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SEPARABLE WORDS WITH THE NOUN COMPONENT – GENERIC OBJECT IN MODERN CHINESE

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to analyze the syntagmatic interaction of verb-noun separable words *liheci* with inserts that modify the noun component, which is a generic object. The corpus material demonstrates a wide range of attributive inserts in preposition to the noun component of separable word, and the article consecutively discusses the interaction with each insert before the noun. It is shown that some inserts break the semantic unity of the two-syllable complex and noun component form direct attributive relations with the prepositive element. As a result, such noun is no longer semantically empty. The cases of incorporating actants and adjuncts into the separable predicate are also described.

Key words: separable words, *liheci*, generic object, verb-noun construction, modern Chinese

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Научная статья

РАЗДЕЛЬНО-СЛИТНЫЕ СЛОВА С ИМЕННЫМ КОМПОНЕНТОМ – ГЕНЕРИЧЕСКИМ ОБЪЕКТОМ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ КИТАЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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Аннотация. В статье представлены результаты исследования сочетаемостного потенциала разделяемых двусложных глагольно-именных комплексов современного китайского языка при дистантном положении компонентов. Данные единицы, которые в синологии принято называть раздельно-слитными словами *лихэцы*, весьма гетерогенны по своей структуре, семантике и степени спаянности компонентов, в связи с чем данное исследование целенаправленно ограничивается описанием синтагматических свойств *лихэцы*, составляющих одну из семантических групп, а именно *лихэцы* с «пустым» именным компонентом – генерическим

объектом. Анализ корпусного материала позволил выявить широкий набор вставок-атрибутов в препозиции к имени. Показано, что некоторые вставки способны разрывать семантическую спаянность двусложного комплекса и устанавливать полноценные атрибутивные отношения с именным компонентом, который в результате такого оформления перестает быть семантически пустым. Кроме того, описаны случаи инкорпорации в состав раздельно-слитных предикатов актантов и сирконстантов, синтаксически пониженных до атрибутов именных компонентов *лихэцы*, а также выявлены возможности функционирования именных компонентов в качестве аналогов глагольных счетных слов.

Ключевые слова: раздельно-слитные слова, лихэцы, генерический объект, глагольно-именная конструкция, современный китайский язык

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Introduction

In modern Chinese, two-syllable verb-noun complexes, the components of which demonstrate a distant position in the sentence, are the object of close attention of linguists. In sinology, such complexes are commonly called separable words *liheci* (离合词 *lìhéci*). Attributing such units to compound words or phrases is an important theoretical problem. The problem of the language status of verb-noun complexes in modern Chinese, questions of their nomination and structural and grammatical characteristics have been touched upon to a certain extent in the works of national linguists [1; 5; 6; 7; 8], etc., Chinese linguists [15; 16; 17; 19], etc., and Western linguists [12; 13; 14], etc.

The study of separable words is also relevant for practical purposes: separable complexes are given a lot of attention to in linguodidactics. As Tan Aoshuang notes, these units are on the list of the most difficult grammatical phenomena of the Chinese language [10, p. 494]. There is a significant number of works devoted to the analysis of the most frequent errors relating to the use of separable words, as well as proposing various strategies for teaching these units.

However, in national sinology, there is almost a total absence of works devoted to the separable words *liheci*, including the analysis of their semantic and syntagmatic characteristics. It is important to note that the class of separable words is very heterogeneous and the nature of these units is different, which is reflected in their syntagmatic behavior and controversial status in Chinese language system. As has been demonstrated in [2; 3; 4], there are three basic semantic groups of verb-noun separable words *liheci* according to the semantic weight of the components and their contribution to the meaning of the whole complex.

Within the framework of our semantic classification, separable verb-noun complexes in which the semantic core is the verb component, while the noun component is desemantized, constitute the group of separable words *liheci* with "empty" noun component. As noted in [2], there are two types of a such noun component: the "empty" noun component that semantically duplicates the meaning of the verb component, and the "empty" noun component – generic object.

This study focuses on the structural, semantic and syntagmatic properties of separable words *liheci* with the noun component – generic object.

In separable words belonging to this subgroup the noun component is the most typical object of the action denoted by the verb component, for example: 吃饭 *chīfàn* ‘to eat, to take food’ (lit.: ‘to eat’ + ‘steamed rice’), 走路 *zǒulù* ‘to go’ (lit.: ‘to go’ + ‘way, road’), 唱歌 *chànggē* ‘to sing’ (lit.: ‘to sing’ + ‘song, hymn’), 鞠躬 *jūgōng* ‘to bow’ (lit.: ‘to bow’ + ‘body’), 帮忙 *bāngmáng* ‘to help’ (lit.: ‘to help’ + ‘haste, bustle’), 懂事 *dǒngshì* ‘to understand, to deal with’ (lit.: ‘to understand’ + ‘business, matter, thing’), 付款 *fùkuǎn* ‘to pay’ (lit.: ‘to pay, to pay out’ + ‘amount of money’), etc. As noted in [18], the meaning of a such noun component is actually included in the semantics of the first verb component, and therefore, in general, does not require syntactic expression. So, in separable words with "empty" noun component, the second component only emphasizes the meaning of the first component. For example, in *liheci* 走路 *zǒulù* ‘to go’ (lit.: ‘to go’ + ‘way, road’) the meaning of the verb component 走 *zǒu* ‘to go’ already includes semantics of 路 *lù* ‘way, road’ [18, p. 113].

The desemantization of one of the components is interpreted in [9] as a semantic feature of a compound word in modern Chinese. Such component does not exert any influence on the semantics of the whole complex and loses its semantic weight [9, p. 107]. For example, the meaning of the unit 吃饭 *chīfàn* ‘to eat, to take food’ (lit.: ‘to eat’ + ‘steamed rice’) is actually broader than the sum of the meanings of the constituent parts: this two-syllable verb means taking any food, not only rice [8, p. 182].

Thus, the semantics of the so-called "empty" noun component is irrelevant to the meaning of the whole complex, although etymologically such noun has its own semantics. The role of such component in *liheci* is to bring verb component to the two-syllable norm, turning the one-syllable verb into a semantically and grammatically complete unit (the formal-quantitative requirement of the Chinese language). As Xiang Yuanmao notes, such noun component has lost referentiality and substantivity, but has a high degree of predictability, being the most characteristic name in postposition to the verb, on the semantics of which the meaning of the complex is based [quoted from: 16, p. 64].

Using a one-syllable verb with an "empty" object is interpreted in [10] as the process of incorporation by the verb of a recurrent participant of the situation – an object that loses all signs of the semantic role Patient and turns into a noun group with a generic meaning [10, p. 81]. However, the noun components of separable words demonstrate a heterogeneous object nature. The following implicit roles of the noun components can be distinguished: Trajectory in 走路 *zǒulù* ‘to go’ (lit.: ‘to go’ + ‘way, road’), Patient in 吃饭 *chīfàn* ‘to eat, take food’ (lit.: ‘to eat’ + ‘steamed rice’), Means in 付款 *fùkuǎn* ‘to pay’ (lit.: ‘to pay’ + ‘amount of money’), Working Part in 鞠躬 *jūgōng* ‘to bow’ (lit.: ‘to bow’ + ‘body’), etc.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the syntagmatic interaction of separable words *liheci* with inserts that modify the noun component – generic object. The main source of linguistic material is the Chinese Language Corpus of Center for Chinese Linguistics PKU.

Research results

The analysis of the corpus material revealed the following inserts in preposition to the noun component – generic object:

a) Quantitative groups (measure words, counting complexes, numerals, units with quantitative semantics)

The measure word 个 *gè* ‘piece’, placed in preposition to the noun component of separable word, function as a quantifier of the action, describing a single situation:

(1) 每个月，孙琳都会跟同事们一起吃个饭。

Měi gè yuè, Sūn Lín dōu huì gēn
 Every CLF month Sun Lin all can COM
tóngshì-men yīqǐ chī gè fàn
 colleague-PL together eat CLF steamed_rice
 ‘Every month, Sun Lin has a dinner with her colleagues’

(2) 让我们一起唱首歌吧。

Ràng wǒmen yīqǐ chàng gè gē ba
 CAUS 3PL together sing CLF song MOD
 ‘Let’s sing together’

In example (3) the measure word 个 *gè* ‘piece’ modifies the noun component with the semantics Working Part in *liheci* 鞠躬 *jūgōng* ‘to bow’ (lit.: ‘to bow’ + ‘body’). A multiple situation is described:

(3) 一个老农民没等人齐就独自鞠三个躬。

Yī gè lǎo nóngmín méi děng rén
 One CLF old farmer NEG wait man
qí jiù dúzì jū sān gè gōng
 gather in_a_moment alone bow three CLF body
 ‘An old farmer bowed three times without waiting for everyone to gather’

A generic object can take in preposition special measure words, such as 条 *tiáo* ‘branch, strip’ (with the component 路 *lù* ‘path, road’), 件 *jiàn* ‘thing’ (with the component 事 *shì* ‘business, matter, thing, incident’); 笔 *bǐ* ‘a measure word for sums of money’ (with component 款 *kuǎn* ‘amount of money’), etc. As a result, such generic object loses its initial semantic emptiness and acquire referential status (definite/indefinite referentiality):

(4) 不多几步，她们就分开了，走了三条路。

Bù duō jǐ bù, tāmen jiù fēnkāi-le,
 NEG many several step 3PL in_a_moment
zǒu-le sān tiáo lù
 separate-PFV go-PFV three CLF road
 ‘After a few steps, they separated and walked three ways’

(5) 小高同志，你付了这笔款吧！

Xiǎo Gāo tóngzhì, nǐ fù-le
 Xiao Gao comrade 2SG pay-PFV
zhè bǐ kuǎn ba!
 DEM CLF amount_of_mone MOD
 ‘Comrade Xiao Gao, you should pay this amount!’

In (6–7) the generic noun component takes a numeral without a measure word in preposition and functions as an analogue of the verb measure word. This strategy is demonstrated by separable

words whose noun component has an implicit semantics Working Part (6) and Measure of Action (7):

(6) 陆凤娇笑着对二人鞠了一躬。

Lù Fèngjiāo xiào-zhe duì

Lu Fengjiao smile-DUR ADDR

èr rén jū-le yī gōng

two man bow-PFV one body

‘Lu Fengjiao smiled and bowed to the two of them’

(7) 他快跑了六十多步。

Tā kuài pǎo-le liùshí duō bù

3SG.M quick run-PFV sixty odd step

‘He quickly ran sixty-odd steps’

There are cases of inserting units with quantitative semantics before the noun component of *liheci*. As a rule, these units semantically refer directly to the noun component. As a result of such modification, an initially "empty" generic object acquires referential status (definite/indefinite referentiality):

(8) 作为记者，我走过很多路，也遇到了很多人。

Zuòwéi jìzhě, wǒ zǒu-guò hěnduō lù,

As journalist 1SG go-EXP many road

yě yùdào-le hěnduō rén

also meet-PFV many man

‘As a journalist, I have travelled many roads and met many people’

b) Demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, indefinite pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns in combination with measure words function as markers of definiteness:

(9) 我们一定要付清这笔款。

Wǒmen yīdìng yào fù-qīng zhè bǐ kuǎn

1PL certainly must pay-RES DEM CLF amount

‘We must pay this amount’

(10) 你会唱那首歌吗？

Nǐ huì chàng nà shǒu gē ma?

2SG can sing DEM CLF song Q

‘Can you sing that song?’

The interrogative pronoun 什么 *shénme* ‘what’ is found in preposition to the generic noun component. From the semantic point of view, it does not in any way characterize the noun component to which it is a formal attribute. The pronoun 什么 *shénme* ‘what’ indicates the subjective attitude of the speaker, expressing his disapproval:

(11) 懂什么事啊！

Dǒng shénme shì a

Understand what thing MOD

‘But what do you know?!’

There are also examples in which the interrogative pronouns 什么 *shénme* ‘what’ semantically refers directly to the noun component, which is no longer semantically empty:

(12) 你想吃什么饭吗?

Nǐ xiǎng chī shénme fàn ma?

2S G want eat what steamed_rice Q

‘What would you like to eat?’

An example of the use of the indefinite pronoun which refers to the noun component both formally and semantically is illustrated by (13):

(13) 人饿了吃什么饭都是香的。

Rén è-le chī shénme fàn

Man hungry-MOD eat any steamed_rice

dōu shì xiāng de

all COP flavorful ATTR

‘Any meal tastes good when a man is hungry’

c) Personal pronouns, noun groups and adjectives

The case of insertion of *noun groups* as attributes of the noun component is illustrated by (14):

(14) 人只能是永远走在成人的路上。

Rén zhǐ néng shì yǒngyuǎn zǒu

Man just can COP always go

zài chéng rén de lù-shàng

APPL adult ATTR road-LOC

‘A man can go on the path of growing up all his life’

Noun groups with spatial and temporal semantics are incorporated into the separable complex as formal attributes of the noun component, but semantically refer to the situation described by the predicate as a whole. Cases of insertion adjuncts with semantics Term and Distance is represented by (15–16):

(15) 虽然走了四小时的路，我并不感到有吃东西的需要。

Suīrán zǒu-le sì xiǎoshí de lù,

Although go-PFV four hour ATTR road

wǒ bìng bù gǎndào yǒu chī dōngxī de xūyào

1SG entirely NEG feel have eat thing ATTR need

‘Even though I walked for four hours, I didn’t feel the need to eat’

(16) 他们走了二千多公里路，演出了五十九场。

Tāmen zǒu-le èrqiān duō gōnglǐ lù,

3PL go-PFV two_thousand over kilometre road

yǎn-chū-le wǔshíjiǔ chǎng

perform-RES-PFV fifty_nine CLF

‘They’ve travelled over 2,000 kilometres and played fifty-nine shows.’

The formal presence of the noun component after the verb component in separable words restricts the entering of another object in absolute postposition to *liheci*. This grammatical restriction is overcome by inserting indirect object between the components of separable predicate:

such participants are syntactically lowered to attributes of the noun component of separable word. Thus, predicate and indirect object are organized into a single incorporative verb complex.

In (17–18) Malefactive and Benefactive are inserted between the components of *liheci* 碍事 *àishì* ‘to hinder, to impede, to annoy’ (lit.: ‘to hinder, to impede’ + ‘business, matter, thing’) and 帮忙 *bāngmáng* ‘to help’ (lit.: ‘to help’ + ‘haste, trouble’):

(17) 我在这里等着你，但不会碍你的事。

<i>Wǒ</i>	<i>zài</i>	<i>zhèlǐ</i>	<i>děng-zhe</i>	<i>nǐ</i> ,		
1SG	PREP	here	wait-DUR	2SG		
<i>dàn</i>	<i>bù</i>	<i>huì</i>	<i>ài</i>	<i>nǐ de shì</i>		
but	NEG	be_going_to	hinder	2SG ATTR	business	

‘I’m here for you, but I won’t get in your way’

(18) 他准知道老人会帮他的忙。

<i>Tā</i>		<i>zhǔn</i>	<i>zhīdào</i>	<i>lǎorén</i>		
3SG.M		for_sure	know	old_man		
<i>huì</i>	<i>bāng</i>	<i>tā</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>máng</i>		
FUT	help	3SG.M	ATTR	trouble		

‘He knew for sure that the old man would help him’

There is also an example in the corpus which illustrates the insertion of personal pronoun between the components of separable word. Such attribute anaphorically refers to the subject of the action. It seems that such combinatorics indicates a high degree of involvement of participants in the process, their abstraction from the surrounding world (the case of separable word 聊天儿 *liáotiānr* ‘to talk’ (lit.: ‘to talk’ + ‘weather’):

(19) [他们] 继续用方言聊他们的天。

<i>[Tāmen]</i>	<i>jìxù</i>	<i>yòng</i>	<i>fāngyán</i>	<i>liáo tāmen</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>tiān</i>
3PL	continue	INS	dialect	talk 3PL	ATTR	weather

‘[They] continue to talk in their dialect’

Conclusion

The analysis of the corpus material revealed such inserts in preposition to the noun component – generic object of separable words as measure words, counting complexes, numerals, units with quantitative semantics, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite and personal pronouns, nouns and noun groups.

In some cases, the semantic unity of separable words, in which the noun component is a generic object, is broken. Initially "empty" generic objects form direct attributive relations with the prepositional modifier not only formally, but also semantically. As a result, such noun components are no longer semantically empty.

The units with "empty object" also demonstrate the strategy of incorporating actants and adjuncts between the components of the separable predicate. The inserted participant is lowered in the rank to the attribute of the noun component of the *liheci*.

Taking numerals in preposition, some noun components can also function as analogues of the verb measure words.

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Abbreviations

1 – first person;	EXP – experientive;
2 – second person;	FUT – future;
3 – third person;	INS – instrumental;
ADDR – addressee;	M – masculine;
ATTR – attribute;	MOD – modal particle;
CAUS – causative;	NEG – negation;
CLF – measure word, classifier;	PFV – perfective;
COM – comitative;	PL – plural;
COP – copula;	PREP – preposition;
DEM – demonstrative pronoun;	RES – resultative morpheme;
DUR – durative;	SG – singular.

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