ON THE NOTION OF SUBMORPH AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO THE LANGUAGES OF EAST AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

V.M.Alpatov
Moscow

It is well known that syllables coincide with morphems in Chinese, Vietnamese and many other languages of East and South-East Asia; the term "morphosyllable" reflects this property. The particular importance of singling out this unit is connected with its correspondence to the primary phonetical and lexical unit of the Chinese linguistic tradition (ji).

However it is known that this unit does not always correspond to the usual conception of morpheme (Kasevich 1990: 67-69). We can not describe all the definitions of morpheme and their differnces but it is necessary for us to note that the majority of them is connected with the conception of morpheme as a meaningful unit. This conception is productive for morphology and derivation. If some asemantic morphemes are recognized they are residual segments which are hardly included into meaningful segments, for instance the thematic vowels in composita in many Indo-European languages.

Many Chinese or Vietnamese "morphosyllables" have no meaning but they are not residual either: Chinese zhi and zhu in zhizhu 'spider', pi and li in pili 'thunder', yao and tiao in yaotiao 'solitary', pu and tao in putao 'vine'; also in loan-words: mo and dang in modang 'modern', qiao, ke and li in qiaokeli 'chocolate'; the list of such examples is in (Semenas 1992: 27). The contrary case, the amalgamation of two morphemes in one syllable is more rare: Chinese wa-r 'play' (the so-called erization). "Morphosyllables" do

not coincide with morphemes is about 7% of words included in the Chinese dictionaries (Semenas 1992: 27). The number of such cases is rising now since they are especially frequent in the loan-words and the number of which becomes significant in view of the process of internationalization.

We can not think that all the meaning of such words is concentrated in one "morphosyllable" while the other "morphosyllables" are asemantic, for instance in putao pu means 'vine' and tao means nothing. Only putao, modang and so on as a whole correspond to the definitions of morpheme; from the point of view of grammar we have all the reasons to concider putao, modang as the usual meaningful "morphosyllables" such as ren 'man'.

However there is also possible another approach to morphemes except the grammatical one. It is the investigation of the own morpheme structure. This investigation is the subject of a special branch of linguistics - morphophonology established by N.S.Trubetskoy (Trubetskoy 1929; Trubetskoy 1934).

Although morphophonology is connected with the investigation of the structure of morphemes consisting of phonemes, moras and syllables, the majority of linguists does not consider morphemes as meaningful units at the time of the morphophonological description of a language. For instance S.E.Martin defines morpheme as a meaningful unit but does not follow this description when compiling the list of Sino-Japanese morphemes (without distinguishing of homonyms) (Martin 1952: 24-26). We see the Japanese "morpheme" buku which is used only in bukuryoo 'Pachyma hoelen' (plant) from Chinese fuling although only bukuryoo as a whole has a meaning. S.E.Martin does not include in his list

bukuryoo or budoo 'vine' from above-mentioned putao and it is right from the morphophonological point of view. However the contradiction arises between the grammatical and morphophonological approaches. One term "morpheme" applies to different units.

We think that it is possible to overcome this contradiction by the use of the term submorph. This notion is introduced in the book (Churganova 1973) which deals with the morphophonology of Russian; see also (Kasevich 1986). In Russian "the number of the types of the distribution of morphological units is built not on meaningful categorical foundation but on pure morphophonological ones irrespective of the presence or absence of meaning of these elements" (Churganova 1973: 11). One of examples in (Churganova 1973) is the derivation of diminutives. For instance if nouns end to =ets they form diminutives by the change of =ets to =chik although =ets can be a morpheme or only a part of a morpheme: kup=it' 'buy', kup=ets 'merchant', kup=chik 'little merchant' and konets 'end', konchik 'little end' although konets is not divided to morphemes. The author of the book proposes to consider the maximal morphophonological unit to be not a morpheme but a submorph; submorph can be meaningful or meaningless (Churganova 1973: 13). V.G. Churganova distinguishes submorphs (=ets in konets) and "morphophonological nuclei" (kon=) but we define submorphs wide than V.G.Churganova and V.B.Kasevich: kon=, =ets, kup=, =ets are submorphs; there are two submorphs and two morphemes in kupets but two submorphs and one morpheme in konets.

The "morphosyllables" of Chinese and the other languages of East and South-East Asia are submorphs. They can be meaningful or meaningless but they have the rigid structure: they are equal to syllables and

the phoneme structure of every syllable is rigid too. The erization complicates slightly the situation but such cases are not numerous and we can enumerate them. However the presence or absence of meaning is not predictable and it is not connected with the structure of submorphs.

We can compare submorphs in Chinese with submorphs in Chinese loan-words in Japanese. Such submorphs in Japanese can be unequal to one syllable and can consist of two syllables: koku 'state' from go or above-mentioned buku from fu. However this transformation is regular and the rigid structure of submorphs is preserved. The separation of such submorphs in Japanese is supported by the script: every submorph is written by one character. The separation is additionally confirmed by the abbreviations: every abbreviation is formed from submorphs but not from morphemes: keidaisotsu 'graduation of the Keio university' from keioo=daigaku=sotsugyoo although the proper name Keioo is not divided into meaningful components.

The so-called syllable languages of East and South-East Asia and the languages with the considerable influence of the syllable languages (Japanese, Korean) demonstrate the necessity of the notion of submorph as the maximal unit of morphophonology. Such necessity is more significant for these languages than for the inflected languages of Europe. It is difficult and maybe impossible to single out submorphs of the latter languages irrespective of singling out morphemes but we can single out Chinese or Vietnamese submorphs only by morphophonological criteria. The arrangement of phonological units of the syllable languages is very rigid; it leads to the rigid structure of submorphs and to lack of their coincidence with morphemes since the degree of the idiomatization of