

*Grammata
Serica
Silesiana*

Dálný východ

Grammata Serica Silesiana

Tereza Slaměnicková a Martina Jemelková (eds.)

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Editors
Olomouc, 21 August 2023

EDITORIAL

This journal issue is a collection of papers written in English or Chinese by the Czech sinologist **Jaromír Vochala**. It also includes two research studies by his wife, **Žu-čen Vochalová**, and one article written in tandem by both authors. We abstracted the list of J. Vochala's papers, fulfilling the criteria mentioned above, from his complete bibliography drawn up in a previous issue of the *Far East* journal.¹ Published in 2018, this issue was a Festschrift compiled on the occasion of J. Vochala's 90th birthday and, among other things, gathered eight research papers written by his students and second-generation students. This issue is, in contrast, an anthology of papers authored by J. Vochala himself, respectively by his wife. It attempts to provide easy and comprehensive access to studies published by these two authors over time in various places. We used the encyclopedia *Kdo byl kdo: Čeští a slovenští orientalisté, afrikanisté a iberoamerikanisté* [Who Was Who: Czech and Slovak Orientalists, Africanists and Ibero-Americanists]² while seeking out Ž. Vochalová's single-authored papers.

The papers are referred to here by their original date in the following list which is, for practical reasons, divided into two parts. The first includes articles written in English, while the second is in Chinese. Each part is ordered chronologically from the oldest to the newest. The initials JV indicate J. Vochala as the author of the paper and ŽV indicate Žu-čen Vochalová.

- 1964** JV: A contribution to the problem of delimiting grammatical and lexical meanings of elementary linguistic units in Chinese³
- 1967** JV: Some remarks on the analysis of Chinese characters⁴
- 1968a** JV: On the nature of Chinese characters⁵
- 1968b** ŽV: On the nature of the construction 'you-N' in the contemporary Chinese⁶
- 1969** ŽV: A few remarks on the problem of delimiting the basic linguistic units in Chinese⁷
- 1971** JV: A remark to the synchronic analysis of Chinese writing⁸

¹ Frolíková, Martina et al.: Bibliografie Jaromíra Vochaly. *Dálný východ* 2018, VIII (1), pp. 166–172.

² Vochalová, Žu-čen: VOCHALOVÁ Žu-čen. In: *Kdo byl kdo: Čeští a slovenští orientalisté, afrikanisté a iberoamerikanisté* [Who Was Who: Czech and Slovak Orientalists, Africanists and Ibero-Americanists]. Prague 1999.

³ Originally: *Archiv orientální* 1964, 32, pp. 403–427.

⁴ *Monumenta Serica, Journal of Oriental Studies* 1967, XXVI, pp. 42–46.

⁵ In: Král, Oldřich and Vlasta Hilská (Eds.): *Charles University on Far Eastern Culture*. Prague 1968, pp. 117–148.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 149–171.

⁷ *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Philologica* 2. 1970, 5, pp. 105–113.

⁸ In: *Papers presented to the XXI International Congress of Chinese Studies, Senigallia, 7–13 September 1969*. Roma – Napoli 1971, pp. 257–263.

- 1972 JV: Formal aspects of the Chinese graphemic system⁹
- 1979 JV: Specificity of monosyllabic denominations in Chinese semantic and graphemic systems¹⁰
- 1981 JV: The specific features of Chinese characters and some of the problems involved in their reform¹¹
- 1985a JV and ŽV: Some remarks towards new phraseological expressions in Modern Chinese¹²
- 1985b JV: Chinese characters and the problems of the science of script¹³
- 1987a JV: A few notes to the analysis of the Chinese writing system¹⁴
- 1988 JV: A note on the Chinese syntax¹⁵
-
- 1957 JV: Relie Huanying Zhongguo de Pinyin Zimu 热烈欢迎中国的拼音字母 [We Warmly Welcome Chinese Alphabet Pinyin]¹⁶
- 1986a JV: Hanyu Jiaoxuezhong de Hanzi Wenti 汉语教学中的汉字问题 [Problems of Chinese Characters in Chinese Teaching]¹⁷
- 1986b JV: Jichu Jieduan de Hanzi, Yuyin he Yufa Jiaoxue 基础阶段的汉字、语音和语法教学 [Chinese Characters, Phonetics and Grammar Teaching at the Basic Level]¹⁸
- 1987b JV: Mantan Hanyu Yusu de Tezheng 漫谈汉语语素的特征 [On the Features of Chinese Morphemes]¹⁹

We chose a distinctly reverent adaptation, only interfering with the texts in the technical sense, most often unifying the graphic elements. The adjustments were made in favor of facilitating the reading of the papers.

⁹ In: Petráček, Karel (Eds.): *New Methods of Analysis in Oriental and African Studies. Studia Orientalia Pragensia V.* Prague 1972, pp. 25–36.

¹⁰ *Asian and African Linguistic Studies. Studia Orientalia Pragensia IX.* Prague 1979, pp. 157–202.

¹¹ *Archiv orientální* 1981, 49, pp. 45–54.

¹² In: Vochala, Jaromír (Eds.): *Asian and African Linguistic Studies II. Studia Orientalia Pragensia XIV.* Prague: 1985, pp. 2–13.

¹³ *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Philologica 3. Phonetica Pragensia VII.* Prague 1985, pp. 121–138.

¹⁴ In: *Problemy języków Azji i Afryki.* Warsaw 1987, pp. 127–129.

¹⁵ In: *Asian and African Linguistic Studies III. Studia Orientalia Pragensia XVII.* Prague 1988, pp. 127–139.

¹⁶ In: *Hanyu Pinyin Fang'an Cao'an Taolunji, Diyi Ji* 汉语拼音方案草案讨论集, 集第一辑 [Collection of Discussion Papers on the Hanyu Pinyin Draft, First Volume]. Peking 1957, pp. 181–182.

¹⁷ *Yuyan Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu* 语言教学与研究 [Language Teaching and Research] 1986, 3, pp. 104–108.

¹⁸ In: *Diyi jie Guoji Hanyu Jiaoxue Taolunhui Wenxuan* 第一届国际汉语教学讨论会文选 [Anthology of the First International Chinese Language Teaching Symposium] Peking 1986, pp. 595–598.

¹⁹ *Zhongguo Yuwen* 中国语文 [Studies of the Chinese Language] 1987, 2, pp. 93–100.

J. Vochala's Chinese articles, that were signed by two different Chinese names, i.e., Wu He 吳和 (1957) and Ya Wohala 雅·沃哈拉 (1986a, 1986b, 1987b), are both provided with the original Czech version of his name in this issue. The affiliations provided by the authors in the original papers were removed. The notes included at the end of texts 1985a and 1987b have been moved to the appropriate pages below the line. The complex diagrams in 1979 were redrawn with Microsoft PowerPoint.

The input methods of Chinese characters, i.e., sinograms, were limited when the earlier papers were published. In light of current possibilities, we have typed the originally handwritten sinograms or their components listed as examples in the English papers, with two types of exceptions occurring in text 1985b. First, several early forms were transferred in the form of pictures from the original article. Second, strokes not found in the Microsoft Word set of symbols were copied from Wikipedia.²⁰ Apart from this, the model of stroke arrangements included in 1986b was copied as a picture from the original text. In addition, several texts (1964, 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1985b, 1988) provided sinograms separately in attachments. For clarity, we have placed them directly into the texts. Some of the examples were mentioned repeatedly in a single paper. If it was practical, we added the sinograms to each of them.

The articles were written when significant language reforms were in progress in the P.R.C., including graphic simplification of sinograms. The authors occasionally used traditional forms of sinograms, in which case the *List of Simplified Chinese Characters* published by the Language Reform Committee in 1964 introduced less complex graphics. Given the current practice, we have decided to replace them with the relevant simplified sinograms. We support this decision with the fact that even J. Vochala seemed to favor the simplified sinograms, considering his choice while translating the *Analects of Confucius* published in 2009.²¹ In light of this, we preserve the traditional forms in only two texts. The first is text 1967, where the examples are provided exclusively in traditional sinograms. The other is text 1987b, which discusses specific structural aspects of the sinogram graphics which were changed during the simplification process.

Another adjustment involved replacing the Wade-Giles transcription with the currently used Hanyu Pinyin (including tone marks) in the 1964, 1967, and 1971 texts. The reasons for this were practical: younger generations of sinologists are no longer familiar with Wade-Giles. All the other transcription systems were left unchanged. We also refrain from any changes in the marking of word boundaries. Apart from the short and full citations, we do not interfere with the original use of capital letters. What is different, however, is that we unified the graphic marking of all the transcribed words or phrases that originally varied significantly between

²⁰ Stroke (CJK character). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stroke_\(CJK_character\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stroke_(CJK_character)) (accessed in August 2023).

²¹ *Confucius v zrcadle sebraných výroků* [Confucius in the Mirror of the Collected Sayings]. Prague 2009.

the papers. Instead of the original graphing marking (such as italics, apostrophes, etc.), we provide all of them in a different font style. We preserve, however, the /slashes/ in **1979** because of the specific distinctive function assigned to this graphic marking by the author.

Following the practice of the journal, we have supplemented all the English articles with English abstracts and keywords. This, in other words, means that these were not included in the original papers, but we summarized the most important facts as editors. The exceptions are texts **1969**, **1979**, and **1985a**, in which case the original Czech summaries were transferred into English. As for the Chinese articles, only the **1987b** has the form of a standard research paper. The Chinese abstract was included in the original text.

The most significant change was performed in the references. We have simplified the full in-text or note citations to their short versions and added them close to the material they support in the form of footnotes. We consequently created a complete list of full references. The format of the full citations adheres to the journal guidelines. This, among others, includes adding English translations to each article and journal titles in any other original language. Considering the fact that we were not able to verify if the Chinese titles were originally written in traditional or simplified sinograms, we could only refrain from this distinction and provide all titles in the simplified sinograms.

Finally, we also corrected occasional typing errors. The erratum inserted at the end of the text **1964** was also fixed in the text and removed from the current version of the paper. We also revised the incorrect numbering of the footnotes in text **1968a**.

Although we have made every effort to minimize their occurrence, we apologize for any mistakes we have made in the digitalization and subsequent editing of the original texts. Please send your comments to Mgr. T. Slaměnková, Ph.D., KAS FF UP, tř. Svobody 26, 771 80 Olomouc, Czech Republic.

T. Slaměnková and M. Jemelková
Olomouc, 20 August 2023

STUDYING CHINESE NEVER ENDS!

/hànyǔ yǒngyuǎn xuébuwán/

汉语永远学不完

David Uher

In October 1994, I started working in the Far East office at the Department of Romance Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Palacký University in Olomouc. I came then across a general absence of a Chinese language teaching strategy at this university, where the field of Sinology began to function earlier than in Prague. Still, it was abolished in 1951 by the leadership of UP. I remember that, after the arrival of the Haná metropolis, I had similar feelings to Charles IV, who described his return to the Czech Kingdom with the words: “Quod regnum invenimus ita desolatum, quod nec unum castrum invenimus liberum, quod non esset obligatum cum omnibus bonis regalibus, ita quod non habebamus ubi manere, nisi in domibus civitatum sicut alter civis. Castrum vero Pragense ita desolatum, destructum ac comminutum fuit, quod a tempore Ottogari regis totum prostratum fuit usque ad terram.”¹

Fortunately, I had previously learned Chinese under the guidance of such luminaries of our field as Jaromír Vochala (1927–2020), Oldřich Švarný (1920–2011) and David Sehnal (1964). While J. Vochala emphasized the written language in teaching and O. Švarný the spoken language, D. Sehnal built his teaching strategies on a symbiosis of both approaches. It is therefore not surprising that in my didactic attempts, all three became my role models precisely as described in the famous saying of Confucius: /sān rén xíng, bì yǒu wǒ shī yān. zé qí shàn zhě ér cóng zhī, qí bú shàn zhě ér gǎi zhī/ 三人行，必有我師焉。擇其善者而從之，其不善者而改之² “When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them.”³ However, the following text will only deal with the Vochala couple.

Czechoslovak sinologist Jaromír Vochala was born on September 24, 1927 in Janovice-Bystré near Frýdek-Místek. At age twenty-five, he went to the People’s Republic of China on a scholarship to study foreign trade. After changing his field of study, he was accepted to the Faculty of Chinese Language and Literature at the prestigious Peking University, from which he graduated in 1958. During his studies, he married a Chinese student, Wang Žu-čen Vochalová (1934–1998).

After returning from China, between 1958 and 1960, he worked first in Czech language courses for international students at the University of Economics in Prague,

¹ In: *Vita Caroli* (kap. 8) [23.12.03] https://www.phil.muni.cz/german/projekty/hmb/e-text/fr_VitaCaroli_cz.html.

² *Analects* VII.22.

³ [23.12.03] <https://ctext.org/pre-qin-and-han?searchu=三人行必有我師焉>.

then as an assistant in Sinology at the Department of Asian and African Studies of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. After 1970, for political reasons, mainly because he disagreed with the “entry” of Warsaw Treaty troops into Czechoslovakia, he was prevented from qualifying for the next twenty years. However, he had the required scientific rank and, in his scientific-pedagogical activities, performed tasks at the level of docent and professor. He was appointed associate professor only in 1990 and retired shortly after. In 2011, he received the scientific title of Doctor of Science, the weight of which in the Czech Republic is comparable to a professorship.

From 1952–1957, Ž. Vochalová studied Hindi at the Faculty of Oriental Languages at Peking University, and between 1959 and 1963, she studied Czech for foreigners and Chinese at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. From 1958, she lived permanently in Czechoslovakia; from 1993, in the Czech Republic. In the years 1960–1964, she worked in the lexicographic department of the Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, where, under the leadership of Danuška Heroldová-Štovičková (1929–1976) and, after her sudden death, Zdenka Heřmanová (1930), she prepared a unique project of an extensive nine-volume *Czech-Chinese Dictionary*.⁴ In 1964, she was accepted as an assistant in Chinese at the Department of Asian and African Studies of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. She worked here until her retirement in 1990.

In his scientific work, J. Vochala dealt mainly with contemporary and classical Chinese language, especially with Chinese characters, both theoretically and applied. In particular, he strove for new research approaches to studying the Chinese language. He demonstrated the necessity of analysing various linguistic phenomena not only on a linguistic level but also on a grammatical level due to the pleremic character of the Chinese characters. It is of fundamental importance, especially for investigating the nature of the Chinese word and the Chinese morpheme. By applying a systemic view to the subject of research and emphasizing the analysis of syntagmatic-paradigmatic relations of linguistic units of the Chinese language, he indicated new possibilities for explaining the complex problems of Chinese grammar, lexicography, and phraseology.

His monograph *Chinese Writing System: Minimal Graphic Units*⁵ is a fundamental contribution to the systematic description of the minimal graphic units of Chinese character writing, their combinatorial peculiarities, and their functional aspects. An attempt at new approaches in the field of lexicography is the *Concise Chinese-Czech and Czech-Chinese Dictionary*,⁶ where, in the processing and construction of dictionary entries, he systematically solves the severe problem of fundamental typological and functional differences between the two languages in terms of the part-of-speech characteristics of the word.

⁴ *Česko-čínský slovník*. Praha 1974–1984, 9 volumes.

⁵ Vochala, Jaromír: *Chinese Writing System: Minimal Graphic Units*. Praha 1986, 143 p.

⁶ Vochala, Jaromír: *Stručný čínsko-český a česko-čínský slovník*. Praha 1997, iii, 51, xii, 424, xix, 262 p.

During his work at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, J. Vochala also devoted himself to the modernization of language teaching. Based on the Chinese graphemic system analysis he developed new methodological procedures in teaching Chinese characters, the theoretical basis and practical applications he described in many articles published here and abroad. He applied modern methodological approaches in several of his university teaching texts, which were dedicated to teaching the Chinese language and characters, including audio-oral courses, interpreting exercises, *Introduction to Chinese, Japanese, Korean Writing*, etc. The highlight of his teaching career was supposed to be the university textbook *Basics of Contemporary Chinese*, which unfortunately has not yet been published. In this sense, J. Vochala also devoted himself to classical Chinese and, together with Ž. Vochalová prepared the *Introduction to the Grammar of Classical Chinese*, later revised and translated into German in collaboration with the German sinologist Klaus Kaden (1934–2019).⁷

In addition to his main linguistic focus, he also devoted himself to translation work. From 1961, he was a member of the translation section of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers. He translated *King Lavra* by Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821–1856) into Chinese and then into Czech several works by modern Chinese novelists, e.g. Mao Dun, Zhang Tianyi, etc. His collection of old Chinese folk poetry, *Songs from the Yellow River*,⁸ published in two editions in 1986 and 1987, won the prize of the Práce Publishing House. His translations of the Chu poet Qu Yuan⁹ and the *Analects*,¹⁰ to which he also added two other important parts of the Confucian canon, i.e., the *Doctrine of the Mean*¹¹ and the *Great Learning*,¹² aroused reader response. In 2004, he received an honourable mention from the jury of the competition organized by the Union of Interpreters and Translators “Dictionary of the Year” for the *Chinese-Czech Czech-Chinese Dictionary*.¹³ In 2017, the Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic awarded him the Artis Bohemiae Amicis award for his scientific and pedagogical activities.

In her scientific work, Ž. Vochalová mainly dealt with modern Chinese. She contributed to solving complex questions connected with the definition of the word boundary, to a more detailed specialization of the structural types of collocations in Chinese, and to solving some problems of Chinese syntax. For many years, she collaborated with Jarmila Kalousková (1908–1989) on the issues of modern Chinese grammar and with Jaromír Vochala on a monographic study on the productive type of verbo-nominal idioms in journalistic style. Among other things, she participated

⁷ Vochala, Jaromír und Ruzhen Vochalová: *Einführung in die Grammatik des klassischen Chinesisch*. Leipzig 1990, 155 p.

⁸ Vochala, Jaromír: *Zpěvy od Žluté řeky*. Praha 2014, 92 p.

⁹ Qu Yuan: *Z čchuských písní* [From the Songs of the South]. Praha 2004, 172 p.

¹⁰ Vochala, Jaromír *Konfucius v zrcadle Sebraných výroků* [Confucius in the Mirror of the Collected Sayings]. Praha 2009, pp. 19–121.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 421–445.

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 446–458.

¹³ Vochala, Jaromír: *Čínsko-český, česko-čínský slovník*. Voznice 2003, li, xi, 658, xviii, 614, ii p.

in the compilation of a German-Chinese dictionary at the Academy of Sciences, the GDR. During her long-term teaching career at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, she contributed to the modernization of language teaching. She took part in the demanding preparation and processing of Chinese and Japanese teaching texts¹⁴ and other didactic aids, especially on recordings for audio-oral Chinese language courses.

I met J. Vochala and his wife, Ž. Vochalová, for the first time in September 1989, when I joined the Department of Asian and African Sciences at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague to study Orientalism-Sinology. Like many of my older colleagues, I recognized them as experienced teachers who opened the way for me to the secrets of the Chinese language and thus became a lifelong authority.

J. Vochala has always placed particular emphasis on seeing Chinese as an indispensable tool for any Sinological endeavour, and his statement /hànyǔ yǒngyuǎn xuébuwán/ 汉语永远学不完 “studying Chinese never ends” did not become a brake, but a driving engine of my interest in Chinese language and culture. As a teacher, J. Vochala was demanding but, at the same time, fair and kind. I do not remember him ever raising his voice at me, although I surely deserved it many times for my knowledge. His attitude made me highly embarrassed if I did not prepare enough for his classes. Thanks to his approach succinctly expressed by Han Fei /níng xìn dù, wú zì xìn yě/ 宁信度，無自信也 “I’d rather trust the gauge than myself,”¹⁵ he thus succeeded in raising several Sinologists who are successfully using their knowledge today obtained from him during their studies. That is why I was sorry I did not meet him after returning from a one-year study in Beijing in September 1991 at Charles University.

While J. Vochala focused on the theoretical problems of describing a language so different from Czech, Ž. Vochalová concentrated on the practical application of these interpretations. In particular, her emphasis on the study of Chinese character writing influenced me in my pedagogical practice. It became the ideological basis of the *Textbook of Chinese Characters*¹⁶ and remained the backbone of the project covering the entire character stock of Oldřich Švarný’s *Learning Dictionary of the Chinese Language*.¹⁷ The breadth of her vocabulary in Czech was astounding, which must have been difficult for her to grasp both from a linguistic perspective, especially a morphological perspective, and the point of view on the culture of the Czech language. Her *Chinese Conversation*¹⁸ is, after Průšek’s *Textbook of Spoken Chinese*,¹⁹

¹⁴ For example Vasiljevová, Zdeňka: *Feudalismus v zemích Dálného východu* [Feudalism in the Countries of the Far East]. Praha 1983, 215 p. or Vochala, Jaromír, Miroslav Novák and Vladimír Pucek: *Úvod do čínského, japonského a korejského písma* [Introduction to Chinese, Japanese and Korean Writing]. Praha 1989, 2 volumes.

¹⁵ Han Fei XXXII.48.

¹⁶ Kučera, Ondřej, David Uher a Jakub Vykoukal: *Učebnice čínských znaků I*. Olomouc 2005, xix, 237 p.

¹⁷ Švarný, Oldřich: *Učební slovník jazyka čínského*. Olomouc 1998–2000, 4 volumes.

¹⁸ Vochalová, Žu-čen and Jaromír Vochala: *Čínská konverzace*. Praha 1965, 1967, 2 volumes.

¹⁹ Průšek, Jaroslav: *Učebnice mluvené čínštiny*. Zlín 1938, 153 p.

the very first such manual in Czech, and it naturally became a great inspiration for my *Textbook of Chinese Conversation*.²⁰

Coming back from my doctoral studies in Nanking in 2002, I was delighted by J. Vochala's warm interest in my research work, which inspired me largely. I consider the *Chinese-Czech Czech-Chinese Dictionary* to be his "opus magnum," which opens the way to learning the Chinese language not only for the younger Sinological generation but especially for students still searching for their relationship with the Chinese language. He filled the blank space on our field's history pages that no one else had served before him. Only then did I find out that we were compatriots and vaguely remembered my grandmother's story about how my great-grandfather bought a cow from J. Vochala's father. I will never forget that time, in the most challenging hour for Chinese Studies in Olomouc. He rushed to his aid and protected the specialisation with his erudition with O. Švarný when the malice of the Philological Section of the Accreditation Committee of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports in the Czech Republic critically threatened the granting of accreditation. This was primarily based on a misunderstanding of the context of Sinology. While other philological disciplines have been developing for hundreds or thousands of years, Czech Sinology was created only seventy years ago, and it has been systematically persecuted for at least forty years. I was also moved when he added a dedication to his translation of *Analects*: "published in honour of the founding of the Confucius Institute in the Czech Republic,"²¹ of which I was the director then. To this day, I am also grateful to him for his critical comments on my translation of the *Afterword to the Shuowen* into English and his support of my study of phonetics at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. His name has always opened doors for me and still opens them in communication with leading Czech linguists and foreign Sinologists.

Olomouc, 3 December 2023

²⁰ Uher, David, Liu Xuemin and Jakub Vykoukal: *Učebnice čínské konverzace*. Praha 2007, 223 p. and Uher, David, Jin Xueli and Tereza Slaměniková: *Učebnice čínské konverzace II*. Praha 2016, 2 volumes.

²¹ Vochala, Jaromír: *Konfucius v zrcadle Sebraných výroků*. Praha 2009, 534 p.

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF DELIMITING GRAMMATICAL AND LEXICAL MEANINGS OF ELEMENTARY LINGUISTIC UNITS IN CHINESE

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Abstract: *Words in the Chinese language typically have only one grammatical form. The lack of inflection leads to a greater reliance on word order while conveying grammatical information. Moreover, the absence of grammatical categories in the form of elementary units in Chinese suggests that a more significant number of syntactic relations are potentially bearable by the given unit. Thus, detecting the grammatical and lexical meanings has to rely on the investigation in the frame of the context and concerning their interrelations in the language system. This paper demonstrates the importance of such a procedure in Chinese employing the example of the morpheme shi 是 in those cases when it occurs as an independent utterance. To be specific, the morpheme shi 是 is examined in the following linguistic environments: 1. with zero potential linguistic context; 2. in a sequence with the morpheme a 啊; 3. in the linguistic environment of the ta men shi de guo ren 他们是德国人 type. The results of the analysis indicate that the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance is always emphatic and has varied characteristics in terms of its function and semantics.*

Keywords: *Chinese language, grammatical meaning, lexical meaning, linguistic context, morpheme shi 是*

0.0 The nature of linguistic units subjected to investigation in a certain language, is given and conditioned by the entire system of the given language.¹ Thus any language system is an abstraction from concrete utterances, and, on the other hand, finds its expression in concrete utterances. Utterances containing the unit under examination must be regarded as a realization of the given language system, which comprises linguistic phenomena organized in various relations and dependencies enabling the concrete utterance to assume the very form it possesses. This can be illustrated by the following examples of two utterances in Czech and Chinese, in which the subject is not expressed:² “Přijdeš?” (Will you come?) – “Přijdu!” (Yes, I shall.) and

¹ The conception of language as a system, the grounds of which were laid down by Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Cours de linguistique générale*, has nowadays been generally accepted among linguists. In the present work the systematic character of language is recognized not only from the grammatical, but also the lexical point of view.

² The utterance is regarded here as an actualization of the language system and may therefore be investigated from the viewpoint of the units of the system. This should explain the seeming contamination of the levels of langue and parole in the following parts of this treatise.

Ni lai ma? 你来吗? – *Lai*. 来。³ While in the utterance “přijdu” the absence of the pronominal subject is enabled first of all by the fact that the Czech language system contains a verbal category of Person, the absence of the pronominal subject in the utterance “lai 来” is made possible by the sole fact that the pronominal subject has been expressed in the context, where it is obligatory, since Chinese does not express Person by the form of the verb.

On the other hand, units which have occurred in certain utterances cannot be regarded in isolation but as a part of the entire language system finding its expression in potential variants of utterances, which alone enable to examine the nature, function etc. of the given unit. E.g. the word “předsedou” in Czech, if it occurs as an independent utterance, can yield no more information than that on the level of morphological analysis, when observed in an isolated position, and its form offers mere conjectures as to the possibilities of different syntactical functions given by the system of the language; it is only the context in which the word occurs that enables to detect its syntactical functions:

- a) Kým byl na schůzi kritizován? (By whom was he criticized at the meeting?)
Předsedou. (By the chairman.) – Adverbial
- b) Čím je ten soudruh ve vaší organizaci? (What is this comrade[’s function] in your organization?)
Předsedou. (Chairman.) – Nominal Predicate
- c) Čím byl zvolen? (What was he elected?)
Předsedou. (Chairman.) – Complement
- d) Kým to cloumají? (Whom are they shaking?)
Předsedou. (The chairman.) – Object

It is not, however, the respective question itself, that determines the above syntactical functions of the word “předsedou”, but the fact that these syntactical functions exist in potential alternatives of the utterance “předsedou” within the given context:

- ad a) Byl kritizován *předsedou*. (He was criticized by the chairman.)
- ad b) Je *předsedou*. (He is chairman.)
- ad c) Byl zvolen *předsedou*. (He was elected chairman.)
- ad d) Cloumají *předsedou*. (They are shaking the chairman.)

In the quoted examples the context expressed by means of a question is, from the grammatical point of view, directly related to the given utterances and has a delimitative function with regard to their variants.

This is also the case when the utterance does not have any linguistic context, or when its linguistic context is not directly related to the word under examination:

A. The Situational Context:

³ The examples in Chinese are transcribed according to the *Project for Alphabetic Transcription of Chinese* (Han yu pin yin fang 汉语拼音方案), approved by the 5th session of the 1st National Congress on the 11th of February, 1958. The transcription is morphematic.

1. *Auto!* (A car! – a warning against an oncoming car)
 2. *Autem!* (By car! – two people in a hurry to get somewhere in time, one of them suggests a means of transport)
- B. The Linguistic Context:
1. Slyšel jsem, že prý jste se pohádali! (I have heard that you were supposed to have had a row!)
Nesmysl! (Nonsense!)

In the above cases, too, there can occur different word-forms indicating the word's syntactic functions. They are such word-forms which correspond to the forms of the respective words that can be found in the expanded variants of the same utterances, which are most current in the given context:

- ad A.: 1. (Pozor), jede *auto!* (Look out, a car is coming!) – Subject
 2. Jedme *autem!* (Let's go by car!) – Adverbial
 ad B.: 1. To je *nesmysl!* (That's nonsense!) – Nominal Predicate

Comparing the variants of a given utterance can thus result in obtaining the differentiating members, which might be called the *potential linguistic context* (PLC) of a shorter utterance. PLC then stands for the linguistic environment of the given unit, which is admitted by the language system in the quality of distinguishing components of the variants of the same utterance in a given broader context. The PLC, similarly to the components of the realized utterance with regard to the unit under examination relevant for the detection of the syntactical function of the given unit, can be named *direct context* (DC). Examples of DC can be observed in all the above mentioned cases of PLC.

An utterance might also be expanded by further members or an additional utterance, which are subjective nature; e.g. the utterance "Jede auto!" can be expanded to "Pozor, jede auto!", or to "Jede auto, *uhni!*" (A car is coming, move aside!) etc., which contexts can be qualified according to their positions with regard to the utterance containing the unit under examination, as the *prepositive context* (PrC) and/or the *postpositive context* (PsC).

A broader context of the unit under examination, i.e. the context creating the conditions for a response by means of an utterance containing this unit, can be designated as *antecedent context* (AC). The AC, however, can assume different natures with regard to the utterance that follows; it can be e.g. in direct grammatical relation to the utterance containing the unit under examination; such kinds of AC are for instance the complementary questions quoted above:

- ad a) *Kým byl na schůzi kritizován?* (By whom was he criticized at the meeting?)
 Předsedou. (By the chairman.)
 ad b) *Čím je ten soudruh ve vaší organizaci?* (What is this comrade[']s function in your organization?)
 Předsedou. (Chairman.)
 etc.

This type of AC could be specified as the *identifying antecedent context* (IAC) since its components are identical with the components and relations in DC itself. An AC which is either a situational context or a linguistic context, from the grammatical point of view not directly related to the utterance containing the given unit, might be designated as the *simple antecedent context* (SAC). Examples of SAC can be perceived among the above cases, such as the situational context attached to the utterance “auto” and “autem”, and the linguistic context of the utterance “nesmysl” (Slyšel jsem, že prý jste se pohádali! – I have heard that you were supposed to have had a row!). Such classification of context is to be regarded as a preliminary starting point for the analysis itself, which might require still further classification.

0.1 A confrontation with the entire language system and an investigation in the frame of the context is particularly important for the detection of the grammatical and lexical meanings of elementary units in Chinese. It is well known that Chinese does not express grammatical categories by means of different word-forms, or does so to a limited extent only, which, consequently, adds to the importance of the syntactic media of expressing grammatical relations. When examining an elementary syntactic unit in Chinese which has occurred as an independent utterance, e.g. the unit *nong min* 农民, very little information can be obtained about it. This, on the other hand, suggests that there potentially exist a larger number of syntactic relations bearable by the given unit. The absence of grammatical categories in the form of elementary units in Chinese also affects their semantics; e.g. the absence of the category of number, gender etc. with the units that usually perform the function corresponding to those of nouns in European languages makes these units assume the meaning of some kind of collectives, potentially capable of referring to one or more persons of male or female gender. Thus e.g. the above mentioned unit *nong min* 农民 can stand for “peasant”, “peasants”, “peasant woman”, “peasant women”, and, as part of a sentence, can become its subject, object, nominal predicate or even attribute:

1. Ta shi *nong min*. 他是农民。He is a peasant. – Nominal predicate
2. Zhe xie nü de shi *nong min*. 这些女的是农民。These women are peasants. – Nominal Predicate
3. Jie fang yi qian di zhu bo xiao *nong min* bo xiao de hen li hai. 解放以前地主剥削农民剥削得很厉害。Until the liberation the landlord(s) exploited the peasant(s) most intensely. – Object
4. Yi qian *nong min* chang chang mei you ke chi de ke chuan de. 以前农民常常没有可吃的可穿的。In the past the peasant(s) often had nothing to eat or wear. – Subject
5. Ta men qu nian ban le yi ge *nong min* ye yu xue xiao. 他们去年办了一个农民业余学校。Last year they established an evening-school for peasants. – Attribute

The grammatical neutrality of linguistic units in Chinese furthermore affects the contextual delimitation of their syntactic functions; e.g. the Chinese equivalents

corresponding to the above-quoted utterances of situational SAC in Czech would be as follows:

- ad 1. Qi che! 汽车! A car!
- ad 2. Zuo qi che! 坐汽车! By car!

In the case of ad 2. the unit qi che 汽车 is expanded by the morpheme zuo 坐, which has the function of some kind of preposition (originally a unit of verbal nature meaning “to sit”), and thus creates a sequence of a specified syntactic function. The PLC of this sequence would be

Wo men zuo qi che qu ba! 我们坐汽车去吧! Let's go by car!

In this case the sequence zuo qi che 坐汽车 performs the function of an adverbial. Since the unit qi che 汽车 can do so only when preceded by the morpheme zuo 坐, we may designate the latter as a constitutive context (CC) of the unit qi che 汽车, obligatorily delimiting the syntactic function of the sequence.

In the present treatise I should like to demonstrate the importance of the study of linguistic units in the Chinese language within their context and with regard to their interrelations in the language system, for which purpose I shall employ the example of the Chinese morpheme shi 是.

The morpheme shi 是 has generally been ascribed the role of a copula as its main function, and in different Chinese grammars it is either considered to be a special class of verb,⁴ referring to its grammatical meaning, or, forms an independent part of speech entering the category of the so-called empty⁵ or semi-empty⁶ words. It has moreover been noted that the morpheme shi 是 constitutes a series of the so-called xi guan yong fa 习惯用法, i.e. idiomatic or conventional usage.⁷ It is not intended in this study to analyze all the types of different occurrences of the morpheme shi 是, but employ one example in order to illustrate the possibility and necessity of delimiting a formal characteristics of the grammatical and lexical meanings of elementary units in Chinese by means of their context and their inter-relations in the language system.

1.0 The Morpheme shi 是 as an Independent Utterance

Examples

1. Ni ba zhe feng xin song gei er lian zhang! 你把这封信送给二连长! Deliver this letter to the Second Company Commander!
Shi! 是! Yes! (I wilco!)
2. Xia ci ke bu xu zhe yang zuo le! 下次可不许这样作了! Mind this does not repeat!
Shi! 是! Yes!

⁴ Cf. Lü Shuxiang 1954.

⁵ Cf. Zhang Zhigong 1957.

⁶ Cf. Wang Li 1954.

⁷ Cf. Zhang Zhigong 1957.

3. Wang Gui, ni qu gu liang qi che lai! 王贵你去雇辆汽车来! Wang Gui, go and order a taxi!
Shi! 是! Yes!
4. Zhe xie ren shi bu shi de guo ren? 这些人是不是德国人? Are these people Germans?
Shi! 是! Yes! (Yes, they are.)
5. Ta shi ni de ge ge ma? 他是你的哥哥吗? Is this your brother?
Shi! 是! Yes! (Yes, he is.)
6. Ta men dou shi xue sheng, shi bu shi? 他们都是学生, 是不是? They are all students, aren't they?
Shi! 是! Yes! (Yes, they are.)

Description

In all the quoted examples the morpheme *shi* 是 can be qualified as emphatic. In examples No. 1–3 the emphasis is mostly constant, whereas in No. 4–6 it may vary as to its intensity, depending on the subjective attitude of the speaker.

In the given examples the morpheme *shi* 是 constitutes an independent utterance. In order to present a more complete characteristics of its grammatical functions and relations, it is essential to find out and describe its PLC.

As to examples No. 1–3 there exists no PLC for the utterance *shi* 是; the utterance can only be expanded by a PsC:

- ad 2. *Shi, tuan zhang!* 是, 团长! Yes, (comrade) regiment commander!
- ad 3. *Shi, lao ye!* 是, 老爷! Yes, my lord!

As far as examples No. 4–6 are concerned, the situation is different; e.g. the utterance *shi* 是 in example No. 4 has the following variants:

- a) *Shi a!* 是啊! Yes!
- b) *Shi de guo ren!* 是德国人! (They) are Germans!
- c) *Ta men shi de guo ren!* 他们是德国人! They are Germans!
- d) *Shi, ta men shi de guo ren!* 是, 他们是德国人! Yes, they are Germans!
- e) *Shi a, shi de guo ren!* 是啊, 是德国人! Yes, (they) are Germans!
- f) *Shi a, ta men shi de guo ren!* 是啊, 他们是德国人! Yes, they are Germans!

The utterance *shi* 是 can be expanded in a similar way also in the case of examples No. 5 and No. 6.

From the variants given above, variant c) may be regarded as an expanded form of the variant b) and f) as an expansion of e), by which the number of variants of the utterance *shi* 是 is reduced to four:

- I. *Shi a!* 是啊!
- II. *Ta men shi de guo ren!* 他们是德国人!
- III. *Shi, ta men shi de guo ren!* 是, 他们是德国人!
- IV. *Shi a, ta men shi de guo ren!* 是啊, 他们是德国人!

The differentiating members of the variants I and II can be called the PLC of the utterance shi 是. As to variants No. III and IV, the utterance shi 是, or its expanded variant shi a 是啊, are enlarged by a further utterance, namely by the variant II of the utterance shi 是, which can be qualified as the PsC of the utterance shi 是 (or shi a 是啊). Nevertheless, the PsC of the two utterances is not of the same nature; in the case of variant No. III the morpheme shi 是 at the beginning of the utterance may be regarded as identical, as far as its function is concerned, with the morpheme shi 是 in the PsC (owing to the existence of variant No. II), or with the morpheme shi 是 in variant No. I. In the former case PsC is relevant for identifying the morpheme shi 是 opening the utterance, and therefore, should be qualified as the *identifying postpositive context* (IPsC). As to the latter case, the relation of the morpheme shi 是 to its PsC is similar to that of the sequence shi a 是啊 to the PsC of variant No. IV, where the differentiating members of the morpheme shi 是 in the sequence shi a 是啊 and in the PsC are not identical. This kind of PsC can be specified as the *simple postpositive context* (SPsC).

A SPsC may follow the morpheme shi 是 even if the latter is not expanded by the morpheme a 啊:

ad 4. Shi, ni kan bu chu lai ma? 是, 你看不出来吗? Yes, can't you recognize it?

The above example serves as a particularly good illustration of the two functions of the morpheme shi 是 in this position, for there can exist the following variants of it:

- i. Ta men shi de guo ren, ni kan bu chu lai ma? 他们是德国人, 你看不出来吗? They are Germans, can't you recognize?
- ii. Shi a, ni kan bu chu lai ma? 是啊, 你看不出来吗? Yes, can't you recognize?

As follows from the preliminary analysis, due to the different contextual circumstances indicating different functions of the morpheme shi 是, it is necessary to divide the above examples into two groups, the first comprising examples No. 1–3, the second consisting of No. 4–6. However, as to the second group, the situation is not clear, since the morpheme shi 是 occurs there with two distinct PLC, and is therefore liable to perform two different functions. Thus, in order to give a complete characteristics of the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance we shall have to analyze it in the following linguistic environments:

1. With zero PLC.
2. In a combination with the morpheme a 啊.
3. In a linguistic environment of the *ta men shi de guo ren* 他们是德国人 type.

1.1 The morpheme **shi 是** with zero PLC

Let us take into account some more examples in addition to those quoted in the preceding chapter:

1. Ni jiao Zhang pai zhang dao zhe li lai! 你叫张排长到这里来! Call the squad-leader Zhang for me!
Shi! 是! Yes! (I wilco!)
2. Rang ta men gan jin hui lai! 让他们赶紧回来! Let them come back quickly!
Shi! 是! Yes (, sir!)
3. Xi wang ni men zai zhe r hao hao r de gong zuo! 希望你们在这儿好好地工作! Mind you do some proper work here now!
Shi! 是! Yes (, sir!)
4. Ni men bi xu wan cheng zhe ge ren wu! 你们必须完成这个任务! You have got to fulfil the task!
Shi! 是! Yes (, sir!)
5. Wang Gui, ni zhe ge hun dan, jing rang ta pao le! Xian ni liang tian ba ta zhao hui lai! Zhao bu hui lai wo jiu rao bu liao ni! 王贵, 你这个混蛋, 竟让他跑了! 限你两天把他找回来! 找不回来, 我就饶不了你! Wang Gui, you scoundrel, you've him slip out after all! You've got the limit of two days to bring him back, or else I'll make you feel sorry for it!
Shi! 是! Yes (, sir!)

Description

As it has already been said, the morpheme **shi 是** has no expanded variants here and its PLC is therefore zero; it can only be followed by a PPsC, or, in some cases, the morpheme **shi 是** can be reduplicated:

- ad 4. Shi, lian zhang! 是, 连长! Yes, (comrade) company commander!
ad 5. Shi, shi, shi! 是, 是, 是! Yes, Yes, Yes!

The absence of a PLC indicates that the morpheme **shi 是** in the above cases cannot be a unit performing a function in a sentence but that it makes up a sentence by itself. Its existence is fully conditioned by the presence of an AC, which, owing to the zero PLC of the morpheme **shi 是**, can be but a simple antecedent context. The semantic context of such a SAC is as a rule, an expression of the will, wish, order etc. of some person.

The SAC may either be of linguistic nature or situational – an example of a situational context:

- A gesture ordering someone to leave –
Shi! 是! Yes! (I wilco!)

Such kind of situational context can be, however, actually regarded as nothing but a *substitution* for a linguistic context. In this case, an instruction or gesture stand for a means of communication similar to a linguistic utterance expressing will, wish or order, a. s. o.

The semantic contents of the morpheme *shi* 是 in cases like these can be generally characterized as “submission to another person’s will, wish, order etc.,” alike the English “Yes, sir” or “I wilco” in military usage.

Due to the fact that a negative response to the same AC is out of question, this morpheme does not constitute any binary pair of “positive-negative” in the language system.

Accordingly, the morpheme *shi* 是 can be described as an *affirmative particle* with the abstract meaning of submission to another person’s will, wish, order etc. The term “particle” in this connection stands for a unit of intersentential dependency, functioning as a one-member sentence. The formal trails of function and semantic contents of the morpheme *shi* 是 described in this way are as follows: a) emphasis, b) zero PLC, c) a SAC with a definite semantic contents, d) the absence of a binary pair of “positive-negative” in the language system.

1.2 The morpheme *shi* 是 in a sequence with the morpheme *a* 啊.

Examples

1. Zhe ge ren shi ni men de xian sheng ma? 这个人是你们的先生吗？ Is that man your teacher?
Shi a! 是啊！ Yes, he is!
2. Ta shi zuo jia, shi bu shi? 他是作家，是不是？ He is a writer, isn't he?
Shi a, ta shi zuo jia! 是啊，他是作家！ Yes, he is a writer!
3. Zhe liang ge zhong guo ren shi bu shi yan jiu sheng? 这两个中国人是不是研究生？ Are they post-graduate students, those two Chinese?
Shi a, ta men zai zhe r xue hua xue. 是啊，他们在这儿学化学。 Yes, (they are,) they have been studying chemistry here.
4. Zhe ge nü de zhen de shi Jin De sui de ai ren ma? 这个女的真的是金德崇的爱人吗？ Is the woman really Jin Desui's wife?
Shi a, ni ren wei ta shi shei? 是啊，你认为她是谁？ So she is, who did you take her for?
5. Ta shi bu shi you ai ren? 他是不是有爱人？ Does he have a girl?
Shi a, ta you ai ren! 是啊，他有爱人！ Yes, he does (have a girl).
6. Shi bu shi ta yi jing bu zuo na ge he zuo she de she zhang le? 是不是他已经不作那个合作社的社长了？ Is he really no longer chairman of the co-operative?
Shi a, ta xian zai zai di fang wei yuan hui gong zuo. 是啊，他现在在地方委员会工作。 That's right, he is now working at the National Committee.
7. Ta yi jing bu zai na r gong zuo, shi bu shi? 他已经不在那儿工作，是不是？ He is not working there any longer, is he?
Shi a, ta zao yi jing bu zai na r gong zuo. 是啊，他早已经不在那儿工作。 Yes, he has not been working there for a long time already.
8. Ni men lai de ji an qi wan cheng zhe ge ren wu ma? 你们来得及按期完成这个任务吗？ Will you manage to fulfil this task in due time?
Shi a, mei you wen ti! 是啊，没有问题！ Yes, we certainly shall.

9. Ta shi zai mei you shi jian lai ma? 他实在没有时间来吗? Has he really no time to come?
Shi a, ni bu xiang xin ma? 是啊, 你不相信吗? Yes, don't you believe it?
10. Wo men bu ying gai dui ta zhe yang li hai! 我们不应该对他这样厉害! We should not have been so hard on him!
Shi a, bu ying gai! 是啊, 不应该! We should not have, should we!
11. Ta zhe yang zuo zhen ben! 他这样作真笨! It was really silly of him to have done it in this way!
Shi a, wei shen me bu gen ren jia shang liang yi xia? 是啊, 为什么不跟人家商量一下! Yes, why doesn't he consult anyone!
12. Ta zuo de shi zai tai guo fen le! 他作得实在太过分了! He has really gone too far!
Shi a! 是啊! Yes, (that he has)!
13. Ting shuo ta yi jing jie hun le! 听说他已经结婚了! I have heard he's already married!
Shi ma? 是吗? [*Shi a?* 是啊?] Oh, has he?
Shi a! 是啊! Yes, he has!

Description

In all the above examples the morpheme *shi* 是 may be designated as emphatic.

The morpheme *shi* 是 appears here in sequence with the morpheme *a* 啊, which usually functions as a formal indicator of the termination of an utterance and has an emotional colouring. This morpheme has been traditionally called a sentence particle.⁸

In Chapter 1.0 this sequence has been treated as an expanded variant of the utterance *shi* 是 in the given conditions of context. It is necessary to ascertain whether this sequence is always an expanded variant of the utterance *shi* 是:

- ad 1. *Shi!* 是!
- ad 2. *Shi, ta shi zuo jia!* 是, 他是作家!
- ad 3. *Shi, ta men zai zhe r xue hua xue.* 是, 他们在这儿学化学。
- ad 4. *Shi, ni ren wei ta shi shei?* 是, 你认为她是谁?
- ad 5. *Shi, ta you ai ren!* 是, 他有爱人!
- ad 6. *Shi, ta xian zai zai di fang wei yuan hui gong zuo.* 是, 他现在在地方委员会工作。
- ad 7. *Shi, ta zao yi jing bu zai na r gong zuo.* 是, 他早已经不在那儿工作。
- ad 8. **Shi, mei you wen ti!* 是, 没有问题!

and further up to ad 13 the morpheme *shi* 是 hardly ever stands by itself. Moreover, in examples No. 5–7 the informant permits the occurrence of the morpheme *shi* 是 without the morpheme *a* 啊 only with hesitation. The quoted examples must therefore be divided into the following three groups:

⁸ Cf. Wang Li 1954; Lü Shuxiang 1953.

- I. The examples No. 1–4, where the sequence shi a 是啊 can be considered an expanded variant of the morpheme shi 是;
- II. the examples No. 5–7, in which the classification of the sequence shi a 是啊 as an expanded variant of shi 是 leaves some uncertainty;
- III. the examples No. 8–13, where the sequence shi a 是啊 cannot be considered an expanded variant of the morpheme shi 是.

It follows from the above that –

1. the sequence shi a 是啊 is an expanded variant of the morpheme shi 是 only in certain contextual conditions;
2. the sequence shi a 是啊 is not merely a simple variant of the morpheme shi 是;
3. in certain contextual conditions (examples No. 8–13) the morpheme shi 是 can function only when combined with the morpheme a 啊, in which cases the latter can be described as the CC of the former.

It will thus be necessary to characterize the sequence shi a 是啊 as a whole and then confront it with the morpheme shi 是 in the given contextual conditions.

The sequence shi a 是啊 has no expanded variants, and its PLC is thus zero. It follows that the sequence in question does not perform its function within a sentence, but constitutes a unit in itself, functioning as a sentence. Its occurrence is conditioned by AC, which may either be a SAC or an IAC, the former applying to the cases of AC in examples No. 1, 3 and 4 of group I, and examples No. 8–12 of group III. The part concerning IAC is somewhat more complicated: With a comparatively great deal of certainty IAC could be perceived in the AC of the example No. 13 of group III, the AC being formed in this case by a sequence comprising the morpheme shi 是 plus the CC and has a zero PLC, too. In example No. 1 of group I and in all the examples of group III the AC is a question consisting of the alternative construction positive-negative of the morpheme shi 是, i.e. the construction shi bu shi 是不是. In order to be able to define the nature of the AC, in which this interrogative sequence occurs, we must first characterize the sequence itself.

Generally said, the sequence shi bu shi 是不是 can occur principally in two kinds of utterances:

1. In an utterance of the ta shi de guo ren 他是德国人 type, where, besides forming a question, it also performs the function determined by its DC. This kind of sequence can occur only in group I:
ad 3. Zhe liang ge zhong guo ren shi bu shi yan jiu sheng? 这两个中国人是不是研究生?

In this function the sequence may also assume a discontinuous form:

Zhe liang ge zhong guo ren shi yan jiu sheng bu shi? 这两个中国人是研究生不是?

2. In such utterances where it has one function only, namely that of forming a question related to the entire utterance or to its part. In this function the sequence can occur in groups I and II:

Group I:

ad 2. Ta shi zuo jia, *shi bu shi*? 他是作家，是不是？

Group II:

ad 5. Ta *shi bu shi* you ai ren? 他是不是有爱人？

ad 6. *Shi bu shi* ta yi jing bu zuo na ge he zuo she de she zhang le? 是不是他已经不作那个合作社的社长了？

ad 7. Ta yi jing bu zai na r gong zuo, *shi bu shi*? 他已经不在那儿工作，是不是？

Although etymologically of the same origin, the members of the sequence *shi bu shi* 是不是 in each of the groups have dissimilar inner relations. Whereas in the first group the relation between the morpheme *shi* 是 and its negation *bu shi* 不是 within the sequence is loose, which is also reflected in the possibility of the sequence assuming a discontinuous form *shi...bu shi* 是……不是, in the second group the relation between the members of the sequence is very close and the whole sequence must be regarded as a single unit, even though the nature of its respective constituents is, to a certain extent, preserved. Such a sequence may be designated as an *alternative binomic interrogative particle*. The process of formalizing the sequence and its unfinished character can be illustrated by the examples of the group II, if we examine the affirmative and the negative answer to the question formed by means of this alternative interrogative particle – e.g.:

ad 5. Ta *shi bu shi* you ai ren? 他是不是有爱人？

A. Affirmative answer:

a) You a, ta you ai ren.

有啊，他有爱人。

b) Shi a, ta you ai ren.

是啊，他有爱人。

c) Shi, ta you ai ren.

是，他有爱人。

B. Negative answer:

a) Mei you, ta mei you ai ren.

没有，他没有爱人。

b) Bu, ta mei you ai ren.

不，他没有爱人。

c) Bu, ta mei you ai ren.

不，他没有爱人。

The above indicates that a question formed by means of the alternative interrogative particle *shi bu shi* 是不是 requires a generally affirmative or a negative answer. Affirmation or negation are, with the exception of a single case, expressed by units different from those in the interrogative particle *shi bu shi* 是不是. The only contradictory case is the affirmative answer *shi, ta you ai ren* 是, 他有爱人, about which it has been stated already before that the informant permits this kind of utterance only with hesitation. The fact that in the negative answers of group II there never occurs the negative component of the alternative interrogative particle, i.e. the component *bu shi* 不是, and the disputate nature of the occurrence of the affirmative component of the interrogative particle, i.e. of the component *shi* 是, reveals the process of formalization of this sequence. On the other hand, the fact that the informant admits the affirmative answer *shi* 是, in spite of some hesitation, indicates the formalization process not to be completed as yet.

Consequently, the interrogative particle *shi bu shi* 是不是 both in its meaning and its function is not a sum of its respective components, but a unit of specific function and meaning, correlated with the sequence *shi a* 是啊.

The AC containing the interrogative particle *shi bu shi* 是不是 can, therefore be considered an IAC.

The AC of the sequence *shi a* 是啊 is, as a rule, an ascertaining question or an utterance expressing the subjective attitude of the speaker towards a certain fact. The semantic contents of the sequence *shi a* 是啊 is an affirmation, assent or consent to the utterance in the AC. The morpheme *a* 啊 renders the sequence an emphatic colouring.

The sequence *shi a* 是啊 is often followed by a PsC, which confirms the affirmation or the expression of consent, or provides it with further explanation, precision etc. This PsC is always a SPsC.

The morpheme *shi* 是 as a variant of the sequence *shi a* 是啊 has the PLC *a* 啊. Moreover, as it has already been said, the morpheme *shi* 是 as an independent utterance can also have a PLC of the type *shi de guo ren* 他是德国人 type. The variants with both kinds of PLC can exist only in the group I of the above examples, while in the group II the variants of the type *ta shi de guo ren* 他是德国人 are out of question. This implies that in group II the morpheme *shi* 是 – as far as its existence in the group can be presumed – has an only function, namely that performed by its variant, the sequence *shi a* 是啊.

There are two kinds of AC conditioning the occurrence of the morpheme *shi* 是, both of which can be regarded as IAC, one with regard to the variant *shi a* 是啊 – i.e. the AC in all the examples of group II and in examples No. 2 of group I –, the other with regard to the variants of the type *ta shi de guo ren* 他是德国人 – i.e. the AC in all the examples of group I.

The AC of the morpheme *shi* 是 as a variant of the sequence *shi a* 是啊 is, as a rule, an ascertaining question. The semantic contents of the morpheme *shi* 是 in such cases is affirmation or consent to the contents of the question.

The PsC following the morpheme *shi* 是, when examined with regard to the variant *shi a* 是啊, is always a SPsC. When examined with regard to the variant of

the ta shi de guo ren 他是德国人 type, it can be either a SPsC or an IPsC. The PsC in example No. 2 is an example of IPsC.

For a complete characteristics of the morpheme shi 是, which has the expanded variant in the form of the sequence shi a 是啊, both the morpheme shi 是 and its variant shi a 是啊 will also have to be described from the point of view of their relations in the language system.

The correlative relation, in which the morpheme shi 是 and its expanded variant participate, is the relation of positive-negative. Since in group I the morpheme shi 是 has two variants and in group III it does not occur without the morpheme a 啊, the correlative relations of positive-negative will have to be ascertained for each group separately. The groups I, II and III will be represented respectively by examples No. 1, 5 and 9.

Group I:

ad 1. Zhe ge ren shi ni men de xian sheng ma? 这个人是你们的先生吗?

A. Affirmative answer:

1. Shi! 是! Yes!
2. Shi a! 是啊! Yes!

and the following most expanded variants:

3. Ta shi wo men de xian sheng! 他是我们的先生! He is our teacher!
4. Shi, ta shi wo men de xian sheng! 是, 他是我们的先生! Yes, he is our teacher!
5. Shi a, ta shi wo men de xian sheng! 是啊, 他是我们的先生! Yes, he is our teacher!

B. Negative answer:

1. Bu! 不! No!
2. Bu shi! 不是! (No,) he is not!

and the following most expanded variants:

3. Ta bu shi wo men de xian sheng! 他不是我们的先生! He is not our teacher!
4. Bu, ta bu shi wo men de xian sheng! 不, 他不是我们的先生! No, he is not our teacher!
5. Bu shi, ta bu shi wo men de xian sheng! 不是, 他不是我们的先生! (No,) he isn't, he is not our teacher!

Group II:

ad 5. Ta shi bu shi you ai ren? 他是不是有爱人?

A. Affirmative answer:

1. Shi a, ta you ai ren. 是啊, 他有爱人。 Yes, he has a wife.
2. Shi, ta you ai ren. 是, 他有爱人。 Yes, he has a wife.

B. Negative answer:

1. Bu, ta mei you ai ren. 不, 他没有爱人。 No, he doesn't have a wife.

Group III:

ad 9. Ta shi zai mei you shi jian lai ma? 他实在没有时间来吗?

A. Affirmative answer:

1. Shi a, ni bu xiang xin ma? 是啊，你不相信吗？

B. Negative answer:

1. Bu, bu yao na me ren zhen, wo shi gen ni kai wan xiao de! 不，没有那么认真，我是跟你开玩笑的！ Oh no, you mustn't take everything so seriously, I was only joking (with you)!

The situation in group I offers an obvious proof of the correlation between the positive units shi 是 and shi a 是啊 on one side and the negative units bu 不 and bu shi 不是 on the other. (The morpheme bu 不 is a negative determining such units whose function is similar to that of verbs and adjectives in European languages, and also occurs in the quality of an independent utterance.) In those cases where the units occur as independent utterances, their correlative interrelations cannot be determined a priori, e.g. between the variants No. 1, 2, 4, and 5 of the positive and negative utterances. Nevertheless, the correlation of positive-negative can safely be ascertained between the variants No. 3 of the affirmative and negative answers:

A. Affirmative answer:

Ta shi wo men de xian sheng!

他是我们的先生！

B. Negative answer:

Ta bu shi wo men de xian sheng.

他不是我们的先生。

The above implies the correlation shi 是 – bu shi 不是. Supposing that variant No. 3 is an expansion of variant No. 1 in the affirmative answers, i.e. of the utterance shi 是, the correlation shi 是 – bu shi 不是 can be ascertained for variant No. 1 as well. The morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance, however, has also the variant shi a 是啊. The sequence shi a 是啊 is unambiguously ascertained in groups II and III in correlation with the negative bu 不. We may therefore presume that the same correlation also applies to group I and that the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance, with regard to the variant shi a 是啊, will also be correlated with the negative bu 不; this implies the following correlative relations of positive-negative in group I:

ad 1. Zhe ge ren shi ni men de xian sheng ma? 这个人是你们的先生吗？

A. Affirmative answers:

1. Shi! 是！

2. Shi a! 是啊！

3. Ta shi wo men de xian sheng!
他是我们的先生！

4. Shi, ta shi wo men de xian sheng!
是，他是我们的先生！

5. Shi a, ta shi wo men de xian sheng!
是啊，他是我们的先生！

B. Negative answers:

1. Bu shi! 不是！

2. Bu! 不！

3. Ta bu shi wo men de xian sheng!
他不是我们的先生！

4. Bu shi, ta bu shi wo men de xian sheng!
不是，他不是我们的先生！

5. Bu, ta bu shi wo men de xian sheng!
不，他不是我们的先生！

In group II both the sequence shi a 是啊 and the morpheme shi 是 are correlated with the negative bu 不. Notwithstanding certain doubts as to the existence of the utterance shi 是 in this group, the fact stated above justifies the ascertainment of a double correlation of the morpheme shi 是 in group I, which indicates a double function of the morpheme shi 是, too. There will thus exist the following correlative relations of positive-negative in group II:

ad 5. Ta shi bu shi you ai ren? 他是不是有爱人?

A. Affirmative answer:

B. Negative answer:

1. Shi a, ta you ai ren!

1. Bu, ta mei you ai ren!

是啊, 他有爱人!

不, 他没有爱人!

2. Shi, ta you ai ren!

是, 他有爱人!

In group III there is only the correlation between shi 是 and bu 不:

ad 9. Ta shi zai mei you shi jian lai ma? 他实在没有时间来吗?

A. Affirmative answer:

B. Negative answer:

1. Shi a, ni bu xiang xin ma?

1. Bu, bu yao na me ren zhen, wo shi gen

是啊, 你不相信吗?

ni kai wan xiao de! 不, 不要那么认真,

我是跟你开玩笑的。

The following conclusions can be made as a result of the above analysis:

1. One of the functions performed by the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance, is similar to that of the sequence shi a 是啊.
2. The sequence shi a 是啊 has a zero PLC and is a unit of intersentential dependency, functioning as a sentence. The semantic contents of the sequence is an emphatic affirmation, or consent to the meaning of the utterance in AC. In the correlation positive-negative the sequence shi a 是啊 is correlated with the negative bu 不 in the function of a sentence. The sequence shi a 是啊 can be described as an *emphatic binomic affirmative particle*.
3. The morpheme shi 是 which has the PLC a 啊 is also a unit of intersentential dependency functioning as a sentence, its semantic contents being affirmation or consent. The morpheme shi 是 thus appears to be the *non-emphatic variant* of the sequence shi a 是啊. The distribution of the morpheme shi 是 as compared to the sequence shi a 是啊 is contextually limited; its occurrence always requires an IAC of the morpheme shi 是, either with regard to the variant shi a 是啊 or to the variant ta shi de guo ren 他是德国人 type.

The morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance is correlated with the negative bu 不 as well as with the sequence bu shi 不是. As a variant of the sequence shi a 是啊 it is in correlation with the negative bu 不 only. The difference in emphasis between shi a 是啊 and shi 是 also finds an expression in the intensity of emphasis of the negative member of the correlation; the negative bu 不 correlated with the sequence shi a 是啊 is usually more emphatic.

The morpheme *shi* 是 described in this way can be called an *affirmative particle* with the general meaning of affirmation or consent.

1.3 The morpheme *shi* 是 in the linguistic environment of the *ta shi de guo ren* 他是德国人 type.

This case will be illustrated by examples adopted from chapter 1.0, with some examples added:

1. *Ta shi fei ji jia shi yuan ma?* 他是飞机驾驶员吗? Is he an airman?
Ta shi fei ji jia shi yuan. 他是飞机驾驶员。 He is an airman.
2. *Zhe liang ge gu niang shi bu shi jie mei?* 这两个姑娘是不是姐妹? Aren't the two girls sisters?
Ta men shi jie mei. 她们是姐妹。 They are sisters.
3. *Ta shi ni men de chang zhang bu shi?* 他是你们的厂长不是? Isn't that the manager of your factory?
Ta shi wo men de chang zhang. 他是我们的厂长。 He is our factory manager.
4. *Ta men shi xue sheng ba?* 他们是学生吧? Are they students?
Ta men shi xue sheng. 他们是学生。 They are students.

Description

The morpheme *shi* 是 occurring in the above-mentioned examples is emphatic.

The linguistic environment in which the morpheme *shi* 是 occurs is relevant for delimiting its grammatical and semantic characteristics, and can therefore be classified as a DC. In this DC the members of sentence traditionally named Subject and Predicate are expressed by units of a function similar to nouns in European languages. The DC of the morpheme *shi* 是 can consequently be described as a Subject and Predicate of a nominal character. The morpheme *shi* 是 connects both the main members of sentence; it confirms that the Subject is of a certain nature, or, that it belongs to a certain category. This indicates that in this kind of linguistic environment the morpheme *shi* 是 performs the function of a copula.

The same copulative may, however, also be performed by the morpheme *shi* 是 of non-emphatic nature – e.g.:

- a) *Yi jia er shi san.* 一加二是三。 One and two makes three.
- b) *Zhong guo shi da guo.* 中国是大国。 China is a big country.
- c) *Zhe shi wo de shu.* 这是我的书。 This is my book. (These are my books.)
- d) *Ta shi shei?* 他是谁? Who is that?
Ta shi wo men de xian sheng. 他是我们的先生。 He is our teacher.
- e) *Ta shi ni de peng you hai shi ni de ai ren?* 他是你的朋友还是你的爱人?
Is he your friend or is he your boyfriend?
Ta shi wo de peng you. 他是我的朋友。 He is my friend.

For an adequate characteristics of the emphatic morpheme *shi* 是 a description of the relation and the difference between both the morphemes will be needed.

As it has been noted above, both the emphatic and the non-emphatic morphemes shi 是 have the copulative function. Nevertheless, a comparison of the two morphemes from the point of view of their contextual conditions and their relations in the language system will reveal the following differences:

1. The utterances containing the emphatic morpheme shi 是 are always dependent on an AC. The utterances containing the non-emphatic morpheme shi 是 need not have any AC. In case they do have an AC, it is of a different kind than that of the emphatic morpheme; in the case of utterances with the emphatic morpheme it is an IAC expressed by means of an ascertaining question, while in the case of utterances containing the non-emphatic morpheme it is an IAC expressed by a complementary or eliminative question [cf. examples d) and e)]. Potentially the IAC can be delimited even in utterances which have no AC:

- ad a) Yi jia er shi duo shao? 一加二是多少? How much does two plus one make?
- ad b) Zhong guo shi da guo hai shi xiao guo? 中国是大国还是小国? Is China a big country or a small country?
- ad c) Zhe shi shei de shu? 这是谁的书? Whose book is this? (Whose books are these?)

2. It follows that the nature of the IAC constitutes the decisive factor conditioning the occurrence of the emphatic or the non-emphatic morpheme shi 是 in the following utterance, since the IAC determines where the rheme (novum) of the utterance will be. In case the IAC is a complementary or an eliminative question, the rheme (novum) of the utterance lies in that member which is demanded by the question, and the morpheme shi 是 merely indicates the grammatical relation; that being apparent from the IAC, the morpheme shi 是 need not be expressed in the answer, the rhematic part of the sentence being sufficient – e.g.:

- ad a) Yi jia er shi duo shao? 一加二是多少?
San. 三。
- ad b) Zhong guo shi da guo hai shi xiao guo? 中国是大国还是小国?
Da guo. 大国。
- ad c) Zhe shi shei de shu? 这是谁的书?
Wo de. 我的。
- ad d) Ta shi shei? 他是谁?
Wo men de xian sheng. 我们的先生。

When the IAC is an ascertaining question, the morpheme shi 是, confirming the contents of the question as a whole, is itself the rheme (novum) of the utterance – e.g.:

- ad 1. Ta shi fei ji jia shi yuan ma? 他是飞机驾驶员吗?
Shi. 是。
- ad 2. Zhe liang ge gu niang shi bu shi jie mei? 这两个姑娘是不是姐妹?
Shi. 是。

The following correlative relations of positive-negative can be traced here:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>A. IAC – complementary or eliminative question:</p> <p>i. Jin tian (shi) xing qi ji?
今天(是)星期几?
What day is it today?
Jin tian shi xing qi liu hai shi xing qi ri?
今天是星期六还是星期日?
Is it Saturday or Sunday (today)?</p> <p>ii. Ta shi na r de ren?
他是哪儿的人?
Where does he come from?
Ta shi shan dong ren hai shi he bei ren?
他是山东人还是河北人?
Does he come from Shandong or from Hebei?</p> | <p>affirmative answer:</p> <p>Jin tian (shi) xing qi liu.
今天(是)星期六。</p> <p>Ta (shi) shan dong ren.
他(是)山东人。</p> | <p>negative answer:</p> <p>–</p> <p>–</p> |
| <p>B. IAC – ascertaining question:</p> <p>i. Jin tian shi xing qi liu ma?
今天是星期六吗?
Is it Saturday today?
Jin tian shi bu shi xing qi liu?
今天是不是星期六?
Isn't it Saturday today?</p> <p>ii. Ta shi shan dong ren ma?
他是山东人吗?
Does he come from Shandong?
Ta shi bu shi shan dong ren?
他是不是山东人?
Doesn't he come from Shandong?</p> | <p>affirmative answer:</p> <p>Jin tian shi xing qi liu.
今天是星期六。</p> <p>Ta shi shan dong ren. 他是山东人。</p> | <p>negative answer:</p> <p>Jintian bu shi xing qi liu. 今天不是星期六。</p> <p>Ta bu shi shan dong ren. 他不是山东人。</p> |

Consequently, the following conclusions can be made concerning the emphatic and the non-emphatic morpheme *shi* 是 functioning as a copula:

Both, the emphatic and the non-emphatic morphemes *shi* 是 perform the syntactic function of an indicator of the predicative relation in nominal sentences. Owing to this function, both the morphemes are syntactically dependent units and can be denominated by the traditional term “*copula*”.⁹

⁹ It should be pointed out that apart from the grammatical meaning of “an indicator of the

Unlike the non-emphatic morpheme *shi* 是, its emphatic counterpart has other functions besides the copulative one. As the preceding analysis has demonstrated, the distribution of the emphatic morpheme *shi* 是 is conditioned by the presence of an IAC. The emphasis of the morpheme *shi* 是 then expresses an affirmation to the meaning of the IAC. In this respect, the emphatic morpheme *shi* 是, too, is a unit of intersentential dependency, performing a similar function to that of the affirmative particle. With regard to these two functions the emphatic morpheme *shi* 是 can be designated by the term “*confirmative copula*”.

The function and the meaning of the morpheme *shi* 是 as a confirmative copula are on the one hand delimited by DC, i.e. the Subject and the Predicate of a nominal character, and by an IAC, i.e. ascertaining question, on the other. In the language system the morpheme *shi* 是 as a confirmative copula participates in the correlative relation with the sequence *bu shi* 不是 as its counterpart.

predicative relation in nominal sentences” the copula does not express any other grammatical meanings, in which it differs from the units performing a similar copulative function in languages with a developed morphology, where such units are marked with the capacity of expressing a variety of grammatical meanings. Such is the case e.g. in Czech, where the “proper function of the copula (copulative verbs) is grammatical: They express the grammatical meanings of Person, Number and Mood, and thus make the expression more distinct” (Havránek et al. 1960: 302). As a result of these grammatical meanings, every independent utterance in Czech is usually defined in some way or other as to Tense; it usually specifies whether the number of persons concerned is one or more, etc. This is not the case in Chinese: The copula in Chinese has a single form and does not specify the utterance either with regard to Tense, Number, or in any other way. Such specification may take place either by lexical means or by means of the context; the Plural Number is expressed to a limited extent by means of the postpositive grammatical indicator of Plurality 们. To give some examples:

1. Plurality expressed by means of 们:

Ta *men* shi yan yuan. 他们是演员。 They are actors.
2. Plurality expressed by lexical media:

Wo men de xue sheng *dou* shi qing nian tuan yuan. 我们的学生都是青年团员。
Our students are all (of them) members of the Youth Organization. (*dou* 都 – a delimiting adverb)
3. Plurality expressed by means of the context:
 - a) I am informing someone that *the book* he is taking is mine: Zhe shi wo de shu! 这是我的书! This is my book!
 - b) I am informing someone that *the books* he is taking are mine: Zhe shi wo de shu! 这是我的书。 These are my books!
4. Specification of Tense in the utterance by means of the linguistic context:
 - a) Ni hai you fu qin ma? 你还有父亲吗? Is your father still living?
You! 有! (Yes,) he is!
Ta zuo shen me? 他作什么? What does he do?
Ta shi jun ren. 他是军人。 He is a soldier.
 - b) Ni hai you fu qin ma? Is your father still living?
Mei you, yi jing qu shi le. 没有, 已经去世了。 No, he has died already.
Ta zai shi de shi hou zuo shen me? 他在世的时候作什么? What did he do before he died?
Ta shi jun ren. 他是军人。 He was a soldier.

2.0 Summary

As a result of the analysis presented in the preceding chapters the following conclusions can be made concerning the morpheme as an independent utterance:

1. The morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance is always emphatic.
2. Depending on different contextual conditions and relations in the system of the language, the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance has a varied characteristics of its function and semantics:
 - a) with a zero PLC, with an AC expressing will, wish, command, etc., and without the correlative relation of positive-negative, the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance is an affirmative particle with the general meaning of submission to another person's will, wish, command, etc.
 - b) in case it has a PLC, consisting of the morpheme a 啊 only, and an IAC in the form of an ascertaining question, realized by the alternative binomic interrogative particle shi bu shi 是不是, and if it constitutes a correlative relation of positive-negative with the negative bu 不, the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance is an affirmative particle with the general meaning of affirmation or consent. In such contextual conditions, however, the occurrence of the morpheme shi 是 is somewhat disputable.
 - c) in case it has a double PLC consisting of the morpheme a 啊 and a Subject plus a Predicate of a nominal character, if its AC is an IAC, and if it constitutes a correlative pair of positive-negative with both, the negative bu 不 and the sequence bu shi 不是 as counterparts, the morpheme shi 是 as an independent utterance cumulates two functions: the function of a confirmative copula and that of an affirmative particle.

3.0 Conclusion

The preceding analysis should be regarded as a demonstration of some procedures which can be adopted in ascertaining grammatical and lexical meanings in a language similar to Chinese. The analysis by no means claims to be complete; its results, for instance, certainly require verification and justification by a detailed phonetical analysis. Furthermore, since the morpheme shi 是 occurs also in other contextual conditions than those subjected to the above analysis, it could not be described with regard to its further functions resulting from the different contextual conditions. The analysis was intended to point out the necessity and the possibility of detecting formal indicators of functions and meanings of linguistic units in Chinese, and to prove that the procedures adopted lead to positive results offering deeper insight into the complex problems of a given language. It may be said that among the positive results obtained by the above analysis is the discovery that cumulation of functions is possible in Chinese. If this statement can be accepted, it will certainly be useful to subject other similar phenomena of Chinese to an analysis from this viewpoint.

4.0 List of Abbreviations

- AC – antecedent context
CC – constitutive context
DC – direct context
IAC – identifying antecedent context
IPsC – identifying postpositive context
PLC – potential linguistic context
PrC – prepositive context
PsC – postpositive context
SAC – simple antecedent context
SPsC – simple postpositive context

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SOME REMARKS ON THE ANALYSIS OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *The Chinese writing system is characterized by a complex arrangement of relations on various levels. The paper addresses two questions concerning the analysis of Chinese characters. The first investigates the relationship between language and writing to define the nature of the Chinese writing system. The second examines the inner graphic structure of Chinese characters. First, it describes the relationship between graphic and linguistic units from the genetic and functional aspects. It consequently addresses the structure of Chinese characters from a purely graphic perspective.*

Keywords: *Chinese characters, grapheme, morpheme, graphical symbol, graphical structure*

Depending upon the aim of our investigation, we can approach the analysis of Chinese characters in various ways. First of all, Chinese characters can be investigated on the level of the relationship between language and writing. Investigation on this level is of fundamental importance when we wish to ascertain the nature of Chinese characters. At the same time, the relation between graphic and linguistic units in Chinese can be assessed both from the synchronic and diachronic points of view. We can also analyse Chinese characters taking into consideration their inner graphic structure – either in relation to the linguistic units or on the purely graphic level. Other problems concern the graphic form of Chinese characters, e.g. the various styles formed in the course of their development, the reform of Chinese characters, etc.

The main purpose of this paper is not to solve the problems concerning Chinese characters in the respects mentioned above; there are many works dealing in different degrees with these questions.¹ (Some of these questions will be discussed in greater detail in another study which I am preparing for publication.) Here we wish merely to point out generally two questions of principle concerning the analysis of Chinese characters.

¹ In addition to works dealing with Chinese characters in connection with writing in general (e.g. works by I. J. Gelb, V. Istrin etc.) there are many works devoted particularly to the problems of Chinese characters, such as *A Course in the Analysis of Chinese Characters* by R. B. Blakney (Shanghai 1926), *Chinese Characters* by L. Wieger (2nd edition, Peking 1940), *Grammata Serica* by B. Karlgren (Stockholm 1940), *Hanzi Wenti* 漢字問題 [Problems of Chinese Characters] by Ai Wei 艾偉 (Shanghai 1949), *Hanzi de Jiegou jiqi Liubian* 漢字的結構及其流變 [Structure of Chinese Characters and their Changes] by Liang Donghan 梁東漢 (Shanghai 1965) etc.

1. The question of the nature of Chinese characters

As mentioned above, the nature of writing must be investigated on the level of the relationship between language and writing. That is to say, the important question here is to which linguistic units the graphic symbols are allotted. Chinese characters – from the synchronic point of view – can be allotted to two kinds of linguistic units: morphemes (both free and bound) and syllables. However, we cannot simply say that some Chinese characters are morphemographic symbols and the remainder syllabographic symbols. In order to make the nature of Chinese characters more precise we must take the following questions into consideration:

- a) how morpheme and syllable relate to each other in Chinese;
- b) whether one and the same grapheme represents always the same kind of linguistic units;
- c) whether one and the same linguistic unit is represented only by a single grapheme;
- d) which are the specific features of graphic symbols in relation to corresponding linguistic units.

In contemporary Chinese, almost all tonic syllables can function as morphemes. On the other hand, the morphemes are fully identifiable only through the context (linguistic or situational) – even in the case of free morphemes. In an isolated position they have merely the character of potential morphemes and it depends on their mutual combination whether they become real morphemes or not. On the contrary, graphemes in an isolated position will be identified as a symbol of contextually defined linguistic units and, in certain cases, in consequence of their mutual combination they can become graphic symbols denoting syllables. (Cf. e.g. characters in phonetic loans such as 馬達 *mǎdá* – motor, 布拉格 *bùlāgé* – Prague, etc., where each character representing in its primary function a morpheme, represents a syllable.) Thus one can see that one and the same character is not always of the same nature.

As to the question whether one and the same linguistic unit is represented only by a single morpheme, we must consider separately the graphic representation of morphemes and that of syllables. Multigraphic representation of morphemes (e.g. the multigraphic representation of the morpheme “tā”: 他 *he*, 她 *she*, 它 *it*) does not affect the nature of graphic symbols, while the multigraphic representation of the syllable means that the graphemes only participate in the representation of one and the same syllable and therefore such characters can be hardly considered as fully syllabographic.

Specific features of graphic symbols can be demonstrated in the case of graphemes denoting syllables.

Graphic symbols which denote only syllables are very often compound graphemes of the so-called ideophonetic type (i.e. graphemes composed of a radical and a phonetic). These graphemes indicate *syllables*, but their radicals often refer to *words*. (For this reason the same radical is often reduplicated in graphemes denoting the syllables of one and the same word, e.g. radical 虫 in graphemes 蜻蜓 *qīngtīng* –

dragon-fly, radical 虫 in graphemes 芭蕉 bājiāo – banana, etc.) Thus the radical (i.e. its reduplication) in these characters on the one hand indicates that the grapheme does not represent a morpheme but a syllable, on the other hand it indicates that the grapheme is a symbol of the syllable of a certain word, and can for this reason be identifiable even in an isolated position.

2. The question of the graphic structure of Chinese characters

The graphic structure of Chinese characters can be investigated from two fundamental points of view: i. on the level of the relationship between graphic and linguistic units, and ii. on the purely graphic level.

ad i. On the level of the relationship between graphic and linguistic units the graphic structure can be examined either from the genetic or from the functional aspect.

Investigation of the graphical structure from the genetic aspect is in reality the investigation of grapheme-formation. To this sphere belong such questions as by what means were or are graphemes generally formed; what is the relationship of grapheme elements to the linguistic units in the process of grapheme-formation; what kinds of grapheme formation have been productive at different periods of the development of Chinese characters, etc. On the other hand, analysis of graphic structure from the functional aspect concerns above all the question of the function of graphic elements in the completed graphic structure in relation to linguistic units represented by the given grapheme. Let us compare, for example, one and the same compound grapheme 侈 both from the genetic and the functional point of view:

- a) From the genetic point of view, this grapheme is composed of a radical and a phonetic, i.e. it belongs to the so-called ideophonetic category. Put simply, we may say that characters of this category were created in such a way that an existing grapheme was used to denote another word of the same or similar phonetic form, and to this homograph was added another grapheme with a distinctive-determinative function. Thus the grapheme 侈 denoting the word *tʰʷja – large, pompous, has been created by borrowing the grapheme 多 denoting *ta – much, a word with similar phonetic form, and adding the radical 亻 – man.²
- b) From the functional point of view, the radical 亻 in the quoted example, besides serving as significant determinant, also acts as determinant of the phonetic modification. It indicates that the phonetic form of the denoted linguistic unit is not the same as that of the borrowed grapheme. The radical 亻 has this function in the grapheme 侈 both at the time when it was created and in the present. (Now, the radical 亻 indicates that the phonetic form of the linguistic referent of the grapheme 侈 is not /duō/, which is the phonetic form of the linguistic referent of the grapheme 多, but /chǐ/.)

² For this example see Karlgren 1949: 17–18.

From this point of view there is no difference between the graphemes of the ideophonetic category and of the so-called “suggestive” category (i.e. graphemes composed of two or more existing graphemes which “suggest” the meaning of the denoted word [morpheme]) in the case of “structural homography.” E.g. in the grapheme 休 the graphic element 亻 can be regarded as determinant of the phonetic modification as well, since the element 木 exists as phonetic in other compound graphemes.

ad ii. On the purely graphical level the analysis of the graphic structure concerns many aspects, e.g. the question of separability of minimal graphic elements, structural types of graphemes, graphic modification of graphic elements in the graphic structure etc.

Graphic elements separable on the purely graphic level were not the same as those separable on the level of the relation between graphic and linguistic units. A criterion which can be set up for the decomposition of graphic structure from the purely graphic point of view is the repeatability of the graphic elements in the graphemes. In such a way we can separate such elements as 乚 or 丩 which are found in many graphemes, for example 乚 in 生, 失, 先, etc., 丩 in 貴, 賈, 壬, etc. Such an analysis of a representative number of the graphemes which are used in contemporary Chinese can not only provide an inventory of the structural graphic elements which may be taken as the material basis for a further investigation from the theoretical point of view,³ but also can be very useful when applied to pedagogical practice.⁴

There are still other lines along which graphemes can be investigated on the purely graphic level, both from a theoretical and practical point of view. These problems, however, are being left to be discussed on another occasion.

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³ See for example the attempt to describe the Chinese characters by the method of generative grammar in *On the Pictorial Structure of Chinese Characters* by B. Kirk Rankin, III et al. (1965).

⁴ Such an analysis of graphic structure for the purpose of improving the method of teaching Chinese characters was elaborated in the Department of Asian and African Studies of the Philosophical Faculty of the Caroline University in Prague, and quite independently, in an analysis of graphic elements, we achieved results very similar to those in the above-quoted work. Our analysis (Vochala et al. 1975a, 1975b) which was undertaken for pedagogical purposes was begun in 1962 and is now being prepared for publication.

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ON THE NATURE OF CHINESE CHARACTERS¹

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *This paper aims to provide a comprehensive characterization of the Chinese writing system. First, it investigates the intricate relationship between the graphic symbols and the linguistic units allotted to them. In the case of Chinese characters, the second mentioned are associated with both a sound and a meaning. The complexity of the arrangement arises from the fact that one element of a set is not necessarily paired with one element of the other set. The three-level mapping system enables the existence of a wide range of different relations with varying productivity. Later, the paper shifts attention to the graphic components of Chinese characters and sheds light on their participation in the representation of linguistic units. The main focus is on compound graphemes composed of the so-called 'radical' and 'phonetic'.*

Keywords: *Chinese characters, grapheme, morpheme, syllable, radical, phonetics*

0.0 A writing system can be defined as a system of graphic symbols (graphemes) with a stabilized form, accepted by a society. These symbols serve the recording of speech, thereby establishing a unilateral relationship of dependence between writing and the language: the existence of writing is conditioned by the existence of language.² The study of the character of writing must therefore be based primarily on the relationship between linguistic and graphic units; generally speaking – the character of writing must be defined on the level of the relationship between language and writing. This relationship can generally be defined as an allotting of graphic units to certain linguistic units. The priority of the latter in relationship to the graphic units can be expressed terminologically by means of the word 'representation'; certain linguistic units will be 'represented' by certain graphic units and the graphic symbol will be the 'representant' of the given linguistic unit. Sometimes it will be necessary to proceed from the graphic units; in such a case we shall speak about the graphic symbols 'denoting' certain linguistic units, the latter thus being the 'linguistic referents' of graphic symbols.

Writing can also be characterized from the graphic point of view; graphic matters can concern both graphic form and graphic structure. In certain cases the latter can be relevant for the characteristics of graphic symbols in relation to linguistics symbols.

¹ Expression *Chinese character* is here considered working term as well-established denomination for the graphic symbols of writing that is used officially in China.

² This can be understood both historically and in the general sense of the word. It can be taken for granted that writing originated later than speech and that it is always formed on the basis of a certain language.

0.1 The linguistic units to which graphic units are allotted can be of various kinds; fundamentally there are two basic kinds of linguistic units: a) bilateral units, i.e. linguistic signs with both 'signifiant' and 'signifié' in them and in direct relation to the meaning, and b) unilateral units which distinguish the sound forms of bilateral units and have no direct relation with the meaning. Each type of writing can then be denominated according to which bilateral or unilateral linguistic units are represented by graphic symbols. There are the following types of writing according to V. Istrin i.e.: 1. phraseography (graphemes represent phrases), 2. logography (graphemes represent words), 3. morphemography (graphemes represent morphemes), 4. syllabography (graphemes represent syllables), 5. phonemography (graphemes represent phonemes).³ In the first three types of writing, graphic symbols represent bilateral linguistic units, in types 4 and 5, these are unilateral units.

In relationship to linguistic units Chinese characters are usually qualified as logographic writing,⁴ sometimes also as morphemographic writing.⁵ Characters are as a rule classified in two basic categories according to whether or not they comprise the 'phonetic' element (traditionally called 'phonetic') or, in harmony with the traditional classification, they are divided into six categories.⁶ In both cases, the same approach, a **genetic** approach, is taken in principle towards the distribution of Chinese characters to the various categories.⁷

This work is an attempt at a general characterisation of Chinese writing in view of the relationship of its symbols to linguistic units from the synchronic point of view, and at a functional characterisation of the graphic structure, relevant for a close characterisation of the graphic symbols.

1.0 The graphic symbols of Chinese writing can be allotted explicitly to the following linguistic units in Chinese: 1. to the syllable, 2. to the retroflex sound /r/.

Contemporary Chinese, with the Peking dialect as its phonetic norm, has 1.380 syllables in all. Each syllable consists of segmental phonemes and one of four suprasegmental tones (without the tones, there are 420 syllables, each of which can be combined with all or some of the four tones).⁸ The number of Chinese characters, however, is many times higher. This means that more than one grapheme can be

³ See V. Istrin 1965.

⁴ The term logographic writing (i.e. word-writing) has replaced the term ideographic writing which was frequently used in the past.

⁵ This term is used e.g. by V. Istrin in the above-quoted work. In spite of different names, some other works point out that Chinese characters have morphemic references (cf. e.g. H. A. Gleason 1956).

⁶ The six categories of Chinese characters are: 1. pictorial category (xiangxing 象形), 2. indicative category (zhishi 指事), 3. suggestive category (huiyi 会意), 4. deflected category (zhuanzhu 转注), 5. adoptive category (jijie 假借), 6. ideophonetic category (xingsheng 形声).

⁷ Chinese transcription based on *The Draft for a Transcription Alphabet of Chinese* (Hanyu pinyin fang'an 汉语拼音方案), approved by the National People's Congress in February 1958, is used in this article.

⁸ In certain circumstances, a tonic reduction occurs, turning tonic syllables into atonic ones.

allotted to one syllable. The number of graphemes allottable to individual syllables varies considerably. E.g. the dictionary *Xinhua zidian* 新华字典 which contains 7,300 graphemes, syllable /yì/ is represented by 59 graphemes, syllable /lì/ by 46 graphemes, syllable /yù/ by 43 graphemes, etc., while syllables /bī/, /bū/, /pāi/..., /bái/, /béng/, /bú/..., /bēi/, /biě/, /pǎo/..., /biè/, /pàng/, /pèng/...⁹ etc.¹⁰ are each represented by a single morpheme. The number of graphemes allotted to individual syllables naturally varies in the different dictionaries depending upon the type of the dictionary, its size, etc., and in this respect the problem of codification plays its role as well. E.g. in the dictionary *Hanyu cidian* 汉语词典, syllable /yì/ is represented by 81 graphemes, syllable /lì/ by 63 graphemes etc. Many syllables represented by a single grapheme in the dictionary *Xinhua zidian* are represented by several graphemes here, such as e.g. /bú/ 4 graphemes, /fóu/ 3 graphemes, /pǒu/ 5 graphemes, etc. Nevertheless, it should be pointed that a number of syllables, such as e.g. /shuí/, /gěi/, /děi/ and others, are represented by a single grapheme in various dictionaries. The dictionaries also differ in whether or not they represent a certain syllable at all (the latter in the dictionary *Xinhua zidian* being e.g. syllables /pǒu/, /niá/, /běng/ and others, in the dictionary *Hanyu cidian* syllables /miú/, /fòng/, etc.).

The retroflex sound /r/ occurs in syllables /ér/, /ěr/ and /èr/ which do not differ from other syllables regarding graphic representation, and in the syllables with the retroflex ending /-r/ where it participates with other phonemes in constituting the syllable. The phoneme /r/ is usually represented by a single grapheme; it is the only case in the system of Chinese writing that a grapheme represents a smaller unit than a syllable.

The multigraphic representation of the majority of syllables (it is approximately two-thirds in the dictionary *Xinhua zidian*) indicates that the study of them at the level of their relationship with unilateral units only would be insufficient for the characterisation of the graphemes of Chinese writing. Therefore, the study must be extended to another level – that of the relationship of graphemes with bilateral units.

1.1 Considering that graphemes of Chinese writing represent linguistic units, which on the level of the second language segmentation with the exception of sound /r/ are always syllables, the relationship of the syllable to bilateral units in Chinese will be of basic importance for further description.

It can be said preliminarily that a syllable can be:

1. the 'signifiant' of the free morphemes¹¹ (i.e. such as can have the function of a word in a clause) and the bound morphemes (i.e. morphemes which cannot fulfil the function of a word in a clause).¹²

⁹ See supplement *The Graphic Representation of Tonic Syllables in the Dictionary Xinhua zidian*.

¹⁰ The meaning of diacritical mark in the given examples: ā 1. tone, á 2. tone, ǎ 3. tone, à 4. tone.

¹¹ The so-called free morphemes, however, can appear in other cases as bound morphemes, i.e. they can be components of words.

¹² There is a great number of transitional types between the two kinds of morphemes.

2. one part of the 'signifiant' in the case of polysyllabic morphemes,
3. the 'signifiant' of two morphemes, i.e. in certain syllables with retroflex ending /-r/, in the case when retroflex sound /r/ is a morpheme.¹³

The term *morpheme* used here to denominate bilateral linguistic units in Chinese, requires more detailed explanation in view of certain specific features which it has in Chinese.

The morpheme can be defined as a minimal bilateral linguistic unit; its being bound to the word is frequently stressed in various definitions of the morpheme.¹⁴

It is a characteristic feature of Chinese that a vast number of morphemes are monosyllabic. The syllables which represent the 'signifiant' of these morphemes cover almost fully the inventory of tonic syllables in Chinese. However, there are many more monosyllabic morphemes than syllables, and, therefore, many morphemes are homophonous. There are frequent cases of homophony in certain bound morphemes among which scores of homophonous morphemes can be found. It is relatively less frequent in free morphemes where the most frequent number is 2–5 homophonous morphemes. In spite of this, the number of homophonous units is relatively high in this case too, compared with the total number of free morphemes. E.g. in the dictionary *Hanyu pinyin cihui* 汉语拼音词汇 out of a total of over two thousand monosyllabic entries (the dictionary has 59 thousand items including some established word-groups) only one third of the words is not homophonous with other words. Homophony is thus another characteristic feature of monosyllabic morphemes in Chinese.

Certain problems concerning the identification of morphemes are connected with the specific features of morphemes in Chinese; this applies primarily to free morphemes and their identification as syntactically independent units. It can be assumed, in view of the relatively high percentage of homonymy in monosyllabic free morphemes, that in many cases the meaning of these morpheme-words would be unclear in an isolated position. Experiments with Chinese informants, however, showed that not only homonyms but even those which are not homophonous with bound morphemes are not always clear in meaning if pronounced outside the context.¹⁴ On immediate acoustical impression, the informants mostly began to identify every such word by creating an associative context (e.g. míng 命 – “life”: yì tiáo míng 一条命 – “one life”; tòu 透 – “thorough”: kàn tòu 看透 – “to see through”; huài 坏 – bad: zhè ge rén hěn huài 这个人很坏 – “this man is very bad”, etc.). However, certain informants could not immediately recall the proper context in certain cases and could not ‘understand’ the word. (In the case of one informant these words were e.g.: bī 逼 – “to compel”; tiān 搽 – “to smooth (a brush pen on the ink slab)”; niàng 酿 – “to ferment, brew”, and others). In words with several homonyms, the identified words naturally differed with individual informants; usually, however, they

¹³ Cf. e.g. item ‘morfema’ in the dictionary *Lingvisticheski slovar prazhskoi shkoly* (Russian edition of *Dictionnaire de Linguistique de l'école de Prague*) by J. Vachek (1964).

¹⁴ The experiment was made on the basis of the dictionary *Xinhua zidian*.

were quite frequent words; sometimes, a frequent bound morpheme was identified instead of free morphemes (e.g. one informant identified morpheme *xiàn* which is homonymous in words *xiàn* 县 – “a district”, *xiàn* 线 – “a line”, *xiàn* 陷 – “to fall” as morpheme *xiàn* 现 from the word *xiànzài* 现在 – “present, now”). It sometimes happened too that certain informants could not identify some of these homophonous words in a certain meaning, as they could not recall immediately an associative context. This all proves that monosyllabic words in Chinese are identifiable primarily as contextual units (context means both linguistic and situational context). The semantic vagueness of monosyllabic words in an isolated position also has a certain connection with the amorphousness of Chinese monosyllabic words if they appear as autonomous units.¹⁵

A question arises in view of what has been said here as to what extent the words in an isolated position can be regarded as actual words. The phonetic form of these units alone is far from sufficient to identify the meaning of the given unit; the phonetic form can manifest the meaning of these units then and only then through the context. For this reason, we can regard monosyllabic words in an isolated position rather as *potential* morphemes which become actual morphemes as words in the context. Regarding the relationship between morpheme and syllable, this implies that out of the total number of 1,380 tonic syllables the majority of them can be regarded from this point of view as potential morphemes. This also implies that in the case of monosyllabic free morphemes in Chinese the definition of the term *morpheme* should be put more precisely in the sense that it is a minimal bilateral unit bound to the word in the context.

Regarding the problem of morphemes in polysyllabic words, the situation is quite complicated and can be dealt with only generally in this article. The main question is when the syllables of a polysyllabic word can be regarded as morphemes and when they cannot. From the synchronic point of view, those parts of the word can be considered as morphemes which participate by their meaning in the total meaning of the word. However, in many cases it is very difficult to define this unequivocally. There can be a different degree of ideomatism of the total meaning of the word in view of the meaning of its components which are semantically expressive themselves (in Chinese cf. e.g. word *bǐmò* 笔墨 – “style”, where the meaning of component *bǐ* 笔 is “brush”, and *mò* 墨 means “Indian ink”, and word *dōngxī* 东西 – “thing”, where the meaning of component *dōng* 东 is “east” and component *xī* 西 is “west”), or in addition to semantically expressive components, there appear components which are not semantically explicit. In Chinese, these are particularly those linguistic units which used to be independent words in old Chinese but have turned into mere components of words and their original meaning is not now evident. (Cf. e.g. components *lín* 吝 and *shè* 啬 in the word *línshè* 吝啬 – “niggardly, miserly”). The situation in Chinese is all the more complicated as, owing to the special character of Chinese writing, the

¹⁵ It is indisputable that the grammatical form of the word also effects its semantics; word-form can indicate whether the word expresses action or quality, whether it is the name of person or thing referring to one or more persons or things, etc.

language awareness of literate and illiterate speakers about the composition of the word is quite different. This will be discussed later.¹⁶

If a polysyllabic word is viewed as a complete structure (not from the genetic point of view), **repeatability** of at least one component, in the meaning which is contained in the whole meaning of the word and which is more or less stabilized in the language, can be set up as a criterion for the separability of morphemes in polysyllabic words. Repeatability means that the given morpheme occurs in the language at least in one more case either as a free morpheme (independent word) or a bound morpheme (part of word). All components need not be repeatable; it is sufficient for the separability of morphemes that a single component be repeatable (E.g. in hybrid word pǐjiǔ 啤酒 – “beer” only component jiǔ 酒 – “alcoholic beverage”, appearing either as independent word or as a word component, e.g. in the words shāojiǔ 烧酒 – “spirits”, jiǔjīng 酒精 – “spirits of wine”, and in other words, is repeatable, while component pǐ 啤 is only a phonetic loan here, which appears neither independently nor as a component in other words, and yet it is separable as a morpheme).

Almost all the syllables of contemporary standard Chinese are used as morphemes in polysyllabic words; only a small number of syllables, such as /biè/, /mān/, /há/, /cēn/ and certain others never occur as morphemes in polysyllabic words (nor, naturally, as independent words). This means that almost all syllables can potentially fulfil the function of morpheme and most of the syllables are the phonetic form of from two to a few score homophonous morphemes. Taking the word as a result of the process of word-formation, the fact, whether the given syllable will be realized as a morpheme or not, will depend with which syllable it combines in the given word, and how the given combination will identify the meaning of syllabic components in view of the total meaning of the word. This also qualifies the meaning of morphemes which are either homophonous or polysemic. E.g. in words biānfú 蝙蝠 – “bat”, biānhào 编号 – “catalogue number”, and biānjiāng 边疆 – “frontier”, the homophonous component biān will be only a syllable in the first case, because in the word biānfú 蝙蝠 there is no component in the given combination identifiable in view of the total meaning as a morpheme; in the second case, i.e. in the word biānhào 编号 the mutual combination of both components identifies the component biān in view of the full meaning of the word in the meaning “to arrange (under numbers)”, while in the word biānjiāng 边疆 the component biān will in this way be identified as “a border”. The components of polysyllabic homonymous words will be identified similarly as morphemes. E.g. in the word quánlì 权利 – “right”, quán 权 – “rights”, and lì 利 – “privileges” will be identified in view of the meaning of this word, while in homonym quánlì 全力 – “with all one’s strength”, there will be morphemes quán 全 – “whole, all”, and lì 力 – “strength”.

It thus depends on the full meaning of the word whether the given combination of the syllabic components of a polysyllabic word will identify these components

¹⁶ These problems were pointed out e.g. by Peng Chunan 彭楚南 in the article “Danyin-jieyu wenti de shizhi” 单音节语问题的实质 [“The Essence of the Problem of Monosyllabic Languages”] (1955).

as morphemes. The combination of individual syllables in proper names, however, can alone be sufficient for the given name to be understood either as a simple or a descriptive denomination. E.g. the name of the country Brazil is *bāxī* 巴西 in Chinese; the combination of these two syllables does not create preconditions for this geographical name to be understood as a descriptive name. On the contrary, the adapted name of the state Haiti – *hǎidì* 海地 which is a loan-word can be understood as a descriptive name, composed of morphemes *hǎi* 海 – “sea”, and *dì* 地 – “land”. This is an analogic combination to the translated descriptive geographic name of Tierra del Fuego – *huǒdì* 火地 composed of morphemes *huǒ* 火 – “fire”, and *dì* 地 – “land”. This proves again that syllables in Chinese can mostly be understood as potential morphemes which can be realized as real morphemes through a proper combination.

This brief description cannot naturally comprehend all the problems of the morpheme in Chinese which require a further detailed study. At the conclusion of this analysis let us mention at least one of the many problems in this sphere which shows the complexity of morpheme analysis in Chinese. The word *lǐngxiù* 领袖 – “leader” can be taken as an example. Etymologically, this word is composed of the morpheme *lǐng* 领 meaning “collar” which also has the same meaning in contemporary Chinese (e.g. in words *lǐngzi* 领子 – “collar”, *lǐngdài* 领带 – “tie”, etc.) and of the morpheme *xiù* 袖 meaning “sleeve”, also existing in this sense in contemporary Chinese (e.g. in words *xiùzi* 袖子 – “sleeve”, *xiùkǒu* 袖口 – “wristband”, etc.). However, the morpheme *lǐng* 领 meaning “to lead, to guide” exists at the same time in contemporary Chinese as a free morpheme, and with a similar meaning, it is a component in other words, e.g. in the words *lǐngdǎo* 领导 – “to lead”, *shuàilǐng* 率领 – “to lead”, etc. On the contrary, the component *xiù* 袖 cannot be proved to have a similar reference in contemporary Chinese (as homonymous free morphemes have the following main meanings: “bromine”, “embroider(y)”, “rust”, “a (Chinese) constellation”; as bound morphemes they mean “odour”, “sleeve”, “handsome”). Thus the component *lǐng* 领 is semantically very explicit in view of the fact that it is repeatable in the language by way of its meaning through which it participates in the full meaning of the word, and from the aspect of the completed word structure it can be separated as a morpheme with the meaning “to lead”. The question is how morpheme *xiù* 袖 which is semantically empty and here appears to be a sort of a ‘residual’ morpheme, should be regarded in this case.

1.2 The preceding explanation implies that it will be useful to characterize the graphic symbols of the Chinese writing separately with regard to free monosyllabic morphemes and separately with regard to syllabic components of polysyllabic words.

As regards monosyllabic free morphemes, it can be stated that in most cases, each morpheme has its own graphic symbols which means that homophonous morphemes are usually represented by different graphemes. E.g. three homophonous morphemes *nán* are represented by three different graphemes: *nán* – “difficult, hard”, graph. 难; *nán* – “south”, graph. 南; *nán* – “male (of person)”, graph. 男. These

cases can be called monographic representation of homophonous morphemes. In certain cases, homophonous morphemes are represented by an identical grapheme, e.g. morpheme *huì* – “to meet, a meeting”, and morpheme *huì* – “can (have the skill), possibly”, are represented by the same grapheme 会. In such a case we can speak of the homographic representation of homophonous morphemes. There are also cases when several non-homophonous morphemes are represented by a single grapheme; e.g. morpheme *xíng* – “will do, all right”, and morpheme *háng* – “a firm, business house”, are represented by a single grapheme 行. These cases can be called homographic representation of non-homophonous morphemes. The number of cases of homographic representation has increased as a result of the simplification of some of the Chinese characters.¹⁷ There are exceptional cases when one morpheme is represented by several graphemes (if of course we don't take into account doublets of simplified graphemes and unsimplified ones which are still used parallel with the former and other graphic doublets as a result of the lack of the codification in writing). Such a multigraphic representation of one morpheme appears in the morpheme *tā* – personal pronoun of 3rd person sg. If the denoted object (referent) is a male in this case, it is represented by the grapheme 他, if it is a female, it is represented by grapheme 她, and in the case where the denoted object is an animal or thing, it is represented by graphemes 它 or 牠.

Owing to the fact that Chinese characters represent morphemes as linguistic units bound to the word in the context, graphic symbols of monosyllabic free morphemes are fully identifiable in an isolated position, in contrast with the linguistic units denoted by them, which need not be fully identifiable in an isolated position. This applies to both homophonous and non-homophonous morphemes. It was demonstrated that in certain cases, native speakers of Chinese could not recollect an associative context, even if they heard a monosyllabic word which had no homonyms, in an isolated position, while the graphic representant of such word was identified immediately. The heart of the matter lies in the fact that during the conscious process of learning to write (in contrast with the process of a native speaker learning to speak, which is spontaneous) graphemes are fixed as symbols of linguistic units in the context; in the course of this process, the graphic symbol is constantly confronted with the linguistic unit defined by the context, and is identified in this way also on visual perception.

In the case of homographic representation, the homogram is identified as a graphic symbol of one or another linguistic unit defined by the context. From this viewpoint there is no difference between the homographic representation of homophonous and non-homophonous units. In multigraphic representation, on the other hand, graphemes also have a different denotation in addition to the unequivocal denotation of a contextually defined linguistic unit.

¹⁷ The simplification of Chinese characters is part of the reform which has been in progress in China; in all, over three thousand characters (including all the characters with simplified radicals) have been simplified. The first table of simplified characters was issued in 1956.

Summing up what has been said above, we can divide the graphic symbols representing free morphemes into two basic groups: The first is made up of graphic symbols each of which represents only one language unit defined by the context. It includes graphemes denoting non-homophonous morphemes, regardless of whether it is monographic or multigraphic representation, and graphemes monographically denoting homophonous morphemes. The second group is that of graphemes representing several linguistic units, both homophonous and non-homophonous. This could be summed up in the following survey:

Group I	1.	谁	—	shéi	—	who?
	2.	难	—	nán	—	difficult, hard
		南	—	nán	—	south
		男	—	nán	—	male (of a person)
	3.	他	—	tā	—	he, she, it
		她	—			
		它 (牠)	—			
Group II	1.	会	—	hui	—	can (have the skill), possibly
			—	hui	—	to meet, a meeting
	2.	行	—	xíng	—	will do, all right
			—	háng	—	a firm, business house

The graphic symbols representing free morphemes can be characterized generally as logographic symbols with predominantly monographic, in certain cases homographic, and exceptionally multigraphic representation of linguistic units.

The graphic representation of the syllabic elements of polysyllabic words (viewed as a result of the process of word-formation) is, mainly, of the following two kinds:

1. graphic symbols representing morphemes
2. graphic symbols representing syllables

Ad 1. Problems arising in connection with defining what is and what is not a morpheme in polysyllabic words were mentioned in the preceding chapter. Chinese characters only complicate this situation. Their graphic symbols function as an etymologizing factor in this case; in words, where individual components cannot be separated in view of the total meaning of the word, these components can be represented by graphemes, representing or having represented morphemes in other places. The word *dōngxi* whose syllabic components are represented by graphemes 东 and 西, which represent morphemes with the meaning “east” and “west” in contemporary Chinese can be given as an example. Another example is the word *qiáocuì* 憔悴 – “withered, pining”, generally regarded as a simple word, in which the grapheme 悴 represents a morpheme of old Chinese meaning “sad”. The grapheme functions as an etymologizing factor in the word *lǐngxiù* 领袖 – “leader” in its component xiù 袖, which is a semantically empty morpheme, but whose graphic representant denotes in a different place the morpheme meaning “sleeve”, which is in harmony with the

etymology of this component in the given word. This etymologization is conspicuous in polysyllabic words, in contrast to monosyllabic words, where graphic symbols represent words exclusively as simple denominations.

The etymological character of graphic symbols in composed words and the conscious process of learning graphic symbols, as mentioned above, result in the formation of a different language awareness as to the composition of polysyllabic words in speakers of literate Chinese from that in the illiterate speakers of that language. This can be seen especially in words where the semantics of morphemes is not conspicuous or in which the meaning of the word is to a great degree idiomatic. A more analytic view of these words is formed by literate speakers of the language than by illiterate speakers who feel the words rather as simple denomination, despite their containing components repeatable in the language. (In the above-quoted article, Peng Chunan gives the following examples of this kind of words *yìliào* 意料 – “to suppose, anticipate”; *yìshù* 艺术 – “the arts, art”; *huìyì* 会议 – “conference”; *qǐyì* 起义 – “uprising, rebellion”.)

Just as of free morphemes, so there is the homographous representation of both homophonous and non-homophonous morphemes in morphemes of polysyllabic words, in addition to the monographic representation of homophonous or non-homophonous morphemes, and there is also multigraphic representation of the morpheme *tā* in the polysyllabic form of the plural of this stem – *tāmen* – “they” (usually in cases when the denoted object is a male or female person, i.e. 他们 (for males) and 她们 (for females)). The grapheme 仍 representing free morpheme *réngh* relating to meaning “still, yet” (e.g. in word *rénghjiù* 仍旧 – “as before, as usual”) can be given as an example of the monographic representation of non-homophonous morpheme. The cases of monographic representation of homophonous morphemes prevail, and, as was said above, the number of monographic representants of homophonous morphemes amounts to several score in certain cases. The homographic representation of homophonous morphemes in polysyllabic words can thus stem from the fact that homophonous morphemes represented by homograms have become components of polysyllabic words, e.g. the grapheme 会 represents free homophonous morphemes *huì* – “to meet, a meeting”, and *huì* – “can (have the skill), possibly” which consequently have the same homographic representation as components in composed words, e.g. in words *huìyì* 会议 – “conference” and *lǐhuì* 理会 – “to give heed to”. Homograms can also appear in morphemes which are bound in contemporary Chinese. E.g. the morpheme *táng*, relating to meaning “hall” in word *lǐtáng* 礼堂 – “auditorium” and prefix *táng* in words denoting family relationships, e.g. in word *tángmèi* 堂妹 – “father’s brother’s daughter younger than oneself” are represented by identical grapheme 堂. This is similar in the homographic representation of non-homophonous morphemes. E.g. the free morphemes *cháng* – “long” and *zhǎng* – “to grow” are represented by homogram 长, which is subsequently identical in composed words in which these morphemes occur, e.g. in the words *chángjiǔ* 长久 – “a long time, permanent” and *zēngzhǎng* 增长 – “to augment, to add to”. Non-homophonous morphemes which are always bound, can

also have homographic representation, like e.g. the morpheme *cháo* in the word *chádài* 朝代 – “dynasty” and the morpheme *zhāo* in the word *jīnzhāo* 今朝 – “this morning” are represented by the same grapheme 朝. In certain cases, the same grapheme denotes both bound morphemes homophonous with free morphemes and bound morphemes which are not homophonous with free morphemes. E.g. the free morpheme *zhāo* 着 – “to touch” and the homophonous bound morpheme *zháo* e.g. in the word *shuìzháo* 睡着 – “to fall asleep”, as well as the non-homophonous bound morphemes *zhāo* e.g. in the word *zhāoliang* 着凉 – “to catch cold” and *zhe* – verbal suffix e.g. in the word *tǎngzhe* (*kàn bào*) 躺着 (看报) – “lying (to read a newspaper)”, are represented by the same grapheme 着.

It is implied in what has been said above that the graphic symbols of Chinese writing representing morphemes, which are components of polysyllabic words, can be characterized as **morphemographic** symbols of **etymological** character which, as in the case of free morphemes, can be monographic, homographic and multigraphic representants of linguistic units.

Ad 2. In polysyllabic words, where syllabic components are not morphemes, graphic symbols naturally denote only syllables. Graphemes denoting syllables in these words can, in principle, be divided into two main groups; one of them is formed by graphemes which are homographic with graphemes representing morphemes, the second group comprises graphemes which denote only syllables. The first group includes e.g. graphemes 马 and 虎 denoting the syllables /mǎ/ and /hǔ/ in the word *mǎhǔ* 马虎 – “negligent”, which also represent morphemes meaning “a horse” and “a tiger”, graphemes 沙 and 发 denoting the syllables of the phonetic loan-word *shāfa* 沙发 – “a sofa”, which elsewhere represent morphemes *shā*, meaning “hoarse, raspy”, and *fā*, meaning “to send out”, or graphemes 加, 拿 and 大 denoting the syllables of the name of the country *jiānádà* 加拿大 – “Canada” which also represent homophonous morphemes meaning *jiā* – “to add”, *ná* – “to take”, *dà* – “great, large”. The second group can be exemplified by graphemes denoting syllables in the words *bōli* 玻璃 – “glass”, *zhīzhū* 蜘蛛 – “spider”, *níngméng* 柠檬 – “a lemon”, and so on.

Two functions – **primary** and **secondary** – can be observed in graphemes which are homographic symbols for both morphemes and syllables. The graphemes appear in their primary function as symbols representing morphemes, and in their secondary function as symbols denoting syllables. Formally, the secondary function of graphemes is seen in the obligatory nature of the context. In an isolated position, the grapheme appears always in its primary function – that of the representant of morpheme (the graphemes 马 and 虎 in the word *mǎhǔ* 马虎 – “negligent” will not represent the syllables /mǎ/ and /hǔ/ in an isolated position, but morphemes *mǎ* – “a horse” and *hǔ* – “a tiger”). In the secondary function, graphemes can denote also syllables different from those that are the ‘signifiant’ of morphemes represented by the same graphemes in the primary function. E.g. grapheme 参 represents morpheme *cān* relating to the meaning of “to take part in”, while in the word *cēnci*

参差 – “uneven, not uniform”, this grapheme appears in the secondary function denoting the syllable /cēn/; in the same word, similarly, the grapheme 差 denoting the syllable /cī/ represents in its primary function morphemes chā, chà (the basic meaning of both is “to differ by”) and chāi (“to send on an errand, to commission”). Sometimes it is the syllable which is not a potential morpheme (these cases, however, are quite rare); one of these syllables is e.g. /cēn/ in the above-mentioned case; another example can be the syllable /biè/, denoted by the simplified grapheme 别 (which replaced grapheme 譬), which is also the representant of homophonous morphemes bié – “other, different” and bié – “don’t!”. The same syllable can also be represented by several graphemes in the secondary function. The syllable /gē/, e.g., in the word mòxīgē 墨西哥 – “Mexico” is denoted by the grapheme 哥, while the same syllable in the word gēbì 戈壁 – “Gobi” is denoted by the grapheme 戈. These cases are very frequent and can be described as the multigraphical representation of the syllable by graphemes in their secondary function.

The primary function of graphemes of this kind is decisive for assessing their character. They are **morphemographic** graphemes, another characteristic feature of which is their capacity to appear in the **secondary** function as symbols representing syllables.

The graphemes of the second group appear only in the function of graphic symbols of syllables; sometimes they are syllables which are not potential morphemes, e.g. the syllable /lǎ/ in the words lǎba 喇叭 – “a bugle, a loudspeaker” and lǎma 喇嘛 – “Lama”, or the syllable /mān/ in the word mānhān 颞颥 – “vacillating, dawdling”, and certain others. These cases, however, are relatively rare; they are mostly syllables which are potential morphemes. In certain cases, graphic symbols are the only representant of the given syllable; graphemes 喇 and 颞 representing the syllables /lǎ/ and /mān/, respectively, in the above-mentioned examples, demonstrate such monographic representation. A number of graphemes are used in the representation of the syllable in other cases; in the dictionary *Xinhua zidian*, the syllable /hú/ is represented by the following graphemes in various simple polysyllabic words: 戳 in the word húsù 戳棘 – “frightened, trembling”; 葫 in the word húlu 葫芦 – “the bottle gourd”; 蝴 in the word húdié 蝴蝶 – “a butterfly”; 狻 in the word húsūn 狻猊 – “a kind of monkey (found in North China)”; and 囫 in the word húlún 囫圇 – “whole, in one lump”. In these cases, which are quite frequent, we can speak about the multigraphic representation of the syllable. The homographic representation of different syllables also occurs sometimes in graphemes denoting syllables; e.g. the grapheme 蚂 denotes the syllables /mā/ in the word mǎláng 蚂螂 – “a dragonfly”, /má/ in the word mǎhuáng 蚂蟥 – “a leech”, /mǎ/ in the word mǎyǐ 蚂蚁 – “an ant”, and /mà/ in the word mǎzhà 蚂蚱 – “a grasshopper”.

In view of the fact that the graphemes of this group always denote only syllables, they should be called syllabographic graphemes. The multigraphic representation of syllables, however, indicates that they are not syllabograms in the real sense of the word. It can be found by comparing certain graphemes participating in the representation of the syllable that they differ by a certain graphic component, tra-

ditionally called the radical, which is in certain relationship with the meaning of the **bilateral** units in which the graphemes occur. E.g. in the above-mentioned examples, grapheme 葫 representing the syllable /hú/ in the word húlu – “bottle gourd”; has the radical 艹 – “grass”, grapheme 蝴 for the same syllable in the word húdié – “butterfly” has the radical 虫 – “insect”, and grapheme 狻 in the word húsūn – “a kind of monkey” has the radical 犭 – “dog”. The relationship of the radicals to the meaning of the bilateral unit can also be observed in the case of the monographic representation of syllables. Problems related to the graphic structure of Chinese characters naturally also apply to the graphemes representing bilateral linguistic units and will be described in the following chapter.

2.0 The description of the characteristics of the graphic symbols of Chinese writing has hitherto concerned only the main characteristics stemming from the relationship of graphic symbols in **their entirety** to linguistic units. Most graphic symbols, however, consist of graphic elements which are in a certain relationship with linguistic units.

The graphemes of contemporary Chinese writing are usually divided into two groups. The first is formed by such graphemes that do not comprise in their structure any element relating directly to the phonetic form of the language unit. The other group consists of graphemes composed of two basic elements: the so-called radical (signific, classifier, determinant), usually interpreted as an element indicating the signification category of the grapheme, and the so-called phonetic, interpreted as an element indicating its phonetic shape. The number of such graphemes is estimated at more than 90 per cent of the total number of commonly used graphic symbols. The graphemes of the first group are further divided into simple graphemes (by their origin ‘pictorial’ and ‘indicative’) and compound graphemes (traditionally called ‘suggestive’). Sometimes, the graphemes of Chinese writing are simply divided from the view of simplicity and complexity of structure; graphemes composed of the radical and the phonetic are classified among compound graphemes in such a case.

In order to define more precisely the characteristics of the graphic symbols of contemporary Chinese writing, it will be necessary to give attention to the so-called compound graphemes, and of these primarily to graphemes composed of the ‘radical’ and the ‘phonetic’.

Simply, it can be said that the compound graphemes of the ‘suggestive’ category originated as a symbol, formed by the composition of existing graphemes. Such graphemes were chosen which when combined could indicate the meaning of the language referent. The origin of graphemes composed of the ‘radical’ and the ‘phonetic’ can be explained in a simplified way as the use of an existing grapheme for the denotation of homonym or near-homonym. However, this character was complemented by another graphic symbol whose language referent was linked somehow with the meaning of the given word. This complemented graphic symbol, now called the radical, had, in principle, the following two main functions: distinctive – it distinguished the graphemes from the ‘loan-graphemes’ and from other graphemes

formed in a similar way, and the determinative function – it classified the given grapheme as one with language referents, with certain connection of the meaning. For the identification of the grapheme the ‘radical’ was then seen as a certain indication of the meaning of the language referent.

Certain changes, however, have also occurred in the relationship of the graphic components of compound graphemes with linguistic units, as a result of language and graphic changes over several thousand years of the common development of the Chinese language and Chinese characters. Now, an attempt will be made to characterize generally the compound graphemes (primarily the graphemes composed of the ‘radical’ and the ‘phonetic’) of contemporary Chinese writing in relation to linguistic units, in view of their internal structure.

214 radicals are usually distinguished in contemporary Chinese characters, while around 850 are usually given regarding phonetics. However, the terms ‘radical’ and ‘phonetic’ denote the structural units of graphic symbols, above all, from the genetic point of view. Preceding from the **completed** structure of graphic symbols in the present stage of the development of Chinese characters, it can be seen that there are differences between the content of these terms and the functional characteristics of graphic elements denoted by these terms.

It can be preliminarily stated that, in many cases, the ‘radical’ is not an ‘indication’ of the meaning of the language referent, and that more frequently, even in most cases, homophonous units are not denoted by graphemes with the same ‘phonetic’. E.g. grapheme 错 representing the word cuò – “wrong” has the ‘radical’ 钅 – “gold, metals”, the grapheme 减 representing the word jiǎn – “to diminish” has the radical 氵 – “water”, etc.; the grapheme 工, whose language referent is the word gōng – “labour” occurs as a ‘phonetic’ in the graphemes with the following language referents: gōng 功 – “accomplishment, merit”, gōng 攻 – “to attack”, kōng 空 – “empty”, hóng 红 – “red”, gāng 肛 – “rectum”, jiāng 江 – “a (large) river”, xiàng 项 – “item”, etc. In addition to this, there is structural homography between graphemes composed genetically of the ‘phonetic’ and ‘radical’, and compound graphemes of the ‘suggestive’ type. E.g. the grapheme 沐 (mù – “to wash, to bathe”) is a grapheme composed of the ‘radical’ 氵 – “water” and the ‘phonetic’ 木 /mù/, while the grapheme 休 (xiū – “to rest”) is a grapheme of the ‘suggestive’ type, where the element 亻, which is a ‘radical’ in other graphemes, and the element 木, which can function as a ‘phonetic’ in other graphemes, do not fulfil the function of ‘radical’ and ‘phonetic’ (graphic elements 亻 – “man”, and 木 – “tree” ‘suggest’ the meaning of the language referent “to rest” (a man leaning against the tree)). This structural homography results from the fact that the same graphic symbols can frequently appear as graphic elements of both compound graphemes of the ‘suggestive’ type and of the ‘ideophonetic’ type.

It can be said generally that graphemes composed of the ‘radical’ and ‘phonetic’ are, in fact, homographic symbols (phonetic) with a determinative graphic element (radical). These graphically ‘determined’ homograms usually have their **basic** (graphically undetermined) homograms (see the above mentioned examples); however, in certain cases this basic homogram does not exist; this means that although the

given homographic element is repeatable in certain graphemes and separable from the graphic structure, it has no language referent. Such a homographic component is separable e.g. in graphemes quán 拳 – “fist”, 券 quàn – “ticket” and juàn 卷 – “document, record”, where element 𠂔 is repeated. These graphemes have almost homophonous language referents, but the element 𠂔 alone does not have the language reference. The homographic elements in determined homograms representing homophonous language units can differ; e.g. in determined homograms representing morphemes lì 粒 – “a grain”, and lì 笠 – “a rain-hat of bamboo”, the homographic element is 立, in graphemes representing the morphemes lì 痢 – “dysentery” and lì 俐 – “intelligent, clever” the homographic element is 利, in graphemes representing the morphemes lì 凛 – “cold” and lì 慄 – “afraid” the homographic element is 栗, etc.

The graphically ‘determined’ homograms are graphic symbols of linguistic units as a complex, in their entirety. However, proceeding from graphemes and their internal structure as from the graphic units of a system in their mutual connection and assessing the relationship of the elements of the graphic structure to the linguistic units from this point of view, these elements appear to be functionally differentiated.

If the language referent of the graphically ‘determined’ homogram is a morpheme, the graphic determinant is an element analytically denoting the morpheme as a more closely defined contextual unit. In spite of the fact that the homographic element and the determinant represent a morpheme in mutual combination, the determinant appears in the grapheme **moreover** as a graphic indicator of the semantic category of the morpheme (the classification, of course, is not always adequate). The graphic determinant appears here as a certain graphic ‘formant’, without having a corresponding formal linguistic unit. Both elements will have different characteristics if the graphemes are analyzed in their relationship to language representants on the level of the second language segmentation. In the case of homophony of the language referent of the compound grapheme with the language referent of the basic homogram, the homographic component is separable from the grapheme as the graphic symbol denoting a unilateral unit – a syllable, and the graphic determinant appears on this level as a determinant of the phonetic **identity** of the language referent of the basic homogram and homographic element of the compound grapheme. If the language referent of the compound grapheme is not homophonous with the language referent of the basic homogram, the graphic determinant functions as a determinant of the phonetic **modification** of the language referent of the homographic element in view of the language reference of the basic homogram. In such a case, the homographic element cannot be separated as a symbol denoting the syllable; e.g. determinant (radical) 冫 in grapheme jiāng 江 – “a (large) river” indicates on this level that the language referent of this grapheme is not /gōng/, which is a language referent of the basic homogram 工, but /jiāng/. Graphic symbols of this type are not differentiated here from graphemes of the ‘suggestive’ type in cases of ‘structural homography’ between both types, as has been mentioned above.

Therefore, the characteristics of graphemes which have morphemes as language referents can be further specified in the sense that in some graphic symbols of this

kind, graphic elements denoting syllable can be separated on the level corresponding to the second language segmentation; it should be added that graphic elements frequently only participate in the representation of the syllable in this way, so that these elements usually are of only partially syllabographic character.

The situation is rather complicated regarding graphic symbols composed of the homographic element and the graphic determinant, with the syllables as their language representants. Attention will be given here primarily to those cases in which the graphic determinant is reduplicated in graphemes denoting the syllables of one and the same word. This phenomenon is very conspicuous in graphemes representing syllables and can be proved by a number of examples (e.g. 虫 in graphemes 蜘蛛 denoting the syllables of the word zhīzhū – “spider”; 木 in graphemes 枇杷 denoting the syllables of the word píba – “loquat”; 王 in graphemes 玻璃 denoting the syllables of the word bōli – “glass” etc.). The reduplication of graphic determinants is not incidental in these cases; it is connected with the function of the determinant in the relation to the units on the level of the first language segmentation, i.e. with the function of the graphic indicator of the classification of the linguistic units in semantic categories. As in the polysyllabic single words graphic symbols denote syllables, this classification in semantic categories cannot be indicated within the framework of a single grapheme. Giving an analogy with mathematic processes, this is in fact a relationship that could be illustrated e.g. in the graphemes of the word zhīzhū – “spider” in the following way: 虫 (知朱). As a result of this, in the graphic symbols denoting a unilateral unit, appears an element which is a graphic indicator of the classification in the semantic categories of the bilateral unit. The graphic symbol representing the syllable thus becomes a distributively determined unit where the graphic determinant is in a certain relationship to the bilateral unit. An isolated graphic symbol of this kind thus can be identified as a symbol of the syllable of certain word; e.g. the grapheme 枇 in an isolated position will be identified as a representant of the syllable /pí/ in the word píba – “loquat” 枇杷, and not as a representant of the same syllable in the homonymous word píba – “a four-stringed plucked instrument with frets” 琵琶. Otherwise, the graphic determinant naturally has the same function as in the graphemes representing morphemes, if we analyse them in relationship to the units of the second language segmentation. Here, too, the graphic determinant appears as a determinant of phonetic identity (e.g. the graphic determinant 木 in the grapheme 杷 denoting the syllable /bā/), and appears to be also the determinant of phonetic modification (e.g. the graphic determinant 王 in the grapheme 玻 representing the syllable /bō/, while the basic homogram 皮 represents the syllable /pí/).

Therefore, it will be necessary to complement the characteristics of graphic symbols which have only syllables as language referents by finding that a number of graphemes of this kind are ‘semantized’ by the presence of the graphic determinant, i.e. of the very same element owing to which these graphemes have certain syllabographic character, because without it the graphic symbols would be symbols denoting the syllable in their **secondary** function. The reduplication of the graphic

determinant in the graphemes of a single word can, on the other hand, indicate (with certain limits) that unilateral units – syllables – are the language referents of these graphemes.

3.0 The retroflex sound /r/ is found in two kinds of syllables: in those which are a phonetic form of one morpheme (i.e. in syllables /ér/, /ěr/ and /èr/), and in the so-called syllables with retroflex ending /-r/, where the syllabic segment is usually the phonetic form of two morphemes. As mentioned above, syllables /ér/, /ěr/ and /èr/ do not differ from other syllables regarding graphic representation and they will be no more discussed here.

The retroflex sound /r/ is usually a phonetic form of a morpheme, which is always a bound morpheme – sometimes bound to another morpheme, sometimes to a word, sometimes even to a word-group. However, it is sometimes quite difficult to ascertain whether the retroflex sound /r/ is a morpheme or only a phoneme, especially in cases of facultative retroflex ending /-r/ (e.g. in the word xiàbian(r) 下边 (儿) – “below”, shòuyī(r) 寿衣(儿) – “grave-clothes”, etc.). The graphic representant, however, is always the same; it is grapheme 儿 (grapheme 兒 before simplification) which is homographic with the grapheme of the morpheme ér – “child”. In this kind of syllables, the syllable is sometimes only extended by the retroflex sound /r/, sometimes, however, phonetic changes occur in the syllable (for example the loss of final vowels or consonants, as e.g. /hai/ + /r/ – /har/, /gan/ + /r/ – /gar/ etc.). The consequence is the homophony of linguistic units; e.g. syllables with finals /-e/, /-ei/ and /-en/ have the same final /-er/ after adding the retroflex /r/, syllables with finals /-i/, /-in/ have the same final /-ir/ after adding the retroflex /r/, etc. In these cases, the graphemes that were representing non-homophonous morphemes before adding the retroflex /r/, now represent homophonous morphemes, e.g. graphemes 根 and 歌 denoting non-homophonous morphemes gēn – “root” and gē – “song” in the words gēr 根儿 – “root” and gēr 歌儿 – “song” denote morphemes which are homophonous (i.e. ge-).

On the linguistic level, the retroflex sound /r/ is always an inseparable part of the syllable; however, on the graphic level it is usually represented apart from the rest of the syllable which is represented by a different grapheme; while other sounds in the syllable are graphically represented globally by a grapheme, the retroflex sound /r/ is graphically represented linearly as an independent grapheme.

The grapheme 儿 can be characterized as a symbol representing monographically the morpheme ‘-r’, eventually representing the phoneme /r/ in the secondary function.

4.0 The characteristics of the basic features of Chinese characters, outlined in the preceding chapters, shows that the graphic symbols form their own system which is not always adequate to the system of the linguistic level, so that certain contradictions occur between both levels; e.g. homography on the graphic level does not correspond completely to homophony on the linguistic level. This has certain

consequences the interpretation of which would require a special study and goes beyond the limits of this article. Some of them can only be noted here.

There is a conspicuous contradiction between the linguistic level and the graphic level e.g. in dictionaries. The order of items in Chinese dictionaries is naturally based on graphic symbols (reverse priority in the relationship between the language and writing), so that various linguistic units are listed under one entry in cases of the homographic representation of non-homophonous units. These linguistic units would be included as special entries if Chinese used the phonemographic type of writing. On the other hand, the monographic symbols of homophonous units that could be included under one entry as semantic sub-chapters in the case of phonemographic writing are given here as independent entries. Linguistic amphibology can also be 'ciphered' by the monographic representation of homophonous linguistic units. This is used e.g. as an artistic means in Chinese poems, but can occur elsewhere, e.g. in proper names. There is, e.g., a proper name with the grapheme 男, which represents the morpheme nán – “male (of person)”, in which the grapheme 男 was used to 'cipher in' the meaning of the homophonous morpheme nán 难 – “difficult”, included in the name by the parents in memory of their difficult situation at the time of the child's birth.

Furthermore the influence of writing on the spoken language in various respects, is also one of the specific features of the Chinese characters. It is obvious, for instance, that the etymological character of the graphic symbols is an active factor in word-formation. Even the graphic itself can sometimes be such an active element in the formation of neologisms; as Lin Handa 林汉达 demonstrates in his article “Dongcide lianxie wenti” 动词的连写问题 [“When verbs should be written as one word”] (1953), the origination of a neologism on the basis of the structure of the grapheme bīng 兵 – “soldier”, by the decomposition of the graphic structure into independent elements as graphic representants of linguistic units qiū 丘 and bā 八, i.e. qiūbā 丘八 – “soldier” (with a pejorative shade).

The graphic representation of tonic syllables in the dictionary

Xinhua zidian

Number of graph.	Tone	Syllable
59	4.	yì
46	4.	lì
43	4.	yú
41	1.	xī

39	2.	yu
	4.	bi
37	2.	fu, qi
35	4.	zhi
34	1.	ji
31	4.	ji, shi
30	2.	jue
27	2.	ji
26	2.	yi
25	2.	he
24	1.	qian
	2.	bo
23	2.	jie
	3.	gu
	4.	fu, lu, jian, ju
22	1.	zi
	4.	mo
21	1.	jian, xiao
	2.	ling
	4.	su, yue
20	2.	yuan
	4.	hui, si, wu
19	1.	zhi
	4.	bei, xie, zhu, yan
18	1.	qi, zheng
	2.	li, hu, wei
	3.	wei
17	1.	jiao, jing, zhen
	2.	pi, mei, huang, xun, zhuo, yao, yan
	4.	shan, e

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16	1.	shan, shu, si, yi
	2.	xia, you
	4.	xu, wei
15	1.	jia, ju, qu, zhu, yan
	2.	tong, lian, long, xi, xian, cheng, shi, ying
	3.	piao, jian
	4.	dai, di, dian, hu, huo, jiu, qi, xi, shu
14	1.	yin, ying
	2.	zhi, chan, rong
	3.	li, zhi, yan, wu, wan, yu
	4.	dan, xian
13	1.	feng, gong, xin, xu, zhan
	2.	pu, tan, tuo, lan, quan, ao
	3.	fu
	4.	mu, ta, ti, jie, que, she, ye, you
12	1.	ba, ge, gan, gu, jie, qiu, chi
	2.	mi, di, du, tang, lin, lu, ge, qiao, qiu, qin, qu, xie, chou, yang, wu
	3.	xian
	4.	nie, luo, ke, han, huan, jiao, jiu, jing, shuo, ren, rui, yun
11	1.	bin, dan, gang, gua, jiang, shi, shen, yong
	2.	peng, meng, ming, die, liao, zhe, chen, chu, e, yin, yun
	3.	jin, yi, yong
	4.	bu, duo, lie, gou, kuai, jun, zha
10	1.	pi, gui, jin, qiang, qing, xiu, xian, sou
	2.	ping, mo, fan, da, tai, tian, tu, ni, lang, liu, ju, qian, zhu, chi, ru, ze, ci
	3.	min, di, ji, ju, xi, zi
	4.	bian, mao, man, zhao, zhou, zhang, chi, zuo, wo

9	1.	bo, diao, ding, gou, ke, hui, jiu, xiong, yao, wu
	2.	pang, mao, lou, luo, kui, hao, han, huan, jia, chang
	3.	lü, gui, kai, qi, zhu, you
	4.	pi, mi, fan, gui, kui, hao, juan, xiao, xiu, xun, zhan, zhen, chu, ru, cu, sui
8	1.	bei, ban, fei, fu, ta, gao, guan, xuan, zhou, zhang, zhong, cheng, chong, sha, sheng, cong, suo, an, wa, wei
	2.	pao, mou, tao, tiao, ting, luan, hua, hong, qiong, xing, chui, shu
	3.	bing, pu, miao, lei, lu, gao, jing, chan, shi
	4.	bao, ban, pei, mei, fei, du, duan, dun, na, liu, gu, kuang, jiang, qian, xiang, xing, xuan, zheng, cha, shen, zao, ai, ya, yuan
7	1.	bao, bian, po, fen, tao, geng, guo, jian, qiao, zha, chang, shao, ya, you
	2.	pei, mang, fa, ti, nao, lei, liang, hang, cha, chun, ya
	3.	bao, bi, pi, fei, tang, gan, geng, jia, chi, shen, shu, er, wang
	4.	ba, bang, po, pan, dao, dou, dang, diao, dong, lai, lao, lü, guan, kuo, hou, qie, qiao, zhe, che, shao, shou, sheng, rui, zi, cuo, se, ao, an, yao
6	1.	biao, dian, dun, tan, kun, hu, jun, xing, xun, xiong, cha, chao, chen, shang, cong, sui, song, ai, you, yuan
	2.	pa, pan, min, tun, ning, lao, lun, hou, hen, huai, qing, xuan, zha, chao, zu, wan
	3.	bai, bian, meng, mu, tian, lao, lan, guo, gong, jiu, jiang, xiong, zhan, zhen, cai, ai, yin
	4.	bing, deng, tai, tuo, nai, ni, la, le, liao, lian, gan, kou, he, hua, xia, xue, chen, ce
5	1.	ban, pian, can, dang, dong, ting, tuo, le, kan, ku, kuang, han, hong, qin, xie, zhui, zou, zeng, sao, su, yang, wo, wan
	2.	ba, pin, ma, teng, nan, nong, lai, hui, qiang, xiang, she, rou, rang, cai, cao, ye, liao, luo
	3.	ma, dao, dou, duo, nan, niu, nian, guan, kan, xu, zha, zhang, chu, shou, zao, zan, zu, suo, song, ya, yang, ying
	4.	bo, beng, mie, fen, ding, dui, te, nuo, liang, ge, gai, kang, ku, hai, jia, zhui, zhuan, zhuang, chang, sha, ruo, zui, song, yin, yong, wan, wen

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4	1.	bing, pai, pang, piao, pu, ma, da, dou, deng, di, tang, la, guang, kang, keng, heng, hun, huang, jue, zhao, zhuan, zhun, zhuang, shuan, shuang, za, zang, zong, ci, can, cuo, cui, cuan, sun, e, yu
	2.	pai, man, fen, fang, duo, nian, nuo, leng, ga, guo, hu, chuan, chong, shao, cong
	3.	ban, biao, bu, pan, piao, mei, mao, mou, mi, fang, du, tan, ting, tong, nai, niao, long, gou, ke, kao, ken, kun, hu, huo, huang, qiao, qiu, zhe, zhong, chang, can, sou, you, yao, wen, yun
	4.	pu, mai, feng, fan, nian, lou, liu, gao, gua, qing, zhai, zhong, chuo, chui, zong, ci, wang
3	1.	ben, pa, pan, mo, fan, de, du, ti, luo, fai, ka, kai, kui, kong, he, hao, zhe, zhua, chai, chu, shuai, zai, zao, zun, cun, sa, sai, suan, yai, weng
	2.	po, piao, pian, miao, mian, fei, feng, de, tuan, na, nu, la, lü, hai, zhai, zhou, chai, chuang, rao, ran, ren, zuo, cuo, ai, er
	3.	ba, ben, bang, po, mang, fa, fou, dan, dang, dian, ding, tiao, tu, tuo, nao, nang, lou, lian, liang, ge, ka, kuai, kong, hui, jiong, qing, qu, quan, xiao, xing, zhao, zhun, chou, cheng, shang, ran, ren, rang, ruan, zai, zuo, ci, sao, san, sang, sun, e, ye
	4.	bai, bin, pai, pao, piao, men, miao, de, tiao, tu, tong, nüe, lei, lan, lang, gen, gang, kao, kan, kua, hun, qin, qu, quan, xin, chuai, shuai, shun, ze, zai, zou, zan, cao, cuan, sa, sou, suan, a, er
2	1.	bai, beng, bie, pao, pang, pie, pin, mao, mi, mie, dai, diu, duo, duan, tiao, tian, tu, tun, n, ne, nian, lou, liao, liu, ga, gen, kou, kua, kuan, ha, hai, hei, huan, jiong, que, quan, qiong, xia, xue, zhai, che, chan, chui, chuan, chu, chuang, she, shua, zan, cao, cu, san, sang, a, o, ao, en, ang, ye, wen, yue
	2.	bao, bi, bie, pou, pen, mai, tou, neng, lüan, ke, kuang, huo, qie, qun, xiao, xue, xiong, shen, za, can, cen, ceng, cu, cun, sui, wang
	3.	bo, bin, pang, fan, deng, dun, dong, ta, tao, ni, nu, nü, leng, liu, ling, ga, gang, gua, guai, kua, kui, hai, hao, han, hen, huan, jie, qiang, xie, xiu, xuan, zhou, zheng, zhuan, cha, che, chao, chuan, shai, shan, sheng, shun, re, ru, rong, zen, zui, zun, zong, sa, sui, ao, an, wa
	4.	ben, biao, pa, pian, pin, ma, meng, mian, tang, tui, nei, nao, nen, neng, niao, nin, ning, ling, long, lüe, guang, gong, ken, kun, hong, qia, qiang, chan, chuan, chuang, chang, rao, run, zuan, zun, cai, cun, sun, you, ying, wa, weng, yong

1	1.	bi, bu, pai, pen, ping, m, man, miao, fa, dao, die, dui, tai, tou, teng, tie, tui, tuan, tong, ne, nao, nang, nia, nie, niu, lo, lei, liao, li, lie, ling, lu, lun, guai, kei, kao, ng, hn, hng, hou, hang, hua, qia, qie, qun, chou, chua, chuo, chuai, shai, shou, shuo, rang, reng, zen, zu, zuo, zui, zuan, ca, cai, cen, ceng, sen, seng, e, ei, eng, yo, wai, wang, yun
	2.	bai, beng, bu, miu, mu, fo, fou, dao, tui, nang, nie, niu, nin, niang, gen, gu, kuang, ha, hen, jia, que, xu, zhao, sha, shei, shou, sheng, shui, reng, rua, rui, zei, zao, zan, cang, cuan, su, a, o, ang, wan, yong
	3.	bei, bie, pao, pou, peng, pie, pian, pin, mo, mai, man, ming, fen, fen, da, dai, dei, duan, ti, tie, tui, tuan, nei, ning, nuan, la, lang, lia, luan, lüan, gai, gei, guang, kou, ku, kuan, ha, hou, juan, ju, qia, qie, qiu, qin, xue, zhai, zhua, zhui, zhuang, chuai, chun, chuang, chong, sha, she, shao, shua, shuai, shui, shuang, rao, rui, zou, zang, zua, ca, cao, cuo, cui, cun, si, o, wo, wai, yue, yuan
	4.	bie, pang, peng, ming, fo, fang, fong, den, tao, tou, tie, tian, tun, nou, nang, niang, nu, nun, nong, nü, leng, luan, lun, ga, geng, guo, guai, gun, kai, kong, hen, huai, zhei, zhui, zhun, chai, chou, cheng, chong, shai, shuan, ri, re, rou, rang, ceng, sai, en, ang, wai

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ON THE NATURE OF THE CONSTRUCTION 'YOU-N' IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHINESE¹

Žu-čen Vochalová

Abstract: *This paper sheds light on an overlooked issue of contemporary Chinese syntax. The subjects of the study are the VN constructions where the V component is represented by the verb you 有. A comprehensive analysis is conducted separately for constructions with a monosyllabic N-member and a disyllabic N-member. The paper describes the functional categories of the whole construction and its members, the degree of syntactic independence of the members, and the semantic aspects. It reflects the different functional characteristics of the expressions having the function of the verbal predicate or the adjectival predicate. The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the analysis.*

Keywords: *Modern Chinese, syntactic constructions, VN construction, verb you 有, monosyllabic N-member, disyllabic N-member*

0.0 In Sinological literature great attention has been paid to constructions with object determination, especially in connection with the question of the boundary between word and word-group in contemporary Chinese.² At the same time however, linguists do not as a rule consider cases where the component V of this construction is realised by a verb you 有.³ The main interest is precisely on such construction VN where the component N is represented by the so-called empty or general object (e.g. *chang ge* 唱歌 to sing, *xie zi* 写字 to write etc.) when it is particularly difficult to judge whether we are dealing with a construction at the syntactic or the morphological level. On the other hand in constructions 'you 有-N' the element N is, quite the contrary, always 'full', whereas the element you 有 can be in certain cases semantically 'more empty'. The actual semantic content of the verbal element of this construction – delimited negatively, we are dealing with a verb of non-action – makes from this construction a construction which has its own specific features distinct from other VN constructions.

0.1 you 有 as an independent word has two basic meanings: 'to have' and 'there is'. In addition you 有 has a set of further meanings depending on its syntactic function and

¹ In this article we shall use the transcription as in *The Draft for a Transcription Alphabet of Chinese* (Han yu pin yin fang an 汉语拼音方案), which was approved by the National People's Congress in February 1958. The transcription is morphematic.

² Viz for example Lu Zhiwei 1957; Isajenko 1957; Hu Fu et al. 1956; Kratochvíl 1962.

³ Great attention is of course paid to the verb you 有, whether in synthetic works or monographs – viz e.g. Ding Shengshu et al. 1963; Zhang Zhigong 1957; Dragunov 1957.

on so-called conventional use (xi guan yong fa⁴ 习惯用法). The subject under study in this article is not the construction ‘you 有-N’ in all syntactic functions, but only in one function, that is as predicate. Furthermore we shall not be considering in this article cases where after the verb you 有 follows a noun or nominal complex when it is a question of the so-called cun zai ju 存在句 type, that is, sentences which express that there is something somewhere, a case where the nature of the relation between you 有 and N is disputable; N here is sometimes considered as object,⁵ sometimes as subject.⁶ In sentences of this type, that is where the verb you 有 means ‘there is’, we do not have the phenomena which are really characteristic for the construction of ‘you 有-N’ as ‘indisputable’ predicate, that is it is not possible to form a close connection between the two members of the construction, as this is carried out by certain grammatical and semantic features. It is only the study of such cases as can have this close connection which concern us here. It is unnecessary to establish criteria to distinguish both these types of sentence for the purposes of this discussion, because the very nature of the problem sufficiently defines the character of the material under discussion, and excludes cases where we have you 有 linked to a noun in sentences of the cun zai ju 存在句 type.

1.0 The construction ‘you 有-N’, from the point of view of internal structure – as has been said above – can be ranged among constructions with the relation of object determination. However from the point of view of grammatical functions this construction is not unambiguous. Let us first compare these two sentences:

1. Ta you shu ma? 他有书吗? Has he books?
2. Ta de zhi shi you xian ba? 他的知识有限吧? So his knowledge might be limited?

In both the above examples we have the construction ‘you 有-N’ in the function of predicate. If we compare these sentences as autonomous units there is no formal difference between them. It is quite another matter if we compare the answers to the questions:

- ad 1. You. 有。 He has.
- ad 2. Shi a, you xian. 是啊，有限。 Yes, it is.

It is seen that while in the first sentence the verbal and nominal members of the construction fulfill the function of the individual members of the sentence – and here we are dealing with the construction at the syntactic level – in the second sentence the whole construction fulfills the function of the individual sentence member. This is also shown in the expanded answers to the above questions:

- ad 1. Ta you hen duo shu. 他有很多书。 He has many books.
- ad 2. Ta de zhi shi hen you xian. 他的知识很有限。 His knowledge is very limited.

⁴ Viz e.g. Zhang Zhigong 1957.

⁵ E.g. Dragunov 1957.

⁶ E.g. Zhang Zhigong 1957.

In both sentences we have a different expansion of the sentence members. We could discover commutatively that the different method of expansion in both constructions is not only a matter of the use of both constructions in actual discourse (answers to a question), but that they have general validity. In the first sentence it is not possible to place *hen* 很 before the construction 'you 有-N', nor is it possible in the second sentence to expand the member N. It is of course also necessary to discover whether in the second sentence *hen* 很 expands only the verbal member of the construction, or the whole construction. Let us compare these sentences:

1. Ta hen ai ta ma? 他很爱她吗? Does he love her a lot?
Hen ai (ta). 很爱(她)。A lot (he loves her).
2. Ta de zhi shi hen you xian ba? 他的知识很有限吧? So his knowledge might be very limited?
Hen you xian. 很有限。It is very limited.
and further:
3. Ta hen xi huan xiao hair. 他很喜欢小孩儿。He likes little children very much.
Xiao hair, ta hen xi huan. 小孩儿, 他很喜欢。Little children he likes very much.
4. Ta de zhi shi hen you xian. His knowledge is very limited.
*Xian, ta de zhi shi hen you. *限, 他的知识很有。

In the system of Chinese the adverb *hen* 很 goes mainly with adjectives, but also some non-action verbs; in the above examples these are the verbs *ai* 爱 – 'to love', *xi huan* 喜欢 – 'to like'. (Others are for example *xiang* 想 – 'to think about', *pa* 怕 – 'to fear', *tao yan* 讨厌 – 'not to be able to bear (stand) s.o. (to abhor)' and so on.) It is one feature of the functional differentiation of both types of words that the object does not follow adjectives, whereas it may follow verbs. As is clear from the above given examples, the adverb *hen* 很 does not determine merely *you* 有, but the whole expression *you xian* 有限. In view of its functional characteristic, and from the semantic point of view, we can therefore range the expression *you xian* 有限 with predicatives, which we shall call predicatives of adjectival character.

We can also demonstrate that the expression *you xian* 有限 belongs to the mentioned type with the aid of further formal criteria, above all with the aid of the adverbial modifier *hen* 很; it is a postpositive modifying member in the sentence, which is connected to the modified member in the sentence with the aid of the formal element *de* 得. It is characteristic in that it is connected immediately behind the predicative, and, if this should be a verb, the object cannot follow it; cf. e.g.

1. Ta men hen guan xin ta. 他们很关心他。They take great care of him.
2. Ta men dui ta guan xin de hen. 他们对他关心得很。They take great care of him.

however:

3. Ta de zhi shi hen you xian. 他的知识很有限。His knowledge is very limited.
4. Ta de zhi shi you xian de hen. 他得知识有限得很。His knowledge is very limited.

which shows that here xian 限 cannot be considered as syntactic object. The same criterion (together with others) is also used by Lu Zhi wei to discover whether the construction with object determination is a word or word-group.⁷ The question is whether this criterion in 'you 有-N' constructions is absolutely valid, that is to say whether all 'you 有-N' constructions which can be potentially modified by the adverbial modifier hen 很 are **always** words. Further analysis will show this.⁸

In *Han yu de gou ci fa* 汉语的构词法 Lu Zhi wei is practically not concerned with 'you 有-N' constructions in the section where he analyses constructions with object determination. The question, which 'you 有-N' construction should be considered as word-forming and which not, is resolved in practise by the lexicographical group in the Committee for the Reform of the Chinese Script (zhong guo wen zi gai ge wei yuan hui ci hui xiao zu 中国文字改革委员会词汇小组) in the *Chinese Phonetic Dictionary*⁹ which contains 59,100 entries, comprising words, some fixed word-groups and idioms. Here are considered as words only those 'you 有-N' constructions in which the nominal member is a monosyllabic morpheme; insofar as any 'you 有-N' constructions with disyllabic N are entered here, they are considered as word-groups. Of course, orthographical problems are naturally resolved with an eye to practical requirements, therefore it is impossible to draw theoretical conclusions from their resolution. It seems however that it will obviously be useful to analyse separately constructions with monosyllabic N-member and those with disyllabic N-member – above all for the reason that between monosyllabic N-members may stand both free and bound morphemes, whereas in the case of disyllabic N we are dealing as a rule with language units which may act as syntactically free units (this is not to say of course that in another context they may not be bound units).

The subject under examination will be constructions 'you 有-N' which in their basic form occur in actual discourse, and not mere lexicographical abstractions. So for example from the utterance Ta you yi ke leng ku de xin. 他有一颗冷酷的心。 – 'He has a cruel heart' it is possible to abstract the construction you xin 有心 – 'to have heart', which, however, in this sense does not occur in actual utterance. (Another matter is you xin 有心 in the meaning 'to will' which does occur in actual utterance and is the subject of the analysis.)

⁷ Viz Lu Zhiwei 1957: 89.

⁸ It is not of course the main aim of this paper to solve the problem of the word in these constructions.

⁹ *Hanyu Pinyin Cihui* 1963.

1.1 The construction 'you 有-N' with monosyllabic N-component

Examples

you shu 有书: Ta you shu, ni ke yi jie ta de. 他有书, 你可以借他的。He has a book, you may borrow from him.

you xi 有喜: Ta you xi le. 她有喜了。She is expecting.

you xin 有心: Ta you xin qu kan ta. 他有心去看他。He wants to go and see him.

you yi 有意: Ta you yi qu ta. 他有意娶她。He intends to marry her.

you qian 有钱: Ta you qian ma? 他有钱吗? a) Has he money? b) Is he rich?

you li 有理: Wo kan, ta you li. 我看, he有理。I think he's right.

you ming 有名: Ta you ming ma? 他有名吗? Is he famous?

you xiao 有效: Zhei zhong yao shi bu shi you xiao? 这种药是不是有效? Does this medicine have an effect?

you yong 有用: Zhei xie dong xi you yong ma? 这些东西有用吗? Are these things good for anything?

you xian 有限: Ta de zhi shi you xian. 他的知识有限。His knowledge is limited.

The description will follow the functional characteristic of the whole construction and its individual members, the degree of syntactic independence of the members of the construction, and semantic aspects. The given examples can be divided into three basic groups according to the functional characteristic of the whole construction: I. Expressions having the function of verbal predicate, II. Expressions having the function of verbal and adjectival predicate, III. Expressions having the function of adjectival predicate.

I. This group is divisible into three subgroups:

A. expressions which can be characterised as constructions in which the component you 有 is a syntactic verb, and the component N is a nominal referent. In such constructions the connection between the component you 有 and component N is free; N as independent syntactic unit may be determined by attribute, it may be inverted in the sentence etc.; you 有 as an independent syntactic unit may have after it a verbal suffix. In the given examples this type of construction is represented by the expression you shu 有书:

1. Ta you hen duo shu. 他有很多书。He has many books.
2. Shu, ta you, ben zi, mei you. 书, 他有, 本子, 没有。He has a book but no exercise book.
3. Wo xian zai yi jing you le shu. 我现在已经有了书。Now I have a book.

We can further expand the functional characteristic by establishing that the whole construction can be followed by a verb as complement closely defining the member N; this is a verb which usually occurs with a given noun in object determination. We shall indicate this complement by the symbol D_1 . E.g.

Ni you shu jie ma? 你有书借吗? Have you (any) book for loan? (cf. jie shu 借书 - 'to lend a book')

The construction can at the same time be a component of a compound predicate in which the part after the construction as a rule expresses purpose:

Ni you shu ke yi jie gei wo ma? 你有书可以借给我吗? Have you any book which you could lend me?

B. expressions which are the construction with close connection between you 有 and N, with however the possibility of limited disjunction of both members.

The component N in constructions of this kind cannot be determined and at the same time is not movable in sentence continuity. However the component you 有 may be followed by a verbal suffix:

Ta you le xi le. 她有了喜了。 She is expecting.

D₁ may not follow a construction of this type, and moreover the construction does not occur in a compound predicate, as was mentioned in I.A.

C. expressions which are the construction with close connection between you 有 and N, without the possibility of disjunction of both the members of the construction. In constructions of this type, N cannot be qualified nor is it movable in sentence continuity. After the component you 有 it is unusual to find a suffix. In our examples, the group is represented by the expressions you xin 有心 and you yi 有意. In the expression you xin 有心 the N-member is represented by a morpheme which in another context can be a syntactically independent unit; here however it is a bound morpheme, and its meaning, by which it shares in constituting the meaning of the whole expression, is shifted. It is a peculiarity of these expressions that they cannot independently form a predicate; they always occur only in a multiverbal predicate before the main verb. In this they are distinct from the other expressions which are the subject of our inquiry. They have been placed among the constructions being studied mainly for the sake of comparison with some expressions with which they have close semantic relations or with which they partially coincide in their functional characteristics.

The expressions which enter into this group can be considered as words; this is supported by, inter alia, comparison with their opposites, which have an expressly word-forming construction:¹⁰

Ta wu xin qu kan ta. 他无心去看他。 He is not interested in going to see him.

II. Of the above given examples, you qian 有钱 and you li 有理 belong among 'you 有-N' constructions which may have the function of both verbal and adjectival predicate. Examples:

¹⁰ Some expressions of this type occur as a rule only in the negative, for example wu fa 无法: Zhe ge wen ti wo men wu fa jie jue. 这个问题我们无法解决。 – We are not able to solve this question. In spoken Chinese wu 无 is a bound morpheme.

1. Ta you qian ma? 他有钱吗? a) Has he money? b) Is he rich?
a) Ta you hen duo qian. 他有很多钱。 He has much money.
b) Ta hen you qian. 他很有钱。 He is very rich.
2. a) Wo you li, ke shi bu neng dou gao su ni. 我有理, 可是不能都告诉你。 I have (my) reasons, but I cannot tell you them all.
b) Ta de hua you li ma? 他的话有理吗? Is what he says reasonable? Hen you li. 很有理。 Very reasonable.

In the examples a) the construction acts as a predicate of verbal character, in the examples b) as a predicate of adjectival character.

In its function of verbal predicate, the construction of the expressions in this group has the same characteristic as of the expression in I. A. (the type you shu 有书), with some restriction in the case of you li 有理. In this case the N-member may be qualified in a similar way as in the case of you qian 有钱, for example:

Ji ran ni you na me duo li, ni wei shen me bu jiang? 既然你有那么多理, 你为什么什么不讲? If you have so many reasons, why don't you state them?

At the same time you li 有理 may be followed by D₁:

Ni ji ran you li jiang, ni wei shen me bu jiang? 你既然有理讲, 你为什么不讲? If you can give reasons, why don't you state them then?

Unlike the case of you qian 有钱, in the case of you li 有理 the N-member is not as a rule placed before the verb or at the beginning of a sentence; compare for example:

1. Qian, ta dao shi you bu shao. 钱, 他倒是有不少。 Money, yes, he has quite a lot of that.
2. *Li, ta dao shi you bu shao. *理, 他倒是有不少。

Cases, where the N-member is emphasised in negative sentences constitute an exception, e.g.

Ta yi dian li ye mei you. 他一点儿理也没有。 He's not in the least bit right.

you li 有理 at the same time does not usually occur in a compound predicate in which purpose is expressed after the 'you 有-N' construction, whereas you qian 有钱 frequently occurs in this compound predicate:

Ta you qian shang da xue? 他有钱上大学? Has he money for studying at university?

In the function of adjectival predicate these expressions only occur in positive sentences, e.g.

Ta hen you qian. 他很有钱。 He is very rich.

Ta de hua you li de hen. 他的话有理得很。 It is very reasonable what he says.

In negative sentences the negative adverb *mei* 没 is used; this particle is characteristic for the verb *you* 有, whereas in the system of Chinese, predicatives of adjectival character use the negative adverb *bu* 不. Cf. e.g.

1. *Shi bu shi ta hen cong ming?* 是不是他很聪明? So he's very clever?
Bu, bu cong ming. 不, 不聪明。No, he's not clever.
2. *Shi bu shi ta hen you qian?* 是不是他很有钱? So he's very rich?
Bu, ta mei you qian. 不, 他没有钱。No, he's poor.

From the semantic point of view this can be explained by saying that whereas the expression *you qian* 有钱 as adjectival predicative, i.e. in the sense 'rich, well-off', where it has the character of compound word, is not – from the point of view of the whole meaning of the compound – a simple linking of the meanings of the two components, but it does imply the meaning 'much' relating to the nominal component of the compound; if it is negative, this semantic feature disappears.¹¹ In the negative, the N-member can at the same time be qualified, for example:

Ta de hua mei you shen me li. 他的话没有什么理。That which he says has no great foundation.

III. Expressions belonging among constructions of adjectival character can be divided into two groups:

A. expressions which in their basic form belong among constructions of adjectival character, but where the components of the construction may acquire a certain degree of syntactic independence. From our examples *you ming* 有名, *you xiao* 有效 and *you yong* 有用 belong to this group.

The adjectival character of these expressions in their basic form (i.e. before they 'acquire any independence' by the components of the construction) comes only from the fact that the component N is not here the syntactic object, so that there are no objective considerations for the possibility of the construction's having a double character. Formally this is shown by the fact that these expressions can always be potentially determined by the adverb *hen* 很 or the adverbial modifier *de hen* 得很, unlike the expressions entering into group II. (cf. e.g. the sentence *Wo you li, ke shi bu neng dou gao su ni* 我有理, 可是不能告诉你, where it is impossible to place the adverb *hen* 很 before the expression *you li* 有理). A further distinction from this group is that the expressions *you ming* 有名, *you xiao* 有效 and *you yong* 有用 cannot be followed by *D₁*, nor are they ever a component of a compound predicate.

The so-called 'acquisition of independence' by members of the construction means that the relation between *you* 有 and N changes into a syntactic relation which also leads to a change in the character of the construction, for example:

¹¹ At the same time it is of course necessary to point out that *mei* (you) *qian* 没(有)钱 (not to have money) can be understood not only in the concrete sense, but also in the transferred sense as signifying a characteristic, i.e. not to have money – to be poor.

1. Xian zai ta you le ming le. 现在他有了名了。 Now he has a name (is famous).
2. Zhei zhong yao you shen me xiao? 这种药有什么效? This medicine has some effect?
3. Zhei ge dong xi you shen me yong? 这个东西有什么用? What's this thing good for?

The same change also happens in the negative, with the exception of the expression *you ming* 有名 where the use of even the negative adverb *bu* is allowed, and so the adjectival character of the construction is preserved. Examples:

1. a) Zhei ge ren mei you ming. 这个人没有名。 This man isn't known.
b) Zhei ge ren bu you ming. 这个人没有名。 This man is unknown.
2. Zhei ge dong xi mei you yong. 这个东西没有用。 This thing isn't of any use.

In the case of the expression *you xian* 有限 the negative is also formed with the aid of the negative adverb *mei* 没. In addition the negative may be expressed by the aid of the antonym of *you xiao* 有效 which is *wu xiao* 无效. The semantic field of both expressions is only partially covered, therefore the expression *wu xiao* 无效 as the opposite of *you xiao* 有效 cannot be used everywhere. Cf. e.g.

1. Zhei xie cuo shi hen you xiao. 这些措施很有效。 These precautions were very effective.
Zhei xie cuo shi dou wu xiao. 这些措施都无效。 All these precautions were of no avail.
2. Zhei zhong yao hen you xiao. 这种药很有效。 This medicine is very effective.
Zhei zhong yao mei you xiao. 这种药没有效。 This medicine has no effect.

The syntactic character of the relation of both components in the negative is also confirmed by the fact that the N-member may be determined and may also be placed before the verb:

1. Zhe ge ren mei you shen me ming. 这个人没有什么名。 This man isn't very well known.
2. Zhei ge dong xi yi dianr yong ye mei you. 这个东西一点儿用也没有。 This thing is of no further use at all.

B. Into this group fall expressions where the connection of the two members of the construction is very close, and the components do not acquire syntactic independence. The expression *you xian* 有限 belongs here. The closeness of the connection of the two components is further confirmed by the fact that this expression is not used in the negative, where the components would 'acquire independence'.¹² The expression *you xian* 有限 can be considered as a word.

¹² The expression *you xian* 有限 has the opposite *wu xian* 无限, which however is not used in the function of predicate.

1.2 The constructions 'you 有-N' in which the N-component is represented by a disyllabic unit

Examples

you yi fu 有衣服: Xia ge li bai you tiao wu hui, ni you yi fu ma? 下个礼拜有跳舞会, 你有衣服吗? Next week there will be a dance party, have you a suit?
you yi si 有意思:

a) Zhe ge zi you yi si ma? 这个字有意思吗? Has this character meaning?

b) Zhei ben shu you yi si ma? 这本书有意思吗? Is that book interesting?

c) Zhei ge nan de dui ta hao xiang you yi si. 这个男的对她好象有意思。

It seems that this man fancies her.

you jing yan 有经验: Zhei ge ren you jing yan. 这个人有经验。

a) This man has experience.

b) This man is experienced.

you tiao jian 有条件: Zhei ge ren you tiao jian. 这个人有条件。 This man has qualifications (abilities).

you li mao 有礼貌: Ta you li mao. 他有礼貌。 He is polite.

you yong qi 有勇气: Ta you yong qi. 他有勇气。 He is bold.

In these examples the nominal referent is a unit which can act in the sentence as a syntactically independent unit. The connection of the construction's two members can be of different degrees of closeness, and the whole construction may have a different functional characteristic in individual cases. Our examples can be divided into three basic groups: I. expressions in which the N-component acts only as the syntactic object of the syntactic verb you 有, that is to say cases where the whole construction has the character of verbal predicate; II. expressions acting in the function of verbal and adjectival predicate; III. expressions acting in the function of adjectival predicate.

I. To the first group belong expressions of the type you yi fu 有衣服 where the connection between the two members of the construction is free; the N-member may be determined, it may be inverted in the sentence, and the suffix may follow the verb you 有, for example:

1. Ta you hao ji jian yi fu. 他有好几件衣服。 He has many clothes.

2. Yi fu, ta you hao ji jian. 衣服, 他有好几件。 Clothes, of those he has many.

3. Wo yi jing you le yi fu le, xia ge li bai wo men ke yi qu tiao wu. 我已经有衣服了, 下个礼拜我们可以去跳舞。 I've got some clothes now, next week we can go dancing.

Also in these constructions with disyllabic N-member, the whole construction may be followed by D₁, e.g.

Ta men you yi fu chuan ma? 他们有衣服穿吗? Have they some clothes to put on?

And in addition the construction may be followed by an expression of purpose:
Ni you yi fu ke yi song gei ta men ma? 你有衣服可以送给他们吗? Have you
(any) clothes which you could give them (i.e. as a present)?

Expressions of this type can be made at random in the course of speech.

II. To this group belong expressions which can be determined by the adverb 很 很 or the adverbial modifier 得 得. Examples:

you yi si 有意思:

Zhei ben xiao shuo hen you yi si. 这本小说儿很有意思。 This novel is very interesting.

Zhei ge nan de dui ta hao xiang hen you yi si. 这个男的对她好象很有意思。

It seems that this man fancies her a lot.

you jing yan 有经验:

Zhei ge ren hen you jing yan. 这个人很有经验。 This man is very experienced.

you tiao jian 有条件:

Zhei ge ren hen you tiao jian. 这个人很有条件。 This man has great qualifications (abilities).

The given examples can also act as constructions of a verbal character; the nominal member of the construction may be determined, it can be inverted in the sentence, and the verbal member of the construction can be followed by a suffix. Examples:

1. Zhe ge zi you liang ge yi si. 这个字有两个意思。 This character has two meanings.
2. Shi qing wan le zhi hou, wo you le liang tiao jing yan: yi shi... 事情完了之后, 我有了两条经验: 一是..... After this event I have gained two experiences: one...
3. Zai zhei fang mian ta you bu shao you li de tiao jian. 在这方面他有不少有利的条件。 In this respect he has not a few suitable qualifications.

From the semantic point of view this group is divisible into two sub-groups:

a) The semantic meaning of N is different when the construction is in the function of adjectival predicate from when it is the function of verbal predicate. This concerns the expression you yi si 有意思, cf. e.g.

1. Zhei ge zi you yi si ma? 这个字有意思吗? Has this character (any) meaning?
You, er qie you ji ge yi si. 有, 而且有几个意思。 Yes, it even has several meanings.
2. Zhei ben xiao shuo you yi si ma? 这本小说儿有意思吗? Is this novel interesting?
Hen you yi si. 很有意思。 It is very interesting.

Besides these meanings the word *yi si* 意思 has others in which it can also combine with *you* 有 and so create ‘you 有-N’ constructions with a different functional characteristic in the sentence. Above we had an example where the expression *you yi si* 有意思 occurs together with a prepositional construction *dui... you yi si* 对……有意思 in the sense ‘to fancy someone’, ‘to be interested in someone’ (viz the example *Zhei ge nan de dui ta hao xiang hen you yi si* 这个男的对她好很像有意思). Furthermore the expression *you yi si* 有意思 also occurs in a multiverbal predicate with the sense ‘to intend’, where after this construction follows the other part of the predicate expressing goal or purpose, for example:

Ta you yi si qu ta. 他有意思娶她。 He is intending marrying her. (Compare the analogical construction with monosyllabic nominal referent *you yi* 有意 in the same meaning, which we can consider as abbreviated form of the expression *you yi si* 有意思.)

The change of meaning of the nominal member of the construction, if the construction is in the function of adjectival predicate, can also be observed in other expressions of this construction, for example in the expression *you gu tou* 有骨头 where against the primary meaning of *gu tou* 骨头 – ‘bone’ it acquires a transferred sense which together with *you* 有 has the meaning ‘principled, of firm character’. Cf. e.g.

1. *Wo xiang gei gou mai dianr chi de, ni men you gu tou ma?* 我想给狗买点儿吃的，你们有骨头吗？ I would like to buy something for the dog to eat, do you have bones?
2. *Zhei ge ren shi bu shi you gu tou?* 这个人是不是有骨头？ Is this man of firm character?
Hen you gu tou. 很有骨头。 He is of very firm character.

b) The basic semantic meaning of N in a construction with the function of adjectival predicate is the same as in a construction with the function of verbal predicate, with the sole difference that in constructions with the function of adjectival predicate the noun does not have the meaning of a single object but of the collective which constitutes together with *you* 有 the whole meaning of the construction. Examples:

Wo yi jing you jing yan: Zhe yang de tian qi yi ding yao xia yu. 我已经有经验：这样的天气一定要下雨。 I now have (such) experience: when the weather is like this, then it will certainly rain.

Here *jing yan* 经验 means concrete experience. However in the sentence *Zhei ge ren yi jing gong zuo shi ji nian le, ta you jing yan.* 这个人已经工作十几年了，他有经验。 This man has already been working for over ten years, he has experiences (is experienced).

jing yan 经验 can mean not only concrete experiences but also experience in the general sense, making with *you* 有 the meaning ‘experienced’. In the first case the nominal member can be determined by numerical expressions, in the second,

the whole expression by the adverb 很 很 or the adverbial modifier 得很 得很.
For example:

1. Zhe ge ren yi jing gong zuo shi ji nian le, ta you hen duo jing yan. 这个人已经工作十几年了，他有很多经验。 This man has already been working for over ten years, he has much experience.
2. Zhe ge ren yi jing gong zuo shi ji nian le, ta you jing yan de hen. 这个人已经工作十几年了，他有经验得很。 This man has already been working for over ten years, he is very experienced.

A peculiarity of this group is that in the construction ‘you 有-N’ in the function of adjectival predicate, even with the indicator of this function 很 很, the N-member may be modified by a particular kind of attribute, namely an attribute which determines N as to quality, kind etc. but not to number. E.g.

Ta hen you zhe fang mian de jing yan. 他很有这方面的经验。 He is in this respect very experienced.

A construction with a determined N-member occurring in a sentence in the function of adjectival predicate can however only be determined by the adverb 很 很, while it cannot be modified by the adverbial modifier 得很 得很:

*Ta you zhe fang mian de jing yan de hen. *他有这方面的经验得很。

The fact that the construction with the determined N can be determined only by an adverb shows that we are dealing with a construction of adjectival character, which however is not word. The possibility of determining N in ‘you 有-N’ constructions in the function of adjectival predicate is valid only for some cases of constructions with disyllabic N. If the N is monosyllabic this is not possible. Let us compare for example the expression you yong chu 有用处 – ‘to have use, to be useful’, which also belongs to this group, with the expression you yong 有用 which has the same meaning, though with monosyllabic N:

Zhe ge dong xi dao shi hen you zhe fang mian de yong chu. 这个东西倒是很有这方面的用处。 But on the other hand this thing could be very useful in this respect.

*Zhe ge dong xi dao shi hen you zhe fang mian de yong. *这个东西倒是很有这方面的用。

The expression you jing yan 有经验 can also be followed by an expression of purpose:

1. Jin tian kai hui de shi hou ta you jing yan jiang. 今天开会的时候他有经验讲。 At today’s meeting he will talk about his experiences.
2. Ta you jing yan jiang gei da jia ting. 他有经验讲给大家听。 He will talk about his experiences for them.

In the case of some expressions belonging to this group the situation is complicated by the fact that N has two or, as the case may be, more than two meanings. This is the case for instance with the expression *you tiao jian* 有条件 where *tiao jian* 条件 can mean ‘qualifications’ and ‘conditions’, for example:

1. *Ta zai zhei fang mian you tiao jian ma?* 他在这方面有条件吗? Has he any qualifications in this respect?
2. *Ni deng yi deng, wo hai you tiao jian.* 你等一等, 我还有条件。Wait, I have still another condition.

The construction in which *tiao jian* 条件 occurs in the sense ‘qualifications’ may act in the sentence as verbal or adjectival predicate, whereas the construction with *tiao jian* 条件 in the sense ‘conditions’ can occur only as predicate of verbal character. Cf. e.g.

1. *Ta zai zhei fang mian you liang ge you li de tiao jian.* 他在这方面有两个有利的条件。He has in this respect two suitable qualifications.
Ta zai zhei fang mian hen you tiao jian. 他在这方面很有条件。He has in this respect great qualifications.
2. *Ni deng yi deng, wo hai you ji ge tiao jian.* 你等一等, 我还有几个条件。Wait, I have still some more conditions.

Therefore only *you tiao jian* 有条件 where *tiao jian* 条件 means ‘qualifications’ belongs to this group.

The expression *you tiao jian* 有条件 of adjectival character has a functional characteristic similar to that of the expression *you jing yan* 有经验; the peculiarity of expressions of this type is that they can be followed by an expression of goal or purpose, for example:

Ta hen you tiao jian shang da xue. 他很有条件上大学。He is well qualified for study at university.

With the expression *you jing yan* 有经验 in the function of predicate of adjectival character, extension by expression of goal or purpose is not usual.

Besides the expressions *you jing yan* 有经验 and *you tiao jian* 有条件, such others belong to this group for example as *you ji hua* 有计划 – ‘to have a plan, planified’; *you ban fa* 有办法 – ‘to know the way how to do, to be capable’, etc.

If the expressions of this group occur in the function of predicate in the negative they are connected exclusively with the negative particle *mei* 没;¹³ the predicate then always has verbal character, for example:

Ta zai zhei fang mian mei you tiao jian. 他在这方面没有条件。He has no qualifications in this respect.

¹³ Certain expressions have the opposite formed by the negative particle *wu* 无, if it has the function of an attribute, for example *wu ji hua sheng chan* 无计划生产 – ‘unplanned production’.

III. This group is made up of expressions which, as the constructions with disyllabic N, have only the character of adjectival predicate in their basic form. In the given examples this group is represented by the expressions you li mao 有礼貌 and you yong qi 有勇气. In addition to these expressions there exists a number of further expressions with similar basic functional characteristic, such as for example you jue xin 有决心 – ‘resolute, decided’, you xue wen 有学问 – ‘cultured, learned’, etc.

Similarly as in the case of constructions with monosyllabic N we can here too identify the character of the construction with the aid of the context:

1. Ta you li mao ma? 他有礼貌吗? Is he polite?
Hen you li mao. 很有礼貌。(He is) very polite.
 2. Ni you jue xin ma? 你有决心吗? Are you decided?
Hen you jue xin. 很有决心。(I am) very decided.
- etc.

As for further aspects of functional characteristic, this group is not homogeneous. While in the expressions you li mao 有礼貌, you xue wen 有学问 the nominal member cannot be qualified, in the expressions you yong qi 用勇气, you jue xin 有决心 this is possible:

1. Ta hen you zhei fang mian de yong qi. 他很有这方面的勇气。 In this respect he has great courage.
2. Ta hen you zhei fang mian de jue xin. 他很有这方面的决心。 In this respect he is very decided.

After you yong qi 有勇气, you jue xin 有决心 may further follow some expressions of goal or purpose:

1. Ta hen you yong qi pi ping ta. 他很有勇气批评他。 He has great courage to criticise him.
2. Ta hen you jue xin zuo dao di. 他很有决心做到底。 He is very decided to carry it to the end.

Similarly as in group III. of ‘you 有-N’ construction with monosyllabic N we may find here also that both members of the construction acquire independence, but to a limited degree. In such cases the construction naturally loses its adjectival character. Examples:

1. Ni zen me ye you le li mao le? 你怎么也有了礼貌了? And where did you get that politeness?
2. Ta xian zai ye yi jing you le yong qi le. 他现在也已经有了勇气了。 He has also got courage now.

The same applies in the negative:

1. Ta mei you li mao. 他没有礼貌。 He is not polite.
2. Ta mei you shen me xue wen. 他没有什么学问。 He is not particularly erudite.

3. Ta yī dianr jue xin ye mei you. 他一点儿决心也没有。He hasn't the slightest decision.

2.0 Conclusions

From the preceding analysis we have found:

1. Constructions 'you 有-N' from the point of view of their function in the sentence have a double character, verbal and adjectival. In the function of verbal predicate this construction acts either as a word with the internal structure of object determination, or as syntactic verb with nominal referent (object). If the 'you 有-N' is a verbal predicate with object determination at the level of syntax, then the N-component acts as a noun representing concrete objects capable of being counted. This feature of the N-component either stems unambiguously from the actual meaning of the noun (e.g. shu 书 – 'book', yi fu 衣服 – 'clothing' etc.) or it stems from the linguistic or situational context. (E.g. linguistic context: Wo yao gei gou mai dianr chi de, ni men you gu tou ma? 我要给狗买点儿吃的，你们有骨头吗？ I would like to buy something for the dog to eat, have you bones? – Here gu tou 骨头 has the meaning of the concrete object, whereas in the sentence Zhei ge ren you gu tou, ta jue bu hui qu fu. 这个人有骨头，他决不会屈服。 This man has a firm character, he definitely will not humble himself, gu tou 骨头 has transferred meaning; situational context: in the sentence Ta you qian ma? 他有钱吗？ qian 钱 may signify concretely 'money' for example when shopping, while in a question establishing somebody's material state of affairs qian 钱 is merely a component constituting the sense of the whole expression you qian 有钱 – 'rich'.) A construction 'you 有-N' where N is an abstract noun but at the same time allowing of enumeration (jing yan 经验 – 'experience', li 理 – 'reason' et al.) the construction may be of a double character – verbal and adjectival. If the N-component is a noun not allowing of enumeration (e.g. li mao 礼貌 – 'politeness') the construction has the character of an adjectival predicate.
2. If the 'you 有-N' is disjunctive, it is necessary to distinguish cases where there is structural homonymy between the verbal and adjectival character of the construction, and cases where the construction is, in its basic form, only adjectival. Where there is disjunction of the construction with structural homonymy, we depart from the construction's being of verbal character, and so there is no question of syntactic 'acquisition of independence' which we find in disjunction of the construction when it is of adjectival character.
3. 'you 有-N' constructions have adjectival character only if they are positive expressions. In the negative, with the exception of the expression you ming 有名 all the constructions examined have verbal character.
4. 'you 有-N' constructions of adjectival character with monosyllabic N are generally fixed units and are not freely built up during the discourse, in contrast with constructions with disyllabic N, which can be freely built up. Constructions with monosyllabic N which are determined by the adverb hen 很 cannot have the disjunctive form, while in those with disyllabic N, N can be determined (not however

by any attribute expressing number). In this case however the construction cannot be modified by the adverbial modifier *de hen* 得很, and the whole construction with N determined must be considered as a word group.

5. Unlike 'you 有-N' constructions of adjectival character with monosyllabic N, some of the constructions with disyllabic N may be followed by a sentence member expressing purpose.

6. In 'you 有-N' constructions of adjectival character the main constituent of the semantic meaning of the expression is the component N, while the meaning of the component you 有 is so reduced that it comes closer to being a prefix. Nevertheless its original verbal character is latently preserved in some of these expressions, and this is seen where the you 有 component acquires syntactic independence.

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A FEW REMARKS ON THE PROBLEM OF DELIMITING THE BASIC LINGUISTIC UNITS IN CHINESE

Žu-čen Vochalová

Abstract: *The article addresses the question of the word boundaries of certain disputable cases in Modern Chinese. It investigates expressions whose components are free morphemes with grammatical relations typical for the syntactic level. Special attention is paid to expressions containing morphemes with broad combinatory abilities. The criterion for determining whether they are units on the syntactic or morphological level is the nature of the construction of the relevant expression used in the sentence context.*

Keywords: *Modern Chinese, word boundaries, syntactical construction, free morpheme*

0.0 One of the specific features of modern Chinese is the fact that in many cases it is very difficult to delimit the boundary between word and syntagma. In the course of transformation from monosyllabic words in old Chinese to polysyllabic in modern Chinese there have originated many intermediate linguistic units. In some cases we can, of course, state with certainty that a polysyllabic expression is a word, such as *zhizhu*¹ 蜘蛛 “spider” and a number of other words of this type, where no syllable can be identified as a morpheme. To the group of simple words are usually attached also words with reduplicated syllabic morpheme like *gege* 哥哥 “elder brother”. Many works dealing with the problem of word boundaries in modern Chinese² set up criteria for stating which expressions can be considered words, in the case that their syllabic constituents are morphemes. The expression is a word if, for example, it contains a constituent which is a bound morpheme, such as *wanbi* 完毕 “to finish up” with one bound morpheme *bi* 毕. Another criterion is absence of tone in a certain constituent of an expression, as in *liqian* 利钱 “profit” where the second constituent is atonic. Difficulties arise when all constituents of one expression are tonic syllables which can be assigned as free morphemes. In Chinese the grammatical relations between the members of a syntactical construction are frequently identical with those between the components of a compound word. Consequently, it is often difficult to decide whether the relation between constituents of such an expression is syntactic or morphological. The criteria usually used in such cases consist of the examination of the ability of the expression to be interrupted and syntactically expanded. But such criteria are not sufficient in all cases and for that reason they are often supplemented by an examination of functional features and features of

¹ The examples in Chinese are transcribed according to *Hanyu pinyin fang'an* 汉语拼音方案 “A Project for Alphabetic Transcription of Chinese”, approved in China in 1958.

² Compare, for example, Lu Zhiwei 1957; Hu Fu et al. 1956; Isajenko 1957 etc.

meaning. Needless to say, in the expression of different types of grammatical relation between constituents the criteria vary, and often there appear cases which must be solved individually. It might also be considered whether another formal criterion could be used to solve certain disputable cases. Such a formal criterion may be found in the discrepancy between the nature of the construction of the relevant expression and its actual grammatical function in the sentence.

1.0 In applying the formal criterion mentioned above we can employ Bloomfield's terms characterising constructions of phrases and also compound words, namely 'endocentric' and 'exocentric',³ although owing to the typological character of the Chinese language there may arise certain problems in their usage.

Speaking about the difficulties in delimiting of word boundaries we can state that most problems arise in expressions of the endocentric type comprising constituents that are free morphemes, as expressions of this kind are often of a syntactically expandable character. Let us mention a few examples to demonstrate this phenomenon:⁴

1. attributive construction:

yang rou⁵ 羊肉 "mutton" can be expanded to yang de rou 羊的肉 "sheep's meat"
dun ji 炖鸡 "a steamed fowl" can be expanded to dun de ji 炖的鸡 (the same meaning)

2. co-ordinative construction:

gang tie 钢铁 "iron (of superior quality)" can be expanded to gang he tie 钢和铁 "steel and iron"
shu bao 书报 "books and newspapers" can be expanded to shu he bao 书和报 "book(s) and newspaper(s)"

3. verb-object construction:

chi fan 吃饭 "to take food" can be expanded to chi yi dun fan 吃一顿饭 "to take a meal"
xie zi 写字 "to write" can be expanded to xie jige zi 写几个字 "to write several characters"

4. verb-complement construction:

chi bao 吃饱 "to eat to the full" can be expanded to chi de feichang bao 吃得非常饱 "overeaten"
zuo hao 做好 "to do well" can be expanded to zuo de hen hao 做得很好 "done very well"

The syntactic expansion in the above-mentioned expressions is facilitated by the fact that the grammatical function of the interrupted head constituent does not change as compared with that of the whole expression, although the meaning may in certain cases be somewhat shifted. Another situation arises when the expression in which the relation between the constituents is typical for endocentric construc-

³ See Bloomfield 1933: 194–196, 235–237.

⁴ In this paper our examination is limited to expressions consisting of two morphemes.

⁵ In quoted examples the transcription of the expressions under discussion are morphematic.

tions acts in the sentence as exocentric. In principle there are the following cases in question:

I. One expression can act in different sentences sometimes as endocentric, sometimes as exocentric:

i. you qian 有钱:

- a) Ni *you qian* ma? Jie gei wo san kuai qian. 你有钱吗? 借给我三块钱。
“Have you got money? Lend me three dollars.” – Verb-object construction of verbal function – endocentric.
- b) Ta hen *you qian*. 他很有钱。 “He is very rich.” – The same construction of adjectival function – exocentric.

ii. da xiao 大小:

- a) Shi fangzi jiu xing, bu lun *da xiao*. 是房子就行, 不论大小。 “The main thing is that it is a house, no matter whether it is large or small.” – Co-ordinative construction of adjectival function – endocentric.
- b) Ni zhei jian yifu de *da xiao* heshi ma? 你这件衣服的大小合适吗? “Is the size of your suit right?” – The same construction of substantival function – exocentric.

Endocentric constructions of the above-quoted examples can be expanded:

ad i. a) Ni *you yidianr qian* ma? 你有点儿钱吗? “Have you got some money?”

ad ii. a) Shi fangzi jiu xing, bu lun *da he xiao*. 是房子就行, 不论大和小。
(the same meaning as above)

The same expressions acting as exocentric, however, are syntactically inexpandable.

II. The expression acts in its basic form as exocentric only; its constituents can appear in the sentence as members of an endocentric construction, but the construction cannot be regarded as expanded from the basic form:

zhi qian 值钱:

- a) Zhei zhi shoubiao hen *zhi qian*. 这只手表很值钱。 “This wrist-watch is very valuable.” – Verb-object construction of adjectival function – exocentric.
- b) Zhei zhi shoubiao *zhi* hen duo *qian*. 这只手表值很多钱。 “This wrist-watch is worth a lot of money.” – The same construction of verbal function; it is endocentric.

si huo 死活:

- a) Ta bu guan bierende *si huo*. 他不管别人的死活。 “He doesn’t care about the fate of other people.” – Co-ordinative construction of two verbal constituents in substantival function – exocentric.
- b) Ta *si huo* bu ken lai. 他死活不肯来。 “He is not willing to come in any case.” – The same construction in adverbial function – exocentric.
- c) Ta *si* haishi *huo* gen wo meiyou guanxi. 他死还是活跟我没有关系。 “Whether he will die or live is not my concern.” – The same construction with both constituents in verbal function – endocentric.

III. The expression acts in the sentence as exocentric construction and its constituents do not usually appear together in the sentence as members of an endocentric construction:

bao shou 保守:

Zheige ren hen *bao shou*. 这个人很保守。 “This man is very conservative.”

– Co-ordinative construction of two verbal constituents in adjectival function.

mai ban 买办:

Ta shi ge *mai ban*. 他是个买办。 “He is a comprador.”

– Co-ordinative construction of two verbal constituents in substantival function.

The situation as described in the above-quoted examples shows that it is necessary to distinguish cases in which one expression generally supposed to belong to the endocentric type of construction **actually** acts in a sentence as endocentric, and those in which that expression **actually** acts as exocentric. If such an expression acts as exocentric it is a word, while if it is endocentric it may not be a word. This concerns above all the examples quoted in I above where the expressions consisting of the same free morphemes can act both as endocentric and exocentric. In such a case there usually appear differences in meaning between these two expressions.

As to the expressions quoted in II above they appear only as words. The fact that their components can also be found in the sentence as members of a syntactic construction is due to their distribution as free morphemes; that is to say that the appearance of these morphemes in the sentence is not caused by their mutual dependency (we can say for example: Zhei zhi shoubiao *mai* hen duo *qian*. 这只手表卖很多钱。 “This wrist-watch is sold for a lot of money.” Zhei zhi shoubiao *zhi yi liang jinzi*. 这只手表值一两金子。 “This wrist-watch is worth one tael of gold.” Ta *si* haishi *bu si* gen wo meiyou guanxi. 他死还是不死跟我没有关系。 “Whether he will die or not is not my concern.”).

The expressions of group III comprise such constituents which as a rule do not appear together in the sentence. These expressions act only as exocentric and therefore there is no doubt about their delimitation as words.

2.0 In Chinese there are some free morphemes the peculiarity of which is their great ability to form combinations with plenty of other free morphemes. Frequently this is a question of free combination of these morphemes in the process of speech activity. To the morphemes of this type belong above all hao 好, nan 难 and also you 有.⁶ The expressions formed from these morphemes can also be judged by the criteria used in the preceding chapter. They have, however, some specific features which must be taken into consideration.

⁶ you 有 forms a special group; the specific features of this morpheme, viewed from a somewhat different point of view, were described in the author's article “On the Nature of the Construction ‘you-N’ in Contemporary Chinese” (1968).

The morpheme hao 好 (pronounced in the third tone) is of adjectival and adverbial character and therefore it appears as a rule with other free morphemes in an attributive construction which is of endocentric character:

hao ren 好人 “a good man” – Both the head constituent and the whole construction are substantival.

hao hen 好狠 “very fierce” – Both the head constituent and the whole construction are adjectival.

hao zhuan 好转⁷ “to turn better” – Both the head constituent and the whole construction are verbal.

Similarly the morpheme nan 难 with the meaning “difficult” is used in attributive constructions as adjectival or adverbial determinant of the head constituent; the whole construction is then of endocentric character:

nan zi 难字 “difficult character” – Both the head constituent and the whole construction are substantival.

nan mian 难免⁸ “not able to avoid” – Both the head constituent and the whole construction are verbal.

2.1 We wish, however, to pay attention above all to the cases in which these two morphemes combine with the verb, but where the construction is not verbal. Some of these expressions can be regarded as fixed and they are commonly included in dictionaries as lexical items. But very often these expressions can be, as mentioned above, formed freely in the process of speech.

Examples

Group I:

A. hao chi 好吃: Ni zuo de nage cai feichang hao chi. 你做的那个菜非常好吃。

“The food you have made is extraordinarily tasty.”

hao kan 好看: Zhei fu huar hao kan de hen. 这幅画儿好看得很。 “This picture is very nice.”

hao ting 好听: Zheige changpianr hen hao ting. 这个唱片儿很好听。 “This record is very good (to listen to).”

hao wen 好闻: Zhei zhong xiangshuir hao wen de hen. 这种香水儿好闻得很。 “This perfume smells very good.”

In all the above-quoted examples the constituent nan 难 can be used instead of the constituent hao 好 as its antonym. The expressions themselves then have opposite meaning (nan chi 难吃 “bad to eat”; nan kan 难看 “bad to look at”, etc.). The constructions both with hao 好 and with nan 难 are exocentric as they are of adjectival nature; they can be determined by hen 很, and de hen 得很 like other

⁷ hao zhuan 好转 is also substantival; in this case it is not endocentric.

⁸ nan mian 难免 used in adverbial function is not endocentric.

adjectives.⁹ The relation of the members of these expressions is comparatively very close. The question formed by alternative form is as a rule constructed by reduplication of the whole expression in the negative¹⁰ (i.e. *hao chi bu hao chi?* 好吃不好吃? “is it tasty or not?”), and the answer must also use the whole expression; *hao* 好 or *nan* 难 alone as the answer is insufficient.

- B. *hao wanr* 好玩儿: *Zheige xiaohair hao wanr de hen.* 这个小孩儿好玩儿得很。 “This child is very amusing.”
hao xiao 好笑: *Tade hua zhen hao xiao jile.* 他的话真好笑极了。 “His talk is really extremely laughable.”

Expressions of this group are also adjectival and therefore they are exocentric as well. In contradiction to the preceding group expressions of this type do not have antonyms. Except for this semantic feature the expressions of this group are of the same nature as those in the preceding group.

Expressions ad A. and ad B. of group I. can be considered as words because of the close connection of their constituents.

Group II:

hao xie 好写: *Zhei pian wenzhang hao xie.* 这篇文章好写。 “This article is easy to write.”

nan dong 难懂: *Zhei ben shu nan dong de hen.* 这本书难懂得很。 “This book is very hard to understand.”

In this group the expressions are also adjectival. The specific feature of this kind of expressions is their ability to be formed freely in the process of speech activity; that is to say, morphemes *hao* 好 and *nan* 难 can freely combine with many verbal morphemes without restriction – if they can be combined from the semantic point of view. Morphemes *hao* 好 and *nan* 难 in these expressions have the antonymous meaning “easy” and “hard”. In this meaning they can also combine with the morphemes in the expressions quoted in the group I. For example:

hao chi 好吃:¹¹ *Zhei kuair yu yidianr ci ye meiyou, hen hao chi.* 这块儿鱼一点儿刺也没有，很好吃。 “This piece of fish has no bones at all, it is very easy to eat.”

nan kan 难看:¹² *Zhei pian wenzhang xie de hen bu qingchu, nan kan de hen.* 这篇文章写得很不清楚，难看得很。 “This article is written in a very confusing way, its reading is very hard.”

⁹ This criterion is also used in Lu Zhiwei (1957)

¹⁰ It is not absolutely excluded to form a question by reduplication of the first constituent of the expression in negative form, but it is not common.

¹¹ In order to avoid confusion following from different meanings of the morpheme *hao* 好, it is usually preferred to use *rongyi* 容易 “easy”.

¹² The morpheme *kan* 看 here has a different meaning from that in the group I.

As expressions of this kind can be freely formed in speech activity, their component parts are felt to be freer than in group I. Therefore it is also possible to use in the answer the respective morphemes alone, apart from the full expression which is most usual:

Zhei pian wenzhang *nan dong* ma? 这篇文章难懂吗? “Is this article hard to understand?”

– *Nan*. 难。 “It is hard.”

This kind of answer is possible above all in the case of the morpheme *nan* 难; as to morpheme *hao* 好 it is not usual, because the meaning of the respective morpheme is slightly shifted from the basic meaning which this morpheme has in isolated position.

3.0 When the expressions described in paragraph 1.0 are compared with those in paragraph 2.1 it can be seen that expressions of the *zhi qian* 值钱 type are of a similar character to expressions of the *hao chi* 好吃 “tasty” type. Differences lie in the fact that while the expressions of the *zhi qian* 值钱 type can be considered as the unique combination of the respective morphemes, the combination of morphemes *hao* 好 and *nan* 难 with verbal morphemes in the expressions of *hao chi* 好吃 type are not unique. From the semantic point of view the morphemes *hao* 好 and *nan* 难 in these cases have a somewhat shifted meaning and combine, as a rule, with verbal morphemes with meaning of sense-perception; they thus form expressions with the general meaning of ‘pleasantly or unpleasantly perceived’. From the grammatical point of view the morphemes *hao* 好 and *nan* 难 act as formants combining with verbal head constituents of adjectival nature. Due to these peculiarities morphemes *hao* 好 and *nan* 难 have here some features of prefix.

The expressions which the author placed in group II of paragraph 2.1 seem at first sight to be of the same nature as those in group I of the same paragraph. However, there are certain differences between these two groups both from the semantic and grammatical point of view.

Some differences concerning the semantic aspects of the morphemes *hao* 好 and *nan* 难 in these two groups have been mentioned above. Besides these, there are also differences between the verbal constituents: while in the first group there are verbs with the meaning of sense-perception, in the second group there are action verbs (compare for example *hao chi* 好吃 “tasty” and *hao chi* 好吃 “easy to eat”; in the first case the meaning of *chi* 吃 concerns the sensual aspect (taste), in the second it concerns the action itself).

These semantic features are also closely connected with the grammatical peculiarities of these expressions. In both groups they are of adjectival character; from the point of view of the inner relation of their constituents they are not, however, of the same nature. In the expressions of the first group the head constituent is a verbal morpheme determined by *hao* 好 and *nan* 难; because these expressions are of adjectival character, they act as exocentric, and thus they can be considered

as words. In the expressions of group II, on the contrary, we can consider as head constituent the adjectival morphemes hao 好 and nan 难 with the meaning “easy” and “hard”, while the verbal morphemes combined with them have a function of their complement, explaining more clearly in what respect something is easy or hard. The relation between the two constituents will be clearer if the sentences with these expressions are transformed as follows:

- a) Zhei pian wenzhang hen nan xie. 这篇文章很难写。 “This article is very hard to write.”
- b) Zhei pian wenzhang xie qilai hen nan. 这篇文章写起来很难。 “The writing of this article is very hard.”

From this point of view, expressions of this kind can be considered more as an adjective-complement construction of special type, and the whole construction in such a case is endocentric; consequently, expressions of this kind can be considered as syntagmata. The interpretation that hao 好 and nan 难 are not here adverbial determinants of the following verbal morpheme but the adjectival head of the whole expression is supported by the occurrence of single morpheme nan 难 in answer. It would not be possible to interpret this morpheme as having adverbial character because in Chinese single monosyllabic adverbs, except bu 不, cannot stand for the utterance.

In spite of all this, this interpretation cannot be set up categorically. The fact that the morpheme hao 好 cannot stand for an independent utterance in answer (it is motivated, of course, by semantic reasons as well), and also the analogical form of the expressions of group I, cause that hao 好 and nan 难 are also more or less felt as determinants of the verbal morphemes in group II as well. The most agreeable interpretation might be to characterise it as an intermediate type between the attributive and verb-complement types of construction, i.e. acting as exocentric and at the same time as endocentric.

4.0 The preceding analysis shows that in Chinese it is possible in certain cases to use the criterion of conversion of an endocentric construction into an exocentric one by actually employing the expression in the sentence for the delimitation of the boundary between word and syntagma. Difficulties lie in the fact that because of the typological features of Chinese it is often hard to justify the actual relation between the constituents of the expression and to determine the character of the construction – as demonstrated on the intermediate type mentioned above.

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Několik poznámek k problematice vymezení základních jazykových jednotek v čínštině

Článek řeší otázku hranice slova některých sporných případů v moderní čínštině. Předmětem zkoumání jsou výrazy, jejichž složkami jsou volné morfémy s gramatickými vztahy, které jsou typické pro syntaktickou rovinu. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována výrazům obsahujícím morfémy s širokými kombinačními schopnostmi. Kritériem pro stanovení, zda jde o jednotky na rovině syntaktické, či na rovině morfologické, je aktuální charakter konstrukce daného výrazu užitého ve větné souvislosti.

A REMARK TO THE SYNCHRONIC ANALYSIS OF CHINESE WRITING

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *After a brief introduction to the nature of the relationship between writing and language in Chinese, the paper discusses the question of participation of classifiers in the graphic representation of linguistic units. It draws attention to the function of classifiers at the first stage of analysis that treats the linguistic referent as the integral unit of phonetic and semantic contents. In other words, classifiers mark the semantic class of the linguistic referent. The heterogeneous nature of classifiers brings, however, a range of issues that complicate the analysis of their semantic function. The most considerable of them are introduced in this paper.*

Keywords: *Chinese writing system, grapheme, classifier, semantic class*

A synchronic analysis of Chinese characters at the level of the relationship between writing and language concerns mainly two aspects: the question of the nature of the graphemes from the point of view of their linguistic reference and the ways of graphic representation of different kinds of linguistic units. In this paper I want to discuss one of the problems concerning the second aspect, namely the question of the participation of so-called classifiers in the graphic representation of linguistic units.

Generally speaking, the representation of linguistic units by the graphemes of the Chinese writing system comprises two aspects: the representation of linguistic units by graphemes as integral graphic units and the participation of its graphic components in this representation. As to the first aspect, we can classify the different kinds of graphic representation as follows: monographic (i.e. one linguistic unit is represented by one grapheme), homographic (i.e. several linguistic units are represented by one grapheme), multigraphic (i.e. several graphemes denote different connotations of one linguistic unit) and heterographic (i.e. the representation of one linguistic unit by several graphemes caused by the lack of an orthographic norm). In the graphic representation of linguistic units it seems useful to distinguish further the primary and the secondary function of graphemes, i.e. the cases when one and the same grapheme primarily used for denoting morphemes or words is used for denoting syllables as well.

The fact must be taken into consideration that there exist different kinds of graphic representation of linguistic units and different functions of graphemes when analysing the participation of graphic components in the representation of linguistic units as well. It follows that the participation of graphic components in this representation must be considered in regard to the actual linguistic reference of the respective grapheme. For example, in the case of grapheme 根 we can examine the

participation of its components in the representation of morpheme *gēn* “a root”, while this does not hold in the representation of the syllable /*gēn*/, as e.g. in the word 阿根廷 *Āgēntíng* “Argentine” (though perhaps it is possible to consider the phonetic component of the grapheme as indirectly denoting this syllable).

The functions of the compound parts of graphemes consisting of the so-called classifiers and phonetics, however, is not limited to examination in the case of graphemes denoting the morphemes or words only. In some cases, as in words like 玻璃 *bōli* “glass”, 蜘蛛 *zhīzhū* “the spider”, the graphemes denoting the syllables of these words are analyzable in terms of the function of their graphic components as well. Therefore, when speaking of the function of the compound parts of this kind of graphemes, we must take into consideration both the cases when the respective grapheme denotes morpheme or word and the cases when the grapheme is employed merely for denoting the syllable of a certain word.

In general, the functional analysis of the compound parts of this kind of grapheme can be carried out at two different stages of analysis: 1. in relation to the linguistic referent as the integral unit of phonetic form and semantic contents (so-called two-sided linguistic unit) and, 2. in relation to the phonetic form of this linguistic unit only (so-called one-sided linguistic unit).

At the first stage of analysis the respective linguistic unit is represented by the entire grapheme. This means that its components cannot be treated as if the first one were denoting the phonetic form and the other the semantic contents of linguistic referent. Only the classifier itself has here, moreover, some specific relation to the linguistic referent of the grapheme.

At the second stage of analysis the phonetic component is directly related to the phonetic form of the denoted linguistic unit, while the classifier acts here in a secondary function as the marker of adequacy or non-adequacy of the phonetic component. For example, the classifier No. 85 氵 *shuǐ* “water” in grapheme 江 *jiāng* “the river” indicates that the phonetic is not identical with the phonetic form of the linguistic unit denoted by the whole grapheme.

Here I would like to draw attention particularly to the function of classifiers at the first stage of analysis. Classifiers have here the semantic function which consists in denoting the semantic class of the linguistic referent of the respective grapheme. Analysis of this semantic function, however, is quite complicated. One of the reasons for this complexity is the heterogenous nature of classifiers. From the total number of classifiers, usually stated as 214 items, besides those which can be used as autonomous graphemes with linguistic reference in modern Chinese, there are some classifiers without this kind of linguistic reference, some of them being merely formal graphic units (for example some one-stroke classifiers). In addition to this, there are also some cases of homography of different classifiers, as e.g. the classifiers No. 109 目 *mù* “the eye” and No. 122 网 *wǎng* “the net” in the upper position of the graphic structure, where they have the same form ^{****}. From the pragmatic point of view, however, many of these classifiers are identifiable by users of the Chinese script, even if they do not know their original linguistic reference. Sometimes this is

due to the presence of an easily identifiable phonetic component indicating that the residual graphic component is the classifier, as in the case of grapheme 匪 fěi “rebels”; sometimes it is due to its graphic form or a fixed position in the graphic structure of many graphemes etc. In spite of the absence of their linguistic reference in contemporary Chinese, some of these classifiers are felt as “meaningful”; in some cases their “meaning” can be deduced from the meaning of linguistic referents denoted by various graphemes with respective classifier, as is the case of classifier No. 104 疒 ni “disease”, which appears in many graphemes denoting the names of various kinds of diseases. Sometimes the formal graphic features can act as an active factor in this respect as well, e.g. the pictographic nature of some classifiers, their position in the graphic structure etc. As examples one may refer to the graphic form of classifier No. 22 匚 fāng “the basket” or No. 23 匚 xì “the chest”, and the position of classifiers No. 14 宀 mì “to cover” and No. 40 宀 mián “the roof”.

In the case of classifiers used as autonomous graphemes I want only to point to the difficulties in their identification arising from the structural homography both in one type of graphemes and between different types of graphemes. In the first case is due to the fact that the same graphic component can stand in the place both of semantic and phonetic component and that the position of both in the graphic structure is not always complementary. In the latter, it is the consequence of the fact that the same components employed as classifiers and phonetics can appear as semantic components or formal graphic elements in other types of graphemes as well.

The proper semantic analysis of classifiers concerns above all the problem of the comprehension of the so-called semantic class denoted by a classifier. As mentioned above, the classifier participates in the representation of a linguistic unit both as the integral part of respective grapheme and, moreover, by its own linguistic reference. For this reason the meaning of the linguistic unit in its spoken and written form is not entirely equal, as the latter indicates, in addition, a certain semantic class of this linguistic unit. But what are the semantic classes denoted by classifiers? Problems arise from the contradiction between the conventional nature of classifiers and their so-called “adequacy”. According to their semantic relations classifiers can be arranged into several groups (e.g. man and his activity, parts of human and animal body, necessities of life, nature and its elements, qualities and states, measures and weights, numerals etc.). These groups are very heterogenous as to their representativeness and, naturally enough, cannot correspond to a scientific classification of objective world. For example, animals are represented by 16 classifiers, presenting in fact some kind of classification of animals, which of course does not correspond to the classification from the point of view of systematic zoology. The result of this is that some classifiers in the graphemes denoting animals seem to be inadequate. For example, classifier No. 94 犬 quǎn “a dog” appears in graphemes denoting not only the genus of canine animals, but also some kinds of cats, monkeys, the otter etc. Moreover, this classifier also appears in some graphemes representing linguistic units with the meaning related to the activities or properties of animals, in hunting terms, and also in some cases in which the classifier seems to be quite “inadequate”

(e.g. in grapheme 猜 cāi “to guess”). This classifier also occurs in some graphemes in which it has the function of expressing the pejorative shade in the denotation of some names, e.g. the names of some countries (these graphemes have the nature of occasional heterograms).

The examples quoted above demonstrated that the semantic contents of classifiers is not quite the same as that of autonomous graphemes. Generally speaking, the semantic contents of classifiers denoting semantic classes is wider than that of autonomous graphemes and, in certain graphemes, the secondary meaning or emotional aspects may prevail. For this reason it is also quite difficult to formulate the problem of the adequacy of classifiers. In cases of heterographic representation of the same linguistic unit, which manifests itself by different classifiers, the orthographic norm is above all a matter of convention; it is for example very hard to judge the adequacy of classifiers No. 94 犬 quǎn “a dog” and No. 142 虫 chóng “an insect” in graphemes denoting the morpheme wèi “the hedgehog” (猬, 蝟).

Finally, I want to mention the function of classifiers in some graphemes which are employed for denoting syllables only. In these cases the classifier is often reduplicated, as e.g. in graphemes denoting syllables in words 玻璃 bōli “glass”, 蜘蛛 zhīzhū “the spider” etc. In these cases the semantic class of the whole word is denoted by the classifiers in both graphemes, each of them, however, denoting the syllable. Thus the classifiers have here a special semantizing function: graphemes with respective classifiers do not indicate the syllables /bō/, /li/, /zhī/ and /zhū/ in various words, but only in certain words, thus the grapheme in its integrity denotes the syllable, but its classifier is related to the meaning of the word. This kind of grapheme is therefore identifiable as a graphic representative of the syllable of the respective word even if it occurs in an autonomous position.

FORMAL ASPECTS OF THE CHINESE GRAPHEMIC SYSTEM

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *All graphemes at a certain stage of development belong to the same graphical system and thus also share a specific set of subordinated graphical elements. This paper addresses the issue of minimal graphic elements, so-called strokes, in the Chinese writing system. First, it discusses the issue of creating a representative inventory of graphemes. Second, it tackles terminology-related problems and draws a line between the term 'grapheme', used for a graphical representation of a linguistic unit, and the 'graph', referring to a formal-graphical unit. Third, it combines formative and visual perspectives and describes four individual graphical characteristics of strokes: shape, dimension or length, position, and direction of writing. Each stroke has particular distinctive characteristics that allow for different possibilities for its graphical variability. The strokes also show features of bound structural units, and, therefore, the variable element of their graphical characteristics is determined by higher structural units.*

Keywords: *Chinese writing system, kǎishū, grapheme, graph, stroke*

The traditional Chinese script is the product of a long period of development. To date, its fundamental typological character as preserved in the earliest Chinese inscriptions has not qualitatively changed. Today, just like in ancient times, the graphic symbols (graphemes) of the Chinese writing system represent primarily meaningful monosyllabic linguistic units. (In accordance with the development of the Chinese language at the lexical level, i.e. with the growth of polysyllabic words, however, the Chinese script at present is more of a logomorphemographic, or, better to say, morphemographic type than of a purely logographic one.) Important changes have come into being, however, in the sphere of the formation of graphemes and their graphical form as well: the pictorial principle which can be supposed to have been originally the fundamental principle of the formation of graphemes ceased to be productive in subsequent stages of development of the Chinese writing system, being replaced by other principles (among which the formation of graphemes by means of the so-called "radicals" and "phonetics" became most productive). The graphical form was gradually simplified and, consequently, the pictorial nature of graphemes became disguised. Thus the formalization of the graphical form has resulted in the form of graphemes (as well as their significant components) ceasing to be primarily graphically motivated; the graphical form of graphemes now consists of formal graphical elements which are recurrent in different graphemes. In spite of their different genetic origin, all graphemes at the present stage of development thus belong to the same formal graphical type which facilitates the decomposition of every grapheme into subordinated graphical elements. The aim of this paper is to discuss

selected problems concerning the study and description of the minimal graphical elements commonly called strokes.

1.0 The decomposition of graphemes into minimal graphical elements must be based on a representative number of graphical forms of graphemes, i.e. it has to take into consideration a delimited number of graphemic units. Since our approach to the analysis will be synchronic, there arises the problem which graphemes have to be examined. In this connection the following facts must be considered:

A) Because of the typological specificity of the Chinese writing system the characteristic feature of the “stock” of graphemes is its variability: in accordance with continuous changes in the vocabulary of the Chinese language (i.e. changes in the meaning of words, some words become obsolete, new ones originate), the “stock” of graphemes denoting those words changes, too. Moreover, there is the problem of graphemes denoting special terms used by limited circles of persons, graphemes denoting words which are of dialectical colouring, etc. Thus it is quite difficult to state precisely the definite number of graphemes for the period chosen as the time-frame of the analysis. For that reason the selected number of graphemes represents merely an approximate estimate of the graphemes which were more or less in use in the given period.

B) While there is a direct dependence of the graphemes on denoted linguistic units as to their ranging in the vocabulary during the given period, the graphical form of graphemes itself is not in direct dependence on language changes. Therefore, there is no coincidence between the period which might be chosen for a synchronic analysis of graphemic units and the period during which this or that type of form (or ductus) of graphemes has been in use. For example, the period of modern Chinese, which can be chosen as the time-frame for delimiting the number of graphemes to be studied, can be estimated at (the past) fifty years. On the other hand, the period during which the present ductus of graphemes known as *kāishū* has been in use is much longer – more than seventeen centuries (i.e. since the end of the period of archaic Chinese). Thus the same type of graphical form (*kāishū*) concerns a greater number of graphemes than those which have been (more or less) in use during the period in question (i.e. the period of modern Chinese). Since the variety of graphical forms of graphemes belonging to the ductus is expressed in the form of concrete graphemes, the restriction of the number of graphemes the form of which we study can partially influence the results of our analysis. Nevertheless, because of the large number of graphemes to be examined in the period under review, it can be intuitively supposed that the influence will not be essential at least as far as the analysis of minimal formal graphical elements is concerned.

C) The ductus *kāishū* is not quite uniform and appears in some modifications, being patterned after some popular calligraphers’ styles. Differences exist also between the

handwritten form (with brush or pen) and the printed form. Besides the standard *kǎishū* style, there are two more styles of hand-written form derived from the style, which are used for rapid writing, namely, *xíngshū* (running or current script) and *cǎoshū* (coarse or cursive script). *Xíngshū* and *cǎoshū* should be considered special styles of writing – special kinds of graphical stylization of the standard form of graphemes preserving more or less the general pattern of their origin (in *cǎoshū* the stylization of the graphical form can even result in the loss of the original pattern); the stylization does not respect the graphical independence of the minimal graphical elements (strokes) which are often combined or some of them even omitted. The release from the strict standard form manifests itself in the existence of a variety of *xíngshū* and *cǎoshū* forms used by individual persons. Because of their specificity, these two kinds of graphical styles should be treated as a special object of analysis. The printed form of graphemes is originally based on the hand-written form. There exists a printed form which is essentially identical with the hand-written form of the *kǎishū* style. In the majority of cases, however, the so-called “Sung’s form” of printed graphemes is used, deviating in some respects from the standard *kǎishū* style and preserving some graphical features of the older *zhuànshū* (seal script) and *lishū* (official writing) styles. Thus this kind of printed form of graphemes should, because of its specificity, become a special object of analysis as well.

The object of analysis would therefore be those graphemes the form of which is based on the hand-written form. Individual variants of writing should be, however, eliminated. This means that for the purpose of examination we must choose one of the authoritative forms of graphemes (such as the graphemes printed on the basis of the hand-written form used in some standard dictionaries, e.g. in *Xīnhuá Zìdiǎn*, *Tóngyīn Zìdiǎn*, etc.).

D) Within the framework of the reform of the Chinese script there has been simplified a certain number of the most commonly occurring graphemes in recent times. But because the original (unsimplified) graphemes continue to be more or less in use, the analysis should include both the simplified and original graphemes.

2.0 The term “grapheme” appearing in preceding paragraphs is used there in fact in a wide sense – as the general denomination of the graphical units of a system of writing. In an analysis considering different points of view, however, it seems to be useful to point out the terminological differences as well. Starting from the basic function of the script we can keep the term “grapheme” for the units of the writing system standing for the graphical representative of linguistic units; when considering the units of the writing system from the point of their graphical form, we can call them “graphs”.

Being formal graphical units, graphs can be delimited by a formal criterion, namely, the criterion of separation: graphs are those graphical units which are in a written text separated one from another. Graph is the maximal formal graphical unit.

Grapheme and graph are thus units of the writing system on two different levels: the linguistic and the formal-graphical. The relation of these two levels in an analysis of the graphical form of the graphical units of the writing system is as follows: the starting point in the delimitation of the object of analysis is linguistic; the analysis itself is conducted on the formal graphical level (at first, the number of graphemes which should be examined as graphs must be delimited).

Graphs consist of lower graphical units of different kinds. The minimal formal graphical unit forming the graph is the graphical element commonly called “stroke”. The formal criterion for its delimitation is that of graphical continuance or uninterrupted: every stroke represents an uninterrupted line (or point); the continuance is stated according to the rules of correct writing by hand. Thus every graph consists of the definite number of strokes (the minimum is one, the maximum exceeds thirty). The number of strokes can thus be regarded as one of the formal graphical (quantitative) features of the graph. This graphical feature is utilized, for example, in lexicography: in dictionaries graphemes are often arranged according to the number of strokes used to write them (in addition to other principles of the location of characters).

3.0 The total number of strokes decomposed from a representative number of graphs represents the inventory of minimal formal graphical elements. All these graphical elements can be described according to the graphical characteristics they possess. Graphical characteristics have two aspects: formative and visual. From the formative point of view, graphical elements are considered the result of their modes of formation including the direction in which the stroke is written. From the visual point of view, the stroke is regarded as the resulting product of writing (i.e. its graphical characteristics lack the dynamic aspect such as direction of writing). In describing graphical characteristics we can use a combined formative-visual aspect, according to which there are distinguished the following graphical characteristics of strokes: 1. shape, 2. dimension (length), 3. position of stroke (e.g. horizontal, vertical, etc.), and 4. direction of writing. With regard to the different instruments used for writing, other graphical characteristics can be added: the strokes decomposed from graphs written with brush vary in thickness and some of them are shaded. This specific kind of graphical characteristics that depends on the instrument of writing can be viewed, however, as irrelevant for the aim of our analysis.

Strokes are not only elementary graphical units with certain graphical characteristics but also elementary combinatory graphical units that are an integral part of higher graphical units in the structure of graphs. There is a very close connection between these two natures of strokes and, consequently, both the aspects have to be considered in an analysis.

Let us now focus on individual graphical characteristics of strokes.

Shape is a graphical characteristic of quite a complex nature. From the graphical point of view shape can be essentially of three kinds: point, straight line, and curve (curved line) – and their mutual combinations. Their nature is not, however, the

same. While point is graphically unvariable (we must distinguish between the point meaning “dot” which is defined as not having dimensions and the “point” as the conventional denomination of a kind of stroke which can vary in shape), straight line is variable only as to the dimension and curve enables to form a great number of graphical shapes. Therefore, the strokes represented by straight lines cannot vary in shape (straight line can have no other shape than that of straight line), while the strokes which are curves have numerous forms (also some “points” belong to this kind of strokes). Shape is thus one of the basic distinctive features of strokes. There arise difficulties in the case of “curved” strokes, however, as it is sometimes hard to ascertain whether the respective form is the basic form or merely a modified one.

Dimension or length of stroke is a graphical characteristic of dependent nature that can have different degrees. It is relatively independent in the case in which a stroke alone stands for a graph (the so-called “one-stroke graphs”) and in which the dimension of the stroke is limited merely by the type (size) of graphs chosen for writing. In the case of graphs composed of two or more strokes the chosen type (size) of graphs forms naturally the basic for the dimension of respective strokes as well. Within this framework, however, the dimension of strokes further depends on other factors, such as: a) the dimensional kind of graphs (some graphs are by their very nature “greater” and others “smaller”); b) the complexity of the graphical structure of the graph (for example, the dimension of strokes in the same graphical unit is different if that unit stands for an independent graph and if it is merely a graphical component of another complex graph); and c) the calligraphic rules (for example, in combination of two straight horizontal strokes the first one is, as a rule, shorter than the second).

Position of strokes is essentially of three kinds: horizontal, vertical and oblique. Position is the graphical characteristic which is relevant for the classification of strokes but varies in degree. While the horizontal and vertical positions are positionally unvariable, the oblique one allows various inclinations. Consequently, there can arise the question whether this or that inclination of the stroke is its distinctive graphical characteristic or whether it is merely some kind of positional variant. In the case of straight-line strokes the position, i.e. horizontal or vertical, is the main distinctive feature for the classification of strokes: horizontal straight stroke and vertical straight stroke belong to two different kinds of strokes characterized by specific combinatoric features.

Position is a graphical characteristic closely connected with combinatoric characteristics of strokes. This is apparent particularly in the case of strokes that have oblique position (including the so-called points which are, in fact, short strokes with diverse inclination). The degree of their inclination frequently varies depending on the stroke with which they combine or correlate in the graphical structure, on the way the strokes combine, on the point of linkage of the strokes, and on the position of the stroke in the graphical structure.

Direction of writing is a graphical characteristic related to the formative aspect of graphical units (i.e. strokes in our case). The direction of writing strokes is in

part natural and in part conventional; it has become a fixed orthographical rule. Direction of writing can appear indirectly even in the graphical form of strokes. This is especially evident in writing with brush (e.g. in different thickness of different parts of a stroke, in shading, etc.). In writing with pen the influence of direction of writing on the graphical form of a stroke is less apparent. Direction of writing is a distinct feature in some of the strokes having oblique inclination and not differing too much in form (e.g. as far as the form, length and position are concerned, there is a coincidence in certain variant forms of the stroke called piě – a slant stroke written downwards from right to left – and the stroke tí – a rising stroke written upwards from left to right).

3.1 Individual characteristics are an integral part of the graphical characteristics of strokes. The different nature of individual characteristics of various kinds of strokes creates different prerequisites and possibilities for their graphical variability. Thus, for example, the horizontal and vertical straight strokes can vary in fact only as far as the length is concerned, while the oblique strokes that are curved can vary as to the length, inclination, degree of curving and even direction of writing.

Apart from the simple strokes that are the bearers of basic graphical characteristics (as mentioned above) there are also compound strokes formed essentially from the actually existing strokes of the simple form (or their variations). The number of realizable graphical variants of those strokes is increased by the existence of various combinatoric possibilities of individual varying parts of the given stroke.

3.2 As to the classification of strokes decomposed from a given number of graphs, it is the distinctive nature of their graphical characteristics that serves as the basis for their classification. The distinctive nature may concern one or several graphical characteristics. This criterion cannot be, however, regarded as absolute or sufficient for the classification of strokes. Difficulties arise as soon as we try to apply this criterion, the reason being that we can hardly employ an exact criterion when evaluating the graphical characteristics of individual strokes; we cannot, for example, univocally determine the tolerance concerning the length of a stroke and cannot, therefore, univocally decide whether the different length of two strokes under comparison exceeds the limits of such tolerance or not. There is a similar situation in the cases concerning other graphical characteristics such as position, curving, etc. This is so because in the fixed graphical structure strokes play the role of structural units entering, in the framework of the given structure, into mutual combinations. The graphical structure then forms the framework within which the potential possibilities of the graphical characteristics of a stroke can manifest themselves. Thus, if we speak about individual kinds of strokes we in fact think in terms of graphical units representing an abstraction – i.e. units with common graphical characteristics which imply an element of variability. If we speak, for example, of the horizontal straight stroke as a formal unit of the graphical structure we mean the stroke with graphical characteristics expressed explicitly in the name of the stroke, and with

implicit variable graphical characteristics that can be expressed by terms “shorter” or “longer”. To express graphically a general “horizontal straight stroke” would in fact mean to choose one of its variable forms (varying in length) as the basic one (in this concrete case the choice would probably fall on the actual horizontal straight stroke that is a graphical form of the grapheme representing the language unit yī in the sense of “one”).

3.3 The strokes that are units of the graphical structure and enter into mutual combinations can be characterized by the succession of their combination as well as the kind of combination they form. Succession is a formative element of the graphical structure and concerns, therefore, higher graphical units than stroke (i.e. the graphical components and graphs that are not discussed in this study). Strokes alone can then be characterized and classified on the basis of the fact whether they have – in the framework of a higher graphical unit and according to the succession – the nature of an initial, final or medial stroke, or whether they can be used in a different succession.

There are essentially three kinds of stroke combinations: a) separated (if the strokes of a combination do not meet), b) connected (if they link at a certain point), and c) intersecting (if they cross). Of course, more than two strokes can combine within one graphical unit and thus form various kinds of combinations.

4.0 As follows from the observations above, the minimal graphical units – the strokes – have a specific place in the Chinese graphemic system. On the one hand, the formalization of the graphical form enables their decomposition from the graphical structure as well as their description and categorization on the basis of fundamental graphical characteristics. On the other hand, however, strokes exhibit features of bound structural units in which the graphical structure determines the variable element of their graphical characteristics. Thus there exists a kind of subordination of the graphical characteristics of the minimal units to the higher structural units whose graphical form has a conventionalized nature and employs certain calligraphical criteria.

The subordination to the graphical structure of a higher graphical unit and the influence of the calligraphical aspect are apparent, for example, in the phenomenon which we may call “graphical conversion”, i.e. the change of one type of stroke into another. Graphical conversion occurs in a stroke of a higher graphical unit of which the stroke is an integral part provided the higher graphical unit has a certain position in the graphical structure of a graph. A common graphical conversion is, for example, the change of a horizontal straight stroke into a rising one, provided the horizontal stroke is the final stroke of the graphical component that has its left position in the graphical structure of a graph. There are many cases of positionally conditioned graphical conversions of strokes; some of them have become a calligraphical norm, others are of a more or less facultative character.

5.0 This study has dealt with selected aspects of the examination and description of graphical units from the point of their formal graphical characteristics. Naturally, a number of other problems concerning the graphical form of higher graphical units were not discussed here. The same is true of the problems pertaining to the function of minimal graphical units from the point of their distinctive nature in respect to the graphical representation of language units. This is a complicated question which does not, of course, concern the formal graphical level but the graphemic one.

SPECIFICITY OF MONOSYLLABIC DENOMINATIONS IN CHINESE SEMANTIC AND GRAPHEMIC SYSTEMS

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *The distinction between the spoken and written form is important for characterizing monosyllabic denominations in Chinese. Monosyllabic denominations in their phonetic shape have, except for so-called erizedated words, the nature of either un-motivated names or motivated names of other than a descriptive type. The basic specific feature of these denominations, which results from the typological character of the Chinese language at the lexical level (the root nature of monosyllabic words and a high degree of homonymy), is their low identifiability in an isolated position. In their graphical form, monosyllabic denominations are represented by graphemic units, which from a synchronic point of view can have the nature of both motivated and unmotivated graphemes. Motivation on the level of writing has its own specific features and results from the typological specificity of the graphemic system that forms the Chinese character script. As a result, it often occurs that unmotivated monosyllabic denominations are motivated on the level of writing or that there is interference of motivation on both levels.*

Keywords: *Chinese language, Chinese writing system, monosyllabic denominations, motivated denomination, grapheme*

The terms ‘denomination’ or ‘naming unit’ refer to linguistic units from the point of their naming function, i.e. the linguistic units denominating the objective sphere (objects, phenomena, actions, physic and somatic states etc.) reflected as concepts in human consciousness.

As the denomination represents the concept expressed by a certain linguistic form and because the concept is the reflection of an objective sphere in human mind, its meaning can be considered as having two modes – sense and denotation (designation).

On the lexical plane, denominations do not, as a rule, relate to concrete entities of the objective sphere but denote them generally: their lexical meaning represents a conceptual generalization of the essential marks of concrete entities. Only such naming units as some proper names and some other expressions denoting unique objects can have a concrete denotation. Consequently, denomination on the lexical level will often have a definite sense but a general denotation. On the other hand, if being used in utterance, they can refer both to concrete individual entities and/or to a class of entities. The concretization of lexical meaning manifests itself here in that of denoted object with the sense remaining the same. A closer restriction

of the general lexical meaning of the denomination in utterance can be, moreover, expressed explicitly (e.g. by some kind of determinatives).

The nature of denominations in relation to the form of expressing the conceptual reflection of the objective sphere can be of motivated or unmotivated character. In the latter case there is no coherence between the appearance of denomination and its meaning (i.e. the conceptual content), while motivated denomination is characterized particularly by this kind of coherence.

According to the character of motivating reference and the way in which the motivating reference is employed in various denominations, the motivated denominations in Chinese can be essentially divided as follows:

1. **DESCRIPTIVE DENOMINATIONS** – the meaning of denomination is more or less indicated by the meaning of its constituents; the denomination refers by its structure to one or more denominations as the basic ones, e.g. zhūròu – pork (zhū – pig, ròu – meat),
2. **TRANSPOSITIONAL SEMANTIC DENOMINATIONS** – the relation to the other denomination as basic one is semantic par excellence; the motivating reference is based on certain common features of the denoted objects, and the meaning of transpositional semantic denomination in relation to the basic denomination can be characterized as figurative, e.g. zhōng – a clock: zhōng – a large bell,
3. **CORRELATIVE SEMANTIC DENOMINATIONS** – one denomination refers to the other with which it forms a correlative pair of a high degree of semantic and formal affinity, with sound alternation performing the role of word-formative element; as the direction of motivation from the synchronical point of view is often difficult to establish within such a pair, words of the pair can be on principle supposed as being of mutual motivated character, e.g. hǎo – good: hào – to be fond of,
4. **IMITATIVE DENOMINATIONS** – denomination relates to a denoted phenomenon of special kind – to the natural sounds and voices; phonemic shape of denomination refers here to imitated sounds and voices, e.g. miē (sound of bleating of sheep).

Denominations, as concerns their motivated or unmotivated character, can be examined either from the angle of their formation in a denominative act or from the synchronic point of view considering them as complete naming units analyzable on the basis of an associative analysis in relation to the other denominations as basic ones or in the relation to the denoted phenomena (i.e. in imitative denominations). In the present paper the synchronous aspect of the matter will be considered in the first place.

Denomination can be represented by one or by several words.¹ Unmotivated (simple) denominations are as a rule expressed by one word (in some special cases, however, denomination consisting of several words can be felt as a simple denomination in common linguistic awareness, e.g. 'fata morgana' in some languages). Motivated denominations are frequently expressed by one or more words. In our analysis we shall deal with denominations represented by one word only.

Denominations as to the material means of their realization can appear in two forms: oral and written. Being lexical units inventoried in a dictionary they are naturally recorded in a written form. In linguistic manifestation denomination can appear in oral and/or written form. In comparison with the oral form, the written one has its specific features which, view of the different types of script used in different languages, can be of different relevancy for an analysis of denominations in a language. Also the different orthography employed in the languages with the same type of script can cause discrepancy of a different degree between the oral and written form of denomination (e.g. in the phonemographic type of script the different orthography, i.e. phonemic, etymologic, historic etc., results in a different discrepancy between homophony of oral denominations and homography of written denominations). In the Chinese language, the writing system of which consists of a special type of graphemes (i.e. so-called Chinese characters) the differences between the oral and written forms of denomination concern various aspects which are of great relevancy for an analysis of denominations in the language.² Specific features of oral and written forms of denominations in Chinese shall be demonstrated on examples of monosyllabic denominations, for the very reason that they are in one-to-one relation with the graphemes representing them (with the exception of the so-called erized words which are represented by two graphemes). The oral form of monosyllabic denominations shall be in this paper recorded in the Pinyin transcription (specific features of this 'written form' shall not be considered here).

Generally speaking, specific features of monosyllabic denominations in Chinese follow from the typological character of the Chinese language. Chinese belongs essentially to the analytic language type; its monosyllabic words are of root nature (except for the above mentioned erized monosyllabic words), so that their form alone inheres no indicator of 'part of speech' and, consequently, no indicator of their potential syntactic functions. Truly enough, there are some cases in which the alternation of segmental and/or suprasegmental phonemes (tones) has a distinctive word-class function (i.e. in the above mentioned correlative semantic denomina-

¹ In the Chinese language, in which the borderline between morphology and syntax is not often quite distinct, it is sometimes difficult to delimitate the boundary of a word and to state whether the components of the denomination under discussion have the word status or not. The problem of word in the Chinese language is beyond the range of this paper; the term 'word' will be employed here in a general sense, as a working term without further characterization of its specificity in Chinese.

² It is the denotative function in relation to motivation which is the most common basis for analysis and description of the specificity of Chinese linguistic units both in oral and written form.

tions); these alternations, however are not regular and have no general value (cf. for example: bèi – the back; bēi – to carry on one's back; hǎo – good; hào – fond of, fond of ...-ing; cháng – long; zhǎng – to grow, etc.).

Another characteristic feature of Chinese monosyllabic words is a high degree of their homophony (if considering both the free and bound forms of monosyllabic meaningful linguistic units, the number of homophonous units amounts in some cases to several dozen). There are, for example, the following words with the same phonemic shape /qí/:³

1. qí (literary style) – his, her, its, their etc.
2. qí – a flag
3. qí (auxiliary noun) – an issue (of periodical)
4. qí – chess
5. qí – to ride (astride)
6. qí – 1. even, of equal length or height
2. to make even or neat, to straighten up

The above mentioned specific features of Chinese monosyllabic words reflect themselves in some respect in the naming function of those linguistic units, namely, they weaken the identifying function of this kind of denominations (the relation to denoted conceptual content) as well as their distinctive function (the relation to other denominations). Thus the monosyllabic denominations, being in an isolated position (e.g. as lexical items), are often felt to be vague; their phonemic shape is frequently not sufficient to be associated with the respective conceptual content. Being regarded from the point of the status of words they can be rather considered potential words which become actual words only after being put into a context (linguistic or situational). In other words, the characteristic feature of monosyllabic words in Chinese is their weak autonomy in an isolated position. If, for example, we introduce them as lexical items in a dictionary, they cannot be identified without an explanation of their meaning. If compared with the lexical items of synthetical language which are, as a rule, conventionally treated in dictionaries in a grammatical form, the corresponding form of Chinese monosyllabic items should be expressed 'analytically' by introducing the respective lexical unit in its minimal context as an identifying frame for its lexical meaning as well.⁴ For example, the above quoted homophonous of the phonemic shape /qí/ can be treated in the following 'analytical' forms:

- qí₁: (bù jì) qí (shù) – his, her, its, their etc. (as in 'its number cannot be counted')
 qí₂: (yī miàn) qí – a flag (as in 'one flag')
 qí₃: (dì-yī) qí (zǎzhì) – an issue (as in 'the first issue of periodical')

³ According to the *Concise Dictionary of Spoken Chinese* by Yuen Ren Chao and Lien Sheng Yang (1966), besides the items enlisted in this dictionary as free words, we are quoting here also the items enlisted there as words of literary style and auxiliary nouns.

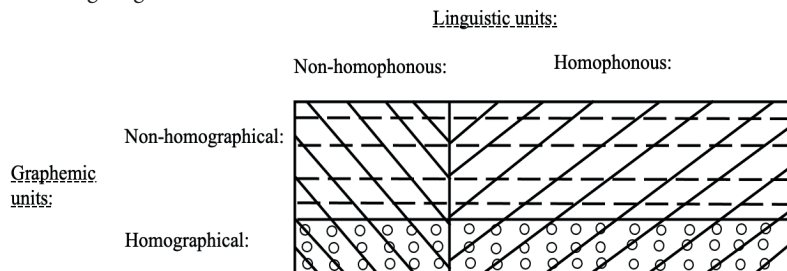
⁴ A somewhat different situation exists in polysyllabic lexical items which have comparatively a much higher degree of autonomy, because of their linguistic forms within the frame of which the monosyllabic linguistic units enter into mutual combinations, the degree of their determinateness is higher and that of their homophony lower than in monosyllabic words.

- qí₄: (xià) qí – chess (as in ‘to play chess’)
 qí₅: qí (mǎ) – to ride (as in ‘to ride a horse’)
 qí₆: 1. (bùfá hěn) qí – even, regular (as in ‘marching (pace) is keeping in order’)
 2. (shuǐ) qí (le àn) – to make even (as in ‘water has leveled the bank’)

The selected minimal context in the function of both ‘analytical’ form and semantic identifying frame of respective monosyllabic linguistic units should be introduced in brackets because, in spite of its specific lexicographic function, it has here the exemplifying nature only.

As to the written form of Chinese monosyllabic denominations (i.e. monosyllabic denominations recorded by Chinese characters), their specificity follows from the specific features of this type of writing system.

Taking into consideration which kind of linguistic units is represented by Chinese characters, the Chinese writing system can be characterized as essentially logomorphemographic (or morphemographic) type of script.⁵ As the graphemic units of this script denote primarily monosyllabic meaningful units, there is no direct dependence of the form of graphemes on the phonemic shape of their linguistic references. This manifests itself, among other things, in a discrepancy between the homography of graphemic units and the homophony of linguistic units denoted by them: the majority of both non-homophonous and homophonous linguistic units is represented by different (i.e. non-homographic) symbols and only a fraction of them is represented homographically. Schematically this can be expressed by the following diagram:



A considerably lower degree of homography of Chinese characters than the homophony of their monosyllabic linguistic references is one of important specific features of the Chinese writing system resulting in heightening the identifiability of monosyllabic denominations in a written form.

Speaking about the identification of denominations in a written form it is necessary to consider the class of users of the Chinese characters appearing in those denominations. In this connection it is important to point out another specific fea-

⁵ On the relation between Chinese characters and the linguistic units denoted by them, see for more details the author's paper 'On the Nature of Chinese Characters' (1968).

ture of Chinese characters concerning the pragmatic aspect and stemming from the typological specificity of the Chinese writing system: in the process of mastering Chinese, characters by their users, individual graphemic symbols are as a rule memorized as graphical representatives of contextually determined (monosyllabic) linguistic units, i.e. as linguistic units in their special 'analytical' form. Therefore, being in an isolated position (for example as lexical items) they are identifiable as graphical representatives of monosyllabic linguistic units by one or another potential context. For example, the grapheme 旗 will not be identified as a graphical symbol of an isolated linguistic form qí, the meaning of which is vague and the phonemic shape of which shares more potential meaningful linguistic units, but as the graphical symbol of contextually determined linguistic unit qí – for example by one of potential context, e.g. (yī miàn) qí – (one) flag. Thus the graphemes can in some degree compensate for the 'analytical' form of their linguistic references, which is necessary for their identification in an isolated position. In this respect, however graphemes are not entirely identical with the linguistic units in the 'analytical' form, since individual graphemes can denote linguistic units which are polysemic and/or which can be employed in various grammatical functions and, in the case of homography, one grapheme can denote different linguistic units. Nevertheless, as to its ability to be associated with one or another determined linguistic units, the degree of identifiability of a grapheme is comparatively high. For this reason, a grapheme can play the role of an identifying graphical form of the linguistic unit in an isolated position (it can be introduced in brackets behind the respective linguistic unit), e.g. qí /其/, qí /旗/, qí /骑/ etc. If we start from the grapheme as the graphical representative of a linguistic unit, considering there are some cases of homography, the denoted linguistic unit should be placed behind the grapheme, e.g. 扇 /shàn/ – a fan, 扇 /shān/ – to fan. The above stated two kinds of recording shall be employed in the next description in this study.

Another specific feature of the Chinese writing system is the variety of graphical means employed in the denotative function of its graphemes. Graphemes are conventionalized graphic symbols and their present graphic shape is the result of a long period of development, in the course of which various principles of grapheme formation have been employed with a different degree of productivity at different stages of development. Different principles employed in the formation of graphemes have resulted in a different relation of the graphic shape of graphemes to denoted linguistic units. The coherence between the graphic shape of denotative graphemic unit and denoted linguistic units become, however, in many cases concealed as a result of considerable changes in the graphic shape of graphemes and the lexical meaning of denoted linguistic units in the course of long development of both the Chinese writing system and the Chinese language. From the synchronic point of view, employing the analogical criteria as in the case of linguistic naming units, individual graphemes as to their denotative function can be characterized as exhibiting or not exhibiting coherence between their graphic shape and conceptual content (and through it the denoted phenomenon) of denoted linguistic units; in the former case we can speak

about motivated denotative graphemic units and in the latter about non-motivated denotative graphemic units. As follows from the typological character of the Chinese script, the specificity of the denotative function of its graphemes consists in the fact that the motivated character of graphemes can be the matter of the graphemes denoting both free morphemes (words) and bound morphemes.

Motivated denotative graphemic units can be essentially divided into the following kinds:

1. IMITATIVE GRAPHEMES – their graphic shape refers to the phenomenon that is graphically imitated. Graphemes belonging to this kind are those traditionally called ‘pictograms’, i.e. graphemes schematically drawing concrete objects. The motivated character of this type of graphemes is directly dependent on the resemblance of the graphic shape of the grapheme to the imitated object; as a result of the formalization of the graphic shape of graphemes in the course of their development, however, the graphic shape of many pictograms has considerably changed being subordinated to formal graphic aspects, so that most of the original pictograms have lost their motivated nature. Nevertheless, there can be found some graphemes of the present form the graphic shape of which has preserved certain pictographic features; their graphic shape did not fully lose the resemblance to the original imitated object. To this kind of residual ‘pictograms’ can be ranged such graphemes (representing now bound morphemes) as 口 /kǒu/ – mouth, 木 /mù/ – wood, 日 /rì/ – the sun, 月 /yuè/ – the moon etc. The specific feature of motivated graphemes of the imitative type consists in the twofold aspects of their denotative function: primarily, they are graphic representatives of respective linguistic units; secondly, their graphic shape refers to objects mediated by the conceptual content of the linguistic units. The motivated character of these graphemes has here merely a subsidiary nature; it can play a role in the process of mastering these characters as well as in their identification.

2. INDICATIVE (SYMBOLIC) GRAPHEMES – the graphic shape refers to the conceptual content of denoted linguistic unit indicating it by intuitive symbolics expressed by graphic means. This kind of graphemes has represented at any time only a small part of the total number of graphemes; in spite of the changes in the graphic shape during the development of the Chinese writing system there are some graphemes that have preserved their motivated character, for example some of the graphemes denoting numerals, i.e. 一 /yī/ – one, 二 /èr/ – two, 三 /sān/ – three; in the originally indicative graphemes 上 /shàng/ – up, upper, above, and 下 /xià/ – down, lower, below, the degree of motivated character is somewhat lower; the intuitive symbolics are more or less distinct here only if both graphemes stand in opposition and if their graphic form is compared.

Imitative and indicative graphemes are denotative graphemic units of similar nature: their motivated character depends on the graphic shape alone so that both kinds of graphemes can be ranged under one denotative type.

3. SEMANTIC HOMOGRAMS – the grapheme denoting a linguistic unit refers to the same grapheme denoting another linguistic unit as the basic one; motivating reference is based on the semantic relation of both denoted linguistic units. The semantic relation of linguistic units denoted by the same grapheme can have the nature of motivating reference of various kinds, namely those which can be found in transpositional semantic denominations and correlative semantic denominations.⁶ Thus the semantic homograms expressing the relation between denoted linguistic units can be essentially divided into two kinds:

1. Semantic homograms denoting basic and transpositional denominations (the phonetic shape of both linguistic units is identical), as e.g.:
月 /yuè/ – the moon /bound morpheme/: 月 /yuè/ – a month
2. Semantic homograms denoting two correlative semantic denominations (in the phonemic shape of both linguistic units there appears an alternation of phoneme and/or tone):
稱 /chēng/ – to weigh: 稱 /chèn/ – balanced, symmetrical

4. DERIVED INDICATIVE GRAPHEMES – the grapheme refers to another basic grapheme from which it is derived by adding a graphic element (stroke) which has the function of an indicative marker. The motivating reference of the derived grapheme stems from the original motivated character of the basic grapheme (regularly a pictogram by origin) on the basis of which the conceptual content of denoted linguistic unit is indicated by a graphic modification. The degree of motivated character of this kind of grapheme depends on the degree of the motivated character of the basic grapheme, on the intelligibility of the indicative function of added marker, and on the semantic relation of both basic and derived graphemes. This kind of graphemes includes for example:

- 本 /běn/ – a root (the grapheme refers to the basic grapheme 木 /mù/ – wood, tree; the derivational graphic element marks the ‘base’ in the pictogram 木 thus indicating the conceptual content of the linguistic unit denoted by this grapheme).
- 刃 /rèn/ – the edge of a blade (the grapheme refers to the basic grapheme 刀 /dāo/ – a knife; the derivational graphic element marks the ‘edge’ in the pictogram 刀 thus indicating the conceptual content of the linguistic unit denoted by this grapheme).

This kind of grapheme must be distinguished from those which, from a purely formal graphic point of view, seem to be ‘derivatives’ as well; some of them, due to

⁶ As our approach to the analysis of the denotative function of graphemes is the same as that to the analysis of denominations, i.e. synchronic one, we shall regard as semantic homograms the graphemes denoting such linguistic units that are now considered different words (regardless of whether they are originally belonged to the one etymon) but at the same time having certain semantic relation. In some cases, however, this semantic relation is not quite obvious and, consequently, the motivated character of the homographic representative is not apparent either, e.g. 本 /běn/ – root: 本 /běn/ – volume (auxiliary noun).

a semantic relation between linguistic units denoted by graphemes which are in correlation, have the nature of quasi-derived indicative graphemes. Compare for example:

王 /wáng/ – a king: 玉 /yù/ – jade

尸 /shī/ – a corpse: 户 /hù/ – door; a household (AN)

弋 /yì/ – to shoot (lit.): 戈 /gē/ – a spear (lit.)

乌 /wū/ – a crow; black (bound morpheme): 鸟 /niǎo/ – a bird

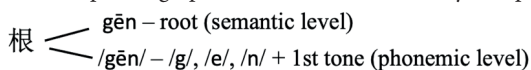
5. DESCRIPTIVE-SYMBOLIC GRAPHEMES – i.e. compound graphemes composed of two or more ‘significant’ graphic components. Every component of a compound grapheme refers to an autonomous grapheme as the graphic representative of a linguistic unit or to a ‘significant’ systemic graphic unit (called ‘signific’). The motivating reference of the descriptive-symbolic grapheme functions as a suggestion of the conceptual content of the linguistic unit denoted by the grapheme. Some of these graphemes have an evidently descriptive nature, such as, for example, the simplified grapheme 尘 /chén/ – dust, composed of components 小 /xiǎo/ – small and 土 /tǔ/ – earth, soil, dust, where the single components are in vertical succession corresponding to the succession of the graphemes to which these components refer, if being employed as graphic representatives of the components of descriptive denomination (cf. e.g. the descriptive denomination of the analogical structure in 小人 /xiǎorén/ – a mean man, 国土 /guótǔ/ – territory of a country etc.). More often, however, the conceptual content of denoted linguistic unit is suggested by a combination of these ‘significant’ graphic components with symbolics; in such cases, the original motivation on the basis of which the respective grapheme was formed is, from the synchronic point of view, often quite obscure, in spite of the clear reference provided by its structural components. For example, the grapheme 男 /nán/ – man, male, is composed of two ‘significant’ graphic components, one of which refers to the grapheme 田 /tián/ – field, and another to the grapheme 力 /lì/ – strength; from the reference provided by these components, however, one can hardly deduce the meaning (conceptual content) of the linguistic unit that has to be denoted by the respective compound grapheme. In some cases the motivated character of graphemes of the descriptive-symbolic type is based on the motivating reference of the ‘significant’ components of the grapheme and, at the same time, on utilizing the factor of position in the graphic structure. For example, in the grapheme 尖 /jiān/ – sharp, pointed, etc., the graphic components referring to the graphemes 小 /xiǎo/ – small and 大 /dà/ – great, large, are arranged in the graphic structure so that the meaning of the linguistic unit denoted by this compound grapheme is suggested periphrastically ‘above small, below great’. In the grapheme 东 /dōng/ – east, the meaning of denoted linguistic unit is suggested by the motivating reference of graphic components to the graphemes 日 /rì/ – sun and 木 /mù/ – tree, and by the arrangement of these ‘significant’ components in the structure of grapheme: the sun behind a tree, i.e. the direction of the sunrise.

Generally speaking, the motivating reference of structural components of graphemes of the descriptive-symbolic type is often merely a weak clue for the identification, i.e. for allotting to them a respective linguistic unit.

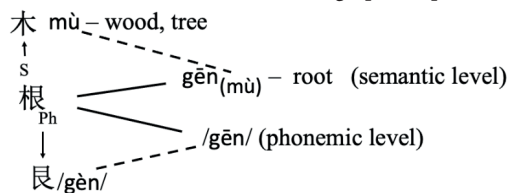
Very frequently, this type of graphemes is, from the synchronic point of view, felt as unmotivated; many of them have lost their motivating character in consequence of semantic changes of the linguistic units denoted by them in the course of development of the Chinese language. In many cases, the motivated character of the graphemes originally composed of 'significant' graphic components was concealed in consequence of considerable changes in both the graphic form and structure in the course of development of the Chinese graphemic system. As an example can be used the grapheme 走 /zǒu/ – to walk, originally composed of components which represented the drawing of a walking man (upper component) and foot (lower component), suggesting the meaning 'to run, to hurry'.

6. THE CLASS-INDICATING COMPOUND GRAPHEMES, i.e. graphemes composed as a rule of two components of a different nature: one component, usually called 'phonetic', has the nature of a phonetic homogram; it refers to another (basic) grapheme, even though on the phonemic level of graphical representation only (from the point of grapheme formation, the 'phonetic' is mostly an independent grapheme by origin borrowed on the basis of phonetic identity or similarity in order to form a compound grapheme); another component is 'signific' (classifier, determinant, radical) which refers to another (basic) grapheme or systemic graphic unit on the semantic level of graphic representation (i.e. it refers to graphemic units denoting certain linguistic units in their integrity of phonemic shape and semantic content). The denotative function of graphemes composed of 'phonetic' and 'signific' components can be demonstrated on the grapheme 根:

1. The compound grapheme denotes in its entirety a respective linguistic unit:



2. The graphic components of the compound grapheme denoting a respective linguistic unit refer to a different level of graphic representation:



In this kind of graphemes the motivating reference concerns one of these two components only, namely, the 'signific' one. The motivating reference of the 'signific'

to the other graphemic unit is of classificatory nature: it indicates that the linguistic unit denoted by the respective compound grapheme is classed to a given (as a rule superior) semantic category. For example, the graphemes 松 /sōng/ – pine tree, 柱 /zhù/ – a pillar, 根 /gēn/ – root, 梨 /lí/ – a pear, and many other graphemes, have the common ‘signific’ referring to the independent grapheme 木 /mù/ – wood, tree, which indicates that the linguistic units denoted by these graphemes are classed into the same semantic category, namely, that represented by the semantic content of the linguistic unit denoted by the grapheme 木. Owing to the classificatory nature of ‘signific’ in the denotative function of this kind of compound graphemes, we suggest to call them ‘class-indicating compound graphemes’.

Graphemic units, to which the ‘signific’ of class-indicating compound graphemes refers, can be either independent graphemes (denoting meaningful linguistic units) or bound ‘significant’ structural graphemic units; both are entities of the system of the so-called ‘bùshǒu’, i.e. ‘class heads’ or ‘keys’ (translated also as ‘radicals’) serving for arranging all graphemes of the Chinese script into dictionaries. From the synchronic point of view, the original etymological sense of some ‘significs’ is no more realized by the common user of the Chinese script, and, consequently, the motivated character of this kind of graphemes can be deprived. The deprivation of the motivated character of this kind of graphemic units can also be due to other factors, such as, for example changes in the graphical form, or those in the semantic content of the linguistic units denoted by the respective grapheme. There are also many cases in which the ‘signific’ is felt to be ‘inadequate’ (the same holds good for the ‘phonetic’). The situation becomes problematic, however, if we realize that the ‘significs’ are often employed in an extended meaning.⁷

Unmotivated graphemes can be divided into two kinds:

1. NON-SEMANTIC HOMOGRAMS, i.e. graphemes originally denoting a linguistic unit which have been borrowed to denote another linguistic unit without a semantic relation to either. The borrowing is often based on the phonetic identity or similarity of both denoted linguistic units (phonemic homogram), such as e.g. the simplified grapheme 只 /zhǐ/ – a single, one of a pair, which is a borrowing of the grapheme denoting the linguistic unit zhǐ – only. In some cases the same grapheme can also be employed to denote non-homophonous linguistic units, such as, e.g. 乐 /lè/ – happy, to laugh, and 乐 /yuè/ – music; 行 /xíng/ – to walk (lit.) and 行 /háng/ – a row, a line, etc.
2. OTHER UNMOTIVATED GRAPHEMES. They form a broad scale of graphemes of different types: from originally motivated graphemes of various grapheme-formative categories which have lost their motivated character to the graphemes formed as formal graphical signs.

⁷ For some aspects of this problem, see the author’s article ‘A Remark to the Synchronic Analysis of Chinese Writing’ (1971).

The categories outlined above describe the main types of graphemes of the Chinese writing system from the point of their denotative function (a more detailed classification and description of different denotative types of graphemes would go beyond the aim of this article). Let us now attempt a brief preliminary conclusion about the specificity of the denotative function of the graphemes in the Chinese writing system:

1. Graphemes of the Chinese writing system are characterized by a variety of graphical forms resulting from the typological nature of the Chinese script. Different linguistic units are in most cases denoted by different graphemes. Homography is one of the means of denoting linguistic units and as it can be of various nature, the homography of graphemic units and homophony of linguistic units does not, consequently, fully overlap.
2. The Chinese graphemic system operates with a variety of denotative graphical means, stemming from the variety of principles of grapheme formation; some of them have ceased to be productive in the course of development of the Chinese script, others have remained fully productive. At the present stage of development of the Chinese script the motivated character of graphemes based on the reference of structural graphic units is essential, while the motivated character of graphemes based on the graphic form itself is marginal. As the motivated character of graphemes is a matter of the specificity of the Chinese graphemic system, there is no causal relation between the motivated character of graphemic and linguistic units in Chinese. Some aspects of this question will be mentioned in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Monosyllabic linguistic units of the Chinese language used in the naming function can be divided into the following kinds:

1. Simple (unmotivated) denominations
2. Motivated denominations:
 - a) Transpositional semantic denominations
 - b) Correlative semantic denominations
 - c) Imitative denominations
 - d) Descriptive denominations of 'erized' type (i.e. those composed of a root morpheme and suffix er)

SIMPLE MONOSYLLABIC DENOMINATIONS

They form a prevailing part of monosyllabic naming units in Chinese. The majority of them are homophonic, while the graphemes denoting them are in most cases non-homographic. As to the homographic representation of simple monosyllabic denomination, there must be excluded the cases in which the grapheme denotes merely free variants of the same linguistic unit (alternation of different phonemic shapes of the same meaningful linguistic unit denoted by the same grapheme; often this is the matter of difference between literary and spoken 'pronunciation' of the

grapheme), as for example sè ~ shǎi /色/ – colour; niào ~ suī /尿/ – urine; hóng ~ jiàng /虹/ – a rainbow; shéi ~ shuí /谁/ – who?; xiě ~ xuè /血/ – blood; nǎi ~ něi /哪/ – which?, etc.

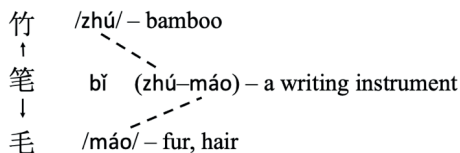
The homograms denoting different simple monosyllabic denominations are, as a rule, of unmotivated relation (phonetic homograms). Other graphemes denoting this kind of denomination can be both of motivated and unmotivated character. Let us now compare unmotivated monosyllabic denominations in their phonemic shape and if they are denoted by graphemes of motivated character.

In the case of imitative and indicative graphemes the motivating reference is of implicative character: the graphic form relates here to some mode of meaning of the linguistic unit denoted by the grapheme alone. In relation to the denoted linguistic unit the motivated character of this kind of graphemes thus has the nature of the manifestation of certain mode of meaning of the respective linguistic unit by a graphic form.

There are several unmotivated monosyllabic denominations denoted by motivated graphemes of the derived indicative type.

The denotative specificity of this kind of graphemes consists in their motivated character being of a combined nature (the indicative character of their graphic form and the reference to other graphemes from which they are derived) which is reflected in a way in the suggestion of the meaning of denoted linguistic units by the graphic form of respective graphemes. Let us take, for example, the grapheme 末 denoting the word mò – the end. The meaning of this word is suggested here by the graphic form of the respective grapheme (indicative aspect) which, at the same time, refers to the basic grapheme 木 /mù/ – wood, tree. Thus there is a logic relation between the basic and derived grapheme, namely that of ‘the whole to the part’ (tree: the end of a tree), asserting itself in the suggestion of the meaning of the denoted linguistic unit. Consequently, on the graphemic level the ‘suggested’ meaning will be ‘narrower’ than that of the denoted linguistic unit in its phonemic shape.

Unmotivated monosyllabic denominations can be further ‘motivated’ on the graphemic level by graphemes of the descriptive-symbolic type. As an example can serve us the simplified grapheme of motivated character 笔 denoting the unmotivated denomination bǐ – writing instrument. The grapheme 笔 consists of two components: 竹 (‘bound’ graphic variant form) referring to the grapheme 竹 /zhú/ – bamboo, and 毛 referring to the grapheme 毛 /máo/ – fur, hair; the motivating reference of both components combined in the graphic structure suggests the meaning of the denoted linguistic unit bǐ – a writing instrument. Schematically this can be expressed as follows:



The motivated character of descriptive-symbolic graphemes is based analogically as that of linguistic descriptive denominations. There is, however, a fundamental difference between them: in a descriptive denomination, for example in a compound word, the structural components referring to other denominations form (by their own phonemic shape) the phonemic shape of the whole denomination which conveys a certain meaning; contrary to this, a compound grapheme of the descriptive-symbolic type denotes primarily a simple denomination, and the linguistic units denoted by graphemes to which the structural components of the compound grapheme refer do not form a structural parts of the respective simple denomination. Compare, for example, the descriptive denomination *qiúchǎng* /球场/ – ground for various ball-games, with motivating reference to the denominations *qiú* /球/ – a ball and *chǎng* /场/ – a place, a field etc., and the above quoted grapheme 笔 denoting the linguistic unit *bǐ* – writing instrument, the graphic components of which refer to the graphemes 竹 /zhú/ – bamboo and 毛 /máo/ – fur, hair. The grapheme 笔 will always be identified primarily as the graphic representative of the linguistic unit *bǐ* (i.e. it will be read /bǐ/ and not /zhú-máo/); its motivated character, as in the case of other motivated graphemes, is of subsidiary nature only, which can assert itself in a specific situation.

There are many monosyllabic unmotivated denominations denoted by motivated graphemes of the class-indicating compound type. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, their motivated character is based on the motivating reference of the structural component called ‘signific’ with a classificatory function suggesting roughly the semantic category of the linguistic unit denoted by the whole compound grapheme. The semantic content of different ‘significs’ intermediated by their reference to other graphemic units can be of various kinds: the majority of ‘significs’ refers to graphemic units which are the graphemic signs of linguistic unit (denominations) denoting objects (e.g. 人 /rén/ – person, 刀 /dāo/ – knife, 口 /kǒu/ – mouth, 木 /mù/ – wood, 水 /shuǐ/ – water, 鸟 /niǎo/ – a bird, and many others), some of them refer to graphic signs of linguistic units denoting actions (e.g. 示 /shì/ – to show, reveal, 见 /jiàn/ – to see, 走 /zǒu/ – to walk, and others) or qualities (e.g. 大 /dà/ – great, large, big, 黑 /hēi/ – black, and others).

Similarly, the linguistic units denoted by different graphemes with the same ‘signific’ can denote objects, actions and qualities as well. Consequently, the ‘signific’ in its classificatory function can enter into various semantic relations with the semantic content of the linguistic units denoted by the respective compound graphemes. Let us introduce, for example, some motivated graphemes with the ‘signific’ referring to the grapheme 女 /nǚ/ – women:

- a) The relation of the object’s natural coherence:

女 /nǚ/ – women
 ↑ ↓
 奶 /nǎi/ – breast

- b) The relation of subordination:

女 /nǚ/ – women
 ↑ ↓
 娘 /niáng/ – mother

- c) The relation of the bearer to the action:

女 /nǚ/ – women
 ↑ ↓
 嫁 /jià/ – to marry (a husband)

- d) The relation of the bearer to the quality:

女 /nǚ/ – women
 ↑ ↓
 嬌 /jiāo/ – delicate

etc.

As the principal function of the ‘signific’ in the class-indicating compound graphemes is that of suggesting the semantic category of the linguistic unit denoted by the respective compound grapheme, its relation to the conceptual content of the denoted linguistic unit is often that of ‘genus’ to the ‘species’. Thus the ‘signific’ has in this kind of graphemes a similar function to that of the identifying member (genus) in descriptive denominations consisting of two members: the identifying and the differentiating ones. Compare, for example, the motivated denomination with the genus niǎo /鸟/ – a bird with a motivated grapheme with the ‘signific’ referring to the grapheme 鸟 /niǎo/ – a bird:

- A. Descriptive denomination:

huáng /黄/ – yellow
 ↑
 huángniǎo /黄鸟/ – the golden oriole (species)
 ↓
 niǎo /鸟/ – a bird (genus)

- B. Class-indicating compound grapheme:

鹰 /yīng/ – an eagle (species)
 ↓
 鸟 /niǎo/ – a bird (genus)

In the descriptive denomination huángniǎo the naming unit is determined both as to the genus and the species, and it holds good both for linguistic and graphemic levels. On the contrary, in a simple denomination such as yīng the genus is denoted on the graphemic level only; on the linguistic level the secondary denotative function of the ‘signific’ suggesting the genus could be expressed merely as an index to the denoted linguistic unit, namely

鹰 – yīng_(niǎo)

TRANSPOSITIONAL SEMANTIC DENOMINATIONS

Motivated monosyllabic denominations of this kind are based on the association of one linguistic unit which is being named with another, already named linguistic unit. In Chinese many abstracts have originated by a semantic shift from concretes; see e.g. philosophical terms such as yīn /阴/ – dark cosmogonic principle ← the north slope of hight, and yáng /阳/ – the light cosmogonic principle ← the south slope of hight. From the synchronic point of view, however, we must take into consideration only such cases in which both the original (basic) and figurative meanings of the word are in use at the present time. In some cases, however, it is difficult to decide whether we have to do with one word conveying both the primary and secondary (figurative) meanings, or whether there are two homophonous words involved. Compare, for example,

- xīn /心/ – 1. heart (the organ)
 2. heart (as concerned with feelings)
 3. mind
- bái /白/ – 1. white
 2. in vain
- yuè /月/ – 1. (bound morpheme) – the moon
 2. a month

As to graphic representation of this kind of motivated denominations, they are often denoted by the same grapheme as the denomination in its primary meaning. In the cases in which the grapheme denoting a linguistic unit in its primary meaning is of motivated nature, there arises a question about the motivated character of the grapheme if it denotes the linguistic unit in its figurative meaning. Generally it can be said that in such a case the motivated nature and the degree of motivation of the grapheme depends on the relation of the motivating basis of the grapheme to the motivating basis of the transpositional semantic denomination denoted by this grapheme, or on the relation of the motivating reference of the grapheme to the conceptual content of both the basic and figurative denominations. Let us introduce the following examples:

a) The denomination yuè /月/ a month, conveys the motivating reference to the denomination yuè /月/ – the moon (originally an independent word, now the component of the compound word yuèliang /月亮/ with the same meaning), in the basis of which there lies the concept of time – the interval between new moons. The grapheme 月 denoting the denomination yuè – the moon, is of (residual) imitative type (i.e. the drawing of a respective object), so that its motivating basis has no coherence with the motivating basis of the figurative denomination denoted by it; consequently, the grapheme 月, denoting the denomination yuè – a month is of unmotivated nature.

b) The transpositional semantic denomination zhōng /钟/ – a clock, refers to the basic denomination zhōng /钟/ – a (large) bell; both denominations are denoted by the same grapheme 钟 with the 'signific' 钅 referring to the grapheme jīn /金/ –

metals; the classificatory function of this ‘signific’ can be applied to the conceptual content of both denominations; consequently, the grapheme 钟 denoting both denominations is of motivated nature. But if this grapheme denotes zhōng – amount of time, a clock, the grapheme ceases to be motivated.

It can be concluded from this that the motivated character of graphemes is originally bound to the primary meaning of the denoted denomination and that if they denote the denomination in secondary meaning, they have often been demotivated.

On the other hand, there are also cases in which one linguistic unit is denoted by different motivated graphemes, especially by class-indicating compound graphemes with employing different ‘significs’ suggesting this or that secondary meaning of the denoted linguistic unit (or a different denotation of its meaning), for example,

suān /酸/ ——— 1. sour

 /痠/ ——— 2. sore, ache (aching of the limbs, muscular pains)

tā /他/ ——— he, it, them

 /她/ ——— she

CORRELATIVE SEMANTIC DENOMINATIONS

This kind of motivated denominations form correlative pairs of monosyllabic words with sound alternation (i.e. alternation of segmental or/and suprasegmental phoneme) marking the change of lexical and/or lexical-grammatical meaning (both words, however, share a common basis of meaning). Denominations of this kind are often denoted homographically, (i.e. by homograms with the so-called pò-dú – split readings), e.g.:

hǎo /好/ – good : hào /好/ – to be fond of

zhǎng /长/ – to grow : cháng /长/ – long

dàn /担/ – a carrying pole load : dān /担/ – to carry

As both denominations in the correlative pair are usually semantically closely related one to another, and supposing that the grapheme denoting one denomination is of motivated character, the motivated character of grapheme is often preserved when the grapheme denotes the second denomination as well; for example in the above quoted grapheme 担, denoting dàn a carrying pole-load, and dān – to carry, the ‘signific’ 扌, referring to the independent grapheme 手 /shǒu/ – hand, can be considered the motivating structural component in both cases. The same holds good for descriptive-symbolic grapheme 看, denoting 1. kàn – to look, look at, and 2. kān – to guard, where the motivating reference of its components to the independent graphemes 手 /shǒu/ – hand and 目 /mù/ – eye with utilizing the graphic structure can be considered a suggestion of the meaning of both denoted linguistic units.

In some cases both the denominations are denoted by different graphemes, differentiating often one from the other either by addition of ‘signific’ to one of them,

or by using a different ‘signific’ in both graphemes. Some of these differentiating graphemes have the status of standard graphemes, while the others have the nature of ‘vulgar’ graphemes (heterograms). Compare, for example:

晾 /liàng/ – to hang out to dry, to let cool : 凉 /liáng/ – cool, cold

嫁 /jià/ – to marry (husband) : 家 /jiā/ – home, family

背 /bèi/ – to carry on the back : 背 /bèi/ – the back

The motivated character of correlative denominations, if being denoted by this kind of graphemes, is often of complex nature: the grapheme with different of additional ‘signific’ is in its primary function the graphic representative of a respective denomination referring to another denomination of the correlative pair; at the same time, its ‘signific’ component referring to the given independent grapheme suggests the semantic category of the linguistic unit denoted by the whole grapheme and thus indicates the lexical-grammatical difference between both the denominations of the correlative pair.

IMITATIVE DENOMINATIONS

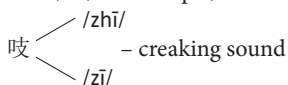
Imitative denominations occupy relatively a small part among monosyllabic denominations in Chinese. They are naming units denoting various sounds and voices produced by animate beings or by things. Being linguistic units, imitative denominations are of conventional nature and their phonemic shape is based on the phonological system of the given language, so that in different languages the phonemic shape of onomatopoeia do not have to be (and usually are not) quite the same. Monosyllabic onomatopoeia in Chinese are thus formed by a similar repertoire of phonemes as other Chinese monosyllabic linguistic units; in some cases, however, there appear certain deviations from the usual combinatory rules of Chinese phonemes in the syllabic structure, as for example, in the onomatopoeic word ‘pia’ – splash (final /-ia/ combines usually with initial consonants of the palatal series and with lateral /l/ only).⁸

As to the graphemic representation of monosyllabic imitative denominations, there are several points that have to be mentioned:

1. There are some imitative denominations that have no graphemes to denote them (in the dictionary *Hanyu Pinyin Cihui*, for example, onomatopoeia ‘c’, ‘pia’ and ‘shi’).

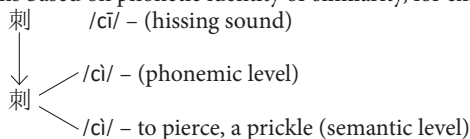
⁸ As to the suprasegmental features of onomatopoeia, they are characterized by a certain specificity as well: in dictionaries they are usually introduced as having the first tone (i.e. upper level tone). This can be intuitively explained in the following way: the semantic content of onomatopoeic words is the natural sound being imitated; this means that linguistic sounds denote unlinguistic sounds, being naturally not in mutual tonal opposition as characteristic of Chinese linguistic units. Onomatopoeia, however, being the linguistic signs of respective sounds enter into tonal opposition of the Chinese tonal system so that they must be viewed as having certain intonation; the first tone with its level contour of pitch is probably most adequate for denoting the natural melody of various natural sounds.

2. There are certain differences between some standard dictionaries in introducing imitative denominations; some onomatopoeia listed in one dictionary are absent in another. For example, onomatopoeia 嗷 /bēng/ and 哇 /kuāng/ listed in the dictionary *Hanyu Pinyin Cihui* are not listed in such standard dictionaries as *Cihai 辞海*, *Xinhua Zidian 新华字典*, Mathews' *Chinese-English Dictionary*, Oshanin's *Kitajsko-russkij slovar* etc.
3. Similar sounds and voices of different origin can be denoted homophonously and represented by the same grapheme:
 - 1) 呜 /wū/ – (sound of a crying child)
 - 2) (sound of a snarling dog)
 - 3) (sound of the blowing wind) etc.
4. The same grapheme can denote variant forms of the same onomatopoeic word, as, for example, in:

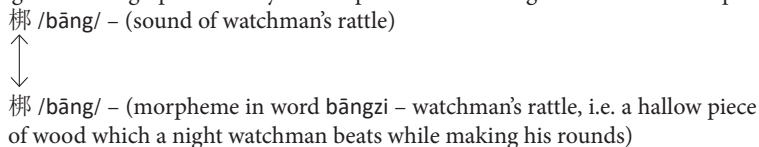


Graphemes denoting imitative denominations can be either homograms (i.e. they can be homographic with graphemes denoting non-onomatopoeic linguistic units) or special graphemes denoting onomatopoeia only.

Homograms denoting imitative denominations can be of two kinds: phonetic and semantic. Phonetic homograms are of unmotivated nature; they are phonetic loans based on phonetic identity or similarity, for example:



Semantic homograms denoting imitative denominations are comparatively rare; being motivated graphemes they have a specific semantizing function. For example:



Grapheme 梆 denoting onomatopoeic word bāng, indicates by its motivating reference that the denoting sound is that produced by an object denoted by the linguistic referent of the basic grapheme. Let us note that the motivated character of the grapheme 梆 is, in these two cases, of a different nature: when denoting the morpheme bāng in the word bāngzi – watchman's rattle, its motivated character is based on the motivating reference of 'significant' 木 /mù/ – wood; when denoting onomatopoeic word bāng the motivated character is based on the reference to the entire basic grapheme.

Non-homographic (special) graphemes denoting imitative denominations are often of a different character, but have, as a rule, a common specific feature: they contain a 'significant' graphic component referring to the grapheme 口 /kǒu/ – mouth, which can be, to a certain degree, considered a characteristic classifier of this word-class on the level of writing. Considering, however, that onomatopoeia is denoted not only by this type of graphemes and that the 'significant' 口 /kǒu/ appears also in many other graphemes denoting linguistic units of various word-classes, the classificatory function of the component 口 in graphemes denoting onomatopoeia is only partial.

Here are a few examples of motivated graphemes with the 'significant' 口:

唧 /jī/ – (high-pitched sound for the squeaking of mouse, the creaking of door, etc.); the grapheme is composed of the 'significant' 口 referring to the grapheme 口 /kǒu/ – mouth and the 'phonetic' 即 referring to the grapheme 即 /jí/.

咩 /miē/ – (sound of the bleating of sheep); the grapheme is composed of components 口 referring to the grapheme 口 /kǒu/ – mouth and 羊 referring to the grapheme 羊 /yáng/ – a sheep.

喵 /miāo/ – (sound of the mew of the cat); the grapheme is composed of the 'significant' 口 referring to the grapheme 口 /kǒu/ – mouth and 'phonetic' 苗 referring to the grapheme 苗 /miáo/; the 'phonetic' 苗 is identical here with that in the grapheme 猫 /māo/ – the cat, so that this component has here at the same time the function of partial semantic homogram indicating the actor of the sound denoted by the respective onomatopoeic word.

It can be concluded from the brief description above that in the case of onomatopoeia we are concerned with motivated denominations of a different motivated character on the linguistic and graphemic levels. While the motivation of imitative denominations on the linguistic level is based on the sounds and voices being denoted, the motivated character of graphemes denoting them is semantic. Thus we encounter on the graphemic level an interesting phenomenon: linguistic units denoting sounds and voices are 'semantized' by the motivating reference of graphic components of graphemes, and the semantization, as we have seen, can be of different kinds. The motivated character of graphemes denoting imitative denominations can be in single cases of complex nature, as in the grapheme 喵喵.

DESCRIPTIVE DENOMINATIONS OF THE 'ERIZATED' TYPE

Among the monosyllabic motivated denominations in Chinese there is one kind the motivated character of which is structural; it consists of two morphemes: the first one is lexical and refers to the other basic denomination (sometimes to the root morpheme of another basic denomination), the second one is suffix -r (mostly word-formative or diminutive suffix);⁹ for example:

⁹ A detailed description of various functions of 'erization' is beyond of the range of this paper focusing on a general characterization of Chinese monosyllabic denominations. For this problem see, e.g. Yu Min (1954); Yuen Ren Chao (1968, Chapter 4); Sun Changshu (1956: 143–153), etc.

shuǐr /水儿/ – watery part, juice



shuǐ /水/ – water

yìn /印儿/ – an imprint



yìn /印/ – to print

kòngr /空儿/ – leisure, spare time



kòng /空/ – emptied

qiúr /球儿/ – a small ball, globule



qiú /球/ – a ball

gùnr /棍儿/ – a stick



gùnzi /棍子/ – a stick

jīnr /今儿/ – today



jīntian /今天/ – today

Some ‘erized’ denominations are merely conventional or dialectical variants of non-erized denominations on the phonemic level; erization has in this case neither word-formative nor diminutive nor any other function, so that this kind of erized denominations has the character of simple denominations only. For example:

shì /事/ ~ shìr /事儿/ – thing, affair, event

zì /字/ ~ zìr /字儿/ – a written character

There is a low degree of homophony in erized monosyllabic denominations. Among comparatively frequent denominations with ‘erization’ only the following three pairs can be listed at this point:

gē /歌儿/ – a song : gē /哥儿/ – elder brother

gé /格儿/ – a frame : gé /嗝儿/ – belching

huà /画儿/ – a picture : huà /话儿/ – talk

Erized monosyllabic denominations are on the graphemic level denoted by two graphemes: the first one denotes the root morpheme, i.e. that part of denomination referring to the other denomination as basic one, while the second grapheme, always the same in all erized denominations (i.e. grapheme 儿, now simplified to 儿), denotes the ‘erizing’ element of the denomination – regardless of whether the

respective denomination is motivated or simple and regardless of different functions of the 'erizating' element in motivated descriptive denominations. Due to this specificity of graphemic representation, the grapheme 儿 can be said to be a graphemic sign of the subsyllabic element -r, i.e. a phonemic unit, and, consequently, it can be characterized as a phonemographic symbol. The monosyllabic descriptive denomination of 'erizated' type is thus denoted by a combination of independent graphemes of two types, i.e. by various logo-morphemographic graphemes combined with one phonemographic grapheme 儿.

Descriptive denominations of 'erizated' type are sometimes recorded in written texts with omitting the grapheme 儿; that is to say, the phonemically erizated denomination is denoted in the same way, i.e. homographically as the basic (i.e. non-erizated) denomination that is being referred to; compare for example:

- a) 他买了一张画。 /Tā mǎile yì zhāng huà./ – He has bought one picture.
- b) 你在那儿画什么？ /Nǐ zài nàr huà shénme?/ – What are you drawing there?

In the first sentence the grapheme 画, representing the erizated descriptive denomination huà – picture, is homographic with the grapheme 画 /huà/ – to draw, to paint, in the second sentence. Thus on the graphemic level the grapheme 画 /huà/ – a picture has the nature of **semantic homogram** referring to the grapheme 画 /huà/ – to draw, to paint. The identification of the grapheme 画 as the graphic representative of the linguistic descriptive denomination huà is conditioned here by its employment in a context only.

Descriptive denominations of 'erizated' type where erization is explicitly expressed by the grapheme 儿 and where the grapheme denoting the root morpheme of the denomination is of motivated character, have on the graphemic level a double motivated character: a linguistic motivated character graphemically expressed by two graphemes in their primary function (i.e. as graphemic signs of two parts of descriptive denomination) and, a graphemic motivated character based on the graphemic shape or graphemic structure itself. For example:

- a) 唱儿 /chàngr/ – a song (descriptive denomination of 'erizated' type denoted explicitly on the graphemic level by a combination of two graphemes 唱 and 儿).
- b) The grapheme 唱 denoting a root morpheme of the denomination 唱儿 /chàngr/ – a song, has a 'signific' 口 referring to the grapheme 口 /kǒu/ – a mouth, and by this motivating reference the whole denomination is classed into a certain semantic category.

Conclusion

The above gathered notes on the problems of monosyllabic denominations in Chinese merely point out some specific features of this kind of denomination both on the linguistic level and that of writing – without a claim to exhaust all aspects of this complicated question. In any case, however, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the brief outline above:

- a) Monosyllabic denominations in Chinese possess certain specific features which must be studied in close connection with the general typological features of the Chinese languages.
- b) There is a fundamental difference between monosyllabic and polysyllabic denominations: while monosyllabic denominations are in many cases identifiable as lexical units only in their 'analytic' form (i.e. in a certain context), polysyllabic denominations are identifiable by themselves (the 'analytic' form is, to some degree, compensated for by a mutual combination of the components of a polysyllabic denomination).
- c) The real nature of monosyllabic denominations in Chinese is in a way modified at the graphemic level by the typological specificity of graphemes of the Chinese script.
- d) Graphemes of the Chinese script form a specific graphemic system operating with various graphic means employed in various ways in denoting linguistic naming units and, consequently, enabling the existence of different kinds of denotative graphemic units of motivated character independent of the nature of denoted linguistic unit.
- e) The motivated character of graphemes of the Chinese script is a secondary property of graphemes and its function is merely subsidiary; in some cases, however, the motivated character of a grapheme is directly connected with the primary denotative function of the grapheme.
- f) The motivated character of graphemes accentuates a certain aspect of the semantic content of the denoted linguistic unit or its classing into a certain semantic category; in some cases, however, the motivated character of a grapheme can be a misleading clue for the interpretation of the denoted linguistic unit.

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Zvláštnosti jednoslabičných pojmenování v čínštině

Pro charakteristiku jednoslabičných pojmenování v čínštině je důležité rozlišení mezi jejich mluvenou a psanou podobou. Jednoslabičná pojmenování ve své fonetické realizaci mají s výjimkou tzv. erizovaných slov povahu buď značkových pojmenování, nebo motivovaných pojmenování jiného než deskriptivního typu. Obecnou zvláštností těchto pojmenování, která vyplývá z typologických zvláštností čínštiny na rovině lexika (kořenný charakter jednoslabičných slov a vysoký stupeň homonymie), je jejich nízká identifikovatelnost v izolované pozici. Ve své grafické realizaci jsou jednoslabičná pojmenování reprezentována grafemickými jednotkami, která z hlediska synchronního mohou mít povahu jak motivovaných, tak nemotivovaných grafemů. Motivovanost na rovině písma má své specifické rysy a vyplývá z typologických zvláštností grafemického systému, který tvoří čínské znakové písmo. V dů-

sledku toho dochází mnohdy k tomu, že nemotivovaná jednoslabičná pojmenování jsou motivovaná na rovině písma, nebo že dochází k interferenci motivovanosti na obou rovinách.

Особенности односложных наименований в китайском языке

Для характеристики односложных наименований в китайском языке необходимо различать их письменный и устный вид. Односложные наименования в своей фонетической реализации имеют за исключением так называемых выделенных слов или характер наименований-знаков, или мотивированных наименований иного, не дескриптивного типа. Общей особенностью этих наименований, которая вытекает из типологических особенностей китайского языка на уровне лексики (коренной характер односложных слов и высокая степень омонимии), является их низкая опознаваемость в изолированном виде. В своей графической реализации односложные наименования представлены графемическими единицами, которые с синхронной точки зрения могут иметь характер как мотивированных, так и немотивированных графемов. Мотивировка в письменном виде имеет свои специфические черты и вытекает из типологических особенностей графемической системы, которая создает китайскую знаковую письменность. Вследствие этого, очень часто случается, что немотивированные односложные наименования мотивируются на уровне письменного вида, или же наблюдается интерференция мотивировки на обоих уровнях.

THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF CHINESE CHARACTERS AND SOME OF THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THEIR REFORM

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *The first part of this paper provides a comprehensive overview of the specific features of the Chinese writing system, including the influence on the sphere of its users in various ways. It shows the advantages and especially disadvantages of Chinese characters in everyday communication. The second part introduces changes resulting from simplifying a large set of graphemes within the reforms in the second half of the twentieth century. Among other things, it points out the problem of how to pass on the literary heritage from the period before the reform. The article's last part concerns prospects of future development. It is concluded with considerations about certain problems associated with a potential transition to a new phonemographic alphabet.*

Keywords: *Chinese writing system, types of writing systems, homography, homophony, Chinese character simplification*

Chinese characters are often defined as a logographic writing, but this is not quite an exact characterization. It is valid with certain reservation for the earlier phase of the Chinese language only, when it was basically a monosyllabic language and the individual characters stood for monosyllabic words. While the Chinese characters preserved a basically monosyllabic linguistic reference¹ in the course of their development, in many cases the nature of the syllabic linguistic units nevertheless changed. The phonetic changes resulting from the development of the Chinese language (in particular, the simplification of syllable structure) produced a high degree of homophony of monosyllabic words; this led to the gradual formation of polysyllabic words, usually by combining roots. Consequently, many syllabic syntactical units were transformed into morphological units (morphemes), while retaining their graphic representation.² These important changes, however, were not reflected in the system of Chinese writing. The large number of homophonous syllabic morphemes (many syllables being the phonetic form of as many as several dozen morphemes) meant that they acquired meaning only in the context of the meaning of the whole word. In many cases the part played by each morpheme in the meaning of the whole word is no longer clear from the synchronous point of view. Native speakers of the language in question have as a rule acquired their linguistic skills spontaneously, and they do not necessarily learn etymologically compound words as motivated

¹ Only in “erized” syllables are two symbols used for a syllable; the sub-syllabic component /-r/ has its own symbol.

² The symbols of the Chinese writing system denote not only bilateral linguistic units but also unilateral (syllables), especially in polysyllabic phonetic loans.

denominations. On the other hand, the graphic symbols which originally represented certain words remained the same when they became the graphic representation of morphemes. From the diachronous point of view, the individual graphic symbols thus retain the character of symbols originally designating syntactical units, while from the synchronous point of view they are symbols distinguishing various non-homophonous and homophonous morphemes by their graphic form. In the process of mastering the written language, one sees that each symbol in the Chinese writing system (i.e. each character) represents a certain word or component of a certain word. It is thus possible to identify the graphic symbols of Chinese in an isolated position, whereas the corresponding linguistic units often cannot be unequivocally identified in their phonetic form in isolation.

Chinese characters, from the point of view of their inner structure, designate linguistic units in various ways. Proceeding from the traditional classification of Chinese characters from the point of grapheme formation, six categories of graphemes are distinguished: 1. pictograms, 2. indicative graphemes, 3. suggestive graphemes, 4. loan graphemes, 5. ideo-phonograms, 6. transfigurative graphemes. From the point of view of synchrony Chinese characters can be classified, according to the complexity of their internal structure, as either 1) simple symbols, or 2) compound symbols. Compound symbols are composed of graphic components referring to linguistic units of different levels, namely to the semantic level and the phonetic one.

From the logo-morphemographic character of the Chinese writing system it follows that every monosyllabic word or morpheme is designated by a special graphic symbol. In fact, however, besides the monographic representation of linguistic units, there are many examples of homography; i.e. the same graphic symbol is used to designate various words or morphemes, both homophonous and non-homophonous. Homography is the result of the use of the loan principle in representing linguistic units, i.e. existing symbols are used to denote homophonous or almost homophonous linguistic units. This principle is still productive at present, being one of the important methods of simplification of Chinese characters. There are also cases of the same linguistic unit being designated by several graphic symbols; sometimes these are merely variants of the same grapheme, but in other cases the use of different symbols for the same unit is functional and is considered to set the norm. A typical example is the graphic representation of the personal pronoun *tā*³ (3rd. pers. sing.) used both for persons of both sexes and for animals and things; the characters, however, differ according to whether the pronoun stands for a male person, a female person, or an animal or a thing. This is a special feature of Chinese characters which are capable of expressing by graphic means (especially by the “radicals”, i.e. classifiers) various connotations of the same linguistic unit, or of making the meaning more precise.

³ The Chinese transcription used in this text is based on the Hanyu Pinyin Fang'an (*Draft for a Transcription Alphabet of Chinese*) approved by the National People's Congress in February 1958.

The category of phono-ideograms and the homographic representation of homophonous linguistic units imply a degree of “phonetization” of the Chinese characters. This is of course a limited phonetization which does not disturb the logo-morphemographic character of the system. In phonoideographic symbols representing homophonous words or morphemes the phonetics are often different, phonoideographic symbols employing one and the same phonetic often represent linguistic units of different phonetic form, homographic symbols are used to designate not only homophonous linguistic units but non-homophonous ones as well, etc.

The characterization of the Chinese writing system as given above is thus far from adequate for showing their complexity, which is the outcome of the many changes undergone both by the language and by the characters in their common development. As a result of changes in the graphic form and the graphic structure of individual characters, changes in the lexical meaning and the phonetic form of the linguistic units concerned, the obscurity of the original motivation in the graph-formation, and of many other factors, it is often difficult from the synchronous point of view to decide which graphic symbols should be considered simple and which compound, which come under the category of “suggestive” and which under that of phonoideographic symbols. In many cases it is very difficult to determine to what extent the components of the grapheme are functional. In suggestive symbols, the symbolism of various types makes it difficult. In ideo-phonetic symbols, just as the phonetic often does not give an adequate representation of the linguistic referent from the phonetic aspect, the radicals, too, are often inadequate for placing the given symbol clearly in a semantic category.

The brief description of the nature of Chinese characters given above⁴ suggests that there is a specific relationship between the linguistic and the grapholinguistic planes. This can be seen in the following aspects of the problem:

1. The Chinese characters represent a system of graphic symbols which does not entirely cover the vocabulary of the Chinese language. This fact objectively reduces the value of this system for communication. The need to broaden the vocabulary leads to the certain need to supplement the stock of characters. The formation of new symbols and their introduction into active use for communication lags behind the needs of the times.
2. In the logo-morphemographic type of writing, the symbols designate linguistic units as an integral unity of sound and meaning. Since the graphic form of these symbols is not bound to the sound of the designated unit, they can designate words or morphemes without regard to differences of pronunciation. The value of this type of writing for communication is thus significantly enhanced both horizontally and vertically. It bridges the phonetic differences between various dialects. Differences which are so marked that speakers of different dialects cannot understand one another, although the grammatical and lexical differences are relatively small. It also facilitates to some degree the understanding of texts written in Old Chinese.

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of this question, see the author’s article “On the Nature of Chinese Characters” (1968).

3. On the grapholinguistic plane, homophonous bilateral linguistic units and, not infrequently, unilateral units, too, are often distinguished by different symbols. When the mother tongue is learnt spontaneously, polysyllabic words are viewed synthetically, particularly when their components are bound morphemes or mere syllables without lexical meaning. When the symbols of the Chinese writing system are consciously learnt, homophonous morphemes, and often the same syllables, are written by different symbols, while the same morpheme is expressed by the same symbol in different compound words. While learning, the user of script is thus forced to memorize when a given component is represented by the same symbol and when another symbol is required for a homophonous component. This leads to the conscious realization of the meaningful components of the word by corresponding graphic means. If the user of script then passes on to the study of texts in Old Chinese, a process of etymologization of the graphic symbols then occurs, which can be carried to the stage where the given symbols designate syntactical linguistic units. This helps to form an analytical approach to polysyllabic words. The graphic symbols become an important element in the literate's linguistic consciousness and function as an active identification factor when the reader encounters an unknown word, as well as an active factor when new compound words are formed. The etymologizing nature of Chinese characters also facilitates the use of archaic means of expression in the written language, as seen in the use of graphic symbols in their original linguistic reference.

4. Compound symbols whose components refer to the semantic content of the designated linguistic units have retained a certain semantic specificity. Most of the linguistic units designated by Chinese characters are simple (unmotivated) denominations, or they may be syllabic units without lexical meaning. On the other hand, when these linguistic units are represented by compound symbols having functional components, i.e. in the grapholinguistic plane, they can acquire a motivated character. In suggestive graphemes the monosyllabic linguistic units can be designated descriptively – symbolically (e.g. the symbols 尘 chén – dust, 林 lín – forest⁵ etc.). In phonoideographic graphemes the linguistic referent is placed in a certain semantic category by means of the radical: i.e. while in the phonetic form the linguistic unit is a simple denomination, in its graphic form the semantic category to which it belongs is indicated as well. In some polysyllabic simple words, where the syllables are represented by phonoideographic symbols with a reduplicating radical, the radical has a semanticizing function: the radical which refers to the content of the given word is part of the symbols used to represent the syllables of the word; by means of the radical, therefore, these symbols show that the syllables are part of a word of a certain semantic category (e.g. the radical 木 mù – tree in the symbols for the syllables (pí) 枇, and (pa) 杷 in the word 枇杷 pípa – *Eriobotrya japonica*).

⁵ 尘: components 小 xiǎo – small and 土 tǔ – earth, soil; 林: duplication of the component 木 mù – tree.

The specific features of the Chinese characters impinge on the sphere of the users of the language in various ways. Some aspects of this problem have already been touched upon above; they must now be treated more fully.

The logo-morphemographic type of writing represented by Chinese characters makes considerable demands on the reader. It is believed that at the present time several thousand graphic symbols are in everyday use. Larger dictionaries, however, which include the symbols used in Old Chinese, contain tens of thousands of characters and more. The graphic form of Chinese characters is also very complex. Before the reform of 1956–59, when many characters were simplified, the average number of strokes to a character was eleven or twelve, while some characters were composed of as many as thirty strokes. While it is true that the characters often use graphic components found in many different characters, these components are not always functional and in the case of phonoideographic characters they are often “inadequate”. In such cases, as in the simple symbols, the only method of learning the graphic form of the symbols is mechanical drilling.

In view of the logo-morphemographic character of the Chinese writing system, the process of mastering the characters is one in which the learner gradually enlarges his fund of graphic symbols; i.e. he gradually increases the number of linguistic units which he is able to express in written form, and the number of graphic symbols to which he is able to allot the appropriate linguistic reference. The concept of “literacy” in Chinese characters thus involves a quantitative aspect. We can only speak of a greater or lesser degree of literacy, according to the number of characters mastered; it is impossible to draw a clear line between literacy and illiteracy. The varying level of knowledge from one user of the language to another, in respect of the number of characters mastered, and therefore the varying degree of literacy, is a source of “noise” in the process of communication. The limited number of characters used by each individual also limits his ability to write: the choice of linguistic means of expression is bound to the ability to express these means in written symbols.

Pedagogically speaking, the involved nature of Chinese characters and the great demands this makes on the student’s time, to the detriment of other skills and knowledge, is a drawback. The need to acquire the basic graphic symbols step by step in the course of several years limits the student’s reading, which directly depends on the number of characters he has been able to learn. Zhou Youguang⁶ has calculated that the reading matter put before children in the first four years of primary school in China is roughly one sixth of that gone through in the same time in schools abroad, where phonemographic writing is used. The Chinese characters make great demands on mechanical memorizing; they necessitate constant drilling, while learning the characters in a process which lasts practically from school-age right through adulthood.

The fact that Chinese characters are so difficult is also one of the main obstacles encountered in dealing with illiteracy. The various courses arranged to teach characters to adults have not always had the desired effect. The process of mastering the

⁶ Zhou Youguang 1964.

characters is a slow one in these courses (the period of study must be spread over the winter months for the peasants) and it takes several hundred hours to learn the basic fund of characters.

On the other hand, the specificity of the Chinese characters can act as an active factor in the process of broadening the vocabulary for literate speakers of the language. In the first phase of literacy, it is the rule to study the graphic symbols representing the linguistic units already fixed in the student's vocabulary. As his knowledge of characters widens, and with it his opportunity for reading, he may find in his texts known symbols standing as components of unknown words. In the process of identifying and learning words of this kind, besides the context there is an active factor in the graphic symbols which indicate the meaning of the word by their own linguistic reference (naturally enough, this reference plays here a more or less subsidiary part). The considerable number of homophonous syllabic components makes it difficult to identify them readily in their phonetic form in this or that unknown word; they become recognizable as components with a certain semantic content in the context of the meaning of the whole word (which may, of course, be determined to some extent by its own context). For example, the separate components of the word *bàndǎotǐ* cannot be clearly identified in their phonetic form without a knowledge of the meaning of the whole word (semi-conductor), but the graphic symbols representing each component allow the user of the script to allot a certain meaning to each of them: 半 *bàn* – half, 导 *dǎo* – to lead, 体 *tǐ* – a substance. According to his degree of literacy, the student will come across new symbols more or less often in his reading, representing linguistic units which may or may not be a part of his vocabulary already. In some cases, his identification of such symbols may draw, besides the context, on the graphic components in the symbol concerned. This, however, conceals the danger of a wrong interpretation, for the conventional nature of the symbols does not allow us to decide *a priori* to what extent the components of the symbol concerned are adequate, and how they participate in the designation of the linguistic referent. This is one of the reasons for the varying interpretations of some symbols whose linguistic reference is obscure, in old Chinese texts. Nevertheless, the fact that the Chinese characters can by means of their components (or by other graphical means) suggest the meaning of the linguistic referent is due to the specific relationship between the units on the linguistic and grapholinguistic level in Chinese. This specific relation is sometimes incorrectly interpreted, suggesting that sometimes the “meaning” can be understood from the graphic symbols themselves, without their “reading” – in other words, that we do not need to know the phonetic form of the linguistic referent of the symbol in question. There are examples which would appear to support such a view; for instance, when the reader meets the symbols 忐 忑 in his text, it can happen that he does not need to “read” them in order to comprehend their “meaning”. The two graphic symbols designate the word *tǎntè* – anxious, undecided; the meaning of the word can be deduced from the relationship between the linguistic referents of the components of the two characters: the first is composed of 上 *shàng* – upwards and 心 *xīn* – heart,

the second of 下 xià – downwards and 心 xīn – heart. The meaning of the word is indicated here by the relation of the graphic components meaning “upwards” (上 shàng) and “downwards” (下 xià) to the graphic components meaning “heart” (心 xīn), and by the co-ordinating relationship of the components meaning “upwards” (上 shàng) and “downwards” (下 xià) in both symbols. The concept “anxious”, “undecided” is suggested metaphorically by the relationship of the idea of “heart” to that of “upwards” and “downwards”. If the phonetic form of the linguistic referent of these two symbols happens not to be known to the reader, it does not follow that he inevitably connects the “meaning” with the symbols used. The “meaning” of the symbol is surmised on a linguistic basis, through the mediation of linguistic substitution such as periphrase or subjectively chosen “reading”; in the case quoted here, for example, it can be the “reading” of the components 上 and 下.

This brief account of the specific features of the Chinese writing system has shown the disadvantages and the several advantages of the Chinese characters for the purpose of communication. The fact that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages has led the Chinese to attempt a reform of the writing system on many occasions in the past. In the course of their long history, Chinese characters have several times been reformed in order to make them simpler in graphic form and graphic structure, but the original type has not fundamentally changed. Not until the end of the last century did a movement for a radical reform begin to develop, preceded by the efforts of foreign missionaries to elaborate a phonetic alphabet for the Chinese language (Matteo Ricci, Nicolas Trigault and others). Beginning with that of Lu Zhuangzhang, dozens of schemes for a new alphabet have been worked out, some of which have been put into use to a greater or lesser degree.⁷

The period following the establishment of the Chinese People’s Republic saw a new phase in the movement for a reform of the Chinese characters. As early as October 1949, the Chinese Society for a Reform of the Script was formed; in 1952, the Ministry of Education set up the Chinese Committee for the Study of a Script Reform; and in 1954, the Chinese Committee for a Script Reform was formed under the auspices of the State Council. This Committee concentrated on the following fundamental tasks: to simplify the characters, to promote the “common speech”, and to work out a new phonemographic alphabet. The task facing the Committee was the creation of favourable conditions for a fundamental reform of the Chinese script.

In view of the considerable phonetic differences existing between the different Chinese dialects, a basic condition for the success of any such reform is the wide promotion of the “common speech”.⁸ One important means of furthering the spread of the “common speech” is the new alphabet, Pinyin Zimu, based on the Latin alpha-

⁷ For example, Wang Zhao’s system, the Zhuyin Zimu alphabet officially adopted in 1918 for the transcription of the Chinese characters and as means of unifying pronunciation, the Guoyu Luomazi alphabet approved in 1928 as a second transcription alphabet, the Ladinghua Xin Wenzhi alphabet.

⁸ An attempt was made in 1931–32 to work out a system of transcription of Chinese characters using the Latin alphabet; it was intended to bridge the differences between dialects. Known as Romanization Interdialectique, it was the work of two missionaries.

bet and taking the place of the Zhuyin Zimu alphabet used up to that time; it serves to indicate the standard pronunciation for the linguistic referents of the characters, and it is also being introduced into schools. The experience already gained in the reform movement was turned to account in drawing up this transcription system which was approved by the National People's Congress in 1958. In recent years, the application of Pinyin has been extended. Since 1977 it has become internationally accepted for transcribing Chinese geographical names in foreign languages using the Roman alphabet, and since 1979 it has been used for transcribing Chinese proper names in foreign language publications (diplomatic documents, news, journals, etc.) in China. It can be assumed that in the future it will become the basis of a new script to take place of the characters.

In order to make the Chinese characters less difficult, since for the time being they remain the official script of China, some of the characters have been simplified and some variants have been dropped from use. The first phase of simplification took place in four stages from 1956 to 1959; in 1964 a comprehensive list of all simplified characters was published (a total of 2,238), in 1977 (December) a list of another group of simplified characters was published (a total of 853 characters, including 60 simplified elements which can be used in the other characters – both divided into two groups according to the time when they were to be put into practice). The actual application, however, seems to be not so widely acceptable as in the case of the first group.

The reform of the Chinese script has so far been of an experimental nature and sooner or later it will enter the phase in which a decision must be taken as to how the reform is to proceed further with regard to its fundamental aims. In China, various aspects of this question were discussed in journals and newspapers as early as in the fifties, and after a pause of many years caused by the paralysis of cultural and scientific life during the period of the Cultural Revolution, the discussion was again started up in the seventies.⁹ The further simplification of the Chinese characters and a reduction of their number was requested in many articles. After the second list of simplified characters was published, however, the reaction was not unequivocally positive, and problems concerning the present phase, as well as the perspective of a further simplification of the characters are still being discussed. The effort to make the study of those characters which are still too complicated easier seems to be justifiable. But the simplification of the characters and the reduction of their number is not merely a graphical problem but a grapholinguistic one as well, as it is closely connected with the designatory function of the characters. For example, the simplification of characters and the reduction of their number through the use of the principle of a substitution of complex characters by those with a smaller number of strokes (including the elimination of the radicals) denoting the homophonous linguistic units leads to a further increase in the number of cases of homography on the grapholinguistic level. The consequence of this is a weakening of the distinctive

⁹ Since 1973, *Wenzi Gaige*, as an inset of *Guangming Ribao* issued fortnightly, has been republished.

function of these characters. For this reason, it is always necessary to examine carefully in which cases of homography the context is sufficient to indicate their meaning. In any case, homography leads to the multiplication of linguistic reference, obscuring to some extent the etymology of the symbols concerned.

Following the simplification of the Chinese characters, a difference can be seen between those who became literate before the reform and those who mastered the characters in the course of the reform. The former have acquired a fund of non-simplified characters which is probably being augmented by simplified characters in the course of the reform. The latter know above all the simplified characters and may not know the original non-simplified characters. As to this second category, within which a further differentiation may take place if simplification continues, there arises the problem of how to acquaint them with the cultural heritage from the period before the reform. Texts written in modern Chinese can be reprinted, using the simplified characters, but if this method is applied to the literature of earlier periods, certain problems arise and will increase with the further simplification of the characters and reduction of their number. This is due to the changes in the linguistic referents of the characters from older to modern Chinese, as we have already pointed out. While in modern Chinese, although the increased homography can cause that the graphic symbols are sometimes less distinctive, a correct interpretation of the text is not endangered, just as homophonous linguistic referents do not prevent an understanding in the spoken language; on the other hand, in old Chinese texts reprinted with simplified characters this new homography would lead to ambiguity and thus increase the likelihood of a wrong interpretation. To reintroduce homographic symbols into ancient texts would be an inadequate way of designating linguistic units at a given period of the language's development, and would not correspond to the linguistic situation existing at that time. This kind of regressive intervention on the grapholinguistic level would go against the trend of development in the sounds of the Chinese language (i.e. the reintroduction of homography as against the overcoming of increasing homophony as Chinese develops).¹⁰

The characters of the future, considerably simplified, could thus presumably not be used as a satisfactory method of handing down the literary heritage to those whose knowledge covers only these simplified symbols. This invalidates the arguments of those who oppose a thorough reform of the Chinese system of writing in the belief that the introduction of a phonemographic script would break the continuity of Chinese culture, while a reform (i.e. simplification) of the existing type of script (i.e. characters) would preserve this continuity. If the original characters in the old texts remain unchanged, it would mean that the newly-literate, with their knowledge of simplified characters only, would have to learn the non-simplified characters as well in order to identify them.

¹⁰ In spite of some relation between homophony and homography in the Chinese language, we cannot of course identify the homophony in the spoken language with the homography in the written language. The homographic symbols do not designate only homophonous linguistic units, nor are all these units represented by homographs. If this were so, the Chinese writing system would be a syllabographic one.

A simplification of characters and the reduction of their number is merely a transitional stage towards a more radical reform, i.e. the elaboration and use of an alphabetic system in place of the existing logo-morphemographic one. It is usually accepted that for such a reform to be carried out the language must first be unified and the “common speech” codified. Here, the main stress is laid on the work of the schools where systematic, carefully planned teaching can achieve the maximum spreading of the “common speech”. The process will certainly take much longer among the other strata of the population in those regions where dialects are spoken, and deviation from the norm, especially in pronunciation, will be greater.

The new phonemographic alphabet has an important role to play in the process of unification, but its significance for the teaching process is not always fully appreciated. The very position of the phonemographic alphabet as an ancillary transcription to denote the pronunciation of the characters tempts teachers to regard it as something having a subsidiary nature, subordinated to the main goal – which is to learn the characters. The teachers themselves are acquiring the habit of using this alphabet in a situation in which they are most accustomed to another type of writing – the logo-morphemographic one –, with the symbols representing syllabic linguistic units in which sound and meaning are an integral whole, which accounts for their tendency to adopt a global approach to the syllable; consequently, they often must cure themselves of habits inculcated in the course of their own learning of the characters. The phonemographic alphabet is not always actively drilled and fixed as the pedagogical process continues; as a result, many students forget this new alphabet after a few years. Experience has shown that teaching is improved by a proper use of the alphabet; those teachers who are proficient in its use are more conscious of their pupils' pronunciation and can better point out their mistakes.

Some authors believe that at first it is an advantage in the dialect-speaking regions to practice the new alphabet on the basis of the local pronunciation, proceeding to practice the pronunciation of the letters according to the norm only later, after a skill in the use of the alphabet has been acquired and the student is able to join single letters together to form syllabic segments.

There are a number of linguistic and orthographic problems still to be solved before the Chinese system of characters can be replaced by a phonemographic system. Among the most important are the question of the borderline of the words in the script, the designation of the tones, the transcription of foreign words, and others. A special problem, and one which is often discussed, is that of how to pass on to the users of the new script the cultural treasures of the past.

A phonemographic script could not, of course, take over those functions which are peculiar to the logo-morphemographic type, to Chinese characters. It can be assumed that the introduction of a phonemographic script would lead to some changes in the written language. There are, for example, a number words and expressions that are used in the contemporary written language which do not figure in the spoken language, and whose existence in the written language is due to those specific features of the Chinese characters we have already described. The concise

forms of expression found in texts written in characters would in many cases have to give way to expressions current in the spoken language and which are comprehensible when heard.

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SOME REMARKS TOWARDS NEW PHRASEOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS IN MODERN CHINESE

Jaromír Vochala and Žu-čen Vochalová

Abstract: *A productive type of phraseological expressions in contemporary Chinese combines a monosyllabic verbal component and a polysyllabic noun component (mostly two-syllable). Unlike traditional four-syllable idioms, which are patterning structurally the old Chinese language, these new verbal phraseological (VP) expressions are created by a semantic transposition of phrases that are part of the common vocabulary of contemporary colloquial Chinese. Some of them are also used as a basis for forming variant expressions (synonymous, antonymous or others). These are developed based on association with one of the components. Being used in an utterance, the VP expressions can occur as discrete units whose components can be modified. The modifier of either component can be connected with the original meaning or with the figurative meaning of the expression. Apart from this, the figurative meaning of a phraseological expression can be extended to other units of the utterance. In such a case, the literal meaning of the expression is used in a specific way that is manifested in its semantic coherency with the meaning of other utterance units. The semantic content of these phraseological expressions is usually broader than their non-phraseological synonyms, and significant expressivity is an essential part of their connotative meaning.*

Keywords: *Modern Chinese lexicology, Chinese idiom, phraseological expression, V-N construction, figurative meaning*

1.0 Among the idiomatic expression in Modern Chinese, there are some consisting of two parts: the first component is a monosyllabic verb, the second is a disyllabic or polysyllabic noun. Some of them are quite common and can be found as lexical items in standard dictionaries of the Modern Chinese language. For example, in the *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* 汉语词典 Hànyǔ Cídiǎn¹ there are, among others, the following current expressions of this kind: 碰钉子 pèng dīngzi – meet with a rebuff (lit. touch a nail), 拍马屁 pāi mǎpì – to flatter, to fawn on (lit. clap the backside of a horse), 露马脚 lòu mǎjiǎo – give oneself away, let the cat out of the bag (lit. show the legs of a horse), 开倒车 kāi dàoche – turn the clock back, turn the wheel of history (lit. drive a return car), 开夜车 kāi yèchē – work late into the night (lit. drive a night car), 挂羊头卖狗肉 guà yángtóu mài gǒuròu – try to palm off sth. inferior to what it purports to be (lit. hang up a sheep's head, and then sell dogmeat) etc.

¹ Peking 1957. It is a concise edition of the *Dictionary of National Language* 国语辞典 Guóyǔ Cídiǎn of 1947.

In the recent period, plenty of phraseological expressions of this structural pattern have appeared in some functional styles of Modern Chinese, as e.g. in newspapers, in political, ideological and economic articles and speeches, and also in the language of fiction. Among many others, there are, for example, expressions as follows:

- 扣帽子 kòu màozi – put a label on somebody (lit. put a hat on somebody)
 打棍子 dǎ gùnzi – strike off somebody by excessive criticism (lit. strike somebody with a big stick, come down with a big stick)
 抓辫子 zhuā biànzi – seize on somebody's mistake or shortcoming, to capitalize on somebody's vulnerable point (lit. seize somebody's plait)
 穿小鞋 chuān xiǎoxié – make things hard for somebody by abusing one's power (lit. put on or wear small or tight shoes)
 走后门 zǒu hòumén – secure advantages through pull or influence (lit. get in by the back door)
 翘尾巴 qiào wěiba – be cocky, get stuck-up (lit. erect one's tail)
 吃大锅饭 chī dàguōfàn – practise equalitarianism (lit. eat together food prepared in large canteen cauldron)

Examples given above belong to the most frequent idiomatic expressions of this kind; they are now considered lexical items (at least the majority of them) and they are included in the new dictionaries published in recent years. While in the above mentioned *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* 汉语词典 Hànyǔ Cídiǎn of 1957 none of the above quoted expressions appear there, the *Dictionary of Modern Chinese* 现代汉语词典 Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn of 1979² includes the expressions 扣帽子 kòu màozi, 抓辫子 zhuā biànzi, 翘尾巴 qiào wěiba, 吃大锅饭 chī dàguōfàn (presented here as an example of the figurative meaning of 大锅饭 dàguōfàn), and the *Chinese-English Dictionary* of 1978³ includes all the above quoted seven expressions. The increase of the number of phraseological expressions of V-N construction is also apparent from their total number in the above mentioned two dictionaries of the Chinese language: in the *Dictionary of Modern Chinese* 现代汉语词典 Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn, 1979, their number is twice as big as in the *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* 汉语词典 Hànyǔ Cídiǎn, 1957 (the volume of the latter being even greater).

According to some Chinese linguists,⁴ the frequency of the appearance of this kind of phraseological expressions in colloquial Chinese now exceeds that of the traditional four-syllable idioms, usually called 成语 chéngyǔ, patterning structurally the old Chinese language.⁵ Such a conclusion is seemingly in contradiction with their

² Peking 1979.

³ 汉英词典 Hànyīng Cídiǎn. Peking 1978.

⁴ Cf. Shi Shi 1979: 351–355.

⁵ The traditional four-syllable idioms are of various structures with various kinds of syntactic relations of their components, which are usually monosyllabic words of the old Chinese language. Part of these monosyllabic words are not used any longer now, or do not stand for a word in modern Chinese. They are closely knitted and usually not separable. Many of them

ratio in special dictionaries of Chinese idiomatic expression published in recent time. For example, the *Manual of Chinese Frequent Idioms* 汉语常用成语手册 Hànyǔ Chángyòng Chéngyǔ Shǒucè of 1978⁶ includes nearly 5400 entries of traditional four-syllable idioms, while the three-syllable ones of the V–N construction amount to about thirty entries only. Similarly, the *Chinese-English Dictionary of Idioms and Everyday Expressions* 汉英成语和常用语 Hànyīng Chéngyǔ hé Chángyòngyǔ of 1979,⁷ which has more than 8000 entries, includes only about 90 phraseological expressions of the construction under discussion.

One of the reasons why their number in dictionaries is so small consists in the fact that they often have a nature of **occasional denominations** of various phenomena of social and political life of the Chinese society, and many of them have not become fixed in the vocabulary of Modern Chinese. As belonging to this kind of phraseological expression can be, for example, considered the following: 摘桃子 zhāi táozi – appropriate fruits of somebody else's labour (lit. pick peaches), 抢旗子 qiǎng qízi – usurp the post of the standard-bearer, appropriate the leading post (lit. snatch a standard), 开黑店 kāi hēidiàn – organize a sinister (reactionary) gang (lit. set up an inn run by brigands), etc. In addition, there are certain doubts concerning the very nature of this kind of phraseological expressions among the linguists, which don't univocally consider them idioms 成语 chéngyǔ because of certain specific features, as we shall see below.

As to the denomination of this kind expression, the authors who consider them a kind of Chinese phraseology, term them in various ways. For example, 史式 Shǐ Shì⁸ employs the term 新成语 xīn chéngyǔ – new idioms, as originating from so-called 熟语 shúyǔ – idiomatic phrases, “familiar expressions”, 马国凡 Mǎ Guófán⁹ terms them 惯用语 guànyòngyǔ – customary phrases (the term 熟语 shúyǔ is used by him as a general denomination of phraseology). For the time being, we shall employ the working term “verbal phraseological expressions”, shortly VP expressions.

2.0 What are the features which are characteristic of VP expressions?

2.1 First of all, it can be stated that in contradiction to the traditional four-syllable idioms, the VP expressions are, as a rule, based on the vocabulary of the contemporary colloquial language. They come into being by semantic transposition of a free combination of a quite common verb with a quite common noun, and the relation between the original and the figurative meaning of such an expression is usually quite obvious. The VP expressions manifest themselves as a **specific use** of the respective word group of V–N construction, namely as a **denomination of an action or state**,

are of an old origin and they are, as a rule, unintelligible without an explanation. Their pattering is still to certain degree employed for forming new expressions

⁶ Lu Ge et al. 1978.

⁷ Li Xuexi 1979.

⁸ Shi Shi 1979.

⁹ Ma Guofan 1978.

the way, manner, result, consequence etc. of whose realization is similar to the action or state expressed by the respective word group in its literal sense. That is to say, the original meaning of the expression becomes one of the semantic components of the figurative meaning of the VP expression, functioning as a **simile**. For example, the expressions 打棍子 *dǎ gùnzi* represents a figurative denomination of behaviour or action the realization of which is something like “to strike somebody with a big stick” or “to come down with a big stick”. Thus the original meaning of the components of the VP expression is preserved in its semantic contents in a specific way and, as we shall see below, it can also be specifically expressed in the sentence. In some VP expressions, a semantic transposition is accompanied by specific semantic-distributional features of the verbal component of the respective VP expression. For example, the VP expression 穿小鞋 *chuān xiǎoxié* being used in an utterance, requires a construction with a coverb 给 *gěi* in the capacity of a constitutive element to the verbal component of this VP expression (the semantic transposition is based here on the meaning “to give somebody tight shoes to wear”, but not on the meaning “to wear tight shoes”).

Some VP expressions consist of the verbal and nominal components the combination of which in their original meaning is felt as unusual. It is e.g. the VP expression 扣帽子 *kòu màozi*, the verbal component of which has the original meaning “to cover with inverted cup, bowl etc.”, which is semantically incompatible with the noun 帽子 *màozi* – a hat. In such a case, owing to the singularity of the respective word combination, the expression is felt as a phraseological unit par excellence.

2.2 Another specific feature of VP expression is the capability of some of them to function as a basis for the formation of variant VP expressions – synonymous, antonymous, or other kinds of variants respectively. Cf. for example:

扣帽子 *kòu màozi* – put a label on somebody

a) Synonymous variants:

戴帽子 *dài màozi*

套帽子 *tào màozi*

The original meaning of the variant verbal components: 戴 *dài* – put on, wear,
套 *tào* – cover with, slip over

b) Antonymous variant:

摘帽子 *zhāi màozi* – remove a label, lit. take off one’s hat

打棍子 *dǎ gùnzi* – strike off somebody by excessive criticism

Antonymous variant:

挨棍子 *ái gùnzi* – be struck off by excessive criticism, lit. be beaten by a big stick

走后门 *zǒu hòumén* – secure advantages through pull or influence

Variants:

开后门 *kāi hòumén* – give the possibility to achieve something by pull,
lit. open the back door

堵后门 dǔ hòumén – close the possibility to achieve something by pull,
lit. block up the back door

翘尾巴 qiào wěiba – be cocky, get stuck-up

Antonymous variant:

夹尾巴 jiā wěiba – behave oneself, behave modestly, lit. tuck one's tail
between one's legs

Besides, there is a variant 割尾巴 gē wěiba – take someone down a peg, lit.
cut of a tail; this expression still has another meaning which is more usual,
namely “remove the residue of sth.”

吃大锅饭 chī dàguōfàn – to practise equalitarianism

Synonymous variants:

吃大锅粥 chī dàguōzhōu

喝大锅粥 hē dàguōzhōu

The original meaning of the variant components: 粥 zhōu – gruel, 喝 hē – drink.

2.3 One of the most outstanding specific features of the VP expressions under discussions is their functioning in utterances as discrete units. Their components can be separated, their order can be inverted, and both the verbal and the nominal components can be modified. For example:

扣帽子 kòu màozi:

他们给他扣上了右派分子的帽子 tāmen gěi tā kòushàng yòupài-fēnzǐ de màozi – they put a label Rightist on him, he was officially declared a Rightist

翘尾巴 qiào wěiba:

牛皮不要吹得太大，尾巴不要翘起来 niúpí bùyào chuīde tài dà, wěiba bùyào qiàoqilai – don't boast too much, don't be cocky

Remarkable is the fact that some of such modifiers (both morphological and syntactical) are proper to the phraseological meaning and others to the original meaning of the components of the VP expression. In the first of the above quoted examples, the directional-resultative modifier 上 shàng is proper to the original meaning of the verb 扣 kòu (the same holds good for the verbal components in the synonymous variants of this VP expression, i.e. 戴上帽子 dàishàng màozi and 套上帽子 tàoshàng màozi), while in the sentence 他们摘掉了落后帽子 tāmen zhāidiào le luòhòu màozi – they removed the label of “backwardness”, the resultative modifier 掉 diào is connected with the phraseological meaning of the verbal component 摘 zhāi (the modifier that is proper to its original meaning is 下来 xiàlai). In the same sentence, the attribute 右派分子 yòupàifēnzǐ specifies the nominal component 帽子 màozi in its phraseological meaning, while in the sentence 任你扣上多少顶帽子 rèn nǐ kòushàng duōshao dǐng màozi – no matter how many labels you put on a person..., the classifier 顶 dǐng is specific for the noun 帽子 màozi in its original meaning “hat”.

2.4 The above mentioned phenomena indicate that from the syntagmatic point of view, the VP expressions being used in utterances can, simultaneously with their figurative meaning, employ the original meaning of their components in a specific way. See, for example, the following sentence:

广大教育工作者头上套帽子，身上挨棍子 guǎngdà jiàoyù gōngzuòzhě tóu shàng tào màozi, shēn shang ái gùnzi – a vast of educational workers were labeled and struck off (persecuted), lit. hats were put on the heads of a vast number of educational workers and their bodies were beaten with a big stick

The adverbial modifier 头上 tóu shang – on the head determining the action expressed by the VP expression 套帽子 tào màozi is in semantic coherency with the original meaning of this expression, just as the adverbial modifier 身上 shēn shang – on the body is in coherency with the original meaning of the VP expression 挨棍子 ái gùnzi. Both modifiers become here constituents of complex metaphorical expressions, the nuclei of which are the respective VP expressions.

2.5 In the case of some very frequent VP expressions, their components can be used alone, without the counterpart.

For example:

他们把许多老干部打成“走资派” tāmen bǎ xǔduō lǎo gānbù dǎchéng “zǒuzīpài” – many veteran cadres were struck off down by being declared “capitalist-roaders”

The modified verb 打成 dǎchéng in the sentence refers to the VP expression 打棍子 dǎ gùnzi.

他们的那一套帽子、棍子还在起作用 tāmen de nà yí tào màozi, gùnzi hái zài qǐ zuòyòng – their manners of putting labels on persons and striking off others are still in operation

The nouns 帽子 màozi and 棍子 gùnzi in the above quoted sentence are used in the figurative meaning achieved against the backgrounds of the entire sense of the VP expressions 扣帽子 kòu màozi and 打棍子 dǎ gùnzi.

2.6 Some VP expressions can be the basis for the formation of occasional metaphorical denominations, their original meaning of the component of the VP expression being employed. For example, there is an occasional metaphoric expression 帽子工厂 màozi gōngchǎng formed on the basis of the VP expression 扣帽子 kòu màozi; the expression 帽子工厂 màozi gōngchǎng, the literal sense of which is “the factory making hats or caps”, is formed by employing the original meaning of the component 帽子 màozi of the VP expression 扣帽子 kòu màozi, but the figurative meaning of this occasional expression, i.e. “fabrication of plenty various labels”, refers to the figurative meaning of the respective VP expression. A similar occasional expression 鞋店 xiédiàn, the original meaning of which is “the shoe shop”, is metaphorically used in the meaning “fabricating plenty of difficulties”, referring to

the VP expression 穿小鞋 chuān xiǎoxié, with the original sense of the component 鞋 xié being employed.

Similarly, some variant VP expression or other metaphorical expressions are occasionally formed on the basis of an association with the basic VP expression or its components. For instance, there are cases of utterances where expressions like 棒子 bàngzi – club, cudgel, 大棒 dà bàng – big club, 铁棒子 tiě bàngzi – iron club, 鞭子 biānzi – a whip, 钢鞭子 gāng biānzi – steel whip etc. are used metaphorically in a similar sense as is the 棍子 gùnzi of the VP expression 打棍子 dǎ gùnzi, and such synonymic expression again can be the basis for the formation of another occasional denomination. For example:

(打)	棍子	(dǎ) gùnzi	– (to strike off somebody by) excessive criticism
	↓		
	棒子	bàngzi	– excessive criticism
	↓		
	棒子手	bàngzishǒu	– person who strikes off others by excessive criticism, lit. a hatchet man

3.0 The semantic content of VP expressions is, as a rule, richer than that of non-phraseological synonymous expressions. VP expressions can express various aspects of denoted phenomena, and, being the result of a semantic transposition, they usually imply an emotional component as well (most of the VP expressions denominate the negative phenomena in social life of the Chinese society). Being based on the vocabulary of the colloquial language, they are easily intelligible and their vivid nature as well as emotional colouring make them a vigorous means of linguistic effectiveness. While the traditional four-syllable idioms are closely connected with the old Chinese literary language, the VP expressions are a typical product of the modern Chinese language. VP expressions represent a special kind of Chinese phraseology, presenting themselves as a rather flexible and productive part of the expressional means of contemporary Chinese.

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Několik poznámek k novým frazeologismům v moderní čínštině

Velmi produktivním typem frazeologismů v současné čínštině jsou frazeologismy s jednoslabičnou složkou verbální a víceslabičnou složkou jmennou (nejčastěji dvouslabičnou). Na rozdíl od tradičních čtyřslabičných idiomů, jež jsou tvořeny na základě staré čínštiny, tyto nové frazeologismy vznikají sémantickou transpozicí spojení slov, jež jsou zcela běžnou součástí současné čínštiny. Některé z nich tvoří základ variantních frazeologismů – synonymních, antonymních a jiných, na základě asociace s některou složkou frazeologismu mohou vznikat nové metaforické výrazy apod. Ve větné souvislosti mohou vystupovat jako diskrétní jednotky, jejichž jednotlivé složky mohou být blíže určeny; určující člen té které složky bývá přitom někdy spjat s přímým, někdy s frazeologickým významem daného slovního spojení. Obrazný význam frazeologismu bývá někdy rozšířen i na další složky výpovědi; v takovém případě pak dochází ke zvláštnímu uplatnění přímého významu daného frazeologismu, jež se projevuje v sémantické svázanosti tohoto přímého významu s významem jiných výrazů v dané výpovědi. Sémantický obsah těchto frazeologismů bývá zpravidla bohatší, než je tomu u jejich nefrazeologických synonym, a součástí jejich konotačního významu je výrazná expresivita.

CHINESE CHARACTERS AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE SCIENCE OF SCRIPT

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *The paper begins with a brief overview of the present situation in developing the science of script. It points out that the current approach is mainly limited to analyzing the phonemographical systems of scripts and argues that the building-up of a general script theory can benefit from a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese graphemic script. To prove the point, the paper's author summarizes the characteristics of its specific features from the point of view of the designating and communicative functions of the graphemes. This outline is preceded by a systematic description of the basic principles based on which the system was formed and the principles underlying the later simplification and formalization of the graphic forms of graphemes and their structure, including essential reforms of the graphemic system. The conclusion suggests a possible approach to interpreting scripts concerning the specific features of an ideographical type of script.*

Keywords: *Chinese writing system, theory of script, development of Chinese characters, grapheme, linguistic unit*

So far research in the field of script has been able to accumulate a lot of information about the individual writing (quite a lot has been done by our researchers), about their typological characteristics, their origin and development as well as some general knowledge concerning the history and theory of script. In spite of that we cannot but say that the science of script as a branch of knowledge has only started the process of its own formation. Not even its name has been fixed so far. Besides more often used designation as *grammatology* (I. J. Gelb), *graphic linguistics* (R. A. Crossland), or *graphistics* (W. R. Rennagel), there are also other names such as *grapholinguistics*, *graphemics*, *grammatography*, *philography* etc., which reflect various conceptions of the theory of script. Often discussed are such basic questions as definition of the subject of this branch of research, specification of its subdivisions, problems of methodology of the science of script and the like. With this is connected the question of unification of the system of concepts and terminology used in describing the phenomena of scripts and overcoming the present state of terminology lacking unity.¹

The questions of the science of script are also much discussed in the Soviet Union (here the terms “*grammatology*” or “*graphic linguistics*” are often used). There is a number of works devoted to various aspects of analysis of scripts (among other let me mention e.g. T. A. Amirova, A. M. Kondratov, A. A. Leont'ev, R. V. Makarova,

¹ For this cf. e.g. Amirova 1977.

A. J. Koshevarova, T. M. Nikolayeva etc.). A number of works is devoted to individual systems of writing both from the point of view of diachrony and synchrony. Well represented are also works concerned with the problems of the Chinese characters which continue in the tradition of Russian sinology from the end of the 19th cent. (V. P. Vasilyev). Various aspects of the Chinese characters are discussed in the works of V. M. Alekseyev, Ju. V. Bunakov, I. M. Oshanin, G. P. Serdyuchenko, B. P. Lavrent'yev, A. A. Zvonov and others.

Research work in the field of the Chinese characters can be based on vast literature produced by the Chinese traditional science of script (*wenzixue*). Its origin and development is closely connected with the canonical book of Chinese palaeography *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (Analytical Dictionary of Characters) by Xu Shen from the beginning of the 2nd cent. AD. In this work a classification of the original Chinese characters is laid down in which the characters are subdivided into six categories. This work exercised a great influence on the later research in the Chinese characters which was carried on particularly during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and the principles of Xu Shen's classification are of importance for the analysis of the Chinese characters even nowadays. This rich tradition is followed up in the extensive research in the sphere of script carried out in China. The object of research is both the present state of the Chinese characters and their historical development, as well as the problems of a reform of the present script, standardization of the characters, orthographical problems etc.

An all-round analysis of the system of Chinese characters and its typological peculiarities offers a valuable material and stimulates the building up of a general theory of script which in some conceptions is understood narrowly in such a way that it is based mainly on the analysis of the phonemographical systems of script. The aim of this contribution is to show the characteristic features of the system of the Chinese characters and to indicate also some possible attitudes to their presentation.²

The name "Chinese characters" must be understood as a widely used designation for the original Chinese script which has been used in China for more than three thousand years (the first written documents in Chinese appeared in the 14th–11th cent. BC, during the so called Yin period of the Shang dynasty).³ What is of relevance for the typological characteristics of this system of script is which language units are

² For the questions of the characteristic features of the Chinese graphemic system, its analysis and some aspects of its functioning, cf. also other works by the present author:

"On the Nature of Chinese Characters" (1968)

"Formal Aspects of the Chinese Graphemic System" (1972)

"Specificity of Monosyllabic Denominations in Chinese Semantic and Graphemic Systems" (1979)

"The Specific Features of Chinese Characters and Some of the Problems Involved in Their Reform" (1981)

Chinese Writing System. Minimal Graphic Units (1986).

³ Some scholars think that the Chinese characters are 5–6 thousand years old. They make this conclusion on the basis of recent archeological discoveries in the province Shaanxi and the discovery of the remains of the Dawenkou culture at the lower Huang He, where on a part

represented by the Chinese characters. The Chinese of the period from which the first written documents were preserved can be roughly characterized as a monosyllabic and isolating language, while the Chinese characters used to take down this language designate its monosyllabic meaningful (i.e. bilateral) units. Traditionally the Chinese characters are designated as an ideographic script. With regard to its quantitative characteristics it could also be called a syllabic-ideographic script. Since in the old Chinese period the monosyllabic meaningful units which are designated by the Chinese characters are usually words, the scripts of that period is sometimes more specifically called logographic. In later development Chinese gradually turns into a polysyllabic language in such a way that polysyllabic compounds are formed from the monosyllabic bases. Therefore, later on the Chinese characters do not designate only monosyllabic words but also monosyllabic morphemes. Thus even nowadays this script preserves its character of a “(syllabic)-ideographic script”, though more specifically it will be called a “logo-morphemographical script”. For a general designation of the Chinese characters, i.e. if they are viewed from a general point of view as the basic units of a certain system of script used to take down certain language units, we can use the term grapheme and the system can be called graphemic. If the Chinese characters are viewed from the point of view of their graphical form with no regard to their linguistic reference, they can be called graphs.

The graphemic system of the Chinese characters represents a heterogenous system of hierarchic units and rules of their functioning. In order to achieve a better characteristics of its specific features from the point of view of the designating and communicative functions of the graphemes it will be useful to mention at least roughly in which way this system was formed and how it developed.

From the type of the logograms in the oldest written documents (Oracle Bone Inscriptions) it can be concluded that in principle the graphemes of the system of Chinese characters originated as motivated signs while the motivation was of various types. Generally speaking, the graphemes of this period show certain pictographic features though at times already considerably schematized (they obviously had passed through a longer period of development). With one portion of the graphemes the motivation was based on their very graphical form. Here belong graphemes traditionally classified in the category of *xiangxing* – pictographs (more exactly: pictographic ideograms): the conceptual contents of the designated word are represented here in a more or less schematic picture. As for motivation these graphemes refer to the denotation of the designated word (graphemes with a denotative motivation). There are graphemes which originated as iconical signs on the principle of *physei*, as e.g. the graphemes designating the words *mǎ* 馬 – “horse” (the pronunciation is modern, the same goes for the other examples), *yú* 魚 – “fish”, *rì* 日 – “Sun”, *mù* 木 – “tree”, *rén* 人 – “man, human being”, etc. Rendering the conceptual contents of the word by a grapheme on the basis of the pictographical principle was possible especially in those cases when the denotation is characterized by its

of the pottery graphic signs were found which appear to be similar, to a certain extent, with the Chinese characters of the Yin period.

shape. But even in these cases it was often impossible to preserve the distinctive features in the graphic presentation of denotations which are similar in their shapes (e.g. individual zoological or botanical species identical in certain essential features, as various types of birds, animals, fish, trees etc.). With many words, which are used as designations of substances and phenomena, the shape of the denotation is not a relevant part of the denotative meaning of the respective word. In such cases rendering the word by a pictographic grapheme might be based on symbolism, e.g. the grapheme for the word *tiān* 天 – “heaven” is a picture of a great figure of a man representing an anthropomorphic deity, the grapheme for the word *zāi* 灾 – “disaster” is a picture of a flowing current stopped by an obstacle, the grapheme for the word *fù* 父 – “father” represents a hand holding a stick or a sharp object, the grapheme for the word *fù* 福 – “abundance, happiness” is a picture of a vessel for wine etc. Also some graphemes for words expressing properties, actions, spatial relations and the like, are shaped on the basis of certain symbolism. E.g. the grapheme for the word *dà* 大 – “great” is a picture of the figure of a tall man, the grapheme for the word *gāo* 高 – “high” represents a high building, the grapheme *zuǒ* 左 – “left” is a picture of the left hand, the grapheme for the word *lì* 立 – “to stand” represents a figure of a man standing on the ground etc. The pictographic symbolism is also used in the graphemes which are traditionally *zhishi* – indicative, or “self-explanatory characters”. Here belong the graphemes for the numerals *èr* 二 – “two”, *sān* 三 – “three”, for the words *shàng* 上 – “above, overhead, ascend”, *xià* 下 – “down, descend” etc.

Another type of motivated graphemes are graphemes the motivation of which is based on the graphical structure. To them belong compound graphemes traditionally called *huiyi* – “suggestive” (or “associative compounds”), which are composed of two or several originally independent graphemes suggesting by their “meaning” (i.e. their original linguistic reference) the meaning of the designated linguistic unit. Here the meaning is usually suggested figuratively or with the use of a certain kind of symbolism. E.g. the grapheme for the word *míng* 明 – “clear, bright” is composed from component parts which as graphemes designate the words *rì* 日 – “Sun” and *yuè* 月 – “Moon”, the grapheme for the word *nán* 男 – “man, male” is composed from component parts referring to the words *tián* 田 – “field” and *lì* 力 – “strength” (i.e. the one who uses strength in the field).

However, in quite a number of cases the motivation of graphemes – whether it is based on the graphic form or the graphic structure – is obscure and vague, or the graphemes are conventionalized already in their oldest form (e.g. perhaps the graphemes for some numerals like *qī* 七 – “seven”, *bā* 八 – “eight”, *jiǔ* 九 – “nine” etc.).

A very common means for the solution of the designating needs by written signs in the earliest period of development of the Chinese characters became further the homographical principle, i.e. using an already existing grapheme to designate a homophonous or almost homophonous word, less frequently also phonetically a completely different word. E.g. the grapheme *jī* 箕 𪗇 – “basket” was used to designate an almost homophonous word *qí* with the meaning his, her, their etc. Traditionally

these graphemes are called *jiājie* – “loan characters” (sometimes they are also called phonographs, though it is not completely correct).

The consequence of a wide application of the homographical principle bears a negative influence on the communicative function of the graphemes (there is a higher danger of their misinterpretation in the text). That is why another category of compound graphemes was created – with a grapheme homographically used, another grapheme was joined as a differentiating element. At the same time, for this function such grapheme was used which was semantically linked with the “meaning” of the whole compound grapheme: it often suggested to which semantic sphere the designated word belonged (e.g. a certain type of animal or plant, an object produced from a certain material etc.). This “semantic” component of the compound graphemes of this type is called a determinative or classifier; it is also commonly called a radical and this term is at the same time used in lexicography as a designation for the components of graphemes according to which the graphemes are arranged in the dictionaries. The other component, the homographic component, which refers to the phonetic shape of the “borrowed” grapheme, is traditionally called phonetic. So e.g. the grapheme for the word *lín* 霖 – “continuous heavy rain” is composed of a determinative, which as an independent grapheme designates the word *yǔ* 雨 – “rain”, and a phonetic, which as an independent grapheme sounds *lín* 林 (it means “forest”, but this meaning does not apply here). Graphemes formed in this way are called *xingsheng* – phonoideograms (lit. “pictophonetic” characters). Phonoideograms originated in various ways – by joining a determinative to the original or “loan” grapheme (e.g. the grapheme designating the word *jī* 箕 – “basket” was later enlarged by a determinative with the meaning of “bamboo” 竹, while the homographically designated word *qí* meaning “his, her, their” etc. continued to be written without this determinative), or otherwise a phonetic was added to the original grapheme (e.g. to the grapheme for the word *zāi* 災 – “disaster” a component with the pronunciation *cái* 才 was added later and this component functions as a phonetic in this grapheme 灾). The graphemes of this category, which in the oldest written documents represent about 20 per cent, became the most productive grapheme-forming category and nowadays more than 90 per cent of all graphemes belong to this category. In the above mentioned dictionary *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, Xu Shen singled out altogether 540 radicals. Starting from the dictionary *Zi Hui* from the beginning of the 17th cent., their number was reduced to 214 (this number is essentially preserved even in modern lexicographical works, but in some cases the number is further reduced).

Besides the above mentioned principles of forming graphemes some more principles were also used to a certain extent but for the purposes of this contribution we shall not mention them.

Characteristic for the further development of the Chinese graphical system is the process of formalization and simplification of the graphic form of graphemes and also the prevailing simplification of their graphical structure. The calligraphic styles following one another in the development of the Chinese characters, mean

a gradual simplification of this graphemic system which is getting rid of the original pictography while the “depicting” forms of practically all graphemes change into mere conventional graphical signs. This radical formalization of the graphic shape of the Chinese characters was achieved especially in the two latest calligraphic styles – the so called official script, which was used during the reign of the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD) and the regular script, which from the end of the reign of the Han dynasty followed after the official script and has been used up to the present day. Only with a few graphemes some residues of the original pictography can be found (e.g. mù 木 – “tree, wood”, kǒu 口 – “mouth”, rì 日 – “Sun” etc.). The minimum constitutive element of the graphic shape of this system of script became the more or less stabilized stroke defined by its graphic features, such as the shape, length, positional direction (slant) and direction of writing, besides a combinatorical characteristics (the type of the combination of strokes, their distribution etc.). The strokes are divided into simple 一 | 丿 ㇇ ㇏ and compound 冂 冃 ㇇ ㇏ ㇐ ㇑ ㇒ etc. and they can further be subdivided according to whether they have a simple or hook-like termination 一: 冂 | : 冂 冃: 冃 etc. By their combination, simple graphs or structural components of complex graphs are formed. The present-day graphs, the form of which is genetically based on pictography, are therefore composed from various formal elements, the graphical form of which is subordinated to certain formal factors, as the complexity of the graphical structure, the position in the structure, the succession of strokes etc. Owing to a formalization of the graphical shape of the original pictographic forms, similar combinations of strokes are created in the various graphs which are used as components of the graphical structure and some of them coincide with the graphic shape of graphemes or their functional components. E.g. nowadays the pictographic grapheme designating the word gāo 高 – “high” has a graphic shape 高 which can be analyzed in structural components currently occurring in other graphemes of the present-day graphical style and which graphically coincide with the respective radicals 宀: 宀交享京..... 口: 召另句问..... 冂: 冂冂冂冂.....

Thus formalization of the graphical system means de-motivation of those graphemes the graphic shape of which was connected with the meaning of the designated linguistic units in one way or the other. Essentially, this formalization was carried out in a systematic way,⁴ i.e. the respective graphic forms changed mostly analogically, both as individual graphemes and as components of other graphemes (e.g. the originally pictographic grapheme for the word mǎ 马 – “horse” has now a graphic shape 马 which appears in an analogical form also as a component in other graphemes 骑骂妈, or certain graphic form appearing as a component in other graphemes was modified in various ways, while this modification is analogical in the same positions in the graphical structures of various graphemes (e.g. the original pictographic grapheme for the word xīn 心 – “heart” has now a graphic shape 心

⁴ This does not apply for spontaneously simplified forms of individual characters; their simplification was not necessarily systematic, because they might have appeared in different places at various times.

which appears in an analogical shape as a graphical element in the bottom position 想, while in the inner bottom position it has a regular modified shape 恭慕, in the left position it has another regular modified shape 忙怀. Among other things, this regularity makes the connection between the original grapheme and its modified shape as a component of compound graphemes clear for the user of the script and in case of structurally motivated graphemes the motivation reference of such components is not disturbed.

On the other hand the development of the characters tended quite often to changes in the inner structure of the components of the graphemes and in this way possibly also to a disturbance of their function. E.g. the original phonoideogram for the word *xīng* 星 𠄎 – “star”, where the radical component 晶 originally means “star, glitter of the star”, later changed into a grapheme 星, in which due to the changes the radical component is represented by the radical 日 日 – “Sun”. The phonoideogram for the word *bù* 布 𠄎 – “cloth” was originally composed from the radical *jīn* 巾 巾 – “a piece of cloth” and the phonetic /fù/ 𠄎, but now the phonetic turned into a formal graphical constituent due to the graphical changes.

As a consequence of the formalization of the Chinese characters, the pictographical principle became unproductive and the formation of graphemes through composition – either from “semantic” elements or – more frequently – from a radical and a phonetic – turned into the basic grapheme-forming principle.

The development of the graphic form and structure of the Chinese characters is closely connected with the reforms of this graphemic system. In the course of history there were several such reforms the aim of which was to simplify and perfect the script, to standardize it and to reduce the number of graphemes used.

The script of the earliest documents from the Yin period was not standardized, the graphemes were written in various variants and their position was not stabilized. The lack of standardization more or less continued also in the period of the Zhou dynasty (11th cent. BC–256 AD), when the number of graphemes increased considerably and their structure became more complex (many of the new graphemes are phonoideograms). The Chinese philological tradition has it that the first script reform was carried out under the Zhou King Xuan (827–781 BC). The graphical style of this script was called the “great seal”. After China was unified under the First Emperor of Qin (221 BC) the script was also unified (the reform was carried out by the Minister Li Si) and it was later called the “small seal”. The next reform of the Chinese script was connected with the introduction of the above mentioned style called “official script” under the Han dynasty. This was a reform which meant a grave change of the graphic form and structure of the script. The next style – the “regular script” – brought only some degree of modification of the graphic form of the “official script” with no substantial changes of the graphical structure.

During the whole period of existence of the Chinese characters, non-standard simplified variants were used besides the standard graphemes, particularly in unofficial documents, in everyday use etc. Though for the standard style of writing rigid rules were applied and they were required particularly in the state examinations,

the simplified forms of the graphemes were widespread. In the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th cent. requirements were voiced asking admission of the simplified forms so that they could be used in the fight for spreading education and enlightenment. Under the pressure of this reform movement the Kuomintang government published the first part of 324 simplified graphemes in 1935 but after six months their use was declared optional. After the People's Republic of China was founded it was decided to simplify a certain number of graphemes and to eliminate the use of various doublets with the aim to simplify the existing graphemic system and to facilitate its study. The simplified graphemes were published in four tables between 1956 and 1958. The simplification concerned whole graphemes and also some graphical elements which are repeated in various graphemes – the total number of these fully or partly simplified graphemes was 2,238. Simplification of the graphic style of the present Chinese characters and its standardization are tasks, which were set for the transitional period of the reform of the Chinese characters, while there is a perspective aim to switch over to a phonemographic script in future after the necessary preconditions have been created.

The simplification of a part of the graphemes of the present Chinese characters makes the study of the script easier for those who start to learn to read and write, it is true, but on the other hand it generally complicates the situation for all users by the fact that both simplified and unsimplified forms of graphemes are in practical use (they are found in the vast literature published before the simplification).

Thus the present-day Chinese characters as a product of a long development form a considerably complicated graphemic system. In the individual above mentioned categories this becomes evident in the following aspects:

1. The graphemes belonging genetically to the categories of “pictographic” ideographs and “indicative” graphemes often contain components which graphically coincide with the graphemes themselves or with their components (see above the example of the pictographic grapheme for the word gāo 高 – “high”).

2. In case of the compound graphemes, which genetically belong to the category of “suggestive” graphemes, the relation of the “semantic” components to the meaning of the linguistic unit is quite often vague and such graphemes are usually felt to be unmotivated, particularly in cases when the development of the graphical system disturbed the original components of the grapheme. E.g. the present grapheme for the word zǒu 走 – “to go” is originally a compound grapheme 𠂔, in which the upper component depicts a man with stretched out hands and the bottom component depicts a trace which suggests movement (originally the word designated by this grapheme meant “to run”); but now the upper component coincides with the grapheme for the word tǔ 土 – “earth” and the bottom component may be further analyzed into formal components of which the first 卜 coincides with a modified grapheme for the word bǔ 卜 – “divination” and the second one 人 coincides with the modified grapheme for the word rén 人 – “man, human being”.

3. Quite complicated is the situation with graphemes belonging to the category of phonoideograms:

- a) Many determinatives are not felt constitute “semantic” components (they do not refer to independent graphemes or they refer to obsolete graphemes which are not commonly known).
- b) With regard to the conventional character of the determinatives their semantically classifying function is often “inadequate”. E.g. the grapheme for the word zhū 猪 – “pig” contains a radical 豕 with the meaning “a dog”, which of course does not correspond to the classification from the point of view of systematic zoology. Some radicals became “inadequate” due to the changes in the conceptual contents of the designated linguistic unit. E.g. the grapheme for the word jìng 镜 – “mirror” contains a radical 钅 with the meaning “metal”, which became “inadequate” after mirrors started to be produced from glass instead of bronze.
- c) With most of the phonoideograms there is no agreement between the “reading” of the whole grapheme and the “reading” of its phonetic. E.g. the following phonoideograms with the same phonetic /gōng/ 工 are read in the following ways: gōng 功, kōng 空, hóng 红, gāng 缸, jiāng 江 and xiàng 项.
- d) The position of the radical element in the graphical structure may be mostly of several types (the structural arrangement may be horizontal, vertical, with an inner or outer component or with a combined arrangement), only some radicals occur in all graphemes always in the same position. Sometimes the various positions of the same radical may have a distinctive function. E.g. the radical with the meaning “heart” 心 containing the phonetic /wáng/ 亡 in a horizontal arrangement forms the grapheme for the word máng 忙 – to be busy, but if the radical element is positioned in the bottom, it is a grapheme for the word wàng 忘 – “to forget”, sometimes it may, however, mean only a variant manner of writing (e.g. the same radical in the same positions in graphemes 慚慚).
- e) Some graphemes appear as radical components in some compound graphemes and as phonetics in other compound graphemes. Thus the same component in the same position can be a radical in one grapheme, while it is a phonetic in another (e.g. the component which as an independent grapheme designates the word yáng 羊 – “sheep” appears as a radical in the grapheme for the word qún 群 – “flock”, while it is a phonetic in the grapheme for the word yáng 洋 – “ocean”).
- f) It is quite common that components appearing as radicals or phonetics in phonoideograms appear also in graphemes of other categories (see above). Due to the frequent “inadequacy” of the radicals and phonetics of the phonoideograms the difference between phonoideograms and “suggestive” graphemes, or eventually the graphemes of the “pictographic” origin is quite obscured (cf. e.g. the “suggestive” grapheme for the word xiū 休 – “to relax” and a phonoideogram for the pronoun nǐ 你 – “you” with a phonetic /ěr/ 尔).

4. The individual syllables of polysyllabic single words are very often designated by “loan” graphemes, i.e. on the homographical principle. To designate the same syllable in various words, the same grapheme is sometimes used, sometimes they are different graphemes. E.g. the syllable /mǎ/ is designated by the same “loan” grapheme 马 in the words mǎdá 马达 – “motor” and mǎhu 马虎 – “negligent” but in the word mǎfēi 吗啡 – “morphine”, the same syllable is designated by a different grapheme 吗. And besides, the rendering of phonetic loans in Chinese, foreign proper names etc. is at first often unstable in the graphemes of the Chinese characters and the same syllable of the same word may be designated by different graphemes (e.g. the syllable /sī/ in the variant Chinese forms of Marx’s name – Mǎgésī 马格斯 and Mǎkèsī 马克思).

The above brief survey of the development of the Chinese characters and the characteristics of the present state of this graphemic system have shown that in this type of script and its inner system there is a number of peculiar features both in the designating function of the graphemes and in their communicative function.

1. With phonetically borrowed foreign words and proper names, the ideographic type of script makes it possible to choose the graphemes in such a way the loan word or name can be felt to be a motivated designation (e.g. Tallinn has the form Tǎlín 塔林 in Chinese – the “Tower Forest”).

2. Monosyllabic linguistic units which usually are (unmotivated) signs (with the exception of a semantic transposition), in their written form – provided they are designated by compound graphemes (with an inner form) – can suggest the meaning of the designated word, eventually express additional or connotative meanings. E.g. the meaning of the word chén 尘 – dust, is suggested by the components xiǎo 小 – “small” and tǔ 土 – “clay, soil, earth”. In the grapheme for the word yīng 鹰 – “eagle”, the radical niǎo 鸟 – “bird” explicitly implies that the designated word is classified into the more general category of “birds”. The functional components of the graphemes, and especially their radicals, can be used to convey the adherent expressivity. To express a pejorative meaning, occasional compound graphemes are sometimes formed by adding the radical 狗 “dog”. With polysyllabic single words, the graphemes can “semantize” these syllabic segments of words by their inner form; e.g. the graphemes designating the syllables /gǎn/ 橄 and /lǎn/ 榄 of the bisyllabic single word gǎnlǎn – “Chinese olive”, imply a meaning into both syllables on the level of script by the presence of the radical component 木 with the meaning “tree”.

The functional components of graphemes can be foregrounded in some cases and can serve as a more or less sufficient support for the identification of the conceptual contents of the linguistic referent though the person using the script may not know its phonetic shape. Thus for example, if the person using the Chinese characters meets the graphemes designating a less frequent expression tāntè 忐忑 – “vacillating, nervous”, he can understand the “meaning” on the basis of the inner structure of both graphemes without knowing their “reading”, i.e. the phonetic

shape of the linguistic referent: both graphemes contain the element *xīn* 心 – “heart”, while the second element of the first grapheme is the element *shàng* 上 – “upwards” and in the second grapheme it is the element *xià* 下 – “downwards”, suggesting the meaning “nervous, vacillating” etc.

Another type for foregrounding of the components of a grapheme in the written language are cases where the respective component appears independently as a grapheme in the utterance (i.e. it has its own linguistic reference); actually we have to do with a verbal expression of the fact that the grapheme is a compound one. E.g. in the well-known Chinese novel *Shui Hu Zhuan*, there is a sentence which in translation runs as follows: “Master, you are thinking about the one ‘of a pair of trees, am I right?’”⁵ (i.e. about the person, whose name is written by a grapheme combined from two components *mù* 木 – “tree”, i.e. *Lín* 林.) The foregrounding of the elements of a grapheme can be demonstrated also on another example from the same novel, which at the same time shows that the Chinese graphemic system of the ideographic type disposes of specific means and that between the written and spoken Chinese language there are not only correlating phenomena but also specific phenomena. It is a special case of paronymity when by a change of the radical a change of the meaning of the linguistic reference is achieved though there is no change of its phonetic shape: a person in the novel, whose name is *Gāo* 高, is nicknamed as *Qiú* 毬 – “ball” (the man played excellently with a ball), which was later changed, as it is worded in the text – “after he rose to power and position the component *máo* 毛 was left out from the character (i.e. grapheme) *qiú* 毬 and instead of it the component *rén* 人 (“man, human being”) was added and thus his name changed into a surname *Gāo* 高 with a personal name *Qiú* 俅 (i.e. Gao Polite).”⁶

3. The graphemes of the Chinese ideographic script became a part of the linguistic consciousness of the literate users of the Chinese language. In this connection one thing is important, viz. that in the process of mastering the script individual graphemes are fixed as written signs of contextually determined linguistic units. That is to say, with regard to the typological peculiarities of the Chinese language, and particularly with regard to the root nature of the syllabic linguistic units designated by graphemes and to a high level of homophony of these syllabic units, graphemes are usually presented in such a way that the syllabic unit designated by them is included into one of their potential contexts or the graphemes are associated with the denotate of that linguistic unit (e.g. by graphic means), eventually the designated linguistic unit can be defined by its equivalent in a foreign language (e.g. if Chinese and its script are studied as foreign language). Thus if we say that a grapheme 事 designates a monosyllabic word *shì*, this wording is quite vague, because this form of expression has several dozens of meanings (both as a word and as a morpheme)

⁵ Yánèi shì sīxiǎng nà shuāng mù de, zhè cāi rúhé? 衙内是思想那双木的，这猜如何？ (*Shui Hu Quan Zhuan* 1954: I,114)

⁶ Hòulái fājī, biàn jiāng qì qiú nàgè zì, qù le máo páng, tiān zuò lì rén, biàn gǎi zuò xìng Gāo míng Qiú 后来发迹，便将气毬那个字，去了毛傍，添作立人，便改作姓高名俅 (ibid: 16).

and in the script these homophonous units are designated by various graphemes (shì can mean e.g. 事 “matter, business”, 式 “type”, 试 “try”, 市 “market”, 世 “lifetime, generation”, 士 “bachelor”, 示 “show”, 视 “look at”, 势 “influence, power”, 誓 “swear”, 柿 “persimmon”, 释 “explain”, etc.). In an isolated position the meaning of this form of expression can be determined by being included into one of the potential context, e.g. by the contexts yī jiàn shì 一件事 – “one /some/ matter, business”, the meaning of the form shì is specified as “matter, business”. One of the consequences of such determination of the meaning of the designated monosyllabic units is the fact that with literate speakers there is a clear awareness about the composite character of compounds, about their inner form; graphemes then can be a support or provide a key for understanding the meaning of the whole word. With illiterate speakers, where this support is lacking, the meanings of the components (especially in case of bound morphemes) can be identified only on the background of the overall meaning of the word. At times, graphemes also constitute an important support in forming new words. Peculiar in this respect is the fact that by the choice of graphemes used in the literary language (modern or old), words can be formed which in the written form are quite comprehensible, but this may not be true about their spoken form.

4. On the basis of the graphemic system of an ideographic type of script, a special type of written language was created in China, which is called “wenyan”, i.e. a classical literary language which was the means of correspondence on the state level starting from the beginning of the new era practically till the beginning of the 20th cent. The ideographical type of script brought about a gradual split between the spoken and written language. Thus, a special type of written language appears which is practically outside any time sphere, it is not intelligible when listened to and at the same time it is extremely economical in its means of expression, which was made possible by this very special type of script. In the words of V. M. Sofronov, “those who have mastered the script were able to compose texts which could linguistically belong e.g. to the 6th cent., but equally well to the 19th cent.”⁷ In the complicated language situation with a great differentiation of dialects, the ideographic script played the role of an integrating factor and preserved the continuity of the Chinese classical culture, a culture which was created on the basis of this script. In the course of centuries this literary language was enriched lexically, but grammatically it practically did not change.⁸ This old literary language influenced not only the modern literary language “baihua”, but also spoken Chinese, which was enriched especially by many set phrases, and the structural models of the idioms of the Chinese classical literary language are to a certain extent productive even nowadays.

5. Since the ideographic type of script can differentiate homophonous monosyllabic units on the level of script, the possibility of their identification in an autonomous position improves, which makes it possible to use such forms in the written language

⁷ Sofronov 1979.

⁸ However, this is not completely true about its reformed variants.

which in a phonetic shape would not be sufficiently identifiable. This concerns e.g. the various abbreviation-like expressions formed on the model of classical Chinese, isolated monosyllabic words, as e.g. inscriptions, book titles, etc., which cannot be considered as set phrases.

6. The ideographical type of the Chinese characters makes it possible to bridge the great phonetic differentiation of the dialects of the Chinese national language and thus it serves as a means of an interdialectal written communication. For the same reason, under certain conditions this type of script can be used as a basis for graphemic systems of other languages (Japanese, at an earlier period Korean, Vietnamese and some other languages).

From the above mentioned characteristic features of the graphemic system of the Chinese characters some conclusions concerning the analysis of this script and the levels of this writing system can be made.

The level, on which the units of script are investigated in connection with the units of language, can be called a grapholinguistic level. On this level, the basic units of the graphemic system – the graphemes – will appear as written signs designating certain language units. The typological specification of the graphemes will be expressed by the term “ideogram” (logogram, morphemogram, logo-morphemogram). The units of the structural levels of language, as specified from the grapholinguistic point of view, can be designated by terms containing the component grapho- as their first element (graphomorpheme, grapholexeme, graphosyllabeme etc.).⁹ Thus for example, we can speak about additional or connotational meanings of some grapholexemes, about “semantization” of some graphosyllabemes etc.

A question to be discussed on the grapholinguistic level is also the manner of representation of the language units by graphemes as far as their mutual relation is concerned, i.e. whether the representation is monographic (the particular language unit is represented by one grapheme), homographic (several syllabic units are represented by one grapheme), multigraphic (the same language unit is designated by several graphemes with various additional (denotational) meanings – e.g. the pronoun of the 3rd pers. *tā* – “he, she, it” is designated by different graphemes for male persons 他, female persons 她, animals or things 它, or heterographic (designation of the same unit by various graphemes).

The grapholinguistic level also includes an analysis of the functional aspects of the components of graphemes, their participation in the designation of the meaning of the language unit represented by a grapheme. From the point of view of the inner graphemic system, these subgraphemic units are structural units of the graphemic (structural) level and refer either to the sound of the designated linguistic units (phonetics) or to their meaning (determinative – and other “signifiers”). The inner form of graphemes is determined not only by their subgraphemic elements, but also,

⁹ For the use of the term “grapholinguistics” and the terms containing the component “grapho-”, cf. also the paper by A. W. Sariti “Chinese Grapholinguistics” (1957).

as a rule, by the arrangement of their graphical structure. The position (arrangement) of the subgraphemic components in the structure of the graphemes is usually functional (constitutive and distinctive functions); sometimes, however – as it was already mentioned above – a different arrangement of these components in a grapheme does not have a distinctive function. In some cases a particular arrangement of the subgraphemic elements directly participates in the suggestion of the meaning of the linguistic unit designated by the grapheme. E.g. the grapheme for the word *jīān* 尖 – “point, pointed” contains subgraphemic components with the “meaning” *xiǎo* 小 – “small” and *dà* 大 – “great” which by their vertical arrangement (above “small”, below “great”) suggest the meaning “pointed”.

The analysis of graphemes from the point of view of the function of their elements is linked with many complications caused by the complex character of this graphemic system, as it was mentioned above. There is, for example, a question of criteria for the decision whether a component, to which a linguistic reference can be allotted, is a subgraphemic functional element or not (e.g. in graphemes suggesting the meaning of a linguistic unit by way of some symbolism, in graphemes with “non-adequate” radicals and phonetics etc.).

In connection with the problems of analysis of the graphemes of the Chinese characters, here are a few more notes on the functional aspects of their minimum constitutive elements – the strokes.

The strokes are the minimum constitutive – and at the same time distinctive – elements of graphemes and subgraphemic units. A characteristic feature of the constitutive function of strokes is not their linear, but planary arrangement (horizontal, vertical, inner – outer arrangement, intersecting combination etc.). Thus the constitutive and distinctive functions of the strokes are realized in a whole complex of graphic elements participating in the formation of the respective graphical shape. Besides the graphical form proper of the individual strokes, we are concerned with the type and manner of their mutual combination, their overall arrangement in the graphical structure etc.

Graphemes can contain one or several dozens of strokes. Many graphemes are composed of the same number of strokes and are differentiated by their structural components and their arrangement in the graphical structure and besides, graphemes (simple) or some of their components (with compound graphemes) can be distinguished by strokes, by the manner of their combination, by the type of their combination, eventually also by a difference of some of the graphical properties of the same stroke (e.g. length). Besides graphemes which form oppositions by all or several distinctive features, there are also cases in which the difference between the graphemes forming an opposition seems to be concentrated in a single distinctive feature. E.g.:

1. Different type of the combination of strokes:
 - a) contact vs. intersection – 刀 : 力
 - b) contact vs. separation – 人 : 八
 - c) intersection vs. separation – 弔 : 引

2. Different manner of the combination of strokes – 人 : 入
3. The same combination of strokes with a different length of strokes – 土 : 士
4. Opposition of graphemes differing by a single stroke – 干 : 千

Suppose we label the constitutive and distinctive elements of the graphic form and graphic structure (strokes, manner and type of their combination etc.) by the term graphonic elements, then the stroke can be considered the basic graphonic element of the general graphonic complex. In this graphonic complex the stroke fulfills its (graphonic) function simultaneously with other graphonic elements.

The level, on which the units of script are analyzed with no regard for their language referent and where we disregard the functional properties of its structural elements, is the graphic level. The maximum unit of this level – the graph – can be separated on the basis of formal criteria: in the text it is regularly separated by a clear-cut space, it has a standard square form (delimited by a real or ideal graphic square). From the static point of view a graph appears to be a graphic figure with a certain arrangement of graphic components formed by combinations of strokes. From the dynamic point of view the graph is characterized by a certain succession of these graphic components forming a hierarchic structure. The minimum unit of this level is the stroke, which from the static point of view can be characterized as a line of a varying shape, while its beginning and end may sometimes be marked by certain features (e.g. a hook-like termination, shading of the initial or final part of the stroke in the calligraphical style etc.). From the dynamic (motoric) point of view, a stroke is the basic graphical unit written “at one go” and in the determined direction (both are convention-based).

Strokes obtained by segmentation of graphs are arranged into types of strokes according to the degree of agreement of their basic graphical properties (shape, position, direction of writing, size) and their distributive and combinational properties are taken into consideration (their combination with other strokes, manner of their combination, in which position they can appear in higher graphical units – initial, medial or final, etc.). The frame, within which strokes form mutual combinations, are either simple graphs or subgraphical components. They are those components of the graphical structure which keep recurring in various graphs. The analysis on the graphical level establishes the inventory of hierarchical subgraphical components, specifies their arrangement in the graphical structure, their combinational features, deals with the question of graphical modifications of these components and the conditions under which these modifications appear, etc.

The above notes concerning the analysis of the Chinese graphemic system suggest a possible approach to the interpretation of facts of script with regard to the specificity of the ideographical type of script. With regard to the use of the terms in the suggested conception, the most appropriate term for the science of script appears to be its traditional designation *grammatology*. From a general *grammatological* point of view, the term “grapheme” which in the suggested conception designates the basic unit of the Chinese graphemic system, can be defined, practically in agree-

ment with E. K. Guseva, as a written sign, the material representation for which is a graphically expressed letter or a “hieroglyph”, the referents of which can be various linguistic units – phonemes, syllables, morphemes and words. In works dealing with the Chinese ideographical script (eventually the Japanese script) the term “grapheme” usually designates different units of the script: sometimes it designates the basic units of this system of script (A. N. Sokolov), sometimes their components (A. Ja. Šer). In the conception of the Soviet specialist in Japanese Je. V. Makajevskij, the basic units of an ideographical script are literemes, their immediate constituents are graphemes and the strokes are designated as segmemes.

As for the communicative function of graphemes, the Chinese ideographical script convincingly justifies the functional approach to the analysis of the relation between the spoken and written language, as against the genetic approach which points out the sound language as the subject proper of linguistic research and considers the written language to be a phenomenon of a secondary nature. E.g. according to L. Bloomfield, “for the linguist, writing is, except for certain matters of detail, merely an external device, like the use of the phonograph, which happens to preserve for our observation some features of the speech of past times.”¹⁰ The facts of the Chinese written language clearly prove that the communicative function of the graphemes of the Chinese ideographical script is often realized in a specific way and that the specific features of the written language must be analyzed in a close connection with the analysis of the respective graphemic system.

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¹⁰ Bloomfield 1933: 282.

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A FEW NOTES TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM

Jaromír Vochala

Abstract: *This paper defines concepts and terminology associated with various levels of the Chinese writing system's examination. The grapholinguistic level of analysis targets the relationship between the graphic symbols and their linguistic representation. Its basic units are called graphemes, and the terms for different linguistic units operating on this level can be modified by the prefix grapho-. In addition, specific terms are used in order to reflect the quantitative differences in the arrangement of units on this level. Considering their function, the subordinated graphemic units are referred to as significs or phonetics. The internal graphemic structure of graphemes is the subject of the graphemic level of analysis. Finally, the graphic level focuses on the Chinese characters' visual and formative aspects. Its minimal graphic units are strokes that enter into mutual combinations and form so-called graphs.*

Keywords: *Chinese writing system, levels of analysis, grapheme, graph, stroke*

Chinese characters, as the logo-morphemographic type of writing system (also commonly specified as “ideographic”), can be examined on various levels of analysis. The problems concerning the relationships between the graphic symbols of the system and their linguistic reference are examined on the *grapholinguistic* level of analysis (the term “grapholinguistic” is used here in somewhat different sense than e.g. in the Sariti's paper “Chinese Grapholinguistics”, in *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association*). The basic unit on this level can be called *grapheme*, the linguistic reference of which can be morpheme or word (and also syllable or phoneme, if the grapheme is used in its secondary function). Different linguistic units operating on the grapholinguistic level are sometimes designated by the terms with component *grapho-*, e.g. *grapholexeme*, *graphomorpheme*, etc. Units operating on linguistic and grapholinguistic level are not always entirely identical (for example, there is one lexeme *tā* – personal pronoun of 3rd person sg., but four corresponding grapholexemes: 他, 她, 它 and 牠). Another aspect of the examination on the grapholinguistic level concerns the relation between graphemes and their linguistic reference from the quantitative point of view (one-to-one relation, multi-to-one relation and vice versa). Proceeding from the graphemes, the following kinds of graphic representations can be distinguished: *monographic*, *homographic*, *multigraphic* and *heterographic*.

Graphemes of the Chinese writing system can be further investigated from the viewpoint of the participation of their subordinated graphemic units in the graphic representation of linguistic units. The subgraphemic units of the internal Chinese writing system can refer to linguistic units of different levels; those referring to the

semantic level can be termed *significs*, whereas those referring to the phonetic level are usually called *phonetics*.

Examination of graphemic system can be also carried out from the viewpoint of their motivating character, which can consist in the graphic form of grapheme or in its structure.

Examination of the internal graphemic structure of the graphemes is carried out on the *graphemic* level of analysis.

As to the graphic form and structure of the Chinese characters, without regard to their linguistic reference, it is the subject of an analysis on the *graphic* level. The maximal units operating on this level of analysis can be termed *graphs*, the minimal ones are traditionally called *strokes*.

Graph can be characterized as being of motoric-visual nature: on the one hand it is manifested by writing, on the other hand, it is the resulting product of writing. As to the strokes, the similar characterization can be employed here as well: strokes are those minimal graphic units that, according to the Chinese tradition, are written "at one go", and show themselves as continuous lines of various shapes.

Strokes can be characterized from the viewpoint of their graphic features, i.e. with regard to their shape, length (dimension), position and direction of writing. As the constituent of higher graphic units, strokes enter into mutual combinations. From this point of view, strokes can be defined as the minimal combinative units. The frame within which the stroke enter into mutual combinations, can be either graph or subgraphic constituent, which can be decomposed from the graphic structure of graphs on the basis of some formal criteria (graphic coincidence with graphs or elements of other graphs, recurrence in other graphs etc.). Simple graphs or ultimate subgraphic elements form thus the immediate frame of stroke-combinations.

The motoric visual features of strokes and their combinative characteristics, i.e. their ability to combine with other strokes and with other graphic units and their ability to occupy certain places in the stroke succession, form the basis of the stroke classification.

Besides their formal graphic and combinative characteristics, the strokes involve also a functional aspect: as the material means of graphemic units they have constituting and distinguishing functions. There is a close connection between the specificity of constituting function of strokes and their combinative features: the arrangement of strokes in higher graphic units is not linear (as in the case of phonemes) – strokes form graphic configurations, where the strokes are arranged in various ways. In constituting the higher graphic forms the strokes thus fulfil their function simultaneously with other graphic factors (location of strokes, type and way of stroke combinations etc.). In the case of complex graphemes, the stroke is constituent of subgraphic unit, which stands here as functional unit.

Graphs as exponents of the grapholinguistic units form oppositions by their entire graphic form. Contrastive graphic forms can relate with differences of the subgraphic units and their arrangement in the graphic structure, or differences of the constituent strokes and their combinations.

There are many graphic forms in oppositions which consist of the same number of strokes. If we consider those formed by strokes as immediate constituents, their distinctions can consist in the type of strokes combined, in the type and way of stroke combinations and sometimes also in dimensional differences of the same type of stroke. Differences can concern more or even all distinctive features, but sometimes can also be concentrated only on the one distinctive feature.

The constituting and distinguishing features of the graphs can be termed *graphonics*. The strokes in simple graphic forms represent the basic graphonic constituents of a graphonic complex (there are also other graphonic factors as the location of strokes, type and way of their combinations etc. which fulfil their function simultaneously with strokes).

The functional aspect of strokes is a very complicated phenomenon and further investigations in this aspect have to be carried out.

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A NOTE ON THE CHINESE SYNTAX

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Abstract: *A universal definition of particular sentence parts in contemporary Chinese is a constant point of discussion. Generally speaking, a sentence can be manifested by variant forms of utterances. A sentence's potential linguistic and/or extralinguistic environment can particularize different semantic nuclei of information-bearing structures. The present paper investigates the syntactic structure of certain types of contextually determined utterances. It focuses on sentences with a verbal predicate having two actant verb and attempts to identify the criterion for determination of subject and object parts of sentences within the frame of an actual utterance.*

Keywords: *Modern Chinese, syntactic structure, verbal predicate, foregrounding*

1. A syntactic structure analysis of natural language always faces a fundamental problem of a contradiction between the abstract nature of the investigated language system and the observation and presentation of this system in its material manifestation.

A sentence is a basic construction class of the language system viewed from the point of its communicative function and it is manifested by variant forms of utterances. A sentence is an abstraction of its communicative variants – utterances and can be represented by the “basic” variant form, e.g.:

Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。He sells fruit.

S V O

Variants:

a) Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。He sells fruit. He is selling fruit.

b) Tā màile shuǐguǒ. 他卖了水果。He sold fruit.

c) Tā mài shuǐguǒ ma? 他卖水果吗? Does he sell fruit? Is he selling fruit?

...

A presentation of the sentences under examination in our linguistic description is thus, as a rule, substantial. But once the sentence is actually realized, it has always certain semantic content and the information bearing structure, which can differ according to the potential linguistic and/or extralinguistic environment of the sentence:

1. Tā zài nàbian gàn shénme? 他在那边干什么? What is he doing there?

Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。He is selling fruit.

/S/ V O

2. Tā zài nàbian mài shénme? 他在那边卖什么? What is he selling there?

Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。He is selling fruit.

/S/ V O

3. Shéi zài nàbian mài shuǐguǒ? 谁在那边卖水果? Who is selling fruit there?
Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。 He is selling fruit.
 S /V O/
4. Tā zài nàbian mǎi shuǐguǒ, háishì mài shuǐguǒ? 他在那边买水果, 还是卖水果? He is buying or selling fruit there?
 Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。 He is selling fruit.
 /S/ V O

The underlined expressions mài shuǐguǒ 卖水果, shuǐguǒ 水果, tā 他 and mài 卖, in above quoted examples represent different semantic nuclei of information bearing structures of the contextually differentiating utterances. These potential contexts can thus particularize pieces of information included in quoted utterances which are identical both in the lexical items and the superficial syntactic structure as well. Consequently, in the predicative part of the sentence Tā mài shuǐguǒ 他卖水果, realized as differently foregrounded utterances, there can be traced units of different levels:

1. One-word denominations mài 卖 and shuǐguǒ 水果 in utterances No. 2 and No. 3 on a word level, and
2. two-words denomination mài shuǐguǒ 卖水果 in utterances No. 1 and No. 3 on a phrase level.

Such a one-word denominations as quoted above represent the free syntagmatic collocation in the utterance, and each constituent as such is contrastive by itself; cf. utterances No. 2 and No. 4:

- No. 2: Tā zài nàbian mài shénme? 他在那边卖什么? What is he selling there?
 a) Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。 He is selling fruit.
 b) Tā mài shūcài. 他卖蔬菜。 He is selling vegetable.
 c) Tā mài shū hé zázhì. 他卖书和杂志。 He is selling books and magazines.
 ...

The noun shuǐguǒ 水果 contrasts here with other nominal expressions which can function as possible object modifier of the verb mài 卖.

- No. 4: Tā zài nàbian mǎi shuǐguǒ háishì mài shuǐguǒ? 他在那边买水果, 还是卖水果? Is he buying or selling fruit there?
 a) Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。 He is selling fruit.
 b) Tā mǎi shuǐguǒ. 他买水果。 He is buying fruit.
 The verb mài 卖 is contrastive here with the verb mǎi 买.

One-word denominations as lexical items can be considered the units of the lexical system of Chinese “par excellence”, while denominations of mài shuǐguǒ 卖水果 type can be considered a **potential** naming units on the paradigmatic axis, which by the virtue of the semantic compatibility of both constituents can become an

actual transitory denominations in the utterance. The denomination *mài shuǐguǒ* 卖水果 employed in the utterance is contrastive as a whole, e.g. in the utterance No. 1:

Tā zài nàbian gàn shénme? 他在那边干什么? What is he doing there?

- a) Tā mài shuǐguǒ. 他卖水果。 He is selling fruit.
- b) Tā zuòzhe. 他坐着。 He is sitting.
- c) Tā gěi péngyou xiě xìn. 他给朋友写信。 He is writing a letter to his friend.

Thus, there are two different hierarchical denominations which can form a predicate in the sentence *Tā mài shuǐguǒ* 他卖水果. Consequently, the semantic structures of respective utterances should be different as well. Cf. e.g. utterances No. 1 and No. 2:

No. 1: Tā mài shuǐguǒ. (expressing what subject is doing)

No. 2: Tā mài shuǐguǒ. (expressing what the object is that is effected by the action of the subject, i.e. that it is the fruit what he is selling – *tā mài dè shuǐguǒ* 他卖的是水果。)

Grammatical relation of both constituents in above quoted two utterances, i.e. the relation of objective determination, are identical, while from generalized semantic point of view there are differences: in the first utterance both components are semantically tantamount (the verb nominal construction as a whole predicates what subject is doing), while in the second one the nominal referent functions here particularly as the object effected by the action, and it is semantically more relevant.

The problems of syntactic analysis, considering the substantial manifestation of the sentence in variant utterances, which are contextually determined have proved to be quite actual while examining utterances with “inverted” syntactic order. Position of two-words denomination *mài shuǐguǒ* 卖水果 when employed in predicative function can't be inverted, with the exception of “unusual” speech, when an inverted subject can be added (separated by a pause) to the nucleus *mài shuǐguǒ* 卖水果:

Tā zài nàbian gàn shénme? 他在那边干什么? What is he doing there?

Mài shuǐguǒ, tā. 卖水果, 他。 Is selling fruit, he.

In the case of one-word denominations *mài* 卖 and *shuǐguǒ* 水果 employed in the predicative part of the sentence, the inversion, on the contrary, is quite usual:

Tā shuǐguǒ, shūcài shénmedōu bù mài ma? 他水果, 蔬菜什么的都不卖吗? Fruit, vegetable and so on, these all he does not sell?

Shuǐguǒ tā mài. 水果他卖。 Fruit he is selling.

According to some grammarians, the syntactic structure of this kind of sentence should be SSV (i.e. the original postverbal O-part of the sentence becomes S-part).¹ Such an approach to the syntactic analysis in fact admits that the identical verb can

¹ Cf. Zhu Dexi 1985: 9, 27–41, 1984: 95–124; Liu Yuehua et al. 1983: 263–272.

have the different valency in respective information bearing structures consisting of the identical lexical items, and that is why this grammatical relation treatment of such a verb is made possible. In our opinion, unless the verb under discussion changes its meaning, its constitutive components cannot be left unexpressed. An “inner” form of the phrase *mài shuǐguǒ* 卖水果, considered the unit on the paradigmatic axis, is defined as a construction of objective determination; being foregrounded (actualized) in this or that utterance, this syntactic relation of the verb *mài* 卖 and the noun *shuǐguǒ* 水果 remains the same, even if the latter stands for the topic of the utterance. In comparison with the “regular” (unmarked) syntactic order SVO, the syntactic order of the utterance *Shuǐguǒ tā mài* 水果他卖 is marked (used for expressing contrast). Labelling the regular syntactic order as “objective”, this kind of inverted order can be termed “subjective”.

2. It is well known fact, that in Chinese, where there are not sufficient morphological criteria for delimiting this or that syntactic function, the problem of definition of such sentence parts like subject and object is the constant theme of linguistic discussions. Foregoing description has shown that the substantially expressed sentences have different information bearing structures, where the semantic relation of the constituents in predicative part of sentence is not always identical, while their grammatical relation remains the same, though the nominal referent is put at the place of greatest stress. Thus, if we want to verify the syntactic relation of the verbal constituent in the sentence, we can in many cases take as a criterion the fact whether the respective verb with nominal constituent under discussion can form a denomination on the paradigmatic axis of verb-nominal construction or not. For example:

Bàozhǐ wǒ yǐjīng kànle. 报纸我已经看了。 A newspaper – I have already read it.

There is a potential verb-nominal collocation *kàn bàozhǐ* 看报纸 “to read a newspaper” on the paradigmatic axis as transitory denomination. Generally speaking the actual existence of such a denomination can be verified in **non-foregrounding** position of the sentence, i.e. as subject, object, attribute etc. For example:

Kàn bàozhǐ hěn yǒu yìsi. 看报纸很有意思。 To read (reading) a newspaper is very interesting.

Now, let us consider the following sentence:

Tā sǐle fùqīn. 他死了父亲。 His father has died. (As for him, his father died.)

There is no potential verb-nominal collocation *sǐ fùqīn* 死父亲 on the paradigmatic axis, that could be employed in the non-foregrounding position. It cannot be said, for example:

**Sǐ fùqīn d nà yī tiān wǒ hěn nánguò.* *死父亲的那一天我很难过。

The correct sentence should be:

Fùqīn sǐ d nà yī tiān wǒ hěn nánguò. 父亲死的那一天我很难过。 On the day when my father died, I was very grieved.

The predicative relation can be characterized as a **foregrounding** relation of the expression in predicative part of the sentence to its subject; that is to say, this relation is particularized as to the mood, aspect or tense. In the sentence with verbal predicate, foregrounding of the respective verb can be manifested explicitly for example with the presence of the verbal suffixes *le* 了, *zhe* 着, and *guo* 过. In the above quoted sentence *Tā sǐle fùqīn* 他死了父亲, the predicative verb with suffix *le* 了 should be in foregrounding relation to the noun *fùqīn* 父亲 (the verb of one valency). Otherwise we must admit that in the above quoted utterance we have to do with the verb of two valences meaning something like “to lose”. Supposing that *sǐ fùqīn* 死父亲 is a construction of V-O relation, it should bear structural features which are characteristic for verb-nominal construction of an objective determination. Compare for example with those sentences, where construction V-O *shīqù fùqīn* 失去父亲 “to lose a father” is employed in some standard structural frames in which such a construction can usually occur:

Tā shīqùle fùqīn. 他失去了父亲。
He has lost his father.

a) *Tā yěxǔ huì shīqù fùqīn.*
他也许会失去父亲。
Maybe he will lose his father.

b) *Tā shīqù fùqīn shīqùde tài zǎo.*
他失去父亲失去得太早。
He has lost his father too soon.

c) *Shīqù fùqīn zǒng shì yī jiàn fēicháng nánguò d shìr.*
失去父亲总是一件非常难过的事儿。
To lose father is always very grieved.

Tā sǐle fùqīn. 他死了父亲。
His father has died.

**Tā yěxǔ huì sǐ fùqīn.*
*他也许会死父亲。

**Tā sǐ fùqīn sǐde tài zǎo.*
*他死父亲死得太早。

**Sǐ fùqīn zǒng shì yī jiàn fēicháng nánguò d shìr.*
*死父亲总是一件非常难过的事儿。

Our analysis of the sentence *Tā sǐle fùqīn* 他死了父亲 is $S \frac{P}{V S}$.

For the same reason, the interpretation of such a structural type as *Tái shàng zuòzhe zhǔxítuán* 台上坐着主席团 “There is a presidium sitting on the tribune” as SVO structure² seems to be open to discussion as well. According to this interpretation, the phrase *zuò zhǔxítuán* 坐主席团 should represent potential denomination of VO construction on paradigmatic axis, and in this form can be employed in a sentence. Nevertheless this is not the case. Compare for example:

² Cf. Zhu Dexi 1985: 9, 27–41, 1984: 95–124; Liu Yuehua et al. 1983: 263–272.

Tái shàng yǎn xì yǐjīng yǎnle liǎng ge xiǎoshí le.

台上演戏已经演了两个小时了。

A play is being performed already two hours on the stage.

*Tái shàng zuò zhǔxítuán yǐjīng zuòle liǎng ge xiǎoshí le.

*台上坐主席团已经坐了两个小时了。

Moreover, an explicit marker of foregrounding 着 in the verb *zuòzhe* 坐着 is expressing the state of *zhǔxítuán* 主席团, consequently, these two words are in predicative relation.

3. Referring to the above stated description we can conclude that the syntactical analysis of actual utterances explores variant forms of standardized sentence represented by the “basic” variant utterance. In the sentence with verbal predicate having two actant verb, the criterion for determination of subject and object parts of the sentence consists above all of decision whether the relation between the verb and noun under discussion is that of foregrounding character or not. A valency belongs to the verb paradigmatic features, but the respective realization of the constitutive components of the verb in this or that position within the frame of an actual utterance is conditioned communicative-semantically in accordance with the communicative intention in the act of communication. The postverbal position of the same nominal expression after the same verb does not necessarily mean that the syntactic relation must be the same. Compare for example the sentence *Zài wàibiān dēngzhe yí ge rén* 在外边儿等着一个人. in the following different potential contexts:

1. *Tā xiànzài zài nǎr?* 他现在在哪儿? Where is he now?
Zài wàibiān dēngzhe yí ge rén. 在外边儿等着一个人. He is outside waiting for one man (somebody).
2. *Shì-bushi zài wàibiān yǒu shéi?* 是不是在外边儿有谁? There is somebody outside, isn't there?
Shì a, zài wàibiān dēngzhe yí ge rén. 是啊, 在外边儿等着一个人. Yes, there is one man (somebody) waiting outside.

While in the first sentence the syntactic relation of the collocation *dēngzhe yí ge rén* 等着一个人 is that of objective determination having possible variant *dēng yí ge rén* 等一个人, in the second sentence the same collocation consists of constituents expressing the relation of predication, where the “foregrounded” form *dēngzhe* 等着 cannot have variant form without suffix.

We have merely touched here a few aspects of the very complicated question of subject and object in contemporary Chinese. Naturally enough, a lot of cases can be found, where the application of above used approach to the verification of syntactic relation is complicated by the fact, that there are many types of the sentences with verbal predicate differentiated by the varying nature of the constitutive components (actants) of these respective verbs representing various semantic relations. In any case, formal aspects of the structure of sentences are after all semantically conditioned. The description of these “complicated” cases should be done in a close

connection to their **syntactically relevant semantic features**, as well as with consideration of both paradigmatic and syntagmatic aspects of the phenomena under examination, and, if necessary, with regard to communicative aspects and information bearing structure.

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热烈欢迎中国的拼音字母

Jaromír Vochala

我们在中国留学的外国同学，对中国的文字改革工作一值很感兴趣。因此，最近中国文字改革委员会所发表的《汉语拼音方案（草案）》，引起了我们外国留学生很大地重视。我们捷克留学生几次谈到这个方案（草案），大家都觉得它很合理。不过还有一些地方大家感到不习惯。第一，按照我个人的意见，ㄅ、ㄆ、ㄇ、ㄏ、ㄏ、ㄏ这些音的拼法不符合一般的拼法习惯。这些音都是有吐气不吐气分别的清音，按照国际音标拼法的原则应该把这些音写为：p, p'(pʰ); t, t'(tʰ); k, k'(kʰ) 就是说——有吐气音的字母用吐气音符号来表示它。但是《汉语拼音方案（草案）》用有清浊分别的符号来表示这些吐气和不吐气音：ㄅ写成 b, ㄆ写成 p 等等。因此，对一些有清音和浊音分别的外国人和中国方言（比方说吴语）区的人来说，他们可能在学习汉语普通话时，会发生一些困难。

第二，ㄐ、ㄑ、ㄒ写法的问题。我觉得用 z, c, s 或 z, ç, ç 后面加上 i 或 y 就可以了，不必另用字母。这样一方面少了三个字母，另一方面学起来很容易，因为本来 z, c, s 或 z, ç, ç 后面加上 i 或 y 跟ㄐ、ㄑ、ㄒ相近。而实际上也不能互相混淆，因为它们跟元音配合在一起时，在这方面是互相排斥的：z, c, s 或 z, ç, ç 在普通话里不能跟 i, y 这两个元音拼，而ㄐ、ㄑ、ㄒ就是跟这两个元音拼在一起的。

第三，一个字母应该代表一个音素的问题。y 这个字母用在韵头的时候，我感觉到好象代表两个音素：j 和 y。此方说“约”这个词的音照我的看法一共有三个音素：j, y, e (jye)。再举一个例子：“庸”字按照实际的音应该念成 jun, 但是《汉语拼音方案（草案）》把这个字的音拼为 yn。

第四，拼法跟念法一致性的问题。a 这个字母如果出现在 i 或 y 跟 n 中间 (ian, yan) 就实际上念成 e（严格地来说是国际音标的 ϵ ），所以如果我们按照草案里边的拼法把“烟”字拼成 ian 就出现了拼法和念法矛盾的现象。我觉得如果直接按照实际的音来拼就学起来很方便，尤其是对其他方言地区的人来说。不然的话，他们可能不容易理解为什么这里的 a 念为 e，而为什么干脆不写 e。同样的道理也是上面所讲的 yn 写法的问题。

我所提出的这些意见不一定对；因为我在这方面的知识差得很远，所以不见得从各方面来考虑了这些问题。

汉语教学中的汉字问题

Jaromír Vochala

1. 汉字难学是大家公认的事实。对中国人尚且如此，对没有“汉字环境”而学汉语的外国人更是如此。在作为外语的汉语教学过程中怎么处理汉字问题，在很大程度上直接影响教学效果。

笔者在捷克斯洛伐克查理大学长期从事汉语教学工作，曾对改进汉语的教学方法，提高其效率作了一些尝试，编了几部有关的教材。在摸索怎样处理汉字问题的过程中，同时也对汉字字形结构进行了一些观察研究，试图找出组成汉字的各结构单位在形式上和功能上的特征。然后把这些特征从应用文字学的角度加以考虑，以便能制定出尽可能符合大学程度的系统性较强的教学方法和步骤。

本文打算从两方面来谈谈汉字教学问题。一是从基础汉语总的设想来看汉字教学的方法，二是汉字的具体教学方法和步骤。

2. 对基础汉语作出总设想时，就会碰到汉字教学的安排问题，什么时候开始教汉字最为适宜，是先采取以口头练习为主的教学方法，对有声的语言有了一定的技能以后才开始教汉字为好，还是从一接触汉语就教汉字为好。当然，可能不只是这两种，也可以采取逐渐引进教材，夹在用拼音写的课文里种种方法。这里不打算一个一个地讨论。

根据教学实践，我认为从一开始就学汉字最为适宜。主要理由是：汉字作为表意文字在学汉语的过程中对学习词汇——语言意义单位——能起积极作用。学生如果从一开始就把汉字跟相应的词项连在一起学，汉字就能逐渐成为他的“汉语语感”的有机成分，在学习词汇过程中起重要的辅助作用。对外国人来讲，学习词汇较为突出的难处是：由于作为汉语词汇基本单位的词根性质及词汇里大量的同音现象，再加上外国人不习惯于声调辨别语义的作用，觉得声调不同的词、词素都差不多，因此对汉语词汇语音上的区别性特征，往往感觉不那么灵敏，很不容易记住。具体来讲，若是单音词，光靠其音来记其义，就觉得很多词都很相似，常常混淆不清。如果是复合词，由于同样的道理，也在一定的程度上有这种混淆不清的现象，而且还往往对其内部形式也不能掌握。如果把同音词、近音词跟具有不同字形的汉字同时学，就实际上等于多了有助于记词汇的一种符号形式，就复合词来说，汉字还可以把其“内部形式”显示出来。再说，汉字结构上的有功能的成分（即有些形声字、会意字的偏旁）对于记词（词素）的音义有时也会起一定的作用。这样一来，学生在学汉语的过程中，从一开始就能逐渐归纳出词和词在聚合轴上的关系，对汉语的词汇系统逐步有所了解。

3. 要是采用从一开始就学汉字的办法，教学效果在很大程度上依赖于怎么样“从一开始就用汉字”，以及用什么教学方法和步骤才能把汉语和汉字的各自独特的系统有效地教给学生。由于汉字的表意性质，它不象表音文字那样能在比较短的时间内掌握使用，而只能随着所学的词汇的增长一个一个地

长期学。既然每课里所出现的汉字全部依赖于该课的词汇，那么就很难制定一套遵照汉字系统的特点教写汉字的有效方法。如果只让学生一个一个地去掌握各课的生词表上所出现的汉字，由于他们对汉字字形结构一无所知，又缺乏书写习惯，汉字对他们来说就会形成一种难写难记的长期负担，学汉字花的时间多，就相对减少了学习其他语言技能的时间。

那么，对汉字的教学应怎么处理才能在教学步骤和方法上对汉语和汉字两种不同系统得到兼顾呢？据我们所取得的经验看，一种行得通的办法是，从汉字字形结构方面着手，先成套地解决汉字写法的问题。也就是说，还没有学语法课以前，与语音引论课同时进行字形结构上的有系统的渐进的各种练习。用这种办法培养学生的初步书写习惯和技能，并且也让他们对汉字结构成分及其功能有所了解。可把这个阶段叫作汉字入门阶段。这样经过四五个星期以后，学生进入学课文阶段时，就再也不必花那么多时间来练习汉字的写法了，而且对汉字的结构及其有功能的成分有了一定的了解，记汉字也比较容易了。在汉字入门阶段，完全可以根据汉字系统本身的字形结构特点制定一套汉字教学方法和步骤，而不受汉语教材的任何限制。反过来，开始教课文时也就不必考虑用什么教学方法来教各种不同字形结构的汉字了。

4. 我们在汉字入门阶段所采用的教学方法是建立在下面这几个原则上的：

(1) 从简单到复杂，从局部到整体。

(2) 分几个阶段进行，每一个阶段要有个教学重点。

(3) 教学目的要以掌握字形结构为主，但同时也要要求记部分汉字及部首。

各个阶段的特点大致如下：

第一个阶段。重点在于掌握笔画及其最简单的搭配，即两个笔画的搭配。从笔形特点出发，按该笔画的分布情况，进行两个笔画的搭配练习，一共有三十多种。笔画是一个一个地引进的，每种笔画要作为一个小单元来讲，而其搭配的练习要限制在已经学过的笔画的范围内。

经过笔画的搭配练习，学生也就初步掌握了笔顺的基本规则。此外，制定笔画的搭配练习时，还要让学生特别注意和练习：

(1) 笔画的不同搭配方式，即隔离的（如二、八等）、接触的（如入、丁等）和交叉的（如十、七等），并注意搭配的方式和笔顺的关系（如横竖交叉地搭配时，笔顺的先横后竖等）。

(2) 搭配之点（搭配的方式相同，搭配之点不同的情况。如“人”“入”等）。

(3) 搭配中的笔画的变体（同一个笔画的长短不同，如“二”中的两个横；斜度不同，如“斤”字中的两个撇等）。

第二个阶段是以三个笔画的搭配为主的。这里有三个不同的搭配法：

(1) 把笔画跟部件搭配（即由两个笔画的搭配而成的部件，该笔画为起笔）。如一上：工，丿厶：么，丨口：山，等。

(2) 把部件跟笔画搭配（该笔画为“末笔”）。如丨一：上，十一：土，二丨：干，丨丶：寸，等。

- (3) 三个或四个笔画的单个搭配。如丿 ㇇：及，く 丨一：女，ノ 丨、
、：心，、 丨 冫、：为，等。

这一段的重点是使学生初步掌握汉字笔画的结合搭配方式，以及进一步了解和巩固笔顺的规则。在搭配练习中之所以有起笔和末笔之分，是为了突出笔顺的某些规则（如先中间后两边：山，小等），点在不同位置当作末笔的情况（如“义”“戈”“勺”等），指出某些笔画当作末笔的特点（如横或竖为末笔往往是长笔等）。

第三个阶段着重于简单部件的搭配。部件搭配也分为分离的、接触的和交叉的三种，每种又按部件彼此安排位置分成若干种类。这里部件和部件的搭配一般说来还不构成汉字偏旁结构，但虽然如此，它还是具有结构性质的，部件跟部件的安排有上下、左右、内外、合并几种基本形式。这一阶段的教学目的在于让学生掌握部件搭配顺序，初步养成合乎规则的书写习惯。举几个例子：

- (1) 分离搭配：
(a) 六 共 (b) 比 舛 (c) 斗 头 (d) 办 小
- (2) 接触搭配：
(a) 示 云 (b) 支 舌 (c) 止 正 (d) 永 豕
(e) 月 用
- (3) 交叉搭配：
(a) 牛 车 (b) 井 升 (c) 母 舟 (d) 内 肉

第四个阶段是介绍和练习汉字结构的不同类型。实际上，第三、四阶段里的一些汉字从其构造来看没有实际上的区别，如“反”“有”“在”等字放在哪个阶段都可以。在这个阶段里还要着重练习汉字结构成分在不同的结构里的一些特殊顺序规则，以及汉字的偏旁在不同结构里的变体，笔画的转化等现象。

练习汉字结构的各个类型可以跟汉字部首相连而进行，以最常用的部首的分布为基础分别进行各种结构类型的练习（即按“左”“右”“上”“下”“内”“外”等结构位置上所出现的部首而进行），并区分部首的“自由”和“粘着”形式，以及各种变体等情况。

在进行书写练习时，可以让学生作一个汉字部首表，往空格里逐渐填上所遇到的部首及其各个变体。同时也给所有碰到的汉字注音释意，让他们尽可能记住最常用的字，以及常用的部首。这样，开始学课文以前，学生已经能学会一定数量的汉字，或者至少对一些字的形音义有一定的印象。这对记字无疑会起积极作用。在学课文时，尤其是在初期阶段一定能帮助学生比较容易地渡过汉字这一难关。

基础阶段的汉字、语音和语法教学

Jaromír Vochala

0.0 捷克斯洛伐克查理士大学哲学系的汉语教学已有几十年的历史。

在我国，一般人把汉语看作是世界上最难掌握的语言之一。来到我们大学要学汉语的学生也抱有这种心理。抱有这种心理学汉语时有积极的和消极的两方面的因素。积极的一面是学生一般对较大的学习负担有了思想准备；消极的一面是学生有时丧失信心，认为跟捷文有那么大差别的汉语不容易学会，尤其是数量庞大的、复杂的文字更是无法掌握。

汉捷两种语言在类型学上的差别大，汉字系统复杂，这都是事实。针对这种情况制定好汉语教学方法及步骤极为重要。我们认为语言教学要跟汉学专业的教学总目的相配合，在学汉学专业过程中要求学生尽快掌握汉语基础，使他们尽早能用汉语来看原文材料。从这一观点出发，我们对五年的汉语教学作了相应的安排，将汉语基础教学集中在第一学年。第一学年的语言教学是关键性的；这一年内应让学生具备这样的知识及能力，以便升入二年级时能逐渐阅读用汉字书写的资料。我想就着重讲一讲我们在第一学年教汉语及汉字的一些经验，同时也涉及到语言教学的一般性问题。

0.1 我国学生一般进了大学以后才第一次接触汉语：这就是说在学基础汉语的初期要经过一个一切都要从头学起的极为紧张的阶段。同时还应克服母语中的某些习惯的干扰。因此在初期，教学效率很大程度上决定于语言及文字各个现象在语言课程里的恰当安排，及其按比例的讲解和练习。要避免某个阶段负担过重，特别要考虑到的是汉语和汉字构成自己独特的系统，它们之间又存在着内在联系，所以在每个教学阶段要尊重语言、文字的特点，制定出符合其特点的方法和步骤。

要在第一学年达到上述的要求，就基础汉语课来说，必须是快速集中性质的。在我们具体条件下（学生要修两个专业，每个专业一周上十小时课）。汉语课每学期有十五周：第一学期每周上七小时课；第二学期上九小时课。我们所取得的经验表明，一周虽只有几个小时进行语言教学，也可以完成要求相当高的学习计划（就词汇来说大约掌握两千左右）。

1.0 我们为第一学年修基础汉语本科的学生编了两本教材：《中国、日本及朝鲜文字入门》两册（作者：雅·沃哈拉（吴和），米·诺瓦克，维·布泽克）及《基础现代汉语》（四册），最后一册为视听课程，有录音带、图象等（作者：雅·沃哈拉）。

1.1 我们编了专门讲汉字的教材，是由于需要从教学步骤和方法上解决对汉字教学的一个难题：汉字作为一个复杂的文字系统，需要逐步掌握，是一个长期的过程；但是已经在基础汉语课程学习的初期阶段就已需要会写课文里所用的汉字，并且也应该让学生从整个汉字系统来体会和理解所

碰到的每个字。大家知道汉字作为表意文字（即表词或表词素文字），是相当复杂的，字形上、结构上是多样的，不象表音文字那样能在较短时间之内掌握。因为汉字所代表的是意义单位，学生在学汉语当中每课里应学的汉字全要依赖于该课的课文及语法内容。其结果，在每课里学生能碰到各种字形繁简各异的汉字。按传统的教法，尤其是教汉语的初期阶段，需要花很多时间零零碎碎地解释每个汉字的字形和结构，学生不易掌握，学汉字花的时间过多，相对减少了学习其他语言技能的时间。为了避免学生负担过重，教员只好缩减每课的生词。

针对上述情况我们编写的《中国、日本及朝鲜文字入门》的原则是这样的：基础汉语教学从集中讲解、练习语音、文字开始，让学生在学习语法、词汇以前已从字形及结构上了解掌握汉字系统——从笔画一直到汉字结构的各个类型以及汉字结构的功能单位等。其目的是让学生获得书写各式各样汉字的技能。不管其字形或结构如何繁复，汉字入门阶段大约需要四、五个星期，同时略微在此之前进行语音教学。汉字教学建立在分析汉字内部各个单位的形式及分布的特点。第一阶段着重掌握笔画及其各个变体、各个笔画的分布、笔画及其配合规则，以及笔顺，以便培养学生初步书写汉字的最小单位及其互相简单的配合。每个笔画作为一个单元分别讲解、练习。每个小单元里的笔画配合只限于前面已讲解练习过的。笔画的配合要按配合的方式分别交代（即隔离的、接触的、交叉的）。比如：

	隔离	接触	交叉
(一) 横一 (— — —)	二 二 ∴		
(二) 竖 ()	巾 ∥ ∴	丁 厂 上 ∴	十 十 ∴
(二十八) 勾 乚 (乚 乚 乚)	儿 儿 ∴	儿 匕 巳 ∴	七 匕 ∴

其次是过渡到高一层的字形结构单位，即单字及简单字形结构成分。练习着重于提高已获得的字形写法技能，尤其是在几个笔画配合中的笔顺方面，以及笔画配合所构成的单字字形（或字形结构成分）的形状等。再其次是笔画及字形结构成分在复杂一点儿字形中的配合。最后学汉字结构单位在不同汉字结构里的顺序，结构单位（偏旁）在汉字结构的变体，整个字形结构的形状，内部的安排等。

除了字形结构以外,《汉字入门》还给学生介绍汉字部首。了解部首及其功能对掌握汉字有不容置疑的好处。它常常是记字意的依据,或者至少是帮助记忆的一种符号。

练习字形结构时也同时交代该字的音、意(即所代表的词或词素),以便使学生**练字**的时候产生必要的语言联想;这样在开始学第一课以前(即语音、文字引论后的第一课),学生已掌握了一些用汉字书写的词汇。

总之,几年来的经验表明,基础汉语教学开头集中学汉字字形和结构有下面的好处:

- (1) 学生集中掌握书写各种汉字的技能,培养正确的写字习惯;
- (2) 帮助学生培养分析汉字字形结构的能力,逐步了解汉字系统;
- (3) 初步掌握一定数量的汉字的形、音、义及其部首系统。

由于对基础汉语教学的不同要求和目的,汉字教学在具体安排及方法上可有相当大的灵活性,但无论如何《汉字入门》该分为几个阶段,而每个阶段要有明确的方法及渐进的教学要求。当然也还有些问题需要进一步研究,如:

- (1) 《汉字入门》教学上该怎样要求最为适宜?
- (2) 如何利用类推方法练习同型汉字?
- (3) 练习汉字字形结构时对识字有什么要求?

1.2 汉语语音集中讲解和练习是大致跟《汉字入门》并行进行的。先介绍**拼音字母**,然后才开始讲汉字,以便学生一开始就能给碰到的汉字表音。在语音练习方面,除了由于两种语言发音部位及发音方法的不同,以及两种语言所用的拉丁字母里的一些字母的发音不同而引起的困难外,最大的问题是掌握声调和句子的语调。在集中练习语音时先从带调的单音节开始,以后是两个和两个以上的音节(各个字调配合的安排是有系统的),一直到**练习不同的句调**。重视练习语调不只是在汉语语音引论阶段,而是贯穿在教基础汉语的**整个过程中**。特别要注意到不同句子句末词上的升降跟字调的关系,句调对字调的影响等等。要掌握汉语字调配合语调,特别是掌握语调对句尾音节的声调发生影响的情况是个长期过程,在这方面母语习惯的影响尤为强烈。

1.3 基础汉语本身的学习(即语音、文字引论之后的部分)以一周为单元,包括词汇、语法、课文三部分。

1.3.1 对词汇部分交代和练习时要考虑到每一课的生词是汉语词汇系统中的一部分,并要考虑到汉语的词与捷克语相应的词在意义上,用法上不完全相同(学词汇时学生往往趋向于一视同仁),因此尽可能把词的意义在汉语词汇系统里给以确定。在安排生词或进行词汇练习时,都可以从某个词的聚合关系着手,如同义、反义关系,结构上的关系,词类上的关系等。特别是汉语里的某个词义有两个或两个以上的捷语译义,或者相反,几个汉语的词义只有一个捷语译义,更应从词跟词的聚合关系确定该词的词义。词汇在某课里的恰当组织和安排,可以使学生学词时产生应有的联想,而且词在生词表里有系统的安排本身就有助于记忆。

更不可忽视的是词的组合关系，即把词放在几个典型的词组来学，这样学生先具备了现成造句的“半成品”，有助于即刻的（快当的）表达。用这样的步骤来学单音词尤为重要，因为对外国人来说，掌握单音词往往有困难。第一，因为单音词里同音词很多；第二，单音词往往是多义词；第三，记汉语的单音词没有象多音词那样有结构上的依据。

1.3.2 基础汉语的语法部分的主要作用在于培养学生口头及书面上的正确**表达能力**。就教学方法来讲，在这里，理性认识因素同熟巧因素要均衡，具体步骤是：（一）简单介绍某一个语法现象，（二）用句子格式介绍该语法现象，（三）作该语法现象的练习；先朗读和翻译该语法现象的例句，让学生通过翻译逐步理解和概括两种语言在语法上和词汇上的差别。以后是口头练习，利用各种传统方法，如句法变换、词汇在句子格式的更换、句子的扩展、限制性回答、翻译练习等等。这里重要的是不同性质练习的适当配合：一方面应该培养学生在进行各种对话时的机械反应，另一方面要培养学生能分析和理解练习中所学的**各种语法现象**，防止和纠正正在作机械反应练习时所产生的一些偏向。例如不跟所学的相应的格式相联系及不跟母语中对应的语言现象相对照。另外，也不能忽略传统翻译练习的好处（尤其初学阶段学生大多通过母语理解掌握外文）。语法练习的效率在一定程度上取决于学生对该课**词汇**所掌握的程度。在进行语法练习的第一阶段时，学生的注意力往往集中于例句中汉字的念法和意义，而对首先应该注意的语法本身反而忽略过去。为了让学生在讲解语法前能熟练掌握词汇，基础汉语第四册给学生提供了各种词汇练习。另外有效的办法是每次语法课前进行词汇测验；同样，学习每课课文以前也作语法测验，全学期的测验结果可作为学期末考查及格的条件。

1.3.3 课文是一周课程总结性的部分。其目的不仅让学生能看懂课文，也要巩固和发展学生成段表达的技能。

课文的编写注重其知识性和趣味性，以提高学生学习的积极性。在初学汉语的这一阶段，可以把所学的语言作为工具用以学习与汉学专业有关的知识，如中国行政区的划分，历史朝代，一些重要事件、人物等等。课文的内容有时候也可以跟所讲的语法配合，如汉语中的表示地点方位词适合讲中国的行政区划分，表示时间的词适合讲中国的朝代等。这样从学习一开始就把语言同专业知识密切结合起来，有助于提高学生对专业的兴趣。

漫谈汉语语素的特征

Jaromír Vochala

提要 汉语语素的特点可以从语音平面的语音形式和文字平面的文字形式分别考察。两种形式性质不同，应分别对待。从语音形式看，汉语语素有大量同音、多义等现象，只靠语音形式本身来辨认其语义内容就往往有困难。一个单音节的语音形式如果孤立起来看，只是潜在地与概念内容有联系，由组合关系或语境确定了以后，才能充当语素词或合成词的语素。从文字形式看，汉字能把大多数的同音语素区分开，这种区分在识字过程中就已经完成了。由于汉字往往可以表意，因此文字语素可以有内部形式的，与其所代表的语义有一定的联系。

1.0 语素是语言最小的意义单位，是最小的音义结合体。语素之音如何表示其义，这是研究一种语言语素特征要搞清的一个要点。严格讲，语素之音是指由**语音实体**所体现的语素之外形，但我们观察研究的往往是以文字实体（书写体或印刷体）所体现的语素。语言单位的两种物质外形我们可以称其为两种语言形体：前者为语音形体（音体），后者为文字形体（字体）。

1.1 语言单位的文字形体可以由不同类型的文字体现，如汉语语素可以由表音的拼音字母记录，也可以由表意的汉字体现。语素是由哪一类文字表示的，这对研究语素形体上的特征极为重要。由拼音文字记录的语素是个线性排列的字符片段，与相应的音体语素之音序是对应的，但由汉字体现的语素的内部组织，与相应的音体语素的语音排列无关。汉字是表意文字，是作为一个整体表示语素的，但其结构成分有时分别与该语素之音或义有关。单这一点就表明，由这两种类型的文字所体现的语素，从**文字语言平面上** (grapholin-guistic level) 来看有所不同，应分别对待。

汉语以拼音字母记录的语素文字形式与相应的语音形式相比，大体上是对应的，¹ 从语言形式和语义内容之间的关系来看是大同小异的。² 因此，分析汉语**语言平面**上的语素的时候，就基本上可以把这两种形体替换用。这样，本文下面谈论文字语言平面上的语素特征时，就专指由**汉字**所体现的一种字体语素的特征，而由拼音字母记录下来的音体语素就归到语言平面上去处理。

2.0 语言平面上的汉语语素的特征

从语音形式来看，汉语里有三种语素：1) 音位语素（只有 /-r/ 这一个）；2) 单音节语素（其数目为最多）；3) 多音节语素（其中以双音节的为最

¹ 当然，也有些差异，比如拼写时一般不标上语素音位变异等现象。

² 这里不谈表音文字的形、义关系方面的一些特殊情况，如能用大写字母来把充当专有名词和普通名词的语素区别开等。

多)。要把语言平面上的语素与字体语素的特征相比，就首先应该从单音节语素的特征加以分析说明。

2.1 汉语单音节语素的语音形式（语素的表示成分）大致就是汉语语音系统的那一千三百多个带声调的音节，只有个别音节象 /biè/, /cēn/, /há/, /mān/ 等不充当语素，而只是多音词的无意义的音节。既然汉语里几乎全部带调的音节都能充当语素，那么就可以说，差不多每一个汉语的音节都可看作是个潜在语素。这是汉语音、义两种层次上的单位之间关系方面的一个重要特征。

现代汉语语素共有一千三百个以上的音节形式，而据一些统计，³ 现代汉语共使用大约五千个单音节语素，一个音节平均对应于四个语素左右。当然，这种对应关系并不是均分的；大约有四分之一的音节是“一音一素”的，而有些音节多到对应几十个语素。⁴ 因此，从语音形式来看，汉语语素主要特征之一是存在大量的同音现象，而且有的语素的同音现象达到了相当高的程度；只有少数语素是不同音的。

语素作为语言系统里的单位是一种抽象形式，是从实际话语句法上的终端成分——词——分出来加以概括的一种形式。从句子分出来，到不能再分为止，可叫作语素词；如果句子终端成分是合成词，再切分出来的就是隶属该词的语素。比如，{-rén(-)} 是该语素在聚合轴线上的一种概括的结构形式，表示其在组合轴线上可以充当词 (yī gè rén)，也可以充当词的结构成分 (rénmen, gōngrén)。

聚合轴线上的语素是抽象形式的语言单位，只有把它实体化才能表示出来。有的语素有几个变式，记录聚合轴线上的语素语音形式一般是那种所谓基础形式（即“典型”的变体）。

语素的一些语音变式是属于语音层次上结合音变的那一种（如两个上声音节相连而产生的变调现象等）。也有语素音位变式的情况，如数词 yī（基础形式）与不同声调的音节形式结合而发生的音变现象：

dì-yī	- /yǐ/	}	{yǐ}
yí wàn	- /yí/		
yì tiān	- /yì/		

{yǐ-} 语素在各合成词中的变式应看成是“常规式”（写法规则却可规定写原调），比如 yígōng (yīgòng), yìdiǎnr (yìdiǎnr) 等。

常见的语素语音变式之一是轻声变式。有些充当词的语素在连接话语中就有轻声变式，如动词后面的人称代词：Shéi zhǎo wo? ({wǒ} → /wo/)。也有与别的语素结合而发生轻声变式的现象，如 gēge {gē} → /ge/, míngbai ({bái} → /bai/) 等。有时轻声有辨别意义的作用，如 dàyì 和 dài yì 等。也有一些原来的轻声变式已成了有独自意义的语素，如 {zǐ} (nánzǐ): {zǐ} (háizǐ) 可写作 háizǐ)。

如果语音相近，意义上只有细微的差别，也可以算是一个语素的变式，比如：

³ 见尹斌庸 1984: 338-347。

⁴ 见上尹斌庸的引文，也参看笔者 Jaromír Vochala “On the Nature of Chinese Characters” - The Graphic Representation of Tonic Syllables in the Dictionary Xinhua Zidian (1968)。

{/fèn/ (shífèn, bǎifèn, ...)	{/chā/ (chāyì, chāshù, ...)
{/fèn/ (shuǐfèn, fènliang, ...)	{/chà/ (chàbuduō, chàjìn, ...)

2.2 语素是语言系统的一种抽象形式，但总要靠其实体体现才能加以观察研究。作为语言系统单位的单音节语素，如果孤立起来看，就无从知道是个词还是个词的成分。由于汉语语素有大量同音、多义等现象，只靠其语音形式来辨认其语义内容就往往有困难。这不只是就粘着语素来说的（其语义本来往往不显明，不固定），自由语素（语素词）也是如此。看（听）一个孤立的单音节语素要经思索才能凭借其形（即语音形式）联想某种义，但往往也会“想不起来”是什么意思，象 [āng-], {niàng}, {tiàn} 等语素就未必一看就知其义的。“想得起来”其某种意思，是经联想把该语音形式“现实化”了的一种过程，是给它配上了能与之搭配构成合成词或词组的成分，或把它“语境化”了：āng- — āngzāng, niàng — niàng jiǔ, tiàn — tiàn bǐ。较为容易辨认的单个语素，是那些常用的，出现于极为常见的语境的语素（如 {shéi}, {lái}, {bái} 等）。充当单音词和充当合成词的成分的语素，从这个角度来看没有实质上的差别。⁵ 这与汉语类型上的特征有关。

充当单音词的单个语素的“自显其义”的能力较弱，这是汉语具有一定的“单音节性”和“词根性”的表现。一个词是语言意义单位，又是语法上的单位。在屈折语里，词的语法功能是通过词形变化表现出来的，语言系统里的词是诸词形的总和概括的抽象形式的单位。作为词汇上的词项，一个词总是以其中一种形态形式体现出来的。一般来说，词汇的词项就是以其“基本（语法）形式”而体现的（命名）单位。⁶ 这些具有基本形式的单个词项，也就有其结构表现出来的词类标志，表示该诸词在聚合轴线上关系。同时，这些词的基本形式又是该诸词在组合轴线上某种程度的句法功能的标志。⁷ 这样，用来记录语言系统里的词汇单位的形式也就具有表示语法意义的成分；因而，即使是个孤立的命名单位，其形式的区别性特征也就足以使它能“自显其义”。

汉语的单音词作为词汇系统的单位就没有那种形态上的“基本形式”，是单语素词；在形式上跟合成词的语素是没有区别的。然而，既然是个词，就除了有词汇意义（如就实词而言）以外，其作为语法上的单位总还含有自己类词的意义及语法功能的性能。但这并不是由其表示成分（即语音形式）本身表现出来的，而是由某种外部结构形式在组合轴线上表现出来的。比如 bāo yìbāo 的 {bāo} 是个动词，yī bāo táng 的 {bāo} 是名词作量词用，等等。如果没有那种外部结构形式，看单个的 {bāo} 就无从知道是什么 (x) bāo (x) 的 {bāo}，因而也就谈不上其词类等词汇语法意义上的特点。因此可以说，汉语单个单音节“音义结合体”，只是经联想而生其词汇语法意义的。由于各个语素之间在同音、常用不常用等方面有差异，由各音节所体现的语音形式也各自会在“经联想而生其义”方面有所不同。

⁵ 笔者曾就这方面作了一些试验，有个“发音合作人” (informant) 把 {xiàn} “语境化”为 xiànzài 的 xiàn 这个合成词的成分，而没有“想起”象 yī tiáo xiàn 的 xiàn 或 rénshù bú xiàn 的 xiàn 等单音词。

⁶ 比如，在捷克语这种“基本形式”是名词的第一格、动词的不定式等。

⁷ 比如，捷克语的第一格的名词是能充任句子里的主语，系词谓语句的谓语的体词成分，能表示命名修饰语等，不定式动词与能愿动词、能愿谓词、一些助动词等能构成复合谓语等等。

语素是小于词的语言单位，是凭借其上一级的单位的词才能呈现出限定意义的。比如说，看（听）单个的语素 {rén} 时，只能“联想”说其义跟 yī gè rén 的 {rén}，或 gōng rén 的 {rén} 等意思有关，也会跟 rén xīn 的 {rén} 或 rén ài 的 {rén} 等意思有关等等。充当了语素词，由组合轴线上的配搭或语境等被确定之后，才能呈现出限定的概念内容，或者充当了合成词的语素成分，才能显现出其表意作用，而呈现出限定的不独立的概念内容。

总之，一个单音节的语音形式如果孤立起来看，它与概念内容能产生联系可看成是其隐显度不同的潜在能力。这些孤立语音形式具有备用成词或词的成分的性质，可看作是**潜在语素**。由组合关系或语境确定了以后，才能充当语素词或合成词的语素。

要把潜在语素在聚合轴线上加以确定（比如把它用作词汇上的词项来处理），可以用其组合轴线上的较为常见的配搭当作该词素的代表性的外部结构形式把它“现实化”（语境化）。语素的那种外部结构形式可放在括号里把它记下来，表示其举例性和局部性。比如：

shì ¹ (shí shì qiú) shì	shì ³ (tā) shì (wǒ de mèimei)
shì (gǔ fēi jīn)	(wǒ) shì (lái kàn tā de)
shì (, wǒ zhīdao)	(tā) shì (yī piàn hǎoxīn)
shì ² (yóu) shì (kè zhī)

聚合轴线上的语素之间的关系是一种联想关系。汉语语音、语义上的演变使现代汉语语素之间意义上的关系相当复杂而相互交叉。由于汉语里存在着大量的同音、多义、音近义通等现象，汉语使用者在语素“语境化”的过程中能对不同源的语素之间产生意义上的联想。由这种“不妥当”的联想而构成的配搭有时在文字语言平面上表现出来，这表现在写别字方面：

bèi ¹	bèi shī	“背诗”写成“备诗”
↓		
bèi ²	bèi kè	“备课”写成“背课”

一个潜在语素是否要“现实化”成实在的语素取决于与之组成的配搭是否能算是其“内部形式”。比如：

léi	└───	dǎléi {léi} ——— 词素
		léidá /léi/ ——— 音节

同样的潜在语素不同的相互的配搭可以使无内部形式的配搭变成有内部形式的。试看王剑小说《强者》里的一句语言游戏：“说穿了一句话，美洲有个加拿大，中国有个大家拿。”⁸按 jiā-ná-dà 这种次序，这三个潜在语素的配搭不构成内部形式，所以没“现实化”成语素；把次序改成 dà-jiā-ná 有内部形式的一个词语，三个潜在语素就成了语素。

⁸ 王剑 1985: 220.

3.0 文字语言平面上的汉语语素的特征

由文字所体现出来的语素可称为**文字（或字体）语素** (graphomorpheme)。汉字限定其类型上的属性，其语素可称为汉字语素或表意文字语素。

汉字用来表示汉语意义单位为其首要功能；其第二功能是被“假借”来表示无意义的音节。

如果所表示的意义单位是语素词，把汉字语素同音体语素相比较，前者就有下面的主要特征：

- 1) 这类文字语素所表示的是在一定程度上**已被确定的**音体语素。
- 2) 能把大多数的同音语素区别开。
- 3) 有少数文字语素是同形的。

由于有上述的 1) 2) 两个特征，由汉字中介的语素词就有较为显著的“自显其义”的能力。试比较几个同音语素及其相应的文字语素：

shì (- bushi) - {shì¹} 是 shì (yīshi) - {shì³} 试
 (yī jiàn) shì - {shì²} 事 (Běijīng) Shì - {shì⁴} 市

平常讲汉字表示汉语语素的特征时，往往只强调汉字能把同音语素区别开这一主要功能。汉字这种特征的实质在于：**一个字眼代表已在组合或聚合轴线上所确定的或通过某种解释而弄清的语素**。这跟表意性质的汉字的**实用特征**是分不开的，表现在识字过程当中，比如学“事”字时，如果光说这是个 shì，就不知道这个汉字所表示的是哪一个“实在”的语素 (x) {shì} (x)；只有知道了是 yī jiàn shì 的 shì 或 shìqing 的 shì 等时，才能掌握。在识字过程当中，常用“这是 xy 的 x”，“这个字当 x 讲”，“这个字是 x 的意思”等类似的公式，就是在不同轴线上确定该汉字所指语言单位的典型方式。上面所举的后两个公式是用来解释相应语素的意义的，但其用法还得靠语言环境来确定。因此，汉字所代表的语素主要还是由其在组合轴线上的搭配来确定的。这样看来，所学过的汉字就含有其所指语素在组合轴线上的潜在配搭的**内在标志**：事（即 yī jiàn shì 的 shì）= (yī jiàn) shì。

3.1 汉字由于其表意性质相对来讲是一种“不变式”，而可变的是其所代表的音体语言单位。也就是说，一种实体的（即视觉接受的）不变式的表意符号表示另一种实体的（即听觉接受的）可变式的音义结合体。上面所举的语言平面上的各种语素变式的例子皆是由“不变式”的字表示的（单个的字代表语素的“基础形式”）：

{yī} 一：/yī/（第一），/yí/（一万），/yì/（一天）
 {wǒ} 我：/wo/（谁找我？）
 {gē} 哥：/ge/（哥哥）

如果伴随着音变的是语素之解体，就会出现同形字体语素（同形文字语素）的情况。如：

子¹ {zǐ}（男子）：子² {zǐ}（孩子）

文字语素与语言平面上的语素之间的这种对应关系是多样的，下面再举几个例子。

1) 同形（文字）语素对应音体语素的“文白分读”“古义旧读”等的一些变式：

血¹ /xiě/（流血）：血² /xuè/（血球）

父¹ /fù/（父母）：父² /fǔ/（渔父）

2) 同形语素所对应的可算是不同的（音近的）语素，但还有一定的意义上的联系：

数¹ shù（人数）：数² shǔ（数一数）

好¹ hào（好人）：好² hào（好学）

3) 同形语素对应不同音而意义上也没有联系的音体语素：

石¹ {shí}（石头）：石² {dàn}（一石米）

率¹ {lǜ}（比率）：率² {shuài}（轻率）

4) 同形语素所对应的是同音语素：

才¹ {cái¹}（才能）：才² {cái²}（刚才）

打¹ {dǎ¹}（打人）：打² {dǎ²}（打这儿往西）

别¹ {bié¹}（告别）：别² {bié²}（辨别）：别³ {bié³}（用别针别上）：别⁴ {bié⁴}（别客气）

由一个汉字所表示的几个同形语素跟对应的音体语素一样要经组合轴线上的配搭才能被确定。但由于上面所说的识字过程的特点，文字使用者要**有意识地**学该汉字所表示的同形语素，因此单个的汉字也较为容易能“想起”都“当什么讲”（当然，这只是笼统地讲，要看汉字使用者掌握文字的程度等等要素）。

语言平面上的语素也可以有几个不同的对应文字语素，如：

{tā}：他 她 它（牠）

有一种情况值得注意：从同源词所派生的新意义是由另外一个汉字记录下来的，但意义上的派生关系还看得出来，比如：

取 {qǔ¹} qǔ dōngxi（取东西）

qǔ xuésheng（取学生）

娶 {qǔ²} qǔ xífur（娶媳妇儿）

“取”“娶”是两个不同形的文字语素，但是 {qǔ¹} {qǔ²} 也可以当一个语素处理。因此，对汉语语素的确定也要分别观察各语素和文字语素在聚合轴线上的关系。各自的特点可以表现在两者的不同联想关系上，比如 **bèi** (shūbāo) 和 **bèi** (yī shǒu shī) 两个词在意义上的差异较为显著，但在文字语言平面上两者之间有由同形字“背”所中介的联想而产生的意义上的联系。假如没有汉字在这儿起作用，在语言平面上也可能会代之而产生由同音语素所中介的另一种意义上的联系：

bèi (yī shǒu shī) ←→ bèi (míngtiān de kè)

3.2 汉字语素的特征还跟汉字系统本身有关。作为文字语素的表示成分，各个汉字之间存在着种种聚合关系，比如：

1) 汉字之间可有字形上的联系。有一部分汉字是近形异义，如：

土 tǔ : 士 shì; 戍 shù : 戌 xū : 戎 róng; 日 rì : 曰 yuē; 没 méi : 设 shè; 人 rén : 入 rù; 要 yào : 耍 shuǎ

近形字的这种字形上的联系在文字语言平面上表现于该文字语素有错认、错用等可能性。

2) 文字语素之间的聚合关系也有基于“有理据”的字形上的，象“木”字（本字）和“本”字（派生字）之间的关系。属于这类的字还有如“刀：刃”，“木：末”等。

3) 汉语文字语素在聚合轴线上的关系以汉字结构上的最为常见。

大多数汉字是由两个或两个以上的结构成分构成的合成字。作为文字语素表示成分，汉字结构成分从其功用来看可分为表意（即会意字的偏旁、形声字的意符）、表音（即形声字的音符）和形式成分（无表音、意之成分）。由于文字、语言的演变，以及其他一些原因，汉字的表音、表意成分往往“名存实亡”或者“名不副实”，但也有一部分汉字一般人还是能把它们看作是“有理据”的，即有“内部形式”的。形声字的一些意符在“识字”和“认字”过程当中往往能起积极的作用（辅助把该字与其所表示的语意联系起来，产生联想涵义等）。

从表示文字语素的功用方面来看，形声字应考虑其结构成分同所指语言单位不同层次上的关系。形声字是以整体代表语素的，其结构成分同时分别表示不同层次上的单位。形声字的声符是个同形假借的符号，其表音作用是由表意性质的符号中介的，因此，代表同音语素的各形声字可以有不同的声符（即由不同的同音字或近音字来充当）。比如：

鹰 yīng 声符雁 /yīng/
 樱 yīng 声符婴 /yīng/
 瑛 yīng 声符英 /yīng/
 鶯 yīng 声符鶯 (荣) róng

同一个声符也往往出现于不同的形声字，比如：“雁”声——鹰、膺；“婴”声——樱、婴、瓔、櫻、纓、鸚；“英”声——嫵、瑛、鏗；“鶯”声（不同字的省声）——鶯、鶯、鶯、鶯等。

从把不同声符的形声字作为同音文字语素表示成分来看，声符跟形符一样，也有区别性结构成分的功用；同音文字语素的形声字，如果形符同而声符不同，则结构区别性成分在声符。比如，代表同音语素 {yīng} 的“鹰”“鸚”“鶯”三个字之间的区别性成分为“雁”“婴”和“英”。如果相比的形声字是声符同而形符不同，则是形符充当区别性的结构成分的，如“樱”“鸚”“樱”“纓”等字的“木”“鸟”“才”“纟”等部。

这样，从文字语素在聚合轴线上的关系来看，形符和声符都可看作是对所表示的音体语素在组合轴线上的确定的一种外在标志。比如，如果把“鸚”和“樱”相比，那么，“鸚”代表 yīng(gēr) 而“樱”代表 yīng(táo) 的外在标志分别是“鸟”和“木”两个形符；而如果把“鸚”和“鹰”两

个字相比，“鸚”代表 yīng(gēr) 而“鷹”代表 yīng(gōubī) 的外在标志就该是“嬰”和“雁”两个声符。

由于声符往往不跟形声字的读音完全相同，形声字的形符又在文字语素的语音层次上可充当该汉字的读音与其声符的读音之间异同的一种标志。因为每个形声字在这方面情况有所不同，形符在这个层次上的具体功用如何，要掌握一个形的声字才能知道。试看有“寺”/sì/ 声符的下面几个形声字：

诗 shī 时 shí 侍 shì 持 chí 痔 zhì 待 dài 特 tè 等 děng

经过识字的过程，我们知道“寺”部加不同的形符是什么读音（ì + 寺读 /shī/, í + 寺读 /dài/ 等等），因而形符在这儿有区别读音的功用。

从文字语素的聚合关系来看，形声字的形符还表示该语素的一种类属意义。这样，由形声字体现的文字语素与相对应的音体语素比较起来，多了一种附加意义。比如，文字语素“鸚”代表在组合轴线上所确定的语素 yīng(gēr)，而其内部形式又表示它在聚合轴线上的属类关系，即它是属“鸟”这一类的。这种由内部形式所表示的类属附加意义可图表为 yīng(gēr)niǎo。

形声字的形符有时还能把无意义的音节“有意化”。一些用来记录双音节语素的形声字如“蜘蛛”“蝙蝠”“枇杷”等字就是如此。看到“枇”字就能靠其形符认出是个“枇杷”的“枇”，而不是“琵琶”的“琵”，也不是什么别的多音词的音节 /pí/。有这种功用的汉字，在文字语言的平面上，不只是用来表音节的一种符号，而且还给提供一定的意义上的信息，可以看作是一种“部分的表意字” (partial ideographs)。

4) 由“会意字”体现的文字语素当中，有一部分从一般人的语感来看能算是“有理据性”的，即有内部形式的。其内部形式与该字所代表的语素意义有关。在识字过程中，这样的会意字的结构成分可以当学习掌握这类汉字的一种辅助。与对应的音体语素相比，这类文字语素还有其内部形式的一种联想附加意义：

尘 = chén (tǔ) xiǎo tǔ 歪 = wāi (fēng) bù zhèng

3.3 汉字的第二功用是用来表示多音节单纯词的音节。这一功用表现在把表意性质的汉字“非意义化”了：汉字由记录语言意义层次上的单位转化为记录语言层次上的单位。所谓“非意义化”，指的是所使用的汉字的组合构成非意义的搭配，也就是说，该搭配是不属于在组合轴线上确定该语素的潜在语境范围之内的。拿“雷达”这两个字的搭配作例子。确定“雷”字所表示的语素 {léi_n} 可以有 léi(yǔ), léi(bào), léi(míng) 等组合，确定“达”字所表示的语素 {dá_n} 可以有 (biào)dá, (dào)dá, (chuán)dá 等组合，而 léi + dá 这个组合则不在其范围之内。

但是，正因为汉字能担任两种功能，也就可以选用能构成“有意义”的搭配的字来记录多音节的单纯词，如“绷带”（英语的 bandage），“维他命”（拉丁语、希腊语的 vitamin）等。

3.4 由汉字体现出来的文字语素用于汉语，还表现出组合上的一些特征。这涉及到与书面语有关的一系列问题，这里只能略微提一下。

由于由汉字体现的文字语素的上述特征（尤其是“自显其义”的能力），书面上就能用平时口头不独用的一些单音节语素。只凭借听觉不一定能听明白的某些语言表达形式（如一些文言词语和缩略语等形式），用汉字写出来

就看得懂。假如有人说“Fǎnduì yǐ gāng móu sī”这么一句话，你就不一定能马上听明白是什么意思；如果是用汉字写的“反对以钢谋私”，⁹你就看得懂。

由于汉字的表意性质，由同音语素构成的双关语，如果用文字语素来表达，该配搭就成了非双关意义的。比如：

xiàng qián kàn 向前看：向钱看

单音节的文字语素也能用于“零语言环境”而传输一定的信息，如书名、篇名等。虽然对“零语言环境”的文字语素的确定是有限制的，但其“自显其义”的程度（即使与所联想出的语境不一定相合）比对应的音体语素总要高一些，试比较由音、字两体所体现的语素充当“零语言环境”的书名：

Wù : 雾（巴金） Yè : 夜（叶圣陶）

Fèn : 分（谢冰心） Shí : 蚀（茅盾）

在话语中还可以把汉字形式结构上的成分“现实化”或“语境化”。这样的功用是基于汉字的内部系统，跟汉字类型上的特征是分不开的。这里只举《水浒传》里的一个例子来说明，第七回有这么一句话：“衙内是思想那双木的”。¹⁰这里所谓“双木的”，是把“林”字的成分“现实化”成文字语素而用于话语中。

4.0 上述介绍的对语言平面上和文字语言平面上的汉语意义单位的一些初步观察表明，语音形体的和由汉字体现出来的文字形体的语素各有其显著的特征，而这些特征能关系到该单位的性质问题。语素同语素能分辨是建立在其异质性基础之上的；音体语素之异质性往往要在组合轴线上才能表现出来，而文字语素的异质性却已经在识字过程中显而易见。两种形体语素的表示成分是由不同性质的单位组成的，而文字语素表示成分可以有内部形式的，与其所代表的语义可以发生一定的联系。

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⁹ 人民日报，1986. 1. 6.

¹⁰ 水浒传全传 1954: I, 114。

