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## **“All the aids which a beginner needs”: James Summers’ (1828-1891) research on Chinese grammar**

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## Chapter 6. Parts of speech

This chapter discusses whether and how Summers classified words and whether certain parts of speech exist in Chinese in his view. It further investigates the sources and influences of Summers' works.

### 6.1 A general introduction to the problems of classifying Chinese words

The term “parts of speech” was originally “parts of the sentence” in Greek (*mérē lógon*), but when translated into European vernaculars, it was converted to “parts of speech”. This translation indicates that these “parts” are not the units of a sentence anymore, but instead, the units of language. This raised the question of whether the parts of speech that were distinguished in European languages (nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, pronouns etc.) are the same for all the languages of the world, including Chinese.<sup>192</sup> Guō Ruì (2002, p. 11), for one, listed many reasons why it is difficult to classify Chinese words according to European categories and argued that it is not clear whether Chinese words can be classified at all. If one takes both literary Chinese and vernacular Chinese into account without distinguishing them clearly, as most of the early sinologists did, things become even more complicated.

There is, for example, discussion on the question of whether Chinese has a separate class of adjectives. Chinese words that seem to be the semantic counterparts of adjectives in English have a lot in common with elements that are generally acknowledged to be verbs in Chinese. For example, syntactically, adjectives in Chinese can be the predicate of a sentence without the help of a copula, and some of them can be reduplicated in the same way as verbs. However, they also have a number of properties that set them apart from verbs. For instance, they can modify an NP without the help of *de* 的, while verbs cannot. They also display patterns of reduplication, with ensuing meanings, which cannot be found with verbs.<sup>193</sup>

A similar case can be made for the class of prepositions. Whether there is a separate class of such words in Chinese is a hotly debated issue. There are elements in Chinese that behave like prepositions in European languages. However, many of them originate as verbs, and the same forms act as verbs in other contexts. For example, in the following sentences, *zài* 在 ‘to be, in’ behaves like a verb in example (a), yet it functions as a preposition in example (b), where *shàngbān* is the main verb:

- (1) a. *Tā zài jiǎ.*

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<sup>192</sup> The part about “parts of speech” in this paragraph is based on McDonald (2020, pp. 191–192).

<sup>193</sup> See Paul (2015, pp. 139–174) and Basciano (2017, pp. 558–560).

he be home

‘He is home.’

b. *Tā zài Běijīng shàngbān.*

he in Beijing work

‘He works in Beijing’.

Not all of such words have a verbal counterpart, while otherwise behaving the same as the others in their prepositional use.<sup>194</sup>

Furthermore, in locative expressions like the ones in (2) below, the ground noun is often followed by an element (*wài* ‘outside’ and *qián* ‘in front of’ in (2)), which is often referred to as a “localizer” in Chinese linguistics (e.g., Chao 1968, pp. 620–627; Li 1990, p. 4).

(2) a. *fáng wài*

house outside

‘outside the house’

b. *mén qián*

door front

‘in front of the door’

These “localizers” share characteristics with both nouns and adpositions (Ernst 1988, p. 221; McCawley 1992, pp. 228–231). Historically, many of these elements were nouns.<sup>195</sup> The distribution of these locative expressions is similar to NPs (Li 1990, p. 4). However, these localizers can be translated into European languages as adpositions and have also been classified as postpositions (Chao 1968, pp. 621–622).

## 6.2 Summers and parts of speech

Summers claimed that “Chinese words have really no classification or inflection” and “all Chinese words cannot be classified under European denominations” (1863a, p. 40). He reminded students that “[i]t is of great importance for the student to be able to divest his mind of the idea of a Chinese word being a noun or a verb, and to be able to treat any word as a noun or a verb, according as the case may require” (1863a, p. 141). Students should be open-minded, think outside of a European framework, and be aware that Chinese words have no classification inflectionally. In other words, Chinese words cannot be classified by their forms as words per se in the same way as European languages, but he did not object to other criteria of

<sup>194</sup> See Li and Sandra (1981, pp. 356–367), McCawley (1992, pp. 218–219), Paul (2015, pp. 53–54), and Basciano (2017, pp. 560–561).

<sup>195</sup> Paul claimed that some of them are not originally nouns but verbs (see Paul 2015, p. 106).

classification.

That having been said, classifying words for Summers was a task he must fulfil, due to the necessity of analysing Chinese grammar in a way familiar to his readers who were brought up in the Latin linguistic tradition and who were used to its classification of words. He stated that it will be “more convenient for our purpose of analysis” and “necessary to acquire words before we can [...] examine the structure of the sentence” while “many [words] may be placed in grammatical categories and be distinguished by the respective terms for the parts of speech” (1863a, p. 40). Therefore, in practice and for didactic purposes, Summers tried to classify Chinese words according to criteria other than inflection.

### 6.2.1 *Summers’ criteria for classifying words*

As mentioned above, inflection cannot serve as a criterion for classifying Chinese words. Summers had to find other ways.

#### 6.2.1.1 “Position” and its definition

The following quotations reveal one of Summers’ criteria:

- a. [A]ny expression may be treated adverbially in certain positions in the sentence. (1864a, p. 65)
- b. [T]he position of the words alone can determine how the expression must be construed. (1863a, p. 142)
- c. The position also of a syllable or word may determine what part of speech it is, while the same syllable, disconnected from the sentence or phrase, would have no grammatical worth at all. (1864a, p. 42)

As presented in these quotations, the position of a word in a sentence or a phrase is one of Summers’ criteria for classifying Chinese words. Lí Jīnxī’s famous statement in 1924 sounds quite similar to quotation (c): “*yī jù biàn pǐn, lí jù wú pǐn* (依句辨品, 離句無品 ‘The class [of a word] is determined by the sentence. Outside the sentence, it has no class’).”<sup>196</sup>

However, Summers did not clarify what the word “position” really means: whether it refers to a syntactic slot that the word fills, or to the relative position of the word when collocated with other words. In the quotation “[t]he subject must be a noun or a word used as

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<sup>196</sup> Lí claimed that his argument is inspired by some earlier Chinese scholars’ statements in the Yuan (1271–1368) and Qing dynasties (1644–1912), for example, *Wén wú dìng fǎ, wén chéng fǎ lì* 文无定法, 文成法立 ‘There are no fixed grammatical rules; When the passage is finished, the rules are set’ (Sūn Liángmíng 2005a, p. 23). However, these scholars focused on how to compose works of literature rather than on how to classify words.

such” (1863a, p. 183), Summers suggested that syntactic function is the criterion “position”. However, for Summers, the collocation of words or the relative position of words (or word-constituents) also helps to classify words:

- a. Auxiliary syllables and particles do however frequently distinguish the parts of speech. (1863a, p. 40)
- b. Nouns may be distinguished by their form when certain formative particles are present as affixes. (1864a, p. 42)
- c. A noun before an adjective is either (1) the subject of a sentence of which the adjective is the predicate, or it is (2) construed as an adverb. (1863a, p. 99)

It is clear that word formation processes are included in the views illustrated by these quotations. For example, the “formative” *zi* (cf. Chapter 5) helps to form nouns like *xiāngzi* 箱子 ‘box’ (1863a, p. 43). One of the main features of “formatives” like *zi* is to mark the part of speech of the word, according to Summers. Therefore, “position” is a very important criterion to classify Chinese words according to Summers. “Position” in his eyes refers not only to the syntactic function of the word (i.e., to be the subject or the predicate) but also the collocation with other words (or morphemes, i.e., the relative “position” with elements like “formatives”).

#### 6.2.1.2 The “meaning” of a word as the criterion for classifying words

In his *Flying Dragon*, Summers wrote a series of articles to teach Chinese people the English language (cf. Chapter 3). In one of them, he distinguished nouns from verbs according to the criterion *yìsi* 意思 ‘meaning’ in his own words as follows:

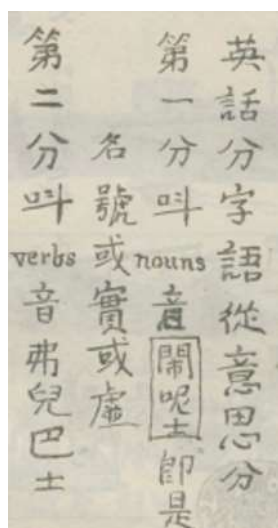


Figure 10: “Meaning” of the word as a criterion to classify words in *Flying Dragon*<sup>197</sup>

英話分字語，從意思分第一分叫 nouns，音“鬧呢士”，即是名號，或實或虛。第二分叫 verbs，音“弗兒巴士”，即行動食思之意。  
(論英國話語, in *Flying Dragon*, No. 9, 1866, punctuation added).

In English, there are different parts of speech. According to the meaning [of words], the first class is called “nouns”, pronounce *nàoneshì*, which are the real or unreal names [of things]. The second class is called “verbs”, pronounce *fúérbāshì*, which means moving, acting, eating and thinking. [English translation mine]

To Summers, the lexical meaning of words can serve as a criterion in the classification of words, which also applies to Chinese. He wrote:

- a. [T]he meaning of a character or word and its position in the sentence will generally determine to what category it belongs. (1863a, p. 40)
- b. Though the Chinese employ the *same* word frequently to express the substantive or the verbal meaning, they have a class of words almost exclusively applied to *things*, and another class to *actions*. (1853b, p. vi)

When more than one criterion applies, the question of which criterion is prioritised should be considered. However, Summers did not discuss this issue at all.

In summary, Summers claimed that Chinese words cannot be classified under the European system inflectionally. Words in Chinese, however, can be classified according to other criteria, such as their relative positions, i.e., some morphological and collocational rules and their meaning. For him, classifying Chinese words is necessary in order to analyse individual sentences and to improve the teaching of the language.

### 6.2.2 Summers’ classification of parts of speech in different works

His *Lecture* (pp. 26–27) introduces the traditional Chinese terms *xūzì* 虛字 ‘function words’ (literally, ‘empty words’) and *shízi* 實字 ‘content words’ (literally, ‘substantial words’), the latter of which is further subdivided into *sǐzì* 死字 ‘nouns’ (literally, ‘dead words’) and *huózi* 活字 ‘verbs’ (literally, ‘living words’; more discussion on these notions below). Summers did

<sup>197</sup> © British Library Board (Asia, Pacific & Africa OP.711 General Reference Collection 1867–1870 LOU.LON 71A [1867] 14 Jan 1867–Dec 1870, 0029).

not propose his own classification in this book, but just briefly introduced the traditional Chinese classification of words without any explanation of the criteria.

In *Rudiments*, Summers classified words into nouns (a term which includes substantives and adjectives), verbs, and particles (1864a, p. 42). But in the same book, he also introduced pronouns (pp. 59–60) and adverbs (pp. 65–69). The classification here is very close to the Greco-Latin tradition. For instance, substantives and adjectives are subcategories of nouns, and they are presented in a rather simple way. This publication is a manual for fast learning for beginners. Theories and detailed explanations, therefore, give way to practical application: putting Chinese into familiar European dress so the students do not get startled.

In his most comprehensive work, *Handbook*, Summers also briefly mentioned the traditional Chinese distinction of empty words and substantial words, but he focused on dividing the words into the following classes: nouns (including classifiers), adjectives, numerals, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, and other particles (including onomatopoeias). The order of the parts of speech listed here is based on the order of how they are presented in the *Handbook*. From this order one can realize that Summers' classes are derived from traditional European classification: first come those classes that have inflections of case, number, and gender in European languages, namely nouns, adjectives, and pronouns, which are then followed by verbs. The parts of speech that have no inflections, such as adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions follow.<sup>198</sup>

#### 6.2.2.1 Is there a class of “adjectives” in Summers' opinion?

As mentioned above, there is the question of whether Chinese has a separate class of adjectives. In the *Rudiments*, Summers classified substantives and adjectives under nouns, but in his *Handbook* (1863a, p. 55), he said that “[s]ome syllables are used exclusively as adjectives, and are but seldom employed in the other grammatical relations”. He suggested that, grammatically speaking, adjectives should be regarded as an independent class. Although he did not mention the similarities between verbs and adjectives directly, he did say that adjectives can be the predicate in sentences without the help of copulas: “[a] noun before an adjective is [...] the subject of a sentence of which the adjective is the predicate” (1863a, p. 99). However, this kind of syntactic similarity between verbs and adjectives is apparently not strong enough for

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<sup>198</sup> This system of classification does not get any influence from the Chinese philological tradition. In the chapter on syntax, Summers used forty pages to discuss the details of particles, especially of literary Chinese, under thirteen classes. This will be discussed in Chapter 8, together with the relationship between empty words and particles in Summers' view.

Summers to abandon the European tradition of considering the bond between nouns and adjectives.

#### 6.2.2.2 Summers' ideas of Chinese adposition

Summers' attitude towards the independence of the class of adpositions is worth mentioning. In the beginning of the section "The prepositions" in his *Handbook*, Summers said:

The relations expressed by the prepositions are shown in Chinese partly by prepositions properly so called, and partly by the union of these in construction with postpositions. The former are generally verbs; the latter, commonly nouns. (pp. 91–93)

He employed the term "prepositions" as the title of this section, which indicates that "preposition" refers to both "preposition" and "postposition" in his terminology. Summers obviously assumed that the meaning expressed by prepositions and postpositions in European languages have their counterparts in Chinese. He indicated, however, that there is no class of adpositions in Chinese, because prepositions are verbs, whereas postpositions are nouns. Verbs and nouns are just used as adpositions. In the examples he gave for prepositions, he always wrote the meaning of their verbal counterparts first, for instance, "*tsai* 在 'to be in a place,' - *in* (locative) (*in*) or *on*" (1863a, p. 91).

Postpositions "are treated as nouns" (1863a, pp. 91–92), for example, *chūng* 中 'middle,' *tsai-ŭ-chūng* 在屋中 'in the middle of the house', as translated by him (1863a, p. 92). His above statement "are treated as nouns" is confusing. The statement might be understood as saying that these elements are postpositions in nature but can be treated as nouns. However, considering Summers' general attitude towards parts of speech in Chinese, i.e., "to treat any word as a noun or a verb, according as the case may require", he tried to argue here that these postpositional elements must be treated as nouns, although they are not inflectionally marked as such.

Summers additionally presented two usages of the term "postposition": normally, they combine with prepositions, e.g., *zài fángzi nèi* 在房子內 'within the house' (1863a, p. 92). When the expression "stands as the nominative case, or the subject of a sentence", the preposition *zài* has to be omitted, just like in the sentence *Chéng nèi yǒu mǐ mài* 城內有米賣 lit. 'the city's interior has rice to sell', i.e. 'In the city there is rice to sell' (1863a, p. 142),<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Some scholars (e.g., Paul 2015, pp. 98–99) made a difference between the monosyllabic and the disyllabic forms of localizers. They argued that the latter are generally nouns, while the former share more features with



which hints at the concepts of existential sentences in Chinese. Existential sentences express the existence of some entity, which is denoted by the nominal phrases, at a certain place. One of the typical patterns of this kind of sentences is: *Locus* (place+ localizer) -verb-noun phrase (Li and Thompson 1981, p. 510; Simpson 2017, p. 212), just like the abovementioned example of Summers. Unfortunately, this example and the extremely brief instruction is the only time that Summers touched on this topic.<sup>200</sup>

### 6.3 Summers' precursors and parts of speech

Classifying words has always been an important task for grammarians in Europe. For instance, Dionysius combined morphological, syntactic and semantic criteria to classify Greek words into eight classes (Evans 2000, p. 708; Anward 2006, p. 628), namely nouns, adverbs, verbs, participles, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and articles for didactic purposes (Sasse 1993, p. 646; Robins 1997, p. 43, p. 44; Swiggers and Wouters 2007, pp. 53–54). In medieval times, grammarians further classified words into ten classes, namely nouns, adjectives, adverbs, numerals, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, and interjections, mainly based on morphological criteria (Sasse 1993, p. 646). These classes were considered universal for all languages (Breitenbach 2000, p. xxxiii).<sup>201</sup>

Word classification was not a new topic for Chinese linguistics either. The opposite concepts of function words and content words originated in the Chinese linguistic tradition. They were introduced to Europe by Prémare and were widely used as a tool to analyse all languages in modern linguistics (Robins 1997, p. 120). The distinction between these two concepts first arose in the Song dynasty with the terms *xūzì* 'empty words' and *shízì* 'substantial words'. At that time, *shízì* referred to nouns, which meant that the remaining kinds of words

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adpositions. One of the differences between them is that the particle *de* can be added in between the disyllabic form and its complement, but not in between the monosyllabic form and its complement in modern Mandarin. In all Summers' works, most of the examples of "postpositions" are monosyllabic. Only three of them in the *Handbook* (pp. 92–93) are disyllabic: "*pǔ-tsai* 不在 lit. 'not present' = without" in "*t'ā-mân pǔ-tsai* 他們不在 'without them' (they being absent)", "*wai-t'eû* 外頭 lit. 'outside head' = beyond (extra or ultra)" in "*miaú-mân wai-t'eû* 廟門外頭 'outside the temple-gate'"; and "*kwó-k'ú* 過去 lit. 'pass over go' = beyond (extra)" in "*Mei-ling kwó-k'ú* 梅嶺過去 'beyond the Mei Ling'". Although Summers argued that these elements "supply the place of prepositions" (p. 92), he considered these elements as postpositional nouns since they follow their complements, and he employed the term "preposition" to refer to postposition as well. Summers did not analyse the differences between monosyllabic and disyllabic "postpositions". It is plausible that he saw no difference between these two forms. Most likely, as long as an element can be translated as a postposition in European languages, then it is a noun that is used as a postposition in Chinese for Summers. This echoes Chao's observation presented at the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>200</sup> His research on Chinese classifiers and particles will be discussed in the next two chapters.

<sup>201</sup> For a discussion of different parts of speech in European scholars' works, see Kemp (1986, p. 345), Sasse (1993, p. 646), Robins (1997, p. 44), McDonald (2020, pp. 88–89, pp. 191–192, pp. 205–221) and Swiggers and Wouters (2007, p. 52), among many others.

were *xūzì*, including verbs and some adjectives (Shào Jingmǐn 1990, p. 33; Gōng Qiānyán 1997, pp. 13–14). From the Qing dynasty onwards, the term *xūzì* referred to the concept of function words (Shào Jingmǐn 1990, p. 34).<sup>202</sup> Likewise, *sǐzì* ‘dead words’ and *huózi* ‘living words’ are also two opposing concepts. In most scenarios, the former referred to nouns and the majority of adjectives, while the latter referred to verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and particles (Gōng Qiānyán 1997, pp. 13–14). Semantic and syntactic criteria were employed to categorize words into different classes by early Chinese scholars (Sūn Liángmíng 2005b, p. 392, p. 394; Hǎi Xiǎofāng 2011, p. 313).

### 6.3.1 *Are there any “word classes” in Chinese?*

Some early scholars, such as Mentzel and Müller, argued that Chinese words cannot be classified into parts of speech (Klötter and Zwartjes 2008, p. 186). However, most of the works to which Summers referred classified Chinese words into different classes. For example, Edkins argued that parts of speech do exist, although they are concealed: “[t]he frequent interchange of the parts of speech, and the rhythmical construction of sentences, have almost kept in concealment among the natives, the classification of which words naturally admit” (1853, p. 63). Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 38) stated that there are words which have fixed classes, but some of them have to be analysed case by case. Gützlaff (1842, p. 37) argued that: “Chinese words do not exactly belong to one particular class”. Dyer’s statement can serve as a summary of the views of Summers’ contemporaries: “[i]t has often been said that ‘the Chinese language has no grammar’: if by this is meant that the different parts of speech are not distinguished by inflections, as in most other languages, the observation is so far correct” (1840, pp. 347–348). Their statements imply that Chinese words cannot be classified inflectionally, but that there are other ways of classifying them.

### 6.3.2 *The criteria for classifying words in Summers’ reference works*

In the non-Chinese linguistic works to which Summers referred, scholars basically used morphological<sup>203</sup> and semantic criteria (e.g., Stier 1833, p. 120; Becker 1841, p. 82) to classify words.

Many sinologists specifically used the syntactic function and collocation of words, i.e.,

<sup>202</sup> Sūn Liángmíng (2005b, p. 307), on the contrary, argued that after the late South Song (1127–1279) period, the scope of *xūzì* and *shìzì* were very close to that of the “function words” and the “content words” presently. However, the discussion about this is not my focus here.

<sup>203</sup> For example, Thomas Hewitt Key (1799–1875, 1858, p. 33) said that “Adjectives are declined like substantives”. Substantives and adjectives, therefore, are in the same class for him (p. 5).

the “position” of the words, to classify words. Gützlaff (1842, p. 23) explained this criterion as follows: “[a] word may be used as a substantive, adjective, or verb, just as it pleases the speaker or writer, and its position shows in what sense it ought to be understood”. The same idea was shared by Varo (2000 [1703], pp. 53–55),<sup>204</sup> Marshman (1814, p. viii, p. ix),<sup>205</sup> Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 35)<sup>206</sup>, Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 176),<sup>207</sup> Bazin (1856, p. 27),<sup>208</sup> Edkins (1853, p. 64, p. 102; 1857, p. 100, p. 208, p. 224),<sup>209</sup> Schott (1857, p. 67)<sup>210</sup> and William Martin (1827–1916, 1863, p. 10).<sup>211</sup>

Like Summers, some scholars employed semantic criteria to classify words, for example, Marshman (1814, p. 194, p. 269),<sup>212</sup> Varo (2000 [1703], p. 53)<sup>213</sup> and Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 35).<sup>214</sup> When scholars employ semantic criteria, it is the lexical meaning of the words that they

<sup>204</sup> The original text reads: “[f]or [the word], when positioned in the sentence [...] or [used] in conjunction with other [words], in the end does receive a specific meaning [...]. By putting certain terms side by side with others, and using them according to their [syntactic] positions, the cases of the declensions can be understood [in terms of] our eight parts of speech, which are nouns, pronouns, verbs, participles, prepositions, adverbs, interjections, and conjunctions”.

<sup>205</sup> The original text reads: “[o]n examining the various parts of speech, the reader will perceive, that the whole of Chinese Grammar turns on Position” (p. viii) and “Thus does position alone, or, its being surrounded with certain other words, vary a word even in English” (p. ix).

<sup>206</sup> The original text reads: “[b]eaucoup de mots chinois peuvent être pris successivement comme substantifs, comme adjectifs, comme verbes, quelquefois même comme particules. On peut à volonté marquer précisément le sens où un mot est pris, et le rôle qu’il joue dans la proposition, ou bien laisser au lecteur le soin de le déterminer, d’après le sens du contexte et la position relative des mots”.

<sup>207</sup> The original text reads: “[b]ut however it may be in this respect the connection in which a character occurs is sufficient to determine whether it be a substantive or a verb”.

<sup>208</sup> The original text reads: “[l]es adjectifs composés ne se distinguent des substantifs de la quatrième que par la position et la terminaison commune des adjectifs 的”.

<sup>209</sup> The original text reads: “[f]or example the words 過 *kú*, 能 *nung*, 生 *sáng* are in the books verbs or nouns according to their position” (1853, p. 64), “Substantives become adjectives to other substantives, if placed before them in combination” (1853, p. 102) and “It is the position of such words in the group and the sentence to which they belong, that determines to what part of speech they should be referred. [...] [B]y the laws of combination, the part of speech to which a word belongs is at once seen, the cases of nouns and the moods and tenses of verbs are clearly expressed, and various kinds of derivatives are formed among all the principal parts of speech” (1857, p. 100). Some detailed examples read as such: “A verb as the subject of a proposition is a substantive” (1857, p. 208) and “A subject may consist of a substantive, or a substantive group, or of a pronoun, a verb or verb group, an adverb of place and time, or an adjective construed as nouns” (1857, p. 224).

<sup>210</sup> Schott’s (1857) idea about Chinese parts of speech is similar. Although he focused on the combination of words, he argued that Chinese words have fixed classes, but also act differently depending on the position: “We have already seen that a verb before another, as well as a noun before and after a verb, can play an adverbial role (The original text reads: “Wir haben bereits gesehen dass ein verbum vor einem anderen, ebenso ein nomen vor und selbst nach einem verbum [eine] adverbiale rolle spielen kann”) (p. 67).

<sup>211</sup> The original text reads: “[e]ach character, in general, may thus play several parts—appearing without any change of form, as a substantive, adjective, verb, or adverb, according to its position in a sentence”.

<sup>212</sup> The original text reads: “[a] second kind of adjectives are those, which, originally expressing ideas in their nature substantives, are often used to express the quality they originally denote, as existing in another substantive” (p. 269).

<sup>213</sup> The original text reads: “[e]ach one of [the words] has almost the same [...] part [of speech] of the eight general [parts of speech] which make up Latin [grammar], for to one and the same syllable can be attributed the meanings of a noun, a verb, an adverb, etc.” (The underlined part is added by me and the rest are from the book).

<sup>214</sup> The original text reads: “[b]eaucoup de mots chinois peuvent être pris successivement comme substantifs, comme adjectifs, comme verbes, quelquefois même comme particules. On peut à volonté marquer précisément le sens où un mot est pris, et le rôle qu’il joue dans la proposition, ou bien laisser au lecteur le soin de le déterminer,

rely on. Some scholars used the semantic criteria directly, without considering syntax. Naturally, then, Chinese words can be classified. For example, Morrison (1815a) analysed Chinese grammar directly without discussing whether Chinese words have fixed classes. He assumed that Chinese has parts of speech and that these are similar to their semantic counterparts in English. Prémare (1847 [1831]) also applied semantic criteria when discussing literary Chinese. For example, he stated that the meaning that some verbs convey in Chinese makes it impossible to use them as nouns (p. 177).

Some scholars<sup>215</sup> also tended to combine the various traditional European parts of speech together with the tradition in China, namely the distinction between content words and function words, and “living words” and “dead words” (Gianninoto 2014a, p. 146).

Therefore, Summers’ classification inherited the notions of his precursors. The classification of words should rely on the criterion of syntax and semantics.

### 6.3.3 *Different classes of words*

The research to which Summers referred in his publications is rooted in the European grammatical tradition, and therefore, his division of parts of speech follows suit. The following table shows the classifications of Summers’ precursors.

*Table 1: Parts of speech according to Summers’ precursors (“√” shows that they have the class, while “O” means this class is subsumed under another class)*<sup>216</sup>

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d'après le sens du contexte et la position relative des mots”.

<sup>215</sup> To name but a few, see Bridgman (1841, p. xvi), Edkins (1853, pp. 62–63) and Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 27).

<sup>216</sup> Remarks on Table 1:

1. The scholars, who discussed classifiers in the section on nouns or on numerals, are listed here as “including classifiers” in the table. But in fact, most of them regarded classifiers as particles, not as numerals or nouns. This will be discussed in Chapter 7. Morrison (1815a, p. 37) argued that the appellative of what we call “classifiers” today is “numerals” (see Chapter 7). He did not state clearly whether classifiers are a subcategory of nouns or numerals (The latter, in his words, is called “numbers”, cf. 1815a, p. 81). However, he analysed them in the section on nouns. Therefore, in Table 1, classifiers are placed under nouns. The same applies to Prémare.
2. Bayer did not say that it is a subclass of “Numerus” but only explained the classifiers in the section on numerals (pp. 47–48).
3. Wade did not explain in his book these terms in a systematic way but only lists them. He also mentioned that numerals are also called classifiers (1859, p. 18).
4. Some works are not included in this table as they do not discuss parts of speech, for example:
  - a. Although in dictionaries scholars used terms “nouns”, “verbs” and so on, they did not introduce each class or divide the words systematically, like Morrison (1815b), Williams (1844, 1856), Medhurst (1832, 1842, 1843, 1847, 1848) and De Guignes (1813);
  - b. Some works only provide translations of sentences or articles, without grammatical analysis, for instance: Edkins (1862), Medhurst (1844), Morrison (1816), Davis (1823), Thom (1840), Bridgman (1841), and Martin (1863). Although Williams (1842) dedicated a chapter for classifiers, he did not discuss other parts of speech;
  - c. Additionally, there are some other books about characters (Du Ponceau 1838; Callery 1841), sociology (Meadow 1847) and literature (Schott 1854; Horace Hayman Wilson 1786–1860, 1852). Therefore, these works are not analysed in table 1.
5. Particles will be discussed in Chapter 8.
6. The situation of “adpositions” is complicated, and it is discussed in 6.3.4.

	nouns	adjectives	pronouns	verbs	adpositions	adverbs	Interjections	conjunctions	Numerals
Varo (1703)	√ including adjectives	O	√	√	√	√	√	√	√ including classifiers
Bayer (1730)	√ including adjectives	O	√	√	√	√	√	√	√ including classifiers
Fourmont (1742)	√ including classifiers	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Marshman (1814)	√	√ including numerals	√	√	√	√	√	√	O
Morrison (1815a)	√ including classifiers (called numerals)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Rémusat (1822)	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√ including classifiers
Gonçalves (1829)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√ including classifiers
Prémare (1847 [1831])	√ including adjectives and classifier	O	√	√	√	√			
Gützlaff	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

(1842)							are called expletives and interjections		including classifiers
Endlicher (1845)	√ including classifiers, adjectives, numerals	O	√	√		√	√	√	O
Edkins (1853)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√ are called expletives and interjections	√	√
Bazin (1856)	√ including classifiers	√ including numerals	√	√	√	√	√	√	O
Schott (1857)	√ including classifiers	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Edkins (1857)	√ including classifiers	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Wade (1859)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Summers (1863a)	√ including classifiers	√	√	√	cf. 6.2.2.2	√	√	√	√

Though different scholars used different criteria to classify words, the final results are similar. The classes they all agreed on are nouns, verbs, pronouns, and adverbs. The problematic classes for Chinese, are adjectives, numerals, and classifiers. Whether these words are independent classes seems to be the nucleus of the debate. Among these three, classifiers are a separate class in Chinese, which has no direct counterpart in European languages (see Chapter 7). For these scholars, adjectives were sometimes treated as a subcategory of nouns, while numerals were sometimes placed under nouns or adjectives. These points of view stemmed from the European linguistic tradition and are independent from the properties of Chinese. However, scholars also took the characteristics of the Chinese language into consideration. For example, in Chinese, there are no articles, and consequently, European sinologists did not try to impose this class on Chinese. Overall, Summers' classification was a close approximation to those of his precursors.

#### *6.3.4 Summers' precursors and adpositions*

In the following paragraphs, I discuss whether Summers was influenced by his precursors as far as his discussion of the class of adpositions in Chinese is concerned. Although none of Summers' precursors employed the term "adposition" in their works, like Summers, they normally discussed "preposition" and "postposition" in the same section as more or less similar types of words, for instance, Marshman (1814, p. 485), Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 141), Endlicher (1845, p. 335) and Edkins (1853, p. 148; 1857, p. 187). The term "localizer" was not employed, but "postposition", a term that was coined in 1533 by Spanish grammarian Bernabé Busto,<sup>217</sup> was widely used in missionary grammars (Zwartjes 2002, pp. 46–47).

##### **6.3.4.1 Summers' precursors and prepositions**

For some of the early scholars, there was an independent class of prepositions in Chinese. Edkins (1853, p. 148) argued that adpositions in Shanghainese are used to show the relationship between nouns and what he called "case particles". Those used before nouns and that express dative and ablative meaning are called "prepositions", such as *cóng* 從 'from'; while those that express the locative and that are used after the nouns are called "postpositions", for example *qián* 前 'before'. He further stated that some prepositions can be "used as verbs", for example, *cóng* 從 'to follow' in Shanghainese. The same statements appeared in his research on Mandarin as well (1857, p. 187). For Edkins, prepositions can be used as verbs, and they

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<sup>217</sup> His birth and death years are unknown.

originate from verbs, but prepositions and verbs are two independent classes (1857, p. 209).<sup>218</sup> Marshman (1814, p. 485, footnote) also observed that the same form can be a preposition or a verb depending on the different position in the sentence, but prepositions are a closed class and are mainly functional, not like verbs (1814, p. 73).<sup>219</sup> However, there were also scholars who tended to imply that prepositions are not a separate class, an idea shared by Summers. For example, Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 76, p. 142) argued that some verbs are taken as prepositions, while Endlicher (1845, p. 335) mentioned that most prepositions are verbs. In other words, for them, “prepositions” in Chinese are not really an independent word class. It is the verb that acts as the preposition.

### 6.3.4.2 Summers’ precursors and postpositions

Some scholars in Summers’ time stated that there is no postposition in Chinese, but that instead other classes of words are used as postpositions under certain circumstances, which is very similar to what Summers said. For example, Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 76) employed the term “preposition” to refer to both prepositions and postpositions. For him, some nouns when combined with other nouns can also be treated as postpositions and express the meaning of a postposition, for example, *nèi* 內 ‘in’ in *hǎinèi* 海內 ‘in the sea’.<sup>220</sup> Endlicher (1845, p. 337) mentioned that nouns can be used as postpositions. When Endlicher translated the meaning of the postpositions into German, he always pointed out their nominal notion, for instance, *shàng* 上 ‘das Obere’ (p. 337).<sup>221</sup> There were also some scholars, whose attitude towards this question was unclear, such as Edkins and Marshman.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>218</sup> The original text reads: “The prepositions are almost all freely used as verbs, being such originally. In both cases they precede nouns, so that their character as prepositions or verbs in any individual case, must be decided by the sense, not by position”.

<sup>219</sup> The original text reads: “Prepositions which, as united with verbs, scarcely exceed twenty in any language, (of which also several concur in expressing nearly the same idea,) seldom do more than mark some circumstance relative to the verb, or augment its force, or occasionally invert its meaning”.

<sup>220</sup> The original text reads: “Plusieurs substantifs se prennent comme prépositions, quand ils sont construits avec d’autres noms: *kouě tchoûng* 國中 dans le royaume, *hài nèi* 海內 dans la mer”.

<sup>221</sup> However, he did not use the translation to emphasise the relationship between verbs and prepositions as Summers did; for instance, his translation of “*vveí* 為” is only ‘wegen’ (p. 336), without any reference to its verbal meaning.

<sup>222</sup> Edkins’ perspective on this topic is not clear. On the one hand, he argued that there is an independent class of postpositions and that “[t]he postpositions are freely used as adjectives. When they follow their word they are postpositions; when they precede they are adjectives” (1857, p. 209). The main difference between the two classes, i.e., adjectives and postpositions, is their syntactic features. On the other hand, he also stated that adjectives are used as postpositions, which seems to indicate that postpositions are not an independent word class: “These adjectives when used as locative particles, do not retain like the prepositions their original character. They become abstract signs of place, and are translated as substantives, adverbs, or prepositions, according to the exigencies of the occasion, as in 他在上我在下 *t’a tsai’ shang’ ’wo tsai’ hia’*, he is above and I below. Here perhaps it is most correct to say that *shang’* and *hia’* are substantives governed by the verb *tsai’*” (1857, pp. 189–190). Edkins stated



Summers' precursors also discussed some other characteristics of adpositions. For instance, Bazin (1856, pp. 89–90) pointed out the semantic difference between prepositions and postpositions: prepositions generally denote relations of cause, tendency, union, simultaneity, conformity, and proximity, while postpositions express the relations of place, situation, order, and time.<sup>223</sup> Endlicher (1845, p. 338) noted that sometimes in literary Chinese, prepositions are used together with the postpositions like preposition *yú* and the postposition *shàng* in the sentence *Wáng zuò yú táng shàng* 王坐於堂上 'The king sits in the hall'. In vernacular Mandarin, however, prepositions can be omitted. No one before Summers raised the point that when the expression serves as the "subject", the preposition is omitted and only the postposition remains. This was a novel observation made by Summers.

Generally, there was no consensus among scholars about whether adpositions were an independent word class or a function of other words. Some of them stated that prepositions and postpositions are different in their positions and in their connections with other words, namely that, verbs were used as prepositions, while nouns or adjectives functioned as postpositions. These insights were adopted by Summers. For Summers, verbs and nouns serve as adpositions in Chinese; therefore, to him, there is no "adpositions" class as such in Chinese.

#### 6.4 Summers' successors and parts of speech

Most of Summers' successors used syntactic and semantic criteria to classify Chinese parts of speech as well. Some of them argued that the position of a word can help to classify it, for example, Douglas.<sup>224</sup> Most of them suggested that in Chinese, words cannot be placed in fixed classes. But in practice, they used semantic criteria in order to place words in fixed classes. For instance, Douglas (1875, p. 43) stated that words belong to fixed parts of speech according to

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that adjectives can be used as postpositions while placed after nouns. Semantically they could thus be translated into other homologous classes of words in European languages, such as nouns. Edkins considered postpositions a type of particle ("The postpositions, or case particles answering to our locative prepositions" 1857, p. 199). However, Edkins noted that adjectives are sometimes considered as a part of particles, so he was unsure whether postpositions stand as an independent class from adjectives.

Marshman's attitude was clearer than Edkins', but still rather vague. He wrote: "The Postpositions are about nine in number", which states that postpositions are a closed class of words. However, he further argued that postpositions could be considered as nouns or adjectives ("Hence they may be considered either as substantives, or as adjectives including within them some substantive signifying place, situation, &c.") since they are often preceded by a genitive particle, for example the expression "*mun tchee choong* 門之中 'the door's mid space'" (1814, p. 487, the page number was wrongly printed as 587 in the original book).

<sup>223</sup> The original text reads: "Les rapports exprimés par la préposition, c'est-à dire par la particule qui se place avant son complément, sont, en général, des rapports de cause, de tendance, d'union, de simultanéité, de conformité, de proximité ..... Les rapports exprimés par la postposition, c'est-à dire par la particule qui se place après son complément, sont, en général, des rapports de lieu, de situation, d'ordre et de temps".

<sup>224</sup> See: 1875 (p. 38) and 1904 (p. 52, p. 53). He also claimed that the collocation of words helps classify them.

the meaning that they convey. Gabelentz (1881, p. 113) also argued that the lexical meaning of a word is the main criterion to classify words, and words have different functions in different sentences, which is similar to Schott's idea.<sup>225</sup>

Considering how they classified words, most of them were similar to their precursors, including Summers himself, for example Edkins (1864a), Wade (1867) and Douglas (1904). Gabelentz's (1881) classes were different. He classified the words according to some characteristics of the Chinese language, so his results differ from the traditional classes in the West: interjections, onomatopoeias, pronouns, nouns, prepositions, numerals, adjectives, verbs and negation words. He may not have been influenced by Summers in this regard.

When it comes to adpositions, Edkins' opinion changed in his work by 1871; however it shows no trace of influence from Summers.<sup>226</sup> As mentioned above, Gabelentz had his own way of classifying words. His class of adpositions roughly corresponds to his "part and relational words" (Theil- und Verhältnisswörter). He stated that this type of word can act and be translated as nouns, adverbs, some conjunctions, adjectives, prepositions, postpositions, verbs etc..<sup>227</sup> In literary Chinese, these words are all monosyllabic but in colloquial Chinese, some of them might be followed by elements like *miàn* 面 'side' to form disyllabic units (1883, p. 36, p. 91). None of Summers' successors mentioned that when the expression is used as the "subject", the preposition can be omitted, as Summers did.

## 6.5 Summary

Summers' ideas on the parts of speech in Chinese represent the general trends of his time. Since there are some properties of the Chinese language which are not compatible with the traditional European linguistic framework, it is not easy to decide whether or how words in Chinese can

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<sup>225</sup> In practice, the semantic criterion is based on the assumption that the classes of these Chinese words are the same as those of their semantic counterparts in European languages (Cikoski 1970, p. 10).

<sup>226</sup> Edkins argued that the "locative postpositions are best explained as substantives" and "the original force of such words was verbal" (1871, pp. 87–88). His focus shifted to the connection between postpositions and nouns and verbs, instead of focusing on adjectives as he had in 1864 or earlier. In 1888, he integrated his argument about the relationship between postpositions and other words into one statement from a cognitive point of view. He wrote: "[a]djectives are usually in pairs. When direction is indicated by adjectives [,] verbs of motion are involved in the idea. The hand indicates direction by pointing in the case of above, upper, below, right, left, front, back. The idea may become also an adverb or a postposition. It is so with 上 *shang*, ascend above, upper, with 中 *chung*, to strike the middle, central, middle, within. Beside the natural sounds imitated, the hand itself would be so important a factor that its name would inevitably enter into the composition of many of these words, to a greater or less degree. Right and left would be named from the act of pointing" (1888, pp. 75–76, emphasis added).

<sup>227</sup> The original text is: "[d]ie Wörter dieser Art sind durchweg einsylbig, aber wegen der Vielfältigkeit ihrer Functionen wichtig. Sie können nämlich angewandt und übersetzt werden: a) als Substantiva; b) als Adverbien, zum Theil unsere Conjunctionen vertretend; c) als Adjectiva; d) als Postpositionen, unsere Präpositionen ersetzend; e) als verba factiva: zum x machen; f) als verba neutra transitiva: x sein oder werden im Verhältnisse zum Objecte" (1883, p. 36).

be classified. But the classifications of many sinologists were rooted in the European tradition, while at the same time taking the characteristics of Chinese into account. Syntactic position and the lexical meaning of words were important criteria employed in the research of Summers and his contemporaries. One reason for this is that most works by early sinologists were manuals, that were used for teaching purposes. Their purpose was to teach Chinese. Practical approaches were thus more important to the authors than theoretical analysis. An efficient teaching system, which intertwined the linguistic knowledge of the students had to be employed as a convenient way of presenting the Chinese language. Hence, authors had to classify words and found ways to place words in fixed classes. Lǚ Shūxiāng's (2001 [1954], p. 221) comments on Lí Jǐnxī may serve as a perfect explanation for this kind of scenario: "Mr. Lí Jǐnxī would rather drift a bit away from his theory in practice. He does not want to implement his theory earnestly, because he is engaged in teaching. He is unwilling to pursue utopia."<sup>228</sup> Summers' approach was similar. His works are representative of the works that he based himself on. Although Summers also briefly mentioned the traditional Chinese word classes, those classes had little influence on him in his detailed classifications.

Despite his reliance on his precursors' study of Chinese parts of speech, we also find some innovative idea in his work, such as when the adpositional expression with a postposition stands as the "subject" of the sentence, the preposition can be omitted. This brief mention touches on the topic of existential sentences. However, he did not explore this at all and his argument was not adopted by his successors.

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<sup>228</sup> The original text reads: "黎錦熙先生寧可讓他的實踐和他的理論脫點兒節，不肯認真貫徹他的理論，因為他從事實際教學，他不願意追求空想。"