

A study on “*you*(有)+VP” structure  
in Mandarin Chinese

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
Linguistics

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June 2005

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## Abstract

The Chinese word *you* (有) has a new usage of *you+VP* structure in Mandarin Chinese. This paper examines the development of *you* from a lexical verb to auxiliary, and by analyzing different possible types of *you+VP* in Mandarin, examines the aspectual function of *you* in the trendy *you+VP* structure. Evidence from Pre-Qin works and equivalent structure in Cantonese grammar will be provided for comparison. This paper will also show the specialness of *you* to other Chinese perfective markers. The emergence of *you+VP* construction indicates the development of a new symmetric *you* vs. *meiyou* aspectual system in addition to well-established asymmetric ones such as the *le/guo* vs. *meiyou* systems.

## **Acknowledgement**

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Prof. Yap Foong-ha for teaching me the essential concepts of grammaticalization, arousing my interest in cognitive linguistics and for her responsible supervision on this paper. Besides of being an excellent supervisor, Prof. Yap was very considerate in my life in Hong Kong, as close as a relative to me. I would also like to express my gratitude to Prof. Gu Yang who gave me some advice on my study and thank all professors of Department of Linguistics who facilitated my integration of linguistic knowledge.

Finally, I would like to give my special thanks to my beloved parents who have always been very supportive for my study and personal development.

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## 1. Introduction

The Chinese word *you* (有) is a polysemous verb that has many meanings and is used widely in various situations. It can express ‘possession,’ e.g. 我有一本书 (*wo you yi ben shu*) ‘I have a book’; ‘existence’, e.g. 墙上有一幅画 (*qiang shang you yi fu hua*) ‘There is a picture on the wall’; ‘availability’, e.g. 各大药店有售 (*ge da yao dian you shou*) ‘This medicine is available in all pharmacies’; ‘comparison’, e.g. 小明都有他爸爸那么高了 (*Xiaoming dou you ta baba na me gao le*) ‘Xiaoming is as tall as his father now’; ‘occurrence’, e.g. 他有病了 (*ta you bing le*) ‘He is sick now’.

In some southern dialects such as Cantonese (spoken in Guangdong Province and Hong Kong), and Min (spoken in Fujian Province and Taiwan), *you* is not only a verb, but also appears in *you*+VP construction functioning as an aspect auxiliary, which was until recently not acceptable in Mandarin Chinese grammar. The temporal function of *you* in Cantonese is shown in (1):

(1) A: 有 冇 見 到 阿陳 啊? <sup>1</sup> (Matthew & Yip, 1994)

*Yauh* mouh gin dou A-Chan a?

Have not-have see PRT<sup>2</sup> Ah-Chan PRT?

‘Did you see Chan?’

B: 有。

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<sup>1</sup> The written characters and their phonological glosses of Cantonese examples in this paper are presented in traditional Chinese characters and Cantonese Romanization, since the writing and speaking systems are not exactly the same between Mandarin (spoken in Mainland China) and Cantonese.

<sup>2</sup> The following abbreviations will be used in interlinear glosses of the examples:

CL: classifier            CNJ: conjunction      EXP: experiential marker    NEG: negative  
NOMZ: nominalizer    PROG: progressive      PRON: pronoun            PRT: particle  
SFP: sentence final particle

*Yauh.*

Have.

‘Yes.’

Nowadays in Mandarin, we frequently hear *you*+VP constructions among northern Mandarin speakers and it is becoming popular in Mainland China, especially among the younger generation and the media. It seems that *you* now has one more trendy usage in Mandarin, expressing not only possession and existence but also temporal notion, as illustrated in (2) and (3):

(2) A: 你 有 没 有 吃 饭 啊? <sup>3</sup>

Ni<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> mei<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup> a?

You have NEG have eat dinner SFP?

‘Did you have dinner?’

B: 我 有 吃。

Wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup>.

I have eat.

‘Yes, I did.’

(3) 我 在 美国 也 有 去 这样 的 超市，

Wo<sup>3</sup> zai<sup>4</sup> mei<sup>3</sup> guo<sup>2</sup> ye<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> qu<sup>4</sup> zhe<sup>4</sup> yang<sup>4</sup> de chao<sup>1</sup> shi<sup>4</sup>,

I in USA too have go this NOM super market,

可 人家 不 让 我 拍!

ke<sup>3</sup> ren<sup>2</sup> jia<sup>1</sup> bu<sup>2</sup> rang<sup>4</sup> wo<sup>3</sup> pai<sup>1</sup>!

but PRON not let me photograph!

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of *you* in Mandarin Chinese will have Mandarin Romanization (*Hanyu Pinyin*), morph-by-morph gloss and English translation.

‘I went to this kind of supermarket in the US too, but picture-taking was prohibited.’ (www.homemsg.focus.cn)

This paper will examine the meaning extension and the aspectual function of *you*. More specifically, we will trace the mechanism of development of *you* from possession and existence verb to auxiliary. In addition, we will illustrate how *you* is distinct from other traditional perfective markers.

## **2. Literature Review**

Many Chinese Grammarians had focused on the study of *you* structures after the 1950’s and it is becoming a multidimensional and controversial topic because of the complexity of this word.

Previous studies on the word *you* mainly focused on the syntactic scope of *you* constructions (Lü, 1942; Li, 1957; Ding, 1961; Zhao, 1979; Zhan, 1981; Ma, 1983; Huang, 1989; Liu, 1983, etc.) and post-*you* constituents (Zhang & Fan, 1996; Zhu, 1982, etc.). The present study will focus on the grammaticalization of *you* from lexical verb to aspectual marker, i.e. from possessive/existential *you* to perfective *you* in *you*+VP structure in Chinese.

### **2.1 *you*+VP in Cantonese**

Some linguists compared the temporal structure of *you*+VP in Hong Kong Cantonese with the English perfect. They argued that the usage of *you* in Cantonese is influenced



by the English perfective marker “have (done)” (Shi Dingxu, 2002; Kong, 2002). This “language transfer analysis” (Shi Dingxu, 2002) sounds reasonable given that Hong Kong has had a long colonial history and English must have influenced some elements of its language. Thinking twice, however, language transfer could be just one of many possible factors. Other areas like Guangzhou and Taiwan did not have such a colonial experience, yet a similar *you+VP* structure is also attested in the dialects used in these areas. Moreover, it cannot explain the reason of the occurrence of *you+VP* structure in Mandarin.

## 2.2 Previous Observations on *you+VP* in Mandarin

Yang and Dong (2004) reported that the occurrence of *you+VP* structure in Mandarin is due to the influence of Hong Kong and Taiwanese drama series.

Historical linguist Shi Yuzhi investigated the development of interrogative sentence *youmeiyou+VP* (Shi & Li, 2001) and the grammaticalization of the negative perfective marker *meiyou* in Mandarin (Shi & Li, 2000). In his recent paper concerning Chinese perfective marker (Shi, 2004), he pointed out that *le* (了) and *mei(you)* [没(有)] are the affirmative and negative perfective markers in Mandarin Chinese and the pair forms an asymmetric system, as shown in (4):

- (4) Affirmative: 我 已经 吃 了 饭, 现在 不 饿。(Shi, 2004)  
 Wo<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>3</sup>jing<sup>2</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> le fan<sup>4</sup>, xian<sup>4</sup>zai<sup>4</sup> bu<sup>2</sup> e<sup>4</sup>.  
 I already eat PFT dinner, now not hungry.  
 ‘I have already had dinner. I’m not hungry now.’

Negative: 我 还 没 有 吃 饭, 现在 很 饿。  
Wo<sup>3</sup> hai<sup>2</sup> mei<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup>, xian<sup>4</sup>zai<sup>4</sup> hen<sup>3</sup> e<sup>4</sup>.  
I still NEG have eat dinner, now very hungry.  
'I have not had dinner yet. I'm very hungry now.'

As we shall see later in section 10, the emergence of aspectual marker *you* gives rise to a new symmetric system involving a *you* vs. *mei you* contrast.

### 2.3 Possession to aspect

Heine (1997) depicted possession in some European and African languages from the perspective of cognitive sources and grammaticalization. Heine reports that in English, as well as many other European languages, “constructions using ‘have’ as their predicate base have given rise to both expressions of verbal possession and of perfect aspect” (p189). The case of *you* might be the application of this tendency in Mandarin.

### 2.4. Research questions of the present study

The newly occurring *you+VP* phenomenon has triggered some discussion. The present paper will address the following questions: What are the lexical and grammatical functions of *you* in Mandarin Chinese? How does lexical verb *you* acquire perfective aspect function in *you+VP* construction? How does perfective marker *you* differ from other perfective markers such as *le* and *guo*?

### 3. Methodology

In this study, examples of different meanings of *you* in archaic Chinese are collected from the CHANT (Chinese Ancient Texts) database<sup>4</sup>. Some dictionaries on archaic Chinese are used as supplementary sources to examine the functions and meaning extensions of *you* as well as the *you*+VP structure. Cantonese grammar books will be consulted to illustrate *yauh*+VP structure in Cantonese. These will be compared with equivalent Mandarin *you*+VP constructions.

*You*+VP structure in Mandarin will be sorted into two main sections, namely *you*+VP in conversations and *you*+VP in declarative sentences. Perfective *you*+VP in conversations is believed to be invited by the question form before it is more widely accepted in declarative sentences. Transcripts of programs from CCTV (China Central Television) and radio shows and some popular websites will be used to obtain tokens of *you*+VP structure spoken by Mandarin speakers.

### 4. Lexical meaning extensions of *you*

#### 4.1 Basic lexical meanings of *you* in Ancient Chinese

In the etymological dictionary entitled *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (说文解字, Notes on Language and Characters, compiled by Xu Shen (许慎) in the East Han Dynasty around 110-121 AD), the Chinese character *you* (有, 'have') is a compound character formed with the characters *shou* (手, 'hand') and *rou* (肉, 'meat') meaning "have meat in hand". 'Possession' and 'existence' are the two basic meanings of *you*. *You* in

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<sup>4</sup> I am very grateful for the access to the CHANT database which provides this study with tokens of ancient Chinese. It was established by the Institute of Chinese Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1988. <http://www.chant.org>

(5) demonstrates the meaning of ‘possession’ and the sentence here means that ‘everyone possesses personal hobbies’.

(5) 民 生 各 有 所 乐 兮,  
min<sup>2</sup> sheng<sup>1</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> suo<sup>3</sup> le<sup>4</sup> xi<sup>1</sup>,  
people live every have PRT hobby SFP,

余 独 好 修 以 为 常。  
yu<sup>2</sup> du<sup>2</sup> hao<sup>4</sup> xiu<sup>1</sup> yi<sup>3</sup> wei<sup>2</sup> chang<sup>2</sup>.  
I only like think to as usual.

‘Everyone has hobbies. I like doing thinking.’

[*Chuci, Lisaojing* (楚辞·离骚经), in Warring States Period]

In (6) and (7), *you* demonstrates the other basic meaning of ‘existence’, often translatable as English ‘there be’:

(6) 庖 有 肥 肉, 厩 有 肥 马,  
pao<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> fei<sup>2</sup> rou<sup>4</sup>, jiu<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> fei<sup>2</sup> ma<sup>3</sup>,  
kitchen have fat meat, stable have fat horse,

民 有 饥 色, 野 有 饿 莩,  
min<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> ji<sup>1</sup> se<sup>4</sup>, ye<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> e<sup>4</sup> piao<sup>3</sup>,  
people have hungry look, field have hungry body,

此 率 兽 而 食 人 也。  
ci<sup>3</sup> shuai<sup>4</sup> shou<sup>4</sup> er<sup>3</sup> shi<sup>2</sup> ren<sup>2</sup> ye<sup>3</sup>.  
this lead beast CNJ eat people SFP.

‘*There is* meat in the kitchen and horses in the stable, while *there are* starving looks on people’s faces and dead bodies on the street. The regime is leading beasts to eat people.’

[*Mengzi, Lianghuiwangshang* (孟子·梁惠王上), in Warring States Period]

(7) 河 侧 有 两 山 相 对,  
he<sup>2</sup> ce<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> liang<sup>3</sup> shan<sup>1</sup> xiang<sup>1</sup> dui<sup>4</sup>,  
river side have two mountain each face,

水 出 其 间。  
shui<sup>3</sup> chu<sup>1</sup> qi<sup>2</sup> jian<sup>1</sup>.  
water out PRON between.

‘On both sides of the river, *there are* two mountains facing each other; the water flows out from between them.’

[*Shuijingzhu* (水经注), in Southern and Northern Dynasties]

*You* is also used with the meaning of ‘happen’ (He, 1988, p.108), ‘occur’ or ‘take place’ as in (8). Such usage can be considered as a derivation from ‘existence’, interpreted in the sense of ‘there be’. (8) explains how Zhangheng's seismograph works by depicting a possible situation *happening, occurring, or taking place* in the future:

(8) 如 有 地 动, 樽 则 振 龙,  
ru<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> di<sup>4</sup> dong<sup>4</sup>, zun<sup>1</sup> ze<sup>2</sup> zhen<sup>4</sup> long<sup>2</sup>,  
if have earth quake, cylinder CNJ shake dragon,

机 发 吐 丸, 而 蟾 蜍 衔 之。  
ji<sup>1</sup> fa<sup>1</sup> tu<sup>3</sup> wan<sup>2</sup>, er<sup>3</sup> chan<sup>2</sup> chu<sup>2</sup> xian<sup>2</sup> zhi<sup>1</sup>.

machine launch vomit ball, CNJ frog hold PRON.

‘If *there is* an earthquake, a dragon which faces the direction of the earthquake among the eight dragons on the cylinder would shake. The ball in the dragon’s mouth would drop down and the frog positioned right below the dragon would hold the ball in its mouth.’

[*Houhanshu, Zhangheng Zhuan* (后汉书·张衡传), in Southern and Northern Dynasties]

## 4.2 Lexical meanings of *you* in Modern Chinese

In Modern Chinese, the verb *you* retains the two lexical meanings of ‘possession’ and ‘existence’, both of which can be further extended to more readings such as ‘comparison and achievement in amount’, ‘occurrence and ‘availability’’. In this section, let’s have a look at the distribution of lexical meanings of *you* in Modern Chinese.

(9) 他 有 两 个 孩子。

ta<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> liang<sup>3</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> hai<sup>2</sup>zi.

he have two CL kids.

‘He has two kids.’

(10) 我 有 一 本 书。

wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>4</sup> ben<sup>3</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>.

I have one CL book.

‘I have a book.’

(11) 这 张 桌子 有 三 条 腿。

zhe<sup>4</sup> zhang<sup>1</sup> zhuo<sup>1</sup>zi you<sup>3</sup> san<sup>1</sup> tiao<sup>2</sup> tui<sup>3</sup>.

this CL table have three CL legs.

‘This table has three legs.’

(12) 他 有 着 艺术家的 气质。 (Lu, 2002)

ta<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> zhe yi<sup>4</sup>shu<sup>4</sup>jia<sup>1</sup> de qi<sup>4</sup>zhi<sup>2</sup>.

he have PROG artist NOM characteristic.

‘He has the characteristics of an artist.’

(13) 他 对 语言学 很 有 兴趣。

ta<sup>1</sup> dui<sup>4</sup> yu<sup>3</sup>yan<sup>2</sup>xue<sup>2</sup> hen<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> xing<sup>4</sup>qu<sup>4</sup>.

he towards Linguistics very have interest.

‘He is very interested in Linguistics.’

(9) and (10) illustrate the meaning of ‘to be in possession of’, where the possessor is animate, while the possessee can be animate or inanimate. In (11), the possessee is a part of the possessor and both of them can be inanimate. (12) and (13) show a more specific meaning of ‘possession’, that is ‘to possess as a characteristic, quality, or function’, usually followed by durative aspect *zhe* (着) or is modified by intensifiers such as *hen* (很, ‘very’) indicating a strong (hence most likely persistent and durable) interest. From (9) to (13), we see a progression of the ‘possession’ meaning from concrete to abstract.

Another meaning of *you* found in the Modern Chinese involves ‘comparison or achievement in amount’ [Lu Shuxiang, 2002, *Xiandai Hanyu Babaici* (现代汉语八百词, 800 words in Modern Chinese)]. In (14), Xiaoming’s height is compared to his father’s to show how tall he is now. It can be interpreted as ‘Xiaoming *has* the hight

of his father now'. In (15), the height Xiaogang *has* is expressed by saying 'He achieves the height of five feet'. I assume this reading is derived from 'possession': Xiaoming *has* something, that something being the same height as his father (lit. such height as his father's). That is, a comparative construction is viewed as an abstract possessee argument.

- (14) 小明 已经 有 他 爸爸 那么 高 了。  
Xiao<sup>3</sup>ming<sup>2</sup> yi<sup>3</sup>jing<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> ta<sup>1</sup> ba<sup>4</sup>ba na<sup>4</sup>me gao<sup>1</sup> le.  
Xiaoming already have he father that tall SFP.  
'Xiaoming is as tall as his father now.'

- (15) 小刚 有 五 尺 高 了。  
Xiao<sup>3</sup>gang<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> wu<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>3</sup> gao<sup>1</sup> le.  
Xiaogang have five feet high SFP.  
'Xiaogang is five feet tall now.'

Possession verb *you* in earlier examples takes two arguments (both of which can be animate or inanimate). It conveys abstract 'possession' when the 'possessee' argument is abstract. Existential *you* is still a basic meaning in contemporary Mandarin. As the term 'existential' suggests, *you* indicates that *there is* something or something *exists* in some place. It can be regarded as a subset of 'possession' *you* with the 'possessor' argument being an abstract one, including places and locations such as 'Hong Kong' (Xiang<sup>1</sup>gang<sup>3</sup>) and 'on the table' (zhuo<sup>1</sup>zi shang<sup>4</sup>) in (16) and (17) respectively.

- (16) 香港 有 维多利亚 港。  
Xiang<sup>1</sup>gang<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> wei<sup>2</sup>duo<sup>1</sup>li<sup>4</sup>ya<sup>4</sup> gang<sup>3</sup>.



Hong Kong have Victoria Harbor.

‘There is Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong.’

(17) 桌子 上 有 一 个 书包。

zhuo<sup>1</sup>zi shang<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>2</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>bao<sup>1</sup>.

table above have one CL bag.

‘There is a bag on the table.’

The meaning of ‘happen’, ‘occur’ or ‘take place’ is extended from ‘existence’ as mentioned in the previous section. It usually expresses that something happens to someone or occurs/takes place somewhere as shown in (18) and (19), which can be interpreted as ‘There is sickness in his body now’ and ‘There are teeth in the kid’s mouth now’ respectively.

(18) 他 有 病 了。

ta<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> bing<sup>4</sup> le.

ta have sickness SFP.

‘He is ill.’

(19) 这 孩子 嘴 里 有 牙 了。 (Zhao,1979)

zhe<sup>4</sup> hai<sup>2</sup>zi zui<sup>3</sup> li<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> ya<sup>2</sup> le.

this kid mouth inside have teeth SFP.

‘Teeth are growing the kid’s mouth.’

The abstract arguments in ‘existence’ and ‘occurrence’ *you* constructions are mostly locative phrases, like ‘Hong Kong’ in (16), ‘on the table’ in (17) and ‘in the mouth’ (*zui<sup>3</sup> li<sup>3</sup>*) in (19).

The locative phrase argument in each example provides background for

‘existence’ or ‘occurrence’, which paves the way for topicalization as shown in (20).

(20) 玫瑰花 有 红 的, 有 白 的。

mei<sup>2</sup>gui<sup>4</sup>hua<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> hong<sup>2</sup> de, you<sup>3</sup> bai<sup>2</sup> de.

rose have red NOM, have white NOM.

‘As for roses, there are red ones, (and) there are white ones.’

The versatility of lexical verb *you* is further demonstrated in its extended meaning of ‘availability’ as shown in (21).

(21) 各 大 药 店 有 售。

ge<sup>4</sup> da<sup>4</sup> yao<sup>4</sup>dian<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> shou<sup>4</sup>.

every big pharmacy have sale.

‘This medicine is available in pharmacies.’

有售 (*you<sup>3</sup> shou<sup>4</sup>*) is an idiom in Chinese where 售(*shou<sup>4</sup>*) can be viewed as a noun ‘sale’ or a verb ‘sell’. Thus (21) can be interpreted as ‘Every big pharmacy *has* this medicine for sale’ or ‘Every big pharmacy *has* this medicine to sell’ because of the ambiguity of the morpheme 售(*shou<sup>4</sup>*). If 售(*shou<sup>4</sup>*) is viewed as a verb ‘sell’, *you* ‘has’ here would be a light verb which takes a clause as its complement, with the subject ‘medicine’ inside the clause being dropped.

From the usage of *you* in Ancient Chinese and Modern Chinese, we see that the reading of ‘comparison and achievement in amount’, ‘occurrence’ and ‘availability’ were extended from ‘possession’ or ‘existence’ as sketched in the preliminary chart below (Fig.1). In addition, *you* developed from a lexical verb to a light verb syntactically, which is to be further examined in the following section.

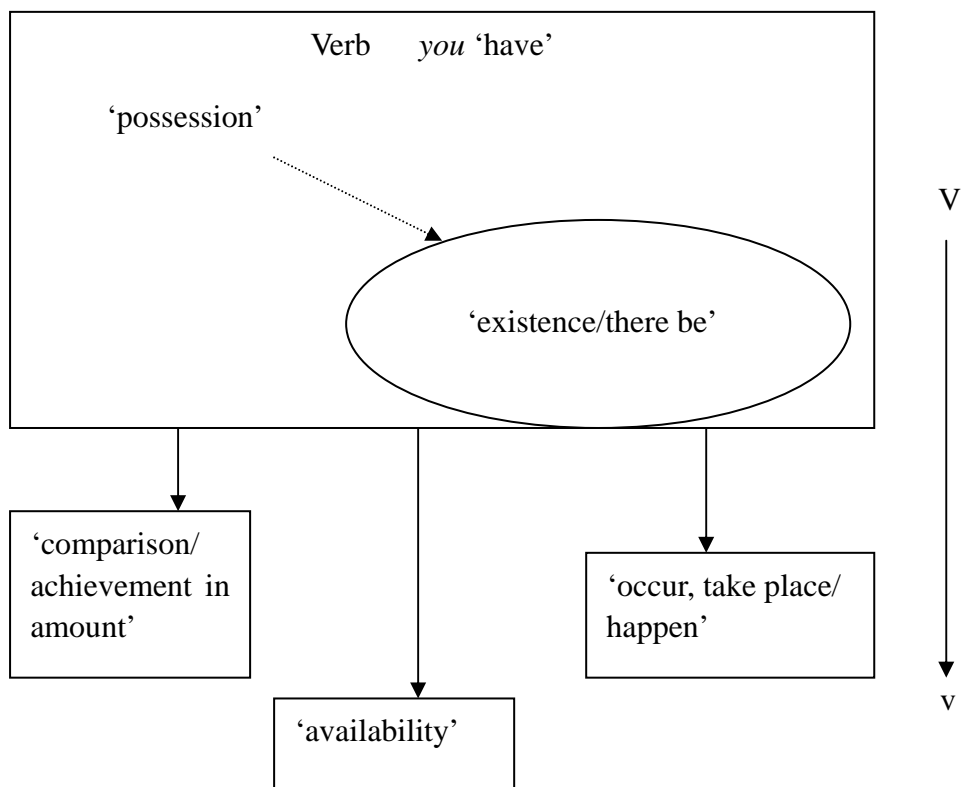


Fig. 1

### 4.3 *you* evolves to auxiliary

Preposition phrases are the locative focus of the existential sentence, such as ‘on the table’ (*zhuo<sup>1</sup>zi shang<sup>4</sup>*) in (17), reproduced here as (22). (23) conveys the same meaning by replacing existential *you* with a resultative verb 放 (*fang<sup>4</sup>*) ‘put’. However, *you* is not just an alternation of placement verbs such as 放 (*fang<sup>4</sup>*) (Gu, 2004). In (24), *you* is a light verb which can select a VP as its complement where the positions of subject and preposition phrase changed.

- (22) 桌子 上 有 一 个 书包。  
*zhuo<sup>1</sup>zi shang<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>2</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>bao<sup>1</sup>.*  
 table above have one CL bag.

‘There is a bag on the table.’

(23) 桌子 上 放 着 一 个 书 包。  
 zhuo<sup>1</sup>zi shang<sup>4</sup> fang<sup>4</sup> zhe yi<sup>2</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>bao<sup>1</sup>.  
 table above put PROG one CL bag.  
 ‘There is a bag laying on the table.’

(24) 有 [VP 一 个 书 包 放 在 桌 子 上]。  
 you<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>2</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>bao<sup>1</sup> fang<sup>4</sup> zai zhuo<sup>1</sup>zi shang<sup>4</sup>.  
 have one CL bag put PROG table above.  
 ‘There is a bag laying on the table.’

(25) 昨天 有 [VP 同 事 [v 告 诉] 他 这 件 事]。  
 zuo<sup>2</sup>tian<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> tong<sup>2</sup>shi<sup>4</sup> gao<sup>4</sup> su<sup>4</sup> ta<sup>1</sup> zhe<sup>4</sup>jian<sup>4</sup>shi<sup>4</sup>.  
 yesterday have colleague tell him this CL matter.  
 ‘Colleague told him this matter yesterday.’

Light verb *you* in (25) constructs a vp-shell. The existential *you* taking the VP as a complement conveys ‘the fact that some colleague told him this matter exists’. When the animate subject of the VP ‘colleague’ is raised out of VP according to Internal Subject Hypothesis, *you* becomes an auxiliary preceding VP in the syntactic structure in (26), which indicates the completion of the action of ‘telling him the matter’.

(26) 昨天 同 事 有 告 诉 他 这 件 事。  
 zuo<sup>2</sup>tian<sup>1</sup> tong<sup>2</sup>shi<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> gao<sup>4</sup> su<sup>4</sup> ta<sup>1</sup> zhe<sup>4</sup>jian<sup>4</sup>shi<sup>4</sup>.  
 yesterday colleague have tell him this CL matter.  
 ‘Colleague told him this matter yesterday.’

The completed chart below proposes the development of *you* from a lexical verb to auxiliary.

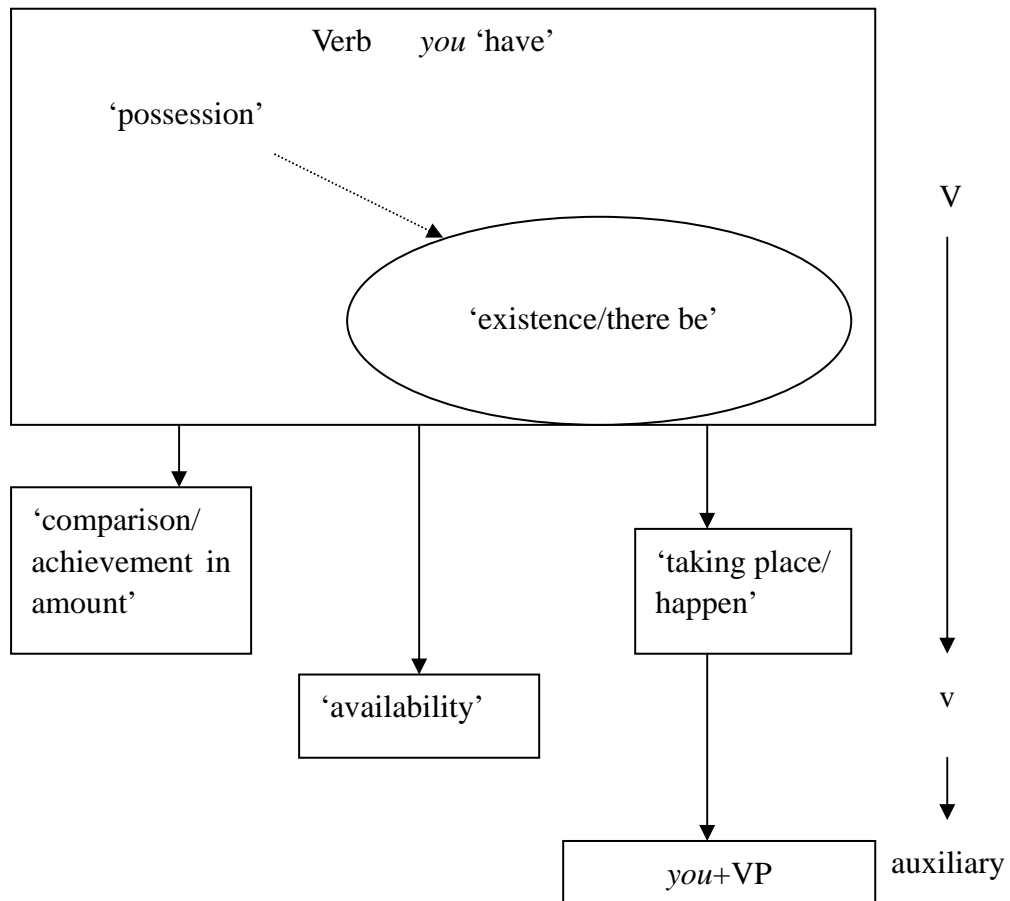


Fig. 2

### 5. Another look at *you+VP* in Cantonese

As Chappell (2004) pointed out, “It can be expected that different kinds of archaic and medieval features be potentially preserved in certain of the more conservative dialect groups of Sinitic” (p.3). Before analyzing the use of trendy *you+VP* in Mandarin, this chapter will have another look at *you+VP* in Cantonese. Given

considerable dialectal contact, it is directly related to and may be the social resource of the *you*+VP pattern in Mandarin.

As in Mandarin, the Chinese word 有(*you*) is also a possession verb in Cantonese 有(*yauh*). Besides being used as a verb, *yauh* is categorized as a primary auxiliary in Cantonese (Luke & Nancarrow, 2004), which can be placed before verbs in *you*+VP structure.

Cantonese grammar books identify two main functions for the *you*+VP structure. As an auxiliary, 有/*yauh*<sup>5</sup> and 冇/*mou*<sup>5</sup> (有/*you* and 没有/*meiyou* in Mandarin) before a verb is used to indicate past events, but is highly emphatic (Matthew & Yip, 1994; Luke & Nancarrow, 2004) as shown in (27) and (28):

(27) A: 你 有 冇 食 晒 的 藥 啊?

Leih *yauh mouh* sihk saai di yeuhk a?

You have not-have eat all CL medicine PRT?

‘Have you taken all the medicine?’

B: 當然 有 食 晒 啦。

Ganghaih *yauh* sihk saai la.

surely have eat all PRT.

‘Of course, I have taken all (of them).’ (Matthew & Yip, 1994: 281)

(28) A: 個 次 我 的 去 左 淺水灣。

Go chi ngohdeih heui-jo Chekchyuh waan.

That time we go-PFT Stanley.

‘That time we went to Stanley.’

B: 系 啊，我 都 有 去。

Haih a, ngoh dou *yauh* heui.

Is PRT, I also have go.

‘That’s right, I went too!’

(Matthew & Yip, 1994: 281)

*Yauh*+VP in Cantonese is also used to describe the present with a habitual meaning, often conveyed or reinforced through the use of adverbs of frequency, as shown in Example (43):

(29) 報紙 日日 都 有 講 股市。

bouji yaht-yaht dou *yauh* gong gusih.

newspaper day-day all have talk stock-market.

“The paper talks about the stock market every day.” (Matthew & Yip, 1994:281)

This kind of sentence with *yauh*+VP is quite typical and commonly used in Cantonese. Cantonese speakers retain this grammatical structure to express the function of (emphatic) past marker when they speak Mandarin. For example in (30), the Mandarin-speaking host asked Cantonese native-speaking Director WangJiawei why he slowed down script writing when he was directing. It seemed that actors’ performance in his movie would be affected due to his incomplete script. In the director’s utterance, *yauh*+VP structure in Cantonese was phonetically converted into *you*+VP in Mandarin. He tried to affirm and emphasize the action of providing the actor a finished script with emphatic past marker *you* (*yauh*). Actor Liang recalled how he joined Director Wang’s movie in (31).

(30)—主持人：我们所知道的是，八十年代写过十三部作品，据说速度挺快的，几个月，就可以完成一部戏的写作。你当导演的时候，为什么就这么慢了呢？你替人家想过吗？

—Host: As far as I know, you had written 13 scripts in the 80's. It's quite fast to finish one script in a few months. Why did you slow down script writing after being a director? Have you ever been concerned about the actors?'

—王家卫：我有给剧本给他的，也写得很快。

—Wang<sup>2</sup> Jia<sup>1</sup>wei<sup>4</sup>: wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> gei<sup>3</sup> ju<sup>4</sup> ben<sup>3</sup> gei<sup>3</sup> ta<sup>1</sup> de, ye<sup>3</sup> xie<sup>3</sup> de<sup>2</sup> hen<sup>3</sup> kuai<sup>4</sup>.

—Director Wang: I have give script give him PRT, also write PRT very fast.

—Director Wang: I did give a script to him. I wrote very fast, too.' ( Excerpt from 《艺术人生》，CCTV)

(31)—主持人：第一次王导来找你的时候，也没有剧本吗？

—Host: Didn't you have a script when you first joined Director Wang's movie?'

—梁朝伟：那一次，他有讲故事给我听，我觉得很新颖，所以才有第一次的合作。

—Liang<sup>2</sup> Chao<sup>2</sup>wei<sup>3</sup>: na<sup>4</sup> yi<sup>2</sup> ci<sup>4</sup>, ta<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> jiang<sup>3</sup> gu<sup>4</sup>shi gei<sup>3</sup> wo<sup>3</sup> ting<sup>1</sup>, wo<sup>3</sup> jue<sup>3</sup> de<sup>3</sup> hen<sup>3</sup> xin<sup>1</sup> ying<sup>3</sup>, suo<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>3</sup> cai<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> di<sup>4</sup> yi<sup>1</sup> ci<sup>4</sup> de he<sup>2</sup> zuo<sup>4</sup>.

—Actor Liang: that one time, he have tell story give me listen, I feel very interesting, so have first cooperation.

—Actor Liang: That day, he told me the story. I thought it was very interesting. Then we cooperated."

(CCTV, 《艺术人生》之《重温你的“花样人生”》,2004年9月29日)

*You (yauh)* is a simple past marker indicating the past action 'told a story'. It appears that in Cantonese *yauh* saves both perfect and past simple marking functions. We will discuss *you* being perfective marker and simple past marker in Cantonese and Mandarin as well in the next section.

## 6. *you*+VP structure in Mandarin

Why does *you*+VP structure become accepted and popular in Mandarin and what is



the function of auxiliary *you* in *you+VP* structure?

Nowadays among Mandarin speakers, trendy *you+VP* structures in conversations and in declarative sentences are mainly of two types.

### 6.1 *you+VP* in conversations

In Mandarin, the negative and interrogative form of possession verb *you* before noun phrases are *meiyou* (没有/not have) and *youmeiyou* (有没有/have not have) respectively:

	NP
Affirmative	<i>you+NP</i> 你 有 这 本 书。 <i>ni<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> zhe<sup>4</sup> ben<sup>3</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>.</i> you have this CL book. 'You have this book.'
Negative	<i>meiyou+NP</i> 你 没 有 这 本 书。 <i>ni<sup>3</sup> mei<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> zhe<sup>4</sup> ben<sup>3</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>.</i> you not have this CL book. 'You don't have this book.'
Interrogative	<i>youmeiyou+NP</i> 你 有 没 有 这 本 书?

	ni <sup>3</sup> you <sup>3</sup> mei <sup>2</sup> you <sup>3</sup> zhe <sup>4</sup> ben <sup>3</sup> shu <sup>1</sup> ? you have not have this CL book ‘Do you have this book?’
--	---

*Youmeiyou*+VP is a “lately emerged” interrogative form in Mandarin (Ding, 1961). The development of such an interrogative form is from *meiyou*, which modifies a VP (Ota, 1958). The following chart highlights the comparison between *you*+NP construction and *you*+VP construction.

	NP	VP
Interrogative	<i>Youmeiyou</i> +NP 你 有 没 有 这 本 书? Ni <sup>3</sup> you <sup>3</sup> mei <sup>2</sup> you <sup>3</sup> zhe <sup>4</sup> ben <sup>3</sup> shu <sup>1</sup> ? You havenot have this CL book ‘Do you have this book?’	<i>Youmeiyou</i> +VP 你 有 没 有 吃 饭? Ni <sup>3</sup> you <sup>3</sup> mei <sup>2</sup> you <sup>3</sup> chi <sup>1</sup> fan <sup>4</sup> ? You have not have eat dinner ‘Have you eaten dinner?’
Affirmative	<i>You</i> +NP 你 有 这 本 书。 Ni <sup>3</sup> you <sup>3</sup> zhe <sup>4</sup> ben <sup>3</sup> shu <sup>1</sup> . you have this CL book ‘You have this book.’	<i>You</i> + VP 我 有 吃 饭。 Wo <sup>3</sup> you <sup>3</sup> chi <sup>1</sup> fan <sup>4</sup> . I have eat dinner ‘I have eaten dinner.’
Negative	<i>Meiyou</i> +NP 你 没 有 这 本 书。	<i>Meiyou</i> +VP 你 没 有 吃 饭。

	Ni <sup>3</sup> mei <sup>2</sup> you <sup>3</sup> zhe <sup>4</sup> ben <sup>3</sup> shu <sup>1</sup> . you not have this CL book 'You don't have this book.'	Ni <sup>3</sup> mei <sup>2</sup> you <sup>3</sup> chi <sup>1</sup> fan <sup>4</sup> . You not have eat dinner 'You haven't eaten dinner.'
--	--	---

*Le* (了) and *meiyou* (没有) are the standard and more widely used affirmative and negative perfective markers in Mandarin (Shi, 2004). In this conversation, the yes answer should be utterance (32B):

(32) A: 你 有 没 有 吃 饭?

Ni<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> mei<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup>?

You have not have eat dinner

'Have you eaten dinner?'

B: 我 吃 饭 了。

Wo<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup> le.

I eat dinner PFT.

'I have eaten dinner.'

The answer to the question *youmeiyou*+VP should be VP+*le* or *meiyou*+VP, depending on whether affirmative or negative responses are intended. This perfective marker system involving *le/meiyou*+VP is therefore asymmetric.

*Meiyou* ('not have') before VP is an auxiliary for negating completion of the action (Zhao, 1979). In the affirmative response of the conversation, by getting rid of the negator *mei* in negative answers, *you* can be the affirmative perfective marker which has the same function of *le* expressing the perfective aspect, as shown in sentence (33B). It is possible for Mandarin speakers to add *you* before VP since there

exists a natural gap before VP. *You+VP* and *meiyou+VP* naturally form a symmetric system of perfective markers.

(33) A: 你 有 没 有 吃 饭?  
ni<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> mei<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup>?  
you have not have eat dinner?  
'Have you eaten dinner?'

B: 我 有 吃 饭。  
wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup>.  
I have eat dinner  
'I have eaten dinner.'

## 6.2 *you+VP* in declarative sentences

*You+VP* in conversations usually appears in response to the *youmeiyou+VP* form in questions, which often invites an affirmative answer with *you+VP*. This perfective response token morphologically and syntactically conforms to its negative and interrogative counterparts, *meiyou+VP* and *youmeiyou+VP* respectively. *You+VP* in declarative sentences, however, refers to its occurrence in statements rather than as a response to a question.

*You+VP* structure is often observed in declarative sentences with some verbal phrases such as 提高 (*ti gao*) 'progress', 增加 (*zeng jia*) 'increase' and 变化 (*bian hua*) 'change', all of which are also abstract NPs:

(34) a 我 学习 有 进步。  
wo<sup>3</sup> xue<sup>2</sup>xi<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> jin<sup>4</sup>bu<sup>4</sup>.  
I study have progress.

‘My study shows progress.’

b 我 学习 进步 了。

wo<sup>3</sup> xue<sup>2</sup>xi<sup>2</sup> jin<sup>4</sup>bu<sup>4</sup> le.

I study progress PFT

‘My study has progressed.’ (‘My study shows progress.’)

(35) a 今 年 的 产 量 有 增 加。

jin<sup>1</sup> nian<sup>2</sup> de chan<sup>3</sup>liang<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> zeng<sup>1</sup>jia<sup>1</sup>.

this year de crop have increment.

‘This year’s crop shows an increment.’

b 今 年 的 产 量 增 加 了。

jin<sup>1</sup> nian<sup>2</sup> de chan<sup>3</sup>liang<sup>4</sup> zeng<sup>1</sup>jia<sup>1</sup> le.

this year de crop increase PFT

‘This year’s crop has increased.’ (‘This year’s crop shows an increment.’)

(36) a 情 况 有 变 化。

qing<sup>2</sup>kuang<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> bian<sup>4</sup>hua<sup>4</sup>.

situation have change.

‘There is some change in the situation.’

b 情 况 变 化 了。

qing<sup>2</sup>kuang<sup>4</sup> bian<sup>4</sup>hua<sup>4</sup> le.

situation change PFT.

‘The situation has changed.’ (‘There is some change in the situation.’)

Examples (34a), (35a) and (36a) are definitely good in accordance with *you*+NP in Chinese grammar; they provide evidence of a ‘bridging context’ (Evans & Wilkins

2000; Heine 2002) for the emergence of a new trendy *you*+VP constructions. This is because 提高 (*ti gao*) ‘progress’, 增加 (*zeng jia*) ‘increase’ and 变化 (*bian hua*) ‘change’ are construable as either abstract nouns or verbs. Since Chinese lacks derivational morphemes, these words (namely ‘progress’, ‘increase’ and ‘change’) are morphologically the same when used as noun or verb. Their usage paves the way for the rise of the *you*+VP construction.

The lack of morphological marking between noun and verb in Chinese is an important feature facilitating this development. Interestingly though, it is language contact with southern dialects that first sparked the trendy use of *you*+VP in Mandarin.

If we replace preverbal *you* with postverbal perfective marker *le*, as in (34b), (35b) and (36b), we highlight the completion of a past event. Significantly, the perfective *le* construction expresses the same temporal meaning expressed through *you* construction in the (a) examples.

Another usage of *you*+VP in declarative sentences is illustrated in (37) to (39) below, where 给 (*gei*) ‘give’, 去 (*qu*) ‘go’ and 看 (*kan*) ‘watch’ are pure verbs without ambiguity. It appears to be influenced by similar usage in Cantonese. General and emphatic indication of past event is shown in (37) and (38). Expression of habitual meaning is reinforced by frequency adverbs, as shown in (39).

(37) 那 天 生 日, 我 有 给 他 礼 物。

na<sup>3</sup> tian<sup>1</sup> sheng<sup>1</sup>ri<sup>4</sup>, wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> gei<sup>3</sup> ta<sup>1</sup> li<sup>3</sup>wu<sup>4</sup>.

That day birthday, I have give he present.

‘I gave him a present on his birthday.’

(38) 我 有 去 参加 你的 婚礼, 恭 喜 你 啦。

wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> qu<sup>4</sup> can<sup>1</sup>jia<sup>1</sup> ni<sup>3</sup>de hun<sup>1</sup>li<sup>3</sup>, gong<sup>1</sup> xi<sup>3</sup> ni<sup>3</sup> la.

I have go attend your wedding, congratulations.

“I did go to your wedding. Congratulations!”

(39) 我 天天 都 有 看 你的 影集, 非常 的 不错。

wo<sup>3</sup> tian<sup>1</sup>tian<sup>1</sup> dou<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> kan<sup>4</sup> ni<sup>3</sup>de ying<sup>3</sup>ji<sup>2</sup>, fei<sup>1</sup>chang<sup>2</sup> de bu<sup>2</sup>cuo<sup>4</sup>.

I everyday all have see your album, very good

“I have been looking at your album everyday. It’s really very nice.” [新路网-留言板-李述钦留言本, 2002. (cf. Yang & Dong, 2003)]

Bybee et al. (1994) presented the path of development of ‘be/‘have’ leading to perfective and simple past as follows: ‘be/‘have’> resultative > anterior > perfective/simple past (p105, Fig. 3.1). By contrasting between perfective and past, Bybee et al. (1994) assumed that “simple pasts are more grammaticized than perfectives, and in some cases, are further developments from perfectives” (p.92). *You* in (37) and (38) in Mandarin and (28), (30) and (31) in Cantonese (presented in section 5) indicates that *you* can now also extend to simple past context.

*You* as perfective aspect indicates perfect of experience that happened in the past for at least once. The habitual meaning expressed by *you* in (39), however, is perfect of experience also, more specifically, perfect of habitual experience. The event had happened in the past for the first time and continually happened from then on as a habitual experience, which is predictable from the frequency of occurrence in a certain period of time.

## 7. More Evidence of *you*+VP in Pre-Qin works

(40) to (45) are tokens of *you* before VP from Pre-Qin works. In these examples, *you* functions as an aspect auxiliary indicating completion of an action or event, as shown in the interpretations of the examples.

(40) 女 子 有 行, 远 父 母 兄 弟。  
nǚ<sup>3</sup> zǐ<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> xíng<sup>2</sup>, yuǎn<sup>3</sup> fù<sup>4</sup> mǔ<sup>3</sup> xiōng<sup>1</sup>dì<sup>4</sup>.  
woman child have go, far father mother brother.

问 我 诸 姑, 遂 及 伯 姊。  
wèn<sup>4</sup> wǒ<sup>3</sup> zhū<sup>1</sup> gū<sup>1</sup>, suì<sup>2</sup> jí<sup>2</sup> bó<sup>2</sup> zǐ<sup>3</sup>.  
visit my many aunt, CNJ and uncle sister.

‘The girl has got married, far from parents and brothers. She would like to go back to visit aunts and cousins.’

[*Shijing* (诗经), Spring and Autumn Annals]

(41) 伯 华 曰: “ 外 有 军, 内 有 事。  
Bó<sup>2</sup>huá<sup>2</sup> yuē<sup>1</sup>: “ wài<sup>4</sup> yǒu<sup>3</sup> jūn<sup>1</sup>, nèi<sup>4</sup> yǒu<sup>3</sup> shì<sup>4</sup>.  
Bohua say: “outside have army, inside have matters.

赤 也, 外 事 也, 不 敢 侵 官。  
chì<sup>4</sup> yě<sup>3</sup>, wài<sup>4</sup> shì<sup>4</sup> yě<sup>3</sup>, bù<sup>4</sup> gǎn<sup>3</sup> qīn<sup>1</sup> guān<sup>1</sup>.  
red SFP, outside thing SFP, NEG dare offend position.

且 吾 子 之 心 有 出 焉, 可 征 讯 也。“  
qiě<sup>3</sup> wú<sup>2</sup>zǐ<sup>3</sup> zhī<sup>1</sup> xīn<sup>1</sup> yǒu<sup>3</sup> chū<sup>1</sup> yān<sup>1</sup>, kě<sup>3</sup> zhēng<sup>1</sup> xūn<sup>4</sup> yě<sup>3</sup>.”  
CNJ you NOM heart have out SFP, can ask information SFP.”



‘Bohua said, there are foreign wars and domestic routines. Foreign affairs is more urgent and hard to give good advice. Your question is not of my justification, please go to consult others.’

[*Guoyu* (国语), Warring States Period]

(42) 今 子 曰 中 立， 况 固 其 谋 矣。  
jin<sup>1</sup> zi<sup>3</sup> yue<sup>1</sup> zhong<sup>1</sup> li<sup>4</sup>, kuang<sup>4</sup> gu<sup>4</sup> qi<sup>1</sup> mou<sup>2</sup> yi<sup>3</sup>.  
today you say middle stand, moreover consolidate PRON scheme SFP.

彼 有 成 矣， 难 以 得 间。  
bi<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> cheng<sup>2</sup> yi<sup>3</sup>, nan<sup>2</sup> yi<sup>3</sup> de<sup>2</sup> jian<sup>4</sup>.  
PRON have finish SPF, hard to achieve nonalignment.

‘If today you decide to be neutral instead, it will further consolidates their scheme. It will be more difficult to sow discord between them when they have achieved success.’

[*Guoyu* (国语), Warring States Period]

(43) 皆 古 圣 人 也， 吾 未 能 有 行 焉；  
jie<sup>1</sup> gu<sup>3</sup> sheng<sup>4</sup> ren<sup>2</sup> ye<sup>3</sup>, wu<sup>2</sup> wei<sup>4</sup> neng<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> xing<sup>2</sup> yan<sup>1</sup>;  
all ancient saint people SFP, I NEG can have do SFP;

乃 所 愿， 则 学 孔 子 也。  
nai<sup>3</sup> suo<sup>3</sup> yuan<sup>4</sup>, ze<sup>2</sup> xue<sup>2</sup> kong<sup>3</sup>zi<sup>3</sup> ye<sup>3</sup>.  
I PRT wish, PRT learn Confucius SFP.

‘All the three are ancient scholars; I could not have done as they did. What I wish is to learn (of the ways of) Confucius.’

- (44) 曰：“老 衰 而 擅。” 是 有 不 然：  
yue<sup>1</sup>: “lao<sup>3</sup> shuai<sup>1</sup> er<sup>2</sup> shan<sup>4</sup>.” Shi<sup>4</sup> you<sup>4</sup> bu<sup>4</sup> ran<sup>2</sup>:  
Say: “old weak CNJ abdicate.” Is but NEG this:

血 气 筋 力 则 有 衰，  
xue<sup>3</sup> qi<sup>4</sup> jin<sup>1</sup> li<sup>4</sup> ze<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> shuai<sup>1</sup>，  
blood breath physique energy PRT have decline，

若 夫 智 虑 取 舍 则 无 衰。  
ruo<sup>4</sup> fu<sup>1</sup> zhi<sup>4</sup> lü<sup>4</sup> qu<sup>3</sup> she<sup>3</sup> ze<sup>2</sup> wu<sup>2</sup> shuai<sup>1</sup>.  
if you wise think take give PRT NEG decline.

‘There is a saying that old and weak Emperors should abdicate the throne. It is not so sometimes: perhaps your physical condition has declined, but if you think and make decisions wisely, (you have) not declined’

- (45) 恍 若 有 望 而 不 来，  
huang<sup>3</sup> ruo<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> wang<sup>4</sup> er<sup>3</sup> bu<sup>4</sup> lai<sup>2</sup>，  
as if have expect but NEG come，

忽 若 有 来 而 不 见。  
hu<sup>1</sup> ruo<sup>4</sup> you<sup>3</sup> lai<sup>2</sup> er<sup>2</sup> bu<sup>2</sup> xian<sup>4</sup>.  
suddenly seem have come but NEG show-up.

‘I seemed to have expected (the beautiful girls) but they didn’t come. They seemed suddenly to have come but I couldn’t see.’

[*Songyu Deng Tuzihaose Fu Bing Xu* (宋玉登徒子好色赋并序), Warring States Period]

Evidence in Pre-Qin works showed that *you* had once been used as a perfective marker. Southern Chinese dialects retain much more Old Chinese grammar than Modern Mandarin does. That *yauh*+VP structure is still being used as aspect auxiliary in Cantonese further shows that the functional usage of *you* is preserved in the Chinese language. The new trendy use of *you* as perfect auxiliary in Mandarin appears to have been triggered after language contact with southern dialects. This provides fertile soil for *you*+VP to be reacquired in Modern Mandarin. Heine and Kuteva (2005, p.14) pointed out that in the ‘contact-induced’ language change, “...the same grammatical category may re-emerge in a given language, and that this persistence or ‘diachronic stability’ is a phenomenon entirely language-internally conditioned.”

## **8. The specialness of perfective marker *you* in *you*+VP in Mandarin**

Tense and aspect are common in languages in the world, yet every language may have its own logic and system of tense and aspect. Chinese is believed to be a tenseless language in which no overt temporal morpheme like *-ed* in English is attached to the predicates. But Chinese is not an aspectless language.

As a grammatical notion, aspect deals with how the event described by a verb is viewed. There are two main categories of aspect, namely, of imperfective and perfective (Comrie, 1976). According to Yang and Bateman (2002), “(in) the Chinese aspect system, the combination of individual aspects is much more semantically

restricted and much less grammatically regular than that in English.”

Why is there a need to acquire *you* as an additional perfective marker in Mandarin when *le* and *guo* are already well-established perfective markers in this language? Perfective markers in Mandarin and Cantonese will be introduced in the following sections for comparison of *you* with other perfective markers.

### 8.1 Perfective marker *le* in Mandarin and *zo*<sup>2</sup> in Cantonese

Aspect may be indicated by prefixes, suffixes or other changes to the verb, or by auxiliary verbs. Often aspect in Chinese is expressed by *predicative suffix* to the verb. Perfective aspect in Mandarin is expressed by the markers 了/*le* and 过/*guo* (Li & Thompson, 1981) attached after the verb in the form of predicative suffix.

(46) 节目 开始 了。

Jie<sup>2</sup>mu<sup>4</sup> kai<sup>1</sup>shi<sup>3</sup> le.

show begin PFT.

‘The show has begun.’

The perfective marker in Cantonese is postverbal “咗, *zo*<sup>2</sup>” (Zhang Hongnian, 1972; Gao, 1980; Yuan, 1989; Zhang Shuangqing, 1996; Yue, 2004), which indicate the completion of an action. It is equivalent to *le* in Mandarin. For example:

(47) a 冲 咗 凉 之後, 成 個 精神 晒! (Zhang, 1972)

chung zo leung jihauh, sehng go jingsahn saai!

wash PFT bath after, whole person spirited SFP!

‘After having a bath, you will be totally spirited.’

In Mandarin:

b 洗 了 澡 之后, 整 个 人 都 精 神 了!  
 Xi<sup>3</sup> le zao<sup>3</sup> zhi<sup>1</sup> hou<sup>4</sup>, zheng<sup>3</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> ren<sup>2</sup> dou<sup>1</sup> jing<sup>1</sup>shen<sup>2</sup> le!  
 wash PFT bath after, whole CL person all spirited SFP!  
 ‘After having a bath, you will be totally spirited.’

## 8.2 Experiential marker *guo*

Comrie (1976) defines the experiential perfect as indicating “that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present” (p58). In both Mandarin (Li & Tompson, 1981) and Cantonese (Zhang Hongnian, 1972; Gao, 1980; Yuan, 1989; Zhang Shuangqing, 1996; Yue, 2004), experiential aspect marker “过/過, *guo*” is used for past experience at an unspecified time.

(48) 我 去 过 中国。(Mandarin)

wo<sup>3</sup> qu<sup>4</sup> guo<sup>4</sup> Zhong<sup>1</sup>Guo<sup>2</sup>.

I go EXP China.

‘I have been to China.’

我 去 過 中国。(Cantonese)

ngo<sup>5</sup> heoi<sup>3</sup> gwo<sup>3</sup> Zung<sup>1</sup>Gwok<sup>3</sup>.

I go EXP China.

‘I have been to China.’

Different from *le* and *zo*, the focus of *guo* is not only that an event has taken place but also that it has taken place at least once. For example, 去了/咗中国 (*qu<sup>4</sup> le Zhong<sup>1</sup>guo<sup>2</sup>/ heoi<sup>3</sup> zo<sup>2</sup> Zung<sup>1</sup>Gwok<sup>3</sup>*) means that somebody has gone to China. Moreover, he must not be here when the utterance occurs. Perfective marker *le/zo* expresses the completion of the action “go”. On the other hand, 去过/過中国 (*qu<sup>4</sup>*

*guo* Zhong<sup>1</sup>guo<sup>2</sup>/ heoi<sup>3</sup> gwo<sup>3</sup> Zung<sup>1</sup>Gwok<sup>3</sup>) means somebody has been to China sometime before, and he might be here when and where the utterance occurs. Experiential marker *guo/gwo* expresses the completion of the experience of “have been to”.

### 8.3 *you* in *you*+VP

From our earlier analysis of *you*+VP in Contemporary Mandarin, ancient Chinese and Cantonese, it is worth noting that *you* in the trendy *you*+VP structure in Mandarin is mostly a perfective marker or a simple past marker which is complementary with *le*. However, in contrast to *le* and *guo*, *you* has its specialness and can not completely be a substitute of *le* or *guo*.

In Mandarin, *you*+VP structure usually occurs in response to *youmeiyou*+VP questions, which leaves a natural gap before VP as highlighted in (49) *chifan* ‘eat dinner’. If the question involves postverbal perfective marker *le* and sentence final interrogative particle 吗/*ma* (VP+*le*+*ma*) instead of preverbal *youmeiyou*, Mandarin speakers would often use perfective marker *le* as in (50). The preverbal vs. postverbal position of *you* and *le* respectively is a major difference, between the two perfective markers.

- (49) A: 你 有 没 有 吃 饭 ？  
 Ni<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> mei<sup>2</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup>?  
 You have not have eat dinner?  
 ‘Have you eaten dinner?’

B: 我 有 吃。  
wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup>.  
I have eat.  
'I have eaten.'

(50) A: 你 吃 饭 了 吗?  
Ni<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup> le ma<sup>1</sup>?  
You eat dinner PFT ma?  
'Have you eaten dinner?'

B: 我 吃 了。  
wo<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> le.  
I eat PFT.  
'I have eaten.'

Cantonese perfective marker “咗” can not appear together with “有 *yauh*”, but experiential marker “過 *gwo*” can. (Zhang,1972)

(51) a. \*有 買 咗 這 本 書。  
*yauh* maaih zo ze bun syu.  
have buy PFT this CL book  
'I have bought this book.'

b. 有 買 過 這 本 書。  
*yauh* maaih *gwo* ze bun syu.  
have buy EXP this CL book  
'I have bought this book before.'

Counterparts of (51a) and (51b) in Mandarin would be:

(52)a. \*有 买 了 这 本 书。  
you<sup>3</sup> mai<sup>3</sup> le zhe<sup>4</sup> ben<sup>3</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>.  
have buy PFT this CL book.  
'I have bought this book.'

b. 有 买 过 这 本 书。  
you<sup>3</sup> mai<sup>3</sup> guo<sup>4</sup> zhe<sup>4</sup> ben<sup>3</sup> shu<sup>1</sup>.  
have buy EXP this CL book.  
'I have bought this book before.'

The co-occurrence of aspectual auxiliary *you/yauh* with experiential *guo/gwo* but not perfective *le/zo* indicates that *you* shares the same function with *le* as perfective aspect auxiliary. (51b) and (52b) in Cantonese and Mandarin are good because *you/yauh* here emphasizes past experience or completion of an action indicated by *guo*. It is the emphatic meaning that *you* expresses when experiential marker *guo* appears.

In practical speech, *you+VP* usually emphasizes a fact insisted by the speaker. In “我吃饭了/*wo<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup> le*”, *le* refers more to the result of “I have eaten” and it is relevant to the current state of “I’m not hungry now.” In contrast, by saying “我有吃饭/*wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> fan<sup>4</sup>*”, the speaker intends to emotionally affirm the fact of “I have eaten”. This strong affirmation or assertion alludes to a (potential) contrastive view, perhaps one which the speaker suspects the hearer subscribes to, and which the speaker needs to counteract.

Besides being a perfective/simple past marker with an emphatic tone, *you* also expresses habitual meanings when referring to the present, as discussed in section 6.2



and shown in Example (39), reproduced here as (53). This is another difference between *you* and *le* and *guo*.

(53) 我 天天 都 有 看 你的 影集, 非常 的 不错。

wo<sup>3</sup> tian<sup>1</sup>tian<sup>1</sup> dou<sup>1</sup> you<sup>3</sup> kan<sup>4</sup> ni<sup>3</sup>de ying<sup>3</sup>ji<sup>2</sup>, fei<sup>1</sup>chang<sup>2</sup> de bu<sup>2</sup>cuo<sup>4</sup>.

I everyday all have see your album, very good

“I have been looking at your album everyday. It’s really very nice.” [新路网-留言板-李述钦留言本, 2002. (cf. Yang & Dong, 2003)]

## 9. Mechanism of Change—from possession to perfective marker

In the previous sections, the semantic meanings of possession verb *you* and its functional usage analysis in *you*+VP was elucidated. We now discuss the mechanism of change from lexical to functional reanalysis by focusing on the ubiquity of grammaticalization from possession to aspect.

According to Heine (1977), in English, as well as many other European languages, “constructions using ‘have’ as their predicate base have given rise to both expressions of verbal possession and of perfect aspect” (p.187). The case of *you* demonstrates the application of this tendency in Mandarin. Consider the examples below:

English: I have a house. I have eaten.

German: Ich habe ein Haus. Ich habe gegessen.

French: J’ai une maison. J’ai mangé. (Heine, 1997)

Heine (1977) noted that “the development from possession to perfect aspect has been accounted for with reference to a kind of metaphorical process, whereby the

possessor of an object is used as a vehicle to express the agent of an action ... this process was triggered by specifying possession” (p.192). The stages of the metaphorical process is sketched as steps from A to E:

- A. He has a letter
- B. He has a letter # (a) written (one)
- C. He has written # a letter
- D. He has written
- E. He has gone (Heine, 1977)

This metaphorical process also accounts for the grammaticalization of *you* in Mandarin.

A.	<p>我 有 一 个 通 知。</p> <p>Wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>2</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> tong<sup>1</sup>zhi<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>I have one CL notice</p> <p>‘I have a piece of notice.’</p>	<p>possessor has possessee→</p>
B.	<p>我 有 一 个 通 知 (要) 告 诉 你。</p> <p>Wo<sup>3</sup> you<sup>3</sup> yi<sup>2</sup> ge<sup>4</sup> tong<sup>1</sup>zhi<sup>1</sup>(yao<sup>4</sup>) gao<sup>4</sup>su<sup>4</sup></p> <p>ni<sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>I have one CL notice (to) tell</p> <p>you.</p> <p>‘I have a piece of notice to tell</p> <p>you.’</p>	<p>possessor has event / action</p> <p>→</p> <p>agent has action→</p>

C.	我 有 通 知 你。 Wo <sup>3</sup> you <sup>3</sup> tong <sup>1</sup> zhi <sup>1</sup> ni <sup>3</sup> .  I have notify you  ‘I have notified you.’	agent has done something→
D.	我 有 看 这 部 电 影。 Wo <sup>3</sup> you <sup>3</sup> kan <sup>4</sup> zhe <sup>4</sup> bu <sup>4</sup> dian <sup>4</sup> ying <sup>3</sup> .  I have watch this CL movie  ‘I have watched this movie.’	agent has done something

At stage A, possession verb *you* is in a transitive structure where “I” am the possessor of the possessee “a piece of notice”. At stage B, the possessee is modified by “to tell you” and “I” am the possessor of the action or event of “telling you (the piece of notice)” as well. Meanwhile, then, the possessor of the action of “telling you (the piece of notice)” can be viewed as the agent of the action. At stage C, “notify” is used as the main verb, in part because it has the same form when used as a verb or noun. At this stage, the possessor is reinterpreted as the agent. The interpretation focuses on the agent ‘having an action done (by the agent himself/herself). In effect, this is construable as ‘the agent has done something’. Finally in stage D, the main verb might be preceded by the perfective marker *you*, especially under the language

influence of southern dialects such as Cantonese.

## **10. Emergence of a new symmetric structure with perfective marker *you***

As discussed in Section 6, Cantonese has a symmetric system of perfective markers involving 有 *yauh*/冇 *mouh*. In Mandarin, however, affirmative perfective marker 了 *le* and negative 没有 *meiyou* form an asymmetric aspect system. That is, *le* is attached postverbally, and preverbal *meiyou* has no etymological relation with affirmative *le*.

As discussed in previous sections, *you* is emerging as a perfective marker functioning nearly the same with *le* despite some specialness in usage. There is just a negative morpheme *mei* before *you* to be removed for affirmation. *You* and *meiyou* are both preverbal for aspect, and they function symmetrically in both conversations and declaratives. The perfective marker system in Mandarin is gradually and subtly acquiring a symmetric system.

## **11. Conclusion**

Chinese is believed to be a tenseless language, but rich in aspect. Through cross-dialectal influence in late 20<sup>th</sup> century, *you*+VP structure has become popular in Mandarin speaking areas. In Pre-Qin, *you* was an auxiliary indicating perfective aspect before verbal phrases. The *you*+VP template is thus available for Mandarin even though it was not recounted until recently. This study traces the grammaticalization of *you* and suggests that *you*+VP structure might not just be due to language contact, but there must be cognitive motivation and variable and structural

facilitation within the language for its occurrence. The path of development of *you* proposed in this study is outlined in figure 3.

Analyses of *you*+VP in conversations (led by the *youmeiyou*+VP question) and in declarative sentences reveal that *you* is an aspect marker, which has some specialness that *le* and *guo* have not. The Mandarin perfective marker system is additionally acquiring a symmetric system with *you* besides the asymmetric systems with *le* and *guo*. The cognitive motivation of this new usage of *you* in Mandarin conforms to a commonly observed development of possession verbs evolving into aspect markers in many other languages.

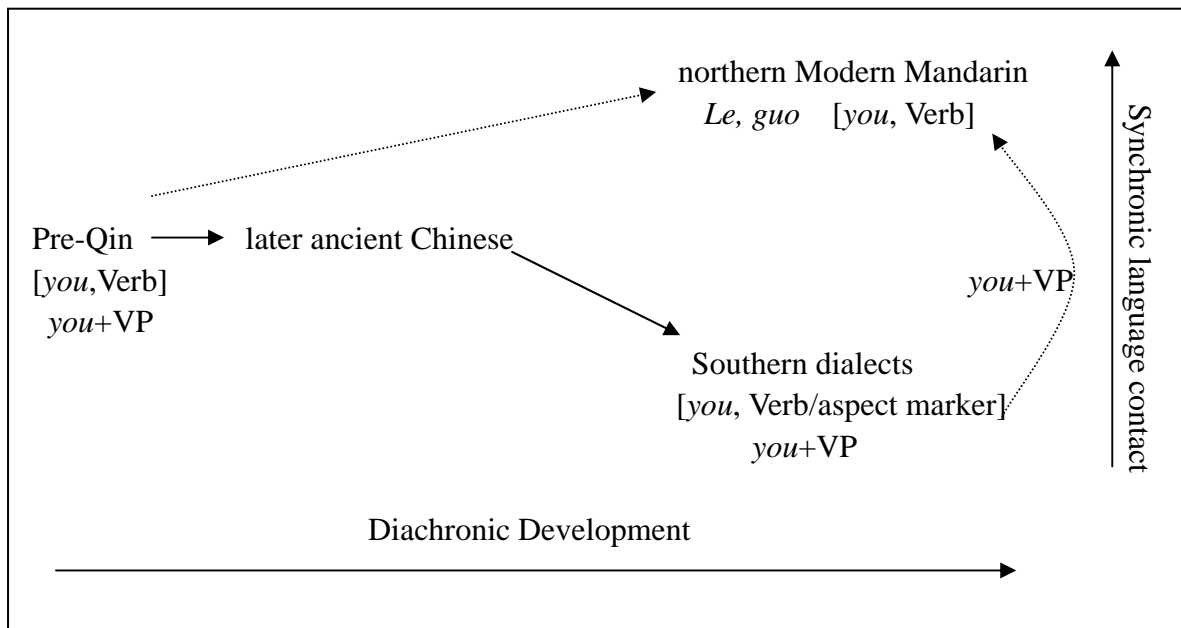


Fig. 3

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