

**From Duration to Aspect: The V *Tsit-e(-a)* O--(*Tsit*)-*e*
Construction in Taiwan Southern Min**

Abstract

This study investigates the syntax and semantics of the numeral *tsit* ‘one’ plus the so-called verbal classifier *e* in Taiwan Southern Min, (TSM), focusing on the V(erb) + *tsit-e(-a)* O(bject) + *tsit-e* type. The core meanings of *tsit-e* include ‘once,’ ‘a short period of time,’ ‘as soon as,’ ‘to do something a little bit,’ and ‘to the result or extent of.’ We argue that *tsit-e* in the post-object position in the V + *tsit-e(-a)* O + (*tsit*)-*e* type emerges as a marker for the delimitative aspect, a kind of perfective aspect indicating a holistic transitory situation. Syntactically, we assume it heads an AspP, taking VPs denoting activities or achievements, but not accomplishments or states. In contrast, the prenominal *tsit-e(-a)* denotes activities and is a process-related durative which measures the duration of an event. As a delimitative aspect marker, *tsit-e*, is often used to express suggestions or desires and may be shortened into *e*. Remarkably, in short of the numeral *tsit*, *e* requires a vague quantifier indicating small quantity to be within its scope. Finally, it is shown that verb reduplication in TSM has to be licensed by either *tsit-e* or *e*, yielding a reading involving iterative actions within a short period of time.

Key words: numeral ‘one,’ verbal classifier, duration, delimitative aspect, verb reduplication, Mandarin Chinese, Taiwan Southern Min