Inner Aspect in Cantonese

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Abstract

The paper provides the first systematic study on the structural properties of inner aspect in Cantonese. In total 14 postverbal inner aspectual elements have been identified (e.g., completive *jyun* in *sik-jyun* 'finish eating'). It is shown that they occupy a middle position: above resultative verbal complements (e.g., *baau* 'full' in *sik-baau* 'eat and become full'), but below outer aspectual elements (e.g., perfective *-zo* in *sik-zo* 'ate'). Syntactically, they are lower than *v*P but may be either higher or lower than VP. Furthermore, while some of them are phase complements, some others have already become or on their way to becoming verbal suffixes.

Keywords: inner aspect, phase complements, verbal suffixes, Cantonese

1.   Introduction

Aspect refers to "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976:3) denoted by the predicate. Aspect may be divided into situation aspect and viewpoint aspect (Smith 1991, 1997; see Smith 1994 and Soh 2014 for Chinese). The former is usually known as eventualities ("Aktionsart"), including states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements; and the latter includes the familiar perfective and imperfective aspects.

Structurally speaking, there are at least two aspectual projections on the clausal spine: above *v*P, the outer aspect; and below *v*P, the inner aspect (i.e., "the split aspect approach", MacDonald 2008, Travis 2010; for Mandarin and/or Cantonese, see Gu 1995, Tsai 2008, Huang, Li & Li 2009, Sybesma 2017, Lu, Lipták & Sybesma 2019, Yip 2020a, Tang 2022, Lee & Pan 2024). While attempts have been made to map outer aspect to viewpoint aspect and inner aspect to situation aspect (e.g., Lu, Lipták & Sybesma 2019), these two classifications do not exactly align. It is possible for viewpoint aspects to be encoded in both inner and outer aspect positions (see the recent study in Yan & Yuan 2024). This study maintains that the situation-viewpoint split is semantic and the inner-outer split is structural/syntactic, and there is no one-to-one mapping between them. The focus of this paper will be the inner-outer split.

Cantonese is rich in postverbal elements pertaining to aspect. There has been a fruitful of work on outer aspectual elements such as perfective suffix *-zo* (咗), experiential suffix *-gwo* (過), progressive suffix *-gan* (緊), durative suffix *-zyu* (住), among others (Lin 1963, Cheung 1972/2007:§4, Gao 1980:34–59, Matthews & Yip 1994:210–221, Zhi 1994, Li et al. 1995:418–424, 552–565, Chan 1996, Chang 1996, Cheng 2001, Chor 2004, Peng 2010; see the comprehensive review in Tang 2015:§7).[1] There is, however, very little attention on the **inner aspect** in Cantonese. Canonical inner aspectual elements include *hou* (好) in *so-hou* (鎖好) 'locked properly' or *zoek* (著) in *fan-zoek* (瞓著) 'slept', which express the phase/stage of an action and have been called phase complements (PCs) (時相補語) (Chao 1968: 446–450).

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[1] Cantonese examples are transcribed in *Jyutping* (the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong Cantonese Romanization Scheme in 1993), and tones (1–6) are only represented for SFPs. The glossing abbreviations adopted in this paper: 1, 2, 3=first, second, third person respectively; CL=classifier; PL=plural; SG=singular; PFV=perfective aspect; PROG=progressive aspect; COMPL=completive aspect; ACHV=achievement aspect; CONT=continuative aspect; EXP=experiential aspect; DUR=durative aspect; SFP=sentence-final particle.

Some of them have been documented in some of work cited above, but there is, to the best of my knowledge, no systematic study on them.

The primary goal of this paper is to provide a comprehensive description of the structural properties of the inner aspectual elements in Cantonese. As will be discussed in Section 2, they are grammatically different from resultative verbal complements (RVCs), such as *baau* (飽) 'full' in *sik-baau* (食飽) 'eat and become full', and from outer aspectual elements such as perfective *-zo* (咗). Morphologically, RVCs are the closest to the verbal root, then inner aspect, and further, outer aspect, and the furthest one is the universal quantificational suffix *-saai* (晒) (see Zhan 1958, T. H. T. Lee 1994, Tang 2003, P. Lee 2004, 2012, *i.a.*), as schematized in (1).

(1)   The verbal template in Cantonese
        VERBAL ROOT < RVCs < inner aspect < outer aspect < *-saai*

I will proceed to discuss the grammatical status of inner aspectual elements with formal diagnostic tests in Section 3: whether they are phase complements or aspectual suffixes. Section 4 sketches a formal syntactic analysis. I propose that outer aspects are *v*P-external and inner aspects are *v*P-internal, and further suggest that the formal distinction between verbal complements and suffixes is whether they are base-generated within VP-internally or not. Section 5 concludes.

2.   Defining inner aspect

Let us begin with an operational definition of (postverbal) inner aspectual elements in Cantonese, given in (2). (2b) and (2d) set them apart from RVCs; and (2c) sets them apart from outer aspectual suffixes.

(2)   The operational definition of (postverbal) inner aspectual elements
        a. A morpheme following the verbal root; which (→ postverbal)
        b. Contributes to aspectual meaning; (→ aspectual)
        c. Can be followed by the perfective suffix 咗 *-zo*; and (≠ outer aspect)
        d. Cannot undergo verb doubling alone and/or together with the verbal root. (≠ RVCs)

The definition in (2) gives 14 inner aspectual elements, listed in (3) with the aspectual contribution briefly described. I will go through each part of the definition below.

(3)   Postverbal inner aspectual elements in Cantonese
        (Cheung 1972/2007:113–115, Matthews & Yip 1994:210–221, Tang 2015:71–89)
        a. *dou* (in tone 2) (到/倒) 'arrive': Achievement
            E.g., *wan-dou* (搵到) 'found'   (Fang 2003, Huang 2021, Lai & Pang 2023)

        b. *zoek* (著) 'be on target': Achievement
            E.g., *fan-zoek* (瞓著) 'slept'

        c. *gin* (見) 'see (vs. look)': Achievement, successful perception
            E.g., *teng-gin* (聽見) 'heard (vs. listened)'

        d. *seng* (成) 'succeed': Achievement, successful action
            E.g., *joek-seng* (約成) 'succeeded in making an appointment'

e. *can* (親) '(lit.) intimate': Achievement, with adversative results
   E.g., *daa-can* 'injured by hitting'   (Gu & Yip 2004, Sio 2020)

f. *jyun* (完) 'finish': Completive
   E.g., *sik-jyun* (食完) 'finished eating'

g. *hou* (好) 'good': Completive with a "properly-finished" flavor
   E.g., *zou-hou* (做好) 'done'

h. *dim* (掂) 'all right': Completive with a "properly-finished" flavor
   E.g., *gaau-dim* (搞掂) 'finished, settled'

i. *hei* (起) 'finish, ready, (lit.) lift': Completive with a "ready" flavor
   E.g., *waak-hei* (畫起) 'finished drawing'   (Chor 2007)

j. *lok* (落) 'finish (a long time ago), (lit.) fall': Completive, temporally distant
   E.g., *gaau-lok* (教落) 'taught way back then'   (Cheng 1998)

k. *zyu* (住) 'hold': Continuative states, for verbs of attachment
   E.g., *kam-zyu* (冚住) 'cover still'

l. *sat* (實) 'firm': Continuative states
   E.g., *mong-sat* (望實) 'keep looking'

m. *ding* (定) '(lit.) steady': Doing something in advance
   E.g., *zyu-ding* (煮定) 'cook in advance'   (Wong 2018)

n. *gwo* (過) '(lit.) pass': Doing something again to fix undesirable outcomes
   E.g., *cungsan se-gwo* (重新寫過) 'write again' (Chen & Lin 2006, Liu & Yip 2023)

First, all these elements are postverbal (= (2a)). They encode aspectual meaning (= (2b)) by either indicating the eventuality or imposing a viewpoint on it, including achievement (3a-3e), completives (3f-3j), and continuation of states (3k-3l).[2] Some come with additional flavors (mostly from the literal meaning of the morpheme), such as the "properly done" flavor of *hou* (好) '(lit.) good' or the "successfully done" flavor of *seng* (成) '(lit.) succeed'.

There are two special cases: *ding* (定) in (3m) with an "in advance" meaning, and *gwo* (過) in (3n) with an "again" meaning (to be distinguished with the experiential *-gwo* 過). Both of them presuppose some situation/event other than the current one: a prospective event for *ding* (定), for example, cooking in advance of going to work in (3m); and a previous event for *gwo* (過), which is also a writing event in (3n). They do not seem to impose a particular viewpoint on the event structure. Nevertheless, they both have requirements on the

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[2] How completives can be distinguished from achievement markers as well as perfective aspect is a non-trivial issue. As well-known, perfective aspect in Chinese only indicates endpoints rather than completion of an event as in (i), unlike English. Similarly, achievement markers like *dou* (到) in (ii) also do not indicate completion. A thorough discussion is however beyond the scope of this paper, and readers are referred to Smith (1994).

(i)   我寫咗一封信，但未寫完。
      Ngo se-**zo**   jat-fung seon, daan mei   se-**jyun**.
      1SG   write-PFV   one-CL letter   but   not.yet write-COMPL
      Lit.: '#I wrote a letter, but haven't finished writing (it).' (infelicitous in English)
(ii) 我聽到一首歌，但未聽完（全首）。
      Ngo teng-**dou** jat-sau go,   daan mei   teng-**jyun** (cyun-sau).
      1SG   hear-ACHV one-CL song but   not.yet hear-COMPL whole-CL
      'I heard a song, but haven't finished hearing/listening (the whole song).'

eventualities of the predicates they attach to: [+durative] and [+dynamic] for *ding* (定) (Wong 2018), and [+dynamic] for *gwo* (過). Thus, I regard them as aspectual elements as well.[3]

Note that a number of elements in (3) have other uses or homophonous counterparts. For example, *dou* (到) has a capacity modal use, as in *co-dou ng-go jan* (坐到五個人) 'able to have 5 people sitting' (e.g., Huang 2021). *Zoek* (著) has a suffixal use with unintentionality (Lai & Chin 2018), as in *m-siusam jyu-zoek keoi* (唔小心遇著佢) 'met him/her unintentionally'. Also, there is another *-can* (親) expressing universal quantification on events like *juk-can zau tung* (郁親就痛) 'feel hurt once (you) move' (Zhan 1958, P. Lee 2017, Yip 2020b, 2022). *Zyu* (住) is usually regarded as a durative aspect suffix as in *sik-zyu faan* (食住飯) 'eating rice', but it is a phase complement when with "verbs of attachment", like *kam* (冚) 'cover' and *pou* (抱) 'hug' (a distinction dated back to Cheung 1972/2007:158-162).[4] *Hei* (起) has a special converbal use requiring a following clause as in *gong-hei zau nau* (講起就嬲) 'become mad once mentioning it' (see Tang 2018, 2022; Yip 2019, 2022 for converbal suffixes in Cantonese), where *hei* indicates inchoative aspect. Similarly, *lok* (落) conveys inchoative aspect when used in middle-like constructions like *sik-lok m-co* (食落唔錯) 'it tastes (lit. eats) good' (Cheng 1998, Shi 2003, N. Lee 2016). Moreover, both *hei* (起) and *lok* (落) have a directional complement use, as in *ling-hei* (拎起) 'pick up' and *sik-lok tou* (食落肚) '(lit.) eat down (to) stomach'. On the other hand, *ding* (定) has a RVC use as in *kei-ding(-ding)* (企定/企定定) 'stand steadily' (Wong 2018). Lastly, it is well known that *gwo* (過) is also an experiential suffix as in *lai-gwo* (嚟過) 'have come before', an outer aspectual element. This paper only focuses on the inner aspectual use and remains neutral to whether these other uses are polysemous (i.e., still the same morpheme) or homophonous (i.e., already a different morpheme).

The definitions (2a-b) (postverbal elements with aspectual contribution) are necessary conditions rather than sufficient ones for inner aspectual elements. While the primary meaning RVCs is the lexical meaning, such as *baau* (飽) 'full' in *sik-baau* (食飽) 'eat and become full' and *sei* (死) 'die' in *daa-sei* (打死) 'beat to death', they have a (secondary) aspectual restriction [+telic] (either accomplishment or achievement). The restriction, however, stems from the very nature of resultatives: having a result entails a natural endpoint of the event. The restriction is also related to the eventualities of the RVCs themselves. For example, since *sei* (死) is an instant event (or a change of state), *daa-sei* (打死) is achievement, as opposed to accomplishment *sik-baau* (食飽) where *baau* (飽) is a stative predicate. In contrast, the inner aspectual elements in (3) do not lexically encode a (clear) result of the event (even for *can* 親, whose result is underspecified), but they primarily indicate the temporal structure of a situation. There is hence a principled difference between the aspectual contribution by inner aspect and by RVCs.

Second, regarding definition (2c), all inner aspectual elements can be followed by the perfective suffix *-zo* (咗), just like RVCs, such as *sik-**baau**-zo* (食飽咗) 'ate and became full' (see Cheung 1972/2007). What (2c) differentiates is the position of inner aspect from that of outer aspect: they occupy different postverbal slots, which structurally correspond to different syntactic positions. The examples are given in (4).[5]

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[3] In traditional grammar (e.g., Cheung 1972/2007, Gao 1980, Chang 1996), "again" is often regarded as a type of aspect, termed "repetitive aspect" (重行體/多回體), and relatedly "resumptive aspect" (回復體), such as *-faan* (翻). For a comparison between *-faan* (翻) and repetitive *gwo* (過), see Liu & Yip (2023).

[4] There is a similar split for Mandarin *-zhe* (著), see Yuan (1993) and Tsai (2008).

[5] The source URL links of the internet examples are provided below, accessed on 2022-6-23.
(4c):https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57s8tFuEXbU

(4)   *-Zo* (咗) suffixation

     a. 阿明攞到咗一個 offer。   (Huang 2021:4)

        Aaming   lou-**dou**-<u>zo</u>   jat-go   ofa.

        Ming   get-ACHV-PFV one-CL   offer

        'Ming got an offer.'

     b. 佢瞓著咗。   (Cheung 2007:114)

        Keoi   fan-**zoek**-<u>zo</u>.

        3SG   sleep-ACHV-PFV

        'He has slept.'

     c. 佢係夢見咗自己係一隻蝴蝶嗎？   (Video caption, 2021-2-10)

        Keoi hai   mung-**gin**-<u>zo</u>   zigei hai jat-ze   wudip   maa3?

        3SG be   dream-ACHV-PFV self be one-CL   butterfly SFP

        'Did he dream that he became a butterfly?'

     d. 又係一個傾下傾下又傾成咗嘅 Project 啦。   (Social media, 2020-10-8)

        Jauhai   jat-go   king-haa-king-haa   jau   king-**seng**-<u>zo</u>   ge pozek laa1.

        again.be one-CL talk-PROG-talk-PROG again talk-ACHV-PFV   GE project SFP

        'Just another (business) project that we managed to strike over time.'

     e. 你嚇親咗佢。   (Matthews & Yip 1994:228)

        Nei haak-**can**-<u>zo</u>   keoi.

        2SG scare-ACHV-PFV   3SG

        'You scared her.'

     f. 食完咗飯好耐嘍！   (Cheung 2007:149)

        sik-**jyun**-<u>zo</u>   faan hou-noi   lo3!

        eat-compl-PFV   rice very-long SFP

        '(I) have finished my meal for quite some time!'

     g. 以為做好咗心理準備。   (Social media, 2021-6-23)

        Jiwai   zou-**hou**-<u>zo</u>   samlei zeonbei.

        think   do-COMPL-PFV   mental preparation

        '(I) thought (I was) mentally prepared.'

     h. 單 case 我搞掂咗㗎嘞。   (Words.hk)

        Daan case ngo gaau-**dim**-<u>zo</u>   gaa3 laak3.

        CL   case 1SG tackle-COMPL-PFV SFP   SFP

        'I have finished this case.'

(4d):https://www.facebook.com/stationerylo/photos/a.852095568464119/1314818108858527/?type=3

(4g):https://pages.facebook.com/1835535343424298/photos/a.1856762237968275/2779070852404071/?type=3
&source=48

(4h):https://words.hk/zidin/%E6%8E%82

(4i):https://m.facebook.com/szetosifu/photos/a.276853775694116/1097213856991433/?type=3&locale2=zh_C
N

(4j):https://maylibibi.blogspot.com/2009/07/bibi_2573.html

(4k):https://www.am730.com.hk/%E5%A8%9B%E6%A8%82/%E6%BB%95%E9%BA%97%E5%90%8D%E8
%B7%8C%E6%96%B0%E6%A2%9D%E8%82%8B%E9%AA%A8-
%E9%9D%A0%E9%A3%9F%E5%97%8E%E5%95%A1%E6%AD%A2%E7%97%9B%E9%96%8B%E5%B
7%A5-/39339

(4l):https://m.facebook.com/szetosifu/photos/a.276853775694116/1097213856991433/?type=3&locale2=zh_C
N

(4m):https://es.restaurantguru.com/%E6%99%AE%E6%B4%B1-Hong-Kong

i. 我幅畫終於畫起咗。 (Social media, 2016-3-17)
   Ngo fuk waak zungjyu waa-**hei**-<u>zo</u>.
   1SG CL drawing eventually draw-COMPL-PFV
   'My painting is finally done.'

j. 我返工之前 (…) 煮落咗湯底。 (Blog, 2009-7-12)
   Ngo faangung zicin (…) zyu-**lok**-<u>zo</u> tongdai.
   1SG go.to.work before cook-COMPL-PFV soup.base
   'Before going to work, I have already cooked the broth.'

k. 肋骨插住咗個肺。 (News, 2020-2-6)
   Laakgwat caap-**zyu**-<u>zo</u> go fai.
   rib puncture-CONT-PFV CL lung
   'a rib punctured the lung and got stucked.'

l. 難以置信咁望實咗自己部手機。 (Creative writing, 2021-12-26)
   Naanjiziseon-gam mong-**sat**-<u>zo</u> zigei bou saugei.
   unbelievable-ly stare-CONT-PFV self CL cell.phone
   '(He) stares at his cell phone unbelievably.'

m. 同埋好夠熱，唔會好似煮定咗好耐。 (Food guide, 2022-4-27)
   Tungmaai hou gau-jit, m-wu houci zyu-**ding**-<u>zo</u> hou-noi.
   and very enough-hot not-will seem.like cook-in.advance-PFV very-long
   'It's also hot enough and doesn't look like being prepared a long time ago.'

n. 重新寫過咗《拜仁頌》嘅第三段歌詞。 (Liu & Yip 2023:101)
   Cungsan se-**gwo**-<u>zo</u> *Baaijanzung* ge daisaam dyun goci.
   again write-again-PFV *Bayernhymne* GE third line lyrics
   'Rewrote the third line of the lyrics of *Bayernhymne.'*

Outer aspectual suffixes, on the other hand, cannot be stacked (Cheung 1972/2007). Progressive *-gan* (緊) cannot be suffixed by *-zo* (咗) (for obvious reasons of aspectual conflicts), as well as experiential *-gwo* (過), as shown in (5a-b).[6] Recall that *-zyu* (住) has an outer aspectual counterpart—this durative *-zyu* (住) also resists *-zo* (咗) suffixation, as in (5c).

(5) Failure of *-zo* (咗) suffixation
   a. *佢已經睇緊咗呢本書。
      Keoi jiging tai-**gan**-<u>zo</u> ni-bun syu.
      3SG already read-PROG-PFV this-CL book
      Int.: 'S/he has been already reading this book.'

   b. *佢已經睇過咗呢本書。
      Keoi jiging tai-**gwo**-<u>zo</u> ni-bun syu.
      3SG already read-EXP-PFV this-CL book
      Int.: 'S/he has been already read this book.'

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[6] This is different from Mandarin, where experiential *-guo* (過) can be followed by (suffixal) perfective *-le* (了):
(i) 他已經看過了那本書了。
   Ta yijing kan-**guo**-<u>le</u> nei-ben shu le.
   3SG already read-EXP-PFV that-CL book SFP
   'S/he has already read that book.' (Gu 1995:52)

c. *佢已經食住咗飯。
    Keoi jiging   sik-**zyu**-<u>zo</u>   faan.
    3SG   already read-DUR-PFV   rice
    Int.: 'S/he has been already eating.'

Last but not least, the definition (2d), verb doubling, serves as an extremely powerful tool to tease inner (and outer) aspectual elements apart from RVCs. To begin with, verbs in Cantonese may be doubled for contrastive topicality (T. T.-M. Lee 2022, 2024a).

(6)   做，佢係會做嘅。
       Zou, keoi hai   wui   **zou** ge2.
       do   3SG   be   will do   SFP
       'As for doing, s/he will do.'   (T. T.-M. Lee 2024a:43)

The doubled verbs must be "bare" and cannot carry the outer aspectual suffix *-zo* (咗) along in (7a-b) (T. T.-M. Lee 2024b). In contrast, RVCs can be carried along, as in (7b).

(7)   Contrast in verb doubling: outer aspect vs. RVCs
       a. {食/*食咗}，佢係已經食咗嗰碗飯嘅。
           {**Sik**/ ***sik-zo**}, keoi hai jiging   **sik-zo** go-wun   faan ge2.
            eat   eat-PFV 3SG be already eat-PFV that-CL   rice SFP
            'As for eating, s/he has already eaten that bowl of rice.'

       b. {食/食飽/*食飽咗}，佢係已經食飽咗嘅。
           {**Sik**/ **sik-baau**/ ***sik-baau-zo**}, keoi hai jiging   **sik-baau-zo**   ge2.
            eat   eat-full   eat-full-PFV   3SG be   already eat-full-PFV   SFP
            'As for eating (and becoming full), s/he has already eaten and become full.'

Importantly, inner aspectual elements are degraded to be doubled along. This is illustrated with *dou* (到) (for achievement), *jyun* (完) (for completives), *zyu* (住) (for continuatives), *ding* (定), and *gwo* (過) in (8). Some of them are arguably more acceptable than doubling with suffixes, but the crucial point is that they are still not as natural as doubling with RVCs in (7b).

(8)   Failure of doubling along with the verb
       a. {執/??執到}，佢尋日係執到一張銀紙嘅。
           {**Zap**/ **??zaap-dou**}, keoi camjat   hai **zaap-dou** jat-zoeng   nganzi ge2.
            pick   pick-ACHV 3SG yesterday be pick-ACHV one-CL   bill   SFP
            'As for picking up, s/he has picked up a money bill yesterday.'

       b. {食/*食完}，佢係已經食完嗰碗飯嘅。
           {**Sik**/ ***sik-jyun**}, keoi hai jiging **sik-jyun**   go-wun   faan ge2.
            eat   eat-COMPL 3SG be already eat-COMPL that-CL   rice SFP
            'As for eating, s/he has finished eaten that bowl of rice.'

       c. {抱/?抱住}，個媽媽係抱住個 B 嘅。
           {**Pou**/ **?pou-zyu**}, go mama   hai **pou-zyu**   go bi   ge2.
            hold   hold-CONT that mother be hold-CONT CL baby SFP
            'As for holding, the mother is holding the baby.'

d. {行/??行定}，佢係有行定入去先嘅。

   {**Haang**/**??haang-ding**}, keoi hai jau **haang-ding** japheoi sin1 ge2.
   walk walk-in.advance 3SG be have walk-in.advance inside SFP SFP
   'As for walking, s/he has walked inside (there) in advance.'

e. {寫/*寫過}，佢係已經重新寫過篇文嘅。

   {**Se**/ ***se-gwo**}, keoi hai jiging cungsan **se-gwo** pin man ge2.
   write write-again 3SG be already again write-again CL paper SFP
   'As for writing, s/he has already written the article again.'

An even more striking contrast is whether the postverbal elements may be doubled alone without the verbal roots.[7] While it is possible for RVCs as in (9a), it is clearly impossible for inner aspectual elements in (9b), let alone outer aspectual suffixes in (9c).

(9) Contrasts in doubling alone without the verb

  a. 飽，佢係已經食飽咗嘅。

   Baau, keoi hai jiging **sik-baau-zo** ge2.
   full 3SG be already eat-full-PFV SFP
   'As for becoming full, s/he has already eaten and become full.'

  b. *完，佢係已經食完嗰碗飯嘅。

   *Jyun, keoi hai jiging **sik-jyun** go-wun faan ge2.
   COMPL 3SG be already eat-COMPL that-CL rice SFP
   'As for eating, s/he has finished eaten that bowl of rice.'

  c. *咗，佢係已經食咗嗰碗飯嘅。

   *-Zo, keoi hai jiging **sik-zo** go-wun faan ge2.
   PFV 3SG be already eat-PFV that-CL rice SFP
   'As for eating, s/he has already eaten that bowl of rice.'

Note that the failure to be doubled alone is a general property of all inner aspectual elements regardless of their grammatical status. As will be discussed in Section 3, some of them (e.g., *zoek* 著) are verbal complements rather than suffixes. As shown in (10), however, all the inner aspectual elements cannot be doubled alone without the verb.

(10) Failure to double alone without the verb

  a. {夢/*到/*見}，佢係尋晚夢{到/見}老豆嘅。

   {**Mung**/***dou**/***gin**}, keoi hai cammaan **mung{-dou/gin}** loudau ge2.
   dream ACHV 3SG be last.night dream-ACHV dad SFP
   'As for dreaming, s/he dreamt of Dad last night.'

  b. {瞓/*著}，佢係瞓著咗嘅。

   {**Fan**/ ***zoek**}, keoi hai **fan-zoek-zo** ge2.
   sleep ACHV 3SG be sleep-ACHV-PFV SFP
   'As for sleeping, s/he has fallen asleep.'

  c. {傾/*成}，佢係傾成咗個 project 嘅。

   {**King**/ ***seng**}, keoi hai **king-seng-zo** go pozek ge2.
   talk ACHV 3SG be talk-ACHV-PFV CL project SFP
   'As for bargaining, s/he has successfully bargained for the project.'

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[7] I thank Kiki Liu and Fulang Chen for drawing my attention to this contrast in Mandarin.

d. {嚇/*親}，我係嚇親咗佢嘅。

   {**Haak**/***can**}, ngo hai **haak-can-zo** keoi ge2.

    scare   ACHV   1SG   be   scare-ACHV-PFV   3SG   SFP

    'As for scaring, I have scared him/her.'

e. {做/*好/*掂/*起}，佢係已經做{好/掂/起}呢樣嘞。

   {**Zou**/***hou**/***dim**/***hei**}, keoi hai jiging   **zou{-hou/dim/hei}** ni-joeng laak3.

    do   COMPL   3SG   be   already   do-COMPL   this-CL   SFP

    'As for doing, s/he has already done this.'

f. {教/*落}，老豆係一早有教落嘅，但係……

   {**Gaau**/***lok**}, loudau hai jatzou jau **gaau-lok**   ge2, daanhai…

    teach   COMPL dad   be   early   have teach-COMPL   SFP   but

    'As for teaching, Dad did teach about this long time ago, but…'

g. {望/*住/*實}，佢係有望{住/實}你嘅，但係……

   {**Mong**/***zyu**/***sat**},   keoi hai jau   **mong{-zyu/sat}** nei ge2, daanhai…

    watch   CONT CONT   3SG   be   have watch-CONT   2SG SFP   but

    'As for staring, s/he is staring at you, but …'

h. {行/*定}，佢係有行定入去先嘅。

   {**Haang**/***ding**},   keoi hai jau **haang-ding**   japheoi sin1 ge2.

    walk   in.advance   3SG   be   have walk-in.advance   inside   SFP   SFP

    'As for walking, s/he has walked inside (there) in advance.'

i. {寫/*過}，佢係已經重新寫過篇文嘅。

   {**Se**/   ***gwo**}, keoi hai jiging   cungsan **se-gwo**   pin man   ge2.

    write   again   3SG   be   already   again   write-again CL   paper   SFP

    'As for writing, s/he has already written the article again.'

      Table 1 summarizes the contrasting properties of inner aspectual elements with RVCs and outer aspectual elements.

Postverbal elements	Attached to a verbal root?	Primarily aspectual meaning?	*-Zo* (咗) suffixation?	Doubling (alone and/or with the verb)?
RVCs	YES	NO (only secondary)	YES	YES
Inner aspect	YES	YES	YES	NO
Outer aspect	YES	YES	NO	NO

Table 1: Contrasting properties of inner aspect with RVCs and outer aspect

3.   Phase complements or verbal suffixes?

After identifying the inner aspectual elements, the next question is what their grammatical status is. As elements attaching to the verbal root, there are at least two possibilities: verbal complements or verbal suffixes. Usually, most inner aspectual elements are regarded as the former as phase complements, PCs. Nevertheless, as we will see below, some should be treated (and even have been treated so in the literature) as verbal suffixes.

      The traditional criteria for verbal suffixes are listed in (11), which are from Cheung (1972/2007) and have been influential in Cantonese linguistics (e.g., adopted by P. Lee 2004,

2012 and Tang 2015). Note that some of the criteria might be questionable, such as (11d). Suffix stacking is indeed possible in Cantonese with *saai* (晒) (Tang 2003, 2015), such as *sik-gwo-saai* (食過晒) 'has eaten all'. I thus discard this criterion.[8]

(11)   The traditional criteria for verbal suffixes from Cheung (1972/2007)
      a.   Productivity/flexibility: suffixes can combine with a wide range of verbal roots.
      b.   Boundness: suffixes are bound morphemes.
      c.   Vacuity: suffixes lack lexical meaning.
      d.   Exclusivity: suffixes cannot be stacked.   *(not considered in this paper)*
      e.   Potential form: suffixes cannot participate in V-*dak/m*-X forms.
      f.   Following VO and VR compounds: suffixes can attach to Verb-Object and Verb-Resultative compounds. (i.e., suffixes may follow RVCs.)

Let us begin with (11a). Some inner aspectual elements like *dou* (到), *jyun* (完), *ding* (定) and *gwo* (過) can attach to almost any [+dynamic] and/or [+durative] predicates (i.e., excluding stative *hung* 紅 'be red' and instant *sei* 死 'die'). *Hou* (好) and *dim* (掂) are also quite productive, but cannot attach to non-volitional or uncontrollable predicates: compare *fan-jyun* (瞓完) 'finished sleeping' and **fan-hou/dim* (*瞓好/掂). *Hei* (起) and *lok* (落) only attach to transitive verbs, but not all of them; **ji-hei/lok* (*醫起/落) '(Int.) healed someone' is not acceptable.

Other elements are however very restricted. For example, *gin* (見) only attaches to verbs of perception such as *tai-gin* (睇見) 'saw', *mong-gin* (望見) 'saw', *teng-gin* (聽見) 'heard', and even reject some other perceptual verbs like **man-gin* (*聞見) '(Int.) smelled'. *Zoek* (著) similarly is very limited and almost only attaches to verbs of sleeping. *Zyu* (住) and *sat* (實) only combine with a few verbs of "attachment" as discussed above. Some are not as unproductive as these four, but still quite limited. *Seng* (成) is also an achievement marker like *dou* (到), but it cannot attach to some of the verbs that *dou* (到) can attach to, like **zap-seng* (*執成) '(Int.) successfully pick something up'. *Can* (親) usually attaches to verbs with a specific manner like *zuk-can* 濁親 'choked' (see Gu & Yip 2004). The inner aspectual elements are roughly classified into four groups according to their productivity in (12).

(12)   Productivity of inner aspectual elements
      a.   Very productive (4): *dou* (到), *jyun* (完), *ding* (定), *gwo* (過)
      b.   Relatively productive (4): *hou* (好), *dim* (掂), *hei* (起), *lok* (落)
      c.   Relatively unproductive (2): *seng* (成), *can* (親)
      d.   Very unproductive (4): *gin* (見), *zoek* (著), *zyu* (住), *sat* (實)

Now consider (11b), whether inner aspectual elements are bound morphemes. It is not an easy question. Even though some elements have a free counterpart, it is not clear whether that is the same morpheme or a different one. There are however several clear cases. *Jyun* (完) clearly can be a free morpheme with exactly the same "finish" meaning, as in *tou hei jyun-zo* (套戲完咗) 'the movie has ended'. In contrast, *dou* (到/倒) in tone 2, which probably comes from *dou* (到) 'arrive' in tone 3 with the tone changed, no longer can standalone. *Seng* (成)

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[8] While (11e) holds almost across-the-board, there is a potential counter-example to it: *-saai* (晒) can participate in potential forms, such as *sik-dak/m-saai* (食得/唔晒) 'can/cannot eat (them) all'. Nevertheless, *-saai* (晒) is arguably a verbal suffix (see extensive arguments in P. Lee 2012:26-30).

comes from *sing* (成) in *singgung* 成功 'success', but *sing* (成) itself is also bound. It is also clear that *zoek* (著), *can* (親), *hei* (起), *lok* (落), *zyu* (住), *ding* (定) and *gwo* (過) lack free forms of the same meaning. Cases fall in the middle are *gin* (見), *hou* (好), *dim* (掂), and *sat* (實), which seem to retain some but not all the lexical meaning of their free forms.

(13)   Boundness of inner aspectual elements
   a.   Free (1): *jyun* (完)
   b.   Maybe free or bound (4): *gin* (見), *hou* (好), *dim* (掂), *sat* (實)
   c.   Bound (9): *dou* (到), *zoek* (著), *seng* (成), *can* (親), *hei* (起), *lok* (落), *zyu* (住), *ding* (定) and *gwo* (過)

As for (11c) vacuity, we have already established that inner aspectual elements are different from RVCs in that the former conveys lexical meaning, but the latter conveys aspectual meaning. It is however true that some inner aspectual elements may retain a certain extent of the original lexical meaning, such as *seng* (成) from *singgung* 成功 'success'. *Jyun* (完), unfortunately, is simply untestable: it has aspectual meaning even in its free form.

(14)   Vacuity of inner aspectual elements
   a.   Aspectual, with little or no lexical meaning (9): *dou* (到), *zoek* (著), *jyun* (完), *can* (親), *hei* (起), *lok* (落), *zyu* (住), *ding* (定), and *gwo* (過)
   b.   Retaining some lexical meaning (5): *gin* (見), *seng* (成), *hou* (好), *dim* (掂), *sat* (實)

Criterion (11d) exclusivity is not considered as a valid one for the reasons discussed above. Moreover, all the inner aspectual elements, as their defining property in (2), can be followed by perfective suffix *-zo* (咗). We will see however that some should be verbal suffixes.

Criterion (11e) refers to whether the verbal root and the postverbal element can be "infixed" by *-dak/m-* (得/唔) 'able/not' to form the so-called potential forms (能性式/可能補語), which is possible for verbal complements but not for verbal suffixes. As shown in (15), most inner aspectual elements allow *-dak/m-* (得/唔) infixation. The few that reject it are *hei* (起), *lok* (落), *ding* (定), and *gwo* (過). It is thus quite strong evidence that these four are verbal suffixes. The other 10 elements, in contrast, are more verbal-complement-like.

(15)   Potential forms (*-dak/m-* 得/唔 'able/not' infixation)[9]
   a.   有時都攞唔到，好似今日咁多人，就未必攞得到。(Video caption, 2021-2-10)
         Jausi   dou   lo-<u>m</u>-**dou**,   houci gamjat gam-do   jan,
         sometimes also get-not-ACHV like   today   that-many person
         zau   meibit   lo-<u>dak</u>-**dou**.
         then   uncertain get-able-ACHV
         'Sometimes (you) cannot get it. When there are as many people like today, it's not certain that (you) can get it.'

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[9] The source URL links of the internet examples are provided below. (15a) and (15k) were accessed on 2022-6-23, and (15g) was accessed on 2024-12-24.
(15a): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57s8tFuEXbU
(15g): https://www.dcard.tw/f/hkmacgirl/p/254459847
(15k): https://www.facebook.com/HKBusChannel/posts/2078493698854987/

b. 佢瞓{得/唔}著
   Keoi   fan-{dak/m}-**zoek**
   3SG   sleep-able/not-ACHV
   'He can(not) sleep.'

c. 睇{得/唔}見
   Tai-{dak/m}-**gin**
   see-able/not-ACHV
   'can(not) see'

d. 我估今晚去得成。   (Matthews & Yip 1994:221)
   Ngo gu   gammaan   heoi-dak-**seng**.
   1SG guess tonight   go-able-ACHV
   'I think we'll manage to go tonight'

e. 嚇唔親你添。
   Haak-m-**can**   nei   tim1.
   scare-not-ACHV 2SG   SFP
   '(I) couldn't scare you.'

f. 食{得/唔}完
   Sik-{dak/m}-**jyun**
   eat-able/not-COMPL
   'can(not) finish eating'

g. 話我一定鎖唔好隻門   (Discord, 2024-1-19)
   Waa ngo jatding   so-m-**hou**   zek mun
   say 1SG definitely   lock-not-COMPL   CL door
   'Say that I definitely cannot lock the door properly.'

h. 搞{得/唔}掂
   Gaau-{dak/m}-**dim**
   do-able/not-COMPL
   'can(not) settle'

i. *畫{得/唔}起幅畫[10]
   *Waak-{dak/m}-**hei**   fuk   waa
    draw-able/not-COMPL CL   drawing
   Int.: 'can(not) finish the drawing'

j. *煮{得/唔}落湯底[11]
   *Zyu-{dak/m}-**lok**   tongdai
    cook-able/not-COMPL   soup.base
   Int.: 'can(not) cook the broth in advance'

k. 香港啲公司到呢個年代仲以為可以冚得住啲消息。 (Video caption, 2021-2-10)
   Hoenggong di   gungsi   dou ni-go   nindoi
   Hong Kong CL.PL company to   this-CL era
   zung jiwai hoji kam-dak-**zyu**   di   siusik.
   still think can cover-able-CONT CL.PL news
   'How could the HK companies think that they can cover up the news nowadays?'

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[10] Compare: directional complement *ling-{dak/m}-hei* (拎{得/唔}起) 'can(not) pick up'.

[11] Compare: directional complement *sik-{dak/m}-lok* (食{得/唔}落) 'can(not) eat/swallow'.

l. 撳{得/唔}實
Gam-{<u>dak/m</u>}-**sat**
hold-able/not-CONT
'can(not) hold still'

m. *煮{得/唔}定餐飯[12]
*Zyu-{<u>dak/m</u>}-**ding**   caan faan
 cook-{<u>dak/m</u>}-in.advance CL rice
Int.: 'can(not) cook the meal in advance'

n. *重新寫{得/唔}過篇文
*Cungsan se-{<u>dak/m</u>}-**gwo**   pin man
 again write-able/not-again CL   paper
Int.:'can(not) write the article again'

Regarding the last criterion (11f), most inner aspectual elements (10 in total) cannot follow an RVC as in (16), a canonical property of being a PC given that verbal complements can never stack (except directional complements).[13] *Ding* (定) and *gwo* (過) resist *-dak/m-* (得/唔) infixation, and, as expected, can follow RVCs, further supporting their suffixal status. *Hei* (起) and *lok* (落), however, cannot follow RVCs, although they also resist *-dak/m-* infixation. Yet, it might be due to an independent constraint that *hei* (起) and *lok* (落) only accept monosyllabic verbal roots: compare *cyulei-jyun/hou* (處理完/好) 'finished processing' and **cyulei-hei/lok* (*處理起/落). The puzzling cases are *dou* (到) and *jyun* (完). While they accept *-dak/m-* (得/唔) infixation (i.e., PC-like), they can also follow RVCs (i.e., suffix-like). Given that they are highly productive and indicate primarily aspectual meaning, it is possible that they are mid-way to verbal suffixes.[14]

(16) Following RVCs
a. 後尾我哋同康華終於打開到話題。   (News, 2022-1-22)
Haumei ngodei tung Hong Waa zungjyu **daa-hoi-dou** waatai.
afterwards 1PL   with Akina Hong eventually hit-open-ACHV topic
'We eventually opened up the topic with Akina Hong.'

b. *瞓冧著
*Fan-lam-zoek
 sleep-deep-ACHV
Int.: 'slept deeply'

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[12] Compare: RVC *co-{dak/m}-ding* (坐{得/唔}定) 'can(not) sit firmly'.

[13] The source URL links of the internet examples are provided below, accessed on 2022-6-23.
(16a):https://www.singtaousa.com/3894174
(16f):https://shorturl.at/aAS79
(16m):https://filmot.com/sidebyside/HeWgxZeM1GY/zh-HK/zh-HK/Chinese+%28Hong+Kong%29/Chinese+%28Hong+Kong%29/%E3%80%90%E8%A9%A6%E8%A9%95%E6%B8%AC%E3%80%91%E5%86%87%E4%BA%BA%E8%A7%80%E5%A1%98%E5%AF%A6%E6%B8%ACSIGMA+24mm+f3.5+DG+DN/%E8%86%A0%E6%94%9D%E7%8F%BE%E5%A0%B4

[14] It is even possible that *dou* (到) and *jyun* (完) *are* verbal suffixes given that another verbal suffix, *-saai* (晒), also allows *-dak/m-* (得/唔) infixation.

c. *睇清見
   *Tai-cing-gin
     see-clear-ACHV
   Int.: 'saw clearly'

d. *book 爆成呢間餐廳
   *Buk-baau-seng ni-gaan   caanteng
     book-full-ACHV   this-CL   restaurant
   Int.: 'successfully made this restaurant fully booked'

e. *打傷親呢個人
   *Daa-soeng-can ni-go   jan
     hit-hurt-ACHV   this-CL   person
   Int.: 'beat and injured this guy'

f. 蒸熟完就可以攪碎   (Food guide, 2014-7-18)
   Zing-suk-jyun   zau hoji gaau-seoi
   steam-cooked-COMPL then may stir-shattered
   'after finished steaming it, you can break them into pieces'

g. ??省靚好個招牌
   ??**saang-leng-hou**   go ziupaai
     wipe-pretty-COMPL   CL sign
   Int.: 'made the fame better'

h. *搞清楚掂
   *gaau-cingco-dim
     make-clear-COMPL
   Int.: 'made it clear'

i. *寫靚起幅字
   *se-leng-hei   fuk   zi
     write-pretty-COMPL CL   word
   Int.: 'finished the calligraphy artwork'

j. *煲滾落個湯底
   *Bou-gwan-lok   go   tongdai
     boil-boiled-COMPL CL   soup.base
   Int.: 'boiled the broth long time ago'

k. *揿平住/實張紙
   *gam-ping-{zyu/sat} zoeng zi
     hold-flattened-CONT   CL   paper
   Int.: 'held and flattened the paper'

l. 拆走定個書架   (Tang 2015:78)
   Caak-zau-ding   go   syugaa
   remove-away-in.advance   CL   book.shelf
   'removed the book shelf in advance'

m. 真係可以再放大過呢啲位置。   (Video, 2020-12-27)
   Zanhai hoji zoi **fong-daai-gwo** ni   di   waizi.
   really may again zoom-big-again this CL.PL position
   'We really can re-enlarge these positions.'

Table 2 summarizes the results of the above five tests on the 14 inner aspectual elements. I take *-dak/m-* (得/唔) infixation to be a hallmark property for phase complements, and the ability to follow RVCs for verbal suffixes. There are in total 4 verbal suffixes and 8 PCs, and 2 intermediate cases: *dou* (到) and *jyun* (完). The results of these two tests are generally consistent with their productivity (lower for PCs; higher for suffixes). For boundness and vacuity, there seems to be a one-way correlation: suffixes are all bound and all lack lexical meaning, whereas bound elements without lexical meaning are not necessarily suffixes (e.g., *can* 親).

Inner aspect	Productivity	Bound?	Vacuous?	*-dak/m-* infixing?	Following RVCs?	Status
ding (定)	High	YES	YES	*	OK	**Suffix**
gwo (過)	High	YES	YES	*	OK	**Suffix**
hei (起)	Mid-high	YES	YES	*	*	**Suffix**
lok (落)	Mid-high	YES	YES	*	*	**Suffix**
dou (到/倒)	High	YES	YES	OK	OK	**In-between**
jyun (完)	High	NO	YES	OK	OK	**In-between**
hou (好)	Mid-high	Maybe	NO	OK	*	**PCs**
dim (掂)	Mid-high	Maybe	NO	OK	*	**PCs**
seng (成)	Mid-low	YES	NO	OK	*	**PCs**
can (親)	Mid-low	YES	YES	OK	*	**PCs**
zyu (住)	Low	YES	YES	OK	*	**PCs**
zoek (著)	Low	YES	YES	OK	*	**PCs**
sat (實)	Low	Maybe	NO	OK	*	**PCs**
gin3 (見)	Low	Maybe	NO	OK	*	**PCs**

Table 2: The grammatical status of inner aspectual elements

4.   A formal analysis

This section offers a formal syntactic analysis of inner aspectual elements. First, I assume the split-aspect approach where there are two aspectual projections: one above *v*P, one below *v*P (Gu 1995, Tsai 2008, Huang, Li & Li 2009, Sybesma 2017, Lu, Lipták & Sybesma 2019, Yip 2020a, Tang 2022, Lee & Pan 2024; for other languages, see MacDonald 2008, Travis 2010).

(17)   The split-aspect approach
[TP … [AspP-outer **Asp**outer [*v*P … [AspP-inner **Asp**inner [VP …

Second, I assume the non-lexicalist approach where suffixes host a functional head and project a phrase, rather than being base-generated with the verb on big V (Tang 1998, 2003, 2006, Tsai 2001, 2008, T. T.-M. Lee 2024b; against the lexicalist approach in Gu 1993, 1995, Huang, Li & Li 2009). In other words, suffixes are not part of the verb in the lexicon. The suffixation is achieved by verb movement in the syntax. For example, the verbal root *sik* (食)
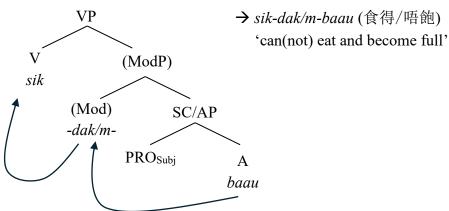
'eat' is base-generated at V and moves up to perfective -*zo* (咗) at Asp$_{outer}$ to form the verb *sik-zo* (食咗) 'ate', as illustrated in (18).

(18)   Suffixation by syntactic verb movement
    a. [$_{TP}$ ... [$_{AspP-outer}$ **-*zo*** [$_{vP}$ ... *v* [$_{AspP-inner}$ **Asp$_{inner}$** [$_{VP}$ *sik* 'eat' ...   (baseline)
    b. [$_{TP}$ ... [$_{AspP-outer}$ *sik*-**Asp$_{inner}$**-*v*-***zo*** [$_{vP}$ ... _ [$_{AspP-inner}$ _ [$_{VP}$ _   (syntax)
    c. *sik*-∅-∅-***zo***   = *sik*-***zo***   (PF)

Third, I propose that RVCs do not form a compound with the verbal root in the lexicon either. They are small clauses (SCs) taken by the verb, and undergo head movement to the verb (in a manner like V-to-V incorporation). The RVC assigns a theta-role to the silent pronoun big PRO at the specifier, which is controlled by (and thus co-referential with) the subject. To derive the -*dak/m*- (得/唔) infixation, I follow Cheng & Sybesma (2004) in assuming a VP-internal Modal Phrase (ModP) hosted by -*dak/m*- (得/唔). Head movement goes up in a "snowball" fashion, as in (19). I further assume the infixal status of -*dak/m*- (得/唔) so they always get inserted between RVCs and the verbal root.
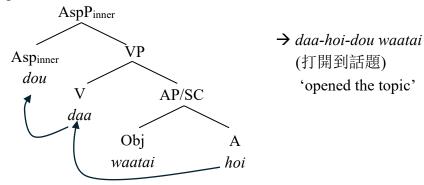
(19)   RVCs as small clauses

→ *sik-dak/m-baau* (食得/唔飽)
'can(not) eat and become full'

To capture the verb doubling contrasts, I propose that only lexical heads may be doubled. Functional projections, on the other hand, cannot be doubled (see T. T.-M. Lee 2024a:41 for the failure of modals to undergo topic doubling). This explains why verbs and RVCs (i.e., lexical projections such as A or V) can be doubled, whereas aspectual elements (i.e., Asp$_{inner}$/Asp$_{outer}$) cannot.
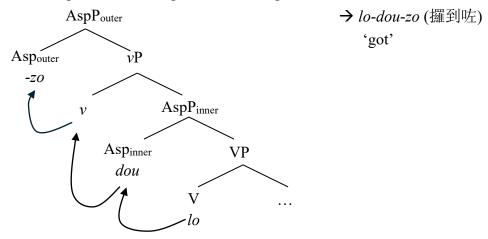
Now, we can discuss how inner aspectual elements are represented in the syntax. As for the suffixal elements, I assume that they are base-generated at the Asp$_{inner}$ head and attract head movement. In the case with RVCs, V moves up to Asp$_{inner}$ and carries along the RVC. Hence, the inner aspectual suffixes follow the RVCs. When the object is present, it is base-generated at the specifier of the SC, and receives theta-roles from both the RVC and the V. The derivation is illustrated in (20).

(20)   Inner aspectual suffixes follow RVCs

→ *daa-hoi-dou waatai*
(打開到話題)
'opened the topic'

On the other hand, inner aspectual suffixes are within *v*P. When outer aspectual suffixes are also present, the V moves along with Asp$_{inner}$ all the way up to Asp$_{outer}$ above *v*P. Hence, inner aspect necessarily precedes outer aspect, capturing *-zo* (咗) suffixation.
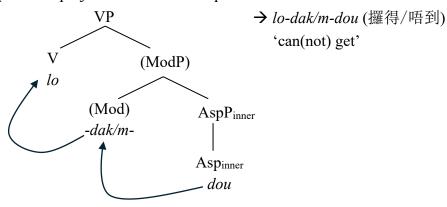
(21)   Inner aspectual suffixes precede outer aspectual suffixes

→ *lo-dou-zo* (攞到咗)
'got'

The question that remains is how phase complements like *zoek* (著) are derived. One straightforward option is to treat them like RVCs as an SC and base-generate the SC under VP. There are however two problems. First, SCs are lexical projections like VP and AP, but PCs should host aspectual projections for their meaning, and to capture the resistance to be doubled (i.e., functional projections cannot be doubled). Second, SCs assign theta-roles to the object and/or a PRO controlled by the subject. PCs nevertheless do not assign any theta-roles.

To resolve this dilemma, I propose that there is a third aspectual projection below VP (see Tsai 2008 for similar ideas). This is illustrated in (22).

(22)   Phase complements project a VP-internal AspP

→ *lo-dak/m-dou* (攞得/唔到)
'can(not) get'

In this way, the PC moves up to Mod and then V to derive the *-dak/m-* (得／唔) infixation. On the other hand, the PC projects an aspectual head and cannot be doubled. Note that for inner aspectual elements that have an intermediate status between suffixes and PCs, I suggest that they may be projected either above VPs (following RVCs) or below VPs (with *-dak/m-* 得／唔 infixation).[15]

5.   Conclusion

To conclude, this paper has provided a detailed and systematic description of the properties of the inner aspectual elements in Cantonese. In total 14 such elements have been identified, supported by diagnostics including *-zo* (咗) suffixation and the failure to undergo verb doubling. With comprehensive investigation of the properties of these elements, including productivity, boundness, vacuity, potential forms (*-dak/m-* 得／唔 infixation) and ability to follow RVCs, it is concluded that 4 of them are verbal suffixes: *ding* (定), *gwo* (過), *hei* (起), and *lok* (落); 8 of them are phase complements: *zoek* (著), *gin* (見), *seng* (成), *can* (親), *hou* (好), *dim* (掂), *zyu* (住), and *sat* (實); and 2 of them have an intermediate status: *dou* (到) and *jyun* (完).

I also offered a formal syntactic analysis. Adopting a non-lexicalist approach, neither verbal complements nor suffixes are base-generated with the verbal root in the lexicon, but they enter syntax as different units. Suffixes host functional projections above VP, where two aspectual projections are available: Asp$_{outer}$ above *v*P and Asp$_{inner}$ below *v*P. The verb undergoes syntactic head movement to the aspectual suffix to form a suffixed verb. On the other hand, resultative verbal complements form small clauses that are taken by the verb, below VP. Phase complements also project AspP$_{inner}$ below VP. Both RVCs and PCs move to V, and potentially take up the infixal *-dak/m-* (得／唔) on an optional VP-internal modal projection. In this way, we obtain the formal basis for three distinctions of postverbal elements in Cantonese: (i) the verbal complement-suffix distinction: whether they are base-generated VP-internally or externally; (ii) the outer-inner aspect distinction: whether they are base-generated *v*P-internally or externally; (iii) the resultative-aspectual distinction: whether they head lexical projections or functional (aspectual) projections.

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[15] The current structure predicts that PCs may be stackable with inner aspectual suffixes. I leave this issue to further research.

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粵語的內層體貌

本文為第一個針對粵語內層體貌結構特點的系統研究。本文一共討論十四個動詞後內層體貌成分，如「食完」的完成體「完」。結構上，它們佔據中間位置：比結果補語（如「食飽」的「飽」）高，但比外層體貌後綴（如「食咗」的完整體「咗」）低。句法上，內層體貌比輕動詞短語（*v*P）低，但可以在動詞短語（VP）以上或以下。此外，一些內層體貌成分的語法類別屬時相補語，其他成分則或為動詞後綴，或介乎後綴和補語之間。

關鍵詞：內層體貌，時相補語，動詞後綴，粵語

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