
507 of words in this book notice text:

Reviewed by Edward Vajda

Western Washington University
Modern Languages-9057
Bellingham, WA 98225

e-mail: vajda@cc.wwu.edu

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.


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.]