Teach Yourself Chinese - how? The history of Chinese self-instruction manuals for English speakers, 1900-2010[1]

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Abstract This paper examines the history of self-instructional manuals of (Mandarin) Chinese published in Britain between 1900 and 2010, one of the main ways of learning Chinese for most of the 20th century in Britain, when Chinese instruction was virtually non-existent in schools and barely available in adult education classes. It thus contributes to the history of the prolific but under-researched genre of teach-yourself language manuals. More importantly, it aims to promote critical reflection on the aims and means of teaching Chinese to English-speaking learners today, by examining how the authors of such manuals tackled the task in the past. After an overview of the history of Chinese language learning in the UK, the article examines the differing approaches to teaching Chinese in these texts (particularly varied in the first half of the 20th century), with particular focus on pedagogical approaches to the spoken and written language, to the grammar of Mandarin Chinese (including claims made about Chinese grammar, terminology and concepts used, and the presentation of measure words), and to representing Chinese culture. The paper concludes with some thoughts on how knowledge of the past can inform critical reflection on current materials and practice in Chinese as a Foreign Language.

Keywords: History of Language Learning and Teaching (HoLLT), Chinese as a Foreign Language, Mandarin Chinese, language pedagogy, history of linguistics.

摘要　　这篇论文考察了从 1900 年到 2010 年在英国的汉语（普通话）自学教程出版史。二十世纪的英国，自学是学习汉语的主要途径——通常，汉语学习者不管是在学校还是在成教班，都很难得到他人指导。在这种情况下，众多汉语自学教程"应运而生"，而对此类教材未有充分研究。更重要的是，本文旨在通过考察当时教程如何着手教授汉语，促进当今对对外（英）

汉语教学的批判性反思。本文回顾了汉语学习在英国的历史，考察了汉语教学（尤其是二十世纪前半叶）的不同方法，并着重审视了以下方面的教学法：对外汉语口语和写作、汉语语法（包括有关语法的一些论点、专有名词和概念，以及量词的教学）和中国文化。 对于过去的回顾如何能够促进当今我们对汉语国际教育教材和实践的反思，本文提出了一些想法。
关键词： 语言教学史 汉语作为外语 普通话 语言教学法 语言学史

1. Introduction

> "We hope to see the day when a knowledge of the Chinese language will be as common an accomplishment, as a knowledge of German, French, Spanish, or Italian, is to-day." (Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904: ix)

Today the learning of Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language internationally, as both an industry and the object of research, shows some signs of rivalling that of English Language Teaching (see for example Chen, Wang et al. 2010; Everson & Xiao 2011, Duff et al. 2013). Numerous multimedia packages, websites and podcasts promise the independent learner the possibility of successful Chinese language-learning – the Beijing based Pop-Up Chinese is perhaps one of the best-known. With easy access not just to traditional written materials and exercises, but also to audio, video, and user-friendly smartphone dictionaries such as Pleco, complete with the ability to look up unknown characters using handwriting recognition, it is, today, perhaps just about possible to learn Mandarin without a teacher. Yet the promise "Teach Yourself Chinese" has a much longer history, and this paper examines some of the books that have made that promise to English speakers since 1900. My aim is threefold: first, to add a 20th-century chapter to the history of how Westerners have learned Chinese (see, e.g., Chappell & Peyraube 2014, Gianninoto 2014), and so, more widely to the history of European-Chinese relations; second, to add to our knowledge of the still very under-researched and yet enduringly popular genre of the self-instructional language learning manual (see Sørensen 2010, 2011, Franz 2005, Langer 2008). Third, it is a step towards writing the history of language learning and teaching, which – for the UK as for most parts of the world, and for Chinese as for most languages – is a history that has yet to be written (see McLelland & Smith 2014); the establishment of a research network on History of Language Learning and Teaching (HoLLT; see www.hollt.net) under the aegis of AILA (International Association of Applied Linguistics) attests to growing recognition of the need to

understand the past. For language educators, the past is like another place – not quite a 'foreign' country as L.P. Hartley famously put it, but a 'different place' where some of the basic premises may remain unchanged. So examining the past allows a kind of comparative education, and provides a wider context to discussions about language teaching aims, policy and practice today. In this paper, after an overview of the status of Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language in Britain (Section 2), I introduce the self-instructional manuals that form the corpus for this study, all published between 1900 and 2010 (Section 3). In Section 4, I analyse how these texts present Mandarin Chinese to their learners: How difficult is it and why is it worth learning? (4.1); What approaches are experimented with in the early part of the century? (4.2); How are the challenges of script and tone tackled? (4.3); What is the place of Chinese grammar in teaching, and how is it presented? (4.4); How is Chinese culture represented? (4.5). I conclude with some remarks on how examining this past can help us reflect on teaching materials and practice today

Let me begin with four caveats. First, where I draw comparisons to the teaching of European languages in Britain, it is not in order to 'judge' the teaching of Chinese against approaches assumed *a priori* to be superior, but in order to highlight ways in which the overlooked history of learning this non-European language differs from that of learning 'traditional' foreign languages like French and German, on which the dominant narrative about language learning and teaching to date is based. Second, although the post-1990 texts in my sample are accompanied by audio materials which certainly help the independent learner of Chinese, there is no space to analyse them here – my analysis concentrates on the written texts available since 1900. Third, with one exception, I have restricted my study to the learning of Mandarin Chinese rather than Cantonese, for two main reasons. First, although Cantonese Chinese was relevant to the British through their interest in Hong Kong throughout the 20th century (as a lively publishing history of Cantonese textbooks in Hong Kong attests), in Britain it appears to have been even less learnt than Mandarin – it is significant that according to COPAC (the combined catalogue of British academic libraries), a *Teach Yourself Cantonese* was not published until 1970 (Bruce 1970), twenty-three years after the *Teach Yourself Chinese* (i.e. Mandarin Chinese) by Williamson (1947); and even some British officials in Hong Kong seem to have learnt Mandarin rather than Cantonese: my copy of Williamson's book was owned by a senior police offer in Hong Kong. Second, it is Mandarin, not Cantonese, that is taught in British education today, so it makes sense to *start* with the history of learning Mandarin. The history of Cantonese learning by English speakers would certainly reward study – indeed, the first relevant book published in the

20th century in Britain, written in the heyday of phonetics in British language learning, clamours for attention. It is a phonetic reader in Cantonese, a collaboration between Kwing Tong Woo and the famous phonetician Daniel Jones (Jones & Kwing Tong Woo 1912). Given the limited space here, however, I must leave the task of tackling the history of Cantonese teaching and learning to others. My final caveat is that I am not, myself, a teacher of Chinese, nor a language pedagogy specialist, so this paper does not claim to present a recipe for successful teaching today based on the lessons of the past (Amongst a prolific literature in materials development and in pedagogy, key text include Tomlinson 2011; Li Quan 2006 for Chinese; Ellis, Shintani et al. 2014). I hope, however, that it will stimulate reflection on current teaching materials and practice – when future generations come to write about us as the past, what will they write?

Before turning to my analysis, the following section outlines the context in which the self-instructional manuals were produced, with a brief overview of the past and present status of Chinese as a foreign language in Britain.

2.   The history and current status of learning Chinese in Britain

The first grammar of Chinese for European learners, Martini's *Grammatica sinica* appeared in 1696,[2] but it was not until the early decades of the 19th century that the first manuals of Chinese for English speakers appeared,[3] beginning with Marshman's *Clavis Sinica* (1814) and Morrison's *A grammar of the Chinese language* (Morrison 1815, rpt. 2008).[4] Over the course of the 19th century, when French and German, the languages of Britain's two powerful near neighbors, became established in British schools and universities (see McLelland 2015a,b), Chinese Studies, by contrast, remained marginal at best owing its existence al-

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[2] The *Grammatica sinica* by the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini (1614-1661) was the first grammar of Mandarin Chinese by any Westerner (see Paternicò 2011); in 1696, it "became the first Mandarin Chinese grammar to be printed" (Gianninoto 2014, p. 139, n.2, following Paternicò, 2011: 232). The earliest Western grammar of *any* variety of Chinese language dates from the first quarter of the 17th century (1620 *Arte de la lengua chio chiu,* probably written by a Spanish missionary; see Klöter 2011).

[3] The British architect John Webb (1611-1672) had written the earliest treatise on the Chinese language in any European language, *An Historical Essay Endeavoring a Probability That the Language of the Empire of China Is the Primitive Language* (1669), suggesting that Chinese was the language spoken before the confusion of tongues at Babel (the story told in the Bible to explain the diversity of human languages, Genesis 11:1-9). However, Webb had never visited China, nor did he have any knowledge of the language, and his remarks were based on the reports of Jesuit missionaries. For comparison, first grammar of German aimed at English learners was published in 1680 (Aedler 1680; see Van der Lubbe 2007, McLelland 2015).

[4] See Chappell & Peyraube (2014); on Morrison's dictionary, published over the years 1815-1823, see Yang 2014).

most entirely to Protestant Christian missionary activities.[5] British Chinese Studies was first established with the appointment in 1837 of Samuel Kidd as Professor of the Chinese Language and Literature at University College, London, which was seeking to differentiate itself from Oxford and Cambridge by focussing on "new" subjects (Weber 2006: 52);[6] Kidd, like Marshman and Morrison, had learnt his Chinese as a Protestant missionary (Douglas 2004). The early history of Sinology in Britain, carried by British men who had gained their expertise through long residence in China, is thus quite different to that of some of the other language disciplines – British German Studies, by contrast, was almost entirely in the hands of German emigrés in the 19th century.[7]

Represented in only a few universities until the late 20th century,[8] Chinese remained virtually invisible in school education too, where "Modern Languages" meant in effect French and German for all of the 19th and most of the 20th century (see McLelland 2015).[9] However, since the reforms to China's economy under Deng Xiaoping and with China's growing economic power, the importance of teaching and learning of Chinese in Britain has increasingly been recognized. In a recent review of foreign languages provision in England (Worton 2009), Chinese was one of four languages (along with Spanish, Arabic and Russian) that respondents "felt to have the brightest future" (Worton 2009: para. 158); Chinese was one of three languages (along with Arabic and Japanese) reported to be in demand "for future career purposes rather than for reasons of purely cultural interest". A Confederation of British Industry report (2009) found that 38% of firms were seeking speakers of "Mandarin/Cantonese" (!), well ahead of Russian

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[5] Both Marshman and Morrison were missionaries. Marshman had spent his career in India (though never China) with the Baptist Missionary Society, and produced the first Chinese translation of the Bible (1821), the result of fifteen years' work. Robert Morrison was the first Protestant missionary in China (for further biographical details, see Yang 2014).

[6] It was only several decades later that Oxford and Cambridge established Chairs in Chinese (Oxford 1876, Cambridge 1888). The School of Oriental Studies of the University of London was not founded until the 20th century (1916), and it was not until the 1940s that the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Oxford University offered their students a full "Honours" degree in Chinese.

[7] See Flood (1999), Weber (2012, 2013). The trend continued in 19th-century German language teaching in schools too, where Otto Siepmann and Walter Rippmann were leading figures; see McLelland (2012).

[8] The UK's universities admissions website (UCAS) yields 30 hits for Chinese Studies in Britain. This is far less than the 51 for German Studies, 69 for French, and 70 for Spanish – but, notably, nearly twice the number for Russian (17), another major world language which, like Chinese, is not widely learnt at school.

[9] Even Spanish, which has today now overtaken German as the second foreign language in schools, marshalled only tiny numbers of candidates at examinations in the 19th century (see, for example, the figures given by Ortmanns (1993: 34).

and Spanish (21% and 28%). This growing belief in the importance of Chinese has yet to be matched by educational provision. At the GCSE examinations (General Certificate of School Education, taken by pupils aged 16) in 2012-13, only 2600 entrants took Chinese, i.e. less than 1% of the total who took any modern language (301500) (see Department of Education 2014). Of those 2600 entrants, 97% achieved a "good" grade (between A* and C), compared to 71% for any modern language, and 70% and 75% for French and German respectively. This discrepancy suggests that the examination was overwhelmingly taken by learners with a Chinese background, and indeed a curriculum guide for Chinese published in 2007 explicitly presents Chinese as a "community language" (Thompson et al. 2007). The number of school pupils taking Chinese as a foreign language in the UK is evidently still extremely small, despite all the rhetoric about the perceived importance of Mandarin. Chinese is, then, still an "exotic" language for the average English speaker in the UK, but one whose growing importance has been recognized.

3. Self-instruction language manuals of Chinese, 1900-2010[10]

The turn of the 20th century marked both the end of an era and the dawn of a new one in developing the profile of Chinese Studies in Britain. On the one hand, 1903 saw the final (third) edition of Wade's landmark textbook of Chinese for English-speaking learners, the *Progressive Course designed to assist the student of Colloquial Chinese*, originally published in 1867 for a highly specialized kind of learner, "Consular students", "student interpreters" in the British Legation in Peking (see Wade & Hillier 1903: publisher's preface).[11] Meanwhile, books for a new kind of learner of Chinese began to emerge, aimed for the first time at a much less pre-selected public, who sought to learn Chinese by self-study for "self-improvement" rather than pressing practical need.[12] Given the marginal

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[10] I use the term *manual* here in the sense that it has generally been used in the history of language learning and teaching – to describe any kind of book that could be used by a learner, with or without a teacher, to learn languages. I avoid the term *textbook* because, in the British context at least, the term often implies a text designed for a prescribed curriculum; self-instructional books do not fall into this category. On definitions of textbooks and approaches to textbook analysis, see Issitt (2004) and further references there.

[11] It was based on Wade (1859). A detailed analysis and comparison of this text in its different versions, though a desideraturm, is beyond the scope of this paper.

[12] The self-instructional manual is a 20th century phenomenon. Until the establishment of foreign languages in schools in some parts of Europe from around 1800 (in Britain only from the 1830s, see Proescholdt 1991), a distinction between self-instruction manuals and textbooks for use with a teacher was an artificial one. The 19th century saw the emergence of manuals explicitly aimed at the self-taught learner – for example English-language manuals were aimed at emigrants to the USA from Scandinavia (Sørensen 2010, 2011) and

status of Chinese, such a self-instructional manual might well have been the first and main resource for British people who wanted and/or needed to learn Chinese, with or without guidance from a more or less qualified tutor or teacher at an evening class. In fact I have found no reference at all to the teaching of Chinese in the journal *Adult Education* up to the 1970s, where French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian all feature – this does not discount the possibility that evening classes in Chinese were available in some locations, but they must have been very rare. All this makes Chinese self-instructional manuals important documents in the history of Anglo-Chinese relations and in the history of Chinese as a foreign language in Britain.

My sample (Table 1) includes all the very few self-instructional manuals of Mandarin Chinese available in the UK up until the 1970s. Thereafter, the number of available texts for learning Chinese increases, together with growing availability of adult education classes in Chinese; my sample includes representatives from the three best-known series, the *Teach Yourself* series (Hodder & Stoughton), the *Colloquial* series (Routledge) and the newer *Breakthrough* series (Macmillan), all explicitly intended to be usable by learners without a teacher (though also marketed as suitable for use in a class). With the exception of the first volume in the sample, all deal with Mandarin Chinese. The exception, *Chinese Made Easy* (1904), is included because it is the earliest exponent of the teach-yourself Chinese genre that I have found,[13] and its authors faced the same challenges as those

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from Germany (Franz 2005, Langer 2008), some explicitly holding out the possibility that one might learn the language during the long sea voyage (e.g. Woodbury 1849, Elwell 1855; Titles (here translated into English) included: *Help Yourself! Key to learning to speak and write the English Language independently*; *Self-help in English: a Grammar for those who in a short Time want to acquire Knowledge of the English Language* ; *Complete Norwegian-Danish Grammar. Almost for the Use of Non-students and by Self-teachin*g; *Easy and comprehensible Guide for Emigrants and Others who in a short Time want to learn to understand and make oneself understood in the English Language* ; see Sørensen 2011). However, the evidence suggests that "aspirational" self-instruction manuals – for self-improvement and possible career advancement rather than for pressing practical need – are a phenomenon of the 20th century, aimed at a population amongst whom the majority had experienced elementary education, but no more.

[13] The first author, Brooks Brouner, appears on the title page as A.B., M.D. (i.e. Bachelor of Arts and Medical Doctor); his co-author Fung Yuet Mow (or, in some catalogues, Yüeh Mao Fêng) was "Chinese missionary in the City of New York"; I have been unable to ascertain any further details. The …. *Made Easy* title was a popular one from at least the mid-seventeenth century onwards, for example *The carpenters rule made easie* (Darling 1658), *Measuring Made Easy* (Good 1724), *Chess Made Easy* (Franklin 1800, 3rd ed.). Although the authors of *Chinese Made Easy* resided in New York and it was published by Brill in Leiden, a review in *The Monist* (Vol. 17, No. 2, April, 1907, pp. 314-16), attests that it was used in Britain too, where it was published by Macmillan, priced at 6 shillings and sixpence.

confronted by authors of Mandarin Chinese manuals. Two self-instructional manuals for Mandarin appeared within ten years of *Chinese Made Easy*: Hillier's *The Chinese Language and How to Learn it* (1907),[14] and Darroch's *Chinese Self-Taught* (1914).[15] Neville J. Whymant's *Colloquial Chinese (Northern)* appeared in 1922;[16] *Teach Yourself Chinese* was published by the English Universities Press in 1947. Its author, Henry Raymond Williamson, had, like Darroch, been a missionary, and had spent the years 1908-1926 in Shanxi province for the Baptist Missionary Society. These men, though they in some cases became teachers and professors of Chinese, their background was quite different to that of the professional language (French and German) teachers brought together in Britain in the Modern Languages Association; rather, they became authors of manuals as a result of having lived in China and learnt the language there.

The Chinese revolution (1949) followed hard on the heels of Williamson's 1947 *Teach Yourself* Chinese volume, and no further self-instructional manuals seem to have appeared until the reprint of the same volume in 1979, presumably a hasty response to the softening of relations between China and the West that began with Nixon's visit in 1978. Growing interest in Chinese from this period is reflected in a completely new edition of Whymant's *Colloquial Chinese* (originally published 1922) in 1982, authored by an Anglo-Chinese team from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London. It is an excellent textbook of Chinese, but unlike Whymant's and Kan's versions (Whymant 1922, Kan 1995), it is not suitable for the average adult learner. It proceeds at a fast pace, and makes use of a good deal of sophisticated linguistic terminology (e.g. *morpheme, graph*) and accurate phonological characterizations

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[14] Hillier is described on the title page of the second edition of this volume (1910) as "Sir Walter Hillier, K.C.M.G., C.B. Late Professor of Chinese, King's College London, Formerly Chinese Secretary to H.M.'s Legation at Peking and sometime H.M.'s Consul-General in Korea." He had co-authored the second edition of Wade's *Progressive Course designed to assist the student of Colloquial Chinese* (1867, 1886, 3rd ed. published 1903).

[15] John Darroch had spent many years working in China as a missionary and educator. He is described on the title page of the second edition (1910) as "John Darroch, Litt.D., Chairman of the Executive Committee of the [i.e. missionary] Educational Association of China; General Agent of the Religious Tract Society in China" – he was later awarded an O.B.E. Originally from Scotland, he served as a missionary in Shanxi (where he worked for a university) and Jiangsu provinces, and in Shanghai, where he also managed a street construction, for a while known as Darroch Road (now Doulun Road in Shanghai) (see *Chinese Recorder*, Volume 72, published by the Presbyterian Mission Press, 1941).

[16] Whymant is described on the title page as "Lecturer in Chinese and Japanese, School of Oriental Studies, University of London; Sometime Sir John Francis Davis Chinese Scholar, University of Oxford; Author of Chinese Coolie Songs, etc., etc."

of Chinese sounds (e.g. *c* as an "unaspirated voiceless dental sibilant affricate", p. 8). Presumably used as a set text at SOAS, T'ung & Pollard's text continued to be reprinted many times (1987, 1988, 1991, twice in 1994, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004), but by the 1990s, new self-instructional manuals were long overdue. A completely new edition of *Teach Yourself Chinese* in 1991 by Elizabeth Scurfield (who had co-founded the Chinese department at the University of Westminster in 1974 "at the tender age of 23 and brought new ideas and enthusiasm to its creation"; Scurfield 1991: 17) marked the start of a new wave, followed by new titles in the *Colloquial* and *Breakthrough* series too (Kan 1995, Meek & Mao 1999). In the 1990s alone, at least six self-instructional texts appeared – as many as had appeared in the preceding 90 years of the 20th century (see Table 1), including a proliferation of manuals specializing in particular aspects of learning Chinese, especially the script or the culture (e.g. Scurfield & Song 1999; Wilkinson 2002, 2004), though also, for example, in Chinese for the phone (*Teach Yourself Phone Mandarin Chinese*, Kan 2008). Scurfield's later co-author Lianyi Song taught at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Dr Qian Kan, the author of the 1995 updated *Colloquial Chinese* and, at the time, Head of Chinese at the Open University, previously at Cambridge and Lancaster, was the first Chinese native speaker who was sole author of a manual of this kind. She was later followed by Catherine Hua Xiang, whose *Mastering Chinese* (Xiang 2010) I have chosen as an example of a very recent title. It is the successor title, with the same publisher, to *Breakthrough Chinese* (Meek & Mao 1999, not reprinted), and its preface explicitly states it "can be used by independent learners or in a classroom setting".

1.	1904	*Chinese Made Easy*, by Walter Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (Cantonese, rather than Mandarin)
2.	1907	*The Chinese language and how to learn it: a manual for beginners*, by (Sir) Walter Hillier (followed by a second volume in 1909); in this paper I cite the second edition (1910)
3.	1914	*Chinese self-taught by the Natural Method. With phonetic pronunciation. Thimm's system* by John Darroch (O.B.E.). Two volumes: 1. *Syllabary and pronunciation*; 2. *Chinese grammar self-taught* (first published in 1922)
4.	1922	*Colloquial Chinese (Northern)* by A. Neville J. Whymant
5.	1947	*Teach Yourself Chinese,* by Henry Raymond Williamson
6.	1979	*Teach Yourself Chinese*. A reprint of the 1947 text, identical

		apart from minor alterations in the introduction
7.	[1982	*Colloquial Chinese* by Ping-Cheng T'ung and David E. Pollard – not suitable for average adult learners]
8.	1991	*Teach Yourself Chinese. A complete course for Beginners.* A completely new edition, by Elizabeth Scurfield
9.	1995	*Colloquial Chinese. The complete course for beginners*, by Qian Kan
10.	1996	*Beginner's Chinese: an easy introduction* by Elizabeth Scurfield & Lianyi Song
11.	1999	*Complete Mandarin Course* by Scurfield (revised version of 1991 *Teach Yourself Chinese* volume)
12.	1999	*Beginner's Chinese Script* by Scurfield & Song (3 editions between 1999 & 2003)
13.	1999	*Breakthrough Chinese. The successful way to speak and understand Mandarin Chinese* by Catherine Meek and Yan Mao
14.	2002	*Chinese language, life & culture* by Kenneth Wilkinson. Republished 2004 as *World cultures: China*
15.	2010	*Read and write Chinese script,* by Scurfield and Song (new edition of *Beginner's Chinese Script*)
16.	2010	*Mastering Chinese. The complete course for beginners*, by Catherine Hua Xiang

Table 1: An overview of some self-instruction manuals of Chinese, 1900-2010

4. Pedagogical approaches in self-instructional manuals of Chinese

4.1 Making the case for Chinese: which Chinese to learn, and how hard will it be?

> The intention is that anyone with an interest in linguistic studies, for the sake of hobby or what not, may gain, with the assistance of this book a knowledge of the genius of the Chinese language colloquial and written." (Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904, "Introduction" by Herbert A. Giles, p. [v]).

Authors of the first self-instructional manuals of Chinese in the early decades of the 20th century still faced the basic question of defining the task: which kind of Chinese to learn? The question was not just which variety to teach – by definition,

the books in my sample after *Chinese Made Easy* all chose Mandarin.[17] Another question was whether to focus on the written or spoken language. For Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow and, to a lesser extent, Hillier,[18] the emphasis lies on the classical written language, but the later manuals of Darroch, Whymant, Williamson and beyond all prioritized the colloquial language.[19] Whymant equates "Colloquial Chinese" with "Kuan Hua proper", one of five styles of Chinese, and the one "essential to be attacked" (Whymant 1922: 13).[20] Williamson (1947: 3) similarly characterizes the language of his dialogues as "phrases and sentences as they are spoken by Chinese of average intelligence today." Meek & Mao (1999) sum up the consensus of the second half of the 20th century in preferring the spoken form of the language, for "there is not a lot of point in knowing the Chinese characters if you can't order a cup of coffee!" (Meek & Mao 1999: iv).

Having made the case for their chosen variety of Chinese, authors seek to reassure their readers that learning the language is achievable and rewarding. There is a change over the century, from presenting Chinese as a fiendish challenge to stretch the mind (Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904), to something that anyone can learn (Xiang 2010). Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904: ix) emphasize the intellectual reward of learning Chinese, a language with a venera-

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[17] For example, Darroch (1914: 1) informed his readers that of 400 million Chinese, probably 350 million spoke Mandarin; in the accompanying grammar published in 1922, he wrote that Mandarin was "the language spoken by seven-tenths of the population and now commonly called 'pu tung hwa' (current speech)" (Darroch 1922: preface, no p.n.).

[18] Hillier at least partly aimed his work at students preparing for civil service or armed forces examinations. He relates with wry amusement a sentence he was himself required to translate in his first examination after twelve months of study, conducted by (British consular official) Sir Robert Hart (1835-1911): "The melancholy wailing of the whistles carried by the pigeons as they wheel in mid air reminds one of the souls of the departed roaming about in space seeking for a resting place" (Hillier 1909 [i.e. Vol. II]: 256). Hillier did also expect his readers to be tested on idiomatic Chinese however – the other sentence he recollects from his own examination was the idiom "let the cat out of the bag" (p. 256).

[19] A different question again, though not one posed by the self-instructional manuals, was what kind of written Chinese to teach. Creel et al's *Newspaper Chinese,* published in the midst of World War II, was written in recognition of the need for Americans able to read not just classical Chinese but also modern Chinese newspapes; it was "a direct result of the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941" (Creel et al. 1943: v), presumably in order to equip Americans to follow the Chinese perspective on contemporary affairs.

[20] His full list is "*Wen Li* – Used by Scholars. 2. *Kuan Hua Proper*. –   spoken by the general well-educated public and by officials. 3. *Kuan Hua Patois*. – Spoken by the lower class generally; is No. 2 interspersed with localisms and replete with slang and slurred pronunciations. 4. *The Classical Written Style*. – As extant in the days of Confucius, and still the sine qua non for University aspirants. 5. *The Epistolary Style*. – Used solely in writing letters, etc." (Whymant 1922: 12-13).

ble pedigree, and make a virtue out of its challenges:

> to acquire it, gives as much mental training as do many of the subjects found in a college curriculum. There is something fascinating in the thought that in acquiring a modern language (i.e. Chinese) we are at the same time acquiring a language more ancient than that of Athens or Rome; a language which is unique, in that it is known to at least a third of the world's population; moreover it is the only live language extant that antedates the Christian era" [presumably the authors mean only languages with a substantial written history].

They enthuse that learning the writing system "provides mental gymnastics quite unequalled by the learning of any other foreign language known to us". Hillier (1910: 17, 19) likewise emphasizes the difficulty of learning Chinese, but in terms rather less encouraging to the hobby learner: "Theoretically, Chinese colloquial is not a difficult language to acquire"; "any one who will take the trouble can acquire a sufficient vocabulary at the end of a few months to make his ordinary wants known, or to travel anywhere without the aid of an interpreter". However, to get beyond this "elementary stage" the learner must be prepared for "some very up-hill work" (Hillier 1910: 19). One difficulty, apart from that of the pronunciation, was the gulf between spoken and written varieties of the language – one would never read aloud a book "of high-class character"; conversely, colloquial Chinese was, Hillier said, not normally written down except in "a few novels" or in minutes of a court of law; in general, in writing down a conversation, a Chinese person would "inevitably transpose it into literary form" (Hillier 1910: 22). Hillier concludes, then, that "the popular estimate of the supreme difficulty of the language is not far wide of the mark" (Hillier 1910: 22). While living in the country for two to three years would suffice to acquire a good working knowledge of French or German, an English speaker would need at least five or six years to achieve the same level in Chinese. Indeed, "it is not too much to say that not ten per cent of Europeans who have devoted several years to the study of the language speak really well; that it requires from five to ten years constant practice to speak fluently, and that there is probably hardly a living instance of a European speaking Chinese so well as to be undistinguishable from a native" (Hillier 1910: 18). Hillier expects considerable commitment, therefore, noting with some asperity: "There is probably no short cut to a knowledge of any language, and certainly none to Chinese. If a student will not take the small amount of trouble necessary to master eight hundred to a thousand symbols he had better leave Chinese alone" (Hillier 1910: 24).

Whymant (1922: iv) also admits the difficulties of Chinese: "the Written Style is undoubtedly the most difficult study in the world – so difficult, in fact,

that no European has so far succeeded in producing a composition therein which could earn the approbation of a native", and so, "There is an idea generally prevalent that only the genius with a lifetime of leisure can afford to devote himself to the study of the Chinese language". For that reason, Whymant's volume is intended to introduce the reader only to the "Colloquial Style" (and only in romanized form). This easier style "may be learned by any one with ordinary acumen and perseverance in the same period that one devotes to the study of elementary Latin, Greek, or French Classics […] Many men of ordinary ability who found it impossible to acquire even the slightest knowledge of the written tongue have been fluent speakers of the colloquial".

Williamson (1947) aims to teach the colloquial language "as spoken by Chinese of average intelligence today", so as "to meet the needs of a student making his first contacts with the Chinese people" (Williamson 1947: 3). Although, unlike Whymant, he expects his reader to master written characters, he is more encouraging than Hillier: "In conclusion let me say that anyone of average intelligence and perseverance can gain a working knowledge of Chinese. So in the words of one of the Chinese proverbs which you will find in the book: 'Don't mind going slow, as long as you keep going'" (Williamson 1947: 5). Thirty odd years later, Scurfield's encouragement of her readers is couched in very similar terms:

> Most people imagine Chinese must be a very difficult language to learn. However, […] you may well find that spoken Chinese is not as difficult as you had thought – you may even find it comparatively easy! The written language is a different kettle of fish entirely. The Chinese have a saying: *Xue dao lao, huo dao lao, hai you sanfen xue bu dao* Study reach old, live reach old, still have three-tenths study not reach. This is certainly true as far as Chinese is concerned, but the rewards are great. It will take time, but if you can keep your mind open, you will be surprised at the results! (Scurfield 1991**:** vii-viii)

The same requirement of merely "average intelligence" applies to learning the script: "Anybody of average intelligence and with a reasonable visual memory who is prepared to put in the necessary time *can* master the Chinese script" (Scurfield & Song 1999: xiv). This is a noticeable change from Hillier's assessment, who had noted that even those who passed "a severe competitive examination before admission [to the Chinese Consular Service], and must therefore be above the average standard of education and ability" took years to achieve a working knowledge of the language (Hillier 1910: 18). By 2010, Xiang – while conceding that the pronunciation and writing system are "more difficult" and "more challenging" than the grammar, writes even more encouragingly, "Every-

one can master Mandarin. It is very easy in some ways – no verb endings (as in French, for example), no case endings (as in German), no genders (as in most European languages)" (Xiang 2010: vii).

Overall, over the past hundred years, the task of learning Chinese has been presented as increasingly doable – from being presented in 1904 as vigorous mental gymnastics equivalent to a college education, it becomes first something those of "average intelligence" and then "everyone" could do; it is, ultimately, "easy". The increasing perceived easiness has a number of causes. First, as we have seen, the learners are expected only to master conversational Chinese rather than classical Chinese, partly because of changes within China itself.[21] Second, the number of characters to be learnt in the course of a single volume has been reduced (see 4.3 below). Third, and crucially, learning Chinese has moved from the margins to the mainstream – for example, Xiang's *Mastering Chinese* text-book is based on her evening classes at Bristol University's 'Lifelong Learning' program,[22] open to adults of all educational backgrounds, so to harp upon the difficulties of the language, as earlier authors did, is arguably coun-ter-productive..

Not only has Chinese apparently been getting easier; learning it, at least to the end of the self-instructional manual, is also presented as taking ever less time. Early in the century, Hillier (1910: vii) suggests that "The exercises contained in this volume, with a total capital of one thousand words, should be mastered in six months by any one who will devote an hour or so a day to the task." Williamson (1947: 1) writes, "I can assure the student at the outset, that if he or she will per-severe for a period of six months, concentrating for two hours daily, genuine and satisfying progress will be made." But by 2010, Scurfield – or her publisher – hint that with just a minute a day, something can be achieved, as the text offers different ways of using the book if one has "Only got a minute?", "Only got five minutes?" or "Only got 10 ten minutes"? (Scurfield, 2010: iii). More realistically, perhaps (and more in tune with my own experience), Scurfield (2010: 194) also warns her readers, in the context of urging studying flashcards in every spare

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[21] As Hillier (1922: 15) already noted "The modern style of Chinese composition that is daily gaining ground, partly in consequence of the revised system of education, which is placing classics and poetry somewhat in the background, and also through the influence of the newspapers, which are now read by millions of people, is bringing a much simpler form of composition into vogue which can be read with comparative ease". Similarly, Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904: vii) had already stated that "THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE is, strange to say, easier to acquire than ancient Greek or Latin, or many modern European languages. German, French, Spanish and Italian are each in turn, more difficult to learn than Chinese." However, the spoken language was not the object of their instruction.

[22] See the review on the Amazon site:

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Mastering-Chinese-complete-beginners-Languages/dp/0230200133).

moment, "You do realize that, by deciding to learn Chinese, you have made a decision that means you will never again be able to complain that you have nothing to do, don't you?".

4.2 Experiments in pedagogical approach up to 1950

The manuals of the first half of the 20th century take strikingly different approaches to the still new challenge of how to present Chinese to independent learners, and with the additional difficulty (today no longer a problem) of marrying horizontal left-to-right English with vertical right-to-left Chinese. Again, this history mirrors the changing status of learning Chinese, from a very minority activity at the start of the 20th century, to becoming a "normal" kind of foreign language learning. The first two texts take a scholarly approach with centuries-old roots in teaching Latin to an elite as a language of scholarship in Europe; the next three all switch to an approach for teaching vernacular languages for practical purposes, but still one that is centuries-old and very different from school language teaching of the time, as we shall see in the case of Williamson (1947) below. Only very recently, from the 1990s onwards, and thus much later than for other languages, do *self-instructional* texts for Chinese adopt pedagogical practices familiar from mainstream *school* language teaching.

Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904) claim that their whole approach is "entirely original and unique, in that it presents the study of Chinese, in true Chinese form". The authors take as the basis for instruction the primer used by generation upon generation of Chinese children learning to read, the *Three Character Classic*, or *Sarm Chee Kun* (三字经, in Mandarin *San Zi Jing*). They explain the importance of this text by citing the famous sinologist Herbert A. Giles (who wrote a short introduction to their *Chinese Made Easy*) in his edition of the work:

> It is an elementary guide to knowledge for Chinese children arranged in 365 alternating rhyming lines of three characters each, and containing about 500 different characters in all. Every child throughout the Empire begins his or her studies with this book, learning to repeat a certain amount daily, until the whole is known by heart. It is the foundation stone of a Chinese education. Its importance therefore to foreigners who wish to study the book language of China and to be able to follow out Chinese trains of thought, can hardly be overestimated. Serious students would do well to imitate the Chinese school boy, and commit the whole to memory. (Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904: 13; cf. Giles 1910).

The authors present what they called an "interlinear" English translation of the

Three Character Classic (Figure 1), giving both a character-for-character rendition and a translation – the differing direction of the two scripts makes literal "interlinearity" impossible. Consciously or not, the authors draw on a tradition reaching back into European antiquity for the teaching of Latin;[23] likewise, their inclusion of an interlinear version of the Lord's Prayer (Figure 1) draws on a centuries-old tradition of using this canonical text as an exemplar of an unfamiliar language, with its origins in missionary linguistics, and already used by the 16th-century language cataloguer Conrad Gessner (Gessner 1551, ed. Colombat & Peters 2009). Third, they claim as novel their "comprehensive analytical presentation of Chinese words" in the vocabularies, which they illustrate with the example of *butter*, composed of three characters meaning literally "cow-milk-oil" (p. x); again, a similar practice can be found in medieval European vernacular glossings of Latin words, morpheme by morpheme. Fourth, the authors provide vocabulary grouped onomasiologically (i.e. thematically, by meanings, e.g. "Man's relations", "Buildings", "Professional Occupations") – this too is a European tradition with centuries-old roots (see Hüllen 2002, Section III). In sum, Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow offer a unique combination of tried and tested Chinese *and* European methods for language learning – especially for learning a written language – but they are far removed from contemporary developments in modern language teaching epitomized by the so-called Reform Movement.[24]

By contrast with the ideal scholarly learner envisaged by Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow, Hillier's 1907 manual *The Chinese language and how to learn it: a manual for beginners* is "especially intended for the use of Army Officers, of Missionaries, and of young business men connected with trade interests in China who wish to commence the study of the language in England with a view to continuing it in the country itself." It is intended to benefit those "who think they would like to learn Chinese but are discouraged by the sight of the formidable textbooks with which the aspiring student is confronted". After introductory sections on the written language and spoken language, characters and tones (pp. 1-36), the volume (1907, 2nd ed. 1910, the edition to which I have referred) offers six chapters of "Progressive Exercises", progressing from simple example sentences in the first two lessons, to longer dialogues, to three stories in the final lesson. The Chinese versions are provided separately at the back of the book, because of the need to print the Chinese text in a different direction to the English;

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[23] The interlinear approach had also been widely used in earlier European grammars of Chinese, as Gabelentz (1878) describes. For glossing of Latin in early medieval Europe, see for example Bergmann et al. (2001).

[24] On the Reform Movement in modern language teaching, which flourished around the turn of the 20th century, see Howatt & Smith (2002).

the single-page solution arrived at by Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (illustrated in Figure 1) is not used. In each case, the front of the book gives both the English translation and an adjacent English character-by-character paraphrase (see Figure 2), except for the three stories in Chapter XI.[25] Numbered footnotes supply the vocabulary (in character and romanization) and grammatical points needed for each numbered sentence.

The Opening of the Three Character Classic in Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904: 94)
Figure 1: Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904: 94, 92)

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[25] A second volume (1909) contains twelve stories from the Chinese classic *Liao Chai* (i.e. 聊斋志 *Liáozhāi zhìy* by Pu Songling – in this case, the characters appear with annotations (after the manner of the *Three Character Classic* in *Chinese Made Easy*, cf. Figure 1), with a separate fluent translation of each story at the front of the book.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

求 *cow* — Ask
免 *mean* — Forgive
我 *ngow* — Us
負 *foo* — Disregard

And lead us not into temptation.

勿 *mot* — Not
俾 *bay* — Give
我 *ngow* — Us
試 *see* — Temptations

But deliver us from evil.

拯 *chun* — Deliver
我 *ngow* — Us
出 *chut* — Out
惡 *ork* — Evil

on earth as it is in heaven.

在 *jo-e* — On
地 *day* — Earth
若 *yes-ork* — As
天 *tine* — Heaven

Give us this day our daily bread.

所 *sese* — That which
需 *sou-e* — Need
之 *gee* — Of
糧 *lay-ung* — Food
今 *lum* — This
日 *yot* — Day
賜 *chee* — Give
我 *ngow* — Us

And forgive us

我 *ngow* — We
免 *mean* — Forgive
人 *yun* — Man
負 *foo* — Disregard

Our father in heaven.

我 *ngow* — Our
爻 *foo* — Father
在 *jo-e* — In
天 *tine* — Heaven

Hallowed be thy name.

願 *yzin* — Wish
爾 *yze* — Thy
名 *mun* — Name
聖 *sun* — Holy

Thy kingdom come.

爾 *yze* — Thy
國 *gwork* — Kingdom
臨 *lum* — Descend
至 *chee* — Come

Thy will be done.

爾 *yze* — Thy
官 *chee* — Will
得 *dut* — Attain
成 *sun* — Accomplish

An Interlinear version of the Lord's Prayer in Cantonese and English (Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904: 92)
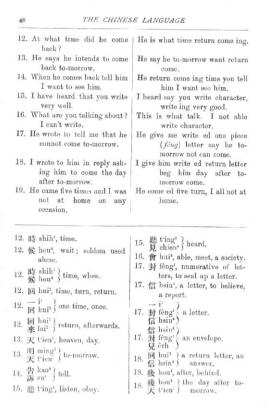
Figure 2: Hillier (1910: 48), showing part of the second lesson

The next two manuals to appear, Darroch's *Chinese self-taught by the natural method. Thimm's system* (1914) and Whymant's *Colloquial Chinese* (1922), consciously broke with the scholarly approaches of *Chinese Made Easy* and Hillier (1910). Both are part of successful publishing empires. Thimm's "system" for language resulted in a whole series of manuals published by Marlborough & Co.;[26] the "Colloquial Manuals" were published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & co. (e.g. *Colloquial French*, Patterson 1918, *Colloquial German* Patterson 1920). In line with recent discussions in Reform-Movement minded language teaching circles (though not in line with established practice in school language teaching), both authors give first priority to learning to speak the language. The

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[26] Darroch (1914: 108) includes an advertisement for Marlborough's Self-Taught series including Hindustani, Japanese, Burmese, Persian, and Syrian and Egyptian Arabic, as well as "all the principal European languages, and Latin".

"natural method" in the title of Darroch's work implies, in name at least, picking up a language in the way one picks up one's mother tongue;[27] the title of the *Colloquial ...* series likewise places the emphasis on spoken communication. And yet the two volumes take very different approaches to the same challenge.

Whymant's *Colloquial Chinese* is, according to the front cover, "written expressly for the use of those who wish to acquire rapidly a sound colloquial knowledge of the Chinese language." Although it belongs to the *Colloquial ...* series, suggesting a uniform approach that can be applied to all language learning, Whymant emphasizes the very different-ness of Chinese, warning that "It must be realized from the outset that to study Chinese in the same way as one would attempt to master any other tongue would be but to court failure". The successful learner of Chinese needs to be a good mimic and not be "bored by incessant repetition *of the same thing*" (Whymant 1922: 5, emphasis in original); Whymant used Wade's Romanization throughout, and made no attempt whatsoever to introduce the Chinese script – a mere page is given over to a brief description of it, and no characters at all are presented. The volume, consisting of four chapters (60 pages in total, plus a vocabulary), beginning with Lesson 1 "The Simple Sentence", is, frankly, somewhat thrown together. For example, information about negatives comes unannounced at the end of Lesson 1, but Lesson 2 is then on "Position of Negatives". The second last paragraph (no. 44) in Lesson 4 states that "honorific and deprecatory particles" will be "dealt with in a later section" (p. 60), but there are no more sections, merely a long vocabulary list, in which Pekingese vocabulary is given alongside its Cantonese equivalent, in order to "emphasize the fundamental difference between the two forms of speech" (p. 61). No marking of tones is given for Cantonese because "they are greater in variety and more minutely distinguished" (p. 61), so that the Cantonese forms are more of a curiosity than of any practical use.

While Whymant's approach is to encourage the reader to cast aside all preconceptions about learning a language when tackling Chinese, and, indeed (as we shall see in section 4.4 below), to approach it burdened by as little grammatical paraphernalia as possible, Darroch does almost the reverse. As already noted, his volume is ostensibly part of Thimm's "system". Franz Thimm (1820-1899), a prolific publisher of language manuals, claimed that "The usual cumbrous methods […] are intended to convey far more critical and analytical knowledge of a language than is often necessary, and involve an amount of time and application that few persons can spare to devote to the purpose" (cited by Keating 1983: 433 from an 1877 edition of Thimm's *French self-taught, A New System on the Most*

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[27] On the history of the natural method, see Finotti (2010), and Howatt & Smith (2000: General Introduction). Titles promising instruction on the natural method date back to the mid-19th century, e.g. Eichhorn (1852).

Simple Principles for Universal Self tuition). Thimm was, then, one of many who were impatient with the grammar-first or grammar-translation methods that dominated modern language teaching in the 19th-century. Darroch accordingly provides little grammatical information in his *Chinese Self-Taught by the natural method.* It contains "a section on the pronunciation, Romanization and tonal peculiarities of Chinese words, followed by very comprehensive vocabularies, conversational phrases and sentences, carefully selected for practical daily use and classified according to subject, with the phonetic transcription of the Chinese words" (preface to Darroch's later *Chinese Grammar Self-Taught*, 1922: n.p.). The "Natural Method", then, as it appeared here, amounts to learning to pronounce words, and then, later, to parrot sentences. There is not the slightest hint given in Darroch's first volume as to how to produce a sentence not contained in the book. As a "method" it does not add up to much, but it has much in common with some of the earliest surviving language manuals in Europe, providing bilingual word-lists and conversational phrases grouped according to topics (see for example McLelland 2004).

Like the *Colloquial* series and Thimm's System, Williamson's *Teach Yourself Chinese* (1947) was part of a very successful series, which, besides languages, also included *Teach Yourself* manuals in salesmanship, shorthand, and many other topics. The *Teach Yourself* series, founded in the 1930s, capitalized on a growing market of working adults who hoped to better their prospects in work or in society by improving themselves (note the Biblical quote on the inside front and back covers of some of the early editions of the *Teach Yourself* series: "Give instruction to a wise man … and he will be yet wiser", Proverbs 9: 9)., but drawing on a self-instructional tradition that dated to at least the start of the 20th century. For example, *Teach Yourself German*, one of the first in the series to appear, in 1938, was based on John Adams' *Self-Educator in German* from 1901. In practice, as with Thimm's "system", there was considerable scope for variation within the *Teach Yourself* "brand", as a comparison between the first edition of *Teach Yourself Chinese* (1947) and the first edition of *Teach Yourself German* (1938) shows.

4.2.1 Comparing two Teach Yourself volumes, German (Wells 1938a) and Chinese (Williamson 1947)

The author of *Teach Yourself German* (1938), Sydney Wells, had already produced texts of French, German, Italian and even a phrasebook of Dutch, and with publications including *School Certificate Test Papers in German* (Wells 1938b) he was clearly part of establishment, mainstream school language teaching. Wells observes in his preface that "it used to be quite common […] for a well-educated man to turn out a creditable essay in French or German on the fos-

sil iguanadon, yet to be distressingly inarticulate when called upon to order a second-class railway ticket or a dinner" […] "Most of the difficulties of forty years ago were due to an undue importance given to grammar and Classical subject-matter: the teaching did not help the practical man who wanted to travel" (Wells 1938a: vii). Wells accordingly draws on recent innovations in language pedagogy intended to address these shortcomings. He uses phonetic script and seeks to explain the pronunciation of the sounds precisely, with illustrations of the position of the lips for the vowels (Wells 1938a: 18). In other ways, however, Wells is still heavily indebted to the "grammar and translation" teaching method used in 19th and early 20th-century schools. The title of every one of his lessons presents explicit grammar as the main point of instruction, e.g. "The simple sentence", "Order of words". A typical lesson begins with an explanation in English about the grammar point to be studied, followed by a list of new vocabulary, then exercises to "Read and then turn into English", and finally exercises for translation into German. Despite the apparent focus on "the practical man who wanted to travel", the sentences for translation are drills constructed around the grammar point, with dubious real-world applicability, for example e.g. "Are the gardens long and beautiful? They are beautiful, but not long. Is the tailor always honest? Yes, he is always honest" (Wells 1938a: 33).[28]

Williamson's *Teach Yourself Chinese* is very different to Wells's *Teach Yourself German*. Williamson's dialogues with parallel translation perpetuate a model going back hundreds of years. Many of the dialogue topics are even highly similar to those in 17th- and 18th-century European manuals. For example, an 17th century manual of German for English speakers also has, like Williamson, dialogues on modes of transport, on buying cloth, consulting a tailor, at the shoemaker's, dealing with laundry, a consultation with a doctor, and discussion of food (Offelen 1687). Williamson urges his readers, "The main purpose […] should be to memorise the dialogues, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase. If that is done the rules of grammar will be unconsciously acquired" (Williamson 1947: 4-5). His emphasis is on speaking rather than on drilling grammar; even though there are brief "Grammar notes" (pp. 425-436), there are no exercises of any kind. One might consider this an early version of a "communicative" approach, except for Williamson's insistence on memorizing the dialogues word-for-word. In fact, his advice coincides with that given to learners contained in a typical early 18th-century language manual, "First learn the vocabulary. Then

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[28] Wells was evidently conscious that this might fall rather short of the promise of language for "the practical man who wanted to travel". He conceded in his preface, "Not much has been given in actual conversations in this book," but claimed nonetheless that "all the exercises given are conversational in tone and subject matter. Make up your own conversations by rearranging the sentences given here"   (Wells 1938a: ix).

the short familiar phrases. Afterwards the proverbs and familiar dialogues" (Beiler 1731: 287). Having come to Chinese as a missionary,[29] Williamson adopts neither the traditional school grammar-translation approach, nor newer developments in teaching pronunciation. Williamson's manual was reprinted in 1979, so until Scurfield's new edition in 1991 (Scurfield 1991), *Teach Yourself Chinese* offered learners a method that owed much to centuries-old traditions of practical hands-on language learning, and nothing at all to 20th-century language pedagogy, at least judged by European norms.

4.3 New problems for English-speaking learners: script and tones

The long experience of English-speaking learners in tackling European languages did not prepare them at all for two of the challenges of learning Chinese: the writing system and the tones. Still, the authors of *Chinese Made Easy* (1904) are impressive in their optimism about the learnability of written Chinese: "There is a popular fallacious notion that written Chinese is unusually difficult to acquire. This is not so"; "With the detail well grasped it is not quite so difficult as it would appear" (1904: VIII-IX, 247), for while a 15-stroke word might seem complicated, it compared favorably with the 32 separate strokes to make the 15-letter word *plenipotentiary* (p. IX). However, this view is not shared by most of the authors of self-instructional manuals in the 20th century, and given the tendency to claim, increasingly, that Chinese is easier than one might think, it is not surprising that the number of characters that a learner is expected to learn in single volume decreases considerably over time. Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904) include "about a thousand well-chosen characters" (see introduction by Giles, p. vi), likewise Hillier, who tells his readers that this will take the learner about "a third of the distance" to be covered (where the ultimate goal is knowledge of 1500-2000 characters *and* of how to use them; Hillier 1910: 7). Williamson (1947: 1) similarly opts for about 1000 characters, which "if thoroughly learned, will enable the student to converse freely on matters of everyday importance". There is, then, a consensus in the first self-instructional manuals of about 1000 characters. In the second wave of texts, published after 1990, authors

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[29] According to Stanley (n.d.), Williamson had refused to be considered for an appointment as Professor of Chinese Studies at the University of London, preferring instead to continue his missionary work. However, his *Teach Yourself China* was, ironically, published at a time when the British emphasis was shifting from missionary activity in China (which the missionary societies ceased after the revolution in 1949) to colonial control in Hong Kong. My second-hand copy of Williamson's book was inscribed by its owner, "Inspector Roderick Mackenzie, Hong Kong Police Force", presumably the same Roderick Mackenzie who received a Colonial Police Medal in 1963, by which time he was Chief Inspector of the Hong Kong Police Force; it contains a number of loose sheets filled with handwritten exercises, the last one dated "8 Sep. 1961".

no longer spell out how many characters learners will encounter, but the number clearly decreases. Scurfield's (1991) word list contains about 1200 words, with at most about 750 different characters (80 radicals are given on p. 187). Even the volume devoted to learning the Chinese script by Scurfield & Song (1999, 2010) contains only about 850 words in the glossary, with fewer individual characters. Kan's (1995) word list comprises about 650 words; again, there are far fewer distinct characters. Xiang (2010) contains a glossary of about 750 words (fewer distinct characters), with about 140 characters to write in the course of working through the book – but Xiang also allows for learners who do not wish to learn the characters by presenting everything in pinyin too. Overall, where it is required at all, expectations of learning Chinese characters have been lowered substantially over the past century. It is a moot point how this may affect Chinese as a language choice – on the one hand, more learners may experience the reward of completing a course successfully, and feel motivated to continue; on the other, learners may be discouraged to realize they are a long way from functional literacy.

As for intonation, Wade (1859: 85) already piggy-backed on the emotional function of intonation in English to describe the pitch required, characterizing the first tone as "affirmative", the second as akin to expression in English of "doubt or astonishment"; the third in English "would indicate indignation or denial", and the fourth "prolonged as it were regretfully". [30] (Wade also imagined a monosyllabic dialogue among four persons where the emotion expressed would elicit the correct tone: "Dead[1]. *Killed*?[2] No![3] Yes![4]"). In the first half of the 20th century Hillier, Darroch and Williamson all follow Wade's example, using words such as *reproof, dictatorial, mild surprise, acute surprise, curt* to characterize the various tones. Manuals after 1990 experiment with various didactic ploys to assist learners to produce the tones. Scurfield encourages kinetic learning: she associates each tone with an action (raised eyebrows for 2nd tone; dropped chin into neck for 3rd tone; and a gentle stamp of the foot for 4th tone); Kan is the first to give a

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[30] Wade's description of the fourth tone as "prolonged" is at odds with 20th-century and current accounts of it as short. Not part of our sample, but also falling into the category of drawing on the emotional function of tone in English, is the description in Creel (1939:3): "The first tone is a somewhat high, level, slightly prolonged tone, like the manner in which ones answers 'yes' when his name is called from a roll. The second is a rising tone; when one is absorbed at his desk, and someone knocks on the door, and while still thinking of something else one quickly answers 'yes' with a rising inflection […] The third tone starts moderately high, drops rather low, and then rises slightly at the end. When someone says something which seems doubtful, but to which one slowly says 'ye-es; while still questioning it in his mind […]. The fourth tone is brief, and comes to a full stop, like the end of a sentence. If someone asks whether one is really sure of what he has said, and one answers, shortly and positively, 'yes!', this is like the fourth tone."

graphic representation of the changes in pitch (very similar to those in Sun 2006: 39). Xiang (2010), the most recent text in the sample, does not merely describe the tones, but also didacticizes them, with graduated practice in every chapter, progressing from simple tones in isolation to combinations of tones, and including authentic Chinese tongue-twisters (e.g. Xiang 2010: 191-92). Of course, the ready availability of accompanying audio material today makes such an approach far more feasible than it was a century earlier.

4.4 Teaching the grammar of Chinese in self-instructional manuals
4.4.1 is there such a thing as Chinese grammar, and can it be taught?
     The script and tones were new ideas to English learners used to learning European languages. But at least, they might have thought with relief, they could expect to learn clear grammatical rules whose mastery would guarantee a measure of success. However, even this assumption is challenged by many authors of the 20th-century self-instructional manuals. A recurrent thread through the textbooks – unexpected for learners used to European languages – is the difficulty of giving firm rules about Chinese grammar. *Chinese Made Easy* sets out the perception of Chinese grammar by many Europeans as follows:

> the simplicity of such a language is at once self-evident, when we are told that words have neither gender nor declension; that verbs have no conjugation, (and may be either active, transitive, neuter or even causal); that the language is composed mainly of monosyllabic words, which are really root ideas; and that a word may be used either as a noun, verb, adverb or conjunction, depending simply on the context or as the exigencies of surrounding words demand.
>
> This has led to the popular fallacy that Chinese has no grammar. What is meant by that statement is that a grammar *per se* has never been made by the Chinese themselves. Nevertheless the Chinese language does adhere to certain forms of speech which forms it is necessary for us to acquire to speak, read and write the language correctly; hence as grammar may be defined to be 'the art of speaking reading and writing a language correctly,'[31] the Chinese language may be said to have a grammar". (Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904: VII-VIII)

Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904) suggest above that describing Chinese grammar is a challenge mainly because it has not often been tried. Both Hillier and Whymant suggest instead that the language is *inherently* hard to capture in rules. Whymant (1922: 9) declares that "what rules do exist seem to be present for the sole purpose of demonstration as to the myriad ways in which they may

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[31] This definition goes back in the Western grammatical tradition at least as far as Quintilian (1st century A.D.).

be broken!”; “Grammar, as it is understood in other languages, is absent from Chinese” (Whymant 1922: 3). Hillier observes that “there are so many ways of saying the same thing in Chinese that it is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules” (Hillier 1910: 63). Williamson (1947: 434-35) echoes Hillier’s view: “The language is so flexible and free that rules may or may not be observed. Practically everything that has been said above […] is open to modification,” although Williamson at least hopes that “the student will at least have observed from what has been written that there *is* such a thing as Chinese Grammar!” Scurfield (1991) also points out the difficulty of giving fixed rules, but she explains the difficulty not as an essential characteristic of Chinese compared with other languages, but rather on the grounds that Putonghua is “still developing”:

> Over 20 years of experience have taught me that I should never be too categorial as far as Chinese grammar is concerned and always to preface remarks with ‘nearly always’, ‘almost invariably’, etc. If I have forgotten to do so at any point in this book please regard it as said. Putonghua is still developing as a language so that even Chinese experts may, for example, hold a three-day meeting to discuss ‘*le*’.   (Scurfield 1991:   xxii)

Statements like these about the difficulty of fixing Chinese rules are exactly the kinds of statements made in medieval Europe about European languages compared to Latin, at a time when Latin already had centuries of pedagogical grammatical tradition (including, crucially, centuries of teaching the language to non-native speakers), but the European vernaculars did not yet have such traditions. The 9th-century monk Otfrid wrote about German, for example, that it was “undisciplined and unaccustomed to being held in by the curbing rein of the art of grammar”, and the first attempts at French and German grammars for non-native speakers were only written in the late 16th century.[32] This is a striking parallel between the status of Chinese as a foreign language until the later 20th century, and that of the major European languages compared to Latin in medieval Europe. It perhaps explains the fact that grammar is given little attention in our sample of 20th-century Chinese texts, compared to manuals of European languages of the same era (as we have already seen in the comparison of the two *Teach Yourself* manuals above). So Hillier, for example, counsels that “It is not advisable for the student, at any rate in the early stages of his career, to go deeply into the question of Chinese grammar; he will pick up the rules, such as they are, as he goes along”. Instead of grammatical rules in the traditional sense, Hillier’s “rules” are more like strategies: “It is a safe rule […] to begin by cutting out all

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[32] *indisciplinabilis atque insueta capi regulari freno grammaticæ artis*; from the preface to Otfrid’s gospel harmony (870A.D.), online at http://www.harbornet.com/folks/theedrich/hive/Medieval/Otfrid.htm. Translation by James Marchand. See McLelland (2009).

superfluities. It [i.e. what one wants to say] should, in fact, be treated as one would treat a telegraphic message", but "with the liberal interspersion of certain particles" (Hillier 1907: 44). When in doubt, "Whenever a word is wanted to help out a sentence that seems to require touching up, throw in a *chiu* [i.e. *jiu⁴*] and you will generally be safe" (p. 53).

Whymant believes that most "rules" in Chinese can be broken, so he, like Hillier, concentrates on a number of rules of thumb for coping with simple spoken language. These include the following:

- "The Chinese stylist is enamoured of the negative mood" (p. 4).; (This observation presumably explains Whymant's decision to devote the whole of one of his four chapters to the various negators.)

- "In Mandarin omit as frequently as possible personal pronouns, verbal particles, relative clauses, and, above all, circumlocution" (p. 7).

- "usually, the Chinese prefer short phrases to actual sentences. […] The rule, for all practical purposes, is Elimination […] Never use a verb if your meaning is perfectly clear without it" (pp. 8-9).

- "Make sure of your words, perfect your idiom from English into Chinese, deduct fifty per cent of your verbiage – and then speak" (p.7). (This is reminiscent of Hillier's advice, above, to aim for a "telegraphic" style).

4.4.2 Changing grammatical concepts and terms

Where the authors do discuss grammar explicitly, their choice of grammatical terminology is interesting. Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904) use Western concepts, but are careful to avoid suggesting that European grammatical categories exist in Chinese, instead carefully saying "is expressed by", as in "The PAST PARTICIPLE is expressed by the adverb of time, the particle […] *kay* sometimes following the verb" (p. 66); "The following characters are used to express the PERFECT TENSE" (the list includes: 曾 *chun*, 了 *lee-oo*, 已 ye, 已經 *ye kun*, 過 *guo*, p. 76). Hillier follows a similar principle, starting with familiar Western (in effect, Latin) grammatical categories and then explaining how these are rendered in Chinese. So he, like *Chinese Made Easy*, introduces four characters that are "the most important" for the "past tense", "future", "subjunctive" and "passive". For "past tense" he lists "了 *liao³*, 過 *kuo⁴*, 來著 *lai²-cho*, 已經 *i³-ching¹*"; he also provides sentence patterns under the various headings of active and passive, present, imperfect, perfect, pluperfect, future, indicative, subjunctive, etc. (pp. 64-70). Whymant (1922) is the most innovative among the manuals of the first half of the century, completely breaking free of the structure

of Western grammars. Whymant emphasizes word order, which the Latinate, part-of-speech driven approach to grammar almost inevitably underplayed. "In fact position in the sentence is the one law governing Chinese construction, or, as it has been expressed by the pioneer of Marshman: 'The whole of Chinese grammar depends upon position'" (Whymant 1922: 3-4). Indeed, "It is merely by position that a word is described as adjective, noun or verb" (Whymant 1922: 56). Whymant's Lesson 1 introduces what he calls the "tri-verbal sentence", consisting usually of *noun/pronoun – verb – object*, or *noun/pronoun – negative – verb*, but he adds, "This is as far as it is wise to take the grammatical analogy with which we are so familiar, since those parts of speech as such do not exist in Chinese" (p. 34).[33]

As one might expect from the "natural method", Darroch's *Chinese Self-Taught by the Natural Method* contains no grammatical information whatsoever. However, Darroch's later accompanying volume, *Chinese Grammar, Self-Taught* (1922), makes up for this: it is the most closely bound to the Western tradition of pedagogical grammar of all the manuals. Its preface states that "Chinese scholars do not study their own language by these rules [because] [t]he very names we use to designate the parts of speech […] were unknown in China until the influx of western learning". Still, the volume "is intended to exhibit the structure of the Chinese language in terms of grammar familiar to western readers" (Darroch 1922: preface, n.p.). But Darroch's approach does not simply make use of Western grammatical terminology where helpful; rather, the *entire* structure of the grammar is dictated by the traditional order of Latin grammar, familiar to European language-learners from late Antiquity onwards: noun, pronouns, adjectives, verbs (including present, future, past and imperfect; subjunctive and optative mood, passive voice), adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions.[34] For example, Darroch presents 的 *dih* (i.e. *de*) as a "relative pronoun", though simultaneously

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[33] Subsequent lessons deal with the position of negating particles, the use of the various verbs meaning "to be able to"; numerals; classifiers; expressing the comparative and superlative of adjectives; and pronouns, including the reflexive tzŭ4-chi3 (i.e. 自己 zi4ji3), described by Whymant (1922: 59) as "actually a postposition", an analysis that I have not encountered elsewhere.

[34] There are also a small number of sections determined by Chinese categories, including a section in the last lesson on the "numerary adjunct or classifier" (p. 93), of which a list of 21 is given (see below). Missing from the traditional European parts of speech are the article, participle and interjection; Morrison (1815) and Abel-Rémusat (1822) had already dispensed with two of these three, but maintained the useful category of interjections; see Gianninoto (2014: 143).

recognizing it as a "possessive particle" (Darroch 1922: 59).[35] Elsewhere, he presents 的 as a past tense marker, as in "這是你做的嗎 *dje shï ni dzo dih ma, did you do this*?" (p. 63). At the level of detail, Darroch's analyses can be thoughtful. For example, 在 *dzai*, "the commonest preposition in Chinese" (p. 80), can also function with other "auxiliary prepositions" like 裏 *li,* 上 *shang,* 下 *hsia* [in fact these are postpositions, as Darroch later specifies, pp. 81-82], and this is "a good example of that compound structure of the language which we have noted in nouns, adjectives, and verbs" (p. 81). In the absence of any copula verb in a sentence like "書在桌子上 *shu dzai djoh-dz shang, the book is on the table*," Darroch opines, "Grammatically it would be equally correct to construe 在 *dzai* in its primary sense as the verb *to be*", but he rejects this because the reply "不是在桌子上 *buh shï dzai djoh-dz shang, (it) is not on the table*" would then have two verbs "clashing with each other in the sentence" (p. 81).

Williamson's slim grammar notes are also rather closely tied to European grammatical categories. The exposition begins with "the article", where the need for a classifier in expressions like " 'I ko jên' [一個人], a man" is explained (Williamson 1947: 427).[36] The definite article "appears only in relative clauses, and then, as in all other cases, its place is taken by distinguishing adjectives 'chê ko' 這個 and 'na ko' 那個 That. E.g., The man whom I mentioned is 'Wo so shuo ti *na ko* jên'" (p. 426). Grammatical case is "normally distinguished by the position of the word in the sentence"; for example, Williamson says, the "dative" (a term that would only be familiar to readers who had learned Latin or another highly inflected language) is "usually expressed by 'kei', [給] 'give', 't'i' [替], 'instead of', or 'wei' [为], 'for' (p. 429). By Scurfield's time, readers can no longer be assumed to be familiar with Latin grammatical categories from a typical British school education, and Scurfield does not rely on them, but explains, "I have chosen what I felt to be the most helpful grammatical descriptions. Other people may well use another term for auxiliary verb, resultative verb, and so on" (Scurfield 1991: xxii). By Kan (1995), considerable progress away from the Latin approach has been made: Kan's grammar summary (pp. 265-274) deals first of all with the fundamentals of word order and topic-structure (one is reminded of the innovative Whymant (1922), who also begins with the structure of the sen-

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[35] A similar analysis had been given by Wade (1859: 2, sentence 24), "It may be construed as the relative pronoun; or, if thing or circumstance be understood after it, as the possessive particle", but note Wade's more cautious (and therefore more accurate) formulation: "may be construed".

[36] Williamson is inconsistent in supplying characters alongside his romanizations. Here as elsewhere below, square brackets indicate that I have added the characters.

tence), and then proceeds by part of speech. Kan still gives "articles" a heading, but only to explain that they "do not exist in Chinese"; interspersed among entries on adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs and prepositions, there are now sections on Chinese categories not found in European languages: verb-adjectives (as in *Wǒ hěn máng* [我很忙]'I am very busy'), measure words, "grammar words (particles)", negational words, and directional words. By Xiang (2010), there is no longer any trace of a structure dictated by the traditional European parts of speech. Instead, Xiang's syllabus is ordered by communicative need, beginning with formal and informal greetings, use of 们 *men* to indicate the plural, and basic construction of words with 好 *hǎo* and 见 *jiàn* (e.g. 你好 *nǐ hǎo,* 再见 *zài jiàn*), progressing over the next two chapters to question formation, indicating possession and negation, use of numbers and measure words.

4.4.3 Teaching measure words

Measure words or classifiers are an unfamiliar grammatical category for English-speaking learners. Their treatment by earlier western grammars has already received some attention in the history of linguistics (Gianninoto 2014 and Chappell & Peyraube 2014), so it is worth considering briefly how our 20th-century self-instructional manuals tackle them. The earliest treatment, in *Chinese Made Easy* (Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904: 187-194), is the most comprehensive, containing a list of 60 different classifiers, defined as a word "of a generic character, that is, it is applied to a certain class of objects supposed in some way to be ANALOGOUS" in the way that "length, piece and slice" are similarly used in English (p. 187). Hillier (1910) has comparatively little to say about classifiers, merely remarking "The symbols from one to ten are as with us, except that the numerative 個, 'piece', generally follows each figure (Hillier 1910: 45)." Whymant (1922: 54-55) gives a list of 14 "auxiliary numerals or numeratives" in alphabetical order, pointing out that readers might have encountered their influence in Pidgin English expressions such as "'one-piecey-man', 'one-piecey-boat'". As a linguist working at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, he compares auxiliary numerals in Chinese with those in Assyrian, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and "several other languages" (p. 53, 54), and explains that in Chinese, a language with many homophones, the auxiliary numeral "helps […] by particularising the sound to convey the meaning intended" (p. 53). Williamson's choice of eleven classifiers and examples is revealing (Williamson 1947: 429-430). His second classifier is *Ting* 頂, "used with caps, hats, etc."; the third, *Kuan* 官, is that required for pipes; the fourth is *Pa* 把, presented by Darroch (1922: 93) as a classifier for things with handles, in-

cluding knives and ploughs, but described by Williamson as being used with "teapots, teacups", etc. Williamson's pragmatic anglocentricism shines through – for with these 'top three' classifiers (after the generic *Ko* 個), his learner is well equipped to remove his hat, take up his pipe and drink his tea, as expected of the well-bred Englishman.

Kan (1995: 268-69) lists 26 measure words, in alphabetical order of the pinyin, which, although *ge* 个 is singled out as the most common (p. 268), renders relatively common classifiers such as *wèi, zhāng* 位，张 rather inconspicuous. Scurfield too presents a summary table in alphabetical order (1991: 114-115), but also revisits the measure words over successive chapters (2, 3, 4) in a pedagogical spiral. She is the first to draw a distinction between words like *běn* 本 or *zhāng* 张 and "true" measure words like *bēi* 杯 that are "actual indicators of quantity" (Scurfield 1991: 6). Meek & Mao (1999: 37), with a highly practical focus, introduce only those classifiers that a visitor to China is most likely to need: *bēi* [杯] (for that all important cup of coffee, see 4.1 above), *zhāng* [张] (for one's receipt), *wèi* [位] (for booking a restaurant), and *kǒu* [口] (for the number of people in one's family); the most widely applicable *gè* 个 is introduced later (p. 45). Not surprisingly, Xiang (2010), as the latest text in our sample, offers the most didacticized presentation. Xiang presents only nine common classifiers, since "It is the awareness of the concept that is important", p. 69). The learner is offered three channels for learning, memory, visual, and analytical. There are prototypical example phrases for memorization (e.g. 两本书 *liǎng běn shù,* 六副画 *liù fú huà*, p. 68); illustrations to help associate the meaning to the word; and, on the facing page, a list with a brief explicit definition, e.g. "双 *shuāng*: used for pairs, such as shoes, socks and chopsticks" (p. 69). In sum, the history of classifiers in these manuals further exemplifies tendencies that we have already observed in our sample: liberation from Latinate terminology (from "auxiliary numeral" to "classifier"), a reduction in the amount to be learnt, a focus on everyday needs (including hats, pipes and tea!), and improved didactics.

4.5 Encountering Chinese culture

The representation of culture in language pedagogy has become the focus of considerable interest in recent decades, in particular aiming to equip learners to overcome stereotypical assumptions about the speakers of the language they are learning (see e.g. Byram 1993, 2008; Kramsch 1989, 1998, 1999; see Risager 2007 for a history of teaching culture). Here, more than in the presentation of language topics, authors' selection – from a virtually infinitely wide choice – of information and materials is likely to reveal (more or less explicitly formulated)

ideologies, both about the nature of language learning and about the culture of Chinese speakers. It is impossible to do more than scratch the surface of the topic here; what follows can be little more than a spur to further study. On the one hand, the representation of Chinese culture in our sample follows a similar path to that of other languages in Europe – from a focus on 'high' culture in the earlier period, to an attempt to capture the characteristic 'essence' of the people (cf. the *Kulturkunde* movement of the 1920s to 1940s; see Risager 2006:30-32), to a greater focus on the culture of the everyday in later decades. So at the start of the century, for Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904) the ultimate goal of learning the language is access to the 'high culture' of classical Chinese, which is highly valued (see the authors' remarks on the writing system above, for example). *Chinese Made Easy* is "a work of love" (Brooks Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow 1904: xi) which models an extremely open, receptive attitude to this elite Chinese culture, by adopting a traditional Chinese primer in order to teach Chinese to foreigners. Since the authors do not envisage their readers meeting Chinese speakers, they give no information about everyday culture. Hillier also promises his learners they will learn enough for "a sound appreciation of a novel, to read the Confucian Classics with intelligent interest" (Hillier 2010: 35), but he also pays attention to the *everyday* culture of politeness in Chinese, devoting almost as much space to it as he does to grammar. There is scarcely scope for explicit cultural information in Whymant's short volume (1922), but occasional example sentences hint at certain attitudes, e.g. "China nowadays is (certainly) not like it was in earlier times". The only explicit information on polite behavior is given a propos of the question "Have you yet eaten your rice?": "This is a very common greeting amongst the Chinese. It actually takes the place of Good morning! or How are you? amongst us" (Whymant 1922: 50, 51). Whymant's interest in the songs and psychology of "coolies" (see Whymant 1920, 1921) shines through in some of his introductory material: "the song of the coolie is a mine whence may be extracted the gems of understanding of the nature of this wonderful people" (Whymant 1922:11), but Whymant is given to the occasional sweeping stereotyping generalization:

> The Chinese are of complex psychology. Were the dreams of the average Chinese translated into reality, the Celestial Empire would be at once the most beautiful, the most powerful, the most envied, and the most brilliant in the world. […] Practical and matter-of-fact as he is in matters of business, at heart John Chinaman [!] is a dreamer of dreams […] the surest way to his heart is to memorize a store of his proverbial dicta and bring them into the conversation at every possible juncture. (Whymant 1922: 10).

From the late 1920s to 1940s, an essentializing *Kulturkunde* movement in language teaching (see Risager 2006: 30-32) saw proverbs, whose importance is noted by Whymant above, as one of many avenues to discover an individual people's "national character". Williamson may not have been aware of this, but he nevertheless devotes one of his forty lessons to proverbs, considering Chinese "rich in proverbial expressions" (Williamson 1947: 322-331). By 1995, Kan's cultural information is predominantly practical. For example, a note to the first dialogue explains that Chinese mainland buses have a conductor whose job it is to sell tickets; unlike in Britain, "the bus driver's job is only to drive" (Kan 1995: 197). Xiang (2010) is the only text in which an aspect of cultural knowledge forms an explicit learning goal of each chapter, specified in the chapter overview alongside targets for communication skills, vocabulary, grammar, and Chinese characters (Xiang 2010: x-xiii). Topics covered are predominantly the culture of the everyday, rather than high culture: they include politeness, family values, Chinese horoscopes, and traditional festivals – but Xiang also presents two Chinese poems to learn (静夜思 *jìng yè sī* by Li Bai, p. 160, and 悯农 *mǐn nóng* by Li Shen, p. 248). In sum, the changing emphases in the representation of Chinese culture in our sample follow a similar trajectory to that charted by Risager (2006) in her history of teaching the culture of European languages: from an emphasis on high culture, to looking for the cultural "essence", to attending to everyday culture, and, ultimately, treating cultural knowledge not as an "add-on", but integrated along with the language skills.

More interesting, perhaps, is the question of the attitudes implicit in the selection and representation of cultural topics. Hillier, in 1910, shows an unreflecting acceptance of notions of social class (in his own culture as well as Chinese) when he gives the rule of thumb that "it will be found a safe rule to address all but distinctly social inferiors [!] as *nin* or *nin-na* 'you sir', and people to whom more consideration is due as Hsien-shêng, 'before born'" (Hillier 1910: 54). He explains,

> The observation of these little distinctions is important, for the Chinese, as a people, are most polite in their manners towards each other, and neglect of their conventionalities by foreigners […] is a fertile source of contemptuous dislike.   Treat a Chinese [*sic*] with the conventional form of politeness to which he is accustomed from his own people […] and he will treat you with the respect he seldom accords to the 'barbarian' who knows nothing of his language or of his customs. (Hillier 1910: 54-55).

Hillier warns that "firing off a prepared sentence abruptly" to a Chinese interlocutor will result "nine times out of ten" in bewilderment, for the addressee will simply assume the remark must be in a foreign language and unintelligible. "If,

however, the remark is introduced by a ceremonial bow, or if a question is prefaced by [a number of polite phrases], the person addressed […] will realize that the foreigner knows the laws of politeness, and the remark that follows will almost always be understood" (Hillier 1910: 97). Amongst the dozen or so other rules of common courtesy listed by Hillier are: "Never precede a visitor into or out of a room"; to remove one's spectacles "before asking a question of a stranger"; "If your host or visitor rises from his chair, you must not fail to rise also".

Williamson's goal in his manual is less to prevent individual miscommunications of the kind that Hillier tries to protect against, than to promote lasting peace and understanding between peoples:

> Much of the world's progress in mutual understanding and co-operation depends on our being able to understand one another's speech, and on our acquaintance with one another's literature. […] With the idea of contributing a little towards these worthy objectives, I have prepared this short introduction to the language of the Chinese people, many of whom I have learned to respect, and whose culture I greatly admire. (Williamson 1947: v).

Significantly, given the date of publication (1947, after World War II and still during the Chinese Civil War), Williamson's last dialogue features two speakers reflecting "On War and Peace", concluding with a hope for peace despite the existence of competing political ideas including "Democracy, Communism, Progressive (revolutionary) and Conservative parties" (Williamson 1947: 316). And yet, despite Williamson's professed desire to promote understanding between peoples, the Anglo-Chinese relationship that his dialogues model is a very unequal one, situated firmly in the context of English colonial expats dealing with socially inferior Chinese servants and vendors, and certainly sharing Hillier's unquestioning acceptance of a social hierarchy. The dialogues include *Domestic matters, A talk with the cook, The week's work in the home* and *Talking accounts with the cook* (Williamson 1947: vii-viii). In Dialogue 6 the mistress commits the *faux pas* of commanding her servants to sit – they reply 不用坐。我们站着的好; 'No need for us to sit. It is more fitting that we stand'; and Williamson adds the annotation "Servants naturally expect to stand in the presence of their mistress" (Williamson 1947: 66). Later, a Chinese servant explains that the tailor has yet to finish a coat urgently wanted by the lady of the house. Answering the master's exasperated query as to why he was not told this before, the servant explains that he did know where to find the master, but the master counters, "Isn't it (rather) because you are lazy and have not tried to find me?" (Williamson 1947: 304). Another example: "You did not make the bed properly yesterday. I did not sleep

very well" (Williamson 1947: 202); when the servant protests that he was too busy, the master concedes, "If you have too much to do, and cannot do everything, I must get someone to help". The prevailing atmosphere is one of frequent low-level misunderstandings and frustrations. Note that this volume was reprinted, contents unchanged, in 1979, thirty years after the revolution in China – surely, one would hope, one of the most extreme cases of outdated cultural material in the history of language learning and teaching!

The contrast between Williamson's book and Scurfield's *Teach Yourself Chinese* (1991, 1999) which superseded it is stark: Scurfield describes her personal encounter with China: "The first time I went to China I fell in love with the country and the people. I have learned so much […] and had such fun." It is this love for the country and its people that she is keen to share; she hopes that her volume "will, at the very least, have given you the possibility of seeing a little into that inscrutable Oriental mind" (Scurfield 1991: vii) – this phrase is reprinted unchanged in the 2001 edition, meaning that the stereotype of the "inscrutable Oriental" survives into the 21st century. There is a further hint of such stereotyping when Scurfield & Song (1999: 105) suggest a link between Chinese *characters* and *the character* of the Chinese people, even if it is cautiously phrased ("some people maintain … stereotypical characteristics"):

> There is no doubt that learning Chinese script will help you understand a great deal of the Chinese culture and Chinese ways of perceiving things. Here we would like to suggest that even copying characters, which is generally regarded as a boring exercise, can help you understand some aspects of Chinese culture. Think of the words or phrases associated with learning to write Chinese characters: mechanic repetition, sticking to rules regarding stroke order, styles of calligraphy as models to follow, characters in boxes (boundaries) so that they look the same size, proportion of components, balance of parts, etc. Some people maintain that these are stereotypical characteristics of the Chinese.

Nevertheless, Scurfield is a Sinophile who hopes "that my […] enthusiasm comes off the pages of this book as you study this fascinating language" (Scurfield 1999: vii). It is symptomatic of this enthusiasm (at a time where many people knew virtually nothing of modern China and were correspondingly nervous of first encounters) that the first three chapters in Scurfield (1991) are all about "Making Friends (i), (ii), (iii)", beginning with an interaction between a Chinese man and a British man come to teach English at Beijing University. (I am reminded of unremittingly positive portrayals of Germany in textbooks for English learners, in the face of very different prevailing social attitudes to Germans in the first two decades after World War II; see McLelland 2015, Chapter 6).

However, in the 1990s interest in trade with China was growing rapidly, and Kan (1995) reflects a more instrumental, business-minded approach to China: by contrast with Scurfield (1991), Kan's early interactions are not predicated on making friends, but on dealings with "a potential business partner" and attending "a company party" (Kan 1995: 17, 52). Meek & Mao's *Breakthrough Chinese* (1999) contains no more than survival language, but is, by comparison, surprisingly rich in factual information about contemporary Chinese society. Going beyond practical essentials, the authors include features on Chinese medicine, festivals, and consumerism, as well as culturally and politically sensitive topics such as the single child policy and the associated problem of female infanticide, though withholding judgement – for example, we are told blandly that the policy was "backed up by incentives for compliance, and penalties for non-compliance" (p. 67), without any reference to infringement of personal freedom of the kind one might encounter in western journalism. The authors provide a small selection of recommended reading under headings including the Cultural Revolution, foreigners in China, and the reform period (p. 164). This progression – from Scurfield's encouragement in 1991 to take a plunge into the unknown, to doing business with China in Kan's volume of 1995, to Meek & Mao's matter-of-fact explanations of Chinese cultural practices in 1999 – arguably reflects a process of "de-alienizing" of China and growing familiarization of the country in British eyes.

5. Conclusion

Could the promise of "teaching yourself Chinese" from these manuals ever have been realized? Certainly, it would have been impossible to conduct a conversation in Chinese after studying Brooke Brouner & Fung Yuet Mow (1904), but one would have achieved a functional literacy for certain kinds of texts, at least, and their illustrations of dictionary entries equipped the learner to progress further. Hillier (1910) attempts to cover all bases by providing an ambitious introduction to 1000 characters, to colloquial Chinese, *and* to aspects of everyday culture, but without a running romanization, the learner would surely have been unable to speak even simple sentences without the aid of a teacher. Whymant's learner would have been better equipped to take a plunge into everyday conversation, but would have been totally illiterate. Williamson (1947) provides a running romanized text, missing from Hillier, but by the time of the 1979 reprint, the China that Williamson presents is hopelessly outdated in both language and culture. Among the second wave of texts, Scurfield (1991) and Xiang (2010) come closest to giving an integrated introduction to everyday Chinese language and culture, but at a cost – the number of characters to be acquired is much lower

than in the earlier manuals.

What can the history of such Chinese language manuals over the period 1900-2010 tell us? First, the social and educational historian will observe that the authors have changed from British specialists whose main qualification was their long residence in China, with little or no acquaintance with current pedagogical developments affecting the teaching of European foreign languages, to Anglo-Chinese teams in established Chinese teaching posts in Britain (Scurfield & Songi; Meek & Mao), and, most recently, also Chinese sole authors with a specialism in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language (Kan 1995, Xiang 2010). Likewise, the representation of everyday culture seems to have changed. It was initially characterized by caution in dealings with Chinese people, but later it models growing confidence and familiarization. The history of teach-yourself manuals thus reflects the changing status of Mandarin Chinese in Britain, from a tiny specialism to a (deservedly) mainstream foreign language (even if school provision has yet to match this change).

Chinese language teachers may also gain from this journey into the past of learning Chinese. Language teachers are eternally faced with the difficult question of the status and ultimate purpose of learning the language – is it part of a high-status liberal education for an elite, or a vocational requirement, or a practical skill accessible to all, to name just three of the many competing answers in the 20th and 21st centuries? Our sample shows how the answers proposed by authors to adult learners have changed radically – from the 'mental gymnastics' and access to high culture promised in earlier decades, to the approaches exemplified by the three main self-instructional publishers in the 1990s. *Teach Yourself Chinese* (Scurfield 1991) exhorts the reader to an enthusiastic encounter with a rich culture waiting to be discovered; *Colloquial Chinese* (Kan 1995) provides above all a 'useful' introduction to the language and culture with the emphasis on practical needs; in *Breakthrough Chinese* (1999) the relatively small amount of language presented seems to serve as the hook to a wider interest in Chinese culture that can, in fact, be accessed through English. It is striking, too, that amongst the British authors of these texts – surely the keenest people to promote Chinese – Chinese has often been presented as a 'special case' in learning a language. It has not *necessarily* been presented as exceptionally difficult (though that was certainly the prevailing view in the early decades), but it *was* long viewed as an exceptional language; a common claim is that its grammar cannot, in the last analysis, be fixed. We may wish to ask ourselves what kind of subject *our* teaching makes of Chinese for our learners; whether Chinese really is a 'special' or 'different' language to learn; and what the effect is of presenting Chinese as such when it is competing with other optional language subjects for attention.

Reflecting on the past can also help inform present-day decisions about pedagogy. The 20th-century self-instructional manuals experiment with a wide range of pedagogical approaches to meet the new challenge of teaching Chinese, first for a small group of specialists willing to make a considerable time commitment, ultimately as a leisure activity for learners of all abilities and backgrounds. One notable change is that the burden placed upon the learner regarding the script has been substantially reduced over time, a fact that is at least worth bearing in mind when we are faced with decisions about how much knowledge of the script to require. (For example, the GCSE qualification, for 16 year-olds in Britain, specifies that candidates for Chinese may word-process an assignment, provided the system used for inputting pinyin does not offer predictive text – already that specification may be in need of revision, as predictive text software becomes ubiquitous.) In grammar, 19th-century authors were already beginning to break free from using European grammatical categories as a starting point; this continued into the 20th century, and by the 21st century (exemplified in the sample by Xiang 2010) the influence of Latinate grammar is barely even detectable. Teachers may or not be interested in the details of this history of linguistics, but overall it represents a heartening improvement in westerners' ability to encounter Chinese on its own terms, rather than through a eurocentric lens. Less heartening, perhaps, is the question of how Chinese culture has been represented to learners. The approach to culture has often been reductive – the Chinese are variously dreamers (Whymant); potentially difficult servants (Williamson); or ever eager to make friends (Scurfield) – and, given these various rather reductive versions, it is perhaps not so surprising that the Chinese could be considered, even up to 2001, 'inscrutable'. Teachers of Chinese today may be (more or less) confident that their materials are not guilty of such simplifications, but the process of examining the past can be a salutary reminder to us to assess the representations of Chinese language and culture(s) today with similar critical distance – how will they, in future, be judged?

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