

UDC 811.581-44

Jing Bailiang
South Ural State University
Chelyabinsk, Russian Federation
bailyanczzin@yandex.ru

THE STUDY OF WORD CLASSES IN THE HISTORY OF CHINESE LINGUISTIC TRADITION

Abstract

The concept of the parts of speech in Chinese linguistics is essentially different from understanding parts of speech in Indo-European language studies. Some Chinese and foreign linguists are trying to elaborate a classification for the parts of speech based on corresponding systems of other languages and thus disregarding the relevant properties of Chinese. This article reviews the history of identification of word classes in Chinese linguistic tradition that correlate with the parts of speech in modern Chinese, and presents an attempt to trace the development of the word classes theory in traditional Chinese grammar. Literature analysis on the issue shows that the preliminaries of the theory were formed by Chinese scientists employing philosophic approach that bore a certain amount of subjective attitude and were determined by semantic criterion. As a result, all words were divided into the ones that bear certain meaning and the ones that are deprived of it but are able to change the initial meaning, although word class affiliation was not determined at those times. Then, new notions of word classes were suggested; on their basis, new classifications emerged that took into account not only semantic criterion but functional one as well. The hieroglyph was chosen as the basic unit for classification purposes. The classifications were much more diversified including 9 groups of meaningful words and up to 30 functional ones. These excessive details have been recently eliminated.

Keywords: Chinese linguistics, word classes categorization, semantic criterion, functional criterion, hieroglyph, meaningful words, functional words.

doi: 10.22250/24107190_2019_5_3_228_235