Chinese

An Essential Grammar
Second Edition

Yip Po-Ching and
Don Rimmington

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
Chinese

An Essential Grammar

Second Edition

This new edition of Chinese: An Essential Grammar is an up-to-date and concise reference guide to modern Chinese (Mandarin) grammar. Refreshingly jargon free, it presents an accessible description of the language, focusing on the real patterns of use today. This Grammar aims to serve as a reference source for the learner and user of Chinese, irrespective of level, setting out the complexities of the language in short, readable sections.

It is ideal either for independent study or for students in schools, colleges, universities and adult classes of all types.

Features include:

- a new chapter on paragraph development
- Chinese characters, as well as the pinyin romanisation, alongside all examples
- literal and colloquial translations into English to illustrate language points
- detailed contents list and index for easy access to information
- a glossary of grammatical terms.

Yip Po-Ching is former Lecturer in Chinese Studies at the University of Leeds. Don Rimmington is Emeritus Professor of East Asian Studies and former Head of the East Asian Studies Department at the University of Leeds.
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**Glossary of grammatical terms**

**Index**
This book aims to identify the basic features of the grammar of Mandarin Chinese. It should therefore be of use not only to students and teachers of Chinese, but also to those with a general interest in languages and linguistics. While we hope our analysis is based on sound linguistic principles, we have endeavoured to keep technical terminology to a minimum to allow as wide a readership as possible access to the material. Where it has been necessary to use specialist terminology, we have offered explanations which we hope will be intelligible to the general reader. A ‘Glossary of grammatical terms’ is also included (pp. 226–229) for reference.

Our approach has been eclectic: we have used both traditional and modern forms of analysis, and for maximum clarity both syntactic and semantic categories. Our concern has been twofold. First, we have sought to provide a structural description of Mandarin Chinese, starting with the noun and its modifiers; moving to the verb and its fundamental characteristics, including pre-verbal adverbials and post-verbal complements; then discussing the sentence, where the subject and its verbal predication are very much geared to a pragmatic use of word order and sentence particles; and finally looking at the paragraph, in which the component sentences can be seen to acquire extemporaneous features of abbreviation and additional structural flexibility brought about by the context or cotext. Second, we have been conscious of functional needs; we have therefore, where possible, shaped our analysis in the form of meaningful units and provided a wide range of practical vocabulary to illustrate language usage.

The language examples in the book are in most cases provided with both a literal (lit.) and a colloquial translation into English. The literal translations include a limited number of grammatical symbols representing functional words as follows:
Two other symbols used in the text are:

> meaning ‘changes into’

* indicating incorrect usage

We are deeply indebted to Li Quzhen for extensive assistance with the provision of Chinese script in the examples, paragraphs, and texts. We also appreciate support given by Sophie Oliver, senior editor, and Elizabeth Johnston, editorial assistant, at Routledge. The contents of the book are, of course, entirely our responsibility.

Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington
The Chinese language

The Chinese language, or group of related languages, is spoken by the Hans, who constitute 94 per cent of China’s population. One word for the language in Chinese is Hanyu, the Han language. Different, non-Han languages are spoken by the remaining 6 per cent of the population, the so-called minority peoples, such as the Mongols and Tibetans.

The Chinese language is divided into eight major dialects (with their numerous sub-dialects). Speakers of different dialects in some cases find each other unintelligible, but dialects are unified by the fact that they share a common script. This book describes the main dialect, which is known by various names: Mandarin, modern standard Chinese, or Putonghua (‘common speech’). It is spoken in various sub-dialect forms by 70 per cent of Hans across the northern, central and western regions of the country, but its standard pronunciation and grammar are associated with the Beijing region of north China, though not Beijing city itself. The seven other Chinese dialects are Wu (spoken in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, including Shanghai, by 8.4 per cent of Han speakers), Xiang (Hunan, 5 per cent), Cantonese (Guangdong, 5 per cent), Min (Fujian, 4.2 per cent), Hakka (northeast Guangdong and other southern provinces, 4 per cent) and Gan (Jiangxi, 2.4 per cent).

Cantonese, Min and Hakka are widely spoken among overseas Chinese communities. In Taiwan a form of Min dialect is used, though the official language is Mandarin, brought over by the Nationalists in 1949 and called there Guoyu (‘national language’). Mandarin is also widely used in Singapore, where it is known as Huayu (‘Chinese language’). The Chinese population of Britain, which comes largely from Hong Kong, uses mainly Cantonese.

Written Chinese employs the character script, which existed virtually unchanged in China for over two thousand years, until a range of
simplified forms began to be introduced by the mainland Chinese government in the 1950s. Words in Chinese are made up of one or more syllables, each of which is represented by a character in the written script. Since the last century, Chinese has also been transcribed into Western alphabetic scripts, and this book makes use of the standard romanisation *pinyin*.

Note: Mandarin is China’s official language, transmitted nationally by radio and television, and therefore understood by virtually everyone in the country.

**Mandarin pronunciation**

Syllables can be divided into initials (consonants) and finals (vowels or vowels followed by -n or -ng). Below is a full list of initials and finals, with some guidance on pronunciation. Where possible, the closest equivalents in English pronunciation have been given, but care should be taken with these and confirmation sought, if necessary, from a native Chinese speaker.

**Initials**

- f, l, m, n, s, (w) and (y) – similar to English
- p, t and k – pronounced with a slight puff of air, like the initials in *pop*, *top* and *cop*
- h – like *ch* in the Scottish *loch*, with a little friction in the throat
- b, d and g – not voiced as in English, but closer to *p* in *spout*, *t* in *stout*, and *c* in *scout*, than to *b* in *bout*, *d* in *doubt* and *g* in *gout*
- j – like *j* in *jeep*
- q – like *ch* in *cheap*
- x – like *sh* in *sheep*

The three above are pronounced with the lips spread as in a smile.

- ch – like *ch* in *church*
- sh – like *sh* in *shirt*
- zh – like *j* in *judge*
- r – like *r* in *rung*

The four above are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled back.

- c – like *ts* in *bits*
- z – like *ds* in *bids* (but not voiced)
** Finals **

a – as in father
ai – as in aisle
an – as in ran
ang – as in rang, with the a slightly lengthened as in ah
ao – like ou in out
e – as in her, the
ei – as in eight
en – as in open
eng – like en + g
er – like err, but with the tongue curled back and the sound coming
from the back of the throat
i – with initials b, d, j, l, m, n, p, q, t and x, as in machine, or like ee in
see (but pronounced differently with other initials, see below)
ia – i followed by a, like ya in yard
ian – similar to yen
iang – i followed by ang
iao – i followed by ao, like yow in yowl
ie – like ye in yes
in – as in thin
ing – as in thing
iong – i merged with ong
iu – like yo in yoga
i – with initials c, r, s, z, ch, sh and zh, somewhat like i in sir, bird (but
pronounced differently with other initials, see above)
o – as in more
ou – as in dough, or like oa in boat
ong – like ung in lung, but with lips rounded
u – as in rule, or like oo in boot
ua – u followed by a
uai – u followed by ai, like wi in wild
uan – u followed by an
uang – u followed by ang, like wang in twang
ueng – u followed by eng, which exists only with zero initial as weng
ui – u followed by ei, similar to way
un – u followed by en, like uan in truant
uo – u followed by o, similar to war
u/ü – with initials j, q and x (as u) and with initials l and n (as ü) like
i in machine, pronounced with rounded lips, and similar to u in French
une or ü in German über
uan – u/ü followed by an, only with initials j, q and x
ue or üe – with initials j, q and x (as ue) and with initials l and n (as üe),
ue/u/ü followed by e as above
un – u/ü with n, like French une, only with initials j, q and x
Most finals can be used without an initial (zero initial), and finals beginning with i (as in *machine*) and u/ü (like the French *une*) are written in the *pinyin* romanisation with y as the first letter, and those beginning with u (as in *rule*) with w as the first letter:

- -i > yi  -ie > ye
- -ia > ya   -in > yin
- -ian > yan  -ing > ying
- -iang > yang -ieng > yong
- -ia > yao  -iu > you
- -ü > yu  -ue/üe > yue
- -uan > yuan -un > yun
- -u > wu  -uang > wang
- -ua > wa  -ui > wei
- -uai > wai -un > wen
- -uan > wan -uo > wo

Note the vowel changes with -iu (> you), -ui (> wei) and -un (> wen).

Note: Strictly speaking, in the *pinyin* system the hand-written form ‘a’ is used instead of the printed version ‘a’, but this book has adopted ‘a’ throughout.

**Tones**

In Chinese each syllable (or character) has a tone, and in Mandarin there are four tones. In the *pinyin* romanisation, the mark above a syllable indicates its tone: ¯ first tone, ´ second tone, ˇ third tone and ` fourth tone. Some words have unstressed syllables which are toneless and therefore are not given tone marks. Structural words like particles are also often unstressed and are similarly unmarked.

- **First tone** high, level pitch; constant volume
- **Second tone** rising quite quickly from middle register and increasing in volume
- **Third tone** starting low and falling lower before rising again; louder at the beginning and end than in the middle
- **Fourth tone** starting high, falling rapidly in pitch and decreasing in volume
In speech, when a third tone precedes another third tone it changes to a second tone. Also, the pronunciation of 一 yī ‘one’ and 不 bù ‘not’ varies according to their context. Yī ‘one’ is first tone in counting but otherwise is fourth tone yì, except if followed by a fourth tone when it changes to second tone yí. Similarly, bù ‘not’ is fourth tone but changes to second tone bú when it comes before a fourth tone. However, since these tonal adjustments are all rule-governed, they will not be indicated in our example sentences. That is to say, yī will always be shown as first tone and bù as fourth tone.

The Chinese vocabulary

A large number of words in everyday vocabulary are of one syllable:


Structural particles are also almost always monosyllabic:

了 le aspect marker and sentence particle
的/地/得 de indicator of attributives, adverbials or complements
吗 ma signifier of general questions

In general, however, the vocabulary is full of disyllabic words or expressions which combine monosyllables in one way or another. These words or expressions derive their meaning explicitly or implicitly from the words or syllables that make them up:

电 diàn ‘electricity’ + 梯 tī ‘ladder’ = 电梯 diàntī ‘lift’, ‘elevator’
海 hǎi ‘sea’ + 洋 yáng ‘ocean’ = 海洋 hǎiyáng ‘ocean’
大 dà ‘big’ + 家 jiā ‘family’ = 大家 dàjiā ‘everybody’
打 dǎ ‘to hit’ + 断 duàn ‘to break’ = 打断 dǎduàn ‘to interrupt’, ‘to break in two’
房 fáng ‘house’ + 子 zi suffix = 房子 fángzi ‘house’
玩 wán ‘to play’ + 儿 er suffix = 玩 wánr ‘to have fun’, ‘to enjoy oneself’
走 zǒu ‘to walk’ + 路 lù ‘road’ = 走路 zǒulù ‘to go on foot’
跑 pǎo ‘to run’ + 步 bù ‘step’ = 跑步 pāobù ‘to run’, ‘to jog’
Words or expressions of three or more syllables can also be formed:

邮 yóu ‘postal’ + 递 dì ‘to pass on’ + 员 yuán ‘person’ = 邮递员 yóudìyuán ‘postman’

科学 kēxué ‘science’ + 家 jiā ‘family’ = 科学家 kēxuéjiā ‘scientist’

打 dǎ ‘to hit’ + 电话 diànhuà ‘telephone’ = 打电话 dǎ diànhuà ‘to make a telephone call’

明 míng ‘open’ + 信 xìn ‘letter’ + 片 piàn ‘piece’ = 明信片 míngxìnpiàn ‘postcard’

自 zì ‘self’ + 行 xíng ‘to walk’ + 车 chē ‘vehicle’ = 自行车 zìxíngchē ‘bicycle’

圣 shèng ‘saint’ + 诞 dàn ‘birth’ + 节 jié ‘festival’ = 圣诞节 Shèngdànjié ‘Christmas’

出租 chūzū ‘to hire out’ + 汽车 qìchē ‘car’ = 出租汽车 chūzū qìchē ‘taxi’

百货 bàihuò ‘hundred goods’ + 商店 shāngdiàn ‘shop’ = 百货商店 bàihuò shāngdiàn ‘department store’

The lists above show how the majority of Chinese words are constructed in accordance with grammatical principles. Chinese word-formation is therefore in a sense Chinese syntax in miniature. For example:

1. 花 huā ‘flower’ + 园 yuán ‘plot (of land)’ = 花园 huāyuán ‘garden’ is a modifier + modified structure
2 头 tóu ‘head’ + 痛 tòng ‘to be painful’ = 头痛 tóutòng ‘headache’ is a subject + verb structure

3 学 xué ‘to learn’ + 习 xí ‘to practise’ = 学习 xuéxí ‘to study’ is a juxtapositional structure where two synonymous items are placed side by side

4 唱 chàng ‘to sing’ + 歌 gē ‘song’ = 唱歌 chànggē ‘sing’ is a verb + object structure

5 吵 chāo ‘to make a noise’ + 醒 xǐng ‘to wake up’ = 吵醒 chāoxǐng ‘to wake (somebody) up (by making a noise)’ is a verb + complement structure
Part I

Nouns

Introduction

In this section we discuss nouns and pronouns in Chinese. In particular we will look at the different types of nouns and those elements closely associated with them: numerals, demonstratives, measure words and attributives.

Nouns in Chinese generally have one or two syllables. A few have three syllables, but four-syllable nouns are quite rare. Some nouns are identifiable by the suffixes 子-zi, 子-(e) or 子-tou, but most are not obviously distinguishable from other word classes.

Nouns do not change for number. An unqualified noun can therefore be singular or plural, though out of context it is likely to be plural. The plural suffix 们-men is used with pronouns, and in particular circumstances with human nouns.

Numerals are placed before nouns to specify number, but a measure word must be inserted between the numeral and the noun. Similarly, a measure word must be placed between a demonstrative and a noun. There is a general measure word 个-gè, but most measure words are specific to particular nouns or sets of nouns.

Adjectives or other qualifying elements also come before the nouns they qualify. If the qualifier is monosyllabic, it is usually placed directly before the noun. If the qualifier is of two or more syllables, the particle 的 de will come after the qualifier and before the noun.

Definite and indefinite reference for Chinese nouns is not signified by articles like the or a(n) in English, though the demonstratives and the numeral 一 yī ‘one’ when used with a noun (with a measure) may indicate respectively definiteness and indefiniteness. Perhaps more important is the location of the noun in the sentence, since a pre-verbal position is normally definite and a post-verbal position indefinite.

Pronouns are naturally of definite reference. The third person pronoun 他 tā in its spoken form may signify any of the three genders: masculine, feminine or neuter. The written forms make the distinction clear:
Nouns

1.1 Noun features

In Chinese nouns may consist of one or more syllables, each syllable being represented by a written character. Nouns with two syllables are by far the most numerous in the vocabulary, though in everyday speech monosyllabic nouns are likely to be as frequent as disyllabic ones. A noun of more than one syllable is usually formed by building meaning-related syllables around a headword. For example:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>汉</th>
<th>笔 bǐ</th>
<th>pen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>铅笔 qiānbǐ</td>
<td>pencil</td>
<td>(lit. lead-pen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>毛笔 máobǐ</td>
<td>writing brush</td>
<td>(lit. hair-pen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>圆珠笔 yuánzhūbǐ</td>
<td>biro, ball-point pen</td>
<td>(lit. round-pearl-pen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>笔名 bǐmíng</td>
<td>pen name, pseudonym</td>
<td>(lit. pen-name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>笔试 bǐshì</td>
<td>written examination</td>
<td>(lit. pen-examination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>笔记 bǐjì</td>
<td>notes</td>
<td>(lit. pen-note)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>笔记本 bǐjiběn</td>
<td>notebook</td>
<td>(lit. pen-note-book)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nouns do not change for number or case. That is, they remain the same whether they are singular or plural (the distinction usually indicated by context or, more obviously, by use of numbers), and whether they are the subject or the object of a verb. For example:

一支笔 yī zhī bǐ  | one/a pen |
很多笔 hěn duō bǐ  | a lot of pens |
笔在这儿。 Bǐ zài zhèr.  | The pen is here. |
我有笔。 Wǒ yǒu bǐ.  | I have got a pen. |

Nouns may be divided into the following categories:

(a) Proper nouns: 中国 Zhōngguó, China; 长城 Chánghéng, The Great Wall; 圣诞节 Shèngdànjié, Christmas
(b) Common nouns: 足球 zúqiú, soccer; 火车 huǒché, train; 词典 cídiǎn, dictionary

c Abstract nouns: 印象 yìnxiàng, impression; 意见 yìjiàn, opinion; 能力 nénglì, ability

d Material nouns: 水 shuǐ, water; 塑料 sùliào, plastics; 煤气 méiqì, gas

e Collective nouns: 车辆 chēliàng, vehicles; 人口 rénkǒu, population; 信件 xìnjiàn correspondence (letters)

1.2 Proper nouns

Proper nouns are names of people, places, institutions, etc. Contrary to English practice, the names of individuals in Chinese are in the order of first surname, which is usually one syllable, and then chosen name, which can be either one or two syllables.

李惠明 Lǐ Huìmíng, in which 李 Lǐ is the surname and 惠明 Huìmíng the chosen name

张兰 Zhāng Lán in which 张 Zhāng is the surname and 兰 Lán the chosen name

Note: There is a relatively small number of surnames in Chinese; some of the most common, as well as 李 Lǐ and 张 Zhāng, are 王 Wáng, 黄 Huáng, 赵 Zhào, 孙 Sūn, 马 Mǎ, 吴 Wú, 胡 Hú, 钱 Qián, 徐 Xú.

In forms of address, nouns denoting title or status follow the surname:

王先生 Wáng xiānshēng Mr Wang
李小姐 Lǐ xiǎojiě Miss Li
周总理 Zhōu zōnglǐ Prime Minister Zhou
高校校长 Gāo xiàozhǎng Headmaster Gao
赵经理 Zhào jīnglǐ Manager Zhao

Note: People are addressed in Chinese by their occupational title far more than in English. It would therefore be normal to address someone as Headmaster 高 Gāo, Manager 赵 Zhào, etc.

The names of places can also be followed by a status noun such as 县 xiàn ‘county’, 镇 zhèn ‘town’, 市 shì ‘city’, 地区 dìqū ‘district’ or 省 shěng ‘province’. For example:
Similarly, in the names of institutions the place name is followed by a noun indicating institutional function:

- 上海师范大学 (Shànghǎi Shīfān Dàxué) - Shanghai Normal University
- 广东省公安厅 (Guǎngdōngshěng Gōng’ānjú) - Guangdong Provincial Public Security Bureau

In the case of postal addresses, the sequence of wording is the opposite of English with the largest entity coming first and the smallest last:

- 中国 (Zhōngguó) Mr Ming Li
- 山东 (Shāndōng) [c/o Miss Huiming Zhang]
- 济南 (Jǐnán) Department of Chinese
- 济南大学 (Jǐnán Dàxué) Jinan University
- 中文系 (Zhōngwénxì) Jinan
- 张惠明小姐转李明先生收/启 [Zhāng Huìmíng xiǎojiē zhuǎn] Li Míng xiānshēng shōu/qǐ

A direct translation of the Chinese address would be:

CHINA
Shandong (province) Jinan (city)
Jinan University
Department of Chinese
[Zhang Huiming Miss to transfer]
Li Ming Mr to receive/to open (formal)

Note: 收 Shōu ‘to receive’ or 启 qǐ ‘to open (formal)’ is conventionally added after the name of the recipient, and 转 zhuǎn ‘to transfer’ is generally used where the letter is c/o somebody else.
This principle of the large coming before the small is applied elsewhere in Chinese. Dates, for instance, are in the order of year, month and day. (See 10.2.1.)

1.3 Common nouns

Common nouns make up a large part of the language’s vocabulary. Some incorporate conventional monosyllabic suffixes such as: 子-zi, 儿-(e)r, or 头-tou; others have more meaningful monosyllabic suffixes such as: 责-yuán ‘person with specific skills or duties’, 者-zhě ‘person concerned with an activity’, 家-jī ‘specialist’, etc. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>汉字</th>
<th>意思</th>
<th>异体字</th>
<th>意思</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>孩子</td>
<td>háizi</td>
<td>子</td>
<td>儿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鸟儿</td>
<td>niāor</td>
<td>鸟</td>
<td>儿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>砖头</td>
<td>zhuāntou</td>
<td>砖</td>
<td>头</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>运动员</td>
<td>yùndòngyuán</td>
<td>运动</td>
<td>动</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>记者</td>
<td>jīzhē</td>
<td>记</td>
<td>者</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>作家</td>
<td>zuòjiā</td>
<td>作</td>
<td>专</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common nouns by themselves, particularly when they are grammatical objects, are indefinite, singular or plural, unless otherwise specified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>汉字</th>
<th>意思</th>
<th>异体字</th>
<th>意思</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>书</td>
<td>shū</td>
<td>笔</td>
<td>bǐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>学生</td>
<td>xuésheng</td>
<td>老师</td>
<td>láoshī</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3.1 The plural suffix – 们

Human nouns can be followed by the plural suffix 们-men; they then take on definite reference. Compare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>汉字</th>
<th>意思</th>
<th>异体字</th>
<th>意思</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>学生</td>
<td>xuésheng</td>
<td>学生们</td>
<td>xuéshengmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>孩子</td>
<td>háizi</td>
<td>孩子们</td>
<td>háizimen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nouns
There is usually some implication of familiarity when 们-men is used; it often occurs when groups of people are addressed:

先生们,  Xīànshēngmen,  Ladies and gentlemen . . .
女士们  nǚshīmen . . .
朋友们好!  Péngyoumen hǎo!  How are you, my friends?

However, 们-men cannot be used with a number:

两个学生  liǎng gè xuéshēng  two students
NOT: *两个学生们  *liǎng gè xuéshēngmen

Neither can -men be used as a plural suffix for non-human nouns:

*书们  *shūmen  *(lit. book + plural suffix)
*猫们  *māomen  *(lit. cat + plural suffix)

### 1.3.2 Nouns and definite or indefinite reference

There are no definite or indefinite articles like the or *a(n) in Chinese. Definite or indefinite reference is usually determined by the positioning of the noun before or after the verb. A pre-verbal position normally denotes definite reference, and a post-verbal position indefinite reference. Take, for example, 猫 māo ‘cat(s)’ in the following sentences:

猫在哪儿?  Māo zài nǎr?  她喜欢猫。 Tā xǐhuān māo.
(lit. cat be-at where)  (lit. she like cat)
Where is/are the cat(s)?  She likes cats.

### 1.4 Nouns and conjunctions

Two or more nouns may be joined together by the conjunctions 和 hé ‘and’ or 或 huò ‘or’:

| 刀和叉 | dāo hé chā | knives and forks |
| 笔和纸 | bǐ hé zhǐ | pen and paper |
| 李惠明和张兰 | Lǐ Huīmíng hé Zāng Lán | Li Huiming and Zhang Lan |
| 信纸, 信封和邮票 | xìnzhǐ, xìnfēng hé yóupiào | letter-paper, envelopes and stamps |
1.5  Common nouns: countability

One feature of common nouns is that they can be counted. This involves the use not only of numbers (see Chapter 2) but also measure words (see Chapter 3).

2  Numerals and nouns

2.1  Cardinal numbers

一  yī    one   六  liù    six
二/两  èr/liǎng  two   七  qī    seven
三  sān    three  八  bā    eight
四  sì    four   九  jiǔ    nine
五  wǔ    five   十  shí    ten

Numbers ranging from eleven to ninety-nine are combinations of members of the basic set one to ten:
The system extends itself beyond the basic set with the following:

百 bǎi hundred
千 qiān thousand
万 wàn ten thousand
亿 yì hundred million

For example:

三百六十八 sānbāi liùshí bā 368
九千四百二十七 jiǔqiān sìbǎi èrshí qī 9,427
五万八千六百 wǔwàn bāqiān liùbǎi 58,631
三十一 sānshí yī
二十三亿 èrshísān yì 2,345,678,921
四千五百六十七万 sìqiānwǔbǎi liùshíqīwàn
八千九百二十一 bāqiān jiǔbǎi èrshí yī

Care must be taken with large numbers, since the English number sets a thousand and a million differ from the Chinese 万 wàn ‘ten thousand’ and 亿 yì ‘hundred million’. A million in Chinese is 一百万 yībǎiwàn; ten thousand is 一万 yīwàn, NOT 十万 *shíwàn.

If there is a nought (or noughts) in a figure, 零 líng ‘zero’ must be added as a filler. For example:

三百零五 sānbāi líng wǔ 305
三千零五 sānqiān líng wǔ 3,005
三千零五十 sānqiān líng wǔshí 3,050

2.1.1 Two forms of the number two

There are two forms of the number two in Chinese: 二 èr and 两 liǎng.
二 Èr is used in counting, or in telephone, room, bus numbers, etc.:
二号车 èr hào chē no. two bus

八九二三三六 bā jiǔ èr sān sān liù 892336 (telephone number)

二 Èr occurs in compound numbers: 十二 shí èr ‘twelve’, 二十二 èrshí èr ‘twenty two’, 二百 èrbǎi ‘two hundred’, etc. (though 两 liǎng can also be used with 百 bǎi, 千 qiān, 万 wàn and 亿 yì). 两 Liǎng is almost always used with measures (see Chapter 3):

两个人 liǎng ge rén two people (lit. two mw person)

NOT: *二个人 *èr gè rén

2.2 Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers in Chinese are formed simply by placing 第 dì before the cardinals. For example:

一 yī one > 第一 dì yī first
二 èr two > 第二 dì èr second
三 sān three > 第三 dì sān third
九十七 jiǔshí qī ninety-seven > 第九十七 dì jiǔshí qī ninety-seventh
一百 yībǎi hundred > 第一百 dì yībǎi hundredth

When used with nouns, ordinals, like cardinals, need to be followed by measure words (see Chapter 3).

Note: In the following cases Chinese uses ordinal numbers where English employs cardinals:

(1) dates: 三月一号 sān yuè yī hào March 1st
五月六号 wǔ yuè liù hào May 6th

(2) floors/storeys: 二楼 èr lóu (American English) the second floor; (British English) the first floor
三楼 sān lóu (American English) the third floor; (British English) the second floor

Whereas the British convention is to number floors ground, first, second, etc., in Chinese the ground floor is 地下 dìxià (or less commonly 一楼 yī lóu) and the
Nouns

floors above are second, third, etc. This means that ‘first floor’ in British English is 二樓 ॅो (lit. two floor) in Chinese, ‘second floor’ is 三樓 ॅो ॅ, etc.

(3) years of study (at an educational institution):

一年级 ॅ नीं जी ॅ यरस्त
三年级 ॅ नीं जी ॅ तरस्त

2.3 ‘Half’

半 ॅ न यल ‘half’ functions as a number and therefore requires a measure word. 半 ॅ न यल may also come after the measure word when it follows a whole number:

半个苹果 ॅ न गे पिंग गो हल आन एण्पल
半杯啤酒 ॅ न बी पिजी हल आ फ़ास बिजी ओर
一个半梨 ॅ गी गे बं ली ओन आ एण्न बिली

2.4 Fractions, percentages, decimals, multiples, and ‘every’

Other forms of numbers in Chinese are:

(1) Fractions:

三分之一 ॅ न फे न जी ॅ र लोट (lit. three parts’ two)
八分之五 ॅ न फे न जी वु लोट (lit. eight parts’ five)

(2) Percentages:

百分之一 ॅ बी फे न जी वी वी पॉर्ट ओन (lit. hundred parts’ one)
百分之六十 ॅ बी फे न जी लिउशी ॅ पॉर्ट ओन (lit. hundred parts’ sixty)

(3) Decimals:

零点五 ॅ लिंग दीण वु लोट (lit. nought point five)
一点四 ॅ यी दीण सी लोट (lit. one point four)

(4) Multiples:

两倍 ॅ ली अंग बे लोट (lit. two times)
十二倍 ॅ शी एर बे लोट (lit. twelve times)
(5) The inclusive 每 měi ‘every’:

每个人 měi gè rén everyone
evèry and nouns
every day

2.5 Approximation

Approximation in Chinese may take the following forms:

1. 几 jǐ ‘several’:
   - 几个苹果 jǐ gè píngguǒ a few apples
   - 几个句子 jǐ gè jùzì a few sentences
   - 几个生词 jǐ gè shēngcì a few new words
   - 几十个朋友 jǐ shí gè péngyou a few dozen friends
     (lit. a few tens friends)
   - 几千个警察 jǐ qiān gè jǐngchá a few thousand policemen

   几 jǐ can also mean ‘or so, and more’, when used after 十 shí ‘ten’ or its multiples:
   - 十几个人 shí jǐ gè rén a dozen or so people
   - 三十几个瓶子 sān shí jǐ gè píngzi thirty or so bottles

2. 来 lái ‘or so’ and 多 duō ‘just over’, placed like 几 jǐ after 十 shí ‘ten’ or its multiples. However, while 多 duō may also occur after 百 bǎi ‘hundred’, 千 qiān ‘thousand’, or 万 wàn ‘ten thousand’, 来 lái is used only after 百 bǎi:
   - 十来个老师 shí lái gè lǎoshī ten teachers or so
   - 二十多个学生 èr shí duō gè xuéshēng over twenty students
   - (一)百来/多个工人 (yī) bǎi lái/duō gè gōnggrén a hundred and more workmen
   - 两千多人工 liǎng qiān duō gè rén over two thousand people

Note 1: All these expressions of approximation with 几 jǐ, 来 lái and 多 duō require measure words when used with nouns (see Chapter 3). Also, in these cases, 一 yī ‘one’ is not used before 十 shí ‘ten’, is optional before 百 bǎi ‘hundred’, but is obligatory before 千 qiān ‘thousand’ and 万 wàn ‘ten thousand’.
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Note 2: 多 Duō must come after the measure when the number is not ten or a multiple of ten. This is notably the case in expressions relating to age, distance, height, weight, money, etc.

五岁多 五岁多 wǔ suì duō over 5 (years old)

十六公斤多 十六公斤多 shí liù gōng jīn duō over 16 kilo(gram)s

三英里多 三英里多 sān yīng lǐ duō over 3 miles

(3) two consecutive numbers (from one to nine) in increasing order, either alone or as part of larger numbers:

四五個客人 四五個客人 sì wǔ gè kèrén four or five guests

四五十个 四五十个 sì wǔ shí gè forty to fifty boys

男孩子 男孩子 nán háizi

十七八个 十七八个 shí qī bā gè seventeen to eighteen girls

女孩子 女孩子 nǚ háizi

五六百(个)人 五六百(个)人 wǔ liù bǎi (gè) rén five to six hundred people

Note: As we can see in the last example, the measure word 个 gè is optional before 人 rén ‘person/people’. This is because 人 rén, apart from being a noun, can be used as a measure word itself.

(4) (大)约 (Dà)yuē ‘about/around’ and 左右 zuò yòu ‘more or less’, used with any numbers and any of the above forms of approximation:

(a) 大约 大约 èrshí gè 荷花 zuò yòu roughly twenty children

(b) 左右 Zuò yòu comes after the ‘numeral + measure word + noun’ phrase:

Note: 上下 Shàngxià functions in a similar way to 左右 zuò yòu, but its use is limited to approximation about age, height and weight; e.g. 三岁上下 sān suì shàng xià ‘around thirty years of age’.
Measures for nouns

3.1 Measures and gè

When in Chinese a number is used with a noun, a measure word must be placed between the number and the noun. This contrasts with English where nouns can be divided into countables and uncountables, the former being used directly with numbers and the latter requiring a measure phrase after the number, e.g. three students (countable) and three loaves of bread (uncountable). Chinese nouns on the other hand all take measure words:

- 三个学生 sān gè xuésheng  three students
- 三个面包 sān gè miàn bāo  three loaves of bread

Note: Measure words are sometimes also called classifiers.

Gè is by far the commonest measure and can be used with almost all nouns, including abstract nouns:

- 一(个)人 yī (gè) rén  one/a person
- 十(个)人 shí (gè) rén  ten people
- 两个姐姐 liǎng gè jiějie  two elder sisters
- 三个手表 sān gè shǒubǐāo  three watches
- 一个花园 yī gè huāyuán  one/a garden
- 四十个字 sìshí gè zì  forty Chinese characters
- 五个月 wǔ gè yuè  five months
- 每个旅客 měi gè lǚkè  every passenger
- 一个印象 yī gè yìnxiàng  an impression

However, with time nouns, some of which have monosyllabic and disyllabic alternatives, the occurrence of gè is decided with reference to rhythm: gè must be omitted before monosyllables but is present before disyllables. For example:

- 一年 yī nián/  *一个年 yī gè nián  one year
- 一个月 yī gè yuè  one month
- 两天 liǎng tiān/  *两个天 liǎng gè tiān  two days
3.2 Other measure words

In addition to 个 gè, there is a wide range of commonly used measure words, which can be divided roughly into the categories below. (In the examples, the numeral 一 yī ‘one’ is used, though any number could appear in its place.)

(1) Shapes: the shape measure words are perhaps the most interesting because they evoke images of their associated nouns.

(a) 条 tiáo (long and flexible):

一条蛇 yī tiáo shé a snake

一条河 yī tiáo hé a river

Other nouns used with 条 tiáo include: 裙子 qúnzi ‘skirt’, 裤子 kùzi ‘trousers’, 线 xiàn ‘thread’, 绳子 shéngzi ‘rope’, ‘string’, 街 jiē ‘street’, etc.

(b) 支 zhī (long and slender):

一支笔 yī zhī bǐ a pen

一支香烟 yī zhī (xiāng)yuān a cigarette

Also with 支 zhī: 牙膏 yágāo ‘(tube of) toothpaste’, 枪 qiāng ‘pistol; rifle’, etc.

(c) 根 gēn (slender):

一根香蕉 yī gēn xiāngjiāo a banana

一根香肠 yī gēn xiāngcháng a sausage
Also with 根 gēn: 头发 tóufa ‘hair’, 铁丝 tiēsī ‘wire’, 针 zhēn ‘needle’, etc.

(d) 张 zhāng (flat):
一张纸 yī zhāng zhǐ  a piece of paper
一张票 yī zhāng piào  a ticket

(e) 颗 kē (small and round):
一颗珍珠 yī kē zhēnzhū  a pearl
一颗星 yī kē xīng  a star
Also with 颗 kē: 糖 táng ‘sweets’, 心 xīn ‘heart’, etc.

(f) 粒 lì (round and smaller than 颗 kē):
一粒米 yī lì mǐ  a grain of rice
一粒沙 yī lì shā  a grain of sand
Also with 粒 lì: 子弹 zdíàn ‘bullet’, 花 huāshēng ‘peanut’, etc.

(2) Associated actions:
(a) 把 bā (to handle): 一把刀 yī bā dāo  a knife
一把牙刷 yī bā yáshuā  a toothbrush

(b) 封 fēng (to seal): 一封信 yī fēng xìn  a letter

(3) Particular sets:
(a) 本 běn (for books, etc.):
一本词典 yī běn cídiǎn  a dictionary
一本杂志 yī běn zázhì  a magazine

(b) 只 zhī (for animals, birds and insects):
一只兔子 yī zhī tùzi  a rabbit
一只鸟 yī zhī niǎo  a bird
一只苍蝇 yī zhī cāngying  a fly
There are alternative measure words for some common animals: 一头牛 yī tóu niú ‘an ox’, 一匹马 yī pǐ mǎ ‘a horse’, 一条狗 yī tiáo gǒu ‘a dog’.

(for utensils): 一只箱子 yī zhī xiāngzi a box/suitcase
                  一只碗 yī zhī wǎn a bowl

Also with: 杯子 bēizi ‘cup’, ‘glass’, ‘mug’, etc.

(c) 棵 kē (for certain plants):
    一棵菜 yī kē cài a vegetable
    一棵草 yī kē cǎo a tuft of grass

Also with: 树 shù ‘tree’, etc.

(d) 辆 liàng (for vehicles):
    一辆汽车 yī liàng qìchē a car
    一辆火车 yī liàng huǒchē a train

(e) 架 jià (for planes):
    一架飞机 yī jià fēijī a(n) (aero)plane
    一架轰炸机 yī jià hōngzhàjī a bomber
    一架喷气机 yī jià pēnqìjī a jet plane

(f) 台 tái (for machines):
    一台机器 yī tái jīqì a machine
    一台电视机 yī tái diànnǐjī a television

Also with: 电脑 diànnǎo ‘computer’, 缝纫机 féng rènjī ‘sewingmachine’, etc.

(g) 件 jiàn (for shirts, coats, etc.):
    一件衬衫 yī jiàn chènshān a shirt
    一件大衣 yī jiàn dài yī an overcoat

(h) 间 jiān (for rooms, etc.):
    一间屋子 yī jiān wūzǐ a room
    一间卧室 yī jiān wōshì a bedroom

(i) 所 suǒ (for houses, institutions):
    一所房子 yī suǒ fángzǐ a house
    一所学校 yī suǒ xuéxiào a school

Also with: 医院 yīyuàn ‘hospital’, etc.
Measures for nouns

(j) 座 zuò (for buildings, mountains, etc.):

- 一座宫殿 yī zuò gōngdiàn a palace
- 一座山 yī zuò shān a hill/mountain

Also with: 桥 qiáo ‘bridge’, 城 chéng ‘city’, etc.

(k) 场 chǎng (for activities, etc.):

- 一场电影 yī chǎng diànyǐng a film
- 一场足球赛 yī chǎng zúqiú(sài) a soccer match

Note: The measures associated with particular sets of nouns are too numerous to list. They include:

- 花儿 yī duō huā ‘a flower’,
- 帽子 yī mào ‘a hat/cap’,
- 戏 yī xià ‘a play’,
- 歌 yī shōu gē ‘a song’, etc.

(4) Containers:

- 一杯咖啡 yī bēi kāfēi a cup of coffee
- 一碗饭 yī wǎn fàn a bowl of rice
- 一桶水 yī tǒng shuǐ a pail/bucket of water

Other containers include: 瓶 píng ‘bottle’, 盘 pán ‘plate’, 罐 guàn ‘tin’/‘can’, 盒 hé ‘small box’, 包 bāo ‘packet’, etc.

Note: Cultural artefacts can sometimes dictate different sets of container measures. Take the case of 杯 bēi ‘cup’, ‘glass’, ‘mug’:

- 一杯茶 yī bēi chá a cup of tea
- 一杯啤酒 yī bēi pǐjiǔ a glass of beer

(5) Standard measures:

- 一公斤苹果 yī gōngjīn píngguǒ a kilo(gram) of apples
- 一码布 yī mǎ bù a yard of cloth
- 一加仑汽油 yī jiālún qíyòu a gallon of petrol


(6) Collections:

- 一群人 yī qún rén a crowd of people
- 一套课本 yī tào kèběn a set of textbooks
- 一沓纸 yī dá zhǐ a pile of paper
Other collection measures include: 串 chuan ‘cluster’, 堆 duī ‘pile’/‘heap’, 打 dá ‘dozen’, 批 pī ‘batch’, etc.

Note 1: The collection measure 群 qún ‘group’/‘crowd’ in Chinese is matched in English by a range of measures used with different nouns: 一群蜜蜂 yī qún mìfēng ‘a swarm of bees’, 一群牛 yī qún niú ‘a herd of cows’, 一群狼 yī qún láng ‘a pack of wolves’, 一群羊 yī qún yáng ‘a flock of sheep’, etc.

Note 2: The notion of pair is usually expressed in Chinese by 对 duì, 双 shuāng or 副 fù: 一双鞋 yī shuāng xié ‘a pair of shoes’, 一双筷子 yī shuāng kuāizi ‘a pair of chopsticks’, 一对耳环 yī duì ěrruán ‘a pair of ear-rings’, 一副眼镜 yī fù yǎnjìng ‘a pair of spectacles/glasses’, 一副手套 yī fù shòutào ‘a pair of gloves’, etc.

However: a pair of trousers 一条裤子 yī tiáo kùzǐ, a pair of scissors 一把剪刀 yī bǎ jiǎndāo.

(7) Portion:

一块蛋糕 yī kuài dàngāo a piece of cake
一片面包 yī piàn miànbāo a slice of bread
一滴水 yī dī shuǐ a drop of water

Note: 块 kuài is also used for 肥皂 féizào ‘soap’, 地 di ‘land’, etc.; 片 piàn for 叶子 yèzi ‘leaf’, etc; 滴 dī for 血 xiě ‘(drop of) blood’, etc.

(8) Indefinite small numbers or amounts (一些 yī xiē ‘some’; 一点儿 yī diǎnr ‘a little’):

一些书 yī xiē shū some books
一些时间 yī xiē shíjiān some time
一点儿面粉 yī diǎnr miànfěn a little flour

Note 1: 些 Xiē can only be used with the numeral 一 yī ‘one’ and with demonstratives (see 4.3).

Note 2: 一些 Yī xiē usually occurs with common nouns (e.g. books) and material nouns (e.g. water), and 一点儿 yī diǎnr with material nouns (e.g. flour) and abstract nouns (e.g. time, opinion). (See also 3.3 and 3.4 below.)
3.3 Abstract nouns

Abstract nouns in Chinese also take measure words. For example,

- 一条消息 yī tiáo xiāoxi a piece of news
- 一个主意/主张 yī gè zhūyì/zhǔzhāng an idea/a proposal
- 一件事 yī jiàn shì a matter
- 一丝笑容 yī sī xiàoróng a smile

The measure word 种 zhǒng ‘kind, type’ is regularly found with abstract nouns:

- 一种能力 yī zhǒng nénglì a skill
- 一种方法 yī zhǒng fāngfǎ a method
- 一种思想 yī zhǒng sīxiǎng a kind of thinking

Abstract nouns may always be used with the indefinite small amount measures 一些 yī xiē or 一点儿 yī diǎnr ‘some’:

- 一些/点儿建议 yī xiē/diǎnr jiànyì some suggestions
- 一些/点儿印象 yī xiē/diǎnr yìnxiàng some impression

3.4 Material nouns

Material nouns in Chinese, on the other hand, may only occur with standard measures, container measures, portion measures and indefinite small amount measures:

- 一斤米 yī jīn mǐ a jīn (i.e. half a kilogram) of rice (standard)
- 一瓶酒 yī píngr jǐù a bottle of wine/spirits (container)
- 一块布 yī kuài bù a piece of cloth (portion)
- 一些水 yī xiē shuǐ some water
- 一点儿水 yī diǎnr shuǐ a little water

3.5 Collective nouns

Collective nouns are formed by attaching a measure word as a kind of suffix to their related nouns. However, they are established expressions and new forms are rarely coined. For example:
Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>我 wǒ I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>你 nǐ you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>他 tā he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>她 tā she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>它 tā it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for nouns, there is no case inflection for pronouns; they remain the same whether they are the subject or the object:

我喜欢他。 Wǒ xǐhuan tā. I like him.
她喜欢我。 Tā xǐhuan wǒ. She likes me.
我们不喜欢他们。 Wǒmen bù xǐhuan tāmen. We don’t like them.
他们不喜欢我们。 Tāmen bù xǐhuan wǒmen. They don’t like us.
The spoken form of the third person singular is the same for masculine, feminine and neuter genders. In other words, 他 tā may mean he/she/it or him/her/it.

Two other personal pronouns are widely used. The first, 您 nín, is a polite form of second person singular:

你好  Nǐ hǎo!  (lit. you good)  Hello; how are you?
您好   Nín hǎo!  (lit. polite: you good)  How do you do?

Note: There is no corresponding polite form for the second person plural: 您们 *nínmen. To address a group politely one can use the phrase: 您几位 nín jī wèi, where 几位 jī means ‘several’ and 位 wèi is a polite measure word for people.

The second, 咱们 zánmen meaning ‘we’/‘us’, is used where the speaker intends to include the listener(s) in what is said:

咱们走吧!  Zánmen zǒu ba!  (lit. we [you and I] leave p)  Let’s go!

Note: 吧 Ba is a sentence particle indicating a suggestion (see 8.6).

咱们 Zánmen is particularly used by speakers from northern China. However, the distinction between 咱们 zánmen and 我们 wǒmen seems to be growing increasingly blurred, and 我们走吧 wǒmen zǒu ba ‘let’s go’ is now common among northern as well as southern speakers.

The use of these personal pronouns is generally analogous to English. However, the neuter third person singular or plural occurs only rarely, particularly when the reference is to (an) inanimate object(s). In the sentence below, for example, there is no pronoun in the second clause:

这本小说   Zhè běn xiǎoshuō (lit. this mw novel very long, very long, but I very like) This novel is very long, but I like it very much.
很长, 可是   hěn cháng, kěshì
我很喜歡。   wǒ hěn xīhuān.

Note: The neuter third person singular or plural form must still be used in a 把 bā-structure (see last example under 20.1(2)).

In contrast, when a person is referred to, the personal pronoun must be used:

那个人很骄傲, 是可 hěn xīhuān tā. (lit. that mw person very proud, but I very like him) That person is very proud but I [still] like him very much.
When an animal is referred to, the pronoun may be included or omitted. For example:

我有一只猫，它很可爱，我很喜欢它。 *Wǒ yǒu yī zhī māo, (tā) hěn kē’ài, wǒ hěn xīhuan (tā).* *(lit. I have one mw cat, (it) very lovely, I very like (it)) I have a cat. It is a lovely cat. I like it very much.*

Chinese, unlike English, does not use the third person neuter pronoun in expressions about time, distance, the weather, etc. (e.g. it’s late, it’s a long way); instead it employs a relevant noun.

时间不早了。 *Shíjiān bù zǎo le.* *(lit. time not early p) It’s late.*
路很近。 *Lù hěn jìn.* *(lit. way very near) It’s quite near.*
天晴了。 *Tiān qíng le.* *(lit. sky turn-fine p) It’s cleared up.*
昨天天气很好。 *Zuótiān tiānqì hěn hǎo.* *(lit. yesterday weather very good) It was fine yesterday.*

Note: See Chapter 16 for further discussion of le at the end of a sentence.

### 4.2 Possessive pronouns

The possessive forms of these personal pronouns in Chinese, whether adjectives (e.g. my, your, our, etc.) or pronouns (e.g. mine, yours, ours, etc.) are all formed by adding the suffix 的 de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>我的 wōde</td>
<td>我们的 wǒmende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>咱们的 zánmende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>你的 níde</td>
<td>你们的 nǐmende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(polite)</td>
<td>您的 nínde</td>
<td>your/your(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>your/your(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>他的 tāde</td>
<td>他们的 tāmende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>她的</td>
<td>her(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>它的</td>
<td>its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>their/their(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For example:

我的书  
书是我的  

wǒde shū  
Shū shì wǒde.  

my book(s)  
The book(s) is/are mine.

Note 1: 的 De, as part of a possessive adjective, may be omitted when the reference is to relatives or close friends, e.g.:

我妈妈  
你女朋友  
她哥哥  

wō māma  
ní nǚ péngyou  
tā gēge  

my mother  
your girlfriend  
her elder brother

Note 2: When a possessive adjective occurs with a numeral-measure phrase, the former precedes the latter and de is usually present, e.g.:

我的一个同事  
他的两个孩子  

wǒde yī gè tóngshì  
tāde liǎng gè háizi  
a colleague of mine  
two children of his

4.3  Demonstrative pronouns

The two demonstrative pronouns in Chinese are 这 zhè ‘this’ and 那 nà ‘that’:

这是我的。  
那是你的车票。  
那不行。  

Zhè shì wǒde.  
Nà shì nǐde chēpiào.  
Nà bù xíng.  

This is mine.  
That is your train/coach ticket.  
That won’t do.

这 zhè and 那 nà can also modify nouns as demonstrative adjectives, but like numerals they must normally be followed by a measure. With measures, regularly 这 zhè becomes 这 zhèi and 那 nà becomes 那 nèi.

那个人是  
我爸爸。  
我要买这本  
地图册。  

Nèi gè rén  
shì wǒ bàba.  
Wǒ yào mǎi zhèi  
běn ditúcè.  

(lit. that mw person be my father)  
That man is my father.  
(lit. I want buy this mw atlas)  
I want to buy this atlas.

Note: Where the context is sufficient (i.e. when the noun has already been identified), the noun may be omitted:

那个是她的。  
我喜欢这个。  
这位是我们的老师。  

Nèi gè shī tāde.  
Wǒ xǐhuān zhèi gè.  
Zhèi wèi shì wǒmende lǎoshī.  

That one is hers.  
I like this one.  
This (polite form) is our teacher.
Plurals of the demonstratives can be formed by using the measure some xiě (cf. 3.2 (8)): 这些 zhèi xiě ‘these’ and 那些 nèi xiě ‘those’:

这些是我们的。 Zhèi xiě shì wǒmén de. These are ours.
那些是你们的。 Nèi xiě shì nǐmén de. Those are yours.
这些箱子是我的。 Zhèi xiě xiāng zi shì wǒ de. These suitcases are mine.
那些衣服是他的。 Nèi xiě yīfu shì tā de. Those clothes are his.
这些钱是她的。 Zhèi xiě qián shì tā de. This money is hers.

When demonstratives are used with numbers, the word order is demonstrative, number, measure, noun:

这些是三张票的。 Zhèi xiě sān zhāng piào shì wǒ de. These three tickets are mine.
这些是两张票的。 Zhèi xiě liǎng zhāng piào shì nǐ de. These two tickets are yours.

If a possessive adjective is also present, it always comes first (see 5.8):

我们这些三张票。 Wǒmen zhèi sān zhāng piào. These three tickets are mine.
你们这些两张票。 Nǐmen zhèi liǎng zhāng piào. These two tickets are yours.

4.4 Interrogative pronouns

The main interrogative pronouns in Chinese are:

谁 shéi/shuí who(m)
谁的 shéide/shuíde whose
哪 nǎ/nèi (+ measure word + noun) which
哪些 nǎ/nèi + xiě (+ noun) which (plural)
什么 shénme what

Note: 那 nà/nèi ‘that’ and 哪 nǎ/nèi ‘which’ are differentiated in meaning by their tones and written forms.

When interrogative pronouns are used, the word order of the question does not change from that of statement. In other words, the inter-
rogative word comes at the point in the sentence where the answer word is expected:

Q: 那个人是谁？
   Nèi gè rén shì shéi?
   (lit. that mw person be who)

   A: 那个人是我爸爸。
   Nèi gè rén shì wǒ bàba.
   (lit. that mw person be my father)

   Who is that person?
   That person is my father.

Q: (A knock on the door) 谁是？
   Nǐ shì shéi/shuí?

   A: 我是你的邻居。
   Wǒ shì nǐde línjū.

Note: It would be wrong to say *谁是那个人 ‘shéi shì nèi gè rén’ in the first example because the answer will be 那个人是我爸爸 ‘nèi gè rén shì wǒ bàba’ and not *我爸爸是那个人 ‘wǒ bàba shì nèi gè rén’. The reason is that a noun of definite reference in Chinese will normally come first as the subject or topic of a sentence, whether in a statement or question. Similarly, a personal pronoun (as in the second example) is naturally of definite reference and therefore comes first in the sentence. It would be wrong to ask *谁是你 ‘shéi shì nǐ’ or answer *你的邻居是我 ‘nǐde línjū shì wǒ’.

Q: 谁是你的中文老师？
   Shéi/shuí shì nǐde zhōngwén lǎoshī?
   (lit. who be your Chinese teacher)
   Who is your Chinese teacher?

   A: 那个人/李明是我的中文老师。
   Nèi gè rén/Lǐ Míng shì wǒde zhōngwén lǎoshī.
   (lit. that mw person/Li Ming be my Chinese teacher)
   That person/Li Ming is my Chinese teacher.

Q: 谁有火柴/打火机？
   Shéi yǒu huǒchái/dáhuǒjī?
   (lit. who have match(es)/lighter)
   Who has a match/lighter?

   A: 我有(火柴/打火机)。
   Wǒ yǒu huǒchái/dáhuǒjī.
   (lit. I have match(es)/lighter)
   I have (a match/lighter).

Q: 这是谁的行李？
   Zhè shì shuíde xínglǐ?
   (lit. this be whose luggage)
   Whose luggage is this?

   A: 这是我的(行李)。
   Zhè shì wǒde xínglǐ.
   (lit. this be my luggage)
   This is mine/my luggage.

Q: 这串钥匙是谁的？
   Zheì chuàn yào shì shuí
duìshuí?
   (lit. this mw key(s) be whose)
   Whose keys are these/Whose is this bunch of keys?

   A: (这串钥匙)是我的。
   Zheì chuàn yào shì wǒde.
   (lit. this mw key(s) be mine)
   They/These keys are mine/This bunch of keys is mine.
Q: 你喜欢哪幅画？
Nǐ xǐhuan nà/fēi fú huàr?
(lit. you like which mw painting)
Which painting do you like?

A: 我喜欢这幅画。
Wǒ xǐhuan zhèi fú huàr.
(lit. I like this mw painting)
I like this painting.

Q: 你认识哪两个人？
Nǐ rènshi nà/néi liǎng gè rén?
(lit. you know which two mw people)
Which two people do you know?

A: 我认识这两个人。
Wǒ rènshi zhè/zhèi liǎng gè rén.
(lit. I know this two mw people)
I know these two people.

Q: 你认识哪些字？
Nǐ rènshi nà/néi xiē zi?
(lit. you know which mw character)
Which characters do you know?

A: 我认识这些字。
Wǒ rènshi zhè xiē zi.
(lit. I know these mw character)
I know these characters.

Q: 你找什么？
Nǐ zhǎo shénme?
(lit. you look-for what)
What are you looking for?

A: 我找我的钱包。
Wǒ zhǎo wǒde qiánbāo.
(lit. I look-for my purse/wallet)
I'm looking for my purse/wallet.

Q: 你喝杯什么？
Nǐ hē bēi shénme?
(lit. you drink mw: cup what)
What will you have to drink?

A: 我喝杯茶/咖啡/桔子水/啤酒。
Wǒ hē bēi chá/kāfēi/júzishuǐ/ jiǔjīu
(lit. I drink mw: cup tea/coffee/orange juice/beer)
I'll have tea/coffee/orange juice/beer.

4.5 Other pronouns

Other miscellaneous pronouns include:

大家       dàiā
 everybody (used before and after the verb)

人家       rénjia
 the other person (occurring before and after the verb)

自己       ziji
 oneself (used before and after the verb or after a personal pronoun)

谁       shéi/shuí
 everybody/nobody (placed before the verb and always with 都 dōu 'all' or 也 yě 'also')
什么 shénme everything/nothing (likewise placed before the verb and always with 都 dōu ‘all’ or 也 yě ‘also’
大家都知道 Dàjiā dōu zhídào (lit. everybody all know this matter) Everybody knows this.
她认识大家。 Tā rènshì dàjiā. (lit. she recognise everybody) She knows everybody.
人家不理她。 Rénjiā bù lǐ tā. (lit. others not bother-with her) The others ignored her.
她不理人家。 Tā bù lǐ rénjiā. (lit. she not bother-with others) She ignored the others.
谁都/也喜欢她。 Shéi dōu/ yě xǐhuān tā. (lit. everybody all/also like her) Everybody likes her.
谁都/也不喜欢他。 Shéi dōu/ yě bù xǐhuān tā. (lit. everybody also not like him) Nobody likes him.
她谁都/也不喜欢。 Tā shéi dōu/ yě bù xǐhuān. (lit. she everybody all/also not like) She doesn’t like anybody.
她什么 都/也吃。 Tā shénme dōu/ yě chī. (lit. she everything all/also eat) She eats everything.
她什么 都/也不吃。 Tā shénme dōu/yě bù chī. (lit. she everything all/also not eat) She doesn’t eat anything.
我自己 不吃肉。 Wǒ zìjǐ bù chī ròu. (lit. I self not eat meat) I don’t eat meat myself.
他老突出自己。 Tā lǎo tūchū zìjǐ. (lit. he always stick-out self) He always pushes himself forward.

Note 1: 都 Dōu ‘all’ and 也 yě ‘also’ are referential adverbs used to reinforce the idea of ‘everybody’. Their use is discussed in full in 14.3. A discussion of the joint occurrence of both subject and topic in a pre-verbal position (e.g. 她谁都/也不理。 Tā shéi dōu/yě bù lǐ ‘she ignores everybody’) is found in 18.4 and 18.5.

Note 2: To express ‘each other’ or ‘one another’ the adverb 互相 hùxiāng ‘mutually’ is placed after the subject: e.g. 他们互相帮助。 Tāmen hùxiāng bāngzhù. ‘They help each other/one another.’

Note 3: We can see that 谁 shéi/shuí can be used either as an interrogative pronoun or to mean ‘everybody/nobody’. Any possible ambiguity may be removed by the use of emphasis. Normal stress will usually encode a straightforward question whilst emphatic stress will produce a rhetorical effect, e.g.:
Nouns

I

Who is criticizing you? or Nobody is criticizing you.

你怪谁？Nǐ guài shuí? Who are you blaming? or You can’t blame anyone.

Note 4: 老 Lǎo ‘always’, see 10.4 Note 1.

4.6 Pronouns and conjunctions

Pronouns, like nouns, may be linked by conjunctions, such as 和 hé (跟 gēn, 同 tóng and 与 yǔ) ‘and’ and 或 huò ‘or’ (see 1.4):

你和我 Nǐ hé wǒ you and me

这个或那个 zhèn gè huò nèi gè this one or that one

5 Adjectives and attributives

5.1 Attributives

Attributives are words or expressions used to qualify nouns. They may either describe or delimit them. In Chinese, all attributives precede the word they qualify. This contrasts with English where many attributives, e.g. relative clauses, prepositional and participial phrases, follow the noun.

5.2 Adjectives as attributives

When adjectives are used as attributives in Chinese, a distinction can be made between monosyllabic adjectives and adjectives with more than one syllable.

5.2.1 Monosyllabic adjectives

Monosyllabic adjectives are placed directly before the nouns they qualify:

旧书 jìù shū old books
好朋友 hào péngyou good friends
一条红裙子 yī tiáo hóng qúnzi a red skirt
一个大家庭 yī gè dà jiātíng a big family
我的一副黑眼镜 wǒde yī fù hēi yǎnjīng a pair of sunglasses of mine
Note: A monosyllabic adjective attached to a noun may often become an established word or expression and take on a distinctive meaning of its own:大人dàrén ‘adult’ (lit. big person), 小费xiǎofèi ‘tip, gratuity’ (lit. small fee), 公园gōngyuán ‘park’ (lit. public garden), 私人sīrén ‘personal’, ‘private’ (lit. private person), etc.

5.2.2 Polysyllabic adjectives and **de**

If the adjective has more than one syllable, the particle **de** is generally used between the adjective and the noun it qualifies:

- 漂亮的衣服 **piàoliàng de yīfu** beautiful clothes
- 年轻的姑娘 **niánqīng de gūniáng** young girls
- 一个错误的决定 **yī gè cuòwù de juédìng** a wrong decision
- 软绵绵的地毯 **ruǎnmianmian de ditǎn** soft carpet

The same general principle applies when a monosyllabic adjective is preceded by an adverb of degree:

- 很新的衣服 **hěn xīn de yīfu** very new clothes
- 一个十分重的包裹 **yī gè shífēn zhòng de bāoguǒ** a very heavy parcel
- 一所极大的房子 **yī suǒ jí dà de fángzi** an extremely big house

5.2.3 Disyllabic adjectives and **de**

However, a limited number of common two-syllable adjectives are used **without** **de**. Idiomatic phrases such as 很多hěn duō ‘many’ and 不少bù shǎo ‘quite a few’ may be included with them:

- 彩色电视 **cāisè diànshi** colour television
- 根本原则 **gēnběn yuánzé** fundamental principles
- 很多人 **hěn duō rén** a lot of people
- 不少事 **bù shǎo shì** quite a few matters
- 不少时间 **bù shǎo shíjiān** quite some time
I Nouns

Note 1: Other disyllabic adjectives which do not usually require de are:

Note 2: Disyllabic attributives without de may often be used with disyllabic nouns to form idiomatic expressions:
旅行支票 lǚxíng zhībiāo ‘traveller’s cheque’, 圣诞礼物 shèngdàn liwù ‘Christmas present’, 百货商店 bǎihuò shǎngdiàn ‘department store’ (lit. hundred-goods shop), 电视节目 diànshì jiémù ‘television programme’, etc.

5.3 Nominal attributives

Nouns may also act as nominal attributives. Whether monosyllabic or polysyllabic, they do not generally require the particle de. In some cases the resulting expressions have become established terms in the language, as in the first three examples below:

- 书架 shū jià > 书架 shūjià bookshelf
- 电影院 diànyǐng > 电影院 diànyǐngyuàn cinema (lit. film house)
- 时间表 shíjiān biǎo > 时间表 shíjīānbìǎo timetable
- 语法书 yǔfǎ shū grammar book
- 电话号码 diànhuà hǎomǎ telephone number
- 两英镑 shí bàng fākuǎn ten pound fine
- 两英里路 liǎng yīnglǐ lù two miles distance

Note: Material nouns are often used as nominal attributives: 一扇铁门 yī shàn tiě mén ‘an iron gate’, 一堵砖墙 yī dū zhuān qiáng ‘a brick wall’, 一条项链 yī tiáo jīn xiàngliàn ‘a gold necklace’, 一件皮夹克 yī jiāng pí jiākè ‘a leather jacket’, etc.

5.3.1 Nominal attributives and de

The particle de may be used between a nominal attributive and the noun it qualifies, but in these cases it indicates either possession or close association:

- 爸爸的领带 bàba de lǐngdài father’s tie
- 学校的运动场 xuéxiào de yùndòngchǎng the school’s sportsfield

Note: Compare this with the use of de in possessive pronouns: 我的鞋 wǒde xié ‘my shoes’, 他的/她的袜子 tāde wāzi ‘his/her socks/stockings’, etc.
5.4 Prepositional and postpositional phrases as attributives

Prepositional phrases (e.g. 靠床 kào chuáng ‘against the bed’, see Chapter 19) and postpositional phrases (e.g. 桌子下 zhuōzǐ xià ‘under the table’, see Chapter 11), when used as attributives, always require de:

(1) Prepositional phrases:
- 靠墙的桌子 kào qiáng de zhuōzǐ the desk/table against the wall
- 沿路的商店 yán lù de shāngdiàn the shops along the road

(2) Postpositional phrases:
- 屋子里的家具 wūzǐ lǐ de jiājù furniture in the room
- 墙上的标语 qiáng shàng de biāoyǔ slogans on the wall

5.5 Verbal phrases or clauses as attributives

Attributives in Chinese become more complex when they contain verbs. Below are some examples of verbal phrase or clause attributives. They always require the use of the particle 的 de:

(1) Verbal phrases:
- 卖报纸的商店 mài bàozhǐ de shāngdiàn a shop that sells newspapers
- 新来的秘书 xīn lái de mishū the secretary who has just come
- 有钱的家庭 yǒu qián de jiātíng families which have money
- 要洗的衣服 yào xǐ de yǐfu clothes which need washing

(2) Verbal clauses:
- 你要付的钱 nǐ yào fù de qián the money you will have to pay
- 你叫的菜 nǐ jiào de cài the dish(es) you have ordered
- 他们去中国的那天 tāmen qù Zhōngguó de nèi (yī) tiān the day they went to China
- 革命开始的地方 géming kāishǐ de difāng the place where the revolution started
5.6 The order of sequential attributives

Where attributives of various types (adjectival, nominal or verbal) occur in one sentence, they must follow one of the following sequences:

1. An adjectival attributive will always precede a nominal attributive:
   - 黑皮鞋 hēi pí xié black leather shoes
   - 灰色的绒大衣 huīsè de róng dàyī [a] grey felt coat

2. An adjectival attributive with 的 de always comes before an adjectival attributive without the de:
   - 干净的小房间 gānjìng de xiǎo fángjiān [a] clean, small room
   - 很高的白房子 hěn gāo de bái fángzi [a] very high white house

3. A verbal attributive invariably precedes all other attributives:
   - 会画画儿的新同学 huì huà huàr de xīn tóngxué [a] new coursemate who can draw/paint
   - 戴眼镜的女老师 dài yǎnjìng de nǚ lāoshī [the] woman teacher who wears glasses

5.7 Demonstrative and numeral phrases with other attributives

Demonstrative and numeral phrases precede all attributives:

- 这两条红裙子 zhè liǎng tiáo hóng qúnzi these two red skirts
- 那些看中文杂志的人 nàlài xiĀ kàn Zhōngwén zázhì de rén those people who read Chinese magazines
- 那只你喜欢的小花猫 nàzhī nǐ xǐhuān de xiǎo huā māo that little tabby cat (which) you like

Note: The only exception is that with verbal attributives the demonstrative/numeral phrase may come after the attributive:

- 看中文杂志的那些人 kàn Zhōngwén zázhì de nàlái xiē rén those people who read Chinese magazines
- 你喜欢的那只小花猫 nǐ xǐhuān de zhī xiǎo huā māo that little tabby cat (which) you like
5.8 Possessive pronoun and other attributives

A possessive pronoun will precede all qualifying phrases (e.g. demonstrative/numeral phrase and attributives):

- 我的三个好朋友 wǒde sān gè hǎo péngyou my three good friends
- 你的那件新买的 nǐde nèi jiàn xīn mǎi that newly-bought
- 的皮夹克 de pí jiākè leather jacket of yours

5.9 Ér between adjectives

When two similar adjectives qualify the same noun, they are usually joined together by the conjunction 而 ér ‘as well as’:

- 一个年轻而漂亮 yīgè niánqīng ér (a) young, beautiful
- 一间干净而整齐的房间 yījiān gānjìng ér (a) clean and tidy room

5.10 Omission of the noun following an attributive

If the context makes it clear, the noun following the attributive can be omitted, though in these cases 的 de must always be retained:

- 我喜欢 nèi gè xīhuàn (lit. I like that new)
- 这是我 zuòtiān mǎi de. (lit. this be I yesterday buy)

5.11 Attributives in word-formation

Finally, in Chinese any grammatical category or construction may be attached without 的 de to a following noun headword to become a word or idiom in the language:

- 养老金 yǎnglǎojīn old-age pension (lit. support-old-money)
- 轻音乐 qīngyīnyuè light music (lit. light-music)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>旅行社</td>
<td>lǚxíngshè</td>
<td>travel agent (lit. travel-society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>双人床</td>
<td>shuāngrénchuáng</td>
<td>double bed (lit. two-people-bed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>录音机</td>
<td>lùyīnjī</td>
<td>tape recorder (lit. record-sound-machine)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The italics mark out the attributives from the (non-italicised) headwords.
Part II

Verbs

Introduction

Verbs in Chinese (as in English) may be divided into three major categories: the verb 是 ‘to be’, the verb 有 ‘to have’ and a broad set of verbs that may be loosely called action verbs. 是 ‘to be’ is used to introduce nominal predicates. It does not occur with adjectival predicates, which come directly after the (pro)nominal subject without any copula, usually with the reinforcement of a degree adverb. Many such adjectives, if followed by the particle 了 le, can acquire a function similar to verbs; we have called these state verbs, since they signify state rather than action. 有 ‘to have’, as well as indicating possession, may express existence, providing the structure for introductory phrases like ‘there is/are’ in English. Action verbs embrace a wide range of semantic groups including motion verbs, modal verbs, attitudinal verbs, intentional verbs, dative verbs, causative verbs, etc. Analysis of these groups enables the characterisation of many verbal constructions and their functions.

One feature common to all verbs in Chinese is that they do not conjugate for tense. The time of the action specified by the verb is normally indicated by placing a time expression before the verb or at the beginning of the sentence. Chinese verbs do have to be related to aspect, however, in that there needs to be some indication of whether the action has been completed, is ongoing, or is part of past experience. This is achieved by introducing an aspect marker 了 le, 过 guo, or 着 zhe as a suffix to the verb, or 在 zai directly before the verb. Action verbs without aspect markers usually express habitual action or intention.

Expressions indicating location, like time expressions, come before the verb. This means that the action of a verb is always expressed against a previously established setting of time and place.

Everything that comes after the verb (apart from the object) we have put in the category of complement. The various types of complement,
indicating duration, frequency, result, direction, manner, consequential state, etc., follow logically from the action of the verb. One interesting feature of result and direction complements is that they can be converted into potential complements. Such potential complements have a slightly different emphasis from 能 néng ‘to be able’, which is one of a substantial number of modal verbs in Chinese.

Chinese, as a verb-oriented language, encodes most ideas in terms of verbs (instead of prepositions, abstract nouns, long attributives, etc.). It is therefore important to understand the central role of verbs in Chinese sentences and the various syntactic elements associated with them.

6 Adjectival and nominal predicates; the verb shì

6.1 Adjectival predicates

In this chapter we deal with predicates which describe or define the subject. In English such predicates would normally use the verb ‘to be’ as a copula or link verb. In Chinese they are slightly more complex, particularly in the case of adjectival predicates.

6.2 Adjectival predicates and the verb ‘to be’

In an adjectival predicate the verb ‘to be’ is not normally used. This is a distinctive feature of Chinese:

她很高。 Tā hěn gāo. (lit. she very tall) She is (very) tall.

这所房子的租金很贵。 Zhè suǒ fángzi de zūjīn hěn guì. (lit. this mw house p rent very expensive) The rent of this house is (very) expensive.

6.2.1 Adjectival predicates and degree adverbs

The adjective used in such an adjectival predicate must always be modified by a degree adverb, most commonly 很 hěn ‘very’. 很 Hěn is often unstressed, when it carries little meaning:

我很难过。 Wǒ hěn nánguò. (lit. I very sad) I am (very) sad.

这件事 很奇怪。 Zhè jiàn shì hěn qíguài. (lit. this mw matter very strange) This matter is (very) strange.

那个人 很可靠。 Nèi gè rén hěn kěkào. (lit. that mw person very reliable) That person is (very) reliable.
Other degree adverbs, unlike 很 hěn, are normally stressed. The most common are 真 zhēn ‘really’, 相当 xiāngdàng ‘fairly’, 非常 fēicháng or 十分 shífēn ‘extremely’:

- 那所学校 那所 school
  真大. zhēn dà. That school is really big.

- 那个孩子 相当聪明。 xiāngdàng
  zhēn hǎizì cōngmíng. That child is fairly clever.

- 这个礼堂 非常宽敞。 Zhèi gè lǐtáng
cōngchǎng. This hall is extremely spacious.

- 这条街 十分繁忙。 Zhèi tiáo jiē
  shífēn fánmáng. This street is extremely busy.

Note: If a degree adverb is not used with an adjectival predicate, a contrast is implied:

- 这本书有用。 zhè shěnshū  yǒuyòng. This book is useful (but that one isn’t).
- 昨天凉快。 zuótiān liángkuài. Yesterday was cool (but today isn’t).

### 6.2.2 Adjectival predicates in the negative

However, there is no need for a degree adverb when the adjectival predicate is negated by 不 bù ‘not’:

- 这个问题 不重要。 Zhèi gè wèntí bù zhòngyào. (lit. this mw problem not important) This problem is not important.
- 那把椅子 不舒服。 Něi bā yǐzi bù shūfu. (lit. that mw chair not comfortable) That chair is not comfortable.

If both 很 hěn and 不 bù are present, the word order becomes important to the meaning:

- 这个问题 不很重要。 Zhèi gè wèntí bù hěn zhòngyào. (lit. this mw problem not very important) This problem is not very important.
- 那把椅子 很不舒服。 Něi bā yǐzi hěn bù shūfu. (lit. that mw chair very not comfortable) That chair is very uncomfortable.
6.2.3 Adjectival predicates followed by verbs

Adjectival predicates are often followed by a verb (phrase) to indicate the area in which the quality or property expressed in the adjective applies:

- 这个菜很好吃。 (lit. this mw dish very good-eat)  
  Zhèi gè cài hěn hāochī. This dish is delicious.

- 她的英文很难懂。 (lit. her English very difficult-understand)  
  Tāde Yīngwén hěn nán dǒng. Her English is difficult to understand.

- 中文语法很容易学。 (lit. Chinese grammar very easy learn)  
  Zhōngwén yǔfǎ hěn róngyì xué. Chinese grammar is easy to learn.

Note: 好 hǎo ‘good’, as in the first example, may be followed by a number of verbs to form established words or expressions: 好听 hàotīng ‘pleasant to the ear’, 好看 hàokàn ‘good-looking’, 好玩 háowán ‘enjoyable’, etc.; 难 nán ‘difficult’ can be used similarly to convey the opposite meaning: 难吃 nánchī ‘unpleasant to the taste’, 难看 nánkàn ‘ugly’, 难听 nán tīng ‘unpleasant to the ear’, etc.

6.3 Non-gradable adjectives as attributives

In the examples above, the adjectives may be described as gradable in that they can be modified by degree adverbs. Adjectives which have a more definite either–or quality (e.g. 男 nán ‘male’, 女 nǚ ‘female’, 真 zhēn ‘true’, 假 jiǎ ‘false’, etc.) and are therefore not so readily modified, may be called non-gradable adjectives. These non-gradable adjectives, when functioning as adjectival predicates, commonly require the use of the copula 是 shì in conjunction with the particle 的 de:

- 这是真的。 (lit. this be true p)  
  Zhè shì zhēn de. This is true.

- 他的话是假的。 (lit. his words be false p)  
  Tāde huà shì jiǎ de. What he said is untrue.

- 这些服装是新式的。 (lit. these clothes be new-type p)  
  Zhèi xiē fúzhūāng shì xīnshì de. These clothes are fashionable.

Most non-gradable adjectives exist in complementary pairs, either as antonyms (e.g. 正确 zhèngquè ‘correct’ and 错误 cuòwù ‘false’) or as positives and negatives (e.g. 正式 zhèngshì ‘formal’ and 非正式 fēi zhèngshì ‘informal’).
Note: Other common non-gradable adjectives and adjectival idioms are: 死 sí ‘dead’, 活 huó ‘alive’; 女 cái ‘female’ (animal), 雄 xióng ‘male’ (animal); 天然 tiānrán ‘natural’, 人造 rénzào ‘man-made’, ‘artificial’; 有可能 yǒu kěnéng ‘possible’, 不可能 bù kěnéng ‘impossible’, etc.

6.3.1 Attributives of shape, colour or material

Terms of shape, colour or material similarly tend to indicate an absolute either–or quality or property and as adjectival predicates follow the same... is shì... the de format:

- 那张桌子 是圆的。 (lit. that mw table be round p) Nèi zhāng zuōzi shì yuán de. That table is round.
- 他的衬衫 是白的。 (lit. his shirt/blouse be white p) Tāde chēnshān shì bái de. His shirt/blouse is white.
- 这条裙子 是布的。 (lit. this mw skirt be cloth p) Zhèi tiáo qúnzi shì bù de. This skirt is made of cloth.


Note 2: Regarding terms of colour and shape, it is possible to have different degrees of, for example, ‘redness’ or ‘roundness’; it is therefore possible to say:

- 这朵花很红。 (lit. this mw flower be red) Zhèi duō huā hěn hóng. This flower is very red.
- 那个盘子 不太圆。 (lit. that mw plate be round p) Nèi gè pánzi bù tài yuán. That plate is not quite round.

6.4 Nominal and pronominal predicates

Nouns and pronouns can also act as nominal and pronominal predicates, where they generally require the use of the copula or link verb is shì ‘to be’:

- 她是我的笔友。 (lit. she be my pen-friend) Tā shì wǒde bǐyǒu. She is my pen-friend.
11 Verbs

Zhè shì Wáng xiānsheng. (lit. this be Wang mister) This is Mr Wang. (as in an introduction)

Wǒ méi gè yuè de shōurú shì yī qiān duō bàng. (lit. I every mw month p income be one thousand more pound) My monthly income is over a thousand pounds.

Zhè gè chéngshì de shìzhě shì shénme? (lit. this mw city p mayor be who) Who is the mayor of this town?

Zhè shì túshūguǎn. (lit. this be library, you’re looking for) This is the library.
A number of verbs can be said to resemble the copula 是 shì:

我姓李。 Wǒ xìng Lǐ. (lit. I surname Li) My surname is Li.

我叫爱玲。 Wǒ jiào Àiling. (lit. I call Ailing) My name is Ailing.

这个孩子像他妈妈。 Zheè gè háizi xiàng tā māmā, (lit. this mw child resemble his mother, not resemble his father) This child is like his mother, not his father.

这个孩子不像他爸爸。 Zheè gè háizi bù xiàng tā bàba. (lit. I belong dragon) I was born in the year of the dragon. (See note under 6.4.)


我妹妹金头发。 Wǒ mèimei jīn tóuфа. (lit. my younger-sister golden hair) My younger sister is a blonde.

我二十一岁。 Wǒ èrshí yī suì. (lit. I twenty-one years-of-age) I am twenty-one.

今天星期一。 Jīntiān xīngqī yī. (lit. today Monday) Today is Monday.

这双鞋十二镑。 Zhèi shuāng xié shí èr bàng. (lit. this pair shoes twelve pound) This pair of shoes costs twelve pounds.

The copula shì in its negative form

In the negative form of a non-gradable adjectival predicate (6.3 and 6.3.1) or a nominal/pronominal predicate (6.4 and 6.4.1), the copula 是 shì is always present with 不 bù placed immediately before it:
7 The verb yǒu; comparisons

7.1 The functions of yǒu

The verb 有 yǒu has a number of functions. Primarily it indicates possession or existence (the latter is discussed in 11.5), but it also appears in expressions of comparison.

7.1.1 Yǒu indicating possession

We start here with 有 yǒu as a verb of possession meaning ‘to have’:

我有(一)个弟弟。 Wǒ yǒu (yī) gè dìdi. (lit. I have one mw younger-brother)

他有很大钱。 Tā yǒu hěn duō qián. (lit. He has very much money)

蜘蛛有八只脚。 Zhīzhū yǒu bā zhī jiǎo. (lit. spider have eight mw foot)

这个柜子有五个抽屉。 Zhèi gé guìzi yǒu wǔ gé chōútǐ. (lit. this mw cabinet have five mw drawer) This cabinet has five drawers.

明天我有一个约会。 Míngtiān wǒ yǒu (yī) gé yúehuí. (lit. tomorrow I have one mw appointment) I have an appointment tomorrow.

Note: 是 Shì may also be used as an intensifier for emphatic statements. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 22.
7.1.2 Mei as negative of yǒu

有 Yǒu is negated by placing 没 méi (NOT 不 bù) before it:

我没有
自习车。

Wǒ méi yǒu zìxíngchē. (lit. I not have bicycle)

I haven’t got a bicycle.

他们没有
电视机。

Tāmen méi yǒu diànshíjī. (lit. they not have television-set)

They don’t have a television.

Note: In a negative sentence, the object of 有 Yǒu is not normally qualified by the ‘numeral → yī (+ measure word)’, because in Chinese there is no need to quantify what one doesn’t possess:

*我没有一辆
自行车。

Wǒ méi yǒu yī liàng zìxíngchē. (lit. *I not have one mw bicycle)

没有 Méi yǒu may often be abbreviated to 没 méi in speech:

我没有
工作。

Wǒ méi gōngzuò. (lit. I now not-have work)

I haven’t got a job at the moment.

7.1.3 Yǒu indicating change or development

有 Yǒu often takes modified or unmodified verbal objects to indicate change or development:

他的中文
有进步。

Tāde Zhōngwén yǒu jīn bù. (lit. His Chinese have progress) He has made progress in his Chinese.

她家的生活
水平有很大
的提高。

Tā jiā de shēnghuó shuǐpíng yǒu hěn dà de tǐgāo. (lit. Her family p living standard have very big p rise) The living standard of her family has greatly improved.

英国的经济
最近有一些
发展。

Yīngguó de jīngjì zuìjìn yǒu yī xiē fāzhǎn. (lit. Britain p economy recently have some develop) There has been some development in Britain’s economy recently.

这儿的情况
有不少变化。

Zhèr de qíngkuàng méi yǒu bù shǎo biànhuà. (lit. here p situation have not-few change) There have been quite a few changes in the situation over here.
7.1.4 Yǒu forming idiomatic expressions

有 Yǒu often takes abstract noun objects to form idiomatic expressions, which may be equivalent to English adjectives. These regularly function as gradable adjectival predicates and can be modified by adverbs of degree:

- 这本小说很有意思。 Zhèi běn xiǎoshūō hěn yǒu yìsī. (lit. this mw novel very have meaning) This novel is very interesting.
- 那个演员非常有名。 Nèi gè yānyuán fēicháng yǒu míng. (lit. that mw actor/actress extremely have name) That actor/actress is extremely famous.

These expressions must be negated by 没有 méi(yǒu):

- 我今天晚上没(有)空。 Wǒ jīntiān wǎnshāng méi(yǒu) kòng. (lit. I today evening not-have leisure) I am busy tonight.
- 那个年轻人真没(有)礼貌。 Nèi gè niánqīng rén zhēn méi(yǒu) lǐmào. (lit. that mw young person really not-have politeness) That young person is really impolite.

Note: Other commonly used idioms with 有 yǒu are 有钱 yǒu qián ‘rich’, 有学问 yǒu xuéwèn ‘learned’, 有经验 yǒu jīngyàn ‘experienced’. For example:

- 那个商人很有钱。 Nèi gè shāngrén hěn yǒu qián. That businessman is (very) rich.
- 那个教授很有学问。 Nèi gè jiāoshòu hěn yǒu xuéwèn. That professor is very learned.
- 这个老人非常有经验。 Zhègè lǎo rén fēicháng yǒu jīngyàn. This old man is extremely experienced.

7.1.5 Yǒu introducing adjectival predicates

有 Yǒu may also be used to introduce an adjectival predicate which incorporates a number:
Comparison in Chinese may be expressed in a number of ways. The most common makes use of the preposition 比 bǐ ‘compared with’, and follows the pattern X 比 bǐ Y + gradable adjective. (We noted in 6.2.1 that a gradable adjective unmodified by a degree adverb implies a contrast or comparison.)

The adjective in a comparison cannot be modified by degree adverbs such as 很 hěn ‘very’, 非常 fēicháng, 十分 shífēn ‘extremely’, etc., and it would be wrong to say:

*中文比英文很难。Zhōngwén bǐ Yīngwén hěn nán. (lit. *Chinese compare English very difficult)
### 7.2.1 Emphatic or specific comparison

The degree of comparison may be made clear, however, either by using the adverbs 更 gèng or 还 hái meaning ‘even more’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>今天比昨天更冷。</td>
<td>Jīntiān bǐ zuótiān gèng lěng. (lit. today compare yesterday even-more cold) Today is even colder than yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>这儿比那儿还安静。</td>
<td>Zhèr bǐ nàr hái ānjìng. (lit. here compare there even-more quiet) It is even quieter here than there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or by tagging various kinds of *degree complements* to the adjectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>中文比英文难得多。</td>
<td>Zhōngwén bǐ Yīnwén nán de duō. (lit. Chinese compare English difficult much) Chinese is <em>much</em> more difficult than English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我妹妹比我姐姐高一点儿。</td>
<td>Wǒ mèimei bǐ wǒ jiējie gāo yī diǎnr. (lit. my younger-sister compare my elder-sister tall one bit) My younger sister is <em>slightly/a bit</em> taller than my elder sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我哥哥比我大两岁。</td>
<td>Wǒ gēge bǐ wǒ dà liǎng suì. (lit. my elder-brother compare me big two years-of-age) My elder brother is two years older than I am.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For further discussion of degree complements see 13.6.

### 7.2.2 Negative comparison

A negative comparison can be expressed in two ways:

1. By placing 不 bù before 比 bǐ (i.e. X is not more . . . than Y):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>今天不比昨天冷。</td>
<td>Jīntiān bù bǐ zuótiān lěng. (lit. today not compare yesterday cold) Today is not colder than yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>这条路不比那条路近。</td>
<td>Zhèi tiáo lù bù bǐ nà tiáo jìn. (lit. this mw road not compare that mw near) This is not a shorter way than that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. By using the formulation X 没有 méi(yǒu) Y 那么/这么 (nàme/zhème ‘so’) adjective (i.e. X is not so . . . as Y):
Note 1: As illustrated in the first example under (2), Chinese like English can concentrate on the contrasting attributive rather than expressing the comparison in full, i.e. it is not necessary to say 昨天的天气 zuótiān de tiānqì.

Note 2: This formulation with 有 yǒu may be used in a positive sentence when a question is asked:

```
这个有那个便宜吗？
Zhèi yǒu nàge piányì ma?
(lit. this mw have that mw cheap p)
```

```
说日语有说汉语那么容易吗？
Shuō Rìyǔ yǒu shuō Hányǔ nàme róngyì ma?
(lit. speak Japanese have speak Chinese so easy p) Is speaking Japanese as easy as speaking Chinese?
```

In fact these questions are asking about ‘equivalence’; their meaning overlaps with that of the 一样 yíyàng structure (see 7.2.3).

```
7.2.3 Comparison: equivalence or similarity
```

Equivalence or similarity is conveyed by use of the adjective 一样 yíyàng ‘the same’ (lit. one kind) in the formulation X 跟 Y 一样 yíyàng (i.e. X is the same as Y):

```
我的跟你的一样。
Wǒde gēn nǐde yíyàng.
(lit. my and your one-kind)
Mine is the same as yours.
```

This structure can be extended by the addition of a further adjective:

```
那件行李跟这件一样轻。
Nèi jiàn xínglǐ gēn zhèi jiàn yíyàng qīng.
(lit. that mw luggage and this mw same light) That piece of luggage is as light as this one.
```

```
我和你一样累。
Wǒ hé nǐ yíyàng lèi.
(lit. I and you same tired) I am just as tired as you are.
```

Note: We have seen earlier that 跟 gēn, 和 hé, 同 tóng and 与 yǔ ‘and’ may be used interchangeably (see 1.4).
### 7.3 Comparatives and superlatives

Where only one item is mentioned in a comparison, a simple comparative or superlative expression like 比较 bijjào ‘comparatively’ or 最 zúi ‘most’ is placed before the adjective:

- 这个牌子 Zhèi gè páizi (lit. this mw brand p honey) 比较便宜。bìjào piányì. (This brand of honey is (relatively) cheaper.)
- 那个公园 Nèi gè gōngyuán (lit. that mw park most beautiful) 最美丽。zuì měilì. (That park is the most beautiful [of all].)

### 8 Verbs and aspect markers

#### 8.1 Action, state, and dative verbs

Having discussed 是 shì ‘to be’ and 有 yǒu ‘to have’, we will now look at action verbs, state verbs and dative verbs.

#### 8.2 Action verbs

Action verbs signify movement or action (e.g. 打 dǎ ‘hit’, ‘strike’, ‘beat’; 跑 pào ‘run’; 喝 hē ‘drink’). Apart from being used in imperatives (see 8.6), they are generally employed for narrative purposes. One of the most prominent features of action verbs in narration is that they are almost always used in conjunction with an aspect marker, 了 le, 过 guò or 着 zhe (suffixed to the verb), or 在 zài (preceding the verb). However, action verbs may also occur without any marker, when they describe one of the following:

1. **Habitual action:**
   - 孩子们 Háiizimen (lit. children day-day see television)
   - 天天看电视 tītiān kàn diànsì. (The children watch television every day.)
   - 马吃草 Mǎ chī cǎo. (lit. horse eat grass) Horses eat grass.

2. **Permanent or long-term characteristics:**
   - 我一九三五年 Wǒ yī jiǔ sān wǔ nián (lit. I one-nine-three-five year come-out-into-world)
   - 出世。chūshì. (I was born in 1935.)
Wǒ xīn (lit. I believe Christ-religion)
Jídūjiào. I am a Christian.

Note: Other religions (branches of religion): 佛教 Fójiào ‘Buddhism’,
天主教 Tiānzhǔjiào ‘Catholicism’, 伊斯兰教 Yīsīlánjiào ‘Islam’,
道教 Dàojiào ‘Taoism’, etc.

(3) Intended action:

Wǒ xiànzài (lit. I now go office)
qù bāngōngshì. I am going to the office now.

Jīntiān wǒ (lit. today I invite-guest) It’s on
qǐngkè. me today.

8.3 Aspect markers

The aspect markers 了 le, 过 guo, 着 zhe and 在 zài:

8.3.1 Le

了 Le indicates the ‘completion of an action’: 

Wǒ xiě le (lit. I write asp three mw letter)
sān fēng xìn. I wrote three letters.

Wǒ xǐle (yī) (lit. I wash asp one mw bath/
gè zǎo. shower) I took a bath/shower.

Wǒ mǎile (lit. I buy asp two mw come-return
liàng zhāng ticket) I bought two return tickets.
lái huí piào.

As in these three examples, the object of a verb with 了 le is usually
something specified or defined. If the object is a single unmodified noun,
the sentence is generally felt to be incomplete:

*Wǒ chīle fàn. (lit. *I eat asp cooked-rice)

This problem is resolved if the object is specified or the sentence is
extended:

Wǒ chī le (lit. I eat asp two bowl rice)
liǎng wǎn fàn. I ate two bowls of rice.
Wǒ chīle fàn jiù huí jiā. (lit. I eat asp rice-meal then return home) I’ll go home as soon as I finish the meal.

Note: For a full discussion of composite sentences like this last extended sentence, see Chapter 24.

It must be stressed that aspect markers are NOT indicators of tense. Whereas in English the form of the verb changes to indicate tense, in Chinese time expressions specify the time of the action of the verb (compare Chapter 10).

Wǒ zuótiān kàn xiǎoshū, jīntiān xiě xìn, míngtiān shōushí fángzī. (lit. I yesterday read novel, today write letter, tomorrow tidy-up house) Yesterday I read a novel, today I’m writing letters and tomorrow I will tidy the house.

A completed action with 了 le may take place in the past or future.

Wǒ zuótiān xiále kě yīhòu qù kàn diànyǐng. (lit. I yesterday finish asp lesson after-that go see film) Yesterday when I’d finished class, I went to see a film.

Wǒ míngtiān xiále kě yīhòu qù kàn diànyǐng. (lit. I tomorrow finish asp lesson after-that go see film) Tomorrow when I finish class, I’ll go and see a film.

To express the negative of completed action, i.e. to say what did not happen in the past or has not happened, 没(有) méi(yǒu) is used, WITH-OUT 了 le:

Tā méi(yǒu) qù ōuzhōu. (lit. He not(-have) go Europe) He did not go to Europe.

Shéi méi(yǒu) tīng zuótiān de guāngbō? (lit. who not(-have) listen yesterday p broadcast) Who didn’t listen to yesterday’s broadcast?

Note: However, 不 bù is used for a habitual action, whether in the past, present or future:

Tā yǐqián bù chōuyān. (lit. He before not inhale-smoke) He did not smoke before.
8.3.2 Guo

过 Guo denotes that an action is a ‘past experience’:

我看过 京剧.  

Wǒ kàn guò jīngjù. (lit. I see asp Beijing-drama) I have seen Peking opera. (I therefore know what it is.)

我喝过 茅台 酒.  

Wǒ hē guò máotái jiǔ. (lit. I drink asp Maotai (wine/spirit)) I have tried Maotai. (I therefore know what it tastes like.)

To illustrate the difference between 了 le and 过 guo, consider the following:

我们吃过 北京烤鸭.  

Wǒmen chī guò Běijīng kǎoyā. (lit. we eat asp Beijing roast-duck) We have tried Beijing duck before.

那天我们 吃了北京 烤鸭.  

Nèitiān wǒmen chī le Běijīng kǎoyā. (lit. that day we eat asp Beijing roast-duck) We had Beijing duck that day.

他们今年 去过台湾.  

Tāmen jīnnián qù guò Táiwān. (lit. they this-year go asp Taiwan) They went to Taiwan this year (but they are back now).

他们今年 去了台湾.  

Tāmen jīnnián qù le Táiwān. (lit. they this-year go asp Taiwan) They went to Taiwan this year (and they are still there).

The sentence 他们今年去过台湾. Tāmen jīnnián qù guò Táiwān shows that 过 guo can be used to indicate experience within a defined period of time, 今年 jīnnián ‘this year’ (as well as experience up to the present). The defined period can of course be any period including the immediate past. Hence the colloquial enquiry 你吃过饭没有 Ni chī guò fàn méiyǒu ‘Have you eaten?’ is acceptable because the speaker has sub-consciously in mind the immediate meal-time.
Verbs

8.3.3  Zài

在 Zài, which is placed before the verb, indicates an ‘action in progress’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action In Progress</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>交响乐团</td>
<td>Jiāoxiāng yuètuán zài yǎnzòu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在演奏</td>
<td>(lit. join-sound music-group asp: in-the-process-of play Beethoven p)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>贝多芬的乐曲。</td>
<td>Bèiduōfēndeqiánzài yuèqí.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>贝多芬</td>
<td>de yuèqí.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>姐姐在念大学。</td>
<td>Jiējie zài niàn dàxué.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大学。</td>
<td>(lit. elder-sister asp: in-the-process-of read university)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The use of 在 zài in this construction appears to derive from its function as a preposition (coverb). The fact that the sentences 他正在那儿学习。tā zài nàr xuéxí and 他在那儿学习。tā zài xùéxí can be seen to be identical in meaning ‘He is (there) studying’ would seem to confirm this point. The那儿 nàr in the second sentence, in fact, provides no precise indication of place.

Zhèng ‘just’ is regularly used with 在 zài and makes the sentence slightly more emphatic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action In Progress</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他们正在打乒乓球。</td>
<td>Tāmen zhèngzài dǎpíngpāngqíu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>打乒乓球。</td>
<td>(lit. they just asp: in-the-process-of beat pingpong-ball) They are just playing pingpong/table tennis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sentence particle 呢 ne may be added to ‘action-in-progress’ sentences to introduce a tone of mild assertion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action In Progress</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她(正)在收拾客厅呢。</td>
<td>Tā (zhèng) zài shōushí kètīng ne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>收拾客厅呢。</td>
<td>(lit. she (just) asp: in-the-process-of tidy-up lounge p) She is just tidying up the lounge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: It is possible to express action in progress without 在 zài, employing zhèng and 呢 ne:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action In Progress</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他们正休息呢。</td>
<td>Tāmen zhèngxiūxī ne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>休息呢。</td>
<td>(lit. they just rest p)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: It is possible to express action in progress without 在 zài, employing zhèng and 呢 ne:
在 Zài can refer to defined periods of time other than the immediate present:

- 你近来在做什么？ Nǐ jìn lái zài zuò shénme? (lit. you recently asp: in-the-process-of do what) What have you been doing recently?
- 他去年在学骑马。 Tā qùnián zài xué qí mǎ. (lit. He last-year asp: in-the-process-of learn ride-horse) He was learning to ride (a horse) last year.

With a frequency adverb, it can also express continuing or persistent ‘action in progress’:

- 他们天天在吵架。 Tāmen tiāntiān zài chǎojià. (lit. they day-day asp: in-the-process-of quarrel) They are quarrelling every day.
- 他以前每天晚上都在喝酒。 Tā yǐqián měi tiān wǎnshāng dōu zài hē jiǔ. (lit. He before every-day evening all in-the-process-of drink wine) He used to be drinking every night.

In negative ‘action-in-progress’ sentences, which rarely occur, the negator 不 bù comes before 在 zài:

- 我不在跟你你说，我在跟她说。 Wǒ bù zài gěn nǐ shuō, wǒ zài gěn tā shuō. (lit. I not asp: in-the-process-of with you talk, I asp: in-the-process-of with her talk) I am not talking to you; I am talking to her.

8.3.4 Zhe

The Zhe implies either that the action is an ‘accompaniment to another action’:

- 老师笑着说，‘谢谢!’ Lǎoshī xiào zhe shuō, ‘Xièxiè!’ (lit. teacher smile asp say: thank-thank) The teacher smiling/with a smile said, ‘Thanks!’
- 他们站着聊天。 Tāmen zhànzhe liáotiān. (lit. they stand asp chat) They stood chatting.

or a ‘state resulting from an action’:

- 妹妹穿着一条白裙子。 Méimei chuānzhe yī tiáo bái qúnzi. (lit. younger-sister wear asp one mw white skirt) (The) younger sister is wearing a white skirt.
Verbs

Mén guānzhé. (lit. door closed asp) The door is closed.

Chuāng kāizhè. (lit. window open asp) The window is open.

Mén shàng tiězhè yī fù duìlián. (lit. door-on paste asp one mw couplet) On the door was posted/pasted a couplet.

The door is closed.

Chuāng kāizhè. (lit. window open asp) The window is open.

Mén shàng tiězhè yī fù duìlián. (lit. door-on paste asp one mw couplet) On the door was posted/pasted a couplet.

Note: Most verbs expressing the wearing of articles of clothing may be suffixed with 着 zhe: 穿着皮鞋/袜子 chuānzhē píxiē/wàzi ‘wearing leather shoes/socks’, 戴着帽子/手套 dài zhē máozī/shǒutào ‘wearing a hat/gloves’, 打着领带 dǎzhē língdài ‘wearing a tie’, 围着围巾 wéi zhē wéijīn ‘wearing a scarf’, etc.

(正)在 (Zhèng) zài and 着 zhe have similar meanings, but the following sentences illustrate the difference between them:

Tā (zhèng)zài chuān dàyī. (lit. she right-now put-on big-coat) She is putting on an overcoat.

Tā chuānzhē dàyī. (lit. she wear asp big-coat) She is wearing an overcoat.

Note: There is some similarity between the use of 在 zài and 着 zhe when a verb-zhe phrase is modified by an adverbial expression:

Tāmen gāogàoxìngxìng de chàngzhē gē. (lit. they high-spirited p sing asp song) They are just singing happily.

Tāmen gāogàoxìngxìng de zài tāolùnzhe nèi gè wèntī. (lit. they just asp: in-the-process-of discuss asp that mw question) They are just discussing that question.

8.4 State verb

The aspect marker 了 le may be used with adjectival predicates (see Chapter 6) to create state verbs. Whereas adjectives indicate existing or
permanent properties, state verbs express changed or changing features. Compare the following pairs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State verb</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我重了两公斤。</td>
<td>这个箱子真重。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒ zhòngle liǎng gōngjīn.</td>
<td>(lit. I heavy asp two kilo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have put on two kilos</td>
<td>This box/suitcase is really heavy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>天黑了。</td>
<td>天很黑。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiān hēile.</td>
<td>Tiān hěn hēi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lit. sky black asp/p)</td>
<td>(lit. sky very black)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has gone dark.</td>
<td>It is (very) dark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你胖了。</td>
<td>她很胖。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ pàngle.</td>
<td>Tā hěn pàng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lit. you fat asp/p)</td>
<td>(lit. she very fat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve put on weight.</td>
<td>She is very fat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: This use of le at the end of a sentence is linked with the function of 了 le as sentence particle (see Chapter 16).

Note 2: To say 你胖了 nǐ pàngle in a Chinese context is a compliment since it implies that the person you are addressing looks to be in good health.

8.5 Dative verbs

There are a few dative verbs which take two objects in the order indirect object followed by direct object.

姐姐给妹妹 一盒糖。  jiējie gěi méimei yī hé táng. (The) elder sister gave (her) younger sister a box of sweets.

他送我 一支钢笔。  Tā sòng wǒ yī zhī gāngbǐ. He gave me a pen [as a gift].

我还他 两镑钱。  Wǒ huán tā liàng bàng qián. I gave him back [his] two pounds.

Note: As we can see from the examples above and also those given below, aspect marker 了 le can generally be omitted with dative verbs indicating completed actions. But see also 8.5.2.

Certain action verbs with 给 gěi ‘to give’ as a suffix follow the same pattern:

她交给我 一篇作文。 Tā jiāo gěi wǒ yī piān zuòwén. She handed in a composition to me.
8.5.1 Dative verbs relating to spoken activity

Some verbs relating to spoken activity may also be used in a dative construction:

- 他们叫我老李。 Tāmén jiào wǒ Lǎo Lǐ. They call me Old Li.
- 他告诉我一件事。 Tā gāosù wǒ yī jiàn shì. He told me something.
- 老师问我一个问题。 Lǎoshī wèn wǒ yī gè wèntí. The teacher asked me a question.

Note: An idiom with 问 wèn in the dative construction is 我爸爸问你好。 Wǒ bàba wèn nǐ hǎo. ‘My father sends you his regards.’

8.5.2 Dative verbs and aspect markers

The aspect markers 了 le, 过 guo and occasionally (正)在 (zhèng) zài may occur with dative verbs but not 着 zhe.

- 他借过你钱没有？ Tā jièguò nǐ qián méiyǒu? (lit. He borrow asp you money not-have) Has he ever borrowed money from you?
- 他们送了我一个景泰蓝花瓶。 Tāmén sòngle wǒ yī gè jíngtàilán huāpíng. (lit. they give asp me one mw cloisonné vase) They gave me a cloisonné vase.
- 她(正)在教我们英语。 Tā (zhèng) zài jiāo wǒmen Yīngyǔ. (lit. she (just) asp: in-the-process-of teach us English) She is teaching us English now.

Note: For a further discussion of dative constructions, see 21.4.
8.6 Causative verbs

There are a number of causative verbs like 催 cuī ‘urge’ 叫 jiào ‘tell’, 命令 minglìng ‘order’, 带领 dài lǐng ‘guide’, ‘lead’, etc. in the language. These verbs take objects which are usually human or animate beings and can therefore engender further actions on their own under the verbal or physical instigation or manoeuvre initiated by the subject (for details, see 21.5):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cantonese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哥哥催我</td>
<td>Gēge cuī wǒ</td>
<td>(lit. elder brother urge me go register/put one’s name down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>去报名。</td>
<td>qù bàomíng.</td>
<td>(My) elder brother urged me to go and register/put my name down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她要我帮助她。</td>
<td>Tā yào wǒ bāngzhù tā.</td>
<td>(lit. she want me help her) She wants/wanted me to help her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>学校要求我们穿校服。</td>
<td>Xuéxiào yǎoqíú wǒmen chuān xiàofú.</td>
<td>(lit. school require us wear school uniform) The school requires us to wear school uniform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>姐姐拉/推我上了车。</td>
<td>Jiějie lā/tuī wǒ shàngle chē.</td>
<td>(lit. elder sister pull/pushed me on to the bus/train) (My) elder sister pulled/pushed me on to the bus/train.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see from these examples that causative verbs themselves do not normally incorporate aspect markers whether they indicate past, progressive, completed or habitual action; but if the second verb in the construction indicates completed action, it can take the aspect marker 了 le.

Note also that in some cases an action verb may be used as either a dative or a causative verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cantonese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他们帮(了)我</td>
<td>Tāmen bāng(le) wǒ hěnduō máng.</td>
<td>(lit. they help (asp) me a lot busy-ness) They gave me a lot of help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我很多忙。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他们帮我办了很多事儿。</td>
<td>Tāmen bāng wǒ bànle hěnduō shìr.</td>
<td>(lit. they help me do asp a lot things) They helped me deal with a lot of things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>老师教(了)我们一首歌。</td>
<td>Lǎoshī jiāo(le) wǒmen yī shōu gē.</td>
<td>(lit. teacher teach (asp) us one mw song) The teacher taught us a song.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.7 Imperatives

Action verbs, dative verbs and causative verbs may also be used in *imperatives*. In these sentences the subject (apart from 咱们 zánmen ‘we’ inclusive or 我们 wǒmen ‘we’) is generally omitted, and the particle 吧 ba is often added at the end to connote suggestion:

- 吃(一)点儿乳酪吧。 *Chī (yī) diǎnr rǔlào ba.* (lit. eat (a) little cheese p) Have a bit of cheese.
- 咱们打(一)场篮球吧。 *Zánmen dǎ (yī) chǎng lánqiú ba.* (action verb) Let’s have a game of basketball.
- 给我一杯桔子水吧。 *Gěi wǒ yī bēi júzishuǐ ba.* (dative verb) Give me a glass of orange juice.
- 送他一瓶酒吧。 *Sòng tā yī píng jiǔ ba.* (dative verb) Give him a bottle of wine/spirits.
- 教我们打太极拳吧。 *Jiāo wǒmen dǎ tàijíquán ba.* (causative verb) Teach us (to do) shadow boxing.
- 提醒他去登记吧。 *Tíxǐng tā qù dēngjī ba.* (causative verb) Remind him to go and register.

Without the particle 吧 ba, imperatives are more like commands:

- 过来! *Guò lái!* (lit. across come) Come (over) here!
- 站起来! *Zhàn qǐ lái!* (lit. stand up-come) Stand up!
- 别撒谎! *Bié sā huǎng!* (lit. don’t tell lie) Don’t lie/tell lies.
- 别乱来! *Bié luànlái!* (lit. don’t confusion come) Don’t do/touch it [because I know you’ll make a mess of it].

Note: For negative commands, see 15.2 (6).
8.7.1 Polite requests

Polite requests may be expressed by using 请 qǐng ‘please’ at the beginning of the imperative with or without the second person pronoun and the particle 吧 ba (see 21.5.1):

请(你)说 请英文(吧). 请跟我来. 请(你)原谅. 请坐!
Qǐng (nǐ) shuō Yīngwén (ba). Qǐng gēn wǒ lái. Qǐng (nǐ) yuányíliàng. Qǐng zuò!
(lit. please (you) speak English (p)) (lit. please follow me come) (lit. please (you) excuse) (lit. please sit)
Please speak English. Please follow me. Please forgive me. Please sit down.

8.7.2 Imperatives and aspect markers

The aspect marker 着 zhe (not 了 le, 过 guo or 在 zài) may be used in imperatives to imply that the action is expected to be continued in some way. In these cases the verb is generally monosyllabic:

(lit. put asp p) (lit. carry asp p) (lit. wait asp) (lit. please wait asp)

9 Motion verbs and direction indicators

9.1 Motion verbs and simple direction indicators

There are a number of common motion verbs in Chinese, which express not only motion but also direction. They may be used transitively or intransitively and they fall naturally into two groups:

(1) The first group consists of the two basic verbs 来 lái ‘come’ and 去 qù ‘go’:

I’ll come. They won’t come. I won’t go. They’ll go.
Verbs

Used transitively, these can take location objects:

她来我这儿。  Tā lái wǒ zhèr.  She’ll come to my place.
我们去北京。  Wǒmen qù Běijīng.  We are going to Beijing.

(2) The second group comprises a number of verbs which regularly precede 来 lái and 去 qù to express movement in particular directions. Linked with 来 lái they indicate movement towards the speaker, and with 去 qù movement away from the speaker:

(a) 上 shàng ‘upwards’:

她上来了。  Tā shàng lái le.  She came up.
他上去了。  Tā shàng qù le.  He went up.

If used transitively, the location object is always placed between the verb and 来 lái or 去 qù:

她上楼来了。  Tā shàng lóu lái le.  She came upstairs.
他上楼去了。  Tā shàng lóu qù le.  He went upstairs.

Note: The particle 了 le which comes at the end of these sentences has the simultaneous functions of aspect marker and sentence particle (see 16.2.2).

(b) 下 xià ‘downwards’:

他们下来了。  Tāmén xià lái le.  They came down.
他们下去了。  Tāmén xià qù le.  They went down.

他们下楼来了。  Tāmén xià lóu lái le.  They came downstairs.
他们下楼去了。  Tāmén xià lóu qù le.  They went downstairs.

(c) 过 guò ‘across or over a distance’:

请过来。  Qǐng guò lái.  Please come over (here).
请过去。  Qǐng guò qù.  Please go over (there).
汽车过桥来了。  Qìchē guò qiáo lái le.  The car has come over the bridge.
The boat has gone across to the other side of the river.

Mother has come back.
Grandfather has gone back.
Father has come home.
The ambassador has gone back to London.
Please come in.
The guest(s) came into the room.
Grandmother has gone to town.
The hostess came out.
The boss has gone out.
My younger brother has got up.
Spring has arrived.

Note: 出 is seldom used transitively with 来 or 去, but there are established phrases such as:

She is away.

Note: 起 Qi does not occur with 去 qù in spoken Chinese. It is also rarely used transitively with an object.
II  
Verbs

校长大到我家来了。  
Xìaozhǎng dào wǒ jiā lái le.  
The headmaster came to my house.

姐姐到剧院去了。  
Jiějie dào jùyuàn qù le.  
(My) elder sister went to the theatre.

Note: 到 Dào is not used with 去 qù on its own, but it can occur with 去 qù with a location object. (See 19.1.1 (2) where 到 dào is classified as a coverb.)

9.2  Motion verbs and compound direction indicators

These motion verbs not only function as independent verbal expressions, but also serve as direction indicators for other action verbs. Again, 来 lái or 去 qù imply motion towards or away from the speaker, and their partner verbs 上 shàng, 下 xià, 过 guò, 回 huí, 进 jǐn, 出 chū and 起 qǐ express more precise directions.

| Gōnggōng qìchē kǎi guólái le. | (lit. public car drive across come p) The bus drove up. |
| Jǐngchá páo guòqù le. | (lit. policeman/policewoman run across go p) The policeman/ policewoman hurried across (away from the speaker). |
| Hǎi’ōu fēi huílái le. | (lit. gull fly back p) The gulls flew back (to where the speaker is). |

If the action verb is used transitively, the object may be placed either after the whole verb phrase or before 来 lái or 去 qù:

| Tāmén dài lái yī bāo yān. | Tāmén dài lái yī bāo yān lái. | They have brought a packet of cigarettes. |
| Tā ná chū lái yī zhī yān. | Tā ná chū yī zhī yān lái. | He took out a cigarette. |

However, if the object is a location, it must go between the first part of the direction indicator and 来 lái or 去 qù:

| Tā páo shàng lóu qù le. | Tā páo shàngqù lóu le. | She ran upstairs. |
Further examples:

(1) intransitive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tàiyáng zhèngzài</td>
<td>The sun is rising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shēng qǐlái.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kèrenmen dōu</td>
<td>The guests all sat down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zuò xiàlái le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yīshēng zǒu</td>
<td>The doctor came over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guòlái le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yùndòngyuán</td>
<td>The athlete ran out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pāo chūlái le.</td>
<td>(towards the speaker).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiǎo māo</td>
<td>The kitten has climbed up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pá shàngqù le.</td>
<td>(away from the speaker).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qīchē kāi</td>
<td>The car has gone past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guòqù le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) transitive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Māma mǎi huí</td>
<td>Mum has bought a fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī tiáo yú lái.</td>
<td>(lit. bought and come back with a fish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yóudiyuán dì guò</td>
<td>The postman handed over a few letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jǐ fēng xìn lái.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bàba tiào xià</td>
<td>Father jumped out of bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chuáng lái.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiējie zǒu jìn</td>
<td>(The) elder sister walked into a shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shāngdiàn qù le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jīnglǐ pǎo huí</td>
<td>The manager has gone (or hurried) back to the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gōngsī qù le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xíngrén héng</td>
<td>The pedestrian has crossed the road (to the other side).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guò mǎlù qù le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hūshi zǒu chū</td>
<td>The nurse came out of the ambulance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiūhúcē lái.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qìqiú pǐāo shàng</td>
<td>The balloon floated up into the sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiānkōng qù le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yéye gǎn huí</td>
<td>Grandfather came hurrying home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiā lái le.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.3 **Motion verbs with metaphorical meaning**

Motion verb expressions may carry meanings beyond simply physical movement. For example:

1. The motion verb 过去 guò qù may indicate the passage of time:
   
   冬天过去了。  
   Dōngtiān guò qù le.  
   Winter has passed.

2. The direction indicators 起来 qǐlái, 下来 xiàlái and 去 xiàqù, which can be used with both state and action verbs, may convey various meanings:
   
   a. 起来 qǐlái (i) mentioning or recollecting something:
      
      她提起这件  
      Tā tí qǐ zhè jiàn shì lái.  
      She brought this matter up.
   
      她想起那件事来。  
      Tā xiǎng qǐ nèi jiàn shì lái.  
      She recalled that incident.
   
   b. 起来 qǐlái (ii) initiating an action or a state:
      
      他唱起来。  
      Tā chàng qǐ gē lái.  
      He started singing.
   
      孩子哭起来了。  
      Háizi kū qǐlái le.  
      The child started to cry.
   
      天气暖和起来了。  
      Tiānqì nuǎnhuò qǐlái le.  
      The weather is getting warmer.
   
   c. 下来 xiàlái gradual diminishing of an action or state:
      
      汽车停下来。  
      Qìchē tíng xiàlái le.  
      The car has gradually come to a stop.
   
      大家都静下来了。  
      Dàjiā dōu jìng xiàlái le.  
      Everybody became quiet.
   
   d. 下去 xiàqù continuation or resumption of an action:
      
      请说下去。  
      Qǐng shuō xiàqù.  
      Please go on (with what you were saying).
   
      坚持下去。  
      Jiānchí xiàqù!  
      Stick it out/keep at it.
9.4 Direction indicators with specific meanings

上 shàng, 下 xià, 出 chū and 过 guò may occur alone with action verbs, i.e. without 来 lái or 去 qù. They then have specific meanings, depending on the verbs they are associated with. Some of the most common usages are:

(1) 上 shàng

(a) putting on the body or the surface of something:

他穿上一件蓝衬衫。
Tā chuān shàng yī jiàn lán chēnshān. He put on a blue shirt/blouse.

老教授戴上他的眼镜。
Lǎo jiàoshòu dài shàng tāde yǎnjīng. The old professor put on his glasses.

她贴上两张邮票。
Tā tiē shàng liǎng zhāng yóupiào. She stuck two stamps on [the envelope].

(b) closing something:

她闭上了眼睛。
Tā bì shàng le yǎnjīng. She closed her eyes.

他关上了窗户。
Tā guān shàng le chuānghu. He closed the window.

(c) implying success:

他考上大学了。
Tā kǎo shàng dàxué le. He has passed the examination for university.

(d) making an addition:

请加上三个。
Qǐng jiā shàng sān gè. Please add three more.

算上我。
Suàn shàng wǒ. Count me in.

(2) 下 xià

(a) removing, detaching:

她脱下毛衣。
Tā tuō xià máoyī. She took off her sweater.

他摘下一朵花儿。
Tā zhāi xià yī duō huār. He plucked a flower.
(b) noting down:

他记下了他这句话。 He made a note of these words.

(3) 出 chū revealing:

他说出这件事。 He revealed this matter.

他想出一个好办法。 He came up with a good plan.

(4) 过 guò doing in excess:

他坐过站。 He went past the stop/station.

10 Verbs and time

10.1 Time expressions

We have seen in Chapter 8 the importance of time expressions in the Chinese sentence, that they provide a time reference or context for the action of the verb, which does not change tense. The following sentences illustrate the point:

我昨天进城去。 I went to town yesterday.

我明天进城去。 I’ll go to town tomorrow.

我常常进城去。 I often go to town.

Because of their significance, time expressions invariably occur in an early position before the verb, often at the beginning of the sentence. In the mind of the Chinese speaker, the time reference has to be made clear before the action is stated. This means that the word order of a Chinese sentence is likely to contrast with its English translation, which will almost certainly have the time reference towards the end of the sentence:

星期四见。 See [you] on Thursday.

我们明天下午去东京。 We are going to Tokyo tomorrow afternoon.
### 10.2 Point of time expressions

Time expressions indicating a point of time for an action can be placed either in front of the subject or after it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>míngnián wǒ shàng Běijīng qù.</td>
<td>míngnián wǒ shàng Běijīng qù.</td>
<td>lit. next-year I up-to Beijing go I am going to Beijing next year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wǒ míngnián shàng Běijīng qù.</td>
<td>wǒ míngnián shàng Běijīng qù.</td>
<td>lit. I next-year up-to Beijing go I am going to Beijing next year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the time expression is more specific, it is likely to come after the subject:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wǒ zǎoshàng qī diǎn (zhōng) qǐ chuāng.</td>
<td>wǒ zǎoshàng qī diǎn (zhōng) qǐ chuāng.</td>
<td>lit. I morning seven hour (clock) get-up bed) I get up at seven in the morning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The following are examples of some of the most common point-of-time expressions, which normally appear before the verb:

#### Year

- 去年 quánían ‘last year’; 今年 jǐnnián ‘this year’; 明年 míngnián ‘next year’;
- 前年 qiánnián ‘the year before last’; 三年前 sān nián qián ‘three years ago’;
- 一年后 yī nián hòu ‘a year later’; 一九九五年 yī jiǔ jiǔ wǔ nián ‘(in) 1995’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wǒ jǐn nián shìjū suì.</td>
<td>wǒ jǐn nián shìjū suì.</td>
<td>I’m nineteen this year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wǒ yé ye sān nián qián qǔ shí le.</td>
<td>wǒ yé ye sān nián qián qǔ shí le.</td>
<td>My grandpa died three years ago.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tā yī jiǔ jiǔ wǔ nián bié.</td>
<td>tā yī jiǔ jiǔ wǔ nián bié.</td>
<td>She graduated in 1995.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Season

- 春天 chūntiān ‘spring’; 夏天 xiàtiān ‘summer’; 秋天 qiūtiān ‘autumn’; 冬天 dōngtiān ‘winter’;
- 去年春天 quánián chūntiān wǒ qù Zhōngguó. | quánián chūntiān wǒ qù Zhōngguó. | I went to China in the spring of last year. |

#### Month

The months in Chinese are formed simply by placing the cardinal numbers one to twelve before 月 yuè ‘month’/月 ‘moon’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wǒ fūmǔ sānyuè lái.</td>
<td>wǒ fūmǔ sānyuè lái.</td>
<td>My parents are coming in March.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For days of the month 号 hào, or more formally 日 rì, follows the number: 十月二号/日 shíyuè èr hào/ rì ‘2nd October’.

他们十月二号
来我家。

Tāmen shíyuè èr hào lái wǒ jiā.

They will come to my place on the second of October.

Other expressions include: 上个月 shàng gè yuè ‘last month’; 这个月 zhèì gè yuè ‘this month’; 下个月 xià gè yuè ‘next month’; 两个月前 liǎng gè yuè qián ‘two months ago’; 三个月后 sān gè yuè hòu ‘three months later/in three months’; 去年一月 qùnián yīyuè ‘in January last year’; 今年二月 zhènǐnián èryuè ‘in February this year’; 明年三月 míngnián sānyuè ‘in March next year’.

我上个月买了一辆新汽车。

Wǒ shàng gè yuè mǎi le yī liàng xīn qìchē.

I bought a new car last month.

他三个月后结婚。

Tā sān gè yuè hòu jiéhūn.

He’s getting married in three months’ time.

我今年二月离开这儿。

Wǒ zhènǐnián èryuè líkāi zhèr.

I’ll leave this place in February this year.

Week

上(个)星期 Shàng (gè) xǐngqī ‘last week’; 这(个)星期 zhèì (gè) xǐngqī ‘this week’; 下(个)星期 xià (gè) xǐngqī ‘next week’; 两个星期前 liǎng (gè) xǐngqī (yī)qián ‘two weeks ago’; 三个星期以后 sān (gè) xǐngqī (yī)hòu ‘three weeks later/in three weeks’.

我们下(个)星期考试。

Wǒmen xià (gè) xǐngqī kǎoshì.

We’ll have an examination next week.

张太太两(个)星期
(以)前来过这儿。

Zhāng tāitài liǎng (gè) xǐngqī (yī)qián láiguó zhèr.

Mrs Zhang was here two weeks ago.

Days

For days of the week apart from Sunday the cardinal numbers one to six are placed after 星期 xǐngqī or 礼拜 lǐbài ‘week’, and for Sunday either 天 tiān or 日 rì is used instead of a number: 星期一 xǐngqī yī ‘Monday’; 星期二 xǐngqī èr ‘Tuesday’; 星期三 xǐngqī sān ‘Wednesday’; 星期四 xǐngqī sì ‘Thursday’; 星期五 xǐngqī wǔ ‘Friday’; 星期六 xǐngqī liù ‘Saturday’; 上(个)星期一 shàng (gè) xǐngqī yī ‘last Monday’ (lit. Monday last week); 这个星期二 zhèì gè xǐngqī è ‘this Tuesday’; 下星期三 xià xǐngqī sān ‘next Wednesday’ (lit. Wednesday next week).

我们星期三开会。

Wǒmen xǐngqī sān kāihuì.

We are holding a meeting on Wednesday.

Other expressions for days include: 昨天 zuòtiān ‘yesterday’; 前天 qián tiān ‘the day before yesterday’; 今天 jīntiān ‘today’; 明天 míngtiān ‘tomorrow’; 后天 hòutiān ‘the day after tomorrow’; 八天(以)前 bā tiān (yī)qián ‘eight days ago’; 九天(以)后 jiù tiān (yī)hòu ‘nine days later/in nine days’.
Verbs and time

Time of day

早上 Zāoshāng ‘(in) the morning’; 上午 shàngwǔ ‘(in) the morning (i.e. forenoon)’; 下午 xiàwǔ ‘(in) the afternoon’; 中午 zhōngwǔ ‘(at) noon’; 晚上 wǎnshāng ‘(in) the evening’; 夜里 yèlǐ ‘(at) night’; 半夜 bànyè ‘midnight/in the middle of the night’.

她前天回家。 Tā qiántiān huíjiā. She came back the day before yesterday.

我后天休息。 Wǒ hòutiān xiūxī. I’ll take a day off the day after tomorrow.

Time of day

两点 Liángdiǎn ‘two o’clock’; 两点半 liángdiǎn bàn ‘half past two’; 两点一刻 liángdiǎn yī kè ‘a quarter past two’; 两点三刻 liángdiǎn sān kè (lit. two hour three quarters) ‘a quarter to three’; 一点零五分 yīdiǎn líng wǔ fēn ‘five minutes past one’; 四点二十五分 sìdiǎn èrshíwǔ fēn ‘twenty-five minutes past four’; 一点差五分 yīdiǎn chà wǔ fēn ‘five minutes to one’; 早上九点 zhāoshāng jiǔdiǎn (zhōng) ‘nine o’clock in the morning’.

两点半下班。 Wǒ liángdiǎn bàn xiàbān. I came off work at half past two.

他们有一点差五分钟吃午饭。 Tāmen yīdiǎn chà wǔfēn chīwǔfàn. They have lunch at five to one.

我们早上九点(钟)出发。 Wǒmen zhāoshāng jiǔ diǎn (zhōng) chūfā. We’ll set out at nine in the morning.

General

上(一次) Shàng (yī) ‘last time’; 下(一次) xià (yī) ‘next time’; (在)四点与四点半之间 (zài) sìdiǎn yǐ sìdiǎn bàn zhījiān ‘between four and four thirty’; (在)假期里 (zài) jiàqī lǐ ‘during the holidays’; 周末 zhōumò ‘(over) the weekend’; 四天内 sītiān nèi ‘within four days’.

我下次来看你。 Wǒ xiàcì zài lái kàn nǐ. I’ll come and see you again next time.

假期里我去旅行。 Jiàqī lǐ wǒ qù lǚxíng. I went travelling during the holidays.

10.2.1 Detailed time expressions

In detailed time expressions giving years, months, dates, etc., the larger always precede the smaller. For example, 2.35 p.m. on 31 August, 1995 is:
10.3  Point-of-time expressions incorporating verbal phrases

More complex point-of-time expressions in the form of verb phrases also go before the main verb. In these phrases the verb is followed by ... 的时候 ... de shì(hou) or shí ‘when/while’, 以后 yǐhòu or 之后 zhīhòu ‘after’, or 以前 yǐqián or 之前 zhīqián ‘before’:

- 我们上课 (的)时(候),  Wǒmen shàngkè (de) shì(hou), (lit. we have-class p time, teacher say) When we were in class, the teacher said . . .
- 老师说 ... lǎoshì shuō . . .
- 我下了班 yǐhòu jiù qù 后就去踢足球了 tī zúqíú le. (lit. I finish asp work-shift after immediately go kick football p) After I came off work, I went to play football.
- 回家以前 Huí jiā yǐqián tā lái zhǎo wǒ. (lit. return home before she come look-for me) Before she went home, she came to see me.

The last two examples illustrate that if the time phrase and the main verb have the same subject, the subject may go before either verb.

Note 1: The adverb 就 jiù ‘then’ is regularly found in the second clause of such sentences. It is placed immediately before the verb (and after the subject, if there is one). (See Chapter 24.)

Note 2: These time expressions may be preceded by the preposition 在 zài ‘in/during’. Expressions with (的)时(候) (de) shì(hou) may also be linked with the preposition 当 dāng ‘when’ if a subject is present:

- 在洗澡以前 zài xǐzāo yǐqián before having a bath
- 当我起床(的)时(候) dāng wǒ qǐchuáng (de) shì(hou) while I was getting up
- NOT: 当起床(的)时(候) dāng qǐchuáng (de) shī(hou)
Note 3: Other complex point-of-time expressions are:

在中国逗留期间 zài Zhōngguó dōuliú qījiān  while staying in China
在英国访问期间 zài Yīngguó fǎngwèn qījiān  while visiting England
我在在中国逗留期间病了。Wǒ zài Zhōngguó dōuliú qījiān bìng le.  I fell ill during my stay in China.

10.4 Imprecise points of time

Adverbs expressing imprecise points of time are generally placed after the subject:

他已经毕业了。 Tā yǐjīng biè le.  He has already graduated.
救火车立刻 dào le.  The fire engine arrived at once.
她先喝汤。 Tā xiān hē tāng.  She drank the soup first.

One cannot say:

*已经他毕业了。 Yǐjīng tā biè le.
*立刻救火车到了。 Lìkè jiùhuōchē dào le.

Note 1: Common adverbs of this kind include: 马上 mǎshàng ‘immediately’;
常常 chángcháng ‘often’; 总/老 zǒng/lǎo ‘always’; 从(来)不 còng(lái) bù ‘never’;
一直(都) yízhí (dōu) ‘all along’.

我马上就来。 Wǒ mǎshàng jiù lái.  I’ll be with you immediately.
他老提起 zhéi huí shì.  He’s always bringing up this matter.
我从来不抽烟。 Wǒ cónglái bù chōuyān.  I have never smoked.
他一直都 zài bāngzhù wǒ.  He’s been helping me all along.

Note 2: There are however some adverbs which can occur both before and after the subject: 将来/以后 jiànglái/yǐhòu ‘in future’; 现在 xiànzǎi ‘now’; 过去 guòqù ‘in the past’; 起初 qǐchū ‘at first’; 首先 shǒuxiǎn ‘first of all’; 以前 yǐqìán ‘formerly’; 后来 hòulái ‘later/afterwards’; 接着 jiēzhe ‘next’; 最后 zuǐhòu ‘finally/ in the end’; 最近 zuǐjìn ‘lately’; 近来 jìn lái ‘recently/lately’.

我现在去银行。 Wǒ xiànzǎi qù yínháng.  I’m going to the bank now.
起初我不相信他。 Qǐchū wǒ bù xiǎngxìn tā.  At first I didn’t believe him.
Verbs

I went to Australia later on.

She finally agreed [to it].

How have you been lately?

10.5 *Indefinite points of time*

Phrases indicating *indefinite points of time* (often with 有 yǒu) are invariably placed at the beginning of a sentence, as they set the time for a narrative:

One day I went to his place.

One year that place had a heavy snowfall.

Note: Many expressions of this type can be formulated. For example, (有)一个星期天 (yǒu) yī gè xīngqī tiān ‘one Sunday’; (有)一个星期天晚上 (yǒu) yī gè xīngqī tiān wǎnshāng ‘one Sunday evening’.

One Sunday we went mountain-climbing.

10.6 *Frequency expressions with 每 měi*

Frequency expressions with 每 měi ‘every’ may be placed before or after the subject. They are usually followed by the adverb 都 dōu ‘all’:

I do physical exercises/I work out every day.

He replies immediately to letters every time.

I go shopping in the market every Saturday morning.
10.7 Time expressions in existence sentences

Time expressions may also introduce existence sentences with 有 yǒu ‘there is/are’ in the pattern: time expression + 有 yǒu + (qualifier) + noun. In contrast, parallel English sentences usually begin with ‘there is/are’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Expression</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>今(天)晚(上)</td>
<td>(lit. today evening)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有一个音乐会。</td>
<td>There will be a concert this evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下星期六也有篮球/羽毛球比赛吗？</td>
<td>Is there a basketball/badminton match next Saturday?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>明天没有(有)公共汽车到城里去。</td>
<td>(lit. tomorrow there-isn’t public car to town) There aren’t any buses to town tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For similar use of location phrases, see 11.5.

10.7.1 Time expressions in emergence or disappearance sentences

Time expressions can also introduce emergence or disappearance sentences in which the verb is marked by the aspect marker 了 le:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Expression</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>刚刚走了一辆火车。</td>
<td>(lit. just-now leave asp one mw train) A train left just now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>马上来了 一辆救护车。</td>
<td>(lit. immediately come asp one mw ambulance) An ambulance arrived immediately.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Location phrases occur in a similar construction. See 11.6.

11 Verbs and location

11.1 Location expressions

Like the time expressions described in Chapter 10, location phrases, which identify the locus of an action or event, always precede the verb. Place and time have to be made clear before the verb is expressed to establish the context for the action.
They are working in Xi'an.

Please wait for me here.

Where a location phrase and a time phrase are both present, the time phrase normally precedes the location phrase; it may come right at the beginning of the sentence, that is, before the subject:

They yesterday at library study) They were studying at the library yesterday.

Last year I was doing business in Hong Kong.

As illustrated in the above examples, location phrases may take the form of zài ‘in, at’ with a simple location pronoun (这儿 zhèr ‘here’, 那儿 nàr ‘there’ or 哪儿 nàr ‘where’) or with a place name or location noun (西安 Xiān, 香港 Xiānggǎng ‘Hong Kong’, 图书馆 tǔshūguǎn ‘library’).

### 11.2 Zài and postpositional phrases

Another, perhaps more common form of location phrase uses 在 zài with what we will call a postpositional phrase, which consists of a noun followed by a postposition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postposition</th>
<th>Postpositional phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>里  li</td>
<td>in(side)  屋子里 wūzi lǐ    in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>外  wài</td>
<td>out(side) 城外 chéng wài  outside the town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>上  shang</td>
<td>on, above, over 桌子上 zhuōzi shang on the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下  xià</td>
<td>under, below 树下 shù xià  under the tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>前  qián</td>
<td>in front of  门前 mén qián  in front of the door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postposition</td>
<td>Postpositional phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>后 hòu</td>
<td>at the back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of/behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>边/旁边 biān/</td>
<td>by the side of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pángbiān</td>
<td>路边 lù biān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by the side of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中/中间 zhōng/</td>
<td>in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōngjiān</td>
<td>大厅 dàtīng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>中间 zhōngjiān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>对面 duìmìàn</td>
<td>opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>学校 xuéxiào</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>对面 duìmìàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>opposite the hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那儿/这儿 nàr/</td>
<td>At a place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhèr</td>
<td>律师 lǜshī nàr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(where sb or sth is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>那儿 zhèr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at the lawyer’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Other postpositions include: 底下 dīxià ‘underneath’, 之间 zhījiān ‘between’, ‘among’, 四周 sìzhōu ‘around’, 附近 fùjīn ‘nearby’, 隔壁 gébì ‘next door to’, etc.

Note 2: Inevitably there are some idiomatic differences between Chinese postpositions and English prepositions, e.g. 钥匙在门上 yàoshì zài mén shang (lit. key be-at door-on) ‘the key is in the door’; 报上 bào shàng (lit. newspaper-on) ‘in the newspaper’; 太阳下散步 tài yáng xià sànbù (lit. sun under stroll) ‘stroll in the sun’.

### 11.2.1 Disyllabic postpositions

里 Li, 外 wài, 上 shàng, 下 xià, 前 qián and 后 hòu take the suffixes -面 -miàn/-mian, -边 -biān/-bian or more colloquially -头 -tou to form disyllabic postpositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-面 -miàn/-mian</th>
<th>-边 -bian</th>
<th>-头 -tou</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>里面 lǐmiàn</td>
<td>里边 lǐbiān</td>
<td>里头 lǐtōu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>外面 wàimiàn</td>
<td>外边 wàibiān</td>
<td>外头 wàitōu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>上面 shàngmiàn</td>
<td>上边 shàngbiān</td>
<td>上头 shàngtōu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下面 xiàmiàn</td>
<td>下边 xiàibiān</td>
<td>下头 xiàtōu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>前面 qiánmiàn</td>
<td>前边 qiánbiān</td>
<td>前头 qiántōu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>后面 hòumiàn</td>
<td>后边 hòubiān</td>
<td>后头 hòutōu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Other disyllabic postpositions with -面 -miàn or -边 -bian are:
Verbs

左面/左边 zuǒmiàn/zuōbian to the left (of)
右面/右边 yòumiàn/yòubian to the right (of)
东面/东边 dōngmiàn/dōngbian to the east (of)
南面/南边 nánmiàn/nánbian to the south (of)
西面/西边 xīmiàn/xībian to the west (of)
北面/北边 běimiàn/bèibian to the north (of)

Such disyllabic postpositions usually follow disyllabic nouns to maintain a matching rhythm:

窗户前面/前边 chuānghu qiánmiàn/ qiánbian in front of the window
大门后面/后边 dàmén hòumíàn/ hòubian behind the door/gate
马路旁边 mǎlù pángbiān by the side of the road
花园中间 huāyuán zhōngjiān in the middle of the garden

There is also a tendency to match monosyllabic elements, and the above examples could be reformulated as:

窗前 chuāng qián
门后 mén hòu
路旁/路边 lù páng (written)/lù bian (colloq.)
园中 yuán zhōng (written)

The general rule to remember is that a disyllabic noun can be followed by either a disyllabic or monosyllabic postposition whereas a monosyllabic noun is only followed by a monosyllabic postposition, e.g.:

朋友之间/朋友间 péngyou zhījiān/ péngyou jiān amongst/between friends
海滩上面/海滩上 hǎitān shàngmiàn/ hǎitān shàng on the beach
屋子里里面/屋子里/屋里/*屋里面 wūzi lǐmiàn/wūzi lǐ/ wūlǐ/wū lǐmiàn in the room
大海上面/大海上/海上/*海上 dáhǎi shàngmiàn/ dáhǎi shàng/hǎi shàng/ hǎi shàngmiàn on the sea
11.2.2 Disyllabic postpositions as location pronouns

Disyllabic postpositions can also act as location pronouns and form location phrases with 在 zài:

在后边         zài hòubian  at the back
在里头          zài lǐtou    inside
在上面          zài shàngmian on top

11.3 Simple location sentences

Simple location sentences are formed by using the verb 在 zài ‘to be in/at’ followed by a location noun or pronoun, or a postpositional phrase:

厕所 在二楼。 Cèsuǒ zài èr lóu.  The toilet is on the first floor.
你的座位在 第三排。 Nǐ de zuòwèi zài dì sān pái. Your seat is in the third row.
最近的邮筒 在哪儿？ Zuì jìn de yóutǒng zài nǎr?  Where is the nearest pillar-box?
孩子都在 外头。 Háizi dōu zài wàitou.  The children are all outside.
书房在中间。 Shūfáng zài zhōngjiān.  The study is in the middle.
她在花园里。 Tá zài huāyuán lǐ.  She is in the garden.
书在书架上。 Shū zài shūjià shàng.  The book is on the bookshelf.
我家在海德 公园附近。 Wǒ jiā zài Hǎidé gōngyuán fùjīn. My home is near Hyde Park.

Postpositions should not be attached to place names:

她在中国。 Tá zài Zhōngguó.  She is in China.
NOT: *她在中国里。 Tá zài Zhōngguó lǐ.
我朋友在北京。 Wǒ péngyou zài Běijīng.  My friend is in Beijing.
NOT: *我朋友在北京里。 Wǒ péngyou zài Běijīng lǐ.

With nouns indicating location, rather than objects, the postposition 里 lǐ ‘in’ is optional:
Note: It must be made clear that 在 has two functions: (1) location verb ‘to be in/at’ and (2) a location preposition (coverb) ‘in’/‘at’ (see 11.4 below).

**11.4 Location phrases modifying main verbs**

As illustrated by the first set of simple sentences in 11.1, in a location phrase used adverbially to modify the main verb of the sentence, 在 functions as a preposition (or coverb) meaning ‘in’ or ‘at’. (For further discussion of 在 and other similar prepositions, see Chapter 19 on coverbs.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Sentence</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他在花园里割草。</td>
<td>Tā zài huāyuán lǐ gē cǎo.</td>
<td>He is cutting the grass in the garden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们在海滩上晒太阳。</td>
<td>Wǒmen zài hǎitān shàng shài tàiyáng.</td>
<td>We were sunbathing on the beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他们在客厅里听音乐。</td>
<td>Tāmen zài kětīng lǐ tīng yǐnyuè.</td>
<td>They were listening to music in the lounge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>妈妈在市场上买菜。</td>
<td>Māmā zài shìchǎng mǎi cài.</td>
<td>Mum is buying food at the market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你在大学学什么科目？</td>
<td>Nǐ zài dàxué xué shénme kēmù？</td>
<td>What subject are you studying at the university?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我在银行开了一个账户。</td>
<td>Wǒ zài yínháng kāi le yī gè zhànghù.</td>
<td>I have opened an account at the bank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>姐姐在外面晾衣服。</td>
<td>Jiějie zài wàimian liàng yīfu.</td>
<td>My elder sister was hanging out clothes to dry (outside).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她在草地上躺着。</td>
<td>Tā zài cǎodi shàng tǎngzhe.</td>
<td>She was lying on the grass.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the last example, 躺 tǎng must have the aspect marker 着 zhe (which almost functions as a rhythm filler), since the verb that comes at the end of a statement must have more than one syllable:
11.5 Location phrases in existence sentences

Sentences expressing the existence of someone or something in a particular locality usually have a phrase indicating location plus the verb 有 ‘there is/are’ as follows: phrase indicating location + 有 yǒu + (qualifier) + noun(s).

This construction is similar to the time expression existence sentences discussed in 10.7. Again, there is a contrast with English in which parallel sentences usually begin with ‘There is/are . . .’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>镜子旁边有一盆花儿。</td>
<td>Mirror beside have one pot flower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>松树底下有一只兔子。</td>
<td>Pine-tree under there-is one hare [or rabbit].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>舞台上只有两个演员。</td>
<td>Stage on only there-are two actors on the stage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The verb 住 zhù ‘live/lodge’ is the main exception to this rule.

However, when the location phrase with 在 zài comes at the end of the sentence, the structure is only acceptable with verbs like 躺 tāng ‘lie’, 坐 zuò ‘sit’, 站 zhàn ‘stand’, 蹲 dūn ‘crouch’, 停 tíng ‘stop/park/alight’ 降落 jiàngluò ‘land/descend’, etc., where the action terminates on arrival at the location. (For more about 在 zài phrases see 13.5):
Verbs

 Zhèr fùjìn yǒu xīyīdiàn ma? (lit. here nearby there-is laundry p) Is there a laundry near here?

 Nǎr yǒu cèsuǒ? (lit. where there-is toilet) Where is there a toilet?

 Libian yǒu rén. (lit. inside there-are people) There is somebody inside.

Note: We have already pointed out (see Chapter 1) that the subject of a verb tends to be of definite reference. The last two examples could therefore be rephrased as:

 Cèsuǒ zài nǎr? Where is the toilet?

 Rén zài libian. The person/people (or, colloquially, ‘s/he’/‘they’) is/are inside.

As illustrated by the above examples, the noun following 有 yǒu is always of indefinite reference. It would not be natural to say:

 * Dòngwūyuán lǐ yǒu nèi tóu xióngmāo. (lit. zoo in there-is that mw panda) There is that panda in the zoo.

11.5.1 Shì in existence sentences

The verb 是 shì may also be used in existence sentences which start with a phrase indicating location. The function of 是 shì in these sentences is more complex than that of 有 yǒu. When the emphasis is on ‘defining’ what exists at a location, 是 shì is followed by a noun of indefinite reference:

 Jùchǎng gébi shì yī gè zhǎnlǐnguǎn. (lit. theatre next-door be one mw exhibition-hall) Next door to the theatre is an exhibition hall.

When the emphasis is on ‘locating’ where something is, the noun after 是 shì is of definite reference:

 Kètīng duimiàn shì wòshì. (lit. guest-hall opposite be bedroom) Opposite the sitting-room is the bedroom.

Note: See also the last note under 6.4.
Shì can also be modified by 都 dōu or 全 quán ‘all’ to mean that a location is filled or covered with identified objects or people:

冰箱里边 都是水果。（lit. ice-box inside all be fruit) Inside the fridge there was nothing but fruit.

地上 全是水。（lit. floor/ground on all be water) There is water all over the floor/ground.

11.5.2 Zhe in existence sentences

Like 有 yǒu and 是 shì, action verbs suffixed with the aspect marker 着 zhe may be used in location-related existence sentences. As in 8.3.4, these verbs indicate a ‘state resulting from an action’:

墙上挂着 一幅画。 Qiáng shang guàzhe yī fú huà. (lit. wall on hang asp one mw painting) There is a painting hanging on the wall.

桌子上 放着两 杯茶。 Zhuōzi shang fàngzhe liǎng bēi chá. (lit. table on put asp two mw:cup tea) There are two cups of tea (placed) on the table.

房子里 住着不 少人。 Fángzi lǐ zhùzhe bù shǎo rén. (lit. house in live asp not few person) There are quite a lot of people living in the house.

院门口 处站着 一队人。 Xiànyuàn rén kǒuchù páizhe yī duì rén. (lit. theatre entrance queue asp one mw:queue people) There was a line of people queuing at the entrance to the theatre.

Note: Some nouns (e.g. 入口处 rùkǒuchù ‘entrance’) which themselves indicate some form of location are commonly used without a postposition.

If the action verb denotes persistent activity, (正)在 (zhèng)zài is used instead of 着 zhe:

体育馆里 (正)在进行 体操比赛。 Tiyùguān lǐ (zhèng)zài jīnxíng tǐcāo bǐsài. (lit. gymnasium in (just) asp: in-the-process-of conduct gymnastics competition) A gymnastics contest is going on in the gymnasium.

广场上 (正)在举办 工艺品 展览。 Guǎngchǎng shàng (zhèng)zài jǔbàn gōngyìpǐn zhǎnliăn. (lit. square on (just) asp: in-the-process-of hold handicraft exhibition) A handicraft exhibition is being held in the square.
11.6 Le in emergence or disappearance sentences

In the same way, a phrase indicating location may be followed by a verb with the aspect marker 了 le to express the emergence or disappearance of something or somebody at or from that location. The pattern is: phrase indicating location + action verb + 了 le + (qualifier) + noun(s).

For example:

我家来了  
很多客人。  

Wǒ jiā láile  
hěn duō kèrén.  

(lib. my house come asp very many guest) Many guests came to/turned up at my place.

图书馆丢了不少书。  

Túshūguǎn diūle bù shàò shū.  

(lib. library lost asp not few book) The library has lost quite a few books.

Note: Compare the similar structure for time expressions (10.7.1).

11.7 Order of sequence of time and location phrases

Where a location phrase and a time phrase occur in an existence or an emergence/disappearance sentence, either phrase may come first. (This differs from the adverbial use of location and time phrases, discussed in 11.1 in which the time expression must come first.) For instance:

昨天晚上  
城里有一个示威游行。  

Zuótiān wànshāng chéng li yǒu yī gè shìwéi yóuxíng.  

(lib. yesterday evening town-in there-was one mw demonstration parade) There was a demonstration in (the) town yesterday evening.

or, 城里  
昨天晚上  
有一个示威游行。  

Chéng li zuótiān wànshāng yǒu yī gè shìwéi yóuxíng.  

(lib. town in yesterday evening there-was one mw demonstration parade) There was a demonstration in (the) town yesterday evening.

12 Verbs: duration and frequency

12.1 Duration expressions

Unlike defined point-of-time expressions, duration and frequency expressions usually come after the verb. As observed above, in a Chinese sentence, setting in time and space is established before the action of the verb is expressed; duration and frequency on the other hand, as
consequences of the verb, are delineated after the action of the verb has been described.

*Duration* expressions naturally take the form of a numeral followed by a time word. In some cases the time word requires a measure (e.g. 月 yuè ‘month’, 钟头 zhōngtóu ‘hour’, 礼拜 lǐbài ‘week’, which take 个 gé). In other cases the time word is itself a measure word, and numerals may therefore be placed immediately before it (e.g. 一年 yī nián ‘one year’, 四天 sì tiān ‘four days’). With 小时 xiǎoshí ‘hour’ and 星期 xīngqī ‘week’ the measure 个 gé is optional. Another more general duration expression is 很久/hěn cháng shíjiān ‘a long time’.

Note: Since numerals up to twelve are used with 月 yuè to denote the calendar months (see Chapter 10 above), care must be taken to distinguish, for example 三月 sān yuè ‘March’ and 三个月 sān gè yuè ‘three months’.

### 12.1.1 Duration expressions and noun objects

If the verb in the sentence has a noun object as well as a duration phrase, the duration phrase is placed between the verb and the noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I lived in Britain for two years.</td>
<td>我在英国住了两年. Wǒ zài Yīngguó zhùliǎng nián. (lit. I at Britain live asp two year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am preparing/intend to stay in Britain for six months.</td>
<td>我准备在英国呆/待六个月. Wǒ zhǔnbèi zài Yīngguó dāi liù gè yuè. (lit. I prepare at Britain stay six mw month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I slept for eight hours.</td>
<td>我睡了八个小时/钟头. Wǒ shuìle bā gè xiǎoshí/zhōngtóu. (lit. I sleep asp eight mw hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We talked for a long time.</td>
<td>我们谈了很久. Wǒmen tánle hěn jiǔ. (lit. we talk asp very long)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The duration phrase may also be regarded as attributive and used with or without 的 de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I studied Chinese for more than four months (at one stage).</td>
<td>我学过四个多月中文. Wǒ xuéguò sì gè duō yuè Zhōngwén. (lit. I study asp four mw more month Chinese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I played badminton for half an hour.</td>
<td>我打了半个钟头羽毛球. Wǒ dǎle bàn gè zhōngtóu yǒu máoqiú. (lit. I hit asp half mw hour badminton)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II
Verbs

我学过四个
多月的中文。

Wǒ xuéguò
sì gè duō yuè de
Zhōngwén.
(lit. I study asp four mw month
p Chinese) I studied Chinese for
four months (at one stage).

我明天下午
要讲两个钟
头的课。

Wǒ míngtiān
xiàwǔ yào
jiǎng liǎng gè
zhōngtóu de kè.
(lit. I tomorrow afternoon will
talk two mw hour p lesson) I am
going to lecture for two hours
tomorrow afternoon.

This is the case whether the sentence is a simple or causative
construction:

钢琴老师
要求我每天
练三个小时
(的)琴。

Gāngqín lǎoshī
yāoqǐ wǒ
měitiān liàn
sān gè xiǎoshi
(de) qín.
(lit. piano teacher require me every
day practise three mw hour de piano)
The piano teacher told me to practise
the piano three hours a day.

法官判
小偷坐
一年牢。

Fāguān pān
xiǎotōu zuò
yī nián láo.
(lit. judge sentence thief sit one year
prison) The judge sentenced the
thief to one year in prison.

12.1.2 Repetition of the verb in a noun-object-duration structure

An alternative pattern when a noun object is present is to repeat the verb
after the object and then place the duration phrase after the repeated verb:

我学中文
学了四年。

Wǒ xué
Zhōngwén
xuéle sì nián.
(lit. I study Chinese study asp
four year) I studied Chinese
for four years.

他们聊天
聊了一个
晚上。

Tāmen liáotiān
liáole yī gè
wánshāng.
(lit. they chat chat asp one
mw evening) They chatted
the whole evening.

In this construction the repeated verb is usually one of completed action
with aspect marker 了 le.

12.1.3 Duration expressions and pronoun objects

When there is a pronoun object, the duration phrase always follows the
pronoun:

我等了他半
个多钟头。

Wǒ děngle
tā bàn gè duō
zhōngtóu.
(lit. I wait asp him half mw
more hour) I waited for him
for over half an hour.
12.1.4 Duration expressions in dative construction

In a dative construction, where both direct and indirect objects are present, the duration phrase comes after the indirect object and precedes the direct object as an attributive (see 12.1.1):

- 老师教了我两个小时的中文。 Lǎoshī jiāo le wǒ liǎng gè xiǎoshí (de) zhōngwén. (lit. teacher teach asp me two mw hour de Chinese) The teacher taught me two hours of Chinese.
- 她欠了银行半年的债。 Tā qiàn le yínháng bàn nián (de) zhài. (lit. she owe asp bank half year de debt) She was in debt to the bank for six months.

12.1.5 Duration expressions and definite reference

If the duration expression alludes to a period of time in the past within which something has or has not happened, it then takes on definite reference and is placed, like other time expressions, before the verb. Duration expressions of this type are often followed by 内/内 nei/nèi ‘within (the last) . . .’ or 以来 (yǐ)lái ‘since . . .’:

- 我三个月内/内看了五次电影。 Wǒ sān gè yuè nèi/lǐ kànle wǔ cì diànyǐng. (lit. I three mw month within see asp five times film) I have been to the cinema five times in the past three months.
- 我半年没去看电影了。 Wǒ bàn nián méi qù kàn diànyǐng le. (lit. I half year not go see film p) I have not been to see a film for the last six months.
- 我一年以来都在实验室工作。 Wǒ yī nián yǐ/lái dōu zài shíyánsì shì gōngzuò. (lit. I one year so-far all at laboratory work) I have been working in the laboratory for the whole of the past year.
- 我圣诞节以来都没上过班。 Wǒ Shèngdànjié yǐ/lái dōu méi shàngguō bān. (lit. I Christmas so-far all not go-on asp shift) I have not been back to work ever since Christmas.
- 我这三年来都没见过我的表弟。 Wǒ zhèi sān nián lái dōu méi wòde biǎo dì. (lit. I this three year within all not see asp my cousin) I haven’t seen my cousin for the last three years.

Note: In Chinese, terms for cousins, like other family relationships, are very precise. On the mother’s side they are 表哥 biǎo gē, 表弟 biǎo dì, 表姐 biǎo jiě, 表妹 biǎo mèi, and on the father’s side 堂哥 táng gē, 堂弟 táng dì, etc.
12.2 Brief duration

Brief duration can be conveyed by repeating the verb, sometimes after 一 yī ‘one’, or by using phrases like 一下 yī xià ‘a moment’ or 一会儿 yī huìr ‘a short while’ after the verb:

(1) Repetition of verbs:

(a) Monosyllabic verbs:

看看 kānkàn have a look

看一看 kàn yī kàn have a look

看了看 kānle kàn had a look

(b) Disyllabic verbs (cannot be used with 一 yī or 了 le):

介绍介绍 jièshào jièshào give a brief introduction

NOT:

*介绍一介绍 jièshào yī jièshào give a brief introduction

*介绍了介绍 jièshàole jièshào gave a brief introduction

(c) Verb object constructions (only the verb is repeated):

洗手 xǐ shǒu wash hands

洗一洗手 xǐ (yī) xǐ shǒu wash one’s hands

扫地 sǎo di sweep the floor

扫了扫地 sǎole sǎo di swept the floor (briefly)

NOT: *洗手洗手 xǐ shǒu xǐ shǒu

or *扫地扫地 sǎo di sǎo di

(2) With 一下 yī xià or 一会儿 yī huìr:

让我看一下。 Ràng wǒ kàn yī xià. Let me have a look.

咱们休息一会儿。 Zànmen xiūxi yī huìr. We’ll rest for a while.

Where the verb has an object, brief duration phrases, like other duration phrases, come before the object:

我们跳了一下舞。 Wǒmen tiàole yī xià wǔ. We danced for a while.

我看了一会儿书。 Wǒ kànle yī huìr shū. I read for a while.
12.2.1 Brief duration and instrumental objects

Brief duration may also be expressed by employing an instrumental object, often part of the body, which follows the indirect object in a dative construction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他打了一拳。</td>
<td>Tā dǎle wǒ yī quán.</td>
<td>He hit asp me one fist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我踢了他一脚。</td>
<td>Wǒ tíle tā yī jiǎo.</td>
<td>I kick asp him one foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>教练看了大家一眼。</td>
<td>Jiàoliàn kànle dàjiā yī yǎn.</td>
<td>The coach cast a glance at everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们见过一面。</td>
<td>Wǒmen jiànguo yī miàn.</td>
<td>We met once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The last example may be reformulated as a dative construction: 我见过他一面。Wǒ jiànguo tā yī miàn. ‘I met him once.’

12.3 Frequency expressions

Frequency phrases, like duration phrases, come after the verb. They consist of a numeral combined with one of a number of common frequency measure words such as 次 cì, 遍 biàn, 回 huí and 趟 tàng. While 次 cì simply indicates an occurrence, 遍 biàn implies ‘from beginning to end’, 回 huí ‘to and fro’, and 趟 tàng ‘back and forth from a place’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他们来过三次。</td>
<td>Tāmen láiguo sān cì.</td>
<td>They’ve come/been here three times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我念了一遍。</td>
<td>Wǒ niànlé yī biàn.</td>
<td>I read [it] through once (from beginning to end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们见过她两回。</td>
<td>Wǒmen jiànguo tā liǎng huí.</td>
<td>We have met him/her twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我去过几次。</td>
<td>Wǒ quéguo jǐ tàng.</td>
<td>I have been [there] several times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the verb has a noun object, the frequency phrase is generally placed between the verb and the object:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我看过两次歌剧。</td>
<td>Wǒ kànguò liǎng cì gējù.</td>
<td>I have been twice to see an opera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他坐过三趟飞机。</td>
<td>Tā zuòguò sān tàng fēijī.</td>
<td>He has been on a plane three times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If the object is a location phrase, however, the frequency phrase may be placed either between the verb and the location object or after the location object:

I went to Beijing twice.

She has been to my place once.

As with duration phrases, if the object is a pronoun, the frequency phrase is placed after the pronoun:

I looked for/visited him once.

The above-mentioned rules regarding the position of the frequency phrase in relation to noun or pronoun objects always apply whatever the construction:

She helped me once.

My sister-in-law persuaded me to at least go and see him once.

As we have seen, Chinese verbs are seldom used without some form of marker or attachment. They are regularly modified (e.g. by time and location expressions) or complemented in some way. Complements in Chinese are those elements of a sentence which come after the verb (apart from the object) and which either describe the action of the verb or express its result.
A number of complements which occur with action verbs have already been encountered, for example, aspect markers, direction indicators and duration/frequency markers. Here we introduce a further range of complements, those indicating result, potential, manner, location/destination and degree.

### 13.2 Complements of result

**Complements of result** are adjectives or verbs which follow immediately after the main verb. They indicate the direct result of an action, either what it achieves or what happens unintentionally. For example, the verb complement 见 jiàn ‘to see’ implies successful seeing or apprehension, as in 看见 kàn jiàn ‘to see’ (lit. look-see) and 听见 tīng jiàn ‘to hear’ (lit. listen-apprehend), while the adjective complement 错 cuò ‘wrong’ indicates a mistaken result, as in 听错 tīng cuò ‘to mishear’ (lit. listen-wrong) and 看错 kàn cuò ‘to misread’ (lit. look-wrong). Although most complements of result are monosyllabic, some of the adjectival ones are disyllabic (e.g. 清楚 qīngchú ‘clear’, 干净 gānjìng ‘clean’, etc.).

1. **Adjectives:**
   - 你猜错了。 Nǐ cāi cuò le. (lit. you guess wrong p) You have guessed wrong.
   - 他修好了那辆摩托车。 Tā xiū hǎo le nèi liàng mótuōché. (lit. He repair good asp that mw motorbike) He has repaired that motorbike.
   - 他弄脏了她的裙子。 Tā nòng zāng le tāde qúnzi. (lit. He make dirty asp her skirt) He has dirtied her skirt.
   - 他没听清楚我的话。 Tā méi tīng qīngchū wǒde huà. (lit. He not listen clear my words) He didn’t hear clearly what I said.

2. **Verbs:**
   - 我已经做完了我的作业。 Wǒ yǐjīng zuò wán le wǒde zuòyè. (lit. I already do finish asp my homework/coursework) I have already done my homework.
   - 你听懂了吗？ Nǐ tīng dǒng le ma? (lit. you listen understand asp p) Did you understand (what was said)?
Many verb-and-complement expressions in fact are established terms in the language:

人民的生活水平提高了。
(Rénmín de shēnghuó shuǐpíng tígāo le.) The people’s living standards have improved.

他打断了我的发言。
(Tā dāduàn le wǒde fāyán.) (lit. He hit-broken-in-two asp my speech) He interrupted my speech.

Note: The most common complements of result, apart from the above, are:

(a) **Adjectives**

| 坏 huài | bad | 这个孩子弄坏了我的电脑。Zhègè háizi nòng huài le wǒde diànhuà. |
| 对 dui | right | 你猜对了。Nǐ cāi dui le. You guessed right. |
| 饱 bāo | full (with eating) | 我吃饱了。Wǒ chī bāo le. I have eaten my fill/I’m full. |
| 醉 zuì | drunk | 我的朋友喝醉了。Wǒde péngyou hē zuì le. My friend is/was drunk. |

(b) **Verbs**

| 破 pó | break | 我打破了眼镜。Wǒ dǎ pó le yǎnjīng. I broke my glasses. |
| 到 dào | attain, achieve | 她找到了她的钱包。Tā zhǎo dào le tāde qiánbāo. She’s found her purse/wallet. |
### 13.3 Potential complements

Ability or inability to do something is regularly expressed by a *potential complement*. This is formed by placing 得 de (positive) or 不 bù (negative) between a verb and a complement of result. The potential complement, which is a distinctive feature of Chinese, implies that the result of the action can (or cannot) be achieved or happen, that is that the outcome is to some extent dependent on external circumstances beyond the speaker’s control. (This contrasts with the use of the modal verb 能(够) néng(gòu) ‘can’, see 15.2 (5).)

1. **Adjectival potential complements:**
   - 他吃不饱。 Tā chī bù bǎo. (lit. He eat not full) He couldn’t eat his fill. (i.e. there wasn’t enough food to go round, he is such a big eater, etc.)
   - 你站得稳吗？ Nǐ zhàn de wěn ma? (lit. you stand can stable p) Can you stand up (without falling)? (i.e. somebody has had too much to drink, has been ill, etc.)
   - 这条牛仔裤洗得干净吗？ Zhèi tiáo niúzǎikù xǐ de gānjìng ma? (lit. this mw jeans wash can clean p) Can these jeans be washed (clean)?

2. **Verbal potential complements:**
   - 她听得懂我的话。 Tā tīng de dòng wǒ de huà. (lit. She listen can understand my words) She could understand my words. (because they were not too profound, not strongly accented, etc.)
13.3.1 Potential complements using direction indicators

Directional complements (see direction indicators discussed in 9.2) can also be used in the potential form:

- 我走不了了。 Wǒ zǒu bù liǎo le. (lit. leave not achievable) I can’t (possibly) leave. (i.e. there are no more trains, the work isn’t finished yet, the weather is too bad, etc.)
- 大家都看不见黑板上的字。 Dàjiā dōu kàn bù jiàn hēibǎn shàng de zì. (lit. everybody all look not see blackboard-on p words/characters) Nobody can see the words/characters on the blackboard. (i.e. the blackboard is too far away, the words/characters are too small, etc.)
- 我走不动了。 Wǒ zǒu bù dòng le. (lit. I walk not move p) I can’t walk any further (i.e. too tired, etc.)
- 这个靠得住吗？ Zhègè kào de zhù ma? (lit. this mw person rely de fast p) Is this person reliable?

13.3.2 Metaphorical meanings of potential complements

We have seen in 9.3 that direction indicators/complements may carry meanings beyond simply physical movement. Similar metaphorical usages are found with potential complement of direction:

- 我吃不下。 Wǒ chī bù xià le. (lit. I eat not down) I can’t eat any more. (i.e. too full, having already eaten too much, etc.)
- 我们今天搬不进去。 Wǒmen jīntiān bān bù jìnqù. (lit. we today move not into-go) We can’t move in today (e.g. into a flat, etc.). (i.e. the flat, etc. has not been vacated yet, etc.)
- 书要得回来吗？ Shū yào de huílái ma? (lit. book get can come-back p) Can l/you get the books back? (i.e. someone will or won’t return them, etc.)

- 这个礼堂坐得下一千人。 Zhègè lǐtáng zuò de xià yī qiān rén. (lit. this mw auditorium sit can contain one thousand person) This hall can seat one thousand people.
- 我买不起照相机。 Wǒ mǎi bù qǐ zhàoxiàngjī. (lit. I buy not up camera) I can’t afford a camera.
The complements of manner and of consequential state involve placing de after a verbal or adjectival predicate followed by either an adjectival phrase (normally indicating manner) or a verbal phrase or clause (usually indicating consequential state). The adjectival phrase in a complement of manner describes the way in which an action is seen to be carried out. (This contrasts with adverbial modifiers which emphasise more the intention or demeanour of the initiator of the action – see 14.1 for further comment on this point.) The complement of consequential state can follow either an adjectival or a verbal predicate. It depicts an observed situation which arises from an action or an ongoing state but which is not necessarily an intended outcome.

### Modification of complement of manner

In the complement of manner, the adjective in the adjectival phrase must be either adverbially modified or followed by a degree complement (see 13.6 below):

- 她说得不太清楚。 Tā shuō de bù tài qīngchū. (lit. she speak p not too clear) She did not put it too clearly.
- 那匹马跑得比较/最快。 Nà pí mǎ pǎo de bǐjiàol/zuì kuài. (lit. that mw horse run p comparatively/most fast) That horse ran faster [than the others]/the fastest [of all].
- 歌咏队唱得好极了。 Gēyǒngduì chàng de hào jì le. (lit. chorus/choir sing p good extreme p) The chorus/choir sang extremely well.
- 我今天起床早得多。 Wǒ jīntiān qǐ de zǎo de duō. (lit. I today get-up p early much-more) I got up much earlier today.
- 战士们站得很直。 Zhànshìmen zhàn de hěn zhí. (lit. soldiers stand p very straight) The soldiers stood very straight.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nèi gè gūniang</td>
<td>(lit. that mw girl dress-up p very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dābàn de hēn</td>
<td>beautiful) That young girl is dressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piàoliang.</td>
<td>up very beautifully.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The last two examples illustrate that with some verbs the manner complement borders on expressing consequential state.

13.4.2 Complement of consequential state

The complement of consequential state is either a verbal phrase or a clause:

(1) Verbal phrase:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tā pǎo de</td>
<td>(lit. she run p non-stop pant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhí chuānqì.</td>
<td>She ran till she was out of breath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā lěng de</td>
<td>(lit. she cold p shiver p) She was so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de fādōu le.</td>
<td>cold that she began to shiver.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Clause:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tā zǒu de jǐáo dōu/yě ruǎn le.</td>
<td>(lit. He walk p leg all/also weak p) He walked till his legs were very weak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā xiào de zuǐ dōu/yě hé bù lǒng le.</td>
<td>(lit. He smile/laugh p mouth all/also close not together p) He grinned broadly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒ kùn de yǎnjiēng dōu/yě zhēng bù kāi le.</td>
<td>(lit. I tired-and-sleepy p eye both also open not separate p) I was so sleepy that my eyes refused to open.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For emphasis these complemental clauses often make use of the adverbs 都/也 dōu/yě ‘all’/‘also’. In addition, the preposition or coverb 连 lián ‘even’ may precede the subject in the clause. For instance, the second example above may be rewritten as: 他笑得连嘴都合不拢了。Tā xiào de lián zuǐ dōu hé bù lǒng le.

13.4.3 Complements of manner or consequential state with a ‘verb + object’ verb

When a complement of manner or consequential state occurs with a ‘verb + object’ verb, the verb is repeated after the object and then followed by the complement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tā xiào de lián zuǐ dōu hé bù lǒng le.</td>
<td>He grinned broadly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13.4.4 Adjectival complements of manner in comparisons

Adjectival complements of manner may express comparison (note the general discussion of comparison, equivalence, etc., in 7.2 and 7.2.3). In such complements the ‘比 bǐ + (pro)noun’, ‘跟 gēn + (pro)noun’ and ‘没(有) méi(yǒu) + (pro)noun’ expressions are placed either before the main verb, or before the adjective in the complement:

- 我跳得比他高。
  Wǒ tiào de bǐ tā gāo. (lit. I jump p compare he high)
  I jump higher than he does.

- 我比他跳得高。
  Wǒ bǐ tā tiào de gāo. (lit. I compare he jump p high)

- 这匹马跑得跟那匹马一样快。
  Zhèi pǐ má pǎo de gēn nèi pǐ má yǐyàng kuài. (lit. this mw horse run p and that mw horse same fast) This horse runs as fast as that one.

- 这匹马跟那匹马跑得一样快。
  Zhèi pǐ má gēn nèi pǐ má pǎo de yǐyàng kuài.

- 我考得没(有)他那么好。
  Wǒ kǎo de méi(yǒu) nàme hǎo. (lit. I examine p not-have he so good) I did not do as well as he did in the examination.

- 我没(有)他考得那么好。
  Wǒ méi(yǒu) tā kǎo de nàme hǎo. (lit. I not-have he examine p so good)

13.4.5 Complement-of-manner comparison with a ‘verb + object’ verb

Where the complement-of-manner comparison occurs with a ‘verb + object’ verb, the same rule applies, with the ‘比 bǐ + (pro)noun’, ‘跟 gēn + (pro)noun’ or ‘没(有) méi(yǒu) + (pro)noun’ phrase located either before the repeated verb or before the adjective in the complement:
He sings better than I do.

or, He sings so well.

She sings better than I do.

or, She sings so well.

I don’t speak Chinese as fluently as he does.

or, I don’t speak Chinese so well.

Note: The ‘比 bǐ + (pro)noun’ and other comparative phrases cannot precede the first verb: e.g. *他比我唱歌唱得好听。Tā bǐ wǒ chànggē chàng de hǎo tīng.

### 13.5 Complement of location or destination

Complements of location/destination occur with motion verbs and indicate the location where the subject ends up through the action of the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/destination</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>汽车停在车库。</td>
<td>Qìchē tíng zài chē fáng. (lit. car stop at garage) The car was parked at the garage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>妈妈回到来家。</td>
<td>Māmā huí dào jiā li. (lit. mother return to home in) Mother came home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would not be normal to say:

*他学习在图书馆。Tā xuéxí zài túshūguǎn. (lit. he study at library)

because 学习 xuéxí ‘study’ does not express any spatial motion. It would be more natural to use an adverbial modifier before the verb:

他在图书馆学习。Tā zài túshūguǎn xuéxí. He studied at the library.

The location phrase as an adverbial placed before the verb indicates where the subject was before the action of the verb took place, i.e. one must get to the library before one can settle down to study there. In contrast, the location/destination phrase as complement indicates where the subject finishes up after the action has taken place.
Compare the following two sentences:

她走到公园去。  
Tā zǒu dào gōngyuán qù. (lit. she walk to park go)  She went to the park [on foot]. (i.e. she set out with the park as her destination.)

她到公园去走走。  
Tā dào gōngyuán qù zǒuzōu. (lit. she get-to park go walk-walk)  She went for a walk in the park. (i.e. she got to the park first and then took a walk there.)

13.6 Degree complements

Degree complements follow and intensify adjectives. They are generally stronger in meaning than the degree adverbs and expressions introduced in 6.2.1 (e.g. 很 hěn ‘very’, 太 tài ‘too’, 相当 xiāngdāng ‘rather’, 够 gòu ‘enough’, 有点儿 yǒu diǎnr ‘a bit’, etc.). The most common degree complements are:

(1) 得很 de hěn  
冷得很 lěng de hěn  
very  
very cold

(2) 得多 de duō  
好得多 hǎo de duō  
多 le  
贵多了 guì duō le  
much more  
much better  
much more  
much more expensive

(3) 极了 jí le  
高兴极了 gāoxìng jí le  
extremely  
extremely happy

(4) 透了 tòu le  
湿透了 shī tòu le  
thoroughly  
wet through

(5) 死了 sǐ le  
饿死了 è sǐ le  
extremely, terribly  
terribly hungry

(6) 得要命 de yàomìng  
热得要命 rè de yàomìng  
terribly  
terribly hot

(7) 得不得了 de bùdeliāo  
坏得不得了 huài de bùdeliāo  
exceedingly  
exceedingly bad

(8) other 得 de + adjective/verb expressions:

得刺眼 de cìyǎn  
亮得刺眼 liàng de cìyǎn  
得刺耳 de cì’ěr  
响得刺耳 xiǎng de cì’ěr  
eye-dazzling  
dazzlingly bright  
ear-piercing  
ear-piercingly loud
Note: 得 de as used throughout this chapter in potential, manner, consequential state and degree complements is different from the attributive 的 de we have met earlier. The character for the 地 de which appears in Chapter 14 in adverbial modifiers is different again.

14 Verbs and adverbials

Adverbial modifiers are words or expressions, usually placed immediately before the verb or sometimes at the beginning of a sentence, which give additional information concerning the action or state expressed in the verb. They fall into three main categories: background, manner and attitude indicators. We have already discussed background indicators such as time and location expressions (see Chapters 10 and 11); here the focus is on adverbial modifiers of manner and attitude.

14.1 Adverbials of manner

Adverbials of manner consist of adjectives, normally two-syllable, followed by the particle 地 de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverbial</th>
<th>Complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她迅速地跑过来.</td>
<td>她 xìnùndì de păozhe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她愉快地笑了笑.</td>
<td>Tā yúkuâi de xiăole xiăo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between an adverbial of manner and a complement of manner (see 13.4) is that the adverbial is concerned mainly with the ‘demeanour’, ‘intention’, etc., of the subject, while the complement is more concerned with the manner and result of the verb as observed by a third party. Compare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverbial</th>
<th>Complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他 hên kuâi de păozhe.</td>
<td>他 păo de hên kuâi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lit. he very quick p run asp) He ran very fast.</td>
<td>(lit. he run p very fast) He ran very fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i.e. He was intent on running fast)</td>
<td>(i.e. as apparent to an onlooker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他十分出神地听着.</td>
<td>他 tīng de shìfēn chūshēn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lit. he extremely enchanted p listen asp) He listened with great fascination.</td>
<td>(lit. he listen p extremely enchanted) He listened with great fascination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i.e. as could be observed)</td>
<td>(i.e. as could be observed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14.1.1 Monosyllabic adjectives as adverbials of manner

A monosyllabic adjective must either be repeated or made disyllabic by the addition of a degree adverb to become an adverbial of manner:

她静静地坐着。 Tā jīngjīng de zuòzhe. (lit. she quiet-quiet p sit p)

他很快地转过身来。 Tā hěn kuài de zhuǎn guò shēn lái. (lit. he very quick p turn around body come) He quickly turned round.

Note: Some disyllabic repetitions are established adverbial expressions and do not derive from monosyllabic adjectives:

悄悄地 quietly qīāoqīāo de 他悄悄地告诉我。 Tā qīāoqīāo de gàosù wò . . .

偷偷地 furtively tōutōu de 她偷偷地看了我一眼。 Tā tōutōu de kànle wǒ yī yǎn.

默默地 silently mòmò de 她默默地瞧着我。 Tā mòmò de qiáozhe wǒ.

渐渐地 gradually jiānjīān de 天气渐渐地暖和起来。 Tānqì jiānjīān de nuānhuò qīlái.

14.1.2 Adverbials of manner with marked verbs

As in the above sentences illustrating adverbials of manner, the verb preceded by an adverbial modifier usually has to be marked in some way, e.g. by a direction indicator or an aspect marker. In the following examples 站 zhàn is marked by 起来 qǐlái and 下 xià by 着 zhe.

我朋友慢慢地站起来。 Wǒ péngyou màn màn de zhàn qǐlái. (lit. my friend slow-slow p stand up) My friend stood up slowly.

雪纷纷扬扬地下着。 Xué fēn fēn yángyáng de xiàzhe. (lit. snow hard-and-fast p fall asp) The snow came down thick and fast.
14.1.3 Adverbials of manner with unmarked verbs

Adverbial modifiers may occur with unmarked verbs in expressions such as imperatives. 地 De is generally omitted, and the monosyllabic adverbial usually either reduplicated or extended by words such as 点儿 diǎnr or 些 xiē ‘a bit’/‘a little’.

快点儿来!  
Kuài diǎnr lái!  (lit. quick a-bit come) Come here quickly!

早些回来。  
Zǎo xiē huílái.  (lit. early a-little return-come)  
Come back a little earlier.

好好睡!  
Hāohāo shuì!  (lit. good-good sleep) Go to sleep nicely! (parent to a child)

慢慢来!  
Mànmàn lái!  (lit. slow-slow come) Take it easy!

14.1.4 Monosyllabic adverbial modifiers without de

Monosyllabic adverbial modifiers without 的 de occur in certain established expressions and imperatives:

慢走  
màn zǒu  take care  lit. slow go (a polite expression when seeing guests off)

快起来  
kuài qǐlái  up you get  lit. quick get-up (waking somebody in the morning)

多谢  
duō xiè  many thanks  lit. much thank (an expression of gratitude)

多保重  
duō bāozhòng  look after yourself  lit. much take-care (a good wish at parting)

14.1.5 Particular types of adverbials of manner

Adverbials of manner are also formed from some particular types of phrase:

(1) Onomatopoeic coinages:

风呼呼地吹着。  
Fēng hūhū de chuīzhe.  (lit. wind onom p blow asp)  
The wind was howling.

蜜蜂在花丛中嗡嗡地飞着。  
Mìfēng zài huācóng zhōng wēng wēng de fēizhe.  (lit. bee in flower-cluster middle onom p fly asp)  
The bees were humming amongst the flowers.
(2) Phonaesthetic expressions, in which a repeated syllable comes after an adjective, verb or noun to extend its descriptive quality through an association of sound and meaning:

他懒洋洋地躺著。  
Tā lǎnyāngyāng de tāngzhe.  
(lit. he lazy-phon p lie asp)  
He idly lay there.

他兴冲冲地走进来。  
Tā xīngchōngchōng de zǒu jīnlái.  
(lit. he spirit-phon p walk in)  
He entered in high spirits.

她笑眯眯地点了点头。  
Tā xiàomīmī de diǎnle diǎn tóu.  
(lit. she smile-phon p nod asp nod head)  
She nodded with a smile.

(3) Quadrisyllabic idioms:

她无可奈何地耸了耸肩。  
Tā wúkě nàihé de sǒngjiān.  
(lit. she without-able-do-what p shrug asp shrug shoulder)  
She shrugged her shoulders helplessly.

我情不自禁地叹了口气。(一)口气。  
Wǒ qíng bù zi jìn de tànle (yī) kǒu qì.  
(lit. I feeling-not-self-forbid p sigh asp one mw:mouthful breath)  
I sighed despite myself.

我不知不觉地睡着了。  
Wǒ bù zhí bù jué de shuì zháole.  
(lit. I not-know-not-feel p sleep achieve p)  
I fell asleep without realising it.

(4) Parallel constructions:

她一步一步地向前走去。  
Tā yī yī bù yī bù de xiàng qian zǒu qù.  
(lit. she one step one step p towards front walk go)  
She went forward step by step.

她一个字一个字地写着。  
Tā yī ge zi yī ge zi de xiēzhe.  
(lit. she one mw character one mw character p write asp)  
She is writing [it] down character by character.

14.2 Attitudinal adverbial expressions

Attitudinal adverbial expressions are words or idioms used by the speaker to bring a tone of judgement or evaluation to the sentence. They occur either immediately after the subject or, if they are phrases, at the beginning of the sentence:

她当然不同意。  
Tā dāngrán bù tóngyì.  
(lit. she of-course not agree)  
She naturally disagreed.
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我不一定去。Wǒ bù yǐdīng qù. (lit. I not-certain go)
I can’t say for sure that I will go.

依我看，Yī wǒ kàn,
I think,
她是对的。tā shì duì de.
As far as I can see, she is right.

Note: Other common expressions of this type include: 甚至 shènzhì ‘even’,
总算 zòngsuàn ‘after all’, 也许 yěxū ‘perhaps’, 肯定 kěndìng ‘definitely’, 对我来说 duì wǒ lái shuō ‘as far as I am concerned’,
在我看来 zài wǒ kàn lái ‘as I see it’, 毫无疑问 háowú yìwèn ‘no doubt’, 很不幸 hěn bù xìng ‘unfortunately’.

我们总算
Wǒmen zòngsuàn
写完了。
xǐ wàn le.

他们也许
Tāmen yěxū tīng de
听得懂广州话。
dōng Guǎngzhōu huà.

14.3 Referential adverbs

There are a number of monosyllabic adverbs which are placed directly
before the main verb and have an important linking function in the
meaning of the sentence. Since they refer forwards and/or backwards,
we will call them referential adverbs. These referential adverbs also
function as conjunctives linking clauses or predicates/comments in com-
posite sentences (see Chapter 24), but here we deal with their place in
simple sentences. Some are best discussed in pairs:

(1) 就 Jiù ‘then’ and 才 cái ‘only then’: 就 jiù emphasises a direct
consequence, while 才 cái indicates that something ensued only at
a particular time or under particular circumstances:

我们很早就到了。Wǒmen hěn zǎo jiù dào le. (lit. we very early then arrive p)
We arrived very early.

他们很晚才来。
Tāmen hěn wǎn cái lái. (lit. they very late only-then come)
They didn’t come till very late.

他们去年就开始学
Tāmen qùnián jiù kāishí xué
汉语了。
Hányǔ le. Chinese p) They began to study
Chinese (as early as) last year.

他们去年
Tāmen qùnián
才开始学
Cái kāishí xué
汉语。
Hányǔ. (lit. they last-year only-then begin
learn Chinese p) They did not begin
to study Chinese until last year.
Note 1: Sentences with 就 jiù, as above, regularly end with 了 le, since they almost certainly express a change in circumstances (see Chapter 16 for discussion of sentence 了 le). However, 了 le is not generally used with 才 cái—see 16.3 (9).

Note 2: 便 Biàn ‘then’ may be used interchangeably with 就 jiù in this sense, particularly in the written language.

就 Jiù can also emphasise immediacy:

我 就 来: Wǒ jiù lái (lit. I immediately come (p)) I’m coming. (or I’ll be right with you)

我去去就 回来(了)。 Wǒ qūqū jiù huí lái (le). (lit. I go-go immediately back-come (p)) I’ll be right back.

Note: 了 Le here is optional: without it, the sentence sounds somewhat abrupt; with it, the tone is more reassuring.

(2) 都 Dōu ‘all’/‘both’ always refers back to a preceding phrase, e.g. the subject, a posed topic (i.e. object transposed to a pre-verbal position – see 18.4), a frequency expression (e.g. with 每 měi ‘every’). It never relates to what follows it or follows the verb:

大家都去 吃午饭了。 Dàjiā dōu qù chī wǔfàn le. (lit. everybody all go eat lunch p) Everybody has gone for lunch.

他们两个 人都 回来 了。 Tāmen liǎng gè rén dōu huí lái le. (lit. they two mw people both have come back.)

这儿每年 冬天 都 下雪。 Zhèr měi nián dōngtiān dōu xià xuě. (lit. here every-year winter all come-down-snow) It snows here every winter.

我们 北京、西安、上海 都 去过。 Wǒmen Běijīng, Xīān, Shànghǎi dōu qùguó. (lit. we Beijing, Xi’an, Shanghai all go asp) We’ve been to Beijing, Xi’an and Shanghai.

那两个 电影 我 都 不 喜欢。 Nà liǎng ge diànyǐng wǒ dōu bù xǐhuān. (lit. those two mw film I both not like) I don’t like either of those two films.

(3) 只 Zhǐ ‘only’, in contrast with 都 dōu, generally refers to what follows in the sentence:

我 只 去 香港。 Wǒ zhǐ qù Xiānggǎng. (lit. I only go Hong Kong)

我们 只 谈 过 一 次。 Wǒmen zhǐ tán guò yī cì. (lit. we only talk asp one time) We talked [about it] only once.
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(4) 也 Yě ‘also’ and 还 hái ‘additionally’ have similar meanings. 也 Yě generally refers back to the subject, though it may also point forward to the following verb and/or object:

她也 Tā yě (lit. she also start-burn p)
发烧了. fāshāo le. She has a fever too.

我也 Wǒ yě (lit. I also not-have money)
没(有)钱. méi (yǒu) qián. I haven’t got any money either.

还 Hái, on the other hand, always refers to the following verb or object of that verb, implying an additional action or situation:

小偷 Xiǎotōu (lit. thief in-addition steal asp
还偷了 hái tōule television-set) The thief also stole
电视机. diànshìjī. the television. (i.e. in addition to other things)

大学还有 Dàxué (lit. university additionally have
中文系. hái yǒu Chinese-department) The university
Zhōngwénxī. has a Chinese Department as well.

Note 1: 还 Hái also has the meaning ‘still’:

她还在 Tā hái zài (lit. she still at here)
这儿. zhèr. She is still here.

他们还 Tāmen hái (lit. they still not return home)
没回家. méi huí jiā. They haven’t gone home yet.

Note 2: In sentences with 谁 shéi/shuí ‘everybody’/什么 shénme ‘everything’ as the subject, 也 yě can be used interchangeably with 都 dōu, and is generally preferred when the sentence is negative:

这件事 Zhèi jiàn shì (lit. this mw matter everybody all/also
谁也知道. shéi dōu/yě know) Everybody knows this.
zhídào.

这件事谁 Zhèi jiàn shì shéi (lit. this mw matter everybody also
也不知道. yě bù zhídào. not know) Nobody knows this.

Note 3: In another construction, 连 lián ‘even’ is used with 都 dōu or 也 yě in the pattern: subject + 连 lián + noun or verb phrase + 都 dōu or 也 yě + verb (or with ‘连 lián + noun or verb phrase’ preceding the subject):

他连首相 Tā lián shǒuxiāng (lit. he even prime-minister all/also know)
都/也认识. dōu/yě rènshì. He even knows the prime minister.

他连动 Tā lián dòng yě (lit. he even move also not move)
也不动. bù dòng. He did not so much as move.

连一分钱 Lián yǐ fēn qián (lit. even one cent money she also not
她也没有. tā yě méi yǒu. have) She doesn’t (even) have a cent.
(5) 再 Zài and 又 yòu both mean ‘again’, but there is a subtle distinction between them. 又 Yòu expresses actual repetition, while 再 zài indicates projected repetition. This means that often 又 yòu is used in a past or continuous present context, whereas 再 zài is used in a future context:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我明天再来。</td>
<td>Wǒ míngtiān zài lái.</td>
<td>I'll come again tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他们昨天又来了。</td>
<td>Tāmen zuótiān yòu lái le.</td>
<td>They came again yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那个孩子又在看电视了。</td>
<td>Nèi gè hái zi yòu zài kàn diànshì le.</td>
<td>That child is watching television again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an indicator of projected repetition, 再 zài may also imply the postponement of an action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我们明天再谈。</td>
<td>Wǒmen míngtiān zài tán.</td>
<td>We’ll discuss [it] tomorrow. (i.e. not today)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>这个问题以后再考虑吧。</td>
<td>Zhèi gè wèntí yǐhòu zài kǎolū ba.</td>
<td>We’ll consider this question in future. (i.e. not now)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is possible for 再 zài to be used in the past when repetition is anticipated rather than realised. That is why 再 zài occurs naturally in negative sentences where the anticipated repetition does not take place:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>后来我们不再去找他们了。</td>
<td>Hòulái wǒmen bù zài qù zhǎo tāmen le.</td>
<td>Afterwards we did not go and look them up again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他走了，没(有)再回来。</td>
<td>Tā zǒu le, méi(yǒu) zài huí lái.</td>
<td>He left and did not come back again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, 又 yòu may occur in future contexts where repetition can be seen as part of a predetermined plan or course of action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Expression</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>下个月我们又要放假了。</td>
<td>Xià gè yuè wǒmen yòu yào fàngjià le.</td>
<td>Our holiday comes round again next month.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**II**

**Verbs**

Wǒ hòutiān yòu dēi qù jiàn dāoshī le. *(lit. I day-after-tomorrow again must go see tutor p) I’ll have to go and see my tutor again the day after tomorrow.*

(6) 倒 Dào and 却 què both mean ‘but’, ‘however’, ‘on the other hand’, or ‘on the contrary’. They are almost interchangeable, though 却 què occurs more often in negative sentences:

小李倒感冒了。 Xiǎo Lǐ dào gǎnmào le. *(lit. little Li however catch-cold p) However, Little Li caught a cold.*

小李却不喜欢吃蔬菜。 Xiǎo Lǐ què bù xīhuan chī shūcài. *(lit. Little Li however not like eat vegetables) Little Li, however, doesn’t like (to eat) vegetables.*

### 14.4 Referential adverbs with negatives

Referential adverbs generally precede the negative adverbs 不 bù and 没(有) méi(yōu):

明天我不来了。 Míngtiān wǒ jiù bù lái le. *(lit. tomorrow I then not come p) I won’t come tomorrow then.*

那次以后他们才没(有)去钓鱼。 Nèi cì yīhòu tāmen cái méi(yǒu) qù diào yú. *(lit. that time after they only-then not-have go fishing) It was only after that that they did not go fishing again.*

### 14.5 Order of sequence of referential adverbs

When two or more referential adverbs occur together or with negative adverbs, the sequence is as follows:

倒/却 dào/què 再 zài 也 yě 不/没(有) bù/méi(yǒu) 只 zhǐ

or

倒/却 dào/què 也 yě 都/就 dōu/jiù 不/没(有) bù/méi(yǒu) 再 zài 只 zhǐ

他们倒再也不 不/没埋怨我们了。 Tāmen dào zài yě bù/méi mányuàn wǒmen le. *(lit. they in-contrast again also not complain us p) After that they didn’t complain about us any more.*
Note: In the above sentence, 不 bù implies an intention (in this case a past rather than future intention) whereas 没 méi is simply factual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character(s)</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哥哥也就不抽烟了。</td>
<td>Gēge yē jiù bù chōuyān le.</td>
<td>My elder brother didn’t smoke again after that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>孩子们也都不再撒谎了。</td>
<td>Háizimen yēdōu bù zài sāhuāng le.</td>
<td>The children also didn’t tell lies any more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大家就不在只考虑自己了。</td>
<td>Dàjiā jǐu bù zài zhǐ kāolū zìjī le.</td>
<td>Nobody thought only about themselves after that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 14.6 Order of adverbials in sequence

In this chapter and Chapters 10 and 11, we have discussed a whole range of adverbials. Where a number of adverbials occur in sequence before a verb, the general order is: ‘attitude’, ‘time’, ‘referential’, ‘manner’, ‘location’. However, ‘time’ may change places with ‘attitude’, and ‘location’ with ‘manner’:

- 她很可能这时(个)候也认真真地在博物馆看展品呢。  
  \( \text{她很可能这时(个)候也认真真地在博物馆看展品呢。} \)  
  (lit. she very possible this (mw) time also conscientiously at museum see exhibit p) It is most likely that at this moment she is also looking conscientiously at the exhibits in the museum.

- 她这(个)时候很可能也在博物馆认认真真地看展品呢。  
  \( \text{她这(个)时候很可能也在博物馆认认真真地看展品呢。} \)  
  (lit. she very possible this (mw) time also conscientiously at museum see exhibit p) It is most likely that at this moment she is also looking conscientiously at the exhibits in the museum.

### 15 Modal and similar verbs

#### 15.1 Modal, attitudinal, and intentional verbs

In this chapter we focus on verbs which precede the main verb in a sentence. Chief among these are modal verbs (e.g. 能 néng ‘can’, 要 yào ‘want’, 得 déi ‘must’, etc.). Other verbs of this type are those that express attitude in some way (e.g. 喜欢 xǐhuān ‘like’, 同意 tóngyì ‘agree’, etc.), which we refer to loosely as attitudinal verbs; there are also intentional verbs (e.g. 打算 dǎsuàn ‘plan’, 准备 zhǔnbèi ‘prepare’, etc.). Modal
verbs, attitudinal verbs and most intentional verbs regularly appear with the negator 不 bù but never with 没(有) méi(yǒu). The negator 不 bù usually comes before the modal, attitudinal or intentional verb, or occasionally after it, as required by meaning or emphasis:

我今天 不能来。  
Wǒ jīntiān bù néng lái.  (lit. I today not can come)

我今天能不  
Wǒ jīntiān néng bù lái ma?  (lit. I today can not come p)

你不能不来。  
Nǐ bù néng lái.  (lit. you not can not come) You must come (you cannot but come).

15.2 Modal verbs

Modal verbs express obligation, necessity, permission, possibility, ability, desire, admonition or daring. Note that: (1) they can precede any type of verb including attitudinal and intentional verbs, though they occur less commonly with 是 shì ‘to be’ or 有 yǒu ‘to have’; (2) they are almost never preceded by another verb (see note below); (3) they are never immediately followed by a noun or pronoun object (though 要 yào ‘want’ can be used as a full verb when it may take an object). As we will see later (18.3.1), sentences with modal verbs are topic-comment rather than subject-predicate sentences.

Note: Modal verbs may be preceded by verbs expressing hope or aspiration, such as 希望 xīwànɡ, 盼望 pànwànɡ, 渴望 kěwànɡ, etc.

我希望能 再见到您。  
Wǒ xīwànɡ néng zài jiàn dào nín.  (lit. I hope can again see polite:you) I hope to see you again.

See also note on 高兴 gāoxìnɡ ‘happy’ at 15.3.2 below.

(1) 应该 Yīnggāi or, more colloquially, 该 gāi or 得 déi indicate obligation (‘ought to’, ‘should’, ‘have to’):

你应该去睡觉了。  
Nǐ yīnggāi qù shuǐjiào le!  (lit. you should go sleep p) You ought to go to bed./It’s time you went to bed.

你不应该在这儿抽烟/吸烟。  
Nǐ bù yīnggāi zài zhèr chōuyān/xīyān.  (lit. you not should at here inhale-smoke) You shouldn’t smoke here.

我该/得走了。  
Wǒ gāi/déi zǒu le.  (lit. I should leave p) I must be off.
你的新手表得报税。
*Níde xīn shōubiǎo děi bàoshuì.* *(lit. your new watch should report-tax) You will have to declare your new watch at customs.*

旅客都得填写这张表格。
*Lǚkè dōu děi tiánxiě zhè zhǎng biǎogé.* *(lit. passengers all should fill-write this mw form) All passengers should fill in this form.*

(2) **必须** *Bǐxū* conveys *necessity or compulsion* (*must*):

你必须去打针。
*Ní bǐxū qù dàzhēn.* *(lit. you must go hit-needle) You must go and have an injection.*

你必须回答我的问题。
*Ní bǐxū huídá wǒde wèntí.* *(lit. you must answer my question) You must answer my question.*

Note: 必须 *Bǐxū* may be considered an adverb. Like modal verbs it is placed before the verb, but it cannot be used in an affirmative-negative form: *必须 不必须 bǐxū bù bǐxū.*

The negation of **必须** *bǐxū* is 不用 *bùyòng* or more formally不必 *bùbì* (*there’s no need*):

你不用/不必去接她。
*Ní bùyòng/ bùbì qù jiē tā.* *(lit. you not need go meet her) There’s no need for you to go and meet her.*

我们不用告诉他们。
*Wǒmen bùyòng gàoсу tāmen.* *(lit. we not need tell them) There’s no need for us to tell them.*

(3) **可以** *Kéyǐ* and 能 *néng* express *permission* (*may*, ‘can’):

我现在可以/能走了吗？
*Wǒ xiànzài kěyǐ/ néng zǒu le ma?* *(lit. I now may/can leave p p) May I leave now?*

你可以/能在这儿停车。
*Ní kěyǐ/néng zài zhèr tíng chē.* *(lit. you not may/can at here stop car p) You may not park your car here.*

我可以/能看看你的驾驶证照吗？
*Wǒ kěyǐ/néng kànkàn nǐde jiàshì zhǐzhào ma?* *(lit. I may/can look-look your driving licence p) May I have a look at your driving licence?*

我可以/能提出一个问题吗？
*Wǒ kěyǐ/néng tí yī gè wèntí ma?* *(lit. I may/can raise one mw question) May I ask a question?*
Verbs

(4) 会 Hui indicates either *possibility/probability* (‘may’, ‘is likely to’):

- 今天会刮风吗？ Jintiān huì guā fēng ma? (lit. today likely blow wind)
- 他们明天不会来。 Tāmen míngtiān bù huì lái. (lit. they tomorrow not likely come)

or, *ability* in the sense of an acquired skill (‘can’):

- 我不会弹钢琴。 Wǒ bù huì tán gāngqín. (lit. I not can play piano)
- 你会打太极拳吗？ Nǐ huì dā tàijíquán ma? (lit. you can hit shadow-boxing)

(5) 能 Néng and 能够 néng(gòu) also convey *ability* but in the sense of physical strength or capability (‘can’):

- 我一天能(够)跑十英里路。 Wo yī tiān néng(gòu) pǎo shí yīnglǐ lù. (lit. I one day able run ten miles)
- 今天我不能(够)去上班。 Jintiān wǒ bù néng(gòu) qù shàngbān. (lit. today I not can go on-shift)

Note: In contrast to the potential complement, 能够 néng(gòu) tends to imply that personal attitude, capacity or judgement, rather than external circumstances, determine ability (or inability).

(6) 想 Xiǎng and 要 yào express *wish* or *desire* (‘want’, ‘would like to’):

- 我想买一些食品和饮料。 Wǒ xiǎng mǎi yī jī xiè shípǐn hé yǐnliào. (lit. I want buy some food and drink)
- 你想去参观工厂吗？ Nǐ xiǎng qù cānguǎn gōngchǎng ma? (lit. you want go visit factory)
- 他要学开车。 Tā yào xué kāi ché. (lit. s/he want learn drive-car)
她要在广州呆(待)两个礼拜。

我想换五百元。

Tā yào zài Guǎngzhōu dài liǎng gè lìbāi. (lit. she want at Guangzhou stay two mw week) She wants to stay in Guangzhou for two weeks.

Wǒ xiǎng huàn wǔbǎi yuán. (lit. I want change five-hundred yuan) I would like to change five hundred yuan.

Note 1: The 元 yuán (or more colloquially 块 kuài) is the basic unit of Chinese currency. It is divided into 10 角 jiǎo (more colloquially 毛 máo) and 100 分 fēn.

Note 2: 呆 dài and 待 dài can be used interchangeably to mean ‘stay’.

However, in imperative sentences 要 yào and its negative form 不要 bù yào mean respectively admonition (‘must’) and prohibition (‘don’t’):

你要小心!  Nǐ yào xiǎoxīn! (lit. you must small-concern) You must be careful!

不要动!  Bù yào dòng! (lit. not must move) Don’t move!

Note 1: With 要 yào in this sense the pronoun subject is normally present, but with 不要 bù yào it is optional.

Note 2: 要 yào may also be used by itself as a transitive verb to mean ‘want’ or ‘need’, when it takes a noun or pronoun object:

Wǒ yào chá, bù yào kāfēi. I want tea, not coffee.

Zuò chē qù zhì yào yī gè xiǎoshí. It takes only an hour to go by car.

别 Bié can be used as an alternative to 不要 bù yào for ‘don’t’:

Bié dòng!  Don’t move!

Bié xiào wǒ!  Don’t laugh at me!

Bié jìn lái!  Don’t come in!

(7) 愿意 Yuàn yì and 肯 kěn indicate willingness (‘be willing’):

校长愿意退休。 Xiàozhǎng yuàn yì tuìxiū. (lit. headmaster willing retire) The headmaster is willing to retire.

他不愿意谈宗教或政治。 Tā bù yuàn yì tán zōngjiào huò zhèngzhì. (lit. he not willing talk religion or politics) He is not willing to talk about religion or politics.
15.2.1 Modal verbs and adverbs of degree

Modal verbs do not generally take adverbial modifiers. However, adverbs of degree (e.g. 很 hěn, 非常 féicháng, etc.) naturally occur with 想 xiǎng ‘want’ and 愿意 yuàn’i ‘be willing’:

我很想 Wǒ hěn xiǎng (lit. I very want go spend-holiday) I want very much to go away for a holiday.

他们非常 Tāmén féicháng (lit. they extremely willing help you) They are extremely willing to help you.

Also, negative expressions are regularly softened by the addition of 太/大 tài/dà ‘too’:

明天不会下雨。 Míngtiān bù dà huì xià yǔ. (lit. tomorrow not too likely fall-rain) It is not too likely to rain tomorrow.

他不太愿意支持我。 Tā bù tài yuàn yì zhīchí wǒ. (lit. he not too willing support me) He is not too willing to support me.

我不敢吃生蚝。 Wǒ bù dà gān chī shēng háo. (lit. I not too dare eat raw-oyster) I’m a bit of a coward when it comes to eating raw oysters.

15.2.2 Modal verbs and comparison

Comparisons can be expressed using modal verbs, with the ‘比 bǐ + (pro)noun’ phrase preceding the modal verb (see 7.2 for comparison structures):

他都说我不大聪明。 Tā dōu shuō wǒ bù tài cōng明。 (lit. he say I not too clever) He says I’m not too clever.
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15.3 **Attitudinal verbs**

*Attitudinal verbs* may, like modal verbs, precede verbs, but they can also be followed by nouns or pronouns. Unlike modal verbs, they regularly take adverbial modifiers of degree:

- 西方人喜欢养狗。 *Xīfāngrén xǐhuān yǎng gǒu.*
  - (lit. Westerners like raise dog) Westerners like keeping dogs.
- 西方人很喜欢狗。 *Xīfāngrén hěn xǐhuān gǒu.*
  - (lit. Westerners very like dog) Westerners like dogs very much.
- 他们非常讨厌买东西。 *Tāmen fēicháng tǎoyàn mǎi dōngxi.*
  - (lit. they extremely hate buy thing) They really hate shopping.
- 他们非常讨厌那个人。 *Tāmen fēicháng tǎoyàn néi gè rén.*
  - (lit. they extremely hate that mw person) They really loathe that person.
- 我怕坐缆车。 *Wǒ pà zuò lānchē.*
  - (lit. I fear sit cable-car) I am afraid to ride in a cable-car.
- 我很害怕。 *Wǒ hěn pà guǐ.*
  - (lit. I fear ghost) I am afraid of ghosts.
- 我很同意选他。 *Wǒ hěn tóngyì xuǎn tā.*
  - (lit. I very agree elect him) I agree to vote for him.
- 我很同意你的意见。 *Wǒ hěn tóngyì nǐde yìjiàn.*
  - (lit. I agree your opinion) I agree to your idea.
- 他们很反对吃肉。 *Tāmen hěn fǎndùì chī ròu.*
  - (lit. they very oppose eat meat) They are opposed to eating meat.
- 他们反对这个提议。 *Tāmen fǎndùì zhè hē tíyì.*
  - (lit. they oppose this mw proposal) They are opposed to this proposal.
15.3.1 Wàngle and Jìde

Two commonly used verbs which may be categorised as attitudinal verbs are 忘了 wàngle ‘to forget’ and 记得 jìde ‘to remember’:

别忘了带钥匙。 Bié wàngle dài yàoshi. (lit. don’t forget asp bring key) Don’t forget to bring [your] keys [with you].

请记得锁门。 Qǐng jìde suǒ mén. (lit. please remember lock door) Please remember to lock the door.

Note: 忘了 Wàngle ‘to forget’ invariably incorporates the aspect marker le.

15.3.2 Gāoxìng

The adjective 高兴 gāoxìng ‘happy’ can take on the function of an attitudinal verb and precede another verb:

我很高兴认识您。 Wǒ hěn gāoxìng rènshì nín. (lit. I very happy know polite: you) I am pleased to meet you.

我们非常高兴有机会来这儿访问。 Wǒmen fēicháng gāoxìng yǒu jīhuì lái zhèr fāngwèn. (lit. we extremely happy have opportunity come here visit) We are extremely happy to have the opportunity of coming here for a visit.

Note: 高兴 Gāoxìng like 希望 xīwàng ‘to hope’ may precede a modal verb:

我很高兴能来中国留学。 Wǒ hěn gāoxìng néng lái Zhōngguó liúxué. (lit. I very happy can come China study-abroad) I am very happy to be able to come to study in China.

15.4 Intentional verbs

Intentional verbs are always followed by verbs and do not take adverbial modifiers of degree:

我打算去旅行。 Wǒ dāsuàn qù lǚxíng. (lit. I calculate go travel) I am planning to go travelling.

我们的工厂打算装空调。 Wǒmen de gōngchǎng dāsuàn zhuāng kōngtiáo. (lit. our factory calculate install air-conditioning) Our factory is planning to install air-conditioning.
Modal and similar verbs

Tā zhǔnbèi (lit. she prepare apply one mw job)
shēnqìng yì fèn gōngzuò. She is planning to apply for a job.

你决定吃什么？ Nǐ juédìng chī shénme? (lit. you decide eat what)
What have you decided to eat?

Note: Some of these verbs can be followed by nouns (e.g. 她在准备功课 Tā zài zhǔnbèi gōngkè ‘She is preparing (for) the lesson’) but they are then full verbs and carry no meaning of intention.

15.4.1 Negation of intentional verbs

Negating intentional verbs is slightly more complicated than negating modal or attitudinal verbs. The negator 不 bù can come either before or after the intentional verb, without there being any significant difference in meaning. For instance,

我不打算参加比赛。 Wō bù dàsuàn cānjiā bīsài. (lit. I not plan take-part-in contest)
I am not planning to take part in the competition.

我打算不参加比赛。 Wō dàsuàn bù cānjiā bīsài. (lit. I plan not take-part-in contest)
I am planning not to take part in the competition.

准备, 计划 Zhǔnbèi, jìhuà ‘plan’, etc., follow this pattern.

Exceptionally, 决定 juédìng ‘decide’ can only be followed (not preceded) by the negator 不 bù:

我决定不参加比赛。 Wō juédìng bù cānjiā bīsài. (lit. I decide not take-part-in contest)
I have decided not to take part in the competition.

NOT: *我不决定参加比赛。 Wō bù juédìng cānjiā bīsài.

The negator 没(有)méi(yǒu), usually preceded by 还 hái ‘still’, can be used before 决定 juédìng, however. The action verb which follows 决定 juédìng may then take an affirmative-negative format:

我还没(有)决定参加(加)不参加比赛。 Wō hái méi(yǒu) juédìng cān(jiā) bù cānjiā bīsài.
(lit. I still not-have decide take-part-in not take-part-in contest) I haven’t yet decided whether to take part in the competition or not.
A distinctive characteristic of many Chinese sentences is the influential role of the particle le in their formulation. The addition of le at the end of a statement introduces an assertiveness of tone implying change, updating, etc. The presence of le may therefore convert a subject-predicate sentence into a topic-comment sentence (see Chapter 18). Other sentence particles, 呢 ma, 呢 ne, 吧 ba, etc., transform statements into various forms of question; imperatives may be signalled by 吧 ba; and exclamations are indicated by 啊 a and its variants.

Prepositional or coverbal phrases are a regular feature of Chinese sentences. The location phrases introduced in Part II are coverbal, and other coverbal phrases provide background information on method, direction, destination, etc. The coverb 把 bā, which expresses intentional manipulation or unintentional intervention, has the important function of moving an object to a pre-verbal position, leaving the post-verbal space clear for the complement. The coverb 被 bèi, rarely used except in narration, introduces the agent in a passive construction. (Passives are more readily formed, however, through topic-comment structures where sentence le is generally indispensable.)

Serial constructions occur frequently in Chinese sentences. They bring together verbal elements through meaning relationships such as time-sequence, purpose, etc., rather than through syntax. Composite sentences, on the other hand, consist of more than one clause or predicate/comment, usually linked by conjunctions and/or conjunctives.

As a non-morphological language, Chinese relies heavily on its speakers’/listeners’ knowledge of the real world. This makes for not only standard constructions like notional passives in the form of topic-comments but also frequent abbreviations and omissions in sentences so that sense depends on reference to non-linguistic contexts and verbal cotexts.
Emphasis is regularly generated by the use of the intensifier 是 shì which can focus stress on almost any element in the sentence. In addition, topicalisation may emphasise an object by transferring it to a topic position in a topic-comment sentence.

The subject-predicate and topic-comment dichotomy we have proposed offers insights into the organisation of Chinese sentences. The shift from subject-predicate to topic-comment through the introduction of sentence particle 了 le, modal verbs, the intensifier 是 shì, etc., represents a move by the speaker from a narrative to a descriptive, explanatory, or argumentative stance.

16 Statements and the sentence particle le

16.1 Le as a sentence particle

We have earlier discussed the function of le as an aspect marker prefixed to a verb of action to indicate the completion of the action (see 8.3.1). A second, important use of le is as a sentence particle placed at the end of a sentence and influencing its meaning as a whole. By adding le to a sentence, the speaker introduces some form of comment on the action or the situation, implying a commitment or involvement on his/her part. The speaker may be suggesting that circumstances have changed or are about to change, that things are not as the listener expects, or that circumstances have reached a particular point. When using le in this way, the speaker readily lets his/her enthusiasm, interest and involvement be known. Sentence le does occur in written Chinese, especially in letters, but its function makes it particularly common in speech. In effect, adding sentence le updates the situation; thus, underlying all such statements with le is the fundamental notion of change. For example,

我不抽烟。 wǒ bù chōuyān. (lit. I not inhale-cigarette)
我不抽烟了。 wǒ bù chōuyān le. (lit. I not inhale-cigarette p) I don’t smoke any more. (i.e. I have given up smoking)

The first statement is simply a statement of fact, whereas the second implies a change in habit from ‘smoking’ to ‘non-smoking’.

16.2 Functions of sentence le

In the examples below, sentence 了 le conveys to the listener (or reader) a sense of updating, change, reversal, etc. of the previous situation.
(1) Sentences containing result or direction complements which in one way or another signal new situations or conditions:

她睡着了。 **Tā shuì zháo le.** (lit. she sleep achieved p) She has fallen asleep.

爸爸喝醉了。 **Bàba hē zuì le.** (lit. father drink intoxicated p) Father has got drunk.

她出去了。 **Tā chū qù le.** (lit. she out go p) She has gone out.

太阳升起来了。 **Tàiyáng shēng qǐ lái le.** (lit. sun rise up-come p) The sun has risen.

(2) Sentences with verbs or indicators which mean ‘begin’, ‘end’, ‘start’, ‘finish’, ‘emerge’, ‘disappear’, ‘change’, etc., which by definition introduce new circumstances:

谈判开始了。 **Tánpàn kāishī le.** (lit. negotiation begin p) The negotiations have begun.

会议结束了。 **Huìyì jiéshù le.** (lit. meeting end p) The meeting has ended.

天气变了。 **Tiānqì biàn le.** (lit. weather change p) The weather (has) changed.

她哭起来了。 **Tā kū qīlái le.** (lit. she cry/weep start p) She (has) started to cry.

Similarly, an adverbial in the sentence may indicate that something is about to take place:

飞机快要起飞了。 **Fēijī kuài yào qǐfēi le.** (lit. plane quick about take-off p) The plane is about to take off.

天就要下雨了。 **Tiān jiù yào xià yǔ le.** (lit. sky soon about fall-rain p) It is about to rain.

(3) Sentences with a monosyllabic action or state verb which naturally poses a contradiction to a previous action or state:

火车到了。 **Huǒchē dào le.** (lit. train arrive p) The train has arrived.

她病了。 **Tā bìng le.** (lit. she ill p) She has fallen ill.

天亮了。 **Tiān liàng le.** (lit. sky bright p) It is light (now).
III
Sentences

花儿开了。 *Huàr kāi le.* (lit. flower open p) The flowers have come out.

东西贵了。 *Dōngxi guì le.* (lit. things expensive p) Things are getting more expensive.

(4) Sentences which have nominal predicates indicating age, height, weight, etc., and register change or updating:

我今年六十岁了。 *Wǒ jīn nián liùshí suì le.* I am sixty (years old) this year.

小伙子一米八了。 *Xiǎohuǒu zi yī mǐ bā le.* The young man is one metre eight tall (now).

孩子六个月了。 *Háizi liù gè yuè le.* The child is six months old (now).

我快七十公斤了。 *Wǒ kuài qī shí gōng jīn le.* (lit. I almost seventy kilogram p) I am almost seventy kilograms (in weight) (now).

16.2.1 Summing-up function of *le*

Since the primary function of sentence *le* is to emphasise updating or change of situation, a speaker narrating and commenting on a series of events will tend to delay *le* to the end of the statement, thereby summing up the situation:

她把衣服洗干净了。 *Tā bǎ yīfu xǐ gānjìng le.* (lit. she grasp clothes wash clean p) She washed the clothes (clean).

她把衣服洗干净，晾出去了。 *Tā bǎ yīfu xǐ gānjìng, liàng chūqù le.* (lit. she grasp clothes wash clean, hang out p) She washed the clothes and hung them out to dry.

她把衣服洗干净，晾出去，然后寄信去了。 *Tā bǎ yīfu xǐ gānjìng, liàng chūqù, ránhòu ji xìn qù le.* (lit. she grasp clothes wash clean, hang out, then post letter go p) She washed the clothes, hung them out to dry and then went to post a letter.

16.2.2 *Le* as both sentence particle and aspect marker

When *le* follows a verb phrase at the end of a sentence, it often functions both as aspect marker indicating completed action and as sentence particle:
16.3 Cases where sentence le is not used

Sentence le is usually not used where the indication of ‘change’ is not the speaker’s primary concern. For example, in:

(1) Sentences which indicate habitual actions, where the emphasis is more on persistence than change:

她常常打网球。 Tā chángcháng dǎ wǎngqiú. (lit. she often-often hit net-ball) She plays tennis very often.

我天天钓鱼。 Wǒ tiāntiān diào yú. (lit. I day-day hook-fish) I go fishing every day.

(2) Sentences with verbs marked by a continuous aspect marker or brief duration indicator, where the focus is on the continuity or brevity of the action:

她(正)在听广播。 Tā (zhèng)zài tīng guǎngbō. (lit. she (just) asp: in-the-process-of listen broadcast) She is listening to the broadcast.

他点了点头。 Tā diǎn le diǎn tóu. (lit. he nod asp nod head) He nodded.

(3) Sentences with verbs complemented by duration or frequency indicators or used with objects qualified by numeral and measure word phrases, where the interest is in what took place:

他学了四年中文。 Tā xuéle sì nián Zhōngwén. (lit. he study asp four year Chinese) He studied Chinese for four years.
Sentences

Zhōngguó liáng cí. (lit. she go asp China two times)

Tā chīle sān piān miànbāo. (lit. she eat asp three mw bread)

Zhōngguó She has been to China twice.

She ate three slices of bread.

She has been to China twice.

She has got a lot of jewellery.

She is a painter.

This cat is a tom(cat).

She has been to China twice.

She had been to China twice.

She has eaten three slices of bread.

She has drunk eight glasses of beer (and he does not look well, should not have done so, etc.).

She has been to China twice.

She has drunk eight glasses of beer.

She has been to China twice.

She has got a lot of jewellery.

She has been to China twice.

She has eaten three slices of bread.

She has drunk eight glasses of beer.

She has been to China twice.

She has eaten three slices of bread.

She has drunk eight glasses of beer.
Statements and the sentence particle 了

(8) Sentences in which a manner adverb is the centre of interest:

气球慢慢地
飘上天空去。
Qi qiú màn màn
de piāo shàng
tiānkōng qù.
(lit. balloon slow-slow p float up sky go) The balloon rose slowly into the sky.

母亲紧紧地
抱住孩子。
Mǔ qīn jǐn jǐn
de bào zhǔ
háizi.
(lit. mother tight-tight p embrace firm child) The mother held the child firmly in her arms.

(9) Sentences with the referential adverb 才 cái which emphasise the time or condition referred to:

她很晚才
回家。
Tā hěn wǎn
cái huí jiā.
(lit. she very late until-then return home) She returned home very late.

他喝醉了
才写得出
好诗。
Tā hē zuì le
cái xiě de
chū hǎo shī.
(lit. s/he drink intoxicated p only-then write p out good poem) Only when s/he is drunk can s/he produce good poems.

16.4 Ultimate versatility of sentence 了

Nevertheless, 了 le may be used with almost any sentence if the speaker wishes to impart his/her awareness of development or difference in a situation (see note under 16.3 (3) above). Naturally sentence le occurs in some circumstances more than others, but it is possible to find it added to unlikely sentences if the situation demands. For example:
Questions

Questions in Chinese take a number of different forms: question-word questions; general questions (with ma); surmise questions (with ba); affirmative-negative questions; alternative questions; rhetorical questions, etc.

### 17.1 Question-word questions

*Question-word questions* make use of question words or expressions, of which the following are the most obvious examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>谁</td>
<td>shéi (or shuí)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>谁的</td>
<td>shéide (or shuíde)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>什么</td>
<td>shénme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>什么时候/几时</td>
<td>shénme shíhou (or jǐ shí)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>几点钟</td>
<td>jǐ diǎn (zhōng)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪儿</td>
<td>nār (or shénme difang)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>怎么/怎么样</td>
<td>zěnme, zěn(me)yàng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪</td>
<td>nǎ/něi + (numeral) + measure word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>为什么</td>
<td>wèi shénme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: See earlier reference to interrogative pronouns in 4.4.

Question words or expressions occur in the sentence at the point where the answer is expected. There is no change in word order as in English.
Q: 谁是？
A: 她是我同学。

Q: 谁来过？
A: 张先生。

Q: 你见到谁了？
A: 我见到了李小姐。

Q: 这是谁的狗？
A: 这是我邻居的狗。

Q: 你想喝(一)点儿什么？
A: 我想喝(一)点儿可乐。

Q: 你今天上什么课？
A: 我今天上文学课。

Q: 什么时候去中国？
A: 我下个月去中国。

Q: 你几点钟回来？
A: 我八点左右回来。
Q: 你在哪里等我？
A: 我在火车站等你。

Q: 四十一路车站在哪儿？
A: 四十一路车站在前面。

Q: 你准备怎么样去伦敦？
A: 我准备坐长途汽车去。

Q: 他为什么没来？
A: 他有事没来。

Q: 你觉得这件外套怎么样？
A: 我觉得很好。

Q: 哪本小说最有趣？

Note: For discussion of coverbs like 坐 zuò ‘travel by’, see Chapter 19.

Note: 为什么 Wèi shénme ‘why’ is asking for an explanation rather than an identification, and the most common responses to it are therefore clauses beginning with 因为 yīnwèi ‘because’. (See Chapter 4.)
A: 那本小说最有趣。 Nà/néi běn xiǎoshuō zui yǒuqù. (lit. that mw novel most interesting) That novel is the most interesting.

### 17.1.1 Zēnmeyàng

怎么样 Zēnmeyàng ‘how’ can be used as a predicate by itself without a verb (see also 17.6 below).

Q: 电影怎么样？ Diànyīng zēnmeyàng? (lit. film how/what like) How was the film?/What was the film like?
A: 电影很动人。 Diànyīng hén dòngrén. (lit. film very moving) The film was very moving.

Q: 价钱怎么样？ Jiàqián zēnmeyàng? (lit. price how/what like) What about the price? 
A: 价钱很公道。 Jiàqián hén gōngdào. (lit. price very reasonable) The price was very reasonable.

Q: 咖啡馆的服务员怎么样？ Kāfēiguǎn de fúwùyuán zēnmeyàng? (lit. café p assistant how/what like) What are the waiters at the café like?
A: 他们很友好。 Tāmén hén yóuhǎo. (lit. they very friendly) They are very friendly.

### 17.1.2 Duō in questions

A number of question expressions are formed with 多 duō ‘how’, ‘to what extent’:

- **多久** duō jiǔ (or duō cháng shíjīān) how long
- **多远** duō yuǎn how far
- **多大** duō dà how old
- **多** duō + gradable adjective how + gradable adjective

There is also the common question word **多少** duōshǎo (lit. many-few) ‘how many’/‘how much’. ‘How many’ (but not ‘how much’) in pragmatically smaller numbers or quantities can also be represented by **几** jǐ.
As above, these question expressions are placed in the sentence where the answer is expected:

**Q:** 你想要多少？
Nǐ xiǎng yàò duōshǎo?
(lit. you want have how-many)

**A:** 我想要两个。
Wǒ xiǎng yào liǎng gè.
(lit. I want have two mw)

**Q:** 你用了多少钱？
Nǐ yòngle duōshǎo qián?
(lit. you use asp how-much money) How much (money) did you spend?

**A:** 我用了三十镑(钱)。
Wǒ yòngle sānshí bāng (qián).
(lit. I use asp thirty pound money)

**Q:** 你等了多久了？
Nǐ děngle duō jiǔ le?
(lit. you wait asp how-long p) How long have you been waiting?

**A:** 我等了一个小时了。
Wǒ děngle yī gè xiǎoshí le.
(lit. I wait asp one mw hour p) I have been waiting (for) an hour.

**Q:** 你家离这儿多远？
Nǐ jiā lí zhèr duō yuǎn?
(lit. you home from here how-far) How far is your home from here?

**A:** 我家离这儿二十英里。
Wǒ jiā lí zhèr èrshí yīnglǐ.
(lit. my home from here twenty mile) My home is twenty miles from here.

**Q:** 你妹妹今年多大了？
Nǐ mèimei jǐnnián duō le?
(lit. your younger sister this-year how big p) How old is your younger sister this year?

**A:** 她今年十八岁了。
Tā jǐnnián shí bā suì le.
(lit. she this-year eighteen years-of-age p) She is eighteen years old this year.

**Q:** 你弟弟多高？
Nǐ dìdi duō gāo?
(lit. your younger-brother how tall) How tall is your younger brother?

**A:** 他一米七五。
Tā yī mǐ qī wǔ.
(lit. he one metre seven five) He is one metre seventy-five.

**Q:** 你在上海呆了几天？
Nǐ zài shānghǎi dāile jǐ tiān?
(lit. you in Shanghai stay asp how many days) How many days did you stay in Shanghai?
**17.1.3 Ne in questions**

The particle 呢 ne can be added to the end of a question-word question usually to convey a slightly quizzical tone:

- 书在哪儿？  
  Shū zài nǎr?  
  Where is the book?

- 书在哪儿呢？  
  Shū zài nǎr ne?  
  Where can the book be?

- 他为什么没来？  
  Tā wèi shénme méi lái?  
  Why didn't he come?

- 他为什么没来呢？  
  Tā wèi shénme méi lái ne?  
  Why didn't he come then?
17.2 General questions with ma

General questions in Chinese can be formed by adding the particle **ma** to the end of the sentence. There is no change in word order. The answer to such questions is likely to be ‘yes’ or ‘no’; this is usually expressed by repeating the verb or adjective used in the question, in the case of ‘no’ with the negative (不 **bù** or 没 **méi**). If the question has a modal verb, the response uses the modal verb:

Q: 您是张云吗？
   Nǐn shì
   Zhāng Yún ma?
   Are you Zhang Yun?

A: 是。(我是张云。)
   Shì. (Wǒ shì
   Zhāng Yún.)
   Yes. (I’m Zhang Yun.)

Q: 这是终点站吗？
   Zhè shì zhōngdiǎn
   zhàn ma?
   Is this the terminus?

A: 不是。
   Bù shì.
   No.

Q: 你同意吗？
   Nǐ tóngyì ma?
   Do you agree?

A: 同意。
   Tóngyì.
   Yes. (lit. agree)

Q: 他有一个弟弟吗？
   Tā yǒu yī
gè dìdi ma?
   Has he got a younger brother?

A: 没有。
(他没有弟弟。)
   Méi yǒu. (Tā
   méi yǒu dìdi.)
   No. (He doesn’t have a younger brother.)

Q: 你姐姐抽烟吗？
   Nǐ jiējie
chōuyān ma?
   Does your elder sister smoke?

A: 抽。
   Chōu.
   Yes. (lit. smoke)

Q: 汽车加了油吗？
   Qíchē
   jiāle yóu ma?
   Have you filled the car with petrol?

A: 加了。
   Jiāle.
   Yes. (lit. filled)

Q: 你当过兵吗？
   Nǐ dāngguō
   bīng ma?
   Have you ever been a soldier?

A: 没有。
(没当过。)
   Méiyǒu. (Méi dāngguō.)
   No. (I have never been (one).)
Q: 你会说中文吗？
A: 不会。

Q: 你要喝茶吗？
A: 要。

Q: 那个节目有趣吗？
A: 很有趣。

Q: 你最近忙吗？
A: 不太忙。

Q: 那儿冷吗？
A: 冷极了。

Q: 你感冒了吗？
A: 是的。我感冒了。

Q: 你回来得很早吗？
A: 不是。我回来得很晚。

Nǐ huì shuō Zhōngwén ma? Can you speak Chinese?
Bù huì. No. (lit. cannot)
Nǐ yào hē bēi chá ma? Would you like a cup of tea?
Yào. Yes. (lit. like)
Nèi gè jiémù yǒuqù ma? Was that programme interesting?
Hěn yǒuqù. Yes, very interesting.
Nǐ zuījìn máng ma? Have you been busy recently?
Bù tài máng. Not very. (lit. not too busy)
Nàr lěng ma? Was it cold there?
Lěng jí le. Extremely cold.
Nǐ gǎnmào le ma? (lit. you get-cold asp p) Have you got a cold?
Shì (de). (lit. be [p]. I get-cold p)
Wǒ gǎnmào le. Yes. I’ve got a cold.
Nǐ huí lái de hěn zǎo ma? (lit. you back-come p very very late) Did you come back early?
Q: 她结婚了吗？
A: 不，她还没（有）结婚。

Tā jiéle hūn le ma? (lit. she get asp married p p) Is she married?
Bù, tā hái méi(yóu) jiéhūn. (lit. no, she still not have marry) No, she is not married yet.

It should be noted that in Chinese the response to a question posed in the negative is to affirm or deny the negative, whereas in English the convention is to link the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ with the response:

Q: 你不高兴吗？
A: 不，我很高兴。
or, 是(的)，我不高兴。

Nǐ bù gāoxìng ma? (lit. you not happy p) Aren’t you pleased?
Bù, wǒ hěn gāoxìng. (lit. no, I very happy) Yes, I am.
Shì (de), wǒ bù gāoxìng. (lit. yes, I not happy) No, I’m not.

Q: 你明天不来吗？
A: 不，我来。
or, 是(的)，我不来。

Nǐ míngtiān bù lái ma? (lit. you tomorrow not come p) Aren’t you coming tomorrow?
Bù, wǒ lái. (lit. no, I come) Yes, I am.
Shì (de), wǒ bù lái. (lit. yes, I not come) No, I’m not.

Q: 你没见过他们吗？
A: 不，没见过。
or, 是(的)，我没见。

Nǐ méi jiànguò tāmen ma? (lit. you not see asp them p) Haven’t you met them before?
Bù, jiànguò. (lit. no, see asp) Yes, I have.
Shì (de), méi jiànguò. (lit. yes, not see asp) No, I haven’t.

Note: These questions can be made more rhetorical by introducing 难道 nándào ‘do you mean to say’, ‘is it really the case’ before or after the subject:

Q: 难道你不想念家吗？
A: 难道你不知道这事吗？

Nǐ nándào bù xiǎng jiā? Don’t you really miss your family?
Nándào nǐ bù zhīdào zhè shì shì ma? Didn’t you really know this?

17.3 Surmise questions with ba

To ask a general question, where the answer is expected or assumed, 吧 ba is used in place of 吗 ma. Such questions are similar to English
tag questions with phrases like ‘is(n’t) it’, ‘are(n’t) they’, etc., at the end. We will call these questions *surmise questions*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你会骑摩托车吧？</td>
<td>Nǐ huì qí mótuōche ba? (lit. you can ride motorcycle p) You can ride a motorbike, can’t you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你不吃蛇吧？</td>
<td>Nǐ bù chī shé ba? (lit. you not eat snake p) You don’t eat snake, do you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers to surmise questions (吧 ba questions) follow the same lines as those to 吗 ma questions. If the enquiry is about a state of affairs, 是 (的) shì (de) ‘yes’ or 不 (是) bù (shì) ‘no’ can be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>请问溜冰吧？</td>
<td>Nǐ huì lǚbīng ba? (lit. you can slide-ice p) You can skate, can’t you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>请问他懂广州话吧？</td>
<td>Tā dǒng Guǎngzhōu huà ba? (lit. he understand Cantonese p) He knows Cantonese, doesn’t he?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>请问他懂。</td>
<td>Tā dǒng. (lit. be [p]. he understand) Yes, he does.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where the question is posed in the negative, the response affirms or denies that negative, as with negative 吗 ma questions (see 17.2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你不是张先生吧？</td>
<td>Nǐ bù shì Zhāng xiānshēng ba? (lit. you not be Zhang mister p) You aren’t Mr Zhang, are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我不是。</td>
<td>Wǒ bù shì. (lit. yes, I not be) No, I am not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or, 不。我是张先生。</td>
<td>Bù. Wǒ shì Zhāng xiānshēng. (lit. no, I be Zhang mister) Yes, I am Mr Zhang.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17.4 *Affirmative-negative questions*

Another common way to make a general enquiry is to use *affirmative-negative questions*. These take the form of an affirmative verb or adjective immediately followed by its negative, i.e. ‘verb/adjective + 不 bù verb/adjective’. In the case of 有 yǒu, the negative is, of course, 没 méi.
Q: 你是不是张小姐？
A: 是./不是。
Nǐ shì bù shì Zhāng xiǎojie? Shi./Bù shì. Yes./No.

Q: 你身上有没有钱？
A: 有./没有。
Nǐ shēn shāng yǒu méi yǒu qián? Yǒu./Méi yǒu. Yes./No.

Q: 他明天来不来？
A: 来./不来。
Tā míngtiān lái bù lái? Lái./Bù lái. Yes./No.

Q: 你想不想喝啤酒？
A: 想./不想。
Nǐ xiǎng bù xiǎng hē píjiǔ? Xiǎng./Bù xiǎng. Yes./No.

Q: 杯子够不够？
A: 够./不够。
Bēizi gòu bù gòu? Gòu./Bù gòu. Yes./No.

Q: 银行远不远？
A: 很远./不很远。
Yínháng yuǎn bù yuǎn? Hěnyuǎn./Bù hěn yuǎn. Yes./No.

If the verb or adjective is disyllabic, the second syllable may be dropped from the first verb or adjective:

Q: 那儿安(静)不安静？
A: 安静./不安静。
Nèr ān(jìng) bù ānjìng? Ānjìng./Bù ānjìng. Yes./No.

Q: 她愿(意)不愿意？
A: 愿意./不愿意。
Tā yuàn(yì) bù yuàn(yì)? Yuàn(yì)./Bù yuàn(yì). Yes./No.

This also happens with ‘verb + object’ expressions:

Q: 你起不起床？
A: 起床./不起床。
Nǐ qǐ bù qǐchuáng? Qǐchuáng./Bù qǐchuáng. Yes./No.
Q: 你洗不洗澡？ Nǐ xǐ bù xǐzāo?  Are you going to take a bath?
A: 洗。/不洗。 Xǐ./Bù xǐ.  Yes./No.

If the verb is preceded by a modal verb or 来/去 lái/qù, then only the modal verb or 来/去 lái/qù is made affirmative-negative:

Q: 你会不会 拉小提琴？ Nǐ huì bù huì lā xiǎotíqín?  Can you play the violin?
A: 会。/不会。 Hui./Bù huì.  Yes./No.

Q: 明天会不会 下雨？ Míngtiān huì bù huì xià yǔ?  Will it rain tomorrow?
A: 会。/不会。 Hui./Bù huì.  Yes./No.

Q: 你下午去 不去游泳？ Nǐ xiàwǔ qù bù qù yóuyǒng?  Are you going swimming this afternoon?
A: 去。/不去。 Qù./Bù qù.  Yes./No.

Where the verb indicates a completed action or past experience, the affirmative-negative pattern can be created either by putting 没有 méiyǒu at the end of the question or by placing 有没有 yǒu méiyǒu before the verb:

Q: 你学过中文没有？ Nǐ xué guo Zhōngwén méiyǒu?  Have you ever learned Chinese?
or, 你有没有学过中文？ Nǐ yǒu méiyǒu xuéguo Zhōngwén?
A: 学过。/没有。/ 没学过。 Xuéguo./Méiyǒu./ Méi xuéguo.  Yes./No.

Q: 你吃了药没有？ Nǐ chīle yào méiyǒu?  Did you take your medicine?
or, 你有没有吃药？ Nǐ yǒu méiyǒu chī yào?
A: 吃了。/没有。/ 没吃。 Chīle./Méiyǒu. Méi(yǒu) chī.  Yes./No.

Q: 你收到了回信没有？ Nǐ shōu dào le huíxìn méiyǒu?  Have you got a reply to your letter?
or 你有没有收到回信？ Nǐ yǒu méiyǒu shōu dào huíxìn?
A: 收到了。/没有。/ 收到。 Shōu dào le./Méiyǒu  Yes./No. Méi(yǒu) shōu dào.
Note: As seen in 8.3.1, the aspect marker le is not used in a negative statement with 没(有) méi(yǒu). It would therefore be incorrect to say: *你有没有吃了药? Nǐ yǒu méiyǒu chīlè yào?

### 17.5 Alternative questions with háishi

Alternative questions are posed by using 还是 háishi ‘or’ as a pivot between two balanced verbal clauses to suggest alternative possibilities:

- 你今天走还是明天走？
  - Nǐ jīntiān zǒu háishi
  - míngtiān zǒu?
  - Are you leaving today or tomorrow?

- 你坐汽车去还是坐火车去？
  - Nǐ zuò qìchē qù háishi zuò huǒchē qù?
  - Are you going by coach or by train?

- 他们想跳舞还是想看戏？
  - Tāmen xiǎng tiàowǔ háishi xiǎng kànxi?
  - Do they want to go to a dance or to see a play?

- 你来还是她来？
  - Nǐ lái háishi tā lái?
  - Are you coming or is she coming?

Note 1: 还是 Háishi is used to mean ‘or’ only in questions. In other sentences the word for ‘or’ is 或者 huòzhě (see 24.2.1 (2)).

Note 2: The adverbs 究竟 jiūjìng and 到底 dàodǐ, meaning ‘after all’, are often used for emphasis with alternative questions, affirmative-negative questions and with some question-word questions. They are always placed before the first verb:

- 他究竟想学汉语还是想学日语？
  - Tā jiūjìng xiǎng xué Hányǔ háishi xiǎng xué Riyǔ?
  - What does he really want to learn – Chinese or Japanese?

- 你到底有没有空？
  - Nǐ dàodǐ yǒu méi yǒu kòng?
  - Are you free after all?

- 他们究竟什么时候到？
  - Tāmen jiūjìng shénme shíhou dào?
  - When exactly do they arrive?

- 你究竟要去哪儿呢？
  - Nǐ jiūjìng yào qù nár ne?
  - Where do you really want to go?

### 17.6 Tags indicating suggestion

Suggestions in the form of questions can be made by adding a tag expression such as 好不好 hǎo bù hǎo, 好吗 hǎo ma or 怎么样 zěnmeyàng at the end of the sentence:
A positive answer to all these questions will usually be 好 Hao ‘fine’/‘OK’/‘good’. A negative response will obviously involve explanation but will often begin with 对不起 Duibuqi ‘sorry’.

### 17.7 Tags seeking confirmation

**Confirmation** can often be sought by adding the tag expression 是吗 Shi ma or 是不是 Shi bu shi at the end of a statement:

| Q: 她病了, 是吗? Tā bìng le, shì ma? | A: 是的. 她病了. Shì de. Tā bìng le. | She is ill, isn’t she? Yes. She’s ill. |
| Q: 你下个星期 考试, 是不是? Nǐ xià gè xīngqī kǎoshi, shì bù shì? | You’ll have exams next week, won’t you? |

Note: For discussion of 是 shi as an intensifier, see Chapter 22.

### 17.8 Rhetorical questions

**Rhetorical questions**, for which no answers are expected, can be formulated by inserting expressions such as 难道 nándào (lit. ‘difficult to say’), using pronouns such as 谁 shéi ‘who/nobody’, 什么 shénme ‘what/anything’, or referential adverbs such as 才 cái ‘only then’, etc.:

| 你难道不知道这件事吗? Nǐ nándào zhīdào zhè jiàn shì ma? | (lit. you difficult-to-say not know this thing) Don’t you know about this? |

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**Questions**
Subject and predicate; topic and comment

18.1 Dual patterning of sentence structures

Chinese sentences may be divided into two broad categories: subject-predicate and topic-comment. These two categories are markedly distinct both in terms of definite and indefinite reference and in their use of different types of verb with or without aspect markers. The transformation of a subject-predicate structure into a topic-comment one, with modal verbs or the sentence particle le, is a key feature of Chinese sentence construction.

This dual patterning of syntax enables flexible and succinct expression, with less dependence on formal grammatical features and sharper focus on meaning in relation to the real world. For instance:

东西都放在柜子里了。Dōngxi dōu fàng zài guìzi lǐ le. (lit. things all put at cupboard-in p)

Everything has been put in the cupboard.

This sentence does not need to be couched in the passive voice, though its English equivalent does. By relying on real-world knowledge, the Chinese speaker can be confident that no misunderstanding will arise, since the listener cannot possibly assume that the ‘things’ in the sentence are the subject and responsible for the action of putting. (Compare 18.4.1.)

18.2 Subject-predicate sentences

A subject-predicate sentence usually relates an event and is therefore used for narrative purposes. It has the following features:

(1) The subject is often a noun or pronoun representing the initiator or recipient of the action (or non-action) expressed by the verb:
大家都带了雨伞。

Dàjiā dōu dáile yǔsān.

Everybody carried an umbrella with them.

他们收到了不少礼物。

Tāmen shōu dàole bù shào liwù.

They received quite a lot of presents.

弟弟不吃鱼。

Dìdì bù chī yú.

My younger brother doesn’t eat fish.

他没(有)去过印度。

Tā méi(yǒu) qùguō Yǐndū.

He has never been to India.

(2) The subject must be of definite reference:

她在洗碗。

Tā zài xǐ wǎn.

She is washing the dishes.

老师走进了教室。

Lǎoshī zǒu jìn le jiàoshì.

The teacher came into the classroom.

孩子们在马路上踢球。

Háizìmen zài mǎlù shàng tí qiú.

The children are playing football on the road.

妈妈丢掉了她的钱包。

Māma diū diào le tāde qiánbāo.

Mother has lost her purse.

A noun at the beginning of such a sentence, even if unqualified by a demonstrative (this, that), will have definite reference (e.g. 老师 lǎoshī ‘the teacher’ in the above). A personal pronoun is naturally of definite reference, and a pronoun like 大家 dàjiā refers to ‘everybody of a definite group’. A noun of indefinite reference cannot normally be the subject of a subject-predicate construction, and it would therefore be unusual to say:

*一个学生 站了起来。

*Yī gè xuésheng zhànle qǐlái. (lit. A student stood up.)

However, it is possible to begin the sentence with the verb 有 yǒu so that the noun of indefinite reference comes after a verb:

有一个学生 站了起来。

Yǒu yī gè xuésheng zhànle qǐlái. A student stood up.

This accounts for the fact that many narrative sentences begin with a time or location expression followed by 有 yǒu:

这时候有一辆车 开了过来。

Zhèshí hǎi yī辆车 chē kāile guólái. (lit. this time there-was (one) mw car drive asp across- come) At this moment a car approached.
Sentences

今天晚上有(一个)个朋友来我家坐。

Jīntiān wǎnshāng yǒu (yī) gè péngyǒu lái wǒ jiā zuò. (lit. today evening there-will-be (one) mw friend come my home sit) A friend is coming round to my place this evening.

外面有人找你。

Wàimiàn yǒu rén zhǎo nǐ. (lit. outside there-is person look-for you) There is someone outside looking for you.

(3) The predicate verb is an action verb. Aspect markers are therefore almost always present in subject-predicate sentences (see Chapter 8).

我喝了一杯牛奶。

Wǒ hē le yī bēi niúnǎi. I drank/had a glass of milk.

他看过杂技。

Tā kànguò zájì. He has seen acrobatics.

他们正在谈判。

Tāmen zhèngzài tánpàn. They are negotiating right now.

她戴着一顶白帽子。

Tā dàizhe yī dìng bái màozi. She is wearing a white hat.

Note: Some action verbs can be followed by zhe to indicate a persistent state that results from the action of the verb. See the last example above and 8.3.4.

(4) It may be a sentence with a passive marker (e.g. 被 bèi, 让 ràng, 叫 jiào, etc.) or with 把 bā (implying intentional manipulation or unintentional intervention; see also Chapter 20):

信封被弄得很脏。

Xînfēng bèi nóng de hén zāng. (lit. envelope by handle p very dirty) The envelope has been made very dirty.

他们把汽车停在路边。

Tāmen bǎ qíchē tíng zài lù biān. (lit. they grasp car stop at road-side) They parked their car by the side of the road.

(5) The predicate verb may be causative or dative (see 8.5 and 21.5).

她请我吃饭。

Tā qǐng wǒ chī fàn. She invited me to a meal. (causative)

我送他一个礼物。

Wǒ sòng tā yī gè lǐwù. I gave him a present. (dative)
A *topic-comment* sentence, while usually following a structure with a noun phrase followed by a verb phrase similar to that of a subject and predicate, provides a description or offers an opinion, rather than narrating an action or event. It is therefore a construction designed for descriptive, explanatory or argumentative purposes. The following features differentiate it from the subject-predicate sentence:

1. The topic may be of any word class or any structure (e.g. a phrase or even a clause):

   - **字典很** (lit. dictionary very useful) 
     **Zìdiǎn hěn yóuyòng.** *(noun: ‘dictionaries’)* Dictionaries are very useful.
   - **懒惰是** (lit. lazy is not right) 
     **Lǎnduò shì bù duì.** *(lit. lazy is not right)* Being lazy is wrong.
   - **做事应该** (lit. do things should) 
     **Zuò shì yīnggāi rēnzhēn.** *(lit. do things should be conscientious)* One should be conscientious when doing anything.
   - **他不来** (lit. he not come not) 
     **Tā bù lái bù yàojǐn.** *(lit. he does not come)* It does not matter if he does not turn up.

2. The topic may be of definite or indefinite reference:

   - **工具应该** (lit. tool should put at here) 
     **Gōngjù yīnggāi fāng zài zhèr.** *(lit. tool should put here)* The tools should be placed here.
   - **一个人** (lit. one person not) 
     **Yī gè rén bù néng bù jiǎng lǐ.** *(lit. one person not not reasonable)* A person must be reasonable.

3. The comment can be an adjectival predicate, or it can contain the verbs 是 shì or 有 yǒu:

   - **这个孩子** (lit. this child is) 
     **Zhèì gè háizi hěn cōngmíng.** *(lit. this child is)* This child is very intelligent.
   - **今天是我的生日。** (lit. my birthday) 
     **Jīntiān shì wǒde shēngrì.** *(lit. my birthday)* Today is my birthday.
   - **每个人都有** (lit. every person has) 
     **Měi gè rén dōu yǒu yī gè míngzi.** *(lit. every person has)* Every person has a name.
### 18.3.1 Further ways to form topic-comment sentences

In addition, topic-comments can be created in the following circumstances:

1. When a modal verb is present, since a modal verb naturally signals a comment:
   
   她会说中文。 Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén. She can speak Chinese.
   
   谁都应该遵守纪律。 Shéi dōu yǐnggāi zūnshǒu jìlǜ. Everybody should observe discipline.
   
   学生也可以参加。 Xuéshēng yě kěyǐ cānjīā. Students may also take part.

2. By the addition of the sentence particle T le. This can convert most subject-predicates into topic-comments since by definition it expresses a comment on the action, updating, indicating change, etc. (see 16.1):
   
   弟弟吃鱼了。 Dìdì chī yú le. My younger brother eats fish now.
   
   病人醒过来了。 Bìngrén xǐng guòlái le. The patient has regained consciousness.
   
   别人都离开了。 Biérén dōu líkāi le. The others have all left.

### 18.4 Topic | subject-predicate sentences

A posed topic may be followed by a subject-predicate structure. There are therefore a large number of sentences where both a topic and a subject are present. These ‘topic | subject-predicate’ structures are often used for explanatory purposes:

那本侦探 小说我们卖完了。 Nèi běn zhèntàn xiǎoshuō wǒmen mài wán le. We have sold out of that detective/crime novel.

信她寄出去了。 Xin tā jǐ chūqù le. She has posted the letter.

你的裤子我烫好了。 Nǐde kùzǐ wǒ tàng hǎo le. I’ve ironed your trousers.
18.4.1 Notional passive sentences

The subject in these ‘topic + subject-predicate’ structures may be omitted if its sense is understood from the context. Sentences of this type superficially become ‘topic + predicate’ structures and can be seen as *notional passive* sentences in which the topic is notionally the object of the verb. The three examples in 18.4 may be re-formulated without the subject as:

- 那本侦探小说卖完了。  
  *Nèi běn zhēnzhēn xiǎoshuō | mài wán le.*  
  (lit. that mw detective novel | sell finish p) That detective novel is sold out.

- 信寄出去了。  
  *Xìn | jì chūqù le.*  
  (lit. letter | post out-go p) The letter has been sent/posted.

- 你的裤子烫/熨好了。  
  *Nǐde kùzǐ | tàng/ yùn háo le.*  
  (lit. your trousers | iron good p) Your trousers have been ironed.

Other examples are:

- 这个戏演了两个月了。  
  *Zhè gè xì | yánle liǎng gè yuè le.*  
  (lit. this mw play | perform asp two mw month p) This play has been on for two months.

- 包裹收到了。  
  *Bāoguǒ | shōu dào le.*  
  (lit. parcel | receive arrive p) The parcel has been received.

- 代表团的访问日程安排好了。  
  *Dàibiáotuán de fāngwèn ríchéng | ānpái hǎo le.*  
  (lit. delegation p visit itinerary | arrange good p) The itinerary for the delegation’s visit has been arranged.

- 你要的东西买回来了。  
  *Nǐ yào de dòngxi | mái huílái le.*  
  (lit. you want p things | buy back-come p) The things you want have been bought.

18.5 Subject | topic-comment sentences

Conversely, a subject may be followed by a topic-comment structure to create a ‘subject | topic-comment’ sentence. At first sight these sentences seem to have two subjects, but in fact what looks like a second subject is a topic (relating to the subject) on which a comment is expressed:
He is not healthy.

I work very busy.

The director of the board has an extremely high salary.

The economy of Guangdong developed/is developing very fast.

It is also possible for the possessive 的 de to be used after the subject, thereby changing the subject–topic sequence into a simple topic and leaving the sentence in the topic-comment form:

I am busy with my work.

The economy of Guangdong developed/is developing very fast.

19 Prepositions and coverbs

19.1 Coverbs

We have seen in 11.4 how the preposition 在 zài ‘in’, ‘at’ followed by a location noun, pronoun or postpositional phrase can be placed before the verb as a location phrase:

Mother is preparing the meal/doing the cooking in the kitchen.

There are a number of prepositions that grammatically function like 在 zài. As they can also be used as full verbs, they may be called coverbs, i.e. verbs that occur in sequence with other verbs in a sentence. The coverb with its object can be referred to as a coverbal phrase. In the above example, 在 zài is the coverb, and the location phrase 在厨房里 zài chūfáng lǐ, in syntactic terms, is a coverbal phrase.
19.1.1 Coverbs of place and time

(1) 在 ‘in, at’

她在 (飞)机场 当翻译。

Tā zài (fēi)jīchǎng dāng fānì.

She serves as an interpreter at the airport.

我在大使馆 办签证。

Wǒ zài dàshíguǎn bàn qiānzhēng.

I was applying for a visa at the embassy.

我可以在这儿抽烟/吸烟吗？

Wǒ kēyǐ zài zhèr chōuyān/ xīyān ma?

May I smoke here?

(2) 到 ‘to’

下学期到四月份才开始。

Xià xuéqī dào sìyuèféi cái kāishí.

Next term doesn’t begin till April.

课程到明年六月份就结束了。

Kèchéng dào míngnián liùyuèfèn jiù jiéshù le.

The course will end next June/June next year.

Note: 月份 yuèfèn is used as an alternative to 月 yuè when referring to months of the year.

他们明天到俄国去。

Tāmen míngtiān dào Éguó qù.

They are going to Russia tomorrow.

他没到医院来看我。

Tā méi dào yīyuàn lái kàn wǒ.

He did not come to the hospital to see me.
Sentences

We do not go to the restaurant.

We are not dining out at a restaurant.

As can be seen from the last example, a copular phrase with 走 来 ‘come’ or 去 ‘go’ may often be followed by another verb to indicate purpose.

(3) 往 Wáng, 向 xiàng, 朝 cháo ‘towards’

汽车往南 开去.

The car is heading south.

她朝我 点了点头.

She nodded to me.

他向俱乐部 走来.

S/he came towards the club.

(4) 从 Cóng ‘from’

这个音乐剧 从去年就开始上演了.

This musical has been on since last year.

风从西边 吹来.

The wind blew from the west.

你从这儿 向北走.

You go north from here.

Note: In this last example, there are two copular phrases: 从这儿 Cóng zhèr and 向北 xiàng běi.

(5) 离 Lí ‘(distance) from (in terms of place or time)’

我家离大学 很远.

My home is very far from the university.

我的办公室 离市中心 很近.

My office is very close to the city centre.

Note 1: 离 Lí ‘from’ simply indicates distance between two fixed objects, while 从 Cóng ‘from’ is always associated with movement from one place to another.
Note 2: The negator 不 bù comes before the main predicate verb or adjective and not before 离 lǐ. 我家离大学不远。Wǒ jiā lí dàxué bùyuǎn ‘My home is not far from the university.’ NOT: *我家不离大学远。Wǒ jiā bù lí dàxué yuǎn.

我家离上海有二十公里。Wǒ jiā lí Shànghǎi yǒu ěrshí gōnglǐ. (lit. my home from Shanghai have twenty kilometres) My home is twenty kilometres from Shanghai.

现在离圣诞节还有两个月。Xiànzài lí Shèngdànjié hái yǒu liǎng gè yuè. (lit. now from Christmas still have two months) There are still two months from now to Christmas.

Note: When the actual distance or time is specified, the verb 有 yǒu is normally required.

(6) 沿着 Yánzhe ‘along’

我们沿着那条街走去。Wǒmen yánzhe nèi tiáo jiē qù. (lit. we along that street walk go) We went along that street.

船沿着运河开到。Chuán yánzhe yùnhé kāi lái. (lit. boat along canal sail come) The boat came along the canal.

Note: 沿 Yán on its own is only found in such expressions as 沿路 yán lù ‘all along the road’, 沿海 yán hǎi ‘all along the coast’, etc., which are generally used to indicate existence rather than movement:

沿路都是麦田。Yán lù dōu shì màitián. There are wheatfields all along the road.

19.1.2 Coverbs of methods and means

(1) 用 Yòng ‘with, using’

她用毛笔画画儿。Tā yòng máobǐ huà huàr. (lit. she use Chinese-brush paint picture) She paints with a Chinese brush.

(2) 坐 Zuò ‘(travelling) on/by’ (lit. sit)

我常常在地铁上班。Wǒ chángcháng zuò dìtiē shàngbān. (lit. I often sit underground-rail go-to-work) I often go to work by underground.
III

Sentences

我们很想

Wǒmen hěn

(slit. we very want sit train/bus/plane/boat go) We'd very much

坐火车/公共汽车/飞机/船去。

xiàng zuò huǒchē/gōnggōng qì/chē fēi/jī chuán qù.

(We'd very much like to go by train/bus/plane/boat.)

Note: An alternative coverb for travel is 乘 chéngh:

我常常乘

Wǒ chángcháng chéngh

出租汽车上班。

chūzū qìchē shàngbān.

(lit. I often take hire-car go-to-work) I often go to

work by taxi.

19.1.3 Coverbs of human exchange and service

(1) 对 Duì ‘(speaking) to’, ‘(behaving) towards’

对

Tā duì wǒ

(slit. he to me said . . .)

说 . . .

shuō . . .

He said to me . . .

他们对我

Tāmen duì

(wlit. they towards me very good)

wǒ hén hǎo.

They are very kind to me.

Note: 对 Duì is also commonly used to mean ‘with regard to’:

我对美术/音乐没(有)

Wǒ duì měishù/yīnyuè

(méi(yǒu) xìngqù.

have interest) I have no interest in

美术/音乐.

(2) 给 Gěi ‘to’, ‘for’

我今天晚上

Wǒ jīntiān

(wlit. I today evening to you make

给

wǎnshāng gěi

telephone-call) I will call/ring you

你
dá diànhuà.

tonight.

我每周都

Wǒ měi zhōu
dōu gěi bàba

(wlit. I every week all to father

给爸爸

dōu gěi bàba

write letter) I write to my father

写信。

xiě xìn.

every week.

请你给我

Qǐng nǐ gěi

(wlit. please you to me write (one)

开(一)张

wǒ kāi (yī)

(mw receipt) Please write a

收据。

zhāng shōujù.

receipt for me.

(3) 为/替 Wèi/tí ‘for’, ‘on behalf of’

姐姐替我

Jiējiē tǐ wǒ

(lit. elder-sister for me cut hair)

理发。

lǐ fà.

My elder sister cut my hair

for me.
Ménfáng wèi (lit. porter for me call asp one mw taxi) The porter called a taxi for me.

Note: 跟 Gēn may also be used colloquially like 对 duì above:

她跟我说... Tā gēn wǒ shuō... She said to me...

19.1.4 Coverbs of reference

(1) 按/照/按照 Àn/zhào/ànzhào ‘according to’

请你按  Qǐng nǐ àn/ (lit. please you according-to regulation go manage this)
照/按照 zhào/ànzhào  guīdīng qù bàn (mw matter) Please do this according to the regulations.

(2) 就 Jiù ‘with reference to’

我们就  Wǒmen jiù (lit. we with-reference-to this mw question discuss a-moment) Let’s have a discussion of/discuss this question.

19.1.5 Coverbs and comparison

比 Bī and 跟 gēn in comparison expressions (as discussed in 7.2 and 7.2.3) are in fact coverbs.

她比我大。 Tā bǐ wǒ dà. She is older than me.

这个跟那个一样贵。 Zhèi gè gēn nèi gè yīyàng guì. This one is as expensive as that one.

把 Bā in manipulation constructions and 被 bèi for passive voice (analysed in Chapter 20) are also coverbs.

19.2 Disyllabic prepositions

There are a number of disyllabic prepositions which, though similar to coverb prepositions, are not strictly in that category, since they may be
followed not only by nominal expressions but also in most cases by verbal phrases. These prepositional constructions usually come at the beginning of the sentence:

(1)  根据/据 Gènjū/jù ‘on the basis of’

根据路牌, Gènjū lùpái (lit. basing-on road-sign we
我们找到, wǒmen zhǎo  look-for-and-find asp her home)
了她的家, dào le tāde jiā.  We found her home with the
help of road signs.

据她所说, jù tā suǒ shuō,  (lit. basing-on p say, they
他们已经, tāmen yǐjīng  already leave p) According to
走了, zǒu le.  her, they have already left.

(2)  关于 Guānyú ‘as for’, ‘as regards’

关于这一点, Guānyú zhèi (lit. as-for this one point, I already
我已经提出, yǐ diǎn, wǒ  raise-out asp my opinion) As
过我的意见, yǐjīng tíchūguò  regards this point, I have already
wǒde yìjian.  put forward my opinion.

(3)  由于 Yóuyú ‘because of’

由于大雪, Yóuyú dà xuě,  (lit. because-of heavy snow, ball-
球赛暂停, qiúsài zàntíng.  contest temporary-stop) The ball
game was temporarily suspended
because of the heavy snow.

Note: 由于 Yóuyú may also be regarded as a conjunction when it is
followed by a clause. (See Chapter 24.)

(4)  为了 Wèile ‘for the sake of’

为了这件事, Wèile zhèi (lit. for this mw matter, I go asp
我去了三趟, wǒ  three trip) I made three trips
qù le sān tàng.  there for this business.

为了看望, Wèile kànwàng (lit. in-order-to visit old grandma,
老祖母, lǎo zǔmǔ, tā  she every week all return home)
她每星期, měi xīngqī dōu  She goes home every week in
都回家, huí jiā.  order to see her old grandma.

Note: We have consciously used the term ‘preposition’ for this group of words
in order to illustrate the uniformity of their function.
20  Bả and bèi constructions

20.1  The bả construction

The 把 bả construction is a grammatical feature unique to the Chinese language. In this construction, the coverb 把 bả, which as a verb has the meaning ‘to grasp’, has the function of shifting the object of the verb to a pre-verbal position in the pattern of ‘subject + bả + object + verb’. Three interrelated features of the construction can be identified:

(1) As seen in 1.3.2, an unqualified object after the verb will generally be of indefinite reference. Employment of the coverb 把 bả, which moves the object in front of the verb, automatically converts the noun to definite reference:


我去把书买回来。 Wǒ qù bǎ shū mǎi huílái. (lit. I go grasp book buy back-come) I am going to buy the book/books (and come back with it/them).

(2) In the discussion of complements in 13.4.3, it was apparent that with complements adjustments have to be made when the verb is followed by an object:

这个人说得很快。 Zhèi gè rén shuō huà shuō de hén kuài. (lit. this mw person say words say very fast) This person speaks very fast.

In this example, the repetition of the verb 说 shuō enables it to deal with the object and the complement one at a time. The coverb 把 bả is used to similar effect, moving the object before the verb and leaving the post-verbal position clear for the complement.

她把书放好了。 Tā bǎ shū fàng hǎo le. (lit. she grasp book put good p) She placed the books in good order.

她把它搁在书架上。 Tā bǎ tā gē zài shūjià shàng. (lit. she grasp it leave at bookshelf on) She placed it on the bookshelf.

Note: 它 Tā ‘it’ cannot be omitted after 把 bả.
(3) 把 Bà, which as noted derives from a verb meaning ‘to grasp’, also implies intentional (or sometimes unintentional) manipulation of the object on the part of the subject. In the latter case, 给 gěi may sometimes be added before the main verb.

她把衣服洗干净了。 Tā bā yīfu xǐ gānjìng le. (lit. she grasp clothes wash clean p) She has washed the clothes./She has done the washing.

他把衬衫弄脏了。 Tā bā chènshān (gěi)nòngzāng le. (lit. he grasp shirt handle dirty p) He dirtied his shirt.

The subject of a 把 bā construction deliberately (or unwittingly) handles or deals with the object in such a way that some kind of consequence is registered in the complement that follows the verb.

The 把 bā construction, therefore, cannot be used if any of the above conditions are not met. In other words, a 把 bā construction must have an object of definite reference (shifted now to a pre-verbal position directly after 把 bā); a complement of some kind after the verb to indicate the result achieved by the action of the verb, either intentionally or unintentionally, on the part of the subject. The following sentences are therefore unacceptable:

(a) *我把舞跳了一次。 Wǒ bā wǔ tiào yī cì. (lit. I danced once)

(The noun 舞 wǔ ‘dance’ is not of definite reference in this context.)

(b) *我把书放了。 Wǒ bā shū fàng. (lit. I put the books)

(There is no complement and therefore no indication of any result achieved by the action of the verb 放 fàng ‘put’.)

(c) *我把电影看了两个钟头。 Wǒ bā diànyǐng kàn le liáng gè zhōngtóu. (lit. I took two hours to watch the film)

(It is clearly beyond the power of the subject to decide how long the film will be. There are of course occasions when the subject can control the duration of something – see 20.1.1 below.)

(d) *我把这本书喜欢得很。 Wǒ bā zhěi běn shū xǐhuan de hěn. (lit. I like this book very much)

(The verb 喜欢 xǐhuan ‘like’ expresses the inclination of the subject and the complement 的很 de hěn ‘very much’ indicates the degree or extent of the liking; these cannot be regarded as a manipulative action and an achieved result.)
The **bā** construction and complements

Complements in a **bā** construction may take various forms:

- **Wō bā lā jī dào** (lit. I grasp litter pour off p)
  - *diào le.* (result – verb)
  - I have dumped the rubbish.

- **Tā bā xìn fēng hǎo** (lit. she grasp letter seal good p)
  - *le.* (result – adjective)
  - She has sealed the letter.

- **Tā bā huà guà** (lit. he grasp picture hang up-)
  - *qīlái le.* (direction)
  - He hung the picture.

- **Dìdì bā kèwén fūxí le** (lit. younger-brother grasp text revise asp two times)
  - *liàng biàn.* (frequency)
  - My younger brother revised the text twice.

- **Jìngchá bā xiǎotōu guān le liáng** (lit. police grasp thief imprison asp two mw month)
  - *gè yuè.* (duration)
  - The police kept the thief in prison for two months.

- **Jiějie bā fángjiān** (lit. elder-sister grasp room tidy asp one stroke)
  - *shōushì le yī xià.* (brief duration)
  - My elder sister tidied up the room.

- **Tā bā yǐzi lā dào** (lit. she grasp chair pull to table side)
  - *zhúzǐ pángbiān.* (destination)
  - She pulled the chair to the side of the table.

- **Wō bā dàyī guà zài yījià** (lit. I grasp overcoat hang at clothes-hanger on)
  - *shàng.* (location)
  - I hung my overcoat on the clothes-hanger.

- **Wōmen bā liwù sòng** (lit. we grasp gift present give her)
  - *gěi tā.* (dative)
  - We presented the gift to her.

- **Tāmen bā wūzi dāsào de gāngānjìngjìng** (lit. they grasp room sweep p clean-clean p)
  - *de.* (manner)
  - They swept the room clean.

Note: Reduplicated adjectival complements are usually followed by 得 de.

- **Tā bā wǒ qì de huà dōu shuō bù chūláí le.** (lit. she grasp me anger p words all speak not out-come p)
  - She made me so angry that I could not speak a word.
20.1.2 Le and zhe as complements in bā sentences

The aspect markers 了 le and 着 zhe may also be used as complements in 把 bā sentences.

(1) 了 Le (indicating completed action with verbs which have an inherent meaning of result):

- 她把茶喝了. Tā bā chá hēle. (lit. she grasp tea drink asp)
- 谁把门锁了. Shéi bā mén suōle? (lit. who grasp door lock asp)

(2) 着 Zhe (indicating persistence in an imperative sentence):

- 请把灯拿着. Qǐng bā dēng názhe. (lit. please grasp lamp hold asp)
- 把菜留着. Bā cài liúzhe. (lit. grasp dishes keep asp)

20.1.3 Bā and resultative complements

One type of complement regularly used with 把 bā is the resultative complement beginning with 成 chéng, 作 zuò or 为 wéi all meaning ‘become’, ‘act as’:

- 作家把自己写的故事翻译成法文. Zuòjiā bǎ zìjǐ xiě de gǔshì fānyì chéng Fāwén. (lit. writer grasp self write p story translate become French)
- 她把我当作最好的朋友. Tā bǎ wǒ dàng zuò zuí hǎo de péngyou. (lit. s/he grasp me regard become most good p friend) S/he regarded me as her best friend.

20.1.4 Nòng and Gāo in bā sentences

弄 Nòng and 搞 gāo are two versatile colloquial verbs meaning loosely ‘to handle’ which feature regularly in 把 bā sentences:

- 我把盒子弄破了. Wǒ bā hézi nòng pò le. (lit. I grasp box handle break p) I broke the box.
- 别把机器弄坏了. Bié bā jīqì gāo huài le. (lit. don’t grasp machine handle bad p) Don’t damage the machine.
20.1.5 Negative bā sentences

In negative 把 bā sentences, the negator must precede 把 bā:

- 音乐家还没(有)把 méi(yǒu) bā tāde 他的歌曲 gēqǔ guàn chéng 灌成唱片. (lit. musician still not-have grasp his song record become record)
- 别把花瓶 pèng dāo. 碰倒. (lit. don’t grasp vase bump fall-over)
- 他从不把 bēizi dié hǎo. 被子叠好. (lit. he always not grasp quilt fold-good) He never folds up [his] quilt properly.

Note: 不 bù with 把 bā is comparatively rare, occurring normally with verbs indicating habitual action or sometimes intention. It also occurs in composite sentences (see 24.3).

20.1.6 Bā and modal verbs

Modal verbs may come before 把 bā:

- 我能把 chuānghu dǎ kāi ma? (lit. I can grasp window hit open p) May I open the window?
- 你可以把 gōngjù shōu qǐlái le. 工具收起来 le. (lit. you can grasp tool collect up- come p) You can put the tools away [now].

The negator 不 bù generally precedes the modal verb in a 把 bā construction, though it may occasionally come after it if required by meaning:

- 她不肯 bā cìdiàn jiè 借给他. Tā bù kěn (lit. she not willing grasp dictionary lend give him) She was not willing to lend her dictionary to him.
- 你能不 bā lájī dào 垃圾倒在这儿吗? Nǐ néng bù (lit. you can not grasp litter dump at here p) Can you not tip [your] litter here?

20.1.7 Bā and indefinite reference

We have emphasised in this section that the object of the coverb 把 bā must be of definite reference. This is certainly true, particularly in
narrative or descriptive sentences. Sometimes even when the object is indefinite in form, it is still of definite reference in meaning:

```
她把一条
好好的裙子
撕破了。
Tā bǎ yī tiáo
hǎohāode
qúnzi sī pò le.
(lit. she grasp one mw good de
skirt tear-break p) She tore a nice
skirt into pieces.
```

This definite reference would of course have been made clearer if the speaker had said:

```
她把那么/
这么一条
好好的裙子
撕破了。
Tā bǎ nàme/
zhème yī tiáo
hǎohāode
qúnzi sī pò le.
(lit. she grasp like-that/like-this one
mw good de skirt tear-break p)
She tore a nice skirt like that/like
this into pieces.
```

However, where 把 bā is followed by a noun in a generic sense, it is to be understood as of indefinite (i.e. generic) reference. A sentence like this tends to sound more argumentative:

```
她(老是)
把钱藏在
枕头下。
Tā (lǎoshì) bā
qián cáng zài
zhēntou xià.
(lit. she (always) grasp money hide
cv:in/at pillow below) She always
hides her money under the pillow.
```

```
他们(竟然)
把书本放
在冰箱里。
Tāmen (jìnrán)
bā shū běn fàng
zài bīngxiāng li.
(lit. they contrary-to-expectation grasp books place cv:in/at refrigerator inside) They even
put books in the fridge.
```

```
别把朋友
当成敌人。
Bié bā péngyou
dàngchéng
dirén.
(lit. don’t grasp friend regard
cv:in/at become enemy) Don’t regard
your friends as enemies.
```

### 20.2 The 被 bèi construction

The 被 bèi construction in Chinese is similar to the passive voice in English, though it is not as commonly used. The coverb 被 bèi ‘by’ marks the agent and with it forms a coverbal phrase, which like other coverbal phrases comes after the subject and before the verb. The agent may be either definite or indefinite reference.

The 被 bèi construction has features in common with the 把 bā construction: the verb is usually one of ‘manipulation’, involving action, handling, changing, etc., and is normally complex, that is, followed by some form of complement. Additionally, the 被 bèi construction often conveys the sense that something has gone wrong:
20.2.1 Ràng and jiào

In colloquial speech, 让 ràng or 叫 jiào may be used instead of 被 bèi:

香蕉让孩子吃掉了。 Xiāngjiāo ràng háizi chī diào le. (lit. banana by child eat off p) The banana was eaten by the child.

我的雨伞叫人借走了。 Wǒde yǔsān jiào rén jiè zǒu le. (lit. my umbrella by someone borrow away p) My umbrella was borrowed by someone.

In addition, 给 gěi may be added before the verb:

足球迷叫流氓给打伤了。 Zúqiúmí jiào liúmáng gěi dǎ shāng le. (lit. football-fan by hooligan by hit hurt p) The football fan was beaten up by hooligans.

20.2.2 The bèi construction with an agent

It is possible for the construction to be used without an agent. In these cases, 被 bèi (or 给 gěi, but not 让 ràng or 叫 jiào), is placed before the verb:

他们被关在外头了。 Tāmen bèi guān zài wàitou le. (lit. they by shut at outside p) They were shut outside.

他给踢了一脚。 Tā gěi tī le yī jiǎo. (lit. he by kick asp one mw) He was kicked.

20.2.3 Negative bèi sentences

As with the 把 bǎ structure, the negator and modal verbs precede 被 bèi:

他们的主张没有(有)被接受。 Tāmende zhǔzhāng méi(yǒu) bèi jiēshòu. (lit. their proposal not-have by accept) Their proposal was not accepted.
### 20.3 The \textit{bèi} construction versus the notional passives

While the \textit{bèi} construction, usually describing an event, parallels the passive voice, sentence forms of the topic-comment variety (see 18.3) may be defined as \textit{notional passives}. In these sentences, the topic is often inanimate (or non-human), and therefore no ambiguity arises as to the relationship between the topic and the verb. For example, in the first sentence below, the \textit{letter} cannot possibly be taken as initiating the action of \textit{writing} itself.

- 信写完了。\textit{Xìnxíe wán le.} (lit. letter write finish p) The letter has been written.
- 杯子打破。\textit{Bēizi dǎ pò le.} (lit. cup/mug hit broken p) The cup/mug was broken.
- 窗户都漆成绿色了。\textit{Chuānghu dōu qī chéng lǜsè le.} (lit. window all paint become green p) All the windows have been painted green.
- 床单和被套都洗干净, 折叠好了。\textit{Chuángdān hé bèitào dōu xǐ gānjìng, zhédié hǎo le.} (lit. bedsheets and blanket-cover all wash clean, fold good p) All the bedsheets and quilt covers have been washed [and] neatly folded up.

### 21 Serial constructions

#### 21.1 General features of serial constructions

Chinese, unlike English, does not have the grammatical means to construct participles or infinitives, nor sets of prepositions capable of diversified meanings. Instead, it makes use of sequences of verbal phrases in what we will call serial constructions.

A \textit{serial construction} normally consists of two (or more) verbal predicates or comments which share the same subject or topic and follow
one another without any conjunction(s). A serial construction may have adjectival as well as verbal predicates.

### 21.2 Semantic varieties in serial constructions

The semantic relations between serial predicates or comments may belong to any of the following categories:

1. **Sequence**: The action of the first verb takes place before that of the second. The first verb often carries the aspect marker 了 le:

   - 他下了课回家去了。 (lit. he finish asp class return home go p) He finished class and went home.
   - 她吃了药去睡觉了。 (lit. she eat asp medicine go sleep p) She took her medicine and went to bed.

   Note: As discussed in 8.3.1, if an unqualified noun follows a verb carrying the aspect marker 了 le, the sentence needs to be completed with another clause or verbal phrase.

2. **Purpose**: The action described by the second verb is the purpose of the first verb (often 来 lái ‘to come’ or 去 qù ‘to go’):

   - 他们来伦敦探望我们。 (lit. they come London visit us) They came to London to visit us.
   - 我去商店买东西。 (lit. I go shop buy things) I am going to the shops to do some shopping.
   - 咱们约(一个)时间(一个)谈吧。 (lit. we appoint (one) mw time talk (one) talk p) Let’s make an appointment to have a talk.
   - 我代表大家向您祝贺。 (lit. I represent everybody to polite:you congratulate) On behalf of everybody I congratulate you.

   Note: Coverbal phrases indicating ‘service’ may often be used after 来 lái ‘come’ or 去 qù ‘go’ in a purpose serial construction:

   - 她来替我熨衣服。 (lit. she come for me iron clothes) She came to iron my clothes for me.
   - 我去给他理发。 (lit. I go for him arrange-hair) I’ll go and cut his hair.
Sometimes 来 lái may lose its motion meaning and simply indicate an intention:

我来谈谈。 **Wǒ lái tán tán.** (lit. I come talk-talk)
I’ll say a few words.

我来给你们介绍一下。 **Wǒ lái gěi nín jiè shào yī xià.** (lit. I come for you introduce one time) Let me introduce you.

To enhance the meaning of purpose (or lack of purpose), words such as 以便 yìbiàn ‘so as to’ and 以免 yǐmiǎn ‘so as not to’ are used before the second verbal expression.

她学习   **Tá xué xí**  (lit. she studies Chinese, so-that to China go travel)
中文, 以便 Zhōngwén, yìbiàn dào
到中国去 Zhōngguó qù lǚyóu/lǚxíng.

我没(有)   *Wǒ méi(yǒu)**  (lit. I not grasp this mw matter
把这件事 tell him, so-as-not-to make
告诉他, him sad) I did not tell him
以免使 about this matter so as not
他难过. tā nánguò.

(3) In constructions we have met which are essentially serial constructions, for example:

(a) Using coverbs 用 yòng, 坐 zuò, etc.:

我们坐电梯   **Wōmen zuò**  (lit. we sit lift go-up
上三楼. diàntī shàng sān lóu. three floor) We went up
到第二层 by lift.

你能用 中文说吗? **Nǐ néng yòng**  (lit. you can use Chinese
Zhōngwén shuō ma?) Can you say [it] in Chinese?

(b) Using the aspect marker 着 zhe:

她握着我的手   **Tā wòzhe wǒde**  (lit. she grasp asp my
手说: ‘谢谢你们。’)

(c) 把 bā, 被 bèi, 比 bǐ constructions (see Chapters 7 and 20).

(4) Where the main verbal phrase is followed by a second verbal phrase which conveys no new information but reiterates the
same idea from a different perspective by means of a negative, antonymous expression:

他抓住我 不放。

Wǒ yǎo le yī kǒu miàn bāo méi(yǒu) tūn xiàqù. (lit. I bite asp one mw bread not-have swallow down-go) I took a bite from the bread but did not swallow it.

(5) Where the verb 有 yǒu, indicating possession or existence, is followed by its object and then by another verb (sometimes preceded by a modal verb) expressing intentional action directed back to the object:

我 没有钱用。

Wǒ méiyǒu qián yòng. (lit. I not-have money use) I haven’t got any money to spend.

我有一封信要写。

Wǒ yǒu yī fēng xìn yào xiě. (lit. I have one mw letter want write) I have got a letter to write.

你有什么衣服要熨吗？

Nǐ yǒu shénme yīfu yào yùn ma? (lit. you have what clothes want ironing p) What clothes have you got [for me] to iron?

哪儿有 (香) 烟卖？

Nǎr yǒu (xiāng) yān mài? (lit. where there-are cigarette sell) Where do they sell cigarettes?

If the object of 有 yǒu is an abstract noun, the following verb phrase may be of any length, expressing the need (or lack of need) for further action:

我没有责任告诉她。

Wǒ méiyǒu zérèn gāosù tā. (lit. I not-have responsibility tell her) I’m not responsible for letting her know.

你有理由不同意。

Nǐ yǒu líyǒu bù tóngyì. (lit. you have reason not agree) You have reasons to disagree.

你没有权利每天到这儿来胡说八道。

Nǐ méiyǒu quánlì měi tiān dào zhèr lái húshuō bādào. (lit. you not-have right every day to here come talk-nonsense) You don’t have the right to come here and talk nonsense every day.
21.3 Adjectives or state verbs in serial constructions

Adjectives or state verbs may be placed at any position in a serial construction to introduce a descriptive element into the narrative:

小猫跳上跳下，可爱极了。 (lit. little kitten jump up jump down, lovable to-the-extreme p)

大家静了下来，坐着不动。 (lit. everybody quieten asp down, sit asp not move) Everybody quietened down and remained motionless in their seats.

21.4 Dative constructions

Dative verbal expressions regularly feature in serial constructions. A verb taking a direct object is followed by the verb 给 gěi with an indirect object:

爸爸买了汽车给我。 (lit. father buy asp one mw car give me) Father bought a car for me.

我寄了一张明信片给同事。 (lit. I post asp one mw postcard give colleague) I sent a postcard to my colleague.

This extended dative construction with 给 gěi generally does not apply in the case of verbs expressing speech activity:

我告诉你一个秘密。 (lit. I tell you one mw secret) I’ll tell you a secret.

NOT *我告诉你一个秘密给你。 (lit. I tell one mw secret give you)

Note: See 8.5 for a fuller discussion of direct and indirect objects.

21.5 Causative constructions

A common form of serial construction is the causative construction, in which the object of the first verb becomes the subject of the second verb/adjective:
### Serial Constructions

- **I invited him to dinner.**  
  **Wǒ qīng tā chī fàn.**

- **We elected him president.**  
  **Wǒmén xuǎn tā dāng zhǔxí.**

- **This made me very happy.**  
  **Zhè shí wǒ hěn gāoxìng.**

- **They wanted me not to go.**  
  **Tāmén yào wǒ bié qù.**

---

#### Note 1: Verbs which produce a causative construction include those in the following semantic categories:

- **(i) Request or command:**  
  - 请 *qǐng* ‘ask’,  
  - 叫 *jiào* ‘make’,  
  - 派 *pài* ‘send’,  
  - 命令 *mìnglìng* ‘order’.

  - **He asked me to take out my passport.**  
    **Tā jiào wǒ bǎ hùzhào ná chéle.**

- **(ii) Wish:**  
  - 想 *yào* ‘want’.

  - **She wanted me to go and meet her at the airport.**  
    **Tā yào wǒ dào qù jiē tā.**

- **(iii) Persuasion or requirement:**  
  - 劝 *quàn* ‘persuade, urge’,  
  - 催 *cuī* ‘press’,  
  - 要求 *yāoqiú* ‘require’.

  - **I urged her to learn shadow-boxing.**  
    **Wǒ quàn tā xué dǎ quán.**

  - **The teacher required the students to pay attention to safety.**  
    **Lǎoshī yāoqiú xuéshēng zhùyì ānquán.**

- **(iv) Permission:**  
  - 让 * ràng* ‘let’,  
  - 允许 *yǔnxǔ* ‘allow’,  
  - 准 *zhǔn* ‘permit’.

  - **Father allowed me to go dancing.**  
    **Bāba yǔnxǔ wǒ qù tiàowǔ.**

- **(v) Coercion:**  
  - 强 *qiáng* ‘force’,  
  - 强迫 *qiángpò* ‘compel’.

  - **The robber forced me to get out my money and hand it over to him.**  
    **Qiángdào bǐ wǒ bǎ qián ná chūlái gěi tā.**

- **(vi) Prevention:**  
  - 禁止 *jìnzhǐ* ‘forbid, ban’,  
  - 阻止 *zǔzhǐ* ‘prevent’.

  - **Lorries are not allowed to use this road.**  
    **Zhèi tiáo lù jìnzhǐ huòchē tōngguò.** (lit. this mw road forbid lorry go through)
Sentences

(vii) Others: 等 děng ‘wait’, 听 tīng ‘listen to’.

我等你来.  Wǒ děng nǐ lái.  I’ll wait till you come.

听我说      Tīng wǒ shuō.  Listen to me.

Note 2: Causative verbs do not take aspect markers:

*我逼了他   Wǒ bī le tā (lit. I force asp him go see
go to see the doctor) I forced him to go and see the doctor.

去看医生.  qù kàn yīshēng.

If necessary, the second verb may incorporate aspect markers:

她请我们看了   Tā qǐng wǒmen kàn le yī cháng diànyǐng.

一场电影.  (lit. she invite us look asp one
to see a film)

我请他们吃了一顿饭.  Wǒ qǐng tāmen chī le yī dùn fàn.

我请他们吃了一顿饭.  (lit. I invite them eat asp one
food) I invited them for a meal.

21.5.1 Qǐng in a causative construction

Polite requests are often a serial construction using the causative verb
请 qǐng ‘ask politely’ (cf. 8.6).

(1) With an object:

请你把证件拿出来.  Qǐng nǐ bǎ zhèngjàn ná chū lái.

( lit. ask you grasp document take out-come) Please take out your documents.

请大家安静一点儿.  Qǐng dà jiā ānjìng yī diànr.

( lit. ask everybody quiet a little) Please be quiet, everyone./ Would everyone please be quiet.

(2) Without an object:

请再说一遍.  Qǐng zài shuō yī biàn.

( lit. ask again say one time) Please say it again.

请说得慢一点儿.  Qǐng shuō de màn yī diànr.

( lit. ask say p slow a little) Please speak more slowly.

请别用手摸展品.  Qǐng bié yòng shǒu mō zhǎnpǐn.

( lit. ask don’t use hand touch
exhibits) Please don’t touch the exhibits with your hands.
21.5.2 Extended causative constructions

In an extended causative construction, the second verb (i.e. next but one) after the causative verb may refer to either the object or the subject of the causative verb:

(1) Referring to the subject:

我约她在图书馆等我，有一封信要交给她。 Wǒ yuē tā zài tǔshūguǎn, yǒu yī fēng xìn yào jiāo gěi tā. (lit. I make-appointment her at library wait-for me, have one mw letter want hand-over give her) I asked her to wait for me at the library, [as] I had a letter to pass on to her.

(2) Referring to the object:

我请她帮我，教我怎么读/念内外两个(汉)字。 Wǒ qǐng tā bāngzhù wǒ, jiāo wǒ zěnmé dú/niàn nà/nèi liàng gè (hàn)zi. (lit. I asked her help me, teach me how read those two mw Chinese-characters) I asked her to help me and teach me how to read those two Chinese characters.

21.6 Extended serial constructions

All the predicate (or comment) types mentioned above may, of course, combine in longer serial constructions:

我洗了澡，换了衣服，带弟弟开车到小李家， 请问我们一起去看电影。 Wǒ xǐ le zǎo, huàn le yīfu, dài diē lǐ jiā, qǐng tā wǒmen yìqǐ qù kàn diànyīng. (lit. I wash asp bath, change asp clothes, bring asp younger-brother drive car to Xiao Li home, ask him please we together go see film) Having taken a bath and changed my clothes, I drove with my younger brother to Xiao Li’s place and asked him to go with us to see a film.

22 Emphasis and the intensifier shì

22.1 Shì as an intensifier

Emphasis in language can be conveyed in various ways. The most common is to focus on a particular word or phrase through sentence stress,
word order or other intensifying devices. Sentence stress is the concern of phonology, and we will not dwell on it here. In our discussion of subject-predicate and topic-comment constructions, we have seen how change in word order can bring about different emphases. What concerns us here is the use of the verb 是 shì as an intensifier to highlight specific elements in a sentence. We will distinguish between its use in sentences referring to the past (i.e. with 的 de) and in those referring to the continuous present or future (i.e. generally without 的 de). (In the literal translations of the examples in this chapter, 是 shì appears as int[ensifier].)

### 22.2 The shì...de construction

Where an event or action took place in the past, 是 shì may be used in conjunction with 的 de to highlight the adverbials or modifying elements in a sentence, e.g. time expressions; coverbal phrases indicating location, method or instrument; adverbial phrases of manner; or ‘purpose’ constructions beginning with 来 lái or 去 qù. It is as if a statement with the 是...的 shì...de construction represents an answer to a question about when, where, how, to what purpose, at the hands of whom, etc., an action took place. 是 shì is placed immediately before the adverbial expression or verb followed by purpose expression/complement, and 的 de generally comes at the end of the sentence.

1. **Time expressions:**
   - 我是昨天来的. Wǒ shì zuótiān lái de. (lit. I int yesterday come p) I came yesterday./It was yesterday that I came.
   - 你是去年还是今年到的? Nǐ shì qùnián háishi jǐnnián dào de? (lit. you int last-year or this-year arrive p) Did you arrive here last year or this year?

2. **Coverbal phrases indicating location, method, instrument, etc.:**
   - 她是在新加坡出生/出世的. Tā shì zài Xīnjiāpō shēng/ chūshì de. (lit. she int at Singapore be-born p) She was born in Singapore.
   - 我们是从朝鲜来的. Wǒmen shì cóng Cháoxiān lái de. (lit. we int from Korea come p) We come from Korea.
   - 你是坐车/还是走路来的? Nǐ shì zuò chē/ háishi zǒulù lái de? (lit. you int sit car or walk-road come p) Did you come by car or on foot?
(1) 我是用毛笔写的。

(2) 我和信是用钢笔写的。

(3) ‘Purpose’ constructions beginning with 来 lǎi or 去 qù:

我是来看病的。

他是去找你的。

(4) 被 bì or similar phrase introducing an agent:

洗衣机被弄坏了。

汽车被修好了。

(5) Adverbial phrases of manner:

船是慢慢沉到海底的。

(6) Complements of manner:

他们是玩儿得非常高兴的。

Note: In colloquial speech, 是 shì may often be omitted from the 是 ... de structure:

他昨天来了。

他们坐飞机去的吗?
Subject and object emphasis in shì...de sentences

The shì...de construction may also be used to emphasise either the subject or the object of the verb.

1) If the emphasis is on the subject, shì is placed directly before the subject:

- Shì wò dǎ pò zhè gè běizi de. (lit. I hit break this mw cup/mug) I was the one who broke this cup/mug.
- Shì jǐngchá zhuā zhù xiǎotōu de. (lit. policeman/woman catch hold thief p) It was the policeman/woman who caught the thief.
- Zhèi běn shì shéi/shuí xiě de? Who wrote this novel?/Who was this novel written by?
- Nèi bēi kāfēi gěi wǒ dào de. (lit. that mw coffee int I pour give you p) (It was) I (who) poured that cup of coffee for you.

Note: The last two sentences above are topic | subject-predicate constructions (see 18.4). The subject embedded in this structure can be emphasised, but the topic is emphatic by definition and cannot be intensified by a shì...de construction. Therefore, the sequence ‘是 shì topic | subject-predicate 的 de’ is impossible:

*是信我寄的。Shì xīn wǒ jì de. (lit. int letter I post p)

2) If the emphasis is on the object of a verb, shì is placed before the verb, while de comes before the object instead of at the end of the sentence:

- Wǒ shì mǎi de féizào. (lit. I int buy p soap) I bought some soap.
- Tā shì hē de júzishuǐ. (lit. she int drink p orange-juice) She drank orange juice.

Shì...de construction and bù

The shì...de construction, though it refers to past events, may only be negated by bù (not by 没(有) méi(yǒu)). Bù comes before shì:

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22.3 *Shì* without **de** for progression and projection

When *shì* is used for emphasis in relation to present continuous or projected events or actions, it generally occurs alone without **de**.

### 22.3.1 Contexts for *shì* (without **de**) sentences

*Shì* can be employed in the contexts listed under 22.2 (1), (2) and (3) for the *...* *shì* ... **de** structure (i.e. with time expressions, coverbal phrases and ‘purpose’ constructions), and to emphasise either subject or object:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I won't be coming tomorrow.</td>
<td>我是明天来。</td>
<td>Wǒ shì míngtiān lái.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are going to the seaside for their holidays.</td>
<td>他们是到海边去度假。</td>
<td>Tāmen shì dào hǎibiān qù dùjià.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We won't be going by tram.</td>
<td>我们不是坐电车去。</td>
<td>Wǒmen bù shì zuò diànchē qù.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the emphasis is on the subject, 是 *shì* is placed immediately before the subject:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will you be going?</td>
<td>是你去吗?</td>
<td>Shì nǐ qù ma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She's the one who should apologise to everybody.</td>
<td>是她应该向大家道歉。</td>
<td>Shì tā yīnggāi xiàng dājiā dàoqiàn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the emphasis is on the object, 是 *shì* is placed immediately before the predicate verb, but the object will naturally be stressed in speech:
22.3.2 Shì and comparison

Shì is also used alone to emphasise a comparison construction. It is placed immediately before 比 bǐ in affirmative and 没 (有) méi(yǒu) in negative comparisons:

你的房子
是比我大的。
Nǐde fánghú shì bǐ wǒde dà. (lit. your house is bigger than mine.)

我说中文
是没(有)的。
Wǒ shuō Zhōngwén shì méi(yǒu). (lit. I don’t speak Chinese)

你说得好。
nǐ shuō de hǎo. (lit. as well as you do.)

22.3.3 Shì and negation

The negative of 是 shì sentences, like that of 是...的 shì...de sentences, is formed by placing 不 bù before is shì:

我们不是
走路去。
Wǒmen bù shì zǒulù qù. (lit. we are not going on foot.)

我不是
去吵架。
Wǒ bù shì qù chǎojià. (lit. I am not going (in order) to have a row.)

22.4 Shì and topic-comment sentences

The above discussion has focused on 是 shì as an intensifier of elements in the predicate that modify the verb (adverbials, ‘purpose’ constructions, etc.) or subjects/objects of the verb. In addition, 是 shì as an intensifier may occur alone in topic-comment sentences with gradable adjectives or state verbs.

我是去看她的。
Wǒ shì qù kàn tā. (lit. I am going to see her.)

他们是想吃
冰淇淋/冰激凌。
Tāmen shì xiǎng chī bīngjīlíng/bīngqílíng. (lit. they want to eat ice-cream) It is ice-cream that they want to eat.

他们是想吃
冰淇淋/冰激凌。
Tāmen shì xiǎng chī bīngjīlíng/bīngqílíng. (lit. they want to eat ice-cream) It is ice-cream that they want to eat.
(1) Gradable adjectives:

她是很矮。  Tā shì hěn ǎi.  (lit. she int very short)  
She is short.

他们是不高兴。  Tāmen shì bù gāoxìng.  (lit. they int not happy)  
They are unhappy.

(2) State verbs:

我是病了。  Wǒ shì bìng le.  (lit. I ill p) I am ill.

我们是错了。  Wǒmen shì cuò le.  (lit. we int wrong p)  
We are wrong./It’s our fault.

It can also be introduced in a subject-predicate sentence where the emphasis is on the whole predicate. Its presence in effect makes the sentence topic-comment:

我们是去了三次。  Wǒmen shì qùle sān cì.  (lit. we int go asp three-times)  
We (really) did go three times.

我是吃过蜗牛。  Wǒ shì chīguò wōniú.  (lit. I int eat snail) I have eaten snails.

他们是不知道。  Tāmen shì bù zhīdao.  (lit. they int not know) They really don’t know.

这个问题是可以提出来。  Zhègè wèntí shì kěyǐ tī chūlái.  (lit. this mw question int can raise out-come)  
This question can be raised.

22.4.1 Shi implying reservation

The sentences in 22.4, in fact, all have an undertone of reservation or contradiction. It is often the case that the implicit reservation in such sentences is immediately made explicit by a contradictory statement:

他是聪明，不过太骄傲了。  Tā shì cōngmíng, bùguò tài jiāo’ào le.  (lit. he int clever, but too proud p) He is clever, but he’s too conceited.

这个工作我是喜欢，可是薪水太少。  Zhègè gōngzuò wǒ shì xiǎohuan, kěshì xīnshuǐ tài shǎo.  (lit. this mw job I int like, but salary too little) I do like this job, but the salary is too little.
22.4.2 ‘Verb/Adjective + shì + Verb/Adjective’ implying reservation

The pattern of this last structure (in 22.4.1) in colloquial speech can take the form of ‘verb–是 shì–verb’ or ‘adjective–是 shì–adjective’:

这个工作我喜欢
但是...

那本书好是好,
不过太贵了。

Zhèi gè gōngzuò
wǒ xǐhuān shì
xǐhuān, dànshì...

Nèi běn shū hǎo
shì hǎo, bùguò
tài guì le.

22.5 Repetition and emphasis

Apart from the use of the intensifier 是 shì, emphasis in Chinese may also be expressed through repetition. This occurs particularly when agreement, disagreement, thanks or welcome are expressed:

A: 这样行吗？Zhèi yàng xíng ma? (lit. this type OK p)
Will this do?

B: 行, 行, 行。
Xíng, xíng, xíng. (lit. OK, OK, OK)
It is perfectly all right.

A: 我来帮你忙Wǒ lái bāng nǐ máng. (lit. I come help you busy)
I’ll come and help you.

B: 不, 不, 不,
Wǒ zìjǐ lái. (lit. no, no, no. I self come)
No, no, no. I’ll manage myself.

A: 你英文说得真好。
Nǐ Yīngwén shuō de zhēn hǎo. (lit. you English speak p really good)
You speak really good English.

B: 不, 不, 不, Bù, bù, bù. (lit. no, no, no) Not at all.
(being modest)

Note: When praised, an English speaker is likely to say ‘thank you’, while a Chinese person will probably make a modest denial such as 不, 不 bù, bù, bù.

欢迎, 欢迎。Huānyíng, huānyíng. Welcome.
请进, 请进。Qǐng jìn, qǐng jìn. Please come in.
哪里, 哪里。Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ. It was nothing. (polite response to thanks)
Abbreviation and omission

23.1 Three types of abbreviation

Like most languages, Chinese has a considerable number of conventional phrases or constructions which habitual usage has made acceptable despite apparent grammatical incompleteness. Similarly, Chinese makes use of abbreviated expressions when allowed or demanded by the context (i.e. the actual situation in which the utterance takes place). There is also a tendency, already observed, for Chinese to omit words from a sentence that are not strictly necessary for the meaning. This is possible because the sentence is formulated within a cotext (i.e. the spoken or written text that precedes and/or follows). For example, the subject and/or object may be omitted in response to a question (see 17.2). There is, of course, likely to be some overlap between context and cotext.

23.2 Conventional abbreviations as subjectless sentences

Conventional abbreviations normally take the form of subjectless sentences and occur in the following types of expression:

(1) Thanks, good wishes, apologies, etc.:

- 谢谢, or Xièxiè, (lit. thank-thank, or thank-thank you)
- 谢谢你。Xièxiè nǐ. Thanks, or Thank you.
- 不谢, or Bù xiè, (lit. not thank, or not polite) You’re welcome. (in response to 谢谢 xièxiè)
- 不客气。Bù kèqì. (lit. don’t polite) Don’t stand on ceremony, or Make yourself at home.
- 对不起。Duìbuqǐ. (lit. face not rise) Sorry.
- 很/真抱歉。Hěn/zhēn bàoqiàn. (lit. very/really be-apologetic) [I] must apologise.
- 恭喜,恭喜。Gōngxì, gōngxì. (lit. respectfully-[wish]-happy, respectfully-[wish]-happy) Congratulations!

Others include: 慢走 màn zǒu ‘take care’ (lit. slow walk) (said when seeing off a guest), 辛苦了 xīnkǔ le ‘you must be tired (after such a long journey)/sorry to have put you to so much trouble’ (lit. tiring p), 一路平安 yì lù píng'àn ‘have a safe/pleasant journey’ (lit. all way peace-safe).
健康 zhù ní shēntǐ jiànkāng ‘wish you good health’ (lit. wish you body healthy), 敬你一杯 jǐng nǐ yī bēi ‘your health!’ (lit. respectfully-[offer] you one cup/glass), 再见 zàijiàn ‘goodbye’ (lit. again-see), 干杯 gān bēi ‘bottoms up, cheers’ (lit. dry glass).

(2) Approval, commendation, etc.:
对! Dui! (lit. correct) (You’re) right!
好。 Hǎo. (lit. good) That’s good/All right.
不要紧。 Bù yàojǐn. (lit. not important) It doesn’t matter.

Others include: 没关系 méi guānxì ‘never mind/it doesn’t matter’ (lit. no concern), 没问题 méi wèntí ‘no problem’, 真巧啊 zhēn qiǎo a ‘what a coincidence’ (lit. really coincidental p), 好香啊 hǎo xiāng a ‘how sweet (of smell)/how tasty’ (lit. very fragrant/savoury p).

(3) Requests, warnings, etc.:
请便。 Qǐngbiàn. (lit. please convenient) Please yourself, or Do as you please.
请指正。 Qǐng zhǐzhèng. (lit. please point-correct) Please make comments/corrections. (usually when presenting a piece of writing, etc. and politely seeking opinion)
小心。 Xiǎoxīn. (lit. small concern) Be careful, or Take care.
记得关门。 Jìde guānmén. (lit. remember close door) Remember to close the door.

Others include: 看好 kàn hǎo ‘look out/watch out’ (lit. look well), 开会了 kāihuì le ‘let’s start (the meeting)’ (lit. start/hold meeting p), 救命啊 jiùmìng a ‘help!’ (lit. save life p).

(4) Standard prohibitions, often found as public notices:
请勿吸烟! Qǐng wù xīyān! (lit. please no inhale-smoke) No smoking!
请勿随地丢垃圾! Qǐng wù suídì diū lājī! (lit. please no over-all-floor throw rubbish) No litter!
不准停车! Bù zhǔn tíng chē! (lit. not allow stop car) No parking (on these premises).
禁止入内! Jǐngzhǐ rù nèi! (lit. forbid enter inside) No entry.
(5) Proverbial sayings:

活到老，
学到底。

Huó dào lǎo, xué dào lǎo. (lit. live till old, learn till old) It’s never too late to learn. / You’re never too old to learn.

己所不欲，
勿施于人。

Jǐ suǒ bù yù, wù shī yú rén. (lit. self that which not want, do not impose on people) Do unto others as you would be done by.

(6) Sentence starters, characteristic of oral or written narrative:

想不到会在这儿见到你。

Xiǎngbudào hui zài zhèr jiàn dào nǐ. (lit. think-not-reach can at here bump into you) [I] never thought/expected [I] would see you here.

不知道他明天来不来。

Bùzhīdào tā míngtiān lái bù lái. (lit. not know he tomorrow come not come) [I] don’t know whether he is coming tomorrow or not.

恐怕我感冒了。

Kǒngpà wǒ gǎnmào le. (lit. afraid I catch-cold) [I] am afraid I have caught a cold.

Others include: 记得 . . . jìde . . . ‘[I] remember . . . ’ (lit. remember), 不料 . . . bù liào . . . ‘unexpectedly . . . ’ (lit. not expect), 听说 . . . tīng shuō . . . ‘[I] have heard that . . . ’ (lit. hear say).

(7) Statements about the weather (often including a change in the weather, or a realisation about the state of the weather on the part of the speaker – see discussion on sentence 了 le in Chapter 16):

下雨了。

Xìà yǔ le. (lit. fall rain p) It’s raining.

出太阳了。

Chū tài yáng le. (lit. out sun p) The sun is out.

Others include: 刮风了 guā fēng le ‘it’s windy’, 起雾了 qǐ wù le ‘it’s getting foggy’, 打霜了 dǎ shuāng le ‘it’s frosty/there’s a frost’, 打雷了 dǎ léi le ‘it’s thundering’, 闪电了 shǎn diàn le ‘it’s lightning’.

23.3 Contextual abbreviation

Contextual abbreviation usually takes the form of a one-word (or two-word) expression.
(1) Calling out to somebody:

喂!  Wèi!  Hello! Hey! (or on the telephone, Hello)
老李!  Lǎo Lǐ!  Old Li!
服务员!  Fúwùyuán!  Waiter!

(2) Calling attention to something:

火!  Huǒ!  Fire!
信。  Xìn.  A letter (for you).
票。  Piào.  Tickets. (said perhaps by a bus conductor)

(3) Enquiring about the ‘whereabouts’ of something or the ‘condition’ of somebody:

鞋呢？  Xié ne?  Where are the shoes?
钱呢？  Qián ne?  Where is the money?
你呢？  Nǐ ne?  How about you?
他们呢？  Tāmen ne?  How about them?

(4) Written instructions:

男(厕)  nán(cè)  gentlemen (lit. man-lavatory)
女(厕)  nǚ(cè)  ladies (lit. female-lavatory)
无人  wú rén  vacant (of lavatory) (lit. no people)
有人  yǒu rén  engaged (of lavatory) (lit. have people)
推  tuī  push
拉  lā  pull

23.4  Cotextual omissions

Cotextual omissions take a number of forms. As observed earlier, numbers/demonstratives with measures and attributives with 的 de do not need to be followed by a noun once that noun has been identified:

这个  zhè gè  this one
第三个  dì sān gè  the third one
我的  wǒ de  mine
23.4.1 Cotextual omissions and headwords

Where a noun is made up of a defining element and a headword, once the noun is identified, subsequent reference may be to the headword alone. Thus when it is already clear that references are to respectively 公共汽车 gōnggòng qìche ‘bus’, 直升飞机 zhíshēng fēijī ‘helicopter’, and 精神病院 jīngshénbing yuàn ‘mental hospital’, the following sentences can occur:

我们(在)哪儿等车? Wǒmen zài nǎr děng chē? Where do we wait for the bus?

我们几点(钟)登机? Wǒmen jǐdiǎn (zhōng) dēng jī? When do we board the helicopter?

他(已经)入院了。 Tā yǐjīng rù yuàn le. He has already been admitted to the mental hospital.

23.4.2 Cotextual omissions in answers

As seen in 17.2, positive or negative answers to a question are regularly expressed by repeating the verb in the question. With cotextual abbreviations, usually the verb is retained as the core element, and repetition of other parts of the sentence, especially pronouns, becomes unnecessary:

Q: 你喜欢这件毛衣吗? Nǐ xihuan zhèi jiàn máoyī ma? Do you like this sweater?

A: 喜欢, Xǐhuan. (lit. like) Yes.

不喜欢, Bù xihuan. (lit. not like) No.

Q: 你认识她吗? Nǐ rènshi tā ma? Do you know her?

A: 认识, Rènshì. (lit. know) Yes.

不认识, Bù rènshì. (lit. not know) No.

23.4.3 Contextual/cotextual omissions in extended passages

In written or spoken passages, omissions of previous references are similarly possible, because the reader or listener is able to make sense of the material on the basis of contextual/cotextual evidence:
Wǒ yòng Zhōngwén xiě le yī piàn wénzhāng gěi wǒ lǎoshī kàn, shuō kàn hòu, qǐng zhízhèng, jīnhòu kěyǐ chóngxiě. (lit. I use Chinese write asp one mw essay give my teacher look, say look after, please correct, afterwards can re-write) I wrote an essay in Chinese and gave [it] to my teacher to look at, saying that after [she] had read [it] could [she] please correct [it]. (so that) afterwards [I] could re-write [it].

The seven bracketed pronouns in the translation are not present in the Chinese original. Such omissions are possible because the speaker/writer is confident that the passage is intelligible on the basis of contextual/cotextual evidence.

24 Composite sentences: conjunctions and conjunctives

24.1 Types of composite sentence

In Chapter 21, we looked at serial constructions, in which a subject (or topic) is followed by more than one verb (or adjective) without any linking device(s). Here we deal with composite sentences. We use this term to describe sentences which have either (1) more than one clause in a coordinated or subordinated relationship, or (2) more than one predicate or comment pertaining to the same subject or topic. The common feature of these two types of composite sentence is that their parts are usually linked by conjunctions and/or conjunctives.

It is possible, however, for the first type of construction to have no conjunctions or conjunctives; the clauses are then bound together in rhythmic or lexical balance or contrast (see 24.3 below). When the second type of construction has no conjunctions or conjunctives, it becomes a serial construction. We deal here first with sentences marked by conjunctions or conjunctives.

Note: We have discussed conjunctions that link words and expressions, e.g. 和 hé, 跟 gēn, etc. (see Chapter 1), but not those that link clauses.

24.2 Conjunctions and conjunctives

Conjunctions in Chinese occur independently (e.g. 但是 dànshí, 可是 kěshì, 不过 bùguò ‘but’; 否则/不然 fǒuzé/bùrán ‘otherwise’; 所以/因此 suǒyǐ/yǐncǐ ‘therefore’, etc.) or in related pairs (e.g. 虽然...但是
...suírán ...dànshì ...‘although ... (however)... ’;  因为 ... 所以...
yīnwèi ...suǒyǐ ...‘because ... (therefore)... ’ etc.:

我们退让了，
可是他们
还不同意。

因为妈妈病了，
所以我呆/待在
家里看护她。

虽然那个孩子
很聪明，
但是学习
不够努力。

Suírán neì gè háizi
hèn cōngming,
dànshì xuéxí
bù gòu nǔlì.

（lit. though that mw child
very intelligent, but study not
sufficient hard)  Though that
child is very clever, (however)
he does not study hard enough.

从第二和第三例句中，可以看出相关连词 (e.g. 因为 yīnwèi 和 所以 suǒyǐ，虽然 suírán 和
但是 dànshì) 的使用方式，其中一个放在第一个
分句的开头，另一个放在第二个 (主句) 分句的开始。前者
分句的连词可能位于主语之后，通常在两个分句
共享同一个主语时。

那个孩子
虽然很聪明，
但是学习
不够努力。

Nèi gè háizi
suírán hèn
cōngming,
dànshì xuéxí
bù gòu nǔlì.

（lit. that mw child though very
intelligent, but study not
sufficient hard)  Though that
child is very clever, (however)
he does not study hard enough.

Conjunctives, on the other hand, are adverbs such as 就 jiù ‘then’，
才 cái ‘only then’, etc., which function as referential adverbs in simple
sentences (see 14.3), but in compound sentences occur at the beginning
of the second (main) clause after the subject to link that clause to the
previous (subordinate) clause. The previous clause may include
a conjunction such as 如果 rúguǒ，要是 yàošì，假如 jiāfrú ‘if’，除非
chúfēi ‘unless’, etc.). Conjunctives also occur as related pairs
(e.g. 一... 就... yī... jiù ‘as soon as...’, 又... 又...
yòu... yòu ‘both... and...’, etc.).

你如果没空，
我们就改天
谈吧。

Nǐ rúguǒ méi
kòng, wǒmen
jiù gǎitiān
tán ba.

（lit. you if not free, we then
change-day talk p)  If you are
busy, we’ll talk [about it]
another day.
Sometimes a second conjunction may be included with the conjunctive in the second clause:

你如果没空，那么我们就改天谈吧。  
*Nǐ rúguǒ méi kòng, nàme wǒmen jiù gǎitiān tán ba.*  
(lit. you if not free, in-that-case we then change-day talk p)  
If you are busy, (then) we'll talk [about it] another day.

### 24.2.1 Meanings and functions of composite sentences

Composite sentences have a wide range of meanings and functions. We will give examples in the following categories: contrast, choice, addition, cause and effect, inference, condition, ‘non-condition’, supposition, concession, preference, and time relations:

1. **Contrast:**

   他想睡一会儿，可是睡不着。  
   *Tā xiǎng shuì yī huìr, kěshì shuì bù zháo.*  
   (lit. he want sleep one while, but sleep not attain)  
   He wanted to have a sleep but could not go to sleep.

   (conjunction: 可是 kěshì ‘but’)

   快走吧，否则你会迟到的。  
   *Kuài zǒu ba, fǒuzé nǐ huì chídào de.*  
   (lit. quick go p, otherwise you probably late-arrive p)  
   Be quick, or you’ll be late.

   (conjunction: 否则 fǒuzé ‘otherwise’)

   我没有钱，不然我就买微波炉了。  
   *Wǒ méi yǒu qián, bùrán wǒ jiù mǎi wěibīólú le.*  
   (lit. I not-have money, otherwise I then buy microwave-stove p) I don’t have any money, otherwise I would have bought a microwave.

   (conjunction: 否然 bùrán ‘otherwise’, reinforced by conjunctive: 就 jiù ‘then’)

   我们的房子很小，不过有(一)个很漂亮的花园。  
   *Wǒmen de fángzi hěn xiǎo, bùguò yǒu (yī) gè hěn piàoliàng de huāyuán.*  
   (lit. our house very small, but have (one) mw very beautiful garden) Our house is small, but we have a beautiful garden.

   (conjunction: 不过 bùguò ‘however’)

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**III Sentences**

Sentences
她虽然很饿，
但是不想
吃饭。

Tā suīrán hén è, dànshì bū xiǎng chī fàn.
(lit. she though very hungry, but not want eat rice)

Though she was very hungry, (however) she did not want to touch any food.

(paired conjunctions: 虽然 suīrán ‘though’ and 但是 dànshì ‘but’)

他不但不
责备自己，
反而责怪别
人。

Tā bùdàn bù zébèi zìjǐ, fān’ér zéguài biérén.
(lit. he not-only not blame oneself, on-the-contrary blame others) Not only did he not blame himself but he laid blame on others.

(paired conjunctions: 不但 bùdàn ‘not only’ and 反而 fān’ér ‘on the contrary’)

(2) Choice:

你可以付
现金或者
开支票。

Nǐ kěyǐ fù xiànjīn huòzhé kāi zhīpiào.
(lit. you may pay cash or write cheque) You may pay cash or by cheque.

(conjunction: 或者 huòzhé ‘or’)

他不是
抽烟就是
喝酒。

Tā būshì chōuyān jiùshì hējiǔ.
(lit. he not-be inhale-cigarette then-be drink-wine) If he is not drinking, (then) he is smoking.

(paired conjunctions: 不是 būshì ‘if not’ and 就是 jiùshì ‘then’)

不是他们来，
就是我们去。

Bùshì tāmen lái, jiùshì wǒmen qù.
(lit. not-be they come, then-be we go) If they didn’t come, (then) we would go./Either they would come or we would go.

(3) Addition:

她很聪明，
而且很用功。

Tā hěn cóngming, érqǐě hěn yōnggōng.
(lit. she very intelligent, moreover very hardworking)

She is very intelligent, and also extremely diligent.

(conjunction: 而且 érqǐě ‘moreover’)

Composite sentences: conjunctions and conjunctives
他不仅/不但骂人而且打人。 \(\text{Tá bùjǐn/bùdàn mà rén érqiē dǎ rén.} \) (lit. he not-only scold people but-also hit people) He not only used abusive language but also resorted to blows.

*(paired conjunctions: 不仅/不但 bùjǐn/bùdàn ‘not only’ and 而且 érqiē ‘but also’)*

(4) *Cause and effect:*

他病了, 因此他没来参加宴会。 \(\text{Tá bìng le, yīncǐ méi lái cānjīā yànhuì.} \) (lit. he ill p, therefore not come attend banquet) He was ill and so did not come to the banquet.

*(conjunction: 因此 yīncǐ ‘therefore’)*

因为他们没带地图，所以迷路了。 \(\text{Yīnwèi tāmen méi dàì dìtú, suǒyǐ mílù le.} \) (lit. because they not bring map, therefore lose-way p) Because they did not have a map with them, they lost their way.

*(paired conjunctions: 因为 yīnwèi ‘because’ and 所以 suǒyǐ ‘therefore’)*

由于天气不好，比赛暂停。 \(\text{Yóuyú tiānqì bù hǎo, bǐsài zàntíng.} \) (lit. owing-to weather not good, contest suspend) Owing to bad weather, the contest was postponed.

*(conjunction: 由于 yóuyú ‘owing to’)*

Note: 由于 Yóuyú may often be used in the first clause without any conjunction or conjunctive in the second clause.

In cause and effect sentences, the ‘effect’ may be expressed before the ‘cause’. The first (main) clause is then unmarked, and the second (subordinate) clause begins with 因为 yīnwèi ‘because’. Sometimes 因为 yīnwèi is preceded by 是 shì ‘to be’:

我没(有)去见他们，(是)因为 我有另外一个约会。 \(\text{Wǒ méi(yǒu) qù jiàn tāmen, (shì) yīnwèi wǒ yǒu língwǎi yī gè yuēhuì.} \) (lit. I not go see them (be) because I have another one mw appointment) I didn’t go and see them because I had another appointment.

Note: 由于 Yóuyú may often be used in the first clause without any conjunction or conjunctive in the second clause.
他突然晕倒了因为他喝了太多
的酒。

Tā tūrán
yǔndǎo le yīnwēi
tā hē le tài duō
de jiǔ.

(lit. he suddenly faint-fall p
because he drink asp too
much p wine/spirit) He
suddenly passed out,
because he had had too
much to drink.

(5) Inference:

既然你
不舒服，
就别来了。

Jìrán nǐ
bù shūfu,
jiù bié lái le.

(lit. since you not comfortable,
then don’t come p) Since
you aren’t well, don’t come
(then).

(conjunction: 既然 jírán ‘since’, linked with conjunctive: 就 jiù
‘then’)

既然他们
说不来，
我们就别
等他们了。

Jìrán tāmen
shuō bù lái,
wǒmen jiù bié
déng tāmen le.

(lit. since they say not come,
we then don’t wait-for
them p) Since they said
that they would not come,
we had better not wait for
them (then).

(6) Condition:

只要你小心，
就不会出
什么问题。

Zhīyào nǐ xiǎoxīn,
jiù bù huì chū
shénme wèntí.

(lit. provided you small-
concern, then not likely
emerge any problem)
Provided you are careful,
there won’t be any problem.

(conjunction: 只要 zhīyào ‘provided’, linked with conjunctive: 就 jiù
‘then’)

只有你学好
中文，你才能
去中国工作。

Zhīyǒu nǐ xué hǎo
Zhōngwén, nǐ
cái néng qù
Zhōngguó
gōngzuò.

(lit. only-if you study well
Chinese, you only-then can
go China work) Only if you
do well in your study of
Chinese will you (then)
be able to go and work in
China.

(conjunction: 只有 zhīyǒu ‘only if’, linked with conjunctive: 才 cái
‘only then’)

Composite
sentences:
conjunctions and
conjunctives
除非你去说服他们，他们才会同意合作。

*Chúfēi nǐ qù shuōfú tāmen, tāmen cái huì tóngyì hézuò.* (lit. unless you go convince them, they only-then likely agree cooperate) Only if you go and convince them will they (then) agree to cooperate.

*(conjunction: 除非 chuífēi ‘unless’, linked with conjunctive: 才 cái ‘only then’)*

Note: 除非 chuífēi is also regularly paired with 否则/不然 fǒuzé/bùrán ‘otherwise’:

除非你去说服他们，否则/不然他们不会同意合作。

*Chúfēi nǐ qù shuōfú tāmen, fǒuzé bùrán tāmen bù huì tóngyì hézuò.* (lit. unless you go convince them, otherwise they not likely agree cooperate) You must go and convince them, otherwise they won’t agree to cooperate.

(7) ‘Non-condition’:

不管她来不来，我们也按照计划出发。

*Bùguān tā lái bù lái, wǒmen yě ànzhào jìhuà chūfā.* (lit. no-matter she come not come, we also according-to plan set-out) No matter whether she turns up or not, we’ll still set out according to plan.

*(conjunction: 不管 bùguān ‘no matter’, linked with conjunctive: 也 yě ‘also’)*

无论天晴还是下雨，我都走路去。

*Wúlùn tiān qíng háishì xià yǔ, wǒ dōu zǒulù qù.* (lit. regardless sky fine or fall rain, I all walk-road go) Whether it’s fine or raining, I’m going on foot.

*(conjunction: 无论 wúlùn ‘regardless’, linked with conjunctive: 都 dōu ‘all’)*

(8) ‘Supposition’:

你如果愿意，我就替你写回信。

*Nǐ rúguō yuàn yì, wǒ jiù tì nǐ xiě huíxìn.* (lit. you if willing, I then for you write reply-letter) I’ll reply to the letter for you if you want.

*(conjunction: 如果 rúguō ‘if’, linked with conjunctive: 就 jiù ‘then’)*
要是他们家没有电话，我就去电话亭打。

Yàoshi tāmen jiā méi yǒu diànhuà, wǒ jiù qù diànhuàting dà.
(lit. if their home not-have telephone, I then go telephone-booth make-a-call)
(I’ll go and use the public telephone if there isn’t one at their place.)

(Conjunction: 要是 yàoshi ‘if’, linked with conjunction: 就 jiù ‘then’)

假如冬天没有暖气，你怎么办？

 Jiárú dōngtiān méi yǒu nuánqì, nǐ zěnme bàn?
(lit. suppose winter there isn’t heating, you how manage)
(How do you manage if there isn’t any heating in winter?)

(Conjunction: 假如 jiárú ‘if’; since the second clause is a question, no linking conjunction or conjunctive is necessary)

Note: The phrase...的话...de huà ‘if’ may be used at the end of the first clause, either alone or with one of the conjunctions 如果 rúguǒ, 假如 jiárú, 要是 yàoshi earlier in the clause.

明天 (如果) 下雪的话，我们就去滑雪。

Míngtiān (róuguǒ) xià xué de huà, wǒmen jiù qù huáxuè.
(lit. tomorrow (if) fall snow, that-is-the-case, we then go ski) We’ll go skiing if it snows tomorrow.

(9) Concession:

(a) referring to the past:

尽管天气不好，比赛还是照常进行。

 Jǐnguān tiānqì bù hǎo, bǐsài háìshi jīnxíng.
(lit. though weather not good, contest still as-usual go-on) Though the weather was not good, the match was held as planned.

(Conjunction: 尽管 jǐnguān ‘although’, linked with conjunctive: 还是 háìshi ‘still’)

(b) referring to the future:

即使/就算很危险，我也不怕。

Jíshǐ/jìşiúsuàn hěn wēixiān, wǒ yě bù pà.
(lit. even-if very dangerous, I also not afraid) Even if it is dangerous, I’m (still) not afraid.

(Conjunction: 即使/就算 jíshǐ/jìşiúsuàn ‘even if/though’, linked with conjunctive: 也 yě ‘also’)

Composite sentences: conjunctions and conjunctives
Sentences

(10) **Preference:**

中国传统

(11) **Time relations:**

(a) as soon as

(b) not yet
(c) only then

*Wǒ zuò wán*  
*góngkè cái*  
*xià lóu qù*  
*kàn diànshì.*  

(lit. I do finish coursework only-then down stairs go watch television) I did *not* go downstairs to watch television *until* I had finished my coursework.

*(conjunctive:* 才 cái ‘only then’)

(d) then

*Tā kū qǐ lái,*  
*yúshì wǒ jiù*  
*zǒu guò qù.*  

(lit. she cry/weep start, so I then go across) She started weeping, *so* (then) I went over (to her).

*(conjunctive:* 于是 yúshì ‘thereupon’, reinforced by *conjunctive:* 就 jiù ‘then’)

*Wǒmen*  
*hǎohāo de*  
*shuì le yī jiào,*  
*ránhòu jiù*  
*qù yóuyǒng.*

(lit. we well-well p sleep asp one sleep, after-that then go swim) We had a good sleep, and then we went swimming.

*(conjunctive:* 然后 ránhòu ‘after that’, reinforced by *conjunctive:* 就 jiù ‘then’)

Note 1: 于是 Yúshì and 然后 ránhòu are often accompanied by the conjunctive 就 jiù.

Note 2: The expressions ... 的时候 ... de shíhou ‘when ...’, ... 以后 ... yǐhòu ‘after ...’ and ... 以前 ... yǐqián ‘before ...’ (see 10.3) are also regularly linked with 就 jiù ‘then’ in the main clause:

*Xi yǎn wán yǐqián*  
*guānzhòng jiù hē dàocǎi le.*  

Before the performance (of the play) had ended, the audience booed.

*Fágūān jìn lái de shíhou,*  
*dàjiā jiù zhàn qǐ lái le.*  

When the judge entered, everyone *(then)* stood up.

*Nǐ dào le yǐhòu jiù*  
*gěi wǒ dà diànhuà.*  

After you’ve arrived, telephone me.
24.2.2 Paired conjunctives

There are a few conjunctives which repeat to form related pairs. In a sentence, these are placed immediately before two verbal predicates/comments sharing the same subject/topic:

- 他们一边/一面对喝 /They drank as they chatted.
- 他们一边/一面对
- 讨

Note: Other commonly used conjunctives of this type are:

- 又...又... /I was both hungry and thirsty.
- 越...越... /He ran faster and faster.

Some conjunctions are used in a similar way:

- 咱们或者去滑雪或者去游泳.
- Zánmen huòzhě qù huáxuě huòzhě qù yóuyǒng.

24.3 Composite sentences as parallel structures

Composite sentences can also be formed without using conjunctions or conjunctives, by placing clauses in parallel with each other. This is done in a number of ways:

(1) By repeating the same interrogative adverb or pronoun in the second clause:

- 谁输, 谁请客. /Whoever loses will pay for the meal.
- Shéi shū, shéi qǐngkè.
- 哪儿便宜到哪儿去买. /Wherever is cheaper, we’ll go and buy.
- Nǎr piányi dào nǎr qù mǎi.
- 怎么好怎么做. /We’ll do it whichever way seems best.
- Zěnme hǎo zěnme zuò.
(2) By posing a condition in the first clause and then answering or countering it in the second:

东西太贵，我不买。 Dōngxi tài guì, wǒ bù mǎi. (lit. thing too expensive, I not buy) If things are too expensive, I won’t buy (anything).

天气不好，我们不来了。 Tiānqì bù hǎo, wǒmen bù lái le. (lit. weather not good, we not come) If the weather isn’t good, we won’t come.

他们去，我不去。 Tāmen qù, wǒ bù qù. (lit. they go, I not go) If they are going, I won’t go.

不把文章写完，我不睡觉。 Bù bǎ wénzhāng xiě wán, wǒ bù shuìjiào. (lit. not grasp essay/article write finish, I not sleep) I won’t go to bed before I finish the essay/article.

It would, of course, be acceptable to use one of the conditional conjunctions if rúguò,假如 jìärú,要是 yào shì (or...的话 de huà) or the conjunctive 就 jiù, or both a conjunction and the conjunctive in these sentences:

如果东西太贵，我就不买了。 Rúguò dōngxi tài guì (de huà), wǒ jiù bù mǎi le.

(3) By binding the two clauses in a rhythmic and semantic balance:

吃中餐用筷子， Chī zhōngcān yòng kuàizi, (lit. eat Chinese food use chopsticks, eat Western food use knife and fork) (You) eat Chinese food with chopsticks (and) Western-style food with knives and forks.

吃西餐用刀叉。 chī xīcān yòng dāochā.

他看看我，我看看他。 Tā kàn kàn wǒ, wǒ kàn kàn tā. (lit. he look-look me, I look-look him) He looked at me (and) I looked at him.

24.4 Verbs taking object clauses

Finally, there are a few verbs which take object clauses and form sentences that may be regarded as composite. We list some of these verbs in categories of meaning:
(1) Estimation, thought:

我认你
是对我。  
我时间
不早了。

Wǒ rènwéi nǐ  (lit. I think you be right p)
shì duì de.  I think you are right.
Wǒ juéde  (lit. I feel time not early p)
shíjiān bù zǎo le.  I feel it’s getting late.

In these examples, your shì duì de and 时间不早了shíjiān bù zǎo le are the object clauses.

(2) Suggestion and promise:

我说你
应该坐
火车去。  
我建议大家
一起干。

Wǒ shuō nǐ  (lit. I say you should travel-by)
yīnggāi zuò  train go) I say (that) you
huǒchē qù.  should go by train.
Wǒ jiànyì dàjiā  (lit. I suggest everyone)
yīqǐ gàn.  together work) I suggest

we should do it together.

我答应
明天去
看她。

Wǒ dàying  (lit. I promise tomorrow go)
míngtiān qù  see her) I promised to go
kàn tā.  and see her tomorrow.

Note: From this last example, it can be seen that if the object clause has

the same subject as the main clause, the subject need not be repeated.

(3) Belief:

我相信
地球是
圆的。

Wǒ xiāngxìn  (lit. I believe earth be)
dìqū shì  round p) I believe that
yuán de.  the earth is round.

(4) Wish:

我希望你
能来参加
我们的晚会。

Wǒ xīwàng nǐ  (lit. I hope you can come
néng lái cānjīa  attend our evening-gathering)
wǒmen de  I hope you will be able to
wǎnhuì.  come to our party.

(5) Worry:

我担心
明天
会下雨。

Wǒ dānxīn  (lit. I worry tomorrow possible
míngtiān  fall rain) I am worried that it
huì xià yǔ.  might rain tomorrow.

Object clauses also naturally take the form of direct speech:
Exclamations and interjections; appositions; and apostrophes

25.1 Exclamations

Exclamations in Chinese, as in most languages, can be partial or full statements. Vehemence or emphasis is normally expressed by adding the particle 啊 a to the end of the exclamation. Degree adverbs such as 多么 duō(me) ‘how’/‘what’ or 真 zhēn ‘really’ regularly occur before adjectives to intensify emotions.

(1) Partial statements (i.e. only the comment is present):

- 多(么)美丽 de jǐngsè a! (lit. how beautiful p scenery p) What a beautiful view!
- 真棒啊! Zhēn bàng a! (lit. really great p) Really great!

(2) Full statements:

- 这个箱子 zhègè xiāngzi (lit. this mw box really heavy p) This case is really heavy!
- 这儿的空气 zhèr de kōngqì (lit. here p air how fresh p) How fresh the air is here.

Note: The pronunciation of the particle 啊 a may be influenced by the vowel or consonant that precedes it:

(1) 啊 a > 咦 wa following ao, etc.

- 多好哇! Duō hǎo wa! (lit. how good p) How good it is!

(2) 啊 a > 呀 ya after i, ai, etc.

- 真奇怪呀! Zhēn qíguài ya! (lit. really strange p) How strange!
Sentences

(3) 啊 a > 哪 na after words ending with n, etc.

天哪! Tiān na! (lit. heaven p) Good heavens!

(4) 了 le + 啊 a > 啦 la:

完啦! Wán la! (originally: 完了啊 wán le a) (lit. finish p) All over!

25.1.1 Exclamations with tài

In another regular formulation, the adverb 太 tài ‘too’ is placed before an adjectival or verbal predicate followed by 了 le:

太好了! Tài hǎo le! (lit. too good p) Terrific!

太美了! Tài měi le! (lit. too beautiful p) How beautiful!

太感谢你了! Tài gǎnxiè nǐ le! (lit. too thank you p) I’m truly grateful!

25.1.2 Question-word questions as exclamations

Exclamations may also be shaped as question-word questions, generally ending with 啊 a, 呀 ya, etc.

你昨天 Nǐ zuótiān (lit. you yesterday for-what
为什么不来呀? bù lái ya? not come p) Why didn’t you
come yesterday?!

Note: 不 Bù is used here instead of 没 méi because, although the action is in the past, the speaker wants to emphasise not the fact but the intention of the listener, who didn’t turn up the day before.

你怎么没帮忙啊? Nǐ zěnme méi bāngmáng a? (lit. you how not help p) How come you didn’t help?

我怎么办啊? Wǒ zěnme bān na? (lit. I how deal p) What am I to do?

你怎么说这样的话呀? Nǐ zěnme shuō zhèyàng de huà ya? (lit. you how say like-this p words p) How could you say such a thing?!
25.2 Interjections

Chinese has a wide range of *interjections* used at the beginning of sentences to express various kinds of emotion or attitude:

啊, 雨停了.  *Ā, yǔ tíng le.* (lit. oh, rain stop p)
Hey! It's stopped raining.

呸, 真卑鄙!  *Pèi, zhēn bēibǐ!* (lit. bah really base)
Gosh! How mean!

喂, 你去哪儿?  *Wèi, nǐ qù nǎr?* (lit. hello, you go where)
Hello there! Where are you going?

嗨, 下雪了.  *Hèi, xià xuě le.* (lit. hey, fall snow p)
Why, it's snowing.

Note: Other commonly used interjections include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>唉呀  Āiyā</th>
<th>for impatience</th>
<th>唉呀, 别烦我!  Āiyā! Bié fán wǒ!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ah, don’t bother me. (see 25.2.1 below)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>唉  Āi</th>
<th>for remorse or regret</th>
<th>唉, 我又弄错了.  Āi, wǒ yòu nòng cuò le.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oh dear, I’ve got it wrong again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>哼  Hng</th>
<th>for dissatisfaction</th>
<th>哼, 他想骗我.  Hng, tā xiǎng piàn wǒ.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huh, s/he wants to fool me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>嗯  Ng</th>
<th>for agreement</th>
<th>嗯, 行.  Ng, xíng.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mm. OK.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>哎哟  Āiyǒ</th>
<th>for pain</th>
<th>哎哟! 黄蜂蜇了我了.  Āiyǒ! Huángfēng zhēle wǒ le.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ouch, I’ve been stung by a wasp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25.2.1 Tone variations in interjections

Tones are important for interjections in Chinese, and the same interjection with different tones can convey different feelings:

A 1st tone (pleasant surprise):

啊, 出太阳啦!  *Ā, chū tài yáng la!* (lit. interj come-out sun p)
Hey! The sun has come out.
Sentences

A 2nd tone (pressing a point):

啊, 你到底
go or not? (lit. interj you after-all go not)
去不去?
qù bù qù?

啊, 这是
do (one) matter p)
怎么样啊?
yī huí shì a?

A 3rd tone (doubt or suspicion):

啊, 这怎么
do (one) matter p)
(一)回事啊?
yī huí shì a?

A 4th tone (sudden enlightenment):

啊, 我明白了。
(lit. interj I understand p) Oh, I think I understand it now.

啊, 
(lit. interj this mw child grow p so tall p) Goodness, this
孩子长得
zhè shì zěnme
child has grown so tall.
这么高啦!
zhè shì zěnme
so tall p)

哎呀, 你怎么
(lit. interj you how p grasp
把握我衣服
bā wò de yīfu
my clothes handle dirty p)

弄脏了。
nòng zāng le.

Greatness, this

An interjection may also, in different contexts, convey different feelings with no change of tone:

哎呀, 这个
(lit. interj this mw child grow
孩子长得
píng gào la!
child has grown so tall.
这么高啦!
zhè shì zěnme
so tall p)

哎呀, 你这么
(lit. interj you how p grasp
把握我的衣服
bā wò de yīfu
my clothes handle dirty p)

弄脏了。
nòng zāng le.

Oh dear, how could you

25.3 Appositions

Appositions are another form of independent element in Chinese sentences. They function in a way similar to appositions in English, being placed immediately after the word or words they refer to:

大家都
(lit. everybody all admire
佩服小李, Xin Li, an outstanding
一个出色的
outstanding engineer)
工程师.
yī gè chūsè de
gōngchéngshī.

她妈妈的
(lit. her mother’s palm-on
掌上明珠)
掌上明珠
zhāng shāng míngzhū.

她是独生女,
(lit. she be only-daughter,
一个出色的
her mother’s palm-on
工程师.
yī gè chūsè de
gōngchéngshī.

Tā shì dúshēngnǚ,
(lit. she be only-daughter,
她妈妈的
her mother’s palm-on
mǔ mā de
bright-pearl) She is an only
tā mā de
daughter, the apple of her
zhāng shāng
mother’s eye.
míngzhū.
Pronouns or pronominal expressions such as 自己 zìjǐ ‘self’, 一个人 yī gè rén (lit. one mw person) ‘alone’/‘by myself’, 俩 liǎ ‘both’/‘the two’, etc., are commonly used appositions:

我 自 己 来。 **Wǒ zìjǐ lái.** (lit. I self come) I'll help myself. (i.e. to food, etc.)

他 一 个 人 走 了。 **Tā yī gè rén zǒu le.** (lit. he one mw person go p) He left by himself.

他 们 俩 吵 起 来 了。 **Tāmen liǎ chǎo qǐlái le.** (lit. they two quarrel start p) The two of them started to quarrel.

### 25.4 Apostrophe

*Apostrophe* is another independent element, which in Chinese normally comes at the beginning of a sentence rather than at the end:

李先生， 你 早！ **Lǐ xiānshēng, nǐ zǎo!** (lit. Li Mr, you early) Good morning, Mr Li!

张 教 授， 请 您 讲 话。 **Zhāng jiàoshòu, qǐng nín jiǎng huà.** (lit. Zhang professor, please polite: you say words) Professor Zhang, please say a few words.

小 陈， 你 上 哪 儿 去？ **Xiǎo Chén, nǐ shàng nǎr qù?** (lit. little Chen, you to where go) Little Chen, where are you going to?

老 王， 近 来 怎 样？ **Lǎo Wáng, jìn lái zěnyàng?** (lit. old Wang, recently what-like) How are things with you lately, Old Wang?
Part IV

Paragraphs

Introduction

We have so far looked at the features of Chinese grammar within the structure of the sentence. However, other factors come into play in longer passages when sentences occur in sequence within the framework of a paragraph. In this final section, we will draw attention to these factors and illustrate their impact through a number of short passages in different styles.

We have already seen in our discussion of conjunctions and serial constructions that correlative and referential devices, which are apparently essential to the structure of a sentence, may be rendered superfluous by meaningful clues provided by context or cotext. For instance, in our discussion of topic-comment structures, we have encountered such meaning-dictated and form-saving tendencies as 信寄走了。Xīn jì zōu le. rather than *信被寄走了。Xīn bèi jì zōu le. (see 18.4.1). As we will see, Chinese is fundamentally oriented towards meaning rather than dictated by form. In the following we will explore these tendencies in more detail and consider the grammatical strategies the Chinese language employs to change or nullify certain formal ingredients of sentences when they are brought together in longer passages. Prime among these are: pronominal and conjunctional omission; elastic sentential configuration; conventional rhythmic cohesion; preferential treatment of repetition; etc. Through the exploitation of contextual meaning, the elimination of formal elements, and the employment of rhythmic balance, a Chinese speaker/writer is able to weave together sentences, which might seem incomplete to speakers of English, into paragraphs that are in fact grammatically coherent.

We will start our discussion with the diary form, essentially a narrative, and follow it with a letter, a dialogue, a speech, a description, a piece of expository writing, and a short argumentative essay. Each example will consist of the Chinese text (including a pinyin version) and a translation into colloquial English, followed by an analysis of
syntactic and, in some cases, stylistic features. Where necessary we will also provide literal translations.

26.1 A diary

Rìjì

Èrlínglíngwù nián wǔyuè èrshí wǔ rì qìng(yīn)/yǔ

Jǐn wǎn zài diànnǐ shāng kànle yī chǎng zújiǔ bǐsài, shì Yīngguó liwùpū zúqiúduì yī Yídàlì AC màilan zúqiúduì zhēngduó èrlínglíngwù nián òuzhōubēi guànjūn de juédáì.

Shàngbānchāng kāishí bù dào jǐ fēn zhōng, màilan dui jiǔ jìnle yī qiú, shàngbānchāng jiēshù shì, bǐfēn yíjīng shì sān bǐ lìng, màilan dui zhànle shāngfēng/língxīán.

Rénrén dōu yīwéi zhè huí liwùpū dui shì shūdīng le de. Kěshì shéi yě měi liàodào, xiàbānchāng yī kāishí, liwùpū dui jījù jīngōng, bǐng zài tóngyáng xījū xīng de qīngkuàng xià, liánxū tījīn sān qiú, bānchēng sān píng.

Jiā shí zài sāi, shuāngfāng shìjūnlì, shízhōng bāočí sān bǐ sān. Zúhòu zhīnèng kào (fá) diānqū lái juédìng shèngfù.

Translation:
25 May, 2005 fine/cloudy/rain
This evening I watched a football match on television. It was the 2005 European Cup Final between Liverpool and AC Milan. Within a few minutes of the first half beginning Milan scored, and by the end of the half, the score was already three nil with Milan in the ascendance. Everyone thought Liverpool were bound to lose. But against all expectations, once the second half started, Liverpool attacked furiously and in similar dramatic circumstances scored three goals in succession, pulling back to three all. In extra time both sides were equally matched and the score remained three all. In the end they had to resort to penalty kicks to decide the winner. The result was that Liverpool turned out to be victorious, and became the 2005 European Cup champions. The match inspired a few thoughts in me: it’s the same whatever you do – temporary setbacks should not be taken too seriously, and as long as you persevere, you are sure to win in the end.

Analysis:
This diary is essentially a narrative with the author recounting what takes place in a football match he watched on television that day. Towards the end he expresses his feelings about the result of the match by relating it to his personal experience and philosophy. The main points we need to consider here are:

(a) contextual omission of the subject in clauses or sentences, e.g.:

今晚在电视上看了一场足球比赛...
Jīn wǎn zài diànshì shàng kàn le yī chǎng zújiú bǐsài...
‘This evening (I) watched a football match on television.’

As the keeper of the diary, the subject here is naturally understood as the initiator of the action, and he does not need to identify himself as 我 ‘I’. It would therefore be superfluous, though not wrong, to introduce the pronoun, but if it were included, the tone would be somewhat unnatural. As we shall see later, the object of a verb may be left out for similar reasons.

是英国利物浦足球队与意大利AC米兰足球队争夺2005年欧洲杯冠军的决赛。
shì Yīngguó liwǔpú zúqíúduì yǔ yìliè AC miān zúqíúduì zhēngdúo érlínglíngwǔ nián āozhōubēi guànjūn de juésài.
‘(It) was the 2005 European Cup Final between Liverpool and AC Milan.’

This illustrates the discourse feature of Chinese to drop, where possible, a nominal subject (or object) that is contextually obvious, without
any implications for the structural completeness of the sentence. In general, this explains why the third person neuter pronoun ‘it’ is something of a rarity in Chinese.

做任何事情都一样 ... 只要坚持不懈, 最终定能取得胜利。
zuò rènhé shìqíng dōu yīyang . . . zhǐyào jiānchìbùxiè, zuìzhōng dìng néng qùde shèngli.
‘it’s the same whatever (you) do – . . . as long as (you) persevere, (you) are sure to win in the end’.

The subjects of the clauses in this case are of generic reference and are therefore readily omitted. Proverbial expressions in Chinese are more than likely to follow this pattern.

(b) conventional omission of conjunctions, e.g.:

上半场开始不到几分钟, 米兰队就进了一球, 上半场结束时, 比分已经是三比零, 米兰队占了上风。
Shàngbānchǎng kāishǐ bù dào jǐ fēn zhōng, mǐlán duì jiù jìnle yī qiú, shàngbānchǎng jiēshì shí, bǐfēn yìjīng shì sān bǐ líng, mǐlán duì zhànle shàngfēng.
‘Within a few minutes of the first half beginning Milan scored, (and) by the end of the half, the score was already three nil (with) Milan in the ascendance.’

All the clauses here are complete with their subjects and predicate verbs and are strung together in the sentence with commas as clausal boundaries rather than conjunctions. Chinese sentences are in fact semantic units, where sentential considerations are not confined entirely to the grammatical centrality of a ‘subject-predicate’ form, but focus on the linking of ideas featured sequentially but coherently in a composite unit of expression. In this case, the speaker/writer has taken five ‘subject-predicate’ clauses to form the unit of expression, which presents the central theme of what happens in the first half of the match. (Other speakers/writers might have shaped the same sequence into two or three sentences with, for example, full stops after the second and possibly the fourth clause. These elastic sentential configurations demonstrate the flexibility of a meaning-oriented language like Chinese.)

The English translation is obliged to introduce the conjunction ‘and’, but it uses other language forms to deal with the verb-dominant tendency of Chinese, of which this sentence is an example. (See (d) below.)

(c) insertion of conjunctions contributing to the cadence of the sentence, e.g.:
下半场一开始，利物浦队急剧进攻，并在同样戏剧性的情况下，延续踢进三球，扳成三平。

xiàbànhǎng yī kāishì, liwùpū duì jī jìngōng, bìng zài tóngyàng xǐjūxìng de qíngkuàng xià, liánxù tījin sān qiú, bānchéng sān píng。

‘once the second half started, Liverpool attacked furiously and in similar dramatic circumstances scored three goals in succession, pulling back to three all’.

Here the clausal conjunction 并且 bīngqǐ ‘and’ provides the cadence for a two-part structure: it serves to highlight what is to come, introducing a commentative dimension into the narrative. Without the conjunction, the sentence becomes more of a factual report.

(d) verbal versus prepositional preponderance: a literal translation of the sentence in (b) above would be as follows:

‘first half begin not reach several minutes, Milan team then score a goal, arrive first half finish time, score already is three-nil, Milan team occupy upper position’

This translation demonstrates clearly that Chinese is a language which relies heavily on verbs. We have seen that subjects and objects can readily be omitted in a defined context but a predicate verb must always be present. English, on the other hand, tends to employ nominal and prepositional expressions. This is apparent from the colloquial rendition provided in (b), where the first, third, and final clauses in Chinese all become prepositional phrases in English.

26.2 A letter

书信
Zhìmíng xiōng:

您好!  很久没有给您去信了, 请原谅, 想近来一切均好, 学业上也有长足的进步吧。我也一切如常, 只是小孩有时有点淘气, 不太听话, 多说他几句就生起气来, 把门关了, 叫吃饭也不下来。大概是这个年龄小孩都有点乖戾吧, 再说, 我和妻子也都工作繁忙, 没有太多时间照顾他, 跟他一起搞些有益身心的活动, 所以也很难全怪他。

shūxin

Nín hǎo!  hěn jǐu méiyǒu gěi nín qù xìn le, qǐng yuánliàng, xiàng jìn lái yīqié jùn hǎo, xuéyè shang yě yǒu zhǎngzú de jīnbù ba. Wǒ yě yīqié rúcháng, zhǐshì xiǎoháir yōushí yǒu diǎn táoqì, bù tài tīnghuà, duō shuō tā jǐ jù jiǔ shēng qí qí lái, bǎ mén guān le, jiào chīfǎn yě bù xià lái. Dāngài shì zhěi gè niánlíng xiǎohái dōu yǒu diǎn guāili ba. Zài shuō, wǒ hě qīzǐ yě dōu...
Paragraphs

Translation:
Dear Zhiming,

How are you? I am sorry I haven’t written for ages. Hope things have gone well for you lately, and you’ve made good progress with your studies. Things remain the same with me and it’s just that the child is sometimes a bit naughty, doesn’t do as he is told, frets the more I tell him off, shuts himself away, and won’t even come down when I call him to eat. Probably it’s the contrariness of a child of his age. What’s more, my wife and I are both busy at work and don’t have too much time to look after him or do interesting things with him, and so it’s very difficult to blame him entirely. We hope that when he gets past this age, he will grow up and gradually change for the better. Oh yes, young Li wants me to pass on to you that he is going for a year’s visit to Australia next month, and before he goes we are wondering whether the three of us can find time to get together, perhaps better at my place. Please let me know what you think. Best wishes to you and your family, and please pass on my regards to your parents.

Yours, Lingqiang
23 June

Analysis:
The main purpose of this letter is to pass on a message to arrange a meeting of the three friends. It is customary for the writer of a Chinese letter not to come straight to the point, but politely to put in a few preliminaries to add some substance. Here there are initial statements: ‘expressing good will’ (e.g. 你好 Nǐ hào! ‘How are you?’) and ‘asking
for forgiveness for not writing too often (e.g. 您好! 很久没有给您去信了, 请原谅。Nín hǎo! hěn jiù méiyǒu gěi nín qùxìn le, qǐng yuánliàng. ‘I am sorry I haven’t written for ages’, etc.) In addition, something like 请代问候您双亲。Qǐng dài wèn hòu nín shuāngqīn. ‘Please pass on my regards to your parents’, etc. is more often than not a concluding sentence. The address code amongst friends is usually 兄 xiōng ‘elder brother’ for someone older and 弟 dì ‘younger brother’ for someone younger in the case of men, and for women 姐 jiě ‘elder sister’ and 妹 mèi ‘younger sister’ respectively. A letter invariably ends with 上 shàng ‘submit respectfully’ after one’s signature. When writing to a superior, however, one would use formal titles (e.g. 局长 júzhǎng ‘head of the bureau’, 教授 jiàoshòu ‘professor’, 主任 zhǔrèn ‘director’, etc.) or polite addresses (e.g. 先生 Xiànshēng ‘Mr’, 太太 Tàitāi ‘Mrs.’, 姐姐 Xiǎojie ‘Miss’, etc.).

In this letter we see linguistic characteristics already observed in the diary above: omission of clausal or sentential subjects or objects where the context eliminates any possible misunderstanding, and of conjunctive devices, when the ideas expressed belong to the same central theme, e.g.:

很久没有给您去信了, 请原谅。
hěn jiù méiyǒu gěi nín qùxìn le, qǐng yuánliàng.
‘(I) haven’t written to you for a long time. Please forgive/excuse (me).’

想近来一切均好...
Xiǎng jìn lái yíqiè jūnhǎo...
‘Hope things have gone well (for you) lately’

只是小孩有时有点淘气, 不太听话, 多说他几句就生起气来, 把门关了, 叫吃饭也不下来。
zhǐshì xiǎohái yǒushí yǒu diǎn táoqì, bù tài tīnghuà, duō shuō tā jù jù jiù shēng qī qǐ lái, bǎ mén guān le, jiào chīfàn yě bù xià lái.
‘it’s just that the child is sometimes a bit naughty, doesn’t do as (he) is told, frets the more (I) tell him off, shuts (himself) away, and won’t even come down when (I) call (him) to eat.’

In fact, the suppressed subjects (in brackets) of the predicate verbs in the clauses change from first person to third person and vice versa without any problem retrieving meaning from the text (see also 23.4.3). The clauses are separated by commas alone without any need for conjunctions – a further proof that Chinese sentences are semantic units of expression. As long as the component elements contribute to the same central idea of ‘the child’s contrariness’, they naturally belong together.
我和妻子也都工作繁忙，没有太多时间照顾他，跟他一起搞些有益身心的活动，所以也很难全怪他。希望过了这个年龄，能懂得起事来，渐渐有所改变。

Wō hé qīzi yě dōu gōngzuò fānmáng，méiyǒu tài duō shìjiān zhàogù tā，gēn tā yīqǐ gāo xiě yǒuyì shēnxīn de huódòng，suǒyǐ yě hén nán quán guài tā。Xīwàng guóle zhè gè niánlíng，néng dōng qǐ shí lái，jiānjiān yǒu suǒ gāibiǎn。

‘my wife and I are both busy at work and don’t have too much time to look after him or do interesting things with him, and so it’s very difficult to blame him entirely. (We) hope that when (he) gets past this age, (he) will grow up and gradually change for the better.’

Once again, we see that, for the same reasons noted in the previous sentence, subjects and objects, as well as conjunctions, are omitted in the Chinese text.

### 26.3 A dialogue

#### 对话

市政府门口

小李: 老张，老张! 想不到在这儿见到你，你来这儿干啥？

老张: 啊，小李，原来是你，我还以为是谁呢! 近来怎么样？

小李: 还可以。你呢？

老张: 不错，不错。只是前几天着了点儿凉，有一点点咳嗽，已经差不多好了。你呢？还在考试吧？

小李: 不，早就考完了。

老张: 成绩怎么样？

小李: 还没公布，估计不会太理想。有的科目很可能不及格呢。

老张: 为什么？

小李: 主要是考试前那段时间，天气太热，晚上也没有睡好。加上心情紧张，饭也吃不下，所以复习得不好。

#### Duihuà

市政府门口

Xiao Li: Lao Zhang, Lao Zhang! Xiàngbúdào zài zhèr jiàndào nǐ. Nǐ lái zhèr gàn shà?

Lao Zhang: Ā, Xiao Li, yuánlái shì nǐ. Wǒ hái yǐwèi shì shéi ne! Jinlái zènmeyàng?

Lǐ: Hái kěyì. Nǐ ne?

Zhāng: Bù cuò, bù cuò. Zhīshī qián jī tiān zháole diānr liàng, yǒudìānr kěsōu, yǐjīng chābuduō hǎo le. Nǐ ne? Hái zài kāoshì bā?

Lǐ: Bù, zǎo jiù kāo wán le.

Zhāng: Chéngjì zènmeyàng?

Lǐ: Hái méi gōngbù, guījǐ bù huí tài lǐxiǎng. Yóu de kěmù hén kěnēng bù jīgē ne.

Zhāng: Wěi shénme?

Lǐ: Zhùyào shì kāoshi qián nèi duǎn shìjiān, tiānqì tài rè, wǎnshàng yě méiyǒu shuí hào. Jiāshàng xīnqīng jīnzhāng, fān yě chībuxià, suǒyì fǔxí de bù hào.
老张: 但愿如此。张: 谢谢, 再见。小李: 再见。

小李: 但愿如此。老张: 好吧, 咱们先谈这儿。今天有中国代表团来这儿访问, 我是来替市长当翻译的。我还是赶快去见他吧。

小李: 好吧, 那就再见了。祝你一切顺利。老张: 谢谢, 再见。小李: 再见。

Translation:
At the door of the Municipal Government Office

Young Li: Old Zhang, old Zhang! I didn’t expect to meet you here. What have you come for?
Old Zhang: Ah, Young Li, so it’s you. I didn’t realize it was you. How have things been for you lately?
Young Li: Quite good. What about you?
Old Zhang: Not bad, not bad. It’s just that I caught a bit of a cold a few days ago, and have a bit of a cough. It’s almost better now. How about you? You’re still taking exams, aren’t you?
Young Li: No. They finished some time ago.
Old Zhang: What were your results?
Young Li: They’ve not been published yet. I guess they won’t be too brilliant. It’s very probable that I haven’t passed some subjects.
Old Zhang: Why?
Young Li: Mainly because in the period before the exam, it was too hot, and I didn’t sleep well at night. On top of that, I was nervous and could not eat, so my revision didn’t go well.
Old Zhang: Don’t worry. Probably things won’t be as bad as you imagine.
Young Li: I hope so.
Old Zhang: OK, let’s leave it at that. Today a Chinese delegation is visiting here. I am interpreting for the Mayor. I must dash off to see him now.
Young Li: OK, so we’ll say goodbye. Hope everything goes smoothly for you.
Old Zhang: Thank you. Goodbye for now.
Young Li: Goodbye.
Analysis:
In a dialogue or conversation, omissions are all the more common because the context is made immediately apparent by the ongoing exchange, e.g.:

Old Zhang: What were your results?
Young Li: (They’ve) not been published yet. (I) guess (they) won’t be too brilliant. It’s very probable that (I) haven’t passed some subjects.

‘Results’ is obviously the topic of this exchange and, as it has been the keyword in the question, there is no need to reiterate it in the answer. Likewise, it is clear that ‘I’ have taken the examination and there is therefore no need for me to identify myself.

Once again there is no doubt that the answer relates to the candidate himself and the subject is consequently omitted.

It is also worth pointing out that in informal Chinese, as in a conversation like this, there is a tendency for speakers to use the sentence particle 了 le. This is because in everyday conversation (or letters) one says things as they come to mind: thus the sentences of the speaker (or writer) are less structured and tend more often than usual to round up ideas at every step. When this happens, 了 le becomes a natural mechanism to bring an idea to a close before the speaker goes on to another. For instance, in 已经差不多好了 yǐjīng chābúduō hào le ‘It’s almost better now’, 早就考完了 zǎo jiù kǎo wán le ‘The exams finished some time ago’, and 那就再见了 nà jiù zàijiàn le ‘so we’ll say goodbye’, the speaker indicates that he has no doubt in his mind that what he has just verbalised represents a situation which has already been or will soon be
actualised and 了 le helps him to signal that, by bringing the idea to conclusion. We can illustrate this further by adding 了 le to other sentences in the dialogue. For example, 成绩怎么样 Chéngjì zěnmeyàng? ‘What were your results?’ is a straightforward question, but 成绩怎么样了 Chéngjì zěnmeyàng le introduces an anxious tone into the query and indicates concern for the impending outcome; 天气太热 tiānqì tài rè ‘it was too hot’ is a factual statement, but 天气太热了 tiānqì tài rè le emphasises a situational change where the heat is hardly ideal for exams; if 饭也吃不下 fàn yě chībuxià ‘could not eat’ is again a factual report, 饭也吃不下了 fàn yě chībuxià le becomes a comment highlighting a disturbing change in appetite; if 别担心 bié dànxīn ‘don’t worry’ is a forthright request, 别担心了 bié dànxīn le ‘stop worrying’ gently urges the listener to change his present state of anxiety.

We can see from the above that wherever 了 le occurs, it is an indication that what the speaker has in mind is, or will soon be, a different situation, which the listener is invited to think about. In the unstructured, and almost anarchic, sequence of such sentences, 了 le is a natural marker between them; this means that the less structured the speech (or writing), the more frequent the use of 了 le. In more structured expository or argumentative writing, as we shall see, 了 le appears far less frequently.

26.4 A welcome speech

欢迎词

张院长, 张夫人:

我代表XX大学, 对你们到校来访问, 表示热烈的欢迎。自从咱们两校互派留学生与访问学者以来, 双方在学术上互相促进, 取得了不少成绩。我想特别指出的是贵校派来的学生与老师, 勤奋好学, 遵守纪律, 助人为乐, 每一批都给我们留下了深刻的印象, 希望他们回到本校之后, 能够多做贡献, 进一步加强我们之间的友谊。张院长这次到来, 可以亲眼看到贵校学生与老师学习与生活的实况。在我们这儿, 他们是贵宾, 是最受欢迎的人。我们尽了一切努力, 使他们身心愉快, 学有所成。当然, 我们也得感谢张院长对我校派去的学生与

Huānyíngcí

Zhāngyuànzhāng, Zhāngfùrén:

Wǒ dài biǎo XX dàxué, dui nín de dàolo huì lái, bǎolǐ zhì lè de huānyíng. Zìpǐn zǎnmen liǎng xiào hù pài liú xuéshèng yǔ fāngwèn xuézhèng dà fú bàn le bù shǎo chéngjì. Wǒ xiǎo yě tēbié zhíchū de shì guì xiào pài lái de xuéshèng yǔ lǎoshī, qínfèn hǎoxué, zhǔnshòu jílǔ, zhù rén wéi lè, měi yī pǐ dōu gěi wǒmen liù xià le shènghuó de yínxiǎng, xiē wàng tāmen huì lái bāo dān xiào zhīhòu, nènggòu duō zuò gōngxiàn, jǐn yìbù jiā qiāng wǒmen zhījiǎn de yǒuyì. Zhāngyuànzhāng zhèi ci dàolái, kěyī qǐn yǎn kǎndào guì xiào xuéshèng
President Zhang and Mrs Zhang,
On behalf of XX university, I express a warm welcome to you on your
visit to our humble university. Ever since our two universities have
been exchanging students and visiting scholars both sides have achieved
considerable results in promoting mutual academic progress. What
I would like to point out in particular is that the students and teachers
sent by your honourable university have been diligent and committed
to their studies, have observed discipline, and have taken pleasure
in helping others. Every cohort has left us with a deep impression, and
I hope that after their return to their own university, they are able
to make wider contributions and further strengthen the friendship
between us. President Zhang, you will be able to see with your own
eyes during this visit the actual conditions in which the students and
teachers sent by your honourable university live and study. Here they
are honoured guests and the most welcome of people. We have done
our utmost to ensure that they are happy in every way and successful
in their studies. Of course we must also thank President Zhang for the
meticulous care and concern shown to the students and teachers we
have sent (to your university). When they return they say unanimously
that the period when they studied at your university was even more
happy and comfortable than at home. At this point, on behalf of our

Translation:
President Zhang and Mrs Zhang,
On behalf of XX university, I express a warm welcome to you on your
visit to our humble university. Ever since our two universities have
been exchanging students and visiting scholars both sides have achieved
considerable results in promoting mutual academic progress. What
I would like to point out in particular is that the students and teachers
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to their studies, have observed discipline, and have taken pleasure
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in their studies. Of course we must also thank President Zhang for the
meticulous care and concern shown to the students and teachers we
have sent (to your university). When they return they say unanimously
that the period when they studied at your university was even more
happy and comfortable than at home. At this point, on behalf of our
humble university I would like to express once again our heartfelt thanks to President Zhang. Let me take this opportunity to ask everybody present to raise their glasses together in a toast to President Zhang and Mrs Zhang and wish them good health, all success, and marked achievements during this visit.

Analysis:
A welcome speech, like other formal addresses, is likely to incorporate standard clichés, and a number of them can be seen here (e.g. 我们学校的‘our humble university’, 贵校的‘your honourable university’, 代表 you’re behalf, 借此机会 ‘take this opportunity’, etc.). Another prominent feature of this style is an inclination to use rhythmic patterns and parallelisms (e.g. 严谨好多, 扎实细心, 关心与照顾 ‘are happy in every way and successful in their studies’, 关怀与照顾 guǎnhuái yú zhàogù ‘care and concern’, 愉快与舒适 yúkuài yú shūshì ‘happy and comfortable’, etc.

26.5 A description

Máoshuwén


Jìn shí jǐ nián lái, Lizì zài chéngshì jiànzhu shàng, yǒu hěn dà de fāzhàn. Yóuqí shì shìzhōngxīn, jiēdào liàngpáng de jiānzhù yǔ lái yǔ xīnyíng biézhi, bùxíngjiē gèng shì mǐngjìng kuānxìng, zhèr xīngrán bùyòng dànxīn chēliáng de láiwǎng. Kēshì zúi yòu tèshè de háiyào shù nǎ yītiàotiáo de gōng lǎng jiē, qītā chéngshì hào bù duō jiàn. Zhělǐ de gōnglǎngjiē, měi tiáo dōu yǒu dūtè de fēnggé, qízhòng
Leeds is a city in West Yorkshire in northern Britain, said to be the fourth biggest city in England. England’s largest city is of course London, with Birmingham next, Manchester third, and Leeds coming fourth.

In the last ten years or so, there have been major developments in urban construction in Leeds. In the city centre in particular, the buildings along the streets are looking increasingly original and attractive. The pedestrian precincts are even more bright and spacious with people not needing to worry about traffic. But more distinctive are the many arcades, which are not often found in other cities. Each arcade has its unique style. One of them even has beautiful flowerbeds and pleasing fountains with benches beside them where people can sit and rest any time they like. The shop-windows on either side are full of eye-catching goods, attracting visitors from outside. The coffee shops here also have tables and chairs in the middle of the arcade, where customers can sit at their leisure and enjoy a cup of coffee.

Analysis:
A description in Chinese is naturally drawn to sequences of words and phrases expressing similar meanings. For example, in this passage, to attain variety, four different verbs are used to indicate comparison:

Translation:
Leeds is a city in West Yorkshire in northern Britain, said to be the fourth biggest city in England. England’s largest city is of course London, with Birmingham next, Manchester third, and Leeds coming fourth.

In the last ten years or so, there have been major developments in urban construction in Leeds. In the city centre in particular, the buildings along the streets are looking increasingly original and attractive. The pedestrian precincts are even more bright and spacious with people not needing to worry about traffic. But more distinctive are the many arcades, which are not often found in other cities. Each arcade has its unique style. One of them even has beautiful flowerbeds and pleasing fountains with benches beside them where people can sit and rest any time they like. The shop-windows on either side are full of eye-catching goods, attracting visitors from outside. The coffee shops here also have tables and chairs in the middle of the arcade, where customers can sit at their leisure and enjoy a cup of coffee.
to indicate position, arrangement and special quality; and in order to acquire a cadential rhythm, four character phrases are coined, e.g. 新颖别致 xīn yǐng bié zhì from 新颖 xīn yǐng ‘refreshingly new’ and 别致 bié zhì ‘original’, 明净宽敞 míng jìng kuān chàng from 明净 míng jìng ‘bright and clean’ and 宽敞 kuān chàng ‘wide and spacious’, 舒心惬意 shū xīn qiè yì from 舒心 shū xīn ‘relaxing one’s mind’ and 意气 qiè yì ‘pleasing one’s heart’; and parallel structures are formed, e.g. 美丽的小花坛 měi lì de xiǎo huā tán ‘beautiful flowerbeds’, 惬人的小喷泉 yí rén de xiǎo pēn quán ‘pleasing fountains’, (可供行人)随时休憩的长凳, 琳琅满目的商品, 陈列着, 吸引了, (核 gōng xíng rén) 水 chí xū qí de cháng dēng, lín lǎng mǎn mù de shāng pǐn, chén liè zhe, xī yīn le, etc. Descriptions are generally intent on achieving variety in usage and vibrancy in rhythm.

26.6 An explanatory piece of writing

说明文
识记中文单词的方法

学中文，除了学发音与语法之外，还得识记一定数量的单词。一门语言的发音与语法，都是封闭的系统，其规则是有限的，而且在短期内不会发生很大的变化，所以并不难学。单词却不一样，是永远也学不完的。因为一门语言的词汇是一个开放的系统，在不断更新，不断增加，可是不要这么一说就恐慌起来。其实一门语言中常用的词儿并不多，无非是那么几千个。只要方法对头，要掌握这几千个词儿倒并不难。至于那些不常用的词儿，可以慢慢来，等到需要的时候，再一个一个地学。

现在我们谈谈学中文词儿的方法。大家都知道，每个单词都有自己独特的发音与用法，所以在识记一个单词的时候，除了要知道意
除此之外，一定要把音调发准，把有关的搭配弄清。例如‘见面’一词，意思为‘(lit. see face) meet’，音调是jiànniàn，搭配则是“跟他见面‘meet him’和‘见过他一面’‘met him once’。这样就不会根据英文 meet 一词的用法而说出*见面他’这样的话来了。

记中文单词还有一个窍门，这里值得一提，学中文的人听了一定会高兴的。其实中文里几乎所有的词儿都是由单音节的字构成的。当代中文的字汇，象语言语法一样，也是一个封闭系统，一般情况下是不会再造出什么新的字来了。常用的字也只有两千五百到三千个，几乎所有的词儿都是由这几个字组合而成的，而且往往是由两个这样的字组合成的。上面提到的‘见面’一词就是由‘见’与‘面’两个字构成的，学会了这两个字，还可以帮助你掌握不少其他如‘再见’zàijiàn ‘(lit. again see) goodbye’，见证 jiànzhēng ‘(lit. see prove) witness’，‘面试’miànshi ‘(lit. face test) interview’这类词儿。

shìjì yǐ gè dāncì de shìhou，chú le yào zhídào yìsì zhīwài，yídǐng yào bā yǐndiào fà zhūn，bā yǒuguān de dāpéi nóng qǐng。Lírú ‘jiànniàn’ yǐ cí，yìsì shì ‘meet’，yǐndiào shì ‘jiànniàn’，dāpéi zé shì ‘gēn tā jiànniàn’，hé ‘jiān guò tā yì miàn’。zhèyàng jiù bù hui gēnjù yīngwén ‘meet’。yǐ cí de yòngfā ér shuō chū ‘jiànniàn tā’ zhèyàng de huà lāi le。

Ji zhòngwén dāncì háiyǒu yī gè qiàomén，zhéi zhìáo yī cí ti，xuè zhòngwén de rèn tǐng le yídǐng huì gāoxìng de。Qíshí zhòngwén lǐ jǐhū suǒyǒu de cí dōushì yǒu dānyīnjié de zi gōuchéng de。Dāngdài zhòngwén de zìhuì，xiàng yǔyīn yǔfā yìyìng，yěshí yǐ gè fēngbǐ xītōng，yǐbān qíngkuàng xià shì bù huì zài zào chū shènmé xīn de zì lái le。Chángyòng de zì yě zhǐyǒu liǎng qiān wǔ bāi dào sān qiān gè，jǐhū suǒyǒu de cí dōushì yǒu zhē jǐ qiān gè zì zūhé érchéng de。érqiě wǎngwǎng shì yǒu liǎng gè zhèyàng de zì zūchéng de。Shàngmìan tīdào de ‘jiànniàn’ yǐ cí jìshì yǒu ‘jiàn’ yǔ ‘miàn’ liǎng gè zì gōuchéng de，xué huì de zhe liǎng gè zì，hái kěyǐ bāngzhù nǐ zhǎngwò būshāo qītā rú ‘zāijiàn’ ‘(goodbye)’，jiànzhēng，‘(witness)’，miànshi ‘(interview)’ zhè lèi cír。

Translation:

The Way to Learn Chinese Words

In studying Chinese, apart from pronunciation and grammar, you also have to learn a sufficient number of words. The pronunciation and grammar of a language are closed systems, and their rules are limited in number and moreover these rules are unlikely to change significantly over a short period of time. They are therefore certainly not difficult to learn. Words on the other hand are different. You can never stop learning
them because the vocabulary of a language is an open system, forever being renewed and extended. But don’t panic because I say this. In fact, there aren’t many commonly used words in a language and usually no more than a few thousand. As long as you go about it properly, you’ll certainly have no difficulty mastering these few thousand words. As for less commonly used words, you can take them slowly and learn them one by one when the time comes.

Now let’s talk about how to learn Chinese words. Everyone knows that each word has its own unique pronunciation and usage, and therefore when learning a word, in addition to its meaning, you have to be clear about its pronunciation and collocation. For example, the word 见面 jiānmìàn, which means ‘meet (lit. see face)’, has the pronunciation (i.e. tone as well as sound) ‘jiānmìàn’ and the collocations of 见面和他见面 gēn tā jiānmìàn ‘meet him (lit. with him see face)’ and 见过他一面 jiàn guò tā yī miàn ‘met him once (lit. see p him one face)’, etc. Thus you wouldn’t say something like *见面他 jiānmìàn tā ‘(lit.) meet him’ in the way you would use ‘meet’ in English.

There is a knack for remembering Chinese words, which is also worth mentioning here, and people learning the language will definitely be pleased to hear about it. The fact is that all Chinese words are made up of monosyllabic characters. The character set of contemporary Chinese, like its pronunciation and grammar, is a closed system too, and in normal circumstances no new characters will be created. There are only 2,500 to 3,000 commonly used characters in Chinese, and most words are combinations of two of those characters. The word 见面 jiānmìàn mentioned above is formed from the two characters 见 jiàn ‘see’ and 面 miàn ‘face’, and learning these two characters will help you to grasp many other words such as 再见 zàijiàn ‘goodbye (lit. again see)’, 见证 jiànzhèng ‘witness (lit. see prove)’, 面试 miànsì ‘interview (lit. face test)’, etc.

Analysis:
Expository writing naturally exhibits some of the features noted above in the diary, letter, dialogue and description sections. Here we will concentrate on repetitional strategies.

A piece of expository writing has to have an internal logic and coherence (see also the analysis of argumentative writing below) and focuses throughout on a particular thematic concept or concepts. One therefore finds considerable repetition of key words. This unique feature of expository writing can be seen in both the Chinese original and also the relatively literal English translation. For example, note the frequent presence of key concepts like pronunciation and grammar, closed and open systems, words, characters, collocation, etc. However, there is a marked difference in the strategies adopted by the two languages.
English, repetition is normally avoided by the use of pronouns and a wide range of synonyms, though in practice, where the writing is more oriented towards meaning and content rather than style, repetition becomes more acceptable. In Chinese, however, which is not comfortable with nominal or pronominal substitution, repetition is more readily tolerated and, where the context is clear, meaning takes over, allowing for simple omission. For example:

大家都知道, 每个单词都有自己独特的发音与用法, 所以在识记一个单词的时候, 除了要知道意思之外, 一定要把音调发准, 把有关的搭配弄清。

Dàjìa dōu zhīdào, měi gè dǎncí dōu yǒu zǐjǐ dútè de fāyīn yǔ yòngfǎ, suǒyǐ zài shìjī yī gè dǎncí de shìhou, chú le yào zhīdào yisi zhīwài, yìdīng yào bǎ yǐndiào fā zhūn, bǎ yǒuyuàn de dàpèi nòng qǐng.

Everyone knows that each word has its own unique pronunciation and usage, and therefore when learning a word, in addition to its meaning, you have to be clear about its pronunciation and collocation.

26.7 An argumentative piece of writing

议论文

健康之我见

有人说: ‘‘健康是财富中的财富.' 我觉得这个说法是十分正确的. 其实道理很简单, 试想一下, 一个人,如果身体不好, 一年到头病病歪歪的, 就算再有钱, 又怎样去享受美好的人生呢?

Yìlùnwén

Jiānkāng zhī wǒ jiàn

Yǒu rén shuō: 'Jiānkāng shì cǎifù zhōng de cǎifù.' Wǒ juéde zhè gè shuōfǎ shì shīfēn zhèngquè de. Qǐshí, dàoli hén jiàndān. Shì xiǎng yǐxiá, yī gè rén, rúguì shēntǐ bù hǎo, yī nián dào tóu bìng bìng wǎi wǎi de, jùsuàn zài yǒu qián, yǒu zēnyáng qù xiǎngshòu měihào de rénshēng ne?

Yào shuōmíng jiānkāng de zhòngyáo, wǒ hái kěyǐ jūchú yǐ gè lìzi: Shàng zhōngxué shì yǒu gè tóng bān tóngxué, tā quèshí shì gè shǔxué qícái, lǎoshī bù dōng de xītī, tā yě néng jiēdá, kěshì yóuyú shèntǐ bù hǎo, niánji qīngqīngde jiù yǎozhē le. Wǒ yīzhī rènwéi, yǎoshi jǐntiān tā hái huó zhe, dìng néng xiǎng Àiyīnsìtān nèiyàng wèi shēhuì hé rénléi zàofú de. Yǒucí kējiān, wúlùn shì shénmé, dōu yào yǐ jiānkāng wéi jīchú.
那么说，怎样才能使自己健康起来呢？在我看来，使身体健康的因素，不外五个方面：（一）要经常锻炼身体，使自己血脉畅通，筋骨壮健，增强对疾病的抵抗力；（二）起居饮食有度，保证适量的睡眠，多吃蔬菜水果，少吃肥腻荤腥；（三）不抽烟、酗酒、或吸毒，介绝一切危害生命与健康的陋习；（四）注意冷暖，讲究卫生，减少患病的机会；（五）时刻保持心情愉快，为人公正、善良、慷慨，遇事沉着、冷静，不动肝火，考虑与处理问题，均从正面出发。

如果我们能做到以上五点的话，健康也就有了基本的保障。有了健康，也就有了一切：从事学习研究也好，完成工作任务也好，外出度假旅游也好，无论进行什么活动，你都能从中得到最充分的乐趣。

上面所说的只是我个人的看法。说得不对的地方/如有不当之处，欢迎大家批评指正。

Nama shūo, zěnyáng cǎinéng shǐ zìjī jiǎnkāng qílái ne? Zài wǒ kānláí, shí shèngtǐ jiǎnkāng de yínshù, bùwài wū gè fāngmiàn: yī, yào jǐngcháng duànlìan shèntǐ, shǐ zìjī xuèmài chàngtǒng, jǐng zhùhuángjiàn, zèngqǐ jiù jìngbìng de dìkàngli; èr, qījù yīnshì yǒudù, bǎozhèng shìliàng de shuímián, duò chǐ sūcǎi shuǐguō, shǎo chǐ fēi ni hún xìng; sān, bù chǒuyān, xūjū, huò xīdú, jiéjué yǐqiě wēihǎi shēngmìng yǔ jiǎnkāng de lóuxì; sì, zhùyì lèngnuǎn, jiāngjiǔ wěishēng, jiānshǎo huǎnbìng de jīhūi; wǔ, shīkè bāochí xìnqǐng yúkuàiléi, wèi rén gōngzhèng, shānlíang, kāngkǎi, yù shì chénzhuó, lèngjīng, bù dōng gānhuò, kǎolū yǔ chūfēi wènti, jūn cóng zhèngmiǎn chūfā.

Rúguò wǒmen néng zuò dào yí shàng wǔ diǎn de huà, jiǎnkāng yě jiù yǒu le jībèn de bāozhǎng. Yǒu le jiǎnkāng, yě jiù yǒu le yǐqí: cóngshí xuèxī yánjǐ yě hǎo, wǎnchēng gōngzuò rénwù yě hǎo, wǎichi dùjīa lùyǒu yě hǎo, wùlùn jǐnxíng shènme huódòng, nǐ dōu néng cóngzhōng dédào zui chōngfèn de lèqù.

Shàngmiàn suǒ shuō de zhīshì wǒ géér de kānfā. Shuō de bù dui de dìfāng/rúyǒu bùdàng zhī chū, huànying dàjiā pǐpiè zhīzhèng.

Translation:
People say ‘Health is the richest of riches’. I feel this is entirely correct. The reason in fact is quite simple. Just think for a moment, if a person is in poor condition and is sickly all year long, even if he is wealthy, how can he enjoy a happy life? To illustrate the importance of good health, I can cite an example: at middle school I had a fellow student who was a mathematics genius. He could even solve equations that the teacher couldn’t. However, because he was in poor health he died very young. I have always thought that, if he were still alive today, he would have been able like Einstein to bring benefits to society and mankind.
From this it can be seen that, no matter what the circumstances, good health must be the foundation.

This being the case, how can you make yourself healthy? As far as I am concerned, the factors for ensuring good health lie in five areas: (1) You should take regular exercise to achieve good blood circulation and physical strength and increase resistance to disease; (2) Your daily diet and lifestyle should be controlled to guarantee an appropriate amount of sleep, and you should eat more vegetables and fruit and less greasy food; (3) Don’t smoke, drink excessively or take drugs, and give up all bad habits that endanger life and health; (4) Pay attention to temperature change and be particular about hygiene, to reduce chances of falling ill; (5) Always maintain a cheerful frame of mind. When treating people, be kind, fair, and generous, and in dealing with matters stay cool and calm, don’t lose your temper, and always start from the positive.

If we can accomplish these five points, our health will basically be guaranteed. If you have health, you have everything: whether you are pursuing study and research, completing tasks at work, going off for holiday travel, or engaging in any activity no matter what, you can always derive the greatest pleasure from what you are doing.

What I have said above is just my own opinion. If any of it is wrong or inappropriate, I would welcome criticisms or comments.

Analysis:
A piece of argumentation like this is likewise more structured than more informal speech or writing. In this case we want to draw attention to logical links provided by the presence of paired conjunctions and conjunctives between different parts of the argument. See for example 如果...就算...又 rúguǒ...jiūsuàn...yòu ‘if...even if...’, 要是...定能 yàoshì...dìngnéng ‘if...’, 无论...都要 wúlùn...dōuyào ‘no matter...’, 如果...也就 rúguǒ...yějiù ‘if...’, 无论...都能 wúlùn...dōunéng ‘no matter...’, 可是 kěshì ‘however’, etc. Also present are those idiomatic phrases commonly found in any piece of argument, which serve as signposts of progression from one idea to another (e.g. 其实 qíshí ‘in fact’, 试想一下 shìxiǎng yìxià ‘just think for a moment’, 由此可见 yóu cǐ kě jiàn ‘from this it can be seen’, 那么说 nàme shuō ‘this being the case’, 我看来 zài wǒ kàn lái ‘as far as I am concerned’, etc.). A sentence like the last one is virtually a cliché which occurs as a modest gesture at the end of a presentation:

上面所说的只是我个人的看法。说得不对的地方/如有不当之处，欢迎大家批评指正。

Shàngmiàn suǒ shuō de zhīshí wǒ de rén de kànfā. Shuō de bù duì de difang/rúyǒu bùdàng zhī chū, huǎnyíng dàjiā pīpíng zhīzhèng.
‘What I have said above is just my own opinion. If any of it is wrong or inappropriate, I would welcome criticisms or comments.’

The translation, more literal than colloquial in this case, reveals precisely the lexis and steps of argument in the Chinese original. Again, as regards other features such as the omission of subjects and objects, etc., please see the analyses given for earlier sections.
Glossary of grammatical terms

adjectives
Words used to describe, define or evaluate qualities or characteristics associated with nouns, such as ‘big, green, good’. Gradable adjectives are adjectives that generally can be modified by a degree adverb. That is, they can be graded to varying degrees using a range of adverbs such as ‘very, extremely’, etc. Non-gradable adjectives are usually not modifiable by degree adverbs as they have more absolute meanings (e.g. ‘male, female, square, black’) and define rather than describe.

adverbial
In Chinese, a word or phrase placed directly before a verb to modify it, usually providing background information such as time, location, means, method, manner, etc. (e.g. ‘yesterday, in London, by train, with chopsticks, slowly’, etc.).

aspect markers
The functional words 了 le, 过 guo, 着 zhe and 在 zai which are closely associated with verbs. 了 le, 过 guo and 着 zhe are suffixed to the verb, and 在 zai immediately precedes it; they indicate the aspectual notions of completion, immediate or past experience, simultaneousness, persistence, and continuation. Chinese aspect markers are NOT indicators of tense. Tense is specified by time expressions placed before the verb or at the beginning of the sentence.

attitudinal verb
In Chinese, a verb which reflects the speaker’s attitude. It may be followed by verbal as well as nominal objects (e.g. ‘I like tea, I like to drink tea’).

attributive
In Chinese, a word, phrase or clause placed before a noun to qualify or identify it (e.g. ‘nice weather, a very useful book’, or – a clause – ‘a nobody-will-ever-forget experience’).
causative verb  A verb which causes its object to produce an action or to change state (e.g. ‘ask him to come, make him happy’, etc.).

clause  A term employed to describe a subject-predicate or topic-comment construction which relates to other similar constructions, with or without conjunctural devices, to constitute a sentence in Chinese.

comment  The part of a sentence in a topic-comment sentence which follows the topic. The topic establishes the theme or focus of interest in the sentence, while the comment describes, defines, explains or contends, etc. In contrast with a subject-predicate sentence which narrates an incident (e.g. somebody did something), a topic-comment sentence makes observations, provides descriptions, offers explanations, etc. The verb 是 ‘to be’, adjectives, modal verbs and the particle le are all regular elements in a comment.

complement  A word, phrase or clause which comes directly either after a verb (i.e. a verbal complement) to indicate the duration, frequency, terminal location or destination, result, manner or consequential state of the action expressed by the verb, or after an adjective (i.e. an adjectival complement) to indicate its degree or extent.

composite sentence  A general term referring to a sentence which consists of more than one clause or predicate linked together by (a) conjunction(s) or conjunctive(s). A composite sentence may therefore be of a compound or complex nature, using coordinate or subordinate conjunctions.

conjunctions  Words used to join two words, phrases or clauses (e.g. ‘and, otherwise, because’, etc.). Conjunctions in Chinese often form related pairs (e.g. ‘because . . . therefore, though . . . however’, etc.).

conjunctives  Referential adverbs used to link two clauses or predicates/comments.

context  The extralinguistic situation or environment in which a verbal event takes place.

cotext  The verbal text (in speech or in writing) that goes before or after the verbal event under consideration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>coverb</td>
<td>In Chinese, a preposition-like verb which is not normally used on its own but is followed by another verb (or other verbs). A coverb with its object forms a <em>coverbal phrase</em>, which indicates location, method, instrument, reference, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dative verb</td>
<td>A verb which requires two objects: a direct object and an indirect object (e.g. give him a present, in which ‘him’ is the indirect object and ‘a present’ is the direct object).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definite reference</td>
<td>Terms used in connection with nominal or pronominal items. The difference between definite and indefinite reference may be illustrated by the use of the definite article ‘the’ and the indefinite article ‘a(n)’ in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indefinite reference</td>
<td>See <em>definite reference</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree adverb</td>
<td>See <em>adjective</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direction indicators</td>
<td>A set of motion verbs which follow other verbs as direction complements to indicate the spatial direction or, sometimes, the temporal orientation (i.e. beginning, continuing or ending) of the actions expressed by those verbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indefinite reference</td>
<td>See <em>definite reference</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intensifier</td>
<td>A word used to emphasise or highlight elements in a sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intentional verb</td>
<td>A verb which expresses the speaker’s intentions. It is generally followed by another verb indicating the action which the speaker intends to take (e.g. ‘I plan to study Chinese’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>location phrase</td>
<td>A location word or postpositional phrase preceded by the coverb <em>fēi zài</em> ‘(be) in, at’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measure words</td>
<td>Also known as <em>classifiers</em>, these are words which must be used between a numeral or demonstrative and the noun it qualifies. English equivalents are ‘a piece of cake, a glass of beer’, but in Chinese measure words are used with all nouns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modal verbs</td>
<td>A set of verbs which are used directly before other verbs to indicate possibility, probability, necessity, obligation, permission, willingness, daring, etc. (e.g. ‘can, must, should, may, dare’, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notional passive</td>
<td>A term used to refer to a construction in which the object of the verb is brought forward to a subject position before the verb, while the verb is still encoded in its active form. Hence the passive voice is not realised in its actual form but can only be notional.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
onomatopoeia
A word which is used to approximate to a natural sound in real life. There are a considerable number of conventionalised onomatopoeic words in Chinese, but they are also regularly created spontaneously.

particle
In Chinese, a monosyllabic item which has no independent meaning of its own but serves to deliver a structural or functional grammatical message. The sentence particle 吗 ma, for example, has no independent semantic significance, but its presence has the function of changing a statement into a general question.

phonaesthemes
Two-syllabled items which are suffixed to an adjective to add to its descriptive power by introducing some kind of sound connotation.

postposition
A word placed after a noun to indicate a part of the noun or a spatial/temporal relationship to the noun (e.g. ‘on, in, outside, above’, etc.). A noun followed by a postposition is called a postpositional phrase, which usually indicates location or time, and resembles a prepositional phrase in English (e.g. the prepositional phrase ‘on the table’ in English is rendered in the word order ‘the table on’ in Chinese).

predicate
The part of a sentence that follows the subject. The subject is usually the initiator or recipient of the action expressed by the verb or verb phrase in the predicate. In a Chinese subject-predicate sentence, the subject is generally of definite reference.

referential adverbs
A set of monosyllabic adverbs such as 就 jiù, 才 cái, 都 dōu, 也 yě, 又 yòu, 再 zài, 还 hái, 倒 dào, 却 què, etc., which in a sentence refer either backwards to elements before them or forward to elements after them, echoing or reinforcing the meaning of those elements.

serial construction
A type of Chinese sentence in which more than one verb occurs in succession without any conjunctival devices.

state verb
In Chinese, a verb which is formed by placing the particle 了 le after an adjective. A state verb indicates a state of affairs rather than an action or an event.

subject
See predicate.

tense
See aspect markers.

topic
See comment.
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