

On the position of perfective aspect: evidence from Yangchun Yue dialect

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[This is a preliminary work and comments are very much welcome.]

1. Background: the split-aspect approaches

➤ Splitting aspect in syntax

- A general dichotomy: situation aspect vs. viewpoint aspect (MacDonald 2008, Travis 2010, *i.a.*)
 - Lower (below *vP*): situation aspect, i.e. inner aspect
 - Higher (generally above *vP*): viewpoint aspect, i.e. outer aspect
- Fine-grained distinctions in Chinese
 - Within situation/inner aspect (Sybesma 2017, Lu, Lipták & Sybesma 2019)
 - Within viewpoint/outer aspect (Gu 1995, Soh 2008, 2009, Tsai 2008, Huang, Li & Li 2009)
- Splitting *perfective aspect*
 - Different markers: perfective *le* and experiential *guo* (Smith 1991)
 - Distinct positions:
 - Tsai (2008): *guo* is higher (hereafter **EXP**), based on “incompleteness effects”
 - Gu (1995): *le* is higher (and perhaps HLL 2009 as well) (hereafter **PRF**)

➤ Two observations and two claims

- **#1**: Suffix stacking in Yangchun (陽春) Yue dialect
 - **PRF** is the highest aspectual projection within TP, higher than distributive marker **DIST** and experiential **EXP**
- **#2**: Conditioned incompleteness effects of perfective markers
 - “Incompleteness effects” of perfective markers should be attributed to the (non-)existence of other event-argument licensing devices (including operators), rather their syntactic positions

➤ Roadmap

- §2: Competing proposals for perfective markers
- §3: Suffix stacking in Yangchun Yue dialect
- §4: Conditioned incompleteness effects of perfective markers
- §5: Residue: Hong Kong Cantonese

2. Competing proposals for perfective markers

➤ Competing proposals

- Tsai (2008): “incompleteness effects”

(1) ?Akiu na-**le** shu.

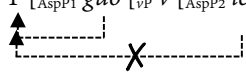
Akiu take-Prf book

“Akiu took books.”

(2) Akiu na-**guo** shu.

Akiu take-Exp book

“Akiu took books before.”

- “Incompleteness effects” arise when the event argument is not licensed, which can be done by tense anchoring (i.e. licensing through T)
 - *le* is lower than *vP* and cannot (covertly) raise to T for tense anchoring
 - *guo* is higher than *vP* and covertly raises to T for tense anchoring
 - $[T_{[AspP1]} [guo [vP v [AspP2] le \dots]]]$
- 
- **Potential problem (#1)**: it wrongly predicts the linear order of *guo* EXP and *le* PRF
 - Given the verb head movement approach adopted by Tsai (2008), V-*le-guo* should be generated, rather than V-*guo-le* which can be found in natural data (=3)). This point is also noted in Gu (1995).

(3) Ni kan-**guo-le** xuduo meijing (BCC corpus)

2SG see-EXP-PFV many beautiful.scenery

“You have seen a lot of beautiful scenery.”

- Gu (1995): *le* PRF may follow *guo* EXP, but not the other way around

(4) Ta yijing kan-**guo-le** nei-ben shu le

he already read-exp-prf that-cl book sfp

“He has already read that book.”

(5) *ta yijing kan-**le-guo** nei-ben shu le.

he already read-exp-prf that-cl book sfp

- Semantic explanation: “[s]ince *-le* is not confined to the completion of the event involved, it naturally has a wider scope over *-guo*” (Gu 1995:52)
- Syntactic account: $[Asp_{le} [Asp_{guo} [vP \dots]]]$
- Mirror Principle (Baker 1985): the suffix order mirrors syntactic hierarchy
 $V-guo-le \leftrightarrow [le [guo [V]]]$
- Resolves problem #1.

- **Potential problem (#2)**: the scopal relation of *le* PRF and *guo* EXP is not as clear as it might seem to be, given that both amount to a perfective reading (compare (6)-(7) to (4))
- (6) Ta yijing kan-**le** nei-ben shu le
he already read-exp-prf that-cl book sfp
“He has already read that book.”
- (7) Ta yijing kan-**guo** nei-ben shu le
he already read-exp-prf that-cl book sfp
“He has already read that book.”
- **Potential problem (#3)**: we couldn’t capture the differential incompleteness effects of *le* PRF and *guo* EXP by Asp-to-T movement
- Quick responses to the three problems
 - #1: V-EXP-PRF order seems to hold cross-dialectally as in Yangchun Yue dialect.
 - #2: The interaction of perfective markers and a distributive marker (hereafter DIST) in Yangchun Yue dialect makes the scopal relation clearer.
 - #3: Close examination on the incompleteness effects of perfective markers suggests that *guo* EXP does not always “salvage” an “incomplete” sentence.

3. Suffix stacking in Yangchun Yue dialect

- Suffix stacking in Yangchun Yue dialect
 - Yangchun (陽春) Yue dialect
 - Southern west Guangdong Province, belongs to 高陽片
 - One major consultant (春城) and two other consultants (春城 and 陂面)
 - Allows multiple suffix stacking
 - PRF and EXP (just like Mandarin, cf. 看過了)
 - Perfective *pou45* (Gan & Xu 2013, Wang 2020)
- (8) 佢睇過**補**咁泥書咯
Kɛi212tɕi212-kɔ33-pou45 ko212 nai45 si45 lɔ33.
3SG read-EXP-PRF that CL.PLbookSFP
“He has read these books.”
 - DIST and EXP (just like Hong Kong Cantonese, cf. 睇過晒)
- (9) 佢睇過**齊**咁泥書咯
Kɛi212tɕi212-kɔ33-ɕi2 ko212 nai45 si45 lɔ33
3SG read-EXP-DIST that CL.PLbookSFP
“He has read all these books.”

- PRF, DIST and EXP

(10) 佢睇過齊補泥書咯

Kɛi212 tɛi212-kɔ33-cɛi2-pou45 ko212 nai45 si45 lɔ33.
3SG read-EXP-DIST-PRF that CL.PLbookSFP
“He has read all these books.”

- Rigid ordering

(11)a. *喫補過

**hɛt45-pou45-kɔ33*
eat-PRF-EXP

b. *喫齊過

**hɛt45-cɛi2-kɔ33*
eat-DIST-EXP

c. *喫過補齊

**hɛt45(-kɔ33)-pou45-cɛi2*
eat-EXP-PRF-DIST

- Maximum post-verbal slots: 3
Potential post-verbal slots: 4

(12) V - C - Suffix1 - Suffix2 - Suffix3

a.	打	爛	過	齊		泥玻璃窗
b.	打	爛		齊	補	泥玻璃窗
c.	打		過	齊	補	泥玻璃窗
d.	*打	爛	過	齊	補	泥玻璃窗
	hit	break	EXP	DIST	PRF	CL.PL-glass.window

➤ Suffix stacking and scope

- The scopal relations to be demonstrated:
 - (I) *cɛi2* 齊 DIST > *kɔ33* 過 EXP
 - (II) *pou45* 補 PRF > *cɛi2* 齊 DIST
 - (III) *pou45* 補 PRF > *cɛi2* 齊 DIST > *kɔ33* 過 EXP
- *Cɛi2* 齊 DIST
 - Acts like a distributive marker / universal quantifier, just like Cantonese *saai* 晒 (T. H. Lee 1994, Tang 1996, P. Lee 2012, Law 2019, *i.a.*)

- Quantifies over objects:

- (13) 佢睇^齊乃三本書, (*但係本本都係得睇一半)
3SG read-DIST that three-CL-book but CL-CL DOU COP only read half
“He read all those three books, (*but for each book he just read half of it).”

- Quantifies over subjects:

- (14) 佢[k^{hi}ɛk5]去^齊北京嘅
3SG.PL go-DIST Beijing SFP
“All of them has gone to Beijing.”

- (I) *kɔ33* 過^{EXP} and *cvi2* 齊^{DIST}
 - A little excursion to (Hong Kong) Cantonese:
Saai 晒^{DIST} scopes over *gwo* 過^{EXP} and amounts to truth-conditional differences as in the contrast below (adapted from T. T.-M. Lee 2020:18)

- (15) 阿明試過食^晒啲蛋糕 [HK Cantonese]
Aaming si-gwo sik-saai di daangou EXP > DIST
Aaming try-EXP eat-DIST CL.PL cake
“Aaming once ate all the cakes.”

- (16) 阿明食過^晒啲蛋糕 [HK Cantonese]
Aaming sik-gwo-saai di daangou DIST > EXP
Aaming eat-EXP-DIST CL.PL cake
“Aaming has eaten/tasted all the cakes.”

- When EXP > DIST, the higher EXP simply indicates that there is a (past) bounded situation of Aaming eating all the cakes. It does not affect the universal quantification of DIST on the object and all the cakes need to be eaten (completely).
- When DIST > EXP, it is the bounded event “has eaten x” being distributed, i.e. for every cake x, there is a bounded event that Aaming has eaten x. He might not have necessarily finished the whole piece for every cake, and thus amounts to a “tasted all” reading.
- The distinction of termination and completion in Mandarin (Smith 1991), which also applies to Chinese languages in general

- (17) 阿明食過舊蛋糕, 但係未食完 [HK Cantonese]
Aaming sik-gwo gau daangou, daanhai mei sik-jyun
Aaming eat-EXP CL cake but not.yet eat-finish
“(Lit.): Aaming has eaten the cake, but he hasn’t finished it.”

- Going back to Yangchun dialect: *kɔ33* 過^{EXP} and *cvi2* 齊^{DIST}
- Yangchun dialect does not have *si-gwo* 試過 ‘(lit.) try-EXP’

- V-*kɔ33-cvi2* exhibits **DIST** > **EXP** scope and shows truth-conditional difference with **ALREADY** > **DIST**

(18) 佢已經睇齊乃三本書，(*但係本本都係得睇一半) **ALREADY** > **DIST**

3SG already read-DIST that three-CL-book but CL-CL DOU COP only read half
“He has read all those three books, (*but for each book he just read half of it).”

(19) 佢睇過齊乃三本書，(但係本本都係得睇一半) **DIST** > **EXP**

3SG read-EXP-DIST that three-CL-book but CL-CL DOU COP only read half
“He read all those three books, (but for each book he just read half of it).”

- (II) *Pou45* 補 **PRF** and *cvi2* 齊 **DIST**

- V-*cvi2-pou45* has the same truth condition as **ALREADY** > **DIST**, showing that **PRF** scopes over **DIST**, which conforms to the mirrored word order.

(20) 佢睇齊補乃三本書，(*但係本本都係得睇一半) **PRF** > **DIST**

3SG already read-DIST-PRF that three-CL-book but CL-CL DOU COP only read half
“He has read all those three books, (*but for each book he just read half of it).”

- Note: **PRF** does not block subject quantification of **DIST** (cf. the blocking effects of verbal negation and modals to *saai* in Cantonese, P. Lee 2012)

(21) 佢[k^hiək5]去齊補北京嘅

3SG.PL go-DIST-PRF Beijing SFP
“All of them has gone to Beijing.”

- (III) *Pou45* 補 **PRF**, *kɔ33* 過 **EXP** and *cvi2* 齊 **DIST**

- V-*kɔ33-cvi2-pou45* does not require the all the books to be read thoroughly, showing that **EXP** is scoped under **DIST** and subsequently under **PRF**.
- Roughly, the sentence means: “there is a (past) bounded situation where for every book x, there is a bounded event that Aaming has read x.”

(22) 佢睇過齊補乃三本書，(但係本本都係得睇一半) **PRF** > **DIST** > **EXP**

3SG already read-EXP-DIST-PRF that three-CL-book but CL-CL DOU COP only read half
“He has read all those three books, (but for each book he just read half of it).”

➤ Taking stock

- An articulated vP periphery

[_{TP} ... [_{PRFP} **PRF**-*pou45* 補 [_{DISTP} **DIST**-*cvi2* 齊 [_{EXPP} **EXP**-*kɔ33* 過 [_{vP} ...]]]]]

- Problem #1: Ordering resolved
- Problem #2: The scopal relations (I-III) are made clear with the presence of distributive marker
- How about problem #3 (incompleteness effects)?

4. Conditioned incompleteness effects of perfective markers

- Seeking an alternative account for incompleteness effects of perfective markers
 - Caveat: NOT an alternative approach for incompleteness effects (Tsai 2008)
 - Adopt Tsai's event argument licensing approach
 - Suggest an alternative account for perfective markers, which involves no Asp-to-T raising
- (In)completeness effects of perfective markers
 - Mandarin *le* PRF exhibits incompleteness effects, which can be salvaged by temporal adverbials

(23)?他吃了飯

Ta chi-le fan

3sg eat-PRF rice

"He has eaten."

(24)他剛吃了飯

Ta gang chi-guo fan

3sg just.now eat-EXP rice

"He has just eaten."

- Mandarin *guo* EXP does not always render a sentence "complete"
 - Smith (1991): *guo* EXP is ambiguous between specific and indefinite "experiential" reading
 - Episodic vs. generic reading
 - Under episodic reading, *guo* EXP behaves the same with *le* PRF, i.e. it also shows incompleteness effects which can be salvaged by adding a temporal adverbial

(25)(?)他吃過飯

Ta chi-guo fan

3sg eat-EXP rice

i. ?"He has eaten." (episodic reading)

ii. "He has eaten rice before." (generic reading)

(26)他剛吃過飯

Ta gang chi-guo fan

3sg just.now eat-EXP rice

"He has just eaten." (episodic reading)

- If the tense anchoring of *guo* is achieved by a syntactic Asp-to-T movement (in LF), i.e. it is driven by syntactic motivations (e.g. feature-checking), then the effect of meaning on incompleteness is unexpected.
- We might posit a feature [*u*EXP] on T which agrees with [*i*EXP] *guo* and attracts movement. But this involves stipulation. Also, *guo* is not tied with experiential reading. It is also compatible with specific/episodic reading.

- Generic operator and completeness
 - Sentences with generic reading are “complete”

(27) 貓捉老鼠
mao zhuo laoshu
cat catch rat
“Cats catch rats”

(28) 長頸鹿吃樹葉
zhangjinglu chi shuye
giraffe eat leaf
“Giraffes eat leaves.”

- Generic affixal quantifier *hoi* 開 in Cantonese:
- No incompleteness, i.e. type I affix in Tang’s 2018 sense (note: Tang 2018 treats inchoative *hoi* as type III affix and does not mention generic/habitual *hoi*)

(29) 佢睇開報紙 [HK Cantonese]
Keoi tai-hoi bouzi
3sg read-gen newspaper
“He reads newspapers.”

- *Guo* is licensed by a covert generic operator which gives rise to the experiential/generic reading. The generic operator quantifies the event argument and renders the sentence “complete”.

(30) (作為亞洲人，)[GEN [他吃過飯]]
Zuowei Yazhou ren, Ta chi-guo fan
3sg eat-EXP rice
“He has eaten rice before.”

- *Le* cannot be licensed by a generic operator, since it marks event definiteness (Chan 1996, Tang 1996) and resists further quantification

(31) *作為亞洲人，他吃了飯
Zuowei Yazhou ren, ta chi-guo fan
As Asia person 3sg eat-EXP rice
“As an Asian, he has eaten rice before.”

- (In)completeness effects with perfective stacking
 - Stacking of *guo* and *le* significantly improves the sentences with *episodic* reading

(32) 他吃過了飯

Ta chi-guo-le fan

3sg eat-EXP-PRF rice

“He has already eaten.”

(33)?他吃了飯

Ta chi-le fan

3sg eat-PRF rice

(34) (?)他吃過飯

Ta chi-guo fan

3sg eat-EXP rice

- When *le* takes a resultative verb complement (i.e. a telic predicate), there is no incompleteness effects. *Guo* in (32) is performing the same function as RVC.

(35) 他打死了人

Ta da-si-le ren

3sg hit-die-PRF person

“He has beaten someone to death.”

5. Residue: Hong Kong Cantonese

➤ Suffix stacking in Hong Kong Cantonese

- Lack of Yangchun-type stacking, despite the existence of (rough) counterpart particles

(36)*佢睇過晒咗呢三本書

Int.: “He has read all the three books.”

- Maximum post-verbal slots: 2
Potential post-verbal slots: 3

(37) V - C - Suffix1 - Suffix2

(38)a. 油 - 花 - 過 -

b. 油 - 花 - - 晒

c. 油 - - 過 - 晒

d. ?油 - 花 - 過 - 晒

paint stain EXP DIST

(39)?佢油花過晒呢幾幅牆

- Syllable constraints?

- (40)?佢打爛過晒啲玻璃窗 (‘V-σσσ)
(41)?佢洗乾淨過晒呢啲衫 (‘??V-σσσσ)
(42)佢洗乾淨咗呢啲衫 (V-σσσ)

- Other cases: *maai-saai* 埋晒, *faan-saai* 翻晒, and see Wong (2015) for more

- Restricted stacking

- PRF and EXP

- (43)(*)食過咗餃子就要做野喇
(44)食過咗只落咗佐料嘅燒雞之後，方蕩眼中嘅世界成都變咗 (Blog, 2019)¹
(45)睇過咗標題，愛上咗個絲打 (Online forum, 2017)²

- PRF and DIST

- (46)*睇咗晒呢三本書
(47)*睇晒咗呢三本書
(48)但係睇晒咗個改動，發覺成篇都係用語體中文寫 (Wiki, 2014)³
(49)无论睇晒咗. 定係睇到一半睇唔落去. 网友嘅反应都係. 迷惑!!! (News, 2020)⁴
(50)我睇晒咗，英文版。(Forum, 2007)⁵

- PRF, EXP and DIST

- (51)*睇過晒咗呢三本書
(52)*睇過咗晒呢三本書

- Why can't Cantonese *zo* PRF stack with other particles?

- Complementary distribution with *jau* 'have'

- (53)*有睇咗呢三本書
(54)*冇睇咗呢三本書

- *Jau* 'have' scopes over 過晒

- (55)有睇過晒呢三本書

¹ <https://www.itread01.com/content/1556827125.html>

² <https://forum.hkgolden.com/thread/6745695/page/2>

³ https://zh-yue.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:SC96

⁴ https://k.sina.cn/article_1736039387_6779dbdb01900qbgb.html, or <https://kknews.cc/entertainment/n2qjon8.html>

⁵ <http://bbs.m.cantonese.asia/archiver/tid-7110.html?page=2>

- Wang (1965): Mandarin *le* and *meiyou* are suppletion
 - Cantonese *jau* 'have' and *zo* PRF are the same perfective head with different phonological properties? (i.e. affixal vs. non-affixal)
 - **Problem**: *jau* 'have' expresses existence which is not the same as perfective aspect
- Remaining problems (and interesting data) in Yangchun dialect
- Co-occurrence of *pou45* 逕 PRF with stative predicates and progressive aspect 緊
 - No incompleteness effect for *pou45* 逕 PRF

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