

Chapter 2

The Mashi Wentong

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 *The Authors of the Mashi Wentong*¹

The *Mashi Wentong* (from here we will use MSWT) was published under the name of Ma Jianzhong (1844–1900, courtesy name Meishu 眉叔, Christian name Mathias), but many scholars hold that he was at least assisted by his elder brother Ma Jianchang 馬建昌 (1840–1939, courtesy name Xiangbo 相伯, as this actually is his best-known name, we will use this name in the rest of this study), while some even go as far as to believe that Ma Xiangbo was the real author of this work.

The Ma brothers were born into a catholic family in Dantu, Jiangsu province, near the present day city of Zhenjiang. Their father, Ma Songyan (馬松岩 d. 1872), was a physician and a pharmacist. Both their parents, as well as their maternal grandparents, were Catholics; it is said that the family was already converted to Catholicism in the seventeenth century. Especially their mother was very religious.

Both brothers started with a traditional Chinese education. However, they were not content with this kind of studies, and therefore, Ma Xiangbo ran away from home to Shanghai in 1851. Through the introduction of a friend, he went to Zikawei (Xujiahui), the Jesuit center in Shanghai, and there he entered the College of St Ignatius. Ma Jianzhong followed his brother 1 year later.

The principal of the college was an Italian, named Angelo Zottoli (1823–1902). Zottoli was very interested in the Chinese language and literature: Later, from 1879 to 1882, he would publish a five volume textbook for students of Chinese (Zottoli: 1879–1882). Zottoli grew very fond of the Ma brothers and gave private lessons in mathematics and other subjects to Ma Xiangbo. Undoubtedly a teacher like Zottoli greatly encouraged the Ma brothers' interest in Western learning.

¹The main sources of these biographies are Lou Xian'e (1978), Boorman (1967), and Zhang Ruogu (1965); when these sources are used, no notes will be given.

Although the two brothers remained on close terms, after graduation their careers went into different directions. Ma Xiangbo became a teacher at the College of St. Ignatius and its principal in 1872. At that time he grew more and more interested in science and translated books on various scientific subjects. However, because he, along with teaching religion, also taught Confucianism, his superiors feared that he might corrupt the minds of his pupils; hence, they transferred him to Nanking to compile and translate science books. Disappointed, he left the Society of Jesus in 1876.

Through the introduction of his elder brother, Ma Jianxun (馬建勛 d. 1882), Ma Xiangbo got in contact with Li Hongzhang (1823–1901), one of the most prominent political figures of that time (Ma Jianxun served as private secretary to Li Hongzhang). Through this connection Ma Xiangbo obtained various official posts, including diplomatic missions to Korea and Japan.

In 1884 Li Hongzhang appointed both Ma Jianzhong (see below) and Ma Xiangbo to the China Merchants' Steam and Navigation Company, founded in 1872 to compete with British shipping in China.

Two years later Ma Xiangbo left for the United States to find funds for financing Li Hongzhang's plan to build a Chinese navy. Ma took advantage of being abroad to visit England, France, and other European countries (he was also received by the Pope), before returning to China in 1887.

In 1898 Ma Xiangbo took part in a movement for political reform, which failed after only a few months. Ma went back to Shanghai, where he returned to a scholarly life. It was in that period that he and his brother wrote the MSWT.

From the turn of the century, Ma Xiangbo devoted himself almost entirely to education.

Let us now return to Ma Jianzhong. In 1876 the government decided to send a group of students abroad for further studies. Although not originally a member, Ma Jianzhong was also included in this group on the recommendation of Li Hongzhang. He was sent to Paris to study international law at the *Ecole des Sciences Politiques* and the *Faculté de Droit* of the *Université de Paris*. We know the different classes he attended from a letter by him addressed to Li Hongzhang (1877).² In this letter he gives an account of his final examination; the questions mostly concerned such fields as international law and political science: Latin, Greek, and French literature only constituted a small part of the total examination.

In the same letter he also discusses the state organization as he experienced it during his stay in France. In another letter, addressed to a friend (1877)³, he revealed his ideas about a school for diplomats he thought necessary, as he was dissatisfied with the results of the *Tongwenguan* (see Sect. 1.5.1).

After his return to China (1879 or 1880, the sources do not agree on this point), Ma Jianzhong became Li Hongzhang's personal secretary. In this function, many of

²Teng/Fairbank (1954: 95–97); Ma Jianzhong (1960: 28–32).

³Ma Jianzhong (1960: 43–47).

his activities included dealing with foreign countries, e.g., diplomatic trips to India and Korea.

In 1884 Ma Jianzhong was appointed assistant manager of the China Merchants' Steam and Navigation Company. At that time China was involved in a protracted war with France. The Company's ships could not sail out, because of a French blockade. Since Ma Jianzhong was on friendly terms with American businessmen, they agreed to his plan of letting the company's ships carry the American flag. In this way the ships could sail out freely.

Information on Ma Jianzhong's activities during the next decade is scarce. In 1896 he took part in a mission to Russia, to attend the coronation of Tsar Nicolas II. It is reported that he also made two trips to Europe in the following years.⁴

During the various diplomatic missions, Ma Jianzhong gained a lot of experience in dealing with foreigners. In the previous chapter, we already mentioned the lack of interest on the part of the Chinese in learning foreign languages and its impact on Chinese language studies. Its impact on contacts with foreigners was equally negative. The language barrier constituted one of the main obstacles for the introduction of Western learning into China. A man like Ma Jianzhong, educated in a Western tradition and a polyglot himself, must have been constantly aware of this.

Moreover, as a diplomat, Ma Jianzhong daily had to face the superiority of the Western powers. All this made him into one of the most ardent promoters of Western learning in general and the learning of Western languages in particular.

For some 20 years Ma Jianzhong had been making notes on grammar during his studies of both Western and Chinese literature. Taking these notes as a base, he and his brother wrote the MSWT, which was finished in 1898.

2.1.2 *The Authorship of the MSWT*

The preface of the MSWT is dated April 9, 1898, and apparently one volume, containing the first half of the work, was available in 1900, because it was reviewed in that year.⁵ However, the complete work was not published until 1904, by the Commercial Press in Shanghai, under the auspices of Ma Xiangbo. According to Ma Xiangbo himself, he had the book published under the name of Ma Jianzhong to honor his deceased brother.

A number of articles on this topic have appeared in China.⁶ Both Zhu Xing and Fang Hao claim that Ma Xiangbo personally told them that he himself was the principal author of the MSWT. As early as 1896, when the Ma brothers were teaching Latin to Liang Qichao (1873–1929) and Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), two leading thinkers of early republican China, they used a manuscript of a combined Chinese

⁴Cordier (1900).

⁵Tobar (1900), Parker (1900).

⁶Zhu Xing (1980), Fang Hao (1979), Tang Yan (1979).

and Latin grammar. Ma Xiangbo later published a Latin grammar entitled *Lading Wentong* (拉丁文通), a title analogous to MSWT.⁷

According to Ma Xiangbo, he himself was better versed in Chinese literature, while his brother had read more Western literature; hence, many of the examples in the MSWT were provided by the elder brother.

It is not possible to determine just how much each brother contributed to the MSWT. Ma Jianzhong had been making grammar notes for some 20 years. Surely these notes must have constituted the base of the grammar. However, Ma Xiangbo, especially at that time, was much engaged in education. In fact, the year before the complete publication of the grammar (1903), he had founded the Aurora University. Although it is never specifically mentioned as such, it is highly probable that the MSWT was meant to be used as a textbook or a reference work for the students of that university. At least the Latin grammar was used as such.

The postface of the MSWT clearly states that the main objective in writing a grammar of Chinese was to help shorten the time necessary to learn to read and write, so the aim of the MSWT was educational, which also strengthens the hypothesis that Ma Xiangbo was the main author.

In the present study we will leave the controversy as it is and refer to both brothers as “the authors.”

2.2 The Grammatical System of the MSWT

In this section we will give a general description of the grammatical system of the MSWT. Our treatment is divided into several parts, each covering one particular topic (parts of speech, grammatical functions, etc.).

As we pointed out at the end of Chap. 1, one of the main problems pertinent to our subject is the tremendous amount of terms, which even is bewildering for someone familiar with Chinese. To make the following presentation as clear as possible, we have made a conspectus of the categorical system of the MSWT. Every item of this conspectus consists of the Chinese name, both in characters and in transcription, the English translation, and a reference number. Whenever in the following description of the grammatical system we use a Chinese term which is not frequently mentioned, we will cite its reference number in the conspectus. This will help the reader to keep track of the argument and at the same time will enable him to get more familiar with the system as a whole.

As regards the English translations of the terms, we have adopted the following method: whenever a Chinese category matches one from Western grammar, we take the corresponding Western term as the translation, regardless of the literal meaning

⁷We have not yet been able to locate this work.

of the Chinese term, e.g., *jiezi* (27) is translated as “preposition” not as “introductory word.” In the remaining cases we use the literal translation of the Chinese term.

The edition of the MSWT we will refer to in this study is the one compiled by Zhang Xichen (1964). This is a complete reprint of the first edition, the only differences being the addition of punctuation and Zhang’s own comments. We have selected this edition because all recent publications on the MSWT refer to this edition.

For each topic of the following description, we will discuss the content and the etymology of the terms. The authors do not mention a particular Western work as their model, but their work generally agrees with the nineteenth-century European school grammar.

Evidently they have been influenced by Prémare’s grammar, but not enough to call it the “model” of the MSWT. Still, in our comparison of the grammatical system of the MSWT with Western grammar, we will pay special attention to Prémare’s work, as in all probability it was the first contact the Ma brothers had with Western grammar studies.

As the MSWT exclusively deals with *wenyan*, whenever in this chapter we used the term “Chinese,” it will only refer to *wenyan*.

2.2.1 *The Parts of Speech*

(0) *Zi* 字 words

(1) *Shizi* 實字 full words

(3) *Mingzi* 名字 nouns

(4) *Benming* 本名 proper nouns

(5) *Gongming* 公名 common nouns

(6) *Qunming* 群名 collective nouns

(7) *Tongming* 通名 abstract nouns

(8) *Daizi* 代字 pronouns

(9) *Zhiming dz.* 指名代字 personal pronouns

(10) *Jiedou dz.* 接讀代字 relative pronouns

(11) *Xunwen dz.* 訊問代字 interrogative pronouns

(12) *Zhishi dz.* 指示代字 demonstrative pronouns

(13) *Zhuzhi dz.* 逐指代字 general demonstrative pronouns

(14) *Tezhi dz.* 特指代字 specific demonstrative pronouns

(15) *Yuezhi dz.* 約指代字 restrictive demonstrative pronouns

(16) *Huzhi dz.* 互指代字 mutual demonstrative pronouns

(17) *Dongzi* 動字 verbs

(18) *Neidongzi* 內動字 intransitive verbs

(19) *Waidongzi* 外動字 transitive verbs

(20) *Tongdongzi* 同動字 copular verbs

- (21) *Zhudongzi* 助動字 auxiliary verbs
- (22) *Wushu dz.* 無屬動字 impersonal verbs
- (23) *Jingzi* 靜字 adjectives
 - (24) *Xiangjing* 象靜 qualitative adjectives
 - (25) *Zijing* 滋靜 quantitative adjectives
- (26) *Zhuangzi* 狀字 adverbs
- (2) *Xuzi* 虛字 empty words
 - (27) *Jiezi* 介字 prepositions
 - (28) *Lianzi* 連字 conjunctions
 - (29) *Tiqi lz.* 提起連字 initial conjunctions
 - (30) *Chengjie lz.* 承接連字 connective conjunctions
 - (31) *Zhuanlie lz.* 轉捩連字 adversative conjunctions
 - (32) *Tuituo lz.* 推拓連字 concessive conjunctions
 - (33) *Zhuzi* 助字 particles
 - (34) *Chuanxin zz.* 傳信助字 affirmative particles
 - (35) *Chuanyi zz.* 傳疑助字 dubitative particles
- (36) *Tanzi* 歎字 interjections

Grammatical functions (37) *ci* 詞

- (38) *Qici* 起詞 subject
- (39) *Yuci* 語詞 predicate
- (40) *Zhici* 止詞 direct object
- (41) *Biaoci* 表詞 nominal predicate
- (42) *Sici* 司詞 regimen
- (43) *Jiaci* 加詞 modifier
- (44) *Zhuanci* 轉詞 indirect object

Sentence positions (45) *ci* 次

- (46) *Zhuci* 主次 subjective position
- (47) *Binci* 賓次 objective position
- (48) *Pianci* 偏次 modifier position
- (49) *Zhengci* 正次 head position
- (50) *Qianci* 前次 antecedent position
- (51) *Tongci* 同次 appositive position

In the MSWT the basic element of grammar is the *zi*, a notion we already treated in Sect. 2.1.2. The problem is that *zi* also refers to the unit of writing, and it is hard to determine whether *zi* as used in the MSWT is to be taken as one notion or there are two different words, only vaguely related.

The MSWT opens with a series of definitions (*jieshuo* 界說). However, although all categories of *zi* are listed with their own definition, *zi* itself is not included. We have to look at other statements elsewhere in the book to find out the exact meaning

of the term *zi*. In general, *zi* refers to the word-syllable of the traditional commentaries, but in some instances disyllabic words are also called *zi*; e.g., on p. 274 *wuling* 無令 “no matter what” is called a *lianzi* (28) “conjunction.”

Probably, the authors did not really think about this problem; they chose *zi* as the translation of the Western term “word,” as it was the Chinese word closest in meaning, but at the same time retained its original meaning. An important factor here is the fact that the MSWT deals with *wenyan*, which is basically a monosyllabic language. If the Ma brothers would have written a grammar of the vernacular, they would have been forced to go deeper into the difference between word and character.

The traditional terms *shizi* (1) “full word” and *xuzi* (2) “empty word” have also been adopted in the MSWT, but they are defined in terms of the Western parts of speech. *Shizi* covers the content words and *xuzi* the form words.⁸

So far, comparison with Western works of grammar is not useful from an etymological point of view, as the terms discussed above are all taken from traditional Chinese philology. However, it is interesting to see that in this respect Western works on Chinese grammar are often influenced by Chinese philology, instead of the other way around. In Sect. 1.5.2 we have already seen that Prémare’s terms *litera*, *litera plena*, and *litera vacua* are the translations of *zi*, *shizi*, and *xuzi* respectively, but a modern scholar like Dobson uses a similar terminology. Dobson distinguishes between the “lexic” (his translation of *zi*) and “word,” but he only distinguishes two classes of words—plerematic and cenematic words—which is his way of saying full and empty words.⁹

The full words in the MSWT are divided into five subcategories:

Mingzi (3) “nouns”

The term *mingzi*, as well as its subcategories, is a literal translation of the Western term. Only *tongming* (7) does not completely cover our abstract nouns. *Tongming* refers to other parts of speech which are used as nouns in certain patterns. Chinese lacks such morphological distinctions as that between “high” and “height” in English, so parts of speech can only be determined in a concrete context (see Sect. 1.2). The authors clearly state their view that the parts of speech are not fixed in Chinese and that one has to consult the context of a word to decide on its part of speech.

A consequence of the denial of fixed parts of speech should be that one does not talk about “verbs used as nouns,” “adjectives used as verbs,” etc.

Still, this is sometimes the case in the MSWT, and the subcategory of *tongming* is an example of this. The reason that only for “other parts of speech used as nouns” a separate term is coined probably is the fact that this is the most frequent case of “derived” parts of speech.

⁸Sweet (1892: 22–24).

⁹Dobson (1959: 3–5).

Prémare still uses the older definition of *nomen*, which comprises nouns and adjectives. In this respect the term *mingzi* in the MSWT is closer to the term noun in Western school grammar.

Daizi (8) “pronouns”

The situation of the pronouns is rather complicated. The term itself evidently is a translation of the Latin term *pronomen*.

Zhiming dz. (9) literally means “pronouns referring to nouns”; the group of words it comprises coincides with our personal pronouns. The authors further distinguish between personal pronouns referring to the person speaking or spoken to and those referring to an antecedent, a distinction analogous to our distinction between personal and anaphoric pronouns.

This distinction is very appropriate, as *wenyan* does not have real third person pronouns. Instead, when an emphatic third person pronoun is needed, a demonstrative pronoun (see below) is used. There is a nonemphatic third person object pronoun (see Sect. 2.1.4), but etymologically this also is a demonstrative pronoun.

The group of *jiedou dz.* (10) merely consists of three words: *suo* 所, *zhe* 者, and *qi* 其. They are defined as words linked to a word group to form a clause (*dou*, for this term see below).

This category is clearly modified after the Western relative pronouns, as the phrases coined with *suo* and *zhe* all correspond to relative constructions in Western languages. For example, with *shu* 書 “to write” one can make the following phrases:

Suo shu 所書 “that which is written”

Shu zhe 書者 “the one who is writing”

However, in the Chinese translation of a phrase like “the book I bought yesterday,” these words are not obligatory; the attributive clause in Chinese is treated in the same way as a simple attributive phrase.

Suo and *zhe* can be regarded as relative pronouns, but only in the sense of Sweet’s “condensed relatives,” i.e., relative pronouns that act as their own antecedent.¹⁰

Qi originally means “his, her, and its,” but it can also be placed in front of a secondary clause to replace the subject, e.g.:

周公知其將畔而使之與

Zhou gong zhi qi jiang pan er shi zhi yu (Mencius 2b9)

“The Duke of Zhou sent him, knowing that he would rebel, did he?”

It probably has been this use of *qi* that made the authors list it among the relative pronouns. However, there is no reason to regard this use of *qi* as different from its normal use; the literal translation of *zhi qi jiang pan* is “knowing his future rebelling.” As in the case of *suo* and *zhe*, the authors’ analysis has been based on translation, as “that” in English and “que” in French are both used as relative pronoun and conjunction.

¹⁰ Sweet (1892: 81).

The term *xunwen dz.* (11) “interrogative pron.” does not require any further explanation.

The term *zhishi dz.* (12) literally means “demonstrative pron.,” but its scope is broader than that of its Western counterpart; in fact, only the *tezhi dz.* (14) coincide with our dem. pron. The *zhuzhi dz.* (13) comprise words meaning “every,” “each,” etc. The *yuezhi dz.* (15) refer to words placed after the subject denoting its distribution, e.g.:¹¹

人皆可以為堯舜有諸

Ren jie ke yi wei Yao Shun you zhu (Mencius 2a/6)

“Is it possible that everyone can be a Yao or a Shun?”¹²

The *huzhi dz.* (16) comprise words meaning “each other.”

The division of the pronouns in the MSWT generally agrees with that in Western grammar. The only deviation is the subdivision of the demonstrative pronouns, for which no model can be found, either in Western grammar or in traditional Chinese philology. It is set up by the authors themselves.

Dongzi (17) “verbs”

The term *dongzi* has been mentioned before in our treatment of the beginnings of grammar studies in traditional Chinese philology. There it was paired with the term *jingzi* (23), referring to nominal and verbal uses of one and the same word. Wang Fengzao had adopted them in the same way in his grammar of English.

In the MSWT both terms are adopted, but with different meanings. *Dongzi* is taken as the equivalent of the Western term “verb” and *jingzi* as that of “adjective.”

Transitivity is denoted by means of the prefixes *nei* “inner” and *wai* “outer”—“inner verbs” (18) being the intransitive verbs and “outer verbs” (19) the transitive verbs. The choice of these names is inspired by the way the authors regard transitivity. In their view the subject is the initiator of the action and the object its goal. When no goal is present, the action, so to speak, remains at the initiator; hence, verbs which do not require an object are called “inner verbs.” When a goal is present, the action stops at this goal, i.e., outside its initiator, hence the name “outer verbs.” The nomenclature of some of the grammatical functions is also derived from this view (see Sect. 2.2.2).

The term *tongdongzi* (20) “copular verbs,” which literally means “similar /to/ verbs,” is chosen because it comprises words which do not denote any action, but still function as verbs, e.g., words meaning “to resemble,” “to exist,” etc.

The *zhudongzi* (21) “auxiliary verbs” do not need further explanation.

The term *wushu dongzi* (22) “impersonal verbs” literally means “verbs not pertaining /to/anything.” This refers to words like *yu* 雨 “to rain,” which do not require a subject. This kind of verbs is called impersonal in Western grammar, hence our translation.

¹¹ Compare with Dobson’s “distributives”; Dobson (1959: 78 ff.).

¹² Jie means “all,” but because of its position it is regarded as a *yzdz*, not as a *zzdz*.

Again, this division of the verbs generally coincides with that of the late nineteenth-century European grammars. The only term which needs further commentary is *tongdongzi* (20). This term comprises words which do not seem to have common features. Of course, the authors state that these are all words not denoting any action, but grammatically functioning as verbs. However, there are many more words meeting this requirement, but which still are not regarded as *tongdongzi* in the MSWT. Probably, the category of *tongdongzi* is modeled after Prémare's *verba substantiva* "copular verbs" which comprise the same group of words. For this reason we have translated *tongdongzi* as copular verbs.

Jingzi (23) "adjectives"

As we already mentioned under the *dongzi*, the term *jingzi* has been taken from traditional Chinese philology. This is one of the rare instances that the authors mention the source of a term. The terms *xiangjing* (24) "qualitative adjective" and *zijing* (25) "quantitative adjective" are taken from the following passage of the *Zuozhuan* (Xi, 15):

物生而後有象,象而後有滋

Wu sheng er hou you xiang, xiang er hou you zi

"When things appear, they have form; only when they have form, they can have quantity."

The terms are Chinese, but evidently their content is completely Western. The *xiangjing* comprise the Chinese equivalents of our adjectives¹³; the *zijing* consist of three groups of words: cardinal numbers (*shumu* 數目), ordinal numbers (*xushu* 序數), and approximate numbers (*yueshu* 約數, i.e., words meaning "many," "some," etc.).

Zhuangzi (26) "adverbs"

These are words modifying verbs and adjectives. The authors divide the *zhuangzi* into several groups denoting time, place, manner, etc., but these groups are not considered different subcategories of the *zhuangzi*.

No source can be found for the name *zhuangzi*, which literally means "modifying words."

The empty words in the MSWT are divided into four subcategories:

Jiezi (27) "prepositions"

This is a superfluous category, in the same way as the *jiedou dz.* (10), i.e., prepositions do not really exist in Chinese. Like the *jiedou dz.* this category is based on translation into Western languages. Almost all the words belonging to this group are verbs which can, in combination with their objects, modify other verbs in the same

¹³ Chinese does not have adjectives. The Chinese words corresponding to our adjectives are in fact a subcategory of verbs, generally called "stative verbs" or "quality verbs"; Henne et al. (1977: 170 ff.).

way as the prepositional phrases in Western languages. Sinologists now generally refer to these words as “coverbs.”¹⁴

One member of this group is rather out of place, viz., the particle *zhi* 之.¹⁵ This particle is used to link modifiers to their head words. When the modifier is a noun or a nominal phrase, *zhi*, in the construction N *zhi* N, can be translated into English with the preposition “of,” into French with “de.” This probably is the reason why the authors of the MSWT consider *zhi* as a preposition as well.

Prémare also distinguishes prepositions using the same criterion (translation into Latin; see p. 49). His *praepositiones* also comprise words as *zhong* 中 “the middle,” *shang* 上 “the top,” etc. This kind of words are used in constructions like *guo zhong* 國中 “in the country,” *shan shang* 山上 “on (the top of) the mountain,” etc. In the MSWT these words are regarded as nouns.

Lianzi (28) “conjunctions”

The name *lianzi* is a literal translation of the Western term, but the subdivision of this category closely resembles Wang Mingchang’s division of the empty words (see Sect. 1.4.1).

The *tiqu* 1z. (29), literally “raising conjunctions,” are sentence initial particles used to emphasize the following statement, e.g., *fu* 夫, *gai* 蓋, etc. This group of words coincide with Wang’s *qiyuci*.

The *chengjie* 1z. (30), literally “connecting conjunctions,” are defined as conjunctions which do not cause a turn of meaning. For example, in the pattern “if S1 then S2,” S2 is logically implied by S1; the same holds for the pattern “S1, because S2,” where S2 is the natural reason for S1 (at least for the speaker). This is the most extensive subcategory of the conjunctions; it comprises hypothetical, temporal, and causal conjunctions. It coincides with Wang’s *jiyuci*.

The *zhuanlie* 1z. (31), literally meaning “reversing conjunctions,” are the counterparts of the *chengjie* 1z.. They are defined as conjunctions which cause a turn of meaning. They comprise words meaning “but,” “however,” etc. This group coincides with a part of Wang’s *zhuanyuci*.

Finally there are the *tuituo* 1z. (32), literally “yielding conjunctions.” Both the name of this category and the group of words it refers to correspond to the Western concessive conjunctions. In Wang Mingchang’s division of the empty words, these words are listed under the *zhuanyuci*.

Zhuizi (33) “particles”

In Sect. 1.4.1 we have seen the term *zhuizi*, literally meaning “auxiliary words,” as a general designation of grammatical words, the predecessor of the term *xuzi* “empty words.” In the MSWT this term is restricted to the final particles. The authors divide the *zhuizi* into two subcategories: those that convey a modality of certainty, *chuanxin* 2z. (34), and those that convey a modality of uncertainty, *chuanyi*

¹⁴ Henne et al. (1977: 150 ff.)

¹⁵ We have already mentioned the word *zhi* as the 3rd pers. object pronoun.

zz. (35). This resembles the division made by Liu Zongyuan (see Sect. 1.4.1), who divided the *zhuzi* into “affirmative words” (*jueci* 決辭) and “dubitative words” (*yici* 疑辭). However, in the MSWT there is no reference to Liu Zongyuan.

Tanzi (36) “interjections”

This term, which literally means “lamenting words,” does not require further explanation. Wang Mingchang distinguishes a group of *tanyuci*, which might be the source of the term in the MSWT.

2.2.2 The Grammatical Functions

According to the authors’ definition, *ci* (37) express the mutual influence of nouns and pronouns on one hand and verbs and adjectives on the other hand. In view of this definition, *ci* must be interpreted as the designation of grammatical functions.

The authors distinguish seven of these functions:

Qici (38) “subject” and *zhici* (40) “object”

These two terms can best be discussed at the same time. Their names, which literally mean “beginning phrase” and “halting phrase,” respectively, are related to the authors’ definition of transitivity (see our discussion of the term *neidongzi* (18) and *waidongzi* (19). In their view the subject is the initiator of the action and the object its goal. In other words, the action “begins” at the subject and “halts” at the object, hence the names *qici* and *zhici*.

Sici (42) “regimen”

The *sici*, literally meaning “governing phrase,” is the object of a preposition (*jiezi* (27)). As we pointed out before, the *jingzi* are a subcategory of the verbs rather than constituting a separate part of speech. However, as the *jiezi* are not regarded as verbs in the MSWT, their objects cannot be referred to with the term *zhici*; hence, a special term had to be coined to refer to this kind of constituents.

The name probably is a translation of the Latin term *regimen* as used by Prémare.

Yuci (39) “verbal predicate”

All sentence constituents other than the subject form the *yuci*, which is a translation of the Western term “predicate.”

Biaoci (41) “nominal predicate”

The *biaoci*, literally meaning “expressive phrase,” is a predicate whose main constituent is a noun or an adjective. The distinction between nominal and verbal predicates is based on Western grammar, but it is not certain whether such a distinction is valid for Chinese as well. As we pointed out in Sect. 1.2, one of the main problems of *wenyan* grammar is the question whether parts of speech are lexically fixed or can only be determined in a context. Generally, *wenyan* content words can

perform any grammatical function without formal changes. If one would want to attach a “basic” part of speech to every content word, it would be a matter of counting; e.g., some words are more frequently used as nouns (i.e., in grammatical functions as subject and object), while other words mostly function as verbs.¹⁶

Although the authors state that they do not recognize fixed parts of speech, they still consider *jingzi* (23) and *mingzi* (3) used as the main constituent of the predicate as *jingzi* and *mingzi*, not as *dongzi* (17). For this reason the Western distinction between verbal and nominal predicates is adopted for Chinese as well. If the authors would have been consistent in rejecting fixed parts of speech, the distinction between *yuci* (39) and *biaoci* (41) would have been superfluous. Actually, sentences with a *mingzi* as the predicate are negated by a special negation (*fei* 非 “is not”), which might be brought forward as the proof for the existence of nominal predicates in Chinese. However, this does not hold for *jingzi*, and the authors do not mention the word *fei*, at least not in this respect.

To justify their distinction between *yuci* and *biaoci*, the Ma brothers distinguish a group of words which can be used to link the subject with the nominal predicate (e.g., *wei* 為); they call them *duanci* 斷詞 “judgemental words.” This is rather peculiar, as it is only used at one place in the book, and is not referred to as a subcategory of some part of speech, let alone a part of speech of its own. This group of words is rather hybrid in nature; it consists of verbs (e.g., *wei* 為 “to be”), demonstrative pron. (e.g., *shi* 是 “that”), etc. Perhaps this group is modeled after the Western copulas, but this conjecture would get us in conflict with the *tongdongzi* (20), which we also interpreted as copular verbs. Probably the term *duanci* was coined in a casual way, as an ad hoc designation for a group of words in a certain pattern performing the same function.

Jiaci (43) “modifier”

The term *jiaci* is given two different definitions at two different instances in the MSWT, and apparently the authors were not aware of this.

Firstly, it is listed under the grammatical functions as the designation of a preposition and its regimen (*sici* (42)) used to modify a subject-predicate construction. Later (see Sect. 2.3.5) the same term *jiaci* is used to refer to the apposition. Moreover, at the same place *jiayu* 加語 is also used with the same meaning.

As the first meaning of *jiaci* is defined at the beginning of the work in the section of the definitions, we may conclude that this is the original meaning the authors had in mind. The other interpretation of *jiaci* probably is equally ad hoc as the coinage of the term *duanci*.

*Zhuan*ci (44) “indirect object”

This term literally means “turning phrase.” It is not listed under the definitions at the beginning of the MSWT. It is first mentioned in the chapter on transitive verbs as the “goal which is indirectly reached by a verb.” This definition, which is related

¹⁶Dobson (1959: 14).

with the authors' definition of subject and object, leads us to translate it as "indirect object." However, the scope of this term is much broader than just the indirect object.

The term *zhuan*ci of the MSWT can best be compared with Dobson's "second postverbal element." According to Dobson's analysis of the verbal sentence, the verbal element (β 1) can take two postverbal elements (γ 1 and γ 2): the first one expresses the direct object, usually unmarked, and the second one another object affected by the verb; the latter can be marked.¹⁷ The second postverbal element expresses such notions as indirect object, direction, destination, etc. The notion of *zhuan*ci in the MSWT coincides with Dobson's second postverbal element, with the exception of the instrument, which is treated as a separate sentence constituent by Dobson.¹⁸

2.2.3 The Sentence Positions

The category of *ci* (45) "position" is one of the most typical features of the grammatical system of the MSWT. *Ci* is defined as the position of nouns and pronouns in a sentence or clause. The authors distinguish six positions:

Zhuci (46) "subject position"

Words whose grammatical function is subject or nominal predicate, or which denote the person addressed, occupy the *zhuci*, literally "host position."

Binci (47) "object position"

Words whose grammatical function is the object of a transitive verb or the regimen of a preposition occupy the *binci*, literally "guest position."

Pianci (48) "modifier position"

Words which are placed in front of a noun to modify it occupy the *pianci*, literally "determinative position."

Zhengci (49) "head position"

Nouns which are modified by a preceding word occupy the *zhengci*, literally "principal position."

Qianci (50) "antecedent pos.," *tongci* (51) "appositive pos."

When two or more nouns or pronouns referring to the same thing are placed together, the first one occupies the antecedent position and the second one the appositive position. This includes the subject-nominal predicate construction, in which the subject occupies the antecedent pos. and the nominal predicate the appositional position.

¹⁷Dobson (1959: 62–76). N.B., verbal element is not verb. Dobson does not distinguish parts of speech.

¹⁸Dobson (1959: 87–90).

There neither exists a category of “position” in European grammar nor in traditional Chinese philology.¹⁹ Looking at the definitions of each position, especially those of the first two, it is clear that *ci* is meant to be the counterpart of the category of case in European grammar. For example, the *zhuci* (46) is defined as the position of the subject, the nominal predicate, and the person addressed. In Latin both functions are marked by the nominative case, and although there exists a separate vocative case for nouns and adjectives of the first declination, the vocative of most words is identical in form with the nominative. In modern German, e.g., the person addressed is marked by the nominative case.

In the same way it is evident that *binci* (47) is the counterpart of the accusative case in Latin grammar, as the *binci* is the position of the object and the regimen of a preposition, which can be considered as a kind of object.

However, the scope of *binci* is much broader than just “accusative case.” Every noun (or pronoun) which is closely linked to the verb, but which is not the subject, is said to occupy the *binci*. This will often be the object, but can also be an expression of place, time, price, distance, etc.; even nouns which are placed directly in front of the verb are included. In this respect it is interesting to look at the literal meaning of the terms *zhuci* and *binci*, which is “host position” and “guest position,” respectively. In this view, the subject is thought of as the main participant in the action denoted by the verb; important participants other than the subject are considered as secondary. This view is based on the Western idea that the subject-predicate construction constitutes the core of a sentence. We will list some examples to illustrate the notion of *binci*:

晉侯在外十九年

Jin Hou zai wai shi jiu nian (Zuozhuan Xi 28)

“The Marquis of Jin was abroad for 19 years.”

Shi jiu nian “19 years” is said to be the *binci*.

長三尺餘

Chang san chi yu (Hanshu, biography of Dongfang Shuo)

“He was over three feet tall.”

San chi yu “over three feet” is said to be the *binci*.

家居

Jia ju (Shiji, biography of Qu Yuan & Jia Sheng)

“To live at home”

Jia “/at/home” is said to be the *binci*.

The authors themselves point out that *ci* is the counterpart of the notion of case in Western grammar, though not explicitly, and not at the place where they treat “position.” One has to look at the chapter on prepositions to find an explanation of why a category of “position” was set up.²⁰

¹⁹ Graham (1978: 315).

²⁰ Zhang Xichen (1964: 313).

There the authors point out that (pro)nouns can perform many functions in relation with the action denoted by the verb. Those in front of the verb occupy the *zhuci* and those after the verb the *binci*. However, they continue, more types of relations are possible. To express these relations, a language like Old Greek and Latin has four additional cases, constituting a total of six. Evidently, what they had in mind were the six cases of Latin (Greek only had five!). They conclude their discussion by stating that as Chinese lacks morphology, the prepositions are used to mark the relations between the (pro)nouns and the verb.

Although the notion of *ci* in the MSWT is modeled after the notion of case in Western grammar, they are not quite the same. Prémare's *casus* completely coincide with the six cases of Latin, but of the six *ci* in the MSWT, only three can be paired with a Western case.

Zhuci and *binci* have already been discussed. Based on the above analysis, we may conclude that *zhuci* coincides with the nominative and *binci* with the *casus obliqui*²¹ except the genitive, which is expressed by the term *pianci* (48).

Like *zhuci/binci*, *pianci/zhengci* (49) and *qianci* (50)/*tongci* (51) constitute mutually supplementing pairs. The pair *pianci/zhengci* corresponds with the Western pair of terms modifier/head, except that *pianci* is restricted to (pro)nouns. *Qianci/tongci* corresponds with the Western terms antecedent and apposition, albeit that *tongci* includes the nominal predicate.

Zhengci, *qianci*, and *tongci* do not really mark a particular grammatical function. The *zhengci* and the *qianci* can have any function; the *tongci* always agrees in function with its *qianci*. The pair *qianci/zhengci* resembles the pair “modifier/head” of Western grammar.

2.2.4 Syntax

Syntax is the aspect of grammar most neglected in the MSWT. The work is almost exclusively devoted to the categorical system, with a strong emphasis on the parts of speech; even grammatical functions and “positions” are treated under the nouns, as function and position apply to nouns (and pronouns). Generally, syntactic constructions are discussed under the main parts of speech involved in these constructions, as was not uncommon in Western grammars either.

A syntactic topic typical for adjectives is comparison. As can be expected, comparison is treated in the chapter on *jingzi* (23) “adjectives.”

The authors adopt the three Western degrees of comparison:

Pingbi 平比 “positive”

Markers: *ru* 如, *ruo* 若, *you* 犹, etc. (all meaning “as, like”)

²¹ This does not imply that *binci* was meant to be the translation of *casus obliqui*.

Chabi 差比 “comparative”

The authors distinguish two different patterns. The first one is the pattern:
X ADJ *yu* 於 Y “X is ADJ-er than Y”

For example:

季氏富於周公

Ji shi fu yu Zhou gong (Lunyu 11/17)

“/The head of the/ Ji clan was richer than the Duke of Zhou.”

The second pattern is formed with *wu* 無 “nothing” or *mo* 莫 “no one,” which are regarded as pronouns by the authors, e.g.:

莫宜寡人

Mo yi gua ren (Shiji, annals of Emperor Wen)

“No one is more suitable than me.”

Jibi 極比 “superlative”

Markers: *zui* 最, *ji* 極, *zhi* 至, etc. (all meaning “most, extremely”).²²

Under the verbs two syntactic patterns are discussed, viz., passive sentences and sentences with more than one verb.

When the object of a transitive verb is transferred to the subject position, the verb is called a *shoudongzi* 受動字 “passive verb,” literally “receptive verb,” in the MSWT.²³ The authors distinguish six different passive constructions (S and O refer to the logical subject and object, respectively):

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------|---|---------------|---|------------------|
| 1. | O | <i>Wei</i> 為 | S | <i>Suo</i> 所 | V | |
| 2. | O | <i>Wei</i> 為 | S | | V | |
| 3. | O | | | | V | <i>Yu</i> 於S |
| 4. | O | | | <i>Bei</i> 被 | V | (<i>Yu</i> 於 S) |
| | | | | <i>Shou</i> 受 | | |
| | | | | <i>Jian</i> 見 | | |
| 5. | O | | | <i>Ke</i> 可 | V | |
| | | | | <i>Zu</i> 足 | | |
| 6. | O | | | | V | |

The number of different ways of constructing “passive” sentences indicates that it is not at all certain that Chinese actually has an equivalent of our passive sentence. This is related to the fact that the primary Chinese sentence structure is not subject-predicate, but topic-comment; i.e., the first constituent of the sentence states the thing talked about, while the rest expresses what is said about the topic. Therefore, when a Chinese sentence consists of a noun and a verb, the noun is the topic and the

²² Zhang Xichen (1964: 170–188).

²³ Op.cit., pp. 205–212.

verb the comment. Logically, the noun can be the subject or the object; Chinese is neutral in this respect. For example:

諫行言聽

Jian xing yan ting (Mencius 4B/3)

“The admonitions have been followed and the advice has been listened to.”

This sentence consists of two topic-comment constructions, whose topics are the logical object. Later, in our discussion on the chapter about sentence structure in the MSWT, we will discuss this subject in greater detail.

The second syntactic topic discussed under “verb is sentences with more than one verb.” When two or more verbs are present in one sentence, according to the terminology of the MSWT, the first one expresses the action of the subject and is called *zuodongzi* 坐動字, literally “fixed verb.” The other verbs express actions linked with the *zuodongzi*; they are called *sandongzi* 散動字, literally “movable verbs.”²⁴ *Zuodongzi* is the translation of “main/finite verb” in Western grammar; *sandongzi* comprise the Western infinitive and participles, e.g.:

宋人有閔其苗之不張而攬之者

Song ren you min qi miao zhi bu zhang er ya zhi zhe (Mencius 2A/2)

“A man from Song grieved over the fact that his corn did not grow and pulled at them.”

In this sentence *min* “to grieve” is the *zuodongzi* and *zhang* “to grow” is a *sandongzi*. In the English translation, we have to use the finite form did, but the Chinese literally says: “grieved over the not growing of his corn.”

Like so many aspects of the grammatical system of the MSWT, the distinction between *zuodongzi* and *sandongzi* is based on translation of Chinese into a Western language. As Chinese lacks morphology, no distinction between finite and nonfinite forms can be made. The same error is made by Prémare, who distinguishes a *modus infinitivus* and *participia*, based on the Latin translation of the Chinese examples (see Sect. 1.5.2).

The only part of the MSWT which exclusively deals with syntax is the very last chapter, entitled “On Sentences and Clauses” (*Lun ju dou* 論句讀).²⁵ Besides the word-character (*zi* (0)), three higher syntactic units are distinguished in the MSWT. In upward hierarchical order these are:

Dun 頓 “phrase”

Every group of words after which a pause is possible is called a *dun*.²⁶

²⁴Op. cit., p. 264; also see Pilz (1981).

²⁵Op.cit., pp. 490–558.

²⁶Op.cit., p. 513.

Dou 讀 “clause”

Every group of words containing a subject-predicate construction, but lacking a final intonation is called a *dou*.²⁷ When a nonfinite verb (*sandongzi*) has a subject of its own, together they constitute a *chengdou* 承讀 “subjugated clause.”²⁸ Subjugated clauses, e.g., are clauses functioning as the object:

今人乍見孺子將入於井

Jin ren zha jian ru zi jiang ru yu jing... (Mencius 2A/6)

“Nowadays if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well...”

In this sentence *ru zi jiang ru yu jing* is the objective clause of *jian* “to see.”

Ju 句 “sentence”

Every group of words containing a subject-predicate construction, and whose meaning is complete, is called a *ju*.²⁹

The terms *dou* and *ju* have already been discussed in Sect. 2.1.4.1; *dun* (like *dou*) means “to pause”; its difference with *dou* is that a *dou* contains an S-P construction, while a *dun* does not need to do so. These three terms will be discussed in greater detail below.

The core of the last chapter is constituted by seven syntactic rules. The authors list seven “major rules,” *tuan* 彖, which literally means “explanation.”³⁰ Four of these *tuan* are supplemented with several “minor rules,” *xi* 系, which literally means “appendix.”³⁰ These indicate the circumstances under which syntax deviates from the major rule. Actually, most of these rules can be found in preceding parts of the work, but in a very incoherent way. In this chapter the authors collect the basic rules of Chinese syntax and present them in a more systematic fashion.

In our following treatment we will first present the major and minor rules, followed by our commentary.

Tuan 1³¹

Every clause or sentence must have a subject.

- xi* 1: In sentences stating a general truth, no subject is needed.
- xi* 2: In orders and admonitions the subject can be left out.
- xi* 3: When a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, the subject of the main clause is transferred to the subordinate clause.
- xi* 4: In a series of clauses or sentences with the same subject, this subject is only mentioned once.
- xi* 5: Impersonal verbs do not require a subject.

²⁷ Op.cit., p. 521.

²⁸ Op.cit., p. 269.

²⁹ Op.cit., p. 539.

³⁰ This term is taken from the “Book of Changes” (*Yijing*).

³¹ Zhang Xichen (1964: 491–496).

- xi* 6: Sometimes the original subject is replaced by a common name (e.g., a place name denoting a person from that place).
- xi* 7: When a noun occurs in a series of clauses or sentences, occupying different positions (*ci* (45)), it is fronted and behaves like a subject.

The main rule, viz., that every clause or sentence must have a subject, is directly copied from Western grammar. The fact alone that seven “additional” rules are needed to tackle all exceptional cases indicates the inadequacy of this rule.

In Indo-European languages the S-P construction constitutes the core of a sentence, as, e.g., is expressed by the person/number concord between the subject and the main verb. The subject in an Indo-European language cannot easily be left out, even when it is known by the speaker/listener; in that case a pronoun is still used to refer to it.

In *wenyan* the subject behaves as a determinant of the predicate.³² Like all determinants, the subject is only used to avoid confusion on the part of the listener/reader. This view is substantiated by the fact that certain pronouns, which have a distinct determinative form, take this form when used as the subject³³ and that the structural particle *zhi* 之, which is used to link a modifier to its head, can also be used in a subordinate clause to link the subject and predicate. See, e.g., the example from Mencius cited earlier to illustrate the terms *zuodongzi* and *sandongzi*. In this sentence *miao zhi zhang* “the growing of the corn” is the object of *min* “to grieve”; therefore, *zhi* is inserted to mark the dependent state of the S-P construction.

It would be tempting to interpret this as a kind of nominalization of the S-P construction, but this is still based on the translation of the Chinese original into a Western language.

In the same passage of Mencius we find the following construction:

助苗長

Zhu miao zhang

“To help the corn grow.”

Here the S-P construction has not been “nominalized.” However, this use of *zhi* has not yet been studied exhaustively, and as it is not our aim to solve any grammatical problems in this study, we will not go further into this matter. We have only paid some more attention to this phenomenon, because it is a very basic aspect of Chinese grammar.

Instead of the S-P construction, Chinese uses the topic-comment (T-C) construction as the basic sentence pattern. As we already pointed out, in a T-C construction, the sentence is divided into two main segments, the first one referring to the topic talked about, which is regarded as known, and the second one expressing what one actually has to say about the topic, which is regarded as new information. Of course, the topic will frequently be identical with the logical subject, but not necessarily, as

³² Dobson (1959: 76–78).

³³ Op.cit., p. 77.

they are two distinct entities. Any sentence constituent can be fronted as the topic, and mixing up T-C and S-P constructions will lead (and has led) to serious misinterpretations of Chinese language structure.

With all this in mind, we can see more clearly the problem of the first major rule. The authors follow their foreign model in taking the S-P construction as the core of every sentence, which, as we have just pointed out, does not fit the actual structure of Chinese. Now it is no longer surprising that so many supplementary rules are needed and that the exceptions seem to outnumber the “normal” cases.

The first five supplementary rules deal with circumstances under which the subject is not used. Rule 5, the one about the impersonal verbs, is rather obvious, as not requiring a subject is the principal feature of impersonal verbs. The other rules would not have been necessary, if the authors would have had a correct understanding of the way agency, i.e., the logical subject, is expressed in the language they were describing.

The supplementary rules 6 and 7 deal with topicalization; 7 with topicalization in general and 6 with one specific case. These rules would also have been unnecessary, if the authors had been aware of the fact that the S-P construction of the Western languages is not applicable to Chinese.

*Tuan 2*³⁴

The subject always precedes the predicate.

- xi 1:* In exclamations the predicate precedes the subject.
- xi 2:* When *he* 何 “what” is the subject, it is preceded by the nominal predicate.
- xi 3:* In a series of clauses and sentences with the same main verb, it only appears once.
- xi 4:* In comparative clauses and sentences, the predicate of the compared part can be left out.
- xi 5:* The separating words (*duanci*, see p.20) between the subject and the nominal predicate can be left out.

The theme of *tuan 2* is the predicate, its position relative to the subject, and the circumstances under which it can be deleted.

The situation described in *xi 1* has its equivalent in English in sentences like: “Long live the Queen!” A Chinese example is as follows:

大哉堯之為君也

Da zai, Yao zhi wei jun ye (Lunyu 8/19)

“Great indeed was Yao as a sovereign!”

Xi 2 introduces a specific feature of *wenyan* grammar. The interrogative pronoun *he* “what” is often placed at the end of a sentence:

³⁴ Zhang Xichen (1964: 499–503).

鄰國之民不加少。。。何也

Lin guo zhi min bu jia shao... he ye (Mencius IA/3)

“The population of the neighboring states does not decrease... Why is this?”

In the MSWT *he* in this sentence is called the subject, but in reality it is the comment, the preceding clause being its topic. When analyzed in this way, *xi* 2 is superfluous, as the word order (topic-comment) is normal.

This is related to the problem we discussed in connection with *tuan* 1. If one would rephrase the main rule of *tuan* 2 as “the topic always precedes the comment,” *xi* 2 would not have been necessary.

xi 3 concerns the general Chinese tendency towards economy, everything which can be derived from the context is usually left out. In *tuan* 1, we have already seen this tendency applied to the subject. Here we can see it applied to the predicate, i.e., the verbal element of the predicate:

大都不過三國之一中五之一小九之一

Da du bu guo san guo zhi yi zhong wu zhi yi xiao jiu zhi yi (Zuozhuan Yin 1)

“Big cities should not exceed one third of the capital of the State, medium cities one fifth, and small cities one ninth.”

The constructions referred to in *xi* 4 have their equivalent in English in utterances like: “I can’t lift this, not to mention you.” All examples cited in the MSWT contain the word *hekuang* 何況 “not to mention.”

As explained earlier, the words called *duanci* in the MSWT seem to have the same function as the verb “to be” in English, but the use of these words is optional in Chinese, so it would be improper to regard them as “copular verbs.” *Xi* 5 simply states the optional character of these words.

Tuan 3³⁵

The object is placed after the transitive verb.

- xi* 1: For the sake of emphasis, the object can be fronted; in that case it is repeated by a pronoun.
- xi* 2: When the object is pronominal and the verb is negated, the object precedes the verb.
- xi* 3: When an interrogative pronoun is the object or the regimen of a preposition, it precedes the verb/preposition.
- xi* 4: When the object is fronted and the verb is modified by a word expressing negation or doubt, *zhi* 之 is often placed after the object; to express emphasis, *shi* 是 can be used instead of *zhi*.

Tuan 3 deals with the position of the object. Here, “object” both refers to *zhici* (40) and *sici* (42), which is another proof that the *sici* “regimen” in reality is a kind of object.

³⁵Op.cit., pp. 503–509.

The situations described in *xi*'s 1 and 6 are instances of topicalization. The former describes sentences in which the object is placed in topic position, with the object position still filled by a pronoun; the latter describes sentences with a double topic, i.e., both the logical subject and the logical object are in topic position, with *zhi* or *shi* after the second topic. For example:

君亡之不恤群臣是憂

Jun wang zhi bu xu er qun chen shi you (Zuozhuan Xi 15)

“Our prince does not grieve for his own exile, but his sorrow is all for his subjects.”

The structure of this sentence is rather complex. It consists of a T-C construction (*jun* “prince”=topic), the comment of which in its turn consists of two other T-C constructions (with *wang* “exile” and *qun chen* “all subjects” as the topics). The literal translation of the first part of this sentence is “our prince, his exile, this he does not grieve for...”

Xi 2 and 3 introduce a typical feature of *wenyan* grammar. Unstressed pronouns in a negative sentence and unstressed interrogative pronouns are placed in front of the verb:

余恐亂命以不女違

Yu kong luan ming yi bu ru wei (Zuozhuan Xiang 10)

“I was afraid of confusing your plans, therefore I did not oppose you.”

子將奚先

Zi jiang xi xian (Lunyu 13/3)

“What would you consider the first thing to be done?”

Tuan 4³⁶

The position of the indirect object (*zhuan*ci (44)) is not fixed; it depends on the verb or the preposition.

xi 1: Indirect object denoting place can be used with or without a preposition.

xi 2: Indirect object denoting time are used without a preposition.

xi 3: Indirect object denoting reason have to be used with a preposition; those denoting price, measure, number, and distance do not require one.

Since the “major rule” is not really a rule, but a statement in which no definite rule exists, the “minor rules” do not state the circumstances under which the main rule is not applicable. On the contrary, they constitute the real rules concerning the position of the *zhuan*ci (also see p. 75).

The *tuans* 5, 6, and 7 lack supplementary rules.

Tuan 5³⁷

³⁶ Op.cit., pp. 510–512.

³⁷ Op.cit., pp. 513–519.

Every group of words, after which a pause is possible, is called a *dun* “phrase.” This term has already been discussed in this section.

Tuan 6³⁸

Every group of words which contains an S-P construction, the meaning of which is not complete, is called a *dou* 讀 “clause.”

A clause can occur in three patterns:

1. Formed with a relative pron. (*jiedou* 之. (10):

天下諸侯宜為君者唯魯侯爾

Tian xia zhuhou yi wei jun zhe wei lu hou er. (Gongyang Zhuang 12)

“Of all feudal lords in the world, only the Marquis of Lu was fit to be a prince.”

2. With *zhi* 之 between subject and predicate:

北宮黝之養勇也不膚撓

Beigong you zhi yang yong ye bu fu nao (Mencius 2A/2)

“Beigong You had this way of nourishing his valor: he did not flinch from any strokes on his body.”

3. Introduced by a conjunction:

寡人若朝於薛不敢與諸任齒

Guaren ruo chao yu Xue bu gan yu zhu Ren chi (Zuozhuan Yin II)

“If I were at the court of Xue, I would not dare to take rank with the Ren.”

The theme of this *tuan* is the *dou*, the most suitable translation of which is “clause.” However, as we mentioned before, the term *dou* as used in the MSWT only refers to subordinate clauses. Hence, the examples cited mostly comprise attributive clauses and subordinate clauses introduced by conjunctions. We will go further into this matter in our discussion of *tuan* 7, which concerns the term *ju*.

The use of the structural particle *zhi* as mentioned in the second example has already been discussed in relation with *tuan* 1.

Tuan 7³⁹

Every group of words containing an S-P construction, the meaning of which is complete, is called a *ju* 句 “sentence.”

Structurally, there are two kinds of sentences:

1. Independent sentences
2. Combinations of a main clause (*ju*) and one or more subordinate clauses (*dou*)

Sentences can be combined according to four patterns:

- (1) A combination of parallel sentences

³⁸Op.cit., pp. 521–526.

³⁹Op.cit., pp. 539–550.

- (2) Sentences with a different depth of meaning (i.e., with conjunctions meaning “not only... but...”)
- (3) Sentences whose meanings are independent (with hypothetical and causal conjunction)
- (4) Sentences with opposite meanings (with adversative conjunction)

The authors finish this chapter suggesting that one might distinguish the causal sentences as a separate pattern, as they share traits of (3) and (4).

The topic of this *tuan* is the term *ju*, which is usually translated as “sentence.” However, in the MSWT *ju* is used with two slightly different shades of meaning. Sometimes it refers to the whole sentence. In that case the translation of “sentence” is correct. Sometimes it is used in combination with *dou*, *ju* referring to the main clause and *dou* to the subordinate clause (s). This is the case in patterns (2) and (4). The first pattern refers to a common habit of Chinese writers to use parallel constructions, i.e., constructions with the same syntactic pattern; e.g.:

君子喻於義小人喻於利

Junzi yu yu yi xiao ren yu yu li. (Lunyu 4/16)

“The mind of the gentleman is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain.”

The other patterns do not require further explanation.

The division of sentence types agrees with that of Western grammar. The first division agrees with our division of sentences into “simple” and “compound” sentences. The various patterns correspond with the Western division into hypothetical, adversative, etc. sentences. The authors have correctly added the typical Chinese type of parallel sentences to this set.

The relation between this division and the Western division into coordinating and subordinating constructions is not clear. Whenever (what we would call) coordinating conjunctions are used, the authors speak of two or more *ju*; in the other cases, they speak of a combination of a *ju* (main clause) and one or more *dou* (subordinate clause (s)). However, no equivalent terms for our “subordination” and “coordination” can be found in the MSWT.

2.2.5 Examples of Analysis

At the end of the chapter on verbs, the authors present the complete analysis of a number of sentences under the heading: “verbs in succession” (*dongzi xiang cheng* 動字相承). Strictly speaking, these analyses are meant to be an illustration of the terms *zuodongzi* “finite verb” and *sandongzi* “nonfinite verb” (see Sect. 2.2.4), but in fact they constitute a perfect example of the way a larger piece of text is analyzed

according to the grammatical system of the MSWT. Below we will present the analysis of the first five sentences of Lunyu 16/1, followed by our comments.⁴⁰

1. 季氏將伐於顓臾

Ji shi jiang fa Zhuanyu

“/The head of/ the Ji clan was going to attack Zhuanyu”

Ji shi Subject

Jiang Adverb

Fa *Zuodongzi*; expressing the action of the subject

Zhuanyu Object of *fa*

2. 冉有季路見於孔子曰季氏將有事於顓臾

Ran You Ji Lu jian yu Kongzi yue Ji shi jiang you shi yu Zhuanyu

“Ran You and Ji Lu went to see Confucius and said: ‘Ji is going to commence operations against Zhuanyu.’”

Ranyou Jilu Subject

Jian *Zuodongzi*

Yu Kongzi Ind. object;/the words/ up to this place constitute a clause (*dou*), expressing the time of their speaking

Yue *Zuodongzi*; its subject is that of the previous clause.⁴¹ The object of *yue* is the following phrase; therefore one can pause here a little

Ji shi Subject; as previous sentence

Jiang you *Zuodongzi*

Shi Object

Yu Zhuanyu Indirect object; expressing the location. /The words/ up to here constitute the object of *yue*

3. 孔子曰求無乃爾是過與

Kongzi yue Qiu wu nai er shi guo yu

“Confucius said: ‘Qiu, is it not you who are in fault here?’”

Kongzi Subject

Yue *Zuodongzi*; as the previous *yue*

Qiu Subject position; calls his name

Wu nai Adverb; to express doubt, linked with the particle *yu* for the sake of emphasis

Er Subject

Shi Determinative word (*jueci* 決辭); to replace the main verb of the sentence

Guo Nominal predicate

Yu Particle; up to this place a sentence is formed

⁴⁰ Op.cit., pp. 264–265.

⁴¹ We have left out a nongrammatical remark, viz., that Ji Lu is not the same person as Zi Lu.

4. 夫顓與昔者先王以為東蒙主且在邦域之中矣是社稷之臣也

Fu Zhuanyu xi zhe xian wang yi wei Dongmeng zhu qie zai bang yu zhong yi shi Sheji zhi chen ye

“As regards Zhuanyu in the past, a former king appointed /its ruler/ to preside over /the sacrifices to/ the Eastern Meng; moreover, it is in the midst of our territory; /its ruler/ is a minister of our State.”

<i>Fu</i>	Specific demonstrative pronoun
<i>Zhuanyu</i>	Subject pos.; mentioned at the beginning of the sentence; to explicitly mention its name raises the tension of the text
<i>Xi zhe</i>	Adverb; expressing time
<i>Xian wang</i>	Subject
<i>Yi</i>	“To use”; verb; h.l. <i>zuodongzi</i>
<i>Wei</i>	“To make”; also a verb; a <i>sandongzi</i> linked with the word <i>yi</i> above, as if saying: “in the past, the late king used Zhuanyu to preside over /the sacrifices to/ the Eastern Meng”; hence, <i>wei</i> implies the word Zhuanyu. It is left out here, because it has been raised at the beginning of the sentence
<i>Dongmeng</i>	Modifier position of the word <i>zhu</i>
<i>Zhu</i>	Object of <i>wei</i> ; it is also possible to regard <i>wei</i> as <i>shi</i> 是; <i>zhu</i> then becomes the nominal predicate, as if saying: “in the past, the late king installed him as the presider over /the sacrifices to/ the Eastern Meng.” /The words/ up to this place constitute a causal clause (<i>gu zhi dou</i> 故之讀), stating the reason for being a “minister of our State”
<i>Qie</i>	Conjunction; renders the meaning a step further, links /this clause/ to the previous clause. It means to say that /the ruler of/ Zhuanyu was a minister of the State not only because the late king invested him, so in addition <i>qie zai</i> is used.
<i>Zai</i>	<i>Zuodongzi</i> ; its subject is assumed to have been mentioned before
<i>Bang yu zhi</i>	<i>zhong</i> Indirect object; expressing place
<i>Yi</i>	Particle; to affirm that things are as they are. Up to this place another clause is formed, also telling the reason. Both clauses are secondary; the following main clause completes the meaning
<i>Sheji</i>	Modifier position
<i>Zhi</i>	Preposition
<i>Chen</i>	Nominal predicate
<i>Ye</i>	Particle; to affirm the reason, as if saying: “at that time the late king’s installing him was like that, and its location like this, so he naturally ought to be a minister of our State.” Up to this point the sentence is complete

5. 何以伐為

He yi fa wei

“What’s the use of attacking it?”

- He* Interrog. pron.; the regimen of *wei*, fronted because of inversion.
See the chapter on interrogative pronouns
- Yi* “To use”; verb, h.l. *zuodongzi*; the subject is the person addressed, perhaps hinting at /the head of/ the Ji clan, as if saying: “as he is a minister of your State, what is the use of you people attacking him?”
- Fa* *Sandongzi*; linked with 11 above
- Wei* Preposition; its regimen, *he*, is fronted. If we explain *wei* as *zai* 哉, then *yi* becomes a preposition, and *he yi fa wei* would mean something like: “because of what attack it?”

Most of this analysis can be readily understood after having read the above introduction of the grammatical system of the MSWT. Here, we will point out a few specific points to illustrate the method of analysis adopted by the authors.

In the first place the analysis has been made linearly, there does not seem to be any notion of hierarchical organization. Moreover, no distinction is made between what is called “parsing” and “analysis” in Western school grammar.⁴² The three levels of *zi* (0), *ci* (37), and *ci* (45) are used alternately.

However, some system can be found. Apparently, a sentence is first split up into constituents. Subsequently full words are labeled according to their grammatical function or position, and empty words according to their part of speech. Verbs are labeled as *zuodongzi* or *sandongzi*.

It seems as if the authors have taken Prémare’s rules of analysis at heart (see Sect. 1.5.2). They first locate the main verb (*zuodongzi*) and then its subject. This again is based on the view that the core of every sentence is an S-P construction.

Interesting is the difference in use of *qici* (38) and *zhuci* (46). The “normal” subject is always called *qici*, while the topic is called *zhuci*, as can be seen in the analysis of sentence (4), where Zhuanyu is labeled *zhuci*, while later, in the commentary on *shi* 是, it is referred to as a “fronted *qici*.”

The analysis is at some instances incomplete and inconsistent. For reasons unknown some words are not separately labeled, e.g., *yu* in the phrase *yu Kongzi* in sentence (2). The phrase as a whole is labeled indirect object (*zhuanzi* (46)), but neither *yu* nor *Kongzi* are treated separately. This probably is caused by the fact that the analysis is done in a linear way.

If *yu* and *Kongzi* would have been labeled separately, it would have been hard to label *yu Kongzi* as a whole as well.

An inexplicable inconsistency is that *jiang you* in sentence (2) as a whole is labeled *zuodongzi*. Surely, this is not what the authors had in mind; *jiang* simply is not labeled perhaps because it had already been labeled “adverb” in the previous sentence.

Interesting in this respect is the different treatment of *bang yu zhi zhong* “in the midst of the territory” and *Sheji zhi chen* “a minister of our State,” both in sentence (4). Although the syntactic structure of both is completely the same, they are treated

⁴² Our term “analysis,” as used in the present study, is not the same as the “analysis” of school grammar; our “analysis” comprises both parsing and analysis.

differently; the former as a whole is labeled indirect object, because *zhong* is regarded as a preposition; the latter is split up into three separately labeled parts: *Sheji* (modifier position), *zhi* (preposition), and *chen* (head position), i.e., a modifier-head construction. Again this erroneous distinction is based on translation of the Chinese into a Western language.

In some instances the meaning of words and phrases is provided in the commentary. For example, *yi* 以 can be a preposition or a verb; therefore, in sentence (4) it is specifically stated that *yi* means “to use,” not “by means of” or “because.” Another way of explaining the meaning is using the set phrase: *you yun* 猶云 “as if saying...” followed by a paraphrase of (part of) the sentence in question. We find three instances of this in the commentary of sentence (4) alone.

The end of every *dou* “clause” and *ju* “sentence” is marked.

Finally, one term is used which is not found in the rest of the work, viz., *jueci* (決辭; used in the commentary of sentence 3), which we have translated as “determinative word.” We mentioned this term before on p.72, where we discussed the resemblance between the division of the auxiliary words by Liu Zongyuan and their division in the MSWT. However, Liu’s *jueci* correspond to the *chuanxin* 心 (34) of the MSWT, while *shi* in sentence (3) is regarded as a demonstrative pronoun.

On the whole, this “textual analysis” is a mixture of a traditional Chinese commentary and Western grammar, which is another illustration of the hybrid nature of the MSWT as a link between traditional Chinese philology and modern grammar studies.

2.3 Evaluation of the MSWT

In judging this kind of works, two criteria have to be used, viz., the adequacy of the grammatical system and the intelligibility of the book for the intended users. We will begin with the latter.

The structure of the MSWT is one of its weakest points. The various remarks relevant to a certain topic are usually dispersed throughout the book. Often such remarks can be found at the least expected places. This, in combination with the lack of an index, renders the work quite inaccessible to the average user who merely wants to consult it to solve a concrete grammatical problem.

Due to this inaccessibility, the MSWT has not had much influence outside academic circles. It has been positively reviewed in some Western journals,⁴³ but the only reaction on the Chinese side has been the rapid appearance of several alternative grammar books during the following decades. These grammarians all praise the MSWT in their prefaces, but without exception also state that the work needs to be seriously revised and that their works constitute the results of such revision.

As regards the grammatical system, enough has been said about the fact that it is an imitation of European school grammar. More interesting would be to go deeper

⁴³ See note 5.

into the way the foreign model was adapted to Chinese grammar and whether this adaptation has been successful or not. After all, imitation itself is not objectionable, as long as the result is adequate and workable.

One aspect which is very interesting to look into is the source of the terminology. According to their etymology, the grammatical terms of the MSWT can be divided into three groups:

1. Literal translations of Western terms, with the same sense as the original term (e.g., *mingzi* (3), *lianzi* (28))
2. Terms taken from traditional Chinese philology, but given a new, Western, sense (e.g., *dongzi* (17), *jingzi* (23))
3. Traditional terms, more or less retaining their original meaning (e.g., *shizi* (1), *xuzi* (2))

Hybrid forms also exist, e.g., *tiqu lianzi* (29), which is composed of a traditional Chinese element (*tiqu*) and a Western one (*lianzi*). Besides *gelangma* 葛郎瑪 “grammar,” which is only used once in the entire work, no other transliterations are used in the MSWT.

The adoption of traditional terms is the point where the MSWT differs from most of the later Chinese grammar books. Although the later works also adopt some traditional terms (in imitation of the MSWT), it is not done to the same extent as in the MSWT. Above, in Sect. 2.2.5, the section on sentence analysis, we already pointed out that this textual analysis resembled a traditional Chinese commentary. Generally, one can regard the MSWT as the link between traditional Chinese philology and modern grammar studies. The best test for the adequacy of the grammatical system is to examine the way in which features are handled which are present in European languages, but not in Chinese, or the other way around, which are present in Chinese, but not in European languages.⁴⁴ The terminology related to the former should not be adopted in a grammar of Chinese, as it would be superfluous.

For the latter new term would have to be coined, as adequate terms are lacking in European grammar.

A good example of a feature of European grammar, which is lacking in Chinese, is the category of case. The notion of case has already been exhaustively treated in Sects. 1.5.2 and 2.2.3, where we pointed out how the definition of case has changed during the history of Western grammar studies and how the category of *ci* (45) in the MSWT was set up according to the “broad” definition of case in European grammar.

The category of case, whether in the narrow or in the broad definition, is superfluous for Chinese. That the authors of the MSWT, in spite of this, still incorporated it into their grammatical system indicates that they were not yet able to deviate too much from their foreign model.

Of course, the foundation of this was laid by the way the Ma brothers were taught Latin and French at Zikawei. Prémare already used the category of *casus* in his

⁴⁴With “European languages” we mean those European languages mastered by the authors.

grammar, and Zottoli followed him in this respect in his *Cursus Literaturae Sinicae*, so for the Ma brothers “case” was just an indispensable part of a grammar.

As an example of a feature that does not exist in European languages, we can take the final particles, called *zhuzi* (33), in the MSWT.

The final particles are an important group of words in Chinese. In *wenyan* they have two separate functions: the expression of modality and the indication of the end of a sentence. As traditionally Chinese writers did not use punctuation marks, the final particles often function as the indication of the end of a sentence or a group of sentences containing a complete argument. The latter function, of course, is derived from the former. Due to their importance and unique function, it is justified to treat this group of words as a separate category.

Western grammars of *wenyan* all include a category of “particles,” but in all those works, the scope of this category is much broader than just the final particles. Often one gets the impression that “particle” is used as a collective term for all words which are difficult to fit into the Western division of the parts of speech; almost in the same way as the Han commentator treated the category of *ci* (see Sect. 1.4.1).

The authors of the MSWT correctly distinguished the final particles as a separate part of speech. They also solved the problem of finding an adequate name for this category. As it is a typical Chinese category,⁴⁵ they have taken the traditional Chinese term, *zhuzi*, which originally had the same scope as *xuzi* (2), to name the final particles.

This way of handling the final particles indicates that the authors mastered grammatical theory to the extent that they were able to add a new category to the Western parts of speech, and more than that, their *zhuzi* fit much better in their general system of parts of speech than is the case with the “particles” in the Western grammars of *wenyan*.

In summary, although the MSWT in nature is a copy of European grammar, the authors have tried to adapt it to the Chinese language in such a way that it has become a new type of grammar (regardless of the question whether this adaptation has been successful or not), combining Chinese and Western scholarship. They provided later grammarians with a firm foundation to build further on. This justifies calling the MSWT an epoch-making work.

⁴⁵ Zhang Xichen (1964: 412).

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