

MASTER'S THESIS

A corpus-based comparison between semantic and pragmatic features of English aspect marker-ING and Chinese aspect markers ZHE and ZAI

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**A CORPUS-BASED COMPARISON BETWEEN
SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF
ENGLISH ASPECT MARKER *-ING* AND CHINESE
ASPECT MARKERS *ZHE* AND *ZAI***

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to explore the similarities and differences between the imperfective aspect markers of English *-ing*, Mandarin *zhe* and *zai* from the perspective of the semantic-pragmatic interface.

Aspect is profoundly studied in both English and Mandarin Chinese with intuition-based approach and constructed examples. Although English *-ing* has been examined in a number of corpus and empirical studies, the patterns and form changes are mainly concerned in them. With respect to the aspect studies in Mandarin Chinese, Xiao & McEnery (2004) conduct a corpus-based study, but they still take the syntactic and semantic approaches as many others do. Thus, the present analysis bridges these gaps by conducting a corpus – based analysis in terms of the semantic and pragmatic features. Since English *-ing*, Mandarin *zhe* and *zai* all view a situation from within, Comrie (1976)'s definition of aspect and the aspectuality in Functional Grammar are especially chosen for marking a further dynamic analysis to examine the distinctive features behaved in the internal temporal structure of a situation.

The main findings show that the majority number of both English *-ing* and Mandarin *zai* could express ongoing situations, but the English *-ing* of ongoing could also emphasize a particular moment of the reference time of a situation, while Mandarin *zai* fails to do that, unless it occurs with Mandarin *zheng*. Furthermore, compared with Mandarin *zhe*, the durativity in English *-ing* involves repeating the situations involved. As regards the Chinese translation of English *-ing*, most of

English *-ing* is translated into Chinese without aspect markers marked, especially when English *-ing* functions to anticipate future happenings and denote durative nature. The whole analysis provide a pedagogical guide to language learners of Chinese for native speakers of English and a theoretical reference for generalizing the rule of Chinese translations of English *-ing*.

摘要

本篇論文試圖從語義語用方面比較英語未完成體 *-ing*，漢語未完成體“著”和“在”。

體在英語和漢語的研究大多是應用語言的直覺知識和非真實語言加以論證。雖然已有一些是基於語料庫對英語 *-ing* 進行研究，但大多涉及的是英語 *-ing* 的形式和結構的變化。體在漢語的研究中，Xiao & McEnery (2004) 採用了語料庫的方法，然而該研究依然是從句法語義的角度對漢語的體進行研究。因此，本篇論文試圖採用語料庫從語義語用的角度對體進行分析。誠然英語 *-ing*，漢語“著”和“在”都是從內部觀察一種情狀，所以該篇分析尤其採用 Comrie (1976) 對體的定義和功能語法中體的理論對這三個未完成體的標記進行動態比較。

比較發現，雖然多數英語 *-ing* 和漢語“在”從語義語用的角度表達情狀的進行，但英語 *-ing* 在該情況下還可以尤其突出參照時間上的某一時間點，而漢語“在”除非與漢語“正”同時出現構成漢語“正在”或“正…在”才可以達到這一效果。此外，與漢語“著”比較，英語 *-ing* 表達的情狀持續涉及到情狀的重復。而在英語 *-ing* 的中文譯文中，漢語多數採用無未完成體標記的譯文表達。

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