

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE CANTONESE ASPECT MARKERS *GAN* AND *HAIDOU*

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In past research on Cantonese, the progressive aspect is typically stated as being marked by the postverbal particle *gan*¹ (Cheung 1972, Gao 1980, Li, et al 1995, Yip & Matthews 1995). Few people recognize that the preverbal locative adverb *haidou* can also be used as a progressive aspect marker (Cheung 1972, Gao 1980). For those discussions where the progressive marker *haidou* is mentioned, only a very brief description is devoted to *haidou* when compared to *gan*. Moreover, no attention is paid to the difference between them and *haidou* is usually considered simply as an alternative to *gan* or used to emphasize the ongoing meaning when it co-occurs with *gan* in the way that *haidou* is preverbal and *gan* is postverbal (Li et al 1995, Yip & Matthews 1995).

This paper intends to discuss the difference between *gan* and *haidou* and to explain it by considering notions originating from the two-component theory of aspect advocated by Smith (1997). In her theory, both the viewpoint aspect and situation aspect of the verb constellation contribute to the aspectuality of a sentence. It is well known that the progressive aspect can occur in sentences with Activity and Accomplishment (e.g. Gu 1999:193-4). Thus, it is not surprising that both *haidou* and *gan* can occur in these two types of events. However, I will show that *gan* is also compatible with a certain subset of Stative sentences. This hypothesis builds on the observation that the situation type Stative, as in Smith's terminology, may further be divided into two types which are quite different in nature, namely Property and State, I claim that the State is compatible with *gan* while the Property

¹ Throughout this paper, *gyut ping*, the Hong Kong Cantonese romanization system designed by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (<http://www.lshk.org/cantonese.php>), is used to represent the Cantonese data. Cantonese is a tone language but for the sake of convenience the lexical tone is left out unless it is significant in the discussion.

is not. This additional classification helps us to establish a syntactic and semantic distinction between *gan* and *haidou*. It provides an effective criterion to predict the distribution of the two aspect markers. In a nutshell, the goal of this paper is to show:

- (G1) *Haidou* is a typical progressive aspect marker which is used in Activities and Accomplishments.
- (G2) *Gan* should be treated as a general imperfective aspect marker. While it can be used with Activities and Accomplishments, it can also be employed with [-permanent] States.

This paper is set out as follows. First of all, the imperfectiveness of *gan* and *haidou* is justified. Examples are given to show that they determine imperfective aspect where no absolute tense is indicated; however, by default, they assume that the reference time is just the same as the speech time, in other words, the present tense. Second, I provide some examples of sentences which lead to my main concern in this paper. Some of them admit only *haidou* and some admit only *gan*. I then try to explain these distributions by considering the situation aspect and discuss their implications on our understanding of the aspectuality of these two markers. Finally, some apparent exceptions to my claim are mentioned, which I will attribute to syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors.

1. *Gan and haidou as aspect markers in Cantonese*

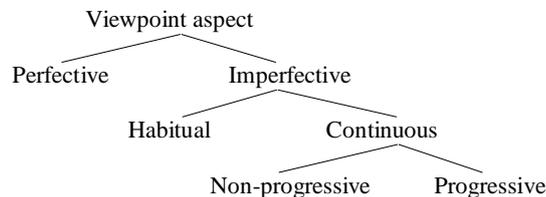
Cantonese uses grammaticalized morphemes to express the viewpoint aspect. Most of these morphemes still have their concrete lexical meanings when they are not used as aspect markers. Among them, postverbal particles like *gan*, *zyu*, *hoi*, *lok* express imperfective aspect. Previous research has very often neglected *haidou* or simply described it as an appendix to *gan*. This is motivated by the observation that preverbal *haidou* can replace *gan* or co-occur with it to emphasize progressiveness. Such research does not seem to accept *haidou* as a progressive aspect marker like the postverbal particles. It has even been suggested that *haidou* is just like an adverb (Li, et al 1995). In this section, I will illustrate situations in Cantonese where the postverbal *gan* and preverbal *haidou* in Cantonese do act as imperfective markers in that the reading of the present tense is assumed when no other temporal constituent is used. Discussion of the progressiveness of each of these markers will be left to Section 2. Before considering *gan* and *haidou*, it is necessary to mention the system of aspectual classification I adopt in this paper.

1.1 *Classification of imperfectives*

There are two kinds of aspect, namely viewpoint aspect and situation aspect. Both aspectual systems are relevant to my argument and will also be discussed in this paper. This section however concentrates solely on the first system.

Imperfective aspect can basically be divided into two kinds, namely the perfective and imperfective. The perfective presents a situation as a whole, including its initial and final endpoints while the imperfective only focuses on some part of the whole situation and thus excludes both endpoints. Smith (1997) classifies those situations lacking marked aspectual morphemes as neutral aspect, which is flexible, including the initial endpoint of a situation as well as at least one of the internal stages. Throughout this paper, only the imperfective will be discussed.

Comrie (1976:25) presents the following tree diagram to illustrate the classification of the viewpoint aspectual system:



The table is constructed by pairs of oppositions, aiming at covering various languages. It should be noted that a language may not have corresponding grammatical marking on all viewpoint aspects. For English, the construction *be + V-ing* acts as the whole subclass of continuous aspect. Equally the table may not be adequate for some languages. According to previous discussion (Cheung 1972, Gao 1980, Li, et al 1995, Yip & Matthews 1995), Cantonese has quite a rich aspectual system. However, these linguists fail to agree on how to classify and interpret some of the particles. For instance, the most diversely interpreted one is *hoi*, which was classified as continuous in Cheung (1972), progressive in Gao (1980), inchoative in Li, et al (1995) and habitual in Yip and Matthews (1995). The studies concurred mainly in classing *gan* as progressive, and *zyu* as durative or continuous (and thus non-progressive continuous). An exemption to this last point is Gao (1980), who classified *zyu* as progressive just like *gan* and *hoi*.

I do not intend to go through, in detail, all of these aspect markers and their various classifications. In the following sections, *gan* and *haidou* will be discussed in more depth, and particularly focus will be given to their role in marking tense and aspect.

1.2 *Gan* as a continuous aspect marker in Cantonese

The postverbal particle *gan* has been treated as a typical progressive marker in Cantonese (Cheung 1972, Gao 1980, Li, et al 1995, Yip & Matthews 1995). I argue that although this is mainly the case, it may also serve as a continuous aspect marker. Its progressiveness, and its interaction with tense, will be discussed in Section 2.

Before dealing with the temporal semantics of *gan*, we will take a look at its distribution. Firstly, *gan* immediately follows the simple verb, for example (Yip & Matthews 1995: 202),

- (1) Go-zan-si ni dung lau zung hei -gan.
that CL time this CL flat still build GAN
“At that time this block of flats was still being built.”

Second, it is an infix in a verb-complement compound, following the verb and preceding the complement. For example (Yip & Matthews 1995: 202), in Cantonese, *gan* can be inserted into the verb-complement compound, *paakto* (to date):

- (2) Keoidei loeng-go paak-gan-to.²
they two CL date GAN
“The two of them are dating.”

For the syntax of *gan*, it should be noted that *gan* also functions as an adjective – meaning *tight* – as well as the complement in a verb compound where it represents the result or aim of the action on the object. So, V + *gan* + O forms a resultative predicate (Cheung 1972:107-8)³. Since there is no difference between these two *gan*'s in this construction, sentences like the following one are ambiguous:

- (3) Ngo jiga bong-gan tiu sing.
now tie GAN CL rope
(i) “I now tie the rope tight.”
(ii) “I am now tying up the rope.”

In the above example, if we interpret *gan* as an adjective, the reading (3i) will be obtained. Otherwise, we have to interpret *gan* as an imperfective aspect marker (the imperfectiveness of *gan* will be justified below; for the moment I will take it for granted), as in (3ii). We can use a syntactic test to clarify which interpretation is being adopted. For instance, a verb phrase with adjectival complement *gan* is compatible with the perfective aspect marker *zo*, that is, *bong-gan-zo* (have tied tight) while a verb phrase with imperfective aspect marker *gan* is not. However, such ambiguity is quite rare because the adjective *tight*, due to its specific meaning, can be a complement to only a few verbs. In contrast, the imperfective aspect marker *gan* can be applied to a large set of verbs, at least to all verbs indicating action.

I am now about to discuss the tense and aspect semantics of *gan*. Consider the following examples:

² CL refers to numeral classifier.

³ The verb *paakto* can be analyzed as a complex one in that *paak* and *to* are both verbs, with the latter being nominalized, hence its similarity to a VO compound. In Cantonese, the aspect suffix is attached to the V in VO compounds.

- (4) Camjat saam-dim-zong go zan, ngo zong zou-gan je
yesterday three o'clock that time I still do GAN thing
"At three o'clock yesterday, I was still working."
- (5) Ngo jiga aamaam sik-gan je
I now just eat GAN thing
"I am just eating."
- (6) Tingjat saam-dim-zong go zan, ngo zong zou-gan je
tomorrow three o'clock that time I still do GAN thing
"At three o'clock tomorrow, I will still be working."
- (7) Ngo sik-gan je
I eat GAN thing
"I am eating."

These examples demonstrate that *gan* can be used in the past as in (4), present as in (5) and future as in (6). Note that in each of these three examples, a certain reference time is given, namely *cam-jat saam-dim-zong* (at three o'clock yesterday) in (4), *ji-ga* (now) in (5) and *ting-jat saam-dim-zong* (at three o'clock tomorrow) in (6). The verb phrases with *gan* anchor these time adverbials; in other words, the event time (E) is equal to the reference time (R). The tenses of (4)-(6) are then obtained by comparing the time of the adverbials, that is, the reference time (R) to the speech time (S). Example (7) does not have any time adverbial as the reference time. By default, it should be present. However, since the verb phrases in (4)-(8) are all of the same structure on the surface, that is, V + *gan* + O, it means that this *gan*-form has no tense in nature and thus no absolute tense but relative tense, that is, the tense relative to the context or a given reference time in the discourse. Suppose (7) is in a context which provides a clear past or future tense, then (7) can still be interpreted in past or future tense.

Now I turn to aspect. Suppose in a sentence, the postverbal *gan* is not or cannot be interpreted as a resultative complement. Is it really an imperfective marker rather than a perfective one, or does it bear no relevance to aspect? Certain tests provide pertinent insights. Since the imperfective form differs from the perfective in that it excludes the endpoints of the situation, we may expect that predication with *gan* is incompatible with the meaning of completion:

- (8) a. #Camjat saam-dim-zong go zan, ngo zong zou-gan je, jau aamaam zou-yun.
yesterday three o'clock that time I still do GAN thing and just do finish
"#At three o'clock yesterday, I was still working and had just finished."
- b. Camjat saam-dim-zong go zan, ngo zong zou-gan je. Ji-ga aamaam zou-yun.
yesterday three o'clock that time I still do GAN thing now just do finish
"At three o'clock yesterday, I was still working. Now I've just finished."

(8) is obtained by adding a clause with meaning of completion to the end of (4). (8a) turns out to be semantically ill-formed (denoted by #). The only possible reading is (8b) where the added clause is interpreted as a new utterance which is structurally independent of the previous clause and conveys a present reading. *Yun*, literally meaning “finish”, is a verbal suffix. Based on its clear literal meaning, the predication with *yun* has to be perfective. Since the truth values of V-*gan* and V-*yun* are opposite, a predication with *gan* has to be interpreted in the imperfective sense.

Recall the hierarchical classification of the viewpoint aspectual system suggested by Comrie (1976:25) mentioned in Section 1.1. After confirming that *gan* is imperfective, I would like to ask whether it can express the habitual. Let us consider the following examples:

- (9) Ngo gau-nin fung laibaailuk paau (*-gan) -bou
I last year every Saturday jog
“Last year I jogged every Saturday.”
- (10) Ngo jiga fung laibaailuk paau (*-gan) -bou
I now every Saturday jog
“Now I jog every Saturday.”
- (11) Ngo ha-go jyut hoici fung laibaailuk paau (*-gan) -bou
I next CL month start every Saturday jog
“Starting from next month, I will jog every Saturday.”

From the above examples we know that *gan* cannot express habitual aspect whether the sentence is in the past, present or future tense. In Comrie’s hierarchy, *gan* should be classified as continuous in aspect.

What I have shown in this section is that the verbal suffix *gan* is a continuous aspect marker and the predication with *gan* anchors the time adverbial if there is any, and produces a relative tense; however, it has nothing to do with absolute tense but is present by default. Moreover, there is a syntactic test to distinguish the aspect marker *gan* from the resultative complement *gan*.

1.3 Haidou as a continuous marker in Cantonese

In this section, I discuss *haidou* in the order of its morphology, syntax and finally semantics of tense and aspect. *Haidou* consists of two morphemes, *hai* and *dou*. *Dou* is not a free morpheme but a nominal suffix.⁴ It represents a variable location depending on the noun phrase preceding it and can be translated in English as

⁴ Syntactically the Cantonese *dou* can be comparable to the Mandarin *li*, though the latter literally means “inside” and the former “place”. The morpheme *li* is called “localizer” in Chao (1968), and is argued to be a clitic that is a subtype of noun in Huang, Li & Li (2009).

“place”.⁵ The noun phrase preceding it can be any spatial object and so the construction NP-*dou* is very productive, for instance:

- (12) a. Zeong toi -dou
CL table place
“the place near/on the table”
b. Peter-dou
Peter place
“the place near Peter/Peter’s home”

Other than NPs, *dou* can also follow the deitics *ni* “this” and *go* “that”, the question word *bin* “which” to form constructions meaning “here”, “there” and “where” respectively.

- (13) a. Ni-dou “this place/here”
b. Go-dou “that place/there”
c. Bin-dou “which place/where”

Hai is a locative preposition, roughly equivalent to the English “at/in” or “be at/in” in English. Then we have the construction *hai X-dou* which is actually a prepositional phrase. However, the X in-between can be empty and in this case the prepositional phrase *haidou* can mean *hai ni-dou* “(be) here” or *hai go-dou* “(be) there”. This can be illustrated by the following conversation:

- (14) A: Haidou a.
Be here/there SFP⁶
“It’s here/there”
B: Hai bindou a?
at where SFP
“Where is it?”
A: Hai zeong toi -dou.
at CL table place
“It’s on/near the table.”

In the above, the first utterance of person A regards a variable location that depends on their own location or on the direction they are pointing in. Person B seeks for a clearer location and person A replies with a concrete one.

Now I turn to syntax. The question I would like to address whether there exists a syntactic test which can distinguish the aspect marker *haidou* from the prepositional

⁵ For recent discussion on the element PLACE, see Cinque (2010).

⁶ SFP refers to sentence final particle, which is frequently used to realize mood in Cantonese.

phrase *haidou*.⁷ This test may help to distinguish the temporal meaning from the spatial one. In Cantonese, prepositions can be classified into two categories, namely the “pure” prepositions and the “verb-like” ones, as I will call them. This division is established by two syntactic tests which aim at distinguishing prepositions from verbs. The first test is whether the morpheme A can appear in the A-not-A construction to form yes/no questions. Some prepositions cannot appear in A-not-A construction:

- (15) *Jau-m-jau ni- tiu lou heoi a?
from not from this CL way go SFP
“Go from this way?”

In such cases, the appropriate structure should be as follows:

- (16) Hai-m-hai jau ni-tiu lou heoi a?
Be not be from this CL way go SFP
“Go from this way?”

Hai in the above example is the copula “be” and is a different morpheme from the locative preposition *hai*; the preposition is in the second tone of Cantonese, namely *hai2* and the copula in the sixth tone, *hai6*. However, some other prepositions can appear in the A-not-A construction, such as the locative preposition *hai*:

- (17) Nei hai2-m-hai2 li-dou zyu a?
You at not at here live SFP
“Do you live here?”

But at the same time, it can also be achieved by the copula:

- (18) Nei hai6-m-hai6 hai2 lidou zyu a?
You be not be at here live SFP
“Do you live here?”

The examples of *yau* and *hai* respectively illustrate the so-called pure prepositions and the verb-like prepositions. To form the yes/no question, pure prepositions have to use the copula, as shown in (15) and (16) while the use of the copula is not obligatory in verb-like prepositions. The question could be asked as to why the latter categories are not simply classified as verbs? The answer to this lies in the second syntactic test which claims that, to be a verb, the morpheme must be able to be suffixed by at least one aspectual marker. *Hai* does not fulfill this criterion;

⁷ An important note to be emphasized here is that throughout this paper only the preverbal but not postverbal *haidou* is discussed. In Cantonese, there is actually a postverbal *haidou* which can also be interpreted as a prepositional phrase and as an aspect marker. Nevertheless, it is outside the interests of this paper and so will not be discussed.

in the following example, *hai* cannot be followed by the imperfectives *gan*, *zyu*, *hoi* and *lok*, perfect *zo* and experiential *gwo*:

- (19) Nei hai (*gan/*zyu/*hoi/*lok/*zo/*gwo) li-dou zyu a?
You at ASP here live SFP
“Do you live here?”

The debate on the classification of prepositions and verbs is not my concern here. The reason I mention the above tests is their use in determining *haidou* as a prepositional phrase or as an aspect marker. When *haidou* is interpreted as a prepositional phrase before a verb phrase, both constructions of *hai6-m-hai6 dou* and *hai6-m-hai6 haidou* can be used to form interrogatives. In contrast, when *haidou* is interpreted as an aspect marker, only *hai6-m-hai6 haidou* can be used to form interrogatives. So in the following, (20) has only one reading while (21) has two:

- (20) Keoi hai-m-haidou sik faan a?
He at not at place eat rice SFP
“Will he have a meal here?”
- (21) Keoi hai-m-hai haidou sik faan a?
He be not be at here eat rice SFP
(i) “Will he have a meal here?”
(ii) “Is he having a meal?”

Therefore, to determine whether *haidou* in the sentence *Keoi haidou sik faan* refers to a prepositional phrase or an aspect marker, we may adopt the syntactic test suggested above. If both constructions are permitted to form interrogatives, then *haidou* refers to a prepositional phrase. If only the “be-not-be” construction is permitted, *haidou* refers to an aspect marker.

After establishing a syntactic means of testing the existence of the aspect marker *haidou*, I shall now move on to discuss the relation of *haidou* to tense and aspect. I claim that *haidou* is a continuous aspect without the absolute tense. Since the argument is exactly the same as that mentioned in Section 1.2, I will not repeat it but will simply give the examples and brief notes as reference. After replacing the postverbal *gan* in examples (4)-(11) by the preverbal *haidou*, we have the following examples.

- (22) Camjat cat-dim-zong go-zan, ngo zong **haidou** zou je
yesterday seven o'clock that time I still at here do thing
“I was still working at seven o'clock yesterday.”
- (23) Ngo jiga aamaam **haidou** sik je
I now just at here eat thing
“I am just eating”

- (24) Tingjat cat-dim-zong go-zan, ngo zong **haidou** zou je
tomorrow seven o'clock that time I still at here do thing
"I will still be working at seven o'clock tomorrow."
- (25) Ngo **haidou** sik je
I at here eat thing
"I am eating"

The above examples aim to show that *haidou* is independent of any time location and so can be used in the past, present and future. By default however, the present tense will be employed.

- (26) a. #Camjat saam-dim-zong go-zan, ngo zong **haidou** zou je, jau aamaam zou-yun
yesterday three o'clock that time I still at here do thing and just do finish
"#At three o'clock yesterday, I was still working and had just finished."
- b. Camjat saam-dim-zong go-zan, ngo zong **haidou** zou je. Ji-ga aamaam zou-yun.
yesterday three o'clock that time I still at here do thing just now do finish
"At three o'clock yesterday, I was still working. Now I've just finished."

The above examples aim to demonstrate that *haidou* has to be interpreted in the imperfective sense.

- (27) Ngo gau-nin fung laibaailok (*haidou) paaubou
I last year every Saturday jog
"Last year I jogged every Saturday."
- (28) Ngo jiga fung laibaailok (*haidou) paaubou
I now every Saturday jog
"Now I jog every Saturday."
- (29) Ngo ha -go jyut hoici fung laibaailok (*haidou) paaubou
I next CL month start every Saturday jog
"Starting from next month, I will jog every Saturday."

Examples (27)-(29) aim to show that the imperfective *haidou* should be classified as a continuous aspect since it is not habitual.

What I have shown in this section is that the preverbal *haidou* is a continuous aspect marker in which the time adverbial, if there is one, is anchored by the predication it specifies. In this way a relative tense is produced which has nothing to do with absolute tense but is set to the present tense by default. Additionally there is a syntactic test to distinguish the aspect marker *haidou* from the prepositional phrase *haidou*.

2. *The progressiveness of gan and haidou*

This section investigates the main concern of this paper, namely the problem of whether *gan* and *haidou* are progressive aspect markers. For the time being, I will just assume that they both can act as a continuous imperfective aspect marker. As the past literature mentioned, *gan* can convey the progressive sense, i.e. that of ongoing actions. Though less attention was paid to *haidou*, some linguists did take it as conveying progressive aspect and as an alternative to *gan* or as co-occurring with *gan* to emphasize the progressive sense (Cheung 1972, Gao 1980, Li, et al 1995, Yip & Matthews 1995). I agree that both *gan* and *haidou* can convey progressive sense, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (30) a. Keoi jiga {siu-gan / tiu-gan-mou / tai-gan go-bun syu / hau-gan dou mun}.
He now {laugh GAN / dance GAN / see GAN that CL book / knock GAN CL door}
- b. Keoi jiga haidou {siu / tiu-mou / tai go-bun syu / hau dou mun}.
He now HAIDOU {laugh / dance / see that CL book / knock CL door}
“He is now laughing / dancing / reading that book / knocking at the door.”

The verb constellations which can freely adopt *gan* and *haidou* are so common that people may have the illusion that the two aspect markers have the same distribution. Nevertheless, there are some other examples which indicate certain subtle differences. I name the following differences by (D1), (D2) and (D3). Let us look at (D1):

- (31) a. Keoi jiga {faannou-gan / soengsam-gan / beng-gan / soen-gan Jesou}.
He now {worry IMPFV / sad IMPFV / sick IMPFV / believe IMPFV Jesus}
“He is now being worried / being sad / being sick / believing in Jesus.”
- b. *Keoi jiga haidou {faannou / soengsam / beng / soen Jesou}.

In (31a), the use of *gan* produces grammatical sentences, but in (31b), despite the same predicates being employed as those in (31a), *haidou* cannot be used. Let us pass on to (D2):

- (32) a. Keoi sik-gan faan dou haidou tai syu.
He eat IMPFV rice also IMPFV see book
“While having a meal, he is still reading a book.”
- b. *Keoi haidou sik-faan dou tai-gan syu.

In (32a), *gan* is used in the adverbial clause and *haidou* in the main clause without affecting grammaticality. However, in (32b), with the same verb constellations as those in (32a), swapping *gan* and *haidou* makes the sentence ungrammatical. Now let us look at (D3):

- (33) a. Keoidei paak-gan-to.
They date IMPFV
(i) “They are dating (right now)”
(ii) “They are (in the state of) dating. / They are a pair of lovers.”
- b. Keoidei haidou paakto.
They date IMPFV
“They are dating (right now)”
- (34) a. Keoi duk-gan syu.
He read IMPFV book
(i) “He is studying (right now).”
(ii) “He is (in the state of) studying. / He is a student”
- b. Keoi haidou duk syu.
He IMPFV read book
“He is studying (right now).”

A lot of verb constellations incorporating *gan* are ambiguous between two readings, as is the case in (33a) and (34a). However, only the first set of readings survives when *gan* is replaced by *haidou*, as in (33b) and (34b). Such a subset of verb constellations is so large that we cannot simply treat this phenomenon as exceptional or lay it down to certain pragmatic reasons. This subset includes *wan gung* (search a job), *hok faatman* (learn French), *haauleoi* (consider), *zou je* (work), *zeoi go go neoizai* (woo the lady) and so on. How could the differences (D1), (D2) and (D3) between *gan* and *haidou* be explained? I will later provide one reason which is general enough to cover all three differences. Indeed this is the main goal of the paper. Since the explanation involves situation aspect however, we should first take a look at the classification of situation aspect with remarks on its application in Cantonese. After that, I will mention and discuss my explanation of (D1), (D2) and (D3).

2.1 Classification of situation aspect

As mentioned at the beginning of Section 1, both kinds of aspect, namely viewpoint aspect and situation aspect, are relevant to my argument. In Section 1, I have only focused on the viewpoint aspect of *gan* and *haidou*. In this section, I will first briefly review situation aspect and then discuss its significance for the main goal of this paper.

2.1.1 Vendler's classical classification

Vendler (1957) classified the English verbs into Statives⁸, Activities, Accomplishments and Achievements. He adopted various tools, some syntactic and some semantic, to implement this classification. First, the group of Statives and Achievements are different from the group of Activities and Accomplishments in that the latter admit the continuous tense but the former do not:

- (35) I am running. (Activity)
- (36) I am drawing a circle. (Accomplishment)
- (37) *I am knowing. (Stative)
- (38) *I am reaching the top. (Achievement)

For the group which admits the continuous tense, Vendler suggested a semantic criterion to make a further distinction. Suppose a verb in this group takes the continuous tense and it is acting at some moment. If it is still true at the moment after it ends, it is an Activity; otherwise, it is an Accomplishment. For example, even if the event that someone was running is suddenly terminated, the fact that he did run will never be denied; however, someone suddenly stops drawing a circle, it is not true to say that he did draw a circle since the circle has not been completed. Finally, we come to the group which does not admit the continuous tense. To distinguish Statives from Achievements, Vendler used the "how long" question. This type of question is compatible with Statives but not with Achievements. For the latter, instead, the "at what time" question is appropriate:

- (39) For how long did you love her? (Stative)
For three years.
- (40) *For how long did you reach the top? (Achievement)
- (41) At what time did you reach the top? (Achievement)
At noon sharp.

After a brief introduction to Vendler's system of situation aspect, I will consider Smith's system, which constitutes another milestone on the studies of the topic.

2.1.2 Smith's two-component theory

Smith (1997) comprehensively investigated viewpoint aspect and situation aspect. I will mention five points extracted from Smith (1997) which are relevant to the goal of this paper. To be clear, I will discuss them one by one.

⁸ Vendler's (1957) original term is 'State', and Smith (1997) seems to use 'State' and 'Stative' without any distinction. To be consistent, this paper uses 'Stative' for 'State' in Vendler (1957) and reserves 'State' for a subset of 'Stative' which will be defined in section 2.1.3.

First of all, Smith emphasized that situation aspect is conveyed by the verb constellation which is defined by a main verb and its arguments, including the subject, whereas viewpoint aspect is conveyed by a grammatical morpheme, usually verbal. Therefore, when determining the situation aspect of a sentence, she considers not only the verb and object, just as Vendler did, but also other arguments, including adjuncts. This criterion allows the following classification:

- (42) a. Mary walked to school. (Accomplishment)
b. Mary walked in the park. (Activity)

The main difference of the above two sentences is that (a) offers a natural endpoint while (b) does not since Mary might be wandering in the park without any goal.

Secondly, Smith noticed that adverbials are significant in determining the situation type:

- (43) a. Bill knew the truth. (Stative)
b. Suddenly Bill knew the truth. (Achievement)

In the above, adding the adverb “suddenly” changes the Stative to an Achievement. Nevertheless, Smith insisted that every verb constellation still has its own primitive situation type, which is called the basic-level categorization. And when there is a type shift triggered by adverbials or other information from context, it is called the derived-level categorization. In this paper, the former one is mainly considered.

Thirdly, other than the four types suggested by Vendler, Smith considered one more type, called Semelfactive, which includes verb constellations such as “knock on the door” and “cough”. To a certain extent, a Semelfactive is similar to an Achievement in that it refers to an instantaneous action and so is not supposed to be in the continuous aspect:

- (44) a. ?Mary knocked for five minutes. (Semelfactive)
b. ?Mary was coughing. (Semelfactive)

A knock or a cough is instantaneous and should have no duration. However, (44) are not ungrammatical as they can be interpreted as a continuous series of many single actions. A repetitive Semelfactive however should be interpreted as a multiple-event Activity. What then is the main difference between Semelfactive and Achievement? In the latter, the result is achieved by the action, while in the former, no necessary result remains after the action. For example, once someone has achieved the result of “reaching the top”, they should stay at the top, at least for a while, which is a change of state when compared to the situation before the action. In contrast, after someone has completed the action of “knocking on the door” once, there should be no change of state for either the person or the door. Thus a Semelfactive can be, and usually is expected to be repeated many times to derive an

activity. In contrast, once someone has reached the top, it is impossible to reach it again within a short period. In short, Semelfactives and Activities are [-telic] whereas Achievements are [+telic].

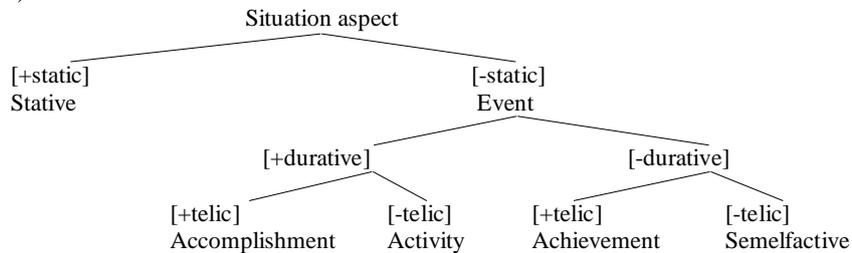
Fourth, Smith regarded aspect as a parameter which is realized differently in the languages of the world and intended to provide an adequate theory to account for the similarities and differences in aspectual systems. She regarded the two-component theory as abstract enough to achieve the above goal. The theory asserted that the aspectual meaning of a sentence is a composite of the viewpoint aspect and situation aspect. Accordingly, the following two Accomplishments can be distinguished by their different viewpoint aspects:

- (45) a. Mary walked to school. (Accomplishment + Perfective)
 b. Mary was walking to school. (Accomplishment + Imperfective)

Smith claimed that these two aspectual systems are independent (Smith 1997:81-86). One of the arguments, which is relevant to my goal in this paper, is whether the imperfective and the stative belong to the same category. As a result of stative imperfectives existing in languages like Russian, French and Mandarin Chinese, she concluded that imperfective and stative are two different categories.

Finally, she attributed the five situation aspects to three distinct features, namely [static] vs. [dynamic], [durative] vs. [instantaneous] and [telic] vs. [atelic]. This provides a foundation of the situation aspect as a parameter which is realized in different ways in different languages. The following table summarizes this work:

- (46) a.



- b.

	Static	Durative	Telic
Stative	[+]	[+]	[-]
Activity	[-]	[+]	[-]
Accomplishment	[-]	[+]	[+]
Semelfactive	[-]	[-]	[-]
Achievement	[-]	[-]	[+]

These five situation aspects should be able to cover all verb constellations in every language. Theoretically, three binary features should generate eight different combinations. Smith (1997) recognized only five combinations however. This is due to the nature of [+static], which intrinsically implies [+durative] and [-telic], so that three other combinations are excluded. The tree diagram in (46a) is therefore just a convenient way to construct a hierarchical classification which facilitates the discussion of my argument in this paper as [\pm static] is my primitive concern. As a matter of fact, we can also start with [\pm durative] in the first branch. Thus, in principle, (46b) is clearer and more comprehensive.

2.1.3 Comments on Smith's theory

Among the five points extracted from Smith (1997) which I have just mentioned above, I have some remarks on the last two which may affect the main goal of this paper. In the fourth point, it is doubtful whether the two kinds of aspects are really independent, as claimed by Smith (1997:81-86). In her discussion on the relationship between statives and imperfectives, it seemed that the term "progressive" is equated to "imperfective". She shifted between the terms freely in the discussion. Although I agree with her conclusion that the imperfective and Stative are two different categories as the imperfective Stative exists in some languages, it should be recalled that the progressive and Stative are still mutually exclusive in distribution. This then involves the nature of the progressive and the Stative. For the former, which refers only to events, it appears more precise to concede a stricter and narrower sense of progressiveness. For the latter, I prefer to divide the Stative into two subsets, namely 'State' and 'Property'. In the following sections I will clarify these two stands.

2.1.4 Nature of progressive and Stative

In this section, I will show in detail the nature of progressive and Stative since this helps us reach the main goal of this paper, that is to clarify the differences (D1), (D2) and (D3) of *gan* and *haidou*, raised in the beginning of Section 2. In (47), (48) and (50), the data comes from discussing English aspects. To ensure that the implication is still applicable to Cantonese, a Cantonese translation is given following the English data.

Vlach (1981) believed that the progressive is actually a Stative. In his opinion, the progressive operator, such as the "be + V-ing" construction in English, makes events stative and never takes a stative verb constellation since they are already stative. He justified this claim by comparing these two sentences:

- (47) a. Max was here when I arrived.
Ngo lei dou go zan, aa Max hai dou.
b. Max was running when I arrived.
Ngo lei dou go zan, aa Max paau-gan bou.

Vlach claims that *be here* and *be running* are both stative since these two predicates have to be true for a non-empty interval before and at the moment of the happening of the event *I arrived*. With a little modification, I present his definition of Stative as follows:

- (48) A verb constellation VP is defined as a Stative if the truth of the sentence “PAST(VP) when I arrived” requires that VP was true for some period leading up to the time of my arrival.⁹

The usual understanding of the term “progressive” refers to ongoing actions. Therefore, it is more reasonable to reserve the [dynamic] feature for progressive. If the verb constellation conveys no internal stage or the internal stage cannot be detected in the physical world, it should not have the quality of a progressive. Thus, I reject considering the progressive as a Stative. However, this intuition has to be justified by a linguistic test. Smith (1997:84-86) noticed that by using this kind of *when*-clause test, Statives can still be distinguished from progressives:

- (49) a. Mary was angry when John broke the glass.
Aa John da lan zek bui go zan, aa Mary hou nau.
b. Mary was singing when John broke the glass.
Aa John da lan zek bui go zan, aa Mary coeng-gan go.

In the examples above, Mary’s singing has to happen before John’s breaking the glass. I call this the “before” reading. However, Mary’s being angry can happen before or just after John’s breaking the glass. It then has two readings, namely the “before” reading and “after” reading. But there is another problem for this criterion to be workable, that is, for many typical Statives, the whole clause sounds very odd:

- (50) a. #Max (already) understood Kant when I arrived.
#Ngo lei dou go zan, aa Max (jigging) ming baak zo Hongdak
b. ?Max was (already) tall when I arrived.
?Ngo lei dou go zan, aa Max (jigging) hou gou.

By adding the adverb “already”, (b) is rendered distinctly more grammatical, but it still remains quite stilted. In fact, Vlach noticed this oddity but he accepted that the adding of “already” is sufficient to resolve it, and so he still adopted (50) as the definition of Stative. Thus, this broad definition of Stative not only includes all the statives usually accepted, but also progressives. I would like to point out two problems here. First, in (47a), “be here” is special as it is logically implied by “I arrive” and cannot be treated as a general case of Statives. It is therefore not an appropriate demonstration of the definition. Second, it is clear that “be angry” is

⁹ This VP is only a convenient symbol for verb constellation and is not restricted to the traditional structure of the verb phrase; rather it may include arguments and light verbs.

semantically different from “be tall”. It is this distinction which leads to the oddity mentioned above. We should follow this intuition to split elements that are usually classed as Statives into two subclasses. “Be angry” may change easily and swiftly, and is to a great extent controllable by the agent but “be tall” may not. The former can be classified as Property while the latter is better classed as a State. Then we may consider Stative as consisting of Property and State. “Understand” is more like a Property but not so solid as “be tall”. So in (50a), “understand” can be interpreted as happening after or just before the *when*-event, when “already” is absent, just like the two interpretations of “be angry” in (49a). Furthermore, I propose that the progressive be reserved for events, like “run”. Here I use the term “event” so as to distinguish it from “stative” but it should be understood that only the Activity and Accomplishment typically take the progressive. If *was running* in (47b) is replaced by *ran* which is not progressive but neutral in viewpoint aspect, the action of Max’s running should be interpreted as starting just after my arrival. Therefore, by using such *when*-clause test, we have actually four exclusive subsets as follows:

(51)

	“before” reading	“after” reading
Property	No (or not available)	No (or not available)
State	Yes	Yes
Event (in progressive)	Yes	No
Event (in neutral viewpoint)	No	Yes

The last case does not exist in Cantonese since an explicit, rather than a neutral, viewpoint aspect is obligatory there. The subclass Property has been suggested in Francis and Matthews (2005). They classified the verbs in Cantonese in three classes, namely Property, State and Action. They adopt the semantic feature [permanent] as the defining characteristic of Property, which is equivalent to the idea of individual-level predication, as opposed to stage-level predicate (Francis and Matthews 2005: 294-6, Smith 1997:32-5, Carlson 1977). Lehmann (1999) thought that a State is transitory, contingent, more temporary and implies endpoints. A Property on the other hand may characterize an entity. He gave an example which highlights this distinction. Spanish uses two copulas, *ser* and *estar*, with adjectival predicates to express respectively Property and State:

- (52) a. Juanita es guapa.
 “Juanita is pretty.”
 b. Juanita está guapa.
 “Juanita is looking pretty.”

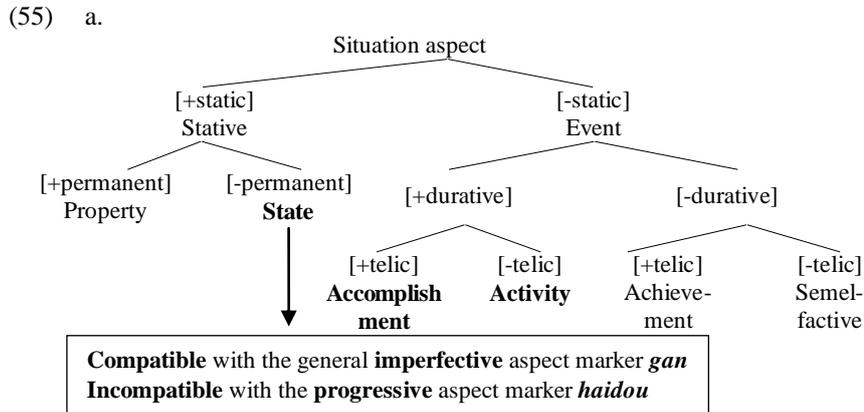
I claim that in Cantonese, the verbal suffix *gan* is a general imperfective aspect marker which can follow the State while the preverbal *haidou* is a progressive aspect marker which cannot select the State. I will justify this claim in the next section. But

to show that it is significant to classify Stative into Property and State in my discussion, I point out that *gan* is compatible with State but not with Property. See the following examples:

- (53) a. Keoi hou go.
 He very tall
 “He is (very) tall.”¹⁰
- b. *Keoi go -**gan**.
 He tall IMPFV
 “He is getting taller and taller.”
 (Intended meaning: “He is tall”)
- (54) a. Keoi hou soengsam.
 He very sad
 “He is (very) sad.”
- b. Keoi soengsam-**gan**.
 He sad IMPFV
 “He is sad.”

Both (53) and (54) are Statives but (53) is a Property, and so is [+permanent], while (54) is a State, and is instead [-permanent]. (54b) is perfectly compatible with *gan* but in (53b), *gan* changes the reading of “be tall” to “become tall”. The reason of this shift is that “be tall” is a Property, which is in nature incompatible with *gan*.

Finally, let me conclude my classification of situation aspect by re-drawing the table in (46) as follows:



¹⁰ By default, the Cantonese adjectival predicates are introduced by *hou*, an adverb of degree meaning “very”. So in (53a), the “very” sense is possible but not obligatory.

b.

	Static	Durative	Telic	Permanent
State	[+]	[+]	[-]	[-]
Property	[+]	[+]	[-]	[+]
Activity	[-]	[+]	[-]	[-]
Accomplishment	[-]	[+]	[+]	[-]
Semelfactive	[-]	[-]	[-]	[-]
Achievement	[-]	[-]	[+]	[-]

2.2 Difference between *gan* and *haidou*

In this section, I will justify the above claim that the verbal suffix *gan* is a general imperfective aspect marker and the preverbal *haidou* is a progressive aspect marker. This claim is supported by its ability to explain the differences (D1), (D2) and (D3), mentioned in the end of Section 1, where examples (31)-(34) are provided. Let me go through these examples (renumbered) and demonstrate how positing a difference between the two verbal elements allows these three differences to be accounted for.

(D1):

- (56) a. Keoi jiga {**faannou-gan** / **soengsam-gan** / **beng-gan** / **soen-gan Jesou**}
 He now worry IMPFV / sad IMPFV / sick IMPFV / believe IMPFV Jesus
 “He is now being worried / being sad / being sick / believing in Jesus.”
 b. *Keoi jiga *haidou* {**faannou** / **soengsam** / **beng** / *soen Jesou*}.

Usually, we classify the verb constellations *faannou* (being worried), *soengsam* (being sad), *beng* (being sick) and *soen Jesou* (believing in Jesus) as Statives. However, in my approach, they should be classified as States, as distinct from Properties since these verbs generally refer to a temporary situation which is consequently subject to change. It should be noted that the last one *soen Jesou* (believing in Jesus), is more ambiguous as someone’s religious belief is supposed to last for a long amount of time, possibly their whole lifetime. The imperfective *soen-gan Jesou* can therefore be used only in some contexts. For example, it may describe a believer who is not so serious about their religion and has changed it several times, or the message of their belief is new and surprising to the listener. In short, all these verb constellations involve no physical action or dynamicity, meaning that they are incompatible with the progressive aspect marker *haidou* but compatible with the general imperfective aspect marker *gan*.

(D2):

- (57) a. Keoi sik-**gan** faan dou **haidou** tai syu.
 He eat IMPFV rice also IMPFV see book
 “While having a meal, he is still reading a book.”
 b. *Keoi **haidou** sik-faan dou tai-**gan** syu.

In (57a), *gan* is used in the adverbial clause and *haidou* in the main clause. However, the sentence will be ungrammatical if the two aspect markers swap, as in (57b). Of course, there are still two other cases:

- (57) c. Keoi sik-**gan** faan dou tai-**gan** syu.
d. Keoi **haidou** sik-faan dou **haidou** tai syu.
“He is having a meal and reading a book.”

Though (57c) and (57d) are grammatical, their interpretations are slightly different. They no longer take *sik faan* (have a meal) as the background and *tai syu* (read a book) as the focus. Rather, they juxtapose the two ongoing actions where *dou* means no longer “still” but “and”. My claim can account for this phenomenon. Since *gan* is a general imperfective which can convey a stative meaning, it stativizes the action of *sik faan* so that *sik-gan faan* can be an adverbial. However, *haidou* is a progressive aspect marker, which has to emphasize ongoing action and thus have no function of stativization. It could be pointed out that the item *dou* is ambiguous between the two meanings of “also” and “and”, something that renders the example sentences not very reliable. The same outcome can be derived from replacing *dou* by *go zan*, that means only “at that moment”. The contrast between *gan* and *haidou* would then become more prominent:

- (58) a. Keoi sik-**gan** faan go zan **haidou** tai syu.
b. *Keoi **haidou** sik-faan go zan tai-**gan** syu.
c. *Keoi sik-**gan** faan go zan tai-**gan** syu.
d. *Keoi **haidou** sik-faan go zan **haidou** tai syu.

Notice that both *gan* and *haidou* can convey progressive meaning for Activities and they can go with verb constellations like *sik faan* and *tai syu* well when there is no adverbial:

- (59) a. Keoi sik-**gan** faan / tai-**gan** syu.
b. Keoi **haidou** sik-faan / **haidou** tai syu.

Therefore, the stativization of *gan* is an adequate account for (57) and (58). Now we go to the last difference of *gan* and *haidou*.

(D3):

- (60) a. Keoidei **paak-gan-to**.
They date IMPFV
(i) “They are dating (right now)”
(ii) “They are (in the state of) dating. / They are a pair of lovers.”
b. Keoidei **haidou paakto**.
They IMPFV date
“They are dating (right now)”

- (61) a. Keoi **duk-gan syu**.
 He read IMPFV book
 (i) “He is studying (right now).”
 (ii) “He is (in the state of) studying. / He is a student”
- b. Keoi haidou **duk syu**.
 He IMPFV read book
 “He is studying (right now).”

A lot of verb constellations can be interpreted in two ways when they are with *gan*, as in (60a) and (61a). However, only the first readings survive when *gan* is replaced by *haidou*, as in (60b) and (61b). I call the reading in (i) “concrete” and that in (ii) “abstract”. The main characteristic of the concrete reading is that it refers to an ongoing action in the physical world and so can be recognized through sensory media. The defining feature of the abstract reading on the other hand is that it refers to a temporary state which is usually known by information, such as someone’s occupation, relationship with others or recent hobbies, which are supposed to have started not very soon before, exist now and last for a definite period of time. These two readings have two sources. One source is the different interpretation on the verb constellation. For example, in (60) *paakto* could refer to an activity carried out by two lovers, such as going shopping together and acting intimate, as in (a)(i), but it can also refer to the relationship of the pair of lovers, as in (a)(ii). Note that in each of the two readings, *paakto* has the same lexical meaning. The other source of ambiguity is from the different lexical meanings. For example, in (61) *duk syu* can simply mean “read a book”, as in (a)(i), but it can also be abstracted as a state of studying in school or equivalently being a student as in (a)(ii). Nevertheless, not all Activities or Accomplishments permit the dual reading with *gan*, as illustrated in (62):

- (62) a. Keoidei **sik-gan je** / haidou **sik je**.
 “They are eating”
- b. Keoi **teng-gan jamngok** / haidou **teng jamngok**.
 “He is listening to music.”
- c. Keoi **tai-gan syu** / haidou **tai syu**..
 “He is reading a book.”

Many verb constellations such as *sik je* (eat) and *teng jamngok* (listen to music), cannot be interpreted as a state. (61) and (62c) make a sharp contrast. Though both *duk syu* and *tai syu* mean “read a book”, only *duk syu* can imply “be a student”. So for this kind of verb constellations *gan*-sentences do not convey the other reading. In short, the abstract reading can be obtained by States only when the verb constellations are potential; in this case, *gan* can appear while *haidou* cannot.

I conclude my discussion on (D3) with the following table:

(63)

Reading Verb constellation	“Concrete” (with <i>gan</i> / <i>haidou</i>)	“Abstract” (with <i>gan</i>)
With only one reading		
<i>Sik je</i>	Eat	<i>Not available</i>
<i>Teng jamgok</i>	Listen to music	<i>Not available</i>
<i>Tai syu</i>	Read a book	<i>Not available</i>
With two readings; Ambiguity lies in interpretation		
<i>Paakto</i>	Date	Relationship of lovers
<i>Wan gung</i>	search a job (e.g. from newspaper or online right now)	In the state of searching a job (being unemployed)
<i>Hok faatman</i>	learn French (e.g. reading a French textbook right now)	In the state of learning French (e.g. having a 2-hour French lesson every Monday)
<i>Haauleoi</i>	Consider and about to reply	In the process of consideration
With two readings; Ambiguity lies in lexical meaning		
<i>Zou je</i>	Do something (e.g. doing a task)	Work (as an occupation)
<i>Duk syu</i>	Read a book	Be a student
<i>Zeoi go go neoizai</i>	Run after the lady	Woo the lady

2.3 A brief conclusion of Section 2

The following conclusions can be derived from Section 2. First, based on the system of viewpoint and situation aspects advocated by Smith (1997) and on some data in English, Cantonese and Spanish, I proposed to treat the two subclasses of the Stative, Property and State, as being on the same level as the other four situation aspects, namely Activity, Accomplishment, Achievement and Semelfactive. This

splitting is supported by the *when*-clause test, which indicates a syntactic and semantic distinction among Properties, States and progressives. Significantly, this division can adequately and consistently account for the differences (D1), (D2) and (D3) between the verbal suffix *gan* and preverbal *haidou* in Cantonese. Simply put, the general imperfective aspect marker *gan* has the ability to stativize and can go with States (but not Properties) whereas the progressive aspect marker *haidou* cannot co-occur with any Stative.

3. Non-aspectual factors of the difference between *gan* and *haidou*

Though aspect is quite effective in distinguishing the distribution and meaning of *gan* and *haidou*, there are some other factors which may restrict their distribution. These constraints may be of a syntactic, semantic or pragmatic nature. In (64) and (65), I give one example for each of these three types of restrictions.

The first is a syntactic constraint. Let us consider the following data:

- (64) Peter hai tousyugun japbin **haidou** hang lei hang heui.
Peter at library inside PROG walk come walk go
“Peter is wandering inside the library.”
- (65) a. *Peter hang lei hang heui-**gan**.
b. *Peter hang-**gan** lei hang heui.
c. *Peter hang-**gan** lei hang-**gan** heui.

In Cantonese, the construction V-*lei*-V-*heui* has an iterative meaning, that is, the action denoted by the verb V repeats continuously. Though *lei* (come) and *heui* (go), as such, are verbs, they act as directional particles in the construction. I would like to demonstrate that *haidou* can precede this construction to impose a progressive meaning. In (64), to avoid *haidou* being interpreted as locative adverb, Peter should be considered as being inside the library. He is therefore very likely not in the same place as the speaker at the moment of speech, and thus force *haidou* to be interpreted as a progressive aspect marker. The grammaticality of (64) shows that this is really the case. Therefore, in principle, *gan* should also be able to make the sentence progressive. However, the syntactic property of the construction V-*lei*-V-*heui* prohibits the appearance of any other postverbal particles, including *gan*. No matter the position in which *gan* is put, the sentence is ungrammatical, as shown in (65a)-(65c) (only three of the possible positions are shown). These examples therefore demonstrate one exceptional case where the verb constellation is compatible with *haidou* but not *gan*.

The second is a semantic constraint. Let us consider the following data:

- (66) Peter hang-**gan** gwolai / gwoheui.
Peter walk PROG come here / go there
“Peter is walking towards here / towards there.”

- (67) a. *Peter **haidou** hang gwolai.
b. Peter **haidou** hang gwoheui.
Peter (from) here walk go there
“Peter is walking towards there from here”

Again, *gwolai* (come here) and *gwoheui* (go there) are directional particles. The literal meaning of *haidou* is “at here, be here”, which is frequently used as a preverbal locative adverb. If the action denoted by the verb constellation contains an obvious shift in location, then it will conflict with the semantics of *haidou* and result in ungrammaticality. In (67a), *haidou* is not compatible with *gwolai* (come here) which implies that Peter is not in the same place as the speaker. Additionally, despite the grammaticality of (67b), *haidou* can only be interpreted as a locative adverb, meaning “be here, at here” but sometimes understood as “from here”. This is illustrated by the sentences in (68), which are compatible with *gwoheui* (go there). These examples demonstrate an exception where a typical Activity is compatible with *gan* but not *haidou*.

The last is a pragmatic constraint. Let us consider the following example:

- (68) a. Ngodei cidou la, nei zong **haidou** sik je!
we late SFP you still PROG eat thing
“We are late. You’re still eating!”
b. #Ngodei cidou la, zong sik-**gan** je!
we late SFP still eat PROG thing
“We are late. You’re still eating!”

If someone intends to show (usually negative) surprise about an ongoing action being done by someone else, *haidou* is more appropriate, as the contrast between (68a) and (68b) shows. Since the use of the progressive in this way, aims at pointing out the fact that the action should have been completed and not be ongoing, the temporal adverb *zong* “still” is often used to form constructions *zong haidou V* and *zong V-gan*. On the other hand if a person intends to prevent someone else from getting a bad shock following an ongoing action of theirs, *gan* is more appropriate. This is shown in the contrast between in (69a) and (69b) below:

- (69) a. m-hou-yisi, ngo zidou jiging gwo sai zong,
danhai ngo zong sik-**gan** je, jiu ci-di sin dou.
sorry I know already over all clock
but I still eat PROG thing need late.little first arrive
b. #m-hou-yisi, ngo zidou jiging gwo sai zong,
danhai ngo zong **haidou** sik je, jiu ci-di sin dou.
sorry I know already over all clock
but I still PROG eat thing need late.little first arrive

“Sorry, I know that I’ve been late.
But I’m still eating and I’ll be a bit late.”

The latter utterance shows that the person who is late does not intend to speed up and is not regretful at all. Hence, it sounds odd, especially if there is “sorry” at the beginning. However, it is not easy to explain why there is such a difference between *gan* and *haidou*.

4. Conclusion

The verbal suffix *gan* in Cantonese is a progressive aspect marker which co-occurs with Activities and Accomplishments, while the preverbal *haidou* is a locative adverb that can sometimes substitute *gan* to convey progressive meaning. Our findings show that:

- (G3) *Haidou* is a typical progressive aspect marker which is used in Activities and Accomplishments.
- (G4) *Gan* should be treated as a general imperfective aspect marker. While it can be used with Activities and Accomplishments, it can also be employed with [-permanent] States.

This claim not only clarifies the aspectual nature of *gan* and *haidou*, but also provides a consistent explanation to account for some syntactic and semantic differences between them, as named (D1), (D2) and (D3) in this paper. Moreover, it supports the splitting of Statives into States and Properties in Smith’s classification of the five situation aspects. In order to defend my claim, it was necessary to enumerate some apparent exceptions. I attributed them to non-aspectual factors which include syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics of *gan* and *haidou*.

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