

Reviews

A Grammar of Mandarin. By JEROEN WIEDENHOF. Amsterdam: JOHN BENJAMINS, 2015. Pp. xxiii + 477. \$158 (cloth); \$54 (paper).

This comprehensive work is Jeroen Wiedenhof's lucid translation of his original study in Dutch, *Grammatica van het Mandarijn* (Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2004, 4th rev. ed. 2015). It presents a mature and solid treatment of the grammar of spoken Mandarin that is the result of sustained research and study over many years. In this book, Wiedenhof attends to everything that should be covered by a comprehensive grammar: all elements found within the structural system of a language, including sound system, sentence structures, lexicon, and other elements that convey meaning. The volume's pages contain a wealth of information and theoretical insight, all richly supported with copious examples and illustrations. Overall, the book lays out Wiedenhof's own distinctive take on the grammar of Mandarin, one in which the author does not shy from departing from accepted views and standard interpretations to present fresh insight and new approaches. It is thus an authoritative and thought-provoking contribution to the scholarship of Mandarin in English that is most welcome in the field and sure to have long-lasting impact.

The book's first chapter, "Mandarin," places its topic in context as a variety of Chinese that is now the standard language of China. The second chapter, "Phonetics and Phonology," presents a description of Mandarin pronunciation and a phonemic analysis. The following nine chapters provide Wiedenhof's analysis of syntax, morphology, and lexicon, including a detailed list and discussion of function words: chapter three on "Subordination," chapter four on "Nouns," chapter five on "Verbs," chapter six on "Properties and States," chapter seven on "Negation and Questions," chapter eight on "Tense, Aspect, and Mood," chapter nine on "Counting and Classifying," chapter ten on "Morphology," and chapter eleven on "Function Words." The last chapter, chapter twelve on "The Chinese Script," provides an overview of the writing system from its earliest origins to its modern form and usage. The volume concludes with four appendices providing useful charts on transcriptions and Romanization as well as a glossary of terminology. Interspersed throughout the main text are passages printed in a smaller typeface that the author includes to provide "more detailed treatments" of points under discussion, in which he includes most of his references to linguistic sources (p. xxii).

Wiedenhof's goal in compiling this grammar was to "have Mandarin speak for itself as much as possible" (p. xxi). He takes a descriptive approach, seeking to "document common and regular language use and embrace *all evidence of change and variation*" (p. xxiii, emphasis added). He tells us that the local form of Mandarin spoken in Beijing is the primary object of his description, though he also takes into account Mandarin that is spoken in Taiwan (Taipei), with occasional examples from Tiānjīn, Chéngdū, and Qíqǐhǎēr (p. xxi).

The description is based on spoken corpus data collected by the author across his years of research, including recorded conversations and collected field notes (p. xxi). In this way, Wiedenhof can be considered to follow in the tradition of the English grammarian Randolph Quirk, whose landmark *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* used a large corpus of spoken and written texts to underpin a grammar of English that strove for descriptive accuracy of language in real use and not a treatment structured by prescriptive rules. Wiedenhof also looks back to Yuen Ren Chao, whose *Grammar of Spoken Chinese* similarly based its description primarily on the spoken Mandarin that Chao recorded over a long career of linguistic observation (p. 9).

The author has largely succeeded in compiling a thorough and useful updated descriptive grammar of Mandarin. Yet realistically, no single work can achieve the author's goal of including "all evidence of change and variation" to be found in the language. Given the immense variety of Mandarin types and the relentless pace of language change in modern China, a grammar that would provide a descriptive treatment of Mandarin in its entirety is an impossibility. So Wiedenhof's treatment should be under-

stood to be restricted to the language of Beijing, though with frequent forays into Taiwan Mandarin, where he says “Mandarin has developed a distinctive linguistic identity” (p. xxi). In sum then, this book presents a description of Beijing speech of the late twentieth to early twenty-first century with an eye also to a contemporaneous variety found in Taiwan; but it is not a comprehensive description of the grammar of all varieties of Mandarin found in China today. To illustrate some features of the author’s description and approach, below we take a critical look at just a few of the abundant points of note and interest in the volume.

Wiedenhof strives to be exhaustive in his consideration of each area he covers. His success in meticulous description is demonstrated by his analysis of the phonetics and phonology of Mandarin in chapter two. This chapter treats every aspect of the pronunciation of his target varieties of Chinese (Beijing Mandarin and the Taipei variant) in utmost detail. For example, the author provides highly detailed prose and graphic descriptions of the tones of Mandarin, including their pronunciation in isolated syllables (citation pronunciation) and in context, their transcription, and their sandhi patterns. He provides the same level of detail for consonants and vowels, and initials and finals. We are thus presented with a fine-grained description and snapshot of Mandarin pronunciation as found in Beijing, with notes as to how Taipei pronunciation differs from that.

Yet, thorough as it is, the treatment presents us with a set of lingering unknowns: Whose pronunciation is being described? What proportion of speakers pronounce Mandarin in the ways discussed—with or without the Taiwan variations? Given the vast number of Mandarin speakers in China, what percentage of them reflects the pronunciation described here? What other variations are there in the overall population of Mandarin speakers? A more detailed description of the corpus sources—including what kind of speakers are represented, their ages and genders, where they are from, how many there are, and other background information—would help shed light on these kinds of questions. But the reader only knows that the speakers are from either Beijing or Taiwan.

Though packed with great detail, Wiedenhof’s treatment reveals the impossibility of achieving a fully comprehensive description of Mandarin. With regard to pronunciation alone, no single descriptive treatment can completely capture the wide but acceptable variation found in Mandarin. The great majority of Mandarin speakers today probably do not speak the specific varieties of Mandarin described for Beijing and Taiwan in the pages of this volume. Their pronunciation will vary more or less from the specifics and details of the description provided here, though their speech is nevertheless fully native and acceptable within the parameters of both Mandarin in general and Modern Standard Chinese in particular.

An example to illustrate our point is found in the Mandarin of northeast China (Dōngběi). This variety is classified within the Beijing subgroup of Mandarin Dialects (Qián 2010), and has also developed a distinctive linguistic identity. In Dōngběi Mandarin, many speakers’ pronunciation of the first tone is not as high as in the Beijing 55 (using Y. R. Chao’s five-point scale), being closer to 44 or even lower, while the pronunciation of the fourth tone does not fall as far as in the Beijing 51 and is closer to 53. In both the Beijing city dialect and the northeast versions of Mandarin, the first tone can be simply described as high-level and the fourth tone as high-falling. While both pronunciations are native Mandarin and neither is artificial, their commonality is not easily managed, or captured, by the narrowly detailed description Wiedenhof provides. Another characteristic of northeastern Mandarin is that the pronunciation of the final *-o* (as written in *pīnyīn*) that follows labials *b-*, *p-*, *m-*, and *f-* is not rounded in articulation as it is in Beijing, and has merged into the final *-e*. Wiedenhof’s phonetic description of final *-o* after labials identifies it as rounded [wə] (p. 45), which matches the Beijing realization. But his phonemic treatment places it within the same unrounded final as *-e*: /əa/ (p. 66), which actually matches the northeastern phonology. The phonetic difference between Beijing and northeastern pronunciations is real and perceptible to speakers. Beijing speakers consider the final *-o* to belong with, or more closely match, the final *-uo* (Wiedenhof’s phonemic /uəa/) and perceive the northeastern pronunciation as a regional accent. Again, we have acceptable variation that is not easily captured in a narrow description of the Beijing type. But both the Beijing and the northeastern types fall under the broad rubric of “Mandarin.”

Wiedenhof's richly extensive discussions in chapters two through ten on parts of speech, morphology, syntax, lexicon, etc., are innovative, useful, and stimulating. His approach is often theoretically interesting and provides a valuable impetus for taking a fresh look at what the linguistic data tell us. His conceptualizations of parts of speech and sentence structures, for instance, frequently depart from the widely used analyses underpinning many Chinese-language descriptions of Mandarin. Often his treatment gives greater weight to semantic aspects of a grammatical entity and less weight to the more purely structural approaches found in other treatments. While this approach may have its merits, we are disappointed that Wiedenhof generally does not explicitly compare his interpretation to common and influential earlier analyses.

For example, he notes that nouns, verbs, and adjectives in Mandarin can be defined "on the basis of language internal data" (p. 86): a noun is "an expression which must refer to two entities whenever it is constructed with a following *de*." A verb is "an expression which, in combination with a following *de*, allows the possibility of referring to a single entity, and often does precisely that." And a "Mandarin adjective is a verb in this sense, while at the same time denoting a property or state." Yuen Ren Chao's definitions of these parts of speech are somewhat different, but also based on language-internal data:

A noun is a substantive which can be modified by a D-M [demonstrative-measure] compound. (Chao 1968: 505)

A verb "in the wide sense" (including adjectives) is any word which can be modified by the negative *bu* 不 'not' or *mei* 没 'have not or did not' . . . Verbs in this wide sense will then be synonymous with predicatives. (Chao 1968: 663)

The famous twentieth-century Chinese grammarian Zhū Déxī (who surprisingly goes entirely unmentioned in the present volume) defined nouns and verbs similarly, with slight but useful refinements:

The grammatical characteristics of nouns are that (1) they can be modified by a number-measure compound . . . ; (2) they cannot be modified by adverbs. (Zhū 1982: 51)

Predicatives that cannot be modified by the adverb 'hěn' or that can take objects are verbs while predicatives that can be modified by the adverb 'hěn' and that cannot take objects are adjectives. (Zhū 1982: 66)

What are the advantages of Wiedenhof's definitions in contrast to those of Chao and Zhū? Wiedenhof does not tell us; and readers of this volume are left to their own devices to figure that out. The result of our own reflection is a judgment that, although Wiedenhof's analysis is theoretically compelling, both Chao's and Zhū's definitions, also both descriptive in intent, are more understandable to, and more useful for, learners and teachers of Mandarin. Their structural formulations are straightforward and transparent and less dependent on the interpretive vagaries of terms such as "entity," "property," and "state," and thus are easier to grasp and to explain.

In compiling a grammar, an author generally needs to consider various parameters that will affect the outcome of the effort. These parameters include the goals of the work and other concerns, including: (1) Will it be descriptive or prescriptive in focus and purpose? (2) Will it be diachronic or synchronic? (3) What is the intended readership: linguists, teachers, learners? (4) What will the data sources and collection methodology be?

Wiedenhof indicates that his goals are primarily descriptive and his data are from a corpus that, for the most part, he compiled himself. His focus throughout the book is primarily synchronic (with some exceptions in chapter twelve on writing). In structure and tone, the volume appeals to all types of reader: linguists, teachers, and learners alike. The kinds of quibbles and caveats discussed above notwithstanding, overall Wiedenhof has produced a volume that admirably succeeds within his rather wide-reaching selection of parameters: a synchronic description of Mandarin grounded in an extensive corpus of oral data that is of both theoretical interest and pedagogical use. It is a fine contribution to the field.

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Writing Chinese Laws: The Form and Function of Legal Statutes Found in the Qin Shuihudi Corpus.
By ERNEST CALDWELL. Routledge Studies in Asian Law. New York: ROUTLEDGE, 2018. Pp. x + 202. \$149.24 (cloth); \$24.98 (e-book).

The book under review is a revised version of the author’s PhD dissertation “Writing Chinese Laws: The Form and Function of Statutes in Qin Legal Culture” (Univ. of Chicago, 2014). Drawing on methods from sociolegal studies and legal linguistics, the author takes a form and function approach to the study of legal manuscripts from early imperial China. He argues that the form of extant Qin statutes—including codicological, paleographical, and textual features—is informed by their supposed function, as reconstructed from various sources on Qin legal thought. The book consists of two main parts, the former (chapters two and three) is mainly devoted to the *function* of written law in pre-imperial China more generally and in the kingdom of Qin specifically, the latter (chapters four and five) to the material and textual *form* of Qin legal statutes as represented by the manuscripts from Shuihudi tomb 11.

Drawing on several passages from the received *Zuo zhuan*, chapter two investigates the sociopolitical conditions that prompted the rise of written law in several kingdoms of pre-imperial China as well as the role ascribed to it. The author argues that at least a significant part of the elite deemed written law capable of increasing sociopolitical stability and control over both the aristocracy and the general population. This chapter was previously published under the title “Social Change and Written Law in Early China” in *Law and History Review* 32.1 (2012): 1–30.

Chapter three closes in on the role written law played in the kingdom and later empire of Qin. Starting with a description of sociopolitical problems akin to those in other pre-imperial kingdoms, the author employs received and excavated sources to illustrate the importance the Qin government attached to the written form more generally and to written law in particular. He considers Qin written law to have served as an administrative tool capable of controlling and standardizing official behavior and of maintaining the functioning of the government down to the local level.

The following two chapters investigate to what extent this assumed function of Qin written law affected the actual form of legal statutes. Chapter four is concerned with material aspects. From the uniform use of a particular type of script and certain forms of punctuation in Qin legal and administrative documents, the author concludes that these served to fulfill the need for consistent and accurate understanding. He also argues that the use of tied-together bamboo slips as writing support facilitated the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date legal statutes and the production of compilations of legal excerpts.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the linguistic composition of the statutory articles in the Shuihudi Qin manuscripts. Starting with a discussion of how the particular legal meaning of individual words is clarified through definition, enumeration, and subject repetition, the author goes on to examine the compositional features of individual statute articles and finally focuses on the composition of complete statutes with direct or indirect referencing between articles of the same statute and even between separate statutes. He argues that these compositional strategies have text-cohesive or text-claritive effects, which seem to echo the main function attributed to written law by the Qin.