

## A Comparative Study of the Verbal System of Lizu and Ersu

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This paper presents results of a comparative study of the verbal system in the two closely related Tibeto-Burman languages of western Sichuan: Lizu (based on the dialect of Kala Township, Muli County) and Ersu (based on the dialect of Zela Township, Ganluo County). The analysis is based on primary data elicited through two questionnaires with of a total of circa 1,000 sentences: (1) Dahl's (1985) tense and aspect questionnaire, and (2) a grammar questionnaire of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. These were complemented with data derived from natural conversations and from texts (traditional stories).

The main goals of the study are: (1) Description of the verbal systems of Lizu and Ersu, as represented by the dialects of Kala and Zela, (2) Identification of a common aspectual system, shared by the two languages, and (3) Identification and explanation of areal phenomena as can be glimpsed through the variation in the expression of aspectual meanings in these closely related languages.

The first part of the presentation overviews essential characteristics of the aspectual systems of the two languages, and compares them with previous descriptions of Lizu and Ersu (Huáng and Rénzēng 1991; Sūn 1983). We demonstrate that Lizu and Ersu have near-identical aspectual systems with a basic distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect, which is expressed by lexical-derivational means. Bare verb stems tend to be imperfective. Perfective forms are derived by adding telicity-inducing directional prefixes to an imperfective verb stem. In addition, Lizu and Ersu share the following inflectional and periphrastic aspectual categories: (1) the inflectional perfective (Lizu  $-æ^{55}$ , Ersu  $-a^{55}$ ), restricted to past time reference; (2) the periphrastic progressive, which is independent of time reference and normally used with dynamic situations (Lizu *ge*, Ersu *ge*); (3) the periphrastic durative, which is normally restricted to non-past time reference and used with static situations (Lizu *tɕæ*, Ersu *tɕa*); (4) the periphrastic experiential, which is restricted to past time reference ( $mi^{23}$  in Lizu, but  $tɕ^{hi35}$  in Ersu).

The second part of the presentation comments on the dissimilarities between the two languages (essentially, differences in the inventories of aspectual markers and those in the semantics and scope of the shared aspectual markers). One of the major differences includes the encoding in Lizu of speaker vs. non-speaker opposition, as characteristic of the Tibetan and Pumi languages with which Lizu is in contact (cf. Chirkova 2008, 2011; Lin and Yin 2013). Our Ersu data suggests a similar, albeit less grammaticalized speaker/non-speaker system, which has not been previously described for that language. Given that the speaker/non-speaker markers are non-cognate in the two languages, they are likely to represent independent parallel developments.

Based on new fieldwork on Lizu and Ersu, the paper provides newly collected data and new analysis. It contributes to a more detailed understanding of the verbal systems of the two languages and of the dynamics of the evolution of verbal systems in contact.

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