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VERBAL MORPHOLOGICAL CATEGORY OF ASPECT IN THE CANTONESE LANGUAGE

Presented paper deals with the morphological category of aspect in Cantonese. Given the lack of a morphological category of tense in Cantonese, aspect holds a particular position in this system, as it is the sole morphological means expressing temporal relations. The aim of the paper is to present the functioning of the various aspects of Cantonese, both perfective and imperfective, based on the theoretical framework presented beforehand, which draws on the previous achievements of linguists in this field. The second section presents what specific morphological means are used to express the category of aspect in Cantonese, which is then followed by a brief discussion of the relation between resultative verb compounds and the perfective aspect. The last, and by far the largest section, presents corpus material which exemplifies the use of different aspect markers. The paper is an attempt to respond to the hitherto lack of consensus among Sinologists about the number as well as the types of aspects that occur in Cantonese.

Keywords: Cantonese, aspect, aspectology, Chinese linguistics, morphology, verbal morphology

1. Introduction

Presented paper aims at classifying the synchronic types of morphological aspects of the Cantonese language. Thus, any traces of aspectuality expressed lexically or through periphrastic means were omitted; only morphology is of interest for this study. By default, all the examples of utterances that form the basis of the analysis in Section 4 are taken from the Cantonese language corpus 'CantoneseWaC', created in the Sketch Engine domain (See References). In

situations where the source of an example differs from the corpus mentioned above, the corresponding reference is included as a footnote to the specific example.

The term 'Cantonese' is understood in the paper in the meaning adopted by Yue-Hashimoto (1993: 292), i.e., as the language of Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangzhou, which is considered to be the most representative form of the Yue subgroup. It is distinguished from other Yue varieties by the fact that it is the subgroup's sole member to have developed a written form (Bauer and Matthews 2017: 176). This factor was crucial in determining the variety to be studied here, as the paper deals almost exclusively with the language's written form.

The motivation behind conducting the presented study has its source in the prevailing lack of consensus amongst Sinologists as to how many aspects exist in Cantonese, and what aspects specifically are those. Since the 1970s, linguists have provided their own typologies which ranged in the number of described aspects from seven to as much as fifteen. Frequently different, unrelated concepts were mixed together, so that, for example, adverbs or potential complement constructions were treated as aspectual markers. Thus, a clear-cut division of the linguistic forms reflected in the following material must be made here. It is assumed that only those morphemes which function as verbal affixes, and moreover, cannot be attributed with any other function other than aspectual in that position, are to be considered markers of the morphological category of aspect. As a result, the author did not consider such morphemes as 返 *faan2* or 就 *zau6* to be the representatives of aspectual markers (as is sometimes done, see e.g., Kwok 1971), since examples of their usage make it possible to understand them as a verbal complement and an adverb, respectively. In that case, positing for additional aspectual values in Cantonese, introduced by, *inter alia*, the above-mentioned morphemes, seems to be an unnecessary proliferation of the existing categories. Concluding, the presented typology constitutes a synthesis of the author's personal knowledge of the Cantonese language and an overview of the existing literature on the topic, on the basis of which aspectual affixes that strictly conform to the above-said rules were extracted and exemplified using utterances from a corpus.

Standard Cantonese script is used to transcribe the language, which is based on the Standard Chinese writing system (traditional). The *Jyutping* (粵拼) system was used to romanise these characters, without marking the tonal sandhi phenomenon (unless necessary due to morphophonological influence on the aspectual markers). In the examples from the corpus, hyphens separate specific lexical units from one another. These examples are accompanied by romanisation, glosses, and the author's translation.

The list of glosses is to be found below:
~ Reduplication
1SG First person singular
2SG Second person singular

3SG	Third person singular
ADVR	Adverbial particle
ADVS	Adversative particle
AUX	Auxiliary verb
CARD	Cardinal numeral
CLF	Classifier
CMPR	Comparative
CONJ	Conjunction
CONT	Continuous aspect marker
CONV	Continuative aspect marker
DEF	Definiteness
DEG	Degree complement
DEM	Demonstrative pronoun
DIR	Directional complement
DLM	Delimitative aspect marker
EXP	Experiential aspect marker
HAB	Habitual aspect marker
IMP	Imperative
INCH	Inchoative aspect marker
INTS	Intensifier
IO	Particle introducing the indirect object
ITER	Iterative aspect marker
NEG	Negation
O	Object
PASS	Passive voice
PEJ	Pejorative
PFV	Perfective simple aspect marker
PL	Plural
PN	Proper name
POSS	Possessive pronoun
POT	Potential complement
PREP	Preposition
PROG	Progressive aspect marker
PSN	Personal name
REFL	Reflexive pronoun
RES	Resultative complement
SFP	Sentence-final particle
SUP	Superlative
V	Verb
WH	Interrogative pronoun
*	Gramatically incorrect

2. Morphological realisation of aspect in Cantonese

Cantonese aspectual markers are predominantly grammaticalised verbs that function as affixes (Yue 2017: 124). In most cases these are suffixes, and in only one case is the marker a verbal prefix. Two of the possible markers of the delimitative aspect are numerals, functioning as an infix placed between a reduplicated verb. Those aspectual markers that can be etymologically traced to a verb are monomorphemic. In addition to markers of this type, two aspects can also be morphologically marked by means of directional verb compounds (henceforth: DVC), and one by resultative verb compounds (henceforth: RVC). Other morphological processes by which aspectual meaning is introduced are reduplication (delimitative aspect), as well as elision, due to which the toneme of the verb may become an aspectual marker (perfective simple aspect). In addition, one possible marker of the progressive aspect (喺度 *hai2 dou6*) was probably coined as a result of the influence of Standard Chinese, as a calque of the Mandarin construction. The multitude of markers of some aspectual values makes it possible to express them by means of a parasynthesis, consisting of a prefix and a suffix. An interesting exception occurs in the case of the inchoative aspect, expressed by a polymorphemic marker, which is split into two elements, according to the rules by which DVCs function in Cantonese. The positioning of aspectual markers is also dependent on the structure of the verb being marked. Compound verbs, i.e., verb-complement compounds functioning as single lexemes in the system, combine with aspectual markers in two ways. For a more extensive description of how aspectual markers behave while affixed to compound verbs, see the perfective simple aspect part in Section 4.

3. RVCs and the perfective simple aspect

Thompson (1973: 361) defines RVCs as "morphologically complex verbs which can undergo a certain affixation rule. […] A resultative compound verb […] is, very roughly, a compound verb made up of two parts, the first indicating an action and the second the result of that action." As noted by Tham (2015: 306), formally both of the aforementioned parts of the RVCs are verbs. The second verb of such a compound (V2) expresses the result of an action described by the first verb (V1). Matthews and Yip (2011: 243) list 15 verbs that can act as V2 of RVCs, including "好 *hou2* completion", "匀 *wan4* thoroughly", or "到 *dou3* arrival". Regardless of what meaning is carried by a given V2, such a complement always constitutes a completive (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994: 57-60), as evidenced by the fact that these complements invariably express the result of a given action. Since such complements always explicitly present the consequence of a state or action described by V1, it is a logical necessity that

such a predicate be considered as a closed event, without any insight into its internal structure. In practice, this means that any RVC must be considered as a perfective. In Cantonese, the meanings introduced by RVCs correspond to the perfective simple aspect (see Section 4.1.). For this reason, it is possible to express the perfective by means of a RVC alone, without a formal aspectual marker following. In modern Cantonese however, both options, i.e., the RVC alone as well as one with an aspectual marker suffixed to it are both used to express the perfective simple aspect. The fact that the completive itself carries aspectual value may explain why some researchers (e.g., Kwok 1971: 95 or Killingley 1993: 21) distinguish an aspect called "Completive", for which the markers would be frequently occurring V2s of the RVCs. In line with the assumptions of this paper, the aforementioned authors have correctly identified the fact that RVCs inherently carry an aspectual value, but instead of treating such constructions equal to those bearing the perfective simple marker (咗 *zo2*), they have created an additional, possibly superfluous aspectual category.

4. Cantonese aspects and their textual representations

4.1. The perfective simple

In most descriptive works, this aspect is simply referred to as "perfective". Nonetheless, since there exist two additional aspects which are perfective as well (experiential and delimitative, see below), the author has decided that a more fitting name should be coined for this particular aspect to distinguish it from the other perfectives.[1] The choice of the adjective 'simple' is justified by the fact that this aspectual value does not entail any specific interpretation of an utterance besides perfectivity itself, contrary to the other two perfectives. Thus, a predicate suffixed with a perfective simple aspect marker informs about an action or a state which is perceived holistically, as having been brought to an end, and having some specific final effect (although not always expressed explicitly). How the action proceeded, or how its proceeding is to be interpreted, remains irrelevant. This aspect serves to express a single event, an integral, indivisible whole, enclosed within an outlined time frame (see Comrie 1976: 16-24). Since an action described by a verb modified by the perfective simple marker is interpreted as having been brought to an end, it is considered ungrammatical to use the perfective simple aspect suffix with verbs which, by definition, do not imply an endpoint, such as 'to like', 'to name', 'to be', etc. (cf. Sun 2006: 67).

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[1] This decision was made due to an identical operation adopted by Xiao and McEnery in their work regarding Standard Chinese. See Xiao and McEnery (2004: 89).

The perfective simple aspect is introduced by the verbal suffix 咗 *zo2*. In non-compound predicates, it is not separated from the verb by any other morpheme. Therefore, in utterances with a monosyllabic predicate, indicating the perfective simple does not require morphological procedures other than suffixation, as exemplified by the sentence [1]:

[1] 身邊-其實-都-有-好-多-朋友-做-咗！

    san1 bin1-kei4 sat6-dou1-jau5-hou2-do1-pang4 jau5-zou6-zo2

    by one's side-actually-everything-to have-INTS-a lot-friend-to do-PFV

    In fact, we all have a friend who has done (this).

In the case of polysyllabic verbs, however, the usage of the 咗 *zo2* suffix is complicated by the existence of three different classes of bi-morphemic verbs, in which the said suffix is subject to different rules of connectivity with the verb (Matthews and Yip 2011: 229). The first class consists of verb-object compounds in which the object is an integral part of the verb, owing to the process of incorporation. Examples of such compounds include the verbs 瞓覺 *fan3 gaau3* 'to sleep', 結婚 *git3 fan1* 'to get married', or 出汗 *ceot1 hon6* 'to sweat'. In all three examples given, the first morpheme is the verb proper, while the second morpheme is a nominal object. Only when combined together can these two morphemes carry their specific verbal meaning, different from the meaning of the monomorphemic verb proper. When one wishes to use the suffix 咗 *zo2* with a predicate belonging to the first class described above, the aspectual marker is placed between the verb and the incorporated object. Example [2] presents an utterance where this is the case. Such a disjunction of the two morphemes constituting a class one verb can be observed in syntactic constructions as well. As Matthews and Yip (2011: 59-60) note, morphemes constituting verbs of this class can also be separated by RVCs, adnominals, time adverbs, personal pronouns and, in cases of topicalisation, objects.

[2] 我-結-咗-婚-，有-個-仔-，唔-想-冇-份-工。

    ngo5-git3-zo2-fan1-jau5-go3-zai2-m4-soeng2-mou2-fan6-gung1

    1SG-to get married (1)-PFV-to get married (2)-to have-CLF-son-NEG-think-NEG.to have-CLF.DEF-job

    I got married and I have a son, so I cannot imagine not having this job.

The second class of compound verbs are those compounds in which all (usually two) morphemes cannot be separated by any grammatical morphemes. For this reason, aspectual markers are affixed to them in the same fashion as in example [1], i.e., immediately after the entire verb. These are compound verbs *stricto sensu* and not, as in the case of the first class, verb-object compounds. The functioning of the perfective simple aspect with verbs of this type is shown in example [3].

[3] 佢-哋-當然-成功-咗。

    keoi5-dei2-dong1 jin4-sing4 gung1-zo2

    3SG-PL-of course-to succeed-PFV

Of course, they have succeeded.

The third class of compound verbs may be thought of as a 'mix' of the first two classes. It is characterised by the fact that the choice of placement of the aspectual marker depends largely on the speaker's preference, possibly due to sentential context. Whether the aspectual marker is used after the first or the last morpheme of the verb, no change in meaning is entailed. The internal structure of the predicates described above is also ambiguous, as both verb-object compounds (e.g., 移民 *ji1 man4* 'to migrate') and proper compound verbs (退休 *teoi3 jau1* 'to retire'), constitute the third class. Such a predicate is exemplified in [4]. Accordingly with what has been established, a potential utterance [4'], with the aspectual marker placed after both verbal morphemes, would still be considered grammatical, although there might occur different preferences among native speakers.

[4] 踏-入-2000-年-，似乎-至少-有-一半-喺-97-移-咗-民-嘅-朋友-都-返-咗-嚟-香港。

daap6- jap6-loeng5 cin1-nin4-ci5 fu4-zi3 siu2-jau5-jat1 bun3-hai2-gau2 sap6 cat1- ji1-zo2-man4-koi3-pang4 jau5-dou1-faan2-zo2-lai4-hoeng1 gong2

to tramp on-RES-two thousand-year-appears-at least-to have-half-PREP-ninety seven- to emigrate (1)-PFV-to emigrate (2)-POSS-friend-everything-to return-PFV-DIR-Hong Kong

 It seems that at least half of my friends, who had emigrated in 1997, have returned to Hong Kong.

Let us now turn to the problem of suffixing the 咗 *zo2* morpheme to verb stems which are additionally marked by RVCs or DVCs. Firstly, the RVC in example [5]:

[5] 我-有-個-阿叔-打仗-死-咗。

ngo5-jau5-go3-aa3 suk1-daa2 zoeng3-sei2-zo2

1SG-to have-CLF-uncle-to fight a war-RES-PFV

I had an uncle who died fighting a war.

As in the above utterance, the aspectual suffix follows the entire verb-complement compound. However, this fact does not indicate that such structures are analytic rather than synthetic; they are still within the bounds of verbal morphology, since the V2 of the RVC *de facto* becomes a part of the verb.

In the case of predicates modified by both the 咗 *zo2* morpheme and a DVC, the order of affixes described above is switched. DVCs, i.e., those introduced by the grammaticalised verbs of motion 嚟 *lai4* 'to come (here)' and 去 *heoi3* 'to go (there)', need be the predicate's rightmost morpheme. Only after the whole V+咗 *zo2* compound can these directional complements be added, as seen in the example below.

[6] 囡囡-好-快-就-入-咗-嚟-，佢-長-頭髮-遮-住-大-半邊-面。

naam4 naam4-hou2-faai3-zau6-jap6-zo2-lai4-keoi5-coeng4-tau4 faat3-ze1-zyu6-daai6-bun3 bin1-min6

girl-INTS-quick-at once-to enter-PFV-DIR-3SG-long-hair-to cover-CONT-big-half-face

The girl entered at once, her long hair covering a larger half of her face.

A distinguishing feature of the 咗 *zo2* suffix is its inability to occur with verbs negated by the negation marker 唔 *m4*. To negate a predicate in the perfective simple aspect, one has to use the negation 冇 *mou2* as the verb's preposition. This negation is in itself verbal (lit. 'to not have', 'to not exist'). Its usage eliminates the need to use the 咗 *zo2* suffix. Thus, a grammatically correct negated verb in the perfective simple aspect has a form of '冇+V', as shown in [7].

[7] 我-乜-都-冇-做！

ngo5-mat1-dou1-mou2-zou6

1SG-WH-everything-NEG.PFV-to do

I haven't done anything!

The negation 冇 *mou2* is not, however, the only possible option to negate predicates in the perfective simple aspect. When one wishes to express the meaning of 'not yet' with a RVC, the preferred negation particle is 未 *mei6*, as in example [8]. As with 冇 *mou2*, negating a predicate by the 未 *mei6* morpheme prevents the subsequent use of the 咗 *zo2* suffix.

[8] 我-未-說-完-，佢-兩-眼-好像-會-放飛-箭-地-說 [...]。

ngo5-mei6-syut3-jyun4-koei5-loeng5-ngaan5-hou2 zoeng6-wui5-fong3 fei1-zin3-dei6-syut3

1SG-NEG-to speak-RES-3SG-two-eye-to appear-AUX-to shoot out-arrow-ADVR-to speak

I was not yet done talking, when he, with a look that could kill, told me that [...].

In Section 3 it was established that RVCs in the syntactic position of the predicate do not require a formal aspectual marker to express the category of perfectivity. This is due to the nature of such compounds, whose semantic value precludes an imperfective interpretation. The functioning of such predicates, wherein the V2 of an RVC is the only marker of perfectivity, is illustrated by example [9].

[9] 一早-攞-住-鋤頭-去-開-礦。

jat1 zou2-lo2-zyu6-co4 tau4-heoi3-hoi1-kwong3

early morning-to take-CONT-pickaxe-to go-RES.PFV-mine

Early in the morning, he went in the direction of the mine carrying a pickaxe.

The last point regarding the realisation of the perfective simple aspect applies to the spoken variety of Cantonese only. As Zhang (1970: 464-465) notes, the perfective simple aspect does not require any separate morphemes to serve as its marker. In fact, in the spoken language, it is possible for that function to be fully taken over by the suprasegmental prosodic value of the predicate. As a result of anticipatory tonal assimilation (*sandhi*), the toneme of the predicate is modified to the tone of the morpheme 咗 *zo2*, and thus to the Cantonese second tone (the

rising tone, known as 'dark rising', IPA: ˧˥). Thus, the predicate's tonal value carries the grammatical meaning of the perfective simple aspect, so that the only marker of this category is the phonetic value of the predicate – in this situation, the verb becomes a portmanteau morpheme (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 157). Due to the exclusively written nature of the corpus constituting the source of the example sentences for the present study, the examples given below are extracted from Zhang (1970: 464).

[10] 佢-嚟-咗-喇！
     keoi5-lai4-zo2-laa3
     3SG-to come-PFV-SFP
     He has come!

[10'] 佢-嚟-喇！
     keoi5-lai2-laa3
     3SG-to come.PFV-SFP
     He has come!

In line with what was stated above, the difference between sentence [10] and its equivalent [10'] lies solely in the presence or absence of the aspectual marker. In [10'], where that marker is absent, a change in tonal value is apparent – anticipatory tonal assimilation results in a modification of the verb's primary toneme to the toneme of the suffix 咗 *zo2*, which itself undergoes elision. In situations where the primary toneme of the predicate is the second tone, and is therefore identical to the tone of the aspectual marker, the described process proceeds unchanged. The suprasegmental prosodic value of the predicate remains the second tone, with the simultaneous elision of the aspectual marker. In practice, this implies that the aspectual value has to be deduced from the context, as in sentences [11] and [11'] below.

[11] 寫-咗-封-信。
     se2-zo2-fung1-seon3
     to write-PFV-CLF-letter
     (I) have written a letter.

[11'] 寫-封-信。
     se2-fung1-seon3
     to write.PFV-CLF-letter
     (I) have written a letter.

4.2. The experiential

The experiential aspect is also perfective, and therefore it too describes the predicate as temporally bound, without revealing the details of how a given state or action progresses within the established time frame. However, apart from the mere indication of the category of perfectivity, the experiential aspect introduces

a more specific meaning – the primary semantic value of verbs modified by the experiential aspect marker implies experience, having performed or experienced what is described by the predicate, regardless of the point on the timeline at which it occurred. This means that the experiential aspect is unrelated to the notion of perfect, i.e., the action described is not relevant to the point of reference articulated in the utterance. The existence of such an aspectual category is typical for the entire Sinitic language family. The Cantonese experiential is marked by the 過 *gwo3* verbal suffix.

[12][2] 我-喺-間-公司-打-過-工。

  ngo5-hai2-gaan3-gung1 si1-daa2-gwo3-gung1
  1SG-PREP-CL.DEF-company-to work (1)-EXP-to work (2)
  I used to work in that company.

[13] 我-曾-到-過-那-，景色-相當-美。

  ngo5-cang4-dou3-gwo3-naa5-ging2 sik4-soeng1 dong1-mei5
  1SG-once-to arrive-EXP-DEM-landscape-rather-beautiful
  I've been there once, the landscape is truly beautiful.

  In both cited examples the subject recounts an experience, but when did the experience occur is irrelevant in relation to the point of reference. It is thus common to use such adverbs as 曾 *cang4* 'erstwhile' together with the experiential aspect, so as to further emphasise that lack of connection (example [13]). Furthermore, as indicated by example [12], the rules of suffixing the aspectual markers with compound verbs, described in the previous subsection, also apply in this case, as the class one compound verb 打工 *daa2 gung1* 'to work' is separated by the aspectual suffix.

  Similarly to Standard Chinese, the use of the experiential aspect is not possible with verbs which "cannot in principle happen more than once" (Li and Thompson 1989: 232). Utterances in which the predicate is semantically restricted to being a singular event cannot be marked by the experiential. For this reason, utterances such as [14] are considered ungrammatical.

*[14] *佢-阿媽-死-過。

  **keoi5-aa3 maa1-sei1-gwo3*
  *3SG-mother-to die-EXP
  *His mother died.

  In the light of information presented thus far, it is evident that the main difference between the perfective simple and the experiential aspects lies in the fact that the former implies a perfect (relevance to the moment of utterance), while the latter does not. This difference has been widely accounted for in the literature (e.g., Gao 1980: 52). In practice, then, markers of the two said aspects can be used interchangeably in many contexts, with the only difference being the implied or non-implied category of perfect. As noted by Matthews and Yip

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[2] Extracted from Zhang (1996).

(2011: 236), this difference is especially evident in a pair of utterances which explicitly mark the length of a given state or action. The two researchers provide the following examples:

[15] 你-喺-香港-住-過-幾耐-呀？

    nei5-hai2-hoeng1 gong2-zyu6-gwo3-gei2 noi6-aa1

    2SG-PREP-Hong Kong-to live-EXP-WH-SFP

    How long did you live in Hong Kong (before leaving)?

[16] 你-喺-香港-住-咗-幾耐-呀？

    nei5-hai2-hoeng1 gong2-zyu6-zo2-gei2 noi6-aa1

    2SG-PREP-Hong Kong-to live-PERF-WH-SFP

    How long have you lived in Hong Kong?

Aside from describing having some kind of experience (or a lack thereof), the experiential aspect is also used as a means of denoting inferential statements, as in [17].

[17] 如今-卻-已經-像-下-過-雨-一樣。

    jyu4 gam1-koek3-ji5 ging1-zoeng6-haa6-gwo3-jyu5-jat1 joeng6

    now-CONJ-already-seems as-to rain (1)-EXP-to rain (2)-identically

    Now, however, it seems as if it were raining.

Similarly to the perfective simple aspect, negating a predicate marked by the experiential suffix 過 *gwo3* by means of 唔 *m4* is considered ungrammatical. For this aspect, it is also necessary to use the prepositional morpheme 冇 *mou2*. However, in this case, the morpheme 冇 *mou2* does not affect the aspectual marker in any way – the grammatical form of a negated predicate in the experiential aspect is 冇+V+過, as in [18] below.

[18] 總之-我-乜-都-冇-做-過。

    zung2 zi1-ngo5-mat1-dou1-mou5-zou6-gwo3

    CONJ-1SG-WH-everything-NEG-to do-EXP

    All in all, I didn't do (/hadn't done) anything.

Yet again, as in the case of perfective simple, it is common to use the negation particle 未 *mei6* as a preposition before a verb in the experiential aspect, in order to emphasise the meaning of 'not yet'. The 未+V+過 predicates inform the interlocutor that the speaker is (or was) yet to experience the event in question up to the point of reference. This negation particle is often preceeded by 從 *cung4* 'since (some time)', forming a 從未 *cung4 mei6* 'never, not yet' syntagm.

[19] 我-未-讀-過-大學。

    ngo5-mei6-guk6-gwo3-daai6 kok6

    1SG-NEG-to study-EXP-university

    I never studied at a university.

4.3. The delimitative

As the name suggests, this aspect *delimitates* the verb it modifies – it implies a short, momentaneous interpretation of the predicate. Since it is a perfective aspect, the predicate is read as a single, finite occurrence, additionally marked to be "instantaneous, happening in a matter of seconds" (Gao 1980: 53). The delimitative aspect may be likened to such English periphrastic modifiers of the verbal head as 'for a while' or 'a little'.

The delimitative aspect may be marked by comparatively many morphological processes. Firstly, there is the suffixation of the grammatical morpheme 吓 *haa2*. This process is sometimes also coupled with a reduplication of the verb. In addition to V+吓 and V~+吓 predicates, delimitativity can also be marked by infixing a numeral 一 *jat1* 'one' or 兩 *loeng5* 'two' between two syllables of a reduplicated monosyllabic verb. Matthews and Yip (2011: 239) also note the process of phonetic elision of the infixed numeral 一 *jat1*, which affects the tone of the first syllable of the reduplicated verb. The toneme of that syllable then changes to the second tone. Thus, this is a process identical to that of the elision of the perfective simple aspect marker, with the proviso that in this case the predicate is reduplicated, and so the first morpheme of the predicate becomes a portmanteau morpheme. The following examples introduce all of the above-said morphological processes used to mark the delimitative aspect. [20] exemplifies the suffixation of the morpheme 吓 *haa2*. [21] shows how 吓 *haa2* functions alongside reduplication. Examples [22] and [23] present the infixation of numerals 一 *jat1* and 兩 *loeng5* between reduplicated morphemes of the predicate, while [24] accounts for a predicate in which elision of the infixed numeral resulted in modifying the suprasegmental phonological value of the first syllable of the predicate.

[20] 我-返-香港- 一定-睇-吓。
    ngo5-faan2-hoeng1 gong2-jat1 ding6-tai2-haa2
    1SG-to return-Hong Kong-surely-to look-DLM
    I'll make sure to have a look at it once I'm back in Hong Kong.

[21] 後嚟-我-諗諗-吓！
    hau6 lai4-ngo5-sam2 sam2-haa2
    later-1SG-to think ~-DLM
    I'll give it a thought later.

[22] 佢-笑-一-笑-話-：係-咩？
    keoi5-siu3-jat1-siu3-waa6-hai6-me1
    3SG-to laugh-one-V~-to tell-to be-WH
    Giving a chuckle, he asked: Is that so?

[23] PA-喺-手-上-嘅-name list-揭-兩-揭-回答-哦。
    pi ei-hai2-sau2-soeng6-koi3-name list-kit3-loeng5-kit3-wui4 daap3-o6
    PN-PREP-hand-PREP-POSS-name list-to open-two-V~-to answer-SFP
    The PA had slightly unrolled the name list he had in hand, and answered.

[24] 必然-要-試試-呢-間-嘢-有-乜-吸引。
    bit1 jin4-jiu3-si2 si3-ni1-gaan1-je5-jau5-mat1-kap1 jan5
    necessarily-to have to-to check~-DEM-CLF-thing-to exist-WH-fascinating
    I have to go and check what's so fascinating over there.

In addition to the morphological processes described above, one more problematic process should be mentioned here, namely, marking the delimitative aspect by means of the suffixal bisyllabic morpheme 一吓 *jat1 haa2*. Apart from Kwok (1971: 114-115), such a way of marking the delimitative does not appear in any of the descriptive works cited so far. However, the corpus used for the present study records 45 utterances in which the bound morpheme 一吓 *jat1 haa2* is employed to express the delimitative aspect. In the author's opinion, the increasing productivity of this morpheme is a natural phenomenon, as it reflects the process of expressing the delimitative aspect in Standard Chinese, in which one possible marker is the suffix 一下 *yí xià*. Therefore, the increasing frequency of the Cantonese suffix 一吓 *jat1 haa2* may be related to the ever-growing influence of the standard variety of Chinese.

The following example is also worth examining.

[25] 可能-件-嘢-係-假貨-，用-兩-吓-就-壞-咗。
    ho2 nang4-gin6-je5-hai6-gaa2 fo3-jung6-loeng5-haa2-zau6-waai4-zo2
    perhaps-CLF.DET-thing-to be-counterfeit-to use-two-DLM-at once-to break-PFV
    Perhaps it's a counterfeit. I used it for a while and it broke instantly.

In this case, the delimitative aspect was introduced by means of the suffix 兩吓 *loeng5 haa2*, which was probably coined under the influence of the spreading 一吓 *jat1 haa2*. It is thus a borrowing of a morpheme from Standard Chinese with a simultaneous substitution of the numeral 'one' for the numeral 'two', which, however, is already a typically Cantonese feature; in Standard Chinese any use of the numeral 'two' is non-productive in marking the delimitative aspect. This extension of the functioning of one morpheme to other morphemes within the same grammatical category is known to grammaticalisation theory as a process of intra-paradigmatic syncretism (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 160-165). It is important to note, however, that even if this process is observable in Cantonese, it is still at a nascent stage – the corpus records only two instances of the use of the 兩吓 *loeng5 haa2* suffix.

While describing the functioning of the delimitative aspect in Mandarin, Li and Thompson (1989: 232-236) list a series of restrictions on the types of verbs that can be marked by the delimitative. Their observations are also true for Cantonese, so they may be paraphrased here. Firstly, the delimitative aspect can mark only dynamic verbs. It is also ungrammatical to use the existential verb 有 *jau5* in the delimitative aspect. Another limitation is contained in the verb's implied volitionality. The delimitative aspect occurs only with those verbs that "under normal circumstances imply volition on the part of the subject" (Li and

Thompson 1989: 234). Thus, delimitativity does not mark such verbs as 蹎 *gwaan3* 'to fall over', 死 *sei2* 'to die', 走失 *zau2 sat1* 'to get lost', etc. The last restriction is that delimitatives do not occur in compound verbs with a clearly outlined result of an action, such as 打開 *daa2 hoi1* 'to open'. Moreover, it should be noted that the delimitative aspect rarely, if ever, marks negated predicates. Corpus on which this study is based presents no examples of clauses in which the delimitative aspect marker 吓 *haa2* and negation occur simultaneously.

In addition to the primary meaning of delimiting the predicate within a very short time frame, the delimitative aspect also serves to outline the temporal background of an utterance (topic time). In a situation where verb A, taking place within an indefinite time frame, has been interrupted by verb B, verb A will be modified by the delimitative. Such usage poses a significant difference from Standard Chinese, in which the same function is performed not by the delimitative aspect but by the continuous (Sun 2006: 71-72). However, according to Matthews and Yip (2011: 239-240), only reduplication and suffixation of the morpheme 吓 *haa2* are used to mark topic time, as shown in the example [26]. Other morphological processes are not applicable in expressing such a meaning.

[26] 食食-吓-諗-到-啦！
sik6 sik6-haa2-sam2-dou3-laa1
to eat~-DLM-to think-RES-SFP
I realised that while eating!

4.4. The progressive

The progressive aspect, in line with its imperfective character, implies that the verb is to be interpreted cursively, as an activity whose end point is not known. What is highlighted is how the verb progresses within the established time frame. According to Comrie's (1976: 25) classification, the progressive is one of the subtypes of the continuous, which is important in the Cantonese context, as the language differentiates between three separate continuous aspectual categories. Progressivity in the Cantonese context means interpreting the predicate as *being underway* within the given time frame; it is not a protracted, relatively unchanging state (as in the case of the continuous), but rather a dynamic action. A predicate marked by the progressive is to be understood as an action in progress at the point of reference, developing in that moment. This fact precludes the possibility of stative verbs being marked by this aspectual category (ibid.: 35).

Two morphemes indicate the progressive aspect, which may be used separately or form a parasynthesis, meaning that Cantonese possesses three productive morphological operations to express this particular aspectual value.

The first of these morphemes is the verbal suffix 緊 *gan2*. Some works (Zhang 1970; Zhang 1996) also provide an alternative graphic representation of this morpheme, namely 喫. Use of this suffix as a marker of the progressive aspect is shown in the following example.

[27] 我-講-緊-廣東-話。
     ngo5-gong2-gan2-gwong2 dung1-waa6
     1SG-to speak-PROG-Guangdong-language
     I'm speaking Cantonese right now.

The second morphological process used to mark the progressive is the prefixation of the prepositional phrase 喺度 *hai2 dou6* 'here; in this place'. Prefixing the predicate with this bi-morphemic prepositional phrase introduces a meaning identical to the suffixation of 緊 *gan2*, so the phrase becomes an aspectual marker and does not denote its primary deictic meaning.

[28] 大哥-同-四-個-細佬-喺度-食飯。
     daai6 go1-tung4-sei3-go3-sai3 lou2-hai2 dou6-sik6 faan6
     eldest brother-PREP-four-CLF-younger brother-PROG-to eat food
     The eldest brother is currently having a meal with his four younger
     brothers.

Example [29] below presents how the two said morphemes form a parasynthesis. From a theoretical point of view, such simultaneous use of two morphemes performing identical function in a single utterance may be viewed as redundant, but it is nonetheless productive in Cantonese. Thus, a progressive aspect can be marked in an utterance by the simultaneous prefixation of the prepositional phrase 喺度 *hai2 dou6* and the suffixation of 緊 *gan2*.

[29] 我-知道-你-喺度-痛-緊。
     ngo5-zi1 dou3-nei5-hai2 dou6-tung3-gan2
     1SG-to know-2SG-PROG-to be hurt-PROG
     I know you're hurting.

Given that in Standard Chinese the progressive aspect is also expressed by a preposition (在 *zài* 'at'), with a meaning identical as the Cantonese preposition 喺 *hai2*, Matthews and Yip (2011: 231) hypothesise that the Cantonese process of prefixing the verb with a morpheme which primarily functions as a preposition is in fact a calque from *putonghua*. Such a hypothesis, although highly plausible given the profound influence of Standard Chinese on Cantonese over the past two decades (Bauer and Matthews 2017: 169), still awaits its confirmation in diachronic studies. It should be borne in mind, however, that using locative expressions to introduce progressivity is a highly common phenomenon, supported by extensive quantitative research (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994: 128-133). In summary, the emergence of the Cantonese prefix 喺度 *hai2 dou6* may not necessarily be an effect of borrowing.

4.5. The continuous

On the aforementioned Comriean diagram, the continuous aspect is superordinate to the progressive. Therefore, the meaning introduced by the two aspects is similar, but the progressive is more specific. As stated above, the progressive aspect imposes a dynamic interpretation on the predicate – the action in progress develops, changes. The continuous, on the other hand, describes activities of a relatively unchanging and constant nature. For this reason, the continuous aspect will not necessarily require being used with non-stative verbs. The similarity of continuous and progressive aspects mentioned here has led some researchers to treat them as a single category (Gao 1980: 45-46). However, as other scholars have shown, marking the same verb with either the continuous or progressive aspect carries semantic differences, and so in this paper they are also treated as separate entities.

The continuous is introduced through the suffixation of the morpheme 住 *zyu6*, whose primary meaning is verbal: 'to live in; dwell'. In the case of polymorphemic verbs, the suffix behaves in accordance with the rules established in Section 4.1.

[30] 我-哋-成日-陪-住-佢。
    ngo5-dei2-sing4 jat6-pui4-zyu6-koei5
    1SG-PL-all day-to keep company-CONT-3SG
    We're keeping his company the entire day.

[31] 我-好-掛-住-你。
    ngo5-hou2-gwaa3-zyu6-nei5
    1SG-INTS-to miss someone-CONT-2SG
    I miss (lit. I'm missing) you a lot.

The fact that the continuous marks not dynamic, changing activities, but rather those that are extended in time, may be seen from the above examples. In [30], this fact is reflected by the adverb 成日 *sing4 yat6* 'all day', whereas in [31], the predicate is a static verb. These facts rule out the possibility of using the progressive in the above utterances. However, as some researchers note (Zhang 1970 and Zhang 1996), there do exist contexts in which the use of both continuous and progressive aspect is grammatical from a normative point of view. By virtue of such utterance pairs, the difference between continuous and progressive becomes clear, as in the following examples [32] and [33].[3]

[32] 戴-緊-眼鏡。
    daai3-gan2-ngaan5 geng2
    to wear-PROG-glasses
    To be putting on glasses.

---

[3] Extracted from Zhang (1970).

[33] 戴-住-眼鏡。

   daai3-zyu6-ngaan5 geng2

   to wear-CONT-glasses

   To be wearing glasses.

The progressive aspect in [32] dictates that the verb 'to wear' be read as a developing activity, and thus it must be understood as 'to put on'. On the other hand, the suffixation of the continuous aspect marker suggests an activity prolonged in time, so that wearing glasses is the state prevalent throughout, say, a whole given day. Note, however, that an utterance such as [33] does not apply to situations in which the subject would wear glasses every day for a very long period of time, e.g., as a result of a defective sight. In such situations, it would be more appropriate to mark the verb with the habitual aspect marker (See 4.8).

As Matthews and Yip (2011: 233) point out, there is a small group of verbs, which, when suffixed by 住 *zyu6*, change their primary meaning. The most frequent of these verbs is 諗 *sam2* 'to think', which, while marked by the continuous, changes the meaning to 'to intend; to plan':

[34] 我-諗-住-返-屋企。

   ngo5-sam2-zyu6-faan2-uk1 kei2

   1SG-to think-CONT-to return-home

   I plan to go back home.

4.6. The continuative

The continuative aspect is an imperfective continuous aspect. However, situating this aspect on Comrie's diagram is problematic, as this aspect can denote both progressive and non-progressive actions. A given verb X, modified by the continuative, is to be interpreted as 'continue to do X', 'keep on X-ing', with the X already being the current state. This means, therefore, that "the continuative viewpoint presupposes the prior initiation of a situation […] and focuses on the resumptive point and its continuative stage" (Xiao and McEnery 2004: 227).

The continuative aspect is introduced by means of a grammaticalised DVC 落去 *lok6 heoi3* 'to descend; fall down'. The verb of motion 去 *heoi3* was first grammaticalised to form a DVC, and then, as a result of reanalysis, this particular DVC became a productive marker of the continuative aspect. As a continuative aspect marker, the compound 落去 *lok6 heoi3* does not carry the semantic value of two separate verb morphemes, and it is never split while performing this function. Therefore, it should be treated as a single unit, i.e., as a bisyllabic bound morpheme. It functions as a suffix, being the sole means of introducing the described aspectual value in Cantonese.

[35] 陀螺-可-唔-可以-永久-轉-落去-唔-會-停？

   to4 lo4-ho2-m4-ho2 ji5-wing5 gau2-zyun2-lok6 hoei3-m4-wui5-ting4

spinning top-possible-NEG-possible-forever-to spin-CONV-NEG-AUX-to stop

Could the spinning top keep on spinning like that forever and don't stop?

Theoretically, the continuative aspect marker may be suffixed to mono-morphemic verbs only. Nevertheless, as Zhang (1970: 475) notes, class one compound verbs can be marked by the 落去 *lok6 heoi3* suffix. Doing so requires an elision of the incorporated object, so that the end result is a monomorphemic verb alone, as in the example [36], in which the initially used verb 嗌交 *aai3 gaau1* 'to argue' is elided to just 嗌 *aai3* when marked by the continuative.

[36]⁴你-哋-成日-嗌交-，如果-再-嗌-落去-，我-就-唔-客氣-嘅-囉！

> *nei5-dei2-sing4 jat6-aai3 gaau1-jyu4 gwo2-zoi3-aai3-lok6 heoi3-ngo5-zau6-m4-haak3 hei3-koi3-lo4*
>
> 2SG-PL-all day-to argue-CONJ-again-to argue-CONV-1SG-at once-NEG-polite-POSS-SFP
>
> You've been arguing the entire day. If this continues, I'm not going to be nice!

At the syntactic level, the occurrence of the continuative aspect also entails certain restrictions. If the continuative marker is suffixed to a transitive verb, then the object need be topicalised, as in [37].

[37] 呢-個-學生-，我-教-唔-落去。

> *ni1-go3-hok6 saang1-ngo5-gaau3-m4-lok6 heoi3*
>
> DEM-CLF-student-1SG-to teach-NEG-CONV
>
> I won't be teaching this student anymore.

Default Cantonese word order is SVO, so the object 學生 *hok6 saang1* 'student' should occupy the last syntactic position. However, the continuative aspect forced the topicalisation of this object, rendering an OSV-type utterance in [37].

4.7. The iterative

The meaning introduced by the iterative marker is that a given action is repeated at least once within a short interval. The specific number of repetitions of the activity described by this aspect is contextually determined or expressed by lexical means – the iterative aspect marker itself does not convey information about the specific number of times the verb is repeated, but only about the fact that it must have taken place more than once. A logical consequence of the repetitive nature of iterative aspect is that it can only mark repetitive verbs, i.e., primarily those that denote a physical action. The iterative is not used in predicates related to feelings, or those whose repetition is semantically impossible, such as 出世 *ceot1 sai3* 'to be born'.

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⁴ Extracted from Zhang (ibid.).

The repetitive nature of the iterative aspect may call to mind the habitual, which also implies a kind of repetition of actions (cf. below). Thus, a clear line should be drawn between habituality and iterativity, which can be brought down to two points. "Firstly, the mere repetition of a situation is not sufficient for that situation to be referred to by a specifically habitual (or, indeed, imperfective) form" (Comrie 1976: 27). Habituality requires a significant extension of the verb over time until it becomes customary, so that the situation described is true for every single occurrence of the activity during a certain stretch of time. Iterativity does not imply this customary nature. Secondly, habituality does not imply iterativity. On the contrary, a given utterance can be habitual without any repetitiveness to it, e.g., in the sentence 'A bank used to stand here', the existence of the bank building can be described as habitual (protracted in time and true for that entire segment of time), but not as an iterative.

The iterative aspect is marked by the verbal suffix 過 *gwo3*, which results in homonymy with the experiential aspect. This homonymy is not coincidental – both morphemes find their source in the verb 過 *gwo3* 'to pass; to go by', which, as a result of different grammaticalisation processes, found use as indicators of two different aspectual categories. Below utterances [38] and [39] exemplify the functioning of the iterative aspect in utterances taken from the corpus.

[38] 我-也-要-走-過-去。

    ngo5-jaa5-jiu3-zau2-gwo3-heoi3

    1SG-also-to have to/want to-to go-ITER-DIR

    I also have to/want to go again.

[39] 不過-，佢-只係-轉身-就-又再-瞓-過。

    bat1 gwo3-keoi5-zi2 hai6-zyun2 san1-zau6-jau6 zoi3-fan3-gwo3

    CONJ-3SG-only-to turn around-at once-again-to sleep-ITER

    However, he just turned around to the other side and fell asleep again.

Examples above suggest that the Cantonese iterative aspect cannot be interpreted as a perfective. In both examples, the speaker situates the utterance between successive repetitions of a given action, and therefore does not describe it as a bounded, punctual whole. The successive instances of this repetition are framed from an 'internal' perspective, which precludes a perfective.

4.8. The habitual

The habitual describes actions or states that have become customary, happening with certain regularity for a stretch of time long enough to be considered a rule. Utterances in which the activity described by the habitual cannot be logically extended over time, such as in the sentence 'Paul is always late for school', the iterative nature of being late is apparent; the activity expressed in the sentence as habitual consists of many single occurrences of being late over a long

stretch of time. The below examples [40]-[41] also reflect this fact. However, the adverb 'always' suggests that the sentence, despite assuming the iterative nature of the activity, should be interpreted as habitual – it is a valid state, a rule within the time period described. Different opinions can be found among researchers as to what habituality is. Comrie classifies it as an aspect of the imperfective type, while in another of his works he writes that "habitual meaning lies on the boundary of the three systems of tense, aspect, and mood" (Comrie 1985: 40). Dahl (1985: 96) writes that habitual may be described as a "major TMA [tense-mood-aspect] category", while Bache (1982: 61-62) argues why habituality should be understood in terms of *aktionsart*. However, the Cantonese habitual shows characteristics of an imperfective, and is furthermore expressed in this system through morphological operations. For these reasons, this paper refers to the habitual as an aspect.

The habitual is introduced by the 開 *hoi1* verbal suffix. As with the experiential and iterative, habitual aspect can only apply to verbs that are repeatable. Verbs that speak of singular events are never marked by the suffix 開 *hoi1*.

[40] 平時-做-開-功課-嘅-我 。。。
   ping4 si4-zou6-hoi1-ge3-ngo5
   usually-to do-HAB-homework-POSS-1SG
   Me, who usually does his homework, [...].

[41] 有-睇-開-我-個-blog-嘅-朋友-都-知道。
   jau5-tai2-hoi1-ngo5-go3-blog-ge3-pang4 jau5-dou1-zi1 dou3
   to have-to read-HAB-1SG-CLF-blog-POSS-friend-everything-to know
   Everyone who reads my blog regularly knows (this).

Matthews and Yip (2011: 242) suggest that the habitual aspect can also be introduced by the static verb 慣 *gwaan3* 'to get used to'. However, the examples given by the authors cast doubt on such an interpretation. In the author's opinion, a sequence V+慣 should rather be understood as an RVC, as in the following example.

[42] 喺-香港-住-慣-唔-慣-啊?
   hai2-hoeng1 gong2-zyu6-gwaan3-m4-gwaan3-aa3
   PREP-Hong Kong-to live-RES-NEG-RES-WH
   Have you gotten used to living in Hong Kong already?

4.9. The inchoative

The inchoative aspect indicates the initiation of an action or a state. Once initiated, the action or state denoted by the verb in the inchoative aspect continues, stretching into the future. The semantic focus of this aspect therefore rests on the very point of initiation, but it must be treated as an imperfective, due

to the presupposition of continued, unbounded duration of a given state or action it marks.

Similarly to the continuative, the inchoative is introduced by a marker identical to a DVC. The specific DVC in question is 起上嚟 *hei2 soeng5 lai4* 'to stand up', often shortened to 起嚟 *hei2 lai4* (Kwok 1971: 100). In the case of intransitive verbs, the marker functions invariably as a verbal suffix, as presented below in [43].

[43] 终于-忍-唔-住-痛哭-起嚟。

    zung1 jyu1-jan2-m4-zyu6-tung3 huk1-hei2 lai4

    at last-to endure-POT.NEG-RES-to wail-INCH

    At last he couldn't endure it anymore and started crying bitterly.

Transitive verbs, on the other hand, provide interpretative problems when analysing the functioning of the inchoative aspect, as they call into question the morphological nature of the entire category. It is so because whenever a verb requires an object, the suffix 起(上)嚟 *hei2 (soeng5) lai4* becomes disintegrated into two parts. The first syllable, 起 *hei2*, remains a verbal suffix. The other morphemes, (上)嚟 (*soeng5*) *lai4*, are moved behind the object. The same applies to compound verbs of the first class. This fact could well be the evidence that the inchoative aspect is not expressed morphologically, but through periphrastic constructions. The following utterances [44] and [45] presents such a 'disintegrated' use of the inchoative aspect marker in utterances with transitive verbs.

[44] 天空-忽然-落-起-雨-上嚟。

    tin1 hung1-fat1 jin4-lok6-hei2-jyu5-soeng5 lai4

    sky-suddenly-to rain (1)-INCH (1)-to rain (2)-INCH (2)

    It suddenly started to rain.

[45] 走-起-路-嚟-一點-聲音-都-冇。

    zau2-hei2-lou6-lai4-jat1 dim2-sing1 jam1-dou1-mou5

    to go by foot (1)-INCH (1)-to go by foot (2)-INCH (2)-a little-sound-everything-to not have

    When I started walking, I couldn't hear a sound.

Given that etymologically the inchoative marker is a DVC, one may notice that its structure remained unchanged after its meaning was extended to mark the inchoative aspect, contrary to what was observed with the continuative. As the marker 起(上)嚟 *hei2* (*soeng5*) *lai4* is split into two elements, it is impossible to treat it as a single polysyllabic morpheme. On the other hand, however, the meaning introduced by these morphemes is purely aspectual. In none of the cited examples do the morphemes described here indicate a DVC, as they do in example [46]:

[46] 我-好-不-容易-才-爬-起-床-嚟-穿-上-衣服。

    ngo5-hou2-bat1-jung4 ji6-coi4-paa4-hei2-cong4-lai4-cyun1-soeng5-ji1 fuk6

1SG-INTS-NEG-easy-only-get up-DIR (1)-bed-DIR (2)-to put on-DIR-clothes

 With much difficulty, I finally got up from bed and put my clothes on.

How, then, should the inchoative be described in Cantonese? The answer to that question may have been indirectly provided in the following words:

> Morphological forms expressing aspectual meanings in Chinese developed at divergent stages of evolution of the language and this development is still under way […]. Those that developed earlier, such as *-zhe*, *-le* and *-guo*, have been fully grammaticalised and have become dedicated aspect markers. Some others, though they have gradually begun to denote aspectual meanings, still keep their lexical meanings to a great extent. [Inchoative] and [continuative] […] belong to this latter category. (Xiao and McEnery 2004: 227)

These words refer to aspectual markers of Standard Chinese, but due to convergent development of aspectual categories in *putonghua* and Cantonese, they may be of use here as well. 起(上)嚟 *hei2* (*soeng5*) *lai4* is precisely such a morphological form that has gradually begun to denote an aspectual meaning. It is not a fully developed, morphological marker of the inchoative. However, if the words quoted above are to be believed, it is developing in this direction exactly, following in the footsteps of other aspectual markers that have also undergone a process of morphologisation from lexical morphemes to bound grammatical morphemes functioning as affixes.

Nevertheless, this study calls for some kind of a synchronic categorisation of the inchoative. As illustrated in the examples, the inchoative aspect is expressed by the V+起+(O)+(上)嚟 construction. The morpheme 起 *hei2* can undoubtedly be classified as a grammatical verbal suffix. The second morpheme, whether mono- or bisyllabic, functions as a postposition of the complement, which could also be interpreted as a suffix in in the case of class one compound verbs, where the complement is *de facto* part of the verb. Such a suffix is, like 起 *hei2*, a grammatical morpheme, as it does not introduce any lexical meaning. In other instances, however, the hypothesis that the inchoative is a morphological aspect is difficult to defend. Even if the morphologisation of the inchoative marker is indeed underway, it appears that contemporaneously there is no solid ground to treat the inchoative as a morphological aspect, but rather that it is still a periphrastic, analytical construction.

5. Summary

At the outset of the summary, it is imperative that the author acknowledges the limitations of the presented study. First and foremost, the paper is of cursory, introductory nature, as an in-depth, detailed study of each of the numerous

Cantonese aspects would require a much more extensive publication. Problems that are worthy of a more thorough investigation (in the author's opinion) were briefly discussed here in sections 3 and 4.9. What those particular sections stress is the undergoing grammaticalisation processes that may be observed in Cantonese, which, in a grand scheme of things, could contribute to analyses of how aspectual morphemes develop in both Cantonese and other languages of the Sinitic language family. What is also worthy of researchers' attention and has only been briefly mentioned here is the influence of the Standard Chinese aspectual system on the Cantonese one. It is evident that the spreading popularity of the standard variety of Chinese has its bearing on other varieties, as evidenced here by the delimitative aspect and (hypothetically) the progressive. It is also the author's sincere hope that the presented paper would contribute to the studies of grammatical systems of Chinese languages other than Mandarin, as these were largely neglected in the previous decades. Additionally, analysing the functioning of the Cantonese aspects on the basis of a larger set of exemplary sentences could render results that would likely bring about refinements to this particular typology. As a concluding point, below the reader may find a table which juxtaposes all the aspects, their formal markers, and meaning introduced by them, discussed on the previous pages. The inchoative aspect has been omitted from the table due to its ambiguous status.

Tableau 1: Juxtaposition of the Cantonese aspects			
	Name of the aspect	**Primary function**	**Formal marker(s)**
Perfective aspects	Perfective simple	• Denoting perfectivity without any additional meanings attached	• 咗 *zo2* • V2s of RVCs (an open class) • 冇 *mou2*/未 *mei6* in negated sentences • Tonemic change
	Experiential	• Denoting experience	• 過 *gwo3* • 冇 *mou2*/未 *mei6* in negated sentences
	Delimitative	• Delimiting an action within a very short time frame • Topic time	• 吓 *haa2* • Predicate's reduplication + 吓 *haa2* • Infixation of a numeral 一 *jat1* or 兩 *loeng5* • 一吓 *jat1 haa2* • Predicate's reduplication + tonemic change

Tableau 1. cont.

	Name of the aspect	Primary function	Formal marker(s)
Imperfective aspects	Progressive	• Denoting a progressive, dynamic change	• 緊/嗰 *gan2* • 喺度 *hai2 dou6*
	Continuous	• Denoting an ongoing, but relatively unchanging state	• 住 *zyu6*
	Continuative	• Continuation of a given state or process, which continues into an unspecified future	• 落去 *lok6 heoi3*
	Iterative	• Repetition of a given action	• 過 *gwo3*
	Habitual	• Habituality	• 開 *hoi1*

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