

## THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR STUDIES INTO CHINA IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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### *Abstract*

During the first half of the 19th century, Protestant missionaries based in China started teaching some English to the students attending their schools; in the second half of the century Chinese scholars opened their own language schools and wrote their grammar-books of English.

This contribution describes four of the grammarbooks for English that marked milestones in that period: Morrison's *A Grammar of the English Language* (1823), Lobscheid's *Chinese-English grammar* (1864), Cáo Xiāng's *Yingzì rùmén* (1874), and Wāng Fèngzǎo's *Yingwén jǔyú* (1878). Its aim is to sketch the lines of the introduction of some of the key terms for grammar, within the theoretical framework of the phenomenon of grammatization of Chinese: the mutual influence from contemporary grammatical studies of Chinese and other languages will be highlighted.

### *Keywords*

grammatization of Chinese, Robert Morrison, William Lobscheid, Cáo Xiāng, Wāng Fèngzǎo, English grammar texts

### *Résumé*

Pendant la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les missionnaires protestants en Chine commencent à enseigner l'anglais aux élèves des leurs écoles; au cours de la deuxième moitié du siècle, les érudits chinois fondent leurs propres écoles de langues et rédigent leurs grammaires anglaises.

Cette contribution décrit quatre grammaires anglaises qui marquent des étapes fondamentales de cette période: celle de Morrison, *A Grammar of the English Language* (1823); le travail de Lobscheid, *Chinese-English grammar* (1864); le texte de Cáo Xiāng, *Yingzì rùmén* (1874), et le *Yingwén jǔyú* (1878) de Wāng Fèngzǎo. Elle se propose d'esquisser les contours du contexte de l'introduction dans cette discipline de certaines unités fondamentales du métalangage, tout en soulignant l'influence réciproque entre les études grammaticales contemporaines du chinois et d'autres langues.

### *Mots-clés*

grammatisation du chinois, Robert Morrison, William Lobscheid, Cáo Xiāng, Wāng Fèngzǎo, grammaires anglaises

## INTRODUCTION

The origins of the study of Chinese grammar in China have been traditionally dated to 1898, with the publication of Mǎ Jiànzhōng's 馬建忠 *Mǎshì wéntōng* 馬氏文通, though in reality linguistic and grammatical studies on the Chinese language (as well as on its dialects and variants) considerably predate the end of the 19th century. Uchida (2017, p. 21-23) has recently compiled a detailed list of studies and textbooks dedicated to Chinese language and grammar written by Western scholars, the most of

whom missionaries, between 1620 and 1895, published mainly in East Asia. Uchida reviews them favourably due to the depth of their research and the width of their scopes. Hardly any of the works cited by Uchida were written in Chinese, for they were all penned by Western and not by Chinese scholars. The authors of these works were mostly missionaries, mainly belonging to the religious congregations who created the renowned scientific tradition of “missionary linguistics” and provided grammatical descriptions for a high number of exotic languages. Therefore, these texts might be included in the collection of European works which carried on a process of grammatization, as Sylvain Auroux (1992) puts it.

The research on Chinese grammar carried out by Chinese scholars before the *Mǎshì wéntōng* did not exploit Western grammatical categories; Chinese traditional linguistics developed a specific branch that addressed issues of word position and parts of speech according to native linguistic categories. The earliest texts wholly devoted to these subjects can be traced back to the fourteenth century (Lú Yǐwěi’s 盧以緯 *Yǔzhù* 語助, 1324) and its acme arrived in the eighteenth century (Liú Qí’s *Zhùzì biànlüè*, 1711 and Wáng Yǐnzhī’s *Jīngzhuàn shìcí*, 1798), not to mention the interesting work by Bì Huázhēn 畢華珍 *Yǎnxù cǎotáng bǐjì* 衍緒草堂筆記 [Notes from the Yǎnxù Cottage], published in 1822 (see Hagège 1975, p. 26).

There is a third realm of linguistic compilation, which constituted honestly the first gateway for grammar studies to slowly enter into the Chinese linguistic academic debate: the works about foreign languages, most of which are constituted by translations from foreign languages. Takekoshi in this issue has illustrated how, from a well-established tradition of bilingual lexicography, some grammatical analyses encroached the texts about Manchu. As for translations, during the Táng dynasty (618-907), the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* by the Indian grammarian Pāṇini and other Buddhist texts describing Sanskrit grammar were translated into Chinese (see Sūn 1999), but their influence on native grammar studies at that time was limited. Around the beginning of the 19th century, some Western missionaries, and only subsequently Chinese scholars, engaged in writing about the grammars of certain foreign languages, mainly for the practical necessity of communicating with foreigners and for the purpose of translating into Chinese official foreign texts.

The present contribution aims to sketch the lines of development of the study of the English grammar in the 19th century in China. The increasingly mature grammars of English written in that period both influenced and were influenced by contemporary and previous linguistic and grammatical studies of Chinese and of other languages, through a continuous dialogue between them.

## 1 CHINESE STUDIES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES BEFORE THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The first book about the English language written in China is the *Yīngjīlìguó yìyǔ* 口英咭喇國譯語 [English glossary], completed between 1747 and 1761 (Huáng 2010, p. 152, Yú 2016, p. 58). It was a glossary compiled by Chinese *tōngshì* 通事 ‘interpreters’ (mainly from Canton) exhibiting a selection of Chinese lemmas belonging to common lexical realms (such as astronomy, geography, time, colors, plants, directions and so on), each paired with its closest equivalent in English (written in Western letters) and with a tentative pronunciation (written in Chinese characters). The blueprint of this work was constituted by the *Huáyí yìyǔ* 華夷譯語 [Glossaries in Chinese and foreign languages], wordlists devoted to the languages of all of China’s neighbouring populations (such as Mongol, Persian, Tibetan, Uyghur and many other)<sup>1</sup>.

The complete absence of any information about English grammar allows us to appraise the influence of this glossary on the development of grammar studies in China as very limited; nevertheless, it seems that the *Yīngjīlìguó yìyǔ* inaugurated a tradition of bilingual lexicographical production related to English. Several glossaries from the 19th century were compiled in Canton and later in other cities of southern China by local interpreters and translators. The intended audience was local merchants: as a matter of fact, they were meant to collect words of the local pidgin English, which in the first decades of the 19th century was taking form. Among these glossaries, the most influential were the *Hóngmáo tōngyòng fānhuà* 紅毛通用番話 (1835), the *Yīnghuà zhùjiě* 英話註解 (1860), the *Yīngyǔ jíquán* 英語集全 (1862) and the *Zidiǎn jíchéng* 字典集成 (1868).

## 2 THE ROOTS OF THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR STUDIES: MORRISON’S ENGLISH GRAMMAR

### 2.1 The “Grammar of the English Language” by Robert Morrison

It can be argued that the first book written, at least partially, in Chinese about English grammar, and undoubtedly one of the earliest grammar texts written in Chinese, is *A grammar of the English language* (in Chinese *Yīngguó wényǔ fānlì zhuàn*, with a second title on the second page *Yīngjīlì wénhuà zhī fānlì* 英吉利文話之凡例) written by the English Protestant missionary Robert Morrison (1782-1834) and published in 1823 (see Huáng 2006a, Guō 2017, Uchida 2017, p. 70-71).

Morrison’s English grammar is a 97-page book in which the author arranges the matter of English grammar according to the common order adopted in 19th century English grammars: “Orthography” (usually encompassing spelling and elements of phonology), “Etymology” (usually limited to the matter of the parts of speech),

1 See the contribution of Takekoshi on this volume (p. 39-55).

“Syntax” (generally enumerating a number of rules for the correct constructions of phrases and sentences) and “Prosody”. We have no primary evidence of what English grammar Morrison may have consulted in his own scholastic endeavours, but it is highly likely that he had had familiarity with Murray’s *English Grammar* (1795) or its abridgement (1797), for these volumes were, in the first years of the 19th century, the most-frequently studied grammar manuals (see [Michael 1991](#), p. 15-16). Similarly, we have no primary indication of what work Morrison may have referenced as a model for his new work, but we can postulate that Joseph Priestley’s *The Rudiments of English* (first edition, 1761) must have had some influence: the very first sentence of Morrison’s grammar is drawn from Priestley’s, “Grammar is the Art of using words properly” (“wénhuà zhī fánlì shì zhèngyòng zhī fǎ” 文話之凡例是正用之法; [Morrison 1823](#), p. 1); what is more, Priestley’s edition had been one of the most influential grammarbooks of the 18th century, as innumerable contributions in [Tieken-Boon van Ostade \(2008\)](#) acknowledge. The influence of Priestley’s *Rudiments* as “the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety” (to cite Murray) is reflected in the fact that Morrison treated the parts of speech as his main focus much the same way Priestley had. The classification of the parts of speech was a major problem for Western scholars studying Chinese grammars, for which reason “Etymology” became a fundamental part of Western grammars of Chinese ([Uchida 2017](#), p. 59). Despite the fact that Western parts of speech were known to be rather inadequate to describe Chinese grammar structures properly ([Peyraube 2001](#), p. 344-345), Western scholars had no other tools at their disposal; as a consequence, parts of speech came to occupy a considerable part of their grammatical description of (and debate around) Chinese.

## 2.2 Sources of Morrison’s lexical choices and the contribution of his English textbook towards grammar studies in China

It is actually problematic to define the role of both of Morrison’s grammars towards the development of grammar study among Chinese scholars. As for his English grammarbook (as well as the one devoted to Chinese, the *Grammar of the Chinese Language*, published in 1815), Morrison largely resisted translating Western grammatical terminology into Chinese; and in so doing, he forestalled any debate among Chinese scholars on the merit of analyzing Chinese grammar along the lines of Western categories. In the *Grammar of English*, Morrison provides Chinese translations for only about a dozen grammatical terms, which, however, are applied inconsistently throughout the text; among them, he proposes the translations of ‘noun [of persons]’ as *rénwù míngmù* 人物名目 and of ‘verb’ as *shēngzì* 生字 ([Morrison 1823](#), p. 58, p. 69). The *Grammar of Chinese* only presents the equivalences for the terms ‘verb’ and ‘noun’: the selected Chinese counterparts of

the former are *shēngzì* 生字 (lit. ‘word of living’), and *dòngzì* 動字 (lit. ‘word of moving’), for the latter *sǐzì* 死字 (lit. ‘word of dying’) and *jìngzì* 靜字 (lit. ‘word of being still’; Morrison 1815, p. 113).

Seeking to identify the sources from which Morrison drew inspiration appears to be a challenging venture. Uchida (2017, p. 71) maintains that Morrison, in his process of translation, would select a Chinese term if it was appropriate; otherwise, he would leave the English untranslated. In this case, he must have had some acquaintance with traditional Chinese linguistics in order to evaluate whether the candidate Chinese translations were appropriate or not. In fact, the terms he had chosen as equivalencies have something in common with their English counterparts. *Míng* 名 (nowadays usually translated as ‘name’ or ‘noun’) has a paramount importance in Chinese philosophy of language. Philosophical speculation over language, logic and their relationships with things occur in the majority of the philosophical texts of Chinese antiquity and the theories exposed therein constitute an important part of the intellectual and cultural foundation of China; *míng* is one of the words generally employed to refer to ‘name’ (Harbsmeier 1998, p. 46-53, Cheng 2000, p. 19-57, *inter alia*). The other term occurring in the English grammarbook, *shēngzì*, does not occur in the major linguistic texts, while it is found in some commentaries to ancient Classics and in works of poetic criticism. As for the Chinese grammarbook, *sǐzì* and the pair *dòngzì* / *jìngzì* are some of the few terms belonging to traditional Chinese linguistics most related to grammatical issues. As the *Míng* textbook *Duìlèi* 對類 puts it, *sǐzì* corresponds to the renowned category of ‘full words’ or ‘content words’ (*shízi* 實字), but also to some categories of ‘empty words’ or ‘function words’ (*xūzì* 虛字); if we are to try to compare them with Western categories, *sǐzì* embraces nouns and adjectives (see Ji 2001, p. 50; Cheng 2000, p. 23; Wang, Tsai and Wang 2009, p. 399). The usual counterpart of *sǐzì* is not *shēngzì* but *huózì* 活字 (lit. ‘word of living’), for which the usually established equivalent is ‘verb’. While *sǐzì* and *huózì* are quite frequent in literature, the pair *dòngzì* / *jìngzì* occurs much more rarely. Among the latest definitions of them before the 19th century, Yuán Rénlín in 1711 used these notions to refer respectively to words which either “are active putting much effort” or “exist according to their nature” (Yuán 1989, p. 130).

No clues survive as to what texts Morrison may have studied about traditional Chinese linguistics before 1823, and therefore how he may have come to know such terms. Before leaving Britain for China, he had had the opportunity to study Chinese with a Chinese scholar who lived in London, Yong Sam-Tak; the materials that he employed were texts at that time stored at the British Museum (Kitson 2016, p. 65). At a later stage, he presumably studied Theophilus Siegfried Bayer’s *Museum Sinicum* (1730) and certainly read Étienne Fourmont’s *Linguae Sinarum Mandarinicae hieroglyphicae Grammatica duplex* (1742, as Kitson 2013, p. 82

reports); these two texts are cited in Morrison's biography, written by his wife Eliza (Morrison 1839 p. 299). In China, his level of knowledge of the spoken language, as well as that of Classical Chinese, grew considerably (Kitson 2013, p. 84); nonetheless, it is unclear whether he had had the opportunity to be introduced to such traditional Chinese linguistic texts, in which the notions of *sīzì* (and seemingly not *huózi*), *dòngzì* and *jìngzì* were explained. All these factors make it difficult to formulate any hypothesis regarding Morrison's Chinese sources.

A review of the most-renowned Western texts of Chinese language suggests that the equivalence between Western grammar terms and Chinese linguistic terms, before Morrison, may have been first introduced by the French Jesuit Joseph de Prémare: in his *Notitia Linguae Sinicae*, he translates 'verb' as *huózi* and 'noun' as *sīzì* (Prémare 1847, p. 27). Prémare in his *Notitia* abstains from referring to the texts in which he found out these notions; however, he purportedly learnt them from several traditional Chinese commentaries. Dudink (1996, p. 150), Brockey (2007, p. 266), Wong (2015) *inter alia* proved that the Jesuits possessed several primers to the Classics and their commentaries, where the notions of *huózi* and *sīzì*, along with those of *shízì* and *xūzì*, are now and then dealt with. They also brought to Paris a copy of the the dictionary *Zhèngzìtōng* 正字通 [Perfect knowledge of correct characters] (1671), known by Fourmont (1742, p. 505-511) and Abel-Rémusat (1811): in the *Zhèngzìtōng*, the notions of *jìngzì* and *dòngzì* do occur.

As for Prémare's *Notitia Linguae Sinicae*, even though it was written in 1728, it was only published in 1831, by Morrison himself. Morrison may have heard about Prémare's grammar in Fourmont's *Meditationes sinicae* (1737), where it was flatly and superficially dismissed; then, according to the notes referring to Prémare reported in Morrison (1839), Morrison certainly conceived a (new?) interest towards it presumably in 1822, after having read the preface of the *Elémens de la grammaire chinoise* by Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat. No evidence of Morrison's having read Prémare before the compilation of *Chinese grammar* and *English grammar* has been found; in general, it has been impossible to find any evidence whatsoever that Morrison ever studied the "voluminous Catholic writings about China" (Broomhall 1981, p. 116), including linguistic recounts.

Chinese materials available in London to Morrison was barely comparable to what was stocked in Rome or Paris; this makes the quest for Morrison's sources even more enigmatic. Nonetheless, a proper analysis of the Chinese collection of the British Museum at the beginning of the 19th century might suggest a solution; at present this would exceed the limits of this contribution.

On these grounds, it is plausible that Morrison did not establish the equivalence between 'verb' and *shēngzì* or *dòngzì* and between 'noun' and *míng*, *sīzì* or *jìngzì* on his own, but drawing from some previous (probably European) works. Yet, in the

absence of evidence about Morrison's models, at present we cannot eschew the presumption that Morrison himself established equivalencies with major Chinese linguistic notions.

Morrison was the first Protestant missionary in China (Yong and Peng 2008, p. 386) and his studies on Chinese language, literature and culture, published in various southern Chinese and southeast Asian cities towns (such as Guangzhou, Macao, Batavia, Malacca), were credited as being the foundational works of the English tradition of sinology (Xiong 2013, p. 100-101). Morrison's *Grammar of the Chinese Language* had an unquestionable role in the development of grammar study about the Chinese language; on the other hand, it is difficult to gauge the success of his *Grammar of the English language* in China, inasmuch as, at the time of its publication, the English-language market there was still in its infancy. As for the contribution to the development of grammatical debate in China (and in Chinese), the equivalencies between English and Chinese terms are a small but meaningful step forward.

### 3 AFTER THE OPIUM WARS: LOBSCHIED'S ENGLISH GRAMMAR

#### 3.1 *The "Chinese-English grammar" by William Lobscheid*

After Morrison's English grammar, no other major text or phrasebook was written introducing English grammar until the new phase of interest in English and other foreign languages began after the second Opium War and the ensuing treaties (1856-1860). If before 1860 Western presence in China was limited to just five ports, among which Canton and Shànghǎi, and commercial relations had still not been so widely developed, after 1860 Western countries penetrated the Chinese market deeply and opened embassies in Běijīng with the aim of intensifying commercial and diplomatic relations.

The *Chinese-English grammar* (in Chinese *Yīnghuá wénfǎ xiǎoyǐn*, transcribed in Cantonese as *Ying Wa Man Fat Siu Yan*) is a two-part (45 and 80 pages, respectively) textbook of English composed in 1864 by the Protestant missionary William Lobscheid (1822–1893). Lobscheid's work does not highlight the need for a more useful tool for teaching English to the Chinese; he rather declares that his work has the second aim of educating Chinese by spreading Christianity and Western science, with the outcome of the disposal of Chinese characters in favour of the "Phonetic System" (Lobscheid 1864a, I, Preface). Yet, Lobscheid in his *English grammar* made an effort to translate a greater number of English grammatical terms than Morrison, while in his *Grammar of the Chinese Language* (1864) he only mentions *huózi*—including verbs—and *sīzi*—including nouns and adjectives (Lobscheid 1864b, p. 17 and p. 60).

As Lobscheid declares in the “Preface of the Translator” of the first part, the *Chinese-English grammar* is an abridged translation of Allen and Cornwell’s *Grammar for beginners* (first edition 1847). Görlach (1998, p. 30) considers Allen and Cornwell’s grammar a “modest school grammar”, even though the authors may well be deemed as “innovators” in that, instead of proposing grammar as an art, they claim that it “is the science of words” (Allen and Cornwell 1876, p. 9). In fact, the *Grammar for beginners* is not arranged according to the canonical four parts of a Murrayan grammar; rather, it is a very-elementary school grammar divided in three parts: the first illustrates the basic characteristics of the parts of speech, the second expounds some deeper analysis, and the third pinpoints some elements of syntax. Every subject is treated by means of examples, explanations, definitions and exercises. Lobscheid translates the contents of this grammarbook into Cantonese, for which he provides romanization as well.

### 3.2 Lobscheid and the contemporary grammarbooks

William Lobscheid had the opportunity to travel broadly in China (see Hú, Fang and Chen 2016, p. 563-564). In all likelihood, while staying in Hong Kong and other southern cities, Lobscheid had the possibility to consult the contemporary grammar texts upon Chinese and upon English, written by Protestant missionaries. We can also speculate that he may have read works of the Catholic tradition, such as Joaquim Afonso Gonçalves’ *Grammatica latina ad usum sinensium iuvenum* (1828) or Angelo Zottoli’s *Emmanuelis Alvarez institutio grammatica ad sinenses alumnus accomodata* (1859); but evidence for such hypotheses remains scant.

In his English work, besides the employment of the English terms, Lobscheid introduces what he calls *shíchēng* 實稱 ‘true designation’ for all of them. The breadth of the range of influence on Lobscheid’s works is suggested by the fact that, in some cases, he resorts to terms previously occurring not only in Morrison’s grammars and in contemporary English-Chinese dictionaries (see Uchida 2017, p. 62), but also in Gonçalves’ and Zottoli’s Latin grammars: this is the case of *míngzì* 名字 ‘noun’ and *huózi* ‘verb’. Lobscheid lays these terms as headwords in compounds designating other parts of speech, such as *dìngmíngzì* 定名字 ‘article’ (lit. ‘definer of the noun’), *dìnghuózi* 定活字 ‘adverb’ (‘lit. definer of the verb’) and *tímíngzì* 替名字 ‘pronoun’ (lit. ‘substitute of the noun’).

For other parts of speech, Lobscheid proposes brand new creations, for instance *shìzì* 勢字 ‘adjective’, as it “expresses the quality [*xíngshì* 形勢] of a noun” (Lobscheid 1864a, I, p. 10). For ‘conjunction’, Lobscheid creates *jìzì* 繼字 (lit. ‘word of continuation’); but in the explanation, ‘to connect’ is *lián* 連 (Lobscheid 1864a, I, p. 18), which belongs to traditional linguistic terminology (see for instance Wáng 2000, p. 15).

The case of *lún* 倫 is remarkable. *Lún* has been used in the compound word *dìnglúnzi* 定倫字 ‘preposition’, inasmuch as it expresses the “relation” existing between a noun or pronoun and another (Lobscheid 1864a, I, p. 16); it has also been used in *lúntímíngzì* 倫替名字 ‘relative pronoun’, because it “relates to some noun or pronoun going before it” (Lobscheid 1864a, II, p. 9). *Lún* is also used in *xínglún* 行倫 ‘nominative case’ (lit. ‘active case’), *shòulún* 受倫 ‘objective case’ (lit. passive case) and *shǔlún* 屬倫 ‘possessive case’ (lit. ‘case of belonging’). Lastly, it appears in *guànlún* 貫倫 ‘active [verb]’ and *shòulún* 受倫 ‘passive [verb]’ (Lobscheid 1864a, II, p. 38). While the pair *xíng* / *shòu* appear in Gonçalves and in Zottoli for ‘active verb’ and ‘passive verb’, the equivalence of *lún* to ‘relation’ in a very broad grammatical sense seems to be Lobscheid’s original idea. If the morpheme *dìng* 定 ‘to define’ is to be considered as “definer”, “indicator”, “qualifier”, then a preposition is what “defines or indicate a case”: such conception for preposition is very different from *qiáncí* 前辭 (lit. ‘word preceding’), exploited by Gonçalves and Zottoli. Moreover, “case” considered as “relation” is different not only from previous grammatical description, but also from subsequent ones: in fact, the concept of the “case” as “position” is what usually prevailed (see Pellin 2011).

On these grounds, Lobscheid’s English grammarbook, even though small and based on an elementary English text, contributed to the development of the study of grammar, on the one hand, by expanding the terminology of grammar. On the other hand, Lobscheid’s methodology of coining terms consisted of the selection of a few key notions of traditional linguistics, and thereafter in the creation of compound words, in order to build a sort of lexical system in which terms are as integrated as possible.

#### 4 THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR OF MERCHANTS: CÁO XIĀNG’S ENGLISH PHRASEBOOK

The opening of “modern” diplomatic relationship after 1860 led to the necessity of a “modern”, professional body of experts of foreign languages; and this is the reason why the Institute for foreign languages (Jīngshī Tóngwénguǎn 京師同文館) was founded in Běijīng in 1862. In 1863 a similar institution was founded in Shànghǎi, which in 1869 was renamed Guǎng Fāngyán Guǎn 廣方言館 [School for extending the knowledge of languages] (Biggerstaff 1961, p. 165-167).

One of the earliest students at Guǎng Fāngyán Guǎn was Cáo Xiāng (1844-1923), who later worked in a number of Shànghǎi’s government agencies and offices (see Pellin 2009, p. 91-92). Cáo Xiāng figures among the pioneers of English teaching in China for his *Yīngzì rùnmén* [Introduction to English], written in 1874 and published in 1894.

Cáo Xiāng's English textbook belongs to the tradition of phrasebooks and phonetic primers for foreign languages that, after the *Huáyí yìyǔ*, appeared mainly in southern cities, were based on Cantonese or Ningboese, and were meant to serve the needs of local merchants. In fact, the main part of the *Yīngzì rùmén* deals with the pronunciation of English (on the basis of the Shànghǎi dialect) and collects useful sentences in English in a fashion not so different from that of the first part of Morrison's English textbook. What is different from the previous phrasebooks is that Cáo Xiāng adds a brief description of English grammar, in the chapter intitled "Xué yǔ yàojué" 學語要訣 [Secrets for studying the language].

The goal of Cáo Xiāng, as he declares in the Preface, is to spread the knowledge of English among Chinese people; at that time, English was hardly known by anyone, resulting this to be a hindrance to commercial and social relationships.

Cáo Xiāng does not declare which his models are (except for the phrasebook part); the short size of the chapter here under study (some 15 pages) hinders even more from speculating his sources. Nevertheless, it is possible for the modern scholars to identify some of his influences. Cáo Xiāng seems to have followed the pattern of Lobscheid in creating a relatively integrated lexical system. He passes over *míng* for 'noun', for example, in favour of the more technical *shízì* 實字 'full word'; *shízì* then is the headword for the compound *jiāshízì* 加實字 'adjective' (lit. 'word added to noun', because it is "added before the noun"; quoted by Huáng, 2006c, p. 57). For 'verb', Cáo Xiāng proposes the neologism *dòngzuòzì* 動作字, on which he builds *jiādòngzuòzì* 加動作字 'adverb' (lit. 'word added to verb'). Other grammatical notions are expressed through words which do not enter into the lexical system, such as *wèizhìzì* 位置字 'preposition' (lit. 'word of position'), *xiāngliánzì* 相連字 'conjunction' (lit. 'linking word'). As for *gāngmùzì* 綱目字 'article', Cáo Xiāng may have been influenced by Tarleton P. Crawford's *Mandarin Grammar* (1869) or even by Thomas Wade's *A progressive course designed to assist the student of colloquial Chinese* (1867; see Huáng, 2006b, p. 64): for both authors, *gāng* 綱 is 'subject', while *mù* 目 is 'predicate'; alternatively, Cáo Xiāng may have selected *gāngmù* 綱目 because of its use in the sense of 'outline', so that it may roughly mean 'word that arranges items into a program'.

Among the most troublesome concepts to be introduced into Chinese lexicon is "case". Cáo Xiāng dismisses the notion of "relation", as proposed by Lobscheid, but rather proposes the concept of 'level' (*céng* 層) and applies it only to personal pronouns: the first level is the nominative case (for instance, "I"), the second is the genitive case ("mine") and the third is the accusative case ("me"). Strangely enough, Cáo Xiāng completely ignores the apostrophe-*s* as the marker of the genitive case for nouns. On the other hand, the notion of 'passive voice', for which Lobscheid had used the same morpheme used for 'accusative [case]', is rendered differently in other lexical items. In *shòuzhě* 受者 'patient' (lit. 'the one who is

subjected’) there is *shòu* 受 (the counterpart of *shòuzhě* is *zuòzhě* 做者 ‘agent’, lit. ‘the one who does’). For ‘passive verb’, Cáo Xiāng coins *bèizuò kǒuqì* 被做口氣, where *bèi* 被, the passive marker of Modern Chinese, is employed. The notion of “relation”, also used by Lobscheid for ‘relative pronoun’, does not occur in Cáo Xiāng’s rendering; he prefers, rather, *huígù zhī fǎ* 回顧之法, lit. ‘modality of looking back’.

Cáo Xiāng’s *Yīngzì rùmén* proved successful: it was used as the blueprint for the *Fǎzì rùmén* 法字入門 [Introduction to French] by Gōng Wèilín 龔渭琳 (1887), where the structure and the lexicon is almost entirely inherited; the introduction of the *Fǎzì rùmén* was even written by Mǎ Jiànzhōng, future author of the *Mǎshì wéntōng* and famed French expert. Moreover, it is unmistakable that the *Yīngzì rùmén* influenced the next most important Chinese-written English textbook, the *Yīngwén jǔyú*.

## 5 THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR OF DIPLOMATS: WĀNG FÈNGZǎO’S ENGLISH GRAMMARBOOK

### 5.1 The “Examples of English” by Wāng Fèngzǎo

Wāng Fèngzǎo (1851-1918) was one of the most brilliant students of the Guǎng Fāngyán Guǎn of Shànghǎi and later of Tóngwénguǎn of Běijīng: after studying, he also obtained the highest degree in the bureaucratic system, then became ambassador to Japan, rector of Nányáng gōngxué 南洋公學 (now Jiāotōng Dàxué 交通大學) of Shànghǎi and Dean of the Department of Natural Sciences of Imperial University of Běijīng (successor of the Tóngwénguǎn; see Pellin 2009, p. 99-100). Wāng Fèngzǎo’s career is a sign that the education at Tóngwénguǎn, despite its several shortcomings illustrated by many scholars, was capable, at least in its heyday, of training traditional *literati* with a sufficient command of Western languages and sciences to serve the diplomatic needs of the late Qing empire (see Biggerstaff 1961, p. 152-153; Ji and Chén 2007, p. 110-111).

Wāng Fèngzǎo’s *Yīngwén jǔyú*, written in 1878 and first published in 1887, is undoubtedly the first full-fledged grammar of the English language written entirely in Chinese, with a complete set of Chinese terms for grammar. At that time, several dictionaries and phrasebooks for learning English had been published already: what it was still lacking was a proper grammar of English. The importance of grammar is underlined by Zēng Jìzé 曾紀澤, the author of the Preface: he states that grammar is like the shafts of a cart, without which it cannot be pulled by the horse. What it was necessary to win, in Zēng’s view, was the reluctance shown by contemporary scholars to get into new things such as the study of foreign languages, as it had turned out that contemporary problems could not be further procrastinate.

The original text translated by Wāng Fèngzǎo is the 21st edition of the *Elementary grammar of the English language* (1868) by the American grammarian Simon Kerl. Kerl is usually mentioned among the innovators in American grammar-writing: together with Samuel Stillman Greene (1810-1883), the innovators, seeking to shake off the limits of Murrayan grammarbooks, ceased to call grammar an “art” and started to call it a “science”; they concentrated more on morphology and syntax rather than phonology and prosody; they also innovated the presentation of grammatical functions, and added new forms of exercises, such as sentence building and analysis to the traditional parsing and false syntax (Nietz 1965, p. 541-546; Woods 1986, p. 4-20). The innovation introduced thereafter touches the structure of the sentence (formed by a subject and a predicate) and the relations between different parts thereof (see Downey 1991). Kerl was also the author of *Kerl’s Series of School-Books*, among which its *Comprehensive grammar* is considered “one of the more ambitious American grammars” (Görlach 1998, p. 201); in the preface, Kerl maintains that the *Elementary grammar* is nearly identical to the first part of the *Comprehensive grammar*, so that it shares the same qualities, for example it is “simple, progressive and logical” (Kerl 1868, Preface).

Wāng Fèngzǎo’s English textbooks in its 54 folios (corresponding to 108 pages) offers an abridged translation of Kerl’s *Elementary grammar*. The very beginning, where Wāng Fèngzǎo introduces grammar (Wāng 1887, p. 1a-1b) and the last two chapters, where he deals with ellipsis and inversion (Wāng 1887, p. 53a-54b), correspond to the first and the last pages of Kerl’s *First lessons in English grammar* (Kerl 1865, p. 1 and p. 168). Wāng Fèngzǎo avoids making explicit mention of the title of Kerl’s book that he translates (Wāng 1887, Indication to the reader), but the comparison among several of Kerl’s texts rules out any other candidates (such as Kerl’s *Common school grammar*; see Qiū 2008, p. 35): the order of the presentation, as well as the majority of the examples, are taken directly from the *Elementary grammar*. The exercises of Kerl’s original text are usually omitted, some definitions and rules are merged; but one of the main strong points of Kerl’s grammars, the illustrations of English language, “the bush on which the roses grow” (Kerl 1868, Preface), are the key elements of Wāng Fèngzǎo’s renditions. As a matter of fact, Wāng Fèngzǎo refers to his work as a collection of *jǔyú* 舉隅 ‘examples’.

## 5.2 *The combination of different traditions of grammar studies in Wāng Fèngzǎo*

In Wāng Fèngzǎo, the tradition of English grammarbooks written by English and by Chinese scholars in southern cities (such as Shànghǎi, where Wāng Fèngzǎo had first studied) are combined with traditional linguistics in Běijīng, in a first tentative synthesis. Wāng Fèngzǎo, differently from Cáo Xiāng, was a member of the *literati*

social class of the Shànghǎi area; his strong traditional cultural background, which won him the possibility to move from Shànghǎi Tóngwénguǎn to Běijīng Tóngwénguǎn, would later lead him to be awarded the highest degrees in the imperial bureaucracy as well. Influence of the two traditions is clearly evident in his English grammar.

‘Grammar’ for Wāng Fèngzǎo is *wénfǎ* 文法, a traditional word meaning ‘way to write correctly’. This is not an original choice: it had already been employed with the meaning of ‘grammar’ by at least Gonçalves in his *Arte China constante de alphabeto e grammatica* (1829) and then by Lobscheid and others; however, the fact that this word originates in traditional linguistics is a sign of the lexical realm Wāng Fèngzǎo is concerned with. As for the main grammatical notions, ‘noun’ and ‘verb’ (which are pivotal in Kerl’s description of grammar as well), Wāng Fèngzǎo discards definitely *míngzì* and the pairs *huózì* / *sǐzì* and *shízì* / *xūzì* and entrenches the relatively less common *jìngzì* for ‘noun’ and *dòngzì* for ‘verb’ (twenty years before Mǎ Jiànzhōng; see Qín 2015). Then, following Cáo Xiāng’s model, he builds a lexical tree on these two terms: taking *jìngzì* as the headword, Wāng Fèngzǎo creates *xìjìngzì* 繫靜字 ‘adjective’, *dàijìngzì* 代靜字 ‘pronoun’, *dòngjìngzì* 動靜字 ‘verbal noun’ and *dòngxìjìngzì* 動繫靜字 ‘participial adjective’; taking *dòngzì* as the headword, he creates *xìdòngzì* 繫動字 ‘adverb’, *jìngdòngzì* 靜動字 ‘copulative verb’, *xìjìngdòngzì* 繫靜動字 ‘participle’ and *fūdòngzì* 輔動字 ‘auxiliary verb’. The choices for ‘article’ (*qūzhǐzì* 區指字), ‘preposition’ (*wǎnhézi* 縮合字) and ‘conjunction’ (*chéngzhuǎnzì* 承轉字) remain extraneous to the aforementioned lexical tree, as is the case in Cáo Xiāng. It is noteworthy that for ‘conjunction’, Wāng Fèngzǎo resists resorting to words such as *lián* 連 or *jì* 繼, meaning ‘to connect’; he once again draws from words belonging to traditional linguistics and to traditional poetic criticism, *chéng* 承 and *zhuǎn* 轉 (see Gianninoto in this volume; Liú 1954, p. 11, Wáng 2000, p. 14 and p. 35; for the structure of poem, see Kirkpatrick and Xu 2012, p. 45-49).

As for “case”, despite the fact that Kerl insists on its relational function, Wāng Fèngzǎo refrains from defining it altogether, and selects a morpheme, *dì* 地, lit. ‘place’, which is more similar to Gonçalves’s and Zottoli’s renderings of it, rather than to Lobscheid’s *lún* or even Cáo Xiāng’s *céng*. On the other hand, the morpheme *shòu* 受, often used before, expresses both the ‘objective case’ (*zhǔshòudi* 主受地) and the ‘object’ (translated as “word in the objective case”). As the counterpart of *shòu* one finds *shī* 施, a component of the word *shìshì* 施事 ‘agent’ in modern Chinese: it occurs in *zhǔshìdì* 主施地 ‘subjective case’ and in ‘subject’ in the sense of “word in the subjective case”. The influence of Cáo Xiāng may be clearly spotted, among other passages, in *zhǐgù dàijìngzì* 指顧代靜字 ‘relative pronoun’, which is very close to Cáo Xiāng’s *huìgù*. Wāng Fèngzǎo translates ‘subject’ and ‘predicate’, considered as main parts of the sentence, as *tí*

題, lit. ‘forehead’, and *mù* 目 lit. ‘eye’. Here it is proposed that Wade’s and Crawford’s works directly influenced Wāng Fèngzǎo’s choice (*mù* had been matched with ‘predicate’ in both).

The fact that Wāng Fèngzǎo translated Kerl’s grammarbook almost in its entirety makes *Yīngwén jǔyú* far ampler and more detailed than previous grammarbooks, therefore the number of notions introduced into Chinese by this means significantly outnumber those of previous works. Here it is not possible, due to limits of space, to mention all of them; for them Wāng Fèngzǎo necessarily had to rely more on his skill as a translator for creating neologisms than on his knowledge of traditional linguistics, which did not provide enough candidates to equivalence.

The role of the *Yīngwén jǔyú* in the diffusion of grammar study in China was to provide an exhaustive set of grammatical terms; moreover, it was adopted by the Tóngwénguǎn as their English textbook; consequently, all the Tóngwénguǎn graduates until the end of the 19th century studied it.

The legacy of Wāng Fèngzǎo’s *Yīngwén jǔyú* remained until the end of 19th century: Zhāng Déyí’s 張德彝 *Yīngwén huàguī* 英文話規 [Grammar of English] (1898) follows the same patterns of lexical creation. Even the *Guānhuà wénfǎ* 官話文法 [Chinese grammar], written by Zhāng Tíngyàn 張廷彥 and the Japanese Tanaka Keitarō 田中慶太郎 in 1905, relies heavily on Wāng Fèngzǎo’s lexicon (see Dù 1989).

## CONCLUSION

Recently Edward McDonald said that

it would not [...] be stretching it too far to say that for Chinese of Mǎ Jiànzhōng’s generation, the notion of grammar [...] was a kind of conceptual *bóláipǐn* 舶來品 or ‘imported good’ (McDonald 2018, p. 246)

It is undoubtful that the Chinese approach towards Western knowledge, in the decades after the Opium Wars (1860s) to the end of Sino-Japanese war (1895) was rather practical. The most advanced member of the Chinese intelligentsia started to call for the spread of the knowledge of Western science and technology around the second half of the 19th century (see for instance the reformer Féng Guìfēn’s 馮桂芬 article “On the adoption of Western learning” written in 1861); along with it, experts able to read, translate and explain Western texts were needed as well. Therefore Chinese *literati* acknowledged the problem of the absence of knowledge in China and framed it on a very pragmatic level: the absence of scientific, even technological knowledge, and of the relevant linguistic competence. Within this outlook, linguistic knowledge seemingly was nothing more than a good, to be seized and put on use in China. Cáo Xiāng and Wāng Fèngzǎo, in their works,

highlighted how much Chinese society was lagging behind because the Chinese people were not provided with a proper linguistic and in particular grammatical knowledge; they sounded quite confident about the fact that China had the possibility to overcome such a gap.

Maybe this oversimplifying vision was feasible when merely technical knowledge was translated. When it came to more theoretical fields of knowledge, from natural sciences to human sciences, this direct importation and immediate employment could not be reasonably implemented so easily. Twenty years after the compilation of the *Yīngwén jǔyú*, in Mǎ Jiànzhōng's time, the relationship between what was Western knowledge and what was Chinese knowledge and which their relations ought to be was not so clear-cut anymore. The motto launched by the statesman Zhāng Zhīdòng 張之洞 right in 1898, *zhōngxué wéi tǐ xīxué wéi yòng* 中學為體西學為用 "Chinese learning is the essence, Western learning is the tool", did not imply contradiction among the two parties but rather an integration of them, for the sake of the salvation of the former<sup>2</sup>. Western learning was to serve Chinese traditional learning and to modernize it, in order to make it capable to face the challenges of the new times.

The 19th century grammarbooks of English, here described, were too elementary and had far a tiny audience to be able to raise any considerable debate about the cultural influence brought by themselves. Nonetheless, as the present contribution tried to show, the effort put, at different degrees, by both the Western and the Chinese authors in rescuing traditional grammatical notions and integrating into a new scientific framework, deserves to be considered a sign of a negotiation in the reception of Western grammar, twenty years before that was more clearly advocated by Chinese reformists. Underneath the commonplace of the lack of grammar and grammar studies in Chinese, worded for instance by Joshua Marshman in his *Elements of Chinese grammar* (Marshman 1814: vi) or by a bold Lobscheid and later expressed by Chinese scholars themselves (Mǎ Jiànzhōng among them) as an element of a more general (and more painful) feeling of national deficiency, it seems that the process of creation of a modern Chinese grammar was far from being a direct and acritical importation. On the contrary, it seems rather a complex research of the most adapt elements of traditional culture (here, linguistic thought) to be bent and fit to explain new, foreign ideas, not only just for the salvation of the old, native ones but in accord with them and in continuity with traditional learning.

2 See among others Lin 2004, p. 25; Weston 2004, p. 29; in particular on the debate about the concepts of *ti* and *yong* see Hon 2002.

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