

Aspect in Mandarin Chinese: A corpus-based study. By RICHARD XIAO, TONY
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The authors of this study pursue two goals. Citing examples from a large corpus of texts rather than relying primarily on native-speaker intuitions, they provide a fine-grained account of how aspect operates on both the lexical and sentential levels in contemporary Mandarin Chinese. Based on this description, they propose a number of refinements to currently existing general theories of aspect. The accompanying discussion revisits such important issues as the difference between aspect vs. *Aktionsart*, situation aspect vs. viewpoint aspect, contextual levels of analysis, and the notion of time vs. space in definitions of event boundedness.

Theoretical preliminaries occupy the first three of the book's seven chapters. Important works that inform this discussion are Comrie's overview of aspectual concepts and categories (Bernard Comrie, *Aspect*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) and Vendler's seminal definition of states, activities, accomplishments and achievements (Zeno Vendler, *Linguistics in philosophy*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967). X and M also adopt the definition of semelfactives from Carlota S. Smith's *The Parameters of Aspect* (2nd ed., Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997) and elaborate upon Carlson's distinction between individual-level predicates and stage-level predicates (Lauri Carlson, "Aspect and quantification," *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 14: Tense and aspect*, 31-64, New York: Academic Press, 1981) to distinguish two types of stative verbs. Altogether, this yields a system of six basic situation types rather than Vendler's original four.

Chapters five and six contain a detailed analysis of how these situation types interact with the expression of various nuances of perfective and imperfective aspect in Mandarin Chinese. Making reference to copious examples, the authors identify eight viewpoint markers, rather than the three (*-le*, *-guo*, *-zhe*) commonly discussed in grammars of Chinese, and offer many insights into how these markers interact with lexical and sentential layers of aspect. All example sentences are

rendered in Pinyin (though minus tone marks) and are provided with full morpheme glossing and idiomatic English translations.

Chapter six contains a preliminary comparison of aspect in English and Chinese in light of translation patterns of English tense/aspect categories into Chinese. Chapter seven (281-6) concludes with a brief summary of the book's findings.

As the first published text-based study of aspect in Chinese, this book demonstrates the value of corpus data for purposes of developing linguistic theory. By filling numerous gaps in the description of Chinese aspect, the authors' findings will prove essential to anyone wishing to gain a more complete picture of Mandarin Chinese language structure. The book is also useful for its clear summary of previous approaches to the theory of aspect and for the clarity it brings to the description of basic aspectual categories. Also welcome is the two-layered approach adopted, which accounts for situation aspect in terms of verb classes on the lexical level and as situation types on the sentential level, resulting in a synthesis of ideas presented by Vender and Smith (cf. works cited above). It remains to be seen, however, whether the categories developed here and used with such success in describing Mandarin Chinese will indeed work equally well in the description of other languages. [EDWARD J. VAJDA, *Western Washington University*.]