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Introduction

Increasing international and, often, cross-cultural contact and exchanges in all spheres of human activity have created a world in which access to other, alternative knowledge pools has become easier than ever before. Science in particular, or, more generally, fields of knowledge creation, are considered to have greatly benefited from today's global society. At the same time, we are witness to nationalisation processes within the scientific discourses of non-'Western' countries as well as (often officially sanctioned) revivals of indigenous, non-'Western' forms of knowledge, trends that are occasionally accompanied by a strongly anti-'Western' outlook.

This paper aims to shed some light on recent discourse about 'Eastern' and 'Western' knowledge production and knowledge exchange within the humanities, and investigates the ways in which one system of scientific methodology and discourse scrutinises and evaluates another. The case of Chinese cultural linguistics, an academic sub-discipline that emerged only fairly recently, will be used to demonstrate in more concrete terms how such a discourse on indigenous and foreign knowledge and science can take place. It will be shown that in the course of these reception and evaluation processes, the cultural linguists' arguments often rely heavily on *a priori* constructions of 'East' and 'West', resulting in highly specific and selective perceptions of the respective scientific systems and paradigms. These constructs are, nevertheless, useful instruments for the actors, i.e. the cultural linguists themselves, not only as a means of appropriating the Other (as is maintained by classical Orientalism), but also to serve their need to create a collective identity and further their own interests.

The Global and the Local: Opposites or Complements?

A "solid American citizen" of the 1930s awakes

> in a bed built on a pattern which originated in the Near East... [...] He throws back covers
> made from cotton, domesticated in India, or linen, domesticated in the Near East, or wool
> from sheep, also domesticated in the Near East, or silk, the use of which was discovered in

China. [...] He then shaves, a masochistic rite which seems to have been derived from either Sumer or ancient Egypt. [...] ... [Finally] he settles back to smoke, an American Indian habit, consuming a plant domesticated in Brazil in either a pipe, derived from the Indians of Virginia, or a cigarette, derived from Mexico [...] While smoking he reads the news of the day, imprinted in characters invented by the ancient Semites upon a material invented in China by a process invented in Germany. As he absorbs the accounts of foreign troubles he will, if he is a good conservative citizen, thank a Hebrew deity in an Indo-European language that he is 100 per cent American.[1]

This individual, described so brilliantly by Ralph Linton, still seems oddly familiar to us now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. We are asked to observe the objects that go to make up an "average man's" everyday life, all of which can be traced back to the most far-flung corners of the earth. However, the global origins of these everyday objects and customs do not appear to lead to an internationalisation of this average man's feelings, thoughts, and actions. On the contrary, recent theoretical and empirical research has pointed to the multiple layers of globalisation processes and their inevitable ambiguity: an increased understanding of the workings of the global market and of issues regarded as 'international', as well as growing similarities between state institutions or movements of mass culture go hand in hand with an equally increased awareness of individual cultural roots and a reinforcement, revival, or even reinvention of indigenous traditions. At first glance, this appears to be an almost paradoxical blend of economic, technological, and communicational globalisation on the one hand, and local reactions to globalisation, regional constructions of indigenous worlds of meanings, and national searches for identity on the other.[2]

Such an "interweaving of contrary currents"[3] can be observed in diverse contexts and at various levels: Ralph Linton's "solid American citizen" is a case in point, but so are entire nation states, stumbling as they attempt to adapt themselves to the global environment and simultaneously reassure themselves of their cultural and national identities. The *group* is of central importance here as a construct which creates a sense of belonging and which can only function by sharply differentiating itself from other groups. This practice has been described

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[1] Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction*, London, Appleton, 1936, pp. 326f.
[2] For a more detailed analysis, see Jürgen Schriewer, who identifies several "contrary currents", including: "internationalization" vs. "indigenization"; "supranational integration" vs. "intranational diversification"; "'evolutionary universals'" vs. "sociocultural configurations"; "global diffusion processes" vs. "culture-specific reception procdesses"; etc.: Jürgen Schriewer, "World System and Interrelationship Networks", in: Popkewitz, Thomas S., ed., *Educational Knowledge: Changing Relationships between the State, Civil Society, and the Educational Community*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2000, pp. 305–343.

by anthropologists and political scientists as *groupism*: "... to make group identity politically efficacious, groups tend to strengthen boundaries, reject overlaps, demand exclusive loyalties."[4] Often, such groupisms are accompanied by nationalising, culturalising, or ethnicising tendencies – some of which are even officially approved – if it is the nation, culture, or ethnos that are to function as core groups.

The system of science is no exception to this general trend: in spite of (or maybe because of) the alleged universal validity of scientific reasoning, scientific discourse has readily taken part in groupist attempts at self-assertion. Academic science in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and the United States has been involved not only in knowledge production, but also in staging national performances through academic exchanges, conferences, exhibitions etc. The questions science asked and the conclusions at which it arrived were certainly influenced by this practice. Against this background, the recent culturalisation and indigenisation of science to be observed in Hindu, Muslim, and Confucian societies come as no surprise.[5] It is, however, striking that these phenomena are diametrically opposed to other postmodern developments. Whereas 'Western'[6] scientific discourse, by and large following the doctrines of postmodernity, attempts (in theory at least) to assume a plurality of truths, some of its 'Eastern' equivalents have conversely begun presenting their version of science as the only possible alternative. Thus, theories that were potentially subversive in the 'Western' context privilege orthodox interpretations after entering the context of reception. This has also been noted with regard to the Chinese reception of postmodern theories, which frequently serve "to advance or consolidate cultural conservatism..."[7]

In order to illustrate these trends in more concrete terms, this paper will discuss the phenomenon of Chinese cultural linguistics, which emerged within the field of general

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[3] Ibid., p. 327.

[4] Eric Wolf, "Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People", in *Current Anthropology*, vol. 1, 1994, pp. 1–12, here p. 10.

[5] On these tendencies in Islam and Confucianism, see Ruth Hayhoe and Julia Pan, eds, *Knowledge Across Cultures. A Contribution to Dialogue Among Civilizations*, CERC Studies in Comparative Education, 11, Hong Kong, Comparative Education Research Centre, 2001. A critical analysis of the influence of Hindu conceptions of society and knowledge on school curriculum can be found in Sangeeta Kamat, "Postcolonial Aporias, Or What Does Fundamentalism Have to Do with Globalization?". The article has been submitted to *Comparative Education* and will probably be published in 2003; I am grateful to the author for her permission to refer to the paper prior to publication.

[6] Since 'East' and 'West' are understood mainly as mental constructs here (political, economic, sociohistorical etc.) and many phenomena are difficult to allocate geographically to either East or West, these terms are placed in quotation marks throughout the paper.

[7] Geremie R. Barmé, "To Screw Foreigners Is Patriotic: China's Avant-Garde Nationalists", in *The China Journal*, vol. 34, 1995, pp. 209–234, here p. 218. On the use and abuse of postmodern theory in literary studies, see Zhao Yiheng, "'Houxue' yu Zhongguo xin baoshouzhuyi" ['Post-studies' and China's New Conservatism], in *Ershiyi shiji*, vol. 27, 2, 1995, pp. 4–15.

linguistics in China approximately fifteen years ago. It will be shown how this sub-discipline has been involved in a multi-layered process of self-assertion, in the course of which it not only made polemical attacks on its enemies – who were often more imagined than real – but also made use of arguments and attributes that 'Western' Orientalists had formerly employed to classify (and often denigrate) the 'East' in general and China in particular.

Between East and West: Chinese Cultural Linguistics

As a discipline, Chinese cultural linguistics is devoted to investigating the relationship between Chinese culture and the Chinese language. This objective is often accompanied by a sense of "historical mission", which "understands how to bring Chinese language research back to serve the genuine Chinese cause."[8] Moreover, it is frequently emphasised that Chinese is "an extremely mature and highly cultivated language."[9] In practice, cultural linguistics comprises a potpourri of topics with interdisciplinary foci, such as the relation of language to thought, philosophy, politics, myths, religions, literature, art, traditions, personal and place names, cultural history, cultural psychology, cultural interchange, subcultures, gender, and language use.[10] While some cultural linguists acknowledge this interdisciplinary character and are content to move between various disciplines (*guanxilun*), other, more vociferous representatives such as Shen Xiaolong maintain that it is an independent, genuinely Chinese discipline with its own contents and theories, and they are continually engaged in trying to differentiate it from 'Western' approaches (*bentilun*).[11]

The cultural linguists' attempt to establish the uniqueness of the Chinese language and its culture within one discipline in the context of today's internationalised and to some extent also 'deculturalised' academic landscape demonstrates cultural linguistics to be one of the "contrary currents" mentioned above. Moreover, their arguments reveal some similarities with other 'Eastern', often anti-modernist movements within Islam, Neo-Confucianism, and Hinduism. Employing an Occidental perspective,[12] they set up dichotomies such as 'Eastern'

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[8] Dai Zhaoming, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Daolun* [An Introduction to Cultural Linguistics], Beijing, Yuwen Chubanshe, 1996, p. 106.

[9] Shen Xiaolong, "Lishixing de fanbo: Zhongguo wenhua yuyanxue" [A Historical Movement: Chinese Cultural Linguistics], In: *Xuexi yu Tansuo*, vol. 3, 1987, pp. 36–43, here p. 39.

[10] Cf. Dai Zhaoming, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Daolun*; and Cao Xiqun, *Han Yuyan Wenhua Luncong: Guoji Han Yuyan Wenhua Xueshu Yantaohui Lunwenji* [Essays on Chinese Language and Culture: Essay Collection of the International Scientific Symposium on Chinese Language and Culture], Beijing, Renmin chubanshe, 1995.

[11] See for example Shen Xiaolong, "Cultural Identification of Chinese Language Research Methods – A Free Discussion of Cultural Linguistics", translated by Annabel Allen, in *Journal of Macrolinguistics*, vol. 1, 1992, pp. 27–35.

[12] In contrast to the term 'Orientalism', 'Occidentalism' has several, sometimes incompatible meanings (see for example Couze Venn, *Occidentalism. Modernity and Subjectivity*, London etc., Sage, 2000; and Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism. A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press,

spirituality, intuition, or putative humanism versus 'Western' rationality or scientism. By means of this 'reversed Orientalism' they stress the incompatibility of 'East' and 'West', turning the second component of each dichotomy into a negative foil of a positively perceived 'Eastern' characteristic from which the true 'East' should keep its distance. Further opposing pairs emerge from this dichotomous reasoning, which are subsequently operationalised as units of analysis: 'Eastern' subjectivity versus 'Western' objectivity, the 'Eastern' community versus the 'Western' individual, or 'Eastern' synthetic thought versus 'Western' analytical or logical thought. *Nota bene*, these cultural linguists rarely differentiate between the various non-Chinese languages. The majority of publications only refer nebulously to 'Western' language or even to the 'English' language alone as representative of 'Western' languages; other languages, such as the Arab or African languages, do not play a role in their discourse, despite China's claims of political commitment to the Third World.

This strategy of reversed Orientalism is no Chinese peculiarity, but is to be found in parallel, anti-modernist trends in other countries as well. In her analysis of the recent curriculum reform in India, Sangeeta Kamat shows convincingly that there is no reason to believe in an "atrophying of national identities";[13] on the contrary, it is precisely in our global age that nationalism appears as "a central tendency of globalization."[14] Aside from the general reappraisal of India's past and the rejection of an "alien technological ethos,"[15] it is also the reversal of the old colonial hierarchies which imbues India with these old Orientalist stereotypes: "This is the quintessential post-colonial paradox, that is, to define an authentic cultural identity in opposition to Western civilization leads to a nostalgic and uncritical return to a 'pre-colonial' past, a past that was invented by the Empire itself..."[16]

As far as academic research is concerned, this incompatibility results in the development of different theories for 'East' and 'West'. This has already been formulated for Islamic science from a culturalist perspective:

1995). Here, 'Occidentalism' is understood as the argumentative counterpart or mirror image of 'Orientalism': just as the 'West' appropriated the 'East' through discourse by reducing it to certain (negative) patterns, there is an opposite appropriation of the 'West' by the 'East'. The reasons or intentions of this discursive instrumentalisation are secondary for the definition (hegemonic power in international politics, power monopoly within domestic politics, etc.).
[13] Kamat, "Postcolonial Aporias" (note 5), p. 4.
[14] Ibid., p. 5.
[15] Ibid., p. 9.
[16] Ibid., p. 11.

The subject's attitude toward the data studied determines the outcome of the study. This is why the humanistic studies of the Western scientist are necessarily 'Western' and cannot serve as models for the study of Muslims or their society.[17]

In East Asia, it was primarily the modern Neo-Confucians who repeatedly stressed the normative character of Chinese science, despite numerous investigations into critical intellectual traditions within East Asian philosophy. Such claims were often followed by an appeal to maintain and nourish this normative character, and it thereafter became one of the so-called 'Asian values'.[18]

The Chinese New Left has readily taken up and elaborated these approaches, emphasising not only the researcher's attitude, but also the quality of the research object.[19] It is argued that the difference between the research objects calls for different theories to describe and explain them:

What is called social science today is Western social science, which has emerged in the course of *Western* 'societal transformations'; it does not only embody the self-understanding of the Westerners of these societal transformation processes, but is also the outcome of complex social and political factors accompanying them.[20]

Similarly, Shen Xiaolong, one of the most prominent and controversial representatives of cultural linguistics, calls for a theoretical body that is only applicable to Chinese and does not employ 'Western' approaches, since 'Western' theories have proved incapable of doing justice to the specificities of the Chinese language.[21]

From the perspective of the sociology of science, such fundamental questioning is perfectly legitimate: any kind of knowledge or science emerges within a specific context and is thus shaped by this context, as has been framed analytically by the notion of the

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[17] Isma'il R. Al Faruqi and Abdullah Omar Nasseed, eds, *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspective*, Jeddah, King Abdul Aziz University, 1981, p. 12; quoted in Zarah Al Zeera, "Paradigm Shifts in the Social Sciences in the East and West", in: Hayhoe and Pan, *Knowledge Across Cultures*, pp. 55–73, here p. 63 (note 5).

[18] See for example Peter S.J. Chen, *Asian Values in a Modernizing Society: A Sociological Perspective*, Sociology Working Paper, 51, Department of Sociology, University of Singapore, 1976.

[19] Cf. Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China. Modernization, Identity, and International Relations*, Cambridge, University Press, 1999, pp. 56-57.

[20] Gan Yang, "'Jiangcun jingji' zai renshi" [A Re-evaluation of the Book *The Economy of the Village Jiang*], in *Du Shu*, vol. 10, 1994, pp. 50–57, here p. 51.

[21] Shen Xiaolong, "Cultural Identification of Chinese Language Research Methods" (note 11).

paradigm.[22] It is therefore quite right for critics to perceive 'Western' theories as biased and limited to some extent. However, it was also and particularly in the 'West' that such critique was articulated most fiercely, and in contrast to some currents in Chinese academic discourse which call for an indigenisation of theories (*bentuhua*), this did not lead to a conviction that from now on, each 'culture' should be responsible for its own theory building.[23]

Not only from an academic point of view, but also politically, such a stance comes dangerously close to the particularistic notion that the 'West' should not be allowed to interfere with anything 'Eastern', because of its inherent lack of understanding for the 'Orient'. This negates the possibility not only of developing universal theories, but still more the right to draw comparisons, as the existence of a *tertium comparationis* is excluded *a priori*. This seriously limits comparative research on 'East' and 'West', at least when such dichotomous 'East'-'West' reasoning dominates the academic scene, as is the case with cultural linguistics.

Strangely enough, for some Occidentalists the assumption of mutual incommensurability holds true only when the 'East' is the object of the 'West's' analysis. While 'Western' categories and theories are regarded as unsuitable for examining the 'Eastern' character, they seem to be intelligible enough to be dismissed as redundant by 'Easterners'. Indeed, 'Eastern' or Chinese thinking is sometimes considered superior from a postmodern perspective. This self-assertive attitude on the part of 'Eastern' academics has not only been mentioned recently in connection with the "new cultural patriots,"[24] but was already derided almost thirty years ago by the famous sociolinguist Chao Yuen Ren:

> As a native speaker of the Chinese language, I feel tempted to say: Ha! here is proof that the Chinese language is much superior to Western languages for science, not for old-fashioned Newtonian science, but for twentieth-century modern science, for in what Western language can one say, without distinction of person or number, simply 'Moves' instead of 'It moves', or 'Vibrates' instead of 'It vibrates'? [However, he concludes:] The only generalization to make about language and science is [...] to make no generalizations...[25]

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[22] See for example Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, second, enlarged edition, Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press, 1970 [1962].

[23] An obvious problem would be the necessity of finding exact definitions for the construct we call 'culture', in order to decide on competences for theory building.

[24] Peter Kupfer, "Mit Konfuzius auf der Datenautobahn in die Zukunft? Chinesischer Traditionalismus im Informationszeitalter", in: Christiane Hammer and B. Führer, eds, *Tradition und Moderne. Religion, Philosophie und Literatur in China*, Dortmund, Projekt Verlag, 1997, pp. 239–257, here p. 243.

[25] Chao Yuen Ren, *Aspects of Chinese Sociolinguistics*, selected and introduced by Anwar S. Dil, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1976, p. 247.

Is cultural linguistics now nothing more than a reaction to globalisation that employs Occidentalist practices? To be sure, local reactions to the ubiquitous global (often seen as tantamount to the 'West' as such) are of extreme importance for the emergence and self-image of this sub-discipline. This view is supported by the argumentational models used by the cultural linguists, which will be outlined in more detail below. However, the concept of the opposition between the global and the local, construed around the groupism "China against the 'West'", has to be submitted to critical scrutiny. Whether this perspective is sufficient to understand the emergence, the dynamics, and the successes of Chinese cultural linguistics remains to be seen in the last section of this chapter.

Patterns of Discourse

Cultural linguistics discourse analysis has yielded two main findings:[26]

1. In characterising their discipline as specifically Chinese and novel, cultural linguists are attempting to lend their academic activities historic stature;

2. Chinese cultural linguists adopt traditional Western ideas on Chinese thought and language, but re-evaluate them and transform them into a positive image of Chinese culture.

There is nothing new about the Chinese search for its own path and its simultaneous confrontation with 'Western' thought. Even open-minded Chinese reformers and modernisers have been careful not to merely adopt 'Western' solutions, but rather select the parts that appear to be useful and adapt them to Chinese reality. Equivalents of allegedly novel 'Western' notions were often searched for within the Chinese tradition in order to facilitate the subsequent adoption of the foreign import.[27] Even Mao Zedong, whose ideology was obviously derived from 'Western' Marxist-Leninist thought, is known to have grounded his ideas in Chinese tradition. This is also true with his concerns about the Chinese language and the preservation of its *Chineseness*:

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[26] Only articles by those authors whom prominent cultural linguists themselves considered trend-setting were evaluated. Journals which served as discussion forums for cultural linguists were also included and are listed here: *Yuwen Jianshe, Beifang Luncong, Waiyu Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu, Zhongguo Yuwen, Yuyan Wenzi Yingyong, Yuwen Daobao, Xuexi yu Tansuo, Yuyan Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu, Hanyu Xuexi*, *Waiguoyu* and the available issues of the *Journal of Macrolinguistics*, which is published by Chinese cultural linguists in Leeds. Shao Jingmin estimates that 800 articles and 60 to 70 books with cultural linguistic contents had been published by the mid-1990s; cf. Shao Jingmin, ed., *Wenhua Yuyanxue Zhongguochao* [The Chinese Movement of Cultural Linguistics], Beijing, Yuwen chubanshe, 1995.

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Why do we have to study language, and why do we have to spend so much energy on it? Because such a thing as language cannot be mastered casually: it requires painstaking effort. Firstly, we have to learn from the masses. Our people's vocabulary is rich, lively, and vivid, expressing life's reality. [...] Secondly, from foreign languages, we have to pick those elements which are of use to us. As to foreign languages, we should not copy them mechanically or use them indiscriminately, but should absorb only the good things, those things that are applicable to our situation. Since China's original vocabulary has not been used sufficiently, today's vocabulary contains much that comes from abroad. [...] Thirdly, we have to study the vital things in the language of the people from our past. Since we have not been studying language diligently, we have not been using the elements from our ancestors' language which are still full of life in a sufficient and reasonable manner...[28]

Within a general culturalist trend in the social and human sciences, cultural linguists can be said to have taken up these claims of the existence and pertinence of an independent Chinese path and to have transferred them from the field of language use to their own science, linguistics.

In order to stress both the innovative character and the 'Chineseness' of their discipline, cultural linguists have developed a particular penchant for attacking all those 'Western' linguistic theories regarded as neglecting the socio-cultural context of language, such as Chomsky's generative grammar or structuralist theory. Other approaches, such as those within sociolinguistics or anthropological linguistics, are played down or ignored completely, although they had already found a Chinese audience in the 1980s, for example through the journal *Guowai Yuyanxue* (Linguistics Abroad).

Cultural linguists also distance themselves from Chinese researchers investigating the relationship between culture and language by either not mentioning them at all or, at best, by calling them 'predecessors' who had not yet fully grasped their mission.[29] Such was the fate of the prominent Chinese linguists Wang Li, Lü Shuxiang, and Luo Changpei. Lü and Luo had

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[27] For example, the prominent early twentieth-century reformer Cai Yuanpei listed traditional Chinese values to match the ideals of the French revolution (liberty, equality, fraternity).

[28] Mao Zedong, "Fandui dangbagu" [Against Party Jargon], speech at the cadres' assembly in Yan'an on February 8, 1942, in: *Mao Zedong Xuanji* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong], Xi'an, Renmin Chubanshe, 1969 [1942], pp. 787–803, here p. 794.

[29] For a more detailed analysis, see Barbara Schulte, *Die chinesische Kulturlinguistik: Ein chinesischer Sonderweg?*, unpublished Master's thesis, Berlin, Humboldt University, 2000.

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already carried out research on culture and language in the 1940s and 1950s,[30] although this came to a halt following Stalin's pamphlet on Marxism in linguistics in 1950.[31] Also in the 1950s, Wang tried to integrate semantic elements into his theory of grammar; this combinatory approach was subsequently presented as a new theory by the cultural linguists, and some of them, such as Shen Xiaolong, simply plagiarised the idea, omitting to mention its inventor.[32]

Since being the first to have a new idea is of primary importance to the cultural linguists, there was a fierce argument about who had actually founded the discipline only a few years after its emergence. Some claimed to have coined the term 'cultural linguistics' (*wenhua yuyanxue*), which had not existed prior to the 1980s and which is not commonly used in the 'West'.[33] You Rujie and Zhou Zhenhe are generally regarded as having founded the discipline with their book *Dialects and Chinese Culture*, written in 1985 and published a year later.[34] You Rujie therefore claims to have invented the term 'cultural linguistics',[35] whereas Hu Mingyang ascribes this achievement to Chen Jianmin, an expert on foreign language teaching who is said to have held a postgraduate seminar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences entitled 'cultural linguistics' as long ago as 1985.[36] In fact, You Rujie had already written an article dealing with cultural linguistic issues in 1978 when he was himself a postgraduate student, which was published in 1980.[37] In co-operation with Zhou Zhenhe, You published another book that integrated dialectology and history in 1984, which did not arouse any particular interest; an article by Zhang Gongjin, an expert on the Dai dialect in Yunnan, which also dealt with cultural history and dialectology, was equally neglected by the academic

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[30] For example, Lü Shuxiang, "Nanbeichao renming yu fojiao" [Personal Names During the Southern and Northern Dynasties and Buddhism], in: Shao Jingmin, ed., *Wenhua Yuyanxue Zhongguochao* [The Chinese Movement of Cultural Linguistics], Beijing, Yuwen chubanshe, pp. 183–193 (the article was written in 1944, but due to political circumstances it was first published in 1988 in the journal *Zhongguo Yuwen*); Luo Changpei, *Yuyan yu Wenhua* [Language and Culture], Beijing, Yuwen chubanshe, 1989 [1950].

[31] Joseph Stalin, *Otnositel'no marksizma v yazykoznanii* [On Marxism in Linguistics], Moscow, Pravda, 1950.

[32] Cf. Wang Li, *Hanyu Yufa Gangyao* [Fundamentals of Chinese Grammar], with a foreword by A.A. Dragunov, Shanghai, Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1982 [1957], pp. 144ff.; this book was originally published under Wang's pseudonym Wang Liaoyi.

[33] An exception is Palmer's book, which, however, did not attract much attention; see Gary B. Palmer, *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics*, Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press, 1996.

[34] You Rujie and Zhou Zhenhe, *Fangyan yu Zhongguo Wenhua* [Dialects and Chinese Culture], Zhongguo Wenhuashi Congshu, Shanghai, Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1986.

[35] You Rujie, "The History and Meaning of Cultural Linguistics", in *Journal of Macrolinguistics*, vol. 2, 1992, pp. 9–16.

[36] Cf. Hu Mingyang, "Macrolinguistics in China", in *Journal of Macrolinguistics*, vol. 1, 1992, pp. 6–10.

[37] The title reads "Cong yuyan dilixue he lishi yuyanxue shilun Yazhou zaipei dao de qiyuan he chuanbu" [The Origin and diffusion of rice planting in Asia from the perspective of linguistic geography and historical linguistics]; most probably the term 'cultural linguistics' does not yet appear in the article, which was unfortunately unobtainable.

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public.[38] The sudden attractiveness of cultural linguistics in the mid-1980s appears to have been connected to the historical context of these years rather than to its actual content, a fact that will be discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

Styled a dynamic and innovative force, cultural linguistics was marketed as a model worthy to be taken note of and imitated in the decadent and bleak 'West'. The publisher stresses this in the foreword of *Dialects and Chinese Culture*, the pioneering work on cultural linguistics mentioned above:

> Chinese culture, which sat in the world's first row for a long time, has unselfishly contributed its treasures to the progress of mankind. Today, our ancient but young people is approaching a new century at great speed; the excessively materialised countries of the world are again setting their eyes on this ancient, civilised country.[39]

Shen Xiaolong went even further in his missionary zeal, and articulated the hope that the "European linguists, who have harboured negative feelings towards research on the so-called 'East-Asian languages' for the past half of the century, will become inspired by Eastern linguistics through the results of Chinese cultural linguistics."[40]

Interestingly, the proclaimed originality of cultural linguistics does not prevent the discipline from drawing on conservative conceptions of culture that regard it to be a monolithic, homogeneous, and static block. This notion seems to be typical for fields based on culturalist argumentation, as Morris-Suzuki testifies in her comments on a trend in Japanese history research, where approaches using civilisation theory have again gained in popularity "in order to re-create an identity in an increasingly international age."[41] Such a concept of culture is primarily characterised by two basic assumptions: (*i*) Culture consists of a number of specifiable elements; and (*ii*) all members of a given culture share these elements. Using Humboldt's *Weltanschauung* and Herder's *Volksgeist* as a model – sometimes even referring to them explicitly – cultural linguists paint an idealised, overtly homogeneous and harmonious portrait of culture. This not only serves to preserve or (re-)create the unity of Chinese culture, but also differentiates it more sharply from other, particularly 'Western' cultures, which are depicted as disjointed and chaotic.

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[38] Zhang Gongjin, Shehui yuyanxue yu Zhongguo minzushi yanjiu [Research on Sociolinguistics and on the History of Chinese minorities], in *Zhongyang Minzu Xueyuan Xuebao*, vol. 4, 1982, pp. 16–22.
[39] Publisher's foreword in You Rujie and Zhou Zhenhe, *Fangyan yu Zhongguo Wenhua* (note 34).
[40] Shen Xiaolong, "Lishixing de fanbo", p. 43 (note 9).

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Despite their anti-'Western' stance, cultural linguists closely follow 'Western' thinkers, such as Otto Jespersen or Marcel Granet, who wrote on 'primitive' or 'exotic' languages and cultures during the first half of the twentieth century.[42] All these approaches are based on the triple equation *culture = world view = language*. However, in contrast to earlier 'Western' attempts, cultural linguists transform those attitudes regarded as deficient or non-civilised by their 'Western' counterparts into a civilisational advantage, thus elevating the Chinese language and culture to a position of superiority. This strategy will be illustrated by the following descriptions of oppositional pairs, which originated in 'Western' discourse on the 'East' but which were subsequently appropriated by the cultural linguists.

Poetical and pictorial nature versus rationality

'Primitive' languages were thought to be poetic and pictorial, in contrast to the rational languages of the civilised peoples: "The old words [...] spoke more immediately to the senses – they were manifestly more suggestive, more graphic and pictorial..."[43] This theory was taken up by Granet, a sinologist, who exoticises the Chinese language by attesting to its extremely pictorial character,[44] thereby ignoring the fact that all languages were originally based on pictures and thereafter extended through metaphorical use.[45] Chinese cultural linguists also consider the picture to be the basic element of the Chinese language, but in their eyes this is a positive characteristic that distinguishes Chinese from other languages. Dai Zhaoming even speaks of a "general pictorialisation" penetrating all spheres of Chinese thought and language.[46] This vivid and creative China with its pictorial language is now contrasted with a 'West' which cultural linguists describe as formalised and limited by rigid structures.

Musical and emotional nature versus scientific orientation

"Men sang out their feelings long before they were able to speak their thoughts,"[47] says Jespersen of 'primitive' people, while Granet muses on the impact of Chinese emotions on Chinese syntax: "When speaking, the intensity of the different emotions, coming up one after

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[41] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Rewriting History: Civilization Theory in Contemporary Japan", in *positions*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1993, pp. 526–549, here p. 535.

[42] See for example Otto Jespersen, *Language. Its Nature, Development and Origin*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1950 [1922], particularly Book IV: Development of Language, XXI. The Origin of Speech, pp. 412-442; Marcel Granet, *Das chinesische Denken: Inhalt, Form, Charakter*, ed. Manfred Porkert, München, Piper, 1963 [1936].

[43] Jespersen, *Language*, p. 431.

[44] Granet, *Das chinesische Denken*, p. 23.

[45] See for example Jean Aitchison, *The Seeds of Speech: Language Origin and Evolution*, Cambridge, University Press, 1996.

[46] Dai Zhaoming, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Daolun*, p. 72 (note 8).

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the other, determined the word order."[48] Furthermore, Granet ascribes a musical character and a certain suggestiveness to the Chinese language.[49] In keeping with this view, the cultural phonologist Shi Youwei considers the Chinese tone to be the "psychology of the Chinese word root,"[50] difficult for foreigners to understand. Dai Zhaoming goes as far as to turn the emotional element into the basis of cultural linguistics, thus differentiating it from a 'Western' linguistics obsessed by structural analysis and granting it leave to do without such tedious instruments as scientific description:

> [Cultural linguistics] does not aim at description, which to a high extent abstracts and formalises structural rules of language, but aims at integrating the widespread and rich sense of language among the Han Chinese, the cultural content hidden in Chinese syntax, the semantic context, psychology, rhythm, and many other elements which are expressed through the structure of Chinese sentences, thus explaining the expressive functions of the Chinese linguistic system.[51]

The concrete versus the abstract

> ... our remote ancestors were not able to see and to express what was common to these ideas; their minds were very unsystematic, and separated in their linguistic expressions things which from a logical point of view are closely related: much of their grammar, therefore, was really of a lexical character... [...] Primitive man did not see the wood for the trees.[52]

Granet also observes a lack of abstract thinking among the Chinese, and like Jespersen uses the absence of generic terms for the 'same' or for 'comparable' activities or features as evidence for his theory, referring to terms such as the Chinese words for 'old', which vary according to an individual's age and state of health, or the verb 'to die', whose translation differs depending on the hierarchical status of the dead or dying person. This subsequently led

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[47] Jespersen, *Language*, p. 436.
[48] Granet, *Das chinesische Denken*, p. 21.
[49] Ibid., p. 25.
[50] Shi Youwei, "Hanyu wenhua yuyinxue xushitan" [On the Real Situation of Chinese Cultural Phonology], in *Shijie Hanyu Jiaoxue*, vol. 4, 1992, pp. 261–264. Standard Chinese is made up of four different tones which serve to differentiate meaning.
[51] Dai Zhaoming, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Daolun*, p. 37.
[52] Jespersen, *Language*, p. 426 and p. 430.

Nakamura to conclude: "... the Chinese esteemed differences of rank more than they valued comprehending a group of related phenomena in a universal [*sic*!]."[53]

The lack of generic terms is mentioned in many cultural linguistic publications, most of which conclude that the Chinese language and Chinese thought prefer the use of concrete terms.[54] Only Chen Jiong criticises this oversimplification of Chinese thought and even so, Chen does not maintain that these prejudices are false, but merely finds them inopportune, since they do not present the Chinese nation in a favourable light, drawing as they do on the work of 'Western' sinologists that have not always been well-disposed towards the Chinese.[55]

Underdeveloped logical thinking or correlational, synthetic thinking versus logical, analytic thinking

The vast majority of experts on 'primitive' cultures agree that our ancestors lacked the capability to think logically. As far as Chinese is concerned, this has traditionally been proved by referring to the language's poor morphology and loose syntax.[56] This view was thereafter adopted by the cultural linguists, and the idea of a synthetic character of 'Eastern' thought can be found throughout the 'soft' disciplines.[57] Oddly enough, cultural linguists do not trace this back to particular intellectual traditions or specific discourse practices, but substantiate it by referring to the language structure, or rather, to the lack of structure. According to cultural linguistics, however, this characteristic enables the Chinese to free themselves of rigid categories, and thus grasp things from a more global perspective. Fundamentally, this oppositional pair correlates closely to the preceding ones, and due to the general and rather vague character of these dichotomies, their components can often be regarded as interchangeable.

Chinese script versus 'Western' alphabet

The Chinese script has always inspired the European imagination, and European researchers again tended to produce daring, if not exoticising, interpretations of it. Frequently, although

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[53] Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India – China – Tibet – Japan*, Honolulu, Hawaii, East-West Center Press, 1966. Of course, there are also numerous examples in European languages which reveal the historical priorities of those using the language, for example the French differentiation between 'fleuve' and 'rivière'.

[54] See for example Dai Zhaoming, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Daolun*, pp. 28ff. (note 8), and Shen Xiaolong, "Cong Han minzu de shikongguan kan Hanyu shishiju de pupailü" [The Arrangement Principles of Chinese Agent Clauses from a View to the Time and Space Perspective of the Han Chinese], in *Yuwen Daobao*, vol. 9, pp. 56–59.

[55] Chen Jiong, "Zhongguo yuyanxue liupai yu Zhongguo wenhua yuyanxue" [The Linguistic Currents in China and Chinese Cultural Linguistics], in *Beifang Luncong*, vol. 2, 1990, pp. 22–28.

[56] Granet, *Das chinesische Denken*, p. 27 (note 42).

[57] See for example Zhang Shichu, "The Comparative Study of East and West Cultures in China in Recent Years", in *Social Sciences in China*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1986, pp. 35–48.

with the exception of highly esteemed philosophers such as Leibniz, the 'Western' alphabet has been presented as the most intelligent writing system and thus as the zenith of script evolution.[58] Some cultural linguists are now turning the tables on these 'Westerners' by drawing on recent neurolinguistic research dealing with the processing of various writing systems in the human brain, in order to maintain that the Chinese writing system functions more efficiently than the "English alphabet."[59] The Chinese script seems to have undergone a general, nationalistically oriented re-evaluation, and

> as a cultural heritage having lasted for over thousands of years [it] is, in the eyes of a growing nationalist lobby, ideally suited to [represent] the uniqueness, even the superiority of the Chinese value system [...] In accordance with the long-term political and economic guidelines of the Beijing leaders, An Zijie[60] and his more or less influential followers have proclaimed that the twenty-first century would be the 'age in which the Chinese script will unfold its power'[61]... In the course of increasing digitalisation and growing networks of information, the new cultural patriots consider the Chinese language and script to be the ideal means of world-wide communication.[62]

To a certain extent, the analysis of the Chinese script is combinable with the preceding oppositional pairs. For example, Cai Jinghao writes that Chinese thought is structured in a way similar to the Chinese script, having a "sense of immediacy" and being of a "holistic" nature.[63]

Intuitive and subjective nature versus objectivity

In the foreword to his volume on cultural linguistics, Shao Jingmin states that intuition has always been a defining characteristic of Chinese philosophy, in contrast to 'Western' linguistics, which operates according to objective rules.[64] Only three years earlier, however,

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[58] See for example Ignace J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing*, second edition, Chicago, University Press, 1963.

[59] See He Jiuying, Hu Shuangbao and Zhang Meng, "Jianlun Hanzi wenhuaxue" [A Simple Discussion of Studies on Script and Culture], in *Beijing Daxue Xuebao (Zhexue Shehui Kexue)*, vol. 6, 1990, pp. 91–98.

[60] An Zijie is a Hong Kong-based businessman and politician known for his patriotism, and is also a lay researcher on the Chinese script.

[61] This quotation is the title of an article by Yuan and Xu; see Yuan Xiaoyuan and Xu Dejiang, Ershiyi shiji – Hanzi fahui weili de shidai [The twenty-first centruy – the age in which the Chinese script will unfold its power], in *Hanzi Wenhua*, vols 1–2, 1989, p. 76.

[62] Kupfer, "Mit Konfuzius auf der Datenautobahn in die Zukunft?", p. 243 (note 24).

[63] Cai Jinghao, "Hanyu yu Zhongguo wenhua" [The Chinese Language and Chinese Culture], in: Gu Jiazu and Lu Sheng, eds, *Yuyan yu Wenhua* [Language and Culture], Shanghai, Shanghai waiyu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996, pp. 147–161, here p. 148.

[64] Shao Jingmin, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Zhongguochao* (note 30).

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he had opposed the arbitrariness which, under the guise of being some kind of 'intuition', had entered Chinese syntax analysis. Indirectly attacking Shen Xiaolong, he complained that "this subjective consciousness, with which language is turned into a piece of clay – you want to knead it this way, knead it that way, you want to explain it this way, explain it that way – is no longer in need of an objective, standardised examination procedure."[65] The concept of 'intuition', as well as the other oppositional pairs laid out above, can be best understood by examining the notion of 'humanism' as conceived by Shen Xiaolong for linguistic analysis.

Humanism versus scientism

Not to be confused with the European definition of the term, 'humanism' in cultural linguistics is the application of a tried and tested philosophical concept dating from the 1980s to the realm of linguistics.[66] Its vagueness is revealed by Shen Xiaolong's definition of 'humanism', and readers are left asking themselves what function this concept is in fact to serve in the field of linguistics. In order to illustrate this point more comprehensively, Shen's definition is presented here in full length:

So-called humanism means that in its analysis and comprehension, the Chinese language is based, in contrast to Western languages, on the subjective consciousness of humans and on the humanistic environment, and less on formal rules; in concrete terms, this humanistic character is expressed through the flexible substance of the Chinese language, through its floating [*sic*!] structure, and through its spirit-integrating methods. In terms of the flexible substance, the language units in Chinese with their size and character are not fixed by rules, but can be like this or like that; depending on the intonation of the context or logical environment, they can be used freely, they can be added and be left out, they can reveal something, but also obscure it. In terms of the floating structure, Chinese sentences, when read out, display a rhythm, and in their arrangement they show a [natural] logic; intonation and grammatical sequences are connected organically and harmonically. In terms of the spirit-integrating methods, Chinese grammar emphasises the way in which the spirit grasps

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[65] Shao Jingmin, "Guanyu Zhongguo wenhua yuyanxue de fansi" [Reflection on Chinese Cultural Linguistics], in *Yuyan Wenzi Yingyong*, vol. 2, 1992, pp. 74–79, here pp. 78-79.
[66] Cf. the discussion in Zi and Zhang: Zi Zhongyun, "The Relationship of Chinese Traditional Culture to the Modernization of China", in *Asian Survey*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1987, pp. 442–458; Zhang Shichu, "The Comparative Study of East and West Cultures" (note 57). Zhao Yiheng speculates that the term 'humanism', first used in China in the 1980s, might have become popular because many Chinese perceived the time after the Cultural Revolution to be a kind of 'renaissance' in the European sense of the word. It is probable that in the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the term was increasingly sinicised and linked to traditonal elements, particularly those from the Confucian tradition.

the form; the syntactic function of expression contains structural patterns, and word meanings contain syntactic functions...[67]

Essentially, the opposition humanism vs. scientism is not a further dimension, but rather the quintessence of the dichotomies mentioned so far, and has the task of polarising and popularising the concepts of 'East' and 'West' as a global oppositional pair.

From a linguistic point of view, Shen's humanism has little to offer in practical terms: although he negates the existence of rules for the Chinese language and wants to replace them with 'humanism' or 'mind', he still operates with traditional grammatical categories in his analyses, using terms such as noun, verb etc.[68] Nevertheless, 'humanism' as a concept has had an immense influence on the discourse of cultural linguistics, and has been taken up repeatedly in various studies within the discipline.

The characteristics of cultural linguistics

The arguments used to criticise 'Western' research on China can be equally held against the general line of reasoning within Chinese cultural linguistics, which, like its 'Western' pendant, functions on the basis of simple equations and simplistic analogies: "Precedence of syntax = orientation towards order, missing subject in the sentence = collectivism, mass nouns instead of countable nouns = massification instead of individualisation etc. [and above all] *(missing) inflection = (missing) reflection*."[69] All these equations imply a correlative deficiency, which, as has been shown, is transformed into an advantage within the discourse of cultural linguistics.[70]

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[67] Shen Xiaolong, "Hanyu renwenxing sixiang san tiyi" [Three proposals for Chinese Humanistic Thought], in *Beifang Luncong*, vol. 1, 1990, pp. 7–15, here p. 7.

[68] For example, Shen Xiaolong, "'Zuozhuan' zhutiju yanjiu" [On the Topic Sentences in the 'Zuozhuan'], in *Zhongguo Yuwen*, vol. 2, 1986, pp. 130–142. This is also criticised by Chen Jiong; see Chen Jiong, "Zhongguo yuyanxue liupai" (note 55).

[69] See Heiner Roetz, *Die chinesische Ethik der Achsenzeit: Eine Rekonstruktion unter dem Aspekt des Durchbruchs zu postkonventionellem Denken*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1992, pp. 34-35. As demonstrated by the quotations from Jespersen, the search for almost mathematically precise formulae to describe the relationship between language and culture is not restricted to research on China, but can be detected in many philological studies on ('primitive') language; see for example Friedrich von Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und die Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Altertumskunde*, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, 1, 1, Amsterdam, Benjamin, 1977 [1808].

[70] Lang extends this list of 'Western' postulates on Chinese deficiencies:
    missing noun inflection and the postulate of an 'ontological indifference';
    missing verb inflection and the postulate of a missing time consciousness;
    missing subject and the postulate of a missing subjectivity;
    'monosyllabic morphology' and the postulate of 'aisthetic' thought;
    monosyllabism and the postulate of missing precision;
    conversion and the postulate of missing precision;
    missing alphabet and the postulate of missing abstraction.

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Cultural linguistic discourse can therefore be seen to possess the following salient characteristics:

Nationalism: China's contributions to the world are emphasised, and the twenty-first century is seen as a turning point, after which Asia and particularly China will play a leading role. The 'West', from which China is to emancipate herself, is blamed for the 'backwardness' that China has suffered so far.

Programmaticism: "It is the responsibility [of cultural linguistics] to investigate how, from the perspective of linguistics, a new Chinese culture can be established."[71] Cultural linguistics is frequently presented as an instrument of cultural construction.

Missionary zeal: Cultural linguistics continues the Chinese struggle as a defender of spiritual values (as opposed to the material achievements of the 'West') in the field of linguistics, and thus not only wants to occupy its own niche in the academic world, but claims (international) leadership.

Anti-'scientism': Cultural linguistics opposes any concept of science determined by typologies and categories. It particularly attacks three theories that form part of the body of 'Western' linguistics: firstly, those categories that have been developed on the basis of the Indo-European languages (such as parts of speech, syntactic functions etc.); secondly, the categorisation of languages into language families according to typological characteristics; and, thirdly, the differentiation between synchronic and diachronic linguistics introduced by structuralist theory. Generally, cultural linguistics is marked by a general opposition to theory building. Thus, Hu Mingyang maintains that orthodox linguistics is living in an ivory tower,[72] and in one article reports on a survey according to which grammar was the most-hated subject for 90 per cent of teachers and students.[73] Dai Zhaoming also recalls the enthusiasm of university students when cultural linguistics showed them that "one can do linguistics like this."[74] Brooding on all the scientific problems that have so far remained unsolved, another linguist, Jin Lixin, laments: "All this research and these debates on such useless [theory] models – nobody knows how much

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See Heribert Lang, *Die chinesische Sprache und das "Sprachliche Relativitätsprinzip"*, dissertation at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt/Main, 1981.

[71] Dai Zhaoming, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Daolun*, p. 31 (note 8).

[72] Hu Mingyang, "Macrolinguistics in China", p. 10 (note 36).

[73] Hu Mingyang, "Lilun yishi he wushi jingshen" [On a Conscious and Pragmatic Attitude], in: Yu Zhihong, *Xiandai Yuyanxue. Lilun Jianshe de Xin Sikao* [Modern Linguistics: New Considerations on Theory Building], Beijing, Yuwen chubanshe, 1996, pp. 17–21.

[74] Dai Zhaoming, *Wenhua Yuyanxue Daolun*, p. 268.

precious time and effort has been wasted by how many grammarians."[75] In this way, cultural linguistics is marketed as a cure-all for a wide variety of theoretical problems – and for problems with theory.

Innovativeness: Despite obvious similarities both with 'Western' linguistic approaches and with neighbouring Chinese disciplines, cultural linguists – or at least the hardliners among them – maintain that their discipline is newly created and entirely independent, and they stress its distinctness from orthodox (both 'Western' and Chinese) linguistics and from other, related disciplines.

Groupism – three-dimensional

In the preceding sections, Chinese cultural linguistics has been interpreted as a local reaction to globalisation processes that is characterised by Occidentalist discourse strategies. An analysis of the structures of argumentation used in the discourse of cultural linguistics has borne out the assumption that cultural linguists employ a reversed Orientalism. In this last section, possible reasons for this choice of strategy will be investigated. What is the cultural linguists' ultimate objective? The opposition between the global and the local seems too general to have a direct impact on the discourse of cultural linguistics. It is therefore necessary to look more closely at the specific socio-political context out of which cultural linguistics emerged.

Why was it that cultural linguistics suddenly prompted such enthusiasm in the mid-1980s, even though a number of studies that could be termed 'cultural linguistic' had already been carried out far earlier? Firstly, the debates taking place most frequently within politics and society at the time show that there was a high demand for topics pertaining to culture. The so-called 'cultural fever', an attempt after the Cultural Revolution and in the course of the Four Modernisations to reduce the population's general loss of orientation and fill the vacuum left by declining ideological stringency, formed ideal conditions for the emergence of cultural linguistics. At the same time, the assumption that both a *Volksgeist* and a homogeneous Chinese culture existed was in line with the official political agenda. The search for a specifically national identity was thought to be so urgent that it was even made a key topic of the seventh five-year plan in 1986.[76] The political reaction to the Tian'anmen incident in 1989 further hardened the nationalist stance of the cultural linguists:

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[75] Jin Lixin, "On the Various Research Approaches towards Grammar" [Lun yufa duowei yanjiu], in: Yu Zhihong, *Xiandai Yuyanxue*, pp. 97-104, here p. 99.

[76] Cf. Beate Geist, *Die Modernisierung der chinesischen Kultur: Kulturdebatte und kultureller Wandel im China der 80er Jahre*, Hamburg, Institut für Asienkunde, 1996, p. 6.

June 4 brought the (pluralistic) debate on culture held in the 1980s to an end. It has been
followed by a prescribed recollection of the long and glorious history and culture of China,
with the unambiguously political goal of counteracting the anti-traditionalism and the
national, historical, and cultural nihilism of the preceding years. Emphasis is put on the
'diffusion of the excellent national culture' (*hongyang minzu youxiu wenhua*). It was
intended to strengthen national self-confidence and national unity – and social stability.[77]

Politically speaking, cultural linguists can be said to be engaged in an "official
Occidentalism" as defined by Chen Xiaomei: "the Western Other is construed by a Chinese
imagination, not for the purpose of dominating the West, but in order to discipline, and
ultimately to dominate, the Chinese self at home."[78] However, it would be erroneous to term
the cultural linguists spineless or call them marionettes, whose greatest wish is to execute the
will of the political leadership. Instead, one has to ask what personal interests of these
academics were at play when they proclaimed the new discipline of cultural linguistics. The
"historical necessity of cultural linguistics" as formulated by Shen Xiaolong gives some
intimation of these:

> The emergence of such a scientific school is not the result of one or two people. It has
> appeared on the threshold of the second century of modern Chinese linguistics, it has
> emerged from the cultural fever triggered by the Chinese modernisation process, and its
> exponents consist of a group of linguists who were sent to the country for ten years [i.e.,
> during the Cultural Revolution], as well as of a whole generation of linguists who were
> deprived of a university education. All this expresses poignantly the historical necessity of
> Chinese cultural linguistics.[79]

This sense of deprivation and the calls to compensate for it shapes the cultural linguists'
self-image, as, at the time of the discipline's emergence, they were almost all of the same age:
too young to have attained an academic position before the Cultural Revolution, but too old to
start their academic education in the modernisation period that followed it. The discipline that

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[77] Ibid., p. 217.
[78] Chen Xiaomei, *Occidentalism. A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, New York, Oxford, Oxford
University Press, 1995, p. 5.
[79] Shen Xiaolong, "Outlines for Chinese Cultural Linguistics" [Zhongguo wenhua yuyanxue lungang], in *Beifang
Luncong*, vol. 5, 1988, pp. 5-13, here p. 5.

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resulted from these experiences might be compared to China's so-called 'scar literature', and it certainly serves to create and guarantee identity. By setting up a discipline that is presented as both important and superior, cultural linguists have succeeded in establishing a collective identity through which they could articulate and eventually achieve their own academic ambitions. Thinking back to Wolf's concept of groupism, this means that the group construct 'China versus the world' is complemented by another groupism, namely 'the victims (of the Cultural Revolution) versus the unscathed'.

The existence of these two groupings must have been felt all the more poignantly when the 'homecomers' entered the scene, i.e. those academics educated abroad and attracted by lucrative offers of higher posts in the academic field as part of the modernisation policy in the 1980s. Not only could these homecomers boast of experience and qualifications that had been denied to those forced to remain in China, but the import of theories completely new to the common Chinese academic because of China's isolation from the rest of the world during the Cultural Revolution, revealed only too painfully the unhappy fate of Chinese academia. These theories included new perspectives on culture and language, some of which were subsequently appropriated by the cultural linguists; they also included the postmodern theories mentioned above, which, having dismissed a Eurocentric perspective in favour of more marginal groups, were ideally suited to reflect and verbalise the cultural linguists' beliefs. This use of theory was additionally supported by a general Chinese predilection for employing theories as weapons within the academic arena: "... the hue and cry over theory in China is part of a complex battle for intellectual and ideological supremacy (*zhengduo huayuquan*) launched by up-and-coming younger academics."[80]

Yet another groupism can be added to those of 'China vs. the world' and 'victims vs. the unscathed', namely 'the newly created academic field vs. the orthodox establishment' (in Bourdieu's sense).[81] This groupism could explain the vehemence with which cultural linguists attack orthodox linguistics, while continuing to make use of conventional linguistic tools. It also accounts for their endeavours to stress the differences between their and other, obviously connected fields, since only this difference can legitimise their claim to having constructed an independent discipline. The outcome of these battles decides on the distribution of socially and financially attractive academic teaching and research posts as well as of other resources attached to these positions. By drawing on nationalistic, Occidentalist, and politically

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[80] Geremie R. Barmé, "To Screw Foreigners Is Patriotic: China's Avant-Garde Nationalists", in *The China Journal*, vol. 34, 1995, pp. 209–234, here p. 218.
[81] Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1984.

opportune structures of argumentation, cultural linguists skilfully transform the academics with whom they are competing for desirable resources into politically dubious subjects. From a historical-comparative sociology of science perspective,[82] one might speak of 'discourse coalitions', of 'alliances', or of "sometimes intense interactions between actors from different fields of social activity, from science as well as from politics."[83] Like other disciplines in the social, human, and even natural sciences, therefore, cultural linguistics has not developed according to any teleological rule or automatic logic inherent in the discipline's nature, but has emerged from a concrete social and institutional context, draws on particular intellectual traditions, and is shaped by the specific relationship between the government and intellectuals (or state and university).

These three groupisms illustrate the complexity of superficially anti-'Western', anti-globalist, or nationalist phenomena like cultural linguistics in China. It has been demonstrated that the motivation of the cultural linguists in establishing their field cannot be reduced to one factor alone, but has to be seen as a combination of individual identities, academic ambitions, and an Occidentalism appropriated and reversed to serve the needs of nationalistic theory-building. All this reflects the modern concept of culture as a heterogeneous pool of resources and strategies that "can be used when suitable and set aside when not."[84] Cultural linguists, who at first glance appear so straightforward and almost helpless in constructing their illusionary world of indigenous theories, on the contrary turn out to be extremely skilful in choosing and implementing these different strategies. By carefully examining current political preferences and popular sentiments, they are able to succeed in transforming their own disadvantaged biography into a strategic advantage.

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[82] Cf. Björn Wittrock, P. Wagner and H. Wollman, "Social Science and the Modern State: Policy Knowledge and Political Institutions in Western Europe and the United States", in: Peter Wagner et al., eds, *Social Sciences and Modern States. National Experiences and Theoretical Crossroads*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 28–85.

[83] Jürgen Schriewer, "Educational Studies in Europe", in: Elizabeth Sherman Swing, J. Schriewer und François Orivel, eds, *Problems and Prospects in European Education*, Westport, Connecticut and London, Praeger, 2000, pp. 72–95, here pp. 73-74.

[84] Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn, eds, *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 10.