introduction, by providing detailed historical and contextual information, that makes accessible what has until recently been a particularly hard-to-appreciate aspect of twentieth-century Chinese society: its thriving yet hard-to-fathom stage culture. Particularly surprising is the subtlety with which Chinese dramatists have addressed and continue to address problems in their society, something we have been conditioned not to expect given the realities of government censorship and politically correct discourse. All in all, this volume provides a refreshing and fascinating entryway into a little appreciated corner of contemporary Chinese culture and society.

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Ekaterina Yurievna Chirkova. *In Search of Time in Peking Mandarin.* CNWS Publications, vol. 125. Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2003. ix, 127 pp. Paperback €19.00, ISBN 50–5789–089–5.

Ekaterina Chirkova's *In Search of Time in Peking Mandarin* is a delightful surprise— at once scholarly, current, and very readable. Perhaps what is most impressive about it is that it reminds us, once again, in a patient and not pedantic or preaching manner, that our definition of what constitutes a "standard" language in any geopolitical setting, China most definitely included, is never as neat and clean as we might believe it to be, despite decades of imposed regularization. And while the volume's advertising assertion that Chirkova's work demonstrates that "some forms that have been considered extinct in Mandarin are alive and kicking in the language of Peking" may be a bit too sweeping a generalization, it does nonetheless manage to address at the microlevel some very significant syntactic and sociolinguistic issues as to the distinctions between Beijing Mandarin and Modern Standard Chinese (MSC).

By means of critical introduction, the perspective that I bring to this review is that a large percentage of us who have been actively involved in the teaching of Chinese as a second/foreign language over the past two decades have, with good reasons that are genuinely justifiable, urged our students to spend at least a sizable amount of time of their composite study-abroad experience in Beijing. And yet, at the same time, many of us have also recognized, at least subconsciously,

that what we have been able to present to and practice with them on their native American shores—linguistically, communicatively, and culturally—has been, at the least, somewhat insulated from what they would ultimately be facing when they took their bicycles to the streets of the northern capital. What Chirkova presents in this book is a quantitatively limited but nonetheless qualitatively compelling confirmation of our concerns.

Chirkova's focus is the role of syntactic aspect in its quasi-tense role within Beijing Mandarin, although she does also briefly discuss several other unique features of Peking Mandarin, both lexical (e.g., the expression *biarla* 'side') and syntactic (in particular the use of the co-verbs *gen* and *dai* as a sort of substitute for *zai* 'be in'). Stepping beyond what most of us, as both students and teachers, have delineated as the defining morphological components for aspect—namely *le* 了, *guo* 过, and *zhe* 着—Chirkova sets forth a number of empirically based propositions. The less contentious of these claims is that for a significant portion of the Beijing population, *le* is more than an aspect marker—serving as well in a type of topic-comment delineating role—and there is the need to specify two additional aspect markers, one of which is *laizhe* 来着. These two observations are not particularly earthshaking; within the past decade, the pedagogically oriented treatises by Yip and Rimmington (1997) and He (1998) regarding *le* and *laizhe*, respectively, have provoked many of us to reexamine our prior predilections regarding the bases and limits of aspect. But Chirkova pushes the limits on two more significantly innovative fronts, in her contention that *zai* 在 is not a marker of the progressive aspect in Peking Mandarin and that *de* 的 has an even more expansive range of semantic and pragmatic roles, including that of an aspect marker, without explicit requisite linking to *shi* 是.

Of these two more significant challenges to the Mandarin status quo, the one regarding *zai* is somewhat less innovative. If Chirkova had had access to Light's 1989 article, which, in her defense, until very recently (2004) has been out of print for a number of years, she would have had independent expert evidence that, at least by Light's analysis, *zai* is simply not a marker of aspect in any way, shape, or form. *In Search of Time* is in this regard fully consistent with the pedagogical orientation presented within *Chinese Primer*, by Chen et al., which, like *In Search of Time*, does state that *zai* is progressive when appearing with *zher* 这儿 or *nar* 那儿 (Chen et al. 1994, p. 147), clearly drawing from Chen's inspirational forefather, Y. R. Chao's *Mandarin Primer* (1948, p. 55). The case that she makes for *de* is much more provocative, and she dedicates nearly half the book to a single chapter focusing on that contention, drawing both from historical evidence (in particular citing the earlier works of Dragunov [1952] and Chao [1968]) and her own research. Her conclusion is that

the subordinative particle *de* can have two additional meanings. . . . [T]he particle between a verb and its locative object is by and large a phenomenon of the

spoken language and is considered as denoting the meaning of the verb *zai* 'be in' and of the verb *dao* 'arrive' in the written language. . . . [T]he particle *de* between a verb and its direct object, on the other hand, is often read as denoting an aspectual meaning, i.e. signaling a situation which results from an event that precedes the narrated time. (p. 90)

In support of these contentions, Chirkova provides reasonably compelling samples in her corpus, one of which appears below (the aspectual use of *de* is indicated in bold print):

Wo	*wuba*	*nian*	*a*	*gang*	*shang*	*bar,*	*ba*	*yuefen*	*shang*
1S	5.8	year	ah	just	up	shift	eight	month	up

de	*bar,*	*jiu*	*yuefen*	*wo*	*shifu*	*dai*	*de*	*wo*	*shang* . . .	*Dalian,*
SUB	shift	9	month	1S	master	take	SUB	1S	up	Dalian

bu	*shi,*	*shang*	*Shenyang,*	*Shenyang*	*chang.*
not	be	up	Shenyang	Shenyang	factory.

In 1958 ah . . . I just began working. I had begun working in August, and already in September my master took me to . . . Dalian, no, to Shenyang, to the bridge factory in Shenyang. (p. 29)

But the analysis is, by the author's own admission, quantitatively limited. First, she notes that "[a]spectual use of the particle *de* constitutes just a fraction of all occurrences of this particle in the corpus: 156 aspectual uses versus a total of 9,227 uses of *de*" (p. 29). A second sort of quantitative limitation is the age of the informants, nearly half of which (eighteen out of forty-two) were sixty or over (p. 9). The same sort of age conditions surrounded the use of *le* as a topic marker, as Chirkova admits: "Consultants aged above 60 years tend to use the particle *le* after the topic, whereas younger consultants (younger than 30 years old) do not use it after the topic at all. Moreover, as became obvious in my discussions of the sentences with topical *le* with younger native speakers, this usage sounds odd to many of them, and for some even totally unacceptable" (p. 40). One might be inclined, had Chirkova provided the complete corpus, to conclude that these uses of *de* and *le* are a highly marked, and even genuinely dying, artifact of "old" Beijing Mandarin, with little hope of surviving within the broader *lingua franca* context of MSC.

One other limitation on the application of *In Search of Time* to a broader base —instructional as well as linguistic—is reflected in Chirkova's comparative analysis of *le* versus *de*, specifically by the allowance (at least by one of her informants) of the co-occurrence of *cai* and *le* within the same sentence, as shown below:

Wo	*jiu*	*zheng*	*re*	*de*	*shihou*	*wo*	*cai*	*zhu*	*le*	*yuan*	*me*
1S	just	right	hot	SUB	time	1S	only	dwell	PF	hospital	DAS

Only when it became hot, I was hospitalized. (p. 86)

For those of us conditioned by the DeFrancis admonition that "[t]he verb modified by *cai* is never modified by *le*" (1963, p. 242), Chirkova's data seems in this area somewhat suspect.

In technical terms, *In Search of Time* is remarkably error-free in all respects. There is a smattering of English-language errors, mostly in the selection of articles ("**an** language consultant" [p. 7]) and prepositions ("can result **to** a reanalysis" [p. 99]), as well as the even more infrequent typographical slip ("*laide* **an** *laizhe*" [p. 95]—most likely a result of the spell-checker being left in the Chinese rather than English-language mode!). And while one would wish that all the Chinese-language text had included *hanzi*, rather than limiting such character inclusions to quotations from original works cited and place names, one also understands the realities of desktop word-processing budgetary issues, even in the twenty-first century.

In summary, this volume provides us with a succinct but well-researched and thought-provoking reminder of the analytical timelessness of the late Professor Chao, and the sociolinguistic time-limitedness of the eldest generation of *lao Beijingren* 老北京人. There is some small sense of irony in Dr. Chirkova's characterization of Beijing Mandarin as the "spoken foundation of Standard Mandarin" (p. 1), given that her subjects produce such seeming deviations from the "norm" of MSC. For those with particular interest in modern Chinese syntax or sociolinguistics, this is a book well worth the small amount of time it will take to read it.

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