

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The underlying thread running through this study is that Chinese compounds are not “black boxes” containing unexplainable phenomena that need to be written off to “lexicalization” (Packard 2000:233). Processes of lexicalization do not appear out of nowhere; they come from the syntax. It is perhaps partly because of the “black box” notion of Chinese lexical items that compound verbs have largely been left out of, for example, studies on aspect and voice in Chinese. Basically the same strict rules of word order that apply to Chinese syntax apply to Chinese compounds: attributive modifiers come before their heads, matrix verbs come before their complements, and verbs come before their objects. The major difference is that in compounds, the elements bond tightly with each other, that is, they are inseparable; and in many cases, certain rules of syllabicity apply. Once we allow ourselves to examine the lexicon in the same way we examine the syntax of Chinese, we open up a whole new realm of possibility and discovery.

