AUTO-VERBAL CLASSIFIER
STRUCTURES IN WU CHINESE

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PART I: Research Purpose
Why verbal classifiers (VCLs) in Sinitic languages?

Verbal classifiers (VCLs) have been much less studied from a typological perspective than the category of nominal classifiers (NCLs), and even less in the non-Mandarin branches of Sinitic languages, such as Wu Chinese.

Why auto-verbal classifier (auto-VCL) structures in Wu Chinese?

The auto-VCL refers to a copy of the verb itself for use as a classifier, that is, it corresponds to the reduplicant in verb structures. The verb reduplicant may be a measure for verbs of action to indicate the temporal duration or frequency in Sinitic languages. For example, the verb reduplicant in the verb phrase [\textit{VERB}-'one'-\textit{VERB}] in Mandarin indicates the delimitative or iterative aspect;

It is striking that auto-VCLs have a closer relationship with verbal aspects than other kinds of VCLs (such as body-part VCLs, instrumental VCLs and frequency VCLs);

Furthermore, there are more auto-VCL structures in the Wu dialects than other non-Mandarin languages. Verb reduplicants in different types of complex sentences can indicate different grammatical aspects in Wu Chinese, such as imperfective or prospective aspect.

Verbs can be reduplicated thrice or even five times to code the durative of verbs of action in the Wu dialects, which accords with the quantity principle of iconicity.
PART II: An Introduction to the Wu dialects of China
Wu Chinese is one of the major branches of Sinitic languages with about 74 million speakers covering 160 cities and counties, mainly distributed in the area of southern Jiangsu province, southeastern Anhui province, Shanghai city and Zhejiang province. (Note: The data are cited from the Institute of Linguistics, CASS ed., 2012:103, 中国语言地图集第2版方言卷 Language Atlas of China, the second edition, volume two: Chinese dialects).

Wang and Cao (2012:104-105, B1-14) divide the Wu dialects into six sub-groups, which are Taihu 太湖片, Taizhou 台州片, Jin-qu 金衢片, Shang-li 上丽片, Oujiang 瓯江片 and Xuanzhou 宣州片.

The Suzhou dialect 苏州方言, Ningbo dialect 宁波方言, and Wenzhou dialect 温州方言 are typical representatives of the Wu dialects.
Earlier studies generally recognize two major types inside the Wu dialects, which are Northern Wu and Southern Wu. The people speaking Northern Wu and Southern Wu dialects cannot communicate with each other. (Dong, Jin et al. 1998: 300, Yuan 2001: 57);

The personal pronouns in Wu Chinese contrasts greatly with that of Standard Mandarin. Apart from the first person singular pronoun which is pan-Sinitic, quite distinct forms exist for the rest (Chappell et Li, 2016: 617-618, edited by Chan), see examples from Shanghainese: 1SG: \( \eta u^{13} \) 我, 2SG: \( nuj^{13} \) 侬, 3SG: \( hi^{13} \) 伊, 1PL: \( a^{5}la^{53} \) 阿拉, 2PL: \( nA^{13} \) 俩, 3PL: \( hi^{13}la^{55} \) 伊拉;

Southern Wu Chinese with the methods of attaching syllabic word, vowel nasalization and tone sandhi to code the diminutive (Cao 2001 (3): 33-44).

- The Yunhe dialect (suffix -\( nji \)): \( a^{3} \) ‘duck’ \( a^{3}-nji \) ‘small duck’
- The Jinhua dialect (vowel nasalization): \( l^{3}u \) ‘rabbit’ \( l^{3}u \) ‘small rabbit’
- The Tangxi dialect (vowel nasalization and tone sandhi): \( u^{11}dia^{113} \) ‘butterfly’ \( u^{33}tian^{24} \) ‘small butterfly’

The well-observed order of the double object construction in Wu Chinese is [\textsc{Verb-Direct Object-Indirect Object}], however, it is [\textsc{Verb-Indirect Object-Direct Object}] order in Standard Mandarin. (Zhu, 2006: 137)

The Wu dialects are the topic-prominent type, and are less typical VO languages than the Beijing Mandarin (Liu, 2001(4): 332-343).
Nominal classifiers can be reduplicated to mean ‘all/every’ in Wu Chinese, just like *penpen* 本本 ‘every (book)’ in Shanghainese (Zhu, 2006: 76);

Furthermore, bare classifier structures are appearing in Wu Chinese, which are not grammatical in Mandarin. Note: Wang (2015:110) defines ‘a bare classifier phrase refers to one composed of just a classifier and its head noun without any numerals or demonstratives preceding the classifier.’ Bare classifier phrases are also applicable for VCLs, presenting as the form [VCL-VERB] in which just a VCL without quantifiers or demonstratives to modify the head verb, the pre-verbal VCL has a definite reading.

1 Bare nominal classifier structure: [NCL-NOUN]
   Shanghai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
   只鸡一眼也不好吃
   *tsaq jiì iqngae xa veq haochiq*
   ‘The chicken is not tasty at all.’ (Zhu Xiaonong, 2006: 77)

2 Bare verbal classifier structure: [VCL-VERB]
   Jiading dialect 嘉定方言 (Wu, Sinitic)
   趁上海尠去
   *tʰä̃34 zə̃24he21 veŋ33 tɕʰi44*
   VCL: time. DEF Shanghai not go
   ‘(He) did not go to Shanghai this time.’
   (Tang Zhenzhu & Chen Zhongmin, 1993:18)
The Wu dialects
- Map A1: Languages in China
- Map B1-14: The distribution of the Wu dialects.
Table 1: Varieties of Wu that are referenced in this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub groups</th>
<th>Dialects and authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>太湖片</strong></td>
<td><strong>Jiangsu Province:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taihu</td>
<td>苏州方言 Suzhou dialect; 常熟方言 Changshu dialect; 吴江方言 Wujiang dialect;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>昆山方言 Kunshan dialect; 太仓方言 Taicang dialect; 张家港方言 Zhangjiagang dialect;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>常州方言 Changzhou dialect; 金坛方言 Jintan dialect; 溧阳方言 Liyang dialect;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>无锡方言 Wuxi dialect; 江阴方言 Jiangyin dialect; 宜兴方言 Yixing dialect;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>靖江方言 Jingjiang dialect; 启东方言 Qidong dialect; 海门方言 Haimen dialect;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>海门四甲方言 Haimen Sijia dialect; 通州方言 Tongzhou dialect; 如东方言 Rudong dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>浙江省 Zhejiang Province:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>杭州方言 Hangzhou dialect; 嘉兴方言 Jiaxing dialect; 桐庐方言 Tonglu dialect;</td>
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<tr>
<td>绍兴方言 Shaoxing dialect; 余姚方言 Yuyao dialect; 宁波方言 Ningbo dialect;</td>
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<tr>
<td>鄞州方言 Yinzhou dialect; 象山方言 Xiangshan dialect; 舟山方言 Zhoushan dialect</td>
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<td><strong>上海市 Shanghai City:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>上海方言 Shanghai dialect; 松江方言 Songjiang dialect</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>台州片</strong></td>
<td><strong>Zhejiang Province:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taizhou</td>
<td>天台方言 Tiantai dialect</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>金衢片</strong></td>
<td><strong>Zhejiang Province:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jin-qu</td>
<td>义乌方言 Yiwu dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>上丽片</strong></td>
<td><strong>Zhejiang Province:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang-li</td>
<td>庆元方言 Qingyuan dialect; 江山方言 Jiangshan dialect</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>江西省 Jiangxi Province:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>广丰方言 Guangfeng dialect</td>
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<td><strong>瓯江片</strong></td>
<td><strong>Zhejiang Province:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oujiang</td>
<td>温州方言 Wenzhou dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>宣州片</strong></td>
<td><strong>Anhui Province:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xuanzhou</td>
<td>宣城方言 Xuancheng dialect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART III: Auto-Verbal Classifiers (Auto-VCLs) in Sinitic languages
Previous definitions of auto-VCLs in East Asia:

- **Chao (1968:616)** gives a definition that ‘the verb itself may be a measure serving as cognate object with or without a numeral (usually the numeral \(yi^{55} \) — ‘one’) as its determinative, as in the verb phrase \(kan^{51}yi^{35}kan^{51}\) 看一看 ‘take a look’, acting as a measure for verbs of action.

- **Matisoff (1973:89)** coins the term ‘auto-classifier’ originally for Lahu, a Loloish language of Thailand, arguing that ‘some nouns may be their own classifiers, that is, there are some nouns whose classifiers have the same phonological shape as themselves, such as \(yɛ \text{ tɛ } yɛ\) ‘a/one house; the whole house; the first house’, in fact, which are auto-nominal classifiers.

- **Gerner (2014:289)** claims that ‘verbal auto-classifiers (ACLs) are verbs which serve as their own phase and event counter.’
I argue that verb reduplicants are classifiers of their cognate verbs which code the temporal duration or frequency of verbs of action, combining with verbs to indicate the lexical aspect (the delimitative or iterative aspect), such as the verb reduplicants in the verb phrase [VERB-(‘one’)-VERB] in Sinitic languages.

DELM: Li and Thompson (1981:232) give a definition that ‘the delimitative aspect means doing an action ‘a little bit’, or for a short period of time, this aspect is structurally represented by the reduplication of the verb, and this reduplication may optionally involve the morpheme $yi^{55}$ ‘one’ between the verb and the reduplicated syllable.’

ITER: Comrie (1976:42) gives a definition of the ‘iterative aspect’ as referring to ‘a situation that is repeated, such as a series of coughs in English’.

My definition of the auto-VCL:

I label verb reduplicants coding lexical or grammatical aspects as auto-verbal classifiers (auto-VCLs), distinguishing auto-VCLs from auto-nominal classifiers (auto-NCLs) discussed by Matisoff (1973:89) for Lahu.
2. Lexical aspects and Auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages

- Wu Chinese and Standard Mandarin both use auto-VCLs combining with activity and semelfactive verbs to code the delimitative or iterative aspect:

- Auto-VCLs combine with activity verbs to code the delimitative aspect:

  \[ \text{ACTIVITY VERB-(‘one’)-AUTO VCL} \]

(3) Mandarin (Sinitic)

想一想

\[ \text{xiang}^{214} \quad \text{yi} \quad \text{xiang}^{214} \]

\[ \text{think} \quad \text{one} \quad \text{think} \]_{DELM}

‘Have a think.’

(4) Suzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

你要回头想一想，仔细查一查

\[ \text{ni}^{55} \quad \text{iæ}^{55} \quad \text{fiue}^{12} \quad \text{de}^{33} \quad \text{sil}^{51} \quad \text{iə?} \quad \text{siæ}^{51} \]

\[ \text{2SG} \quad \text{need} \quad \text{go back} \quad \text{head} \quad \text{[think} \quad \text{one} \quad \text{VCL: think}]_{DELM} \]

carefully

\[ \text{tsi}^{51} \text{si}^{21} \quad \text{za}^{13} \quad \text{iə?} \quad \text{za}^{13} \]

\[ \text{[check} \quad \text{one} \quad \text{VCL: check}]_{DELM} \]

‘You need to go back, have a think and check it carefully.’ (Ye Xiangling, 1988:300)
2. Lexical aspects and Auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages

Auto-VCLs combine with semelfactive verbs to code the iterative aspect:

\[ \text{SEMELFACTIVE VERB-('one')-AUTO VCL} \]

(5) Mandarin (Sinitic)

来嗅嗅这朵花香不香

lai\textsuperscript{35} \ [xiu\textsuperscript{51}~xiu] \ zhe\textsuperscript{51} \ duo\textsuperscript{214} \ hua\textsuperscript{55}

come [sniff ~ VCL: sniff] \_ITER \ this \ NCL \ flower

xiang\textsuperscript{55} \ bu\textsuperscript{51} \ xiang\textsuperscript{55}

fragrant \ not \ fragrant

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’

(6) Shanghai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

来闻闻看剫这朵话香哦

le\textsuperscript{13} \ [məŋ\textsuperscript{22} \ məŋ\textsuperscript{55}] \ kʰò\textsuperscript{21} \ gə\textsuperscript{21}

come [sniff VCL: sniff] \_ITER \ TENT \ this

tu\textsuperscript{23} \ ho\textsuperscript{53} \ cia\textsuperscript{55} \ va?\textsuperscript{21}

NCL \ flower \ fragrant \ not

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’

(You Rujie ed., vol: 5-6, 2013:19)
2. Lexical aspects and Auto-VCLs in Sinitic languages (3)

[VERB-QUANTIFIER (more than ‘one’)-AUTO VCL], in which the auto-VCL codes the number of times of verbs of action:
The auto-VCL in the verb phrase [SEMELACTIVE VERB-QUANTIFIER-AUTO VCL] turns out to be a frequency marker to code the number of times an action takes place, as in (7); whereas in Mandarin, only the frequency marker *xia*⁵¹ 下 ‘time’ can be used in (8): Wu dialects use many of these specific frequency VCLs, as opposed to a general one.

(7) Tiantai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
只灯泡闪阿三闪，拔弗亮了
*tsaʔ²  təŋ⁵³ pʰau⁵⁵  eiæʔ⁵  aʔ*
NCL.DEF   bulb   flash   PFV
se³³  eiæʔ⁵,
three      VCL: flash > time
*bæʔ²³  foʔ  lian⁵⁵  lau*
just    not      bright     PRF
‘This bulb just flashed three times, and then it was not bright any more.’
(Dai Zhaoming, 2003:191)

(8) Mandarin (Sinitic)
这只灯泡闪了三下
*zhe⁵¹  zhi⁵⁵  deng⁵⁵ pao⁵¹  shan²¹⁴  le  san⁵⁵  xia⁵¹*
this      NCL  bulb   flash     PFV  three    VCL: time
‘This bulb flashed three times.’
3. The habitual aspect and Auto-VCLs (1)

- I find that whether the object is definite or not determines the aspect indicated by the verb phrase [ACTIVITY VERB-AUTO VCL-OBJECT]:

  - Under the condition that the object is indefinite, the auto-VCLs combining with the verb code the habitual aspect:
    Indefinite object => habitual aspect (HAB)

  - whereas under the condition that the object is definite, the auto-verbal classifiers combining with the verb code the delimitative aspect (or iterative aspect).
    Definite object => delimitative aspect (or iterative aspect)

- Note: Comrie (1976: 27-28) gives a definition that ‘habitual is a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment, but precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period.’ He also distinguishes the iterative aspect from the habitual aspect as in the sentence the Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus, in which there is no need for iterativity to be involved.
3. The habitual aspect and Auto-VCLs (2)

**[Activity Verb-Auto VCL-Indefinite object]:**

*The Auto-VCLs combining with activity verbs and indefinite objects code the habitual aspect in both Wu Chinese and Mandarin in my sample:*

(9) Mandarin (Sinitic)

嗑嗑瓜子，读读报纸

[ke\(^{51}\)~ke] \[gua^{55}zi\] [du\(^{35}\)~du] \[bao^{51}zhi^{214}\]

‘(I) eat sunflower seeds and read newspapers everyday.’

(10) Tiantai dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

啜啜瓜子，读读报纸，批批条子

[t\(ɛ\)yu\(^{55}\)~t\(ɛ\)yu\(^{23}\)] \[kuo^{33}ts\(^{325}\)\], [du\(^{32}\)~du\(^{23}\)] \[p\(h\)^{33}~p\(h\)^{33}\] \[diau^{33}ts\(^{325}\)\]

读读报纸. INDEF] \[read ~ VCL: read newspaper. INDEF\] \[sign ~ VCL: sign note. INDEF\]

‘(I) eat sunflower seeds, read newspapers and sign notes everyday.’ (Dai Zhaoming, 2003:199)
3. The habitual aspect and Auto-VCLs (3)

**[VERB-AUTO VCL-DEFINITE OBJECT]: The Auto-VCLs combining with activity verbs and definite objects code the delimitative or iterative aspect in both Wu Chinese and Mandarin:**

- The delimitative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase: [ACTIVITY VERB- (‘one’)-AUTO VCL-DEFINITE OBJECT]

(11) Jiading dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
叫伊唻修一修扇门
\( \text{tei}^{33} \text{i}^{53} \text{l}^{31} \text{[sy}^{55} \text{i}^{33} \text{]} \)
ask 3SG come [repair one
\( \text{sy}^{21} \text{sir}^{53} \text{m}^{51} \text{]} \)
VCL: repair NCL.DEF door]_{DELM}
‘Ask him to come and repair this door for a while.’
(Tang Zhenzhu & Chen Zhongmin, 1993:18)

(12) Mandarin (Sinitic)
修一修这扇门
\( \text{xiu}^{55} \text{yi} \text{xiu}^{55} \text{zhe}^{51} \text{shan}^{51} \text{men}^{35} \]
[repair one repair this. DEF NCL door]_{DELM}
‘Try to repair this door for a while.’
The iterative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase: [SEMELFACTIVE VERB- (‘one’)-AUTO VCL-DEFINITE OBJECT]

(13) Jiading dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

来闻闻哀朵花阿香

le\(^3\) mën\(^2\)~mën\(^3\) e\(^4\) tœu ho\(^44\)]

come [sniff ~ VCL: sniff this. DEF NCL flower] \(\text{ITER}\)

aʔ\(^42\) eïä\(^3\)

not fragrant

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’

(Wang Ping, 2011:352)

(14) Mandarin (Sinitic)

来嗅嗅这朵花香不香

lai\(^35\) xiu\(^51\)~xiu zhe\(^51\) duo\(^214\) hua\(^55\)]

come [sniff~ VCL: sniff this. DEF NCL flower] \(\text{ITER}\)

xiang\(^55\) bu\(^51\) xiang\(^55\)

fragrant not fragrant

‘Come and take a sniff of this flower to see if it is fragrant or not.’
Wu Chinese and Mandarin show similar patterns of syntactic behaviour for the features of lexical and grammatical aspects:

- Auto-VCLs combine with activity verbs to code the delimitative aspect: 
  \[\text{Activity Verb} - ('one') - \text{Auto VCL} - (\text{Definite Object})\]

- Auto-VCLs combine with semelfactive verbs to code the iterative aspect: 
  \[\text{Semelfactive Verb} - ('one') - \text{Auto VCL} - (\text{Definite Object})\]

- The verb phrase \[\text{Activity Verb} - \text{Auto VCL}\] combines with an indefinite object to indicate the habitual aspect: 
  \[\text{Activity Verb} - ('one') - \text{Auto VCL} - \text{Indefinite Object}\]

However, auto-VCLs in the Wu dialects can function as a frequency marker when combined with quantifiers that are more than ‘one’; by contrast, auto-VCLs in Standard Mandarin can only use the frequency marker \(xia^5\) ‘time’ to code the number of times of an action:

- \[\text{Verb-Quantifier (more than ‘one’)-Auto VCL}\] (only in Wu Chinese)
- \[\text{Verb-Quantifier (more than ‘one’)-Frequency Marker}\] (in Standard Mandarin)
PART IV: Specific Auto-VCL structures in Wu Chinese
4. [(VERB-AUTO VCL)-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT] (1)

- Auto-VCLs code the prospective aspect in the verb structure [VERB-AUTO VCL-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT]

  - Comrie (1976: 64) give a definition that ‘the perfect is retrospective (RET), in that it establishes a relation between a state at one time and a situation at an earlier time. If languages were completely symmetrical, one might equally well expect to find prospective (PROSP) forms, where a state is related to some subsequent situation, for instance where someone is in a state of being about to do something.’

- In Mandarin, there are no auto-VCLs in the verb structure [VERB-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT], which co-occur with the retrospective aspect (RET) marker le 了:

  (15) Mandarin (Sinitic)
  保险丝搭牢
  bao214 xian214 si55 da55 lao35
  fuse wire attach firm
  ‘Attach the fuse wire firmly.’

  (16) Mandarin (Sinitic)
  保险丝搭牢了
  bao214 xian214 si55 da55 lao35 le
  fuse wire attach firm RET
  ‘(I) have attached the fuse wire firmly.’
4. [(VERB-AUTO VCL)-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT] (2)

- By contrast, in Wu Chinese, auto-VCLs in the verb structure [VERB-AUTO VCL-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT] which is used to code the prospective aspect including the imperative, cannot co-occur with the retrospective aspect marker, such as lɐi⁵⁵ in (18).
- The Wu dialects show semantic constraints on the compatibility of retrospective aspect marker with VCLs. To be precise, the retrospective aspect markers are not compatible.

(17) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

*保险丝搭搭牢

\[pɔ⁴⁴ɕi⁴⁴ʂɿ⁴⁴\text{ təʔ⁵⁵~təʔ⁵ } lɔ⁵⁵\]

fuse wire attach ~ VCL: attach. PROSP firm

‘Attach the fuse wire firmly.’(Ruan Guijun, 2009:82)

(18) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

*保险丝搭搭牢嘞

\[pɔ⁴⁴ɕi⁴⁴ʂɿ⁴⁴\text{ təʔ⁵⁵~təʔ⁵ } lɔ⁵⁵\]

fuse wire attach ~ attach. PROSP firm *RET
5. [VERB- (‘one’)-AUTO VCL] and [VERB- (‘not’)-VERB] in the Shaoxing Dialect (1)

Not all verb reduplicants can be treated as auto-VCLs in the Shaoxing dialect: The verb reduplicant in the form [VERB-(‘not’)–VERB] cannot be treated as the auto-VCL since it still functions as a verb to pose a polar question. This elliptical form is not found in Mandarin:

(19) Shaoxing dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
葛个书偌看看嘞
keʔ³ keʔ⁵ cy⁵² noʔ²⁵ kʰɛ̃³³~kʰɛ̃³³ laʔ³
this NCL book 2SG read ~ read Q
‘Have you read this book or not?’ (Wang Futang, 2015:345)

By way of contrast, the verb reduplicant in the form [verb-(‘one’)–verb] can be treated as an auto-VCL which combines with verbs to indicate lexical aspects:

(20) Shaoxing dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
让我看看
ŋiaŋ¹¹ ŋo⁵⁵ [kʰɛ̃³³~kʰɛ̃³³]
let 1SG [look ~ VCL: look]DELME
‘Let me have a look.’ (Wang Futang, 2015:346)
In fact, only the rising and entering tones distinguish [VERB-(‘not’)-VERB] from [VERB-(‘one’)-AUTO VCL] by means of tone sandhi; there are no changes for the level and departing tones, which rely on contexts to differentiate them, as you see in Table 2 below (Wang, 2015:344):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight tones</th>
<th>Intrinsic tone</th>
<th>[V-(勿)-V]</th>
<th>[V-(一)-V]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High register</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level tone</td>
<td>52+52</td>
<td>穿穿 tsʰ55,tsʰ52</td>
<td>穿穿 tsʰ55,tsʰ52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low register</td>
<td>231+231</td>
<td>来来 le115,le52</td>
<td>来来 le115,le52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low register</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Wear or not’</td>
<td>‘Try to wear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level tone</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Come or not’</td>
<td>‘Come for a while’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High register</td>
<td></td>
<td>穿穿 tsʰ55,tsʰ52</td>
<td>穿穿 tsʰ55,tsʰ52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising tone</td>
<td>335+335</td>
<td>走走 tsˈ33,tsˈ52</td>
<td>走走 tsˈ33,tsˈ55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low register</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Walk or not’</td>
<td>‘Take a walk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising tone</td>
<td>113+113</td>
<td>坐坐 zo115,zo52</td>
<td>坐坐 zo115,zo55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low register</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Sit or not’</td>
<td>‘Take a seat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High register</td>
<td></td>
<td>看看 kʰ33,kʰ33</td>
<td>看看 kʰ33,kʰ33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departing tone</td>
<td>33+33</td>
<td>聊聊 f投资者11,f投资者11</td>
<td>聊聊 f投资者11,f投资者11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low register</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Look or not’</td>
<td>‘Have a look’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departing tone</td>
<td>11+11</td>
<td>话话 f投资者11,f投资者11</td>
<td>话话 f投资者11,f投资者11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low register</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Say or not’</td>
<td>‘Have a talk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High register</td>
<td></td>
<td>吃吃 tʰ54,tʰ54</td>
<td>吃吃 tʰ3,tʰ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering tone</td>
<td>45+45</td>
<td>吃吃 tʰ54,tʰ54</td>
<td>吃吃 tʰ3,tʰ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low register</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Eat or not’</td>
<td>‘Have a eat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering tone</td>
<td>23+23</td>
<td>读读 do25,do54</td>
<td>读读 do25,do54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Read or not’</td>
<td>‘Have a read’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The verb can be reduplicated twice to code the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause indicating the background information.

There is ‘a tendency for punctual verbs to have perfective aspect in foregrounded sentences and conversely for verbs of the durative/stative/iterative types to occur in imperfective in background clauses.’ (Hopper, 1979:215)

In the Ningbo dialect, two verb reduplicants both can be treated as auto-VCLs to code the imperfective aspect together in the verb construction \([\text{VERB}_1-\text{AUTO VCL}-\text{AUTO VCL}-\text{VP}_2]\), this structure is not found in Mandarin. However, this structure is also not common in Northern Wu (triple reduplication is common), and is only found in Ningbo, and in the Luxi dialect (Gan, Sinitic).

(21) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
讲讲讲，造孽嘞
\(kɔ̃^{35}_{35}~[kɔ̃^{35}_{35}~kɔ̃^{35}_{35}]\),
zɔ̃^{22}ŋi^{22}_{22}
leɪ^{22}
talk ~ [VCL: talk~ VCL: talk]_{IPFV}
quarrel
‘(They) were talking and then had a quarrel.’ (Ruan Guijun, 2009:26)

(22) Duchang dialect (Gan, Sinitic)
渠讲讲讲，哭起来嘚
iɛ^{214}_{214}
kon^{352}_{352}~[kon^{352}_{352}~kon^{352}_{352}]\),
guk^{21}_{21}
i^{352}_{352}le^{i344}_{344}
te
3SG
talk ~ [VCL: talk~ VCL: talk]_{IPFV}
cry
INCEP
PRF
‘She was talking and then began to cry.’ (Lu Jifang, 2007:197)
However, in Mandarin, verbs cannot be reduplicated like this once or twice to indicate the imperfective aspect. The verb construction [\(\text{VERB}_1-\text{AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-VP}_2\)] in the Ningbo dialect corresponds to the \([(\text{VERB}_1-\text{IPFV})-(\text{VERB}_1-\text{IPFV})-\text{VP}_2]\) structure in Mandarin.

(23) Mandarin (Sinitic)
*看看看，睡着了
*\text{kan}^{51-\text{kan}^{51-\text{kan}^{51}}, \text{shui}^{51}\text{zhao}^{35} \text{le}}
*\text{read \sim VCL: read \sim VCL: read \text{fall asleep \ PRF}}

(24) Mandarin (Sinitic)
他看着看着，睡着了
\text{ta}^{55} \text{kan}^{51} \text{zhe} \text{kan}^{51} \text{zhe}, \text{shui}^{51}\text{zhao}^{35} \text{le}
\text{3SG \text{read \ IPFV \text{read \ IPFV \text{fall asleep \ PRF}}}

‘He was reading and then fell asleep.’
The auto-VCLs in the verb construction $[\text{VERB}_1-[\text{AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL}]_{\text{IPFV}}-\text{VP}_2]$ can also code the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause to provide the background information.

By contrast with the construction $[\text{VERB}_1-[\text{AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL}]_{\text{IPFV}}-\text{VP}_2]$, the more times a verb is reduplicated, the longer is the temporal duration expressed by the verb construction, which accords to the principle of iconicity.

This verb construction is widely found in Northern Wu, which also corresponds to the $[(\text{VERB}_1-\text{IPFV})-(\text{VERB}_1-\text{IPFV})-\text{VP}_2]$ construction in Mandarin.

(25) Suzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
俚看电视看看看看睏着则
3SG watch television watch ~ [VCL: watch ~ VCL: watch ~ VCL: watch]_{IPFV}
fall asleep PRF
‘He was watching TV and then fell asleep.’ (Wang Ping, 2011:356)
7. [**VERB**₁-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL-VP₂] structure in Northern Wu (2)

(26)  Jiaxing dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
讲座讲座，笑起来哩
kâ⁴⁴~[kã~kã⁴⁴~kã],

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>talk ~</th>
<th>[VCL: talk ~ VCL: talk ~ VCL: talk]</th>
<th>IPFV</th>
<th>laugh</th>
<th>INCEP</th>
<th>PRF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

‘We were talking and then began to laugh.’ (Xu Yue, 2016:118)

(27)  Wujiang dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
伊辣电视机面前看看看看睏着特
i² ləʔ⁴ dr²ti⁴tci² mIr²² zIr²⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3SG</th>
<th>LOC</th>
<th>television</th>
<th>face</th>
<th>front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

kʰø²¹~[kʰø³~kʰø²¹~kʰø¹] kʰuən²¹zəʔ³ də?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>watch ~</th>
<th>[VCL: watch ~ VCL: watch ~ VCL: watch]</th>
<th>IPFV</th>
<th>fall asleep</th>
<th>PRF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

‘He was watching TV and then fell asleep.’

(Jiangsu Yuyan Ziyuan Ziliao Huibian Bianweihui, vol 12, 2015:139)
The verb can even be reduplicated five times to form the verb construction \([\text{VERB}_1-\text{AUTO VCL}-\text{AUTO VCL}-\text{AUTO VCL}-\text{AUTO VCL}-\text{VCL}]_{\text{IPFV}}-\text{VP}_2\], in which the auto-VCLs code the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause to provide the background information.

The more times the verb is reduplicated, the longer the temporal duration expressed by the verb construction, which follows the quantity principle (Givón 1984: 970), using reduplication to iconically mark an increase.

In my sample of languages, this verb construction is only found in Hangzhou.

(28) Hangzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)
我吃吃吃吃吃吃困着勒
\(\text{ŋου}^{44} \text{ʨʰiɕ}^3 \sim \text{ʨʰiɕ}^5 \sim \text{ʨʰiɕ}^3 \sim \text{ʨʰiɕ}^3 \sim \text{ʨʰiɕ}^3 \sim \text{ʨʰiɕ}^4\)
1SG eat \sim [VCL: eat \sim VCL: eat \sim VCL: eat \sim VCL: eat \sim VCL: eat]_{\text{IPFV}}
\(\text{κʊɛn}^{55} \text{ʣʰe}^3 \text{ʨʰe}^{31}\)
fall asleep PRF
‘I was eating and then fell asleep.’ (Qian Nairong, 2003a:404)
Verbs of ‘looking, watching and seeing’ combine with auto-VCLs in the Wu dialects to indicate the conative aspect (CONAT) in the verb structure [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT].

**CONAT:** Conative aspect in Athapaskan languages is defined by Rice (2000:260) as: ‘A further substitution aspectual type is the conative, meaning that an event was attempted or directed at a target’. I adopt this definition and apply it to Sinitic languages. In Mandarin, auto-VCLs can indicate the conative aspect in the form [VERB-(‘one’)-AUTO VCL]; by contrast, the post-verbal adverb *KAN* 看 and its varieties are used to mark the conative aspect (also known as the tentative aspect) in Wu Chinese.

In Standard Mandarin, the auto-VCLs can code the conative aspect without an overt conative aspect marker *KAN* 看 ‘look’:

(29) Mandarin (Sinitic)

你去走走

ni²¹⁴ qu⁵¹ zou²¹⁴~zou

2SG go walk~ VCL: walk. **CONAT**

‘Try to have a walk.’
However, the verb *KAN 看* has grammaticalized into a conative aspect marker in Northern Wu due to phonetic erosion in the verb construction [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT: KAN], situated in the post-verbal position.

(30) Jiaxing dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

โจก去看看
          ne₁³   teʰi⁵³   kʰɤə⁵³-kʰɤə⁵³
2SG     go  look~ VCL: look-CONAT
‘You try to have a look.’ (Xu Yue, 2016:123)

The conative aspect marker *KAN 看* also attaches to other kinds of VCLs, such as the body-part VCL *KOU 口* ‘mouth’ in Suzhou: [VERB-QUANTIFIER-BODY PART VCL-CONAT: KAN]

(31) Suzhou dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

让俚尝两口看
          ȵi₂²²   li⁴⁴   z̟₂¹   i̟⁴⁴   kʰei⁴⁴   kʰθ²¹
let 3SG    taste two VCL: mouth CONAT
‘Let him try to have a taste.’ (LI Xiaofan, 1998: 206)

It is important to distinguish the conative structure from the verb construction [VERB-AUTO VCL-AUTO VCL] in a subordinate clause, even if their surface structures are similar, their underlying functions are totally different:

(32) Ningbo dialect (Wu, Sinitic)

看看看，睏熟嘞
          kʰi⁴⁴-kʰi⁴⁴-kʰi⁴⁴
read~ [VCL: read~ VCL: read] IPFV
          kʰuən⁴⁴   zo²²   lei²²
sleep deeply PRF
‘(He) was reading and then fell asleep deeply.’ (Ruan Guijun, 2009:26)
9. [VERB-AUTO VCL-CONAT] in the Wu dialects (3)

- **KAN 看** ‘look’ acts as the conative aspect marker in the construction [VERB-VCLP-CONAT], and is not only limited to modifying the auto-VCLP;
- In Northern Wu, the adverb **KAN 看** ‘look’ is widely used, whereas there are more varieties of **KAN 看** in the Southern Wu area, such as
  - **teʰiːn⁵** 起儿 in the Yiwu dialect;
  - **Xiang 相** in the Tiantai, Xianju and Wenling dialects;
  - **tsʰɿ⁴** 肴 in the Wenzhou dialect;
  - **CU 促** in the Songyang and Suichang dialects,
  - **Wang 望** in the Wuyi, Lishui, Jinyun, Yongkang and Xuanping dialects;
  - **Liao 瞭** in the Qingtian and Qingyuan dialects.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-groups</th>
<th>Conative aspect markers</th>
<th>Dialects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taihu (9/29)</strong></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰa⁵¹</strong></td>
<td>Suzhou dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰa⁵¹</strong></td>
<td>Haimen dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰe⁵⁵</strong></td>
<td>Hangzhou dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰa⁵³</strong></td>
<td>Jiaxing dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰie⁴⁴</strong></td>
<td>Ningbo dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰe⁴⁴</strong></td>
<td>Xiangshan dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰa⁷¹</strong></td>
<td>Zhoushan dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰa⁵³</strong></td>
<td>Shanghai dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰa⁵³</strong></td>
<td>Songjiang dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taizhou (1/1)</strong></td>
<td>相 <strong>sian⁵⁵</strong></td>
<td>Tiantai dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jin-qu (1/1)</strong></td>
<td>起儿 <strong>teʰiːn⁵⁵</strong></td>
<td>Yiwu dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shang-li (1/3)</strong></td>
<td>七 <strong>tsʰə⁵⁵</strong></td>
<td>Jiangshan dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oujiang (1/1)</strong></td>
<td>肴 <strong>tsʰɿ⁴²</strong></td>
<td>Wenzhou dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Xuancheng (1/1)</strong></td>
<td>看 <strong>kʰa⁵³</strong></td>
<td>Xuancheng dialect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 showing languages in sample with conative aspect marker 14/36
Interim Conclusion

- Not all verb reduplicants can be treated as auto-VCLs:
  - This depends on the elliptical form of the verb construction:
    - \([\text{VERB- ('not')-VERB}]\) in the Shaoxing dialect, in which the verb reduplicant still functions as a verb to pose a polar question;
    - By comparison, the verb reduplicant in the verb phrase \([\text{VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL}]\) can be treated as an auto-VCL which combines with the verb to code lexical aspects.
  - Distinguish the verb construction \([\text{VERB-AUTO vcl-CONAT}]\) ‘try to have a look’ from the verb construction \([\text{VERB}_1\text{-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-VP}_2]\) ‘be looking’.

- Auto-VCLs can indicate lexical and grammatical aspects in different verb constructions which are not found in Standard Mandarin:
  - Coding the prospective aspect:
    - \([\text{VERB-AUTO vcl. PROSP-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT}]\)
  - Coding the imperfective aspect in the background clause: the more times the verb is reduplicated, the longer the temporal duration expressed by the verb construction:
    - \([\text{VERB}_1\text{-[AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl]}\text{IPFV-VP}_2]\)
    - \([\text{VERB}_1\text{-[AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl]}\text{IPFV-VP}_2]\)
    - \([\text{VERB}_1\text{-[AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl]}\text{IPFV-VP}_2]\)
PART V: Conclusion
Auto-VCL structures in Wu Chinese share these similarities with other Sinitic languages:

- Lexical aspects with auto-VCLs:
  - The delimitative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase 
    \[\text{ACTIVITY VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL- (DEFINITE OBJECT)}\]
  - The iterative aspect is indicated by the verb phrase 
    \[\text{SEMELFACTIVE VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL- (DEFINITE OBJECT)}\]

- The habitual aspect with auto-VCLs:
  - The habitual aspect is indicated by the verb phrase 
    \[\text{ACTIVITY VERB- ('one')-AUTO VCL- INDEFINITE OBJECT}\]
The following auto-VCL structures are specific to Wu Chinese compared with other Sinitic languages:

- **Auto-VCLs code the frequency of verbs of action:** (whereas the general frequency marker *xia* 下 ‘time’ is used in Standard Mandarin):
  - `[VERB-QUANTIFIER-AUTO vcl]`

- **Auto-VCLs can code the prospective or imperfective aspect in different verb constructions:**
  - **Coding the prospective aspect:**
    - `[VERB-AUTO vcl-RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT]`
  - **Coding the imperfective aspect in a subordinate clause:**
    - `[VERB₁-[AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl]_{IPFV}-VP₂]` (only found in the Ningbo dialect)
    - `[VERB₁-[AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl]_{IPFV}-VP₂]` (widely found in Northern Wu, also in Hui Chinese)
    - `[VERB₁-[AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl]_{IPFV}-VP₂]` (only found in the Hangzhou dialect)
In Wu Chinese, not all verb reduplicants can be treated as auto-VCLs:

The verb reduplicant in the verb form \([\text{VERB- ('not')-VERB}]\) in the Shaoxing dialect cannot be treated as an auto-VCL structure, as the elliptical component is negator \(\text{Wu 勿} \text{ ‘not’}\), which is used to form questions.

The grammaticalized verb \(\text{Kan 看 ‘look’}\) also cannot be treated as auto-VCLs when it functions as a conative aspect marker, which also can be used to modify other verbs.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{看看看 [VERB-AUTO vcl-CONAT] ‘try to have a look’} \\
\text{读读看 [VERB-AUTO vcl-CONAT] ‘try to have a read’} \\
\text{看看看 [VERB-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl] ‘be looking’} \\
\text{读读读 [VERB-AUTO vcl-AUTO vcl] ‘be reading’}
\end{align*}
\]

Auto-VCLs are verb reduplicants which can combine with verbs to indicate the lexical or grammatical aspects in different verb constructions.
References (1)


References (3)

References (4)

References (5)

References (6)


