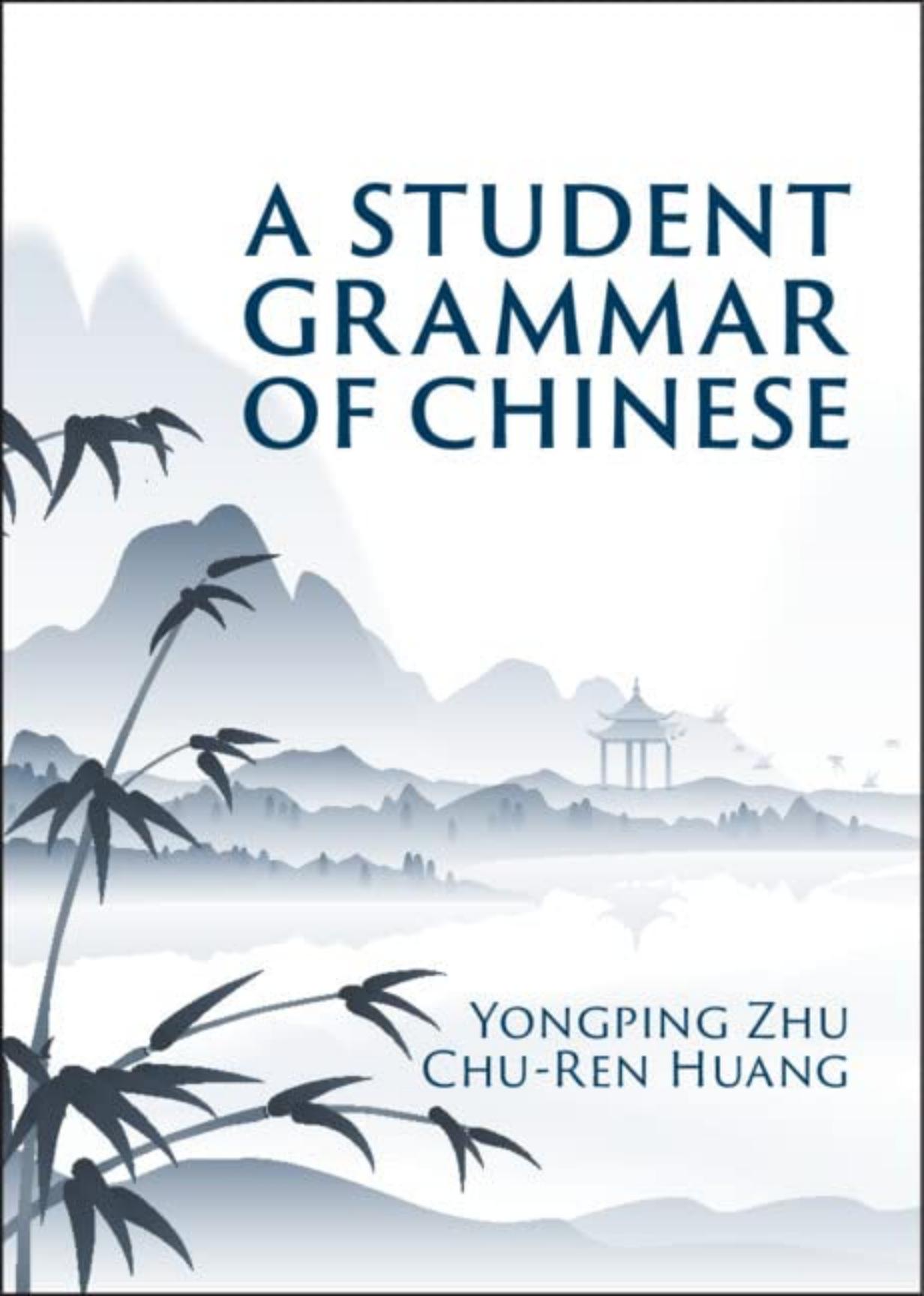


# A STUDENT GRAMMAR OF CHINESE



YONGPING ZHU  
CHU-REN HUANG

# A Student Grammar of Chinese

Written for beginning learners of the language, this concise introduction to Chinese grammar assumes only a basic knowledge of Chinese, and no knowledge of grammatical terminology or practices. Comparing Chinese grammar patterns and rules with those of English, and illustrated with a wealth of real-life examples, it allows learners to understand the similarities and differences between the two languages. Using engaging and accessible language, it examines the Chinese sound system, writing system, word formation rules, parts of speech, and simple and complex sentences, as well as explaining special constructions that are typically challenging to second language learners. Each chapter begins with clear learning goals and ends with a useful summary highlighting the chapter's main points. To call attention to specific issues, sidebars are interspersed throughout the text, and exercises within the book and online answer keys help students to reinforce learned material and assist with self-study.

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# *A Student Grammar of* **Chinese**

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# Preface

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Mandarin Chinese is one of the two most spoken native languages in the world and is fast becoming a global language. Chinese is the only language in the world that has more than three thousand years of continuous written documentation. It is widely borrowed from in what is called the Sinosphere, and its influence, especially in terms of loan words and writing systems, can be easily detected in Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. There are many fascinating stories about Chinese to share; however, since you have picked up this book, we assume that you do not need convincing and are already interested in learning more about the Chinese language and Chinese culture. It is important to note that, contrary to popular misconceptions, Chinese does have grammar, just like every other language in the world. Chinese grammar is neither simpler nor more complicated than other grammar systems, it is just a bit different.

The development of this book began with a concerted effort to present Chinese grammar in an easily accessible way by focusing on the detection of patterns as well as the differences and similarities between Chinese grammar and the English grammar that the reader is already familiar with. The features of this grammar book, which are designed to ensure easy navigation and accessibility, are as follows:

## Content:

- plain language without theoretical jargon;
- comprehensive coverage of the Chinese sound and writing systems;
- a glossary at the beginning of the book to introduce basic terms;
- a comprehensive index at the end of the book to provide easy access to specific grammar points and keywords;
- exercises at the end of chapters that allow students to apply what they have learned and verify their knowledge of the chapters, as well as reinforce learning outcomes;
- online answer keys to the exercises and additional appendixes to assist students' self-study at [www.cambridge.org/ZhuHuang](http://www.cambridge.org/ZhuHuang).

## Format:

- clear learning goals at the beginning and a brief summary at the end of each chapter to help readers quickly grasp the main points of the chapter;
- *Tip*, *NOTE*, *Attention*, and *Alert!* boxes are provided to emphasize common errors as well as to provide guidance for understanding challenging grammatical points;

- succinct tables for improving comprehension and providing an overall picture;
- both simplified and traditional characters are provided for examples, with the format of the traditional characters following the simplified characters (简/繁). Only one form will be provided when the same character is used for both simplified and traditional character sets. This provides ease of access to readers by providing the writing system that they are more comfortable with, while also giving interested readers the ability to explore the differences between the two writing systems.

To create a friendly reading environment, we have invited two “bright” fellow students to accompany you on your journey of learning grammar. You will get to know more about *Xiaoming* (小明) (lit. “little bright”) and *Xiaoliang* (小亮) (lit. “little light”) through reading example sentences in the book. We think that you will find them to be engaging, although not always diligent. There are also some examples with interesting and easy-to-read sentences that are made of common words and some fun tongue twisters in the exercises. We hope that all of these features will help you to find both fun and fulfillment in learning Chinese grammar.

Most of all, do bear in mind that the best way to learn grammar is to speak more! Please make sure that you practice making sentences with the grammar you have learned and talk to your classmates or teacher. If you are self-studying, try to construct a dialogue with *Xiaoming* or *Xiaoliang* based on what they say in the book.

This grammar book can supplement any textbook used in Chinese language classes, or it can stand alone as a textbook for a class on Chinese grammar. It can also serve as a reference book for beginner- to higher-level students, as well as Chinese language instructors teaching at those levels. The structure of this book allows students some flexibility to tailor and self-pace their study plan, including heritage learners who may have already mastered some grammatical points. As a student grammar book, the grammatical discussion in this volume is limited in scope and depth by design. For students and teachers who need more comprehensive coverage, we recommend *A Reference Grammar of Chinese* (Huang and Shi, 2016).

Dr. Yongping Zhu began drafting this book in 2008 with students’ needs in mind and Dr. Chu-Ren Huang joined the effort around 2014. Our long-distance collaboration led to rendezvous at various places in China and the US, but was also constantly delayed by duties at our home institutions. During this long process, in addition to remaining focused on providing comprehensive coverage of linguistic facts with concise and transparent explanations, we have also had the advantage of receiving feedback from different sources. Students from our targeted readership (i.e., those who have studied Chinese for one to five years) have helped us to draw a clear roadmap for readers to navigate with ease. Experienced Chinese instructors have helped us to hone our writing more concisely. For content development, we have drawn on our experience of teaching Chinese as a second language and conducting linguistic research for the past 30 years, as well as the accumulated knowledge of the field. We hope that our readers find this book to be the key required to unlock boundless knowledge of the Chinese language.

# Acknowledgments

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We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Katie Hazell, Professor Jin Zhang, and Dr. Yin Zhong for their careful reading and editing of the final draft, as well as the anonymous reviewers who provided invaluable feedback, which improved this book in ways too numerous to mention. Needless to say, any remaining errors are ours.

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Yongping Zhu, South Bend, Indiana, USA

Chu-Ren Huang, Hong Kong

# Glossary of grammatical terms and abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
ADJECTIVE xíngróngcí 形容词/形容詞	adj	A word that describes a noun and functions as the predicate of a sentence in Chinese, e.g., <b>高</b> 山 gāo shān (tall mountain), and <b>她/他很高</b> tā hěn gāo (she/he is tall) (Chapter 12).
ADVERB fùcí 副词/副詞	adv	A word whose function is to modify a verb or an adjective, e.g., <b>刚到/剛到</b> gāng dào (just arrived), and <b>很好</b> hěn hǎo (very good) (Chapter 13).
AGENT (DOER)		A doer who performs an action, often represented by a noun or a noun phrase, e.g., <b>她/他吃苹果/她/他吃蘋果</b> tā chī píngguǒ (she/he eats apples) (Chapters 22 and 23).
ASPECT		A particle attached to a verb signifying information on the relative time of the event (§10.4 and §16.2).
Perfective		An aspect that indicates the completion of an event, such as <b>了</b> le, e.g., <b>她/他去了中国/她/他去了中國</b> tā qù le Zhōngguó (she/he has gone to China).
Durative		An aspect that indicates the continuation of an event, such as <b>着</b> zhe, e.g., <b>她/他拿着一本书/她/他拿著一本書</b> tā ná zhe yì běn shū (she/he is holding a book).
Experiential		An aspect that indicates a highly relevant event that happened before, such as <b>过</b> guo, e.g., <b>她/他去过中国/她/他去過中國</b> tā qù guo Zhōngguó (she/he has been to China [before]).
CHARACTER Hànzì 汉字/漢字		The basic writing unit of Chinese (§4.4 and §4.5).

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
Associative huìyì 会意/ 會意		A character formed by two or more pictograms or ideograms, e.g., 明 míng (bright); also known as a joined-meanings character.
Ideographic zhǐshì 指事		A character formed by an indicative symbol, e.g., 一 yī (one), 二 èr (two), 三 sān (three).
Pictographic xiàngxíng 象形		A character formed by a single pictogram, i.e., a visual representation of the meaning, e.g., 山 shān (mountain).
Pictophonetic xíngshēng 形声/形聲		A character formed by joining a semantic and a phonetic component, e.g., 妈/媽 mā (mother) in which the semantic part is 女 (nǚ, female) and the phonetic part is 马/馬 mǎ (horse); also known as a phonetic-semantic compound.
Radical bùshǒu 部首		A semantic component of a character indicating its broad category and relatedness, e.g., the radical 女 (nǚ, female) from the character 妈/媽 mā (mother). Most characters have radicals.
CLAUSE		A sentence-like unit within a sentence, containing a subject and predicate, e.g., 我希望你高兴/我希望你高興 wǒ xīwàng nǐ gāoxìng (I hope you are happy) (§18.1.2).
Main		A clause carrying the core idea in a complex sentence, e.g., 她/他病了, 所以没去上课/她/他病了, 所以沒去上課 tā bìng le, suǒyǐ měi qù shàng-kè (she/he was sick; thus, she/he did not go to class) (Chapter 29).
Relative		A gapped clause modifying a noun and linked to the noun with the gap, e.g., 她/他买的书很新/她/他買的書很新 tā mǎi de shū hěn xīn (the book that she/he bought is new), the object is missing and linked to the noun (§16.1.1).
Subordinate		A clause that is dependent on, and typically precedes, the main clause to express a supplementary meaning of a complex sentence, e.g., 她/他病了, 所以没去上课/她/他病了, 所以沒去上課 tā bìng le, suǒyǐ měi qù shàng-kè (she/he was sick; thus, he did not go to class) (Chapter 29).

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
CONJUNCTION liánchéng 连词/連詞	conj.	A word linking two linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses, or sentences), e.g., 我会说中文和英文/我會說中文和英文 wǒ huì shuō Zhōngwén hé Yīngwén (I can speak Chinese and English) (Chapter 15).
GRAMMAR		The rules for constructing sentences and meanings (Chapter 2).
MEASURE WORD liàngcí 量词/量詞	MW	A word that serves as a counting unit for nouns and expresses some properties of the noun, e.g., 三本书/三本書 sān běn shū (three books); also known as a classifier (Chapter 8).
NOUN míngcí 名词/名詞	N	A word that serves as a name for an entity, concept, or event, e.g., 我是学生/我是學生 wǒ shì xuéshēng (I am a student) (Chapter 6).
NUMBER shùcí 数词/數詞		A word that stands for a number, e.g., 一 yī (one), 二 èr (two), 十 shí (ten) (§7.1).
Ordinal		A word that indicates the order of things, e.g., 第一 dì-yī (the first), 第三 dì-sān (the third) (§7.2).
PARTICLE zhùcí 助词/助詞	part	A word that marks sentence types, such as stance or modality. It is typically monosyllabic and atonal (Chapter 16).
Aspectual		A particle attached to a verb, e.g., 了 le, 过 guo, and 着 zhe (see ASPECT).
Mood		A particle that appears at the end of a sentence and indicates the sentence type, including mood and stance, e.g., 吗/嗎 ma for an interrogative sentence: 你是学生吗/你是學生嗎 nǐ shì xuéshēng ma (are you a student?); 了 le for a new situation or a state change: 我是大学生了/我是大學生了 wǒ shì dàxuéshēng le (I am a college student now); 呢 ne for a follow-up question: 我周末看电影, 你呢/我週末看電影, 你呢 wǒ zhōumò kàn diànyǐng, nǐ ne (I will watch a movie on the weekend, how about you?), or for the introduction/affirmation of new information: 我看书呢/我看書呢 wǒ kàn-shū ne (I am

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
		studying now); 吧 ba for a non-assertive question: 你会说中文吧/你會說中文吧 nǐ huì shuō Zhōngwén ba (you can speak Chinese, right?), or for concessive consent: 好吧 hǎo ba (all right) (§16.3).
Structural		A particle that marks the relation of the components that it links in a sentence, e.g., 的 de links the attributive (modifier, including relative clause) and the head noun (modified) as in 我的书/我的書 wǒ de shū (my book); 地 de links a manner adverbial and a verb as in 她/他很高兴地唱歌/她/他很高興地唱歌 tā hěn gāoxìng de chàng-gē (she/he sang happily); and 得 de links a complement to the verb as in 她/他说得很快/她/他說得很快 tā shuō de hěn kuài (she/he speaks fast) (§16.1).
PATIENT (RECEIVER)		An undergoer at the receiving end of an action, e.g., 她/他吃苹果/她/他吃蘋果 tā chī píngguǒ (she/he eats apples) (Chapter 22).
PHRASE		A linguistic unit formed by the combination of words, which can then be combined to form a sentence following grammatical rules (Chapter 2).
Noun	NP	A phrase with a noun/pronoun as its head (italicized) that performs the grammatical function of a sentence element, e.g., 很多学生在图书馆努力地学习中文/很多學生在圖書館努力地學習中文 hěn duō xuéshēng zài túshūguǎn nǔlì de xuéxí Zhōngwén (many students study Chinese diligently at the library).
Verb	VP	A phrase with a verb as its dependents, such as the object, complement, or other modifiers. It functions as the main predicate in a sentence, e.g., (小明)学习中文/(小明)學習中文 xuéxí Zhōngwén (study Chinese) in the NP example sentence above. It can also be an element, e.g., the object of 喜欢 xǐhuan (like) as in 小明喜欢学习中文/小明喜歡學習中文 Xiǎomíng xǐhuan xuéxí Zhōngwén (Xiaoming enjoys studying Chinese).

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
Prepositional	PP	A phrase contains a preposition and a noun phrase as its object, e.g., 在图书馆/在圖書館 <i>zài túshūguǎn</i> (at the library) in the NP example sentence above.
PREFIX		A syllable attached to the front of a word/stem to form a new word, e.g., 小 xiǎo as in 小明 <i>Xiǎomíng</i> (young/little Ming) (§6.5).
PREPOSITION jiècí 介词/介詞	P/prep	The word in a prepositional phrase that indicates the relation between the object of a noun phrase and the event described by the verb, such as time, place, reason, instrument, or object. For example, 从 cóng (from) in 我从外国来/我從外國來 <i>wǒ cóng wàiguó lái</i> (I came from a foreign country) (Chapter 14).
PRONOUN dàicí 代词/代詞	pr	A word that functions as a noun phrase and represents a previously used word, e.g., 我 <i>wǒ</i> (I), 她/他 <i>tā</i> (she/he), 怎么 <i>zěnme</i> (how) (Chapter 9).
Demonstrative		A word to “point” to what is referred to in context, e.g., 这/這 <i>zhè</i> (this) and 那 <i>nà</i> (that); time 这会儿/這會兒 <i>zhèhuǐr</i> (now), 那会儿/那會兒 <i>nàhuǐr</i> (then); place 这儿/這兒 <i>zhèr</i> /這裏 <i>zhèlǐ</i> (here), 那儿/那兒 <i>nàr</i> /那里/哪裏 <i>nàlǐ</i> (there); manner/degree 这么/這麼 <i>zhème</i> (this way), 那么/那麼 <i>nàme</i> (that way), 这样/這樣 <i>zhèyàng</i> (like this), and 那样/那樣 <i>nàyàng</i> (like that) (§9.2).
Interrogative		A question word, e.g., 谁/誰 <i>shéi</i> (who), 什么/什麼 <i>shénme</i> (what), 哪儿/哪兒 <i>nǎr</i> (where), 怎么/怎麼 <i>zěnme</i> (how) (§9.3).
Personal		A word standing for a noun, e.g., 我 <i>wǒ</i> (I), 你 <i>nǐ</i> (you), 他 <i>tā</i> (he), 她 <i>tā</i> (she), 它 <i>tā</i> (it), 大家 <i>dàjiā</i> (everyone, all) (§9.1).
SENTENCE ELEMENT jùzì chéngfen 句子成分		A linguistic unit that plays a grammatical role in a sentence, also known as component (Chapters 2 and 17).

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
<b>Adverbial</b> zhuàngyǔ 状语/ 狀語		An element that modifies and restricts the predicate, e.g., 我们都是学生/我們都是學生 wǒmen dōu shì xuésheng (we all are students) (§21.2).
<b>Attributive</b> dìngyǔ 定语/ 定語		An element that modifies and restricts a noun phrase or a noun, e.g., 新学生喜欢这所学校/新學生喜歡這所學校 xīn xuésheng xǐhuan zhèi suǒ xuéxiào (new students like this school) (§21.1).
<b>Complement</b> bǔyǔ 补语/補語	C/comp	An element that provides additional information on the manner, result, or state of the predicate and occurs after the predicate. The five types of complements are: <b>Resultative</b> , 她/他听懂了/她/他聽懂了 tā tīng dǒng le (she/he understood by listening); <b>Manner</b> , 她/他说得很好/她/他說得很好 tā shuō de hěn hǎo (she/he speaks very well); <b>Potential</b> , 她/他说得好/她/他說得好 tā shuō de hǎo (she/he can speak well); <b>Directional</b> , 她/他进来了/她/他進來了 tā jìnlái le (she/he came in); <b>Quantitative</b> , 她/他说了两遍/她/他說了兩遍 tā shuō le liǎng biàn (she/he spoke twice) (Chapter 20).
<b>Object</b> bīnyǔ 宾语/賓語	O/obj	An element that undergoes the activity or change described by the predicate, e.g., 她/他吃苹果/她/他吃蘋果 tā chī píngguǒ (she/he eat apples) (Chapter 19). Some verbs can take two objects. The one that directly undergoes the activity or change is the <b>Direct Object</b> . The one affected by the full event of [Predicate + Direct Object] is the <b>Indirect Object</b> , which is typically considered to be the recipient of a transfer. For example, 老师教我们中文/老師教我們中文 lǎoshī jiāo wǒmen Zhōngwén (the teacher teaches us Chinese); 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) is the <b>direct object</b> , the content being taught; and 我们/我們 wǒmen (us) is the <b>indirect object</b> (§19.3).

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
<b>Predicate</b> wèiyǔ 谓语/ 謂語	P	The core element of the sentence that defines the event that other elements, such as the subject, are involved in, e.g., 她/他 學中文/她/他 學中文 tā xué Zhōngwén (she/he studies Chinese) (§18.2).
<b>Subject</b> zhǔyǔ 主语/ 主語	S/subj	An element central to the event that the predicate describes, e.g., 我是学生/我是學生 wǒ shì xuéshēng (I am a student) (§18.1).
<b>SUFFIX</b>		A syllable that is attached to the end of a word, e.g., the personal plural 们/們 men in 学生们/學生們 xuéshēngmen (students) (§6.5).
<b>SYLLABLE</b>		The basic phonological unit corresponding to a character that contains a vowel sound, e.g., 她/他 tā (she/he) (§3.2).
<b>Initial</b> shēngmǔ 声母/ 聲母		The consonant at the beginning of a syllable, such as m in mā (妈/媽 mother).
<b>Final</b> yùnmǔ 韵母/ 韻母		The non-initial part of the syllable, which contains at least one vowel and possibly an ending nasal consonant, e.g., an in nán (男 male).
<b>Tone</b> shēngdiào 声调/ 聲調		The lexical pitch of a syllable. There are four tones in Mandarin Chinese, e.g., the first tone (high level tone) such as mā (妈/媽 mother), second tone (rising tone) such as má (麻 numb; hemp), third tone (contour tone) such as mǎ (马/馬 horse), and fourth tone (falling tone) such as mà (罵/罵 scold) (§3.3).
<b>VERB</b> dòngcí 动词/動詞	V	A word that represents an action or a state, and is the main part of the predicate of a sentence, e.g., 学/學 xué (study) in 我学中文/我學中文 wǒ xué Zhōngwén (I study Chinese) (Chapter 10).
<b>Intransitive</b>	vi	A verb that takes no object, e.g., 哭 kū (cry) in 她/他哭了 tā kū le (she/he cried) (§10.2).

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
Modal		A verb, also known as an Auxiliary Verb, that occurs before another verb to express the moods of a sentence, such as willingness, ability, possibility, permission, necessity, or obligation, e.g., 可以 kěyǐ (may) in 小亮可以请假/小亮可以請假 Xiǎoliàng kěyǐ qǐng jià (Xiaoliang may ask for leave) (Chapter 11).
Transitive	vt	A verb that takes one or two objects, e.g., 看 kàn (look; watch) in 看电影/看電影 kàn diànyǐng (watch movie). A few verbs can take two objects, e.g., 教 jiāo (teach), 给/給 gěi (give), and 问/問 wèn (ask) (§10.1).
VERB-OBJECT COMPOUND	V-O/VO	A compound word formed with a verb and its object (noun). Many V-O compounds can be separated in a sentence, but they usually function as intransitive verbs when they are not separated, e.g., 看书/看書 kàn-shū (lit. look-book; to study/read) in 她/他在图书馆看书/她/他在圖書館看書 tā zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū (she/he studies at the library); the same compound can be separated to form a VP, e.g., 她/他在图书馆看中文书/她/他在圖書館看中文書 tā zài túshūguǎn kàn Zhōngwén shū (she/he reads Chinese books at the library) (§10.3).
VERB-COMPLEMENT	V-C/VC	A compound word formed with a verb and its complement (Chapter 20). The form VC specifically refers to a verb and its resultative complement. The VC construction is inseparable and should be considered as a single unit (resultative complement is italicized below), e.g., 听懂/聽懂 tīng.dǒng (to understand [on hearing]) in 我听懂了/我聽懂了 wǒ tīng.dǒng le (I [listened and] understood) (§20.1).
WORD		A minimal meaningful free unit in a language (Chapter 2 and §4.1).

(cont.)

Term	Abbreviation	Gloss <sup>1</sup>
<b>WORD ORDER</b>		The sequential order of words in a sentence; a pattern that results from the grammatical rules of a language, e.g., the basic word order in Chinese is Subject-Verb-Object, and the modifier typically precedes the modified, i.e., the head noun comes last in a noun phrase, and the adverbial precedes the predicate in a sentence (§2.3 and Chapter 21).
	<b>SVO</b>	An abbreviation for subject-verb-object word order.
	<b>SVC</b>	An abbreviation for the subject-verb-complement word order

<sup>1</sup>Keywords are in bold.

# Special symbols

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?	Indicates that a word or sentence is questionable
*	Indicates that the sentence is unacceptable
(V).(C)	A dot . between a verb and a resultative complement in a verb-complement construction indicates that the construction is inseparable and should be used as one unit, e.g., 听懂/聽懂 tīng dǒng (understand by listening)
(V)-(O)	A hyphen – between a verb and an object in a V-O construction indicates that the construction is separable, e.g., 说话/說話 shuō huà (lit. speak-word, speak) vs. 说中国话/說中國話 shuō Zhōngguó huà (speak Chinese)



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## Introduction

In this unit, we will guide your exploration of the general characteristics of Chinese by introducing some basic facts about Chinese, the special features of Chinese grammar, Chinese sounds, word formation, and Chinese characters. Accordingly, this unit is divided into the following four chapters:

- Chapter 1: Chinese and Mandarin
- Chapter 2: Chinese grammar
- Chapter 3: The sound system
- Chapter 4: Words and Chinese characters



# 1

## Chinese and Mandarin

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To understand the term *Chinese*
- ★ To understand the difference between Mandarin and Chinese dialects

### 1.1 What is Chinese?

When beginning your study of Chinese, this is probably the first question you have as you may have heard different terms describing the language, such as *Chinese*, *Mandarin*, or perhaps even *Cantonese*. These terms carry different meanings, as explained below:

- **Chinese** has two different meanings. It can be used to refer to a group of different languages, which are often called the *Chinese dialects* (see the section below); or it can refer to the *standard language* in China. The latter meaning of *Chinese*, which is also called *Mandarin* (*Chinese*), is used in this book.
- **Mandarin** is also known as the following:
  - 普通话/普通話<sup>1</sup> Pǔtōnghuà (lit. common language) or 汉语/漢語 Hàn yǔ (lit. Han nationality language) on mainland China
  - 国语/國語 Guóyǔ (lit. country language) in Taiwan
  - 华语/華語 Huáyǔ (Chinese language) mainly in east Asian countries
  - 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese language) throughout the world
  - *Chinese* in this book
  - **Cantonese** is one of the Chinese dialects.

### 1.2 Do Chinese people speak Chinese?

If the term *Chinese* means Mandarin, as is adopted in this book, then about one-third of Chinese people do not speak Chinese; instead, they speak Chinese dialects. There are seven major dialects within the Chinese language family:

- i. Northern dialect (北方方言 or 官话方言/官話方言 běifāng fāngyán/ guān huà fāngyán)

<sup>1</sup> Simplified characters are placed before the traditional characters throughout the book.

- ii. Cantonese (粤语/粵語 Yuèyǔ)
- iii. Wu (吴语/吳語 Wúyǔ)
- iv. Xiang (湘语/湘語 Xiāngyǔ)
- v. Gan (赣语/贛語 Gānyǔ)
- vi. Min (闽语/閩語 Mǐnyǔ)
- vii. Hakka (客家语/客家語 Kèjiāyǔ)

The variation between these dialects causes them to be mutually incomprehensible. As such, Mandarin, which is based on the *Northern dialect*, has become increasingly popular in modern China. Nearly all Chinese people who speak different dialects can also understand Mandarin, and some are even able to speak Mandarin with a dialectal accent. This may be because all of the dialects have similar grammatical structures and they all share the same writing system, with logographic forms called *characters*.

### 1.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have clarified the term **Chinese**, which can refer to either Mandarin or all Chinese dialects, of which there are seven major ones: Northern dialect, Cantonese, Wu, Xiang, Gan, Min, and Hakka. Since the variation of dialects can be problematic for comprehension in oral communication, Mandarin (**Chinese** in this book), which is based on the Northern dialect, has become the most commonly used in China.

## Chinese grammar

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To understand the meaning of the term *grammar*
- ★ To know the basic units of Chinese grammar
- ★ To learn the distinguishing characteristics of Chinese grammar

### 2.1 Grammar

#### What is *grammar*?

The grammar of a language informs how words in that language are combined to form sentences. To elaborate on this point, let's first look at the following Chinese sentences:

- (1)a. 学生说中文。  
學生說中文。  
Xuésheng shuō Zhōngwén.  
Students speak Chinese.
- b. 中文学生说。  
中文學生說。  
Zhōngwén xuésheng shuō.  
As for Chinese, students [do] speak.
- c. \*学生中文说<sup>1</sup>  
\*學生中文說  
\*xuésheng Zhōngwén shuō  
(lit. student Chinese speak)

The three words 学生/學生 xuésheng (student), 说/說 shuō (speak), and 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) in the above sentences are in different orders, but sentences (1a) and (1b) are grammatically correct, whereas, (1c) is not

<sup>1</sup> The symbol \* indicates that the usage (sentence or word) is incorrect.

grammatically correct. Why is this so? It is because sentences (1a) and (1b) follow the rules of Chinese grammar, but (1c) does not. Specifically,

- (1a) follows the Chinese word order of Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) in which the noun 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) serves as the **subject** (S), the verb 说/說 shuō (speak) serves as the **predicate** (V), and the noun 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) serves as the **object** (O);
- (1b) is a common topic-comment sentence in Chinese in which the noun 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) serves as the **topic**, while the subject-predicate phrase 学生说/學生說 xuésheng shuō (students speak) serves as the **comment**; and
- (1c) is a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order in which the object 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) precedes the verb 说/說 shuō (speak). Grammar rules of other languages allow this kind of sentence (e.g., Japanese); however, Chinese grammar rules do not.

From the above analysis, we can see that there are three basic language units:

- **word**: the smallest meaningful unit in a language that can be used freely, such as 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) or 说/說 shuō (speak);
- **phrase**: the combination of words following grammatical rules, such as the verb-object (VO) phrase 说中文/說中文 shuō Zhōngwén (speak Chinese) in (1a) and the subject-predicate phrase 学生说/學生說 xuésheng shuō (student speak) in (1b); and
- **sentence**: the composition of words and phrases such as (1a) and (1b).

We also know that the combination of phrases and the composition of sentences are governed by *rules* and that those *rules* are known as *grammar*. In other words:

**Grammar** can be understood as the *rules* of making sentences.

Whether we realize it or not, we all follow grammatical rules when we speak a language. Therefore, if one wants to learn to speak a language correctly, the grammar of the language should be learned.

## 2.2 Ways of learning grammar

### How do we study grammar?

While the number of sentences that can be created is limitless, grammar rules carry certain limitations as they are highly abstract compared to concrete sentences. To understand and visualize these more abstract grammar rules, concrete examples should be referenced. As such, let's take Lego, a popular toy, as an example. If one wants to build anything with pieces of Lego, only two things are needed:

- i. (enough pieces of) Lego; and
- ii. (instructions on) how to put two or more pieces of Lego together.

Then one decides on what to build, say, a house, in which case one should:

- interlock individual small pieces of Lego to larger blocks to build walls, windows, doors, roofs, and so on; and
- assemble the blocks (e.g., walls, windows, and roofs) to make a house.

If we compare the construction of a Lego house with sentence composition, we can see similarities between the two in that both need the following:

- **a basic unit:** an individual piece of Lego, which corresponds to a *word*
- **blocks:** interlocked pieces of Lego that:
  - (i) are larger building materials used for a house, which correspond to *phrases* consisting of words; and
  - (ii) are formed as the walls, door, and roof of a completed house, which correspond to the *subject, predicate, object*, and so on, in a sentence.
- **instructions:** rules on how to (or how not to) put two or more Lego pieces together in order to build a certain type of **house**, just like grammar provides the basic *patterns* and grammatical *rules* by which **sentences** are composed.

These similarities are summarized in Table 2.1 for easy comparison.

The comparison in Table 2.1 shows us that various objects can be built by assembling multiple pieces if we follow simple instructions. Likewise, an unlimited number of correct sentences can be made by arranging words according to the

**Table 2.1** Comparison of Lego and grammar

Names	Lego Example	Grammar
<b>Basic unit</b>	an individual piece of Lego	<b>words</b> such as 学生/學生 xuésheng (student), 说/說 shuō (speak), 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) in (1)
<b>Blocks</b>	interlocked pieces that function as a wall, roof, etc.	<b>phrases</b> such as the subject-predicate phrase: 学生说/學生說 xuésheng shuō (student speak), and the <b>components</b> (also known as <b>elements</b> ) in a sentence such as subject, predicate, and object in (1)
<b>Instructions/ rules</b>	how to put two or more Lego pieces together to build a <b>house</b> , or a bridge, etc.	stipulates if and how two (or more) words can be put together and in which order, and provides basic patterns and example <b>sentences</b>

rules of grammar. We have also learned from this analogy that if we want to study a language, we should know the following:

- at the level of the **word**: what a word is and how a phrase is formed with words;
- at the level of the **sentence**: what the elements are and how they are combined together to make sentences.

We will explore these concepts further in Units II and III respectively.

In order to build a house that is different from other houses, we must follow specific instructions. Similarly, if we want to make a sentence in a certain language, we must follow the grammar rules of that language. This naturally now leads to the question: What are the characteristics of Chinese grammar?

## 2.3 The characteristics of Chinese grammar

Chinese sentences, like other languages (including English), are made up of words. However, there are two main features of Chinese grammar that differ most noticeably from English.

### ► 2.3.1 Word form

The **word form** does not change. When you see a word ending with *-ful*, or *-ly*, or *-ty* in English, you can easily determine the following:

- A word with the *-ful* ending is an **adjective**, such as *beautiful*.
- A word with the *-ly* ending is an **adverb**, such as *beautifully*.
- A word with the *-ty* ending is a **noun**, such as *beauty*.

However, in Chinese, regardless of whether 漂亮 piàoliang (beauty/beautiful/beautifully) is used as a noun serving as the *subject* as in (2a), as an adjective serving as the *predicate* as in (2b), or as an *adverbial* as in (2c), its form remains the same.

(2)a. 漂亮不等于聪明。

漂亮不等於聰明。

Piàoliang bù děngyú cōngming.

Beauty is not equal to smartness.

b. 小明的妈妈很漂亮。

小明的媽媽很漂亮。

Xiǎomíng de māma hěn piàoliang.

Xiaoming's mom is beautiful.

c. 小明漂亮地回答了老师的问题。

小明漂亮地回答了老師的問題。

Xiǎomíng piàoliang de huídá le lǎoshī de wèntí.

Xiaoming answered the teacher's question(s) beautifully.

Likewise, regardless of whether Chinese **nouns**, such as 桌子 zhuōzi (table), are **singular** as in (3a) or **plural** as in (3b), their form does not change.

- (3)a. 老师的办公室里有一张大桌子。  
老師的辦公室裏有一張大桌子。  
Lǎoshī de bàngōngshì li yǒu yì zhāng dà zhuōzi.  
There is one big **table** in the teacher's office.

- b. 教室里有十张桌子。  
教室裏有十張桌子。  
Jiàoshì li yǒu shí zhāng zhuōzi.  
There are ten **tables** in the classroom.

Chinese **verbs** also have no form change, regardless of whether the action, such as 学/學 xué (study), is **ongoing** as in (4a), is in **present time** as in (4b), or is in **past time** as in (4c).

- (4)a. 小亮正在学中文。  
小亮正在學中文。  
Xiǎoliàng zhèngzài xué Zhōngwén.  
Xiaoliang is **studying** Chinese.
- b. 小亮常常学中文。  
小亮常常學中文。  
Xiǎoliàng chángcháng xué Zhōngwén.  
Xiaoliang often **studies** Chinese.
- c. 昨天小亮学中文了。  
昨天小亮學中文了。  
Zuótiān Xiǎoliàng xué Zhōngwén le.  
Xiaoliang **studied** Chinese yesterday.

This aspect of Chinese grammar presents both advantages and disadvantages to language learners, especially those whose native language requires word forms to change in different contexts, as English does:

- **Advantage:** It reduces the burden on memory, as one only needs to memorize the original word form and does not have to change its form from sentence to sentence.
- **Disadvantage:** One cannot distinguish the part of speech of a word just by looking at the word form; instead, one must analyze its relationship with the other words in the sentences to determine its part of speech.

Let's use the Lego example again as we compare the differences between Chinese and English:

- The **English** Lego sets assign different colors to different types of Lego pieces according to their features (such as the numbers of studs); that is, all pieces

functioning as nouns are red, verbs are yellow, and so on. Thus, one can use the word forms (just like the color of the pieces of Lego) to help sort words into different groups and decide where a word can be put.

- The Chinese Lego sets have the same color for all different types of pieces, and word forms do not change. Thus, one who sorts the pieces must sort them according to *their relationship with other pieces*, that is, whether a certain piece can be interlocked with other pieces. If some pieces have the same connecting feature, then they belong to the same category. For example, one knows that:
  - 漂亮 piàoliang is a noun (beauty) in (2a) because it is at the beginning of the sentence serving as the subject and connected to a verb;
  - it is an adjective (beautiful) in (2b) because it follows an adverb 很 hěn (very); and
  - it is an adverb (beautifully) in (2c) because it is connected to 地 de (a particle for the adverbial), and together they occur before a verb.

To elaborate on this point, let's look at a rather popular, jovial saying in Chinese 死读书/死讀書 sǐ dú-shū, 读死书/讀死書 dú sǐ shū, 读书死/讀書死, dú-shū sǐ, which moves the placement of the word 死 sǐ (die) to create different meanings. In order to make the saying into a meaningful sentence, we have added several words to it, as can be seen in (5):

- (5) (小明就知道)死读书, 读死书 ; (最后就是)读书死。  
 (小明就知道)死讀書, 讀死書 ; (最後就是)讀書死。  
 (Xiǎomíng jiù zhīdào) sǐ dú-shū, dú sǐ shū; (zuìhòu jiù shì) dú-shū sǐ.  
 (Xiaoming only knows to) read books **lifelessly** (mechanically) and read **dead** (useless) books; (eventually, he) reads and **dies** (*implying: without a future by way of study*).

While the above saying is a kind of humorous joke, it reveals that the meaning and the part of speech of a word in Chinese relies heavily on the relationship of the word with other words in a sentence. Taking the word 死 sǐ (die) in (5) as an example:

- when the word 死 sǐ precedes the verb 读/讀 dú (read) as in 死读书/死讀書 sǐ dú-shū (study mechanically), it is an **adverb** with the meaning *lifelessly*, and it functions as an adverbial modifying the verb;
- when it precedes the noun 书/書 shū (book) as in 读死书/讀死書 dú sǐ shū (*lit. read dead books*), it is an **adjective** modifying the noun and the phrase means *read useless books*; and
- when it is after the verb-object construction 读书/讀書 dú-shū (read books; study) as in 读书死/讀書死 dú-shū sǐ (*die after studying*), it is a **verb** meaning *die* (*metaphorically: no future*), and the sentence becomes a series verb construction.

The written form 死 sǐ experiences no change; however, its meanings and parts of speech change depending on its relationship with the other words in the sentence. For example:

- if it is “interlocked” with (modifies) the verb, it is an adverb (*lifelessly*);
- if it can be connected with (modifies) the noun, it is an adjective (*dead*); or
- if it stands alone and is located in a position parallel to another verb phrase 读书/讀書 dú-shū (study), it is a verb (*die*).

Conversely, English displays different writing forms such as *die* (verb), *dead* (adjective), *deadly* (adverb), and *death* (noun) based on the parts of speech of the word.

There are many such amusing expressions in Chinese. An additional example to show this feature of Chinese is seen in (6).

- (6)a. 大好人 dà hǎorén (very good man)  
 b. 人好大 rén hǎo dà (the person is so big)  
 c. 大人好 dàrén hǎo (adults are better [may imply a comparison with children])

Similarly, the writing form 好 hǎo (good) does not change; however, it is,

- an adjective (*good*) when it modifies a noun 人 rén (human) in (6a);
- an adverb (*so*) when it modifies an adjective 大 dà (big), which functions as a verb (predicate) in (6b); and
- an adjective but functions as a verb (predicate) ([*be*] *better*) in (6c).

### ► 2.3.2 Word order

**Word order:** in Chinese, the basic word order of a sentence is SVO. This is the same as in English, which makes it easy for English learners to remember. The major differences between Chinese grammar and English grammar that relate to word order are as follows:

- **The modifier precedes the modified** in Chinese as shown by 很 hěn (very) in (2b), 漂亮地 piàoliang de (beautifully) in (2c), 死 sǐ (die/dead/deadly/death) in (5), and 好 hǎo (good/so/[*be*] better) in (6a) and (6b). This is also the case in many English sentences; for example, adjectives precede nouns as seen in the translation “*good man*” in (6a), and adverbs precede verbs such as “*so*” in the translation of (6b); however, in English adverbs can also come after verbs such as “*beautifully*” in the translation of (2c) and “*lifelessly*” in (5).
- **Time words**, such as 昨天 zuótiān (yesterday) in (4c), and **place words**, like 教室里/教室裏 jiàoshì li (in the classroom) as in (3b), can be placed at the beginning of a sentence; however, in English, they are typically placed at the end of a sentence.

Examples (7) and (8) further illustrate the features of word arrangement in Chinese.

- (7) 小明在图书馆看书。  
 小明在圖書館看書。  
 Xiǎomíng zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū.  
 Xiaoming is studying in the library.

- (8) 小亮用筷子吃饭。  
 小亮用筷子吃飯。  
 Xiǎoliàng yòng kuàizi chī-fàn.  
 Xiaoliang eats with chopsticks.

When comparing the English translations of the sentences in (7) and (8), we can see that

- the phrase 在图书馆/在圖書館 zài túshūguǎn (in the library) precedes 看书/看書 kàn-shū (study) in (7); and
- the phrase 用筷子 yòng kuàizi (with chopsticks) precedes 吃饭/吃飯 chī-fàn (eat) in (8) in Chinese.

However, in English, the word orders of the two are opposite. In the physical world, one must be in the library (在图书馆/在圖書館 zài túshūguǎn) first and then read as described in (7), and one must take chopsticks first and then eat as narrated in (8). So, the word order of most Chinese sentences is arranged following the **temporal sequence** of events in real life. In other words, the event happens first in real life, and thus the word recording the event is arranged earlier than the event that occurs later (see Tai, 1985).

**The Rule of Temporal Sequence:** Though there are exceptions, Chinese word order mostly mirrors the temporal sequence of events. So, if an event occurs earlier in real life, the linguistic unit representing the event is arranged earlier than the linguistic unit representing an event that takes place later. Examples (7) and (8) illustrate this rule.

## 2.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have clarified the term **grammar** as the rules for making sentences. By analogizing Lego sets to grammar, we have learned that sentences are composed of the basic language unit, words, following certain rules. By comparing Chinese with English, we know that Chinese words have no form changes in sentences regardless of number or tense; rather, the relationships between words play important roles in determining their parts of speech. We have also learned that word order in both Chinese and English is fundamentally the same (namely, SVO, with the modifier preceding the modified in most cases). Conversely, time words and place words are treated differently in Chinese and English: they are usually placed at the beginning of a sentence, and prepositional phrases as modifiers often precede the modified in Chinese.

## 2.5 Exercises

### I Answer the following questions:

- How do you define *grammar*?
- Why is grammar important when studying a language?
- When studying a language, what do we need to know?
- As a common practice, how should we determine the part of speech of a Chinese word?
- What are the distinguishing features of Chinese grammar? Please list two.
- What are the characteristics of Chinese word order?

**II Arrange the Chinese linguistic units below to make a meaningful sentence by referring to the English translations:**

**Example:**

**Given:** (A) 小明 Xiǎomíng, (B) 看书/看書 kàn-shū (read books; study),  
(C) 在教室 zài jiào shì (in the classroom)

Xiaoming is reading books/studying in the classroom.

**Answer:** 小明在教室看书/小明在教室看書。Xiǎomíng zài jiào shì kàn-shū.

Or: A C B

1. (A) 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, (B) 吃饭/吃飯 chī-fàn (eat), (C) 在饭馆/在飯館 zài fānguǎn (at a restaurant)  
Xiaoliang is eating at a restaurant.
2. (A) 老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher), (B) 教中文 jiāo Zhōngwén (teach Chinese), (C) 在教室 zài jiào shì (in the classroom)  
The teacher is teaching Chinese in the classroom.
3. (A) 小明 Xiǎomíng, (B) 听音乐/聽音樂 tīng yīnyuè (listen to music),  
(C) 在他的房间/在他的房間 zài tā de fángjiān (in his room)  
Xiaoming is listening to music in his room.
4. (A) 我 wǒ (I), (B) 跟我的老师/跟我的老師 gēn wǒ de lǎoshī (with my teacher), (C) 说中文/說中文 shuō Zhōngwén (speak Chinese)  
I speak Chinese with my teacher.
5. (A) 美国人/美國人 Měiguó rén (American), (B) 吃饭/吃飯 chī-fàn (eat), (C) 用刀叉 yòng dāochā (with a knife and fork)  
Americans eat food with a knife and fork.
6. (A) 我的老师/我的老師 wǒ de lǎoshī (my teacher), (B) 来/來 lái (come), (C) 从中国/從中國 cóng Zhōngguó (from China)  
My teacher comes from China.
7. (A) 小亮的小狗 Xiǎoliàng de xiǎogǒu (Xiaoliang's little dog), (B) 跑 pǎo (run), (C) 进房间里/進房間裏 jìn fángjiān li (into the room)  
Xiaoliang's little dog ran into the room.
8. (A) 小亮的小狗 Xiǎoliàng de xiǎogǒu (Xiaoliang's little dog), (B) 跑 pǎo (run), (C) 在房间里/在房間裏 zài fángjiān li (in the room)  
Xiaoliang's little dog is running in the room.

## The sound system

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To gain an enhanced understanding of the Chinese sound system, with an emphasis on syllable structure
- ★ To know the nature and distribution of Chinese initial consonants, finals, and tones
- ★ To learn the rules of tone changes

#### Why is the sound system important?

Understanding the sound system of a language is the crucial first step in learning to speak with good pronunciation, which is necessary for effective communication. We know that languages are built upon and expressed with sounds. We also know that if the pronunciation of a word is wrong, the listener may hear entirely different words. Therefore, we would like to begin with the Chinese sound system and provide materials for practicing Chinese sounds. Remember that the quantity and quality of imitative practices help to master the correct pronunciation of a language. Now you may ask:

#### What is different between the sounds of English and Chinese?

The answer can be found in the following sections.

### 3.1 The special features of Chinese sounds

- **Tonal language:** There are four basic tones in Chinese, which means that each syllable can be pronounced in four different tones, each of which has a different meaning. For example,
  - the initial consonant (hereafter *initial*) *m*, and
  - the final/rime (hereafter *final*) *a* combine to form > *ma*

The single syllable *ma* can be pronounced in four different tones that correspond to different words, such as the words 妈/媽 (mom), 麻 (numb; hemp), 马/馬 (horse), and 骂/罵 (scold). The four words are all Romanized into *ma*, but they are pronounced in different tones:

- 妈/媽 (mom) is pronounced in the first tone and is written in *pinyin* as *mā*.
- 麻 (numb; hemp) is pronounced in the second tone and is written as *má*.

- 马/馬 (horse) is pronounced in the third tone and is written as mǎ.
- 骂/罵 (scold) is pronounced in the fourth tone and is written as mà.

**NOTE** **Pinyin** 拼音 pīnyīn is used to represent the sounds of Chinese characters with Roman letters to help with the learning of standard Chinese and has been used in China since 1958.

Ex. (1) is a special tongue twister that can be used to practice these tone variations.

- (1) 妈骑马/媽騎馬,  
马慢/馬慢,  
妈骂马/媽罵馬。  
Mā qí mǎ,  
mǎ mǎn,  
mā mà mǎ.

Mom rides a horse. The horse is slow, (so) mom shouts at the horse.

However, if one mispronounces 妈/媽 mā (mom) as the third tone mǎ and 马/馬 mǎ (horse) as the first tone mā, then the sentence would be as in (2).

- (2) 马骑妈/馬騎媽,  
妈慢/媽慢,  
马骂妈/馬罵媽。  
Mǎ qí mā,  
mā mǎn,  
mǎ mà mā.

A horse rides mom. Mom is slow, (so) the horse shouts at mom.

Through the use of this extreme example, we want to emphasize the importance of pronunciation, which affects not only words (e.g., 妈/媽 mā [mom] or 马/馬 mǎ [horse]) but also grammar. For example, 马/馬 mǎ (horse) should be the object as in (1) but it becomes the subject in (2) because of the incorrect pronunciation. We will teach you how to pronounce the four tones correctly in §3.3.

- **Sonorously syllable:** In Mandarin Chinese, a syllable (usually a word) always has a vowel(s) that is only audible next to a consonant and has no consonant clusters, such as *st-* as in *study* in English. Furthermore, syllables can only end with vowels or *-n* and *-ng*, unlike the full range of consonants that can end a syllable in languages such as English, for example, *-b* as in *rob*, *-d* as in *dad*, *-g* as in *big*, *-p* as in *pop*, *-t* as in *right*, and *-k* as in *cook*. This feature makes Chinese syllables sonorous and easy to pronounce.
- **Small numbers of syllables:** Excluding tones, Chinese has 404 basic syllables, including all possible combinations of consonants and vowels. The number of possible syllables in Chinese is relatively small compared to English or other languages that have thousands of syllables. All of these features make the syllable structure of Chinese relatively simple and its sounds easy to learn.

Although Chinese tones pose challenges for new learners whose native languages do not have tones and some learners may feel frustrated when initially learning them, the study of tone will quickly become easier as learners advance, especially after reading the tips for pronouncing the tones in the following section.

### 3.2 The structure of Chinese syllables

Chinese syllables are made up of three parts, and the first two parts, shown below, are similar to what we find in other non-tonal languages:

- i. The initial (*consonant*) 声母/聲母 shēngmǔ is the first segment to start a syllable, although some syllables may omit this part.
- ii. The final (*rime* 韵母/韻母 yùnmǔ) is the remaining segment of the syllable, which contains a *vowel(s)* and possibly an ending nasal consonant. All syllables must have a final.
- iii. The tone 声调/聲調 shēngdiào is unique to tonal languages like Chinese; it is not a segment but the *pitch contour* that is used to pronounce the final.

The structure of Chinese syllables is presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1** *The structure of Chinese syllables*

Character/meaning	Pinyin	Syllable		
		initial	final	tone
妈/媽 mother	mā	m	a	1st
男 male	nán	n	an	2nd
脚/腳 foot	jiǎo	j	iao	3rd
饿/餓 hungry	è	ø	e	4th

The final can be,

- ♦ one vowel like *a* in *mā*;
- ♦ one vowel with a nasal consonant as *an* in *nán*; or
- ♦ one compound vowel such as *iao* (three vowels) in *jiǎo* in Table 3.1.

**Zero Initials** 零声母/零聲母 língshēngmǔ are the syllables that have no initial, such as *è* in the last line of Table 3.1.

When uttering a syllable in Chinese, one must not only pronounce the initial and final in the right way but also must pronounce the correct tone (i.e., the correct pitch contour).

### 3.3 Basic tones

There are four basic tones in Chinese:

- first tone (一声/一聲 yī shēng)
- second tone (二声/二聲 èr shēng)
- third tone (三声/三聲 sān shēng)
- fourth tone (四声/四聲 sì shēng)

**Where are the tone marks placed?**

Tone marks are always placed on vowels (a, o, e, i, u, ü).

- If a syllable has one vowel, the tone mark is placed over the vowel as in mā and nán.
- For a compound vowel (more than one vowel) in a syllable, the tone mark should be placed over the main vowel following the order of *a > o > e > i/u > ü*, for example, jiǎo (脚/腳 foot), yǒu (有 have), bēi (杯 cup), and lüè (略 brief).
- If *u* and *i* appear together, place the tone mark over the last vowel, for example, duì (对/對 correct) and diū (丟 lose).

The first tone to the fourth tone are indicated by the use of diacritic marks —, /, \, and \, respectively, which are placed above the main vowel in the final of the syllable. These four basic tones can be presented on a five-point scale based on voice range, as shown in Table 3.2 below; 5 represents the highest pitch, 1 represents the lowest, and 3 represents one's natural, comfortable voice range.

**Table 3.2** Pitch contours of Chinese (Mandarin) tones

1st tone (5-5)	2nd tone (3-5)	3rd tone (2-1-4)	4th tone (5-1)	Pitch
5 —————> 5	3 ↗ 5	2 ↗ 1 ↗ 4	5 ↘ 1	5 High
				4 Mid-high
				3 Middle
				2 Middle-low
				1 Low

The **first tone** is a constant, **high level tone** (pitch value 55). It starts at pitch value 5 and stays at 5, as in the word mā (媽/媽 mother).



**TIP** To pronounce the 1st tone as mā, try using a high vowel *i* or *a* and pronounce it at the highest comfortable pitch of your voice range and try to maintain the high pitch without dropping, like *humming* the sound **ah** in singing.

The **second tone** is a **rising tone** (pitch value 35). It starts from the middle of one's voice range (pitch 3) and rises towards the level of the first tone (pitch 5) and is how one pronounces má (麻 numb; hemp).

**TIP**

To pronounce the 2nd tone, adopt the rising intonation at the end of a question sentence, such as “Did you say **that?**” or, like saying “**what!?**” when hearing something *unbelievable*.

The **third tone** is a **contour tone** (pitch value 214). It begins from near the bottom of one’s voice range (pitch 2), dips to the bottom pitch 1, and then rises to the mid–high pitch 4, as can be heard with the pronunciation of mǎ (马/馬 horse).

**TIP**

To pronounce the third tone, think about hearing an untrue story and saying “**yeah ...**” with an elongated and *skeptical* tone. It is also helpful to practice the third tone by lowering and then raising your chin while lowering and raising the pitch (see the half 3rd tone in §3.5.1).

The **fourth tone** is a **falling tone** (pitch value 51). It begins from the top of one’s voice range (pitch 5) and proceeds quickly down to the bottom pitch 1, and is how one pronounces mà (罵/罵 scold).

**TIP**

To pronounce the 4th tone, you may compare your intonation to that of an *emphatic “No!”* when you disagree with something strongly.

**NOTE** The pitches of the four tones are relative and contrastive patterns, so one should not worry about whether one’s pitch is lower or higher than others. The pitch values of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are comparable to the musical notes *do, re, mi, fa, sol*, but in terms of accuracy they are not as strict as the notes (Chao, 1980 [1959]).

The pronunciations of the four tones are summarized in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3** Tones, tone marks, and pitches

Tone	Tone mark	Pitch	Articulation	Example	Meaning	Comparative sounds in English
1st	—	55	long high	mā 媚/媽	mother	as humming high voice <i>ah</i> in singing
2nd	/	35	long rising	má 麻	numb, hemp	as <b>what!?</b> with an <i>unbelievable</i> tone
3rd	∨	214	low rising	mǎ 馬/馬	horse	as <b>yeah ...</b> with a <i>skeptical</i> tone
4th	\	51	abrupt falling	mà 蔑/罵	to scold	as <b>No!</b> with a strong tone of disagreement

### 3.4 Neutral tone

In natural connected speech, some syllables lose their tonal pitch and are pronounced in a relatively **light and short tone**; this is called a *neutral tone* (轻声/輕聲 qīngshēng). The neutral tone is written without a tone marker. Since the neutral tone always follows other syllables, its pitch varies depending on the preceding syllables.

**Table 3.4** The pitches of the neutral tone

Tone of the preceding syllable	Example	Pitch of the neutral tone
1st (55)	chēzi 车子/車子 car	low (1 or 2 on a scale of 5)
2nd (35)	érzi 儿子/兒子 son	low (1 or 2 on a scale of 5)
3rd (214, changed to 21; see below)	yǐzi 椅子 chair	high (4 or 5 on a scale of 5)
4th (51)	màozi 帽子 hat	low (1 on a scale of 5)

► **TIP** The way to pronounce the various neutral tone syllables (examples taken from Table 3.4):

- **High-low** combination: such as the **1st tone** (55), **2nd tone** (35), and **4th tone** (51). They either *end* at 5 (the 1st and 2nd tone), or *start* at 5 (the 1st and 4th tone), so the neutral tone ends at 1 or 2 as in chēzi, érzi, and màozi, respectively.
- **Low-high** combination: this is only with the **3rd tone** (pitch value is 21 here, see explanation below), which starts at 2; thus, the neutral tone ends at 4 or 5 as in yǐzi.
- **Long-short** combination: The preceding syllable should be *prolonged*, and the neutral tone should be *shortened* and *unstressed*. Specifically, the neutral tone should only take a half beat, and the preceding syllable should take one and a half beats if one syllable with tone takes one beat.

### 3.5 Changed tones

When tones are combined in use in normal speech, the pitches of some tones lose their value and change tones; this is known as *tone sandhi*. This situation usually happens to the 3rd tone and 4th tone when they are preceded by other tones in a cluster.

► **3.5.1** Tone change for the 3rd tone

The pronunciation of the 3rd tone (214) is longer than the other three tones when read individually. Following the economic rule (to save energy), Chinese

people rarely say a full 3rd tone except when emphasizing something. Rather, people pronounce a *half third tone* (半三声/半三聲 bànsānshēng) at the end of a word, or the end of a sentence by cutting off the rising pitch 4, and thus changing the pitch 214 to 21. So, you often hear Chinese people say 好 hǎo (good) as the pitch of 21 rather than 214 in the greeting 你好 nǐ hǎo (hello).

The 3rd tone **must** change its pitch to 21 or 35 under the following conditions:

- Change to the **half 3rd tone** (21): When a 3rd tone is immediately followed by a tone (1st, 2nd, 4th, or neutral) other than the 3rd tone, the 3rd tone is changed into a half 3rd tone with the pitch 21, as can be seen below.
  - ◆ 1st tone: 你听/你聽 nǐ tīng (you listen) → (21 + 55)
  - ◆ 2nd tone: 你来/你來 nǐ lái (you come) → (21 + 35)
  - ◆ 4th tone: 你看 nǐ kàn (you look) → (21 + 51)
  - ◆ neutral tone: 你的 nǐ de (your/yours) → (21 + 4)

**TIP**

To pronounce the half 3rd tone, begin just like the regular third tone, start at level 2 in the five-point scale, reach the lowest point (level 1) and remain at that level without rising again; or, like singing the low musical note *do*.

- Change to the **2nd tone** (35): When a 3rd tone is immediately followed by another 3rd tone, the first one is changed to a 2nd tone, and the second one can either be a full or half 3rd tone:
  - ◆ 3rd tone: 你好 nǐ hǎo (hello) → (35 + 21 or 214); 很好 hěn hǎo (very good) → (35 + 21 or 214)
- When three 3rd tones are strung together such as in 我很好 wǒ hěn hǎo (I am fine), or 我想你 wǒ xiǎng nǐ (I miss you), there are usually two ways of changing tones, depending on the structure of the words and the sentence:
  - ◆ three 3rd tones: 我很好 wǒ hěn hǎo (I am fine) → 2nd tone (35) + 2nd tone (35) + 3rd tone (21/214); or: → half 3rd (21) + 2nd tone (35) + 3rd tone (21/214).
- When four or more 3rd tones are together, which is rare, the common way of pronunciation is as follows:
  - ◆ four 3rd tones: 我很想你 wǒ hěn xiǎng nǐ (I miss you very much) → 2nd (35) + half 3rd (21) + 2nd (35) + 3rd tone (21/214)
  - ◆ five 3rd tones: 我也很想你 wǒ yě hěn xiǎng nǐ (I miss you very much also) → 2nd (35) + 2nd (35) + half 3rd (21) + 2nd (35) + 3rd tone (21/214)

**3.5.2 Tone change for the 4th tone**

- When two 4th tones are joined together, the pitch of the initial 4th tone falls to half of a normal 4th tone and its pitch is changed from 51 to 42.
  - ◆ 看报/看報 kàn-bào (read newspaper) / 护照/護照 hùzhào (passport): (51 + 51) → (42 + 51)

NOTE Even though the pitch of the 3rd and 4th tone change in actual speech, as explained above, the original tone marks should still be written in *pinyin*. This is different from the tone changes of — *yī* (one) and 不 *bù* (not), whose tone marks should be written in *pinyin* according to how they are actually pronounced (see §3.5.3).

### ► 3.5.3 Special tone change for — *yī* — (one; a) and 不 *bù* 不 (no; not)

When — *yī* and 不 *bù* are used alone or at the end of a phrase, they are pronounced using their original tones, for example, — *yī* (one), 十一 *shíyī* (eleven), and 不 *bù* (not). But — *yī* changes its tone when it is followed by other tones in speech, while the tone of 不 *bù* only changes when it is followed by a 4th tone. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 show the tone changes of — *yī* (one) and 不 *bù* (not), respectively.

**Table 3.5** Tone change for — *yī* (one)

— <i>yī</i> with other tones	Tone changes of — <i>yī</i>	Example	Meaning
— <i>yī</i> + 1st tone	<i>yī</i> → 4th tone	一天 <i>yì tiān</i>	one day
— <i>yī</i> + 2nd tone		一年 <i>yì nián</i>	one year
— <i>yī</i> + 3rd tone		一起 <i>yìqǐ</i>	together
— <i>yī</i> + 4th tone	<i>yī</i> → 2nd tone	一样/一樣 <i>yíyàng</i>	alike

**Table 3.6** Tone change for 不 *bù* (not)

不 <i>bù</i> with other tones	Tone changes of 不 <i>bù</i>	Example	Meaning
不 <i>bù</i> + 1st tone	remains as 4th tone	不说/不說 <i>bù shuō</i>	not say
不 <i>bù</i> + 2nd tone		不同 <i>bùtóng</i>	not same; different
不 <i>bù</i> + 3rd tone		不好 <i>bù hǎo</i>	not good
不 <i>bù</i> + 4th tone	<i>bù</i> → 2nd tone	不对/不對 <i>bú duì</i>	not correct

## 3.6 Chinese initials

There are **twenty-one** initials in Mandarin. Their articulations and features are shown in Table 3.7. The linguistic terms in the table are just to guide the pronunciation of each sound and do not require memorization.

**Table 3.7** Chinese initials and the corresponding English sounds<sup>\*</sup>

Row	Manner/ place of articulation	Unaspirated Column 1	Aspirated Column 2	Nasal Column 3	Fricative Column 4	Liquid Column 5
1	Labials	b <u>s</u> pit	p <u>p</u> it	m <u>m</u> oat	f <u>f</u> it	l <u>l</u> leaf
2	Dentals	d <u>s</u> tuck	t <u>t</u> ick	n <u>n</u> ote		
3	Dental sibilants	z	c		s <u>s</u> ip	
4	Retroflexes	zh	ch		sh	r
5	Palatals	j	q		x	
6	Gutturals	g skip/go	k keep		h	

\* italicized/underlined.

## → Alert!

**The sounds *b*, *p*, *d*, *t*, *g*, *k* in Chinese pinyin are different from those of *b*, *p*, *d*, *t*, *g*, *k* in English**, even though the letters are the same. • The initials *p*, *t*, *k* are *aspirated* (with a stronger puff of breath, as in *pō*, *tē*, and *kē*). • The initials *b*, *d*, *g* are *unaspirated* (as in *bō*, *dē*, and *gē*) like the sounds *p*, *t*, and *k* in English. Bear in mind that the Chinese *b* is pronounced like the English *p* in *speak*, while Chinese *p* is pronounced like the English *p* in *peak* but with a strong puff of breath (see more examples for the six different contrasts in Table 3.7).

The **Rows** in Table 3.7 are arranged according to the positioning of one's mouth when producing the sounds, and the **Columns** are the features of the initials. While some initials have a corresponding sound in English, not all of the initial sounds exist in the English sound system.

The most difficult initials (**bolded** in the above table) for English speakers are:

- Dental sibilants *z* and *c* in row 3:
    - To produce these sounds, one should place the tip of the tongue behind the top of one's front teeth.
      - *z* sounds close to *ds* as in *reads* (e.g., *zā*, *zè*); while
      - *c* (aspirated) is similar to *ts* as in *cats*. One should keep the same position as *z* but make the sound with a strong puff of breath (e.g., *cā*, *cè*).
  - Retroflexes *zh*, *ch*, *sh*, and *r* in row 4:
    - To produce these initials, begin by saying *sh* as if trying to quiet a crowd by whispering a long *shhh* . . . , and then apply this to the following English sounds:

- *sh* is similar to *sh* as in *bush*, but the tongue is further back, and the tip of the tongue barely touches the front part of the roof of the mouth (e.g., *shā, shē, shī*);
  - *zh* is similar to *dge* as in *judge*, but the tip of the tongue curves more to the back of the mouth, and the sound is not voiced; to pronounce *zh*, the tongue must be drawn a little bit back from the position of producing *sh* (e.g., *zhā, zhē, zhī*);
  - *ch* is produced with the same mouth positioning as *zh* but aspirated, and it is similar to *ch* as in *coach* (e.g., *chā, chē, chī*); and
  - *r* is similar to *r* as in *rose*, but the tip of the tongue does not touch the roof of the mouth. To produce *r*, the tongue is drawn further back and loosely rolls in the middle of the mouth; you must flatten your mouth as if you were smiling (e.g., *rán, rè, rī*).
- Palatals *j*, *q*, and *x* in row 5:
- The tongue is placed against or near the palate, but the tip of the tongue should touch the back of the lower teeth. To pronounce this group of initials, you may refer to the following English sounds:
    - *j* is similar to *j* as in *jeep*, but the tongue is near the teeth and the mouth is in a relaxed position (e.g., *jī, jiā*);
    - *q* is produced with the same positioning as *j*, but it is an aspirated sound with a strong puff of air (aspirated, e.g., *qī, qiā*); and
    - *x* is similar to the combination of *ss* and *y* in *bless you*, but the tip of the tongue is much lower in the mouth (e.g., *xī, xiā*).
- Guttural *h* in row 6 is not the same as the English *h*.
- The Chinese *h* is a much rougher sound and is similar to the *ch* in *ach* in German. The back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate, and the friction is noticeable (e.g., *hē, hā*).

### 3.7 Chinese finals

In total, there are **thirty-six** finals in Mandarin, all of which are vowels or vowels plus one nasal sound *n* or *ng* (see Table 3.8).

**NOTE** The special simple final (vowel) *er*. It is pronounced as *e + r*. Specifically, one needs to say the *e* sound first and then curves one's tongue back as when pronouncing initial *r* (it is similar to the sound *ur* in *urge*). It stands alone without an initial such as 儿/兒 *ér* (son) and 二 *èr* (two). When it follows another syllable as a noun suffix, the *e* sound drops but the *r* sound stays, e.g., 花 *huā* + 儿/兒 *er* → 花儿/花兒 *huār* (flower) (see §6.5.2).

Although there are many finals in Chinese, the basic vowels are the simple finals *a*, *o*, *e*, *i*, *u*, and *ü*, of which

- *a*, *e*, and *i* have corresponding sounds in English (see the Table 3.8);
- *o* cannot be a final alone and must be with other vowels; although the forms *bo*, *po*, *mo*, and *fo* exist in *pinyin*, they are actually pronounced as *buo*, *puo*, *muo* and *muo*; and
- *u* and *ü* are the most difficult vowels.

**Table 3.8** Chinese finals and the corresponding English sounds\*

<b>Simple Finals</b> (single vowel)	a <u>f</u> ather	o	e <u>uh</u>	i <u>e</u> at	u	ü	er
<b>Compound Finals</b> (two or three vowels)	ai <u>ais</u> le	ei <u>eight</u>	ao <u>cow</u>	ou <u>ob</u>			
	ia <u>yah</u>	ie <u>yes</u>	i <u>ao</u>	iou <u>(-iu)</u>			
	ua	uo	uai <u>why</u>	uei <u>(-ui)</u>	wait		
	üe						
<b>Nasal Finals</b> (end with <i>n</i> or <i>ng</i> )	an	en <u>spoken</u>	ang	eng	ong		
	i <u>an</u> <u>yen</u>	in <u>pin</u>	iang <u>young</u>	ing <u>sing</u>	iong		
	u <u>an</u> <u>one</u>	uen <u>(-un)</u>	u <u>ang</u>	ueng			
	ü <u>an</u>	ün					

\*italicized/underlined.

In short, if one can master the two vowels *u* and *ü*, one should have no problem learning the rest of the finals. "How are these two sounds pronounced?" you may ask. The following tips may help you pronounce these two vowels.

- The final *u* is a **rounded** high back vowel. To pronounce this sound, the tongue must be pulled toward the back of the mouth while the lips make a very small opening in the front. The tongue is raised higher than it would be to pronounce its counterpart in English. It is different from the sound *oo* as in book. There are two tips for producing this sound (Chao, 1948):
    - whistle the lowest note possible, then vocalize instead of actually whistling; and
    - imagine holding as much water as possible without either swallowing it or letting any of it out of the lips.

You may apply these tips to pronounce the following sounds: ū (pinyin as wū); lū, nū; zū, cū, sū; zhū, chū, shū, rū.

- The final *ü* is a **rounded** high front vowel. It is a combination of *i* and *u*. To produce this vowel, you must first pronounce *i*, then gradually change the shape of your mouth *from unrounded to rounded*. The shape of the lips is smaller than when making the final *u* and more like the position one makes to kiss.

You can use the above suggestions to pronounce these sounds: ū (pinyin as yū); lū, nū; jū, qū, xū (pinyin as jū, qū, xū).

There are two further difficult finals that are not listed in Table 3.8 because these two finals cannot be pronounced alone and must be with other initials:

- -i (the tip of the tongue almost touches the back of the upper teeth) with the dental sibilants *z*, *c*, and *s*, which are written in *pinyin* as *zi*, *ci*, *si*. You will produce the -i sound when you pronounce and prolong the sounds of *zī*, *cī*, or *sī*; and

- -i (curved) with the retroflexes *zh*, *ch*, *sh*, and *r*, which are written in *pinyin* as *zhi*, *chi*, *shi*, and *ri*. You will produce the -i sound when pronouncing and prolonging the sounds of *zhī*, *chī*, *shī*, or *ri*.

The sketch of the Chinese sound system in this chapter should give you a general roadmap for learning how to pronounce Chinese sounds. It takes a lot of practice to be able to pronounce Chinese sounds as accurately as a native speaker. However, even if your pronunciation is not perfect (just like your Chinese teacher's English pronunciation may not be like a native speaker), do ensure that you differentiate different sounds according to the Chinese sound system and not the sound system of your mother tongue.

### 3.8 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned that Chinese is a **tonal language** with four basic tones, which are the 1st tone (high pitch 55), 2nd tone (mid-high 35), 3rd tone (low-high 214), and 4th tone (high-low 51). However, Chinese people rarely produce the full 3rd tone, and instead, they often pronounce a *half 3rd tone* with a pitch of 21 at the end of a word or a sentence in actual conversations. The 3rd tone must be changed to the *half 3rd tone* (low 21) when it is immediately followed by the 1st, 2nd, 4th, or neutral tone, and to the 2nd tone when followed immediately by another 3rd tone. We have also learned that there are 21 initial consonants and six basic vowels (a, o, e, i, u, ü) in Chinese, of which ten initials (z, c, zh, ch, sh, r, j, q, x, h) and two vowels (u, ü) are significantly different from English sounds and may therefore pose difficulty for English speakers. The aspirated sounds (with a strong puff) like *p*, *t*, and *k* may also be difficult for some learners. The best way to master Chinese sounds is to mimic the standard pronunciation and practice the sounds constantly.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.9 Exercises

Audio materials are provided at [www.cambridge.org/ZhuHuang](http://www.cambridge.org/ZhuHuang). Please practice the sounds following the guide.

#### I Pronunciation drill

i. **Tones.** Read the following sounds aloud:

1. Four basic tones:

- tāng 汤/湯 (soup); táng 糖 (sugar); tǎng 躺 (lie down); tàng 烫/燙 (burn)
- zhōng 中 (middle); guó 国/國 (country); hǎo 好 (good); kàn 看 (look)
- suān 酸 (sour); tián 甜 (sweet); kǔ 苦 (bitter); là 辣 (spicy)

<sup>1</sup> Many of the descriptions, especially those on tones, initials, and finals in this chapter are based on the explanations in *Chinese Primer* by Ch'en et al. (1994), as well as unpublished teaching materials edited by Professor Rulan Chao Bian at Harvard University.

## 2. Combination tones:

- 1st tone with other tones:
  - bān-jīā 搬家 (move out)
  - yīngxióng 英雄 (hero)
  - Ying-Měi 英美 (UK-USA)
  - qīpiàn 欺骗/欺騙 (to cheat)
  - māma 妈妈/媽媽 (mom)
- 2nd tone with other tones:
  - tóngwū 同屋 (roommate)
  - nóngmín 农民 (peasant)
  - érnǚ 儿女/兒女 (sons and daughters; children)
  - wénhuà 文化 (culture)
  - bóbó 伯伯 (uncle [father's older brother])
- 3rd tone with other tones (the 3rd tone should be pronounced as a half 3rd tone except when two 3rd tones are together, in which the first 3rd tone should be pronounced as a 2nd tone):
  - lǎoshī 老师/老師 (teacher)
  - Měiguó 美国/美國 (USA)
  - yǐngxiǎng 影响/影響 (influence)
  - liwài 里外/裏外 (inside and outside)
  - wǒmen 我们/我們 (we)
- 4th tone with other tones:
  - qìchē 汽车/汽車 (car)
  - wèntí 问题/問題 (question; problem)
  - dàxiǎo 大小 (size)
  - shùzì 数字/數字 (number)
  - bàba 爸爸 (dad)

**Table 3.9** Tones in two syllabic combinations

	+ 1st tone	+ 2nd tone	3rd tone	+ 4th tone	+ neutral tone
1st tone	tā tīng 他听/ 他聽 (he listens)	tā lái 他来/ 他來 (he comes)	tā dǒng 他懂 (he knows)	tā mà 他骂/ 他罵 (he cures)	tā de 他的 (his)
2nd tone	shéi tīng 谁听/ 誰聽 (who listens)	shéi lái 谁来/ 誰來 (who comes)	shéi dǒng 谁懂/誰懂 (who knows)	shéi dà 谁大/誰大 (who is older)	shéi de 谁的/ 誰的 (whose)
3rd tone	nǐ tīng 你听/ 你聽 (you listen)	nǐ lái 你来/ 你來 (you come)	nǐ hǎo 你好 (hello)	nǐ kàn 你看 (you look)	nǐ de 你的 (yours)
4th tone	tài gāo 太高 (too tall)	tài nán 太难/ 太難 (too difficult)	tài xiǎo 太小 (too small)	tài pàng 太胖 (too fat)	tàitai 太太 (wife)

- Tones containing three syllabic combinations (rhymed):
  - Zhōngguó rén 中国人/中國人 (Chinese people), shuō Yǐngwén 说英文/說英文 (speak English); māma shuō 妈妈说/媽媽說 (mom says), shū hěn hǎo 书很好/書很好 (the book is good).
  - rén hěn duō 人很多 (people are many), shíjiān shǎo 时间少/時間少 (time is little); xuéxí hǎo 学习好/學習好 (study well), xuéyuàn xiǎo 学院小/學院小 (college is small).
  - Měiguó rén 美国人/美國人 (American), xiě Hánzì 写汉字/寫漢字 (write Chinese characters); hǎo xuéshēng 好学生/好學生 (good students), lǎoshī shǎo 老师少/老師少 (teachers are few).
  - shìjiè dà 世界大 (the world is big), wèntí duō 问题多/問題多 (questions/problems are many); kàn Zhōngguó 看中国/看中國 (see China), yào dú-bào 要读报/要讀報 (should read the newspaper).

3. Tone changes:

- Examples of yī 一 with other tones:
  - yì zhāng (zhǐ) 一张(纸)/一張(紙) (a piece of [paper])
  - yì táng (kè) 一堂(课)/一堂(課) (a [class])
  - yìqǐ 一起 (together)
  - yí tào (shū) 一套(书)/一套(書) (a set of [books])
  - yì suān 一酸 (a sour [dish])
  - yì tián 一甜 (a sweet [dish])
  - yì kǔ 一苦 (a bitter [dish])
  - yí là 一辣 (a spicy [dish])
- Examples of bù 不 with other tones:
  - bù chī 不吃 (not eat)
  - bù xíng 不行 (not okay)
  - bù hǎo 不好 (not good)
  - bù yào 不要 (don't want)
  - bù suān 不酸 (not sour)
  - bù tián 不甜 (not sweet)
  - bù kǔ 不苦 (not bitter)
  - bù là 不辣 (not spicy)

ii. **Initials.** Read the following sounds aloud:

1. Identify the contrast between the first unaspirated sound in each pair and the aspirated sounds in the following examples:
  - bēng-péng 甭-棚 (do not need-shed)
  - duì-tuì 对/對-退 (correct-retreat)
  - gān-kān 甘-刊 (sweet-publish)
  - zuì-cuì 醉-脆 (drunk-fragile)
  - zhǎng-chǎng 掌-厂/廠 (palm-factory)
  - jiǎng-qiǎng 讲/講-抢/搶 (speak-rob)

2. Examples with difficult initials (also pay attention to the difficult finals such as -i in the first group and -u in the last group) include the following:
- zì hěn duō 字很多 (there are many characters) – cì hěn duō 刺很多 (there are many thorns) – sì hěn duō 寺很多 (there are many temples)
  - jiāng méi le 姜沒了/姜沒了 (there is no ginger) – qiāng méi le 枪沒了/槍沒了 (there is no gun) – xiāng méi le 香沒了/香沒了 (there is no incense)
  - zhū lái le 猪来了/豬來了 (the pig came) – shū lái le 书来了/書來了 (the books arrived) – chūlai le 出来了/出來了 (came out) – 出去了 chūqu le (go out); rùkǒuchù 入口处/入口處 (entrance)

- iii. **Finals.** Read the following sounds aloud; pay attention to the difficult sounds *u* and *ü*:

- Single syllable comparison:
  - dōu 都 (all) – duō 多 (many)
  - kuài 快 (fast) – kuà 跨 (stride)
  - liǔ 柳 (willow) – lüè 掠 (rob)
  - xuě 雪 (snow) – shuǐ 水 (water)
  - rì 日 (sun) – rè 热/熱 (hot)
  - ròu 肉 (meat) – ruò 弱 (weak) – ruì 瑞 (auspicious)
- Disyllable comparison:
  - duì le 对了/對了 (correct) – diū le 丢了 (lost)
  - qiūjú 秋菊 (autumn chrysanthemum) – chòu qí 臭棋 (bad move in playing chess)
  - nǚ’ér 女兒/女兒 (daughter) – nǔlì 努力 (endeavor)
  - lǜshī 律师/律師 (lawyer) – lù shī 录诗/錄詩 (record poems)
  - liúxué 留学/留學 (study abroad) – lüèduó 掠夺/掠奪 (rob)
  - wǔdǎo 舞蹈 (dance) – yú dǎo 鱼岛/魚島 (fish island)
  - jùshì 句式 (sentence pattern) – qùshì 趣事 (interesting things) – xùshì 叙事/敘事 (narrate)
  - zhūshì 猪市/豬市 (pig market) – chūshì 出世 (be born) – shūshì 书市/書市 (book fair) – rúshì 儒士 (Confucian scholar)

## II Read the following tongue-twisters (绕口令/ràokǒuling) aloud for fun.

1. Pay special attention to the tones of *mā* 妈/媽 (mom), *mǎ* 马/馬 (horse), and *mà* 骂/罵 (curse):

妈妈骑马，马慢，妈妈骂马/媽媽騎馬，馬慢，媽媽罵馬。

Māma qí mǎ, mǎ mǎn, māma mà mǎ.

Mom rides a horse. The horse is slow, (so) mom shouts at the horse.

2. Pay special attention to aspirated sounds *ch*, *p*, and *t* in *chī* 吃 (eat), *pútāo* 葡萄皮儿/葡萄皮兒 (grape skin), *tǔ* 吐 (spit), and unaspirated sounds *b* and *d* in *bù* 不 (not) and *dào* 倒 (indicating contrast):

吃葡萄不吐葡萄皮儿，不吃葡萄倒吐葡萄皮儿/吃葡萄不吐葡萄皮兒，不吃葡萄倒吐葡萄皮兒。

Chī pútāo bù tǔ pútāo pír, bù chī pútāo dào tǔ pútāo pír.

When eating grapes, one doesn't spit out the grape skin, but when not eating grapes, one spits out the grape skin.

3. Pay special attention to the sounds of *s* and *sh* in *si* and *shí*:

四是四，十是十，十四是十四，四十是四十。谁能说准四十四，就请谁来试一试/四是四，十是十，十四是十四，四十是四十。誰能說準四十四，就請誰來試一試。

Sì shì sì, shí shì shí, shísì shì shísì, sīshí shì sīshí. Shéi néng shuō zhǔn sīshísì, jiù qǐng shéi lái shì yí shì.

Four is four, ten is ten, fourteen is fourteen, and forty is forty. Whoever can say forty-four correctly, please give it a try.

4. Pay special attention to the finals *en* and *eng* in *pen* and *peng*:

天上一个盆，地下一个棚。盆碰棚，棚碰盆，棚倒了，盆碎了。是盆赔棚还是棚赔盆/天上一个盆，地下一个棚。盆碰棚，棚碰盆，棚倒了，盆碎了。是盆賠棚還是棚賠盆

Tiānshàng yí ge pén, dìxià yí ge péng. Pén pèng péng, péng pèng pén; péng dǎo le, pén suì le. Shì pén péi péng háishi péng péi pén?

There was a basin on the sky, and there was a shed on the ground. The basin collided on the shed, and the shed collided on the basin. The shed fell down, and the basin broke to pieces. Should the basin pay for the shed or the shed pay for the basin?

5. Pay special attention to the finals *ui* in *cui* and *tui* and *u* in *cu*:

山前有个崔粗腿，山后有个崔腿粗。二人山前来比腿，不知道是崔粗腿的腿粗还是崔腿粗的腿粗/山前有個崔粗腿，山後有個崔腿粗。二人山前來比腿，不知道是崔粗腿的腿粗還是崔腿粗的腿粗。

Shānqián yǒu ge Cuī Cūtū, shānhòu yǒu ge Cuī Tuǐcū. Èr rén shānqián lái bǐ tū, bù zhīdào shì Cuī Cūtū de tuǐ cū háishi Cuī Tuǐcū de tuǐ cū.

There is a “Cui Thick-leg” (a person’s name) living in front of the mountain; and there is a “Cui Leg-thick” (another person’s name) living at the back of the mountain. The two came to compare their legs at the front of the mountain, and (we) don’t know whether Cui Thick-leg’s legs are thicker or Cui Leg-thick’s legs are thicker.

6. Pay special attention to the finals *ian* in *yan* and *üan* in *yuan*:

山前有个严圆眼，山后有个严眼圆。二人山前来比眼，不知道是严圆眼的眼圆还是严眼圆的眼圆/山前有個嚴圓眼，山後有個嚴眼圓。二人山前來比眼，不知道是嚴圓眼的眼圓是嚴眼圓的眼圓。

Shānqián yǒu ge Yán Yuányǎn, shānhòu yǒu ge Yán Yǎnyuán. Èr rén shānqián lái bǐ yǎn, bù zhīdào shì Yán Yuányǎn de yǎn yuán háishi Yán Yǎnyuán de yǎn yuán.

There is a “Yan Round-eye” (a person’s name) living in front of the mountain; and there is a “Yan Eye-round” (another person’s name) at the back of the mountain. The two came to compare their eyes at the front of the mountain, and (we) don’t know whether Yan Round-eye’s eyes are rounder or Yan Eye-Round’s eyes are rounder.

# Words and Chinese characters

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To understand the differences between words and Chinese characters
- ★ To know the ways that words and Chinese characters are formed
- ★ To know how to learn and write Chinese characters

### 4.1 The relationship between words and characters

Chinese people are fond of using the term character (字 zì) rather than word (词/詞 cí) when speaking, so it is often the case that you may hear a sentence like (1).

- (1) 小明的回答就一个字“对。”  
 小明的回答就一個字 「對。」  
 Xiǎomíng de huídá jiù yí ge zì: “duì.”  
 Xiaoming's answer is just one character (word): “Right.”

This may then lead to the question:

#### Is a character equivalent to a word?

Well, the answer is yes and no. It is yes because in most cases, one character is one word; however, it is also no, because a word is a minimal meaningful free unit in a language, whereas a character is a writing form that may or may not be a word. The differences between words and characters can be specified by some examples.

- The following words have:
  - ♦ one character: 饭 / 飯 fàn (food);
  - ♦ two characters: 饭馆 / 飯館 fànguǎn (restaurant);
  - ♦ three characters: 图书馆 / 圖書館 túshūguǎn (library);
  - ♦ four characters: 公共汽车 / 公共汽車 gōnggòng qìchē (bus); and
  - ♦ more than four characters: 美利坚合众国 / 美利堅合眾國 Měilìjiān hézhōngguó (USA).
- Characters can be joined together as one word and indicate one meaning, but each single character is meaningless, such as:
  - ♦ 葡萄 pútao (grape);
  - ♦ 玻璃 bōli (glass); and
  - ♦ 徘徊 páihuái (walk to and fro).

Neither the single character 葡 pú nor 葡 táo above has a meaning; however, when they are put together as one word 葡萄 pútao, the meaning “grape” is created. Similarly, the two characters in 玻璃 bōli (glass) and 徘徊 pái huái (walk to and fro) have no meaning when they stand alone.

Nevertheless, single characters without any meaning are very rare in Chinese. In fact, almost every single character represents a certain meaning and can combine with other characters to form new words.

## 4.2 The formation of words

There are three common ways to create new words in Chinese. The first one is *reduplication*, which is not a grammatical convention in English.

### i. Reduplication means that one word is repeated to form a new word.

- Reduplication of adjectives:
  - 慢 màn ([adj.] slow) → 慢慢 mānmàn ([adv.] slowly)
  - 高兴/高興 gāoxìng ([adj.] happy) → 高高兴兴/高高興興 gāogāo xìngxìng ([adv.] happily) (see §12.2)
- Reduplication of verbs:
  - 说/說 shuō (to say) → 说说/說說 shuōshuo (to say a little)
  - 学习/學習 xuéxí (to study) → 学习学习/學習學習 xuéxí xuéxí (to study [a little bit]) (see §10.6)
- Reduplication of measure words:
  - 个/個 gè (a common measure word) → 个个(人)/個個(人) gègè (rén) (every [person])
  - 天 tiān (day) → 天天 tiāntiān (every day); 年年 niánnián (every year) (天 tiān [day] and 年 nián [year] are nouns but also function as measure words; thus, they can be repeated as a meaning of “every x”) (see §8.2)
- Reduplication of family members (kinship terms):
  - 妈/媽 mā (mom) → 妈妈/媽媽 māma (mother)
  - 爸 bà (dad) → 爸爸 bàba (father)
  - 哥 gē (elder brother) → 哥哥 gēge (elder brother)
  - 妹 mèi (younger sister) → 妹妹 mèimei (younger sister)

The other two ways are similar to English, that is, to *add* and to *join*. The former way is known as **derivation**, and the latter way is known as **compounding**.

### ii. Derivation creates new words mainly by adding affixes (namely, prefixes or suffixes) to existing meaningful units. Opposed to English, which has many prefixes and suffixes, such as the prefixes *un-* as in *unhappy* and *dis-* as in *dislike*, and the suffixes such as *-ty* as in *safety* and *-en* as in *strengthen*, Chinese has very few affixes which are not fully fledged, such as:

- Prefix 第- *di-*, e.g., 第一 *dì-yī* (first), i.e., 第 *dì-* + 一 *yī* (one) = the first (see §7.2);
- Suffix -者 *-zhě* (-er), for example:
  - 读者/讀者 *dúzhě* (reader): 读/讀 *dú* (to read) + -者 *-zhě* (-er) = reader
  - 作者 *zuòzhě* (writer): 作 *zuò* (to do; make) + -者 *-zhě* (-er) = writer

- 学者/學者 xuézhě (scholar): 学/學 xué (to study) + -者 -zhě (-er) = scholar
- Suffix -化 -huà (-ize/ify; -tion):
  - 绿化/綠化 lühuà (green-ize, make green by planting trees): 绿/綠 lǜ ([adj.] green) + -化 huà (-ize) = green-ize (verb)
  - 美化 měihuà (beautify): 美 měi ([adj.] beautiful) + -化 -huà (-ity) = beautify (verb)
  - 现代化/現代化 xiàndàihuà (modernization): 现代/現代 xiàndài ([adj.] modern) + -化 -huà (-tion) = modernization (noun) (see more noun prefixes and suffixes in §6.5)
- iii. **Compounding** combines two or more meaningful units (words mostly) to create new words. For example, 黑 hēi (black) and 板 bǎn (board) join together to create the new word 黑板 héibǎn (blackboard). This way of forming words is highly productive in Chinese as well as in English. For example, the word 学/學 xué (study) can combine with other words to create many new words, of which only a few are listed below:
  - 学/學 xué (study) + 费/費 fei (fee) = 学费/學費 xuéfei (tuition)
  - 学/學 xué (study) + 分 fēn (point) = 学分/學分 xuéfēn ([course] credit)
  - 学/學 xué (study) + 年 nián (year) = 学年/學年 xuénián (academic year)
  - 学/學 xué (study) + 期 qī (period) = 学期/學期 xuéqī (semester)
  - 学/學 xué (study) + 生 shēng ([n.] student) = 学生/學生 xuéshēng (student)
  - 学/學 xué (study) + 习/習 xí (practice) = 学习/學習 xuéxí (study)
  - 学/學 xué (study) + 校 xiào (school) = 学校/學校 xuéxiào (school)

### 4.3 The types of compounds

Interestingly, the structural relations between the units of compounds are basically consistent with the structural relations in phrases and sentences in Chinese, specifically:

- the subject precedes the predicate;
- the verb precedes the object;
- the verb precedes the complement; and
- the modifying unit precedes the modified. For example, adjectives and adverbs precede nouns and verbs, respectively.

The following common types of compounds can illustrate the points above and can also help you to learn sentence structures later on.

- **Subject-predicate compounds:** the first word is like the subject, and the second is like the predicate (see §18.2.2), for example:
  - 面试/面試 miànsì (face-test) = interview/to interview;
  - 地震 dìzhèn (earth-shake) = earthquake; and
  - 年轻/年輕 niánqīng (year-light) = young
- **Verb-object compounds:** the first word is a verb, and the second word is a noun as well as the object of the verb (see §10.3), for example:

- 知道 zhīdào (know-way) = to know;
- 担心/擔心 dānxīn (bear-heart) = to worry; and
- 发音/發音 fāyīn (send-sound) = to pronounce/pronunciation.
- **Verb-complement compounds:** the first word is a verb and the second is either an adjective or a verb that provides additional information, such as the result of the first word (see §20.1), for example:
  - 提高 tígāo (raise-high) = to improve;
  - 长大/長大 zhǎngdà (grow-big) = to grow up; and
  - 看见/看見 kànjian (look-see) = to see.
- **Modifying-modified compounds:** the first word modifies and restricts the second (see Ch. 21), for example:
  - 手机/手機 shǒujī (hand-machine) = cell phone;
  - 电影/電影 diànyǐng (electric-image) = movie; and
  - 好吃 hǎo chī (good-eat) = delicious.
- **Coordinate compounds:** consists of two words with similar meanings (see §15.2), for example,
  - 国家/國家 guójiā (country-family) = country;
  - 声音/聲音 shēngyīn (sound-voice) = sound/voice; and
  - 帮助/幫助 bāngzhù (help-assist) = to help.
- **The strategy of “one dividing into two” for learning compounds:** a compound word may consist of more than two words, but it can always be divided into two components for ease of understanding, examples of which are below.
  - One compound with three words can be divided into two components:  
图书馆/圖書館 túshūguǎn (library) = 图书/圖書 túshū (book) + 馆/館 guǎn (hall)
    - 图书/圖書 túshū (book) can be further divided into two components:  
图书/圖書 túshū (book) = 图/圖 tú (picture; map) + 书/書 shū (book)
  - One compound with four words can be divided into two components:  
公共汽车/公共汽車 gōnggòng qìchē (bus) = 公共 gōnggòng (public) + 汽车/汽車 qìchē (automobile)
    - Compounds 公共 gōnggòng (public) and 汽车/汽車 qìchē (automobile) can be further divided into two components:
      - a. 公共 gōnggòng (public) = 公 gōng (public) + 共 gòng (together)
      - b. 汽车/汽車 qìchē (automobile) = 汽 qì (steam) + 车/車 chē (vehicle)

This strategy of “one dividing into two” helps us to understand the meaning and structure of a compound word. Furthermore, it helps us to learn and to comprehend the meanings of characters and even how to write characters because most Chinese characters contain two or more meaningful components.

## 4.4 Features of Chinese characters

The basic unit of the Chinese writing system is the character. In most cases, a character stands for a meaningful unit; however, there is no indication of how to pronounce a character without having learned it first. You may now have the following question:

Why don't Chinese characters directly represent sounds as most languages, like English, do?

The following two facts about Chinese may answer this question:

- **Limited numbers of syllables:** While the relatively small number of syllables (404 in total) is helpful for learning Chinese sounds, it also creates many homonyms which can cause confusion. For example, if you type the syllable *ren* in *pinyin* on the computer, more than twenty characters can be generated. Even with *rén*, which specifies the second tone, there are still several characters with different meanings, such as the following:
  - ◆ 人 *rén* (human being)
  - ◆ 仁 *rén* (benevolence)
  - ◆ 王 *rén* (ninth of the ten Heavenly Stems in Chinese culture)
  - ◆ 任 *Rén* (a surname)
- **Rich dialects:** There are many (seven major) dialects in Chinese that are mutually incomprehensible, as mentioned in Chapter 1. As such, one word may be spoken with different pronunciations in different dialects. For example, the character 人 (human being) is spoken differently in different dialects. If we transcribe the word from its various pronunciations, it is written in *pinyin* roughly as follows:
  - ◆ *rén* in standard Mandarin
  - ◆ *yín* in Northeastern dialect
  - ◆ *níng* in Wu dialect
  - ◆ *yěn* in Cantonese

Many Chinese characters carry specific conventionalized meanings but do not directly connect with the sound of a word. The Chinese writing system accommodates this well as it is able to greatly reduce the number of homonyms and allows for comprehension by people speaking different dialects.

Nevertheless, the number of characters in Chinese far exceeds the twenty-six English letters, so most Chinese learners often ask the following question:

### How can we learn so many characters?

We will offer several practical tips for learning Chinese characters in the following sections.

## 4.5 Ways of forming characters

While all early writing systems originated from pictographic symbols, most languages subsequently evolved into alphabetical writing systems. Conversely, Chinese has retained its ideographic writing system, and some of characters can still be traced to their original pictographic features. Table 4.1 (from Huang and Shi [2016]) shows how the forms of characters have changed from the earliest writing document in oracle bone scripts (1250 BCE–1050 BCE) to the present, with the internal composition unchanged. This continuity is a very important characteristic of Chinese characters and allows modern Chinese readers to read and access historical texts relatively easily. We will be referring to the four

**Table 4.1** Evolution of Chinese scripts

	'water'	'to fish'	'up'	'bright'
Oracle-Bone Script	☵	漁	二	日
Bronze Script	☵	漁	二	日
Small Seal Script	水	漁	上	明
Clerical Script	水	漁	上	明
Standard Script	水	漁	上	明

(Huang and Shi, 2016: 9)

characters 水 shuǐ (water), 漁 yú (to fish), 上 shàng (up), and 明 míng (bright) in Table 4.1, and other characters in the remainder of this chapter when we discuss how characters are composed.

#### Some facts about Chinese characters

- The Chinese writing system is the oldest continuously used written language in the world with a history of more than 3,500 years.
- There are more than 10,000 Chinese characters, including all historical and regional variants.
- Knowledge of about 3,000 characters is sufficient for reading newspapers and writing simple essays.

It becomes easier to learn characters once you know the ways that characters are formed. There are four basic ways to form characters:

1. **象形字** xiàngxíng zì **pictographic characters** (pictograms) are visual representations of the things denoted by the words they stand for (the first symbol in each line is the earlier writing form):
  - ☵ 水 shuǐ (river; water)<sup>1</sup>
  - 山 (resembles the shape of a mountain), 山 shān (mountain)
  - 人 rén (human being)
  - 日 rì (sun)
  - 月 yuè (moon)

<sup>1</sup> The images of Chinese scripts in this section have been extracted from Academia Sinica's Database of Chinese Characters Composition (漢字構形資料庫) at <https://cdp.sinica.edu.tw/cdphanzi>.

2. **指事字** zhǐshì zì ideographic (indicating-meaning) characters (ideograms) are symbols to indicate abstract meanings:

— 上 shàng (above), which is created by adding a short line above a longer line.

— 下 xià (below), which is created by putting a short line below a longer line.

3. **会意字/會意字** huìyì zì associative (joined-meaning) characters are formed by two or more pictograms or ideograms to create meaning from the semantic association of the pictograms and/or ideograms:

明 míng (bright) is a combination of two pictographic characters 日 rì (sun) and 月 yuè (moon), both of which can be bright.

卡 qiǎ (get stuck; jam) is a combination of two indicating-meaning characters 上 shàng (above) and 下 xià (below), to denote a meaning of “getting stuck” when one cannot go up or down.

4. **形声字/形聲字** xíngshēng zì pictophonetic characters (phonetic-semantic compounds) are a combination of semantic and phonetic parts. Such characters consist of two elements: one gives a clue to the semantic category of the word represented, and the other a clue to its sound, which may not represent its modern pronunciation. For example:

漁/漁 yú (to fish):

- the left part of the character is 氵, the simplified symbol of the character 水 shuǐ (river; water), stands for the **semantic** class (of/related to water); and
- the right part (**phonetic**) 魚/魚 yú (fish) indicates the pronunciation and provides more precise semantic information (to fish).

妈/媽 mā (mother):

- the left part (**semantic**) 女 nǚ means female; and
- the right part (**phonetic**) 马/馬 mǎ (horse) indicates its pronunciation.

More than 90 percent of the most commonly used Chinese characters nowadays are *pictophonetic* characters. This means that most Chinese characters do, in fact, contain information on how the character is pronounced; however, the pronunciation information is often indirect.

Through further examination of the four formations of Chinese characters, we have found that characters can be divided into these two groups:

- characters with a **single component**: such as 水 shuǐ (river, water), and 上 shàng in the *pictographic* (#1 above) and the *ideographic* (#2) categories respectively; and
- characters with **complex components** (two or more): such as 明 míng (bright) and 漁/漁 yú (to fish) in the *associative* (#3) and *pictophonetic* (#4) categories respectively. Specifically, 明 míng (bright) consists of two components 日 rì (sun) and 月 yuè (moon), and 漁/漁 yú (to fish) consists of the components 水 shuǐ (river; water) and 魚/魚 yú (fish).

Statistics on the characters used in modern Chinese show that the group with complex components make up about 97 percent of all characters, while there are only around 200 characters with single components. This discovery reveals a

feasible and efficient way to learn Chinese characters; one could master Chinese characters just by learning the roughly 200 single components (characters) and the ways of combining the components into characters. We will elaborate on this point in §4.6.

## 4.6 Learning Chinese characters

To learn Chinese characters efficiently, we can apply the strategy of “one dividing into two” to separate a character into two parts. Most characters consist of two components, one of which should be a radical. Let’s therefore begin by discussing some common radicals, which mostly come from the category of *pictographic characters*.

**Radicals** (部首 bùshǒu) are semantic parts indicating the broad semantic category and semantic relatedness of characters. Since radicals categorize and define the meaning of characters, knowing the meaning of radicals is very helpful for learning characters. For instance, if you know the character 青 qīng (green) and also some common radicals, then you may learn more characters as below:

- 清 qīng (clear) with a 氵 radical which is from the character 水 shuǐ (water), meaning *clear*, as in *clear water*;
- 晴 qīng (sunny) with a 日 rì (sun) radical, meaning *sunny*, as in *sunny day*;
- 情 qīng (feeling) with a 忄 radical, which is from the character 心 xīn (heart), indicating that emotion relates to the heart;
- 请/請 qǐng (to ask) with a 言 yán radical for the simplified character, which is from the character 言 yán (word), indicating the action *ask* relates to word;
- 睛 jīng (eyeball) with a 目 mù (eye) radical, which is often used with 眼 yǎn (eye; also with the 目 mù (eye) radical) as in 眼睛 yǎnjīng (eye);
- 精 jīng (refined; energy) with a 糸 mǐ (rice) radical, originally meaning *fine rice*;
- 菁 jīng (a kind of flower) with a 艹 cǎo (grass) radical from the character 草 cǎo (grass), indicating the category of plant; and
- 婧 jīng (slender [woman]) with a 女 nǚ (female) radical, meaning slender and virtuous (particularly when referring to a woman).

Once a learner knows the meanings of radicals, they may be able to guess, or be prompted to remember, the meaning of other characters. This is exemplified by the eight characters above, which have the same form 青 qīng (green) as the phonetic part but different radicals.

Conversely, if a learner sees several particular characters sharing one radical, they could infer the general meaning of the characters from the semantic class of the radical. For example, the following characters all share the same radical 言 yán (word) for the simplified character, which is from the character 言 yán (word):

- 请/請 qǐng (ask; request)
- 说/說 shuō (speak)
- 话/話 huà (word)

- 谈/談 tán (talk)
- 讨论/討論 tǎolùn (discuss)

One may guess the general meaning of the characters above, which are in the semantic class related to *word*.

**Alert!**

*Pictophonetic* characters, which are widely used in modern Chinese, mark the semantic or phonetic classes as mentioned above; however, they do not provide a precise phonetic or semantic value. The example of 青 qīng (green), which is the phonetic element, shows that the pronunciation of the eight characters is different, even though their sounds are similar and they share the same ending *-ing* (only tones and/or initials are different for some characters). Sometimes, the pronunciations are vastly different. Therefore, in each group of words with the same phonetic part, their generalization and variations will be different and need to be learned.

There are 201 radicals in total,<sup>2</sup> of which about 30–40 are commonly used. Once a learner knows the meanings of radicals, it becomes easier to determine the meaning of a character. To help beginning learners, we list some common radicals in Table 4.2, in addition to those mentioned above.

**Learn characters by dividing components:** Once a learner understands that characters consist of components, they can reduce the burden of memorization by breaking down complex characters into smaller components. This allows learners to learn a large number of characters efficiently. For example, the character 明 míng (bright) can be broken down into two components if one is familiar with the basic components:

明 míng (bright) = 日 rì (sun) + 月 yuè (moon)

With this example, three characters are learned. Even more characters can be learned by breaking down a more complex character. For example, one would memorize nine characters when breaking down the character 椅 yǐ (chair) to small components:

椅 yǐ (chair) = 木 mù (wood; *the radical*) + 奇 qí (strange; *phonetic part*);  
*formation: left-right*;

- 奇 qí (strange) = 大 dà (big) + 可 kě (can); *formation: top-bottom*;
  - 大 dà (big) = 一 yī (one) + 人 rén (human being); *formation: horizontal-vertical*, i.e., 人 (vertical) crosses 一 (horizontal); and
  - 可 kě (can) = 丁 dīng (man) + 口 kǒu (mouth); *formation: outside-inside*.

Conversely, if you encounter a complex character, say, 椅 yǐ (chair) but you have learned some simple characters like 木 mù (wood), 大 dà (big), and 可 kě

<sup>2</sup> *The Table of Indexing Chinese Character Components* 汉字部首表/漢字部首表 was formulated by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the State Language Commission. It has been implemented since May 2009.

**Table 4.2** Additional common radicals\*

Radicals	Pinyin	Meaning	Examples
人 (亼)	rén	human being	你 nǐ (you), 住 zhù (live), 从/從 cóng (follow; from)
刀 (刂)	dāo	knife	切 qiē (cut), 刚/剛 gāng (just), 到 dào (arrive)
土	tǔ	earth	在 zài (be at/in/on; exist), 场/場 chǎng (a large place used for a particular purpose)
口	kǒu	mouth	叫 jiào (call), 吃 chī (eat), 喝 hē (drink)
辵 <sup>†</sup>	chuò	move	进/進 jìn (enter), 过/過 guò (pass), 送 sòng (deliver; give), 远/遠 yuǎn (far), 近 jìn (near)
心 (忄)	xīn	heart	想 xiǎng (think), 懂 dǒng (understand), 忙 máng (busy)
手 (扌)	shǒu	hand	打 dǎ (beat), 换/換 huàn (exchange), 把 bǎ (hold)
肉 (月)	ròu (yuè)	flesh (moon)	肚 dù (belly; stomach), 有 yǒu (have), 期 qī (period)
木	mù	wood	林 lín (forest), 床 chuáng (bed), 机/機 jī (machine)
火 (火)	huǒ	fire	灯/燈 dēng (lamp), 热/熱 rè (hot)
贝/貝	bèi	cowrie (money)	贵/貴 guì (expensive), 财/財 cái (money; wealth)
足	zú	foot (movement)	跑 (run), 跳 tiào (jump)
金 (钅)	jīn	gold (metal)	钱/錢 qián (money), 铁/鐵 tiě (iron), 钟/鐘 zhōng (bell; clock)
食 (饣)	shí	eat; food	饭/飯 fàn (meal), 饿/餓 è (hungry)

\* If a variant of a radical is used in radical form, it is given in parentheses, e.g., (亼). The basic meaning is given first and the associated meaning is given in parentheses, e.g., gold (metal).

<sup>†</sup> This symbol is not a character and is only used as a radical in modern Chinese.

(can), you can combine these simple characters to write the complex character 椅 yǐ (chair). By applying this strategy, you will not only learn the meaning of more characters but also how to write them beautifully.

## 4.7 Writing Chinese characters

Chinese characters are formed by components, as discussed above, and each component is composed of different writing strokes. Therefore, once you have learned the basic principles of composition ordering of Chinese characters, writing

them will be less daunting. For example, the character 日 rì (sun), which is also the radical of the character 明 míng (bright), is formed by four strokes. The combination of components and the composition of strokes both follow a fixed order. The stroke order for writing the character 日 rì (sun) is shown in the diagrams, and an explanation is provided in the box below:

Writing the character 日 rì (sun):

- i. top-left down first
- ii. top-left to right-top then down
- iii. middle left to right in the box
- iv. bottom left to right to close and complete writing



The rule of thumb is to start at the top left corner and to end with the bottom right corner.

There are only eleven basic strokes, and including their variants, about thirty strokes in total. Since the rules of stroke order generally apply to all components, once you have learned a few, you should be able to figure out the order for new components and characters. Some common rules of stroke order include the following:

- From left to right: 人 rén (human being), 水 shuǐ (water)
- From top to bottom: 二 èr (two), 三 sān (three)
- Horizontal before vertical: 十 shí (ten)
- Middle before two sides: 小 xiǎo (small)
- From outside to inside: 月 yuè (moon; month)
- Inside before closing: 日 rì (sun; day)

Writing characters with the proper fixed stroke order makes learning characters easier and improves calligraphy. Conversely, incorrectly ordered characters are more difficult to write quickly and naturally, and harder to read.

**NOTE** Simplified (简体字/簡體字 jiǎntǐzì) and Traditional (繁體字 fántǐzì) characters are two variants of modern Chinese writing: the former is used in mainland China, and the latter is mainly used in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In general, the component composition relations and orders are kept the same in both systems. This underlines the advantage of learning characters by breaking them into components. For instance, the simplified 国 and the traditional 國 guó (country) share the same radical 匚 and have different components inside: a component/character 玉 yù (jade) in the former and a 或 huò (or) in the latter.

## 4.8 Summary

In this chapter, we began by distinguishing the difference between the terms **word** and **character**. The former is the minimal meaningful free unit in language, and the latter is a basic writing form in the Chinese writing system. One character tends to be a word in most cases; however, in a few cases, a single character is

meaningless. There are three primary ways of forming words: **reduplication** by repeating a word, **derivation** by adding a *prefix* or *suffix* to an existing meaningful unit, and **compounding** by combining two or more meaningful units to create new words. Since almost every single character carries a specific meaning, Chinese favors compounding to form new words.

We have also learned that there are four ways to form Chinese characters: **pictographic**, **ideographic (indicating-meaning)**, **associative**, and **pictophonetic** characters. Among the four, the *pictophonetic* characters, which contain clues to both the meaning and pronunciation of the characters, are currently the most common. An easy way to learn characters is to begin by learning the basic components, which have mostly evolved into **radicals**, and then to learn the ways to combine components of characters. Complex characters can then be broken into small components, and the components can be composed into characters by following the fixed writing order. Once learners know the general rules of forming Chinese characters, they can start to read with the knowledge of a couple hundred characters and write beautiful Chinese characters!

## 4.9 Exercises

**NOTE** You may encounter some characters or words that you do not know in the **Exercises** of this book. It would be very helpful to have a Chinese–English dictionary and an English–Chinese dictionary to refer to.

### I Divide words into small components

- i. Identify the prefix or suffixes of following words:

**Example**

**Given:** (1) 第一 dì-yī (first); (2) 美化 měihuà (beautify):

**Answer:** (1) 第 *dì* (prefix), 一 *yī* (one); (2) 美 *měi* (beautiful) + -化 *-huà* (suffix, or -ity)

- 老大 lǎodà (the oldest)
- 老外 lǎowài (foreigner)
- 老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher)
- 小说家/小說家 xiàoshuōjiā (novelist)
- 舞蹈家 wǔdǎojiā (dancer)
- 科学家/科學家 kēxuéjiā (scientist)
- 政治家 zhèngzhìjiā (politician)
- 服务员/服務員 fúwùyuán (waiter; attendant)
- 运动员/運動員 yùndòngyuán (athlete)
- 演员/演員 yǎnyuán (actor; actress)
- 售货员/售貨員 shòuhuòyuán (salesclerk; shop assistant)

- ii. Divide compounds into small components:

**Example**

**Given:** 图书馆/圖書館 túshūguǎn (library)

**Answer:** 图书馆/圖書館 túshūguǎn (library) = 图书/圖書 túshū (book) + 馆/館 guǎn (hall)

图书/圖書 túshū (book) = 图/圖 tú (picture; map) + 书/書 shū (book)

- 冰箱 bīngxiāng (refrigerator)
- 手机/手機 shǒujī (cell phone)
- 大小 dàxiǎo (size)
- 大学生/大學生 dàxuéshēng (college student)
- 办公室/辦公室 bàngōngshì (office)
- 信用卡 xìnyòngkǎ (credit card)
- 出租车/出租汽車 chūzū qìchē (taxi)
- 电子邮件/電子郵件 diànzì yóujìan (email)
- 高速公路 gāosù gōnglù (highway)

## II Writing practice

- Identify the radicals and their meanings for the following characters:

**Example**

**Given:** 妈/媽 mā (mother)

**Answer:** radical: 女 (woman)

- 河 hé
- 江 jiāng
- 饭/飯 fàn
- 饿/餓 è
- 鸡/雞 jī
- 鸭/鴨 yā
- 鹅/鵝 é
- 你 nǐ
- 他 tā
- 她 tā
- 妈/媽 mā
- 姓 xìng

- Determine how many strokes are in the following characters:

**Example**

**Given:** 妈/媽 mā (mother)

**Answer:** Six strokes for the simplified character and twelve strokes for the traditional character

- 月 yuè (moon)
- 手 shǒu (hand)
- 永 yǒng (forever)
- 渔/漁 yú (to fish)
- 跑 pǎo (run)
- 贵/貴 guì (expensive)

- Analyze the following characters in terms of their components and practice writing out the components in the order of their composition:

**Example**

**Given:** 妈/媽 mā (mother)

**Answer:** two components: 女, 马/馬

- 美 měi (beautiful)
- 林 lín (forest)
- 花 huā (flower)

4. 男 nán (male)
5. 意 yì (meaning)
6. 唱 chàng (sing)

### III Identification exercise

- i. Identify the radicals of the following characters and indicate the position of each radical in terms of its location in the character:

**Example**

**Given:** 妈/媽 mā (mother)

**Answer:** radical: 女, on the left of the character

1. 利 lì (sharp)
2. 照 zhào (shine)
3. 湖 hú (lake)
4. 草 cǎo (grass)
5. 树/樹 shù (tree)

- ii. Identify the phonetic parts of the following characters and find the differences in their pronunciations, if any:

**Example**

**Given:** 妈/媽 驴/罵 码/碼 嘴/嗎

**Answer:** 妈/媽 mā 驴/罵 mà 码/碼 mǎ 嘴/嗎 ma, phonetic part: 马/馬 mǎ

1. 盍 中 种/種 忠 衷
2. 桐 筒 铜/銅 洞 同
3. 王 皇 枢 狂 旺
4. 皇 凰 僖 惶 遑
5. 空 江 扛 贡/貢 红/紅



## Parts of speech

This unit introduces parts of speech in Chinese and their functions. To present both a broad overview and a closer inspection of individual features, the unit is divided into twelve chapters:

- Chapter 5: Introduction to parts of speech in Chinese
- Chapter 6: Nouns
- Chapter 7: Numbers
- Chapter 8: Measure words (classifiers)
- Chapter 9: Pronouns
- Chapter 10: Verbs
- Chapter 11: Modal verbs
- Chapter 12: Adjectives
- Chapter 13: Adverbs
- Chapter 14: Prepositions
- Chapter 15: Conjunctions
- Chapter 16: Particles



# 5

## Introduction to parts of speech in Chinese

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know parts of speech in Chinese and their functions
- ★ To learn how to differentiate Chinese parts of speech

As we know, there are numerous words in a language. Words can be categorized into different groups for the purpose of efficiency, just as the infinite number of whole numbers can be categorized into two groups: *odd numbers* and *even numbers*. Traditionally, Chinese words are also divided into the two large groups below, based on their meanings and functions in a sentence.

1. **Content words** display specific meanings and can serve as the main element of a sentence: *subject*, *object*, or *predicate*. This group can be further divided into two subcategories:
  - i. **nominals**, such as nouns and pronouns, which mainly serve as the *subject* or *object*;
  - ii. **predicates**, such as verbs and adjectives, which mainly serve as the *predicate*.
2. **Function words**, such as adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions, show the grammatical meaning or mood of a sentence; however, they cannot be the three main elements of a sentence previously mentioned.

The two groups are summarized in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1** Functions of Chinese parts of speech

Group	Parts of speech		In sentence
Content Words 实词/實詞 shící	Nominals	noun, pronoun, number, measure word	mainly <i>subject</i> , <i>object</i>
	Predicates	verb, modal verb, adjective	mainly <i>predicate</i>
Function Words 虚词/虛詞 xūcí	adverb, conjunction, preposition, particle		grammatical meaning

This brief categorization of words can help us not only to understand the corresponding relationship between the parts of speech and the main elements in a sentence, but also to understand and make sentences. Example (1) illustrates this point:

(1)	Subject	Predicate	Object
	小明	学	中文。
	小明	學	中文。
	Xiǎomíng	xué	Zhōngwén.
	Xiaoming	study	Chinese
	noun	verb	noun

Nevertheless, this categorization of words only outlines the roles of words relating to the core elements in a sentence. In order to know what kinds of words can be in the substantive or functional category, we must determine whether certain words share the same property. Then we can assign words to specific parts of speech in accordance with their uses and functions in a sentence.

### How do we categorize the words' parts of speech?

To determine whether a word belongs to a certain part of speech in Chinese, we cannot rely on the forms of the words because Chinese words lack form changes (see §2.3). Rather, Chinese words fall into different categories based on the *function* of the word; specifically, the way a word connects with other words and its functional position or, in other words, as the subject or predicate in a sentence. A common practical way of determining a word's part of speech is to select a word as the tester. For instance, the adverb 很 hěn (very) is often used as one of the testers to distinguish nouns, adjectives, and verbs by linguists:

- **Nouns** cannot be used with 很 hěn (very) before them, for example, \*很学生/很學生 \*hěn xuésheng (*lit. very student*)
- **Adjectives** can be used with 很 hěn (very), for example, 很好 hěn hǎo (*very good*)
- **Verbs** mostly cannot be used with 很 hěn (very) in front of them, for example, \*很学习/很學習 \*hěn xuéxí (*lit. very study*); however, verbs expressing mental activities can, for example, 很喜欢/很喜歡 hěn xǐhuan (*like very much*)

Fortunately, English is in this respect the same as Chinese: the adverb “very” can also be placed before an adjective but cannot be placed before a noun or a verb. The difference is that English has other ways of determining a word's part of speech, such as form changes, for example, *beauty* (N), *beautiful* (Adj), and *beautify* (V), but Chinese has to rely on the functions of words exclusively (see §2.3).

Based on word functions, Chinese words can be divided into eleven parts of speech (i.e., categories) in this book. Table 5.2 outlines the most useful parts of speech for most contexts; however, it should be noted that the number of parts of speech varies between textbooks.

We will guide your exploration of each of the eleven Chinese parts of speech in the following chapters.

**Table 5.2** Chinese parts of speech

Name	Examples	Chapter
<b>Nouns</b>	学生/學生 xuésheng (student); 朋友 péngyou (friend); 美国/美國 Měiguó (USA); 明天 míngtiān (tomorrow); 星期 xīngqī (week)	6
<b>Numbers</b>	零 líng (zero); 一 yī (one); 二 èr (two); 百 bǎi (hundred); 千 qiān (thousand)	7
<b>Measure words (MW)</b>	个/個 gè (a general MW); 张/張 zhāng (for flat things); 本 běn (for books); 次 cì (occurrence; time); 遍 biàn ([for actions] one time)	8
<b>Pronouns</b>	我 wǒ (I; me); 你 nǐ (you); 他 tā (he; him); 我们/我們 wǒmen (we; us); 这/這 zhè (this); 谁/誰 shéi (who); 什么/什麼 shénme (what)	9
<b>Verbs</b>	说/說 shuō (say); 写/寫 xiě (write); 学/學 xué (study); 是 shì (be); 知道 zhīdao (know); 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like)	10
<b>Modal verbs</b>	能 néng (can); 应该/應該 yīnggāi (should); 要 yào (will); 得 děi (should; must)	11
<b>Adjectives</b>	好 hǎo (good); 快 kuài (fast); 好看 hǎokàn (good-looking); 高兴/高興 gāoxìng (happy)	12
<b>Adverbs</b>	很 hěn (very); 也 yě (also); 都 dōu (all); 就 jiù (then); 又 yòu (again); 已经/已經 yǐjīng (already); 也许/也許 yěxǔ (probably)	13
<b>Prepositions</b>	在 zài (at/in/on); 从/從 cóng (from); 给/給 gěi (to); 比 bǐ (than)	14
<b>Conjunctions</b>	和 hé (and); 或者 huòzhě (or); 因为/因為...所以 yīnwei...suǒyǐ (because...)	15
<b>Particles</b>	<b>Structural Particles</b>	的 de; 地 de; 得 de
	<b>Dynamic Particles</b>	了 le; 着/著 zhe; 过/過 guo
	<b>Modal Particles</b>	吗/嗎 ma; 呢 ne; 吧 ba

## 5.1 Summary

This chapter has introduced the **parts of speech of Chinese**. Traditionally, Chinese words are divided into two groups – **content words** and **function words** – based on their meaning and function in a sentence. The former group can be further divided into two subcategories. The first subcategory is **nominals**, such as nouns and pronouns, which mainly serve as the subject or object. The second subcategory is **predicates**, such as verbs and adjectives, which mainly serve as the predicate in a sentence; this group includes function words such as adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and particles, which display the grammatical meaning or mood of a sentence. Since Chinese words lack form changes, determining whether a word belongs to a certain part of speech is primarily based on the function of the word; specifically, the way a word connects with other words and its functional position in a sentence. Based on word function, Chinese words are divided into eleven parts of speech (i.e., categories) in this book: nouns, numbers, measure words, pronouns, verbs, modal verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and particles.

# 6

## Nouns

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the subcategories of Chinese nouns and their differences in meanings and uses
- ★ To know the affixes of Chinese nouns and learn how to use them
- ★ To learn the functions of nouns and how to use them in sentences

**Nouns** are the names of things and the basic building blocks of language. For this “naming” purpose, nouns in all languages are the same. However, in grammar, languages differ in how nouns are used. There are two prominent differences between Chinese nouns and English nouns:

- Most Chinese nouns need to be modified by measure words (MW) when used with a number.
- There is no distinction between singular and plural in Chinese nouns, as mentioned in §2.3.

### 6.1 Definition and features of Chinese nouns

- **Definition:** Nouns name people, things (including events), abstract concepts, places, and time.
- **Syntactic (associative) features:**
  - Most nouns can be modified by a numeral such as 一 yī (one) and measure words, such as 个/個 gè and 本 běn:
    - 一个学生/一個學生 yí ge xuésheng (one student)
    - 本书/一本書 yì běn shū (one book)
  - Nouns cannot be modified by adverbs such as 不 bù (not) and 都 dōu (totally; all). So, the following expressions are incorrect:  
\*不现在/不現在 \*bù xiànzài (*lit.* not now) as in (1c) below:

- (1) a. 我现在可以看电视吗？  
我現在可以看電視嗎？  
Wǒ xiànzài kěyě kàn diànshì ma?  
May I watch TV now?

- b. 现在不行。Xiànzài bù xíng.  
現在不行。

- c. \*不现在 \*bù xiànzài  
\*不現在  
Not now.

\*都老师/都老師 \*dōu lǎoshī (*lit. all teacher*) as in (2b) below:

- (2) a. 老师都是中国人。Lǎoshī dōu shì Zhōngguó rén.  
老師都是中國人。
- b. \*都老师是中国人 \*dōu lǎoshī shì Zhōngguó rén  
\*都老師是中國人  
All teachers are Chinese.

## 6.2 The types of Chinese nouns

Since an important feature of Chinese nouns concerns whether they can be used with measure words, we divide Chinese nouns into six categories according to their meanings and associative function with measure words as shown in Table 6.1.

The following characteristics further describe the six categories of nouns in Table 6.1:

- The first three categories (Common, Collective, and Abstract nouns) require certain types of measure words.
- The fourth category (Proper nouns) names unique individuals, which cannot therefore be counted or used with numerals or measure words, although there are a few exceptions in particular contexts, for example, (3).

- (3) 有两个长城, 一个是秦时的长城, 一个是现在的长城。  
有兩個長城, 一個是秦時的長城, 一個是現在的長城。

Yǒu liǎng ge Chángchéng, yí ge shì Qín shí de Chángchéng, yí ge shì xiànzài de Chángchéng.

There are two Great Walls, one was in the Qin dynasty and the other is in the present time.

The phrase 两个长城/兩個長城 liǎng ge Chángchéng (two Great Walls) describes the two very different images of the Great Wall in different periods.

- The last two categories (Spatial and Temporal nouns) cannot be used with measure words, e.g., \*一个前面/\*一個前面 \* yí ge qiánmian (*lit. one front*) and \*一个今天/\*一個今天 \*yí ge jīntiān (*lit. one today*),<sup>1</sup> but they often serve as the subject in a sentence. This is different from English. For example, (4):

<sup>1</sup> In some special contexts, some temporal nouns (time words), such as 星期一 Xīngqīyī (Monday) – 星期天 Xīngqīntiān (Sunday) can be used with measure words. For example, 这个月有五个星期一/这个月有五个星期一 Zhè ge yuè yǒu wǔ ge Xīngqīyī (There are five Mondays this month). The use of 星期一 Xīngqīyī (Monday) in this sentence is more like an individual entity rather than a time word.

**Table 6.1** Types of Chinese nouns

Category	Meaning	Examples	With MW
<b>Common nouns</b>	Names of individuals or similar types of people or things	人 rén (human being) 山 shān (mountain) 自行车/自行車 zìxíngchē (bike) 空气/空氣 kōngqì (air) 铁/鐵 tiě (iron)	Yes
<b>Collective nouns</b>	Names for a collection of more than one individual	父母 fùmǔ (lit. father and mother; parents) 子女 zǐnǚ (lit. sons and daughters; children) 亲友/親友 qīnyǒu (relatives and friends)	Yes
<b>Abstract nouns</b>	Names for abstract concepts	水平 shuǐpíng (level) 名声/名聲 míngshēng (reputation) 爱情/愛情 àiqíng (love)	Yes
<b>Proper nouns</b>	Unique names for specific individuals, including people, places, and institutions	孔子 Kǒngzǐ (Confucius) 华盛顿/華盛頓 Huáshèngdūn (Washington) 北京 Běijīng (Beijing) 美国/美國 Měiguó (USA)	No <sup>*</sup>
<b>Spatial nouns</b>	Names for concepts associated with direction or location	Direction/location	No
		Proper nouns (names for specific locations)	中国/中國 Zhōngguó (China) 纽约/紐約 Niǔyuē (New York)
		Common nouns (associated with a place)	图书馆/圖書館 túshūguǎn (library) 学校/學校 xuéxiào (school) 饭馆/飯館 fānguǎn (restaurant)
<b>Temporal nouns</b>	Names for temporal points or periods	今天 jīntiān (today) 星期一 Xīngqīyī (Monday) 现在/現在 xiànzài (now)	No

<sup>\*</sup> with exceptions.

- (4) 前面有一条河。  
前面有一條河。  
Qiánmian yǒu yì tiáo hé.  
There is a river in the front.
- (5) 明天下雨。  
Míngtiān xià-yǔ.  
It will rain tomorrow.

You will see more examples of special nouns (place words) in Chapter 26 and temporal nouns (time words) in §18.1.1 and §21.2.3, respectively. The next section will explore what kind of nouns can be associated with certain measure words.

### 6.3 Nouns and measure words (classifiers)

When Chinese nouns occur with a number, certain measure words are typically attached to a particular group of nouns, which share the same property. Based on the relationships between the nouns and the measure words, the first three categories of nouns (Common, Collective, and Abstract) can be further categorized into the following four subclasses.

i. **Countable nouns** (a type of **common noun**) are nouns that can be counted individually. In grammar, these nouns require a specific measure word or individual measure words when they are being counted. The individual measure word generally indicates the unit of counting, as can be seen in the following examples:

- 三个老师/三個老師 sān ge lǎoshī (three teachers)
- 三本书/三本書 sān běn shū (three books)
- 三支笔/三支筆 sān zhī bì (three pens)
- 三辆车/三輛車 sān liàng chē (three cars)
- 三张桌子/三張桌子 sān zhāng zhuōzi (three tables/desks)

Some events and activities can also be named by countable nouns:

- 三部电影/三部電影 sān bù diànyǐng (three movies)
- 三通电话/三通電話 sān tōng diànhuà (three calls)

ii. **Uncountable nouns** (also called **mass nouns** or a type of **common noun**): cannot be counted individually and have to be counted by a standard measure or by a container. In grammar, these nouns do not have corresponding individual measure words; rather, they can be used with standard measures and containers.

- Measure words indicate **length**, **capacity**, and **weight** measures:
  - **length:** 三尺布 sān chǐ bù (three *chi* of cloth; 1 *chi*  $\approx$  13.12 inch)
  - **capacity:** 三加仑水/三加侖水 sān jiālún shuǐ (three **gallons** of water)
  - **weight:** 三斤肉 sān jīn ròu (three *jin* of meat; 1 *jin*  $\approx$  1.1 lb)
- Measure words are borrowed from container nouns, such as 碗 wǎn (bowl) and 杯 bēi (cup), in the following examples. These measure words measure the quantity of the object they contain:

- 三碗水 sān wǎn shuǐ (three bowls of water)
- 三杯咖啡 sān bēi kāfēi (three cups of coffee)
- Non-quantified measure words such as 点儿/點兒 diǎnr (a little) or 些 xiē (some) as below:
  - 一点儿水/一點兒水 yì diǎnr shuǐ (a little bit of water)
  - 一些药/一些藥 yì xiē yào (some medicine)

**TIP** Mass nouns in English also require *measure words* to count. Both languages have a similar strategy of adding a “measure word” between number and noun for some nouns (generally mass nouns). More examples in English are given below for Chinese mass nouns: *a/one bottle of beer; two sheets of paper; three pieces of cake; four lumps of sugar, five schools of fish*.

iii. **Collective nouns** are a collection of individuals and thus cannot be modified by individual measure words; rather, they require the following measure words:

- collective measure words such as 群 qún (crowd) and 批 pī (batch):
  - 一群子女 yì qún zǐnǚ (a group of children)
  - 两批纸张/兩批紙張 liǎng pī zhǐzhāng (two batches of paper)
- non-quantified measure words such as 些 xiē (some):
  - 一些亲友/一些親友 yì xiē qīnyǒu (some relatives and friends)
- **temporary measure words** are words that were originally nouns and can be understood as a kind of temporary container such as 桌 zhuō (table), that is, a tableful of food is the amount of food that can be served (i.e., contained) on that table:
  - 一桌饭菜/一桌飯菜 yì zhuō fàncaì (a tableful of food)

iv. **Abstract nouns** name concepts and can be modified by the following:

- **kind measure words**, such as 种/種 zhǒng (kind) and 类/類 lèi (type):
  - 一种道德/一種道德 yì zhǒng dàodé (a kind of moral)
  - 一类矛盾/一類矛盾 yí lèi máodùn (a type of contradiction)
- **non-quantified measure words**, such as 点儿/點兒 diǎnr (a bit) and 些 xiē (some):
  - 一点印象/一點印象 yì diǎn yìnxiàng (a little impression)
  - 一些观念/一些觀念 yì xiē guānniàn (some concepts)

## 6.4 Nouns: singular and plural

Chinese nouns have no distinction of number by themselves. For example, 书/書 shū can mean “book” or “books,” as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2. This contrasts with English, which makes the distinction between *singular* and *plural* obligatory for most nouns. A few examples are as follows:

- 人 rén person/people
- 电影/電影 diànyǐng movie/movies
- 飞机/飛機 fēijī plane/planes

Whether a Chinese noun carries a *singular* or *plural* meaning completely depends on the context. If there is a need to specify the noun as either *singular* or *plural*, one typically adds additional modifying words before the noun.

NOTE 天 tiān (day) and 课/課 kè (lesson) are special nouns and do not need an MW (see §8.2). For singular nouns:

- add 一 yī (one) and a specific measure word:
  - 一天 yì tiān (one day)
  - 一课/一課 yí kè (one lesson)
  - 一个人/一個人 yí ge rén (one person)
  - 一张纸/一張紙 yì zhāng zhǐ (one piece of paper)

For plural nouns:

- add 一些 yìxiē (some), such as 一些人 yìxiē rén (some people);
- add 很多 hěnduō or 许多/許多 xǔduō (many), such as 许多人/許多人 xǔduō rén (many people); or
- add the plural suffix -们/們 -men for human beings:
  - 朋友们/朋友們 péngyǒumen (friends)
  - 学生们/學生們 xuéshengmen (students)

### TIP Do's and Don'ts for [noun + -们/們 -men]

- **Do's:** It is used most often to address a particular group such as: 女士们, 先生们/女士們, 先生們 ... Nǚshìmen, xiānshengmen ... (Ladies and gentlemen ...).
- **Don'ts:** It cannot be used with **non-human nouns**, such as \*狗们/\*狗們 \*gǒumen (lit. dogs) (except for metaphoric uses).
- **Do's:** It can be used with 人 rén (human being) as in 人们 rénmen (human beings):
- **Don'ts:** It cannot be used with other monosyllabic nouns:

monosyllable (incorrect)	disyllable (correct)
*官们/官們 *guānmen	官员们/官員們 guānyuánmen (officers)
*贼们/賊們 *zéimen	小偷们/小偷們 xiǎotōumen (thieves)

- **Don'ts:** It cannot occur in contexts where a plural meaning is already expressed by other elements, such as numeral and quantifier words like 许多 xǔduō or 很多 hěnduō (many):

Incorrect	Correct
*三个老师们/三個老師們 *sān ge lǎoshīmen	三个老师/三個老師 sān ge lǎoshī (three teachers)
*许多学生们学中文 *許多學生們學中文	许多学生学中文/許多學生學中文。
*xǔduō xuéshengmen xué Zhōngwén	Xǔduō xuésheng xué Zhōngwén. (Many students study Chinese.)

NOTE A few monosyllabic can be reduplicated to mean “every,” which carries a plural meaning in Chinese, and therefore no measure word is used, as in examples (6) and (7).

- (6) 人人都喜欢看电影。  
人人都喜歡看電影。  
Rénrén dōu xǐhuan kàn diànyǐng.  
Everyone likes watching movies.
- (7) 小明天天都来上课。  
小明天天都來上課。  
Xiǎomíng tiāntiān dōu lái shàng-kè.  
Xiaoming comes to class every day.

## 6.5 Nouns: prefixes and suffixes

Unlike English, which has many noun prefixes such as *sub-* as in *subset* and *subdivision* and suffixes such as *-ness* as in *happiness*, Chinese has no fully fledged prefixes and suffixes. Nevertheless, the following prefixes and suffixes can be used to mark the status of **nouns** in Chinese:

- 吃 chī (eat) is a verb, but it becomes a noun with the prefix 小 xiǎo as in 小吃 xiǎochī (refreshment).
- 骗/騙 piàn (cheat) is a verb, but it becomes a noun with the suffix 子 zǐ as in 骗子/騙子 piànzǐ (swindler).

More examples and explanations follow.

### ► 6.5.1 Prefixes: 老 lǎo- and 小 xiǎo-

#### ■ Prefix 老 lǎo-

If you look at the translation of the English phrase “old dogs learn new tricks” in Chinese, you may see the following sentence:

- (8) 老狗学新把戏。  
老狗學新把戲。  
Lǎo gǒu xué xīn bǎxì.

You may therefore understand the meaning of the word **老** lǎo to be “old.” You may also hear a Chinese person commend your Chinese to others by saying:

- (9) 哇, 这个**老**外会说中文 !  
哇, 這個**老**外會說中文 !  
Wā, zhèi ge lǎowài huì shuō Zhōngwén!  
Wow, this foreigner can speak Chinese!

While enjoying the compliment, however, you may grumble that you are not “old.” The original meaning of the character **老** lǎo is “old”; however, **老外** lǎowài (*lit. old outside; foreigner*) does not contain any meaning of “old,” as is also the case with **老师/老師** lǎoshī (teacher). When **老** lǎo is used as a prefix, it loses the meaning of “old” in most contexts and instead takes on the following:

- a meaning of familiarity or seniority or respect:
  - **老师/老師** lǎoshī (teacher)
  - **老爸** lǎobà (father)
  - **老妈/老媽** lǎomā (mother)
  - **老乡/老鄉** lǎoxiāng (fellow villager)
  - **老板/老闆** lǎobǎn (boss)
  - **老张/老張** lǎo Zhāng (Old Zhang [last name])
  - **老大** lǎodà ([in order of seniority] the oldest) and **老小** lǎoxiǎo (the youngest)
- a casual and informal meaning:
  - **老外** lǎowài (foreigner)
  - **老婆** lǎopó (wife)
  - **老公** lǎogōng (husband)
  - **老汉/老漢** lǎohàn (old man)
- animals:
  - **老虎** lǎohǔ (tiger)
  - **老鼠** lǎoshǔ (mouse)
  - **老鹰/老鷹** lǎoyīng (eagle)

**TIP**

**Learn Chinese noun prefixes word by word.** Chinese noun prefixes such as **老** lǎo- occur frequently, but they cannot be randomly applied to form new words. Instead, they need to be learned word by word. For instance, **老** lǎo- in **老弟** lǎodi (young fellow) is a noun prefix, but if you put it before **朋友** péngyou (friend), it can only be an adjectival modifier meaning “old” or “long-standing” as in **老朋友** lǎo péngyou (old friend). Similarly, mouse is always **老鼠** lǎoshǔ even if it is just born and contains the prefix **老** lǎo. But if you put **老** lǎo before **猫/貓** māo (cat), it cannot be a prefix and instead can only refer to an old cat.

### ■ Prefix 小 xiǎo-

The original meaning of the prefix was “small,” for example 小河 xiǎohé (small river), but 小说/小說 xiǎoshuō (lit. small speak) is not “small talk”; rather, it means “novel; fiction.” Nevertheless, its original meaning can still be seen as a prefix that commonly refers to the following:

- ◆ smallness, or a connotation of informality:
  - 小孩 xiǎohái (child)
  - 小意思 xiǎoyìsì (small token of one's regard)
  - 小吃 xiǎochī (refreshments)
  - 小費/小費 xiǎofèi (tip)
  - 小名 xiǎomíng (nickname)
- ◆ receptivity, politeness, or familiarity:
  - 小姐 xiǎojiě (miss)
  - 小弟 xiǎodi (your little brother [self-address used among friends])
  - 小伙子 xiǎohuǒzi (young man)
  - 小两口/小兩口 xiǎoliāngkǒu (young couple)

**NOTE** There is a prefix, 阿 ā- that is used with human beings in southern China that indicates a close personal relationship when used in the following contexts:

- (i) used before a last name as 阿陈/阿陳 ā Chén, or a first name as 阿华/阿華 ā Huá;
- (ii) to address relatives as 阿妹 āmèi (younger sister); 阿哥 āgē (older brother); 阿爸 ābà (dad); 阿姨 āyí (aunty); and the last one 阿姨 āyí (aunty) is a popular noun throughout China that refers to any woman of similar age to one's parents.

### ► 6.5.2 Suffixes 子 -zi, 头/頭 -tou, and 儿/兒 -er

Unlike the two prefixes above, the common suffixes 子 -zi, 头/頭 -tou, and 儿/兒 -er are read with a neutral tone, and they do not carry their original meaning when they are used as suffixes. Thus, we need to learn which nouns are used with each of these three suffixes.

**TIP** When 子 -zi is used as a suffix, it is always used in a neutral tone. If 子 is read in the third tone, as zǐ, then it is not a suffix and carries its substantive meaning. For instance, 子 zǐ in 孔子 Kǒngzǐ (Confucius) and 妻子 qī zǐ (wife and son) are not suffixes; however, the neutral tone 子 -zi in 妻子 qīzi (wife) is a suffix.

### ■ Suffix 子 -zi

The original meaning of this character is “child” and it is read as zǐ; however, it carries neither that meaning nor the tone when it is used as a suffix.

- 儿子/兒子 érzi (son)
- 骗子/騙子 piànzi (swindler)
- 肚子 dùzi (abdomen)
- 脑子/腦子 nǎozi (brain)
- 椅子 yǐzi (chair)
- 本子 běnzi (notebook)

### ■ Suffix 头/頭 -tou

The original meaning of the character was “head,” and it is read as *tóu*; however, it retains neither that meaning nor tone as a *suffix*.

- 木头/木頭 mùtou (wood)
- 石头/石頭 shítou (stone)
- 骨头/骨頭 gǔtou (bone)
- 罐头/罐頭 guàntou (can; jar)
- 前头/前頭 qiántou (front)
- 上头/上頭 shàngtou (above)
- 念头/念頭 niàntou (idea)

### ■ Suffix: 儿/兒 -er

The original meaning of this character was “son,” and it is read as *ér*; however, it does not have this meaning as a *suffix*. It is pronounced as a retroflex, which cannot be a syllabic unit and must be merged with the preceding syllable to form a new syllable by dropping the *e* in *-er* in *pinyin*.

- 花 huā (flower) + 儿/兒 er = 花儿/花兒 huār (flower)
- 盒 hé (box) + 儿/兒er = 盒儿/盒兒 hérr (box)
- 鸟儿/鳥兒 niǎor (bird)
- 盖儿/蓋兒 gār (cap; lid)
- 水饺儿/水餃兒 shuǐjiāor (dumpling)

**NOTE** The words with the retroflex *suffix* 儿/兒 -er are more popular in northern dialects, especially the Beijing dialect. Since the *suffix* 儿/兒 -er is used predominantly in spoken form, there are significant variations in its usage. Southern Chinese rarely uses it and mostly does so with words that only have single syllables.

When the ending of the preceding syllable is a nasal sound, such as *n* or *ng*, the nasal sound should be dropped off in speech.

- 信 xìn (letter) + 儿/兒 er → 信儿/信兒 xìnr (message)
- 方 fāng + 儿/兒 er → (药) 方儿/(藥)方兒 fānr (prescription)
- 空 kòng (empty) + 儿/兒 er → 空儿/空兒 kònr (free time)
- 明 míng (bright) + 儿/兒 er → 明儿/明兒 mínr (tomorrow)
- 冰棍 bīngùn + 儿/兒 er → 冰棍儿/冰棍兒 bīnggùr (popsicle)

**Please be aware:** in certain contexts, you cannot drop 子 -zi, 头/頭 -tou, or 儿/兒 -er as a *suffix* of a noun, or it may cause misunderstanding. For instance, if you introduce your boss to someone in a casual manner, you should say the sentence in (10) but not (11):

(10) 这是我的头儿。

這是我的頭兒。

Zhè shì wǒ de tóur.

This is my boss.

(11) 这是我的头。

這是我的頭。

Zhè shì wǒ de tóu.

This is my head.

头/頭 tóu means “head” as in (11); however, 头儿/頭兒 tóur with the suffix -儿/-兒 -er means “boss,” as in (10) and is used mostly in colloquial conversations. As such, if you omit the suffixes in some contexts, the remaining part could:

- i. be understandable but odd, especially in spoken Mandarin, such as:
  - 桌 zhuō vs. 桌子 zhuōzi (table); i.e., it is odd to say: ?這是我的桌 / ?這是我的桌 ?zhè shì wǒ de zhuō (this is my table), though it is understandable. The following two cases make sense too:
    - 舌 shé vs. 舌头/舌頭 shétou (tongue);
    - 花 huā vs. 花儿/花兒 huār (flower).
- ii. not be recognized as a full word, such as:
  - 饺/餃 jiǎo vs. 饺子/餃子 jiǎozi (dumpling); i.e., you must say 饺子/餃子 jiǎozi (dumpling);
  - 馒/饅 mán vs. 馒头/饅頭 mántou (Chinese steamed bread);
  - 方 fāng vs. 方儿/方兒 fār (prescription); or
- iii. have a different meaning, such as:
  - 瘦 shòu ([adj.] lean) vs. 瘦子 shòuzi (lean person);
  - 甜 tián ([adj.] sweet) vs. 甜头/甜頭 tiántou (sweet taste [of power; success]; benefit);
  - 画/畫 huà ([v.] to paint) vs. 画儿/畫兒 huàr (painting; drawing).

## 6.6 Nouns in sentences

Chinese nouns mainly function as the subject, object, or attributive in a sentence.

■ **Subject**, such as 小明 Xiǎomíng ([proper n.] a person's name), 春天 chūntiān ([temporal n.] spring), and 这儿/這兒 zhèr ([spatial n.] here) in the sentences in (12)–(14), respectively:

(12) 小明学习。

小明學習。

Xiǎomíng xuéxí.

Xiaoming studies.

(13) 春天来了。

春天來了。

Chūntiān lái le.

The spring comes.

(14) **这儿**有很多书。

**這兒**有很多書。

Zhèr yǒu hěn duō shū.

There are many books **here**.

■ **Object**, such as 中文 Zhōngwén ([proper n.] Chinese), 星期一 Xīngqīyī ([temporal n.] Monday), and 北边/北邊 běibian ([spatial n.] north) in the sentences in (15)–(17) respectively:

(15) **老师教中文。**

老師教**中文**。

Lǎoshī jiāo Zhōngwén.

The teacher teaches **Chinese**.

(16) 今天是**星期一**。

Jīntiān shì Xīngqīyī.

Today is **Monday**.

(17) 教室在学校**北边**。

教室在學校**北邊**。

Jiàoshì zài xuéxiào běibian.

The classroom is in the **north side** of the school.

■ **Attributive** (a noun that modifies another noun in a sentence), such as 中国/中國 Zhōngguó ([proper n.] China), 秋天 qiūtiān ([temporal n.] autumn), and 前边/前邊 qiánbian ([spatial n.] front) in the sentences in (18)–(20):

(18) 小亮喜欢**中国**画儿。

小亮喜歡**中國**畫兒。

Xiaoliang xǐhuan Zhōngguó huàr.

Xiaoliang likes Chinese paintings.

(19) **秋天**的景色很美丽。

**秋天**的景色很美麗。

Qiūtiān de jǐngsè hěn měilì.

The scenery of **autumn** is beautiful.

(20) 小亮的宿舍在**前边**的楼里。

小亮的宿舍在**前邊**的樓裏。

Xiaoliang de sùshè zài qiánbian de lóu li.

Xiaoliang's dormitory is in the building **ahead**.

■ **Adverbial** (a noun that modifies a verb in a sentence); this function of nouns is limited to temporal nouns such as 明天 míngtiān (tomorrow) in (21) and spatial nouns such as 北京 Běijīng (Beijing) in (22), although spatial nouns are less frequently used in this way.

- (21) 小明明天来学校。  
小明明天來學校。  
Xiǎomíng míngtiān lái xuéxiào.  
Xiaoming will come to school tomorrow.

- (22) 我们北京见。  
我們北京見。  
Wǒmen Běijīng jiàn.  
Let's see each other in Beijing.

**NOTE Nouns functioning as verbs.** Chinese nouns can also function as the predicate in a sentence. The most frequently used nouns for this function are **time** (day) as in (23), a **noun phrase giving quantitative information** as in (24), **weather** as in (25), or a **native place** as in (26) below. A linking verb **是 shì** (be) can usually be added between the subject and the noun, although it may indicate a focus in some contexts. For example, with **是 shì** (be) in (23), it is to emphasize that today's day is Friday without referring to other days.

- (23) 今天(是)星期五。Jīntiān (shì) Xīngqīwǔ. (It's Friday today.)
- (24) 我今年(是)十八岁/我今年(是)十八歲。  
Wǒ jīnnián (shì) shíbā suì. (I'm eighteen years old this year.)
- (25) 昨天(是)晴天。Zuótiān (shì) qíngtiān. (It was a sunny day yesterday.)
- (26) 小明(是)北京人。Xiǎomíng (shì) Běijīng rén. (Xiaoming is a Beijinger.)

## 6.7 Summary

In this chapter, we have defined **Chinese nouns** as the names of things and categorized them into six groups: **common**, **collective**, **abstract**, **proper**, **spatial**, and **temporal**. We have learned that specific measure words are needed for certain groups of nouns when they are used with numbers. We have also discussed two prefixes, **老** lǎo- and **小** xiǎo-, and three suffixes, **子** -zi, **头/頭** -tou, and **儿/兒** -er, of nouns, as well as the functions of Chinese nouns in sentences, which mainly serve as the subject or object.

## 6.8 Exercises

### I Translate the following phrases into Chinese

You may use either pinyin or characters, by either handwriting or typing. Many of the words have appeared in this chapter, but you may use an English-Chinese dictionary for assistance.

1. one person
2. two students

3. three teachers
4. four books
5. an apple
6. five sheets of paper
7. six cultures
8. many Chinese people
9. some suggestions
10. ladies and gentlemen

**II Find the nouns in the following sentences and identify their functions as either subject (sub.) or object (obj.):**

1. Wǒ shì Měiguó rén. (I am an American.)
2. Xuésheng xuéxí Zhōngwén. (Students study Chinese.)
3. Lǎoshī xǐhuan kàn diànyǐng. (Teachers like watching movies.)
4. Jīntiān Xīngqītiān. (Today is Sunday.)

**III Identify the measure words (MW), prefixes (pref.), and suffixes (suf.) in the following sentences:**

1. 阿爸喜欢看书/阿爸喜歡看書。  
Ābà xǐhuan kàn-shū. (Dad likes reading books.)
2. 老张有三个孩子/老張有三個孩子。  
Lǎo Zhāng yǒu sān ge háizi. (Old Zhang has three children.)
3. 很多小孩儿有小名/很多小孩兒有小名。  
Hěnduō xiǎoháir yǒu xiǎomíng. (Many children have nicknames.)
4. 老王的老婆喜欢吃饺子/老王的老婆喜歡吃餃子。  
Lǎo Wáng de láopo xǐhuan chī jiǎozi. (Old Wang's wife likes eating dumplings.)
5. 花儿很好看/花兒很好看。  
Huār hěn hǎo kàn. (Flowers are beautiful.)
6. 桌子是木头做的/桌子是木頭做的。  
Zhuōzi shì mùtou zuò de. (The table is made of wood.)

**IV Please fill in the missing words in the following sentences:**

1. 老李有三( )儿子/老李有三( )兒子。  
Lǎo Lǐ yǒu sān ( ) érzi. (Old Li has three sons.)
2. 我有五( )书/我有五( )書。  
Wǒ yǒu wǔ ( ) shū. (I have five books.)
3. ( )赵的妻( )有两把椅( )/( )趙的妻( )有兩/兩把椅。  
( )Zhào de qī( ) yǒu liǎng bǎ yǐ( ). (Old Zhao's wife has two chairs.)

**V Answer the following questions:**

1. How do Chinese people usually express the plural meaning?
2. Under what kind of conditions is the plural form -们/-們 -men not to be used?
3. Under what kind of conditions can Chinese nouns function as a predicate?
4. How many common prefixes are there in Chinese?
5. How many common suffixes are there in Chinese? What are their original meanings?
6. What are the phonetic features of the suffix -儿/-兒 -er in speech?

# Numbers

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn how to read Chinese numbers
- ★ To know how to use basic, ordinal, and multiple numbers, as well as decimals, fractions, and approximations
- ★ To learn the special uses of certain numbers

Like English, Chinese has two ways of writing numbers:

- Arabic numerals: 1, 2, 3, and so on
- Words: 一 yī (one), 二 èr (two), 三 sān (three), and so on (formal writing: 壹 (one), 贰/貳 (two), 叁/叁 (three) is mostly used when referring to currency; pronunciations are the same)

The two languages also have some of the same denominations (class of units in numbers):

- 十 shí (ten)
- 百 bǎi (hundred)
- 千 qiān (thousand)

However, there are also different denominations of numbers in the two languages, as can be seen below.

### In Chinese:

- 万/萬 wàn (ten thousand)
- 亿/億 yì (hundred million)

### In English:

- *million* (一百万/一百萬 yíbǎi wàn)
- *billion* (十亿/十億 shíyì)

Thus, reading numbers in the other language is always difficult for dual language speakers of English and Chinese. This chapter will help you to learn and read Chinese numbers.

## 7.1 Basic numbers

Chinese uses the following two units to express various numbers:

- i. **Numbers:** 零 0, líng; 一 1, yī; 二 2, èr; 三 3, sān; 四 4, sì; 五 5, wǔ; 六 6, liù; 七 7, qī; 八 8, bā; 九 9, jiǔ; 十 10, shí;
- ii. **Denomination** (shortened as **denom** hereafter): 十 shí (ten); 百 bǎi (hundred); 千 qiān (thousand); 万/萬 wàn (ten thousand); 亿/億 yì (hundred million); single-digit numbers (0–9) have no denom name in English but are referred to as **个位/個位** gèwèi (basic unit) in Chinese.

### ► 7.1.1 Reading numbers

The ways of reading numbers in Chinese and English are similar, except for the numbers 11 and 12, and numbers greater than ten thousand. For example:

- **0–10:** read as described in i. **Numbers** above; the way of reading is the same as English.
- If a number is greater than ten and smaller than twenty, it reads as denom (+ shí) + number:
  - **11–19:** read + shí (ten) first and then the numbers of 1–9, such as:
    - 一 shíyī (eleven)
    - 二 shíèr (twelve)
    - 三 shísān (thirteen) to 九 shíjiǔ (nineteen); (+ shí in these numbers is like *-teen* as in **thirteen** through **nineteen** in English)
- If a number is larger than 20, the basic pattern is *number + denom (+ number)*. For example:
  - **Whole numbers** such as 30, 40, 300, or 3,000: read the number first and then the denom, skipping all the zeros. The way to read these numbers is the same as in English. For example:
    - 20 to 90: 二 + èrshí (twenty); 30: 三 + sānshí (thirty); 90: 九 + jiǔshí (ninety)
    - 100 to 900: 一 + yíbǎi (one hundred); 九百 jiǔbǎi (nine hundred)
    - 1,000 to 9,000: 一千 yìqiān (one thousand); 九千 jiǔqiān (nine thousand)
  - **21–29, 31–39 to 91–99:** read numbers 2–9 first, then the denom + shí (ten), and then the numbers (1–9). It is like reading **number + -ty + number** in English. For example,
    - 21–29: 二 + 一 èrshíyī (21, twenty-one); 二 + 二 èrshíèr (22, twenty-two); 二 + 九 èrshíjiǔ (29, twenty-nine)
    - 91–99: 九 + 一 jiǔshíyī (91, ninety-one); 九 + 二 jiǔshíèr (92, ninety-two); 九 + 九 jiǔshíjiǔ (99, ninety-nine)

#### ► Alert!

- **110–119:** the way of reading these numbers is different from reading other numbers in the hundreds because “ten” is a denom:
  - 110: 一百一十 yíbǎi yíshí; or, 一百一 yíbǎiyí (one hundred and ten)
  - 111–119: 一百一十一 yíbǎi yíshíyī (one hundred and eleven); 一百一十九 yíbǎi yíshíjiǔ (one hundred and nineteen)

- **120–999:** 一百二十 yībǎi èrshí (one **hundred** and **twenty**); 九百九十九 jiǔbǎi jiǔshíjiǔ (nine **hundred** and **ninety-nine**)
- **1,110–9,999:** the way to read is number + thousand + lower numbers; for example,
  - 1,110: 一千一百一 yìqiān yìbǎi yīshí; or 一千一百一 yìqiān yìbǎiyī (one **thousand** one **hundred** and **ten**)
  - 9,999: 九千九百九十九 jiǔqiān jiǔbǎi jiǔshíjiǔ (nine **thousand** nine **hundred** and **ninety-nine**)
- **Large numbers over the denom of thousand:** For many Germanic languages, like English, the largest basic denom is *thousand*, while the largest basic denom in Chinese is *ten thousand* 万/萬 wàn (10,000). This means that \*十千\*shíqiān is not used in Chinese. Instead, bigger numbers are described using the basic denoms to count how many 万/萬 wàn there are. Hence, the following numbers are read in English and Chinese differently:
  - 10,000 (ten thousand): 一万/一萬 yíwàn (1,0000); 90,000: 九万/九萬 jiǔwàn (9,0000)
  - 100,000 (one hundred thousand): 十万/十萬 shíwàn (10,0000); 900,000: 九十万/九十九萬 jiǔshí wàn (90,0000)
  - 1,000,000 (one **million**): 一百万/一百萬 yíbǎi wàn (100,0000); 9,000,000: 九百万/九百萬 jiǔbǎi wàn (900,0000)
  - 10,000,000 (ten **million**): 一千万/一千萬 yìqiān wàn (1000,0000); 90,000,000: 九千万/九千萬 jiǔqiān wàn (9000,0000)
  - 100,000,000 (one hundred **million**): 一亿/一億 yíyì (1,0000,0000); 900,000,000: 九亿/九億 jiǔyì (9,0000,0000)
  - 1,000,000,000 (one **billion**): 十亿/十億 shíyì (10,0000,0000); 9,000,000,000: 九十亿/九十億 jiǔshí yì (90,0000,0000)

**TIP**

A simple way to understand large numbers over the denom of *thousand* is this: English measures numbers by sets of **three zeros**; Chinese does so by **four zeros** as shown in *italic* in the parentheses above.

- **The basic format** of reading numbers is **number + denom**; specifically, read the numbers first and then the denom. Once you understand this, you will not panic when you have to read large numbers, such as 134,567,892, whose reading is demonstrated in Table 7.1.

**Alert!**

Don't read 和 hé (and) when reading large numbers in Chinese as in English. For example, the number 7,892 is read in English as seven thousand eight hundred and ninety-two, but qīqiān bābǎi jiǔshíèr (denoms are highlighted) in Chinese.

**NOTE** When reading serial numbers such as years, telephone numbers, or room numbers, just read the numbers and not the denoms. For example:

- **Year:** 1999 一九九九 yī jiǔ jiǔ jiǔ.

**Table 7.1** Reading the number 134,567,892 (1,3456,7892 in Chinese)

	Denom		Denom		Denom		Denom		Denom	
	亿/億 yì hundred million		万/萬 wàn ten thousand		千 qīan thousand		百 bǎi hundred		十 shí (-ty)	
1		3456		7		8		9		2
一	亿/億	三千四百五十六	万/萬	七	千	八	百	九	十	二
yí	yì	sānqiān sìbǎi wǔshíliù	wàn	qī	qīan	bā	bǎi	jiǔ	shí	èr

(1) 今年是2020年。

Jinnián shì èr líng èr líng nián.

It is 2020 this year.

• **Telephone number:** 1800–123–4567 yī bā líng líng-yī èr sān-sì wǔ liù qī.

(2) 小亮的电话号码是574–890–1234。

Xiǎoliàng de diànhuà hào mǎ shì wǔ qī sì-bā jiǔ líng-yī èr sān sì.

Xiaoliang's phone number is 574–890–1234.

• **Room number:** 328 sān èr bā

(3) 我的房间号是1657。

我的房间號是1657。

Wǒ de fángjiān hào shì yī liù wǔ qī.

My room number is 1657.

**NOTE** — yī (one) can be read as yāo to avoid confusion with 七 qī (seven), which has a similar sound, when saying room numbers or telephone numbers. For example, — yī in sentences (2) and (3) can be read as yāo:

(2) Xiǎo Liàng de diànhuà hào mǎ shì wǔ qī sì-bā jiǔ líng-yāo èr sān sì (574–890–1234).

(3) Wǒ de fángjiān hào shì yāo liù wǔ qī (1657).

### ► 7.1.2 Reading 零 líng (zero) in numbers

Zero means that the denom has no value, and therefore it is read without a denom. There are several ways of reading 零 líng (zero):

• **零 líng (zero) must be read** when the number 0 is between two numbers below ten thousand. If the 零 líng (zero) is missed, it becomes another number or the wrong form. For example:

◦ 101: 一百零一 yíbǎi líng yī (101) vs. 一百一(十) yíbǎi yī(shí) (110)

◦ 5,020: 五千零二十 wǔqiān líng èrshí; **NOT:** \*五千二十 \*wǔqiān èrshí

• **Optional:** when a 零 líng (zero) is in the denom *thousands place* it is optional, for example,

◦ 10,500: 一万(零)五百/一萬(零)五百 yíwàn (líng) wǔbǎi (10,500); vs. 一万五(千)/一萬五(千) yíwàn wǔ (qiān) (15,000)

◦ 30,104: 三万(零)一百零四/三萬(零)一百零四 sānwàn (líng) yíbǎi líng sì

• **Read 零 líng once:** when two or more zeros are together between two numbers, it should be read only once, for example:

◦ 10,030: 一万零三十/一萬零三十 yíwàn líng sānshí (10,030); vs. 一万零三/一萬零三 yíwàn líng sān (10,003)

◦ 98,005: 九万八千零五/九萬八千零五 jiǔwàn bāqiān líng wǔ

◦ 100,046: 十万零四十六/十萬零四十六 shíwàn líng sìshíliù

Table 7.2 summarizes the ways of reading 零 líng (zero).

In short, the rule of thumb for reading 零 líng (zero) is as follows:

▪ When a denom is 0 (zero) in a number, 零 líng (zero) should be read aloud.

**Table 7.2** Reading of 零 líng (zero)

Number	Reading					Without 零 líng
	ten thousand 万/萬 wàn	thousand 千 qiān	hundred 百 bǎi	ten 十 shí		
105			一百 yíbǎi	零 líng	五 wǔ	一百五(十)(150) yíbǎiwǔ(shí)
3,020		三千 sānqiān	零 líng	二十 èrshí		NOT: *三千二十 *sānqiān èrshí
40,300	四万/四萬 sìwàn	(零) (líng)	三百 sānbǎi			四万三(百)/四萬三(百) sìwàn sān(bǎi)
50,402	五万/五萬 wǔwàn	(零) (líng)	四百 sìbǎi	零 líng	二 èr	五万四百零二/五萬四百零二 wǔwàn sìbǎi líng èr (keep the last 零 líng)
60,030	六万/六萬 liùwàn	零 líng		三十 sānshí		NOT: *六万三十/ *六萬三十 *liùwàn sānshí
700,009	七十万/七十萬 qīshíwàn	零 líng			九 jiǔ	NOT: *七十万九/ *七十萬九 *qīshí wàn jiǔ

This rule also helps us understand and read amounts of Chinese money aloud. The denominations of Chinese currency are 塊/塊 kuài (formally called 元 yuán; dollar), 毛 máo (formally called 角 jiǎo; ten cents), and 分 fēn (cent). If the denom 毛 máo is 0, 零 líng (zero) must be said. Let's compare the following:

- \$5.08 五塊零八/五塊零八 wǔ kuài líng bā;
- \$5.80 五塊八/五塊八 wǔ kuài bā; or, 五塊八毛/五塊八毛 wǔ kuài bā máo

## 7.2 Ordinal numbers

The following are the ways of expressing numerical order in Chinese:

I. **Add the prefix 第 dì-** before the basic numbers, such as 第一 dì-yī (the first), 第三 dì-sān (the third), or 第一百三十 dì-yībāi sānshí (the 130th), as in (4).

- (4) 小明到了北京以后, 第一天参观了故宫, 第二天去了长城。  
小明到了北京以後, 第一天參觀了故宮, 第二天去了長城。  
Xiǎoming dào le Béijing yǐhòu, dì-yī tiān cānguān le Gùgōng, dì-èr tiān qù le Chángchéng

After arriving in Beijing, Xiaoming visited the Forbidden City on the first day and went to the Great Wall on the second day.

### II. Numbers before nouns:

• **Family members:** 二哥 èrgē (the second-eldest brother); 三弟 sāndì (the third among younger brothers); the eldest brother or sister should be 大哥 dàgē (the eldest brother) or 大姐 dàjiě (the eldest sister), for example, (5):

- (5) 小亮的**大哥**是一个医生。  
小亮的**大哥**是一個醫生。  
Xiǎoliàng de dàgē shì yí ge yīsheng.

Xiaoliang's **eldest brother** is a doctor.

• **Month and date:** Months are named by their position in numerical order from one to twelve, instead of the given Gregorian calendar name used in English: 一月 yī yuè (January), 二月 èr yuè (February), 十二月 shí èr yuè (December); 一号/一號 yī hào (the first [day]), 二号/二號 èr hào (the second [day]), 三十一号/三十一號 sānshíyī hào (the thirty-first [day]), for example, (6).

- (6) 今天是十月三十号。  
今天是十月三十號。  
Jīntiān shì shí yuè sānshí hào.

It is October 30th today.

• **Others:** 三楼/层/三樓/層 Cf. pinyin. sān lóu/céng (the 3rd floor); 三路汽车/三路汽車 sān lù qìchē (bus no. 3); for example, (7).

- (7) 小亮住三楼十八号。  
小亮住三樓十八號。  
Xiǎoliàng zhù sān lóu shíbā hào.

Xiaoliang lives in room 18 on the third floor.

## 7.3 Multiple numbers, decimals, and fractions

I. **Multiple numbers:** Add 倍 bèi (times; -fold) before a number to indicate multiples: 三倍 sān bèi (three times; threefold); 三十倍 sānshí bèi (thirty times; thirtyfold).

NOTE There are two patterns in Chinese indicating the different meanings of 倍 bèi:

i. [A 是 shì B 的 de number 倍 bèi] includes the original, for example, (8).

(8) 八是二的四倍。

Bā shì èr de sì bèi.

Eight is four times as much as two.

ii. [A 比 bǐ B 多 duō/大 dà number 倍 bèi] doesn't include the original, for example, (9).

(9) 八比二多三倍。

Bā bǐ èr duō sān bèi.

Eight is three times more than two.

II. **Decimals:** Decimal points are read as 点/點 diǎn (point) in Chinese. The way to read decimals is to say the numbers after 点 diǎn (point) directly without a denom, like in English. For example:

0.35: 零点三五/零點三五 líng diǎn sān wǔ

3.1416: 三点一四一六/三點一四一六 sān diǎn yī sì yī liù

45.78: 四十五点七八/四十五點七八 sìshíwǔ diǎn qī bā

136.92: 一百三十六点九二/一百三十六點九二 yìbǎi sānshíliù diǎn jiǔ èr

III. **Fractions:** The format is number/denominator (e.g., 百 bǎi [hundred], 千 qiān [thousand], 万/萬 wàn [ten thousand]) + 分之 fēn zhī + number (numerator). This is different from English. For example:

½: 二分之一 èr fēn zhī yī

¾: 四分之三 sì fēn zhī sān

1/10: 十分之一 shí fēn zhī yī

33/100 (33%): 百分之三十三 bǎi fēn zhī sānshísān

2/1000: 千分之二 qiān fēn zhī èr

## 7.4 Approximate numbers

There are several ways of expressing approximate numbers in Chinese:

I. **Two adjacent numbers together:** The smaller number precedes the larger number, for example, 三四天 sān sì tiān (three or four days) or 十七八岁/十七八岁 shíqī bā suì (seventeen or eighteen years old), as illustrated by examples (10)–(12).

- (10) 小亮每天七八点起床。  
小亮每天七八點起床。  
Xiǎoliàng měitiān qī bā diǎn qǐ-chuáng.  
Xiaoliang gets up at about seven or eight o'clock every day.
- (11) 我的学校有三四千个学生。  
我的學校有三四千個學生。  
Wǒ de xuéxiào yǒu sān sì qiān ge xuésheng.  
There are about three or four thousand students in my school.
- (12) 小亮的宿舍离教室五六分钟。  
小亮的宿舍離教室五六分鐘。  
Xiǎoliàng de sùshè lí jiàoshì wǔ liù fēnzhōng.  
Xiaoliang's dormitory is about five or six minutes away from the classroom.
- NOTE** There are two commonly used exceptions: the first is when the larger number precedes the smaller number, **三两个/三兩個** sān liǎng ge (three or two), and the second is when the two numbers are not adjacent, **三五次** sān wǔ cì (three to five times).
- II. **Add approximation words**, such as **多** duō (more) or **来/來** lái (about), after numbers.
- Examples (13) and (14) illustrate number + **多** duō (more):
- (13) 小明的爸爸五十多岁。  
小明的爸爸五十多歲。  
Xiǎomíng de bàba wǔshí duō suì.  
Xiaoming's father is more than fifty years old.
- (14) 我们班有 20 多个人。  
我們班有 20 多個人。  
Wǒmen bān yǒu èrshí duō ge rén.  
There are more than twenty people in our class.
- **number + 来/來 lái (about)** is used with whole numbers, such as 10 or 100 in example (15) or week or month in example (16), to indicate more or less than the number.
- (15) 小亮的中文老师五十来岁。  
小亮的中文老師五十來歲。  
Xiǎoliàng de Zhōngwén lǎoshī wǔshí lái suì.  
Xiaoliang's teacher of Chinese is about fifty years old.
- (16) 小亮学中文学了三个来月了。  
小亮學中文學了三個來月了。  
Xiǎoliàng xué Zhōngwén xué le sān ge lái yuè le.  
Xiaoliang has been studying Chinese for about three months.

III. Add approximation words such as 差不多 chàbuduō (about) or (大)約/ (大)約 (dà)yuē (approximately) before numbers, as in examples (17) and (18).

(17) 现在差不多 10 点了。

現在差不多 10 點了。

Xiànzài chàbuduō shí diǎn le.

It is about ten o'clock now.

(18) 我们学校(大)约有五百个老师。

我們學校(大)約有五百個老師。

Wǒmen xuéxiào (dà)yuē yǒu wǔbǎi ge lǎoshī.

There are about five hundred teachers in my school.

## 7.5 二 èr vs. 两/兩 liǎng (two)

Two can be expressed by both 二 èr or 两/兩 liǎng in Chinese depending on the context, but the **basic rule** is this:

- 二 èr is used in counting numbers, while 两/兩 liǎng is used when indicating the number of things.

Thus:

- **二 èr** must be read in basic numbers, ordinal numbers, decimals, or fractions.
  - 1: 一 yī; 2: 二 èr; 22: 二十二 èrshíèr
  - the 2nd: 第二 dì-èr; the 222nd: 第二百二十二 dì-èrbǎi èrshíèr
  - 2.22: 二点二二/二點二二 èr diǎn èr èr
  - ½: 二分之一 èr fēn zhī yī
  - 十二个学生/十二個學生 shíèr ge xuésheng (12 students), is an example of a number greater than ten.
- **两/兩 liǎng** must be read when the number "two" is followed by a measure word below the number ten.
  - 两个学生/兩個學生 liǎng ge xuésheng (two students)
  - 两本书/兩本書 liǎng běn shū (two books)
  - 两把椅子/兩把椅子 liǎng bǎ yǐzi (two chairs)
  - 两杯水/兩杯水 liǎng bēi shuǐ (two cups of water)
  - 现在两点半/現在兩點半 xiànzài liǎng diǎn bàn (It is half past two now).

These different uses of 二 èr and 两/兩 liǎng are due to the original meanings of 二 èr and 两/兩 liǎng: the former is a number "two," but the latter is "pair." Therefore, 两/兩 liǎng can be used in a word 两口子/兩口子 liǎngkǒuzi (a couple) and can also express an approximate meaning like 几 jǐ (several) as in (19), but 二 èr cannot.

(19) 我跟你说两句话。

我跟你說兩句話。

Wǒ gēn nǐ shuō liǎng jù huà.

Let me say a few words to you.

It may also be the reason that both words can be used with the large numbers over the denoms of “hundred” and greater, but only 二 èr can be used with denoms of “ten” or smaller. This indicates that the meaning of 两/兩 liǎng is not as precise as 二 èr, which pertains to a specific number, and smaller numbers should be more precise.

- 两/兩 liǎng is more commonly used with greater denoms, such as 千 qiān (thousand), 万/萬 wàn (ten thousand), and 亿/億 yì (hundred million). Conversely, 二 èr is more commonly used with smaller denoms, such as 百 bǎi (hundred), and only on the denom 十 shí (ten) and the digit unit two. For example:
  - 百 bǎi, e.g., 222: 二百二十二 èrbǎi èrshíèr, or 两百二十二/兩百二十二 liǎngbǎi èrshíèr
  - 千 qiān: 两千/兩千 liǎngqiān or 二千 èrqiān (two thousand)
  - 万/萬 wàn: 两万/兩萬 liǎngwàn or 二万/二萬 èrwàn (twenty thousand)
  - 亿/億 yì: 两亿/兩億 liǎngyì or 二亿/二億 èryì (two hundred million)
- Both 两/兩 liǎng, which is more common, and 二 èr can be used **before a measure word** that indicates **length, capacity, or weight**:
  - 两米/兩米 liǎng mǐ or 二米 èr mǐ (two meters)
  - 两加仑水/兩加侖水 liǎng jiálún shuǐ or 二加仑水/二加侖水 èr jiálún shuǐ (two gallons of water)
  - 两斤水果/兩斤水果 liǎng jīn shuǐguǒ or 二斤水果 èr jīn shuǐguǒ (two jīn of fruits)

## 7.6 Special uses of 半 bàn (half) and 几/幾 jǐ (several)

半 bàn (half) is used:

- **before a measure word** if there is no number: 半斤 bàn jīn (half jīn); 半个/半個 bàn ge (half); 半天 bàn tiān (half-day; a long time), as shown in (20) and (21).

(20) 小亮吃了半個蘋果。

小亮吃了半個蘋果。

Xiǎoliàng chī le bàn ge píngguǒ.

Xiaoliang ate half of the apple.

(21) 小明写了半天中文。

小明寫了半天中文。

Xiǎomíng xiě le bàn tiān Zhōngwén.

Xiaoming wrote Chinese for a half-day (a long time).

(半天 bàn tiān here is hyperbole for short events that took longer than expected or for emphasis).

- **after a measure word and before a noun** if there is a number; the pattern is *number + measure word + 半 bàn + noun*, as can be seen in examples (22) and (23).

(22) 小亮吃了两个半苹果。

小亮吃了兩個半蘋果。

Xiǎoliàng chī le liǎng ge bàn píngguǒ.

Xiaoliang ate two and a half apples.

(23) 小明学了三个半学期的中文。

小明學了三個半學期的中文。

Xiǎomíng xué le sān ge bàn xuéqī de Zhōngwén.

Xiaoming studied Chinese for three and a half semesters.

▪ The use of 几/幾 jǐ (several):

- **below ten** (2–9): such as 几个人/幾個人 jǐ ge rén (several people); 几天/幾天 jǐ tiān (several days), and illustrated by example (24):

(24) 小明今天读了几本书。

小明今天讀了幾本書。

Xiǎomíng jīntiān dú le jǐ běn shū.

Xiaoming read several books today.

- **After denoms if below one hundred:** *denom* + 几/幾 *jǐ*; such as 二十几年/二十幾年 èrshí jǐ nián (twenty-something years); 九十几岁/九十幾歲 jiǔshí jǐ suì (ninety-something years old), for example, (25).

(25) 小明只有十几块钱。

小明只有十幾塊錢。

Xiǎomíng zhǐyǒu shí jǐ kuài qián.

Xiaoming only has slightly more than ten dollars.

- **Before denoms:** 几/幾 *jǐ* + *denom*; such as 几十/幾十 *jǐ shí* (several ten); 几千/幾千 *jǐ qiān* (several thousand), for example, (26).

(26) 我们学校有几万学生。

我們學校有幾萬學生。

Wǒmen xuéxiào yǒu jǐ wàn xuésheng.

There are tens of thousands of students in my school.

## 7.7 Numbers in sentences

Numbers are usually used with measure words to modify nouns, as seen in examples (27) and (28).

(27) 小亮今天有两堂课。

小亮今天有兩堂課。

Xiǎoliàng jīntiān yǒu liǎng táng kè.

Xiaoliang has two classes today.

- (28) 我们班有二十个学生。  
我們班有二十個學生。  
Wǒmen bān yǒu èrshí ge xuésheng.  
There are twenty students in my class.

However, numbers can also be used independently as a subject, as in (29), or as an object in a calculation, as in (30).

- (29) 六是三的两倍。  
六是三的兩倍。  
Liù shì sān de liǎng bèi.  
Six is twice as much as three.
- (30) 二二得四。  
Èr èr dé sì.  
Two times two is four.

## 7.8 Summary

In this chapter, we have found that both Chinese and English use two methods to denote **numbers**: *Arabic numerals* such as 1, 2, and 3, and *words* such as 一 yī (one), 二 èr (two), and 三 sān (three). However, Chinese uses different **denominations** like 万/萬 wàn (ten thousand) and 亿/億 yì (hundred million) instead of million and billion in English. We have also found that Chinese adds the prefix 第 dì before a basic number to indicate an ordinal number such as 第一 dì-yī (the first) or 第二 dì-èr (the second). In addition to this, we have discussed the ways to read numbers, multiple numbers, decimals, fractions, and approximate numbers as well as the special uses of 二 èr /两/兩 /liǎng (two) and 半 bàn (half) in Chinese. Finally, we have shown that Chinese numbers are often used with measure words to modify nouns in sentences. For ease of reference, the rules regarding Chinese numbers are summarized in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3** Chinese numbers

Type	Examples
Basic numbers	一 yī (one), 二 èr (two), 三 sān (three); 十二 shí èr (twelve); 一千零一 yìqiān líng yī (one thousand and one)
Denominations (denom)	十 shí (ten); 百 bǎi (hundred); 千 qiān (thousand); 万/萬 wàn (ten thousand); 亿/億 yì (hundred thousand)
Ordinal numbers	第一 dì-yī (the first), 第三 dì-sān (the third)

Table 7.3 (cont.)

Type	Examples	
Multiple numbers	三倍 sān bèi (threefold); 三十倍 sānshí bèi (thirtyfold)	
Decimals	三点一四一六/三點一四一六 sān diǎn yī sì yī liù (3.1416)	
Fractions	二分之一 èr fēn zhī yī (1/2); 百分之三十三 bǎi fēn zhī sānshísān (33%)	
Approximate numbers	Adjacent numbers	三四天 sān sì tiān (three or four days)
	No. + 多 duō /来/lái	二十多岁/二十多歲 èrshí duō suì (more than twenty years old) 二十来岁/二十來歲 èrshí lái suì (about twenty years old)
	差不多 chàbuduō	差不多 10 点了/差不多 10 點了 chàbuduō shí diǎn le (almost ten o'clock)
	几个 jǐ (several)	几个学生/幾個學生 jǐ ge xuésheng (several students)

## 7.9 Exercises

### I Read the following numbers in Chinese:

- 4060
- 30506
- 200072
- 65874532
- $\frac{1}{3}$
- 1%
- 0.522
- 2013.55
- Year: 1984
- Phone number: 800-235-9722
- Room #: 1534

### II Change the following basic numbers to ordinal numbers:

- 2
- 10
- 220
- 1078

### III Please fill in the blanks with 二 èr or 两/liǎng:

- ( ) 个老师/( ) 個老師 lǎoshī (teacher)
- 十( ) 个学生/十( ) 個學生 xuésheng (student)

3. 第( )课/第( )課 kè (lesson)
4. 第十( )课/第十( )課 kè (lesson)
5. ( )杯咖啡 kāfei (coffee)
6. ( )十( )本书/( )十( )本書 shū (book)
7. ( )点/( )點 diǎn (point)三三
8. ( )个苹果/( )個蘋果 píngguǒ (apple)

#### IV Translate the following sentences into Chinese.

You may use either pinyin or characters, by either handwriting or typing.

1. My second-eldest sister is a high school teacher.
2. My good friend gets up at 8 or 9 a.m. every day.
3. He has been studying Chinese for two and a half semesters.
4. My Chinese teacher is about forty years old (use 来/來 lái).
5. There are more than twenty students in my class.
6. It is about 2 p.m. now.

#### V Answer the following questions:

1. How many ways are there of expressing numbers in Chinese?
2. What denominations of numbers are different between Chinese and English?
3. What is the basic format of reading large numbers in Chinese?
4. What is the main function of Chinese numbers in a sentence?

#### VI Read the following tongue-twisters aloud to practice basic numbers:

出东门，过大桥，大桥底下一树枣，拿着杆子去打枣。青的多，红的少，一个枣，两个枣，三个枣，四个枣，五个枣，六个枣，七个枣，八个枣，九个枣，十个枣，十个枣，九个枣，八个枣，七个枣，六个枣，五个枣，四个枣，三个枣，两个枣，一个枣。这是一个绕口令，一气说完才算好。

出東門，過大橋，大橋底下一樹棗，拿著桿子去打棗。青的多，紅的少，一個棗，兩個棗，三個棗，四個棗，五個棗，六個棗，七個棗，八個棗，九個棗，十個棗，十個棗，九個棗，八個棗，七個棗，六個棗，五個棗，四個棗，三個棗，兩個棗，一個棗。這是一個繞口令，一氣說完才算好。

Chū dōngmén, guò dà qiáo, dà qiáo dǐxià yí shù zǎo, ná zhe gānzi qù dǎ zǎo. Qīng de duō, hóng de shǎo, yí ge zǎo, liǎng ge zǎo, sān ge zǎo, sì ge zǎo, wǔ ge zǎo, liù ge zǎo, qī ge zǎo, bā ge zǎo, jiǔ ge zǎo, shí ge zǎo, shí ge zǎo, jiǔ ge zǎo, bā ge zǎo, qī ge zǎo, liù ge zǎo, wǔ ge zǎo, sì ge zǎo, sān ge zǎo, liǎng ge zǎo, yí ge zǎo. Zhè shí yí ge ràokǒuling, yí qì shuō. wán cái suàn hǎo.

Go out the east gate and pass a big bridge and there are many dates in a tree under the bridge. Take a bamboo pole to knock off the dates. There are more green dates than red dates. One date, two dates, three dates, four dates, five dates, six dates, seven dates, eight dates, nine dates, ten dates; ten dates, nine dates, eight dates, seven dates, six dates, five dates, four dates, three dates, two dates, and one date. This is a tongue twister; it would be better to say it all in one breath.

## Measure words

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the types of Chinese measure words and their different meanings and uses
- ★ To learn the usages of measure words with nouns
- ★ To learn the functions of measure words in sentences

### 8.1 Measure words and standard measure words

In order to count things or activities, Chinese uses both numbers and **classifiers**, also known as **measure words (MWs)**, which are used after numbers to indicate counting units. For example, if one wants to say “one book” in Chinese, it is inappropriate to say \*一书/\*一書 \*yì shū; rather, 一本书/一本書 yì běn shū is used. The MW 本 běn must be used between the number 一 yī (one) and the noun 书/書 shū (book). The general rule and the basic form of using MWs can be summarized as follows:

- **The general rule:** a number cannot directly precede a noun; instead, an MW needs to “sort” or “measure” the noun
- **The basic form:** number + MW + noun

**In addition to the basic form:** the following few words can be used before MWs:

- pronouns 这/這 zhèi (this), 那 nèi (that), 哪 něi (which), whose formal readings are zhè/nà/nǎ. These pronouns merge the sounds of 这一/這一 zhè yī (this one), 那一 nà yī (that one), and 哪一 nǎ yī (which one) as can be seen in 这/這 zhèi, 那 nèi, 哪 něi + 本书/書 běn shū (this/that/which book) in speech respectively (see §9.2.1)
- 每 měi (every) as in 每本书/每本書 měi běn shū (every book)

MWs can be divided into nominal and verbal measure words according to whether they modify things or actions. To learn more measure words, refer to Appendix 1: Common Measure Words.

**TIP** In English MWs are required to count mostly mass nouns (see §6.3). For example, one cannot say “\*one water,” but rather “one glass/bottle of water.” The MW “glass” or “bottle” between the number “one” and the noun “water” is needed. Simply put, you may treat all Chinese nouns as “mass nouns,” which require an MW to be counted.

## 8.2 Nominal measure words

**Nominal MWs** are used to count units of things or people. There are seven types of nominal MWs, as listed in this section (see also §6.3).

1. **Individual MWs** are used for the units of individual things. A noun denoting something individual requires a specific individual MW. For instance,
  - to count books, the MW 本 běn must be used, as in 三本书/三本書 sān běn shū (three books)
  - to count human beings the MW 个/個 ge must be used, as in 三个学生/三個學生 sān ge xuésheng (three students), or the polite MW 位 wèi, as in 三位老师/三位老師 sān wèi lǎoshī (three teachers).

**NOTE The meaning of MWs and nouns.** Many MWs have some kind of connection in meaning with the corresponding nouns. For example, the meaning of the MW 条/條 tiáo indicates a thing with a long narrow shape to be used for anything with that shape such as 两条蛇/兩條蛇 liǎng tiáo shé (two snakes), 两条鱼/兩條魚 liǎng tiáo yú (two fish), or 两条河/兩條河 liǎng tiáo hé (two rivers). Another example is the MW 张/張 zhāng, which denotes a flat item and is used with items having a flat surface, such as 三张纸/三張紙 sān zhāng zhǐ (three sheets of paper) or 三张桌子/三張桌子 sān zhāng zhuōzi (three tables).

### Alert!

You cannot mismatch the individual MWs with the nouns; i.e., you cannot say:

- \*三个书/\*三個書 \*sān ge shū (lit. three ge book)
- \*三本学生/\*三本學生 \*sān běn xuésheng (lit. three běn student).

To use appropriate MWs with nouns, refer to Appendix 1: Common Measure Words.

**TIP** “Default” MW 个/個 ge: the most frequently used MW in Chinese is 个/個 ge. It is typical for beginning learners to try to use 个/個 ge when they do not know which MW to use. For example, the MW for 伞/傘 sǎn (umbrella) should be 把 bǎ, but a learner who doesn’t know it may try 一个伞/一個傘 yí ge sǎn (one umbrella). The result is awkward, but will nonetheless still be understood, and is

better than not using an MW at all, e.g. \*一伞/ \*一傘 \*yì sǎn (lit. one umbrella), which is completely unacceptable. If you want to make your Chinese authentic, you should learn the MWs that are correct for particular nouns.

2. **Collective MWs**, such as 双/雙 shuāng (pair), 套 tào (set), and 群 qún (group), are used for things composed of two or more individuals, for example, (1) and (2).

(1) 桌子上有一双筷子。

桌子上有雙筷子。

Zhuōzi shàng yǒu yì shuāng kuàizi.

There is one **pair** of chopsticks on the table.

(2) 教室里有一群学生。

教室裏有一群學生。

Jiàoshì lǐ yǒu yì qún xuésheng.

There is a **group** of students in the classroom.

3. **Measure MWs** include the following:

- 米 mǐ (meter) for *length* as in 三米布 sān mǐ bù (three meters of cloth)
- 加仑/加侖 jiálún (loanword from “gallon”) for *capacity* as in 三加仑汽油/三加侖汽油 sān jiálún qìyóu (three gallons of gasoline)
- 磅 bàng (loanword from “pound”) for *weight* as in 三磅苹果/三磅蘋果 sān bàng píngguǒ (three pounds of apples)

4. **Kind MWs** such as 种/種 zhǒng and 样/樣 yàng (kind; type), for example,

- 三种人/三種人 sān zhǒng rén (three kinds of people)

- 三样衣服/三樣衣服 sān yàng yīfu (three types of clothes)

5. **Indefinite MWs** (only two): 点儿/點兒 diànr (a little) and 些 xiē (some).

Only the following words can be used before these two words:

- 一 yī (one), which can be dropped

- 这/這 zhè, 这么/這麼 zhème (this; so)

- 那nèi, 那么/那麼 nàme (that; so)

- 哪 něi/nǎ (which) can only be used with 些 xiē, as in 哪些 něi/nǎ xiē (which)

Refer to Table 8.1 for more details.

**Table 8.1** Indefinite measure words

	点儿/點兒 diànr (a little)	些 xiē (some)
— yī (one) is optional	小明买了(一)点儿苹果/小明買了(一)點兒蘋果。 Xiǎomíng mǎi le (yì) diànr píngguǒ. Xiaoming bought a small amount of apples.	(一)些 yìxiē indicates the quantity of things more than (一)点儿 / (一)點兒 yìdiànr 小明买了(一)些苹果/小明買了(一)些蘋果。 Xiǎomíng mǎi le (yì)xiē píngguǒ. Xiaoming bought some apples.

Table 8.1 (cont.)

这/這 zhèi, 这么/這麼 zhème (this; so)	indicates that the quantity is less 小明买了这么点儿水果/小明買了這麼點兒水果。	indicates that quantity is more 小明买了这么些水果/小明買了這麼些水果。 Xiǎomíng mǎi le zhème xiē shuǐguǒ. Xiaoming bought so many fruits.
那 nèi, 那么/那麼 nàme (that; so)	Xiǎomíng mǎi le zhème diǎnr shuǐguǒ. Xiaoming bought so little fruit.	

6. Quasi-MWs are nouns but also function as MWs. There are a few quasi-MWs, such as 天 tiān (day), 年 nián (year), and 课/課 kè (lesson) (see Table 8.2):

Table 8.2 Examples of quasi-measure words

Noun (when a number precedes it)	MW (used between a number and a noun)
我们这个星期三天没课/我們這個星期三天沒課。 Wǒmen zhèi ge xīngqī sān tiān méi kè. We have no class for three days this week. 小明学中文学了三年/小明學中文學了三年。 Xiǎomíng xué Zhōngwén xué le sān nián. Xiaoming studied Chinese for three years.	小明做了三天功课/小明做了三天功課。 Xiǎomíng zuò le sān tiān gōngkè. Xiaoming did his homework for three days. 小明学了三年中文/小明學了三年中文。 Xiǎomíng xué le sān nián Zhōngwén. Xiaoming studied Chinese for three years.

### Alert!

Another MW cannot be used between the quasi-MW and noun. It is **incorrect** to say:

\*三个天/\*三個天 \*sān ge tiān (lit. three days) **correct form:** 三天 sān tiān (three days)

\*三个年/\*三個年 \*sān ge nián (lit. three years) **correct form:** 三年 sān nián (three years)

\*三个课/\*三個課 \*sān ge kè (lit. three lessons) **correct form:** 三课/三課 sān kè (three lessons)

But 三堂/节课/三堂/節課. Cf. pinyin: sān táng/jié kè (three classes) is acceptable because the 课/課 kè here means “class” not “lesson.”

7. **Temporary MWs** are nouns but are temporarily used as MWs, such as 碗 wǎn (bowl) and 房子 wūzi (room) in the sentences in Table 8.3. In this usage, they can be viewed as containers of the noun, and the particle 的 de typically occurs between the MW and the noun.

**Table 8.3** Examples of temporary measure words (noun and MW)

Noun	Temporary MW (used between a number and a noun)
<p>桌子上有两个碗/桌子上有兩個碗。 Zhuōzi shàng yǒu liáng ge wǎn. There are two bowls on the table.</p> <p>小明住这间屋子/小明住這間屋子。 Xiǎomíng zhù zhè jiān wūzi. Xiaoming lives in this room.</p>	<p>小亮吃了两碗饭/小亮吃了兩碗飯。 Xiǎoliàng chī le liǎng wǎn fàn. Xiaoliang ate two bowls of rice.</p> <p>小明有一屋子(的)书/小明有一屋子(的)書。 Xiǎomíng yǒu yì wūzi (de) shū. Xiaoming has a full room of books.</p>

### 8.3 Verbal measure words

Verbal MWs indicate the times of action. There are two types of verbal MWs:

- I. **Individual verbal MWs** indicate the occurrences and duration of actions. The most common individual verbal MWs are 次 cì, 下 xià, 遍 biàn, and 场/場 chǎng.
- **次 cì:** counts the times of actions which are generally repeated, as in (3).

- (3) 小明今天去了两次图书馆。  
小明今天去了兩次圖書館。  
Xiǎomíng jīntiān qù le liǎng cì túshūguǎn.  
Xiaoming went to the library two times today.
- **下 xià:** counts the times of actions which normally last for a short duration of time, as in (4).
- (4) 小明敲了两下门, 没人应, 又敲了一下。  
小明敲了兩下門, 沒人應, 又敲了一下。  
Xiǎomíng qiāo le liǎng xià mén, méi rén yìng, yòu qiāo le yí xià.  
Xiaoming knocked on the door twice. No one responded, so he knocked on it again.

**NOTE** 一下 yí xià can be used as one unit roughly meaning “for a while” to soften the mood of a sentence as in sentence *a* below, which has a milder tone than sentence *b*:

- a. 我来介绍一下我姐姐/我來介紹一下我姐姐。  
Wǒ lái jièshào yí xià wǒ jiějie.

Let me take a second to introduce my sister.

- b. 我来介绍我姐姐/我來介紹我姐姐。

Wǒ lái jièshào wǒ jiějie.

Let me introduce my sister.

- **遍 biàn** indicates an action from the beginning to the end, as seen in (5) and (6).

- (5) 这本书小明读了三遍。

這本書小明讀了三遍。

Zhèi běn shū Xiǎomíng dú le sān biàn.

Xiaoming read the book thoroughly three times.

- (6) 请你再说一遍。

請你再說一遍。

Qǐng nǐ zài shuō yí biàn.

Please say it again.

- **场/場 chǎng** indicates the duration of an action and is used mostly for sports or performances, for example (7).

- (7) 今天小明打了两场球。

今天小明打了兩場球。

Jīntiān Xiǎomíng dǎ le liǎng chǎng qiú.

Xiaoming played two (basket)ball games today.

- II. **Temporary verbal MWs** are the names of parts of the body or tools that are temporarily used as verbal MWs to count the frequency of the action. For example, in (8) and (9).

- 眼 yǎn (eye):

- (8) 小明看了一眼小亮。

Xiǎomíng kàn le yì yǎn Xiǎoliàng.

Xiaoming glanced at Xiaoliang.

- 刀 dāo (knife):

- (9) 小亮在鱼上切了一刀。

小亮在魚上切了一刀。

Xiǎoliàng zài yú shàng qīe le yì dāo.

Xiaoliang took a cut (with a knife) of the fish.

## 8.4 Compound measure words

There are a few special MWs that are composed of two or more words, called **compound measure words**, such as 人次 réncí (person-time; noun + MW) in (10) and 架次 jiàcì (flight; MW + MW) in (11).

- (10) 每年有一百万**人次**旅游者参观长城。  
 每年有一百萬**人次**旅遊者參觀長城。  
 Měinián yǒu yíbǎi wàn rénci lǚyóuzhě cānguāng Chángchéng.  
 Every year there are one million sightseeing visits to the Great Wall.

- (11) 首都机场今天起飞了一千**架次**飞机。  
 首都機場今天起飛了一千**架次**飛機。  
 Shǒudū jīchǎng jīntiān qǐfēi le yì qiān jiàcì fēijī.  
 There were one thousand flight takeoffs at the Capital Airport today.

In sentence (10), 一百万人次/一百萬人次 yíbǎi wàn rénci (one million person-times) could mean that (a) one person visited the Great Wall one million times, or (b) one million people visited once, or (c) five hundred thousand people visited twice, and so on. In (11), 一千架次 yìqiān jiàcì (one thousand takeoffs) follows the same logic.

## 8.5 Measure words in sentences

A measure word cannot be a sentential element by itself. It must be used with a number, one of the pronouns 这/這, 那, 哪 zhèi, nèi, něi (this/that/which), or be in a reduplicated form as an attributive (see Chapter 21) or a complement (see Chapter 20) in sentences.

- **Attributives** (modifying nouns; the most common usage) in examples (12) and (13).

- (12) 小明这个学期选了**五门**课。  
 小明這個學期選了**五門**課。  
 Xiǎomíng zhèi ge xuéqī xuǎn le wǔ mén kè.  
 Xiaoming takes five courses this semester.

- (13) **这场**电影的时间太晚了。  
**這場**電影的時間太晚了。  
 Zhèi chǎng diànyǐng de shíjiān tài wǎn le.  
 The time of this movie is too late.

- **Complement**, as in (14).

- (14) 这个电影小明看了**三次**。  
 這個電影小明看了**三次**。  
 Zhèi ge diànyǐng Xiǎomíng kàn le sān cì.  
 Xiaoming watched the movie three times.

## 8.6 Reduplications of measure words

Measure words can be reduplicated to express the meaning of “every” or “one after another.” There are two types of reduplications of measure words:

1. **AA form:** emphasizes each one in a group with the meaning of “without exception”, for example, (15).

(15) 个个学生都很努力。

個個學生都很努力。

Gègè xuésheng dōu hěn nǔlì.

Every single student is diligent.

Please be aware of the differences between reduplications of MW (AA form) and 每 měi (every). The meanings of the two are similar, but the emphasis and uses in sentences are different (see Table 8.4).

**Table 8.4** The meaning of reduplicated MWs and 每 měi (every)

	Reduplicated MW (AA form)	每 měi (every)*
Meaning	Emphasizes “every single and without exception” 我们天天都有中文课/我們天天都有中文課。 Wǒmen tiāntiān dōu yǒu Zhōngwén kè. We have Chinese class every single day (without exception).	Emphasizes the common point of “every individual” 我们每天都有中文课/我們每天都有中文課。 Wǒmen měitiān dōu yǒu Zhōngwén kè. We have Chinese class every day.
Subject	来了很多学生, 个个都喜欢中文课/來了很多學生, 個個都喜歡中文課。 Lái le hěnduō xuésheng, gègè dōu xǐhuan Zhōngwén kè. Many students came. Every single student (without exception) likes Chinese class.	来了很多学生, 每个都喜欢中文课/來了很多學生, 每個都喜歡中文課。 Lái le hěnduō xuésheng, měi ge dōu xǐhuan Zhōngwén kè. Many students came. Everyone likes Chinese class.
Modifying nouns in the object place	*老师喜欢个个学生/*老師喜歡個個學生 (wrong!) *lǎoshī xǐhuan gègè xuésheng (lit. teacher likes each student)	老师喜欢每个学生/老師喜歡每個學生。 Lǎoshī xǐhuan měi ge xuésheng. The teacher likes every student.

Table 8.4 (cont.)

	Reduplicated MW (AA form)	每 měi (every)*
Before a number	<p>*个个四个学生，就有一个学生喜欢运动/*個個四個學生，就有一個學生喜歡運動 (wrong!)</p> <p>*gègè sì ge xuésheng, jiù yǒu yí ge xuésheng xǐhuan yùndòng (lit. each four students, then there is one student who likes sport)</p>	<p>每四个学生就有一个学生喜欢运动/每四個學生就有一個學生喜歡運動。</p> <p>Měi sì ge xuésheng jiù yǒu yí ge xuésheng xǐhuan yùndòng. One of every four students likes sports.</p>

\* See §9.5.

2. — AA form: means “everyone,” “one by one,” or “one after another”, as in (16).

- (16) 学生们一个个都很高兴。  
學生們一個個都很高興。  
Xuéshengmen yí gègè dōu hěn gāoxìng.  
Every single student is very happy.

3. — A — A form: is a variant of — AA form, but means “one by one” or “one after another”, as in (17).

- (17) 学生们一个一个走进教室。  
學生們一個一個走進教室。  
Xuéshengmen yí ge yí ge zǒu jìn jiàoshì.  
Students walked into the classroom one by one.

## 8.7 Summary

In this chapter, we have emphasized that there must be a **measure word** (MW) when counting nouns or actions in Chinese. The **basic form** is *number + MW + noun*. We have learned that there are two large categories of MWs: **nominal MWs**, which count the units of things, and **verbal MWs**, which count the frequency of actions. There are seven subcategories of MWs under nominal MW, which are individual, collective, measure, kind, indefinite, quasi, and temporary. There are two subcategories of verbal measure words, which are individual and temporary measure words. A measure word alone cannot be an element of a sentence; rather, it must be used together with either a number or a pronoun, such as **这/這 zhè**, **那 nèi**, **哪 něi** (this/that/which), or in a reduplicated form. The measure word **个/個 ge** can be set as a “default” classifier for beginning learners; however, one should memorize the appropriate measure words to use with different nouns in order to speak authentic Chinese.

## 8.8 Exercises

### I Please fill in the blanks with the appropriate MWs:

- 三( )学生/三( )學生 xuésheng (student)
- 两( )床/兩( )床 chuáng (bed)
- 五( )书/五( )書 shū (book)
- 三( )咖啡 kāfēi (coffee)
- 两( )汤/兩( )湯 tāng (soup)
- 一( )篮球赛/一( )籃球賽 lánqiú bài (basketball game)
- 去 qù (go) 了三( )电影院/去 qù (go) 了三( )電影院 diànyǐngyuàn (movie theater)
- 看 kàn (read) 了两( )课文/看 kàn (read) 了兩( )課文 kèwén (lesson text)

### II Translate the following phrases into Chinese.

You may use either pinyin or characters, by either handwriting or typing.

- two teachers
- five pens
- these three apples
- those four sheets of paper
- some friends
- some water
- a football (gǎnlǎnqiú) game
- every student

### III Translate the following sentences into Chinese.

You may use either pinyin or characters, by either handwriting or typing.

- My friend studied Chinese for one and half years.
- Students walked out of the movie theater one by one.
- My good friend bought so many fruits for me.
- My girlfriend watched the movie three times yesterday.
- I read the texts of each lesson twice every day.
- My teacher ate so little food.

### IV Answer the following questions:

- What is the general rule for counting things in Chinese?
- What is the “default” MW and its “pros and cons”?
- What is the basic form of using Chinese MWs? What are the exceptions?
- Under what conditions can Chinese MWs be used in a sentence?

### V Read the following tongue-twister aloud to practice numbers and MWs:

一二三，三二一，一二三四五六七，七个阿姨来摘果儿，七个花篮手中提，七盘果儿摆七样，苹果，桃儿，柿子，石榴，李子，栗子，梨。

一二三，三二一，一二三四五六七，七个阿姨来摘果儿，七个花篮手中提，七盘果儿摆七样，苹果，桃儿，柿子，石榴，李子，栗子，梨。

Yí èr sān, sān èr yī, yī èr sān sì wǔ liù qī, qī ge āyí lái zhāi guōr, qī ge huālán shǒu zhōng tí, qī pán guōr bǎi qī yàng, píngguōr, táo, shízì, shíliú, lízì, lízì, lí.

One two three, three two one, one two three four five six seven, seven aunts come to pick up fruits and nuts with seven gaily decorated baskets in their hands. Seven kinds of fruits and nuts in the seven plates are: apples, peaches, persimmons, pomegranates, plums, chestnuts, pears.

## Pronouns

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the types of Chinese pronouns and their usages
- ★ To learn the use of interrogative pronouns in non-question sentences

**Pronouns** can substitute nouns, verbs, adjectives, numbers, and adverbs in sentences. For example, the pronoun 他们/他們 tāmen (they) can take the place of the noun 学生/學生 xuésheng (students) in (1), and the interrogative pronoun 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (what; how) can take the place of the verb 病 bìng (sick) in (2).

(1)a. 学生在做什么？

學生在做什麼？

Xuésheng zài zuò shénme?

What are the students doing?

b. 他们在看电影。

他們在看電影。

Tāmen zài kàn diànyǐng.

They are watching a movie.

(2)a. 小明怎么了？

小明怎麼了？

Xiǎomíng zěnme le?

What happened to Xiaoming?

b. 小明病了。

Xiǎomíng bìng le.

Xiaoming is sick.

Pronouns can be divided into three types based on their meaning and function: **personal**, **demonstrative**, and **interrogative**.

### 9.1 Personal pronouns

- **Singular:** 我 wǒ (I), 你 nǐ (you), 您 nín (you, *polite*), 他 tā (he), 她 tā (she), 它 tā (it)
- **Plural:** add the plural suffix -们/-們 -men, such as 我们/我們 wǒmen (we), 你们/你們 nǐmen (you), and 他们/他們, 她们/她們, 它们/它們 tāmen (they) (see §6.4); another form is 大家 dàjiā (everyone; all)

- **Pronoun 自己 zìjǐ** (self) can be singular as in (3) or plural as in (4) depending on the context.

## NOTE

1. **Gender of personal pronouns:** There is no gender difference in Chinese. 他/她/它 he/she/it differ in writing, but are all pronounced as tā.
2. **Polite form:** 您 nín (you) shows deference to someone such as guests or teachers. For example, 老师, 您好/老師, 您好! Lǎoshī, nín hǎo! (Hello, professor!). It has no plural form. One may use 您几位/您幾位? Nín jǐ wèi? (lit. you-several-MW; How many of you?) to express the plural polite meaning.

(3) 小明觉得**自己**说得很好。

小明覺得**自己**說得很好。

Xiaomíng juéde zìjǐ shuō de hěn hǎo.

Xiaoming feels that **he himself** has spoken very well.

(4) 小明和小亮给他们**自己**订了一个学习计划。

小明和小亮給他們**自己**訂了一個學習計劃。

Xiaomíng hé Xiǎoliàng gěi tāmen zìjǐ ding le yí ge xuéxí jíhuà.

Xiaoming and Xiaoliang made a studying plan for **themselves**.

**自己 zìjǐ** (self) can be used after personal pronouns, such as:

- 我自己 wǒ zìjǐ (myself)
- 你自己 nǐ zìjǐ (yourself)
- 他/她/它自己 tā zìjǐ (himself/herself/itself)
- 我们自己/我們自己 wǒmen zìjǐ (ourselves)
- 你们自己/你們自己 nǐmen zìjǐ (yourselves)
- 他们/他們, 她们/她們, 它们/它們 + 自己 tāmen zìjǐ (themselves)

These forms usually carry an emphasized meaning as in (4) above or as in (5) and (6).

(5) (你不用告诉我, ) 我**自己**听懂了他的意思。

(你不用告訴我, ) 我**自己**聽懂了他的意思。

(Nǐ bùyòng gàosu wǒ,) Wǒ zìjǐ tīng.dǒng le tā de yìsi.

(You don't need to tell me.) I **myself** understood his meaning.

(6) 他们**自己**决定今天下午去看电影。

他們**自己**決定今天下午去看電影。

Tāmen zìjǐ juéding jīntiān xiàwǔ qù kàn diànyǐng.

They **themselves** have decided to watch a movie this afternoon.

Personal pronouns are similar to nouns in that both can be the **subject**, **object**, or **modifier** in a sentence, but they cannot be modified by adverbs. Normally, no modifier can be placed before personal pronouns; thus, the corresponding English sentence “**many of them** like sports” can be (7), but not (8).

- (7) 他们很多(人)喜欢运动。  
他們很多(人)喜歡運動。  
Tāmen hěn duō (rénn) xǐhuan yùndòng.  
Many of them like sports.
- (8) \*很多他们喜欢运动  
\*很多他們喜歡運動  
\*hěn duō tāmen xǐhuan yùndòng  
(lit. many they like sport)

## 9.2 Demonstrative pronouns

The basic demonstrative pronouns are 这/這 zhè (this) and 那 nà (that), from which all other demonstrative pronouns are derived. Demonstrative pronouns can be divided into the following types based on their meanings.

**Table 9.1** Demonstrative pronouns

Meaning	Refer to what is close	Refer to what is far
Thing, people	这/這 zhè (this)	那 nà (that)
Time	这会儿/這會兒 zhèhuǐr (this moment)	那会儿/那會兒 nàhuǐr (that moment)
Place	这儿/這兒 zhèr, 这里/這裏 zhèli (here)	那儿/那兒 nàr, 那里/那裏 nàli (there)
Manner/ Degree	这么/這麼 zhème (so; such; like this)	那么/那麼 nàme (so; like that)
	这样/這樣 zhèyàng (so; like this)	那样/那樣 nàyàng (so; like that)
	这么样/這麼樣 zhèmeyàng (so; like this)	那么样/那麼樣 nàmeyàng (so; like that)

NOTE “This” and “that” in English change to “these” and “those” when they are describing something plural, but 这/這 zhè (this) and 那 nà (that) do not have a plural form. Instead, the MW 些 (xiē) is used to indicate plurality, such as 这些/這些 zhèxiē (these) and 那些/那些 nàxiē (those).

### 9.2.1 Different pronunciations of 这/這 zhè, 那 nà, and 哪 nǎ in spoken Chinese and the usages of some demonstrative pronouns

You may be confused about the pronunciations of 这/這 zhè (this), 那 nà (that), and 哪 nǎ (which) as you may hear different pronunciations of these three words, such as 这/這 zhè/zhèi, 那 nà/nèi, or 哪 nǎ/něi. Although the pronunciations vary, they actually follow one rule; they are pronounced as zhèi,

nèi, and něi, when followed by a number or measure word in the spoken language. This is because,

- zhèi is the merging of the sounds of 这一/這一 zhè yī (this one),
- nèi is the merging of the sounds of 那一 nà yī (that one), and
- něi is the merging of the sounds of 哪一 nǎ yī (which one).

For ease of understanding, the pronunciations of these three words we summarized, with specific examples, in Table 9.2 (also see Table 8.1).

**Table 9.2** Pronunciations of 这/這 zhè, 那 nà, and 哪 nǎ

	zhè/nà/nǎ (standard)	zhèi/nèi/něi (in spoken)
这/這 (this)	这是书/這是書。 Zhè shì shū. (This is a book.) 这地方/這地方 zhè dìfang (this place) 这么/這麼 zhème (so) 这儿/這兒 zhèr, 这里/這裏 zhèli (here)	这个/這個 zhèi ge, 这一个/這一個 zhèi yí ge (this one) 这会儿/這會兒 zhèihuìr (this moment) 这些/這些 zhèixiē (these) 这样/這樣 zhèiyàng (this way)
那 (that)	那是书/那是書。 Nà shì shū. (That is a book.) 那地方 nà dìfang (that place) 那么/那麼 nàme (so) 那儿/那兒 nàr, 那里/那裏 nàli (there)	那个/那個 nèi ge, 那一个/那一個 nèi yí ge (that one) 那会儿/那會兒 nèihuìr (that moment) 那些 nèixiē (those) 那样/那樣 nèiyàng (that way)
哪(which)	我哪有空儿/我哪有空兒？ Wǒ nǎ yǒukòngr? (How do I have time?) (used as a rhetorical question) 你是哪的人 or 哪个地方的人/哪個地方的人? Nǐ shì nǎ de rén / něi ge dìfang de rén? (Where are you from?) 哪儿/哪兒 nǎr, 哪里/哪裏 nǎli (where)	哪个/哪個 něi ge, 哪一个/哪一個 něi yí ge (which one) 哪会儿/哪會兒 něihuìr (which moment) 哪些 něixiē (which ones) 哪样/哪樣 něiyàng (which way)

• **这/這 zhè and 那 nà:**

- can be the subjects:

- (9) **这**是一本书, **那**是一支笔。  
**這**是一本書, **那**是一支筆。  
 Zhè shì yì běn shū, nà shì yì zhī bì.

**This** is a book, and **that** is a pen.

- can modify a number and/or MW (read as **这/這 zhè** and **那 nèi**):

(10) **这**三本书是小明的, **那**支笔是小亮的。

**這**三本書是小明的, **那**支筆是小亮的。

Zhè sān běn shū shì Xiāomíng de, nèi zhī bì shì Xiǎoliàng de.

These three books are Xiaoming's, and that pen is Xiaoliang's.

### Alert!

这/這 zhè (this)／那 nà (that) are rarely used as an *object* in Chinese; however, when they are used in an object position, add an appropriate MW after. For instance, the sentence “I like this but don't like that.” should NOT be translated as:

\*我喜欢这, 不喜欢那/\*我喜歡這, 不喜歡那 \*wǒ xǐhuan zhè, bù xǐhuan nà.

Instead, an appropriate MW must be added depending on the context:

我喜欢**这个**, 不喜欢**那个**/我喜歡**這個**, 不喜歡**那個**。Wǒ xǐhuan zhèi ge, bù xǐhuan nèi ge. (referring to thing or person);

我喜欢**这张**, 不喜欢**那张**/我喜歡**這張**, 不喜歡**那張**。Wǒ xǐhuan zhèi zhāng, bù xǐhuan nèi zhāng. (referring to table or photo);

我喜欢**这件**, 不喜欢**那件**/我喜歡**這件**, 不喜歡**那件**。Wǒ xǐhuan zhèi jiàn, bù xǐhuan nèi jiàn. (referring to clothes or thing).

- can be the **objects** of prepositions:

(11) 你把**这**给老师。

你把**這**給老師。

Nǐ bǎ zhè gěi lǎoshī.

Give **this** to the teacher.

(12) 小明对**那**没有兴趣。

小明對**那**沒有興趣。

Xiāomíng duì nà méiyǒu xìngqù.

Xiaoming has no interest in **that**.

- 那 nà (that)** at the beginning of a sentence means “in that case”:

(13).a. 明天下雨, 我们还去长城吗?

明天下雨, 我們還去長城嗎?

Míngtiān xià-yǔ, wǒmen hái qù Chángchéng ma?

It will rain tomorrow. Should we still go to the Great Wall?

b. **那**我们就别去了。

**那**我們就別去了。

Nà wǒmen jiù bié qù le.

In **that case**, let's not go.

- 这么 /這麼 zhème (so, in this way), 那么/那麼 nàme, or nèime (so, like that, in that way) mostly modify adjectives or verbs:

(14) 你们学校这么漂亮。那些花那么好看。

你們學校這麼漂亮。那些花那麼好看。

Nǐmen xuéxiào zhème piàoliang. Nèixiē huā nàme hǎokàn.

Your school is **so** beautiful. Those flowers are **so** beautiful.

- 这样(儿)/這樣(兒) zhèiyàng(r) (like this) and 那样(儿)/那樣(兒) nèiyàng(r) (like that) modify verbs as in (15a) or adjectives as in (15b). When modifying a noun, they need to be followed by the particle 的 de as in (15c).

(15a). 你应该这样儿/这么写汉字, 不应该那样儿/那么写。

你應該這樣兒/這麼寫漢字, 不應該那樣兒/那麼寫。

Nǐ yīnggāi zhèiyàngr/zhème xiě Hánzì, bù yīnggāi nèiyàngr/nàme xiě.

You should write Chinese characters **this way**, not **that way**.

b. 小明的弟弟都长得这样儿/这么高了。

小明的弟弟都長得這樣兒/這麼高了。

Xiǎomíng de dìdì dōu zhǎng de zhèiyàngr/zhème gāo le.

Xiaoming's younger brother has grown up as tall as this.

c. 我们喜欢这样儿的老师。

我們喜歡這樣兒的老師。

Wǒmen xǐhuan zhèiyàngr de laoshi.

We like this kind of teacher.

- 这会儿/這會兒 zhèihuìr (now, at this moment) and 那会儿/那會兒 nèihuìr (then, at that moment) function as time words and can serve as the subject as in (16), and are often used after other words specifying the time as (17).

(16) 那会儿没下雪, 这会儿下了。

那會兒沒下雪, 這會兒下了。

Nèihuìr méi xià-xuě, zhèihuìr xià le.

There was no snow **at that moment**, but it is snowing **now**.

(17a). 明年这样儿, 小明和小亮该毕业了。

明年這樣兒, 小明和小亮該畢業了。

Míngnián zhèiyàngr, Xiǎomíng hé Xiàoliàng gāi bìyè le.

Xiaoming and Xiaoliang will graduate **at this time** next year.

b. 中学这样儿, 小明不喜欢运动, 现在很喜欢。

中學這樣兒, 小明不喜歡運動, 現在很喜歡。

Zhōngxué zhèiyàngr, Xiǎomíng bù xǐhuan yùndòng, xiànzài hěn xǐhuan.

Xiaoming didn't like exercising when he was in the high school, but he likes it now.

- 这儿/這兒 zhèr/这里/這裏 zhèli (here) and 那儿/那兒 nàr/那里/那裏 nàli (there) refer to places (Southern Chinese prefers to use 这里/這裏 zhèli and 那里/那裏 nàli), as in examples (18) and (19). Unlike English, 这儿/這兒 zhèr/这里/這裏 zhèli (here) and 那儿/那兒 nàr/那里/那裏 nàli (there) can be used as the subject at the beginning of a sentence (see Chapter 26).

(18) **这儿**有很多书, **那儿**有很多报纸。

**這兒**有很多書, **那兒**有很多報紙。

Zhèr yǒu hěn duō shū, nàr yǒu hěn duō bàozhǐ.

There are many books **here**; and there are many newspapers **there**.

(19) **这儿**是书店, **那儿**是图书馆。

**這兒**是書店, **那兒**是圖書館。

Zhèr shì shūdiàn, nàr shì túshūguǎn.

It is a bookstore **here**; and that is a library **there**.

**Alert!**

A common error that is made by beginning learners is that they often drop 这儿/這兒 zhèr (here) or 那儿/那兒 nàr (there) when it is used with a personal pronoun or noun as a place word. Please refer to Table 9.3 to avoid incorrect sentences.

**Table 9.3 Nouns and pronouns used with zhèr/nàr as a place word**

English	Chinese: Correct	Chinese: Incorrect
Xiaoming is reading books <b>at that table</b> .	小明在 <b>桌子那儿</b> 看书呢/小明在 <b>桌子那兒</b> 看書呢。 Xiǎomíng zài zhuōzi nàr kàn-shū ne.	*小明在桌子看书/*小明在桌子看書 * Xiǎomíng zài zhuōzi kàn-shū *小明看书在桌子/*小明看書在桌子 * Xiǎomíng kàn-shū zài zhuōzi
His book is at the teacher's <b>place</b> .	他的书在老师 <b>那儿/这儿</b> / 他的書在老師 <b>那兒/這兒</b> 。 Tā de shū zài lǎoshī nàr/zhèr.	*他的书在老师/*他的書在老師 *tā de shū zài lǎoshī
I want to go to Xiaoliang's <b>place</b> .	我要去小亮 <b>那儿/这儿</b> / 我要去小亮 <b>那兒</b> 。 Wǒ yào qù Xiǎoliàng nàr.	*我要去小亮 *wǒ yào qù Xiǎoliàng *我要去小亮的 *wǒ yào qù Xiǎoliàng de

### 9.3 Interrogative pronouns

There are the following interrogative pronouns in Chinese (see §24.2).

- Asking about people: 谁/誰 shéi (common in speaking)/shuí (who) as in (20a):

(20)a. **谁**喜欢唱歌跳舞？  
**誰**喜歡唱歌跳舞？  
**Shéi** xǐhuan chàng-gē tiào-wǔ ?

**Who** likes singing and dancing?

- b. **小亮**喜欢唱歌跳舞。  
**小亮**喜歡唱歌跳舞。  
**Xiǎoliàng** xǐhuan chàng-gē tiào-wǔ .  
**Xiaoliang** likes singing and dancing.

- Asking about things: 什么/什麼 shénme (what):

(21)a. 这是**什么**？  
 這是**什麼**？  
**Zhè** shì shénme?

**What** is this?

- b. 这是书。  
 這是書。  
**Zhè** shì shū.  
 This is a book.

- Modifying a number or MW: 哪 nǎ (which) modifies a number as in (22a) or an MW as in (22b) (read as něi):

(22)a. **哪**三本书是图书馆的？  
**哪**三本書是圖書館的？  
**Něi** sān běn shū shì túshūguǎn de?  
**Which** three books belong to the library?

- b. 小明在**哪**所大学读书？  
 小明在**哪**所大學讀書？  
**Xiǎomíng** zài **něi** suǒ dàxué dú-shū?  
**Which** university is Xiaoming studying at?

- Asking about places: 哪儿/哪兒 nǎr (common in speech) / 哪里/哪裏 nǎli (where) (Southern Chinese prefers to use 哪里/哪裏 nǎli), as in (23).

(23) 你从**哪儿**来？你的教室在**哪里**？  
 你從**哪兒**來？你的教室在**哪裏**？  
**Nǐ** cóng **nǎr** lái? **Nǐ** de jiàoshì zài **nǎli**?

**Where** do you come from? **Where** is your classroom?

- **Asking about the time:** 多会儿/多會兒 duōhuìr, and 什么时候/什麼時候 shénme shíhou (interrogative pronoun 什么/什麼 shénme + noun 时候/時候 shíhou [time]) (when; what time), as in (24).

- (24) 小亮**什么时候/多会儿**毕业?  
 小亮**什麼時候/多會兒**畢業?  
 Xiǎoliàng shénme shíhou/duōhuìr bìyè?  
 When will Xiaoliang graduate?

**NOTE** **什么时候/什麼時候** shénme shíhou (when, what time) vs. **什么时间/什麼時間** shénme shíjiān (what time): both phrases are acceptable when asking a specific time (what time) as in (25). When asking about a general time frame (when), 什么时候/什麼時候 shénme shíhou is more appropriate as in (24). You can see the difference between these two expressions by comparing the examples in (26).

- (25) 你**什么时候/什么时间**上课?  
 你**什麼時候/什麼時間**上課?  
 Nǐ shénme shíhou/shénme shíjiān shàng-kè?  
 What time will you have class?

- (26)a. 你**什么时候**有时间?  
 你**什麼時候**有時間?  
 Nǐ shénme shíhou yǒu shíjiān?  
 When will you have time?  
 b. \*你**什么时间**有时候  
 \*你**什麼時間**有時候  
 \*nǐ shénme shíjiān yǒu shíhou  
 (lit. you what time have time)

- **Asking about manner or degree:** 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how)/怎么样/怎麼樣 zhěnmeyàng (how about), as in (27).

- (27) 老师, 这个汉字**怎么**写?  
 老師, 這個漢字**怎麼**寫?  
 Lǎoshī, zhèi ge Hànzì zěnme xiě?  
 Professor,<sup>1</sup> how do I write this character?

- (28) 小明今天考试考得很好。你考得**怎么样**?  
 小明今天考試考得很好。你考得**怎麼樣**?  
 Xiǎomíng jīntiān kǎoshì kǎo de hěn hǎo. Nǐ kǎo de zhěnmeyàng?  
 Xiaoming did very well on the test today. How about you?

<sup>1</sup> 老师/老師 lǎoshī can be translated as “teacher” or “professor” in English; however, it is most accurately translated as “professor” when used as a title to refer to a college/university teacher, such as “Professor Zhang.”

- 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how come) can also ask a reason like 为什么/為什麼 wèishénme (why), for example, (29).

(29) 小亮今天**怎么/为什么**没来上课？

小亮今天**怎麼/為什麼**沒來上課？

Xiǎoliàng jīntiān zěnme/wèishénme méi lái shàng-kè?

**How come/Why** Xiaoliang didn't come to the class today?

Although both 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how come) and 为什么/為什麼 wèishénme (why) can be used to ask for a reason, 怎么/怎麼 zěnme carries a sense of “unexpectedness” and “surprise” in asking for a reason, while 为什么/為什麼 wèishénme (why) inquires about a general reason. To find out why water is important for human beings in a science class, one would most likely use 为什么/為什麼 wèishénme (why) as in (30).

(30) 水**为什么**对人很重要？

水**為什麼**對人很重要？

Shuǐ wèishénme duì rén hěn zhòngyào?

**Why** is water important to human beings?

However, if someone has always believed that air is important to human beings and to his/her surprise hears that the water is important, 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how come) may be used to express a sense of “surprise,” as in (31).

(31) 水**怎么**对人很重要？

水**怎麼**對人很重要？

Shuǐ zěnme duì rén hěn zhòngyào?

**How come** water is important to human beings?

- **Asking about the number:** Since 几/幾 jǐ expresses a number between 2 and 9, you can ask a child's age by saying 你几岁/你幾歲? Nǐ jǐ suì? (How old are you?), but to ask an adult's age 你多大? Nǐ duō dà? (How old are you?) is used. It must follow an MW as in (32) and (33); the use of an MW is optional with 多少 duōshǎo (how many) as in (34). **Please be aware**, 几/幾 jǐ can also express an approximate number meaning “several” (between 2 and 9) as in (32b) (see §7.6).

(32)a. 你有**几个**哥哥、姐姐、弟弟、妹妹？

你有**幾個**哥哥、姐姐、弟弟、妹妹？

Nǐ yǒu jǐ ge gēge, jiějie, dìdì, mèimei?

**How many** brothers and sisters do you have?

b. 这个周末，小亮看了**几**部电影。

這個週末，小亮看了**幾**部電影。

Zhèi ge zhōumò, Xiǎoliàng kàn le jǐ bù diànyǐng.

Xiaoliang watched **several** movies this weekend.

(33) 你今年十几岁？(to a teenage)

你今年十幾歲？

Ni jin nián shíjǐ suì?

Is your age between eleven and nineteen?

(34) 你们学校有多少(个)学生？

你們學校有多少(個)學生？

Nimen xuéxiào yǒu duōshao (ge) xuésheng?

How many students are there in your school?

**TIP**

Keep the following two points in mind for questions with interrogative pronouns:

- Chinese interrogative pronouns are not always at the beginning of a question as they usually are in English.
- To answer a question that has an interrogative pronoun, simply replace the interrogative pronoun with the answer without changing other words.

We will take the interrogative pronoun 谁/誰 shéi (who) to elaborate these two points in Table 9.4.

**Table 9.4** The position of interrogative pronoun 谁/誰 shéi (who) and answer in a sentence

Position	Question	Answer
Beginning of a sentence	谁是你的老师/誰是你的老師? Shéi shì nǐ de lǎoshī? Who is your teacher?	张老师是我的老师/張老師是我的老師。 Zhāng lǎoshī shì wǒ de lǎoshī. Professor Zhang is my teacher.
End of a sentence	张老师是谁/張老師是誰? Zhāng lǎoshī shì shéi? Who is Professor Zhang?	张老师是中文老师/張老師是中文老師。 Zhāng lǎoshī shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī. Professor Zhang is a teacher of Chinese.
Middle of a sentence	那是谁的书/那是誰的書? Nà shì shéi de shū? Whose book is that?	那是张老师的书/那是張老師的書。 Nà shì Zhāng lǎoshī de shū. That is Professor Zhang's book.

In the **Answer** column of Table 9.4, the bolded answers **张老师/張老師** Zhāng lǎoshī (Professor Zhang) in rows 2 and 4 and **中文老师/中文老師** Zhōngwén lǎoshī (teacher of Chinese) in row 3 simply replace the interrogative pronoun 谁/誰 shéi (who) in the corresponding questions to formulate statements. No other words in the sentences are changed.

To expand the example of 谁/誰 shéi (who) to other interrogative pronouns, when interrogative pronouns appear at various places in a question in Chinese, simply substitute the pronoun with the answer to answer the question.

## 9.4 Interrogative pronouns not used as questions

Sentences with interrogative pronouns do not constitute questions in two scenarios.

### 1. Generalization:

A. Interrogative pronouns used in a pair with 都 dōu (all; mostly in positive sentences) as in (35a)–(35c), or 也 yě (also; mostly in negative sentences) as in (35d); 无论/無論 wúlùn (more formal), 不管 bùguǎn (less formal) (no matter) can be added before interrogative pronouns to emphasize the generalization as in (35c).

- (35)a. **谁都**知道水的重要性。  
**誰都**知道水的重要性。

Shéi dōu zhīdào shuǐ de zhòngyàoxìng.

**Everyone** knows the importance of water.

- b. 你**什么时候都**可以问老师问题。  
你**什麼時候都**可以問老師問題。  
Nǐ shénme shíhou dōu kěyǐ wèn lǎoshī wèntí.

You can ask your teacher questions at **any time**.

- c. **无论什么问题都可以问。**  
**無論什麼問題都可以問。**  
Wúlùn shénme wèntí dōu kěyǐ wèn.  
(You) can ask **any** questions.

- d. **谁也**不知道小亮为什么没来上课。  
**誰也**不知道小亮為什麼沒來上課。  
Shéi yě bù zhīdào Xiǎoliàng wèishénme méi lái shàng-kè.  
Nobody knows why Xiaoliang did not come to the class.

B. Interrogative pronouns used in a pair, such as 谁...谁/誰...誰 shéi...shéi (whoever) as in (36), and 什么...什么/什麼...什麼 shénme...shénme (whatever) as in (37):

- (36) **谁**想问问题**谁**就可以问。  
**誰**想問問題**誰**就可以問。  
Shéi xiǎng wèn wèntí shéi jiù kěyǐ wèn.

**Whoever** wants to ask questions can go ahead and ask.

- (37) 你喜欢唱**什么**歌就唱**什么**歌。  
你喜歡唱**什麼**歌就唱**什麼**歌。  
Nǐ xǐhuan chàng shénme gē jiù chàng shénme gē.  
You may sing **whatever** song you like to sing.

## 2. Uncertain (cannot or do not want to specify):

(38) 好像谁告诉过我这件事。

好像誰告訴過我這件事。

Hǎoxiàng shéi gàosu guo wǒ zhèi jiàn shì.

It seems that **someone** has told me this thing.

(39) 我现在很饿, 想吃点什么。

我現在很餓, 想吃點什麼。

Wǒ xiànzài hěn è, xiǎng chī diǎn shénme.

I am hungry now and want to eat **something**.

The usage of 什么/什麼 shénme (something) in sentence (39) should be read as unstressed with a falling intonation. However, it should be stressed with a rising intonation in a question as in (40):

(40) 咖啡和茶, 你喜欢什么?

咖啡和茶, 你喜歡什麼?

Kāfei hé chá, nǐ xǐhuān shénme?

What do you like, coffee or tea?

## 9.5 Special pronouns: 每 měi (every) and 各 gè (each; every)

While 每 měi (every) and 各 gè (each; every) indicate an individual of a group, 每 měi directs the attention to **all** while 各 gè directs the attention to the **individuals** of the group. For example, (41) and (42).

(41) 每个学生都喜欢这家饭馆的饭。

每個學生都喜歡這家飯館的飯。

Měi ge xuésheng dōu xǐhuan zhèi jiā fānguǎn de fàn.

Every student (*all students*) likes the food in this restaurant.

(42) 各个学生都喜欢这家饭馆的饭。

各個學生都喜歡這家飯館的飯。

Gè ge xuésheng dōu xǐhuan zhèi jiā fānguǎn de fàn.

Each (*individual*) student likes the food in this restaurant.

Since 各 gè (each; every) focuses on the individual (*implying one*), it cannot be used with a number as in (44b). It can only be used with a limited number of MWs, such as 个/個 ge as in (42) and 位 wèi; and 样/樣 yàng (type) and 种/種 zhǒng (kind) as in (43). Alternatively, 每 měi (every) can be used with numbers as in (44a) and all MWs (see §8.6).

(43) 小明喜欢看各种各样的电影。

小明喜歡看各種各樣的電影。

Xiǎoming xǐhuan kàn gèzhǒnggèyàng de diànyǐng.

Xiaoming likes to watch all kinds and types of movies.

(44)a. **每**三个学生就有一个喜欢运动。

**每**三個學生就有一個喜歡運動。

Měi sān ge xuésheng jiù yǒu yí ge xǐhuan yùndòng.

One of **every** three students likes sports.

b. **\*各**三个学生就有一个喜欢运动

**\*各**三個學生就有一個喜歡運動

gè sān ge xuésheng jiù yǒu yí ge xǐhuan yùndòng

(lit. each three students then have one like sport)

## 9.6 Summary

We have learned that there are three types of **pronouns** in Chinese: **personal**, **demonstrative**, and **interrogative**. Personal pronouns refer to people. Demonstrative pronouns refer to things, people, place, time, manner, and degree. Interrogative pronouns match with the references of both personal and demonstrative pronouns. The relationships between these three pronouns and their meaning-matches can be summarized in Table 9.5.

**Table 9.5** The types of Chinese pronouns

Type	Meaning	Examples	Interrogative Pronouns
Personal Pronouns	thing/ animal	它 tā (it); 它们/它們 tāmen (they)	什么/什麼 shénme (what)
	human	我 wǒ (I); 你/您 nǐ/nín (you); 他/她 tā (he/she)	谁/誰 shéi (who)
		我们/我們 wǒmen (we); 你们/你們 nǐmen (you); 他/她 + 们/們 tāmen (they)	
		自己 zìjǐ (self); 别人 biérén (other); 大家 dàjiā (all; everybody)	
Demonstrative Pronouns	thing/ people	这/這 zhè (this) 那 nà (that)	哪 nǎ (which)
	place	这儿/這兒 zhèr; 那儿/那兒 nàr; 这里/這裏 zhèlǐ (here) 那里/那裏 nàlǐ (there)	哪儿/哪兒 nǎr, 哪里/哪裏 /nǎli (where)
	time	这会儿/這會兒 zhèhuír 那会儿/那會兒 nàhuír (this moment) (that moment)	多会儿/多會兒 duōhuír (what时候/什麼時候 shénme shíhou) (when)
	manner/ degree	这么/這麼 zhème (so, this way) 这(么)样/這(麼)樣 zhè(me)yàng (this way) 那么/那麼 nàme (that way) 那(么)样/那(麼)樣 nà(me)yàng (that way)	怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how) 怎(么)样/怎(麼)樣 zěn(me)yàng (how; how about)

Since some pronouns have different readings, we suggest that beginning learners learn the standard readings first while also being aware of the common sounds in oral communication. We have also introduced the special uses of interrogative pronouns in non-question sentences to express general or uncertain meanings. Finally, we have distinguished the different meanings of two special pronouns 每 měi (every) and 各 gè (each), both of which refer to the individual of a group; however, the former calls attention to the individual representing all, while the latter focuses on the individual of the group.

## 9.7 Exercises

### I Fill in the blanks with the appropriate pronouns:

- 这是( )的书/這是( )的書? Zhè shì ( ) de shū?
- 小亮的书在桌子( )/小亮的書在桌子( )。 Xiǎoliàng de shū zài zhuōzi ( ).
- 我们( )天有考试/我們( )天有考試? Wǒmen ( ) tiān yǒu kǎoshì?
- 老师, 这几个汉字( )写/老師, 這幾個漢字( )寫? Lǎoshī, zhèi jǐ ge Hánzì ( ) xiě?
- 这些汉字应该( )写/這些漢字應該( )寫。 Zhèixiē Hánzì yīnggāi ( ) xiě.
- 小亮( )天都有中文课/小亮( )天都有中文課。 Xiǎoliàng ( ) tiān dōu yǒu Zhōngwén kè.

### II Translate the following sentences into Chinese with the appropriate pronouns:

- We have a test every Friday.
- Wherever you want to go is fine with me.
- I am thirsty and would like to drink something first.
- Which book do you like, this one or that one?
- Your school's library is so big!
- No matter who says it, that is wrong.
- He himself forgot his girlfriend's birthday.

### III Use the appropriate interrogative pronouns to ask questions for the underlined parts:

Example:

Given: 他的朋友是美国学生/他的朋友是美國學生。

Tā de péngyou shì Měiguó xuésheng.

Answer: 谁是美国学生/誰是美國學生? Shéi shì Měiguó xuésheng?

他的朋友是哪国学生/他的朋友是哪國學生?

Tā de péngyou shì nǎ guó xuésheng?

- 我们明天八点考试/我們明天八點考試。 Wǒmen míngtiān bā diǎn kǎo-shì.
- 老师的家在北京/老師的家在北京。 Lǎoshī de jiā zài Běijīng.
- 这句话应该这么样说/這句話應該這麼樣說。 Zhèi jù yīnggāi zhèmeyàng shuō.

4. 我们明年这时候应该毕业了/我們明年這時候應該畢業了。  
Wǒmen míngnián zhè shíhou yīnggāi bìyè le.
5. 小亮很喜欢吃饺子/小亮很喜歡吃餃子。 Xiǎoliàng hěn xǐhuan chī jiǎozi.
6. 小明学习非常努力/小明學習非常努力。 Xiǎomíng xuéxí fēicháng nǔlì.

#### IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate pronouns:

1. A: 请问, 你叫( )名字/請問, 你叫( )名字?  
Qǐngwèn, nǐ jiào ( ) míngzì?  
B: 我叫张明。请问, 你在( )个学校上学/我叫張明。請問, 你在( )個學校上學?  
Wǒ jiào Zhāng Míng, Qǐngwèn, nǐ zài ( ) ge xuéxiào shàng-xué?  
A: 我在北京的一所大学上学。请问, 你从( )来/我在北京的一所大學上學。請問, 你從( )來?  
Wǒ zài Běijīng de yì suǒ dàxué shàng-xué. Qǐngwèn, nǐ cóng ( ) lái?
2. A: 请问, 今天是( )月( )号, 星期( )/請問, 今天是( )月( )號, 星期( )?  
Qǐngwèn, jīntiān shì ( ) yuè ( ) hào, Xīngqī ( )?  
B: 今天是三月二十二号, 星期四。你知道我们( )天放暑假/今天是三月二十二號, 星期四。你知道我們( )天放暑假?  
Jīntiān shì sān yuè èrshí èr hào, Xīngqīsì. Nǐ zhīdao wǒmen ( ) tiān fàng shǔjià?
3. A: 你知道今天( )来我们学校吗/你知道今天( )來我們學校嗎?  
Nǐ zhīdao jīntiān ( ) lái wǒmen xuéxiào ma?  
B: ( )来我都不关心, 因为我今天特別忙/( )來我都不關心, 因為我今天特別忙。  
( ) lái wǒ dōu bù guānxīn, yīnwei wǒ jīntiān tèbìé máng.
4. A: 你喜欢( )运动/你喜歡( )運動?  
Nǐ xǐhuan ( ) yùndòng?  
B: 我( )运动都喜欢/我( )運動都喜歡。  
Wǒ ( ) yùndòng dōu xǐhuan.  
A: 昨天我们学校跟别的学校比赛, 你知道( )个队赢了/昨天我們學校跟別的學校比賽, 你知道( )個隊贏了?  
Zuótiān wǒmen xuéxiào gēn bié de xuéxiào běisài, nǐ zhīdao ( ) ge duì yíng le?

# 10

## Verbs

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the different usages of transitive and intransitive verbs in Chinese
- ★ To know how to use separable verbs (i.e., verb-object compounds), a special construction in Chinese
- ★ To know how to express information about the time of activities by using the verb suffixes 了 le, 着/著 zhe, 过/過 guo, and the progressive marker 在 zài
- ★ To learn reduplication of verbs denoting “a little bit” for the action

Verbs are used to indicate the event/activity described in a sentence. Different kinds of events/activities indicated by verbs are shown in Table 10.1.

**Table 10.1** The types of events/activities described by verbs

Meaning	Example
Action	打 dǎ (hit), 跑 pǎo (run), 说/說 shuō (say), 写/寫 xiě (write), 听/聽 tīng (listen), 看 kàn (look; watch; read), 上学/上學 shàng-xué (attend school)
Mental activities	想 xiǎng (think), 爱/愛 ài (love), 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like), 希望 xīwàng (hope)
Change	生 shēng (give birth to), 死 sǐ (die), 开始/開始 kāishǐ (start), 发展/發展 fāzhǎn (develop)
Relations such as possession, existence, and others	是 shì (be), 有 yǒu (have), 在 zài (be at/on/in), 姓 xìng (be surnamed)

Basic Chinese verbs mostly have one or two syllables, and can be divided into two categories, depending on whether they take an object or not:

- **Transitive:** verb + object (see §10.1)
- **Intransitive:** cannot take an object (see §10.2)

Some words can be transitive or intransitive verbs with different meanings. For example, the verb 笑 xiào means “smile, laugh” without an object as in (1), and “laugh at” with an object as in (2).

(1) 小亮笑。

Xiǎoliàng xiào.

Xiaoliang smiles.

(2) 小亮笑小明。

Xiǎoliàng xiào Xiǎomíng.

Xiaoliang laughed at Xiaoming.

## 10.1 Transitive verbs

Most transitive verbs can take one single object. For example:

Verb	Object
说/說 shuō (say, speak)	中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese language)
听/聽 tīng (listen)	音乐/音樂 yīnyuè (music)
看 kàn (read; watch)	书/書 shū (book), 电影/電影 diànyǐng (movie)
写/寫 xiě (write)	汉字/漢字 Hánzì (Chinese character), 信 xìn (letter)
学习/學習 xuéxí (study)	汉语/漢語 Hán yǔ (Chinese language)

A few verbs can take two objects. The first object (Object<sub>1</sub>) typically refers to human beings, and the second object (Object<sub>2</sub>) refers to things in Chinese. The meaning is that the subject gives/offers someone (Object<sub>1</sub>) or something (Object<sub>2</sub>). For example:

Verb	Object <sub>1</sub> (human)	Object <sub>2</sub> (thing)
给/給 gěi (give)	他 tā (he)	书/書 shū (book)
教 jiāo (teach)	学生/學生 xuéshēng (student)	中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese)
问/問 wèn (ask)	老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher)	问题/問題 wèntí (question)

**NOTE** English has two ways of expressing Chinese double-object sentences, as shown in (3c) and (3d), whereas Mandarin Chinese has only one corresponding expression, as in (3a), in which Object<sub>1</sub> 小亮 Xiaoliang is a human being. Thus, (3b), in which Object<sub>1</sub> is a thing 书/書 (book) is incorrect (see §19.3).

- (3)a. 小明给了小亮一本书。  
 小明給了小亮一本書。  
 Xiāomíng gěi le Xiǎoliàng yì běn shū.
- b. \*小明给了—本书小亮  
 \*小明給了—本書小亮  
 \*Xiāomíng gěi le yì běn shū Xiǎoliàng
- c. Xiaoming gave Xiaoliang a book.
- d. Xiaoming gave a book to Xiaoliang.

## 10.2 Intransitive verbs

Some verbs cannot take an object, such as 醒 xǐng (wake) (4), 躺 tǎng (lie down), 毕业/畢業 bìyè (graduate), and 游泳 yóuyǒng (swim).

- (4) 小明醒了。  
 Xiāomíng xǐng le.  
 Xiaoming woke up.

## 10.3 Verb-object compounds

There are many disyllabic verbs in Chinese. Some of these verbs are inseparable and are simply examples of transitive or intransitive verbs, and others are separable.

- **Inseparable disyllabic verbs** consist of two parts that are integrated as one unit:
  - 学习/學習 xuéxí (lit. study-practice; study)
  - 打扫/打掃 dǎsǎo (lit. hit-sweep; clean up)
  - 讨论/討論 tǎolùn (lit. discuss-argue; discuss)
  - 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (lit. joy-happy; like)
  - 注意 zhùyì (lit. pour-thought; pay attention)
- **Separable verbs** (Verb-object compounds [V-O]):
  - 毕业/畢業 bì-yè (lit. finish-school work; graduate)
  - 洗澡 xǐ-zǎo (lit. wash-bath; bathe)
  - 跳舞 tiào-wǔ (lit. jump-dance; dance)
  - 睡觉/睡覺 shuì-jiào (lit. sleep-sleep; sleep)
  - 看书/看書 kàn-shū (lit. look-book; read books, study)
  - 开玩笑/開玩笑 kāi-wánxiào (lit. open-joke; to make fun of)

Unlike the inseparable disyllabic verbs above, many V-O compounds can be separated when used in a sentence and usually function as *intransitive verbs*. There are at least three ways for separable verbs (V-O compounds) to be separated in a sentence:

- (i) **by verb suffixes** 了 le as in (5), 着/著 zhe as in (6), or 过/過 guo as in (7):

NOTE The verb suffix 了 le indicates a completed action, 着/著 zhe indicates the continuation of a state or action, and 过/過 guo indicates a past experience (see §10.4).

- (5) 小明毕了业就找到了工作。

小明畢了業就找到了工作。

Xiǎomíng bì le yè jiù zhǎo dào le gōngzuò.

Xiaoming found a job right after graduation.

- (6) 小明洗着澡呢。

小明洗著澡呢。

Xiǎomíng xǐ zhe zǎo ne.

Xiaoming is taking a shower.

- (7) 小亮跳过舞。

小亮跳過舞。

Xiǎoliàng tiào guo wǔ.

Xiaoliang has danced before.

- (ii) **by a number** such as 一 yī (one), or an MW such as 个/個 ge, or a **number + MW** such as 一个/一個 yí ge (one MW) in (8) to indicate that the activity does *not take long* or is *not very intensive*, unlike the English indefinite article “a.”

- (8) 小亮想睡一/个/一个觉再看书。

小亮想睡一/個/一個覺再看書。

Xiǎoliàng xiǎng shuì yí/ge/yí ge jiào zài kàn-shū.

Xiaoliang wants to take a nap before studying.

- (iii) **by a modifier** such as 很长时间/很長時間 hěn cháng shíjiān (a long time) or 三个钟头/三個鐘頭 sān ge zhōngtóu (three hours) between the V-O 看书/看書 kàn-shū (study) and after the verb suffix 了 le in (9a), and 小明 Xiǎomíng between the V-O 开玩笑/開玩笑 kāi wánxiào (make fun of) in (9b). The particle 的 de is usually needed between the modifier and the object; thus, the V-O construction in this use becomes V-O → V + modifier + 的 de + O.

- (9a) 小明看了很长时间/三个钟头的书。

小明看了很長時間/三個鐘頭的書。

Xiǎomíng kàn le hěn cháng shíjiān/sān ge zhōngtóu de shū.

Xiaoming has studied for a long time/for three hours.

- b. 小亮开小明的玩笑。

小亮開小明的玩笑。

Xiǎoliàng kāi Xiǎomíng de wánxiào.

Xiaoliang made fun of Xiaoming.

## Alert!

The modifiers, such as 三个钟头/三個鐘頭 sān ge zhōngtóu (three hours) in (9a) and 小明 Xiǎomíng in (9b), cannot be placed after the V-O compounds as in (10a) and (10b); however, “three hours” and “Xiaoming” after the verbs in the English translations as in (9a) and (9b) are fine. This often causes one of the most common mistakes for learners of Chinese. Specifically, they are misled by English to place the modifier after the verb (V-O compound), and thus create “foreign” sentences like examples (10a) and (10b).

- (10)a. \*小明看书**三个钟头**/\*小明看書**三個鐘頭** \*Xiǎomíng kàn-shū  
sān ge zhōngtóu
- b. \*小亮开玩笑**小明**/\*小亮開玩笑**小明** \*Xiǎoliàng kāi wánxiào  
Xiǎomíng

**NOTE** Some V-O compounds, such as 说话/說話 shuō-huà (lit. say-word; to speak), are translated into transitive verbs in English. However, since there is already an object 话/話 huà (word) in the V-O compound 说话/說話 shuō-huà, it *cannot* take another object. If you want to say “Xiaoming speaks Chinese” in Chinese, you must use the simple verb 说/說 shuō (speak) instead of the V-O compound 说话/說話 shuō-huà. In other words, you should omit the “dummy object” 话/話 huà (word), and then add the object “Chinese” (中文 Zhōngwén) as in (11a), rather than as in (11b).

- (11)a. 小明**说**中文。  
小明**說**中文。  
Xiǎomíng **shuō** Zhōngwén.  
Xiaoming speaks Chinese.
- b. \*小明**说话**中文  
\*小明**說話**中文  
\*Xiǎomíng **shuō-huà** Zhōngwén  
(lit. Xiaoming say word Chinese)

**Common separable verbs (V-O Compounds)** also used as *intransitive verbs* in Chinese are 看书/看書 kàn-shū (lit. look-book; to study); 帮忙/幫忙 bāng-máng (lit. help-business; to help); 唱歌 chàng-gē (lit. sing-song; to sing); 吃饭/吃饭 chī-fàn (lit. eat-food; to eat); 考试/考試 kǎo-shì (lit. take an examination-test; to test).

## 10.4 Verb suffixes: 了 le, 着/著 zhe, 过/過 guo

Chinese verbs, unlike English verbs, **do not indicate tense**. Instead, the verb suffixes 了 le, 着/著 zhe, or 过/過 guo are attached after a verb to signify information on the relative time of the activity (often called aspects).

## ► 10.4.1 了 le, a marker for the completion of an action (perfective aspect)

The verb suffix 了 le indicates the *completion of an activity* and can be used for a past event as in (12), a present event as in (13), or a future event as in (14).

## ▪ Past:

(12) 昨天小明买了[一个手机](#)。

昨天小明買了[一個手機](#)。

Zuótian Xiāomíng mǎi le yí ge shǒujī.

Xiaoming bought a cell phone yesterday.

## ▪ Present:

(13) 小明现在有了[手机](#)。

小明現在有了[手機](#)。

Xiāomíng xiànzài yǒu le shǒujī.

Xiaoming has a cell phone now.

## ▪ Future:

(14) 明天小明打了[电话](#)就去图书馆。

明天小明打了[電話](#)就去圖書館。

Míngtiān Xiāomíng dǎ le diànhuà jiù qù túshūguǎn.

Xiaoming will go to the library immediately after making a phone call tomorrow.

The uses of the verb suffix 了 le are quite elusive in Chinese. Although it is used mostly to describe past events, it is not equivalent to the past tense in English. The three sentences above demonstrate that 了 le can be used in the past, present, and future. Interestingly, the three sentences in (12)–(14) above display the four typical conditions of using the verb suffix 了 le in Chinese.

**Condition I:** when a time word/phrase indicates the specific time that the action occurred, such as the nouns 昨天 zuótian (yesterday) in (12) and 刚才/刚才 gāngcái (just now) in (15), and the adverbs 刚/剛 gāng (just) and 已经/已經 yǐjīng (already) in (16); the suffix 了 le is often used after the verb.

(15)a. 老师刚才回答了小明的问题。

老師剛才回答了小明的問題。

Lǎoshī gāngcái huídá le Xiāomíng de wèntí.

The teacher just answered Xiaoming's question.

b. \*老师刚才回答小明的问题

\*老師剛才回答小明的問題

\*lǎoshī gāngcái huídá Xiāomíng de wèntí

(lit. teacher just answered Xiaoming's question)

- (16)a. 小明已经买了手机。  
 小明已經買了手機。  
 Xiǎomíng yǐjīng mǎi le shǒujī.  
 Xiaoming has already bought a cell phone.
- b. \*小明已经买手机  
 \*小明已經買手機  
 \*Xiǎomíng yǐjīng mǎi shǒujī  
 (lit. Xiaoming already bought cell phone)

Since the time words clearly indicate that the activities, 回答 huídá (answer) in (15) and 买/買 mǎi (buy) in (16), have completed before the speaking time, 了 le is used after the verbs; the sentences without 了 le, (15b) and (16b), are grammatically incorrect.

**Condition II: 了 le with a quantity object.** If there is a *quantity object* (number + MW + N), for example, 一个手机/一個手機 yí ge shǒujī (one cell phone) after the verb 买/買 mǎi (buy) in (12), it is common that the suffix 了 le is used to describe a past event, regardless of whether there is a time word, as in (12), or not, as in (17a) and (18a).

- (17)a. 小亮喝了三瓶可乐。  
 小亮喝了三瓶可樂。  
 Xiǎoliàng hē le sān píng kělè.  
 Xiaoliang drank three bottles of cola.
- b. \*小亮喝三瓶可乐  
 \*小亮喝三瓶可樂  
 \*Xiǎoliàng hē sān píng kělè  
 (lit. Xiaoliang drinks three bottles of cola.)

- (18)a. 小明学了两年中文。  
 小明學了兩年中文。  
 Xiǎomíng xué le liǎng nián Zhōngwén.  
 Xiaoming studied Chinese for two years.
- b. \*小明学两年中文  
 \*小明學兩年中文  
 \*Xiǎomíng xué liǎng nián Zhōngwén  
 (lit. Xiaoming studies two years Chinese)

Since there is a quantity object 三瓶可乐/三瓶可樂 sān píng kělè (three bottles of cola) and 两年中文/兩年中文 liǎng nián Zhōngwén (two years of Chinese) in (17a) and (18a) respectively, the suffix 了 le should be used. Otherwise, sentences (17b) and (18b) are not correct.

If there are two activities in a sentence describing a past event in which only one verb takes a quantity object, 了 le is often used after the verb with a quantity object, such as 三磅水果 sān bàng shuǐguǒ (three lb of fruit) in (19a) and 一家商

店 yì jiā shāngdiàn (one store) in (19b), or an *uncertain quantity object* such as 很多水果 hěnduō shuǐguǒ (many fruits) in (19a).

- (19)a. 刚才小亮去商店买了三磅水果/很多水果。  
剛才小亮去商店買了三磅水果/很多水果。

Gāngcái Xiǎoliàng qù shāngdiàn mǎi le sān bàng shuǐguǒ/hěnduō shuǐguǒ.

Xiaoliang just went to a store and bought three lb of fruit/many fruits.

- b. 刚才小亮去了~~一~~家商店买水果。  
剛才小亮去了~~一~~家商店買水果。

Gāngcái Xiǎoliàng qù le yì jiā shāngdiàn mǎi shuǐguǒ.

Xiaoliang just went to a store to buy fruit.

If both verbs take a quantity object in a sentence, 了 le is often used after both verbs as in (20):

- (20) 刚才小亮去了~~一~~家商店买了三磅水果/很多水果。  
剛才小亮去了~~一~~家商店買了三磅水果/很多水果。

Gāngcái Xiǎoliàng qù le yì jiā shāngdiàn mǎi le sān bàng shuǐguǒ/hěnduō shuǐguǒ.

Xiaoliang just went to a store and bought three lb of fruit/many fruits.

Based on this observation, we can summarize the rule for Condition II as follows:

If there is no additional context provided, the **default** use of 了 le with the quantity object, as in (17a) and (18a), refers to a past event. Conversely, if there is a verb taking a quantity object in a sentence describing a past event, 了 le is typically used after the verb. Its pattern is: V + le + number + MW + N.

**Condition III: 了 le with a verb indicates a state of time.** Specifically, it signals a period of time prior to the starting point of an event, but not the ending point, such as the verb 有 yǒu (have) in (13). The sentence indicates that a state of ownership, 有了手机/有了手機 yǒu le shǒujī (have a phone), occurred before the speaking time. Therefore, the suffix 了 le is used with the verb to refer to a state in which the starting point of ownership has already happened, but it still continues into the present, and it could potentially continue into the future. Additional such verbs include 饿/餓 è (be hungry) as in (21), 累 lèi (be tired), 病 bìng (be sick), and 醉 zuì (be drunk).

- (21) 小明饿了。  
小明餓了。  
Xiǎomíng è le.

Xiaoming is hungry.

The sentence in (21) indicates that the state of being “hungry” has already begun and that it continues into the time that the sentence is spoken, and maybe even into the future. Since the state “hungry” occurs before the speaking time, the suffix 了 le is used after the verb 饿/餓 è (hungry).

**Condition IV: two or more activities in a sentence** in which one action has been or will be completed before another action. In this case, 了 le is often used after the verb (s) whose action occurred earlier. An example of this is in (14) in which Xiaoming will complete the first activity 打电话/打電話 dǎ diànhuà (make a phone call) and then do the next activity 去图书馆/去圖書館 qù túshūguǎn (go to the library), so 了 le is used after the first verb 打 dǎ (make). Additional examples are (22) and (23).

(22) 小明每天洗了澡吃了饭去上课。

小明每天洗了澡吃了飯去上課。

Xiǎomíng měitiān xǐ le zǎo chī le fàn qù shàng-kè.

Xiaoming goes to class after showering and eating every day.

(23) 小亮昨天下了课就开始做功课。

小亮昨天下了課就開始做功課。

Xiǎoliàng zuótiān xià kè jiù kāishǐ zuò gōngkè.

Xiaoliang started doing homework right after class yesterday.

The actions 洗澡 xǐ-zǎo (take a shower) and 吃饭/吃飯 chī-fàn (eat) in (22) and 下课/下課 xià-kè (finish class) in (23) are completed before the action 去上课/去上課 qù shàng-kè (go to class) and 开始做功课/開始做功課 kāishǐ zuò gōngkè (start doing homework), respectively. Thus, 了 le is used after the verbs 洗 xǐ (wash), 吃 chī (eat), and 下 xià (be off) accordingly.

If we know this usage of 了 le, it may help us to understand the following two sentences, which both happened in the past; however, (24) uses 了 le and (25) does not.

(24) 昨天八点上课, 小明七点就来了。

昨天八點上課, 小明七點就來了。

Zuótiān bā diǎn shàng-kè, Xiǎomíng qī diǎn jiù lái le.

The class started at 8.00 a.m. yesterday, but Xiaoming had come at 7.00 a.m.

(25) 昨天八点上课, 小亮九点才来

昨天八點上課, 小亮九點才來

Zuótiān bā diǎn shàng-kè, Xiǎoliàng jiǔ diǎn cái lái.

The class started at 8.00 a.m. yesterday, but Xiaoliang did not come until 9.00 a.m.

Both sentences describe events that happened yesterday, but the suffix 了 le is used after the verb 来/來 lái (come) in (24) and not used in (25). The reason for this can be determined by focusing on the timelines of the activities in the two sentences.

In (24), the two activities are:

- 1st activity: 小明来/小明來 Xiǎomíng lái (Xiaoming came) at 7 a.m.
- 2nd activity: 上课/上課 shàng-kè (have class) at 8 a.m.

Since the first action 来/來 lái (come) occurs at 7 a.m. and is earlier than the second action 上课/上課 shàng-kè (have class) at 8 a.m., the suffix 了 le is used after the verb 来/來 lái (come) to indicate that the action 来/來 lái (come) is

completed before the activity 上课/上課 shàng-kè (have class), even though the 来/來 lái (come) is placed after 上课/上課 shàng-kè (have class) in the sentence.

In (25), the two activities are:

- 1st activity: 上课/上課 shàng-kè (have class) at 8 a.m.
- 2nd activity: 小亮来/小亮來 Xiǎoliàng lái (Xiaoliang came) at 9 a.m.

The action 来/來 lái (come) at 9 a.m. does not happen at 8 a.m., which is the class time, thus the suffix 了 le should not be used after the verb.

This comparison and analysis tell us that:

- i. not every sentence describing a past event should use the verb suffix 了 le as in (25); and
- ii. 了 le is often used after one activity occurred earlier than another activity in a sentence with two or more activities, such as in examples (14), (22), (23), and (24).

The four common conditions for using 了 le can give us a general idea of the uses of the verb suffix. However, since the verb suffix 了 le is one of the most difficult and complex grammar points in Chinese, we would like to provide the following tip for learning to use the suffix 了 le:

**TIP**

If you are a beginning learner, we suggest that you not make up sentences with 了 le by yourself; rather, you should imitate your teachers or textbooks by using the sentences with 了 le first. After you have encountered a lot of sentences with 了 le, you will better understand how to use it.

▪ **The negation of a sentence with 了 le**

When negating a sentence with the suffix 了 le, one should use 没/沒 méi (not) and drop the 了 le, as in (26).

(26)a. 昨天小明买了手机吗？

昨天小明買了手機嗎？

Zuótān Xiǎomíng mǎi le shǒujī ma

Did Xiaoming buy a cell phone yesterday?

b. 没, 昨天小明没买手机。

沒, 昨天小明沒買手機。

Méi, zuótān Xiǎomíng méi mǎi shǒujī.

No, Xiaoming did not buy a cell phone yesterday.

c. \*昨天小明没买了手机

\*昨天小明沒買了手機

\*zuótān Xiǎomíng méi mǎi le shǒujī

(lit. yesterday Xiaoming did not buy le cell phone)

In sentence (26b), the action 买/買 mǎi (buy) has not actually occurred before the speaking time, so the 了 le, which denotes the completion of the action, cannot be used. Thus, sentence (26c) is wrong.

### ► 10.4.2 着/著 zhe, a marker for the continuation of an action or state (durative aspect)

- Duration of an action (action starts but is not finished):

(27) 外邊下着大雨。

外邊下著大雨。

Wàibian xià zhe dàyǔ.

It is raining heavily outside.

(28) 小亮高興地唱着歌。

小亮高興地唱著歌。

Xiǎoliàng gāoxìng de chàng zhe gē.

Xiaoliang is singing happily.

- Duration of a state (an action to a thing and the thing is in a continuing state)

(29) 桌子上放着书。

桌子放著書。

Zhuōzi shàng fàng zhe shū.

The book is placed on the table.

(Someone placed the book on the table, and the book is still there)

(30) 门开着。

門開著。

Mén kāi zhe.

The door is open.

(Someone opened the door, and the door remains open)

- The verb suffix 着/著 zhe is often used after the first verb to describe the state or manner of the second action.

(31) 小明笑着說, “我們去看電影吧。”

小明笑著說, 「我們去看電影吧。」

Xiǎomíng xiào zhe shuō, “Wǒmen qù kàn diànyǐng ba.”

Xiaoming said with a smile, “Let’s go see a film.”

(32) 老师拿着书讲课。

老師拿著書講課。

Lǎoshī ná zhe shū jiǎng-kè.

The teacher lectured with a book (in his/her hand).

### ► 10.4.3 过/過 guo, a marker for a past experience (experiential aspect)

The verb suffix 过/過 guo is used after a verb to indicate that an action or a state has happened or has existed in the past, or has been experienced before, but no longer exists, for example, (33).

(33) 小明以前学过法语, 现在不学了。

小明以前學過法語, 現在不學了。

Xiǎomíng yǐqián xué guò Fǎyǔ, xiànzài bù xué le.

Xiaoming studied French before, but doesn't study it now.

**NOTE** Suffix **过/過** *guo* vs. suffix **了** *le*. The former implies that the action/state *happened before but does not exist* at the time of speaking. The latter signifies the *completion* of an action, which *may or may not exist* at the time of speaking. Compare the following two sentences:

A. 小明学过两年中文/小明學過兩年中文。Xiǎomíng xué guo liǎngnián Zhōngwén.

Xiaoming studied Chinese for two years before.

B. 小明学了两年中文/小明學了兩年中文。Xiǎomíng xué le liǎng nián Zhōngwén.

Xiaoming studied Chinese for two years.

- In sentence A: the experiential marker **过/過** *guo* signifies that Xiaoming has the *experience* of studying Chinese for two years, but the studying period does not overlap with the speaking time.

- In sentence B: **了** *le* means that the action **学/學** *xué* (study) *lasted* for two years, but it does not indicate whether it exists at the speaking time or if it will continue.

Let's see two more sentences:

C. 小亮去过中国/小亮去過中國。Xiǎoliàng qù guo Zhōngguó.

Xiaoliang has been to China (before) (she is not in China now).

D. 小亮去了中国/小亮去了中國。Xiǎoliàng qù le Zhōngguó.

Xiaoliang went to China (she is in China now most likely).

## 10.5 在 zài, a progressive marker for an action in progress

The basic form that indicates an action in progress is using the word 在 *zài* before a verb; the other progressive forms are derived from this basic form. For example, the following sentences with different forms can all express the meaning "Xiaoming is reading a book":

- 在 *zài* + V: 小明在看书/小明在看書。Xiǎomíng zài kàn-shū.
- 在 *zài* + V + ne 呢: 小明在看书呢/小明在看書呢。Xiǎomíng zài kàn-shū ne.
- 在 *zài* + V + 着/著 *zhe* + ne 呢: 小明在看着书呢/小明在看著書呢。Xiǎomíng zài kàn zhe shū ne.

**NOTE** Progressive marker **在** *zài* vs. Durative marker **着/著** *zhe*. 在 *zài* indicates an *action in progress*, while 着/著 *zhe* describes a *state of activity*. Let's compare the following dialogues to see the differences between 在 *zài* and 着/著 *zhe*:

i.

A: 小明做什么呢/小明做什麼呢? Xiǎomíng zuò shénme ne?  
(What is Xiaoming doing?)

B: 小明在穿衣服。Xiǎomíng zài chuān yīfú.

(Xiaoming is putting on his clothes.)

ii.

A: 小明穿什么衣服/小明穿什麼衣服？Xiǎomíng chuān shénm yīfú？  
(What clothes is Xiaoming wearing?)

B: 小明穿着红衣服/小明穿著紅衣服 Xiǎomíng chuān zhe hóng yīfú.  
(Xiaoming is wearing red clothes.)

Since the particle 呢 ne can also signify an action in progress, the two sentences with 呢 ne above can indicate a progressive action if 在 zài is not in the two sentences, such as 小明看书呢/小明看書呢。Xiǎomíng kàn-shū ne. (see §16.3.3).

- The adverb 正 zhèng (exactly; *emphasizing the time*) can precede the progressive marker 在 zài (emphasizing the state) in all the above forms to enhance the sense of action in progress:
  - 正 zhèng + 在 zài + V: 小明正在看书/小明正在看書。Xiǎomíng zhèngzài kàn-shū. Xiaoming is reading a book (right now).
- The adverb 正 zhèng (exactly) can precede a verb without 在 zài to signify an action in progress, but it is more natural with a particle 呢 ne at the end of the sentence. So the sentence above can be expressed as the following sentence:
  - 正 zhèng + V + 呢 ne: 小明正看书呢/小明正看書呢。Xiǎomíng zhèng kàn-shū ne. Xiaoming is reading a book (right now).

### Attention

The sentences “he is coming” and “he is arriving” denote a future meaning in English, so the two sentences cannot be used with the progressive marker 在 zài. Rather, the adverb 马上/馬上 mǎshàng (right away) must be added to indicate the imminent event:

#### Correct

他马上来/他馬上來。Tā mǎshàng lái.

(He is coming.)

他马上到/他馬上到。Tā mǎshàng dào.

(He is arriving.)

#### Incorrect

\*他在来/\*他在來

\*tā zài lái

\*他在到 \*tā zài dào

## 10.6 Reduplication of verbs

There are two basic forms of the reduplication of verbs, which denote the actions take a short amount of time (“a little bit”) and/or the attempt in taking the actions (“tentative”). The actions are normally carried out quickly or in a casual manner, compared to the verb being used alone.

- **A-A form** (A stands for a monosyllabic verb such as 说/說 shuō (say) in 说说/說說 shuōshuo (say). The second A reads as a neutral tone, for example, (34).

(34) 小明每天看看书, 听听音乐。

小明每天看看書, 聽聽音樂。

Xiaoming měitiān kànkan shū, tīngting yīnyuè.

Xiaoming reads books and listens to music (for a little bit) every day.

- **AB-AB form** (AB stands for a disyllabic verb such as 学习/學習 xuéxí (study) in 学习学习/學習學習 xuéxixué (study). This way of reduplication is different from the reduplication of adjectives which is a form of *AABB* (see §12.2). The form AB-AB in verbs can be considered as taking the *A-A* form if *AB* is viewed as one unit, an option that two *Bs* can be read as neutral tones:

(35) 小亮每天打扫打扫房间, 整理整理书架。

小亮每天打掃打掃房間, 整理整理書架。

Xiaoliang měitiān dǎsao-dǎsao fángjiān, zhěngli-zhěngli shūjià.

Every day, Xiaoliang cleans up the room a bit and rearranges the bookshelves a bit.

The two forms above are the basic forms, from which other forms are derived, as shown below:

- **A 一 yi A form:** The number 一 yī (one) is inserted between the *A-A* form. The two forms have about the same meaning:

(36) 小明每天看一看书, 听一听音乐。

小明每天看一看書, 聽一聽音樂。

Xiaoming měitiān kàn yi kàn shū, tīng yi tīng yīnyuè.

Xiaoming reads books and listens to music (for a little bit) every day.

- **A 了 le A / AB 了 le AB form:** The verb suffix 了 le is inserted into *A-A* or *AB-AB* to express the short duration of an action that has already been completed:

(37) 小亮说了说话, 唱了唱歌。

小亮說了說話, 唱了唱歌。

Xiaoliang shuō le shuō huà, chàng le chàng gē.

Xiaoliang spoke a bit and sang a bit.

(38) 我们讨论了讨论老师的问题。

我們討論了討論老師的問題。

Wǒmen tǎolùn le tǎolùn lǎoshī de wèntí.

We discussed the teacher's questions for a little bit.

- **VV-O (AA-B) form:** Some verb-object compounds are separable verbs such as 吃饭/吃飯 chī-fàn (eat), which can also be reduplicated and become a *VV-O* form (quickly and casually):

- (39) 小明今天不忙，就是上上课，吃吃饭。  
 小明今天不忙，就是上上課，吃吃飯。  
 Xiǎomíng jīntiān bù máng, jiùshì shàngshàng kè, chīchī fan.  
 Xiaoming is not busy today, and just goes to class and eats.

- **A-A 看 kàn /AB-AB 看 kàn form:** These forms carry a meaning of “try to do the action” (try and see). They underline the “tentative” and suggests that the activity will not necessarily be completed.

- (40) 这个字不难，你写写看。  
 這個字不難，你寫寫看。  
 Zhèi ge zì bù nán, nǐ xiěxie kàn.  
 This character is not difficult; why not give it a try?

- (41) 这个问题很难，我解释解释看。  
 這個問題很難，我解釋解釋看。  
 Zhèi ge wèntí hěn nán, wǒ jiěshì-jíeshi kàn.  
 This problem is very difficult; let me try to explain it.

**Reduplications carry a polite meaning:** Since the meaning of an action in reduplication form is “a little bit,” the reduplication of verbs is often used to express a polite meaning in a tactful manner when one gives suggestions or makes requests, as in (42) and (43), or to express a relaxing or easy feeling, as in (34), (35), (36), and (39).

- (42) 老师，您看看，这个字写得对不对？  
 老師，您看看，這個字寫得對不對？  
 Lǎoshī, nǐn kānkan, zhèi ge zì xiě de duì bu duì?  
 Professor, would you take a look – is this character written correctly?
- (43) 下课以后，我们一起打球，怎么样？  
 下課以後，我們一起打球，怎麼樣？  
 Xià kè yǐhòu, wǒmen yìqǐ dǎdǎ qiú, zěnmeyàng?  
 Let's play (basket)ball for a while after class, shall we?

**Some verbs cannot be reduplicated.** Since the reduplication of verbs expresses an **activity** with the meaning “a little bit,” activity verbs that have only yes/no states with scalar meanings cannot be reduplicated. This includes verbs describing mental activities, like 爱/愛 ài (love), 怕 pà (fear), and 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like), and verbs expressing existence, possession, or judgment such as 在 zài (to be at/in/on), 有 yǒu (to have; there is), and 是 shì (to be).

## 10.7 Verbs in sentences

Bridging the subject and object, a verb is the nucleus of a sentence; its main function is to serve as the predicate in a sentence. In English, a verb can become other elements in a sentence by adding *-ing* to serve as a gerund or participle or

adding *to* to form an infinitive. Since Chinese verbs are a kind of prototype, they do not change their forms but can serve as other elements in sentences, like the English gerunds and participle or infinitive verb forms.

▪ As a subject:

- (44) 学习不容易。  
學習不容易。  
Xuéxí bù róngyi.  
*Studying* is not easy.

▪ As an object:

- (45) 小明喜欢游泳。  
小明喜歡游泳。  
Xiǎomíng xǐhuan yóuyǒng.  
Xiǎomíng likes *swimming*.

▪ As an attributive:

- (46) 这个游泳池很大。  
這個游泳池很大。  
Zhèi ge yóuyǒngchí hěn dà.  
This *swimming* pool is big.

▪ As an adverbial (usually with the affix 着/著 zhe):

- (47) 学生们说笑着走进教室。  
學生們說笑著走進教室。  
Xuéshengmen shuōxiào zhe zǒu jin jiàoshì.  
Students walked into the classroom *laughing* and *talking*.

▪ As a complement:

- (48) 这辆车的速度高达每小时二百英里。  
這輛車的速度高達每小時二百英里。  
Zhèi liàng chē de sùdù gāo dá měi xiǎoshí èrbǎi yīnglǐ.  
The speed of the car reaches as high as 200 miles per hour.  
(lit. the car's speed [is] high, **reaching** per hour 200 miles)

## 10.8 Summary

We have learned that **verbs** are a very complex and important word class that can indicate various activities such as **actions**, **mental activities**, **changes**, **existences**, and more. Verbs can be divided into two groups: **transitive** and **intransitive**. Some Chinese verb-object compounds function as intransitive

verbs and are separable. Since verbs usually carry the information of time in sentences, we have explained that the verb suffixes 了 le, a marker for the completion of an action; 着/著 zhe, a durative marker; and 过/過 guo, an experiential marker, each signify information about time. Importantly, the suffix 了 le is not equivalent to the past tense in English, even though it is mostly used for past events. The progressive marker 在 zài, along with other forms, expresses the meaning of an action in progress in Chinese. The two basic forms of reduplication of verbs: A-A and AB-AB, denote a meaning of “a little bit” for the action. We have also shown that although verbs mainly function as a predicate, they can also function as other elements in sentences without changing the verb forms.

## 10.9 Exercises

### I Fill in the blanks with the verb suffixes 了 le, 着/著 zhe, 过/過 guo, or the progressive marker 在 zài:

- 我们昨天晚上看( )一个非常有意思的电影/我們昨天晚上看( )一個非常有意思的電影。  
Wǒmen zuótān wǎnshàng kàn ( ) yí ge fēicháng yǒuyìsì de diànyǐng.
- 小亮很早以前曾经去( )北京/小亮很早以前曾經去( )北京。  
Xiǎoliàng hěn zǎo yǐqián céngjīng (once) qù ( ) Běijīng.
- 学生们正( )考试呢/學生們正( )考試呢。  
Xuéshengmen zhèng ( ) kǎo-shì ne.
- 小亮, 明天你最好做( )作业再去看电影/小亮, 明天你最好做( )作業再去看電影。  
Xiǎoliàng, míngtiān nǐ zuìhǎo zuò ( ) zuòyè zài qù kàn diànyǐng.
- 今天小明一天就看( )三本书/今天小明一天就看( )三本書。  
Jīntiān Xiǎomíng yì tiān jiù kàn ( ) sān běn shū.
- 小明很早就到了教室, 一直在椅子上坐( )/小明很早就到了教室, 一直在椅子上坐( )。  
Xiǎomíng hěn zǎo jiù dào le jiàoshì, yìzhí zài yǐzi shàng zuò ( ).
- 我们的老师喜欢站( )上课/我們的老師喜歡站( )上課。  
Wǒmen de lǎoshī xǐhuan zhàn ( ) shàng-kè.
- 小亮以前学( )日语, 可是现在都忘了/小亮以前學( )日語, 可是現在都忘了。  
Xiǎoliàng yǐqián xué ( ) Rìyǔ, kěshì xiànzài dōu wàng le.

### II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:

- John did not do his homework yesterday.
- We went to a restaurant, watched a movie, and then came back to our dormitory yesterday.
- My friend is taking the test now.
- Have you ever been to a foreign country?
- John likes singing. He sang a lot of songs yesterday.
- Lisa graduated two years ago, but she has not found a job yet.
- John watched TV for five hours and only slept three hours yesterday.

8. John felt like there was nothing to do on the weekend and just took a nap and watched TV (for a while).

**III Use the appropriate form of reduplication of verbs to rewrite the following sentences.**

The verbs that need to be reduplicated are bolded and underlined:

**Example:**

Given: 小明每天看书, 写字/小明每天看書, 寫字。  
Xiǎomíng měitiān kàn-shū, xiě-zì.

Answer: 小明每天看看书, 写写字/小明每天看看書, 寫寫字。  
Xiǎomíng měitiān kànkan shū, xiěxie zì.

1. 我不会写这个字, 请你帮我/我不會寫這個字, 請你幫我。

Wǒ bú huì xiě zhèi ge zì, qǐng nǐ bāng wǒ.

2. 我们的屋子太乱了, 我想明天整理房间/我們的屋子太亂了, 我想明天整理房間。

Wǒmen de wūzi tài luàn le, wǒ xiǎng míngtiān zhěnglǐ fángjiān.

3. 我的手机不见了, 你帮我找手机吧/我的手機不見了, 你幫我找手機吧。

Wǒ de shǒuji bù jiàn le, nǐ bāng wǒ zhǎo shǒuji ba.

4. 这个电影很有意思, 你应该去看/這個電影很有意思, 你應該去看。

Zhèi ge diànyǐng hěn yǒuyìsì, nǐ yīnggāi qù kàn.

5. 明天的考试很难, 你应该好好准备/明天的考試很難, 你應該好好準備。

Míngtiān de kǎoshì hěn nán, nǐ yīnggāi hǎohāo zhǔnbèi.

6. 你太累了, 应该休息/你太累了, 應該休息。Nǐ tài lèi le, yīnggāi xiūxi.

**IV Complete the following dialogues:**

1. A: 请问, 除了中文以外, 你还学过什么外语/請問, 除了中文以外, 你還學過什麼外語?

Qǐngwèn, chúle Zhōngwén yǐwài, nǐ hái xué guo shénme wàiyǔ?

B: \_\_\_\_\_.

2. A: 请问, \_\_\_\_\_/請問, \_\_\_\_\_? Qǐngwèn, \_\_\_\_\_?

B: 我在高中学了三年中文/我在高中學了三年中文。

Wǒ zài gāozhōng xué le sān nián Zhōngwén.

3. A: 你喜欢坐着看书还是喜欢躺着看书/你喜歡坐著看書還是喜歡躺著看書?

Nǐ xǐhuan zuò zhe kàn-shū háishi xǐhuan tǎng zhe kàn-shū?

B: \_\_\_\_\_.

4. A: 你每天都做什么/你每天都做什麼? Nǐ měitiān dōu zuò shénme?

B: \_\_\_\_\_. (please use the reduplication of verbs)

5. A: 你昨天做了多长时间的功课/你昨天做了多長時間的功課?  
Nǐ zuótiān zuò le duō cháng shíjiān de gōngkè?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。

6. A: 你常常下了课以后做什么/你常常下了課以後做什麼?  
Nǐ chángcháng xià le kè yǐhòu zuò shénme?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。

#### V Read the following tongue-twisters aloud.

Pay attention to the verbs and the verb suffixes 了 le and 着/zhe:

**有个面铺门朝南，门上挂着蓝布棉门帘。摘了蓝布棉门帘，面铺门朝南，挂上蓝布棉门帘，面铺还是门朝南。**

**有個面鋪門朝南，門上掛著藍布棉門簾。摘了藍布棉門簾，面鋪門朝南，掛上藍布棉門簾，面鋪還是門朝南。**

**Yǒu** ge miànpù mén cháo nán, mén shàng guà zhe lán bù mián ménlián. Zhāi le lán bù mián ménlián, miànpù mén cháo nán, guà shàng lán bù mián ménlián, miànpù háishi mén cháo nán.

There is a noodle shop which door faces south, and there is a blue cotton door curtain hanging on the door. When the blue cotton door curtain is taken off, the door of the noodle shop faces south; when the blue cotton door curtain is hung on, the door of the noodle shop still faces south.

# 11

## Modal verbs

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the most common Chinese modal verbs, their meanings, and when to use them
- ★ To learn how to distinguish the meanings of similar modal verbs
- ★ To know the grammatical features of modal verbs

What are modal verbs, and how do they differ from ordinary verbs? You may have been prompted to ask this question by the title of this chapter. To determine what exactly a modal verb is, let's first look at the two sentences in examples (1) and (2).

- (1) 吃饭的时候，小明要喝茶。  
吃飯的時候，小明要喝茶。  
Chī-fān de shíhou, Xiǎomíng yào hē-chá.  
Xiaoming wanted to drink tea while eating.
- (2) 吃饭的时候，小亮要了一杯咖啡。  
吃飯的時候，小亮要了一杯咖啡。  
Chī-fān de shíhou, Xiǎoliàng yào le yì bēi kāfēi.  
Xiaoliang ordered a cup of coffee while eating.

There are two uses of 要 yào, which are shown in the sentences above.

- ♦ In sentence (1), 要 yào expresses Xiaoming's desire "want," and the main verb is 喝 hē (drink).
- ♦ In sentence (2), 要 yào is the main verb with the verb suffix 了 le describing a past activity, "ordered."

At the most basic level, **modal verbs** come before other verbs and "help" them, without describing the event directly, while **verbs** describe an event or activity. We will guide you in exploring more features of modal verbs in the following sections.

### 11.1 The most common modal verbs

**Modal verbs** are also known as *auxiliary verbs*. They express an attitude toward or judgment of the event or the activity being talked about from the speaker's perspective or based on shared knowledge.

The most common Chinese modal verbs can be categorized according to their primary meanings:

willingness	想 xiǎng (would like), 要 yào (want), 愿意/願意 yuànyi, 肯 kěn (be willing)
ability	会/會 huì (can; know how to), 能 néng (can), 能够/能夠 nénggòu (can)
possibility	能 néng (can), 会/會 huì (can; be likely), 要 yào (may), 可能 kěnéng (maybe)
permission	可以 kěyǐ (may), 能 néng (can)
necessity	应该/應該 yīnggāi, 应当/應當 yīngdāng (should; ought to), 要 yào (should)
obligation	得 děi (have to; must), 必须/必須 bìxū (must)

This list shows that each modal category can be expressed by several modal verbs and that some modal verbs can be used in more than one category, such as 能 néng (can), 会/會 huì (can; be likely; know how to), and 要 yào (want; may; should). As a result of the similarities and overlapping uses of modal verbs, there is often some confusion about how to distinguish their meanings and how to use similar modal verbs in sentences. In the following sections, we will explore the subtle differences between similar modal verbs.

## 11.2 Willingness and intention: 要 yào (want) vs. 想 xiǎng (would like)

Both of the modal verbs 要 yào (want) and 想 xiǎng (would like) can express a desire to do something. However:

- 要 yào expresses a stronger desire or a demand; and
- 想 xiǎng, whose original meaning is “think,” signifies a softer request or intention.

For example:

- (3)a. 你想喝点儿什么?  
你想喝點兒什麼?  
Nǐ xiǎng hē diǎnr shénme?  
What would you like to drink?

- b. 我想喝茶。  
Wǒ xiǎng hē-chá.  
I would like to have tea.

- (4)a. 你要喝点儿什么?  
你要喝點兒什麼?  
Nǐ yào hē diǎnr shénme?  
What do you want to drink?

b. 我要喝茶。

Wǒ yào hē-chá.

I want to drink tea.

In the dialogues (3a)–(3b) above, it is typically more *polite* to use 想 xiǎng (would like). 要 yào (want) is also grammatically correct, but it is usually reserved for when a speaker is very familiar with an addressee. Grammatically there is no difference between these two modal verbs, and they can often be used interchangeably. Although when used in a simple statement, such as in (3b), 想 xiǎng (would like) carries the implication of asking for permission and introducing a suggestion, 要 yào (want) in (4b) is a clear demand. As such, native speakers of Chinese find it more polite to use 想 xiǎng (would like).

Since the meanings of the words 要 yào (want) and 想 xiǎng (would like) are subtly different, their combinations with other words and usages are also different.

- 要 yào (want) can be used with words meaning “absolutely,” such as the adverb 一定 yíding (certainly) and the fixed expression 非...不可 fēi...bù kě (definitely), to enhance desire. 想 xiǎng (would like) cannot be used in this way.
- 想 xiǎng (would like) can be used with the hedging expression 有(一)点儿/有(一)點兒 yǒu (yì)diǎnr (a little bit; somewhat) to soften desire, and some adverbs of degree, such as 很 hěn (very) and 非常 fēicháng (very), to strengthen desire. 要 yào cannot be used in this way.

These differences are summarized in Table 11.1.

**Table 11.1** Examples of words used with 要 yào (want) and 想 xiǎng (would like)

要 yào (want)	想 xiǎng (would like)
一定 yíding (certainly) 非...不可 fēi...bù kě (absolutely)	有(一)点儿/有(一)點兒 yǒu (yì)diǎnr (a little bit); 很 hěn (very); 非常 fēicháng (very)
小亮一定要去游泳。 Xiǎoliàng yíding yào qù yóuyǒng. Xiaoliang certainly wants to go swimming. 小亮非要去游泳不可。 Xiǎoliàng fēi yào qù yóuyǒng bù kě. Xiaoliang definitely wants to go swimming.	小明有点儿想去游泳/小明有點兒想去游泳。 Xiǎoliàng yǒu diǎnr xiǎng qù yóuyǒng. Xiaoliang wants to go swimming a little bit. 小明很想游泳。 Xiǎoliàng hěn xiǎng qù yóuyǒng. Xiaoliang wants to go swimming very much.

- 想 xiǎng can be added before 要 yào to soften the mood of the sentence.

(5) 小明想要去长城。

小明想要去長城。

Xiǎomíng xiǎng yào qù Chángchéng.

Xiaoming would like to go to the Great Wall.

- **Negation:** 不想 bù xiǎng (would not like to) is often used as a polite decline to express the meaning of “don’t want to,” as in (6b), while 不要 bú yào (don’t want to), as in (6c), is a strong and active refusal.

(6)a. 你要喝咖啡吗？

你要喝咖啡嗎？

Nǐ yào hē kāfēi ma?

Do you want to drink coffee?

b. 我不想喝咖啡。

Wǒ bù xiǎng hē kāfēi.

I don’t want (would not like) to drink coffee.

c. 我不要喝咖啡。

Wǒ bú yào hē kāfēi.

I don’t want to drink coffee.

- The negation form 不要 bú yào (don’t) that is often shortened as 别 bié (don’t) through sound merging, specifically bú yào → bié in a rapid reading, can be used in an imperative sentence, as shown in example (7):

(7) 下雨了, 别 (or 不要) 去长城了。

下雨了, 别 (or 不要) 去長城了。

Xià-yǔ le, bié (or bú yào) qù Chángchéng le.

It is raining. Don’t go to the Great Wall.

By contrast, 不想 bù xiǎng (would not like) cannot be used in an imperative sentence.

- 要 yào as a modal verb can also indicate other meanings, such as possibility “may” and necessity “should” (see §11.4 and §11.5).

**NOTE** 要 yào and 想 xiǎng can also act as verbs. For example:

**要 yào:**

1. 你要什么/你要什麼？ Nǐ yào shénme? (What do you want?)

2. 我要咖啡。 Wǒ yào kāfēi. (I want coffee.)

**想 xiǎng:**

1. 小亮想妈妈/小亮想媽媽。 Xiǎoliàng xiǎng māma. (Xiaoliang misses her mom.)

2. 小明想办法学习/小明想辦法學習。 Xiāomíng xiǎng bànfǎ xuéxí. (Xiaoming is thinking of ways to study.)

3. 小明想小亮不会来上课/小明想小亮不會來上課。 Xiāomíng xiǎng Xiǎoliàng bú huì lái shàng-kè. (Xiaoming thinks/guesses that Xiaoliang will not come to class.)

### 11.3 Ability: 能 néng (can) vs. 会/會 huì (can; know how to)

The modal verbs 能 néng (can) and 会/會 huì (can; know how to) express two different types of abilities.

- 能 néng signifies the ability that a person possesses, or the capacity or opportunity provided by circumstances (including permission), (8)–(9).
- 会/會 huì indicates the ability and skills gained through learning (10).

(8) 小明打字很快, 一分钟能打 100 个字。  
小明打字很快, 一分鐘能打 100 個字。

Xiaoming dǎ-zì hěn kuài, yì fēnzhōng néng dǎ yībāi ge zì.

Xiaoming types very fast and he can type 100 words a minute.

(9) 小明今天不能打字, 因为他的手摔坏了。  
小明今天不能打字, 因為他的手摔壞了。

Xiaoming jīntiān bù néng dǎ-zì, yīnwei tā de shǒu shuāi.huài le.

Xiaoming cannot type today since he fell and hurt his hand.

(10)a. 你会打字吗?  
你會打字嗎?  
Nǐ huì dǎ-zì ma?

Do you know how to type?

b. 会。我会打字, 但是一分钟只能打 10 个字。  
會。我會打字, 但是一分鐘只能打 10 個字。

Huì, wǒ huì dǎ-zì, dànshì yì fēnzhōng zhǐ néng dǎ shí ge zì.

Yes, I know how to type, but I can only type ten words a minute.

By comparing the above sentences, the following can be observed:

- 能 néng indicates ability with a certain level of *efficiency*, such as typing 100 or 10 words per minute as in sentence (8) and sentence (10b), respectively. Or, ability may be *constrained by some factors*, such as a physical condition (an injured hand) in (9).
- 会/會 huì denotes ability and *skill acquired by learning* or practicing as in sentence (10b); specifically, the skill of typing is gained through learning. Its usage often expresses a subjective judgment of one's own ability. For instance, it is likely for one to reply to (10b) by saying the sentence in example (10c):

(10)c. 那么你不算会打字。  
那麼你不算會打字。  
Nàme nǐ bú suàn huì dǎ-zì.

Then you cannot really say that you know how to type (because you can only type ten words a minute).

- The modal verb 可以 kěyǐ (be able to; can) carries a meaning similar to 能 néng, indicating capability; thus, the modal verb 能 néng in the above sentences can be replaced by 可以 kěyǐ (see §11.4).

NOTE 会/會 huì is also a transitive verb meaning “know,” but its object (noun) must be related to language or some specific subjects to be learned. For example:

小明会英文也会中文/小明會英文也會中文。Xiǎomíng huì Yīngwén yě huì Zhōngwén. (Xiaoming knows English and Chinese).

## 11.4 Permission and possibility: 可以 kěyǐ (may) vs. 能 néng (can) and 会/會 huì (will; can)

The modal verbs 可以 kěyǐ (may) and 能 néng (can) carry similar meanings, giving **permission** or **suggestions**, or asking for permission in a question, as is seen in examples (11) and (12). 可以 kěyǐ is more *polite* when asking for and giving permission. However, in the negative context of forbiddance, 不可以 bù kěyǐ is stronger and carries a strong sense of prohibition (such as when a parent disciplines a child).

- (11)a. 上课的时候可以/能吃东西吗?  
上課的時候可以/能吃東西嗎?  
Shàng-kè de shíhou kěyǐ/néng chī dōngxi ma?  
May/Can I eat during class time?
- b. 不可以/不能。但是你可以/能喝水。  
Bù kěyǐ/Bù néng. Dànshì nǐ kěyǐ/néng hē-shuǐ.  
No. But you may/can drink water.

In addition, 可以 kěyǐ, 能 néng, and 会/會 huì can all express **possibility**, but there are subtle differences. For example, (12).

- (12)a. 下雨了, 你觉得小明会/能/可以来上课吗?  
下雨了, 你覺得小明會/能/可以來上課嗎?  
Xià-yǔ le, nǐ juéde Xiǎomíng huì/néng/kěyǐ lái shàng-kè ma?  
It is raining. Do you think that Xiaoming will/can/will be able to come to class?
- b. 他会/能/可以来。  
他會/能/可以來。  
Tā huì/néng/kěyǐ lái.  
He will (most likely)/can/will be able to come.

In (12a) and (12b), the following can be observed:

- 会/會 huì denotes the *actual possibility* of the event happening, likely based on an *objective* observation. For example, perhaps Xiaoming has never missed a single class, no matter how bad the weather is.
- 能 néng and 可以 kěyǐ signify a more *subjective* judgment of the possibility by associating the possibility with some kind of *capacity*. Perhaps the speaker knows that Xiaoming can come to the class because he has an umbrella or a car (the capacity), and therefore he has the ability to drive the car or use the umbrella to get to class.

Because of this difference, 会/會 huì can be used to indicate a *natural* and *objective* possibility, as can be seen in (13). Neither 能 néng nor 可以 kěyǐ has this function:

- (13) 一会儿会下雨  
一會兒會下雨。  
Yí huìr huì xià-yǔ.  
It may rain soon.

The modal verb that is categorized under possibility, 要 yào (may; will), has a similar meaning to 会/會 huì, but it has more certainty than 会/會 huì, and thus it is more subjective, as in (14).

- (14) 一会儿要下雨。  
一會兒要下雨。  
Yí huìr yào xià-yǔ.  
It will rain soon.

### 11.5 Necessity and obligation: 应该/應該 yīnggāi (should; ought to) vs. 得 děi (have to; must)

- The modal verb 应该/應該 yīnggāi expresses the meaning of obligation, such as “ought to,” “should.”

- (15) 老师应该帮助学生。  
老師應該幫助學生。  
Lǎoshī yīnggāi bāngzhù xuésheng.  
Teachers should help students.

To negate the sentence in example (15), one can use 不应该/不應該 bù yīnggāi or 不该/不該 bù gāi (shouldn't), which means that one has an obligation to not do something, not that one does not have the obligation.

- The modal verb 得 děi (have to; must) is similar to 应该/應該 yīnggāi in expressing an obligation, but with the speaker's strong judgment and urging added (16). It is often used in spoken Chinese, especially in northern China.

- (16) 学生得上课、做功课。  
學生得上課、做功課。  
Xuésheng děi shàng-kè, zuò gōngkè.  
Students must go to class and do homework.

#### Alert!

To negate the sentence in (16), you cannot use \*不得 \*bù děi, but rather 不用 bú yòng (need not), as in (17).

(17) 学生**不用**上课、做功课。

學生**不用**上課、做功課。

Xuésheng bú yòng shàng-kè, zuò gōngkè.

Students need not go to class nor do homework.

**NOTE** The Chinese punctuation mark “、” (頓号/頓號 dùnhào) as in (16) and (17) indicates a slight-pause between two or more coordinative words or phrases. It functions like “and” in English:

- In (16), the two coordinative verb phrases 上课/上課 shàng-kè (go to class) and 做功课/做功課 zuò gōngkè (do homework) are connected by the mark “、” as one unit governed by the modal verb 得 děi (must); specifically, 得上課/得上課 and 得做功课/得做功課 ([students] must go to class and must do homework).
- In (17), the two phrases 上课/上課 shàng-kè (go to class) and 做功课/做功課 zuò gōngkè (do homework), linked by mark “、” are both dominated by the negative form 不用 bú yòng (need not); specifically, 不用上課/不用上課 and 不用做功课/不用做功課 ([students] need not go to class and need not do homework). It is **by no means** that “students do not need to go to class, (but) do homework.”
- 要 yào as a modal verb can also express objective necessity as in (18).

(18) 学中文**要**注意声调。

學中文**要**注意聲調。

Xué Zhōngwén yào zhùyì shēngdiào.

One must pay attention to the tones when studying Chinese.

- To negate this 要 yào, use 不用 bú yòng (need not), as in (19), rather than 不要 bú yào which means “don’t.”

(19) 学中文**不用**担心声调。

學中文**不用**擔心聲調。

Xué Zhōngwén bú yòng dānxīn shēngdiào.

One need not worry about the tones when studying Chinese.

## 11.6 The grammatical features of modal verbs

Modal verbs have the following grammatical features:

- They must occur before a verb or an adjective, but not before a noun.
- They cannot be reduplicated.
- They cannot be followed by the verb suffixes 了 le, 着/著 zhe, or 过/過 guo.
- They can be used in the V-not-V form to ask a question, with the exception of 得 děi (have to; must), for example,

(20) 你想不想去长城?

你想不想去長城?

Nǐ xiǎng bu xiǎng qù Chángchéng?

Do you want to go to the Great Wall?

\*我们得不得去上课

\*我們得不得去上課

wǒmen děi bu děi qù shàng-kè

(lit. we have not have to go to class)

- They can be used alone as a reply to a yes–no question, with the exception of 得 děi (have to; must). For example,

(21)a. 你能不能举起 200 磅的东西?

你能不能舉起 200 磅的東西?

Nǐ néng bu néng jǔ qǐ èrbǎi bàng de dōngxi?

Can you lift something that weighs 200 pounds up?

b. 能/我能。

Néng/Wǒ néng.

Can/I can.

(22)a. 我们得去上课吗?

我們得去上課嗎?

Wǒmen děi qù shàng-kè ma?

Must we go to class?

b. 得去/我们得去 (上课)。 (must be 得去 děi qù, not: \*得 \*děi)  
得去/我們得去 (上課)。

Děi qù/Wǒmen děi qù (shàng-kè).

Must go/We must go (to class).

## 11.7 Summary

We have distinguished the meanings of the most common **modal verbs** by separating them into different groups in this chapter. We have seen that modal verbs assist verbs in expressing the mood of a sentence, such as **willingness**, **ability**, **possibility**, **permission**, and **necessity**. We have observed that some modal verbs can express different meanings, such as 要 yào, which can indicate willingness (“want”), possibility (“may”), and necessity (“should”). Conversely, one mood can be expressed by two or more modal verbs, such as 能 néng and 可以 kěyǐ which can both express permission, although 可以 kěyǐ is a more polite way to do so. At the end of the discussion, we listed the grammatical features of modal verbs, that is, they must precede a verb or an adjective, but not a noun, in a sentence. Furthermore, they cannot be reduplicated, nor followed by the verb suffixes 了 le, 着 zhe, or 过 guo, although they can be used in the V-not-V pattern to ask questions.

## 11.8 Exercises

### I Fill in the blanks with appropriate modal verbs (可以 kěyǐ/能 néng, 得 děi, 要 yào, 会/會 huì, 想 xiǎng):

- 雨下得很大, 可是小明非( )去长城不可/雨下得很大, 可是小明非( )去長城不可。  
Yǔ xià de hěn dà, kěshì Xiǎomíng fēi ( ) qù Chángchéng bù kě.
- 虽然明天有考试, 可是今天晚上小亮还是有点儿( )去看电影/雖然明天有考試, 可是今天晚上小亮還是有點兒( )去看電影。  
Suīrán míngtiān yǒu kǎoshì, kěshì jīntiān wǎnshàng Xiǎoliàng háishi yǒudiǎnr ( ) qù kàn diànyǐng.
- 我朋友( )说汉语, 可是不( )写汉字/我朋友( )說漢語, 可是不( )寫漢字。  
Wǒ péngyou ( ) shuō Hánnyǔ, kěshì bù ( ) xiě Hánzì.
- 老师告诉学生上课的时候不( )看手机/老師告訴學生上課的時候不( )看手機。  
Lǎoshi gàosù xuésheng shàng-kè de shíhou bù ( ) kàn shǒujī.
- 学外语就( )多说多听/學外語就( )多說多聽。  
Xué wàiyǔ jiù ( ) duō shuō duō tīng.
- 这个盒子很大, ( )放进去十个苹果/這個盒子很大, ( )放進去十個蘋果。  
Zhèi ge hézi hěn dà, ( ) fàng jinqu shí ge píngguǒ.
- 今天天气很好, 不( )下雨/今天天氣很好, 不( )下雨。  
Jīntiān tiānqì hěn hǎo, bù ( ) xià-yǔ.

### II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:

- Students should hand in their homework on time.
- My friend writes Chinese characters very fast and can write 50 characters within one minute.
- May I sit in this chair?
- What would you like to eat? Fish or beef?
- Lisa wants to watch the movie this evening, not the game.
- John wants to go to China to study Chinese next year.
- Do you think it will rain this evening?
- We have to take the test this afternoon.
- You are a good student and need not worry about your test.
- John knows how to play basketball, but he cannot play today because his hand was injured yesterday.

### III Change the following sentences to negative sentences:

Example:

Given: 上课可以吃东西/上課可以吃東西。 Shàng-kè kěyǐ chī dōngxi.

Answer: 上课不可以吃东西/上課不可以吃東西。 Shàng-kè bù kěyǐ chī dōngxi.

- 我们每天都得上课/我們每天都得上課。

Wǒmen měitiān dōu děi shàng-kè.

2. 明天有考试, 今晚你要准备这个考试/明天有考試, 今晚你要準備這個考試。

Míngtiān yǒu kǎoshì, jīnwǎn nǐ yào zhǔnbèi zhèi ge kǎoshì.

3. 小明会开车, 也会修车/小明會開車, 也會修車。

Xiǎomíng huì kāi-chē, yě huì xiū chē.

4. 小明应该上外语课/小明應該上外語課。

Xiǎomíng yīnggāi shàng wàiyǔ kè.

**IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate modal verbs:**

1. A: 老师, 我\_\_\_\_\_问您一个问题/老師, 我\_\_\_\_\_問您一個問題。

Lǎoshī, wǒ \_\_\_\_\_ wèn nín yí ge wèntí.

B: \_\_\_\_\_。

2. A: 长城很有意思, 你这个周末\_\_\_\_\_去/長城很有意思, 你這個週末\_\_\_\_\_去?

Chángchéng hěn yǒuyìsī, nǐ zhèi ge zhōumò \_\_\_\_\_ qù?

B: 我很\_\_\_\_\_去, 可是这个周末我有别的事, 不\_\_\_\_\_去/我很\_\_\_\_\_去, 可是這個週末我有別的事, 不\_\_\_\_\_去。

Wǒ hěn \_\_\_\_\_ qù, kěshì zhèi ge zhōumò wǒ yǒu bié de shì, bù \_\_\_\_\_ qù.

3. A: 你觉得今天\_\_\_\_\_下雨吗/你覺得今天\_\_\_\_\_下雨嗎?

Nǐ juéde jīntiān \_\_\_\_\_ xià-yǔ ma?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。

4. A: 你姐姐\_\_\_\_\_说中文吗/你姐姐\_\_\_\_\_說中文嗎?

Nǐ jiějie \_\_\_\_\_ shuō Zhōngwén ma?

B: 她不\_\_\_\_\_说中文, 可是她\_\_\_\_\_说法语和日语/她不\_\_\_\_\_說中文, 可是她\_\_\_\_\_說法語和日語。

Tā bù \_\_\_\_\_ shuō Zhōngwén, kěshì tā \_\_\_\_\_ shuō Fǎyǔ hé Rìyǔ.

5. A: 你想去中国学中文吗/你想去中國學中文嗎?

Nǐ xiǎng qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén ma?

B: 今年我很忙, 不\_\_\_\_\_去, 但是明年我一定\_\_\_\_\_去。

Jīnnián wǒ hěn máng, bù \_\_\_\_\_ qù, dànshì míngnián wǒ yídìng \_\_\_\_\_ qù.

6. A: 老师, 谢谢您帮我/老師, 謝謝您幫我。

Lǎoshī, xièxie nín bāng wǒ.

B: 不用谢, 老师\_\_\_\_\_帮助学生/不用謝, 老師\_\_\_\_\_幫助學生。

Bú yòng xiè, lǎoshī \_\_\_\_\_ bāngzhù xuésheng.

**V Read the following tongue-twisters aloud. Pay attention to the modal verbs.**

会炖我的红烧肉炖冻豆腐, 就请炖我的红烧肉炖冻豆腐。不会炖我的红烧肉炖冻豆腐, 就请不要炖我的红烧肉炖冻豆腐。炖坏了我的红烧肉炖冻豆腐, 你得赔我的红烧肉炖冻豆腐。

會燉我的紅燒肉燉凍豆腐，就請燉我的紅燒肉燉凍豆腐。不會燉我的紅燒肉燉凍豆腐，就請不要燉我的紅燒肉燉凍豆腐。燉壞了我的紅燒肉燉凍豆腐，你得賠我的紅燒肉燉凍豆腐。

Huì dùn wǒ de hóngshāoròu dùn dòng dòufu, jiù qǐng dùn wǒ de hóngshāoròu dùn dòng dòufu. Bú huì dùn wǒ de hóngshāoròu dùn dòng dòufu, jiù qǐng bú yào dùn wǒ de hóngshāoròu dùn dòng dòufu. Dùn huài le wǒ de hóngshāoròu dùn dòng dòufu, nǐ děi péi wǒ de hóngshāoròu dùn dòng dòufu.

If you know how to cook my red-cooked pork with frozen *tofu*, please cook my red-cooked pork with frozen *tofu*. If you don't know how to cook my red-cooked pork with frozen *tofu*, please don't cook my red-cooked pork with frozen *tofu*. If you ruin my red-cooked pork with frozen *tofu*, you must repay me for my red-cooked pork with frozen *tofu*.

# 12

## Adjectives

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the meanings and grammatical features of Chinese adjectives
- ★ To know the forms of reduplication of adjectives
- ★ To learn how to use Chinese adjectives

**Chinese adjectives** describe nouns and occur before them. They can function as the predicates of sentences, as intransitive verbs do in English. Adjectives can express the following:

- **Shape or sense:** 大 dà (big), 小 xiǎo (small), 高 gāo (tall), 矮 āi (short), 红/紅 hóng (red), 整齐/整齐 zhěngqí (tidy), 甜 tián (sweet)
- **Evaluation quality:** 好 hǎo (good), 坏/壞 huài (bad), 对/對 duì (right), 错/錯 cuò (wrong), 美丽/美麗 měili (beautiful)
- **Manner of an action or mental state:** 快 kuài (fast), 慢 màn (slow), 紧张/緊張 jǐnzhāng (nervous), 流利 liúlì (fluent), 认真/認真 rènzhēn (conscientious; serious)

### 12.1 Grammatical features of Chinese adjectives

There are three major grammatical features of Chinese adjectives:

- Modifying nouns by occurring before them:** such as 高山 gāo shān (tall mountain) and 漂亮衣服 piàoliang yīfú (pretty clothes). This feature is the same as in English.
- Functioning as intransitive verbs** (i.e., without an object): such as 高 gāo (tall) and 漂亮 piàoliang (beautiful) in example (1). This feature is different from English.
- Ability to be modified by adverbs of degree:** such as 很 hěn (very) in (1) or 非常 fēicháng (very). This is an important way of identifying adjectives, since most verbs cannot be modified by adverbs of degree (except for some verbs expressing mental activities such as 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan [like] and 想 xiǎng [want; miss]). This feature is the same as in English.

- (1) 小明很高, 小亮很漂亮。

Xiǎomíng hěn gāo, Xiǎoliàng hěn piàoliang.

Xiaoming is tall, and Xiaoliang is beautiful.

**NOTE** English uses the verb “to be” to link the subject and the adjective, as in the translation of (1), but it is incorrect to use 是 shì (be) before an adjective such as \*小明是高 \*Xiǎomíng shì gāo (lit. Xiaoming be tall), because Chinese adjectives can be used as intransitive verbs.

**Alert!**

The default meaning of a Chinese adjective used as a verb is comparative, not absolute. This means that when an adjective is used without a modifier, it is always used in comparison with others. For instance, 小明高 Xiǎomíng gāo (Xiaoming is taller) (see §25.1.1). To express a non-comparative meaning, an adverb, such as 很 hěn or 非常 fēicháng (very), must be used before the adjective. For this usage, 很 hěn is the default adverb used; it loses the meaning “very,” as in (1) above, and it typically loses its tone in rapid speech. If one intends to emphasize the meaning “very,” 很 hěn (very) is stressed with its tone.

Since a Chinese adjective can be a predicate in a sentence, it carries these common properties of Chinese verbs:

- It can take the verb suffixes 了 le, 着/著 zhe, or 过/過 guo, as in example (2).

(2) 这朵花红了几天。

這朵花紅了幾天。

Zhèi duǒ huā hóng le jǐ tiān.

This flower was red for a few days.

(几天/幾天 jǐ tiān (a few days) is a temporal complement, not an object, here.)

(3) 这朵花还红着。

這朵花還紅著。

Zhèi duǒ huā hái hóng zhe.

This flower is still red.

(4) 这朵花红过。

這朵花紅過。

Zhèi duǒ huā hóng guo.

This flower was red (but now it is a different color, or withered).

- It can be used with the sentence-final particle 了 le that indicates a new situation (see §16.3.1), as in example (5).

(5) 这朵花红了。

這朵花紅了。

Zhèi duǒ huā hóng le.

This flower has become red.

- It can be in the *A-not-A* form to ask questions, as in example (6).

- (6) 小明高不高？  
Xiǎomíng gāo bu gāo?  
Is Xiaoming tall?

NOTE The Chinese adjective is also called a **stative verb**, which can neither take an object nor denote an action, but rather describes a state.

## 12.2 Reduplication of adjectives

There are two basic forms of the adjective reduplication for intensification: *AA* and *AABB*. In addition to intensification, the reduplication also i. removes the comparative meaning, and ii. allows adjectives to modify verbs (just like adverbs), such as in (7), (17), and (18).

- i. ***A-A* form** (*A* stands for a monosyllabic adjective):

红/紅 hóng → 红红/紅紅 hónghóng (red), 大 dà → 大大 dàdà, 慢 màn → 慢慢 (儿)/慢慢(兒) màn mānr (slow).

**Pronunciation:** The stress is on the first syllable. When an *-r*, which is optional, is attached to a reduplicated monosyllabic adjective, the second syllable reads as a retroflex sound in the first tone in speech, for example, (7).

- (7) 学生就应该好好(儿)学习。  
學生就應該好好(兒)學習。  
Xuésheng jiù yīnggāi hǎohǎo(r) xuéxí.  
Students should study conscientiously.

- ii. ***AA-BB* form** (*AB* stands for a disyllabic adjective):

高兴/高興 gāoxìng → 高高兴兴/高高興興 gāogāo-xìngxìng, 清楚 qīngchǔ → 清清楚楚 qīngqīng-chǔchǔ (clear).

This form is different from the form of reduplication of verbs: *ABAB* (see §10.6).

**Pronunciation:** The second syllable of some reduplicated disyllabic adjectives are read as a neutral tone, while the third and fourth syllables are stressed and read as the first tone in casual speech or read in their original tones in a formal setting, for example, (8).

- (8) 小亮总是穿得漂漂亮亮(儿)的。  
小亮總是穿得漂漂亮亮(兒)的。  
Xiǎoliàng zǒngshì chuān de piàopiao-liāngliāng(r) de (spoken) (piàopiao-liāngliāng de(formal)).  
Xiaoliang is always dressed beautifully.

## Alert!

The reduplication of an adjective makes the adjective more “vivid,” and implies a fond feeling or a mild degree of stress, and thus **cannot** be modified by degree adverbs such as 很 hěn (very), nor by the negative adverb 不 bù (not). It is **incorrect** to say:

\*小明有一张很~~大大的~~书桌/\*小明有一張很~~大大的~~書桌

\*Xiāomíng yǒu yì zhāng hěn dàdà de shūzhuō (lit. Xiaoming has a very big desk)

or:

\*小明很~~高高兴兴的~~/\*小明~~很高高興興的~~

\*Xiāomíng hěn gāogāo-xìngxìng de (lit. Xiaoming very happy)

\*小明不高~~高高兴兴~~/\*小明不~~高高興興~~

\*Xiāomíng bù gāogāo-xìngxìng (lit. Xiaoming not happy)

## 12.3 Adjectives in sentences

In addition to being used as a stative verb to serve as the **predicate** in the sentences mentioned above, (1)–(6), the most common role of a Chinese adjective in a sentence is serving as an **attributive** to modify a noun, such as 好 hǎo (good) in (9).

- (9) 小明是一个好学生。  
 小明是一個好學生。  
 Xiāomíng shì yí ge hǎo xuésheng.  
 Xiaoming is a good student.

▪ Use of 的 de between the modifier and the modified word: There are several situations in which the structural particle 的 de should or should not be placed between the adjective (modifier) and the noun (modified) (see §16.1.1).

• **Optional:** 的 de is optional in the following two situations:

- i. **monosyllabic adjectives:** usually 的 de is not needed, as in 好学生/好學生 hǎo xuésheng (good student) in (9), but it can be added for emphasis, as in 好的~~的~~学生/好的學生 hǎo de xuésheng (student who is good). Another example that is common to say is 新书/新書 xīn shū, 新的~~的~~书/新的書 xīn de shū (book that is new), which stresses the newness of the object as in (10).

- (10) 小明买了一本新(的)书。  
 小明買了一本新(的)書。  
 Xiāomíng mǎi le yì běn xīn (de) shū.  
 Xiaoming bought a new book.

- ii. **disyllabic adjectives**, such as 重要 zhòngyào (important) with **disyllabic nouns**, such as 问题/問題 wèntí (problem; issue) in (11).

(11) 我们今天讨论了一个重要(**的**)问题。

我們今天討論了一個重要(**的**)問題。

Wǒmen jìntiān tǎolùn le yí ge zhòngyào (de) wèntí.

We discussed an important issue today.

- **Obligatory:** 的 de is needed in the following two situations:

- i. disyllabic adjectives, such as 好看 hǎokàn (beautiful) with monosyllabic nouns such as 画儿/畫兒 huàr (picture) in (12).

(12) 小明画了一张很**好看**的**画儿**。

小明畫了一張很**好看**的**畫兒**。

Xiaoming huà le yì zhāng hěn hǎokàn de huàr.

Xiaoming drew a beautiful painting.

- ii. **reduplications of adjectives with nouns**, such as 大大 dàdà (big) in (13) and 干干净净/乾乾淨淨 gāngān-jìngjìng (clean) in (14).

(13) 小亮有一双**大大**的眼睛。

小亮有一雙**大大**的眼睛。

Xiaoliang yǒu yì shuāng dàdà de yǎnjing.

Xiaoliang has a pair of big eyes.

(14) 小亮穿了一件**干干净净**的衣服。

小亮穿了一件**乾乾淨淨**的衣服。

Xiaoliang chuān le yí jiàn gāngān-jìngjìng de yīfu.

Xiaoliang is wearing a piece of clean clothing.

**NOTE** There is another 的 de, which is a sentence-final particle used after reduplicated adjectives at the end of a sentence either as a *complement* as in (8) or as a *predicate* below: 这个菜甜甜的、酸酸的, 很好吃/這個菜甜甜的、酸酸的, 很好吃。Zhèi ge cài tián tián de, suān suān de, hěn hǎochī. (This dish is sweet and sour. It is delicious.)

In addition to being the predicate and attributive above, an adjective can also function as other elements:

- **an adverbial** that modifies verbs, such as the adjective 多 duō (many; more) in (15):

(15) 学外语就应该**多**说。

學外語就應該**多**說。

Xué wàiyǔ jiù yīnggāi duō shuō.

(One) should speak more when learning a foreign language.

There are several situations for using the structural particle 地 de between the adverbial and modified words which are verbs mostly (see §16.1.2).

- **Optional: disyllabic adjectives (including reduplicated AA forms)**, such as 清楚 qīngchǔ (clear) in (16) and 慢慢 mǎnmǎn (slow) in (17). However, when the adjectives are to be emphasized, 地 de should be used:

- (16) 老师清楚(地)回答了学生的问题。  
 老師清楚(地)回答了學生的問題。  
 Lǎoshī qīngchǔ (de) huídá le xuésheng de wèntí.  
 The teacher answered the student's questions clearly.

- (17) 请你慢慢(地)说。  
 請你慢慢(地)說。  
 Qǐng nǐ mǎnmǎn (de) shuō.  
 Please speak slowly.

- **Required: reduplicated disyllabic adjectives**, such as 高高兴兴/gāogāo-xìngxìng (happy) in (18).

- (18) 老师跟学生高高兴兴地说着话。  
 老師跟學生高高興興地說著話。  
 Lǎoshī gēn xuésheng gāogāo-xìngxìng de shuō zhe huà.  
 The teacher is talking with students happily.

- **a subject**, such as 努力 nǔlì (diligent) in (19), or an **object**, such as 安静/安静 ānjìng (quiet) in (20), although uncommon:

- (19) 努力对学习来说很重要。  
 努力對學習來說很重要。  
 Nǔlì duì xuéxí lái shuō hěn zhòngyào.  
 Diligence is important for studying.

- (20) 考试的时候, 需要安静。  
 考試的時候, 需要安靜。  
 Kǎo-shì de shíhou, xūyào ānjìng.  
 Quietness is needed during the exam.

- **a complement**, such as 对/對 duì (right) or 错/錯 cuò (wrong) as in (21) and (22).

- (21) 你找对人了。  
 你找對人了。  
 Ni zhǎo.duì rén le.  
 You have found the right person (lit. you have found *right* the person).

- (22) 你打错电话了。  
 你打錯電話了。  
 Ni dǎ.cuò diànhuà le.  
 You have the wrong number (lit. you dialed *wrong* the number).

## 12.4 Restrictions for some adjectives

### ▪ Adjectives 多 duō (many) and 少 shǎo (few) as modifiers:

- The two words above cannot be used as modifiers to directly precede a noun. For example, \*多人 \*duō rén (lit. many people) and \*少学生/\*少學生 \*shǎo xuésheng (lit. few students).
- Instead, an adverb, such as 很 hěn which does not carry the meaning of “very” in this usage should be added; such as in 很多(的)人 hěn duō (de) rén (many people) and 很少(的)学生/很少(的)學生 hěn shǎo (de) xuésheng (few students), for which 的 de is optional. For example, (23) and (24).

(23) 小明有很多(的)书。

小明有很多(的)書。

Xiaoming yǒu hěn duō (de) shū.

Xiaoming has many books.

(24) 学生们有不少(的)问题。

學生們有不少(的)問題。

Xuéshengmen yǒu bù shǎo (de) wèntí.

The students have many questions.

### ▪ Adjectives with absolute value and cannot be compared: such as 男 nán (male) and 女 nǚ (female): These two words can only modify nouns and cannot function as predicates, as in (25).

(25) 我们班有15个男生, 20个女生。

我們班有15個男生, 20個女生。

Wǒmen bān yǒu shíwǔ ge nánshēng, èrshí ge nǚshēng.

There are 15 male students and 20 female students in our class.

The adjectives 男 nán (male) and 女 nǚ (female) cannot be the object in a sentence except when the two are used in a pair in a fixed expression as in (26a). It is **incorrect** to say (26b); instead, the structural particle 的 de must be added after 男 nán (male) and 女 nǚ (female), as in (26c).

(26)a. 我们班有男有女。

Wǒmen bān yǒu nán yǒu nǚ.

There are males and females in our class.

b. \*小明是男, 小亮是女

\*Xiǎomíng shì nán, Xiǎoliàng shì nǚ

(lit. Xiaoming is male and Xiaoliang is female.)

c. 小明是男的, 小亮是女的。

Xiǎomíng shì nán de, Xiǎoliàng shì nǚ de.

Xiaoming is a male; Xiaoliang is a female.

From the discussion above, we can see that even though the words 男 nán and 女 nǚ behave very much like nouns (i.e., males and females), their function

is actually more like adjectives, which modify nouns. For learning purposes, simply remember 男 nán (male) and 女 nǚ (female) as adjectives that have some noun-like properties.

- **Adjectives 够/gòu (enough), 对/對 duì (right), and 错/錯 cuò (wrong):** Several adjectives like these three cannot be an attributive that modifies a noun. They can serve as a predicate as in (27) below or a complement as in (21) and (22) above. It is **incorrect** to say: \*够钱/\*夠錢 \*gòu qián (lit. enough money); \*对人/\*對人 \*duì rén (lit. right person); and \*错电话/\*錯電話 \*cuò diànhuà (lit. wrong telephone) (but 错字/錯字 cuò zì [wrong character] is fine). For example, (27).

- (27) 钱够了/不够。 (够 gòu (enough) is a *predicate*.)  
錢夠了/不夠。 (夠 gòu (enough) is a *predicate*.)

Qián gòu le/bú gòu.

The money is enough/is not enough.

## 12.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned the meanings, grammatical features, and restrictions of **Chinese adjectives**. The primary difference from their English counterpart is that Chinese adjectives can function as verbs, and thus the linking verb 是 shì (be) cannot be used before an adjective when the adjective is a predicate, e.g., 他很高 tā hěn gāo (he is tall), or 他高 tā gāo (he is taller). The main features of Chinese adjectives discussed in this chapter are summarized in the following table.

**Table 12.1** The meanings and grammatical features of Chinese adjectives

Category	Sub-category	Examples/ Notes
Meaning	shape	大 dà (big), 小 xiǎo (small)
	evaluation quality	好 hǎo (good), 坏/壞 huài (bad)
	state of action	快 kuài (fast), 慢 màn (slow)
Grammatical features	function as intransitive verbs	can take the verb suffixes 了 le, 着/zhe, and 过/guo; use A-not-A pattern to ask questions
	modified by adverb 很 hěn (very)	most verbs cannot be modified, except those expressing mental activities like 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like)
	elements in sentences	predicate, attributive (mostly), adverbial, complement, subject, object

Table 12.1 (cont.)

Category	Sub-category	Examples/ Notes
	reduplication (AA, AABB) implies intensification	好好 hǎohǎo (good), 高高兴兴/gāogāo-xìngxìng (happy); cannot be modified by 很 hěn (very) nor by 不 bù (not)
	particle 的 de (attributive) needed	reduplications or disyllabic adjectives modify a monosyllabic noun, e.g., 好吃的饭 hǎochī de fàn (delicious food)
	particle 地 de (adverbial) needed	reduplicated disyllabic adjectives as adverbials modifying verbs, e.g., 高高兴兴地唱/gāogāo-xìngxìng de chàng (happily sing)

## 12.6 Exercises

### I Write the reduplicated forms of the following adjectives:

- 长/長 cháng (long):
- 高 gāo:
- 小 xiǎo:
- 快 kuài:
- 简单/簡單 jiǎndān:
- 舒服 shūfu:
- 认真/認真 rènzhēn:
- 热闹/熱鬧 rènao:

### II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:

- Many students don't have enough money.
- John just dialed a wrong number a moment ago.
- John is tall, and his girlfriend is beautiful.
- Do you have enough money for lunch?
- John had a delicious dinner.
- Lisa is lying on the bed comfortably watching TV.
- John has a few new books.
- Is John happy today?

### III Fill in the blanks with 很 hěn, 的 de, 地 de, or nothing:

#### Example

Given: 小亮\_\_\_\_\_ 学校 \_\_\_\_\_ 有 \_\_\_\_\_ 多学生/小亮\_\_\_\_\_ 学校 \_\_\_\_\_ 有 \_\_\_\_\_ 多学生。

Xiǎoliàng \_\_\_\_\_ xuéxiào \_\_\_\_\_ yǒu \_\_\_\_\_ duō xuésheng.

Answer: 小亮的学校 \_\_\_\_\_ 有很多学生/小亮的学校 \_\_\_\_\_ 有很多学生。

Xiǎoliàng de xuéxiào \_\_\_\_\_ yǒu hěn duō xuésheng.

- 我们每天都需要\_\_\_\_\_喝\_\_\_\_\_多水/我們每天都需要\_\_\_\_\_喝\_\_\_\_\_多水。  
Wǒmen měitiān dōu xūyào \_\_\_\_\_ hē \_\_\_\_\_ duō shuǐ.
- 小亮的房子\_\_\_\_\_高高\_\_\_\_\_，大大\_\_\_\_\_，  
\_\_\_\_\_漂亮。  
Xiǎoliàng de fángzǐ \_\_\_\_\_ gāogāo \_\_\_\_\_, dàdà \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ piàoliang.
- 小明\_\_\_\_\_总是\_\_\_\_\_高高兴兴\_\_\_\_\_唱歌/小明  
\_\_\_\_\_總是\_\_\_\_\_高高興興\_\_\_\_\_唱歌。  
Xiǎomíng \_\_\_\_\_ zǒngshì \_\_\_\_\_ gāogāo-xìngxìng \_\_\_\_\_ chàng-gē.
- 小亮\_\_\_\_\_穿了一件\_\_\_\_\_漂漂亮亮\_\_\_\_\_新衣服  
\_\_\_\_\_。  
Xiǎoliàng \_\_\_\_\_ chuān le yí jiàn \_\_\_\_\_ piàopiao-liàngliàng \_\_\_\_\_ xīn yīfu.

#### IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate words:

- A: 我买了三块钱的东西，给了您五块钱，可是您只找了我一块钱/  
我買了三塊錢的東西，給了您五塊錢，可是您只找了我一塊錢。  
Wǒ mǎi le sān kuài qián de dōngxi, gěi le nín wǔ kuài qián, kěshì nín zhǐ zhǎo le wǒ yí kuài qián.  
B: 对不起，我找\_\_\_\_\_钱了/對不起，我找\_\_\_\_\_錢了。  
Duībuqǐ, wǒ zhǎo \_\_\_\_\_ qián le.
- A: 你们班有多少个学生/你們班有多少個學生？  
Nǐmen bān yǒu duōshao ge xuésheng?  
B: 我们班有三十个学生，二十个是男\_\_\_\_\_，十个是女\_\_\_\_\_/  
我們班有三十個學生，二十個是男\_\_\_\_\_，十個是女\_\_\_\_\_。  
Wǒmen bān yǒu sānshí ge xuésheng, èrshí ge shì nán \_\_\_\_\_, shí ge shì nǚ \_\_\_\_\_.
- A: 你们学校有\_\_\_\_\_多学生吗/你們學校有\_\_\_\_\_多學生嗎？  
Nǐmen xuéxiào yǒu \_\_\_\_\_ duō xuésheng ma?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_少，只有一千多个学生/\_\_\_\_\_少，只有一千多個學生。  
\_\_\_\_\_ shǎo, zhǐyǒu yìqiān duō ge xuésheng.
- A: 你常常打扫你的房间吗/你常常打掃你的房間嗎？  
Nǐ chángcháng dǎsǎo nǐ de fángjiān ma?  
B: 当然，我的房间总是干干净净\_\_\_\_\_/當然，我的房間總是乾乾淨淨\_\_\_\_\_。  
Dāngrán, wǒ de fángjiān zǒngshì gāngan-jìngjìng \_\_\_\_\_.
- A: 你的周末怎么样/你的週末怎麼樣？  
Nǐ de zhōumò zěnmeyang?  
B: 好极了，我和我的朋友热热闹闹儿\_\_\_\_\_过了一个周末/好極了，我和我的朋友熱熱鬧鬧兒\_\_\_\_\_過了一個週末。  
Hǎo jí le, wǒ hé wǒ de péngyou rērē-nāonāo \_\_\_\_\_ guò le yí ge zhōumò.

6. A: 你的宿舍怎么样/你的宿舍怎麼樣？

Nǐ de sùshè zěnmeyang?

B: 很好，有一张大大\_\_\_\_\_书桌，还有一个高高\_\_\_\_\_书架/

很好，有一張大大\_\_\_\_\_書桌，還有一個高高\_\_\_\_\_書架。

Hěn hǎo, yǒu yì zhāng dàdà \_\_\_\_\_ shūzhuō, hái yǒu yí ge  
gāogāo \_\_\_\_\_ shūjià.

**V** Read the following tongue-twister for fun.

Pay attention to the order of the adjectives.

**大花**碗里扣着一个**大花活**蛤蟆/**大花**碗裏扣著一個**大花活**蛤蟆。

Dà huā wǎn li kòu zhe yí ge dà huā huó háma.

A big, colorful, and live toad is tapped by a big and colorful bowl.

## Adverbs

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the meanings and grammatical functions of Chinese adverbs
- ★ To learn how to distinguish the usages of several adverbs with similar meanings
- ★ To know the use of adverbs with multiple positions and adverbs used in pairs

**Chinese adverbs** modify verbs and adjectives in sentences. English adverbs have the same function; however, the placement of adverbs varies between the two languages. Chinese adverbs always precede the modified verbs and adjectives (with a few exceptions), whereas English adverbs can be before or after the modified verbs and adjectives in sentences.

The following are some of the most typical types of functional adverbs:

- **Degree:** 很 hěn (very), 非常 fēicháng (extremely), 太 tài (extremely; too), 真 zhēn (really), 更 gèng (more), 特别 tèbié (especially)
- **Time:** 才 cái (then; only; just), 就 jiù (then; only; just), 刚/剛 gāng (just), 马上/馬上 mǎshàng (immediately), 已经/已經 yǐjīng (already), 正在 zhèngzài (in the process of), 将要/將要 jiāngyào (will)
- **Frequency:** 常(常) cháng(cháng) (often), 总是/總是 zǒngshì (always), (很)少 (hěn)shǎo(rarely)
- **Scope:** 都 dōu (all), 只 zhǐ (only), 一共 yígòng (totally), 一起 yìqǐ (together)
- **Repetition:** 又 yòu (again), 再 zài (again), 也 yě (also), 还/還 hái (still), 常 cháng (often)
- **Negation:** 不 bù (not), 没/沒 méi/沒有/沒有 méiyǒu (not), 别/別 bié ([do] not)
- **Affirmation:** 一定 yíding (certainly), 必然 bìrán (inevitably)
- **Viewpoint:** 可 kě (but), 却/卻 què (but), 到底 dàodǐ (eventually; after all), 差点儿/差點兒 chàdiǎnr (almost), 好在 hǎozài (luckily)
- **Approximation:** 几乎/幾乎 jīhū (nearly), 大概 dàgài (probably), 也许/也許 yěxǔ (perhaps), 可能 kěnéng (possibly)
- **Manner:** 互相 hùxiāng (mutually), 逐步 zhóbù (step by step), 逐渐/逐漸 zhújiàn (gradually)

## 13.1 Grammatical functions of Chinese adverbs

There are three main features of Chinese adverbs.

- i. They typically serve as the adverbial:

- 已经/已經 yǐjīng (already) in (1) and 非常 fēicháng (extremely) in (2) below, and
- the adverbs modify and precede verbs, such as 去 qù (go) in (1), and adjectives, such as 高兴/高興 gāoxìng (happy) in (2):

(1) 小明已经去过中国了。

小明已經去過中國了。

Xiaoming yǐjīng qù guo Zhōngguó le.

Xiaoming has already been to China.

(2) 小明今天非常高兴。

小明今天非常高興。

Xiaoming jīntiān fēicháng gāoxìng.

Xiaoming is very happy today.

- ii. They don't modify nouns, pronouns, or number phrases (number + MW) in general, unless:

- the adverbs denote a meaning of scope, such as 就 jiù (only) in (3) and 一共 yígòng (totally) in (4), or a meaning of the time, such as 才 cái (just) and 已经/已經 yǐjīng (already) in (5); or
- the number phrases, such as 三百元 sānbǎi yuán (\$300) in (4), and nouns, such as 星期四 Xīngqīsì (Thursday) and 星期五 Xīngqīwǔ (Friday) in (5), function as the predicate (see §18.2.2).

NOTE You may understand that the verb 是 shì (be) can be omitted when it is used after the adverbs. However, we add 是 shì (be) in parentheses in the following sentences for ease of understanding.

(3) 三十个学生, 就(是)小亮没写作业。

三十個學生, 就(是)小亮沒寫作業。

Sānshí ge xuésheng, jiù (shì) Xiǎoliàng méi xiě zuòyè.

Of all the 30 students, Xiaoliang is the only one who did not do his homework.

(4) 小明买了三本书, 一共(是)三百元。

小明買了三本書, 一共(是)三百元。

Xiaoming mǎi le sān běn shū, yígòng (shì) sānbǎi yuán.

Xiaoming bought 3 books and (the cost) was 300 dollars in total.

(5) 今天才(是)星期四, 我以为已经(是)星期五了呢。

今天才(是)星期四, 我以為已經(是)星期五了呢。

Jīntiān cái (shì) Xīngqīsì, wǒ yǐwéi yǐjīng (shì) Xīngqīwǔ le ne.

I thought that it was Friday today, but it is only Thursday.

iii. They cannot be used alone as a sentence as in (6c) below, except for a few adverbs such as 不 bù (not), 没/沒 méi (not), 当然/當然 dāngrán (of course), and 也许/也許 yěxǔ (probably; maybe) as in (6b):

- (6)a. 小明今天**非常**高兴吗？  
小明今天**非常**高興嗎？  
Xiǎomíng jīntiān fēicháng gāoxìng ma?  
Is Xiaoming very happy today?
- b. 也许/当然。  
也許/當然。  
Yěxǔ/Dāngrán.  
Probably/Of course.
- c. \* **非常**  
\* fēicháng  
(lit. very)

## 13.2 Special uses and nuances of some common adverbs

There are some adverbs whose meanings and usages are similar, which can cause confusion among learners. The following are some common adverbs that are easily mistaken.

### ► 13.2.1 Adverbs of time 又 yòu (again) and 再 zài (again): recurrence of an action or event

• **又 yòu** denotes an event that *has already happened* and can be used with the verb suffix 了 le as in (7) below, or with a predictable and *unchangeable repetition* (as on the calendar and schedule) as in (8). When used with the verb 是 shì (be) or a modal verb, such as 要 yào (will) in (8), 又 yòu does not need to relate to the timing of the action.

- (7) 小明昨天**又**来了。  
小明昨天**又**來了。  
Xiǎomíng zuótiān yòu lái le.  
Xiaoming came again yesterday.

- (8) 明天**又**是星期五了, **又**要有考试了。  
明天**又**是星期五了, **又**要有考試了。  
Míngtiān yòu shì Xīngqīwǔ le, yòu yào yǒu kǎoshì le.  
Tomorrow will be Friday again and we will have a test again.

• **再 zài** signifies a thing *in the future* or an anticipated event and cannot be used with 了 le as in (9).

- (9) 小明明天还会**再来**。  
小明明天還會**再**來。  
Xiǎomíng míngtiān hái huì zài lái.  
Xiaoming will come again tomorrow.

### ► 13.2.2 Adverbs 就 jiù and 才 cái (then)

There are three differences between these two adverbs:

- **就 jiù** indicates earlier, faster, or smaller than expected; more generally, it expresses the attitude that the result exceeds the speaker's expectation.
- **才 cái** denotes later, slower, or bigger than expected; more generally, it expresses the attitude that the result does not meet the speaker's expectation.
  - i. **Early vs. late:** 就 jiù indicates earliness with the verb suffix 了 le, while 才 cái denotes lateness without 了 le (see §10.4.1), as is seen in examples (10) and (11) respectively.

- (10) 九点上课, 小明八点就来了。  
九點上課, 小明八點就來了。

Jiǔ diǎn shàng-kè, Xiǎomíng bā diǎn jiù lái le.

The class started at nine o'clock, but Xiaoming came as early as eight.

- (11) 九点上课, 小亮十点才来。  
九點上課, 小亮十點才來。

Jiǔ diǎn shàng-kè, Xiǎoliàng shí diǎn cái lái.

The class started at nine, but Xiaoliang didn't come till ten.

- ii. **Fast vs. slow:** 就 jiù indicates fastness while 才 cái denotes slowness, based on the meaning of earlier or later than expected, as in (12).

- (12) 小明半个小时就写完了作业, 小亮一个小时才写完。  
小明半個小時就寫完了作業, 小亮一個小時才寫完。

Xiǎomíng bàn ge xiǎoshí jiù xiě.wán le zuòyè, Xiǎoliàng yí ge xiǎoshí cái xiě.wán.

Xiaoming finished his homework within a half hour but Xiaoliang took one hour.

- iii. **Few vs. more:** 就 jiù indicates fewness while 才 cái signifies a greater quantity, for example, (13).

- (13) 看场电影五块钱就够了, 可是看场球赛二十块钱才够。  
看場電影五塊錢就夠了, 可是看場球賽二十塊錢才夠。

Kàn chǎng diǎnyǐng wǔ kuài qián jiù gòu le, kèshì kàn chǎng qiúsài èrshí kuài qián cái gòu.

It is enough to watch a movie with \$5 but it costs \$20 to watch a ball game.

**Exception:** When 才 cái (only) is used before a number (be aware that the meaning of 才 cái [only] in this usage is different from that of 才 cái [then] above), it can indicate a small quantity or low degree. For example:

- **time:** in which the expectation is 9 o'clock, but it is not met, for example, (14).

- (14) 九点上课, 才八点小明就来了。  
九點上課, 才八點小明就來了。

Jiǔ diǎn shàng-kè, cái bā diǎn Xiǎomíng jiù lái le.

The class started at nine, but Xiaoming came as early as eight.

- **number:** in which the expectation is that a movie should cost more, but it is not met as in (15a), while 就 jiù just indicates fewness as in (15b) but does not have the surprised feeling of 才 cái.

- (15)a. 看场电影**才**五块钱。(好便宜啊！)  
看場電影**才**五塊錢。(好便宜啊！)  
Kàn chǎng diǎnyǐng cái wǔ kuài qián. (Hǎo piányi a!)  
It is *only* \$5 for a movie. (It is so cheap!)
- b. 看场电影**就**五块钱。(一点儿都不贵。)  
看場電影**就**五塊錢。(一點兒都不貴。)  
Kàn chǎng diǎnyǐng jiù wǔ kuài qián. (Yìdiǎnr dōu bú guì.)  
It is (as cheap as) \$5 for a movie. (It is not expensive at all.)

### ► 13.2.3 Adverbs of degree: 很 hěn (very), 太 tài (extremely), and 真 zhēn (really)

These three adverbs display nuances in meaning and form, as well as modifying adjectives that serve as the **predicate**.

- **很** hěn (very) describes a thing and stresses its tone to show a high degree as in (16). If the meaning of degree is not present, then the tone is not stressed (see §12.1).
- **太** tài (extremely) has a degree that is *higher than expected*; hence, it is stronger than 很 hěn (very). It should be used with 了 le in the form of **太** tài + **adjective** + **了** le to express an emotional *exclamation* as in (17a); however, if it is used with an adjective that has a *derogatory* meaning, such as 难看/nánkàn (ugly) in (17b), or denotes a meaning of “excessive” or “too much,” as in (17c), note that the use of 了 le is optional.
- **真** zhēn (really; indeed) indicates an *emphasized and undoubted* meaning as in (18).

- (16) 这件衣服**很漂亮**。  
这件衣服**很漂亮**。  
Zhèi jiàn yīfu hěn piàoliang.  
This piece of clothing is very beautiful.

- (17)a. 这件衣服**太漂亮了**!  
这件衣服**太漂亮了**!  
Zhèi jiàn yīfu tài piàoliang le!  
This piece of clothing is extremely beautiful!
- b. 这件衣服**太难看/太难看了**!  
这件衣服**太難看/太難看了**!  
Zhèi jiàn yīfu tài nánkàn/tài nánkàn le!  
This piece of clothing is extremely ugly!

- c. 这件衣服**太大**/**太大了**！  
 這件衣服**太大**/**太大了**！  
 Zhèi jiàn yīfú tài dà/tài dà le!

This piece of clothing is too big!

- (18) 这件衣服**真**漂亮！  
 這件衣服**真**漂亮！  
 Zhèi jiàn yīfú zhēn piàoliang!

This piece of clothing is really beautiful!

#### ► 13.2.4 Adverbs of negation: 不 bù (not) vs. 没/沒 méi (not)

- **不** bù negates desire and habit from a **subjective** perspective and can be used in the past, present, and future, for example (19).

- (19) 小亮明天**不**去看电影。  
 小亮明天**不**去看電影。  
 Xiǎoliàng míngtiān bù qù kàn diànyǐng.  
 Xiaoliang will not go to watch movie tomorrow.

- **没/沒** méi negates the occurrence and realization of an action or event from an **objective** perspective and is used mostly *in the past* but not in the future. It is often used to deny or contradict previous claims.

NOTE **不** bù can be used with the sentence-final particle 了 le. For example, 小明**不吃**牛肉**了**。Xiǎoming bù chī niúròu le. (Xiaoming is no longer eating beef [*implying* that he had eaten beef before but has now changed his habit.]); while **没/沒** méi cannot be used with the verb suffix 了 le, it can be used with the sentence-final particle 了 le with some restrictions (see §16.3.1 and sentences [30] and [31b] below).

Examples (20) and (21) show the basic difference between 不 bù and 没/沒 méi:

- (20) 小明**不吃**牛肉。  
 Xiǎoming bù chī niúròu.  
 Xiaoming doesn't eat beef.

- (21) 小亮**没**吃牛肉。  
 小亮**沒**吃牛肉。  
 Xiǎoliàng méi chī niúròu.  
 Xiaoliang did not eat the beef.

- Sentence (20) means that Xiaoming doesn't want (不 bù) to eat beef subjectively (his desire/habit).
- Sentence (21) shows that the action of eating (beef) didn't (没/沒 méi) actually occur (Xiaoliang may like eating beef but has not had a chance to eat it).

Just as differences can be found between 不 bù and 没/沒 méi, the verbs that they each negate carry different meanings.

- 不 bù (not) negates the following verbs:
  - verbs that express mental activities, such as 知道 zhīdao (know):

(22) 小明不知道明天有考试。

小明不知道明天有考試。

Xiǎomíng bù zhīdao míngtiān yǒu kǎoshì.

Xiaoming doesn't know there will be a test tomorrow.

- verbs that express frequent and habitual actions:

(23) 小明不常去图书馆。

小明不常去圖書館。

Xiǎomíng bù cháng qù túshūguǎn.

Xiaoming doesn't go to the library often.

- modal verbs, such as 可以 kěyǐ (may):

(24) 上课的时候不可以看手机。

上課的時候不可以看手機。

Shàng-kè de shíhou bù kěyǐ kàn shǒuji.

(You) cannot look at your cell phone in class.

- the verb 是 shì (be) (judgment):

(25) 小明不是美国人。

小明不是美國人。

Xiǎomíng bù shì Měiguó rén.

Xiaoming is not American.

- 没/沒 méi (not) negates the following verbs:

- the verb 有 yǒu (have; there is):

(26) 小明没有兄弟姐妹。

小明沒有兄弟姐妹。

Xiǎomíng méi yǒu xiōngdì-jiemèi.

Xiaoming has no siblings.

(27) 桌子上没有书。

桌子上有沒有書。

Zhuōzi shàng méi yǒu shù.

There is no book on the table.

**Alert!**

Never say \*不有 \*bù yǒu.

- an action that didn't occur:

(28) 昨天小亮**没**看电影。昨天小亮**沒**看電影。

Zuótiān Xiǎoliàng méi kàn diànyǐng.

Xiaoliang didn't watch the movie yesterday.

- the verb suffix **过/過** *guo* (experiential aspect) can also be used with **没/沒** *méi*:

(29) 小亮**没**去**过**中国。小亮**沒**去**過**中國。Xiǎoliàng méi qù *guo* Zhōngguó.

Xiaoliang has not been to China (before).

The differences between 不 *bù* (not) and 没/沒 *méi* (not) can be shortened to the following:

- 不** *bù* negates mental activities, habitual actions, modal verbs, and 是 *shì* (be); and
- 没/沒** *méi* negates 有 *yǒu* (have; there be), actions that didn't happen, or an experience with **过/過** *guo* that has not yet occurred.
- The following observations about **没有/沒有** *méiyǒu* (no; not) can be made:
  - 没有/沒有** *méiyǒu* (no; not) is the same as 没/沒 *méi* (not) in negating verbs, and thus 有 *yǒu* (have; there is) can be added after 没/沒 *méi* in (28) and (29) above without changing the meaning.
  - 没有/沒有** *méiyǒu* (no; not) is the negative form of the verb 有 *yǒu* (have; there is). Since the verb 有 *yǒu* (have; there is) can only be negated by 没/沒 *méi*, 有 *yǒu* can be omitted without changing the meaning. For instance, the verb 有 *you* in (26) and (27) above can be omitted to 没兄弟姐妹/沒兄弟姐妹 *méi xiōngdì-jìemèi* (no siblings) and 没书/沒書 *méi shū* (no book), respectively. In this case, 没 *méi* (no) negates the noun (the object of the verb 有 *yǒu*) directly.
  - 没有/沒有** *méiyǒu* (no; not) is used with the sentence-final particle 了 *le*, which indicates a new situation (see §16.3.1), for example, (30).

(30) 小明现在**没(有)**钱**了**。小明現在**沒(有)**錢**了**。Xiǎomíng xiànzài méi(yǒu) qián *le*.Xiaoming has no money now (*implying* that Xiaoming had money before).

- 没有/沒有** *méiyǒu* (no; not) can be used in the future to negate nouns as in (31a), or with the sentence-final particle 了 *le* in the future as in (31b).

(31)a. 明天我们**没(有)**考试。明天我們**沒(有)**考試。

Míngtiān wǒmen méi(yǒu) kǎoshì.

We will **have no** test tomorrow.

- b. 明天我们**没(有)**考试了。  
 明天我們**沒(有)**考試了。  
 Míngtiān wǒmen méi(yǒu) kǎoshì le.

We will **have no** test tomorrow (*implying* that the scheduled test tomorrow was canceled or rescheduled).

► 13.2.5 Order of adverbs: 不 bù (not) with the adverbs 都 dōu (all), 很 hěn (very), and 太 tài (extremely)

In most cases, 不 bù and 没/沒 méi are used after other adverbs, such as after 从来/從來 cónglái (always) in (32a) and (32b), and 还/還 hái (still) in (33), respectively.

- (32)a. 小明从来**不**喝酒。  
 小明從來**不**喝酒。  
 Xiǎomíng cónglái bù hē jiǔ.  
 Xiaoming never drinks alcohol (never wanted to drink alcohol).

- b. 小明从来**没**喝过酒。  
 小明從來**沒**喝過酒。  
 Xiǎomíng cónglái méi hē guo jiǔ.

Xiaoming has never drunk alcohol (before) (has not had the experience of drinking alcohol).

- (33) 已经下课了, 小亮还**没(有)**来。  
 已經下課了, 小亮還**沒(有)**來。  
 Yǐjīng xià-klè le, Xiǎoliàng hái méi(yǒu) lái.

The class was dismissed, but Xiaoliang still did not come.

不 bù can also be used before or after several adverbs, such as 都 dōu, 很 hěn, and 太 tài, but with different meanings.

- 都不 dōu bù (all not) vs. 不都 bù dōu (not all):

- (34)a. 我们都**不**喜欢看电影。  
 我們都**不**喜歡看电影。  
 Wǒmen dōu bù xǐhuān kàn diànyǐng.  
 We all don't like watching movies.

- b. 我们**不都**喜欢看电影。  
 我們**不都**喜歡看电影。  
 Wǒmen bù dōu xǐhuān kàn diànyǐng.  
 Not all of us like watching movies.

## Alert!

都 dōu (all) cannot precede the subject! Don't say: \*都我们喜欢看电影/\*都我們喜歡看電影 \* dōu wǒmen xǐhuan kàn diànyǐng for the sentence "All of us like watching movies."

- 很不 hěn bù (很 hěn [very] intensifies 不 bù [not]) vs. 不很 bù hěn (不 bù negates 很 hěn [very]):

(35)a. 小亮的中文**很不好**。

Xiǎoliàng de Zhōngwén **hěn bù** hǎo.

Xiaoliang's Chinese is very bad.

b. 小明的中文**不很好**。

Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén **bù hěn** hǎo.

Xiaoming's Chinese is not very good.

(Maybe his Chinese is okay but cannot reach the degree of "very good").

- 太不...了 tài bù ... le (extremely not) vs. 不太 bú tài (not very)

(36)a. 我**太不**喜欢这个电影**了**！

我**太不**喜歡這個電影**了**！

Wǒ tài bù xǐhuan zhèi ge diànyǐng le!

I really don't like this movie!

b. 我**不太**喜欢这个电影。

我**不太**喜歡這個電影。

Wǒ bú tài xǐhuan zhèi ge diànyǐng.

I don't like this movie very much.

## TIP

In the cases of 都不 dōu bù vs. 不都 bù dōu; 很不 hěn bù vs. 不很 bù hěn; and 太不...了 tài bù ... le vs. 不太 bú tài, simply translate the sentence literally word by word to understand the meaning.

### ► 13.2.6 Time adverb 刚/剛 gāng (just) and time noun 刚才/剛才 gāngcái (just now)

- 刚/剛 gāng or 刚刚/剛剛 gānggāng (just) is an adverb and must be used *before verbs*:

- (37)a. 小明呢？  
Xiǎomíng ne?  
Where is Xiaoming?

- b. 小明刚/刚刚去了图书馆。  
小明剛/剛剛去了圖書館。  
Xiǎomíng gāng/gānggāng qù le túshūguǎn.  
Xiaoming just went to the library.

- 刚才/剛才 gāngcái (just now) is a *time noun* that can be used before a verb, as in (38a), or at the beginning of a sentence, as in (38b), with the meaning of the two sentences the same:

- (38)a. 小明刚才去图书馆了。  
小明剛才去圖書館了。  
Xiǎomíng gāngcái qù túshūguǎn le.
- b. 刚才小明去图书馆了。  
剛才小明去圖書館了。  
Gāngcái Xiǎomíng qù túshūguǎn le.  
Xiaoming just went to the library a moment ago.

**TIP** An easy way to determine the position of the time noun 刚才/剛才 gāngcái (just now) is to see if other similar time nouns like 今天 jīntiān (today) or 去年 qùnnián (last year) can be used in that position.

- The difference between the meaning of 刚/剛 gāng and 刚才/剛才 gāngcái:
- 刚/剛 gāng or 刚刚/剛剛 gānggāng (just) indicates a comparably short time and may or may not relate to the speaking time (the short time indicated by 刚/剛 gānggāng is slightly more emphasized than 刚/剛 gāng); whereas;
  - 刚才/剛才 gāngcái (just now) means just a moment ago and strictly emphasizes that an event has happened *just before* the speaking point.

Thus, example (39a) uses 刚/剛 gāng (just) because 一年 yì nián (one year) is a relatively short time to learn a language fully; however, it does not use 刚才/剛才 gāngcái (just now) because it is not a short time before the speaking time (39b).

- (39)a. 小明刚学了一年中文，所以他的中文不太好。  
小明剛學了一年中文，所以他的中文不太好。  
Xiǎomíng gāng xué le yì nián Zhōngwén, suǒyǐ tā de Zhōngwén bú tài hǎo.  
Xiaoming just studied Chinese for one year, so his Chinese is not very good.

- b. \*小明剛才学了一年中文，所以他的中文不太好  
 \*小明剛才學了一年中文，所以他的中文不太好  
 \*Xiǎomíng gāngcái xué le yì nián Zhōngwén, suǒyǐ tā de Zhōngwén bú tài hǎo  
 (lit. Xiaoming just now studied Chinese for one year, so his Chinese is not very good.)

### 13.3 The positions of adverbs in sentences

- **Before verbs and adjectives as the adverbial:** Commonly, Chinese adverbs modify and precede verbs and adjectives as mentioned previously; thus, you may interpret Chinese adverbs as “ad-verb,” meaning “ad(d) before verb.” This is different from English in which adverbs can be after verbs, such as:
  - ◆ You are a student, and I am **also** a student; or,
  - ◆ I am a student, **too**.

It is **incorrect** to say the above in Chinese as:

- ◆ \*你是学生，我是**也**学生/\*你是學生，我是**也**學生  
 \*nǐ shì xuésheng, wǒ shì yě xuésheng; or,
- ◆ \*我是学生**也**/\*我是學生**也** \*wǒ shì xuésheng yě
- ◆ The **corrected** sentence in Chinese is 我**也**是学生/我**也**是學生。 Wǒ yě shì xuésheng. (I am a student too.)
- **After verbs or adjectives as the complement:** A few monosyllabic adverbs, such as 很 hěn (very) after the particle 得 de and 极/極 jí (extremely) with 了 le, can be the **complement**, but the predicate must be an adjective, such as 好 hǎo (good) in (40), or a verb expressing a mental activity, such as 喜欢 xǐhuan (like) in (41) below:

- (40) 小明的中文好得很。  
 Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén hǎo de hěn.  
 Xiaoming's Chinese is very good.

- (41) 我们喜欢极了这部电影。  
 我們喜歡極了這部電影。  
 Wǒmen xǐhuan jí le zhè bù diànyǐng.  
 We like this movie very much.

- **Multiple positions as the adverbial:** Several Chinese adverbs can precede the verb and the subject in a sentence. There are not many so-called “**movable adverbs**,” which can be placed before subjects and verbs; however, the most common are 难道/難道 nándào (is it really true...?) to reiterate a rhetorical question as in (42), 也许/也許 yěxǔ (perhaps) as in (43), 大概 dàgài (probably), and 可能 kěnén (possibly). They typically express the speaker's judgment on the statement. It does not matter whether these adverbs are placed before or after the subject of a sentences, the meaning of the sentence is unchanged.

(42)a. 难道你不喜欢这部电影吗？

難道你不喜歡這部電影嗎？

Nándào nǐ bù xǐhuan zhèi bù diànyǐng ma?

b. 你难道不喜欢这部电影吗？

你難道不喜歡這部電影嗎？

Nǐ nándào bù xǐhuan zhèi bù diànyǐng ma?

Is it really true that you don't like this movie? (implying that you should like the movie)

(43)a. 也许小亮今天不会来上课了。

也許小亮今天不會來上課了。

Yěxǔ Xiǎoliàng jīntiān bù huì lái shàng-kè le.

b. 小亮也许今天不会来上课了。

小亮也許今天不會來上課了。

Xiǎoliàng yěxǔ jīntiān bù huì lái shàng-kè le.

Perhaps Xiaoliang will not come to class today.

## 13.4 Adverbs used in pairs

▪ **Same adverbs:** 又 yòu...又 yòu... (both...and...) is used in (44) with verbs and in (45) with adjectives, and 越 yuè...越 yuè... (the more...the more...) is used in (46):

(44) 小明今天很高兴，又说又唱。

小明今天很高興，又說又唱。

Xiǎomíng jīntiān hěn gāoxìng, yòu shuō yòu chàng.

Xiaoming is happy today; he keeps speaking and singing.

(45) 小亮又聪明又漂亮。

小亮又聰明又漂亮。

Xiǎoliàng yòu cōngming yòu piàoliang.

Xiaoliang is both smart and beautiful.

**NOTE** Adjectives in the form of 又 yòu...又 yòu... must both share the same positive meaning as in (45) or the same negative meaning as in:

(a) 这家饭馆的菜又贵又难吃/這家飯館的菜又貴又難吃。 Zhèi jiā fānguǎn de cài yòu guì yòu nánchī. (The dishes at this restaurant are expensive and unsavory.)

It is **incorrect** to say:

(b)\*这家饭馆的菜又贵又好吃/\*這家飯館的菜又貴又好吃 \*zhèi jiā fānguǎn de cài yòu guì yòu hăochī (lit. this restaurant's dishes expensive and delicious)

- (46) 小亮**越看越**喜欢这部电影。  
小亮**越看越**喜歡這部電影。

Xiǎoliàng yuè kàn yuè xǐhuan zhèbù diànyǐng.

The more Xiaoliang watches the movie, the more she likes it.

▪ **Different adverbs:**

- 再 zài...也 yě... (even if so...but...) in (47): 再 zài denotes a meaning similar to “even if” to exaggerate an extreme situation, while 也 yě indicates that the result will remain the same regardless of what the extreme situation is.

- (47) 汉字**再难也**要练习写。

漢字**再難也**要練習寫。

Hànzì zài nán yě yào liànxí xiě.

Even if Chinese characters are extremely difficult to write, one still wants to keep practicing writing.

- 非 fēi...不可 bùkě (absolutely) as in (48): 非 fēi means “not,” and is borrowed from classical Chinese; 不 bù is “not,” and 可 kě is a short form of 可以 kěyǐ (can), so the double negation in the pair expresses a strong imperative tone like “absolutely.”

- (48) 小亮**非**要学好中文**不可**。

小亮**非**要學好中文**不可**。

Xiǎoliàng fēi yào xuéhào Zhōngwén bùkě.

Xiaoliang definitely wants to study Chinese well.

## 13.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned that **Chinese adverbs** can express various meanings such as **degree**, **time**, **scope**, **negation**, **repetition**, and **approximation**. The most prominent feature of Chinese adverbs is that they modify and *precede* verbs and adjectives, basically serving as the adverbial in a sentence. A few “movable adverbs,” such as 大概 dàgài (probably) and 也许/yěxǔ (perhaps), can precede both verbs and subjects. We have also distinguished several adverbs whose meanings and usages are similar and easily misused, such as the negative adverbs 不 bù (not) and 没/méi (not; no), and the time adverbs 就 jiù (then; only; just) and 才 cái (then; only; just). We concluded this section by listing several adverbs used in pairs with a correlative function in sentences, such as 又 yòu...又 yòu... (both...and...) and 越 yuè...越 yuè... (the more...the more...).

## 13.6 Exercises

### I Change the following sentences to negative sentences:

Example:

Given: 小亮昨天看电影了/小亮昨天看電影了。

Xiǎoliàng zuótān kàn diànyǐng le.

**Answer:** 小亮昨天沒看电影/小亮昨天沒看電影。

Xiǎoliàng zuótān méi kàn diànyǐng.

1. 小明喜欢看电影/小明喜歡看電影。 Xiǎomíng xǐhuan kàn diànyǐng.
2. 小亮常常去图书馆/小亮常常去圖書館。 Xiǎoliàng chángcháng qù túshūguān.
3. 小明昨天做功课了/小明昨天做功課了。 Xiǎomíng zuótān zuò gōngkè le.
4. 教室里有很多学生/教室裏有很多學生。 Jiàoshì li yǒu hěn duō xuésheng.
5. 小明今天非常高兴/小明今天非常高興。 Xiǎomíng jīntiān fēicháng gāoxìng.
6. 小亮明天就有很多钱了/小亮明天就有很多錢了。 Xiǎoliàng míngtiān jiù yǒu hěn duō qián le.
7. 我听懂老师的问题了/我聽懂老師的問題了。 Wǒ tīngdǒng lǎoshī de wèntí le.
8. 这个学校很漂亮/這個學校很漂亮。 Zhèi ge xuéxiào hěn piàoliang.

## II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:

1. I just graduated last month and have not found a job yet.
2. All my friends want to watch a ball game this evening.
3. Not all students want to study a foreign language.
4. The movie started at 8.00 p.m., but we came as early as 7.00 p.m.
5. The movie started at 8.00 p.m., but John didn't come until 9.00 p.m.
6. Our school is really beautiful!
7. This movie is not very interesting.
8. John was sick and didn't go to class yesterday.

## III Use the words provided in the parentheses below to fill in the blanks. Each word is to be used once:

(常常 chángcháng, 也许/也許 yěxǔ, 再 zài, 又 yòu, 都 dōu, 又…又… yòu…yòu)

1. 明天\_\_\_\_\_是周末了, 我们可以去看电影了/明天\_\_\_\_\_是週末了, 我們可以去看電影了。  
Míngtiān \_\_\_\_\_ shì zhōumò le, wǒmen kěyǐ qù kàn diànyǐng le.
2. 我们的宿舍\_\_\_\_\_干净\_\_\_\_\_舒服/我們的宿舍\_\_\_\_\_乾淨\_\_\_\_\_舒服。  
Wǒmen de sùshè \_\_\_\_\_ gānjìng \_\_\_\_\_ shūfu.
3. 小明很喜欢喝咖啡, 喝了一杯, 还想\_\_\_\_\_ 喝一杯/小明很喜歡喝咖啡, 喝了一杯, 還想\_\_\_\_\_ 喝一杯。  
Xiǎomíng hěn xǐhuan hē kāfēi, hē le yì bēi, hái xiǎng \_\_\_\_\_ hē yì bēi.
4. 小亮\_\_\_\_\_跟老师练习说中文/小亮\_\_\_\_\_跟老師練習說中文。  
Xiǎoliàng \_\_\_\_\_ gēn lǎoshī liànxí shuō Zhōngwén.
5. 学生们\_\_\_\_\_很想去旅游/學生們\_\_\_\_\_很想去旅遊。  
Xuéshengmen \_\_\_\_\_ hěn xiǎng qù lǚyóu.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ 小亮明天去图书馆看书/\_\_\_\_\_ 小亮明天去圖書館看書。

\_\_\_\_\_ Xiǎoliàng míngtiān qù túshūguān kàn-shū.

**IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate words:**

1. A: 你喜欢这部电影吗/你喜歡這部電影嗎?

Nǐ xǐhuan zhèi bù diànyǐng ma?

B: 太喜欢了, 我明天还想\_\_\_\_\_看一次/太喜歡了, 我明天還想\_\_\_\_\_看一次。

Tài xǐhuan le, wǒ míngtiān hái xiǎng \_\_\_\_\_ kàn yí cì.

2. A: 小明去哪儿了/小明去哪兒了? Xiǎomíng qù nǎr le?

B: \_\_\_\_\_他还在这儿呢, 现在不知道去哪儿了/\_\_\_\_\_他還在這兒呢, 現在不知道去哪兒了。

\_\_\_\_\_ tā hái zài zhèr ne, xiànzài bù zhīdào qù nǎr le.

3. A: 老师, 学习中文有什么好法子吗/老師, 學習中文有什麼好法子嗎?

Lǎoshī, xuéxí Zhōngwén yǒu shénme hǎo fǎzī ma?

B: 有啊, 只要多说, 你就会\_\_\_\_\_说\_\_\_\_\_好/有啊, 只要多說, 你就會\_\_\_\_\_說\_\_\_\_\_好。

Yǒu a, zhǐyào duō shuō, nǐ jiù huì \_\_\_\_\_ shuō \_\_\_\_\_ hǎo.

4. A: 这家饭馆的饭怎么样/這家飯館的飯怎麼樣?

Zhèi jiā fānguǎn de fàn zěnmeyang?

B: 好吃\_\_\_\_\_了。Hǎo chī \_\_\_\_\_ le.

5. A: 你知道小明今年暑假做什么/你知道小明今年暑假做什麼?

Nǐ zhīdào Xiǎomíng jīnnián shǔjià zuò shénme?

B: \_\_\_\_\_他会去中国学中文/\_\_\_\_\_他會去中國學中文。

\_\_\_\_\_ tā huì qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén.

6. A: 这家饭馆的红烧牛肉怎么样/這家飯館的紅燒牛肉怎麼樣?

Zhèi jiā fānguǎn de hóngshāo niúròu zěnmeyang?

B: 对不起, 我从来\_\_\_\_\_吃过红烧牛肉/對不起, 我從來\_\_\_\_\_吃過紅燒牛肉。

Duìbuqǐ, wǒ cónglái \_\_\_\_\_ chī guo hóngshāo niúròu.

7. A: 我们要一个红烧牛肉, 怎么样/我們要一個紅燒牛肉, 怎麼樣?

Wǒmen yào yí ge hóngshāo niúròu, zěnmeyang?

B: 对不起, 我从来\_\_\_\_\_吃牛肉/對不起, 我從來\_\_\_\_\_吃牛肉。

Duìbuqǐ, wǒ cónglái \_\_\_\_\_ chī niúròu.

## Prepositions

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the meanings and grammatical features of Chinese prepositions
- ★ To differentiate the usage and meaning of prepositions in preverbal or postverbal positions
- ★ To distinguish Chinese prepositions from verbs

### 14.1 Some similarities and differences between Chinese and English prepositions

Chinese prepositions and English prepositions have some similarities, as identified below:

- **Functionally:** prepositions in both languages can introduce nouns or pronouns to indicate time, place, reason, instrument, or object, to name a few, all of which relate to the event described by the verb.
- **Structurally:** prepositions in both languages *cannot* be used alone; they must be used as a prepositional phrase (PP) in which a preposition is used with a noun (including pronouns) or a noun phrase in the following form:<sup>1</sup>

PP: preposition + NP (*nouns or pronouns*)

For example:

**跟** gēn (*with*) 我 wǒ ([pronoun] me) as seen in (1).

**在** zài (*in*) 学生中心/學生中心 xuéshēng zhōngxīn ([n.] student center) as in example (2).

- (1) 小明喜欢跟我说中文。  
 小明喜歡跟我說中文  
 Xiǎomíng xǐhuan gēn wǒ shuō Zhōngwén.  
 Xiaoming likes speaking Chinese **with** me.

<sup>1</sup> There are a few exceptions in Chinese, e.g., the preposition 在 zài ([be] at/in/on) can be used alone in a conversation (see §14.4), and when 被 bì or 给/géi (by) is used as a passive voice marker in the passive voice construction, its object (noun or NP) can be omitted (see §23.2 and §23.3).

However, there is a big difference between the use of prepositions in Chinese and English. Specifically, the prepositional phrase (PP) is placed before the verb in Chinese but after the verb in English, in most cases, as can be seen in (1) and (2a).

- (2)a. 小亮**在学生中心**唱歌。  
 小亮**在學生中心**唱歌。  
 Xiǎoliàng zài xuésheng zhōngxīn chàng-gē.  
 Xiaoliang is singing in the student center.
- b. \*小亮唱歌**在学生中心**  
 \*小亮唱歌**在學生中心**  
 \*Xiǎoliàng chàng-gē zài xuésheng zhōngxīn  
 (lit. Xiaoliang sing in student center)

This difference often leads learners to formulate sentences incorrectly, like (2b) in which the PP 在学生中心/在學生中心 zài xuésheng zhōngxīn (in the student center) is mistakenly placed after the verb 唱歌 chàng-gē (to sing), as is done in English.

In addition to this, one may also be confused as to why 在 zài is the preposition “in” in (2a) but becomes the verb “is in” in (3b):

- (3)a. 小亮**在哪儿**？  
 小亮**在哪兒**？  
 Xiǎoliàng zài nǎr?  
 Where is Xiaoliang?
- b. 小亮**在学生中心**。  
 小亮**在學生中心**。  
 Xiǎoliàng zài xuésheng zhōngxīn.  
 Xiaoliang is in the student center.

In the following sections, we will help you to navigate the obstacles to mastering Chinese prepositions.

## 14.2 Meanings of prepositions

As mentioned earlier, Chinese prepositions are the same as English in what they can introduce:

- ♦ time
- ♦ place/location
- ♦ participants (including the doer and receiver of an action)
- ♦ reference points
- ♦ recipients and beneficiaries
- ♦ instruments
- ♦ topics
- ♦ logical relations relating to events

These similarities may make it easy for English learners to understand the meaning of Chinese prepositions, but they may also cause learners to misplace the prepositions in Chinese sentences because of the influence of English word order. Therefore, attention must be paid to the position of the prepositional phrases in the following sentences when learning the meanings of Chinese prepositions.

- **Time (when): 在 zài (at) as in (4) and 从/從 cóng (from) as in (5):**

(4) 小亮在晚上学中文。

小亮在晚上學中文。

Xiǎoliàng zài wǎnshàng xué Zhōngwén.

Xiaoliang studies Chinese **in the evening**.

(5) 小明从 2016 年开始学中文。

小明從 2016 年開始學中文。

Xiǎomíng cóng èr líng yī liù nián kāishǐ xué Zhōngwén.

Xiaoming has been studying Chinese **since 2016**.

It should be noted that time nouns in Chinese mark the time of an event. Hence the preposition 在 zài (at) in (4) is typically optional when used to indicate a time point. However, prepositions, such as 从/從 cóng (from), that indicate other time relations are typically required and are not optional, as in (5).

- **Place/location:**

- i. **No movement involved:** 在 zài (at) as in (6):

(6) 小明在家看电视。

小明在家看電視。

Xiǎomíng zài jiā kàn diànshì.

Xiaoming watches TV **at home**.

- ii. **Involving movement:** as a source, 从/從 cóng (from) as in (7), or as a goal, 往 wǎng (towards) as in (8):

(7) 小亮从美国到了北京。

小亮從美國到了北京。

Xiǎoliàng cóng Měiguó dào le Běijīng.

Xiaoliang arrived in Beijing **from the USA**.

(8) 小明往南走。

Xiǎomíng wǎng nán zǒu.

Xiaoming walks **towards the south**.

iii. Distance from (a place): 离/離 lí (away from) as in (9):

(9) 小亮家离学校很近。

小亮家離學校很近。

Xiaoliang jiā lí xuéxiào hěn jìn.

Xiaoliang's home is close **to her school**.

### Attention

Nouns and pronouns denoting things or persons cannot be a location or a place; instead:

- *localizers*, such as **上** -shang (up) or **里** -li (inside), as seen in sentences (19)–(20) and (23)–(24) below (see §26.1); or
- *demonstrative pronouns*, such as **这儿/這兒** zhèr (here) or **那儿/那兒** nàr (there), should be added after a noun or a pronoun to indicate a place (see §9.2).

Table 14.1 shows the correct and incorrect expressions of these locative prepositions.

**Table 14.1** Correct/incorrect expressions with locative prepositions

Correct	Incorrect
小明在桌子上写字/小明在桌子 上写字。 Xiāomíng zài zhuōzi shàng xiě-zì. Xiaoming is writing characters <b>on the table</b> .	*小明在桌子写字/*小明在桌子寫字 *Xiāomíng zài zhuōzi xiě-zì (lit. Xiaomingon table write character)
小亮在高速公路上开车/小亮在高 速公路 <b>上</b> 开车。 Xiǎoliàng zài gāosù gōnglù shàng kāi-chē. Xiaoliang is driving <b>on the highway</b> .	*小亮在高速公路开车/*小亮在高 速公路 <b>開車</b> *Xiǎoliàng zài gāosù gōnglù kāi-chē (lit. Xiaoliang on highway drive)
小明在小亮那儿看电视/小明在小亮那 兒看电视。 Xiāomíng zài Xiǎoliàng nàr kàn diànshì. Xiaoming is watching TV at Xiaoliang's place.	*小明在小亮看电视/*小明在小亮看 電視 *Xiāomíng zài Xiǎoliàng kàn diànshì (lit. Xiaoming at Xiaoliang watch TV)
你的书在我这儿/你的書在我這兒。 Nǐ de shū zài wǒ zhèr. Your book is at my place.	*你的书在我/*你的書在我 *nǐ de shū zài wǒ (lit. your book is at me)

- **Goal/target** such as **他的朋友** tā de péngyǒu (his friend), introduced by **跟** gēn (with) in (10); **老师/老師** lǎoshī (teacher) / **她的朋友** tā de péngyǒu (her friends), introduced by **对/對** duì (to) in (11); and **外边/外邊** wàibian (outside), introduced by **向** xiàng (towards) in (12):

(10) 小明跟他的朋友说中文。

小明跟他的朋友說中文。

Xiǎomíng gēn tā de péngyǒu shuō Zhōngwén.

Xiaoming speaks Chinese **with his friend**.

(11) 小亮对老师说中文，对她的朋友说英文。

小亮對老師說中文，對她的朋友說英文。

Xiǎoliàng duì lǎoshī shuō Zhōngwén, duì tā de péngyǒu shuō Yīngwén.

Xiaoliang speaks Chinese **to her teacher**, but speaks English **to her friends**.

(12) 小亮上课的时候向外边看。

小亮上課的時候向外邊看。

Xiǎoliàng shàng-kè de shíhou xiàng wàibian kàn.

Xiaoliang looks (to the) **outside** when she is in class.

- **Recipient**s such as **他的朋友** tā de péngyou (his friend), introduced by **给/給** gěi (to; for) as in (13). All **给/給** gěi (to; for) sentences can also have a beneficiary meaning, see (14), and the difference between these two meanings are dependent on the context:

(13) 小明给他的朋友买了一本书。

小明給他的朋友買了一本書。

Xiǎomíng gěi tā de péngyou mǎi le yì běn shū.

Xiaoming bought a book **for his friend**.

- **Beneficiaries** of an action such as **她的朋友** tā de péngyou (her friend) and **他的老师/他的老師** tā de lǎoshī (his teacher), introduced by **给/給** gěi in (14) and **替 tì** (for; on behalf of) in (15):

(14) 小亮给她的朋友写作业。

小亮給她的朋友寫作業。

Xiǎoliàng gěi tā de péngyou xiě zuòyè.

Xiaoliang did homework **for her friend**.

(15) 小明替他的老师上课。

小明替他的老師上課。

Xiǎomíng tì tā de lǎoshī shàng-kè.

Xiaoming teaches class **for his teacher**.

- **Instruments** are typically marked by prepositions, such as **用 yòng** (with) in (16):

(16) 中国人用筷子吃饭。

中國人用筷子吃飯。

Zhōngguó rén yòng kuaizi chī-fàn.

The Chinese eat **with chopsticks**.

- Topics typically occur at the beginning of a sentence and can be introduced with prepositions, such as 对(于)/對(於) duìyú (with regard to) and 关于/關於 guānyú (as for) in (17):

- (17) **关于**小亮, 我知道的不多。  
**關於**小亮, 我知道的不多。  
 Guānyú Xiǎoliàng, wo zhīdào de bù duō.

As for Xiaoliang, I don't know much.

- Logical relations include standards and rules and are introduced by prepositions, such as 根据/根據 gēnjù (according to):

- (18) **根据**规则, 小明赢了。  
**根據**規則, 小明贏了。  
 Gēnjù guīzé, Xiǎomíng yíng le.

According to the rules, Xiaoming won.

Prepositions can also introduce other participants, such as 把 bǎ (to) to introduce the receiver, 被 bēi (by) to introduce the doer, and 比 bǐ (than) to introduce the target/standard of comparison: see (22), (23) and (25), respectively.

You may have already noticed that the prepositional phrases are *before* verbs in Chinese sentences but *after* verbs in English translations, except for sentences (17) and (18) above. Nevertheless, you may have also encountered some sentences in which the prepositional phrases are after the verbs in Chinese. We will discuss this phenomenon in §14.3.

### 14.3 Postverbal position of Chinese prepositions

The default position of prepositional phrases is typically before the main verb in Chinese sentences, which is demonstrated in the many example sentences above. From this point of view, you may interpret Chinese prepositions (pre-position) as having a **pre-(verbal) position**. When prepositions are placed after the main verb in Chinese, there are often context-specific restrictions.

- I. **Restriction on prepositions:** only 在 zài, 到 dào, and 给/給 gěi can have a postverbal preposition, and “all (are) translatable as ‘to’ or ‘at’” in spoken language (Chao, 1968: 753). These three prepositions can also be used in the preverbal position; however, sentences often have **different meanings** when the prepositions are placed with certain kinds of verbs, especially motion verbs, in preverbal or postverbal positions.

- A preverbal PP occurs before the main verb as in (19a) and (20a).
- A postverbal PP occurs after the main verb as in (19b) and (20b).

- (19)a. 小明在桌子上跳。  
 Xiǎomíng zài zhuōzǐ shàng tiào.  
 Xiaoming is jumping on the table.
- b. 小明跳在桌子上。

Xiǎomíng tiào zài zhuōzi shàng.

Xiaoming jumped onto the table.

- (20)a. 小明(上)到桌子**上**跳。

Xiǎomíng (shàng) dào zhuōzi shàng tiào.

Xiaoming went onto the table to jump.

- b. 小明**跳**到桌子**上**。

Xiǎomíng tiào dào zhuōzi shàng.

Xiaoming jumped onto the table.

- Sentences (19a) and (20a) indicate Xiaoming was on the table first and then jumped.
- Sentences (19b) and (20b) show that Xiaoming jumped first and then landed on the table.

Even though the words in (19) and (20) are about the same, the preverbal and postverbal positions have changed the meaning of the sentences. The word order in the above sentences reminds us of the **Rule of Temporal Sequence**; namely, if an event happens earlier than another event in the objective world, their corresponding linguistic units are arranged in order based on their sequences in the objective world (see §2.3).

Unlike the prepositions 在 zài (be at/in/on) and 到 dào (to), which typically introduce location and time, the preposition 给/給 gěi (to) typically introduces *human beings* as in (13) and (14) above, and (21) below:

- (21)a. 小明**给**小亮**送**了一本书。

小明**給**小亮**送**了一本書。

Xiǎomíng gěi Xiǎoliàng sòng le yì běn shū.

Xiaoming sent Xiaoliang a book.

- b. 小明**送**了一本书**给**小亮。

小明**送**了一本書**給**小亮。

Xiǎomíng sòng le yì běn shū gěi Xiǎoliàng.

Xiaoming sent a book to Xiaoliang.

- c. 小明**送**给**了**小亮一本**书**。

小明**送**給**了**小亮一本**書**。

Xiǎomíng sòng gěi le Xiǎoliàng yì běn shū.

Xiaoming sent Xiaoliang a book.

The three sentences above all have the meaning “Xiaoming sent a book to Xiaoliang,” but they contain subtle differences:

- (21a) shows that the preposition 给/給 gěi (to) introduces the recipient 小亮 Xiǎoliàng first as the PP 给小亮/給小亮 gěi Xiǎoliàng (to Xiaoliang), which is the focus of the sentence, that is, Xiaoliang is the *goal* of sending the book to.

- (21b) emphasizes the event 送书/送書 sòng shū (send a book), that is, it highlights the *transition* of the book from Xiaoming to Xiaoliang.
- (21c) stresses the *result* of the action 送 sòng (send), that is, it implies that Xiaoliang has received the book.

### Attention

The verb suffix 了 le must be used after the postverbal preposition, which is after the main verb as in (21c) and as in (22c):

小明跳在了桌子上。Xiǎomíng tiào zài le zhuōzi shàng. (Xiaoming jumped onto the table).

了 le cannot be used after preverbal prepositions or before the postverbal preposition,; thus, the following two sentences are **incorrect**:

\*小明在了桌子上跳 \*Xiǎomíng zài le zhuōzi shàng tiào (lit. Xiaoming was on the table jumped), or

\*小明跳了在桌子上 \*Xiǎomíng tiào le zài zhuōzi shàng (lit. Xiaoming jumped on the table)

II. **Restriction on verbs:** sentences display **similar meanings** when prepositions are placed before or after certain verbs. Only a few verbs have this feature, all of which contain a *durative* meaning that expresses a period of length, such as the following:

- 住 zhù (live) in (22)
- 站 zhàn (stand) in (23)
- 坐 zuò (sit) in (24)
- 睡 shuì (sleep)
- 趴 pā (bend over)
- 躺 tǎng (lie down)
- 停 tíng (stop)

The verb suffix 着/著 zhe (durative aspect), which signifies a continuing state, can go after a verb as in (23a) and (24a) to enhance the durative meaning of the verb.

If the length of the duration needs to be specified, the preverbal form is appropriate with the *time complements*, such as 三年 sān nián (three years), 两个小时/兩個小時 liǎng ge xiǎoshí (two hours), and 很长时间/很長時間 hěn cháng shíjiān (long time), after the verbs 住 zhù (live) in (22c), 站 zhàn (stand) in (23c), and 坐 zuò (sit) in (24c), respectively.

- (22)a. 小明**在北京住**。  
Xiǎomíng zài Běijīng zhù.  
b. 小明**住在北京**。  
Xiǎomíng zhù zài Běijīng.  
Xiaoming lives in Beijing.

- c. 小明**在北京住**了三年。  
 Xiǎomíng zài Běijīng zhù le sān nián.  
 Xiaoming lived in Beijing for three years.

- (23)a. 小明**在教室里站**着。  
 小明**在教室里站**著。  
 Xiǎomíng zài jiàoshì li zhàn zhe.

- b. 小明**站在教室里**。  
 小明**站在教室裏**。  
 Xiǎomíng zhàn zài jiàoshì li.  
 Xiaoming is standing in the classroom.
- c. 小明**在教室里站**了两个小时。  
 小明**在教室裏站**了兩個小時。  
 Xiǎomíng zài jiàoshì li zhàn le liǎng ge xiǎoshí.  
 Xiaoming stood in the classroom for two hours.

- (24)a. 小明**在椅子上坐**着。  
 小明**在椅子上坐**著。  
 Xiǎomíng zài yǐzi shàng zuò zhe.

- b. 小明**坐在椅子上**。  
 Xiǎomíng zuò zài yǐzi shàng.  
 Xiaoming is sitting on the chair.
- c. 小明**在椅子上坐**了很长时间。  
 小明**在椅子上坐**了很長時間。  
 Xiǎomíng zài yǐzi shàng zuò le hěn cháng shíjiān.  
 Xiaoming sat on the chair for a long time.

III. **Restriction on formal settings:** In addition to 在 zài (be at/in/on), 到 dào (to), and 给/給 gěi (to) there are a few postverbal prepositions, such as 于/於 yú (at; in; on), 自 zì (from), 向 xiàng (towards), and 往 wǎng (towards) that are used in formal settings, mostly in written language, as in *a* in (25)–(28) below. By comparison, preverbal prepositions are common in spoken language, as in *b* in (25)–(28).

- (25)a. 小明生**于**1988年。  
 小明生**於**1988年。  
 Xiǎomíng shēng yú yī jiǔ bā bā nián.  
 Xiaoming was born in 1988.
- b. 小明**在**1988年出生。  
 Xiǎomíng zài yī jiǔ bā bā nián chūshēng.  
 Xiaoming was born in 1988.

- (26)a. 小亮來**自**北京。  
 小亮來**自**北京。  
 Xiǎoliàng lái **zì** Běijīng.  
 Xiaoliang is from Beijing.

- b. 小亮**从**北京來。  
 小亮**從**北京來。  
 Xiǎoliàng **cóng** Běijīng lái.  
 Xiaoliang is from Beijing.

- (27)a. 中国走**向**发展之路。  
 中國走**向**發展之路。  
 Zhōngguó zǒu **xiàng** fāzhǎn zhī lù.  
 China is walking towards the road of development.
- b. 小亮**向**家里走去。  
 小亮**向**家裏走去。  
 Xiǎoliàng **xiàng** jiā li zǒu qu.  
 Xiaoliang is walking towards his home.

- (28)a. 这列火车开**往**北京。  
 這列火車開**往**北京。  
 Zhèi liè huochē kāi **wǎng** Běijīng.  
 This train goes to Beijing.
- b. 这辆大巴**往**学校开去。  
 這輛大巴**往**學校開去。  
 Zhèi liàng dàbā **wǎng** xuéxiào kāi qu.  
 This bus is driving towards the school.

Sentences (25a), (26a), (27a), and (28a) all represent formal situations. The prepositions **于/於** yú (at; in; on) and **自** zì (from) in (25a) and (26a) are borrowed from classical Chinese but used in modern written Chinese. The prepositions **向** xiàng and **往** wǎng (towards) can either be used in the postverbal position in formal settings, as in (27a) and (28a), or in the preverbal position in spoken language, as in (27b) and (28b).

#### 14.4 Prepositions or verbs

We can now discuss the obstacle mentioned at the outset of how to determine whether a word is a preposition or a verb.

The origin of Chinese prepositions are verbs, and almost all Chinese prepositions are derived from verbs. Thus, some prepositions can still function as verbs. For example, the common prepositions **在** zài (be at/in/on), **到** dào (to), **给/給**

gěi (to; for), and 跟 gēn (with) in *a* in examples (29) to (32) below can also function as verbs in *b*:

- (29)a. 小明在图书馆看书。([prep.] 在 zài [be at/in/on])  
小明在圖書館看書。

Xiaoming zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū.

Xiaoming is studying **in** the library.

- b. 小明在图书馆。([v.] 在 zài [be at/in/on])  
小明在圖書館。

Xiaoming zài túshūguǎn.

Xiaoming **is in** the library.

- (30)a. 小亮走到电影院看电影去了。([prep.] 到 dào [to])  
小亮走到電影院看電影去了。

Xiaoliang zǒu dào diànyǐngyuàn kàn diànyǐng qù le.

Xiaoliang walked **to** the movie theatre to watch the movie.

- b. 小亮到了电影院。([v.] 到 dào [go; arrive])  
小亮到了電影院。

Xiaoliang dào le diànyǐng yuàn.

Xiaoliang **arrived at** the movie theatre.

- (31)a. 小明给小亮倒茶。([prep.] 给 gěi [for; to])  
小明給小亮倒茶。([prep.] 紿 gěi [for; to])

Xiaoming gěi Xiaoliang dào-chá.

Xiaoming poured tea **for** Xiaoliang.

- b. 小明给了小亮一百块钱。([v.] 给 gěi [give])  
小明給了小亮一百塊錢。([v.] 紿 gěi [give])

Xiaoming gěi le Xiaoliang yìbǎi kuài qián.

Xiaoming **gave** Xiaoliang one hundred dollars.

- (32)a. 小亮跟老师说中文，跟朋友说英文。([prep.] 跟 gēn [with])  
小亮跟老師說中文，跟朋友說英文。

Xiaoliang gēn láoshī shuō Zhōngwén, gēn péngyǒu shuō Yīngwén.

Xiaoliang speaks Chinese **with** her teacher and speaks English **with** her friends.

- b. 小亮在前面走，小明在后面跟着。([v.] 跟 gēn [follow])  
小亮在前面走，小明在後面跟着。

Xiaoliang zài qiánmian zǒu, Xiaoming zài hòumian gēn zhe.

Xiaoliang walked in the front and Xiaoming **followed** her.

You may now have the question: How do we distinguish Chinese prepositions from verbs?

The following three tips can help answer this:

- i. Chinese prepositions cannot take the verb suffixes 了 le, 着 zhe, and 过 guo but verbs can, as can be seen in (30b), (31b), and (32b) above.
- ii. Prepositions cannot be reduplicated, unlike verbs and adjectives.
- iii. As in English, Chinese prepositions cannot be used alone but must **co-occur** with another verb in a sentence; verbs can be used alone. Thus, a Chinese preposition is also called a **co-verb** to show this feature of the preposition and also its origin. For example, the preposition 对/對 duì (to) with the proper noun Xiaoliang forms a PP, 对小亮/對小亮 duì Xiǎoliàng (to Xiaoliang), before the predicate 好 hǎo ([adj.] good) as in (33).

**NOTE** 了 le and 着 zhe in some prepositions, such as 为了/為了 wèile (in order to), 除了 chúle (except), 随着/隨著 suízhe (with), and 沿着/沿著 yán zhe (along), are not verb suffixes since the above prepositions with 了 le and 着 zhe are fixed and inseparable units.

- (33) 小明对小亮好吗?  
 小明對小亮好嗎?  
 Xiǎomíng duì Xiǎoliàng hǎo ma?

Is Xiaoming nice to Xiaoliang?

To answer the question above, it is correct to use a sentence such as (34a), or a predicate (verb or adjective) such as 好 hǎo(nice; good) in (34b), but prepositions such as 对/對 duì (to) as in (34c) and PPs such as 对小亮/對小亮 duì Xiǎoliàng (to Xiaoliang) as in (34d) cannot answer the question alone.

- (34)a. (小明)对小亮好。  
 (小明)對小亮好。  
 (Xiǎomíng) duì Xiǎoliàng hǎo.  
 (Xiaoming) is nice to Xiaoming.
- b. 好。  
 Hǎo.  
 Nice/Well.
- c. \*对  
 \*對  
 \*duì  
 (lit. to)
- d. \*对小亮  
 \*對小亮  
 duì Xiǎoliàng  
 (lit. to Xiaoliang)

**Exception:** as there are a few prepositions that are also verbs, they can answer questions alone when used as a preposition, such as the preposition 在 zài ([be] at/in/on) in (35b) below.

- (35)a. 小明在图书馆看书吗?  
 小明在圖書館看書嗎?  
 Xiǎomíng zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū ma?  
 Does Xiaoming study in the library?
- b. 在。  
 Zài.  
 Yes.
- c. \*(小明)在图书馆  
 \*(小明)在圖書館  
 \*(Xiǎomíng) zài túshūguǎn  
 (lit. Xiaoming in the library)
- d. \*看书  
 \*看書  
 kàn-shū  
 (lit. study)

The main reason that the preposition 在 zài can be used alone is that it still contains its verb meaning, “(is) in,” and it signifies the location that is the focus of the question. However, the PP 在图书馆/在圖書館 zài túshūguǎn (in the library) without a verb, as in (35c), is an incorrect way of answering the question in (35a). Example (35d) shows that when agreeing, one must agree to the whole event “studying in the library” and cannot separate the location from the event. Therefore, unlike example (34b), it is not appropriate to answer this question with the verb 看书/看書 kàn-shū (study), as in (35d).

## 14.5 Summary

Prepositions are a rather small but important word class. In this chapter, we have learned that prepositions precede nouns and pronouns to create prepositional phrases (PP) with the form of *Preposition + NP*, which is the same in both Chinese and English. Unlike English, Chinese prepositional phrases are in the *preverbal* position in sentences in most cases. There are only three prepositions 在 zài (be at/in/on), 到 dào (to), and 给/給 gěi (to) that can be used in the *postverbal* position, with some restrictions. We have also learned that some Chinese prepositions can also be verbs, but prepositions cannot follow the verb suffixes 了 le, 着/著 zhe, and 过/過 guo, and also cannot be used alone like verbs are.

The main features, meanings, and positions of the preposition are summarized in Table 14.2.

**Table 14.2** The features and meanings of prepositions<sup>2</sup>

Type	Note	Example
Features	cannot be used alone (but used as a PP)	他在家看书/他在家看書。 Tā zài jiā kàn-shū. He studies at home.
	cannot be reduplicated	—
	cannot take suffixes 了le, 着/zhe, 过/guo	Except in postverbal position: 他跳在了床上。 Tā tiào zài le chuáng shàng. He jumped onto the bed.
Meaning (to introduce a new person/time/location involved in the event)	time	他在晚上看书/他在晚上看書。 Tā zài wǎnshàng kàn-shū. He studies in the evening.
	place	他在图书馆看书/他在圖書館看書。 Tā zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū. He studies in the library.
	goal/target	他跟老师说中文/他跟老師說中文。 Tā gēn lǎoshī shuō Zhōngwén. He speaks Chinese with his teacher.
	recipient	他给我一本书/他給我一本書。 Tā gěi wǒ yì běn shū. He gave me a book.
	beneficiary	他替老师上课/他替老師上課。 Tā tì lǎoshī shàng-kè. He teaches class for his teacher.
	instrument	他用筷子吃饭/他用筷子吃飯。 Tā yòng kuaìzi chī-fàn. He eats with chopsticks.

<sup>2</sup> See also Appendix 2.

Table 14.2 (cont.)

Type	Note	Example
	topic	关于 <b>小亮</b> , 我知道的不多/關於 <b>小亮</b> , 我知道的不多。 Guānyú Xiǎoliàng, wǒ zhīdào de bù duō. As for Xiaoliang, I don't know much.
	logical relation	根据 <b>规则</b> , 小明赢了/根據規則, 小明贏了。 Gēnjiù guīzé, Xiǎomíng yíng le. According to the rules, Xiaoming won.
	receiver (see Chapter 22)	他把 <b>水</b> 喝了。 Tā bǎ shuǐ hē le. He drank the water.
	doer (see Chapter 23)	他被 <b>小亮</b> 打了。 Tā bèi Xiǎoliàng dǎ le. He was hit by Xiaoliang.
	comparative object (see Chapter 23)	他比 <b>小明</b> 高。 Tā bǐ Xiǎomíng gāo. He is taller than Xiaoming.
Position	preverbal (common)	All examples used above to illustrate the <b>Meaning</b> of prepositions are also applicable here.
	postverbal (limited to 在 zài, 给/給 gěi, 到 dào)	他跳 <b>在</b> 桌子 <b>上</b> 。 Tā tiào zài zhuōzi shàng. He jumped onto the table.
	either pre- or post-verbal position (verbs with <i>durative</i> meaning)	他在 <b>北京</b> <b>住</b> 。 Tā zài Běijīng zhù. He <b>住</b> 在北京。 Tā zhù zài Běijīng. He lives in Beijing.

## 14.6 Exercises

### I Complete the blanks with the words provided where they are required:

1. 小明走进教室, 坐\_\_\_\_\_在\_\_\_\_\_椅子上/小明走進教室, 坐\_\_\_\_\_在\_\_\_\_\_椅子上。 (了 le)  
Xiǎomíng zǒu jìn jiàoshì, zuò \_\_\_\_ zài \_\_\_\_ yǐzi shàng.

2. 小明\_\_\_\_\_常常\_\_\_\_\_小亮买\_\_\_\_\_水果/小明\_\_\_\_\_常常  
\_\_\_\_\_小亮買\_\_\_\_\_水果。 (给/給 gěi)  
Xiǎomíng \_\_\_\_\_ chángcháng \_\_\_\_\_ Xiǎoliàng mǎi \_\_\_\_\_ shuǐguǒ.
3. 小明\_\_\_\_\_纽约住\_\_\_\_\_了三年了/小明\_\_\_\_\_紐約住  
\_\_\_\_\_了三年了。 (在 zài)  
Xiǎomíng \_\_\_\_\_ Niǔyùē zhù \_\_\_\_\_ le sān nián le.
4. 今天是小亮的生日, 小明送\_\_\_\_\_她\_\_\_\_\_很多花。 (给/  
給 gěi)  
Jīntiān shì Xiǎoliàng de shēngrì, Xiǎomíng sòng \_\_\_\_\_ tā \_\_\_\_\_ hěn  
duō huā.
5. 老师\_\_\_\_\_小明\_\_\_\_\_说:“下课以后, 请到\_\_\_\_\_我的办公室  
来。”/ 老師\_\_\_\_\_小明\_\_\_\_\_說:“下課以後, 請到\_\_\_\_\_我的  
辦公室來。” (对/對 duì)  
Lǎoshī \_\_\_\_\_ Xiǎomíng \_\_\_\_\_ shuō: “Xià-kè yǐhòu, qǐng dào \_\_\_\_\_ wǒ  
de bàngōngshì lái.”
6. 我们的老师喜欢\_\_\_\_\_教室里站\_\_\_\_\_着讲课/我們的  
老師喜歡\_\_\_\_\_教室裏站\_\_\_\_\_著講課。 (在 zài)  
Wǒmen de lǎoshí xǐhuan \_\_\_\_\_ jiàoshì li zhàn \_\_\_\_\_ zhe jiǎng-kè.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ 早上八点太早了, 我喜欢\_\_\_\_\_晚上\_\_\_\_\_看  
书/\_\_\_\_\_ 早上八點太早了, 我喜歡\_\_\_\_\_晚上\_\_\_\_\_看  
書。 (在 zài)  
\_\_\_\_\_ zǎoshang bā diǎn tài zǎo le, wǒ xǐhuan \_\_\_\_\_ wǎnshàng \_\_\_\_\_  
kàn-shù.
8. 小明每天\_\_\_\_\_家里开车来\_\_\_\_\_学校上课/小明每天  
\_\_\_\_\_家裏開車來\_\_\_\_\_學校上課。 (从/從 cóng)  
Xiǎomíng méitiān \_\_\_\_\_ jiā li kāi-chē lái \_\_\_\_\_ xuéxiào shàng-kè.

## II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:

1. Have you studied Chinese in China?
2. John took a taxi to the airport from his older brother's place.
3. John was so tired that he fell asleep on the sofa when he got home.
4. After dinner, we went for a walk on the street.
5. Our teachers are always nice to students.
6. John drives to school every day since his home is far away from the school.
7. The little dog is so interesting; it jumped onto the table a moment ago but now it is jumping on the floor.
8. John just likes sitting on the sofa watching TV every Friday evening.

## III Use the words provided in the parentheses below to fill in the blanks:

(到 dào, 对/對 duì, 给/給 gěi, 在 zài, 跟 gēn, 比 bì)

1. 老师上课的时候\_\_\_\_\_学生们讲语法/老師上課的時候  
\_\_\_\_\_學生們講語法。

Lǎoshī shàng-kè de shíhou \_\_\_\_\_ xuéshengmen jiǎng yǔfǎ.

2. 学生们\_\_\_\_\_新老师都非常客气/學生們\_\_\_\_\_新老師  
都非常客氣。

Xuéshengmen \_\_\_\_\_ xīn lǎoshī dōu fēicháng kèqi.

3. 下课以后, 小亮很喜欢\_\_\_\_\_中国学生用中文聊天/  
下課以後, 小亮很喜歡\_\_\_\_\_中國學生用中文聊天。  
Xià-kè yǐhòu, Xiǎoliàng hěn xǐhuan \_\_\_\_\_ Zhōngguó xuésheng yòng Zhōngwén liáo-tiān.
4. 很有意思, 小明的妹妹\_\_\_\_\_小明高。  
Hěn yǒuyìsì, Xiǎomíng de mèimei \_\_\_\_\_ Xiǎomíng gāo.
5. 学生们学习都很努力, 每天都学\_\_\_\_\_晚上 11 点/學生們學習都很努力, 每天都學\_\_\_\_\_晚上 11 點。  
Xuéshengmen xuéxí dōu hěn nǔlì, měitiān dōu xué \_\_\_\_\_ wǎnshàng shíyī diǎn.
6. 小明很喜欢躺\_\_\_\_\_床上看书/小明很喜歡躺\_\_\_\_\_床上看書。  
Xiǎomíng hěn xǐhuan tǎng \_\_\_\_\_ chuáng shàng kàn-shū.

#### IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate prepositions:

1. A: 你今天几点有中文课/你今天幾點有中文課？  
Nǐ jīntiān jǐ diǎn yǒu Zhōngwén kè?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_早上 10 点到12点, 我有中文课/\_\_\_\_\_早上 10 點到 12 點, 我有中文課。  
\_\_\_\_\_ zǎoshang shí diǎn dào shí'èr diǎn, wǒ yǒu Zhōngwén kè.
2. A: 请问, 图书馆怎么走/請問, 圖書館怎麼走？  
Qǐngwèn, túshūguǎn zěnme zǒu?  
B: 您一直走, \_\_\_\_\_右一拐就到了。  
Nǐn yìzhí zǒu, \_\_\_\_\_ yòu yì guǎi jiù dào le.
3. A: 中午你想\_\_\_\_\_哪儿吃饭/中午你想\_\_\_\_\_吃飯？  
Zhōngwǔ nǐ xiǎng \_\_\_\_\_ nǎr chī-fàn?  
B: 我想\_\_\_\_\_中国城吃午饭/我想\_\_\_\_\_中國城吃午飯。  
Wǒ xiǎng \_\_\_\_\_ Zhōngguó chéng chī wǔfàn.
4. A: 你家在哪儿/你家在哪儿？  
Nǐ jiā zài nǎr?  
B: 我家\_\_\_\_\_学校很近/我家\_\_\_\_\_學校很近。  
Wǒ jiā \_\_\_\_\_ xuéxiào hěn jìn.
5. A: 我的手机呢? 我怎么找不到我的手机了/我的手機呢? 我怎麼找不到我的手機了?  
Wǒ de shǒujī ne? Wǒ zěnme zhǎo bu dào wǒ de shǒujī le?  
B: 你的手机\_\_\_\_\_我这儿呢/你的手機\_\_\_\_\_我這兒呢。Nǐ de shǒujī \_\_\_\_\_ wǒ zhèr ne.
6. A: 张老师去哪儿了/張老師去哪兒了?  
Zhāng lǎoshī qù nǎr le?  
B: 他回办公室了, 可能\_\_\_\_\_办公室\_\_\_\_\_学生谈话呢/他回辦公室了, 可能\_\_\_\_\_辦公室\_\_\_\_\_學生談話呢。  
Tā huí bàngōngshì le, kěnénɡ \_\_\_\_\_ bàngōngshì \_\_\_\_\_ xuésheng tán-huà ne.

# 15

## Conjunctions

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the grammatical features and functions of Chinese conjunctions
- ★ To distinguish the differences between conjunctions, prepositions, and adverbs
- ★ To learn the usages of some common conjunctions and connective expressions

**Chinese conjunctions** link two linguistic units, such as words, phrases, clauses, or sentences, and cannot be used alone. While these features are the same as English conjunctions, some differences can be seen between the two languages. For example, the **Chinese conjunction 和 hé (and)** **cannot connect two sentences** as can be seen in (1b), but in English “and” can, as in (1a).

(1a. Xiaoming is a student **and** Xiaoliang is, too.

- b. \*小明是学生**和**小亮也是  
\*小明是學生**和**小亮也是  
\*Xiǎomíng shì xuèsheng hé Xiǎoliàng yě shì
- c. 小明是学生，小亮也是。  
小明是學生，小亮也是。  
Xiǎomíng shì xuèsheng, Xiǎoliàng yě shì

The correct translation of (1a) into Chinese is (1c), in which the conjunction **和 hé (and)** is not used.

We will examine Chinese conjunctions and discover their uses below.

### 15.1 Types of conjunctions

There are three types of Chinese conjunctions, which are categorized according to their ability to connect linguistic units.

1. **Word conjunctions:** can connect words and phrases, but not clauses or sentences, such as **和 hé** and **跟 gēn** (and) in example (1) (see §15.2.1 below).

2. **Clause conjunctions:** can connect clauses (small sentence) or sentences, but not words and phrases, such as 因为/因為 yīnwei...所以 suǒyǐ (because...thus) in example (12) (see §15.2.3).
3. **General conjunctions:** can connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences, such as 还是/還是 háishi and 或者 huòzhě (or) in examples (24) and (25) (see §15.2.9).

## 15.2 Functions of conjunctions

Conjunctions can show grammatical relations by linking two linguistic units. The commonly used conjunctions are divided into ten categories based on their relation to other words.

### ► 15.2.1 Coordination

Two units linked by conjunctions that are equal to each other and have no primary and secondary distinction, such as 和 hé and 跟 gēn (and) in (2), (3), and (4a), as well as 与/與 yǔ, 同 tóng, and 及 jí (and); the latter three conjunctions are used mostly in written Chinese. These conjunctions can only connect words and phrases as below and not clauses or sentences as in (1b) above. They can connect:

- Nouns or pronouns (most common):

- (2) 小明会说中文，英文和/跟日文。  
小明會說中文，英文和/跟日文。  
Xiāomíng huì shuō Zhōngwén, Yīngwén hé/gēn Rìwén.  
Xiaoming can speak Chinese, English and Japanese.

The conjunction 和 hé or 跟 gēn (and) should be used between the last two units if there are more than two coordinative units, as in (2).

- Adjectives and verbs (with some restrictions). The typical restrictions are listed below:

- **Restriction 1:** adjectives and verbs must be disyllabic. For example:
  - the disyllabic adjectives 用功 yònggōng (diligent) and 快乐/快樂 kuàilè (happy) are linked by 和 hé (and) to modify 学生/學生 xuésheng (student), as in (3a); and
  - the verbs 唱歌 chàng-gē (sing) and 跳舞 tiào-wǔ (dance) are linked by 和 hé (and) to be the object of 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like), as in (4a); however,
  - the sentences with single-syllable adjectives, as in (3b), or verbs, as in (4b), are **incorrect**.

- (3)a. 小明是一个用功和快乐的学生。  
小明是一個用功和快樂的學生。  
Xiāomíng shì yí ge yònggōng hé kuàilè de xuésheng.  
Xiaoming is a diligent and happy student.

- b. \*小明是一个棒和好的学生  
 \*小明是一個棒和好的學生  
 \*Xiǎomíng shì yí ge bàng hé hǎo de xuésheng  
 (lit. Xiaoming is a fantastic and good student)

- (4)a. 小亮喜欢唱歌和跳舞。  
 小亮喜歡唱歌和跳舞。  
 Xiǎoliàng xǐhuan chàng-gē hé tiào-wǔ.  
 Xiaoliang likes singing and dancing.

- b. \*小亮喜欢唱和跳  
 \*小亮喜歡唱和跳  
 \*Xiǎoliàng xǐhuan chàng hé tiào  
 (lit. Xiaoliang like sing and jump)

• **Restriction 2:** used more in **formal settings** when the adjective serves as the predicate:

- (5) 现在的手机越来越复杂和精巧了。  
 現在的手機越來越複雜和精巧了。  
 Xiànzài de shǒujī yuèlái yuè fùzá hé jīngqiǎo le.

The cell phone becomes more and more complex and exquisite nowadays.

In spoken language, it is more appropriate to use other words to connect adjectives such as:

- the adverb 也 yě (also), as in (6a); and
- the pair of adverbs 又…又… yòu . . . yòu (both . . . and . . .), as in (6b), and  
 又… yòu which can connect single-syllable adjectives, as in (6c); however,
- the use of 和 hé (and) in (6d) is **incorrect**.

- (6)a. 这间屋子很干净也很舒服。  
 這間屋子很乾淨也很舒服。  
 Zhèi jiān wūzi hěn gānjìng yě hěn shūfu.

This room is clean **and also** comfortable.

- b. 这间屋子又干净又舒服。  
 這間屋子又乾淨又舒服。  
 Zhèi jiān wūzi yòu gānjìng yòu shūfu.

This room is both clean and comfortable.

- c. 小明又高又帅。  
 小明又高又帥。  
 Xiǎomíng yòu gāo yòu shuài.

Xiaoming is both tall and handsome.

- d. \*这间屋子很干净和很舒服  
 \*這間屋子很乾淨和很舒服  
 \*zhè jiān wūzi hěn gānjìng hé hěn shūfu  
 (lit. this room very clean and comfortable)

- **Restriction 3:** verbs connected by the conjunctions as the predicate should have the same object.
  - The verbs 学习/學習 xuéxí (study) and 练习/練習 liànxí (practice) in (7a) share the same object, 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese).
  - It is inappropriate to connect two verbs that have two different objects as the predicate, such as 语法/語法 yǔfǎ (grammar) and 发音/發音 fāyīn (pronunciation) in (7b).
  - It would be better to simply add a slight pause mark “、” (顿号/頓號 dùnhào whose function is like the English conjunction “and”) between the two verb phrases as in (7c).

- (7)a. 小明昨天学习和练习了中文。  
 小明昨天學習和練習了中文。  
 Xiǎomíng zuótiān xuéxí hé liànxí le Zhōngwén.  
 Xiaoming studied and practiced Chinese yesterday.

- b. \*小明昨天学习了语法和练习了发音  
 \*小明昨天學習了語法和練習了發音  
 \*Xiǎomíng zuótiān xuéxí le yǔfǎ hé liànxí le fāyīn  
 (lit. Xiaoming yesterday study grammar and practice pronunciation)

- c. 小明昨天学习了语法、练习了发音。  
 小明昨天學習了語法、練習了發音。  
 Xiǎomíng zuótiān xuéxí le yǔfǎ, liànxí le fāyīn.  
 Xiaoming studied grammar and practiced pronunciation yesterday.

Following the same principle, 和 hé (and) cannot connect two V-O compounds as the predicate since the V-O construction carries an object, even if it is a “dummy object” such as 上课/上課 shàng-kè (go to class) and 打工 dǎ-gōng (lit. hit-work; work a part-time job) as in (8a); instead, a 顿号/頓號 dùnhào (slight-pause mark) “、” between the two verbs as in (8b) below is more appropriate.

- (8)a. \*小亮每天上课和打工  
 \*小亮每天上課和打工  
 \*Xiǎoliàng měitiān shàng-kè hé dǎ-gōng  
 (lit. Xiaoliang every day go class and work)
- b. 小亮每天上课、打工。  
 小亮每天上課、打工。  
 Xiǎoliàng měitiān shàng-kè, dǎ-gōng.  
 Xiaoliang goes to class and works (a part-time job) every day.

### ► 15.2.2 Progression

Conjunctions, such as **不但**...**而且** búdàn ... érqiě (not only ... but also), used in a pair to link phrases as in (9) and clauses as in (10), indicate a **progressive** relationship between two clauses either in degree of depth or breadth; for example, the degree of the second clause is further or wider than the first clause, as in (9) and (10).

(9) 小亮**不但**很漂亮, **而且**很聪明。

小亮**不但**很漂亮, **而且**很聰明。

Xiǎoliàng búdàn hěn piàoliang, érqiě hěn cōngming.

Xiaoliang is not only beautiful, but also smart.

(10) **不但**小明会说中文, **而且**小亮也会说中文。

**不但**小明會說中文, **而且**小亮也會說中文。

Búdàn Xiǎomíng huì shuō Zhōngwén, érqiě Xiǎoliàng yě huì shuō Zhōngwén.

Not only does Xiaoming know how to speak Chinese, but Xiaoliang does as well.

- If there is only *one subject* as in (9), the subject Xiaoliang appears once and precedes the conjunction **不但** búdàn.
- If there are *two different subjects* as in (10), the subjects Xiaoming and Xiaoliang should follow the conjunctions **不但** ...**而且** búdàn ... érqiě, respectively. This is about the same as the English word order, as can be seen in the translations of (9) and (10).
- If the two clauses that are connected by the pair of conjunctions do not show a progressive relationship, then the usage is **inappropriate** as in (11):

(11) \*小明**不但**考试很好, **而且**成绩也很好

\*小明**不但**考試很好, **而且**成績也很好

\*Xiǎomíng búdàn kǎoshì hěn hǎo, érqiě chéngjì yě hěn hǎo

(lit. Xiaoming not only test good but also score good)

The reason that this phrase is incorrect is because **考试/考試** kǎoshì (test) and **成绩/成績** chéngjì (score) are talking about the same thing, and therefore, the sentence does not have a progressive meaning.

### ► 15.2.3 Causality

Conjunctions such as **因为/因為**...**所以**...**所以** yīnwei ... suǒyǐ (because ... [therefore]), which are often used in a pair to link two clauses indicate a reason–result relation as in (12):

(12) **因为**小明病了, **所以**他今天没来上课。

**因為**小明病了, **所以**他今天沒來上課。

Yīnwei Xiǎomíng bìng le, suǒyǐ tā jīntiān méi lái shàng-kè.

Xiaoming was sick; thus, he didn't come to class today.

The conjunction **由于/由於** yóuyú (because) can also indicate a reason as **因为/因為** yīnwei does and thus these two conjunctions are interchangeable in some

contexts. For instance, 由于/由於 yóuyú can replace 因为/因為 yīnwei in (12) and doesn't change the meaning of the sentence. Nevertheless:

- 由于/由於 yóuyú is used more in written language, while 因为/因為 yīnwei is used more in spoken language;
- 由于/由於 yóuyú can be collocated with 所以 suǒyǐ (therefore) and also with the more formal conjunctions 因此 yīncǐ and 因而 yīnér (thus), as in (13a) below, while 因为/因為 yīnwei is inappropriate with the latter two formal conjunctions; and
- 由于/由於 yóuyú is always used in front of the first (subordinate) clause as in (13a), but 因为/因為 yīnwei can be used after the main clause as in (13b).

(13)a. 由于 小明找到了一个很好的工作, 因而 他特别高兴。

由於 小明找到了一個很好的工作, 因而 他特別高興。

Yóuyú Xiǎomíng zhǎo.dào le yí ge hěn hǎo de gōngzuò, yīnér tā tèbìe gāoxìng.

Xiaoming has got a very good job; thus, he is especially happy.

b. 小明特别高兴, 因为 他找到了一个好工作。

小明特別高興, 因為 他找到了一個好工作。

Xiǎomíng tèbìe gāoxìng, yīnwei tā zhǎo dào le yí ge hěn hǎo de gōngzuò.

Xiaoming is especially happy because he has got a very good job.

#### ► 15.2.4 Condition

Conjunctions, such as 只要 zhǐyào (as long as), 只有 zhǐyǒu (only), 不管 bùguǎn (no matter), and similar linking phrases and clauses, indicate the condition for a result.

- **只要** zhǐyào vs. **只有** zhǐyǒu. Comparisons between these two conjunctions can be seen in (14a) and (14b), and (15a) and (15b) below:
  - 只要 zhǐyào is often used in a pair with the adverb 就 jiù meaning “as long as . . . then” and indicates a **necessary** condition as a result.
  - 只有 zhǐyǒu is used with the adverb 才 cái meaning “only if . . . then” and signifies the **solitary** condition, which is the necessary result.

(14)a. 只要努力, 就能学好中文。

只要努力, 就能學好中文。

Zhǐyào nǔlì, jiù néng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén.

As long as (one is) making efforts, then one can study Chinese well.

b. 只有努力学习, 才能学好中文。

只有努力學習, 才能學好中文。

Zhǐyǒu nǔlì xuéxí, cái néng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén.

One wouldn't study Chinese well if he/she doesn't study it diligently.

or: One wouldn't study Chinese well unless he/she studies it diligently.

(15)a. **只要**你天天练习说中文, 你的中文水平**就会**提高。

**只要**你天天練習說中文, 你的中文水平**就會**提高。

Zhǐyào nǐ tiāntiān liànxí shuō Zhōngwén, nǐ de Zhōngwén shuǐpíng jiù huì tí.gāo.

As long as you practice speaking Chinese every day, your Chinese proficiency will improve.

b. 你**只有**天天练习说中文, 你的中文水平**才会**提高。

你**只有**天天練習說中文, 你的中文水平**才會**提高。

Nǐ zhǐyǒu tiāntiān liànxí shuō Zhōngwén, nǐ de Zhōngwén shuǐpíng cái huì tí.gāo.

Only if you practice speaking Chinese every day, can you then improve your Chinese proficiency.

or: You won't improve your Chinese proficiency if you don't practice speaking Chinese every day.

Since the conjunction 只有 zhǐyǒu (only if) indicates an only condition for a result, it can be exchanged with a similar conjunction, 除非 chúfēi (unless). Thus, the meaning of (14b) and (15b) remains the same even if 只有 zhǐyǒu (only if) is replaced with 除非 chúfēi (unless).

• **无论/無論** wúlùn, **不论/不論** bùlùn, **不管** bùguǎn (no matter) are often used in pairs with the adverbs 都 dōu (all) or 也 yě (also). The first two conjunctions, 无论/無論 wúlùn and 不论/不論 bùlùn, are used more in written language, and 不管 bùguǎn is used more frequently in spoken language. A question form must follow the conjunctions as shown in examples (16)–(19) below.

◦ Question form: V-not-V

(16) **无论**你**忙不忙**, 都应该做功课。

**無論**你**忙不忙**, 都應該做功課。

Wúlùn nǐ máng bu máng, dōu yīnggāi zuò gōngkè.

No matter whether you are busy or not, you should do your homework.

◦ Question form: A **还是/還是** háishi B

(17) **不管**明天下雨**还是**不下雨, 我**都要**去爬山。

**不管**明天下雨**還是**不下雨, 我**都要**去爬山。

Bùguǎn míngtiān xià-yǔ háishi bù xià-yǔ, wǒ dōu yào qù pá-shān.

No matter whether it will rain tomorrow or not, I will go hiking.

◦ **Interrogative pronouns**, such as 什么/什麼 shénme (what), 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how), 哪儿/哪兒 nǎr (where), 哪 nǎi (with MW [which]), 谁/誰 shéi (who) as in (18), and 多 duō (how) as in (19).

(18) **不论谁**有问题, 张老师**都**很热情地帮助。

**不論誰**有問題, 張老師**都**很熱情地幫助。

Bùlùn shéi yǒu wèntí, Zhāng lǎoshī dōu hěn rèqíng de bāngzhù.

No matter who has problems, Professor Zhang helps him/her with great passion.

(19) **不管**明天有多热, 小明**都要**去爬山。

**不管**明天有多热, 小明**都要**去爬山。

Bùguǎn míngtiān yǒu duō rè, Xiǎomíng dōu yào qù pá-shān.

No matter how hot it is tomorrow, Xiaoming will go hiking.

### ► 15.2.5 Supposition

Conjunctions, such as **如果** rúguǒ/要是 yàoshì/假如 jiārú (if), are often used in a pair with the adverb **就** jiù (then) to indicate a suppositional situation as in (20).

(20) **要是/如果/假如**明天不下雨, 我们**就**爬山去。

Yàoshì/Rúguǒ/Jiārú míngtiān bù xià-yǔ, wǒmen jiù pá-shān qu.

If there is no rain tomorrow, we will go hiking.

**要是** yàoshì (if) is often used in informal settings, while **如果** rúguǒ and **假如** jiārú (if) are used more often in formal settings.

### ► 15.2.6 Inference

The conjunction **既然** jírán (since) is often used with the adverb **就** jiù (then) as a pair showing a relation of cause and effect. The first clause that is linked by **既然** jírán indicates that an event already happened or that it is a known fact, and the second clause is the inferred recommendation or suggestion as in (21).

(21) **既然**已经下雨了, 我们**就**别去爬山了吧。

**既然**已經下雨了, 我們**就**別去爬山了吧。

Jírán yǐjīng xià-yǔ le, wǒmen jiù bié qù pá-shān le ba.

Since it has already begun raining, we should not go hiking, all right?

### ► 15.2.7 Concession

The conjunction **即使** jíshí (even if) is often used as a pair with the adverb **也** yě (also), of which the first clause linked by **即使** jíshí signifies a concessive condition that is often extreme or exaggerated, while **也** yě indicates that the content of the second clause does not change whatever the condition is.

(22) **即使**下刀子, 我**也**要去爬山。

Jíshí xià dāozi, wǒ yě yào qù pá-shān.

(Don't mention rain or snow) Even if it rains knives, I will still go hiking.

### ► 15.2.8 Transition

Conjunctions such as **虽然/雖然** ... **但是/可是** suīrán ... dànshì/kěshì (although ... [but]) are often used in a pair as in (23) below.

(23) **虽然**小明今天不舒服, **但是**他还是来上课了。

**雖然**小明今天不舒服, **但是**他還是來上課了。

Suīrán Xiǎomíng jīntiān bù shūfù, dànshì tā háishi lái shàng-kè le.

(Although) Xiaoming is not feeling well today, (but) he still came to class.

### ► 15.2.9 Alternative

Conjunctions, such as 或者 huòzhě and 还是/還是 háishi (or), that indicate alternative choices can link words as in (24b), phrases as in (24a), and clauses as in (25).

(24)a. 你想喝茶**还是**喝咖啡？

你想喝茶**還是**喝咖啡？

Nǐ xiǎng hē-chá **háishi** hē kāfēi?

Would you like to drink tea or coffee?

b. 茶**或者**咖啡都可以。

Chá **huòzhě** kāfēi dōu kěyǐ.

Either tea or coffee is fine.

(25)a. 周末小明跟小亮常常去公园散步，**或者**去电影院看电影。

週末小明跟小亮常常去公園散步，**或者**去電影院看电影。

Zhōumò Xiǎomíng gēn Xiǎoliàng chángcháng qù gōngyuán sàn-bù, **huòzhě** qù diànyǐngyuàn kàn diànyǐng.

Xiaoming and Xiaoliang often go walking in the park or go to a theater to watch movies on the weekend.

b. 你这个周末去公园散步**还是**去电影院看电影？

你這個週末去公園散步**還是**去電影院看电影？

Nǐ zhèi ge zhōumò qù gōngyuán sàn-bù **háishi** qù diànyǐngyuàn kàn diànyǐng?

Will you go walking in the park or go to see a movie in the theater this weekend?

#### ► Alert!

Don't confuse 或者 huòzhě and 还是/還是 háishi as both are translated as "or" in English! In Chinese, 或者 huòzhě is used in a statement as in (24b) and (25a), but 还是/還是 háishi is used in a question as in (24a) and (25b).

### ► 15.2.10 Preference

The conjunctions 宁可/寧可 nìngkě (would rather) and 与其/與其 yǔqí (rather than) are often used in pairs with other words as connecting clauses, such as 宁可...也不/寧可...也不 nìngkě ...yě bù and 与其...不如/與其...不如 yǔqí...bù rú (rather ... than). These expressions mark the **preferred** choice by comparing two sides.

- **宁可/寧可** nìngkě **A** **也不** yě bù **B** (rather A than B; lit. rather A not B): Part A is preferred and B should be avoided; however, neither A nor B are *favorable* choices.

- (26) 小明宁可早到教室一个小时，也不愿意迟到一分钟。

小明寧可早到教室一個小時，也不願意遲到一分鐘。

Xiaoming nìngkě zǎo dào jiàoshì yí ge xiǎoshí, yě bù yuàn yì chí dào yì fēnzhōng.

Xiaoming would rather arrive in the classroom one hour early than be one minute late.

The first clause with 宁可/寧可 nìngkě (would rather) is Xiaoming's preference, although it is *not ideal* (to arrive earlier), in order to avoid the worse outcome in the second clause (being late by even one minute).

- **宁可/寧可** nìngkě **A 也要** yěyào **B** (would rather do A in order to achieve B):

Part B is the preferred goal, even at the cost of having to do A. For instance, to achieve the preferred goal of 做完功课/做完功課 zuò.wán gōngkè (finish the homework) in (27), Xiaoming is willing to pay the price of not sleeping.

- (27) 小明宁可不睡觉，也要做完功课。

小明寧可不睡覺，也要做完功課。

Xiaoming nìngkě bù shuì-jìao, yě yào zuò.wán gōngkè.

Xiaoming would rather not go to sleep in order to finish his homework.

- **与其/與其** yǔqí **A 不如** bùrú **B** (rather B than A): Part B is preferred over A.

This combination often expresses one person's viewpoint or suggestion as in (28):

- (28) **与其**去中国学中文，**不如**在美国学。

**與其**去中國學中文，**不如**在美國學。

Yǔqí qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén, bùrú zài Měiguó xué.

If (you plan to) go to study Chinese in China, why not just study in the US?

### 15.3 Common connective expressions

Some fixed pairs can also have the function of connecting words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in addition to conjunctions. The following are the common connective expressions:

- **—...就** yī...jiù (both are adverbs) (as soon as): connects two verbs/adjectives or verb phrases indicating that the two actions happened immediately one after the other, as in (29).

- (29) 小明一下课就去图书馆了。

小明一下課就去圖書館了。

Xiaoming yí xià-kè jiù qù túshūguǎn le.

As soon as Xiaoming got out of class, he immediately went to the library.

- **连/連...都/也** lián (preposition) ... dōu/yě (adverb) (even): an **emphasizing form** in which the emphasized word/phrase is after **连/連** lián (including) (see §27.1).

## ◦ Emphasizing the subject:

- (30) 这个字真难, 连老师都/也不认识。

這個字真難, 連老師都/也不認識。

Zhèi ge zì zhēn nán, lián lǎoshī dōu/yě bú rènshí.

This character is so difficult that even the teacher cannot recognize it.

## ◦ Emphasizing the object:

- (31) 这个字很容易, 你怎么连这个字都/也不认识? !

這個字很容易, 你怎麼連這個字都/也不認識? !

Zhèi ge zì hěn róngyi, nǐ zěnme lián zhèi ge zì dōu/yě bú rènshí?!

This character is very easy. How come you don't recognize even this character?!

- +
- 一边...一边/一邊...一邊 yìbiān...yìbiān**
- (
- both are adverbs*
- ) (
- while*
- ): the actions happen simultaneously as in (32) or two things/actions happen at the same time as in (33):

- (32) 小明一边吃饭一边看电视。

小明一邊吃飯一邊看電視。

Xiǎoming yìbiān chī-fàn yìbiān kàn diànshì.

Xiaoming is watching TV while eating.

- (33) 小亮一边上学一边打工。

小亮一邊上學一邊打工。

Xiǎoliàng yìbiān shàng-xué, yìbiān dǎ-gōng.

Xiaoliang has a part-time job while studying in school.

**15.4 Chinese conjunctions vs. adverbs and prepositions**

We have seen in §15.3 that adverbs and prepositions can also have the function of connecting linguistic units. In addition to this, the words 和 hé and 跟 gēn (and) can be used as conjunctions and also prepositions. In this section, we will briefly illustrate the major differences between conjunctions with adverbs and prepositions.

- Some adverbs and prepositions can be used alone, such as the adverbs 不 bù (not) and 也许/也許 yěxǔ (probably) and the preposition 在 zài ([be] at/in/on) (see §13.1 and §14.4 respectively), but conjunctions cannot be used alone.
- Words 和 hé and 跟 gēn can function as conjunctions (and) or as prepositions (with)
  - As conjunctions (and): two units linked by 和 hé or 跟 gēn are equal, and their meanings remain the same even if the two units exchange positions, such as Xiaoming and Xiaoliang in (34a) and Xiaoliang and Xiaoming in (34b).

- (34)a. 小明和/跟小亮都是中国人。  
 小明和/跟小亮都是中國人。  
 Xiǎomíng hé/gēn Xiǎoliàng dōu shì Zhōngguó rén.  
 Xiaoming and Xiaoliang are both Chinese.

- b. 小亮和/跟小明都是中国人。  
 小亮和/跟小明都是中國人。  
 Xiǎoliàng hé/gēn Xiǎomíng dōu shì Zhōngguó rén.  
 Xiaoliang and Xiaoming are both Chinese.

- As **prepositions (with)**: when 跟 gēn (used more often than 和 hé) and 和 hé are used as prepositions meaning “with,” the meanings are different when the position of the subject is changed. For example, *Xiaoming* is the subject of the action “speak” in (35a), but *Xiaoliang* is the subject in (35b):

- (35)a. 小明只跟/和小亮说话。  
 小明只跟/和小亮說話。  
 Xiǎomíng zhǐ gēn/hé Xiǎoliàng shuō-huà.  
 Xiaoming only speaks **with** Xiaoliang.
- b. 小亮只跟/和小明说话。  
 小亮只跟/和小明說話。  
 Xiǎoliàng zhǐ gēn/hé Xiǎomíng shuō-huà.  
 Xiaoliang only speaks **with** Xiaoming.

A modifier can be in front of the preposition, such as the adverbs 只 zhǐ (only) in (35a) and (35b), and 都 dōu (all) in (36a) before the preposition 跟 gēn (with); however, adverbs such as 也 yě (also) cannot be in front of the conjunctions 和 hé and 跟 gēn (and), as in (36b).

- (36)a. 小明和小亮都跟/和老师说话。  
 小明和小亮都跟/和老師說話。  
 Xiǎomíng hé Xiǎoliàng dōu gēn/hé lǎoshī shuō-huà.  
 Both Xiaoming and Xiaoliang speak **with** the teacher.
- b. \*小明也和小亮跟老师说话  
 \*小明也和小亮跟老師說話  
 \*Xiǎomíng yě hé Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī shuō-huà  
 (lit. Xiaoming also and Xiaoliang with teacher speak)

## 15.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned that a **conjunction** cannot be used alone in a sentence, and its main function is to link linguistic units and show their grammatical relations, which are summarized in Table 15.1. Some conjunctions, such as 和

**Table 15.1** The main grammatical relations indicated by conjunctions

Relations	Example
Coordination	他会说英文 <b>和</b> 中文/他會說英文 <b>和</b> 中文。Tā huì shuō Yīngwén <b>hé</b> Zhōngwén. He can speak English <b>and</b> Chinese.
Progression	他 <b>不但</b> 会说英文, <b>而且</b> 会说中文/他 <b>不但</b> 會說英文, <b>而且</b> 會說中文。 Tā <b>búdàn</b> huì shuō Yīngwén, <b>érqìe</b> huì shuō Zhōngwén. He can speak <b>not only</b> English <b>but also</b> Chinese.
Causality	<b>因为</b> 他会说中文, <b>所以</b> 他在中国找到了工作/ <b>因為</b> 他會說中文, <b>所以</b> 他在中國找到了工作。Yīnwei tā huì shuō Zhōngwén, <b>suoyǐ</b> tā zài Zhōngguó zhǎo.dào le gōngzuò. <b>Because</b> he knows Chinese, he has found a job in China.
Condition	<b>只要</b> 努力学习, <b>就能</b> 学好中文/ <b>只要</b> 努力學習, <b>就能</b> 學好中文。 Zhǐyào nǔlì xuéxí, jiù néng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén. As long as (one is) studying diligently, one can study Chinese well.
Supposition	<b>如果</b> 不努力, <b>就</b> 学不好中文/ <b>如果</b> 不努力, <b>就</b> 學不好中文。 Rúguǒ bù nǔlì, jiù xué bù hǎo Zhōngwén. If one doesn't make efforts, he/she cannot study Chinese well.
Inference	<b>既然</b> 你已经学中文了, <b>就</b> 努力学吧/ <b>既然</b> 你已經學中文了, <b>就</b> 努力學吧。 Jírán nǐ yǐjīng xué Zhōngwén le, jiù nǔlì xué ba. Since you have already studied Chinese, then you should make an effort with it.
Concession	<b>即使</b> 你说错了 <b>也</b> 没有关系/ <b>即使</b> 你說錯了 <b>也</b> 沒有關係。Jíshǐ nǐ shuō.cuò le yě měiyǒu guānxì. It doesn't matter <b>even if</b> you speak wrongly.
Transition	<b>虽然</b> 他不是中国人, <b>可是</b> 他说中文说得非常好/ <b>雖然</b> 他不是中國人, <b>可是</b> 他說中文說得非常好。 Suīrán tā bù shì Zhōngguó rén, kěshì tā shuō Zhōngwén shuō de fēicháng hǎo. (Although) he is not Chinese, (but) he speaks Chinese very well.
Alternative	他周末想去看电影 <b>或者</b> 看球赛/他週末想去看電影 <b>或者</b> 看球賽。 Tā zhōumò xiǎng qù kàn diànyǐng <b>huòzhě</b> kàn qiúsài. He wants to watch a movie <b>or</b> a ball game on the weekend.
Preference	<b>与其</b> 去中国学中文, <b>不如</b> 在美国学/ <b>與其</b> 去中國學中文, <b>不如</b> 在美國學。 Yǔqí qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén, bùrú zài Měiguó xué. It would be better to study Chinese in the US rather than by going to China.

hé/跟 gēn (and), can only connect nominal words and not clauses or sentences, while other conjunctions can only connect two clauses or sentences, such as 因为/因為...所以 yīnwei ... suǒyǐ (because ... [thus]). Alternatively, other conjunctions can connect not only words, but also phrases and clauses, such as 或者 huòzhě (or). There are also some fixed pairs that express a connective function, even though they are not conjunctions, such as 一...就 yī...jiù (as soon as) and 一边 ... 一边/一邊 ... 一邊 yìbiān ... yìbiān (while).

## 15.6 Exercises

### I Insert the provided words into the appropriate blanks:

- 桌子上 有 书 本 子 笔 咖啡/桌子上有書  
\_\_\_\_\_ 本子 \_\_\_\_\_ 笔 \_\_\_\_\_ 咖啡。(和 hé)  
Zhuōzi shàng yǒu shū \_\_\_\_\_ běnzi \_\_\_\_\_ bì \_\_\_\_\_ kāfei.
- 我们 今天下午 去 看电影 去 图书馆 看书/我們 今天下午 去 看電影 去 圖書館 看書? (还是/還是 háishì)  
Wǒmen jīntiān xiàwǔ \_\_\_\_\_ qù kàn diànyǐng \_\_\_\_\_ qù túshūguān \_\_\_\_\_ kàn-shū?
- 今天下午 没有 课, \_\_\_\_\_ 我们 可以 去 看电影 去 打球/今天下午 沒有 課, \_\_\_\_\_ 我們 可以 去 看電影 去 打球。 (或者 huòzhě)  
Jīntiān xiàwǔ méiyǒu kè, \_\_\_\_\_ wǒmen kěyǐ qù \_\_\_\_\_ kàn diànyǐng \_\_\_\_\_ qù dǎ-qíu.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 长城 在 中国 很有名, 而且 在 世 界 上 也 很 有 名 / \_\_\_\_\_ 長城 在 中 國 很 有 名, 而且 在 世 界 上 也 很 有 名。 (不但 bùdàn)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chángchéng \_\_\_\_\_ zài Zhōngguó \_\_\_\_\_ hěn yōumíng, érqiè zài shìjiè shàng yě hěn yōumíng.
- 这个 字 真 难 写, \_\_\_\_\_ 学 生 不 会 写, 而且 连 老 师 也 不 会 写/這個 字 真 難 寫, \_\_\_\_\_ 學 生 不 會 寫, 而且 連 老 師 也 不 會 寫。 (不但 bùdàn)  
Zhèi ge zì zhēn nán xiě, \_\_\_\_\_ xuésheng \_\_\_\_\_ bú huì \_\_\_\_\_ xiě, érqiè lián lǎoshī yě bú huì xiě.
- 小明 今 天 的 天 气 非 常 不 好, 所 以 不 想 去 爬 山 了 / 小明 今 天 的 天 气 非 常 不 好, 所 以 不 想 去 爬 山 了。 (因为/因為 yīnwei)  
Xiǎomíng \_\_\_\_\_ jīntiān de tiānqì \_\_\_\_\_ fēicháng \_\_\_\_\_ bù hǎo, suǒyǐ bù xiǎng qù pá-shān le.
- 虽 然 张 老 师 非 常 忙, \_\_\_\_\_ 他 总 是 很 热 情 地 帮 助 学 生 / 虽 然 張 老 师 非 常 忙, \_\_\_\_\_ 他 總 是 很 热 情 地 帮 助 學 生。 (但是 dànshì)  
Suīrán Zhāng lǎoshī fēicháng máng, \_\_\_\_\_ tā \_\_\_\_\_ zǒngshì \_\_\_\_\_ hěn rèqíng de bāngzhù xuésheng.

8. 小亮\_\_\_\_\_每天从家里到学校，\_\_\_\_\_喜欢\_\_\_\_\_开车一边听音乐/小亮\_\_\_\_\_每天從家裏到學校，\_\_\_\_\_喜歡\_\_\_\_\_開車一邊聽音樂。(一边/一邊 yìbiān)  
 Xiǎoliàng \_\_\_\_\_ měitiān cóng jiā li dào xuéxiào, \_\_\_\_\_ xǐhuan \_\_\_\_\_ kāi-chē yìbiān tīng yīnyuè.

**II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:**

1. Not only do students like watching movies but teachers do as well.
2. A: Do you want to go shopping or watch the ball game?  
 B: Either shopping or watching the ball game is fine.
3. John wants to watch the movie, and Lisa wants (to watch), too.
4. No matter where you go this summer, I will go, too.
5. I will go hiking no matter whether you go or not.
6. John would rather watch the movie than sleep.

**III Use the appropriate conjunctions to make the following two sentences into one sentence:**

**Example:**

**Given:** Sentence 1: 小明是学生/小明是學生。Xiǎomíng shì xuésheng.

Sentence 2: 小亮是学生/小亮是學生。Xiǎoliàng shì xuésheng.

**Answer:** 小明和小亮都是学生/小明和小亮都是學生。Xiǎomíng hé Xiǎoliàng dōu shì xuésheng.

1. 小亮学了两年多中文了/小亮學了兩年多中文了。 Xiǎoliàng xué le liǎng nián duō Zhōngwén le.  
 小亮的中文还是不好/小亮的中文還是不好。 Xiǎoliàng de Zhōngwén háishi bù hǎo.
2. 小明今天有考试/小明今天有考試。 Xiǎomíng jīntiān yǒu kǎoshì.  
 小明明天有考试/小明明天有考試。 Xiǎomíng míngtiān yǒu kǎoshì.
3. 你的法语已经非常好了/你的法語已經非常好了。 Nǐ de Fǎyǔ yǐjīng fēicháng hǎo le.  
 你下学期不要学法语了/你下學期不要學法語了。 Nǐ xià xuéqī bù yào xué Fǎyǔ le.
4. 我的法语不错/我的法語不錯。 Wǒ de Fǎyǔ búcuò.  
 我下个学期还要学法语/我下個學期還要學法語。 Wǒ xià ge xuéqī hái yào xué Fǎyǔ.
5. 小明打球打得很好。 Xiǎomíng dǎ-qíu dǎ de hěn hǎo.  
 小明的学习成绩很好/小明的學習成績很好。 Xiǎomíng de xuéxí chéngjì hěn hǎo.
6. 小亮这个周末非常忙/小亮這個週末非常忙。 Xiǎoliàng zhèi ge zhōumò fēicháng máng.  
 小亮这个周末没有给小明打电话/小亮這個週末沒有給小明打電話。  
 Xiǎoliàng zhèi ge zhōumò méiyǒu gěi Xiǎomíng dǎ diànhuà.

## IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate words:

1. A: 老师, 中文这么难, 您觉得我能学好中文吗/老師, 中文這麼難, 您覺得我能學好中文嗎?

Lǎoshī, Zhōngwén zhème nán, nín juéde wǒ néng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén ma?

- B: 只要你每天练习说中文, 你\_\_\_\_\_一定能学好中文/只要你每天練習說中文, 你\_\_\_\_\_一定能學好中文。

Zhǐyào nǐ měitiān liànxí shuō Zhōngwén, nǐ \_\_\_\_\_ yídìng néng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén.

2. A: 我的钱不多, 今年暑假又想去旅游, 又想去打工。怎么办呢/我的錢不多, 今年暑假又想去旅遊, 又想去打工。怎麼辦呢?

Wǒ de qián bù duō, jīnnián shǔjià yòu xiǎng qù lǚyóu, yòu xiǎng qù dǎ-gōng. Zěnme bàn ne?

- B: \_\_\_\_\_ 你的钱不够, 就别去旅游了, 还是打工吧/ \_\_\_\_\_ 你的錢不夠, 就別去旅遊了, 還是打工吧。

nǐ de qián bù gòu, jiù bié qù lǚyóu le, háishi dǎ-gōng ba.

3. A: 你说我今天下午是在家里看电视呢, 还是出去打球/你說我今天下午是在家裏看電視呢, 還是出去打球?

Nǐ shuō wǒ jīntiān xiàwǔ zài jiā li kàn diànshì ne, háishi chūqu dǎ-qíu?

- B: 今天天气这么好, \_\_\_\_\_ 在家里看电视, 还不如出去打球呢/今天天氣這麼好, \_\_\_\_\_ 在家裏看電視, 還不如出去打球呢。

Jīntiān tiānqì zhème hǎo, \_\_\_\_\_ zài jiā li kàn diànshì, hái bùrú chūqu dǎ-qíu ne.

4. A: 这个周末很忙, 你还要去看电影吗/這個週末很忙, 你還要去看電影嗎?

Zhèi ge zhōumò hěn máng, nǐ hái yào qù kàn diànyǐng ma?

- B: \_\_\_\_\_ 你看不看, 我都要看。

\_\_\_\_\_ nǐ kàn bu kàn, wǒ dōu yào kàn.

5. A: 中文很难, 为什么你要学中文呢/中文很難, 為什麼你要學中文呢?

Zhōngwén hěn nán, wèishénme nǐ yào xué Zhōngwén ne?

- B: \_\_\_\_\_ 我很喜欢中国文化, 所以我要学中文/ \_\_\_\_\_ 我很喜歡中國文化, 所以我要學中文。

\_\_\_\_\_ wǒ hěn xǐhuan Zhōngguó wénhuà, suǒyǐ wǒ yào xué Zhōngwén.

6. A: 小明每次下课以后都去哪儿/小明每次下課以後都去哪兒?  
Xiǎomíng měicì xià-kè yǐhòu dōu qù nǎr?
- B: 他总是 \_\_\_\_\_ 下课就去图书馆看书/他總是 \_\_\_\_\_  
下課就去圖書館看書。  
Tā zǒngshì \_\_\_\_\_ xià-kè jiù qù túshūguǎn kàn-shū.

# 16

## Particles

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the three types of Chinese particles and their functions
- ★ To use common particles with their restrictions

**Particles** are special in Chinese. There are three main grammatical features of Chinese particles.

1. Particles **cannot be used alone** and instead must be attached to another word, phrase, or sentence.
2. Particles express a grammatical meaning **without a concrete meaning**.
3. Particles are read in the **neutral tone**.

According to the functions of particles, they can be divided into the following three types:

- i. **structural particles**, such as 的 de, 地 de, and 得 de;
- ii. **aspectual particles** (verb suffixes), such as 了 le, 着/著 zhe, and 过/過 guo; and
- iii. **modal particles**, such as 了 le, 吗/嗎 ma, 呢 ne, 吧 ba, and 啊 a.

We will now explore the special features of each type of Chinese particle in the following sections.

### 16.1 Structural particles

The common structural particles are 的, 地, and 得, which are all read as a neutral tone *de*.

#### ► 16.1.1 Structural particle 的 de

- **的 de**: is the most frequently used word in Chinese that marks **attribution**, and it is typically used between the attributive (modifier) and the head noun (modified) to indicate possession (ownership) as in (1)–(2), or restriction as in (3)–(7). There are several different ways of expressing this function in

English. A comparison between the Chinese sentences and the English translations below will highlight the differences.

- (1) 老师的书很新。  
老師的書很新。  
*Lǎoshī de shū hěn xīn.*

The teacher's book is pretty new.

The difference of attributive and the head noun between Chinese and English in the above sentence can be summarize as the form below:

老师/老師 lǎoshī	的 de (particle)	书/書 shū
teacher	's	book
attributive (modifier)	<b>marker of attributive</b>	head noun (modified)

In addition to linking a noun, 老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher), and a head noun, 书/書 shū (book) as above, 的 de can also link other words to the head.

The **attributive** can be:

- **Pronouns**, such as 他 tā (he) with the particle 的 de as 他的 tā de (his) as in (2) below:

- (2) 他的书很新。  
他的書很新。  
*Tā de shū hěn xīn.*

His book is new.

- **Adjectives**, such as 红/紅 hóng (red) and 黄/黃 huáng (yellow)

- (3) 红的书很新, 黄的书很旧。  
紅的書很新, 黃的書很舊。  
*Hóng de shū hěn xīn, huáng de shū hěn jiù.*

The red book is new and the yellow book is old.

- **Verbs**, such as 买/買 mǎi (buy) and 借 jiè (borrow)

- (4) 买的书很新, 借的书很旧。  
買的書很新, 借的書很舊。  
*Mǎi de shū hěn xīn, jiè de shū hěn jiù.*

The purchased book is new but the borrowed book is old.

- **Phrases with the form [time word + verb]**, such as 昨天买/昨天買 zuótiān mǎi (bought yesterday) and 去年买/去年買 qùnián mǎi (bought last year)

- (5) 昨天买的书很新, 去年买的书很旧。  
昨天買的書很新, 去年買的書很舊。  
*Zuótiān mǎi de shū hěn xīn, qùnián mǎi de shū hěn jiù.*

The book purchased yesterday is new but the book purchased last year is old.

- **Phrases with the form [subject + verb]**, such as 小明买/小明買 Xiǎomíng mǎi (Xiaoming bought) and 小亮买/小亮買 Xiǎoliàng mǎi (Xiaoliang bought)

(6) 小明买的书很新, 小亮买的书很旧。

小明買的書很新, 小亮買的書很舊。

Xiǎomíng mǎi de shū hěn xīn, Xiǎoliàng mǎi de shū hěn jiù.

The book (that) Xiaoming bought is new, but the book (that) Xiaoliang bought is old.

- **Phrases with a form [verb + object]**, such as 买书/買書 mǎi-shū (buy book) and 卖书/賣書 mài-shū (sell book)

(7) 买书的学生成很用功, 卖书的学生成很聪明。

買書的學生很用功, 賣書的學生很聰明。

Mǎi-shū de xuésheng hěn yònggōng, mài-shū de xuésheng hěn cōngmíng.

The students **who** buy books are studious, and the students **who** sell books are smart.

The sentences in (5)–(7) above lead to the linguistic term *relative clause*, the sentence word order of which is very different between Chinese and English. We will elaborate on these differences in the next subsection.

#### 16.1.1.1 Particle 的 de and the relative clause

The relative clause functions like an adjective modifying a noun. There are three differences between sentences with a relative clause in Chinese and English:

- i. 的 de is the only marker of a relative clause (attributive) in Chinese, while there are several markers in English, such as *that* in (6), *who/whom* in (7) and (8), *where* in (9), and *which, when, why, and whose*.
- ii. The marker 的 de must be used in Chinese; conversely, in English markers, such as “*that*” in (6) can be omitted. This can be seen in the comparison between the Chinese sentence and the English translation in (6).
- iii. The word order of the relative clause in Chinese and English is reversed since the relative clause as a modifier *precedes* the head noun (modified) in Chinese, but the relative clause (modifier) is *after* the head noun (modified) in English. The different word orders of relative clauses in the two languages can be shortened below (with the relative clauses underlined):

Chinese relative clause ([S] V) + marker (的 de) + noun

English noun + relative clause (marker [that, who ...] + [S] V)

For ease of understanding, you may just reverse the order of the English relative clause with the noun and change the pronoun to the particle 的 de to create a correct sentence in Chinese, and *vice versa*. Let's take the noun phrase 小明买的书 Xiǎomíng mǎi de shū (the book [that] Xiaoming bought) in sentence (6) as an example:

A. 小明买/小明買 Xiǎomíng	<u>的</u> de	书/書 shū (book)
<u>mǎi</u> (Xiaoming bought)		
<u>relative clause (modifier)</u>	<u>marker</u> [2]	<u>noun (modified)</u> [3]
[1]		
B. The book (书/書 shū)	<u>that (de)</u> [2]	Xiaoming bought
		(小明买/小明買
		Xiǎomíng mǎi)
<u>noun (modified)</u> [1]	<u>pronoun (marker)</u> [2]	<u>relative clause (modifier)</u> [3]

In the above example, the order is as follows:

- in A (Chinese): [1] the **relative clause**, [2] the marker, [3] the noun
- in B (English): [1] the noun, [2] the marker, [3] the **relative clause**

To achieve the correct word order for a Chinese relative clause, as in A, we simply need to exchange the positions of [1] and [3] in B.

Examples (8) and (9) below elaborate on this point. Please be aware that:

- the **relative clause** is underlined and **bolded**, and
- the head noun is *italicized*.

(8) **你喜欢的**人是张老师的女儿。  
**你喜歡的**人是張老師的女兒。

Nǐ xǐhuan de rén shì Zhāng lǎoshī de nǚ'ér.

*The person who/whom you like* is Professor Zhang's daughter.

(9) **小明住的**城市很有名。  
**Xiǎomíng zhù de** chéngshì hěn yōumíng.

*The city where Xiaoming lives* is very famous.

**NOTE** There are no relative pronouns (for example, that, who, when, where, how) in Chinese, but similar meanings can be expressed by the noun that follows **的 de** with the fixed forms of **的时候 de shíhou**, **的地方 de difang**, and **的方法 de fāngfǎ** as in (10)–(12), respectively:

(10) 我**学中文的**时候最快乐。  
**我學中文的**時候最快樂。  
Wǒ xué Zhōngwén de shíhou zùi kuàilè.

I am happiest **when** I study Chinese.

or: I am happiest at the time when I study Chinese (slightly over-translated).

(11) 这是**我学中文的**地方。  
**這是****我學中文的****地方**。  
Zhè shì wǒ xué Zhōngwén de difang.

Here is **where** I study Chinese.

or: Here is the place **where** I study Chinese.

- (12) 老师喜欢我学中文的方法。

老師喜歡我學中文的方法。

Lǎoshī xǐhuan wǒ xué Zhōngwén de fāngfǎ.

My teacher likes **how** I study Chinese.

or: My teacher likes the ways I study Chinese.

In general, proper nouns, including names, terms of address, and pronouns, cannot be modified by a relative clause because they refer to a unique entity, unless the context clearly indicates that there is more than one such entity. For example, in (13), the use of 戴眼镜的小亮/戴眼镜的亮亮 dài yǎnjìng de Xiāoliàng (the Xiaoliang who is wearing eyeglasses) implies that there are two or more Xiaoliangs around.

- (13) 戴眼镜的小亮喜欢唱歌，不戴眼镜的小亮喜欢跳舞。

戴眼鏡的小亮喜歡唱歌，不戴眼鏡的小亮喜歡跳舞。

Dài yǎnjìng de Xiāoliàng xǐhuan chàng-gē, bù dài yǎnjìng de Xiāoliàng xǐhuan tiào-wǔ.

The Xiaoliang who is wearing eyeglasses likes singing, and the Xiaoliang who is not wearing eyeglasses likes dancing.

### 16.1.1.2 Uses of 的 de

It is always confusing when 的 de should be used. Learners must learn whether or not 的 de should be used between the attributive and the head noun on a case-by-case basis. Some general rules for using and not using 的 de between the attributive and the head noun follow (see also §21.1.3).

- **的 de** should be omitted before relational terms of address, such as family members, especially after the pronouns 我 wǒ (I), 你 nǐ (you), and 他/她 tā (he/she), as in 我爸爸 wǒ bàba (my father) and 他哥哥 tā gēge (his older brother) in (14):

- (14) 我爸爸是律师，他哥哥是医生。

我爸爸是律師，他哥哥是醫生。

Wǒ bàba shì lǜshī, tā gēge shì yīshēng.

My father is a lawyer and his older brother is a doctor.

- **的 de** is required for:

- possession (ownership) and restriction, such as 老师的书/老師的書 lǎoshī de shū (the teacher's book) in (1) and 他的书/他的書 tā de shū (his book) in (2);
- monosyllable verbs, such as 买的书/買的書 mǎi de shū (purchased book) in (4);
- verb phrases, such as 昨天买的书/昨天買的書 zuótiān mǎi de shū (the book bought yesterday) in (5);
- relative clauses, as in (6)–(9); and
- prepositional phrases, such as 在桌子上的书/在桌子上的書 zài zhuōzi shàng de shū (the book on the table) in (15).

- (15) 在桌子上的书很新。

在桌子上的書很新。

Zài zhuōzi shàng de shū hěn xīn.

The book *on the table* is new.

16.1.1.3 的 *de* phrase

The particle 的 *de* can be combined with a noun, pronoun, adjective, and verb as a phrase *functioning as a noun*:

• with a noun:

- (16) 小明有很多书, 有中文的, 也有英文的。

小明有很多書, 有中文的, 也有英文的。

Xiǎomíng yǒu hěn duō shū, yǒu Zhōngwén de, yě yǒu Yīngwén de.

Xiaoming has many books, some of which are written in Chinese and some in English.

• with a pronoun:

- (17) 我跟小明的书不一样, 我的是新书, 他的是旧书。

我跟小明的書不一样, 我的是新書, 他的是舊書。

Wǒ gēn Xiǎomíng de shū bù yíyàng, wǒ de shì xīn shū, tā de shì jiù shū.

My book is different from Xiaoming's; mine is a new book, and his is an old book.

• with an adjective:

- (18) 小明跟小亮去商店买花, 小明买了一朵红的, 小亮买了一朵黄的。

小明跟小亮去商店買花, 小明買了一朵紅的, 小亮買了一朵黃的。

Xiǎomíng gēn Xiǎoliàng qù shàngdiàn mǎi huā, Xiǎomíng mǎi le yì duǒ hóng de, Xiǎoliàng mǎi le yì duǒ huáng de.

Xiaoming and Xiaoliang went to a shop to buy flowers; Xiaoming bought a red one and Xiaoliang bought a yellow one.

• with a verb:

- (19) 小明很喜欢中文, 说的、写的、看的都跟中文有关。

小明很喜歡中文, 說的、寫的、看的都跟中文有關。

Xiǎomíng hěn xǐhuan Zhōngwén, shuō de, xiě de, kàn de dōu gēn Zhōngwén yǒuguān.

Xiaoming likes Chinese very much. What he speaks, writes and reads are all related to Chinese.

• with a sentence (S-V phrase):

- (20) 老师说的很清楚, 你说的不清楚。

老師說的很清楚, 你說的不清楚。

Lǎoshī shuō de hěn qīngchu, nǐ shuō de bù qīngchu.

What the teacher said is clear, but what you said is not.

**NOTE** The 的 *de* phrases in sentences (16)–(20) refer to **known information**, which may appear in a preceding sentence or be well-known facts. For example, we know that the 的 *de* phrase “中文的 Zhōngwén de” means “中文的书/中文的書 Zhōngwén de shū (Chinese book)” in (16) because the preceding sentence,

“小明有很多书/小明有很多書 Xiǎomíng yǒu hěn duō shū (Xiaoming has many books),” reveals the information, 书/書 shū (book), clearly. Alternatively, if there is no context provided, we would have no idea what the phrase “中文的 Zhōngwén de” refers to; it could be referring to “中文的 (电影/電影) Zhōngwén de (diànyǐng) (Chinese [movie]),” “中文的 (报纸/報紙) Zhōngwén de (bàozhǐ) (Chinese [newspaper]),” or other subjects.

### ► 16.1.2 Structural particle 地 de

The particle 地 de is the marker of **adverbials** and is used between the adverbial and the verb, as seen with the adverb 热情/熱情 rèqíng (warmly) describing the action 帮助/幫助 bāngzhù (help) in (21). Please pay close attention to the position of the adverbs (*italicized*) in the English translation sentences relative to their Chinese counterparts:

- (21) 老师热情**地**帮助学生。  
老師熱情**地**幫助學生。  
Lǎoshī rèqíng **de** bāngzhù xuésheng.

Teachers help students *warmly*.

The form of the above sentence can be summarized as: *adverbial (modifier) + marker of adverbial 地 de + verb (modifier)*; i.e., 热情/熱情 rèqíng (warmly) + **地 de** (particle) + 帮助/幫助 bāngzhù (help).

- (22) 张老师**慢慢****地**走进教室。  
張老師**慢慢****地**走進教室。  
Zhāng lǎoshī mǎnmǎn **de** zǒu jìn jiào shì.

Professor Zhang walked into the classroom *slowly*.

- **When should 地 de be used?** Not all adverbials require the particle 地 de. We provide some general rules for using or not using 地 de below (see §21.2.2).
  - the use of 地 de is **optional** under the following situations:
    - **disyllabic adjective**, like 热情/熱情 rèqíng (warmly) in (21); and
    - **reduplicated adjective**, such as 慢慢 mǎnmǎn (slowly) in (22).
  - the use of 地 de is **required** when a phrase serves as the adverbial, such as 非常高兴/非常高興 fēicháng gāoxìng (very happy) in (23):

- (23) 小明**非常****高兴****地**上课去了。  
小明**非常****高興****地**上課去了。  
Xiǎomíng fēicháng gāoxìng **de** shàng-kè qù le.

Xiaoming went to class *happily*.

- **地 de should not be used** when monosyllabic adverbs serve as the adverbial: such as 早 zǎo (early) in (24), 快 kuài (fast), 慢 màn (slow), 多 duō (more), and 少 shǎo (less).

- (24) 小明**早**来了半个小时。  
小明**早**來了半個小時。  
Xiǎomíng zǎo lái le bàn ge xiǎoshí.

Xiaoming came a half-hour *early*.

### ► 16.1.3 Structural particle 得 de

The particle 得 de is the marker of a **complement** and is used between the verb and the complement. The form is *verb + 得 de + complement*. Not all complements use 得 de: only the complements of *potential*, as in (25), and the complements of *manner*, as in (26), should use it (see §20.2 and §20.3 for details).

- Complements of potential:

(25) 小明听得懂老师的话。

小明聽得懂老師的話。

Xiaomíng tīng de dōng lǎoshī de huà.

Xiaoming can understand what the teacher has said.

- Complement of manner (also known as a *predicative complement*):

(26) 小亮说得很快。

小亮說得很快。

Xiaoliang shuō de hěn kuài.

Xiaoliang speaks fast.

## 16.2 Aspectual particles (verb suffixes)

There are three aspectual particles 了 le, 着/著 zhe, and 过/過 guo known as verb suffixes (see §10.4).

- The perfective aspectual particle 了 le is used after a verb to mark the ending of an event (see §10.4.1).

- For **active verbs**, it indicates the completion of an action, as in (27).

- For an **adjective** (stative verb), it indicates the change (transition) from one state to another, as in (28).

(27) 小明刚才买了一本书。

小明剛才買了一本書。

Xiaomíng gāngcái mǎi le yì běn shū.

Xiaoming just bought a book.

(28) 小亮比以前瘦了一些。

Xiaoliang bǐ yǐqián shòu le yìxiē.

Xiaoliang has become thinner than before/Xiaoliang has lost some weight.

**NOTE** The perfective aspectual particle 了 le *cannot* be used with verbs without an action meaning, such as 是 shì (be), 在 zài (be at/in/on), 叫 jiào (be called [name]), and 像 xiàng (resemble); or verbs involving mental activities without clear beginnings or endings, such as 爱/愛 ài (love), 恨 hèn (hate), 想 xiǎng (miss).

However, 了 le can be used when a durational phrase is added to give an externally marked beginning and ending, such as 只恨了几分钟/只恨了幾分鐘

zhǐ hèn le jǐ fēnzhōng (only hated for a few minutes). Particle 了 le signifies that the action, 买/買 mǎi (buy), has been completed in (27), and the state, 瘦 shòu (thin), has already occurred and remains through the speaking time in (28).

- The durative aspectual particle 着/著 zhe is used after a verb to indicate,
  - an action in **progress**, as in (29); or
  - a state in **continuation**, as in (30) (see §10.4.2).

(29) 小明和小亮高兴地唱着歌。

小明和小亮高興地唱著歌。

Xiǎomíng hé Xiǎoliàng gāoxìng de chàng zhe gē.

Xiaoming and Xiaoliang are singing happily.

(30) 墙上挂着很多照片。

牆上挂着很多照片。

Qiáng shàng guà zhe hěn duō zhàopiàn.

There are many photos hanging on the wall.

- The experiential aspectual particle 过/過 guo is used after a verb to indicate that an **action** or a **state** has happened, existed, or been experienced as in (31) (see §10.4.3).

(31) 小明两年以前去过中国。

小明兩年以前去過中國。

Xiǎomíng liǎng nián yǐqián qù guo Zhōngguó.

Xiaoming went to China two years ago.

- Negation of aspectual particles (see Table 16.1).

**Table 16.1** *The affirmative and negative forms of aspectual particles*

Aspectual Particles	Affirmative Form	Negative Form
Perfective aspect 了 le	小明唱了首歌。 Xiǎomíng chàng le yì shǒu gē. Xiaoming sang a song.	小明没唱歌/小明沒唱歌。 (no 了 le) Xiǎomíng méi chàng-gē. Xiaoming did not sing.
Durative aspect 着/著 zhe	小明唱着歌/小明唱著歌。 Xiǎomíng chàng zhe gē. Xiaoming is singing.	小明没唱着歌/小明沒唱著歌。 Xiǎomíng méi chàng zhe gē. Xiaoming is not singing.
Experiential aspect 过/過 guo	小明唱过歌/小明唱過歌。 Xiǎomíng chàng guo gē. Xiaoming has sung songs.	小明没唱过歌/小明沒唱過歌。 Xiǎomíng méi chàng guo gē. Xiaoming has not sung songs.

## 16.3 Modal particles

Chinese modal particles express various tones of sentences and are unique compared to English and other European languages. There are many modal particles in Chinese, but we will only discuss five common modal particles, 吗/嗎 ma, 呢 ne, 吧 ba, 啊 a, and 了 le, in this section.

Modal particles are generally used at the end of a clause or sentence. They can be divided into the following three groups.

### ► 16.3.1 Modal particle 了 le (sentence-final particle)

Unlike the aspectual particle 了 le, which is used after a verb as a verb suffix in (27) and (28), the modal particle 了 le is used at the end of a sentence to indicate a new situation, as in (32), or a state change, as in (33).

- (32) 小明是大学生了。  
小明是大學生了。  
Xiǎomíng shì dàxuéshēng le.

Xiaoming is a college student now.  
(new situation: Xiaoming was not a college student before, but now he is)

- (33) 小亮的病好了。  
Xiaoliang de bìng hǎo le.  
Xiaoliang has recovered from her sickness.  
(the state of sickness has changed)

When 了 le appears twice in one sentence, the first 了 le (aspectual particle) indicates the completion of the action, and the second 了 le (sentence-final particle) signifies the speaking time (now). Let's compare the two sentences in examples (34) and (35):

- (34) 小明学了中文。  
小明學了中文。  
Xiǎomíng xué le Zhōngwén.  
Xiaoming studied Chinese.

- (35) 小明学了中文了。  
小明學了中文了。  
Xiǎomíng xué le Zhōngwén le.  
Xiaoming has studied Chinese.

Sentence (34) with the aspectual particle 了 le simply indicates the completion of the action 学/學 xué (study), while sentence (35), with two uses of 了 le, signifies that the action 学/學 xué (study) has been completed at the speaking time (now) and that the action may continue into the future, or may stop. If there is an object indicating a period of time, such as 两年/兩年 liǎng nián (two years) in (36), this comparison is much clearer:

- (36)a. 小明学了两年中文了, 还想再学。 小明學了兩年中文了, 還想再學。  
 Xiǎomíng xué le liǎng nián Zhōngwén le, (hái xiǎng zài xué).  
 Xiaoming has been studying Chinese for two years (and wants to continue).

- b. 小明学了两年中文了, 不想再学了。 小明學了兩年中文了, 不想再學了。  
 Xiǎomíng xué le liǎng nián Zhōngwén le, (bù xiǎng zài xué le).  
 Xiaoming has been studying Chinese for two years (but doesn't want to continue any longer).

In the above sentences, the first 了 le, a verb suffix, signifies that the action 学/學 xué (study) occurred earlier (two years ago) and the second 了 le, a particle at the end of each sentence, before the parentheses, indicates that the “Chinese study” continues until *now* and will continue in the future as in (36a), or will not continue as in (36b), depending on the context.

To negate sentences containing the verb suffix 了 le and the quantity object indicating a time period as in (36), a quantity of time duration, such as 两年/兩年 liǎng nián (two years), must be placed before the negative adverbs, such as 没/沒 méi (not) in (37a) or 不 bù (not) in (37b). In this case, the negative adverb 没/沒 méi or 不 bù (not) can be used with the sentence-final particle 了 le (see §13.2.4).

- (37)a. 小明两年没学中文了。 小明兩年沒學中文了。  
 Xiǎomíng liǎng nián méi xué Zhōngwén le.  
 Xiaoming didn't study/hasn't studied Chinese for two years.
- b. 小明两年不学中文了。 小明兩年不學中文了。  
 Xiǎomíng liǎng nián bù xué Zhōngwén le.  
 Xiaoming hasn't studied Chinese for two years.

### ► 16.3.2 Modal particle 吗/嗎 ma

The particle 吗/嗎 ma is added to the end of a declarative sentence, such as (38), to turn it into a question, such as (39):

- (38) 小明是学生。 小明是學生。  
 Xiǎomíng shì xuésheng.  
 Xiaoming is a student.

- (39) 小明是学生吗? 小明是學生嗎?  
 Xiǎomíng shì xuésheng ma?  
 Is Xiaoming a student?

**Table 16.2** The particle 呀/嗎 *ma* CANNOT be used with other interrogative sentences

Type	Correct	Incorrect
Question words	谁是老师/誰是老師？Shéi shì lǎoshī? Who is the teacher?	*谁是老师吗/*誰是老師嗎 *shéi shì lǎoshī ma (lit. who be teacher <i>ma</i> )
V-not-V	你是不是老师/你是不是老師？ Nǐ shì bu shì lǎoshī? Are you a teacher?	*你是不是老师吗/*你是不是老師嗎 *nǐ shì bu shì lǎoshī ma (lit. you be not be teacher <i>ma</i> )
A 还是 háishi B	你是学生还是老师/你是學生還是老師？ Nǐ shì xuésheng háishi lǎoshī? Are you a student or teacher?	*你是学生还是老师吗/*你是學生還是老師嗎 *nǐ shì xuésheng háishi lǎoshī ma (lit. you be student or teacher <i>ma</i> )

### ► 16.3.3 Modal particle 呢 *ne*

The particle 呢 *ne* primarily has the following three functions:

- i. **Follow-up question:** 呢 *ne* must be used in a question that either follows another question, as in (40), or has a clear context, as in (41) (see §24.2.3).

- (40)a. 你今天忙不忙？  
Nǐ jīntiān máng bu máng?  
Are you busy today?
- b. 我不忙， 你呢？  
Wǒ bù máng, nǐ ne?  
I am not busy, are you?

- (41) (小明): 我的书呢？  
(小明): 我的書呢？  
(Xiǎomíng): Wǒ de shū ne?

Where is my book? (the context must be that Xiaoming is looking for his book).

- ii. **Expressing an exaggerative meaning in a declarative sentence:**

- (42) 小亮会画画儿呢！  
小亮會畫畫兒呢！  
Xiǎoliàng huì huà huàr ne!

Xiaoliang even knows how to draw pictures!  
(implying that Xiaoliang is smart and even knows how to paint)

It is often used with 可 kě to enforce an *exaggerative* meaning, as in (43):

(43) 小明的中文可好呢！

Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén kě hǎo ne!

Xiaoming's Chinese is really good!

iii. **Indicating an action in progress** (see §10.5):

(44) 小明在图书馆看书呢。

小明在圖書館看書呢。

Xiǎomíng zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū ne.

Xiaoming is studying in the library.

#### ► 16.3.4 Modal particle 吧 ba

The particle 吧 ba *softens the tone* of a sentence with three main functions in the following types of sentences:

i. **In an interrogative sentence** with a soft tone:

(45) 小亮会说中文吧？

小亮會說中文吧？

Xiǎoliàng huì shuō Zhōngwén ba?

Xiaoliang knows how to speak Chinese, (I guess), right?

ii. **In an imperative sentence** to softly request, commend, or persuade:

(46) 老师，你就让我们去看电影吧！

老師，你就讓我們去看電影吧！

Lǎoshī, nǐ jiù ràng wǒmen qù kàn diànyǐng ba!

Teacher, would you please let us to watch the movie?

iii. **In a declarative sentence** to express an agreement, as in (47b):

(47)a. 我们今天晚上看电影去，怎么样？

我們今天晚上看電影去，怎麼樣？

Wǒmen jīntiān wǎnshàng kàn diànyǐng qu, zěnmeyàng?

Let's watch a movie this evening, okay?

b. 好吧。

Hǎo ba.

All right.

#### ► 16.3.5 Modal particle 啊 a

The particle 啊 a is used commonly:

- at the end of an interrogative sentence to *soften* the question, as in (48);
- at the end of a statement signifying a *soft tone* for certainty/confirmation, as in (49); or
- as a *warning*, as in (50).

(48) (one heard the door knocked and thus asked): 谁啊/誰啊 ?

Shéi a?

Who is it?

(49)a. 我们今天晚上看电影去吧 ?

我們今天晚上看電影去吧 ?

Wǒmen jīntiān wǎnshàng kàn diànyǐng qù ba?

Let's watch a movie today, alright?

b. 好啊 !

Hǎo a!

Great!

(50) 你开车时一定要小心啊 !

你開車時一定要小心啊 !

Nǐ kāi-chē shí yíding yào xiǎoxīn a!

You must be careful when driving!

NOTE The varieties of 啊 a: 呀 ya and 啦 la

- 呀 ya: If the ending sound of a word in front of “啊 a” is *a, e, u, i*, the particle “啊 a” can be changed to “呀 ya”, as in (48); that is, “谁啊/誰啊? Shéi a? (Who is it?)” can be “谁呀/誰呀? Shéi ya?” because the sound preceding “啊 a” is *i*, as in “谁/誰 shéi” in pinyin.
- 啦 la: is a combination sound of “了 le” and “啊 a”. For example, “啦 la” in the sentence “下雨啦 ! Xià-yǔ la! (It is raining!)” is a combination of “了啊 le and a” in the sentence “下雨了啊 ! Xià-yǔ le a!”

## 16.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned three **structural particles** 的 de (the marker of attributives), 地 de (the marker of adverbials), and 得 de (the marker of complements). The formats of the three particles with their modified parts can be simplified as follows:

- 的 de + noun
- 地 de + verb
- verb + 得 de

We have also learned three **aspectual particles** (verb suffixes), 了 le, 着/zhe, and 过/guo, which are used after verbs to indicate the *completion* of an action (了 le), a *durative state* (着/zhe), and an *experimental state* (过/guo), as well as five common **modal particles**:

- sentence-final particle 了 le indicating a *new situation*
- 呀/嗎 ma, a particle for an *interrogative sentence*

- 呢 ne indicating a *follow-up question, exaggeration, or continuation*
- 吧 ba expressing a *soft tone for a question, an imperative, or a declarative sentence*
- 啊 a for *softening a question, certainty, or warning*

## 16.5 Exercises

### I Insert the provided words into the appropriate blanks below:

1. 张老师总是\_\_\_\_\_喜欢\_\_\_\_\_慢慢\_\_\_\_\_喝咖啡/張老師總是\_\_\_\_\_喜歡\_\_\_\_\_慢慢\_\_\_\_\_喝咖啡。(地 de)  
Zhāng lǎoshī zǒngshì \_\_\_\_\_ xǐhuan \_\_\_\_\_ mǎnmǎn \_\_\_\_\_ hē kāfēi.
2. 李老师\_\_\_\_\_女儿\_\_\_\_\_周末很喜欢去电影院看\_\_\_\_\_电影/李老師\_\_\_\_\_女兒\_\_\_\_\_週末很喜歡去電影院看\_\_\_\_\_電影。(的 de)  
Lǐ lǎoshī \_\_\_\_\_ nǚ'ér \_\_\_\_\_ zhōumò hěn xǐhuan qù diànyǐngyuàn kàn \_\_\_\_\_ diànyǐng.
3. 小明的中文非常\_\_\_\_\_好, 他说\_\_\_\_\_中文说\_\_\_\_\_非常快/小明的中文非常\_\_\_\_\_好, 他說\_\_\_\_\_中文說\_\_\_\_\_非常快。(得 de)  
Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén fēicháng \_\_\_\_\_ hǎo, tā shuō \_\_\_\_\_ Zhōngwén shuō \_\_\_\_\_ fēicháng kuài.
4. 小亮刚一毕业\_\_\_\_\_就找\_\_\_\_\_到工作\_\_\_\_\_/小亮剛一畢業\_\_\_\_\_就找\_\_\_\_\_到工作\_\_\_\_\_。(了 le)  
Xiǎoliàng gāng yí bìyè \_\_\_\_\_ jiù zhǎo \_\_\_\_\_ dào gōngzuò \_\_\_\_\_.
5. 小亮一边看\_\_\_\_\_电视\_\_\_\_\_, 一边\_\_\_\_\_写功课/小亮一邊看\_\_\_\_\_電視\_\_\_\_\_, 一邊\_\_\_\_\_寫功課。(着/著 zhe)  
Xiǎoliàng yìbiān kàn \_\_\_\_\_ diànshì \_\_\_\_\_, yìbiān \_\_\_\_\_ xiě gōngkè.
6. 小明昨天\_\_\_\_\_课就去图书馆\_\_\_\_\_看\_\_\_\_\_书去了/小明昨天\_\_\_\_\_課就去圖書館\_\_\_\_\_看\_\_\_\_\_書去了。(了 le)  
Xiǎomíng zuótiān xià \_\_\_\_\_ kè jiù qù túshūguǎn \_\_\_\_\_ kàn \_\_\_\_\_ shū qù le.
7. 虽然长城很有名\_\_\_\_\_, 张老师也想去\_\_\_\_\_, 可是因为忙, 从来没去\_\_\_\_\_/雖然長城很有名\_\_\_\_\_, 張老師也想去\_\_\_\_\_, 可是因為忙, 從來沒去\_\_\_\_\_. (过/過 guo)  
Suīrán Chángchéng hěn yǒumíng \_\_\_\_\_, Zhāng lǎoshī yě xiǎng qù \_\_\_\_\_, kěshì yīnwei máng, cónglái méi qù \_\_\_\_\_.
8. 张老师很喜欢买\_\_\_\_\_书, 他买\_\_\_\_\_书大多是中文\_\_\_\_\_/張老師很喜歡買\_\_\_\_\_書, 他買\_\_\_\_\_書大多是中文\_\_\_\_\_. (的 de)  
Zhāng lǎoshī hěn xǐhuan mǎi \_\_\_\_\_ shū, tā mǎi \_\_\_\_\_ shū dàduō shì Zhōngwén \_\_\_\_\_ shū.

**II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:**

1. John has been studying Chinese for three years.
2. The man who is reading a book is my Chinese teacher.
3. John has never studied Chinese before.
4. At the time when I saw John, he spoke Chinese very well.
5. A: Where is John?  
B: John is on the phone now.
6. John was late for the class, so he opened the door slowly and walked into the classroom quietly.

**III Select the appropriate words to fill in the blanks:**

1. 桌子上\_\_\_\_\_那本书不是我的，是张老师的/桌子上\_\_\_\_\_那本書不是我的，是張老師的。(的 de/地 de/得 de)  
Zhuōzi shàng \_\_\_\_\_ nà běn shū bù shì wǒ de, shì Zhāng lǎoshī de.
2. 今天是小亮的生日，她非常高兴\_\_\_\_\_跟大家一起跳舞、唱歌/今天是小亮的生日，她非常高興\_\_\_\_\_跟大家一起跳舞、唱歌。(的 de/地 de/得 de) Jīntiān shì Xiǎoliàng de shēngrì, tā fēicháng gāoxìng \_\_\_\_\_ gēn dàjiā yìqǐ tiào-wǔ, chàng-gē.
3. 小亮跳舞跳\_\_\_\_\_非常好。(的 de/地 de/得 de)  
Xiǎoliàng tiào wǔ tiào \_\_\_\_\_ fēicháng hǎo.
4. 小亮还没有去\_\_\_\_\_北京/小亮還沒有去\_\_\_\_\_北京。(了 le/着/著 zhe/过/過 guo)  
Xiǎoliàng hái méiyǒu qù \_\_\_\_\_ Běijīng.
5. 小明这几天太累了，昨天晚上他正看\_\_\_\_\_书就睡着了/小明這幾天太累了，昨天晚上他正看\_\_\_\_\_書就睡著了。(了 le/着著 zhe/过/過 guo)  
Xiǎomíng zhèi jǐ tiān tài lèi le, zuótiān wǎnshàng tā zhěng kàn \_\_\_\_\_ shū jiù shuìzháo le.
6. 张老师的女儿可漂亮\_\_\_\_\_/張老師的女兒可漂亮\_\_\_\_\_！(吗/嗎 ma/呢 ne/吧 ba)  
Zhāng lǎoshī de nǚér kě piàoliang \_\_\_\_\_ !
7. 这间教室好大\_\_\_\_\_/這間教室好大\_\_\_\_\_！(吗/嗎 ma/呢 ne/吧 ba)  
Zhèi jiān jiàoshì hǎo dà \_\_\_\_\_ !

**IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate words:**

1. A: 请问, \_\_\_\_\_/請問\_\_\_\_\_?  
Qǐngwèn, \_\_\_\_\_?
- B: 是啊，我是张老师，请问您有什么事/是啊，我是張老師，請問您有什麼事？  
Shì a, wǒ shì Zhāng lǎoshī, qǐng wèn nín yǒu shénme shì?
2. A: 你喜欢打球吗/你喜歡打球嗎?  
Nǐ xǐhuan dǎ-qiú ma?  
B: 很喜欢/很喜歡，\_\_\_\_\_?  
Hěn xǐhuan, \_\_\_\_\_?

A: 我也很喜欢/我也很喜歡。

Wǒ yě hěn xǐhuan.

3. A: 明天是周末, 我们去看电影, 怎么样/明天是週末, 我們去看電影, 怎麼樣?

Míngtiān shì zhōumò, wǒmen qù kàn diànyǐng, zěnmeyang?

- B: 下星期一就开始考试了, 我们别去看电影了, 还是\_\_\_\_\_ /下星期一就開始考試了, 我們別去看電影了, 還是\_\_\_\_\_。

Xià Xīngqīyī jiù kāishǐ kǎo-shì le, wǒmen bié qù kàn diànyǐng le, háishi \_\_\_\_\_.

4. A: 小明学了两年中文了, 他的中文怎么样/小明學了兩年中文了, 他的中文怎麼樣?

Xiǎomíng xué le liǎngnián Zhōngwén le, tā de Zhōngwén zěnmeyang?

- B: 他说中文\_\_\_\_\_ /他說中文\_\_\_\_\_。

Tā shuō Zhōngwén \_\_\_\_\_.

5. A: 小亮现在正在做什么呢/小亮現在正在做什麼呢?

Xiǎoliàng xiànzài zhèngzài zuò shénme ne?

- B: 她在图书馆\_\_\_\_\_ /她在圖書館\_\_\_\_\_。

Tā zài túshūguǎn \_\_\_\_\_.

6. A: 我们下课以后去打球吧/我們下課以後去打球吧?

Wǒmen xià kè yǐhòu qù dǎ-qíu ba?

- B: 好\_\_\_\_\_。以前我打得不好, 现在打\_\_\_\_\_ /以前我打得不好, 現在打\_\_\_\_\_。

Hǎo \_\_\_\_\_. Yǐqián wǒ dǎ de bù hǎo, xiànzài dǎ\_\_\_\_\_.



## **Simple sentences**

We will teach you the structure and functions of a simple sentence by thoroughly explaining the features of each component (element) in a sentence. This unit consists of the following five chapters:

- Chapter 17: Introduction to simple sentences
- Chapter 18: Elements of a sentence 1: subject and predicate
- Chapter 19: Elements of a sentence 2: object
- Chapter 20: Elements of a sentence 3: complement
- Chapter 21: Elements of a sentence 4: attributive and adverbial



## Introduction to simple sentences

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the components and structure of a simple sentence
- ★ To understand the functions of a simple sentence
- ★ To know the structure and function of special simple sentences without a subject or predicate

A sentence is the basic unit of language that we use to express our thoughts through conversations. Since the sentence plays an important role in communication, we assume that you may have some questions about it, the first of which may be:

#### How do we define a sentence?

A **sentence** expresses a complete meaning with a certain intonation. The end of a sentence is typically marked by a short pause when speaking. In writing, the end of a sentence is marked according to the sentence type; specifically, a sentence can be marked by a period 句号/句號 jùhào (。), which is also called “a full stop,” a question mark 问号/問號 wènhào (？), or an exclamation point 感叹号/感嘆號 gǎntànhào (！).

Sentences can be categorized into two types: *simple sentences* and *complex sentences*. We will discuss simple sentences in Units III and IV, and complex sentences in Unit V.

### 17.1 The structure of simple sentences

#### How many components does a sentence have?

A sentence is composed of *phrases* arranged according to general grammatical rules; a phrase is composed of *words*. Conventionally, it is common to consider a sentence as composed of words. The grammatical relationships between phrases in a sentence can be described in terms of the *six grammatical roles* they play, which are **subject**, **predicate**, **object**, **attributive**, **adverbial**, and **complement**.

##### i. Subject-predicate (S-P; the subject precedes the predicate):

A simple sentence contains just the subject and the predicate as in example (1).

(1)	学生		学习。
	學生		學習。
	xuésheng		xuéxí
	Students		study.
	subject		predicate

In the above sentence, the noun 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) is the *subject*, and the verb 学习/學習 xuéxí (study) is the *predicate*. This sentence simply means that “The students are studying/study something,” without specifying what is being studied.

To express a complex meaning, a sentence may contain other components in addition to the subject and predicate, as in examples (2), (3), and (4).

**NOTE** The symbol || is used to separate the subject and the predicate, while the symbol | is used to separate other components.

ii. **Subject-verb-object** (SVO; the object follows the verb which functions as the predicate):

(2)	学生		学习		中文。
	學生		學習		中文
	xuésheng		xuéxí		Zhōngwén.
	Students		study		Chinese.
	subject		predicate/verb		object

The noun 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) is the *object* of the verb 学习/學習 xuéxí (study) in sentence (2). From this example, you can see that the Chinese word order SVO is exactly the same as in English.

iii. **Subject-verb-complement** (SVC; the complement follows the verb):

(3)	学生		学习		得很好。
	學生		學習		得很好。
	Xuésheng		xuéxí		de hěn hǎo.
	Students		studied		very well.
	subject		predicate/verb		complement

The phrase 得很好 de hěn hǎo (very well) is the *complement* of the verb 学习/學習 xuéxí (study) in sentence (3), in which the particle 得 de is the marker for the complement.

iv. **Attributive-subject-adverbial-verb-object**:

(4)	很多		学生		只		学习		中文。
	很多		學生		只		學習		中文。
	Hěn duō		xuésheng		zhǐ		xuéxí		Zhōngwén.
	Many		students		only		study		Chinese.
	attributive		subject		adverbial		predicate/verb		object

The attributive 很多 hěn duō (many) is a modifier of the subject (noun) 学生/學生 xuésheng (student). The adverbial 只 zhǐ (only) is the modifier of the verb 学习/學習 xuéxí.

### How do we determine whether a sentence is grammatical or not?

- **The most important components (elements):** Of the six components, the subject and predicate are *primary components*. Taking sentence (4) as an example:
  - if we were to take out all other components of the sentence and only keep the subject and predicate, the sentence would become sentence (1), a **grammatical sentence**; conversely;
  - if we were to take out either the subject or predicate from sentence (4), it would become an **ungrammatical sentence** as in (5):

(5)a. \*很多只学习中文 (no subject)

\*很多只學習中文

\*hěn duō zhǐ xuéxí Zhōngwén

(lit. many only study Chinese)

b. \*很多学生只中文 (no predicate/verb)

\*很多學生只中文

\*hěn duō xuésheng zhǐ Zhōngwén

(lit. many students only Chinese)

Knowing the grammatical relationship of components can help with examining whether or not a sentence is grammatical as specified in the analysis above, and also with understanding a more complex sentence.

### How do we understand a more complex sentence?

- **To read a complex sentence**, we must first find the two crucial components in the sentence: *subject* and *predicate*. After the subject and the predicate of the sentence are found, we can then consider the relation of other components to them. For example:

(6) 很多美国	<b>学生</b>	都很努力地	<b>学习</b>	很难的	中文。
很多美國	<b>學生</b>	都很努力地	<b>學習</b>	很難的	中文。
Hěn duō Měiguó	xuésheng	dōu hěn nǔlì de	xuéxí	hěn nán de	Zhōngwén.
Many American	students	all very	study	difficult	Chinese.
attributive	subject	adverbial	predicate	attributive	object
(modifier)		(modifier)		(modifier)	

Although sentence (6) is more complex than sentence (4), it still has subject-predicate as its core components. When all of the modifiers, such as the attributive and adverbial indicated by italics in (6), are omitted, the sentence becomes the SVO sentence seen in (7), which contains the core meaning of the original sentence, (6):

- (7) 学生学习中文。  
 學生學習中文。  
 Xuésheng xuéxí Zhōngwén.  
 Students study Chinese.

If we were to further remove the *object* from sentence (7), it becomes sentence (1) which still retains the basic meaning of sentence (6). This observation demonstrates a way of understanding and analyzing complex sentences, regardless of how many components it has.

### How do we divide a sentence into different components?

- **Analyze a more complex sentence in steps:** To understand the meaning and structure of a more complex sentence, it can be methodically divided into different components. Let's take sentence (6) as an example, with the specific steps outlined below.

**Step 1:** Determine the **main verb** (predicate), 学习/學習 xuéxí (study), and then the subject, 学生/學生 xuésheng (student), to divide the sentence into two sections:

**subject section:** 很多美国学生/很多美國學生 hěn duō Měiguó xuésheng (many American students)

**predicate section:** 都很努力地学习很难的中文/都很努力地學習很難的中文 dōu hěn nǔlì de xuéxí hěn nán de Zhōngwén (all very diligently study difficult Chinese)

### Step 2:

- a. In the **subject section** find the attributives, 很多 hěn duō (many) and 美国/美國 Měiguó (USA), that modify the subject/noun, 学生/學生 xuésheng (student).
- b. In the **predicate section**:
  - i. separate the predicate/verb, 学习/學習 xuéxí (study), and the object section, 很难的中文/很難的中文 hěn nán de Zhōngwén (difficult Chinese); then,
  - ii. separate the predicate/verb, 学习/學習 xuéxí (study), and the adverbials, 都, 很, 努力地 dōu, hěn, nǔlì de (all, very, diligently), in which the particle 地 de is the marker for the adverbial modifying the verb.

**Step 3:** In the **object section** separate the object, 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese), and its modifier, 很难的/很難的 hěn nán de (difficult), in which the particle 的 de is the marker for the attributive.

In fact, larger chunks, such as the attributive 很多美国/很多美國 hěn duō Měiguó (many Americans; two attributives) and the adverbial 都很努力 dōu hěn nǔlì (all very diligently; three adverbials), can be further divided. We can use the same steps outlined above and summarized in Table 17.1 to divide them into smaller components in order to obtain a more detailed understanding.

As stated earlier, a sentence is composed of different components in a hierarchy in which the relationship of the subject and the predicate in a sentence are at the top level.

**Table 17.1** Steps for dividing components of a sentence

Sentence (lit. meaning in English)	很多美国/很多 美國 hěn duō Měiguó many American	学生/學生 xuésheng student	都很努力地 dōu hěn nǔli de all very diligent	学习/學習 xuéxí study	很难的/ 很難的 hěn nán de difficult	中文 Zhōngwén Chinese
Step 1	Subject section					
Step 2	Attributive (modifier)	Subject	Predicate section			Object section
Step 3			Adverbial (modifier)	Predicate	Attributive (modifier)	Object
speech parts	adv. adj. noun	noun	adv. adv. adj. particle	verb	adv. adj. particle	noun

**TIP**

**To understand a rather complex sentence:** First look for the main verb of the sentence and divide the sentence into two sections: the *subject* and the *predicate*, then find out the modifying components and take them out. The core meaning of the sentence will emerge.

## 17.2 The functions of simple sentences

**What are the functions of simple sentences in communication?** When speaking, we use sentences to express certain meanings with different intonations for a statement, question, command, or exclamation. According to their functions, simple sentences can be categorized into four types as follows.

### ► 17.2.1 Declarative sentences

Declarative sentences make a statement, as in (8) and (9), or express a view, as in (10).

- (8) 我们都是学生。  
我們都是學生。  
Wǒmen dōu shì xuésheng.

We are all students.

- (9) 下雨了。  
Xià-yǔ le.  
It's raining.

- (10) 我不同意你的看法。  
Wǒ bù tóngyì nǐ de kànfa.  
I disagree with your view.

### ► 17.2.2 Questions

Also known as *interrogative sentences*, these pose questions by the following means (see also Chapter 24):

- with the question particle 呀/嗎 ma:

- (11) 小明是学生吗？  
小明是學生嗎？  
Xiǎomíng shì xuésheng ma?  
Is Xiaoming a student?

- with a question pronoun, such as 什么/什麼 shénme (what), 哪儿/哪兒 nǎr (where), 谁/誰 shéi (who):

(12) 图书馆在哪儿？

圖書館在哪儿？

Túshūguǎn zài nǎr?

Where is the library?

- with a V-not-V form for yes/no questions, such as 多不多 duō bu duō, in the following sentence:

(13) 你们学校的学生多不多？

你們學校的學生多不多？

Nǐmen xuéxiào de xuésheng duō bu duō?

Are there many students in your school?

- with the conjunction 还是/還是 háishi (or) for alternative choices:

(14) 我们这个周末看电影还是看球赛？

我們這個週末看電影還是看球賽？

Wǒmen zhèi ge zhōumò kàn diànyǐng háishi kàn qíúsài?

Will we watch a movie or a ball game this weekend?

### ► 17.2.3 Imperative sentences

Imperative sentences can express the following meanings:

- Command/permission:

(15) 请进！

請進！

Qǐng jìn!

Please come in!

- Request:

(16) 请打开书。

請打開書。

Qǐng dǎ-kāi shū.

Please open your book.

- Advice:

(17) 千万要多喝水！

千萬要多喝水！

Qiānwàn yào duō hē-shuǐ!

You should drink more water.

- Recommendation:

(18) 我们再讨论一下这个问题吧。

我們再討論一下這個問題吧。

Wǒmen zài tǎolùn yí xià zhèi ge wèntí ba.

Let's discuss this question again.

**Negation for imperative sentences:** Add a negator, such as 别 bié (don't) as in (19), 不要 bú yào (don't), or 不许/不許 bù xǔ (not allow to) before the verb. They typically carry negative commands or warnings.

▪ **Warning:**

- (19) 请别说话！  
請別說話！  
Qǐng bié shuō-huà!  
Please don't talk!

▪ **Wish:**

- (20) 生日快乐！  
生日快樂！  
Shēngrì kuàilè!  
Happy birthday!

**NOTE Soften the imperative sentence:** To show politeness, people often add the verb 请/請 qǐng (please) at the beginning of an imperative sentence as in (15), (16), and (19).

An exclamation point ( ! ) as in (15), (17), (19), and (20), or a Chinese period (。), as in (16) and (18), mark the end of an imperative sentence. It should be noted that while the exclamation point is the default punctuation and can be used for all imperative sentences, the period can be used (and is preferred) for softer commands.

#### ► 17.2.4 Exclamatory sentences

Exclamatory sentences express strong feelings with an exclamation point ( ! ) as the ending punctuation, for example in the following cases:

▪ **Commendation:**

- (21) 这里的景色多么漂亮啊！  
這裏的景色多麼漂亮啊！  
Zhèlǐ de jǐngsè duōme piàoliang a!  
How beautiful the scenery is here!

▪ **Strong emotion:**

- (22) 我好想妈妈呀！  
我好想媽媽呀！  
Wǒ hǎo xiǎng māma ya!  
How I miss my mother!

▪ **Surprise:**

- (23) 他太奇怪了！  
Tā tài qíguài le!  
He is so strange!

▪ **Condemnation:**

- (24) 这件事真可恶！  
 這件事真可惡！  
 Zhèi jiàn shì zhēn kěwù!

This thing is really detestable!

**Intensifiers for the exclamatory sentence:** several adverbs may be used to strengthen the overall feeling of a sentence, such as:

- 多 duō or 多么...啊/多麼...啊 duōme . . . a (how) as in (21),
- 好 hǎo (very) as in (22),
- 太... 了 tài . . . le (so) as in (23), and
- 真 zhēn (really) as in (24) can be used before adjectives or some verbs, such as 想 xiǎng (miss) as in (22).

### 17.3 Sentences without subjects or predicates

Do all sentences need a subject and predicate? Although a sentence is generally composed of two core components, subject and predicate, Chinese does allow some sentences without a subject and others without a predicate. These kinds of sentences can be categorized into the following three types.

#### ► 17.3.1 Subjectless sentences

A subjectless sentence can arise in two scenarios, as outlined below.

- i. **Reporting a natural phenomenon or new event**, such as weather in (9) and (25), or an event that requires the listener to do something, such as stopping talking in (26):

**Alert!**

The sentences indicating a weather condition as in (9) and (25) or reporting a new event as in (26), *cannot* contain a subject in Chinese, but should have a subject in English.

- (25) 出太阳了。  
 出太陽了。  
 Chū tàiyang le.

The sun is out.

- (26) 上课了。  
 上課了。  
 Shàng-kè le.

It's time for class.

ii. **Imperative sentences** as in (15), (16), (17), and (19). This type of sentence does not need a subject in English either. A further example is (27):

- (27) 请安静！  
請安靜！  
Qǐng ānjìng!  
Please be quiet!

### ► 17.3.2 Sentences with one word or phrase

This kind of sentence can express the following meanings:

i. **A sudden discovery or warning**, as in (28), or **a warning**, as in (29), with one word:

- (28) 蛇！  
Shé!  
Snake!

- (29) 小心！  
Xiǎoxīn!  
Watch out!

ii. **Praise and admiration**, as in (30) and (31), with one phrase:

- (30) 多么好看的校园！  
多麼好看的校園！  
Duōme hǎokàn de xiàoyuán!  
How beautiful the campus (is)!

- (31) 唱得好极了！  
唱得好極了！  
Chàng de hǎo jí le!  
(You/they/he/she) sing(s) wonderfully well!

### ► 17.3.3 The elliptical sentence

Elliptical sentences are where some components of sentences are omitted. When the context is clear, especially in a conversation, a complete sentence is not needed to express a meaning that both the speaker and hearer can understand, as B can in (32) and (33). This is the same as in English.

▪ **No subject or object:**

- (32) A: 你是学生吗？  
你是學生嗎？  
Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?  
Are you a student?

B: 是。

Shì.

Yes.

(The subject and the object are omitted. The complete sentence should be: 我是学生/我是學生。 Wǒ shì xuésheng. [I am a student]).

▪ No predicate or object:

(33) A: 谁今天晚上不看电影？

誰今天晚上不看電影？

Shéi jīntiān wǎnshàng bù kàn dìanyǐng?

Who will not watch the movie this evening?

B: 我。

Wǒ.

Me.

(The predicate/verb and object are omitted. The complete sentence should be: 我不看电影/我不看電影。 Wǒ bù kàn dìngyǐng. [I will not watch the movie])

## 17.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned the structures and functions of simple sentences. Structurally, a simple sentence can be divided into six components based on their grammatical relationships: **subject**, **predicate**, **object**, **attributive**, **adverbial**, and **complement**. We have also learned the method for identifying the subject and predicate, and then isolating the other components in a complex sentence. This allows us to understand the core meaning of the sentence, as a sentence generally contains a *subject* and *predicate*, which are the most important components. Functionally, we have learned that sentences can mainly be categorized into four types based on their uses:

- i. the **declarative sentence** indicates statements
- ii. the **interrogative sentence** asks questions
- iii. the **imperative sentence** makes commands or requests, or offers advice
- iv. the **exclamatory sentence** expresses feelings such as praise, surprise, fondness, or detestation

In the final section of the chapter, we covered several types of special sentences without a subject or predicate, which are **subjectless sentences**, **sentences with one word or phrase**, and **elliptical sentences**, which often occur in conversational contexts.

## 17.5 Exercises

I Identify these elements in the following sentences:

Example

Given: 小亮很努力地学习她不懂的汉字/小亮很努力地學習她不懂的漢字。

Xiǎoliàng hěn nǔlì de xuéxí tā bù dǒng de Hánzì.

<b>Answer:</b>	小亮	很努力地	学习	她不懂的	汉字。
	小亮	很努力地	學習	她不懂的	漢字。
	Xiǎoliàng	hěn nǔlì de	xuéxí	tā bù dǒng de	Hànzì.

subject      adverbial      predicate      attributive      object

- 小明买了很多外文书/小明買了很多外文書。 Xiǎomíng mǎi le hěn duō wàiwén shū.
- 李老师总是说得非常快/李老師總是說得非常快。 Lǐ lǎoshī zǒngshì shuō de fēicháng kuài.
- 新来的张老师非常认真地教中国历史/新來的張老師非常認真地教中國歷史。 Xīn lái de Zhāng lǎoshī fēicháng rènzhēn de jiāo Zhōngguó lìshǐ.
- 李老师的孩子长得特别好看/李老師的孩子長得特別好看。 Lǐ lǎoshī de háizi zhǎng de tèbié hǎokàn.
- 全班学生都很快地做完了作业/全班學生都很快地做完了作業。 Quán bān xuésheng dōu hèn kuài de zuò. wán le zuòyè.
- 小亮的朋友在学校的图书馆借了很多非常有意思的中文书/小亮的朋友在學校的圖書館借了很多非常有意思的中文書。 Xiǎoliàng de péngyou zài xuéxiào de túshūguǎn jiè le hěn duō fēicháng yǒuyìsì de Zhōngwén shū.

## II Translate the following sentences into Chinese:

- It is time for lunch.
- Class is dismissed.
- How tall the building is!
- Sit down, please.
- John's girlfriend speaks Chinese very well.
- Will you go to watch the new foreign movie this weekend?
- A: What time is it?  
B: It's 10 o'clock.
- My new classmate, who just came from China, always likes watching very competitive football games.

## III Correct the following sentences and explain why they are wrong:

### Example

Given: \*我们都学生/\*我們都學生 \*wǒmen dōu xuésheng

Answer: 我们都是学生/我們都是學生。 Wǒmen dōu shì xuésheng.  
(lacks the predicate/verb)

- \*刚刚的都找到了非常满意的工作/\*剛剛的都找到了非常滿意的工作  
\*gānggāng de dōu zhǎo.dào le fēicháng mǎnyì de gōngzuò
- \*对于学生的发音问题，始终没有办法/\*對於學生的發音問題，始終沒有辦法  
\*duìyú xuésheng de fāyīn wèntí, shǐzhōng méiyǒu bànfǎ
- \*小明在北京住了三年，可是还没长城/\*小明在北京住了三年，可是還沒長城  
\*Xiǎomíng zài Běijīng zhù le sān nián, kěshì hái méi Chángchéng

4. \*这个周末我想商店买/\*這個週末我想商店買  
\*zhèi ge zhōumò wǒ xiǎng shāngdiàn mǎi
5. \*同学们都很努力地作业/\*同學們都很努力地作業  
\*tóngxuémen dōu hěn nǔlì de zuòyè

#### IV Complete the following dialogues with one word or phrase:

1. A: 请问, 这是谁的书/請問, 這是誰的書?  
Qǐngwèn, zhè shì shéi de shū?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (mine)。
2. A: 今年夏天你去不去中国/今年夏天你去不去中國?  
Jīnnián xiàtiān nǐ qù bu qù Zhōngguo?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。
3. A: 下课以后, 你去哪儿/下課以後, 你去哪兒?  
Xià-kè yǐhou, nǐ qù nǎr?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。
4. A: 你已经学了四年中文, 是吗/你已經學了四年中文, 是嗎?  
Nǐ yǐjīng xué le sì nián Zhōngwén, shì ma?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。
5. A: 你在做什么呢/你在做什麼呢?  
Nǐ zài zuò shénme ne?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (reading)。
6. A: 我们明天晚上去看电影吧/我們明天晚上去看電影吧?  
Wǒmen míngtiān wǎnshàng qù kàn diànyǐng ba?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。

## Elements of a sentence 1: subject and predicate

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the grammatical features of the subject and predicate
- ★ To know what linguistic forms can serve as the subject or predicate

#### What are the subject and predicate?

The **subject** is what a sentence is about or talks about, and it is the target or object of description in a sentence, while the **predicate** describes either the state or the activity of the subject.

The subject and the predicate are the core elements of a sentence in Chinese, just like in other languages. We will discuss these two elements individually below.

### 18.1 The subject

Compared to English, the subject in Chinese generally displays the following special characteristics.

- i. A Chinese subject can be separated from its predicate by a particle, such as 啊 a as in (1b), 呀 ya, 吧 ba, and 嘛 ma, between the subject and predicate, but the meanings of (1b) and (1a), which has no the particle, are the same:

- (1)a. 这些学生都很想学好中文。  
 這些學生都很想學好中文。  
 Zhèxiē xuésheng dōu hěn xiǎng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén.

- b. 这些学生啊, 都很想学好中文。  
 這些學生啊, 都很想學好中文。  
 Zhèxiē xuésheng a, dōu hěn xiǎng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén.

These students all want to study Chinese well.

Unlike languages such as English, a natural pause, including the insertion of a particle, can occur after the subject in Chinese. (1b) above shows that the subject, (这些)学生/(這些)學生 (zhèxiē) xuésheng ([these] students), is separated from the predicate, 都很想学好中文/都很想學好中文 dōu hěn xiǎng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén (all want to study Chinese well), by a particle, 啊 a, or a pause. This kind of separation marks the previous element as the topic. In

languages like English, a topic and a subject have different functions. In Chinese, however, a subject can also be a topic.

- ii. **The subject can be omitted** when the context is clear, as with speaker B in example (2) below:

- (2) A: 你去过中国吗?  
你去過中國嗎?  
Nǐ qù guo Zhōngguó ma?  
Have you ever been to China?  
B: (我)去过一次。  
(我)去過一次。  
(Wǒ) qù guo yí cì.  
I have been once.

**NOTE** Speaker B's sentence in (2) does not have the subject 我 wǒ (I), which is common in Chinese; however, the subject must be added in English, as is present in the English translation of speaker B in this example.

### 18.1.1 The grammatical features of the subject

- Structurally, the subject precedes the predicate, as in English.
- Semantically, the subject can be any of the following:

- the one that acts:

- (3) 小明昨天买了一本书。  
小明昨天買了一本書。  
Xiǎomíng zuótiān mǎi le yì běn shū.  
Xiaoming bought a book yesterday.

The subject, 小明 Xiǎomíng, is the doer of the buying action, 买/買 mǎi (buy), in (3).

- the one that is acted upon:

- (4) 作业做完了。  
作業做完了。  
Zuòyè zuò.wán le.  
The homework has been completed.

The subject, 作业/作業 zuòyè (homework), is acted upon by the action, 做 zuò (do), whose doer is assumed but not expressed in (4).

- The time or location of an action whose doer is commonly known and therefore does not need to be expressed, as in (5). This is different from English.

- (5) 明天下雨。  
Míngtiān xià-yǔ.  
It will rain tomorrow.

The subject, 明天 míngtiān (tomorrow), is neither the doer nor the receiver of the action, 下雨 xià-yǔ (rain); rather, it is a noun to set a time frame for the sentence, as in (5).

### ► 18.1.2 Words and phrases that can serve as the subject

#### i. Words

- **Nouns** commonly serve as the subject, such as 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) in (1), 小明 Xiǎomíng in (3), 作业/作業 zuòyè (homework) in (4), and 明天 míngtiān (tomorrow) in (5).
- **Pronouns**, such as 你 nǐ (you) in (2) and 这/這 zhè (this) in (6):

- (6) **这**是我的书。  
**這**是我的書  
 Zhè shì wǒ de shū.  
 This is my book.

- **Numerals**, such as 十 shí (ten) in (7):

- (7) **十**等于五加五。  
**十**等於五加五。  
 Shí děngyú wǔ jiā wǔ.  
 Ten equals five plus five.

- **Verbs**, such as 学习/學習 xuéxí (study) in (8):

- (8) **学习**很重要, 健康更重要。  
**學習**很重要, 健康更重要。  
 Xuéxí hěn zhòngyào, jiànkāng gèng zhòngyào.  
 To study and learn is very important; yet to be healthy is even more important.

- **Adjectives**, such as 健康 jiànkāng (healthy) in (8) and 漂亮 piàoliang (beautiful) in (9):

- (9) **漂亮**不等于聪明。  
**漂亮**不等於聰明。  
 Piàoliang bù děngyú cōngming.  
 Beauty doesn't equal intelligence.

**NOTE** There are **no word form changes for verbs and adjectives** in Chinese, whether they serve as the predicate or the subject/object. For example, the word form of the verb 学习/學習 xuéxí (learn), and the adjectives 漂亮 piàoliang (beautiful) and 健康 jiànkāng (healthy) remain the same whether they occur in a predicate or a subject/object position. This is very different from languages such as English, where gerunds (-ing), infinitives (to + verb) as in (8), or nominalized forms (e.g., happiness) are required.

## ii. Phrases

It is also common for different phrases to serve as the subject in Chinese, as discussed below.

- **Subject-predicate (S-P) phrases**, also known as **clauses** (or sentence-like units within a sentence), such as subject + predicate 我去 wǒ qù (I go) and 你去 nǐ qù (you go) in (10). Please be aware that the meaning of this kind of sentence is expressed in a different way in English, for example the translation in (10).

- (10) **我去**不合适, **你去**比较合适。  
**我去**不合適, **你去**比較合適。

Wǒ qù bù héshì, nǐ qù bǐjiào héshì.

It is inappropriate *that I go*; rather, it is more appropriate *that you go*.

**NOTE** Although the shortest possible clauses are given as examples, there is no length restriction, and very long clauses can be a subject.

- **V-O phrases**, such as 改作业/改作業 gǎi zuòyè (correct homework) in (11) and 看书/看書 kàn-shū (read [books]) in (12):

- (11) **改作业**是老师的责任。  
**改作業**是老師的責任。

Gǎi zuòyè shì lǎoshī de zérèn.

Correcting homework is a teacher's responsibility.

- (12) **看书**是小明的一个爱好。  
**看書**是小明的一個愛好。

Kàn-shū shì Xiǎomíng de yí ge àihào.

Reading is one of Xiaoming's hobbies.

- **Complementary phrases**, such as 睡得晚 shuì de wǎn (sleep late) and 休息好 xiūxi hǎo (rest well) in (13):

- (13) **睡得晚**对身体不好, **休息好**很重要。  
**睡得晚**對身體不好, **休息好**很重要。

Shuì de wǎn duì shēntǐ bù hǎo, xiūxi hǎo hěn zhòngyào.

Going to sleep late is not good for one's health. Resting well is very important.

- **Numeral-measure phrases**, such as 五本 wǔ běn (five-MW) in (14):

- (14) **五本**(书)十块钱。  
**五本**(書)十塊錢。

Wǔ běn (shū) shí kuài qián.

It's ten dollars for five books.

- **Reduplicated measure words**, such as 件件 jiànjiàn (every piece) in (15):

(15) 小亮买了很多衣服, 件件都很好看。

小亮買了很多衣服, 件件都很好看。

Xiǎoliàng mǎi le hěn duō yīfú, jiànjiàn dōu hěn hǎokàn.

Xiaoliang bought a lot of clothes, and every one of them is beautiful.

- **的 de construction:**

(16) **老师说的**正是我想要知道的。

**老師說的**正是我想要知道的。

Lǎoshī shuō de zhèng shì wǒ xiǎng yào zhīdao de.

What the teacher said is exactly what I wanted to know.

Since the 的 de construction functions as a noun, it naturally can serve as the subject, such as 老师说的 lǎoshī shuō de (what the teacher said) in (16) (see §16.1.1).

- **Time words/phrases and place words/phrases** function as nouns and thus can serve as the subject in Chinese. An example in sentence (5) shows that the time word 明天 míngtiān (tomorrow) serves as the subject. Another example includes the time phrase 今天下午 jīntiān xiàwǔ (this afternoon), which acts as the subject in (17):

(17) **今天下午**不上课。

**今天下午**不上課。

Jīntiān xiàwǔ bù shàng-kè.

There is no class this afternoon.

- **The place word** 北京 Běijīng, which is also a proper noun, serves as the subject in (18):

(18) **北京**是中国的首都。

**北京**是中國的首都。

Běijīng shì Zhōngguó de shǒudū.

Beijing is the capital of China.

- **The place phrase** 学校里/學校裏 xuéxiào li (in school) serves as the subject in (19):

(19) **学校里**有很多树。

**學校裏**有很多樹。

Xuéxiào li yǒu hěn duō shù.

There are many trees **in the school**.

 **Alert!**

Dummy subjects, such as “it” in English in example (5) or “there” in (17) and (19), are not needed for time or place words or phrases in Chinese.

## 18.2 The predicate

The predicate describes or makes a statement about the subject or represents the action taken by the subject.

### ► 18.2.1 The grammatical features of the predicate

- i. Structurally, the predicate follows the subject, as in English.
- ii. Chinese predicates do not undergo word form changes (or agreement) pertaining to numbers, gender, time, and so forth. For example:

(20) 小明去北京，我们去上海。

小明去北京，我們去上海。

Xiǎomíng qù Běijīng, wǒmen qù Shànghǎi.

Xiaoming goes to Beijing; we go to Shanghai.

(21) 小明昨天去了北京，我们明天去。

小明昨天去了北京，我們明天去。

Xiǎomíng zuótiān qù le Běijīng, wǒmen míngtiān qù.

Xiaoming went to Beijing yesterday; we will go to Beijing tomorrow.

In the two sentences above, the verb 去 qù (go) in Chinese remains unchanged:

- whether the subject is singular (Xiaomíng) or plural (wǒmen, we) as in (20); conversely, in the English translation the verb “go” must change its form to “goes” to agree with the singular subject; or,
- whether it is used for a past time (昨天 zuótiān, yesterday) or a future time (明天 míngtiān, tomorrow) as in (21); however, in English, the verb must change to “went” when a past time is being referred to.

### ► 18.2.2 Words and phrases which can serve as the predicates:

#### i. Words

- **Verbs:** Most predicates are verbs, as in all of the sentences above, except for sentence (14) in which the noun phrase serves as the predicate.

To negate the predicate the Chinese word order requires that the adverb 不 bù or 没 méi precede the verb. As such, learners must be careful not to use the English word order in which the negation words “not” and “no” sometimes follow the verb. The examples in Table 18.1 show the differences between the word orders.

**Table 18.1** Correct and incorrect expressions for the negation of verbs

English	Correct	Incorrect
He is not Chinese.	他不是中国人/他不是中國人。 Tā bú shì Zhōngguó rén.	*他是不中国人/*他是不中國人 *tā shì bù Zhōngguó rén
I have no money.	我没有钱/我沒有錢。 Wǒ méiyǒu qián.	*我有没钱/*我有沒錢 *wǒ yǒu méi qián

- **Adjectives**, such as 漂亮 piàoliang (beautiful) in (22) below, which are different from English:

(22) 张老师的女儿很**漂亮**。

張老師的女兒很**漂亮**。

Zhāng lǎoshī de nǚ'ér hěn piàoliang.

Professor Zhang's daughter is beautiful.

When an adjective serves as the predicate in a descriptive sentence, it should have an adverb added to it, such as 很 hěn (very) in (22) above (see §12.1). To negate an adjective, the adverb 不 bù (not) is used instead of 很 hěn (very), as in (23).

(23) 张老师的女儿**不**漂亮。

張老師的女兒**不**漂亮。

Zhāng lǎoshī de nǚ'ér bù piàoliang.

Professor Zhang's daughter is not beautiful.

- **Nouns and numerals** do not usually serve as the predicate except in some special cases when indicating equivalent relations, such as when indicating dates as in (24), weather as in (25), a person's nationality as in (26), and age as in (27).

(24) 昨天**星期一**。

Zuótiān Xīngqīyī.

Yesterday was Monday.

(25) 今天**晴天**。

Jīntiān qíngtiān.

It is a sunny day today.

(26) 我们老师**中国人**。

Wǒmen lǎoshī **Zhōngguó rén**.

Our teacher is Chinese.

(27) 小明**二十**(岁)。

小明**二十**(歲)。

Xiǎomíng èrshí (suì).

Xiaoming is twenty years old.

**Alert!**

You *cannot* simply add the adverb 不 bù (not) to negate sentences (24)–(27). When nouns and numerals serve as the subject, the verb 是 shì (to be) can be added between the subject and the predicate. Therefore, the adverb 不 bù (not) and the verb 是 shì (to be) must be added to negate those sentences (see Table 18.2).

**Table 18.2** Correct and incorrect expressions for the negation of nouns and numerals

English	Correct	Incorrect
Yesterday wasn't Monday.	昨天 <b>不是</b> 星期一。 Zuótān bú shì Xīngqīyī.	*昨天 <b>不</b> 星期一 *zuótān bù Xīngqīyī
It is not a fine day today.	今天 <b>不是</b> 晴天。 Jīntiān bú shì qíngtiān.	*今天 <b>不</b> 晴天 * jīntiān bù qíngtiān
Our teacher is not Chinese.	我们老师 <b>不是</b> 中国人/ 我們老師 <b>不是</b> 中國人。 Wǒmen lǎoshī bú shì Zhōngguó rén.	*我们老师 <b>不</b> 中国人/ *我們老師 <b>不</b> 中國人 *wǒmen lǎoshī bù Zhōngguó rén
Xiaoming isn't 20 years old.	小明 <b>不是</b> 二十岁 / 小明 <b>不是</b> 二十歲。 Xiǎomíng bú shì èrshí (suì).	*小明 <b>不</b> 二十岁 / *小明 <b>不</b> 二十歲 *Xiǎomíng bù èrshí (suì)

• **Pronouns**, such as the interrogative pronoun 怎么样/怎麼樣 zěnmeyàng (how) in (28):

- (28) A: 小亮的中文发音**怎么样**？  
小亮的中文發音**怎麼樣**？  
Xiǎoliàng de Zhōngwén fāyīn zěnmeyàng?  
How is Xiaoliang's Chinese pronunciation?  
B: **不怎么样**. (impolite)  
**不怎麼樣**.  
Bù zěnmeyàng.  
It's unexceptional/not worth commenting.

Just as with 怎么样/怎麼樣 zěnmeyàng (how), expressions with a certain number of pronouns are quite useful when one is unsure of what to say or does not want to be too specific, as shown in examples (29) and (30):

- (29) (我们可以用这两种不同的法子泡茶。) 你**这样**, 我**那样**。  
(我們可以用這兩種不同的法子泡茶。) 你**這樣**, 我**那樣**。  
(Wǒmen kěyǐ yòng zhè liǎng zhǒng bù tóng de fǎzì pào-chá.) Nǐ zhèyàng, wǒ nàyàng.  
(We can use these two different ways to infuse tea.) You do it this way; I do it that way.
- (30) (你好像很不舒服。) 你**怎么**了?  
(你好像很不舒服。) 你**怎麼**了?  
(Nǐ hǎoxiàng hěn bù shūfú.) Nǐ zěnme le?  
(It seems that you are uncomfortable.) What happened to you?

ii. **Phrases:**

It is common that phrases serve as the predicate to form various types of sentence patterns.

- **Verb-object phrases** as 学中文/學中文 xué Zhōngwén (study Chinese) in (31):

(31) 学生学中文。

學生學中文。

Xuésheng xué Zhōngwén.

Students study Chinese.

There are few verbs, such as 教 jiāo (teach), that can take two objects, such as 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) and 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) in (32) (see §10.1 and §19.3).

(32) 张老师教学生中文。

張老師教學生中文。

Zhāng lǎoshī jiāo xuésheng Zhōngwén.

Professor Zhang teaches students Chinese.

**Attention**

Some V-O constructions are in fact intransitive compound verbs, such as 见面/見面 jiàn-miàn (see; lit. see-face), and cannot take an object. It is **incorrect** to say:

\*他每天见面老师/ \*他每天見面老師 \*tā měitiān jiàn-miàn lǎoshī (lit. he everyday see face teacher); instead, say:

他每天见老师/他每天見老師。Tā měitiān jiàn lǎoshī, or 他每天和老师见面/他每天和老師見面。Tā měitiān hé lǎoshī jiàn-miàn. (He sees the teacher every day.) See §10.3.

- **Verb-complement phrases**, such as 说得很快/說得很快 shuō de hěn kuài (speak fast) in (33) (see §20.2 for more details):

(33) 老师说得很快。

老師說得很快。

Lǎoshī shuō de hěn kuài.

The teacher speaks very fast.

- **Subject-predicate phrases** (clauses), such as 头疼/頭疼 tóu téng (headache) in (34):

(34) 我头疼。

我頭疼。

Wǒ tóu téng.

I have a headache.

It is challenging to determine the subject when a subject-predicate phrase serves as the subject; for example, whether 我 wǒ (I) or 我头/我頭 wǒ tóu (*lit. I head*) is the subject in sentence (34) above. We can test it by using a “**pause or particle**” method, namely, whether a *pause* or *particle* can be added after the subject according to the rules outlined earlier. A particle, 呀 ya, can be added after 我 wǒ (I) in (35a) but not after 头/頭 tóu (head) in (35b) below. Thus, 我 wǒ (I) should be the subject, not 我头/我頭 wǒ tóu (*lit. I head*) in sentence (34) above.

- (35)a. 我呀, 头疼。  
我呀, 頭疼。  
Wǒ ya, tóu téng.  
I am headachy.
- b. \*我头呀, 疼  
\*我頭呀, 疼  
\*wǒ tóu ya, téng

• **Serial verb phrases**, which contain two or more verb phrases, serve as the predicate in which the phrases share the same subject and have no pause or conjunctions between or among the verb phrases. This kind of sentence is also called a **serial-verb sentence**, as in (36):

- (36)a. 小明看完了书去图书馆。  
小明看完了書去圖書館。  
Xiǎomíng kàn.wán le shū qù túshūguǎn.  
Xiaoming finished reading and then went to the library.
- b. 小明去图书馆看完了书。  
小明去圖書館看完了書。  
Xiǎomíng qù túshūguǎn kàn.wán le shū.  
Xiaoming went to the library and then finished reading.

- (37)a. 小亮站起来开了门走了出去。  
小亮站起來開了門走了出去。  
Xiǎoliàng zhànl qǐlai kāi le mén zǒu le chūqu.  
Xiaoliang stood up, opened the door, and walked out.
- b. \*小亮开了门走了出去站起来  
\*小亮開了門走了出去站起來  
\*Xiǎoliàng kāi le mén zǒu le chūqu zhànl qǐlai  
(*lit. Xiaoliang opened the door walked out stood up*)
- c. \*小亮走了出去站起来开了门  
\*小亮走了出去站起來開了門  
\*Xiǎoliàng zǒu le chūqu zhànl qǐlai kāi le mén  
(*lit. Xiaoliang walked out stood up opened the door*)

## NOTE

- The verb phrases in a serial verb phrase show actions in their natural order (see the Rule of Temporal Sequence in §2.3). Specifically, actions that happen earlier are placed before the actions that happen later. For example:
  - the verb phrase 看书/看書 kàn-shū (read books) occurs first and thus precedes the verb phrase 去图书馆/去圖書館 qù túshūguǎn (go to the library) in (36a), and the opposite is seen in sentence (36b); and
  - in (37a), the verb phrase 站起来 zhàn qǐlai (stand up) occurs first, and thus precedes the other two verb phrases, 开了门/開了門 kāi le mén (open the door) and 走了出去 zǒu le chūqù (walk out).
- The verb phrases in the serial verb phrase cannot change position. If the positions are exchanged, the meaning of the sentence is changed, as can be seen by comparing (36a) and (36b) above, or the sentence becomes unacceptable as shown in (37b) and (37c). In English, the conjunction “and” is typically added between the two verbs or the last two verbs in a sentence, as well as in serial verb sentences (as seen in the translations above), but there is no conjunction between the verbs in Chinese.
  - Pivotal phrases contain a V-O phrase and an S-P phrase in which the object in the V-O phrase also serves as the subject in the S-P phrase. This kind of sentence is also categorized as a **pivotal sentence**, for example, in (38) and (39).

(38) 老师帮学生学中文。

老師幫學生學中文。

Lǎoshī bāng xuésheng xué Zhōngwén.

The teacher helped students study Chinese.

(39) 小明请小亮唱歌。

小明請小亮唱歌。

Xiǎomíng qǐng Xiǎoliàng chàng-gē.

Xiaoming asked Xiaoliang to sing.

The noun 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) has two functions in sentence (38):

- one is the object of the verb 帮/幫 bāng (help) in the V-O phrase; and
- the other is the subject of 学中文/學中文 xué Zhōngwén (study Chinese) in the S-P phrase.

The subject of the whole sentence is 老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher), and the predicate section, 帮学生学中文/幫學生學中文 bāng xuésheng xué Zhōngwén (help students study Chinese), is a *pivotal* phrase. The grammatical relations of the sentence are summarized below:

老师	帮	学生	学	中文
老師	幫	學生	學	中文
lǎoshī	bāng	xuésheng	xué	Zhōngwén
teacher	help	student	study	Chinese
Subject	Verb	Object		
		Subject	Verb	Object
Predicate (pivotal phrase [V-O + S-P])				

**TIP Understanding the pivotal sentence:** You may think of sentence (38) as two sentences.

1. 老师帮学生/老師幫學生 lǎoshī bāng xuésheng (the teacher helps students); and
2. 学生学中文/學生學中文 xuésheng xué Zhōngwén (students study Chinese).

The two sentences are compressed into one sentence with the repeated 学生/學生 xuésheng (students) taken out in:

3. 老师帮学生(学生)学中文/老師幫學生(學生)學中文。

Lǎoshī bāng xuésheng (xuésheng) xué Zhōngwén.

(The teacher helps students [students] study Chinese).

Similarly, 小亮 Xiǎoliàng is a double status word in sentence (39):

- it is the object of the verb 请/請 qǐng (ask); and
- it is the subject of 唱歌 chàng-gē (sing).

The subject of the entire sentence is 小明 Xiǎomíng, whereas the pivotal phrase, 请小亮唱歌/請小亮唱歌 qǐng Xiǎoliàng chàng-gē (ask Xiaoliang to sing), is the predicate.

## 18.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned that the **subject** is the target of a description, statement, or illustration that is made by the **predicate** of a sentence. In accordance with the word order of a sentence, the subject precedes the predicate. Depending upon the meaning of the subject and the predicate, the subject can be the doer or receiver of an action, or neither. Subjects tend to be nouns or pronouns, but other linguistic forms such as numerals, verbs, adjectives, or phrases can act as subjects too. Since time words or phrases and place words or phrases (e.g., 今天 jīntiān [today] and 学校里/學校裏 xuéxiào li [in school]) function as nominals, it is common for them to serve as subjects in Chinese. Although most predicates are verbs, other linguistic forms such as adjectives, nouns, numerals, some pronouns, or phrases can also serve as the predicate. Regardless of whether a verb serves as the subject or predicate, its form remains unchanged.

## 18.4 Exercises

### I Change the following sentences into serial verb sentences:

Example:

Given: 小亮每天上楼。 小亮每天看书/小亮每天上樓。 小亮每天看書。

Xiǎoliàng méitiān shàng lóu. Xiǎoliàng méitiān kàn-shū.

Answer: 小亮每天上楼看书/小亮每天上樓看書。

Xiǎoliàng méitiān shàng lóu kàn-shū.

- 小亮吃完了饭。小亮付钱/小亮吃完了飯。小亮付錢。  
Xiǎoliàng chī.wán le fàn. Xiǎoliàng fù-qián.
- 很多学生上完了课。很多学生去图书馆/很多學生上完了課。很多學生去圖書館。  
Hěn duō xuésheng shàng.wán le kè. Hěn duō xuésheng qù túshūguān.
- 小明听了这个消息。小明很高兴/小明聽了這個消息。小明很高兴。  
Xiǎomíng tīng le zhèi ge xiāoxi. Xiǎomíng hěn gāoxìng.
- 我们做完了作业。我们去电影院。我们看电影/我們做完  
了作业。我們去電影院。我們看電影。  
Wǒmen zuò.wán le zuòyè. Wǒmen qù diànyǐngyuàn. Wǒmen  
kàn diànyǐng.
- 明天我们坐飞机。明天我们去中国/明天我們坐飛機。明天我們去中國。  
Míngtiān wǒmen zuò fēijī. Míngtiān wǒmen qù Zhōngguó.
- 我有一个问题。我问您/我有一個問題。我問您。  
Wǒ yǒu yí ge wèntí. Wǒ wèn nín.

## II Change the following sentences into pivotal sentences:

Example:

Given: 老师请学生。学生吃饭/老師請學生。學生吃飯。

Lǎoshī qǐng xuésheng. Xuésheng chī-fàn.

Answer: 老师请**学生**吃饭/老師請**學生**吃飯。

Lǎoshī qǐng xuésheng chī-fàn.

- 我们选小明。小明当校长/我們選小明。小明當校長。  
Wǒmen xuǎn Xiǎomíng. Xiǎomíng dāng xiàozhǎng.
- 学生喜欢张老师。张老师教书/學生喜歡張老師。張老師教書。  
Xuésheng xǐhuan Zhāng lǎoshī. Zhāng lǎoshī jiāo-shù.
- 老师批评小亮。小亮发音不好/老師批評小亮。小亮發音不好。  
Lǎoshī pīping Xiǎoliàng. Xiǎoliàng fāyīn bù hǎo.
- 学校里有很多树。树很漂亮/學校裏有很多樹。樹很漂亮。  
Xuéxiào li yǒu hěn duō shù. Shù hěn piàoliang.

## III Translate the following sentences into Chinese:

- Tomorrow is Sunday.
- There are many books on the table.
- It was not a sunny day yesterday.
- Xiaoming's teacher will be 50 years old next year.
- There are so many books in your school library.
- Swimming is a very good exercise.
- Our classroom is not big.

## IV Correct the following sentences:

Example:

Given: \*今天不星期六 \*jīntiān bù Xīngqīliù

Answer: 今天**不是**星期六。Jīntiān bù shì Xīngqīliù.

- \*老师给一本书学生/\*老師給一本書學生 \*lǎoshī gěi yì běn shū xuésheng
- \*这个学生学习很努力，每天说话中文/\*這個學生學習很努力，每天說話中文  
\*zhèi ge xuésheng xuéxí hěn nǔlì, měitiān shuō-huà Zhōngwén
- \*我是不美国学生/\*我是不美國學生 \*wǒ shì bù Měiguó xuésheng
- \*今天不是热/\*今天不是熱 \*jīntiān bù shì rè
- \*我的朋友今年不二十岁/\*我的朋友今年不二十歲 \*wǒ de péngyou jīnnián bù èrshí suì
- \*我的很多同学才开始学中文今年/\*我的很多同學才開始學中文今年  
\*wǒ de hěn duō tóngxué cái kāishǐ xué Zhōngwén jīnnián

#### V Complete the following dialogues with complete sentences:

- A: 请问，明天星期几/請問，明天星期幾？  
Qǐngwèn, míngtiān xīngqījǐ?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。
- A: 你们教室的墙上有画儿吗/你們教室的牆上有畫兒嗎？  
Nǐmen jiàoshì de qiáng shàng yǒu huàr ma?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。
- A: 你们的中文老师是美国人吗/你們的中文老師是美國人嗎？  
Nǐmen de Zhōngwén lǎoshī shì Měiguó rén ma?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (is not)。
- A: 你今年多大？  
Nǐ jīnnián duō dà?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。
- A: 什么时候下雨/什麼時候下雨？  
Shénme shíhou xià-yǔ?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (this afternoon.)。
- A: 你的宿舍大不大？  
Nǐ de sùshè dà bu dà?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (is big)。

## Elements of a sentence 2: object

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the meanings and structures of the object
- ★ To learn the grammatical features of the object

The object of a sentence shares many similarities with the subject. For example, they are both nominal in nature, and any word can serve as a subject and can also be an object; however, unlike the subject, the object must come after the predicate (main verb) and have a close relationship with the verb of a sentence. This is the same as in English. Based on the features of the object, we can define the object as follows:

The **object** generally undergoes the activity or change described by the predicate. Typically, in Chinese, the object is a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase, and occurs after the main verb (predicate) in a sentence.

### 19.1 Meaning relationships

There are various meaning relationships between the object and the verb. The various functions of the object are as follows.

- **Undergoer or receiver of the action (verb):**

- (1) 小亮吃**苹果**。  
 小亮吃**蘋果**。  
 Xiǎoliàng chī píngguǒ.  
 Xiaoliang eats an apple.

The object **苹果/蘋果** píngguǒ (apple) undergoes the **吃** chī eating event. In other words, the activity described by the predicate has caused something to be done to the object. This is the most typical function of an object. Other examples include **打人** dǎ rén (hit people) and **洗衣服** xǐ yīfu (wash clothes).

- **Outcome created by the predicate:**

- (2) 小明昨天画了一幅**画儿**。  
 小明昨天畫了一幅**畫兒**。  
 Xiǎomíng zuótiān huà le yì fú huà.  
 Xiaoming drew a picture yesterday.

The object 画儿/畫兒 huàr (picture) in the above sentence doesn't exist before the action 画/畫 huà (draw), but it is the outcome of the painting action 画/畫 huà (draw). Other examples include 写信/寫信 xiě-xìn (write letter) and 做蛋糕 zuò dànghāo (make cake).

• Goal or endpoint of an action:

(3) 学生们周末去**长城**。

學生們週末去**長城**。

Xuéshengmen zhōumò qù Chángchéng.

Students will go to the Great Wall on the weekend.

The object 长城/長城 Chángchéng (Great Wall), which is the location where the action targets and ends, is the goal of the action 去 qù (go).

• Instrument used with the action:

(4) 小亮拉**小提琴**。

Xiǎoliàng lā xiǎotíqín.

Xiaoliang plays the violin.

The object 小提琴 xiǎotíqín (violin) is an instrument played (拉 lā [pull]) by Xiaoliang. Instrumental objects typically have a very close semantic relation with the verb. Additional examples are 弹钢琴/彈鋼琴 tán gāngqín ([pluck] play piano), 吹笛子 chuī dízǐ ([blow] play flute), and 打鼓 dǎ gǔ ([beat] play drum).

**NOTE Doer and undergoer/receiver vs. subject and object:** The subject is the doer and the object is the undergoer in most cases; however, the subject is not equal to the doer, nor is the object equal to the undergoer. The subject and object are concepts of sentence structure, while the doer and undergoer are concepts of semantic meaning.

• Doers of an action:

(5) 家里来**客人**了。

家裏來**客人**了。

Jiā li lái kèrén le.

There are guests in the house.

(6) 椅子上坐着**一个人**。

椅子上坐著**一個人**。

Yǐzi shàng zuò zhe yí ge rén.

There is a person sitting on the chair.

The object 客人 kèrén (guest) has arrived (来/來 lái [come]) and is currently in the house in (5), and the object 人 rén (person) is currently sitting (坐 zuò [sit]) on the chair in (6).

This type of object introduces new information (vs. the old/known information introduced by the topic/subject in Chinese). In this type of sentence, the subject is typically a location; hence, the object is the only possible “doer” of the described event. They are called “existential sentences” because the focus is on the new state that the object is in rather than the action being taken (see §26.2.3 and §26.3).

## 19.2 Words or phrases that can serve as the object

• **Noun**, as in sentences (1)–(6) above and (7) below:

- (7) 我们每天都上中文课。  
我們每天都上中文課。  
Wǒmen měitiān dōu shàng Zhōngwén kè.  
We have Chinese class every day.

• **Pronoun**:

- (8) 我认识他。  
我認識他。  
Wǒ rènshí tā.  
I know him.
- (9) 老师常常帮助我。  
老師常常幫助我。  
Lǎoshī chángcháng bāngzhù wǒ.  
The teacher often helps me.

- (10) 你的书在这儿。  
你的書在這兒。  
Nǐ de shū zài zhèr.  
Your book is here.
- (11) 小亮昨天买了什么？  
小亮昨天買了什麼？  
Xiǎoliàng zuótiān mǎi le shénme?  
What did Xiaoliang buy yesterday?

• **Verb or V-O phrase**:

- (12) 小明希望早点毕业。  
小明希望早點畢業。  
Xiǎomíng xīwàng zǎodiǎn bìyè.  
Xiaoming hopes to graduate earlier.

- (13) 今年暑假我打算旅游。  
今年暑假我打算旅遊。  
Jīnnián shǔjià wǒ dǎsuan lǚyóu.  
I plan to travel during this summer break.

- (14) 我们对这个问题进行讨论。  
我們對這個問題進行討論。  
Wǒmen duì zhèi ge wèntí jìnxíng tǎolùn.  
We are discussing this question.

(15) 我们开始上课。

我們開始上課。

Wǒmen kāishǐ shàng-kè.

Let's start our class.

(16) 明年很多学生还要继续学习中文。

明年很多學生還要繼續學習中文。

Míngnián hěnduō xuésheng hái yào jìxù xuéxí Zhōngwén.

Many students will continue studying Chinese next year.

The **objects** in the above sentences are verbs, such as 毕业/畢業 bìyè (graduate) in (12), 旅游/旅遊 lǚyóu (travel) in (13), 讨论/討論 tǎolùn (discuss) in (14), and V-O (verb-object) phrases such as 上课/上課 shàng-kè (to have class) in (15) and 学习中文/學習中文 xuéxí Zhōngwén (to study Chinese) in (16).

**NOTE** There are not many verbs that can take a verb or a V-O phrase as the **object**. The most commonly used verbs of this type are 希望 xīwàng (hope) as in (12), 打算 dǎsuan (plan) as in (13), 进行/進行 jìnxíng (carry on; underway) as in (14), 开始/開始 kāishǐ (start) as in (15), and 继续/繼續 jìxù (continue) as in (16).

• **Adjective:**

(17) 小亮喜欢干净。

小亮喜歡乾淨。

Xiaoliang xǐhuan gānjìng.

Xiaoliang likes being neat.

(18) 小明今天感到很高兴。

小明今天感到很高興。

Xiaoming jīntiān gǎndào hěn gāoxìng.

Xiaoming feels happy today.

**NOTE** There are not many verbs that can take an adjective as the **object** and the verbs that do mostly denote mental activities and senses, such as 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like) in (17), 感到 gǎndào (feel) in (18), and 怕 pà (fear; be afraid of).

• **Numerals** as in (19) and **numeral + classifier** as in (20):

(19) 我的电话号码是888-777-6688。

我的電話號碼是888-777-6688。

Wǒ de diànhuà hào mǎ shì bābābā-qīqīqī-liùliùbābā.

My telephone number is 888-777-6688.

(20) 那台电脑是1000元。

那台電腦是1000元。

Nà tái diànnǎo shì yìqiān yuán.

That computer is \$1,000.

## • Subject-predicate phrases (clause):

(21) 我知道我们明天去长城。

我知道我們明天去長城。

Wǒ zhīdào wǒmen míngtiān qù Chángchéng.

I know that we will go to the Great Wall tomorrow.

(22) 他说张老师今天不上课。

他說張老師今天不上課。

Tā shuō Zhāng lǎoshī jīntiān bù shàng-kè.

He said that Professor Zhang does not teach today.

The **objects** 我们明天去长城/我們明天去長城 wǒmen míngtiān qù Chángchéng (we will go to the Great Wall tomorrow) in (21) and 张老师今天不上课/張老師今天不上課 Zhāng lǎoshī jīntiān bù shàng-kè (Professor Zhang does not teach today) in (22) are the subject-predicate phrases as the parts of the sentences. The main verbs of the sentences are 知道 zhīdào (know) and 说/說 shuō (say), respectively.

**NOTE** Verbs that usually take the **subject-predicate** phrase as the object often indicate mental activities and cognition, such as 知道 zhīdào (know) in (21). Other such common verbs are: 认为/認為 rènwéi (think), 发现/發現 fāxiàn (find), 希望 xīwàng (hope), 相信 xiāngxìn (believe), 看见/看見 kàn,jian (saw), and 听见/聽見 tīng,jian (heard).

From the examples above, we have seen that the *nominal*, such as the noun or pronoun, serves as the object by default. There are some limiting conditions for other types of objects, such as verbs or adjectives. Specifically, there are some special requirements for the verb when a verb, adjective, or subject-predicate phrase serves as the object.

### 19.3 Double objects

Verbs that represent the transfer of something to someone can have two objects. In Chinese, the fixed order is the *direct object* (the one who receives the transfer) placed right after the verb and before the *indirect object*, which is the thing or object being transferred. Typical verbs include 教 jiāo (teach) and 送 sòng (send) as in (23), and 给/給 gěi (give) as in (24) (see §10.1).

The pattern of verbs with a double object:

Subject	+ Verb	+ Object <sub>1</sub> (human being)	+ Object <sub>2</sub> (non-human)
张老师	教	我们	中文
張老師	教	我們	中文
Zhāng lǎoshī	jiāo	wǒmen	Zhōngwén
Professor Zhang	teaches	us	Chinese

Examples (23) and (24) further illustrate this pattern.

- (23) 我朋友送我一张电影票。  
我朋友送我一張電影票。

Wǒ péngyou sòng wǒ yì zhāng diànyǐng piào.

My friend gave me a movie ticket for free.

- (24) 老师给学生一本书。  
老師給學生一本書。

Lǎoshī gěi xuésheng yì běn shū.

The teacher gave the student a book.

## 19.4 Summary

We began this chapter by showing that the **object** has a nominal-like nature and that it is placed after the main verb in a sentence. We then explained the **functions of an object** in a sentence; an object can be the **receiver** (undergoer) of an action (mostly), the **doer** of an action, a **place**, or an **instrument or tool**. We have also identified that nouns and pronouns mostly serve as the object, but when a verb (V-O phrase), an adjective, or a subject-predicate phrase serves as the object, the predicate verbs are highly selective (restricted). Additionally, a few verbs, such as 教 jiāo (teach), 送 sòng (send), and 给/給 gěi (give), can take **double objects**.

## 19.5 Exercises

### I Underline the object in the following sentences:

**Example:**

**Given:** 每个周末小亮都看电影/每個週末小亮都看電影。

Méi ge zhōumò Xiǎoliàng dōu kàn diànyǐng.

**Answer:** 每个周末小亮都看电影/每個週末小亮都看電影。

Méi ge zhōumò Xiǎoliàng dōu kàn diànyǐng.

- 小亮每天都要画一幅画儿/小亮每天都要畫一幅畫兒。  
Xiǎoliàng měitiān dōu yào huà yì fú huà.
- 周末很多学生去图书馆/週末很多學生去圖書館。  
Zhōumò hěn duō xuésheng qù túshùguǎn.
- 星期日我们家里来了很多朋友/星期日我們家裏來了很多朋友。  
Xīngqīrì wǒmen jiā li lái le hěn duō péngyou.
- 教室里坐着很多学生/教室裏坐著很多學生。  
Jiàoshì li zuò zhe hěn duō xuésheng.
- 明年夏天我打算去中国学中文/明年夏天我打算去中國學中文。  
Míngnián xiàtiān wǒ dǎsuan qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén.
- 老师喜欢学生上课说中文/老師喜歡學生上課說中文。  
Lǎoshī xǐhuan xuésheng shàng-kè shuō Zhōngwén.
- 小明今天感到非常累。  
Xiáomíng jīntiān gǎndào fēicháng lèi.

8. 我看見小明刚才去了老师的办公室/我看見小明剛才去了老師的辦公室。

Wǒ kàn.jian Xiǎomíng gāngcái qù le lǎoshī de bàngōngshì.

**II Correct the following sentences:**

**Example:**

**Given:** \*李老师教中文语法学生 / \*李老師教中文語法學生

\*Lǐ lǎoshī jiāo Zhōngwén yǔfǎ xuésheng

**Answer:** 李老师教学生中文语法/李老師教學生中文語法。

Lǐ lǎoshī jiāo xuésheng Zhōngwén yǔfǎ.

- \*学生们进行讨论对中国环境问题/ \*學生們進行討論對中國環境問題  
\*xuéshengmen jìnxíng tǎolùn duì Zhōngguó huánjìng wèntí
- \*小明送很漂亮的小亮 \*Xiǎomíng sòng hěn piàoliang de huā Xiǎoliàng
- \*李老师给了两件礼物他的朋友/ \*李老師給了兩件禮物他的朋友  
\*Lǐ lǎoshī gěi le liǎng jiàn lǐwù tā de péngyou
- \*小明希望毕业明年/ \*小明希望畢業明年 \*Xiǎomíng xīwàng bìyè míngnián
- \*听说我们没有中文考试这个星期五/\*聽說我們沒有中文考試這個星期五  
\*tīngshuō wǒmen méiyǒu Zhōngwén kǎoshì zhèi ge Xīngqīwǔ

**III Select the appropriate words or phrases from the word/phrase bank to fill in the blanks:**

**Word/Phrase Bank:** 找到工作 zhǎo.dào gōngzuò; 作业/作業 zuòyè; 小亮去北京 Xiǎoliàng qù Běijīng; 那儿/那兒 nàr; 300 塊钱/ 300 塊錢 sānbǎi kuàiqián

1. 小明每天下课以后写\_\_\_\_\_ /小明每天下課以後寫\_\_\_\_\_。

Xiǎomíng měitiān xià-kè yǐhou xiě \_\_\_\_.

2. 小亮买了一个手机很便宜, 才\_\_\_\_\_ /小亮買了一個手機很便宜, 才\_\_\_\_\_。

Xiǎoliàng mǎi le yí ge shōujī hěn piányi, cái \_\_\_\_.

3. 我希望能早点\_\_\_\_\_ /我希望能早點\_\_\_\_\_. Wǒ xīwàng néng zǎo diǎn \_\_\_\_.

4. 我刚才看见你的电脑在桌子\_\_\_\_\_ /我剛才看見你的電腦在桌子\_\_\_\_\_。

Wǒ gāngcái kàn.jian nǐ de diànnǎo zài zhuōzi \_\_\_\_.

5. 我们听说\_\_\_\_\_ 了/我們聽說\_\_\_\_\_ 了。 Wǒmen tīngshuō \_\_\_\_ le.

**IV Use the given words or phrases to create sentences. The specific meanings of some sentences have been provided:**

**Example:**

**Given:** 老师/老師 lǎoshī, 教 jiāo, 语法/語法 yǔfǎ, 学生/學生 xuésheng

**Answer:** 老师教学生语法/老師教學生語法。 Lǎoshī jiāo xuésheng yǔfǎ.

1. 小明 Xiǎomíng, 送给/送給 sòng gěi, 很多礼物/很多禮物 hěn duō lǐwù, 朋友 péngyou

2. 有 yǒu, 很多人 hěn duō rén, 饭馆里/飯館裏 fānguǎn li (There are many people in the restaurant.)
3. 张老师/張老師 Zhāng lǎoshī, 给了/給了 gěi le, 两张球票/兩張球票 liǎng zhāng qiú piào, 小明 Xiǎomíng
4. 没有/沒有 méiyǒu, 学生/學生 xuéshēng, 教室里/教室裏 jiào shì li (There are not any students in the classroom.)
5. 明天 míngtiān, 我们/我們 wǒmen, 计划/計劃 jìhuà, 去长城/去長城 qù Chángchéng (We planned to go to the Great Wall tomorrow.)

**V Please complete the following dialogues with the complements:**

1. A: 你昨天去商店买了\_\_\_\_\_ / 你昨天去商店買了\_\_\_\_\_?  
Nǐ zuótiān qù shāngdiàn mǎi le \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: 买了一件衣服, 一双球鞋, 一共花了\_\_\_\_\_ (\$200) / 買了一件衣服, 一雙球鞋, 一共花了\_\_\_\_\_ (\$200).  
Mǎi le yí jiàn yīfú, yì shuāng qiúxié, yígòng huā le \_\_\_\_\_ (\$200).
2. A: 明天我们怎么去飞机场/明天我們怎麼去飛機場?  
Míngtiān wǒmen zěnme qù fēijīchǎng?  
B: 你先到\_\_\_\_\_ (my place), 然后/然後, \_\_\_\_\_ (go to the airport from my place).  
Nǐ xiān dào \_\_\_\_\_, ránhòu, \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A: 明天是小明的生日, 我们给他送\_\_\_\_\_ / 明天是小明的生日, 我們給他送\_\_\_\_\_?  
Míngtiān shì Xiǎomíng de shēngrì, wǒmen gěi tā sòng \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: 小明喜欢看电影, 我们\_\_\_\_\_ 吧/小明喜歡看电影, 我們\_\_\_\_\_ 吧。 (give two movie tickets to him)  
Xiǎomíng xǐhuan kàn diànyǐng, wǒmen \_\_\_\_\_ ba.

## Elements of a sentence 3: complement

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the grammatical features of the complement
- ★ To know the meanings and structures of various complements

The complement, like the object, is placed after the predicate in Chinese. Unlike the object, however, the complement is typically a *verb*, an *adjective*, or an *adverb*, while the object is typically a *noun* or a *pronoun* (see Chapter 19). Based on its features, the complement can be defined as follows:

A **complement** provides additional information on the manner, result, or state of the predicate or the object. Complements typically occur after the main verb (predicate) in a sentence in Chinese.

There are many types of complements in Chinese, which are different from English and can therefore cause difficulty for English speakers. Based on the meaning and structure, we have divided Chinese complements into five types, as below (the complements are **bolded**):

1. **Resultative** complement: 他听**懂**了/他聽**懂**了。 Tā tīng.**dǒng** le.  
(He understood [by listening]).
2. **Manner** complement: 他说得**(很)好**/他說得**(很)好**。 Tā shuō de **(hěn) hǎo**. (He spoke very well).
3. **Potential** complement: 他说得**好**/他說得**好**。 Tā shuō de **hǎo**. (He can speak well).
4. **Directional** complement: 他进**来**了/他進**來**了。 Tā jìnai le. (He came in).
5. **Quantitative** complement: 他说了**两遍**/他說了**兩遍**。 Tā shuō le **liǎng** **biàn**. (He spoke twice).

From the translations above, you may find that English can express the corresponding meanings of the Chinese “complements,” but by different grammatical means. We will help you to explore each type of complement in the examples following.

**TIP**

Chinese complements are complex; however, the following two rules may assist you in learning the role of the complement:

- Only verbs and adjectives (and a few adverbs, with restrictions, such as 很 hěn [very] and 极/極 jí [extremely]) can serve as the complement, with the exception of Type 5, the quantitative complement; and
- The complement always follows the main verb (its “head” verb).

## 20.1 Resultative complement

The resultative complement indicates the result of an action. For example:

- (1) 学生们听**懂**了老师的话。

學生們聽**懂**了老師的話

Xuéshengmen tīng.dǒng le lǎoshī de huà.

Students understood what the teacher said (by listening).

- (2) 小亮写**错**了一个字。

小亮寫**錯**了一個字。

Xiaoliang xiě.cuò le yí ge zì.

Xiaoliang wrote one character wrongly.

The verb 懂 dǒng (understand) is the result of its head (main) verb 听/聽 tīng (listen) in (1). The adjective 错/錯 cuò (wrong) is the result of its head (main) verb 写/寫 xiě (write) in (2).

▪ **The features of the resultative complement:**

- One unit:**<sup>1</sup> The complement and its head (main) verb are closely linked as one unit (VC), and no word can be inserted between them. Thus, the whole VC functions as one verb and can take the following:
  - the verb suffixes 了 le and 过/guo (no 着/zhe) after it, but not between the VC:

Correct	Incorrect
听 <b>懂</b> 了/看 <b>见</b> 过	*听 <b>了</b> 懂/*看 <b>过</b> 见
聽 <b>懂</b> 了/看 <b>見</b> 過	*聽 <b>了</b> 懂/*看 <b>過</b> 見

<sup>1</sup> A dot (.) is used between the verb and the resultative complement to indicate that the VC is inseparable and should be used as one unit, e.g., 看见/看見 kàn.jiàn (saw). If the particle 得 de or the adverb 不 bù (not) is inserted between the verb and the resultative complement, such as 看得见/看得見 kàn de jiàn (can see) or 看不见/看不见 kàn bù jiàn (cannot see), respectively, it becomes a potential complement (see §20.3), but not a resultative complement.

(cont.)

Correct	Incorrect
tīng.dǒng le/kàn.jian guo understood/saw 听懂了老师的话 聽懂了老師的話	*tīng le dǒng/kàn guo jiàn (lit. listen le understand/see guo saw) *听老师的话懂了 *聽老師的話懂了
tīng.dǒng le lǎoshī de huà understood the teacher's words	*tīng lǎoshī de huà dǒng le (lit. listen teacher de word understand le) *我看見着这个字 *我看見著這個字

- + an object, such as 老师的话/老師的話 lǎoshī de huà (teacher's words) in (1) and 一个字/一個字 yí ge zì (one character) in (2) above.
- ii. **Negation:** Only the adverb 没/沒 méi (not) can be used to negate the sentence before the main verb since the resultative complement often indicates the completion (result) of an action; conversely, 没/沒 méi signifies that the action does not happen and as such there can be no completion (result). Thus, the corresponding negation of sentences (1) and (2) above should become (3) and (4), respectively.

► **Attention:**

了 le is not used when negating a sentence with 没/沒 méi [not].

- (3) 学生们没听**懂**老师的话。  
學生們沒聽**懂**老師的話。

Xuéshengmen méi tīng.dǒng lǎoshī de huà.

Students did not understand the teacher's words (by listening).

- (4) 小亮没写**错**字。  
小亮沒寫**錯**字。  
Xiaoliang méi xiě.cuò zì.

Xiaoliang did not write the character wrongly.

**Exception:** 不 bù (not), the other negative adverb, can only be used in sentences expressing a *suppositional condition* as in (5):

(5) 你不做完作业，就不能去看电影。

你不做完作業，就不能去看電影。

Nǐ bù zuò wán zuò yè, jiù bù néng qù kàn diànyǐng.

If you do not complete your homework, you cannot go to watch the movie.

**NOTE** The common **verbs** that can serve as the resultative complement are 懂 dǒng (understand), 见/見 jiàn (see), 完 wán (finish), and 到 dào (arrive). The common **adjectives** are 快 kuài (fast), 慢 màn (slow), 对/對 duì (right), 错/錯 cuò (wrong), 好 hǎo (good), 坏/壞 huài (bad), 早 zǎo (early), 晚 wǎn (late), 清楚 qīngchǔ (clear), and 干净/乾淨 gānjìng (neat).

## 20.2 Manner complement

This kind of complement describes the manner or the degree of an action and can be divided into three subcategories:

- I. Describes the **ways** an action is performed with the marker 得 de
- II. Describes the **degree** of an action **with the marker 得 de**
- III. Describes the **degree** of an action **without the marker 得 de**

**NOTE** If the complement is an adjective, an adverb, such as 很 hěn (very) in (6), 非常 fēicháng (very), 特别 tèbié (especially), or 太 tài (too), is often used before the adjective, except duplicated adjectives.

I. **Describes the ways an action is performed:** The complement marker 得 de must be inserted between the verb and the complement, as shown in example (6).

(6)	Pattern	subject	verb	marker 得	complement
		小明	跑	得	快/很快。
		Xiǎomíng	pǎo	de	kuài/hěn kuài.
		Xiaoming	runs		fast.

(7) 他高兴得跳了起来。

他高興得跳了起來。

Tā gāoxìng de tiào le qǐlai.

He was so happy that he jumped up.

The adjective 快 kuài (fast) or the phrase 很快 hěn kuài (very fast) as the complement describes the **manner** of the action 跑 pǎo (run) in (6). The verb phrase 跳了起来 tiào le qǐlai (jumped up) describes the **manner** of 高兴/高興 gāoxìng (happy) in (7) above.

- **Negation:** When negating the complement of manner, the adverb 不 bù (not) is commonly used after the marker 得 de.

Positive	Negative	Incorrect
你写得对/很对。 你寫得對/很對。	你写得不对。 你寫得不對。	*你不写得对 *你不寫得對
Nǐ xiě de duì/hěn duì.	Nǐ xiě de bú duì.	*nǐ bù xié de duì (lit. you don't write correctly)
You wrote it correctly.	You wrote it incorrectly.	

When negating a sentence with the verb 有 yǒu (have), the adverb 没/méi (not) is used:

Positive	Negative	Incorrect
你说得有道理。 你說得有道理。	你说得没道理。 你說得沒道理。	*你说得不道理 *你說得不道理
Nǐ shuō de yǒu dàoli.	Nǐ shuō de méi dàoli.	*nǐ shuō de bú dàoli (lit. you say no reason)
What you said is reasonable.	What you said is not reasonable. (lit. you say no reason)	

\*你沒说得有道理  
\*你沒說得有道理  
\*nǐ méi shuō de yǒu dàoli  
(lit. you not say have reason)

- **Verb copying:** If there is an object with a complement, repeat the verb so that the object and the complement each follow a different copy of the verb.

**Pattern:**

*subject + verb + object + verb + marker 得 + complement*

(8)	小亮	说	中文	说	得	很好。
	小亮	說	中文	說	得	很好。
	Xiǎoliàng	shuō	Zhōngwén	shuō	de	hěn hǎo.

Xiaoliang speaks Chinese very well.

**Incorrect:**

\*小亮说中文很好/\*小亮說中文很好 (without 得 de)

\* Xiǎoliàng shuō Zhōngwén hěn hǎo

(lit. Xiaoliang speak Chinese very well)

\*小亮说中文得很好/\*小亮說中文得很好 (not repeating the verb)

\* Xiǎoliàng shuō Zhōngwén de hěn hǎo

(lit. Xiaoliang speak Chinese *de* very well)

**TIP**

To simplify sentence (8) without repeating the verb, you may move the object 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) to the beginning of the sentence as in (9) or before the main verb as in (10).

(9) 中文小亮说得很好。

中文小亮說得很好。

Zhōngwén Xiǎoliàng shuō de hěn hǎo.

As for Chinese, Xiaoliang speaks very well.

(10) 小亮中文说得很好。

小亮中文說得很好。

Xiǎoliàng Zhōngwén shuō de hěn hǎo.

Xiaoliang speaks Chinese very well.

### Attention

The verb suffixes 了 le, 过/過 guo, and 着/著 zhe cannot be used after the main verb in a sentence with a manner complement, even if the meaning of the sentences indicates a past or durative meaning. For instance, the correct way to express the English sentence “you spoke very well” in Chinese is as follows:

#### Correct

你说得很好。

你說得很好。

Nǐ shuō de hěn hǎo.

You spoke very well.

#### Incorrect

\*你说了很好

\*你說了很好

\*nǐ shuō le hěn hǎo

(lit. you speak very good)

\*你说了得很好

\*你說了得很好

\*nǐ shuō le de hěn hǎo

(lit. you speak very good)

- **Modifier before or after the verb:** The differences between the *adverbial* and the *manner complement* are subtle, but we can distinguish their meaning differences by comparing the following two sentences.

(11) 小明很认真地写/小明很認真地寫。 (adverbial before the verb with the adverbial marker 地 de)

Xiǎomíng hěn rènzhēn de xiě.

Xiaoming seriously writes it (*with his effort; subjectively*).

(12) 小明写得很认真/小明寫得很認真。 (complement after the verb with the complement marker 得 de)

Xiǎomíng xiě de hěn rènzhēn.

Xiaoming writes it seriously (*describe the result; objectively*).

- Sentence (11) with the adverbial 很认真/很認真 hěn rènzhēn (very seriously) shows Xiaoming's effort (intentionally writing seriously) from the *beginning* of the action 写/寫 xiě (write).
- In contrast, the complement 很认真/很認真 hěn rènzhēn (very seriously) in sentence (12) indicates the *result* of the action 写/寫 xiě (write), that is, one judges Xiaoming's seriousness based on the *outcome* of Xiaoming's writing.

From this analysis, we can summarize the differences between the two as follows:

- The **adverbial** focuses on the effort from the *subjective* perspective.
- The **manner complement** focuses on the result of an action from the *objective* perspective.

## II. Indicate the degree of a verb or adjective *with* the marker 得

(13) 刚才的考试很难得。 得

剛才的考試難得。

Gāngcái de kǎoshì nán de hěn.

The test just now was very difficult.

(14) 今天外边热得要命。 得

今天外邊熱得要命。

Jīntiān wàibian rè de yàomìng.

It is extremely hot outside today.

(15) 小明喜欢中文喜欢得不得了。 得

小明喜歡中文喜歡得不得了。

Xiǎomíng xǐhuan Zhōngwén xǐhuan de bùdéliǎo.

Xiaoming really likes Chinese.

**NOTE** There are not many degree complements in Chinese. The most common is the adverb 很 hěn (very) in (13) and fixed oral expressions, such as 要命/要死 yàomìng/yàosǐ (extremely) in (14) and 不得了 bùdéliǎo (extremely) in (15); the head of the degree complement can be adjectives, such as 难/難 nán (difficult) in (13), 热/熱 rè (hot) in (14), and verbs expressing mental activity, such as 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like) in (15).

If there is an object in the sentence, repeat the verb the same way that 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like) is repeated in sentence (15) above.

## III. Indicate the degree of a verb or adjective *without* the marker 得

**NOTE** There are not many words that can be a degree complement without using 得 de. The most common one is the adverb 极/極 jí (extremely) in (16) and (17). Others include the verb 死 sǐ (lit. die; extremely) in (18), and the adjective 多 duō (many) in (19). The particle 了 le must be used at the end of the sentence.

(16) 小明找到工作了， 高兴极了。

小明找到工作了， 高興極了。

Xiǎomíng zhǎo.dào gōngzuò le, gāoxìng jí le.

Xiaoming was extremely happy when he got a job.

- (17) 这部电影，小亮喜欢**极**了。  
 這部電影，小亮喜歡**極**了。  
 Zhè bù diànyǐng, Xiǎoliàng xǐhuān jí le.  
 Xiaoliang likes this movie very much.

- (18) 我今天累**死**了。  
 Wǒ jīntiān lèi sǐ le.  
 I am exhausted today.
- (19) 今天比昨天冷**多**了。  
 Jīntiān bǐ zuótān lěng duō le.  
 It is much colder today than yesterday.

## 20.3 Potential complement

This type of complement indicates ability.

**Affirmative form:**

*subject + verb + 得 + complement*

- (20) 小明听得**懂**老师的话。  
 小明聽得**懂**老師的話。  
 Xiǎomíng tīng de dǒng lǎoshī de huà.  
 Xiaoming can understand the teacher's words (by listening).

**Negative form:**

*subject + verb + 不 + complement*

- (21) 小明看不**清楚**这个字。  
 小明看不**清楚**這個字。  
 Xiǎomíng kàn bu qīngchu zhèi ge zì.  
 Xiaoming cannot see the character clearly.

The complements are the verb 懂 dǒng (understand) in (20) and the adjective 清楚 qīngchu (clear) in (21).

- Sentence (20) indicates that Xiaoming has the ability to understand (懂 dǒng) the teacher's words by listening (听/聽 tīng, the main verb).
- Sentence (21) indicates that Xiaoming does not have the ability to see (看 kàn, the main verb) the character clearly (清楚 qīngchu); specifically, the ability may be restricted by other factors, for example, the character is too small or Xiaoming has poor vision.

**NOTE** The verb suffixes **了** le, **着/著** zhe, and **过/過** guo cannot be paired with the potential complement since it expresses the meaning of ability.

**Correct**

小明做得完作业。

小明做得完作業。

Xiǎomíng zuò de wán zuòyè.

Xiaoming can complete his homework.

**Incorrect**

\*小明做得完了作业

\*小明做得完了作業

\*Xiǎomíng zuò de wán le zuòyè

(lit. Xiaoming do de complete le homework)

- With an object: The object often follows the complement (if there is one), as in (20) and (21) above. To emphasize the complement, the object, such as 这个字/這個字 zhèi ge zì (this character) in (21), can be placed at the beginning of the sentence, as in (22a), or before the main verb, as in (22b) below.

(22)a. **这个字**小明看不清楚。

**這個字**小明看不清楚。

Zhèi ge zì Xiǎomíng kàn bu qīngchu.

b. 小明**这个字**看不清楚。

小明**這個字**看不清楚。

Xiǎomíng zhèi ge zì kàn bu qīngchu.

Xiaoming cannot see the character clearly.

- Enforced potential complement: The ability expressed by the potential complement can be enforced by adding the auxiliary verb 能 néng (can) to affirmative sentences, such as in (23) below.

(23) 小明**能**听得懂老师的话。

小明**能**聽得懂老師的話。

Xiǎomíng néng tīng de dǒng lǎoshī de huà.

Xiaoming can understand the teacher's words (by listening).

**NOTE** The potential complement is used most frequently in negative sentences, as in (21), (22), and (24a), but 能 néng (can) cannot be used with a potential complement in a negative sentence, as in (24c); however, it can be used in a negative non-potential complement sentence without 得 de, as in (24b). Nevertheless, the negative potential complement in (24a) is more common than (24b), even though the two sentences carry about the same meaning.

(24)a. 小明**听不懂**老师的话。

小明**聽不懂**老師的話。

Xiǎomíng tīng bu dǒng lǎoshī de huà.

b. 小明**不能**听懂老师的话。

小明**不能**聽懂老師的話。

Xiǎomíng bù néng tīng dǒng lǎoshī de huà.

Xiaoming cannot understand the teacher's words (by listening).

- c. \*小明不能听得懂老师的话  
 \*小明不能聽得懂老師的話  
 \*Xiǎomíng bù néng tīng de dǒng lǎoshī de huà  
 (lit. Xiaoming cannot listen *de* understand teacher's words)

- **Potential complement** vs. **manner complement**: The two types of complements are different in both meaning and structure.
  - **Meaning:** The differences in meaning of the two types of complements can be seen in the following two scenarios.

- (25) **Scenario 1:** Xiaoming will make a presentation in Chinese on behalf of his team. Speaker A doesn't know Xiaoming's language proficiency; speaker B is Xiaoming's professor.

A: 小明只学了一年中文，他能说好中文吗？  
 小明只學了一年中文，他能說好中文嗎？  
 Xiǎomíng zhǐ xué le yì nián Zhōngwén, tā néng shuō.hǎo Zhōngwén ma?

Xiaoming has only studied Chinese for one year. Can he speak Chinese well?

B: 放心，他(能)说得好。  
 放心，他(能)說得好。  
 Fàngxīn, tā (néng) shuō de hǎo.  
 Relax; he can speak well.

- (26) **Scenario 2:** Xiaoming has just completed his presentation in Chinese. Speaker C doesn't know Chinese, but Speaker D is an expert of Chinese.

C: 小明的中文怎么样？  
 小明的中文怎麼樣？  
 Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén zěnmeyàng?

How is Xiaoming's Chinese?

D: (他)说得很好/说得真好。  
 (他)說得很好/說得真好。  
 (Tā) shuō de hěn hǎo/shuō de zhēn hǎo.  
 (He) spoke very well/spoke really well.

By comparing the two scenarios, we can tell that:

- the **potential complement** in (25, B) focuses on Xiaoming's ability to speak Chinese; but
- the **manner complement** in (26, D) describes the state of speaking Chinese.
- **Structure**

- **Modifier:** The **manner complement** often takes an adverb, such as 很 hěn (very) or 真 zhēn (really), as a modifier before the adjective that serves as the complement, as in (26, D), although it can be used without the modifier as 说得/說得好 shuō de hǎo (speak well). Conversely, the

**potential complement** cannot have any adverb added to the adjective that serves as a complement to modify it (see [25, B]).

- **Post-modifier:** A **manner complement** can take a post-modifier, such as 极了/jí le (extremely), after it as in (27) below; however, a **potential complement** cannot.

(27) 中文小明说得好**极了**。

中文小明說得好**極了**。

Zhōngwén Xiǎomíng shuō de hǎo jí le.

Xiaoming speaks Chinese excellently.

- **Negative form:** For the **potential complement**, replace the marker 得 de with the adverb 不 bù (not), as in (28). For the **manner complement**, keep the marker 得 de and add 不 bù (not), as in (29):

(28) 小明说**不好**。

小明說**不好**。

Xiǎomíng shuō bù hǎo.

Xiaoming cannot speak well.

(29) 小明说得**不好**。

小明說得**不好**。

Xiǎomíng shuō de bù hǎo.

Xiaoming doesn't speak well.

- **Question in the affirmative–negative form (positive part + negative part).**

### Potential complement

(30) 中文小明说**得好**说**不好**?

中文小明說**得好**說**不好**?

Zhōngwén Xiǎomíng shuō de hǎo shuō bù hǎo?

Can Xiaoming speak Chinese well?

### Manner complement

(31) 中文小明说**得好不好**?

中文小明說**得好不好**?

Zhōngwén Xiǎomíng shuō de hǎo bu hǎo?

Does Xiaoming speak Chinese well?

**TIP** To get the question forms of these two structures, simply add their affirmative and negative forms, and then remove the redundant words.

	Affirmative	Negative	Question
<b>Potential</b>	小明说得好	+ 小明说不好	= 小明说得好 小明说不好?
	小明說得好	+ 小明說不好	= 小明說得好 小明說不好?
	Xiǎomíng shuō de hǎo	+ Xiǎomíng shuō bù hǎo	= Xiǎomíng shuō de hǎo Xiǎomíng shuō bù hǎo?
<b>Manner</b>	小明说得 (很) 好	+ 小明说得不 好	= 小明说得好 小明说得不好?
	小明說得 (很) 好	+ 小明說得不 好	= 小明說得好 小明說得不好?
	Xiǎomíng shuō de (hěn) hǎo	+ Xiǎomíng shuō de bù hǎo	= Xiǎomíng shuō de hǎo Xiǎomíng shuō-de bù hǎo

**NOTE** The question particle 吗/嗎 ma can be used for both types:

**Potential complement**

你听得懂吗/你聽得懂嗎?  
Nǐ tīng de dǒng ma?

Can you understand it (by listening)? Did you hear it clearly?

**Manner complement**

你听得(很)清楚吗/你聽得(很)清楚嗎?  
Nǐ tīng de (hěn) qīngchu ma?

- **Object position:** The object always follows the **potential complement**, as in 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) in (32); however, the **manner complement** should *repeat* the main verb, 说/說 shuō (speak), and the object should be placed after the first verb 说/說 shuō (speak), as in (33):

(32) 小明说得好中文。  
小明說得好中文。  
Xiǎomíng shuō de hǎo Zhōngwén.  
Xiaoming can speak Chinese well.

(33) 小明说中文说得很好。  
小明說中文說得很好。  
Xiǎomíng shuō Zhōngwén shuō de hěn hǎo.  
Xiaoming speaks Chinese very well.

The above differences between the potential complement and the manner complement are summarized in Table 20.1.

**Table 20.1** The major differences of potential and manner complements

	Potential Complement (ability)	Manner Complement (manner/degree)
<b>Affirmative</b>	说得好/說得好 shuō de hǎo can speak well	说得好/說得好 shuō de hěn hǎo; or: 说得好/說得好 shuō de hǎo speaks well
<b>Negative</b>	说不好/說不好 shuō bu hǎo cannot speak well	说得好不好/說得好不好 shuō de bù hǎo doesn't speak well
<b>Question (affirmative-negative form)</b>	说得好说不好/說得好說不好 shuō de hǎo shuō bu hǎo can (one) speak well	说得好不好/說得好不好 shuō de hǎo bu hǎo does (one) speak well
<b>With an object</b>	说得好中文/說得好中文 shuō de hǎo Zhōngwén can speak Chinese well	说中文说得好/說中文說得 很好 shuō Zhōngwén shuō de hěn hǎo speaks Chinese very well
<b>With a modifier</b>	—	说得好/說得好 shuō de hěn hǎo speaks very well
<b>With a post-modifier</b>	—	说得好极了/說得好極了 shuō de hǎo jí le speaks excellently
<b>Stress</b>	说得好/說得好 shuō de hǎo speaks well (on the verb 说/說 shuō [speak])	说得好/說得好 shuō de hěn hǎo speaks very well (on the complement 好 hǎo [good])

## 20.4 Directional complement

This kind of complement indicates the direction of the action. There are two types of complements, **simple** directional complements and **compound** directional complements.

### ► 20.4.1 Simple directional complements

There are two types of simple directional complements:

- Only two verbs, 来/來 lái (come) and 去 qù (go), can serve as the complement that indicates the direction of an action based on the speaker's position/perspective.

- (34) 小明拿來了一本书/小明拿來了一本書。 (来/來 lái [come] indicates the action is towards the speaker)

Xiǎomíng ná lái le yì běn shū.

Xiaoming brought a book (towards the speaker).

- (35) 小亮送去了一本书/小亮送去了一本書。 (去 qù [go] indicates the action is away from the speaker)

Xiǎoliàng sòng qù le yì běn shū.

Xiaoliang sent a book to (someone).

- ii. Eight verbs in total, 上 shàng (up), 下 xià (down), 进/進 jìn (enter), 出 chū (out), 回 huí (return), 过/過 guò (over), 起 qǐ (up), and 开/開 kāi (open), can serve as the complement indicating the direction of the action based on the actual direction of the motion:

- (36) 小明走进教室。

小明走進教室。

Xiǎomíng zǒu jìn jiàoshì.

Xiaoming walked into the classroom.

- (37) 请打开书。

請打開書。

Qǐng dǎ kāi shū.

Please open the book.

The verb 走 zǒu (walk) has no direction, but the complement 进/進 jìn (enter) in (36) indicates the direction of the motion (enter) from outside to inside the classroom. The verb 打 dǎ (beat) has no direction, but the complement 开/開 kāi (open) in (37) indicates the direction (open) from the state of being closed.

#### ► 20.4.2 Compound directional complement

This kind of complement is composed of the two types of simple directional complements above (eight words in the first row + two words in the first column), totaling the fourteen in Table 20.2.

**NOTE** The compound -开来/-開來 -kāilai (-open up) cannot be the predicate by itself:

\*小明开来书看/\*小明開來書看

\*Xiǎomíng kāilai shū kàn

(lit. Xiaoming open book read)

It must follow a verb to serve as a complement:

小明打开书看/小明打開來書看。

Xiǎomíng dǎ kāilai shū kàn.

Xiaoming opens the book and reads.

The compound directional complement can also be used as the predicate; for example, 进来/進來 jìn lai (come in).

**Table 20.2** Compound directional complements

	上 shàng (go) up	下 xià (go) down	进/進 jìn enter	出 chū (go) out	回 huí return	过/過 guò (go) over	起 qǐ (get) up	开/開 kāi open
来/來 lái come	<b>上来/上來</b> shànglái come up	<b>下来/下來</b> xiàlái come down	<b>进来/進來</b> jìnlái come in	<b>出来/出來</b> chūlái come out	<b>回来/回來</b> huílái come back	<b>过来/過來</b> guòlái come over	<b>起来/起來</b> qǐlái get up	V+ <b>开来/ 開來</b> V+kāilái open up
去 qù go	<b>上去</b> shàngqu go up	<b>下去</b> xiàqu go down	<b>进去/進去</b> jìnqu go in	<b>出去</b> chūqu go out	<b>回去</b> huíqu go back	<b>过去/過去</b> guòqu go over	—	—

NOTE All directional complements are pronounced as neutral tones when they are used after verbs.

**As the predicate:**

- (38) 小亮**进来**了。  
 小亮**進來**了。  
 Xiǎoliàng jìn lai le.  
 Xiaoliang came in.

**As the complement:**

- (39) 小亮**走进来**了。  
 小亮**走進來**了。  
 Xiǎoliàng zǒu jinlai le.  
 Xiaoliang walked in. (towards the speaker)

The compound directional complement indicates the dual direction of an action because it combines two types of verbs. Taking (39) as an example:

- the action 走 zǒu (walk) has no direction, but
- the compound complement 进来/進來 jinlai (come in) indicates two meanings:
  - the first complement 进/進 jìn (enter) indicates that 小亮 Xiǎoliàng enters a place from outside, and
  - the second complement 来/來 lái (come) indicates that 小亮 Xiǎoliàng walks towards the speaker.

### ► 20.4.3 The grammar features of the directional complement

There are three features of the directional complement, which are i. the absence of the complement marker 得 de; ii. the ability to take the verb suffixes 了 le or 过/過 guo; and iii. variation in the position of the object. The features are discussed in detail below.

- i. It has **no complement marker 得 de**: If a verb is used with the marker, it becomes the potential complement.

Directional complement	Potential complement
小明上去了。	小明上得去。
Xiǎomíng shàng qu le.	Xiǎomíng shàng de qu.
Xiaoming went up.	Xiaoming can go up.
小明走上了。	小明走得上去。
Xiǎomíng zǒu shàngqu le.	Xiǎomíng zǒu de shàngqu.
Xiaoming walked up.	Xianming can walk up.

- ii. It **can take the verb suffixes 了 le or 过/過 guo** either after the main verb, as in (40a) and (41a), or after the complement, as in (40b) and (41b), respectively:

- (40)a. 小明买了三本书来。  
 小明買了三本書來。  
 Xiǎomíng mǎi le sān běn shū lai.  
 Xiaoming bought three books here.

- b. 小明买回来了三本书。  
 小明買回來了三本書。  
 Xiǎomíng mǎi huilai le sān běn shū.  
 Xiaoming bought back three books.

- (41)a. 小亮带过三本书来。  
 小亮帶過三本書來。  
 Xiǎoliàng dài guo sān běn shū lai.  
 Xiaoliang has brought three books here.

- b. 小亮带回来过三本书。  
 小亮帶回來過三本書。  
 Xiǎoliàng dài huilai guo sān běn shū.  
 Xiaoliang has brought back three books.

▪ **Comparison:** The meaning difference with and without the verb suffix 着/著 zhe

- (42)a. 小明走回来了。  
 小明走回來了。  
 Xiǎomíng zǒu huilai le.  
 Xiaoming walked back.

- b. 小亮走着回来了。  
 小亮走著回來了。  
 Xiǎoliàng zǒu zhe huilai le.  
 Xiaoliang returned by walking.

- **Without 着/著 zhe** as in (42a): The main verb is 走 zǒu (walk) and the compound complement 回来/回來 huílai (return) displays two meanings.
  - The first complement, 回 huí (return), indicates the direction of motion.
  - The second complement, 来/來 lái (come), indicates the direction towards the speaker.
- **With 着/著 zhe** as in (42b): The main verb is 回 huí (return) and the complement is 来/來 lái (come), but 走着/走著 zǒu zhe (walking) serves as the adverbial describing the manner (by walking) of the action 回 huí (return).

iii. The position of the object varies under the following two scenarios:

- If the object indicates a place, it should be before 来/來 lái (come) or 去 qù (go) but not after it.

	Correct (before 来/來 lái or 去 qù)	Incorrect (after 来/來 lái or 去 qù)
Simple complement	小明进教室来了。 Xiaoming jìn jiàoshì lái le. Xiaoming came in the classroom.	*小明进来教室了 *Xiaoming jìnlái jiàoshì le (lit. Xiaoming enter classroom)
Compound complement	小明走进教室来了。 Xiaoming zǒu jìn jiàoshì lái le. Xiaoming walked into the classroom.	*小明走进来教室了 *Xiaoming zǒu jìnlái jiàoshì le (lit. Xiaoming walk in classroom)

- If the object refers to a person/thing, it can be placed either before or after 来/來 lái or 去 qù.

After 来/來 lái or 去 qù	Before 来/來 lái or 去 qù
Simple complement	
小明带来了朋友。 小明帶來了朋友。 Xiaoming dài lái le péngyou. Xiaoming brought a friend.	小明带朋友来了。 小明帶朋友來了。 Xiaoming dài péngyou lái le. Xiaoming brought a friend.
Compound complement	
小明带回来了朋友。 小明帶回來了朋友。 Xiaoming dài huí lái le péngyou. Xiaoming brought a friend back.	小明带回朋友来了。 小明帶回朋友來了。 Xiaoming dài huí péngyou lái le. Xiaoming brought a friend back.

Nevertheless, sentences with the object before the complement, as in the right column above, sound more natural.

#### ► 20.4.4 The extended meanings of the compound directional complement

Some compound directional complements can also express meaning beyond direction, as listed below.

▪ **起来/起來** qǐlai (up):

- Indicates the **beginning and continuation of an action** as in (43) or a state as in (44) below. If there is an *object*, such as 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) in (43) below, the object must be placed between 起 qǐ and 来/來 lái.

(43) 还没上课, 学生已经开始练起中文来了。

還沒上課, 學生已經開始練起中文來了。

Hái méi shàng-kè, xuésheng yǐjīng kāishi liànl qǐ Zhōngwén lái le.

Students had already started practicing Chinese before the class began.

(44) 听了老师的话, 学生们都高兴起来 了。

聽了老師的話, 學生們都高興起來了。

Tīng le lǎoshī de huà, xuéshengmen dōu gāoxìng qǐlai le.

Students turned happy after having listened to the professor's words.

- Indicates when an **action occurs**, such as 说起来/說起來 shuō qǐlai (to bring up [a subject]), or when a **new discovery accompanies**, such as 做起来难/做起來難 zuò qǐlai nán (difficulty to do) in (45) below.

(45) 任何事情, 说起来容易, 做起来难。

任何事情, 說起來容易, 做起來難。

Rènhé shìqìng, shuō qǐlai róngyì, zuò qǐlai nán.

Anything is easier said than done.

▪ **下去** xiàqu (down): indicates the continuation of an action; there should be no object after 下去 xiàqu:

## Incorrect:

(46) 中文我还要学下去。

中文我還要學下去。

Zhōngwén wǒ hái yào xué xiàqu.

\*我还要学下去中文

\*我還要學下去中文

\*wǒ hái yào xué xiàqu Zhōngwén

I will continue studying Chinese. (lit. I still want study down Chinese)

▪ **出来/出來** chūlai (out): indicates the result of an action:

(47) 他写出来了这个字。

他寫出來了這個字。

Tā xiě chūlai le zhèi ge zì.

He wrote out this character.

(48) 他说出来了自己的看法。

他說出來了自己的看法。

Tā shuō chūlai le zìjǐ de kànfa.

He spoke out his opinion.

## 20.5 Quantitative complement

This kind of complement specifies the frequency and duration of an action and the result of comparing length, height, and depth. There are three subtypes:

I. **The complement of frequency** specifies the frequency of an action.

- (49)a. 小亮去过**两次**长城。  
 小亮去過**兩次**長城。  
 Xiǎoliàng qù guo liǎng cì Chángchéng.  
 b. 小亮去过长城**两次**。  
 小亮去過長城**兩次**。  
 Xiǎoliàng qù guo Chángchéng liǎng cì.  
 Xiaoliang has been to the Great Wall twice.

- (50)a. 我看了**三遍**这本书。  
 我看了**三遍**這本書。  
 Wǒ kàn le sān biàn zhèi běn shū.  
 b. 我看了这本书**三遍**。  
 我看了這本書**三遍**。  
 Wǒ kàn le zhèi běn shū sān biàn.  
 I have read the book three times.

- (51)a. 小明拍了**两下(儿)**桌子。  
 小明拍了**兩下(兒)**桌子。  
 Xiǎomíng pāi le liǎng xià(r) zhuōzi.  
 b. 小明拍了桌子**两下(儿)**。  
 小明拍了桌子**兩下(兒)**。  
 Xiǎomíng pāi le zhuōzi liǎng xià(r).  
 Xiaoming pounded the table twice.

The most common measure words of the complement of frequency are 次 cì as in (49), 遍 biàn as in (50), and 下 (儿/兒) xià(r) as in (51).

**The position of the objects**, such as 长城/長城 Chángchéng (Great Wall), 这本书/這本書 zhèi běn shū (this book), and 桌子 zhuōzi (table), can be after the complement (more common) as in (49a)–(51a), or before the complement as in (49b)–(51b).

If the object is a pronoun, it must be placed before the complement like 他 tā (he, him) in (52a), but not after the complement as in (52b):

- (52)a. 小明病了, 小亮到医院看了**他**三次。  
 小明病了, 小亮到醫院看了**他**三次。  
 Xiǎomíng bìng le, Xiǎoliàng dào yīyuàn kàn le tā sān cì.  
 Xiaoming was sick. Xiaoliang went to the hospital and visited him three times.

- b. \*小明病了, 小亮到医院看了三次**他**  
 \*小明病了, 小亮到醫院看了三次**他**  
 \*Xiǎomíng bìng le, Xiǎoliàng dào yīyuàn kàn le sān cì tā  
 (lit. Xiaoming sick Xiaoliang go hospital visit le three times he)

II. The **complement of duration** specifies the duration of an action.

**Pattern:**

*verb + complement (number + MW + noun/quasi-MW)*

- (53) 小亮每天锻炼**一个小时**。  
 小亮每天鍛煉**一個小時**。  
 Xiǎoliàng měitiān duànliàn yí ge xiǎoshí.  
 Xiaoliang exercises for one hour every day.

- (54) 小亮毕业**三年**了。  
 小亮畢業**三年**了。  
 Xiǎoliàng bìyè sān nián le.  
 Xiaoliang has been out of school (lit. has graduated) for three years.
- (55) 小亮今天忙了**一天**。  
 Xiǎoliàng jīntiān máng le yì tiān.  
 Today, Xiaoliang has been busy for the whole day.

The most common units of measuring duration are nouns indicating time, such as 小时/小時 xiǎoshí or 钟头/鐘頭 zhōngtóu (hour) in (53), 分钟/分鐘 fēnzhōng (minute), 月 yuè (month), 星期 xīngqī (week), (一)会儿/ (一)會兒 yíhuìr (a moment), and also quasi-measure words, such as 年 nián (year) in (54) and 天 tiān (day) in (55), which cannot be added to the measure word before them.

In order to add an object to this type of complement, the verb should be repeated. For example, if the object 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) needs to be added to (56a), the verb 学/學 xué (study) should be repeated as in (56b); or a simple SVO sentence, as in (56c), can be used.

- (56)a. 小明学了三年。  
 小明學了三年。  
 Xiǎomíng xué le sān nián.  
 Xiaoming has studied for three years.
- b. 小明学中文学了三年。  
 小明學中文學了三年。  
 Xiǎomíng xué Zhōngwén xué le sān nián.
- c. 小明学了三年 (的) 中文。  
 小明學了三年 (的) 中文。  
 Xiǎomíng xué le sān nián (de) Zhōngwén.  
 Xiaoming has studied Chinese for three years.

In (56c), 三年 (的) 中文 sān nián (de) Zhōngwén (*lit. three-year's Chinese*) is the quantity object of the verb 学/學 xué (study); specifically, 三年 sān nián (three year) quantifies (modifies) the noun 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese), but the particle 的 de is optional.

III. **The complement of quantity** specifies length as in (57), height, width, and depth, or indicates the comparative result on the quantity, as in (58) below.

**Pattern:**

*adjective + complement (numeral + MW + noun)*

(57) 这间教室长十米。

這間教室長十米。

Zhèi jiān jiàoshì cháng shí mǐ.

This classroom is 10 meters long.

(58) 我们班比他们班多五个学生。

我們班比他們班多五個學生。

Wǒmen bān bǐ tāmen bān duō wǔ ge xuésheng.

Our class has five more students than their class.

Having learned the many types of complements above, you may now have the question: *Why is a sentence with a complement so complex?* The answer is simple: sentences with complements are complex because a V-C (verb-complement) indicates two events, that is, an action and also the additional information of the action, which is different from a simple SVO sentence that normally indicates just a single event. Let's compare the sentences in (59) and (60):

(59) 他写了一个字。 (SVO sentence)

他寫了一個字。

Tā xiě le yí ge zì.

He wrote one character.

(60) 他写错了。 (SVO sentence with a complement 错/錯 cuò [wrong])

他寫錯了一個字。

Tā xiě.cuò le yí ge zì.

He wrote one character wrongly.

Sentence (59) indicates only one action 写/寫 xiě (write), while sentence (60) contains a resultative complement that expresses two events: the action 写/寫 xiě (write; the cause) and also the result of the action 错/錯 cuò (wrong). In other words, sentence (60) integrates two meanings into one sentence:

<b>event<sub>1</sub></b>	他写了一个字 他寫了一個字 (cause):	+ <b>event<sub>2</sub></b>	一个字错了 一個字錯了 (result):	= 他写错了字。 = 他寫錯了一個字。
	tā xiě le yí ge zì he wrote one character	+	yí ge zì cuò le one character was wrong	= Tā xiě.cuò le yí ge zì. = He wrote one character wrongly.

All types of verb-complements contain at least two meanings; some even contain three meanings (the compound directional complement), as discussed previously. Let's refresh our memory with the following sentence:

- (61) 小明走出来了。  
小明走出來了。  
Xiǎomíng zǒu chulai le.  
Xiaoming walked out (towards the speaker).

The verb-complement in (61) includes three meanings: the verb 走 zǒu (walk) that indicates a movement; the compound complement 出来/出來 chūlai, of which 出 chū (go out) indicates a directional movement from inside to outside, and 来/來 lái (come) that indicates the movement towards the speaker.

**TIP**

**Temporal sequence** (see §2.3 and §18.2.2): It may be easier just to remember that the word order of verb-complements mirrors the temporal sequence of events in the actual world; in other words, if something happens first, say it first. For instance, the action 写/寫 xiě (write) occurs first, and then the result 错/錯 cuò (wrong) second, and thus, the word order in (60) follows the temporal sequence of the actual world, too. Following the same principle, in the actual world the action 走 zǒu (walk) happens first, then 出 chū (go out), and lastly 来/來 lái (towards to the speaker); thus, (61) follows the same temporal sequence.

## 20.6 Summary

In this chapter, we began by learning the five types of complements and found that the complement is placed after the main verb in a sentence and has a verbal-like nature, that is, only verbs and adjectives (and a few adverbs) can serve as complements (except the quantitative complement). The features of the different complements are summarized in Table 20.3.

**Table 20.3** Types of complements

Complement	Subcategory/Meaning	Example
<b>Resultative</b>	the result of an action	他听 <b>懂</b> 了/他聽 <b>懂</b> 了。 Tā tīng, dǒng le. He understood (by listening).
<b>Manner</b>	i. manner (of the action)	他说得 <b>很好</b> /他說得 <b>很好</b> 。 Tā shuō de hěn hǎo. He spoke very well.
	ii. degree (of the action; with 得 de)	他高兴得 <b>很</b> /他高興得 <b>很</b> 。 Tā gāoxìng de hěn. He was very happy.
	iii. degree (of the action; without 得 de)	他高兴 <b>极</b> 了/他高興 <b>極</b> 了。 Tā gāoxìng jí le. He was extremely happy.
<b>Potential</b>	ability	他(能)说得 <b>好</b> /他(能)說得 <b>好</b> 。 Tā (néng) shuō de hǎo. He can speak well.
<b>Directional</b>	i. simple: 来/來 lái (come); 去 qù (go)	他进 <b>来</b> 了/他進 <b>來</b> 了。 Tā jìn lái le. He came in.
	ii. simple: 上 shàng (up), 下 xià (down), 进/進 jìn (enter), 出 chū (out), 回 huí (return), 过/過 guò (over), 起 qǐ (up), 开/開 kāi (open)	他走 <b>进</b> 教室/他走 <b>進</b> 教室。 Tā zǒu jìn jiàoshì. He walked into the classroom.
	iii. compound: (simple ii + simple i)	他走 <b>进</b> 来 <b>了</b> /他走 <b>進</b> 來 <b>了</b> 。 Tā zǒu jinlai le. He walked in. (towards the speaker)
<b>Quantitative</b>	i. frequency	他看了 <b>三遍</b> 。 Tā kàn le sān biàn. He read it three times.
	ii. duration	他学了 <b>三个小时</b> /他學了 <b>三個小時</b> 。 Tā xué le sān ge xiǎoshí. He studied for three hours.
	iii. quantity	这把椅子高 <b>一米</b> /這把椅子高 <b>一米</b> 。 Zhèi bǎ yǐzi gāo yì mǐ. This chair is one meter tall.

## 20.7 Exercises

## I Correct the following sentences:

Example:

Given: \*小亮做作业完了/\*小亮做作業完了 \*Xiǎoliàng zuò zuòyè wán le

Answer: 小亮做完了作业/小亮做完了作業。 Xiǎoliàng zuò.wán le zuòyè.

- \*小亮很想学中文好/\*小亮很想學中文好 (hint: resultative complement)  
\*Xiǎoliàng hěn xiǎng xué Zhōngwén hǎo
- \*小亮写了一个字错/\*小亮寫了一個字錯 (hint: resultative complement)  
\*Xiǎoliàng xiě le yí ge zì cuò
- \*小明说中文说很好/\*小明說中文說很好 (hint: manner complement)  
\*Xiǎomíng shuō Zhōngwén shuō hěn hǎo
- \*小明不看清楚黑板上的汉字/\*小明不看清楚黑板上的漢字 (hint: potential complement)  
\*Xiǎomíng bú kàn.qīngchu hēibǎn shàng de Hánzì
- \*一上课, 小明就开书看/\*一上課, 小明就開書看 (hint: directional complement)  
\*yí shàng-kè, Xiǎomíng jiù kāi shū kàn
- \*小明跟他的朋友走进来教室了/\*小明跟他的朋友走進來教室了 (hint: directional complement)  
\*Xiǎomíng gēn tā de péngyou zǒu jinlai jiàoshì le
- \*小亮一次去过中国/\*小亮一次去過中國 (hint: quantitative complement)  
\*Xiǎoliàng yí cì qù guó Zhōngguó

## II Select the appropriate words from the word bank to fill in the blanks.

Each word can only be used once:

Word bank: 错/錯 cuò; 三 sān; 上 shàng; 懂 dǒng; 完 wán; 快 kuài; 动/動 dòng; 极/極 jí)

- 小明写\_\_\_\_\_了作业/小明寫\_\_\_\_\_了作業。 Xiǎomíngxiě \_\_\_\_\_ le zuòyè.
- 对不起, 你找\_\_\_\_\_钱了。你应该找我三块钱, 可是只给了我两块/對不起, 你找\_\_\_\_\_錢了。你應該找我三塊錢, 可是只給了我兩塊。 Duibuqǐ, nǐ zhǎo \_\_\_\_\_ qián le. Nǐ yīnggāi zhǎo wǒ sān kuài qián, kěshì zhě gěi le wǒ liǎng kuài.
- 他们唱着歌走\_\_\_\_\_山了/他們唱著歌走\_\_\_\_\_山了。 Tāmen chàng zhe gē zǒu \_\_\_\_\_ shān le.
- 快考试了, 我们忙\_\_\_\_\_了/快考試了, 我們忙\_\_\_\_\_了。 Kuài kǎo-shì le, wǒmen máng \_\_\_\_\_ le.
- 小明今天学中文学了\_\_\_\_\_个小时/小明今天學中文學了\_\_\_\_\_個小時。 Xiǎomíng jīntiān xué Zhōngwén xué le \_\_\_\_\_ ge xiǎoshí.

6. 小亮学了三年中文, 听得\_\_\_\_\_中国人的话了/小亮學了三年中文, 聽得\_\_\_\_\_中國人的話了。  
Xiǎoliàng xué le sān nián Zhōngwén, tīng de\_\_\_\_\_ Zhōngguó rén de huà le.
7. 这件行李太重了, 你搬不\_\_\_\_\_ /這件行李太重了, 你搬不\_\_\_\_\_。  
Zhèi jiàn xínglì tài zhòng le, nǐ bān bu \_\_\_\_\_.  
8. 小明写汉字写得很\_\_\_\_\_ /小明寫漢字寫得很\_\_\_\_\_。  
Xiǎomíng xiě Hánzì xiě de hěn \_\_\_\_\_.  
III Use the given words or phrases to complete the sentences with the specific complements indicated in the parentheses:

Example:

Given: 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 打扫房间/打掃房間 dǎsǎo fángjiān, 干净/乾淨 gānjìng (predicative complement)

Answer: 小亮打扫房间打扫得很干净/小亮打掃房間打掃得很乾淨。

Xiǎoliàng dǎsǎo fángjiān dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng.

1. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 说话/說話 shuō-huà, 不快 bú kuài (manner complement)
2. 昨天晚上 zuótīān wǎnshàng, 我睡觉/我睡覺 wǒ shuì-jiào, 晚 wǎn (manner complement)
3. 我去过小明的家/我去過小明的家 wǒ qù guo Xiǎomíng de jiā, 找到他家 zhǎo.dào tā jiā (potential complement)
4. 小明 Xiǎomíng, 说/說 shuō, 清楚 qīngchu (A-not-A question with manner complement)
5. 小明 Xiǎomíng, 说/說 shuō, 清楚 qīngchu (A-not-A question with potential complement)
6. 小明 Xiǎomíng, 跑进去/跑進去 pǎo jinqu, 宿舍里/宿舍裏 sùshè li (directional complement)
7. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 很 hěn, 高兴/高興 gāoxìng (manner complement)
8. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 昨天 zuótīān, 唱歌 chàng-gē, 三个小时/三個小時 sān ge xiǎoshí (quantitative complement)
9. 小明 Xiǎomíng, 听/聽 tīng, 懂 dǒng, 老师的问题/老師的問題 lǎoshī de wèntí (negative resultative complement)
10. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 高兴/高興 gāoxìng, 跑进来/跑進來 pǎo jinlai, 教室 jiàoshì (manner complement and directional complement)

IV Complete the following dialogues with the correct complement:

1. A: 请问, 图书馆怎么走/請問, 圖書館怎麼走?

    Qǐngwèn, túshūguān zěnme zǒu?

B: 对不起, 我没听\_\_\_\_\_ (clearly) 您的问题。您能不能再说\_\_\_\_\_ /對不起, 我沒聽\_\_\_\_\_ (clearly) 您的問題。您能不能再說\_\_\_\_\_ ?

    Duìbuqǐ, wǒ méi tīng \_\_\_\_\_ nín de wèntí. Nín néng bu néng zài shuō \_\_\_\_\_?

A: 可以, 图书馆怎么走/可以, 圖書館怎麼走?

Kěyǐ, túshūguān zěnme zǒu?

B: 现在我听\_\_\_\_\_ (understand)了。您走\_\_\_\_\_ (wrong direction)了, 您应该往回走。过了那栋楼, 就\_\_\_\_\_ (can see) 图书馆了/現在我聽\_\_\_\_\_ (understand)了。您走\_\_\_\_\_ (wrong direction)了, 您應該往回走。過了那棟樓, 就\_\_\_\_\_ (can see) 圖書館了。

Xiànzài wǒ tīng \_\_\_\_\_ le. Nín zǒu \_\_\_\_\_ le. Nín yīnggāi wǎng huí zǒu. Guò le nà dòng lóu, jiù \_\_\_\_\_ túshūguān le.

A: 谢谢! 您说\_\_\_\_\_ (very clearly)/ 謝謝! 您說\_\_\_\_\_ (very clearly)。

Xièxie! Nín shuō \_\_\_\_\_.

B: 不客气/不客氣。Bú kèqi.

2. A: 你学了几年中文/你學了幾年中文?

Nǐ xué le jǐ nián Zhōngwén?

B: \_\_\_\_\_. (I have studied Chinese for two years.)

A: \_\_\_\_\_. (You spoke Chinese very well.)

B: 哪里哪里。有的时候, 我还\_\_\_\_\_ /哪裏哪裏。有的時候, 我還\_\_\_\_\_ (cannot understand others' questions)。

Nǎli nǎli. Yǒu de shíhou, wǒ hái \_\_\_\_\_.

3. (the speakers are outside of a house)

A: 请你走\_\_\_\_\_屋子里\_\_\_\_\_, 搬两把椅子\_\_\_\_\_, 我想坐会儿/请你走\_\_\_\_\_屋子裏\_\_\_\_\_, 搬兩把椅子\_\_\_\_\_, 我想坐會兒。

Qǐng nǐ zǒu \_\_\_\_\_ wūzi li \_\_\_\_\_, bān liǎng bǎ yǐzi \_\_\_\_\_, wǒ xiǎng zuò huìr.

B: 好的。那您还需要我帮您\_\_\_\_\_ (take out a bottle of water) 吗/好的。那您還需要我幫您\_\_\_\_\_ (take out a bottle of water) 嗎?

Hǎo de. Nà nín hái xūyào wǒ bāng nín \_\_\_\_\_ ma?

A: 好。谢谢你/好。謝謝你。Hǎo. Xièxie nǐ.

## Elements of a sentence 4: attributive and adverbial

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the similarities and differences of the attributive and the adverbial
- ★ To learn the grammatical features of the attributive and the adverbial
- ★ To learn the uses of the marker 的 de for the attributive and the marker 地 de for the adverbial

In Chinese, the attributive and the adverbial always precede the modified parts, which is different from English. In English, these two elements can be placed before or after the modified units in specific contexts. The differences can be seen by comparing Chinese sentences with their corresponding English translations in the following examples.

According to the functions of the attributive and the adverbial in sentences, these two elements are defined as follows:

- The **attributive** modifies and restricts the subject or the object, which are mostly nouns.
- The **adverbial** modifies and restricts the predicate, which is mainly verbs or adjectives.

The specific differences between these two elements can be found in the following summary (the attributive and the adverbial are bolded):

Attributive	Adverbial
<b>好学生/好學生</b> hǎo xuésheng (good student)	<b>非常好</b> fēicháng hǎo (very good)
<b>游泳场所/游泳場所</b> yóuyǒng chǎngsuǒ (swimming place)	<b>经常游泳/經常游泳</b> jīngcháng yóuyǒng (often swim)
<b>很慢的火车/很慢的火車</b> hěn màn de huochē (slow train)	<b>慢慢地开/慢慢地開</b> màn mān de kāi (drive slowly)
<b>三个苹果/三個蘋果</b> sān ge píngguǒ (three apples)	<b>特别好吃</b> tèbié hǎochī (very delicious)

By comparing the two groups above, we can see that:

- the unit of the **attributive** and its modified element, 好学生/好學生 hǎo xuésheng (good student), function as a nominal phrase; thus, it serves as the *subject* or the *object*; and
- the unit of the **adverbial** and its modified elements, **非常好** fēicháng hǎo (very good) and **经常游泳/經常游泳** jīngcháng yóuyǒng (often swim), constitute the verbal phrase, and thus together (as the verbal phrase) serve as the *predicate* in the sentence.

We will elaborate on these two elements below.

**NOTE** **Attributives** can also modify **verbs**, such as **帮助/幫助** bāngzhù (help):

小明很感谢老师的**帮助**/小明很感謝老師的**幫助**。

Xiǎomíng hěn gǎnxiè lǎoshī de bāngzhù.

Xiaoming really appreciates the teacher's help.

or **adjectives**, such as **干净/乾淨** gānjìng (clean):

我们都应该保持宿舍的**干净**/我們都應該保持宿舍的**干淨**。

Wǒmen dōu yīnggāi bǎochí sùshè de gānjìng.

We all should maintain the cleanliness of the dorm.

## 21.1 Attributive

The following form and sentence can help us to concretize the above definition of the attributive (the modified word is named the *head word*).

**Form:**

*attributive* + *head word (subject)* + *predicate* + *attributive* + *head word (object)*

**我的中文**老师是**中国**人。

**我的中文**老師是**中國**人。

Wǒ de Zhōnwén lǎoshī shì Zhōngguó rén.

My Chinese teacher is Chinese.

### ► 21.1.1 The grammatical features of the attributive

- Structurally, the attributive precedes the modified (head) word.
- Semantically, the attributive mainly modifies or restricts the head word according to the aspects below.

Typically, the attributive indicates the following meanings:

- possession**, as the attributive 小亮 Xiǎoliàng (proper noun) modifies the head word 书/書 shū (book) and indicates that the book belongs to Xiaoliang, who owns the book, in (1):

(1) 小亮的书在桌子上。

小亮的書在桌子上。

Xiǎoliàng de shū zài zhuōzi shàng.

Xiaoliang's book is on the table.

- **property**, as the attributive 新 xīn ([adj.] new) indicates the type of students in (2):

(2) 新学生都很喜欢这所学校。

新學生都很喜歡這所學校。

Xīn xuésheng dōu hěn xǐhuan zhèi suǒ xuéxiào.

The new students all like this school.

- **quality**, as the attributive 硬木 yìngmù ([n.] hardwood) describes the material that the table is made of in (3):

(3) 我们的教室都是硬木桌子。

我們的教室都是硬木桌子。

Wǒmen de jiàoshì dōu shì yìngmù zhuōzi.

Our classroom's tables are all (made of) hardwood.

- **quantity**, as the attributive 三 sān (three) indicates the numbers of days in (4):

(4) 小明病了三天。

Xiǎomíng bìng le sān tiān.

Xiaoming was sick for three days.

- **place**, as the attributive 山上 shān shàng (on the mountain) describes the place of the flowers in (5):

(5) 山上的花很漂亮。

Shān shàng de huā hěn piàoliang.

The flowers on the mountain are beautiful.

- **time**, as the attributive 昨天 zuótiān (yesterday) indicates the time of the class in (6):

(6) 昨天的中文课很有意思。

昨天的中文課很有意思。

Zuótiān de Zhōngwén kè hěn yǒuyìsī.

The Chinese class yesterday was very interesting.

### ► 21.1.2 Words and phrases that can serve as the attributive

- Words: Nouns**, such as 小亮 Xiǎoliàng in (1), 硬木 yìngmù (hardwood) in (3), 昨天 zuótiān (yesterday) in (6); **adjectives**, such as 新 xīn (new) in (2); **pronouns**, such as 我们/我們 wǒmen (we) in (3); and **numerals**, such as 三 sān (three) in (4) above.

- **Verbs** can also serve as the attributive, such as 旅行 lǚxíng (travel) in (7).

(7) 旅行计划取消了。

旅行計劃取消了。

Lǚxíng jíhuà qǔxiāo le.

The traveling plan was canceled.

ii. **Phrases:** Various phrases can serve as the attributive, but the particle 的 de must be used between the attributive and its head noun. Several common phrases used as the attributive are listed below.

- **Subject-predicate phrases** like 我们参观/我們參觀 wǒmen cānguān (we visit) in (8):

(8) **我们参观**的城市很漂亮。

**我們參觀**的城市很漂亮。

Wǒmen cānguān de chéngshì hěn piàoliang.

The cities that we visited were very beautiful.

The marker for the attributive, 的 de, signals that 我们参观/我們參觀 wǒmen cānguān (we visit) is the attributive modifying its head noun 城市 chéngshì (city).

- **V-O phrases** like 看书/看書 kàn-shū (read book; study) in (9):

(9) **看书**的学生都去了图书馆。

**看書**的學生都去了圖書館。

Kàn-shū de xuésheng dōu qù le túshūguǎn.

The students who study have all gone to the library.

- **Complementary phrases** like 说得好/說得好 shuō de hǎo (speak well) in (10):

(10) 说得好的同学都参加了演讲比赛。

說得好的同學都參加了演講比賽。

Shuō de hǎo de tóngxué dōu cānjiā le yǎnjiǎng bǐsài.

The students who speak well all participated in the speech contest.

- **Numeral-measure phrases** like 一千块(钱)/一千塊(錢) yìqiān kuài (qián) (1,000-MW [money]), which **describes** the amount of money spent on books, in (11):

(11) 小明买了**一千块**(钱)的书。

小明買了**一千塊**(錢)的書。

Xiaoming mǎi le yìqiān kuài (qián) de shū.

Xiaoming bought one thousand dollars' worth of books.

(12) 小明买了**三本**书。

小明買了**三本**書。

Xiaoming mǎi le sān běn shū.

Xiaoming bought three books.

**NOTE** In the above sentence, the numeral-measure phrase 一千块/一千塊 yìqiān kuài (\$1,000) as an attributive modifies the noun 书/書 shū (book) meaning *worth of books*; thus, the particle 的 is needed. If the phrase 一千块/一千塊 yìqiān kuài (\$1,000) modifies 钱/錢 qián (money) directly, 块/塊 kuài is

the MW for 钱/錢 qián, and therefore no 的 de is needed as we don't say \*一千块的钱/\*一千塊的錢 \*yìqiān kuài de qián. Accordingly, we don't say \*三本的书/\*三本的書 \*sān běn de shū, rather 三本书/三本書 sān běn shū is correct because 本 běn is the MW for 书/書 shū (book) and the numeral-measure phrase 三本 sān běn (three-MW) restricts and modifies the noun 书/書 shū (book) in (12) (also see example (23) below).

- **Coordinative phrases** like 老师和学生/老師和學生 lǎoshī hé xuésheng (teacher and students) in (13):

(13) **老师和学生的爱好都一样。**

**老師和學生的愛好都一樣。**

Lǎoshī hé xuésheng de àihào dōu yíyàng.

The teacher's and students' hobbies are the same.

- **Prepositional phrases** like 跟学生/跟學生 gēn xuésheng (with student) in (14):

(14) **老师结束了跟学生的谈话。**

**老師結束了跟學生的談話。**

Lǎoshī jiéshù le gēn xuésheng de tán-huà.

The teacher ended the conversation with the students.

- **Locality phrases** like 山上 shān shàng (on the mountain) in (5) above.

### ► 21.1.3 The marker for the attributive 的 de

It can be challenging to determine whether or not to use 的 de between the attributive and the head word, as pointed out in §16.1.1. To enhance your understanding, we would like to reiterate the general rules for the uses of 的 de mentioned in §16.1.1 and provide additional examples below:

- i. **的 de** must be used when the attributive is:

- a **phrase**, except the numeral-measure phrase, which indicates a restrictive meaning, as mentioned in (12) above and (23) below;
- **possessive or restrictive** like the noun 姐姐 jiějie (elder sister) in (14) and like the pronoun 你 nǐ (you) in (15).

**NOTE** 的 de can be omitted when modifying family members, such as 我妈妈/我媽媽 wǒ māma (my mom) and 你弟弟 nǐ dìdi (your younger brother). Kinship terms with 的 de, such as **我的妈妈/我的媽媽** wǒ de māma (my mom) and **你的弟弟** nǐ de dìdi (your younger brother) are correct to use, but they carry a stressed (bolded) sense of possession.

的 de **cannot** be omitted in (18) or (19). If omitted, 吃的东西/吃的東西 chī de dōngxi (lit. eating stuff; food) in (18) becomes 吃东西/吃東西 chī dōngxi (to eat something); and 参观的人/參觀的人 cānguān de rén (lit. people who are visiting; visitor) in (19) becomes ?參觀人 / ? 參觀人 ?

cānguān rén (*lit. visit people*). As can be seen, the sentences no longer make sense. When disyllabic verbs modify disyllabic nouns such as 参观(的)团体/參觀(的)團體 cānguān (de) tuántǐ (visiting group) or 劳动(的)人民/勞動(的)人民 láodòng (de) rénmín (working people), the de is optional.

(15) **姐姐**的车很漂亮。

**姐姐**的車很漂亮。

Jiějie de chē hěn piàoliang.

(My) elder sister's car is beautiful.

(16) **你的**书在哪儿买的？

**你的**書在哪儿買的？

Nǐ de shū zài nǎr mǎi de?

Where did you buy your books?

• a **timeword** like 昨天 zuótān (yesterday) in (6) above and a **location** like 这儿/這兒 zhèr (here) in (17):

(17) **这儿**的饭馆都很有名。

**這兒**的飯館都很有名。

Zhèr de fānguǎn dōu hěn yōumíng.

The restaurants here are all famous.

• a **verb** like 吃 chī (eat) in (18) and 参观/參觀 cānguān (visit) in (19):

(18) 小明买了一些**吃**的东西。

小明買了一些**吃**的東西。

Xiaoming mǎi le yìxiē chī de dōngxi.

Xiaoming bought some food(s).

(19) 参观的人很多。

參觀的人很多。

Cānguān de rén hěn duō.

There are many visitors.

• an **adjective** (disyllabic) like 高兴/高興 gāoxìng (glad) and 快乐/快樂 kuàilè (happy) in (20):

(20) **高兴**的学生唱起了**快乐**的歌。

**高興**的學生唱起了**快樂**的歌。

Gāoxìng de xuésheng chàng qì le kuàilè de gē.

The happy students started singing happy songs.

ii. **的 de** is not used when the attributive is:

• a **noun** describing property, like 纸/紙 zhǐ (paper) in (21):

(21) 纸老虎不吃人。

紙老虎不吃人。

Zhǐ lǎohǔ bù chī rén.

The paper tiger doesn't bite.

- a **monosyllabic adjective** in most cases, like 好 hǎo (good) in (22):

(22) 小明和老师是好朋友。

小明和老師是好朋友。

Xiǎomíng hé lǎoshī shì hǎo péngyou.

Xiaoming and the teacher are good friends.

- a **numeral-measure phrase** indicating a restrictive meaning, like 三本 sān běn (three-MW) in (12) above and 五张/五張 wǔ zhāng (five-MW) and 十把 shí bǎ (ten-MW) in (23) below:

(23) 教室里有五张桌子十把椅子。

教室裏有五張桌子十把椅子。

Jiàoshì li yǒu wǔ zhāng zhuōzi shí bǎ yǐzi.

There are five tables and ten chairs in the classroom.

#### ► 21.1.4 The order of attributives

There are often multiple attributives modifying the subject and the object in a sentence, an example of which follows:

(24) 小明的这三本新书都是红色的。

小明的這三本新書都是紅色的。

Xiǎomíng de zhèi sān běn xīn shū dōu shì hóngsè de.

Xiaoming's three new books are all red.

Taking the above sentence as an example, attributives are generally arranged in the following order, similar to English, as is seen in the literal translation below:

Possessive N/Pron	Demonstrative Pron	Numeral-MW	Adj	N (head word)
小明的	这	三本	新	书
小明的	這	三本	新	書
Xiǎomíng de lit. Xiaoming's	zhèi	sān běn three MW	xīn new	shū book

## 21.2 Adverbial

The form and the sentence below can help us to understand the definition of the adverbial mentioned at the beginning of the chapter:

**Form:**

subject + **adverbial** + head word (*predicate [verb/adjective]*) + (object)

学生们	<b>努力地</b>	学习	(中文)
學生們	<b>努力地</b>	學習	(中文)
xuéshengmen	nǔlì de	xuéxí	(Zhōngwén)
students	diligently	study	(Chinese)
我们	<b>非常</b>	高兴	
我們	<b>非常</b>	高興	
wǒmen	fēicháng	gāoxìng	
we	very	happy	

### ► 21.2.1 The grammatical features of the adverbial

- Structurally, the adverbial precedes the modified predicate (head word).
- Semantically, the adverbial mainly modifies or restricts the head word or sentence in accordance with the following aspects.
  - To indicate time the attributive is mainly:
    - a **time word**, such as 今天 *jīntiān* (today) in (25);
    - an **adverb**, such as 已经/已經 *yǐjīng* (already) in (26); or
    - a **prepositional phrase**, such as 在下午三点/在下午三點 *zài xiàwǔ sān diǎn* (at 3.00 p.m.) in (27).

(25) 我们**今天**去长城。  
我們**今天**去長城。  
Wǒmen *jīntiān* qù Chángchéng.

We will go to the Great Wall today.

(26) 学生们**已经**做完作业了。  
學生們**已經**做完作業了。  
Xuéshengmen *yǐjīng* zuò.wán zuòyè le.  
Students have already completed their homework.

(27) 我们**在下午三点**开会。  
我們**在下午三點**開會。  
Wǒmen *zài xiàwǔ sān diǎn* kāi-huì.

We will have a meeting at 3.00 p.m.

- To indicate negation, degree, repetition, scope, estimation, and tone of speech as below (all adverbials are adverbs and bolded).

## + negation:

- (28) 小明的妈妈**不会**说中文。  
 小明的媽媽**不會**說中文。  
 Xiǎomíng de māma bú huì shuō Zhōngwén.  
 Xiaoming's mom can't speak Chinese.

## + degree:

- (29) 我们的宿舍**特别**干净。  
 我們的宿舍**特別**乾淨。  
 Wǒmen de sùshè tèbié gānjìng.  
 Our dorm is very clean.

## + repetition:

- (30) 老师**又**讲了一遍语法。  
 老師**又**講了一遍語法。  
 Lǎoshī yòu jiǎng le yí biàn yǔfǎ.  
 The teacher explained the grammar again.

## + scope:

- (31) 我们**都**是学生。  
 我們**都**是學生。  
 Wǒmen dōu shì xuésheng.  
 We all are students.

## + estimation:

- (32) 小亮今天**也许**不来上课了。  
 小亮今天**也許**不來上課了。  
 Xiǎoliàng jīntiān yěxǔ bù lái shàng-kè le.  
 Perhaps Xiaoliang will not come to the class today.

## + tone of speech:

- (33) 小明今天上课**差点儿**迟到。  
 小明今天上課**差點兒**遲到。  
 Xiǎomíng jīntiān shàng-kè chàdiǎnr chídào.  
 Xiaoming was almost late for the class today.

▪ To indicate the goal, location, or target as in sentences (34)–(36), respectively.  
 All attributives are prepositional phrases and bolded (see §14.2):

- (34) 小亮**为了学好中文**去了北京。 (goal)  
 小亮**為了學好中文**去了北京。  
 Xiǎoliàng wèile xuéhǎo Zhōngwén qù le Běijīng.  
 Xiaoliang went to Beijing in order to study Chinese well.

- (35) 学生们喜欢**在图书馆**看书。(location)  
 學生們喜歡**在圖書館**看書。  
 Xuéshengmen xǐhuān zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū.

Students like to study at the library.

- (36) 老师**对学生**很热情。(target)  
 老師**對學生**很熱情。  
 Lǎoshī duì xuésheng hěn rèqíng.

Teachers are enthusiastic with (lit. to) the students.

- **To describe the doer's manners or mental activities** (the doer is usually the subject in a sentence), the adverbial can be any of the following:
  - an **adjective**, such as 高兴/高興 gāoxìng in (37);
  - a **verb**, such as 感激 gǎnjī (feel grateful) in (38);
  - an **adverb**, such as 悄悄 qiāoqiāo (quietly) in (39);
  - a **phrase**, such as the V-O phrase 有计划/有計劃 yǒu jìhuà (have a plan) in (40).

- (37) 小亮**高兴**地跟朋友聊天。  
 小亮**高興**地跟朋友聊天。  
 Xiǎoliàng gāoxìng de gēn péngyou liáotiān.

Xiaoliang chatted with his friend happily.

- (38) 学生**感激**地说：“谢谢老师的帮助。”  
 學生**感激**地說：「謝謝老師的幫助。」  
 Xuésheng gǎnjī de shuō, “Xièxie lǎoshī de bāngzhù.”  
 Students gratefully said, “Thanks for the help, teacher.”

- (39) 小明**悄悄**地回到了宿舍。  
 Xiǎomíng qiāoqiāo de huídào le sùshè.  
 Xiaoming returned to his dorm quietly.

- (40) 老师**有计划**地帮助学生学习。  
 老師**有計劃**地幫助學生學習。  
 Lǎoshī yǒu jìhuà de bāngzhù xuésheng xuéxí.

The teacher has, with a plan, helped students to study.

- **To describe the manner of the action**, the adverbial can be any of the following:
  - an **adjective**, such as 详细/詳細 xiángxì (detail) in (41);
  - an **adverb**, such as 反复 fánfù (repeatedly) in (42);
  - a **phrase**, such as 来回/來回 láihuí (come and go [repeatedly]) in (43);
  - a **pronoun**, such as 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how) and 这样/這樣 zhèiyàng (this way) in (44).

(41) 老师**详细**地讲了一遍课文。

老師**詳細**地講了一遍課文。

Lǎoshī xiángxì de jiǎng le yí biàn kèwén.

The teacher explained the text of the lesson in detail one time.

(42) 你应该**反复**地练习中文。

你應該**反複**地練習中文。

Nǐ yīnggāi fánfù de liànxí Zhōngwén.

You should practice your Chinese repeatedly.

(43) 小狗**来回**地跑。

Xiǎo gǒu láihuí de pǎo.

The small dog ran back and forth.

(44) A: 这个汉字**怎么**写?

這個漢字**怎麼**寫?

Zhèi ge Hànzì zěnme xiě?

How do I write this character?

B: 你应该**这样**写。

你應該**這樣**寫。

Nǐ yīnggāi zhèiyàng xiě.

You should write it this way.

### ► 21.2.2 The marker for the adverbial 地 de

In addition to the general rules for using 地 de mentioned in §16.1.2, we would like to provide two more rules by summarizing the examples in this chapter as below:

- 地 de** **should be used** when the attributive describes the doer's manner or mental activities like the **adjective** 高兴/高興 gāoxìng (glad) in (37), the **verb** 感激 gǎnjī (thank) in (38), the **adverb** 悄悄 qiāoqiāo (quietly) in (39), and the **phrase** 有计划/有計劃 yǒu jíhuà (have a plan) in (40) above.
- 地 de** **is not used** when the attributive is a **time word**, such as 今天 jīntiān (today) in (25), an **adverb**, such as 已经/已經 yǐjīng (already) in (26), a **prepositional phrase**, such as 在下午三点/在下午三點 zài xiàwǔ sān diǎn (at 3.00 p.m.) in (27) or a **pronoun**, such as 怎么/怎麼 zěnme (how) or 这样/這樣 zhèiyàng (this way) in (44).

### ► 21.2.3 The order of adverbials

There are often multiple adverbials modifying the predicate (head word) in a sentence. The order of adverbials is generally arranged as follows, which is very different from English (see the translation below):

Time	Place	(Subject)	Scope	Degree	Manner	Target	V (head word)	(Object)
昨天	在教室里	(学生)	都	很	高兴地	跟老师	说	(中文)
昨天	在教室裏	(學生)	都	很	高興地	跟老師	說	(中文)
Zuótiān	zài jiào shì li	(xuésheng)	dōu	hěn	gāoxìng de	gēn lǎoshī	shuō	(Zhōngwén)

Students spoke Chinese happily with the teacher in the classroom yesterday.

The general format of Chinese word order relating to a time word, place word, and subject in a sentence is as follows:

- the **time word** goes first, such as 昨天 zuótān (yesterday) in the above sentence
- the **place word** follows, such as 在教室里/在教室裏 zài jiàoshì li (in the classroom) above
- the **subject** is optional, specifically, the subject 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) can be after the time word and the place word as above; or at the beginning of the sentence as in (45a), or after the time word as in (45b) below:

- (45)a. 学生 昨天在教室里都很高兴地跟老师说中文。  
**學生** 昨天在教室裏都很高興地跟老師說中文。  
 Xuésheng zuótān zài jiàoshì li dōu hěn gāoxìng de gēn lǎoshī shuō  
 Zhōngwén.
- b. 昨天 学生 在教室里都很高兴地跟老师说中文。  
 昨天 學生 在教室裏都很高興地跟老師說中文。  
 Zuótān xuésheng zài jiàoshì li dōu hěn gāoxìng de gēn lǎoshī shuō  
 Zhōngwén.
- Students spoke Chinese happily with the teacher *in the classroom* *yesterday*.

This is to say that the order of the time word and the place word is fixed; however, the subject, such as 学生/學生 xuésheng (students) in the above sentences, can be moved to the beginning of the sentence, before the time word, 昨天 zuótān (yesterday), or after it, or after the place word according to the context. This arrangement of word order is different from word order in English.

## 21.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned that both the **attributive** and the **adverbial** precede their modified head word. Different types of words and phrases can serve as the attributive and the adverbial. We have noticed that, under certain circumstances, the marker 的 de for the attributive or the marker 地 de for the adverbial is often used between the attributive and its modified head word or between the adverbial and the modified head word, respectively. We have also learned that there is a rather fixed order for the multiple attributives and adverbials modifying the head word. The order of multiple adverbials in Chinese is very different from the word order of English.

In order to see a general picture of the attributive and the adverbial, the most notable differences between the two elements are summarized in Table 21.1.

**Table 21.1** The differences between the attributive and the adverbial

Attributive	Adverbial
nouns, pronouns, or adjectives (mostly)	adverbs or prepositional phrases (mostly)
before the subject or object (nouns mostly)	before the predicate (verbs and adjectives mostly)
use <b>的</b> de: phrases serve as the attributive (except the numeral-MW phrase indicating a restrictive meaning) don't use <b>的</b> de: modifying family members	use <b>地</b> de: verbs (V-O phrases), disyllabic adjectives serve as the adverbial don't use <b>地</b> de: adverbs and prepositional phrases serve as the adverbial

## 21.4 Exercises

### I Underline the attributive and double-underline the adverbial in the following sentences:

Example:

Given: 学生们都同意老师的看法/學生們都同意老師的看法。

Xuéshengmen dōu tóngyì lǎoshī de kànfa.

Answer: 学生们都同意老师的看法/學生們都同意老師的看法。

Xuéshengmen dōu tóngyì lǎoshī de kànfa.

1. 老师跟学生的想法完全不一样/老師跟學生的想法完全不一樣。

Lǎoshī gēn xuésheng de xiǎngfǎ wánquán bù yíyàng.

2. 很多学生对这部电影非常感兴趣/很多學生對這部電影非常感興趣。

Hěn duō xuésheng duì zhè bù diànyǐng fēicháng gǎn xìngqu.

3. 小亮刚刚看了这部电影/小亮剛剛看了這部新電影。

Xiǎoliàng gānggāng kàn le zhè bù xīn diànyǐng.

4. 我昨天认识了很多中国朋友/我昨天認識了很多中國朋友。

Wǒ zuótiān rènshí le hěn duō Zhōngguó péngyou.

5. 我们一起讨论了中国的环境问题/我們一起討論了中國的環境問題。

Wǒmen yìqǐ tǎolùn le Zhōngguó de huánjìng wèntí.

6. 我哥哥不喜欢喝绿茶，他喜欢喝红茶/我哥哥不喜歡喝綠茶，他喜歡喝紅茶。

Wǒ gēge bù xǐhuan hē lǜchá, tā xǐhuan hē hóngchá.

### II Insert the marker for the attributive **的** de or the marker for the adverbial **地** de into the appropriate places in the following sentences:

Example:

Given: 学生很努力做完了昨天作业/學生很努力做完了昨天作業。

Xuésheng hěn nǔlì zuò.wán le zuótiān zuòyè.

Answer: 学生很努力地做完了昨天**的**作业/學生很努力地做完了昨天**的**作業。

Xuésheng hěn nǔlì de zuò.wán le zuótiān de zuòyè.

- 大家非常高兴唱完了这首新歌/大家非常高興唱完了這首新歌  
(Everyone finished singing the new song happily.) Dàjiā fēicháng gāoxìng chàng, wán le zhèi shǒu xīn gē
- 小亮一下课就买了一些喝东西/小亮一下課就買了一些喝東西  
(Xiaoliang bought some stuff to drink right after class.) Xiǎoliàng yí xià kè jiù mǎi le yìxiē hē dōngxi
- 树上花都很好看/樹上花都很好看 (The flowers on the trees are all beautiful.) Shù shàng huā dōu hěn hǎo kàn
- 小明很兴奋看完了这本新出版书/小明很興奮看完了這本新出版書 (Xiaoming finished reading the newly published book excitedly.) Xiǎomíng hěn xìngfèn kàn, wán le zhèi běn xīn chūbǎn shū
- 老师非常详细回答了学生问题/老師非常詳細回答了學生問題  
(The teacher answered the students' questions in detail.) Lǎoshī fēicháng xiángxì huídá le xuésheng wèntí
- 小亮刚买了下个周末电影票/小亮剛買了下個週末電影票  
(Xiaoliang just bought the movie ticket for next weekend.) Xiǎoliàng gāng mǎi le xià ge zhōumò diànyǐng piào
- 小明朋友很不高兴说：“今天球赛真没意思”/小明朋友很不高興說：「今天球賽真沒意思」(Xiaoming's friend said unhappily, “Today's ball game was not exciting.”) Xiǎomíng péngyou hěn bù gāoxìng shuō: “Jíntiān qiúsài zhēn méi yìsì”

### III Rewrite the following sentences in each group as a complex sentence with multiple attributives or adverbials:

**Example:**

**Given:** 小明是一个学生, 小明是新学生, 小明是从中国来的学生  
小明是一個學生, 小明是新學生, 小明是從中國來的學生  
Xiǎomíng shì yí ge xuésheng, Xiǎomíng shì xīn xuésheng, Xiǎomíng shì cóng Zhōngguó lái de xuésheng

**Answer:** 小明是一个从中国来的新的学生/小明是一個從中國來的新學生。

Xiǎomíng shì yí ge cóng Zhōngguó lái de xīn xuésheng.

**Given:** 小明在图书馆看书, 小明昨天看书, 小明跟朋友一起看书/  
小明在圖書館看書, 小明昨天看書, 小明跟朋友一起看書  
Xiǎomíng zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū, Xiǎomíng zuótiān kàn-shū,  
Xiǎomíng gēn péngyou zài túshūguǎn yìqǐ kàn-shū  
(adverbials):

**Answer:** 小明昨天在图书馆跟朋友一起看书/小明昨天在圖書館跟朋友一起看書。

Xiǎomíng zuótiān zài túshūguǎn gēn péngyou yìqǐ kàn-shū.

- 这是一本书, 这是新书, 这是从图书馆借来的书/這是一本書, 這是新書, 這是從圖書館借來的書  
zhè shì yì běn shū, zhè shì xīn shū, zhè shì cóng túshūguǎn jiè lái de shū
- 我有一张照片, 我有全家照片, 我有很老的照片/我有一張照片, 我有全家照片, 我有很老的照片

wǒ yǒu yì zhāng zhàopiàn, wǒ yǒu quán jiā zhàopiàn, wǒ yǒu hěn lǎo de zhàopiàn

3. 小亮把水放在一张桌子上, 把水放在木头桌子上, 小亮把水放在教室里的桌子上/小亮把水放在一張桌子上, 把水放在木頭桌子上, 小亮把水放在教室裏的桌子上

Xiǎoliàng bǎ shuǐ fàng zài yì zhāng zhuōzi shàng, bǎ shuǐ fàng zài mùtou zhuōzi shàng, Xiǎoliàng bǎ shuǐ fàng zài jiàoshì li de zhuōzi shàng

4. 小明已经去了中国, 小明昨天去了中国, 小明跟他的朋友一起去了中国/小明已經去了中國, 小明昨天去了中國, 小明跟他的朋友一起去了中國

Xiǎomíng yǐjīng qù le Zhōngguó, Xiǎomíng zuótān qù le Zhōngguó, Xiǎomíng gēn tā de péngyou yíqǐ qù le Zhōngguó

5. 小亮昨天看了一场电影, 小亮在电影院看电影, 小亮很高兴地看电影/小亮昨天看了一場電影, 小亮在電影院看電影, 小亮很高興地看電影

Xiǎoliàng zuótān kàn le yì chǎng diànyǐng, Xiǎoliàng zài diànyǐngyuàn kàn diànyǐng, Xiǎoliàng hěn gāoxìng de kàn diànyǐng

6. 张老师很快乐地教中文, 张老师在纽约教中文, 张老师给美国学生教中文/張老師很快樂地教中文, 張老師在紐約教中文, 張老師給美國學生教中文

Zhāng lǎoshī hěn kuàilè de jiāo Zhōngwén, Zhāng lǎoshī zài Niǔyúē jiāo Zhōngwén, Zhāng lǎoshī gěi Měiguó xuéshēng jiāo Zhōngwén

#### IV Correct the following sentences based on the given meanings in English:

Example:

Given: \*小明做了作业昨天/\*小明做了作業昨天

\*Xiǎomíng zuò le zuóyè zuótān

Answer: 小明昨天做了作业/小明昨天做了作業。

Xiǎomíng zuótān zuò le zuóyè.

1. \*这是我的教室上中文课/\*這是我的教室上中文課

(This is my classroom where I take Chinese class.)

\*zhè shì wǒ de jiàoshì shàng Zhōngwén kè

2. \*长城是非常有名的一个地方在中国/\*長城是非常有名的一個地方在中國

(The Great Wall is a famous place in China.)

\*Chángchéng shì fēicháng yōumíng de yí ge difang zài Zhōngguó

3. \*我的爸爸不喜欢别人开他车/\*我的爸爸不喜歡別人開他車

(My father doesn't like others to drive his car.)

\*wǒ de bàba bù xǐhuan biéren kāi tā chē

4. \*小明姐姐喜欢穿衣服红色的/\*小明姐姐喜歡穿衣服紅色的

(Xiaoming's older sister likes wearing red clothes.)

\*Xiǎomíng jiějie xǐhuan chuān yīfú hóngsè de

5. \*小亮就要毕业了明年/\*小亮就要畢業了明年 (Xiaoliang will graduate next year.)

\*Xiǎoliàng jiù yào bìyè le míngnián

6. \*老师说：“真好！你就回答了我的问题这么快”/\*老師說：  
「真好！你就回答了我的問題這麼快」(The teacher said, "Great! You answered my questions so quickly.")  
\*lǎoshī shuō: "Zhēn hǎo! Nǐ jiù huídá le wǒ de wèntí zhème kuài"
7. \*学生们走到图书馆从教室/\*學生們走到圖書館從教室  
(Students walked to the library from the classroom.)  
\*xuéshengmen zǒu dào túshūguǎn cóng jiàoshì
8. \*请到我的办公室来马上下课以后/\*請到我的辦公室來馬上  
下課以後  
(Please come to my office immediately after class.)  
\*qǐng dào wǒ de bàngōngshì lái mǎshang xià-kè yǐhou

**V Complete the following dialogues with complete sentences based on the given meanings in English:**

1. A: 请问，你毕业以后打算做什么/ 請問，你畢業以後打算  
做什麼？  
Qǐngwèn, nǐ bìyè yǐhou dǎsuan zuò shénme?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (I am going to study Chinese at Peking University  
for one year and then look for a job in New York).
2. A: 你昨天到哪儿去了/你昨天到哪兒去了？  
Nǐ zuótiān dào nǎr qù le?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (I went to the school bookstore and bought a newly  
published book yesterday).
3. A: 谁是你的中文老师/誰是你的中文老師？  
Shéi shì nǐ de Zhōngwén lǎoshī?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (The person who is holding a cup of coffee is my Chinese  
teacher).
4. A: 你为什么笑/你為什麼笑？  
Nǐ wèishénme xiào?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (My Chinese teacher suddenly sang a funny song in the  
classroom just now).
5. A: 你什么时候看书/你什麼時候看書？  
Nǐ shénme shíhou kàn-shū?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (I like reading books in the library every afternoon).
6. A: 请说说你刚买的车/請說說你剛買的車。  
Qǐng shuōshuo nǐ gāng mǎi de chē.  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (My new car is a big, beautiful, and red car).



## Special sentences

In the following chapters of this unit, we will introduce several special sentences that are either unique to Chinese or often cause confusion for learners. The special sentences to be discussed are as follows:

- Chapter 22: The 把 bǎ construction
- Chapter 23: The 被 bì construction
- Chapter 24: Questions
- Chapter 25: Comparisons
- Chapter 26: Existential sentences
- Chapter 27: Emphatic sentences



# 22

## The 把 bǎ construction

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the grammatical features and structure of the bǎ construction
- ★ To learn when to use or not to use the bǎ sentence
- ★ To learn the conditions of using the bǎ sentence

The 把 bǎ construction is unique to Chinese, and learners often find it confusing and difficult to use. The complexity of this construction increases when a bǎ sentence expresses the same meaning as a regular sentence, like the examples below:

- (1)a. 小亮做完了作业。  
小亮做完了作業。  
Xiǎoliàng zuò.wán le zuò.yè.
- b. 小亮**把**作业做完了。  
小亮**把**作業做完了。  
Xiǎoliàng bǎ zuò.yè zuò.wán le.  
Xiaoliang has completed her homework.

In the above example, (1a) is a regular SVO sentence and (1b) is a sentence with 把 bǎ, but the meanings of the two sentences are about the same, and thus the two can be translated as the same sentence in English. You may naturally therefore have the following question: *What is the bǎ construction in Chinese for, and why should I learn it?*

In the following sections, we will discuss the features of the bǎ construction and the conditions for using bǎ sentences in detail.

### 22.1 The features of the bǎ construction

Since there is no English equivalent of the bǎ construction, we will examine it in specific situations. Let's first look at the following two scenarios:

**Scenario 1:** You saw that John ate an apple, but Lisa didn't, and she asked you, "What did John do?" You may answer the question as in (2a):

(2)a. John ate an apple.

b. 小明吃了一个苹果。

小明吃了一個蘋果。

Xiǎomíng chī le yí ge píngguǒ.

Since word order (SVO) in English is the same as Chinese, the corresponding Chinese sentence in (2b) matches the English sentence almost word for word.

**Scenario 2:** There was an apple on the table, which was Lisa's, and you saw that John took the apple and ate it. When Lisa found that the apple was gone and asked you: "Where is **the** apple?", most likely, your answer would be (3a) below:

(3)a. John **took** the apple and ate it.

b. 小明**把**苹果吃了。

小明**把**蘋果吃了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ píngguǒchī le.

The most appropriate corresponding Chinese sentence to (3a) is (3b) with **bǎ**, though other alternative Chinese sentences can also be used to translate sentence (3a). There are two reasons for this:

i. **Definite vs. indefinite:**

- The noun object "apple" is **definite** in (3a), that is, the speaker knows it (saw it) and the hearer Lisa also knows it (it's hers); therefore, the definite article "the" is used.
- On the contrary, "apple" in (2a) is **indefinite** because the hearer, Lisa, does not know it; therefore, the indefinite article "a/an" is used.

Chinese has no such articles to distinguish definiteness but has other ways instead. For example:

- a regular SVO sentence in Chinese can be used to express an *indefinite* noun, such as the object 苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ (apple) after 一个/一個 yí ge (one) in (2a); however,
- the object of **bǎ** must be *definite* in the **bǎ** construction, such as 苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ (apple) in (3b).

ii. **The features of the verbs and the meaning of the **bǎ** construction:**

- Sentence (3a) has a meaning of *handling* something and completing it, that is, one *takes* the apple and *eats* (finishes) it.
- The **bǎ** construction has about the same meaning, that is, one issues an action that can make the object of **bǎ** have some change, cause some result, or bring influence. For example, one eats (吃 chī) the apple (苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ) and the action can make the apple smaller or gone as in (3b). This is why the **bǎ** construction is commonly referred to as the "*disposal form*".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *disposal form* 处置式/處置式 chǔzhì shì was first defined by well-known linguist Wang Li (2014 [1943]: 160 ff), that is, "The disposal form states how a person is handled, manipulated, or dealt with; how something is deposited of; or how an affair is conducted" (translated by Li [1974: 200–01]; cited from Li and Thompson [1981: 468]).

- One interesting thing should be mentioned here: the meaning of “take” is to hold something with the hand(s) as in (3a), and the original meaning of 把 bǎ is also “to hold/take,” a generic hand-movement with the hand radical 扌 in the character, which can still be found in modern Chinese, although it is now used mostly as a preposition, as in (3b).

Based on these observations, we can summarize the features of the bǎ construction as follows.

- The **subject** must be the doer of the action, such as Xiaoliang in (1b) and Xiaoming in (3b);
- The **object** of bǎ must undergo the action and be definite or specific typically, such as 作业/作業 zuòyè (homework) in (1b) and 苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ (apple) in (3b);
- The **predicate** (main verb) must be a transitive verb with a dynamic meaning typically that has some *disposal* effect on the object of bǎ and produces the result of the action, such as 做 zuò (do) in (1b) and 吃 chī (eat) in (3b);
- There must be **other elements** after the predicate to indicate the result or change, such as 了 le in sentence (3b) or 完了 wán le (completed) in (1b), both of which indicate the result of the actions.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, the bǎ construction can be defined simply as follows:

*The subject issues an action applied to the object introduced by 把 bǎ, and the action can bring about a change or result.*

Then we can formulate a **general pattern of the bǎ construction** based on its features, as below:

*S + bǎ + O + V + other elements*

We will discuss each element of the above pattern in detail in the following section.

## 22.2 The structure of the bǎ construction

### ► 22.2.1 The subject of the bǎ construction

As identified earlier, the subject in the bǎ construction issues the action (the doer of the action). Most often, the subject is a human being, such as Xiaoliang in (1b) and Xiaoming in (3b), but it also can be a non-human being such as:

<sup>2</sup> There are a few exceptions, especially when the verb is a V-C compound, such as 取消 qǔxiāo (lit. take-disappear, cancel) in the following sentence: 今天事情很多, 我建议把下午的会议取消/今天事情很多, 我建議把下午的會議取消. Jīntiān shìqíng hěn duō, wǒ jiànyì bǎ xiàwǔ dehuiyi qǔxiāo (There are many things today, thus, I suggest canceling the meeting this afternoon).

• **animals**, such as 小狗 xiǎo gǒu (small dog) in (4):

(4) 小亮的**小狗**把苹果吃了。

小亮的**小狗**把蘋果吃了。

Xiǎoliàng de xiǎo gǒu bǎ píngguǒ chī le.

Xiaoliang's small dog ate the apple.

• **natural force**, such as 风/風 fēng (wind) in (5):

(5) **风**把门吹开了。

**風**把門吹開了。

Fēng bǎ mén chuī.kāi le.

The wind blew the door open.

## ► 22.2.2 The object of the bǎ construction

We have already explained and demonstrated that the object of bǎ must be definite. Nevertheless, the object might also be **specific** in certain contexts. Suppose the situation is as below:

**Scenario 3:** Xiaoming's father was in his study and heard a crashing sound from the kitchen, so he asked: “怎么回事儿/怎麼回事兒？Zěnme huí shír?” (What's happening?) Most likely, Xiaoming's mother would answer him as in (6), if it was Xiaoming who broke a glass cup:

(6) 没事儿，小明打碎了**一个**玻璃杯子。  
沒事兒，小明打碎了**一個**玻璃杯子。  
Méi shìr, Xiǎomíng dǎ.pò le yí ge bēizi.

Not a big deal, Xiaoming broke a glass cup.

Since Xiaoming's father didn't see what happened in the kitchen, Xiaoming's mother just needs to deliver the general information by saying the above sentence. So, the number — yí (one) and the English indefinite article “a” can be used before the object to indicate that the noun 杯子 bēizi (cup) is **indefinite** in (6).

However, if there are glass cups, porcelain cups, and wine bottles in the kitchen (Xiaoming's father knows), then Xiaoming's mother will want to *identify* that it is **one glass cup** that is broken but not others. So, the glass cup becomes **specific** to Xiaoming's mother and she can use a bǎ sentence to refer to that particular glass cup, with the number — yí (one), as in (7):

(7) 没事儿，小明把**(一)**个玻璃杯子打碎了。  
沒事兒，小明把**(一)**個玻璃杯子打碎了。  
Méi shìr, Xiǎomíng bǎ (yí) ge bēizi dǎ.pò le.

Not a big deal, Xiaoming broke **one** glass cup.

Xiaoming's father can also *specify* the cup from other things after hearing the sentence, thus the bǎ sentence is appropriate in this scenario. Nevertheless, the number — yí (one) is often dropped and just the measure word, 个/個 ge, remains, as in (7). This case and the other earlier examples demonstrate that the object of bǎ must be definite or specific.

### ► 22.2.3 The verb and other elements in the bǎ construction

In the bǎ construction, the relationship between the verb and the element after the verb is very important. This is to say:

- the **verb** is not only a transitive verb with a dynamic meaning, but it also has some disposal effect; and
- the **element** after the verb should show the change, result, or influence of the verb.

If a bǎ sentence doesn't meet the requirements even though the object is definite, it is still possible to make an ill-formed bǎ sentence. For example, both (8a) and (8b), copied from (3b), follow the general pattern of the bǎ construction pointed out earlier, but sentence (8a) is a grammatically correct bǎ sentence while (8b) is not.

#### General pattern:

*subject + bǎ + object + verb + other elements*

- (8)a. 小明把苹果吃了。  
 小明把蘋果吃了。  
 Xiǎomíng bǎ píngguǒ chī le.  
 (Xiaoming ate the apple.)
- b. \*/小明把中文课上了  
 \*/小明把中文課上了  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ Zhōngwén kè shàng le  
 (lit. Xiaoming ba Chinese class attend le)

Why? This is because:

- the verb 吃 chī (eat) in (8a) can make the object 苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ (apple) change; specifically, it makes the apple either smaller or gone as mentioned previously; but
- the verb 上(课/課) shàng(kè) (attend [class]) in (8b) cannot change the Chinese class.

However, if we add the complement 完 wán (finish) after the verb 上(课/課) shàng(kè) (attend [class]), as in (9) below, the sentence becomes a well-formed bǎ sentence.

- (9) 小明把中文课上完了。  
 小明把中文課上完了。  
 Xiǎomíng bǎ Zhōngwén kè shàng.wán le.  
 Xiaoming finished his Chinese class.

The reason for this is that sentence (9) shows the change and the result of the action “attend,” specifically, Xiaoming attended (上 shàng) the class and completed (完 wán) the action of attending the class from the beginning to the end.

The result of this feature of bǎ sentences is that all types of complements listed in Chapter 20, which indicate the change or result of an action – except the

potential complement, which indicates potential – are often used after the main verb. An elaboration on the complements and the other elements after the verb in the bǎ construction follows.

- **Resultative complements** are used commonly in the bǎ construction because the complements, indicated by their names, signify the result of the verb:

- 完 wán (finish) in (1b) and (9)
- 开/開 kāi (open) in (5)
- 破 pò (broken) in (7)
- 坏/壞 huài ([becoming] bad) after the verb 摔 shuāi (fall; break) in (10)
- 错/錯 cuò (wrong) after the verb 写/寫 xiě (write) in (11)

(10) 小亮把手机摔壞了。

小亮把手機摔壞了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ shǒujī shuāi.huài le.

Xiaoliang dropped and broke her cell phone.

(11) 小明把字写錯了。

小明把字寫錯了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ zì xiě.cuò le.

Xiaoming wrote the character wrong.

- **Directional complements** are popular in bǎ sentence constructions because most directional complements can express a directional meaning and also a result. For example, 开/開 kāi in (5) above contains a directional meaning from closed to open but also a result, the state of 开/開 kāi (open) is the result of the action 吹 chuī (blow). Examples of directional complements are:

- the *simple* directional complement 来/來 lái (come), as in (12)

- the *compound* directional complement 进来/進來 jinlai (into [towards the speaker]), as in (13) and (14), in which the place word 房间/房間 fángjiān (room), if there is one, should be inserted between the compound complement (see §20.4.3):

(12) 小亮把药送來了。

小亮把藥送來了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ yào sòng lái le.

Xiaoliang sent the medicine (towards the speaker).

(13) 小明把电视搬进来 了。

小明把電視搬進來了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ diànshì bān jinlai le.

Xiaoliang moved in the TV (towards the speaker).

(14) 小明把电视搬进房间來了。

小明把電視搬進房間來了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ diànshì bān jìn fángjiān lái le.

Xiaoliang moved the TV into the room (towards the speaker).

- Quantity complements can be used in bǎ sentences because the complements indicate the frequency of action, such as 两遍/兩遍 liǎng biàn ([read] two times in (15), or the duration of action, such as 三个小时/三個小時 sān ge xiǎoshí ([opened for] three hours) in (16). This kind of bǎ sentence bring focus to the frequency or duration of action and highlights them as new and important information. Since frequency or duration are not typically viewed as results, this usage occurs in a specific context with necessary background information. In (15), Xiaoming read twice instead of just once because he is studious, or perhaps had not fully understood after the initial reading. In (16a), the background of air circulation suggests that Xiaoliang thinks that a period of three hours is required to keep the air fresh.

(15) 老师只让读一遍课文, 可是小明把课文读了**两遍**。

老師只讓讀一遍課文, 可是小明把課文讀了**兩遍**。

Lǎoshī zhǐ ràng dú yí biàn kèwén, kěshì Xiāomíng bǎ kèwén dù le liǎng biàn.

The professor requested that the lesson text be read only once, but Xiaoming read the text twice.

(16)a. 为了让房间流通新鲜空气, 小亮每天都把窗户**开三个小时**。

為了讓房間流通新鮮空氣, 小亮每天都把窗戶**開三個小時**。

Wèi le ràng fángjiān liútōng xīnxiān kòngqi, Xiāoliàng měitiān dōu bǎ chuānghu **kāi sān ge xiǎoshí**.

In order to circulate fresh air in the room, Xiaoliang opens the window for three hours every day.

b. 老师太厉害了, 把一个”把”字讲了**三个小时**。

老師太厲害了, 把一個「把」字講了**三個小時**。

Lǎoshī tài lìhai le, bǎ yí ge “bǎ” zì jiǎng le **sān ge xiǎoshí**.

Our teacher is so good, s/he lectured on the single character “bǎ” for three hours.

Please be aware the complement of duration 三个小时/三個小時 sān ge xiǎoshí (three hours) in (16) is not commonly used in the bǎ construction because it is restricted to only a few verbs with a sustained meaning such as 关/關 guān (close) or 开/開 kāi (open), or context with emphasis on contradiction of expectations, as in (15) and (16b).

- Manner complements indicate the degree of the action with the particle 得 de and are typically used in bǎ sentences because the degree also shows a change. For example, in (17), the room changed from the state of being dirty to being spotless in 很干净/很乾淨 hěn gānjìng (very clean) after the action 打扫/打扫 dǎsǎo (clean up), and in (18) Xiaoming's character writing reaches a degree of 漂亮极了/漂亮極了 piàoliang jí le (being extremely beautiful):

(17) 小亮把房间打扫**得很干净**。

小亮把房間打掃**得很乾淨**。

Xiāoliàng bǎ fángjiān dǎsǎo **de hěn gānjìng**.

Xiaoming cleaned the room immaculately.

(18) 小明把汉字写得漂亮极了。

小明把漢字寫得漂亮極了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ Hánzì xiě de piàoliang jí le.

Xiaoming wrote the Chinese characters extremely beautifully.

- Prepositional phrases as complements can also be used with bǎ sentences:

(19) 小明把书放在桌子上了。

小明把書放在桌子上了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ shū fàng zài zhuōzi shàng le.

Xiaoming put the book on the table.

The reason that the prepositional phrase (PP) 在桌子上 zài zhuōzi shàng (on the table) can be used as a complement is that it indicates the result of the action; specifically, the state of 在桌子上 zài zhuōzi shàng (on the table) is the result of the action 放 fàng (put). We will elaborate on this point more in §22.3.1 below.

- The verb suffix 了 le cannot be used with all verbs, but it can typically be used with verbs that can cause a change or result. Examples of this are 吃 chī (eat) in sentences (3a), (8a), and (4) explained earlier, 喝 hē (drink) in (20), which changes the amount of water, or 丢 diū (lose) in (21), which causes a result of the object 手机 shǒujī (cell phone) disappearing:

(20) 小明把瓶子里的水喝了。

小明把瓶子裏的水喝了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ píngzi li de shuǐ hē le.

Xiaoming drank the water in the bottle.

(21) 小亮把手机丢了。

小亮把手機丢了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ shǒujī diū le.

Xiaoliang lost her cell phone.

- The verb suffix 着/zhe is not commonly used in bǎ sentences because the verbs are limited to the meaning that matches with the durative suffix 着/zhe, such as 开/開 kāi (open) in (22) and 带/帶 dài (bring) in (23). The usage of 着/zhe is seen most in imperative sentences:

(22) 小亮, 请把窗户开着。

小亮, 請把窗戶開著。

Xiǎoliàng, qǐng bǎ chuānghu kāi zhe.

Xiaoliang, please keep the window open.

(23) 回学校上学, 别忘了把书带着。

回學校上學, 別忘了把書帶著。

Huí xuéxiào shàng-xué, bié wàng le bǎ shū dài zhe.

When you go back to school, don't forget to bring your books.

- The verb suffix **过/過** guo is typically used with *resultative complements*, such as 写错/寫錯 xiě.cuò (write wrong) in (24) because the suffix **过/過** guo signifies a past experience or activity but does not indicate the result of the action:

- (24) 小亮把自己的名字写错过, 小明也把自己的名字写错过。  
 小亮把自己的名字寫錯過, 小明也把自己的名字寫錯過。  
 Xiǎoliàng bǎ zìjǐ de míngzì xiě.cuò guo, Xiāomíng yě bǎ zìjǐ de míngzì xiě.  
 cuò guo.

Xiaoliang wrote her name wrong (before), so did Xiaoming.

- **Reduplicated verbs** denote a meaning of degree, “a little bit,” and thus can be used with bǎ sentences. Reduplicated verbs typically deliver meaning with a less formal effect (see §10.6); as such, they are often used with bǎ in *imperative* sentences with a *mild* tone. For example, 写/寫 xiě (write) in (25), which carries an imperative and tentative meaning, and 整理 zhěnglǐ (arrange) in (26), which has a mild imperative meaning:

- (25) (The scenario is as follows: Xiaoming's teacher encourages Xiaoming to try writing the character):

你把这个字写写。  
 你把這個字寫寫。  
 Nǐ bǎ zhèi ge zì xiěxié.

Write this character. (Would you?)

- (26) (The scenario is as follows: Xiaoming works in the library as a student helper, his supervisor assigns work for him):

你把书架整理整理。  
 你把書架整理整理。  
 Nǐ bǎ shūjia zhěngli-zhěngli.

Rearrange the bookshelves a bit (please).

- **Auxiliary verb 能 néng (can) and the potential complement:** as elaborated on previously, bǎ constructions cannot be used with the potential complement. The reason for this is that:

- the **potential complement**, as its name implies, indicates a possible potential of whether the subject does or does not have the *ability to reach* the result *through* an action. For example, in (27), Xiaoming may have the ability to reach the result 完 wán (finish) through the action 吃 chī (eat), yet the apple still exists; on the contrary,
- the **bǎ construction** emphasizes that the subject *issues* an action that has the *disposal* effect *causing* the result. For example, in (28a) Xiaoming issued the action 吃 chī (eat) that disposed of the object 苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ (apple) and caused it to be finished (result).

- (27) 小明吃得完这个苹果。  
 小明吃得完這個蘋果。  
 Xiāomíng chī de wán zhèi ge píngguǒ.  
 Xiaoming can finish eating this apple.

- (28)a. 小明**把**这个苹果吃完了。  
 小明**把**這個蘋果吃完了。  
 Xiǎomíng bǎ zhèi ge píngguǒ chī.wán le.  
 Xiaoming finished eating this apple.

- b. \*小明**把**这个苹果吃得完  
 \*小明**把**這個蘋果吃得完  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ zhèi ge píngguǒ chī de wán  
 (lit. Xiaoming *ba* this apple eat finish)
- c. \*小明**把**这个苹果吃不完  
 \*小明**把**這個蘋果吃不完  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ zhèi ge píngguǒ chī bu wán  
 (lit. Xiaoming *ba* this apple eat not finish)

The differences exemplified in (28b) and (28c) demonstrate that the potential complement is incompatible with the **bǎ** construction.

To express the same meaning as in (27) with the **bǎ** construction, an auxiliary verb, 能 néng, (can) can be added before **bǎ**, as in (29a), and in (29b) with a negative meaning:

- (29)a. 小明**能**把这个苹果吃完。  
 小明**能**把這個蘋果吃完。  
 Xiǎomíng néng bǎ zhèi ge píngguǒ chī.wán.  
 Xiaoming can finish eating this apple.
- b. 小明**不能**把这个苹果吃完。  
 小明**不能**把這個蘋果吃完。  
 Xiǎomíng bù néng bǎ zhèi ge píngguǒ chī.wán.  
 Xiaoming cannot finish eating this apple.

The key to understanding the **bǎ** construction in **把这个苹果吃完/把這個蘋果吃完** bǎ zhèi ge píngguǒ chī.wán (finish eating this apple) is that the unit is governed by 能 néng (can) in (29a) or 不能 bù néng (cannot) in (29b); as such, the whole sentence shows that the subject Xiaoming has the ability (能 néng) to issue the action “eat,” which can produce a disposal effect on the object “apple,” and cause the result “finish” as in (29a), or does not have the ability as in (29b).

- **Negation of **bǎ** construction:** the negative adverb 不 bù (not) can be added before the auxiliary (modal) verbs, such as 能 néng (can) in (29b) above, or in sentences expressing a *suppositional* condition (see §20.1), such as (30) below.

- (30) 你不**把**作业做完, 就不要去看球赛。  
 你不**把**作業做完, 就不要去看球賽。  
 Nǐ bù bǎ zuòyè zuò.wán, jiù bú yào qù kàn qiúsài.

*If you do not complete your homework, do not go to watch the ball game.*

Although 不 bù (not) can be used, typically 没(有)/沒有 méi(yǒu) (not) is used, and it is placed before bǎ because of the *done* meaning of the bǎ construction.

- (31) 小亮没(有)把作业做完。  
 小亮沒(有)把作業做完。  
 Xiǎoliàng méi(yǒu) bǎ zuòyè zuò.wán.

Xiaoliang didn't complete his homework.

Please be aware that the negation of the bǎ construction has the meaning of "not done," instead of merely "didn't do"; for example, Xiaoliang actually did his homework but just has not finished it yet, as in (31).

- **Auxiliary verbs and adverbs should precede bǎ.** In addition to the examples of the auxiliary verb 能 néng (can) in (29) and negative adverbs 不 bù (not) in (30) and 没(有) /沒有 méi (yǒu) (not) in (31), the following sentences also show that the auxiliary verb 应该/應該 yīnggāi (should) in (32) and the adverb 也 yě (also) in (33) should be placed before bǎ:

- (32) 你应该把书放到书架上。  
 你應該把書放到書架上。  
 Nǐ yīnggāi bǎ shū fàng.dào shūjìa shàng.  
 You should put the books on the bookshelf.

- (33) 小明做完了今天的作业，小亮也把今天的作业做完了。  
 小明做完了今天的作業，小亮也把今天的作業做完了。  
 Xiǎomíng zuò.wán le jīntiān de zuòyè, Xiǎoliàng yě bǎ jīntiān de zuòyè zuò.  
 wán le.

Xiaoming finished today's homework, and Xiaoliang also finished today's homework.

### 22.3 When to use or not use the bǎ construction

At the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned that the regular SVO sentence and the bǎ sentence can sometimes express about the same meaning. It seems that most bǎ sentences listed above can be converted into regular SVO sentences. Then you may ask:

#### When should I use the bǎ sentence?

To answer this question, let's first examine all typical types of the bǎ construction, which have the disposal meaning. It seems that most types of bǎ sentences can be converted into regular SVO sentences without substantial meaning differences, although some bǎ sentences cannot be converted. Table 22.1 summarizes this observation.

**Table 22.1** The *bǎ* sentences and the corresponding SVO sentences

#	Subject	<i>bǎ</i>	Object	Verb	Other elements (Complement)	Converted to SVO sentences / English Meaning
1	小明 Xiǎomíng	<b>把</b> <b>bǎ</b>	作业/作業 zuòyè	做 zuò	了 Le	小明做了作业/小明做了作業。 Xiǎomíng zuò le zuòyè. Xiaoming finished the homework.
2	你 nǐ		手机/手機 shǒujī	拿 ná	着/著 Zhe	你拿着手机/你拿著手機。 Nǐ ná zhe shǒujī. You hold the cell phone (please).
3	你 nǐ		这个字/ 這個字 zhèi ge zì	写/寫 xiě	写/寫 Xiě	你写写这个字/你寫寫這個字。 Nǐ xiěxie zhèi ge zì. You write this character (would you?).
4	小明 Xiǎomíng		饭/飯 fan	吃 chī	完了 wán le	小明吃完了饭/小明吃完了飯。 Xiǎomíng chī.wán le fàn. Xiaoming finished eating.
5	小明 Xiǎomíng		桌子 zhuōzi	擦了 cā le	两遍/兩遍 liǎng biàn	小明擦了两遍桌子/小明擦了兩遍 桌子。 Xiǎomíng cā le liǎng biàn zhuōzi. Xiaoming wiped the table two times.
6	小明 Xiǎomíng		弟弟 dìdi	叫 jiào	起来了/ 起來了 qǐlai le	小明叫起来了弟弟/小明叫起 來了弟弟。 Xiǎomíng jiào qǐlai le dìdi. Xiaoming woke his younger brother up.

7	小明 Xiǎomíng	房间/房間 fángjiān	打扫/打掃 dǎsǎo	得干净极了/得乾淨極了 de gānjìng jí le	<b>NO (SVO)</b> Xiaoming cleanedup the room immaculately.
8	小明 Xiǎomíng	书/書 shū	放 fàng	在桌子上了 zài zhuōzǐ shàng le	<b>NO (SVO)</b> Xiaoming put the book on the table.
9	小明 Xiǎomíng	女朋友 nǚpéngyou	送 sòng	到机场了/ 到機場了 dào jīchǎng le	<b>NO (SVO)</b> Xiaoming saw his girlfriend off at the airport.
10	小明 Xiǎomíng	作业/作業 zuòyè	交 jiāo	给老师了/ 給老師了 gěi lǎoshī le	<b>NO (SVO)</b> Xiaoming handed in his homework to the teacher.
11	小明 Xiǎomíng	这本书/ 這本書 zhèi běn shū	翻译/翻譯 fānyì	成英文了 chéng Yīngwén le	<b>NO (SVO)</b> Xiaoming translated the book into English.

The following observations can be made from Table 22.1:

- ♦ bǎ sentences **can be converted into regular SVO sentences with simpler elements** after the verbs.
  - one word: 了 le, 着/著 zhe, and 写/寫 xiě (write) as in #1, #2, and #3, respectively
  - two words: 完了 wán le (finished) as in #4 and 两遍/兩遍 liǎng biàn (two times) as in #5
  - three words: 起来了/起來了 qǐlai le (rise up) as in #6
- ♦ bǎ sentences **cannot be converted to SVO sentences with more complex elements** after the verbs.
  - the manner complement indicating the degree with the particle 得 de as in #7
  - prepositional phrases as in #8–#11

These observations provide us with a clue, that is, if the complement after the verb is more complex, it may become obligatory to use the bǎ construction. It may also imply that there is a device in Chinese that adjusts the arrangements of components if the components are very complex in a sentence. We will elaborate on this point based on the following observations.

As explained previously, the typical word order in Chinese is that the object follows the verb in the form of the SVO structure, as in (34), and the complement likewise follows the verb in the form of the SVC structure, as in (35):

- (34) 小亮打扫房间。 (SVO)  
 小亮打掃房間。  
 Xiǎoliàng dǎsǎo fángjiān.  
 Xiaoliang cleans up the room.
- (35) 小亮打扫得很干净。 (SVC)  
 小亮打掃得很乾淨。  
 Xiǎoliàng dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng.  
 Xiaoliang cleaned up immaculately.

If one wants to express the meaning of sentences (34) and (35) in one sentence, then the verb 打扫/打掃 dǎsǎo (clean up) would take two elements: the object 房间/房間 fángjiān (room) and the complement 很干净/很乾淨 hěn gānjìng (very neat) to form a sentence, as in (36) below, which **cannot** be accepted in Chinese:

- (36) \*小亮打扫房间很干净  
 \*小亮打掃房間很乾淨  
 \*Xiǎoliàng dǎsǎo fángjiān hěn gānjìng  
 (lit. Xiaoliang clean up the room very neat)

The two elements after the verb result in a “traffic jam.”<sup>3</sup> To avoid this, Chinese uses bǎ to move the object, 房间/房間 fángjiān (room), to before the verb, 打扫/打掃 dǎsǎo (clean up), and leaves only the manner complement, 很干净/很乾淨 hěn gānjìng (very neat), after the verb, as in (37):

<sup>3</sup> This term is borrowed from *Chinese Primer: Notes and Exercises* (Ch'en et al., 1994: 109).

- (37) 小亮**把**房间打扫得很干净。  
 小亮**把**房間打掃得很乾淨。  
 Xiǎoliàng bǎ fángjiān dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng.  
 Xiaoliang cleaned up the room immaculately.

The bǎ sentence in (37) not only:

- reduces the “load” of the verb by bringing the object, 房间/房間 fángjiān (room), to the front of the verb; but also
- cleans up the “traffic jam” by leaving only the complement after the verb.

Thus, it makes the sentence “simple” because the preposition bǎ takes one element (the object), and the verb takes another element (the complement).

Structurally speaking, Chinese tends to avoid having both the object and the complement after the main verb, for the bǎ construction, as well as other types of sentences, examples of which follow.

i. **Verb copying**, as in (38c):

- (38)a. 小明**学**中文。 (SVO)  
 小明**學**中文。  
 Xiǎomíng xué Zhōngwén.  
 Xiaoming studies Chinese.
- b. 小明**学**得很好。 (SVC)  
 小明**學**得很好。  
 Xiǎomíng xué de hěn hǎo.  
 Xiaoming studies very well.
- c. 小明**学**中**文****学**得很好。 (SVO-VC)  
 小明**學**中**文****學**得很好。  
 Xiǎomíng xué Zhōngwén xué de hěn hǎo.  
 Xiaoming studies Chinese very well.

Each instance of the verb 学/學 xué (study) after duplication takes only one element, either the object 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) or the complement 很好 hěn hǎo (very well) in (38c).

ii. **Topic-comment** sentences, as in (39a) below which combines the meanings of (38a) and (38b) above:

- (39)a. **中文**小明学得很好。  
**中文**小明學得很好。  
 Zhōngwén Xiǎomíng xué de hěn hǎo.  
 As for Chinese, Xiaoming studies it very well.

b. 小明(把)中文学得很好。

小明(把)中文學得很好。

Xiǎomíng (bǎ) zhōngwén xué de hěn hǎo.

As for Xiaoming, he has done very well studying Chinese.

The object, 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese), in (38a) is moved to the beginning of the sentence to serve as the topic, and the subject-predicate phrase 小明学得很好/小明學得很好 Xiǎomíng xué de hěn hǎo (Xiaoming studies very well) serves as the complement in which the verb 学/學 xué (study) only takes one element: the complement 很好 hěn hǎo (very well) in (39a) above.

Chinese is rather versatile in terms of its use of topics. Here one can further topicalize 小明 Xiǎomíng from (39a) to get (39b). Notice that 把 bǎ in (39b) is optional and does not influence the meaning. This illustrates why the object of 把 bǎ is also referred to as a secondary topic.

iii. **The bēi construction** in (40) below expresses the meanings of (34) and (35) above (please also refer to the next chapter):

(40) 房间被小亮打扫得很干净。

房間被小亮打掃得很乾淨。

Fángjiān bēi Xiǎoliàng dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng.

The room was cleaned up immaculately by Xiaoliang.

Based on the above observation and the features of the bǎ construction stated earlier, we can now define three conditions for forming a bǎ sentence:

- The object (noun phrase) of bǎ is definite or specific.
- The main verb has a dynamic meaning with the disposal effect.
- The complement after the main verb is more complex.

Hence, we can provide a general rule to answer the question at the beginning of this section: *the more a sentence fulfills the above conditions, the more likely the bǎ sentence is to be used*. More specifically, there are three circumstances in which the bǎ sentence is used: *obligatory, most likely, and impossible*. We will now discuss these individually.

### ► 22.3.1 Obligatory conditions of using the bǎ sentence

If we examine the above two types of bǎ constructions, which **cannot** be converted into regular SVO sentences, we can find that there are clear markers:

- ◆ the complement marker 得 de for bǎ sentences with the manner complement
- ◆ the preposition markers 在 zài (be at/in/on), 到 dào (to), 给/給 gěi (to), and 成 chéng ([become] to) for bǎ sentences with prepositional phrases

Accordingly, each has its own requirements and specific pattern. We will discuss each type separately below.

## I. Manner complements

Manner complements have been discussed through examples (34)–(37) above. Now we can summarize the conditions that necessitate the bǎ construction in this type of sentence:

- The verbs should involve **two elements**: the **object** and the **manner complement**, typically indicating a change from one state to another.
- The **marker** is the particle 得 de.

Its specific pattern is:

### Specific pattern 1:

*S + bǎ + O + V + 得 de + manner complement (state change)*

Example (41) illustrates this:

- (41) 小亮把中文歌唱得好听极了。  
 小亮把中文歌唱得好聽極了。  
 Xiǎoliàng bǎ Zhōngwén gē chàng de hǎotīng jí le.  
 Xiaoliang sang Chinese songs so pleasantly.

## II. Prepositional phrase after the verb

There are two subtypes of prepositional phrases after a verb, as discussed in i. **location change** and ii. **causative change** below:

- i. **Location change** has the location marking the end of the action. As pointed out earlier, location change is also the result of the action. The features of this type of change are as follows:

- **Verbs** should involve the object and place. The typical verb should contain the motion meaning, such as 放 fàng (put), 搬 bān (move), 挂/guà (hang), and 送 sòng (give).
- **Markers** are prepositions, such as 在 zài (be at/in/on) and 到 dào (to), that introduce a location, or 给/give gěi (to) that introduces a person. Only these three prepositions can be used after a verb in spoken language (see §14.3).

The specific patterns are as follows:

### Specific pattern 2:

*S + bǎ + O + V + 在 zài/到 dào + location*

Examples are as follows:

- (42) 小亮把衣服放在/到床上了。  
 Xiǎoliàng bǎ yīfú fàng zài/dào chuáng shàng le.  
 Xiaoliang put the clothes on/onto the bed.
- (43) 小明把盒子搬到楼上了。  
 小明把盒子搬到樓上了。  
 Xiǎomíng bǎ hézi bān dào lóu shàng le.  
 Xiaoming moved the box upstairs.

- (44) 小亮**把**照片**挂**在墙上了。  
小亮**把**照片**掛**在牆上了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ zhàopiàn guà zài qiáng shàng le.

Xiaoliang hung the picture on the wall.

- (45) 小明**把**车**开**到飞机场了。  
小明**把**車**開**到飛機場了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ chē kāi dào fēijīchǎng le.

Xiaoming drove the car to the airport.

In the above examples, the verbs 放 fàng (put) in (42), 搬 bān (move) in (43), 挂/掛 guà (hang) in (44), and 开/開 kāi (drive) in (45) make the objects change their locations from unknown places to the bed in (42), upstairs in (43), the wall in (44), and the airport in (45), and thus, the bǎ construction is needed.

It should be noted here that the verbs 来/來 lái (come) and 去 qù (go) can be added after the locations to indicate the direction towards or away from the speaker in the above sentences, except with the preposition 在 zài (be at/in/on). For example, sentence (43) above can be changed to (46) below:

- (46) 小明**把**盒子**搬**到楼上**来/去**了。  
小明**把**盒子**搬**到樓上**來/去**了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ hézi bān dào lóu shàng lái/qù le.

Xiaoming moved the box upstairs (towards/away from [the speaker]).

NOTE If there is an *object* and a *location* in a sentence with the **directional complement** indicating *location change*, the bǎ construction becomes obligatory. For example:

- (47)a. 小亮**放**进去了。  
小亮**放**進去了。  
Xiǎoliàng fàng jìnqù le.

Xiaoliang put (it) in.

- b. 小亮**放**进书包里去了。  
小亮**放**進書包裏去了。  
Xiǎoliàng fàng jìn shūbāo li (qu) le.

Xiaoliang put (it) into the schoolbag.

- c. 小亮**把**手机**放**进书包里去了。  
小亮**把**手機**放**進書包裏去了。  
Xiǎoliàng bǎ shǒujī fàng jìn shūbāo li (qu) le.

Xiaoliang put her cell phone into her schoolbag.

As can be seen in (47a) and (47b), there is no object but just the compound directional complement 进去/進去 jinqu (into), and in (47b) an additional

location 书包里/書包裏 shūbāo li (in the schoolbag); however, in (47c) both the object 手机/手機 shǒujī (cell phone) and the location exist, and the location of the object changes, so bǎ must be used. The location should be inserted between the compound directional complement 进/進 jìn and 去 qù, if 去 qù is used. Thus, its pattern, which is different from above, is as follows:

#### Specific pattern 3:

*S + bǎ + O + V + directional verb + place (+ 来/來 lái or 去 qù)*

Since this also indicates the *location change*, the verbs are similar to the above verbs; however, directional verbs are needed as well:

- **Verbs** should involve two things: the object and place. The typical verb should contain the motion meaning, such as 放 fàng (put), 搬 bān (move), 拿 ná (take), and 送 sòng (give).
- **Directional verbs** are typically 上 shàng ([go] up), 下 xià ([go] down), 进/進 jìn (enter), 出 chū ([go] out), and 回 huí (return), but they should be pronounced as neutral tones because they serve as directional complements (see §20.4.2).

If a sentence lacks a location word but implies the object that has moved to a new position is a human being, the bǎ construction can also be used. Such sentences can use the verbs 送 sòng (give), 交 jiāo (hand over), or 拿 ná (take) as in (48) with the preposition 给/給 gěi (to) to introduce a new owner. Its pattern is below, with an example for human being in (48a), and an example for place in (48b).

#### Specific pattern 4:

*S + bǎ + O + V + 给/給 gěi (to) + person/place*

- (48)a. 小明**把**那本书拿给小亮了。  
小明**把**那本書拿給小亮了。  
Xiǎomíng bǎ nèi běn shū ná gěi Xiàoliàng le.

Xiaoming gave that book to Xiaoliang.

- b. 小明**把**那本书还给图书馆了。  
小明**把**那本書還給圖書館了。  
Xiǎomíng bǎ nèi běn shū huán gěi túshūguǎn le.  
Xiaoming returned that book to the library.

- ii. **Causative change** means that the action causes one thing, A, to change to another thing, B. The preposition marker is 成 chéng ([become] to), which introduces a thing or a person (noun phrase). Its pattern and examples are below:

#### Specific pattern 5:

*S + bǎ + O (A) + V + 成 chéng (to) + noun phrase (B)  
(someone makes one thing into another)*

(49) 请**把**汉语翻译成英文。

請**把**漢語翻譯成英文。

Qǐng bǎ Hán yǔ fānyì chéng Yīngwén.

Please translate the Chinese into English.

(50) 学校**把**老师的办公室改成教室了。

學校**把**老師的辦公室改成教室了。

Xuéxiào bǎ láoshī de bàngōngshì gǎi chéng jiàoshì le.

The school changed the teachers' offices into classrooms.

We can summarize the obligatory conditions of using the bǎ construction in the following table (see Table 22.2).

### ► 22.3.2 Most likely conditions of using the bǎ sentence

We explained earlier that the object bǎ must be definite or specific, using the examples of the apple in Scenario 2 and the cup in Scenario 3. In a situation like Scenario 4 below, a bǎ sentence should be used, not a regular SVO sentence.

**Scenario 4:** Xiaoming's father walked into the kitchen and found a broken glass cup on the table; he asked, “这是怎么回事兒/這是怎麼回事兒？Zhè shì zěnme huí shìr? (What happened?)” Most likely, Xiaoming's mother would answer the question with a bǎ sentence, such as (51a), but not as (51b):

(51)a. 小明不小心**把**玻璃杯打破了。

Xiǎomíng bù xiǎoxin bǎ bōli bēi dǎ. pò le.

Xiaoming accidentally broke **the** glass cup.

b. 小明不小心打破了**一个**玻璃杯。

小明不小心打破了**一個**玻璃杯。

Xiǎomíng bù xiǎoxin dǎ. pò le yí ge bōli bēi.

Xiaoming accidentally broke **a** glass cup.

Since Xiaoming's father *saw* the cup broken and Xiaoming's mother *knew* who had broken it, the bǎ sentence marking the cup as *definite* is an appropriate answer because the facts are known by both speaker and hearer. Conversely, sentence (51b) implies that Xiaoming's father *does not know* the cup that is broken and Xiaoming's mother is just passing general information with an indefinite number **一(个) /一個** yí(ge) (one) before the noun 玻璃杯 bōli bēi (glass cup); thus, the sentence is inappropriate in this scenario.

In short, if other conditions are met, specifically, the verb has the disposal effect and there is another element after the verb, and if the object (noun) of bǎ is *more definite, more specific, and more explicit* in the context, then the *more likely* the bǎ sentence is to be used.

### ► 22.3.3 Impossible conditions of using the bǎ sentence

Some ill-formed bǎ sentences, for example, the potential complements as in (28b) and (28c), have been shown above for the purpose of illustrating the features of

**Table 22.2** The obligatory conditions of using the *bǎ* construction with more complex complements

	Typical verbs	Marker	Complement	Examples
Manner complement	打扫/打掃 dǎsǎo (tidy up), 整理 zhěnglǐ (arrange)	得 de	(adjective with modifier) 很干净/很乾淨 hěn gānjìng (very clean), 好极了/好極了 hǎo jí le (extremely good)	他 <b>把</b> 房间打扫 <b>得</b> 很干净。 他 <b>把</b> 房間打掃 <b>得</b> 很乾淨。 Tā bǎ fángjiān dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng. He cleaned up the room very neatly.
Location change	放 fàng (put), 搬 bān (move), 挂/掛 guà (hang)	在 zài (be at/in/on)	(place words) 桌子上 zhuōzi shàng (on the table), 教室里/教室裏 jiào shì li (in the classroom), 学校/學校 xuéxiào (school)	他 <b>把</b> 书 <b>放</b> 在桌子上。 他 <b>把</b> 書 <b>放</b> 在桌子上。 Tā bǎ shū fàng zài zhuōzi shàng. He put the books on the table.
			到 dào (to) jiào shì li (in the classroom), 学校/學校 xuéxiào (school)	他 <b>把</b> 电视 <b>搬</b> 到楼上了。 他 <b>把</b> 電視 <b>搬</b> 到樓上了。 Tā bǎ diànsī bān dào lóu shàng le. He moved the TV to the upstairs.
	送 sòng (give), 交 jiāo (hand in)	给/給 gěi (to)	(human; institution) 朋友 péngyou (friend), 图书馆/圖書館 túshūguǎn (library)	他 <b>把</b> 书 <b>送</b> 给老师了。 他 <b>把</b> 書 <b>送</b> 給老師了。 Tā bǎ shū sòng gěi lǎoshī le. He gave the book (as a gift) to his teacher.
Causative change	翻译/翻譯 fānyì (translate), 改 gǎi (change)	成 chéng (to)	(noun)	他 <b>把</b> 中文 <b>翻</b> 译 <b>成</b> 英文。 他 <b>把</b> 中文 <b>翻</b> 譯 <b>成</b> 英文。 Tā bǎ Zhōngwén fānyì chéng Yīngwén. He translated Chinese into English.

the bǎ construction. In the following section, we will list some common *incorrect* bǎ sentences for your reference. As pointed out earlier, the meaning of the verb plays an important role in the bǎ sentence; thus, choosing the right verb is the key to bǎ sentences. Although verbs with a **dynamic** meaning and with the *disposal* effect are numerous and cannot all be listed here, we have listed some typical verbs that have no disposal effect to help you avoid common mistakes. It is *impossible* to use the following verbs with the bǎ construction.

- i. **Verbs that don't indicate change**, such as 是 shì (be) and 有 yǒu (have) in (52), and 姓 xìng (be surnamed) in (53):

- (52) \*小亮**把**很多钱有  
 \*小亮**把**很多錢有  
 \*Xiǎoliàng bǎ hěnduō qián yǒu  
 (lit. Xiaoliang ba a lot of money have)

- (53) \*小明**把**张姓  
 \*小明**把**張姓  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ Zhāng xìng  
 (lit. Xiaoming ba Zhang [as his] surname)

- ii. **Cognitive verbs**, such as 同意 tóngyì (agree), 听/聽 tīng (listen), 懂 dǒng (understand), and 知道 zhīdao (know) in (54) and 认识/認識 rènshí (know) in (55) below:

- (54) \*我**把**小明的事情知道了  
 \*wǒ bǎ Xiǎomíng de shìqing zhīdao le  
 (lit. I ba Xiaoming thing know)

- (55) \*小亮**把**小明的朋友认识了  
 \*小亮**把**小明的朋友認識了  
 \*Xiǎoliàng bǎ Xiǎomíng de péngyou rènshí le  
 (lit. Xiaoliang ba Xiaoming's friend know)

- iii. **Mental activity verbs**, such as 怕 pà (fear), 愿意/願意 yuànyì (be willing), and 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like) in (56) below:

- (56) \*小明**把**中文喜欢了  
 \*小明**把**中文喜歡了  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ Zhōngwén xǐhuan le  
 (lit. Xiaoming ba Zhongwen like)

- iv. **Verbs that indicate beginning or continuation**, such as 出发/出發 chūfā (set off; start [on a journey]), 继续/繼續 jìxù (continue), and 开始/開始 kāishǐ (start) in (57) below:

- (57) \*我们把中文课开始上了  
 \*我們把中文課開始上了  
 \*wǒmen bǎ Zhōngwén kè kāishǐ shàng le  
 (lit. we ba Chinese class start take)

v. **Directional verbs**, such as 出 chū ([go] out), 回 huí (return), and 进/進 jìn (enter) in (58) below:

- (58) \*小明把教室进去了  
 \*小明把教室進去了  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ jiàoshì jìnqù le  
 (lit. Xiaoming ba classroom enter)

The bǎ construction is a very challenging grammar point. As such, we would like to offer a *tip* for you: The best way to master the bǎ construction at the beginning level is to learn through examples by getting familiar with and imitating the types of sentences that require the use of bǎ. To be specific, it would be better to first learn the examples in the *obligatory* condition of using the bǎ construction, especially *location change* in §22.3.1, for the following reasons:

- the pattern is very clear (**specific pattern 2**)
- the name of this type, *location change*, is easy to memorize as a reminder that one thing is moved to another place
- there are a few **verbs** that are commonly used, such as 放 fàng (put) and 搬 bān (move), which need three parties, who (*subject*), what (*object*), and to where (*complement*), to meet the requirements of the bǎ construction perfectly. Similarly, the corresponding verbs of 放 fàng and 搬 bān, i.e., “put” and “move” in English also involve the above three participants. The only difference is that in English the object of “put” and “move” is after the verb, and in the bǎ construction it is before the verb 放 fàng or 搬 bān (also see the example and translation in [59] below). This similarity helps English speakers to understand and learn this type of bǎ construction.
- there are only two **preposition markers**, 在 zài (be at/in/on) and 到 dào (to), as in (42).

To refresh your memory, example (59) is an additional bǎ sentence with the meaning of *location change*.

- (59) 小亮把手机放在沙发上。  
 小亮把手機放在沙發上了。  
 Xiǎoliàng bǎ shǒujī fàng zài shāfā shàng le.  
 Xiaoliang put her cell phone on the sofa.

As you begin to use the bǎ construction, you can simply follow the patterns and examples to make error-free bǎ sentences. After that, you can gradually expand to other types of bǎ sentences and eventually master the bǎ construction.

## 22.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned the features and structures of the **bǎ construction**, as well as the conditions for using it. In the **bǎ** construction:

1. the **predicate** must be composed of dynamic transitive verbs that have the *disposal effect*;
2. the **object** (noun) of **bǎ** must be *definite* or *specific*; and
3. there must be **other elements** after the verb.

We have also learned a general *rule* for using the **bǎ** construction, that is, the more the noun (the object of **bǎ**) is *definite*, the more the verb is *dynamic* with the *disposal effect*, and the more the complement after the verb is *complex*, the more likely the **bǎ** sentence is to be used. Accordingly, we have demonstrated that there are three conditions for using the **bǎ** construction, which are *obligatory*, *most likely*, and *impossible*. Lastly, we encouraged students to first learn the **bǎ** construction under the *obligatory* condition and then gradually progress to other **bǎ** sentences.

## 22.5 Exercises

### I. Change the following sentences to **bǎ** sentences:

**Example:**

**Given:** 他喝完了那杯茶。 Tā hē.wán le nèi bēi chá.

**Answer:** 他**把**那杯茶喝完了。 Tā **bǎ** nèi bēi chá hē.wán le.

1. 小亮吃了早饭/小亮吃了早飯。 Xiǎoliàng chī le zǎofàn.
2. 我的同学摔坏了我的电脑/我的同學摔壞了我的電腦。 Wǒ de tóngxué shuāi.huài le wǒ de diànnǎo.
3. 小明刚刚看完了这本小说/小明剛剛看完了這本小說。 Xiǎomíng gānggāng kàn.wán le zhèi běn xiǎoshuō.
4. 小亮擦干净了黑板/小亮擦乾淨了黑板。 Xiǎoliàng cā gānjìng le hēibǎn.
5. 你说说今天上课的事吧/你說說今天上課的事吧。 Nǐ shuōshuo jīntiān shàng-kè de shì ba.

### II. Fill in the blanks with the given words (one word can only be used once):

**Example:**

**Given:** 学生**把**昨天的作业做\_\_\_\_了/學生**把**昨天的作業做\_\_\_\_了。

Xuésheng bǎ zuótān de zuòyè zuò\_\_\_\_ le.

**Answer:** 学生**把**昨天的作业做完了/學生**把**昨天的作業做完了。

Xuésheng bǎ zuótān de zuòyè zuò.wán le.

**Word bank:** 出, 给/給, 到, 成, 来/來, 搬

1. 小亮在书店**把**那本新书买\_\_\_\_了/小亮在書店**把**那本新書買\_\_\_\_了。  
Xiǎoliàng zài shūdiàn bǎ nèi běn xīn shū mǎi \_\_\_\_ le.
2. 我把电视机\_\_\_\_到楼上了/我把電視機\_\_\_\_到樓上了。  
Wǒ bǎ diànshījī \_\_\_\_ dào lóushàng le.

3. 他把银行的钱取\_\_\_\_\_来了/他把銀行的錢取\_\_\_\_\_來了。  
Tā bǎ yínháng de qián qǔ \_\_\_\_\_ lai le.
4. 小亮把她的小狗带进教室里\_\_\_\_\_了/小亮把她的小狗帶進教室裏\_\_\_\_\_了。  
Xiǎoliàng bǎ tā de xiǎo gǒu dài jin jiàoshì li \_\_\_\_\_ le.
5. 小明把这本英文小说翻译\_\_\_\_\_中文了/小亮把這本英文小說翻譯\_\_\_\_\_中文了。  
Xiǎomíng bǎ zhèi běn xiàoshuō fānyì \_\_\_\_\_ Zhōngwén le.
6. 小明把刚买的书送\_\_\_\_\_小亮了/小明把剛買的書送\_\_\_\_\_小亮了。  
Xiǎomíng bǎ gāng mǎi de shū sòng \_\_\_\_\_ Xiǎoliàng le.

### III. Use the words or phrases given to complete the sentences with the bǎ construction:

**Example:**

**Given:** 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 打扫房间/打掃房間 dǎsǎo fángjiān, 很干净/很乾淨 hěn gānjìng

**Answer:** 小亮**把**房间打扫得很干净/小亮**把**房間打掃得很乾淨。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ fángjiān dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng.

1. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 送礼物/送禮物 sòng lǐwù, 给张老师/給張老師 gěi Zhāng lǎoshī
2. 小明 Xiǎomíng, 放东西/放東西 fàng dōngxi, 在桌子上 zài zhuōzi shàng
3. 老师/老師 lǎoshī, 发作业/發作業 fā zuòyè, 给学生/給學生 gěi xuéshēng
4. 我们/我們 wǒmen, 挂那幅画/掛那幅畫 guà nèi fú huà, 在墙上/在牆上 zài qiáng shàng
5. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 放她的书/放她的書 fàng tā de shū, 进箱子里/進箱子裏 jìn xiāngzǐ lǐ

### IV. Revise the following sentences into appropriate bǎ sentences:

**Example:**

**Given:** \*小明把作业做/\*小明把作業做 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ zuòyè zuò

**Answer:** 小明**把**作业做了/小明**把**作業做了。Xiǎomíng bǎ zuòyè zuò le.

1. \*小亮刚把衣服洗/\*小亮剛把衣服洗 \*Xiǎoliàng gāng bǎ yīfú xǐ
2. \*小明**把**名字写纸上/\*小明**把**名字寫紙上 \*Xiǎomíng bǎ míngzì xiě zhǐ shàng
3. \*我们放书桌子上/\*我們放書桌子上 \*wǒmen fàng shū zhuōzi shàng
4. \*小亮**把**书没看完了就还给图书馆/\*小亮**把**書沒看完了就還給圖書館  
\*Xiǎoliàng bǎ shū méi kàn. wán le jiù huán gěi túshūguān
5. \*小亮一定把中文学得好 /\*小亮一定把中文學得好  
\*Xiǎoliàng yìdìng bǎ Zhōngwén xué de hǎo

V. Complete the following dialogues with bǎ sentences based on the meanings given in English:

1. A: 请问, 这个盒子放哪儿/請問, 這個盒子放哪兒?

Qǐngwèn, zhèi ge hézi fàng nǎr?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (You move it into the room and put it on the table.)

2. A: 我的笔到哪儿去了/我的筆到哪兒去了?

Wǒ de bì dào nǎr qù le?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (I put it into a box, which is on the table.)

3. A: 你刚买的新车呢/你剛買的新車呢?

Nǐ gāng mǎi de xīn chē ne?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (My friend drove it to the school.)

4. A: 这幅画挂哪儿/這幅畫掛哪兒?

Zhèi fú huà guà nǎr?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (Please hang this picture on the wall.)

5. A: 你的手机呢/你的手機呢?

Nǐ de shǒujī ne?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (My younger sister accidentally dropped it and damaged it.)

## The 被 bēi construction

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the similarities and differences between the bēi construction and the bǎ construction
- ★ To learn the grammatical features of the bēi constructions
- ★ To recognize the other forms of passive sentences

The 被 bēi construction expresses a *passive* meaning and is similar to the English *by* passive form. Both languages can therefore be regarded as having a *passive marker*, 被 bēi in Chinese and *by* in English, to indicate the passive meaning, as is seen in example (1):

- (1) 蘋果被小亮的小狗吃了。  
 蘋果被小亮的小狗吃了。  
 Píngguǒ bēi Xiǎoliàng de xiǎo gǒu chī le.  
 The apple was eaten by Xiaoliang's small dog.

Both markers introduce the *doer* of the action, 小狗 xiǎo gǒu (small dog) in (1). The difference is the positions of the predicates (main verbs); specifically, the verb 吃 chī (eat) is after the marker bēi in Chinese but before the marker *by* in English.

If you are relieved to learn that there is a corresponding English form to the bēi construction in Chinese, then you may feel even happier to learn that the bēi construction shares many similarities with the bǎ construction discussed in Chapter 22. This means that if you know the features and uses of the bǎ construction, it will help you to learn the bēi construction; the converse is also true. Therefore, we will first discuss the similarities between the bǎ construction and the bēi construction, and then the features and forms unique to the bēi construction.

## 23.1 Similarities and differences between the bǎ construction and the bèi construction

The two constructions mainly share the following five similarities:

- i. **The same structure** (examples of each construction follow):

## Basic pattern:

subject + *bă/bèi* + object + verb + other elements (OE)

The bǎ construction					The bèi construction				
S (doer)	bǎ	O (receiver)	Verb	OE	S (receiver)	bèi	O (doer)	Verb	OE
小明	把	苹果/蘋果	吃	了	苹果/蘋果	被	小明	吃	了
Xiǎomíng	bǎ	píngguǒ	chī	le	Píngguǒ	bèi	Xiǎomíng	chī	le
Xiaoming	ate	the apple.			The apple was eaten by Xiaoming.				

The structures of *bǎ* and *bèi* are the same; however, the meaning of the subject and the object are the exact opposite in the above two sentences, specifically:

- the **subject** is the *doer* of the action (Xiaoming) in the *bǎ* sentence in (2), but it is the *receiver* of the action (apple) in the *bèi* sentence in (3); and
  - the **object** is the *receiver* (apple) in the *bǎ* sentence in (2), but it is the *doer* (Xiaoming) in the *bèi* sentence in (3).

The similarity and differences are summarized in Table 23.1 for a quick comparison.

**Table 23.1** A comparison of the *bă* construction and the *bèi* construction

	The bǎ construction*	The bèi construction†
Subject	小明 Xiǎomíng ( <i>doer</i> ) issues the action 吃 chī ( <i>eat</i> )	苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ ( <i>apple receiver</i> ) receives the action 吃 chī ( <i>eat</i> )
Object	苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ ( <i>apple receiver</i> ) receives the action 吃 chī ( <i>eat</i> )	小明 Xiǎomíng ( <i>doer</i> ) issues the action 吃 chī ( <i>eat</i> )

\* As in (2) above.

<sup>†</sup> As in (3) above.

Based on this observation, the differences between these two constructions, with respect to *voice*, can be stated as follows:

- The **bǎ construction** indicates an *active voice* in which the subject is a **doer** that performs the action on the bǎ's object (*receiver*), which undergoes the action.
  - The **bèi construction** indicates the *passive voice* in which the subject is the *receiver* of an action, but the bèi's object is a **doer**.

**TIP**

More simply, you may take **b** as the marker of *active voice* and **b** as the marker of *passive voice*.

- ii. The **bǎ/bèi** sentences are not completed without other elements after the **predicate** (main verb). If there is not an element after the verb, the sentence will sound incomplete. For example, without the particle 了 le after the verb 吃 chī (eat) in sentences (2) and (3) above, the sentences become **incorrect** as shown below:

**bǎ construction**\*小明**把**苹果/蘋果吃\*Xiǎomíng **bǎ** píngguǒ chī  
lit. Xiaoming *bǎ* apple eat**bèi construction**\*苹果/蘋果**被**小明吃\*píngguǒ **bèi** Xiǎomíng chī  
lit. apple *bèi* Xiaoming eat

A simple explanation is that a **bèi** sentence talks about something being *done* with a certain result *by* someone, while a **bǎ** sentence indicates that someone makes something *done* with a certain result. A bare verb without other elements has the *do* meaning only; therefore, it needs other elements to indicate that the action has been done in the **bǎ** and **bèi** sentences (there are a few exceptions, see examples [8] and [9] below). All complements that can be used with the **bǎ** construction can also be used with the **bèi** construction, except for reduplicated verbs (see Table 22.1 in the previous chapter and examples [21] and [22] below).

- iii. The **predicate must be a transitive verb**, which can influence the object in the **bǎ** construction and the subject in the **bèi** construction to produce the **result of** or the **effect** on the action. For example:

- (4) 小明**把**书看完了。  
小明**把**書看完了。  
Xiǎomíng **bǎ** shū kàn.wán le.  
Xiaoming finished reading the book.

- (5) 书**被**小明看完了。  
書**被**小明看完了。  
Shū **bèi** Xiǎomíng kàn.wán le.  
The book was read (finished) *by* Xiaoming.

The verb 看 kàn (read) above is a dynamic action performed on the object 书/書 shū (book) in the **bǎ** construction in (4), but in the **bèi** construction in (5) the action is performed on the subject, and it triggers the result 完 wán (finish). The word 完 wán (finish) is the complement of the verb 看 kàn (read) in (4) and (5) above.

- iv. Both **bǎ** and **bèi** constructions cannot be used with the **potential complement** 得 de as the potential complement indicates *possibility*, as explained in the previous chapter, and thus it cannot match with the **bèi** construction, which indicates a result or effect on the subject (receiver of the action), as in (6c). As is done in the **bǎ** construction, to express the ability of the doer, an auxiliary verb is added before **bèi**, such as 能 néng (can) in (6a), or a negation, such as 不能 bù néng in (6b) below:

- (6)a. 这本书**能**被小明看完。  
這本書**能**被小明看完。  
Zhèi běn shū néng **bèi** Xiǎomíng kàn.wán.  
This book can be finished *by* Xiaoming.

- b. 这本书不能**被**小明看完。

這本書不能**被**小明看完。

Zhèi běn shū bù néng bì Xiǎomíng kàn.wán.

This book cannot be finished by Xiaoming.

- c. \*这本书**被**小明看得完

\*這本書**被**小明看得完

\*zhèi běn shū bì Xiǎomíng kàn de wán

(lit. this book *bei* Xiaoming read *de* finish)

- v. **Adverbs and auxiliary verbs precede both bǎ and bì.** Examples that precede bǎ can be found in the previous chapter, and an example of an auxiliary verb that comes before bì is 能 néng as in (6a) and (6b) above, and the adverb 也 yě (also) as in (7a), but *not after* as in (7b) below:

- (7)a. 我的电脑**也****被**人偷了。

我的電腦**也****被**人偷了。

Wǒ de diànnǎo yě bì rén tōu le.

My computer was also stolen by someone.

- b. \*我的电脑**被**人**也**偷了

\*我的電腦**被**人**也**偷了

\*wǒ de diànnǎo bì rén yě tōu le

(lit. my computer *bei* people also steal *le*)

The **negative adverbs** 不bù and 没/沒 méi before bǎ are shown in the previous chapter, and they precede bì in (8) and (9a) below. Again, when 没(有)/沒(有) méi (yǒu) is used, 了 le cannot be used, so sentence (9b) is incorrect.

- (8) 这部电影**不****被**学生喜欢。

這部電影**不****被**學生喜歡。

Zhèi bù diànyǐng bù bì xuésheng xǐhuan.

This movie is not liked by students.

- (9)a. 小明**没****被**老师批评。

小明**沒****被**老師批評。

Xiǎomíng méi bì lǎoshī pīping.

Xiaoming wasn't criticized by the teacher.

- b. \*小明**没****被**老师批评了

\*小明**沒****被**老師批評了

\*Xiǎomíng méi bì lǎoshī pīping le

From the above examples, we can see that the two constructions share some similarities, but are opposite in terms of *voice*. Thus, the same meaning can be

expressed by the *bǎ* construction in the *active* voice, as in (10), and by the *bèi* construction in the *passive* voice, as in (11) below, though the focus of the sentences and the contexts are different:

- (10) 小亮**把**书放在桌子上了。  
 小亮**把**書放在桌子上了。  
 Xiǎoliàng **bǎ** shū fàng zài zhuōzi shàng le.  
 Xiaoliang put the book on the table.
- (11) 书**被**小亮放在桌子上了。  
 書**被**小亮放在桌子上了。  
 Shū **bèi** Xiǎoliàng fàng zài zhuōzi shàng le.  
 The book was put on the table **by** Xiaoliang.

Although the *bèi* construction shares many similarities with the *bǎ* construction, it has its own special features, which are discussed in §23.2.

## 23.2 Main function and features of the *bèi* construction

- **Function:** a main function of the *bèi* construction is to express an *adverse* meaning, such as something unfortunate that has occurred. Examples are in (7a) above, and (12) and (13) below.

- (12) 小亮**被**老师批评了。  
 小亮**被**老師批評了。  
 Xiǎoliàng **bèi** lǎoshī pīping le.  
 Xiaoliang was criticized by the teacher.
- (13) 杯子**被**小明打破了。  
 Bēizi **bèi** Xiǎomíng dǎ.pò le.  
 The cup was broken by Xiaoming.

The above sentences express an unfavorable meaning. Needless to say, nobody wants to be criticized, his/her computer to be stolen, or acup to be broken. In some other Asian languages such as Japanese, Vietnamese, and Thai, the passive sentences also carry this meaning.

Nowadays, the use of *bèi* sentences *without the adverse* meaning has increased, such as in example (11) above and (14) below:

- (14) 作业**被**小亮做完了。  
 作業**被**小亮做完了。  
 Zuòyè **bèi** Xiǎoliàng zuò.wán le.  
 The homework was completed **by** Xiaoliang.

Moreover, the *bèi* sentence can even express a *favorite* meaning, especially in written language.

- (15) 他的书**被**一家很有名的出版社出版了。  
他的書**被**一家很有名的出版社出版了。

Tā de shū **bèi** yì jiā hěn yōumíng de chūbǎnshè chūbǎn le.

His book was published **by** a very famous publisher.

- (16) 小明**被**学生选为学生会主席了。  
小明**被**學生選為學生會主席了。

Xiaomíng **bèi** xuésheng xuǎn wéi xuéshènghuì zhǔxí le.

Xiaoming was elected **by** students as the president of the student association.

Interestingly, it has been argued by linguists that these changes are influenced by European languages, especially the English passive sentence.<sup>1</sup> Most likely, the early translators for English learners equated **bèi** to the English passive marker *by*.

As such, a question naturally arises, “why does the **bèi** sentence essentially express an adverse meaning?” The answer can be found through an examination of the features of the **bèi** construction.

- **The subject of the **bèi** construction** must be the *receiver* of the action indicated by the predicate (main verb). It could be human beings, such as 小亮 Xiǎoliàng in (12), or non-human beings, such as 杯子 bēizi (cup) in (13); specifically, the subjects 小亮 Xiǎoliàng and 杯子 bēizi (cup) are the receivers of the action 批评/批评 pīping (criticize) in (12) and the action 打破 dǎ.pò (break) in (13). Since the subject receives the action *passively* and cannot actively refuse an unfavorable thing, the **bèi** sentence is primarily used in an adverse situation.<sup>2</sup>
- **The object** is the *doer* of the action, such as 老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher) in (12) and 小明 Xiaomíng in (13) above. The object can be omitted either when there is no need to identify the doer or if the doer is clear from the context. For example:

- (17) 小亮**被**批评了。  
小亮**被**批評了。  
Xiǎoliàng **bèi** pīping le.  
Xiaoliang was criticized.

- (18) 杯子**被**打破了。  
Bēizi **bèi** dǎ.pò le.  
The cup was broken.

- (19) 门**被**吹开了。  
門**被**吹開了。  
Mén **bèi** chuī.kāi le.  
The door was blown open.

<sup>1</sup> For example, Li and Thompson (1981: 496).

<sup>2</sup> The *adverse* meaning of the **bèi** construction is also largely due to the meaning of **bèi** being “suffer” as a verb before it developed into a preposition; for example, 国一日**被攻**/國一日**被攻** guó yí rì **bèi** gōng (the state suffers an attack one day) (战国策/戰國策 *Zhànguóczé*, about 240 BCE–210 BCE)

Compared to (12) and (13) above, the objects 老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher) and 小明 Xiǎomíng are omitted in (17) and (18), respectively. The object, *wind*, is obvious in (19), so there is no need to explicitly reference it.

- A **predicate** must be a transitive verb with a dynamic meaning that has some effect on the subject (receiver), including verbs such as 批评/批評 pīping (criticize) in (12) and (17), and 打破 dǎ.pò (break) in (13) and (18). Compared to the *bǎ* construction, the predicate of the *bèi* construction has the following specialties:
  - All **verbs** that can be used in *bǎ* sentences can also be used in *bèi* sentences.
  - The verbs that have *no dynamic* meaning, such as 是 shì (be), 有 yǒu (have), and 在 zài (be at/in/on) cannot be used with *bǎ* sentences nor with *bèi* sentences (see §22.3.3).
  - Some verbs that indicate **mental activity or cognitive verbs** cannot be used in *bǎ* sentences but can be used in *bèi* sentences, such as 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like) in (8) above and 知道 zhīdao (know) in (20) below.

(20) 这件事情被很多人知道了。

這件事情被很多人知道了。

Zhèi jiàn shìqing bèi hěn duō rén zhīdao le.

This thing has been known **by** many people.

In short, there are more verbs that can be used in *bèi* sentences than in *bǎ* sentences.

- **Other elements** should be used after the predicate, such as 了 le, 完 wán (finish), and the prepositional phrase 在桌子上 zài zhuōzi shàng (on the table) in (11) above, and all types of complements listed in Chapter 20. In short, **all complements** that can be used in *bǎ* sentences can also be used in *bèi* sentences, except for reduplicated verbs. For example:

(21)a. 你**把**这个字写**写**。

你**把**這個字寫**寫**。

Nǐ bǎ zhèi ge zì xiěxie.

Write this character (would you?).

b. \*这个字**被**你写**写**

\*這個字**被**你寫**寫**

\*zhèi ge zì bèi nǐ xiěxie

(lit. this character *bei* you write)

(22)a. 你**把**房间打扫**打扫**。

你**把**房間打掃**打掃**。

Nǐ bǎ fángjiān dǎsao-dǎsao.

Clean up the room (would you?).

b. \*房间**被**你打扫**打扫**

\*房間**被**你打掃**打掃**

\*fángjiān bèi nǐ dǎsao-dǎsao

(lit. room *bei* you clean)

The reason that reduplicated verbs cannot be used is that the reduplication of verbs signifies a *tentative* activity (see §10.6). In bǎ sentences, it denotes an active meaning that can express a tentative meaning in an **imperative** sentence with the reduplicated verbs, as seen in (21a) and (22a) (see §22.2.3); however, the subject in bēi sentences undergoes the action passively, and it is *inappropriate* to express a tentative activity in an imperative sentence, as seen in (21b) and (22b). The following examples further support this point.

- (23)a. 你**把**书拿着。  
 你**把**書拿著。  
 Nǐ bǎ shū ná zhe.  
 You hold the book (please).

- b. 书**被**小明拿着呢。  
 書**被**小明拿著呢。  
 Shū bēi Xiāomíng ná zhe ne.  
 The book is being held by Xiaoming.

The two sentences above can have the verb suffix 着/著 zhe after the verb 拿 ná (hold), but the bǎ sentence in (23a) expresses an *imperative* meaning with a mild tone, while the bēi sentence in (23b) describes a *continuous* state and the particle 呢 ne, which indicates an action in progress, makes the sentence more natural.

The above three sentences, (21b), (22b), and (23) demonstrate that bēi sentences are not appropriately used in a sentence with an imperative meaning.

### 23.3 Passive voice expressed with other forms

The passive voice sentences can also be expressed with other words and forms, as below.

- i. **给/給** gěi, as in (24), with or without the object (doer):

- (24)a. 小亮**给**人骗了。  
 小亮**給**人騙了。  
 Xiǎoliàng gěi rén piàn le.  
 Xiaoliang was deceived **by** someone.

- b. 小亮**给**骗了。  
 小亮**給**騙了。  
 Xiǎoliàng gěi piàn le.  
 Xiaoliang was deceived.

- ii. **叫** jiào must have the object (doer), as in (25a).

- (25)a. 小亮叫朋友请出去吃饭了。  
 小亮叫朋友請出去吃飯了。  
 Xiǎoliàng jiào péngyou qǐng chūqu chī-fàn le.  
 Xiaoliang was invited by her friend to go out for dinner.

- b. \*小亮叫请出去吃饭了  
 \*小亮叫請出去吃飯了  
 \*Xiǎoliang jiào qǐng chūqu chī-fàn le  
 (lit. Xiaoliang *jiao* invite out eat *le*)

iii. 让/讓 *ràng* must have the object, as in (26a):

- (26)a. 你的书让<sub>人</sub>搬到楼上了。  
 你的書讓<sub>人</sub>搬到樓上了。  
 Nǐ de shū ràng rén bān dào lóushang le.  
 Your books were moved by someone (to) upstairs.

- b. \*你的书让搬<sub>到</sub>搬到楼上了  
 \*你的書讓搬<sub>到</sub>搬到樓上了  
 \*nǐ de shū ràng bān dào lóushang le  
 (lit. your book *rang* move to upstairs *le*)

The three words 给/給 *gěi*, 叫 *jiào*, and 让/讓 *ràng* above are used often in spoken language, but when 叫 *jiào* or 让/讓 *ràng* is used, the object (doer) cannot be omitted, as shown in (25b) and (26b), respectively.

iv. The fixed pattern is *bèi* + O (doer) + 给/給 *gěi* + V + other elements, as in (27):

- (27) 小亮被老师给批评了。  
 小亮被老師給批評了。  
 Xiǎoliàng bèi lǎoshī gěi pīping le.  
 Xiaoliang was criticized by the teacher.

v. Sentences with a passive meaning but without any marker:

- (28)a. 书出版了。  
 書出版了。  
 Shū chūbǎn le.  
 The book was published.

- b. \*书被出版了  
 \*書被出版了  
 \*shū bèi chūbǎn le  
 (lit. book *bei* published)

- (29)a. 门开了。  
門開了。  
Mén kāi le.  
The door was opened.

- b. \*门被开了  
\*門被開了  
\*mén bēi kāi le  
(lit. door *bei* opened)

- (30)a. 手机买好了。  
手機買好了。  
Shǒujī mǎi.hǎo le.  
The cell phone was bought.

- b. \*手机被买好了  
\*手機被買好了  
\*shǒujī bēi mǎi.hǎo le  
(lit. cell phone *bei* bought)

The subjects 书/書 shū (book) in (28), 门/門 mén (door) in (29), and 手机/手機 shǒujī (cell phone) in (30) are all the receivers of the action 出版 chūbǎn (publish), 开/開 kāi (open), and 买好/買好 mǎi.hǎo (bought), respectively. Chinese uses the *topic-comment* sentence by taking the receiver of the action, such as 书/書 shū (book), 作业/作業 zuòyè (homework), and 手机/手機 shǒujī (cell phone), as the *topic* and the rest of the sentence as the *comment* to express the passive meaning in the above sentences without the marker *bēi*. This is similar to expressions in English, specifically, when the subject becomes the *theme* (focus) of the sentence, even though it is acted on, the passive marker *by* and the performer of the action are not required, as examples (28)–(30) demonstrate.

If the action can cause a result in an adverse situation, however, the passive marker *bēi* is most likely used, as in (31a) but not in (31b) below:

- (31)a. 小亮的手机被偷了。  
小亮的手機被偷了。  
Xiǎoliàng de shǒujī bēi tōu le.  
Xiaoliang's cell phone was stolen.
- b. \*小亮的手机偷了  
\*小亮的手機偷了  
\*Xiǎoliàng de shǒujī tōu le  
(lit. Xiaoliang's cell phone stolen)

Compared to sentence (30a), which has a statement in which 手机/手機 shǒujī (cell phone) most likely serves as a topic to answer a question, the action 偷 tōu

(steal) in (31a) is issued by someone who does not appear in the context, and causes an unhappy result; that is, the owner lost her cell phone, and therefore the **bēi** sentence is appropriate in this context.

## 23.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned about the **bēi construction** by comparing the similarities and differences between the **bǎ construction** and the **bēi construction**. This comparison not only helps learners to study the **bēi** construction but also enhances the knowledge of the **bǎ** construction. The **similarities** of the two constructions can be summarized as follows:

- the predicate must be composed of *dynamic* transitive verbs
- there must be other elements after the verb
- the basic pattern, [S + *bēi/bǎ* + O + V + other elements], is the same

Thus, almost all **bēi** sentences can be converted to **bǎ** sentences by exchanging the role of the doer and the receiver of the action, and *vice versa*. However, the **differences** are obvious as well:

- the subject is the *receiver* of the action in a **bēi** sentence, but it is the *doer* in a **bǎ** sentence
- the object is the *doer* in a **bēi** sentence but the *receiver* in a **bǎ** sentence
- the **bēi** sentence indicates a *passive* meaning used essentially in an *adverse* situation; conversely, a **bǎ** sentence enforces the *active* meaning

We have also learned that **bēi** can be replaced by other words, such as **给/給** *gěi*, **叫** *jiào*, or **让/讓** *ràng* in spoken language to express the *passive* meaning. Most importantly, Chinese tends to use the *topic-comment* sentence in which the receiver of the action serves as the topic, and the rest of the sentence serves as the comment to express the *passive* meaning.

## 23.5 Exercises

### I Change the following sentences to **bēi** sentences:

**Example:**

**Given:** 他喝完了那杯茶。 Tā hē.wán le nèi bēi chá.

**Answer:** 那杯茶**被**他喝完了。 Nèi bēi chá **bēi** tā hē.wán le.

1. 小明吃了小亮的苹果/小明吃了小亮的蘋果。  
Xiǎomíng chī le Xiǎoliàng de píngguo.
2. 小亮不小心摔坏了手机/小亮不小心摔壞了手機。  
Xiǎoliàng bù xiǎoxīn shuāi.huài le shǒujī.
3. 小明刚刚写完了今天的汉字/小明剛剛寫完了今天的漢字。  
Xiǎomíng gānggāng xiě.wán le jīntiān de Hánzì.
4. 小亮整理好了书架/小亮整理好了書架。  
Xiǎoliàng zhěnglǐ.hǎo le shūjià.

5. 小亮买到了今年最新的手机/小亮買到了今年最新的手機。

Xiǎoliàng mǎi.dào le jīn nián zuì xīn de shǒujī.

**II Convert the following **bǎ** sentences to **bèi** sentences:**

**Example:**

**Given:** 学生把昨天的作业做完了/學生把昨天的作業做完了。

Xuésheng bǎ zuótān de zuòyè zuò.wán le.

**Answer (bèi):** 昨天的作业被学生做完了/昨天的作業被學生做完了。

Zuótān de zuòyè bèi xuésheng zuò.wán le.

1. 小明**把**书放到书架上了/小明**把**書放到書架上了。

Xiǎomíng bǎ shū fàng.dào shūjià shàng le.

2. 小亮**把**那件新衣服买到了/小亮**把**那件新衣服買到了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ nèi jiàn xīn yīfú mǎi.dào le.

3. 小亮**把**药取回来了/小亮**把**藥取回來了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ yào qǔ huílai le.

4. 小明**把**桌子搬进教室里来了/小明**把**桌子搬進教室裏來了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ zhuōzi bān jìn jiàoshì li lái le.

5. 风**把**小亮的帽子吹走了/風**把**小亮的帽子吹走了。

Fēng bǎ Xiǎoliàng de màozi chuī.zǒu le.

6. 小亮**把**功课交给老师了/小亮**把**功課交給老師了。

Xiǎoliàng bǎ gōngkè jiāo gěi lǎoshī le.

**III Use the given words or phrases to complete the sentences with the **bèi** construction:**

**Example:**

**Given:** 小张/Xiǎo Zhāng, 打扫房间/打掃房間 dǎsǎo fángjiān, 很干  
净/很乾淨 hěn gānjìng

**Answer:** 房间**被**小张打扫得很干净/房間**被**小張打掃得很乾淨。

Fángjiān bèi Xiǎo Zhāng dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng.

1. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 送礼物/送禮物 sòng lǐwù, 给张老师了/給張老師了  
gěi Zhāng lǎoshī le

2. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 放东西/放東西 fàng dōngxi, 在桌子上 zài  
zhuōzi shàng

3. 老师/老師 lǎoshī, 发作业/發作業 fā zuòyè, 给学生了/給學生了 gěi  
xuésheng le

4. 我们/我們 wǒmen, 挂那幅画/挂那幅畫 guà nèi fú huà, 在墙上/zài  
qiáng shàng

5. 小明 Xiǎomíng, 放他的书/放他的書 fàng tā de shū, 进箱子里/進  
箱子裏 jìn xiāngzi li

**IV Convert the following sentences into appropriate **bèi** sentences:**

**Example:**

**Given:** \*作业被小明做/作業被小明做 \*zuòyè bèi Xiǎomíng zuò

**Answer:** 作业**被**小明做完了/作業**被**小明做完了。

Zuòyè bèi Xiǎomíng zuò.wán le.

1. \*刚才苹果被小亮吃/\*剛才蘋果被小亮吃  
\*gāngcái píngguǒ bèi Xiǎoliàng chī
2. \*名字被小明写纸上/\*名字被小明寫紙上  
\*míngzi bèi Xiǎomíng xiě zhǐ shàng
3. \*我们放书桌子上/\*我們放書桌子上 \*wǒmen fang shū zhuōzi shàng
4. \*书没被小亮看完了就还给图书馆/\*書沒被小亮看完了就還給圖書館  
\*shū méi bèi Xiǎoliàng kàn le jiù huán gěi túshūguān
5. \*中文一定被小明学得好/\*中文一定被小明學得好  
\*Zhōngwén yídìng bèi Xiǎomíng xué de hǎo
6. \*小亮的自行车让偷了/\*小亮的自行車讓偷了  
\*Xiǎoliàng de zìxíngchē ràng tōu le
7. \*照片被小亮没送给小明了/\*照片被小亮沒送給小明了  
\*zhàopiàn bèi Xiǎoliàng méi sòng gěi Xiǎomíng le

**V Complete the following dialogues with *bèi* sentences based on the meanings given in English:**

1. A: 我的杯子呢？  
Wǒ de bēizi ne?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (It was broken by Xiaoming.)
2. A: 我的书到哪儿去了/我的書到哪兒去了？  
Wǒ de shū dào nǎr qù le?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (It was put into a box, which is on the table, by Xiaoliang.)
3. A: 你刚买的新车呢/你剛買的新車呢？  
Nǐ gāng mǎi de xīn chē ne?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (It was driven to the school by my friend.)
4. A: 这本小说怎么样/這本小說怎麼樣？  
Zhèi běi xiǎoshuō zěnmeyàng?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (Very good. It was translated to many languages.)
5. A: 你的手机呢/你的手機呢？  
Nǐ de shǒujī ne?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (It was broken by my younger sister.)
6. A: 你的电脑呢/你的電腦呢？  
Nǐ de diànnǎo ne?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (It was stolen.)

# 24

## Questions

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To know the four types of questions and rhetorical questions
- ★ To learn the features and patterns of questions

There are four basic types of questions in Chinese:

1. Yes–no questions with interrogative particles
2. Question-word questions
3. Affirmative–negative (*A-not-A*) questions
4. Alternative questions (*A 还是/還是 B* questions)

Compared to the structure of English questions, Chinese questions appear easier because the word order of Chinese questions is the same as the statement; specifically, the subject does not invert its position with other linguistic forms in the way that auxiliary verbs do in typical English question formation (for example, in the sentence 'He will come', the modal auxiliary verb *will* switches position with the subject *he* to become 'Will he come?' in the question). This difference will be seen clearly by comparing examples of Chinese questions with the corresponding translations.

In addition to these four types of questions, there is also the rhetorical question, which is an interrogative sentence that does not require an answer because it is not a real question but is instead used to emphasize or dare. We will discuss each type of question in further detail below.

### 24.1 Yes–no questions

This type of question is composed of a statement and an interrogative particle, either 呀/嗎 *ma* or 吧/吧 *ba*. The expected answer to this question is *yes* or *no*. There are the following patterns:

#### i. Pattern 1 (basic):

statement + 呀/嗎 *ma*

- (1) 小亮的爸爸是中文老师。  
小亮的爸爸是中文老師。  
Xiǎoliàng de bàba shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī.  
Xiaoliang's father is a teacher of Chinese.

- (2)a. 小亮的爸爸是中文老师吗？  
 小亮的爸爸是中文老師嗎？  
 Xiǎoliàng de bàba shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī ma?  
 Is Xiaoliang's father a teacher of Chinese?

- b. 是，(小亮的爸爸是中文老师)。  
 是，(小亮的爸爸是中文老師)。  
 Shì, (Xiǎoliàng de bàba shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī).  
 Yes, (Xiaoliang's father is a teacher of Chinese).

- c. 不是，(小亮的爸爸不是中文老师)。  
 不是，(小亮的爸爸不是中文老師)。  
 Bú shì, (Xiǎoliàng de bàba bú shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī).  
 No, Xiaoliang's father is not a teacher of Chinese.

Sentence (1) is a declarative sentence (statement), but it becomes a question by adding the interrogative particle 吗/嗎 ma at the end of the sentence, as in (2a). To answer the question, one could use an affirmative sentence as in (2b) or a negative sentence as in (2c).

ii. Pattern 2:

statement + 好吗/好吗 hǎo ma/行吗/行嗎 xíng ma/可以吗/可以嗎 kěyǐ ma/对吗/對嗎 duì ma

This pattern consists of a statement that is followed by a word, such as 好 hǎo (good), 可以 kěyǐ (can), or 对/對 duì (correct) with the interrogative particle 吗/嗎 ma to seek another's opinion in a soft tone.

- (3)a. 我们今天晚上去看电影，好吗？  
 我們今天晚上去看電影，好吗？  
 Wǒmen jìntiān wǎnshàng qù kàn diànyǐng, hǎo ma?  
 Let's see a movie tonight, okay?  
 (lit. we go to watch movie tonight, good ma)

- b. 好 (啊)。  
 Hǎo (a).  
 Good.  
 c. 不好/不太好。  
 Bù hǎo/Bú tài hǎo.  
 It is not good.

- (4)a. 我明天交作业，可以吗/行吗？  
 我明天交作業，可以嗎/行嗎？  
 Wǒ míngtiān jiāo zuòyè, kěyǐ ma/xíng ma?  
 Is it okay if I hand in the homework tomorrow?  
 (lit. I tomorrow hand-in homework, can/fine ma)

b. 可以/行。

Kěyǐ/Xíng.

Yes/Fine.

c. 不可以/不行。

Bù kěyǐ/Bù xíng.

No.

(5)a. 你是美国人, 对吗?

你是美國人, 對嗎?

Nǐ shì Měiguó rén, duì ma?

You are an American, right?

b. 对/是的, (我是美国人)。

對/是的, (我是美國人)。

Dui/Shì de, (wǒ shì Měiguó rén).

Yes, (I am an American).

c. 不对/不是, (我不是美国人)。

不對/不是, (我不是美國人)。

Bú duì/Bú shì, (wǒ bú shì Měiguó rén).

No, (I am not an American).

**NOTE** If a statement is **negative** and followed by 好吗/好嗎 hǎo ma, 可以吗/行吗/可以嗎/行嗎 kěyǐ ma/xíng ma, or 对吗/對嗎 duì ma; or 对不对/對不對 duì bu duì/是不是 shì bu shì (A-not-A question form) as in (6a), the answers pertaining to "yes" or "no" are different from those in English.

(6)a. 你**不是**美国人, 对吗/对不对/是不是?

你**不是**美國人, 對嗎/對不對/是不是?

Nǐ bú shì Měiguó rén, duì ma/duì bu duì/shì bu shì?

You are **not** an American, right/are you?

b. **对(了)**/是的, 我**不是**美国人。

**對(了)**/是的, 我**不是**美國人。

Dui (le)/Shì de, wǒ bú shì Měiguó rén.

No/**Wrong**, I am **not** an American.

c. **不对**, 我**是**美国人。

**不對**, 我**是**美國人。

Bú duì, wǒ shì Měiguó rén.

**Yes/Correct**, I am an American.

The key to understanding this is as follows:

- Chinese uses,
  - “对(了)/對(了) duì (le)” (correct) to *agree with the hearer's statement*, for example, you are *correct*, I am *not* an American, as in (6b); or,
  - 不对/不對 bú duì” (incorrect) to *disagree*, for example, “you are *incorrect*, I *am* an American, as in (6c).
- Conversely, English uses “yes” or “no” from the **self's confirmation**, for example,
  - Yes/correct, I am (the translations as in (6c)); or,
  - No/wrong, I am not (the translation as in (6b)).

If we use symbols to summarize the above explanation by marking the *positive* response and statement as “+” and the *negative* response and statement as “-” to questions with a **negative statement**, the differences between Chinese and English can be symbolized as follows:

**Chinese:** +, - or -, +

**English:** +, + or -, -

### iii. Pattern 3:

statement + 吧 ba

This pattern is not a real question, instead, it is a *probing attempt*; specifically, the speaker makes a statement based on an assumption that they are not quite sure about and are thus inviting a confirmation by adding the particle 吧 ba. We can see this point clearly in the following comparison:

(7)a. 你学过中文吗 ?

你學過中文嗎 ?

Nǐ xué guo Zhōngwén ma?

Have you studied Chinese (before)?

b. 你学过中文吧 ?

你學過中文吧 ?

Nǐ xué guo Zhōngwén ba?

You have studied Chinese (before), right?

Sentence (7a) above is a real question, but (7b) is a supposition in which the speaker assumes that the hearer may know Chinese but is not sure and thus wants to solicit a definite answer. This difference is underlined by the following pairs of examples: an adverb of probability, such as **也许/也許** yěxǔ (probably), can be used in a sentence with the particle 吧 ba, as in (8a), but it cannot be added to a sentence with 吗/嗎 ma, as in (8b) below:

(8)a. 你也许学过中文吧 ?

你也許學過中文吧 ?

Nǐ yěxǔ xué guo Zhōngwén ba?

Probably you have studied Chinese (before), right?

- b. \*你**也許**学过中文吗  
 \*你**也許**學過中文嗎  
 \*nǐ yěxǔ xué guo Zhōngwén ma

- (9) 小明是中文**老师**？  
 小明是中文**老師**？  
 Xiǎomíng shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī?

Is Xiaoming a teacher of Chinese (please confirm it)?

**NOTE** To say a yes–no question, one should use a rising tone with the accent of the sentence on the particles, even though the particles have a neutral tone. If we communicate a declarative sentence with a rising tone at the end of the sentence, it can also express a question meaning without adding a question particle, as in (9). However, this kind of question implies an element of disbelief, and the speaker wants to seek confirmation.

The yes–no questions with interrogative particles are summarized in Table 24.1.

**Table 24.1** Yes–no questions

Pattern	Example	Answer
Statement + <b>吗/嗎</b> ma (basic pattern)	你是学生 <b>吗/嗎</b> ? Nǐ shì xuésheng ma? Are you a student?	我是学生。 / 我 <b>不是</b> 学生。 Wǒ shì xuésheng. / Wǒ bù shì xuésheng. I am a student. / I am not a student.
Statement + <b>对吗/對嗎</b> duì ma (seek hearer's opinion in a soft tone)	你是学生, <b>对吗</b> ? Nǐ shì xuésheng, duì ma? You are a student, right?	<b>对</b> (啊)。 / <b>不对</b> 。 <b>對</b> (啊)。 / <b>不对</b> 。 Duì (a). / Bú duì. Yes. / No.
Statement + <b>吧</b> ba (probing attempt and seeking confirmation)	你是学生 <b>吧</b> ? Nǐ shì xuésheng ba? You are a student (I guess), right?	<b>是</b> 呀, (我是学生)。 / <b>不是</b> , (我不是学生)。 <b>是</b> 呀, (我是學生)。 / <b>不是</b> , (我不是學生)。 Shì ya, (wǒ shì xuésheng). / Bú shì, (wǒ bù shì xuésheng). Yes, (I am a student). / No, (I am not a student).

## 24.2 Question-word questions

This type of question involves the use of question words (interrogative pronouns such as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *how* in English) to ask a *specific* question.

### ► 24.2.1 The main features

This question is formed by placing the interrogative pronoun in the corresponding position of the declarative sentence. For example, sentence (10) below is a declarative sentence, and the questions in (11) can ask any element of sentence (10) by inserting the question word into its corresponding position:

(10) 张老师昨天在教室里摔倒了。

張老師昨天在教室裏摔倒了。

Zhāng lǎoshī zuótān zài jiào shì li shuāi.dǎo le.

Professor Zhang fell down in the classroom yesterday.

(11)a. **谁**昨天在教室里摔倒了？ (in the subject position asking the subject)

**誰**昨天在教室裏摔倒了？

Shéi zuótān zài jiào shì li shuāi.dǎo le?

**Who** fell down in the classroom yesterday?

b. 张老师**什么时候**在教室里摔倒了？ (in the adverbial position asking the time)

張老師**什麼時候**在教室裏摔倒了？

Zhāng lǎoshī shénme shíhou zài jiào shì li shuāi.dǎo le?

**When** did Professor Zhang fall down in the classroom?

c. 张老师昨天在**哪儿**摔倒了？ (in the adverbial position asking the location)

張老師昨天在**哪兒**摔倒了？

Zhāng lǎoshī zuótān zài nǎr shuāi.dǎo le?

**Where** did Professor Zhang fall down yesterday?

d. 张老师昨天在教室里**怎么**了？ (in the predicate position asking about the predicate)

張老師昨天在教室裏**怎麼**了？

Zhāng lǎoshī zuótān zài jiào shì li zěnme le?

**What** happened to Professor Zhang in the classroom yesterday?

By comparing sentences (10) and (11) above, we can see that if a question word is inserted into a declarative sentence, it asks a question corresponding to its position. Sentence (10) can answer all of the questions in (11) by adding a stress to the part corresponding to the question (**bolded**).

## Attention

- i. The word **order** of this question is the same as the declarative sentence.
- ii. **There is no fixed position for the question word**, as in (11a)–(11d). This is different from English, in which the question word is always placed at the beginning of the sentence (see the translation lines of (11a)–(11d)).
- iii. To respond, **use the answer to replace the question word without changing the pattern**. For example:

(12)a. **谁**是张老师?  
**誰**是張老師?  
 Shéi shì Zhāng lǎoshī?  
 Who is Professor Zhang?

b. **我是**(张老师)。  
**我是**(張老師)。  
 Wǒ shì (Zhāng lǎoshī).  
 I am (Professor Zhang).

(13)a. 这是**谁**的书?  
 這是**誰**的書?  
 Zhè shì shéi de shū?  
 Whose book is this?

b. 这是**我的**书。  
 這是**我的**書。  
 Zhè shì wǒ de shū.  
 This is my book.

(14)a. 你找**谁**?  
 你找**誰**?  
 Nǐ zhǎo shéi?  
 Whom are you looking for?

b. 我找**张老师**。  
 我找**張老師**。  
 Wǒ zhǎo Zhāng lǎoshī.  
 I am looking for Professor Zhang.

## Explanation

- 谁/誰 shéi (who) is at the beginning of the sentence in (12a), so the answer 我 wǒ (I) is also at the beginning as in (12b)

- 谁/誰 shéi (who) is in the middle of the sentence as in (13a), so the answer 我 wǒ (I) is in the middle as in (13b)
- 谁/誰 shéi (who) is at the end of the sentence as in (14a), so the answer 张老師/張老師 Zhāng lǎoshī (Professor Zhang) is also at the end of the sentence as in (14b).

**NOTE** The question word 谁/誰 shéi (who) remains the same regardless of whether it is the subject in (12a), the attributive in (13a), or the object in (14a), but it should be “who,” “whose,” or “whom/who” in English, respectively.

### ► 24.2.2 Differences between 多 duō (many/much) and 多少 duōshao (how many/how much)

- i. The adjective 多 duō (many/much) can function as a question word, but it can only be used with adjectives or verbs to express mental activities, such as 想 xiǎng (think; miss) or 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuān (like), and it can have an optional verb 有 yǒu (have) in front of it. The pattern and examples follow:

**Pattern:**

*S + (有 yǒu) + 多 duō + adjective/verb expressing mental activities*

- (15)a. 你(有)多大?  
Nǐ (yǒu) duō dà?  
How old are you?

- b. 我(有)20岁。  
我(有)20歲。  
Wǒ (yǒu) èrshí suì.  
I am 20 years old.

- (16)a. 这间教室(有)多高?  
這間教室(有)多高?  
Zhèi jiān jiàoshì (yǒu) duō gāo?  
How high is this classroom?

- b. 这间教室(有)3米高。  
這間教室(有)3米高。  
Zhèi jiān jiàoshì (yǒu) sān mǐ gāo.  
This classroom is three meters high.

- (17)a. 你(有)多喜欢中文?  
你(有)多喜歡中文?  
Nǐ (yǒu) duō xǐhuān Zhōngwén?  
How much do you like Chinese?

- b. 我非常喜欢中文。  
我非常喜歡中文。  
Wǒ fēicháng xǐhuan Zhōngwén.  
I like Chinese very much.

NOTE Chinese normally uses an adjective with the greater value of two antonyms to ask questions with the form of 多 duō + adj. For example, we take 长/長 cháng (long) or 大 dà (big) in the opposite adjectival pairs 长/長 cháng / 短 duǎn (long/short) or 大 dà / 小 xiǎo (big/small), respectively, to ask a question:

- 多长/多長 duō cháng (how long), but not \*多短 \*duō duān (how short)
- 多大 duō dà (how big), but not \*多小 \*duō xiǎo (how small)

Other adjectives that can be used to ask questions include 重 zhòng (heavy [weight]) in 轻/輕 qīng/重 zhòng (light/heavy), 老 lǎo (old [age]) in 老 lǎo/少 shǎo (old/young), and 快 kuài (fast [speed]) in 快 kuài/慢 màn (fast/slow).

- ii. **The question word 多少 duōshao** (how many/how much) is different from 多 duō (many/much) and is used mostly as the attributive *modifying the noun* as in (18a), or the noun can be omitted in a clear context as in (18b).

- (18)a. 你有多少书?  
你有多少書?  
Nǐ yǒu duōshao shū?  
How many books do you have?

- b. 你花了多少(钱)?  
你花了多少(錢)?  
Nǐ huā le duōshao (qián)?  
How much money did you spend?

- c. \*你有多书  
\*你有多書  
\*nǐ yǒu duō shū
- d. \*你(有)多少大 (see sentence (15a) above)  
\*nǐ (yǒu) duōshao dà  
(lit. you [have] how many big)

The two words 多 duō and 多少 duōshǎo cannot be switched with each other, so (18c) and (18d) are incorrect.

### ► 24.2.3 Follow-up question 呢 ne

The final particle 呢 ne can make a sentence become a question if it follows a word or phrase. It carries a meaning of “how” as in (19b) and (20), and “where” as in (21) in the questions below, even though the question words are omitted in the actual questions. Thus, we categorize this pattern into the group of *question-word questions* (see §16.3.3).

**Pattern:***word/noun phrase + ne*

- (19)a. 你今天怎么样?  
你今天怎麼樣?  
Nǐ jīntiān zěnmeyang?  
How are you today?

- b. 很好, 你呢?  
Hěn hǎo, nǐ ne?  
Very good, and you (**how** about you)?

- (20) 这个周末我想去看电影, 你和你的女朋友呢?  
這個週末我想去看電影, 你和你的女朋友呢?  
Zhèi ge zhōumó wǒ xiǎng qu kàn diànyǐng, nǐ hé nǐ de nǚpéngyou ne?  
I would like to watch a movie this weekend. **How** about you and your girlfriend?

- (21) 我的手机呢?  
我的手機呢?  
Wǒ de shǒujī ne?  
**Where** is my cell phone?

The particle 呢 ne follows a word 你 nǐ (you) in (19b), and phrases 你和你的女朋友 nǐ hé nǐ de nǚpéngyou (you and your girlfriend) and 我的手机/我的手機 wǒ de shǒujī (my cell phone) in (20) and (21) above. We have noted that a question formed by 呢 ne either follows a question, as in (19a), or has some context before the 呢 ne-question; for example, the speaker wants to watch a movie this weekend and then asks the hearer's plan in (20), or in (21) the cell phone is not there and someone asks where it is. Since there must be some context before the 呢 ne-question, we refer to this type of question as a *follow-up question*.

**NOTE** The final particle 呢 ne can be used with a question word to soften the tone of the question, as in (22a) below. The interrogative particle 吗/嗎 ma, however, cannot be used with any question words, as in (22b) below. The reason is that we cannot ask both a yes–no question and a question-word question at the same time, in other words, *cannot double the question*.

- (22)a. 你是哪国人呢?  
你是哪國人呢?  
Nǐ shì nǎ guó rén ne?  
Which country are you from?
- b. \*你是哪国人吗  
\*你是哪國人嗎  
\*nǐ shì nǎ guó rén ma  
(lit. you are which country person ma)

For your reference, a summary of question-word questions is in Table 24.2.

**Table 24.2** Question-word questions

Pattern	Example	Answer
question-word (answer replaces the question word)	你找誰/你找誰? Nǐ zhǎo shéi? Whom are you looking for?	我找小明。 Wǒ zhǎo Xiǎomíng. I am looking for Xiaoming.
多 duō + adj. / v. (expressing mental activities)	你多大? Nǐ duō dà? How old are you?	我二十(岁) / 我二十(歲)。 Wǒ èrshí (suì). I am twenty.
多少 duōshao + N	你有多少书/你有 多少書? Nǐ yǒu duōshao shū? How many books do you have?	我有很多书/我有很 多書。 Wǒ yǒu hěn duō shū. I have many books.
word / noun phrase + 呢 ne	我的书呢/我的書 呢? Wǒ de shū ne? Where is my book?	你的书在桌子上/你的書 在桌子上。 Nǐ de shū zài zhuōzi shàng. Your book is on the table.

### 24.3 Affirmative–negative (A-not-A) questions

In order to understand this type of question more easily, let's change one of Shakespeare's famous sentences by removing the word "or" from the original text:

To be, not to be, that is the question (original: "To be, or not to be, that is the question").

是不是, 那是个问题/是不是, 那是個問題。

Shì bu shì, nà shì ge wèntí.

"To be" (shì) is *affirmative*, but "not to be" (bú shì) is *negative*. When the affirmative and negative units are combined together, it becomes a question. There is no supposition when asking this type of question, and the hearer simply selects either an affirmative or negative unit to answer it. We will elaborate on this type of question in greater detail below.

#### ► 24.3.1 The patterns of affirmative–negative questions

##### i. The basic pattern: A-not-A

The A in the pattern above could be a verb, such as 走 zǒu (walk) in (23), or an adjective, such as 好 hǎo (good), in (24) below.

**NOTE** To answer the questions, you should repeat the verb in the *A-not-A* pattern, such as 走 zǒu in (23b) or 不走 bù zǒu in (23c). *Don't* say 是 shì (yes) or 不是 bú shì (not) before the affirmative or negative unit, as is done in English (see the translations of [23] and [24]).

(23)a. 你走不走？

Nǐ zǒu bu zǒu?

Are you leaving?

b. (走, ) 我走。

(Zǒu,) Wǒ zǒu.

Yes, I am (leaving).

c. (不走, ) 我不走。

(Bù zǒu,) Wǒ bù zǒu.

No, I am not (leaving).

(24)a. 你们的中文老师好不好？

你們的中文老師好不好？

Nǐmen de Zhōngwén lǎoshī hǎo bu hǎo?

Is your teacher of Chinese good or not?

b. (很好, ) 我们的中文老师很好。

(很好, ) 我們的中文老師很好。

(Hěn hǎo,) Wǒmen de Zhōngwén lǎoshī hěn hǎo.

Yes, our teacher of Chinese is very good.

c. (不好, ) 我们的中文老师不好。

(不好, ) 我們的中文老師不好。

(Bù hǎo,) Wǒmen de Zhōngwén lǎoshī bù hǎo.

No, our teacher of Chinese is not good.

The answers to the questions in (23a) and (24a) can be the affirmative unit, as in (23b) and (24b), or the negative unit, as in (23c) and (24c) above.

If there is an object in the question, two patterns can be used:

ii. **Closed form:** *V-not-V + Object (more common)*

**NOTE** For many disyllable predicates, such as 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like), the second syllable can be omitted. One can just say the first syllable (i.e., 喜 xǐ) in the affirmative part, even though it is not a full word in (25b). This is *only* allowed in the *closed form*, and not in the *open form*, as in (26).

(25)a. 你喜欢不喜欢中文？

你喜歡不喜歡中文？

Nǐ xǐhuan bu xǐhuan Zhōngwén?

- b. 你喜不喜欢中文?  
 你喜不喜欢中文?  
 Nǐ xǐ bu xǐhuan Zhōngwén?  
 Do you like Chinese?

iii. **Open form:** *V + Object + not-V*

- (26)a. 你喜欢中文不喜欢?  
 你喜歡中文不喜歡?  
 Nǐ xǐhuan Zhōngwén bù xǐhuan?

- b. 你喜欢中文不?  
 你喜歡中文不?  
 Nǐ xǐhuan Zhōngwén bu?  
 Do you like Chinese?

In the *closed form*, which is more common, the *V-not-V* form is closed and treated as one unit, as in (25); however, in the *open form*, the object is inserted between *V* and *not-V*, as in (26), and the second verb, such as 喜欢/喜歡 *xǐhuan* (like) after 不 *bù* (not), can be dropped in spoken language, as in (26b) above.

iv. **statement + A-not-A**

The feature of this pattern is to make a statement first and then to use the form of *A-not-A* to seek the hearer's *opinion, agreement, or confirmation*. The common forms that can appear at the end of a sentence are 好不好 *hǎo bu hǎo* in (27), 行不行 *xíng bu xíng* in (28), 对不对/對不對 *duì bu duì* in (29), and 是不是 *shì bu shì* in (30):

- (27) 我们今天晚上去看电影, 好不好?  
 我們今天晚上去看電影, 好不好?  
 Wǒmen jīntiān wǎnshàng qu kàn diànyǐng, hǎo bu hǎo?

Let's go to watch a movie this evening, okay?

- (28) 老师, 我明天交作业, 行不行?  
 老師, 我明天交作業, 行不行?  
 Lǎoshī, wǒ míngtiān jiāo zuòyè, xíng bu xíng?

Professor, may I hand in the homework tomorrow?

- (29) 您是中文老师, 对不对?  
 您是中文老師, 對不對?  
 Nín shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī, duì bu duì?

You are a teacher of Chinese, right?

- (30) 你的朋友是美国人, 是不是?  
 你的朋友是美國人, 是不是?  
 Nǐ de péngyou shì Měiguó rén, shì bu shì?

Your friend is an American, isn't he/she?

Only the form “是不是 shì bu shì” can also be used in the following scenarios:

- at the beginning of a sentence, as in (31) below, to express a *polite recommendation*, such as, “is it or is it not (good) that we study first and then watch the movie?”
- in the middle of a sentence before the main verb, as in (32), to ask for a *confirmation*, such as, “(I wonder whether) you are or are not (to) have finished your homework?” The function of this usage is the same as in (30) above in which 是不是 shì bu shì is used at the end of the sentence.

(31) 是不是我们先看书再去看电影？

是不是我們先看書再去看電影？

Shì bu shì wǒmen xiān kàn-shū zài qu kān diànyǐng?

Shall we study first and then go to watch the movie?

(32) 你是不是写完作业了？

是不是寫完作業了？

Nǐ shì bu shì xiě.wán zuòyè le?

You have finished writing your homework, right?

### ► 24.3.2 The main features of A-not-A Questions

- The affirmative unit should precede the negative unit (see the examples above).
- The interrogative particle 呗/嗎 ma cannot be used with A-not-A (*no double questioning*); thus, the following sentence, (33), is incorrect:

(33) \*你是不是中国学生嗎

\*你是不是中國學生嗎

\* nǐ shì bu shì Zhōngguó xuésheng ma

(lit. you be not be Chinese student ma)

However, the modal particle 呢 ne can be used with the A-not-A form, in which the particle 呢 ne softens the tone of the question, as in (34) below:

(34) 你是不是中国学生呢？

你是不是中國學生呢？

Nǐ shì bu shì Zhōngguó xuésheng ne?

Are you a Chinese student (I wonder)?

- The degree adverbs, such as 很 hěn (very) or 非常 fēicháng (extremely), generally cannot be used before the A-not-A form, as in (35) below. This is because degree adverbs imply the positive value of the adjective and therefore contradict the uncertainty of the question.

(35)a. \*你很忙不很忙

\*nǐ hěn máng bu hěn máng

(lit. you very busy not very busy)

b. \*你非常喜欢不非常喜欢中文

\*nǐ fēicháng xǐhuān bu fēicháng xǐhuān zhōngwén

\*nǐ fēicháng xǐhuan bu fēicháng xǐhuan Zhōngwén  
(lit. you very like not very like Chinese)

- If there is an auxiliary verb in this type of question, the auxiliary verb should be structured in the *A-not-A* form, like the auxiliary verb 能 néng (can) in (36a) but not like the verb 帮/bāng (help) in (36b) below:

(36)a. 你**能****不**能**帮**我学中文?  
你**能****不**能**幫**我學中文?

Nǐ néng bu néng bāng wǒ xué Zhōngwén?

Can you help me to study Chinese?

b. \***你****能****帮****不**帮我学中文  
\***你****能****幫****不**幫我學中文

\*nǐ néng bāng bu bāng wǒ xué Zhōngwén

(lit. you can help cannot help me study Chinese)

The main features of *A-not-A* questions are summarized in Table 24.3 below.

**Table 24.3** Affirmative–negative (*A-not-A*) questions

Pattern	Example	Answer
Without an object	你 <b>好</b> <b>不</b> 好? Nǐ hǎo bu hǎo? How are you doing?	我 <b>很</b> 好。/ 我 <b>不</b> 好。 Wǒ hěn hǎo. / Wǒ bù hǎo. I am fine. / I am not fine.
Closed form (with an object)	你 <b>是</b> <b>不</b> 是 <b>学生</b> ?/你 <b>是</b> <b>不</b> 是 <b>學生</b> ? Nǐ shì bu shì xuésheng? Are you a student?	我 <b>是</b> 学生/我 <b>是</b> 學生。 or 我 <b>不</b> 是 <b>学生</b> /我 <b>不</b> 是 <b>學生</b> 。 Wǒ shì xuésheng. / Wǒ bù shì xuésheng. I am a student. / I am not a student.
Open form (with an object)	你 <b>是</b> 学生 <b>不</b> 是 <b>?</b> /你 <b>是</b> 學生 <b>不</b> 是 <b>?</b> Nǐ shì xuésheng bù shì? Are you a student?	我 <b>是</b> 学生/我 <b>是</b> 學生。 or 我 <b>不</b> 是 <b>学生</b> /我 <b>不</b> 是 <b>學生</b> 。 Wǒ shì xuésheng. / Wǒ bù shì xuésheng. I am a student. / I am not a student.
Statement + <i>A-not-A</i>	你是 <b>学生</b> , <b>对</b> <b>不</b> <b>对</b> ?/你 <b>是</b> 學生, <b>對</b> <b>不</b> <b>對</b> ? Nǐ shì xuésheng, duì bu duì? You are a student, right?	<b>对</b> , 我 <b>是</b> 学生/ <b>對</b> , 我 <b>是</b> 學生。 or <b>不对</b> , 我 <b>不</b> 是 <b>学生</b> / <b>不對</b> , 我 <b>不</b> 是 <b>學生</b> 。 Duì, wǒ shì xuésheng. / Bú duì, wǒ bù shì xuésheng. Yes, I am a student. / No, I am not a student.

## 24.4 Alternative questions (A 还是/還是 háishi B questions)

We can now cite Shakespeare's original sentence to understand this type of question:

To be, **or** not to be, that is the question.

是**还是**不是，那是个問題。

是**還是**不是，那是個問題。

Shì háishi bú shì, nà shì ge wèntí.

This type of question provides two or more choices. One can choose one of the choices, like (37b) or (37c) below; however, generally, one cannot answer with an item not mentioned in the original question:

- (37)a. 你喜欢喝咖啡**还是**喝茶？  
你喜歡喝咖啡**還是**喝茶？  
Nǐ xǐhuan hē kāfēi háishi hē-chá?  
Do you like drinking coffee or tea?
- b. 我喜欢喝咖啡。  
我喜歡喝咖啡。  
Wǒ xǐhuan hē kāfēi.  
I like drinking coffee.
- c. 我喜欢喝茶。  
我喜歡喝茶。  
Wǒ xǐhuan hē-chá.  
I like drinking tea.

### ► 24.4.1 The patterns of Alternative Questions

#### i. One subject:

S + (是 shì) A + 还是/還是 háishi B + (还是/還是 háishi C...)

- (38) 你 (是) 想喝咖啡, **还是** (想喝)茶, **还是**(想喝)可乐?  
你 (是) 想喝咖啡, **還是** (想喝)茶, **還是**(想喝)可樂?  
Nǐ (shì) xiǎng hē kāfēi, háishi (xiǎng hē) chá, háishi (xiǎng hē) kělè?  
Would you like to drink coffee, tea, or coke?

The word 是 (shì) is optional, but if it is used, it carries a slightly emphasized meaning on the first option, 想喝咖啡 xiǎng hē kāfēi (would like to drink coffee). The repeated words, like 想 xiǎng (would like) and 喝 hē (drink), can be omitted in (38) because they already appear at the beginning of the sentence.

#### ii. Two different subjects:

(是 shì) A (S1-predicate) + 还是/還是 háishi + B (S2-predicate)

- (39) (是) **小明** 打扫房间还是我打扫 (房间)?  
 (是) **小明** 打掃房間還是我打掃 (房間)?  
 (Shi) Xiǎomíng dǎsǎo fángjiān háishi wǒ dǎsǎo (fángjiān)?

Should Xiaoming or I clean up the room?

There are two subjects, 小明 Xiǎomíng and 我 wǒ (I), in the above sentence. The optional 是 shì can be added before the first subject to make it the emphasized choice.

iii. Two different adverbials:

S + (是 shi) A (adverbial1-predicate) + 还是/還是 háishi B (adverbial2-predicate)

- (40) 我们今天 (是) 在教室看书还是在图书馆看书?  
 我們今天 (是) 在教室看書還是 在圖書館看書?  
 Wǒmen jīntiān (shì) zài jiàoshì kàn-shū háishi zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū?

Should we study in the classroom or in the library today?

是 shì is optional, but it can be added before the first adverbial, like 在教室 zài jiàoshì (in the classroom), to highlight the adverbial, as in (40) above.

NOTE If the main verb is 是 shì, it is redundant to say \*还是是/\*還是是 háishi shì, as in (41b); instead, 还是/還是 háishi alone is enough, as in (41a) below:

- (41)a. 你是中国人还是日本人?  
 你是中國人還是日本人?  
 Nǐ shì Zhōngguó rén háishi Rìběn rén?  
 Are you Chinese or Japanese?  
 b. \*你是中国人还是是日本人  
 \*你是中國人還是是日本人  
 \*nǐ shì Zhōngguó rén háishi shì Rìběn rén  
 (lit. you be Chinese or be Japanese)

- The yes-no interrogative particle 吗/嗎 ma (*again, no double questions*) should not be used, as in (42b) below, because it is not compatible with alternative questions. However, the interrogative modal particle 呢 ne can be used for alternative questions to soften the tone of the sentence, as in (42a) below:

- (42)a. 小亮是老师还是学生呢?  
 小亮是老師還是學生呢?  
 Xiǎoliàng shì lǎoshī háishi xuésheng ne?  
 Is Xiaoliang a teacher or a student (I wonder)?  
 b. \*小亮是老师还是学生吗  
 \*小亮是老師還是學生嗎  
 \* Xiǎoliàng shì lǎoshī háishi xuésheng ma  
 (lit. Xiaoliang be teacher or student ma)

### ► 24.4.2 还是/還是 háishi vs. 或者 huòzhě

In English, the word “or” can be used in a *question*, as in (43a), and in a *statement* as in (43b). However, in Chinese:

- **还是/還是** *háishi* (or) should be used in a *question*, and
- **或者** *huòzhě* (or) should be used in a *statement* (see the corresponding translations for the two sentences):

- (43)a. Would you like to drink coffee **or** tea?

你想喝咖啡**还是**喝茶？

你想喝咖啡**還是**喝茶？

Nǐ xiǎng hē kāfēi **háishi** hē-chá?

- b. Either coffee **or** tea is fine with me. / I am fine with either coffee **or** tea.

我咖啡**或者**茶都喜歡喝。/咖啡**或者**茶都行。

我咖啡**或者**茶都喜歡喝。/咖啡**或者**茶都行。

Wǒ kāfēi **huòzhě** chá dōu xǐhuan hē. / Kāfēi **huòzhě** chá dōu xíng.

To express the meaning that **either A or B** is fine in Chinese, the pattern is:

*A* 或者 *huòzhě* *B* + 都 *dōu* + *V*

Remember that the adverb 都 *dōu* (all) must be used (see the sentence (43b) above).

To express the meaning that **both A and B** are fine/not fine, simply use the form ***dōu +verb***, as in (44b) and (44c) below:

- (44)a. 你喜欢中国饭还是美国饭？

你喜歡中國飯還是美國飯？

Nǐ xǐhuan Zhōngguó fàn **háishi** Měiguó fàn?

Do you like Chinese food or American food?

- b. (我)都喜歡。

(我)都喜歡。

(Wǒ) **dōu** xǐhuan.

I like both.

- c. (我)都不喜歡。

(我)都不喜歡。

(Wǒ) **dōu** bù xǐhuan.

I don't like either.

- **Embedded question forms in sentences:** If there is a sentence that expresses uncertainty, such as, “I don't know whether Xiaoming is a teacher or a student,” the question form **A** *háishi* **B** should be used, as in (45) below, but 或者

huòzhě (or) should not be used. Accordingly, there is a period and not a question mark at the end of the sentence because it is not a question.

- (45) 我不知道小亮是老师**还是**学生。

我不知道小亮是老師**還是**學生。

Wǒ bù zhīdào Xiǎoliàng shì lǎoshī **háishi** xuésheng.

I don't know if Xiaoliang is a teacher **or** student.

The other two types of questions, **question-word questions** as in (46a) below and **A-not-Aquestions** as in (46b), can also be used in *embedded question forms in sentences*; however, 吗/嗎 ma or 吧 ba type questions cannot. The typical verbs that are used with these types of questions are verbs that indicate cognitive activities, such as 知道 zhīdào (know), 清楚 qīngchu (be clear about; understand), 明白 míngbai (understand), and 懂 dǒng (understand), and they are commonly used as a negative form, such as 不知道 bù zhīdào (don't know) in (45) and (46).

- (46)a. 我不知道**谁**是小亮的老师。

我不知道**誰**是小亮的老師。

Wǒ bù zhīdào shéi shì Xiǎoliàng de lǎoshī.

I don't know **who** Xiaoliang's teacher is.

- b. 我不知道小亮**是不是**学生。

我不知道小亮**是不是**學生。

Wǒ bù zhīdào Xiǎoliàng shì **bu shì** xuésheng.

I don't know **whether** Xiaoliang is a student.

The above three types of questions, once again not 吗/嗎 ma or 吧 ba type questions, can also be used with certain question adverbs, such as 到底 dàodǐ ([in a question for emphasis] on earth; what exactly) as below, with an enhanced inquiring tone on the questions:

- (47)a. 小明**到底是**老师**还是**学生? (A **háishi** Bquestion)

小明**到底是**老師**還是**學生?

Xiǎomíng dàodǐ shì lǎoshī **háishi** xuésheng?

What on earth is Xiaoming, a teacher **or** a student? (implying that the speaker is eager to figure out the identity of Xiaoming)

- b. 小明**到底是****谁**? (question-word question)

小明**到底是****誰**?

Xiǎomíng dàodǐ shì **shéi**?

Who on earth is Xiaoming?

- c. 小明**到底是****是不是**学生? (A-not-Aquestion)

小明**到底是****是不是**學生?

Xiǎomíng dàodǐ shì **bu shì** xuésheng?

What on earth is Xiaoming, a student?

For a quick reference, Alternative questions are summarized in Table 24.4 below.

**Table 24.4** Alternative (A 还是/還是 háishi B) questions

Pattern	Example	Answer
One subject	你喜欢喝茶 <b>还是</b> 喝咖啡/你 喜歡喝茶 <b>還是</b> 喝咖啡? Nǐ xǐhuan hē-chá <b>háishi</b> hē kāifēi? Do you like (drinking) tea <b>or</b> coffee?	我喜欢喝茶。 / 我 <b>都</b> 喜欢。 我喜歡喝茶。 / 我 <b>都</b> 喜歡。 Wǒ xǐhuan hē-chá. /Wǒ <b>dōu</b> xǐhuan. I like (drinking) tea./I like both.
Different subjects	你喜欢喝茶 <b>还是</b> 小明喜欢喝茶/ 你喜歡喝茶 <b>還是</b> 小明 喜歡喝茶？ Nǐ xǐhuan hē-chá <b>háishi</b> Xiǎomíng xǐhuan hē-chá? Do you like (drinking) tea <b>or</b> does Xiaoming like (drinking) tea?	小明喜欢喝茶/小明 喜歡喝茶。 Xiǎomíng xǐhuan hē-chá. Xiaoming likes (drinking) tea.
Different adverbials	你在家看书 <b>还是</b> 在图书馆看书/ 你在家看書 <b>還是</b> 在圖書館看書？ Nǐ zài jiā kàn-shū <b>háishi</b> zài túshūguǎn kàn-shū? Do you study at home <b>or</b> at the library?	我在家看书/我在家看書。 Wǒ zài jiā kàn-shū. I study at home.

## 24.5 Rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions, which do not require an answer, can be formed by any type of questions above. The function of a rhetorical question is either to enhance the meaning of affirmation or negation, or to be a dare. We will see this point in the following examples in which rhetorical questions are composed according to the different types of question structures.

### i. Rhetorical questions in yes-no form:

- (48) 你**不是**学过中文**吗**？你就给我们翻译吧。  
 你**不是**學過中文**嗎**？你就給我們翻譯吧。  
 Nǐ **bú** shi xué guo Zhōngwén **ma**? Nǐ jiù gěi wǒmen fānyì ba.  
 Haven't you studied Chinese before (I know you did)? Please just translate for us.

The form 不是...吗/不是...嗎 búshi...ma in the above sentence expresses an affirmative meaning, that is, you have studied Chinese before.

ii. Rhetorical questions in *question-word* form:

- (49) 小亮哪儿有时间做功课啊?  
 小亮哪兒有時間做功課啊?  
 Xiǎoliàng nǎr yǒu shíjiān zuò gōngkè a?  
 How does Xiaoliang have time to do homework?

- (50) 谁不知道长城啊?  
 誰不知道長城啊?  
 Shéi bù zhīdào Chángchéng a?  
 Who doesn't know the Great Wall?

In the above two sentences, the affirmative form in (49) expresses a negative meaning, Xiaoliang has no time to do the homework. Conversely, the negative form in (50) indicates a positive meaning, everyone knows the Great Wall. To soften the tone, the modal particle 啊 a is usually added at the end of the sentence.

iii. Rhetorical questions in *A-not-A* form:

- (51) 这个星期我每天都有考试, 你说, 我忙不忙?  
 這個星期我每天都有考試, 你說, 我忙不忙?  
 Zhèi ge xīngqī wǒ měitiān dōu yǒu kǎoshì, nǐ shuō, wǒ máng bu máng?  
 I have a test every day this week. You tell me, am I busy or not?

To solicit the hearer's agreement or the same feeling, there is often a phrase like 你说/你說 nǐ shuō (you tell me) as in (51) above, 你看 nǐ kàn (you see), or 你想 nǐ xiǎng (you think) before the *A-not-A* form.

iv. Rhetorical questions in *A 还是/還是 B* form:

- (52) 你到学校是学习还是玩儿来了?  
 你到學校是學習還是玩兒來了?  
 Nǐ dào xuéxiào shì xuéxí háishi wánr lái le?  
 Do you come to school to study or play?

The context in (52) is a parent/teacher asking a child/student with a blaming tone whether school is for studying at or playing in. This is an example of the challenge/dare function of a rhetorical question.

## 24.6 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned **four types of Chinese question structures** and one **rhetorical question**, which takes the form of a question but does not expect an answer. The main features of the questions are summarized in Table 24.5.

**Table 24.5** Types of questions and their features

Types	Examples	Answering forms	Notes
yes–no	你是美国人吗/你是美國人嗎? Nǐ shì Měiguó rén ma? Are you an American?	我是。 Wǒ shì. I am. 我不是。 Wǒ bú shì. I am not.	Choose either yes or no. The word order is the same as the declarative sentence with 吗/嗎 ma at the end of the sentence.
question-word	谁是老师/誰是老師? Shéi shì lǎoshī? Who is the teacher?	他是老师。 Tā shì lǎoshī. He is a teacher.	The word order is the same as the declarative sentence. The answer takes the place of the question word.
A-not-A	你学不学中文/你學不學中文? Nǐ xué bu xué Zhōngwén? Do you study Chinese?	我学/我學。 Wǒ xué. I study. 我不学/我不學。 Wǒ bù xué. I don't study.	Takes either A (affirmative) or not-A (negative) to answer.
A háishi B	你喝茶还是咖啡/你喝茶還是咖啡? Nǐ hē-chá háishi kāfēi? Do you drink tea or coffee?	1) 喝茶。 Hē-chá. Tea. 2) 茶或者咖啡都行。Chá huòzhě kāfēi dōu xíng. Either tea or coffee is fine. 3) 都喝。 Dōu hē. Both.	1) Choose one of A or B 2) Either A or B is fine 3) A and B are both fine 还是/還是 háishi is used in questions 或者 huòzhě is used in statements
Rhetorical Question	我哪儿有钱啊/我哪兒有錢啊? Wǒ nǎr yǒu qián a? How could I have money?	Need not answer	The affirmative form emphasizes the negative meaning and <i>vice versa</i> .

## 24.7 Exercises

I Change the following sentences to yes-no questions and A-not-A questions:

Example:

Given: 小亮喜欢喝茶/小亮喜歡喝茶。 Xiǎoliàng xǐhuan hē-chá.

Answer 1 (yes-no question): 小亮喜欢喝茶吗/小亮喜歡喝茶嗎?

Xiǎoliàng xǐhuan hē-chá ma?

Answer 2 (A-not-A question): 小亮喜欢不喜欢喝茶/小亮喜歡不喜歡喝茶?

Xiǎoliàng xǐhuan bù xǐhuan hē-chá?

1. 他是新来的中文老师/他是新來的中文老師。

Tā shì xīn lái de Zhōngwén lǎoshī.

2. 这所学校很漂亮/這所學校很漂亮。

Zhèi suǒ xuéxiào hěn piàoliang.

3. 小亮昨天晚上看了一个电影/小亮昨天晚上看了一個電影。

Xiǎoliàng zuótīān wǎnshàng kàn le yí ge diànyǐng.

4. 小明很喜欢上中文课/小明很喜歡上中文課。

Xiǎomíng hěn xǐhuan shàng Zhōngwén kè.

5. 小明今年夏天可以去中国学中文/小明今年夏天可以去中國學中文。

Xiǎomíng jīnnián xiàtiān kěyǐ qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén.

II Change the following sentences to questions by changing the underlined words with the appropriate question words:

Example:

Given: 小亮昨天没上课/小亮昨天沒上課。

Xiǎoliàng zuótīān méi shàng-kè.

Answer (question-word question): 谁昨天没上课/誰昨天沒上課?

Shéi zuótīān méi shàng-kè?

1. 我们明天没有考试/我們明天沒有考試。

Wǒmen míngtiān méiyǒu kǎoshì.

2. 小明在图书馆看书/小明在圖書館看書。

Xiǎomíng zài túshūguǎn kàn-shù.

3. 小亮的电脑丢了/小亮的電腦丢了。 Xiǎoliàng de diànnǎo diū le.

4. 老师把小明的作业给小明了/老師把小明的作業給小明了。

Lǎoshī bǎ Xiǎomíng de zuòyè gěi Xiǎomíng le.

5. 小亮今天晚上很想去吃中餐/小亮今天晚上很想去吃中餐。

Xiǎoliàng jīntiān wǎnshàng hěn xiǎng qù chī zhōngcān.

6. 小亮明年五月就要毕业了/小亮明年五月就要畢業了。

Xiǎoliàng míngnián wǔ yuè jiù yào bìyè le.

7. 张老师的女儿今年十岁了/張老師的女兒今年十歲了。

Zhāng lǎoshī de nǚ'ér jīnnián shí suì le.

8. 小明今天在书店买了五本书/小明今天在書店買了五本書。

Xiǎomíng jīntiān zài shūdiàn mǎi le wǔ běn shù.

**III Use the words or phrases given to complete the questions with the A haishi B form:**

**Example:**

**Given:** 小张/小張 Xiǎo Zhāng, 晚上 wǎnshàng, 打扫房间/打掃房間 dǎsǎo fángjiān, 做功课/做功課 zuò gōngkè

**Answer (A háishì B question):** 小张晚上 (是)打扫房间 **还是** 做功课/小張晚上 (是)打掃房間 **還是** 做功課?

Xiǎo Zhāng wǎnshàng (shì) dǎsǎo fángjiān  
háishi zuò gōngkè?

1. 小明/Xiǎomíng, 是学生/是學生 shì xuésheng, 是老师/是老師 shì lǎoshī
2. 你的朋友明年 nǐ de péngyou míngnián, 去中国/去中國 qù Zhōngguó, 去日本 qù Rìběn
3. 小亮 Xiǎoliàng, 会说汉语/會說漢語 huì shuō Hànyǔ, 会说英语/會說英語 huì shuō Yīngyǔ
4. 你今天晚上 nǐ jīntiān wǎnshàng, 在图书馆学习/在圖書館學習 zài túshūguǎn xuéxí, 在教室学习/在教室學習 zài jiào shì xuéxí
5. 你这个周末/你這個週末 nǐ zhèi ge zhōumò, 喜欢看电影/喜歡看電影 xǐ huan kàn diànyǐng, 喜欢看球賽/喜歡看球賽 xǐ huan kàn qíusài
6. 你每天 nǐ měitiān, 开车去学校/開車去學校 kāi-chē qù xuéxiào, 走路去学校/走路去學校 zǒu-lù qù xuéxiào

**IV Change the following sentences to rhetorical questions:**

**Example:**

**Given:** 我没有时间做功课/我沒有時間做功課。

Wǒ méiyǒu shíjiān zuò gōngkè.

**Answer:** 我哪有时间做功课啊/我哪有時間做功課啊?

Wǒ nǎ yǒu shíjiān zuò gōngkè a?

1. 法语很难, 我根本不会说/法語很難, 我根本不會說。  
Fǎyǔ hěn nán, wǒ gēnběn bú huì shuō.
2. 这个作业太容易了, 我会做/這個作業太容易了, 我會做。  
Zhèi ge zuòyè tài róngyi le, wǒ huì zuò.
3. 小亮没有护照, 不可以去中国/小亮沒有護照, 不可以去中國。  
Xiǎoliàng méiyǒu hùzhào, bù kěyì qù Zhōngguó.
4. 这个电影一点儿意思都没有/這個電影一點兒意思都沒有。  
Zhèi ge diànyǐng yìdiǎnr yìsi dōu méiyǒu.
5. 书上写着我的名字, 这不是你的书/書上寫著我的名字, 這不是你的書。  
Shù shàng xiě zhe wǒ de míngzì, zhèi bú shì nǐ de shù.
6. 小明找到工作了, 他很高兴/小明找到工作了, 他很高興。  
Xiǎomíng zhǎo dào gōngzuò le, tā hěn gāoxìng.
7. 小亮还是个学生, 不是老师/小亮還是個學生, 不是老師。  
Xiǎoliàng hái shì gè xuésheng, bù shì lǎoshī.
8. 早上还下雪呢, 今天一点儿都不暖和/早上還下雪呢, 今天一點兒都不暖和。  
Zǎoshàng hái xià-xuě ne, jīntiān yìdiǎnr dōu bù nuǎnhuo.

V Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate question forms based on the given meanings in English:

1. A: 今天晚上我们去哪儿吃饭/今天晚上我們去哪兒吃飯?  
Jīntiān wǎnshàng wǒmen qù nǎr chī-fàn?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。(Either a Chinese restaurant or an American restaurant will be fine.)

2. A: 这个周末你想做什么/這個週末你想做什麼?  
Zhèi ge zhōumò nǐ xiǎng zuò shénme?

B: 我想去看电影/我想去看電影, \_\_\_\_\_?

Wǒ xiǎng qù kàn diànyǐng, \_\_\_\_\_ (and you)?

3. A: 小明的中文老师非常好/小明的中文老師非常好。  
Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén lǎoshī fēicháng hǎo.

B: \_\_\_\_\_? (Who is Xiaoming's Chinese teacher?)

4. A: 这只狗在这儿跑来跑去/這隻狗在這兒跑來跑去,  
\_\_\_\_\_?

Zhèi zhī gǒu zài zhèr pǎo lái pǎo qù, \_\_\_\_\_? (Whose dog is this?)

B: 我也不知道。

Wǒ yě bù zhīdào.

5. A: \_\_\_\_\_? (How old is your son?)

B: 八岁/八歲。

Bā suì.

6. A: \_\_\_\_\_? (How many libraries do we have?)

B: 我们学校有六个图书馆/我們學校有六個圖書館。

Wǒmen xuéxiào yǒu liù ge túshūguǎn.

7. A: 今天的考试很容易, 是不是/今天的考試很容易, 是不是?  
Jīntiān de kǎoshì hěn róngyi, shì bu shì?

B: \_\_\_\_\_ (use rhetorical question) ? 我一点儿都不会做/我一點兒都不會做。

Wǒ yìdiǎnr dōu bù huì zuò.

## Comparisons

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the basic patterns of Chinese comparisons
- ★ To learn the features of 比 bǐ and 跟 gēn comparative sentences and the negative forms

Comparison is an essential function of speech: it allows us to express which things are the same, which things are different, and what the differences are. In general, there are two basic types of comparison: comparisons that indicate differences and comparisons that indicate similarities between people or things. Accordingly, in Chinese, there is a 比 bǐ comparative type that displays *difference* and a 跟...一样/跟...一樣 gēn...yíyàng form that represents *similarity*.

### 25.1 比 bǐ comparative sentences displaying difference

#### ► 25.1.1 The patterns of bǐ comparative sentences

The five main patterns of bǐ sentences are outlined below; *A* is the *topic* to be compared, *B* is the *target* to be compared with, and *C* is the *quality* for comparison.

##### i. Basic pattern:

A (*topic*) 比 bǐ (*preposition*) B (*target*) C (*[adj.] quality*)

- (1) 小明**比**老师高。  
小明**比**老師高。  
Xiǎomíng bǐ lǎoshī gāo.

Xiaoming is taller **than** the teacher.

#### TIP

To understand Chinese comparative sentences, just recall the **temporal sequence** of the real world (see §2.3 and §18.2), that is, one compares (比 bǐ's original meaning) *A* with *B* first, and then sees the result *C*, as with 高 gāo (tall)

in example (1). Conversely, English shows the quality (taller) before the target of comparison (with the preposition “than”). Interestingly, in both Chinese and English, the target of comparison and the preposition (i.e., 比 bǐ [than]) are often omitted (see ii and v).

**Please be aware:** The word order of the comparative sentence is different between Chinese and English.

### ii. Specific result of comparison pattern:

*A 比 bǐ B + C (adjective) + D (specific difference)*

**NOTE** Remember (一)点儿/ 一 點兒 (yì)diǎnr (a little bit) and 得多 de duō/多了 duō le (much) are fixed and inseparable phrases.

- (2) 小明 比我 高一点儿/得多/多了/三厘米。  
小明 比我 高一點兒/得多/多了/三厘米。  
Xiǎomíng (bǐ wǒ) gāo yìdiǎnr/de duō/duō le/sān límǐ.

Xiaoming is a bit/much/three centimeters taller (**than** me).

The measured *result* of a comparison is expressed by a complement that indicates the specific difference of the comparative result. For example, in the above sentence, the comparative result of how tall Xiaming is can be any of the following:

- (一)点儿/(一)點兒 (yì)diǎnr (a little bit)
- 得多 de duō/多了 duō le (much)
- a measure phrase, such as 三厘米 sān límǐ (three centimeters)

The result, D, measures the quality, C, so they must be the same kind. For instance, if C is “tall/short,” D cannot be measured in weight, such as kilograms. As mentioned above, the target of comparison and the preposition, such as 比我 bǐ wǒ (**than** me) in (2), can be omitted in a known context (see v below as well).

### iii. Verb phrase pattern:

*A 比 bǐ B + C (verb phrase)*

This pattern has restricted use because only a few verbs can appear in the comparative construction in place of the adjective, in specific contexts. The verbs that can be used include the following:

- mental verbs, such as the emotion word 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan (like) in (3);
- verb + object phrases, such as 有知识/有知識 yǒu zhīshí (have knowledge) in (4) in which the object 知识/知識 zhīshí (knowledge) can be compared by quality;
- verbs such as 说/說 shuō (speak) in (5) because how the object 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese) is spoken (by Xiaoming and myself) can be compared.

- (3) 小明**比**我喜欢咖啡。  
 小明**比**我喜歡咖啡。  
 Xiǎomíng bǐ wǒ xǐhuān kāfēi.  
 Xiaoming likes coffee more **than** I do.

- (4) 老师**比**学生有知识。  
 老師**比**學生有知識。  
 Lǎoshī bǐ xuésheng yǒu zhīshí.  
 Professors are more knowledgeable **than** students.

- (5) 小明说中文**比**我说得好。  
 小明說中文**比**我說得好。  
 Xiǎomíng shuō Zhōngwén bǐ wǒ shuō de hǎo.  
 Xiaoming speaks Chinese better **than** I do.

iv. Adverb pattern:

A **比** bǐ B + 还要/還要 hái yào/更 gèng + C (adjective)

In comparisons, the Chinese degree adverbs 还/還 hái/还要/還要 hái yào (even) and 更 gèng (more) express the meaning of “even more,” and 最 zuì expresses the meaning of “the most.”

- (6)a. 小明很高, 小明的哥哥**比**小明还要/还高。  
 小明很高, 小明的哥哥**比**小明還要/還高。  
 Xiǎomíng hěn gāo, Xiǎomíng de gēge bǐ Xiǎomíng hái yào/hái gāo.  
 Xiaoming is tall, but his older brother is **even** taller **than** Xiaoming.

- b. 小明很高, 小明的哥哥**更**高, 小明的爸爸**最**高。  
 Xiǎomíng hěn gāo, Xiǎomíng de gēge gèng gāo, Xiǎomíng de bàba zuì gāo.  
 Xiaoming is tall; Xiaoming's older brother is even taller; Xiaoming's father is the **tallest**.

**Please be aware:** When using the adverb 最 zuì (the most) to express the superlative meaning, the preposition 比 bǐ and its object (i.e., the target of comparison) *cannot* appear in the sentence, as in (6b) above. This is because with 最 zuì (the most), the target of comparison is each and every one, so there is no need to specify it.

 **Attention**

Recall that degree adverbs, such as 很 hěn (very), compel an absolute meaning from the default comparative meaning of Chinese adjectives (see §12.1). This is why degree adverbs cannot be used before the adjective in 比 bǐ sentences. Thus, example (7) is wrong.

- (7) \*小明**比**老师很高  
 \*小明**比**老師很高  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǐ lǎoshī hěn gāo  
 (lit. Xiaoming than teacher very tall)

v. **Shortened pattern (implied comparison):**

*A + adjective (quality)*

The default meaning of Chinese adjectives is comparative. Therefore, in a clear context, the preposition **比** bǐ (than) and its object (the target of comparison) are not required in a sentence to express the meaning of comparison (see §12.1).

- (8) 这间教室大。  
 這間教室大。  
 Zhèi jiān jiàoshì dà.  
 This classroom is bigger.

Although sentence (8) above may sound a bit abrupt without context, it is most likely that the speaker just walked in from another classroom and found that this classroom is bigger than the last one. The *implied* comparison can be made *explicit* by adding the measured result of the comparison, such as **一点儿/一點兒** yìdiǎnr (a bit) or **多了** duō le (much), after the adjective, **大** dà (big) as in (9) below:

- (9) 这间教室大一点儿/多了。  
 這間教室大一點兒/多了。  
 Zhèi jiān jiàoshì dà yìdiǎnr/duō le.  
 This classroom is a little bit/much bigger.

### ► 25.1.2 Negation of **bǐ** sentences

There are three main negative forms of **bǐ** sentences.

i. **A 没(有)/沒有** méi(yǒu) / **不如** bùrú + **B + C** (adjective)

The pattern with **没(有)/沒有** méi(yǒu) is *more commonly* used to negate **bǐ** sentences. Remember, in order to express a negative meaning, just use **没(有)/沒有** méi(yǒu) (not) or **不如** bùrú (not equal to) to replace **比** bǐ. For example, **bǐ** sentences in (1) and (3)–(5) above can all be changed to negative sentences with **没(有)/沒有** méi(yǒu) (not) or **不如** bùrú (not equal to), as in (10)–(13) below, respectively:

- (10) 小明**没有/不如**老师高。  
 小明**沒有/不如**老師高。  
 Xiǎomíng méiyǒu/bùrú lǎoshī gāo.  
 Xiaoming is not as tall as the teacher.
- (11) 小明**没有/不如**我那么喜欢咖啡。  
 小明**沒有/不如**我那麼喜歡咖啡。  
 Xiǎomíng méiyǒu/bùrú wǒ (nàme) xǐhuan kāfēi.  
 Xiaoming does not like coffee as much as I do.
- (12) 老师**没有/不如**学生有知识。  
 老師**沒有/不如**學生有知識。  
 Lǎoshī méiyǒu/bùrú xuésheng yǒu zhīshí.  
 The teacher is not as knowledgeable as the students.
- (13) 小明说中文**没有/不如**我说得好。  
 小明說中文**沒有/不如**我說得好。  
 Xiǎomíng shuō Zhōngwén méiyǒu/bùrú wǒ shuō de hǎo.  
 Xiaoming doesn't speak Chinese as well as I do.

ii. A **不如** bùrú (not equal to) + B

Different from the above forms of 没(有)/沒(有) méi(yǒu), the quality of comparison C (adjective) can be omitted when the context is clear and when the negative form with 不如 bùrú (not equal to) is used, as in (14) and (15) below. This is because the adjectives after 不如 bùrú typically have a positive meaning, and the meaning of *goodness* remains consistent even if the adjective is omitted in the sentence.

- (14) 小亮的中文**不如**小明的中文 (好/流利)。  
 Xiǎoliàng de Zhōngwén bùrú Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén (hǎo/liúlì).  
 Xiaoliang's Chinese is not equal to (as good/fluent as) Xiaoming's.
- (15) 这所学校**不如**我们学校 (漂亮/有名)。  
 這所學校**不如**我們學校 (漂亮/有名)。  
 Zhèi suǒ xuéxiào bùrú wǒmen xuéxiào (piàoliang/yōumíng).  
 This school is not equal to (as beautiful/famous as) ours.

The good quality that can be specified by adjectives with a positive meaning, such as 好 hǎo (good) or 流利 liúlì (fluent) in (14) and 漂亮 piàoliang (beautiful) or 有名 yōumíng (famous) in (15) is omitted when the context is clear.

iii. **A 不比 bùbǐ + B + C** (adjective)

This pattern is restricted and only used in specific contexts.

(16) 小明**不比**老师高。

小明**不比**老師高。

Xiǎomíng bùbǐ lǎoshī gāo.

Xiaoming is not taller than the teacher.

A phrase like “A **不比** B 高 bùbǐ B gāo” (*lit. A not compare B tall*), should be interpreted as “**not taller than** B.” Therefore, sentence (16) states that Xiaoming is not taller than the teacher; specifically, Xiaoming is the same height as the teacher or shorter than the teacher. Since Chinese adjectives by default imply a comparative meaning, this structure is typically used to imply that *A* and *B* are roughly the same (by comparison).

► **Attention**

The negative adverb **不** bù (not) must precede **比** bǐ, as in (16), but it must not occur before the adjective. Sentence (17) is ungrammatical because the negation **不** bù (not), just like the degree adverb **很** hěn (very), takes away the comparative meaning of the adjective, and therefore, cannot precede the adjective **高** gāo (tall):

(17) \*小明**比**老师不高  
 \*小明**比**老師不高  
 \*Xiǎomíng bǐ lǎoshī bù gāo  
 (*lit. Xiaoming than teacher not tall*)

## 25.2 跟 gēn comparative sentences indicating sameness

To express the meaning of *sameness* or *similarity*, Chinese uses the following patterns.

i. **Basic pattern:**

**A 跟 gēn** (preposition: *with*) *B + 一样/一樣* yíyàng (*same*)

This pattern compares the properties or characters of *A* and *B*, which need not be mentioned in a clear context, and shows the result of the comparison: **一样/一樣** yíyàng (*same*) as in (18) below.

(18) 小亮**跟**老师**一样**。

小亮**跟**老師**一樣**。

Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī yíyàng.

Xiaoliang is the same as the teacher.

To negate the sentence, just add the negative adverb 不 bù (not) before 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same), as in (19) below.

- (19) 小亮跟老师不一样。

小亮跟老師不一樣。

Xiaoliang gēn lǎoshī bù yíyàng.

Xiaoliang is not the same as the teacher.

To *specify* sameness in a certain aspect of the comparison, add a corresponding adjective or verb phrase after 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same), as in the following pattern and examples:

ii. **Specific pattern:**

A **跟 gēn** B + yíyàng + C (adjective/verb phrase; specifying the same)

- (20) 小亮跟老师一样高。 ([adj.] gāo [tall])

小亮跟老師一樣高。

Xiaoliang gēn lǎoshī yíyàng gāo.

Xiaoliang is as tall as the teacher.

To negate the sentence above, add the negative adverb 不 bù (not) before 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same), as in (21) below.

- (21) 小亮跟老师不一样高。

小亮跟老師不一樣高。

Xiaoliang gēn lǎoshī bù yíyàng gāo.

Xiaoliang is not the same height as the teacher.

However, when a *verb phrase* follows 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same), the negative forms are different from the above two sentences and the negative adverb 不 bù (not) is *after* 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same). We can see the differences in the negative sentences, as in (25)–(27), which negate the corresponding positive sentences, as in (22)–(24) below.

- (22) 小亮跟老师一样喜欢茶。 (verb phrase: V + O: xǐhuan chá [like tea])

小亮跟老師一樣喜歡茶。

Xiaoliang gēn lǎoshī yíyàng xǐhuan chá.

Xiaoliang likes tea as much as the teacher.

- (23) 老师跟学生一样有经验。 (verb phrase: yǒu + O: yǒu jīngyàn [have experience])

老師跟學生一樣有經驗。

Lǎoshī gēn xuésheng yíyàng yǒu jīngyàn.

The teacher is as experienced as the students.

- (24) 小亮跟老师一样说得很好。 (verb phrase: shuō de hěn hǎo (speak well)  
小亮跟老師一樣說得很好。

Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī yíyàng shuō de hěn hǎo.

Xiaoliang speaks as well as the teacher.

- (25) 小亮跟老师一样不喜欢茶。 (bù [not] before the verb xǐhuan [like])  
小亮跟老師一樣不喜歡茶。

Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī yíyàng bù xǐhuan chá.

Xiaoliang, being the same as the teacher, does not like tea.

- (26) 老师跟学生一样没有经验。 (méi [not] before the verb yǒu [have]; never  
say “bù yǒu”)

老師跟學生一樣沒有經驗。

Lǎoshī gēn xuésheng yíyàng méiyǒu jīngyàn.

The teacher, being the same as students, has no experience.

- (27) 小亮跟老师一样说得不好。 (bù [not] replaces hěn [very] in the negative  
complement)

小亮跟老師一樣說得不好。

Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī yíyàng shuō de bù hǎo.

Xiaoliang, being the same as the teacher, does not speak well.

It is noticeable that the negative adverb 不 bù (not), or 没/沒 méi (not):

- is used *after* 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same) when it is followed by a *verb phrase* as in (25) and (27), and (26), respectively; but,
- 不 bù (not) should be placed *before* 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same) when 一样/一樣 yíyàng (same) is at the end of a sentence, as in (19), or is followed by an *adjective*, such as 高 gāo (tall) in (21).

### 25.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned two basic types of comparisons in Chinese, which are **比 bǐ sentences** displaying *difference* and **跟 gēn sentences** showing *similarity*. The types and features of the comparisons can be summarized in Table 25.1

Table 25.1 The types of comparisons

Types	Examples	Notes
<i>A bǐ B + C (adj.) (difference) Basic pattern</i>	<p>他<b>比</b>老师高/他<b>比</b>老師高。 Tā bǐ lǎoshī gāo. He is taller than the teacher.</p> <p><b>Neg.:</b> 他<b>没有/不如</b>老师高/他<b>沒有/不如</b>老師高。 Tā méiyǒu/bùrú lǎoshī gāo. He is not as tall as the teacher.</p> <p>他<b>比</b>我喜欢茶/他<b>比</b>我喜歡茶。 Tā bǐ wǒ xǐhuan chá. He likes tea more than I do.</p> <p><b>Neg.:</b> 他<b>没有/不如</b>我(那么)喜欢茶/他<b>沒有/不如</b>我(那麼)喜歡茶。 Tā méiyǒu/bùrú wǒ (nàme) xǐhuan chá. He doesn't like tea as much as I do.</p>	<p>i. the word orders are different in Chinese and English</p> <p>ii. use <b>没(有)/沒有</b> méi(yǒu) (or <b>不如</b> bùrú) to negate <b>比</b> bǐ sentences</p>
<i>A bǐ B + C (adj.) + D (yìdiǎnr/de duō/duō le) (specific difference)</i>	<p>他<b>比</b>我高一点儿/他<b>比</b>我高一點兒。 Tā bǐ wǒ gāo yìdiǎnr. He is a bit taller than me.</p>	<p><b>Don't say:</b></p> <p>*他<b>比我一点儿</b>高/*他<b>比我一點兒</b>高 *tā bǐ wǒ yìdiǎnr gāo *他<b>比我有一点儿</b>高/*他<b>比我有一點兒</b>高 *tā bǐ wǒ yǒu yìdiǎnr gāo</p>
i. <i>A bǐ B hái/gèng + C (adj.)</i> ii. <i>A zuì + adj. (degree of comparison)</i>	<p>小明<b>比</b>老师还高/小明<b>比</b>老師還高。 Xiǎomíng bǐ lǎoshī hái gāo. Xiaoming is even taller than the teacher.</p> <p>小明<b>比</b>老师更高/小明<b>比</b>老師更高。 Xiǎomíng bǐ lǎoshī gèng gāo. Xiaoming is even taller than the teacher.</p> <p>小明最高。Xiǎomíng zuì gāo. Xiaoming is the tallest.</p>	<p><b>Don't use</b> 很 hěn (very) before adjectives.</p>

Table 25.1 (cont.)

Types	Examples	Notes
i. <i>A + adj.</i> ii. <i>A + adj. + yìdiǎnr/de duō/duō le</i> <i>(implied comparison)</i>	小明高。 Xiǎomíng gāo. Xiaoming is taller. 小明高多了。 Xiǎomíng gāo duō le. Xiaoming is much taller.	Don't use 很 hěn (very) before adjectives.
<i>A gēn B yíyàng</i> <i>(the same)</i>	他跟老师一样/他跟老師一樣。 Tā gēn lǎoshī yíyàng. He is the same as the teacher. Neg.: 他跟老师不一样/他跟老師不一样。 Tā gēn lǎoshī bù yíyàng. He is not the same as the teacher.	
<i>A gēn B yíyàng + C (adj.)</i> <i>(specific same)</i>	他跟我一样高/他跟我一樣高。 Tā gēn wǒ yíyàng gāo. He is as tall as me. Neg.: 他跟我不一样高/他跟我不一樣高。 Tā gēn wǒ bù yíyàng gāo. He is not the same height as I am.	

## 25.4 Exercises

### I Change the following sentences to negative sentences:

Example:

Given: 小明比他哥哥高。 Xiǎomíng bǐ tā gēge gāo.

Answer: 小明没有/不如他哥哥高/小明沒有/不如他哥哥高。

Xiǎomíng méiyǒu/bùrú tā gēge gāo.

1. 小亮比她的妹妹漂亮。 Xiǎoliàng bǐ tā de mèimei piàoliang.
2. 小亮比小明喜欢看电影/小亮比小明喜歡看電影。 Xiǎoliàng bǐ Xiǎomíng xǐhuan kàn diànyǐng.
3. 他唱歌比我唱得好。 Tā chàng-gē bǐ wǒ chàng de hǎo.
4. 北京的冬天跟纽约的冬天一样/北京的冬天跟紐約的冬天一樣。 Běijīng de dōngtiān gēn Niǔyù de dōngtiān yíyàng.
5. 这篇课文跟那篇课文一样有意思/這篇課文跟那篇課文一樣有意思。 Zhèi piān kèwén gēn nèi piān kèwén yíyàng yǒuyìsì.
6. 小亮唱歌跟她的妹妹唱得一样好/小亮唱歌跟她的妹妹唱得一樣好。 Xiǎoliàng chàng-gē gēn tā de mèimei chàng de yíyàng hǎo.

### II Change the following sentences to 比 bǐ or 跟 gēn comparative sentences:

Example:

Given: 1. 这间教室大, 那间教室不大/這間教室大, 那間教室不大。

Zhèi jiān jiàoshì dà, nèi jiān jiàoshì bù dà.

2. 这间教室大, 那间教室也大/這間教室大, 那間教室也大。

Zhèi jiān jiàoshì dà, nèi jiān jiàoshì yě dà.

Answer: 1. 这间教室比那间教室大/這間教室比那間教室大。

Zhèi jiān jiàoshì bǐ nèi jiān jiàoshì dà.

2. 这间教室跟那间教室一样大/這間教室跟那間教室一樣大。

Zhèi jiān jiàoshì gēn nèi jiān jiàoshì yíyàng dà.

1. 上周的考试不难, 这周的考试很难/上週的考試不難, 這週的考試很難。  
Shàng zhōu de kǎoshì bù nán, zhèi zhōu de kǎoshì hěn nán.
2. 这家饭馆的饭很好吃, 那家饭馆的饭更好吃/這家飯館的飯很好吃, 那家飯館的飯更好吃。  
Zhèi jiā fānguǎn de fàn hěn hǎochī, nèi jiā fānguǎn de fàn gèng hǎochī.
3. 小亮的手机很贵, 她妹妹的手机还要贵/小亮的手機很貴, 她妹妹的手機還要貴。  
Xiǎoliàng de shǒujī hěn guì, tā mèimei de shǒujī hái yào guì.
4. 小亮的笔10块钱, 她哥哥的笔15块钱/小亮的筆10塊錢, 她哥哥的筆15塊錢。  
Xiǎoliàng de bì shí kuài qián, tā gēge de bì shíwǔ kuài qián.
5. 我喜欢听音乐, 我的朋友也喜欢听音乐/我喜歡聽音樂, 我的朋友也喜歡聽音樂。  
Wǒ xǐhuan tīng yīnyuè, wǒ de péngyou yě xǐhuan tīng yīnyuè.

6. 去年的夏天很热, 今年的夏天也很热/去年的夏天很熱, 今年的夏天也很熱。

Qùnián de xiàtiān hěn rè, jīnnián de xiàtiān yě hěn rè.

7. 小亮说中文说得很好, 她的朋友也说得很好/小亮說中文說得很好, 她的朋友也說得很好。

Xiǎoliàng de Zhōngwén shuō de hěn hǎo, tā de péngyou yě shuō de hěn hǎo.

8. 我妹妹十五岁, 小亮的妹妹也是十五岁/我妹妹十五歲, 小亮的妹妹也是十五歲。

Wǒ mèimei shíwǔ suì, Xiǎoliàng de mèimei yě shì shíwǔ suì.

### III Fill in the blanks with 比 bǐ, 跟 gēn, 没有/沒有 méiyǒu, or 不如 bùrú:

1. 我们班有十个学生, 他们班也有十个学生。我们班的学生\_\_\_\_\_他们班一样多/我們班有十個學生, 他們班也有十個學生。我們班的學生\_\_\_\_\_他們班一樣多。

Wǒmen bān yǒu shí ge xuésheng, tāmen bān yě yǒu shí ge xuésheng.

Wǒmen bān de xuésheng \_\_\_\_\_ tāmen bān yíyàng duō.

2. 美国有三亿人口, 中国有十四亿人口, 美国的人口\_\_\_\_\_中国的多/美國有三億人口, 中國有十四億人口, 美國的人口\_\_\_\_\_中國的多。

Měiguó yǒu sānyì rénkǒu, Zhōngguó yǒu shísi yì rénkǒu, Měiguó de rénkǒu \_\_\_\_\_ Zhōngguó de duō.

3. 小明会说汉语, 他的妹妹也会说。小明\_\_\_\_\_妹妹一样会说汉语/小明會說漢語, 他的妹妹也會說。小明\_\_\_\_\_妹妹一樣會說漢語。

Xiǎomíng huì shuō Hánnyǔ, tā de mèimei yě huì shuō. Xiǎomíng \_\_\_\_\_ mèimei yíyàng huì shuō Hánnyǔ.

4. 小明一米七, 小明的哥哥一米七五。小明的哥哥\_\_\_\_\_小明高五厘米。

Xiǎomíng yì mǐ qī, Xiǎomíng de gēge yì mǐ qī wǔ. Xiǎomíng de gēge \_\_\_\_\_ Xiǎomíng gāo wǔ límǐ.

5. 看电影\_\_\_\_\_看球赛/看電影\_\_\_\_\_看球賽。Kàn diànyǐng \_\_\_\_\_ kàn qíusài.

6. 小明的手机一千块钱, 他妹妹的手机一千五百块钱, 小明的手机\_\_\_\_\_妹妹的贵/小明的手機一千塊錢, 他妹妹的手機一千五百塊錢, 小明的手機\_\_\_\_\_妹妹的貴。

Xiǎomíng de shǒujī yìqiān kuài qián, tā mèimei de shǒujī yìqiān wǔbāi kuài qián, Xiǎomíng de shǒujī mèimei \_\_\_\_\_ de guì.

7. 小明学了三年中文, 我学了两年半。小明的中文\_\_\_\_\_我的中文好一点儿/小明學了三年中文, 我學了兩年半。小明的中文\_\_\_\_\_我的中文好一點兒。

Xiǎomíng xué le sān nián Zhōngwén, wǒ xué le liǎng nián bàn. Xiǎomíng de Zhōngwén \_\_\_\_\_ wǒ de Zhōngwén hǎo yìdiǎnr.

8. 小明的教室\_\_\_\_\_小亮的教室。

Xiǎomíng de jiàoshì \_\_\_\_\_ Xiǎoliàng de jiàoshì.

## IV Correct the following sentences:

Example:

Given (incorrect): \*这本书比那本书很新/\*這本書比那本書很新  
\*zhèi běn shū bǐ nèi běn shū hěn xīn

Answer: 这本书比那本书新/這本書比那本書新。

Zhèi běn shū bǐ nèi běn shū xīn.

1. \*这周的考试比上周的考试有一点难/\*這週的考試比上週的考試有一點難  
\*zhèi zhōu de kǎoshì bǐ shàng zhōu de kǎoshì yǒuyìdiǎn nán
2. 2. \*今天没有昨天热一点/\*今天沒有昨天熱一點  
\*jīntiān méiyǒu zuótān rè yìdiǎn
3. 3. \*电脑便宜比手机/\*電腦便宜比手機 \*diànnǎo piáiyi bǐ shǒujī
4. 4. \*他学习比我很努力/\*他學習比我很努力 \*tā xuéxí bǐ wǒ hěn nǔlì
5. 5. \*小明比他的妹妹五岁大/\*小明比他的妹妹五歲大  
\*Xiǎomíng bǐ tā de mèimei wǔ suì dà
6. 6. \*他们的学校跟我们的学校没有一样好看/\*他們的學校跟我們的學校沒有一樣好看  
\*tāmen de xuéxiào gēn wǒmen de xuéxiào méiyǒu yíyàng hǎokàn
7. 7. \*他的中文比我的中文不一样好/\*他的中文比我的中文不一樣好  
\*tā de Zhōngwén bǐ wǒ de Zhōngwén bù yíyàng hǎo
8. 8. \*那间教室很大比这间教室/\*那間教室很大比這間教室  
\*nèi jiān jiàoshì hěn dà bǐ zhèi jiān jiàoshì

## V Complete the following dialogues with appropriate comparative sentences based on the given meanings in English:

1. A: 你姐姐跟你妹妹谁高/你姐姐跟你妹妹誰高？

Nǐ jiějie gēn nǐ mèimei shéi gāo?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (My younger sister is a bit taller.)

2. A: 你们家谁高/你們家誰高？

Nǐmen jiā shéi gāo?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (My younger sister is tall, but my elder sister is even taller. My elder brother is the tallest.)

3. A: 这本书跟那本书一样吗/這本書跟那本書一樣嗎？

Zhèi běn shū gēn nèi běn shū yíyàng ma?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (This book is not the same as that book.)

4. A: 上次的考试跟这次的考试一样难不一样难/上次的考試跟這次的考試一樣難不一樣難？

Shàng cì de kǎoshì gēn zhèi cì de kǎoshì yíyàng nán bù yíyàng nán?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (The test this time is much more difficult than the last test.)

5. A: 你喜欢跳舞还是你妹妹喜欢跳舞/你喜歡跳舞還是你妹妹喜歡跳舞?  
Nǐ xǐhuan tiào-wǔ háishi nǐ mèimei xǐhuan tiào-wǔ?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (My younger sister likes dancing as much as I do.)

6. A: 这个手机新还是那个手机新/這個手機新還是那個手機新?  
Zhèi ge shǒujī xīn háishi nèi ge shǒujī xīn?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (This one is newer.)

7. A: 日语容易还是法语容易/日語容易還是法語容易?  
Rìyǔ róngyi háishi Fǎyǔ róngyi?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (Japanese is not as easy as French.)

## Existential sentences

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the two types of Chinese existential sentences
- ★ To know the compositions of place words
- ★ To understand the differences between expressing the meaning of existence in Chinese and English

To express the meaning of existence, English commonly uses sentences starting with a so-called *dummy subject*, “there,” such as “*there are/is*,” but Chinese often uses a special structure called the *existential sentence*. We can see the major differences in expressing existence between Chinese and English in the following example:

(1) 桌子上放着很多书。  
 桌子上放著很多書。  
 Zhuōzi shàng fàng zhe hěn duō shū.

**There are** many books **on the table**.  
 (lit.: On the table are placed many books.)

By comparing the sentence and its English translation above, we can see a prominent difference between the two languages, specifically, *word order*.

- In Chinese, the **place word** (locality noun or phrase; see §6.2 and below), such as the phrase 桌子上 zhuōzi shàng (on the table) in (1) above, serves as the subject at the beginning of the sentence.
- Conversely, in English, the phrase “on the table” is the complement at the end of the sentence, as in the translation in (1) above.

In summary, the structure of Chinese existential sentences can be simplified to the following scheme:

*Place Word (S) + Verb + Noun (O)*

The structure above contains three basic units: Place Word (subject), Verb (predicate), and Noun (object). We will outline the features of the existential sentence by discussing these three units individually in the following sections.

## 26.1 Place words

The existential sentence, as can be inferred from its name, indicates that something *exists* somewhere, at some time. Since the place words provide the information for “somewhere,” we shall define the place words first.

Chinese place words include pronouns, nouns, and locative phrases, which are summarized in Table 26.1.

From Table 26.1, we can see that the form (*noun + localizer*) is productive for place words.

There are many *localizers*, which can be divided into two categories.

i. **Single localizers:** The most common single localizers are:

- -上 -shang (above), such as 桌子上 zhuōzi shang (on the table) in (1) above, and
- -里/-裏 -li (in), such as 教室里/教室裏 jiàoshì li (in the classroom) in (10) below.

Single localizers *cannot* be used alone and must be used with other linguistic units, such as the single localizer -上 -shang (above), which must be attached to the noun 桌子 zhuōzi (table), such as 桌子上 zhuōzi shang (on the table).

ii. **Combined localizers:** The most common compound localizers are:

- 里边(儿)/裏邊(兒) lǐbian(r), 里面(儿)/裏面(兒) lǐmian(r) (inside) vs. 外边(儿)/外邊(兒) wàibian(r), 外面(儿)/外面(兒) wàimian(r) (outside);
- 上边(儿)/上邊(兒) shàngbian(r), 上面(儿)/上面(兒) shàngmian(r) (above) vs. 下边(儿)/下邊(兒) xiàbian(r), 下面(儿)/下面(兒) xiàmian(r) (below); and
- 前边(儿)/前邊(兒) qiánbian(r), 前面(儿)/前面(兒) qiánmian(r) (front) as in (2) below vs. 后边(儿)/後邊(兒) hòubian(r), 后面(儿)/後面(兒) hòumian(r) (back).

Compound localizers can be used alone, such as 前边/前邊 qiánbian/前面 qiánmian (front) in (2a) and also with other units, such as 图书馆/圖書館 túshūguǎn (library) in (2b) below (see Appendix 3 for a list of single and compound localizers).

(2)a. 前边/前面有很多树。

前邊/前面有很多樹。

Qiánbian/Qiánmian yǒu hěn duō shù.

There are many trees in the front.

b. 图书馆前边/前面有很多树。

圖書館前邊/前面有很多樹。

Túshūguǎn qiánbian/qiánmian yǒu hěn duō shù.

There are many trees in front of the library.

The single localizers 上 -shang (above) and 里/-裏 -li (in) are the most productive among the localizers and can be used with many nouns to form place words, examples of which are below:

**Table 26.1** Place words (PW)

Type	Place Word	Sentence
Demonstrative pronoun (这/這 zhè [this]; 那 nà [that]) and Interrogative pronoun (哪 nǎ [which])	这儿/這兒 zhèr (here); 那儿/那兒 nàr (there); 哪儿/哪兒 nǎr (where)	那儿有一本书/那兒有一本書。 Nàr yǒu yì běn shū. There is a book <b>over there</b> .
Proper nouns (geographical location)	中国/中國 Zhōngguó (China); 美国/美國 Měiguó (USA); 纽约/紐約 Niúyuē (New York); 北京 Běijīng (Beijing)	纽约有很多高楼/紐約有很多高樓。 Niúyuē yǒu hěn duō gāolóu. There are many tall buildings in <b>New York</b> .
Nouns (institution or location associated with space)	教室 jiàoshì (classroom); 学校/學校 xuéxiào (school); 图书馆/圖書館 túshūguǎn (library); 饭 馆/飯館 fānguǎn (restaurant)	学校有很多树/學校有很多樹。 Xuéxiào yǒu hěn duō shù. There are many trees in the <b>school</b> .
Locative phrase	pronoun + 这儿/這兒 zhèr (here) / 那儿/那兒 nàr (there)	我这儿/我這兒 wǒ zhèr (my place); 他 那儿/他那兒 tā nàr (his place)
	noun + 这儿/這兒 zhèr (here) / 那儿/那兒 nàr (there)	桌子这儿/桌子這兒 zhuōzi zhèr (here on the table); 图书馆那儿/圖書館那 兒 túshūguǎn nàr (there in the library)
	noun + localizer e.g., 上 - shàng (up), 里/裏 -li (inside)	桌子上 zhuōzi shàng (on the table); 教 室里/教室裏 jiàoshì li (in the classroom)

- 书上/書上 shū shàng (on the book), 桌子上 zhuōzi shàng (on the table), 身上 shēn shàng (on the body)
- 教室里/教室裏 jiàoshì lǐ (in the classroom), 图书馆里/圖書館裏 túshūguǎn lǐ (in the library), 学生里/學生裏 xuéshēng lǐ (in the students)

The single localizer -里/-裏 -li (in) cannot be used with proper geographical names. It is **incorrect** to say **\*中国里/\*中國裏** \*Zhōngguó lǐ (lit. in China) or **\*北京里/\*北京裏** \*Běijīng lǐ (lit. in Beijing) as in (3c); rather, one should say (3a) or (3b) below:

- (3)a. **北京**有很多花。  
Běijīng yǒu hěn duō huā.

- b. **北京城里**有很多花。  
**北京城裏**有很多花。  
Běijīng chéng lǐ yǒu hěn duō huā.

There are many flowers in Beijing (city).

- c. **\*北京里**有很多花  
**\*北京裏**有很多花  
\* Běijīng lǐ yǒu hěn duō huā  
(lit. Beijing inside have many flower)

The nature of the place word is like a noun; thus, it commonly serves as the subject, the object, or the attributive. When a place word serves as an *attributive*, the attributive marker 的 de should be placed between the place word, such as 桌子上 zhuōzi shàng (on the table), and the noun (modified), such as 书/書 shū (book) in (4) below:

- (4) 桌子上的书都是小亮的。  
桌子上的書都是小亮的。  
Zhuōzi shàng de shū dōu shì Xiǎoliàng de.

The books on the table all belong to Xiaoliang.

When a place word is used in an existential sentence, it must be the subject. In addition to this feature, there are two other prominent features of existential sentences:

1. only verbs with an existential meaning can be used;
2. the noun (the object) denotes the new information with an *indefinite* reference.

Based on the features of their verbs, Chinese existential sentences can be divided into two types: *stative existential sentences* and *dynamic existential sentences*.

## 26.2 Stative existential sentences

This type of sentence can be further divided into three subtypes

- i. with the verb 有 yǒu (there be)
- ii. with the verb 是 shì (be)
- iii. with verbs denoting a durative meaning, such as 住 zhù (live) and 坐 zuò (sit)

The three most common types of sentences above indicate a state of existence at a place; thus, most sentences can be translated into sentences with the dummy subject “**there** is/are” in English.

### ► 26.2.1 Existential sentence with the verb 有 yǒu (there be)

The verb 有 yǒu has two meanings: *possess* (have), as in (5), and *exist* (there be), as in (6) below.

- (5) 小亮**有**很多钱。  
 小亮**有**很多錢。  
 Xiǎoliàng yǒu hěn duō qián.  
 Xiaoliang **has** a lot of money.

- (6) 小亮的桌子上**有**一台电脑。  
 小亮的桌子上**有**一台電腦。  
 Xiǎoliàng de zhuōzi shàng yǒu yì tái diànnǎo.  
**There** is a computer on Xiaoliang's desk.

Sentence (5) is a regular SVO sentence, and its word order is the *same* as the word order in English; however, (6) is an *existential sentence* and its word order is very different from English. For example, the locality phrase 小亮的桌子上 Xiǎoliàng de zhuōzi shàng (on Xiaoliang's desk) serves as the subject in Chinese, but it serves as the complement after the object in English. Sentence (6) describes a rather stative existential situation that is expected to last. Two additional examples follow:

- (7) 教室里**有**很多学生。  
 教室裏**有**很多學生。  
 Jiàoshì li yǒu hěn duō xuésheng.  
**There** are many students in the classroom.

- (8) 北京**有**很多名胜古迹。  
 北京**有**很多名勝古蹟。  
 Běijīng yǒu hěn duō míngshèng-gǔjì.  
**There** are many scenic spots and historical sites in Beijing.

The locality phrase 教室里/教室裏 jiàoshì li (in the classroom) and the place word (proper noun) 北京 Běijīng serve as the subject in (7) and (8) above, respectively. The two sentences display the meanings that 学生/學生 xuésheng (student) in (7) and 名胜古迹/名勝古蹟 míngshèng-gǔjì (scenic spot and historical site) in (8) *exist* in the two places.

To negate the above sentences, add the negative adverb 没/沒 méi (not) before the verb 有 yǒu (have) to make it 没有/沒有 méiyǒu (there be not), as in (9) below. Again, never say \*不有 \*bù yǒu (lit. no have).

(9) 教室里**没有**很多学生。

教室裏**沒有**很多學生。

Jiàoshì li méiyǒu hěn duō xuésheng.

There are not many students in the classroom.

### ► 26.2.2 Existential sentences with the verb 是 shì (be)

The function of the verb 是 shì (be) in the existential sentence is to *identify* or *distinguish* things at a certain place. We can see this point from the following dialogue:

(10)a. 桌子上**是**杂志吗？

桌子**上是**雜誌嗎？

Zhuōzi shàng shì zázhì ma?

Is it a magazine on the table?

b. 不是，桌子**上是**书，**不是**杂志。

不是，桌子**上是**書，**不是**雜誌。

Bú shì. Zhuōzi shàng shì shū, bù shì zázhì.

No. It is a book, not a magazine, on the table.

**NOTE** The difference between 是 shì (be) and 有 yǒu (there be) in the existential sentence is as follows:

- 有 yǒu (there be) indicates the meaning of “exist,” specifically, **whether there is** anything at a place;
- 是 shì (be) **identifies** things, specifically, **what the thing is**.

Sentence (10a) above shows that the person has seen something on the table and thought it was a magazine. The speaker of (10b) **identifies** that it is a book, *not* a magazine, on the table.

The difference between 有 yǒu and 是 shì can be seen in sentences such as (6)–(8) and (10) above.

### ► 26.2.3 Existential sentences with verbs denoting the durative or displaying state

Verbs in the stative existential sentence are limited to the following two types:

1. verbs containing a *durative* state meaning, such as 睡 shuì (sleep), 躺 tǎng (lie down), 坐 zuò (sit) as in (11), 站 zhàn (stand) as in (12), and 住 zhù (live) as in (13);
2. action verbs whose result denotes a *state* like 种/種 zhòng (plant), 放 fàng (place) as in (1) above, 挂/掛 guà (hang) as in (14), and 写/寫 xiě (write) as in (15).

(11) 教室里**坐着**一个学生。

教室裏**坐著**一個學生。

Jiàoshì li zuò zhe yí ge xuésheng.

There is a student sitting in the classroom.

- (12) 门外站着一个人。  
門外站著一個人。  
Mén wài zhàn zhe yí ge rén.  
There is a person standing outside the door.

- (13) 小明家里住着一位客人。  
小明家裏住著一位客人。  
Xiǎomíng jiā li zhù zhe yí wèi kèren.  
There is a guest living in Xiaoming's house.

- (14) 墙上挂着一幅画。  
牆上掛著一幅畫。  
Qiáng shàng guà zhe yì fú huà.  
There is a painting hanging on the wall.

- (15) 黑板上写着两个字:“中文”。  
黑板上寫著兩個字: 「中文」。  
Hēibǎn shàng xiě zhe liǎng ge zì: “Zhōngwén”.

There are two characters written on the blackboard: “Chinese.”

Since this type of existential sentence expresses a stative state, the durative aspect particle 着/著 zhe often follows the verb, as in (11)–(15) above. For the most part, this type of sentence can be translated as “there be” sentences in English.

### 26.3 Dynamic existential sentences

The main features of this type of existential sentence are as follows.

- Meaning:** denotes a meaning of *appearance* as in sentences (16)–(18) or *disappearance* as in sentence (19)–(20) below;
- Verbs:** involve the transition from one state to another and are intransitive in most cases, such as 来/來 lái (come) in (16), 长/長 zhǎng (grow) in (17), 跑 pǎo (run) in (18), 死 sǐ (die) in (19), and 丢 diū (lose) in (20) below;
- Dynamic particles:** the **perfective aspect** 了 le, as in (16)–(19), and the **experiential aspect** 过/過 guo, as in (20) below, are often used after the verbs to indicate a dynamic change at a specific location.

- (16) 小明家里来了位客人。  
小明家裏來了一位客人。  
Xiǎomíng jiā li lái le yí wèi kèren.  
A guest came to Xiaoming's home.

- (17) 地里长出了一个西瓜。  
地里長出了一个西瓜。  
Dì li zhǎng chū le yí ge xīguā.  
A watermelon grew in the field.

- (18) 教室里跑进来了一只狗。  
教室裏跑進來了一隻狗。  
Jiàoshì li pǎo jinlai le yì zhī gǒu.

A dog ran into the classroom.

The above sentences indicate the *appearance* of either one guest (come to) in (16), a watermelon (grow) in (17), or a dog (run into) in (18), while the following sentences denote the *disappearance* of either one patient (died) in (19) or a dog (lost) in (20).

- (19) 昨天医院里死了一个病人。  
昨天醫院裏死了一個病人。  
Zuótiān yīyuàn li sì le yí ge bìngren.  
A patient died in the hospital yesterday.

- (20) 邻居家里丢过一只狗。  
鄰居家裏丟過一隻狗。  
Línjū jiā li diū guo yì zhī gǒu.  
The neighbor lost a dog before.

- (21) 小明家里住了一位客人。  
小明家裏住了一位客人。  
Xiǎomíng jiā li zhù le yí wèi kèren.  
A guest stayed in Xiaoming's house.

- (22) 黑板上写了两个字:“中文”。  
黑板上寫了兩個字: 「中文」。  
Hēibǎn shàng xiě le liǎng ge zì: “Zhōngwén”.  
Two characters were written on the blackboard: “Chinese.”

**NOTE** Since the particle 了 le denotes a *dynamic* meaning, the verbs showing a displaying state in §26.2.3 in the category of **stative existential sentence** above can also indicate a dynamic meaning by adding the particle 了 le. For instance, the verbs 住 zhù (live) in (13) and 写/寫 xiě (write) in (15) can become **dynamic existential sentences** by adding 了 le, as in (21) and (22).

When compared with sentences (13) and (15), which both use the particle 着/zhe to describe an existential state, sentences (21) and (22), which use the particle 了 le, show a *dynamic* meaning of a state “coming into” existence. That is, there were no guests in the house and no characters on the blackboard, but now a guest and two characters have “appeared” in Xiaoming's house and on the blackboard, respectively.

## 26.4 Indefinite vs. definite: existential sentence vs. N + 在 zài + PW sentence

English nouns use articles such as “*the* (apple)” and “*a/an* (apple)” to differentiate “*definite*” and “*indefinite*” references, but Chinese nouns have no such articles to

provide this distinction. The question of how Chinese does distinguish nouns as definite or indefinite may therefore have occurred to you.

In fact, Chinese has different ways of expressing the concepts of *definite* and *indefinite* for nouns, as mentioned in Chapter 22. One way is by word order, namely, the position of the place word (PW) and the noun in a sentence give a sense of existence:

- *Indefinite* for a noun has the pattern of PW + **有** yǒu + N: the PW is before the verb **有** yǒu, but the noun is after the verb. You can determine that the nouns (the object) after the verbs in the sentences above are *indefinite* by the translated words “a” and “many.”
- *Definite* for a noun has the structure of N + **在** zài + PW: the noun before the verb **在** zài is *definite* and serves as the subject, but the PW serves as the object after the verb **在** zài (be at/in/on).

The two structures are opposites in regard to the word order of PWs and nouns, as well as the meaning of *definite* and *indefinite* for nouns, but they both express a similar meaning regarding existence. We will discuss the differences between these two types of sentences in more detail below.

#### ► 26.4.1 N + 在 zài + PW vs. PW + 有 yǒu + N

Both of these patterns can express the meaning of *existence*, but the former is used to denote a *definite* meaning of the noun, while the latter is the existential sentence with an *indefinite* reference to the noun mentioned above. The following examples show the differences between the two patterns.

##### ▪ Pattern:

N + 在 zài + PW

The noun is *definite*, such as 电脑/電腦 diànnǎo (computer) in (23a)–(23c) below:

- (23)a. 电脑**在**哪里?  
電腦**在**哪裏?  
Diànnǎo zài nǎlǐ?

Where is/are **the** computer(s)?

- b. 电脑**在**小明的桌子上。  
電腦**在**小明的桌子上。  
Diànnǎo zài Xiǎomíng de zhuōzi shàng.

**The** computer(s) is/are on Xiaoming's desk.

- c. 一台电脑**在**小明的桌子上, 一台电脑**在**小亮的桌子上。  
一台電腦**在**小明的桌子上, 一台電腦**在**小亮的桌子上。  
Yì tái diànnǎo zài Xiǎomíng de zhuōzi shàng, yì tái diànnǎo zài Xiǎoliàng de zhuōzi shàng.

One computer is on Xiaoming's desk, and another is on Xiaoliang's desk.

- d. \*一/两台电脑**在**小明的桌子上  
 \*一/兩台電腦**在**小明的桌子上  
 \* yī/liǎng tái diànnǎo zài Xiāomíng de zhuōzi shàng  
 (lit. one/two computer is-on Xiaoming's desk)

The noun 电脑/電腦 diànnǎo (computer) in (23a) has no marker for definiteness, so it can only be used when the speaker knows exactly which computer(s) is/are referred to. Both (23b) and (23c) can be the answer to question (23a) because the noun 电脑/電腦 diànnǎo (computer) is a *definite* reference. Even though the number 一 yī (one) is used before the noun in (23c), the meaning of 一 yī (one) is actually “one (of the two computers),” and thus the 一 yī is not equal to the English article “a.” Accordingly, the noun 电脑/電腦 diànnǎo (computer) is *definite*.

Sentence (23d) cannot answer the question in (23a) because it denotes an *indefinite* meaning. When a noun has an *indefinite* reference in a context, especially indicated by a number such as 一 yī (one) or 两/兩 liǎng (two) as in (23d), this pattern cannot be used. This point can be demonstrated by comparing the following sentences:

- (24)a. 书**在**桌子上。  
 書**在**桌子上。  
 Shū zài zhuōzi shàng.  
 The book(s) is/are on the table.

- b. \*一本**书在**桌子上  
 \*一本**書在**桌子上  
 \*yī běn shū zài zhuōzi shàng  
 (lit. one book is-on table)

The noun 书/書 shū (book) in (24a) is *definite* and can be used with this pattern; however, 书/書 shū (book) with a number 一 yī (one) before it, as in (24b), is *indefinite* and therefore it is incorrect.

The examples above demonstrate that if the pattern of **N 在 zài PW** is used, the noun (the subject) should be *definite*.

▪ **Pattern:**

**PW 有 yǒu N** (alternative pattern: 有 yǒu N 在 zài PW): the N should be *infinite*.

Many examples of this pattern have already been present; however, example (25a) and its alternative pattern (25b) are additional examples.

- (25)a. 桌子上**有**两本书。  
 桌子上**有**兩本書。  
 Zhuōzi shàng yǒu liǎng běn shū.

- b. 有两本书在桌子上。

有兩本書在桌子上。

Yǒu liǎng běn shū zài zhuōzi shàng.

There are two books on the table.

The noun 书/書 shū (book) in the above two sentences is *indefinite* with the number 两/兩 liǎng (two) before it, and therefore it is correct with this pattern.

It should be mentioned here that sentence (25b) is a combination of the patterns PW 有 yǒu N and N 在 zài PW, but it omits the first PW and merges the two identical nouns to become 有 yǒu N 在 zài PW, which is a common structure in Chinese. It is still an existential sentence in which the noun is *indefinite*.

The difference between the two patterns relating to *definiteness* reveals two scenarios. To provide further explanation, (24) and (25) are used as examples below.

**Scenario 1:** In (24a), the N 在 zài PW pattern is most likely to appear as a result of the following context. Before sentence (24a), someone couldn't find their book and asked, "where is my book?" to which the speaker answered with (24a), "the book is on the table." The book (书/書 shū) has been mentioned previously in this context and is *old information* known by both the speaker and the hearer, and is thus a *definite* reference. An answer like (24b) is inappropriate because the context of (24b) does not support the *definite* reference of the noun.

**Scenario 2:** In (25), the PW 有 yǒu N pattern and the 有 yǒu N 在 zài PW pattern is most likely a result of the speaker seeing something on the table and then realizing that there are two books. In this sense, "book" is *new information* to the hearer because it had not been previously mentioned. Thus, it is *indefinite*.

**NOTE Negation of the pattern PW 有 yǒu N with a number.** Generally, there should not be a numeral or a measure word before a negated noun, as in (26a), or to specify a noun, as in (26b), but native speakers normally **do not** say sentence (26c) below, which has a number, 一 yī (one), and an MW, 本 běn, before the noun, 书/書 shū (book).

- (26)a. 桌子上没有书。

桌子上沒有書。

Zhuōzi shàng méiyǒu shū.

There are no books on the table.

- b. 桌子上没有你那一本书。

桌子上沒有你那一本書。

Zhuōzi shàng méiyǒu nǐ nèi yì běn shū.

The book of yours is not on the table.

- c. \*桌子上没有一本书<sup>1</sup>  
 \*桌子上沒有一本書<sup>1</sup>  
 \*zhuōzi shang méiyǒu yì běn shū  
 (lit. table on not have one MW book)

Words such as 你那 nǐ nèi (lit. your that) are needed before the numeral 一 yī (one) to specify the negation of a particular book, as in (26b). This suggests that there are books on the table but not the particular one that you are looking for.

#### ► 26.4.2 PW + 是 shì + N vs. N + 在 zài + PW

The former of these patterns is the existential sentence and is used for **identifying** an *indefinite* reference to nouns, as in (27a) and (28a), while the latter should be used for a *definite* reference to a noun, as explained above and as illustrated by (27b) and (28b) below.

- (27)a. 山后面是<sup>1</sup>一条小河。  
 山後面是<sup>1</sup>一條小河。  
 Shān hòumian shì yì tiáo xiǎohé.  
 Behind the mountain is a small river.
- b. 小河在山后面。  
 小河在山後面。  
 Xiǎohé zài shān hòumian.  
 The small river is **behind** the mountain.
- c. \*一条小河在山后面  
 \*一條小河在山後面  
 \*yì tiáo xiǎohé zài shān hòumian  
 (lit. one small river is-at mountain back)
- (28)a. 图书馆和学生餐厅中间是<sup>1</sup>一个运动场。  
 圖書館和學生餐廳中間是<sup>1</sup>一個運動場。  
 Túshūguǎn hé xuésheng cāntīng zhōngjiān shì yí ge yùndòngchǎng.  
 Between the library and the student cafeteria is a stadium.
- b. 运动场在图书馆和学生餐厅中间。  
 運動場在圖書館和學生餐廳中間。  
 Yùndòngchǎng zài túshūguǎn hé xuésheng cāntīng zhōngjiān.  
 The stadium is **in** the middle of the library and the student cafeteria.

<sup>1</sup> This sentence can be grammatically correct if 一 yī (one) is stressed, but its meaning becomes “there is no any book on the table.” This meaning, nevertheless, is normally expressed in Chinese as 桌子上(连)一本书都没有/zhuōzi shàng (lián) yì běn shū dōu méiyǒu (there is not [even] one book on the table) (see §27.1.3).

- c. \*一个运动场在图书馆和学生餐厅中间  
 \*一個運動場在圖書館和學生餐廳中間  
 \*yí ge yùndòngchǎng zài túshūguǎn hé xuésheng cāntīng zhōngjiān  
 (lit. one stadium is-in library and student cafeteria middle)

In order to make sentences (27c) and (28c) grammatically correct, 有 yǒu (there be) needs to be added at the beginning of each sentence (see (25b) and the explanation above).

In order to negate 在 zài (be at/in/on), 不 bù (not) can be added before 在 zài to become 不在 bú zài (not be at/in/on), as in (29) below to negate (28b).

(29) 运动场不在图书馆和学生餐厅中间。

運動場不在圖書館和學生餐廳中間。

Yùndòngchǎng bú zài túshūguǎn hé xuésheng cāntīng zhōngjiān.

The stadium is **not** in the middle of the library and the student cafeteria.

## 26.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned the special features of the unique **Chinese existential sentences**, which are summarized below:

- Place Words (PW) serve as the subject.
- The verbs are limited. The verbs in the **stative existential sentences** are 有 yǒu (there be), 是 shì (be), and those denoting the *durative* or *displaying* meaning, such as 睡 shuì (sleep) and 放 fàng (put), respectively, which are often followed by the particle 着 zhe to enhance the stative and durative existence. The verbs in the **dynamic existential sentences** either indicate a meaning of *appearance*, such as 来 lái (come), or *disappearance*, such as 丢 diū (lose), which are often followed by the perfective aspect particle 了 le and sometimes by the experiential aspect particle 过 guo to highlight the dynamic changes.
- The nouns (the object) denote new information that is *indefinite*. To express a *definite* reference to a noun in the sense of existence, Chinese uses the pattern of N 在 zài PW.

Table 26.2 summarizes the main features of Chinese existential sentences.

**Table 26.2** The types of existential sentences

Subject	Types	Verb (limited)	Example	Noun (object)
Place Word	Stative	有 yǒu (there be)	桌子上有书/桌子上 <b>有</b> 書。 Zhuōzi shàng yǒu shū. There is a book on the table.	Indefinite reference
		是 shì (be)	桌子 <b>上是</b> 书/桌子上 <b>是</b> 書。 Zhuōzi shàng shì shū. It is a book on the table.	

Table 26.2 (cont.)

		"durative / displaying"	椅子上坐着人/椅子上坐着人。 Yǐzi shàng zuò zhe rén. There is a person sitting on the chair. 墙上挂着画儿/牆上掛著畫兒。 Qiáng shàng guà zhe huà. There is a painting hanging on the wall.
Dynamic	"appearance"		家里来了位客人/家裏來了一位客人。 Jiā li lái le yí wèi kèren. There was a guest coming to the house.
	"disappearance"		村里丢了头牛/村里丟了一頭牛。 Cūn li diū le yì tóu niú. There was a cow lost in the village.

## 26.6 Exercises

### I Change the following sentences to existential sentences without 有 yǒu:

Example:

Given: 有一个学生从前面走过来了/有一個學生從前面走過來了。

Yǒu yí ge xuésheng cóng qiánmian zǒu guolai le.

Answer: 前面走过来了一个学生/前面走過來了一個學生。

Qianmian zǒu guolai le yí ge xuésheng.

1. 有几件衣服在小亮的床上放着/有幾件衣服在小亮的床上放著。

Yǒu jǐ jiàn yīfú zài Xiǎoliàng de chuáng shàng fàng zhe.

2. 有一个人从教室里走出来了/有一個人從教室裏走出來了。

Yǒu yí ge rén cóng jiàoshì li zǒu chulai le.

3. 有一只小狗趴在门口/有一隻小狗趴在門口。

Yǒu yì zhī xiǎo gǒu pā zài ménkǒu.

4. 有很多人坐在教室里/有很多人坐在教室裏。

Yǒu hěn duō rén zuò zài jiàoshì li.

5. 有几个人从车里下来了/有幾個人從車裏下來了。

Yǒu jǐ ge rén cóng chē li xiälai le.

6. 有一幅画在墙上挂着/有一幅畫在牆上掛著。

Yǒu yì fú huà zài qiáng shàng guà zhe.

**II Change the following sentences to the dynamic existential sentences (appearance or disappearance):**

**Example:**

**Given:**

1. 图书馆的很多书不见了/圖書館的很多書不見了。

Túshūguǎn de hěn duō shū bù jiàn le.

2. 小亮家有一位客人。Xiǎoliàng jiā yǒu yí wèi kèren.

**Answer:**

1. (disappearance): 图书馆丢了很多书/圖書館丢了許多書。

Túshūguǎn diū le hěn duō shū.

2. (appearance): 小亮家来了一位客人/小亮家來了一位客人。

Xiǎoliàng jiā lái le yí wèi kèren.

1. 我们教室里有好几位中国学生/我們教室裏有好幾位中國學生。

Wǒmen jiàoshì li yǒu hǎo jǐ wèi Zhōngguó xuésheng.

2. 邻居家的小狗找不到了/鄰居家的小狗找不到了。Línju jiā de xiǎo gǒu zhǎo bu dào le.

3. 有一位客人走进了餐馆/有一位客人走進了餐館。Yǒu yí wèi kèren zǒu jìn le cānguǎn.

4. 有一只小狗跑进了小明家里/有一隻小狗跑進了小明家裏。

Yǒu yì zhī xiǎo gǒu pǎo jin le Xiǎomíng jiā li.

5. 有两位新老师来到我们教室/有兩位新老師來到我們教室。

Yǒu liǎng wèi xīn lǎoshī lái dao wǒmen jiàoshì.

**III Negate the following existential sentences:**

**Example:**

**Given:** 桌子上有一本书/桌子上有一本書。

Zhuōzi shàng yǒu yì běn shū.

**Answer:** 桌子上没有书/桌子上沒有書。Zhuōzi shàng méiyǒu shū.

(There should be no number or measure word in the negation.)

1. 小亮的家里有两辆车/小亮的家裏有兩輛車。

Xiǎoliàng de jiā li yǒu liǎng liàng chē.

2. 前面开来了一辆大巴/前面開來了一輛大巴。

Qiánmian kāi lai le yí liàng dàbā.

3. 图书馆的后面是学生餐厅/圖書館的後面是學生餐廳。

Túshūguǎn de hòumian shì xuésheng cāntīng.

4. 黑板上写着很多中国字/黑板上寫著很多中國字。

Hēibǎn shàng xiě zhe hěn duō Zhōngguó zì.

5. 去年我们家里来过一个美国朋友/去年我們家裏來過一個美國朋友。

Qùnián wǒmen jiā li lái guo yí ge Měiguó péngyou.

6. 椅子上坐着一个学生/椅子上坐著一個學生。

Yǐzi shàng zuò zhe yí ge xuésheng.

7. 草地的旁边是一个湖/草地的旁邊是一個湖。

Cǎodì de pángbiān shì yí ge hú.

**IV Fill in the blanks with the appropriate given words (each word should be used once):**

1. (游着/游著 yóu zhe; 放着/放著 fang zhe; 种着/種著 zhòng zhe; 有 yǒu)

我们的学校很漂亮。学校的前面\_\_\_\_\_很多树，后面\_\_\_\_\_一个大湖，湖中间\_\_\_\_\_很多水鸟，湖的旁边\_\_\_\_\_很多椅子。很多人坐在椅子上看风景。

我們的學校很漂亮。學校的前面\_\_\_\_\_很多樹，後面\_\_\_\_\_一個大湖，湖中間\_\_\_\_\_很多水鳥，湖的旁邊\_\_\_\_\_很多椅子。很多人坐在椅子上看風景。

Wǒmen de xuéxiào hěn piàoliang. Xuéxiào de qiánmian \_\_\_\_\_ hěn duō shù, hòumian \_\_\_\_\_ yí ge dà hú, hú zhōngjiān \_\_\_\_\_ hěn duō shuǐniǎo, hú de pángbiān \_\_\_\_\_ hěn duō yǐzi. Hěn duō rén zuò zài yǐzi shàng kàn fēngjǐng.

2. (放着/放著 fang zhe; 有 yǒu; 是 shì; 有 yǒu; 是 shì; 挂着/掛著 guà zhe)

昨天我去了小明的宿舍。他的房间跟我的不一样。小明房间的左边\_\_\_\_\_一张床，右边\_\_\_\_\_一张书桌，桌子\_\_\_\_\_书也\_\_\_\_\_杂志。桌子的旁边有一个沙发，沙发前面的小桌子上\_\_\_\_\_一个大电视机，沙发后边的墙上\_\_\_\_\_一幅很漂亮的画儿。

昨天我去了小明的宿舍。他的房間跟我的不一樣。小明房間的左邊\_\_\_\_\_一張床，右邊\_\_\_\_\_一張書桌，桌子上\_\_\_\_\_書也\_\_\_\_\_雜誌。桌子的旁邊有一個沙發，沙發前面的小桌子上\_\_\_\_\_一個大電視機，沙發後邊的牆上\_\_\_\_\_一幅很漂亮的畫兒。

Zuótiān wǒ qù le Xiǎomíng de sùshè. Tā de fángjiān gēn wǒ de bù yíyàng. Xiǎomíng fángjiān de zuòbiān \_\_\_\_\_ yì zhāng chuáng, yòubian \_\_\_\_\_ yì zhāng shùzhuō, zhuōzi shàng \_\_\_\_\_ shū yě \_\_\_\_\_ zázhì. Zhuōzi de pángbiān yǒu yí ge shāfā, shāfā qiánmian de xiǎo zhuōzi shàng \_\_\_\_\_ yí ge dà diànsījī, shāfā hòubian de qiáng shàng \_\_\_\_\_ yì fú hěn piàoliang de huàr.

3. (贴着/貼著 tiē zhe; 站着/站著 zhàn zhe; 写着/寫著 xiě zhe; 拿着/拿著 ná zhe)

我昨天九点去商店买东西，看见门口\_\_\_\_\_很多人，手里都\_\_\_\_\_手机。我问：“为什么不进去？”\_\_\_\_\_旁边一个人指了指商店的大门，原来门上\_\_\_\_\_一张字条，上面\_\_\_\_\_今天九点半开门。

我昨天九點去商店買東西，看見門口\_\_\_\_\_很多人，手裏都\_\_\_\_\_手機。我問「為什麼不進去？」旁邊一個人指了指商店的大門，原來門上\_\_\_\_\_一張字條，上面\_\_\_\_\_今天九點半開門。

Wǒ zuótiān jiǔ diǎn qù shāngdiàn mǎi dōngxi, kàn.jian ménkǒu \_\_\_\_\_ hěn duō rén, shǒu li dōu \_\_\_\_\_ shǒujī. Wǒ wèn: “Wèi shénme bú jìnqù?” Pángbiān yí ge rén zhǐ le zhǐ shāngdiàn de dàmén, yuánlái mén shàng \_\_\_\_\_ yí zhāng zìtiáo, shàngmian \_\_\_\_\_: Jǐntiān jiǔ diǎn bàn kāi-mén.

V Complete the following dialogues with appropriate existential sentences based on the given meanings in English:

1. A: 那座山怎么样/那座山怎麼樣?  
Nèi zuò shān zěnmeyàng?  
B: 很漂亮。  
Hěn piàoliang. \_\_\_\_\_。(There are trees and flowers on the mountain; in addition, there is a river behind the mountain.)
2. A: 这是你的书吗/這是你的書嗎?  
Zhè shì nǐ de shū ma?  
B: 是的。  
Shì de. \_\_\_\_\_。(My name is written on the book.)
3. A: 请问, 这儿附近有没有电影院/請問, 這兒附近有沒有電影院?  
Qǐngwèn, zhèr fùjìn yǒu mei yǒu diànyǐngyuàn?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。(There is a movie theater next to the bookstore.)
4. A: 草地上是什么/草地上是什麼?  
Cǎodì shàng shì shénme?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。(There is a dog lying on the grass.)
5. A: 小明家里人不高兴, 怎么回事/小明家裏人不高興, 怎麼回事?  
Xiǎomíng jiā lǐ rén bù gāoxìng, zěnmé huí shì?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。(Xiaoming's family lost a dog.)
6. A: 墙上有什么/牆上有什麼?  
Qiáng shàng yǒu shénme?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。(There is a beautiful painting hanging on the wall.)

## Emphatic sentences

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn two common emphatic constructions in Chinese
- ★ To know the differences between expressing emphasis in Chinese and English

There are many ways of expressing emphasis in Chinese, of which we have already mentioned several, such as 哪...啊 nǎ...a and 不是...吗/不是...嗎 bùshì...ma in the section on rhetorical questions, §24.5. In this chapter, we will primarily discuss two special structures:

1. 连/連...都/也 Lián...dōu/yě construction
2. 是...的 shì...de construction

### 27.1 Emphatic construction: 连/連...都/也 lián...dōu/yě

The word 连/連 lián (include) is often used to introduce an element to be emphasized, and it is paired with the adverb 都 dōu (all) or 也 yě (also) to mean “even.” For example:

- (1) 这个问题很容易, 连小孩都知道。  
 這個問題很容易, **連小孩都**知道。  
 Zhèi ge wèntí hěn róngyi, lián xiǎohái dōu zhīdao.

This question is so easy that **even** a child knows it.

To prove the easiness of the question in the above sentence, the speaker takes a child as one comparative object to indicate that even a child (emphasized unit) knows the answer to the question, so the other comparative objects (who are older than the child) do not need to be mentioned because they definitely know it. In other words, everyone should know the answer.

Based on the emphasized elements in a sentence, sentence structures can be divided into the following three patterns:

- i. Emphasizing the Subject: **连/連** lián + S + **都** dōu/**也** yě + V
- ii. Emphasizing the Object: S + **连/連** lián + O + **都** dōu/**也** yě + V
- iii. Emphasizing the Predicate (verb): S + **连/連** lián + V + **都** dōu/**也** yě + V

The emphasized unit is placed between **连/連** lián and **都/也** dōu/yě.

### ► 27.1.1 Emphasis on the subject

In this pattern, the word **连/連 lián** precedes and places emphasis (*italicized* in the sentences below) on the subject; an example can be seen in (1) and the two additional examples (2) and (3).

- (2) 这个字很难, (**连**)**老师**都**不会写**。

這個字很難, (**連**)**老師**都**不會寫**。

Zhèi ge zì hěn nán, (**lián**) **lǎoshī** dōu bù huì xiě.

This character is so difficult that **even** the *teacher* doesn't know how to write it.

- (3) 这个电影很有意思, (**连**)**我的狗**也**喜欢看**。

這個電影很有意思, (**連**)**我的狗**也**喜歡看**。

Zhèi ge diànyǐng hěn yǒuyìsī, (**lián**) **wǒ de gǒu** yě xǐhuan kàn.

This movie is so interesting, **even** *my dog* likes to watch it.

In the above sentences, the word **连/連 lián** can be omitted, but the subjects 小孩 xiǎohái (child) in (1), 老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher) in (2), and 我的狗 wǒ de gǒu (my dog) in (3) are still emphasized units. The following sentences, (4)–(11), also allow for the word **连/連 lián** to be omitted, with the exception of sentences (5) and (8).

### ► 27.1.2 Emphasis on the object

When the emphasis is on the object, the object should be moved before the verb and is inserted between **连/連 lián** and **都/也 dōu/yě**. For example:

- (4) 他没时间了, **连饭都**没吃就走了。

他沒時間了, **連飯都**沒吃就走了。

Tā méi shíjiān le, **lián** fàn dōu méi chī jiù zǒu le.

He had no time, and left without **even** eating.

- (5) 小明**连自己的名字都**写错了。

小明**連自己的名字都**寫錯了。

Xiǎomíng **lián** zìjǐ de míngzì dōu xiě.cuò le.

Xiaoming **even** wrote *his name* wrongly.

The emphasized objects 饭/飯 fàn (food) in (4) and **自己的名字** zìjǐ de míngzì (one's own name) in (5) are moved before the verbs 吃 chī (eat) and 写错/寫錯 xiě.cuò (write wrong), respectively. This shows that he didn't even have time to eat in (4) and that Xiaoming shouldn't write **his own name** wrongly in (5).

**Please be aware:** the word **连/連 lián** **cannot** be omitted in sentence (5) and sentence (8). If **连/連 lián** is omitted, Xiaoming is no longer the subject in (5) or (8); instead, 小明**自己的名字** Xiǎomíng zìjǐ de míngzì (Xiaoming himself's name) in (5) and 小明上课/小明上課 Xiǎomíng shàng-kè (Xiaoming's attending class) in (8) become the subject. This causes the meaning of both sentences to be awkward.

### ► 27.1.3 Emphasis on the predicate (verb)

The word 连/連 lián can precede the predicate (verb or verb phrase) to emphasize the predicate.

(6) 老师连看都没看，就把作业还给我了。

老師連看都沒看，就把作業還給我了。

Lǎoshī lián kàn dōu méi kàn, jiù bǎ zuòyè huán gěi wǒ le.

The teacher returned my homework to me without **even** *looking at* it.

(7) 小亮很忙，连睡觉都没有时间。

小亮很忙，連睡覺都沒有時間。

Xiaoliang hěn máng, lián shuìjiào dōu méiyǒu shíjiān.

Xiaoliang is very busy and has no time to **even** *sleep*.

(8) 小明连上课都忘了。

小明連上課都忘了。

Xiaoming lián shàng-kè dōu wàng le.

Xiaoming **even** forgot his *class*.

In this pattern, the sentences are either *negatives*, as in (6) and (7), or verbs denoting the meaning of forgetting, as in (8).

When the 连/連...都/也... lián...dōu/yě pattern expresses the *negative meaning*, Chinese often uses the smallest number — yī (one) to emphasize the meaning “none.”

(9) 教室里连一个人都没有。

教室裏連一個人都沒有。

Jiàoshì li lián yí ge rén dōu méiyǒu.

There is not **even** *one person* in the classroom.

(10) 小亮连一天都没休息。

小亮連一天都沒休息。

Xiaoliang lián yì tiān dōu méi xiūxi.

Xiaoliang has not taken a rest **even** *one day*.

(11) 我连一次都没去过纽约。

我連一次都沒去過紐約。

Wǒ lián yí cì dōu méi qù guo Niǔyuē.

I have not gone to New York **even** *once*.

The above three sentences use the word 连/連 lián to stress the number — yī (one), indicating that the amount cannot **even** reach one, and therefore the *negative meaning* of the sentence is enhanced.

## 27.2 Emphatic construction: 是...的 shì...de

This construction always discusses a *past event* that is known to have happened and emphasizes the time, place, doer, or manner in a *past time*. For example, the action 到 dào (arrive) is a known past event, and the time is emphasized in (12) below. The emphasized part is typically placed between 是 shì and 的 de, and it is *italicized* in the following examples. A similar expression in English is “*it was . . . that*,” though it is slightly over-translated (see the translations in the parentheses below).

### i. Emphasis on the time:

(12)a. 你是什么时候到的？

你是什麼時候到的？

Nǐ shì shénme shíhou dào de?

What time did you arrive? (It was *what time* that you arrived?)

b. 我是昨天十点到的。

我是昨天十點到的。

Wǒ shì zuótiān shí diǎn dào de.

I arrived at ten o'clock yesterday. (It was at *ten o'clock* yesterday that I arrived.)

### ii. Emphasis on the place:

(13)a. 你是从哪儿来的？

你是從哪兒來的？

Nǐ shì cóng nǎr lái de?

Where did you come from? (It was *from where* that you came from.)

b. 我是从美国来的。

我是從美國來的。

Wǒ shì cóng Měiguó lái de.

I came from the USA. (It was the USA that I came from.)

### iii. Emphasis on the manner:

(14)a. 你是怎么来的？

你是怎麼來的？

Nǐ shì zěnme lái de?

How did you get here? (It was *by what* that you got here?)

b. 我是坐飞机来的。

我是坐飛機來的。

Wǒ shì zuò fēijī lái de.

I came by airplane. (It was *by airplane* that I came.)

## iv. Emphasis on the doer of the action:

- (15)a. **是谁教你中文的**？ or: **是谁教的你中文**？  
**是誰教你中文的**？ or: **是誰教的你中文**？

Shì shéi jiāo nǐ Zhōngwén de? or: Shì shéi jiāo de nǐ Zhōngwén?

Who taught you Chinese? (It was *who* that taught you Chinese?)

- b. **是张老师教我中文的**。 or: **是张老师教的我中文**。  
**是張老師教我中文的**。 or: **是張老師教的我中文**。

Shì Zhāng lǎoshī jiāo wǒ Zhōngwén de. or: Shì Zhāng lǎoshī jiāo de wǒ Zhōngwén.

Professor Zhang taught me Chinese. (It was *Professor Zhang* that taught me Chinese.)

v. Emphasis on the object of the preposition such as **跟 gēn** (with):

- (16)a. **你是跟谁学中文的**？ or: **你是跟谁学的中文**？  
**你是跟誰學中文的**？ or: **你是跟誰學的中文**？

Nǐ shì gēn shéi xué Zhōngwén de? or: Nǐ shì gēn shéi xué de Zhōngwén?

Whom did you study Chinese with? (It was *with whom* that you studied Chinese?)

- b. **我是跟张老师学中文的**。 or: **我是跟张老师学的中文**。  
**我是跟張老師學中文的**。 or: **我是跟張老師學的中文**。  
Wǒ shì gēn Zhāng lǎoshī xué Zhōngwén de.  
or: Wǒ shì gēn Zhāng lǎoshī xué de Zhōngwén.

I studied Chinese with Professor Zhang.

(It was *with Professor Zhang* that I studied Chinese)

### ► 27.2.1 Some structural features of the **是...的 shì...de** construction

i. The position of **的 de**:

- is often at the end of a sentence, especially in spoken language; and
- it can be placed either at the end of a sentence (more common) or after the verb if the emphasized unit contains a verb-object phrase (see sentences (15) and (16) above). More examples are in sentences (17)–(19) below, which contain the object **北京 Běijīng**:

- (17)a. **你是什么时候到北京的**？ or: **你是什么时候到的北京**？  
**你是什麼時候到北京的**？ or: **你是什麼時候到的北京**？

Nǐ shì shénme shíhou dào Běijīng de? or: Nǐ shì shénme shíhou dào de Běijīng?

When did you arrive in Beijing? (It was *what time* that you arrived in Beijing?)

- b. 我是昨天十点到北京的。or: 我是昨天十点到的北京。  
 我是昨天十點到北京的。or: 我是昨天十點到的北京。  
 Wǒ shì zuótān shí diǎn dào Běijīng de. or: Wǒ shì zuótān shí diǎn dào de Běijīng.

I arrived in Beijing at ten o'clock yesterday.  
 (It was at ten o'clock yesterday that I arrived in Beijing.)

- (18)a. 你是从哪儿来北京的？or: 你是从哪儿来的北京？  
 你是從哪兒來北京的？or: 你是從哪兒來的北京？  
 Nǐ shì cóng nǎr lái Běijīng de? or: Nǐ shì cóng nǎr lái de Běijīng?  
 From where did you come to Beijing? (It was from where that you came to Beijing?)

- b. 我是从美国来北京的。or: 我是从美国来的北京。  
 我是從美國來北京的。or: 我是從美國來的北京。  
 Wǒ shì cóng Měiguó lái Běijīng de. or: Wǒ shì cóng Měiguó lái de Běijīng.  
 I came to Beijing from the USA. (It was from the USA that I came to Beijing.)

- (19)a. 你(是)怎么来北京的？or: 你(是)怎么来的北京？  
 你(是)怎麼來北京的？or: 你(是)怎麼來的北京？  
 Nǐ (shì) zěnme lái Běijīng de? or: Nǐ (shì) zěnme lái de Běijīng?  
 How did you come to Beijing? (It was by what that you came to Beijing?)

- b. 我(是)坐飞机来北京的。or: 我(是)坐飞机来的北京。  
 我(是)坐飛機來北京的。or: 我(是)坐飛機來的北京。  
 Wǒ (shì) zuò fēijī lái Běijīng de. or: Wǒ (shì) zuò fēijī lái de Běijīng.  
 I came to Beijing by airplane. (It was by airplane that I came to Beijing.)

- ii. The word **是** shì can be omitted, but not **的** de, as in (19) above.  
 If 是 shì is omitted in the above sentences, the sentences still carry the emphatic meaning. However, 是 shì cannot be omitted in a negative sentence. For example, to negate sentence (13b) above, the negative sentence should be as follows:

- (20) 我不是从美国来的，我是从英国来的。  
 我不是從美國來的，我是從英國來的。  
 Wǒ bú shì cóng Měiguó lái de, wǒ shì cóng Yīngguó lái de.  
 I didn't come from the USA, but from England.  
 (It was not from the USA that I came, but England.)

- iii. The perfective aspect particle **了** le cannot be used in the **是...的** shì...de construction because the construction emphasizes a particular event that was completed in a past time. The following sentence is thus incorrect:

- (21) \*我是昨天到了北京的  
 \*wǒ shì zuótān dào le Běijīng de  
 (lit. I was yesterday arrive *le* Beijing *de*)

**NOTE** **是...的** shì...de form *without* the emphatic meaning. There are some sentences with the 是...的 shì...de form that are not the emphatic 是...的 shì...de construction, rather; in those sentences, the nouns are omitted after the de, and they do not therefore carry the emphatic meaning:

- (22) 这本书是老师的(书)。  
 這本書是老師的(書)。  
 Zhè běn shū shì lǎoshī de (shū).  
 This book is the teacher's.
- (23) 小亮的飞机票是早上八点的(飞机票)。  
 小亮的飛機票是早上八點的(飛機票)。  
 Xiǎoliàng de fēijīpiào shì zǎoshang bā diǎn de (fēijīpiào).  
 Xiaoliang's airline ticket is at 8 a.m.
- (24) 小亮昨天买的手机是红的(手机)。  
 小亮昨天買的手機是紅的(手機)。  
 Xiǎoliàng zuótān mǎi de shǒujī shì hóng de (shǒujī).  
 The cell phone that Xiaoliang bought yesterday is red.

In the above three sentences, the nouns 书/書 shū (book), 飞机票/飛機票 fēijīpiào (airline ticket), and 手机/手機 shǒujī (cell phone) in parentheses after the de are normally omitted because they previously appeared in the sentences and their repetition is *not necessary*. As a result of the omissions, the sentences all have the 是...的 shì...de form, but they are regular sentences without any emphatic meaning.

### 27.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned two special emphatic constructions: **连/連...都/也... lián...dōu/yě** and **是...的** shì...de (note that there are other ways to express an emphatic meaning in Chinese). The former can emphasize the subject, object, and predicate (verb or verb phrase), while the latter can emphasize the time, place, manner, etc., in a *past time*. We have also learned that the word **连/連 lián** in the **连/連...都/也 lián...dōu/yě** construction and **是 shì** in the **是...的** shì...de construction can be omitted, and the sentences with these constructions can still express an emphatic meaning. When an emphasized unit contains a verb-object structure in the **是...的** shì...de construction, the particle **的 de** has two positions in the sentence: after the verb or at the end of the sentence, which is more common in spoken language. It should also be remembered that the perfective aspect particle **了 le** cannot be used with the **是...的** shì...de construction.

Table 27.1 shows the main features of the two emphatic constructions.

**Table 27.1** The main features of the two emphatic constructions

Types	Emphasis	Example
连/連... 都/也... lián...dōu/yě	on the subject	连老师都不会写这个字/連老師都 不會寫這個字。 Lián lǎoshī dōu bù huì xiě zhèi ge zì. Even the teacher doesn't know how to write this character.
	on the object	你连这个字都不会写/你連這個字都不 會寫。 Nǐ lián zhèi ge zì dōu bù huì xiě. You don't know how to write even this character.
	on the predicate (V/VP)	他连睡觉都没有时间/他連睡覺都 沒有時間。 Tā lián shuìjiào dōu méiyǒu shíjiān. He has no time to even sleep.
是...的 shì...de	on the time	我是昨天到的。Wǒ shì zuótiān dào de. I arrived yesterday.
	on the place	我是从美国来的/我是從美國來的。 Wǒ shì cóng Měiguó lái de. I came from the USA.
	on the manner	我是坐飞机来的/我是坐飛機來的。 Wǒ shì zuò fēijī lái de. I came by airplane.
	on the doer of the action	是张老师教我中文的。or: 是张老师教 的我中文。 是張老師教我中文的。or: 是張老師教的 我中文。 Shì Zhāng lǎoshī jiāo wǒ Zhōngwén de. or: Shì Zhāng lǎoshī jiāo de wǒ Zhōngwén. Professor Zhang taught me Chinese.
	on the object of the preposition	我是跟张老师学中文的。or: 我是跟张老 师学的中文。 我是跟張老師學中文的。or: 我是跟張老 師學的中文。 Wǒ shì gēn Zhāng lǎoshī xué Zhōngwén de. or: Wǒ shì gēn Zhāng lǎoshī xué de Zhōngwén. I studied Chinese with Professor Zhang.

## 27.4 Exercises

### I Change the following sentences to the emphatic construction **连/連...都/也...都/也** lián...dōu/yě, emphasizing the underlined part:

Example:

Given: 他花光了钱, 没有了吃饭的钱/他花光了錢, 沒有了吃飯的錢。

Tā huā guāng le qián, méiyǒu le chī-fàn de qián.

Answer: 他花光了钱, **连**吃饭的钱都没有了/他花光了錢, **連**吃飯的錢都沒有了。

Tā huā guāng le qián, lián chī-fàn de qián dōu méiyǒu le.

1. 学中文的人很多, 很多小学生在学中文/學中文的人很多, 很多小學生在學中文。。

Xué Zhōngwén de rén hěn duō, hěn duō xiǎo xuésheng zài xué Zhōngwén.

2. 这家餐馆没有一个客人/這家餐館沒有一個客人。

Zhèi jiā cānguǎn méiyǒu yí ge kèren.

3. 老师没有想就同意了学生的要求/老師沒有想就同意了學生的要求。

Lǎoshī méiyǒu xiǎng jiù tóngyì le xuésheng de yāoqiú.

4. 上课的时间到了, 老师来了, 可是学生还没来/上課的時間到了, 老師來了, 可是學生還沒來。

Shàng kè de shíjiān dào le, lǎoshī lái le, kěshì xuésheng hái méi lái.

5. 小亮没有时间吃饭/小亮沒有時間吃飯。

Xiǎoliàng méiyǒu shíjiān chī-fàn.

6. 学中文以前, 小明不会说一句汉语/學中文以前, 小明不會說一句漢語。

Xué Zhōngwén yǐqián, Xiǎomíng bù huì shuō yí jù Hànyǔ.

9. 小明的朋友虽然住在北京, 可是没有去长城/小明的朋友雖然住在北京, 可是沒有去長城。

Xiǎomíng de péngyou suīrán zhù zài Běijīng, kěshì méiyǒu qù guo Chángchéng.

10. 小亮还没吃, 就说饭很好吃/小亮還沒吃, 就說飯很好吃。

Xiǎoliàng hái méi chī, jiù shuō fàn hěn hǎochī.

### II Change the following sentences to the emphatic construction **是...的** shì...de, emphasizing the underlined part:

Example:

Given: 小明去年找到工作了。 Xiǎomíng qùnián zhǎodào gōngzuò le.

Answer: 小明是去年找到工作的。

Xiǎomíng shì qùnián zhǎodào gōngzuò de.

1. 小亮去年开始学中文/小亮去年開始學中文。

Xiǎoliàng qùnián kāishǐ xué Zhōngwén.

2. 小亮昨天从上海到了北京/小亮昨天從上海到了北京。

Xiǎoliàng zuótān cóng Shànghǎi dào le Běijīng.

3. 小明的妈妈给小明打了电话/小明的媽媽給小明打了電話。  
Xiǎomíng de māma gěi Xiǎomíng dǎ le diànhuà.
4. 小明跟他的妈妈用英文说话/小明跟他的媽媽用英文說話。  
Xiǎomíng gēn tā de māma yòng Yīngwén shuō-huà.
5. 小亮昨天骑自行车到了学校/小亮昨天騎自行車到了學校。  
Xiǎoliàng zuótān qí zìxíngchē dào le xuéxiào.
6. 老师帮我们学中文/老師幫我們學中文。  
Lǎoshī bāng wǒmen xué Zhōngwén.
7. 你昨天跟谁打电话/你昨天跟誰打電話？  
Nǐ zuótān gēn shéi dǎ diànhuà?
8. 你怎么知道我昨天没上课/你怎麼知道我昨天沒上課？  
Nǐ zěnme zhīdao wǒ zuótān méi shàng-kè?

### III Correct the following sentences using emphatic sentences:

Example:

Given:

1. \*他连书没有/\*他連書沒有 \*tā lián shū méiyǒu
2. \*他没在美国学中文的/\*他沒在美國學中文的 \*tā méi zài Měiguó xué Zhōngwén de

Answer:

1. 他连书都没有/\*他連書都沒有。 Tālián shū dōu méiyǒu.
2. 他不是在美国学中文的/\*他不是在美國學中文的。  
Tā bù shì zài Měiguó xué Zhōngwén de.
1. \*连老师不会写这个字/\*連老師不會寫這個字  
\*lián lǎoshī bú huì xiě zhèi ge zì
2. \*他连看都没看了，就说电影很有意思/\*他連看都沒看了，就說電影很有意思  
\*tā lián kàn dōu méi kàn le, jiù shuō diànyǐng hěn yǒuyìsì
3. \*小亮连两次都没去过纽约/\*小亮連兩次都沒去過紐約  
\*Xiǎoliàng lián liǎng cì dōu méi qù guò Niǔyù
4. \*连他们作业都没做就去看电影了/\*連他們作業都沒做就去看電影了  
\*lián tāmen zuòyè dōu méi zuò jiù qù kàn diànyǐng le
5. \*小亮是去年学了中文的/\*小亮是去年學了中文的  
\*Xiǎoliàng shì qùnián xué le Zhōngwén de
6. \*小亮没开车来学校的/\*小亮沒開車來學校的  
\*Xiǎoliàng méi kāi-chē lái xuéxiào de
7. \*小亮是昨天来了学校的/\*小亮是昨天來了學校的  
\*Xiǎoliàng shì zuótān lái le xuéxiào de
8. \*我们是昨天晚上看电影/\*我們是昨天晚上看電影  
\*wǒmen shì zuótān wǎnshàng kàn diànyǐng

### IV Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate emphatic sentence based on the given meanings in English:

1. A: 你是什么时候学中文的/你是什麼時候學中文的？

Nǐ shì shénme shíhou xué Zhōngwén de?

B: \_\_\_\_\_。(I studied Chinese when I was in high school.)

2. A: 你是怎么学中文的/你是怎麼學中文的？  
 Nǐ shì zěnme xué Zhōngwén de?  
 B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (I watched TV to study Chinese.)
3. A: 你是开车来学校的吗/你是開車來學校的嗎？  
 Nǐ shì kāi-chē lái xuéxiào de ma?  
 B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (No, I didn't drive to school. I walked here.)
4. A: 你最近忙不忙？  
 Nǐ zuijìn máng bu máng?  
 B: 忙极了/忙極了  
 Máng jí le, \_\_\_\_\_ (I do not even have time to call my friend).
5. A: 你父母同意你去中国学中文了/你父母同意你去中國學中文了？  
 Nǐ fùmǔ tóngyì nǐ qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén le?  
 B: 是的啊 Shì de a, \_\_\_\_\_ (they agreed without even asking why).
6. A: 你知道不知道下周五考试/你知道不知道下週五考試？  
 Nǐ zhīdào bu zhīdào xià zhōuwǔ kǎo-shì?  
 B: 不知道啊 Bù zhīdào a, \_\_\_\_\_ (not even one student in my class knows).

## Complicated sentences

As in English and other languages, simple sentences can be combined to form complicated sentences that consist of two or more *clauses* (“small sentences”) and still express a complete meaning with a certain intonation.

- (1)a. 你们几个都学什么外语？  
你們幾個都學什麼外語？  
Nǐmen jǐ ge dōu xué shénme wàiyǔ?  
Which foreign languages do you guys study?
- b. 小张学法语，小明学中文，我学日语。  
小張學法語，小明學中文，我學日語。  
Xiao Zhāng xué Fǎyǔ, Xiǎomíng xué Zhōngwén, wǒ xué Rìyǔ.  
Xiao Zhang studies French, Xiaoming studies Japanese, and I study Chinese.

- (2) **如果**你每天都练习说中文，你的中文**就会**进步。  
**如果**你每天都練習說中文，你的中文**就會**進步。  
Rúguǒ nǐ měitiān dōu liànxí shuō Zhōngwén, nǐ de Zhōngwén jiù huì jìngbù.  
If you practice Chinese every day, your Chinese will (**then**) improve.

- Sentence (1b) consists of three clauses without any *correlatives*, but there is the conjunction “and” in the English translation of (1b).
- Sentence (2) contains a pair of correlatives **如果…就** rúguǒ..jiù (if ... then) connecting the two clauses.

While both sentences (1b) and (2) are complicated sentences, this unit will only discuss complicated sentences with correlatives. Many cases of correlatives have already been discussed in previous chapters, most prominently in Chapter 15 (conjunctions) and briefly in Chapter 13 (adverbs). This unit can serve as a summary and a review of the previous discussions pertaining to sentences with correlatives.

**NOTE** **Correlatives** are conjunctions such as **如果** rúguǒ (if) and adverbs such as **就** jiù (then) in (2) to connect clauses.

There are two types of sentences with correlatives:

- i. **Compound sentences**, which are sentences that have components that are of equal importance in grammar, to be discussed in Chapter 28; and
- ii. **Complex sentences**, which are sentences in which one of the clauses is the main clause, and the other clause is dependent, to be discussed in Chapter 29.



## Compound sentences

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the patterns and common correlatives of compound sentences
- ★ To know the meanings of compound sentences

According to the relationship of the clauses, **compound sentences** can be further divided into the following four subcategories:

- i. Coordinative relation
- ii. Successive relation
- iii. Incremental relation
- iv. Alternative relation

### 28.1 Coordinative relation

• **Meaning:** The meaning of each clause is equal, and there is no difference in the importance of each clause.

• **Correlatives:**

- 也 yě (also) as in (3)
- (又)...又 (yòu)... yòu ([both]...and) as in (4)
- 是...不是 shì... bùshì (be...not) as in (5)
- 一边...一边/一邊...一邊 yìbiān... yìbiān (while) as in (6)

(3) 你会说中文, 我也会说中文。

你會說中文, 我也會說中文。

Nǐ huì shuō Zhōngwén, wǒ yě huì shuō Zhōngwén.

You can speak Chinese; I can as well.

(4) 小亮(又)会说英文, 又会说中文。

小亮(又)會說英文, 又會說中文。

Xiǎoliàng (yòu) huì shuō Yīngwén, yòu huì shuō Zhōngwén.

Xiaoliang can speak both English and Chinese.

(5) 今天是星期六, 不是星期天。

Jīntiān shì Xīngqīliù, bùshì Xīngqītiān.

Today is Saturday, not Sunday.

(6) 小明一边开车一边听音乐。

小明一邊開車一邊聽音樂。

Xiaomíng yìbiān kāi-chē, yìbiān tīng yīnyuè.

Xiaoming listens to music while driving.

**NOTE** The correlatives can also be used to mark *emphasis*. When only one of the clauses is marked with the relative, as in (3) and (4), then the marked clause is also the emphasized one. When both clauses are marked, as in (5) and (6), or unmarked, then there is no emphasis.

## 28.2 Successive relation

- **Meaning:** The clauses indicate the sequences of actions or things. The order of the clauses cannot be changed; specifically, the first clause is first, the second clause is second, and so on and so forth.

- **Correlatives:**

- 先...然后 xiān...ránhòu (first...then) as in (7)
- 一...就 yī...jiù (as soon as) as in (8)

(7) 我们先做完功课, 然后再去看电影吧。

我們先做完功課, 然後再去看電影吧。

Wǒmen xiān zuò.wán gōngkè, ránhòu zài qù kàn diànyǐng ba.

Let's do the homework first and then go to see the movie.

(8) 小亮一下课就回宿舍了。

小亮一下課就回宿舍了。

Xiǎoliàng yí xià-kè jiù huí sùshè le.

As soon as Xiaoliang got out of class, she immediately went back to her dorm.

## 28.3 Incremental relation

- **Meaning:** The meaning of the second clause goes further than the previous one.

- **Correlatives:**

- ...还/...還 ...hái (also; in addition) as in (9)
- 不但...而且 bùdàn...érqìě (not only...but also) as in (10)

(9) 今年夏天我要去上海, 还要去北京。

今年夏天我要去上海, 還要去北京。

Jīnnián xiàtiān wǒ yào qù Shànghǎi, hái yào qù Běijīng.

I will go to Shanghai and also Beijing this summer.

(10) 小亮**不但**喜欢唱歌, **而且**还喜欢跳舞。

小亮**不但**喜歡唱歌, **而且**還喜歡跳舞。

Xiǎoliàng bùdàn xǐhuan chàng-gē, érqiè hái xǐhuan tiào-wǔ.

Xiaoliang not only likes singing, but also likes dancing.

## 28.4 Alternative relation

• **Meaning:** The clauses provide different alternatives, of which one should be chosen.

• **Correlatives:**

- 或者...或者 huòzhě...huòzhě (either...or) in a statement, as in (11)
- (是)...还是/還是 (shì)...háishi (either...or) in a question and 是 shì (be) can be omitted, as in (12)
- 不是...就是 búshì...jiùshì (not...then), as in (13)

(11) 今年夏天我们**或者**去中国, **或者**去日本。

今年夏天我們**或者**去中國, **或者**去日本。

Jinnián xiàtiān wǒmen huòzhě qù Zhōngguó, huòzhě qù Rìběn.

We will go to either China or Japan this summer.

(12) 我们明天(**是**)坐火车**还是**坐飞机去北京?

我們明天(**是**)坐火車**還是**坐飛機去北京?

Wǒmen míngtiān (shì) zuò huǒchē háishi zuò fēijī qù Běijīng?

Will we go to Beijing by train or airplane?

(13) 小明很喜欢运动, 每天**不是**打球**就是**游泳。

小明很喜歡運動, 每天**不是**打球**就是**游泳。

Xiǎomíng hěn xǐhuan yùndòng, měitiān búshì dǎ-qíú jiùshì yóuyǒng.

Xiaoming likes sports. He either plays (basket)ball or swims every day  
(*a literal translation* for the second sentence: He is not playing (basket) ball then is swimming every day).

## 28.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned that there are **four types of common compound sentences** with specific correlative markers according to the relationship of their clauses, which are **coordinative**, **successive**, **incremental**, and **alternative**. The clauses in a compound sentence are equally important in terms of their meaning.

## Complex sentences

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ★ To learn the patterns and common correlatives of complex sentences
- ★ To know the meanings of complex sentences

A **complex sentence** consists of one main clause, which carries the *core idea*, and a subordinate clause, which assists the main clause in expressing the complete meaning of the complex sentence. Generally, the subordinate clause precedes the main clause.

According to the relationship between the constituent clauses, complex sentences can be divided into five subcategories:

- i. Causative relation
- ii. Concessive relation
- iii. Conditional relation
- iv. Purposive relation
- v. Preference relation

### 29.1 Causative relation

- **Meaning:** The subordinate clause presents the cause, and the main clause states the consequence or result.
- **Correlatives:**
  - 因为...所以/因為...所以 yīnwei...suǒyǐ (because...therefore), as in (14);
  - 由于/由於 yóuyú (because), as in (15);
  - 既然...就 jíránh...jiù (since...then), as in (16).

**NOTE** **因为/因為** yīnwei vs. **由于/由於** yóuyú: 由于/由於 yóuyú is used more in written and formal settings (see Chapter 15).

(14) 小明**因为**生病了, **所以**没有去上课。

小明**因為**生病了, **所以**沒有去上課。

Xiǎomíng yīnwei shēng-bìng le, suǒyǐ měiyǒu qù shàng-kè.

Because Xiaoming was sick, he did not go to class.

- (15) **由于**下雨，我们决定不去长城了。  
**由於**下雨，我們決定不去長城了。  
 Yóuyú xià-yǔ, wǒmen juédìng bú qù Chángchéng le.  
 Due to rain, we decided not to go to the Great Wall.

- (16) **既然**你觉得不舒服，**就**不用来上课了。  
**既然**你覺得不舒服，**就**不用來上課了。  
 Jirán nǐ juéde bù shūfù, jiù bù yòng lái shàng-kè le.  
 Since you do not feel well, you need not come to class.

## 29.2 Concessive relation

- **Meaning:** The meanings of the two clauses are opposite, and the main clause “wins” even though the subordinate clause indicates a different expectation.
- **Correlatives:**
  - 虽然…但是/雖然…但是 suīrán…dànshì (although…[but]), as in (17)
  - 尽管…可是/儘管…可是 jǐnguǎn…kěshì (even though…[but]), as in (18)
  - 反而 fān’ér (on the contrary, contrarily), as in (19)
  - 不管…都 bùguǎn…dōu (no matter what), as in (20)
  - 即使…也 jíshǐ…yě (even if), as in (21)
  - 就是…也 jiùshì…yě (even if), as in (22)

- (17) 这间屋子**虽然**很小，**但是**很舒服。  
 這間屋子**雖然**很小，**但是**很舒服。  
 Zhēi jiān wūzi suīrán hěn xiǎo, dànshì hěn shūfù.  
 Although this room is small, it is comfortable.
- (18) 小明**尽管**很忙，**可是**每天都锻炼身体。  
 小明**儘管**很忙，**可是**每天都鍛煉身體。  
 Xiǎomíng jǐnguǎn hěn máng, kěshì měitiān dōu duànliàn shēntǐ.  
 Even though Xiaoming is very busy, he exercises every day.
- (19) 下了一场雨，天气没有凉快下来，**反而**更热了。  
 下了一場雨，天氣沒有涼快下來，**反而**更熱了。  
 Xià le yì chǎng yǔ, tiānqì méiyǒu liángkuai xiàlai, fān’ér gèng rè le.  
 It didn’t cool down after the rain, on the contrary, it became hotter.
- (20) **不管**学生有什么样的困难，老师**都会**帮助。  
**不管**學生有什麼樣的困難，老師**都會**幫助。  
 Bùguǎn xuésheng yǒu shénmeyàng de kùnnán, lǎoshī dōu huì bāngzhù.  
 Regardless of what difficulties students have, the teacher will help.

- (21) 学语言就应该多说。即使说错了, 也没关系。  
 學語言就應該多說。即使說錯了, 也沒關係。  
 Xué yǔyán jiù yīnggāi duō shuō. Jíshǐ shuō.cuò le, yě méi guānxi.  
 One should speak more when studying a language. Even if one said something incorrectly, it wouldn't matter.

- (22) 就是不睡觉不吃饭, 我也要把事情做完。  
 就是不睡覺不吃飯, 我也要把事情做完。  
 Jiùshì bù shuì-jiào bù chī-fàn, wǒ yě yào bǎ shìqing zuò.wán.  
 Even if I neither sleep nor eat, I would finish these things.

Sentences (21) and (22) above combine concessive meaning with a hypothetical condition. Similar to the English phrase “even if,” these are not as strong as counterfactuals because even though the event in the subordinate clause represents an extreme condition, it is still possible.

### 29.3 Conditional relation

- **Meaning:** The subordinate clause states a condition, and the main clause states the prediction or consequence.
- **Correlatives:**
  - 只要…就 zhǐyào… jiù (as long as), as in (23)
  - 只有…才 zhǐyǒu… cái (only then), as in (24)
  - 除非…才 chúfēi… cái (unless), as in (25)
  - 要是/如果…就 yàoshì/rúguǒ… jiù (if . . . then), as in (26)

- (23) 只要努力, 就可以学好中文。  
 只要努力, 就可以學好中文。  
 Zhǐyào nǔlì, jiù kěyǐ xué.hǎo Zhōngwén.  
 As long as one is diligent, one can study Chinese well.

- (24) 只有努力, 才能学好中文。  
 只有努力, 才能學好中文。  
 Zhǐyǒu nǔlì, cái néng xué.hǎo Zhōngwén.  
 One must be diligent, and only then can one study Chinese well.

- (25) 学生除非病了, 才可以不上课。  
 學生除非病了, 才可以不上課。  
 Xuésheng chúfēi bìng le, cái kěyǐ bù shàng-kè.  
 Students must go to class unless they are sick.

(26) **要是**你觉得不舒服, **就**回去休息吧。

**要是**你覺得不舒服, **就**回去休息吧。

Yàoshì nǐ juéde bù shūfù, jiù huíqù xiūxi ba.

If you do not feel well, then you should go back to take a rest.

## 29.4 Purposive relation

- **Meaning:** The subordinate clause indicates a goal, and the main clause states an action to reach that goal.
- **Correlatives:** 为/為 or 为了/為了 wèi/wéile (in order to), as in (27a) below. **Please be aware:** 为/為 wèi or 为了/為了 wéile should be placed in the first clause and not after the main clause. This is different from English. Nevertheless, influenced by English, 是为了/是為了 shì wèile (be to) can be used after the purpose, as in (27b), which is a **simple sentence**, not a complex sentence.

(27).a. **为了**提高自己的中文水平, 小明计划去中国学中文。

**為了**提高自己的中文水平, 小明計劃去中國學中文。

Wéile tígāo zìjǐ de Zhōngwén shuǐpíng, Xiǎomíng jíhuà qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén.

In order to improve his Chinese proficiency, Xiaoming plans to go to China to study Chinese.

b. 小明计划去中国学中文**是为了**提高自己的中文水平。

小明計劃去中國學中文**是為了**提高自己的中文水平。

Xiǎomíng jíhuà qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén **shì wèile** tígāo zìjǐ de Zhōngwén shuǐpíng.

(The reason) that Xiaoming plans to go to China to study Chinese **is to** improve his Chinese proficiency.

## 29.5 Preference relation

- **Meaning:** The subordinate clause often identifies a situation and the main clause selects a preferable choice by comparing the advantages of the two alternatives.
- **Correlatives:**
  - 与其...不如/與其...不如 yǔqí...bùrú (rather than), as in (28)
  - 宁可不...也/寧可不...也 nìngkě bù...yě (rather not), as in (29), in which the main clause follows the subordinate clause

- 宁可...也不/寧可...也不 nìngkě... yě bù (rather), as in (30), in which the main clause precedes the subordinate clause below. **Please be aware:** both choices are *undesirable options*, although the first clause is preferred (see §15.2)

(28) **与其**在家里坐着看电视, **不如**出去运动运动。

**與其**在家裏坐著看電視, **不如**出去運動運動。

Yǔqí zài jiā li zuò zhe kàn diànshì, bùrú chūqù yùndong-yùndong.

It would be better to go out to exercise rather than sitting at home watching TV.

(29) 我**宁可不**睡觉不吃饭, **也要**把功课做完。

**我寧可不**睡覺不吃飯, **也要**把功課做完。

Wǒ nìngkě bù shuì jiào bù chī-fàn, yě yào bǎ gōngkè zuò.wán.

I would rather not sleep or eat but will finish my homework.

(30) 我**宁可**出去运动, **也不**在家里坐着看电视。

**我寧可**出去運動, **也不**在家裏坐著看電視。

Wǒ nìngkě chūqù yùndòng, yě bù zài jiā li zuò zhe kàn diànshì.

I would rather go out to exercise than sit at home watching TV.

## 29.6 Summary

In this chapter, we have learned that a **complex sentence** is formed by a **main clause**, which carries the core idea of the sentence, and a **subordinate clause**, which assists the main clause. Generally speaking, the subordinate clause precedes the main clause. There are five types of common complex sentences with specific correlatives according to the relationship of their clauses, which are **causative**, **concessive**, **conditional**, **purposive**, and **preference**.

At the beginning of this unit, we explained that a **complicated sentence** consists of at least two clauses (“small sentences”) that express the complete meaning of a sentence, and that there are numerous types of relationships between clauses. According to the relationships between their constituent clauses, complicated sentences can be broken down into two categories: **compound sentences** and **complex sentences**. Table 29.1 shows each type of complicated sentence and its corresponding common *correlatives* (note that there are other types of complicated sentences without correlatives in Chinese).

**Table 29.1** The types and common correlatives of complicated sentences

	Subtype (relation)	Correlative	Example
Compound sentence	Coordinative	一边...一边/ 一邊...一邊 yìbiān...yìbiān 是...不是 shì...búshì	他一边开车一边听音乐/他一邊開車一邊聽音樂。 Tā yìbiān kāi-chē yìbiān tīng yīnyuè. He listens to music while driving.
	Successive	先...然后/先...然後 xiān...ránhòu 一...就 yī...jiù	他一下课就回家/他一下課就回家。 Tā yí xià-kè jiù huí jiā. As soon as he gets out of class he goes home.
	Incremental	不但...而且 búdàn...érqìe	他不但会说英文，而且会说中文/他不但會說英文，而且會說中文。 Tā búdàn huì shuō Yǐngwén, érqiè huì shuō Zhōngwén. He knows how to speak not only English, but also Chinese.
	Alternative	或者...或者 huòzhě...huòzhě 不是...就是 búshì...jiùshì	周末他不是看电影就是看球赛/週末他不是看电影就是看球賽。 Zhōumò tā búshì kàn diànyǐng jiùshì kàn qíúsài. He either watches movies or ball games on the weekend.
Complex sentence	Causative	因为...所以/因為...所以 yīnwei...suǒyǐ 既然...就 jìrán...jiù	因为下雨了，我们不去长城了/因為下雨了，我們不去長城了。 Yīnwei xià-yǔ le, wǒmen bú qù Chángchéng le. We will not go to the Great Wall because of the rain.

Table 29.1 (cont.)

	Subtype (relation)	Correlative	Example
	Concessive	虽然…但是/雖然…但是 suīrán…dànshì 即使…也 jíshǐ…yě 反而 fān’ér 不管…都 bùguǎn…dōu	<b>虽然</b> 他不舒服, <b>但是</b> 还是来上课了/ <b>雖然</b> 他不舒服, <b>但是</b> 還是來上課了。 Suīrán tā bù shūfù, dànshì háishi lái shàng-kè le. He was felling unwell, but he still came to class. <b>即使</b> 不睡觉, <b>我也</b> 要做完功课/ <b>即使</b> 不睡覺, <b>我也</b> 要做完功課。 Jíshǐ bù shuì-jiào, wǒ yě yào zuò.wán gōngkè. Even if I don't sleep, I will finish my homework.
	Conditional	只要…就 zhǐyào…jiù 只有…才 zhǐyǒu…cái 要是/如果…就 yàoshì/ rúguǒ…jiù	<b>只要</b> 努力, <b>就能</b> 进步/ <b>只要</b> 努力, <b>就能</b> 進步。 Zhǐyào nǔlì, jiù néng jìnzbù. As long as one is diligent, one can make progress. <b>要是</b> 不舒服, <b>就</b> 別上课了/ <b>要是</b> 不舒服, <b>就</b> 別 上課了。 Yàoshì bù shūfù, jiù bié shàng-kè le. If you are not feeling well, don't go to class.
	Purposive	为了/為了 wèile	<b>为了</b> 学中文, 他去了中国/ <b>為了</b> 學中文, 他去了中 國。 Wèile xué Zhōngwén, tā qù le Zhōngguó. To study Chinese, he went to China.
	Preference	与其…不如/與其…不如 yǔqí…bùrú 宁可…也/寧可…也 nìngkě…yě	<b>与其</b> 看电视, <b>不如</b> 去运动/ <b>與其</b> 看電視, <b>不如</b> 去運動。 Yǔqí kàn diànshì, bùrú qù yùndòng. It's better to do exercise than watch TV.

## 29.7 Exercises

### I Fill in the blanks with the appropriate given correlatives:

(只要 zhǐyào; 只有 zhǐyǒu; 一边...一边/一邊...一邊... yībiān...yībiān; 不管 bùguǎn; 不但 bùdàn; 因为...所以/因為...所以 yīnwei...suǒyǐ; 虽然...可是/雖然...可是 suīrán...kěshì; 先...然后 xiān...ránhòu)

1. 小亮喜欢( )看电视, ( )做功课/小亮喜歡( )看電視, ( )做功課。

Xiǎoliàng xǐhuan ( ) kàn diànshì, ( ) zuò gōngkè.

2. 小亮每天下课以后, 都( )去图书馆看书, ( )再去学生餐厅吃饭/小亮每天下課以後, 都( )去圖書館看書, ( )再去學生餐廳吃飯。

Xiǎoliàng měitiān xià-kè yǐhou, dōu ( ) qù túshūguǎn kàn-shū, ( ) zài qù xuéshēng cāntīng chī-fàn.

3. ( )明天的天气好不好, 我们都要去看电影/( )明天的天氣好不好, 我們都要去看電影。

( ) míngtiān de tiānqì hǎo bu hǎo, wǒmen dōu yào qù kàn diànyǐng.

4. 老师常说, ( )每天多练习, 就一定能学好汉语/老師常說, ( )每天多練習, 就一定能學好漢語。

Lǎoshī cháng shuō, ( ) měitiān duō liànxí, jiù yídìng néng xué hǎo Hánnyǔ.

5. 小亮( )中文说得很好, 而且汉字也写得很好/小亮( )中文說得很好, 而且漢字也寫得很好。

Xiǎoliàng ( ) Zhōngwén shuō de hěn hǎo, érqiè Hánzì yě xiě de hěn hǎo.

6. ( )找到了一个很好的工作, ( )小明请大家吃饭/( )找到了一個很好的工作, ( )小明請大家吃飯。

( ) zhǎo.dào le yí ge hěn hǎo de gōngzuò, ( ) Xiǎomíng qǐng dàjiā chī-fan.

7. ( )打球打了三个小时, ( )他一点也不觉得累/( )打球打了三個小時, ( )他一點也不覺得累。

( ) dǎ-qíu dǎ le sān ge xiāoshí, ( ) tā yìdiǎn yě bù juéde lèi.

8. ( )多复习, 考试才能考好/( )多複習, 考試才能考好。

( ) duō fùxí, kǎoshì cái néng kǎo.hǎo.

### II Correct the following sentences with the appropriate correlatives:

Example:

Given: \*只有在周末, 才他有时间/\*只有在週末, 才他有時間

\*zhǐyǒu zài zhōumò, cái tā yǒu shíjiān

Answer: 只有在周末, 他才~~有~~有时间/只有在週末, 他才~~有~~有時間。

Zhǐyǒu zài zhōumò, tā cíai yǒu shíjiān.

1. \*与其开车去学校, 还是骑自行车去/\*與其開車去學校, 還是騎自行車去

\*yǔqí kāi-chē qù xuéxiào, háishi qí zìxíngchē qù

2. \*不但小明学中文, 而且还学日文/\*不但小明學中文, 而且還學日文

\*bùdàn Xiǎomíng xué Zhōngwén, ěrqiè hái xué Rìwén

3. \*要是明天没有空，就你不用跟我们看电影了/\*要是明天沒有空，就你不用跟我們看電影了  
\*yàoshì míngtiān méiyǒu kòng, jiù nǐ bù yòng gēn wǒmen kàn diànyǐng le
4. \*学生一下课，马上才去吃饭/\*學生一下課，馬上才去吃飯  
\*xuéshēng yí xià-kè, mǎshàng cái qù chī-fan
5. \*既然今晚你有别的事，就我不给你打电话了/\*既然今晚你有別的事，就我不給你打電話了  
\*jìrán jīnwǎn nǐ yǒu bié de shì, jiù wǒ bù gěi nǐ dǎ diànhuà le
6. \*不管明天上不上课，都我们要到学校/\*不管明天上不上課，都我們要到學校  
\*bùguǎn míngtiān shàng bu shàng-kè, dōu wǒmen yào dào xuéxiào
7. \*周末我和我的朋友或者去看电影还是看球赛/\*週末我和我的朋友或者去看電影還是看球賽  
\*zhōumò wǒ hé wǒ de péngyou huòzhě qù kàn diànyǐng háishi kàn qíusài
8. \*小亮一方面吃饭，一方面听音乐/\*小亮一方面吃飯，一方面聽音樂  
\*Xiǎoliàng yìfāngmiàn chī-fan, yìfāngmiàn tīng yīnyuè

**III Complete the following dialogues with the appropriate complex sentences and correlatives based on the given meanings in English:**

1. A: 我什么时候给你打电话比较合适/我什麼時候給你打電話比較合適？  
Wǒ shénme shíhou gěi nǐ dǎ diànhuà bìjiào héshì?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_. (It will be fine as long as it is by 10 p.m.)
2. A: 老师，我今天觉得不舒服，能不能不上课/老師，我今天覺得不舒服，能不能不上課？  
Lǎoshī, wǒ jīntiān juéde bù shūfu, néng bu néng bù shàng-kè?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_. (If you do not feel well, you need not come to class.)
3. A: 你忙不忙？  
Nǐ máng bu máng?  
B: 忙死了。  
Máng sǐ le. \_\_\_\_\_. (I either take tests or go to class everyday [use: 不是 búshì...就是 jiùshì])
4. A: 你的中文老师怎么样/你的中文老師怎麼樣？  
Nǐ de Zhōngwén lǎoshī zěnmeyàng?  
B: 非常好  
Fēicháng hǎo, \_\_\_\_\_. (He is not only smart but also passionate.)
5. A: 你觉得中文难不难/你覺得中文難不難？  
Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén nán bu nán?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_. (Chinese is difficult, but I like it very much.)

6. A: 你觉得今年暑假我应该在美国学中文还是去中国学中文/你  
覺得今年暑假我應該在美國學中文還是去中國學中文?  
Nǐ juéde jīnnián shǔjià wǒ yīnggāi zài Měiguó xué Zhōngwén háishi  
qù Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_。 (It would be better to study Chinese in China  
rather than in the USA. [use: 与其...不如/與其...不如 yǔqí...  
bùrú])

## Common measure words

**Format:** *number + MW + noun*

**Examples:**

三个学生/三個學生 sān gè xuésheng (three students);  
四本书/四本書 sì běn shū (four books)

Refer to Chapter 8 for more examples and other MWs.

Measure Word	Approximate meaning / usage	Nouns typically used with the MW
把 bǎ	handle for something that can be held by the hand	椅子 yǐzi (chair); 伞/傘 sǎn (umbrella); 尺子 chǐzi (ruler); 刀 dāo (knife); 牙刷 yáshuā (toothbrush)
杯 bēi	cup for something in the container	茶 chá (tea); 咖啡 kāfei (coffee); 水 shuǐ (water); 饮料/飲料 yǐnliào (soft drink)
本 běn	book for books	书/書 shū (book); 杂志/雜誌 zázhì (magazine); 字典 zìdiǎn (dictionary); 小说/小說 xiǎoshuō (novel)
部 bù	unit for films/books	电影/電影 diànyǐng (movie); 书/書 shū (book); 字典 zìdiǎn (dictionary)
场/場 chǎng	place for sports/recreational activities	球 qiú (ball); 比赛/比賽 bǐsài (game); 音乐会/音樂會 yīnyuèhuì (concert); 戏/戲 xì (play); 电影/電影 diànyǐng (movie); 雨 yǔ (rain)
栋/棟 dòng	for house/building	楼/樓 lóu (building); 房子 fángzi (house)
朵 duǒ	for flower/cloud	花 huā (flower); 云/雲 yún (cloud)
封 fēng	to seal for letter/email	信 xìn (letter); 电子邮件/電子郵件 diànnǎi yóujiàn (email)

(cont.)

Measure Word	Approximate meaning / usage	Nouns typically used with the MW
副 fù	set for paired things	眼镜/眼鏡 yǎnjìng (glasses); 手套 shǒutào (gloves)
个/個 gè	individual versatile (default) MW, often unstressed (no tone mark)	人 rén (people); 朋友 péngyou (friend), 苹果/蘋果 píngguǒ (apple); 电影/電影 diànyǐng (movie); 国家/國家 guójiā (country); 想法 xiǎngfǎ (idea)
家 jiā	home for families/business establishments	人家 rénjiā (family); 饭馆/飯館 fānguǎn (restaurant); 书店/書店 shūdiàn (bookstore); 旅馆/旅館 lǚguǎn (hotel); 医院/醫院 yīyuàn (hospital)
架 jià	frame for machines	飞机/飛機 fēijī (plane); 机器/機器 jīqì (machine); 钢琴/鋼琴 gāngqín (piano)
间/間 jiān	room for an area in a building	教室 jiàoshì (classroom); 房子 wūzi (room); 客厅/客廳 kètīng (living room)
件 jiàn	item for individual things/matters in general	衣服 yīfu (clothes); 衬衫/襯衫 chènshān (shirt); 事 shì (thing); 行李 xínglǐ (luggage)
句 jù	sentence for language	话/話 huà (words); 中文 Zhōngwén (Chinese); 英语/英語 Yīngyǔ (English)
棵 kē	for plants	树/樹 shù (tree); 草 cǎo (grass)
颗 kē	for small and round things	心 xīn (heart); 星 xīng (star); 豆子 dòuzi (bean); 牙(齿)/牙(齒) yá(chǐ) (tooth)
口 kǒu	mouth for family member/pigs/ others	人 rén (people); 猪/豬 zhū (pig); 水 shuǐ (water)
块/塊 kuài	piece for money/piece/lump	钱/錢 qián (money); 糖 táng (sugar); 面包/麵包 miàn bāo (bread); 砖/磚 zhuān (brick)
粒 lì	grain for something grain-like	米 mǐ (rice); 沙子 shāzi (sand); 粮食/糧食 liángshí (grain)

(cont.)

Measure Word	Approximate meaning / usage	Nouns typically used with the MW
辆/輛 liàng	for vehicles	车/車 chē (vehicle); 汽车/汽車 qìchē (car); 自行车/自行車 zìxíngchē (bike); 大巴 dàbā (bus)
名 míng	<b>name</b> for human being	学生/學生 xuésheng (student); 教师/教師 jiàoshī (teacher); 医生/醫生 yīshēng (doctor); 记者/記者 jìzhě (journalist)
批 pī	<b>bulk</b> for batch/group	产品/產品 chǎnpǐn (products); 学生/學生 xuésheng (students)
匹 pǐ	for horses	马/馬 mǎ (horse)
篇 piān	<b>full article</b> for sheet/leaf (of a book)	课文/課文 kèwén (text); 日记/日記 rìjì (dairy); 文章 wénzhāng (article)
片 piàn	<b>slice</b> for flat and thin things/land	药/藥 yào (tablet); 面包/麵包 miàn bāo (bread); 草地 cǎodì (lawn); 树林/樹林 shùlín (forest)
瓶 píng	<b>bottle</b> for something in the container	水 shuǐ (water); 饮料/飲料 yǐnliào (soft drink); 咖啡 kāfēi (coffee); 酒 jiǔ (alcoholic drink/wine/liquor)
群 qún	<b>crowd</b> for group/herd	人 rén (people); 孩子 háizi (children); 羊 yáng (sheep/goats)
首 shǒu	for songs and poems	歌 gē (song); 诗/詩 shī (poem)
双/雙 shuāng	<b>dual</b> for paired things	筷子 kuàizi (chopsticks); 手 shǒu (hands); 袜子/襪子 wàizi (socks); 鞋 xié (shoes); 手套 shǒutào (gloves); 眼睛 yǎnjing (eyes)
所 suǒ	<b>place</b> for school/house/hospital	学校/學校 xuéxiào (school); 房子 fángzi (house); 医院/醫院 yīyuàn (hospital)
台 tái	<b>terrace</b> for theatrical performance/ machine	戏/戲 xì (drama/play/show); 电脑/電腦 diànnǎo (computer); 电视(机)/電視(機) diànshì(jī) (TV); 机器/機器 jīqì (machine)
套 tào	<b>set</b> for things in a series	书/書 shū (book); 课本/課本 kèběn (textbook); 衣服 yīfu (clothes); 房子 fángzi (house)

(cont.)

Measure Word	Approximate meaning / usage	Nouns typically used with the MW
条/條 tiáo	strip for long and thin things/ itemized things	裤子/褲子 kùzǐ (pants); 裙子 qúnzi (skirts); 毛巾 máojīn (towel); 鱼/魚 yú (fish); 狗 gǒu (dog); 河 hé (river); 船 chuán (boat); 路 lù (road); 短信 duǎnxìn (text message); 微信 Wéixìn (text message via WeChat); 新闻/新聞 xīnwén (news); 意见/意見 yìjiàn (suggestion)
头/頭 tóu	head for animals	牛 niú (cow); 猪/豬 zhū (pig); 大象 dàxiàng (elephant)
位 wèi	position for people (polite form)	老师/老師 lǎoshī (teacher); 朋友 péngyou (friend); 客人 kèrén (guest); 顾客/顧客 gùkè (costumer)
样/樣 yàng	shape for type/kind of things	东西/東西 dōngxi (things); 礼物/禮物 lǐwù (gift); 菜 cài (dishes)
页/頁 yè	page for book/paper	书/書 shū (book); 纸/紙 zhǐ (paper)
张/張 zhāng	spread for flat things	纸/張 zhǐ (paper); 报纸/報紙 bàozhǐ (newspaper); 照片 zhàopiàn (photo); 画儿/畫兒 huàr (painting); 邮票/郵票 yóupiào (stamp); 桌子 zhuōzi (table); 床 chuáng (bed)
支 zhī	branch for song/pen/long objects	歌 gē (song); 笔/筆 bì (pen); 枪/槍 qiāng (rifle)
只/隻 zhī	single for one of certain paired things/animals	手 shǒu (hands); 脚 jiǎo (foot); 眼睛 yǎnjing (eye); 耳朵 ěrduo (ear); 鞋 xié (shoe); 鸡/雞 jī (chicken); 狗 gǒu (dog); 猫/貓 māo (cat)
种/種 zhǒng	kind for group/category	人 rén (people); 事情 shìqing (matters); 东西/東西 dōngxi (things); 颜色/顏色 yánsè (color); 水果 shuǐguǒ (fruits); 情况/情況 qíngkuàng (situation); 看法 kànfa (view)
座 zuò	seat for large and immovable objects	楼/樓 lóu (building); 宾馆/賓館 bīnguǎn (hotel); 房子 fángzi (house); 山 shān (mountain); 桥/橋 qiáo (bridge); 城市 chéngshì (city)

## Common prepositions

**Format:** *Preposition + Noun*

**Examples:**

从美国来/從美國來 cóng Měiguó lái (come from the USA)

Refer to Chapter 14 for more examples. There are not many Chinese prepositions, but they are used frequently. The following table shows the basic meanings of the most common Chinese prepositions.

Preposition	Approximate meaning	Approximate meaning when used as a verb	Genre	Position
把 bǎ	direct object (active voice) marker	hold	formal/ informal	pre-verb
被 bēi	passive voice marker		formal/ informal	pre-verb
比 bǐ	than	compare	formal/ informal	pre-verb
朝 cháo	toward	face	formal/ informal	pre-verb
除了 chúle	except; besides		formal/ informal	pre-verb
从/從 cóng	from		formal/ informal	pre-verb
到 dào	to	arrive	formal/ informal	pre-/ post-verb
对/對 duì	to	face	formal/ informal	pre-verb
给/給 gěi	to	give	formal/ informal	pre-/post-verb

(cont.)

Preposition	Approximate meaning	Approximate meaning when used as a verb	Genre	Position
跟 gēn	with	follow	formal/ informal	pre-verb
和 hé	with		formal/ informal	pre-verb
离/離 lí	from		formal/ informal	pre-verb
凭/憑 píng	rely on		formal/ informal	pre-verb
替 tì	for	substitute	formal/ informal	pre-verb
同 tóng	with	be the same	formal	pre-verb
往 wǎng	toward	go	formal	pre-/post-verb
为/為 wèi	for		formal	pre-verb
为了/為 了 wèile	for	in order to	formal	pre-verb
像 xiàng	like	be like	formal/ informal	pre-/post-verb
向 xiàng	toward	face	formal	pre-/post-verb
沿(着)/沿(著) yán(zhe)	along		formal	pre-verb
照 zhào (按照 ànzhào)	according to	shine, light up; reflect	formal	pre-verb
由 yóu	from		formal	pre-verb
于/於 yú	at/in/on		formal	post-verb
在 zài	at/in/on	be at/in/on	formal/ informal	pre-/post-verb

## Localizers

**Format:** *Noun + Localizer*

**Examples:**

教室**里**/教室**裏** jiàoshì *li* (in classroom);

教室**里边(儿)**/教室**裏邊(兒)** jiàoshì *libian(r)* (in classroom)

Refer to Chapter 26 for more examples.

Single localizer	Compound localizer			
	-边(儿)/ -邊(兒) -bian(r) (side)	-面 (儿)/ -面(兒) -mian(r) (side)	-头(儿)/ -頭(兒) -tou(r) (end)	-里/ -裏 -li (in)/ -儿/-兒 -er
<b>里/裏 lǐ (in)</b>	里边(儿)/裏邊(兒) lǐbian(r) (inside)	里面(儿)/裏面(兒) lǐmian(r) (inside)	里头(儿)/裏頭(兒) lǐtou(r) (inside)	
<b>外 wài (out)</b>	外边(儿)/外邊(兒) wàibian(r) (outside)	外面(儿)/外面(兒) wàimian(r) (outside)	外头(儿)/外頭(兒) wàitou(r) (outside)	
<b>上 shàng (above)</b>	上边(儿)/上邊(兒) shàngbian(r) (above)	上面(儿)/上面(兒) shàngmian(r) (above)	上头(儿)/上頭(兒) shàngtou(r) (above)	
<b>下 xià (under)</b>	下边(儿)/下邊(兒) xiàbian(r) (down)	下面(儿)/下面(兒) xiàmian(r) (down)	下头(儿)/下頭(兒) xiàtou(r) (down)	
<b>前 qián (front)</b>	前边(儿)/前邊(兒) qiánbian(r) (front)	前面(儿)/前面(兒) qiánmian(r) (front)	前头(儿)/前頭(兒) qiántou(r) (front)	
<b>后/後 hòu (back)</b>	后边(儿)/後邊(兒) hòubian(r) (back)	后面(儿)/後面(兒) hòumian(r) (back)	后头(儿)/後頭(兒) hòutou(r) (back)	
<b>东/東 dōng (east)</b>	东边(儿)/東邊(兒) dōngbian(r) (east)	东面(儿)/東面(兒) dōngmian(r) (east)	东头(儿)/東頭(兒) dōngtou(r) (east)	
<b>西 xī (west)</b>	西边(儿)/西邊(兒) xībian(r) (west)	西面(儿)/西面(兒) xīmian(r) (west)	西头(儿)/西頭(兒) xītou(r) (west)	

(cont.)

Single localizer	Compound localizer			
	-边(儿)/ -邊(兒) -bian(r) (side)	-面 (儿)/ -面(兒) -mian(r) (side)	-头(儿)/ -頭(兒) -tou(r) (end)	-里/ -裏 -li (in)/ -儿/-兒 -er
<b>南</b> nán (south)	南边(儿)/南邊(兒) nánbian(r) (south)	南面(儿)/南面(兒) nánmian(r) (south)	南头(儿)/南頭(兒) nántou(r) (south)	
<b>北</b> běi (north)	北边(儿)/北邊(兒) běibian(r) (north)	北面(儿)/北面(兒) běimian(r) (north)	北头(儿)/北頭(兒) běitou(r) (north)	
<b>左</b> zuǒ (left)	左边(儿)/左邊(兒) zuōbian(r) (left)	左面(儿)/左面(兒) zuōmian(r) (left)		
<b>右</b> yòu (right)	右边(儿)/右邊(兒) yòubian(r) (right)	右面(儿)/右面(兒) yòumian(r) (right)		
<b>这/這</b> zhè (this)	这边(儿)/這邊(兒) zhèbian(r) (this side)	这面 (儿)/這面(兒) zhèmian(r) (this side)	这头(儿)/這頭(兒) zhètou(r) (this side)	这里/這裏 zhèli/ 这儿/這兒 zhèr (here)
<b>那</b> nà (that)	那边(儿)/那邊(兒) nàbian(r) (that side)	那面(儿)/那面(兒) nàmian(r) (that side)	那头(儿)/那頭(兒) nàtou(r) (that side)	那里/那裏 nàli/那 儿/那兒 nàr (there)
<b>哪</b> nǎ (which)	哪边(儿)/哪邊(兒) nǎbian(r) (which side)	哪面 (儿)/哪面(兒) nǎmian(r) (which side)	哪头(儿)/哪頭(兒) nǎtou(r) (which side of)	哪里/哪裏 nǎli /哪 儿/哪兒 nǎr (where)
	中间(儿)/中間(兒) zhōngjiān(r) (center; middle)			

## Common sentence patterns

The patterns and examples listed in this appendix show typical usages. To see more comprehensive explanations and usage details, please refer to the corresponding chapter sections.

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
bǎ 把 construction	<p><b>General pattern</b> <i>S + bǎ + O + V + other elements</i> 小亮<b>把</b>作业做完了。 小亮<b>把</b>作業做完了。 Xiǎoliàng bǎ zuòyè zuò.wán le. Xiaoliang has completed her homework.</p>	The subject does something to the object introduced by 把 bǎ and brings about a change or a result.	§22.1
	<p><b>Location change (obligatory)</b> <i>S + bǎ + O + V + 在 zài/到 dào + location</i> 小明<b>把</b>书放在/到桌子上了。 小明<b>把</b>書放在/到桌子上了。 Xiǎomíng bǎ shù fàng zài/dào zhuōzi shàng le. Xiaoming put the book on/onto the table.</p>	The subject does something to the object introduced by 把 bǎ and brings about a <b>change of location of the object to the specified place</b> .	§22.3.1
	<p><b>Location change + direction (obligatory)</b> <i>S + bǎ + O + V + directional V + place + 来/來 or 去 lái or qù</i> 小亮<b>把</b>椅子搬<b>进</b>教室里来/去了。 小亮<b>把</b>椅子搬<b>進</b>教室裏來/去了。 Xiǎoliàng bǎ yǐzi bān jìn jiàoshì li lái/qu le. Xiaoliang moved the chair into the classroom (towards/away from the speaker).</p>	The subject does something to the object introduced by 把 bǎ, and brings about a change of location of the object to the specified place <b>towards or away from the speaker</b> .	

<p><b>Location change with transfer to shuman/place (obligatory)</b> <i>S + bǎ + O + V + 给/給 gěi (to) + person/place</i></p> <p>小明<b>把</b>那本书拿<b>给</b>小亮了。 小明<b>把</b>那本書拿<b>給</b>小亮了。 Xiǎomíng bǎ nèi běn shū ná gěi Xiaoliàng le. Xiaoming gave that book to Xiaoliang.</p>	<p>The subject does something to the object introduced by <b>把</b> bǎ, and brings about a <b>transfer</b> with a change of location of the object <b>to the specified person or the institution</b>.</p>	
<p><b>Manner complements (obligatory)</b> <i>S + bǎ + O + V + 得 de + manner complement (state change)</i></p> <p>小亮<b>把</b>房间打扫得很干净。 小亮<b>把</b>房間打掃得很乾淨。 Xiǎoliàng bǎ fángjiān dǎsǎo de hěn gānjìng. Xiaoliang cleaned up the room neatly.</p>	<p>The subject does something to the object introduced by <b>把</b> bǎ, and brings about a <b>change to the object in a way that is described by the phrase introduced by 得 de</b>.</p>	<p>§22.2.3 §22.3.1</p>
<p><b>Causative change (obligatory)</b> <i>S + bǎ + O (A) + V + 成 chéng (to) + NP (B)</i> (someone makes one thing into another)</p> <p>他<b>把</b>中文<b>翻译</b>成英文。 他<b>把</b>中文<b>翻譯</b>成英文。 Tā bǎ Zhōngwén fānyì chéng Yīngwén. He translated Chinese into English.</p>	<p>The subject does something to the object A introduced by <b>把</b> bǎ, and brings about a change that <b>causes it to become B</b>.</p>	<p>§22.3.1</p>

(cont.)

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
<b>bèi 被</b> construction (passive voice)	<p>S (receiver) + <b>bèi</b> + O (doer) + V + other elements          杯子<b>被</b>小明打破了。          Bēizi <b>bèi</b> Xiǎomíng dǎ.pò le.          The cup was broken by Xiaoming.</p> <p>S (receiver) + <b>bèi</b> + O (doer) + <b>给 / 紿</b> / <b>gěi</b> + V + other elements          小亮<b>被</b>老师<b>给</b>批评了。          小亮<b>被</b>老師<b>給</b>批評了。          Xiǎoliàng <b>bèi</b> lǎoshī <b>gěi</b> pīping le.          Xiaoliang was criticized by the teacher.</p>	The object (which can often be omitted) does something to the subject that typically put the subject in an <i>adverse</i> situation.	§23.1
<b>bèi 倍</b> (times; -fold)	<p>A <b>是</b> shì B <b>的</b> de + number (<math>x</math>) + <b>倍</b> bèi          八<b>是</b>二的<b>四倍</b>。          Bā shì èr de sì <b>bèi</b>.          Eight is four times as much as two.</p>	The quantity of A is $x$ times as many as the quantity of B.	§7.3
	<p>A <b>比</b> bǐ B <b>多</b> duō/大 dà + number + <b>倍</b> bèi          八<b>比</b>二<b>多</b>三<b>倍</b>。          Bā bǐ èr duō sān <b>bèi</b>.          Eight is three times more than two.</p>	The quantity of A is $x$ times more than the quantity of B (i.e., A's quantity equals to $(x+1)$ times of B).	§7.3

bùdàn 不但 ... érqiě 而且 ... (not only ... but also)	<p><b>不但</b> búdàn <i>A</i>, <b>而且</b> érqiě <i>B</i></p> <p>小亮<b>不但</b>很漂亮, <b>而且</b>很聪明。 小亮<b>不但</b>很漂亮, <b>而且</b>很聰明。 (one subject)</p> <p>Xiǎoliàng búdàn hěn piàoliang, érqiě hěn cōngming.</p> <p>Xiaoliang is <b>not only</b> beautiful, <b>but also</b> smart.</p> <p><b>不但</b>小明会说中文, <b>而且</b>小亮也会说中文。 <b>不但</b>小明會說中文, <b>而且</b>小亮也會說中文。(two different subjects)</p> <p>Bùdàn Xiǎoming huì shuō Zhōngwén, érqiě Xiǎoliàng yě huì shuō Zhōngwén.</p> <p><b>Not only</b> does Xiaoming know how to speak Chinese, <b>but</b> Xiaoliang does as well.</p>	<p>This complex sentence links two events with similar meanings to make a stronger claim.</p>	§15.2 §28.3
comparison	<p><b>Difference</b></p> <p><i>A</i> <b>比</b> <i>bǐ</i> <i>B</i> (<i>target</i>) + <i>adj.</i> (<i>quality</i>)</p> <p>小明<b>比</b>老师高。 小明<b>比</b>老師高。</p> <p>Xiǎoming bǐ lǎoshī gāo.</p> <p>Xiaoming is taller <b>than</b> the teacher.</p>	<p>This sentence compares <i>A</i> and <i>B</i> in terms of the quality specified by the adjective.</p>	§25.1
	<p><i>A</i> (<b>比</b> <i>bǐ</i> <i>B</i>) + <i>adj.</i> + <i>C</i> (<i>specific difference</i>)</p> <p>小明(<b>比</b>老师)高一点儿。 小明(<b>比</b>老師)高一點兒。</p> <p>Xiǎoming (bǐ lǎoshī) gāo yìdiǎnr.</p> <p>Xiaoming is a bit taller (<b>than</b> the teacher).</p>	<p>This sentence compares <i>A</i> and <i>B</i> in terms of the quality specified by the adjective <b>with the difference measured by C</b>.</p>	

(cont.)

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
	<p>A <b>比</b> <i>bǐ</i> <i>B</i> + VP            小明<b>比</b>我喜欢咖啡。            小明<b>比</b>我喜歡咖啡。            Xiǎomíng <b>bǐ</b> wǒ <i>xǐhuan</i> kāfēi.            Xiaoming likes coffee more than I do.</p>	<p>This sentence compares <i>A</i> and <i>B</i> in terms of <b>their involvement in the event described by the VP</b>.</p>	
	<p>A <b>比</b> <i>bǐ</i> <i>B</i> + <b>还/還(要)</b> <i>hái(yào)</i>/<b>更</b> <i>gèng</i> + <b>adj.</b>            小明的哥哥<b>比</b>小明<b>还(要)</b>/<b>更高</b>; 小明的爸爸<b>最高</b>。            小明的哥哥<b>比</b>小明<b>還(要)</b>/<b>更高</b>; 小明的爸爸<b>最高</b>。            Xiǎomíng de gēge <b>bǐ</b> Xiǎomíng <i>hái(yào)</i>/<b>gèng</b> <i>gāo</i>; Xiǎomíng de bàba <b>zuì</b> <i>gāo</i>.            Xiaoming's older brother is <b>even</b>/<b>(more)</b> taller <b>than</b> Xiaoming.            Xiaoming's father is the <b>tallest</b>.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates <i>A</i>'s <b>higher status than <i>B</i></b> in terms of the quality specified by the adjective.</p>	
	<p><b>A + adj. (quality) (implied comparison):</b>            这间教室大。            這間教室大。            Zhèi jiān jiàoshì dà.            This classroom is bigger.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates <i>A</i>'s <b>higher status</b> in terms of the quality specified by the adjective (with the goal of comparison understood).</p>	

<p><b>Negation of bǐ sentences</b> A 没(有)/沒有 <i>méi(yǒu)</i> + B + adj. 小明没有老师高。 小明沒有老師高。 Xiǎomíng méi(yǒu) lǎoshī gāo. Xiaoming is not as tall as the teacher.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates A's inferior status than B in terms of the quality specified by the adjective.</p>	<p>§25.1.2</p>
<p><b>Sameness</b> A 跟 <i>gēn</i> (with) B + 一样/一樣 <i>yíyàng</i> (the same) 小亮跟老师一样。 小亮跟老師一樣。 Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī yíyàng. Xiaoliang is the same as the teacher.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates the sameness of A and B (without specifying the quality).</p>	<p>§25.2</p>
<p>A 跟 <i>gēn</i> B + 一样/一樣 <i>yíyàng</i> + adj./VP (specifying the same) 小亮跟老师一样高。 小亮跟老師一樣高。 Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī yíyàng gāo. Xiaoliang is as tall as the teacher.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates the sameness of A and B in terms of the quality specified by the adjective/VP.</p>	
<p><b>Negation</b> 小亮跟老师不一样高。 小亮跟老師不一樣高。 Xiǎoliàng gēn lǎoshī bù yíyàng gāo. Xiaoliang is not the same height as the teacher.</p>	<p>This sentence denies the sameness of A and B in terms of the quality specified by the adjective.</p>	

(cont.)

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
complement (manner with de 得)	<p>S + V + 得 <i>de</i> + C 小明跑得很快/快。 Xiǎomíng pǎo de hěn kuài/ kuài Xiaoming runs fast.</p>	This sentence assigns the manner C to the described activity.	§20.2
	<p><b>Negation:</b> S + V + 不 <i>bù</i> + C 小明跑得不快。 Xiǎomíng pǎo de bú kuài Xiaoming does not run fast.</p>	This sentence assigns the manner not-C to the described activity.	
	<p><b>Verb copying:</b> S + V+ O + V + 得 <i>de</i> + C 小亮说中文说得很好。 小亮說中文說得很好。 Xiǎoliàng shuō Zhōngwén shuō de hěn hǎo. Xiaoliang speaks Chinese very well.</p>	This sentence assigns the manner C to the described <b>transitive</b> activity (note that two copies of the same verb is required, with the first copy optional).	
	<p><b>Question:</b> S + V + 得 <i>de</i> + C + 不 <i>bù</i> + C 小亮 (说中文) 说得好不好? 小亮 (說中文) 說得好不好? Xiǎoliàng (shuō Zhōngwén) shuō de hǎo <u>bu</u> hǎo? Does Xiaoliang speak (Chinese) well?</p>	This question asks for yes–no judgment on the complement.	

complement (potential with <b>de 得</b> )	<p><b>S + V + 得 + C</b> 小明听得懂老师的话。 小明聽得懂老師的話。 Xiǎomíng tīng de dǒng lǎoshī de huà. Xiaoming can understand the teacher's words (by listening).</p> <p><b>Negation: S + V + 不 bù + C</b> 小明听不懂老师的话。 小明聽不懂老師的話。 Xiǎomíng tīng bù dǒng lǎoshī de huà. Xiaoming cannot understand the teacher's words (by listening).</p> <p><b>Question: S + V + 得 de + C + V + 不 bù + C</b> 小亮说得好说不好 (中文)? 小亮說得好說不好 (中文)? Xiǎoliàng shuō de hǎo shuō bu hǎo (Zhōngwén)? Can Xiaoliang speak (Chinese) well?</p>	This sentence indicates <i>S</i> 's ability to carry out the action to the degree of <i>C</i> .	§20.3
complement (directional)	<p><b>Simple directional complement</b> <b>V + 来/來 lái/去 qù (towards/away from the speaker)</b> 小亮进来/去了。 小亮進來/去了。 Xiǎoliàng jìn lái/qu le. Xiaoliang came/went in.</p>	This sentence indicates the direction of an activity toward or away from the reference point (usually the speaker).	§20.4

(cont.)

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
	<p><b>With the object: V + O + 来/來 lái/去 qù</b></p> <p>小亮进教室来/去了。 小亮進教室來/去了。 Xiaoliang jìn jiàoshì lái/qu le. Xiaoliang came/went in the classroom.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates the direction of a transitive activity toward or away from the reference point.</p>	
	<p><b>Compound directional complement V + V(direction) + 来/來 lái /去 qù</b></p> <p>小亮走进来/进去了。 小亮走進來/進去了。 Xiaoliang zǒu jinlai/ jinqu le. Xiaoliang walked in. (towards/away from the speaker)</p>	<p>This sentence indicates the direction of the activity toward or away from the reference point with V indicating the means of movement.</p>	
	<p><b>With the object: V + V (direction) + O + 来/來 lái/去 qù</b></p> <p>小亮走进教室来/去了。 小亮走進教室來/去了。 Xiaoliang zǒu jin jiàoshì lái/ qu le. Xiaoming walked into the classroom. (towards/away from the speaker)</p>	<p>This sentence indicates the direction of a transitive activity toward or away from the reference point with V indicating the means of movement.</p>	

<b>complement (quantitative)</b>	<p><b>V + C (number + MW + N)</b> 小亮每天锻炼<b>一个小时</b>。 小亮每天鍛鍊<b>一個小時</b>。 Xiǎoliàng měitiān duànliàn yí ge xiǎoshí. Xiaoliang exercises for one hour every day.</p>	<p>These sentences specify the frequency or duration of an action.</p>	<p>§20.5</p>
	<p><b>V + C (number + MW)</b> 小亮学了<b>三年</b>。 小亮學了<b>三年</b>。 Xiǎoliàng xué le sān nián. Xiaoliang has studied for three years.</p>		
	<p><b>With the object:</b> <b>V + number + MW + N</b> 小亮学了三年<b>中文</b>。 小亮學了三年<b>中文</b>。 Xiǎoliàng xué le sān nián Zhōngwén. Xiaoliang has studied <b>Chinese</b> for three years.</p>		
<b>double objects</b>	<p><b>S + V + O<sub>1</sub> (human being) + O<sub>2</sub> (non-human)</b> 张老师教<b>我们</b>中文。 張老師教<b>我們</b>中文。 Zhāng lǎoshi jiāo wǒmen Zhōngwén. Professor Zhang teaches us Chinese.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates the transfer of O<sub>2</sub> to O<sub>1</sub>.</p>	<p>§19.3</p>

(cont.)

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
existential sentence	<p><i>S</i> (place word) + <i>V</i> + <i>O</i> (<i>N</i>)</p> <p>桌子上放着很多书。 桌子上放著很多書。</p> <p>Zhuōzi shàng fàng zhe hěn duō shū. There are many books <b>on the table</b>.</p> <p><i>PW</i> + <b>有</b> <i>yǒu</i> + <i>N</i></p> <p>教室里有很多学生。 教室裏有很多學生。</p> <p>Jiàoshì li yǒu hěn duō xuésheng. <b>There are</b> many students in the classroom.</p>	This sentence indicates the existence of <i>O</i> at the location of <i>S</i> .	Chapter 26 §26.2
le 了 (V suffix)	<p><i>S</i> + <i>V</i> + <b>le</b> + <i>number</i> + <i>MW</i> + <i>N</i></p> <p>小亮喝了三瓶可乐。 小亮喝了三瓶可樂。</p> <p>Xiǎoliàng hē le sān píng kělè. Xiaoliang drank three bottles of cola.</p> <p><i>V</i><sub>1</sub> (earlier activity) + <b>了</b> <i>le</i> + <i>V</i><sub>2</sub> (later activity)</p> <p>小明每天吃了饭去上课。 小明每天吃了飯去上課。</p> <p>Xiǎomíng měitiān chī le fàn qù shàng-kè. Xiaoming goes to class after eating every day.</p>	<p>This sentence indicates the completion of the action by measuring it out with <i>MW+N</i>.</p> <p>This sentence indicates that the event represented by <i>V</i><sub>1</sub> is completed before the onset of the event represented by <i>V</i><sub>2</sub>.</p>	§10.4.1

<b>pivotal sentence</b>	<p><b>S + V + O (S + V +O)</b> 老师帮<u>学生学中文</u>。 老師幫<u>學生學中文</u>。 Lǎoshī bāng <u>xuéshēng</u> xué Zhōngwén. The teacher helps students study Chinese.</p>	<p>This sentence links two events with O as the pivot, where O serves as the object of the first event and the subject of the second event at the same time.</p>	§18.2.2
<b>question*</b>	<p><b>yes–no questions</b> <b>statement + 吗/嗎 ma</b> 小亮的爸爸是老师吗？ 小亮的爸爸是老師嗎？ Xiǎoliàng de bàba shì lǎoshī ma? Is Xiaoliang's father a teacher?</p> <p><b>Statement + 好吗/好嗎 hǎo ma, 行吗/行嗎 xíng ma, 可以吗/可以嗎 kěyǐ ma, 对吗/對嗎 duì ma</b> 我们去看电影，好吗？ 我們去看電影，好吗？ Wǒmen qù kàn diànyǐng, hǎo ma? Let's see a movie, okay?</p> <p><b>Statement + 吧 ba (probing attempt)</b> 你学过中文吧？ 你學過中文吧？ Nǐ xué guo Zhōngwén ba? You have studied Chinese (before), right?</p>	<p>This question asks for the <b>truthfulness</b> (i.e., yes or no) of the statement.</p> <p>This tag question asks for <b>consent</b> (i.e., yes or no) to the statement.</p> <p>This question asks for <b>confirmation</b> (i.e., yes or no) to the statement, which is a conjecture by the speaker.</p>	§24.1

(cont.)

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
	<i>question-word questions (specific)</i> 你找 <b>谁</b> ? 你找 <b>誰</b> ? Nǐ zhǎo shéi? <b>Whom</b> are you looking for?	This question asks for the person who the pronoun <b>谁/誰</b> shéi stands for in the sentence.	§24.2
	<i>S + (有 yǒu) + 多 duō (many/much) + adj./V (mental activities)</i> 你(有)多大? Nǐ (yǒu) duō dà? How old are you?	This question asks for <b>the degree or quantity of property</b> specified by the adjective/verbs and belonging to S.	
	<i>S + V + 多少 duōshao (how many/much) + N</i> 你有多少 <b>书</b> ? 你有多少 <b>書</b> ? Nǐ yǒu duōshao shū? <b>How many</b> books do you have?	This question asks for <b>the quantity of N</b> .	
	<b>Follow-up question:</b> <i>word/NP + 呢 ne (how/what)</i> a. 你今天怎么样? 你今天怎麼樣? Nǐ jīntiān zěnmeyang? How are you today? b. 很好, 你呢? Hěn hǎo, nǐ ne? Very good, and you ( <b>how about you</b> )?	This question asks for elaboration with regard to word/NP in relation to the preceding context.	§24.2.3

<p><b>A-not-A questions</b> <b>V-not-V (+ O)</b> 你喜欢不喜欢 (中文) ? 你喜歡不喜歡 (中文) ? Nǐ xǐhuān bu xǐhuān (Zhōngwén)? Do you like (Chinese)? <b>statement + A-not-A</b> 我们去看电影, 好不好? 我們去看電影, 好不好? Wǒmen qu kàn diànyǐng, hǎo bu hǎo ? Let's go to watch a movie, okay?</p>	<p>This alternative question asks for either an <i>affirmative</i> or <i>negative</i> reply (while being neutral as the question presents both alternatives).</p>	<p>§24.3</p>
<p><b>Alternative questions</b> <b>S + (是 shì) A + 还是 háishì B</b> 你(是)想喝咖啡, 还是想喝茶? 你(是)想喝咖啡, 還是想喝茶? Nǐ (shì) xiǎng hē kāfēi, háishi xiǎng hē-chá? Would you like to drink coffee or tea?</p>	<p>This alternative question asks for a <b>choice among the two or more alternatives provided</b> (while being neutral, yet it would be unexpected to answer with an alternative that was not provided).</p>	<p>§24.4</p>
<p><b>Answer</b> (either A or B is fine): <b>A 或者 huòzhě B + 都 dōu + V</b> 咖啡或者茶都行。 Kāfēi huòzhě chá dōu xíng. Either coffee or tea is fine (with me).</p>		

(cont.)

Keyword	Pattern/example	Meaning	Chapter
relative clause	S-V/VP + <b>的</b> <i>de</i> + N 小明买的书很新。 小明買的書很新。 <i>Xiaoming mǎi de shū hěn xīn.</i> The book that Xiaoming bought is new.	A relative clause precedes and restricts the meaning of the head N by requiring that it meets the requirements on the gap in the relative clause at the same time.	§16.1.1
wúlùn/búlùn/bùguǎn... dōu/ yě... 无论/不论/不 管... 都/也... 無論/不論/不管...都/ 也... (no matter ... all/also)	<b>无论/無論</b> <i>wúlùn</i> + <i>question form</i> , <b>都/也</b> <i>dōu/yě</i> ... 无论你忙不忙, 都应该做功课。 無論你忙不忙, 都應該做功課。 <i>Wúlùn nǐ máng bu máng, dōu yīnggāi zuò gōngkè.</i> No matter whether you are busy or not, you should do your homework.	This arbitrary interrogative construction underlines the necessity of the second statement by marking all concerns as irrelevant.	§15.2 §29.2
yī — ... jiù 就... (as soon as)	— <i>yī</i> + <i>V</i> <sub>1</sub> <b>就</b> <i>jiù</i> + <i>V</i> <sub>2</sub> 小明一下课就去图书馆了。 小明一下課就去圖書館了。 <i>Xiaoming yí xià-kè jiù qù túshūguǎn le.</i> As soon as Xiaoming got out of class, he immediately went to the library.	This complex sentence indicates that the two activities <i>V</i> <sub>1</sub> and <i>V</i> <sub>2</sub> happened consecutively one after the other.	§15.3 §28.2
yòu 又 ... yòu 又 ... (both ... and ...)	<b>又</b> <i>yòu</i> + <i>V</i> <sub>1</sub> / <i>adj</i> <sub>1</sub> + <b>又</b> <i>yòu</i> + <i>V</i> <sub>2</sub> / <i>adj</i> <sub>2</sub> 小明今天很高兴, 又说又唱。 小明今天很高興, 又說又唱。 <i>Xiaoming jīntiān hěn gāoxìng, yòu shuō yòu chàng.</i> Xiaoming is happy today; he keeps speaking and singing.	This additive construction indicates that the two events/states specified by the two <i>V</i> /adjectives happen at the same time and enhance each other.	§13.4 §15.2 §28.1

yuè 越 ... yuè 越 ... (the more ... the more ...)	<b>越</b> <i>yuè</i> + <i>V<sub>1</sub>/adj<sub>1</sub></i> + <b>越</b> <i>yuè</i> + <i>V<sub>2</sub>/adj<sub>2</sub></i> 小亮 <b>越</b> 看 <b>越</b> 喜欢这部电影。 小亮 <b>越</b> 看 <b>越</b> 喜歡这部电影。 Xiaoliang <b>yuè</b> kàn <b>yuè</b> xǐhuan zhè bù diànyǐng. The <b>more</b> Xiaoliang watches the movie, the <b>more</b> she likes it.	This progression construction indicates that the second event/state changes in the same direction and at the same speed as the first event/state.	§13.4
zài 在 + PW	<i>N</i> + <b>在</b> <i>zài</i> + <i>PW</i> 书 <b>在</b> 桌子上。 書 <b>在</b> 桌子上。 Shū <b>zài</b> zhuōzi shàng. The book(s) <b>is/are</b> <b>on</b> the table.	This sentence indicates the location of the definite and known <i>N</i> .	§26.4

\* Note that Chinese interrogative pronouns (e.g. *who*, *how*, *what*) appear *in situ*, meaning where they appear is exactly where the queried element would appear in a statement.

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