

listing of items in the eight sections is arbitrary, with no internal logic. The Arabic press vocabulary to which military, diplomatic, and business-people are to pay attention employs far more complex vocabulary and idiomatic expressions than those presented in this work; it can be understood only by a good mastery of the language at an advanced level, not merely by an arbitrary list of words.

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CHINESE

FENG, YU, ZHIJIE JIA, JIE CAI, YAOHUA SHI, & JUDITH M. AMORY. *POP CHINESE: A Cheng & Tsui Handbook of Contemporary Colloquial Expressions*. Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company, 2005. Pp. viii, 387. \$29.95, paper. ISBN 0-88727-424-2.

Since the economic reform started at the end of 1970s, Mandarin Chinese, the official Chinese language, has entered a rapidly changing era that is characterized not only by the many new expressions emerging everyday, but also by the gradual mixture of different Chinese dialects, thanks to the migration of hundreds of millions of people from the countryside to the cities and from city to city. As a result, colloquial expressions originally used only by the locals of a dialect seem to have made inroads into spoken Mandarin, the mass media, and literature. This phenomenon brings new challenges to the teaching and learning of spoken Chinese in English-speaking environments, where teaching materials are often selected from the Chinese mass media and literary sources. A Chinese-English reference book for contemporary Chinese colloquial expressions is definitely needed. Thus, comes the book *POP CHINESE: A Cheng & Tsui Handbook of Contemporary Colloquial Expressions*.

This book has collected 1,200 colloquial Chinese expressions, chosen "primarily from film and television with emphasis on most frequently heard expressions" (p. vii). Evidently, most of the book's entries are from the Beijing dialect. Every expression in the book has a separate entry that consists of the expression given in three different forms: pinyin, simplified Chinese characters, and traditional Chinese characters, followed by an English translation or definition and then by two examples. The 1,200 expressions in the

book are organized in alphabetical order by their pinyin forms. Thus, a reader must know the correct pinyin of an expression to use the book effectively.

Often the reader will find two versions of English translations for an expression, a literal translation of the Chinese version followed by a meaning or a figurative translation based on the common usage of the expression. Except for the two examples given in each entry, no other information is provided for the usage or the discourse context of an expression. At least one of the two examples is quoted from the Chinese mass media or from literature, with the source of the example(s) indicated. In many cases, the context of a quoted example is also explained in English to facilitate understanding. All examples in the book are given in simplified Chinese characters, without the pinyin or traditional Chinese counterpart, followed by English translation and context explanation as needed. The compilation of more than 1,200 colloquial Chinese quotations in one book may be its most valuable feature, one that Chinese language teachers and researchers will appreciate.

Some readers may question the selection criteria used by the authors, which seem to limit the number of entries and, thus, the usefulness of the book. In fact, if one excludes vulgar expressions and those that are self-explanatory to proficient Chinese readers, most of the remaining entries in this book can also be found in the fifth edition of the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (*MCD*, 现代汉语词典), published by China's Commercial Press in 2005. Compared to *MCD*, this book's collection of contemporary colloquial expressions is relatively small. However, what this book has that *MCD* does not have is the English translations and explanations, a must for Chinese language teachers and learners in English-speaking environments. A small drawback is that the English translations in the book seem to need some polish. For example, 鞍前马后, portraying a servant running alongside a horse to serve his master riding the horse, was literally translated as before the saddle and behind the horse (p. 2); 滚刀肉, a piece of raw meat that does not cut easily, was literally translated as meat that rolls from the under of a knife (p. 118); 过来人儿, a person who has had experience relevant to a topic in the conversation, was defined as an experienced person (p. 119).

Readers may also question the way that this book handles the variants of the expressions. If readers know only a variant of an expression, they may have to comb through the book to find the desired entry because the book provides no tools,

such as a variant cross reference, a keyword index, or a user guide. Variation of colloquial expressions may occur more often than people would think. Although words such as 八宝山, 白粉 generally have fixed forms, phrases and patterns of expressions may or may not, for example, 挨哪儿 (p. 1) versus 挨哪儿, 矮一截儿 (p. 1) versus 矮半截儿, ... 得一愣一楞的 (p. 75) versus 一楞一楞的. So, just as a phrase or pattern may vary, so too may a phrase or pattern being picked out from a sentence. Furthermore, variation aside, how can a reader recognize a pattern without prior knowledge of the pattern?

There may be much room for this book to improve. Nevertheless, until a better alternative can be found, it is still a great reference book for people working with contemporary colloquial Chinese expressions in an English-speaking environment.

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KLAYMAN, GERALD S., & YUNFENG ZHAO. *Urban Chinese: Mandarin in 21st Century China*. Beijing, China: Beijing Language University Press, 2004. Pp. v, 357. \$6.64, paper. ISBN 7-5619-1090-8.

In the fall of 1998, an American college student, originally going to Beijing for an internship at a business consulting firm, also became a Chinese language student. He was a self-motivated, hard-working, and intelligent student who immersed himself in the Chinese-speaking environment, never hesitated to ask questions, persistently pursued complete answers, and diligently took notes about all he found out. At the end of his two and a half years of study, he had accumulated tons of notes that recorded his journey of learning as well as some inventive ideas for learning Chinese more effectively. With encouragement and help from his teachers and mentors, especially his Chinese language exchange partner, he compiled and published all of his study notes in 2001. That American college student in the story is the first author of this book, his language exchange partner is the second author, and this book is his study notes.

This book does not provide a comprehensive treatment of contemporary Mandarin, as its title might suggest. Rather, it is a radically abridged category dictionary about everyday Chinese, Mandarin plus Beijing dialect, tailored for English-speaking students going to Beijing to study. Not even one paragraph of text in Chinese can be

found in the book. The book is primarily written in English, except for the main entries and examples, which have a simplified Chinese character version and a pinyin version. Many entries in the book include one or two examples. In some cases, stories are told, and usage and the cultural or historical background are discussed. However, owing to the author's limited knowledge of Chinese language, culture, and history, inaccurate or partial explanations and controversial views are to be expected. Moreover, because of the rapid change in everyday life in China, information from 5 years ago may no longer apply today.

There are eight chapters in this book: Pinyin (6 pp.), Radicals (8 pp., 51 radicals), Measure Words (10 pp., 56 measure words), Chinglish Key (10 pp.), Category Dictionary (216 pp., 23 sub-categories), Personages (10 pp., 7 personage stories), Idioms (32 pp., 24 idiom stories), and Slang (65 pp., 204 colloquial expressions). The subcategories of the category dictionary are hobbies (7 pp.), numbers (6 pp.), time and calendar (6 pp.), weather (8 pp.), family and addressing people (2 pp.), holidays (6 pp.), Chinese zodiac (5 pp., 12 zodiacs), emotions (9 pp.), human (14 pp. for words describing people's outer appearance and personality with examples), body parts (3 pp.), colors (1 p., 12 colors), clothing (9 pp.), foods (8 pp.), beverages (11 pp.), restaurants (18 pp.), vehicles (5 pp.), cabs and directions (13 pp.), education (10 pp.), electronics (21 pp.), business (17 pp. for terminology and expressions), countries (5 pp.), political leaders (4 pp. for the names of the leaders of 18 countries), and language studies (17 pp.). The names of the categories and the amount of information included in each of them show clearly the pattern of everyday life, as well as the everyday language need, of a typical foreign student in Beijing. However, the life of a foreign student in Beijing cannot represent urban life in Beijing, let alone represent urban life in other cities in China. Thus, the title of the book is to some extent a misnomer.

For beginning-level students of Chinese whose mother tongue is English, this book may provide some creative ideas for learning pinyin and for accumulating vocabulary effectively by drawing similarities between Chinese and English. The chapter on pinyin introduces a pinyin romanization system invented by the first author. Just to give one example, one may pronounce pinyin *ao* like *-ow* in *cow* (p. 2), as suggested by the system. The chapter Chinglish Key presents the idea of relating a Chinese word to the English meanings of each of the Chinese characters in the word, such as remembering 篮球 as basket + ball = basketball