Chinese vocabulary and elements of culture reflected in the lexical meaning as a challenge in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language

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This paper describes the elements of Chinese culture enclosed in vocabulary and in the meaning of words; it is divided into four parts. Firstly, it is pointed out that, due to the fact that words are written down with Chinese characters, teachers of Chinese should purposefully help the students understand the rich culture contained in Chinese words, especially disyllabic compounds. Secondly, the article presents the investigation methods concerning compound words applied by the researchers of Chinese lexicon；It also assesses their applicability with regard to teaching a second language. Thirdly, the paper discusses five ways of incorporating Chinese culture during the process of formation of compound words, and points out their relationship with second language teaching. Finally, the paper discusses the methods applied in teaching Chinese vocabulary, and puts forward two methods of teaching vocabulary and their strategies at different levels.

Keywords: disyllabic compound words; ways of absorbing cultural implications; teaching Chinese as a second language

1. Introduction

Karl Wilhelm Humboldt (1767-1835) argued that language "must be looked upon as being an immediate given in mankind" (Humboldt 1963: 239; cf. Yao 1995). Humboldt understood language as a natural function of a human mind, which is inextricably linked to the very core of our "humanness". This study argues that the humanistic character of language conceivably most prominently manifests itself in that local languages are always permeated with specific elements of their respective source cultures. The Chinese language is no exception.

Vocabulary contains both the semantic content and the cultural content of a language (Su Baorong 2000). Because the Chinese words are noted down in Chinese characters, their capacity is even richer. Three aspects are enclosed in Chinese characters: form, sound and meaning (Zhu Zhiping 2005). The aim of creating characters is to note down the current words (Wang Ning 2015). E.g., the character *rén* 人 (亻) ('man; human being; person') has the form of a person standing sideways, *mǔ* 母 ᛜ ('mother') looks like a nursing woman, the addition of two dots (*diǎn* 点) to the *nǚ* 女 ᛜ ('woman') character has been used to emphasize breasts. This is clearly visible in the small seal script of the Qin Dynasty (cf. *Shuōwén Jiězì* 《说文解字》 (*Explaining Graphs and Analysing Characters*), the first Chinese etymological dictionary compiled by Xu Shen 许慎, a Han Dynasty scholar). A few thousand years have already passed since the emergence of Chinese characters, but a considerable number of characters still carry in their form the same meaning as they did several thousand years ago, when the characters were shaped. For example, the character *xiū* 休 ('to rest') meant 'a man resting leaning against a tree'; *mén* 门（門）denotes 'the two door leaves in a room or house', etc. Yet, following the change of times and development of society, the meaning concealed in the shape of the characters also did constantly evolve, get enriched and it absorbed elements of Chinese culture of different eras. In order to excavate and reveal these changes, it is necessary to analyse the meaning recorded in the shape of characters (Wang Ning 2002). For example, in the two sentences: "*Dāngchū, tā hái shì gè xiǎo gūniang* 当初，她还是个小姑娘" ('At that time she was still but a girl') and "*Qǐchū, wǒmen hù bù xiāngshí* 起初，我们互不相识" ('At first, we were not acquainted with each other') the character *chū*初, which appears in the words *dāngchū* 当初 ('in the beginning; at that time') and *qǐchū* 起初 ('in the beginning; at first'), originally meant 'to begin tailoring clothes'. *Shuōwén Jiězì, radical dāo* 《说文解字.刀部》 explains the word as: "*cái yī zhī shǐ* 裁衣之始" ('the beginning of tailoring'). However, as *chū* "初" has been used to denote the beginning of every activity or event, the action of 'tailoring' does no longer exist in words such as *dāngchū* 当初 or *yuèchū* 月初 ('beginning of a month'). Native speakers of Chinese will not wonder whether or not the character *chū* 初 contains the meaning of 'tailoring', but learners of a second language might ask: why does the character *chū* 初in words such as *dāngchū* 当初 or *qǐchū* 起初 contain the radical *yī* 衣 ('clothes')?

It is by no means the intention of the author to encourage teachers of Chinese as a second language to excavate the original meaning of every Chinese character. If the evolution of characters were analysed in detail in class, it would undoubtedly scare away the students or cause great distress. Yet, there are such words, which need deep etymologic research, otherwise the students will find it difficult to grasp their meaning, or the teaching design would be incomplete, especially when it comes to teaching research. Such research would be of great help in both teaching and learning Chinese as a second language.

This paper intends to discuss the formation of Chinese vocabulary and the evolution of word meaning, to show from the point of view of cross-cultural language teaching how Chinese culture is contained in the vocabulary and meaning of words, focusing on disyllabic compound words.

2. Lexicalization and the formation of disyllabic compounds

Compound words do not exist only in Chinese, they are also present in other languages (Gao Mingkai & Shi Anshi 1963). E.g. "blackboard" is an English compound, "żywopłot" ('hedgerow') is a Polish compound word. However, due to the fact that Chinese words are written down in characters, Chinese compounds have their own specific features. Phonetically the Chinese language is monosyllabic (Feng Shengli 2000), although it does not lack words which consist of disyllabic morphemes (Ge Benyi 2004). For example liánmiáncí 连绵词[1], such as xiāosǎ 潇洒 ('natural and unrestrained'), húdié 蝴蝶 ('butterfly'). There are also polysyllabic single-morpheme words, e.g. qiǎokèlì 巧克力 ('chocolate'), Àolínpǐkè 奥林匹克 ('Olympics'), etc. But, because Chinese characters are used to write down the words, the above-mentioned examples are created by combining separate characters for each syllable. For second-language learners, although learning the characters is not easy, having grasped the corresponding idea behind these words, it will not be so difficult to understand them. Disyllabic derivatives are not difficult either, but it is necessary to distinguish prefixes and suffixes (Huang Borong & Liao Xudong 2002), e.g. lǎo 老 (a prefix denoting seniority or respect) as in lǎohǔ 老虎 ('tiger'), lǎoshǔ 老鼠 ('rat; mouse'), and zi 子 (a noun suffix) as in érzi 儿子 ('son'), sūnzi 孙子 ('grandson'). Nonetheless, many disyllabic words differ from the above-made examples. Their characteristic lies in the fact that both morphemes which the word is made of are roots. Moreover, the two characters which have been used to note down such a word can each carry traces of the social and historical development of Chinese (Zhu Zhiping 2005). These traces, to the learner of the language, reveal a culture specific to the Chinese language society.

According to Zhu Zhiping (2005), Disyllabic compounds can be researched from two angles: one is to discuss the structure of the word and the logical semantic relationship between the two morphemes from the synchronic perspective; the other is to examine how the word was formed in a diachronic process (Zhu Zhiping 2005: 12-15). The former has been the mainstream research method since the 1950s (Lu Jianming 1998; Zhu Zhiping 2005). Researchers compare the structure of the compounds according to syntactical rules. According to this, disyllabic compounds are usually categorized into five structural patterns (Huang Borong & Liao Xudong 2002): subject-predicate (e.g. dìzhèn 地震 – 'earthquake'), verb-object (e.g. liúshén 留神 – 'be careful'), verb-complement (e.g. pòhuài 破坏 – 'destroy'), subordinate (e.g. báicài 白菜 – 'Chinese cabbage'), co-ordinate (e.g. péngyou 朋友 – 'friend'). In teaching practice we have noticed that this classification is of no great help for second-language learners to grasp the disyllabic compounds. One of the reasons is that a large number of compounds cannot be evenly divided into these five categories. Among the compounds, the subordinate and the coordinate patterns are the most common (Zhu Zhiping 2005). According to the statistic research conducted by Zhu Zhiping (2005), in the *General Outline of the Chinese Vocabulary Levels and Graded Chinese Characters* (*Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Cíhuì yǔ Hànzi Děngjí Dàgāng*《汉语水平词汇与汉字等级大纲》) published in 2001, there were altogether

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[1] *Liánmiáncí* 连绵词 – disyllabic single-morpheme words usually containing alliteration or rhyme.

6077 disyllabic compounds among words at all the four levels (*jiǎ* 甲, *yǐ* 乙, *bǐng* 丙, *dīng* 丁) according to frequency of usage. Of the 3251 commonly used compounds, the subordinate and coordinate pattern was found in 46% and 44% respectively of the overall number (Zhu Zhiping 2005: 142). The classification into five patterns is not very useful. If the syntactical rules are used for the classification of compound words, students will confuse the explanation of the internal structure of compounds with the structure of phrases. It makes it difficult to tell the two phenomena apart. For example, *dòngjìng* 动静 ('sound; voice' – a single word) and *cōngmíng měilì* 聪明美丽 ('clever and pretty' – a phrase) are both coordinate, *dàmǐ* 大米 ('rice') and *yǒusè yǎnjìng* 有色眼镜 ('coloured glasses; blinkers'), are both subordinate, etc. (Zhu Zhiping 2005).

The analysis of the logical semantic relationship between the two morphemes can at times be of certain help. For example, synonymous coordination (*yǔ* 语 – 'language' + *yán* 言 – 'speech' = *yǔyán* 语言 – 'language'), antonymous coordination (*fǎn* 反 – 'reverse' + *zhèng* 正 – 'straight' = *fǎnzhèng* 反正 – 'restore things to order'); adverb-verb/ adjective subordination (*yóu* 油 – 'oily' + *huá* 滑 – 'slippery; slip' = *yóuhuá* 油滑 – 'slippery; slick'), attribute-noun subordination (*gōng* 公 – 'public; collective' + *shè* 社 – 'society' = *gōngshè* 公社 – 'commune'), etc. However, for second language learners this kind of help is still very limited, because the relationship between morphemes is not connected directly with the usage of the words. Compare the following two sentences:

(1) *Zhège rén hěn yóuhuá* 这个人很<u>油滑</u>。
    'This man is very slick'
(2) *Zhège rén xiàng yóu yīyàng huá* 这个人像油一样滑。
    'This man as is slippery as oil'

Will second language learners understand more easily sentence (1) or (2)? The answer is surely (2). Because *yóuhuá* 油滑 in example (1) is one word, only having understood the meaning of the word can the learner grasp the meaning of the sentence. Whereas "*xiàng yóu yīyàng huá* 像油一样滑" in example (2) has in the syntactic range already uncovered the original meaning of the morphemes hidden in the structure of the word. The learner will easily grasp the metaphor on the basis of the "*xiàng ... yīyàng* 像……一样" ('as… as…') construction, because this comparison puts both the original and metaphorical meaning, which are part of Chinese culture, into the syntactic level. Moreover, *yóuhuá* 油滑 and *dàizhuāng* 袋装 ('(packed) in bags'), although they both are built according to the adverb-verb/adjective subordination relationship, the former will be explained as "*xiàng yóu yīyàng huá* 像油一样滑" ('slippery as oil'), the latter should be explained as "*yòng dàizi bāozhuāng* 用袋子包装" ('packed in bags'). It can thus clearly be seen that having understood the logical semantic relationship between the two morphemes, the learner will still find it difficult to understand the exact meaning of compounds.

So, in the process of teaching Chinese as a second language, can one avoid compounds? It does not seem easy to do. According to Zhou Jian's (1999) statistics of *The*

Contemporary Chinese Dictionary (*Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn*《现代汉语词典》)², in the 1996 edition of the dictionary 67.6% entries were words built of two characters. This is not the only case, the results of Zhu Zhiping's (2005) evaluation of the *General Outline of the Chinese Vocabulary Levels and Graded Chinese Characters* also state clearly, that disyllabic words comprise over 67% of the total number of entries. Among these disyllabic words, the majority were compounds. It looks as if it is rather difficult to avoid compound words while learning Chinese. In fact, as the learners raise their level of knowledge of Chinese, when they enter the intermediate level, compound words become the main task of learning. Especially along with the advancement in the levels of reading and writing, the number of compounds will be growing quickly, because compounds are even more frequent in literally language in accordance with this paper.

According to rough statistics of this paper the numbers of compounds increase as the total number increases as follows (Guojia hanyu shuiping kaoshi weiyuanhui bangongshi kaoshi zhongxin, *General Outline of the Chinese Vocabulary Levels and Graded Chinese Characters*, 2001):
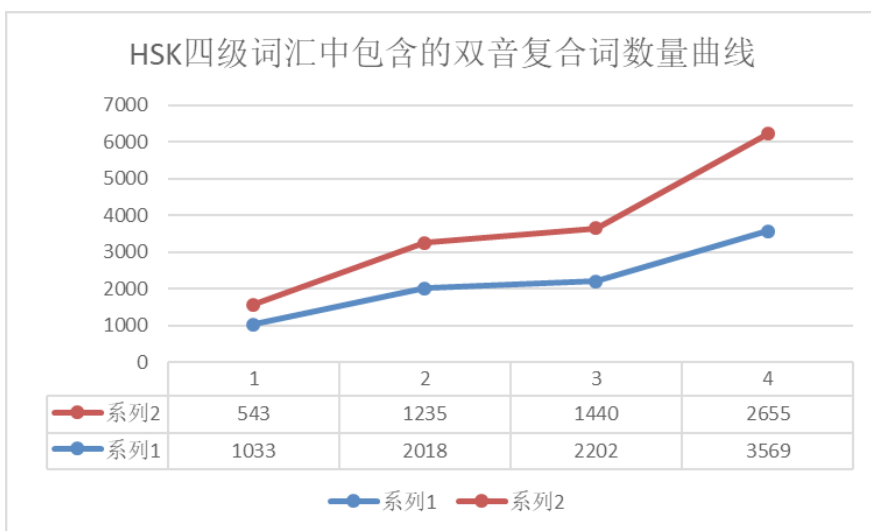

Diagram 1. Number of disyllabic compounds among the lexicon of HSK level 4

The other perspective in learning compound words is diachronic (Zhu Zhiping 2005). It is to discuss the process of formation of compounds in the course of historical changes. At the end of the 20th Century and at the beginning of the 21th Century, as the exegetics began to evolve towards lexical semantics, this perspective of research gradually

² *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (*Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn*《现代汉语词典》) is a normative dictionary compiled by the Dictionary Department of the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. It has been published since 1978 and has had seven editions so far.

began to draw the attention of researchers (Dong Xiufang 2002). The number of mono-syllabic words in Old Chinese was quite big, according to Che Shuya's analysis (2008), *Hán Fēizǐ*《韩非子》, a work from the Warring States period, contains 2182 monosyl-labic words and 2038 disyllabic. As far as this work is concerned, monosyllabic words constitute 51.7% of the two kinds of words, they are dominating. An investigation made by Zhou Jian (1999) shows that in the *Abridged dictionary of oracle bone inscriptions – a reader of oracle texts arranged according to categories* (*Jiǎgǔwén Jiǎnmíng Cídiǎn: Bǔcí Fēnlèi Dúběn*《甲骨文简明词典——卜辞分类读本》) written by Zhao Cheng (1988), monosyllabic words constitute 77.51% of the overall number of words. This stands in opposition to what was stated above, that in modern Chinese it is disyllabic words which are dominant. In Chinese academic circles it is usually believed that "Di-syllabic words are the basic form of Chinese words" (Dong 2002, P.4), though in Old Chinese monosyllabic words were the most common. In ancient documents words were often used in phrases, thus in Modern Chinese they have merged into disyllabic com-pounds (Wang Ning 1997). Prosody is the main reason why they have been used in pairs and eventually coagulated (Feng Shengli 2000).

Some people call this phenomenon, when former phrases develop into modern disyl-labic compounds, lexicalization ("*cíhuìhuà* 词汇化") (Dong Xiufang 2000). That is a Western linguistic term which belongs to the field of research of morphology. Scholars use the term of lexicalization to generally describe various lexical processes, among them the disyllabification of words in Chinese (Zhu Zhiping 2005). Yet, this study argues that the forming of Chinese disyllabic compounds is not equal to the processes of lexicaliza-tion in Western languages. The most evident characteristic is that compounds use the pattern "root + root" as the base, this is different from e.g. "butterfly" (stem + stem), or in Polish "długopis" ('pen') (root + affix + root). What is even more important, the pro-cess of lexicalization has incorporated many aspects of Chinese culture into the words, so the term "lexicalization" seems to be unable to include the whole sense (Wang Ning 1997: 4). For example, the word *guójiā* 国家 denotes "*jiējí tǒngzhì de gōngjù* 阶级统治的工具" ('the tool of class rule') or "*yīgè guójiā de zhěnggè qūyù* 一个国家的整个区域" ('complete territory of a country') (*Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn, Sixth Edition*, Zhongguo Shehui… 2012), as one word. Although the shape of the character for the morpheme *jiā* 家 which it includes is identical as the *jiā* 家 in *jiātíng* 家庭 ('family; household'), they do not mean the same thing. The cultural background behind the fact that *guójiā* 国家 merged into one disyllabic compound is that during the Spring and Autumn Period there was a distinction made between the territory governed by feudal princes and grand mas-ters, and the two morphemes *guó* 国 and *jiā* 家 were used respectively to denote these territories. This kind of cultural implication has been embedded in the coagulation of the morphemes *guó* 国 and *jiā* 家 into one compound word – *guójiā* 国家. That is why it seems necessary to discuss the Chinese culture contained in the compounds from the diachronic point of view.

3. Ways of absorbing cultural implications in Chinese disyllabic compound words

Large numbers of Chinese disyllabic compound words have been formed during the pre-Qin period. Until the late Warring States period they reached one-third of the total number of Chinese vocabulary (Wu Zongwen 2001). Naturally, the formation process brought the content of social life of the Qin and Han Dynasties into these words and this should be seen as the main way of absorbing cultural implications. The analysis and explanation of their cultural meaning can often be based on Xu Shen's *Shuōwén Jiĕzì*. For example, *jiéshù* 结束 in modern Chinese language mainly refers to 'end; finish; conclude; make an end of sth.' (*Xiàndài Hànyŭ Cídiăn, Sixth Edition*, Zhongguo Shehui… 2012), but in fact its primary meaning is more related to the second definition provided in this dictionary: 'attire; dress' (*zhuāngshù* 装束), 'to decorate; to dress up' (*dăban* 打扮), because separately both '*jié* 结' and '*shù* 束' come from words describing two stages of dressing of ancient Chinese people: the first one indicates 'binding the knots on the two plackets of clothes', the second one – 'to tie the clothes with a belt'. Together they express 'to finish dressing', and changed their meaning into 'attire; dress'. However, the phrase 'to finish dressing' gradually lost its primary meaning with the changes of form of Chinese clothing. The literal sense of the word '*jié* 结' is 'to tie (a knot)', *Shuōwén Jiĕzì, radical mì*《说文解字.系部》explains it as: 'closely joined; connection; knot'. In ancient China, a system of knotted strings was used to record events. The action of tying knots changed into the outcome of this act and got the meaning of 'result; conclusion; in the end; as a result'. At present among the three words: *jiéshù* 结束 ('to finish; to end'), *jiéguŏ* 结果 ('result; outcome'), *dìjié* 缔结 ('conclude (treaty, etc.)'), the first two belong to words of high frequency, and are in common use in teaching. *Jié* 结 ('to tie') can be used as a free morpheme and its meaning is still connected with the origin, its transparency is relatively high. *Guŏ* 果 ('fruit'), as in a sentence like *Shù shàng jiēle guŏ* 树上结了果 ('The tree is bearing fruit'), still exists as an everyday expression, it is also easy to understand. But *shù* 束 ('to bind, to tie') needs to be further explained from a cultural point of view.

There are many disyllabic compound words that absorbed some aspects of ancient Chinese social life into the word meaning and word formation (Zhu Zhiping 2005). Yet another example is the word *máobìng* 毛病, which has three meanings in the *Xiàndài Hànyŭ Cídiăn, Sixth Edition* (Zhongguo Shehui… 2012): 1. refers to 'damage or malfunction of the object, but also a mistake in the work'; 2. refers to 'weak point; shortcoming; bad habit'; 3. refers to 'disease; sickness'. And the reason why all these three meanings imply 'small damage', 'tiny mistake', 'small mistake' or 'little shortcoming' and 'not serious disease', is the definition of *máo* 毛. *Shuōwén Jiĕzì* describes *máo* 毛 as 'eyebrows', 'hair' and 'animal hair', with extended meaning 'thin as hair'. This extended meaning has a cultural feature, which was formed on the base of understanding the nature of things through life experience by the ancient Chinese. Another example is *qíng* 情 (basic meaning 'feeling; emotion', also 'situation; state; condition') as in the words *shìqing* 事情 ('affair; matter; question; business') or *qíngkuàng* 情况 ('situation;

condition; state of affairs'). These words belong to words commonly used. When students understand their concealed cultural meaning, it will be helpful in learning how to use them.

The establishing of compound words by literary works is the second way of absorbing cultural implication which we will pay attention to (Wang Shiyu 2018). The formation of these words often comes from literary works in Chinese history. Cultural implications contained in these words first appeared in some classical stories or quotes from the literature, and then settled in the language. For example the word *gōngqīn* 躬亲 ('attend to personally') in the phrase *shìbì gōngqīn* 事必躬亲 ('take care of every single thing personally') comes from *Shījīng. Xiǎoyǎ Jié nánshān* 《诗经.小雅.节南山》 (*Classic of Poetry, Lesser Court Hymns, Nanshan*): "*Fú gōng fú qīn, shùmín fú xìn* 弗躬弗亲，庶民弗信" ('If the monarch does not personally handle government affairs, then the people will not trust him'). The character *gōng* 躬 ('personally') was originally built of the elements 身 *shēn* and 吕 *lǔ*, and according to *Shuōwén Jiězì* means 'body', and often means 'in person' (*Shuōwén Jiězì, radical lǔ* 《说文解字.吕部》). *Qīn* 亲 in traditional writing is written as 親 and refers to 'parents', in wider sense also to 'self', 'oneself', 'one's own', in this poetry line it is synonymous with the word '*gōng* 躬'. A senior official of Zhou Dynasty said the sentence "*Fú gōng fú qīn, shùmín fú xìn* 弗躬弗亲，庶民弗信" to criticize the ruler named Yin. *Gōng* 躬 and *qīn* 亲 were combined into a compound word with meaning 'do sth. personally / by oneself' and the origin of the meaning becomes much clearer, when we trace it back to its cultural source.

Another example: what is the relationship between the character *dōng* 东 ('host') from words *dōngjia* 东家 ('master') or *fángdōng* 房东 ('landlord or landlady') and the noun of locality *dōng* 东 ('east')? In fact, there is a relationship between them. The character *dōng* 东 in the words *dōngjia* 东家 or *fángdōng* 房东 originates from *dōngdàozhǔ* 东道主, a phrase from the *Zuǒzhuàn. Xī gōng sānshí nián* 《左传.僖公三十年》 (*The Commentary of Zuo. Thirty years of Duke Xi*). In this story a man called Zhu Zhiwu advised Duke Mu of Qin not to help the state of Jin to attack the state of Zheng. In the original text: "*Ruò shě Zhèng yǐwéi dōngdàozhǔ, xínglì zhī wǎnglái, gòng qí fá kùn* 若舍郑以为东道主，行李之往来，共其乏困" ('If you give up the plans to destroy the State of Zheng and let it be the host/master of the eastern roads of the Qin Kingdom, when the emissaries of Qin would go back and forth, Zheng could provide what they lacked') the phrase *dōngdàozhǔ* 东道主 means '(make the state of Zheng) the host who receives those (soldiers and envoys of the Qin Kingdom) traveling by the eastern roads'. If the students trace the word back to this allusion, it would be easy for them to understand all the words like: *dōngdào* 东道 ('play the host; treat'), *fángdōng* 房东, *dōngjia* 东家, *zuòdōng* 做东 ('play the host'), etc. and use them in an appropriate way.

As there are plenty of compound words that originate in literature and were formed by classical works, let us give one more example. Chinese *jiǔwéi* 久违 ('I haven't seen you for ages') is an expression that can be used by old friends who have met each other after a long time, it is a polite formula. It can also be used in an extended meaning (to indicate, that sb. hasn't done sth. for a long time), in literature we can find expressions like '*jiǔwéile, jiāxiāng de wèidào* 久违了，家乡的味道' ('I haven't felt the taste of my homeland for a long time'). However, *wéi* 违 from the word *jiǔwéi* 久违 might be dif-

ficult to understand for non-native speakers, as there are words in modern Chinese like *wéibèi* 违背 ('to violate; to go against') or *wéizhāng* 违章 ('break rules and regulations'), in which the character *wéi* 违 has a derogatory sense, and that makes *jiǔwéi* 久违 not easy to understand and use. The expression "*jiǔwéi* 久违" appeared first in a poem by Liu Changqing (刘长卿), a poet who lived during the Tang Dynasty: *Dōng yóu jiǔ yǔ gùrén wéi, xī qù huāngliáng jiù lù wēi* 东游久与故人违，西去荒凉旧路微" ('Long journey to the East, I am separated from old friends; Roads to the West are desolated, and I have lost the old roads'). According to the original meaning of the poem, the sense of the word *wéi* 违 is quite clear – it means 'to part; to leave'.

There are many compound words that originate from classical stories or quotes from the literature, plenty of them are commonly used and often encountered by intermediate-level students, e.g. **cāngsāng** 沧桑 (*cānghǎi sāng tián* 沧海桑田) ('to have experienced many vicissitudes of life or fortune'), *rǎnzhǐ* 染指 ('reap undeserved profit from; encroach upon'), *qiēcuō* 切磋 ('learn from each other by exchanging views; compare notes'), *tàidǒu* 泰斗 (*Tài Shān Běi Dǒu* 泰山北斗) ('(respectful epithet for a person of distinction); leading scholar of the time'), *bāge* 八哥 ('crested myna') (Wang Shiyu 2018), etc.

The third way of absorbing cultural implication by the compound word is caused by the use of rhetorical figures in language, which brings elements of culture into the Chinese vocabulary formation process (Liu Weihong 2011; Long Zhaoyang 2013). There are two rhetorical figures closely related to compound words(Liu Weihong, 2011). One of them is the use of metaphor. For example, *gǔ* 骨 ('bone') and *ròu* 肉 ('meat, flesh') combined together originally refer to the situation when something or someone is 'inseparably related; closely intertwined'. Used as a metaphor, it indicates 'relatives of blood relationship', 'as close as flesh and bones', 'difficult to separate'. E.g. "*Zhè cháng zāinàn dàiláile duōshǎo rénjiā gǔròu fēnlí a.* 这场灾难带来了多少人家骨肉分离啊". ('This disaster brought about the separation of a large number of relatives'). *Gǔròu* 骨肉 directly refers to 'relatives who should not be separated', it is a disyllabic compound word used as a metaphor as a whole. We call it "bimorphemic metaphor". There are more words like that, e.g. *máodùn* 矛盾 (*máo* 矛 – 'speare' + *dùn* 盾 – 'shield' = *máodùn* 矛盾 – 'contradiction'; *fig.* 'speech or behaviour contradiction'); *gāngtiě* 钢铁 (*gāng* 钢 – 'steel' + *tiě* 铁 – 'iron' = *gāngtiě* 钢铁 – 'steel'; *fig.* 'strong and tough'); *hūxī* 呼吸 (*hū* 呼 – 'breathe out, exhale' + *xī* 吸 'breathe in, inhale' = *hūxī* 呼吸 – 'breathe'; *fig.* 'share hardships and dangers; go through trials and tribulations together'), etc. Some disyllabic compound words include only one of the two morphemes to express metaphor, for example in the word *bǐzhàn* 笔战 ('written polemics') only *zhàn* 战 (*lit.* 'war; battle') refers to 'arguing' as a metaphor of 'war', 'conflict'. This kind of compounds are called "monomorphemic metaphor". *Táohóng* 桃红 ('pink'), *àihé* 爱河 ('river of love') – these words also belong to that kind of metaphor. *Táohóng* 桃红 means 'as pink as peach flower', while *àihé* 爱河 – 'love as deep and vast as a river'.

The other figure is metonymy. Metonymy is another rhetorical device, that often appears in disyllabic compound words (Long Zhaoyang 2013). According to Long Zhaoyang's statistics, in the fifth edition of *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn* (Zhongguo Shehui… 2005) there are 380 disyllabic compound words formed by metonymy. For example, *sāng* 桑

and *zǐ* 梓 used separately mean respectively 'mulberry tree' and 'yellow catalpa', but together *sāngzǐ* 桑梓 refers to 'one's native place'. Another example: *xīnshǒu* 新手 (*lit.* 'new hand') is a metonymy of 'inexperienced person', *tóngchuāng* 同窗 (*lit.* 'shared window') means 'people who study in the same class or school', etc.

Recently, academics have applied cognitive linguistics theory to investigate those two rhetoric methods of forming compound words and classified them as "metaphor" (*yǐnyù* 隐喻) and "metonymy" (*zhuǎnyù* 转喻) (Zhu Zhiping 2005; Long Zhaoyang 2013). As "metaphorical words" (*yǐnyù cí* 隐喻词) and "metonymical words" (*zhuǎnyù cí* 转喻词) became points of special interest for Chinese academic circles, many researchers call such words as *xiànjǐng* 陷阱 ('pitfall; trap; snare'; *fig.* 'trap'), *yùnniàng* 酝酿 ('brew; ferment'; *fig.* 'make preparations; deliberate on') "metaphorical words", while words like *tiěchuāng* 铁窗 (1. 'window with iron grating'; 2. 'prison bars; prison'), *zhùshǒu* 助手 ('assistant; helper; aid' (*lit.* 'helping hand')) they name "metonymical words".

This study argues that the two concepts of "metaphor" (*yǐnyù* 隐喻) and "metonymy" (*zhuǎnyù* 转喻) are not exactly the same as *bǐyù* 比喻 ('metaphor; analogy') and *jièdài* 借代 ('metonymy') in traditional Chinese rhetoric. These concepts need further differentiation, but due to the limited length of this article, more detailed definition will not be given here. As these compound words indeed are used very commonly, they should be included in the research of second language teaching and learning.

Now we are going to talk about the fourth method of absorbing cultural implication by the compound word, which is the process of extension of the meaning of the word (Zhu Zhiping 2005). For example, *fēngyǔ* 风雨 ('wind and rain; the weather'), *fēngyún* 风云 ('wind and cloud') originally referred to meteorological phenomena, but in phrases *jīng fēngyǔ, jiàn shìmiàn* 经风雨，见世面 ('see the world and brave the storms') and *fēngyún-tūbiàn* 风云突变 ('abrupt change of the weather; sudden change in the situation') the meaning of the words was already extended to 'difficulties and hardships' and 'fast-changing turbulent situation'.

Another example: *bǎ* 把 and *bǐng* 柄 are parts of tools or items that are held by hands ('grip, handle'), they can be used separately in such phrases as *zìxíngchē bǎshou* 自行车把手 ('bicycle handlebar'), *fǔtóu de shǒubǐng* 斧头的手柄 ('axe handle'). Combined together (*bǎbǐng* 把柄) initially they had the same meaning ('handle'), but in the following sentence the meaning is different: "*Nǐ xiǎoxīn bèi biéren zhuāzhù bǎbǐng* 你小心被别人抓住把柄" ('Be careful not to be caught by others'). Here the word *bǎbǐng* 把柄 refers to 'excuse', 'ground', 'mistake that can be used against sb. (*fig.*)' and this is specific for Chinese culture. Therefore, when you say in Chinese: "*Tā qù mǎi dōngxi, bànlù yùdàole yī gè péngyou* 他去买东西，半路遇到了一个朋友" ('He went shopping and met a friend halfway'), the word *bànlù* 半路 ('halfway') would be easy to understand for the foreigner. But when you say "*Tāmen liǎng gè shì bànlù fūqī* 他们两个是半路夫妻" ('They got married when they were half way through life (or when they have reached middle age)'), the student will find it more strenuous to understand, because the word *bànlù* 半路 in the first sentence refers simply to distance ('halfway'), while in the second – it refers to life as a way, a road, it compares marriage, from its beginning to the end, to a road. There is a concept in Chinese culture, that the wife must be faithful to her husband to the very end, cannot remarry after the husband dies (*cóngyī'érzhōng* 从一而

终), husband and wife have to live together to a ripe old age (*báitóu-xiélǎo* 白头偕老). Not every student is able to understand it and it needs to be explained by the teacher.

There are much more words of this kind, for example *bāofu* 包袱 (*lit.* 'wrapping cloth; a bundle wrapped in cloth'; *fig.* 'millstone round one's neck; load; burden'): "*Bùyào bēi sīxiǎng bāofu* 不要背思想包袱" ('Don't carry your mental burden'); *běnmò* 本末 (*lit.* 'upper and lower parts of a tree'; *fig.* 1. 'course of an event from beginning to end; ins and outs'; 2. 'the fundamental and the incidental'): "*liǎojiě shìqing de běnmò* 了解事情的本末" (to understand the whole matter); *cáiliào* 材料 (1. 'material'; 2. 'data; material; information'; 3. 'makings; stuff'): "*Xiǎng xiě wénzhāng kěshì zhǎobudào cáiliào* 想写文章可是找不到材料" ('I want to write an article, but cannot find the material'); *chuāng-shāng* 创伤 ('wound; trauma'): "*Zìyòu sàngshī fùmǔ gěi tā dàiláile shēnshēn de chuāng-shāng* 自幼丧失父母给她带来了深深的创伤" ('She lost her parents when she was young, which has caused her deep emotional trauma'), etc. (Liu Weihong, 2014).

The fifth method of bringing cultural meaning into disyllabic compound words is made by morphemes with ancient cultural significance which participate in the formation of disyllabic compound words (Wang Ning, 1999).Those morphemes no longer enter the syntactic level as a word or – put differently – they enter the Chinese expression at the syntactic level in another meaning. For example, the character *kuài* 快 in the expression *kuàimàn* 快慢 ('speed') refers to speed ('fast; quick'), but in the word *tòngkuài* 痛快 ('delighted') it refers to mood ('pleased; happy') (Huang Jing, 2016). Another example: *bēnpǎo* 奔跑 ('run; race') can be easily understood by students, although *bēn* 奔 ('run quickly; dash') is a so-called bound morpheme and generally does not enter the syntactic level. However, if you explain that *bēn* 奔 and *pǎo* 跑 are synonymous, it will not be difficult to understand, e.g. the difference between the two sentences: "*Tā pǎo de hěn kuài* 他跑得很快" ('He runs very fast') and "*Yī pī jùnmǎ zài cǎoyuán shàng bēnpǎo* 一匹骏马在草原上奔跑" ('A steed runs on the grassland') is only the difference between spoken and written language. But the word *bēnzǒu* 奔走 ('run around; rush about') is different. In modern Chinese *zǒu* 走 ('to walk; to go') can be a free morpheme (e.g. "*Wǒmen yào chídào le, zǒu kuàidiǎnr* 我们要迟到了，走快点儿" – 'We are going to be late, let's go faster') as well as a bound morpheme (e.g. *zǒumǎ-guānhuā* 走马观花 – 'look at flowers while riding on horseback' = 'gain a superficial understanding through cursory observation'; *bēnzǒu xiānggào* 奔走相告 – 'run around passing on the message'). The first one has the meaning of 'to walk', 'to go on foot', and the second one means 'to run', they have different sense. As for the second word, the teacher needs to explain it from the perspective of evolution from ancient to modern Chinese meaning, otherwise the student will not be able to grasp the exact meaning of such idioms like "*zǒumǎ-guānhuā* 走马观花". You can also say that the fifth method let the remains of ancient Chinese culture enter into the disyllabic compound words during the process of word formation.

Above we discussed five ways of absorbing cultural implications in Chinese disyllabic compound words. I would like to indicate, that there are not only these five methods of bringing cultural components into disyllabic compound words. But it should be emphasized here, that the five abovementioned are the main ways in which culture penetrates compound words. Secondly, these five kinds were discussed from different points of view and they are not completely contradictory to one another, for example, we can also say

that *fēngyǔ* 风雨 ('wind and rain; the weather') is a kind of metaphorical (*yǐnyù* 隐喻) expression. From the perspective of the study of classic texts, extension is the main way to change and develop the meaning of vocabulary, and the process of extension includes both: the development of metaphorical method and non-metaphorical or metonymic method. All these changes of meaning have involved the characteristics of Chinese national culture.

4. The Chinese Culture Carried in Compound Words and Vocabulary Teaching Methods in Second Language Education

Looking from the perspective of second language education, without detailed analysis the cultural load in the above discussed disyllabic compound words is difficult to be understood and grasped by the learners of Chinese as a second language (Zhu Zhiping 2005). Therefore, this group of vocabulary should become an important aspect of cross-cultural second language education.

In any language, vocabulary always carries cultural information (Ping Hong & Zhang Guoyang 2000). In the past, some scholars advocated for distinguishing two categories of vocabulary: "cultural vocabulary" and "common vocabulary" (Chang 1995). However, the so defined category of "cultural vocabulary" could hardly encompass the previously identified five types of culturally-loaded compound words. For example, Chang (1995) divides the Chinese culturally-loaded vocabulary into more than ten categories including: words that reflect the perception of the golden mean, harmony and euphemism, words that reflect specific features of the Han nation, words that reflect folk culture, etc. In general, in his research we can identify several tendencies: (1) focus on culture; no distinctions between archaic and new vocabulary and in terms of the frequency of use; e.g. words such as *bìxià* 陛下 ('your majesty') and *hóngniáng* 红娘 ('matchmaker') equally belong to the scope of discussion; (2) lack of distinction between words and phrases, e.g. *fēnghuǒ* 烽火 ('beacon-fire') and *chuān xiǎoxié* 穿小鞋 ('make things hard for sb.', *lit.* 'wear small shoes') are treated in the same way; no distinction between characters and morphemes, e.g. words containing the morpheme *hú* 胡 (here: a morpheme that signalizes that a certain thing or phenomenon has origins in the culture of ethnic groups from Northwest China) and words containing the character *yáng* 洋 (*lit.* 'ocean', here: referring to things specific for / imported from Western countries) are included in the discussion; (3) concentrating chiefly on the word-level cultural load; giving relatively little attention to word-forming morphemes. Of course, this kind of research is also worth pursuing in second language education, but it differs significantly from the word-formation approach to disyllabic compound words proposed in the present paper. Moreover, as this study discussed above, purely culture-oriented approaches are difficult to employ in everyday Chinese language education, especially in vocabulary teaching.

This study argues that for vocabulary discussed from different angles, different teaching methods must be applied, since one cannot treat everything in the same way. In the teaching of everyday vocabulary, I propose two different approaches to Chinese vocabulary acquisition:

(1) syntax-level vocabulary teaching;
(2) non-syntax-level vocabulary teaching.

At Chinese language classes, when we teach students of the syntactic role certain vocabulary plays in determining the meaning of a sentence, its semantics and usage, teachers usually do not have to touch upon any phenomena that concern Chinese vocabulary, in particular disyllabic compound words, at the word-formation level. For example, when we define parts of speech on a vocabulary list, telling the students that a given word is a noun or a verb, or an adjective, or that it is used as a predicate or as a subject, or as an object, we refer to their knowledge of syntactic structures that they are familiar with from their mother tongue and we expect them to apply this knowledge to the target language, since the vast majority of languages operates with similar syntactic categories.

In another example, when we replace a certain component of a sentence with an alternative word, we help the learners grasp paradigmatic relations between words, which, in turn, allows them to better comprehend syntagmatic relations. In yet another example, when we introduce collocation exercises or ask to make phrases or sentences from a given set of words or to translate a sentence into students' mother tongue, we help them understand semantic connections between words in a sentence or observe specific features of word order in Chinese and relations between vocabulary in their mother tongue and vocabulary in the target language, and so on. All of these explanations and exercises are basically confined to syntactic level; in this process, the learners familiarize themselves with the semantic meaning and usage of a word as a whole.

Designing such exercises basically does not pose any problem, however, when the learner encounters vocabulary that carries cultural load, as discussed in section one of the present paper, it is hardly possible for them to grasp the semantic meaning and usage of such words based only on the list of words with translation or the knowledge of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations in a sentence. For example, when a student learns the word *jiāoliú* 交流 ('flow simultaneously, exchange, communicate'), they are likely to produce the following sentence: *Wǒ yào jiāoliú Zhōngguó péngyou* 我要交流中国朋友 (*lit.* 'I want to / will communicate a Chinese friend'). Then, the teacher will tell them that the sentence is not correct, because the word *jiāoliú* 交流 does not take an object. Soon, the student will ask another question: "Teacher, can we say *jiāoliú sīxiǎng* 交流 思想 ('exchange thoughts')?" And the teacher will say: "Of course". At this point the teacher themselves realizes the problem, because *sīxiǎng* 思想 ('thought') is nothing else but an object taken by *jiāoliú* 交流. So, why cannot one say *jiāoliú péngyou* 交流朋友 ('communicate a friend')? We need to go deeper into the relation between the two components of the word: *jiāo* 交 and *liú* 流. We discover that the two morphemes were brought together to express the meaning *jiāo xiāng liúdòng* 交相流动 ('(of water, liquids, etc.) flow simultaneously in mutual interconnection'). *Jiāo xiāng liúdòng* 交相流动 constitutes the word-formation motivation for 交流 *jiāoliú*. Proceeding from this analysis, we can tell the student that the movement described as *jiāo xiāng liúdòng* 交相流动 ('flow simultaneously') has two agents: one is *wǒ* 我 ('I'), the other is *péngyou* 朋友 ('friend'). These two agents cannot be objects of the verb, and can only play the role of a subject or a prepositional object. One has to say *Wǒ yào gēn Zhōngguó péngyou jiāoliú*

"我要跟中国朋友交流" ('I want to / will communicate with a Chinese friend'). If we put the things in this way, *jiāoliú* 交流 takes no object. Besides, words like *jiāoliú* 交流 do not belong in the domain of "cultural vocabulary".

For this reason, I propose to use "non-syntax-level vocabulary teaching" in order to bring out cultural load carried at the word-formation level. In this method, semantic meaning plays a central role, and allows one to connect the meaning of a word-forming morpheme with the semantic meaning of a word. When necessary, classification of vocabulary based on semantic meaning can be introduced. As far as the teacher is concerned, this task involves the application of the outcome of the research to their classroom teaching in their course design.

Consider, for instance, *lǐ* 理, which can be both a free morpheme and a bound morpheme. E.g. in "*bié lǐ tā* 别理他" ('don't mind him'), *lǐ* 理 (hereafter "*lǐ* 理 1" for clarity) is a free morpheme. But in expressions such as *Tā shì rénmín de hǎo zǒnglǐ* 他是人民的好总理 ('he is a good premier of the people') or *Zhōngguó de dìlǐ wèizhi zài dōngfāng* 中国的地理位置在东方 (*lit.* 'Chinese geographical location is in the East') in the words *zǒnglǐ* 总理 (here: 'prime minister') and *dìlǐ* 地理 ('geography'), *lǐ* 理 (hereafter *lǐ* 理 2) is a bound morpheme. Free morphemes can be used as words and placed in a sentence, the learner can grasp them through translation or based on the context. Therefore, *lǐ* 理 1 can be taught using "syntax-level vocabulary teaching method".

The case of *lǐ* 理 2 is different. Preparing the class, we encounter two problems: one is the relation between *lǐ* 理 1 and *lǐ* 理 2, the other is the semantic meaning of *lǐ* 理 2, including semantic differences between *lǐ* 理 2 in the word *zǒnglǐ* 总理 ('assume overall responsibility, head, director, prime minister') and in the word *dìlǐ* 地理 ('geography'). Because *lǐ* 理 1 is a free morpheme, it is relatively easy to explain its relation to *lǐ* 理 2. But explaining the semantic meaning of *lǐ* 理 2 and its different sense in *zǒnglǐ* 总理 and *dìlǐ* 地理 proves much more challenging. First, we need to identify the original meaning of *lǐ* 理. "Original meaning is the meaning of (when a Chinese character formation, annotation by the author) a Chinese character implied by its composition" (Wang Ning 1996, P.54). In the *Shuōwén Jiězì, radical yù* (《说文解字. 玉部》), we find the following definition: "*lǐ, zhì yù yě* 理，治玉也", (*lit.* '*lǐ* means processing jade/nephrite'). When "processing jade", one needs to pay attention to its grain, only moving with the grain can one achieve the desired effect (Cao et al 1999).

At this point, we discover that in Chinese, there are two groups of disyllabic compound words that contain *lǐ* 理. One includes words such as: *zhìlǐ* 治理, ('administer'), *zhěnglǐ* 整理 ('put in order, make up, arrange'), *guǎnlǐ* 管理 ('manage, look after'), *bànlǐ* 办理 ('handle'), *hùlǐ* 护理 ('to nurse'), *lǐcái* 理财 ('manage financial matters'). The other group includes e.g.: *wénlǐ* 纹理 ('grain, texture'), *dìlǐ* 地理 ('geography'), *wùlǐ* 物理 ('physics'), *tiáolǐ* 条理 ('orderliness'), *dàolǐ* 道理 ('principle'), *zhēnlǐ* 真理 ('truth'), *xīnlǐ* 心理 ('psychology'). The former comprises verbs, the latter nouns. The former is linked to the meaning: *shùnzhe yīdìng de wénlǐ qiēgē yùshí, shǐ zhī yǒu tiáolǐ* 顺着一定的纹理切割玉石，使之有条理 'cut nephrite following its grain to achieve orderliness'), the latter is linked to the meaning: *yùshí shàngmian tiānrán xíngchéng de wénlǐ* 玉石上面天然形成的纹理 ('natural pattern on nephrite's surface').

If the teacher analyses the problem beforehand, when planning the course, in the classroom they will easily and systematically explain vocabulary to the students taking the semantic approach. Obviously, if necessary, one can teach the learners the cultural content of the word *lǐ* 理 as well. Perhaps someone will ask: "In which of the two groups should we place *zǒnglǐ* 总理 ('assume overall responsibility, head, director, prime minister') and *jīnglǐ* 经理 ('manage, manager')? In fact, they belong in both. In the past, they described certain actions, but this meaning was later extended on agents who perform these actions, so the words now also signify a person who assumes overall responsibility and a person who manages something, respectively.

The above example shows that in the Chinese language, there are characters that represent different types of morphemes, and the semantic relations between these morphemes are anything but clear. In teaching vocabulary, one needs to focus specifically on bound morphemes, explaining cultural load implied by their semantic meaning.

There is also another frequently seen type of characters that convey two types of morphemes, but the connections between these two types are possible to establish, for example *fēng* 风 (*lit.* 'wind'). In the *Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese* (现代汉语词典), under the entry *fēng* 风 one can see the following twelve definitions[3]:

(1) *noun*, 'wind; breeze; gale – air current moving approximately parallel to the ground surface, caused by uneven distribution of atmospheric pressure'

(2) *verb*, 'put out to dry; winnow': *fēnggān* ～干 ('air-dry'), *shài gān fēng jìng* 晒干 ～净 ('sun-dried and well winnowed')

(3) 'air-dried': *fēngjī* ～鸡 ('air-dried chicken'), *fēngròu* ～肉 ('air-dried meat')

(4) 'as swift as the wind; speedily': *fēngfā* ～发 ('swift as the wind; speedily'), *fēngxíng* ～行 ('fast; rapidly; vigorously; be in fashion or vogue')

(5) 'practice; custom; atmosphere': *wèirán chéng fēng* 蔚然成～ ('become prevalent; become customary'), *bù zhèng zhī fēng* 不正之～ ('unhealthy social trends; undesirable social practices')

(6) 'scene; view': *fēngjǐng* ～景 ('scenery; landscape'), *fēngguāng* ～光 ('scene; view; sight')

(7) 'attitude, style': *zuòfēng* 作～ ('style of work'), *fēngdù* ～度 ('manner; bearing; demeanour'), *fēngcǎi* ～采 ('elegant demeanour, integrity')

(8) *fēngr* ～儿, *noun*: 'news; information'; *wén fēng ér dòng* 闻～而动 ('act without delay on hearing the news; take immediate action'), *gāng tīngjiàn yī diǎnr fēngr jiù lái dǎting* 刚听见一点儿～儿就来打听 ('fish for information on getting wind of sth.')

(9) 'hearsay; rumour': *fēngwén* ～闻 ('learn through hearsay; hear through the grapevine; get wind of'), *fēng yán fēng yǔ* ～言～语 ('canard; slanderous gossip; groundless talk')

(10) '*Folk Songs of States* (*Guó Fēng* 国风), a chapter in the classic *The Book of Songs* [*Classic of Poetry*] (*Shījīng* 诗经) which collected folksong from 15 states; *cǎi fēng* 采～ ('collect ballads; collect folk songs')

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[3] English translations according to Zhongguo Shehui… 2002.

(11) *Chinese medicine* used in names of certain diseases: *fēngzhěn* ～疹 ('rubella'), *fēngshī* ～湿 ('rheumatism'), *yángxiánfēng* 羊痫～ ('epillepsy'), *ézhǎngfēng* 鹅掌 ～ ('tinea manum')

(12) a surname, (arch.) same as *fěng* 讽

If we exclude the last definition (surname), the remaining eleven can be distinguished into four types based on their semantic meaning:

1. Definitions (1), (2), (3), (6). The meaning is related to wind as a natural phenomenon;
2. Definitions (4), (8), (9). The meaning is related to human language and behaviours;
3. Definitions (5), (7), (10). The meaning is related to social life;
4. Definition (11). The meaning is related to a disease.

The question is: what is the relation between the four types of *fēng* 风? Why were they collected in the dictionary under the same entry? In Duan Yucai's 段玉裁 *Commentary to the Shuowen Jiezi* (*Shuōwén jiězì Zhù* 说文解字注) we read: "The use of *fēng* 风 is broad, every invisible cause is called *fēng* 风". Read in the context of the above four types of definitions, this commentary helps us observe that *fēng* 风 has two general features: first, it signifies the movement of air, and second, it causes certain effects. These are two natural properties of *fēng* 风. The former is physically observable, the latter refers to what Chinese people perceive as caused by *fēng* 风. Given that *fēng* 风 can "invisibly cause" something, it is a factor that can influence e.g. a certain person, or environment, or society. With such explanation, the learner no longer has to memorize the eleven definitions one by one, without any mutual connection. Isn't it exactly what we call in Chinese "half the work, twice the effect" (*shì bàn gōng bèi* 事半功倍)?

The above are examples of "non-syntax-level vocabulary teaching", which should be developed in the teacher's course design and in classroom. Instructors of the Chinese language will certainly discover many similar examples in their everyday practice. Elaborating on them will enrich the content of their classes.

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