A semantic analysis of -le in Mandarin Chinese with aspectual coercion

The semantics of -le in Mandarin Chinese is one of the most controversial topics in Chinese linguistics. I will first present three observations that pose challenges for previous analyses, and then propose a new analysis. Specifically, I claim that -le is a perfective marker that presupposes that the VP is quantized in the sense of Krifka (1989), and may trigger aspectual coercion (De Swart 1998, 2011) in order to satisfy this presupposition. As will be shown with examples, this achieves a uniform account of different interpretative effects observed with different Aktionsarten. In addition, in order to account for the fact that -le, unlike the perfective in Romance, has the boundedness/termination reading with activities but not with states, I propose that -le competes with a different aspectual marker -guo.