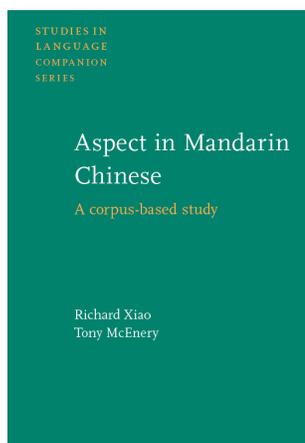


Aspect in Mandarin Chinese

A corpus-based study

Richard Xiao and Tony McEnery

University of Lancaster



Chinese, as an aspect language, has played an important role in the development of aspect theory. This book is a systematic and structured exploration of the linguistic devices that Mandarin Chinese employs to express aspectual meanings. The work presented here is the first corpus-based account of aspect in Chinese, encompassing both situation aspect and viewpoint aspect. In using corpus data, the book seeks to achieve a marriage between theory-driven and corpus-based approaches to linguistics. The corpus-based model presented explores aspect at both

the semantic and grammatical levels. At the semantic level a two-level model of situation aspect is proposed, which covers both the lexical and sentential levels, thus giving a better account of the compositional nature of situation aspect. At the grammatical level four perfective and four imperfective aspects in Chinese are explored in detail. This exploration corrects many intuition-based misconceptions, and associated misleading conclusions, about aspect in Chinese common in the literature.

[Studies in Language Companion Series, 73] 2004. x, 303 pp.

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“In *Aspect in Mandarin Chinese*, Richard Xiao and Anthony McEnery achieve a detailed and insightful analysis of verbal aspect in Chinese, based on a new and powerful two-level model of aspect. Taking as its starting point the theory of Carlota Smith (1991, 1997), their model, clearly and subtly developed, shows undoubted advances over previous treatments of aspect. Of particular importance is the distinction between viewpoint aspect (which is essentially grammatical) and situation aspect (which is essentially semantic, to be analysed at lexical or sentential level). One of the book’s particular strengths lies in its successful combination of theoretical depth with a corpus-based methodology. The authors’ use of corpora of both Chinese and English incorporates also the use of a parallel corpus of both source texts and their translations. The corpus data provide them with a means to confirm the validity of their model across language boundaries, and to show the benefit of both theory and data in the contrastive analyses of the two languages. This book brings new clarity and rigour to the study of aspect, and so advances an important area of grammatical research which has previously suffered from confusing or inadequate formulations.”

Professor Geoffrey N. Leech, Lancaster University

“*Aspect in Mandarin Chinese* makes a very important contribution to aspect studies. It is the first detailed account in English of aspect in Chinese; it is based on a balanced corpus; it recognizes variation among different text types (unlike most existing work on aspect); it develops and applies a revised version of Carlota Smith’s two-level model of aspect. The analysis is all the more valuable for being the product of joint work by a native speaker of English and a native speaker of Chinese, not to mention the input of researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Scholars interested in aspect in general or in aspect in Chinese or in comparing and contrasting aspect in Chinese and English will find this book an essential long-term research tool. I will certainly be using it as soon as it is published.”

Professor Jim Miller, University of Auckland

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