

**Mandarin Compound Verbs/  
Samengestelde werkwoorden in het Mandarijn Chinees**

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Shorter abstract/Korte samenvatting

This is a study of how compound verbs are put together in Mandarin Chinese.

Most Chinese compound verbs consist of two single syllables, written as two Chinese characters, and these must by definition be inseparable.

Chinese was previously said to have very little prefixing. This study has, however, uncovered a large and developed system of prefixing which is in some ways similar to Dutch; for example, Dutch *misleiden* ‘to deceive’, is *wu<sup>4</sup>dao<sup>3</sup>* (error + to lead) in Chinese. In Chinese, the prefix is often a separate word in its own right rather than a form that is not used independently, like Dutch *mis-*.

Chinese has lexical instrumentals, like *mu<sup>4</sup>song<sup>4</sup>* (eyes/ogen + to send off/uitgeleide doen) ‘to follow someone **with** one’s eyes as they leave’, and compounds containing metaphors that describe the manner of an action, e.g. *bing<sup>1</sup>shi<sup>4</sup>* (ice/ijs + to release/loslaten) ‘to dissolve away like ice melting’.

A single Chinese compound verb can also be an abbreviation of an entire phrase; previously this compound type had not been studied in depth. Examples are *xing<sup>1</sup>jian<sup>4</sup>* (to begin + to construct) ‘to begin to build’, and the causative *bi<sup>1</sup>gong<sup>1</sup>* (to force/dwingen + to confess/bekennen) ‘to force to confess’.

One major exception to the two-syllable pattern is compound verbs suffixed with *hua<sup>4</sup>* ‘to change’, used to translate *-ize* or *-ify* suffixed verbs from English, like *idolize* and *typify*. These foreign-originating compounds may be any number of syllables in length.

Chinese has almost no inflection, and relies instead on word order, context and convention to make the meaning of each compound verb clear. In Chinese grammar as well as within compound verbs, modifiers always precede what they modify, and subjects are followed by their predicates.