
5 Grammar

The first Modern Standard Chinese grammar book: *Ma's Basic Principles for Writing* (1898), 马氏文通 *Mǎshìwéntōng*, was written just over a century ago by 马建忠 *Mǎ Jiànzhōng* (1845–1900), who was strongly influenced by grammars published for European languages. Of course this does not mean that Chinese were unaware that they were speaking in accordance with shared grammatical rules. It may never have occurred to them that rules should be systematically compiled, categorized and described for purely structural analysis apart from rhetorical effect. Similarly, it was about one and a half millennia ago that the Chinese scholar 沈约 *Shěn Yuē* (441–513) wrote the first treatise, *On the Four Tones* 四声谱 *Sìshēngpǔ*, describing the four tones of the Chinese language, even though speakers had been pronouncing the same syllables in four different tones for many centuries before he wrote his treatise. It was the challenge of translating Buddhist sutras into Chinese from Sanskrit and Pali, particularly transliterating untranslatable names such as Avalokiteshvara Bodhissatva into pronounceable Chinese syllables, that caused scholars to pay more attention to the structure of their own language than they had for centuries before. In the nineteenth century, it was increased contact with Westerners and their languages that made some Chinese feel the need to systematize the rules for speaking well-formed sentences in their own tongue.

5.1 The main features of Chinese grammar

5.1.1 Absence of morphological change

Perhaps the most salient feature of Chinese grammar is the absence of fixed rules for changing the form of words when their grammatical function changes. There is no change in the form of a verb expressing a present, past, or future action, and no change for subjunctive expressions; there is no gender differentiation among nouns, and no difference between singular and plural nouns. This feature was illustrated earlier in this volume.

5.1.2 Frequent ellipsis

China's "high context culture," as defined by E.T. Hall in *Beyond Culture*, is reflected most clearly in language usage. Once the subject, topic, or even the verb is understood by both speaker and listener, it is commonly omitted. As long as the topic, subject, object, or the verb is understood, it may be omitted in subsequent utterances until the topic, subject, object or verb is changed.

Elliptical sentences are usually responses to questions and they are context-dependent and therefore do not stand alone without a context.

- (1) There is no single word for "yes" or "no" in Chinese as there is in English. The shortest possible "yes" or "no" response to a question is to repeat or negate the verb or auxiliary verb used in the question. Therefore such short answers are elliptical sentences.

他们是法国人吗? Tāmen shì Fǎguó rén ma? Are they French?	是。 / 不是。 Shì./Bú shì. Yes./No.
他们明年去不去法国旅游? Tāmen míngnián qù buqu Fǎguo lǚyóu? Will they visit France next year?	去。 / 不去。 Qù./Bú qù. Yes./No.
他们会不会说法语? Tāmen huì buhuì shuō Fǎyǔ? Can they speak French?	会。 / 不会。 Huì./Bú huì. Yes./No.

- (2) Short answers to questions with question words:

谁请他们去饭馆吃饭? Shéi qǐng tāmen qù fànguǎn chīfàn? Who invited them to eat in a restaurant?	她。 Tā. She.
那本英文杂志是谁的? Nàběn Yīngwén zázhì shì shéide? Whose English magazine is that?	我们的。 Wǒmen de. Ours.
我看不清, 那张纸上写的是什么? Wǒ kàn buqīng, nàzhāng zhǐshàng xiě de shì shénme? I can't see clearly. What is written on that piece of paper?	人名字。 Rén míngzi. Someone's name.
你知不知道他们下星期去哪儿? Nǐ zhī buzhīdào tāmen xiàxīngqī qù nǎr? Do you know where they are going next week?	德国。 Déguo. Germany.
明天早上几点见面? Míngtiān zǎoshang jǐdiǎn jiànmiàn? When are we meeting tomorrow morning?	十点。 Shídiǎn. Ten o'clock.

你的朋友要在你家住多久?	五、六天。
Nǐde péngyou yào zài nǐjiā zhù duōjiǔ?	Wǔ、liù tiān.
How long are your friends going to stay in your house?	Five or six days.
他们今年几月毕业?	七月。
Tāmen jīnnián jǐyuè bìyè?	Qīyue.
When do they graduate this year?	July.

5.1.3 Mutual influence of monosyllabic and disyllabic words

Although each monosyllabic Chinese character is meaningful, there is a tendency in Modern Standard Chinese to use disyllabic words, which we may call “binomes.” For example, the English title of this book, *Using Chinese*, could be translated into Chinese as “用汉语 Yòng Hànyǔ,” but that would sound less natural than “使用汉语 Shǐyòng Hànyǔ,” which consists of two binomes. Similarly, we could translate “Chinese cuisine” directly into “中餐 Zhōngguocān,” but the preferred expression is “中餐 Zhōngcān.” A Chinese could say “扫街道 sǎo jiēdào, sweep the streets,” or “打扫街 dǎsǎo jiē, sweep the streets,” but surely would prefer “打扫街道 dǎsǎo jiēdào” as a balanced pair of binomes, or even the single binome “扫街 sǎo jiē, sweep the streets.” Chinese linguists refer to this phenomenon as 双音化 shuāngyīnhuà, binomization.

5.1.4 Differences between spoken and written forms

Written Chinese characters never have been primarily phonetic representations of the spoken word, so it should come as no surprise that some modes of expression in written Chinese will differ from modern spoken Chinese. One of the ways written Chinese differs from spoken forms is in its preference for brevity. For instance, in spoken Chinese the word most often used for “time” or “when” is “时候 shíhou.” In written Chinese it will often be abbreviated into the single character/syllable “时 shí.” The reason is very simple and practical: when listening, we cannot “see” which of the many “shí” the speaker has in mind, because there are more than twenty-five different characters pronounced “shí” in the second tone, at least four of which are very common: 时 shí, time; 十 shí, ten; 石 shí, stone; and 食 shí, food. The written form disambiguates the meaning for the reader, whereas the listener’s key for disambiguation is the second syllable of “shíhou,” which would be written “时候,” as opposed to “石头 shítou,” “食品 shípǐn,” etc., in speech.

As stated above, the rules of Chinese grammar are fewer and less complex than those of most Western European languages, and are far fewer and far less complex than English grammar. When Chinese

speakers utter a verb they need not worry, for instance, about distinguishing between past, present, and future forms of the verb:

(Yesterday) I went to his home (yesterday).
 (我) 昨天 (我) 去他家。
 (Wǒ) zuótiān (wǒ) qù tā jiā.
 (I) yesterday (I) go his home.

(Today) I am going to his home (today).
 (我) 今天 (我) 去他家。
 (Wǒ) jīntiān (wǒ) qù tā jiā.
 (I) today (I) go his home.

(Tomorrow) I shall go to his home (tomorrow).
 (我) 明天 (我) 去他家。
 (Wǒ) míngtiān (wǒ) qù tā jiā.
 (I) tomorrow (I) go his home.

(Every day) I go to his home (every day).
 (我) 天天 (我) 去他家。
 (Wǒ) tiāntiān (wǒ) qù tā jiā.
 (I) every day (I) go his home.

The reason there is no need to change the verb form is simple enough: if the time of an action or state of affairs (past, present, or future) is significant enough to be mentioned, then it must be placed before the verb, hence removing the need to imbed a tense marker in the verb. The placement variable in the four sentences above is the subject, the first person pronoun, which may either precede or follow the time expression. In English, we may place a time expression at the very end of a sentence, because the verb's tense marker will have made it clear whether the action has or has not yet taken place. The time expression then serves to locate the point more specifically, as “yesterday,” “last week,” “tomorrow,” “next year,” or “when I was young.” Nor is there any need to change verb forms when distinguishing between indicative and subjunctive moods:

If I were you...
 要是我是你, 。 。 。
 yàoshi wǒ shì nǐ (literally, “if I am you”)

Nor do we need to make any changes to nouns when we distinguish between singular and plural:

One mouse, two mice, many mice
 一只老鼠, 两只老鼠, 许多老鼠
 yìzhī lǎoshǔ, liǎngzhī lǎoshǔ, xǔduō lǎoshǔ
 (one mouse, two mouse, many mouse)

This is because having said “two” or “many,” we know beyond all doubt that we are referring to more than one mouse, so there simply

is no need to distinguish between singular and plural forms of a noun. Sometimes this may frustrate or surprise non-native speakers of Chinese, when they hear the announcement:

客人来了!
Kèren lái le!
guest arrive

and have no idea whether it means “the guest has arrived,” “a guest has arrived,” “the guests have arrived,” or “some guests have arrived.” To the Chinese speaker, the reasoning is very simple and obvious: if one person is expected to arrive, the utterance means: “The guest has arrived.” If more than one is expected, it means: “The guests have arrived.” If no one is expected to arrive, the proper utterance would be:

来客了!
Lái kè le!
come guest (s)

Non-agency and non-anticipation of “guest arrival” outweighs the need to distinguish between singular and plural. We see a similar inversion of normal word order in expressions like “下雨了! xià yǔ le!, It’s raining!” or “出太阳了 chū tài yáng le, The sun’s come out,” where something happens without agency and without volition on the part of the speaker.

5.2 Word order and syntax

Word order is paramount in Chinese speech. “Subject–Verb–Object” is the normal word order, with additional information, such as time of action, location of action, manner of action, extent of action, result of action, inserted into this core. As with English, the only difference between “Mom scolds the horse, 妈妈骂马 māmā mà mǎ” and “The horse scolds Mom, 马骂妈妈 mǎ mà māmā” is word order.

Time of action may be placed either immediately before the subject to focus attention on the time, or more often between the subject and the verb:

妈妈昨天骂马。
Māmā zuótiān mà mǎ.
Mom scolded the horse yesterday.

or

昨天妈妈骂马。
Zuótiān māmā mà mǎ.
Yesterday Mom scolded the horse.

The location of action is expressed after the subject and before the verb:

妈妈在院子里骂马。
Māma zai yuànzili mà mǎ.
Mom scolds the horse in the courtyard.

If the time and place are both stated in the same sentence, the time expression precedes the location:

妈妈昨天在院子里骂马。
Māma zuótian zai yuànzili mà mǎ.
Mom scolded the horse in the yard yesterday.

The manner of an action is expressed immediately before the verb:

妈妈昨天好好儿地骂马。
Māma zuótian hǎohāorde mà mǎ.
Mom gave the horse a good scolding yesterday.

The extent and/or result of an action, since they cannot be known until after the action has taken place, always follow the verb:

妈妈骂马骂得很利害。
Māma mà mǎ màde hěn lihài.
Mom scolded the horse severely.

If an action takes place without the volition or anticipation of the speaker (without “agency”), the noun and verb are expressed in reversed order, often, but not always, referring to the weather (the “le” particle indicates a change of status):

下雨了。
Xiàyǔ le.
It's raining.

出事了。
Chūshì le.
There's been an accident.

下课了。
Xiàkè le.
Class is dismissed.

吃饭了!
Chīfàn le!
Dinner is served!

收工了。
Shōugōng le.
It's time to quit work.

散会了。
Sànhuì le.
The meeting is adjourned.

5.3 Topic-comment sentences

Chinese has been called a “topic-prominent language,” meaning that the topic is what is being talked about, and the comment is what is said about the topic. On the surface, this may sound not too different from the basic division of an English sentence into a “subject–predicate” structure, but in fact it is not the same at all, as illustrated in the following typical sentence:

老张身体好。
Lǎo Zhāng shēntǐ hǎo.
Zhāng is in good health.

In this sentence, “Lǎo Zhāng” is the topic, “shēntǐ hǎo” is the comment. The comment itself consists of a subject, “shēntǐ” and a predicate “hǎo.” The first reaction of an English speaker might be to express this type of sentence using a “topic marker” before “Zhāng,” like “As for,” “Concerning” or “Speaking of” but the natural English stylistic equivalent is simply “Zhang is in good health.”

The topic may even be preceded by a contextualizing statement, such as:

去年老张身体好。
Qùnián Lǎo Zhāng shēntǐ hǎo.
Last year Zhang was in good health.

The time expression “qùnián, last year” could also be placed after the topic and before the subject:

老张去年身体好。
Lǎo Zhāng qùnián shēntǐ hǎo.
Zhang was in good health last year.

The “feeling” of the above sentence in English would be “As for Zhāng, last year he was in good health” but the most natural way of expressing it would be “Zhang was in good health last year.”

An illustrative list of sample topic – comment sentences follows:

她年纪小。
Tā niánji xiǎo.
She is young.

那个饭店房间干净吗？
Nàge fàndiàn fángjiān gānjìng ma?
Are the rooms in that hotel clean?

他们谁都不来参加座谈。
Tāmen shéi dōu bùlái cānjiā zuòtán.
None of them will come to participate in the discussion.

他朋友脾气很暴躁。
Tā péngyou píqi hěn bàozào.
His friend has a fiery temper.

那年夏天蒙特利尔天气非常不正常。

Nànián xiàtiān Měngtèlì'ěr tiānqì fēicháng búzhèngcháng.

The weather was very unusual in Montreal that summer.

房租纽约最贵。

Fángzū Niūyuē zuì guì.

Apartment rental is most expensive in New York.

这个汉字结构很简单。

Zhègè hànzì jiégòu hěn jiǎndān.

The structure of this Chinese character is quite simple.

他那个人笨手笨脚的。

Tā nàgè rén bènshǒubènjiǎo de.

He is a very clumsy person.

5.4 Pronouns

5.4.1 Personal pronouns

There is no difference in form between singular nouns and plural nouns in Chinese, with the occasional exception that some may put a “men, 们” after nouns which indicate people, for example: 老师们 *lǎoshīmen*, the teachers; 学生们 *xuéshēngmen*, the students. In pronouns, 代词 *dàicí*, however, there is a difference between singular and plural forms:

Number	Singular			Plural		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
Person	我 <i>wǒ</i>	你 <i>nǐ</i>	他, 她, 它	我们 <i>wǒmen</i>	你们 <i>nǐmen</i>	他们, 她 们, 它们
Possessive	我的 <i>wǒ de</i>	你的 <i>nǐ de</i>	他的, 她的, 它的 <i>tā de</i>	我们的 <i>wǒmen de</i>	你们的 <i>nǐmen de</i>	他们的, 她们的, 它们的 <i>tāmen de</i>
English pronoun	I, me	you, you	he, him; she, her; it, it	we, us	you, you	they, them
English possessive	my, mine	your, yours	his, her, its; his, hers, its	our, ours	your, yours	their, theirs

The word “您 *nín*” is a polite form for “你 *nǐ*” or “你们 *nǐmen*.” The plural form “您们 *nínmen*” is generally not used in the spoken form, but may appear in the written form.

The word “咱们 zánmen” also means “we, us” and is used more by northerners to include the listeners, so it is also known as “the inclusive ‘we’.”

The word “俩 liǎ” means “two of (persons)” and is always combined with two people’s names or the plural form of personal pronouns. For example:

张三和李四俩
Zhāng Sān hé Lǐ Sì liǎ
Zhang San and Li Si: the two of them.

我们俩
wǒmen liǎ
we two

她们俩
tāmen liǎ
they two

5.4.2 Demonstrative pronouns

这 zhè/zhèi	this
这些 zhèxiē/zhèixiē	these
那 nà/nèi	that
那些 nàxiē/nèixiē	those
这样 zhèyàng/zhèiyàng	like this, this way
那样 nàyàng/nèiyàng	like that, that way
这么 zhème	so, like this
这么些 zhème xiē	so much, so many
那么 nàme, like that	in that way
那么些 nàme xiē	so much, so many

5.4.3 Interrogative pronouns

谁 shéi/shuí	who, whom
谁的 shéide/shuíde	whose
哪儿 / 哪里 nǎr/nǎli	where
哪 nǎ/něi	which, what
哪些 nǎxiē/nèixiē	which ones
什么 shénme	what
什么时候 shénme shíhou	when
为什么 wèishenme	why
几 jǐ	how many (usually under ten)
多少 duōshao	how many, how much (usually over ten)
怎么 zěnmē	how, how come
怎么样 zěnmeyàng	how

5.5 Location

The following are used to indicate location, relative location and position:

上边 shāngbianr/上面 shàngmian/上头 shàngtou	above, up there, on top
下边 xiàbianr/下面 xiàmian/下头 xiàtou	under, below, down there
前边 qiánbianr/前面 qiánmian/前头 qiántou	front, in front
后边 hòubianr/后面 hòumian/后头 hòutou	behind, in the back
左边 zuǒbianr	to the left, on the left side
右边 yòubianr	to the right, on the right side
这边 zhèbianr/这边 zhèbianr/这儿 zhèr/这 里 zhèli/这里 zhèli	here, over here
那边 nàbianr/那边 nèibianr/那儿 nàr/那里 nàli/那里 nèili	there, over there
里边 lǐbianr/里面 lǐmian/里头 lǐtou	inside
外边 wàibianr/外面 wàimian/外头 wàitou	outside
旁边 pángbiānr	beside, by the side of, next to
中间 zhōngjiānr/中间 zhōngjiàn	in the middle, in the center, in between
对面 duìmiàn	opposite, facing, across
斜对面 xiéduìmiàn	diagonally opposite to, kitty-cornered from
底下 dǐxia	underneath, under
东边 dōngbianr/东面 dōngmian	east, to the east of
南边 nánbianr/南面 nánmian	south, to the south of
西边 xībianr/西面 xīmian	west, to the west of
北边 běibianr/北面 běimian	north, to the north of

For example:

这所房子的上边是卧室和卫生间，下边是客厅、饭厅和厨房。
Zhèisuǒ fángzide shàngbianr shì wòshì he wèishēngjiān, xiàbianr
shì kètīng, fàntīng he chúfáng.

The upstairs part of this house has bedrooms and bathrooms, and
the downstairs part has the living room, dining room, and the
kitchen.

他们家的前边有湖，后边有山。

Tāmen jiāde qiánbianr yǒu hú, hòubianr yǒu shān.

There is a lake in front of their house and there is a mountain behind it.

玛丽坐在汤姆和白恩的中间。

Mǎlǐ zuòzài Tāngmǔ hé Bái'ēn de zhōngjiān.

Mary sits in between Tom and Brian.

我就住在她家对面。

Wǒ jiù zhùzài tājiā duìmiàn.

I live right across from her house.

5.6 Measure words

Measure words, 量词 liàngcí, also known as classifiers, are mandatory when specifying or counting nouns. There are between 150 and 200 measure words in Chinese. Measure words also appear in English but there are very few of them. In “a bar of soap” or “two cups of coffee,” “bar” and “cups” are like measure words in Chinese. In addition to the words used for length, area, weight, volume, capacity, year, time, temperature, and currency, there are other specific measure words for specific nouns. The word “月 yuè, month” takes “个 gè” as its measure word. For example, “ten months” is “十个月 shíge yuè.”

A formula for the use of measure words is as follows:

这 zhè/zhèi, 那 nà/nèi, 几 jǐ, or 数字 shùzì, numeral + 量词 liàngcí, measure word + 名词 míngcí, noun

These are the most commonly used measure words:

把 bǎ	things with handles, a handful	两把椅子, 三把伞, 一把米
包 bāo	bundles, packets, bales	一包棉花, 一包糖
杯 bēi	cups, glasses	一杯茶, 四杯牛奶
本 běn	volumes, books, magazines	这本小说, 那本杂志
遍 biàn	once over, frequency	写两遍, 再看一遍
册 cè	volumes, books	第一册容易, 第二册难
场 chǎng	occurrences, happenings	下了一场大雨, 一场火
次 cì	number of times an action is taken	一次手术, 看了五次, 写十次
打 dǎ	dozen	一打鸡蛋
袋 dài	bags, sacks	一袋面粉, 一袋金子
滴 dī	drops	一滴眼泪, 一滴汗, 一滴血

点 diǎn	points, items	一点建议, 几点好处
顶 dǐng	hats, caps	八顶新帽子
栋 dòng	houses, buildings	一栋旧房子, 一栋大楼房
段 duàn	paragraphs, sections	一段文章, 一段时间, 一段距离
堆 duī	heaps, piles	一堆石头, 一大堆衣服
对 duì	pairs, couples	六对花瓶, 一对新婚夫妇
顿 dùn	regular meals, reprimands	每天吃三顿饭, 骂一顿, 打一顿
朵 duǒ	flowers, clouds	一朵茉莉花, 几朵白云
份 fèn	copies of newspaper, portions	九份中文报, 一份礼物, 两份快餐
封 fēng	letters	十几封信
幅 fú	paintings	一幅世界名画
个 gè	persons, most things	两个演员, 一个问题, 六个答案, 八个节目, 一个念头, 做了一个梦
根 gēn	long and slender things	几根火柴, 一根针, 一根棍子
盒 hé(r)	small boxes	一盒饼干, 一盒香, 一盒糖果
回 huí	times, cycles, frequency	怎么一回事, 每回都看见他, 去过一回
家 jiā	families, businesses	那家人很忙, 那家饭馆很干净
间 jiān	rooms	四间屋子, 一间病房
件 jiàn	articles, items of clothing	三件行李, 四件大衣
句 jù	sentences, utterances	两句话, 十句话
棵 kē	trees, cabbages	三棵树, 五棵大白菜
口 kǒu	persons, mouthfuls	他家有三口人, 喝了两口茶
块 kuài	lumps, pieces, dollars	一块肥皂, 一块砖, 一块布, 一块钱

粒 lì	grain, rice, sand	一粒种子, 一粒米, 一粒沙子
辆 liàng	vehicles	一辆自行车, 一辆新汽车, 一辆卡车
门 mén	relatives, courses, a discipline	好几门亲戚, 选三门课, 这是一门学问
面 miàn	things with flat surface	一面镜子, 一面鼓, 一面国旗
排 pái	rows of persons or things	一排学生, 两排果树, 三排楼房
盘 pán	coils, plates	一盘蚊香, 一盘围棋, 这盘菜很好吃
匹 pǐ	horses, camels, bolts of cloth	一匹白马, 一匹骆驼, 一匹红绸子
篇 piān	writings	一篇论文, 一篇稿子, 一篇日记
片 piàn	slices, pieces, vast expanse	一片面包, 一片安眠药, 一片空地
瓶 píng	bottles, jars	一瓶可乐, 一瓶咳嗽药, 一瓶酒
群 qún	crowd, flock	一群人, 一群鸭子, 一群牛
岁 suì	years (age)	八岁, 六十岁
扇 shàn	doors, windows	这扇门, 那扇窗户
首 shǒu	poems, songs	那首歌很好听, 这首诗太棒了
束 shù	flowers, bunches	一束鲜花
双 shuāng	pairs (two of same kind)	一双手, 一双黑皮鞋
所 suǒ	houses or other structures	一所房子, 一所所有名的大学
趟 tàng	scheduled transportation, actions such as “go,” “come” etc.	这是最后一趟车, 请你去一趟吧
套 tà	sets, suits	买一套百科全书, 一套家具, 借一套西装
条 tiáo	things narrow and long	一条裤子, 两条裙子, 十几条鱼
头 tóu	heads, animals	几十头奶牛, 一头羊

碗 wǎn	bowls	吃一碗饭，喝一碗汤
位 wèi	persons (polite)	一位教授，一位老师，两位老人
些 xiē	some	买一些东西，有一些问题，一些好处
样 yàng	kinds, sorts	几样菜，两样水果，三样点心
页 yè	pages	请看第六页，看了十页书
张 zhāng	sheets, things with flat surface	一张火车票，两张照片，十三张桌子
只 zhī	one of a pair, some animals	一只耳朵疼，两只青蛙跳下水，三只小鸟
枝 zhī	branches, rod-shaped things	几枝桃花，一枝毛笔，一枝蜡烛
种 zhǒng	kinds, species	一种动物，各种看法，那种颜色
桌 zhuō	tables of	一桌客人，一桌酒席
座 zuò	mountains, big buildings	那座山很高，邮局在这座大楼里

5.7 Ways of asking questions

There are seven sentence patterns that are used to ask questions. They are listed below:

- (1) Add 吗 ma, to the end of a statement:

妈妈骂马吗？
Māma mà mǎ ma?
Does Mom scold the horse?

妈妈没骂马吗？
Māma méi mà mǎ ma?
Didn't Mom scold the horse?

- (2) Use an interrogative pronoun:

该谁骂马呢？
Gāi shéi mà mǎ ne?
Whose turn is it to scold the horse?

你以为她是谁？
Nǐ yǐwéi tā shi shéi?
Who did you think she was?

你能吃多少饺子?

Nǐ néng chī duōshao jiǎozi?

How many dumplings can you eat?

- (3) Ask the listener to choose between affirmative and negative forms:

妈妈骂不骂马?

Māma màbumà mǎ?

Does/Will Mom scold the horse?

她想看这本小说?

Tā xiǎngbùxiǎng kàn zhèběn xiǎoshuō?

Would she like to read this novel?

李老师来了没有?

Lǐ lǎoshī láile méiyǒu?

Has Professor Li arrived yet?

他们有没有孩子?

Tāmen yǒuméiyǒu háiizi?

Do they have children?

- (4) Insert 是不是 shìbùshì, into a statement:

妈妈是不是骂马?

Māma shìbùshì mà mǎ?

Does Mom scold the horse or not?

他们两个是不是好起来了?

Tāmen liǎngge shìbùshì hǎoqilai le?

The two of them have made up, have they?

他们两个好起来了, 是不是?

Tāmen liǎngge hǎoqilai le, shìbùshì?

The two of them have made up, haven't they?

是不是他们两个好起来了?

Shìbùshì tāmen liǎngge hǎoqilai le?

Is it true that the two of them have made up?

- (5) Use 还是 háishi, to offer alternative choices:

妈妈骂马, 还是打马?

Māma mà mǎ, háishi dǎ mǎ?

Will Mom scold the horse or beat it?

你去还是我去?

Nǐ qù háishi wǒ qù?

Shall you go, or shall I?

你今天去还是明天去?

Nǐ jīntian qù háishi míngtian qù?

Will you go today or tomorrow?

你去纽约还是（去）旧金山？
Nǐ qù Niǔyǔē hái shì (qù) Jiùjīnshān?
Are you going to New York or to San Francisco?

你去滑冰还是（去）滑雪？
Nǐ qù huá bīng hái shì (qù) huá xuě?
Will you go ice skating or (will you go) skiing?

你去一个星期还是两个星期？
Nǐ qù yí ge xīng qī hái shì liǎng ge xīng qī?
Are you going for one week or for two weeks?

(6) Use 多 *duō*, to ask about degree or quantity:

妈妈骂的马有多大？
Māma mà de mǎ yǒu duō dà?
How big was the horse Mom scolded?

那一大包书有多重？
Nà yí dà bāo shū yǒu duō zhòng?
How heavy is that big package of books?

您多大年纪？
Nín duō dà nián jì?
How old are you?

她要去多久？
Tā yào qù duō jiǔ?
How long will she be away?

(7) Add 呢 *ne*, to a word or to a short phrase to ask where it is:

马呢？
Mǎ ne?
Where's the horse?

张老师呢？
Zhāng lǎo shī ne?
Where is Professor Zhang?

我的手套呢？
Wǒ de shǒu tào ne?
Where are my gloves?

“呢 *ne*” may also be added at the end of other interrogative sentences when the speaker wishes to reveal curiosity and/or doubt, or to soften the tone:

你以为她是谁呢？
Nǐ yǐ wéi tā shì shéi ne?
Who did you think she was?

你去还是我去呢？
Nǐ qù hái shì wǒ qù ne?
Shall **you** go, or shall **I**?

她要去多久呢?
Tā yào qù duō jiǔ ne?
How long will she be away?

5.8 Auxiliary verbs/optative verbs

Verbs that help other verbs to express necessity, possibility and willingness are called auxiliary verbs or optative verbs, 能愿动词 *néngyuàn dòngcí*. We are familiar with auxiliary verbs in English: the “can” in “I can do it”; the “able” in “I am able to go”; the “may” in “You may go”; the “should” in “I should go.” They appear in Chinese in the following forms:

5.8.1 Capability: 能 *néng*, 能够 *nénggòu*, 会 *huì*

“Néng, can” may indicate a general ability to do something, as in:

他明天不能跟我们去。
Tā míngtiān bùnéng gēn wǒmen qù.
He can't go with us tomorrow.

我能够请三个人跟我去。
Wǒ nénggòu qǐng sāngè rén gēn wǒ qù.
I can invite three people to go with me.

“Huì” may mean “can” in the sense of “mastered the skill of,” as in:

我不会游泳。
Wǒ búhuì yóuyǒng.
I can't swim (I don't know how to swim).

我不会抽烟。
Wǒ búhuì chōuyān.
I don't know how to smoke. (a polite way of saying “I don't smoke” without making the other person feel guilty for offering you a cigarette)

5.8.2 Possibility: 能 *néng*, 可能 *kěnéng*, 能够 *nénggòu*, 会 *huì*

“Néng, can, may” may also indicate possibility under certain conditions, as in:

他的车能坐五个人。
Tāde chē néng zuò wǔgè rén.
His car can seat five people.

我们可能迟到。
Wǒmen kěnéng chídào.
We may possibly arrive late.

“Huì, may, might” may also indicate likelihood of someone doing something, as in:

这么晚，她不会来。

Zhème wǎn, tā búhuì lái.

It's so late. She won't come.

门票那么贵，他不会买。

Ménpiào nàme guì, tā búhuì mǎi.

The admission tickets are so expensive, he wouldn't buy them.

5.8.3 Permission: 可以 kěyǐ, 能 néng, 许 xǔ

“Néng” may also mean “can” in the sense of “be permitted to,” as in:

教室里能抽烟吗？

Jiàoshìlǐ néng chōuyān ma?

Can one smoke in the classroom?

教室里可以抽烟吗？

Jiàoshìlǐ kěyǐ chōuyān ma?

May one smoke in the classroom?

教室里许抽烟吗？

Jiàoshìlǐ xǔ chōuyān ma?

Is smoking allowed in the classroom?

5.8.4 Perceived obligation or likelihood: 应该 yīnggāi, 应当 yīngdāng, 该 gāi, 要 yào:

The feeling that something ought to be done, or that something is likely to happen, is usually expressed by the auxiliary verbs yīnggāi, yīngdāng, or the abbreviated form “gāi.” For example:

十点了，我应该回家了。

Shí diǎn le, wǒ yīnggāi huíjiā le.

It's ten o'clock. I should go home now.

你不应当得罪她。

Nǐ bùyīngdāng dézuì tā.

You shouldn't offend her.

已经不早了，我该走了。

Yǐjīng bùzǎo le, wǒ gāi zǒu le.

It's getting late. I should be leaving now.

下雪了，你开车要小心点儿。

Xià xuě le, nǐ kāichē yào xiǎoxīndiǎnr.

It's snowing. You should drive carefully.

5.8.5 Imperative obligation: 必须 *bìxū*, 非得 *bìděi*, 得 *děi*:

The requirement (as opposed to the feeling) that something must (as opposed to “ought to”) be done is expressed using the auxiliary verb “*bìxū*, *bìděi*,” or commonly “*děi*” before the verb, as in the following examples:

你后天必须出席开会。

Nǐ hòutiān bìxū chūxí kāihuì.

You really must attend the meeting the day after tomorrow.

我们非得参加毕业典礼。

Wǒmen bìděi cānjiā bìyèdiǎnlǐ.

We have to attend the graduation ceremony.

我有重要的约会，所以得早点儿下课。

Wǒ yǒu zhòngyào de yuēhuì, suǒyǐ děi zǎodiǎnr xiàkè.

I have an important appointment, so I have to leave class a bit early.

5.9 Negation

Negation in Chinese may be as simple and direct, or as roundabout and subtle, as the occasion requires. The simplest, most straightforward way to negate a verb is to attach the prefix “不 *bù*” to it.

你去吗?

Nǐ qù ma?

Are you going?

我不去。

Wǒ bú qù.

No, I'm not going.

If a sentence contains a string of verbs, or a principle verb preceded by a string of modifiers, then the “*bù*” is usually placed at the beginning of the string:

她不喝酒。

Tā bù hējiǔ.

She doesn't drink wine.

她不喜欢喝酒。

Tā bù xǐhuān hējiǔ.

She doesn't like to drink wine.

她不喜欢一个人在家里喝酒。

Tā bù xǐhuān yígeren zai jiālǐ hējiǔ.

She doesn't like to drink wine by herself at home.

“不 *bù*” can be used to negate any and all verbs except “有 *yǒu*, to have,” which must be negated by “没 *méi*”:

你有电脑吗？
Nǐ yǒu diànnǎo ma?
Do you have a computer?

我没有电脑。
Wǒ méiyǒu diànnǎo.
No, I don't have a computer.

The negative adverb “不 bù” is used to negate actions and intentions to act in the present and in the future, but for completed actions it is only used to negate the intention to act, not the action itself:

我今天不去。
Wǒ jīntiān bú qù.
I'm not going today.

我明天不去。
Wǒ míngtiān bú qù.
I'm not going tomorrow.

昨天我决定不去。
Zuótiān wǒ juéding bú qù.
Yesterday I decided I wouldn't go.

To negate a completed action, we place “没 méi” before the verb:

我昨天没去。
Wǒ zuótiān méi qù.
I didn't go yesterday.

To negate sentences with auxiliary verbs, place “不 bù” before the auxiliary verbs.

5.10 Particles

Just as Chinese nouns and pronouns have no declension, so the verbs have no inflexion. Since Chinese verbs have no inflexion, the role of placing an action in the past, present, or future is performed by stating a time-when expression before the verb:

昨天我进城。
Zuótiān wǒ jìnchéng.
I went downtown yesterday.

今天我进城。
Jīntiān wǒ jìnchéng.
I'm going downtown today.

明天我进城。
Míngtiān wǒ jìnchéng.
I will go downtown tomorrow.

It can also be achieved by adding a “perfective aspect” particle like “le” or “guò” to indicate that a specific action was or has been completed, or that something has been done before.

我进城了。
Wǒ jìnchéng le.
I went downtown.

我进过城。
Wǒ jìnguò chéng.
I’ve gone downtown before.

Mastery of particles, 助词 zhùcí, such as these is an extremely important part of using Chinese properly and effectively. Particles are added to a word, a phrase, or a sentence to indicate various supplementary meanings, grammatical relations, or mood. In this section we will examine the use and function of three different kinds of particles in Mandarin: structural particles, aspectual particles, and modal particles.

5.10.1 Structural particles: the three de

Structural particles are added to words or phrases to indicate grammatical relations. There are only three of them, and they are all pronounced “de” (neutral tone): 的, 地, and 得.

The particle “的”:

The particle “的” is used most commonly as a “possessive marker,” as in the following sample sentences:

那是妈妈的马。
Nà shì māmāde mǎ.
That’s Mom’s horse.

你的汉语真棒！
Nǐde Hànyǔ zhēn bàng!
Your Chinese is terrific!

It is also used at the end of an adjectival phrase, indicating that what precedes is a modifier, and what follows is being modified, as in:

蓝颜色的夹克
lán yánsède jiákè
a blue-colored jacket

相当便宜的汉堡包
xiāngdāng piányide hànǎobāo
rather cheap hamburger

Note that a single-syllable adjective with no adverbial modifier such as 很 hěn or 真 zhēn or 非常 fēicháng preceding it, as in “好孩

子 hǎo háizi, good child,” “红车 hóng chē, red car,” or “小杯子 xiǎo bēizi, small cup” does not take a “的 de.”

“的 de” is also used as a “subordinate clause marker,” indicating that the preceding clause modifies what follows, often using the pattern “Subject + verb de + noun,” the noun which/that the subject verbs, as in the following samples:

我看的杂志很有意思。

Wǒ kànde zázhi hěn yǒuyìsi.

The magazine which/that I am reading is very interesting.

这是妈妈昨天买的马。

Zhè shi māma zuótiān mǎide mǎ.

This is the horse which/that Mom bought yesterday.

The particle “的” is also frequently used in elliptical sentences in which the modified word is omitted because it is clearly understood by speaker and listener, as in the following examples:

红颜色的毛衣是你的，蓝的是我的。

Hóng yánsède máoyī shi nǐde, lánde shi wǒde.

The red sweater is yours, and the blue one is mine.

大的是你的，小的是我的。

Dàde shi nǐde, xiǎode shi wǒde.

The big one is yours, and the small one is mine.

The particle “地 de”:

The second “地 de” (also pronounced “dì” when used as a noun meaning “place” or “land”) is an adverbial modifier particle that always precedes the verb it modifies, as in the following examples:

他们高高兴兴地工作。

Tāmen gāogāoxìngxìngde gōngzuò.

They are happily going about their work.

她们很快地写完了第二本小说。

Tāmen hěn kuàide xiěwánle dì'èrběn xiǎoshuō.

They quickly finished writing their second novel.

Note: “地 de” is often not used following disyllabic adverbs such as “一起 yìqǐ,” “一齐 yìqí,” “一共 yìgòng,” “相当 xiāngdāng” and “非常 fēicháng,” unless used for emphasis.

The particle “得 de”:

The third “得 de” (also pronounced “dé” meaning “to get” or “to achieve,” and “děi” meaning “must” or “have to” as a verb) is a verb complement particle. It always follows the verb and precedes complementary information which comments on the manner, extent, degree, or quality of the action.

To illustrate:

他说得太快，我听不懂。

Tā shuōde tài kuài, wǒ tīngbudǒng.

He talks too fast. I can't understand him.

她唱得非常好听。

Tā chàngde fēicháng hǎotīng.

She sings extremely well.

To negate the above two examples, we insert “不” after the “得,” and not before the verb:

他说得不快，我听得懂。

Tā shuōde búkuài, wǒ tīngdedǒng.

He doesn't talk fast. I can understand him.

她唱得不好听。

Tā chàngde bùhǎotīng.

She doesn't sing well.

If the verb complement “得 de” particle is used with a “verb + object” structure, such as “说汉语 shuō Hànyǔ, speak Chinese,” “写字 xiězì, write,” “走路 zǒulù, walk,” or “用筷子 yòng kuàizi, use chopsticks,” the verb is usually repeated after stating the object, to form the pattern “Subject + verb + object + verb de + adjective,” as in the following sample sentences:

他看书看得太多。

Tā kànshū kànde tài duō.

He reads too much.

妈妈骂马骂得很利害。

Māma mà mǎ màde hěn lìhai.

Mom scolded the horse severely.

老太太走路走得真慢。

Lǎotàitai zǒulù zǒude zhēn màn.

The old lady walks very slowly.

To negate the three sentences above, we simply replace “太 tài,” “很 hěn,” and “真 zhēn” with “不 bù” or “没那么 méi nàme Adjective, not that Adjective,” or add “不 bù” before “太 tài” or “很 hěn.” If the verb's complement is a clause rather than a simple adjective, the meaning becomes “to verb so...that...” as in these samples:

我累得都站不起来了。

Wǒ lèide dōu zhànbuqǐlai le.

I'm so tired that I can't stand up.

她笑得嘴都合不拢了。

Tā xiàode zuǐ dōu hébulǒng le.

She laughed so hard she couldn't close her mouth.

The “得 de” particle is also used as a “potential complement” (来得了 lái deliǎo, be able to come; 吃得了 chī deliǎo, be able to eat up; 来不了 lái bu liǎo, unable to come; 吃不了 chī bu liǎo, unable to eat up, etc.), as introduced in the “Complements” section above.

5.10.2 Aspect particles: le, ne, zhe, guo

When we speak of the “aspects” of an action, we are referring to five different stages, namely: “about to happen,” “in progress,” “in a continuing state,” “in a completed state” and “a state of having been done before.” They are used for actions that take place in past, present, or future.

About to happen “了 le”:

The typical “about to happen” sentence structure is “Subject + 要 yào + verb + 了 le, The subject is about to verb,” as in the following illustrative examples:

飞机要起飞了。

Fēijī yào qǐfēi le.

The airplane is about to take off.

秋天要来了。

Qiūtiān yào lái le.

Autumn is about to arrive.

妈妈又要骂马了。

Māmā yòu yào mà mǎ le.

Mom is about to scold the horse again.

To emphasize that the action will take place very soon, we may add an adverbial intensifier before the “要 yào,” as follows:

客人就要来了。

Kèren jiù yào lái le.

The guests will be arriving very soon.

我快要饿死了。

Wǒ kuài yào èsǐ le.

I’m just about to die of starvation.

Note the similarity between the “about to happen 了 le” above, and the “change of status 了 le” below:

外边下雨了。

Wàibiān xià yǔ le.

It’s raining outside (it wasn’t before).

天亮了。

Tiān liàng le.

It’s getting bright outside (it was dark before).

Completed state “了 le”:

The aspect particle “了 le” is used immediately after the verb in a simple “Subject + Verb” sentence to indicate that the action is, was, has been, or will have been completed:

他走了。
Tā zǒu le.
He left./He has left.

While it may refer to an action that has already taken place, it must not be seen as a “past tense marker,” because it may just as well refer to present perfect or future perfect events. When a single syllable verb takes a single syllable object, the “le” follows the object at the end of the sentence:

他们吃饭了。
Tāmen chīfàn le.
They ate./They have eaten.

他打我了！
Tā dǎ wǒ le!
He hit me!/He has hit me!

Note that the verbal aspect particle “le” indicating completion and the sentence modal particle “le” indicating that a new situation has come about, may be used in the same sentence:

他们吃了饭了。
Tāmen chīle fàn le.
They have eaten.

他打了我了！
Tā dǎle wǒ le!
He hit me!

When the verb takes an object that is quantified, “le” follows the verb and precedes the object:

她喝了三杯水。
Tā hēle sānbēi shuǐ.
She drank/has drunk three glasses of water.

张教授写了两本书。
Zhāng jiàoshòu xiěle liǎngběn shū.
Professor Zhang wrote/has written two books.

When the verb takes a complement, “le” usually follows the complement:

张老师走进来了。
Zhāng lǎoshī zǒujīnlái le.
Teacher Zhang walked in.

他们最近搬走了。
Tāmen zuìjìn bānzǒu le.
They moved away recently.

Following are more sample sentences:

谁来了?
Shéi lái le?
Who came?/Who has arrived?

她买书了。
Tā mǎi shū le.
She bought (the) book(s).

她买了书了。
Tā mǎile shū le.
She has bought (the) book(s).

她买了三本书。
Tā mǎile sānběn shū.
She bought/has bought three books.

她买到了那三本书。
Tā mǎidàole nà sānběn shū.
She was/has been able to buy those three books.

她买了书才去吃午饭。
Tā mǎile shū cái qù chī wǔfàn.
She went/will go to have lunch only after she had/has bought the book(s).

咱们等她来了再说吧。
Zánmen děng tā lái le zài shuō ba.
Let's discuss it after she gets here.

我吃了十个饺子。
Wǒ chīle shíge jiǎozi.
I ate/have eaten ten dumplings.

我学了三年汉语。
Wǒ xuéle sānnián Hànyǔ.
I studied/have studied Chinese for three years.

我学汉语学了三年。
Wǒ xué Hànyǔ xuéle sānnián.
I studied/have studied Chinese for three years.

The “double le,” Subject + verb 了 + quantified object + 了, indicates “done so far, but not yet finished”:

我已经吃了十个饺子了。
Wǒ yǐjīng chīle shíge jiǎozi le.
I've already eaten ten dumplings (so far, and not yet finished eating them).

我学了三年汉语了。

Wǒ xuéle sānnián Hànyǔ le.

I've been studying Chinese for three years now (not finished yet).

我学汉语学了三年了。

Wǒ xué Hànyǔ xuéle sānnián le.

I've been studying Chinese for three years now (not finished yet).

***In progress* “呢 ne”:**

The typical “in progress” sentence structure is “Subject + 正在 zhèngzai/正 zhèng/在 zài + verb (+ 呢 ne),” as in the following examples:

她正在吃饭呢。

Tā zhèngzai chīfàn ne.

She was/is/will be eating.

她正在吃饭。

Tā zhèngzai chīfàn.

She was/is/will be eating.

她正吃饭（呢）。

Tā zhèng chīfàn (ne).

She was/is/will be eating.

她在吃饭（呢）。

Tā zai chīfàn (ne).

She was/is/will be eating.

她吃饭呢。

Tā chīfàn ne.

She was/is/will be eating.

The “in progress” aspect is negated by using “没 méi” instead of, or in front of “正在 zhèngzai,” “正 zhèng,” or “在 zài,” and without “呢 ne,” as in:

她在吃饭吗？

Tā zai chīfàn ma?

Was/Is/ she eating?

- (1) 她没吃饭，她在打电话呢。

Tā méi chīfàn, tā zai dǎ diànhuà ne.

She was/is not eating. She was/is making a telephone call.

- (2) 她没在吃饭，她在打电话呢。

Tā méi zai chīfàn, tā zai dǎ diànhuà ne.

She was/is not eating. She was/is making a telephone call.

Continuous or on-going state “着 zhe”:

When we want to indicate the continuation of an action, or the on-going result of a completed action, we use the particle “着 zhe” immediately following the verb. Typical examples would be:

他高高兴兴地走着。

Tā gāogāoxìngxìngde zǒuzhe.

He was/is walking happily.

她忙着给丈夫打电话。

Tā mángzhe gěi zhàngfu dǎ diànhuà.

She was/is busy phoning her husband.

他现在还活着吗？

Tā xiànzài hái huózhe ma?

Is he still alive?

墙上挂着一张画儿。

Qiángshang guàzhe yìzhāng huà.

A picture was/is hanging on the wall.

他的嘴可不会闲着。

Tāde zuǐ kě búhuì xiánzhe.

He cannot stop talking.

他们两个人说着说着吵起来了。

Tāmen liǎngge rén shuōzhe shuōzhe chǎoqilai le.

As those two were talking, they started to argue.

我不喜欢站着吃饭。

Wó bù xǐhuan zhànzhe chīfàn.

I don't like to eat standing up.

弟弟拍着巴掌笑。

Dìdì pāizhe bāzhang xiào.

Little brother laughed/laughs, clapping his hands.

The progressive and continuous aspects are often used together in the same sentence:

她正在图书馆看着报呢。

Tā zhèngzai túshūguǎn kànzhe bào ne.

She was/is reading a newspaper in the library.

他吃着饭看电视呢。

Tā chīzhe fàn kàn diànshì ne.

He was/is watching television while eating.

着 and 呢 are often used together as an adjectival suffix meaning “extremely adjective,” as in:

大街上热闹着呢。

Dàjiēshang rènaozhe ne.

It's really bustling out on the street.

小王那个家伙厉害着呢。
 Xiǎo Wáng nàge jiāhuo lihaizhe ne.
 That fellow Wang is really formidable.

Having been done before “过 guò”:

The “experiential aspect” of an action or event, meaning “to have had the experience of verbing before” is expressed by adding “过 guò” immediately after the verb. Note that there are two different kinds of “experience”: (1) to have done something ever before in one’s life; and (2) to have done something which one does regularly (i.e., this year, this month, this week, today, etc.).

The following sentences illustrate both usages:

- (1) 你坐过飞机吗?
 Nǐ zuòguo fēijī ma?
 Have you ever flown in an airplane?
- 你去过桂林没有?
 Nǐ qùguo Guílín méiyǒu?
 Have you ever been to Guilin?
- 我没买过新车。
 Wǒ méimǎiguò xīn chē.
 I’ve never bought a new car before.
- 你吃过四川菜没有?
 Nǐ chīguo Sìchuān cài méiyǒu?
 Have you ever eaten Sichuanese cuisine?
- (2) 吃饭了吗? 吃过了, 谢谢。
 Chīfàn le ma? ... Chīguo le, xièxie.
 Have you eaten yet? ... Yes I have, thanks.
- 你今年放过几天假?
 Nǐ jīnnián fànguò jǐtiān jià?
 How many days of vacation have you taken this year?
- 邮递员今天已经来过了。
 Yóudìyuán jīntiān yǐjīng lái guò le.
 The letter carrier has already come today.

5.10.3 Modal particles: a, ba, de, le, ma, ne

Modal particles are used at the end of sentences to verbalize emotions and moods that accompany an utterance. A few of the most commonly used are introduced below:

啊 a:

The modal particle “啊 a” is used to soften the tone of a sentence, leaving the meaning of the sentence unchanged. It may be used at the end of an interjection to express feelings of admiration, regret, contempt or worry, as in the following examples:

钱都用光了，怎么办啊！

Qián dōu yòngguāng le, zěnmébàn a!

The money's all spent. What'll we do now!

那个小孩子真聪明啊。

Nàge xiǎoháizi zhēn cōngmíng a.

That kid is really smart.

可惜啊！她来了那么一小会儿就走了。

Kěxī a! Tā lái le nàme yìxiǎohuǐr jiù zǒu le.

Such a pity! She left after staying for such a short while.

他真是令人讨厌啊！

Tā zhēnshi lìngréntǎoyàn a!

He's truly disgusting!

It is also used to show agreement, affirmation, warning, or exhortation, as in the following:

是啊！我完全同意你的看法。

Shì a! Wǒ wánquán tóngyì nǐde kànfa.

Yes! I totally agree with your viewpoint.

你一定要来啊！

Nǐ yídìng yào lái a!

You really must come, you know!

行啊！我们按着你的想法做。

Xíng a! Wǒmen ànzhe nǐde xiǎngfǎ zuò.

Okay! We'll do it according to your idea.

It is often used at the end of interrogative sentences that use question words:

你到哪儿去啊？

Nǐ dào nǎr qù a?

Where are you going?

王经理最近怎么样啊？

Wáng jīnglǐ zuìjìn zěnmeyàng a?

How is Manager Wang doing these days?

And it is often used between items in a series, when pausing to think, rather like “uh...” in English, and often following a greeting:

狗啊，猫啊，都是宠物。

Gǒu a, māo a, dōu shì chǒngwù.

Dogs, cats, they're all pets.

老张啊，那个人很复杂。

Lǎo Zhāng a, nàge rén hěn fùzá.

Zhang, uh... is a very complex person.

再见啊，小黄！
Zàijiàn a, Xiǎo Huáng!
Goodbye, Huang!

吧 *ba*:

The modal particle “吧 *ba*” is used at the end of a statement to give the feeling of a suggestion or a request, to show expectation of agreement, or to indicate that the speaker thinks this might be the case, but is not certain:

我们不如一起去吧！
Wǒmen bùrú yìqǐ qù ba!
We might as well go together!

你帮我一个忙吧。
Nǐ bāng wǒ yige máng ba.
How about giving me a hand?

那你的看法跟我的一样吧？
Nà nǐde kànfa gēn wǒde yíyàng ba?
Well then, you and I share the same view, don't we?

他们大概不会想吃凤爪吧？
Tāmen dàgài búhuì xiǎngchī fēngzhǎo ba?
They probably wouldn't want to eat phoenix claws (chicken feet), would they?

的 *de*:

As a modal particle at the end of a sentence, “的 *de*” conveys a sense of affirmation and certainty:

哪儿有这种道理的！
Nǎr yǒu zhèzhǒng dàolǐ de!
How unreasonable!

Used in the “是 *shì*...的 *de*” pattern, “*de*” conveys emphasis on the time, place, cause, manner, purpose, or agent of an action, most often a completed action. In a positive statement, the “*shì*” of the “*shì*...*de*” pattern may be omitted, but in the negative form “*búshì*,” “*shì*” may not be omitted:

爷爷是哪年生的？
Yéye shì nǎnián shēng de?
What year was Grandpa born?

我（是）在多伦多大学学的汉语。
Wǒ (shì) zài Duōlúnduō Dàxué xuéde Hànyǔ.
I studied Chinese at the University of Toronto.

胖子不是一口吃的。
Pàngzi búshi yikǒu chī de.
Fat people don't get that way from a single bite.

了 *le*:

The modal particle “了 *le*” at the end of a sentence often shows the emergence of a new situation, a change in understanding, opinion, ideas, etc.

For example:

天黑了。
Tiān hēi le.
It's become dark outside.

他们现在是博士了。
Tāmen xiànzài shì bóshì le.
They have now become Ph.D.s.

啊，我明白了，他不是你的舅舅。
À, wǒ míngbai le, tā búshi nǐde jiùjiu.
Oh, now I understand – he's not your uncle.

我有事，不能跟你去了。
Wǒ yǒu shì, bùnéng gēn nǐ qù le.
Something's come up, so now I can't go with you.

走了，走了，不能再等了。
Zǒu le, zǒu le, bù néng zài děng le.
Let's go! Let's go! We can't wait any longer.

吗 *ma*:

The interrogative modal particle “吗 *ma*” is added at the end of any declarative sentence to turn the sentence into a question. Note that “吗 *ma*” can never be added to a sentence that has already been made into a question using “question words,” like “谁 *shéi*?” “什么 *shénme*?” “几 *jǐ*?” “多少 *duōshǎo*?” or after using the “Verb-bù-Verb” question form. We may say:

这是你的书吗?
Zhè shì nǐde shū ma?
Is this your book?

明天是星期三吗?
Míngtiān shì xīngqī sān ma?
Is tomorrow Wednesday?

呢 *ne*:

The modal particle “呢 *ne*” is used at the end of a sentence to show “shades of feeling,” such as softening the tone of an interrogative sentence (except interrogative sentences ending in “吗 *ma*”), toning

down a rhetorical question, or softening an exclamation. Following the utterance of a simple noun phrase or a pronoun, it means “what about...?” or “where is...?” For example:

你怎么没有去呢?

Nǐ zěnmē méiyóu qù ne?

How come you didn't go?

她是谁呢?

Tā shì shéi ne?

Who might she have been/be?

我怎么会不知道呢?

Wǒ zěnmē huì bùzhīdào ne?

How could I not have known/not know that?

诶? 你太太呢?

Éi? Nǐ tàitai ne?

Oh! Where is your wife?

我想吃口东西, 你呢?

Wǒ xiǎng chī kǒu dōngxi, nǐ ne?

I'd like to get a bite to eat, how about you?

你看, 她的脸红着呢!

Nǐ kàn, tāde liǎn hóngzhe ne!

Look at her: her face is red!

怎么办呢?

Zěnmē bàn ne?

What's to be done?

5.10.4 Other frequently used modal particles

呗 “bei”	to add the feeling that something is very obvious or easy to resolve.
嘛 “ma”	to add the feeling of obviousness or the tone of impatience.
啦 “la”	a fusion of the “change of status” 了 le + 啊 a.
嘞 “lei”	like 啦 la, but more informal, colloquial, or light-hearted.
咯 “lo”	a fusion of 了 le + 噢 o, like the change of status “了 le,” but more emphatic.
喽 “lou”	a fusion of 了 le and 呕 ou, colloquially intensifying the “了 le.”
哪 “na”	same as 啊 a, but used following syllables ending with “-n” or “-ng.”
哇 “wa”	same as 啊 a, but used following syllables ending with “-u,” “-ao,” or “-ou.”
呀 “ya”	same as 啊 a, but used following syllables ending with “-a,” “-e,” “-i,” “o,” or “ü.”
哟 “yo”	expresses an exclamatory or imperative sense.

5.11 Object inversion: “把 bǎ” sentences

The “把 bǎ” sentence is one of the most useful and characteristic structures in the Chinese language, because it “disposes” of specific things, or “settles” specific matters, giving the topic and the speaker a sense of completion and closure. An English language near-equivalent grammatical pattern might be: “The Subject takes the object and verbs it.” Another way of explaining the use of the “bǎ” construction in structural terms is to say that it brings the object in front of an inseparable verb compound, such as “Verb + 过来 guòlai” or “Verb + 上去 shàngqu.” The basic grammatical pattern is “Subject + bǎ + object + verb + complement.” It is most important to remember that the “bǎ-inverted” object cannot be acted on by a single-syllable verb alone, but requires more syllables. The options are: reduplicate the single-syllable verb; add a complementary particle or phrase after the verb; or add the perfective aspect particle “了 le.”

Specific circumstances wherein the “把 bǎ” construction is preferred include:

1. Giving a brief command:

把它吃掉!
Bǎ tā chīdiao!
Eat it all up!
2. When the verb takes on a directional complement, “把 bǎ” is used to bring the object before the verb:

请你把书拿过来。
Qǐng nǐ bǎ shū náguolai.
Please bring the book over here.
3. When we want to emphasize or exaggerate the way a person feels, or the way a person reacts to something, we may use “把 bǎ” with an adjective followed by a resultative complement:

把她乐死了!
Bǎ tā lèsi!e!
She was thrilled to death!

We may take the normal “S-V-O” sentence “妈妈骂马 māma mà mǎ, Mom scolds the horse” and turn it into a “把 bǎ” sentence, but we may not say: “māma bǎ mǎ mà,” because “mà” alone does not imply disposition of a specific object.

We may, however, say:

妈妈把马骂了一顿。
Māma bǎ mǎ màle yídùn.
Mom gave the horse a good scolding.

妈妈把马骂得很利害。

Māma bǎ mǎ màde hěn lihài.

Mom gave the horse a severe scolding.

妈妈把马骂来骂去。

Māma bǎ mǎ màlái màqù.

Mom scolded that horse over and over.

他把钱都花光了。

Tā bǎ qián dōu huāguāng le.

He spent all the money.

把门关上!

Bǎ mén guānshàng!

Close the door!

差一点儿把她吓死了。

Chāyìdiǎnr bǎ tā xiàsǐ le.

It almost scared her to death.

5.12 Commands and suggestions

The simplest and most common way to make a command is to utter a verb with an abrupt tone of voice:

来!

Lái!

Come here!

去!

Qù!

Go!

吃!

Chī!

Eat!

Often the command may require the addition of a direct object, an indirect object, a resultative complement, or a directional complement, as in the following examples:

放手!

Fàng shǒu!

Let go!

给我!

Gěi wǒ!

Give it to me!

放开!

Fàngkāi!

Let go!

放下!
Fàngxia!
Put it down!

过来!
Guòlai!
Come over here!

出去!
Chūqu!
Get out!

A suggestion, as opposed to a direct command, can be made most simply by softening the tone of voice and adding a “吧 ba” at the end of the sentence:

来吧。
Lái ba.
Come.

去吧。
Qù ba.
Go.

吃吧。
Chī ba.
Go ahead and eat.

放手吧。
Fàng shǒu ba.
You can let go.

给我吧。
Gěi wǒ ba.
You can give it to me.

放开吧。
Fàngkāi ba.
You can let go.

放下吧。
Fàngxia ba.
You can put it down.

过来吧。
Guòlai ba.
Come on over.

出去吧。
Chūqu ba.
You can go out.

The sample phrases above may also be prefaced with a “请 qǐng, please” or with “应该 yīnggāi, should” or “不如 bùrú, might as well” to further soften the tone.

To give a negative command or suggestion, the normal and simplest way is to add a “别 bié, don't” before the command or suggestion:

别去!

Bié qù!

Don't go!

别站着吃饭。

Bié zhànzhe chīfàn.

Don't eat standing up.

别客气。

Bié kèqi.

You're welcome./You needn't be so polite.

别想跟他借钱。

Bié xiǎng gēn tā jièqián.

Don't even think about borrowing money from him.

别管她。

Bié guǎn tā.

Don't pay any attention to her.

5.13 Comparisons

5.13.1 Comparison of equality

The following two patterns are the basic ways of comparing similar things:

- (1) A 和/跟 hé/gēn B 一样 yíyàng Adjective, A is as Adjective as B.

妈妈和马一样高。

Māma hé mǎ yíyàng gāo.

Mom is as tall as the horse.

中文和英文一样容易说。

Zhōngwén hé Yīngwén yíyàng róngyì shuō.

Chinese is as easy to speak as English.

马跟妈妈一样高。

Mǎ gēn māma yíyàng gāo.

The horse is as tall as Mom.

化学跟物理一样难学。

Huàxué gēn wùlǐ yíyàng nánxué.

Chemistry is as hard to learn as physics.

- (2) A 有 yǒu B 那么 nàme adjective, A is just as adjective as B.

妈妈有马那么高。

Māma yǒu mǎ nàme gāo.

Mom is just as tall as the horse.

这家的衣服有那家的那么便宜。

Zhèjiāde yīfu yǒu nàjiāde nàme piányi.

Clothes in this store are just as inexpensive as the clothes in that store.

Note: We cannot say: 妈妈有马那么很高, Māma yǒu mǎ nàme hěn gāo. To convey both ideas, i.e., that Mom is very tall, and that she is as tall as the horse, we would have to say:

妈妈很高, 她有马那么高。

Māma hěn gāo, tā yǒu mǎ nàme gāo.

Mom is tall. She is as tall as the horse.

5.13.2 Negating comparison of equality

The two core patterns for negating comparisons of equality are:

“A and B are not equally adjective,” and “A is not so adjective as B.”

Variations are as follows:

- (1) A 和/跟 hé/gēn B 不一样 bù yí yàng adjective, A and B are not equally adjective.

小张和小赵不一样聪明。

Xiǎo Zhāng hé Xiǎo Zhào bù yí yàng cōngmíng.

Zhang and Zhao are not equally intelligent.

中国跟加拿大不一样大。

Zhōngguó gēn Jiānádà bù yí yàng dà.

China and Canada are not the same size.

- (2) A 没有 méi yǒu B 那么 nàme adjective, A is not so adjective as B.

中国的总面积没有加拿大的那么大。

Zhōngguóde zǒngmiànjī méi yǒu Jiānádàde nàme dà.

The total area of China is not so large as that of Canada.

5.13.3 Comparison of inequality

Comparison of inequality is not the same as negating comparison of equality. When we compare inequality, we state which of two subjects is more “adjective” than the other, as in the following patterns:

- (1) A 比 bǐ B adjective, A is more adjective than B.

小张比小赵聪明。

Xiǎo Zhāng bǐ Xiǎo Zhào cōngmíng.

Zhang is more intelligent than Zhao.

- (2) A 比 bǐ B 还 hái adjective, A is even more adjective than B.

加拿大的总面积比中国的还大。

Jiānádàde zǒngmiànjī bǐ Zhōngguóde hái dà.

The total area of Canada is even larger than that of China.

5.13.4 Negating comparison of inequality

To say that one of two subjects is not more “adjective” than the other, we use the following pattern:

A 不比 bùbǐ B adjective, A is not more adjective than B.

小张不比小赵聪明。

Xiǎo Zhāng bùbǐ Xiǎo Zhào cōngmíng.

Zhang is not more intelligent than Zhao.

加拿大的总面积不比俄国的大。

Jiānádàde zǒngmiànjī bùbǐ Éguóde dà.

The total area of Canada is not greater than that of Russia.

纽约的物价不比伦敦的贵。

Niǔyuēde wùjià bùbǐ Lúndūnde guì.

Prices in New York are not higher than those in London.

5.13.5 Degrees of inequality by comparison

When we want to say “A is more adjective than B” by a specified amount or degree, we may use one of the following sentence patterns:

- (1) A 比 bǐ B adjective + number + measure word, A is X-measure word more adjective than B.

马比妈妈高一英尺。

Mǎ bǐ māma gāo yìyīngchǐ.

The horse is one foot taller than Mom.

妈妈比马矮一英尺。

Māma bǐ mǎ ǎi yìyīngchǐ.

mom is one foot shorter than the horse.

- (2) A 比 bǐ B adjective 得多 deduō, A is much more adjective than B.

马比妈妈高得多。

Mǎ bǐ māma gāode duō.

The horse is a lot taller than Mom.

- (3) A 比 bǐ B adjective 多了 duō le, A is much more adjective than B.

马比妈妈高多了。

Mǎ bǐ māma gāo duō le.

The horse is much taller than Mom.

- (4) A Verb + object + verb 得 de 比 bǐ B adjective, A verb + object more adjective-ly than B.

妈妈骂马骂得比我多。

Māma mà mǎ màde bǐ wǒ duō.

Mom scolds the horse more often than I do.

他说汉语说得比我好。

Tā shuō Hànyǔ shuōde bǐ wǒ hǎo.

He speaks Chinese better than I do.

张三开车开得比李四快。

Zhāng Sān kāichē kāide bǐ Lǐ Sì kuài.

Zhang San drives faster than Li Si.

李四开车开得比张三慢。

Lǐ Sì kāichē kāide bǐ Zhāng Sān màn.

Li Si drives more slowly than Zhang San.

5.14 Complements

A complement, 补语 bǔyǔ, is a word or phrase that follows the main verb of a sentence in order to enhance its meaning.

The following are different kinds of complements.

5.14.1 Complement of degree

For an ordinary declarative statement that someone “verbs” well or poorly, quickly, slowly, sloppily, earnestly, etc., we use this simple pattern:

- (1) Subject + verb 得 de + adjective, The subject verbs adjective-ly. Used as a particle following a verb and preceding a resultative complement, a complement of degree, 程度补语 chéngdù bǔyǔ, “得 de” lets us know that what follows will tell us the extent or degree of the verbing, as in the following examples:

她跑得很快。

Tā pǎode hěn kuài.

She runs fast.

他走得很慢。

Tā zǒude hěn màn.

He walks slowly.

我写得不好。

Wǒ xiěde bùhǎo.

I write poorly.

她来得真早。

Tā láide zhēn zǎo.

She came really early.

你睡得很晚吗?
 Nǐ shuìde hěn wǎn ma?
 Do you go to bed very late?

他们玩儿得很高兴吧?
 Tāmen wánrde hěn gāoxìng ba?
 Did they *have a good time together?

*The verb “玩 wánr” presents an interesting challenge for translation. If the subject is a young child, it usually means “to play,” but for teenagers and adults it means “to spend a pleasant time together,” and comes close to the current expression “to hang out.”

- (2) Subject + verb + object + verb 得 de adjective, The subject verbs + object adjective-ly.

For “Verb + Object” phrases, and for compound verbs that behave grammatically like a “Verb + Object” phrase, we use the following pattern:

她跑步跑得很快。
 Tā pǎobù pǎode hěn kuài.
 She jogs fast.

他走路走得很慢。
 Tā zǒulù zǒude hěn màn.
 He walks slowly.

我写汉字写得不好。
 Wǒ xiě Hànzì xiěde bùhǎo.
 I write Chinese characters poorly.

她听音乐听得很认真。
 Tā tīng yīnyuè tīngde hěn rènzhēn.
 She listens to music very seriously.

你睡觉睡得够不够?
 Nǐ shuìjiào shuìde gòubugou?
 Do you get enough sleep?

他们打羽毛球打得很好玩儿吧?
 Tāmen dǎ yǔmáoqiú dǎde hěn hǎowánr ba?
 They had a very good time playing badminton, didn't they?

Asking a question using “complement of degree” pattern:

Subject + verb (or verb + object + verb) 得 怎么样 de zěnmeyàng?

As in the following example questions:

他跑得怎么样?
 Tā pǎode zěnmeyàng?
 How well does he run?

他跑步跑得怎么样?
Tā pǎobù pǎode zěnmeyàng?
How is he at jogging?

他跑步跑得多不多?
Tā pǎobù pǎode duōbuduo?
Does he jog a lot?

他跑步跑得快不快?
Tā pǎobù pǎode kuàibukuai?
Does he jog fast?

她唱得怎么样?
Tā chàngde zěnmeyàng?
How is she at singing?

她唱歌唱得怎么样?
Tā chànggē chàngde zěnmeyàng?
How is she at singing?

她唱歌唱得好不好听?
Tā chànggē chàngde hǎobuhaotīng?
Does she sing beautifully?

5.14.2 Directional complement

Simple Directional Complement:

The simple directional complement, 趋向补语 *qūxiàng bǔyǔ*, is added to a verb to indicate whether an action is moving towards the speaker or away from the speaker. For example, Verb + lai 来 = to verb in the direction of the speaker, as in the following examples:

拿来
nálai
bring (something) here (where the speaker is).

带来
dàilai
bring (something) along (to where the speaker is).

跑来
pǎolai
come running (in the direction of the speaker).

送来
sònglai
deliver (or send in the direction of the speaker).

飞来
fēilai
fly here (come flying in the direction of the speaker).

If we want to indicate that the action is moving away from the speaker, we use Verb + *qu* 去, as in the following examples:

拿去

náqu

take (something) over there (away from the speaker).

带去

dàiqu

take (something) along (away from the speaker).

跑去

pǎoqu

run (over there, away from the speaker).

送去

sòngqu

deliver (or send, away from the speaker).

飞去

fēiqu

fly there (away from the speaker).

Compound Directional Complements:

The compound directional complement, when added to a verb, adds more precise information in addition to whether the action is happening in the direction of the speaker or away from the speaker. For example: in an upward or downward direction; an inside or outside direction; returning to a point of origination; or crossing over. Using the same verbs as we used for the simple directional complement, we may add the further refinements of compound directionality:

拿上来 / 去

náshànglai/qu

bring/take up here/there

拿下来 / 去

náxiàlai/qu

bring/take down here/there

拿回来 / 去

náhuilai/qu

bring/take back here/there

拿过来 / 去

náguolai/qu

bring/take over here/there

跑上来 / 去

pǎoshànglai/qu

run up here/there

跑下来 / 去
pǎoxialai/qu
run down here/there

跑回来 / 去
pǎohuilai/qu
run back here/there

跑过来 / 去
pǎoguolai/qu
run over here/there

扔上来 / 去
rēngshanglai/qu
toss up here/there

扔下来 / 去
rēngxialai/qu
toss down here/there

Sample sentences using directional complements:

前门没开，我们怎么进去呢？
Qiánmén méikāi, wǒmen zěnmē jìnqu ne?
The front door isn't open, so how are we to go in?

别忘了把我的书拿回来！
Bié wàngle bǎ wǒde shū náhuilai!
Don't forget to bring back my book!

他刚出去了，一会儿就回来，您请进来等他吧！
Tā gāng chūqule, yìhuǐr jiù huílai, nín qǐng jìnlai děng tā ba.
He has just stepped out, and will be back in a little while. Please
come in and wait for him.

妈妈一开门，小鸟就飞出去了。
Māma yì kāimén, xiǎoniǎo jiu fēichuqu le.
As soon as Mom opened the door, the little bird flew out.

外边正下雨，我不想出去了。
Wàibian zhèng xiàyǔ, wǒ bùxiǎng chūqu le.
It's raining outside. I don't want to go out now.

Verb + place + directional complement:

请你上楼来。
Qǐng nǐ shànglóulai.
Please come upstairs (towards the speaker).

她下山去了。
Tā xiàshānqu le.
She has gone down the mountain (away from the speaker).

他们为什么还没回宿舍去呢?
 Tāmen wèishénme hái méi huísùshèqu ne?
 Why haven't they gone back to the dormitory yet?
 听说你要到北京去。
 Tīngshuō nǐ yào dào Běijīng qu.
 I hear that you will go to Beijing.

5.14.3 Complement of time

Complement of time, 时间补语 *shíjiān bǔyǔ*, is an expression that tells about the duration of an action. The basic sentence pattern for such an expression is:

Subject + verb + duration. Some examples:

你每天晚上睡几个钟头?
 Nǐ měitiān wǎnshang shuì jǐge zhōngtóu?
 How many hours do you sleep every night?

你来了多久了?
 Nǐ lái le duōjiǔ le?
 How long have you been here?

我在加拿大十年了。
 Wǒ zài Jiānádà shínián le.
 I've been in Canada for ten years.

她在这儿工作了三年。
 Tā zài zhèr gōngzuò le sānnián.
 She worked here for three years.

她在这儿工作了三年了。
 Tā zài zhèr gōngzuò le sānnián le.
 She has been working here for three years now.

If the action is a Verb + Object compound, the duration is expressed in either of two ways:

- (1) Subject + verb + object + verb + duration:

你平常每天晚上睡觉睡几个钟头?
 Nǐ píngcháng měitiān wǎnshang shuìjiào shuì jǐge zhōngtóu?
 How many hours do you usually sleep every night?

我学汉语学了两年。
 Wǒ xué Hànyǔ xué le liǎngnián.
 I studied Chinese for two years. (I'm no longer studying)

我学汉语学了两年了。
 Wǒ xué Hànyǔ xué le liǎngnián le.
 I've been studying Chinese for two years now. (I'm still studying)

- (2) Subject + verb + duration + de + object:

我们学了两年汉语。

Wǒmen xuéle liǎngniǎnde Hànyǔ.

We studied Chinese for two years. (I'm no longer studying)

我们学了两年汉语了。

Wǒmen xuéle liǎngniǎnde Hànyǔ le.

We've been studying Chinese for two years now. (I'm still studying)

5.14.4 Complement of quantity

Complement of quantity, 数量补语 *shùliàng bǔyǔ*, may be expressed using the same pattern as we use for duration of an act, but quantifying the number of objects acted upon by the verb, or the number of times the act has been performed or repeated, as below:

我买了三双皮鞋。

Wǒ mǎile sānshuāng píxié.

I bought three pairs of shoes.

他每天喝一大瓶酒。

Tā měitiān hē yídàpíng jiǔ.

He drinks a whole bottle of wine every day.

你有几条牛仔裤?

Nǐ yǒu jǐtiáo niúzáikù?

How many pairs of jeans do you have?

我爬过二十次长城。

Wǒ páguo èrshí cì Chángchéng.

I've climbed the Great Wall twenty times.

我爬长城爬了二十次。

Wǒ pá Chángchéng pále èrshí cì.

I climbed the Great Wall twenty times.

你要等他请了三次才答应。

Nǐ yào děng tā qǐngle sāncì cái dāying.

You must wait until he has asked you three times before you agree.

5.14.5 Resultative complement

The resultative complement, 结果补语 *jiéguǒ bǔyǔ*, added to an action gives information about the resulting success of the action, clarity of the action, firmness of the action, etc. Examples are:

看 *kàn*, to look + 见 *jiàn*, to perceive = 看见 *kànjian*, to see

昨天我看见张老师了。

Zuótiān wǒ kànjian Zhāng Lǎoshī le.

I saw Professor Zhang yesterday.

听 *tīng*, to listen + 见 *jiàn*, to perceive = 听见 *tīngjiàn*, to hear

我听了半天，也没听见。

Wǒ tīngle bàntiān, yě méitīngjiàn.

I listened for a long time, but I didn't hear it.

听 *tīng*, to listen + 懂 *dǒng*, to understand = 听懂 *tīngdǒng*, to understand (what is/was heard).

他的口音很重，我没听懂多少。

Tāde kǒuyīn hěn zhòng, wǒ méitīngdǒng duōshǎo.

He has a thick accent; I didn't understand very much.

写 *xiě*, to write + 好 *hǎo*, well = 写好 *xiěhǎo*, to finish writing

她还没写好昨天的作业。

Tā hái méixiěhǎo zuótiānde zuòyè.

She still hasn't finished writing yesterday's homework.

学 *xué*, to study + 会 *huì*, to know how = 学会 *xuéhuì*, to master something

这个语法这么简单，你怎么还没学会呢？

Zhègè yǔfǎ zhème jiǎndān, nǐ zěnméi hái méixuéhuì ne?

This grammar is so simple. Why haven't you mastered it yet?

做 *zuò*, to do + 完 *wán*, to finish = 做完 *zuòwán*, to finish doing something

你做完了体操没有？

Nǐ zuòwánle tǐcāo méiyǒu?

Have you finished your calisthenics?

今天的体操已经做完了。

Jīntiānde tǐcāo yǐjīng zuòwán le.

I've already finished doing today's calisthenics.

5.14.6 Potential complement

The potential complement, 可能补语 *kěnéng bǔyǔ*, is added to an action to indicate the possibility or impossibility of achieving the desired result or successfully completing the act. It is expressed by inserting the particle “得 *de*” or “不 *bù*” between the verb and its resultative or directional complement, as in Verb + *de/bu* + complement. Verb + *de* + complement = can succeed in the complementing, and Verb + *bu* + complement = cannot succeed in the complementing.

Examples are:

那本书我找了很久，怎么找都找不到。

Nàběn shū wǒ zhǎole hěnjiǔ, zěnméi zhǎo dōu zhǎobudào.

I searched for that book a long time, but no matter how hard I searched, I couldn't find it.

你继续找吧，一定找得到。

Nǐ jìxù zhǎo ba, yídìng zhǎodèdào.

Keep on searching; you can find it for sure.

他们听不懂广东话。

Tāmen tīngbudǒng Guǎngdōnghuà.

They don't understand Cantonese.

你的普通话，我听得懂。

Nǐde pǔtōnghuà, wǒ tīngdèdǒng.

I can understand your Mandarin.

我吃不了那么多饺子！

Wǒ chībuliǎo nàme duō jiǎozi!

I can't eat that many dumplings!

我吃得了，你怎么吃不了呢？

Wǒ chīdéliǎo, nǐ zěnmē chībuliǎo ne?

If I can eat them up, why can't you?

走错了路回得来，说错了话回不来。

Zǒucuòle lù huídelái, shuōcuòle huà huíbulái.

Having taken the wrong road, you can come back, but having said the wrong thing, you can't take it back.

5.14.7 List of commonly used verbs with potential complements

Complement	Examples	Meaning
懂 dǒng	听懂；看懂	understand (listening or reading)
见 jiàn	听见；看见	hear; see (listen + perceive; look + perceive)
好 hǎo	写好；看好	finish writing, finish reading
完 wán	做完；吃完	finish doing, finish eating
来 lái	拿来；带来	bring; bring along
去 qù	进去；走去	go in; go on foot
到 dào	办到；送到	succeed in doing; succeed in sending
住 zhù	拿住；站住	hold firmly; stand still
了 liǎo	拿得了；做不了	able to hold; unable to do

Complement	Examples	Meaning
上 shàng	举上; 搬上	raise up; carry up
下 xià:	坐下; 放下	sit down; put down
会 huì:	学会	to master (through study)
起 qǐ	买得起; 看不起	able to afford to buy; unable to look up to
动 dòng	走动; 拿动	able to walk about; able to lift
清楚 qīngchū	看清楚; 听清楚	see clearly; hear distinctly

5.15 Expressing whoever, whatever, wherever, however, and whenever

Structures like “whoever,” “whatever,” “wherever,” “however” and “whenever” usually are expressed by adding “都 dōu, all” or “也 yě, also” after who, what, where, how, or when, as in the following examples:

谁都/也可以。

Shéi dōu/yě kěyǐ.

Anyone will be fine./Whoever will be fine.

什么都/也不要。

Shénme dōu/yě buyào.

(Subject) doesn't want anything at all./ (Subject) wants nothing whatever.

哪儿都/也行。

Nǎr dōu/yě xíng.

Anywhere will do./ Wherever will do.

怎么做都/也好。

Zěnmē zuò dōu/yě hǎo.

It's fine no matter how you do it./It's fine however you do it.

什么时候都/也行。

Shénme shíhòu dōu/yě xíng.

Any time is fine./It's fine whenever.

5.16 Expressing surprise

As with English speakers, Chinese speakers may express surprise upon seeing or hearing something out of the ordinary simply by raising their voice and widening their eyes while uttering a question word:

什么? !

Shénme?!

What?!

谁? !

Shéi?!

Who?!

多少? !

Duōshǎo?!

How much?!

Or they may utter typical expressions of surprise, such as:

哎呀!

Āiyā!

Oh! (sometimes “Oops!”)

哎哟!

Āiyō!

Oh!! (more serious than “āiyā!”)

我的天啊!

Wóde tiān a!

Oh, my gosh!

真没想到!

Zhēn méixiǎngdào!

What a surprise!

5.17 Connecting words

Connecting words/conjunctions/conjunctives/correlatives are used to connect elements in sentences which have either more than one clause, or more than one predicate or comment related to the same subject or topic. These connecting words may occur independently, such as: 可是 kěshi, but; 但是 dànshi, but; 不过 búguò, however; 否则 fǒuzé, otherwise; 要不然 yàoburán, otherwise; 所以 suǒyǐ, so; 因此 yīncǐ, therefore.

They may also occur in correlated pairs, such as: 因为...所以... yīnwèi...suǒyǐ..., because... (therefore)... 虽然...但是... suīrán...dànshi..., although... (yet)... 不但...而且... búdàn...érqiě, not only... (but also).

The following are illustrative examples of both types:

我劝了她，可是她不听。

Wǒ quànle tā, kěshi tā bùtīng.

I pleaded with her, but she wouldn't listen.

他很想参加，但是老板不准。

Tā hěn xiǎng cānjiā, dànshi lǎobǎn bùzhǔn.

He really wants to participate, but his boss won't let him.

我觉得已经太晚了，不过可以替你打听。

Wǒ juéde yǐjīng tàiwǎnle, búguò kěyǐ tì nǐ dǎtīng.

I think it's already too late, but I can enquire for you.

你最好写报告吧，否则可能有人找麻烦。

Nǐ zuìhǎo xiě bàogào ba, fǒuzé kěnéng yǒurén zhǎo máfan.

You'd better write up a report. Otherwise someone could make trouble.

她一定会去，要不然校长会生气。

Tā yídìng huì qù, yàoburán xiàozhǎng huì shēngqì.

She is certain to go. Otherwise the principal would get angry.

今天下大雨，所以野餐取消了。

Jīntiān xià dàyǔ, suǒyǐ yěcān qǔxiāo le.

It's raining heavily today, so the picnic is cancelled.

因为那个饭馆不收信用卡，所以我们去别的地方吃饭了。

Yīnwei nàge fànguǎn bùshōu xìnyòngkǎ, suǒyǐ wǒmen qù biéde dìfang chīfàn le.

That restaurant doesn't accept credit cards, so we went someplace else to eat.

虽然他信佛教，但是他偶尔会吃肉。

Suīrán tā xìn fójiào, dànshi tā ǒu'ěr huì chī ròu.

Although he is a Buddhist, he will occasionally eat meat.

她不但是我老师，而且是我最好的朋友。

Tā búdàn shì wǒ lǎoshī, érqǐè shì wǒ zuìhǎode péngyou.

She is not only my teacher, but my best friend as well.

Note that although normally English will omit either the “because” or the “therefore,” and omit either the “although” or the “yet” in such constructions, they may both be used in Chinese without sounding redundant.

Other connecting words are:

如果... 就... rúguǒ... jiù... if... then

如果你能去，我就不必去了。

Rúguo nǐ néng qù, wǒ jiù búbì qù le.

If you can go, I won't have to go.

要是... 就... yàoshi... jiù..., if... ,then...

要是下雨，我就不去游泳。
Yàoshi xiàyǔ, wǒ jiù búqu yóuyǒng.
If it rains, I won't go swimming.

假如... 就... jiǎrú... jiù... if...,then...

假如便宜一点儿，我就买两件。
Jiǎrú piányi yìdiǎnr, wǒ jiù mǎi liǎngjiàn.
If it's a little cheaper, I'll buy two.

一... 就... yī... jiù..., once... then...

天一黑，我就得回家。
Tiān yì hēi, wǒ jiùděi huíjiā.
As soon as it gets dark, I must go home.

既然... 就... jìrán... jiù..., since... then...

既然你不爱喝酒，我们就去咖啡店喝咖啡吧。
Jìrán nǐ bú'ài hējiǔ, wǒmen jiù qù kāfēidiàn hē kāfēi ba.
Since you don't like to drink alcohol, let's go to a coffee house for some coffee.

只要..., 就... zhǐyào... jiù... if only..., then...

只要不下雨，我就跟你去游泳。
Zhǐyào búxiàyǔ, wǒ jiù gēn nǐ qù yóuyǒng.
As long as it's not raining, I'll go swimming with you.

只有..., 才... zhǐyǒu... cái... only if... only then...

只有不下雨，我才跟你去游泳。
Zhǐyǒu búxiàyǔ, wǒ cái gēn nǐ qù yóuyǒng.
I'll go swimming with you, but only if it's not raining.

除非..., 才..., chéufēi..., cái..., unless...; only then...

除非不下雨，我才跟你去游泳。
Chéufēi búxiàyǔ, wǒ cái gēn nǐ qù yóuyǒng.
I'll go swimming with you, unless it is raining.

除了... 以外,... chule ... yǐwài, ..., except for... ..

除了小张以外，人家都来了。
Chule Xiǎo Zhāng yǐwài, rénjia dōu lái le.
Except for Zhang, everybody else came.

不管..., 也... bùguǎn... yě..., no matter..., still...

不管他要多少钱，我也要买。
Bùguǎn tā yào duōshao qián, wǒ yěyào mǎi.
No matter how much money he wants for it, I'm still going to buy it.

无论...，都... wúlùn... dōu..., regardless... still...

无论她赢还是不赢，我都很佩服她。

Wúlùn tā yíng háishi bùying, wǒ dōu hěn pèifu tā.

Regardless of whether she wins or not, I still have great respect for her.

与其...，不如... yǔqí... bùrú... rather than... better to...

与其得罪人，不如改变话题吧。

Yǔqí dézui rén, bùrú gǎibiàn huàtí ba.

Rather than offend someone, it would be better to change the subject.

一边... 一边... yìbiānr... yìbiānr..., (doing two things at the same time)

我们一边走，一边聊天。

Wǒmen yìbiānr zǒu, yìbiānr liáotiānr.

We chatted as we walked.

一面... 一面... yímiàn... yímiàn..., (doing two things at the same time)

我们一面讨论价钱，一面看画册。

Wǒmen yímiàn tāolùn jiàqian, yímiàn kàn huàcè.

We perused the album of paintings as we discussed the price.

又... 又... yòu..., yòu..., both... and...

她又是我的老师，又是我的朋友。

Tā yòushi wǒde lǎoshi, yòushi wǒde péngyou.

She is both my teacher and my friend.

越... 越... yuè... yuè... the more... the more...

我越认识他，越觉得他不是一般的画家。

Wǒ yuè rènshi tā, yuè juéde tā búshi yìbānde huàjiā.

The more I know him, the more I feel he is not an ordinary artist.

或者... 或者... huòzhe... huòzhe..., either... or...

或者你去，或者我去，都可以。

Huòzhe nǐ qù, huòzhe wǒ qù, dōu kěyì.

Either you go or I'll go; either way is fine.

5.18 Emphasis using the “shì...de” pattern

The most common way of emphasizing agency, time, place, means/manner, or purpose, i.e., who or what, when, where, how or why, etc. of an event in Mandarin is by using the “是...的 shì...de” pattern. There are three things about this pattern that are important: (1) the element that appears in between “shì” and “de” is emphasized;

(2) it is usually used for events that have already taken place; (3) “shì” is sometimes omitted. For example:

他昨天在城里买了一辆新车。
Tā zuótiān zài chénglǐ mǎile yíliàng xīnchē.
He bought a new car downtown yesterday. (No emphasis)

新车是他买的。
Xīnchē shì tā mǎi de.
He is the one who bought the new car. (Emphasizing who)

他是昨天买的新车。
Tā shì zuótiān mǎide xīnchē.
It was yesterday that he bought the new car. (Emphasizing when)

他昨天是在城里买的新车。
Tā zuótiān shì zài chénglǐ mǎide xīnchē.
It was downtown that he bought the new car yesterday.
(Emphasizing where)

他昨天在城里是跟他朋友一起买的新车。
Tā zuótiān zài chénglǐ shì gēn tā péngyou yìqǐ mǎide xīnchē.
It was with his friend that he bought the new car downtown
yesterday. (Emphasizing with whom)

他昨天在城里是用信用卡买的新车。
Tā zuótiān zài chénglǐ shì yòng xìnyòngkǎ mǎide xīn chē.
It was with his credit card that he bought the new car downtown
yesterday. (Emphasizing the means)

他是为了上班买的新车。
Tā shì wèile shàngbān mǎide xīnchē.
It was for going to work that he bought the new car. (Emphasizing
the purpose)

Other common examples of emphasis using the “shì...de” pattern are:

这些菜都是她买的。
Zhèxiē cài dōu shì tā mǎi de.
She bought all these groceries. (who)

你什么时候来的?
Nǐ shénme shíhou lái de?
When did you come? (when)

他们昨天从北京来的。
Tāmen zuótiān cóng Běijīng lái de.
They came from Beijing yesterday. (where)

我来买外套的。
Wǒ lái mǎi wàitào de.
I've come to buy a jacket. (purpose)

我坐火车来的。

Wǒ zuò huǒchē lái de.

I came by train. (means)

我跟同学们一起去的长城。

Wǒ gēn tóngxuémen yìqǐ qù de Chángchéng.

I went to the Great Wall with my fellow schoolmates. (with whom)

Note: The negative form of the “是...的 shì...de” pattern is: “不是...的 búshì...de” and in this pattern “是 shì” cannot be omitted.

5.19 Interjections

Interjections, 叹词 tàncí, express emotions and feelings.

Examples are:

啊 ā	Expressing elation
啊 á	Expressing doubt or questioning
啊 ǎ	Expressing puzzled surprise
啊 à	Expressing agreement/approval
哎 āi	Hey!
唉 āi	Gosh!, My! (mild exclamation, sigh)
唉 ài	Expressing sympathy or disappointment
喂 wèi	No! (expressing disapproval)
欸/诶 ē/èi	Hey! (to attract attention)
欸/诶 é/èi	Ah!, Oh!
欸/诶 ǔ/èi	Huh?, What's this?
欸/诶 è/èi	Hey!
哈 hā	Aha! (expressing satisfaction)
咳 hāi	Hey!
嗨 hāi	Hey!
嘻 hài	Expressing pain, sorrow or regret
咳 hai	Expressing sorrow, surprise
呵 hē	Ah!, Oh!
嗨 hē	Ah!, Oh!
吓 hè	“Tut-tut,” “Tsk-tsk”
嘿 hēi	Hey!
哼 hng	Humph!
嗯 ní or níng	What? Huh?
嗯 ǚ or ǚng	I wonder! I'm suspicious!
嗯 òr or òng	Okay; understood; agreed
哦 ó	Expressing half believing, half doubting
哦 ò	Expressing a newly gained understanding
呸 pēi	Bah! Pooh! Expressing disgust and disdain
喂 wèi	Hey!; “Hello?” when answering the telephone
吁 xū	Wow! Expressing surprise or amazement

吁 yū	Whoa! Calling on a horse to stop
噫 yī	Expressing regret or surprise
咦 yí	Eh? Expressing surprise or disapproval
唷 yō	Oh! I forgot!
啧 zé	tsk-tsk: the sound of tongue-clicking, “Shame on you!”
嗨哟 hāiyō	“Heave-ho”
哎呀 āiyā	Expressing wonder, admiration, or shock
哎哟 āiyō	(also ēiyō) Expressing surprise or pain, more serious than “āiyā”
哎唷 ēiyō	Same as “āiyō” above
喔唷 wōyō	Oh!, Ouch!

5.20 Passive voice

5.20.1 Structural passive

Passive voice, 被动式 bèidòngshì, is expressed by using the passive indicator 被 bèi, by/让 ràng, let or 叫 jiào, let. The last two are most often used orally. The passive voice is not commonly used in Chinese, but it is more often used for stress, or sometimes used to express more unfortunate events.

The sentence structure is as follows:

Object (receiver) + bèi/ràng/jiào + subject (doer)* + verb + other elements.

*The doer can be omitted (this does not apply to when ràng or jiào is used) or 人 rén may be used if it is not clear who the doer is.

新闻报道：很多人的房子被大水淹了。

Xīnwén bàodào: hěnduō rénde fángzi bèi dàshuǐ yānle.

According to news reports, many people's houses were flooded by the high waters.

报纸被丢进垃圾桶了。

Bàozhǐ bèi diūjìn lājītǒng le.

The newspaper was thrown into the garbage can.

她买的那件很贵的衣服被人偷走了。

Tā mǎide nàjian hěnguì de yīfú bèi rén tōuzǒule.

That expensive dress she bought was stolen by someone.

If an adverb or an auxiliary verb or a negative is used, the order is as follows:

Object + adverb/auxiliary verb/negative + bèi + subject + verb + other elements*.

*If the verb is more than one syllable, there is no need for other elements.

这幅很有名的画一定会被他们拍卖掉。
Zhèifú hěn yǒumíngde huà yídìng huì bèi tāmen pāimàidiao.
This very famous painting will definitely be auctioned off by
them.

他的朋友很可能被选出来当主席。
Tāde péngyou hěn kěnéng bèi xuǎnchūlai dāng zhǔxí.
It is very possible that his friend will be elected as the chairperson.

要是不被送去英国学习，他们真的会非常失望。
Yàoshi bú bèi sòngqu Yīngguó xuéxí, tāmen zhēnde huì fēicháng
shīwàng.
They will really be disappointed if they are not sent to England to
study.

她的歌唱得那么好，绝对会被很多人欣赏。
Tāde gē chàngde nàme hǎo, juéduì huì bèi hěnduō rén xīnshǎng.
She sings so well. She will definitely be appreciated by many
people.

5.20.2 Notional passive

When the subject of a sentence does not do the action and is the receiver of the action, and when the doer of the action is either unknown or unnecessary to express, the passive indicator 被 bèi/让 ràng/叫 jiào, is not used. This is known as the notional passive and the sentence structure is usually as follows:

Object (receiver) + verb + other elements.

汽车已经修好了。
Qìchē yǐjīng xiūhǎole.
The car is already repaired.

信昨天就寄出去了。
Xìn zuótiān jiù jìchūqule.
The letter was already mailed yesterday.

我订的书今天早上送来了。
Wǒ dìngde shū jīntian zǎoshang sòngláile.
The book I ordered was delivered this morning.

5.21 Reduplications

5.21.1 Reduplication of verbs

Functions of reduplicated verbs:

- (1) to show that the action is short and quick.
- (2) to indicate an attempt or trial.
- (3) to show that the action is casual.

What verbs can be reduplicated:

- (1) action and behavioral verbs
- (2) verbs with a positive feeling

How to reduplicate the verbs:

1. when monosyllabic verbs are reduplicated: AA

请你先看看。

Qǐng nǐ xiān kànkān.

Please have a look first.

您尝尝好吃不好吃。

Nín chángcháng hǎochī bu hǎochī.

Try it and see whether it tastes good.

我们工作了一整天了，晚上应该听听音乐了。

Wǒmen gōngzuòle yìzhěngtiān le. Wǎnshàng yīnggāi tīngtīng yīnyuè le.

We have been working hard the whole day. We should listen to some music this evening.

2. for disyllabic verbs which are Verb–Object combinations: AAB

有时候游游泳对身体非常好。

Yǒushíhòu yóuyóuyǒng duì shēntǐ fēicháng hǎo.

It is very good for one's health to have a swim sometimes.

今天天气很好，我们想去海边散散步。

Jīntiān tiānqì hěnhǎo, wǒmen xiǎng qù hǎibiān sànsàn bù.

The weather is so nice today, we would like to go to the beach for a stroll.

我们应该不时开开会，大家可以表达一下意见。

Wǒmen yīnggāi bùshí kāikāihuì, dàjiā kěyǐ biǎodáyíxià yìjian.

We should have meetings from time to time so that everyone has a chance to express his/her opinion.

Note: “一 yī” can be inserted between the reduplicated verb (A 一 yī A) to mean the same thing and to have the same function.

请你先看一看。

Qǐng nǐ xiān kànyíkan.

Please have a look first.

他很想去看一散步。

Tā hěn xiǎng qù sànyísàn bù.

He wants very much to go for a walk.

Note: “了 le” can be inserted between the reduplicated verb (A 了 le A) to emphasize the completion of the verb.

她尝了尝不好吃。

Tā chánglechāng bù hǎochī.

She tried it and it did not taste good.

昨天他们虽然很累，可是还游了游泳。

Zuótiān tāmen suīrán hěn lèi, kěshì hái yóuleyouyǒng.

Although they were very tired yesterday, they still had a swim.

3. when disyllabic verbs are reduplicated: ABAB

Note: the reduplicated part of the verb is pronounced in the neutral tone.

这件事我们还是考虑考虑再做决定吧。

Zhèjiàn shì wǒmen háishi kǎolùkǎolù zài zuò juéding ba.

Perhaps we should think this over before we make a decision.

今天虽然天气不太好，他们还是应该出去运动运动。

Jīntiān suīrán tiānqì bútàihǎo, tāmen háishi yīnggāi chūqu yùndongyundong.

Although the weather is not very good today, they still should go out to have a bit of exercise.

你忙了这么久，实在应该放两个星期的假休息休息。

Nǐ mángle zhème jiǔ, shízài yīnggāi fàng liǎnggexīngqīde jià xiūxiūxiūxi.

You have been busy for such a long time. You really should take a two-week vacation to relax a bit.

What verbs cannot be reduplicated:

(1) verbs expressing feelings and emotions:

爱 ài, love; 喜欢 xǐhuan, like; 怕 pà, fear; 嫉妒 jìdù, jealous; 希望 xīwang, hope.

(2) verbs expressing change or development:

开始 kāishǐ, begin; 结束 jiéshù, finish; 发展 fāzhǎn, develop; 变化 biànhuà, change.

(3) verbs expressing existence, judgement, possession:

是 shì, to be; 在 zài, to be at; 有 yǒu, to have; 象 xiàng, to resemble; 好像 hǎoxiàng, to be like.

(4) verbs showing directions:

上 shàng, go up; 下 xià, go down; 出 chū, exit; 进 jìn, enter.

5.21.2 Reduplication of nouns

Some nouns can be reduplicated to mean “each and every + noun”:

他们家人人都有收入。

Tāmen jiā rén rén dōu yǒu shōurù.

Each and every one in their family has an income.

本市不是家家都有孩子。

Běnshì búshì jiājiā dōu yǒu hái'zi.

Not every family in this city has children.

我多么希望天天都是晴天!

Wǒ duōme xīwang tiāntiān dōushi qíngtiān!

How I wish every day was a sunny day!

祝你事事顺利!

Zhù nǐ shìshì shùnlì!

I hope everything goes smoothly for you!

岁岁平安!

Suìsuì píng'ān!

May you have peace year after year!

她年年都有新发明。

Tā niánnián dōu yǒu xīn fā míng.

She has a new invention each and every year.

他们世代代都有人做教授。

Tāmen shìshìdàidài dōu yǒurén zuò jiàoshòu.

There have been professors in their family in each and every generation.

新年的时候家家户户都喜气洋洋的。

Xīnniándē shíhòu jiājiāhùhù dōu xǐqì yángyángde.

Each and every household is brimming with happiness during the New Year.

5.21.3 Reduplication of adjectives

The reduplicated adjectives give a more vivid and lively description.

- (1) Reduplicated adjective + 的 de = adjective
- (2) Reduplicated adjective + 地 de = adverb
- (3) Not all adjectives can be reduplicated.

1. Monosyllabic adjectives are reduplicated as: AA

The duplicated syllable may be pronounced in the first tone and followed by the “r” ending.

The following are some adjectives that are commonly reduplicated:

快快儿 kuàikuàir, fast; 慢慢儿 mànmanr, slow; 远远儿 yuǎnyuǎnr, far away; 好好儿 hàohāor, fine, well; 高高儿 gāogāor, tall; 矮矮儿 ǎi'air, short; 胖胖儿 pàngpāngr, chubby; 瘦瘦儿 shòushòur, skinny; 长长儿 chángchāngr, long; 短短儿 duǎnduǎnr, short; 大大儿 dàdār, large, big; 小小儿 xiǎoxiǎor, small.

湖里清清儿的水真象一面镜子。

Húli qīngqīngrde shuǐ zhēn xiàng yímiàn jìngzi.

The wonderfully clear water in the lake is just like a mirror.

她黑黑儿的头发使人觉得她很年轻。

Tā hēihēirde tóufa shǐ rén juéde tā hěn niánqīng.

Her dark black hair makes one think she is very young.

他慢慢儿地走来走去，不知道在想什么。

Tā mànmanrde zǒulái zǒuqù, bùzhīdao zai xiǎng shénme.

He walks back and forth slowly and I do not know what's on his mind.

小王紧紧地抱住她不放。

Xiǎo Wáng jǐnjǐnrde bào zhu tā bú fàng.

Wang held her tightly and would not let go of her.

2. Disyllabic adjectives are reduplicated as: AABB

These are some commonly reduplicated adjectives: 仔仔细细 zǐzǐxìxì, careful, attentive; 清清楚楚 qīngqīngchǔchǔ, clear; 漂漂亮亮 piàopiàoliàngliàng, beautiful; 高高兴兴 gāogāoxìngxìng, happy; 舒舒服服 shūshūfǔfǔ, comfortable; 辛辛苦苦 xīnxīnkǔkǔ, working hard; 干干净净 gāngānjìngjìng, clean; 整整齐齐 zhěngzhěngqīqī, tidy; 客客气气 kèkèqīqī, polite; 认认真真 rènrenzhēnzhēn, serious, careful.

冬天的时候她总是把孩子穿得暖暖和和的才让他们去上学。

Dōngtiānde shíhou tā zǒngshi bǎ hái zǐ chuānde

nuǎnuānuānuōhuōde cái ràng tāmen qù shàngxué.

She always dresses the children warmly before letting them go to school in winter.

开学了，孩子们都高高兴兴地去上学了。

Kāixué le, hái zǐ men dōu gāogāoxìngxìngde qù shàngxué le.

School started and the children all went to school happily.

5.21.4 Reduplication of measure words

Measure words can be reduplicated for emphasis to mean “each and every + measure word”:

她说的普通话句句都很清楚。

Tā shuōde pǔtōnghuà jùjù dōu hěn qīngchǔ.

Every sentence she spoke/speaks in Mandarin was/is very clear.

这家服装公司的衣服件件都很好看。

Zhèjiā fúzhuāng gōngsīde yīfu jiànjiàn dōu hěn hǎokàn.

Each and every item of clothing in this garment company is beautiful.

那个咖啡店的咖啡杯杯都好喝。

Nèige kāfēidiānde kāfēi bēibēi dōu hǎohē.

Every cup of coffee in that coffee house tastes delicious.

他们卖的水果种种都很新鲜。

Tāmen mǎide shuǐguo zhǒngzhǒng dōu hěn xīnxiān.

Each and every kind of fruit they sell is very fresh.

那家汽车行卖的汽车辆辆都是高贵的汽车。
 Nàjiā qìchēháng màide qìchē liàngliàng dōushi gāoguìde qìchē.
 Every car sold in that dealership is a high-class car.

我们觉得他画的画张张都值得收集。
 Wǒmen juéde tā huàde huà zhāngzhāng dōu zhíde shōují.
 We think every one of his paintings is worth collecting.

5.22 Prepositions

The following are the more commonly used prepositions:

按 àn: based on, on the basis of, according to

按小时工作收费的叫小时工。
 Àn xiǎoshí gōngzuò shōufèide jiào xiǎoshígōng.
 Those whose wages are paid according to hours worked are called
 “hourly workers.”

按照 ànzhào (cannot be followed by monosyllabic words): according to

按照她的意思我们最好先学习汉语。
 Ànzhào tāde yìsi wǒmen zuìhǎo xiān xuéxì Hànyǔ.
 According to her opinion, we had better study Chinese first.

朝 cháo/往 wàng/向 xiàng: toward, towards

你朝 / 往 / 向东走一百米就到了。
 Nǐ cháo/wàng/xiàng dōng zǒu yìbǎi mǐ jiù dào le.
 Walk 100 meters east and you will be there.

趁 chèn: take advantage of

你还是趁天气好的时候去旅游吧。
 Nǐ hái shì chèn tiānqì hǎo deshíhou qù lǚyóu ba.
 Why don't you go traveling while the weather is good.

除了 chúlé/除了 chúlé... 以外 yǐwài: except for, besides

除了游泳（以外），你还做别的运动吗？
 Chúlé yóuyǒng (yǐwài), nǐ hái zuò biéde yùndong ma?
 Do you do other exercises besides swimming?

从 cóng: from

那个人到底是从哪儿来的呢？
 Nàge rén dàodǐ shì cóng nǎr lái de ne?
 Where did that person really come from?

从 cóng... 起 qǐ: starting from

从下星期一起，他们就要上班了。
 Cóng xià xīngqīyī qǐ, tāmen jiù yào shàngbān le.
 They have to start going to work next Monday.

从 *cóng*... 到 *dào*: from...to, from...till

坐飞机从这儿到伦敦要多久?

Zuò fēijī cóng zhèr dào Lúndūn yào duōjiǔ?

How long does it take to fly from here to London?

他们的会从早上一直开到晚上。

Tāmende huì cóng zǎoshang yìzhí kāidào wǎnshang.

Their meeting lasted all the way from morning till night.

对 *duì*: to, towards

他这样对你说话是不可以的。

Tā zhèyang duì nǐ shuōhuà shì bùkěyide.

He should not talk to you like this.

给 *gěi*: for, to

要是有机会的时候, 请你告诉他给我打电话, 好吗?

Yàoshi yǒu jīhuì deshíhou, qǐng nǐ gàosu tā gěi wǒ dǎdiànhuà, hǎo ma?

If there is an opportunity, please tell him to phone me, won't you?

他什么时候才把书还给你呢?

Tā shénme shíhou cái bǎ shū huán gěi nǐ ne?

When will he ever return your book to you?

跟 *gēn*/和 *hé* (the written form is often “与 *yǔ*”): with, from

你别担心, 我不会跟你去华盛顿的。

Nǐ bié dānxīn, wǒ búhuì gēn nǐ qù Huáshèngdùn de.

Don't worry. I won't go to Washington D.C. with you.

他们想跟你们借一万块钱买房子。怎么办呢?

Tāmen xiǎng gēn nǐmen jiè yíwànkuaìqián mǎi fángzi. Zěnmèbàn ne?

They want to borrow ten thousand dollars from you to buy a house. What are you going to do?

关于 *guānyu*: about, concerning, with regard to

今天的校报上有一篇关于她得奖的消息。

Jīntiānde xiàobàoshang yǒu yìpiān guānyu tā déjiǎngde xiāoxi.

There is an item concerning her getting a prize in the university newspaper today.

经 *jīng*: through, as a result of

经他们的介绍, 我才认识她。

Jīng tāmende jièshào, wǒ cái rènshi tā.

I only got to know her through their introduction.

据 jù: based on, according to

据他说，他认识的教授都已经退休了。

Jù tā shuō, tā rènshide jiàoshòu dōu yǐjīng tuìxiū le.

According to him, all the professors he knew have already retired.

离 lí (the written form can be: 距 jù): from, to

现在离上课的时间还有十五分钟。

Xiànzài lí shàngkède shíjiān hái yǒu shíwǔ fēnzhōng.

There is still fifteen minutes to class time.

她的办公室离家不远，可以走路去。

Tāde bàngōngshì lí jiā bù yuǎn, kěyǐ zǒulù qù.

Her office is not far from her home and she can walk to work.

为 wèi/替 tì: for, on account of

她已经是大人了，你不要再为她头疼了。

Tā yǐjīng shì dàren le, nǐ bié zài wèi tā tóuténg le.

She is already an adult. You should not worry yourself over her any more.

为了 wèile: in order to, for the purpose of

为了得到奖学金，她不分昼夜地努力学习。

Wèile dédao jiǎngxuéjīn, tā bùfēnzhòuyède nǔlì xuéxí.

In order to get the scholarship, she studies hard day and night.

向 xiàng: from, towards

他是个好学生，我们都应该向他学习。

Tā shì ge hǎo xuésheng, wǒmen dōu yīnggāi xiàng tā xuéxí.

He is a good student. We all should learn from him.

依 yī: according to, in light of

依她的经验，我们都应该每天早起早睡。

Yī tāde jīngyān, wǒmen dōu yīnggāi měitiān zǎo qǐ zǎo shuì.

In light of her experience, we all should get up early and go to bed early every day.

以 yǐ: with, use, to

他们特别以你的成绩为骄傲。

Tāmen tèbié yǐ nǐde chéngjī wéi jiāo'ào.

They are especially proud of your achievements.

这座大山以北是一条大河。

Zhèzuò dàshān yǐběi shì yìtiáo dàhé.

To the north of this big mountain is a big river.

由 yóu: by, for

下个月的座谈会应该由你主持。

Xiàge yuède zuòtánhuì yīnggāi yóu nǐ zhǔchí.

Next month's seminar should be chaired by you.

这种事当然是由大学校长负责。

Zhèzhǒng shì dāngrán shì yóu dàxué xiàozhǎng fùzé.

Matters like this should naturally be the responsibility of the university president.

由于 yóuyú: due to, owing to

他们这次重要的发现是由于他们仔细的观察。

Tāmen zhècì zhòngyàode fāxiàn shì yóuyú tāmen zǐxìde guānchá.

Their important discovery this time is due to their careful observation.

在 zài: at, on, in

她是不是在南京出生的?

Tā shìbúshì zài Nánjīng chūshēng de?

Was she born in Nanjing?

他们在八月八日那天就结婚了。

Tāmen zài bāyue bāri nàtiān jiù jiéhūn le.

They got married on August 8th.

在 zài... 看来 kànlái: in someone's... view, from... someone's point of view

在他们看来, 学拉丁文是很有用的。

Zài tāmen kànlái, xué Lādīngwén shì hěn yǒuyòngde.

From their point of view, learning Latin is very useful.

自从 zìcóng: since

自从上了大学他开始对汉语感兴趣。

Zìcóng shàngle dàxué tā kāishǐ duì Hànyǔ gǎn xìngqù.

He began to be interested in Chinese since he entered university.

For the uses of 把 bǎ, 被 bèi, 叫 jiào, 给 gěi, 让 ràng and 比 bǐ, see the following:

把 bǎ see "bǎ sentences," p.248

被 bèi, 叫 jiào, 让 ràng see "passive voice," p.270

比 bǐ see "comparisons," p.251

5.23 Subjunctive mood

Subjunctive mood, 假设式 jiǎshèshì, in Chinese is expressed by using certain connecting words, the context of the sentences, or the tone of voice if spoken.

1. 要是 yàoshi A, 就 jiù B, when/if A... then B

要是她能来就好了!

Yàoshi tā néng lái jiù hǎo le!

It would have been nice if she could have come!

要是今天天气有昨天那么好，一定有很多人来参加野餐。
Yàoshi jīntian tiānqì yǒu zuótiān nàme hǎo, yīdìng yǒu hěnduō
rén lái cānjiā yěcān.

If the weather today were as nice as it was yesterday, many people
would have come to the picnic.

2. (要是 yàoshi) A 的话 dehua, 就 jiù B..., if A... then B

(要是)她是个百万富翁的话，她就能买那所房子。

(Yàoshi) tā shì ge bǎiwàn fūwēng dehua, tā jiù néng mǎi nàsuǒ
fángzi.

If she were a millionaire, she could have bought that house.

3. 只要 zhǐyào A, 就 jiù B, if only A... then B

只要他们肯出钱，他们就会像你们一样现在在夏威夷度假了。

Zhǐyào tāmen kěn chūqián, tāmen jiù huì xiàng nǐmen yíyàng
xiànzài zài Xiàwéiyí dùjià le.

If only they were willing to spend the money, they would have
been enjoying a vacation in Hawaii like you are now.

4. 要不是 yàobúshi A, 就 jiù B..., if not A, then B

要不是她告诉我，我到现在还不会知道他们已经去了美国了。

Yàobúshi tā gàosu wǒ, wǒ dào xiànzài hái búhuì zhīdao tāmen
yǐjīng qùle Měiguó le.

If she had not told me, I would not have known that they have
already gone to the United States.

5. Instead of 要是 yàoshi, which can also be omitted, any one of the
following can be used: 如果 rúguǒ, 假如 jiǎrú, 假使 jiǎshǐ, 假若
jiǎruò, or 倘若 tǎngruò.

5.24 Sentences without subjects

Sentences without subjects occur in the following situations:

1. Expressing weather conditions:

出太阳了。

Chū tàiyang le.

The sun has come out.

晴天了。

Qíngtiān le.

It has cleared up.

下雨了。

Xiàyǔ le.

It's raining.

下雪了。

Xiàxuě le.

It's snowing.

下雪子了。

Xiàbáozi le.

It's hailing.

下雾了。

Xiàwù le.

It's foggy.

刮风了。

Guāfēng le.

It's windy.

打雷了。

Dǎléi le.

It's thundering.

闪电了。

Shǎndiàn le.

It's lightning.

2. Expressing time and season:

十一点了。

Shíyīdiǎn le.

It's eleven o'clock.

半夜了。

Bànyè le.

It's midnight.

天黑了。

Tiān hēi le.

It's dark now.

十二月了。

Shí'èryuè le.

It's December now.

冬天了。

Dōngtian le.

It's winter now.

圣诞节了。

Shèngdànjié le.

It's Christmas now.

3. Expressing a factual condition:

出汗了。

Chūhàn le.

(Subject +) is sweating/broke into a sweat.

流泪了。

Liúlèi le.
(Subject +) is shedding tears/started to shed tears.

吃饭了。
Chīfàn le.
Dinner's ready.

上课了。
Shàngkè le.
Class is going to start./Class has started.

下班了。
Xiàbān le.
Time to quit work.

来客了。
Lái kè le.
Guests have showed up./We have guests.

着火了!
Zháohuǒ le!
Fire!/A fire has started.

4. Expressing a command:

该起床了。
Gāi qǐchuáng le.
Time to get up.

小心汽车!
Xiǎoxīn qìchē!
Be careful of cars!

欢迎参观。
Huānyíng cānguān.
Welcome (for a visit by sightseers and other visitors).

请别吸烟。
Qǐng bié xīyān.
Please do not smoke.

努力学习。
Nǔlì xuéxí.
Study hard!