
The Chinese aspect system has undergone extensive research during the past five decades. However – as the authors of this book point out – different linguists define aspect in different ways, hence, there is no generally accepted explanatory model. One of the main aims of this book is to present such a model. What differentiates this account from previous ones is not the framework – Xiao and McEnery use a somewhat modified version of Smith's (1991, 1997) two-component aspect model – but the fact that it is corpus-based and contains both quantitative and qualitative evidence for the authors' claims where many other studies have relied solely on native speaker intuition. To outline the aspect system of Mandarin Chinese is a tremendous task but Xiao and McEnery have accomplished a much-awaited study and a carefully prepared monograph that should be of great interest to all scholars in the field.

The book starts with an introduction followed by Chapter two, which briefly reviews the existing literature on aspectual theory, defines Smith's two-component aspect theory and presents some problems with her model. In Chapter three, the authors divide one of the components in Smith's theory – situation aspect – into two levels, verb classes at the lexical level and situation types at the sentential level (the latter in turn categorized into three units: nucleus level, core level and clause level). I found this chapter very well structured and enlightening. The discussion on the context-
dependent effect of NP arguments on situation aspect in Chinese is particularly interesting. The authors also discuss the roles played by peripheral adjuncts and viewpoint aspect (i.e. e aspect markers) in clause level situation aspect.

The fourth and fifth chapters present the perfective aspects and the imperfective aspects in Chinese. These two chapters form the nucleus of this book. The very thorough analysis of these aspects in Chinese is a pleasure to read (although I did not agree with everything in it), in particular since this part of the book is generously sprinkled with example sentences from the corpora. I will go into the analysis in some detail and comment on the parts that I find particularly worth pointing out.

Chapter four explores the perfective viewpoints, of which (according to the authors) there are four in Mandarin Chinese. These are the actual aspect (marked by -le), the experiential aspect (marked by -guo), the delimitative aspect (marked by verb reduplication) and the completive aspect (marked by resultative verb complements). The chapter begins with an introduction to the actual aspect marker -le and a clarification on the authors' standpoint in the debate over whether le, which can occur both as a post verbal particle and as a clause-final such, should be considered as one or two morphemes. This is a debate that I believe partly originates in two distinct research foci. Two-morpheme advocators generally concentrate on differences in syntactic distribution and – to a limited extent – semantics, while one-morpheme advocators concentrate on semantic similarities and pragmatic effects on the interpretation of le. While Xiao and McEnery defend the two-morpheme treatment of le, unlike most other authors with this view, they argue that a complete description of the Chinese aspect system should include both verbal -le, or actual -le, and clause-final le, or Change of State (COS) le. However, they seem to have had some problems finding a proper place in their model for COS le (perhaps caused by their characterization of the inchoative aspect as an