Lu Man

The Morpho-Syntax of Aspect in Xiāng Chinese

This thesis investigates the morpho-syntax of the aspectual system in one variety of Xiāng (namely: Chángshā), which is one of the ten sub-families of Chinese (which are Mandarin, Xiāng, Gàn, Wú, Yuè, Hakka, Min, Pínghuà, Jìn, and Hui).

Two of the idiosyncratic properties in Xiāng Chinese is that one aspect marker is used to express more than one meaning or that more than one element is used to express one aspectual meaning. I base my analysis on the assumption that inner aspect in Xiāng is a three-layered structure: Asp3P, Asp2P and Asp1P.

I focus my investigating on two aspect particles, ta21 and ka41. Different from previous approaches, I propose a two-particle approach to deal with the multifunction of ta21. I argue that we have two particles sharing the same morphological form: ta21_PERF and ta21_PROG. The difference between the two particles lies in the different syntactic positions they occupy. I also point out that ka41 should not be treated as a perfective marker as it is previously proposed to be. Instead, I suggest that descriptively, ka41 doubles the already existing endpoint and that it does so to make the endpoint definitive. ka41 is used to block further access to the activity preceding the lexical endpoint (for example, such event cannot be present in the progressive). In the end, I point out that in Chángshā and Xiāng in general, all three inner aspect positions can be lexically realized: ta21_PERF occupies Asp3P, ka41 and ta21_PROG occupies Asp2P, and a lexical result predicate may be located in Asp1P position.