

The Modal Particle "Le₂" in the Three Domains of Action, Knowledge, and Speech in Longchuan Hakka Dialect

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Abstract: According to the theory of the three domains of action, knowledge, and speech, the modal particle "le₂" at the end of Mandarin sentences can be classified into three types: "le of action" (le xing), indicating the emergence of a new action state; "le of knowledge" (le zhi), indicating the emergence of new knowledge; and "le of speech" (le yan), indicating the emergence of a new speech state. This paper investigates the "le₂" in Longchuan dialect in detail by means of fieldwork, and compares the differences in pronunciation and paraphrase between Longchuan dialect and Mandarin "le₂".

Keywords: "le₂," "lu," Longchuan Hakka Dialect; the Theory of the Three Domains

1. Introduction

According to the theory of the three domains of action, knowledge, and speech proposed by Shen. [1] Xiao and Shen [2], the modal particle "le₂" at the end of Mandarin sentences can be classified into three types: "le of action" (le xing), indicating the emergence of a new action state; "le of knowledge" (le zhi), indicating the emergence of new knowledge; and "le of speech" (le yan), indicating the emergence of a new speech state. Zhang [3] suggested that the three domains of action, knowledge, and speech can be seen as a continuum. People can only form the "domain of knowledge" (zhi yu) after recognizing things, and the recognition of things must be based on objective facts, which is the "domain of action" (xing yu). Once people have recognized things and formed the "domain of knowledge" (zhi yu), they are then qualified to comment on and discuss things, which is the "domain of speech" (yan yu). There are many scholars who have used the three-domain theory to study the modal words or adverbs of Putonghua, such as Deng [4], and have achieved good results. Some scholars also use the three-domain theory to analyze the virtual words

in dialects, such as: Zhang [5], Deng [6], Zhou [7], Li [8], Liang and Yang [9] etc. Deng [10] used data from Hong Kong Cantonese to analyze the formal distinctions of the Cantonese "le₂" based on the three-domain theory and explored the relationship between the three-domain theory and syntactic structure. There is relatively little research on the "le₂" in Hakka dialects. This paper observes the use of "le" in Longchuan Hakka dialect based on the three-domain theory of previous scholars and in comparison with other Hakka dialects. In Mandarin, "le₁" and "le₂" have the same pronunciation, whereas in Longchuan Hakka dialect, the two have different pronunciations: "le₁," which indicates realization, is generally pronounced as "ei," while "le₂," which indicates a change in the state of affairs, is generally pronounced as "lu." For example:

Qu shi ei fan lu. (She has eaten.)

Qu kending shi ei fan lu. (She has definitely eaten.)

Qu yijing lai ei lu. (He has already arrived.)

Qu yiding zou ei lu. (He must have left.)

Dui wu zhu ei lu. (Sorry.)

This paper observes the use of "ei" and "lu" in Longchuan Hakka dialect through the lens of the theory of the three domains of action, knowledge, and speech.

2. The "Le of Action" in Longchuan Hakka Dialect

Xiao Zhiyie and Shen Jiakuan [1] argue that the "le of action" (le xing) can be divided into "le of action 1" (le xing 1) and "le of action 2" (le xing 2), where "le xing 1" is equivalent to "le₁," indicating the completion of an action. "Le xing 2" indicates that the state of affairs has changed.

2.1 "Ei"

The grammatical meaning of the Mandarin

dynamic particle "le₁" is "realization." The Longchuan dialect's "ei" [ɛ³³] corresponds to most of the functions of "le₁."

"Ei" is used after a verb in non-final sentence positions to indicate that an action or behavior was realized at a certain point in the past. For example:

Qu zuopuri mai ei yi ben shu. (He bought a book yesterday.)

Qu jiao ei san nian shu. (He has taught for three years.)

"Ei" can also indicate that an action or behavior will be realized at a certain point in the future. It is often used after the first verb in a serial verb construction. For example:

Xing kuai shi fan! Shi ei fan wo lai qu mai shan. (Hurry up and eat! After eating, we'll go buy clothes.)

Ni mai ei wu zheng mai che la! (Buy a house first, and then buy a car!)

"Ei" can also be used after an adjective in non-final sentence positions to indicate that a certain characteristic has been realized. For example:

Yi liang nian, wo ge toufa bai ei haoduo. (In these two years, my hair has turned much whiter.)

Shan zao ei di lu. (The clothes have dried a little.)

The Longchuan dialect's "ei" does not cover all the grammatical functions of the Mandarin "le₁". For example, "le₁" can be used in the first part of a hypothetical (conditional) clause to indicate that a supposed action or behavior will be realized at a certain point in the future. However, in Longchuan dialect, the particle "dao" is typically used in the first part of a hypothetical clause, rather than "ei." For example:

Xi hua qu jie jue de dao yi zhi da wenti, wo lai kending xuan qu dang xiaozhang. (If she can solve this big problem, we will definitely elect her as the principal.)

Jie dao ni ma jiu da dianhua fen wo. (After picking up your mom, call me.)

2.2 "Lu"

"Lu" [lu³³] with a level tone: It indicates a statement or affirmation, used to signify that a state of affairs has changed or is about to change. For example:

Jiao mian ei lu [lu³³]. The banana has turned soft.

Shui fei ei lu [lu³³]. The water has boiled.

Ai chu re tou lu [lu³³]! It's going to be sunny!

3. The "Le of Knowledge" in Longchuan Hakka Dialect

Xiao and Shen [2] propose that "le zhi" refers to the speaker stating an evaluation or a realization, presupposing that the listener is not aware of this idea. Therefore, "I am offering you this new idea." The knowledge domain includes actions such as "recognition, speculation, inference, conjecture, and evaluation." In Longchuan dialect, "le zhi" is generally pronounced as "lu" [lu³³]. For example:

Yi jiu shi chuanshuo zhong ge qianlima lu. (This is the legendary Qianlima.) (Inference)

Ting ni kouqi, ni jiu shi Zhang jingli lu. (From the way you speak, you must be Manager Zhang.) (Evaluation)

Yi dui xie tai xi lu. (These shoes are too small.) (Conjecture)

Qu zui zhongyi shi yu lu. (He likes eating fish the most.) (Evaluation)

Xiao and Shen mention that these types of sentences often carry an emotional layer from the speaker, with "emotion transmission" and "meaning communication" happening simultaneously, serving an emphatic purpose. In Mandarin, some sentences might add the modal particle "de" at the end, while in Longchuan dialect, "ei" is added correspondingly. However, this is not the same "ei" as the one indicating realization mentioned earlier, but rather an emphatic modal particle "ei," which we will call "ei₂" here. Additionally, as the mood intensifies, the sentence-final modal particle changes from "lu" to "la."

For example:

Qu zui zhongyi shi mian lu. (He likes eating noodles the most.)

Qu zui zhongyi shi mian ei₂ la. (He likes eating noodles the most, indeed.)

Ziji ren kending bang ziji ren ei lu. (People will definitely help their own kind.)

Ziji ren kending bang ziji ren ei₂ la. (People will definitely help their own kind, indeed.)

Mingpai kending gui lu. (Brand-name items are naturally expensive.)

Mingpai kending gui ei₂ la! (Brand-name items are naturally expensive, indeed!)

4. The "Le of Speech" in Longchuan Hakka Dialect

According to Xiao and Shen [2], "le yan"

refers to the emergence of a new speech act. Speech acts include saying, commanding, announcing, requesting, promising, advising, questioning, and claiming. In most of the examples of "le yan" provided by Xiao and Shen [2], the sentence can function without "le," though it might sound more abrupt. In our observation of the usage in Longchuan Hakka dialect, the situation is similar—most uses of "lu" can be omitted, and in some cases, "lu" cannot be added at all. Below, we will examine these situations separately.

When providing an announcement as a speech act to the listener, Longchuan dialect generally uses "lu" [lu³³]:

Zhuxi: Lai jin kaihui lu. (Chairman: The meeting is starting now.)

Laoshi: Jing xia ei, shangke lu. (Teacher: Quiet, class is starting now.)

Jingli: Ni luyong ei lu. Ni fen wo gongsi luyong lu. (Manager: You've been hired.)

Yi jian paimai pin fen ni lu. (Auctioneer: This auction item is yours./ This painting is yours.)

In common expressions for meeting or parting, "lu" [lu³³] is generally used, but it can be omitted. Some sentences may use "a," and occasionally "lai" can be added at the end of a sentence. For example:

Baibai lu! (Goodbye!)

Lao ni bainian lu! (I'm here to wish you a happy new year!)

Mo shi lu! (It's okay!)

Zou lu, mingzaori jian. (I'm leaving, see you tomorrow.)

Dui bu zhu qu lu! (Sorry!)

Manman xing a! (Take care!)

Chuo cha a! (Please have some tea.)

Zou a! Mo dang wen! (I'm leaving, don't block the way.)

Xing la, mo kiuk lu! (Go, stop rushing me.)

Wang ei lai a! (Be careful!)

Wo lai zuo ei lai! (Let's sit down!)

When making promises, offering assurances, or stating hearsay as a speech act, Longchuan dialect usually also uses "lu" [lu³³]:

Jiu gamyang lu! (It's settled then!)

Bao zai wo shenshang lu! (Leave it to me!)

Xi lu! (Yes, that's right!)

Mo hao lu! (No, thanks!)

In Mandarin, "le yan" is used to express questions or rhetorical questions, but in Longchuan Hakka dialect, "lu" cannot be used in such cases. Instead, rhetorical questions in Longchuan Hakka often use the "A m VP"

structure, and the modal particle "a" [a³³] is commonly used. Sometimes, "lo" [lo³¹] is also used, which adds an intensified questioning tone. For example:

Qu ei Lao Li, Xiao Zhang, hai you nai zhi a/lo? (Went to Lao Li and Xiao Zhang's, who else?)

Ni a xiang ai yi gongzuo la/lo? (You're always late, do you still want this job?)

Yi jian shan yang ban m liang la/lo? (How come this shirt doesn't look nice?)

When making requests as a speech act and presenting it as a new speech state to the listener, the commonly used modal particles are "la" [la⁵⁵] or "wo" [vo³¹]. "Wo" [vo³¹] emphasizes the previously stated fact and carries the meaning of repeated requests. For example:

Bang xia wo wo!/la!/ei! (Please help me!)

Fen wan zhou wo shi li!/la! (Give me a bowl of porridge.)

Qianqi mo kaichu wo la!/wo! (Please don't fire me!)

When providing reminders, warnings, advice, or commands as a speech act, "lu" is occasionally used, but the modal particle "a" is more commonly used. If it's a straightforward command, no modal particle is added, and a somewhat weakened verb "lai" is usually placed at the end of the sentence. For example:

Xing kuai lu!/xing kuai a! (Hurry up!)

Zhuo wen a! (Hold tight!)

Wang jin lai a! (Be careful!)

Fang luo qiang lai! (Put down the gun!)

Fang luo qiang lai la! (Repeated urging)

Mo qu a!/la! (Don't go!)

In summary, in Longchuan dialect, the "le of speech" (le yan) used to express "announcements, promises, assurances, or idioms for meetings or farewells" is generally pronounced as "lu" [lu³³]. However, when expressing "questions" or "rhetorical questions," "a" is commonly used, and sometimes "la," which may be a fusion of "lu" and "a." For expressing "requests" or "reminders, warnings, or advice," "lu" is occasionally used, but "a" is more commonly preferred. When expressing "requests," "lu" is rarely used; instead, "la" [la⁵⁵] or "wo" [vo³¹] (which conveys the sense of repeated pleading) is often used. Compared to the "le of speech" in Mandarin, "lu" in Longchuan dialect is usually used in speech acts with

less emotional intensity, while stronger emotional tones, such as "emphasis," are conveyed using modal particles like "a," "la," or "wo." This is shown in Table 1:

Table 1. The Three Domains of Action, Knowledge, and Speech of "Le" in Longchuan Hakka Dialect

Three Domains		Longchuan Dialect	Example Sentences
Le of Action:	Le of Action 1: Completion of an action, located after the verb	Ei	Qu jiao ei san nian shu. (He has taught for three years.)
Emergence of a new action state	Le of Action 2: Indicates a change in state, located at the end of the sentence	Lu [lu ³³]	Qu shi ei fan lu. (He has eaten.) Ai luo shui lu! (It's going to rain!)
	Le of Knowledge: Emergence of new knowledge, located at the end of the sentence	Lu [lu ³³] La [la ³³]	Yi dui xie tai xi lu. (These shoes are too small.) Yi dui xie tai xi la. (These shoes are too small, indeed.)
	Le of Speech: Emergence of a new speech state, located at the end of the sentence	Lu [lu ⁵⁵] La [la ⁵⁵] Wo [vo ³¹] Lo [lo ³¹]	Shui fei ei lu! (The water has boiled!) Fang luo qiang lai la! (Put down the gun, repeated urging.) Bang xia wo wo! (Please help me!) Yi jian shan yang ban m liang lo? (Why is this shirt not pretty?)

5. The Transformation of the Three Domains of "Le" in Longchuan Hakka Dialect

The "le of speech" (le yan) varies according to the context or surrounding discourse when expressing the emergence of a "new speech state." The phonetic form of "le yan" in Longchuan dialect is richer than that of "le of action" (le xing) and "le of knowledge" (le zhi). The same event may have different modal particles depending on the context, leading to variations in the phonetic forms. Thus, the three domains of "le" in Longchuan Hakka dialect overlap and can often transform into one another. A common form of transformation involves changes in pitch and duration.

The most significant transformation occurs with changes in pitch. "Lu" in daily speech activities has three different tones or intonations: (1) "Lu" [lu³³] with a mid-level pitch, (2) "Lu" [lu⁵⁵] with a high-level pitch, and (3) "Lu" + a rising intonation at the end of the sentence:

"Lu" [lu³³] with a mid-level pitch belongs to "le of action," expressing a statement or affirmation, used to indicate that a state of affairs has changed or is about to change. It is an objective description without much subjective emotional color or implied meaning from the speaker. For example:

Jiao mian ei lu [lu³³]. (The banana has turned soft.)

Shui fei ei lu [lu³³]. (The water has boiled.)

Ai chu re tou lu [lu³³]! (It's going to be sunny!)

When the modal particle changes to a high-level pitch "Lu" [lu⁵⁵], it belongs to "le of speech" (le yan) and often expresses strong emotional colors from the speaker, carrying rich implied meanings. For example:

Jiao mian ei lu [lu⁵⁵]. (The banana has turned soft, and it's no longer edible.)

Shui fei ei lu [lu⁵⁵]. (The water has boiled; turn off the heat now.)

Ai chu re tou lu [lu⁵⁵]! (It's going to be sunny; quickly dry the grain!)

In example (1), the emphasis is on the fact that "the banana has turned soft," reminding the listener to pay attention. The implied meaning can vary depending on the context: "The banana has turned soft, hurry and throw it away!" or "The banana has turned soft, don't eat it!"

If "lu" is combined with a rising intonation at the end of the sentence, it introduces a question, asking the speaker to confirm the truth of the stated fact. For example:

Jiao mian ei lu? (Has the banana turned soft?)

Shui fei ei lu? (Has the water boiled?)

Ai chu re tou lu? (Is it going to be sunny?)

Additionally, the distinction between the three domains is influenced by duration. Deng(2013) [10]found that in some cases in Hong Kong Cantonese, the duration of certain "le of knowledge" (le zhi) and "le of speech" (le yan) can be elongated, making

the syllable's weight/duration one or even two times longer than a normal syllable, expressing different nuances. A similar phenomenon occurs in Longchuan Hakka dialect, as in the following examples:

Fang luo qiang! (Put down the gun.)

Fang luo qiang lai la! (Put down the gun, repeated urging.)

If the intention is to issue a command, it needs to be straightforward and concise, typically without a modal particle. If it is a request, the modal particle "la" is added, and the duration of the sound is elongated. This is similar to Cantonese.

6. Summary

The Three Domains of "Le" in Longchuan Hakka Dialect is different from Mandarin. Regarding the different modal particles lu [lu⁵⁵], la [la⁵⁵], wo [vo³¹], and lo [lo³¹], our preliminary observation is that when expressing stronger emotional colors, a modal particle with a wider mouth opening is often used. Further observation with more speakers is needed to explore this aspect further.

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