BOOK REVIEWS

Reviewed by Shengli Feng[1] and Huang Mei[2] (The Chinese University of Hong Kong[1] and Beijing Language and Culture University[1/2])

Dejin Sun's *Research on Literary Grammar in Modern Written Chinese* aims to study what, how, and why classical or "literary Chinese" survives in modern written Chinese. The key purpose of this book is to define what the literary grammar is in modern written Chinese and to explain why classical forms of Chinese grammar have not vanished completely as has been believed by many scholars of different generations to this day. The book provides a rich set of examples of classical expressions and structures that are present in modern Chinese and demonstrates that all the classical forms in the modern system have their distinctive linguistic values, which, in turn, are verified quantitatively and qualitatively by statistic data from a large corpus. This book is highly recommended for those who are interested in stylistic study and teaching Chinese as a second language.

This book contains eighteen chapters, grouped into 6 sections. There are also two appendices of the top 4000 classical words listed in *the Modern Chinese Frequency Dictionary* and a collection of expressions involving "之". Section 1 (Chapters 1–3) provides the research background and relevant theories. Section 2 (Chapter 4) explores principles that serve to distinguish classical items in modern Chinese. Section 3 (Chapters 5–14) discusses ten types of grammatical items of classical Chinese used in modern writing. Section 4 (Chapter 15) compares individual styles of Mao Zedong's and Deng Xiaoping's writings by measuring their classical items. Section 5 (Chapter 16) explores how to teach modern classical Chinese items as a second language. The final section (Chapters 17–18) summarizes the arguments proposed in this book and raises further questions.

Section 1 (Chapters 1–3) attempts to explain why literary grammar can (and must) remain in modern writing on the basis of Saussure's theory of linguistic value assigned by the distinctive features of the linguistic items. The author argues that the classical items serve distinctive functions from that of their modern counterparts. For example, *zhi* 之 'it, him, her' and *ta* 它 'it' are the third person singular pronouns and both can be used as an anaphor. However, they cannot replace each other because they carry different stylistic features in the *Yuti*

(stylistic-register, Feng 2010) system. Writing is then considered a particular human behavior with four types of cognitive preferences: brevity (求简律), elegance tendency (潜雅律), parallel tendency (鉴齐律), and stylistic coherence (谐体律). Those preferences, as a part of the writing mechanism, according to the author, determine the usages of classical expressions in modern writings. Besides, the author points out that there is a typological basis for the continuity of classical grammar in modern writings. Classical grammar and modern grammar belong to the same kind of (isolating) language typologically, which is the inherent reason why classical structures such as "adverbial verbs" (with no overt morphological markers) are possibly reoccurring in modern Chinese.

Section 2 (Chapter 4) concerns with this question, "How to identify classical items in modern Chinese?" The author proposes two parameters for this: frequency (频度) and amalgamation (融合度). The frequency analysis is based on a corpus specifically designed for this study. The frequency threshold requires that to qualify as "literary grammar" an element must have a high exposure rate in modern Chinese; otherwise it will be considered a simple reuse of old expressions. The amalgamation principle, on the other hand, demands the compatibility of literary grammar with the modern written Chinese system.

In Section 3 (Chapters 5–14), the author examines the frequency and amalgamation behaviors of ten types of classical items, including compounds with causative structures, five function words 其, 之, 以, 所, 于, two structures [以A为B] and [VA 为 B], adverbial nouns and adverbial verbs. The author points out that all these items have distinct linguistic values. They are frequently used in modern Chinese and have a high amalgamation degree.

Section 4 (Chapter 15) compares Deng Xiaoping's work with Chairman Mao's writing in terms of their stylistic differences. This is done on the basis of a quantitative comparison of literary grammatical terms such as the pronoun qí 其, possessive marker zhī 之, and preposition yǐ 以. The author provides an analysis of the amalgamation processes of each of the items utilized in the respective writings. The result is very interesting: Mao's style appears to be more elegant than Deng's as far as classical elements are concerned.

Section 5 (Chapter16) emphasizes the importance of treating modern written Chinese as a multi-component and dynamic linguistic system in teaching Chinese. The author argues that the definition of "literary grammar in modern Chinese" is crucial to ensure the teachers to teach the "right kind of grammar" and that the literary grammar used in modern Chinese must obey the fundamental rules of "standard" language. At the same time, the author also advocates that "old" literary grammar should be allowed to develop into new functions. Moreover, the author

proposes to differentiate rhetorical techniques from regular literary grammar use in modern Chinese.

Section 6 (Chapters 17–18) provides another reason to explain why literary grammar can survive in modern writing from a typological perspective. The author points out that the typology of literary grammar and modern Chinese are in many ways similar, so the old grammar can transform into the modern language.

Through large-scale and corpus-based surveys and statistical measures, this book represents one of the pioneering works in the field of written Chinese studies in recent years. It can be characterized with four different "firsts."

It is the first time that the following questions are answered on the basis of the distinctive value of linguistic forms and a typology theory: What is modern literary [classical] grammar? Why can it still survive in modern Chinese? The author separates "modern literary [classical] grammar" from the modern Chinese system and conducts a thorough analysis with important theoretical implications.

Second, it is the first time that a number of parameters are jointly proposed as motivating factors for the amalgamation of classical grammar into the modern vernacular. One is called grammatical operational compatibility, that is, the systems of classical grammar and modern grammar should fit with each other. The other factors are four psychological factors present in modern writing. As mentioned earlier, these concern brevity, elegance, parallel tendency and stylistic coherence. Apparently, classical Chinese satisfies all of these requirements, which makes literary Chinese highly valuable in modern times.

Third, this is the first time that frequency and amalgamation are used to define key elements in modern literary grammar. All the literary grammatical items discussed in this book are shown to frequently appear in modern Chinese and have a high degree of amalgamation.

Finally, it is the first time that the arguments for written Chinese are built solidly on comprehensive investigations of ten classical items (all function words) with a large corpus. As a result, this study is much more convincing than most previous investigations. It is safe to say that this book sheds new lights on topics in modern written Chinese and opens a new window for further research.

All in all, this book is indispensable for linguists and students who are interested in written Chinese and in general linguistics as well. It is also valuable for Chinese teachers and Chinese learners who inevitably need to deal with literary Chinese at some point in the teaching and learning processes.

References

Feng, Shengli. 2009. "On Modern Written Chinese." *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 37 (1). pp.145–162.

Feng, Shengli. 2010. *On mechanisms of Register System and its grammatical property* 論語體的權制及其語法屬性. 《中國語文》第5期.

Huang, Mei. 2012. *Prosodic Syntactic Research on Qian'ou Monosyllabic Word in Modern Chinese* 《現代漢語嵌偶單音詞的韻律句法研究》. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press. 北京：北京語言大學出版社.

Wang, Yongna. 2012. "Study on Grammar Means of Formal Written Chinese 《漢語書面正式語體的語法手段》." PhD diss., Beijing Language and Culture University.

Authors' addresses

Shengli Feng
Department of Chinese Language and
Literature
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, NT
Hong Kong

sfeng@cuhk.edu.hk

Huang Mei
College of Chinese Language Studies
Beijing Language and Culture University
15 Xueyuan Road
Beijing, China 100083

meihuang@blcu.edu.cn

Reviewed by Rui Peng, (National University of Singapore)

The nine-chapter book, *The Europeanization of modern written Chinese: a case study of the changing third person pronouns in the twentieth century and beyond*, authored by Clara Ho-yan Chan, discusses the evolution of the Chinese third-person pronouns *ta* and its plural form *tamen* over the past 100 years (1904–2003), a typical case of "Europeanization," i.e., the changes of the Chinese language under the influence of Western languages. In contrast to most of the past research concerning the Europeanization of the Chinese language, which usually lack sufficient data observation and systematic comparison of the Chinese language before and after contacting Western languages (Peyraube 2000), this book impresses the readers with its empirical methodology.

The opening chapter is brief but informative. It states the dual objectives of the book, i.e., (1) to establish the development of *ta* and *tamen* in terms of gender and number markings and syntactic functions, and (2) to explain the pronominal innovations that occurred in the 1920s. The second chapter provides a comprehensive survey of the literature on the changes of the Chinese language during the twentieth century. It sets the background and foundation for the discussion in the remaining chapters. In addition, issues regarding the creation of the standard spoken language, the proliferation of new vocabulary, and the changes of grammar are reviewed.

Chapter 3 has two foci, i.e., the methodological framework and principle of data collection. All the data come from two sources, i.e., the Indigenous Chinese Text (ICT) and the Translated Chinese Text (TCT). The former refers to newspaper articles, whereas the latter refers to three Chinese versions of the *Book of Matthew* in the *New Testament*. Three time periods, 1904–1919; 1952–1953, and 2002–2003, are taken from each source. Chan claims that her approaches are two-dimensional, including the examination of diachronic evolution of *ta* and *tamen* over the three periods and the comparison of the usages of the pronouns in both types of sources. The comparison among data from two types of Chinese texts and three time periods is a novel feature of this book. In Chapter 4, after a brief

Chinese Language and Discourse

VOLUME 4   NUMBER 2   2013

Aim and Scope

A peer reviewed journal which seeks to publish original work on Chinese and related languages, with a focus on current topics in Chinese discourse studies. The notion of *discourse* is a broad one, emphasizing an empirical orientation and encompassing such linguistic fields as language and society, language and culture, language and social interaction, discourse and grammar, communication studies, and contact linguistics. Special emphasis is placed on systematic documentation of Chinese usage patterns and methodological innovations in explaining Chinese and related languages from a wide range of functionalistic perspectives, including, but not limited to, those of Conversation Analysis, sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, grammaticalization, cognitive linguistics, typological and comparative studies.

The journal also publishes review articles as well as discussion topics. Exchanges of research views between authors and readers are also encouraged.

Abstracting Services.   CLD is covered in: *LB, LLBA, MLA, TSA Online, Bibliography of Pragmatics Online.*

Guidelines for Contributors

CLD invites contributions relevant to the aim and scope of the journal.
Submission instructions and guidelines can be found on the journal's website:
www.benjamins.com/catalog/cld

All correspondence concerning editorial matters – inquiries regarding suitable topics, length of manuscripts, reviews, etc. – should be sent directly to either of the editors:

Li Wei, K. K. Luke and Hongyin Tao
cld.editors@gmail.com

CLD offers online submission and manuscript tracking: **www.editorialmanager.com/cld/**

Chinese Language and Discourse

Editorial Board

Table of contents