ABSTRACT

The verb “you (有)” in the Southern Min dialect can be used as an auxiliary verb indicating the resultative or completion of action. This is a function not found in Mandarin. By doing typological comparison studies of the verb “you”, using theoretical framework of functionalism and cognitive linguistics, this thesis addresses the various uses of “you” as an aspectual marker.

The first part of this thesis is a comparison of the aspectual marker “you” in the Southern Min dialect with the three aspectual markers of contemporary Mandarin “le”, “zhe” and “guo”. Our study shows that although the aspectual marker is most used to indicate the completion of action, it can sometimes be used to indicate an action that is still in progress, which is equivalent to “zhe” in Mandarin. This thesis attempts to explore the differences between the aspectual marker of the Min dialect and contemporary Mandarin from its usage and word order.

In addition, this thesis also attempts to explore the semantic conditions on the use of “you” in the Southern Min dialect. As “you” takes up the grammatical meaning of realization, similar to “le” in “Putonghua”, I argue that there is a restriction on its grouping with the different types of verbs and adjectives.

The fourth Chapter aims to provide a historical explanation of the word structure of “you+VP” & “you+Adjective” through evidences found in classical grammer of Chinese. As the dialect is developed from the classical Chinese, our findings can be used to support the immersgence of “you mei you （有没有）+VP” in Modern Chinese. Its
grammatical feature is influenced by the classical grammer of Chinese and not from the dialect.

This thesis also explains the grammaticalization of content verb or possessive verb into aspectual marker. Our studies shows that it is not due to a particular meaning of the verb that causes the grammaticalization but the abstract meaning accompanied by it.

It is our hope that the results obtained in this academic exercise make a contribution to the research and enhancement of the understanding of the dialects and Chinese language.