1. **Non-Technical Summary**

A 1000 word (maximum) summary of the main research results, in non-technical language, should be provided below. The summary might be used by ESRC to publicise the research. It should cover the aims and objectives of the project, main research results and significant academic achievements, dissemination activities and potential or actual impacts on policy and practice.

**Aim and objectives of the project**

The aim of our project was to investigate the grammatical and pragmatic properties of a discontinuous type of verbal constructions in Mandarin, namely, split words (SWs). The two components of a typical SW (or splittable verbal compound), a verbal head and a nominal element, can be interposed by other grammatical units. The continuous and discontinuous uses of the SWs in Mandarin have been understood as a special type of linguistic units standing in between words and phrases. This ambiguous categorisation of SWs to both words and phrases has led to much debate among Chinese linguists. Our specific objectives have been: 1) to examine the types of interposing elements and the syntactic functions of SWs; 2) to identify the typical contexts of combined and separated uses of SWs; 3) to explore the discourse the pragmatic functions of SWs; and 4) to achieve a better understanding of the similar constructions in other languages.

**Main research results**

Our qualitative and quantitative analyses showed that the major types of elements attracted by the verbal heads of SWs are aspect markers and resultative verb complements (RVCs), which are sometimes regarded as special types of aspect markers. We found that the discontinuity may involve a negator (NEG), an aspect marker (ASP), a quantificational expression (MC), a classifier (CL) and various forms of pre-modifiers, as listed in the figure below. While several elements may separate the head verb and the noun, a large portion of SWs were found to be very short, predominantly, three morphemes long.

\[
\text{SW}_1 + \text{NEG} + \text{ASP/RVC} + \text{MC} + \text{CL} + \text{MOD} + \text{SW}_2
\]

The analysis of the interaction of discontinuous uses of SWs with sentence type demonstrated that they are not sensitive to either sentence type or the overall semantics, i.e. neutral, positive or negative of the clause. SWs were, however, found to be sensitive to mode, being more common in spoken Mandarin than in written. Within the spoken genres they appear to be particularly frequent in humorous texts, and within the written in mystery and detective stories. A consideration of the inserted elements between the two components of SWs revealed more discourse properties of SWs. For instance, we
noted in our data a strong collocation between SWs and aspect markers (e.g. the actual marker -le and experiential marker -guo), which are commonly used in describing past events. According to Biber (1988, pp. 108-109), the frequent use of perfect aspect verbs is characteristic of narrative discourse, where a sequential account of past events is presented. In addition to the temporal ordering of narrative discourse, post-verbal resultative complements assist to modify the intensity or degree of an activity so as to be more specific or particularised. This elaborated modification of verbs is seen to be a reflection of the speaker’s involvement in the discourse (cf. Biber, 1988, p. 104; Ljung, 2002, p. 181).

Finally, in a few conference presentations we proposed that our research method could be applied to investigating discontinuous verbal constructions of a different nature in other languages (e.g. separable verbs in German and Dutch).

References

Significant academic achievements
Our research has resulted in a number of published and forthcoming works as follows:

(Forthcoming) Bang-le yi ge da mang (offered a big helping hand): A corpus study of the splittable compounds in spoken and written Chinese. Language Sciences.
Dissemination activities and potential or actual impacts on policy and practice

We presented our papers on split words in Mandarin at the following international conferences.


Moreover, we started some discussion on split words in Mandarin and their research methodology on a discussion forum (e.g. http://www.corpus4u.org and http://www.fleric.org.cn/forum/). The discussion helped to disseminate the project findings and to determine how to best formally reflect the problematic linguistic status of SWs in Mandarin.

In addition, our Frequency dictionary of Mandarin with Routledge was informed by our analysis of SWs in empirical language data.

(Word count: 990 words)