

Abstract for ICPEAL 17 & CLDC 9 joint conference

Title: Same interpretation, different process? The case of verbal-*le* and You+VP in Taiwan Mandarin

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The time representation of a sentence can be encoded with a great variety of linguistic tools. This can lead to different interpretation, such as the ‘completed event’ one. The aspectual perfective particle *le* has been analyzed as converting such a meaning (Smith, 1997; Klein et al., 2000), like in (1). Meanwhile, as the verb *you* ‘to have’ has been grammaticalized into an auxiliary in Taiwan Mandarin, it has also been analyzed by some scholars as a perfective marker, semantically equivalent to the particle *le* (Shi & Li, 2001; Tsai, 2002). An example is given in (2).

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|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----------|---------|
| (1) | ta | zuotian / #mingtian | xi-le | yifu |
| | 3SG | yesterday / #tomorrow | wash-PERF | clothes |
| (2) | Ta | zuotian / #mingtian | you xi | yifu |
| | 3SG | yesterday / #tomorrow | YOU wash | clothes |
- ‘He washed the clothes yesterday/#tomorrow’

However, other analyses see *you* as a realis marker or factual marker, putting forward the different syntactic and semantic behaviors of the two markers (Wen, 2002; Liu, 2011, Collart, 2018). Under this view, the ‘completed’ interpretation conveyed by the auxiliary *you* would be due to different reasons, compared with the perfective *le*.

This paper aims to investigate whether these two markers are different or equivalent with a behavioral and an event-related potential (ERP) study. Both markers were placed with a past or future time adverb in a sentence, with temporal violation being created in the future time reference sentence (see elements marked with # in (1) and (2)).

Acceptability judgments in the behavioral study revealed a significant effect of the temporality of the sentence, of the marker, and an interaction of both factors. This implies that even if the two markers are highly related with past time reference, compared with *le*, *you* is less acceptable in past time sentences but more acceptable in future time sentences, supporting the idea that the two markers are not exactly the same, despite a similar interpretation. As for the ERP study, the incongruent *you* elicited a stronger late negativity (after 600 ms) and the verb after the incongruent *you* (*you wash*) elicited a stronger N400 than their congruent counterparts, while the incongruent *le* (*wash-le*) induced a stronger LAN-like component than the congruent *le*. This suggests that the underlying processes of the two markers are indeed different, the one of *you* being semantically driven, while the process of *le* being grammatically based. This is also in line with previous time-relational analyses of *le* and semantic analyses of *you*.

Keywords: Time; Aspect; Realis; Factual; Acceptability Judgments; ERP; You+VP; Perfective-le
Subfields: Sentence and discourse processing; Concept / knowledge representation and storage

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