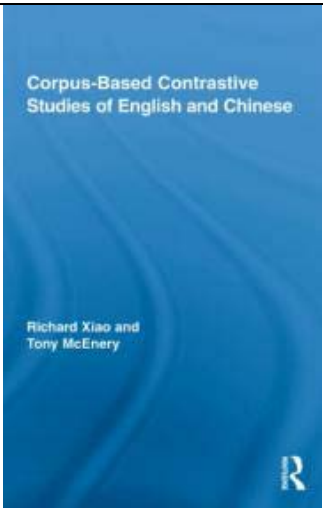


REVIEW OF *CORPUS-BASED CONTRASTIVE STUDIES OF ENGLISH AND CHINESE*

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| <p>Corpus-Based Contrastive Studies of English and Chinese (Routledge Advances in Corpus Linguistics)</p> <p>Richard Xiao and Tony McEnery</p> <p>2010 ISBN: 978-0415992459 US \$117.57 (hardcover) 201 pp.</p> <p>Routledge London & New York</p> |  |
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Review by Zhang Xiaojun, Shaanxi Normal University

Contrastive research of English and Chinese, particularly in mainland China, has attracted great attention since the late 1970s. *Corpus-Based Contrastive Studies of English and Chinese* makes an important contribution to this body of work. Richard Xiao and Tony McEnery provide an examination of a number of grammatical categories, including aspect markers, temporal adverbials, quantifiers, passives, and negation structures in English and Chinese. The book is organized into six main chapters framed by an introductory and summary chapter.

The corpora used in this book are introduced in Chapter 1 and include the Freiburg-LOB corpus (FLOB), the Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese (LCMC), and the Freiburg-Brown corpus (Frown). FLOB is an update of LOB (Johansson, Leech, & Goodluck, 1978) which sampled texts published in 1991–1992. LCMC was designed as a Chinese match for FLOB, representing written Chinese published in China in the early 1990s (McEnery, Xiao, & Mo, 2003).

The first of the chapters in the main text, “Aspect Marking in English and Chinese,” provides a contrastive study of aspect marking in English and Chinese and concludes that while Chinese and English are typologically different, aspect markers in the two languages show a strikingly similar distribution pattern. The authors counted and contrasted the frequencies of perfective and imperfective aspect markers in English and Chinese corpora. In Chinese, they found that the particles ‘-le, -guo, zai, and -zhe’ are regarded as aspect markers, of which the first two markers represent the perfective aspect and the other two refer to the imperfective aspect. In English, perfective meaning is “most commonly expressed by the simple past, though the perfect can also mark perfectivity” (p.14). Comparing the frequencies of perfective and imperfective aspect markers in different languages is a feasible way to set up such contrastive language studies.

Chapter 4, “Quantifying Constructions in English and Chinese,” shows that Chinese employs numeral-classifier constructions obligatorily in quantification, whereas in English a classifier is only required when non-count nouns are quantified. Classifiers are motivated cognitively, pragmatically, and conventionally in both English and Chinese. Normally, Chinese is recognized as a classifier language while English is not, but the two languages show striking similarities in their classifier systems in spite of the different terms used and in spite of several quantitative differences. The authors found that a cross-linguistic difference exists because Chinese is a non-inflectional language, whereas nouns in English inflect for

plurality morphologically. The authors illustrate eight semantic categories of classifiers that exist in both Chinese and English and point out that classifiers in the two languages differ in a number of ways. For example, classifiers are significantly more common in Chinese; unit classifiers and verbal classifiers are characteristic of Chinese while collective classifiers are more diversified in English.

Chapter 5, “Passives in English and Chinese,” is concerned with passive constructions in English and Chinese. The authors indicate that while passive constructions in English and Chinese express a basic passive meaning, they also show a range of differences in terms of overall frequencies, syntactic features and functions, semantic properties, and distributions across genres. By statistically contrasting these, several conclusions were drawn. First, passive constructions are nearly ten times as frequent in English as in Chinese. Also, a major distinction between passive constructions in the two languages is that Chinese passives are more frequently used with an inflective meaning than English passives. There are clearly genre variations in the distribution of passive variants in both languages, and the passive is primarily used to mark an impersonal, objective and formal style in English, whereas it is typically an “inflective voice” in Chinese.

The next two chapters each examine negation structure: “Negation in English and Chinese: Variants and Variations” (Chapter 6) and “Negation in English and Chinese: Special Usages” (Chapter 7). The discussion in Chapter 6 provides various negative forms and their language-specific features in English and in Chinese and focuses on the differences and similarities of explicit *not* and *no*-negation structures in English as well as *bu* and *mei* negations in Chinese. Chapter 7 discusses the scope and focus of negation and also contrasts special usages such as transferred negation, double negation, and redundant negation.

In conclusion, this book seeks to provide a systematic account of several grammatical categories in English and Chinese on the basis of written and spoken corpus data of the two languages. In the final chapter, “Challenge and Promise, and the Way Forward,” the authors construct a model of contrastive corpus linguistics that helps bring together the strengths of contrastive analysis and corpus analysis. This synergy expands the field of corpus linguistics, translation studies, and second language acquisition research by providing a bridge that links all of these research areas.

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