

## Doubling of perfective aspect markers in Hui Chinese

Xuan Ye<sup>1</sup> and Yao Chen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Ohio State University and <sup>2</sup>Fujian Normal University

Research on the doubling of synonymous function words in standard Mandarin Chinese mainly involves system-internal grammaticalization (Liu 2001, Jiang 2008, Zhang 2012). That does not appear to be the case in the doubling of perfective markers in the Hui (徽) dialect of Chinese,<sup>1</sup> spoken in Anhui and Jiangxi provinces. It is proposed here that this phenomenon in Hui Chinese can be attributed to language contact, and more specifically, to contact with standard Mandarin Chinese. This paper provides evidence for such a proposal, based on historical evidence and on data collected in Hui-speaking areas in 2019.

Both *zhe* 着 and *le* 了 are used as perfective aspect markers in the Hui dialect. In contrast, in modern Standard Mandarin, only *le* is used as a perfective aspect marker, while *zhe* is used as a durative aspect marker (Li & Thompson 1981). According to Mei (1988), in the case of northern Mandarin, this process of the division of labor of *le* and *zhe* took place during the Tang dynasty. Nevertheless, ever since the Song dynasty, dialects along the Yangtze River use *zhe* both as a perfective aspect marker and as a durative aspect marker. Long and Sun (2013), however, hold a different view, namely that in the Song dynasty, *zhe* was not used as a perfective aspect marker, but only as an aktionsart, with the semantic meaning of “completion”. In this presentation we will apply the concept of perfectivity broadly to particles that suggest the meaning of “completion” and “realization.”

In the Hui dialect, not only can both *zhe* and *le* be used as perfective markers, but they can co-occur in the same syntactic position as well (Hirata 1998). The different usages of *zhe* and *le* as perfective markers in Hui is demonstrated in Table 1<sup>2</sup>. An example of *le-zhe* co-occurrence in the Qimen Hui dialect 祁门徽语 is shown in (1).<sup>3</sup> As *le* was not originally employed as a perfective aspect marker in Hui, the most likely source of this usage in modern Hui is standard Mandarin. This phenomenon can thus be regarded as the result of language contact between Hui and standard Mandarin.

(1) 我跟渠都讲了着。(祁门徽语 Qimen Hui)

a42 kuẽ11 tɛi55 tu11 kô42 lia42-tʂo0.

Wo gen qu dou jiang le-zhe.

1st-SG with 3rd-SG already tell le-zhe

‘I already told him that.’

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1 Hui Chinese, or the Hui dialect, is one of the southern dialects of Chinese. It is mainly spoken in Xin'anjiang and its surrounding area which is to the south of Yangtze River. The specific counties and cities speaking different subvarieties of the Hui dialect include Jixi, Jingde, Shexian, Tunxi, Xiuning, Yixian, Qimen and Shitai in Anhui Province, as well as Wuyuan in Jiangxi Province (Meng 1997).

2 Table 1 models Hirata's sample sentences (1998: 277), and the results are collected from Chen's fieldwork in Anhui and Jiangxi in 2019.

3 The example is from Chen's fieldwork.

Such an analysis is supported by both historical evidence and subdialectal evidence. Historically speaking, migrants from Northern China occupied the Hui-speaking area from the Northern and Southern dynasties to the Song dynasty, followed by migrants who speak Jianghuai Mandarin during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Campbell 2004). As for the subdialectal evidence, geographical distribution of the aspect markers among various subvarieties of Hui supports the proposed language contact between Hui and standard Mandarin.

Table 1 presents the usage of *le* and *zhe* in different subdialects of Hui, based on geographic distribution from north to south. As Table 1 shows, there are significant differences between northern Hui subdialects on the one hand, and central and southern Hui subdialects on the other, in the choice of *le* and/or *zhe*. The basic distributional pattern is as follows. In northern Hui subdialects, *le* is now used as the perfective aspect marker, replacing the original marker, *zhe*. A different pattern emerges in central and southern Hui subdialects. Although *zhe* is retained, it has a competing form involving aspect-doubling of *le* and *zhe*, with *le-zhe* used in central Hui dialects, and *zhe-le* in southern Hui dialect.

**Table 1.** The Use of Perfective Aspect Markers in Hui Dialects

Mandarin	我买了一个碗。 Wo mai <i>le</i> yi ge wan. 1 <sup>st</sup> -SG buy PFV one QTF bowl I have bought a bowl.	他吃了饭了。 Ta chi <i>le</i> fan <i>le</i> . 3 <sup>rd</sup> -SG eat PFV rice SFP He has eaten.
Hui dialect subvarieties		
Meixi (northernmost)	我买了一只碗。 Wo mai <i>le</i> yi zhi wan.	渠饭吃了。 Qu fan chi <i>le</i> .
Jixi (northern Hui)	我买了一只碗。 Wo mai <i>le</i> yi zhi wan.	渠饭吃了。 Qu fan chi <i>le</i> .
Shexian (northern Hui)	我买了一只碗。 Wo mai <i>le</i> yi zhi wan.	渠饭吃了。 Qu fan chi <i>le</i> .
Tunxi (central Hui)	我买着一只碗。 Wo mai <i>zhe</i> yi zhi wan.	渠吃饭了着。 Qu chi fan <i>le-zhe</i> .
Xiuning (central Hui)	我买着一只碗。 Wo mai <i>zhe</i> yi zhi wan.	渠吃饭了着。 Qu chi fan <i>le-zhe</i> .
Qimen (central Hui)	我买着一个碗。 Wo mai <i>zhe</i> yi zhi wan.	渠吃饭了着。 Qu chi fan <i>le-zhe</i> .
Wuyuan (southern Hui)	我买着一只碗。 Wo mai <i>zhe</i> yi zhi wan.	渠饭吃着了。 Qu fan chi <i>zhe-le</i> .

The results suggest that the northern Hui subdialects are the most greatly influenced by standard Mandarin Chinese, since the perfective aspect marker *le* has supplanted the original element *zhe* in Hui dialects. In the case of the central and southern Hui subdialects, however, *le* has not completely supplanted, the native form, *zhe*, resulting in the retention of *zhe* occurring side-by-side with the overlaying of *le* and *zhe*, either as *le-zhe*, in central Hui dialects, or *zhe-le*, in southern Hui dialects.

Thus, it is proposed here that the co-occurring perfective markers in the Hui dialect is the result of language contact with standard Mandarin Chinese. Hui Chinese originally used *zhe* as the perfective marker. However, due to influence from the standard language's use of *le* as the perfective marker, the two aspect markers—the local and the standard—competed within the same syntactic position. The consequence is the mixed distribution pattern that we see today, with the inconsistent usages of *le* and *zhe* in the different subvarieties of Hui Chinese. The native aspect marker *zhe* is supplanted by *le* in northern Hui dialects. In central and southern Hui dialects, although *zhe* is retained there, its territory is, nonetheless, encroached upon by a competing form involving the aspect-doubling of *le-zhe* in central Hui dialects, and *zhe-le* in southern Hui dialects.

What does the future hold for the Hui dialects? Will *zhe* survive as the stand-alone perfective aspect marker? Or will the *le-zhe* and *zhe-le* eventually replace it? Will the aspect-doubling survive, or will those forms be replaced by *le* in central and southern Hui dialects, as it has already in northern Hui dialects? Only time will tell.

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Xuan Ye: ye.914@osu.edu

Yao Chen: chenyaofujianshida@163.com