

# AUTO-VERBAL CLASSIFIER STRUCTURES IN WU CHINESE

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# PART I: Research Purpose

## Research Purpose:

- Why verbal classifiers (VCLs) in Sinitic languages?
  - Verbal classifiers (VCLs) have been much less studied from a typological perspective than the category of nominal classifiers (NCLs), and even less in the non-Mandarin branches of Sinitic languages, such as Wu Chinese.
  
- Why auto-verbal classifier (auto-VCL) structures in Wu Chinese?
  - The auto-VCL refers to a copy of the verb itself for use as a classifier, that is, it corresponds to the reduplicant in verb structures. The verb reduplicant may be a measure for verbs of action to indicate the temporal duration or frequency in Sinitic languages. For example, the verb reduplicant in the verb phrase [VERB- ('one')-VERB] in Mandarin indicates the delimitative or iterative aspect;
  - It is striking that auto-VCLs have a closer relationship with verbal aspects than other kinds of VCLs (such as body-part VCLs, instrumental VCLs and frequency VCLs);
  - Furthermore, there are more auto-VCL structures in the Wu dialects than other non-Mandarin languages. Verb reduplicants in different types of complex sentences can indicate different grammatical aspects in Wu Chinese, such as imperfective or prospective aspect.
  - Verbs can be reduplicated thrice or even five times to code the durative of verbs of action in the Wu dialects, which accords with the quantity principle of iconicity.

## PART II: An Introduction to the Wu dialects of China

## Wu Chinese (1)

- Wu Chinese is one of the major branches of Sinitic languages with about 74 million speakers covering 160 cities and counties, mainly distributed in the area of southern Jiangsu province, southeastern Anhui province, Shanghai city and Zhejiang province. (Note: The data are cited from the Institute of Linguistics, CASS ed., 2012:103, 中国语言地图集第2版方言卷 Language Atlas of China, the second edition, volume two: Chinese dialects).
- Wang and Cao (2012:104-105, B1-14) divide the Wu dialects into six sub-groups, which are *Taihu* 太湖片, *Taizhou* 台州片, *Jin-qu* 金衢片, *Shang-li* 上丽片, *Oujiang* 瓯江片 and *Xuanzhou* 宣州片.
- The *Suzhou dialect* 苏州方言, *Ningbo dialect* 宁波方言, and *Wenzhou dialect* 温州方言 are typical representatives of the Wu dialects.

## Wu Chinese (2)

- Earlier studies generally recognize two major types inside the Wu dialects, which are Northern Wu and Southern Wu. The people speaking Northern Wu and Southern Wu dialects cannot communicate with each other. (Dong, Jin et al. 1998: 300, Yuan 2001:57);
- The personal pronouns in Wu Chinese contrasts greatly with that of Standard Mandarin. Apart from the first person singular pronoun which is pan-Sinitic, quite distinct forms exist for the rest (Chappell et Li, 2016: 617-618, edited by Chan), see examples from Shanghainese: 1SG: *ŋu*<sup>13</sup> 我, 2SG: *nun*<sup>13</sup> 侬, 3SG: *hi*<sup>13</sup> 伊, 1PL: *a<sup>25</sup>la<sup>53</sup>* 阿拉, 2PL: *na*<sup>13</sup> 侬, 3PL: *hi*<sup>13</sup>*la*<sup>53</sup> 伊拉;
- Southern Wu Chinese with the methods of attaching syllabic word, vowel nasalization and tone sandhi to code the diminutive (Cao 2001 (3): 33-44).
  - The Yunhe dialect (suffix *-ni*): *a<sup>2</sup>* ‘duck’ *a<sup>2</sup>-ni* ‘small duck’
  - The Jinhua dialect (vowel nasalization): *t<sup>h</sup>u* ‘rabbit’ *t<sup>h</sup>ũ* ‘small rabbit’
  - The Tangxi dialect (vowel nasalization and tone sandhi): *u*<sup>11</sup>*dia*<sup>113</sup> ‘butterfly’ *u*<sup>33</sup>*tian*<sup>24</sup> ‘small butterfly’
- The well-observed order of the double object construction in Wu Chinese is [VERB-DIRECT OBJECT-INDIRECT OBJECT], however, it is [VERB-INDIRECT OBJECT-DIRECT OBJECT] order in Standard Mandarin. (Zhu, 2006: 137)
- The Wu dialects are the topic-prominent type, and are less typical VO languages than the Beijing Mandarin (Liu, 2001(4): 332-343).

## Wu Chinese (3)

- Nominal classifiers can be reduplicated to mean ‘all/every’ in Wu Chinese, just like *penpen* 本本 ‘every (book)’ in Shanghainese (Zhu, 2006: 76);
- Furthermore, bare classifier structures are appearing in Wu Chinese, which are not grammatical in Mandarin. Note: Wang (2015:110) defines ‘a bare classifier phrase refers to one composed of just a classifier and its head noun without any numerals or demonstratives preceding the classifier.’ Bare classifier phrases are also applicable for VCLs, presenting as the form [VCL-VERB] in which just a VCL without quantifiers or demonstratives to modify the head verb, the pre-verbal VCL has a definite reading.

(1) Bare nominal classifier structure: [NCL-NOUN]

Shanghai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

只鸡一眼也不好吃

<b>tsaq</b>	<b>ji</b>	<b>iqngae</b>	<b>xa</b>	<b>veq</b>	<b>haochiq</b>
<b>NCL.DEF</b>	chicken	a little	yet	NEG	tasty

‘The chicken is not tasty at all.’ (Zhu Xiaonong, 2006: 77)

(2) Bare verbal classifier structure: [VCL-VERB]

Jiading dialect 嘉定方言 (Wu, Sinitic)

趟上海勸去

<b>t<sup>h</sup>ã<sup>34</sup></b>	<b>zã<sup>24</sup>hE<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>vəŋ<sup>33</sup></b>	<b>tɕ<sup>h</sup>i<sup>44</sup></b>
<b>VCL: time. DEF</b>	Shanghai	not	go

‘(He) did not go to Shanghai this time.’

(Tang Zhenzhu & Chen Zhongmin, 1993:18)



# Wu Chinese (4)

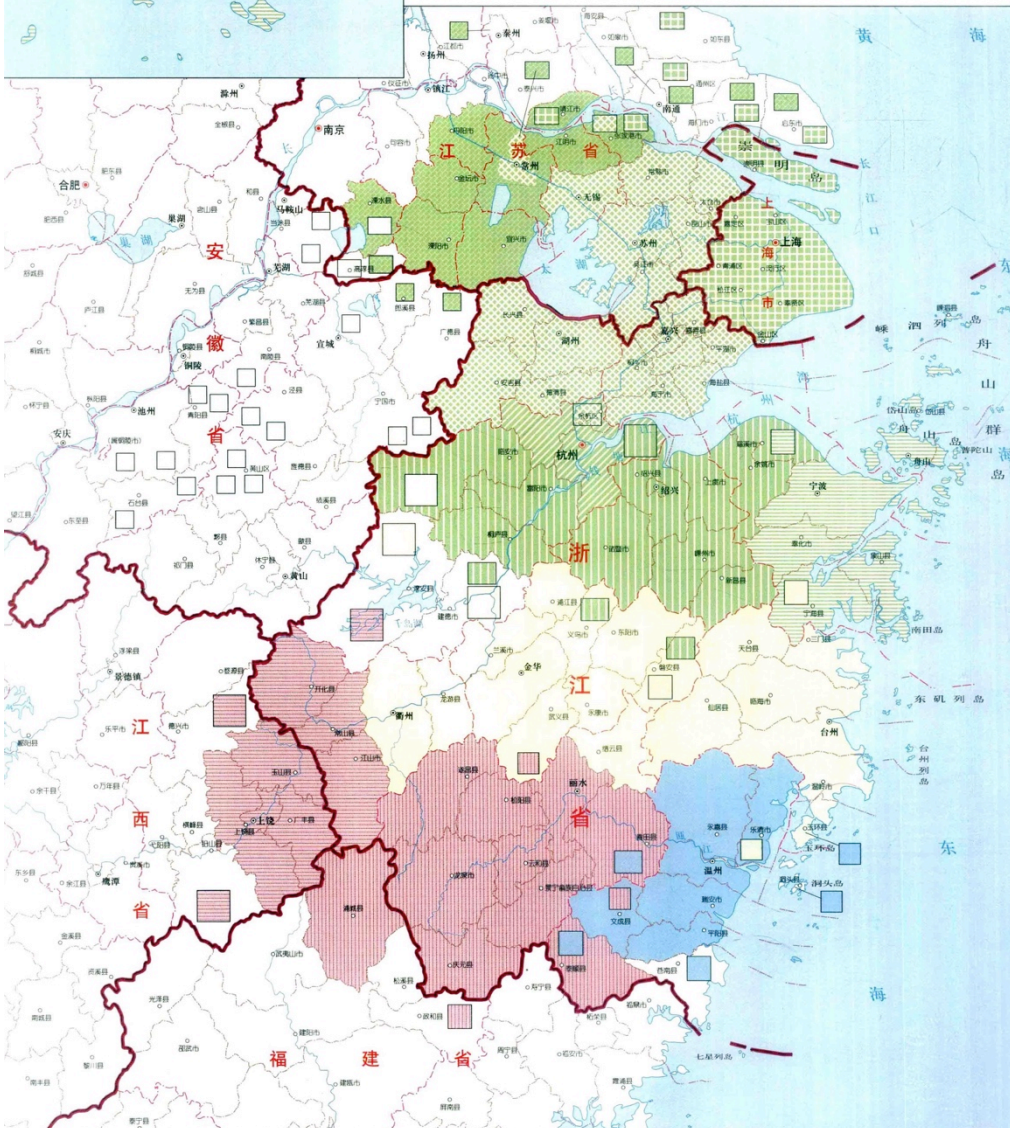
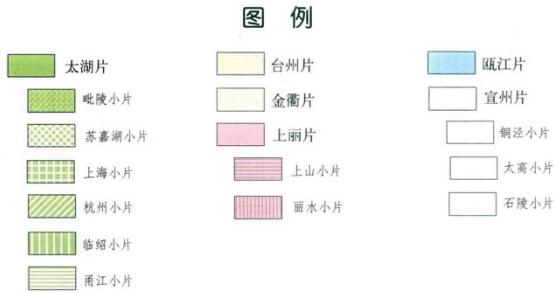
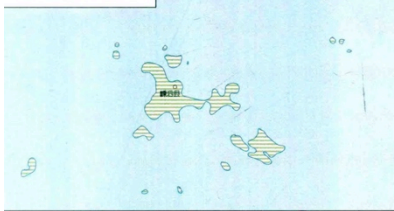


The Wu dialects

# B1-14 吴语

上海市 江苏省 浙江省 安徽省 江西省 福建省

浙江省嵊泗县放大图



- Map A1: Languages in China
- Map B1-14: The distribution of the Wu dialects.
- Cited from *Zhongguo Yuyan Dituji, Di'erban, Hanyu Fangyan Juan* 中国语言地图集，第二版，汉语方言卷 (*Language Atlas of China, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol 2: Chinese dialects*)

- Table 1: Varieties of Wu that are referenced in this study:

Sub groups	Dialects and authors
太湖片 Taihu	<p><b>江苏省 Jiangsu Province:</b>            苏州方言 Suzhou dialect; 常熟方言 Changshu dialect; 吴江方言 Wujiang dialect;            昆山方言 Kunshan dialect; 太仓方言 Taicang dialect; 张家港方言 Zhangjiagang dialect;            常州方言 Changzhou dialect; 金坛方言 Jintan dialect; 溧阳方言 Liyang dialect;            无锡方言 Wuxi dialect; 江阴方言 Jiangyin dialect; 宜兴方言 Yixing dialect;            靖江方言 Jingjiang dialect; 启东方言 Qidong dialect; 海门方言 Haimen dialect;            海门四甲方言 Haimen Sijia dialect; 通州方言 Tongzhou dialect; 如东方言 Rudong dialect</p> <p><b>浙江省 Zhejiang Province:</b>            杭州方言 Hangzhou dialect; 嘉兴方言 Jiaxing dialect; 桐庐方言 Tonglu dialect;            绍兴方言 Shaoxing dialect; 余姚方言 Yuyao dialect; 宁波方言 Ningbo dialect;            鄞州方言 Yinzhou dialect; 象山方言 Xiangshan dialect; 舟山方言 Zhoushan dialect</p> <p><b>上海市 Shanghai City:</b>            上海方言 Shanghai dialect; 松江方言 Songjiang dialect</p>
台州片 Taizhou	<p><b>浙江省 Zhejiang Province:</b>            天台方言 Tiantai dialect</p>
金衢片 Jin-qu	<p><b>浙江省 Zhejiang Province:</b>            义乌方言 Yiwu dialect</p>
上丽片 Shang-li	<p><b>浙江省 Zhejiang Province:</b>            庆元方言 Qingyuan dialect; 江山方言 Jiangshan dialect</p> <p><b>江西省 Jiangxi Province:</b>            广丰方言 Guangfeng dialect</p>
瓯江片 Oujian	<p><b>浙江省 Zhejiang Province:</b>            温州方言 Wenzhou dialect</p>
宣州片 Xuanzhou	<p><b>安徽省 Anhui Province:</b>            宣城方言 Xuancheng dialect</p>

## PART III: Auto-Verbal Classifiers (Auto-VCLs) in Sinitic languages

# 1. The definition of auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages (1)

## □ Previous definitions of auto-VCLs in East Asia:

- **Chao (1968:616)** gives a definition that ‘the verb itself may be a measure serving as cognate object with or without a numeral (usually the numeral *yi*<sup>55</sup> — ‘one’) as its determinative, as in the verb phrase *kan*<sup>51</sup>*yi*<sup>35</sup>*kan*<sup>51</sup> 看一看 ‘take a look’, acting as a measure for verbs of action.
- **Matisoff (1973:89)** coins the term ‘auto-classifier’ originally for Lahu, a Loloish language of Thailand, arguing that ‘some nouns may be their own classifiers, that is , there are some nouns whose classifiers have the same phonological shape as themselves, such as *yɛ̃ tɛ̃ yɛ̃* ‘a/one house; the whole house; the first house’, in fact, which are auto-nominal classifiers.
- **Gerner (2014:289)** claims that ‘verbal auto-classifiers (ACLs) are verbs which serve as their own phase and event counter.’

## 1. The definition of auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages (2)

- I argue that verb reduplicants are classifiers of their cognate verbs which code the temporal duration or frequency of verbs of action, combining with verbs to indicate the lexical aspect (the delimitative or iterative aspect), such as the verb reduplicants in the verb phrase [VERB-(‘one’)-VERB] in Sinitic languages.
- DELM: Li and Thompson (1981:232) give a definition that ‘the delimitative aspect means doing an action ‘a little bit’, or for a short period of time, this aspect is structurally represented by the reduplication of the verb, and this reduplication may optionally involve the morpheme *yi*<sup>55</sup> ‘one’ between the verb and the reduplicated syllable.’
- ITER: Comrie (1976:42) gives a definition of the ‘iterative aspect’ as referring to ‘a situation that is repeated, such as *a series of coughs* in English’.
- **My definition of the auto-VCL:**
  - I label verb reduplicants coding lexical or grammatical aspects as auto-verbal classifiers (auto-VCLs), distinguishing auto-VCLs from auto-nominal classifiers (auto-NCLs) discussed by Matisoff (1973:89) for Lahu.

## 2. Lexical aspects and Auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages (1)

- Wu Chinese and Standard Mandarin both use auto-VCLs combining with activity and semelfactive verbs to code the delimitative or iterative aspect:

- Auto-VCLs combine with activity verbs to code the delimitative aspect:

[ACTIVITY VERB-(‘one’)-AUTO VCL]

- (3) Mandarin (Sinitic)

想一想

[**xiang**<sup>214</sup>            **yi**            **xiang**<sup>214</sup>]  
[**think**            **one**            **think**] <sub>DELM</sub>

‘Have a think.’

- (4) Suzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

你要回头想一想，仔细查一查

ni<sup>55</sup>        iæ<sup>55</sup>        fuE<sup>12</sup>        dE<sup>33</sup>        [siã<sup>51</sup>        iəʔ        siã<sup>51</sup>],  
2SG        need        go back    head        [**think**    **one**        **VCL: think**] <sub>DELM</sub>

tsɿ<sup>51</sup>si<sup>21</sup>    [zɑ<sup>13</sup>        iəʔ        zɑ<sup>13</sup>]  
carefully [**check**    **one**        **VCL: check**] <sub>DELM</sub>

‘You need to go back, have a think and check it carefully.’ (Ye Xiangling, 1988:300) 15

## 2. Lexical aspects and Auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages (2)

- Auto-VCLs combine with semelfactive verbs to code the iterative aspect:

[SEMELFACTIVE VERB-(‘one’)-AUTO VCL]

- (5) Mandarin (Sinitic)

来嗅嗅这朵花香不香

lai <sup>35</sup>	[xiu <sup>51</sup> ~xiu]	zhe <sup>51</sup>	duo <sup>214</sup>	hua <sup>55</sup>
come	[sniff ~ VCL: sniff] ITER	this	NCL	flower
xiang <sup>55</sup>	bu <sup>51</sup>	xiang <sup>55</sup>		
fragrant	not	fragrant		

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’

- (6) Shanghai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

来闻闻看窈这朵话香哦

le <sup>13</sup>	[mən <sup>22</sup> mən <sup>55</sup> ]	k <sup>h</sup> ø <sup>21</sup>	gəʔ <sup>1</sup>
come	[sniff VCL: sniff] ITER	TENT	this
tu <sup>23</sup>	ho <sup>53</sup>	ɕia <sup>55</sup>	vaʔ <sup>21</sup>
NCL	flower	fragrant	not

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’

(You Rujie ed., vol: 5-6, 2013:19)



## 2. Lexical aspects and Auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages (3)

- [VERB-QUANTIFIER (more than 'one')-AUTO VCL], in which the auto-VCL codes the number of times of verbs of action:

The auto-VCL in the verb phrase [SEMELFACTIVE VERB-QUANTIFIER-AUTO VCL] turns out to be a frequency marker to code the number of times an action takes place, as in (7); whereas in Mandarin, only the frequency marker *xia*<sup>51</sup> 下 'time' can be used in (8): Wu dialects use many of these specific frequency VCLs, as opposed to a general one.

- (7) Tiantai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)  
只灯泡闪阿三闪，拔弗亮了  
tsa<sup>2</sup>                      tən<sup>33</sup>p<sup>hau</sup><sup>55</sup>                      ɛiæ<sup>2</sup><sup>5</sup>                      a<sup>?</sup>  
NCL.DEF                      bulb                      flash                      PFV  
sɛ<sup>33</sup>                      ɛiæ<sup>2</sup><sup>5</sup>,                      bæ<sup>2</sup><sup>23</sup>                      fø<sup>?</sup>                      lian<sup>35</sup>                      lau  
three                      **VCL: flash > time**                      just                      not                      bright                      PRF  
'This bulb just flashed three times, and then it was not bright any more.'

(Dai Zhaoming, 2003:191)

- (8) Mandarin (Sinitic)  
这只灯泡闪了三下  
zhe<sup>51</sup>                      zhi<sup>55</sup>                      deng<sup>55</sup>pao<sup>51</sup>                      shan<sup>214</sup>                      le                      san<sup>55</sup>                      xia<sup>51</sup>  
this                      NCL                      bulb                      flash                      PFV                      three                      **VCL: time**  
'This bulb flashed three times.'

### 3. The habitual aspect and Auto-VCLs (1)

- I find that whether the object is definite or not determines the aspect indicated by the verb phrase [ACTIVITY VERB-AUTO VCL-OBJECT]:
  - Under the condition that the object is indefinite, the auto-VCLs combining with the verb code the habitual aspect:  
Indefinite object => habitual aspect (HAB)
  - whereas under the condition that the object is definite, the auto-verbal classifiers combining with the verb code the delimitative aspect (or iterative aspect).  
Definite object => delimitative aspect (or iterative aspect)
- Note: Comrie (1976: 27-28) gives a definition that ‘habitual is a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment, but precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period.’ He also distinguishes the iterative aspect from the habitual aspect as in the sentence *the Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus*, in which there is no need for iterativity to be involved.

### 3. The habitual aspect and Auto-VCLs (2)

▣ [ACTIVITY VERB-AUTO VCL-INDEFINITE OBJECT]:

- ▣ *The Auto-VCLs combining with activity verbs and indefinite objects code the habitual aspect in both Wu Chinese and Mandarin in my sample:*

- (9) Mandarin (Sinitic)  
 嗑嗑瓜子, 读读报纸  
 [ke<sup>51</sup>~ke                      gua<sup>55</sup>zi]                      [du<sup>35</sup>~du                      bao<sup>51</sup>zhi<sup>214</sup>]  
 [eat ~ VCL: eat                      sunflower seed. INDEF] <sub>HAB</sub>                      [read ~ VCL: read                      newspaper. INDEF] <sub>HAB</sub>  
 ‘(I) eat sunflower seeds and read newspapers everyday.’
- (10) Tiantai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)  
 啜啜瓜子, 读读报纸, 批批条子  
 [tɕyʉ<sup>?</sup>~tɕyʉ<sup>?</sup>                      kuo<sup>33</sup>tsɿ<sup>325</sup>],                      [du<sup>?</sup>~du<sup>?</sup>  
 [eat ~ VCL: eat                      sunflower seed. INDEF] <sub>HAB</sub>                      [read ~ VCL: read  
 pau<sup>33</sup>tsɿ<sup>325</sup>],                      [p<sup>hi</sup>~p<sup>hi</sup>                      diau<sup>33</sup>tsɿ<sup>325</sup>]  
 newspaper. INDEF] <sub>HAB</sub>                      [sign ~ VCL: sign                      note. INDEF] <sub>HAB</sub>  
 ‘(I) eat sunflower seeds, read newspapers and sign notes everyday.’ (Dai Zhaoming, 2003:199)

### 3. The habitual aspect and Auto-VCLs (3)

- *[VERB-AUTO VCL-DEFINITE OBJECT]: The Auto-VCLs combining with activity verbs and definite objects code the delimitative or iterative aspect in both Wu Chinese and Mandarin:*

- The delimitative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase: [ACTIVITY VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL-DEFINITE OBJECT]

(11) Jiading dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

叫伊啲修一修扇门

tɕio <sup>33</sup>	i <sup>53</sup>	le <sup>31</sup>	[sy <sup>55</sup>	ir <sup>33</sup>
ask	3SG	come	[repair	one
sy <sup>21</sup>		si <sup>53</sup>		mən <sup>31</sup> ]
VCL: repair		NCL.DEF		door] DELM

‘Ask him to come and repair this door for a while.’

(Tang Zhenzhu & Chen Zhongmin, 1993:18)

(12) Mandarin (Sinitic)

修一修这扇门

[xiu <sup>55</sup>	yi	xiu <sup>55</sup>	zhe <sup>51</sup>		shan <sup>51</sup>	men <sup>35</sup> ]
[repair	one	repair	this. DEF		NCL	door] DELM

‘Try to repair this door for a while.’

### 3. The habitual aspect and Auto-VCLs (4)

- The iterative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase: [SEMELFACTIVE VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL-DEFINITE OBJECT]

(13) Jiading dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

来闻闻哀朵花阿香

le <sup>3</sup>	[mən <sup>2</sup> ~mən <sup>3</sup>	E <sup>4</sup>	təu	ho <sup>44</sup> ]
come	[sniff ~ VCL: sniff	this. DEF	NCL	flower] ITER
aʔ <sup>42</sup>	ciã <sup>3</sup>			
not	fragrant			

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’

(Wang Ping, 2011:352)

(14) Mandarin (Sinitic)

来嗅嗅这朵花香不香

lai <sup>35</sup>	[xiu <sup>51</sup> ~xiu	zhe <sup>51</sup>	duo <sup>214</sup>	hua <sup>55</sup> ]
come	[sniff~ VCL: sniff	this. DEF	NCL	flower] ITER
xiang <sup>55</sup>	bu <sup>51</sup>	xiang <sup>55</sup>		
fragrant	not	fragrant		

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’

## Interim Conclusion

- Wu Chinese and Mandarin show similar patterns of syntactic behaviour for the features of lexical and grammatical aspects:
  - Auto-VCLs combine with activity verbs to code the delimitative aspect:  
[ACTIVITY VERB- ('one') -AUTO VCL-(DEFINITE OBJECT)]
  - Auto-VCLs combine with semelfactive verbs to code the iterative aspect:  
[SEMELFACTIVE VERB- ('one') -AUTO VCL-(DEFINITE OBJECT)]
  - The verb phrase [ACTIVITY VERB-AUTO VCL] combines with an indefinite object to indicate the habitual aspect:  
[ACTIVITY VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL-INDEFINITE OBJECT]
- However, auto-VCLs in the Wu dialects can function as a frequency marker when combined with quantifiers that are more than 'one'; by contrast, auto-VCLs in Standard Mandarin can only use the frequency marker *xia*<sup>51</sup> 下 'time' to code the number of times of an action:
  - [VERB-QUANTIFIER (more than 'one')-AUTO VCL] (only in Wu Chinese)
  - [VERB-QUANTIFIER (more than 'one')-FREQUENCY MARKER] (in Standard Mandarin)

## PART IV: Specific Auto-VCL structures in Wu Chinese

## 4. [(VERB-AUTO VCL)- RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT] (1)

■ **Auto-VCLs code the prospective aspect in the verb structure [VERB-AUTO VCL-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT]**

■ Comrie (1976: 64) give a definition that ‘the perfect is retrospective (RET), in that it establishes a relation between a state at one time and a situation at an earlier time. If languages were completely symmetrical, one might equally well expect to find prospective (PROSP) forms, where a state is related to some subsequent situation, for instance where someone is in a state of being about to do something.’

■ **In Mandarin, there are no auto-VCLs in the verb structure [VERB-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT], which co-occur with the retrospective aspect (RET) marker *le* 了:**

(15) Mandarin (Sinitic)

保险丝搭牢

bao<sup>214</sup>xian<sup>214</sup>si<sup>55</sup>

da<sup>55</sup>

lao<sup>35</sup>

fuse wire

attach

firm

‘Attach the fuse wire firmly.’

(16) Mandarin (Sinitic)

保险丝搭牢了

bao<sup>214</sup>xian<sup>214</sup>si<sup>55</sup>

da<sup>55</sup>

lao<sup>35</sup>

le

fuse wire

attach

firm

RET

‘(I) have attached the fuse wire firmly.’



## 4. [(VERB-AUTO VCL)- RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT] (2)

- By contrast, in Wu Chinese, auto-VCLs in the verb structure [VERB-AUTO VCL-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT] which is used to code the prospective aspect including the imperative, cannot co-occur with the retrospective aspect marker, such as *lei*<sup>22</sup> in (18).
- The Wu dialects show semantic constraints on the compatibility of retrospective aspect marker with VCLs. To be precise, the retrospective aspect markers are not compatible.

(17) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

保险丝搭搭牢

pɔ<sup>44</sup>ɛi<sup>44</sup>sɿ<sup>44</sup>

fuse wire

tɛʔ<sup>5</sup>~tɛʔ<sup>5</sup>

attach ~ VCL: attach. **PROSP**

lɔ<sup>22</sup>

firm

‘Attach the fuse wire firmly.’ (Ruan Guijun, 2009:82)

(18) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

\*保险丝搭搭牢嘞

pɔ<sup>44</sup>ɛi<sup>44</sup>sɿ<sup>44</sup>

fuse wire

tɛʔ<sup>5</sup>~tɛʔ<sup>5</sup>

attach ~ attach. **PROSP**

lɔ<sup>22</sup>

firm

\**lei*<sup>22</sup>

\***RET**

5. [VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL] and  
[VERB- ('not')-VERB]  
in the Shaoxing Dialect (1)

- Not all verb reduplicants can be treated as auto-VCLs in the Shaoxing dialect: The verb reduplicant in the form [VERB-('not')-VERB] cannot be treated as the auto-VCL since it still functions as a verb to pose a polar question. This elliptical form is not found in Mandarin:

(19) Shaoxing dialect (Wu, Sinitic)  
葛个书侬看看嘞  
keʔ<sup>3</sup> keʔ<sup>5</sup> ɛy<sup>52</sup> noʔ<sup>25</sup> k<sup>h</sup>ẽ<sup>33</sup>~k<sup>h</sup>ẽ<sup>33</sup> laʔ<sup>3</sup>  
this NCL book 2SG read ~ read Q  
'Have you read this book or not?' (Wang Futang, 2015:345)

- By way of contrast, the verb reduplicant in the form [verb-('one')-verb] can be treated as an auto-VCL which combines with verbs to indicate lexical aspects:

(20) Shaoxing dialect (Wu, Sinitic)  
让我看看  
ŋian<sup>11</sup> ŋo<sup>55</sup> [k<sup>h</sup>ẽ<sup>33</sup>~k<sup>h</sup>ẽ<sup>33</sup>]  
let 1SG [look ~ VCL: look]<sub>DELM</sub>  
'Let me have a look.' (Wang Futang, 2015:346)

## 5. [VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL] and [VERB- ('not')-VERB] in the Shaoxing Dialect (2)

□ In fact, only the rising and entering tones distinguish [VERB-(‘not’)-VERB] from [VERB-(‘one’)-AUTO VCL] by means of tone sandhi; there are no changes for the level and departing tones, which rely on contexts to differentiate them, as you see in Table 2 below (Wang, 2015:344):

Eight tones	Intrinsic tone	[V-(勿)-V]	[V-(一)-V]
High register Level tone	52+52	穿穿 ts <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>55</sup> ts <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>52</sup> 'Wear or not'	穿穿 ts <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>55</sup> ts <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>52</sup> 'Try to wear'
Low register Level tone	231+231	来来 lɛ <sup>115</sup> lɛ <sup>52</sup> 'Come or not'	来来 lɛ <sup>115</sup> lɛ <sup>52</sup> 'Come for a while'
High register Rising tone	335+335	走走 tsɿ <sup>335</sup> tsɿ <sup>52</sup> 'Walk or not'	走走 tsɿ <sup>33</sup> tsɿ <sup>55</sup> 'Take a walk'
Low register Rising tone	113+113	坐坐 zo <sup>115</sup> zo <sup>52</sup> 'Sit or not'	坐坐 zo <sup>11</sup> zo <sup>55</sup> 'Take a seat'
High register Departing tone	33+33	看看 k <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>33</sup> k <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>33</sup> 'Look or not'	看看 k <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>33</sup> k <sup>h</sup> ẽ <sup>33</sup> 'Have a look'
Low register Departing tone	11+11	话话 fɯo <sup>11</sup> fɯo <sup>11</sup> 'Say or not'	话话 fɯo <sup>11</sup> fɯo <sup>11</sup> 'Have a talk'
High register Entering tone	45+45	吃吃 tɛ <sup>h</sup> ie? <sup>45</sup> tɛ <sup>h</sup> ie? <sup>54</sup> 'Eat or not'	吃吃 tɛ <sup>h</sup> ie? <sup>3</sup> tɛ <sup>h</sup> ie? <sup>5</sup> 'Have a eat'
Low register Entering tone	23+23	读读 do? <sup>25</sup> do? <sup>54</sup> 'Read or not'	读读 do? <sup>1</sup> do? <sup>5</sup> 'Have a read'

## 6. [VERB<sub>1</sub>-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-VP<sub>2</sub>] structure in the Ningbo Dialect (1)

- The verb can be reduplicated twice to code the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause indicating the background information
  - There is ‘a tendency for punctual verbs to have perfective aspect in foregrounded sentences and conversely for verbs of the durative/stative/iterative types to occur in imperfective in background clauses.’ (Hopper, 1979:215)
  - In the Ningbo dialect, two verb reduplicants both can be treated as auto-VCLs to code the imperfective aspect together in the verb construction [VERB<sub>1</sub>-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-VP<sub>2</sub>], this structure is not found in Mandarin. However, this structure is also not common in Northern Wu (triple reduplication is common), and is only found in Ningbo, and in the Luxi dialect (Gan, Sinitic).

(21) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

讲讲讲，造孽嘞

kɔ̃<sup>35</sup>~[kɔ̃<sup>35</sup>~kɔ̃<sup>35</sup>],

talk ~ [VCL: talk~ VCL: talk]<sub>IPFV</sub>

zo<sup>22</sup>ŋi<sup>ʔ2</sup>

quarrel

lei<sup>22</sup>

PRF

‘(They) were talking and then had a quarrel.’ (Ruan Guijun, 2009:26)

(22) Duchang dialect (Gan, Sinitic)

渠讲讲讲，哭起来嘢

iɛ<sup>214</sup> kəŋ<sup>352</sup>~[kəŋ<sup>352</sup>~kəŋ<sup>352</sup>],

3SG talk ~ [VCL: talk ~ VCL: talk]<sub>IPFV</sub>

guk<sup>21</sup>

cry

i<sup>352</sup>lei<sup>344</sup>

INCEP

tɛ

PRF

‘She was talking and then began to cry.’ (Lu Jifang, 2007:197)

6. [VERB<sub>1</sub>- AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-VP<sub>2</sub>]  
structure in the Ningbo Dialect (2)

- However, in Mandarin, verbs cannot be reduplicated like this once or twice to indicate the imperfective aspect. The verb construction [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL]<sub>IPFV</sub>-VP<sub>2</sub>] in the Ningbo dialect corresponds to the [(VERB<sub>1</sub>-IPFV)-(VERB<sub>1</sub>-IPFV)-VP<sub>2</sub>] structure in Mandarin.

(23) Mandarin (Sinitic)

\*看看看，睡着了

\*kan<sup>51</sup>~kan<sup>51</sup>~kan<sup>51</sup>,

\*read ~ VCL: read ~ VCL: read

shui<sup>51</sup>zhao<sup>35</sup>

le

fall asleep

PRF

(24)

Mandarin (Sinitic)

他看着看着，睡着了

ta<sup>55</sup>

kan<sup>51</sup>

zhe

kan<sup>51</sup>

zhe,

shui<sup>51</sup>zhao<sup>35</sup>

le

3SG

read

IPFV

read

IPFV

fall asleep

PRF

'He was reading and then fell asleep.'

7. [VERB<sub>1</sub>- AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL- AUTO VCL-VP<sub>2</sub>] structure in Northern Wu (1)

- The auto-VCLs in the verb construction [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL]<sub>IPFV</sub>-VP<sub>2</sub>] can also code the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause to provide the background information.
- By contrast with the construction [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL]<sub>IPFV</sub>-VP<sub>2</sub>], the more times a verb is reduplicated, the longer is the temporal duration expressed by the verb construction, which accords to the principle of iconicity.
- This verb construction is widely found in Northern Wu, which also corresponds to the [(VERB<sub>1</sub>-IPFV)-(VERB<sub>1</sub>-IPFV)-VP<sub>2</sub>] construction in Mandarin.

(25) Suzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

俚看电视看看看看睡着则

li<sup>44</sup> k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>3</sup> di<sup>2</sup>zɿ<sup>3</sup> k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>52</sup>~[k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>3</sup>~k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>4</sup>~k<sup>h</sup>ø]

3SG watch television watch ~ [VCL: watch ~ VCL: watch ~ VCL: watch]<sub>IPFV</sub>

k<sup>h</sup>uən<sup>4</sup>zɑ<sup>?</sup> tsə<sup>?</sup>

fall asleep PRF

‘He was watching TV and then fell asleep.’ (Wang Ping, 2011:356)



8. [VERB<sub>1</sub>- AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL- AUTO  
 VCL-AUTO VCL- AUTO VCL-VP<sub>2</sub>]:

- The verb can even be reduplicated five times to form the verb construction [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL]IPFV-VP<sub>2</sub>], in which the auto-VCLs code the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause to provide the background information.
- The more times the verb is reduplicated, the longer the temporal duration expressed by the verb construction, which follows the quantity principle (Givón 1984: 970), using reduplication to iconically mark an increase.
- In my sample of languages, this verb construction is only found in Hangzhou.

(28) Hangzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

我吃吃吃吃吃困着勒

ʔŋou<sup>44</sup> tɕ<sup>hiɔ</sup>ʔ<sup>3</sup>~[tɕ<sup>hiɔ</sup>ʔ<sup>5</sup>~tɕ<sup>hiɔ</sup>ʔ<sup>3</sup>~tɕ<sup>hiɔ</sup>ʔ<sup>31</sup>~tɕ<sup>hiɔ</sup>ʔ<sup>3</sup>~tɕ<sup>hiɔ</sup>ʔ<sup>4</sup>]

1SG eat ~ [VCL: eat ~ VCL: eat ~ VCL: eat ~ VCL: eat ~ VCL: eat] IPFV

kuən<sup>55</sup>dzɤʔ<sup>3</sup> lɛʔ<sup>31</sup>

fall asleep PRF

‘I was eating and then fell asleep.’ (Qian Nairong, 2003a:404)



## 9. [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT] in the Wu dialects (1)

- ▣ Verbs of ‘looking, watching and seeing’ combine with auto-VCLs in the Wu dialects to indicate the conative aspect (CONAT) in the verb structure [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT].
- ▣ **CONAT:** Conative aspect in Athapaskan languages is defined by Rice (2000:260) as: ‘A further substitution aspectual type is the conative, meaning that an event was attempted or directed at a target’. I adopt this definition and apply it to Sinitic languages. In Mandarin, auto-VCLs can indicate the conative aspect in the form [VERB-(‘one’)-AUTO VCL]; by contrast, the post-verbal adverb *KAN* 看 and its varieties are used to mark the conative aspect (also known as the tentative aspect) in Wu Chinese.
- ▣ In Standard Mandarin, the auto-VCLs can code the conative aspect without an overt conative aspect marker *KAN* 看 ‘look’:

(29) Mandarin (Sinitic)  
你去走走  
ni<sup>214</sup> qu<sup>51</sup> zou<sup>214</sup>~zou  
2SG go walk~ VCL: walk. **CONAT**  
‘Try to have a walk.’

## 9. [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT] in the Wu dialects (2)

- However, the verb *KAN* 看 has grammaticalized into a conative aspect marker in Northern Wu due to phonetic erosion in the verb construction [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT: KAN], situated in the post-verbal position.

(30) Jiaxing dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

侬去看看

ne<sup>13</sup>      tɕ<sup>h</sup>i<sup>53</sup>      k<sup>h</sup>ɤ<sup>35</sup>~k<sup>h</sup>ɤ<sup>35</sup>-k<sup>h</sup>ɤ

2SG      go      look~ VCL: look-CONAT

‘You try to have a look.’ (Xu Yue, 2016:123)

- The conative aspect marker *KAN* 看 also attaches to other kinds of VCLs, such as the body-part VCL *KOU* 口 ‘mouth’ in Suzhou: [VERB-QUANTIFIER-BODY PART VCL-CONAT: KAN]

(31) Suzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

让俚尝两口看

ŋi<sup>22</sup>      li<sup>44</sup>      zA<sup>21</sup>      i<sup>44</sup>      k<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>44</sup>      k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>21</sup>  
let      3SG      taste      two      VCL: mouth      CONAT

‘Let him try to have a taste.’ (LI Xiaofan, 1998: 206)

- It is important to distinguish the conative structure from the verb construction [VERB-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] in a subordinate clause, even if their surface structures are similar, their underlying functions are totally different:

(32) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

看看看，睏熟嘞

k<sup>h</sup>i<sup>44</sup>~[k<sup>h</sup>i<sup>44</sup>~k<sup>h</sup>i<sup>44</sup>],      k<sup>h</sup>uən<sup>44</sup>      zo<sup>?</sup>2      lɛi<sup>22</sup>  
read~ [VCL: read~ VCL: read] <sub>IPFV</sub>      sleep      deeply      PRF

‘(He) was reading and then fell asleep deeply.’ (Ruan Guijun, 2009:26)

## 9. [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT] in the Wu dialects (3)

- ▣ *KAN* 看 ‘look’ acts as the conative aspect marker in the construction [VERB-VCLP-CONAT], and is not only limited to modifying the auto-VCLP;
- ▣ In Northern Wu, the adverb *KAN* 看 ‘look’ is widely used, whereas there are more varieties of *KAN* 看 in the Southern Wu area, such as
  - ▣ *te<sup>hi:n</sup>5* 起儿 in the Yiwu dialect;
  - ▣ *XIANG* 相 in the Tiantai, Xianju and Wenling dialects;
  - ▣ *ts<sup>h</sup>ɿ<sup>4</sup>* 眙 in the Wenzhou dialect;
  - ▣ *CU* 促 in the Songyang and Suichang dialects,
  - ▣ *WANG* 望 in the Wuyi, Lishui, Jinyun, Yongkang and Xuanping dialects;
  - ▣ *LIAO* 瞭 in the Qingtian and Qingyuan dialects.

(Data is taken from *Linguistic Atlas of Chinese dialects*, Cao ed. Vol Grammar: 091)

Sub-groups	Conative aspect markers	Dialects
<i>Taihu</i> (9/29)	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>21</sup></i>	Suzhou dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>21</sup></i>	Haimen dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>e<sup>55</sup></i>	Hangzhou dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ɿə<sup>53</sup></i>	Jiaxing dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ie<sup>44</sup></i>	Ningbo dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>51</sup></i>	Xiangshan dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>e<sup>44</sup></i>	Zhoushan dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>21</sup></i>	Shanghai dialect
	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>53</sup></i>	Songjiang dialect
<i>Taizhou</i> (1/1)	相 <i>ɕiaŋ<sup>55</sup></i>	Tiantai dialect
<i>Jin-qu</i> (1/1)	起儿 <i>te<sup>hi:n</sup>55</i>	Yiwu dialect
<i>Shang-li</i> (1/3)	七 <i>ts<sup>h</sup>ə<sup>25</sup></i>	Jiangshan dialect
<i>Oujiang</i> (1/1)	眙 <i>ts<sup>h</sup>ɿ<sup>42</sup></i>	Wenzhou dialect
<i>Xuanzhou</i> (1/1)	看 <i>k<sup>h</sup>ø<sup>55</sup></i>	Xuancheng dialect

Table 3 showing languages in sample with conative aspect marker 14/36

## Interim Conclusion

- ❑ Not all verb reduplicants can be treated as auto-VCLs:
  - ❑ This depends on the elliptical form of the verb construction:
    - ❑ [VERB- ('not')-VERB] in the Shaoxing dialect, in which the verb reduplicant still functions as a verb to pose a polar question;
    - ❑ By comparison, the verb reduplicant in the verb phrase [VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL] can be treated as an auto-VCL which combines with the verb to code lexical aspects.
  
- ❑ Distinguish the verb construction [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT] 看看看 'try to have a look' from the verb construction [VERB<sub>1</sub>-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-VP<sub>2</sub>] 看看看 'be looking'.
  
- ❑ Auto-VCLs can indicate lexical and grammatical aspects in different verb constructions which are not found in Standard Mandarin:
  - ❑ Coding the prospective aspect:
    - ❑ [VERB-AUTO VCL. PROSP-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT]
  - ❑ Coding the imperfective aspect in the background clause: the more times the verb is reduplicated, the longer the temporal duration expressed by the verb construction:
    - ❑ [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] IPFV-VP<sub>2</sub>]
    - ❑ [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] IPFV-VP<sub>2</sub>]
    - ❑ [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] IPFV-VP<sub>2</sub>]

## PART V: Conclusion

## Conclusion (1)

- Auto-VCL structures in Wu Chinese share these similarities with other Sinitic languages:
  - Lexical aspects with auto-VCLs:
    - The delimitative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase  
[ACTIVITY VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL- (DEFINITE OBJECT)]
    - The iterative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase  
[SEMELFACTIVE VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL- (DEFINITE OBJECT)]
  - The habitual aspect with auto-VCLs:
    - The habitual aspect is indicated by the verb phrase  
[ACTIVITY VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL- INDEFINITE OBJECT]

## Conclusion (2)

- The following auto-VCL structures are specific to Wu Chinese compared with other Sinitic languages:
  - Auto-VCLs code the frequency of verbs of action: (whereas the general frequency marker *xia* 下 ‘time’ is used in Standard Mandarin):
    - [VERB-QUANTIFIER-AUTO VCL]
  - Auto-VCLs can code the prospective or imperfective aspect in different verb constructions:
    - Coding the prospective aspect:
      - [VERB-AUTO VCL-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT]
    - Coding the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause:
      - [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] IPFV-VP<sub>2</sub>] (only found in the Ningbo dialect)
      - [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] IPFV-VP<sub>2</sub>] (widely found in Northern Wu, also in Hui Chinese)
      - [VERB<sub>1</sub>-[AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] IPFV-VP<sub>2</sub>] (only found in the Hangzhou dialect)

## Conclusion (3)

- In Wu Chinese, not all verb reduplicants can be treated as auto-VCLs:
  - The verb reduplicant in the verb form [VERB- ('not')-VERB] in the Shaoxing dialect cannot be treated as an auto-VCL structure, as the elliptical component is negator *WU* 勿 'not', which is used to form questions.
  - The grammaticalized verb *KAN* 看 'look' also cannot be treated as auto-VCLs when it functions as a conative aspect marker, which also can be used to modify other verbs.
    - 看看看 [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT] 'try to have a look'
    - 读读看 [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT] 'try to have a read'
    - 看看看 [VERB-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] 'be looking'
    - 读读读 [VERB-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] 'be reading'
- Auto-VCLs are verb reduplicants which can combine with verbs to indicate the lexical or grammatical aspects in different verb constructions.



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