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Aspect: A Linguistic Device to Convey Temporal Sequences in Discourse[1]

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This study focuses on how -guo, a perfective aspect marker in Chinese, is used by native speakers to narrate a sequence of events in their speech. The study's analysis of transcribed audio-recorded natural conversation shows that -guo indicates a situation is viewed as a bounded whole with an emphasis on the end-boundary of the situation. The discourse motivation for a speaker to use -guo is to end the situation that -guo co-occurs with and then directs the hearer's attention to the next situation. The discourse level analysis also clarifies the confusion between the analysis of -guo and another perfective particle -le in traditional studies of the Chinese aspect system: -guo is usually treated as an Experiential marker to avoid an analysis with two Perfectives. This study shows that the confusion in traditional studies stems from the limitations of sentence level analyses.

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on how the Chinese (Mandarin) aspect particle *-guo* is used by native speakers to narrate the sequence of events in their speech. Based upon an analysis of audio-recorded and transcribed natural conversation data, this study analyzes *-guo* as a Perfective marker which indicates a situation (including an action or an event depicted by the verb, following Comrie, 1976) is viewed as a bounded whole with an emphasis on the end-boundary of the situation. Thus, the discourse motivation for a speaker to use *-guo* is to close up the situation that *-guo* co-occurs with and then allow the discourse to move on to the next situation.

One explicit case of the necessity to analyze naturally occurring data is also provided in this study. Traditionally, Chinese *-guo* is treated as an Experiential marker while *-le* is treated as the only Perfective marker. However, one common methodological problem among the existing studies of *-guo* and *-le* is that all these studies are based on isolated sentences. If both *-guo* and *-le* mark Perfective (as proposed in this study), they are used for narrating sequences of events in which the situation is reported independent of its relevance to other

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situations (Hopper, 1982). Since each of the isolated sentences usually contains only one situation, when it is used with Perfective *-guo* or *-le*, it is viewed as bounded whole without temporal relevance to other situations. Therefore in sentence level analysis it is impossible to differentiate the grammatical distinction between *-guo* and *-le*. The discourse scope analysis in this study overcomes the limitations of sentence level analysis and therefore clarifies the confusion of the Perfective vs. Experiential analysis in the traditional studies of the Chinese aspect system. The study also explains the difference between the *-guo* Perfective and the general *-le* Perfective based on their different discourse functions. The discourse level functional analysis in this study may also provide a new methodological direction of linguistic study for non-inflectional languages.

TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE DISCOURSE MOTIVATION FOR USING PERFECTIVE ASPECT

Temporal perspective is a term used by Andersen (1994) which refers to the notion that speakers always take personal perspectives on the information they are placing into the on-going discourse; and they can skillfully use linguistic and non-linguist devices to convey their temporal perspective in natural speaking. This study combines research on tense-mood-aspect (TMA) marking in narratives (cf. Labov, 1972; Schiffrin, 1981; Silva-Corvalan, 1983) and research on the grammar of the TMA system, including formal (Smith, 1991) and functional (Hopper & Thompson 1980; Bybee & Dahl, 1989) approaches. In this framework the traditional terms of tense, mood, and aspect are no longer considered as three separate categories. Any given grammatical TMA form, which constitutes only a part of the much larger repertoire of devices, is considered as a linguistic device which is used by speakers to indicate their temporal perspectives in a given discourse context.

Perfective is an aspect which marks a situation as a bounded whole without referring to the internal temporal constituency of the situation (Comrie, 1976). To illustrate perfective aspect, Comrie used the English sentence "John was reading when I entered" (1976:3) as an example. He suggested that the second verb presents the event (my entry) as a bounded whole without reference to its internal temporal consitituency and therefore has perfective meaning. This perfective meaning is expressed by special verbal forms in some languages other than English and those special verbal forms are refered to as perfective aspect markers.

The discourse function of the perfective aspect is also well documented (Hopper, 1979; 1982; Li, Thompson, & Thompson, 1982). Hopper suggests that perfective is the aspect used for narrating sequences of discrete events in which the situation is reported for its own sake, independent of its relevance to

other situations. In narratives, the perfective is used with foreground clauses which present the events in the same temporal order as their succession in the real world.

Chinese is one of the languages which grammatically marks perfective aspect. Aspect marking in Chinese, though, is considered optional (Li & Thompson, 1981). It is optional in the sense that verbs can appear in the clauses without any TMA markings. With this non-obligatory nature, the time frame and temporal sequence of the discourse are mainly established and maintained by time phrases and temporal adverbials. The purpose for speakers to choose a grammatical form, as Andersen (1994) proposed, is to express their thoughts in a "quick and easy" manner. The speakers can choose to use certain TMA markers to economically organize their speech with a coherent temporal sequence, such as using the Perfective post-verbal particle *-le* as a foregrounding device while using the Perfect sentence-final particle *le* to inject background information (Hopper, 1979; Li, Thompson, & Thompson, 1982). The following excerpt is a narrative taken from my audio-recorded data which illustrates the discourse function of the Perfective *-le*, as an example of how the general perfective aspect functions in spoken Chinese:

(1) "Maid service agency" (CGW)[2]

((Context: This is a group conversation among three participants: River, May, and Stu (who didn't speak in this excerpt). The primary story teller is River, who is telling a story about the boss of a maid service agency. The boss is a new reference to May and Stu.))

River:

1 *ta na ge baomu jieshoshuo de laoban benlai jiu shi baomu*
3sg that MW maid agency DE boss originally just be maid
"The boss of the agency originally was a maid."

2 *houlai ziji chengli baomu . nuyong zhongxin*
then self open maid maid center
"Then she opened her own agency,"

3 *gu le yi ge ren* <==
hire -LE one MW person
"(and) hired a person."

4 *jiu shi ta*
just be 3sg
"That was him."

May:

5 *(laughter)*

River:

6 *zuo le*
work -LE
"(He) worked—" (?)

7 *houlai fazhan de hen kuai a*
then develop DE very fast SFP
"Then (the business) grew very fast."

8 *cai ban nian zhe ge baomu jiu kai Lexus che le*
only half year this MW maid already drive CS car LE
"In only half a year, the (former) maid had a Lexus car."

9 *(laughter)*

River:

10 *jiu ba ta fire diao le* <==
then BA 3sg CS off -LE
"Then, (the boss) fired him."

In this excerpt, the following situations are presented by the speaker River in sequential order: 'the former maid opened her own agency (line 1-2), 'hired one person' (line 3), and 'fired the person' (line 10). The Perfective *-le* (line 3 and 10) is used with the foreground clauses to present the events in temporal order. The rest of this paper will demonstrate that *-guo* also has the basic function of a Perfective, with a special emphasis on the end-boundary.[3]

-GUO: EXPERIENTIAL VS. PERFECTIVE

The post-verbal particle *-guo* has been suggested as an Experiential marker in most studies (cf. Ma, 1977; Li & Thompson, 1981; Dahl, 1985). Li and Thompson (1981) present a very detailed description of the Experiential *-guo*. They suggest that *-guo* signals that an event has been experienced (at least once) with respect to some reference time. This reference time is usually left unspecified and *-guo*, in this case, indicates that "the event has been experienced at least once at some indefinite time, which is usually the indefinite past" (p. 228). For example:

(2a) *Ta qunian dao Zhongguo qu guo.*
3sg last.year to China go -GUO
"S/He went to China last year."
(Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 228)

Li and Thompson have based their discussion of *-guo* upon the contrast between *-guo* and the Perfective particle *-le*; most of the examples they provide are minimal pairs using *-guo* and *-le*. Their reason for linking the two particles together is that *-guo* and *-le* are clearly semantically related and there are sentence pairs which are nearly indistinguishable. However, their focus is to differentiate the "Experiential" *-guo* from the Perfective *-le*. For example, (2b) is the minimal pair Li and Thompson provide for (2a).

(2b) *Ta qunian dao Zhongguo qu le.*
3sg last.year to China go -LE
"S/He went to China last year."
(Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 228)

According to their analysis, *-guo* in sentence (2a) is changed into *-le* in (2b) because of the fact that the event 'go to China' has happened, nothing is said about whether s/he is still there. (2a), however, suggests that the event took place at least once and is now over. Thus they have concluded that *-guo* is an Experiential marker which signals that an event has been experienced at least once and that *-le* is a Perfective marker which typically conveys the message that the event took place. This *-le* Perfective and *-guo* Experiential analysis has been widely accepted in the field of Chinese linguistics.

One important thing which should be pointed out in the Li and Thompson study is that their analysis of *-guo* referring to 'indefinite past' was influenced by early studies (Jahontov, 1957; Chao, 1968). Since "aspect is not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the situation" (Comrie, 1976, p.5), *-guo* in fact has nothing to do with the external time reference. Here I would like to point out an example in which *-guo* is used in a 'future' context:

(3) *Ni gen ta jian-guo ji ci jiu shu le.*
you with 3sg see -GUO a few MW then familiar LE
"After you have met him a few times, you will be better acquainted."
(Chao, 1968, pp. 312-13)

While the Experiential analysis is overwhelmingly accepted in the field, Dahl (1985) notes that the *-guo* Experiential in Chinese is an unusual category among the world's languages. From his typological study of TMA, Dahl reports that Experiential is a "relatively uncommon category" and is a peripheral category (no language in his sample uses a morphological construction) in the TMA systems. However, his analysis suggests that only Chinese Experiential is a very distinct category because of the consistent use of the highly grammaticized particle *-guo*.

Since Dahl's (1985) study is based on a survey of a large number of languages, he reports the unusual characteristic of the *-guo* Experiential which is observed in his data without further questioning the widely accepted Experiential analysis of *-guo*. Iljic (1990), however, directly questions the Experiential analysis of *-guo* in his study. He points out that *-guo* can be used in a situation where the emphasis of the sentence is not focused on the experiences of the subject. For example, in sentence (4) the emphasis is on the inventory of actions the agent did to help his mom during a given period of time.

(4) *Xingqitian ni bang mama zuo-guo na xie shi ya?*
Sunday you help mom do -GUO which some affair SFP
"What did you do on Sunday to help your mom?"

Given the use of *-guo* in sentences like (4), Iljic suggests that *-guo* always implies discontinuity between the event and the point of reference. In contrast, *-le* generally expresses continuity between the event and the point of reference. For example:

(5a) *Zhuozi shang fang guo yi ben shu.*
table on put -GUO one MW book
"A book was/had been placed on the table."
(It isn't there anymore.)

(5b) *Zhuozi shang fang le yi ben shu.*
table on put -LE one MW book
"A book was/has been placed on the table."
(Somebody has put it on the table and it is still there.)

Huang and Davis (1989) present another study which clearly suggests that labeling *-guo* as an Experiential aspect is too narrow. Example (6a), they suggest, does not emphasize someone having had some experience.

(6a) *Gou gangcai chi guo ni de pingguo.*
dog just now eat -GUO you DE apple
"The dog just took a bite of your apple."

(6b) *Gou gangcai chi le ni de pingguo.*
dog just now eat -LE you DE apple
"The dog just ate your apple."

Since the focus of the Huang and Davis study is *-le*, they also put much emphasis on the contrast between *-guo* and *-le*. They analyze the contrast between (6a) and (6b) by concluding that *-guo* in (6a) denotes a partial occurrence or complement of the situation while *-le* in (6b) indicates a total completion of the situation—the apple is gone.

Another contrast between *-guo* and *-le* suggested by Huang and Davis is that a situation used with *-guo* no longer holds, but if it is used with *-le* it lacks this implication. For example:

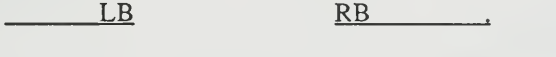
(7a) *Wo kai guo hui le.*
I attend -GUO meeting LE
"I have attended the meeting." (now free to turn his/her attention to some other activity.)

(7b) *Wo kai le hui le.*
I attend -LE meeting LE
"I have attended the meeting."

In (7a), the situation 'to attend a meeting' is over, therefore, the agent can move to the next event. This analysis is similar to Iljic's analysis that *-guo* implies discontinuity. But in the case of *-le* (7b), their analysis suggests that whether the situation still holds or not is not specified. This view contrasts with Iljic's analysis that *-le* emphasizes the continuity.

The most interesting facet of Huang and Davis' analysis is their attempt to put *-guo* and *-le* in the same category—Perfective. Perfectivity "involves lack of

reference to the internal temporal constituency of a situation, rather than explicitly implying the lack of such temporal constituency" (Comrie, 1976, p. 21). Thus, the perfective signals a situation is viewed as a bounded whole; and any bounded situation should have two boundaries: left (beginning) and right (end) boundary (see Figure 1 below).



Situation

Figure 1: Situation, LB, and RB (Huang & Davis, 1989)

Huang and Davis propose that both *-le* and *-guo* signal the presence of an interruption. In the case of *-guo*, it emphasizes the interruption following the right boundary (RB) of the situation; in the case of *-le*, it focuses on either the left boundary (LB) or the right boundary. This proposal concurs with Smith's (1991) analysis that *-le* is the general Perfective and *-guo* is a language specific Perfective in Chinese.

-GUO PERFECTIVE AND *-LE* PERFECTIVE

From a cross-linguistic perspective, it is not uncommon for one language to have more than one perfective grammatical morpheme (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca, 1994). Indeed, both the Chinese *-guo* and *-le* are along the cross-linguistic grammaticization pathway proposed by Bybee et al. (1994). In their framework, perfective and/or past have evolved from anterior (also known as perfect), which in turn has developed from two pathways: the resultative, which has a lexical source of stative verbs such as 'have' and 'be'; and the completive, which has a lexical source of dynamic verbs such as 'finish,' 'come,' and 'go.' The two Chinese Perfective particles *-le* and *-guo* both have a dynamic verb as their semantic source. The dynamic verb *liao* (finish) has developed into a "completive" *liao* which is used in a verb compound (Smith, 1991). When *liao* with the completive meaning is further abstracted along the pathway, it developed into the sentence-final particle '*le*' (Perfect/Anterior) and the post-verbal particle '*-le*' (Perfective) and became more grammaticized: it lost its semantic function and showed phonetic reduction—the vowel reduced to [ə] and the tone became neutral. Another dynamic verb *guo* (cross/pass) was first evolved into a "completive" *guo* used in a verb compound with an optional fourth tone and a strong semantic color (Smith, 1991). Then it developed into the Perfective *-guo*: It reduced to a neutral tone and lost its semantic meaning

therefore it can only be attached to the main verb to indicate grammatical meanings. Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of Perfective in Chinese.

Dynamic Verbs:
liao (finish), *guo* (cross/pass), and others with the meaning of finish/complete

—> completive —> Anterior (*le*) —> Perfective (*-guo*, *-le*)
(an open class,
not grammaticized)

Figure 2: The Evolution of Perfective in Chinese

Both Huang and Davis' (1989) proposal that *-guo* is a Perfective marker which emphasizes the end-boundary of the situation and Smith's (1991) treatment of *-guo* as a language specific Perfective in Chinese can be supported by Bybee et al.'s (1994) grammaticization framework and also by the non-inflectional feature of Chinese. Bybee et al.'s framework proposes that the grammatical meaning of grammatical morphemes are derived from the semantic meaning of the source verb. Since non-inflectional languages such as Chinese are more conservative of the source form of their grammatical morphemes than other more inflectional languages seem to be (Howard & Wang 1995; Bisang, 1995), the end-boundary emphasis function of *-guo* is clearly derivable from its lexical source (the 'cross/pass' meaning of the dynamic verb *guo*). The fact that *-le* is more phonetically reduced than *-guo* is also an indication that *-le* is a more abstract and more general grammatical form.

PERFECTIVE *-GUO* IN NATURAL SPOKEN DISCOURSE

The discourse data used in this study are taken from transcribed audio-recorded conversations among native Chinese speakers. The data constitute a variety of conversational situations including group conversation, telephone conversation, and telephone interview. All the speakers are originally from Mainland China and received their college education there. All data are recorded in the U.S.

As proposed earlier in this paper, the discourse function of Perfective *-guo* in Chinese is to emphasize the end-boundary of a situation.

(8) "Visiting Disneyland" (WK:2)

((Context: A telephone conversation between Stu and Rose. In the previous discourse, Stu tried to convince Rose to visit Disneyland. Starting at the beginning of this excerpt, he is giving Rose another reason to visit.))

Stu:

01 *er erqie nizhidao*
an- and you know
"And, you know,"

02 *suoyou de neixie Zhongguo de maoyi daibiaotuan lai*
all DE those China DE trade delegation come
"All those Chinese business delegations come—"

03 *xiang KY tamen nayang de tuan lai*
like (name) they kind DE delegation come
"(when) the delegation like the one KY went with comes—"

Rose:

04 *wo zhidao wo zhidao*
I know I know
"I know, I know."

05 *suoyi zhege shi wo zui bu yao qu de*
therefore this be I -est not want go SFP
"So this is the biggest reason that I don't want to go."

Stu:

06 *dui tamen mei yi ci ta jiushishuo mei yi ci lai*
right they every one MW 3sg like every one MW come
dou qu
always go
"Right. Every time when they come, they always go (to Disneyland)."

07 *en yinwei wo mama you yi ge pengyou*
en because I mom have one MW friend
"My mom has a friend."

08 *ta ta lai hao ji ci le*
3sg 3sg come many several MW LE
"She (the friend) has been here several times."

09 *ta shuo wo mei yi ci lai dou qu nar*
3sg say I every one MW come always go there
"She (the friend) said 'Every time I always go there (Disneyland).'"

10 *weishenme ne*
why SFP
"Why?"

11 *yinwei daibiaotuan li de ren shi butong de*
because delegation within DE people be different SFP
"Because (each time) the members of the delegation are different."

Rose:

12 *en en*
uh-huh
"Uh-huh."

Stu:

13 *ta shi qu guo le* <==
3sg be go -GUO LE
"She had gone there before."

14 *daduoshu bieren dou meiyou qu guo* <==
majority others all not go -GUO
"But other people (from different delegations) had never gone (there)."

15 *zongshi anpai liang ge difang*
always arrange two MW place
"Two places are always arranged for them (to go)."

16 *yi ge shi en ... zheige Disneyland*
one MW be en ... this CS
"One is Disneyland,"

17 *hai yi ge shi Ducheng*
also one MW be Las Vegas
"the other is Las Vegas."

Rose:

18 *ao Ducheng.*
en Las Vegas
"Uh, Las Vegas."

Stu:

19 *Ducheng ma*
Las Vegas SFP
"Las Vegas"

The topic of this segment is "visiting Disneyland." Before line 13, the visitation is talked about in a rather generic way. Starting at line 07, the situation of 'the person's visiting of Disneyland' is almost habitually repeated in the past (no emphasis of 'at least once'), and will probably happen many times in the future (no indication of 'no longer true'). In line 13, the use of *-guo* clearly emphasizes the end-boundary of the situation. This emphasis implies that the situation took place (or had been experienced) in the past. In line 14 *-guo* is used in exactly the same manner, but this time in a negative structure.

While a speaker uses *-guo* to emphasize the end-boundary of the situation, the "experienced" meaning is naturally inferable from the discourse context. For example:

(9) "Move in" (CGW)

((Context: This is the same group conversation among River, May, and Stu. River and May are co-telling a story about how River was asked by a friend to move in with him.))

May:

1 *na ge shihou*
that MW time
"By that time..."

2 *ni shi ni shi haoxiang gen wo shuodao guo de* <==
you be you be seem to I mention -GUO DE
"You seemed to have mentioned to me,"

3 *na ge ren yitiandaowan jiao ni dao ta jiali*
that MW person everyday ask you go 3sg home
"that everyday the guy asked you to move into his home."

4 *ni hai dao ta jiali qu kan guo* <==
you even go 3sg home go look -GUO
"You even went over and looked at the house."

5 *dui bu dui*
right not right
"Right?"

River:

6 *dui ta jiao wo guoqu zhu ai*
right 3sg ask I go live SFP
"Yeah, he asked me to move in."

May:

7 *yizai xiwang ni guoqu zhu*
again and again hope you go live
"Again and again he wanted you to move in."

8 *dui ba*
right SFP
"Right?"

In this segment, May asks River why his friend wanted him to move in. May has used *-guo* twice to emphasize the end-boundaries of the two situations: 'mention' in line 2 and 'look' in line 4. The clear marking of the end-boundaries signals that both narrated situations are (separately) completed and that the discourse is ready to move to a different situation—his failure to move in. The implication of the situations that 'mention' and 'look' have been experienced at least once is very clear in this context.

While a speaker uses *-guo* to emphasize the end-boundary, it may additionally mark 'discontinuity' in particular narrative contexts. For example:

(10) "Maid service agency" (CGW)

((This is the same three-person group conversation. The narrative in line 3 -16 is quoted earlier as example (1). River is the primary speaker who is describing a business plan he had with one of his friends. The excerpt starts with a story of that friend.))

River:

1 *yi yiqian na ge Zhenjiang ren*
be before that MW PLACE person
"Before, the guy from Zhenjiang ..."

2 *zai baomu jieshaosuo zuo guo yiduan shijian* <==
in maid agency work -GUO a short time
"(He) worked for a maid service agency for a short time."

3 *ta na ge baomu jieshaosuo de laoban benlai jiu shi baomu*
3sg that MW maid agency DE boss originally just be maid
"The boss of the agency originally was a maid."

4 *houlai ziji chengli baomu . nuyong zhongxin*
then self open maid maid center
"Then she opened her own agency,"

5 *gu le yi ge ren*
hire -LE one MW person
"(and) hired a person."

6 *jiu shi ta*
just be 3sg
"That was him."

May:

7 *(laughter)*

River:

8 *zuo le ..*
work -LE ..
"(He) worked—" (?)

9 *houlai fazhan de hen kuai a*
then develop DE very fast SFP
"Then (the business) grew very fast."

10 *cai ban nian zhe ge baomu jiu kai Lexus che le*
only half year this MW maid already drive CS car LE
"In only half a year, the (former) maid had a Lexus car."

11 *(laughter)*

River:

12 *jiu ba ta fire diao le*
then BA 3sg CS off LE
"Then, (the boss) fired him."

May:

13 *nu de hai shi nan de*
female DE or be male DE
"Is (the boss) a woman or a man?"

River:

14 *nu de*
female DE
"A woman."

15 *na ge nu de benlai jiu shi baomu ai*
that MW female DE originally just be maid SFP
"She was a maid originally."

May:

16 *ao*
I see
"I see."

River:

17 *na women shangliang yixia*
then we discuss a.little
"Then, we (River and his friend) talked a little bit,"

18 *ye yao kai*
also want open (a maid agency)
"(and) wanted to open our own agency."

The eventual topic of this segment is about River and his friend who want to open their own maid service agency. *-Guo* in line 2 emphasizes the end-boundary of the situation—'worked in a maid service agency.' This emphasis allows the speaker to close this situation and move to the second situation—'the richness of the owner of a maid agency.' In the real speech event, the second situation digresses into another narrative (line 3 -16) and makes the discontinuity implication of the first situation very significant. Then, in line 17 the speaker uses the word "then" to lead the segment to a conclusion: 'open our own agency.'

It is noteworthy that the adverb "then" in line 17 is used to indicate temporal sequence in discourse as well. When there is no grammatical form available, the speakers may then use time phrase and/or adverbials to establish time frames and indicate temporal sequences. Taken together, all these linguistic devices allow speakers to verbally present their thoughts with a coherent temporal reference.

With a larger discourse context as seen in the above examples, *-guo* clearly exhibits a perfective function with an emphasis on the end-boundary of the situation. The discourse motivation of using *-guo* is to close the situation with which-*guo* co-occurs, allowing the discourse to move to the next situation.

CONCLUSION

The discourse level analysis of this study shows that the Perfective particle *-guo* is one of the linguistic devices used by a native speaker of Chinese to indicate the temporal sequence of the speech. The discourse motivation of using *-guo* is to close the situation and therefore direct the hearer's attention to the next situation in the continued discourse. With this function, *-guo* allows the speakers to organize discrete discourse situations more efficiently.

There are also other TMA markers in Chinese which can be used as linguistic devices to present temporal sequence in discourse. Closely linked to *-guo*, the Perfective *-le* is the general foregrounding device. Speakers can choose between the two Perfective markers based upon their temporal perspectives in the particular discourse context. The functional similarities between *-guo* and *-le* and the general scholastic agreement that postverbal *-le* marks Perfective in Chinese has forced the analysis of *-guo* into other directions (e.g., Experiential) (Iljic, 1990). When *-guo* sentences and *-le* sentences are isolated from their discourse context, as treated in the traditional Chinese linguistic studies, there is then no contextual information which can show how speakers use the two aspect markers to take different temporal perspectives. To be able to obtain a clear interpretation of the isolated *-guo* sentences, contextual time frames are usually constructed and therefore a relative tense (Comrie, 1985) category—Experiential—is assigned to the aspect particle *-guo*. A discourse level functional analysis can not only clarify the confusion between the two Chinese Perfective markers, but also point out the methodological importance of analyzing naturally occurring data in language studies.

APPENDIX: SYMBOLS IN CHINESE GLOSSES

BA:	*Ba*
CS:	Code Switching
DE:	*De*
MW:	Measure Word
SFP:	Sentence-Final Particle
3sg:	Third person singular pronoun

NOTES

[1] I would like to thank the UCLA tense-mood-aspect working group headed by Professor Roger Andersen, for their input and inspiration. I would also like to thank Kathy Howard for her input in the final version of this paper.

[2] See appendix for the symbols used in the Chinese glosses.

[3] Notice the *'le'* in line 8 is the Perfect marker and it injects the background information 'drove a Lexus—very rich' into the on-going discourse (Li, Thompson & Thompson, 1982). The Perfect *le* is not the focus of this study.

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