

The Correlation between Compound Structures and their Grammatical Features in Chinese

Abstract: This thesis discusses how compound structures affect their parts of speech. The formation of compounds is divided into adnominal-head structure, adverbial-head structure, coordinate structure, verb-object structure, verb-resultative structure, subject-predicate structure, serial verbs structure, noun-measurer structure, noun-localizer structure, numeral-measurer structure, serial measurers structure, preposition-object structure, functional morpheme structure, clitic-structure, reduplicative-morphemes structure, affixation structure, all together sixteen types, and the word formations of the most commonly used ten thousand words are also labeled in the thesis.

Statistics show that compounds formed by a certain word forming rules are of specific parts of speech. For instance, 86 percent of compounds with the adnominal-head structure are nouns. 96 percent with the verb-resultative-structure are verbs. 94 percent with the serial verb structure are verbs. 100 percent with the noun-measurer structure are nouns. 75 percent with the verb-object structure are verbs. 62 percent with the adverbial-head structure are verbs. However, some compounds formed by other word forming rules are of varied parts of speech. For example, 51 percent of compounds with the coordinate structure are verbs, 28 percent are nouns and 15 percent are adjectives. 44 percent of compounds with the Subject-predicate structure are verbs, 25 percent are nouns, 15 percent are distinctive words and 6 percent are adjectives.

Therefore, there is no correlation between word formation of compounds and their parts of speech. The affection of compound structures on their parts of speech is mainly embodied by the correlation between the grammatical features of the head and the parts of speech of the compounds. The head-feature percolation theory can be applied to explaining this phenomenon, namely the grammatical features of head-element of compounds can be percolated to the whole compounds and thus determine their parts of speech. Statistics show that 83 percent of compounds accord with head-feature percolation rule. But 17 percent do not. The head-feature shift rule is used to explain the phenomenon. The theory indicates that the grammatical-features of head will change when it percolates upwards. As a result, parts of speech of the whole compounds are different from those of head. We call the compounds that do not accord with head-feature percolation rule as endocentric-words and those that accord with head-feature shift rule as exocentric-words. There are two ways to form an exocentric-word. The first is regular shift, namely in the process of the combination of two word formation element, head-feature shift is regular. The second is irregular head-feature shift, which is caused by the evolvement of parts of speech and metonymy word formation.

Key words: word formation, parts of speech, head-feature percolation,
head-feature shift