

MASTER'S THESIS

The functions and occurrence patterns of aspect markers jo, gwo, gan, jyuh in Cantonese narrative discourse

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**THE FUNCTIONS AND OCCURRENCE PATTERNS OF
ASPECT MARKERS JO, GWO, GAN, JYUH
IN CANTONESE NARRATIVE DISCOURSE**

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Abstract

This dissertation is a discourse-based study of Cantonese aspect in narratives. It aims at investigating the discourse functions and occurrence patterns of situation types and aspectual viewpoint markers *jo*, *gwo*, *gan* and *jyuh* in relation to the foregrounding-backgrounding information structure. Four pieces of narrative scripts are recorded from a local television program series. They are reproduced in written form, transcribed and analysed.

The analytic tool is developed from the two-component theory of Smith (1991,1994). All clauses are categorized as foregrounding or backgrounding, and examined with reference to temporal elements that may contribute to the progression of narrative time, such as situation type, aspect marker, resultative verb complement, clause linking words etc. The results are then analysed by frequency distribution of occurrence and content analysis.

The results show that: (1) The endpoint notion in the temporal frame of situations is relevant to time progression and foregrounding-backgrounding information structure in Cantonese narrative discourse. (2) Perfective *gwo*, imperfectives *gan* and *jyuh* can be treated as backgrounding devices. (3) Perfective *jo* has greater tendency to occur in foregrounding. In addition to its basic use as a perfective marker, perfective *jo* has some other discourse functions. One of the discourse functions is to mark an event as cohesive to another previously mentioned event, especially when there is an intervention of some backgrounding or foregrounding materials between them.

摘要

本論文研究廣東話的體在敘事文 (Narrative) 的功能和出現的規律。本文根據 Smith (1991, 1994) 的“二元理論” (Two-component Theory)，分析：(1) 各種情狀類別 (Situation types) 在敘事文的前景—背景結構中出現的規律；(2) 體標記“咗”“過”“嚟”“住”在敘事文的前景—背景結構中出現的規律和功能。

研究的結果反映了：(1) 情狀的時間架構的起點和終點，與敘事的時間推進以及前景—背景結構有關；(2) 經歷體“過”、進行體“嚟”和存續體“住”具有標示背景結構的功能；(3) 完成體“咗”較傾向出現在前景結構。“咗”除了具有完成體標記的基本功能，它在篇章中還起著其他作用。其中一個作用，是聯繫該情狀和前文某情狀，表示該情狀是前文某情狀的接續和完成。而這兩個情狀之間，可能加插有一些描述性的背景資料。

Table of Contents

Page of acceptance

Acknowledgement

Abstract

Abbreviations

Chapter I	Introduction	1 – 6
1.1	Aims of the study	
1.2	Scope and the organization of the study	
Chapter II	Review of Literature	7 – 38
2.1	Time	
2.2	The location of situations in time	
2.2.1	Tense	
2.2.2	Time adverbial, modal auxiliary and context	
2.2.3	Reichenbach's three orientation points for temporal relationship	
2.3	An overview of aspect theory	
2.3.1	Vendler's verb classes	
2.3.2	Comrie's perfective and imperfective opposition	
2.3.3	Smith's two-component theory	
2.3.3.1	Viewpoint aspect	
2.3.3.2	Situation aspect	
2.4	The importance of aspect in narrative	
2.4.1	Labov's definition of narrative by temporal properties	
2.4.2	Studies of aspect and foreground-background distinction in narrative	
2.4.2.1	Hopper's foreground-background distinction through perfective-imperfective contrast	
2.4.2.2	Reinhart's foreground-background distinction and figure-ground distinction in gestalt theory	

- 2.4.2.3 Ehrlich's dual roles of English progressive in foregrounding and backgrounding
- 2.4.3 Studies of lexical aspect and the movement of time in narrative
 - 2.4.3.1 Dry's time movement make reference to temporal endpoints
 - 2.4.3.2 Hatav's endpoint property directly relevant to temporal sequence
 - 2.4.3.3 Smith's activity sentences also move narrative time
- 2.4.4 Studies of foreground-background distinction and subordination
 - 2.4.4.1 Tomlin's foreground-background distinction associates with independent-dependent clause types
 - 2.4.4.2 Thompson's subordinate clauses maintain temporal line and accomplish text-creation work
- 2.5 Previous studies of Chinese aspect marker in narrative
 - 2.5.1 Andreasen's foregrounding and backgrounding through aspect
 - 2.5.2 Chang's discourse function of imperfective *le*

Chapter III Cantonese Aspect

39 – 58

- 3.1 Some facts about Cantonese aspect markers
- 3.2 Grammatcal aspect
 - 3.2.1 Perfective *jo*
 - 3.2.2 Perfective *gwo*
 - 3.2.3 Imperfective *gan*
 - 3.2.4 Imperfective *jyuh*
- 3.3 Lexical aspect
 - 3.3.1 Resultative verb complements
 - 3.3.2 Cantonese verb classes in Smith's modal
 - 3.3.2.1 States
 - 3.3.2.2 Activities
 - 3.3.2.3 Accomplishments
 - 3.3.2.4 Semelfactives
 - 3.3.2.5 Achievements

Chapter IV	Methodology	59 – 64
4.1	Research questions	
4.2	Data collection	
4.3	Method of analysis	
4.3.1	Operation definitions	
4.3.2	Analysis of data	
Chapter V	Findings and Discussion	65 – 111
5.1	The relations of situation types and foregrounding-backgrounding structure in Cantonese narrative discourse	
5.1.1	Foregrounding	
5.1.2	Backgrounding	
5.1.3	Summary	
5.2	The relations of aspect markers <i>jo</i> , <i>gwo</i> , <i>gan</i> , <i>jyuh</i> and foregrounding-backgrounding structure in Cantonese narrative discourse	
5.2.1	Observations	
5.2.2	Discussion	
5.2.2.1	Perfective <i>jo</i>	
5.2.2.2	Perfective <i>gwo</i>	
5.2.2.3	Imperfective <i>gan</i>	
5.2.2.4	Imperfective <i>jyuh</i>	
Chapter VI	Conclusion	112 – 114
Appendix I		
Appendix II		
Appendix III		
Appendix IV		
References		