THE CLASSIFICATION OF MANDARIN IDIOMATIC VP

Hui An

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ABSTRACT

Hui An: The Classification of Mandarin Idiomatic VP
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Due to their uncommon meaning-form pairing, idioms have always been a center piece in discussions about how human mind stores and computes meaning. Based on the composition of their aspectual properties, this thesis classifies Mandarin idiomatic VPs into five different categories to show that certain idioms can be argued to have aspect put together in the syntax while others are best described to have their aspectual properties stored as a whole in the lexicon. This complex result adds partial support to both Representational Modularity and Distributed Morphology, meanwhile providing more cross-linguistic evidence to the discussion on idiomatic meaning-form pairing.

To my dearest Mom and Dad, I would never be where I am without the love and support from both of you. Thank you. I love you both.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Idioms are a charm for linguists for their irregularity of meaning-form correspondence. Contrary to the more frequent, non-idiomatic constructions, idioms have frequently been referred to as fixed in that their meanings do not seem to be computable based on the meanings of their syntactic parts. Take, for example, the famous idiom *kick the bucket*. The meaning of this expression does not seem to have anything to do with the meaning of either *kick* or *the bucket*. Because of this phenomenon, idioms have long been a key issue in debates about how human mind stores and computes meaning. Recently, McGinnis (2002) claims that all English idiomatic VPs have structural aspect in the sense that the aspectual meanings of these idioms are always computed in the Syntax as opposed to being stored in the lexicon. Meanwhile, Glasbey (2006) claims that there is actually a split in English idiomatic VPs in terms of how their aspectual meanings are put together after she discovers several counterexamples to McGinnis (2002). The complicated facts in English calls for a more detailed classification of idiomatic VPs. Thus, this current thesis aims to provide such a classification to Mandarin idiomatic VPs to more systematically investigate their form-meaning paring. In so doing, this thesis also hopes to provide more evidence to future discussion on aspectual meaning of idioms, as well as to the broader issue on the semantic analyzability of idioms.

This thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 briefly introduces the notion of "aspect" and how it is different from "tense"; Chapter 3 is a review of both McGinnis (2002) and Glasbey (2006) regarding their claims about idiom aspect; Chapter 4 provides a detailed breakdown of the aspectual properties of Mandarin verbs; Chapter 5 demonstrates the thorough classification of

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Mandarin idiomatic VPs; Chapter 6 discusses the questions this classification raises for the

debate between DM and RM regarding idiomatic form-meaning pairing and finally Chapter 7

concludes the thesis.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS ASPECT?

Though both being a type of temporal relation, Aspect is always distinguished from Tense. Tense concerns the time sequence between the situation and the time of utterance. For example, if a sentence is in "past tense", we may easily construe that the situation described by the sentence happens prior to the time when the sentence is uttered. Aspect, on the other hand, deals with the internal temporal structure of a situation. More specifically, Aspect gives us information about the nature of the situation talked about, and a temporal viewpoint which concerns all or part of the situation (Smith 1997). Because of this, linguistically many scholars may further distinguish two types of Aspect: viewpoint aspect and situation aspect. Viewpoint aspect tells us what temporal perspective the speaker uses when a situation is described. Traditionally two different viewpoint aspects are distinguished: perfective aspect which presents a situation as a whole, and imperfective aspect which presents only part of a situation (Smith 1997). This is all that will be said about viewpoint aspect in this paper as it is not the focus here. This paper focuses primarily on situation aspect.

Situation aspect illustrates the internal structure of a situation, informing us what type of situation is being talked about. Generally, linguists distinguish four different situation types (Vendlerian Classes): states, activities, accomplishments and achievements. These four situation types differ from each other in terms of 1) whether or not they are static in time; 2) whether or not they have a natural final endpoint and 3) whether or not they have a duration (Comrie 1976, Smith 1997, Vendler 1957). The following table shows a detailed distinction of the four situation types using feature values:

	Static	Telic	Durative
State	+	-	+
Activity	-	-	+
Accomplishment	-	+	+
Achievement	-	+	-

Table 1. Feature Values of Different Situation Types

It should be noted that the above attributes of the four situation types are understood according to how they are conceived but not literally whether or not they have an endpoint or a duration etc. For example, in reality a situation of eating a grape does not seem to have a duration since the situation usually only involves one single bite. It is instantaneous. But this does not change our conception that an activity of eating usually is associated with a process. So we will still say a situation involving eating is durative.

Traditionally, situation aspect is considered as a property of verbs. This is the case with Vendler (1957) when he first proposed the four situation types. Later, it was discovered that semantic information of verbal arguments, adjuncts, as well as some adverbials all have an impact on the situation type of a sentence. Therefore, it is claimed that the domain of situation aspect is not verbs, but verb constellations rather (Dowty 2012, Smith 1997, Verkuyl 2013). For example, consider the following triplet of sentences:

(1) A. John climbed (activity)

B. John climbed a mountain (accomplishment)

C. John climbed mountains (activity)

The three sentences only differ in the compliment position in the VP. In (1A), the VP *climbed* does not have a compliment and the event described is an activity. However, the addition of the compliment *a mountain* to the VP in (1B) changes the situation type of the sentence into an accomplishment. Since the two sentences have the same subject and same verb tense, we can

thus conclude that it must be the semantic information of the compliment that affects the overall situation aspect of the sentence. This can also be explained by Table 1. An event of climbing is understood to have no natural endpoint because theoretically, one can climb forever. However, an event of climbing a mountain completes when one reaches the summit of the mountain he or she climbs. Therefore, this event is understood to have an endpoint. This is how adding a compliment changes the situation aspect of the events involved in (1A) and (1B). Now let's compare (1C) to (1B). The two sentences resemble each other syntactically. The only difference is that the compliment in (1C), *mountains,* is a bare plural unlike the one in (1B) which is a quantized NP. Again we can conceive that the two events have different situation aspect because an event of climbing mountains seems to describe a habit which has no endpoints. This is further evidence that semantic information of verbal compliments can in fact influence the situation aspectual meaning of sentences. In addition to this, Verkuyl (2013) also provides examples where the subject NP seems to also have an effect on situation aspect:

> (2) A. Famous movie stars discovered that little spa for years
>
> B. A famous movie star discovered that little spa

The situation in (2A) is one where the little spa keeps being discovered by famous movie stars. There is no natural final endpoint to this situation. On the contrary, the situation in (2B) reaches the natural final endpoint when the little spa is discovered by a famous movie star. Of course, (2A) also has an adverbial *for years* that also likely contributes to the shift in situation type, but this does not change the fact that even elements outside the VP can affect the situation type of the sentence. Based on these observations, Smith (1997) claims that situation aspect is fully compositional in that "it is built up with the verb, arguments and the adverbs of a sentence".

This discussion of situation aspect has two important bearings on our discussion of idiom aspect later. First, it is essential to acknowledge that situation aspect is a property on units larger than just the verbs. Because the focus of this thesis is about the situation aspect on idioms, and idioms inevitably resemble regular VPs in terms of syntactic structure, it would be difficult to continue this discussion if situation aspect only concerns verbs, but not larger units like VPs. Second, it is necessary to make explicit the argument that situation aspect is compositional. We have seen how this argument is arrived in the last paragraph for regular VPs, but there has been debates about whether this claim is valid for idioms. As we will see in the next section, the exchange between McGinnis (2002) and Glasbey (2006) is centered around this topic.

CHAPTER 3: THE DEBATE BETWEEN MCGINNIS (2002) AND GLASBEY (2006)

McGinnis (2002)'s argument stems from an observation that the idiomatic VP *kick the bucket* 'to die' does not have the same aspectual properties as the non-idiomatic VP *die*:

(3) A. Hermione was dying for weeks

B. *Hermione was kicking the bucket for weeks.

She claims that if *kick the bucket* 'to die' has the same meaning as *die* as proposed in Jakendoff (1997: 169), the above should not be expected. Marantz (1997) explains this phenomenon as caused by the structures of this idiom carrying "semantic implications of a transitive VP and a definite direct object". McGinnis also agrees that the syntactic structures of idioms should have an impact on their aspectual properties based on the following example:

(4) A. Hermione hang a left in/*for 5 seconds

Hermione hang a picture in/*for 5 seconds

B. Hermione hang fire *in/for 5 seconds.

Hermione hang laundry *in/for 5 seconds.

In each pair of sentences, the top one contains an idiomatic VP while the bottom one contains a non-idiomatic VP with the same syntactic structure. McGinnis observes that the change in aspectual properties caused by a change in direct objects appears in both non-idiomatic and idiomatic VPs. She believes that this parallelism is a piece of evidence for aspectual properties of idioms manipulatable by syntax. As a result, she finishes her argument by giving a rather strong prediction that any given idiom should have the same aspectual properties as the non-idiomatic construction which has the same verb and same syntactic structure. Another way to interpret this,

as Glasbey (2006) suggests, is to say that any given idiomatic VP should have the same aspectual properties on its literal interpretation and idiomatic interpretation since the two interpretations do share the exact same form. As we will see next, Glasbey (2006) proves that this prediction is not borne out.

Glasbey (2006) starts her argument by considering the English idiomatic VP *paint the town red* which she claims is a counterexample to McGinnis (2002). The literal interpretation of this idiom describes an event of the town being painted in a specific color red, while the idiomatic interpretation of it describes an event of having great fun. Glasbey (2006) notes that McGinnis (2002) predicts the two constructions *paint the town red* (Lit.) and *paint the town red* (Id.) should have the same aspect class. However, she does not find this claim true:

(5) A. Mary and I painted the town red in/*for 2 hours (Lit.)

B. Mary and I painted the town red *in/for 2 hours (Id.)

According to (5), the literal interpretation of this idiom is an accomplishment whereas the idiomatic interpretation is an activity. Other examples are readily available: *cry one's heart out* 'to weep inconsolably'; *drown one's sorrows* 'to drink liquor to escape one's unhappiness'; *drive one's pigs to market* 'to snore' etc. These examples suggest not all English idioms have structural aspect. Glasbey (2006) tries to account for her observation by incorporating Krifka (1992)'s theory of aspect composition.

Krifka (1992) argues that the input to the derivation of aspect in syntax includes not only the semantic properties of the subject, the object, the verb and any adverbials etc, but also the thematic relation between the verb and its complements. This explains why *paint the town red* does not have structural aspect on the idiomatic interpretation. In the literal interpretation, the thematic relation between the verb *paint* and its complement *the town* is what Krifka (1992) calls

the "gradual patient" relation since *the town* undergoes a gradual process till being painted fully

red. But there is no counterpart to *the town* in the idiomatic interpretation, thus the thematic

relation is lost. This means that the input to aspect derivation is missing a piece in the idiomatic

interpretation. Consequently, we would expect non-structural aspect on this interpretation.

This observation has another important indication to idiom aspect. Remember that the

reason *paint the town red* does not have structural aspect is because the loss of thematic relation

on the idiomatic interpretation. This is caused by the inability to semantically analyze the

complement *the town* in that interpretation. Such an idiom bears much resemblance to what

Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994) calls Idiomatic Phrase (IP). Indeed, Glasbey (2006) argues that

a prerequisite of having structural aspect is for an idiomatic VP to have semantic counterparts of

its complement on both interpretations. Idioms satisfying this property are termed Idiomatically

Combining Expressions (ICE) in Nunberg et al. (1994). This argument is of course not shared by

McGinnis (2002) when she explicitly mentions that IPs like *hang a left* or *hang fire* still have

compositional aspect as suggested by examples in (2). Glasbey (2006) does not address these

examples directly in her paper but she does mention one idiomatic VP that resembles *hang fire*.

The idiom *saw logs* 'to snore' is one whose two interpretations both describe activity

eventualities despite the fact that it is an IP. Glasbey's explanation of this is to say that this

merely happens by accident because the complement in that idiomatic VP happens to be a bare

plural. Similar explanation can be adopted for *hang fire* since it has a mass noun as its

complement. I find no reason to question her explanation here.

Ultimately, Glasbey (2006) predicts that aspect is structural for a class of idioms, namely

the ICEs. For IPs, she maintains that it is best to consider their aspectual properties as being

stored as a whole in the lexicon with their meanings. Naturally then, a question one needs to ask

is if such a split also exists in another language. A preliminary examination of a couple Mandarin idiomatic VPs seems to yield a positive answer. Let's first consider the idiom *shuo dahua* (*shuo* 'to say', *dahua* 'big words'; Id. 'to lie'):

(6) A. ta   dui wo   shuo-le   shi nian dahua

3rd.SG.NOM.MASC to 1st.SG.NOM say-PERF ten year big words

'He lied to me for ten years'

B. ta   dui wo   shuo-le   shi nian   huaihua

3rd.SG.NOM.MASC to 1st.SG.NOM say-PERF   ten year bad words

'He said bad words to me for ten years'

Apparently, the idiom and the non-idiomatic construction which has exactly the same verb and same syntactic structure share the same aspectual property given that they can both be modified by the for-phrase. So, it seems idiomatic VPs with the same aspectual properties on both interpretations do exist in Mandarin. Are there counterexamples? The answer is positive. Consider the Mandarin idiomatic VP *chao youyu* (*chao* 'to cook', *youyu* 'squid'; Id. 'to fire someone'):

(7) A. shangci   zai   chao   wo-de   youyu(*)

supervisor PROG cook 1st.SG-POSS squid

'supervisor is firing me' (*)

B. chushi zai   chao   wo-de   jidan

chef   PROG cook 1st.SG-POSS egg

'chef is cooking my eggs'

The non-idiomatic VP, *chao jidan* 'to cook eggs', has the same verb and the same syntactic structure as the idiom in the above pair of sentences. The reason to choose this expression

instead of directly using the idiomatic VP in its literal interpretation is mainly due to the difficulty of a native Mandarin speaker (in this case, the author himself) to retrieve its literal meaning given how frequent this idiom is. Anyway, the two does not behave the same in aspect. The idiom describes an achievement eventuality while the non-idiomatic VP describes an activity. Since both idioms with and without the same aspectual properties on their two interpretations can be found in Mandarin, it seems McGinnis (2002) would not suffice to account for the facts in this language, and the split in English as found in Glasbey (2006) can also be found in Mandarin. But there are still many questions yet to be answered. Let's first recall the IP *hang a left* which is claimed by McGinnis (2002) to have compositional aspect. Glasbey (2006)'s prediction would not be able to explain this. Naturally, one would like to know if such examples exist in Mandarin as well. In addition, Glasbey (2006)'s prediction incorporates the classification of idioms into IPs and ICEs by Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994), something McGinnis (2002) does not consider systematically. Therefore it is important to not only see whether the existence of both idiomatic VPs with and without compositional aspect can be attested in Mandarin, but also if they all fall nicely into Glasbey (2006)'s categories. All these questions call for a thorough classification of Mandarin idiomatic VPs. But before the classification can be conducted, the aspectual properties of Mandarin verbs will need to mentioned first as they will be one of the criteria of the classification.

CHAPTER 4: ASPECTUAL PROPERTIES OF MANDARIN VERBS

Introduction

Before we go into much detail about the classification, a discussion about the aspectual classes in Mandarin is provided so that readers have a better idea of the ways in which Mandarin idioms are grouped aspectually.

Aspectual Classes in Mandarin

Vendler (1967) distinguishes four different aspectual classes in English based on the temporal nature of the eventualities denoted by the verbs. These four classes are state, activity, accomplishment and achievement. State and activity verbs are said to describe "atelic" events which have no internal endpoints. In contrast, accomplishment and achievement verbs are said to describe "telic" events which have internal endpoints. Some English examples from each aspectual class are exemplified below:

(8) A. I **know** the truth. (state)

   B. I **ran** for an hour today. (activity)

   C. I **painted** a picture today. (accomplishment)

   D. I **noticed** the suspicious man. (achievement)

Similar to English, Mandarin verbs can also be classified into one of the four Vendlerian aspectual classes. For example:

(9) A. wo   **lei**-le. (stative)

   1st.SG.NOM   exhaust-PERF

   'I am exhausted'

B. wo   zai   **chi**   wufan. (activity)

  1st.SG.NOM PROG eat   lunch

  'I am eating lunch'

C. wo   gang **xie**-le   yi-feng   xin. (accomplishment)

  1st.SG.NOM   just write-PERF one-CL   letter

  'I just wrote a letter'

D. huoche **dao**-le. (achievement)

   train   arrive-PERF

   'The train arrived'

Syntactic Properties of Different Aspectual Classes in Mandarin

<u>Activity</u>

Activity verbs describe dynamic events with a certain duration. This means that they are compatible with the progressive marker *zai* in Mandarin. For example:

(10) ta   zai   shuijiao

   3rd.SG.NOM.MASC PROG sleep

   'He is sleeping'

Just like English activity verbs, they can also appear in the imperative mood:

(11) xi   shou!

   wash   hand

   'Wash your hands!'

Mandarin activity verbs also pattern with certain adverbial expressions. First of all, they can appear with durative adverbials like *shi fenzhong* 'for ten minutes' but not frame adverbials

like *zai shi fenzhong nei* 'in ten minutes' (the *zai* in this adverbial expression is a different one from the progressive *zai*). For example:

(12) A. wo   jintian pao-le   shi fenzhong.

1st.SG.NOM   today   run-PERF ten minute

'I ran for ten minutes today'

B. *wo   jintian zai shi fenzhong nei   pao-le

1st.SG.NOM today   in   ten minute   within run-PERF

'I ran in ten minutes today'

This is because frame adverbials typically entail the period of time needed for the completion or termination of the event. This in turn would suggest that the event has a natural endpoint. Since activity events do not have natural endpoints, their incompatibility with frame adverbials can be expected.

Second, activity verbs can appear with agentive adverbials like *guyi* 'deliberately'. This is because these verbs almost always assign an agent theta role to their subjects. The following is an example:

(13) ta   guyi   ku-le   yi   xiaoshi cai   ting xialai

3rd.SG.NOM.FEM deliberate   cry-PERF one hour   only   stop down

'she cried deliberately for an hour before she stopped'

Last but not the least, activity verbs can appear with scalar adverbials like *chayidian* 'almost'. Verbs modified this way entails that the event described by the verb does not even get to its starting point. For example:

(14) ta   chayidian   ku-le

   3rd.SG.NOM.FEM   almost   cry-PERF

   'she almost cried' → entails that the event of crying did not happen

State

   Stative verbs in Mandarin are also durative and atelic. This suggests the compatibility

with durative adverbials and incompatibility with frame adverbials. They differ from activity

verbs in that they are static in nature, therefore the events described by them are not conceived as

having different stages of development, thus they are unable to appear with the progressive

marker *zai*. Furthermore, lack of dynamicity also implies that these verbs usually do not have

volitional doers, hence they are incompatible with the imperative mood and agentive adverbials.

Lastly, if paired with scalar adverbials, these verbs also entail that the events have not even

reached the starting point. These properties can be exhibited by the following examples:

   (15) Incompatible with progressive:

   *wo   zai   zhidao zhenxiang

    1st.SG.NOM   PROG   know   truth

    'I am knowing the truth'

   (16) Incompatible with frame adverbials but compatible with durative adverbials:

   A. wo   yijing   lei-le   san   tian le

      1st.SG.NOM   already exhaust-PERF three day PART

      'I have already been exhausted for three days'

   B. *wo   zai san   tian nei   lei-le

      1st.SG.NOM   in   three day within exhaust-PERF

      'I was exhausted in three days'

(17) Incompatible with imperative:

    *lei!

    Exhaust

    'Be exhausted!'

(18) Incompatible with agentive adverbials:

    *wo   guyi   lei-le

    1st.SG.NOM   deliberate   exhaust-PERF

    'I am exhausted on purpose'

(19) Paring with scalar adverbials indicates event has not started:

    Wo   chayidian jiu   lei-le

    1st.SG.NOM   almost   just exhaust-PERF

    'I almost got exhausted' → entails that the event of getting exhausted did not happen

Accomplishment

Chang (2001) proposes an interesting view that accomplishment events are actually comprised of two components: an activity component and an endpoint component. This is intuitive if we compare the two VPs *run* and *run a mile*. The latter is an accomplishment as opposed to the former which is activity because the complement designates an internal endpoint to the activity described by the verb. Thus, aspectually this VP has an activity component fused with the endpoint component conveyed through the complement to make it an accomplishment. This also corresponds to Krifka (1992)'s intuition that accomplishment predicates all contain a gradual patient – the activity component of such predicates implies such gradual processes. In this regard, an accomplishment verb should behave very similarly to an activity verb in terms of syntactic properties. Indeed, this analysis is borne out in Mandarin:

(20) Compatible with imperative:

qing   wei   women   gai   yi-dong   fangzi ba

please for   1ˢᵗ.PL.DAT   build   one-CL   house PART

'Please build a house for us!'

(21) Compatible with progressive:

ta   zai   gai   fangzi

3ʳᵈ.SG.NOM.MASC   PROG   build house

'He is building a house'

(22) Compatible with agentive adverbial:

ta   guyi   gai-le   yi-dong   chou fangzi

3ʳᵈ.SG.NOM.MASC   deliberate   build-PERF   one-CL   ugly   house

'He built an ugly house on purpose'

However, since accomplishment verbs have internal endpoints, they describe telic events which pattern with frame adverbials but not durative adverbials:

(23) A. ta   zai san   tian nei   zao-le   yi-dong   fangzi

3ʳᵈ.SG.NOM.MASC   in three   day   within   build-PERF one-CL   house

'He built a house in three days'

B. *ta   gai   yi-dong   fangzi san   tian le

3ʳᵈ.SG.NOM.MASC   build one-CL   house   three day   PART

'He build a house for three days'

When appearing with scalar adverbials, accomplishment verbs can entail two different readings. This is a property that sets accomplishment verbs apart from verbs in the other aspectual classes. The following example should suffice to show this:

(24) ta   chayidian   gai-le   yi-dong   fangzi

3rd.SG.NOM.MASC   almost   build-PERF   one-CL   house

'He almost built a house'

→ can entail that he did not even start to build the house

→ can entail that he already started building the house, but did not quite finish

Achievement

Achievement verbs in Mandarin are dynamic, punctual and telic. Because they are punctual, they usually do not appear in imperative or progressive. They also do not work well with agentive adverbials or durative adverbials. When paring with scalar adverbials, these verbs can have only one reading which indicates that the event has not started. These properties are shown below:

(25) Incompatible with imperative:

   *qing   kanjian zhe-fu   hua

    please see   this-CL   painting

   'Please see this painting'

(26) Incompatible with progressive:

   *ta   zai   kanjian zhe-fu   hua

   3rd.SG.NOM.MASC   PORG   see   this-CL   painting

   'He is seeing this painting'

(27) Incompatible with agentive adverbials:

   *ta   guyi   kanjian zhe-fu   hua

   3rd.SG.NOM.MASC   deliberate   see   this-CL   painting

   'He saw this painting on purpose'

(28) Compatible with frame adverbials but not durative adverbials:

A. ta   zai liang miao nei   kanjian-le wu-fu   hua

3rd.SG.NOM.MASC in   two second within   see-PERF five-CL painting

'He saw five paintings in two seconds'

B. *zhe-fu   hua   ta   yijing   kanjian wu   miao   le

this-CL   painting 3rd.SG.NOM.MASC already see   five second PART

'He already saw this painting for five seconds'

(29) Paring with scalar adverbials yields only one reading:

ta   chayidian kanjian-le   haitun

3rd.SG.NOM.MASC almost   sww-PERF   dolphin

'He almost saw the dolphins'

➔ Entails that the event of seeing dolphins did not happen

<u>Summary</u>

The following table summarizes the syntactic properties of different aspectual classes in Mandarin:

	State	Activity	Accomplishment	Achievement
Imperative	✘	✔	✔	✘
Progressive	✘	✔	✔	✘
Agentive Adverbials	✘	✔	✔	✘
Frame Adverbials	✘	✘	✔	✔
Durative Adverbials	✔	✔	✘	✘
# of Readings with Scalar Adverbials	**1**	**1**	**2**	**1**

Table 2. Syntactic Properties of Mandarin Aspectual Classes

CHAPTER 5: CLASSIFICATION OF MANDARIN IDIOMATIC VP

Introduction

The current classification is based on three criteria: 1) whether the said idiom is an IP or an ICE; 2) the thematic relation between its verb and the verb's complement and 3) the aspectual classes on both the literal and the idiomatic interpretations. The distinction between IPs and ICEs is well established in Nunberg et al. (1994). ICEs have meaningful parts that contribute to the overall idiomatic meaning of the construction, whereas IPs do not. Thus, it is predicted that ICEs, but not IPs, should allow internal modification (Nunberg et al. 1994). In terms of thematic relations, Krifka (1992)'s distinction between gradual patient and normal patient (termed "affected patient" in his work) relations is incorporated. Aspectual classes of idioms are determined according to the syntactic properties of each aspectual class summarized in table 2. All Mandarin idiomatic VPs in this classification are from "Chinese Idiom Dictionary (2011)" published by Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House.

Class 1

This class contains all Mandarin idiomatic VPs that 1) are ICEs; 2) maintain the same thematic relation between their verbs and complements on both literal and idiomatic interpretations and 3) have the same aspectual properties on both interpretations. Examples (30) and (31) below exhibit a couple of idiomatic VPs from this class.

(30) *bao huangzhang*

   Lit. *bao* 'to report', *huangzhang* 'false statement'

   Id. = *shuo huang* (*shuo* 'to tell', *huang* 'lie')

This is an ICE because it can be easily construed that *bao* 'to report' corresponds to *shuo* 'to tell' and *huangzhang* 'false statement' corresponds to *huang* 'lie'. In addition, the complement *huangzhang* is assigned the same theta role "affected patient" in both interpretations since neither reporting false statements nor telling lies involves an endpoint.

The two interpretations have the same aspect class (activity):

A. zhe-ge   kuaiji   bao-le   ershi   nian   huangzhang (Lit.)

   This-CL accountant report-PERF twenty year   false statement

   'This accountant reported false statements for twenty years'

B. ni   zhangfu gen ni   bao-le   ershi   nian huangzhang   le (Id.)

   2nd.SG.GEN husband   to   you report-PERF twenty year false statement PART

   'Your husband lied to you for twenty years'

(31) *ba dingzi*

   Lit. *ba* 'to pull', *dingzi* 'snail'

   Id. = *qingchu zuai* (*qingchu* 'eliminate', *zuai* 'threat')

Again, the literal interpretation of the verb and the complement both have counterparts in the idiomatic interpretation: *ba* 'to pull' idiomatically can mean *qingchu* 'to eliminate' and *dingzi* 'snail' idiomatically can mean *zuai* 'threat'. Therefore, this idiom is an ICE. The same thematic relation is also retained on both interpretations. In either case, there is a gradual patient.

The two interpretations also have the same aspect class (accomplishment):

A. wo   zai yi   fenzhong nei   ba-le   shi-ge dingzi (Lit)

   1st.SG.NOM in   one minute   within   pull out-PERF ten-CL   snails

   'I pulled out ten snails in one minute'

B. wo   yi   zhou nei   ba-le   haojige   dingzi (Id)

1st.SG.NOM   one week within   pull out-PERF   several   snail

'I eliminated several threats in a wee'

This class is expected by both McGinnis (2002) and Glasbey (2006). For McGinnis (2002), it is no wonder that she would welcome the existence of this class since her strong prediction says that all idioms should behave this way, albeit whether they are IPs or ICEs. Glasbey (2006) suggests only those idioms we call ICEs should have the same aspectual properties on both interpretations and the reason they do is because they maintain the same thematic relation on both interpretations. Though all idioms in this class are ICEs, as we will see next, this class does not subsume all ICEs in this classification.

Class 2

This class contains idiomatic VPs that 1) are ICEs; 2) have different thematic relations between their verbs and complements on the two interpretations and 3) have different aspectual properties for the two interpretations. Examples (32) and (33) below all fall into this category:

(32) *ban shitou*

Lit. *ban* 'to carry', *shitou* 'stone'

Id. = *qingchu zhangai* (*qingchu* 'to eliminate', *zhangai* 'obstacle')

This apparently is an ICE since the verb *ban* 'to carry' corresponds to *qingchu* 'to eliminate' and the complement also has an identifiable counterpart. In addition, as is shown in both (32A) and (32B), the complement *shitou* 'stone' can be modified by definite articles. However, there is a "gradual patient" relation between the verb and its complement in the idiomatic interpretation that is not found in the literal interpretation. One could easily construe that eliminating obstacles involves a gradual process, however difficult that might be. A similar

process is not relevant in carrying a stone as this event only features an "affected patient". Therefore, the two interpretations have different thematic relations between the verbs and the verbs' complements.

The two interpretations also have different aspect classes. The literal interpretation describes an activity eventuality while the idiomatic interpretation describes an accomplishment eventaulity:

> A. ta   ban   zhe-kuai shitou ban-le   liang-ge xiaoshi le (Lit)
>
>   3rd.SG.NOM.MASC   carry this-CL   stone   carry-PERF two-CL   hour   PART
>
>   'He carried this stone for two hours'
>
> B. ta   zai liang-ge xiaoshi nei   ban-le   zhe-kuai shitou (Id)
>
>   3rd.SG.NOM.MASC in   two-CL hour   within carry-PERF this-CL   stone
>
>   'He eliminated this obstacle in two hours'

(33) *bao jinwawa*

   Lit. *bao* 'to hug', *jinwawa* 'golden stuffed toy'

   Id. = *zhuazhu jihui* (*zhuazhu* 'to seize', *jihui* 'opportunity')

Similar to (32), this idiom is an ICE since the complement *jinwawa* 'golden stuffed toy' can also be modified by definite articles. However, the thematic relation between the verb and the complement in the two interpretations is again different. In the idiomatic interpretation, there is a gradual patient relation in the event of seizing the opportunity. This relation is not found in the literal interpretation.

The two interpretations have different aspectual properties:

    A. wode   erzi zhengzai bao-zhe   zhe-ge jinwawa

       1st.SG.POSS   son   PROG   hold-IMPERF this-CL golden stuffed toy

       'My son is holding this golden stuffed toy'

    B. *wo   zhengzai bao-zhe   zhe-ge jinwawa

       1st.SG.NOM   PROG   hold-IMPERF this-CL golden stuffed toy

       'I am seizing this opportunity'

According to Krifka (1992)'s theory of aspect composition, it is possible to have different aspectual properties on the two interpretations even when this idiom is an ICE. All that is needed is for the complement in the idiom to be assigned different theta roles in the different eventualities described by the two interpretations. Because of this, this class of idioms is tentatively suggested by Glasbey (2006). However, she does not provide any examples of this sort. Fortunately, the existence of this class in Mandarin not only proves Glasbey (2006)'s hypothesis, but it also validates the theoretical plausibility of Krifka (1992)'s account of aspect composition. In addition, the ICEs in this class strengthens Glasbey (2006)'s prediction that all ICEs can have structural aspect, even when the thematic relations between verbs and complements are different. Though it appears that this class also supports McGinnis (2002)'s prediction that all idioms should have compositional aspect, I tend to think it is more complicated than simply saying this. McGinnis (2002) takes "compositional aspect" to mean that both interpretations of an idiom has to have the same aspectual properties. While idioms in Class 2 are said to have compositional aspect, they do not have the same aspectual properties on both interpretations. In this sense, this class does not serve as evidence to McGinnis (2002)'s prediction.

Class 3

This class contains idiomatic VPs that 1) are IPs; 2) lose the thematic relation between their verbs and complements on the idiomatic interpretation and 3) have different aspectual properties for their two interpretations. Some examples are as follows:

(34) *bao pipa*

Lit. *bao* 'to hold', *pipa* 'lute'

Id. = *aishang bieren* (*aishang* 'to fall in love with', *bieren* 'someone else')

This is an example of IP because the complement *pipa* 'lute' in the idiom clearly does not have a corresponding counterpart in the idiomatic interpretation. As a result, the "affected patient" relation between the verb and the complement in the literal interpretation is lost in the idiomatic interpretation, causing the two interpretations to have different aspectual properties.

A. wo   zhengzai   bao-zhe   pipa (Lit)

   1st.SG.NOM   PROG   hold-IMPERF   lute

   'I am holding a lute'

B. *zhe-ge   nvren   zhengzai   bao   pipa   ne (Id. achievement)

    this-CL   woman   PROG   hold   lute   PART

    'This woman is loving someone else'

(35) *bai longmenzhen*

Lit. *bai* 'to set up', *longmenzhen* 'a combat formation in ancient China'

Id. = *liaotian* 'to chat'

This is another example of an IP. The "gradual patient" relation exhibited in the eventuality of setting up a combat formation in the literal interpretation is again lost in the

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idiomatic interpretation due to the complement *longmenzhen* 'a combat formation in ancient China' not having an identifiable counterpart in the idiomatic interpretation.

The two interpretations also have different aspect classes:

A. *shibing-men   bai   longmenzhen   bai-le   shi fenzhong (Lit.)

soldier-PL   set up   combat formation set up-PERF ten minute

'The soldiers set up the combat formation for ten minutes'

B. wo   gen   zhexie laoren   bai-le   liang xiaoshi longmenzhen (Id.)

1st.SG.NOM with these   old man set up-PERF two   hour   combat formation

'I chatted with these old men for two hours'

This class would prove to be particularly difficult for McGinnis (2002) since this is a class of idioms clearly without compositional aspect. Krifka (1992)'s account of aspect composition explains the reason that these idioms do not have compositional aspect as the loss of their thematic information on the idiomatic interpretation. This makes much sense since these idioms are all IPs which do not have identifiable syntactic chunks if interpreted idiomatically. Once again, Glasbey (2006)'s prediction that IPs should not have compositional aspect seems to apply here.

Class 4

This class contains idiomatic VPs that 1) are IPs; 2) lose the thematic relation on the idiomatic interpretation and 3) have the same aspectual properties for both interpretations. Below is an example of this sort:

(36) *bao fojiao*

Lit. *bao* 'to hug', *fojiao* 'the buddha's feet'

Id. = to work much harder before the deadline than usual

Clearly this idiom is an IP. No corresponding counterparts can be found in the idiomatic interpretation for either the verb *bao* 'to hug' or the complement *fojiao* 'the buddha's feet'. Here, in the literal interpretation the compliment is an affected patient. Since the compliment does not have a corresponding counterpart in the idiomatic interpretation, the affected patient relation is lost. Thus, we would expect to see different aspectual properties for its two interpretations. However, this is not the case:

A. wo   jintian zai simiao bao-le   wu fenzhong fojiao (Lit.)

1st.SG.NOM today in temple hug-PERF five minute   buddha's feet

'I held the buddha's feet for five minutes in a temple today'

B. wo   kaoshi qian   bao-le   yi zhengwan fojiao (Id.)

1st.SG.NOM exam before hug-PERF one night   buddha's feet

'I worked much harder than usual for a whole night before the exam'

Obviously the two interpretations can both be modified by the for-phrase. This is not expected since the aspect on the idiomatic interpretation is predicted to not undergo aspect derivation if we assume Krifka (1992)'s account of aspect composition. This class of idioms resembles the English examples *hang fire* and *saw logs* in that they have the same properties. But unlike the two English examples that can be explained by saying they happen "by accident" due to their complements being bare plurals or mass nouns, we cannot apply the same explanation on this class of Mandarin idioms because Mandarin nouns are by default interpreted as bare plurals (Huang 2009). So it seems this class of idioms really just happens by accident with no clear reason. The idiomatic interpretation just "happens" to describe an activity eventuality as the literal interpretation does. In fact, if IPs have their aspectual information stored in their lexical entries, such "accident" can be expected. After all, to say that something is stored in the lexicon

is to say that it is idiosyncratic. Since it is idiosyncratic, it definitely has the ability to go out of norms. This class of this idioms is such an idiosyncratic example.

A Special Class

This class is special in that all idioms in this class have the same verb *ai* 'to endure'. They are all ICEs but do not have the same thematic relation preserved on their two interpretations. Interestingly, they all have the same aspectual properties for both interpretations. This makes this class a deviation from Class 2. Below is one example from this class:

(37) *ai banzi*

Lit. *ai* 'to endure', *banzi* 'stick'

Id. = *shoudao zefa* (*shoudao* 'to get', *zefa* 'punishment')

Let's first look at the literal interpretation. It does not describe an event where someone has to endure some sticks (it does not even make sense to imagine such an event). Rather, it describes one where someone needs to endure a beating done by some sticks. So it looks like the complement *banzi* 'stick' has an instrument theta role to bear in this interpretation. This is possible because Mandarin verbs can assign more kinds of theta roles to their complements compared to English verbs (Huang 2009). Similar examples include *qiangzi* 'bullet' in *ai qiangzi* 'to be shot by bullets'; *mengun* 'bar' in *ai mengun* 'to endure a beating done by some bars'. They all involve the same verb, and the complements all have the instrument theta role in their literal interpretations. If we turn to the idiomatic interpretation, the picture would look different. Here it describes an event where someone gets punished. Therefore, the complement *banzi* 'stick' would refer to punishment idiomatically. According to Krifka (1992)'s account of aspect composition, if the two interpretations have different thematic relation, they are guaranteed to have different aspectual properties. But this is not what actually happened. Both interpretations are

accomplishment eventualities because they all have two different readings when modified by scalar adverbials:

> A. wo　　　　　chayidian ai-le　　　　wu-dun banzi (Lit.)
>
> 1st.SG.NOM almost　　endure-PERF five-CL beating by stick
>
> 'I almost endured five beatings by stick'
>
> → I did not endure any beating.
>
> → I endured some beatings, but less than five.
>
> B. wo　　　　　chayidian ai-le　　　　wu-dun banzi (Id.)
>
> 1st.SG.NOM almost　　endure-PERF five-CL　beating by stick
>
> 'I almost got punished five times'
>
> → I did not get punished at all.
>
> → I got punished less than five times.

This class is of course a problem for all accounts and/or predictions made in both McGinnis (2002) and Glasbey (2006). However, only idioms with this specific verb exhibit this peculiar property. In this sense, we might still be able to call this class "an accident". But what exactly is the reason behind this class of special idioms requires further research.

Other Theoretical Classes

Because three criteria are considered when classifying Mandarin idioms, potentially we could have many more classes. For example, theoretically, there could be a class whose members would have the same thematic relation on both interpretations but different aspect classes. No such examples can be found in Mandarin and this is to be expected. According to Krifka (1992), it's not possible to have different aspect classes on the two interpretations derived when the same

thematic relation is fed into the aspect composition process. Other hypothetical classes do not exist due to the same reason.

Summary

All Mandarin idiomatic VPs in the dictionary are accounted for in the classification. Idioms in Classes 1 and 2, which are all ICEs (ignoring the ones in the special class), all prove to have compositional aspect assuming Krifka (1992)'s account of aspect composition. As mentioned earlier, they serve to support Glasbey (2006) but not McGinnis (2002) since Class 2 would violate what McGinnis (2002) describes as "compositional aspect" because these idioms do not have the same aspectual properties for their two interpretations. Classes 3 and 4 contain all the IPs in this classification but only idioms in Class 3 conform to Glasbey (2006)'s prediction that no IPs should have compositional aspect. This is because Class 4 contains idioms that appear to have compositional aspect "by accident". Glasbey (2006) also mentions one such accident *saw logs*, but apparently marking this idiom as "an accident" by mentioning the complement being a bare plural would not explain the "Mandarin accidents" since Mandarin nouns are always interpreted as bare plurals without any modification. Therefore, though Class 4 idioms are called "accidents", what causes them to be "accidents" remains to be studied. What also needs further research is the existence of the special class of idioms ubiquitously featuring the verb *ai* 'to endure'. At this current stage, it suffices to call this class of idioms another "accident" class due to the peculiarity behavior of the verb in the idioms in this class. No other classes can be attested in this classification.

So it appears Glasbey (2006)'s prediction would work much better for Mandarin idiomatic VPs than the strong prediction McGinnis (2002) makes. The only thing Glasbey (2006) falls short for would be the existence of Class 2. As mentioned earlier, though Glasbey (2006)

speculates on the plausibility of such a class, she does not have any evidence. I suppose this is

due to her limited data set. If a similar classification is done for English idiomatic VPs, I tend to

believe that such a class should not be difficult to attest in this language.

CHAPTER 6: THE CLASSIFICATION AND THE DEBATE BETWEEN DM AND RM

Introduction

There is a broader picture behind the exchange between McGinnis (2002) and Glasbey (2006), which is the debate between DM and RM regarding their models of idiomatic form-meaning pairing. As we will see later in this section, the classification just exhibited raises new questions in this discussion. In what follows, I will first provide a brief overview of DM and RM, then I will discuss the questions raised by the classification in this debate between DM and RM.

RM & DM: a brief introduction

Both Representational Modularity and Distributed Morphology are complex theories of grammar that aim at explaining how language works in our mind. In this section, I will only briefly introduce some basic claims and assumptions about the two theories that are relevant to our discussion of idiom aspect.

Representational Modularity (RM) got its name because it proposes that our linguistic knowledge can be described as comprised of three distinct *representation modules* which are Phonology, Syntax and Conceptual Structure respectively. The modules being distinct means that structures in each module contain only information available in the module. For example, syntactic structures in the syntax module do not have any phonological or conceptual (semantic) information attached to it. Each module is an autonomous generative system that has its own primitives and formation rules. Structured derived in each module are connected through correspondence rules stored in *interface modules* to give rise to the infinite number of

expressions that we call language. The figure below, borrowed from Jakendoff (1997: 39), provides a sketch of this basic architecture:
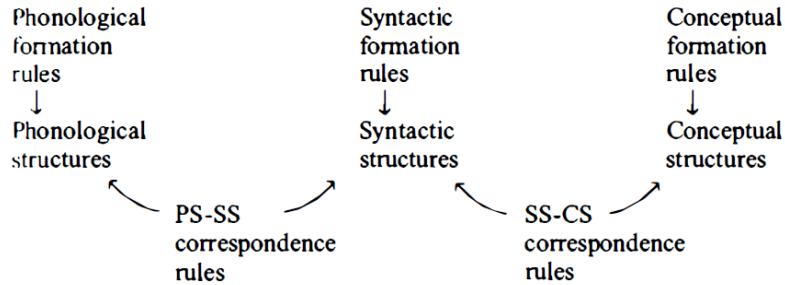

Phonological formation rules	Syntactic formation rules	Conceptual formation rules
↓	↓	↓
Phonological structures	Syntactic structures	Conceptual structures

PS-SS correspondence rules   SS-CS correspondence rules

Figure 1. Architecture of RM

Similar to RM, Distributed Morphology (DM) also proposes a separate function between syntax and phonology. But it is different from RM in that it allows the ingredients to be fed into syntactic operations to contain semantic information as well. The figure below, borrowed from Marantz (1997), shows a sketch of the architecture of this theory:

structure of grammar

List 1 --->   Computational system (Syntax)

List 2 ---> Phonology   LF

Phonetic interface   Semantic interface   <--- List 3

(Computational System = "merge and move")
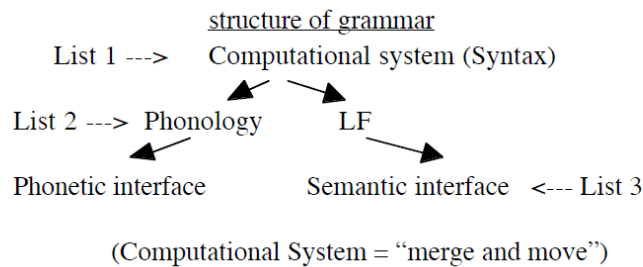
Figure 2. Architecture of DM

List 1 contains morphemes which are atomic roots and atomic bundles of grammatical features in a language (Marantz 1997). Since DM assumes the same processes for word formation as for sentence formation, these morphemes are directly fed into syntactic operations Merge and Move. The syntactic structures such derived will get phonological contents by mapping to *Vocabulary Items* in List 2, also known as the *Vocabulary*. List 3, or the *Encyclopedia*, contains idiosyncratic meanings for the syntactic structures generated in syntax. Because such a word formation

process is distributed over several components of the grammar rather than being completed in the lexicon as proposed in traditional lexicalist approaches, this theory is thus called Distributed Morphology.

Different Predictions DM and RM make about Idiom Aspect

According to Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1998), word meaning can be separated into two parts: a structural part that can be manipulated by syntax and an idiosyncratic part that cannot. Assuming this claim, we would anticipate the two theories to make different predictions about Aspect, which is a type of structural meaning, in idioms. It should be clear that Aspect is structural since the two expressions *I climbed* and *I climbed a mountain* has different aspectual properties. The former describes an activity eventuality while the latter describes an accomplishment. In RM, both structural and idiosyncratic meaning are stored in the Conceptual module since RM requires each module to be distinct. Since Jakendoff explicitly argues for the position that fixed expressions like idioms are stored in the lexicon (Jakendoff 1997: 157), the conceptual structure of any given idiom will be listed in the lexical entry of the idiom along with the correspondence rules which tell us how it is linked to the syntactic and phonological structure of this idiom. What this means is that RM claims aspect is not structural.

DM predicts otherwise. Because in DM, the semantic component known as the Encyclopedia only contains idiosyncratic information, the structural meaning is always predicted to be derived by syntactic operations. Indeed, since DM allows for morphemes to be bundles of syntactic and semantic features, it is not strange how these morphemes can be combined to give the overall aspectual class of a predicate.

So there is a dichotomy. Which model describes idioms more accurately depends on how idiom aspect behaves cross-linguistically. Given Glasbey (2006) and the classification of

Mandarin idiomatic VPs in this current thesis, it is not easy to decide on this matter since each model seems to be able to account for only a fraction of idioms. Specifically, ICEs in both English and Mandarin seem to have compositional aspect, an observation in favor of DM. On the other hand, IPs in both English and Mandarin do not seem to have compositional aspect. Glasbey (2006) suggests it is best to consider that aspect of these idioms is stored in the lexicon, a claim that would be agreed with by RM. Now the question is, if it is possible to adjust some claims by either DM or RM so that one of them can account for all them idiomatic VPs?

Let's consider RM first. We have all the ICEs in English and Mandarin to explain. This would not be an easy task since Jakendoff (1997) is strong in taking the position of lexical storage of fixed expressions like idioms, albeit whether they are ICEs or IPs. To make ICEs work with RM, one would need to claim that these idioms are syntactically derived rather than lexically stored. But since RM requires that each generative module remains distinct, we face the problem of how to determine the idiomatic status of the structure generated in syntax. For example, suppose the English ICE *bury the hatchet* is generated in syntax and awaits mapping to some lexical conceptual structure. Literally, the LCS to be mapped onto the syntactic structure looks something like the following:

(38) [BURY ([ ], [THE ([HATCHET])])]

The empty bracket in (35) is the argument slot for an external argument such as the subject of the sentence where this idiom is put. And idiomatically, the LCS would look like this:

(39) [RECONCILE ([ ], [DISAGREEMENT])]

The grammar would not know which one should be mapped to a syntactic structure like *bury the hatchet* since nothing licenses the idiomatic status of this syntactic structure. This, of course, would predict a chaos in our language system. If this idiom is stored in the lexicon as Jakendoff

suggested, then whenever such a structure is derived syntactically, the system would always know to map the literal interpretation onto it, thus creating no conflicts. Therefore, it would be difficult to alter the operations in RM so that an ICE can be syntactically derived and receive idiomatic interpretation.

Then, what about DM? Is it possible to tweak DM in a way that it could account for the existence of IPs? The first thought coming to mind would be to claim that some idioms do have non-structural aspect. Since this information is not structural, it must be idiosyncratic, thus needs to be stored in the Encyclopedia along with other idiomatic meaning. What this means is basically saying that aspect of IPs is a part of their idiomatic meaning. However, this would also pose a problem for the syntax component in this theory. Let's take the famous English IP *kick the bucket* as an example. As this structure is derived in syntax, semantic information like the lexical aspect of the verb *kick*, the definiteness of the determiner and the singularity of the object noun will all have an impact on the aspectual properties of this structure. In other words, before Encyclopedia entries can be mapped to this structure, this structure would already have an aspect as if it were a non-idiomatic expression. Then the mapping of idiomatic aspect as proposed above would cause a conflict. Or, one could propose that there are roots KICK, THE and BUCKET that do not have semantic information bundled with it, so that when these are fed into syntax, we could derive the same syntactic structure without deriving the aspect along with it. But this requires that for every component in an idiom, we have two roots for it, one with semantic information and one without. This would pose a problem of redundancy and a challenge of our mental capacity.

The above preliminary thoughts suggest that given Glasbey (2006) and the classification in this current thesis, much further research is needed if we aim at using only one of the two

models to account for all idioms. But I tend to think that the classification in this thesis is just a beginning. As I have mentioned toward the end of section 5, we need a classification like the one in this thesis for English to see exactly how similarly idiomatic VPs in English and Mandarin behave in terms of aspectual properties. Only when we have more cross-linguistic data can we continue to make this discussion of idiom aspect between DM and RM further.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The classification in the current thesis attests the existence of idiomatic VPs both with and without compositional aspect and categorizes them into five different classes. This provides further cross-linguistic support to Glasbey (2006) regarding her debate with McGinnis (2002) concerning the aspect of English idiomatic VPs. For the broader debate between DM and RM about idiomatic form-meaning pairing, this classification stands to suggest that neither model accurately captures the whole picture of idiom aspect. Each model only accounts for a fraction of idioms with their arguments. But with this classification, researchers now know exactly which classes of idioms to target if they tend to use Mandarin idioms to support their arguments for or against one of the two models. In addition, since Mandarin idioms do seem to resemble English idioms in terms of their aspectual properties, it would no doubt be beneficial to perform a similar classification on English idioms as well. Especially, Class 2 Mandarin idioms, namely those ICEs that have different thematic relations and aspectual meanings on the two interpretations, are attested only in Mandarin but not in English. As mentioned earlier, Glasbey (2006) has a prediction about the existence of such idioms in English, albeit not being able to provide any examples. So it'd be interesting to see if, after a systematic classification, English idiomatic VPs really have a distribution that is identical to Mandarin. If the two languages do prove to be identical in terms of the distribution of their idiomatic VPs, then the interesting question is how broadly this result can be reproduced across languages. We tend to think that DM and RM cannot coexist, given that they make different predictions on several issues, but if we were able to copy the classification of Mandarin idioms in other languages as well, we might need to start

thinking about ways to incorporate the two models into one. Such a procedure cannot be initiated without ample cross-linguistic data.

Apart from providing evidence and arguments to the DM vs. RM debate, the classification in the current thesis is hoped to be an assistance to more future linguistic research. One could easily combine Classes 1, 2 & 5 to get all the ICEs in Mandarin, and combine Classes 3 & 4 to get all the IPs in Mandarin. This would be convenient for research in the area of internal syntactic structures of idioms. Classes 4 idioms raise this interesting question about their emergence. As mentioned earlier, though these idioms are also said to occur by "accident" like *saw logs* as proposed in Glasbey (2006), the reason to call *saw logs* "an accident" cannot be applied to their Mandarin "siblings". Further research is needed to explain what grants these idioms their special "accident" status. Finally, Class 5 idioms teases research on the theta role assignment of Mandarin verbs in idiomatic VPs. As mentioned earlier, Mandarin verbs are able to assign more theta roles to their arguments than English verbs (Huang 2009). However, such "special" theta role assignment only occurs with one verb in the current classification. It would be interesting to see 1) why none of the other non-agentive verbs are used in Mandarin idiomatic VPs and 2) if similar verbs are used in idioms in other languages as well.

APPENDIX: ALL IDIOMS USED IN THE CLASSIFICATION

Idioms	Interpretation		Class
	Lit.	Id.	
an dixian	an 'to place'; dixian 'bottom line'	to put a mole in enemy	1
an dingzi	an 'to place'; dingzi 'snail'	to put a mole in enemy	1
an maozi	an 'to place'; maozi 'hat'	to give a bad reputation	1
bai kuoqi	bai 'to display'; kuo 'rich'; qi 'atmosphere'	to show off richness	1
bai gandie	bai 'to kowtow'; gandie 'godfather'	to get in with influential people	1
bai pusa	bai 'to kowtow'; pusa 'buddha'	to get in with influential people	1
bao cutui	bao 'to hug'; cutui 'thick leg'	to ask for help from influential people	1
ban jiubing	ban 'to carry'; jiubing 'savior'	to seek help	1
bao huangzhang	bao 'to report'; huangzhang 'false statement'	to tell lies	1
bi gaodi	bi 'to compare'; gao 'high'; di 'low'	to compete against each other	1
bi ermu	bi 'to hide'; er 'ear'; mu 'eye'	to avoid trouble	1
bi fengtou	bi 'to hide'; feng 'wind'; tou 'head'	to avoid trouble	1
ba dingzi	ba 'to pull'; dingzi 'snail'	to eliminate threat	1
ba luobo	ba ' to pull'; luobo 'carrot'	to eliminatge threat	1
ba yanzhongding	ba 'to pull'; yanzhongding 'snail in one's eye	to take out the person one hates	1
bai leitai	bai 'to set up'; leitai 'boxing ring'	to issue challenges	1
bo huapi	bo 'to peel'; huapi 'makeup'	to reveal the truth	1
bao lengmen	bao 'to explode'; leng 'cold'; men 'gate'	unexpected iccident taking place	1
bai matou	bai 'to kowtow'; matou 'wharf'	to visit influential people	1
bo huozhong	bo 'to spread'; huozhong 'fire'	to publicize a possitive thought or theory	1
bu kongzi	bu 'to fill up'; kongzi 'empty spot'	to take one's place	1
bu quantao	bu 'to place'; quantao 'round rope'	to set up traps	1
bu yanxian	bu 'to place'; yan 'eye'; xian 'line'	to secretly arrange scouts	1
bai changshezhen	bai 'to set up'; changshezhen 'a combat formation in ancient China which looks like a snake	to form a queue	1

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bu houchen	bu 'to follow'; hou 'dust one leaves behind when walking'	to imitate someone else	1
caliang yanjing	caliang 'to wipe clean'; yanjing 'eye'	to acknowledge the situation	1
cai yami	cai 'to guess'; yami 'silent puzzle'	to infer one's true meaning behind utterance	1
cai daolu	cai 'to stomp'; daolu 'road'	to acknowledge the situation	1
cai gangsi	cai 'to walk on'; gangsi 'wire'	to do risky things with extra care	1
cha dingzi	cha 'to place'; dingzi 'snail'	to put a mole in enemy	1
chai taizi	chai 'to destroy'; taizi 'stage'	to make something fail	1
chang dujiaoxi	chang 'to sing'; dujiaoxi 'an opera with only one performer'	to do things alone	1
chi dingban	chi 'to eat'; dingban 'tool for torment'	to get punished	1
chi dingxinwan	chi 'to eat'; dingxinwan 'tranquilizer'	to settle one's mind (after given a promise)	1
chui laba	chui 'to blow'; laba 'horn'	to flatter influential people	1
diu fanwan	diu 'to lose'; fanwan 'bowl'	to lose one's job	1
gan mobanche	gan 'to chase'; mobanche 'last bus or train'	to fight for the last opportunity	1
ge lanchuang	ge 'to cut off'; lanchuang 'rotten wound'	to eradicate threat	1
ge yiba	ge 'to cut off'; yiba 'tail'	to eliminate redundancy	1
he gancu	he 'to drink'; gancu 'dry vineger'	to envy out of no reason	1
hu duzi	hu 'to protect'; duzi 'maverick'	to overly protect one's child	1
hui niangjia	hui 'to return'; niangjia 'wife's hometown'	to return to places one used to work or live	1
jie gaizi	jie 'to lift'; gaizi 'lid'	to reveal the truth	1
jie huangbang	jie 'to tear off'; huangbang 'king's announcement	to self-volunteer for task	1
jie yinshou	jie 'to take off'; yinshou 'ribbon to tie up official document in ancient China	to quit one's job	1
kai heidian	kai 'to open up'; heidian 'illegal shop'	to start up a mafia	1
kai kongtouzhipiao	kai 'to write'; kongtouzhipiao 'invalid check'	to make a false promise	1
kai zhipiao	kai 'to write'; zhipiao 'check'	to make a promise	1

lao daocao	lao 'to hold onto'; daocao 'straw'	to hold onto life-saving measures in desperate situation	1
liang hongpai	liang 'to show'; hongpai 'red card in soccer game'	to give penalty because of violation of law	1
lou majiao	lou 'to leak'; majiao 'hoof'	to expose secret unexpectedly	1
mai guanjie	mai 'to buy'; guanjie 'key element to success'	to bribe influential people to get things done	1
huo xini	huo 'to stir'; xini 'diluted cement'	to reconcile disagreement	1
na powan	na 'to hold'; powan 'broken bowl'	to live a poor life	1
pan gaozhi	pan 'to climb'; gaozhi 'tall tree'	to try to be associated with influential people	1
pao longtao	pao 'to run'; longtao 'walk-on'	to be in a very unimportant position	1
pao yema	pao 'to run'; yema 'wild horse'	to speak off topic	1
qi liangtouma	qi 'to ride'; liangtouma 'two-headed horse'	to do two things at the same time	1
qian bizi	qian 'to drag'; bizi 'nose'	to control other people	1
qiang dipan	qiang 'to rob'; dipan 'area'	to take away other people's achievement	1
qiang fanwan	qiang 'to rob'; fanwan 'bowl'	to take away other people's job	1
ru hukou	ru 'to get into'; hukou 'tiger's mouth'	to get into danger	1
sha fengjing	sha 'to kill'; fengjing 'view'	to kill the buzz	1
shuai baofu	shuai 'to drop'; baofu 'baggage'	to be free of burden	1
shuo dahua	shuo 'to tell'; dahua 'big words'	to lie	1
tan fengsheng	tan 'to listen to'; fengsheng 'sound of wind'	to observe situation	1
tian haiyan	tian 'to stuff'; haiyan 'spring'	to make up for huge loss	1
tian kulong	tian 'to stuff'; kulong 'hole'	to repay debt	1
tiao longmen	tiao 'to jump over'; longmen 'dragon gate'	to improve social status through certain measures	1
xia taijie	xia 'to get down'; taijie 'stair'	to get out of embarrassment	1
xie tianji	xie 'to leak'; tianji 'revelation'	to reveal top secret	1
za fanwan	za 'to break'; fanwan 'bowl'	to make someone lose his/her job	1
za paizi	za 'to break'; paizi 'brand'	to ruin reputation	1

zou heidao	zou 'to walk'; heidao 'dark path'	to do illegal things	1
ba huxu	ba 'to pull'; huxu 'tiger's beard	to mess with influential people	2
ba xiangtou	ba 'to pull'; xiangtou 'head of incense'	to end friendship	2
ban shitou	ban 'to carry'; shitou 'stone'	to eliminate obstacle	2
bao jinwawa	bao 'to hug'; jinwawa 'golden sutffed toy'	to seize opportinuty	2
ca pigu	ca 'to wipe'; pigu 'butt'	to clean up the mess	2
chai yutou	chai 'to pull apart'; yutou 'fish's head'	to handle difficult matter	2
chi doufu	chi 'to eat'; doufu 'bincurd'	to flirt with women	2
chi dushi	chi 'to eat'; du 'alone'; shi 'food'	to take all the benefits alone	2
chi shaobing	chi 'to eat'; shaobing 'pancake'	to score 0 (in a competition)	2
chi wobiancao	chi 'to eat'; wobiancao 'grass near an animal's lair'	to harrass people intimate to one	2
chi xiaozao	chi 'to eat'; xiaozao 'specially made delicious food'	to enjoy special treatment	2
diu baofu	diu 'to lose'; baofu 'baggage'	to escape from burden	2
he moshui	he 'to drink'; moshui 'ink'	to receive education	2
he yangmoshui	he 'to drink'; yangmoshui 'foreign ink'	to receive education abroad	2
jie dongfeng	jie 'to borrow'; dongfeng 'east wind'	to seize great opportunity	2
ken yinggutou	ken 'to bite'; yinggutou 'hard bone'	to undertake tough task	2
nian huxu	nian 'to pick up'; huxu 'tiger' beard	to mess with influential people	2
qiao sangzhong	qiao 'to knock'; sangzhong 'bell rung in funeral for religious people'	to announce failure or death	2
shao yehuo	shao 'to burn'; yehuo 'wild fire'	to start a rumor	2
shua bigan	shua 'to play with'; bigan 'pen'	to write an article	2
tiao youguo	tiao 'to jump into'; youguo 'pot full of boiling oil'	to do dangerous things	2
tong mafengwo	tong 'to poke'; mafengwo 'beehive'	to mess with tough people	2
ban shifei	ban 'to carry'; shi 'right'; fei 'wrong'	to cause trouble	3
ba duanti	ba 'to pull'; duanti 'short ladder'	to set people up from behind	3

bai tiandi	bai 'to kowtow'; tian 'sky'; di 'earth'	to get married	3
bai longmenzhen	bai 'to set up'; longmenzhen 'combat formation in ancient China'	to chat	3
ban naodai	ban 'to carry'; naodai 'head'	to die	3
bao pipa	bao 'to hold'; pipa 'lute'	to fall in love with someone else	3
bei heiguo	bei 'to piggyback'; heiguo 'black pot'	to be a skapegoat	3
bei shizijia	bei 'to piggyback'; shizijia 'crucifix'	to suffer for hope or faith	3
biao bangzi	biao 'to hold tightly with arm'; bangzi 'shoulder'	to be intimate	3
bo tianguan	bo 'to knock'; tianguan 'heaven's door	to be very powerful	3
bo mianzi	bo 'to refuse'; mianzi 'face'	to shut down one's request	3
ca jianbang	ca 'to rub'; jianbang 'shoulder'	to hook up with	3
cai jiaohougen	cai 'to stomp'; jiaohougen 'heel'	to stalk	3
cao xianxin	cao 'to worry'; xian 'spare'; xin 'heart'	to worry about unnecessary things	3
cha gangzi	cha 'to insert'; gangzi 'bar'	to interfere	3
chai bijiao	chai 'to destroy'; bijiao 'the root of a wall'	to demean from behind	3
chai houtai	chai 'to take away'; houtai 'background'	to take away one's support	3
chan shuifen	chan 'to add in'; shuifen 'water'	to overstate	3
chang fandiao	chang 'to sing'; fan 'opposite'; diao 'tone'	to oppose	3
chang laodiao	chang 'to sing'; lao 'old'; diao 'tone'	to repeat	3
chang peijue	chang 'to perform'; peijue 'minor role	to assist	3
chang toupai	chang 'to perform'; toupai 'major role'	to be assigned an important task	3
chang zhujue	chang 'to perform'; zhujue 'leading actor'	to be assigned an important task	3
chao lengfan	chao 'to cook'; lengfan 'cold dish'	to repeat	3
chao youyu	chao 'to cook'; youyu 'squid'	to fire	3
che pi	che 'to chat gossip'; pi 'skin'	to entangle	3
cheng yao	cheng 'to prop up'; yao 'waist'	to support	3

cheng qihou	cheng 'to become'; qihou 'weather'	to have great achievement	3
cheng yingxiong	cheng ' to show off'; yingxiong 'hero'	to pretend to be hero when not qualified to be one	3
chi baifan	chi 'to eat'; baifan 'white rice'	to get paid without actually doing anything	3
chi dingzi	chi 'to eat'; dingzi 'snail'	to be refused	3
chi heizao	chi 'to eat'; heizao 'bullet'	to get executed	3
chi ruanfan	chi 'to eat'; ruan 'soft'; fan 'meal'	(men) to live by receiving support from women	3
chi wapian	chi 'to eat'; wapian 'tile'	to make a living by renting houses	3
chi xieyao	chi 'to eat'; xieyao 'lustramentum'	to persuade one to calm down	3
chong lengshui	chong 'to pour'; lengshui 'cold water'	to demean	3
chu lenghan	chu 'to happen'; lenghan 'cold sweat'	to be very nervous or scared	3
chuan xiaoxie	chuan 'to wear'; xiaoxie 'small shoe'	to set one up from behind	3
da bianche	da 'to ride'; bian 'convenient'; che 'vehicle'	to benefit from intricately using convenient resources	3
da baopiao	da 'to write'; baopiao 'warranty'	to guarantee	3
da buding	da 'to knit'; buding 'patch'	to fill in the empty spot	3
da mengun	da 'to hit'; men 'suffocated'; gun 'stick'	to attack surprisingly	3
da qiangxinzhen	da 'to inject'; qiangxinzhen 'an injection to ease the blood flow into and/or out of one's heart	to encourage	3
da xiashou	da 'to work'; xia 'under'; shou 'hand'	to be a sidekick	3
dai gaomao	dai 'to put on'; gaomao 'tall hat'	to flatter	3
dai lvmao	dai 'to put on'; lvmao 'green hat'	to cheat on one's blouse	3
dao kushui	dao 'to pour'; kushui 'bitter water'	to complain about bad experience	3
diao shudai	diao 'to drop'; shudai 'bag full of book'	to show off literary talent	3
diao naodai	diao 'to drop'; naodai 'head'	to die	3
diu lian	diu 'to lose'; lian 'face'	to embarrase oneself	3
dong gange	dong 'to use'; gange 'weapon in ancient China'	to fight or start a war	3

fang changxian	fang 'to let go'; changxian 'long line'	to plan the future	3
fang lengjian	fang 'to let go'; leng 'cold'; jian 'arrow'	to ambush	3
ge kouzi	ge 'to slice'; kouzi 'wound'	to search for a breakthrough	3
gei mianzi	gei 'to give'; mianzi 'face'	to avoid embarrasing someone else	3
gua huzi	gua 'to shave'; huzi 'beard'	to scold	3
guan xianshi	guan 'to get involved'; xian 'spare'; shi 'matter'	to meddle with other people's bussiness	3
gun xueqiu	gun 'to roll'; xueqiu 'snowball'	to enlarge	3
he xibeifeng	he 'to drink'; xibeifeng 'northwest wind'	to starve	3
he daocai	he 'to shout'; dao 'reverse'; cai 'chant'	to boo	3
hui laojia	hui 'to return'; laojia 'hometown'	to die	3
ji yagao	ji 'to squeeze'; yagao 'toothpaste'	to stutter	3
jia shetou	jia 'to set up'; shetou 'tongue'	to demean from behind	3
jia yangzi	jia 'to set up'; yangzi 'crop'	to provoke	3
jian pianyi	jian 'to pick up'; pianyi 'cheap goods'	to benefit greatly without an effort	3
jian shangdi	jian 'to meet'; shangdi 'Jesus'	to die	3
jian yanwang	jian 'to meet'; yanwang 'Hades'	to die	3
jiang jiaqian	jiang 'to speak'; jiaqian 'price'	to bargain	3
jiang panzi	jiang 'to speak'; panzi 'plate'	to negotiate	3
jiao baijuan	jiao 'to submit'; baijuan 'empty exam paper'	(task) not finished at all	3
jiao xuefei	jiao 'to pay'; xuefei 'tuition'	to learn a lesson by failing something or paying a price	3
jiao lengshui	jiao 'to pour down'; lengshui 'cold water'	to discourage	3
jiao hunshui	jiao 'to stir'; hunshui 'dirty water'	to cover up the truth by messing up the bussiness	3
jie xiangyan	jie 'to continue'; xiangyan 'smoke of incense'	to be pregnant	3
jie chuangba	jie 'to uncover'; chuangba 'wound'	to mention tragedy or scandal in the past again	3

jin guancai	jin 'to get in'; guancai 'coffin'	to die	3
juan pugai	juan 'to roll up'; pugai 'blanket'	to resign	3
kai houmen	kai 'to open'; houmen 'backdoor'	to benefit someone else with one's priviledge	3
kai lvdeng	kai 'to turn up'; lvdeng 'green light'	to approve	3
kan dashan	kan 'to talk about'; dashan 'tall mountain'	to chat	3
kan fengjing	kan 'to see'; fengjing 'view'	to look on	3
ken shuben	ken 'to bite'; shuben 'book'	to study very hard	3
lachang lian	lachang 'to stretch'; lian 'face'	to be angry	3
la heiniu	la 'to drag'; heiniu 'black bull'	to advertise false information	3
li menhu	li 'to stand'; menhu 'house'	to stop living together	3
liang hongdeng	liang 'to light up'; hongdeng 'red light'	to come across obstacle	3
luan fangcun	luan 'to mess up'; fang 'square'; cun 'inch'	to be disturbed	3
mo mianzi	mo 'to wipe'; mianzi 'face'	to show no mercy	3
mai changshe	mai 'to sell'; changshe 'long tongue'	to lie	3
mai zuipizi	mai 'to sell'; zuipizi 'mouth'	to only talk without actually doing anything	3
mao lenghan	mao 'to emerge'; lenghan 'cold sweat'	to be extremely afraid	3
mo dixi	mo 'to touch'; di 'under'; xi 'narrow'	to acknowledge the situation	3
mo yanggong	mo 'to dawdle'; yanggong 'work'	to work very slowly to stall	3
mo bozi	mo 'to cut with a knife'; bozi 'neck'	to commit suicide	3
na etou	na 'to hold'; etou 'mistake'	to blackmail	3
na houjiao	na 'to hold'; houjiao 'back foot'	to reveal other people's shortcomings	3
pai mapi	pai 'to tap'; mapi 'horse's butt'	to flatter	3
pai xiongpu	pai 'to clap'; xiongpu 'chest'	to guarantee	3
pan sixing	pan 'to sentence'; sixing 'death penalty'	to deny completely	3
pao zufen	pao 'to dig'; zufen 'tomb of ancestors'	to give the most serious punishment	3
pao shetou	pao 'to run'; shetou 'tongue'	to deceive	3
peng choujiao	peng 'to hold in both hands'; choujiao 'stinky foot'	to flatter without any principle	3

pie danzi	pei 'to ditch'; danzi 'burden'	to quit	3
po lengshui	po 'to pour'; lengshui 'cold water'	to discourage	3
po zangshui	po 'to pour out'; zangshui 'dirty water'	to demean	3
qian hongxian	qian 'to drag'; hongxian 'red line'	to set up dates for men and women	3
qiao jingzhong	qiao 'to knock'; jingzhong 'bell'	to warn	3
qiao zhugang	qiao 'to knock'; zhugang 'bamboo stick'	to blackmail	3
qiao bianzi	qiao 'to perk'; bianzi 'braid'	to die	3
qiao yiba	qiao 'to perk'; yiba 'tail'	to act arrogantly	3
qu xitian	qu 'to go'; xitian 'afterworld'	to die	3
ru kongmen	ru 'to get into'; kongmen 'empty door';	to be a monk	3
sai goudong	dai 'to stuff'; goudong 'dong's lair'	to bribe	3
tang hunshui	tang 'to step in'; hunshui 'dirty water'	to follow suit and do bad things	3
tai gang	tai 'to raise'; gang 'bar'	to argue with	3
ti piqiu	ti 'to kick'; piqiu 'ball'	(both parties) to wriggle out of responsibility	3
tian gouhe	tian 'to stuff'; gouhe 'sewage'	to die	3
tian wanbian	tian 'to lick'; wanbian 'edge of bowl'	to beg	3
tie baitiao	tie 'to attach'; baitiao 'white sticker'	to criticize	3
tuo houtui	tuo 'to drag'; houtui 'leg'	to hinder	3
wa qiangjiao	wa 'to dig'; qiangjiao 'root of wall'	to sabotage other people or group's interest	3
wan kuanglan	wan 'to save'; kuanglan 'huge wave'	to change the situation	3
xia dushou	xia 'to do'; du 'poisonous'; shou 'hand'	to hurt people ruthlessly	3
xian yinqin	xian 'to present'; yinqin 'effort'	to please someone	3
yao caigen	yao 'to bite'; caigen 'root of vegetable'	to live a poor life	3
yao eduo	yao 'to bite'; eduo 'ear'	to whisper	3
zhua babing	zhua 'to catch'; babing 'handle'	to have something on someone	3
zhua bianzi	zhua 'to catch'; bianzi 'braid'	to have something on someone	3
zhuang aizi	zhuang 'to pretend'; aizi 'dwarf'	to beg for life	3

zhuang sunzi	zhuang 'to pretend'; sunzi 'grandson'	to act like one is lower than others socially	3
zhuang nanqiang	zhuang 'to hit'; nanqiang 'south wall'	to be refused	3
zou houmen	zou 'to enter'; houmen 'back door'	to get a shortcut (often illegal)	3
zou xiapolu	zou 'to walk'; xiapolu 'downhill'	to gradually decline	3
zuo jiaozi	zuo 'to sit in'; jiaozi 'sedan chair'	to be flattered	3
zuo lengbandeng	zuo 'to sit on'; lengbandeng 'cold bench'	to be ignored	3
zuo paohui	zuo 'to be'; paohui 'powder'	to sacrifice unneccessarily for someone else	3
bao jiaozi	bao 'to make'; jiaozi 'dumpling'	to besiege enemy	4
bao fojiao	bao 'to hug'; fojiao 'buddha's foot'	to work much harder before the deadline than usual	4
cheng daqi	cheng 'to become'; da 'big'; qi 'machine'	to succeed	4
cheng paoying	cheng 'to become'; paoying 'bubble'	to completely fail	4
chui lengfeng	chui 'to blow'; lengfeng 'cold breeze'	to mock	4
chui niupi	chui 'to blow'; niupi 'skin of bull'	to lie	4
gao yitou	gao 'to be higher than'; yitou 'a head'	to be significantly better than	4
jiao shegen	jiao 'to chew'; shegen 'root of tongue'	to demean	4
la dunju	la 'to use'; dunju 'blunt saw'	to speak haltingly	4
mo doufu	mo 'to grind'; doufu 'bincurd'	to speak garrulously	4
nong huaqiang	nong 'to play'; huaqiang 'colored spear'	to deceive	4
nong kongtou	nong 'to play'; kongtou 'no reason'	to deceive	4
ai banzi	ai 'to endure'; banzi 'stick'	to receive punishment	5
ai gunzi	ai 'to endure'; gunzi 'stick'	to receive punishment	5
ai heiqiang	ai 'to endure'; heiqiang 'black pistol'	to get ambushed	5
ai mengun	ai 'to endure'; men 'suffocated'; gun 'stick'	to get ambushed	5
ai qiangzi	ai 'to endure'; qiangzi 'bullet'	to be shot by a gun	5

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