"All the aids which a beginner needs": James Summers' (1828-1891) research on Chinese grammar

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Part III: Summers and Chinese grammar

Chapter 4. Summers and the claim that Chinese is a "monosyllabic language"

Since the early seventeenth century, Ricci and Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628) initiated the argument that the Chinese language is monosyllabic, implying that there is a one-to-one relationship between syllable and word. This was a general assumption until the twentieth century (DeFrancis 1984, p. 177; Yáo Xiǎopíng 2011b, pp. 489–490; Vermaas 2017, p. 432), and it is referred to as the "Monosyllabic Myth" by Kennedy (1951) and DeFrancis (1984). Many of Summers' precursors shared this idea; their arguments are presented later in this chapter. In this chapter, I first evaluate the notion that Chinese is monosyllabic at the level of the word. Next, I will introduce Summers' ideas on the topic: what was his point of view on the matter and how did he come to his conclusions?

4.1 A general introduction to Chinese as "monosyllabic" at the level of the word

Packard (2004, pp. 7–13) presented various ways of defining the notion "word", and based on this, Vermaas (2017) evaluated the claim that Chinese words are monosyllabic. The first question is: what is a word? To answer this question, the following considerations may be taken into account.

First, there is the notion of the "orthographic word". Orthographic words are defined from the perspective of the writing system, with everything between two spaces being regarded as an orthographic word. If a writing system does not employ spaces, as was the case in the ancient Roman *scriptura continua* (Linell 2005, p. 13), then, by the above definition, there are no orthographic words. For the Chinese writing system, the character counts as the orthographic word (Vermaas 2017, p. 433). As a result, since there is a one-to-one relationship between syllable and character (in most scenarios), every syllable, regardless of its lexical status, will correspond to the notion of the "orthographic word". However, besides using Chinese characters, the Chinese language can also be written with alphabetic writing systems, for example, the *Pinyin* system. The revised version of the *Basic Rules of the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet Orthography* (GB/T16159-2012), published in mainland China, stipulates that under certain circumstances, two or more syllables can be joined together, thus forming an orthographic word, that is longer than one syllable (2012, 5.1 and 5.2, p. 2).

Second, a word can also be defined as a combination of form and meaning, which needs to be committed to memory (Packard 2004, p. 9). This is called the "lexical word", the concept of which is closely linked to entries listed in dictionaries. In the Chinese tradition, entries are

normally monosyllabic characters. There are, of course, expressions and idioms that are not monosyllabic, and their form and the corresponding meaning have to be memorised as well. Nowadays, Chinese dictionaries also take words as entries, such as the *Xiàndài Hānyǔ cídiǎn* (現代漢語詞典 *Modern Chinese Dictionary*). In this sense, lexical words in Chinese are not necessarily monosyllabic.

Third, words can be defined as units that express complete and basic semantic notions. They are called "semantic words". However, the concept of "complete and basic semantic notion" is not well-defined (Packard 2004, p. 10). It comes close to the smallest meaningful form (Bloomfield 1926, p. 155), in other words, the morpheme (Vermaas 2017, p. 434). For Chinese, a semantic word would be the same as an orthographic word if based on the script, as there is, by and large, a one-to-one relationship between character and morpheme.

Fourth, there is the "phonological word", which is defined according to phonological criteria. For example, in some cases in speech, pauses demarcate words. Pauses, prosodic features such as stress and tone assignment, and phonological rules such as sandhi rules help to determine what counts as a phonological word (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2002, p. 13; Packard 2004, p. 10). In this sense, Chinese words are not necessarily monosyllabic.

A fifth perspective from which one can define the notion of "word" is syntax. From that perspective, words are defined as syntactically minimal free forms or minimal units occupying syntactic slots (Packard 2004, p. 12; Vermaas 2017, p. 434). According to Packard, this criterion is the most widely accepted way of defining words (Packard 2004, p. 12).[127]

From all these different ways of defining words, what is important to keep in mind is, first, that all these different "words" do not, as a general rule, overlap. What counts as a "phonological word" is not necessarily a word according to orthographic or semantic criteria. Second, every time we use the term "word" we have to make clear which definition of the term we go by. As will become clear when I turn to Summers' work, this discussion is especially important in the context of Chinese because, in the history of the Chinese language, the syntactic word has changed in size. Whereas in earlier times, syntactic words generally

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[127] These paragraphs on the definition of words is based on Packard (2004, pp. 7–13) and Vermaas (2017). Of course, there are also other ways of defining words. For example, native speakers of a language, who are not professional linguists, would generally consider a linguistic unit, which is smaller than a sentence but bigger than a phoneme, to be a word. The words defined this way are "sociological words", and in Chinese, the sociological word is *zì* 字 (Chao 1968, pp. 136–137). The term *zì* here refers to both the morpheme and the basic unit of the writing system, the character. Sometimes, native speakers also use this term to designate disyllabic and bimorphemic forms. Hence as a sociological word, *zì* does not always correspond to the basic unit of the Chinese writing system (Packard 2004, pp. 14–15). In such cases, it is not equivalent to an orthographic word if based on character writing, and it is not necessarily monosyllabic. For more on this topic, see Di Sciullo and Williams (1987, p. 1), Dai (1997, pp. 112–113), Packard (2004, p. 12) and Vermaas (2017, p. 434).

consisted of one syllable, in Modern Mandarin, most syntactic words are disyllabic (Wáng Lì 2004 [1956], p. 396; 1990, p. 226; Wáng Huàpéng 2000, p. 120). These modern disyllabic words, however, consist of combinations of units that functioned as syntactic words in earlier days. In other words, elements that were "syntactically free forms" at some point in the past lost their freedom, and as such lost their syntactic wordhood. What complicates the situation even more is that, in modern times, but even more so in Summers' time, the written and spoken registers do not always align. This variability leads to a situation wherein what would count as a syntactic word in written Chinese is not necessarily a minimal free form in spoken Mandarin. For example, in the sentence *xué ér shí xí zhī* 學而時習之 'learn and often practice it', *xí* is a syntactic word, whereas in spoken Mandarin, it is a bound morpheme. Several factors contributing to this process of "disyllabification" have been proposed, such as an increase in compounding in response to the need for new words following developments in society (cf. Chéng Xiāngqīng 1992, pp. 58–61; Xú Shíyí 2005, p. 74), Chinese people's preference of even numbers (Hóng Bō 1999, p. 160), the need to cancel homonymy (cf. Lǚ Shūxiāng 1963, p. 21; Li Fang-Kuei 1980 [1973], p. 2; Wáng Lì 2004 [1956], p. 397), a change in syllable weight (Feng 1997, p. 246; 2017, pp. 109–110), dimidiation (Packard 1997, p. 10; Boltz 2017a, p. 87), and the influx of loanwords (Masini 1997, p. 145; Wáng Lì 2004 [1956], p. 396).[128] In what follows, I will present Summers' ideas on the monosyllabism of Chinese.

4.2 Summers' view on the question of whether Chinese is "monosyllabic"

Summers' thoughts were influenced by the myth of language evolution that was popular in the nineteenth century (cf. Chapter 1). For him, all languages were monosyllabic in the very beginning (1864a, p. 5), and Summers distinguished literary Chinese (in his terms, "book language") and colloquial language. The former is monosyllabic (1853b, p. iv), which demonstrates that Chinese is an old language and that literary Chinese has remained unchanged throughout history (1853a, pp. 6–8). Therefore, for Summers, the difference between literary Chinese and colloquial Chinese is not only about style but also about history. In other words, literary Chinese is ancient, while colloquial Chinese is more modern.

Summers argued that colloquial Chinese is a general concept, which includes different varieties of the Chinese language, or in Summers' words, "dialects" (e.g., 1863a, p. xvii; 1853a, p. 28). According to Summers, the differences between the varieties of Chinese are huge because of the vast territory of China and the limited communication between different regions

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[128] This matter will not be discussed in this dissertation.

(1853a, p. 28). He stated that most of the Chinese population speaks their own dialect. According to him, although there is Nanjing and Beijing Mandarin, these varieties are only spoken by the few people "who hold a high position or a cultivated station in society", and therefore "[w]e must descend to the mass of the population, and hear what they speak" (1853a, p. 29).

With regard to colloquial Chinese and its varieties, Summers remained convinced throughout his life that colloquial Chinese was not monosyllabic but disyllabic or even polysyllabic at word level (1853b, p. iv; 1863a, p. 41, p. 69, p. 96; 1864a, p. 5).[129] He raised this idea as early as his *Lecture* in 1853 (p. 7) and he held on to it until the third volume of his *Repository* (1967 [1865b], p. 196). Here are some examples:

> a. [T]he local dialects of China are […] full and polysyllabic. [T]he concurrence of two or three syllables […] produce[s] single words. (1853b, Preface, p. iv)
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> b. The fact that the Chinese generally put two and three syllables together to form a simple notion is enough to show that the term monosyllabic is not applicable to this language. (1863a, p. 96)
>
> c. Monosyllables in Chinese are meaningless; therefore Chinese is not a monosyllabic language. (1864a, p. 5)

According to these quotations, for Summers, words are closely related to expressing ideas, and single words convey simple notions (cf. the semantic criterion to define words as introduced above).

After introducing some basic phonological knowledge of Chinese, Summers wrote the following summary of his ideas on the monosyllabism of Chinese:

> Up to this point we have considered only the *sounds* and *syllables* of
> the Chinese, independent of any meaning that might be attached to
> them. We next turn to *words* as the expression of ideas. By a word is
> here meant one or more syllables, which, on being pronounced, convey
> but one signification. (1863a, p. 12)

He claimed that (semantic) words in Chinese are not monosyllabic, however, he did not elaborate on what "one signification" means. For him, as long as a unit expresses some meaning, it is a word. Lí Jǐnxī (2007 [1924], p. 16) happened to have the same point of view concerning the definition of words, which may help to clarify Summers' notions:

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[129] This is not innovative at his time, see 4.3.1 below.

No matter it is one character or more, as long as it conveys an idea, it can be called a word […]. Some linguists say that the Chinese language is monosyllabic. However, in reality, a character sometimes does not have any meaning or the meaning is not clear. Most of the time it is necessary to use two characters in order to form a word.[130]

Summers also regarded the phonological form and argued that it is the accent that unifies syllables into a word. Hence, phonological words are not monosyllabic for Summers:

There are, however, means existing by which these monosyllabic representatives of the characters are wrought into intelligible language. They may be so connected with each other, and so intoned or accented, that we find some cohering, some nearly vanishing, others making themselves heard more clearly, and conforming themselves to the laws of euphony and the conditions of all human speech; and to such a degree does this cohesion, intonation, and accentuation of syllables take place [...]. Every thing depends on accent and emphasis to make a language polysyllabic. Without accent and emphasis, polysyllables become monosyllables. (1864a, p. 6)

Unfortunately, Summers did not explore this idea any further, and this quotation is the only time when Summers mentioned phonology in the context of wordhood.

Nevertheless, when a character is written down, it is considered to be a word, and monosyllabic at that (Summers 1853a, p. 18; 1967 [1865b], p. 196; 1864a, p. 3). This reveals that, for Summers, the Chinese writing system is logo-syllabic; considering the terms developed in Section 1, one can say that for Summers, the orthographic words are monosyllabic in Chinese. However, Summers also noted that if the Chinese language is transcribed with an alphabetic system, the orthographic words are not monosyllabic:

[I]f the mother tongue of any Chinese were written down from his mouth, with appropriate signs, marking the emphasis and intonation which he produced, and making those syllables coalesce (or nearly so) which he uttered rapidly together, we should find that our production was a polysyllabic tongue—yea, very polysyllabic. (1864a, p. 6).

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[130] The original text reads: "不問它是一個字或是幾個字，只要是表達一個觀念的，就叫做詞……有些語言學家都說中國是單音語係。但在中國言語的實際上，一個字有時無意義，有時意義不明，大多數是要兩個字復合才成功一個詞的。"

Summers observed that the confusion about the status of Chinese as monosyllabic is caused by the Chinese writing system:

> The common error which we have to combat is the absurd idea that Chinese is a monosyllabic tongue, and that all you have to do is to commit to memory so many thousand characters, which are, truly enough, representatives of syllables, but not often representatives of words, which are in Chinese mostly dissyllabic. The mistake arises, we conceive, from viewing the Chinese as expressed to the eye by written symbols, and from forgetting that every language is independent of its written characters, and existed long before they were invented. (1967 [1865b], p. 196, emphasis added).

Each character represents a single syllable (1864a, p. 1, pp. 9–10), so when we define the notion of the "word" orthographically, it could be concluded that Chinese is monosyllabic. However, when we only listen to the language, we come to a different conclusion. As can be deduced from the underlined quotation above, when Summers referred to Chinese as a "monosyllabic" or "polysyllabic" language, he meant a language that is monosyllabic or polysyllabic at the level of the word.

Summers explained the reason for the prevalence of disyllabic and polysyllabic words. He claimed that there are not many syllables in Chinese—the total number approximates 400 in Mandarin besides tones and aspirated initial consonants (1853a, p. 19; 1863a, p. 4), so monosyllabic colloquial Chinese would lead to a flood of homonyms. Disyllables, by contrast, can avoid the ambiguity of homonyms (1853b, p. iv). For Summers, this is the reason why disyllables have replaced monosyllables to form words to a great extent.

To sum up, at the level of the word, Summers argued that colloquial Chinese is not a monosyllabic language (although literary Chinese is) mainly from a semantic perspective. However, it should be pointed out that saying that "Chinese is not a monosyllabic language" does not mean that there are no monosyllabic words in Chinese. In fact, when Summers explained each part of speech, he always first pointed out the "primitive" forms of each word class, i.e., monosyllabic words. An example of a primitive noun would be *chá* 茶 'tea' (1863a, p. 41). His overall intention is to emphasise the abundance and importance of disyllabic and polysyllabic words in vernacular Chinese. Therefore, a syllable can be a word, but a word may consist of multiple syllables.

4.3 Summers' precursors and the claim that "Chinese is a monosyllabic language"

As mentioned above, the discussion of whether Chinese is a monosyllabic language or not concerns the concept of "word". In Priscian's time or even earlier, language units were placed in a hierarchy of sounds, syllables, words and sentences. Smaller units join together to form bigger units (McDonald 2020, p. 96, p. 177). Since the Stoics (third century BC), words have been defined from the perspective of semantic and syntactic criteria as "meaningful sound" or "meaningful utterance" (Law 2003, p. 40).[131] Summers adopted the European linguistic tradition that "syllables" are the units to construct words, and also defined "word" from a semantic and syntactic perspective, as presented in Section 4.2.[132]

4.3.1 Semantic words and the "monosyllabism" claim

In the works that Summers referred to, the concept of "word" is rarely defined. One author who provided a description resembling a definition is Marshman (1814). He consulted the British grammarian James Harris' (1709–1780) definition, which states: "[w]hen to any articulate voice there accedes by compact a meaning or signification, such voice by such accession is then called a word" (Harris 1773 [1751], p. 328). Considering the European tradition, this means that sounds form words, which then express ideas. Marshman picked the key words "meaning" and "significant" to define a word and asserted that a word is formed by "letters" in order to "convey ideas" (1814, p. 15).[133] Thus the semantic criterion plays an important role in how he defined "word" in his works, and for example, he wrote: "[b]y compound words however, are not meant two characters intended to express any two of the parts of speech; but two united to express one object, whether it be a thing, a quality, or an action" (p. 500). One can see, that, for him, a compound is only one word instead of two, as long as it conveys only one meaning. It is, therefore, not monosyllabic. Rudolf Stier (1800–1862, 1833) shared the same criterion, although he did not define "word" clearly. He emphasised the importance of meaning for a word to the extent that if a unit does not convey a clear meaning, for example, an interjection, then it is not a "word" (p. 130). These definitions were based on semantic criteria. These authors argued that Chinese is not a monosyllabic language. Semantics was the

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[131] This indicates that there is no space for "morphemes" between "syllables" and "words". The term "morpheme" was not coined till the 1880s (cf. Chapter 5).

[132] Another example is the following quotation: "[t]he syllables, which are appended to strengthen the original notion conveyed by the prime syllable, are such as denote the *agent*, an *object*; the *completion* or the *expansion* of the idea conveyed by the word to which they are joined; or they are purely *formative* in character, and produce nouns or verbs, adverbs or adjectives, as conventional usage has determined" (Summers 1863a, pp. 40–41).

[133] In the context, Marshman actually wanted to argue that the hieroglyphic and ideographic features of the Chinese characters can express an object or an idea in a more direct way. He did not define "word" directly.

common departure point for the concept of wordhood and the discussion of monosyllabism for most of the scholars.

It is widely agreed upon that disyllabic and polysyllabic words account for a significant percentage of the Chinese vocabulary, by for example, Francisco Varo (1627–1687, 2000 [1703], p. 17), Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 2, p. 109), Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (1803–1851, 1842, p. 3, p. 20), Thomas Taylor Meadows (1815–1868, 1847, p. 16) and Bazin (1856, p. xii, pp. xv–xvi). Most of these scholars supported the notion that "syllables" combine to express one meaning in Chinese, thereby forming a word; thus, for example, Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 107; 1826, p. 51), Williams (1842a, p. 48) and Bazin (1856, p. v, p. xii). Varo (2000 [1703], p. 17), Gützlaff (1842, p. 2) and Bazin (1856, p. iii) made the distinction that colloquial Chinese is not monosyllabic while literary Chinese is. As for the advantage of polysyllabic words over monosyllabic words, many scholars stated that they help to avoid ambiguity caused by homonyms, for example, Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 107), Williams (1842a, p. 48) and Bazin (1856, p. v), just like Summers.

4.3.2 Orthographic words and the trigger of the "monosyllabism" claim

The abovementioned linguistic hierarchy of the articulated sound, namely sounds combining to form syllables, and syllables combining to form words and so on, was apparently strongly influenced by the orthographic system and the didactic mode of literacy, since in Priscian's time, there was no space between Latin or Greek words in writing, and a major part of reading was practicing how to articulate letters into syllables and syllables into meaningful words (McDonald 2020, p. 96). This method of viewing and learning languages also influenced the research on the Chinese language.

Summers stated consistently that one should not confuse the Chinese language system with the Chinese writing system. This argument is apparently aimed at opposing the ideas of some of his precursors, who defined Chinese words using the orthographic criterion: what is written with one unit of writing (a character) is a word. For example, Du Ponceau (1838, pp. xii–xiii) asserted that in the very beginning, the Chinese language was totally monosyllabic, while characters, syllables, words, and even ideas correspond to each other. His argument also shows a combination of the orthographic and the semantic criteria. Prémare's words can further serve as an appropriate example: "[t]he Chinese characters …[have] some definite signification, and that hence there are as many words as there are characters" (1847 [1831], p. ix). This point of view is shared by many scholars to whom Summers referred. For instance, Schott (1857)

argued that one character corresponds to a basic word ('*grundwort*' [sic], p. 18), two of which can form a compound character ('*wortcompositum*' [sic]). For example, *bái* 白 'white' and *xīn* 心 'heart' form *pà* 怕 'to be afraid' (p. 20, p. 23). Other similar examples, with corresponding words and characters, can be found in his book (p. 29, p. 31).

When it comes to the compilation of dictionaries more generally, "character" and "word" was always mixed-use. For example, Williams wrote: "[a] dictionary […] containing old forms of characters, has the words arranged under 540 heads or radicals" (1842a, p. 3). Bridgman (1841, p. xxi) argued that "the object of the former [i.e., *Shuōwén jiězì*] is to explain the orthography of words by an exhibition of their component parts". Morrison (1815a, p. 34) suggested that "[I]n order to find out a word in the dictionary, excepting the Radical part, reckon how many strokes of the pencil are necessary to form the character which you wish to find, then, under its radical and that collection of characters consisting of the given number of strokes, look for it". This can also be seen as a claim that lexical words are monosyllabic.[134] In China, traditionally, people tend to compile dictionaries using characters as entries, while in the West, words are used.

Morrison's idea of monosyllabism is unclear. In his grammar (cf. above and 1815a, p. 2, p. 37), he stated that Chinese is monosyllabic, but in the dictionary that was published in the same year, he argued that the disyllabic units *tāotiān* 滔天 'appalling' and *xiàmín* 下民 'populace' (p. xv) are words. Elsewhere, he wrote: "[t]hat the Chinese Language has no Compound Words, seems a misapprehension" (p. x). He also described compound words in Chinese in the following year (1816, pp. 1–2). There might have been a moment in 1815 when Morrison came to the conclusion that Chinese is not a purely monosyllabic language, or more likely, that orthographic words are monosyllabic, while semantic words are not.

Edkins (1853, p. 191) challenged the argument for Chinese being classified as a monosyllabic language: "[s]ome terms originally consist of two syllables, which are written separately, only because the Chinese mode of writing requires each character to be the sign of a monosyllable [for example] 吩咐 *fun fú* 'to command'". In *Chinese Repository*, for which see Chapter 3 above, a similar statement can be found, saying that the characters are

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[134] A standard definition and example of the "lexical word" is shown in Prémare's work: "[n]ot only are words to be committed to memory, but attention to the form and meaning of the characters is required, so that when e. g. the character *sin* 信, "faith", is pronounced, not only shall the idea of this virtue present itself to the mind, but the character itself, and the two parts from which it derives its meaning, viz. *jin*, 人, a man, and *yen*, 言 words, and in fine the monosyllable itself with its proper tone shall be contemplated in the imagination as in the smooth surface of a mirror" (1847 [1831], p. v).

monosyllabic whereas the oral language is polysyllabic (Samuel Dyer, 1804–1843, 1835, p. 174; DeFrancis 1950, p. 20). Theophilus Siegfried Bayer (1694–1738) also pointed out that Chinese has polysyllabic words which are considered monosyllabic units because of Chinese characters, without any further explanation (1730, Vol. I, p. 106). Abel-Rémusat argued that the perception that Chinese is monosyllabic is based on the writing system of Chinese characters (1826, pp. 169–170).[135] These viewpoints anticipate Summers' statement that the writing system should be distinguished from the language itself.

4.3.3 Phonological words and the "monosyllabism" claim

In one of Edkins' works, he mentioned a concept very similar to that of the "phonological word":

> Words arrange themselves in groups of two, three and four, regulated by accent. The accent falls usually on the last word in a combination of two; on the second and fourth in a combination of four; and on the first and last in a combination of three. But when, as often occurs, two sounds are so closely combined as to become one dissyllabic word, the accent is on the first. (1862, p. 99, emphasis added)

When two "sounds" combine "closely" and the accent is on the first syllable, they can form a word. Hence, if not, they form a phrase or some other unit. What exactly "closely" meant to him cannot be determined precisely, but the "accent" criterion that he came up with falls within the scope of the phonological definition of "word". Today Duanmu (1999) also propounded the argument that there are stresses within Chinese words concealed by tones.[136] Edkins was not alone in his stance on accent and word unity. By his letter to Abel-Rémusat it would appear that Humboldt was already trying to find accents in Chinese words, since the unity of the words builds upon the accents, he said (2001 [1826], p. 172). Unfortunately, neither of them analysed more data or came up with a theory concerning the "phonological word". Summers apparently aligned himself with these researchers. All of them, therefore, argued that Chinese is not monosyllabic.

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[135] In his letter to Abel-Rémusat from 1827, Humboldt praised Abel-Rémusat's objection to the classification of Chinese as a monosyllabic language. He stated that the fallacy is caused by the confusion of the language itself and characters (Humboldt 2001 [1826], p. 169; DeFrancis 1950, pp. 17–18). However, in one of Summers' reference books published in 1836, Humboldt argued that the Chinese language is monosyllabic, despite the fact that there are compounds in Chinese, since the essential grammatical issue is Chinese has no inflection (Humboldt 1836, pp. cccxci–cccxcii).

[136] See p. 248: "when there is foot, there is stress, and vice versa".

4.4 Summers' successors on the view that Chinese being a monosyllabic language

There is no ground-breaking work that is concerned with the claim that Chinese is a monosyllabic language in the publications of Summers' successors. Some of them viewed "words" from various perspectives, while considering the differences between literary and colloquial Chinese. For example, Wade viewed words from an orthographic perspective and argued that "The *tzǔ* [字 'character'] [are] written words of the language" (1867, p. xi), and he asserted that there are polysyllabic combinations in Chinese, but that "each syllable is a word in its original integrity" (1867, p. xii). This shows that, for him, there was also a distinction between the ancient Chinese and the colloquial Chinese in his time.

In his 1904 work, Douglas clarified that "characters" as a unit of the writing system should not be mixed up with "words":

> In transcribing Chinese words I have so far departed from the usual practice as to write them as words and not syllable by syllable. It cannot be too strongly impressed on the student that each character does not necessarily represent a word, and that as a matter of fact there are far more polysyllabic than monosyllabic words in colloquial Chinese. In no other language has the confusion between the written characters and the words been so persistently maintained as in Chinese. (p. 8, emphasis added)

His idea about the polysyllabic characteristic of vernacular Chinese and the cause of monosyllabism are very similar to Summers. Douglas further explained that the notion of Chinese being monosyllabic would lead to false pauses and incorrect rhythm while speaking: "[s]eeing the syllables written as so many words, they pronounce them as so many words, and the result is that, when attempting to speak, they utter a series of jerky monosyllables without the slightest reference to the rhythm of articulate speech" (1904, p. 9). In order to deal with this issue, he joined syllables together without any spaces or hyphens in between when he considered these syllables form "words":

> In the present work I have not confined the system to such Chinese expressions as are expressed by one word in English, but have used it in a way which I believe will best assist students to catch the rhythm of the language. For instance, I have written such words as *K'anshutih* [看書的],
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> 'a student of books,' thus, rather than *K'an shu tih*. (1904, p. 9)

Although he did not define the notion of "word", the point that can be extracted from this quotation is that, for him, a Chinese word is not a translation from an English word, but a non-

pausing unit in the Chinese rhythmic system. This is a new perspective compared to the earlier works. It falls within the notion of a "phonological word".

Davis is another author who applied different criteria to his definition of "word":

a. But when a Chinese sees that 人 *jhin*, "a man", is the root of a character, he knows the word has a reference to the human race in some one or other of its relations. (p. 86)

b. The third and most interesting office of the roots is in serving not only as the elements of all compound words, but as the generic heads for their specific classification…The root *Ta* [大], "great," combined with *Koong* [弓], "a bow," forms the word *Ee* [夷], "a barbarian". (p. 87)

In these two examples, a "character" is equivalent to a "word", and terms like "compound words" referring to compound characters are evidence that orthographic Chinese words are monosyllabic for him. Sometime later, however, in 1870, he provided a clear statement that Chinese is not monosyllabic (p. 3) and that there are compounds in Chinese from a phonological perspective:

The language of China is in a great measure composed of what, for want of a better expression, we will call "compound terms," consisting of two words or characters, which may be a noun with its adjective, a verb with its adverb, two nouns united—and a great many other grammatical combinations of the kind. These are always pronounced together, —as much so as parts of the same compound word in other languages. (p. 14)

In *Phoenix* (1870b, p. 17), Summers praised Davis for including compound words in his works on Chinese. Davis expressed his appreciation for Summers' help in supervising the publication of the book, especially in the printing of the Chinese characters (Davis 1870, p. vii). Although it is Morrison that shaped Davis' view (Davis 1870, p. 3), not Summers, Davis finally aligned with Summers in the same "school".

Gabelentz (1881) took literary Chinese as his object of research while using the semantic criterion and came to the conclusion that one character normally stands for one word (p. 25) and a meaningful syllable is a word (p. 24).

4.5 Summary

Many early sinologists viewed words from more than one perspective. For those who took the orthographic word as a basis, Chinese is monosyllabic. Summers rebutted those of his

precursors who did not distinguish between the writing system and the language system and therefore stated that Chinese is monosyllabic. This is based on his view that literary and vernacular Chinese need to be looked upon differently: at the level of a word, the former is monosyllabic and the latter is not. For Summers, the semantic criterion is essential in defining words. Summers' point of view was not novel, but he was able to compile the ideas of his predecessors and present them in a coherent way to his students.