings vary according to the context. I observe that *ta*^{21} can be used as a perfective marker with any non-stative predicates without any extra conditions. In contrast, if *ta*^{21} is used as a progressive marker, other elements must accompany it; otherwise the sentence is ungrammatical. In order to interpret the conditions in which *ta*^{21} can be used as a progressive marker, I investigated the contexts in which this reading is possible. See (1a) - (1d), where different types of contexts in which *ta*^{21} is used as a progressive marker are presented.

(1) a. [NEG+V+ ta^{21}]
b. [manner/ locative/ instrumental adverb+ ta^{21}]
c. [tsai^{21}ko^{24} +V+ ta^{21}]
d. [V+ ta^{21}+ tsai^{21}ko^{24}]

In (1a) - (1d), *ta*^{21} can be a progressive marker. To explain the fact that *ta*^{21} can be used as either a perfective or a progressive marker, I first explored the possibility that *ta*^{21} is a perfective marker and that the progressive and the duration reading are derived from the contexts. However, this turned out to be an impossible position. Subsequently, I argued that there are two forms of *ta*^{21}, with *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ indicating that an event is completed or terminated, and *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$ indicating that an action is ongoing or continuous. (The duration reading is derived from its use as a perfective marker: the action is completed, the result state created by the action is left there.)

To provide an account for the distribution and interpretation of *ta*^{21}, I introduced Sybesma (2017). In Sybesma (2017), the perfective marker *le* is located not in Outer aspect position, but in Inner aspect position, and is interpreted in Outer aspect position. In the same line of Sybesma (2017) arguing for Mandarin, I assume that *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ in Chángshā is also located in an Inner aspect position, but interpreted in Outer aspect position.

In this part of the analysis, I also adopted insights from Tsai (2008), who argues that tense anchoring is a process of licensing an event argument. Importantly, in tensed languages with tense morphology, anchoring the event argument through tense is the default, while in languages without tense morphology, the process of tense anchoring can be done through the interaction between tense and outer aspect, or other semantic ways. In Mandarin, the tense, according to Tsai (2008), is weak, hence needs to be strengthened. To anchor an event to tense, aspect elements in outer aspect can move up to join T to anchor an event to tense. Otherwise other semantic means are used. For instance, event quantification, negators, modality or other operators can be used to bind an event variable. Tsai further assumes that only elements in Outer aspect position can move up to join T to anchor a sentence to tense, others, which are lower than little v cannot.

Basing myself on Tsai (2008), I proposed that *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ is like *le* in Mandarin. However, as regard to its location, I am in line with Sybesma's (2017) analysis, in assuming that it is located in Asp3, in Inner aspect, but is interpreted in Outer aspect. Since it is interpreted in Outer aspect position, it is able to help the event anchor to tense. Also, I assume that *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$ is located in Asp2 (indicating that an event is ongoing).

Under the above assumptions, it is clear that there is a differnce between *ta*^{21} as a perfective marker in some cases, and a progressive marker in some other cases. The difference between *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$ and *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ lies in the fact that they are located in different syntactic positions. *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ is located in Asp3, with a connection to Outer aspect, from which it can help an event to anchor to tense, while *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG,}}$, is in Asp2, lower than *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$, and consequently too deeply embedded in Inner aspect, to be able to do the same, and needs other material to help out. This approach can explain why *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ can stand alone while *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$ always needs other elements to accompany it.

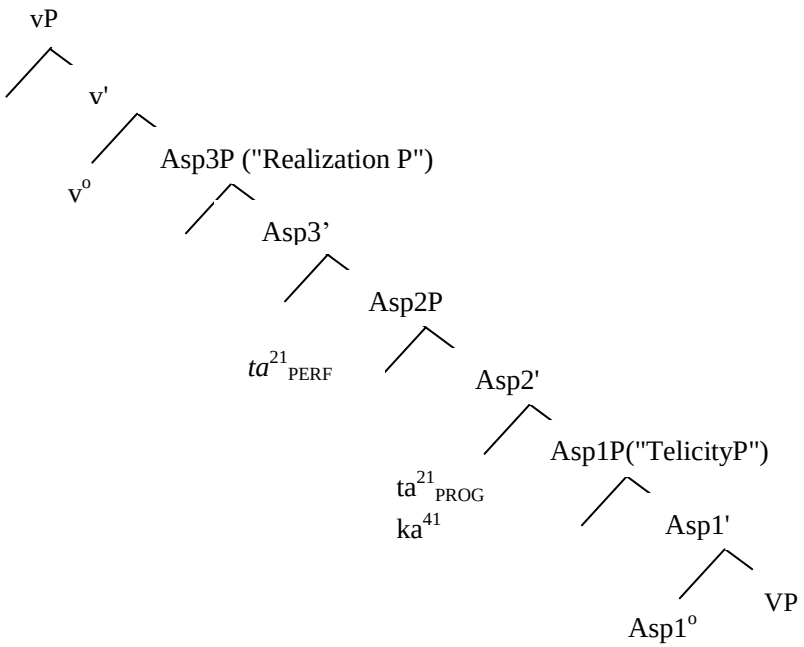
5.3 The distribution and interpretation of *ka*^{41}

In chapter 3, I explored the distribution and interpretation of *ka*^{41} in Chángshā. I first showed the different contexts in which *ka*^{41} is used. I showed that in some cases with an inherent endpoint, *ka*^{41} is obligatory. I also showed that in some other cases, the use of *ka*^{41} will result in variation of the interpretation of a sentence.

After that, I made a reanalysis of the interpretation of *ka*^{41}, pointing out that descriptively *ka*^{41} is used to double an endpoint in a telic event though sometimes the endpoint is implicit. To explain the use of *ka*^{41}, I refer to Sybesma (2017), where the inner aspect of Mandarin is a three-layered structure. The main reason is that *ka*^{41} shares the function that Asp2 has. For instance, *ka*^{41} always appear in telic events, sentences with *ka*^{41} cannot be put in the progressive, while without *ka*^{41}, this is unproblematic. Based on Sybesma (2017), I proposed that like *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$, *ka*^{41} is also located in Asp2 position. The function of *ka*^{41} is to block the event preceding the endpoint from undergoing further syntactic operations (like the progressive).

At the end of the analysis, I presented a four-layered aspectual system in Chángshā, as shown in (2).

（2）



In (2), there are four layers of aspect: one outer aspect and three Inner aspects: Asp3P is RealizationP, indicating whether the endpoint has been reached or not. As to Asp2P, its function varies. If it is filled by *ka*^{41}, then the process of preceding an endpoint projected in an event is not available to participate in further syntactic operation. But if it is filled by *ta*^{21}$_{PERF}$ as is mentioned in chapter 2, then, quite the opposite happens, as it then indicates that an event is ongoing. Asp1P, or Telicity P, is occupied by lexical predicative elements, denoting the endpoint of the event. This is all illustrated in (3), with *ka*^{41} doubling the endpoint in (3ai) and the result is definitive, with the result of blocking further syntactic operations targeting the event, as is shown in (3b). Without *ka*^{41} this is all exactly the other way around, as shown in (3aii) and (3c).

(3) a. t^ha^{33} ɕi^{41} kan^{33}tɕin^{21} (ka^{41}) ta^{21} i^{33} fu^{41}.
3SG wash finish KA PERF clothes
(i)With *ka*: 'He has washing the clothes clean.'
(ii)Without *ka*: 'He has washed the clothes (not necessary cleaned/completed).'
b. *t^ha^{33} tsai^{21} ko^{24} ɕi^{41} kan^{33}tɕin^{21} ka^{41} i^{33}fu^{41}.
3SG PROG wash clean KA clothes
c. t^ha^{33} tsai^{21}ko^{24} ɕi^{41} kan^{33}tɕin^{21} i^{33}fu^{41}.
3SG PROG wash clean clothes
'He is washing the clothes clean.'

5.4 *tau*^{21}*…tsai*^{41} in Xùpǔ and *zhe* in Mandarin in support of *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$ and *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$

In chapter 4, I mainly argued that the proposed analysis of *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$ and *ta*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ in Chángshā can be further supported by three piece of evidence. They are: (i) the use of *tau*^{21}*…tsai*^{41} in Xùpǔ; (ii) the multifunctionality of Mandarin *zhe*; and (iii) the grammaticalization path of *zhe*. I started from the introduction of *tau*^{21}*…tsai*^{41}. In the previous literature, *tau*^{21}*…tsai*^{41} has been argued to be a progressive marker (Hè 1997, Qú 2007). Hè (1997) argues that the combination is used to indicate ongoingness of an action. There is no great difference between the preverbal *tsai*^{41} (a progressive marker) and the *tau*^{21}*…tsai*^{41} combination; both are used to indicate progressive meaning. However, I notice that the combination of *tau*^{21} and *tsai*^{41} can only be used in activities to indicate an ongoing action, while with achievement and accomplishment predicates, the combination does not produce the meaning of ongoingness but the completion of an action. I argued that *tau*^{21} in the combination can be divided into *tau*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ and *tau*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$, with *tau*$^{21}_{\text{PERF}}$ indicating the completion of an action, and *tau*$^{21}_{\text{PROG}}$ indicating that an action is ongoing. I further pointed out that the multifunctionality of *tau*^{21} can be used to support my analysis of *ta*^{21}, which is used to express either the perfective or progressive meaning, as we just saw. The case of *tau*^{21}... *tsai*^{24} is like *ta*^{21}... *tsai*^{21}*ko*^{24} in Chángshā, with *tsai*^{21} being a present tense operator, similar to *tsai*^{21}*ko*^{24}.

I then introduced the multifunctional *zhe* in Mandarin. The interpretation of *zhe* is quite a controversial issue in the literature. Some argue that z*he* is a duration marker indicating the continuation of a result state (Smith 1997, Yeh 1993, Zhū 1981 etc). Others argue that *zhe* should be divided into zhe_{PROG} and zhe_{DUR}. However, different from the above, I suggest that *zhe* is better divided into zhe_{PROG} and zhe_{PERF} instead of zhe_{PROG} and zhe_{DUR}. The division of zhe_{PROG} and zhe_{PERF} can also be used to support my analysis of ta^{21}.

At the end of this chapter, I provide some data from historical texts which show that *zhe* has evolved from an imperfective marker to a perfective marker, and the function as a perfective marker disappears, while the the element *liǎo* 'complete' evolved into the verb final perfective marker *le*. Historically, tau^{21} and ta^{21} are cognates of *zhe*, what is different is that ta^{21} keeps the functions as a progressive and perfective marker. It can be seen as an inheritance of earlier phases in the hirtorical development of Chinese.

Based on the above I came to the conclusion that the cases of Mandarin *zhe* and Xùpǔ tau^{21}, support my analysis of ta^{21} in Chángshā.

5.5 Significance and further research

The proposed analysis is significant in that it provides a novel perspective to deal with the cases of combination of particles and on the one hand and the multifunctionality of individual aspect markers appearing in different types of dialects in Xiāng on the other. First, the combination of particles is quite common in other varieties of Xiāng and in the previous literature, they are treated either as one unit (e.g. tau^{21}… $tsai^{41}$ in Xùpǔ), or as different particles with the same functions (e.g. ka^{41}… ta^{21} in Chángshā). As to the multifunctionality of aspect particles, that is generally attributed to the semantic properties of predicates: different predicates lead to a different function for one and the same particle. The present analysis shows, however, that it is more insightful to analyze these facts differently. First, the combination of aspect particles is best analyzed as involving an aspectual marker plus an additional element that is needed to help in licensing the event argument. The multifunctionality of one element is analyzed as a case of homonymy: two elements with the same form which occupy different postions in the structure,

each position associated with a different function. In this way, the present thesis will stand as a contribution to the development of the analysis of the morpho-syntax of aspect in Xiāng.

The present analysis is also significant for Inner aspect in Mandarin and other languages as well. The idea that the Inner aspect in Mandarin is a three-layered structure as established by Sybesma (2017) has provided a nice account for the differences of the predicate *wán* 'finish' between *chī wán yíge píngguǒ* 'finish an apple' and *cā wán kètīng* 'finished cleaning the living room'. More importantly, it has provided a different way to explain the difference between accomplishments and achievements. The present research is also ssignificant in provinding more evidence to support Sybesma's theory. What I have found is that in Mandarin, in most cases Asp2 position is empty, while in Xiāng it is mostly filled. See the corresponding sentences in (4).

(4) a. Zhangsan kàn wán le nà běn shū. (Mandarin)
read finish PERF that CL book
'Zhangsan read that book(the whole book).'
b. Tsan^{33}san^{33} k^{h}an^{45} oŋ^{13} ka^{41} ta^{21} la^{45} pən^{41} xu^{33}.
read finish KA PERF that CL book
'Tsansan read that book (the whole book).' (Chángshā)

(4) is a resultative construction. The predicate *wán*/*oŋ*^{13} 'finish' is used to indicate the endpoint of the event. What is different is that in Chángshā an extra element, *ka*^{41}, is used.

However, there is no doubt that there are many more questions which need to be considered with respect to Aspect in Xiāng and Chinese more generally. One of these is why the development of the *liǎo* to verbal-*le* has not occurred in Chángshā. Note that it is quite common to see the cognate of *liǎo* in Xùpǔ (*lia*^{33}) and many other Xiāng dialects. It is also not clear how *ka*^{41} in Chángshā developed. All these questions will be the subject of our further investigation.