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

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Chapter 8. Particles

As is well known, the term “particle” is used for those elements—generally small and indeclinable—that are difficult to put in any of the commonly acknowledged word classes (Linell 2005, p. 77; Crystal 2008, p. 352; Simpson 2014, p. 156). More often than not, they perform grammatical functions rather than conveying a lexical meaning (Bussmann 1996, p. 867). In this chapter, I deal with the following issues: how did Summers define such indeterminate type of words for Chinese? Which words did he consider “particles” and why? How do we evaluate Summers’ ideas of “particles” against the background of the historiography of linguistics?

8.1 Summers and particles²⁵²

In Summers’ works, “particle” is not a clear or well-defined concept. This section first presents Summers’ definition of “particles” and their functions, followed by an analysis of the classification of particles in his *Handbook*. I then delve into Summers’ analysis of one typical particle in Mandarin, i.e., *de* 的.

8.1.1 The definition and function of “particle”

Particles can be divided into the following categories based on all of Summers’ publications: Summers called the first category of particles “euphonic particles”. These particles lack a lexical meaning but are used as rhythmical elements to express the feelings of the speaker (1863a, p. 13).²⁵³ The function of the “pure euphonic” particles in Chinese is only to “make a clause sound well”. But pure euphonic particles are very rare, whereas most euphonic particles denote the feelings of the speakers (1863a, p. 176). Although there are peculiar euphonic particles in different “local dialects”, according to Summers (1863a, p. 13), the most common ones in Mandarin are the “final euphonic particles”, such as *li* 哩, *ma* 嗎, *la* 啦, *ya* 呀 and *luo* 咯 (1863a, p. 95). Summers claimed that the members of this type overlap a lot with interjections. For example, in classical Chinese, *zāi* 哉 is “euphonic” and an “exclamatory particle” in a sentence like *Xián zāi Huí yě!* 賢哉回也! ‘how worthy is Hui!’ (1863a, pp. 176–

²⁵² In his works, Summers sometimes discussed particles of other Asian languages as well, such as demonstrative and genitival particles in Japanese (1967 [1864b], pp. 155–156) and genitive particles in Manchu (1870c, 1, p. 25). This chapter focuses on his views on particles in Chinese.

²⁵³ The original text reads: “[t]he same principle of rhythm, which leads to the elision of one of two syllables in a word, under certain circumstances, also leads to the addition of a meaningless particle when the sound of the whole would be improved thereby”.

177). *Yě* 也 is “euphonic” and “also denote[s] an affirmation” (1863a, pp. 176–177). Besides being used as a “final [euphonic] particle”, *yě* also appears as a euphonic particle in the middle of a sentence and “serves the purpose of a comma”, such as in *jīn yě zé wáng* 今也則亡 ‘the present is, - then gone for ever’ (1863a, p. 177). For Summers euphonic particles can sometimes also be interpreted as punctuation in Chinese.

The second category of particles consists of conjunctions, adverbs, and other parts of speech, excluding nouns (also adjectives) and verbs (1864a, p. 42). This type can be seen as equivalent word classes to those that are indeclinable in European languages. Summers stated that “particles” include the following: conjunction,²⁵⁴ adverb²⁵⁵ and onomatopoeia.²⁵⁶ As discussed in Chapter 6, for Summers, there is no equivalence to prepositions in Chinese, but only verbs that sometimes serve as prepositions. However, some words that are often considered “prepositions” are mentioned in his discussion of particles, for example: “[t]he word *ì* 以 ‘to use, to take, by,’ is less commonly employed alone as a causative particle than as a verb to stand for the preposition ‘by, with’” (1863a, p. 165). Such words, for Summers, are either verbs or particles. What needs to be emphasised is that “interjections” are included in both the first type (“euphonic particles”) and in the second type, as stated by Summers (1863a, p. 176).

The third category of particles includes grammatical elements in European languages, such as case, number, mood, tense, and degree of comparison. These elements do not exist in Chinese, but their semantic or syntactic counterparts in European languages are taken as the third type of particles. For example:

- a. case: “[t]he relations usually expressed by *cases* are shown in Chinese by the presence of certain *particles* (pref. or suff.) or by *position*. Thus, *tǐ* 的 (suff.) is the mark of the *genitive case*” (1864a, p. 57).
- b. number: “[e]xamples of the use of the plural particles and adjuncts [...such as *mán* 們 ‘all’] now follow” (1863a, p. 108, example: 1863a, p. 54).
- c. tense and mood: “[t]he ordinary auxiliary particles, which distinguish tense and mood [such as *liǎo* 了 ‘finish’], are not employed with these verbs” (1863a, p. 127; example:

²⁵⁴ E.g.: “[t]he adversative particles include all words which, being used as conjunctions, imply *opposition*” (1863a, p. 162).

²⁵⁵ E.g.: “several other words are used in the books as interrogative adverbs or particles [...]. The interrogative particles will be found further on [the section ‘The interjections and other particles’ (1863a, pp. 95–96)]” (1863a, p. 90).

²⁵⁶ E.g.: “there are in the Chinese colloquial style a great number of expressions in imitation of the various sounds heard in nature (*onomatopoeia*)” (1863a, p. 95). This quotation is from the section “The interjections and other particles” (1863a, pp. 95–96). One can then deduce that Summers considered onomatopoeia a type of particle.

1863a, p. 70).

d. comparative and superlative: “[p]articles which form the superlative [such as *shīn* 甚 ‘very’] are very frequently suffixed instead of being prefixed” (1863a, p. 112; example: 1863a, p. 58).

The members of these categories have different functions, which are not clear-cut but overlap with each other. For Summers, the total of these categories resembles the concept of *xūzì* ‘empty word’:

Among the particles which the Chinese denominate *hú-tsə* are included all words which do not come under the category of nouns, or under that of verbs, but simply denote the relations which the nouns and the verbs of the sentence bear to each other, or the feelings which exist in the mind of the speaker at the time the sentence is uttered (1863a, p. 178).

The quotation “[a]mong the particles which the Chinese denominate *hú-tsə*” also implies that, in Summers’ opinion, there are some other particles apart from *hú-tsə* ‘empty words’. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Summers sometimes used “formative particle” to refer to “formative” (see also: 1853b, p. vi), or word-forming elements were also classified as particles by Summers.

To conclude, for Summers, “particles” include word-forming formatives and “empty words”. The latter are euphonic and express the feelings of the speakers or show the relation between nouns and verbs.

8.1.2 Summers’ classification of particles

Based on the extracted categories of particles described above, this section discusses how Summers classified particles and how he names them in his *Handbook*.

In the syntax part of his *Handbook*, Summers used more than thirty pages to list and explain the function of particles in example sentences (1863a, pp. 142–179). As early as 1853, when he published his first monograph on Chinese, Summers emphasised the importance of particles in the Chinese language and the difficulty of acquiring them. He stated that even Chinese scholars themselves consider using particles properly as a sign of a higher education (1853a, pp. 26–27).

Summers divided particles into thirteen classes according to their different functions and meaning. These thirteen classes are: attributive particles, e.g., *de* 的 ‘-s’, *zhī* 之 ‘-s’ (1863a, pp. 142–147); connective particles, e.g., *yì* 亦 ‘also’, *ér* 而 ‘and, and yet, and then, but, and consequently’ (1863a, pp. 147–152); affirmative particles, e.g., *shì* 是 ‘it is so, it is the truth’,

rán 然 ‘it was thus’ (1863a, pp. 152–157); negative particles, e.g., *bù* 不 ‘not’, *fú* 弗 ‘not’ (1863a, pp. 158–162); adversative particles, e.g., *ér* 而 ‘but’, *dàn* 但 ‘but yet, but especially’ (1863a, pp. 162–165), causative particles, e.g., *yǐ* 以 ‘to use, to take, -by’, *yóu* 由 ‘origin, source’ (1863a, pp. 165–167); conditional particles, e.g., *ruò* 若 ‘if, as’, *rú* 如 ‘as’ (1863a, pp. 167–168); illative particles, e.g., *gù* 故 ‘consequence, inference’, *jiù* 就 ‘consequence, inference’ (1863a, pp. 168–169); interrogative particles, e.g., *hé* 何 ‘what’, *shuí* 誰 ‘who’ (1863a, pp. 169–173); dubitative particles, e.g., *huò* 或 ‘perhaps’, *yǔ* 與 ‘or’ (1863a, pp. 173–174); intensitive particles, e.g., *tài* 太 ‘too, too much’, *tuī* 忒 ‘too, too much’ (1863a, pp. 174–175); exclamatory particles, e.g., *ya* 呀 for wonder or astonishment, *a* 啊 for wonder or astonishment (1863a, pp. 175–176) and euphonic, e.g., *zāi* 哉 as exclamation or euphonic, *hū* 乎 as exclamation or euphonic (1863a, pp. 176–178).

Several particles appeared in multiple classes because of their various functions. For example, when *ér* 而 denotes ‘and, and yet, and then, but, and consequently’ in the sentence *jīng xǐng ér xì zhī* 驚醒而戲之 ‘he awoke in a fright, and then played with him’, it is one of the “connective particles” (1863a, p. 148). *Ér* can also “imply opposition, or the addition of something to the previous clause”. It then acts as an “adversative particle”, like in *shù ér bù zuò* 述而不作 ‘to compile, but not to compose’ (1863a, p. 162). Sometimes, *ér* “has an illative force, and sometimes it is merely euphonic” (1863a, p. 148). According to Summers, an illative particle marks “the consequence or the inference” (1863a, p. 169). In one of his examples *Bú lè shàndào ér wáng qí guó* 不樂善道而亡其國 ‘He delighted not in virtuous principles, and so he lost his kingdom’ (1863a, p. 148), *ér* shows the illative meaning. As to “merely euphonic”, Summers gave the example ... *érkuàng yú rén hū* ...而況於人乎 ‘...much more as regards man!’ (1863a, p. 148). By calling it a “euphonic particle”, Summers expressed the view that *ér* does not convey any meaning in this sentence. *Kuàng* alone can express the meaning of “much more” (Wáng Hǎi et al. 1996, p. 225). In fact, *érkuàng (yú)* can also be considered as a unit to denote the meaning of “much more” (Wáng Hǎi et al. 1996, p. 85). Summers indicated here that *kuàng* denotes the meaning of “much more”, while *ér* is the euphonic particle.²⁵⁷

Most particles Summers included in this part are taken from classical Chinese, but there are some colloquial particles as well, such as connective particle *yòu* 又 ‘again’ in *kànlè yòu*

²⁵⁷ This is different from Marshman (1814, p. 263), who stated that *ér* means “and” and *kuàng* refers to “much more”.

kàn 看了又看 ‘having looked he looked again’ from the vernacular novel *The Fortunate Union* (1863a, p. 149).

Despite having distinguished these thirteen classes, Summers pointed out some other “particles” in his works that are not included in this list, for instance, initial and final particles (1853a, p. 26). These two classes are rooted in traditional Chinese linguistics. Similar names and classes can be found in many works by Chinese authors, for example, *fāyǔcí* 發語詞 ‘initial particles’ and *yǔyǐcí* 語已辭 ‘final particles’ in Liú Qí’s²⁵⁸ *Zhùzì biànlüè* 助字辨略 (1711) (Hé Jiǔyíng 1995, p. 414). Later in his career, Summers employed these two to refer to particles such as *shuí* 誰 ‘who’ and *zāi* 哉 (1863a, p. 169). He integrated many of them into the class of “interrogative particles” (1863a, p. 169), since for Summers, particles should be classified according to their function instead of their position.²⁵⁹ He also mentioned other “particles”, such as plural particles (1863a, p. 108) and auxiliary particles (1863a, p. 127). Their function mainly lies in the area of morphology instead of syntax, according to Summers. That is the reason why they were not taken into account in the section “The syntax of the particles”.²⁶⁰

8.1.3 An example of Summers’ research on particles—Summers on ‘de’ 的

According to the statistics of *Lexicon of Common Words in Contemporary Chinese* (現代漢語常用詞表 (草案), 2008, p. 3), *de* is the most frequently used word. Roughly speaking, in Mandarin, in [X *de* N], X is interpreted as a modifier of N, regardless of the nature of X, whether it is a noun, pronoun, adjective, prepositional phrase (if there is such a thing), or sentence (which is then interpreted as a relative clause). Research on Mandarin cannot avoid discussing *de*. Therefore, tracing the source and influence of Summers’ perspectives of *de* is possible. Moreover, Summers and most of his contemporaries considered *de* to be merely a particle, unlike some other “particles”, which can sometimes also be classified as other parts of speech. For example, *zhī* 之 is sometimes a euphonic particle and sometimes a verb denoting

²⁵⁸ Liú Qí (劉淇) was born in the Qing dynasty. His birth and death years are unknown.

²⁵⁹ However, the reference of “initial particles” in Summers’ works is different from *fāyǔcí* in Chinese traditional linguistics. The latter only refers to those particles which do not convey any lexical meaning, such as *fú* 夫 in *Fú sān nián zhī sāng, tiānxià zhī tōng sāng yě* 夫三年之喪，天下之通喪也 ‘Three years of mourning is universal’ in the *Analects*.

²⁶⁰ Summers also mentioned *reflexive particles* (1863a, Part II, p. 74). In the section “The pronouns”, it is called the *reflexive* pronoun (1863a, pp. 63–64). Unlike some of his precursors, Summers normally did not consider Chinese pronouns as particles. This is the only time he stated so, which shows Summers’ hesitation when classifying certain elements.

‘to proceed to’ (1863a, p. 144). Summers’ ideas of *de* can be seen as a characteristic of his research on particles.

8.1.3.1 *De* as an “attributive particle”

In his chapter *Syntax*, Summers stated that *de* is an “attributive particle”. The effect of attributive particles is “to throw that which precedes them into the form of a qualifying or attributive expression, that is, either the genitive case of a noun, the adjective, or the relative clause” (1863a, p. 142). In Summers’ description, *de* has all these functions: “[a]fter a noun it produces the genitive case [e.g. *hwâng-tí tī mà* 皇帝的馬 ‘the emperor’s horse’], after a verb it makes the participle [e.g. *yiù tseù-tī, yiù fī-tī* 有走的, 有飛的 ‘there are those which walk and those which fly’, or ‘some walk, others fly’],²⁶¹ and after a sentence it must be construed into the form of the relative clause [e.g. *nâ- kó shí tsǒ jī lai tī jīn* 那個是昨日來的人 ‘that is the man who came here yesterday’]” (1863a, p. 143; examples: p. 143).

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 5, in the section “On adjectives”, Summers argued that *de* is used after an adjective to form a derivative adjective which serves as a morphological formative. In the section “The pronouns”, Summers also mentioned that “the genitive case of the personal pronoun”, namely the combination of a personal pronoun and *de*, takes the place of the “possessive pronoun” (1863a, p. 63).

8.1.3.2 Ellipsis of *de*

When explaining adjective modifying nouns, Summers discussed whether and when *de* can be omitted. He argued that *de* is used either to “avoid ambiguity in the expression” or “for the sake

²⁶¹ Summers discussed the structure “verb and *de*” in the chapter ‘Etymology’ of the *Handbook*: “[t]he participles are generally shown by the genitive particle *tī* 的 [...] being suffixed to the verb in one or other of its tenses [and by other methods]” (1863a, p. 81). In this case, *de* directly follows the verb, such as *biànde* 辯的 ‘he who discusses’, or is placed after “the verb in one or other of its tenses”, for example, *huile de* 回了的 ‘returned’. Summers actually emphasised how *de* helps to form “participles” in Chinese. For instance, *de* is placed after the “past tense” verbal structure *huile* to form a “past participle” *huilede* ‘returned’. In his own words: “[a]ny verb may be formed into an attributive in the form of a participle by adding thereto *tī* [的], the genitive particle; and, consequently, any tense of a verb may be changed into the corresponding participle in the same way” (1864a, p. 65). Besides, Summers also discussed another situation: “an active verb and its object with the addition of the genitive particle *tī* 的 [...] throw [...] the whole into the form of a participial expression [to designate agents...such as] *tà-yü-tī* 打魚的 lit. ‘strike-fish (sub. *person*), one who takes fish,’= a fisherman” (1863a, p. 45). Apparently, for Summers, the head of the phrase “person” is omitted in this kind of structure, and the entire unit thus forms a noun. He said: “[n]ouns formed in this way are very numerous” (1863a, p. 45). In *Rudiments* (1864a, p. 54), Summers said “when *tī* is used after a verb it forms a substantive; e.g. *hiō-tī* 學的 ‘a learner’”, which is similar to *biànde* 辯的 ‘he who discusses’. Therefore, when *de* is used after a verb, this entire unit then forms either a “participle” or a “noun”.

of the rhythm” (1863a, p. 109). He therefore considered this topic from two perspectives. From the perspective of grammar and semantics, Summers stated that on the following occasions, *de* cannot be omitted:

(1) when verbs or participles are used as adjective units modifying nouns (1863a, p. 55): This is actually derived from the “rhythm requirement”. For example, *de* in *fùguìde rén* 富貴的人 ‘a rich man’ can be omitted and *fùguì rén* 富貴人 is totally acceptable. However, in *lihàide rén* 利害的人 ‘a fierce, bad person’, *de* is required because, for Summers, the rhythm of *fùguì rén* is *fùguì/rén*, but of *lihài rén* it is *lì/hàirén*. The change of the “rhythm” also leads to a semantic misunderstanding. *Hàirén* would thus form a verb-object structure, denoting ‘to injure a man’. According to Summers, although the verb *hài* ‘to hurt’ has become a part of the adjective *lihài* ‘fierce’, it still reserves some quality of a verb, which means that it governs the noun *rén* ‘person’ as its object. Because the expression is grammatically and semantically ambiguous without the presence of *de*, *de* cannot be omitted.

(2) “A noun and an adjective combined sometimes form an epithet, which is used as an adjective: e.g. *tá-tàn-tǐ* 大胆[的] lit. ‘great-liver’=brave, *kūng-taú-tǐ* 公道[的] lit. ‘just-doctrine’=just” (1863a, p. 56). Here Summers emphasised that *de* is already a fixed part of these “derivative adjectives” (see Chapter 5). If *de* is omitted, the adjective may be understood as an attributive plus a nominal element. Therefore, in this case, *de* is required to avoid ambiguity.

8.1.4 Summary

Summers’ thoughts regarding particles amount to the following definition: [p]articles are elements that do not convey concrete lexical meaning. They are used for euphonic reasons and to express the feeling of the speaker or to signify the interrelationship between nouns, verbs, and adjectives in sentences. Particles include derivational affixes, elements equivalent or similar in function to inflection in European languages, and those words that are not nouns, adjectives, and verbs. For Summers, “particle” is a set comprising non-homogeneous members instead of being a technical term. Summers classified particles and names them according to their functions, and places certain particles, which have more than one function, into different classes.

The main characteristic of Summers’ research on particles may be illustrated by his views on *de*. Summers stated that *de* has both a morphological and a syntactic function. Whether and when *de* can be omitted depends on the rhythm and the semantic-grammatical ambiguity. In

fact, these two aspects reflect the euphonic function and grammatical function of particles as proposed by Summers.

8.2 Summers' precursors and Chinese particles

As early as the fourth century BC, Aristotle already divided words into nouns, verbs, and links or relational particles (Robins 1997, p. 33; Breva-Claramonte 2007, p. 240). In the sixteenth century, scholars studying Latin and other European languages, especially their respective conjunctions, adverbs, prepositions, and other indeclinable words, merged these into the category of particles, together with inflectional affixes (e.g., case markers) and derivational affixes (e.g., diminutives). They further argued that the division of nouns, verbs and particles is universal in all languages (Breva-Claramonte 2007, p. 241, p. 245). Particles were also one of the topics of early Arabic linguistic research, and they were defined negatively, referring to those words apart from nouns and verbs (Owens 2000, p. 288). These facts provide a picture of the obscure status of particles.

Already in early Chinese linguistics, some research on the topic of particles was conducted. A similar but very problematic term, “empty word”, appeared in many Chinese works. This term had various references in different periods of time and in different works. However, since the late seventeenth century, “empty word” has become the name of a fixed class, and the term “function word” is now employed to refer to this class (cf. Chapter 6). The class of empty words includes elements that do not have a lexical meaning.

Yuán Rénlín²⁶² in his treatise *Xūzì shuō* (虛字說 *On Empty Words*, 1710) argued that “empty words are used to express the sounds. When the sounds are expressed, the emotions then appear”.²⁶³ He argued that semantically empty words do not convey meaning but only express the feelings of the speaker via sounds. Grammatically, empty words are used to designate the relation between words and sentences, which was also noted by the Qing era scholar Wáng Yǐnzhī (1766–1834) in his famous work *Jīng zhuàn shì cí* (經傳釋詞 *Annotation of Form Words in Classics*, 1798, in Gōng Qiānyán 1997, p. 17). These semantic and grammatical functions of particles were also mentioned by Summers, although not directly citing from the abovementioned works.

The main framework of Summers' ideas on particles built upon the general research in Europe and China at that time. The following paragraphs trace the origin of Summers' ideas on

²⁶² Yuán Rénlín (袁仁林) was born in Qing dynasty (1644–1912). His birth and death years are unknown.

²⁶³ “故虛字者，所以傳其聲，聲傳而情見焉” (in Sūn Liángmíng 2005b, p. 464).

particles.

Scholars, for example, Gesenius (1813, p. 149) and Key (1858, p. 138), tended to agree that indeclinable words are particles, as opposed to nouns, verbs and pronouns. Most of the sinologists before Summers did not define “particle”, apart from Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 27): “[t]hose which are not essential in composition are called empty, though no character can strictly be so called since it necessarily has some signification. Therefore, when characters are used as mere particles, and are called *hü tsz’* [虛字], they must be understood to be by *kiá tsié* 假借, or metaphor, i.e., they are changed from their natural to a foreign sense”. Prémare indicated that particles are the same as *empty words* and are grammatical rather than lexical. Although they may originally have had a lexical meaning, their meaning had since changed and become grammaticalized.

Many scholars did not single particles out as an independent class but rather mentioned them in different places in their works, for example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 123, p. 125), Gützlaff (1842, p. 21, p. 23); Bazin (1856, p. 90, p. 94). In contrast, Marshman (1814, contents, pp. ii–v), took particles as a category that includes adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections, as opposed to substantives, adjectives, pronouns and verbs. Generally speaking, early sinologists usually considered the following word classes to be particles: interjections,²⁶⁴ conjunctions²⁶⁵ and classifiers.²⁶⁶ Varo (2000 [1703]) also included demonstratives (p. 95) and personal pronouns.²⁶⁷ This makes the particle quite a mixed category. Edkins even stated that particles include words that “cannot be conveniently classed under any part of speech” (1857, p. 204). This is a negative definition of “particle”.

When it comes to the function of particles, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 53) and Du Ponceau (1838, p. ix) stated that in Chinese there is no inflection, so particles help distinguish the corresponding functions. In other words, the function of particles are to Chinese what inflectional affixes are to European languages to demonstrate gender,²⁶⁸ number,²⁶⁹ case,²⁷⁰

²⁶⁴ For example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 99), Morrison (1815b, Part 1, Vol. 1, p. 433) and Rémusat (1822, p. 77).

²⁶⁵ For example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 99) and Gützlaff (1842, p. 126).

²⁶⁶ For example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 159), Morrison (1815b, Part 1 Vol. 1, p. 346), Rémusat (1822, p. 50), Gützlaff (1842, p. 34), Endlicher (1845, p. 174), Bazin (1856, p. 22) and Edkins (1857, p. 119).

²⁶⁷ For example: “[t]he particle *gû* 吾 has a plural but is used only in writing” (p. 67).

²⁶⁸ For example, Morrison (1815a, p. 66).

²⁶⁹ For example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 55), Marshman (1814, p. 372), Morrison (1815b, Part 1, Vol. 1, p. 125), Rémusat (1822, p. 38), Gützlaff (1842, p. 30, p. 31), Endlicher (1845, p. 198), Bridgman (1853, p. 6), Bazin (1856, p. 24) and Edkins (1857, p. 96).

²⁷⁰ For example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 57), De Guignes (1813, p. 6), Morrison (1822, Part 1, Vol. 2, p. 26), Endlicher (1845, p. 209), Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 28), Bridgman (1853, p. 6) and Edkins (1857, p. 97).

tense,²⁷¹ voice,²⁷² comparative and superlative,²⁷³ and so on. This demonstrates that particles show the relation between other words and between sentences, which was pointed out by many scholars.²⁷⁴ Like Summers, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 71, p. 83) also indicated that particles help to form words, for example, the particle *zi* 子 ‘nominal suffix’ can form nouns while the particle *kě* 可 ‘-able’ could do the same for verbs. Thom (1840, p. xi) claimed that in the traditional Chinese writing system, there was no punctuation. Instead, particles are substitutes for punctuation, an idea also pointed out by Dyer (1840, p. 358).²⁷⁵ Abel-Rémusat (1822, p. 82) stated that the final particle *yě* 也 does not have its own meaning and functions as punctuation, which is very similar to Summers’ analysis of *yě* (1863a, p. 177).

Many scholars went so far as to translate the Chinese “empty words” into English as “particles”, such as Abel-Rémusat (1826, p. 88), Williams (1842a, p. 84; 1844, p. 203), Endlicher (1845, p. xviii) and Edkins (1853, p. 40).

8.2.1 Earlier classifications of particles

Summers’ thirteen classes of particles were presented above. Almost all these classes were mentioned by his precursors, although their terms and examples differed slightly from Summers’. For example, Edkins (1857, p. vii, p. 199) listed some affirmative particles, such as *shì* 是 ‘it is, yes’. Edkins and Prémare used the term “negative particle” to refer to elements such as *bù* 不 ‘not’ (Edkins 1857, p. vii, p. 199) and *méi* 没 ‘without’ (Prémare 1847 [1831], p. 77). The term “conditional particle” was employed by Morrison (1815b, Part 1, Vol. 1, p. 127) and Gützlaff (1842, p. 91). Gützlaff even provided a definition: “conditional particles [...] circumscribe the conjunctive. Such as 如 *joo* [‘if’]” (1842, p. 91). Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 80) presented several “argumentative or intensitive particles”, such as *tài* 太 ‘too’. The term “particula interrogative” appeared in Abel-Rémusat’s (1822) works, as for example, *yé* 邪 (p. 86). Comparable to the “exclamatory particles” in Summers’ works, Abel-Rémusat also

²⁷¹ For example, Morrison (1822, Part 1, Vol. 2, p. 64), Gützlaff (1842, p. 97), Edkins (1853, p. 143) and Bridgman (1853, p. 6).

²⁷² For example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 125) and De Guignes (1813, p. 225).

²⁷³ For example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 73, p. 79), De Guignes (1813, p. 446), Marshman (1814, p. 288) and Morrison (1815a, p. 77).

²⁷⁴ For example, Endlicher (1845, p. 163), Schott (1857, p. 78. Schott employed “Hülfswörter” to refer to particles. Sometimes he also used the term “partikel”, such as in p. 81 and p. 88) and Bazin (1856, p. 25).

²⁷⁵ The original text reads: “[f]or commonly the utmost imaginable confusion prevails in native works with regard to stops. Often, when the reader meets with one of these particles, he understands that it is the first word of a new sentence; and then again after a few characters, when he meets with a particle corresponding to the first, he understands that the pause is on the preceding character: the reader goes on, and perhaps meets with an expletive; he then understands that the complete sentence ends with it”.

analysed those “*particula admirativa*” that denote admiration, surprise, agony, and other feelings of the speaker (1822, p. 77). For instance, *hū* 乎 can express sympathy at the end of the sentence *Xī hū!* 惜乎! ‘What a pity!’ (1822, p. 83). The term “adversative” is found in Edkins’ work, who stated that “[w]hen our word *but* means *merely, only*”, it would be expressed in Chinese by adversative conjunctions such as *dànshì* 但是 (1857, p. 202). Summers’ idea of “adversative particle” was slightly different. As long as the particles denote an opposite meaning, they are adversative particles to Summers. Moreover, the categories illative conjunctions and causal conjunctions can be found in Edkins’ work as well (1857, p. 203). Although Edkins called them “conjunctions”, Summers treated conjunctions as a type of particle. Therefore, it is very likely that Summers’ adversative particle, illative particle, and causal particle take Edkins’ corresponding classes as their model.

As for “connective particles”, Gützlaff (1842, pp. 135–136) employed the same term and used the example *dào* 到 or 倒 ‘yet, however, still, on the contrary’ in expressions such as *zhè dào yě búcuò* 这到也不错 ‘this then is not a mistake’. The word *dào*, however, was considered as an adversative particle by Summers, denoting the meaning of ‘then, but then’ (1863a, p. 165). For Summers, “[connective particles] imply an addition of something” and denote ‘and, also’ (1863a, p. 147). In Gützlaff’s opinion, connective particles are elements that simply connect two elements. Gützlaff even took *de* 的 and *zhī* 之, which connect adjectives and nouns, as “connective particles” (1842, p. 38). Therefore, “connective particle” is a very different concept for him than for Summers. Morrison also used “connective particle” to refer to words such as *jì* 暨 ‘with’ (1822, Part 1, Vol. 2, p. 310) and *jiāng* 將 (1822, Part 1, Vol. 2, p. 4). He did not explain his reasoning or give any examples of *jiāng* being used as a “connective particle”. We know, however, that *jiāng* can be an adverb denoting ‘and’, for example, in *jiāng xìn jiāng yí* 將信將疑 ‘half believing, half doubting’ (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 2005, p. 675), which falls into Summers’ domain of “connective particles”. Summers’ perspective of connective particles is more likely to be based on Morrison’s work than on Gützlaff’s.

The “euphonic particles” in Summers’ work correspond to those in Edkins’ work. Edkins argued that some particles do not have a meaning but just have a rhythmic function.²⁷⁶ Although the book by Edkins is about Shanghainese, Summers’ approach to explain euphonic particles in Mandarin is similar. Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 187) mentioned that on some occasions,

²⁷⁶ For example, he said: “*許 hó*’ is a meaningless particle used to complete the rhythmus [sic]” (1853, p. 114) and “The euphonic particle *’lá* 拉 is used to fill up the rhythmus” (1853, p. 82).

particles are used just “for the sake of euphony and elegance”. Actually, according to Summers’ own statement, “pure” euphonic particles merely make a sentence “sound well”. Yet most “euphonic particles” express the feeling of the speaker and are interjections (1863a, p. 176). Many of Summers’ examples in this category are also examples of interrogative or exclamatory particles (cf. 1863a, pp. 177–179). Therefore, euphonic particles are a combined class of rhythmic and some interrogative or exclamatory particles. This class of particles has the same function as “empty words” in Yuán Rénlín’s work mentioned above.

The only new term introduced by Summers is the “dubitative particle”, as it cannot be found in the works of Summers’ precursors. “Dubitative particles”, for Summers, are words that “give a character of *doubt* to the clause or sentence in which they occur”, and he stated clearly that some of them overlap with conditional and interrogative particles (1863a, p. 173). However, Summers did not explain the differences between “dubitative particles” and conditional or interrogative particles. In fact, as early as Varo’s work, the term “dubitative” had already been distinguished: “[t]he interrogative has diverse forms, one being, dubitative” (2000 [1703], p. 107). Summers singled out those interrogatives that express “doubt” as an independent class by naming them “dubitative particles”.

Hence, Summers’ classifications and terms are somewhat different from, yet are at the same time rooted in the works of his precursors. He reanalysed their research and integrated it into his own work. His perspective of the classes and functions of particles are, however, not only built on one single work, but on that of a variety of authors.

8.2.2 Summers’ precursors and the particle *de*

Varo pointed out that *de* can form the genitive case (2000 [1703], pp. 57–59), and Edkins stated that *de* is the marker “of the genitive or possessive case” (1857, p. 97). With regard to the term “attributive”, Edkins said: “[w]hen a noun is united with another by the connecting particle 的 *tíh*, it is related to it as an attributive genitive to its object, and it always precedes” (1857, p. 206). Wade (1859, p. 17) likewise argued that *de* is placed after some elements and forms an attributive. When *de* is placed after a verb, Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 145) and Wade (1859, p. 3) claimed that the entire unit forms a participle, denoting the agent (Prémare (1847 [1831], pp. 30–31; Edkins 1857, pp. 105–106). However, although there are some scholars who also mentioned the participle-forming function of *de*, none of them discuss “*tí* 的 [...] being suffixed to the verb in one or other of its tenses” in as much detail as Summers did (cf. footnote 261). With regard to *de* being used as a “relative particle”, Edkins (1857, p. 204) also mentioned that

de “has the power of a relative pronoun” when used after verbs. Some scholars also stated that *de* can form adjectives (and adverbs), for example, Varo (2000 [1703], p. 71), Marshman (1814, p. 270, p. 465) and Edkins (1857, p. 137).²⁷⁷

As mentioned above, Summers pointed out two situations when discussing whether *de* can be omitted: “avoid ambiguity in the expression” and “for the sake of the rhythm”. In the sources he consulted, no scholar came to the same conclusion, although many of them also noted that on some occasions, *de* can be omitted.²⁷⁸ The example that Summers used, i.e., *lihàide* 利害的 ‘fierce, bad’, appeared both in the works of Bazin (1856, p. 87) and Edkins (1857, p. 137).²⁷⁹ Neither Edkins nor Bazin discussed whether *de* can be omitted or not in this expression when modifying a noun. Summers borrowed their example, analysed it and came to a separate conclusion.

8.3 Summers’ successors and their discussion of particles

In research on the Chinese language, some of Summers’ successors argued that particles can express the comparative (Douglas 1875, pp. 50–51), mood and tense (Douglas 1875, p. 55; 1904, p. 96, p. 104), case (Gabelentz 2015 [1881], p. 211; Douglas 1904, p. 44) and other inflections. They also employed “particle” as the translation of “empty words” (Douglas 1875, p. 42; Gabelentz 2015 [1881], p. 230).

Sinologists also classified particles in special ways. Wade classified particles according to their functions, form classes and positions, for example: *ěr* 爾 is an “adverbial particle” (1867,

²⁷⁷ For more, see Chapter 5.

²⁷⁸ For example, Varo (2000 [1703]) argued that when there is more than one attribution before a noun, *de* has to be placed directly before the noun. For example, *de* is required in the sentence *Zhè yí wèi shì fúzhōufū tàiyé de gōngzǐ* 這一位是福州府太爺的公子 ‘This man, or person, is, of the mandarin, of the city of Fo cheu, son’ (pp. 61–63). Endlicher (1845, p. 228) agreed that *de* has to be placed in between many attributions and the head noun. He further added that *de* cannot be omitted when it is used after the reduplication of adjectives. (The original text reads: “ [w]enn mehrere Eigenschaftswörter einem Hauptworte beigelegt werden, so kann das letzte mit der Partikel 之 *tí* oder 的 *tǐ* versehen werden, besonders wenn durch Verbindung zweier synonymen Eigenschaftswörter ein besonderer Begriff bezeichnet werden soll. Wird durch blosse Wiederholung des Eigenschaftswortes, wie diess in der Umgangssprache häufig der Fall ist, der Begriff der Eigenschaft verstärkt, so darf die Partikel 的 *tǐ* niemals fehlen”. Endlicher 1845, p. 228). The same view was shared by Prémare (1847 [1831], p. 31). Scholars also tried to analyse this issue from a semantic perspective. Prémare wrote: “[w]hen only two nouns are used whose sense is easily perceived, the particle [*tih*] 的 should be omitted; e. g. Chung Kwoh, 中國 the Middle kingdom, not 中的国” (1847 [1831], p. 28). Varo (2000 [1703], p. 59) argued that when expressing “material quality”, *de* has to be omitted, such as in *tóngqián* 銅錢 ‘coin of copper’, which normally cannot be used as **tóng de qián* *銅的錢. On the contrary, when *de* is used to denote possession, it cannot be omitted, for example in the sentence *Zhè yīfu shì wǒde* 這衣服是我的 ‘This suit is mine’, otherwise, the sentence would mean ‘This dress am I’. However, Summers did not mention any of these observations in his works.

²⁷⁹ Edkins translated it as “dangerous”, although, for the same meaning, we write the word as 厲害 nowadays.

documentary series, Vol. 1, p. 31) and *yān* 焉 is an “expletive terminal particle” (1867, documentary series, Vol. 1, p. 41). Gabelentz (2015 [1881], p. 232) classified them into verbal particles, final particles, interjections, pronominal particles etc., according to the etymology and the positions of the particles in the sentence. These classes and names apparently were not influenced by Summers.

Douglas discussed different functions of *de*, for example, to form adjectives (1904, p. 45) and “serve the purpose of a relative” while placed after verbs (p. 46), but he did not touch on the topic of the omission of *de*. Gabelentz (1883, p. 90) argued that *de* is usually required when disyllabic adjectives serve as attributions or words of other parts of speech used as adjectives.

None of Summers’ successors really adopted his innovative analysis of particles and his points on the omission of *de*, i.e., concerning the rhythm and disambiguation of expressions. However, Gabelentz (2015 [1881], p. 230) claimed that particles have two basic functions: (1) to show the relation between the constituents of sentences and between sentences; (2) to make the sentence sound better and to express the feelings of the speaker. Here his statements are similar to Summers’.

8.4 Summary

Summers’ research on particles was rooted in both European and Chinese traditions. For Summers, particles mainly have two functions: to make the sentence well-sounding and to express the feelings of the speaker, and to present the relationship between verbs and nouns in sentences.²⁸⁰ A similar statement can also be found in the work of Summers’ successor Gabelentz. Based on these functions, Summers included words that are not nouns (including adjectives) or verbs, elements corresponding to inflections of European languages, and derivational affixes in the domain of particles. This corresponds with his precursors’ views. The two functions served as a thread running through Summers’ research. Even when he discussed the omission of *de*, these two points were his main concern. Therefore, Summers’ research on particles is self-consistent.

Summers classified and named particles mainly according to their functions. A particle can be placed into different classes according to its particular function. Although his classes and terms for particles are different from those of his precursors’, all the classes he listed can be traced back to those of his precursors, mainly Varo (2000 [1703]), Abel-Rémusat (1822),

²⁸⁰ Another function is to mark or change the part of speech of a word, since he included formatives in particles. However, formatives were not his major concern while discussing particles (cf. Chapter 5).

Prémare (1847 [1831]) and Edkins (1857).

While researching the particle *de*, Summers argued that its main function is to mark the attribution, therefore it is called an “attributive particle”. When it follows nouns, the genitive case is formed. When *de* is used after an adjective, the entire unit becomes a derivative adjective. *De* can also be placed after verbs, together with the “tense” markers to form various participles or nouns that designate the agents. When *de* is placed after a sentence, the entire “sentence” becomes a relative clause. All of these had already been mentioned by his precursors. However, when discussing if *de* can be omitted or not when placed before a noun, Summers took the two main abovementioned functions of particles into account. This was not pointed out by his precursors nor can similar statements be found in his successors’ works.