Tense/Aspect Markers

in Mandarin and Xiang Dialects, and Their Contact

by
Minglang Zhou

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Tense/Aspect markers in Mandarin and Xiang dialects, and their contact*

Minglang Zhou
University of Colorado at Boulder

0. Introduction

The differences among Chinese dialects may be so little that speakers of two dialects have no difficulties in understanding each other or may be so large that mutual intelligibility does not exist at all between speakers of two dialects. However, educated Chinese dialect speakers have used the "same" written language for about two thousand years, no matter what dialects they speak. For this obvious reason, studies in traditional Chinese philology as well as in modern Chinese linguistics generally focus on the phonological differences among Chinese dialects, whereas little attention is paid to the syntactic differences among those dialects (cf. Zhan 1993).

To explore syntactic differences among Chinese dialects and their influence on each other, this paper examines the similarities and differences in tense/aspect markers between Mandarin (普通話) and Xiang dialects (湘語), to show that the syntactic differences regarding tense/aspect markers may be as large as those between two different languages, and to evaluate the use of tense/aspect markers in Mandarin by Xiang speakers, with the consideration that all educated Xiang speakers speak Mandarin sometimes and write in Mandarin at all times.

This paper is organized in five sections. First, the diachronic relationship between Mandarin and Xiang dialects is briefly reviewed. Secondly, previous studies of tense/aspect system in Mandarin Chinese are also reviewed as the foundation for comparison. Thirdly, Xiang tense/aspect markers are presented in detail in comparison to those in Mandarin. Fourthly, Xiang speakers' use of tense/aspect markers is discussed in the context of dialect contact. The paper will conclude with some observations and implications.

1. Historical relationship between Mandarin and Xiang

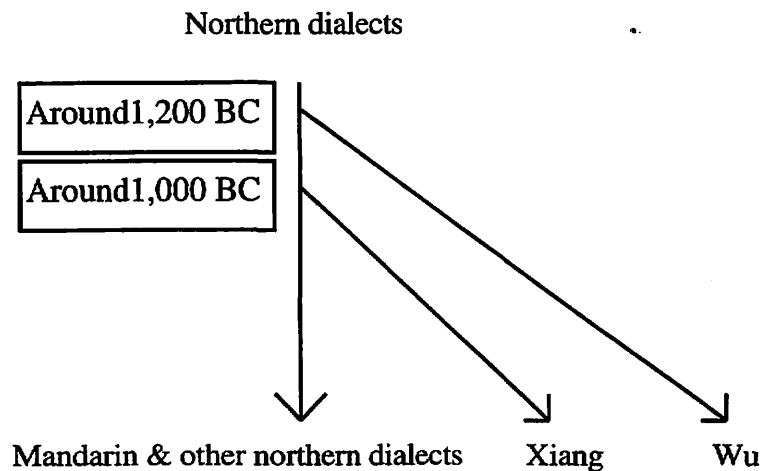Since the thirties of this century when modern linguistic study of dialects started in China,

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Chinese dialects have been classified into five to nine major branches (Chao 1969, Wang 1950, Zhan 1993). Xiang is always considered one of the major dialects in each classification, except in Wang's earlier classification into five major dialects, in which Xiang was considered a subcategory of Guanhua dialect (官話). These classifications recognize not only the linguistic status of Xiang dialect, but also its close relationship with Northern dialects, of which Mandarin is a member.

Xiang is believed to be one of the two oldest Chinese dialects (cf. Zhou & You 1986). When northern Chinese started to migrate from Northern China toward Southern China about three thousand years ago, two dialects consequently emerged. The first one is Wu dialect (吳語), which is said to have developed after two sons, the eldest and the youngest, of the head (Zhou Taiwang) of the Zhou tribe led the migration of some members from the area, now called Shanxi (陝西), to the area of today's Suzhou (蘇州) and Wuxi (無錫) in about the twelfth century BC. The second one is Xiang which is thought to have evolved from the ancient Chu dialect (古楚語). The Chu tribe migrated from the area of present Henan (河南) to the area of current Hubei (湖北) in about the eleventh century BC, and soon expanded to the area belonging to today's Hunan (湖南). The development of these two earliest Chinese dialects may be graphically illustrated as in (1)

(1) The Development of the Old Xiang Dialect

Northern dialects

| Around1,200 BC |
| Around1,000 BC |

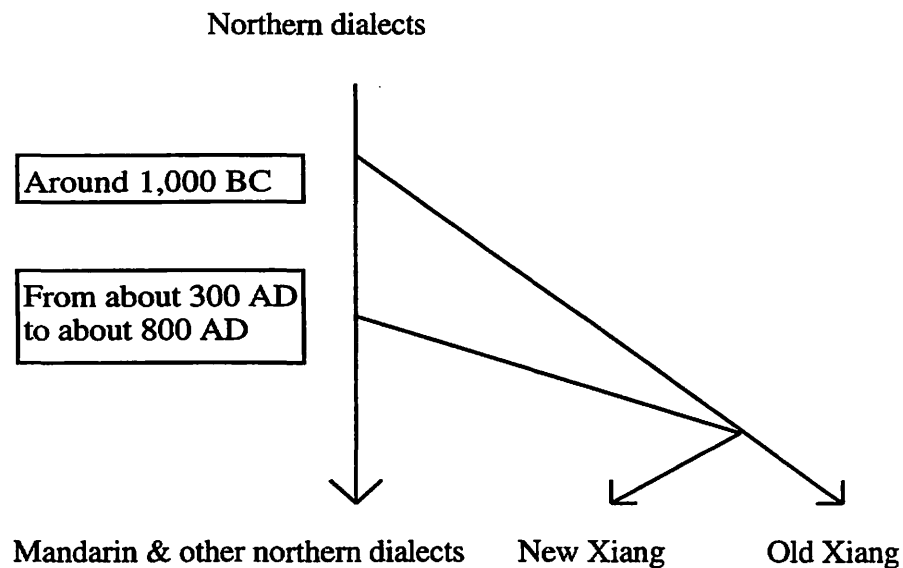Mandarin & other northern dialects   Xiang   Wu

It is clear that the emergence of Xiang dialect was the consequence of northern Chinese migration to the south. Similarly, the development of Xiang dialect was pushed further by migration. About one thousand and three hundred years later at the end of West Jin Dynasty, around 300 AD,

2

another wave of migration rolled from Northern China towards Southern China, reaching Hunan, Jiangxi, Guizhou and Sichuan. This first great migration created the bases for New Xiang dialect (新湘語), Southwestern Guanhua dialect (西南官話) and Gan dialect (贛語). From 755 to 763 AD, during the well-known An & Shi Rebellion, the second great wave of migration from the north pushed deep into Hunan and Jiangxi, reinforcing New Xiang dialect and leading to the complete emergence of Gan dialect. These two waves of migration brought northern dialects into direct contact with Old Xiang dialect (老湘語), resulting in a New Xiang dialect zone between the northern dialects and Old Xiang dialect. Therefore, we today find northern dialects or Guanhua north and northwest of Lake Dongting, as represented by Changde dialect (常德話), New Xiang dialect south of Lake Dongting, as represented by Changsha dialect (長沙話), and Old Xiang dialects in Central and Southwestern Hunan, as represented by Loudi dialect (婁底話). The latest development of Xiang dialects is graphically illustrated in (2),

(2) The Development of New and Old Xiang Dialects

Northern dialects

Around 1,000 BC

From about 300 AD
to about 800 AD

Mandarin & other northern dialects   New Xiang   Old Xiang

There are many phonological differences and some syntactic differences between New Xiang dialect and Old Xiang dialect. However, the current study of the similarities and differences in tense/aspect markers between Mandarin and Xiang focuses on those between New Xiang, as represented by Changsha dialect, and Mandarin.

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2. A review of tense/aspect markers in Mandarin

There are five tense/aspect markers in Mandarin, namely *le* (了), *zai* (在), *zhe* (著), *guo* (過) and verb reduplication (cf. Chao 1968, Li & Thompson 1981, Smith 1991, Zhou 1993b). Tense and aspect are semantically and temporally different notions. The former signifies the relationship between a linear reference time in relation to the time of utterance and the event denoted by the verb. The latter is about the temporal structure of the event itself. However, the use of slash between the two terms in this paper does not mean that no distinction is made in categorizing these markers, but that some markers may have dual functions in marking tense and aspect (Zhou 1993b). The markers will be reviewed in three categories: the perfective, the imperfective, and the delimitative. Each marker will be given a term according to its temporal functions so that comparisons may be more conveniently made between Mandarin and Xiang.

In the category of the perfective markers in Mandarin, there are morphologically two markers, *le* and *guo*. Syntactically, there are two *le*'s: a verbal *le* and a sentential *le*, where the former is suffixed to a verb, while the latter is placed at the end of a sentence. Let's look at the verbal *le* first. There is no controversy that the verbal *le* is a perfective marker, as illustrated in (3) (Chao 1968, Li & Thompson 1981, Smith 1991, Zhou 1993b).

(3) a. Míngtiān zuò le zuòyè,   Zhāng Sān zài qù kàn diànyǐng.
     Tomorrow do Asp. assignment John   then go watch movie
     Tomorrow, John will go to watch a movie after having finished his assignments.
   b. Zuótiān zuò le zuòyè,   Zhāng Sān cái qù kàn diànyǐng.
     Yesterday do Asp. assignment John   then go watch movie
     Yesterday, John went to watch a movie only after having finished his assignments.

In (3), *le* clearly signifies the completion of doing assignments before the following action, regardless of the time frame within which those two actions take place. In the temporal function in (3), *le* encodes the completion of an action/activity in relation to another action/activity. As a perfective marker, the verbal *le* is used independently of deictical time, that is, time in relation to the time of utterance. Thus, *le* in (3) is called "perfective" *le*.

Previous studies (cf. Li &Thompson 1981, Smith 1991) seem to ignore the function of the verbal *le* as a tense marker, as shown in (4) below.

(4) a. Zuótiān, Zhāng Sān zuò **le**   zuòyè.

       Yesterday John   do Asp/Tns. assignment

       Yesterday John did his assignments.

   b. Jīntiān, Zhāng Sān zuò **le**   zuòyè.

       Today John   do Asp/Tns. assignment

       Today John did his assignments.

   c. ?Míngtiān, Zhāng Sān zuò **le**   zuòyè.

       Tomorrow John   do Asp/Tns. assignment

       ?Tomorrow, John did his assignments.

(4) demonstrates without doubt that the Chinese verbal *le* behaves exactly like the English past tense marker in co-occurrence with time frames as represented by temporal adverbials. Both the Chinese verbal *le* and the English past can occur with the time frame of the past and the present, as witnessed in (4a) and (4b), but can not occur with the time frame of the future, as in (4c). The time frame of the present contains the past, whereas the time frame of the future does not contain the past (cf. Binnick 1991). In (4), the Chinese verbal *le* marks both the completion of an action/ activity and the time frame within which it takes place, as the English past does (cf. Comrie 1985). Thus, the verbal *le* in (4) is termed "past tense" *le* for the purpose of comparison in this study.

The sentential *le* seems to be more straightforward than the verbal *le*. The sentential *le* relates, in terms of consequences, the denotation of a verb to a reference time, which is either signified by the utterance time, as in (5a), or by a time adverbial, as in (5b).

(5) a. Zhāng Sān qù xuéxiào **le**.

       John   go school Asp.

       John has gone to the school (already).

   b. Wǎnshàng, Zhāng Sān qù xuéxiào **le**.

       Evening John   go school Asp.

       Last evening, John went/had gone to the school (already).

In (5a), *le* relates a past action/activity to the time of utterance, while in (5b), it relates a past action/activity to the time represented by the temporal adverbial. This is what Li and Thompson

have termed "Current Relevant State" (1981:240). What is related is the consequence of that past action/activity with the time frame either encoded by the utterance time, as in (5a), or by a time adverbial, as in (5b). In the case of (5a), the addressee is informed that John is not with him/her at the time of utterance, whereas the addressee is informed that John was not with him/her at the time signified by the temporal adverbial.

The sentential *le* may also co-occur with the verbal *le* to indicate that an action/activity has been going on from the past up to the time of utterance or to the time signified in the utterance, and may continue, as in (6), or has developed to a certain degree to the time of utterance or time signified, as in (7).

(6) a. Zhāng Sān kàn shū kān **le** sān běn **le**.

John read book read Asp.three MW Asp.

John has read three books (and is still reading).

b. Dào zuótiān wǎnshàng, Zhāng Sān kàn shū kàn **le** sān běn **le**.

Up to yesterday evening John read book read Asp.three MW Asp.

Up to last evening, John had read three books (and was still reading).

(7) a. Zhāng Sān kàn **le** sān běn shū **le**.

John read Asp.three MW book Asp.

John has already read three books.

b. Dào zuótiān wǎnshàng, Zhāng Sān kàn **le** sān běn shū **le**.

Up to yesterday evening John read Asp.three MW book Asp.

Up to last evening, John had already read three books.

In a sense, the sentential *le* is like the English present perfect in that it relates a previous action/ activity to a larger time frame (cf. Zhou 1993b). The difference is that the English present perfect only relates it to a time frame including the utterance time, while the Chinese sentential *le* relates it to both the time frame including the utterance time and the time frame including any time signified in the context. For the stated reason, the sentential *le* is termed "the perfect *le*" in this study.

In the perfective category, the second marker is *guo*, which is called "indefinite past" (Chao 1968:251) or "experiential aspect" (Li & Thompson 1981:226). The major difference between *guo* and *le* lies in that the former signifies that there is temporal gap between the stated action/activity

and the reference time, as evidenced in the minimal pair in (8).

(8) a. Zhāng Sān (jīntiān) qù **le** xuéxiào, kěnéng hái zài xuéxiào.

      John   (today) go Asp. school probably still in school

      John went/ has gone to school (today), and may be still at school.

    b. Zhāng Sān (jīntiān) qù **guo** xuéxiào, ? kěnéng hái zài xuéxiào.

      John   (today) go Asp. School   probably still in school.

      John has been to school (today), and ? may be still at school.

The English translations clearly show the difference between *guo* and *le*. With *le*, (7a) indicates that John may be still in the school at the time of utterance. However, with *guo*, (7b) implies that John is not in the school anymore at the time of utterance, though he was there once before the time of utterance. What *guo* signifies seems to be a gap between the stated action/activity and the time of utterance or time signified in the context. The term "experiential aspect" is still used here.

    In the category of the imperfective, there are two markers, *zai* and *zhe*, in Mandarin. *Zai* and *zhe* are better discussed as a minimal pair. Li & Thompson (1981:217) classify both *zai* and *zhe* as durative aspect markers, while Smith (1991: 357-363) considers *zai* as a progressive marker and *zhe* as a stative imperfective marker. There are definitely differences between *zai* and *zhe*, in addition to their syntactic positions, as (9) demonstrates.

(9) a. Zhāng Sān **zai** kàn yì běn shū.

      John   Asp. read one MW book

      John is reading a book.

    b. Zhuō shàng fàng **zhe/*zai** yì běn shū.

      Desk on place Asp.   one MW book

      A book is (placed) on the desk.

    c. Zhāng Sān tǎng **zhe/*zai** **zai/*zhe** kàn shū.

      John   lie Asp.   Asp.   read book.

      John is reading a book while lying there.

The marker *zhe* either marks a state, as in (9b), or the duration of an action/activity in a subordinate

clause in contrast to that in the main clause, as in (9c). On the other hand, *zai* signifies an ongoing action/activity in relation to a reference time, either the utterance time or contextualized time, as in (9a) and (10). They are not interchangeable. For the convenience of comparison, I prefer to call *zhe* as "durative (aspect) marker" and *zai* as "imperfective (aspect) marker" in this paper.

In the category of delimitative aspect, there is only one marker in the form of verb reduplication in Mandarin, though there may be lexical ways to express the meaning. In Mandarin, verb reduplication has a number of functions and is constrained by semantic, conceptual and phonological factors (cf. Zhou 1993a). With regard to verbal aspect, verb reduplication may mark delimitative aspect, but is not limited to delimitative aspect. Some verbs may be reduplicated in AABB pattern to signify amplificative aspect, as in (10).

(10) a. Zhāng Sān **xiuxiubūbū**, máng le   yì zhěng tiān. (AABB)

John   repair-repair,   busy Asp. A whole day

John repaired and repaired, and was busy for a whole day.

b. Jī   gè   háizi   **dǎdǎ   nàonào**   le   yí   gè   wǎnshàng. (AABB)

Some MW children play-play make-make noise Asp. one MW evening.

Several children played nosily for a whole evening.

Only verbs of activity and accomplishment may be reduplicated in AA, AAB and ABAB patterns to mark delimitative aspect, as in (11) (cf. Vendler 1957, 1967).

(11) a. Zhāng Sān yào **kànkan** shū. (AA)

John   want read-read book.

John will read a book for a short while.

b. Zhāng Sān **shuì** le   **shui jiào**. (AAB)

John   sleep Asp. sleep sleep.

John slept for a short while.

c. Qīng Zhāng Sān **jièshao jièshao** jī   gè   péngyǒu. (ABAB)

Ask John   introduce-introduce some MW friend.

Ask John to (briefly) introduce some friends.

It is noticed that delimitative aspect and amplificative aspect have completely different phonological

patterns in reduplication. The former has SW (strong and weak) tonal values, as in (11), while the latter has SS (strong and strong) tonal values, as in (10). They are highly iconic (Zhou 1993a).

In the above review, tense/aspect markers in Mandarin are classified into three categories: the perfective, the imperfective, and the delimitative. The first category has a perfective *le*, a past tense *le*, a perfect *le*, and an experiential *guo*. The second category has a durative *zhe* and an imperfective *zai*. The last category has a delimitative verb reduplication. These categories and terms will serve as the basis for the comparison of tense/aspect markers in Mandarin and Xiang.

3. Tense/Aspect markers in Xiang

It is difficult to say how many tense/aspect markers there are in Xiang, since some of them may have more than one function in marking tense and aspect. Morphologically speaking, there are eight markers: *da* (哒), *ga* (咖), *gada* (咖哒), *ji* (起), *zai(goli)* (在这里), *can* (餐), and *(da)zhe* (哒着) and *kelai* (去来) (cf. Li *et al* 1993). I will examine these markers in comparison to the corresponding categories in Mandarin.

In the category of the perfective markers, there are four markers, *da*, *ga*, *gada*, and *kelai*, which temporally function respectively as the past tense *le*, the perfective *le*, the perfect *le* and experiential *guo* in Mandarin. Let us look at the past tense *da* in a minimal pair, where *da* can not grammatically co-occur with a future time frame, as in (12b), though it goes grammatically with time frames containing the past, as in (12a).

(12) a. Zhan1 San1 zo2ri2zi/jin1ri2zi kan5 **da** yi2 ben3 xu1.[1]

John　　　　yesterday today　read Asp. one MW book
John read a book yesterday/today.

b. ?Zhan1 San1 min2ri2zi kan5 **da** yi2 ben3 xu1.

John　　　　tomorrow read Asp. one MW book
?John read a book tomorrow.

The marker *da* in Xiang has the same co-occurrence behavior, with regard to time frames, as the Mandarin past tense *le* and the English past tense, as shown in (4) above. However, *da* in Xiang

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1 Xiang has six tones, which are represented by numbers in this paper.

can not be so used, though *le* in Mandarin may be, to encode the perfective, as contrasted in (13).

(13) a. Zhan1 San1kan5 **ga/*da** xu1, cai2 ke5 xio2xiau5.

     John   read Asp.   book then go school.

     John went to the school after he (had) read the book.

  b. Zhāng Sān kàn **le**   shū,   cái qù xuéxiào.

     John   read Asp. book, then go school

     John went to the school after he (had) read the book.

Corresponding to the perfective *le* in Mandarin, the perfective is encoded by the marker *ga* in Xiang, which is used to signify the completion of an action/activity before another event or time, regardless of the deictical time frames (the past, the present, or the future) as in (14).

(14) a. Zo2ri2zi Zhan1 San1kan5 **ga** xu1, cai2 ke5 xio2xiau5.

     Yesterday John   read Asp. book then go school.

     Yesterday, John went to the school after he (had) read the book.

  b. Jin1ri2zi Zhan1 San1kan5 **ga** xu1, zai5 ke5 xio2xiau5.

     Today   John   read Asp. book then go school.

     Today, John will go to the school after he (have read/) reads the book.

In comparison to the Mandarin perfect *le*, *gada* in Xiang has similar functions in relation to the time frame specified by the context or containing the time of utterance, as in (15), where *gada* can be syntactically placed in three different positions in a sentence without any variation in meaning.

(15) a. Zhan1 San1 kan5 **ga** yi2 ben3 xu1 **da**.

     John   read Asp. one MW book Asp.

     John has/had already read a book (up to the time of . . .).

  b. a. Zhan1 San1 kan5 **gada** yi2 ben3 xu1.

     John   read Asp. one MW book.

     John has/had already read a book (up to the time of . . .).

When there is an object, *gada* can be discontinuous, being separated by the object, as in (15a), or go as a whole between the verb and the object, as in (15b). However, *gada* in Xiang differs from the perfect *le* in Mandarin in that it does not signify the inchoative aspect. In Xiang, *da* is used, instead, to signify the inchoative aspect, as compared with the Mandarin perfect *le* in (16).

(16) a. Zhang San kan shu   **le**.
　　　　John　　read book Asp.
　　　　John began to read a book.
　　b. Zhan1 San1 kan5 xu1 **da**.
　　　　John　　　read book Asp.
　　　　John began to read a book.

Semantically and syntactically, the marker *da* in (16b) is different from the *da* as the past tense marker in (12). Given the usage in (15) and (16), we may say there is a perfect aspect marker and an inchoative aspect marker in Xiang for the double functions of the perfect *le* in Mandarin.

The last marker in the perfective category in Xiang is the experiential aspect marker *kelai*, which is syntactically located at the end of a sentence, as shown in (17).

(17) a. Zhan1 San1 kan5 go2 ben1 xu1 kelai.
　　　　John　　read this　MW book Asp.
　　　　John once read this book.
　　b. Zhan1 San1 ke5 xio2xiau5 kelai.
　　　　John　　　go school　　Asp.
　　　　John has been to the school.

In (17), like its counterpart *le* in Mandarin, *kelai* signifies a temporal gap between the time of the action/activity and the time of utterance or time specified in the context.

The comparison of the perfective markers in both dialects is summarized in (18) below, which shows that in Xiang perfective and perfect aspect markers are rich and well developed in terms of their numbers and distinctive temporal functions, as compared with those in Mandarin.

So far as the category of durative aspect markers is concerned, in contrast to the progressive aspect marker (*zheng*)*zai* and the durative aspect marker *zhe* in Mandarin, there are

(18) Mandarin and Xiang Perfective and Perfect Aspect/Tense Markers in Comparison

Cate. Dial.	Mandarin	Xiang
Past tense	*le*	*da*
Perfective	*le*	*ga*
Perfect	*le*	*gada, da*
Experiential	*guo*	*kelai*

three durative aspect markers, *da*, *ji* and *can*, and one progressive marker, *zai(goli)* in Xiang. These markers have completely different functions, and are generally used complementarily to each other, rather than interchangeably, as the following examples with each marker will demonstrate. The marker *da* is used to signify the durative aspect with stative verbs, as shown in (19).

(19) a. Zuo2 shan4 fan5 **da** yi2 ben3 xu1.

       Desk on place Asp. one MW book.

       A book is (placed) on the desk.

  b. Zhan1 San1 zai4 juan2 shan4 tan1 **da**.

       John in bed on lie Asp.

       John is lying on a bed.

In Xiang, *da* in (19) is very similar to the Mandarin *zhe* in function in this context. On the other hand, the aspect marker *ji* signifies a continuation of an action/activity as a stative situation or as the background condition. Thus, it is always used in subordinate clauses only, as in (20).

(20) a. Zhan1 San1 da2 **ji** kou3sau4 zou3lou4.

       John make Asp. whistle walk

       John walked while whistling.

  b. Zhan1 San1 chuan1 **ji** sin1 yi1 shan4 xio2.

       John wear Asp. new cloth attend school

       John goes to school, wearing new clothing.

In (20), *ji* is close to the function of Mandarin *zhe*, but may encode actions/activities as a background condition instead. The marker *can* is complementary to *ji* in that it signifies (with verb reduplication) a lively process of an action/activity as such and as the background condition. It is also used in subordinate clauses only.

(21) a. Zhan1 San1 kan5 **can** (kan5 **can**) ku2 gada.
      John   watch Asp. watch Asp. cry Asp.
      John cried while watching.
    b. Zhan1 San1 qia2 **can** (qia2 **can**) da2 ji   kou3sau4 lai   da
      John   eat Asp. eat Asp. make Asp. whistle Asp. Asp.
      John began to whistle when he was eating.

The examples in (19), (20) and (21) show that in Xiang *da*, *ji* and *can* are used in contexts where *zhe* is used in Mandarin. However, except for *da*, the two aspect markers *ji* and *can* in Xiang encode more aspect meanings, such as state, stative action/activity and active action/activity, than the Mandarin durative marker does.

    The progressive marker, *zai(goli)*, is the closest aspect marker in Xiang to the Mandarin progressive marker (*zheng)zai* in terms of temporal functions and morphology. Morphologically, *goli* in *zai(goli)* is optional, as *zheng* in (*zheng)zai* is, depending on the emphasis and contexts. With regard to their temporal functions, both *zai(goli)* and (*zheng)zai* signify an action/activity in progress in relation to the time of utterance or specified in the context, as illustrated in Xiang in (22a) and in Mandarin in (22b) respectively.

(22) a. Zhan1 San1 zai4(go2li) kan5 dien5shi5
      John   Asp.   watch TV.
      John is/was watching TV (right now).
    b. Zhang San (zheng)zai kan dianshi.
      John   Asp.   watch TV.
      John is/was watching TV (right now).

There is basically no difference between *zai(goli)* (在这里) in Xiang and (*zheng)zai* (正在) in Mandarin, as shown in (22), where they can be interpreted as past or present, depending on the

context or frame time.

The similarities and differences between Mandarin and Xiang in durative and progressive aspect/tense markers are summarized in (23).

(23) Comparison of Imperfective Makers in Mandarin and Xiang

Cate.　　　Dial.	Mandarin	Xiang
Progressive	*(zheng)zai*	*zai(goli)*
Durative as state	*zhe*	*da*
Durative as stative	*?zhe*	*ji*
Durative as action	*?zhe*	*can*

(23) illustrates that durative aspect markers in Xiang distinguish among the durative as state, the durative as stative, and the durative as active, whereas no such distinction is marked in Mandarin, since there is only one durative marker in Mandarin.

When the delimitative aspect is compared, we find three makers, verb reduplication, *can* and *(da)zhe* in Xiang, whereas there is just one, namely, verb reduplication, in Mandarin.

Verb reduplication as delimitative aspect in Xiang follows the patterns, AA, AAB, and ABAB, in Mandarin, as shown in (24).

(24) a. Zhan1 San1 **kan5kan** dien5shi4　　　(AA)
　　　　John　　　watch-watch TV.
　　　　John watches TV briefly.

　　 b. Zhan1 San1**kuen5kuen** gau4.　　　(AAB)
　　　　John　　　sleep-sleep sleep.
　　　　John sleeps briefly.

　　 c. Zhan1 San sian1 **ren5de ren5de** ni3men.　(ABAB)
　　　　John　　　want know-know　　you
　　　　John wants to meet you briefly.

The difference between Xiang and Mandarin with regard to delimitative aspect is found in the two markers, *can* and (*da*)*zhe*. The delimitative signified by verb reduplication in Xiang and Mandarin is absolutely short in its duration. However, the delimitative marked by *can* and (*da*)*zhe* in Xiang is relatively short in its duration. For example, *can* signifies the briefness of an action/activity in relation to another event, as in (25).

(25) a. Zhan1 San1 qia2 **can** fan3, you2 kan5 dien5shi4.

   John   eat Asp. meal then watch TV

   John ate for a while, and then (before he finished) watched TV.

 b. Go2 ben1 xu1, Zhan1 San1 kan5 **can**, you2 kan4 la5 ben1.

   This MW book John read Asp. then read that MW

   This book, John read it briefly, and then (before he finished it) read that one too.

The marker *can* is only used to mark the delimitative aspect of the first of at least two clauses in coordination. *Can* indicates that the first action/activity is briefly carried out, and is subsequently abandoned for the action/activity denoted by the second clause. On the other hand, the marker (*da*)*zhe* in Xiang signifies a briefness, which may be on a trial basis, in relation to the whole course of the action/activity, as in (26).

(26) a. Zhan1 San1 zai3 go2li ju3 yi2 ya4 **zhe**.

   John   in here live one night Asp.

   John would stay here for a night temporarily.

 b. Go2 ben1 xu1, Zhan1 San1 ba ni3 kan5 (**da**)**zhe**.

   This MW book John give you read Asp.

   As for this book, John will let you read it for a while.

The marker *zhe* goes with an intransitive verb, as in (26a), and *dazhe* occurs in a clause with a transitive verb. Syntactically, both *zhe* and (*da*)*zhe* occur at the end of a clause.

   The similarities and differences between delimitative aspect in Xiang and Mandarin are briefly summarized in (27), which shows that Xiang differs from Mandarin in that the former has *zhe* and *dazhe* which encode delimitative aspect relatively in relation to another action/activity or to the whole course of an action/activity, while the latter does not have such markers, though both

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Xiang and Mandarin have an absolute delimitative encoded by verb reduplication.

(27) Comparison of Delimitative Aspect in Xiang and Mandarin

Cate.＼Dial.	Mandarin	Xiang
Absolute delimitative	Verb reduplication	Verb reduplication
Relative (to another activity)	?	*can*
Relative (to the whole course)	?	*(da)zhe*

In summary, in comparison to Mandarin, Xiang demonstrates two striking differences: a larger number of aspect/tense markers and a wider range of grammatically coded aspect meanings. First, insofar as the markers are concerned, Xiang basically has a phonologically and morphologically specific marker for a specific aspect/tense function, while Mandarin tends to have a phonologically and morphologically similar marker for different aspect/tense functions. Secondly, with regard to aspect/tense meanings, Xiang tends to grammaticalize more areas of aspect/tense meaning than Mandarin does. Xiang grammaticalizes durative as stative and as active in the imperfective category, and grammaticalizes delimitative relative to another action/activity and delimitative relative to an unspecified duration in the delimitative category, whereas Mandarin does not do so at all. These differences between Xiang and Mandarin may be larger than those between some languages.

4. Variations of tense/aspect marker use in Mandarin

Now all educated Xiang speakers speak Mandarin at one time or another, and write in Mandarin all the time, due to the effort in the promotion of Mandarin in schools since the middle of the fifties (cf. Zhou, forthcoming). Given the differences between Xiang and Mandarin, how do educated Xiang speakers actually use tense/aspect markers when they speak or write Mandarin? What is the impact of these variations on Mandarin, if there are variations in Mandarin by speakers of another dialect? There seem to be no studies on these issues in the literature. This section is to discuss, with the above comparison as the background, the result of a survey of tense/aspect markers used by Xiang speakers in their Mandarin, as compared with the standard use of these markers in Mandarin.

The survey asks for personal information: dialects, years of Mandarin speaking, and years of education; family information: father's dialect, mother's dialect, and solicits use of tense/aspect markers, as in Appendix 1. The last part consists of nine recorded utterances in Xiang, each of which has one marker from nine of the eleven temporal categories in the perfective, the imperfective, and the delimitative, as in Appendix 2. Verb reduplication in the delimitative and the progressive (*zaigoli*) are not used in the materials, since their forms and functions are similar in both dialects. The survey is designed to check how Xiang speakers use tense/aspect markers in Mandarin, as compared with standard usage in Mandarin, as shown in the target sentences in Appendix 2.

The survey was administered to thirty-eight college students at a local university in Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province, during the summer of 1997. After the directions were given and the first two parts were done, the prerecorded Xiang utterances were played, allowing thirty seconds between each utterance for students to write down their equivalents in Mandarin. The results reported here are from twenty subjects, since the remaining eighteen individuals have questionable dialect background. The results are shown below, in (28) on the next page, as Cate(gories of tense/aspect markers), Use (of those markers in utterances): Source from Xiang (in the form of prerecorded utterance), Target (markers or expressions) in Mandarin, and Variations (in the actual use of those markers).

As (28) indicates, in their Mandarin, these Xiang speakers' usage deviates greatly from the standard usage of tense/aspect markers in the perfect, experiential, durative as state, delimitative relative to another activity, and delimitative relative to the whole event. They produced eighty-six target markers or expressions, but ninety-four markers in variation, out of a total of one hundred eighty markers. In the perfective category, it is surprising that none of these Xiang speakers used the perfect markers as V(erb) *le...le*, nor the experiential *guo*, though their syntactic structure and semantics are very close. It is unclear at this moment what motivation is behind this phenomenon. In the imperfective category, the deviation exists between stative verbs and activity verbs, where *le*, instead of the standard *zhe*, is used with the former. It may be due to the fact that in Xiang the marker for the durative as state is phonologically identical to that for the past. In the delimitative category, it is expected that there is some chaos, since Mandarin does not grammaticalize delimitatives relative to another activity or to the whole event, while Xiang does so. Mandarin uses a combination of an adverb plus verb reduplication (*xian* + verb reduplication) or plus an expression (*xian... yihuir*). This is indeed the case in which some of these Xiang speakers used

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(28) Results from the Survey of Tense/Aspect Marker Use in Mandarin by Xiang Speakers

Cate. / Use	Source from Xiang	Target in Mandarin	#	Variation 1	#	Variation 2	#
Past	*da* (噠)	*le* (了)	18	*dao* (到)	2		
Perfective	*ga* (咖)	*le* (了)	17	*guo* (過)	3		
Perfect	*ga ...da* (咖噠)	V *le...le* (了)	0	V ... *le* (了)	17	V ... *la* (拉)	3
Experient.	*kelai* (去來)	*guo* (過)	0	V ... *le* (了)	19	V *le* (了) ...	1
Durative as state	*da* (噠)	zhe (著)	6	*le* (了)	13	*you* (有)	1
Durative as stative	*ji* (起)	?*zhe* (著)	15	*qi* (起)	5		
Durative as action	*can* (餐)	?*zhe* (著)	18	*qi* (起)	2		
Rel. delim. to another	*can* (餐)	*yihuier* (一會兒)	7	*zhe* (著)	9	*le* (了)	4
Rel. delim. to whole	*(da)zhe* (噠著)	*xian*(先) ...V Redup. 4 / *xian ...yihuier* (先...一會兒) 1		*xian* (先) 10 / V*zhe* (著) 3		V*le* (了)	2
Total	9 x 20		86		83		11

the target expressions and markers, some used only *xian*, while others used *le* and *zhe* which expressed a completely different meaning.

In short, in their ever-increasing use of Mandarin, Xiang speakers' deviation from standard Mandarin grammatical norms is significant in aspect/tense marker use, in addition to their more well-known phonological differences.

5. Conclusion

This paper begins with questions about the syntactic differences and similarities between Mandarin and Xiang. It seems that so far as aspect/tense markers are concerned, the differences are larger than the similarities between the two dialects, though they have a genetic relationship. In the perfective category, two morphologically and phonologically similar markers, *le* and *guo*, perform at least four temporal functions in Mandarin, while in Xiang there are four different markers, *da*, *ga*, *gada*, and *kelai* for the same four temporal functions. In the imperfective category, Mandarin and Xiang both have a progressive marker, but they differ in durative markers. The former has only one, while the latter has three for distinctive temporal functions. In the delimitative category, Mandarin and Xiang share the same approach in verb reduplication, whereas Xiang has grammaticalized two additional areas of temporal structure and relationships between events.

Given the larger number of differences and fewer similarities in aspect/tense markers between Mandarin and Xiang, we find that when speaking/writing Mandarin, Xiang speakers use some aspect/tense markers differently from standard Mandarin usage, influenced by tense/aspect markers in Xiang. In the contact between Mandarin and Xiang, there are changes, as expected in any language contact situation. Further study is needed to investigate to what extent Xiang influences Mandarin and to what extent Mandarin influences Xiang.

The findings and observations from this study raise some more general questions about the relationship between Mandarin and Chinese dialects: "How do dialects influence Mandarin?", "How are changes in Mandarin related to dialects?", and "How does Mandarin influence dialects?". These questions are of great importance at a time when Mandarin is spreading at a rapid rate throughout China (cf. Zhou, forthcoming).

Appendix 1:

<div align="center">普通話學習問卷</div>

　　本問卷的目的是研究學習普通話的認知過程。您將聽到九句長沙話，每句後有三十秒停頓。請您在三十秒內把長沙話譯成普通話，并按順序寫下來。謝謝。

您的個人情況：

出生年月	出生地點	省/市	縣/市
第一方言	第二方言	第三方言	
年級	普通話學齡		

您的家庭情況：

家庭的日常方言

父親的方言	第二方言	第三方言
母親的方言	第二方言	第三方言

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.

Appendix 2:

Testing Materials in Xiang	Target in Mandarin
1. 桌上放噠一杯茶。	1. (桌上放著一杯茶。)
2. 他勾起個腰走路。	2. (他勾著腰走路。)
3. 他講餐講餐，就不作聲噠。	3. (他說著說著，就不出聲了。)
4. 王老師喫咖飯噠。	4. (王老師吃了飯了。)
5. 他做餐作業，又看電視。	5. (他做了一會兒作業，就看電視。)
6. 咯本書，你看噠著。	6. (這本書，你先看看/一會兒。)
7. 我買東西去來。	7. (我買過東西。)
8. 我們實驗咖二十多次，還冇成功。	8. (我們實驗了二十多次，還沒有成功。)
9. 我在街上買噠幾十本書。	9. (我在街上買了幾十本書。)

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