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Any errors are, of course, entirely the responsibility of the authors.

Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington
May 2003
ABBREVIATIONS

adj. adjective
cl. clause
class. classical
colloq. colloquial
cv coverb
dial. dialect
dv dummy verb
fml. formal
infml. informal
lit. literally
mv modal verb
mw measure word
n. noun
neut. neutral
num. numeral
obs. obsolete
p. predicate
pron. pronoun
s. subject
svo subject-verb-object
vb. verb
vs. versus
INTRODUCTION

This book aims to provide a comprehensive grammar of Chinese. It is intended for readers who have some knowledge of the language and are at ease with its written form, whether in traditional characters or romanisation. We have endeavoured to minimise the use of technical expressions, but, where linguistic terms are introduced, we have provided explanations.

We believe that a comprehensive grammar has to be comprehensive in two senses. First, it must highlight the specific characteristics of the language being described and, where appropriate, indicate how they differ from those of other languages. In the case of Chinese, for example, syntactic rules are often seen to be operational in conjunction with semantic, prosodic and discoursal principles. Second, the grammar must be able to cover (and therefore generate) all possible (and acceptable) constructions in the language. We have consequently adopted an eclectic approach and have made reference to a range of grammatical theories in order to achieve what we hope is a multi-perspective approach: semantic, pragmatic, stylistic, prosodic, structural, functional, discoursal, transformational and generative. In our view syntactic generalisations become comprehensive only when they are underpinned by judgements on particular language characteristics that draw on theoretical approaches relevant to those characteristics.

THE LAYOUT OF THE GRAMMAR

For ease of reference, each chapter provides an independent exposition of a particular grammatical feature and can be consulted by readers wishing to investigate that feature. Footnotes offer cross-references to related issues in other chapters. Lists of language examples are given throughout to illustrate points under discussion, and each example is in Chinese script and romanisation, with an English translation and, where needed, a literal translation.

The book lays particular stress on functional types of sentence in Chinese, and this has influenced the sequencing of chapters. The non-morphological nature of the language with the resultant absence of noun and verb inflection, and of general markers for definite and indefinite reference, means that most grammatical features have to be seen in the context of the sentence, or more usefully the sentence type, as a whole. We have identified four basic sentence types and a fifth overriding type, and these are discussed in detail in Chapters 20 and 21. The four basic types are: narrative (action-verb based and associated with the completed action marker); descriptive (again generally featuring action verbs, but with continuous action markers); expository (covering a range of explanatory
statements, relating to existence, possession, cognition, experience, etc., with no verbal markers apart from one indicating experience); and evaluative (also explanatory statements, but with a more judgemental tone, featuring modal verbs, etc., but with no verbal markers). Narrative and descriptive sentences have a subject-predicate structure, while expository and evaluative sentences are more likely to follow a topic-comment pattern. The endless variability and invention of language means that this typology will inevitably have loose ends and overlapping dimensions, and the presence or function of sentence elements will sometimes blur the boundaries between types, but nonetheless we hope that the structure we propose will offer some clarification of the complexities of Chinese grammar.

The fifth overriding type we have called le-expository, because the particle le is present at the end of the sentence, and its presence introduces a notion of change or reversal which the speaker expresses with varying degrees of personal involvement. Le can in fact be added to any of the four sentence types identified above, and, as we shall see, it has a significant impact on the meaning of the sentence. Le-expository sentences are a highly distinctive feature of the Chinese language, and, because they express some degree of endorsement by a speaker, they are a particular feature of the spoken language.

The layout of the book reflects this typology. The first five chapters deal with noun-related issues; Chapters 6 to 14 discuss elements in narrative and descriptive sentences; Chapters 15 to 19 are more concerned with expository and evaluative sentences; Chapters 20 and 21, as we have said, analyse sentence functional types; the final six chapters cover conjunctions, non-declarative sentences (interrogative and imperative) and other elements at work in sentences (omissions, and prosodic and stylistic features).

THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

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

The Chinese language is divided into a number of major dialects (with their many sub-dialects). Speakers of different dialects in some cases find each other unintelligible, but dialects are brought together by the fact that they share a common script. This book describes the main and official dialect, which is known by a number of names: Mandarin, modern standard Chinese, or putonghua ('common speech'). It is spoken in its various sub-dialect forms by almost three-quarters of the Hans across the northern, central and western regions of the country, but its standard pronunciation and grammar are associated with the Beijing area of north China, though not with Beijing city itself. The other dialects are Wu (spoken in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, including Shanghai), Xiang (in
Hunan), Cantonese (in Guangdong), Min (in Fujian), Hakka (in northeast Guangdong and other southern provinces) and Gan (in Jiangxi).

Cantonese, Min and Hakka are widely spoken among overseas Chinese communities. In Taiwan a form of Min dialect is used, though the official language is Mandarin, brought over by the Nationalists in 1949, and called there guoyu ('national language'). Mandarin is also widely used in Singapore, where it is known as huayu ('Chinese language'). Elsewhere, Chinese emigrants took their particular dialects with them, and in Britain, for instance, the Chinese people, who are largely from Hong Kong, almost all speak Cantonese.

The Chinese character script existed virtually unchanged for two thousand years until a range of simplified forms began to be introduced by the mainland Chinese government in the 1950s. These simplified characters, which we employ in this book, are used throughout China and increasingly in Chinese communities outside China, though not Taiwan. Chinese has been transcribed into Western alphabetic script through various systems for over one hundred years and this book makes use of the standard romanisation pinyin.

The formal written language of China until the early decades of the twentieth century was Classical Chinese, which, as the vehicle for all publicly acknowledged literature and for official documentation, was at the heart of the Chinese cultural tradition. However, it had grown remote from spoken Chinese in syntax and lexis, and had a position somewhat akin to medieval Latin in relation to the Romance languages it had spawned. It was left behind by modern written styles, based on spoken Chinese, which evolved over the last hundred years, but echoes of Classical Chinese remain in contemporary speech and writing, especially in literary and aphoristic registers. This continuing presence of the Classical today will be mentioned at various points in our analysis.
Nouns in Chinese are not specifically identified as being nouns except in the case of those with suffixes like 子 zi, 人 er, 头 tou, etc. They are mainly disyllabic, but there are also quite a number of monosyllabic nouns in everyday vocabulary. Trisyllabic nouns are rare and polysyllabic nouns are even rarer, the latter being often regarded as nominal phrases. Chinese nouns do not under any circumstances inflect for case, gender or number, though an unmarked common noun is normally assumed as being plural, e.g. 书 shū ‘books’ rather than ‘book’.

### 1.1 Nouns and Categorisation

Nouns can be assigned to different categories with reference to their grammatical properties. Such categorisation, as we shall see, helps to highlight their usages, and identifies distinctive features relating to the use of measure words, definite and indefinite reference, plurality, etc.

### 1.1.1 Common Nouns

Certain nouns are referrable to classes of tangible (and sometimes discrete) entities, categories, events and phenomena in the natural or human world. They are generally known as common nouns, and are linguistic labels we attach to ourselves and our surroundings. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>诗人</td>
<td>shīrén</td>
<td>poet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山</td>
<td>shān</td>
<td>hill; mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>商店</td>
<td>shāngdiàn</td>
<td>shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>狗</td>
<td>gǒu</td>
<td>dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>牡丹</td>
<td>mǔdān</td>
<td>peony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鞋</td>
<td>xié</td>
<td>shoe(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>盐</td>
<td>yán</td>
<td>salt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. er is essentially a nominal suffix, but occasionally is found with other word classes, e.g. the verb 玩儿 wánr ‘to play, enjoy oneself’, and with some reduplicated adjectives, e.g. 好好儿 háohāor ‘well, good’.

2. An unmarked common noun is normally assumed as being plural. Also see §1.3 for the specific use of the plural suffix 個 men.
Tangibility is not to be understood only in a macroscopic sense. Some entities may not be visibly observable, but their existence can be verified by means of instruments or by accompanying phenomena.

The so-called discreteness, on the other hand, does not necessarily imply separateness. Sometimes such discreteness may be more pragmatic than real. For instance, 树枝 shùzhī ‘branch, twig’ is discrete but not separated from 树干 shùgàn ‘tree trunk’, and there is a similar pragmatic distinction between 腿 tuǐ ‘leg’ and 脚 jiǎo ‘foot’.

However, a most distinctive feature of a Chinese common noun is that some kind of measure word is normally used in conjunction with a number or demonstrative. In some cases the measure is a classifier (a) and in others it is a universal or standard measure (b), which is generally associated with material nouns:

(a) 一座山 yī zuò shān a hill; a mountain
两朵花儿 liǎng duō huār two flowers; two blossoms
四家商店 sì jiā shāngdiàn four shops
五栋房子 wǔ dòng fāngzi five houses
那个人 nèi ge rén that person
这本书 zhèi běn shū this book

(b) 一滴水 yī dī shuǐ a drop of water
三片面包 sān piàn miànbāo three slices of bread
一杯茶 yī bēi chá a cup of tea
十度电 shí dù diàn ten units of electricity (for billing a consumer)

五公斤米 wǔ gōngjīn mǐ five kilos of rice
二十公升汽油 èrshí gōngshēng qíyǒu twenty litres of petrol

3 See Chapter 2 for a full discussion of measure words in all their forms.
4 See §1.1.2 below.
1.1.2 MATERIAL NOUNS

There are a number of common nouns that may be regarded as material nouns. One important feature of these nouns is that, unlike other common nouns, which have their own specific measure words, material nouns must first be grouped, packaged, partitioned or measured in terms of national or international standards before they can be counted. For example:

玻璃  bōli  glass
铁  tiě  iron
水  shuǐ  water
空气  kōngqì  air

They may only be used in connection with grouping, packaging, partitioning or standard measures:

一块玻璃  yī kuài bōli  a (thick) piece of glass  (partitioning)
一片铁  yī piàn tiě  a (thin) piece of iron  (partitioning)
三瓶牛奶  sān píng niúnái  three bottles of milk  (packaging)
四堆泥  sì duī ní  four heaps of earth  (grouping)
两吨铁  liǎng dūn tiě  two tons of iron  (standard measure)

Material nouns can also be distinguished from other common nouns in two further ways:

(a) While, as indicators of small or imprecise number or amount, 一些 yīxiē ‘some’ and 几 jǐ (plus measure) ‘several; a few’ can be used with any common nouns, 一点(儿) yīdián(r) ‘a little’ occurs only with material nouns:

一些书  yīxiē shū  some books
几本书  jǐ běn shū  a few books
*一点(儿)书  *yīdián(r) shū  *a little books

一些水  yīxiē shuǐ  some water
几桶水  jǐ tǒng shuǐ  a few buckets/pails of water
一点(儿)水  yīdián(r) shuǐ  a little water

(b) When suffixed by the particle 的 de, a material noun more often indicates composition rather than possession:

铜的  tóng de  (made of) brass
塑料的  sùliào de  (made of) plastic
玻璃的  bōli de  (made of) glass
Compare the following sentences:

这个盒子是塑料的。zhèi ge hézi shì sùliào de
(lit. this mw box is plastic de)
This is a plastic box. (material composition)

这个盒子是爸爸的。zhèi ge hézi shì bàba de
(lit. this mw box is father de)
This box belongs to father. (possession)

1.1.3 COLLECTIVE NOUNS

Another group of Chinese common nouns has an inbuilt notion of plurality. They are known as **collective nouns**, and are usually formed by juxtaposing two hyponyms (a) or by tagging a measure to a noun (b). For example:

(a) 父母 fùmǔ parents (father and mother)  
夫妇 fūfù a married couple (husband and wife)  
子女 zǐnǚ children (sons and daughters)

(Others include: 师生 shīshēng ‘teachers and students’, 亲友 qìnyǒu ‘friends and relatives’, 男女 nánnǚ ‘men and women; boys and girls’, 人民 rénmín ‘people (as opposed to government)’, 城市 chéngxīqiǎn ‘cities and villages’, 院校 yuànxiào ‘academic institutions’, 书本 shūběn ‘publications (books and newspapers)’, 文具 wénjù ‘stationery’, 树木 shùmù ‘trees’, 饭菜 fàncài ‘food (cooked rice and dishes for a meal)’, 财产 cáichǎn ‘possessions’, etc.)

(b) 车辆 chēliàng vehicles (一辆车 yī liàng chē a/one car)  
花朵 huādúō flowers (一朵花 yī duó huā a/one flower/blossom)  
马匹 mǎpǐ horses (一匹马 yī pǐ mǎ a/one horse)


A common feature of these collective nouns is that they are not differentiable into individual items by means of numerals and measures. For example:

*两个父母 *liàng ge fùmǔ *two parents  
*三辆车 *sān liàng chēliàng *three vehicles

The only measure words that may be used with them are those of grouping, location or indeterminate amount. For example:

一对夫妻 yī dì fūqī a couple  
一批人马 yī pǐ rénmǎ a cohort of people (assembled for a particular job)
1.1.4 ABSTRACT NOUNS

A second major set of nouns is generally known as abstract nouns. Unlike common nouns, they are non-referrable to concrete objects or entities in the natural or human world. They are rather products of human epistemology, being convenient, summary labels used holistically to refer to complex or sophisticated situations, experiences, processes, qualities or phenomena in diverse areas of human endeavour. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract Noun</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>矛盾</td>
<td>máodùn</td>
<td>contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>名声</td>
<td>míngshēng</td>
<td>reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真理</td>
<td>zhēnli</td>
<td>truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>范围</td>
<td>fànwéi</td>
<td>scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>前景</td>
<td>qiánjīng</td>
<td>prospect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>影响</td>
<td>yǐngxiǎng</td>
<td>influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>印象</td>
<td>yǐnxìǎng</td>
<td>impression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While common nouns are the basic stock of words sufficient for general purposes, abstract nouns are tools for conceptualisation and argument.

Abstract nouns may also be defined by a numeral/demonstrative and a measure word, but this measure is restricted to either the more general 个 ge or a measure word indicating type, e.g. 种 zhǒng ‘type, kind, category’ or the indeterminate number/amount measure 一些 yīxiē ‘some’ or 一点 yīdiǎn ‘a little’. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>那个真理</td>
<td>nèige zhēnli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一个印象</td>
<td>yīge yǐnxìǎng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一种影响</td>
<td>yīzhǒng yǐnxìǎng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>两种(不同的)情况</td>
<td>liǎngzhǒng (bù tóng de) qíngkuàng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>这些矛盾</td>
<td>zhèxiē máodùn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一点效果</td>
<td>yīdiǎn xiàoguǒ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.5 PROPER NOUNS

A third important set of nouns is proper nouns. They are unique labels used to identify particular individuals, items, places, etc. In other words, proper nouns have unique referents in the universe. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proper Noun</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>孔子</td>
<td>kǒngzǐ</td>
<td>Confucius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中国</td>
<td>zhōngguó</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proper nouns do not usually associate themselves with numerals and measure words except in a metaphorical sense. For example:

*三个火星 *sān ge huòxīng *three Mars
*两个孔子 *liǎng ge kǒngzǐ *two Confucius’s

but:

另一个孔子 ling yī ge kǒngzǐ another Confucius
两个中国 liàng ge zhōngguó two Chinas

1.1.6 TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL NOUNS

A group of time and location words can be defined as temporal–spatial nouns. These nouns cut right across common, abstract and proper nouns to focus on the notions of time and space. They are, in fact, habitual cognitive linchpins in a speaker’s awareness of daily happenings and events, their precedences, consequences and developments, and their venues and associations, and they help to order and rationalise thought processes. Without these temporal and spatial labels, narration would become impossible and argument would be devoid of logic.

**Temporal nouns:**
- 昨天 zuòtiān yesterday
- 去年 qùnián last year
- 下周 xiàzhōu next week
- 每天 měitiān every day
- 新石器时代 xīnshíqì shí dài the Neolithic Age

**Spatial nouns:**
- 中国 zhōngguó China
- 北京 bèijīng Beijing
- 伦敦 lùndūn London
- 飞机场 fēijīchǎng airport
- 火车站 huǒchēzhàn railway station

What differentiates this group of nouns from the rest is their normal usage as adverbials with or without the help of the preposition-like coverb 在 zài ‘at, in, on, exist’. For example:

他昨天来看我。 tā zuòtiān lái kàn wǒ He came to see me yesterday.
他在中国访问。 tā zài zhōngguó fāngwèn He is touring China at the moment.
1.2 NOUNS AND REFERENCE

1.2.1 DEFINITE OR INDEFINITE/GENERIC REFERENCE

Proper nouns have unique referents and are therefore always of **definite reference** while abstract and material nouns usually have **indefinite** or **generic reference** when unqualified. Collective nouns, too, are by nature of indefinite reference. With common nouns, however, we are faced with a clear choice between definite and indefinite reference.

In a language without definite or indefinite articles like Chinese, the reference of unmarked nouns is influenced by a number of factors: context, sentence type, the position of the noun in relation to the verb in the sentence, and the nature of the verb itself. When we use the noun *shū* ‘book’, for instance, we have no way of determining whether it means ‘the book(s)’ or ‘books’ in general until we place it in a sentence.

In a sentence with an action verb, whether transitive or intransitive, all pre-verbal unmarked nouns (being given information) are of definite reference whereas all post-verbal unmarked nouns (new information) are generally of indefinite reference. For example:

- *shū yǐjīng huán le*  
  The book/books has/have already been returned.

- *wǒ qù jiè shū*  
  I am going/went to borrow a book/some books.

- *háizi huílái le*  
  The child/children has/have come back.

In some contexts, however, a post-verbal unmarked noun may be part of given information and therefore be of definite reference:

- *tā qù zhàogū háizi*  
  She went to look after the children.

With an expository verb like *shì* ‘to be’, the pre-verbal position may also feature new information. It is therefore not impossible for pre-verbal nouns in expository sentences to acquire indefinite or generic reference as well as definite reference, depending on the context. For example:

---

5 See Chapter 23 for a full discussion of reference in relation to sentence types.
Books are messengers of knowledge and culture.

I bought the books.

Definite or indefinite reference may, of course, be formally marked by demonstratives or ‘numerals + measure word’ phrases.

With the help of demonstratives and measure words, a definite-referenced noun may also be used post-verbally:

I have read this book.

However, an indefinite-referenced noun, despite the fact that it has been specified by a ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase, cannot normally be featured in a pre-action-verb position:

* A book was placed on the table.

As a general rule, the shift of an indefinite-referenced noun to a pre-action-verb position will entail the use of the verb 有 ‘there is/are, to exist, to have’:

There was a book on the table.

At this moment a car drove up.

This, however, happens increasingly in modern translations: e.g. At this moment a car drove up, but it is still felt to be translationese by most Chinese readers.

The numeral 一 ‘one’ is often omitted for reasons of speech rhythm.
1.2.2 EXCLUSIVE REFERENCE

Apart from definite and indefinite/generic reference, exclusive references can also be expressed through the use of ‘yi ‘one’ plus a measure word or the adjective 什么 ‘any’. Exclusive-referenced nouns are invariably positioned pre-verbally, and are always accompanied by the obligatory use of an adverb 也 ‘also’ or 都 ‘all’ in the predicate or comment:

我一本书也没借。 wǒ yì běn shū yè méi jiè
I didn’t borrow a single book.

他什么书都看。 tā shénme shū dōu kàn
He reads any books.

1.3 NOUNS AND PLURALITY

Collective nouns, as we have seen, possess inbuilt notion of plurality and are therefore not definable by precise numbers (see §1.2).

Proper nouns derive their singularity or plurality from their corresponding referents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>(singular)</th>
<th>(singular/plural)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>英国</td>
<td>yīngguó</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>基督教徒</td>
<td>jídū jiàotú</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With abstract nouns, the notion of plurality does not normally arise. If it does, it is in a metaphorical and non-numerical sense. An abstract noun can usually only be made to associate with the numeral ‘yi ‘one’. For example:

一线希望 yīxiàn xīwàng a gleam of hope
一派胡言 yī pài húyán a pack of nonsense

It is only with common nouns that there is an obvious choice as to whether they are plural or singular, and plurality is generally indicated by a ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase:

五个学生 wǔ ge xuéshēng five students
两只小猫 liáng zhī xiǎomāo two kittens
三把刀 sān bā dāo three knives

See also §6.2.
In addition 一些 yixiē ‘some’, 几 jǐ plus a measure word ‘a few’, and other established adjectives like 许多 xūduō ‘many’, 不少 būshāo ‘quite a few’, etc., can be used:

- 一些苹果 yixiē píngguǒ some apples
- 几个人 jǐ gè rén a few people
- 许多商店 xūduō shāngdiàn many shops
- 不少书 būshāo shū quite a few books

Similarly, in the case of material nouns, plurality is expressed in conjunction with their measures or through rough estimation. For example:

- 一块布 yī kuài bù a piece of cloth (singular: partitioning)
- 两匹布 liǎng pǐ bù two bolts of cloth (plural: packaging)
- 一批布 yī pǐ bù a batch of cloth (singular: group)
- 两尺布 liǎng chǐ bù two Chinese feet of cloth (plural: standard measures)
- 一些/一点儿布 yixiē/yídiānr bù some cloth (rough estimate)

With human nouns there is a standard plural suffix form 们 men. Some restrictions, however, apply to its use: it normally relates to people in groups, and therefore regularly occurs as a term of address in gatherings, e.g. 朋友们 péngyǒumen ‘friends’, 先生们、女士们 xiǎnshēngmen nǚshīmen ‘ladies and gentlemen’; it is not used with numbers, e.g. ‘three children’ will therefore be 三个孩子 sān ge háizǐ rather than *三个孩子们 *sān ge háizīmen; and when it is present in a sentence, the noun to which it is suffixed is invariably of definite reference:

- 客人们 kèrénmen the guests
- 孩子们 háizīmen the children

It should also be noted that there are a small number of nouns in the language that, whatever their category, cannot be quantified at all (unless metaphorically). They provide some form of overall description: from natural phenomena to social conditions and human traits. For example:

- 大自然 dàziran nature
- 天空 tiānkōng the sky

10 The indeterminate plural measure 些 xiē occurs with the numeral — yǐ and no others. It is also used with the demonstratives 这 zhè and 那 nà to form the plural demonstrative adjectives 这些 zhēixiē ‘these’ and 那些 neixiē ‘those’ (see §3.2). The — yǐ ‘one’ in 一些 yixiē ‘some’ may sometimes be omitted.

11 The list is not exhaustive.
1.4 NOUNS AND SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS

Nouns, whatever their category, and noun phrases may contract the following syntactic relationships with other word classes in a syntactic construction – phrasal as well as sentential:

**Phrasal:**
(a) as an attributive with or without the *de* indicating attribution or possession:

- 电脑世界 diànnǎo shìjiè the computer world
- 电脑的将来 diànnǎo de jiānglái the future of computers

(b) as a headword modified by an adjectival attributive with or without the *de*:

- 新书 xīn shū new books
- 年轻的诗人 niánqīng de shīrén a young poet
- 美丽的风景 měi lì de fēngjǐng a beautiful view
(c) as a headword modified by a ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase:

- 一个诗人 yi ge shīrén a poet
- 两架飞机 liàng jià fēijī two aircraft

(d) as an object governed by a preposition or coverb:

- 靠墙 kāo qiáng against the wall
- 沿着大路 yánzhe dàlù along the road

(e) as a headword followed by a full or abbreviated postposition:

- 桌子上边 zhuōzǐ shàngbiān on the table
- 桌子上 zhuōzǐ shàng on the table

(f) as items juxtaposed to each other or joined together by conjunctions:

- 楼上楼下 lóushàng lóuxià upstairs and downstairs
- 桌子和椅子 zhuōzǐ hé yīzǐ tables and chairs

Sentential:

(g) as the subject of a sentence:

- 飞机起飞了 fēijī qǐfēi le The plane took off.

(h) as the topic of a sentence:

- 电脑十分有用 diànnǎo shífēn yǒuyòng Computers are extremely useful.

(i) as a predicative after 是 shì ‘to be’:

- 这位是诗人 zhè wèi shì shīrén This gentleman/lady is a poet.

(j) as a nominal predicate: 12

- 今天星期五 jīntiān xīngqī wǔ Today is Friday.
- 小孩今年四岁 xiǎohái jīnnián sì suì My child is 4.

12 A nominal predicate can always be reworded to include the expository verb 是 shì ‘to be’; e.g. 今天是星期五 jīntiān shì xīngqī wǔ ‘Today is Friday’. Predicates like these are restricted to the predication of time, date, size, weight, length, height, price, age, nationality, birthplace, personal physical or psychological traits, etc. Physical and psychological traits are represented by phrases like 高个儿 gāgedēr ‘a tall person’, 急性子 jíxìngzi ‘a person of fiery temper’, etc. For example,这个人急性子 zhèrén jíxìngzi ‘This person is hot-tempered’.
(k) as the object of a transitive verb:

他很尊敬老师。  tā hěn zūn jīng lǎo shī  He respects teachers very much.

(l) as an adverbial:

他昨天回来。  tā zuǒ tiān huí lái  He came back yesterday.
他一个人回来。 tā yī ge rén huí lái  He came back on his own.

Apart from temporal nouns, which are almost always used as adverbials, there are a very restricted number of nouns that may be sometimes used (with or more often without the adverbial marker 的 de) as adverbials. The most common ones are:

- 表面  biàomiàn  surface > superficially
- 部分  bùfèn  part > partially
- 集体  jítí  collective > collectively
- 和平  hépíng  peace > peacefully
- 本能  běnnéng  instinct > instinctively
- 历史  lìshǐ  history > historically
- 逻辑  luójí  logic > logically

1.5 NOUNS AND SEMANTIC FIELDS

Nouns may be compartmentalised into definable categories in terms of meaning. These definable categories are generally known as semantic fields. One salient feature of these categories is their established or potential hyponymic relationship with one another. For example, a semantic field concerning meteorological phenomena in Chinese may have a superordinate term 气象 qìxiàng ‘meteorology’ dominating the following hyponyms:

- 雨  yǔ  rain
- 雪  xuě  snow
- 冰  bīng  ice
- 霜子  báozì  hailstone
- 风  fēng  wind
- 云  yún  cloud
- 霜  shuāng  frost
- 露水  lùshuǐ  dew
- 虹  hóng  rainbow
- 彩霞  cǎixiá  sunset clouds
- 雾  wù  fog
- 烟雾  yānwù  smog
- 雷  léi  thunder
- 闪电  shǎndiàn  lightning
These terms may seem different from one another, but in their written form they mostly share the common radical 雨 yǔ ‘rain’: 雪 xuě, 霜 shuāng, 霞 xiá, 霜 xù, 雾 wù, 雷 léi, and the original, unsimplified versions of 电 diàn (電) and 云 yún (雲). If we go further and try to retrieve co-hyponyms of, for example, 雨 yǔ ‘rain’ or 風 fēng ‘wind’ down the semantic ladder, we will find that most terms are organised with the superordinate terms themselves as headwords:

### 雨 yǔ ‘rain’:
- 大雨 dà yǔ: heavy rain
- 毛毛雨 máomáo yǔ: drizzle
- 阵雨 zhèn yǔ: shower
- 暴风雨 bào fēng yǔ: storm

### 風 fēng ‘wind’:
- 微风 wēi fēng: breeze
- 大风 dà fēng: gale
- 台风 tái fēng: typhoon
- 颶风 jiāo fēng: hurricane
- 龍捲風 lóng juàn fēng: tornado

In the Chinese lexicon, in fact, hyponymic or co-hyponymic relationships like the above are often realised in terms of a suffix-like form shared by the hyponyms or co-hyponyms in the field. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>superordinate term</th>
<th>zhhuānjiā</th>
<th>zhuānjiā</th>
<th>xuějiā</th>
<th>zhuōjiā</th>
<th>huājiā</th>
<th>yinyuèjiā</th>
<th>yishùjiā</th>
<th>tànxiānjiā</th>
<th>cishànjiā</th>
<th>cishànjiā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>专家</td>
<td>special; professional</td>
<td>作家</td>
<td>writer</td>
<td>画家</td>
<td>painter</td>
<td>音乐家</td>
<td>musician</td>
<td>艺术家</td>
<td>artist</td>
<td>探险家</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>童车家</td>
<td>philanthropist</td>
<td>医生</td>
<td>artist</td>
<td>父亲家</td>
<td>explorer</td>
<td>足球</td>
<td>philantropist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>superordinate term</th>
<th>jiāotōng gōngjù</th>
<th>means of transport</th>
<th>huǒchē</th>
<th>train</th>
<th>diànhē</th>
<th>tram; trolley</th>
<th>qīchē</th>
<th>car</th>
<th>láncē</th>
<th>cable car</th>
<th>mótuōchē</th>
<th>motorcycle</th>
<th>zìxīngchē</th>
<th>bicycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>交通工具</td>
<td>coach</td>
<td>火车</td>
<td>train</td>
<td>电车</td>
<td>tram; trolley</td>
<td>汽车</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>续车</td>
<td>cable car</td>
<td>摩托车</td>
<td>motorcycle</td>
<td>自行车</td>
<td>bicycle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**co-hyponyms of 汽车 qīchē ‘car’:**
- 长途汽车 chángtú qīchē | coach
- 公共汽车 gōnggòng qīchē | bus
Another salient feature of these semantic fields are the sets of **metonymic relationships** which are often expressed in terms of a **prefix-like form** shared by the members of the same field. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>车头</td>
<td>chētóu</td>
<td>the front of a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>车身</td>
<td>chēshēn</td>
<td>the body of a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>车尾</td>
<td>chēwěi</td>
<td>the rear of a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>车轮</td>
<td>chēlún</td>
<td>wheel (of a car)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>车胎</td>
<td>chētāi</td>
<td>tyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>车闸</td>
<td>chēzhá</td>
<td>brake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>车牌</td>
<td>chēpái</td>
<td>number plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山顶</td>
<td>shāndǐng</td>
<td>peak; summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山腰</td>
<td>shānyāo</td>
<td>halfway up (a mountain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山脚</td>
<td>shānjīào</td>
<td>foot (of a mountain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山坡</td>
<td>shānpō</td>
<td>slope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山脊</td>
<td>shānjǐ</td>
<td>ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山谷</td>
<td>shāngū</td>
<td>ravine; valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>山坞</td>
<td>shānwù</td>
<td>glen; col</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鞋底</td>
<td>xiédí</td>
<td>sole (of shoe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鞋跟</td>
<td>xiégēn</td>
<td>heel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鞋帮</td>
<td>xiébāng</td>
<td>upper (of shoe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鞋带</td>
<td>xiédài</td>
<td>shoelace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花瓣</td>
<td>huābàn</td>
<td>petal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花蕾</td>
<td>huālèi</td>
<td>bud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花蕊</td>
<td>huārúi</td>
<td>stamen or pistil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花粉</td>
<td>huāfēn</td>
<td>pollen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such metonymic associations are not limited to **part-and-whole relationship**, but extend to **spatial affinity** in diverse senses. For example,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>花盆</td>
<td>huāpén</td>
<td>flower pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花瓶</td>
<td>huāpíng</td>
<td>flower vase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花篮</td>
<td>huálán</td>
<td>basket of flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花园</td>
<td>huāyuán</td>
<td>garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花匠</td>
<td>huājiàng</td>
<td>gardener</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 Nowadays there is an increasing use of **的士** for ‘taxi’ (in place of 出租汽车 **chūzū qìché** in everyday speech, **的士** borrows the Cantonese transliteration of ‘taxi’.)
1.6 NOMINALISATIONS

Nominalisation in Chinese does not usually seek morphological conversions. It is always context-dependent. In other words, all nominalisations are contextual nominalisations.

A verb or an adjective may be taken as a noun therefore only in a given context or grammatical framework: for example 广播 guǎngbō ‘to broadcast’ in origin is a verb, as in 广播新闻 guǎngbō xīnwén ‘to broadcast news’. However, if the order of the two words is reversed, 新闻广播 xīnwén guǎngbō will mean ‘news broadcast’, in which the word ‘broadcast’ may be said to have been nominalised according to its headword status in the collocation.

Again, 美 měi ‘beautiful’ in 这个菜的味道真美 zhè ge cài de wèidào zhēn měi ‘This dish tastes really delicious’ (literally: the taste is really beautiful) is undoubtedly an adjective. However, in a context such as the following, it functions as a noun: 外表的美不等于内心的美 wàibiǎo de měi bù děngyú nèixīn de měi ‘Beauty in appearance is not the same as beauty at heart’.

Contextual nominalisation, as we can see, occurs essentially with verbs and adjectives when they are used as grammatical topics or objects. Other word classes are less likely to become nominalised. Here are a few more examples, in which the verbs 研究 yánjiū ‘to study, to research into’, 发现 fāxiàn ‘to discover’ and 判断 pànduàn ‘to judge’ have been made nouns:

他对这个问题进行了研究。 tā duì zhè ge wèntí jìn xíng le yánjiū
He conducted some research into/made a study of the problem.

他然后根据自己的发现，对这个问题作出了判断。
tā ránhòu gēnjū zījǐ de fāxiàn | duì zhè ge wèntí zuòchū le pànduàn
He then, based on his discovery, made a judgement on the problem.
2 NUMERALS AND MEASURES

2.1 DIGITS, UNITS AND CARDINAL NUMBERS

There are eleven digital notations in Chinese:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>零</td>
<td>líng²</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>二</td>
<td>èr (两 liáng)²</td>
<td>two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>四</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>五</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>六</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>七</td>
<td>qī</td>
<td>seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>八</td>
<td>bā</td>
<td>eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>九</td>
<td>jiǔ</td>
<td>nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>十</td>
<td>shí</td>
<td>ten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cardinal integers or round figures from eleven to ninety-nine are formed by arranging in different sequences the ten digits from one to ten. For example:

- twelve = shí’èr
- nineteen = shí jiu
- twenty = èr shí
- ninety = jiǔ shí
- twenty-nine = èr shí jiǔ
- ninety-two = jiǔ shí èr

Numbers above 100 make use of a set of unitary notations, some of which are peculiar to Chinese. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>百</td>
<td>bǎi</td>
<td>hundred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>千</td>
<td>qiān</td>
<td>thousand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The digit 零 líng ‘zero’, apart from indicating itself, is only used in ordinals, decimals or numbers larger than 100.
2 两 liáng ‘two’ is used with measures and nouns rather than 二 èr: 两个人 liǎng ge rén ‘two people’, 两点钟 liǎng diǎn zhōng ‘two o’clock’. However, this does not apply to numbers over ten, e.g. 十二个人 shí’èr ge rén ‘twelve people’, 五十二岁 wǔshí èr suì ‘52 years old’. Also, when 两 liǎng itself is used as a measure word meaning ‘tael’ or ‘50 grams’, 二 èr is preferred to avoid a euphonic clash.
The differences between Chinese and English unitary notations are therefore as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>trillion</th>
<th>billion</th>
<th>million</th>
<th>thousand</th>
<th>hundred</th>
<th>ten</th>
<th>one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1, 0</td>
<td>0, 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0, 0</td>
<td>0, 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>十亿</th>
<th>百万</th>
<th>万亿</th>
<th>亿</th>
<th>百万</th>
<th>千</th>
<th>百</th>
<th>十</th>
<th>个</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>七百</td>
<td>万位</td>
<td>亿位</td>
<td>千万</td>
<td>百万</td>
<td>千</td>
<td>百</td>
<td>十</td>
<td>个</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see that, compared with English where beyond a thousand a new unitary notation is introduced every three places, in the Chinese system, a new notation is used every four places beyond ten thousand (万 万).  

Here are some examples demonstrating the conversion:

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>一百</td>
<td>yī bāi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>一百二十五</td>
<td>yī bāi èrshí wǔ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,236</td>
<td>三千二百三十六</td>
<td>sān qiān èr bāi sānshí liù</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54,321</td>
<td>五万四千三百二十一</td>
<td>wǔ wàn sì qiān sān bāi èrshí yī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>543,217</td>
<td>五十四万三千二百一十七</td>
<td>wǔshí sì wàn sān qiān èr bāi yīshí qī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>一百二十万</td>
<td>yī bāi èrshí wàn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,100,000,000</td>
<td>十一亿</td>
<td>shíyī yī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that in counting numbers larger than one hundred, — yī ‘one’ has to be incorporated before tens as well. Compare:

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>十八</td>
<td>shíbā</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>一百一十八</td>
<td>yī bāi yīshí bā</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

零 líng ‘zero’ has to be introduced into a number where one or more consecutive unitary notations are missing. Compare:

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,981</td>
<td>一千九百八十一</td>
<td>yī qiān jiǔ bǎi bāshí yī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>一千零八十一</td>
<td>yī qiān líng bāshí yī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>一千零一</td>
<td>yī qiān líng yī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,101</td>
<td>一万零一百零一</td>
<td>yī wàn líng yī bǎi líng yī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ 个 gè, the most commonly used measure word (see §2.8.2 below), is generally used to represent one digit numbers (个位数 gè wèi shù).
2.2 ORDINALS

Ordinals in Chinese are formed simply by adding the prefix 第 dì to cardinal numbers. For example:

- 一 yì one > 第一 dì yī first
- 五 wǔ five > 第五 dì wǔ fifth
- 一百零一 yī bǎi líng yī one hundred and one > 第一百零一 dì yī bǎi líng yī one hundred and first

Other examples are:

- 第十一图 dì shíyī tú Diagram 11
- 第八表 dì bā biāo Chart 8
- 第二卷 dì èr juàn Volume 2 (of a set of books)
- 第十二页 dì shíèr yè Page 12

However, not all sequencing in ordinals in English is convertible into corresponding ordinals in Chinese. For example:

Year Two (i.e. the second year) 二年级 èr niánjì
not: *第二年级 *dì èr niánjì
second floor 三楼 sān lóu
not: *第三楼 *dì sān lóu

If there are any rules which can be followed, it seems that in classification or gradation 第 dì will normally be dropped:

- 一等舱 yī děng cāng first class (on a ship or plane)
- 二级商品 èr jí shāngpǐn second-class commodities
- 三流作品 sān liú zuòpǐn third-class works (of art or literature)

And if the item is one from an established series, it is customary, too, for 第 dì to be left out:

- 五路车 wǔ lù chē Bus Route 5, the number 5 bus
- 六号房 liù hào fáng Room 6

Also for the sake of succinctness, ordinals are often represented by cardinals following nouns:

---

4 Books and journals are exceptions, e.g. 第四期 dì sì qī 'Vol. 4', 第七期 dì qī qī 'Issue No. 7', because without the ordinal marker 第 dì, the phrases may respectively mean: '4 volumes (of books)' and '4 issues (of journals').

5 This is more so in written Chinese. In spoken Chinese cardinals more commonly precede nouns.
2.3 ENUMERATION

Cardinal numbers indicate amounts and ordinal numbers position in a sequence. Enumeration is the expression of a number, particularly a large number, for its own sake, e.g. in a telephone directory or on a meter.

Enumeration requires that the numbers be used one after another in a linear succession:

\[
\begin{align*}
2783697 & \quad \text{二七八三六九七} \\
(0113) 2333463 & \quad \text{零一一三二三三三四六三}
\end{align*}
\]

It is also used to refer to particular years:

2001 二零零一年  èr líng líng yì nián (lit. two zero zero one year)

However, centuries and decades are expressed in terms of cardinal numbers:

二十一世纪 ërshí yì shìjì  the twenty-first century
八十年代 bāshí niàndài  the nineteen eighties

2.4 FRACTIONS, PERCENTAGES AND DECIMALS

2.4.1 FRACTIONS

Fractions (分数 fènshù) in Chinese are linguistically expressed in the standard way as a numerator (分子 fènzi) which is a proportion of a denominator (分母 fènmǔ). Both the numerator and the denominator are encoded in terms of cardinal numbers, formulaically, as:

\[
\text{denominator + 分之 fēn zhī + numerator}
\]

6 Note that 一 ‘one’ can often be expressed orally, particularly over the telephone, as 一 yào ‘one’ to rule out the possibility of its being confused with 七 qī ‘seven’.

7 Please also note the widespread use of arabic numerals rather than Chinese numerals in modern documentation.
For example:

\[
\frac{1}{2} \quad \text{二分之一} \quad \text{èr fēn zhī yī}
\]
\[
\frac{2}{3} \quad \text{三分之二} \quad \text{sān fēn zhī èr}
\]
\[
\frac{5}{6} \quad \text{六分之五} \quad \text{lù fēn zhī wǔ}
\]
\[
\frac{1}{10} \quad \text{十分之一} \quad \text{shí fēn zhī yī}
\]

Literally, 二分之一 èr fēn zhī yī means ‘one out of two parts’, 三分之二 sān fēn zhī èr ‘two parts out of three’, and so on and so forth.

**Improper fractions** (假分数 jiǎ fēnshù), where the numerator is bigger than the denominator, are expressed in the same way:

\[
\frac{5}{6} \quad \text{五分之六} \quad \text{wǔ fēn zhī liù}
\]

**Complex fractions** (繁分数 fán fēnshù), where the numerator or the denominator itself is a fraction, are expressed in a similar fashion:

\[
\frac{2}{3}/\frac{1}{2} \quad \text{二分之一分之三分之二} \quad \text{èr fēn zhī yī fēn zhī sān fēn zhī èr}
\]

(two thirds over a half)

**Integers followed by fractions** (带分数 dài fēnshù) adopt the following pattern:

cardinal number + 又 yòu ‘plus’ + denominator + 分之 fēn zhī + numerator

\[
1\frac{1}{2} \quad \text{一又二分之一} \quad \text{yī yòu èr fēn zhī yī}
\]
\[
5\frac{3}{4} \quad \text{五又四分之三} \quad \text{wǔ yòu sì fēn zhī sān}
\]

### 2.4.2 PERCENTAGES

Percentages (百分比 bāi fēn bǐ) as fractions with one hundred as their denominator, are expressed in the same way as fractions in Chinese. The only thing to note is that the number ‘hundred’ in the denominator is encoded in the formula as 百 bǎi on its own rather than its full form 一百 yī bǎi:

\[
64\% \quad \text{百分之六十四} \quad \text{bāi fēn zhī liùshí sì}
\]
\[
101\% \quad \text{百分之一百零一} \quad \text{bāi fēn zhī yī bǎi líng yī}
\]

### 2.4.3 DECIMALS

Decimals (小数 xiǎo shù) have two forms: the number before the decimal point may be read as a cardinal number or as an enumeration with the number after it always an enumeration. For example:

\[
275.63 \quad \text{either} \quad \text{èr bǎi qī shí wǔ diǎn liù sān}
\]
\[
\text{or} \quad \text{èr qī wǔ diǎn liù sān}
\]
2.5 IMPRECISE NUMBERS, HALVES AND MULTIPLES

2.5.1 IMPRECISE NUMBERS (约数 yuēshù)

In this section we are including juxtaposition (one or two); approximation (about); indeterminate excess (over, more than).

2.5.1.1 Juxtaposition

This places two consecutive numbers under ten one after the other in the following kinds of formulation:

一两年  
yī liàng nián  
once or two years; a year or two

一、二十天  
yī ěrshí tiān  
ten to twenty days

一、二/两百人  
yī ěr/lìàng bǎi rén  
one to two hundred people

三、四千人  
sān sì qiān rén  
three to four thousand people

七、八万头牛  
qī bā wàn tóu niú  
seventy to eighty thousand cattle

十二、三万只羊  
shí’èr sān wàn zhī yáng  
one hundred and twenty to thirty thousand sheep

but not:

*六十、七匹马  
*liúshí qī pǐ mǎ  
sixty to seventy horses

2.5.1.2 Approximation

This is expressed in a number of ways:

(a) by placing 大约 dàyuē ‘approximately’ before the number:

大约五十三公斤  
dàyuē wǔshí sān gōngjīn  
around 53 kilos

大约四十来天  
dàyuē sìshí lái tiān  
about forty days

大约七十多岁  
dàyuē qīshí duō suì  
about 70 years of age

大约一百人  
dàyuē yī bǎi rén  
around one hundred people

大约三分之一强  
dàyuē sān fēn zhī yī qiǎng  
slightly over one-third
Note that 良 and 多 are sometimes added after unitary notations such as 十 ‘ten’, 百 百 ‘hundred’, etc., to emphasize the approximation.

(b) by putting 左右 zuoyou ‘around, about, more or less’ (lit. left-right) after a ‘number + measure’ phrase, where the associated noun is not usually identified but can be retrieved from the context:

两斤左右 liang jin zuoyou about two catties
三百名左右 san bai ming zuoyou around 300 people

(c) by adding 来 lai to numbers rounded to ten after unitary notations such as 十 shi ‘ten’, 百 bai ‘hundred’, and 千 qian ‘thousand’, etc.:

十来天 shi lai tian about ten days
二十来岁 ershi lai sui around 20 years old
三百来人 san bai lai ren around 300 people

(d) similarly, by adding 把 bao to the single unitary notations 个 ge ‘one’, 百 bai ‘hundred’, 千 qian ‘thousand’ and 万 wan ‘ten thousand’:

个把星期 ge bao xingqi around a week
百把人 bai bao ren around one hundred people
千把块钱 qian bao kuai qian around 1,000 yuan

2.5.1.3 Indeterminate excess

This is usually conveyed by adding 多 duo ‘many’ to numbers rounded to ten, and this applies to any such number from ten upwards:

十多 shi duo over ten; more than ten
二十多 ershi duo twenty and more
一百多年 yi bai duo nian over one hundred years
两千多人 liang bai duo ren more than two hundred people
三千多 san qian duo over three thousand
四万多 si wan duo more than forty thousand
五亿多 wu yi duo over five hundred million
一百多 yi bai yishi duo over a hundred and ten
两千三百六十多 liang qian san bai liushi duo more than 2,360

8 名 ming is a measure for people in lists, e.g. candidates, recruits, team members, etc.
9 Some of these expressions derive from dialect speech.
10 Note that one does not say *一十多个 yi shi duo, though one has to say 一百多 yi bai duo, 一千多 yi qian duo, etc.
11 A sequence like this with 多 duo is not possible if any of the consecutive unitary notations is missing. *四千零八十 *si qian ling bashi duo * ‘over four thousand and eighty’.
多 duō may of course come between two unitary notations when the former qualifies the latter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Simplified</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>十万 shí wàn</td>
<td>over one hundred thousand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>二十万 èrshí wàn</td>
<td>more than 200,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三百万 sān bǎi wàn</td>
<td>over three million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>四千五百六十万 lǐshí wàn</td>
<td>more than 45,600,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all the above numbers with 多 duō, when the number is associated with a noun or measure and noun, 多 duō comes after the number and before the measure or noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Simplified</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>八十多人 bāshí duō rén</td>
<td>over 80 people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三百多张纸 sān bǎi duō zhāng zhǐ</td>
<td>over 300 sheets of paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

多 duō can also be used with single digit numbers up to ten when they occur with standard measures or with temporal nouns, which are de facto measures. In these cases, 多 duō comes after the standard measure and before the noun if there is one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Simplified</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>四公升多(汽油) si gōngshēn duō (qìyóu)</td>
<td>over 4 litres (of petrol)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>六英里多(路) liù yīnglǐ duō (lù)</td>
<td>over six miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>五年多(时间) wǔ nián duō (shíjiān)</td>
<td>over five years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>两点多(钟) liǎng diǎn duō (zhōng)</td>
<td>shortly past 2 o’clock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三个多月 sān ge duō yuè</td>
<td>over three months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

几 jǐ ‘a few’ has a similar function to 多 duō with numbers rounded to ten, between ten and ninety, conveying the meaning ‘slightly more than’. This holds for larger numbers too, provided the final digit is ten (or a multiple of ten):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Simplified</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>十几人 shí jǐ rén</td>
<td>slightly more than ten people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>五十几岁 wǔshí jǐ suì</td>
<td>a little over 50 years of age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>九十几天 jiǔshí jǐ tiān</td>
<td>over ninety days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三百六十几本 sān bǎi liǔshí jǐ běn</td>
<td>over 360 copies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 If the quantifying unitary notation is 十 shí, two possibilities exist. One may say either 十多万 shí duō wàn ‘over ten thousand’ or 十万多 shí wàn duō ‘ten thousand and more’.

13 In more formal styles, the measure word can be omitted with 人 rén e.g. 八十多 bāshí duō rén.

14 The measure word 几 gě may only be used in the case of time words such as 钟头 zhōngtou ‘hour’, 礼拜 lìbài ‘week’.

\[12\text{ If the quantifying unitary notation is } + \text{ shí, two possibilities exist. One may say either } +\text{ shí duō wàn } \text{ ‘over ten thousand’ or } +\text{ shí wàn duō } \text{ ‘ten thousand and more’.}\\
13\text{ In more formal styles, the measure word can be omitted with } \text{ rén e.g. 八十多 } \text{ bāshí duō rén.}\\
14\text{ The measure word 几 } gě \text{ may only be used in the case of time words such as 钟头 zhōngtou} \text{ ‘hour’, 礼拜 lìbài ‘week’}.\]
Numerals and Measures 25

'几 ji ‘a few’ is of course itself an indicator of an imprecise number below ten and is used in the same way as numerals and placed before measure words:

| 几本15 | 几个 | 几个人
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ji běn shū</td>
<td>ji</td>
<td>ji ge rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a few books</td>
<td>several people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition 强 qiáng ‘strong’ and 弱 ruò ‘weak’ are added to fractions or percentages to mean respectively ‘slightly more’ or ‘slightly less’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>三分之一强</th>
<th>百分之二十弱</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sān fēn zhī yī qiáng</td>
<td>bái fēn zhī èrshí ruò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slightly over one-third</td>
<td>slightly below 20 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5.2 HALVES

Half is expressed by 半 bàn which, as a numeral is followed by a measure word:16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>半个苹果</th>
<th>半天</th>
<th>半年</th>
<th>半个月</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bàn ge píngguǒ</td>
<td>bàn tiān</td>
<td>bàn nián</td>
<td>bàn ge yuè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>half an apple</td>
<td>half a day</td>
<td>half a year</td>
<td>half a month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when it means a half in addition to a number, it is placed after the measure and before the noun, if there is one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>一个半西瓜</th>
<th>两天半</th>
<th>三个半月</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yī ge bàn xīguā</td>
<td>liáng tiān bàn</td>
<td>sān ge bàn yuè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one and half melons</td>
<td>two and a half days</td>
<td>three and a half months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5.3 MULTIPLES

Multiples (倍数 bèishù) are expressed by 倍 bèi ‘(one) time as much’ linked with the cardinal number that precedes it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>一倍半</th>
<th>两倍</th>
<th>三倍</th>
<th>一百倍</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yī bèi bàn</td>
<td>liǎng bèi</td>
<td>sān bèi</td>
<td>yī bǎi bèi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one and a half times as much</td>
<td>twice as much</td>
<td>three times as much</td>
<td>a hundred times as much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further examples are:

六是三的两倍。liù shì sān de liǎng bèi. (lit. six is three’s two times)
Six is twice as much as three.

15 In the same capacity, 几 ji may also be used to mean ‘how many’ when asking about a number below ten: e.g. 几本书? ji běn shū ‘How many books?’ (with the speaker presuming a number below ten).
16 See §2.8 below on measure words.
Note that the same multiple may be expressed in the form of a comparison:

六比三多一倍。 liù bǐ sān duō yī bèi.
(lit. six compared-with three more one time) Six is twice as much as three.

今年的粮食比去年增加了一倍。
jīn nián de liángshí bǐ qù nián zēngjiā le yī bèi.
(lit. this year’s grain output compared-with last year increase le one time)
This year’s grain output increased to twice as much as last year’s.

2.6 MATHEMATICAL SYMBOLS AND SIMPLE ARITHMETIC EQUATIONS

The mathematical symbols for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, etc., are expressed in Chinese in the following terms:

+ 加 jiā add, plus
- 减 jiǎn subtract, minus
× 乘 chéng multiply
÷ 除以 chú yǐ divided by
= 等于 dēngyú equal/be equal to

\[
\begin{align*}
1 + 1 & = 2 \quad \text{yī jiā yī dēngyú èr} \\
2 - 1 & = 1 \quad \text{èr jiǎn yī dēngyú yī} \\
3 \times 3 & = 9 \quad \text{sān chéng sān dēngyú jiǔ} \\
12 \div 4 & = 3 \quad \text{shí’èr chú yǐ sì dēngyú sān}
\end{align*}
\]

Other common symbols are expressed as:

> 大于 dà yú bigger than
< 小于 xiǎo yú smaller than
: 比 bǐ as compared with/proportionate to
[ ]⁴ 四次方 sì cì fāng to the power of 4, etc.

For example:

2 : 5 二比五 èr bǐ wǔ two as against five
4³ 四的三次方 sì de sān cì fāng the cube of four

2.7 THE MULTIPLICATION TABLE

Multiplication tables in Chinese have a rhythm similar to English. When the result is a single digit or a multiple of ten, the word 得 dé ‘obtain’ is added. Otherwise the pattern consists simply of enumerations followed by cardinal numbers.
Chinese, like other languages, has standard measure words relating to distance, weight, volume, etc., or to such universal notions as parts, groups or packages:

- yi bang mogu (mw: bang pound in weight) a pound of mushrooms
- yi pian miangbao (mw: pian piece; slice) a slice of bread

However, Chinese is unique in that all nouns, when occurring with a number or demonstrative, generally incorporate a measure, whether or not there is any notion of ‘measuring’:

- yi ben shu (mw: ben copy) a book
- yi zhang zhuozi (mw: zhang spread) a table

In what follows, we will therefore distinguish between standard measure words and classifying measure words (or classifiers).

2.8.1 STANDARD MEASURES

Standard measure words express universally accepted concepts of measurement on the one hand and packaging, grouping and partitioning on the other. For example:

2.8.1.1 National or international measures

- yi yingli lu a mile
- yi pintuo pijiu a pint of beer
- ershi gongsheng qiyou 20 litres of petrol
- liang gongjin pingguo 2 kilos of apples
- san pingfang mi (ditan) 3 square metres (of carpet)

17 Virtually all the examples we will cite in the following sections will use the numeral — yi ‘one’. When unstressed — yi has the meaning ‘a(n)’ and our translations will reflect this.
2.8.1.2 Packaging measures

Packaging measures usually identify the containers concerned:

一包香烟  yi bāo xiāngyān  a packet of cigarettes
一筒饼干  yi tóng bǐnggān  a (tube-shaped) packet of biscuits
一盒巧克力 yī hé qiāokèlì  a box of chocolate
一瓶酒  yī píng jiǔ  a bottle of wine
一杯茶  yī bēi chá  a cup of tea


2.8.1.3 Grouping measures

Small indeterminate numbers or amounts

Some group measures are more precise while others are less so. The two most common ones in Chinese are 一些 yīxiē ‘some’ and 一点儿 yìdiǎnr ‘a little’. As we can see, they are used invariably with the numeral 一 yī ‘one’:

一些苹果  yīxiē píngguǒ  some apples
一些朋友  yīxiē péngyou  some friends
一点儿牛奶  yìdiǎnr niúnái  a little milk
一点儿希望  yìdiǎnr xīwàng  a bit of hope

As we saw in Chapter 1, while 一些 yīxiē ‘some’ occurs with both common and material nouns, 一点儿 yìdiǎnr ‘a little’ is used only with material nouns:

一些钱  yīxiē qián  some money
一点儿钱  yìdiǎnr qián  a little money
一些朋友  yīxiē péngyou  some friends
*一点儿朋友  yìdiǎnr péngyou  *a few friends

However, although 一点儿 yìdiǎnr ‘a little’ and 一些 yīxiē ‘some’ are generally interchangeable when used with material nouns, 一点儿 yìdiǎnr ‘a little’ tends to connote a smaller amount, and, as a result, 一些 yīxiē ‘some’ never features when scarcity is the focal point:
Clusters

Other group measure words can in most cases be used with any numerals. They are applicable either to animate beings or to inanimate objects, but in a few instances they occur with both.

For animate beings:

- 一班年轻人  yi bān niânqīng rén  a bunch of young people
- 一队战士 yī duì zhànshì  a file of soldiers
- 一组孩子 yī zhú háizi  a group of children
- 一股土匪 yī gǔ tūfēi  a gang of bandits
- 一群羊 yī qún yáng  a flock of sheep

Others include: 伙 huǒ 'group' (e.g. students), 批 pī 'batch', 起 qǐ 'batch', 拨 bō 'group'.

For inanimate objects:

- 一束鲜花 yī shù xiānhuā  a bunch of flowers
- 一串钥匙 yī chuàn yàoshi  a bunch of keys
- 一挂鞭炮 yī guà biānpào  a string of firecrackers
- 一沓纸 yī dá zhǐ  a pile of paper
- 一笔钱 yī bǐ qián  a sum of money
- 一份报纸 yī fèn bàozhǐ  a newspaper

Others include: 套 tào 'set' (e.g. stamps), 簪 dié 'pile' (e.g. books), 排 pái 'row' (e.g. houses), 嘟嘟 dūdū 'cluster' (e.g. grapes), 堆 cōng 'clump' (e.g. grass), 簇 cù 'bunch' (e.g. flowers), 汪 wāng 'pool' (e.g. water), 剂 jī 'dose' (e.g. medicine), 缫 liú 'lock; skein' (e.g. hair; thread).

For both animate beings and inanimate objects:

- 一堆人 yī dūi rén  a throng of people
- 一叠土 yī dūi tǔ  a heap of earth

18 群 qún 'crowd; group' is a cluster measure for all animate beings:
Pairs and couples

对 dui and 双 shuang, both meaning ‘pair’, are used with nouns, animate and inanimate, that exist in some form of duality:

- 一对夫妇  yi dui fufu  a married couple
- 一对枕头  yi dui zhentou  a pair of pillows
- 一对耳环  yi dui erhu'an  a pair of ear-rings
- 一双手  yi shuang shou  a pair of hands
- 一双眼睛  yi shuang yanjing  a pair of eyes
- 两双鞋  liang shuang xie  two pairs of shoes
- 三双袜子  san shuang wazi  three pairs of socks

(Also for: 手套 shoutao ‘gloves’, 筷子 kuazi chopsticks.)

The difference between 对 dui and 双 shuang seems to be that the former emphasises complementarity while the latter indicates functioning together.

Pairs of things which are physically inseparable, and in English are viewed as ‘pairs’, do not use 对 dui or 双 shuang in Chinese. For example:

- 一条裤子  yi tiao kuzi  a pair of trousers
- 一把剪刀  yi ba jian dao  a pair of scissors
- 一副眼镜  yi fu yanjing  a pair of spectacles

Parts or series

Part is expressed by 一部分(的) yi bufen (de) and series by 一系列(的) yi xili (de). Both of these terms may only be preceded by the numeral 一 yi ‘one’ and the particle 的 de is optional.

- 一部分人  yi bufen ren  a section of the people
- 一部分工作  yi bufen gongzuo  part of the work
- 一部分时间  yi bufen shijian  part of the time
- 一系列问题  yi xili wenti  a series of problems
- 一系列政策  yi xili zhengce  a whole set of policies
2.8.1.4 Partitioning measures

Partitioning measure words, which represent part of a whole, are common in many languages. For example:

- 一块蛋糕 yī kuài dàngāo a piece of cake
- 两片面包 liǎng piàn miànbāo two slices of bread
- 一瓣儿蒜 yī bàn'ěr suàn a clove of garlic
- 一截儿木头 yī jiér mùtou a chunk of wood
- 一滴水 yī dī shuǐ a drop of water

Others include: 节 jié ‘section’ (e.g. railway coaches), 段 duàn ‘length’ (e.g. rope; string).

In the above, we see the partitioning of concrete objects. In fact, this process of partitioning may be applied to less concrete and more abstract things where the measure is an item or an instance:

- 一起案子 yī qǐ ànzi a crime
- 一项政策 yī xiànghè zhèngcè a policy
- 一堆事儿 yī zhūăng shìr a matter
- 一门课程 yī mén kēchēng an academic discipline
- 一宗心事 yī zōng xīnshì a worrying matter

In a number of cases, this part-whole relationship can be extended to part of a series, concrete or less concrete:

- 一幕戏 yī mù xì a scene in a play, opera, etc.
- 一顿饭 yī dùn fàn a meal
- 一届毕业生 yī jiè biyèshēng graduates of a particular year
- 一班飞机 yī bān fēijī a scheduled flight
- 一茬麦子 yī chá mái zi a crop of wheat
- 一期杂志 yī qī zázhì an issue of a magazine

Others include: 页 yè ‘page’, 味 wèi ‘ingredient’ (e.g. of (herbal) medicine).

These part-series measure words are in fact often used on their own in an ordinal form with the associated headword being understood from the context:

- 第一届 dì yī jiè the first batch (of graduates)
- 下一班 xià yī bān the next (flight, train, etc.)
- 第二册 dì èr cè Volume 2
- 第二版 dì èr bān the second edition
- 上一期 shàng yī qǐ the previous issue
- 这一代 zhěi yī dài this generation (of people)
2.8.2 CLASSIFYING MEASURES

The so-called classifying measure words constitute the great majority of measure words in Chinese. They are not measures in the real sense of the word, but indicators of prominent features which can be attached to a particular set or class of nouns. That is why they are sometimes called classifiers by some grammarians. As with standard measures, these classifying measure words must be used when their associated nouns are qualified by numerals or demonstratives. For example, the classifier bā which is derived from bā ‘handle’ is used as a classifier for things with a handle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yī bā dāo</td>
<td>a knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liáng bā cuò</td>
<td>two files/rasps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sān bā qǐáo</td>
<td>three spades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sì bā shānzi</td>
<td>four (folding) fans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wǔ bā sān</td>
<td>five umbrellas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liù bā sàozhòu</td>
<td>six brooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qī bā jiàn</td>
<td>seven swords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bā bā jù</td>
<td>eight saws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhèi bā fūzi</td>
<td>this axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nèi bā cháhú</td>
<td>that teapot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This usage is then extended to everything that can be ‘held by the hand as if by a handle’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yī bā chǐ</td>
<td>a ruler (for measuring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liáng bā shūzi</td>
<td>two combs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sān bā yàoshi</td>
<td>three keys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sì bā suó</td>
<td>four locks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wǔ bā yízi</td>
<td>five chairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and then further extended to anything that can be ‘held or scooped up by the handful’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yī bā mǐ</td>
<td>a handful of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī bā tǔ</td>
<td>a handful of earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī bā huā</td>
<td>a bunch of flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī bā yǎnlèi</td>
<td>a flood of tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī bā húzi</td>
<td>a beard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Metaphorical extensions are also possible:

- 一把年纪  
  yī bā niánjì  
  getting on in years (年纪 niánjì age)

- 一把力气  
  yī bā liqì  
  quite strong (力气 liqì strength)

- 一把劲儿  
  yī bā jìnér  
  quite an effort

Other classifying measure words in the language are derived and used in a similar fashion. We will now discuss their particular usages in turn.

The most versatile multi-purpose measure word is 个 gé (usually unstressed as ge in its role as a measure word), which can be associated with most nouns, from human beings to inanimate objects and abstract concepts. For example:

- 一个人  
  yī ge rén  
  a person

- 一个朋友  
  yī ge péngyou  
  a friend

- 一个手表  
  yī ge shǒubíàó  
  a watch

- 一个西瓜  
  yī ge xǐguā  
  a watermelon

- 一个岛  
  yī ge dǎo  
  an island

- 一个城市  
  yī ge chéngshì  
  a city

- 一个电影  
  yī ge diànyǐng  
  a film

- 一个主意  
  yī ge zhúyì  
  an idea

More often, however, particular sets of nouns which share common characteristics or belong to the same type are linked with more specific measure words. These associations are generally derived from shape, category or related activity. For example:

2.8.2.1 Shape-oriented

*Long and narrow*

- 一枝笔  
  yī zhī bǐ  
  a pen

(Also for: 蜡烛 làzhú ‘candle’, 枪 qiāng ‘rifle’, 箭 jiàn ‘arrow’.)

- 一支火箭  
  yī zhī huǒjiàn  
  a rocket

(Also for: 军队 jùnduì ‘army or column of troops’, 牙膏 yágāo ‘tube of toothpaste’, 香 xiāng ‘joss-stick’, 乐曲 yuèqǔ ‘musical composition or piece of music’.)

- 一根针  
  yī gēn zhēn  
  a needle

---

19 Nouns associated with 枝 zhī may generally also use 支 zhī, but this does not apply the other way round in that, where 支 zhī is the normal measure for a noun, it cannot be replaced by 枝 zhī.

20 Another measure word for 香 xiāng ‘joss-stick’ is 炷 zhù, particularly if the joss-stick is burning.
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一杆枪  yī gān qiāng  a rifle
(Also for: 秤 chèn 'steelyard', 旗子 qízi 'flag'.)

一管毛笔  yī guǎn máobǐ  a writing brush
(Also for: 牙膏 yágāo 'tube of toothpaste', 笛 xiǎo 'vertical flute', 笛子 dízǐ 'flute'.)

一条虫  yī tiáo chóng  a worm
(Also for: 蛇 shé 'snake', 绳子 shéngzǐ 'rope', 狗 gōu 'dog', 鱼 yú 'fish', 旅 lǚ 'road', 肝 guān 'liver', 细线 xìxiàn 'wire', 羽 yǔ 'feather', 棘 jí 'thorn', 荸 hú 'bean', 赣 gǎn 'peanut', 紫 zǐ 'purple', 珠 zhū 'pearl', 个 gè 'each'.)

一道光  yī dào guāng  a ray of light
(Also for: 闪电 shàndiàn 'lightning', 彩 huáng 'rainbow', 竹篱 lì 'bamboo or twig fence', 河堤 hédi 'dyke', 眉毛 méimáo 'eyebrow', 伤疤 shāngbā 'scar'.)

一缕炊烟  yī lǚ chuīyān  a wisp/curl of smoke (from a chimney)

一股泉水  yī gǔ quánshuǐ  a stream of spring water

Round or oval

一颗珠子  yī kē zhūzǐ  a pearl
(Also for: 种子 zhǒngzǐ 'seed', 炸弹 zhàdàn 'bomb', 子弹 zidàn 'bullet', 手榴弹 shǒuliúdàn 'hand-grenade', 心 xīn 'heart', 牙齿 yáchǐ 'tooth', 星 xīng 'star', 糖 táng 'sweet, candy'.)

一粒米  yī lì mǐ  a grain of rice
(Also for: 豆子 dōu 'pea; bean', 花生 huāshēng 'peanut', 葡萄 pútao 'grape', 钻石 zuànsī 'diamond', 沙子 sházi 'a grain of sand; grit'.)

一团毛线  yī tuán máoxiàn  a ball of wool
(Also for: 面 miàn 'dough', 棉花 miánhuā 'cotton wool', 火 huǒ 'fire', 云 yún 'a dense patch of cloud'.)

粒 lì and 颗 kē are generally interchangeable unless the object is larger, when only 颗 kē may be used.
一轮明月  
*yī lún míngyuè*  
*a bright moon*  
(Also for: 红日 hóngrì ‘red sun’.)

**Spread out and/or with a flat surface**

一张纸  
*yī zhāng zhǐ*  
*a piece of paper*  

一幅画22  
*yī fú huà*  
*a painting*  
(Also for: 地图 dítú ‘map’.)

一片叶子  
*yī piàn yèzi*  
*a leaf*  
(Also for: 面包 miànbāo ‘slice of bread’, 雪 xuě ‘snowflake’.)

一面镜子  
*yī miàn jīngzi*  
*a mirror*  
(Also for: 锣 luó ‘gong’, 旗 qí ‘flag’.)

一扇门  
*yī shàn mén*  
*a door*  
(Also for: 窗 chuāng ‘window’)

一块玻璃  
*yī kuài bōli*  
*a piece of glass*  

**Resemblance**

一口井  
*yī kǒu jǐng*  
*a well (口 kǒu mouth; opening)*

一头蒜  
*yī tóu suàn*  
*a head or bulb of garlic (头 tóu head)*

一尾鱼  
*yī wěi yú*  
*a fish (尾 wěi tail)*

两撇小胡子  
.liàng piě xiǎo húzi*  
*a moustache (lit. two strokes of moustache) (撇 piě left-falling stroke in writing)*

22 幅 fú can be usually replaced by *zhāng.*
2.8.2.2 Category-oriented

**Human beings**

个个 (often unstressed) is the general measure word for human nouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一个人</td>
<td>yī ge rén</td>
<td>one person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一个老师</td>
<td>yī ge láo shī</td>
<td>a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一个医生</td>
<td>yī ge yī shēng</td>
<td>a doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一个工程师</td>
<td>yī ge gōng chéng shī</td>
<td>an engineer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatives to 个个, in appropriate contexts, are 位 wèi, 名 míng, 员 yuán, 条 tiáo, 口 kǒu, etc. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一位客人 yī wèi kě rén</td>
<td>a guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>五名学生 wǔ míng xué shēng</td>
<td>five students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>四口人 sì kǒu rén</td>
<td>four in the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一员大将 yī yuán dà jiàng</td>
<td>a senior general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一条好汉 yī tiáo hǎo hàn</td>
<td>a brave man</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(位 wèi: polite alternative)
(名 míng: for counting people)
(口 kǒu: for family members)
(员 yuán: for generals)
(条 tiáo: for strong men)

**Animals and insects**

All animals, birds, and insects use the measure word 只 zhī:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一只羊 yī zhī yáng</td>
<td>a sheep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只狼 yī zhī láng</td>
<td>a wolf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只老虎 yī zhī láo hǔ</td>
<td>a tiger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只老鼠 yī zhī láo shǔ</td>
<td>a mouse, rat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只鸟 yī zhī niǎo</td>
<td>a bird</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只燕子 yī zhī yàn zi</td>
<td>a swallow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只麻雀 yī zhī má què</td>
<td>a sparrow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只鸡 yī zhī jī</td>
<td>a chicken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只甲虫 yī zhī jiá chóng</td>
<td>a beetle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只蜻蜓 yī zhī qīng tīng</td>
<td>a dragonfly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只蝴蝶 yī zhī hú dié</td>
<td>a butterfly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只青蛙 yī zhī qīng wā</td>
<td>a frog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只蟹 yī zhī xiè</td>
<td>a crab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only exceptions are fish, reptiles and worms which are associated with 条 tiáo, as we saw at §2.8.2.1, and also the following:
一匹马  yī pī mǎ  a horse

(Also for: 骡子 luózi ‘mule’, 骆驼 luò tuo ‘camel’.)

一头牛  yī tóu niú  a bull/cow; an ox

(Also for: 驴 lú ‘donkey’, 象 xiàng ‘elephant’.)

一条狗  yī tiáo gǒu  a dog

Plants

棵  kē is the measure word generally used with plants. For example:

一棵菜  yī kē cài  a cabbage
一棵草  yī kē cǎo  a tuft of grass
一棵葱  yī kē cóng  a spring onion
一棵麦子  yī kē màizi  a stalk of wheat
一棵树  yī kē shù  a tree

However, for flowers there are four measure words, each used in different contexts:

一朵花  yī duǒ huā  a flower/blossom
一枝花  yī zhī huā  a flower or blossom on a stem or twig
一束花  yī shù huā  a bouquet (of flowers)
一簇花  yī cù huā  a cluster of flowers

Imposing natural or architectural structures

一座山  yī zuò shān  a mountain/hill
一座塔  yī zuò tǎ  a tower/pagoda
一座桥  yī zuò qiáo  a bridge


For buildings, the following are also commonly used:

所 suǒ: for those with institutional association
间 jiān: for smaller constructions, e.g. rooms, etc.

23 棵 kē and 株 zhū are generally used interchangeably in this context.
24 A blade of grass is expressed by another measure word, 茅 jǐng (一茎草 yì jīng cǎo).
嘉 jǐa: for enterprises, etc.
栋 dòng and 隈 zhuàng, as well as 所 suǒ: for houses

For example:

一所学校 yī suǒ xuéxiào a school
(Also for: 医院 yīyuàn 'hospital'.)

一家旅馆 yī jiā lǚguǎn a hotel
(Also for: 饭店 fàndiàn 'restaurant', 商店 shāngdiàn 'shop', 剧院 jùyuàn 'opera house', 工厂 gōngchǎng 'factory', 行行 yínháng 'bank'.)

一间教室 yī jiān jiāoshì a classroom
(Also for: 房 wū 'room'.)

Vehicles

辆 liàng or 部 bù: for 车 chē car
列 liè: for 火车 huǒchē train
艘 sōu or 条 tiáo: for 船 chuán ship or boat
架 jià: for 飞机 fēijī aircraft
顶 dīng: for 轿子 jiàozì sedan chair

Machines

台 tái, which implies a raised platform or table:

一台机器 yī tái jīqì a machine
一台马达 yī tái mǎdá a motor
(Also for: 车床 chēchuáng 'lathe', 缝纫机 féngrènjī 'sewing-machine', 收音机 shōuyīnjī 'radio', 仪器 yǐqì 'instrument; apparatus'.)

Natural or social events

The same written form 场 with two different pronunciations is used for natural or social events, 场 chǎng (second tone) for a period or spell of a natural event or condition; and 场 chāng (third tone) for social events or recreational or sporting activities. For example:

25 家 jiā and 间 jiān can in fact be used interchangeably, and they may replace all other measure words for buildings with specific functions.
26 台 tái may always be used interchangeably with 架 jià ‘frame; shelf’ in the context of machines. Sometimes 部 bù can also be used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yī cháng dà xuě</td>
<td>a heavy snowfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī cháng dà bìng</td>
<td>a (period of) serious illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī chóng zhǎng dia nyǐng</td>
<td>a film show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī chóng qiúsài</td>
<td>a ball game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Publications, writings, expressions, etc.**

- 一 本 书  yī běn shū a book

(Also for: 杂志 zázhì ‘magazine’, 期刊 qīkān ‘journal’, or any publication that is bound into a volume.)

- 一 首 诗  yī shǒu shī a poem

(Also for: 歌 gē ‘song’.)

- 一 缺 词  yī què cí a ci poem
- 一 篇 文 章  yī piān wénzhāng a piece of writing, an essay
- 一 出 戏  yī chū xì an opera/a play
- 一 句 话  yī jù huà a few words/a sentence
- 一 声 谢 谢  yī shēng xièxiè a word of thanks

**Articles of clothing**

For garments worn on the upper part of the body or on the whole body, 件 jiàn is the measure word:

- 一 件 衬衫  yī jiàn chènshān a shirt
- 一 件 外 套  yī jiàn wàitào a jacket
- 一 件 毛 衣  yī jiàn máoyī a woollen sweater
- 一 件 大 衣  yī jiàn dàyī an overcoat

For garments worn on the lower part of the body, 条 tiáo is normally used:

- 一 条 裤 子  yī tiáo kùzi a pair of trousers
- 一 条 裙 子  yī tiáo qúnzi a skirt

**Accessories** have individual measure words:

- 一 条 围 巾  yī tiáo wéijīn a scarf
- 一 条 领 带  yī tiáo lǐndài a tie
- 一 顶 帽 子  yī dǐng màozi a hat/cap
- 一 副 手 套  yī fū shǒutào a pair of gloves
- 一 双 鞋  yī shuāng xié a pair of shoes
Abstract notions

In Chinese, abstract notions may either be seen as categories or types and the measures used are generally 种 zhōng ‘kind’, 类 lèi ‘category’, 样 yàng ‘type’:

- 一种哲学 yī zhǒng zhéxué a kind of philosophy
- 这类角色 zhè lèi juése this kind of role
- 各样商品 gè yàng shāngpǐn different kinds of commodities

2.8.2.3 Action-oriented

A number of nouns derive their measure words from the actions or activities associated with them. For example:

- 一服药 yī fú yào a dose of medicine (服 fú to take medicine)
- 一封信 yī fēng xìn a letter (封 fēng to seal)
- 一发子弹 yī fā zìdàn a bullet (发 fā to fire; to discharge)
- 一卷软片 yī juǎn ruǎnpiàn a roll of film (卷 juǎn to roll)

(Also for: 手纸 shǒuzhǐ ‘toilet paper’, 床 púgài ‘bedding’.)

- 一捆柴 yī kǔn chái a bundle of firewood (捆 kǔn to tie up)
- 一包糖 yī bāo táng a packet of sweets (包 bāo to wrap up)
- 一撮盐 yī cuō yán a pinch of salt (撮 cuō to pick up between the thumb and the first finger)
- 一把沙 yī bā shā a handful of sand (把 bā to hold; grasp)
- 一捧枣子 yī pěng zǎo a double handful of dates (捧 pěng to carry in both hands)
- 一抱草 yī bào cǎo an armful of hay (抱 bào to hug; embrace)
- 一担水 yī dān shuǐ a shoulder pole of water – with a bucket hanging at the two ends (担 dān to carry on a shoulder pole)
- 一张膏药 yī tiē gāoyào a piece of (medicated) plaster (贴 tiē to stick; glue)
- 一堵墙 yī dú qiáng a wall (堵 dǔ to block up)
- 一任首相 yī rèn shǒuxiāng as prime minister (任 rèn to assume a post)

2.8.2.4 Location-oriented

Location measure come in many forms, in that they identify the actual location involved:
Numerals and Measures 41

2.8.2.5 Metaphor-oriented

A number of measure words are associated with more abstract and descriptive notions. These metaphorical measures occur only with the numeral — yī ‘one’.

For example:

- 一线希望 yīxiàn xīwàng a ray/gleam of hope
- 一团漆黑 yī tuán qīhēi complete darkness (lit. a ball/lump of darkness)
- 一片新气象 yī piàn xīnqìxiàng a new and dynamic atmosphere
- 一江春水 yī jiāng chūnshuǐ a scene of rejoicing
- 一池荷花 yī chí héhuā a tree covered in blossoms
- 一处名胜 yī chù míngshèng a pond of lotus flowers

2.9 MEASURE WORDS AND OTHER ATTRIBUTIVES

To convert a cardinally numbered item into an ordinal one, 第 di is added before the numeral and measure word.27 For example:

- 一个人 yī ge rén > 第一个人 di yī ge rén
  a person; one person the first person

27 See §2.2.
两个人 liǎng ge rén > 第二个人 28 di èr ge rén
two persons the second person

When words like 这 zhè ‘this’, 那 nà ‘that’, 每 měi ‘every’, 某 mǒu ‘certain’, 哪 nà ‘which’, etc. are used with numbers, they are placed before the numeral and measure phrase. If the numeral is 一 yī ‘one’, it is usually dropped. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>this person</td>
<td>zhèi ge rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that person</td>
<td>nèi ge rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every person</td>
<td>měi ge rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a certain person</td>
<td>mǒu ge rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which person?</td>
<td>nèi ge rén</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when numerals other than 一 yī ‘one’ are involved, they obviously cannot be omitted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>these four apples</td>
<td>zhèi sì ge píngguǒ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>those five cups/mugs/glasses</td>
<td>nèi wǔ ge bēizi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every other month</td>
<td>měi liǎng ge yuè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two certain persons</td>
<td>mǒu liǎng ge rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which three people?</td>
<td>nèi sān ge rén</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When descriptive adjectives form part of the attributive to a noun qualified by a ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase, they go between the ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase and the noun. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>this book</td>
<td>zhèi běn shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this new book</td>
<td>zhèi běn xīn shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a girl</td>
<td>yī ge gūniang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a pretty girl</td>
<td>yī ge piàoliang de gūniang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that young man/woman</td>
<td>nèi ge niánqīng rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that brave young man/woman</td>
<td>nèi ge yǒnggān de niánqīng rén</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbal attributives, on the other hand, either go between the ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase and the noun or precede the whole phrase altogether. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>every student</td>
<td>měi ge xuésheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every student who can’t use a computer</td>
<td>měi ge bù huì yòng diànnǎo de xuésheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every student who can’t use a computer</td>
<td>bù huì yòng diànnǎo de měi ge xuésheng</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 第 di as an indicator of ‘sequence’ can only be used with 二 èr and not 两 liǎng.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>两个老师</td>
<td>liǎng ge  lǎoshi</td>
<td>two teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>两个新来的老师</td>
<td>liǎng ge  xīn lái de lǎoshi</td>
<td>two teachers who have newly arrived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>新来的两个老师</td>
<td>xīn lái de liǎng ge lǎoshi</td>
<td>two teachers who have newly arrived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>八家商店</td>
<td>bǎ jiā shāngdiàn</td>
<td>eight shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>八家卖衣服的商店</td>
<td>bǎ jiā mài yīfu de shāngdiàn</td>
<td>eight shops which sell clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卖衣服的八家商店</td>
<td>mài yīfu de bǎ jiā shāngdiàn</td>
<td>eight shops which sell clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一个家庭</td>
<td>yī ge jiātíng</td>
<td>a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一个夫妻经常吵架的家庭</td>
<td>yī ge fūqī jīngcháng chāo jiā jīngcháng</td>
<td>a family in which the husband and wife often quarrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>夫妻经常吵架的一个家庭</td>
<td>fūqī jīngcháng chāo jiā de yī ge jiātíng</td>
<td>a family in which the husband and wife often quarrel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact, the longer the attributive, the more likely it is for the ‘numeral + measure’ phrase to go closer to its headword, rather than follow the normal ‘numeral + measure word + attributive + headword sequence’.

### 2.10 REDUPLICATION OF MEASURE WORDS

Measure words may often be reduplicated to mean plurality, profusion, or exclusiveness. For example:

条条大路通罗马。

**tiáo tiáo dà lù tōng luómá**

All roads lead to Rome.

个个都有责任。

**gè gè dōu yǒu zérèn**

Everybody bears responsibility.

These reduplications may be preceded by the numeral — yī ‘one’ to mean ‘every’ and may be used attributively like a ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase:

一朵朵花

**yī duǒ duǒ huā**

every single flower

一门窗课程

**yī mén mén kèchéng**

each and every course

一个个旅客

**yī gè gè lǚkè**

every passenger

The attributive indicator 的 de may also be included after the reduplication to mean ‘many’:

一座座的桥

**yī zuò zuò de qiáo**

many a bridge

一台台的电脑

**yī tái tái de diànmiàn**

many computers
Reduplication of measure words together with their attached numeral — 一 ‘one’, however, means ‘one after another’:

一个一个地 yi gè yi gè de one after another
一步一步地 yi bù yi bù de step by step
一口一口地 yi kǒu yi kǒu de mouthful after mouthful

2.11 MISSING MEASURE WORDS

Measure words, as we have seen, must accompany any noun associated with a numeral. However, sometimes measure words may seem to be missing from certain structures. One possibility is that the noun itself may be a measure. For example:

一个人 yī ge rén one person (where 人 rén is a noun)
一人 yī rén one person (where 人 rén is a measure)

For example:

一人船 yī rén chuán a one-man boat
一个星期 yī ge xīngqī one week (where 星期 xīngqī is a noun)
一星期 yī xīngqī one week (where 星期 xīngqī is a measure)

For example:

一星期假期 yī xīngqī jiàqī a one-week holiday

There is some ambiguity with temporal nouns. Some of them are only nouns, some may be both nouns and measures and while others may only be used as measures:

一个小时 yī ge xiǎoshí one hour (where 小时 xiǎoshí is a noun)
一小时 yī xiǎoshí one hour (where 小时 xiǎoshí is a measure)

一个钟头 yī ge zhōngtou (colloq.) one hour (钟头 zhōngtou can only be used as a noun)
*一个钟头 *yī zhōngtou *one hour

*一个天30 *yī ge tiān *one day (天 tiān is normally used only as a measure)
一天 yī tiān one day

29 地 de is a particle used to mark descriptive adverbials. See §18.2.
30 天 tiān may sometimes be used as a noun when qualified by an attributive, e.g. 一个大晴天 yī ge dà qīngtiān ‘a bright sunny day’.
Numerals and Measures 45

Another situation, where a measure word seems to be missing, is in quadrisyllabic expressions and established idioms. As the use of measure words is a relatively recent development in the history of the language, it is not unusual that in expressions derived from Classical Chinese one finds numerals directly associated with nouns. For example:

一事无成 yi shi wu cheng
(lit. one thing without success) to have accomplished nothing

一蟹不如一蟹 yi xie bu ru yi xie
(lit. one crab smaller than another crab) each one is worst than the last

一叶障目，不见泰山 yi ye zhang mu | bu bian tai shan
(lit. one leaf screens one’s eye, one does not see Mount Tai) one’s view of the important is obscured by the trivial

三言两语 sanyan liangyu
(lit. three words, two expressions) in a few words

五湖四海 wuhu sihai (lit. five lakes, four seas) all corners of the world

A speaker/writer of the language can create expressions modelled on this omission pattern:

(a) when using — yi ‘one’ with a quadrisyllabic rhythm:

这一问题 zhei yi wenti this problem
某一特点 mou yi tedian a certain characteristic
2.12 DISYLLABIC MEASURE WORDS

The number of measure words in Chinese is approximately 450, half of which are in common use. By far the great majority of them, as we have seen, are monosyllabic, but a small number of established or ad hoc disyllabic measure words are used in colloquial speech. For example:

一嘟噜葡萄  yi dulu putao (colloq.) a bunch of grapes
一疙瘩糕儿  yi geda gagor (colloq.) a small piece of cake
一掐子盐    yi qiazi yan (dial.) a pinch of salt

2.13 COMPOUND MEASURE WORDS

Measure words, particularly in technical texts, can appear as compounded measurements. Generally speaking, the compounding usually takes place between an average or universal measure and a duration or frequency measure. The average or standard measure is mentioned first followed immediately by the duration or frequency measure. For example:

人次       renqi number of [for example] visits from people (within a designated period)
架次       jiaci number of flights (within a designated period)
千瓦小时  qiannwa xiaoshi kilowatts per hour

2.14 DURATION AND FREQUENCY MEASURES

Duration and frequency measures are used in a different way from nominal measures. They will be discussed in full in Chapter 8 which deals with duration and frequency complements.

32 If the quadrisyllabic rhythm is not adhered to, the necessary measure word needs to be supplied, e.g. 另一要求 lingwai yi yaoqiu.
33 See Chapter 26 on Prosodic Features.
3 PRONOUNS, PRONOMINALS AND PRO-WORDS

3.1 PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The system of personal pronouns in Modern Standard Chinese is laid out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>person</th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>speaker only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>speaker and hearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker and hearer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>polite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker and hearer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>polite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see that, first, no distinction is made between subject and object cases in the pronominal system in Chinese. For example, 我 wǒ stands for either 'I' or 'me'.

Second, the distinction between the two forms of first person plural 我们 wǒmen and 咱们 zánmen as indicated in the table is not always made by native speakers, particularly those from the south of the country.

Third, the polite form for the second person singular 您 nín, is in practice most commonly used in addressing superiors or new acquaintances. There is no corresponding form in the plural, and, therefore, other supplementary phrases have to be used to convey the kind of politeness intended, e.g. 你们两位 nímen liàng wèi ‘you two (honourable sirs)’, etc.
Fourth, in the third person singular, the differentiation between genders only appears in the written script and no attempt is made in the spoken form to register such differences.

The possessive forms corresponding to these pronouns are expressed by adding the particle of de after the pronouns; and there is no distinction between possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns. For example:

- my; mine: 我的 wōde
- our; ours (inclusive): 咱们的 zánmende
- your; yours: 你的 nǐde
- your; yours (polite): 您的 nínde
- her; hers: 她的 tāde
- their; theirs (masculine): 他们的 tāmende

This is your tea. 这是您的茶。zhè shì nín de chá

This letter is yours. 这封信是您的。zhè fēng xìn shì nín de zhè fēng xìn shì nín de

3.2 DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

In Modern Standard Chinese, there are only two sets of demonstrative pronouns in common use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>close to the speaker</th>
<th>away from the speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>这 zhè ‘this’</td>
<td>那 nà ‘that’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>这儿 zhèr or 这里 zhělǐ ‘here’</td>
<td>那儿 nàr or 那里 nàlǐ ‘there’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

- 这是我的。 zhè shì wōde This is mine.
- 那是你的。 nà shì nǐde That is yours.

These two demonstrative pronouns on their own can only be used in the topic position. When they function as demonstrative adjectives, they combine with measure words or 'numeral + measure' phrases, and like other pronouns can then occur in any position in a sentence:

1 The forms of topic–comment sentences as opposed to subject–predicate sentences are discussed in Chapter 21.
Note that 这 ‘this’ and 那 ‘that’ are always pronounced respectively as zhè and nà when used as demonstrative pronouns on their own. However, as demonstrative adjectives, when they are followed by a measure, they are also pronounced zhè and nèi by many speakers. This is almost certainly a phonetic fusion of zhe + yì ‘one’ and na + yì ‘one’. Even when yì ‘one’ is present in its own right in an utterance, the pronunciation zhè and nèi can still be used. For example:

这(一)件大衣  zhè (yì) jiàn dàyī  this overcoat
那(一)天  nèi (yì) tiān  that day

It also naturally follows that 这些 ‘these’ and 那些 ‘those’ are pronounced zhèxiē and nèixiē, since the plural measure 些 xiē ‘some’ is itself used only with the measure 一 yì ‘one’.

The location words here and there are also based on the two demonstratives:

here  这儿 zhèr  or  这里 zhèlǐ
there  那儿 nàr  or  那里 nàlǐ

这儿/这里有牛奶。 zhèr/zhèlǐ yǒu niúnǎi  Here is some milk.
你的书包在那儿/那里。 nǐde shūbāo zài nàr/nàlǐ  Your schoolbag is over there.

Finally there are a number of demonstratives (used both as pronouns and adjectives), that occur as established words, expressions, idioms, or sayings. These expressions are more literary than colloquial.

---

2 See §1.3.
3 These demonstratives, being classical in origin, do not occur with measure words and are followed immediately by nouns.
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In writings which adopt a more formal tone, 此 'this; here' and 该 'that; the said; the above-mentioned' are still commonly used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>formal in tone</th>
<th>colloquial equivalent</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>此地/此处 cidì/cíchù</td>
<td>这儿/这里 zhèr/zhělǐ</td>
<td>in this place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>此事 císhi</td>
<td>这件事儿 zhèjiàn shír</td>
<td>this matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>该项工作 gāi xiàng gōngzuò</td>
<td>那项工作 nèi xiàng gōngzuò</td>
<td>that job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>该地区 gāi diqū</td>
<td>那个地区 nèi ge diqū</td>
<td>that area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>human beings</td>
<td>who/whom who shuí or (colloq.) shéi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inanimate objects</td>
<td>what shénme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human beings or inanimate objects</td>
<td>which nà/néi + measure word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one of an ordered closed set</td>
<td>which 几 jǐ (+ measure word)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>where4 nàr/náli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Though ‘where’ is an interrogative adverb in English, 哪儿 nàr in Chinese is a pronoun, e.g. 你去哪儿？ nǐ shàng nàr qù (lit. you to where go) ‘Where are you off to?’.
From the table we can see that there are only two interrogative pronouns 谁 shuí (or shéi) and 什么 shénme, and that there is no case differentiation with 谁 shuí.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>谁不去?</th>
<th>shuí /shéi bù qù</th>
<th>Who is not going?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你找谁?</td>
<td>nǐ zhǎo shuí/shéi</td>
<td>Whom are you looking for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>这是什么?</td>
<td>zhè shì shénme</td>
<td>What is this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你要什么?</td>
<td>nǐ yào shénme</td>
<td>What do you want?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

谁 shuí/shéi may of course be turned into a possessive pronoun or adjective by the addition of 的 de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>这本书是谁的?</th>
<th>zhè běn shū shuí/shéide</th>
<th>Whose is this book?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>这是谁的书?</td>
<td>zhè shí shuí/shéide shū</td>
<td>Whose book is this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

什么 shénme may also be used as an interrogative adjective:5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>你喜欢听什么音乐?</th>
<th>nǐ xihuan tīng shénme yìnyuè</th>
<th>What music do you like listening to?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你什么时候走?</td>
<td>nǐ shénme shíhou zōu</td>
<td>What time are you leaving?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, 哪 nà/něi is an interrogative adjective which is always used in conjunction with an appropriate measure word or ‘measure + noun’ phrase (preceded or not preceded by a numeral) to form an interrogative pronominal expression meaning ‘which one/two/ etc’. Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>哪(一)天?</th>
<th>nà/něi (yī) tiān⁶</th>
<th>Which day?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哪(一)年?</td>
<td>nà/něi (yī) nián</td>
<td>Which year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪(一)件?</td>
<td>nà/něi (yī) jiān</td>
<td>Which jacket/shirt/coat/, etc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪本书?</td>
<td>nà/něi bèn shū</td>
<td>Which book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪两支笔?</td>
<td>nà/něi liàng zhī bǐ</td>
<td>Which two pens?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪些椅子?</td>
<td>nà/něi xiē yīzǐ</td>
<td>Which chairs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪条裤子?</td>
<td>nà/něi tiáo kùzǐ</td>
<td>Which pair of trousers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪班飞机?</td>
<td>nà/něi bān fēijī</td>
<td>Which flight?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪个大夫?</td>
<td>nà/něi gě dài fū</td>
<td>Which doctor?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see, 哪 nà/něi is used to single out a particular one or number from an unlimited group of people or things. If the selection is made from an ordered and closed set of items, 几 jǐ is often used instead. For example:

5 When 什么 shénme is used as an interrogative adjective, it can be linked with human nouns to connote contempt: e.g. 你是什么人? nǐ shì shénme rén ‘Who/What are you?’, 什么积极分子? shénme jījí fēnzi ‘What an activist!’, etc.

6 As with zhè/zhěi ‘this’ and nà/něi ‘that’ above 哪 nà followed by — yǐ may also be pronounced as něi.
3.4 INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

By indefinite pronouns we mean words like ‘everybody’, ‘anybody’, ‘nobody’, ‘everything’, ‘anything’, ‘nothing’, and so on. In Chinese, these pronouns are created by using the appropriate interrogative word in conjunction with a reference adverb, either 都 dōu ‘all’ or 也 yě ‘also’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>谁都/也</td>
<td>everyone, anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>什么都/也</td>
<td>everything, anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪个都/也</td>
<td>all, any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪儿/哪里都/也</td>
<td>everywhere, anywhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They generally occur in the topic position, that is at the beginning of an expository or evaluative sentence, and they can be followed by either a positive or negative comment.

7 Please note however that the answer to 哪(一)天 nǎ/něi (yī) tiān may for instance be: (a) today; or (b) Tuesday; or (c) 21st; while to 几号 jī hào, can only be 21st; likewise the answer to 哪个月 nǎ/něi ge yuè is either (a) this month; or (b) May; but to 几月 jī yuè, can only be May.
8 As 年 nián ‘year’ is an open set, it is therefore not usually used with 几 jī.
9 时 shí ‘time’ is not normally used on its own but often occurs with 几 jī to ask meaning ‘which hour, day, month’, etc. in general terms.
10 In these constructions, the interrogative pronoun becomes indefinite: 谁 shuí/shéi ‘who(m)ever’, 什么 shénme ‘whatever’, 哪个 nà ge/nèi ge ‘whichever’, and 哪儿/něi nié ‘wherever’.
11 See Chapter 20.
As happens with its interrogative usage, the addition of 的 de to the indefinite pronoun 谁 shuí/shéi ‘whoever’ converts it to an indefinite possessive 谁的 shuíde/shéide ‘whose’. For example:

谁的都没有关系。shuí/shéide dōu méiyǒu guānxi
It does not matter whose it is.

However, if these Chinese indefinite pronouns are used in any other than the topic position in a sentence, the sentence generally takes the form of a dependent clause followed by, or embedded in, another larger and independent construction:

见到谁，请替我问候一声。jiàndào shuí | qǐng tì wǒ wènhòu yī shēng
Please remember me to anyone you come across.

我肚子一饿，就想吃点儿什么。wǒ dūzi yī è | jiǔ xiàng chī diǎnr shénme
I like to have something to eat as soon as I feel hungry.

去哪儿都行。qù nǎr dōu xíng
(I’ll) go wherever it is/(I) don’t mind where (we) go.

Very often the same indefinite pronoun is used in a similar position in two clauses within a sentence, the second echoing the first:

有什么，吃什么。yǒu shénme | chī shénme
(lit. have what, eat what) I’ll eat whatever you’ve got.

你去哪儿，我就去哪儿。nǐ qù nǎr | wǒ jiù qù nǎr
(lit. you go where, I then go where) I’ll go wherever you go.

谁弄错，谁负责。shuí nòng cuò | shuí fùzé
(lit. who gets wrong, who is responsible)
Whoever makes a mistake will be responsible.
他跟谁好，我也跟谁好。 **tā gēn shuí hǎo | wǒ yě gēn shuí hǎo**  
(lit. he with whom good, I also with whom good)  
I’ll be nice to anyone he is nice to.

你帮谁，我就帮谁。 **nǐ bāng shuí | wǒ jiù bāng shuí**  
(lit. you help whom, I then help whom) I’ll help anyone you help.

One important thing to note about these interrogatives-turned-indefinite pronouns is that, while their interrogative originals are always stressed in a sentence, as indefinites they never are.

### 3.5 ENUMERATIVE PRONOUNS

By enumerative pronouns we mean fixed pronominal expressions used in Chinese which are similar to ‘etc.’ or ‘and so on (and so forth)’ in English:

他在超市买了一些水果，如梨，苹果，橘子，等等。  
**tā zài chāoshì mǎi le yīxiē shuǐguǒ | rú | píngguǒ | júzǐ | děngdēng**  
He bought some fruit, such as pears, apples, oranges, etc. at the supermarket.

where 等等 děngdēng ‘etc, and the like’ is an enumerative pronoun indicating a thing or things of a similar kind in a list that remains open.

Indefinite pronouns also sometimes occur as enumerative pronouns when they are reduplicated and integrated into an object clause. For example,

他说老王、老张，还有谁(谁)也没有去。 **tā shuō lǎowáng | lǎozhāng | háiyǒu shuí shuí (shuí) yě méiyǒu qù**  
He said Old Wang, Old Zhang and various other people had not gone either.

She thought he understood not only astronomy, geography and mathematics but also all other kinds of things.

### 3.6 PRONOMINALS

Pronominals are words or phrases which function like pronouns. The most common type is either a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase on its own or an attributive followed by 的 de. Take the following noun phrase:

两件红色的外套 **liǎng jiàn hóngsè de wàitào**  two red jackets
Enquiries deriving from it about the number and/or colour of the jackets might invite the following pronominal responses:

我买了两件。  
我买了红色的。  
我买了两件红色的。

wǒ mǎi le liàng jiàn  
wǒ mǎi le hóngsè de  
wǒ mǎi le liàng jiàn hóngsè de

I bought two.  
I bought the red ones.  
I bought two red ones.

两件 liàng jiàn, as a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase and 红色的 hóngsède, as an attributive with 的 de, both represent their associated noun 外套 waitào ‘jacket’ in this context, and are both pronominals. We will look at some other examples in different contexts:

At a fruit stall selling mandarin oranges:

你买几斤?  nǐ mái jǐ jīn  
(lit. you buy how many catties) How many catties do you want?
我买三斤。 wǒ mái sān jīn  
(lit. I buy three catties) I’d like to have three catties, (please).
你要大的还是小的? nǐ yào dà de háishi xiǎo de  
(lit. you want big de or small de) Do you want big ones or small ones?
我要中等的。 wǒ yào zhōngděng de  
(lit. I want medium de) I’d like the medium-sized ones.

A scene on the beach:

海滩上有很多人。有的在晒太阳；有的要么跑步，要么在玩泥沙。
hǎitān shàng yǒu hěnduō rén  yǒude zài shài tāiyáng  yǒu de jù pào zhe  tiào zhe  yào de zài wán níshā  
There are a lot of people on the beach, some sun-bathing, others running, jumping or playing with the sand.

晒太阳的大半是大人。跑步、跳着或者在玩泥沙的大多是小孩。
shài tāiyáng de dàbàn shì dá rén  pào zhe  tiào zhe huòzhě zài wán níshā de dà duō shì xiǎohái  
Those sun-bathing are mostly adults while those running, jumping or playing with the sand are mostly children.

卖冰激凌的车一来，那些跑步、跳着，在玩泥沙的马上停下来，蜂拥而上，团团围住卖冰激凌的，使他忙得喘不过气来。
mài bīngjīlǐng de chē yī lái  nèixiē pào zhe  tiào zhe  zài wán níshā de mǎshàng tíng xiǎolái  fēngyōng ér shàng  tuán tuán wéizhù mài bīngjīlǐng de  shì tā máng de chuān bu guò qì lái  
As soon as the ice-cream van arrives, those running, jumping or playing with the sand immediately stop what they are doing and swarm around the ice-cream man in a tight circle, making him so busy he can’t get his breath.
It must, however, be remembered that the de pronominals always imply a contrast, whether the original forms are adjectival or verbal. In the case of adjectival pronominals, one may, say, for example:

大的  大 de  a big one
最大的 最大的 zuì dà de  the biggest one

but never:

*很大的  hěn dà de  *very big one
*大大的  dàdà de  *biggish one

3.7 PRO-WORDS

Apart from the rule-governed ad hoc pronominals, there are a number of established pro-words in the lexicon. They are items that are often used to replace other words or expressions. One common set takes the place of personal pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>person</th>
<th>singular or plural</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>colloquial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td>自己 zǐjǐ  ‘oneself’</td>
<td>自个儿 zǐgér  ‘oneself’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>别人 biérén  ‘others’</td>
<td>前者 qiánzhě  ‘the former’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 自己 zǐjǐ and 自个儿 zǐgér may also be used as emphatic pronouns, e.g. 我自己 wǒ zǐjǐ ‘I myself’, 他们自个儿 tāmén zǐgér ‘they themselves’, etc.
13 前者 qiánzhě and 后者 hòuzhě are somewhat formal, and are generally used to refer to inanimate objects rather than animate beings.
14 人家 rénjiā normally indicates a third party, e.g. 把书送给人家 bā shū sòng gěi rénjiā ‘Take the book to him (her, them)’; however, it may sometimes be used to refer to the speaker him or herself, that is, referring to oneself as if one is a third party when discussing or arguing with somebody, e.g. 他让人家生气了 tā ràng rénjiā shēngqì le ‘He made me angry’.
The possessive forms of these pro-words are formulated in the same way as personal pronouns by adding the particle 的 de:

- 自己的 zǐjī de  one’s own
- 大家的 dàjiā de  everybody’s

Here are some sentence examples:

自己不愿意做，就别叫别人做。 zǐjī bù yuàn yì zuò | jiù bié jiào biérén zuò
Don’t ask others to do what you are unwilling to do yourself.

请大家安静点儿。 qīng dàjiā ānjìng diànr
Please (would everyone) be a bit quiet.

人家的事儿你别管。 rénjia de shìr nǐ bié guǎn
Don’t poke your nose into other people’s affairs. (i.e. Mind your own business.)

The pro-word 怎么样 zènmeyàng is an interrogative, and often constitutes the whole of a predicate. For example:

- 你今天怎么样? ni jìntiān zènmeyàng  How are you today?
- 你明天怎么样? ni míngtiān zènmeyàng  What are you doing tomorrow?
- 今天的电影怎么样? jīntiān de diànyǐng zènmeyàng  How was today’s film?
- 你怎么样? nǐ zènmeyàng  How about you?
- 你怎么样了? nǐ zènmeyàng le  What’s wrong with you?
- 我没怎么样。 wǒ méi zènmeyàng  There’s nothing wrong with me.15

15 A speaker, in responding to a question, will often borrow or repeat a phrase in this way from the question.
4 ADJECTIVES AS ATTRIBUTIVES AND PREDICATIVES

4.1 ADJECTIVES IN CHINESE

Syntactically, adjectives in Chinese may function as attributes when placed in front of noun headwords (with or without 的 de) (= formulaically: Attr. + Noun); or as predicatives when placed behind nominal headwords (with or without 的 de) (= formulaically: Noun + Pred.); or even as adverbials if placed before verbs (with or without 地 de). We will defer the discussion of adjectives functioning as adverbials until Chapter 9. Here, we will concentrate on attributive and predicative uses.

An adjective (e.g. 漂亮 piàoliang ‘pretty’) used attributively with a noun headword produces an extended nominal expression:

一条漂亮的裙子 yi tiáo piàoliang de qúnzi a pretty skirt

When an adjective is used predicatively with a nominal headword, the result is a clause or sentence:

这条裙子真漂亮。 zhèi tiáo qúnzi zhēn piàoliang

This skirt is really pretty.

Apart from differences in syntactic function and in syllabicity, which directly affects collocability, adjectives also differ in many other respects: qualifiers vs quantifiers, gradable vs non-gradable, conditional vs unconditional, derivable vs non-derivable, reduplicable vs non-reduplicable, phonaesthetic vs non-phonaesthetic, derogatory vs commendatory, and so on. These differences, which invariably affect their syntactic capability, are discussed in turn in §4.2 and 4.6 below.

1 See §4.4 for discussion of the descriptive indicator 的 de.

2 Generally speaking, monosyllabic adjectives tend to form words or set expressions and are therefore more restrictive in their collocability, whereas disyllabic adjectives can be used freely as qualifiers (or quantifiers).
4.2 QUALIFIERS OR QUANTIFIERS

Adjectives in Chinese are used, like adjectives in other languages, to qualify or quantify noun headwords. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>好学生</td>
<td>hào xuésheng</td>
<td>a good student/good students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>许多学生</td>
<td>xùduō xuésheng</td>
<td>many students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

where 好 hào ‘good’ qualifies and 许多 xùduō ‘many’ quantifies. As we can see, both precede their respective headwords. When they come together to qualify and quantify one and the same headword, the quantifier always comes before the qualifier:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>许多好学生</td>
<td>xùduō hào xuésheng</td>
<td>many good students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and not:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*好许多学生</td>
<td>*hào xùduō xuésheng</td>
<td>*good many students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualifiers are used freely as either attributives or predicatives, but quantifiers for the most part function only as attributives. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>所有问题</td>
<td>suǒyǒu wèntí</td>
<td>all the problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*问题所有</td>
<td>*wèntí suǒyǒu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>多数人</td>
<td>duōshù rén</td>
<td>the majority of the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*人多数</td>
<td>*rén duōshù</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exceptions are 多 duō ‘many, much’ and 少 shǎo ‘few, little’, which, when duly modified by a degree adverb, may be used predicatively. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>很多东西</td>
<td>hěn duō dōngxi</td>
<td>a lot of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>东西很多</td>
<td>dōngxi hěn duō</td>
<td>there are a lot of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(lit. things are (very) many)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不少人</td>
<td>bùshǎo rén</td>
<td>quite a few people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>人不少</td>
<td>rén bùshǎo</td>
<td>there are quite a few people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(lit. people are quite a few)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 The kind of quantification indicated by adjectives is generally rough and imprecise compared with the more precise or specific ‘numeral and measure word’ phrases.

4 This is similar to noun phrases with a ‘numeral + measure’ and a qualifier where the former always precedes the latter: e.g. 一个好学生 yī ge hǎo xuésheng ‘a good student’, and not *好一个学生 hǎo yī ge xuésheng.
Note, however, that this exception does not apply to 许多 xǔduō 'many, a lot of':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>许多朋友</th>
<th>xǔduō péngyou</th>
<th>quite a few friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*朋友多</td>
<td>*péngyou xǔduō</td>
<td>*there are quite a few friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other common quantifiers include: 大量 dàiliàng 'a great deal', 好些 hǎoxiē 'quite a number'; 个别 gèbié 'individual', 点滴 diàndī 'a little'; 一切 yīqī 'all', 全部 quánhù 'whole'; 有些 yǒuxiē 'some', 有的 yóude 'some'; 多数 duōshù 'majority of', 少数 shàoshù 'minority of'; etc.

4.3 DEGREE ADVERBS AND COMPLEMENTS

Degree adverbs and complements occur respectively before and after adjectives to indicate the degree or extent to which the meaning encoded by an adjective is to be ascertained:

这本字典很好。 zhè běn zìdiǎn hěn hǎo
This dictionary is very good. [degree adverb]

这本字典好得很。 zhè běn zìdiǎn hǎo de hěn
This dictionary is really good. [degree complement]

The presence of these degree adverbs and complements removes any implication of contrast that is latent in an unmarked predicative adjective.

If somebody says:

这本字典好。 zhè běn zìdiǎn hǎo. This dictionary is good.

the speaker must be understood to be implying that some other dictionary is not as good as this one. In fact the degree adverb 很 hěn 'very', unless it is emphasised, does not really mean 'very', and its integration into an adjectival predicative is more often than not to counteract an implication of contrast.

Quantifying adjectives, with the exception of 多 duō 'many' and 少 shǎo 'few', do not normally occur with degree adverbs or degree complements. For example:

*很许多人
hěn xǔduō rén*  quite a number of people
*好些得很
hǎoxiē de hěn*  quite a few

Qualifying adjectives, on the other hand, as we have just seen, usually do require the modification of degree adverbs.

不是
bù zhòng  not heavy
很美
hěn měi  very pretty
Adjectives as Attributives and Predicatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slightly worse</td>
<td>jiào chà</td>
<td>best of all (lit. most good)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fairly interesting</td>
<td>zui hǎo</td>
<td>fairly interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extremely easy</td>
<td>fēicháng róngyì</td>
<td>extremely easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somewhat pitable</td>
<td>yòu diǎnr kělián</td>
<td>somewhat pitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so pretty</td>
<td>nàmé/zhème piàoliang</td>
<td>so pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how beautiful</td>
<td>duōme měili</td>
<td>how beautiful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

不 bù ‘not’ is both negator and degree adverb. When it is used in conjunction with very hěn ‘very’, two different meanings are possible depending on word order:

- 不很好 bù hěn hǎo not very good
- 很不好 hěn bù hǎo very bad

较 jiào and 比 bijiào ‘comparatively’ indicate a comparative degree and 最 zui ‘most’ a superlative degree. For example:

- 这个较好 zhèi ge jiào hǎo This one is better.
- 这个比较好了 zhèi ge bijiào hǎo This one is better.
- 这个最好 zhèi ge zui hǎo This one is the best.

那么 nàme ‘so’ is usually used in negative sentences and 多么 duōme ‘how’ in exclamatory ones. For example:

我从没见过那么漂亮的孩子。
wǒ cóng méi jiàn guò nàme piàoliang de háizi
I have never seen such a pretty child before.

这儿的风景多么美丽呀！zhèr de fēngjīng duōme měilì ya
How beautiful the view is from here!

Other degree adverbs are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tài</td>
<td>too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gèng/gèngjià</td>
<td>even more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wàn fēn</td>
<td>extremely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tébié</td>
<td>especially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wúbǐ</td>
<td>incomparably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guōfēn</td>
<td>excessively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhēn</td>
<td>really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shìfēn</td>
<td>very, extremely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiàngdāng</td>
<td>quite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jǐqì</td>
<td>fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juédīng</td>
<td>most, exceedingly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 蛮 mán ‘fairly’, which occurs mainly in southern dialects of Chinese, is generally used with commendatory terms, e.g. 蛮好 mán hǎo ‘fairly good’, but not: *蛮坏 mán huài* ‘rather bad’.

6 There is a tendency for 有点儿 yòu diǎnr ‘somewhat’ to be used only with derogatory terms, e.g. 有点儿难 yòu diǎnr nán ‘somewhat difficult’, but not *有点儿容易 yòu diǎnr róngyì* ‘somewhat easy’.
Degree complements follow the adjectives they modify:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>好些</td>
<td>hǎoxiē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好点儿</td>
<td>hào diǎnr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好得很</td>
<td>hǎo de hěn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好得多</td>
<td>hǎo de duō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>美极了</td>
<td>měi jí le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>糟透了³⁸</td>
<td>zāo tòu le</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other degree complements are:

- 玩得不得了 huài de bùdiēliàn rotten to the core
- 饿极了 è sǐ le famished (lit. hungry to death)
- 吃得要命 guì de yàomíng impossibly expensive
- 总是高兴了 gāoxìng de liàobùdé exceedingly happy
- 快乐之极 kuàile zhí jí extremely happy
- 热得要死 rè de yàosǐ unbearably hot

It must, however, be noted that only qualifying adjectives that are gradable can take degree adverbs or complements. Non-gradable adjectives usually cannot. For example:

*很男 hěn nán *very male
*女很 nü de hěn *extremely female

4.4 THE DESCRIPTIVE INDICATOR 的 de

The presence of the descriptive indicator 的 de in an adjectival phrase depends on factors, which are different for quantifying and qualifying adjectives.

Quantifying adjectives are not generally used with the descriptive indicator 的 de when they have no more than a quantifying capacity. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>许多人 xǔduō rén</td>
<td>many people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>广大读者 guāngdà dúzhě</td>
<td>a large number of general readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大量信息 dàliàng xìnxi</td>
<td>a large quantity of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>个别地区 gèbié dìqū</td>
<td>individual areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>些许礼物 xiēxǔ liwù</td>
<td>a few presents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>全部开支 quánbù kāizhī</td>
<td>total expenditure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when a quantifying adjective has a more descriptive than quantifying function, it does incorporate 的 de:

³⁷ For more precise degree complements like 高一公分 gāo yī gōngfēn ‘one centimetre taller’, 大两岁 dà liàng suì ‘two years older’, etc., see §4.9.
³⁸ 透了 tòu le ‘thoroughly, to the core’ tends to occur only with a derogatory meaning, e.g. 坏透了 huài tòu le ‘rotten to the core’, but not *好透了 hǎo tòu le* ‘good to the extreme’.
³³ For gradable and non-gradable adjectives, see §4.6 below.
With qualifying adjectives, on the other hand, the presence of the *de* depends on whether the adjective is monosyllabic or polysyllabic. Generally speaking, monosyllabic adjectives have greater collocational restrictions and hence greater structural bonds with the headwords they qualify. They are therefore often placed directly in front of their headwords without the *de*:\(^\text{11}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduplicated Forms</th>
<th>In Chinese</th>
<th>In English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>红砖</td>
<td>hóng zhūān</td>
<td>red bricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>短裤</td>
<td>duān kù</td>
<td>shorts (lit. short trousers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>近路</td>
<td>jìn lù</td>
<td>a short-cut (rather than a detour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>热水</td>
<td>rè shuǐ</td>
<td>hot water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>新书</td>
<td>xīn shū</td>
<td>a new book/new books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>高个子</td>
<td>gāo gè zi</td>
<td>a tall person (lit. tall build/stature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>怪脾气</td>
<td>guài qí qí</td>
<td>an odd/eccentric temperament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>新房子</td>
<td>xīn fán gúi</td>
<td>a new house/new houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好天气</td>
<td>hǎo tiān qì</td>
<td>good weather</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, di- or polysyllabic adjectives usually require the *de*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduplicated Forms</th>
<th>In Chinese</th>
<th>In English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>肥沃的土地</td>
<td>féiwò de tǔ dì</td>
<td>fertile land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>幽静的环境</td>
<td>yōu jìng de huán jìng</td>
<td>quiet surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>幸福的生活</td>
<td>xìng fú de shēng huó</td>
<td>a happy life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>美丽的焰火</td>
<td>měi lì de yàn huó</td>
<td>beautiful fireworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>凉爽的风</td>
<td>liáng shuǎng de fēng</td>
<td>a cool breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蓝蓝的天空</td>
<td>líng lán de tiān kōng</td>
<td>a blue sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>茂密的树林</td>
<td>mào mì de shù lín</td>
<td>a dense forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>平易近人的老师</td>
<td>pín gē yín rén de lǎo shī</td>
<td>an approachable teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>无穷无尽的力量</td>
<td>wú qióng wú jǐn de lì lì</td>
<td>boundless energy/strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一个聪明伶俐的孩子</td>
<td>yī gè cōng mín líng lì de hāi zi</td>
<td>an intelligent, quick-witted child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All phonaesthetic or reduplicated forms, because of their inbuilt descriptive nature, are also usually followed by the *de*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduplicated Forms</th>
<th>In Chinese</th>
<th>In English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>清清的河水</td>
<td>qīng qīng de hē shuǐ</td>
<td>a clear stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蓝蓝的天</td>
<td>lánlán de tiān</td>
<td>a blue sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>圆滚滚的卵石</td>
<td>yuán gǔn gǔn de luǎn shí</td>
<td>smooth, round pebbles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) All reduplicated forms in Chinese are in fact of a descriptive nature.

\(^{11}\) Where the collocation is loose and/or the noun is long, it is possible for a monosyllabic adjective to occur with the *de*, e.g. 新的自来水笔 *xīn de zì lái shuǐ bǐ* a new fountain pen.
白蒙蒙的雾气  báiméngméng de wùqì  white haze
绿茸茸的草地  lǜróngróng de cǎodi  a lush green lawn/field
弯弯曲曲的小道  wānwānquqū de xiǎodào  a zigzag path
火热火热的太阳  huòré huòré de tàiyáng  a burning hot sun
一个老老实实的人  yī ge lǎolǎoshíshí de rén  an extremely honest person

Monosyllabic adjectives, when modified by degree adverbs, become more descriptive than restrictive, and therefore have to include the indicator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>很大的房子</th>
<th>hěn dà de fángzi</th>
<th>a very big house/very big houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>很脏的衣服</td>
<td>hěn zāng de yīfu</td>
<td>very dirty clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>很高的评价</td>
<td>hěn gāo de píngjià</td>
<td>a very good appraisal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when disyllabic adjectives qualify disyllabic headwords, if the consequent quadrisyllabic rhythm forms a tightly knit expression, then the indicator may often be dropped. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>公共场所</th>
<th>gōnggòng chǎngsuǒ</th>
<th>public places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>首要任务</td>
<td>shǒuyào rénwù</td>
<td>the primary task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>根本问题</td>
<td>gēnběn wèntí</td>
<td>the fundamental problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>关键时刻</td>
<td>guānjìàn shìkè</td>
<td>the critical juncture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>保守势力</td>
<td>bǎoshòu shìlì</td>
<td>conservative forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>耐心指导</td>
<td>nàixīn zhídǎo</td>
<td>patient guidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In adjectival predicatives, which, as we have seen, normally incorporate a degree adverb or complement, the *de* is not usually present:

| 这个孩子很高。 | zhèi ge háizǐ hěn gāo | This child is tall. |
| 这个学生非常聪明。 | zhèi ge xuéshēng fēicháng cóngmíng | This student is very clever. |
| 那儿的生活写意得很。 | nàr de shēnghuó xièyì de hěn | Life there is extremely enjoyable. |

However, this is not always the case. In the three examples above, the adjective is evaluative, conveying a comment or judgement, but it is also possible for the adjective to be descriptive rather than evaluative. When this is so, the *de* is likely to be present:

| 那个人老老实实的。 | nèi ge rén lǎolǎoshíshí de | That man is an extremely honest person. |

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12 This does not imply that the indicator 的 de must be omitted. It is still grammatical to say 首要的任务 shǒuyào de rénwù ‘the primary task’, etc.
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太阳火热热的。 *tài yáng huòrè huòrè de* The sun is scorching.

河水清清的。 *hé shuǐ qīngqīng de* The water in the river is crystal clear.

英国的草地一年到头绿茸茸的。 *yīngguó de cǎodi yī nián dào tóu lǜróngróng de* Lawns in Britain are pleasantly green all the year round.

他整天忙忙碌碌的。 *tā zhēngtiān mángmáng lǜlǜ de* He is busy doing this or that all day long.

Quadrisyllable adjectival idioms, whether evaluative or descriptive, in a predicative position uniquely take neither *hěn* nor the *de*:

那个孩子聪明伶俐。 *nèi ge háizi cóngmíng línglì* That child is intelligent and quick-witted.

河水清澈见底。 *héshuǐ qīngchè jiàn dǐ* The water in the river is crystal clear.

### 4.5 ATTRIBUTIVES AND PREDICATIVES

Adjectives, as we said earlier, may precede or follow their noun headwords respectively as *attributives* or *predicatives*.

#### 4.5.1 ADJECTIVES AND THEIR FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY

While most adjectives will conform to the formulae for attributive or predicative uses described in the previous sections, not every adjective in all its senses may be used attributively or predicatively. In other words, they vary in their functional capacity. Take the monosyllabic adjective 大 *dà* ‘big’ for example.

When 大 *dà* is used to indicate that something is physically ‘big’ or to mean ‘on a large scale’, it may be used either:

(a) attributively:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>大象</td>
<td><em>dà xiàng</em></td>
<td>a big elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大蚂蚁</td>
<td><em>dà máyí</em></td>
<td>a big ant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大箱子</td>
<td><em>dà xiāngzi</em></td>
<td>a big box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大规模</td>
<td><em>dà guīmó</em></td>
<td>on a big scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大问题</td>
<td><em>dà wèntí</em></td>
<td>a big problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大错误</td>
<td><em>dà cuòwù</em></td>
<td>a big mistake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) predicatively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nèi tóu xiàng hěn dà</td>
<td>That elephant is very large.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nèi zhī mǎyǐ hěn dà</td>
<td>That ant is very big.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhèi ge xiāngzi hěn dà</td>
<td>This box is very big.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guīmó hěn dà</td>
<td>It is on a big scale (lit. the scale is very big)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wèntí hěn dà</td>
<td>There is a big problem (lit. the problem is very big)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cuòwù hěn dà</td>
<td>It is a big mistake (lit. the mistake is very big)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when 大 dà is used to mean ‘big’ in a metaphorical sense, i.e. when it is removed from its primary sense of physical size, it has to be modified by 非 hěn ‘very’ not only when it is used predicatively but also as an attributive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dà yìngxiāng</td>
<td>a big influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hěn dà de yìngxiāng</td>
<td>The influence is considerable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yìngxiāng hěn dà</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dà qūbié</td>
<td>a big difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hěn dà de qūbié</td>
<td>There is a major difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qūbié hěn dà</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dà zuòyòng</td>
<td>an important function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hěn dà de zuòyòng</td>
<td>The function is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zuòyòng hěn dà</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dà quánlì</td>
<td>enormous power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hěn dà de quánlì</td>
<td>The power is enormous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quánlì hěn dà</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are other collocational restrictions. When 大 dà ‘big’ is used in the sense of ‘important’ with, say, 人物 rénwù ‘personage’, it can only occur attributively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dà rénwù</td>
<td>a bigwig/an important personage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hěn dà de rénwù</td>
<td>a real bigwig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

but not:

*这个人物很大。  *zhèi ge rénwù hěn dà  *This personage is important.

Nor can 大 dà ‘big’ function predicatively in the sense of ‘serious’ in relation to 病 bīng ‘illness’:
Adjectives as Attributives and Predicatives

大病  da bing  a serious illness
很大的病  hên da de bing  an extremely serious illness

nor:

*tāde bing hên da  *His illness is serious.

On the other hand, when 大 dâ ‘big’ means ‘fiery’ of 脾气 pîqi ‘temper’, it is generally used predicatively:

她的脾气很大。  tâde pîqi hên da  She has (got) a fiery temper.

If it is to be used attributively, 很 hên ‘very’ or some other modifier will have to be incorporated and the resultant phrase is restricted in meaning to somebody flying into a rage on a particular occasion:

发很大的脾气  fâ hên da de pîqi  to fly into a temper
*大脾气  dâ pîqi  *a bad temper

This goes to show that, while most adjectives can be used either attributively or predicatively, some are restricted to one function in particular collocations.

4.5.2 ATTRIBUTIVE-ONLY ADJECTIVES

These are generally non-gradable. They differentiate rather than describe, and most of them therefore have extremely restricted collocations. Monosyllabic adjectives in this category are relatively infrequent:

正数  zhêngshù  a positive number
负数  fûshù  a negative number
公鸡  gôngjī  rooster (lit. male fowl)
母牛  mûniû  cow (lit. mother ox)

Monosyllabic attributive-only adjectives include: 单 dân/复 fû ‘(of number) singular/plural’, 单 dân/双 shuâng ‘single/double’, 母 cì/雌 xióng ‘(of animals) female/male’, 公 gông/母 mû ‘(of animals) male/female’, 正 zhêng/副 fû ‘(of presidents, for example) the president/the vice president’, 正 zhêng/反 fàn ‘one side/the reverse side’, 总 zông/分 fèn ‘headquarters/branches’, 横 hêng/竖 shù ‘horizontal/vertical’.

Disyllabic attributive-only adjectives usually convey a formal tone, and they are more likely to have an internal lexical structure. The following attributive-only adjectives, for example, all have a modificational structure:

13 See §4.6.
14 By internal lexical structure we mean the internal syntactic relationship between the two composing morphemes of a disyllabic adjective.

Attributive-only adjectives may also have a governmental or predicational structure:

| 忘我 | wàngwǒ | selfless (lit. forgetting oneself) |
| 无私 | wúsī | unselfish (lit. not having selfishness) |
| 有益 | yóuyì | beneficial (lit. having benefit) |

人造 rénzhào  artificial (lit. ‘man made’)  
国营 guóyíng  state-owned (lit. ‘state-managed’)  
自动 zìdòng  automatic (lit. ‘self-propelled’)

4.5.3 PREDICATIVE-ONLY ADJECTIVES

These, on the other hand, are generally more colloquial in tone, and are mostly monosyllabic:

我很累。 wǒ hén lèi  I am very tired.  
你的话很对。 nǐde huà hén duì  What you said is correct.  
他写的字真棒。 tā xiě de zì zhēn bàngg  His handwriting is remarkably beautiful.  
他的成绩很差。 tāde chéngjì hén chà  His examination results are poor.


However, there is no absolute divide between the two types of adjective which cannot be crossed. Though the result may sometimes sound a little forced, a predicative-only adjective can be made to function attributively by placing it in a ‘degree adverb + de’ frame (e.g. 很差的学校 hěn chà de xuéxiào ‘a badly governed school’). Likewise, an attributive-only adjective can be made to function predicatively by setting it in a ‘is + de’ format (e.g. 这项工程是大型的。zhèi xiàng gōngchéng shì dàxíng de ‘This is an enormous project’).
4.6 VARIOUS INHERENT FEATURES OF ADJECTIVES

The syntactic function of adjectives in Chinese varies with their inherent features. In the following sections we will see these variances through a number of dichotomies.

4.6.1 GRADABLE VS NON-GRADABLE

Gradable adjectives form the greater part of the adjectival lexicon. They are of a descriptive nature and can be used freely both as attributives and as predicatives. Their most salient feature is that they can be modified by degree adverbs or complements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gradable</th>
<th>Non-gradable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gāo</td>
<td>nan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku</td>
<td>tān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qióng</td>
<td>xiàndài</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nèn</td>
<td>héfā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *高* (gāo) = tall
- *苦* (ku) = bitter
- *穷* (qióng) = poor
- *嫩* (nèn) = tender

---

高 (gāo) = tall
gāo de hen (very tall)

苦 (ku) = bitter
yuǎn diānr ku (somewhat bitter)

穷 (qióng) = poor
qióng de hěn (really poor)

嫩 (nèn) = tender
nèn jí le (extremely tender)

---

那儿起了一座很高的楼房。nàr qí le yī zuò hěn gāo de lóufáng
A very tall building was erected there.

我不喜欢喝太浓的茶。wǒ bù xīhuàn hé tài nóng de chá
I don’t like my tea too strong. (lit. I don’t like drinking very strong tea)

这个问是极了。zhèi ge wèntí nán jí le
This question is (simply) too difficult.

Non-gradable adjectives cannot be modified in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-gradable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiàndài</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>héfā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *男* (nán) = male
- *单* (dān) = single
- *现代* (xiàndài) = modern
- *合法* (héfā) = legal

---

For non-gradable adjectives the general predicative schema is 是 shì... 的 de and not 很 hěn...:

*这很非法。* zhè hěn féifǎ
*非法。* féifǎ de

*这非法的。* zhè shì féifǎ de

*那个人很女。* nèi ge rén hěn nǚ
*那个人女的。* nèi ge rén shì nǚ de

*That person is very female.*
*That person is a woman/girl.*

*This is illegal.*
*This is illegal.*
Further examples:

那张桌子是方的。
这个人是残废的。

nèi zhāng zhuōzi shì fāng de  
zhèi ge rén shì cánfèi de
That table is square.
This person is handicapped.

Non-gradable adjectives include: 假 jià ‘false’, 错 cuò ‘wrong’.

There are, of course, a small number of adjectives that straddle the two categories:

他的话是对的。
他的话很对。

tā de huà shì duì de  
tā de huà hěn duì
His words are correct.
His words are very correct.

那张桌子是圆的。
那张桌子很圆。

nèi zhāng zhuōzi  
hén yuán de
nèi zhāng zhuōzi  
hén yuán
That table is round.
That table is truly round.

4.6.2 CONDITIONAL VS UNCONDITIONAL

Apart from the wide range of standard adjectives such as 大 dà ‘big’, 美丽 měi lì ‘beautiful’, etc., which can be said to be used unconditionally as adjectives, there are adjectives which are derived from other word classes. These adjectives may be viewed as being conditional adjectives, which can be made to function as adjectives only in certain collocations and structures. They are therefore either collocation-specific or structure-specific. For example, the adjectival use of the noun 贼 zéi ‘thief’ to mean ‘sly’ is conditional on it occurring in a predicative position: 这个真贼 zhèi ge rén zhēn zéi ‘This person is really cunning’. It can function attributively, but this is limited only to a few established idioms like 贼眉贼眼 zéi méi zéi yǎn ‘shifty’ (lit. thievish eyebrows and thievish eyes), 贼头贼脑 zéi tóu zéi nǎo ‘stealthy’ (lit. thievish head and thievish brain). The adjectival use of the verb 闹 nào ‘make a noise’ to mean ‘noisy’, too, is conditional on it being used in a predicative position: 这儿太闹了 zhèr tài nào le ‘It is too noisy here’. In fact, most of these conditional adjectives are predicative-only.

4.6.3 DERIVABLE VS NON-DERIVABLE

A large part of the Chinese adjectival lexicon consists of disyllabic adjectives that are formed on the basis of monosyllabic adjectives, which we may call stems. These disyllabic adjectives are therefore derivations or derivatives. For example, from 光 guāng ‘polished’, are derived such commonly used adjectives as 光滑 guānghuá ‘smooth’, 光亮 guāngliàng ‘luminous’, 光明 guāngmíng
Adjectives as Attributives and Predicatives

'Bright', 光洁 guāngjié 'bright and clean', 光溜 guāngliu 'slippery', 光润 guāngrùn 'smooth (of skin)', etc. From 冷 lěng 'cold', come 冷淡 lěngdàn 'indifferent', 冷寂 lěngjì 'still', 冷静 lěngjìng 'sober, calm', 冷酷 lěngkù 'callous', 冷落 lěngluò 'desolate', 冷漠 lěngmò 'unconcerned', 冷僻 lěngpì 'deserted', 冷涩 lěngsè 'dull' as well as 寒冷 hánlěng 'frigid', 冰冷 bìnglěng 'ice-cold'.

There are however a small number of monosyllabic adjectives that do not normally act as stems for other adjectives, e.g. 哆 dià 'coquettish', 师 shuài 'smart', etc.

4.6.4 REDUPLICABLE VS NON-REDUPLICABLE

Monosyllabic adjectives indicating physical traits and appealing to the senses are usually reduplicable for descriptive purposes often with an affectionate tone, e.g. 白白的 bāibái de 'white as white can be', 高高的 gāogāo de 'towering', 甜甜的 tiántián de 'very sweet', 香香的 xiāngxiāng de 'sweet-smelling', 软软的 ruǎnruǎn de 'soft to the touch', 静静的 jìngjìng de 'very quiet', etc. Once reduplicated, they describe rather than differentiate as is the case normally with monosyllabic adjectives.

On the other hand, monosyllabic adjectives indicating absolute values, derogatory qualities or psychological traits cannot normally be reduplicated. For example:

*假假的 jiàojià de *false
*丑丑的 chōuchóu de *ugly
*恶恶的 èè de *fierce

They can nevertheless adopt the phonaesthetic type of extension, e.g. 恶狠狠 èhénhén 'ferocious', 懒洋洋 lǎnyángyǎng 'languid', 乐滋滋 lèzīzī 'contented', 傻乎乎 shàihuā 'simple-minded', 羞答答 xiūdádá 'bashful', 假惺惺 jiǎxīngxīng 'hypocritical', 臭烘烘 chòuhōnghōng 'stinking', etc. These phonaesthetic forms are more often used as adverbials than attributives.\(^{15}\)

A number of monosyllabic adjectives that indicate sensory responses may also incorporate phonaesthetic suffixes to enhance their descriptive effect, e.g. 白皑皑 bái'ái'ái 'pure/snow white', 甜丝丝 tiánsīsī 'pleasantly sweet', 香喷喷 xiāngpēnpēn 'sweet-smelling', 软绵绵 ruǎnmíǎnnián 'extremely soft', 矮墩墩 àidūndūn 'pudgy', 静悄悄 jìngqiāoqiao 'very quiet', etc.

Disyllabic adjectives AB can be reduplicable but only in an AABB sequence and if they are originally descriptive adjectives regarding a person’s physical appearance, specific mannerisms, or inbuilt personality. For example,

\(^{15}\) See Chapter 17 on adverbials.
Reduplications like the above, as can be seen from the translations, are generally used as adverbials, apart from a few describing physical appearance.

Statistical analysis shows that less than 20 per cent of the adjectives in the language’s lexicon are in fact reduplicable. These adjectives mostly have a juxtapositional type of lexical structure if they are disyllabic and the majority of them (over 90 per cent) belong to the colloquial rather than formal section of the vocabulary.

4.6.5 DEROGATORY VS COMMENDATORY

Adjectives may be divided semantically for the most part into two major categories: derogatory and commendatory. Those that do not fall into either category may be said to be neutral. There are a number of collocational restrictions that apply to the two non-neutral categories.

Derogatory adjectives cannot be modified by the degree adverb 蛮 mán ‘fairly’ or complemented by the degree complement 得了不得 de liàobude ‘to an enormous extent’:

*蛮臭
*悲观得了不得


Commentatory adjectives, on the other hand, cannot be modified by the degree adverb 有点儿 yǒu diànr ‘somewhat’ or complemented by a degree complement like 得要命 de yàoming ‘to death’:

*有点儿香
*暖和得要命

Neutral adjectives, however, have no such restrictions. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>大</td>
<td>dà de</td>
<td>fairly big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大得不得了</td>
<td>dà de bù de liǎo</td>
<td>extremely big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有点儿大</td>
<td>yǒu diǎnr dà</td>
<td>somewhat big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大得要命</td>
<td>dà de yàoming</td>
<td>exceedingly big</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7 ADJECTIVES AND VALENCY

There are a number of adjectives in the language which, when used in a predicative position, will need to be associated with coverbal phrases or plural number subjects to convey their inherent dual- or multi-valency meanings. For example, one cannot very well say:

*他很生疏。 tā hěn shēngshū  *He is unfamiliar with.
*她很不和。 tā hěn bùhé  *She does not get along very well with.

Sentences along the following lines are, on the other hand, perfectly natural:

他对这儿的情况很生疏。 tā dui zhèr de qíngkuàng hěn shēngshū
He is not familiar with the situation here.

她们很不和。 tāmen hěn bùhé
They do not get along very well with each other.

or

她跟他很不和。 tā gèn tā hěn bùhé
She does not get along very well with him.

Dual- or multi-valency adjectives include: 熟悉 shúxī ‘familiar with’, 陌生 mòshēng ‘unfamiliar with’, 不满 bùmān ‘not happy with’, 要好 yào hǎo ‘on good terms with’, 一样 yīyàng ‘the same as’.

4.8 ADJECTIVES AND COLLOCATION

Adjectives also vary in their collocational capacity. Some like 大 dà ‘big’ and 新 xīn ‘new’, as we have seen, are of such a general nature that they can be used with many noun headwords without too many restrictions.

Most adjectives, however, are collocationally specific. In other words, particular adjectives tend to be linked with specific noun headwords. For example:
(a) attributively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>严格</td>
<td>yángé</td>
<td>stringent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严格的规定</td>
<td>yángé de guīdìng</td>
<td>stringent rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严厉</td>
<td>yánlì</td>
<td>severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严厉的批评</td>
<td>yánlì de pīpíng</td>
<td>severe criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严肃</td>
<td>yánsù</td>
<td>solemn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严肃的气氛</td>
<td>yánsù de qīfèn</td>
<td>a solemn atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严重</td>
<td>yánzhòng</td>
<td>serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严重的后果</td>
<td>yánzhòng de hòuguó</td>
<td>serious consequences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) predicatively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>严格</td>
<td>yángé</td>
<td>strict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>要求很严格</td>
<td>yāoqíù hěn yángé</td>
<td>the demands are strict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严厉</td>
<td>yánlì</td>
<td>stern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>声音很严厉</td>
<td>shēngyīn hěn yánlì</td>
<td>the voice is stern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严肃</td>
<td>yánsù</td>
<td>serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>态度很严肃</td>
<td>tàidū hěn yánsù</td>
<td>the attitude is serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严重</td>
<td>yánzhòng</td>
<td>grave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>事态很严重</td>
<td>shìtài hěn yánzhòng</td>
<td>the situation is grave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is some degree of flexibility in these collocational rules (e.g., 严厉 yánlì ‘stern’ and 严肃 yánsù ‘serious’ can both be used with 态度 tàidū ‘attitude’), but in practice they are closely adhered to by native speakers.

4.9 ADJECTIVES AND COMPARISON

Comparison between two entities A and B is generally expressed in the formula: A + 比 bì ‘compare with’ + B + adjective. For example,

你比我高。 nǐ bì wǒ gāo
You are taller than me. (lit. you cv: compare with me tall)

我比你大。 wǒ bì ní dà
I am older than you. (lit. I cv: compare with you big)

In the formula, A can be a phrase or a clause with B being often pruned to the minimum, keeping only the key point for comparison and dropping other repetitive elements. For example:

这件衬衫比那件[衬衫]贵。 zhèi jiān chènshān bǐ nèi jiān [chènshān] guì
This shirt is more expensive than that one.

---

17 For comparisons with the verb 有 yǒu, see §17.5.
18 比 bì is in fact a coverb. For a fuller discussion of coverbs, see Chapter 11.
Adjectives as Attributives and Predicatives

This dish is tastier than that one.

He runs faster than me. (lit. . . . than I run)

I eat more than him. (lit. . . . than he eats)

It is possible to retain the repeated elements (given in the square brackets) but the sentence then sounds a little unnatural.

In fact, the last two examples can be reworded so that the two subjects/topics in the comparison share the same verb:

He runs faster than me.

I eat more than him.

This indicates that the comparison is made not between the two actions, but between the two people concerned.

The adjective in the formula cannot be premodified, but it may be complemented by a quantifier, indeterminate or precise:

* I am much older than you.

I am a little older than you.

I am two years older than you.

He is slightly taller than me.

He is one centimetre taller than me.

I eat much more than he does.

I eat twice as much as he does.

This is a little dearer than that.

This is three pounds dearer than that.

Premodification would take away the contrast necessary for the comparison. The only exception is the adverb 更 gèng ‘even more’ which is used as a premodifier, e.g. 我比你更大。 wǒ bǐ nǐ gèng dà ‘I am even older than you’.
5 ATTRIBUTIVES OTHER THAN ADJECTIVES

Attributives come in all forms and types and their function is to qualify or quantify nouns, to describe and delimit them. They may be (a) adjectives, (b) nouns, (c) verbs, (d) clauses, (e) prepositional or postpositional phrases, (f) numeral or demonstrative and measure word phrases, (g) pronouns, (h) idioms, etc.

For instance:

(a) 黄狗 huánggǒu brown dog adjective + noun
(b) 笔名 bí míng pen name noun + noun
(c) 滚水 gǔnshuǐ boiling water verb + noun
(d) 我买的东西 wǒ mǎi de dōngxi the things I bought clause + noun
(e) 沿路的商店 yán lù de shāngdiàn the shops along prepositional phrase + noun
家里的人 jiā li de rén the people at home postpositional phrase + noun
(f) 两个女人 liǎng ge nǚrén two women numeral + mw + noun
那个男人 nèi ge nánrén that man demonstrative + mw + noun
(g) 我的书 wǒde shū my book(s) pronoun + noun
(h) 一望无际的草原 yī wàng wújì a boundless stretch idiom + noun
dé cáoyuán of grassland

From the above list, two features of the attributive in Chinese can be observed. First, it almost invariably precedes the noun it modifies; and, second, the marker de is regularly placed between the attributive and the noun. The presence of de depends on the type of attributive being used, and details are given in the list of attributives below.

A further feature to be noted is that the presence of an attributive makes any item it qualifies or quantifies become automatically nominalised, whatever grammatical category it originally belonged to. Verbs and adjectives are often found to be nominalised in such a way. For example:

Where attributives are very long, they can occur after the noun for stylistic reasons. See §5.3.2 below.
Attributives other than Adjectives

5.1 THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ATTRIBUTIVE

Adjectives are attributives par excellence, and they have been fully discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter we shall concentrate on other forms of attributives, which are either of different word classes (e.g. nouns, verbs, etc.) or of different levels of structure (e.g. phrases, clauses, etc.).

5.1.1 NOUNS

5.1.1.1 Nouns with zero marker

Nominal items as attributives have the tendency to form established words or expressions. They are usually placed directly in front of the headword they qualify:

冷水澡

冷水洗澡

lěngshuǐ zǎo

a cold bath (lit. cold water bath)

繁体字

Fántí zì

unabbreviated Chinese characters

双方意见

Shuāngfāng yìjiàn

ideas put forward by both parties

世界记录

shìjiè jílù

world record

5.1.1.2 Nouns with an obligatory or optional de

If a nominal item does not form an established quadrisyllabic expression, it will need de:

现在的情况

xiànzài de qíngkuàng

present situation

童年(的)生活

tóngnián (de) shēnghuó

childhood days

个人(的)体会

gèrén (de) tǐhuì

personal experience

色彩的浓淡

sècǎi de néngdàn

lighter or darker shades of colours

5.1.1.3 Nouns with phonaesthemes and de

泪汪汪的眼睛

lèiwāngwāng de yǎnǐng

tearful eyes

水淋淋的头发

shuǐlínlín de tóufa

hair dripping with water
5.1.2 VERBS

5.1.2.1 Verbs with zero marker

If a verbal item with the noun constitutes an established expression, it does not take 的 de:

敲门声 qiāomén shēng  the sound of knocking at the door
修订版 xiūdīng bǎn  revised edition
印刷体 yìnshūā tì  printed forms
退休生活 tuixiū shēnghuó  life of retirement

5.1.2.2 Verbs with 的 de

Otherwise in most cases, verbal attributives do require 的 de:

开会的日期 kāihuì de rìqì  date for the meeting
要办的事情 yào bàn de shìqing  matters to attend to
渐渐远去的火车 jiānjiān yuǎn qù de huǒchē  a train disappearing into the distance
今天来参观的人 jīntiān lái cānguān de rén  people who came to visit today

5.1.3 CLAUSES

Clausal attributives will always need 的 de:

他讲的话 tā jiāng de huà  what he said
你要的书 nǐ yào de shū  the book you want
笔画多的字 bǐhuà duō de zì  Chinese characters with many strokes
我们没有见过的东西 wǒmen méiyǒu de dōngxi  things we have not seen before

5.1.4 PREPOSITIONAL OR POSTPOSITIONAL PHRASES WITH 的 de

5.1.4.1 Prepositional/coverbal phrases with 的 de

Prepositional or coverbal phrases as attributives are always followed by 的 de:

对北京的访问 duì běijīng de fāngwén  visit to Beijing
在英国的日子 zài yīngguó de rìzǐ  days in Britain
有关水利的著作 yǒuguān shuǐlì de zhǔzuò  writings on water conservation
沿路的商店 yánlù de shāngdiàn  shops along the road
5.1.4.2 Postpositional phrases with 的 de

Postpositional phrases are essentially nominal in nature, and they will also generally need the presence of 的 de to function as attributives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lù shàng de xíngrén</td>
<td>pedestrians on the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hú li de shuǐ</td>
<td>water in the pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shìnèi de kǒngqì</td>
<td>air inside the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gōnglù liàngpáng</td>
<td>ditches on either side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de shuǐqì</td>
<td>of the highway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.5 NUMERALS OR DEMONSTRATIVES AND MEASURE WORDS

5.1.5.1 Numerals and measure words

Numeral and measure word expressions, strictly speaking, are not standard attributives, but are quantifiers that indicate number as well as indefinite reference. They do not require 的 de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yǐ qún qīngnián</td>
<td>a group of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jǐ ge háizi</td>
<td>several children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wǔ tiān qīxiàn</td>
<td>five days’ limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liàng zhōng shuōfǎ</td>
<td>two ways of putting it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.5.2 Demonstratives and measure words

As with numerals and measure words, demonstrative and measure word expressions do not need 的 de when they are associated with noun headwords:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zhèxiē wèntí</td>
<td>these problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nèi shǒu shī</td>
<td>that poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhēi chāng bìsài</td>
<td>this match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nèi yī jiàn dàyī</td>
<td>that overcoat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.5.3 Demonstratives without measure words

On the other hand, in more formal writing, demonstratives may be used as attributives on their own without measure words, placed directly in front of noun headwords:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zhèi rén</td>
<td>this person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhèi chéngshì</td>
<td>this city</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 There are adjectives in the language other than numeral and measure word expressions that indicate indeterminate numbers, and they are likewise used without 的 de, e.g. 许多人 xūduō rén ‘a lot of people’, 不少钱 bùshǎo qián ‘a large sum of money’.
5.1.5.4 Reduplicated measure words with or without 的 de
Reduplicated measure word expressions indicating numerosness or exclusiveness may or may not be preceded by 一 yi ‘one’. Where 一 yi is present, the marker 的 de is usually required; otherwise 的 de is not generally used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>puffs of fragrance</td>
<td>zhènzhèn fāngxiāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every road</td>
<td>tiáotiáo dàlù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white clouds one after another</td>
<td>yī piànpiàn de báiyún</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every letter that arrived</td>
<td>yī fēngfēng de láixin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.6 PRONOUNS
5.1.6.1 Personal pronouns with or without 的 de
Personal pronouns used in their possessive forms may delimit their noun headwords with or without 的 de. The presence of 的 de usually depends on the intimacy of the association or on the rhythm of the utterance. If the association is close, 的 de is more likely to be omitted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>your mother</td>
<td>nǐ māma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his temperament</td>
<td>tāde píqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her name</td>
<td>tāde míngzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my request</td>
<td>wǒde qíngqiú</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.6.2 Interrogative pronouns with or without measure words
Interrogative pronouns, if disyllabic or when incorporating a measure word, do not generally need 的 de to function as attributives. Monosyllabic interrogative pronouns on the other hand definitely do require 的 de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>how much?</td>
<td>duōshǎo qián</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what time, when?</td>
<td>shénme shíhou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what is the matter?</td>
<td>zénme huí shì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what problems?</td>
<td>nèixiē wèntí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whose things?</td>
<td>shuí/shéi de dōngxi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.7 IDIOMS
5.1.7.1 Quadrisyllabic or trisyllabic idioms with 的 de
Quadrisyllabic or trisyllabic idioms must always be followed by 的 de to function as attributives:
5.1.7.2 Disyllabic expressions with 之 zhī qualifying a monosyllabic noun headword

One of the functions of 之 zhī in Classical Chinese was to be an attributive marker, and this function persists in the modern language in a number of set expressions. These expressions are always quadrisyllabic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headword</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jīngmù zhī xīn</td>
<td>feelings of admiration and respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wújí zhī tán</td>
<td>sheer nonsense (lit. a talk without evidence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī kōng zhī jiàn</td>
<td>a narrow view (lit. a view through one hole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shí tiān zhī nèi</td>
<td>within ten days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.7.3 Onomatopoeic terms with/without 的 de qualifying headword

These expressions, like the previous ones, are formulaic and likewise must always be quadrisyllabic including the headword 一声 yī shēng ‘the sound as indicated’. 的 de is used if the onomatopoeic term is monosyllabic; but not if it is disyllabic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pēng de yī shēng</td>
<td>with a bang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuānglāng yī shēng</td>
<td>with a crushing sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So we see that attributives in Chinese are generally placed before their headwords. They have the capacity to qualify or quantify. For some, 的 de must be present, for some it must not. In other cases 的 de is optional and its presence or absence is usually dictated by the needs of rhythm and balance.

5.2 THE SEQUENCING OF ATTRIBUTIVES

When different types of attributives come together, they follow a definite pattern of sequencing. If we take the ‘numeral + measure word’ phrase as the dividing point, we see that some types of attributives generally go before the ‘num + mw’ phrase while others usually follow it. Under certain conditions, post- ‘num + mw’ attributives may cross the boundary and become pre- ‘num + mw’ attributives. However, this is not usually the case the other way round.
Pre- ‘num + mw’ attributives tend to display the following semantic features:

(a) possession

她的一个朋友 tāde yī ge péngyou (lit. her one mw friend)
A friend of hers.

我大儿子的那(一)辆汽车 wǒ dà érzi de nèi (yī) liàng qìchē
(lit. my eldest son’s that (one) mw car) That car of my eldest son.

邻居的那(一)栋房子 línjū de nèi (yī) dòng fángzi
(lit. neighbour’s that (one) mw house) That house of my neighbour.

(b) location

门上的那(一)层油漆 mén shàng de nèi (yī) céng yóuqī
(lit. door-on de that (one) mw: layer paint)
The coat of paint on the door.

厨房里的两个柜子 chūfáng li de liǎng ge guìzi
(lit. kitchen-inside de two mw cupboards)
The two cupboards in the kitchen.

花瓶里的那(一)些鲜花 huāpíng li de nèi (yī) xiē xiānhuā
(lit. flower vase-inside de those (one) mw: some fresh flowers)
Those fresh flowers in the vase.

(c) time

明天的三节课 míngtiān de sān jié kè
(lit. tomorrow de three mw classes) The three lessons tomorrow.

两年来的一些积蓄 liǎng nián lái de yīxiē jīxù
(lit. last two years de one mw: some savings)
Some savings from the last two years.

上个月的一次聚会 shàng gè yuè de yī ci jùhuì
(lit. last month de one mw: time gathering) One gathering last month.

(d) scope

这几种颜色 zhè jiù zhǒng yán sè (lit. these a few mw: kinds colours)
These few colours.

别的的一些事情 bié de yīxiē shìqíng (lit. other one mw: some matters)
Some other matters.
Post- ‘num + mw’ attributives tend to be in the following semantic groups:

(e) state or activity

一些剩下的时间 yīxiē shēngxià de shíjiān
(lit. one mw: some remaining de time) Some remaining time.

一个到海滨去度假的计划 yī ge dào hǎibīn qù dùjià de jīhuà
(lit. one mw cv: to seaside go pass holiday de plan) A plan to go for a seaside holiday.

那些她做的菜 nèixiē tā zuò de cài
(lit. those mw: some she make de food/dishes) The food/dishes she made/cooked.

(f) characteristics

一个很直爽的人 yī ge hěn zhíshuǎng de rén
(lit. one mw very forthright de person) A very forthright man/person.

一片朦胧的晨雾 yī piàn ménglóng de chénwù
(lit. one mw: stretch hazy de morning mist) A stretch of hazy morning mist.

两只水汪汪的大眼睛 liǎng zhī shuǐwāngwāng de dà yǎnjīng
(lit. two mw limpid de big eyes) Two big bright eyes.

(g) shape

一个圆圆的脑袋 yī ge yuányuán de nǎodài
(lit. one mw round de head) A round head.

一顶伞形的帽子 yī dìng sǎnxíng de màozi
(lit. one mw umbrella shape de hat) An umbrella-shaped hat.

(h) colour

几朵白云 jǐ duō bái yún (lit. a few mw white clouds) A few white clouds.

四个金字 sì ge jìnsì (lit. four mw gold characters)
Four golden characters.

一条天蓝色的裙子 yī tiáo tiānlán sè de qúnzǐ
(lit. one mw sky blue colour de skirt) A sky-blue skirt.

(i) material

一件棉布衬衫 yī jiàn miánbù chènshān
(lit. one mw cotton cloth shirt) A cotton shirt.
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A bronze mirror.

Three enamel wash basins.

Two or three balls of wool.

A tea cup.

A pair of running shoes.

In theory, it is possible for all forms of attributive to come together to qualify and quantify the same headword. When this happens, the sequence of attributives will normally be:

(a) possession (noun or pronoun)
(b) location (postpositional or prepositional/coverbal phrase)
(c) time (noun)
(d) scope (demonstrative adjective, etc.)
   numeral + measure word expression
(e) state or activity (verbal phrase or clause)
(f) characteristics (adjective)
(g) shape (adjective)
(h) colour (adjective)
(i) material (noun)
(j) function (noun or verb)

For example:

attributive || headword

她 | 鞋架上 | 去年 | 那 | (一)双 | 穿了又穿的 | 破破烂烂的 | 尖头的 | 黑色 | 棉布 || 拖鞋 tā xiéjià shàng qùnián nèi (yi) shuāng chuān le yòu chuān (de) pòpòlànlan de jiāntòu de hēsè miánbù tuōxié
(lit. her | shoe-rack-top | last year | that | (one) mw: pair | wear le again wear (de) | tattered de | pointed toe de | black colour | cotton cloth || drag shoes (i.e. slippers))

That pair of tattered, black cotton slippers on the shoe rack with pointed toes that she wore over and over again last year.
If we arrange the sentence vertically, we shall see the order of the attributives more clearly:

| 她 | tà | possession | her |
| 鞋架上 | xiéjià shàng | location | shoe rack top |
| 去年 | qùnián | time | last year |
| 那 | nèi | scope | that |
| (一)双 | (yī) shuāng | numeral + measure word | (one) pair |
| 穿了又穿(的) | chuānle yòu chuān de | activity | wore and wore again |
| 破破烂烂的 | pòpòlàn làn de | characteristics | tattered |
| 尖头的 | jiǎntóu de | shape | pointed |
| 黑色 | hēisè | colour | black |
| 棉布 | miánbù | material | cotton |
| 拖 | tuó | function | drag |
| 鞋 | xié | headword | shoes (i.e. slippers) |

For the sake of rhythm or clarity of message, the ‘state and activity’ attributive can often be placed in a position immediately before the ‘scope’ attributive, if there is one, and the ‘numeral + measure word’. The middle section of the sentence above would therefore become:

...穿了又穿的那一双...chuān le yòu chuān de nèi yī shuāng

instead of

...那一双穿了又穿的...nèi yī shuāng chuān le yòu chuān de

5.3 COMBINATION, EMBEDDING AND DELAYING

5.3.1 COMMAS OR CONJUNCTIONS

When attributives of the same type occur with a headword, they are joined by commas or conjunctions:

| yuǎnyuǎn de shílái le yī sōu qǐngjié | měiguān | zhěngjié de yǒutíng |
| (lit. distant de sail-come le one mw light-quick, attractive, neat yacht) |
In the distance an attractive, neat, light yacht approached.

他是一位思想活跃而又谦虚谨慎的人。

tā shì yī ge sìxiǎng huóyùé ér yòu qiānxū jǐnshèn de rén
(lit. he is one mw thinking lively but also modest prudent de person)
He is someone who has a lively mind, but is also modest and cautious.

3 Note that, when listing items, the Chinese convention is to use a reversed (dun) comma, / /.
Any book with missing pages or faulty binding can be exchanged.

The whole city was immersed in an enthusiastic and happy atmosphere.

Everyone likes this sincere and enthusiastic young woman.

5.3.2 LONGER ATTRIBUTIVES

Longer attributives may sometimes have other ‘attributive + headword’ constructions embedded in them. For example:

On the grass, appeared a small path made by the steps of constant passers-by.

She bought a suite of furniture that match particularly harmoniously and attractively with the light-green carpet.

However, Chinese is not a language that is comfortable with long attributives, and the examples above would quite likely be divided into two sections:

On the grass, appeared a small path made by the steps of constant passers-by.
She bought a suite of furniture matching particularly harmoniously and attractively with the light-green carpet.

This unease with long attributives leads to a stylistic preference to have two or more short attributives placed in sequence after a noun headword and separated from each other by commas. For example:

On the grass appeared a small path, made by the steps of constant passers-by, which wound right up to the mountain peak appearing and disappearing in the distance like a series of giant earthworms that, stretching and recoiling, were striving to move upwards.

All the sections marked with < are clearly attributable to their fronted headword 小道 xiǎodào ‘small path’, but when we come to the nominal 蚯蚓 qiūyǐn ‘earthworm’, it then becomes a second headword and the two sections marked << are attributable to it. Theoretically, an articulated attributive chain like this could stretch even further but it would naturally be curtailed by stylistic and other constraints.
6 ACTION VERBS

Action verb is a portmanteau term used here to cover all the verbs in the language apart from non-action verbs such as 是 shì ‘to be’ and 有 yǒu ‘to have’ and verbs of emotion or cognition. Their major distinctive feature is that they generally indicate transient performance. Therefore they are more narrative or descriptive, recounting past events or depicting ongoing actions; whereas non-action verbs tend to register more or less permanent states or characteristics and are therefore more expository. In other words, actions verbs play a more prominent role in narration or description while non-action verbs focus more on explanation. This, of course, does not imply that action verbs cannot be used for purposes other than narration or description, but there is a clear distinction between the subject of an action verb predicate and the topic of a comment expressed by 是 shì ‘to be’, 有 yǒu ‘to have’ or an emotional or cognitive verb. In the former case, the subject either initiates or tolerates the action encoded in the predicate, while in the latter, the topic is linked to further explanations expressed in the comment. Compare the following.

**subject–predicate structures:**

我吃了一碗面。 wǒ chī le yī wǎn miàn (narrative)
I ate a bowl of noodles.

他收到了两封信。 tā shōudào le liǎng fēng xìn (narrative)
He received two letters.

妹妹在弹钢琴。 mèimei zài tán gāngqín (descriptive)
My younger sister is playing the piano.

**topic–comment structures:**

我是大学教师。 wǒ shì dàxué jiàoshī (expository)
I am a university teacher.

他有两个弟弟。 tā yǒu liǎng ge dìdì (expository)
He has two younger brothers.

哥哥喜欢喝啤酒。 gége xihuan hé píjiǔ (expository)
My elder brother likes drinking beer.
We will pick up these differences again in later chapters, and, in particular, in Chapter 21, but here, we will focus on the intrinsic features of action verbs: their diverse structural categories and their formal and semantic relations with the subject and the object. In the next two chapters, we will discuss relationship of action verbs with time and location expressions.

### 6.1 TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE

Action verbs can be transitive or intransitive. The difference is that the former takes an object while the latter does not. For example:

(a) transitive verbs:

他去学中文。 他 zài xué zhōngwén  He is studying Chinese.
她去了伦敦。 她 qù le lún’dūn  She went to London.

(b) intransitive verbs:

春天到了。 chūntiān dào le  Spring has come.
太阳出来了。 tài yáng chū lái le  The sun has come out.

Quite often, a verb can be used both transitively and intransitively:

(a) 请原谅。 请原谅了他。 qǐng yuánliàng wǒ yuánliàng le tā  Please excuse me.¹  I forgave him.
(b) 她笑了。 别笑我。 tā xiào le bié xiào wǒ  She laughed/smiled.  Don’t laugh at me.
(c) 菜来了。 请来两个菜。 cài lái le qǐng lái liǎng ge cài  The food has arrived.  Please bring two dishes.
(d) 他已经离开了。 他已经离开这儿了。 tā yǐjīng liǎi le  tā yǐjīng liǎi zèr le  He has already left.  He has already left here.

The term ‘object’ broadly refers to any nominal or pronominal item (or nominalised verbal or clausal expression) coming immediately after the verb, whether it indicates animate beings or inanimate objects, time, location, result, instrument or activity. The possible semantic diversity of objects bespeaks the

¹ The inclusion of end-of-sentence particle 了 le actually turns an action verb predicate into an explanation, thus making the whole sentence expository. This will be fully discussed in Chapter 20.

² The English translation requires a transitive verb and object.
general flexibility of syntactic rules in languages. Very often a transitive verb may take objects of different semantic orientations. For example:

母鸡在孵小鸡。  
母鸡在孵蛋。  
母亲在喂小孩。  
母亲在喂奶。  

mu jì zài fū xiǎoji  
mu jì zài fū dàn  
mǔqín zài wèi xiáohái  
mǔqín zài wèi nài  

The hen is hatching (its) chicks.  
The hen is hatching eggs.  
The mother is feeding her child.  
(lit. the mother is feeding milk [to her baby]) The mother is breast-feeding.

There are far more transitive than intransitive verbs in Chinese. Apart from those indicating posture (e.g. 站 zàn ‘to stand’, 坐 zuò ‘to sit’), body movement (e.g. 跳 tiào ‘to jump’, 爬 pá ‘climb; crawl’), emotion (e.g. 笑 xiào ‘to smile; laugh’, 哭 kū ‘to cry; weep’) and physical or chemical changes (e.g. 变 biàn ‘to change’, 溶化 rónghuà ‘to dissolve’), which are essentially intransitive, the great majority of action verbs are transitive in nature. Many intransitive verbs or intransitive uses of transitive verbs in English, for example, will find their Chinese counterparts encoded in a disyllabic ‘verb + object’ structure. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>(lit.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td>唱歌 chănggē</td>
<td>sing songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dance</td>
<td>跳舞 tiàowǔ</td>
<td>leap dances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swim</td>
<td>游泳 yóuyǒng</td>
<td>swim swims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read</td>
<td>看书 kānshū</td>
<td>see books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk</td>
<td>谈话 tánhuà</td>
<td>talk words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>走路 zǒulù</td>
<td>walk paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>run</td>
<td>跑步 pāobù</td>
<td>run steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>睡觉 shuǐjiào</td>
<td>sleep a sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drive</td>
<td>开车 kāichē</td>
<td>drive a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cook</td>
<td>煮饭 zhūfàn</td>
<td>boil rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rain</td>
<td>下雨 xiàyǔ</td>
<td>pour down rain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These apparently intransitive verbs nonetheless remain strictly ‘verb + object’ constructions and as such they cannot be followed by additional grammatical items in a sentence. For example, ‘to walk for ten miles’ or ‘to sleep for three hours’ is expressed by interposing a time modification before the object:

走十  
走了十英里 (the) road  
*走十了十英里  
zǒulù  
zòu le shí yīngli (de) lù  
*zòulù le shí yīngli  

to walk  
(he) walked for ten miles

睡十  
睡了三个钟头 (the) hour  
*睡十了三个钟头  
shuǐjiào  
shuí le sān ge zhōngtóu (de) jiǎo  
*shuíjiào le sān ge zhōngtóu  

to sleep  
(he) slept for three hours
In other cases a coverb\(^3\) will be introduced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>动词</th>
<th>词组</th>
<th>意思</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>跟他见面</td>
<td>jiànmìan gēn tā jiàn le miàn</td>
<td>to meet (lit. to see face)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他跟她见面。</td>
<td>tā gēn tā jiàn le miàn</td>
<td>He met her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他见面了她。</td>
<td>tā jiànmìan le tā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

接吻

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>动词</th>
<th>词组</th>
<th>意思</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>跟她接吻。</td>
<td>jiēwěn gēn tā jiēwěn</td>
<td>to kiss (lit. to link lips)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他在接吻她。</td>
<td>tā zài jiēwěn tā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 DYNAMIC AND STATIC DIFFERENCES

A noticeable semantic dimension that affects the use of action verbs in Chinese is the difference between dynamic and static verbs. A dynamic action verb implies that the action travels across a certain space whereas a static action verb does not. This can be clearly illustrated by the difference between ‘walk’ and ‘stand’: when one walks, one moves from one location to another; whereas when one stands, one either stays in one place or changes from a sitting position to a standing position and no change of location is involved.

The dynamic or static nature of an action verb will decide whether a location phrase associated with it precedes or follows it. A dynamic action verb will have location phrases preceding it whereas a static action verb may have a location phrase either preceding it or following it. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>动词</th>
<th>词组</th>
<th>意思</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>走公园里</td>
<td>tā zài gōngyuán lǐ sàn bù</td>
<td>He is having a walk in the park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在公园里散步。</td>
<td>tā sàn bù zài gōngyuán lǐ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>坐草地上</td>
<td>tā zài cǎodi shàng zuò zhe</td>
<td>He is sitting on the grass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在草地上坐着。</td>
<td>tā zuò zài cǎodi shàng</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 DATIVE VERBS

With some transitive verbs (dative verbs), two objects rather than one are present, in the sequence of an indirect object followed by a direct object. In other words, while the valency of ordinary transitive verbs is two (i.e. subject and object) that of dative verbs is three (subject, indirect object and direct object). For example:

\(^3\) See Chapter 11 on coverbs.

\(^4\) The addition of the particle 著 zhe to the verb changes it from narrative mode to descriptive mode. This will be discussed in Chapter 20.
Dative verbs, as we can see, are primarily verbs that indicate giving, receiving, paying, returning, and so on where two parties (usually the subject and the indirect object) are transmitting something (usually the direct object) between them.

Other similar verbs are:

- tui ‘to return (unwanted goods)’, zhao ‘to give change’, fu ‘to pay’, jiang ‘to award’, shang ‘to reward’, zeng ‘to present with’, fen ‘to apportion’.

给 (gei) ‘to give’ is used not only as a dative verb on its own but also in tandem with other verbs to form disyllabic dative verbs. The subject of these verbs must be the giver and the indirect object the beneficiary:

- 我还给他两镑钱。 wò huán gei tā liǎng bàng qián
  I returned/gave back two pounds to him.

- 我交给他一封信。 wò jiāo gei tā yī fēng xìn
  I handed over a letter to him.

- 她递给我一杯啤酒。 tā dì gei wǒ yī bēi píjiǔ
  She handed me a glass of beer.

- 师傅传给我不少技艺。 shīfu chuán gei wǒ bùshǎo jìyì
  The master (worker) passed on to me many skills.

---

5 Teacher (老师 lǎoshī) is a commonly used title in Chinese.
The following verbs often incorporate 给 "to give" as the second syllable:

捐 juān 'to donate', 卖 mài 'to sell', 输 shū 'to lose (in a game)', 补 bǔ 'to supplement', 扔 rēng 'to throw to', 发 fā 'to distribute', 寄 jì 'to send by post', 派 pài 'to despatch (people) to', 介绍 jièshào 'to introduce', 推荐 tuījiàn 'to recommend', 分配 fēnpèi 'to assign or allocate to', 贡献 gòngxiàn 'to contribute'.

In the case of 借 jiè which means both 'to borrow' and 'to lend' and 租 zū which means both 'to hire' and 'to rent', 给 "to give" must be incorporated to express the difference between the two meanings:

他借了我两镑钱。 tā jiè le wò liǎng bāng qián
He borrowed two pounds from me.

他借给我两镑钱。 tā jiè gěi wò liǎng bāng qián
He lent me two pounds.

我租了他们一间屋子。 wǒ zū le tāmen yī jiān wūzi
I rented a room from them.

我租给他们一间屋子。 wǒ zū gěi tāmen yī jiān wūzi
I rented a room to them.

As well as being incorporated into disyllabic verbs 给 "to give" may also be placed before the verb or towards the end of the sentence to create a coverbal construction. Used in this way, it can occur with a wider range of verbs:

她给我倒了杯茶。 tā gěi wò dào le bēi chá
She poured me a cup of tea.

他给我做了碗面。 tā gěi wǒ zuò le wǎn miàn
He made me a bowl of noodles.

我给他打了个电话。 wǒ gěi tā dǎ le ge diànhuà
I telephoned him.

给 "to give" itself incorporates 予 yú 'to give' to form the disyllabic 给予 gěiyǔ 'to give'. Its direct object is abstract rather than concrete, and is generally modified by a degree adjective and preceded by an optional 以 yǐ:

他们给予我极大的支持。 tāmen gěiyǔ wǒ jídà de zhíchì
They gave me very great support.
These words gave them great encouragement.

Other abstract nouns commonly used with 给予 ‘to give’ include:


With certain dative verbs the subject is the beneficiary or recipient:

我拿了你一瓶酱油。 wǒ ná le nǐ yī píng jiàngyóu
I took a bottle of soy sauce from you.

他们罚了你多少钱? tāmen fá le nǐ duōshao qián
How much did they fine you?

Other similar verbs include:


If what is given is information of one form or another, verbs like the following are used:

大家都叫我小李。 dàjiā dōu jiào wǒ xiǎolǐ
Everyone calls me Xiao (Little) Li.

我托你一件事。 wǒ tuō nǐ yī jiàn shì
(lit. I entrust a matter to you) Can you do me a favour?

他瞒了我一件事儿。 tā mán le nǐ yī jiàn shì
He hid a matter from me./He did not tell me about something.

他们限我两天。 tāmen xiàn wǒ liǎng tiān
They limited me to two days.

他告诉我明天开会。 tā gáosu wǒ míngtiān kāihuì
He told me the meeting was/is tomorrow.

人人都说他糊涂。 rénrén dōu shuō tā hútu
Everyone says he is stupid.

她看中他聪明。 tā kànzhòng tā cōngmíng
She was attracted by his intelligence.

他责备我没把这件事儿办好。 tā zébèi wǒ méi bā zhèi jiàn shìr bān hǎo
He blamed me for not doing this well/getting this done.
As we can see from the last few examples, the direct object is a verbal message, and, as such, it can be an adjectival or verbal expression, or even a clause.

Other such verbs include:

劝 quàn ‘to persuade’, 求 qiú ‘to plead with’, 称 chēng ‘to call (by a certain name)’, 骂 mà ‘to criticise’, 问 wèn ‘to ask’, 请教 qǐngjiào ‘to consult’, 通知 tóngzhī ‘to inform’, 嘱咐 zhǔfù ‘to warn or advise’, 答应 dàyìng ‘to promise’, 回答 huídá ‘to reply to’, 抱怨 bàoyuàn ‘to complain’, 表扬 biǎoyáng ‘to praise’.

Finally, some dative verbs express physical or psychological infliction:

他打了我一拳。 tā dǎ le wǒ yī quán
(lit. He hit me one fist) He gave me a punch.

她看了我一眼。 tā kàn le wǒ yī yǎn
(lit. She looked me one eye) She gave me a look.

我踢了他一脚。 wǒ tí le tā yī jiǎo
(lit. I kicked him one foot) I gave him a kick.

这件事儿吓了我一身汗。 zhè jìng shì qì xià le wǒ yī shēn hàn
(lit. This business startled me one body of sweat) This business brought me out in a sweat.

In these cases, the indirect object is always a noun preceded by the numeral — yī ‘one’ with a measure.

Other such verbs include:

吐 tǔ ‘to spit’, 溅 jiàn ‘to splash’, 累 lèi ‘to tire’, 急 jí ‘to worry’, 告 gào ‘to accuse...of’, 状 zhuàng ‘to put...to shame’.

6.4 CAUSATIVE VERBS

Some transitive action verbs, on the other hand, not only transmit an action on to an object, but also cause the object to produce a further action or actions itself. They therefore produce a knock-on effect, with one action leading to another. Theoretically, this knock-on effect can continue to repeat itself as long as the meaning remains clear.

妈妈叫我叫哥哥教妹妹写字。 māmā jiào wǒ jiào gége jiào mèimei xiězì
Mother told me to tell [my] elder brother to teach [my] younger sister to write.

他求我帮他做一件事。 tā qiú wǒ bāng tā zuò yī jiàn shì
He asked me to help him do something.
Generally, however, one follow-up action is more common:

我朋友请我吃饭。 **wò péngyou qìng wǒ chīfàn**
My friend invited me to cat/for a meal.

什么使东西落到地上？ **shénme shì dōngxi luò dào di shàng**
What causes things to fall to the ground?

医生让她好好休息。 **yīshēng ràng tā hǎohào xiūxi**
The doctor told her to have a good rest.

我劝他戒烟，他劝我戒酒。 **wǒ quán tā jièyān | tā quán wǒ jièjiǔ**
I urged him to give up smoking, and he urged me to give up drinking.

奶奶要我替她写信。 **nǎinai yào wǒ tì tā xiěxìn**
Grandma wanted me to write a letter for her.

It is worth noting that despite the fact that causative verbs help to narrate events, they do not usually incorporate the particle 了 le. The second verb in the chain may, of course, take了 le to emphasise that the desired action has already been carried out.

我朋友请我吃了一顿饭。 **wò péngyou qìng wǒ chī le yī dùn fàn**
My friend invited me to a meal.

医生让她好好地休息了几天。 **yīshēng ràng tā hǎohào de xiūxi le jǐ tiān**
The doctor told her to make sure she rested for a few days.

奶奶要我替她写了一封信。 **nǎinai yào wǒ tì tā xiě le yī fēng xīn**
Grandma had me write a letter for her.

Causative verbs with the underlying notion of making somebody do something range from request to requirement and from order to coercion:

我挽留他多坐一会儿。 **wǒ wǎnliú tā duō zuò yīhuìr**
I pressed him to stay a bit longer.

妈妈催弟弟快睡。 **māma cuī dìdì kuài shuì**
Mother urged younger brother to hurry up and go to bed.

别惹你爸爸生气。 **bié rè nǐ bāba shēngqì**
Don’t make your father angry.

这个孩子真逗人喜欢。 **zhè ge háizi zhēn dòu rén xīhuān**
This child really makes people like him.
Everyone elected/chose me to be the manager.

The judge summoned the witness to appear in the court and give evidence.

Other such verbs include:

He supported me in my protest.

She incited [her] younger brother to do something wrong.

The person on duty told the tourists not to drop litter.

Father won’t let me go hunting.

Other such verbs include:

The subject may be involved or become involved in the subsequent action:

I arranged with/made an appointment with him to go for a stroll in town.

I’ll/Why don’t I come and help you pack your luggage.

I accompanied the guests for a meal.

The teacher took the students to visit the exhibition.
He helped me upstairs.  

I saw him off to the station.

If the subject is inanimate, 使 shǐ and its more colloquial or formal counterparts are generally used:

This business makes me extremely disappointed.

This kind of vitality/spirit fills people with admiration.

Talk like that makes one sick.

This news makes people/one happy.

The scenery here enchants one/is enchanting.

A causative construction may sometimes work in conjunction with a dative construction. The causative verb in these cases usually links with 给 gei ‘to give’:

Grandma poured out a cup of tea for me (to drink).

Grandpa handed me a towel to wipe (my) sweat.

My friend gave me a photograph as/to be a keepsake.

6.5 COVERBS

Some transitive verbs, particularly those that indicate location, destination or instrument, are used to accompany other verbs expressing more specific actions.

6 For a detailed discussion of coverbs, see See Chapter 11.
These transitive verbs are generally known as coverbs, that is, verbs that commonly occur with other verbs. They in fact express concepts very similar to those expressed by prepositions in English, which can be seen from the English translations of the following examples. However, unlike English prepositional phrases, Chinese coverbal expressions are generally placed before the main predicate verbs:

他在图书馆借书。tā zài tǔshūguǎn jiè shū
He borrowed a book from the library.

他到车站去坐车。tā dào chēzhàn qù zuò chē
He went to the station to catch a train/bus.

她给爸爸、妈妈写信。tā gěi bāba | māma xiěxìn
She wrote to her mother and father.

她跟朋友一起去看电影。tā gēn péngyou yīqǐ qù kàn diànyǐng
She went with a friend/friends to see a film.

我用电脑画了一幅画儿。wǒ yòng diànnǎo huà le yī fú huàr
I drew a picture on my computer.

6.6 AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SUBJECT AND ITS ACTION VERB PREDICATE

The agreement between the subject and its action verb predicate is threefold.

First is the principle of reference agreement. The subject of an action verb predicate in Chinese must be of definite reference. In other words, only an entity known to the participants of a communication can be featured as the initiator (or tolerator) of an action. Being a language devoid of definite or indefinite articles, Chinese uses the relative positions of items in a narrative or descriptive sentence to establish different points of reference. That is to say, all pre-verbal positions tend to be reserved for definite reference and post-verbal ones for indefinite reference. The following examples and their English translations will make things clear:

女主人唱了一首歌。nǚ zhǔrén chàng le yī shǒu gē
The hostess sang a song.

老师在黑板上写字。lǎoshī zài hēibān shàng xiě zì
The teacher was writing characters on the blackboard.

For a full discussion of reference, see Chapter 20.
Second is the principle of **number agreement**. Generally speaking, most action verbs are compatible with a subject of any number, i.e., singular or plural. However, there are some action verbs which may only relate to a plural subject. For example:

```
他们共事了三年。tāmen gòngshì le sān nián
They worked together for three years.
```

```
大家在门口集中。dàjiā zài ménkǒu jízhōng
Everyone assembled at the entrance.
```

If the subject is singular, a coverbal phrase has to be introduced to indicate the involvement of another party:

```
他在跟她聊天。tā zài gēn tā liáotiān
He is chatting with her.
```

```
弟弟在跟妹妹吵架。dìdì zài gēn méimié chǎojià
Younger brother is quarrelling with younger sister.
```

Otherwise, the rule of agreement is violated and the sentence becomes wrong:

```
*他通信。 tā tōngxīn *He corresponded.
*她争论。 tā zhēnglùn *She argued.
```

The most common verbs of this type in the lexicon include:

```
接吻 jiéwěn ‘kiss’, 见面 jiànmàn ‘meet’, 再见 zàijiàn ‘say goodbye to’,
分手 fènshǒu ‘part company’, 谈判 tánpàn ‘negotiate’.
```

In most cases, such verbs have a first morpheme implying ‘mutuality’, ‘collaboration’ or ‘coming together’. For example:

```
相处 xiāngchù ‘deal with’, 互助 hùzhù ‘help each other’, 合作 hézuò
‘collaborate’, 会面 huìmàn ‘meet’, 联合 liánhé ‘unite with’, 团圆
tuányuán ‘reunite (of a family)’, 聚餐 jùcān ‘come together for a meal’,
交流 jiāoliú ‘exchange views with’, 对立 duílì ‘oppose’, 商量 shāngliàng
‘consult’, 并列 bǐngliè ‘list together’.
```

Third is the principle of **semantic** or **stylistic agreement**. Some action verbs are more subject-specific than others in terms of meaning or style. The verb 喊 tí ‘to crow’, for example, is only relatable in meaning to roosters and some other birds; and the verb 光临 guānglín ‘to honour somebody with one’s presence’ is stylistically applicable exclusively to the second person. If these semantic or stylistic principles are violated, the sentence is unacceptable:

```
6.7 AGREEMENT BETWEEN AN ACTION VERB AND ITS OBJECT

The first agreement between an action verb and its object is collocation. Every action verb has a collocation range, large or small. An action verb like 遵守 (to abide by), for instance, takes only objects like 法律 (laws), 规章制度 (rules and regulations) or 诺言 (promises). Its collocation range is therefore comparatively small. An action verb like 吃 (to eat), on the other hand, has a large collocation range in that many things are edible. But with an action verb like 打 (to hit), the collocation range is even larger, not only because many things can be hit, but also because the verb’s collocation embraces a range of set expressions such as 打字 (to type (words)), 打气 (to pump air into), 打鱼 (to catch fish), 打电话 (to make a telephone call).

This so-called collocation agreement, which is partly of a semantic and partly of a lexical nature, occurs in all languages. There is, however, an agreement between an action verb and its object in terms of rhythm, which is peculiar to Chinese. A ‘verb + object’ expression can be invalidated, even when it conforms with grammar, meaning and collocation, if it violates a rhythmic principle. The general rule with this principle is that while a monosyllabic action verb may be followed by objects of any length, a disyllabic verb may only be followed by objects which are disyllabic or longer. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Monosyllabic</th>
<th>Disyllabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to read:</td>
<td>看书 kānshū</td>
<td>看书报 kàn shūbào</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>阅读书报 yuèdù shūbào</td>
<td>*阅读书报 yuèdù shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to return books:</td>
<td>还书 huán shū</td>
<td>还图书 huán túshū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>归还图书 guīhuán túshū</td>
<td>*归还书 guīhuán shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to drive:</td>
<td>开车 kāichē</td>
<td>开汽车 kāi qīchē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>驾驶汽车 jiāshǐ qīchē</td>
<td>*驾驶车 jiāshǐ chē</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between these rhythmic patterns is one of registral formality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monosyllabic</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disyllabic</th>
<th>Colloquial or metaphorical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. 看书 kānshū</td>
<td>to read</td>
<td>*阅读书 kānshū</td>
<td>to go to or attend a meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>开会 kāihuí</td>
<td>to go to the cinema</td>
<td>开夜车 kāi yèché</td>
<td>to burn the midnight oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Chapter 26 for a wider discussion of prosodic features like these.
disyllabic verb + disyllabic object: formal or written
e.g. 浏览书籍 liúlàn shūjǐ to read extensively
召开会议 zhàokāi huìyì to hold or convene a meeting

6.8 ACTION VERBS: COMPLETION AND CONTINUATION

Action verbs, as we have seen, are designed primarily for narrative or descriptive purposes, and every piece of narration or description must be lodged in a time frame. English and other languages specify the time and aspect of an action verb through the so-called tense framework, which can be summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time</th>
<th>aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
<td>perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perfect continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The manipulation of time and aspect creates tenses like present perfect, past continuous or present perfect continuous, and so on.

In Chinese, the tense and aspect framework looks rather different. Tense is encoded solely by time expressions and not reflected in the form of the verbs while aspect is indicated as follows:

- the completion aspect by 了 le following the verb
- the continuation aspect by 在 zài preceding the verb

他写了一首诗。 tā xiě le yī shǒu shī He wrote a poem. (narration)
他在写一首诗。 tā zài xiě yī shǒu shī He is writing a poem. (description)

These two aspect markers have a far wider function to fulfil than merely indicating such notions as completion or continuation. In this chapter, however, we shall only focus on their aspectual significations.

6.8.1 THE COMPLETION ASPECT

The completion aspect indicator 了 le, as a desemanticised particle derived from the verb 了 liǎo ‘to bring to completion’, is a marker in the narrative indicating that something has already taken place. The subject of the verb in a narrative, as we have seen, must be of definite reference. The object, on the other hand, can be
of either reference. In general, following a verb marked by a perfect aspect 了 le, a noun object on its own, unqualified by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase, will be of definite reference. Where both the subject and the object are of definite reference and are part of known information, the sentence remains incomplete unless something further is added. For example, these two sentences are incomplete:

他写完了诗... tā xiě wán le shī ...
He finished the poem... (and then what?)

我吃了饭... wǒ chī le fàn
I ate/had my meal... (and then what?)

but are readily completed by an additional clause:

他写完了诗就去睡觉了。 tā xiě wán le shī jiù qù shuǐjiào le
(lit. He write-finish le then go sleep le)
He went to bed as soon as he finished writing the poem.

我吃完了饭就去上班了。 wǒ chī wán le fàn jiù qù shàngbān le
(lit. I eat-finish le then go attend-duty le)
I went to work as soon as I had eaten.

A sentence is of course acceptable, if the object is qualified by a numeral phrase to indicate indefinite or generic reference. For example:

他收到了三封信。 tā shōudào le sān fēng xīn
He received three letters.

他碰见了不少老朋友。 tā pèngjiàn le bùshǎo pénghǒu
He bumped into quite a few friends.

The notion of completion indicated by 了 le is naturally associated with past time:

他昨天收到了三封信。 tā zuótiān shōudào le sān fēng xīn
He received three letters yesterday.

那一年他碰见了不少老朋友。
nèi yī nián tā pèngjiàn le bùshǎo lǎo pénghǒu
That year he bumped into quite a few friends.

9 Note that the end-of-sentence 了 le functions entirely differently from the verbal suffix 了 le, and makes the initial narrative sentence expository. See Chapter 21.
了 le can only be used with future time in incomplete clauses (which are resolved by further information):

明天你下了课来找我。míngtiān nǐ xià le kè lái zhǎo wǒ
Come and see me when you have finished class tomorrow.

我写完了三封信就去睡觉。wò xiě wán le sān fēng xìn jiù qù shuìjiào
I will go to bed when I have written three letters.

One cannot say, for example:

*明天我上了三节课。míngtiān wǒ shàng le sān jié kè
*Tomorrow I will have attended three classes.

*下个礼拜你吃了三次中餐。xià gè lǐbài nǐ chī le sān cì zhōngcān
*Next week you will have eaten three Chinese meals.

Negative counterparts of 了 le sentences are expressed by using 没有 méiyǒu or 没 méi without a quantified object:¹⁰

昨天我没(有)上课。zuòtiān wǒ méi (yǒu) shàngkè
I did not go to class yesterday.

他那天没(有)碰见老朋友。tā nèi tiān méi (yǒu) pèngjiàn lǎo péngyou
That day he did not bump into his old friend.

The quantification of an object in negative sentences occurs only for contrast:

昨天我没(有)写三封信，只写了两封。
zuòtiān wǒ méi (yǒu) xiě sān fēng xìn | zhǐ xiě le liǎng fēng
Yesterday I did not write three letters but only two. (lit. only wrote two)

那天我并没碰见两个老朋友，只碰见了一个。
nèi tiān wǒ bìng méi pèngjiàn liǎng ge lǎo péngyou | zhǐ pèngjiàn le yī ge
I did not bump into two old friends that day but only one.
(lit. only bumped into one)

Finally, it must be pointed out that causative verbs and disyllabic dative verbs with 给 gěi cannot be encoded in the completion aspect:

*他逼了我撒谎。*tā bī le wǒ sāhuǎng
*He forced me to lie.

¹⁰ See §16.9.
6.8.2 THE CONTINUATION ASPECT

The continuation aspect marker 在 zài is placed before the verb and the action indicated can be ongoing, continual, or repetitive. In all cases, the continuation aspect makes the sentence descriptive.

They are singing.  tāmen zài chànggē

They have all been studying this question for the last few days.  zhè jī tiān tāmen dōu zài yánjiū zhè ge wèntì

They are investigating the situation.  tāmen zài diàochá qíngkuàng

The performers are rehearsing.  yǎnyuánmen zài páiyān

The notion of continuation can be further emphasised by the addition of 正 zhèng before 在 zài:

Last Sunday afternoon I was just watching a match.  shàng xīngqī tiān xiàwǔ wǒ zhèngzài kàn qítsāi

She is just taking a call.  tā zhèngzài jiē diànhuà

This time next year we will (just) be on holiday.  míngnián zhèi ge shíhou | wǒmen zhèngzài dùjià

The river water is (just) rising.  héshuǐ zhèngzài shàngzhǎng

(Don’t you know) it’s raining [outside].  wàimian zài xiàyǔ ne
孩子们正在睡觉呢。haizi\m\en zheng\i\shuijiao\i ne
(Can’t you see) the children are sleeping.

别吵他。他准备明天的考试呢。
bie chao ta | ta zhunbei mingtian de kaoshi ne
Don’t disturb him. (Can’t you see) he is preparing for tomorrow’s exam.

In contrast with completion aspect, a noun object following a verb with the
continuation aspect will be generally of indefinite reference, whether or not it is
qualified by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase, and there is no question of a sentence
with an unqualified object sounding incomplete. For example:

他在写诗。ta zai xieshi He is writing poems.

他在写一首诗。ta zai xie yi shou shi He is writing a poem.

学生在做作业。xuesheng zai zuo zuoye
The students are doing their coursework.

姐姐在编织一件毛衣。jijie zai bianzhi yi jian maoyi
(My) elder sister is knitting a woollen sweater.

This aspectual function of zai is thought to derive from its use as a coverb in
locational phrases like zai zher ‘at this place; here’, zai n\i\ar ‘at that place; there’, zai jia ‘at home’, zai xuexiao ‘at school’. This
may explain why the presence of a coverbal zai phrase with a specified
location also expresses continuous action:

有许多人在沙滩上晒太阳。you xudu\o\ren zai shatan shang shai taiyang
Lots of people are sunbathing on the beach.

小猫在火炉前打瞌睡。xiao mao zai huolu qian da keshui
The kitten is dozing in front of the fire.

Continuation aspect, unlike completion aspect, is naturally associated with any
time: past, present and future:

他现在正在洗澡。ta xianzai zhengzai xizao
He is taking a bath at the moment.

那时候她在读博士学位。na shihou ta zai du boshi xuewei
At that time she was reading for her Ph.D. degree.

昨天晚上他们在打扑克(牌)。zuotian wanshang tamen zai da puke (pai)
They were playing cards last night.
This time next year we will be on holiday.

The negation of the continuation aspect is usually effected by the use of 不 bu with 在 zài (but not 正在 zhèngzài):

上星期天下午我不在看球赛。
shàng xīngqì tiān xiàwǔ wǒ bù zài kàn qiúsài
I wasn’t watching a match last Sunday afternoon.

她不在接电话。
tā bù zài jiē diànhuà
She isn’t taking a call.

明年这个时候，我们不在度假。
míngnián zhèi ge shíhou wǒmen bù zài dùjià
We won’t be on holiday this time next year.

河水不再上涨。
héshuǐ bù zài shàngzhǎng
The river water isn’t rising.

6.9 ACTION VERBS: MANNER DESCRIBED AND EXPERIENCE EXPLAINED

There are two other verbal indicators which are often used with action verbs. They are 着 zhe and 过 guo. It is a common misunderstanding that they, like 了 le and 在 zài, are also aspectual markers. In fact they have entirely different functions to serve. 着 zhe is suffixed to an action verb so that the resultant verbal phrase is used as a descriptive element in sentences to indicate ‘manner of existence’, ‘manner of movement’ or ‘accompanying manner’, whereas 过 guo is attached to an action verb in order to explain that what has happened is part of the speaker’s past experience. The explanatory function of 过 guo gives the sentence, in which it occurs, an expository tone.

6.9.1 MANNER OF EXISTENCE WITH 着 zhe

Action verbs suffixed with the manner indicator 着 zhe constitute descriptive sentences indicating particular manner of existence:

Location expression + verb + 着 zhe + numeral and measure phrase + noun

天空中飘着几朵白云。
tiānkōng zhōng piāo zhe jǐ duō bái yún
(lit. sky in float-in-the-air zhe several mw white clouds)
A few patches of white clouds were floating in the sky.
A duck is being roasted in the oven.

A light is/was shining in the room.

On the front of this general’s coat were hanging quite a few medals.

Action verbs with 着 zhe may be used after the aspect marker 在 zài or a 在 zài phrase to indicate persistent posture/state or continuous movement:

Noun + 在 zài (phrase) + verb + 着 zhe

The tourists were lying on the beach.

They were walking in the woods.

The bonfire was burning brightly.

The wind was blowing incessantly.

A verb phrase marked by 着 zhe describing accompanying manner may occur within any type of sentence. With its specifying function it always comes before the main verb. Here are some examples:

He walked towards me smiling.

He walked towards me over-come.

He smiled towards me while he walked.
The child with tears in his eyes admitted to his mother that he was wrong.

The nurse tiptoed towards the patient’s bed.

The puppy came over wagging its tail.

He was sitting there with his head lowered.

As she spoke, she started to weep.

She wept and wept and finally fainted.

The presence of 过 guo following an action verb conveys the meaning that the action of the verb is something that has been experienced in the past, and the tone of the sentence is therefore expository:

I have read that novel.

They have already been to China three times.

I’ve been here before.
The past experience may relate to a specified time:

我年轻的时候写过不少诗。 wǒ niánqīng de shíhou xiě guò bùshǎo shī
I wrote a lot of poems when I was young.

她的女儿两年前当过导游。 tāde nǚér liǎng nián qián dāng guò dǎoyóu
Her daughter worked as a tourist guide two years ago.

The negator for verbs with 过 guo is 没有 méi(yǒu):

我没(有)吃过中国菜。 wǒ méi(yǒu) chī guò zhōngguó cài
(lit. I not (have) eat guo Chinese dishes) I have never eaten Chinese food.

你喝过绍兴酒没有？ nǐ hē guò shàoxíng jiǔ méi(yǒu)?
Have you ever had Shaoxing (rice) wine?

The difference in function between 过 guo and the aspect marker 了 le is that, while the former explains an experience, the latter narrates an event. Compare the following sentences:

他去了中国没有？ tā qù le zhōngguó méi(yǒu)
Did he go/Has he gone to China?

他去过中国没有？ tā qù guò zhōngguó méi(yǒu)
Has he (ever) been to China?

你见了他没有？ nǐ jiàn le tā méi(yǒu)
Did you see/Have you seen him?

你见过他没有？ nǐ jiàn guò tā méi(yǒu)
Have you (ever) met him before?

他那年参加了马拉松。 tā nà nián cānjiā le mǎlāsōng
He ran the marathon that year.

他以前参加过马拉松。 tā yǐqián cānjiā guò mǎlāsōng
He has run the marathon before.

If the object is a common noun, it is always definite reference in a verb + 了 le sentence and indefinite in a verb + 过 guo sentence:

你查了字典没有？ nǐ chá le zìdiǎn méi(yǒu)
Have you consulted the dictionary?
你查过字典没有？ nǐ chá guò zìdiǎn méiyǒu
Have you ever consulted a dictionary?

Finally, 过 guò is less commonly attached to verbs that are not action verbs. This normally occurs when the reference is to a previous situation that subsequently changed:

我曾经有过钱。 wǒ céngjīng yǒu guó qián
(lit. I at one time have guò money) I was very rich at one time.

前年他身体好过一阵子。 qián nián tā shēntǐ hǎo guò yīzhènzi
The year before last his health did improve for a while.
7 ACTION VERBS AND TIME

As Chinese action verbs do not change morphologically for tense, the time concept associated with them is therefore encoded in terms of time expressions. The positioning of these time expressions, whether pre-verbal or post-verbal, depends on whether they refer to definite or indefinite time. **Point-of-time** expressions are by nature of definite reference and are therefore always featured in a pre-verbal position. **Duration or frequency** expressions, on the other hand, in that their purpose is to measure *how long* or *how often* an action has been carried out, are likely to be of indefinite reference, and therefore follow the verb. They are moved to a pre-verbal position only when a period of time or number of times serves as the time backdrop against which a particular action encoded in a verb is supposed to be taking place.

7.1 POINT OF TIME

Point-of-time expressions refer to the particular time in or at which an action takes place, and they are by their very nature of definite reference. For Chinese speakers, the time reference has to be established before the action of the verb is stated and point-of-time expressions are therefore positioned either at the beginning of the sentence or immediately after the subject.

昨天我去商场买东西。**zuótiān wǒ qù shāngchǎng mái dòngxi**
Yesterday I went to the shop to buy some things.

他今天没(有)来。**tā jīntiān méi (yǒu) lái**
He has not come today.

去年冬天这儿下了一场大雪。**qùnián dōngtiān zhèr xià le yī chǎng dà xuě**
There was a heavy snowfall here last winter.

我下午三点在大学门口等你。
**wǒ xiàwǔ sān diǎn bàn zài dàxué ménkǒu děng nǐ**
I will wait for you at half past three this afternoon at the entrance to the University.

In contrast with English, point-of-time expressions in Chinese follow the order of year, month, day, week, part of the day, hour, minute and second; that is, the larger unit always precedes the smaller one:
21 seconds after 9:43 on the morning of Friday, 5 June 1987

I'll come at twenty past two tomorrow afternoon.

Duration or frequency expressions, usually come after the verb,\(^1\) but they are placed in a pre-verbal position, when they are posed, often in a contrastive sense, for particular comment or action. As such, they take on definite reference and in effect become point-of-time expressions:

那两天他没上街。nèi liǎng tiān tā méi shàng guō jiē
He did not go out for those two days.

明年头两个月我要到北京去学习。
míngnián tóu liǎng ge yuè wǒ yào dào běijīng qù xuéxí
I am going to study in Beijing for the first two months next year.

头三次我们都输了。tóu sān cì wǒmen dōu shū le
The first three times we lost.

As we can see from these examples, a duration or frequency expression used in this way is usually preceded by a demonstrative or specifying adjective. A duration expression may also be followed by the word 来 lāi ‘till now’, which confirms that it indicates point of time:

这一年 来 zhè yī nián lái in this last year
两个月 来 liǎng ge yuè lái in the last two months

7.2 DURATION

Duration expressions refer to the length of time a particular action lasts. Logically speaking, the duration will not become known until the action concerned has taken place and it will naturally be of indefinite reference. A duration expression therefore is normally positioned post-verbally as a complement.

我们在巴黎待了一个星期。wǒmen zài bālí dài le yī ge xīngqī
We stayed in Paris for a week.

\(^1\) See \S\S\ 7.2 and 7.4 below.
会议继续了一个多小时。huì yì jì xù le yī ge duō xiǎoshí
The meeting continued for over an hour.

我们要等多少时间？wǒmen yào děng duōshǎo shíjiān
How long will we have to wait?

If the verb is a transitive verb with an inanimate object or an intransitive verb with an internal ‘verb + object’ structure, the duration expression is positioned between the verb and the object. Grammatically, the duration expression is now no longer a complement of the verb in question but an attributive to the noun object. Under such circumstances, the attributive indicator 的 de may be optionally incorporated:

我学了两年(的)中文。wǒ xué le liǎng nián (de) zhōngwén
I studied Chinese for two years.

我们跳了三个小时(的)舞。wǒmen tiào le sān ge xiǎoshí (de) wǔ
We danced for three hours.

我们聊了一个晚上(的)天。wǒmen liáo le yī ge wǎnshàng (de) tiān
We chatted for a whole evening.

If the object is a human or other animate being or is a pronoun, the duration complement comes after the noun object:

警察盘问了那个小偷三天三夜。jǐngchá pánwèn le nèi ge xiǎotōu sān tiān sān yè
The police interrogated that petty thief for three days and nights.

校长训了那个调皮的小学生半个钟头。xiǎozhǎng xùn le nèi ge tiǎo pí de xiǎoxuéshēng bàn ge zhōngtóu
The headteacher gave a telling-off to that mischievous pupil for half an hour.

爸爸在经济上支持了我两年。bà ba zài jìngjì shàng zhīchí le wǒ liǎng nián
Father supported me financially for two years.

However, if the focus is divided between the object and the duration, that is, if the construction is bifocal, the verb is repeated after the verb–object and the duration complement comes after the repeated verb:

我们跳舞就(跳)了三个小时。wǒmen tiǎowǔ (jiù) tiào le sān ge xiǎoshí
We (actually) danced for three hours.
We simply chatted the whole evening.

The headteacher gave a telling-off to that mischievous pupil for (all of) half an hour.

Father gave me financial support for (a period of) two years.

A range of duration expressions is given below. It is important to note that some of them take the measure word 个 ge when associated with numerals while others do not. This stems from the fact that in some cases the duration expressions are derived from original nouns while in others they are measures themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>duration expression</th>
<th>with or without measure word 个 ge</th>
<th>example</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>年 nián 'year'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>一年 yī nián</td>
<td>one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>月 yuè 'month'</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>两个月 liǎng ge yuè</td>
<td>two months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>日 rì 'day' (class.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>三日 sān rì</td>
<td>three days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>天 tiān 'day' (colloq.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>三天 sān tiān</td>
<td>three days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>星期 xīngqī 'week' (neu.)</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>四个星期 sì (ge) xīngqī</td>
<td>four weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>礼拜 lǐ bài 'week' (infrml.)</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>四个礼拜 sì ge lǐ bài</td>
<td>four weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>小时 xiǎoshí 'hour' (neut.)</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>半(个)小时 bàn (ge) xiǎoshí</td>
<td>half an hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>钟头 zhōngtou 'hour' (infrml.)</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>半个钟头 bàn ge zhōngtou</td>
<td>half an hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>割 kè (zhǒng) 'quarter of an hour'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>一刻钟 yī kè (zhǒng)</td>
<td>a quarter of an hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>分钟 fēn zhōng 'minute'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>五分钟 wǔ fēn zhōng</td>
<td>five minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>秒(钟) miào (zhǒng) 'second'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>六秒(钟) liù miào (zhǒng)</td>
<td>six seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>上午 shàngwǔ 'morning'</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>整个上午 zhěng ge shàngwǔ</td>
<td>the whole morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中午 zhōngwǔ 'noon'</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>两个中午 liǎng ge zhōngwǔ</td>
<td>two noons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下午 xiàwǔ 'afternoon'</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>半个下午 bàn ge xiàwǔ</td>
<td>half the afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>晚上 wǎnshāng 'evening'</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>整个晚上 zhěng ge wǎnshāng</td>
<td>the whole evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>夜 yè 'night'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>整夜 zhěng yè</td>
<td>the whole night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3 BRIEF DURATION

Brief duration expressions take a few specific forms in Chinese. They indicate short periods of time and are generally placed after the verb like other duration expressions. They are associated with the numeral — yi ‘one’, and the two most common are: 一会儿 yīhuír ‘a little while’ and 一下 yīxià ‘briefly, a bit’. The difference between the two expressions is that the former focuses on the duration while the latter focuses on the action itself. For example:

我在他家坐了一会儿。 wǒ zài tā jiā zuò le yīhuír
I sat for a while in his place.

他随随便便地看了一下。 tā suísuíbiànbiàn de kàn le yīxià
He casually gave it a look./He gave it a cursory glance.

If there is a nominal object in the sentence, the brief duration expression, like other duration expressions, is placed between the verb and the object:

我们聊了一会儿天。 wǒmen liáo le yīhuír tiān
We chatted for a while.

她梳了一下头。 tā shū le yīxià tóu
She gave her hair a comb.

他们研究了一下那个问题。 tāmen yánjiū le yīxià nèi ge wèntí
They gave some thought to that question.

If the object is pronominal, the brief duration expression usually comes after the object:

他在胳膊上轻轻地碰了我一下。
tā zài gēbo shàng qīngqīng de pèng le wǒ yīxià
He touched me lightly on the arm.

If the object is animate, the brief duration expression may come either before or after the object:

妈妈吻了她的孩子一下。 māmā wěn le tāde háizi yīxià

or

妈妈吻了一下她的孩子。 māmā wěn le yīxià tāde háizi
Mother gave her child a kiss.
An alternative way to indicate brief duration is to repeat the verb. In a narrative sentence relating a past completed action, 了 le is inserted after the first verb. This, however, is only possible with a monosyllabic verb. The verb may take an object, but, if so, only the verb is repeated:

她笑了笑。 tā xiào le xiào
She gave a smile.

她梳了梳头。 tā shū le shū tóu
She gave her hair a comb.

他在胳膊上轻轻地碰了碰我。
tā zài gébo shàng qīngqīng de pèng le pèng wǒ
He touched me lightly on the arm.

*我们研究了研究那个问题。 wǒmen yánjiū le yánjiū nèi ge wèntí
*We gave some thought to that question.

In an expository sentence, where the brief activity is habitual or regular, 了 le is not needed:

星期天我们常到公园里去走走。
xīngqītiān wǒmen cháng dào gōngyuán lǐ qù zǒuzou
We often go for a walk in the park on Sunday.

她每天都拿出他的照片来看一看。
tā méitiān dōu nà chū tāde zhàopiàn lái kàn yī kàn
Every day she took out his photograph to look at.

However, in questions or imperatives requiring further action, both monosyllabic and disyllabic verbs may be repeated to indicate brief duration. With disyllabic verbs, there is a simple repetition; but with monosyllabic verbs, the repetition may incorporate the numeral 一 yī.

咱们先休息休息。 zánmen xiān xiūxi xiūxi
We’ll have a rest first.

咱们能好好地研究研究这个问题吗?
zánmen néng hǎohǎo de yánjiū yánjiū zhè ge wèntí ma
Can we give some proper thought to this question?

2 In a narrative sentence with 了 le, a disyllabic verb cannot be repeated to mean brief duration: it may only use the brief duration expression 一下 yìxià.
请你等(一)等！qing nǐ děng (yī) děng
Please wait a moment.

让我看(一)看！ràng wǒ kàn (yī) kàn
Let me have a look.

你来尝(一)尝！nǐ lái cháng (yī) cháng
Come and have a taste.

你也想试(一)试吗？nǐ yě xiǎng shì (yī) shì ma
Would you like to have a try too?

The repetition brief duration construction also implies a degree of eagerness on the part of the speaker:

你猜猜谁来了！nǐ cāicāi | shéi lái le
Have a guess who’s come!

你们见过面没有？我来介绍介绍。
nímen jiàn guò miàn méiyǒu | wǒ lái jièshào jièshào
Have you two met before? I’ll introduce you to each other.

你有空就弹弹钢琴吧。nǐ yǒukòng jiù tán tán gǎngqín ba
Have a go on the piano when you’ve got time.

Involuntary action verbs or verbs that indicate actions or situations beyond one’s control, however, cannot be reduplicated. For example, one cannot say:

*你害怕害怕！nǐ hàipà hàipà *Be afraid!

Nor can brief duration reduplication occur with a negative:

*不要哭哭！bù yào kūkū *Don’t cry!
*别动动！bié dòngdòng *Don’t move!

7.4 FREQUENCY

Frequency expressions in Chinese are generally monosyllabic. They refer to the number of times an action takes place, and like duration expressions, become known only when the action has taken place. They therefore naturally come after the verb, and the most common are: 次 cì, 回 huí, 遍 biàn and 趟 tàng. They all mean ‘time(s)’, but 遍 biàn implies ‘from beginning to end’ and 趟 tàng refers to ‘trips or journeys’.
We discussed this question twice.

I revised that lesson three times.

I have met that man a few times.

I have been to Beijing twice.

If the verb, whether transitive or intransitive, has a nominal object, the frequency expression, like a duration expression, will generally have to go between the verb and the object:

We have met twice.

I revised the lesson three times.

If the object is a location, the frequency expression may go before or after it:

I've been to Beijing twice.

If the object is a pronoun or a human noun, the frequency expression must follow it:

I have met him twice.

They visited their teacher three times.

* I have met him twice.

*They have visited their teacher three times.

过 go ‘have had the experience of’ is an expository indicator. See §6.9.4.
7.5 每 měi ‘every’

The adjective 每 měi ‘every’, like a numeral, indicates exclusive time reference, and it precedes a time noun with or without a measure word. 每 měi is positioned pre-verbally, either at the beginning of the sentence or immediately after the subject, and it is often echoed by the monosyllabic adverb 都 dōu ‘in every instance’, which comes immediately before the verb:

我每天都去上课。 wǒ měitiān dōu qù shàngkè  
I go to class every day.

李家每年都去瑞士旅游。 lǐ jiā měi nián dōu qù ruìshì lǚyóu  
The Li family goes touring in Switzerland every year.

她每个星期都买彩票。 tā měi ge xīngqī dōu mǎi cāiquàn  
She buys lottery tickets every week.

7.6 OTHER TIME EXPRESSIONS

In previous sections, we have looked at point of time, specified duration, brief duration, frequency and exclusive repetition. There are however other non-specific time expressions that are adverbial rather than nominal and indicate concepts like ‘immediately’, ‘gradually’, ‘punctually’, ‘all along’, ‘constantly’, ‘always’, ‘regularly’, ‘already’, ‘finally’, ‘suddenly’, and so on. These adverbs are invariably placed before the verb:

他马上赶去学校。 tā máshàng gǎn qù xuéxiào  
He immediately hurried off to school. (narrative)

孩子渐渐长大了。 háizi jiānjjiān zhāngdà le  
The child gradually grew up. (le-expository)

他们如期到达目的地。 tāmen rúqī dàodá mùdìdi  
They reached their destination on time. (narrative)

她是素食者，从来不吃肉。 tā shì sūshízhě | cóng lái bù chī ròu  
She is a vegetarian and has never (all along not) eaten meat. (expository)

See the table of time nouns in §7.2 on duration.

Most of these adverbs can be used in all types of sentence, but some, specifying point of time, are by definition found most commonly in narrative sentences, and others, implying change or passage of time, will tend to occur more often in expository sentences. See Chapter 20 on sentence types.

Time adverbs like 全来 cónglái and 向来 xiànglái ‘all along, always’ are invariably followed by negators like 不 bù ‘not’, etc.
7.7 NEGATION AND TIME REFERENCE

In Chinese, the particular negator used to negate an action verb is often determined with reference to time and intention.

There are two negators of action verbs in Chinese: 不 bù and 没(有) méi(yǒu). 不 bù mainly negates habitual and intended action, while 没(有) méi(yǒu) indicates that an action has not taken place or been completed. In general this means that 不 bù is largely associated with expository sentences and 没(有) méi(yǒu) with narrative sentences.

7.7.1 NEGATIVE EXPOSITORY SENTENCES

不 bù negating habitual actions (past, present or future):

他常常不上班。 tā chángcháng bù shàngbān
He often doesn't go to work.
In the past he often didn’t go to work.

I’m afraid in the future he won’t often go to work.

不 barbarically as a negator of intention and future action:

I will not go to the meeting tomorrow.

I won’t buy a book as expensive as that.

Note that with unintentional actions 不 barbarically cannot be used:

It will not rain tomorrow.

7.7.2 NEGATIVE NARRATIVE SENTENCES

没(有) méi(yǒu) negating action that has not taken place:

He did not come yesterday.

We did not stay there for two months.

That day she did not take her three doses of medicine.

If a past action did not take place as a result of deliberate non-action on the part of the subject, the negator 不 barbarically is used. A sentence like this is in fact expository:

He (deliberately) would not come yesterday.

7 In a conditional clause, however, 不 barbarically may be used to indicate possibility rather than intention, and hence it is correct to say: if tomorrow doesn’t rain, the game will go ahead. rúguǒ míngtiān bú xià yǔ | qiúsài zhāocháng jīnxìng ‘The match will go ahead tomorrow as scheduled if it doesn’t rain’.
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nen nian women bu (dasuan) zai narin zhù liang ge yue
That year we would not (i.e. we had no intention to) stay there for two months.

nen tian ta (jueding) bu chi san ci yao
That day she would not (i.e. she was determined not to) take her three doses of medicine.

mei(you) also occurs in expository sentences in particular circumstances:

(a) with the experiential verb suffix 趨 guo:

wo mei(you) kan guo nei ben xiaoshuo
I haven’t read that novel.

tamen mei(you) qiu guo meiguo
They have not been to America.

(b) in conjunction with the adverb 还 hai ‘still, yet’:

wo hai mei(you) xie wan wo de lunwen
I haven’t finished my thesis yet.

tamen hai mei(you) zuo chu jueding
They still have not come to a decision.

7.7.3 NEGATIVE DESCRIPTIVE SENTENCES

In descriptive sentences which are characterised by the presence of the continuation aspect marker 在 zai, 不 bu is normally used but 没(有) mei(you) also occurs, particularly when the reference is to a past unrealised action. The difference between them is that 没(有) mei(you) is simply factual and objective while 不 bu implies a degree of intention:

zuotian shangwu wo mei(you) zai daqiu

or

zuotian shangwu wo bu zai daqiu
I wasn’t playing any ball games yesterday morning.

In fact the distinction between these two sentences is that the first is descriptive and the second expository.
Actions may be associated not only with time but also with location. In this chapter, we will look at the ways in which expressions of location, direction and destination in Chinese are linked with action verbs.

8.1 LOCATION EXPRESSIONS AND POSITION INDICATORS

In Chinese, location expressions are usually formed by placing one of the position indicators listed below after a noun. These position indicators have monosyllabic and disyllabic alternatives and the monosyllabic ones are known as postpositions (as opposed to prepositions). The disyllabic (and polysyllabic — see the second table below) forms can be location expressions in their own right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>postpositions</th>
<th>+ 面 mian</th>
<th>+ 边 bian</th>
<th>+ 头 tou</th>
<th>+ 方 fang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>above; on</td>
<td>上 shàng</td>
<td>上面 shàngmian</td>
<td>上边 shàngbian</td>
<td>上头 shàngtou</td>
<td>上方 shàngfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below; under</td>
<td>下 xià</td>
<td>下面 xiàmian</td>
<td>下边 xiàbian</td>
<td>下头 xiàtou</td>
<td>下方 xiàfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inside; in</td>
<td>里 lǐ</td>
<td>里面 lǐmian</td>
<td>里边 lǐbian</td>
<td>里头 lǐtou</td>
<td>内 lǐnèi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside</td>
<td>外 wài</td>
<td>外面 wàimian</td>
<td>外边 wàibian</td>
<td>外头 wàitou</td>
<td>外面 wàifāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before; in front</td>
<td>前 qián</td>
<td>前面 qiánmian</td>
<td>前边 qiánbian</td>
<td>前头 qiángtou</td>
<td>前面 qiánfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behind</td>
<td>后 hòu</td>
<td>后面 hòumian</td>
<td>后边 hòubian</td>
<td>后头 hòutou</td>
<td>后面 hòufāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left-hand side</td>
<td>左面 zuòmian</td>
<td>左边 zuòbian</td>
<td>左头 zuòtou</td>
<td>左方 zuòfāng</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right-hand side</td>
<td>右面 yòumian</td>
<td>右边 yòubian</td>
<td>右头 yòutou</td>
<td>右方 yòufāng</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition there are: 旁 páng/旁边 pángbian ‘by the side of’, 边 bian ‘at the edge of’, 底下 dixia ‘directly under’, 中 zhōng/中间 zhōngjiān ‘in the middle of’, 对面 duìmian ‘opposite’, 附近 fūjīn ‘nearby’, 隔壁 gébì ‘next door to’, 四周 sìzhōu/周圍 zhōuwéi ‘all round’, 之间 zhī jiān ‘among, between’.

For larger areas like a country, a city, etc., there are the following additional possibilities:

1 There is a classical equivalent of 里 lǐ, 内 nèi, which is generally used with more abstract notions, e.g. 花園内 fānyuán nèi ‘within the scope’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>+ 部 bù neut.</th>
<th>+ 面 mian neut.</th>
<th>+ 边 bian colloq.</th>
<th>+ 方 fang frml.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>east of</td>
<td>东部 dòngbù</td>
<td>东面 dòngmian</td>
<td>东边 dòngbian</td>
<td>东方 dòngfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>south of</td>
<td>南部 nánbù</td>
<td>南面 nánmian</td>
<td>南边 nánbian</td>
<td>南方 nánfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>west of</td>
<td>西部 xībù</td>
<td>西面 xīmian</td>
<td>西边 xībian</td>
<td>西方 xīfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>north of</td>
<td>北部 běibù</td>
<td>北面 běimian</td>
<td>北边 běibian</td>
<td>北方 běifāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>southeast of</td>
<td>东南部 dōngnánbù</td>
<td>东南面 dōngnánmian</td>
<td>东南边 dōngnánbian</td>
<td>东南方 dōngnánfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>northeast of</td>
<td>东北部 dōngběibù</td>
<td>东北面 dōngběimian</td>
<td>东北边 dōngběibian</td>
<td>东北方 dōngběifāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>southwest of</td>
<td>西南部 xīnánbù</td>
<td>西南面 xīnánmian</td>
<td>西南边 xīnánbian</td>
<td>西南方 xīnánfāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>northwest of</td>
<td>西北部 xīběibù</td>
<td>西北面 xīběimian</td>
<td>西北边 xīběibian</td>
<td>西北方 xīběifāng</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The position indication with 部 bù mean ‘in the east of’, ‘in the south of’, etc., while those with 面 mian, 边 bian and 方 fāng mean ‘to the east of’, ‘to the south of’, etc.

Here are some examples of location expressions:

- 桌子上 zhuōzǐ shàng on the table
- 桌子上面 zhuōzǐ shàngmian
- 桌子上边 zhuōzǐ shàngbian
- 桌子上头 zhuōzǐ shàngtou
- 桌子上方 zhuōzǐ shàngfāng
- 树下 shù xià under the tree
- 树下面 shù xiàmian
- 树下边 shù xiàbian
- 树下头 shù xiàtou
- 树底下 shù dīxià
- 屋子里 wūzǐ lǐ in the room
- 屋子里面 wūzǐ lìmian
- 屋子里边 wūzǐ libian
- 屋子里头 wūzǐ lítou
- 湖旁 hú páng by the side of the lake
- 湖旁边 hú pánbian
- 湖边 hú bian
- 中国东部 zhōngguó dòngbù in the east of China
- 中国东方 zhōngguó dōngfāng to the east of China
- 中国东面 zhōngguó dōngmian
- 中国东边 zhōngguó dōngbian
8.2 在 zài WITH LOCATION EXPRESSIONS

To indicate location, the preposition or coverb² 在 zài '(exist) in or at' usually combines with a location expression.

The 在 zài coverbal phrase can be positioned earlier or later in a sentence depending on the meaning it contracts with the verb. It comes before the verb if the initiator of the action (usually the subject) has to be at a particular location before the action can be carried out and it is placed post-verbally if the location indicates the position a particular being or object reaches following the action expressed in the verb. In other words, a pre-verbal location expression is usually concerned with the whereabouts of the subject (the initiator of the action) and a post-verbal location expression is more often than not concerned with the whereabouts of the object (which is usually topicalised).³ We will discuss the complementary (post-verbal) use of location expressions in §8.4 below, but here we are concerned with the adverbial use of location expressions with 在 zài, which come between the subject and the verb:

学生们都在图书馆里看书。xuéshēngmen dōu zài tǔshūguǎn (lǐ) kànshū
The students are all reading in the library.

运动员们在操场上跑步。yùndòngyuánmen zài cāochǎng shàng pāobù
The athletes are running on the sportsground.

有不少人在海里游泳。yǒu bùshǎo rén zài hǎi lǐ yóuyǒng
There are quite a few people swimming in the sea.

雪花在空中飞舞。xuěhuā zài kōng zhōng fēiwǔ
The snowflakes are dancing in the air.

我在旧书店外边碰见了一个老朋友。
wǒ zài jiù shùdiàn wàibiān pèngjiàn le yī ge lǎo péngyou
I bumped into an old friend outside the second-hand bookshop.

有许多外国商人在中国东南部建立了企业。
yǒu xúduō wàiguó shāngrén zài zhōngguó dōngnánbù jiànlì le qìyè
Many foreign traders set up businesses in southeast China.

² Coverbs have already been mentioned in §6.5 and they will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.
³ The object is regularly brought forward before the verb or topicalised through use of the 把 bā or notional passive construction, see Chapters 12 and 13.
If the main verb is monosyllabic or does not have an object, the descriptive marker 着 zhe will have to be added to obtain a disyllabic rhythm:

鸟儿在树上吱吱喳喳地叫着。
niǎo zài shù shàng zhīzhīzhāzhā de jiào zhe
The birds are chattering in the trees.

小猫在火炉旁睡着。
xiǎo māo zài huolú páng shuì zhe
The kitten is dozing beside the stove.

洗好的衣服都在晾衣绳上晾着。
xǐ hǎo de yīfu dōu zài liàngyīshēng shànɡ liánɡ zhe
The clothes are drying on the line.

金鱼在鱼缸里不停地游着。
jīnyú zài yúgānɡ lǐ bù tínɡ de yóu zhe
The goldfish swims unceasingly round its tank/bowl.

有两个卫兵在门口(旁)站着。
yǒu liǎnɡ de wèibīnɡ zài ménkǒu (pánɡ) zhàn zhe
There are two guards standing at the entrance.

Though the addition of 着 zhe ‘exist continuously in a particular manner’ is motivated by rhythm, the sentence with its presence becomes even more descriptive. This point will be picked up again in Chapter 21.

8.3 LOCATION EXPRESSIONS AS SENTENCE TERMINATORS

If a location expression indicates the result of an action, it naturally comes after the verb. In other words, if a location expression emphasises the position the subject (the initiator of the action) or the topic (generally the notional object of the action) eventually reaches following the execution of the action implied in the verb, it is only natural for the location expression to come after the verb. Under such circumstances, the expression is always preceded by 在 zài ‘at; in; on’, etc. Location expressions as sentence terminators are particularly common with 把 bā constructions or with notional passives. For example,

他把大衣挂在衣架上。
tā bǎ dàyī guà zài yījià shànɡ
He hung [his] overcoat on, the coat hanger/stand.

4 Monosyllabic rhythm may be possible in imperatives, e.g. 你在这儿等 nǐ zài zhèr děng, ‘Would you wait here’, 请在前面坐 qǐng zài qiánmiàn zuò ‘Please sit at the front’.

5 Disyllabic or trisyllabic nouns may combine with 在 zài to form location expressions without postpositions, e.g. 在图书馆 zài tushūguǎn ‘in the library’, 在门口 zài ménkǒu ‘at the entrance’ if there is no ambiguity as to the actual whereabouts.

6 See Chapter 12 for 把 bā constructions and Chapter 13 for notional passives.
If the emphasis is the verb itself, the location expression becomes a coverbal phrase. For example, the last three examples may be reworded as:

信息都在软盘上存着。xinxi dōu zài ruánpán shàng cún zhe
The information is being stored on the floppy (disk).

游客们都在树荫下躺着。yóukèmen dōu zài shùyín xià tāng zhe
The visitors are all lying in the shade of the tree(s).

客人们都在房子前面站着。kèrènmen dōu zài fángzi qiánmian zhàn zhe
The guests are all standing in front of the house.

We can see that the post-verbal complemental use of the location expression focuses on the location while the pre-verbal adverbial use of the location expression focuses on the action itself. The only case where the alternative structures do not make any difference in meaning is the use of verbs like 住 zhù ‘to live’. However, there will be a difference in their function: the former is a descriptive (with a 在 zài location phrase) while the latter an expository (with an unmarked verb):

他们住在伦敦。támén zhù zài lúndūn
They live in London.

Note that in this case 住 zhù ‘to live; to stay’ is used monosyllabically without the addition of 着 zhe, or it would be a descriptive sentence again.
8.4 LOCATION EXPRESSIONS AS SENTENCE BEGINNERS

Location expressions in a sentence naturally indicate places which the speaker/writer is sure about, and, like point of time expressions, they are of definite reference. As we have seen, expressions of definite reference come before the verb, and location expressions are naturally found as coverbal phrases placed pre-verbally (e.g. the 在 zài phrases seen above) or as sentence beginners. An expository sentence which states that ‘there is something somewhere’ is therefore often couched in Chinese as ‘somewhere has that something’. For example, ‘there is a book on the table’ will have to become literally ‘the top of the table has a book’, 桌子上面有一本书 zhuōzi shàngmian yǒu yī běn shū. Similarly:

箱子里有不少新衬衫。xiāngzǐ lǐ yǒu bùshǎo xīn chènshān
There are quite a few new shirts in the case/box.

冰箱里还有橘子水。bīngxiāng lǐ hái yǒu júzhīshuǐ
There is also orange juice in the fridge.

书架上只有一本书。shūjià shàng zhīyǒu yī běn shū
There is only one book on the bookcase.

行李架上没有行李。xínglìjià shàng méiyǒu xínglǐ
There is no luggage on the luggage rack.

房子后面有一个小菜园。fángzi hóumian yǒu yī ge xiǎo càiyuán
There is a small vegetable garden behind the house.

The verb 有 yǒu ‘to have’ may be replaced by an action verb marked by 着 zhe or 了 le so that what is indicated is not just that somewhere something exists but also in what fashion or manner something came to exist:

墙上挂着/了一幅画儿。qiáng shàng guà zhe/le yī fú huàr
There is/was a picture hanging on the wall.

餐桌上放着/了十分精致的餐具。
cānzhūō shǎng fàng zhe/le shífēn jīngzhì de cānjù
On the table is/was laid out an extremely fine dinner service.

花瓶里插着/了鲜花。huāpíng lǐ chā zhe/le xiānhuā
There are/were flowers (arranged/placed) in the vase.

8 在 zài does not usually occur with sentence beginners. For example, 他在图书馆看书。tā zài tǔshūguǎn kàn shū ‘He is reading in the library’ vs 图书馆有很多中文书。tǔshūguǎn yǒu hěn duō zhōngwén shū ‘There are a lot of Chinese books in the library’. If 在 zài is present with a sentence beginner, it conveys an emphatic tone; e.g. 在车站外边有一个大铜像。zài chēzhàn wàibian yǒu yī ge dà tóngxiàng ‘Outside the station is a large bronze statue’.
The difference between 着 "zhe" and 了 "le" is that the former is more descriptive and the latter more narrative.

To indicate that something is the sole or dominant occupant of a particular place, 是 "shi" ‘to be’ is often used instead of 有 "you" ‘to have’:

花园里到处都是野草。huāyuán lǐ dàochù dōu shì yěcāo
Everywhere in the garden are weeds.

屋子里都是烟。wūzǐ lǐ dōu shì yān
The room is full of smoke.

大学入口处旁边是一个大钟楼。
dàxué rùkǒuchú pángbiān shì yī gè zhōnglóu
Beside the entrance to the university is a large clock tower.

Similarly, an action verb can be used in this sense provided it is followed immediately by the monosyllabic complement 满 "mǎn" ‘full of’ and is marked by 了 "le":

花园里到处长满了野草。huāyuán lǐ dàochù zhǎng mǎn le yěcāo
Everywhere in the garden has grown full of weeds.

屋子里充满了烟雾。wūzǐ lǐ chōngmǎn le yānwù
The room is full of smoke.

汽车里挤满了人。qīchē lǐ jǐ mǎn le rén
The bus/car was crammed with people.

抽屉里塞满了旧报纸。chōutí lǐ sāi mǎn le jiù báozhǐ
The drawer is/was stuffed (full) with old newspapers.

桌子上堆满了书。zhuōzǐ shàng duī mǎn le shū
The table is/was piled high with books.

If the action verb indicates movement, the notion of existence gives way to that of emergence or disappearance. When this happens, complements indicating direction or result have to be incorporated before the marker 了 "le" is added.

海面上飞来了一群海鸥。hǎimian shàng fēi lái le yī qún hǎi’ōu
A flock of gulls came flying over the sea.

地平线上升起了一道黑烟。dìpíngxián shàng shēng qǐ le yī dào hēiyān
A thread of black smoke rose on the horizon.

9 See §§8.5.1 and 8.5.2 for direction complements; see Chapter 10 for result complements.
8.5 DIRECTION INDICATORS

Direction indicator is a term used broadly to refer to a small set of verbs, which can be used as movement verbs on their own, or can be attached to other action verbs to indicate direction of movement or the beginning of a process involving the action. The set can be divided into two subsets, forming two tiers of possible attachment to an action verb.

8.5.1 SIMPLE DIRECTION INDICATORS

来 lái ‘to come’ and 去 qù ‘to go’

来 lái ‘to come’ and 去 qù ‘to go’ are the two simple direction indicators on which other disyllabic direction indicators are built. 来 lái ‘to come’ indicates direction towards the speaker and 去 qù ‘to go’ away from the speaker:10

爷爷回来了。yéye huí lái le
(lit. Grandpa return come le) Grandpa has come/came back.

爷爷回去了 yéye huí qù le
(lit. Grandpa return go le) Grandpa has gone/went back.

If there is a location object, it is placed between the verb and its direction indicator:

爷爷回家来了。yéye huí jiā lái le
(lit. Grandpa return home come le) Grandpa has come home.

爷爷出国去了。yéye chūguó qù le
(lit. Grandpa exit country go le) Grandpa has gone abroad.

If there is a physical object, it comes after the verb, either before or after the direction indicator:

10 来 lái/lai ‘to come’ and 去 qù/qu ‘to go’ on their own and in other particular combinations may also respectively indicate related notions such as ‘coming into, or disappearing from, view’, ‘regaining or losing consciousness’. These uses will be discussed below.

11 Full discussion of the end-of-sentence particle 了 le can be found in Chapter 21.
爷爷带了一瓶酒来。yéye dài yī píng jiǔ lái
Grandpa brought a bottle of wine.

爷爷带来了一瓶酒。yéye dài lái yī píng jiǔ
Grandpa brought a bottle of wine.

8.5.2 DISyllabic Direction Indicators

来 lái ‘to come’ and 去 qù ‘to go’ are combined with a set of movement verbs\(^\text{12}\) to form disyllabic direction indicators, which are attached to a verb to indicate more precise directions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>来 lai towards</th>
<th>去 qu away from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>上 shàng</td>
<td>钢 up</td>
<td>上去 shàngqu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下 xià</td>
<td>钢 down</td>
<td>下去 xiàqu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>进 jìn</td>
<td>进 jin</td>
<td>去 jìnqu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>出 chū</td>
<td>出 chū</td>
<td>去 chūq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>过 guò</td>
<td>过 guò</td>
<td>去 guòq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>回 huí</td>
<td>回 huí</td>
<td>去 huíq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>开 kāi</td>
<td>开 kāi</td>
<td>去 kāiq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>起 qǐ</td>
<td>起 qǐ</td>
<td>*起去 *qǐq</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

登山运动员爬上来了。dēngshān yùndòngyuán pá shànglai le
The mountaineers have climbed up. (towards the speaker–observer above)

登山运动员爬上去了。dēngshān yùndòngyuán pá shàngqu le
The mountaineers have climbed up. (away from the speaker–observer below)

If the sentence is narrative rather than expository (see Chapter 20), the completed action aspect marker 了 le comes after the verb and before the direction indicator:

\(^{12}\) These direction indicators also constitute motion verbs themselves, e.g. 回去 huíq ‘come back’, 下去 xiàq ‘go down’, 进来 jìnlá ‘come in’, 过去 guòq ‘go over’, etc. (see examples under §8.5.1).

\(^{13}\) The combination of 起去 qǐq is no longer used.
The mountaineers climbed up. (towards the speaker–observer)

The mountaineers climbed up. (away from the speaker–observer)

If a location object is present, it is placed between the two syllables of the disyllabic direction indicator:

The mountaineers have climbed up the mountain. (towards the speaker–observer)

The mountaineers have climbed up the mountain. (away from the speaker–observer)

Completed action in such location–object sentences is expressed either by the verb and direction indicator themselves or by placing 了 le after the first element in the indicator and omitting the second element, i.e. 来 lai or 去 qu:

The squirrel climbed up the tree.

Elder brother ran downstairs.

The train went over a bridge.

Here are some more location–object examples where 来 lai or 去 qu has to be omitted due to the presence of 了 le:

Everyone came into the room.

He swam to the opposite bank.

The actor went on stage.
If an object other than location (i.e., physical or abstract) is present, it can be placed either (a) between the verb and the direction indicator, or (b) after the verb and the direction indicator or (c) between the two parts of the direction indicator with 了 le omitted:

(a) 服务员提了一箱子进来。 fúwùyuán tí yī zhī xiāngzi jìn lái
(b) 服务员提进来了一箱子。 fúwùyuán tí jìn lái le yī zhī xiāngzi
(c) 服务员提进了一箱子来。 fúwùyuán tí jìn yī zhī xiāngzi lái

The attendant brought a trunk in.

(a) 妈妈买来了一只大火鸡回来。 māmā mǎi le yī zhī dà huǒjī huí lái
(b) 妈妈买回了一只大火鸡。 māmā mǎi huí lái le yī zhī dà huǒjī
(c) 妈妈买回了一只大火鸡。 māmā mǎi huí yī zhī dà huǒjī lái

Mum bought (and brought home) a big turkey.

(a) 工程师想了一个好办法出来。 gōngchéngshī xiǎng le yī gè hǎo bānfǎ chū lái
(b) 工程师想出来了一个好办法。 gōngchéngshī xiǎng chū lái le yī gè hǎo bānfǎ
(c) 工程师想出来了一个好办法。 gōngchéngshī xiǎng chū yī gè hǎo bānfǎ lái

The engineer came up with a good idea.

In relation to sentence (c), it would be less acceptable to keep 了 le in:

*服务员提进了一箱子来。 fúwùyuán tí le yī zhī xiāngzi lái
*The attendant brought a trunk in.

*妈妈买回了一只大火鸡。 māmā mǎi huí le yī zhī dà huǒjī lái
*Mum bought (and took home) a big turkey.

8.5.3 DIRECTION INDICATORS INDICATING MEANING OTHER THAN DIRECTION

Disyllabic direction indicators can also be used figuratively to convey meanings beyond those of directional motion, though a link with the basic idea of movement is retained. In sentences with these figurative meanings, the object has always to be placed between the two syllables of the disyllabic direction indicator, and the completion aspect marker 了 le may not be incorporated under any circumstances. However, if the verb is intransitive and there is no object present, 了 le can be used after the verb and before the disyllabic direction indicator.

14 With an abstract noun object, this construction is probably less commonly used.
(a) 出来 chūlai can imply ‘coming into view or having its presence felt’ and 下去 xiàqu, ‘disappearing from view’:

他从口袋里拿出两英镑来。 

tā cóng kǒudài lǐ ná chū liǎng bàng qián lái
He took two pounds (cash) out of his pocket.

没人提出任何问题来。 méi rén tíchū rènhé wèntí lái
No one raised any questions.

病人吞下一粒药丸去。 bìngrén tūn yī li yàowán qu
The patient swallowed a pill.

(b) 过来 guòlái and 起来 qǐlái can respectively convey ‘regaining consciousness’ and ‘regaining memory’ and 过去 guòqù, ‘losing consciousness’:

醉汉最后醒了过来。 zuìhàn zuǐhòu xǐng le guòlái
The drunkard finally came to.

他突然想起这件事来。 tā tūrán xiǎng qī zhè jiàn shì lái
He suddenly remembered this.

那个坏消息使她昏了过去。 nèi ge huài xiāoxi shǐ tā hūn le guòqù
That bad news made her faint.

(c) 起来 qǐlái and 下去 xiàqu can respectively imply ‘starting’ and ‘continuing’ an action or process:

人人都唱起歌来。 rénrén dōu chàng qí gē lái
Everyone began to sing.

天下起雨来。 tiān xià qǔ yǔ lái
It began to rain.

老头儿正想说下去。 lǎotóur zhèng xiǎng shuō xiàqu
The old man was about to continue to speak.

我们只能等下去。 wǒmen zhǐ néng děng xiàqu
All we could do was carry on waiting.

我们不能再待下去了。 wǒmen bù néng zài dài xiàqu le
We cannot stay here any longer.

Ambiguity as to whether the direction indicators refer to direction or process does not generally arise because of the semantic nature of the
action verbs in the collocation. However, in some cases, such ambiguities do exist. The verb 跳 tiào ‘to jump’, for instance, is naturally compatible with upward motion and when combined with 起来 qǐlái, it may mean either ‘to jump up’ or ‘to start jumping’ or in particular contexts ‘to start dancing’. The ambiguity is only resolved by the given context or co-text:

他吓得跳了起来。 tā xià de tiào le qǐlái
He was so startled he jumped to his feet.

随着悠扬的舞曲，大家都跳了起来。
suízhé yōuyáng de wǔqǔ | dàjiā dōu tiào le qǐlái
Everyone began to dance with the rise and fall of the dance music.

(d) 下来 xiàlai indicates ‘settling down or coming to a halt’:

屋子里渐渐地静了下来。 wūzǐ lǐ jiāndiàn de jìng le xiàlai
The room slowly went quiet.

汽车慢慢地停了下来。 qìche mànmàn de tíng le xiàlai
The car slowly came to a halt.

8.6 THE DESTINATION INDICATOR 到 dào ‘to arrive’

As an indicator of destination, 到 dào ‘to arrive’ is hybrid in nature, and may specify either location or direction. We will first look at 到 dào as a location indicator:

他一口气跑到火车站。 tā yìkǒuqì pǎo dào huǒchēzhàn
He ran to the railway station without stopping. (lit. in one breath)

她慢慢地走到河边。 tā mànmàn de zǒu dào hébiān
She slowly walked to the river bank.

Here the 到 dào phrases, as sentence terminators (similar to the location expressions with 在 zài in §8.4), clearly indicate the terminal point or destination of the movement verbs.

More often, however, 到 dào combines with 来 lái or 去 qu to indicate direction, and such combinations usually take the form of:

到 dào + location object + 来 lái or 去 qu

These structures are coverbal phrases, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 11, and may feature pre-verbally as adverbials or post-verbally as complements. As adverbials they identify where the subject is before the action in the verb is
carried out and as complements they indicate where the subject or object is after the action.

(a) as adverbials:

他到车站去接朋友。\[15\]  
他 went to the station to meet a friend.

妈妈到市场去买菜。  
妈妈 went to the market to buy vegetables/food.

叔叔到我家来探望我爸爸和妈妈。  
叔叔 came to my/our house to visit mother and father.

The subjects in these cases must get to their destination before they can carry out the various actions of meeting friends, buying food or visiting parents.

(b) as complements:

他急急忙忙地跑到我家来。  
他 came running to my house in a great rush.

鸟儿飞到树上去。  
鸟儿 flew on to the tree.

潜水员潜到海底去。  
潜水员 dived to the bottom of the sea.

他们把楼上的家具搬到楼下去。  
他们 moved the (upstairs) furniture downstairs.

她把省下来的钱存到银行里去。  
她 put/deposited her savings in the bank.

The subjects here must carry out the actions before they or what they are moving reach their various destinations.

\[15\] In sentences like these 来 to or 去 for qu may colloquially be placed at the end of the sentence; e.g. 他到车站接朋友去。 他 went to the station to meet a friend. 'He went to the station to meet a friend'.
Adverbials are words or expressions which modify verbs in the same way that attributives qualify nouns, and they are therefore placed immediately before the verb they modify. They may be divided into two categories: restrictive and descriptive.

Restrictive adverbials function to restrict the time frame, location, tone, structural orientation or referential scope of verbs. They consist of (a) time expressions; (b) a closed set of monosyllabic adverbs that refer forwards and backwards to particular words or expressions in a sentence or context to highlight or emphasise them; (c) set expressions used as mood or tone-setters of an utterance (e.g. 老实说 lǎoshí shuō ‘to be honest’); (d) negators; and (e) coverbal expressions of all kinds. Descriptive adverbials, on the other hand, describe the manner in which the action encoded in the verb is being carried out. They are usually, but not always, followed by the marker 地 de ‘in the manner of’.

Restrictive adverbials, apart from coverbal expressions, generally come before descriptive ones. If there is a coverbal expression in the sentence, a descriptive adverbial can be placed either before or after it depending on meaning and emphasis. In contrast with this, a coverbal expression always occurs after restrictive adverbials.

9.1 restrictive adverbials

9.1.1 time expressions

As we saw in Chapter 7, point-of-time expressions always come before the verb, so that in the time-sequenced logic of a Chinese sentence the time reference can be made clear before the action of the verb is specified:

我每天早晨七点钟上学。wǒ měitiān zǎochen qī diǎn zhōng shàngxué
I go to school every morning at 7 o’clock.

你们几时走？ nǐmen jǐ shí zǒu
When are you leaving?

1 See Chapter 11 on coverbs.
2 Details of the relative position of adverbials are given in §9.5.
Their two families in the past often visited each other.

I can’t remember for the moment/off hand who he is.

His ideal in the end was realised.

Let’s talk again another day.

I’ll come straight away.

He broke the world record twice in a year.

We have not corresponded for a long time.

He has never (lit. hitherto not) smoked.

She from time to time looked out of the window.

I finished writing this essay yesterday.

That Japanese woman suddenly bowed to him.

3 这 zhè here means 马上 máshàng ‘immediately’.
4 This sentence and a few of the following ones are examples of duration and frequency expressions coming before the verb. For an explanation of this, see §7.1.
5 A number of adverbs like 忽地 hūdì, e.g. 突地 tūdì ‘abruptly’, 骤地 zhòudi ‘unexpectedly’, 突地 dōudi ‘unexpectedly’, 即 mòdì ‘suddenly’, although they appear to be descriptive adverbials with 地 di (see §9.2), in fact function as restrictive adverbials.
From these examples we can see that time adverbials generally come immediately after the subject and before the verb (or the co-verbal phrase if there is one). Sentences like the following are not acceptable:

*她向窗外不时探望。* **tā xiāng chuāngwài bùshì tànwàng**
*我把这篇文章昨天就写完了。* **wǒ bā zhèi piàn wénzhāng zuótiān jiù xiě wán le**

Time expressions, however, may be placed at the beginning of the sentence before the subject if they are to be emphasised and if their scope of modification covers the whole sentence rather than the verb alone. For example:

每天早晨七点钟，弟弟还睡得很香的时候，我就背着书包上学去了。
nǐ wén zhāng kěn diàn zhōng, dìdi hái shuì de hěn xiāng de shíhou, wǒ jiù bèizhe shūbāo shàngxué qu le
Every morning at 7 o'clock, while younger brother is still fast asleep, I go off to school with my satchel on my back.

几时你才能变得不那么调皮呢?
jǐshí nǐ cái néng biàn de bù nàme tiáopi ne
When are you ever going to stop being so mischievous?

Sometimes time expressions may take the form of short verbal expressions, which have the inbuilt meaning of ‘while’, ‘after’, ‘before’, etc. It is as if time words like **de shíhou**, 时 *shí* ‘while’ or **zhìqian**, 以前 *yǐqián* ‘before’ or **zhīhou**, 之后 *yíhou* ‘after’, which would normally be found after the verbal expression, have been omitted.

她干活儿十分马虎。**tā gàn huó’r shìfēn māhu**
(lit. she do work extremely careless) She is extremely careless with her work.

这种电池充了电可以再用。**zhè zhǒng diànchí chōng le diàn kěyǐ zài yòng**
(lit. this mw:kind battery fill/charge le electricity may again use) This battery when it’s charged can be used again.

这位老师说起话来喜欢比划手势。
zhè wèi lǎoshī shuō qí huà lái xǐhuān bǐhuà shǒushì
(lit. this mw teacher begin to speak always like gesticulate gestures) This teacher likes to gesticulate when he speaks.

你临走告诉我一声。**nǐ línzǒu gào su wǒ yì shēng**
(lit. you near-go tell me one mw:sound) Tell me **when you are leaving**.

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6 See Chapter 11 on time clauses.
9.1.2 MONOSYLLABIC REFERENTIAL ADVERBS

Referential adverbs are a set of monosyllabic adverbs which are placed immediately before verbs to refer backwards or forwards to a time, person or entity mentioned earlier or later in the sentence. They indicate immediacy, tardiness, inclusion, contrast, repetition, unexpectedness, etc. on the part of the referent in relation to the action which is about to take place or has just taken place.

The main referential adverbs\(^7\) are:

- 就 *jiù* immediately afterwards
- 才 *cái* not until
- 都 *dōu* all; both
- 也 *yě* also
- 却 *què* on the other hand; nevertheless
- 还 *hái* in addition; still
- 倒 *dào* on the contrary; but, however
- 再 *zài* again (in future)
- 又 *yòu* (once) again
- 只 *zhī* only
- 竟 *jìng* unexpectedly

Here are some examples:

一到冬天，天很快就黑了。\(\text{yī dào dòngtiān} | \text{tiān hěn kuài jiù hēi le}\)  
As soon as winter comes, it quickly gets dark.

我家就在大学附近，几分钟就走到了。\(\text{wǒ jiā jiù zài dà xué fùjīn} | \text{jí fēnzhōng jiù zǒu dào le}\)  
My home is nearby the university, and I can walk there in a few minutes.

他们大学毕业之后才结婚。\(\text{tāmen dà xué bié yè zhīhòu cái jiéhūn}\)  
They did not get married until they graduated from university.

与会的人都赞成他的提议。\(\text{yǔ huì de rén dōu zàn chéng tā de tí yì}\)  
The people at the conference/meeting all approved/endorsed his proposal.

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\(^7\) See Chapter 22 for these adverbials discussed as conjunctives.

\(^8\) The referential adverb 就 *jiù* 'just' here refers forward to indicate 'my home is near the university' rather than backwards.
这条马路早晚都塞车。zhèi tiáo lù zǎowǎn dōu sāi chē
(lit. this mw road morning-evening both block cars)
Morning and evening there is always a traffic jam on this road.

离合器坏了，刹车也坏了。líhéqì huài le | shāchē yě huài le
(lit. clutch wrong le, brake also wrong le)
The clutch broke down, and so did the brake.

这条数学题老师也无法解答。zhèi tiáo shùxué tí lǎoshī yě wúfǎ jiědá
(lit. this mw maths problem teacher also no way explain)
Even the teacher has no way to answer this maths problem.

那瞬间我却说不出话来。nèi shùnjìan wǒ què shuòbū chū huà lái
(lit. that instant I but speak not out words come)
At that instant I could not say a word (however much I wanted to).

我妈妈还买了不少头巾。wǒ māmā hái māile bùshāo tóujīn
(lit. my mother in addition buy le not a few scarves)
My mother in addition/also bought several scarves.

你还不明白我的意思吗？nǐ hái bù míngbái wǒde yìsi ma
(lit. you still not understand my meaning ma)
Do you still not understand my meaning?

最后，他倒没有受到处罚。zuìhòu | tā dào méiyǒu shòudào chūfá
(lit. in the end, he but not have receive punishment)
In the end he did not receive any punishment (as he should).

这件事以后再说吧。zhèi jiàn shì yǐhòu zài shuō ba
(lit. this mw matter afterwards again speak ba)
Let’s talk about this again later.

一不小心，他又把球踢出了界外。yī bù xiǎoxīn | tā yòu bǎ qiú tīchū le jièwài
(lit. once not careful, he again cv:grasping ball kick out le boundary-outside)
In a moment of carelessness, he kicked the ball out again.

这儿只有你一个人吗？zhèr zhǐ yǒu nǐ yí ge rén ma
(lit. here only have/there is you one mw person ma)
Are you the only person here?

想不到事情竟发展到不可收拾的地步。
xiǎngbudào shìqíng jǐng fāzhǎn dào bùkě shōushí de dìbù
(lit. did not expect matter unexpectedly develop cv:to not able repair de stage) Unexpectedly, the matter developed to an irretrievable stage/point.
9.2 DESCRIPTIVE ADVERBIALS

Descriptive adverbials are formed from adjectives or various kinds of adjectival constructions which must be at least two syllables long. They not only describe the way in which the action in the verb is being carried out but they also demonstrate an attitude or conscious effort on the part of the subject, that is, the initiator of the action (unless of course the subject is inanimate and cannot wilfully exert any influence). Descriptive adverbials invite appreciation by the senses (sight, hearing, touch, etc.) or understanding of human motives, qualities, etc. They are generally marked by the adverbial marker "de" "in the manner of" and are placed immediately before a verb or before or after a coverbal phrase:

他热情地接待了来宾。tā rèqíng de jiēdài le láibīn
(lit. he warm de receive le guests) He received the guests warmly.

她敏捷地跑上前来。tā mǐnjìé de pāo shǎng qiánlái
(lit. she nimble de run up front come) She came running forward quickly.

老板很痛快地答应了我们的要求。lǎobān hěn tōngkuài de dàying le wǒmén de yàoqū
(lit. the boss very quick de agree le our request(s)) The proprietor/boss agreed to our request promptly.

姐姐高高兴兴地跑回家来。jiējié gāo gāo xīngxing de pāo huí jiā lái
(lit. elder sister high-high-spirit-spirit de run back home come) Elder sister came running home happily.

爸爸笼笼统统地解释了一下。bàba lóng lóng tǒng tǒng de jiěshì le yīxià
(lit. father sweeping-sweeping de explain le one mw:time) Father gave a sweeping explanation.

More rarely, verbs or noun phrases with or without "de" can also function as descriptive adverbials:

他合不拢嘴地笑着。tā hé bù lǒng zuǐ de xiào zhe
(lit. he close-not-be-able mouth de grin zhe) He was grinning from ear to ear.

观众像潮水一样地涌进剧场。guānzhòng xiāng cháo shuǐ yīyàng de yǒng jìn jù chǎng
(lit. audience like tide-water same de flood cv:into theatre) The audience flooded into the theatre (like a tide).

她一个劲儿地诉说着。tā yī jìng de sùshuō zhe
(lit. she persistent de complain zhe) She went on complaining without stop.

For descriptive adverbials without "de", see §9.4 below.
He cleaned up the room on his own.

Monosyllables (including onomatopoeic terms) have to be reduplicated to become adverbials. For example:

-慢慢地 (mànmàn de) = slowly
- 好好地 (hǎohāo de) = well
- 匆匆地 (cōngcōng de) = hurriedly
- 悄悄地 (qiāoqiāo de) = quietly
- 轻轻地 (qīngqīng de) = gently
- 呼呼地 (hūhū de) = whistling (of wind); noise (of snoring)

Trisyllabic (particularly phonaesthetic) adjectives, quadrisyllabic (often idiomatic) expressions and reduplicated disyllabic onomatopoeic terms are also used as adverbials:

- 静悄悄地 (jìngqiāoqiāo de) = very quietly
- 亮晶晶地 (liàngjīngjīng de) = glitteringly
- 一个个地 (yīgègè de) = one by one
- 齐心协力地 (qíxīn xiéli de) = with concerted effort
- 力不从心地 (lì bù cóng xīn de) = helplessly
- 翻来覆去地 (fānlái fùqù de) = repeatedly
- 咕嘟咕嘟地 (gūdūgūdū de) = gurgling, bubbling
- 轰轰隆隆地 (hōnghōng lōnglōng de) = with a cracking/clapping sound

The quadrisyllabic phrases can also be reduplications or intercalated expressions:

- 清清楚楚地 (qīngqīng chūchù de) = clearly
- 认认真真地 (rèn rènzhēnzhēn de) = earnestly
- 得意洋洋地 (déyì yángyáng de) = triumphantly, pleased with oneself
- 一起一伏地 (yī qí yī fú de) = rising and falling, up and down
- 又渴又累地 (yòu kě yòu lèi de) = both thirsty and tired
- 不高不低地 (bù gāo bù dī de) = neither high nor low

Adverbials longer than this are not common, but they are possible particularly if they incorporate words like 似的 (shì de) ‘as if’:

- 好象一点也不在乎似地 (hǎoxiàng yīdiǎn yě bù zài hu shì de) = as if not caring a bit/jot
- 被人骂了一顿似地 (bèi rén mà le yī dùn shì de) = as if rebuked (by someone)
9.3 INITIATOR-ORIENTED OR ACTION-ORIENTED DESCRIPTIVE ADVERBIALS

We have mentioned that a descriptive adverbial may come before or after a verbal expression. This choice is not random, but is in most cases dictated by the underlying meaning. If the adverbial is initiator-oriented and relates more to the attitude or appearance of the subject of the sentence, it is usually placed nearer to the subject; if it relates more to the manner of the action it may be said to be more action-oriented, and is therefore generally placed after the verbal expression and immediately before the verb. Compare the following pair of sentences:

(a) 他慢不心地把要带的东西塞进背包里。  (initiator-oriented)
    \( \text{tā màn bù jīngxīn de bā yào dài de dòngxi sāijīn bēibāo lǐ} \)
    (lit. he casually \( \text{cv:grasping want de} \) things \( \text{cv:stuff cv:into rucksack-inside} \))
    All casual, he stuffed the things he wanted to take into the rucksack.

and:

他把要带的东西漫不经心地塞进背包里。  (action-oriented)
\( \text{tā bā yào dài de dòngxi màn bù jīngxīn de sāijīn bēibāo lǐ} \)
(lit. he \( \text{cv:grasping want de} \) things casually \( \text{cv:stuff cv:into rucksack} \))
He stuffed the things he wanted to take casually into the rucksack.

(b) 他满脸笑容地把要带的东西塞进背包里。  (initiator-oriented)
    \( \text{tā mánlián xiàoróng de bā yào dài de dòngxi sāijīn bēibāo lǐ} \)
    (lit. he grinning all over \( \text{cv:grasping want de} \) things \( \text{cv:stuff cv:into rucksack-inside} \))
    Grinning all over, he stuffed the things he wanted to take into the rucksack.

but less acceptable as:

*他满脸笑容地把要带的东西塞进背包里。  (non-action-oriented)
    \*\( \text{tā bā yào dài de dòngxi mánlián xiàoróng de sāijīn bēibāo lǐ} \)
    *(lit. he \( \text{cv:grasping want de} \) things grinning all over \( \text{cv:stuff cv:into rucksack-inside} \))

(c) 他把要带的东西乱七八糟地塞进背包里。  (action-oriented)
    \( \text{tā bā yào dài de dòngxi luànqībāzāo de sāijīn bēibāo lǐ} \)
    (lit. he \( \text{cv:grasping want de} \) things messily \( \text{cv:stuff cv:into rucksack-inside} \))
    He stuffed the things he wanted to take messily into his rucksack.

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10 Descriptive adverbials indicating intention or attitude may, however, often be used to indicate manner at the same time.
11 The flexible word order of English sometimes makes these distinctions less marked.
The first of the above pairs illustrates that these adverbials may be used before or after the coverbal expression depending on whether they are describing attitude/appearance or manner. However, descriptive adverbials that indicate only attitude or appearance are less likely to be placed after the coverbal phrase (second pair) and those of manner likewise are less likely to come before the coverbal phrase (third pair).

Here are some more examples of either initiator-oriented or action-oriented adverbials:

他勇敢地把球顶出界外。

(ta yǒnggān de bā qiú dǐngchu jiè wài)
(lit. he bravely cv:grasping ball head out boundary-outside)
He bravely headed the ball out of play.

but less acceptable as:

*他把球勇敢地顶出界外。

*tā bā qiú yǒnggān de dǐngchu jiè wài
*(lit. he cv:grasping ball bravely head out boundary-outside)

他迅速地把车刹住。

(ta xùnsù de bā chē shāzhù)
(lit. he rapidly cv:grasping car brake-stop)
Rapidly he put on the brake (and brought the car to a halt).

but less likely as:

*他把车迅速地刹住。

*tā bā chē xùnsù de shāzhù
*(lit. he cv:grasping car rapidly brake-stop)
He braked rapidly (and brought the car to a halt).

他诚惶诚恐地向她道歉。

(ta chéngchángchěngkěnēn de xiàng tā dàoqiàn)
(lit. he sincerely cv:to her apologise) He apologised to her sincerely.

but less likely as:

*他向她诚惶诚恐地道歉。

*tā xiàng tā chéngchángchěngkěnēn de dàoqiàn
*(lit. he cv:to her sincerely apologise)
We have seen that the marker 地 de ‘in the manner of’ is usually present with descriptive adverbials. However, it is not used when the adverbial includes the numeral 一 yī in expressions indicating ‘togetherness’, ‘swiftness’, ‘abruptness’:

- 他们一起去去做义务工作。 tāmen yī qù zuò yìwù gōngzuò
  (lit. they go do voluntary work) They are going together to do voluntary work.
- 孩子们一齐拥了上来。 háizìmen yī qí rǒng le shànglái
  (lit. the children in unison swarm le up come) The children swarmed over all together.
- 他一拳打在那个人的脸上。 tā yī quán dǎ zài nèi ge rén de liǎn shàng
  (lit. he one fist hit cv:on that mw person’s face-on) He punched that man in the face.
- 他一头扎进水里。 tā yī tóu zhā jin shuǐ li
  (lit. he one head plunge cv:into water-inside) He plunged headlong into the water.
- 他一个纵跳过了小河。 tā yī ge zòng bù tiǎo guò le xiǎo hé
  (lit. he one bound jump over le little river) He leapt across the stream.
- 汽车嘎的一声刹住了。 qìché gā de yī shēng shāzhù le
  (lit. the car with a screech brake-stop le) The car screeched to a halt.

Monosyllabic adjectives can be used as adverbials in imperatives, brief responses, etc. and these adverbials are not followed by 地 de:

- 快来！ kuài lái
  (lit. fast come) Come quickly!
- 慢走！ màn zǒu
  (lit. slow leave) Take care, take it easy.
- 好说好说。 hǎoshuō hǎoshuō
  (lit. well said well said) It’s very kind of you to say so.

Note, however, that if 一 yī in the expression indicates ‘repetition or continuation’, 地 de is retained: e.g. 一次又一次地 yī cì yǒu yī cì de ‘again and again’, 一个劲儿地 yī gè jìnér de ‘non-stop’.
A number of adverbs in the lexicon, though descriptive in nature, are not normally found with 地 de. This is simply a matter of usage and no generalisations can be made about them. For example:

dàjiā jiānmáng yíng le shàngqu
(lit. everyone promptly welcome le up go)
Everyone hastened forward (to meet him/her/them).

liáng guó huitán yuánmān jiéshù
(lit. two country talks satisfactorily conclude)
The talks between the two countries were satisfactorily concluded.

tà cóng bù qīngyì fābiāo yījiàn
(lit. he hitherto not rashly express opinion) He never made rash comments.

lièchē xūxū kǎidòng
(lit. the train slowly start-move) The train slowly started to move.

yī lǚ chuīyān niàoniǎo shàngshēng
(lit. one mw:thread kitchen smoke curling up rise)
A wisp of smoke curled up from the kitchen chimney.

wǒ lālāzāzā tán le zhèxīè | qǐng dàjiā zhìjiào
(lit. I in disorganised way talk le these, please everyone make comments)
I have chatted in no particular order about these things and so would everyone please make comments.

9.5 RELATIVE POSITION OF ADVERBIALS

When there is more than one adverbial in a sentence the normal order is for restrictive adverbials to come before descriptive ones. Within the descriptive category, initiator-oriented adverbials precede action-oriented adverbials. The overall sequence is something like:

(a) time expressions: from more general to more specific: 星期天早上十点钟 xīngqī tiān zǎoshàng shí diǎn zhōng
(b) adverbials indicating mood or tone: 很不幸 hěn bùxìng ‘unfortunately’ (interchangeable in position with time expressions)
(c) monosyllabic referential adverbs: 也 yě ‘also’, 都 dōu ‘all’
(d) negators: 不 bù ‘not’, 没有 méiyǒu ‘did/has not’
(e) actor-oriented descriptive adverbials: 高高兴兴地 gāogào xìngxìng de ‘happily’
(f) 着 zhe phrases indicating accompanying manner
(g) action-oriented descriptive adverbials: 一步一步地 以不以不地 ‘step by step’

(h) 把 bā or 被 bèi

(i) coverbal expressions other than 把 bā or 被 bèi or location expressions: 跟他 gěn tā ’with him’ (interchangeable in position with 把 bā or 被 bèi or location expressions)

(j) location expressions: 在花园 zài huāyuán ‘in the garden’

(k) onomatopoeic terms: 哗哗哗地 huāhuāhuā de (interchangeable in position with location expressions)

An extended sentence illustrating all the above (presented here vertically) could be constructed along the following lines:

老实说 (tone),
这个孩子 (subject)
每天 (time)
都 (referential)
不 (negator)
肯 (modal verb)
认认真真地 (actor-oriented)
看着课文 (着 zhe phrase)
干脆利索地 (action-oriented)
把生词 (把 bā phrase)
用铅笔 (coverbal phrase)
在练习本上 (location)
唰唰唰地 (onomatopoeic term)
抄 (main verb)
几遍。 (complement: frequency)

frankly
this mw child
every day
all
not
willing
seriously
reading text
briskly/unhesitatingly
with a scratching noise
copy
a few mw:times

English translation:

Frankly, this child is never willing any day to scratch out without fuss and with a careful eye on the text (of the lesson) a number of copies of the new vocabulary into his/her exercise book.
One of the most distinctive features of Chinese syntax is that a verb in a narrative sentence is rarely used without an object or a complement following it; that is to say, an unmarked verb would not normally be found at the end of a narrative sentence. Even so-called intransitive verbs in Chinese, as we saw in Chapter 6, are in most cases self-contained verb–object structures.

Complements are expressions that indicate in some way the result of the action of the verb or describe the way the action is or has been carried out. In the Chinese mind, they articulate a consequence that is observable in terms of outcome or manner and as such must logically follow the verb. We have already seen examples of complements in duration and frequency phrases (Chapter 7) and direction expressions (Chapter 8). Here we will deal with resultative and potential complements and those indicating manner and consequential state.

10.1 RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS

A resultative complement consists of either a result verb or an adjective and it is placed immediately after the main verb. If there is a following noun, it comes after the verb + complement. The result indicated by the complement can be either intended or unintended, or it can be the natural outcome of the action of the verb. Resultative complements can occur in narrative, expository and evaluative sentences, but not in descriptive sentences.

10.1.1 ADJECTIVAL RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS

Virtually any adjective can function as a resultative complement, but some are used much more often than others for this purpose. Generally speaking, commendatory adjectives indicate intended result and derogatory adjectives unintended results. In cases where the subject is inanimate or the adjective neutral, the result produced may be a description of a natural phenomenon.

他修好了我的汽车。tā xiū hǎo le wǒ de qì chē
(lit. he repair-good le my car) He repaired my car.

1 There is a specific set of verbs in the vocabulary which indicates the end-result of an action rather than the action itself, e.g. 破 pò ‘break’, 倒 dǎo ‘topple’ (see §10.1.2 below).
He damaged my car (in a collision).

They still haven’t clarified this problem.

Younger sister got that question wrong.

The sun lit up the world.

The evening sun coloured the western sky red.

Mother straightened the bed-clothes.

Elder sister wiped the table clean.

Note that in the last two examples the completed action aspect marker 了 le is likely to become optional for reasons of rhythm, when either the verb or the complement is disyllabic.

Common resultative adjectives are mostly monosyllables from the language’s adjectival lexicon, including the following: 饱 báo ‘full from eating’, 醉 zuì ‘drunk’, 对 dui ‘correct’.

10.1.2 VERBAL RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS

A limited set of so-called result verbs function as resultative complements. They tend to indicate the end result of an action rather than an action itself.

Younger brother finished his homework.

2 弄 nòng ‘to handle’ is used widely in colloquial speech, rather like ‘get’ in English.
爷爷新了那封给奶奶的信。yéye jì zòu le nèi fēng gěi nǎinai de xìn
(lit. grandpa send-go that mw give grandma de letter)
Grandpa sent the letter to grandma.

大风吹倒了那棵大树。dà fēng chuī dào le nèi kē dà shù
(lit. typhoon blow-topple le that large tree)
The typhoon blew down that large tree.

那个小男孩打碎了一只盘子。nèi ge xiǎo nánhai dǎ pò le yī zhī pánzi
(lit. that mw little boy hit-break le one mw plate)
That little boy broke a plate.

Other common verbal resultatives are: 掉 diào ‘drop’, 着 zháo ‘reach, find’, 到 dào ‘attain, achieve’, 开 kāi ‘separate’.

10.1.3 RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS IN 把 bā, 被 bèi AND NOTIONAL PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Resultative complements feature commonly in 把 bā, 被 bèi and notional passive constructions, where the sentence ends with the outcome encoded by the complement:

电工把电线剪断了。diàngōng bā diànxiàn jiǎn duàn le
(lit. electrician ba wire cut-break le) The electrician cut the wire.

洪水把稻田淹没了。hóngshuǐ bā dàotián yān mò le
(lit. flood ba paddy field inundate-submerge le) The flood inundated the paddy fields.

剩菜被妈妈倒掉了。shèncài bèi māma dào diào le
(lit. left-overs bei mother tip-drop le) The left-overs were thrown away by mother.

树被大风吹倒了。shù bèi dà fēng chuī dào le
(lit. tree cv:by big wind blow-topple le) The tree was blown down in the gale.

信已经寄走了。xìn yǐjīng jì zòu le
(lit. letter already send-go le) The letter has already been sent.

衣服都晾干了。yīfu dōu liàng gān le
(lit. clothes all dry-in-air-dry le) The clothes are all dried.

Note that sentences like these tend to be le-expository sentences.
10.1.4 RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS AND INTENDED/EXPECTED OUTCOMES IN IMPERATIVE SENTENCES

In addition to indicating results that have already been achieved in a narrative context, resultative complements, when they occur in imperative sentences, can point to outcomes that are intended or expected:

请叠好这些衣服！qing die hǎo zhèxiē yīfú
(lit. please fold-well these clothes) Please fold up these clothes.

别弄坏我的照相机！bié nòng huài wǒde zhàoxiàngjī
(lit. don’t handle-bad my camera) Don’t break my camera.

拿走你的东西！ná zǒu nide dōngxi
(lit. take-go your things) Take away your things.

请把垃圾倒掉。qǐng bā lājī dào diǎo
(lit. please cv:grasp garbage tip-fall) Please tip out the garbage.

别把杯子摔破。bié bā bēizi shuāi pò
(lit. don’t cv:grasp glass drop-break) Please don’t drop the glass.

10.2 POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS

If resultative complements indicate results that are intended or unintended or are natural outcomes, potential complements point to results that are projected by the speaker to be possible or impossible. They are constructed by placing 得 de for positive potential or 不 bu for negative potential between the verb and the adjectival or verbal complements we have seen in §10.1 above. Sentences with potential complements tend to take an objective stance and the ability or inability to carry out the action expressed in the verb may arise at least in part from circumstances beyond the control of the speaker. Potential complements are therefore essentially expository.

10.2.1 ADJECTIVAL POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS

这张照片放得大放不大？zhēi zhàopiàn fàngdà fàngbudà
(lit. this mw photo expand de large expand not large)
Can this photograph be enlarged or not?
不戴眼镜，我看不清楚黑板上的字。
bù dài yǎnjìng | wǒ kàn bu qǐng chu hēi bǎn shàng de zi
(lit. not wear glasses, I see not-clear blackboard-on de Chinese characters)
I can’t see the words on the blackboard clearly without my glasses on.

你弄得明白这个问题吗？ nǐ nòng dé míng bái zhè ge wèntí ma?
(lit. you handle de clear this mw question ma)
Can you work out what the problem is?

10.2.2 VERBAL POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS

昨晚我睡不着。 zuó wān wǒ shuì bù zháo
(lit. yesterday night I sleep not go-to-sleep)
I could not go to sleep last night.

婴儿还断不了奶。 yīng’ér hái duàn bù liǎo nǎi
(lit. baby still stop not end milk)
The baby cannot be weaned from breast-feeding yet.

这场球打得赢吗？ zhè chǎng qiú dǎ de yíng ma
(lit. this game ball hit de win ma)
Can [we] win this game (of football/basketball, etc.)?

10.2.3 POTENTIAL DIRECTIONAL COMPLEMENTS

这么多，我吃不下了。 zhè me duō | wǒ chī bù xià le
(lit. such a lot, I eat not down le) This is too much. I can’t eat any more.

他的名字你想得起来吗？ tā de míng zì nǐ xiǎng dé qǐ lái ma
(lit. his name you think de up ma) Can you remember his name?

你猜得出他的年龄吗？ nǐ cāi dé chū tā de nián lín g ma
(lit. you guess de out his age ma) Can you guess how old he is?

那么高的地方我们老人爬上去。
nà me gāo de dì fāng wǒ men lǎo rén pá bù shàng qu
(lit. such high de place we old people climb not ascend-go)
Old people like us cannot climb to such a high place.

对不起，我现在走不开。 duì bù qí | wǒ xiàn zài zǒu bù kuǎi
(lit. sorry, I now leave-not-separate) Sorry, I can’t get away now.
10.2.4 FIGURATIVE USES AND OTHER FEATURES OF RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS

Verbal, particularly directional complements regularly have meanings beyond physical movement:

他这样说我受不了。 tā zhèyàng shuō wǒ shòubuliǎo
(lit. he this kind say I bear not end) I cannot put up with what he says.

他们看不起我。 tāmen kànbuqǐ wǒ
(lit. they look not up me) They look down on me.

这辆车坐得下五个人。 zhè chē zuòde xià wǔ gè rén
(lit. this mw car sit down five mw people) This car can seat/take five people.

我买不起那幅画儿。 wǒ mǎibuqǐ nēi fú huàr
(lit. I buy not rise that mw picture) I cannot afford (to buy) that picture.

你要想得开。 nǐ yào xiǎngdekāi
(lit. you should think de separate) You should take [it] philosophically.

10.3 COMPLEMENTS OF MANNER AND CONSEQUENTIAL STATE

Complements of manner are formed by placing 得 de after a verbal predicate followed by an adjectival phrase, which specifies the way in which the action of the verb is carried out or seen to be carried out. They delineate the observable manner or result of the action and by definition they are likely to be found in expository sentences. They can therefore be distinguished from pre-verbal adverbial modifiers of manner with 地 de, which are more concerned with the attitude or approach of the initiator of the action, and which tend to feature more in narrative or descriptive sentences. If there is an object in a sentence with a complement of manner, it must be shifted to the beginning of the sentence as a topic or be placed pre-verbally after the coverb 把 bā. The words or expressions found in the complement are usually: (a) an adjective, normally modified by a degree adverb like 很 hěn ‘very’ or by a degree complement of its own; (b) a phonaesthetised adjective; or (c) a reduplicated adjective.

(a) degree adverb + adjective or adjective + degree complement:

那个姑娘打扮得很漂亮。 nèi ge gūniang dǎbàn de hěn piàoliang
(lit. that mw girl dress de very beautiful) That girl is beautifully dressed.

4 See Chapter 9.
事情解决得十分完满。 **shìqíng jiějué de shìfēn wánmǎn**  
(lit. matter resolve de entirely perfect)  
The matter has been resolved perfectly.

她钢琴弹得好极了。 **tā gāngqín tán de hào jí le**  
(lit. she piano play de good extremely le)  
She plays the piano extremely well.

这个翻译中文说得流畅得很。  
**zhèi ge fānyì zhōngwén shuō de liúchàng de hěn**  
(lit. this mw interpreter Chinese speak de fluently de very)  
This interpreter speaks Chinese extremely fluently.

(b) adjective + disyllabic phonaesthemes + 的 de:

他把杯子擦得亮铮铮的。 **tā bā bēizi cā de liàngzhēngzhēng de**  
(lit. he cv:grasp glass rub de shining de)  
He polished the glass so that it shone.

孩子长得胖乎乎的。 **háizi zhǎng de pànghūhū de**  
(lit. child grow de chubby de)  
The child is/has grown chubby.

那个老头子喝得醉醺醺的。 **nèi ge lǎotóuzi hé de zuìxūnxūn de**  
(lit. that mw old man drink de drunk de)  
That old man got drunk.

(c) reduplicated monosyllabic or disyllabic adjectives + (的 de):

大门关得紧紧的。 **dàmén guān de jǐnjǐn de**  
(lit. big gate shut de tight de)  
The main gate was tightly shut.

屋子整理得干干净净的。 **wūzǐ zhěnglǐ de gāngānjìngjìng (de)**  
(lit. room tidy de clean de)  
The room was tidied nice and clean.

他把事件的经过说得清清楚楚的。  
**tā bā shìjiàn de jīngguò shuō de qīngqīngchǔchu de**  
(lit. he cv:grasp event de course tell de clear de)  
He explained clearly the course of events.

In complements of consequential state the adjectival phrase is replaced by:  
(a) a verbal phrase; (b) a clause; or (c) a quadrisyllabic idiom. They differ from complements of manner in that they may follow either an adjectival or a verbal predicate, but in other ways they are similar in function: an object, if present, must come before the predicate; and they are likewise expository in tone, since they elaborate on what is observed to result, intentionally or otherwise, from the
action of the predicate verb or from the situation described by the adjectival predicative.

(a) verbal phrase:

树被大风吹得左右摇摆。shù bèi dà fēng chuī de zuǒyòu yáobāi
(lit. tree cv:by big wind blow de left-right-sway)
The tree was swaying from left to right in the force of the gale.

他笑得直不起腰来。tā xiào de zhībùqǐ yāo lái
(lit. he laugh de straight-not-rise-waist come)
He laughed so much he couldn’t straighten up.

妈妈伤心得睡不着觉。māmā shāngxīn de shuìbùzháo jiào
(lit. mother sad de sleep not tight sleep)
Mother was so sad that she could not go to sleep.

这个人胖得扣不上外衣的纽扣。
zhèi ge rén pàng de kòubùshàng wài yì de niúkòu
(lit. this ge person fat de fasten-not up coat de buttons)
This person was so fat he could not button up his coat.

(b) clause:

她哭得眼睛都红了。tā kū de yǎnjīng dōu hóng le
(lit. she weep de eyes all red le) Her eyes were red with weeping.

老太太气得全身发抖。lǎo taitái qì de quánshēn fādōu
(lit. old lady angry de whole body tremble)
The old lady trembled with anger.

她高兴得嘴巴都合不拢了。tā gāoxìng de zuǐbā dōu hébulóng le
(lit. she happy de mouth also close not together le)
She was so happy that she was beaming all the time.

他们冷得牙齿直打战。tāmén lěng de yáchǐ zhī dázhan
(lit. they cold de teeth continuously chatter)
They were so cold their teeth were chattering.

(c) quadrisyllabic idioms:

桌子上的东西堆得乱七八糟。
zhuòzi shàng de dōngxi duī de luànquībāzāo
(lit. table-top de things pile de untidy)
The things on the table were piled up untidilly.
他回答得干脆利落。tā huídá de gāncuì líluò
(lit. he reply de clear-cut) He gave a clear-cut response.

dītán jiù de yīqiánbùzhí
(lit. carpet old de one-cash-not-worth)
The carpet was so old it was not worth a penny.

这种药苦得难以下咽。zhè zhǒng yào kǔ de nányì xià yàn
(lit. this kind medicine bitter de difficult to swallow)
This medicine is too bitter to swallow.
Coverbs are a specific set of verbs in the Chinese language which are similar to English prepositions. They are called coverbs because they almost invariably have to be used in conjunction with other verbs in a sentence.¹ For example:

小李对我笑了笑。xiaoli dui wo xiao le xiao (coverb: 对 duì ‘towards; facing’) (lit. little Li towards me smile le smile) Little Li smiled at me.

我们向前走去。women xiang qian zou qu (coverb: 向 xiang ‘heading towards’) (lit. we towards ahead go) We went forward/ahead.

他来自北方。ta lai zi beifang (coverb: 自 zi ‘from’) (lit. he come from north) He comes from the north.

她一口气走到学校。tā yìkòuqi zou dao xuéxiào (coverb: 到 dao ‘arriving at’) (lit. she in one breath walk arriving at school) She walked straight through to school.

One cannot say:

* 小李对我。*xiaoli dui wǒ *Xiao Li towards me.
* 我们向前。*women xiang qian *We ahead.
* 他来自北方。*ta zi beifang *He from north.
* 她到学校。*tā dao xuéxiào *She arriving at school.

Coverbs introduce expressions covering a wide range of factors including location, direction, timing, association, means, instrument, etc. and they are also essential elements in a number of grammatical constructions. These are all detailed below in §11.2. In most cases, coverbs are placed before the main verb in the sentence, the general formula being:

subject + coverbal expression + main verb

¹ Most coverbs must be followed by a verb in the sentence. Some, however, can function as independent verbs, e.g. 在 zài. In 他在家休息 tā zài jiā xiūxi ‘He’s resting at home’, in zài is a coverb; but in 他不在家 tā bú zài jiā ‘He’s not at home’, it is a verb.
² 到 dao like 在 zài can also be used as a full verb, but as such it needs to be aspect-marked, e.g. 她下午两点到了学校 tā xiàwǔ liǎng diǎn dào le xuéxiào ‘She arrived at the school at two o’clock in the afternoon’.
In some cases, as can be seen from the third and fourth examples above, the coverb may come after the main verb. This positioning is determined by meaning, and is most common when the reference is to location or direction.\(^3\)

The most important coverbs used in the language in terms of semantic categories are listed at §11.2. For example, 向 xiàng ‘in the direction of’, 朝 cháo ‘towards’, 往 wǎng or wàng ‘going to’, and 奔 bèn ‘heading for’ belong to the same semantic category. Coverbs like these within one category can generally be used interchangeably, but there are often particular features associated with their use as well as differences between them, which we will call peer characteristics.

We will first examine the nature of these peer characteristics before listing the semantic categories of coverbs.

11.1 PEER CHARACTERISTICS

11.1.1 REGISTRAL

Though coverbs in a semantic category broadly function in the same way, they do have differences in register usually associated with stylistic and regional distinctions.

For example, to say ‘I’ll go with him’, the following options might be open:\(^4\)

- 我和他一起去。 wǒ hé tā yīqǐ qù (neut.)
- 我跟他一起去。 wǒ gēn tā yīqǐ qù (northern dialect: colloq.)
- 我同他一起去。 wǒ tóng tā yīqǐ qù (southern dialect: colloq.)
- 我与他同行。 wǒ yǔ tā tóngxíng (fml. and class.)

The choice would be made purely in terms of formality of style.

11.1.2 COLLOCATIONAL

Collocational features are more lexical than grammatical in nature and they are part of language idiom. They dictate that some, if not all, the coverbs in a category may occur with a particular noun. Various possibilities are listed below within the category ‘at the most opportune moment’. For example: 乘 chéng, 趁 chèn, and 随 suí may all collocate with 机 jī ‘opportunity’, but not 就 jiù and 顺 shùn:

- 乘机 chéng jī making use of the opportunity
- 趁机 chèn jī taking the opportunity
- 随机 suí jī acting accordingly
- *就机 jiù jī
- *顺机 shùn jī

\(^3\) See §11.1 below.
\(^4\) See §11.2 below.
All five of them match with 便 biàn ‘convenience’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>方式</th>
<th>便式</th>
<th>while one is at or about something</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>顺便</td>
<td>shùn biàn</td>
<td>as convenient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>就便</td>
<td>jiù biàn</td>
<td>as one pleases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>随便</td>
<td>suí biàn</td>
<td>at one’s convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>趁便</td>
<td>chèn biàn</td>
<td>when convenient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>乘便</td>
<td>chéng biàn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

顺 shùn, 就 jiù, 趁 chèn and 乘 chéng link with 势 shì ‘momentum’, but not 随 suí:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>方式</th>
<th>势式</th>
<th>taking advantage of someone’s error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>顺势</td>
<td>shùn shì</td>
<td>making use of the momentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>就势</td>
<td>jiù shì</td>
<td>taking advantage of a favourable situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>趁势</td>
<td>chèn shì</td>
<td>taking advantage of the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>乘势</td>
<td>chéng shì</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*随势 suí shì

就 jiù and 随 suí both collocate with 地 dì ‘place’ while the others do not:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>方式</th>
<th>地式</th>
<th>on the spot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>就地</td>
<td>jiù dì</td>
<td>at any place where one is – anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>随地</td>
<td>suí dì</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.1.3 GOVERNMENTAL

Coverbs, like other transitive verbs, invariably take objects. Governmental characteristics refer to the fact that the object governed by a particular coverb may take diverse forms. Generally, the object is a noun or nominal expression, but in some cases it may be an adjective, a verb or verb phrase, or even a clause. For example, in the case of the coverb 趁 chèn ‘taking the opportunity of’ from the category cited above, the object may take the form of a noun, an adjective, a verb phrase, or a clause:

趁机 chèn jī taking the opportunity
(机 jī ‘opportunity: an abbreviated noun)
趁热 chèn rè [eating or drinking something] while it is hot
(热 rè ‘hot’: an adjective)
趁下雨 chèn xiàyǔ [doing something] while it is raining
(下雨 xiàyǔ ‘to rain’: a verb)
趁天晴 chèn tiān qíng [doing something] while the weather is fine
(天晴 tiān qíng ‘it is fine’: a clause)

The governing capacity of individual coverbs varies greatly.
11.1.4 PROSODIC

Most coverbs are monosyllabic. However, there are quite a few which have disyllabic alternatives. While monosyllabic coverbs may occur with monosyllabic, disyllabic or multi-syllabic objects, disyllabic coverbs function only with disyllabic or multi-syllabic objects. For example, 按 ‘according to’ can be used freely as follows:

按 按道理 按实际情况
èn lǐ èn dàolì èn shíjì qíngkuāng
according to reason, normally according to reason according to/in the light of actual circumstances

But its disyllabic alternative 按照 ‘in accordance with’ is more restricted, with the following two phrases being acceptable:

按照道理 按照实际情况
ènzhào dàolì ènzhào shíjì qíngkuāng
according to reason in the light of actual circumstances

but not:

*按照 理 *ènzhào lǐ

11.1.5 SEQUENTIAL

As a general rule, coverbs occur before the main verb in the sentence. However, where a coverb indicates location or direction, it may come after the verb. For example, within the category with the meaning ‘in the direction of’ (see §11.2.1.1), 向 ‘towards’ and 往/wàng ‘heading for’ may be used before or after the main verb in the sentence, while most of the others occur only pre-verbally.5

It must however be noted that all post-verbal uses are restricted in one way or another. For example 向 in the pre-ver bal position can govern any noun (or pronoun):

他向我走来。 tā xiàng wǒ zǒu lai
(lit. he cv:towards me walk come) He walked towards me.

whereas post-verbally its noun object is likely to be limited to an abstract idea:

我们从胜利走向胜利。 wǒmen cóng shènglì zǒu xiàng shènglì
(lit. we cv:from victory go cv:towards victory) We went from victory to victory.

5 于 yú, with its origins in Classical Chinese, is the only coverb in this category that is used post-verbally.
This is not heading for glory; this is heading for death.

In the case of 往 wàng/wáng the post-verbal restriction relates to the verb which is limited to examples like 开 kāi (of a car) ‘to head for’:

她往海边走去。 tā wǎng hǎibiān zǒu qu
(lit. she cv:heading for shore walk go) She walked towards the shore (sea).

这班车开往上海。 zhè bān chē kāiwǎng shànghǎi
(lit. this mw vehicle travel cv:heading for Shanghai) This bus/train is going to Shanghai.

In addition to the above, 到 dào ‘arriving at, to’ is used freely in pre- and post-verbal positions. For examples, see §11.2.1.3, and §11.2.2.3 below.

11.1.6 USAGE

Usage differences highlight the specific ways some coverbs are used. For example, in the category of ‘along’, 沿 yán ‘alongside’ does not occur with verbs of motion while its disyllabic counterpart 沿着 yánzhe does:

沿路都是商店。 yán lù dōu shì shāngdiàn
(lit. cv:alongside road all is shops) There are shops all along the road.

他们沿着大路走去。 tāmen yán zhe dà lù zǒu qu
(lit. they cv:along main road walk go) They walked along the road.

The first example above also illustrates the fact that 沿 yán is one of a limited number of coverbs that can be used as sentence beginners. Other examples are:

靠墙摆着一张床。 kào qiáng bài zhe yī zhāng chuáng
(lit. cv:against wall place zhe one mw bed) Against the wall was a bed.

临窗放着一张桌子。 lín chuāng fàng zhe yī zhāng zhuōzi
(lit. cv:beside window place zhe one mw table) Next to the window was a table.

11.2 SEMANTIC CATEGORIES

We list here the semantic categories of coverbs. For each category a table is given summarising peer characteristics: usage (indicating, where appropriate, dynamic and/or static nature, sentence beginners, etc.); register (informal, formal,
colloquial, etc.); collocaational (detailing specific association with specific nouns, where this occurs); governmental (identifying the possible grammatical form of the item governed by the coverb, e.g. noun, pronoun, etc.); prosodic (providing examples of alternative disyllabic coverbs, where they exist); and sequential (indicating whether the coverbs occur only before the main verb, or either before or after it).

11.2.1 DIRECTION AND POSITION
11.2.1.1 Towards or in the direction of

朝 cháo: towards, facing:

他朝我走过来。 tā cháo wǒ zǒu guòlái
(lit. he cv:towards me walk cross come) He walked over to me.

他朝我笑了笑。 tā cháo wǒ xiào le xiào
(lit. he cv:facing me smile le smile) He smiled at me.

我们朝前看去。 wǒmen cháo qián kàn qu
(lit. we cv:towards front look-go) We looked ahead.

向 xiàng: towards:

飞机向东边飞去。 féijī xiàng dōngbiān fēi qu
(lit. plane cv:towards east-side fly-go) The plane flew east.

走到路口，然后向左转。 zǒu dào lù kǒu | ránhòu xiàng zuǒ zhuǎn
(lit. walk cv:arriving crossroads, afterwards cv:towards left turn) Go to the crossroads and then turn left.

我向窗外望去。 wǒ xiàng chuāng wài wàng qu
(lit. I cv:towards window-outside gaze-go) I looked out of the window.

我有点事儿向你请教。 wǒ yǒudiǎn shìr xiàng nǐ qǐngjiào
(lit. I have mw little matter cv:towards you seek advice) I would like your advice on a small matter.

她向我点了点头。 tā xiàng wǒ diǎn le diǎn tóu
(lit. she cv:towards me nod le nod head) She nodded to me.

望 wàng: towards, to:

汽车望南开去。 qīchē wàng nán kāi qu
(lit. car cv:towards south drive-go) The car drove south.
往 wang/wàng: in the direction of:

妈妈往(wàng)厨房走去。māma wàng chūfáng zǒu qu
(lit. mother cv:towards kitchen walk-go) Mother walked to the kitchen.

山脉往(wàng)东延伸。shānmài wàng dōng yánshēn
(lit. mountain range cv:towards east stretch)
The mountain range stretched to the east.

这班车开往(wàng)上海。zhè bān chē kāiwǎng shànghǎi
(lit. this mw train travel cv: towards Shanghai)
This train is going to Shanghai.

奔 bèn: heading for:

汽艇奔码头开去。qìtīng bèn mǎtóu kāi qu
(lit. motorboat cv:heading for dock travel-go) The motorboat headed for the dock.

于 yú: to:

这是问道于盲。zhè shì wèndào yú máng
(lit. this is ask way cv:to blind) This is asking a blind person the way.

我得求救于人。wǒ dé qíjiù yú rén
(lit. I had to cry for help cv: to person)
I had to call someone to come to the rescue.

为 wèi: to:

此事不足为外人道。cǐ shì bù zú wèirén dào
(lit. this matter not worth cv:to outsider speak)
This matter is not for outsiders to hear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>coverb</th>
<th>usage</th>
<th>register</th>
<th>collocational</th>
<th>governmental</th>
<th>prosodic</th>
<th>sequential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>朝 cháo</td>
<td>dynamic/static</td>
<td>inml.</td>
<td>n, pron</td>
<td>朝向 cháozhè</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>向 xiàng</td>
<td>dynamic/static</td>
<td>fml.</td>
<td>n, pron</td>
<td>向着 xiàngzhè</td>
<td>pre-/post-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>望 wàng</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>往 wàng/wàng</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-/post-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>奔 bèn</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>slang</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>于 yú</td>
<td>static</td>
<td>class.</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>post-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>为 wèi</td>
<td>static</td>
<td>obs.</td>
<td>...道 dào ‘to inform’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.2.1.2 From (a starting-point)

从 cóng: from:

我刚从北京回来。 wǒ gāng cóng běijīng huílái
(lit. I just cv:from Beijing return-come) I have just come back from Beijing.

我从他那儿得到你的消息。 wǒ cóng tā nàr dēdào nǐde xiāoxī
(lit. I cv:from his there obtain your news) I got your news from his place.

由 yóu from:

游行队伍由天安门出发。 yóuxíng dùiwù yóu Tiān’ānmén chūfā
(lit. march ranks cv:from Tiananmen start out)
The procession started from Tiananmen.

风向突然变了，由北向南刮起来。 fēngxiàng tūrán biàn le | yóu běi xiàng nán guā qǐlái
(lit. wind direction suddenly change le, cv:from north cv:towards south blow-begin)
The direction of the wind suddenly changed and it began to blow from north to south.

打 dǎ: from:

咱们打这儿走吧。 zánmen dǎ zhèr zǒu ba
(lit. we cv:from here go ba) Let’s go from here.

她打窗户里往外看。 tā dǎ chuānghūlǐ wàng wài kàn
(lit. she cv:from window-inside cv:towards outside look)
She looked out of the window.

起 qǐ: from:

您起哪儿来？ nín qǐ nàr lái
(lit. you (polite) cv:from where come) Where do you [polite] come from?

于 yú: from, at:

他毕业于英国利兹大学。 tā biéyì yīngguó lízī dàxué
(lit. he graduate cv:from England Leeds university)
He graduated from Leeds University in England.

黄河发源于青海。 huánghé fāyuán yú qīnghǎi
(lit. Yellow River has source cv:from Qinghai) The Yellow River rises in Qinghai.
### 11.2.1.3 Going to or arriving at (a destination)

到 dào: to, arriving at:

你到哪儿去? nǐ dào nǎr qù
(lit. you cv:to where go) Where are you going to?

我一口气跑到车站。wǒ yīkǒu qì pǎo dào chēzhàn
(lit. I in one breath run cv:to station)
I ran straight to the bus/coach/railway station.

他下午到医院看病去。tā xiàwǔ dào yīyuàn kàn bìng qu
(lit. he afternoon cv:to hospital see-to illness go)
He is going/went in the afternoon to the hospital for treatment.

### 11.2.1.4 Along

沿 yán: along, alongside:

沿河开满了鲜花。yán hé kāi mǎn le xiān huā
(lit. cv:along river open-full le fresh flower)
There are flowers blooming all along the river.

沿着 yán zhe: along:

我们沿着大街一直走去。wǒmen yán zhe dàjiē yǐzhí zǒu qu
(lit. we cv:along main road straight walk-go)
We walked straight down the main road.
yuan: along:

缘木求鱼。yuán mù qiú yú
(lit. cv:along tree seek fish) Seek fish up a tree. [i.e. bark up the wrong tree]

ái: in sequence:

他挨家挨户去询问。tā áijiā áihù qù xúnwèn
(lit. he cv:in sequence house cv:in sequence door go enquire)
He made enquiries from door to door.

shùn: along:

我顺手把门关上。wǒ shùnshǒu bā mén guān shàng
(lit. I cv:along hand cv:grasp door close up)
I closed the door behind me/as I came in.

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<td>neut.</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>see 沿着 yánzhe</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>沿着</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>see 沿 yán</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>缘 yuán</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>class.</td>
<td>木 mù ‘tree’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>挨 ái</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>家 jiā ‘house’</td>
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<tr>
<td>顺 shùn</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>infml.</td>
<td>路 lù ‘way’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
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</table>

11.2.1.5 Facing

对 dui: to, facing:

你对他说了些什么？nǐ dui tā shuō le xiē shénme
(lit. you cv:to him say le mw:some what) What did you say to him?

duizhe: facing:

他对著镜子梳了梳头发。tā dui zhē jìngzi shū le shū tóufa
(lit. he cv:facing mirror comb le comb hair)
He combed his hair in front of the mirror.

yíng: facing, against:

彩旗迎风招展。cǎiqí yíng fēng zhāozhǎn
(lit. coloured flag cv:facing wind flutter) The bunting fluttered in the wind.
当 dāng: facing, before:

阴谋当众败露。 yīnmóu dāng zhòng bàilù
(lit. plot cv:before crowd fail-expose)
The plot was exposed before everyone/in public.

当着 dāng zhe: facing, before:

请你当着大家的面把问题说清楚吧。
qing ni dāng zhe dàjiā de miàn bā wèntí shuō qīngchú ba
(lit. please you cv:before everyone’s face cv:grasp problem speak-clear ba)
Please make clear the problem in front of everyone.

劈 pī: closely facing, right against:

我劈头碰见小王。 wǒ pī tóu pèngjiàn xiǎowáng
(lit. I cv:right against head bump-see little Wang)
I bumped straight into Xiao Wang.

冲 chōng: facing, towards:

他冲我眨了眨眼。 tā chōng wǒ zhǎ le zhǎ yǎn
(lit. he cv:towards me wink le wink eye) He winked at me.

冲着 chōng zhe: facing, towards:

风很大，别冲着窗口坐。
fēng hěn dà | bié chōng zhe chuǎnkǒu zuò
(lit. wind very strong, don’t cv:facing window sit)
The wind is very strong, don’t sit facing the window.

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<td>n, pron</td>
<td>对着 duizhe</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
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<tr>
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<td>fml.</td>
<td>面 miàn ‘face’</td>
<td>面 miàn ‘face’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>当 dāng</td>
<td>static</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>面 miàn ‘face’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>当着 dāngzhe</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>劈 pī</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>劈 chōngzhe</td>
<td>slang</td>
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<tr>
<td>冲 chōng</td>
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<td>slang</td>
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<td>n, pron</td>
<td>冲着 chōngzhe</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.2.1.6 Against

靠 kao: against, leaning on:

行人靠右边走。 xíngrén kào yòubian zǒu
(lit. pedestrians against right-side walk) Pedestrians keep to the right.

临 lín: next to:

他临床替病人诊治。 tā línchuáng tì bìngrén zhěnzhì
(lit. she next to bed for patients diagnose treat) She diagnoses and treats patients at the bedside.

凭 píng: leaning against:

他凭栏远眺。 tā pínglán yuǎntiào
(lit. he leaning against balustrade distant-gaze) Leaning on the balustrade he gazes into the distance.

负 fù: relying on:

敌人负隅顽抗。 dírén fùyú wánkàng
(lit. enemy relying on corner stubbornly resist) The enemy with their backs to the wall resisted stubbornly.

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<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>临 lín</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>凭 píng</td>
<td>static</td>
<td>class.</td>
<td>lán ‘balustrade’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>负 fù</td>
<td>static</td>
<td>class.</td>
<td>yú ‘corner’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.2.1.7 At, in, on, etc.

在 zài: in, at, on:⁶

飞机在天空中盘旋。 fēijí zài tiānkōng zhōng pánxuán
(lit. plane in air-middle circle) The plane circled in the air.

⁶ See also §8.2.
The exhibition was held in the museum.

He pushed back and forth through the crowd.

A bank of mist rose from the surface of the lake.

*zài* is the most versatile of coverbs, in the way it governs its locational objects. Most commonly the object requires a postposition which indicates its position precisely:

- *zài huāyuán lǐ* (in the garden)
- *zài dà shù xià* (beneath the large tree)
- *zài zhuōzi shàng* (on the table)
- *zài fāngzǐ wài miàn* (outside the house)

However, if the location noun is trisyllabic, the postposition 里 ‘inside’ is usually omitted for prosodic reasons. For example:

- *gēge zài túshūguǎn fùxí gōngkè* (Elder brother is revising his lessons in the library)
- *dìdì zài yóu lè chǎng wán* (Younger brother was having a good time at the funfair)
- *bābā zài bàngōngshì bàngōng* (Father is working in [his] office)

Postpositions other than 里, can, of course, be used:

- *zài yóu lè chǎng wài miàn* (outside the amusement park)
If the location is a place of work or study, a postposition is not needed:

姐姐在银行工作。jiējiě zài yínháng gōngzuò  
(lit. elder sister cv:in bank work) Elder sister works in a bank.

弟弟在大学上学。dīdì zài dàxué shàngxué  
(lit. younger brother cv:in university attend)  
Younger brother is at university.

Likewise the postposition 里 lǐ is not used with a location as large as a country or city:

他在中国旅游。tā zài zhōngguó lǚyóu  
(lit. he cv:in China tour) He is touring in China.

他们在北京居住。tāmen zài běijīng jūzhù  
(lit. they cv:in Beijing live) They live in Beijing.

于 yú: in, at:

熊猫产于中国西南山区。xióngmāo chǎn yú zhōngguó xīnán shānqū  
(lit. panda produce cv:in China south-west mountain region)  
Pandas are found in the mountain regions of southwest China.

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<tr>
<td>在 zài</td>
<td>static; as sentence beginner</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td>里 lǐ may be included/excluded depending on noun involved</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-/post-vb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>于 yú</td>
<td>class.</td>
<td></td>
<td>postposition not often used</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>post-vb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.2.1.8 Through

透过 tòuguò: through:

阳光透过玻璃窗照射进来。yángguāng tòuguò bōlìchuāng zhàoshè jīnlái  
(lit. sunlight cv:through glass window shine-in-come)  
The sunlight shone through the (glass) window.

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<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.2.1.9 Distance from

离 lí: from:

我家离大学不远。wǒ jiā lí dà xué bù yuǎn
(lit. my home cv:from university not far)
My home is not far from the University.

这儿离车站有两英里的路。zhèr lí chē zhàn yǒu liǎng yīnglǐ de lù
(lit. here cv:from station there-are two mile de road/distance)
Here is two miles from the station.

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<td></td>
<td>n, pron</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
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</table>

11.2.1.10 On the spot

就 jiù: at (where one is):

请大家就地坐下。qǐng dājiā jiùdì zuòxiá
(lit. please everyone cv:where-one-is place sit down)
Would everyone please sit down where you are.

随 suí: at (any place one happens to be in):

请游客不要随地丢弃垃圾。qǐng yóukè bù yào suídì diū qì lājī
(lit. please tourists do not cv:where-one-happens-to-be place discard rubbish/litter)
Would tourists please not drop litter everywhere.

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<td>就 jiù</td>
<td>neut./fml.</td>
<td>地 dì ‘place’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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<td>pre-vb</td>
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<tr>
<td>随 suí</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td>地 dì ‘place’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

7 The predicate in a 离 lí sentence is often represented by an adjective or the verb 有 yǒu.
11.2.2 TIME

11.2.2.1 At (a certain time)

在 zài: at:

教师在考试前帮助大家复习功课。
jiàoshī zài kǎoshì qián bāngzhù dàjiā fūxí gōngkè
(lit. teacher cv:at examination before help everyone revise lesson)
The teacher helped everyone with revision before the examination.

火车在中午十二点到达。 huǒchē zài zhōngwǔ shí’èr diǎn dàdá
(lit. train cv:at midday twelve o’clock arrive)
The train arrived at 12 o’clock midday.

开会日期定在下个月七号。 kāihuì rìqí dìng zài xià ge yuè qī hào
(lit. meeting time fix cv:at next mw month seventh day)
The time of the meeting is fixed for the 7th of next month.

于 yú: at:

大学于九月下旬开学。 dàxué yú jiǔyuè xiàwǔ kāixué
(lit. University cv:at nine month last ten-day period start-study)
The University will open in the last week of September.

他于去年去世。 tā yú qùnián qùshì
(lit. he cv:at last year leave-the-world)
He died last year.

我生于一九五六年三月二十八日。
wǒ shēng yú yī jiǔ wǔ nián sān yuè èr shí bā rì
(lit. I born cv:at 1956 year 3rd month 28th day)
I was born on 28th March 1956.

coverb usage register collocational governmental prosodic sequential
在 zài neut. n, pron pre-/post-vb
于 yú fml. n, pron pre-/post-vb

11.2.2.2 From or since (a certain time)

从 cóng: from, since:
他从小就喜爱音乐。tā cóng xiǎo jiù xǐ’ài yǐnyuè
(lit. he cv:from young then love music)
He has loved music since childhood.

她从来不失信用。tā cónglái bù shī xīnyòng
(lit. she cv:from-past-till-now not break faith) She has never broken faith.

我从明天起开始吃。wǒ cóng míngtiān qǐ kāishǐ chī zhāi
(lit. I cv:from tomorrow begin start eat vegetarian diet)
From tomorrow I will start being a vegetarian/go on a vegetarian diet.

自 zì: from, since:

本条例自即日起施行。běn tiáolì zì jírì qǐ shǐxíng
(lit. this mw regulation cv:from this day begin operate)
This regulation will come into operation from today.

由 yóu: from:

课程由明年起改为学分制。kèchéng yóu míngnián qǐ gǎi wéi xuéfèn zhì
(lit. course cv:from next year begin change to credit system)
The courses will be changed to a credit-system from next year.

打 dǎ: from, since:

你打什么时候起学会这套本领?
ní dǎ shénme shíhou qǐ xuéhuì zhèi tào běnlìng
(lit. you cv:from what time begin learn-acquire this mw skill)
Since when have you mastered this skill?

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<td>neut.</td>
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<td>time word, phrase + 起 qǐ adj e.g. 从小 xiǎo ‘since childhood’ v. e.g. 以来 lái ‘from past till now’</td>
<td>n, adj, v</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>自 zì</td>
<td>fml.</td>
<td></td>
<td>time word, phrase + 起 qǐ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>自从 zícóng</td>
<td>pre-/post-vb</td>
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<tr>
<td>由 yóu</td>
<td>class.</td>
<td></td>
<td>time word, phrase + 起 qǐ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>打 dǎ</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td></td>
<td>time word, phrase + 起 qǐ</td>
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<td></td>
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11.2.2.3 Till (a certain time)

到 dào: to, till:

他到天亮时才睡觉。 tā dào tiānliàng shí cái shuǐjiào
(lit. he cv:till daylight time only then sleep)
He did not go to bed till daybreak.

他一觉睡到天亮。 tā yī jiào shuì dào tānliàng
(lit. he one sleep sleep cv:till daylight) He slept right through to daybreak.

至 zhì: to:

事情至此才有了眉目。 shìqíng zhì cǐ cái yǒu le méimu
(lit. matter cv:till this only then have le prospect of solution)
The matter only now has a prospect of solution.

她工作直至深夜。 tā gōngzuò zhízhì shēnyè
(lit. she work direct cv:to deep night) She worked deep into the night.

迄 qì: till:

失踪人的下落迄今还没有消息。
shīzōng rén de xiàluò qìjīn hái méiyǒu xiāoxi
(lit. lose-track-people de whereabouts cv:till now still not have news)
There is still no news of the whereabouts of the missing people.

届 jiè: till, at:

这件事届时再跟你详谈。 zhè jiàn shì jièshí zài gěn nǐ xiángtán
(lit. this mw matter cv:at time again cv:with you in detail talk)
I will speak to you again in detail about this matter when the time comes/in due course.

临 lín: at the point of, on the verge of:

他临危不惧。 tā línwēi bù jù
(lit. he cv:at the point of danger not afraid) He faced danger without fear.

我临行匆忙，来不及向您告别。
wǒ línxíng cóngmáng | lǎibùjí xiàng nín gàobié
(lit. I cv:at the point of leaving in a hurry, no time cv:to you (polite) say good-bye)
I was very busy before departing and didn’t have time to say goodbye to you [polite].
11.2.2.4 At the most opportune moment

趁 chèn: taking opportunity of, while:

趁热打铁。chèn rè dǎ tiě
(lit. cv:while hot strike iron) Strike while the iron is hot.

孩子趁妈妈不在家的时候出去玩儿。
háizi chèn māmɑ bù zài jià de shíhòu chūqu wánr
(lit. child cv:while mother not at home de time out-go play)
The child went out to play while his/her mother was not at home.

顶 dǐng: until:

顶凌晨四点他才睡觉。dǐng língchén sì diǎn tā cái shuìjiào
(lit. cv:until approach morning four o’clock he only then then sleep)
He did not go to bed until 4 o’clock in the early hours of the morning.

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<td>直到 zhídào</td>
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<td>n, v, cl</td>
<td>直至 zhízhì</td>
<td>pre-/post-vb</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>class.</td>
<td></td>
<td>时 shí ‘time’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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<td>colloq.</td>
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<td>时 shí ‘provitionally’</td>
<td>n, adj, v</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>急 jí ‘in haste’</td>
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<td>危 wēi ‘in danger’</td>
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<td>死 sǐ ‘die’</td>
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<td>行 xíng ‘travel’</td>
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<tr>
<td>dǐng</td>
<td>dial.</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>pre-vb</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
就 jiù: fitting in with [convenience]:

这本书，请你就便捎给他。
zhèi bèn shū | qǐng nǐ jiùbiàn shào gěi tā
(lit. this mw book, please you cv:fitting in with convenience take cv:giving to him)
Please will you take this book to him while you are about it.

顺 shùn: following, along with:

请你顺手把门关上。 qǐng nǐ shùnshǒu bǎ mén guān shàng
(lit. please you cv:along with hand cv:grasp door close up)
Would you please as you go out/as you come in/on your way shut the door.

随 suí: along with:

你随时可以跟我联系。 nǐ suíshí kěyì gěn wǒ liánxì
(lit. you cv: along with time may cv:with me contact)
You can get in touch with me any time.

跟 gēn: along with:

他一进屋子，跟手就把鞋脱掉。
tā yī jìn wūzǐ | gēnshǒu jiù bǎ xié tuō diào
(lit. he once enter room, cv:along with hand then cv:grasp shoes take off)
As soon as he came into the room, he straight away took off his shoes.

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<tr>
<td>趁 chèn</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td>机 jì ‘opportunity’</td>
<td>便 biàn ‘convenience’</td>
<td>n, adj, v, cl</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>乘 chéng</td>
<td>fml.</td>
<td>机 jì, 便 biàn</td>
<td>势 shì ‘situation’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>就 jiù</td>
<td>fml.</td>
<td>便 biàn</td>
<td>势 shì ‘situation’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>顺 shùn</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>便 biàn, 势 shì, 手 shǒu ‘hand’</td>
<td>势 shì ‘situation’</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>随 suí</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>时 shí ‘time’</td>
<td>便 biàn, 机 jì, 手 shǒu</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>跟 gēn</td>
<td>slang</td>
<td>手 shǒu</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.2.2.5 Whenever something happens

当 dāng: when:

当他回家度时, 我去探望他。dāng tā huíjiā dùjià shí | wǒ qù tànwàng tā
(lit. cv: when he come home have holiday time, I go visit him)
When he comes home on holiday, I’ll go to visit him.

逢 féng: whenever:

彩票逢星期六开奖。cǎipiao féng xīngqī liù kājiǎng
(lit. lottery tickets cv: whenever Saturday draw lottery)
The lottery is drawn every Saturday.

遇 yù: when, whenever:

球赛遇雨顺延。qiúsài yù yǔ shùn yán
(lit. ball game cv: when rain postpone)
The match was postponed when it rained.

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<tr>
<td>当 dāng</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td>...时 shí or ...</td>
<td>clause</td>
<td>每当 méidāng</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>逢 féng</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>每逢 méiféng</td>
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<tr>
<td>遇 yù</td>
<td>fml.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>凡遇 fányù</td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.2.2.6 As soon as possible

赶 gǎn: hurrying with:

我们赶快走吧。wǒmen gǎnkùài zǒu ba
(lit. we cv: hurrying with speed go ba) Let’s go at once.

请你赶紧回去。qǐng nǐ gǎnjǐn huíqu
(lit. please you cv: hurrying with urgency return-go)
Please hurry back straight away.

尽 jǐn: as is possible:

请你尽早给我一个答复。qǐng nǐ jǐnzhǎo gěi wǒ yī ge dáfù
(lit. please you cv: as is possible early give me one mw reply)
Please let me have a reply as early as possible.
Hope you can reply to my question as quickly as possible.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>赶 gǎn</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>快 kuài 'fast'</td>
<td>adj</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>尽 jǐn</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>快 kuài, 早 zǎo 'early'</td>
<td>n, adj</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.2.3 WITH, FOR OR BY SOMEONE OR SOMETHING

11.2.3.1 Together with

跟 gēn: with:

我跟你说句话。wǒ gēn nǐ shuō jù huà
(lit. I with you speak mw words) I will have a word with you.

我想跟你们合作。wǒ xiǎng gēn nǐmen hézuò
(lit. I like to with you cooperate) I’d like to cooperate with you.

和 hé: with:

我可以和你当面谈谈吗? wǒ kěyǐ hé nǐ dāngmiàn tán tán ma
(lit. I may with you cv:facing face talk-talk ma) May I have a chat with you face to face.

与 yǔ: with:

他与她十分要好。tā yǔ tā shìfēn yàohào
(lit. he cv:with her extremely be on good terms) He is a very close friend of hers.

他与此事无关。tā yǔ cǐshì wúguān
(lit. he cv:with this matter without connection) He has nothing to do with this (matter).

同 tóng: with:

他同她根本不来。tā tóng tā gěnběn hébulái
(lit. he cv:with her basically match-not-come) He really doesn’t get on with her.
我同小李住在一起。 wǒ tóng xiǎoli zhù zài yīqǐ
(lit. I cv:with Little Li live cv:at the same place)
I live with Little Li.

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<tr>
<td>跟 gēn</td>
<td>northern colloq.</td>
<td></td>
<td>n, pron</td>
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<tr>
<td>和 hé</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td></td>
<td>n, pron</td>
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<td>pre-vb</td>
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<tr>
<td>与 yú</td>
<td>class.</td>
<td></td>
<td>n, pron</td>
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<td>pre-vb</td>
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<tr>
<td>同 tóng</td>
<td>southern colloq.</td>
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<td>n, pron</td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-vb</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

11.2.3.2 For (somebody) – beneficiary

给 gěi: for, to:

我给哥哥写了一封回信。 wǒ gěi gége xiě le yī fēng huíxìn
(lit. I cv:to elder brother write le one mw reply letter)
I wrote a reply to elder brother.

快给他赔个不是。 kuài gěi tā péi ge bùshì
(lit. quickly cv:to him compensate mw not right)
Apologise to him immediately.

你能给我们当翻译吗? nǐ néng gěi wǒmen dāng fānyì ma
(lit. you can cv:for us act as interpreter ma)
Can you be our interpreter?

替 tì: for:

大家都来替她送行。 dàjiā duō lái tì tā sòngxíng
(lit. everyone all come cv:for her see-on-way)
Everyone came to see her off.

人人都替你高兴。 rénrén duō tì nǐ gāoxìng
(lit. everyone all cv:for you happy) Everyone is happy for you.

同 tóng: for:

我同你出个主意。 wǒ tóng nǐ chū ge zhùyì
(lit. I cv:for you come-up-with mw idea)
I’ll think up an idea for you.
You go and buy the tickets, and I will keep an eye on the luggage for you.

Let's drink a toast to our guests./Let's drink to the health of our guests.

Please say thank you to the host for me.

Please don't worry about this small matter.

He sent me an invitation.

For safety reasons, please don't use mobile phones in the cabin.

For the convenience of customers, the store decided to open for business at the weekends.

To preserve order at the football ground, the police deployed a considerable number of officers.
11.2.3.3 By – be the responsibility of (somebody)

由 yóu: by:

这件事由我负责。zhè jiàn shì yóu wǒ fūzé
(lit. this mw matter cv:by me take responsibility)
This matter is my responsibility.

归 guī: by, up to:

这些事全部归你管。zhèxiē shì quánbù guī nǐ guǎn
(lit. these mw matters entirely cv:up to you take charge)
You are in charge of all these matters.

11.2.4 INSTRUMENT AND VEHICLE

11.2.4.1 With (a certain instrument or appliance)

用 yòng: with, using:

她用梳子梳了梳头发。tā yòng shūzǐ shū le shū tóufa
(lit. she cv:with comb comb le comb hair) She combed her hair.

他用手掠了一下额前的头发。tā yòng shǒu lüè le yǐxià é qíán de tóufa
(lit. he cv:with hand brush aside le one mw:time forehead in front de hair)
He brushed the hair from his forehead with his hand.
我用胳膊碰了他一下。**wǒ yòng gēbo pèng le tā yīxià**
(lit. I cv:with arm nudge le him one mw:time) I nudged him with my arm.

你用什么理由来说服她呢? **nǐ yòng shénme lǐyóu lái shuōfú tā ne**
(lit. you cv:using what reason come convince her ne)
What reason did you use to convince her (then)?

**拿** ná: with, taking:

我们拿把尺子量一量。**wǒmen ná bǎ chǐzi liáng yì liáng**
(lit. we cv:with mw ruler measure one measure) Let’s measure it with a ruler.

请你拿几句话概括一下。**qǐng nǐ ná jǐ jù huà gāikuò yīxià**
(lit. please you cv:with few mw words summarise one mw:time) Please would you give a summary in a few words.

你帮了我这么多的忙。我拿什么谢你呢?
**nǐ bāng le wǒ zhèmò duō de máng | wǒ ná shénme xiè nǐ ne**
(lit. you help le me so much de help. I cv:with what thank you ne)
You’ve helped me so much. How can I thank you?

你拿什么做标准来衡量呢? **nǐ ná shénme zuò biàozhǔn lái héngliáng ne**
(lit. you cv:with what make criterion come judge ne)
What criteria do you adopt to make a judgement?

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<tr>
<td>用 yòng</td>
<td>neut.</td>
<td>concrete or abstract objects</td>
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<tr>
<td>拿 ná</td>
<td>colloq.</td>
<td>concrete or abstract objects</td>
<td>n, pron</td>
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11.2.4.2 By (a vehicle)

坐 zuò: by:

我们打算坐船去。**wǒmen dǎsuàn zuò chuán qù**
(lit. we intend cv:by boat go) We intend to go by boat.

乘 chéng: by:

你们乘哪一班飞机来? **nǐmen chéng nà/něi yī bān fēijī lái**
(lit. you (plural) cv:by which one mw plane come)
Which flight will you come on?
They went home on the last bus/train.

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<tr>
<td>搭 dā</td>
<td>neut.</td>
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11.2.5 BY MEANS OF, IN ACCORDANCE WITH, ETC.

11.2.5.1 Relying on (a person, etc.)

靠 kào: relying on:

他家里靠他挣钱过活。tā jiā lǐ kào tā zhèngqián guòhuó
(lit. his home-in cv:relying on him earn money pass life)
His family relied on his earnings.

仗 zhàng: relying on:

这件事全仗大家帮忙。zhè jiàn shì quán zhàng dàjiā bāngmáng
(lit. this mw matter entirely cv:relying on everyone help)
This matter is entirely reliant on everyone’s help.

别仗势欺人。bié zhàng shì qí rén
(lit. don’t cv:relying on power bully people)
Don’t rely on your power to bully people.

指着 zhǐzhe: relying on:

我们就指着你帮忙哩。wǒmen jiù zhǐzhe nǐ bāngmáng li
(lit. we just cv:relying on you help li) We just rely on your help.
11.2.5.2 By means of

凭 ping: by means of:

凭票入场。 ping piào rúchāng
(lit. cv:by ticket enter stadium/theatre) Admission by ticket only.

人类凭借语言互相交流思想。
rénlèi píngjiè yǔyán hùxiāng jiāoliú sìxiǎng
(lit. mankind cv:relying on language mutually exchange thinking)
Mankind exchanges ideas by means of language.

借 jiè: taking advantage of:

我想借此机会向大家表示感谢。
wǒ xiǎng jiè cǐ jiìhuì xiàng dàjiā biǎoshì gǎnxìè
(lit. I want cv:taking advantage of this opportunity cv:towards everyone express thanks)
I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone.

他藉着朋友的帮助顺利地回到了家乡。
tā jièzhé pèngyǒu de bāngzhù shùn lì de huídào le jiāxiāng
(he cv:taking advantage of friends’ de help successfully de return to le hometown)
With the help of friends he successfully made it back to his hometown.

通过 tōngguò: by means of, through:

爱迪生通过各种试验终于发明了电灯。
ài dīshēng tōngguò gèzhòng shìyàn zhōngyú fāmíng le diàndēng
(lit. Edison cv:through every mw:kind experiment in the end invent le electric light)
Edison finally invented the electric light after all kinds of experiments.

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<td>‘ticket’</td>
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<td>‘opportunity’</td>
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<td>n</td>
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</table>

8 藉着 jièzhe is in fact a more commonly used written form than 借著 jièzhe.
11.2.5.3 According to

凭 ping: according to:

你凭什么得出这样的结论？ nǐ ping shénme déchū zhèiyàng de jiélùn
(lit. you cv: according to what reach this kind de conclusion)
How did you reach a conclusion like this?

照 zhào: according to:

咱们就照这样办吧。 zánmen jiù zhào zhèiyàng bàn ba
(lit. we then cv: according to this way do ba)
Let's do it like this then.

按 àn: according to:

请按次序发言。 qǐng àn cìxù fāyán
(lit. please cv: according to order speak) Please speak in order.

请大家按照原来的规定去做。 qǐng dàjiā ànzhào yuánlái de guīdìng qu zuò
(lit. please everyone cv: according to original de stipulation go-do)
Would everyone please do it/act as originally stipulated.

依 yī: according to:

依我看，问题并不复杂。 yī wǒ kàn | wènti bìng bù fūzá
(lit. cv: as I see, problem certainly not complicated)
As I see it, the problem certainly isn't complicated.

请大家按照而定。 qǐng yīzhào qǐngkuàng ér dìng
(lit. please cv: according to circumstances and decide)
Please decide in the light of circumstances.

请大家依次就座！ qǐng dàjiā yī cì jiùzuò
(lit. please everyone cv: according to order occupy seat)
Would everyone please sit in proper order.

9 In somewhat more formal statements 而 ér 'and (under these circumstances)' is placed between the coverb expression and the verb. This is likely to happen particularly if the verb is monosyllabic.
本着 běnzhē: in line with:

我们应当本着互助的精神办事。

wǒmen yǐnggāi běnzhē hùzhù de jǐngshén bànshì
(lit. we ought to in line with mutual help de spirit do things)
We must work in the spirit of mutual assistance.

以 yǐ: according to, by means of:

你可以以此类推。 nǐ kěyǐ yǐ cǐ lèituī
(lit. you can by this draw analogy) You can draw analogies from this.

你得以理服人。 nǐ dé yǐ lǐ fúrén
(lit. you must by means of reason convince people) You must convince people by reason.

我以个人的名义向您保证。 wǒ yì gèrén de míngyì xiàng nín bǎozhèng
(lit. I according to individual name towards you (polite) guarantee) I give you my personal guarantee.

我以老朋友的身份劝你别这样做。

wǒ yì lǎo péngyou de shēnfēn quán nǐ bié zhèyàng zuò
(lit. I according to old friend’s de capacity urge you don’t this way do) I urge you as an old friend not to do this.

平均每户以四口人计算。 píngjūn měi hù yì sì kǒu rén jisuàn
(lit. average every household according to four mw people calculate) The average household is calculated as four people.

就 jiù: according to:

就我来说，还是不去好。 jiù wǒ lái shuō | háishi bù qù hǎo
(lit. cv:according to I come-say, still not go good) In my view it is best not to go.

据 jù: according to:

据我推测，他是不会同意的。 jù wǒ tuīcè | tā shì bù huí tóngyì de
(lit. cv:according to I guess, he is not likely agree de) My guess is he won’t agree.

根据气象台的预报，明天要下雨。

gēnjù qìxiāngtái de yǔbào | míngtiān yào xià yǔ
(lit. cv:according to weather station de forecast, tomorrow will rain) According to the weather forecast, it will rain tomorrow.
据说，他已经出国去了。\textit{jūshuō | tā yǐjīng chūguó qù le}  
(lit. cv:according to say, he already exit country go \textit{le})  
They say he has already left the country.

准\textit{zhǔn}: according to:

咱们准前例办吧。\textit{zánmen zhǔn qiánlì bàn ba}  
(lit. we cv:according to precedent do \textit{ba}) Let’s act according to precedent.

如\textit{rú}: according to:

请如期完成。\textit{qīng rúqī wánchéng}  
(lit. please cv:according to schedule complete) Please finish on time.

在此如数归还，请查收。\textit{zài cǐ rúshù guīhuán | qīng cháshōu}  
(lit. herewith cv:according to original numbers return, please check accept)  
Please find the original amount returned herewith.

遵循\textit{zūnxún}: according to:

这类事情可以遵循常规解决。\textit{zhè lèi shìqínghuì yǐ zūnxún chángguī jiējué}  
(lit. this mw:kind matter can cv:according to common practice resolve)  
This matter can be resolved routinely.

基于\textit{jiyú}: on the basis of:

基于以上的理由，我不赞成你的意见。\textit{jīyú yǐshàng de liyóu | wǒ bù zànchéng nǐ de yǐjiàn}  
(lit. cv:on the basis of the above \textit{de} reasons, I not agree your opinion)  
For the reasons above, I do not agree with your opinion.

由于\textit{yóuyú}: owing to:

由于种种原因，他无法出席这次会议。\textit{yóuyú zhǒngzhǒng yúányīn | tā wúfǎ chūxī zhè cì huìyì}  
(cv:owing to all kind of reasons, he no way attend this mw:occasion meeting)  
For various reasons, he cannot attend this meeting.

由于工作关系，我未能离开。\textit{yóuyú gōngzuò guānxi | wǒ wèinéng likāi}  
(lit. cv:owing to work reasons, I not able leave)  
I could not leave because of work [commitments].
出于 chūyú: stemming from:

出于好奇，他极力想弄清事实的真相。

chūyú hàoqí | tā jǐlì xiǎng nònqíng shíshì de zhěnxiàng
(lit. cv:stemming from curiosity, he extreme strength want make clear facts de truth)
Out of curiosity, he was intent on getting to the truth of the situation/the real facts.

针对 zhěnduì: in the light of:

请你针对具体情况作出决定吧。

qìng ni zhěnduì jùtí qīngkuàng zuòchū juédìng ba
(lit. please you cv:in the light of concrete circumstances make out decision ba) 
Please come to a decision in the light of concrete conditions.

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11.2.5.4 Regarding, about

于 yú: regarding:
抽烟于健康有害。chōuyān yú jiànkāng yǒu hài
(lit. smoking regarding health harmful)
Smoking is harmful to health.

这样于你自己不利。zhèyàng yú nǐ zìjǐ bùlì
(lit. this way regarding you self not beneficial)
This is no good to you personally.

至于 zhìyú: as regards:

至于其他问题，以后再说。zhìyú qítā wèntí | yǐhòu zài shuō
(lit. as regards other questions, later again speak)
We will talk again about the other questions later.

关于 guānyú: concerning:

关于这件事，我没有意见。guānyú zhè jiàn shì | wǒ méiyǒu yìjiàn
(lit. concerning this matter, I not have opinion)
I don’t have an opinion on this matter.

关于这个问题，后面还要详述。
guānyú zhè ge wèntí | hòumian hái yào xiángshù
(lit. concerning this question, afterwards still need detail account)
As regards this question, [I] will go into greater details later on.

讲 jiāng: speaking of:

讲条件，他没有你好。jiāng tiáojìàn | tā méiyǒu nǐ hǎo
(lit. speaking of qualification, he not have you good)
Speaking of qualifications, he is not as good as you.

论 lùn: as regards:

论能力，他比你强。lùn nénglì | tā bǐ nǐ qiáng
(lit. as regards ability, he compared with you strong)
As regards ability, he is better than you.

论打壁球，他数第一。lùn dǎ bīqiú | tā shù diànyī
(lit. as regards playing squash, he rank no. 1)
He is ranked number one in squash.
11.2.5.5 Besides, except

除 chú: besides, apart from:

除持票者以外，谁也不准入场。
chú chípiàozhě yìwài | shuí yě bùzhǔn rúchǎng  
(lit. cv:apart from ticket-holder apart, anyone also not allow enter stadium/hall)
No one is allowed in apart from ticket-holders.

她除了家务之外，什么都不会做。
tā chúle jiāwù zhīwài | shénme duō bùhuì zuò  
(lit. she cv:apart from household duties part, anything all not can do)
She can’t do anything but housework.

11.2.5.6 Considering as

为 wéi: considering as:

他把这一切都视为自己的责任。tā bǎ zhè yìqiè dōu shì wéi zìjǐ de zérèn  
(lit. he cv:grasping this everything all look upon cv:as own responsibility)
He considers all this his own responsibility.
作 zuò: considering as:

可别把这件事当作儿戏！kě bié bǎ zhèi jiàn shì dàngzuò érxi
(lit. really don’t cv:grasping this mw matter regard cv:as children’s game)
Mind you don’t treat this matter as something trifling.

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11.2.6 GRAMMATICAL OPERATORS

11.2.6.1 Manipulative

把 bā: grasping:\(^{10}\)

不要把事情弄糟了。bùyào bā shìqíng nònɡzāo le
(lit. don’t cv:grasping matter make mess le)
Don’t mess the business up.

快把药吃了。kuài bā yào chī le
(lit. quick cv:grasping medicine eat le) Hurry up and take the medicine.

将 jiāng: grasping:

先将他请来。xiān jiāng tā qǐnɡ lái
(lit. first cv:grasping him invite-come) Invite him here first.

拿 ná: taking:

别拿我开玩笑。bié ná wǒ kāi wánxiào
(lit. don’t cv:taking me make joke) Don’t make fun of me.

谁都拿他没办法。shuí dōu ná tā méi bànfā
(lit. anyone all cv:taking him have no way)
No one can do anything with him.

\(^{10}\) See Chapter 12 for a full discussion of the 把 bā construction.
管 guǎn: taking:

据民间管月蚀叫天狗吃月亮。mínjiān guǎn yuèshí jiào tiāngǒu chī yuèliàng (lit. people-among cv: taking lunar eclipse call heavenly hound eating the moon) According to folklore, lunar eclipse is known as the Heavenly Hound Eating the Moon.

你管这个叫什么？ nǐ guǎn zhè ge jiào shénme (lit. you cv: taking this call what) What do you call this?

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11.2.6.2 Passive

被 bēi: by:

那个拳击手被他的对手打败了。nèi ge quānjīshǒu bèi tā de duīshǒu dǎbài le (lit. that mw boxer cv: by his opponent defeat le) That boxer was beaten by his opponent.

叫 jiào: by:

谜语叫她(给)猜着了。míyǔ jiào tā (gěi) cāizháo le (lit. riddle cv: by her gěi guess-right le) The riddle was guessed by her.

让 ràng: by:

行李让雨(给)淋湿了。xínglǐ ràng yǔ (gěi) lín shī le (lit. luggage cv: by rain gěi sprinkle wet le) The luggage was soaked by the rain.

给 gěi: by:

车库的门给小偷撬开了。chēkù de mén gěi xiǎotōu qiào kāi le (lit. garage de door cv: by petty thief prise open le) The garage door was prised open by a thief.
覆动词：由：

他从来不为别人所左右。**tā cóngglái bù wéi biérén suǒ zuòyòu**  
(lit. he all along not cv:by other people *suo* control)  
He was never controlled by other people.

他为大家所尊敬。**tā wéi dàjiā suǒ zūnqìng**  
(lit. he cv:by everyone *suo* respect) He is respected by everyone.

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11.2.6.3 Comparison

Note that comparative coverbs are more often followed by adjectival phrases rather than by verbal phrases.

象 xiàng: similar to:

她象她妈妈一样固执。**tā xiàng tā māmǎ yìyàng gùzhí**  
(lit. she cv:similar to her mother the same stubborn)  
She is as stubborn as her mother.

她象她爸爸一样不喜欢吃鱼。**tā xiàng tā bābà yìyàng bù xīhuàn chī yú**  
(lit. she cv:similar to her father the same not like eat fish)  
Like her father, she does not like eating fish.

如 rú: like:

那儿的夏天如冬天一般寒冷。**nàr de xiàtiān rú dòngtiān yībān hánlěng**  
(lit. there *de* summer cv:like winter the same cold)  
Summer there is as cold as winter.

跟 gēn: compared with:

这个学期的功课跟上学期一样多。**zhè hēi xuéqī de gōngkè gēn shàng xuéqī yìyàng duō**  
(lit. this mw term *de* coursework cv:compared with last term the same much)  
The coursework this term/semester is just as much as last term/semester.
比 bǐ: compared with:

这门课比那门容易。zhè mén kè bǐ nà mén róngyì
(lит. this mw discipline/course compared with that mw easy)
This course/discipline is easier than that one.

较 jiào: compared with:

今年的成绩较去年为好。jīnnián de chéngjì jiào qùnián wéi hǎo
(lит. this year de results compared with last year be better)
This year’s results are better than last year’s.

于 yú: than:

地球大于月亮。dìqiú dà yú yuèliàng
(lит. earth big than moon) The earth is bigger than the moon.

健康的体魄贵于任何财富。jiànkāng de típò gui yú rènhé cáifù
(lит. healthy de physique valuable than any wealth)
A healthy body is worth more than riches.

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11.3 COVERBAL POSITIONS

As we have seen above, coverbs can be positioned pre-verbally or post-verbally. A pre-verbual position indicates that the coverbal phrase is being used as an adverbal specifying the background in which the action encoded in the main verb takes place, e.g. location, time, direction taken, instrument used, means employed, principle followed, person involved, and so on. These preliminaries

11 In this context, 跟 gèn may be used interchangeably with 和 hé, 与 yú, 同 tóng.
or conditions must first be established before the action can be carried out, and the coverbal phrase is therefore placed before the main verb to give it precedence. The pre-verbal coverbal phrase is in fact primarily concerned with the starting position of the subject. For example:

他在图书馆学习。 tā zài tǔshūguǎn xuéxí  
(lit. he cv:in library study) He is studying in the library.

*他学习在图书馆。 tā xuéxí zài tǔshūguǎn  
*(lit. he study cv:in library)

Here the subject has to locate himself ‘in the library’ before he ‘can begin to study’.¹²

However, there are situations where the actions in the main verb must be carried out first before a particular location or point of time is reached. For example, the verb 放 fàng ‘to put’ and the verb 走 zǒu ‘to walk’ naturally lead to new locations or destinations. At a more abstract level, a meeting may be scheduled at a particular time or something may be regarded in a different light. All these actions of putting, walking, scheduling or regarding must all happen before the new location, time, etc. is reached, and it is therefore logical for the coverbal phrases to come after the main verbs as complements.¹³ These post-verbal coverbal phrases are, in most cases, concerned with the end or final position of the object. For example,

他把衣服放在床上。 tā bā yīfú fàng zài chuáng shàng  
(lit. he cv:grasping clothes put cv:on bed-top) He put the clothes on the bed.

Here the location of the subject is not specified, but the important thing is that, as he puts down the clothes, they, the object of the sentence, end up on the bed.

Similarly, in the following example:

他游到对岸。 tā yóu dào dui’àn  
(lit. he swim cv:reaching opposite shore) He swam to the opposite shore.

¹² This precedence rule must be followed in the prose grammar of present-day Chinese, which differs from Classical Chinese where such precedence rules were not made or from Chinese poetry where precedence rules may be violated to give way to rhythm or euphony, e.g. 我们走在大路上。 wǒmen zǒu zài dà lù shàng ‘We are walking on a main road’ should, strictly speaking, be reworded as: 我们在大路上走着。 wǒmen zài dà lù shàng zǒu zhe.

¹³ It must be understood that the logic behind the precedence between the coverb and the main verb is a prominent feature of present-day Chinese. In Classical Chinese or in a more classical style, the precedence question discussed here is one more of usage than of meaning or logic.
It is obvious that he must start swimming before he can reach the opposite shore.

In some sentences, particularly those with intransitive verbs, a subject may locate itself in a place before the action and remain in the same place afterwards, so that the starting position and the end position of the subject coincide. As far as meaning is concerned, there is no difference between the pre-verbal and post-verbal position of the coverbal phrase in these cases. For example:

他住在北京。 tā zài běijīng zhù
(lit. he cv:in Beijing live)

他住在北京。 tā zhù zài běijīng
(lit. he live cv:in Beijing) He lives in Beijing.

蝴蝶在花丛中飞舞。 húdié zài huācóng zhōng fēiwǔ
(lit. butterflies cv:in flower-clusters middle fly-dance)

蝴蝶飞舞在花丛中。 húdié fēiwǔ zài huācóng zhōng
(lit. butterflies fly-dance cv:in flower-clusters middle) The butterflies flew about among the flowers.

Elsewhere, context and common sense, too, in a meaning-oriented language like Chinese, will rule out any misunderstanding that might arise from pre-verbal or post-verbal positioning of a coverbal phrase. For instance:

他在黑板上写几个字。 tā zài hēibǎn shàng xiě le jǐ ge zì
(lit. he cv:on blackboard write le a few mw characters) He wrote a few Chinese characters on the blackboard.

means very much the same as the following sentence apart from the switch to definite reference for the object 字 zì ‘characters’:

他把那几个字写在黑板上。 tā bǎ nèi jǐ ge zì xiě zài hēibǎn shàng
(lit. he cv:grasping those few mw characters write cv: on blackboard-top) He wrote those few Chinese characters on the blackboard.

In the first sentence, it will still be understood that the subject is standing in front of the blackboard writing Chinese characters on it, and no one of sound mind will think that subject has climbed on to the blackboard before writing.

Sometimes, when a coverbal phrase indicates time or location (particularly with a fairly long expression), scope, basis or purpose, it may come at the beginning of the sentence before the subject:
趁人不注意，他悄悄地离开了。
chen  rén bù zhù yì | tā qīāoqiāo de liāi le
(lit. cv: taking advantage of people not paying attention, he quietly de leave le)
He quietly left while people weren’t paying attention.

在希马拉亚山的山顶上，空气极其稀薄。
zài xīmáláyà shān de shāndiān shàng | kōngqì jíqí xībó
(lit. cv: on Himalaya mountains de summit-on, air extremely thin)
The air is extremely thin on the summit of Himalayan mountains.

对于这个问题，他们还没有作出答复。
duīyù zhèi ge wèntí | tāmen hái méiyǒu zuòchū dáfù
(lit. cv: regarding this mw question, they still not-have produce reply)
They still have not replied on this question.

关于青少年的品行问题，学校与家长都应该负责。
guānyǔ qīngshàonián de pǐnxíng wèntí | xuéxiào yǔ jiāzhǎng dōu yīnggāi fùzé
(lit. cv: concerning young people teenager de behaviour question, school and parents both must take responsibility of)
School and parents must both take responsibility for the behaviour of young people and teenagers.

除了法语之外，她还学习汉语。
chúle fǎyǔ zhíwài | tā hái xuéxí hàn yǔ
(lit. cv: besides French apart, she also study Chinese)
She is studying Chinese as well as French.

根据最近的研究，记忆的好坏跟年龄无关。
gēnjù zuìjìn de yánjiū | jìyì de hǎo-huài gēn niánlíng wúguān
(lit. cv: according to latest de research, memory de good-bad cv: with age no connection)
According to the latest research, quality of memory/whether memory is good or bad has no relation to age.

为了大家，她宁可牺牲自己的利益。
wèile dàjiā | tā níngkě xīshēng zījī de liyì
(lit. cv: for the sake of everyone, she would rather sacrifice own de interest)
For everyone’s sake, she would rather sacrifice her own interests.
12 把 bā CONSTRUCTIONS

A 把 bā construction is a syntactic feature unique to the Chinese language. It is a device which uses the coverb 把 bā 'to grasp' to move a definite-referenced object to a position before the main verb. This leaves the space after the verb available to elements other than the object, e.g. for a consequential complement to indicate the result inflicted upon the object through the action contained in the verb. This repositioning manœuvre arises from the fact that Chinese sentences find it possible, only in very few instances, to hold an object and an additional element together in a position after the same verb, particularly if the additional element is three or more syllables long. Given its association with an action verb, the 把 bā construction is a regular feature of a narrative sentence.

12.1 THE STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF 把 bā CONSTRUCTION

A 把 bā construction must have the following three structural features:

(a) the object of the coverb 把 bā must be of definite reference;
(b) the main verb of the sentence must be followed by a complement or, less commonly, by a second noun;
(c) the main verb must be an action verb.

If any one of the three conditions is not fulfilled, the construction is not acceptable, as in the following:

*他把一个电视机弄坏了。 *tā bā yī ge diànjī nònghuài le
*He broke a television set.

in which the object of 把 bā is of indefinite reference;

*他把那个电视机送。 *tā bā nèi ge diànjī sòng
*He gave the television set.

in which the verb 送 sòng 'to give as a present' is not followed by either of the elements listed under (b) above;

1 See §11.2.6.
2 See §11.1.
3 Sometimes just 了 le itself with its underlying notion of 了 liǎo 'to finish'.
**He came to know this matter.**

*He* came to know this matter.

in which the verb 知道 zhīdào ‘to know’ is an involuntary cognitive verb, not an action verb.

### 12.1.1 DEFINITE-REFERENCED OBJECT

Since the definite reference of the object of the coverb 把 bā is a requirement of the construction, the object does not need to be specifically marked for definiteness. That is to say, an unmarked noun without any demonstrative adjective will be assumed to be definite:

她自己把药吃了。tā zìjǐ bā yào chī le
(lit. she self cv:grasping medicine eat le) She took the medicine herself.

### 12.1.2 THE ELEMENTS AFTER THE MAIN VERB

The extra elements after the verb in a 把 bā construction may take the form of a complement or an object.

#### 12.1.2.1 Different forms of complement

(a) resultative:

大夫把他的病治好了。dāifu bā tāde bìng zhīhuā le
(lit. doctor cv:grasping his illness cure-well le) The doctor cured his illness.

你把我原来的意思讲走了。nǐ bā wǒ yuánlái de yìsī jiāngzǒu le
(lit. you cv:grasping my original meaning speak-away le) You distorted/did not convey my original meaning.

(b) locational:

母亲把孩子搂在怀里。mǔqīn bā háizi lōu zài huái li
(lit. mother cv:grasping child hold cv:in bosom-inside) Mother took the child in her arms.

他把布告贴在最显眼的地方。
tā bā bùgào tiē zài zuì xiǎnyǎn de dìfāng
lit. he cv:grasping notice stick cv:on most eye-catching place) He stuck the notice in the most eye-catching/conspicuous place.
What wind has blown you here? 

ta bā chuānglián fāng le xiàlai
She pulled down the blind.

He passed on the letter to her.

Grandma told those stories to the children.

The police locked up the petty thief for three days.

Elder sister soaked the soybeans for two hours.

He made some revisions to the draft.

The airport official weighed his baggage.

Here 给 is the coverb in the complement and links with another verb 听 ting 'to listen'.
(g) frequency:

他把那几个生词默写了好几遍。

**tā bā nèi jīge shēngcì mòxiě le hǎo jī biàn**
(lit. he cv:grasping those few mw new words write-from-memory le very a-few times)

He wrote the new vocabulary out from memory a good many times.

老师把那首唐诗朗诵了三次。

**lǎoshī bā nèi shǒu tángshī làngsòng le sān cì**
(lit. teacher cv:grasping that mw Tang poem recite le three times)

The teacher read out/recited that Tang poem three times.

(h) descriptive with 得 de:

她把房间收拾得干干净净。

**tā bā fángjiān shōushí de gāngānjìngjìng**
(lit. she cv:grasping room tidy de dry-dry-clean-clean)

She gave the room a thorough tidying.

他把书架上的书放得整整齐齐。

**tā bā shūjià shàng de shū fàng de zhěngzhěngqíqí**
(lit. he cv:grasping bookcase-top de books place de whole-whole-flush-flush)

He placed/arranged the books neatly on the bookcase.

(i) evaluative with 得 de:

律师把问题解释得很清楚。

**lǜshī bā wèntì jièshì de hěn qīngchu**
(lit. lawyer cv:grasping problem explain de very clear)

The lawyer explained the problem very clearly.

爸爸把道理说得十分详细。

**bàbā bā dàolǐ shuō de shífēn xiángxì**
(lit. father cv:grasping reason say de very clear)

Father put the argument in great detail.

(j) judgemental with 成 chéng, etc.:

导演把整个戏剧处理成一个喜剧。

**dáoyuàn bā zhěng ge xìjù chǔlǐ chéng yī ge xìjù**
(lit. director cv:grasping whole mw play treat cv:as one mw comedy)

The director treated the whole play as a comedy.
他们把这件事儿视为无关紧要的事儿。

tāmén bā zhè jìàn shì wéi wúguān jǐnyào de shì
(lit. they grasping this matter look upon as not-concerning-importance de matter)
They viewed the business/affair as something of no importance.

老奶奶把小姑娘当作自己的女儿。

lǎo nǎinai bā xiǎo gūniáng dàngzuò zì jǐ de nǚ ěr
(lit. old granny grasping little girl look upon as her own de daughter)
The old lady looked upon the young girl as her own daughter.

12.1.2.2 A second object in the form of a noun or a number/measure word

妹妹把水浇了花了。mèimei bā huā jiāo le shuǐ le
(lit. younger sister grasping flower sprinkle le water le)
Younger sister has watered the flowers.

妹妹把水浇了花了。mèimei bā shuǐ jiāo le huā le
(lit. younger sister grasping water sprinkle le flower le)
Younger sister has used the water to water the flowers.

弟弟把蛋糕吃了一半。dídí bā dàngāo chī le yī bàn
(lit. younger brother grasping cake eat le a-half)
Younger brother ate half of the cake.

妈妈把蛋糕切了一块。māmā bā dàngāo qiē le yī kuài
(lit. mother grasping cake cut le one piece) Mother cut a slice of cake.

12.1.3 THE MAIN VERB IN A 把 bā CONSTRUCTION

The main verb in a 把 bā construction, as we have said, must be an action verb, most commonly within a narrative sentence. Therefore the non-action verbs, generally found in expository sentences, would not occur with 把 bā: 是 shì ‘to be’; 有 yǒu ‘to have’, verbs of emotion (喜欢 xǐhuān ‘to like’; 爱 ài ‘to love’, etc.) and most cognitive verbs (知道 zhīdào ‘to know’, 懂 dǒng ‘to understand’, etc.). However, a small number of cognitive verbs, which encode a mental exertion or process rather than result, may still be used with 把 bā sentences:

qing bā zhè jìàn zhòngyào de shì jīzhù
(lit. please grasping this important de matter keep-in-mind firmly)
Please remember this important matter.
Don't forget my telephone number.

Please get a clear understanding of this point.

12.2 INTENTIONALITY IN A 把 bā CONSTRUCTION

Intentionality is an inherent implication underlying most 把 bā constructions, that is to say, a deliberate action is usually involved. However, there are contexts in which either the outcome of the action of the verb is unintentional or the question of intentionality simply does not arise:

He didn’t look at the mirror and put his hat on crooked. 太阳把大地染红了。太阳把大地染红了。

The sun has painted the earth red.

The tide washed away the clothes on the beach.

In other cases the action may be deliberate or not depending on the context:

Younger brother broke the flower vase.

He was late with his (letter of) reply.

When the teacher took the register, he left out her name.

However, if 给 gěi is inserted between the 把 bā phrase and the verb, the implication will invariably be that the action is unintentional:
弟弟(一不小心)把花瓶给打破了。

didi (yī bù xiāoxīn) bá huāpíng gěi dǎpò le
(lit. younger brother (one-not-careful) cv:grasping flower vase gei hit-broken le)
Younger brother broke the flower vase (in a moment of carelessness).

妹妹(无意中)把她那条漂亮的裙子给弄脏了。

mèimei (wúyì zhōng) bā tā nèi tiáo piàoliàng de qúnzi gěi nòngzāng le
(lit. younger sister (have-no-intention-in) cv:grasping her that mw beautiful skirt gei make-dirty le)
Younger sister (inadvertently) got that beautiful skirt of hers dirty.

12.3 把 bā CONSTRUCTION AND IMPERATIVES

Given the emphasis on intention and specific action of the 把 bā construction, it is only natural that it is often used in imperatives, either to make requests or to give orders:

请你随手把门关上。 qǐng nǐ suíshǒu bā mén guān shàng
(lit. please you follow-hand cv:grasping door close-up)
Please close the door behind you.

请把窗户打开。 qǐng bā chuānghu dàkāi
(lit. please cv:grasping window hit-open) Please open the window.

快把瓶口封严。 kuài bā píngkǒu fēngyán
(lit. quick cv:grasping bottle-mouth seal tight)
Hurry up and seal (tight) the bottle.

火旺了，快把锅坐上。 huǒ wàng le | kuài bā guō zuò shàng
(lit. fire burn-bright le, quick cv:grasping pot sit-on)
The fire is roaring/burning up, hurry up and put the pot on.

请你把梨皮旋掉。 qǐng nǐ bǎ lípí xuàn diào
(lit. please you cv:grasping pear-skin peel off) Please peel the pear.

请把盐递给我。 qǐng bā yán dì gěi wǒ
(lit. please cv:grasping salt pass cv:to me) Please pass me the salt.

请大家把果皮扔在垃圾桶里。 qǐng dàjiā bǎ guǒpí rēng zài lájī tōng lǐ
(lit. please everybody cv:grasping fruit-skin throw cv:in litter-bin-inside)
Would everyone please put their litter in the rubbish bins.
12.4 A PARTICULAR FEATURE OF 把 bā CONSTRUCTION IN EVALUATIVE SENTENCES

When the 把 bā construction is used in an evaluative sentence following a modal verb, the necessity for the object of 把 bā to be of definite reference is removed:

你总不能把什么责任都推给我吧。

You can’t possibly push all the responsibilities on to me.

nǐ zǒng bùnénɡ bā shénme zérèn dōu tuī ɡěi wǒ bā
(lit. you after-all not able cv:grasping whatever responsibility all push cv:to me bā)

Could you write a bit better?

ni kěyī bā zì xiě de hǎo yīdiǎnr ma
(lit. you can cv:grasping words write de a little better ma)

Could you write a bit better?

shuǐ dōu yīnɡɡài bā shū fānɡ huì yuánchù
(lit. nobody all ought to cv:grasping book place-back original place)
Everyone ought to put books back where they came from.

shuí dou yìngɡài bā shū fānɡ huì yuánchù
(lit. nobody all ought to cv:grasping book place-back original place)

Who should put the books back?

Everyone ought to put books back where they came from.

ni zǒnɡ bùnénɡ bā shénme zérèn dōu tuǐ ɡěi wǒ bā
(lit. you after-all not able cv:grasping whatever responsibility all push cv:to me bā)

You can’t possibly push all the responsibilities on to me.

shuí dou yìngɡài bā shū fānɡ huì yuánchù
(lit. nobody all ought to cv:grasping book place-back original place)

Everyone ought to put books back where they came from.

Admonitions or admonitory notices may likewise have indefinite-referenced objects after 把 bā:

bùzhǔn bā chēliànɡ tǐngfānɡ zài jinchūkǒu
(lit. not permit cv:grasping vehicles park-place cv:at enter-exit-opening)
Parking (vehicles/cars) at the entrance and exit is forbidden.

jínzhǐ bā qī suì yíxīa de xiǎohái dǎirǔ huíchānɡ
(lit. forbid cv:grasping seven year old below de child bring cv:into assembly hall)
It is not allowed to bring children under 7 into the assembly.

5 别 bié is the fused form of 不要 bùyào and is therefore considered to be the combination of a negator and a modal verb.
严禁把香烟售给十八岁以下的青少年。
yánjìn bǎ xiāngyān shòu gěi shíbā suī yìxià de qǐngshào nián
(lit. strictly forbid grasping cigarettes sell to 18 year below de youths and teenagers)
It is strictly forbidden to sell cigarettes to young people under 18.

怎么可以把垃圾扔在这儿呢?  zěnme kěyǐ bǎ lājī rēng zài zhèr ne
(lit. how can grasping rubbish throw at here ne)
How can rubbish be dumped here?

12.5 把 bā VERSUS 将 jiāng

In a less colloquial and more formal style, 将 jiāng may be used in place of 把 bā:

特将详细的情况报告如下。 tè jiāng xiánxì de qíngkuàng bàogào rúxià
(lit. especially grasping detailed situation report as follows)
I hereby report the detailed situation as follows.

以免将谈判弄僵了。 yǐmǐn jiāng tán pàn nònɡjiāng le
(lit. avoid grasping negotiation make-deadlock le)
To avoid bringing the negotiation to a deadlock.
13 THE PASSIVE VOICE AND 被 běi CONSTRUCTIONS

It has often been suggested that the passive voice is not as commonly used in Chinese as in European languages. There is certainly some truth in this, in that the Chinese language, being meaning-oriented and not morphologically stringent, seems to rely more heavily on context than on grammatical form. The language avoids the use of formal passive voice markers (e.g. 被 běi) until it is perfectly necessary, but from a broader perspective it is possible to see that the passive voice in Chinese in its various forms, marked or unmarked, does occur widely and, as such, may be just as frequently encountered in Chinese (both in speech and in writing) as in European languages.

13.1 THREE FORMS OF PASSIVE

The passive voice in Chinese may adopt any of the following three forms depending on the required tone and emphasis:

(a) the notional passive — where no formal passive marker is employed. This passive normally carries an expository tone.

问题 || 解决了。 wènti || jiějué le
(lit. problem || solve le) The problem was/has been solved.

(b) the formal passive — where a passive marker like 被 běi is introduced. Here the tone is usually narrative:

问题 || 终被解决。 wènti || zhōng běi jiějué
(lit. problem || finally běi:by solve) The problem was finally solved.

(c) the lexical passive — where a verb, indicating that the subject or the topic is the ‘receiver’ of the action, is followed by a nominalised verbal object. Whether this passive is built into a narrative or an exposition, the tone tends to be rather formal.

问题 || 得到了解决。 wèntí || dédào le jiějué
(lit. problem || receive le solution) A solution was found for the problem.

Note that the result expressed in the complement of all notional and formal passive constructions is invariably associated with some kind of change in a situation. The sentence particle 了 le is therefore always present.
We will now look at the specific features of these passive forms.

### 13.2 THE NOTIONAL PASSIVE

The notional passive is the most common form of passive voice in the language. The structure is possible only with a non-morphological language like Chinese, where speakers are accustomed to relying as much on meaning as on form. Take the following example:

信 || 寄走了。xin || ji zou le
(lit. letter || send off le) The letter has been put in the post.

Here there is of course no danger of the hearer misinterpreting the statements as meaning that the letter has initiated the action of sending itself, despite the fact that there is no indication of a passive voice in the verb.

The notional passive in fact avoids passive markers by relying on the hearer's common sense or knowledge of the world. It offers (or invites – in the form of a question) an updated explanation or description of a situation. Essentially what is happening with a notional passive is that the original object of the verb is now posed as the topic under discussion and is shifted to the beginning of the sentence. This is clear from the following structural conversion:

我 || 已经寄了信了。wō || yijing ji le xin le
(lit. I || already send le letter le)
I have (already) put the letter in the post.

Moving the object in the above sentence to the beginning of the sentence, we have:

信 || 我 || 已经寄了。xìn || wǒ || yijing ji le
(lit. letter || I || already send le)
As for the letter, I have already put it in the post.

The original object has now become the topic and occurs before the original subject while the aspect marker le indicating the completion of the action merges with the sentence particle le (for updating the information) to convey both meanings. Apart from these changes, the rest of the original sentence remains intact. If we leave out the original subject 我 ‘I’, the sentence becomes a notional passive with the topic alone directly affected by the predicate comment:
The term ‘notional passive’ derives from the fact that the sentence, though apparently a straightforward ‘topic || explanatory comment’ structure, is really an ‘object (now turned topic) || transitive verb’ construction. It is passive in its underlying meaning but without a surface passive marker.

Being a conversion from an originally ‘verb + object’ construction, the notional passive naturally has a transitive verb in the comment. An intransitive verb gives an unacceptable meaning relationship between the noun and the verb. For example, a sentence like

*信 || 已经走了。xin || yijing zou le
(lit. letter || already leave le) *The letter has already departed.

in which 走 zou ‘leave’ is an intransitive verb, could be understood only in a metaphorical sense.

In addition, as the notional passive is an explanatory comment on a situation, the verb, particularly if it is monosyllabic, generally has to incorporate a complement of some kind, which indicates the relevant consequence of the action or the features attributable to the situation under discussion. The complement takes various forms, which are similar to those in the 被 běi construction, and which most commonly indicate the following:

(a) result:

信 || 收到了。xin || shōudào le
(lit. the letter || receive-arrive le) The letter has been received.

窗户 || 打开了。chuànghu || dǎkāi le
(lit. the window || hit-open le) The window has been opened.

房间 || 收拾好了。fángjiān || shōushi hào le
(lit. the room || tidy-well le) The room has been tidied.

桌子 || 抹干净了。zhuōzi || mā gānjìng le
(lit. the table || wipe-clean le) The table has been wiped clean.

(b) direction:

衣服 || 晾出去了。yīfu || liàng chūqu le
(lit. the clothes || hang out-go le) The clothes have been put out to dry.
电话号码 || 抄下来了。diànhuà hàomà || chāo xiàlai le
(lit. telephone number || copy down-come le)
The telephone number has been transcribed.

大箱子 || 放不进去了。dà xiāngzi || fàngbùjìnqu le
(lit. big case || place not enter-go le) The big case can’t be fitted in.

(c) location:

招贴画 || 贴在墙上。zhāotiēhuà || tiē zài qiáng shàng le
(lit. the poster || stick cv:on wall-on le)
The poster is stuck on the wall.

行李 || 放在行李架上了。xínglǐ || fàng zài xínglijìà shàng le
(lit. the luggage || place cv:on the luggage rack-on le)
The luggage is (placed) on the luggage rack.

(d) frequency:

这个电影 || 已经放映过两次了。zhè ge diànyíng || yǐjīng fāngyìng guò liǎng ci le
(lit. this film || see guò two times le)
This film has already been shown twice.

那篇文章 || 改了很多次了。nèi piān wénzhāng || gài le hěnduō ci le
(lit. that mw essay || revise le very many times le)
That essay has been revised many times.

(e) duration:

那场戏 || 演了三个月了。nèi chǎng xì || yǎn le sān ge yuè le
(lit. that mw play || perform le three mw months le)
That play has been on for three months.

这个菜 || 放了两天了。zhè ge cài || fàng le liǎng tiān le
(lit. this mw dish || put le two days le)
This dish has been left/has not been touched for two days running.

(f) manner and appearance:

书 || 放得整整齐齐的。shū || fàng de zhěngzhěngqíqí de
(lit. the books || place de whole-whole-flush-flush de)
The books have been arranged very neatly.
The Passive Voice and 被 běi Constructions

The characters have been written in a crooked fashion.

The complement however may be replaced by an object which relates semantically to the topic often in part for whole terms:

那封信 写了三张纸。nèi fēng xìn 写了三张纸
(lit. that mw letter  write le three mw:sheet paper)
That letter has been written using three sheets of paper.

那瓶酒 喝了一半。nèi píng jiǔ 喝了一半
(lit. that mw:bottle wine  drink le a half)
Half of that bottle of wine has been consumed.

土豆 削了皮了。tūdòu 削了皮了
(lit. the potatoes  peel le skin le) The potatoes have been peeled.

汽车 加了油了。qichē 加了油了
(lit. the car  add le petrol le) The car has been refuelled.

Some verbs carry the meaning of result within them:

那件工作 完成了。nèi jiàn gōngzuò 完成了
(lit. that mw work  complete le) That job has been carried out.

理想 实现了。li xiàng 实现了
(lit. the ideal  realise le) The dream has been fulfilled.

Verbs in a notional passive are generally couched in a disyllabic form. If the verb used is monosyllabic, it has to be supported pre-verbally or post-verbally by modals, adverbials or particles, or to be echoed in a rhythmic pattern:

(a) pre-verbal support:

信 可以寄了。xìn 可以寄了
(lit. the letter  can send le) The letter can now be sent.

信 已经寄了。xìn 已经寄了
(lit. the letter  already send le) The letter has already been sent.

(b) post-verbal support:

信 寄了没有? xìn 寄了没有?
(lit. the letter  send le have not) Has the letter been sent or not?
Has the letter been sent?

(c) rhythmic pattern:

信 || 寄了, 饭 || 煮了, 你要我办的事儿 || 都办了。
xin || ji le || fan || zhu le | ni yao wo ban de shir || dou ban le
(lit. the letter || send le, the rice || cook le, you-want-me-to-do things || all do le)
The letter has been sent, the meal has been prepared, everything you want me to do has been done.

As was said earlier, a notional passive is designed to offer or invite an explanatory comment on a situation. The focus or emphasis is therefore often on an observed or foreseen result that has a bearing on the situation. This being the case, modals and/or adverbials in the form of time nouns or referential adverbs often form a natural part of the comment in expository or evaluative sentences. For example:

(a) modal:

你的鞋 || 应该擦一擦。nide xie || yinggai ca yi ca
(lit. your shoes || should | brush one brush)
Yours shoes should be given a brush.

(b) time adverbial:

我家的阴沟 || 经常堵塞。wo jia de yingou || jingchang dusè
(lit. my home de drains || often block)
Drains in my house often get blocked.

c) referential adverb:

花园里的花儿 || 都浇了水了。huayuan li de huar || dou jiao le shui le
(lit. the garden-inside de flower || all sprinkle le water le)
All the flowers in the garden have been watered.

On the other hand, adverbials of manner often occur with notional passives in narrative or descriptive sentences:

信 || 胡乱地拆开看了之后, 就随随便便地扔在桌子上。
xin || hu luand de chaikai kan le zhihou | ji u sui sui bianbian de reng zai zhuozi shang
(lit. the letter || carelessly tear open read le after, then casually throw cv:on table-top)
After the letter had been carelessly torn open and read, it was casually thrown on the table.
In sentences like these, the formal passive marker 被 bèi,\(^2\) as a standard feature of narrative, can be introduced to give a slightly more vivid picture of the incident or situation being narrated or described. The above sentence, for example, may be converted into a formal passive with the meaning remaining essentially unchanged:

信 || 被胡乱地拆开看了之后，就被随随便便地扔回桌子上了。
xin || bèi húluàn de chāikāi kàn le zhīhòu | jiù bèi suísuíbiànbiàn de rèng zài zhuōzi shàng

If anything, the addition of 被 bèi associates the actions of ‘tearing the letter open’ and ‘throwing it down’ more closely with the person unspecified who carried them out.

The negation of a notional passive is normally achieved by placing the negator 没(有) méi(yǒu) immediately before the verb. For example:

问题 || 还没解决。 wèntí || hái méi jiéjué
(lit. the problem || still not solve) The problem has not yet been solved.

Once the negator is used, 了 le as either aspect marker or sentence particle can no longer occur. As a result, monosyllabic verbs need to be linked with complements or similar lengthening devices. A positive statement like:

信 || 已经寄了。 xìn || yǐjīng jì le
(lit. the letter || already send le) The letter has already been sent.

will therefore convert to the negative in ways like the following:

(a) with the help of a complement

信 || 还没寄走。 xìn || hái méi jì zǒu
(lit. the letter || still not send off)
The letter has not been sent off yet.

信 || 还没寄出去。 xìn || hái méi jì chūqu
(lit. letter || still not send out) The letter has not been sent yet.

(b) with the help of a particle other than 了 le after the verb:

信 || 还没寄呢。 xìn || hái méi jì ne
(lit. letter || still not send ne)
The letter has not been sent off yet. (connotation: I’m sorry to say.)

\(^2\) See §13.3 below.
In a more formal written text, 尚未 shàng wèi ‘not yet’ may be used instead of 还没 hài méi ‘not yet’. For example,

问题 尚未解决。 wèntí shàng wèi jiējué
(lit. problem still not solve) The problem has not yet been solved.

信 尚未寄走。 xìn shàng wèi jì zǒu
(lit. letter still not send off) The letter has not been sent off yet.

Where a sentence is suppositional and refers to a future situation the negative is expressed by 不 bù ‘not’ rather than 没有 méi(yǒu).

工作 不完成，我 不睡觉。
gōngzuò bù wánchéng wǒ bù shuǐjiào
(lit. the work not complete, I not sleep)
If the work is not completed, I won’t go to bed.

不 ‘not’ is also used in sentences where time adverbs indicate a habit or customary practice:

推销员打来的电话 通常不接。

tuìxiāoyuán dālái de diànhuà tōngcháng bù jiē
(lit. salesman make de telephone call usually not receive)
Telephone calls from salesmen usually are not taken.

In all our examples so far of notional passives the topics have been inanimate objects; where the topic is a human or animate being, ambiguity can arise. For example:

他的助手 借走了。 tāde zhǔshǒu jiē zǒu le
(lit. his assistant borrow away le)
topic comment: His assistant has been borrowed (by somebody else for another project).
subject predicate: His assistant has borrowed it (something understood in the given context).

The first interpretation sees the sentence as a notional passive in which as usual an ‘unspecified doer’ (in this case maybe a boss or professor) has inflicted the action of the verb on the topic (his assistant). In the second interpretation, the verb is in the active voice, and the subject (his assistant) has borrowed something that is unspecified but is clear from the context (a book, computer, etc.).

Absence of specification like this, where identification is self-evident from the context, is a feature of the Chinese language (see Chapter 25).
In the great majority of cases, the context makes the meaning perfectly clear, but nonetheless there is the possibility of ambiguity in cases like these.

To avoid this, speakers normally use formal or lexical passive markers. For example, a sentence like:

他的助手 || 救活了。 tāde zhùshǒu || jiù huó le
(lit. his assistant || save alive le)

could be open to two potential interpretations:

- topic || comment: His assistant was saved (e.g. by the doctor).
- subject || predicate: His assistant has saved the life of somebody else (understood in the context).

To ensure that the passive meaning of ‘His assistant was saved’ is understood, it would be possible to include either a formal passive marker:

他的助手 || 被救活了。 tāde zhūshǒu || bèi jiù huó le
(lit. his assistant || bèi save alive le)

or to adopt, if possible, a lexical passive strategy (see §13.4):

他的助手 || 得救了。 tāde zhūshǒu || déjiù le
(lit. his assistant || receive save le)

13.3 THE FORMAL PASSIVE

13.3.1 SALIENT FEATURES

The most salient feature of a formal passive is the inclusion of the coverb 被 bèi as a formal passive marker to indicate that the subject of the sentence, instead of initiating the action specified in the predicate verb, is actually the ‘receiver’ of the action. The identity of the actual initiator of the action may be revealed immediately after 被 bèi or it may remain unstated or vague. For example:

(a) identity unstated:

那个警察 || 被打伤了。 nèige jīngchá || bèi dǎshāng le
(lit. that mw policeman || bèi:by hit-wounded le)
That policeman was wounded.

(b) identity vague:

那个警察 || 被人打伤了。 nèige jīngchá || bèi rén dǎshāng le
(lit. that mw policeman || bèi:by somebody hit-wounded le)
That policeman was wounded (by somebody).
In speech, the more formal passive marker 被 bèi may be replaced by 让 ràng, 叫 jiào/教 jiào, 给 gěi or 让 ràng 给 gěi, 叫 jiào 给 gěi, etc. In these cases, the initiator is either identified precisely or vaguely. For example, sentences (b) or (c) above could take any one of the following forms:

| Let ràng: | 那个警察 || 让人/流氓打伤了。 |
| --------- | --------------------------------- |
| 被 bèi:   | 那个警察 || 被人/流氓打伤了。 |
| 叫 jiào:  | 那个警察 || 叫人/流氓打伤了。 |
| 给 gěi:   | 那个警察 || 给人/流氓打伤了。 |
| 让 ràng . 给 gěi: | 那个警察 || 让人/流氓打伤了。 |
| 叫 jiào . 给 gěi: | 那个警察 || 叫人/流氓打伤了。 |

13.3.2 BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

As mentioned earlier, the basic characteristic of a formal passive is its inbuilt narrative stance. Compared with the notional passive, which can occur in any type of sentence, the formal passive is generally more committed to the narration or description of an incident or event which has already taken place. For example, in the following two pairs of sentences, a notional passive (i) is felt to be less plausible than the formal passive (ii):

(a) (i) + 那天下午门 || 擎开了。 + nèi tiān xiàwù mén || qiào kāi le (lit. that day afternoon the door || prize open le)
(ii) 那天下午门 || 门被擒开了。 nèi tiān xiàwù mén || bèi qiào kāi le (lit. that day afternoon the door || bèi:by (somebody) prize open le)

That afternoon the door was prised open (by somebody).

(b) (i) + 不久小偷 || 抓住了。 + bùjiǔ xiǎotōu || zhǔā zhù le (lit. not long after the thief || catch firm le)
(ii) 不久小偷 || 小偷被抓住了。 bùjiǔ xiǎotōu || bèi zhǔā zhù le (lit. not long after the thief || bèi:by catch firm le)

Not long after, the thief was caught.

A further distinction between formal and notional passives is that, while the latter is normally objective in stance and can accommodate complements of
The two sentences below demonstrate the contrasting meanings possible with a notional passive:

\[(a) \text{ 饭 || 煮好了。} \text{ fàn || zhū hǎo le} \]
\[(\text{lit. the rice || cook well le}) \text{ The rice is cooked.}]\]
\[(b) \text{ 饭 || 煮糊了。} \text{ fàn || zhū hú le} \]
\[(\text{lit. the rice || cook burnt le}) \text{ The rice is burnt.}]

The expectation that the outcome of a formal passive will be negative means that, if the same two sentences have a passive marker, only the second will be acceptable:

\[(a) \text{ *饭 || 被煮好了。} \text{ *fàn || bèi zhū hǎo le}\]
\[(\text{lit. the rice || beì:by cook well le}) \text{*The rice has been cooked.}]\]
\[(b) \text{ *饭 || 让我给煮好了。} \text{ *fàn || ràng wǒ gěi zhū hǎo le}\]
\[(\text{lit. the rice || ràng:by me gěi cook well le}) \text{*The rice has been cooked by me.}]\]

Here are a few more examples of the undesirable outcomes of formal passives:

\[\text{电视机 || 被我弄坏了。} \text{ diànsījī || bèi wǒ nòng huài le}\]
\[(\text{lit. the television set || bèi:by me handle-damaged le}) \text{ The television was damaged by me.}]\]
\[\text{衣服让我给弄脏了。} \text{ yīfu || ràng wǒ gěi nòng zāng le}\]
\[(\text{lit. the clothes || ràng:by me gěi make-dirty le}) \text{ The clothes were dirtied by me.}]\]
\[\text{钥匙叫他给弄丢了。} \text{ yàoshi || jiào tā gěi nòng diū le}\]
\[(\text{lit. the key || jiào:by him make-lose le}) \text{ The key was lost by him.}]\]
\[\text{气球被小弟弟戳破了。} \text{ qìqiú || bèi xiǎo dìdì chuōpò le}\]
\[(\text{lit. the balloon || bèi:by little younger brother poke-break le}) \text{ The balloon was burst by younger brother.}]\]
That tree was blown down by the gale.

Little sister was embarrassed by our teasing.

I/(s)he was bitten on the leg by a mosquito.

The woollen overcoat had a hole eaten in it by a moth.

13.3.3 IMPERATIVES

In imperatives, the formal 被 bei cannot be used, but the other more colloquial alternatives are acceptable:

Don’t get scalded by the boiling water.

Don’t let the luggage get soaked by the rain.

13.3.4 WHOLE-PART RELATIONSHIPS

It is not unusual for a formal passive to incorporate a 把 bā construction if the subject of the sentence and the object of 把 bā have a whole-part relationship. For example:

The cover of the new book was torn off by little sister.

in which 新书 xīn shū ‘the new book’ and 封面 fēngmiàn ‘the cover’ have a whole-part relationship.
In other words, the subject must represent the whole entity while the object of 把 must represent part of it.

Here is another example:

姐姐 || 叫滚水 | 把手 | 给烫伤了。

jiějie || jiào gǔnshuǐ | bǎ shǒu | gěi tāng shāng le
elder sister || jiào:by boiling water | bǎ:grasping hand | gěi:by scald-hurt le
My elder sister had her hand scalded by boiling water.

13.3.5 A CLASSICAL VARIANT

A classical variant of the formal passive is encoded by 为 wéi ... 所 suǒ. 为 wéi, like 被 bēi, is followed by the initiator of the action in the verb, while 所 suǒ precedes the verb itself. In this formal passive construction, the verb may be monosyllabic or disyllabic and does not need any complement.

他的讲话 || 为掌声所淹没。

tāde jiǎnghuà || wéi zhǎngshēng suǒ yānmò
(lit. his speech || wéi:by applause suǒ drown)
His speech was drowned by the applause.

这位老师 || 为他的学生所爱戴。

zhèi wèi lǎoshī || wéi tāde xuéshēng suǒ àidài
(lit. this mw teacher || wéi:by his students suǒ love-esteem)
This teacher was loved by his students.

这样的丑事 || 必然为人所笑。

zhèyàng de chǒushi || bìrán wéirén suǒ xiào
(lit. this kind de scandal || inevitably wéi:by people suǒ laugh)
This kind of scandal is inevitably laughed at by people.

13.4 THE LEXICAL PASSIVE

In a lexical passive, the subject of the sentence is the receiver of an action, which is the formal object of a particular set of verbs such as 得到 dédào ‘get’, 受到 shòudào ‘receive’, 遭到 zāodào ‘suffer (from)’. The true initiator of the action is identified as an attributive to the formal object. Though the syntactic construction of a lexical passive is a straightforward SVO, the important presence of the initiator modifies this to SV attributive O, where

\[
S = \text{receiver of the action} \\
V = \text{‘receiving’ verb} \\
O = \text{action initiated by somebody else} \\
\text{attributive to } O = \text{initiator}
\]

In other words, the semantic formula of the sentence is:
receiver + verb + initiator (as an attributive) + nominalised verb

For example:

他 || 得到 | 朋友们的支持。 tā || dēdào | péngyoumen de zhīchí
(lit. he || get | friends’ support)
He won the support of his friends./He was supported by his friends.\(^4\)

The formal object of the ‘receive’ verb is always a nominalised verb. It cannot therefore incorporate a complement and it must adopt a disyllabic form. One cannot say, for example:

*他受到大家的罚。 *tā shòudào dàjiā de fá
*He received everyone’s punishment.

Nor is the addition of a complement acceptable, as the formal object is now itself a noun:

*他受到大家的罚一次。 *tā shòudào dàjiā de fá yī cì
*He received a punishment from everyone.

Also being a nominalised form it does not take an object of its own:

*他受到大家的罚一镑。 *tā shòudào dàjiā de fá yī bàng
*He received a penalty of one pound from everyone.

An acceptable formulation can be achieved, however, through the juxtaposition of another monosyllabic verb or through the addition of an attributive:

他受到大家的惩罚。 tā shòudào dàjiā de chéngfá
(lit. he received everyone’s punishment/penalty)
He was punished/penalised by everyone.

他受到大家的重罚。 tā shòudào dàjiā de zhòngfá
(lit. he receive everyone’s heavy punishment/penalty)
He was heavily punished/penalised by everyone.

Other examples are:

他的话受到人们的赞赏。 tāde huà shòudào rénmen de zànshǎng
(lit. his words receive people’s admiration)
His words were admired by people.

\(^4\) The alternative English translation is here to show that a lexical passive in Chinese may be a formal passive in English.
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She behaves towards parents' criticism. **tā de xíngwéi zāodào fùmǔ de pīpíng**
(lit. her behaviour suffer parents' criticism)
Her behaviour met with criticism from her parents/was criticised by her parents.

My suggestion gets my younger sister’s support. **wǒ de jiànyì dédào wǒ mèimei de zhīchí**
(lit. my suggestion get my younger sister’s support)
My suggestion gained my younger sister’s support/was supported by my younger sister.

In a notional or a formal passive, the nature of the outcome of an action is expressed by the complement. The initiator of the action is often not mentioned since it is the outcome that is important. In a lexical passive, however, the focus shifts to the initiator of the action or to the degree or extent to which the action has been carried out. In other words, the emphasis is on the object (the nominalised verb) with its attributive, and the sentence loses focus without an attributive:

*他 得到支持。 *tā 得到 zhīchí
(lit. he get support) *He won support.

The attributive encodes semantically either the initiator and/or the extent to which the action is carried out:

(a) attributive = initiator:

她受到老师的批评。 **tā shòudào lǎoshī de pīpíng**
(lit. she receive teacher’s criticism) She was criticised by the teacher.

(b) attributive = degree or extent to which the action was carried out:

她受到严厉的批评。 **tā shòudào yánlì de pīpíng**
(lit. she receive severe de criticism) She was severely criticised.

(c) attributive = initiator + degree or extent to which the action was carried out:

她受到老师的严厉的批评。 **tā shòudào lǎoshī yánlì de pīpíng**
(lit. she receive teacher severe de criticism) She was severely criticised by the teacher.

Similar examples are:

老师得到学生的尊敬。 **lǎoshī dédào xuéshèng de zūnjīng**
(lit. the teacher receive students' respect) The teacher was respected by the students.
经理受到多方的责难。jingli shòudào duòfāng de zénàn
(lit. the manager receive many parties' censure/blame)
The manager was blamed on all fronts.

来宾受到热烈的欢迎。lái bīn shòudào rèliè de huán yíng
(lit. the guests receive warm de welcome)
The guests were warmly welcomed.

他遭到沉重的打击。tā zàodào chénzhòng de dājī
(lit. he suffer heavy de blow) He suffered heavy [psychological] blows.

The three most commonly used verbs in a lexical passive, 得到 dédào, 受到 shòudào and 遭到 zàodào, have their semantic individualities. While 得到 dédào is usually used in a positive sense and 遭到 zàodào in a negative sense, 受到 shòudào is generally neutral, as we can clearly see from the above examples. Compare the following pairs of sentences:

*学生得到老师的批评。* xuéshēng dédào láoshi de pípíng
(lit. the students get teacher's criticism)

学生得到老师的表扬。xuéshēng dédào láoshi de biǎoyáng
(lit. the students get teacher's praise)
The students were praised by the teacher.

*来宾遭到热烈的欢迎。* láibīn zàodào rèliè de huán yíng
(lit. the guests suffer warm de welcome)

来宾遭到主人的冷落。lái bīn zàodào zhùrén de lěngluò
(lit. the guests suffer host's cold-shoulder/neglect)
The guests were cold-shouldered/neglected by the host.

however:

他的建议受到人们的赞赏。tāde jiànyì shòudào rénmén de zànshǎng
(lit. his suggestion receive people's admiration)
His suggestion was admired/well received by people.

他的建议受到人们的反对。tāde jiànyì shòudào rénmén de fǎnduì
(lit. his suggestion receive people's opposition)
His suggestion was opposed by people.

In terms of register, a notional passive is always extremely colloquial while a formal passive can be made informal by replacing 被 bèi with 让 ràng or 叫 jiào
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plus 给 gěi. On the other hand, a lexical passive is always extremely formal, having a nominalised verb which is usually more abstract than physical in nature.

In addition, a lexical passive generally has a disyllabic nominalised verb as the formal object of a disyllabic ‘receive’ verb, which has a V + 到 dào structure. There is, however, an alternative form of lexical passive which makes use of a set of disyllabic expressions in a V + N format. This alternative form is unmodifiable in syntactic terms and it is found only in established lexical collocations, for example:

- 遭殃 zāoyāng to meet with disaster
- 悼难 línàn to meet with misfortune
- 受伤 shòushāng to be injured, wounded (lit. receive injury)
- 得救 déjiù to be saved (lit. get rescue)
- 惹禍 rěhuò to court disaster
- 遇险 yùxiǎn to run into danger

As the V + N format is self-sufficient and is itself the focal point, there is no need for an attributive, unlike the syntactically modifiable lexical passive. For example:

- 孩子受了伤。 háizi shòu le shāng (lit. the child receive le injury) The child was injured.
- 人质遇难了。 rénzhì yùnnàn le (lit. the hostage meet calamity le) The hostage was killed.
- 病人得救了。 bìngrén déjiù le (lit. the patient get-rescue le) The patient was saved.

5 The English translations here do not necessarily reflect the passive sense of the Chinese.
Chinese, unlike English, does not have verb forms like infinitives, participles or gerunds. Such functions are all covered by the bare verbal stem, that is, the uninflected verb. This being the case, these bare verbs are often seen strung together in a series of two or three to form the predicate of a sentence in what we call a chain (or serial) construction. They are arranged in accordance with an intrinsic time sequence. For example:

\[
\text{wò} \parallel \text{qí chē} \parallel \text{dào huǒchèzhàn} \parallel \text{qù} \parallel \text{mǎi piào}
\]

(lit. I \parallel ride bike \parallel cv: to (i.e. arriving at) railway station \parallel go \parallel buy ticket)

Getting on my bike, I rode to the railway station to get a ticket.

The English translation of the above may also be constructed as, for example: ‘To buy a ticket, I went to the railway station by bike’, where the presence of the infinitive and the preposition allows for a flexible ordering of the verbal phrases. Without linguistic facilities like these, Chinese can only resort to strict time sequencing in terms of meaning. In this case, for example, one has to get on a bike before starting off in the direction of the railway station, and one has to reach the station before going to the ticket office to buy a ticket. Hence the order of the three verbs or verbal phrases is fixed: first 骑车 qí chē ‘to ride a bicycle’, second 到火车站 dào huǒchèzhàn qù ‘to go to the railway station’ and third 买票 mǎi piào ‘to buy a ticket’.

In the following sections, we shall look at the meaning relationships generally found between the verbs in chain constructions.

14.1 THE FIRST VERB INTRODUCING A COVERBAL PHRASE THAT INDICATES LOCATION, ETC.

The first verb in a chain construction can often be a verb, usually a coverb, indicating a location, destination, etc. Location phrases are normally marked by 在 zài ‘to exist; at; in’, destination phrases by 到 dào ‘to arrive; to’, direction phrases by 向 xiàng ‘in the direction of’.

\[
\text{wò qízi zài huàyuán lì zhònghuā}
\]

(lit. my wife cv:at garden-inside grow flower)

My wife is planting flowers in the garden.

1 See Chapter 11 on coverbs.
The children go to play at the funfair.

The neighbour's dog ran up to me.

Coverbal phrases indicating destination are usually followed by 去 'to go' or 来 'to come' either as the main verb itself or as part of the main verb. In the case of direction coverbs, 来 'to come' or 去 'to go' always form part of the main verb. For instance, in the destination sentence above, 孩子们到游乐场去玩儿 háizimen dào yóulèchǎng qù wánr 'The children go to play at the funfair', 去 qù is juxtaposed with 玩儿 wánr 'to play' indicating purpose.

However the sentence could be modified as follows:

(a) 孩子们到游乐场去。 háizimen dào yóulèchǎng qù (lit. children cv: arriving at funfair go) (where 去 qù is the main verb)
    The children went to the funfair.
(b) 孩子们到游乐场玩儿去。 háizimen dào yóulèchǎng wánr qù (lit. children cv: arriving at funfair play-go) (where 去 qù forms part of the main verb with 玩儿 wánr 'to play')
    The children went to play at the funfair.

Similarly with direction coverbs you can have:

jingquán cháo wǒ pū guòlai (lit. police dog cv: towards me jump-over-come) (where 过来 guòlai 'over and towards' forms part of the main verb with 扑 pū 'to jump at')
    The police dog jumped at me.

hai'òu xiàng hǎimian fēi qù (lit. seagull cv: towards sea-surface fly-go) (where 去 qù forms part of the main verb with 飞 fēi 'to fly')
    The seagull flew down to the sea.

14.2 THE SECOND VERB INDICATING PURPOSE

In English, adverbials expressed in terms of infinitives often indicate purpose. In Chinese, purpose is expressed simply by a second verb in a chain construction.

我买了一个礼物送给她。 wǒ mái le yī ge liwù sòng gěi tā (lit. I buy le one mw present give cv:to her)
    I bought a present to give to her.
孩子们都回家来过圣诞节。**háizimen dōu huíjiā lái guò shèngdànjié**  
(lit. children all return home come pass Christmas)  
The children all come home for Christmas.

救火车赶到现场去救火。**jiùhuóchē gǎn dào xiānchǎng qù jiùhuǒ**  
(lit. fire engine rush cv:arriving at scene go fight fire)  
The fire engine rushed to the scene (to fight the fire).

我们到电影院去看电影。**wǒmen dào diànyǐngyuàn qù kàn diànyǐng**  
(lit. we cv:arriving at cinema go see film)  
We went to the cinema (to see a film).

It should be noted that, in encoding purposes, there are often cultural differences between Chinese and European languages, as can be seen from the last two examples above. In English, when a fire engine comes to a scene or somebody goes to the cinema, the purpose is self-evident and to express it might be felt to be tautological. In Chinese, however, purpose is generally spelled out whether self-explanatory or not.

Another point to note is that 来 ‘to come’ and 去 ‘to go’ are often used in connection with purpose, and are usually placed before the second verb. More colloquially, they may also be found after the second verb or even both before and after it. Compare the following sets of sentences:

(a) 姐姐进城去买东西了。**jiējiě jinchéng qù mǎi dōngxi le**  
(lit. elder sister enter town go buy things le)  
姐姐进城买东西去了。**jiējiě jinchéng mǎi dōngxi qù le**  
(lit. elder sister enter town buy things go le)  
姐姐进城去买东西去了。**jiējiě jinchéng qù mǎi dōngxi qù le**  
(lit. elder sister enter town go buy things go le)  
which all mean ‘Elder sister has gone shopping in town’.

(b) 我明天上剑桥去赴约。**wǒ míngtiān shàng jiànqiáo qù fùyuē**  
(lit. I tomorrow cv: to Cambridge go keep appointment)  
我明天上剑桥赴约去。**wǒ míngtiān shàng jiànqiáo fùyuē qù**  
(lit. I tomorrow cv: to Cambridge keep appointment go)  
我明天上剑桥去赴约去。**wǒ míngtiān shàng jiànqiáo qù fùyuē qù**  
(lit. I tomorrow cv: to Cambridge go keep appointment go)  
which all translate as ‘I am going for an appointment in Cambridge tomorrow’.
Here are some more colloquial examples using 来 lái ‘to come’ or 去 qù ‘to go’:

大家快来看。dàjiā kuài lái kàn
(lit. everyone quick come look)
Everyone come and have a look straight away.

你来帮帮忙。nǐ lái bāngbang máng
(lit. you come help-help busy) Come and give me a hand.

爸爸，你来出出主意。bàba | nǐ lái chūchu zhùyì
(lit. father, you come express-express opinion)
Dad, come and tell us what you think (about it).

你去歇歇吧。nǐ qù xiēxié ba
(lit. you go rest-rest ba) Go and have a rest.

我们贺喜来了。wǒmen hèxǐ lái le
(lit. we congratulate-come le) We’ve come to say congratulations.

他来看我来了。tā lái kàn wǒ lái le
(lit. he come see me come le) He came to see me.

我去找他去。wǒ qù zhǎo tā qù
(lit. I go seek him go) I’ll go and look for him.

However, when 来 lái ‘to come’ or 去 qù ‘to go’ occur with verbs that have an inherent meaning of direction, they can only follow these verbs:

妈妈进城去了。māma jinchéng qù le
(lit. mother enter town go le) Mother has gone into town.

爸爸回家来了。bàba huíjiā lái le
(lit. father return home come le) Father has come home.

姐姐出门去了。jiējie chūmén qù le
(lit. elder sister exit door go le) Elder sister is away.

The following would not normally be acceptable:

*妈妈去进城了。*māma qù jinchéng le
*爸爸来回家了。*bàba lái huíjiā le
*姐姐去出门了。*jiējie qù chūmén le
There are some explicit indicators of purpose such as 以 ‘so as to’, 免得 miǎndé ‘to avoid’: ²

他在那几个字下面画了一条红线，以引起读者的注意。

他 zài nèi ji ge zi xiàmiàn huà le yī tiáo hóngxiàn | yī yínqì dúzhē de zhùyì
(lit. he cv: at those few mw characters-below draw le one mw: line red line, so as to attract readers’ attention)

He put a red line under those characters (so as to) attract the readers’ attention.

请你到了之后，马上打个电话来，免得大家记挂。

qǐng nǐ dào le zhīhòu | mǎshàng dǎ ge diànhuà lái | miǎndé dàjiā jígù
(lit. please you arrive le after, immediately make mw telephone call come, to avoid everyone be concerned)

Please phone immediately you arrive to avoid everyone getting worried.

请把盖子拧紧，以免里面的饼干受潮。

qǐng bǎ gàizi nǐng jǐn | yǐmíăn lǐmiàn de bǐnggān shòucháó
(lit. please cv: grasping lid twist tight, to avoid inside de biscuits receive damp)

Please fasten the lid tight to stop the biscuits inside getting damp.

When one verb simply follows another, the action and purpose relationship between them tends to be more implicit than explicit, in contrast with the more explicit relationship when 来 lái or 去 qù or indicators like 以 yǐ or 免得 miǎndé are present:

大家一起鼓掌表示欢迎。 dàjiā yīqǐ gǔzhǎng biǎoshì huānyíng
(lit. everyone together applaud show welcome)

Everyone applauded in welcome.

我请了几天假回家探望我父母。

wǒ qǐng le ji tiān jià huìjiā tánwàng wǒ fùmǔ
(lit. I request le few days holiday return home visit my parents)

I requested a few days’ leave to visit my parents.

他坐在河边钓鱼。 tā zuò zài hébiān diàoyú
(lit. he sit cv: at riverside fish fish) He sat fishing on the river bank.

² Note that 为了 wèile ‘in order to’ never introduces a second-verb phrase, but is always placed at the beginning of a sentence: e.g. 为了不让妈妈知道，她撒了一个谎。 wèile bù ràng māmá zhīdào | tā sā le yī ge huāng. ‘In order not to let mother know (what has happened), she told a lie’.
I cleared a space in the drawing-room for a piano.

The child stood swinging back and forth on the swing.

He was tired with walking and sat down for a rest.

She closed her eyes in relaxation.

To indicate briefness or casualness, the verb of purpose may be repeated as in the last two examples above. Similarly, in making suggestions or requests, the purpose verb is often reduplicated to convey a feeling of tentativeness:

Let's find a quiet place to have a good chat.

Please open the window to let in some air.

Tell a joke for everyone to hear.

Let's get together for a discussion.

In any instance of reduplication, where the verb reduplicated is a monosyllabic verb, there are two possible formulations: VV or V — V, e.g. 看一看 kàn yì kàn ‘to have a look’; if the verb is disyllabic and has an internal juxtapositional structure (i.e. VV), the reduplication can only be VV VV and the insertion of — yi is not possible, e.g. 学习学习 xuéxí xuéxí ‘to learn from’ and not *xuéxí yi xuéxí; if it is a disyllabic verb with an internal ‘verb + object’ structure, only the verb is reduplicated and not the object, e.g. 散步 sàn bù ‘to take a walk’ > 散散步 sàn sàn bù or 散散步 sàn yǐ sàn bù and not *散歩散步 sàn bù sàn bù.
To emphasise this tentativeness, a reduplicated main verb is often followed by the monosyllabic 看 ˋkàn ‘to see what happens’:

你先试试看。 nǐ xiān shìshì kàn
(lit. you first try-try to see what happens) (You) have a try first.

你尝尝看。 nǐ chángcháng kàn
(lit. you taste-taste to see what happens) Have a taste.

穿穿看。 chuānchuān kàn
(lit. put on-put on and see what happens) Try it on.

Sometimes the purpose is expressed succinctly with a monosyllabic verb, single or reduplicated, which more often than not shares the object of the previous verb:

哥哥倒了杯茶喝。 gēge dào le bēi chá hē
(lit. elder brother pour le (one) cup tea drink)
Elder brother poured out a cup of tea to drink.

妹妹要出席舞会，向姐姐借了一条裙子穿。
mèimei yào chūxǐ wǔhuì | xiàng jiējie jiè le yī tiáo qúnzi chuān
(lit. younger sister want attend dance, cv:from elder sister borrow le one mw skirt wear)
Younger sister wanted to go to a dance and borrowed a skirt from her elder sister to wear.

你去买份报纸瞧瞧。 nǐ qù mǎi fèn bàozhǐ qiáoqiáo
(lit. you go buy (one) mw newspaper look-look)
You go and buy a paper to have a look.

咱们租辆自行车骑骑。 zánmen zù liàng zìxíngché qíqí
(lit. we hire (one) mw bicycle ride-ride) Let’s hire a bike to have a ride.

我可以搭下一班飞机走。 wǒ kěyǐ dā xià yī bān fēijí zǒu
(lit. I can take next one mw:flight plane leave) I can go on the next flight.

14.3 THE FIRST VERB INDICATING REASON OR CAUSE

The first verb may state the reason why the action in the second verb should be or has been carried out:

人家正在睡觉，别去打扰。 rénjīā zhèngzài shuìjiào | bié qù dǎjiāo
(lit. other people at-this-very-moment sleep, don’t go disturb)
(S)he is just asleep, (so) don’t disturb him/her.
I can see you [polite], feel extremely honoured.

I will be deeply honoured to meet you.

The (water)pipe burst and spurted water all over him.

The luggage was not fastened properly and everything spilled out.

The vase fell on the floor and broke.

He caught a cold and was sick for a few days.

Old Zhang told a joke and amused everyone.

The child was very small and still afraid of strangers.

The child was very small and still shy with strangers.

She is good-tempered and gets on well with people.

Explanations or causes (or their lack) are expressed by an opening verb phrase consisting of 有 you ‘to have’ (or 没有 méiyǒu ‘to have not’) and a noun. In many cases, the noun is abstract, like 理由 liyóu ‘reason’, 责任 zérèn ‘responsibility’, 权力 quánlì ‘power or authority’, 资格 zīgé ‘qualification’. 
You have no reason to question his motive.

All the countries in the world have a responsibility to fight terrorism.

The teacher is ill and asks for two days’ leave.

The secretary has something on and can’t come to work.

Do you have the confidence to write this essay?

Does she have the courage to overcome this difficulty?

He doesn’t have the ability to help you.

There’s no need for you to go and bicker with them.

I really don’t have time to think about this problem.

Other abstract nouns which can collocate with 有 (or 没有 meiyou) include: 办法 banfa ‘resource’, 本事 benshi ‘ability’, 力量 liliang ‘strength’, 把握 bawo ‘certainty’, 机会 jihui ‘opportunity’, 条件 tiaojian ‘condition’, 可能 kenheng ‘possibility’.

14.4 THE FIRST VERB EXPRESSING ACCOMPANYING MANNER OR CIRCUMSTANCES

The accompanying manner or circumstances of an action, which is usually conveyed by a participial phrase in English, is commonly expressed in Chinese by a
verbal phrase with the manner indicator 着 zhe attached to the verb. A verbal phrase like this always comes before the main verb. For example:

她笑着跟我谈了几句。tā xiào zhe gēn wǒ tán le jī jù (lit. she laugh zhe cv: with me talk le few sentences)
Smiling, she had a few words with me.

他怀着满腔的热情接受了这个任务。
tā huái zhe mà qióng de rè qíng jiē shòu le zēi ge rèn wù (lit. he embrace zhe full breast de enthusiasm accept le this mw task)
He took on this job filled with enthusiasm.

我带着所有的文件去见律师。wǒ dài zhe suǒ yǒu de wén jiàn qù jiàn lǜ shī (lit. I carry zhe all documents go see lawyer)
I went to see the lawyer, taking all the documents.

母亲哼着歌儿哄孩子睡觉。mǔ qìn hēng zhe gē hōng hái zì shuì jiào (lit. mother hum zhe tune/song coax child sleep)
Mother humming a tune, coaxed the child to sleep.

孩子们扒着窗台看游行队伍。
hái zì men bā zhe chuāng tái kàn yóu xíng duì wù (lit. children hold zhe window-sill watch parade procession)
The children watched the parade leaning on the window-sill.

他抄着手站在一边看热闹。tā chāo zhe shǒu zhàn zài yī biān kàn rè nào (lit. he fold zhe arms stand cv: at one side watch excitement)
Standing to one side with arms folded, he watched the excitement.

两个小学生跳着跑过来。liǎng ge xiǎo xiú shēng tiào zhe pāo guò lái (lit. two mw primary school pupils jump zhe run across-come)
Two primary schoolchildren came jumping across.

两个中国老师争着付钱。liǎng ge zhōng guó lǎo shī zhēng zhe fù qián (lit. two mw Chinese teachers vie zhe pay money)
The two Chinese teachers vied (with each other) to pay.

小李红着脸说了几句。xiǎo lǐ hóng zhe liǎn shuō le jī jù (lit. little Li red zhe face say le few sentences)
Little Li with a red face said a few words.

别背着人说别人坏话。bié bēi zhe rén shuō bié rén de huá huà (lit. don’t behind-back zhe someone speak other person de unpleasant talk)
Don’t talk ill of someone behind his/her back.
A "zhe" phrase with a monosyllabic verb may be reduplicated to indicate repetitiveness. A phrase like this may be placed after the subject or at the beginning of the sentence before the subject:

我们说着说着已经走到了湖边。

*women shuo zhe shuo zhe yijing zou dao le hubian*  
(lit. we talk zhe talk zhe already walk cv:arriving at le lake side)

or:

说着说着我们已经走到了湖边。

*shuo zhe shuo zhe women yijing zou dao le hubian*  
(lit. talk zhe talk zhe we already walk cv:arriving at le lakeside)  
Talking endlessly, we had already arrived at the lakeside.

哭着哭着她昏了过去。

*ku zhe ku zhe ta yun le guoqu*  
(lit. weep zhe weep zhe she faint le pass-go)  
She wept and wept until she fainted.

他们吵着吵着打起架来。

*tamen chao zhe chao zhe da qi jia lai*  
(lit. they argue zhe argue zhe fight begin-come)  
They argued and argued until they began to fight.

Accompanying actions in some cases do not need "zhe" if there are verbal complements with balanced rhythm. For example:

护士放轻脚步屏住气走近病人床前。

*hushi fang qing jiaobu pingzhu qi zoujin bingren chuangling*  
(lit. nurse place light footstep hold-fix breath walk near patient bed-front)  
The nurse, with light steps and holding her/his breath, approached the patient’s bed.

compare:

护士踮着脚屏着呼吸走近病人床前。

*hushi dian zhe jiao ping zhe huxi zoujin bingren chuangling*  
(lit. nurse tip-toe zhe hold zhe breath walk near patient bed-front)  
The nurse, on tiptoe and holding his/her breath, approached the patient’s bed.

### 14.5 CONSECUTIVE ACTIONS

A sentence expressing consecutive action regularly takes the form in Chinese of a completed action verb phrase or its negative alternative followed by the most
commonly used referential adverbs 就 jiù ‘then’ or 才 cái ‘only then’ before the main verb:

他下了课就回家去了。 tā xià le kè jiù huíjiā qù le
(lit. he finish le class, then return home go le)
He went home when class was finished.

客人进了门就把鞋脱下来。 kèrén jìn le mén jiù bǎ xié tuō xiàlai
(lit. guests enter le door then cv:grasping shoes take-off down-come)
The guests took off their shoes when they came in.

哥哥吃了饭才开始复习功课。 gēge chī le fàn cái kāi shì fúxǐ gōngkè
(lit. elder brother eat le food, only then begin revise schoolwork)
Elder brother didn’t begin to revise his schoolwork until he had eaten.

我没有吃饭就去打网球了。 wǒ méiyǒu chī fàn jiù qù dá wǎngqiú le
(lit. I not have eat food then go play tennis le)
Without eating, I went to play tennis.

A series of completed action verbs may precede the main verb:

他洗了脸，刷了牙，脱了衣服，就上床睡觉去了。
tā xǐ le liǎn | shuā le yá | tuō le yīfu | jiù shàng chuáng shuìjiào qù le
(lit. he wash le face, brush le teeth, take-off le clothes, then get on bed sleep go le)
After washing his face, brushing his teeth and undressing, he went to bed.

他戴上眼镜，拿起书本，翻到第三页，便大声朗诵起来。
tā dài shàng yǎnjìng | náqǐ shūběn | fān dào sān yè | biàn dàshēng lǎngsòng qǐlái
(lit. he put on spectacles, pick up book, turn cv:to third page, then loud voice read aloud begin)
After putting on his glasses, picking up the book and turning to page three, he began to read it out in a loud voice.

In making requests and suggestions relating naturally to projected rather than completed action, the referential adverb 再 zài ‘only then’ is often used to mark consecutive sequence to the final verb:

这个问题咱们好好地研究研究再说。
zhègè wèntí zánmen hǎohǎo de yánjiū yánjiū zài shuō
(lit. this mw question we well-well de study-study then talk)
Let’s give this question some thought before we talk further.

4 便 biàn ‘then, as soon as’ is used as an alternative to 就 jiù, particularly in written style.
这件事搁一搁再办吧。zhè jiàn shì gē yī gē zài bàn ba
(lit. this matter put aside-one-put aside then deal with ba)
Let’s put this matter aside for a while before we deal with it.

茶刚泡上，闷一会儿再喝。chá gāng pào shàng | mēn yīhuǐr zài hē
(lit. tea just made, brew a while then drink)
The tea is just made. Let it brew for a moment before (you) drink it.

请你等一等再走。qǐng nǐ děng yī děng zài zǒu
(lit. please you wait-one-wait then leave) Please wait a bit before you go.

我先给你垫上，等你取了款再还我。wǒ xiān gěi nǐ diàn shàng | děng nǐ qǔle kuǎn zài huán wǒ
(lit. I first cv:for you advance (money), wait you draw le money (from bank) then return me)
I will give you an advance, and you can pay me back when you draw money out (of the bank).

A consecutive sequence of actions may also include a coverbal or 着 zhe phrase or both before the final verb, with or without a referential adverb:

他扭过头来冲我笑了笑。V + CoV + V
tā niù guò tóu lái chōng wǒ xiào xiào
(lit. he twist-over head come, cv:towards me, laugh le laugh)
He turned (his head) round and gave a smile in my direction.

他抽出一支香烟凑着鼻子闻了闻。V + Vzhe + V
tā chōuchū yī zhī xiāngyān còuzhe bǐzǐ wén le wén
(lit. he take out one mw cigarette, press-close zhe nose smell le smell)
He took out a cigarette, held it close to his nose and smelled it.

她用两手支着头在想什么？CoV + Vzhe + V
tā yòng liǎng shǒu zhīzhē tóu zài xiǎng shénme
(lit. she cv:using two hands support zhe head thinking what)
What is she thinking about, holding her head in her hands?

外宾学着用筷子吃饭。Vzhe + CoV + V
wài bīn xuézhē yòng kuàizi chīfàn
(lit. foreign guests learn zhe cv:using chopsticks eat food)
The foreign visitors are learning to eat with chopsticks.

老爷爷停了一下，皱了皱眉头，又接着往下说。
V + V + refA + Vzhe + CoV + V
lǎo yéye tíng yì xià | zhòu le zhòu méítóu | yǒu jiēzhē wǎng xià shuō
Grandpa stopped for a moment, frowned, and then continued speaking.

Two consecutive actions may of course be carried out by the same person or by two different people. If one action follows the other very quickly, the two verbs are often linked by a pair of referential adverbs — यि... हे जिउ ‘as soon as’ placed respectively before them. For example:

- लाओशी यि ज़ौजिन जियोशि | जिउ नाखु दियांमिंगबु दियांमिंग
  (lit. teacher once walk-into classroom, then take out register call roll)
  As soon as the teacher came into the classroom, (s)he took out the register to do the roll-call.

- खाओझांग यि ज़ौजिन लिटांग | दाजिया जियू अणिझिंग खियालई
  (lit. head teacher once walk-into auditorium, everyone then quiet down-come)
  As soon as the head teacher entered the auditorium, everyone went quiet.

- बिसाई यि काईशी | लिझियांदू जियू जिन ले यि कियू
  (lit. game once begin, Leeds United then enter le one ball)
  As soon as the game started, Leeds United scored a goal.

- तैयांग यि चूलाई | नियार जियू जाई शू शूं शूं जिजियैझाशा डे जियू उनियू
  (lit. sun once out-come, birds then cv:at tree-top chirp-chirp de call-begin)
  As soon as the sun came out, the birds in the trees began to chatter.

- बाबा यि जिन मेन जियू वान खोटियाई | बादयी गूआ जाई यीजिया शंग
  (lit. father once enter door then cv:grasping shoes take off, cv:grasping overcoat hang cv:at clothes stand-top)
  As soon as father comes, he takes off his shoes and hangs up his overcoat.

- दीदी यि फॅंग खियाई डोचा जियू पाओ खू जियाई दियांशी
  (lit. younger brother once put down knife fork then run-go watch television)
  As soon as younger brother puts down his knife and fork, he rushes off to watch television.
14.6 SIMULTANEOUS ACTIONS

Simultaneous actions are linked by a pair of adverbials 一边 yībiān . . . 一边 yībiān ‘while; whilst; at the same time’ which are placed respectively before the two verbs. For example:

他一边看书，一边听音乐。tā yībiān kàn shū | yībiān tīng yīnyuè
(lit. he one-side read book, one-side listen to music)
He was reading and listening to music (at the same time).

售货员一边跟我谈话，一边把我买的东西包好。
shòuhuóyuán yībiān gēn wǒ tánhuà | yībiān bā wǒ mǎi de dōngxi bāo hǎo
(lit shop-assistant one-side cv:with me chat, one-side cv:grasping I bought de things wrap well)
The shop assistant chatted to me as (s)he wrapped up the things I had bought.

14.7 AN EMPHATIC CHAIN CONSTRUCTION

An idiomatic and emphatic chain construction can be formulated by using in sequence two verbs with contrasting meanings, one in the affirmative and the other in the negative. Generally, the affirmative verb comes first:

她拽住他不放。tā zhuài zhù tā bù fàng
(lit. she hold-firm him not let go)
She caught hold of him and would not let him go.

你坐着别动！nǐ zuò zhe bié dòng
(lit. you sit zhe don’t move) You sit (where you are) and don’t move.

小孙丢下工作不管。xiǎosūn diū xià gōngzuò bù guān
(lit. little Sun throw-down work not care)
Little Sun abandoned the work and didn’t bother about it.

老李板起脸孔不笑。lǎolǐ bǎnqí liǎnkǒng bù xiào
(lit. old Li made serious face not smile)
Old Li gave a stern look and didn’t smile.

孩子看到橱窗里的玩具，赖着不肯走。
háizi kàn dào chúchuāng lǐ de wǎnjù | láizhe bùkěn zǒu

5 一边 yīmiàn . . . 一边 yīmiàn ‘at the same time’ are used in the same way but more by southern speakers.
Seeing the toys in the shop window, the child hung back and would not move.

**You怎么能撂下这件事儿不办呢?**

**nǐ zénme néng liàoxiá zhèi jiàn shír bù bàn ne**

(lit. you how able put down this mw matter not deal with ne)

How can you put down this work and not deal with it?

The follow-up negatives in the above examples all indicate intentional actions. If the negative is an expression of something unintentional, it may take the form of a potential complement\(^6\) instead:

邮票已经粘住了，撕不下来。**yóupiào yíjīng niānzhù le | sībuxiàlai**

(lit. stamp already stick-firm le, tear not off-come)

The stamps have already stuck (to the envelope) and cannot be taken off.

我饱了，一点儿也吃不下了。**wǒ bǎo le | yǐdiānr yě chībuxià le**

(lit. I full le, one bit even eat not down le)

I’m full and I can’t eat a bit more.

### 14.8 AN ARTICULATED CHAIN CONSTRUCTION\(^7\)

It is extremely common in Chinese to use the object of a first verb to be the subject of a following verb without having to reiterate the nominal or pronominal item, the formula being:

\[ N1 + V1 + N2, V2 (+ N3, V3) \ldots \]

我说‘大家’自然包括你在内。**wǒ shuō ‘dàjiā’ zīrán bāokuò nǐ zài nèi**

(lit. I say ‘everyone’ naturally include you within)

When I say everyone, I naturally include you.

你掂一掂这条鱼有多重？**nǐ diān yì diān zhèi tiáo yú yòu duō zhòng**

(lit. you weigh-one-weigh (in your hand) this mw fish have how heavy)

Weigh this fish in your hand (and see how heavy it is).

那天我在公园里遇见他，在一旁看着他六岁的小女儿，从滑梯上滑下来。

**nèi tiān wǒ zài gōngyuán lǐ yùjiàn tā | zài yīpáng kànzhè tā liù suì de xiǎo nǚ’er | cóng huá tí shàng huá xiàlai**

\(^6\) A potential complement (see §10.2) tends to imply that the ability (or inability) to carry out the action is beyond the control of the speaker.

\(^7\) See Chapter 25 on abbreviation.
That day I bumped into him in the park as he was watching his little 6-year-old daughter sliding down a slide.

He published an article in the paper, attacking those bureaucrats who read only reports of findings and pay no attention to the real state of affairs.

I like 'gulao' pork because it's sweet and sour and goes well with rice.

As we can see from the last example, a predicate having the object of a preceding verb as its notional subject may be either verbal or adjectival.
15 THE VERB 是 shì

是 shì ‘to be’ is a versatile verb, which is used for a variety of purposes. One is similar to the verb ‘to be’ in English to introduce an explanatory predicative. However, 是 shì is a very different verb from the English link verb, and in the following sections, its various uses will be spelled out. By definition, all sentences with 是 shì are expository in nature.

15.1 是 shì INTRODUCING A PREDICATIVE

是 shì ‘to be’ introduces a predicative, which generally takes the form of a nominal or pronominal. This predicative serves as an explanatory equivalent to the topic under discussion. In other words, 是 shì equates the two items on either side of it. For example:

我弟弟是中学生。 wǒ didì shì zhōng xuéshēng
My younger brother is a secondary school student.

我是大学生。 wǒ shì dà xuéshēng
I am a university student.

她是我们的邻居。 tā shì wǒmén de línjū
She is our neighbour.

他是谁？ tā shì shéi
Who is he?

这是泰山。 zhè shì tàishān
This is Mount Tai.

Verbs functioning in a similar equative way include: 姓 xìng ‘to have the surname of . . .’, 叫 jiào ‘to have the name of . . .’, 相 xiāng ‘to resemble’. For example, 他姓李 tā xìng lǐ ‘His surname is Li’; 她像她母亲 tā xiǎng tā mǔqīn ‘She looks like her mother’.

One salient feature of the equation is that the nominal or pronominal expression on the right-hand side tends to be more general (i.e. less specific) in reference or meaning than that on the left-hand side. One cannot say, for example,

*中学生是我弟弟。 zhōng xuéshēng shì wǒ didì
*A secondary school student is my younger brother.
*A university student is I.  
*Our neighbour is she.

*Who is he?

However, it is possible for the words or expressions on either side of the equation to be equally specific and for them to be of a nominal nature. In these cases they are generally reversible without any significant change in the meaning:

**Mr Wang is our grammar teacher.**

Mr Wang is our grammar teacher.  
Our grammar teacher is Mr Wang.

Li Ming is my boyfriend.  
My boyfriend is Li Ming.

If one item is pronominal, then it is generally placed on the left-hand side while the nominal item for explanation is placed on the right-hand side. This is because pronominal items generally indicate given information, which is then posed as the topic:

This is Mount Tai.  
He is Li Ming.

One does not say:

*Mount Tai is this.  
*Li Ming is he.

The predicative may also take the form of a 的 de expression attached to a pronoun, adjective, verb or subject-predicate clause. For example,

(a) pronoun + 的 de as predicative:

This woollen sweater is mine.
(b) adjective + 的 de as predicative:

玫瑰花是最美的。méiguī huā shì zuì měi de
The roses are the most beautiful flowers.

(c) verb expression + 的 de as predicative:

我弟弟是学汉语的。wǒ dìdì shì xué hàn yǔ de
My younger brother studies Chinese.

(d) clause + 的 de as predicative:

这些礼物是我送给你的。zhèxiē liwù shì wǒ sòng gěi nǐ de
These are presents for you from me./These are presents I am giving to you.

The two sides of such an equation can often be reversed, without any change in the overall meaning of the sentence, although there is some shift in focus. For example:

(a) pronoun + 的 de as topic:

我的是羊毛衫。wǒ de shì yángmáo shān
Mine is a woolen sweater.

(b) adjective + 的 de as topic:

最美的是玫瑰花。zuì měi de shì méiguī huā
The most beautiful are roses.

(c) verb + 的 de as topic:

学翻译的是高年级学生。xué fānyì de shì gāo niánjí xuésheng
Those who study translation are upper-year students.

(d) clause + 的 de as topic:

我叫的是大虾。wǒ jiào de shì dàxiā
What I have ordered are prawns.

的 de expressions may, of course, occupy both sides of the equation:

我叫的是我最喜欢的。wǒ jiào de shì wǒ zuì xíhuàn de
What I have ordered is what I like most.
An interesting footnote to this section is perhaps the extensive use of 的 de expressions as topics with 是 shi predicatives where English would more normally have adverbials (e.g. fortunately, unfortunately, more importantly, strangely enough, etc.). The predicatives under such circumstances have to be in the form of clauses. For example:

幸運的是那天沒有下雨。 xìngyùn de | shì | nēi tiān méiyǒu xià yǔ  
Fortunately, it did not rain that day./What was fortunate was that it did not rain that day.

倒霉的是我不会开车。 dàoméi de | shì | wǒ bù huì kāichē  
Unfortunately, I do not know how to drive./What is unfortunate is that I do not know how to drive.

奇怪的是大家都不赞成。 qíguài de | shì | dàjiā dōu bù zānchéng  
Strangely enough, nobody agreed./What was strange was that nobody agreed.

更重要的是态度要认真。 gèng zhòngyào de | shì | tàidù yào rènzhēn  
More importantly, one must adopt a conscientious attitude./What is more important is that one’s attitude must be conscientious.

Apart from introducing explanatory/expository predicatives, 是 shi ‘to be’ may, of course, also be used to introduce evaluative predicatives with adjectival expressions that incorporate degree adverbs such as 多么 duōme ‘to an immeasurable extent’, 那么 nàme ‘to that degree’. Sometimes exclamatory particles such as 啊 ā, 呀 yā, etc., occur at the end of such sentences. For example:

他的诗是多么奔放啊！ tā de shī shì duōme bēnfāng ā  
(lit. his poems are how unrestrained a) How unrestrained his poems are!

女主人是那么热情。 nǚ zhǔrén shì nàme rèqíng  
The hostess is so cordial and friendly.

This use of is shì as a predicative introducer may be modified by an adverb. For example,

这件羊毛衫好像是我的。 zhè jiàn yángmáoshān hǎoxiàng shì wǒ de  
This woollen sweater seems to be mine.

1 Please note that 好象 hǎoxiàng ‘likely’ is used here as an adverb.
The hostess is always so cordial and friendly.

15.2 PREDICATIVES WITH AN OPTIONAL 是 shì

If the predicative is an item which indicates time, date, age, height, weight, etc., 是 shì is often omitted. For example:

现在(是)几点钟？ xiànzài (shì) jǐ diǎn zhōng
What time is it now?

今天(是)十月二号。 jīntiān (shì) shí yuè èr hào
Today is 2 October.

这个孩子今年(是)五岁。 zēng cì ge háizi jīnnián (shì) wǔ suì
The child is 5 years old.

小李(是)一米七。 xiǎoli (shì) yī mǐ qī
Little Li is 1 metre and 7 centimetres tall.

是 shì cannot, of course, be omitted from the negative forms of these sentences:

今天不是十月二号。 jīntiān bù shì shí yuè èr hào
Today is not 2 October.

现在不是五点钟。 xiànzài bù shì wǔ diǎn zhōng
It is not five o’clock now.

Arithmetical conversion within the same system from a bigger unit to a smaller unit more often than not results in an equation without 是 shì:

一年(是)十二个月。 yī nián (shì) shí’èr gè yuè
There are twelve months in a year.

一天(是)二十四小时。 yī tiān (shì) èrshí sì xiǎoshí
There are twenty-four hours in a day.

However, if the conversion takes place between different systems, 是 shì cannot be omitted:

一吨是一千公斤。 yī dūn shì yī qiān gōngjīn
A ton is equal to one thousand kilograms.

一米是多少英尺？ yī mǐ shì duōshǎo yīngchǐ
How many feet are there in a metre?
When asking or talking about the cost or price of something, omission of 是 shì is the standard form, and the order of the equation is generally reversible:

一本多少钱？ 一本多少钱 yì běn duōshǎo qián

or:

多少钱一本？ duōshǎo qián yì běn

How much per copy?

一盒五十便士。 yī hé wǔshí biànsì

or:

五十便士一盒。 wǔshí biànsì yī hé

Fifty pence for a box.

There is, of course, a set of verbs that express measurements more specifically:

这条绳子长二十米。 zhè tiáo shéngzi cháng èrshí mǐ
(lit. this mw rope is long 20 metres) This rope is 20 metres long.

那栋房子值一百万元。 nèi dōng fángzi zhí yī bǎiwàn yuán
(lit. that mw house is worth one million yuan)

That house is worth a million yuan.

Other verbs in this category are: 高 gāo ‘to have the height of . . .’, 重 zhòng ‘to have the weight of . . .’, 卖 mài ‘to sell for . . .’, 等于 děngyú ‘to be equal to’, 合 hé ‘to be the same as’.

15.3 是 shì INDICATING EXISTENCE

是 shì ‘to be’ may also be used to indicate existence and in this case it resembles 有 yǒu ‘to have, there is/are’. However, the kind of existence expressed by 是 shì, in comparison with 有 yǒu, tends to be more permanent than incidental and to indicate the occupation of the whole specified area rather than part of it.

The structural formula for both 是 shì and 有 yǒu existential sentences is the same:

Time or location + 是 shì or 有 yǒu + item(s) that exist(s)

but their underlying meanings are different:

桌子上有书。 zhúzi shàng yǒu shū
There are books on the table. (i.e. other things may be there too)
The whole table was covered with books. (i.e. the only things on the table are books)

Clearly, 有 yǒu seems to imply that the existence of an item or items in a particular place or time, from the speaker's perspective (i.e. as an onlooker), is probably more casual than intentional. The item or items happen to be there and the onlooker senses their presence. Nouns following 有 yǒu are therefore invariably of indefinite reference.

Because of this, 有 yǒu is more likely to be associated with multiple items or used for making queries:

冰箱里有鱼，有肉，有蔬菜，有水果。 bìnxīang lǐ yǒu yú, yǒu ròu, yǒu shūcài, yǒu shuǐguǒ
There are fish, meat, vegetables and fruit in the fridge.

屋子里有人吗? wūzǐ lǐ yǒu rén ma?
Is there anybody inside?

是 shì on the other hand implies that the existence of an object or objects in a particular place or time, from what can be seen or understood, is either more deliberate than incidental. In other words, the impression seems to be that the item or items are there because of some design or plan or that they have apparently become the sole and dominating occupants of the location in question. That is what is there. This being the case, the noun after 是 shì can have either definite or indefinite reference depending on the context:

后边是诊所。 hòubian shì zhěnsuǒ
At the back is a/the clinic.

cf. 后边有诊所。 hòubian yǒu zhěnsuǒ
At the back there is a clinic.

dàxué duìmiàn shì yì jiā yíngháng
Opposite the university is a bank.

dàxué duìmiàn yǒu yì jiā yíngháng
There is a bank opposite the university.

楼上是三间卧室。 lóu shàng shì sān jiān wòshì
Upstairs are three bedrooms.

楼上有一家银行。 lóu shàng yī jiā yíngháng
There is a bank upstairs.
is therefore often associated with a single category of items and commonly occurs with adverbs like 都 dōu ‘wholly’, 全 quán ‘completely’.

到处是人。 dàochù shì rén There were people everywhere.
满地是水。 mǎndì shì shuǐ There is water all over the ground.
屋子里都是烟。 wūzǐ lǐ dōu shì yān The room was filled with smoke.

It is interesting to note that the idiom 有的是 yǒude shì ‘there’s plenty of . . .’, which employs both 有 yǒu and 是 shì, is used to indicate the profusion of a particular item in a place:

礼堂里还有座位吗? lìtáng lǐ hái yǒu zuòwèi ma Are there any more vacant seats in the auditorium?

有的是。 yǒu de shì Yes, there are plenty of them there.

礼堂里有的是座位。 lìtáng lǐ yǒu de shì zuòwèi There are plenty of seats in the auditorium.

冰箱里有的是冰激凌。 bīngxīāng lǐ yǒu de shì bīngjīlíng There is plenty of ice-cream in the fridge.

15.4 是 shì EXPRESSING EMPHASIS

Similar to cleft sentences in English (e.g. ‘It was yesterday that we arrived’), 是 shì in Chinese is also used to express emphasis (with 的 de being present or not present depending on the situation), and it is placed in front of the word or phrase where emphasis is being sought. In other words, the word or phrase preceded by 是 shì will naturally receive sentence stress. We may call this kind of sentence stress pattern confirmatory emphasis. Let us look at the following narrative Chinese sentence that recounts something that has already happened:

我去年从美国坐飞机到英国去探望王先生。
wǒ qùnián cóng méiguó zuò fēijì dào yīngguó qù tànwàng wáng xiānshēng
Last year I went by plane from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

Different emphasis can be achieved in this sentence by placing 是 shì directly before the subject or any adverbial phrase coming before the main verb, with 的 de added at the end:

2 In spoken English this kind of confirmatory emphasis may often be achieved by giving sentence stress to the word to be emphasised rather than by using a cleft structure. While sentence stress like this can be used in Chinese, emphasis with 是 shì is more common in Chinese than the cleft structure in English.
The Verb 是 shì 251

When the main predicate verb itself is to be emphasised, 是 shì is still placed before it, but 的 de will have to be shifted to a position in front of the object of the verb:

3 Some speakers omit 的 de as in sentences like these:

wo qùnlián cónɡ méiguó zuò fēi jì dào yīngguó qù tànwànɡ wánɡ xiānshénɡ de
It was to visit Mr Wang that I went last year by plane from America to Britain.

wo qùnlián shì cónɡ méiguó zuò fēi jì dào yīngguó qù tànwànɡ wánɡ xiānshénɡ de
It was by plane that I went last year from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

wo qùnlián zhù cónɡ méiguó zuò fēi jì dào yīngguó zhù tànwànɡ wánɡ xiānshénɡ de
It was from America that I went last year by plane to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

wo qùnlián cónɡ méiguó zuò fēi jì shì dào yīngguó qù tànwànɡ wánɡ xiānshénɡ de
It was from America that I went last year by plane to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

wo qùnlián cónɡ méiguó zuò fēi jì dào yīngguó shì qù tànwànɡ wánɡ xiānshénɡ de
It was to Britain that I went last year by plane from America to visit Mr Wang.

wo qùnlián cónɡ méiguó zuò fēi jì dào yīngguó qù tànwànɡ wánɡ xiānshénɡ de
It was to Britain that I went last year by plane from America to visit Mr Wang.

When the main predicate verb itself is to be emphasised, 是 shì is still placed before it, but 的 de will have to be shifted to a position in front of the object of the verb:

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It was to visit Mr Wang that I went last year by plane from America to Britain.

wo qùnlián cónɡ méiguó zuò fēi jì dào yīngguó qù tànwànɡ wánɡ xiānshénɡ de
It was to visit Mr Wang that I went last year by plane from America to Britain.
It was to go and visit Mr Wang that I flew last year from America to Britain.

or:

It was to visit Mr Wang that I went last year by plane from America to Britain.

It was Mr Wang that I went last year by plane from America to Britain to visit. (The person I went last year by plane from America to Britain to visit was Mr Wang.)

The sentence can be reversed to create a different emphasis, but it remains in line with Chinese syntax:

The person who went last year by plane from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang was me. (I was the one who went last year by plane from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.)

However, if the statement refers to the future rather than the past, the particle 的 de is not included unless the object is to be emphasised. For example:

It is next year that I will go by plane from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

It is by plane that I will go next year from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.
It is Mr Wang that I will go next year by plane from America to Britain to visit.

Corresponding negative sentences are couched in a similar way, again with 的 de for past actions but without it for future actions. For example:

It was not I (but my younger brother) who went last year by plane from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

It was not last year (but the year before) that I went by plane from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

It is not next year (but the following year) that I will go by plane from America to Britain to visit Mr Wang.

We have so far confined our examples to simple sentences. In fact, emphasis can also be introduced into a subordinate clause beginning with 因为 yinwei ‘because’ to indicate cause or reason. The word order has to be modified under such circumstances.

For instance, if we take the sentence:

I did not go out yesterday because the weather was not good.

the emphatic transformation with 是 shì would be:

It was because the weather was not good that I did not go out yesterday.
or:

我昨天之所以没出去是因为天气不好。

wǒ zuótiān zhì suǒyǐ méi chūqù shì yīnwèi tiānqì bù hǎo
The reason why I did not go out yesterday was because the weather was not good.

We have called the sentence stress patterns illustrated above confirmatory emphasis, since they confirm a particular point through the combined workings of is shì and sentence stress. However, if the sentence stress does not fall on the word or phrase that follows is shì but on is shì itself, then the emphasis will focus on the whole sentence. We may call this kind of sentence stress pattern concessionary emphasis, which in English would be conveyed by tone of voice or by the addition of something like ‘It is true that...’. As the emphasis falls on the whole sentence, it is only natural for is shì to come between the subject and the predicate. For example:

我昨天是没来上课。 wǒ zuótiān shì méi lái shàngkè
[It is true that] I did not turn up for class yesterday.

我是喝了三杯啤酒。 wǒ shì hé le sān bēi pǐjiǔ
[I must confess that] I did down three glasses of beer.

我是没有钱。 wǒ shì méiyǒu qián
[You are right.] I don’t have any money.

他是在学习英语。 tā shì zài xuéxí yīngyǔ
[Yes.] he is studying English.

Additional remarks to contradict the concession may refer back to any element in the sentence:

我昨天是没来上课，可是预先请了假。

wǒ zuótiān shì méi lái shàngkè | kěshì yùxiān qǐng le jià
[It is true that] I did not turn up for class yesterday, but I had asked for leave in advance.

我昨天是没来上课，可是在家自学。

wǒ zuótiān shì méi lái shàngkè | kěshì zài jiā zìxué
[It is true that] I did not turn up for class yesterday, but I did study on my own at home.

我昨天是没来上课，可是前天来了。

wǒ zuótiān shì méi lái shàngkè | kěshì qiántiān lái le
[It is true that] I did not turn up for class yesterday, but I did come the day before yesterday.
我的确是喝三杯啤酒，可是并没有喝醉。

我是喝了三杯啤酒，可是我没喝葡萄酒啊。

Whether the emphasis is confirmatory or concessionary, the presence of 是 shì as the core verb in all these sentences makes them expository, even though they can have any type of sentence – narrative (most commonly), descriptive, evaluative or expository – embedded in them.

The negation of either a confirmatory or concessionary emphatic sentence is by the addition of the negator 不 bu before 是 shì:

我不是没有钱。 wǒ bù shì méiyǒu qián

It is not that I don’t have any money.

她不是不会说英语。 tā bù shì bù hui shuō yīngyǔ

It is not that she doesn’t know how to speak English.

15.5 是 shì ASSESSING AN OVERALL SITUATION

是 shì may also be used loosely to refer to or to make an overall assessment of a situation, rather like its function as a marker of emphasis. Under these circumstances, 是 shì is not usually stressed, and it is followed by a verbal phrase or a clause. The subject or topic of the sentence can be any part of speech or it can be left out if 是 shì is modified by an adverb. For example:

她是不会来了。 tā shì bù huì lái le
(lit. she shì not probable come le)

I don’t think she will come./She is unlikely to come.

那事说起来容易，做起来难。 nà shì shuōqílái rónɡyì | zuòqílái nán
(lit. that shì say up-come easy, do up-come difficult)

That is easier said than done.

如今是什么办法都试过了。 rújīn shì shénme bānfǎ dōu shì guò le
(lit. till now shì any method all try guo le)

So far we have tried whatever methods we could think of.

4 See §16.3.
这儿是天无三日晴，地无三尺平。
zhèr shì tiān wú sān rì qíng | dì wú sān chǐ píng
(lit. here shì sky has not three days fine, land has not three feet level)
Here there aren’t three fine days in succession or three square feet of land that are level.

都是你不好。 dōu shì nǐ bù hǎo
(lit. all shì you not good) It was entirely your fault.

不是我不愿意。 bù shì wǒ bù yùnyì
(lit. not shì I I not willing) It is not that I am/was unwilling.

This use of 是 shì is most susceptible to modification by adverbs. For example:

他简直是疯了。 tā jiǎnzhí shì fēng le
(lit. he simply shì mad le) He is simply crazy.

她照例是不发表意见。 tā zhàoli shì bù fābiào yìjiàn
(lit. she as usual shì not express opinion)
As usual, she did not express an opinion.

其实是你没有弄明白。 qíshí shì nǐ méiyǒu nòng míngbái
(lit. in fact shì you not have achieve comprehension)
In fact you have not got a clear understanding of it.

15.6 是 shì FORMING PART OF A CONNECTOR

Precisely because of the particular uses of 是 shì discussed in the above sections, many 是 shì expressions with their adverbial modifications have become established as conjunctions often used to introduce subordinate or coordinate clauses:

要是你不愿意，我就请别人帮忙。
yào shì nǐ bù yùn yì | wǒ jiù qǐng bié rén bāngmáng
If you are unwilling, I will ask others to help.

你想去看电影还是去听音乐?
nǐ xiǎng qù kàn diànyǐng háishi qù tíng yīnyuè
Would like to go to the cinema or [to go to] a concert.

我很喜欢这件衣服，可是太贵了。
wǒ hěn xǐhuān zhè jìàn yīfu | kěshì tài guì le
I like this piece of clothing very much, but it is too expensive.

Other such connectors include: 于是 yúshì ‘then’, 但是 dànshì ‘but’, 尤是 yóuqíshì ‘especially’.
15.7 是 shì AS A PIVOT

是 shì can also be used as a pivot between two identical words or expressions for emphatic reiteration. The emphasis is confirmed by the presence of an adverbial pre-modifier. For example:

事实总是事实。 shíshí zōng shì shíshí
(lit. facts always are facts.) Facts are facts.

好就是好。 hǎo jiù shì hǎo
(lit. good then is good.) What is good is good.

不懂就是不懂。 bù dòng jiù shì bù dòng
(lit. not understand then is not understand)
If you don’t understand, you don’t understand.

When there is no adverb, two similar pivotal sentences are needed to make the statement sound complete. For example:

一是，二是 er shì èr
(lit. one is one, two are two) That’s how it is [and that’s that].

好是好，坏是坏。 hǎo shì hǎo | huài shì huài
(lit. good is good, bad is bad)
What is good is good; and what is bad is bad.

Where there is only one such pivotal sentence, it becomes a concessionary statement and needs to be completed by a further comment. For example:

这件衣服漂亮是漂亮，就是贵了点儿。
zhè jiàn yīfu piàoliàng shì piàoliàng jiù shì guì le diǎnr
(lit. this mw: piece clothing beautiful is beautiful, then is expensive le a little)
• This piece of clothing may be beautiful, but it is a little too expensive.

我有是有，可是一下子找不到。
wǒ yǒu shì yǒu | kèshí yī xiàzi zhǎobudào
(lit. I have is have, but one mw: occasion find-not-reach)
I am sure I have this, but I cannot lay my hands on it at the moment.

好是好，可是我还是不去。
hǎo shì hǎo | kèshí wǒ háishì bù qù
(lit. good is good, but I still not go)
It’s all very well, but I am still not going.
16 THE VERB 有 yǒu

有 yǒu ‘to have’, like 是 shì, is also extremely versatile, and its grammatical function far exceeds its partial counterpart ‘to have’ in English. It not only expresses possession, but it also indicates existence, characteristics, condition, degree, comparison, and so on. In the following sections, we shall discuss the multiple uses of 有 yǒu in different contexts, syntactic as well as lexical. Statements of possession or existence are by definition explanatory and therefore most sentences that incorporate 有 yǒu either are or become expository in nature.¹

16.1 有 yǒu INDICATING POSSESSION

The primary meaning of 有 yǒu ‘to have’ is to indicate possession. The subject of a 有 yǒu sentence, that is, the possessor, is usually a living being, but it can also be an inanimate object that contains or consists of component parts:

我有两个妹妹。 wǒ yǒu liǎng ge mèimei
I have two younger sisters.

他有不少词典。 tā yǒu bǎoshǎo cídiǎn
He has quite a lot of dictionaries.

哥哥有一辆摩托车。 gēge yǒu yī liàng mótuōchē
(My) elder brother has a motorbike.

每个人都有两只手。 méi ge rén dōu yǒu liǎng zhī shǒu
Everyone has two hands.

那本书有个很漂亮的封面。 nèi běn shū yǒu ge hěn piàoliàng de fēngmiàn
That book has a very beautiful cover.

这种锅有两个把柄。 zhè zhǒng guō yǒu liǎng ge bābǐng
This kind of pot has two handles.

有 yǒu is negated by 没 méi (and not 不 bù). Once negated, it is generally followed by a generic noun, which is not restricted or modified by numeral and measure word phrases or by other attributives unless the restriction or modification itself is the focus of attention or argument:

¹ See Chapter 20 on different sentence types.
我没有妹妹。**wǒ méiyǒu mèimei**  
I haven’t got/don’t have a younger sister.

哥哥没有摩托车。**gēge méiyǒu mótuōchē**  
(My) elder brother hasn’t got/doesn’t have a motorbike.

这样的戏没有观众。**zhèyàng de xì méiyǒu guānzhòng**  
A play like this doesn’t get an audience.

One does not say:

*我没有两个妹妹。**wǒ méiyǒu liǎng ge mèimei**  
*I don’t have two younger sisters.*

*这样的戏没有五百个观众。**zhèyàng de xì méiyǒu wǔ bǎi ge guānzhòng**  
*A play like this doesn’t get an audience of five hundred.*

unless the specific number is the focus of contrast:

他只有一个妹妹，没有两个。**tā zhīyǒu yī ge mèimei | méiyǒu liǎng ge**  
He has only one younger sister, not two.

那种锅没有两个把柄，只有一个。**nèi zhōng guō méiyǒu liǎng ge bǎbǐng | zhīyǒu yī ge**  
This kind of pot doesn’t have two handles, but only one.

The negation can be made more emphatic by reversing the order of the object noun and **有** `yǒu`, with the noun qualified by 一 `yī` ‘a single’ or 半 `bàn` ‘half’ and the appropriated measure word, and with **有** `yǒu` modified by 也 `yě` or 都 `dōu`:

我一个妹妹也没有。**wǒ yī ge mèimei yě méiyǒu**  
I don’t even have one younger sister.

他半本词典都没有。**tā bàn bèn cídīán dōu méiyǒu**  
He doesn’t even have half a dictionary.

16.2 **有** `yǒu` INDICATING EXISTENCE

**有** `yǒu` indicates existence, if the subject of the sentence is a time or location expression. The object of **有** `yǒu` naturally refers to the person or thing that exists in that particular location or at that particular time.

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2 See also §1.2.3.
明天晚上有个音乐会。 **míngtiān wǎnshàng yǒu yī ge yǐnyuèhuì**
Tomorrow evening there’s a concert.

书架上有很多杂志。 **shūjià shàng yǒu hěn duō zázhì**
There are many magazines on the bookcase.

商店里有不少顾客。 **shāngdiàn lǐ yǒu bùshǎo gǔkè**
There are quite a few customers in the store/shop.

The negation of the existential verb **yǒu** is either **méiyǒu** or **méi**:

那时候，街上没有一个行人。**3 nèi shíhòu | jiē shàng méiyǒu yī ge xíngrén**
At that time, there wasn’t one pedestrian on the street.

屋子里没人。 **wūzǐ lǐ méi rén**
There is no one in the room.

楼下没有电话。 **lóu xià méiyǒu diànhuà**
There isn’t a telephone downstairs.

The negation of an existential sentence, as with a possession sentence, can be made more insistent by moving the object noun before **yǒu** and by adding **yě** or **dōu**:

那时候，街上一个行人也没有。
**nèi shíhòu | jiē shàng yī ge xíngrén yě méiyǒu**
At that time, there wasn’t [even] one pedestrian on the street.

天上半朵云也没有。 **tiān shàng bàn duō yún yě méiyǒu**
There isn’t/wasn’t (half) a cloud in the sky.

屋子里一点声音都没有。 **wūzǐ lǐ yìdiǎn shēngyīn dōu méiyǒu**
There wasn’t the slightest sound in the room.

There is often a fine line between **yǒu** indicating possession and **yǒu** meaning existence, which can invite alternative translations in English:

图书馆有很多中文书。 **túshūguǎn yǒu hēnduō zhōngwén shū**
The library has a lot of Chinese books.
There are a lot of Chinese books in the library.

3 The object of a non-existential **méiyǒu**, like non-possession, cannot be associated with numerals and measures: e.g. **nèi shíhòu | jiē shàng méiyǒu yī ge xíngrén** **"At that time, there weren’t two pedestrian on the street". However, the numeral **yī** plus a measure is possible because in a sentence like this it does not literally indicate a number but emphasises the idea of ‘none’ or ‘not a single one’.
The Verb 有 yǒu

The semantic difference between 有 yǒu and 是 shì when indicating existence has been explained in the previous chapter (§15.3). As we saw, 是 shì can be followed by nouns of either definite or indefinite reference, but 有 yǒu takes nouns of only indefinite reference. For example:

前面是两座大山。 qiánmiàn shì liǎng zuò dà shān  (indefinite)
In front are two big mountains.

但是我家。 duìmiàn jiùshì wǒ jiā  (definite)
Opposite is my home.

but:

沿路上很多商店。 yánlù yǒu hěn duō shāngdiàn
Along the road there are many shops.

靠床有一个衣柜。 kāo chuáng yǒu yī ge yīguì
There is a wardrobe next to the bed.

桌子上有没有书。 zhuōzǐ shàng méiyǒu shū
There aren’t any books on the table.

*马路对面有那家商店。 mǎlù duìmiàn yǒu nèi jiā shāngdiàn
Opposite the main road there is that store/shop.

16.3 有 yǒu INTRODUCING SUBJECTS AND TIME OR LOCATION EXPRESSIONS OF INDEFINITE REFERENCE

Chinese, unlike English, lacks definite and indefinite articles, and definite and indefinite reference is often decided simply by context. However, in narrative sentences, it is usually the position of a noun in relation to the verb that indicates its reference. A noun in a pre-verbal position, that is, the subject of a sentence, generally encodes known or old information and is therefore of definite reference; whereas a noun in a post-verbal position and the object of a verb, tends to encode unknown or new information and is consequently of indefinite reference. The English translations below illustrate this:

那时候客人来了。 nèi shíhou kèrén lái le
At that moment the guest(s) arrived.
那时候来了一个客人。

At that moment a guest arrived.

However, 有 you is used as a dummy verb when an indefinitely referenced noun is moved to a subject, that is, pre-verbal position. The presence of 有 you before the noun ensures that the noun retains its post-verbal position and its indefinite reference:

那时候有(一)个医生进来了。 

At that moment a doctor came in.

*那时候一个医生进来了。 

At that moment a doctor came in.

In this case the other and perhaps more natural option would remain:

那时候进来了一个医生。

At that moment a doctor came in.

However, this last option is possible only with an intransitive verb (like the one in the example). If the verb in the sentence has an object or a complement, the 有 you construction becomes obligatory. For example:

(外面)有人在敲门。 (wàimian) yǒu rén zài qiāo mén

There is someone (outside) knocking at the door.

(这时候)有辆车在路口停了下来。

(zhè shíhou) yǒu liàng chē zài lùkǒu tíng le xiàlái

(At this moment) a car stopped at the intersection.

花丛中有很多蜜蜂在采蜜。 huācóng zhōng yǒu hěn duō mìfēng zài cǎi mì

There were lots of bees gathering nectar from the flowers.

Time and location expressions are of definite reference and are naturally placed at the beginning of a sentence or very early in a sentence in a pre-verbal position:

那天我去找他。 nèi tiān wǒ qù zhǎo tā

That day I went to look for him.

— 一 yī ‘one’ is usually omitted for reasons of rhythm. 一个 yī ge is disyllabic, but when 有 you is added, the phrase becomes awkwardly trisyllabic. To return to the more comfortable disyllabic rhythm, 一 yī is therefore generally left out (see Chapter 26 on prosody).
The railway station was packed with people.

However, if the time or location expression is intentionally indefinite, 有 you will once again have to be introduced:

有一天我去找他。 yǒu yī tiān wǒ qù zhǎo tā
One day I went to look for him.

有个火车站不停普通客车。 yǒu gé huǒchēzhàn bù tíng pǔtōng kēchē
There is one railway station where ordinary passenger trains don’t stop.

Other examples are:

有一次/有一次我在城里遇见他。
yǒu yī cì | yǒu yī huí wǒ zài chéng lǐ yùn jiàn tā
On one occasion, I met him in the town.

有时候他也上我家来。 yǒu shíhou tā yě shàng wǒ jiā lái
Sometimes he came to my home too.

16.4 有 you SPECIFYING DEGREE OR EXTENT

有 you is used with adjectives like 大 dà ‘big’, 高 gāo ‘tall’, 重 zhòng ‘heavy’, to specify how big, tall, heavy, etc., something or somebody is.

他的屋子有多大?  tāde wūzi yǒu duō dà
How big is his room?

他的屋子有三米长，两米宽。 tāde wūzi yǒu sān mǐ cháng | liǎng mǐ kuān
His room is 3 metres long and 2 metres wide.

你弟弟有多高?  nǐ dìdi yǒu duō gāo
How tall is your younger brother?

我弟弟有一米九高。 wǒ dìdi yǒu yī mǐ jiǔ gāo
My younger brother is 1.9 metres tall.

这个包裹有两公斤重。 zhè ge bāoguǒ yǒu liǎng gōngjīn zhòng
This parcel weighs 2 kilos. (lit. 2 kilos heavy)

The phrases 有点 yǒudiǎn or 有些 yóuxiē meaning ‘a little; a bit’ may be used before adjectives or verbs in the predicate to indicate ‘to a certain extent or degree’:
I'm a bit nervous.

He's a bit afraid.

Everyone was a little sorry he was leaving here.

16.5 有 yǒu INTRODUCING COMPARISON

The capacity of 有 yǒu to specify degree or extent leads on naturally to its function of introducing comparisons. Often 那么 nàme or 那样 nàyàng 'so, like that’ is present, and the basic formula is N1 + (没)有 (mei)yǒu + N2 + (那么) (nàme) + adjective + (吗) (ma):

nǐ dìdì yǒu nǐ (nàme) gāo ma
Is your younger brother as tall as you?

wǒ dìdì méiyǒu wǒ (zhème) gāo
My younger brother isn’t as tall as me.

zhè ge bāoguǒ yǒu ñèi ge (nàme) zhòng ma
Is this parcel as heavy as that one?

zhè ge bāoguǒ zhèn de yǒu ñèi ge (nàme) zhòng
This parcel really is as heavy as that one.

nèi tiáo gǒu yǒu yī zhī xiǎo lǎohǔ (nàyàng) dà
That dog is as big as a small tiger.

zhè kē shù yǒu yī ge rén (nàme) gāo
This tree is as tall as a man.

16.6 有 yǒu AS AN ADJECTIVAL FORMATIVE

有 yǒu is also a most versatile element in the formation of an almost unlimited number of adjectives or adjectival phrases in the lexicon. It does this by incorporating nominal objects. For example:

5 See Chapter 11 on the coverb lì bǐ and comparisons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>有 yǒu</th>
<th>to have</th>
<th>+ 钱 qián</th>
<th>money</th>
<th>= rich; wealthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>有 yǒu</td>
<td>to have</td>
<td>+ 利 lì</td>
<td>profit; benefit</td>
<td>= profitable; beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有 yǒu</td>
<td>to have</td>
<td>+ 能力 nénglì</td>
<td>ability</td>
<td>= capable; able</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有 yǒu</td>
<td>to have</td>
<td>+ 办法 bànfǎ</td>
<td>method</td>
<td>= resourceful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are some more examples in sentences:

这个人有信用吗？zhèi ge rén yǒu xìnyòng ma
(lit. does this person have credit) Is this person trustworthy?

那个孩子很有礼貌。néi ge háizi hěn yǒu limào
(lit. that child very much has courtesy) That child is very polite.

我今晚没(有)空。wǒ jīnwán méi(yǒu) kòng
(lit. I tonight don’t have spare time) I am busy tonight.

16.7 有 yǒu EXPRESSING IDEAS OF DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

有 yǒu is often used with verbal nouns like 提高 tígāo ‘improvement’, 发展 fāzhǎn ‘development’, 变化 biānhuà ‘change’, 进步 jǐnbù ‘progress’, 增长 zēngzhǎng ‘increase’, to express ideas of development and change.

她的中文有了显著的提高。tāde zhōngwén yǒu le xiǎnzhuó de tígāo
Her Chinese has seen marked improvement.

人们的思想有了很大的变化。
rénmen de sīxiǎng yǒu le hěn dà de biānhuà
People’s thinking has undergone a huge change.

16.8 有 yǒu INTRODUCING A CONDITIONAL CLAUSE

只有 zhǐyǒu ‘only when; only if’ is used in a full or abbreviated clause to form a conditional clause. The main clause that follows incorporates the monosyllabic adverb 才 cái ‘only then’ before the predicate verb to echo the condition posed by 只有 zhǐyǒu. The main clause will have a full form if the conditional clause is abbreviated, and an abbreviated form if the conditional clause is in its full form. Both the conditional clause and the main clause need of course to be full if their respective subjects are different.

6 See Chapter 22 on conjunctions and conjunctives.
7 A full clause is defined as one with subject and predicate; and an abbreviated clause is one where the subject of the clause is omitted, but appears in the main clause later on.
Only if you understand this point will you be able to make progress.

Only if you understand this point will I be able to help you.

Only if people donate blood will we be able to save him.

16.9 没(有) méi(yǒu) AS NEGATOR OF ACTION VERBS

16.9.1 NEGATOR OF PAST ACTION/EXPERIENCE

没(有) méi(yǒu) is the negator of past action (in a narrative sentence) and of past experience (in an expository sentence). Notice that in the case of the former the completed action aspect marker 了 le is not present, while in the latter the experiential verbal suffix 过 guo is retained:

他没(有)去北京。 tā méi(yǒu) qù běijīng  (narrative)
He did not go to Beijing.

他没(有)去过北京。 tā méi(yǒu) qù guo běijīng  (expository)
He has never been to Beijing.

16.9.2 AFFIRMATIVE–NEGATIVE QUESTIONS AND PAST ACTION/EXPERIENCE

Affirmative–negative questions relating to past action and experience are also constructed with 没有 méi yǒu, though for these 有 yǒu is usually retained. Note that in past-action questions the aspect marker 了 le has to be present because the completion of the action has to be expressed as the affirmative alternative.

他去了北京没有? tā qù le běijīng méi yǒu  Did he go to Beijing?
他去过北京没有? tā qù guo běijīng méi yǒu  Has he been to Beijing?
16.9.3 ANOTHER FORM OF THE QUESTION

These alternative questions may also be expressed by putting 有没有  you meiyou before the verb (in past action questions) or the verb + 过 guo (in enquiries about experience). This form of the question is used throughout China, but it is perhaps more characteristic of the speech of people in the south of the country.

他有没有去北京?  tā yǒu méiyǒu qù běijīng  Did he go to Beijing?
他有没有去过北京?  tā yǒu méiyǒu qù guo běijīng  Has he been to Beijing?

16.10 有 yǒu TO INDICATE ‘PART OF’

In these constructions, a topic is first posed and is then followed by 有的 yǒude to indicate different elements or parts. 的 de may be positioned after 有 yǒu or it can be left till the end of the construction, and the predicate that comes after 有 yǒu may be adjectival or verbal:

我的领带，有的贵，有的便宜。 wǒde lǐng dài | yǒude guì | yǒude piányi  Some of my ties are expensive, some cheap.

我的领带，有贵的，有便宜的。  wǒde lǐng dài | yǒu guì de | yě yǒu piányi de  As for my ties, there are expensive ones and cheap ones.

这儿的学生，有的会说法语，有的会说德语，有的会说西班牙语。 zhèr de xuéshēng | yǒu de huì shuō fǎyǔ | yǒu de huì shuō déyǔ | yǒude huì shuō xībānyáyǔ  Some of the students here can speak French, some German and others Spanish.

这儿的学生，有的会说法语的，有的会说德语的，有的会说西班牙语的。  zhèr de xuéshēng | yǒu huì shuō fǎyǔ de | yǒu huì shuō déyǔ de | yě yǒu huì shuō xībānyáyǔ de  As for the students here, there are some that can speak French, some German and others Spanish.

A more emphatic version links 的 de to the adjectival or verbal predicate and leaves the verb 有 yǒu until the end of the clause:

我的领带，有的贵，有的便宜的也有。 wǒde lǐng dài | guì de yǒu | piányi de yě yǒu  As for ties, I’ve got expensive ones and cheap ones too.
As for the students here, there are some that can speak French, some German and others Spanish too.

If a nominal predicate is intended, then is must be incorporated after 有的:

展的书，有的是原著，有的是译本。
zhānchū de shū | yǒu de shì yuánzú | yǒu de yìběn
Of the books on display, some are original books and some are translations.

In this case, however, 的 de may be left out altogether, and 有 yǒu then becomes the main verb:

zhānchū de shū | yǒu yuánzhù | yě yǒu yìběn
Of the books on display, there are original books and there are also translations.

16.11 有 yǒu AS THE FIRST VERB IN A SEQUENCE

有 yǒu is frequently used in a serial sequence following the pattern of subject + 有 yǒu + verb... For example:

谁有时间帮我一下忙？ shuí yǒu shìjiān bāng wǒ yìxià máng ma
Who has time to give me some help?

你有没有钱买一盒巧克力？ nǐ yǒu méiyǒu qián mǎi yī hé qiáokèlǐ
Do you have the money to buy a box of chocolates?

我没有办法解决这个问题。 wǒ méiyǒu bànfǎ jiějué zhè ge wèntí
I have no way to solve this problem.
This chapter deals with cognitive verbs and verbs of emotion. Though some of them take noun objects, they tend to be followed by verbal or clausal objects and are more expository than narrative in nature. They are in fact not unlike modal verbs, which, as we shall see in Chapter 18 take verbal objects but which can be categorised as evaluative rather than expository. These cognition or emotion verbs convey a range of meaning covering intention, disposition, knowledge, etc., and because of their expository nature they are more likely to be associated with the negator 不 but rather than 没有 méiyóu.

她不喜欢吃面。 tā bù xǐhuan chī miàn
She does not like (eating) noodles.

*她没喜欢吃面。 tā méi xǐhuan chī miàn

As we have already seen, 不 but ‘not’ negates actions that are or were not intended to be carried out while 没(you) méi(you) ‘not’ refers to actions that were or have not been carried out.

昨天上午她故意不去上班。 zuótiān shàngwǔ tā gùyì bù qù shàngbān
Yesterday morning, she deliberately would not go to work.

昨天上午她没去上班。 zuótiān shàngwǔ tā méi qù shàngbān
Yesterday morning, she did not go to work.

For the same reason, these emotion or sense verbs cannot be used with the aspect-marker 了 le, even if they refer to the past:

他以前喜欢喝咖啡。 tā yǐqián xǐhuan hé kāfēi
He used to like drinking coffee (in the past).

One cannot say, for example:

*他以前喜欢了喝咖啡。 *tā yǐqián xǐhuan le hé kāfēi

Most verbs in this category, as we have said, may take either verbal or clausal objects. The distinction between a verbal and a clausal object lies in whether the action expressed in the object verb or clause is initiated by the subject of the
sentence. If it is, the object will be a verbal expression; if it is not, the object takes the form of a clause:

你希望什么时候休假?

*ni xiwang shenhme shihou xiuji*  
(lit. you hope what time take holiday)  
When do you hope to go on holiday?

(a verbal object)

你希望你太太什么时候休假?

*ni xiwang ni tai tai shenhme shihou xiuji*  
(lit. you hope wife what time take holiday)  
When do you hope that your wife will take her holiday?  

(a clausal object)

We will now list the verbs in semantic groups.

### 17.1 INTENTION AND ASPIRATION

#### 17.1.1 POSITIVE INTENTIONS AND ASPIRATIONS


你打算几时走?  

*ni dasuan jishi zou*  
(lit. you intend what time go)  
When do you intend to go?

我带了一简饼干和几包薯片，准备在路上吃。

*wодаile yi tong binggan he ji bao shupian | zhunbei zai lu shang chi*  
(lit. I bring le one tube biscuits and a few packets potato crisps, prepare cv: on road-top eat)  
I have brought a tube of biscuits and few packets of potato crisps to eat on the way.

他们准备下午四点钟开个讨论会。

*tamen zhenbui xiawu si dian zhidai ge taolun hui*  
(lit. they plan afternoon four dot clock hold mw seminar/symposium)  
They plan to hold a seminar/symposium at 4 o’clock in the afternoon.

他决定下个月动身去欧洲旅游。

*taja jueding xia ge yue dongshen qu ouzhou liyou*  
(lit. he decide next mw month set out go Europe travel)  
He has decided to go travelling in Europe next month.
朋友们都希望他早日恢复健康。

**pengyoumen dōu xīwàng tā zǎorì huífù jiǎnkāng**
(lit. friends all hope he early days recover health)
His friends all hope he will soon recover his health.

计划 jihuà 'to plan', 考虑 kǎolù 'to consider', 琢磨 zuómó 'to ponder', 衡量 hénɡliánɡ 'weigh the pros and cons', etc., also belong to this group. They often incorporate interrogatives in the verbal or clausal object:

你琢磨琢磨这里面还有什么问题。

**ni zuómó zuómó zhè lǐmiàn hái yǒu shénme wèntí**
(lit. you ponder-ponder this-inside still have what problems)
You ponder whether there are still any problems here/in this.

请你考虑一下怎么教育这个孩子。

**qǐng ni kǎolù yīxià zěnrì jiàoyù zhè ge háizi**
(lit. please you consider one mw:occasion how educate this mw child)
Please give some consideration to how this child might be educated.

### 17.1.2 NEGATIVE INTENTIONS

懒得 ländé 'to save oneself the trouble', 免得 miándé 'to avoid', 以免 yǐmián 'to avoid', 省得 shěngdé 'to evade', 舍不得 shěbúdé 'cannot bear', 后悔 hòuhuí 'to regret', 讨厌 tǎoyàn 'to hate', 不屑 bùxiè 'to disdain', 反对 fánduí 'to oppose', 犯不着 fānbuzháo 'to be not worth one’s while'.

我后悔没有学会开车。

**wǒ hòuhuí méiyǒu xué huì kāi chē**
(lit. I regret did not learn-able drive car)
I regret that I never learned to drive.

我到达之后马上给他发了一个电子邮件，免得他记挂。

**wǒ dàodá zhīhòu máshàng gěi tā fā le yī ge diànzi yóujiàn | miándé tā jīguà**
(lit. I arrive afterwards immediately cv: to him send le one mw email to avoid he be concerned)
When I arrived, I immediately sent him an email to avoid making him anxious.

她不该这么说，但是你犯不着跟她生气。

**tā bùɡāi zhème shuō | dànshì nǐ fānbuzháo gěn tā shēngqì**
(lit. she not ought like this speak, but you not worth while cv:with her get angry)
She ought not to have said this, but it is not worth your getting angry with her.
17.1.3 UNCERTAIN ASPIRATIONS

幻想 huànxìăng ‘to dream’, 妄想 wàngxiăng ‘to hope vainly’, 恨不得 hènbudé ‘to wish very much’, 巴不得 bābudé ‘to wish earnestly’.

孩子们都幻想当电脑专家。

haìzīmen dōu huànxìăng dāng diànnǎo zhūānjīă
(lit. children all dream be computer expert)
Children all dream of becoming computer experts.

那个北方人恨不得自己马上能说广东话。

neì ge běifāng rén hènbudé zījī máshāng néng shuō guǎngzhōng huà
(lit. that mw northern man very much wish himself immediately be able speak Cantonese)
That northerner very much wants to be able to speak Cantonese straight away.

17.1.4 GROUP INTENTIONS

研究 yánjū ‘to study, consider, give thought to’, 讨论 táolùn ‘to discuss’, 商量 shāngliàng ‘to consult’, 酝酿 yùnniàng ‘to discuss informally’, 策划 cèhuà ‘to plan’, 合计 héjì ‘to put heads together’.

Sentences with these verbs often incorporate an adverb like 怎样 zěnyáng ‘how’ or 如何 rúhé ‘in what fashion’ within the object verb expression or clause. They may also often be reduplicated to express urgency.

请大家研究研究如何救济这些难民。

qīng dàjiā yánjū yánjū rúhé jiǔjǐ zhèxiē nànmín
(lit. please everyone study-study how relieve these mw refugees)
Please would everyone give thought to how to get relief to these refugees.

咱们商量一下这个会议怎么开。

zánmen shāngliàng yīxià zhēi ge huìyì zěnme kāi
(lit. we consult one mw:occasion this mw meeting how hold)
Let’s consult about how to hold this meeting.

17.1.5 VOICED INTENTIONS


研究 yánjū ‘to study, consider, give thought to’ and 策划 cèhuà ‘to plan’ in this group of verbs may, of course, also be used with individual subjects.
I suggest going by coach/long-distance bus.

Everyone proposes that the question be shelved for a while now.

He announced his resignation.

**17.1.6 INTENTIONS PUT INTO PRACTICE**

开始 kāishǐ ‘to begin’, 继续 jíxù ‘to continue’, 着手 zhúoshǒu ‘to tackle’, 抓紧 zhuājīn ‘to make haste’, 负责 fùzé ‘to be responsible’.

The new students have already begun to register.

Cold air is continuing to move south.

**17.1.7 FRUSTRATION AND COMPULSION**


That shop has already gone out of business.

There was a blast/gust of sea breeze, and I could not help giving a shiver.

**17.2 ATTITUDES**

爱 ài ‘to love’, 喜欢 xǐhuān ‘to like’, 乐意 lèyì ‘to be willing’, 害怕 hàipà ‘to fear’, 敢于 gǎnyú ‘to be brave enough’, 勇于 yǒngyú ‘to be courageous enough’,
甘于 gānyú ‘to consign oneself’, 急于 jíyú ‘to be anxious’, 善于 shànyú ‘to be good at’. 习惯 xíguān ‘to be accustomed’, 假装 jiàzhhuāng ‘to pretend’, 适合 shìhé ‘to be suitable for’.

These verbs are often modified by a degree adverb (e.g. 很 hěn ‘very much’), and a number have the suffix 于 yú. They normally take verbal rather than clausal objects because the actions in the verbal objects are generally initiated by the subject of the sentence.

他很乐意帮助大家。 tā hěn lèyì bāngzhù dàjiā
(lit. he very willing help everyone) He is very willing to help everyone.

那个人真喜欢开玩笑。 nèi ge rén zhēn xǐhuān kāi wánxiào
(lit. that mw man really like make jokes) That man really likes making jokes.

我爱听中国传统音乐。 wǒ ài tīng zhōngguó chuántǒng yǐnyuè
(lit. I love listen to China traditional music) I love listening to traditional Chinese music.

铁爱生锈。 tiē ài shēng xiù [a metaphorical extension]
(lit. iron love rust) Iron is apt to get rusty.

要敢于提出自己的见解。 yào gānyú tīzhù zǐjǐ de jiànjǐě
(lit. must be brave enough to raise self de opinions) You must be brave enough to put forward your own opinions.

别急于求成。 bié jìyú qiú chéng
(lit. don’t be anxious achieve success) Don’t be anxious to achieve success.

17.3 KNOWING AND THINKING

你离开的时候，请记得把窗户关上。 
ní lìkāi de shíhou | qǐng jídé bā chuānghuǒ guān shàng 
(lit. you leave de time, please remember cv:grasping window close-to) Please remember to shut the window(s) when you leave.

对不起，我忘记把你要的书带来了。 
duìbùqǐ | wǒ wàngjì bā nǐ yào de shū dàilái le
Verbs that Take Verbal or Clausal Objects 275

Sorry, I forgot to bring the book(s) you want.

Verbs that take verbal or clausal objects:

1. **haoxiang** ‘to seem’, 显得 ‘to appear’, 不如 **būrú** ‘to be better’, 值得 **zhíde** ‘to be worth’, 不足 **búzú** ‘to be not enough’, 不见得 **bù jiàn de** ‘to be not necessarily so’, 看起来 **kàn qǐlái** ‘to look as if’, 在于 **zàiyú** ‘to rest on’, 有待 **yóudài** ‘to wait for’.

These verbs tend to make comments or judgement about happenings, and the person making the judgement is often unstated.

She seems to have something on her mind. **tā hàoxiàng yǒu shénme xīnshì** (lit. she seem have what worries) She seems to have something on her mind.

This book is worth a read. **zhè shì shù zhíde yí dú** (lit. this book worth one read) This book is worth a read.

A question is not worth arguing about. **zhèyàng de wèntí bù zhíde zhēnglùn** (lit. this kind questions not worth debate) A question like this is not worth arguing about.

That problem waits to be resolved. **nèi ge wèntí yóudài jiějué** (lit. that problem need resolve) That problem waits to be resolved.

Verbal statements are not enough for proof. **kǒu shuō bù zú wéi píng** (lit. mouth say not sufficient as proof) Verbal statements are not enough for proof.
17.5 DUMMY VERBS

There are circumstances when a plain verb is felt to be rhythmically or stylistically inadequate and a dummy or make-weight verb is introduced before the original verb, making it the verbal object of the dummy verb. Such linguistic manoeuvres are similar to dichotomies in English, like ‘consider’ and ‘give consideration to’, ‘solve’ and ‘provide a solution to’, and so on. Unlike some of the categories of verbs above, these dummy verbs may be negated by either 不 or 没(有) méi(yǒu).

There are three common dummy verbs in the language:

(a) 加以 jiāyì ‘to provide (an envisaged result)’, which is often found with verbal objects like:

解决 jiéjué ‘to resolve’, 分析 fēnxi ‘to analyse’ and 考虑 kǎolǜ ‘to consider’.

我们对这种情况下应该加以分析。

zhèyàng de wèntí bìxū jǐshí jiāyì jiéjué
(lit. this kind of questions ought to in time provide resolve)
A question like this ought to be resolved promptly.

(b) 进行 jīnxíng² ‘to start or carry out (an indicated process)’ which is followed by verbal objects like:

研究 yánjiū ‘to study’, 探讨 tàntǎo ‘to explore’, etc.

我们能否碰一碰头对这件事进行认真的研究?

wǒmen néng fǒu pèng yī pèng tóu duì zhè jiàn shì jīnxíng rènzhēn de yánjiū
(lit. we can or not bump-one-bump head carry out serious study)
Can we put our heads together and carry out a serious study of this?

² 进行 jīnxíng and 给予 gěiyī (see (e) below) are the only two verbs in this category that may take the aspect marker 了 le.
Biologists carried out/pursued a wide-ranging exploration of hereditary genes.

(c) 给予 gěiyǔ³ ‘to grant (action as necessary)’, which links with:

照顾 zhàogù ‘care’, 同情 tóngqīng ‘sympathy’ and 关注 guānzhù ‘attention’.

对死难者的家属，我们必须给予照顾。

duì sīnànzhē de jiāshū | wǒmen bǐxū gěiyǔ zhàogù
(lit. cv:towards die-killed-in-an-accident-person de relatives, we must dv: grant care)
We must provide care for the families of those who have died.

世界人权组织对人权问题给予了极大的关注。

shìjiè rénquán zǔzhī duì rénquán wèntí gěiyǔ le jídà de guānzhù
(lit. world human rights organisation cv:towards human rights questions dv: grant le extreme great concern)
World human rights organisations paid the greatest attention to human rights issues.

3 Alternative verbs synonymous in meaning and function to 给予 gěiyǔ are 给以 gěiyǐ, 予以 yúyǐ and 致以 zhìyǐ, the last of which is used more often with 敬礼 jìnglǐ ‘salute’.
Modal verbs are a closed set of verbs that are used immediately before the main verb in a sentence to reflect the mood or attitude of either the speaker or the subject of the sentence from the perspective of the speaker. This speaker-oriented stance makes all utterances that incorporate modal verbs evaluative in nature, which means that these verbs, like those in expository sentences, do not occur with aspect markers.

In the first section below, we review all the modal verbs in the language in their semantic categories.

18.1 SEMANTIC CATEGORIES OF MODAL VERBS

18.1.1 PERMISSION

可以 kěyì ‘may; be allowed to’ or 能 néng ‘can; be able to’:

你可以走了。 nǐ kěyì zǒu le
(lit. you may leave le) You may leave now.

他也可以回家了。 tā yě kěyì huíjiā le
(lit. he also may return-home le) He may go home as well.

能 néng is used interchangeably with 可以 kěyì, particularly in questions:

我能走了吗? wǒ néng zǒu le ma
(lit. I can leave le ma) May I leave now?

他可以回家了吗? tā kěyì huíjiā le ma
(lit. he may return-home le ma) Can he go home?

来宾可(以)不可以2在这儿停车? láibīn kě(yì) bù kěyì zài zhèr tíng chē
(lit. guest may-not-may cv:at here stop-car)
May guests park here?

1 See Chapter 20 on different sentence types.
2 The affirmative-negative question format of a disyllabic modal verb like 可以 kěyì can be either 可以不可以 kěyì bù kěyì or increasingly 可不可以 kě bù kěyì, with the second syllable of the modal omitted before the repetition.
In negative statements, 不能 竟 nèng, probably for rhythmic reasons, is colloquially more often used than 不可以 bù kěyǐ:

你不能走。 nǐ bù nèng zǒu
(lit. you not can leave) You can’t go now.

In set expressions with a classical tone, 可 kě or 以 yǐ may be used as individual modal verbs:

无可奉告 wú ké fènggào or 无以奉告 wú yǐ fènggào
(lit. nothing can respectfully tell)
No comment. (i.e. there is nothing that I may tell you)

千万不要掉以轻心。 qiān wàn bù kě diào yì qīng xīn
(lit. by all means not may let-drop light-heart)
Don’t under any circumstances lower your guard!

18.1.2 POSSIBILITY

能 néng or 能够 nénggòu ‘can’ and 可以 kěyǐ ‘be possible’ also express possibility in the sense of someone being able to do something on a particular occasion:

你能帮我把这个箱子抬起来吗? nǐ néng bāng wǒ bā zhèi ge xiāngzi tái qǐlai ma
(lit. you can help me cv:grasping this mw box/case (two-people-)lift-up ma)
Can you help me lift this case?

你能(够)不能够替我翻译一下这句话? nǐ néng(gòu) bù nénggòu tí wǒ fān yì xiā xià zhèi jù huà
(lit. you can-not-can cv:for me translate one mw:occasion this mw:sentence words)
Can you translate this sentence for me?

Generally, 能 néng or 能够 nénggòu ‘can’ and 可以 kěyǐ ‘be possible’ are used in the sense of permission in questions with first person or third person subjects, and in the sense of possibility in questions with second person or inanimate subjects. As far as statements are concerned, context usually disambiguates any confusion that may arise between possibility and permission:

你能把胡椒粉递给我吗? ní néng bǎ hújiāofēn dì gěi wǒ ma
(lit. you can cv:grasping pepper-powder pass-give me ma)
Can you pass me the pepper, please?
你明天可以在会上发言吗？

**ni míngtiān kěyì zài hūi shàng fāyán ma**  (lit. you tomorrow be-possible cv:at meeting-on give-speech ma)
Is it possible for you to give a speech at tomorrow’s meeting?

这种病能治好吗？

**zhè zhǒng bìng néng zhì hǎo ma**  (lit. this kind illness can cure-recover ma)
Can this kind of illness be cured?

他的感冒已经好了，可以参加比赛了。

**tāde gǎnmào yìjīng hǎo le | kěyǐ cānjīa bǐsài le**  (lit. his flu already well le, can take-part-in race le)
He has already recovered from his flu and can take part in the race.

### 18.1.3 PROBABILITY

会**hui** ‘is likely to, may’, which usually invites the presence of the particle of **de** at the end of the sentence:

她会来的。**tā huì lái de**  (lit. she probable come de) She will probably come.

他不会骗我的。**tā bù huì piàn wò de**  (lit. he not probable deceive me de) He won’t lie to me.

Where another particle like 吗 **ma** or 了 **le** is used, it replaces the **de**:

明天会下雨吗？

**míngtiān huì xià yǔ ma**  (lit. tomorrow probable fall-rain ma) Is it likely to rain tomorrow?

她会来吗？**tā huì lái ma**  (lit. she probable come ma) Will she come?

她不会来了。**tā bù huì lái le**  (lit. she not probable come le) Probably she won’t turn up now.

Probability or likelihood, that is not simply chance, but imminent or planned, is expressed by **yào** ‘about to’, often with a monosyllabic adverb such as **jiù** ‘soon’ and **kuài** ‘quickly’ preceding it and the particle of **le** at the end of the sentence to confirm the sense of change of circumstances:

(天) 要下雨了。**tiān yào xià yǔ le**  (lit. sky about-to fall-rain le) It is about to rain.

火车就要开了。**huǒchē jiù yào kāi le**  (lit. train soon about-to start le) The train is just about to leave.
Will the project soon be finished?

If the probability is based on scientific findings or is within human control, 可能 'be possible' is used:

北极的冰山可能融化吗?  běijī de bīngshān kěnèng rónghuà ma
(lit. North Pole de iceberg possible melt ma)
Are the icebergs at the North Pole going to melt?

全球可能出现经济萧条。 quánqíu kěnèng chūxiàn jīngjì xiāotiáo
(lit. whole globe possible appear economic depression)
The whole world is likely to go into an economic depression.

你可能出席这次会议吗?  nǐ kěnèng chūxí zhè cì huìyì ma
(lit. you possible be-present-at this mw:time meeting ma)
Are you going to be able to attend this meeting?

18.1.4 ABILITY OR SKILL

能 néng 'can' and 能够 néngguò 'be able to' convey general and physical capability, and are often used with a quantitative measurement:

我一次能喝三杯啤酒。 wǒ yī cì néng hē sān bēi píjiǔ
(lit. I at-one-time can drink three glasses beer)
I can drink three glasses of beer at one go.

你能够一只手把这个杠铃举起来吗?  nǐ néngguò yī zhǐ shǒu bǎ zhèi ge gànglíng jǔ qǐlái ma
(lit. you can one mw hand cv:grasping this mw barbell lift-up ma)
Can you lift this barbell with one hand?

会 huì, on the other hand, indicates acquired skills:

她会打太极拳。 tā huì dǎ tàijíquán
(lit. she can hit taiji boxing) She can do shadow-boxing.

你会游泳吗?  nǐ huì yóu yǒng ma
(lit. you can swim ma) Can you swim?

我不会说法语。 wǒ bù huì shuō fāyǔ
(lit. I not can speak French) I can’t speak French.
18.1.5 OBLIGATION

Moral obligation is usually expressed by 应该 yìnggāi ‘ought to’ or its alternatives 应当 yìngdāng (more emphatic), 应 yìng (classical), 该 gāi (colloquial) and 当 dāng (in parallelisms):

你应该支持她。 nǐ yìnggāi zhīchí tā (lit. you ought-to support her) You ought to support her.

你应当好好地对待他。 nǐ yìngdāng hǎohào de duidài tā (lit. you ought-to well-well de treat him) You ought to treat him well.

你应该记住这点。 nǐ yīng jìzhù zhè dìdiǎn (lit. you should remember-firmly this point) You must always remember this point.

我该走了。 wǒ gāi zǒu le (lit. I should leave le) I must be off now.

当说就得说。 dāng shuō jiù déi shuō (lit. should say then should say) What should be said should be said.

这件事我应(该)不应该告诉他? zhèjiàn shì wǒ yìng(gāi) bù yìnggāi gāosù tā (lit. this mw matter I should-not-should tell him) Should I tell him about this?

这件事你不该怪他。 zhèjiàn shì nǐ bù gāi guài tā (lit. this mw matter you not should blame him) You should not (have) blame(d) him for this.

Compulsory obligation, on the other hand, is expressed by 必须 bǐxū ‘must’ or 须要 xūyào ‘have to’:

你必须服从命令。 nǐ bǐxū fǔcóng minglìng (lit. you must obey command) You must obey orders.

我们必须马上离开。 wǒmen bǐxū mǎshàng líkāi (lit. we must immediately leave) We must [i.e. we are supposed to] leave immediately.

他必须准时赶到。 tā bǐxū zhǔnshí gǎn dào (lit. he must punctually hurry-arrive) He must get there in time.
To negate compulsory obligation 不 butt is not used with 必须 bixu, but in the following formulations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>得不得</th>
<th>bùdé</th>
<th>not supposed to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>不准</td>
<td>bùzhǔn</td>
<td>forbidden to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不要</td>
<td>bùyào</td>
<td>don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不可以</td>
<td>bù kěyī</td>
<td>not allowed to; may not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不可</td>
<td>bù kě</td>
<td>not permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不能够</td>
<td>bù nénggòu</td>
<td>cannot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In emphatic warnings or exhortations, 不 bù ‘not permitted’ occurs as a sentence terminal in conjunction with 非 fei ‘not’ or 非得 feidèi ‘have got to’, which is placed before the main verb. The two negative expressions convey a strongly positive meaning:

你非来不可。 ní fēi lái bù kě
(lit. you not come not possible) You have to come.

这篇文章非看不可。 zhèi piān wénzhāng fēi kàn bù kě
(lit. this mw essay not look not possible) You have to read this essay.

这件事你非得去处理不可。 zhèi jiàn shì nǐ fēi dé qu chǔlǐ bù kě
(lit. this mw matter you not must go deal-with not possible) You have to go and sort this matter out.

18.1.6 WISHING

A mild wish is usually expressed by 想 xiǎng ‘would like’ or ‘to be thinking of’ while a strong desire is conveyed by 要 yào ‘want’. Compare the following:

今晚我想去看电影。 jīnwǎn wǒ xiǎng qù kàn diànyǐng
(lit. tonight I would-like go see film)
I would like to go and see a film tonight.

今晚我要去看电影。 jīnwǎn wǒ yào qù kàn diànyǐng
(lit. tonight I want go see film) I want to go and see a film tonight.

3 See §18.1.8 below.
4 In fact, 不得 feidèi may sometimes go before the subject to highlight it, e.g.: 这件事非得你去处理不可。 zhèi jiàn shì feidèi nǐ qù chǔlǐ bù kě (lit. this mw matter not must you go deal-with not possible) ‘It’s you who’ll have to go and sort this matter out’.
In questions, 想 xiang and 要 yao are virtually interchangeable:

你想喝点儿什么？ni xiang he diann shenme  
(lit. you would-like drink mw:some what) What would you like to drink?

你要喝点儿什么？ni yao he diann shenme  
(lit. you want drink mw:some what) What do you want to drink?

For more explicit intentions, verbs like 打算 dasuàn ‘to plan to’, 准备 zhunbei ‘to prepare, plan to’, and 决定 jueding ‘to decide to’ are used:

今晚你打算做什么？jinwan ni dasuàn zuo shenme  
(lit. this evening you plan do what) What are you planning to do tonight?

今晚你准备去看电影吗？jinwan ni zhunbei qu lian ying ma  
(lit. this evening you prepare go see film ma)  
Are you planning to go and see a film tonight?

今晚我决定待在家里。jinwan wő jueding dai zai jia li  
(lit. this evening I decide stay cv:at home-inside)  
I have decided to stay at home tonight.

The negatives of 想 xiang and 要 yao carry the flavour of disinclination for the former and refusal for the latter:

今晚我不想吃鱼。jinwan wǒ bu xiang chi yu  
(lit. tonight I not like eat fish)  
I don’t want (to eat) fish tonight. [I don’t fancy the prospect]

今晚我不要吃鱼。jinwan wǒ bu yao chi yu  
(lit. tonight I not want eat fish)  
I don’t want (to eat) fish tonight. [I am against the idea]

One feature of 想 xiang ‘would like’ is that like 愿意 yuanyi ‘be willing to’ (see below) it may be modified by degree adverbs like 很 hên ‘very much’, 正 zheng ‘at this very moment, just’, or 不大 buda ‘not really’, 只 zhi ‘only’:

我很想去见见他。wo hên xiang qu jianjian ta  
(lit. I very-much like go see-see him) I’d very much like to go and see him.

我正想去找您。wǒ zheng xiang qu zhaoo nin  
(lit. I just want go look-for you) I was just thinking of going to find you.

5 See §17.1 (a).
今晚我不大想出去。\textit{jīnwán wǒ bù dà xiǎng chūqu}  
(lit. tonight I not very-much want out-go)  
I don’t really want to go out tonight.

我只想好好地休息休息。\textit{wǒ zhǐ xiǎng hǎohǎo de xiūxi xiūxi}  
(lit. I only want well-well \textit{de} rest-rest) I just want to have a good rest.

\section*{18.1.7 WILLINGNESS}

愿意 \textit{yuànì} ‘be willing’ or 肯 \textit{kěn} ‘be willing (after some persuasion or with some reluctance)’:

我愿意帮你。\textit{wǒ yuànì bāngzhù nǐ}  
(lit. I willing help you) I am willing to help you.

他肯参加吗? \textit{tā kěn cānjiā ma}  
(lit. he willing take-part \textit{ma}) Is he willing to take part?

Like 想 \textit{xiǎng} ‘would like’ (see above), 愿意 \textit{yuànì} may also be modified by degree adverbs:

她很愿意帮你的。\textit{tā hěn yuànì bāng nǐde máng}  
(lit. she very willing help your busy) She is very willing to help you.

他不大愿意坐火车去。\textit{tā bù dà yuànì zuò huǒchē qù}  
(lit. he not very-much willing cv: travel-by train go)  
He is not really willing to go by train.

\section*{18.1.8 NECESSITY}

\textit{dé} ‘to have to, must’ is used in colloquial speech to indicate necessity, and is often interchangeable with the modal verbs of moral or compulsory obligation:

我得走了。\textit{wǒ dé zǒu le}  
(lit. I have to leave \textit{le}) I’ll have to go/I must be off.

有意见得说出来。\textit{yǒu yìjiàn dé shuō chūlái}  
(lit. have opinion have to say out-come)  
If you have an opinion, you must speak.

\textit{dé} is never used in the negative, but it does appear with 不 \textit{bù} in more formal statements, notices, etc., when it is pronounced \textit{dé}:

闲人不得入内。\textit{xínrén bùdé rùnèi}  
(lit. outsiders not have-to enter inside)  
No admittance./Private [i.e. outsiders should not enter the premises]
The negative for necessity is expressed by 不必 必, 不用 用, 无须 须 ‘need not’:

你不必去了。nǐ bù bì qù le
(lit. you not necessary go le) You don’t have to go.

你不用等我了。nǐ bú yòng děng wǒ le
(lit. you not need wait-for me le) You needn’t wait for me.

你无须出席。nǐ wúxū chúxī
(lit. you not must be-present)
There’s no need for you to be present./You’re not obliged to be there.

需要 需要 ‘need’ is originally a full verb, but it may also take on a modal function before the verb 有 有 to indicate ‘necessity’:

人人都需要有社会公德。 rénrén duō xūyào yǒu shèhuì gōngdé
(lit. everybody all need have society public-morality)
Everybody needs to have a public spirit.

18.1.9 BOLDNESS

敢 敢 ‘dare’.

你敢打人吗? nǐ gǎn dǎ rén ma
(lit. you dare hit people ma) How dare you hit people?

我不敢走黑路。wǒ bù gǎn zǒu hēlù
(lit. I not dare walk dark roads) I dare not walk in the dark.

18.2 SPEAKER PERSPECTIVE OF MODAL VERBS

The speaker-oriented nature of modal verbs can be seen clearly in the case of 要 要 ‘to want’. When used with a first person subject (who is naturally the speaker), it indicates a wish on the part of the speaker:

我要喝点儿水。wǒ yào hé diǎnr shuǐ
(lit. I want drink mw: some water) I’ll have/I’d like some water.

But it takes on a different meaning if the subject is in the second person:

你要喝点儿水。nǐ yào hé diǎnr shuǐ
(lit. you must drink mw: some water) You should drink some water.
Here the speaker is not voicing the listener’s wish, but his or her own, and is advising or urging the listener to take the action.

However, if the two sentences are expressed as questions, the meanings of ‘want’ and ‘should’ may be reversed:

你要喝点儿水吗?  nǐ yào hé diǎnr shuǐ ma
(lit. you want drink mw:some water ma) Do you want to drink some water?

我要喝点儿水吗?  wǒ yào hé diǎnr shuǐ ma
(lit. I must drink mw:some water ma) Should I drink some water?

The interrogative has naturally switched the roles of the speaker and the listener, and the emphasis is on the listener’s attitude rather than the speaker’s.

18.3 NEGFATION OF MODAL VERBS

Because the function of a modal verb is to indicate mood or attitude, its negator is always 不  bú ‘not’ (or the more classical 无 wú ‘not’ in some cases) and never 没 méi or 没有 méiyǒu even if it is referring to a mood or attitude in the past.

不  bú ‘not’ is most commonly placed before the modal verb, but it can also be used after the modal verb (and before the main verb), where it conveys a different meaning:

你不可以走。 nǐ bù kěyǐ zǒu
(lit. you not may leave) You may not go. [i.e. you are not allowed to go]

你可以不走。 nǐ kěyǐ bù zǒu
(lit. you may not leave) You may stay. [i.e. you are allowed not to leave]

他不肯去。 tā bù kěn qù
(lit. he not willing go) He is not willing to go.

他肯不去。 tā kěn bù qù
(lit. he willing not go) He is willing not to go. [i.e. he is willing to stay behind]

她不敢来。 tā bù gǎn lái
(lit. she not dare come) She dare not come. [a statement]

她敢不来? tā gǎn bù lái
(lit. she dare not come) Dare she not turn up! [a threat]
However, sentences with the negative after the modal verb sometimes need a degree of modification in order to be acceptable:

他不要喝牛奶。tā bùyào hé niúnǎi
(lit. he not want drink milk) He doesn’t want to drink (any) milk.

*他要不喝牛奶。tā yào bù hé niúnǎi
*(lit. he want not drink milk) *He wants not to drink milk.

but:

他要三天不喝牛奶。tā yào sān tiān bù hé niúnǎi
(lit. he want three days not drink milk)
He wants to stop drinking milk for three days.

and:

她不应该抽烟。tā bù yínggāi chōuyān
(lit. she not should suck cigarette) She shouldn’t smoke.

*她应该不抽烟。tā yínggāi bù chōuyān
*(lit. she should not suck cigarette)

but:

她应该从此不抽烟。tā yínggāi cóngcǐ bù chōuyān
(lit. she should from now not suck cigarette)
She should stop smoking from now on.

不 bù can, of course, be used both before the modal verb and before the main verb to indicate a double negative:

你不可以不走。nǐ bù kěyǐ bù zǒu
(lit. you not may not leave)
You must go. [i.e. you are not allowed to stay]

他不肯不去。tā bù kěn bù qù
(lit. he not willing not go) He insists on going.

18.4 GRAMMATICAL ORIENTATION OF MODAL VERBS

The incorporation of a modal verb in a sentence automatically makes the sentence evaluative, since it expresses a subjective observation on the part of a

See Chapter 20 in particular.
named or unnamed speaker. The sentence takes the form of a topic + comment structure with the modal verb introducing the comment:

你 || 应该帮助他。 nǐ || yìnggāi bāngzhù tā
(lit. you ought to help him) You ought to help him.

Here 你 nǐ ‘you’ is not the subject of a narrative sentence initiating the action of ‘helping’, and there is no certainty that 你 nǐ will ever carry out the action. Instead 你 nǐ ‘you’ is the topic and 应该帮助他 yìnggāi bāngzhù tā ‘must help him’ is the comment. The speaker’s intention is to comment on what 你 nǐ ‘you’ should do.

Because of this topic–comment relationship, a sentence like the following is possible:

药 || 应该准时吃。 yào || yìnggāi zhǔnshí chī
(lit. medicine must on-time eat) Medicine should be taken at the right time.

In this case 药 yào ‘medicine’ obviously does not initiate the action of ‘taking’, but it is a topic followed by a comment relating to it.

In addition to being a noun or pronoun, the topic can naturally take any syntactic form:

懒惰 || 会妨碍你的进步。 (topic = adjective)
lǎnduò || huì fàng’ài nǐde jìn bè
(lit. lazy mv: may hamper your progress)
Being lazy may hamper your progress./If you’re lazy, it may hamper your progress.

经常锻炼身体 || 能增进健康。 (topic = verb phrase)
jīngcháng duānliàn shēn tǐ || néng zēngjīn jiànkāng
(lit. regularly exercising body mv: can improve health)
Regular exercises can improve health.

大家都坐经济舱 || 可以节省不少开支。(topic = clause)
dàjiā dōu zuò jīngjì cáng || kěyǐ jiéshěng bùshǎo kāizhǐ
(lit. everyone all sit-in economy cabin mv: can save not a little expenses)
Everyone can save a lot of expense travelling economy.
By telescopic constructions, we mean constructions where one subject-predicate or topic-comment sentence is seen to be embedded in or interwoven with another.

In the next chapter, we discuss the distinctive features of different sentence types such as narrative, descriptive, expository and evaluative. Telescopic constructions, though they may take the form of any of these sentence types, are themselves generally expository or evaluative. In other words, the first part of a telescopic construction, whatever its formulation, is by definition, a topic presented for explanation or comment.

In the following sections, we will describe the different kinds of telescopic construction commonly encountered in the language.

19.1 TOPIC AND SUB-TOPIC

The typical format of a topic and sub-topic construction is that the topic once stated is immediately followed by a sub-topic, which semantically has a part-whole relationship with the topic. The comment that follows is of course closely related to the sub-topic, which is its immediate focus of interest. However because of the part-whole meaning relationship between the topic and the sub-topic, the comment relates to the topic and the sub-topic together.

她脾气很坏。tā píqì hěn huài
(lit. she temper very bad) She has a bad temper.

这两个孩子身体都很好。zhè zhèng háizi shēntǐ dōu hěn hǎo
(lit. these two mw children body both very good)
These two children are in good health.

In these examples脾性 píqì ‘temperament’ is clearly part of 她 tā ‘her’ and 身体 shēntǐ ‘body, health’ is part of 孩子 háizi ‘the children’. There may be multiple and varied parts to a whole:

这件衣服，领子太大，袖子太短。
zhè jiàn yīfu | lǐngzi tài dà | xiùzi tài duǎn
(lit. this mw clothes, collar too big, sleeves too short)
The collar on this suit is too big and the sleeves too short.
His wife's bearing is dignified, her conversation refined and her manner poised.

Half of these fruit are for you and half for your brother.

The majority of the tourists who come here for holidays are British and the minority French.

Some of the narcissus in our garden are yellow and some white.

A common relationship between topic and sub-topic is that of initiator and activity. The comment that follows may refer to the initiator-topic or the sub-topic activity. Such flexibility broadens the choice of comment:

He is an outstanding student.

He is a conscientious student.

It is obvious that 出色 chūsè ‘outstanding’ refers to the sub-topic 学习 xuéxí ‘studies’ while 认真 rènzhēn ‘conscientious’ describes the topic 他 tā ‘him’.

Little Huang not only studies conscientiously, but he also works hard.
19.2 TOPIC AND SUBJECT

It is not uncommon in a le-expository sentence\(^1\) for a topic and subject to appear together. For example:

信 || 我 | 早就寄走了。 xin || wǒ | zǎo jiù jì zǒu le
(lit. letter I early then send-go le) I’ve sent the letter some time ago.

我的论文 || 导师 | 已经看过了。 wǒde lùnwén || dāoshi | yíjing kàn guo le
(lit. my thesis supervisor/tutor already see guo le)
My supervisor/tutor has already read through my thesis.

In the first example, 信 xin ‘the letter’ is the topic whereas 我 wǒ ‘I’ is the subject that initiates the action of 寄 jì ‘sending’ in the predicate; and in the second, 论文 lùnwén ‘the dissertation’ is the topic while 导师 dāoshi is the subject initiating the action of 看 kàn ‘reading’ in the predicate. Semantically speaking, 信 xin ‘the letter’ and 论文 lùnwén ‘the dissertation’ are respectively the notional object of the verbs 寄 jì ‘to send’ and 看 kàn ‘to read’.

This being the case, these le-expository sentences are easily reconvertible to their narrative originals, with end-of-sentence 了 le as an expository indicator changing to aspect indicator 了 le to mark that the actions have been completed:

我早就寄走了那封\(^2\)信。 wǒ zǎo jiù jì zǒu le nèi fēng xin
(lit. I early then send-go le that mw letter) I had long since sent that letter.

导师已经看过\(^3\)了我的论文。 dāoshi yíjing kàn guo le wǒde lùnwén
(lit. supervisor/tutor already read guo le my thesis)
The supervisor/tutor had already read through my thesis.

In fact le-expository sentences are conversions from corresponding narrative sentences, topicalising the original object, dismantling the straight-forward ‘initiator + action + target’ narrative format or its 把 bā or 被 bēi derivatives,

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1. See Chapter 21, where le-expository sentences are discussed in greater detail.
2. 那封 nèi fēng ‘that + measure word for a letter’ are added here to counteract the post-verbal indefinite reference of a narrative sentence and also to provide rhythmic balance.
3. Note the difference between 过 guó ‘to have read through’ as a resultative complement in this sentence and 过 guo ‘to have had the experience of’ as an expository indicator in a sentence like 导师看过我的论文 dāoshi kàn guo le wǒde lùnwén ‘The tutor has read my thesis’.
and shifting the perspective from recounting a past action to explaining a present situation with the addition of an end-of-sentence 了 le or other relevant particles. Here are some more examples:

这件事 || 大家 | 都知道了。 zhè jiàn shì || dà jiā | dōu zhīdào le  (lit. this mw matter everyone all know le) Everyone knows about this.

八点钟的火车 || 我 | 赶不上了。 bā diǎn zhōng de huǒchē || wǒ | gānbushàng le  (lit. eight o’clock de train I catch not up le) I can’t catch the eight o’clock train.

那条裙子 || 妹妹 | 送给她的朋友了。 nèi táo qúnzi || méimei | sòng gěi tā de péngyou le  (lit. that mw skirt younger sister present-give her friend le) Younger sister has given that skirt to her friend.

那场大火 || 消防队员 | 很快就扑灭了。 nèi cháng dàhuǒ || xiāofáng duìyuán | hěn kuài jiù pū miè le  (lit. that mw big fire fire brigade very fast then extinguish le) The fire brigade very quickly put out that blaze.

圣诞礼物 || 我 | 早就买了。 shèngdàn lǐwù || wǒ | zǎo jiù mǎi le  (lit. Christmas presents I early then buy le) I bought my Christmas presents a long time ago.

There are also topics derived from nominal items taken as the main focus of interest in multi-valency sentences. This is to say that the comment on the topic may take the form of a subject and verb-object predicate. For example:

花儿 || 我 | 浇了水了。 huār || wǒ | jiāo le shuǐ le  (lit. flowers I sprinkle le water le) I have watered the flowers.

水 || 我 | 浇了花儿了。 shuǐ || wǒ | jiāo le huār le  (lit. water I sprinkle le flowers le) I have watered the flowers with the water.

车库的门 || 我 | 上了漆了。 chēkù de mén || wǒ | shàng le qī le  (lit. garage de door I put on le paint le) I have painted the garage door.

漆 || 我 | 用来油了车库的门了。 qī || wǒ | yòng lái yóu le chēkù de mén le  (lit. paint I use-come paint le garage de door le) I have used the paint to paint the garage door.
19.3 ‘SUBJECT + PREDICATE’ AS TOPIC

A subject + predicate clause can also act as the topic of a topic + comment evaluative sentence\(^4\) with the predicate verb being unmarked. This plain structure contrasts with the variety of grammatical patterns required by English translations:

老年内少吃盐对身体有好处。
lǎoniánrén shǎo chī yán duì shēntǐ yǒu hǎochu
(lit. old people little eat salt cv:for body have benefit)
If old people eat less salt, it is good for their health.
It is good for the health of old people to eat less salt.

你这么做太不象话了。nǐ zhème zuò tài bù xiànghuà le
(lit. you like this do too shocking/unreasonable le)
It was really shocking/unreasonable for you to have done this.

这个小伙子当翻译真行。zhè ge xiǎohuǒzi dàng fānyì zhēn xíng
(lit. this young man be interpreter really good)
It is really good that this young man is the interpreter.

If the subject of this topical ‘subject + predicate’ structure is of a general or universal nature, it may be left out. What remains of the topic will now be an unmarked, unmodified verb predicate. For example:

下雨天划船没有什么意思。xiàyǔtiān huà tīng méiyǒu shénme yìsi
(lit. fall rain day row boat have not any interest)
There is no interest at all in going rowing on a rainy day.

到国外去度假可以增进见闻。dào guówài qù duòjià kěyǐ zēngjīn jiànwén
(lit. cv:to country-outside go pass holiday can promote see-hear)
Going on holidays abroad can add to one’s knowledge.

19.4 ‘(SUBJECT) + PREDICATE’ INSERTED BETWEEN ‘TOPIC’ AND ‘COMMENT’

In this structure, a subject + predicate clause is placed between the topic and the comment usually to create an expository or evaluative sentence. In many cases, the subject is absent or understood, and the predicate is always complemented by the descriptive indicator 着 zhe or a directional indicator 来 lái or 起来 qǐlái. The clause carries an underlying conditional meaning.

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\(^4\) See next chapter.
这些鞋子正合适。zhè shuāng xié nǐ chuān zhe zhèng hēshì
(lit. this mw:pair shoes you wear zhe just suit)
These shoes fit you beautifully/well.

那双鞋太紧，穿着不舒服。nèi shuāng xié tài jīn | chuān zhe bù shūfu
(lit. that mw:pair shoes too tight, wear zhe not comfortable)
Those shoes are too tight and would be uncomfortable to wear.

这个人看着很面熟。zhèi ge rén kàn zhe hěn miànshú
(lit. this mw person look zhe very face-familiar)
This man looks very familiar.

这个箱子提着有些沉。zhèi ge xiāngzi tí zhe yǒuxiē chén
(lit. this mw case carry/lift zhe has some heavy)
This case is a bit heavy (to carry).

这种药吃下去就见效。zhèi zhōng yào chī xiàqu jiù jiànxìào
(lit. this mw:kind medicine eat down-go then become effective)
Taking this medicine will do the trick/be effective.

那个老人看上去还很健壮。nèi ge lǎoren kàn shàngqu hái hěn jiànzhuàng
(lit. that mw old man look as if still very robust)
That old man looks as though he is still very robust.

这篇文章念起来不顺口。zhèi piàn wénzhāng niàn qǐlái bù shùnkǒu
(lit. this mw essay begin to read not smooth for mouth)
This essay does not read smoothly.

这种游戏看起来很简单，其实并不简单。
zhèi zhōng yóuxì kàn qǐlái hěn jiàndān | qíshí bǐng bù jiàndān
(lit. this mw:kind game look as if very simple, in fact certainly not simple)
This game looks simple, but in fact it isn’t.
Chinese syntax follows the universal differentiation of sentences along the line of function into four major types: declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory. However, being less morphologically oriented but more functionally disposed than some other languages, Chinese syntax may further differentiate its declarative sentences into the following four subtypes: narrative, descriptive, expository and evaluative. Inevitably, there is blurring at the boundaries between subtypes since the vagaries of language will always defy absolute demarcations. Nonetheless, this differentiation is of extreme importance because it highlights other essential grammatical distinctions which need to be made.

In this chapter, we will concentrate on the most distinctive features of each of these subtypes. However, before we go into greater detail on them, we will first of all give a very brief description of the grounds on which such a subcategorisation is based.

A narrative sentence sets out to recount an incident or tell a story, and it therefore follows a ‘subject + predicate’ format, where the subject is the initiator or recipient of the action specified in the predicate. A narrative sentence is thus a stage in a sequence, encoding one action in a chain of actions, which comprise an overall event.

A descriptive sentence, though it follows a ‘subject + predicate’ format like a narrative, is nevertheless an objective depiction of an action that is ongoing at a particular time. The focus is on the continuous action.

An expository sentence aims to give an explanation. It may adopt either a ‘subject + predicate’ or ‘topic + comment’ format. In its ‘subject + predicate’ form, it makes a statement of what somebody does or can do out of habit, experience or nature, and so on, or intends to do in the future. In a ‘topic + comment’, the comment consists of either the verb 是 shì ‘to be’ or 有 yǒu ‘to

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1 Expository sentences, as we shall see in the next chapter, have an associated category that we label le-expository.
have’ or an unmodified verb or adjective. An expository sentence states either a fact or an intention.

An evaluative sentence, on the other hand, conveys an observation, an opinion, a subjective criticism or assessment. It always takes a ‘topic + comment’ format. If an action verb is used in the comment, it is preceded by a modal verb or followed by a de-complement; and if an adjective is present in the comment, it is modified by a degree adverb or followed by a degree complement. These modifications represent the element of evaluation or judgement in the statement.

In the following sections, the distinctive features of each of these four subtypes will be discussed in detail.

20.1 NARRATIVE SENTENCES

A narrative sentence reports an event or incident that has already taken place, and it generally recounts that somebody (or something) carried out (or caused) an action or that something happened to someone (or something) on some past occasion. If we define the ‘subject + predicate’ format as a typical syntactic representation of the concept of an initiator who initiates an action or a recipient who receives an action, then this format naturally comprises a narrative.

There are two prominent features of a narrative sentence in Chinese. First, since Chinese syntax lacks the category of definite and indefinite articles, nouns in the language depend either on context or their position in sentence for the specification of definite or indefinite reference. In a Chinese narrative sentence, all nouns in a pre-verbal position take on definite reference. Second, the verb in the predicate, being part of a narrative, and naturally indicating a completed action, is therefore generally marked by 了 le. Both these features are illustrated in the example below:

孩子从屋子里跑了出来。 háizi cóng wūzi lǐ páo le chūlái
The child came out of the room.

The English translation makes clear that the noun 孩子 háizi, despite being unmarked and without any referential indication, is nevertheless of definite reference, and the action of coming out by the child, as indicated by the aspect marker 了 le, was obviously completed.

The corollary to this tendency of pre-verbal nouns to be definite-referenced is the fact that all nouns positioned post-verbally are liable to be of indefinite reference. Post-verbal nouns are in fact generally marked by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase to confirm this indefiniteness:
Out of the room came a child.

The two sentences above therefore demonstrate the standard referential properties required for nouns by narrative syntax: pre-verbal definite, and post-verbal indefinite, but usually marked as such.

However, the subject of narrative sentences can have indefinite reference, even if marked by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase, provided either:

(a) the dummy verb 有 ‘to have’ is placed before it, so that it is still, in a sense, post-verbal:

有兩個陌生人走了進來。 有兩個陌生人走了進來
(lit. have two strangers walk le in-come)
Two strangers walked in.

(b) it is moved to a post-verbal position, where indefinite-reference nouns are normally found:

那时候进来了两个陌生人。 那时候进来了两个陌生人
(lit. that time come in le two strangers)
At that moment two strangers walked in/in walked two strangers.

The same applies to a subject noun that is modified by a descriptive, i.e. adjectival attributive, since this modification automatically makes the noun indefinite:

2 了 le in this sentence is optional for reasons of prosody (see Chapter 26). The sentence may also be reworded as 屋子里跑出来一个孩子来。

3 This is only possible if the action verb used is intransitive.
There was a chubby-faced child in the room.

A chubby-faced child came (running) out of the room.

If definite reference has to be expressed, this can be achieved in this case and in all cases by the addition of a ‘demonstrative + measure’ phrase:

That chubby-faced child came out of the room.

It should be noted that subject nouns that are marked as indefinite, but which are followed by the referential adverbs 都 dòu ‘all; both’ and 也 yě ‘also’, are perfectly acceptable in a pre-verbal position, since they are made definite in reference by the presence of the adverbs:

The two strangers both walked in.

The three sedans also stopped at the door.

On the other hand, a post-verbal noun may be given definite reference by either:

(a) introducing the standard ‘demonstrative + measure’ phrase before the noun:

I saw that film.

They discussed this problem.

or:

(b) leaving the noun unmarked and adding a new clause begun with 就 jiù ‘then’ or 才 cái ‘only then’ to make the sentence sound complete:
I went to catch the last bus as soon as I had seen the film.

She did not go upstairs to bed until she had finished the/her homework.

From the above examples, we can also see that point-of-time and location expressions with their specifying capacities are naturally of definite reference as are personal pronouns, which refer to previously mentioned nouns. All of these are likewise generally found in pre-verbal positions in a narrative sentence:

Last week I received dozens of emails.

We planted a good number of/quite a few roses in the garden.

They played two games of chess.

Narrative sentences with time or location beginners often indicate ‘emergence’ or ‘disappearance’ relating to the noun in question:

A lot of guests came to our place yesterday.

There was a heavy rain in the morning.

All unmarked nouns as the object of an action verb aspect-marked by T le are of definite reference, but, as we saw in §6.8.1, a statement with this formulation is felt to be incomplete.

* bushào ‘quite a few’ is an adjective which naturally indicates indefiniteness.
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There appeared a mass of black clouds on the horizon.

A sheep was missing from the pen.

Many gulls came flying over the surface of the sea.

Apart from these prototypical narratives with noun phrases followed by le-aspected action verbs, which are in turn followed by noun phrases or complements, there are other narrative formats such as the ba construction and the passive voice with bei and sentences with dative or causative verbs. They may all be regarded as narrative sentences, as they normally indicate actions or events which have already taken place, and the above-mentioned referential requirements apply to them in the same way. However, these narrative sentences do not necessarily require the presence of le since the notion of completion is very often conveyed by the complement following the verb.

In a ba sentence, not only does the subject have definite reference, as in other narrative sentences, but the noun following the coverb ba must also be definite in reference as it is still positioned pre-verbally. For example:

Father threw the manuscript into the wastepaper basket.

Mother put the washing out on the clothesline (to dry).

In the first sentence, both 爸爸 ‘father’ and 稿子 ‘manuscript’, and in the second, both 妈妈 ‘mother’ and 衣服 ‘clothes’ are of definite reference.

In a bei sentence, the noun following the coverb bei can be either definite or indefinite in reference depending on the context:

See Chapters 12 and 13.

The noun after 把 marked or unmarked always remains definite.
Younger brother was given a lecture by the teacher.

Here 弟弟 ‘younger brother’ and 老师 ‘teacher’ are both of definite reference; on the other hand in a sentence like:

箱子被老鼠咬了一个洞。箱子被老鼠咬了一个洞。

A hole was gnawed in the box by rats.

在 dative and causative sentences, all unmarked nouns, that is, all nouns unmodified by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase are of definite reference.

In a dative sentence, for example, the indirect object, being the personal target of the action of giving or rendering, is generally regarded as of definite reference and remains unmarked, and the direct object, which usually comes after the indirect object, is usually marked by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase as indefinite:

老太太给小姑娘一个苹果。老太太给小姑娘一个苹果。
The old granny gave the young girl an apple.

The hooligan kicked the policeman.

In a causative sentence, the pivotal noun, i.e. the object-and-subject-in-one, when unmarked, is usually of definite reference:

教练鼓励运动员坚持到底。教练鼓励运动员坚持到底。
The coach encouraged the athlete(s) to persist till the end.

The teacher taught the students how to carry out a particular experiment.

One exceptional feature of a causative narrative is that the causative action verb may never take the completed action aspect marker 了 le.

It must, however, be noted that a few commonly used pivotal nouns like 人 ‘people’, 别人 ‘others’, etc., which are indefinite, are exceptions to this.
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1. laoshi zhidao le xuesheng zuo le yi ge shiyan
   *The teacher taught the students how to carry out a particular experiment.

Finally, with regard to completed action, it is of course possible for the aspect marker 了 le to be used with an intransitive action verb, which is not followed by a noun or which has a noun built into it:

她2000年就去世了。tā èrlínglínglíng nián jiù qùshì le
She passed away in (the year) 2000.

建筑计划都批准了。jiànzhù jíhuà dōu pízhǔn le
The building plans were all approved.

The verbs in these sentences essentially point to some form of termination and in varying degrees they may carry some implication of assumed change which is characteristic of the le-expository sentences to be discussed in the next chapter. In fact there are clearly cases where 了 le following a verb at the end of a sentence is almost certainly performing the two functions of being both an aspect marker and indicator of change.9

20.2 DESCRIPTIVE SENTENCES

A descriptive sentence differs from a narrative sentence in many respects, although it is also objective in stance. Rather than recounting what has already happened, it describes either: (a) what is going on through the action of the verb at the moment of speaking; or (b) a state that has resulted from the action of the verb. As with a narrative sentence, its structure is subject-predicate, though in the case of (b) the subject is more a recipient of the action, as in passive bei structures in narrative sentences. The time reference depends on the context, and, while it is mostly the present, it can also be past and, sometimes, future.

The main syntactic feature of a descriptive sentence is that, as in narrative sentences, the verb tends to be marked. This is achieved through the association of the verb with the ‘ongoing’ aspect marker 在 zài10 (or its emphatic alternative 正在 zhèngzài) and the persistent manner indicator 着 zhe. 在 zài and 着 zhe in general terms represent respectively the alternative (a) and (b) forms of the descriptive sentence. However, as we shall see below, they can both occur in the same sentence.

9 See §21.5.
10 See Chapter 6. The ongoing aspect may be indicated by 在 zài on its own or as part of an adverbial location phrase, e.g. 在树上 zài shùshàng ‘on/in the tree’.
As regards reference, the subject of a narrative sentence must be of definite reference whereas the subject/topic of a descriptive sentence may be either definite or indefinite. The post-verbal noun of a descriptive sentence, however, whether marked by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase or left unmarked, always remain indefinite unless it is preceded by a ‘demonstrative + measure’ phrase. Here are some examples:

王老师在备课。 **wáng láoshi zài bèikè**  
(lit. teacher Wang marker:zài prepare lesson)  
Teacher Wang is preparing [his/her] lessons.

姑娘们在舞台上跳舞。 **gūniāngmen zài wǔtái shàng tiàowǔ**  
(lit. (young) girls cv: on stage-top dance) The girls are dancing on the stage.

小鸟在树上歌唱。 **xiǎoniǎo zài shù shàng gēchàng**  
(lit. (little) birds cv: on tree-top sing) Birds are singing in the trees.

他在草地上躺着。 **tā zài cǎodì shàng tǎng zhe**  
(lit. he cv: on grass-land-top lie zhe) He is lying on the grass.

鱼在锅里煎着。 **yú zài guó li jiān zhe**  
(lit. fish cv: in pan-inside fry zhe) The fish is/are frying in the pan.

In the first example, 在 zài indicates ongoing action on the part of the subject. In the second and third, 在 zài as part of a coverbal location phrase again registers the ongoing action. The subjects of the first two examples are of definite reference, but the subject of the third is most likely to be of indefinite reference. In the fourth and fifth examples, 着 zhe is incorporated to indicate the persistent manner in which the action is being carried out. In the last example, the subject 鱼 yú ‘fish’ is the recipient of the action of the verb 煎 jiān ‘to fry’.

Sometimes, as we have seen in Chapter 8, a location phrase with 在 zài may come after the verb. These constructions are similarly descriptive sentences. For example:

伤员躺在担架上。 **shāngyuán tǎng zài dānjià shàng**  
The wounded are lying on the stretcher.

商品陈列在橱窗里。 **shāngpín chéngliè zài chúchuāng lǐ**  
Goods are being displayed in the shop window.

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11 It is a prosodic requirement in Chinese syntax that in descriptive sentences 在 zài phrases of location cannot be followed by monosyllabic verbs. The speaker either chooses a disyllabic verb or a multi-syllabic verbal expression or suffixes 着 zhe to a monosyllabic verb to make it disyllabic.
Location expressions in a sentence are of course always of definite reference wherever they occur.

In a 着 zhe sentence, any verb marked by 着 zhe calls attention to the action itself, and therefore carries a descriptive flavour. As was suggested above, a descriptive sentence indicating a state that has resulted from the action of the verb often includes 着 zhe. The usual layout of the sentence is location phrase + action verb + 着 zhe + noun:

墙上挂着一幅画儿。qiang shang gua zhe yi fu huà
(lit. wall-on hang zhe one mw picture) A picture is hanging on the wall.

书架上放着很多中文书。shujia shang fang zhe hěn duo zhongwen shu
(lit. bookshelf-on place zhe many Chinese books) There are many Chinese books on the bookshelf.

樱桃花树上长着密密麻麻的樱花。
yingtáo shù shàng zhăng zhe mínín má má de yínghuā
(lit. cherry tree-on grow zhe dense-dense-motley-motley de cherry blossoms) There grow countless cherry blossoms on the cherry tree.

玫瑰园里散发着一股清香。méiguī yuán lǐ sànfa zhe yi gū qīngxiāng
(lit. rose garden-in diffuse zhe one mw delicate fragrance) There came a faint scent from the rose garden.

A variant of this descriptive format makes use of the completion aspect marker 了 le with or without the verbal complement 满 mǎn ‘full’ instead of 着 zhe. These sentences are regarded as descriptive rather than narrative because the verb with 了 le calls attention to the resultant state and not the action:

大门上贴了一副对联。dānmén shàng tiē le yi fù duilián
(lit. big door-on stick le one mw:pair couplets) On the door was (posted) a couplet.

屋檐下挂了两个灯笼。wūyán xià guà le liǎng ge dēnglóng
(lit. house eve-under hang le two mw lanterns) Under the eves were hanging two lanterns.

桌子上摆满了餐具。zhuōzi shàng bái mǎn le cānjù
(lit. table-on put full le meal instruments) The table was laid.

12 When 满 mǎn ‘full’ is used, the post-verbal noun cannot be marked by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase.
20.3 EXPOSITORY SENTENCES

Expository sentences are factual statements that offer some form of explanation relating to actual situations or experiences. The aspect markers 了 and 在 and the persistent manner indicator 着 do not occur in them, and there are no rules or restrictions for the pre-verbal and post-verbal positioning of nouns for definite and indefinite reference. Their range of meaning covers: (a) definition and identification, and possession and existence; and (b) experience, objective potential, the factual and the habitual, cognition and intention. They may be either topic-comment or subject-predicate in format, and the categories of meaning under (a) above are generally the former and those under (b) the latter.

20.3.1 TOPIC–COMMENT EXPOSITORY SENTENCES

20.3.1.1 ‘To be’ and ‘to have’

Two verbs that have a dominant presence are 是 ‘to be’ and 有 ‘to have, there is/are’. In addition the near-synonymous or hyponymous counterparts of 是 shì (象 習 ‘to resemble’, 姓 xìng ‘to be called’), also have a place:

- 他(是)我叔叔。 tā shì wǒ shūshū He is my uncle.
- 昆虫有六只脚。 kūncōng yǒu liù zhī jiǎo Insects have six legs.
- 她(像)她妈妈。 tā xiǎng tā māmā She looks like her mother.
- 我姓张。 wǒ xìng zhāng My surname is Zhang.

As well as being nouns of definite or indefinite reference, topics may also adopt different parts of speech or take various forms:

- 地球是圆的。 diqiú shì yuán de The earth is round. (noun: definite reference)
- 蜘蛛有八只脚。 zhīzhū yǒu bā zhī jiǎo Spiders have eight legs. (noun: indefinite reference)
- 月亮是地球的卫星。 yuèliàng shì diqiú de wèixīng The moon is a satellite of the earth. (noun: definite reference)
- 这副眼镜是我的。 zhè fù yǎnjìng shì wǒ de This pair of spectacles are mine. (noun: definite reference)
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打太极拳是他的爱好之一。
**dà tài jí quán shì tā de àihào zhī yì**
(lit. hit *taijiquan* boxing is his favourite *zhi* one)
One of his favourite sports is taiqi/shadow-boxing.

严格有很多好处。 **yángé yǒu hěnduō hǎochù**
(lit. strict has many benefits)
Being strict can be very productive.

办事认真是她的一个特点。
**bànshì rènzhēn shì tā de yī ge tèdiǎn**
(lit. handle matters serious is her one mw characteristic)
One of her characteristics is that she handles things seriously.

In addition to indicating definition, possession, etc., 是 *shì* or 有 *yǒu* are also used to express emphasis or to make comparisons, and remain expository when performing this function:

他是两年前结的婚。 **tā shì liǎng nián qián jié de hūn**
It was two years ago that he got married.

妹妹是不喜欢喝啤酒。 **mèimei shì bù xǐhuàn hē píjiǔ**
It’s true that younger sister doesn’t like beer.

这件外套没有那件那么暖。
**zhè jiàn wàitào méiyǒu nèi jiàn nàme nuǎn**
This jacket isn’t as warm as that one.

20.3.1.2 Adjectival predicates and complements

These constitute another form of comment. It must, however, be remembered that an unmodified adjective always implies a contrast.

谁不累？大家都累。 **shéi/shuí bù lèi | dàjiā dōu lèi**
Who’s not tired? Everybody’s tired.

苹果贵，香蕉也贵。
**píngguǒ guì | xiāngjiāo yě guì**
Apples are expensive and so are bananas.

昨天冷，今天也冷。
**zuótiān lěng | jīntiān yě lěng**
It was cold yesterday and it’s cold today as well.

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13 See Chapters 13 and 14 on 是 *shì* and 有 *yǒu* sentences.
But she is/has grown beautiful.

He explains [it] more clearly than I.

### 20.3.2 SUBJECT–PREDICATE EXPOSITORY SENTENCES

Both action and cognitive verbs are used in these sentences:

#### 20.3.2.1 Statements of past action

Statements of past action indicated by presence of the verb suffix 过 (guò):

- 我吃过蜗牛。 (wǒ chī guò wōniú) I have tried snails before.
- 他听过中国歌曲。 (tā tīng guò zhōngguó gēqǔ) He has heard Chinese songs.
- 她说她见过鬼。 (tā shuō tā jiàn guò guǐ) She said that she once saw a ghost.
- 我去过中国。 (wǒ qù guò zhōngguó) I have been to China.
- 他们去过长城。 (tāmen dào guò chángchéng) They have been to the Great Wall.

#### 20.3.2.2 Potential complements

Potential complements as positive or negative statements of capability, possibility, likelihood, etc.:

- 他一辈子也学不会中文。 (tā yībèizi yě xuébuhuí zhōngwén) He will never in his life be able to learn/master Chinese.
- 这么贵的衣服我买不起。 (zhème guì de yīfu wǒ mǎibuqǐ) I can’t afford such expensive clothes.
- 这辆车坐得下五个人。 (zhè liàng chē zuòdèxià wǔ ge rén) This car can seat five people.

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14 See Chapter 6.

15 See Chapter 10. Note the distinction made there between statements of capability by potential complements and by modal verbs. The latter as will be seen are elements in evaluative sentences.
20.3.2.3 Factual statements and habitual action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>马吃草。</td>
<td>Horses eat grass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>太阳从东方升起。</td>
<td>The sun rises in the east.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我每天买报纸。</td>
<td>I buy a paper every day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20.3.2.4 Cognition and preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我知道他是中国人。</td>
<td>I know he is Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我明白你的意思。</td>
<td>I understand what you mean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他喜欢看外国电影。</td>
<td>He likes watching foreign films.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我爱花鸟。</td>
<td>I love flowers and birds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20.3.2.5 Intentions and plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我打算去旅行。</td>
<td>I intend to go travelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们买这个。</td>
<td>We'll buy this one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他的儿子明天来。</td>
<td>His son is coming tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们去帮他的忙。</td>
<td>We are going to help him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20.3.3 NEGATION OF EXPOSITORY SENTENCES

It is perhaps appropriate to point out here that all negative sentences with 不 (bù) (to negative habitual or intentional action) or 没(有) (méi(yǒu)) (to negate non-completed action with reference to a current situation)\(^\text{16}\) are expository. Their function is not to narrate or describe but to explain.

我不去。wǒ bù qù
I won’t go.

她不是我的女朋友。tā bù shì wǒde nǚpéngyou
She is not my girlfriend.

\(^{16}\) This use of 没(有) méi(yǒu) must be distinguished from its use to negate past actions, which will then be narrative.
Everybody ignored him.  

He still hasn’t come.

She never touches garlic.

She has never touched garlic.

20.4 EVALUATIVE SENTENCES

Evaluative sentences are in fact expository, but they present a judgemental stance on the part of the speaker, so that they are not necessarily factual. They invariably have a topic-comment structure and the comment voices the opinion of the speaker. Like expository sentences, they never include an aspect marker at their core. They take two forms, one focusing on a modal verb, and the other on a modified adjective or complement.

20.4.1 THE MODAL VERB EVALUATIVE

Take the following example,

He must start work immediately.

It is obviously the speaker’s view that the man referred to ‘must start work immediately’. He tā ‘he’, in fact, is not the initiator of the action in the verb, but he is the topic on which the speaker is commenting in relation to the action, and is the focus of the speaker’s concern and attention.

A major feature of an evaluative sentence is that, as with an expository topic-comment, the topic posed for comment can be of either definite or indefinite reference, can be any part of speech, and can be of any structural format. For example:

A person has to listen to reason.

Two hands can make light work.
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办事情要有计划。bàn shìqǐng yào yǒu jìhuà
(lit. do things must have plan) One needs a plan to do things.

他不下场会影响比赛的胜负。tā bù xià chǎng huì yǐngxiǎng qíusài de shèngfù
(lit. he not come on to the pitch will affect match de victory-defeat)
His not taking part in the match will affect its outcome.

In the first and second examples, the noun topics are of indefinite reference; in the third, the topic takes the form of a verb; in the fourth, it is an adjective; in the last example, it is a clause.

20.4.2 THE MODIFIED ADJECTIVE/COMPLEMENT EVALUATIVE

The presence in the comment of a degree adverbial or complement registers the evaluative force of these sentences:

他办事情非常认真。tā bàn shìqǐng fēichāng rènzhēn
He runs/does things extremely seriously/conscientiously.

这儿的风景好极了。zhèr de fēngjǐng hǎo jí le
The scenery here is really beautiful.

他跑得真快。tā pǎo de zhēn kuài
He runs really fast.

这件事他处理得好得很。zhè jiàn shì tā chǔlǐ de hǎo de hěn
(lit. this mw matter he handle de good de very much)
He handled this matter very well.

20.5 COMPARISONS BETWEEN SENTENCE TYPES

The following pairs of similar sentences illustrate the distinctions that can be made between sentence types:

(a) 我们去了上海。wǒmen qu le shànghǎi (narrative)
We went to Shanghai.

我们去过上海。wǒmen qu guo shànghǎi (expository)
We’ve been to Shanghai
The contrast here is plain: 了 le in the first sentence indicating the completion of an action implies a past event and is therefore narrative, whereas 了 guo in the second stating a past experience serves as an explanation and is therefore expository.

(b) 他在墙上挂了一幅画儿。

他 zài qiáng shàng guà le yī fú huàr
He hung a picture on the wall.

墙 zài qiáng shàng guà le yī fú huàr (descriptive)
On the wall hangs a picture.

The first sentence is clearly narrative completed action, while in the second the action verb with 了 le following the location phrase creates a resultant state and is therefore descriptive.

(c) 爸爸在花园里看我给他买的报纸。

bābā zài huāyuán lǐ kàn wǒ gěi tā mái de bāozhǐ (descriptive)
Father is in the garden reading the newspaper I bought for him.

爸爸在花园里看了我给他买的报纸。

bābā zài huāyuán lǐ kàn le wǒ gěi tā mái de bāozhǐ (narrative)
Father read the newspaper I bought for him in the garden.

In the first sentence the location phrase 在花园里 zài huāyuán lǐ establishes the basis for the ongoing action of a descriptive sentence, but in the second it provides the setting for the completed action of a narrative sentence.

(d) 我去找他。

wǒ qù zhǎo tā (expository)
I’ll go and look for him.

我去找了他。

wǒ qù zhǎo le tā (narrative)
I went to look for him.

The first sentence expresses an intention and is therefore expository; the second with aspect marker 了 le is obviously a completed action narrative.

(e) 筑路工人在路上挖了一个洞。

zhù lù gōngrén zài lù shàng wā le yī ge dòng
The road workers dug a hole in the road.

17 It is possible to further insert the persistent-manner indicator 着 zhe in this sentence to enhance its descriptive effect: e.g. 爸爸在花园里看着我给他买的报纸。

bābā zài huāyuán lǐ kàn zhe wǒ gěi tā mái de bāozhǐ 'Father is in the garden reading the newspaper I bought for him'.
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Road workers were digging a hole/holes in the road.

These sentences are obviously narrative and descriptive, but notice that in the first the subject has to be of definite reference, while in the second it can be either definite or indefinite depending on the context.

(f) 他很快地跑着。tā hěn kuài de pāo zhe (descriptive)
    He is/was running very quickly.

他跑得很快。tā pāo de hěn kuài (expository)
    He runs very quickly.

The adverbial phrase 很快地 hěn kuài de in the first sentence describes the way in which he is running. The verb-complement in the second sentence 跑得很快 pāo de hěn kuài explains the fact that he runs very fast.

(g) 他昨天到了北京。tā zuòtiān dào le běijīng (narrative)
    He arrived in Beijing yesterday.

他是昨天到的北京。tā shì zuòtiān dào de běijīng (expository)
    He arrived in Beijing yesterday.

The first sentence narrates the fact that he arrived, but the emphatic 是 shì... 的 de construction in the second makes the sentence an explanation focusing on the time of his arrival and is therefore expository.

(h) 我不能喝那么多的酒。wǒ bùnénɡ hěn nàme duō de jiǔ (evaluative)
    I cannot drink so much wine.

我喝不了那么多的酒。wǒ hēbúliǎo nàme duō de jiǔ (expository)
    I cannot drink so much wine.

The use of the modal verb 能 néng in the first sentence means that the speaker is making a subjective judgement, perhaps on the level of principle or diet. The second sentence with its potential complement 喝不了 hēbúliǎo is more objective and most likely indicates that he does not have the physical capacity to down any more liquor.

(i) 他在北京住。tā zài běijīng zhù (expository)
    He lives in Beijing.

他住在北京。tā zhù zài běijīng (descriptive)
    He is living in Beijing.

The first sentence using an unmarked verb simply states the fact that he lives in Beijing and is therefore expository. The second with a 在 zài phrase as a
complement clearly sets out to highlight a persistent state (i.e. he is living in Beijing) and is therefore descriptive.

(j) 妈妈把房间收拾干净。
māmǎ bā fāngjiān shōushì gānjìng
Mother tidied up the room.

妈妈把房间收拾得真干净。
māmǎ bā fāngjiān shōushì de zhēn gānjìng
Mother tidied up the room really well.

The first sentence is a narrative report. The focus in the second is on 真 zhēn ‘really’, which makes the statement evaluative, despite the presence of 把 bā.

20.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The categorisation of sentences into sentence types attempts to provide a function-based framework to analyse the peculiarities of Chinese syntax. As we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, it is difficult, not to say impossible, to establish any such watertight framework, and our analysis of Chinese sentence structure demonstrates that we have not lost sight of other approaches, including structural, semantic, stylistic and elemental, which of course are equally valid.

Imperatives, interrogatives and exclamations are used very much for their respective functions and there is little need therefore to subject them to the kind of minute differentiation discussed above. However, since they are all based on corresponding statements, their characteristic features are derivable from their declarative counterparts.

There remains one further exceedingly important sentence type to be discussed. We have called this type le-expository, since it involves the addition of the particle 了 le at the end of the sentence and in function it provides a particular style of exposition. It can, in fact, be added to any of the four sentence types analysed above and its impact on them will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

18 See Chapters 23 and 24.
了 le-EXPOSITORY SENTENCES

了 le-expository sentences are formed by putting the particle 了 le at the end of virtually any statement. Like expository sentences they offer an explanation, but they add to this explanation the implication of some form of change or a reversal of a previous situation. They suggest that what is stated represents a change from what existed or what was happening before. In expressing him/herself in this way, the speaker is giving updated information, and (s)he will often back it with some degree of personal endorsement. Much of the time the change asserted in 了 le-expository sentences is simply factual, but it also regularly counters an assumption or expectation in the mind of the person addressed. The context, in which the statement is made, is extremely important, and, as we will see, the implications of a particular sentence can vary significantly depending on the situation in which it is used. Not surprisingly, the construction is very much a feature of spoken language and the social interaction among Chinese people. It is therefore important to understand how it works, but its subtleties have been notoriously challenging for non-native speakers. We hope that the explanations and examples given below may throw some light on it.

This use of 了 le is of course separate from its role as an aspect marker. However, etymologically, the particle derives from the classical verb 了 liǎo ‘to end’, and a semantic link can clearly be seen between its two functions, one being the completion of an action, and the other the termination of a previous situation.

Consider the following two sentences:

她生了一个孩子。 tā shēng le yī ge háizi
She had a baby.

她生了一个孩子了。 tā shēng le yī ge háizi le
She’s had a baby.

The first is a flat statement and the meaning implied by 了 le is that the action of 生 shēng ‘to give birth to’ has been completed. In other words, the action of giving birth to a child has already taken place. The sentence thus encodes a narrative. The second, on the other hand, is much more animated with almost certainly stress on the word ‘baby’, and the end-of-sentence 了 le conveys the sense that a new situation of ‘giving birth to a child’ has happened for someone who probably has not had a baby before. The speaker could of course have a
range of different ideas in mind, depending on the circumstances, and the event could be happy, worrying, unexpected, thought to have been impossible, and so on, but the fundamental notion is that there has been a change. If the first example resembles a past tense in English, the second example is more like a present perfect. The aspect indicator 了 le in the former belongs to the realm of narration while the end-of-sentence 了 le in the latter is a pointer to exposition.¹

In the following sections we will focus, each at a time, on the various semantic and syntactic properties of end-of-sentence 了 le, where necessary in comparison with the aspect 了 le.

21.1 CHANGE OR REVERSAL OF A PREVIOUS SITUATION

Let us look at two more examples of change of circumstances, as described above. The first is a straightforward change:

我妹妹会说日文了。 wǒ mèimei hui shuō riwén le
My younger sister can speak Japanese [now].

This implies that my sister did not know how to speak Japanese before but now she does, and this is something I think deserves some attention.

他看电影了。 tā kàn diànyǐng le
He has gone to the cinema [after all].

The suggestion here is that perhaps the person referred to as he used to be against cinema-going, or did not like going to the cinema at all, or something else. However, what used to be the case is not important. What is important for the speaker who cares to impart this piece of information is that the person referred to has now changed or reversed his former attitude: he is now doing what he would not do before.

Everyday situations also invite this kind of emphasis:

病人吃饭了。 bìngrén chīfàn le
This patient is eating. [(s)he has been unable to eat before]

天晴了。 tiān qíng le
The weather has cleared up. [it has been raining up till now]

时间不早了。 shíjiān bù zǎo le
Time’s getting on. [lit. the time is not early any more]

¹ See Chapter 20.
All these examples describe an emerging situation that has turned the prior situation on its head.

Adjectives, being situation rather than action indicators, are regularly core elements in le-expository sentences indicating reversals. They may be used either independently as predicatives (as the first three examples below show) or as complements to verbs (as in the last three):

东西贵了。 dōngxi guì le
Things have become expensive/gone up.

他有点醉了。 tā yǒu diǎn zuì le
He's a bit drunk.

你的茶快凉了。 nǐ de chá kuài liáng le
Your tea will soon be cold.

孩子的玩具摔坏了。 háizi de wánjù shuāi huài le
The children's toy has been/is broken.

我吃饱了。 wǒ chī bǎo le
I've eaten my fill./I am full.

这个字你写错了。 zhè ge zì nǐ xiě cuò le
You have written this character wrongly.

Some expressions, which clearly signal new situations, past or future, are naturally linked with end-of-sentence le: time adverbs like 已经 yǐjīng ‘already’, 快 kuài ‘is about to’, 要 yào ‘will soon’; modal verbs, which indicate future possibilities, obligations or necessities; and all sentences with resultative complements signifying that something has ‘already’ been or will soon be accomplished or brought about:

(a) time adverbs:

我的病已经治好了。 wǒde bìng yǐjīng zhì hǎo le
My illness is already cured.

截止的日期快到了。 jiézhǐ de rìqī kuài dào le
The deadline is soon.

电影马上就要开演了。 diànyǐng máshàng jiùyào kāiyǎn le
The film is just about to start.

(b) modal verbs:

我该走了。 wǒ gāi zǒu le
I must be off.
He's not willing to donate any more money.

You may go back.

(The water in) the pot has boiled.

The guests are almost all here.

The electric light has been installed.

It is clear from all the above examples that, though 了 le is unstressed, the speaker who is using it is very much making a point. By tagging 了 le to the statement (s)he wants to affirm the message and make the listener aware of its importance or relevance to the immediate situation. This immediate situation, while commonly located in the present, may also relate to events in the past or posed for the future:

By the end of September last year it had already started snowing.

If you don’t come tomorrow till 9 o’clock, he will probably already have left.

If I had the chance to go to university again, I certainly would not be as lazy as I was before.

This underlying attitude, the enthusiasm and willingness to put the listener in the picture, explains why native speakers make particular use of 了 le when they are trying to explain a situation or to sum it up.
21.2 SUBJECTIVE ENDORSEMENT BEHIND THE OBJECTIVE EXPLANATION

A speaker’s response to a situation that is markedly better or worse than expected is regularly couched in a le-expository form. (S)he is, in fact, voicing feelings about the impact of the new situation on him (or her) and (s)he expresses appreciation or displeasure, often vehemently. This explains why sentence le is a common adjunct to hyperbole. Consider the following:

(我们)太幸运了。 (wǒmen) tài xìngyùn le
We are really lucky.

(这)真是再好不过了。 (zhè) zhēn shì zài hǎo bùguò le
You can’t do better than this.

(这条裙子)漂亮极了。 (zhè tiáo qúnzi) piàoliàng jí le
This skirt is extremely pretty.

这个人坏透了。 zhè ge rén huài tòu le
This man is thoroughly bad.

屋子里闷死了。 wūzǐ lǐ mèn sì le
It’s really stuffy in the room.

The structure holds good too for gentle imperatives or urgent requests where some form of immediate reversal of the existing situation is being urged or cautioned against:

好了，好了，别胡闹了。 hǎo le | hǎo le | bié húnào le
OK, OK, stop the racket.

走了，走了，时间不早了。 zǒu le | zǒu le | shíjiān bù zǎo le
Let’s go, let’s go, time’s getting on.

不要哭了。 bù yào kū le
Stop crying.

大家都坐好了。 dàjiā dōu zuò hǎo le
Would everyone sit down.

请别谈话了，会议开始了。 qǐng bié tánhuà le | huìyì kāishì le
Please stop talking. The meeting is starting.
A similarly committed response can also be expected from the listener when a speaker asks questions demanding immediate indication as to whether a reversal of the existing situation can be expected or brought about:

情况究竟怎么样了？ qíngkuàng jiūjìng zěnmeyànɡ le
What’s the situation really like?

这么晚了。他到底来不来？ zhème wǎn le | tā dàodì lái bù lái le
It’s so late. Is he really coming or not?

Sometimes the speaker may even explicitly indicate that the new situation is counter to his/her expectation:

我以为他回家去了。 wǒ yíwéi tā huí jiā qu le
I thought he had gone home.

想不到在这儿见到你了。 xiǎngbudào zài zhèr jiàn dào nǐ le
[I] didn’t realise that I would bump into you here.

It is often the case that it is the impact of change or reversal as much as the change itself that is in the mind of the speaker:

我们看过那个电影了。 wǒmen kàn guǒ nèi ge diàn yìng le
We have seen that film. [we don’t want to see it again]

儿子偷了父亲的钱了。 érzi tōu le fùqīn de qián le
The son stole his father’s money. [that is unthinkable]

21.3 SUMMING UP AFTER A SERIES OF ACTIONS

A narrative account in Chinese usually consists of the description of a sequence of actions or events, marked as appropriate by the aspect marker 了 le, which is terminated by some form of summing up ending with sentence 了 le. This last summing up naturally presents a picture of the new circumstances at the end of the preceding sequence:
He washed his face, brushed his teeth, undressed and went to bed.

Father had breakfast, looked through the paper, put on his coat and drove off to work.

There are cases where there is a need to stress new circumstances at every step and these naturally invite end-of-sentence/clause 了 le:

It went dark, people on the street grew fewer and fewer, (and) the shops closed one after another. She felt hungry, but she had spent all her money. She walked and walked, and began to cry.

This sense of summing up a situation or bringing a particular topic to a close before going on to a new one by the use of end-of-sentence/clause 了 le may also be found with nominal comments. Compare the following pairs of sentences:

The first example of each pair only expresses a fact: ‘the child is 5 years old’ or ‘today is Saturday’. The addition of end-of-sentence 了 le conveys the sense of eventually reaching the present situation or position: the child is (now) 5, and today is (finally) Saturday.

21.4 A RHYTHMIC NECESSITY FOR MONOSYLLABIC VERBS OR VERBALISED ADJECTIVES

Syntactic constructions in Chinese are not only governed by structural and lexical validity, but are also shaped by rhythmic patterns. This applies to
end-of-sentence 了 le (as well as aspect 了 le) which may sometimes be optional with disyllabic verbs or adjectives, but is obligatory with monosyllabic verbs or verbalised adjectives. Compare the following sets of sentences:

(a) 客人早已离开了。kèrén zǎo yì lìkāi le
客人早已离开。kèrén zǎo yì lìkāi
客人早已走了。kèrén zǎo yǐ zǒu le
*客人早已走。*kèrén zǎo yǐ zǒu
The guests have long since left.

(b) 事情已经办妥了。shíqìng yǐjìng bàn tuō le
事情已经办妥。shíqìng yǐjìng bàn tuò
事情已经办了。shíqìng yǐjìng bàn le
*事情已经办。*shíqìng yǐjìng bàn
The matter has already been settled.

(c) 他的病即将痊愈了。tāde bìng jǐjiāng quányù le
他的病即将痊愈。tāde bìng jǐjiāng quányù
他的病快要好了。tāde bìng kuǎiyào hǎo le
*他的病快要好。*tāde bìng kuǎiyào hǎo
He will soon recover from his illness.

It can be seen from the three sets of sentences that the last one in each case is unacceptable, because a monosyllabic verb or verbalised adjective coming at the end of a sentence can be regarded as valid only if it is accompanied by an extra syllable for rhythm. 了 le here fulfils this function ideally, as it also serves as an end-of-sentence marker.

In many cases, these end-of-sentence 了 le serves as a rhythmic filler as well as an indicator of the reversal of circumstances. Common examples are:

天睛了。tían qíng le It has cleared up.
天黑了。tían hēi le It’s gone dark.
天亮了。tían liàng le It’s light now.
雨停了。yǔ tíng le It’s stopped raining.
你胖了。nǐ pàng le You’ve put on weight.

2 The difference between 即将 jǐjiāng ‘soon’ and 快要 kuǎiyào ‘soon’ is one of register and style. It does not affect structural validity of the sentence.
3 Resultative complements like 定 tuō ‘settled’ often act as rhythmic fillers, as does the descriptive indicator 着 zhe, e.g. *他在树荫下躺 versus 他在树荫下躺着 tā zài shùyìn xià tiāng zhe ‘He is lying in the shade of the tree’.
4 This is under most circumstances a compliment rather than a critical comment.
21.5 TWO OR THREE FUNCTIONS IN ONE

As was said earlier in the chapter, end-of-sentence 了 le is isomorphic with aspectual 了 le, with both of them deriving from 了 liao ‘to end’. This being the case, an end-of-sentence 了 le following a verb may often represent the completion of the action indicated by the verb as well as the emergence of a new situation. This two-in-one role is apparent in most of the above examples at the end of §22.4.

In some cases, even the meaning of the isomorphic 了 liao ‘to end’ may be implied in an end-of-sentence 了 le, thus giving it a three-in-one function. For example:

请把剩下的酒喝了！ qǐng bā shèngxià de jiǔ hē le
Please finish off the remaining wine.

垃圾我已经倒了。 lājǐ wǒ yǐjīng dào le
I have already tipped out the rubbish.

她把不要的衣服全扔了。 tā bā bùyào de yīfu quán rèng le
She threw out all the clothes she did not want.

This three-in-one function is confirmed if we rewrite the above three sentences, incorporating the resultative complement 拖 diào ‘to be finished’ (which is itself co-morphogenic with 了 liao ‘to finish’). In each case the meaning remains the same:

请把剩下的酒喝掉了！ qǐng bā shèngxià de jiǔ hē diào le
Please finish off the remaining wine.

垃圾我已经倒掉了。 lājǐ wǒ yǐjīng dào diào le
I have already tipped out the rubbish.

她把不要的衣服全扔掉了。 tā bā bùyào de yīfu quán rèng diào le
She threw out all the clothes she did not want.

21.6 le-EXPOSITORY SENTENCES AND THE FOUR BASIC SENTENCE TYPES

We said at the beginning of this chapter that 了 le could be added to any sentence to form a le-expository sentence. To sum up our discussion of
le-expository sentences, we will here illustrate in a sequence of paired examples the impact end-of-sentence \( T \) \( le \) has on the other sentence types. We will start off with expository sentences:

### 21.6.1 EXPOSITORY SENTENCES

- **我哥哥是工程师。** *wǒ gēge shì gōngchéngshī* (expository)
  My elder brother is an engineer.

- **我哥哥是工程师了。** *wǒ gēge shì gōngchéngshī le* (le-expository)
  My elder brother is now an engineer. [he wasn’t before]

- **她有孩子。** *tā yǒu háizi* (expository)
  She has got children.

- **她有孩子了。** *tā yǒu háizi le* (le-expository)
  She has a child/children now. [she didn’t before]

- **妈妈吃素。** *māma chī sù* (expository)
  (lit. mother eat vegetarian food)
  Mother is a vegetarian.

- **妈妈吃素了。** *māma chī sù le* (le-expository)
  (lit. mother eat vegetarian food)
  Mother has become a vegetarian. [she wasn’t one before]

- **她拉小提琴。** *tā lá xiǎotiqín* (expository)
  She plays the violin.

- **她拉小提琴了。** *tā lá xiǎotiqín le* (le-expository)
  She plays the violin now. [she did not use to]

- **这个人不怕鬼。** *zhèi gé rén bù pà guǐ* (expository)
  (lit. this mw person not afraid-of ghosts)
  This person is not afraid of ghosts.

- **这个人不怕鬼了。** *zhèi gé rén bù pà guǐ le* (le-expository)
  (lit. this mw person not afraid-of ghosts \( le \))
  This person is no longer afraid of ghosts. [he was before]

### 21.6.2 NARRATIVE SENTENCES

- **他在钢琴上弹了两个曲子。** *tā zài gāngqín shàng tán le liǎng ge qǔzi* (narrative)
  He played two pieces of music on the piano.
He has [already] played two pieces of music on the piano, [that’s enough; someone else can play, etc.]

He became a father. **tā dāng le fùqīn**

He is now a father. [he wasn’t one before and now he has a child]

I studied English for three years. **wǒ xué le sān nián yīngwén**

I have studied English for three years. [this is the point I have reached in the learning process]

He drank ten glasses of beer. **tā hē le shí bēi píjiǔ**

He’s drunk ten glasses of beer. [he should not have any more; that is why he can’t stand up, etc.]

I waited here for half an hour. **wǒ zài zhè lè bàn ge zhōngtòu**

I have been waiting here for half an hour. [I won’t wait any longer]

**21.6.3 DESCRIPTIVE SENTENCES**

It is snowing heavily outside. **wàimian xià zhe dà xuě**

It is now snowing heavily outside. [it wasn’t a moment ago]

She is sulking. **tā zài shēngqì**
她在生气了。 tā zài shēngqì le
She is now sulking. [that wasn’t the case before]

他在准备他的功课。 tā zài zhùnbèi tāde gōngkè
He is preparing/doing his homework.

他在准备他的功课了。 tā zài zhùnbèi tāde gōngkè le
He is preparing/doing his homework. [this is something he ought to do]

车子在外面等着。 chēzi zài wàimian děng zhe
The car is waiting outside.

车子在外面等着了。 chēzi zài wàimian děng zhe le
The car is now waiting outside.
[it’s just arrived and I think you ought to go]

21.6.4 EVALUATIVE SENTENCES

你应该感谢他。 nǐ yīnggāi gǎnxiè tā
You should thank him.

你应该感谢他了。 nǐ yīnggāi gǎnxiè tā le
You should now thank him.
[ it might not have been necessary to do so before]

我能去。 wǒ néng qù
I can go.

我能去了。 wǒ néng qù le
I can go now. [I couldn’t before]

我今天必须画完这幅画儿。
wǒ jìntiān bìxū huà wán zhè fú huàr
I must finish this painting today.

我今天必须画完这幅画儿了。
wǒ jìntiān bìxū huà wán zhè fú huàr le
Now I must finish this painting today. [I should have finished it already]

这朵花儿很香。 zhè duo huār hěn xiāng
This flower has a beautiful scent.

这朵花儿很香了。 zhè duo huār hěn xiāng le
This flower (now) has a beautiful scent.
[it didn’t before; I did not expect it to be so fragrant]
Though 了 le can be added to any sentence to make it le-expository, there are cases where the result would require exceptional circumstances. However, no matter how infrequent or strange a situation might be on the face of it, a possible reading can always be found. For example:

They are chatting now. 他们聊天了。tāmen zài tán tiān le
(lit. they zài chat le)  
They are chatting now. [it was not the case a moment ago]

The implication can of course be retrieved only from the context: e.g. they were working very hard and had not had the time to sit down for a chat before, or they had quarrelled and now seem to be getting on better.

Stranger still might be an example like the following:

He is now waiting for somebody. 他在等人了。tā zài děng rén le
He is now waiting for somebody. [it was not the case a while ago]

Possible interpretations of this might be that he had been busy doing something else and had forgotten he should be waiting for somebody or that it is usually the case that somebody else is waiting for him and now the situation is reversed, and so on.

Whatever the prior situation may be, it is only retrievable from the context. The prime syntactic function of 了 le in all le-expository sentences is to indicate a reversal: a declaration that what is the case now is not what it was before.
Conjunctions in Chinese may be divided into two major types: those coupling words or phrases, and those linking clauses. Conjunctives, on the other hand, are a set of monosyllabic referential adverbs, which generally are found at the beginning or towards the beginning of the second (or main) clause of a sentence. They refer back to the preceding (or subordinate) clause, which may itself include a conjunction or, in a limited number of cases, another conjunctive.

Clauses in a sentence can also be brought together without any form of connective marker (conjunction or conjunctive). This happens when correlative or parallel constructions are employed, or where two clauses are set in apposition, where the meaning of the second clause is in some way consequential on that of the first.

In the following sections, we will discuss conjunctions which join words and phrases, conjunctions and conjunctives that link clauses, correlatives that introduce parallel structures, and clauses set in apposition to each other.

22.1 CONJUNCTIONS THAT LINK WORDS OR PHRASES

22.1.1 THE FOUR CONJUNCTIONS

There are four conjunctions that join nouns or nominal expressions. These conjunctions, which all mean 'and', may often be used interchangeably, the difference between them being one of style:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>和 hé</td>
<td>[neutral]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>跟 gèn</td>
<td>[northern colloquial]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>同 tóng</td>
<td>[southern colloquial]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>与 yǔ</td>
<td>[formal]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

爸爸和妈妈 都出去了。 bàba hé māmā dōu chūqù le
Mother and father have both gone out.

城市跟农村 我都住过。 chéngshì gèn nóngcūn wǒ dōu zhùguò
I have lived in towns and villages.
If there are more than two nominal items, the conjunction comes between the last two, the rest being separated by *dun*-commas /・/, which are enumerative commas. These *dun*-commas are unique to Chinese and are written in the reverse direction of a standard comma /,/: 

哥哥、姐姐、妹妹和弟弟 *gēge | jiējie | mèimeí hé didì*  
Elder brother, elder sister, younger sister and younger brother.

物理、化学、数学和哲学 *wúlì | huàxué | shùxué hé zhéxué*  
Physics, chemistry, maths and philosophy.

22.1.2 而 *ér* ‘also’

This is often used to join two adjectives or adjectival expressions, which are either both affirmative or an affirmative followed by a negative. In the former case, the two adjectives must be of similar length, either both monosyllabic or both disyllabic. In the latter case, the affirmative adjective is always monosyllabic and the negative disyllabic with 不 *bù* ‘not’ as the first syllable, in a rhythmic, antithetical sequence:

这个人 坚定而勇敢。 *zhèi ge rén jiàndìng ér yǒnggǎn*  
This man is steadfast and brave.

他是个 认真而严谨的科学家。 *tā shì ge rènzhēn ér yánjǐn de kēxuéjiā*  
He is a serious and rigorous scientist.

这篇文章 长而空。 *zhèi piān wénzhāng cháng ér kōng*  
This essay is long and vacuous/devoid of content.

长而不空 *cháng ér bù kōng*  
long but not vacuous

艳而不俗 *yàn ér bù sú*  
gaudy but not vulgar

这个西瓜大而不甜。 *zhèi ge xīguā dà ér bù tián*  
This watermelon is large but not sweet.
22.1.3 并 bìng ‘also’

This can link two predicate verbs which are transitive and share the same object:

会上讨论并通过了这项提案。

hùi shàng tǎolùn bìng tōngguò lè zhè xiàng tí'àn
The meeting discussed and passed this motion.

大家都同意并拥护我的提议。

dàjiā dōu tóngyì bìng yōnghù wǒde tíyì
Everyone agreed with and supported my proposal.

The lexical conjunctions cited above are the standard connectives for the three word categories of nouns, adjectives and verbs. However, as we shall see from the clausal conjunctions below, they have disyllabic variants: e.g. 以及 yǐjí ‘also’ for 和 hé, etc., 而且 érqiě ‘but also’ for 而 ér, and 并且 bīngqìé ‘and also’ for 并 bìng.

22.2 CLAUSAL CONJUNCTIONS AND CONJUNCTIVES

Clausal conjunctions in Chinese form a large closed set. They display the following distinctive features:

(a) some have monosyllabic and disyllabic variants depending on rhythmic requirements:

但是 dànsì ‘but’ > 但 dàn ‘but’
虽然 suírán ‘though’ > 虽 suī ‘though’
如果 rúguǒ ‘if’ > 如 rú ‘if’

(b) some occur in pairs, others individually or in pairs, and others with conjunctives:

不但 bùdàn ‘not only’ ... 而且 érqiě ‘but also’ (a pair)
不过 bùguò ‘but’ (individual)
(因为 yīnwèi ‘because’) ... 所以 suǒyǐ ‘therefore’ (individual/a pair)
只有 zhīyǒu ‘only’ ... 才 cái ‘then’ (with conjunctive)

(c) they may be positioned either before the subject/topic or before the predicate/comment depending on the scope of meaning they govern in the sentence:

他不但会说英文，而且会说中文。

tā bùdàn huì shuō yīngwén | érqiě huì shuō zhōngwén
He cannot only speak English, but he can speak Chinese too.
Not only can the adults speak Chinese, but even the children can too.

Clausal conjunctives are monosyllabic referential adverbs. They are limited in number, with the most common being: 就 jiu ‘then’, 才 cái ‘only then’, 都 dōu ‘both or all’, 也 yě ‘also’ (or its classical counterpart 亦 yì ‘also’), 还 hái ‘as well’, 却 què ‘but’, etc. They are used mainly in the second clause of a sentence:

(a) to echo a conjunction in the first clause:

今天虽然出太阳，气温却很低。

jintiān suīrán chū tài yáng | qiàn wēn què hěn dī
Although the sun is out today, the temperature is (however) very low.

他如果喝醉了，我们就送他回家。

tā rúguǒ hē zuì le | wǒmen jiù sòng tā huíjiā
If he is drunk, we will (then) take him home.

(b) to enhance the second of a pair of conjunctions:

要是你不舒服，那就别来了。

yào shì nǐ bù shūfú | nà(me) jiù bié lái le
If you aren’t well, in that case don’t come (then).

他不但骂人，而且还打人呢。

tā bùdàn mà rén | érqìé hài dà rén ne
He not only swears at people, but also (in addition) hits them.

22.3 CLAUSAL CONJUNCTIONS AND CONJUNCTIVES IN SEMANTIC CATEGORIES

In each subset the meaning is more or less similar, but in style they can range from the formal to the colloquial.

22.3.1 GIVING REASONS: BECAUSE, BECAUSE OF, THEREFORE

(a) 因为 yīnwèi ‘because’ … 所以 suǒyì ‘therefore’ paired conjunctions in pre-subject/topic positions:

1 See Chapter 17 on adverbials for a full list of these monosyllabic referential adverbs.
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Because the weather was bad, the match was (therefore) suspended.

(b) 因为 yīnwèi/因 yīn ‘because’, on its own as a first-clause conjunction with flexible positioning.²

因为有些事情没办完，我在广州多停留了四天。
yīnwèi yǒuxiē shìqíng méi bàn wán | wǒ zài guǎngzhōu duō
Because there was some unfinished business, I stayed on for four
tíngliúle sì tiān
days in Guangzhou.

因年代久远，这件事已无法考查。
yīn niàndài jiùyuán | zhè jìàn shì yī wúfǎ kǎochá
Because it was in the remote past, there is no way to check this
míngliè shì yī wúfǎ kǎochá
matter.

我刚到广州的时候，因为不懂广州话，闹了不少笑话。
wǒ gāng dào guǎngzhōu de shíhou | yīnwèi bù dǒng guǎngzhōu
When I first arrived in Guangzhou, because I did not understand
huà | nàolé būshāo xiàohuà
Cantonese, I made a lot of funny mistakes.

(c) 由于 yóuyú ‘because’, first-clause conjunction in a pre-subject/topic

由于某些事情没办完，我在广州多停留了四天。
yóuyú tuībù shòushāng | tā méi cǎnjiā bǐsài
Because he had a leg injury, he did not play in the match.

(d) 因而 yīn’ér or 因此 yīncí ‘therefore’, second-clause conjunctions in a

因而比赛暂停。
tiānqì bù hǎo | yīn’ér bǐsài zàntíng
The weather was bad, so the match was suspended.

他腿受伤，所以没参加比赛。
tā tuǐ shòu shāng | yīncí méi cǎnjiā bǐsài
He had a leg injury, so he did not play in the match.

² What is meant by ‘flexible positioning’ is that it may be used either in a pre-subject/topic position
or in a pre-predicate/comment position, depending on the context.
22.3.2 MAKING INFERENCES: SINCE

他既然认错了，你就原谅他吧。 tā jìrán rèncuò le | nǐ jiù yuánliàng tā ba
Since he’s admitted his mistake, you (then) forgive him.

既然两(个)人的看法不一样，这项合作只好作罢了。 jìrán liáng (ge rén de kànfā bù yìyàng | zhèi xiàng hézuò jiù zhīhǎo zuòbà le
Since the two of them have different views, cooperation on this must (then) be abandoned.

既然她不理你，那么你就别理她吧。 jìrán tā bù lǐ nǐ | nàme nǐ jiù bié lǐ tā ba
Since she is ignoring you, (in that case) don’t you (then) take any notice of her.

既然她不愿意，那就算了。 jìrán tā bù yuànyì | nà jiù suàn le
Since she is unwilling, (in that case) (then) forget about it.
22.3.3 EXPRESSING SUPPOSITION: IF

(a) 如(果) rú(guǒ) / 要(是) yào(shi) (colloquial)...(那么 nàme) 就 jiù ‘then’, a ‘conjunction + (conjunction) conjunctive’ pair, with the second conjunctive optional. (The position of the first-clause conjunction is flexible while the second-clause conjunctive is always pre-verbal):

翻泽如果不本国语的特点，就会使人看不懂。
fān yì rúguǒ bù gù běnguóyǔ de tèdiàn | jiù huì shì rén kàn bù dǒng
(lit. translation if not consider native language de characteristics | then may cause people read not understand)
If translation ignores the characteristics of the original language, (then) people may not understand.

如果你认为这样办比较好，那么咱们就这么办吧。
rúguǒ ni rènwéi zhèyàng bàn bijiào hǎo | nàme zánmen jiù zhème bàn ba
If you think doing it this way is better, in that case /then let’s do it this way.

我今晚没空，你要去，那就请便吧。
wǒ jǐnwàn méi kòng | ni yàoshi xiǎng qù | nà jiù qīngbiàn ba
I am busy this evening, and if you want to go, then please yourself/go ahead.

要把这篇文章写好，就得多参考一些有关的资料。
yào bā zhèi piān wénzhāng xiě hǎo | jiù děi duō cǎnkǎo yīxiē yǒuguān de ziliao
If you want to write this essay well, then (you) will have to do a bit more consulting of relevant materials/data.

(b) 如(果) rú(guǒ)/要(是) yào(shi) (colloquial), individual first-clause conjunction, with flexible positioning:

如果你一时手头不便，我可以先给你垫上。
rúguǒ ni yìshí shǒutóu bùbiàn | wǒ kěyǐ xiān gěi nǐ diànhang
If you are short of money for the moment, I can lend you some.

你如有困难，我可以帮助你。
nǐ rú yǒu kùnnan | wǒ kěyǐ bāngzhù nǐ
If you have a problem, I can help you.
The first-clause conjunction **rúguō** ‘if’ is generally replaceable by the following:

假如 **jiārú** ‘supposing’ (or its variants 仏若 **jiāruò**, 假使 **jiāshǐ**)
假设明天不下雨，我一定去。 **jiārú** míngtiān bù xià yǔ | wǒ yīdìng qu
If it doesn’t rain tomorrow, I’ll definitely go.

倘若 **tāngruò** ‘in case’
他倘若不信，就让他亲自去看看。
**tā tāngruò** bù xìn | jiù ràng tā qínzi qù kānkàn
In case he does not believe (it), (then) let him see for himself.

若是 **ruòshì** ‘if’
我若是你，我就绝不会答应他。 **wǒ ruòshì** nǐ | wǒ jiù jué bùhuì dài yìng tā
If I were you, (then) I certainly would not comply with his request.

万一 **wànyī** ‘in the event of’
万一出问题，咱们怎么办？ **wànyī** chū wèntí | zánmen zénme bàn
In the event of a problem arising, what are we to do?

A more rhetorical supposition which must be negative in meaning is encoded by
(要)不是 **(yào)bushì** or 若非 **ruòfēi** ‘if (it were) not (the case) that’, or 莫非 **mófei** ‘unless’:

(要)不是你提醒我，我差点儿把这件事忘了。
(yào)bushì nǐ tǐxing wǒ | wǒ chà diǎnr bā zhèi jiàn shì wàng le
If you had not reminded me, I could well have forgotten it/could have
come close to forgetting.

若非意见分歧，合同早就签订了。
ruòfēi yìjiàn fēnqí | hétóng zào jiù qiāndìng le
If there were not a difference of opinion, (then) the agreement would have
long since been signed.

³ Note that a conjunction like 若是 **ruòshì**, which has 仏 as a constituent element, does not need
to be followed by the verb 仏 ‘to be’ in a sentence like this.
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She originally agreed to come, but she still hasn’t arrived, and so could she be ill.

22.3.4 STATING CONDITIONS: ONLY IF, ONLY WHEN

(a) 只要 zhiyào ‘only if, provided’, a first-clause conjunction, with flexible positioning, which may or may not be linked with a conjunctive:

只要努力，你一定能取得优良的成绩。

zhiyào nǐ nǔlì | nǐ yìdìng néng qūdé yǒuliáng de chéngjì
Only if you put in an effort will you be sure of achieving a good result.

书旧点儿没关系，只要不缺页就行。5

shū jiù diǎnr méi guānxì | zhiyào bù quē yè jiù xíng
It doesn’t matter if the book is a bit old, provided no pages are missing (then it will be all right).

只要认真学，什么都能学会。

zhiyào rènzhēn xué, shénme dōu néng xuéhuì
(You) can master anything, provided you study seriously.

只要肯动脑筋，中文的语法一点儿也不难。

zhiyào kěn dòng nǎojīn | zhōngwén de yǔfá yídīānr yě bù nán
Chinese grammar is not difficult at all, provided you put your mind to it/use your brains.

(b) 只有 zhīyǒu ‘only when, only if’...才 cái ‘only then’, a ‘conjunction + conjunctive’ pair, the first-clause conjunction being flexible in positioning while the second-clause conjunctive may only be pre-verbal:

只有乐观，你的病才能恢复得快。

zhīyǒu lèguān | nǐde bìng cái néng huīfù de kuài
Only by being optimistic could you (then) be able to have a speedy recovery (from your illness).

Note that 莫非 mòfēi can colloquially have a shift of meaning to ‘could (it) be (the case) that’ or ‘it must be (the case) that’, and that, when used in this way, it is often paired with 不成 bùchéng ‘it will not do’ at the end of the sentence.

5 The second clause here in fact consists of two clauses: the first clause being 只要不缺页, and the second 就行.
Only by keeping calm will you (then) be able to win the final victory.

(c) 除非 chūfēi ‘unless’... 不然 bùrán/否则 fóuzé ‘or, otherwise’... a conjunction + conjunction pair, with pre-subject positioning:

除非你保持冷静，不然你得不到最后的胜利。

Unless you keep calm otherwise you won’t be able to win the final victory.

除非天气不好，否则我们下午去看他们。

Unless the weather is bad, (otherwise) we will go to see them this afternoon.

### 22.3.5 OFFERING CONCESSIONS: THOUGH, ALTHOUGH, YET

虽然 suīrán or 虽 sui ‘although’, depending on required rhythm, as first-clause conjunction, with flexible positioning, followed by a second-clause conjunction like 但(是) dàn(shì) or 可(是) kě(shì) ‘yet’ or a conjunctive such as 却 què ‘yet’, 倒 dào ‘nevertheless’ or 可 ké ‘despite all’:

他虽然身体不好，但是很少请假。

Although he wasn’t well/strong, (yet) he rarely requested leave.

大家虽然很累，可是心情都很愉快。

Although everyone was tired, (yet) their mood was cheerful.

文章虽短，却很有力。

Although the essay is short, (yet) it is very forceful.

商店虽然很小，货物倒很齐全。

Although the shop is small, (nevertheless) it is well-stocked.

这孩子年龄虽然不大，说话可十分老练。

Although this child isn’t old, (yet) (s)he speaks with a voice of experience.
Although winter has already arrived, (yet) the roses are still blooming.

The concession, as we can see from the above examples, is usually featured in the first clause and is often negative in nature. If the concession is more positive, i.e. making allowances instead of offering concessions, the conjunctive in the second clause will be 还(是) hǎi(shi) or 仍然 réng(rán) ‘still’ or 也 yě ‘nevertheless’ to provide a (negative) contrast:

Although he is better, he is still very weak.

Although the reasons have been made clear, he still won’t listen.

For more forceful expressions of concession 仍然 suìrán can be replaced by the following adverbial-like conjunctions:

诚然 chéngrán ‘it is true that’:
建议诚然很好，但时机还不成熟。
jiànyì chéngrán hěn hǎo | dàn shíji ēr bù chéngshú
It’s true that it’s a good suggestion/idea, but the time is still not ripe.

固然 gùrán ‘admittedly’:
你的办法固然有很多优点，可是缺点仍然不少。
níde bānfǎ gùrán yǒu hěnduō yǒudiàn | kěshí quèdiǎn réngrán bùsháo
Your method admittedly has many good points, but it still has quite a few defects/weaknesses.

就是 jiūshì/就算 jiūsuàn ‘even if’:
就算他表面上已经同意，他心里仍然不服。
jiūsuàn tā biǎomiàn shàng yījīng tóngyì | tā xīn lì réngrán bùfú
Even if he (already) outwardly agrees, he is still not convinced in his heart.

就是你已得到导师的支持，你还得听取校外考官的意见。
jiūshì nǐ yǐ děitào dǎoshì de zhīchǐ | nǐ hái děi tíngqū xiàowài kǎoguān de yìjiàn
Even if you’ve already got the support of your tutor, you still need to hear the views of the external examiner.
即使 *jishi* ‘even if’:
即使你做得很好，也不能骄傲自满。

*jishi ni zuo de hên hào | yê bûnéng jiâo’ào zîmân*
Even if you’ve done very well, you (still) can’t be arrogant and smug.

哪怕 *napâ* ‘even if’:
哪怕天再冷，他还是只穿着一件衬衫。

*napâ tîân zài lêng | tâ háiishi zhî chuăn zhe yî jiàn chênshân*
Even if it is even colder, he’ll still be wearing only a shirt.

### 22.3.6 DEFYING SETBACKS: NO MATTER

**a)** 无论 *wûlûn* (formal), 不管 *bûguân* (colloquial), or 凭 *pîng* ‘no matter what’, first-clause conjunction, with choice depending on style or rhythm, and 都 *dôu*, or 也 *yê* ‘still’, or 还是 *háiishi* ‘still’, etc., as second-clause conjunctive:

不管天气怎么冷，他还是坚持洗冷水澡。

*bûguân tîânqî zénme lêng | tâ háiishi jiânchí xî lêngshuízâo*
No matter how cold the weather is, he still insists on having a cold bath.

无论语法(的)问题多么复杂，我们都能解释。

*wûlûn yûfâ (de) wîntî duóme fûzâ | wûmen dôu nêng jiâeshi*
No matter how complicated the grammatical problems are, we can always explain them.

无论情况如何，请您打电话告知。

*wûlûn qîngkuâng rûhê | qîng nîn dâ diânhuâ gâozhî*
No matter how things are, please telephone to say.

凭你走得怎么快，我也/都赶得上。

*pîng nî zôu de zénme kuài | wô yê/dôu gân de shâng*
No matter how fast you go, I can still catch up.

**b)** 反正 *fânzhêng* ‘under whatever circumstances, anyway’ may be used individually as either a first or second clause adverbial-like conjunction:

别着急，反正不是什么了不起的事儿。

*bîe zhàoji | fânzhêng bûshî shênme liăobuqî de shîr*
Don’t worry, it is not anything exceptional/special *anyway*. 
Anyway, there is nothing important on today, and we’ll go out for a stroll.

22.3.7 CLARIFYING TIME: WHEN, AS SOON AS, AFTER, BEFORE, ETC.

(a) ... 时 shí or ... 的时候 de shihou ‘when ...’ is in fact a noun (phrase) employed as a pseudo-conjunction to introduce a time phrase or clause. 当 dāng is sometimes placed at the beginning of such a time clause.\(^6\) This usage, however, is dying out.

(dàng) tāi yáng chūiài de shihou | wǒ jiù bā yǐfu liàng chūqu
When the sun came out, I put the clothes out to dry.

(dàng) tā jǐnlái shí | wǒ zhèngzài xiě xìn
When he came in, I was just writing a letter.

(b) ... 后 hòu or 以后 yihòu or 之后 zhìhòu ‘after ...’ and ... 前 qián or 以前 yìqían or 之前 zhìqían ‘before ...’ are likewise used to introduce time phrases or clauses. These time phrases or clauses are echoed by the conjunctive 就 jiù ‘then’ in the second clause in declarative sentences:

bingrén chí yào hòu | shāo jiù tuì le
After the patient took the medicine, the fever (then) subsided.

tā huì lúndūn yìhòu | jiù zài yě méiyǒu láiguò xìn
After he went back to London, he (then) never wrote again/he didn’t send any more letters.

\(^6\) 当 dāng can only be attached to a time clause, but not a time phrase: e.g. 当你回来时 dāng nǐ huí lái shí ‘When you come back ...’, but not *当回来时 dāng huí lái shí ‘When coming back ...’.

\(^7\) Note that a conjunctive is not needed in the second clause of an imperative or interrogative sentence.
Before getting off the bus/train, would passengers please check their (own) luggage.

Before the meeting starts, let us have a moment’s silence for the victims.

(c) 一 yī ... 就 jiù ... ‘as soon as ...’ may be regarded as a pair of conjunctives placed respectively before the verb in the first and second clause:

我一说他就明白了。

wǒ yī shuō tā jiù mínghái le
As soon as I said it, he (then) understood.

(d) 于是 yúshì ‘thereupon, and so’, 然后 ránhòu ‘after that, then’, 接着 jiēzhé ‘following that’, conjunctions positioned at the beginning of the second of a pair of clauses or sentences:

我们等了一会儿，他还没来。于是我们就离开了。

wǒmen děngle yìhuí | tā hái méi lái | yúshì wǒmen jiù líkāi le
We waited a while, (but) he still didn’t come, and so we (then) left.

他在银行自动提款机那儿取了款，然后(就)到酒巴间去喝酒了。

tā zài yínháng zìdòng tíkuānjī nàr qú le kuān | ránhòu (jiù) dào jiǔbājiān qù hē jiǔ le
He withdrew some money from the automatic machine at the bank, and after that (then) went to drink in a bar.

她先擦点儿胭脂，涂上口唇膏，接着(便)戴上项链和戒指。

tā xiān chà dìanr yánzhī | tú shàng kǒuchúnghāo | jiēzhé(biàn)
dài shàng xiāngliàn hé jiēzhī
She first applied a bit of rouge and lipstick, and following that (then) put on a necklace and ring.

(e) The verb 等 děng ‘to wait for’ often serves as a pseudo-conjunction in the first clause meaning ‘wait until’. It is often echoed by the conjunctive, 再 zài ‘then’ or 才 cái ‘only then’, in the second clause:
_wait until the rain stops and then go.

Let's wait until after office hours and then talk in detail.

They waited until spring arrived before they scattered the seeds on the soil.

22.3.8 INDICATING PREFERENCE: WOULD RATHER

寧可 ningkè or 宁愿 ningyuàn ‘would rather’ pre-verb, first-clause conjunction with 也不 yè bù as a pre-verb conjunctive in the second clause:

I would rather be a vegetarian than eat snails.

If the negative is in the first clause, then the second may be either negative with 也不 yè bù or positive with 也 yè on its own:

I would rather not sleep, than not finish writing this report.

I would rather not drink, than be unable to drive after drinking.

Preference may be expressed rather more objectively with the linked conjunctions 与其 yǔqí ‘instead of’ and 倒不如 dàobùrú ‘it’s better’:

Instead of going out to see a film, it would be better to stay home and watch television.

Finally, choice may also be conveyed by pairing the negative 不 bù ‘not’ with the conjunction, 但 ér ‘but’:

He doesn’t drive but cycles to work.
She doesn't use chopsticks but a knife and fork to eat.

22.3.9 **ELUCIDATING ONE'S PURPOSE: IN ORDER TO, SO AS TO, SO AS NOT TO**

为了 **weile** ‘in order to’ pre-verb first-clause conjunction, with a relatively serious or forceful tone:

为了锻炼身体，他买了一副哑铃。

**weile** duànliàn shēntǐ | tā mǎile yī fù yǎlíng

In order to get fit, he bought a pair/set of dumbbells.

为了保护生态环境，他决定不开汽车，而骑自行车上班。

**weile** bāohù shēntài huánjìng | tā juédìng bù kāi qìchē | ér qí zìxíngchē shàngbān

In order to protect the (ecological) environment, he decided not to drive but to cycle to work.

Unstressed purpose is expressed by one verb following another:

妈妈到市场去买菜。

māmā dào shìchǎng qù mǎi cài

Mother goes to the market to buy vegetables.

One does not normally say:

+为了买菜，妈妈到市场去了。+**weile** mǎi cài | māmā dào shìchǎng qù le

An alternative is 以便 **yibiàn** ‘so as to’, pre-verb conjunction in the second clause:

他来看我，以便了解我对这个问题的看法。

tā lái kàn wǒ | **yibiàn** liàojiě wǒ duì zhè ge wèntí de kànfa

He came to see me so as to understand my view of this question.

Negative purpose is expressed by 以免 **yímiăn** or 免得 **miănde** ‘so as to avoid’, also a pre-verb conjunction in the second clause:

我们提前出发，以免迟到。

wǒmen tíqián chūfā | **yímiăn** chídào

We set out beforehand/early, to avoid arriving late.

他把收音机的音量开得很小，免得干扰隔壁的邻居。

tā bǎ shōuyīngjī de yīnliàng kāi de hěn xiǎo | **miănde** gānráo gébì de línjū

He turned down the radio, to avoid disturbing the neighbours next door.

---

8 See Chapter 14 on verb chains.
22.3.10 ENCODING MISCELLANEOUS RELATIONAL CONCEPTS: APART FROM, LET ALONE, OTHERWISE

除了 chúle ‘apart from’ ... 以外 yǐwài or 之外 zhīwài ‘to exclude’, paired conjunctions in the first clause, surrounding a nominal, an adjectival or verbal expression or even a clause:

除了辣椒之外，什么蔬菜我都喜欢吃。

chúle làjiāo zhīwài | shénme shūcài wǒ dōu xǐhuan chí
Apart from chilli/hot pepper, I like any kind of vegetable.

这次旅行，除了天气不好之外，其他一切都很好。

zhè cì lǚxíng | chúle tiānqì bù hǎo zhīwài | qítā yīqí dōu hěn hǎo
On this trip, apart from the weather being bad, everything else was fine.

22.4 CORRELATIONS AND PARALLELS

In correlative or parallel constructions, the first clause and the second clause of a sentence share a lexical item, usually, but not necessarily, placed in the same position in each of the clauses. Sentences of this kind express coordination, continuation, progression, option, contrast, part–whole relationship, and so on.

谁弄坏，谁赔偿。 shuǐ nòng huài | shuí péicháng
(lit. who/anyone breaks, who/anyone pays) Breakages must be paid for.

谁犯规就罚谁。 shuí fāguǐ jiù fá shuí
(lit. who/anyone break rules, then punish who/anyone)
Anyone breaking the rules will be punished.

哪里有火灾，救火车就开到哪里去。
nǎlǐ yǒu huǒzāi | jiù huǒché jiù kāi dào nǎlǐ qu
(lit. wherever there is a fire, fire engine then drive to wherever)
Wherever there’s a fire, the fire-engine will go.

从哪里拿来就放回到哪里去。 cóng nǎlǐ ná lái jiù fānghuí nǎlǐ qu
(lit. from wherever take then put back to wherever)
Put (things) back where they came from.

说明书上怎么说，我就怎么装。
shuòmíngshū shàng zénme shuō | wǒ jiù zénme zhuāng
(lit. manual-on how say, I then how assemble)
I assemble it how the manual says.

他们一边喝酒，一边聊天。 tāmen yībiān hējiǔ | yībiān liáotiān
(lit. they one-side drink wine one-side chat) They chatted as they drank.
气球越升越高。 qíqiú yùè shēng yùè gāo
(lit. balloon the more rose the more high)
The balloon rose higher and higher.

天气越来越热。9 tiānqì yuèlái yuè rè
(lit. weather the more become the more hot)
The weather grew hotter and hotter.

这种苹果又硬又酸。 zhè zhǒng píngguǒ yòu yìn yòu suān
(lit. this kind apple also hard also sour)
This kind/variety of apple is both hard and sour.

或者这样，或者那样，总得有个结论。
huòzhě zhèyàng | huòzhě nèiyàng | zōngděi yǒu ge jiélùn
(lit. either this mw:way, or that mw:way, must have (a) mw conclusion)
Whether this way or that, there must be a conclusion.

要么去，要么不去，你得拿定主意。
yàome qù | yàome bù qù | nǐ děi nádìng zhūyì
(lit. either go, or not go, you must make up your mind)
You must make up your mind whether you are going or not.

她不是唱歌，就是跳舞，一刻也不停。
tā bùshì chènggē | jiūshì tiáowǔ | yīkè yè bù tíng
(lit. she is not sing, then is dance, one moment even not stop)
She was either singing or dancing without a moment’s stop.

有的学生学得好，有的学生学得不好，程度参差不齐。
yǒu de xuéshēng xué de hǎo | yǒu de xuéshēng xué de bù hǎo | chéngdù cēncī bù qí
(lit. some students study de well, some students study de not well, standard uneven)
Some students studied well and others didn’t, and the standard was uneven.

### 22.5 ZERO CONNECTIVES

Clauses in Chinese also come together without any explicit connective marker (conjunction or conjunctive) to link them. This happens when the two clauses are set in apposition to each other and the meaning of the second clause is in some way sequential on the meaning of the first. These meanings cover the whole range of those listed in §22.3 for conjunctions and conjunctives:

9 In 越 yuè... 越 yuè ‘the more... the more’ parallel construction, if a meaningful verb is lacking after the first 越 yuè, the gap is filled by the dummy verb 来 lǎi ‘become’.
十幾年沒見了，她還是那麼年輕。

**shi ji nian mei jian le | ta hai shi name nianqing** (concession)
(lit. ten and more years not see le, she still like that young)
Though (I) have not seen (her) for ten or more years, she is still the same as she was.

時間不早了，咱們走吧。**shi jian bu zao le | zanmen zou ba** (cause)
(lit. time not early le, we go ba) As time is getting on, let’s go.

你稍等一会儿，我马上就来。

**ni shao deng yihuir | wo mashang jiu lai** (condition)
(lit. you a little wait a moment, I immediately then come)
If you will wait a moment, I will be with you shortly.

他剛想出去，忽然下起大雪來了。

**ta gang xiang chuqu | huran xia qi da xue lai le** (time)
(lit. he just think out-go, suddenly fall begin heavy snow come le)
When he was just thinking of going out it suddenly began to snow heavily.

Many formalised or proverbial sayings adopt zero-connective constructions:

欲知后事如何，且听下回分解。

**yu zhi hou shi ruhe | qie ting xia hui fenjie** (supposition)
(lit. want know afterwards matters like what, then listen next chapter recounting)
If you want to know what happens next, listen to the next chapter.
[a storyteller’s expression]

前人种樹，後人乘涼。**qian ren zhong shu | hou ren cheng liang** (cause)
(lit. previous people plant trees, latter people take advantage of cool)
Because earlier people planted trees, those who came later could enjoy the cool.

不打不相識。**bu da bu xiang shi** (cause)
(lit. not fight not mutually know) No discord, no concord.

人不可貌相，海水不可斗量。

**ren bu ke mao xiang | hai shu hu bu ke dou liang** (comparison)
(lit. people not able judge from appearance, sea water not able measure with a cup in bushels)
People can’t be judged from appearances as the sea can’t be measured in bushels.
(Still waters run deep/great minds can’t be fathomed.)

说到曹操，曹操就到。**shuo dao caocao | caocao jiu dao** (coincidence)
(lit. talk about Cao Cao, Cao Cao then comes) Talk of the devil.
There are various ways of asking questions in Chinese, but a common feature of all of them is that there is no inversion of word order, which remains the same as in corresponding statements. To formulate a question, you can add an interrogative particle at the end of a statement, introduce a question word at the point in the sentence where the answer would come, or pose alternatives, in particular in the form of an affirmative–negative verb.

In the following sections we shall discuss in detail the various types of questions.

23.1 YES–NO QUESTIONS

Yes–no questions are based on some form of assumption on the part of the questioner, who is generally expecting a yes–no answer. They are formulated by adding the question particle 吗 ma at the end of a statement. For example:

**statement:** 这辆是开往上海的火车。 zhè liàng shì kāiwǎng shànghǎi de huǒchē (lit. this mw is bound for Shanghai de train)
This is the train to Shanghai.

**question:** 这辆是开往上海的火车吗? zhè liàng shì kāiwǎng shànghǎi de huǒchē ma
Is this the train to Shanghai?

**statement:** 她买了两张火车票。 tā mǎi le liǎng zhāng huǒchēpiào
She bought two railway tickets.

**question:** 她买了两张火车票吗? tā mǎi le liǎng zhāng huǒchēpiào ma
Did she buy two railway tickets?

If the focus of a yes–no question is on the predicate, the answer is usually expressed by repeating the verb or adjective in the affirmative or negative. Where a modal verb is present, the response repeats the modal verb rather than the main verb. Here are some examples:
If the focus of such a question is shifted to anything other than the predicate, e.g. the subject, object, adverbial or complement in the sentence, the reply is likely to be 是 (de) ‘Yes, it is’ or 不 (shi) ‘No, it isn’t’.

你姐姐也来吗?
ni jièjie yě lái ma
Is your sister coming too?

是的
shi de
Yes, she is.

不是
bù shì
No, she isn’t.

他明天上北京去吗?
tā míngtiān shàng běijīng qù ma
Is he going to Beijing tomorrow?

是的
shi de
Yes, he is.

不是
bù shì
No, he isn’t.

你同意我的意见吗?
ní tóngyì wǒde yìjiān ma
Do you agree with my opinon?

是的
shi de
Yes

不是
bù shì
No
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23.2 SURMISE QUESTIONS

If the question has the particle 吧? ba rather than 吗 ma, it embodies a presumption rather than an assumption, and it conveys a surmise with the speaker presuming that what is stated in the question must or must not be the case.

你是李教授吧? nǐ shì lǐ jiàoshòu ba
You must be Professor Li?

你不是李教授吧? nǐ bùshì lǐ jiàoshòu ba
You aren’t Professor Li, are you?

Here are some more examples:

他大概不来了吧? tā dàgài bù lái le ba
He probably isn’t coming, is he?

你是吃素的吧? nǐ shì chīsù de ba
You are a vegetarian, aren’t you?

这是你新买的吧? zhè shì nǐ xīn mǎi de ba
You have just bought this, haven’t you?

这个消息靠谱吧? zhè ge xiāoxi kào de zhù ba
This news is reliable, isn’t it?

2 For the use of 吧 ba in imperatives, see Chapter 24.
A negative question with 嗎 ma in fact also expresses a degree of positive surmise:

你不是李教授吗？ni bùshì lǐ jiàoshòu ma
Aren’t you Professor Li?

你下星期不来吗？ni xià xīngqī bù lái ma
Aren’t you coming next week?

23.3 SUGGESTIONS IN THE FORM OF QUESTIONS

Suggestions are often couched in the form of questions. The usual formulation is for a statement of intent to be followed by a question such as 好吗 háo ma, 行不行 xíng bù xíng and 怎么样 zěnmeyàng.

咱们一起去看电影，好吗？zánmen yǐqǐ qù kàn diànyǐng | háo ma
(lit. we together go see film, all right ma) Let’s go and see a film together.

你帮一下我的忙，行不行？ni bāng yīxià wǒde máng | xíng bù xíng
(lit. you help one mw:time my busy, will do or not) Can you give me some help?

咱们今晚去喝杯啤酒，怎么样？zánmen jīnwàn qù hē bēi píjiǔ | zěnmeyàng
(lit. we this evening go drink (one) mw:glass beer, how about that) Let’s go and have a beer tonight./How about going to have a beer tonight?

23.4 ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

Alternative questions pose two alternative possibilities expressed in the same format with the pivotal interrogative 还是 háishi ‘... or ...’ between them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>question</th>
<th>answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你要红茶还是绿茶？</td>
<td>我要红茶。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni yào hóngchá háishi yào lúchá</td>
<td>wǒ yào hóngchá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want black tea or green tea?</td>
<td>I want black tea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

你想喝红茶还是想喝绿茶？ni xiǎng hē hóngchá háishi xiǎng hē lúchá
Would you like (to drink) black tea or green tea?

咱们坐汽车去还是坐火车去？zánmen zuò qìchē qù háishi zuò huǒchē qù
Shall we go by car or by train?

3 See §23.8 on rhetorical questions.
4 On affirmative-negative expressions like 好不好 háo bù háo ‘OK?’, 行不行 xíng bù xíng ‘Will that do?’, and so on, see §23.5 below.
Answers to affirmative–negative questions are usually given in full with the verb as the first example shows.

23.5 AFFIRMATIVE–NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

General enquiries are also expressed by affirmative–negative questions, which suggest a yes or no alternative to the listener by using the affirmative and negative form of the verbal phrase in an alternating sequence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>question</th>
<th>answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你去不去看球赛?</td>
<td>去。 qù or 不去。 bù qu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lit. you go not go see game)</td>
<td>Yes, I am. No, I am not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you going to the game?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

你吃不吃羊肉?  nǐ chī bù chī yángròu
(lit. you eat not eat lamb) Do you eat lamb?

我们打球，你来不来?  wǒmen dà qiú | nǐ lái bù lái
(lit. we hit ball, you come not come)
We are going for a game, are you coming?

这个问题你清楚不清楚?  zhèi ge wèntí nǐ qīngchù bù qīngchù
(lit. this mw question you clear not clear)
Are you clear about this question?

我有个办法，你们大家看行不行?  wǒ yǒu ge bànfǎ | nǐmen dàjiā kàn xíng bù xíng
(lit. I have mw way, you everybody see work not work)
I have a plan. Do you all think it will work?

5 If the verb used in an alternative question is 是 shì, it does not need to be repeated in the alternative part. For example, one does not say: *今年圣诞节是星期四还是星期五? * jīnnián shèngdànjié shì xīngqī sì hái shì xīngqī wǔ.
你冷不冷？ **nǐ lěng bù lěng**  
(lit. you cold not cold) Are you cold?

这双球鞋是不是你的？ **zhè shuāng qiúxié shì bù shì nǐde**  
(lit. this pair ball-shoes is not is yours)  
Is this pair of trainers/sneakers yours?

你身上有没有零钱？ **nǐ shēnshàng yǒu méiyǒu lǐngqián**  
(lit. your body-on have not have change)  
Do you have any change on you?

If there is a modal verb before the main verb, it is the modal verb that takes the affirmative and negative form:

你想不想去看球赛？ **nǐ xiǎng bù xiǎng qù kàn qiúsài**  
(lit. you like not like go see game) Would you like to go to the game?

你会不会滑冰？ **nǐ huì bù huì huábing**  
(lit. you can not can skate ice) Can you skate?

If the verb or modal verb used in the question is disyllabic, the second syllable of the affirmative verb may be omitted:

你打算打算在这儿待下去？ **nǐ dǎ bù dāsuàn zài zhèr dài xiàqu**  
Do you intend to stay here?

instead of:

你打算打算在这儿待下去？ **nǐ dāsuàn bù dāshuàn zài zhèr dài xiàqu**

你喜不喜欢看电视剧？ **nǐ xǐ bù xīhuàn kàn diānshìjù**  
Do you like (watching) television plays?

instead of:

你喜欢不喜欢看电视剧？ **nǐ xīhuàn bù xīhuàn kàn diānshìjù**

Answers to affirmative-negative questions are simply repetitions of the verb in the positive or negative, similar to those given to yes–no questions (see §23.1 above).

23.6 QUESTION-WORD QUESTIONS

The common question words in Chinese are:
The question word is normally placed in the sentence at the point where the required information would be provided in the corresponding statement, and there is no change of word order. Take a statement like the following:

小张昨天在商场买了两件衬衫。

xiaozhang zuotian zai shangchang mai le liang yuan chenshan
Little Zhang yesterday bought two shirts in the market.

A number of questions can be constructed on the basis of this sentence.

谁昨天在商场买了两件衬衫?
shui zuotian zai shangchang mai le liang yuan chenshan
Who bought two shirts yesterday in the market?

小张什么时候在商场买了两件衬衫?
xiaozhang shenme shihou zai shangchang mai le liang yuan chenshan
When did Little Zhang buy two shirts in the market?

小张昨天在哪儿买了两件衬衫?
xiaozhang zuotian zai nar mai le liang yuan chenshan
Where did Little Zhang buy two shirts yesterday?

小张昨天在商场做什么?
shui zuotian zai shangchang zuo shenme
What did Little Zhang do yesterday in the market?

小张昨天在商场买了几件衬衫?
xiaozhang zuotian zai shangchang mai le ji jian chenshan
How many shirts did Little Zhang buy yesterday in the market?

小张昨天在商场买了两件什么?
xiaozhang zuotian zai shangchang mai le liang yuan shenme
What two things did Little Zhang buy yesterday in the market?
It is clear from these examples that, while the English word order of the translation is adjusted in each case, the Chinese sentence retains the same format with the question word inserted at the appropriate point.

The only exceptions to this are 为什么 weí shénme and 千吗 gàn má ‘why’, which are placed anywhere in front of the verb, depending on emphasis.

为什么小张昨天在商场买了两件衬衫?
weí shénme xiǎozhāng zuótiān zài shāngchǎng mǎile liǎng jiàn chènshān
Why did Little Zhang buy two shirts yesterday in the market?

小张为什么昨天在商场买了两件衬衫?
xiǎozhāng weí shénme zuótiān zài shāngchǎng mǎile liǎng jiàn chènshān
Why did Little Zhang buy two shirts yesterday in the market?

小张昨天为什么在商场买了两件衬衫?
xiǎozhāng zuótiān weí shénme zài shāngchǎng mǎile liǎng jiàn chènshān
Why did Little Zhang buy two shirts yesterday in the market?

小张昨天在商场为什么买了两件衬衫?
xiǎozhāng zuótiān zài shāngchǎng weí shénme mǎile liǎng jiàn chènshān
Why did Little Zhang buy two shirts yesterday in the market?

Some general examples of question-word questions:

你是谁?  nǐ shì shuí
Who are you?

你的导师是谁?  nǐde dàoshī shì shuí
Who is your supervisor/tutor?

谁是你的导师?  shuí shì nǐde dàoshī
Who is your supervisor/tutor?

你打算跟谁一起去?  nǐ dāsuàn gēn shuí yīqǐ qu
Who do you intend to go with?

你姓什么?  nǐ xìng shénme
What is your (sur)name?

你去哪国旅行?  nǐ qù nǎ/něi guó lǚxíng
Which country are you going to on your travels?
哪个是你的？ *nà/nei ge shì nide*
Which one is yours?

你准备怎么去？ *nǐ zhǔnbèi zénme qù*
How do you plan to go?

那儿的气候怎么样？ *nàr de qìhòu zěnmeyàng*
What is the weather like there?

你儿时上班？ *nǐ jishí shàngbān*
When do you go to work?

今年什么时候开学？ *jīnnián shénme shíhou kāixué*
When does school start this year?

下星期几举行毕业典礼？ *xià xīngqī jǐ jǔxíng biàyì diǎnlǐ*
What day next week is the graduation ceremony being held?

这个图书馆有多少书？ *zhèi ge tushūguǎn yǒu duōshào shū*
How many books does this library have?

你去哪儿？ *nǐ qù nár*
Where are you going?

你是什么地方的(的)人？ *nǐ shì shénme difang (de) rén*
Where are you from?

你为什么不去参加舞会？ *nǐ wèi shénme bù qù cānjiā wǔhuì*
Why didn’t you go to the party?

埃菲尔铁塔有多高？ *ái'ěr tiětǎ yǒu duō gāo*
How high is the Eiffel Tower?

你准备在那儿待多久？ *nǐ zhǔnbèi zài nár dàiduōjiǔ*
How long do you plan to stay there?

If the particle 呢 *ne* is added to the end of these question-word questions, the enquiry tends to become more of a query as though the questioner may need to be convinced.

你准备怎么去呢？ *nǐ zhǔnbèi zénme qù ne*
How are you planning to go then?

你准备在那儿待多少时间呢？ *nǐ zhǔnbèi zài nár dàiduōshǎo shíjiān ne*
So how long are you planning to stay there?
23.7 FOLLOW-UP QUERIES WITH 呢 ne

Questions like ‘and how about . . .’, ‘and what about . . .’, etc., which are asked in a given situation or context, are expressed by simply placing the particle 呢 ne after the object, person, etc., that is of concern. For example:

(Portland) ta hē kāfēi) 你呢?  nǐ ne
She’s having coffee.) What about you?

(明天不行。 míngtiān bù xíng) 后天呢? hòutiān ne
(Tomorrow’s no good.) How about day after tomorrow?

(大家都来了。 dàjiā dōu lái le) 李先生呢? lǐ xiànhshēng ne
(Everyone has come.) What about Mr Li?

(我同意。 wǒ tóngyì) 你的朋友呢? nǐde péngyou ne
(I agree.) What about your friend?

(开门吧。 kāi mén ba) 鍵匙呢? yàoshi ne
(Open the door!) Where’s the key?

(真奇怪。 zhēn qíguài) 我的大衣呢? wǒde dàyī ne
(This is really strange!) Where is my overcoat?

23.8 RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

Rhetorical questions with their challenge to the hearer to disagree are often marked in Chinese by the presence of the sentence adverb 难道 nándào ‘is it possible to say’,

zhè jiàn shìr nándào nǐ bù zhídào ma
Do you mean you don’t know about this?

Being an adverb, 难道 nándào may be placed anywhere before the verb. For example:

zhè jiàn shìr nándào nǐ bù zhídào ma
zhè jiàn shìr nǐ nándào bù zhídào ma
nándào zhè jiàn shìr nǐ bù zhídào ma
In fact, all questions couched in the negative have a rhetorical effect:

你不怕她生气吗？

ni bù pà tā shēngqì ma
Aren’t you afraid she’ll get angry?

他不会不守信用吧？

tā bùhuì bù shǒu xīnyòng ba
She is bound to keep her promise, isn’t she?

这样说岂非自相矛盾？

zhèyàng shuō qǐfēi zì xiāng máodùn
Isn’t it self-contradictory to say this?

23.9 EXCLAMATORY QUESTIONS

Exclamatory questions, expressing surprise, doubt, insistence, etc., generally have a particle like 啊 ā, 呀 yā, 哇 wā, etc.7 at the end of the sentence and they often include an adverb like 究竟 jiūjìng, 到底 dàodì ‘after all’.

这是怎么回事啊？

zhè shì zěnme huì shì ā
What’s going on?

你究竟吃不吃呀？

nǐ jiūjìng chī bù chī yā
Are you going to eat (it) (after all) or not?

你干吗不早说呀？

nǐ gàn má bù zǎo shuō yā
Why on earth didn’t you say earlier?

7 The particles in these questions like those in exclamations have phonetic and graphemic variants depending on the preceding vowel or consonant (see Chapter 24).
他是不是回去啦？  tā shì bù shì huí qu  lā
Is it true that he’s gone back home?

到底是哪一天哪？  dào dì shì néi yī tiān na
What day is it then?
Similar to questions, imperatives and exclamations in Chinese are also very much based on notional corresponding statements for their word order. For an imperative, the obvious major difference is the regular addition of a ‘request’ or ‘hope’ expression at the beginning and a different set of particles at the end. For example:

(a) A ‘request’ word at the beginning:

请！ qǐng zuò
Please sit.

(b) A particle at the end:

坐下吧！ zuòxià ba
Sit down.

(c) A ‘request’ word at the beginning as well as a particle at the end:

请坐下吧！ qǐng zuòxià ba
Please sit down.

An exclamation is likely to have an interjection at the beginning and a particle at the end of the sentence:

啊！真好哇！ ā | zhēnhǎo wa
Hey, it’s really good.

Both imperatives and exclamations belong to the realm of topic–comment constructions: the former, where it is present, making explicit the speaker’s authoritative attitude to the situation in hand, and the latter, the speaker’s emotional response. The employment of end-of-sentence particles, as on all other occasions reveals the committed and emotional nature of what is being said.

In the following sections, we will discuss the various types of imperatives and exclamations.
24.1 VERBS IN IMPERATIVES RESTRICTED TO VOLUNTARY ACTIONS

Not every verb in the language can be used in imperatives, only verbs expressing voluntary actions which are controllable. In other words, they are requests for action that is achievable or possible. For example:

请把窗户打开！qing bā chuānghu dākāi
Please open the window.

别锁门！bié suǒ mén
Don’t lock the door.

*请晕倒！qǐng yūn dǎo
*Please faint!

24.2 IMPERATIVES: BEGINNERS AND END-PARTICLES

Imperatives are generally face-to-face interlocutions, and the person addressed is usually left out. For example:

请喝茶！qing hé chá
Please have some tea.

不要打扰他！bùyào dǎjiāo tā
Don’t disturb him!

请别说话！qǐng bié shuōhuà
Please shut up.

The addressee must obviously be identified, if there is more than one person present, or ambiguity might arise:

请您回答这个问题！qǐng nín huídá zhèi ge wèntí
Please would you answer the question!

你过来！nǐ guòlái
You come over here.

If a request is made to everybody present, the expression used is 大家 dàjiā or 各位 gèwèi:

请大家保持安静！qǐng dàjiā bǎochí ānjìng
Would everyone please keep quiet.

1 别 bié ‘don’t’ is the monosyllabic fusion of the original disyllabic expression 不要 bùyào ‘don’t’. 
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Please would you all not leave your seats.

Opening ‘request’ words like 请 qíng ‘please’, 别 bié ‘don’t’, etc., are usually included if the instruction is initiated by the speaker. If it is a response to a move or request initiated by the addressee, the end-of-sentence particle 吧 ba is used:

进来吧！ jīnlái ba
Come in!

你先走吧！ nǐ xiān zǒu ba
You go ahead!

好吧！ hǎo ba
All right.

甭 bèng ‘don’t’, which is a phonetic fusion of the disyllabic 不用 bùyòng ‘there’s no need to’ corresponds to 别 bié ‘don’t’:

你甭管！ nǐ bèng guǎn
(lit. you no-need look-after) Mind your own business!

这件事，你甭操心！ zhèjiàn shì | nǐ bèng cāoxīn
(lit. this mw matter, you no-need worry-about) Don’t worry about this!

Such imperatives, being responses to the actions and attitudes of others, will usually have to include the addressee, and 邦 bèng ‘there’s no need to’ would therefore not normally be used on its own:

*甭担心！ *bèng dānxīn
*Don’t worry!

A further point on 吧 ba is that, as well as giving consent, it is also commonly used to make suggestions:

咱们走吧！ zànmén zǒu ba
Let’s go.

让我来跟你做个伴儿吧。 ràng wǒ lái gēn ní zuò ge bànér ba
Let me be your companion.

我替你满上这杯吧。 wǒ tī nǐ mǎn shàng zhè bēi ba
Let me fill your glass./Let me fill this glass for you.

In addition to 吧 ba with its meaning of consent or suggestion, there are three other end-of-imperative particles: 啊 ā (and its phonetic variants), which conveys eagerness or impatience for an action to be carried out, or a general state of
urgency; 着 zhe, which urges the addressee to persist in a state he or she is already in or about to get into; and 了 le, which presses for the cessation or change of activity. Here are some detailed examples

(a) 啊 å (and its variants 呀 ya, 嘿 na, 啦 la, 嘟 lěi, 嘻 lōu, etc. which all link phonetically with the previous syllable) express urgency on the part of the speaker:

救命啊！ jiùmìng å
Help!/Save me!

来人哪！ lái rén na
(lit. come someone) Come and help!

别说啦！ bié shuō la
Don’t say anything any more!

快来呀！ kuài lái ya
(lit. quick come) Hurry!

走嘞！ zǒu léi
Let’s go!

大家都坐好喽！ dàjiā dōu zuò hǎo lǒu
Everyone sit down, please!

(b) 着 zhe may only be used with verbs which do not involve movement. In other words, the request is made to the addressee to maintain a certain state or position. 着 zhe imperatives are usually extremely brief so as to drive the point home:

(i) maintaining a situation:

坐着！ （别站起来！） zuò zhe （bié zhàn qǐlái）
Stay sitting! (Don’t stand up!)

请等着！ （不要离开！） qǐng děng zhe （bù yào líkāi）
Please keep waiting! (Don’t leave!)

穿着！ （别脱下来！） chuān zhe （bié tuō xiālái）
Keep it on! (Don’t take it off!)

(ii) holding on to something:

拿着！ ná zhe
Keep hold (of it)!

2 See §24.5 below.
Imperatives and Exclamations

放着！ fàng zhe
Leave (it) where it is!

记着！ jì zhe
Remember!

Verbs indicating continuous movement naturally do not occur as imperatives with 着 zhe:

*走着！ *zǒu zhe
*说着！ *shuō zhe

(c) 了 le imperatives urge an immediate stop or change:

好了，好了，别吵了！ hǎo le | hǎo le | bié chǎo le
Enough is enough. Stop arguing!

不要哭了！ bùyào kù le
Stop crying!

吃饭了！ chī fàn le
Food’s up!

集合了！ jíhé le
Fall in!

Because of the advisory nature of 了 le imperatives, they are more often than not prohibitions or suggestions to put a stop to less desirable actions or conditions. They are therefore mostly negative imperatives with 别 bié, etc.:

你别骗我了！ nǐ bié piàn wó le
Stop cheating/deceiving me!

别开他的玩笑！ bié kāi tāde wánxiào le
Don’t tease him!

不要生气了！ bùyào shēngqì le
Don’t get angry!

The end-of-imperative particle 呃 bei ‘then’ is generally used after some form of a condition has been established:

不懂，就好好学呗！ bù dǒng | jiù hǎohǎo xué bei
If you don’t understand, then study hard!
As you know what he's like, don't provoke him again!

An imperative without a 'request' beginner or a terminating particle sounds extremely harsh or rude, and is usually either a command or a threat:

立正！lìzhèng
Attention!

坐下！zuòxià
Sit (down)!

滚出去！gǔnchūqu
Get out!

别动！biédòng
Don't move!

A reiterated or reduplicated imperative with or without a beginner or a particle has the tone of a gentle invitation or plea. Such imperatives are never couched in the negative:

坐，坐，坐！zuò | zuò | zuò
Sit down, sit down.

帮我吧！bāngbāng wǒ ba
Give me a hand./Help me.

你好好地想(一)想吧！nǐ hǎohǎo de xiǎng (yī) xiǎng ba
Think about it!

请你再等一等吧！qǐng nǐ zài děng yī děng ba
Please wait a bit longer!

24.3 SPOKEN AND WRITTEN REQUESTS

'Request' beginners, apart from 请qǐng 'please', and end-of-imperative particles are not used in written requests or prohibitions. Public notices about laws and regulations are generally brief and blunt and do not require the emotional colouring provided by particles, etc. In addition, prohibitions are expressed by the more classical勿wù 'do not', 莫mò 'not to', 不准bù zhǔn 'not allowed', etc. rather than 别bié 'don't':
In letters, imperatives do not normally incorporate particles. They may begin with 请 qìng ‘please’, or perhaps more often with 希 xī or 望 wàng ‘hope’:

请原谅。 qìng yuánliàng
Please forgive me.

万望光临指导。 wàn wàng guānglín zhídào
(lit. ten-thousand hope honour-us-with-your-presence advise)
I/We very much hope you will come and advise me/us.

务希拨冗出席。 wù xī bōrǒng chūxī
(lit. earnestly hope set-aside busy-schedule attend)
Your presence is cordially requested.

敬请来信指教。 jìng qǐng lái xìn zhǐjiào
You are respectfully invited to write and instruct (me/us).

24.4 INTERJECTIONS AND EXCLAMATORY EXPRESSIONS

The shortest exclamations are simply interjections. Long exclamatory expressions tend to take the form of established expletives relating to specific situations.
Some interesting features of interjections in Chinese are:

(a) they are mostly monosyllabic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哇</td>
<td>āi</td>
<td>Look out!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哼</td>
<td>hng</td>
<td>Humph!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) the few disyllabic ones all have level tones: e.g.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>嗨哟</td>
<td>hāiyō</td>
<td>Heave ho!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嗳</td>
<td>hài</td>
<td>Heave ho!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哎呀</td>
<td>āiyā</td>
<td>Gosh; Damn it!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) monosyllabic interjections are extremely tone-sensitive. A syllable, represented by the same grapheme in writing, may adopt different tones for different emotions, e.g.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哇 ā</td>
<td>expressing surprise</td>
<td>哇，下雪啦！ ā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哇 á</td>
<td>pressing a point</td>
<td>哇，你说什么？ á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哇 à</td>
<td>expressing query</td>
<td>哇，这是怎么回事啊？ à</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哇 à [shorter fall]</td>
<td>agreement</td>
<td>哇，好吧。 à</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哇 à [longer fall]</td>
<td>sudden revelation</td>
<td>哇，原来是你。 à</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) some interjections take different graphemes, e.g.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哇/诶 āi</td>
<td>If only...</td>
<td>哇/诶，早知如此，我就不去了。 āi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If only I'd known earlier, I wouldn’t have gone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wow!  Wow, it's snowing like mad.

Here is a list of interjections in semantic categories:

(a) calling somebody's attention:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interjection</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>喂 wèi</td>
<td>Hello!</td>
<td>Hello, where are you off to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嘿 wāi</td>
<td>Hi!</td>
<td>Hi, good morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嘿 wāi</td>
<td>Hey!</td>
<td>Hey, long time no see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嘿 hēi</td>
<td>Hey!</td>
<td>Hey, hurry up!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哎 āi</td>
<td>Look out!</td>
<td>Be careful!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>喂 nuò</td>
<td>There!</td>
<td>There. Isn't that your umbrella?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) responding to a call:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interjection</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>啊 à</td>
<td>All right.</td>
<td>All right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哎 āi</td>
<td>All right.</td>
<td>All right, we'll do it this way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>喂 m</td>
<td>H'm; I see.</td>
<td>H'm, I'm coming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>喂 ng</td>
<td>H'm; yes.</td>
<td>Yes, we'll do it like this then.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>喂 ng</td>
<td>OK.</td>
<td>Yes, OK!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) expressing doubt or query:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interjection</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>喂 ng</td>
<td>What?</td>
<td>What, what did you say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>喂 m</td>
<td>Pardon?</td>
<td>H'm, what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>啊 á</td>
<td>Yes? Well?</td>
<td>Ah, you're going or not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哦 ó</td>
<td>What?</td>
<td>Well, are you going or not?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) expressing sudden revelation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interjection</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>喂/噢 ó</td>
<td>Oh, so it is!</td>
<td>Oh, I've remembered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>喂/噢 ó</td>
<td>Oh, I've remembered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(e) expressing contradiction:

哎 āi  Come on; No, no.

唉 ě  No, no.

(f) expressing surprise:

嘻 xī  Oh/Gosh!

啊 ā  What!

嘿 hēi  Why!

嘿 huò  Wow!

嘻 hē  Ah!

哟 yō  Oh!

呀 yā  Oh!

哟 yōu  Hey!

(g) expressing satisfaction:

嘿 hēi  Hey!

哈 hā  Aha!

(h) expressing disgust or dissatisfaction:

哼 hng  Humph!

呼，他撒谎！

Humph, he’s lying!
Imperatives and Exclamations

(i) expressing disappointment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>呵呵</td>
<td>hè hē</td>
<td>Tut-tut!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嘿嘿</td>
<td>hē hē</td>
<td>Tut-tut, how dare you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好</td>
<td>hǎo</td>
<td>Well!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嘿嘿(sarcastically)</td>
<td>hē hē</td>
<td>Well, you’re really clever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>呸</td>
<td>pēi</td>
<td>Pooh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>呸，他算老几?</td>
<td>pēi</td>
<td>Pooh, he’s a nobody.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(j) expressing regret:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哎/唉</td>
<td>āi</td>
<td>Oh [dejected]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哎呀</td>
<td>yā yā</td>
<td>Oh, what a shame!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哎</td>
<td>āi</td>
<td>Huh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哎，谁知道?</td>
<td>āi</td>
<td>Huh, who knows?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嗨</td>
<td>hài</td>
<td>Huh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嗨，天晓得！</td>
<td>hài</td>
<td>Huh, heaven knows!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exclamatory expressions, on the other hand, are generally situation-specific. The following is a sample list:

(a) for phatic exchanges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你好!</td>
<td>nǐ hǎo</td>
<td>Hello!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你早!</td>
<td>nǐ zǎo</td>
<td>Morning!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>请进!</td>
<td>qǐng jìn</td>
<td>Come in!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>慢走!</td>
<td>màn zǒu</td>
<td>Take it easy!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>再见!</td>
<td>zàijiàn</td>
<td>Goodbye!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>谢谢!</td>
<td>xièxiè</td>
<td>Thank you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不谢</td>
<td>bù xiè</td>
<td>Don’t mention it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好说，好说！</td>
<td>hào shuō hào shuō</td>
<td>You’re too kind!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪里，哪里！</td>
<td>nǎi nǎi</td>
<td>It’s very kind of you to say so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>见笑，见笑！</td>
<td>jiànxiào jiànxiào</td>
<td>I’m hopeless.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) introductory phrases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>对不起</td>
<td>duibuqi</td>
<td>Sorry...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>请问</td>
<td>qìng wèn</td>
<td>May I ask...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>劳驾</td>
<td>láo jià</td>
<td>Excuse me...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>依我看</td>
<td>yī wǒ kàn</td>
<td>In my view...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一般来说</td>
<td>yībān lái shuō</td>
<td>Generally speaking...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) angry and abusive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>活该！</td>
<td>huógāi</td>
<td>Serves you right!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>滚蛋！</td>
<td>gǔndàn</td>
<td>Scram!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他妈的！</td>
<td>tàmāde</td>
<td>Damn it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>混帐！</td>
<td>hùnzàng</td>
<td>Bastard!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>岂有此理！</td>
<td>qǐ yǒu cǐ lǐ</td>
<td>Nonsense!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) 真 zhēn ‘really’ as an opener:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>真糟糕 zhēn zāogāo</td>
<td>What a mess./Too bad.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真该死 zhēn gāisǐ</td>
<td>Damn it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真要害 zhēn yàoming</td>
<td>What a nuisance!/It’s terrible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真奇怪 zhēn qíguaì</td>
<td>Very odd.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e) foregrounding a descriptive term with 的 de for emphasis:

好端端的，为什么生气来了?
hǎoduānduān de | wèishénme shēng qǐ qǐ lái le
Everything is fine, and so why are you getting angry?

无缘无故的，你怎么骂起人来了?
wúyuán wú gù de | nǐ zénmé mà qǐ rén lái le
For no reason at all, why did you start swearing at people?

糊里糊涂的，我把那件事全忘了。
húlíhútu de | wó bà nèi jiàn shì quán wàng le
In my confusion, I entirely forgot about that.

(f) 了 le voicing an interruption:

好了，好了，别提了。 hǎo le | hǎo le | bié tí le
OK, OK, leave it out.

得了，不要再说了。 dé le | búyào zài shuō le
Enough, don’t say any more.

算了。 suàn le
That’s it. [there’s nothing we can do about it]
24.5  EXCLAMATIONS: PARTICLES AND DEGREE ADVERBIALS OR COMPLEMENTS

啊å is the archi-phonemic indicator for most exclamations. Its phonetic and graphemic variants depend on the last vowel or consonant preceding it. The following table gives a rough guide to the possible phonetic and graphetic variations of 啊å:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endings of the previous word</th>
<th>Final phonetic and graphemic realisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a e i (non-alveolar)</td>
<td>+ 啊å = 呀 yā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o ü</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u ao ou</td>
<td>+ 啊å = 哇 wā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>+ 啊å = 哪 nā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(end-of-sentence) le</td>
<td>+ 啊å = 拉 lā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng i (alveolar)</td>
<td>+ 啊å = 啊 ā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

啊å is normally preceded in the exclamatory sentence or phrase by a degree adverb or complement, such as 多(么) ‘how . . . ’, etc. Here are some examples:

这里的风景多美呀！zhèlǐ de fēngjǐng duō měi ya
How beautiful the scenery is here.

这项工作多么有意义呀！zhèxiàng gōngzuò duōme yǒu yìyi ya
This work is really meaningful.

今年夏天的天气真好哇！jīn nián xiàtiān de tiānqì zhēnhǎo wa
The weather this summer is really good.

我的天哪！wǒ de tiān na
Heavens (above)!

什么都安排好啦！shénme dōu ānpái hǎo la
Everything is sorted out/settled.

爷爷病啦！yéye bìng la
Grandpa’s ill!

多棒啊！duō bàng a
Wonderful!

屋子里多么安静啊！wūzǐ lǐ duōme ānjìng a
How quiet it is in the room!

我说的都是真人真事啊！wǒ shuōde dōushi zhēnrén zhēnsī a
I’m talking about real people and events.
PR

a is a direct and instinctive exclamation. However, if the exclamation is a response intended to contradict an apparent assumption, other exclamatory particles are used, which each have specific implications.

ne asserts what is truly the case and not what others might have imagined it to be. It features in complaints, contradictions and rejections of criticism and it is often used with adverbs such as 才 cái ‘only then . . . ’, 正在 zhèngzài ‘right at this moment’ and 怎么 zěnme ‘how can . . . ’.

It will be odd if the English team does not win.

Everyone’s missing you.

How could you say that?

ma is also used to retort in a mild way to what seems to be an unreasonable suggestion:

Isn’t this very clear?

You can’t blame him for this. He’s still young/only a child.

lou, a variant of le, conveys a degree of urgency about something that has to be done or is about to happen:

The match is about to begin. [please settle down and watch!]

The dinner is ready! [please take your seat at the table!]

3 Corresponding to the responsive type in imperatives.
A highly significant feature of Chinese sentence and discourse structure is the avoidance of repetition wherever possible. Sentences are abbreviated and words omitted where context and co-text make the meaning clear. Pronouns in particular are regularly omitted and the third person neuter 它 tā 'it' occurs quite rarely, since it is by definition a reference back to something already identified. Questions with their answers give clear examples of this feature.

25.1 ABBREVIATIONS IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

In answers to questions only essential information is given, and the response to yes–no questions almost invariably focuses on the verb as the core element. In the examples below, we give literal translations to indicate the structure of the responses. There are standard translations in brackets.

**Question:** 那本书你看完了吗?  nèi běn shū nǐ kàn wán le ma
That mw book you read finish le ma?
(Have you finished reading that book?)

**Answer:** 还没有。 hái méiyǒu
Still not have. (Not yet.)

**Question:** 你喜欢这幅画儿吗?  nǐ xǐhuān zhè fú huàr ma?
You like this mw picture ma? (Do you like this picture?)

**Answer:** 我喜欢，可是我妻子不喜欢。
wǒ xǐhuān | kèshì wǒ qīzǐ bù xǐhuān
I like, but my wife not like. (I do but my wife doesn’t.)

Even in answers to question-word questions where the focus is elsewhere, verbs still tend to be repeated:

**Question:** 谁去帮帮他的忙?  shuí qù bāngbāng tāde máng
Who go help-help his busy? (Who is going to help him?)

**Answer:** 我去。 wǒ qù
I go. (I am.)
question: 什么时候去？
What time go? (When are you going?)

answer: 明天去。
Tomorrow go. (Tomorrow.)

Note that in the last question, while ‘you’ is required in the English translation, the Chinese has no need for the pronoun since it is clear that it must be the person addressed.²

25.2 ABBREVIATIONS IN FACE-TO-FACE EXCHANGES

The omission of ‘you’ mentioned immediately above is naturally a feature of orders or requests made face to face, since the addressee is in the same way normally obvious:

请进！qing jin
Please come in.

快把东西收拾好！kuài bā dōngxi shōushí hǎo
Hurry up and make things tidy.

Other conventional face-to-face expressions are likewise succinct, without subjects or objects being mentioned:

对不起。duìbùqǐ  Sorry. (lit. Face-not-rise.)
谢谢。xièxiè  Thanks./Thank you. (lit. Thank-thank.)
没关系。méi guānxi  It doesn’t matter. (lit. Has not concern.)

25.3 ABBREVIATIONS IN COMPARISONS

In Chinese syntax, it is the norm for the second element in a comparison not to be expressed in full. For example in the following sentences the words in square brackets would usually be omitted:

那件衣服比这件[衣服]漂亮。nèi jiān yīfu bǐ zhèi jiān [yīfu] piàoliàng
(lit. that mw clothes compared with this mw [clothes] attractive)
That suit/piece of clothing is prettier/more attractive than this one.

你打羽毛球打得比我[打羽毛球打得]好。
nǐ dǎ yǔmáoqiú dǎ de bǐ wǒ [dǎ yǔmáoqiú dǎ de] hǎo
(lit. you play badminton play de compared with me [play badminton play de] well)
You play badminton better than I do.

¹ Note that the subject 你 ni ‘you’ is omitted in this follow-up question but the verb is retained.
² See §25.5 below.
The weather here is hotter than in Beijing.

25.4 THE HIDDEN PRESENCE OF THE NARRATOR IN A NARRATIVE

The narrator in a piece of narration is omnipresent but not always visible. In Chinese there is a range of set expressions which establish a narrative presentation, introducing the description of a situation or creating an atmosphere. They usually take the form of an impersonalised verbal phrase and are placed at the beginning of the sentence:

只见远远走来两个人。zhī jiàn yuǎnyuǎn zǒu lái liǎng ge rén
(lit. only see far-far walk-come two mw people)
One could see that in the distance two people approached.

据说他已出国去了。jùshuō tā yǐ chūguó qù le
(lit. according to talk he already exit country go le)
They say he’s already gone abroad.

不知不觉已经过了一年。bùzhī bùjué yìjīng guò le yī nián
(lit. not know not feel already pass le one year)
Imperceptibly, a year had already passed.

谁知道那年冬天没有下雪。shuí/shéi zhīdào nèi nián dōngtiān méiyǒu xià xuě
(lit. who know that year winter not have fall snow)
Nobody expected it not to snow that winter./Unexpectedly it did not snow that winter.

怪不得她生气了。guàibúde tā shēngqì le
(lit. wonder not possible she angry le)
No wonder she got angry.

25.5 OMISSIONS IN A DISCOURSE

The omission of sentence elements we observed in §25.1 is most apparent in longer sentences in Chinese. They usually take the form of chain constructions that bring together, in a linear sequence of time and action, a series of basic ‘subject + predicate’ or ‘topic + comment’ sentences. They also establish, by definition, a broader contextual and co-textual base which allows for extensive omissions of elements like subjects and objects from the constituent basic sentences, because these elements have already been identified in the text.

3 See Chapter 14.
Take a sentence like the following (arranged vertically to identify the constituent sentences):

那天我去找一个老朋友，nèi tiān wǒ qù zhǎo yī ge lǎo péngyou
敲了两下门，qiāo le liǎng xià mén
没人回答，méi rén huidá
想他准是出去了，xiǎng tā zhǔn shì chū qù le
便留了个字条，biàn liú le zì zìtiáo
从门上的信箱口里塞了进去，
cóng mén shàng de xìnxiāngkǒu lǐ sāi le jīnqu
约好改日再到拜访，yuē hǎo gǎi rì zài dào bīn fāng
并说回来后，bìng shuō huí lái hòu
最好给我一个答复，zuì hǎo gěi wǒ yí ge dafù
没想到过了几天，méi xiǎng dào guò le jī tiān
收到一封没署名的信，shōudào yī fēng méi shǔmíng de xīn
说他已经搬走了，shuō tā yǐjīng bān zǒu le
不知去了什么地方。bùzhī qù le shénme difang

To highlight the omissions, we will first provide a literal translation and then a full translation, which introduces in brackets the pronominal and other elements required by English but ‘omitted’ by Chinese:

**literal translation:**
那天我去找一个老朋友，
敲了两下门，
没人回答，
想他准是出去了，
便留了个字条，
从门上的信箱口里塞了进去，
约好改日再到拜访，
并说回来后，
最好给我一个答复，
没想到过了几天，
收到一封没署名的信，
说他已经搬走了，
不知去了什么地方。

that day I go find one mw old friend
knock le two mw:times door
no people reply
think he definitely exit-go le
then leave le mw note
cv:from door-on de letter box opening inside
  push le enter-go
fix another day again go visit
and say return-come after
best give me one mw reply
not expect pass le few days
receive one mw not sign de letter
say he already move out le
not know go le what place

**full translation:**
那天我去找一个老朋友，
敲了两下门，
没人回答，
想他准是出去了，
便留了个字条，
从门上的信箱口里塞了进去，
约好改日再到拜访，
并说回来后，
最好给我一个答复，
没想到过了几天，
收到一封没署名的信，
说他已经搬走了，
不知去了什么地方。

That day I went to see an old friend.
(I) knocked on the door,
(but) nobody answered.
(I) thought that he must have gone out,
(and) so (I) left a note
(and) pushed (it) through the letter box in the door,
indicating that (I) would come back another day.
(I) also said that as soon as (he) comes back, it would be nice if (he) could drop me a note.
(I) never expected that a few days later (I) would receive an anonymous letter saying that he had already moved out
(and) (it) was not known where (he) had moved to.

This sentence, centred around the single theme of a fruitless visit, consists of thirteen constituent sentences, simply strung together following an inherent time sequence. There are few linking words and the sentence is a mini-discourse, which holds its shape through the rhythm of the sequentially juxtaposed constituent sentences. Pronouns are generally redundant and are not present since the noun subjects or objects they would represent are clearly identifiable from the context.

Below are a few more examples for illustration.

我养了一只猫，可是不会抓老鼠，妹妹说，算了，不要养了，送给别人吧。

wó yǎng le yī zhī māo | kěshì bù huì zhuǎ lāoshu | mèimei shuō | suàn le
| bù yào yǎng le | sòng gěi biérén ba
(lit. I rear le one mw cat, but not can catch mice, younger sister said, that’s enough, don’t keep le, send-give others ba)
I had a cat, but (it) could not catch mice. Younger sister said, ‘That’s enough. Don’t keep (it) any more. Give (it) to someone else’.

体育锻炼可以增强体质，早上起来跑跑步，使你整天精神饱满，有什么不好呢?

tíyù duànliàn kěyǐ zēngqíáng tízhì | zǎoshāng qǐlái páopào bù | shí nǐ zhèngtīān jǐngshén bǎomǎn | yǒu shénme bù hào ne
(lit. physical training can strengthen constitution, morning get up jog steps, makes you whole day spirit full, has what not good ne)
Physical education can strengthen (the) constitution. Getting up in the morning for a run, can make you full of vigour all day, (and) what is wrong (with that)?

时间很充裕，可以从从容容地做。
shíjiān hěn kuányù | kěyǐ cóngcóngróngróng de zuò
(lit. time very ample, can leisurely de do)
There’s plenty of time (you) can do (it) without any rush.
听他的口音，好象是浙江人。 **ting tāde kòuyīn | hǎoxiàng shì zhèjiāng rén**
(lit. listen to his accent, seems to be Zhejiang person)
From his accent, (he) sounds like someone from Zhejiang.

我常常到那儿去买龙虾，有时有，有时没有。
**wǒ chángcháng dào nàr qù mǎi lóngxiā | yǒu shí yǒu | yǒu shí méiyǒu**
(lit. I often go there go buy lobster, sometimes have, sometimes not have)
I often go there to buy lobsters, sometimes (they) have (some) and sometimes (they) don’t.
Prosodic features, and particularly those relating to rhythm, are essential elements in Chinese syntax. Sentences that do not observe prosodic principles are often regarded not only as stylistically implausible but also as syntactically unacceptable. Consider the following:

*他很喜欢浏览.  *tā hěn xǐhuān liúlǎn shū
He very much likes browsing through books.

The sentence does not infringe any lexical, collocational or grammatical rules, but it is not acceptable because it is out of line with prosodic needs. It can be improved with the following small amendment:

他很喜欢浏览书籍.  tā hěn xǐhuān liúlǎn shūjǐ
He very much likes browsing through books.

Here the addition of a syllable to the noun object, changing the monosyllabic 书 shū into the disyllabic 书籍 shūjǐ ‘books’, ensures rhythmic balance and makes the sentence easy on the Chinese ear. Clearly rhythm, like grammar and collocation, plays a vital role in Chinese syntax.

In the following sections, we will first analyse the basic rhythmic structure of the Chinese language and then look more closely at the interplay between this basic rhythm and syntactic sequences.

### 26.1 THE OVERALL RHYTHM OF CHINESE SPEECH

Owing to the disyllabic dominance of the lexical items in the language’s vocabulary, Chinese has gradually developed a preference for disyllabic rhythms. In fact, the Tang poetry of medieval China was based on **disyllabic trochaic rhythms**:

Xx Xx X

王之涣 登鹳雀楼 Wáng Zhīhuàn  Dēng Guànquè Lóu
Climbing Crane Pagoda

1 Upper-case X is used to indicate stress whereas lower-case x is used to indicate non-stress.
The white sun sinks behind the mountains,
The Yellow River flows into the sea.
Desiring to extend my gaze over a thousand lǐ
I climb another floor of the pagoda.

or

Xx Xx Xx X

张继 枫桥夜泊 Zhāng Jì Fēng Qiáo Yè Bó
Mooring at Night by Maple Bridge

月落 乌啼 霜满 天，
jiāng fēng yú huǒ dìu chóu miàn

The moon sinks, the crows call and frost fills the sky,
By the river maples, the fishing boat lights confront my troubled sleep.
Beyond the walls of Suzhou, the Hanshan monastery
In the middle of the night the sound of its bell reaches the traveller’s boat.

This basic rhythm carries over into modern speech and prose. The length of a
sentence or that piece of language between plausible pauses may of course vary,
and the number of unstressed syllables between stressed ones may be one or
two. However, the first syllable stress remains the basic feature, with a speaker
or writer using a range of rhythmic patterns based on this, e.g.:
An unstressed or introductory syllable is often used at the beginning of a pattern:

\[ xXx \]  

The rhythm of Chinese speech hinges on the insistent front stressing of disyllabic items. Under no circumstances does one find the first syllable of a disyllabic losing its tone, whereas this can sometimes be the case with the second syllable. These structures are underpinned by the fact that disyllabic words across all grammatical categories are naturally of a trochaic rhythm:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{disyllabic noun} & \text{Xx} \\
\text{disyllabic verb} & \text{Xx} \\
\text{disyllabic adjective} & \text{Xx} \\
\text{disyllabic modal verb} & \text{Xx} \\
\text{disyllabic adverb} & \text{Xx} \\
\text{disyllabic conjunction} & \text{Xx} \\
\text{numeral} & \text{Xx} \\
\text{negator} & \text{Xx}
\end{array}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Xx</th>
<th>Xx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bēizi cup/glass</td>
<td>jiūbēi wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dājià to fight</td>
<td>yánjìù to study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>měi lì beautiful</td>
<td>cánkù cruel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kě yì may</td>
<td>yuàn yì willing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yí jìng already</td>
<td>cháng cháng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rú gúō if</td>
<td>suí rán although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>èr shí twenty</td>
<td>sān bāi three hundred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>méi yōu (did/have) not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to the last two categories, it must be noted that monosyllabic numerals or negators like —yi ‘one’ or not bu ‘not’ are invariably stressed.

On the other hand, the following monosyllabic grammatical categories are always unstressed and remain so whatever the context:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{adjectival particle} & \text{X} \\
\text{adverbial particle} & \text{X} \\
\text{complemental particle} & \text{X} \\
\text{sentence particle} & \text{X} \\
\text{functional particle} & \text{X} \\
\text{aspect or style indicator} & \text{X} \\
\text{measure word} & \text{X}
\end{array}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Xx</th>
<th>Xx</th>
<th>Xx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>de</td>
<td>de</td>
<td>de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de</td>
<td>de</td>
<td>de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bā</td>
<td>bèi</td>
<td>bā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guò</td>
<td>zài</td>
<td>guò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bēi</td>
<td>běi</td>
<td>bēi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, some parts of speech can be either stressed or unstressed, depending on emphasis required and on their position in predominantly trochaic sentence patterns:

2 Allowing an extra unstressed syllable at the beginning (xXx) is similar to introducing an extra unstressed syllable (i.e. Xxx Xx) between two stressed syllables. The overall rhythm remains trochaic.
In summary, we may say that disyllabic items of the vocabulary are always first-syllable stressed and monosyllabic items of a grammatical rather than lexical nature are always unstressed. Only monosyllabic items of the lexical vocabulary may adjust their stressed or unstressed status depending on the stress of adjacent items. In other words, when two monosyllabic lexical items come together, either may become stressed or unstressed in relation to the other so long as the overall trochaic rhythm is maintained.

Let us look at the following example:

我想 | 再买 | 一杯 | 酒。

wǒ xiǎng | zài mǎi | yī bēi | jiǔ

I'd like to buy another glass of wine.

In the first beat, a monosyllabic pronoun and a monosyllabic modal verb come together, and the pronoun is stressed to start a trochaic rhythm; the same applies in the second beat where a monosyllabic adverb because of emphasis is stressed before an unstressed monosyllabic verb; similarly in the third beat, a numeral takes precedence in stress before the measure word that follows it; and the final monosyllabic noun is stressed because it stands in isolation unaffected by other syllables.

The above is therefore a well-formed sentence on all counts. However, if the monosyllabic verb 去 qù 'to go' is introduced:

我想再去买一杯酒。

wǒ xiǎng zài qù mǎi yī bēi jiǔ

the sentence remains grammatical, but it is rhythmically unbalanced because of the clash of two consecutive stressed syllables in the middle:

我想再去买一杯 | 酒。

wǒ xiǎng | zài qù | mǎi | yī bēi | jiǔ

If the stress is adjusted to make the two monosyllabic verbs following the adverb unstressed, the necessary emphasis on ‘buying’ is lost:
If the first syllable is made introductory, the required emphasis on ‘another’ will be lost:

+我想 | 再去 | 买 | 酒。

wǒ xiǎng | zài qù | mǎi | yī bēi | jiǔ

This will leave unstressed the concept of ‘again’, which is central to the intended meaning of the sentence.

The mechanical imposition of a trochaic rhythm to the sentence will of course make it sound gibberish altogether:

+我想 | 再去 | 买 | 酒。

wǒ xiǎng | zài qù | mǎi yī | bēi jiǔ

From this we can see that an acceptable rhythmic structure must also be imposed on a Chinese sentence, which may otherwise have proper collocation and good grammar, if full understanding of the meaning is not to be jeopardised.

The obvious solution for the sentence above with 去 'to go' included is in fact to delete a syllable to retrieve the trochaic rhythm:

我想 | 再去 | 买 | 酒。

wǒ xiǎng | zài qù | mǎi bēi | jiǔ

This would be a natural way of formulating the sentence and native speakers would express it in these terms instinctively following trochaic cadence.

Let’s now look at another example:

Everybody has eaten two eggs.

The numeral — 壹 ‘one’ in a ‘numeral + measure word’ collocation can often be deleted to leave the measure word on its own.
Here in the first beat a monosyllabic pronoun and a reference adverb come together, and the pronoun is stressed to start a trochaic rhythm; in the second beat, the verb is stressed leaving the particle naturally unstressed; in the third beat the numeral is as usual stressed while the measure word is not; in the last beat, the first syllable of a disyllabic noun is stressed and the second unstressed. The utterance is therefore acceptable in every way.

However, the sentence could be rephrased without changing the meaning by substituting the disyllabic 大家 dàjiā ‘everybody’ for 谁 shuí ‘everybody’:

Xx Xx Xx Xx
dàjiā dōu | chī le | liǎng ge | jídàn
Everybody has eaten two eggs.

In this case there is no problem with rhythm since the verb remains primarily accented, and an additional unstressed syllable is simply introduced into the first beat.

Similarly there is no difficulty in converting the sentence into an imperative by introducing an extra verb 来 lái ‘to come’ before 吃 chī ‘to eat’:

Xx Xx Xx X

dàjiā | dōu lái | chī jǐ- | dàn
Everybody, come and eat eggs.

Here the verb in the penultimate beat (吃 chī) reaches across the lexical boundary and builds the first syllable of its disyllabic object (鸡 jī) into an unaccented second syllable of its own in order to keep to the rhythmic pattern. This is possible because disyllabic nouns can in fact have its first syllable unstressed following a monosyllabic verb on condition that its second syllable stands free and stressed.

However, if the imperative becomes a question with the addition of the particle 吗 ma at the end, the rhythmic pattern starts to interfere with understanding by having 蛋吗 dàn ma thrown together as a meaningless unit in the last beat.

Xx Xx Xx Xx
+dàjiā | dōu lái | chī jǐ- | dàn ma
Will everybody come and eat eggs?

As a remedy, the stress pattern can be easily adjusted as follows:
大家来吃鸡蛋吗？

Will everybody come and eat eggs?

From this it can be seen how unstressed syllables can be accommodated to keep the trochaic rhythm alive so long as the meaning remains clear.

We will now move on to the further question of the link between grammatical sequences and rhythmic structures.

26.2 SYNTACTIC SEQUENCES AND THEIR UNDERLYING RHYTHM

Meaning is usually realised by the strictly ordered sequence of grammatical patterns or lexical idioms. The more strictly ordered the sequence is, the more rule-governed the rhythmic structure becomes.

26.2.1 ‘VERB + OBJECT’ PATTERNS

First, in the case of ‘verb + object’ patterns, three rhythmic structures are possible:

(a) monosyllabic verb + monosyllabic object: Xx
e.g. 看书 kànshū
disyllabic verb + disyllabic object: Xx + Xx
e.g. 浏览书籍 liúlán shūjí
(c) monosyllabic verb + disyllabic object: Xx + X

If we go back to the first sentence quoted at the beginning of this chapter, we can see that the verb–object sequence at the end of the sentence, 浏览书籍 liúlán shū, has a disyllabic verb + monosyllabic object pattern. Because of this, it does not conform to any of the three structures above and it is not an acceptable sentence

monosyllabic verb and monosyllabic object:

This pattern Xx embraces a large number of words in the lexicon, e.g.

开会 kāihuì 看戏 kànxì 打拳 dǎquán 跳舞 tiàowǔ 唱歌 chànggē

hold a meeting see a play (shadow) box dance (lit. hit fist) leap dance sing (lit. (lit. hit fist))

Please note that the rhythmic cluster does not have to coincide with the lexical boundary, as we have already seen above.
These ‘verb + object’ words are all established lexical items and to make the object disyllabic, e.g. 开会 kāi huìyì, 看戏 kàn xìjù, 打拳 dǎ quánshū, 跳舞蹈 tiào wǔdǎo, 唱歌曲 chàng gēqǔ, while grammatically and apparently rhythmically correct, would in fact be unacceptable as it conflicts with established lexical convention.

However, to extend these words into phrases presents no problem if the following pattern is used:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \ x & \ x & \ X \\
\text{看了} & | & \text{一场} & | & \text{戏} \\
\text{yī chǎng} & | & \text{xi} & & \\
& & \text{(lit. see \( le \) | one mw | play)} & & \text{saw a play}
\end{align*}
\]

或:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \ x & \ X \\
\text{看场} & | & \text{戏} \\
\text{yī chǎng} & | & \text{xi} & & \\
& & \text{(lit. sing \( le \) | one mw | song)} & & \text{sang a song}
\end{align*}
\]
*唱了 | 首歌
chàng le | shǒu gé

and as we have seen in §26.1, their rhythmic pattern would have to be adjusted to:

Xxx X
看了一场 | 戏
kàn yī chāng | xì

唱一首 | 歌
chàng yī shǎo | gé

or:

看了场 | 戏
kàn le chāng | xì

唱了首 | 歌
chàng le shǎo | gé

This rhythmic requirement with verbal patterns explains why verbal reduplications follow similar principles:

Xx 看看 kàn kàn
Xx | X 看一看 kàn yī kàn
Xx | X 看了看 kàn le kàn
Xx | X 讨论讨论 tāolùn tāolùn
*Xx | Xx | X *讨论一讨论 tāolùn yī tāolùn

26.2.2 THE ‘ATTRIBUTIVE + HEADWORD’ PATTERN

This follows two basic rhythmic rules:

(a) if the attributive is monosyllabic, the headword does not normally exceed two syllables. For example:

新书 Xx xīn shū new books
新房子 xx xīn fángzì new house
*新运动场 xx X xīn yùndòngchǎng (new sportsground)

5 — 讨 yi tāo can, of course, make no sense, and that explains why this pattern is impermissible.
(b) if the attributive is disyllabic or polysyllabic, the headword can be of any length. For example:

- 新买的书 | xīn mǎi de | shū newly bought book(s)
- 新买的房子 | xīn mǎi de | fángzǐ newly bought house
- 新买的洗衣机 | xīn mǎi de | xǐyī | jī newly bought washing machine
- 新买的电子游戏 | xīn mǎi de | diànzi | yóuxì newly bought electronic game(s)
- 新买的电子游戏机 | xīn mǎi de | diànzi | yóuxì | jī newly bought electronic game machine

In some cases where a disyllabic attributive is followed by a monosyllabic headword (which can be a suffix-like noun), the combination becomes an established item in the language’s lexicon. For example:

- 运动员 | yùndòng | yuán athlete
- 计算机 | jisuàn | jī computer
- 电话亭 | diànhuà | tíng telephone kiosk
- 时刻表 | shíkè | biǎo timetable
- 压岁钱 | yāsuì | qián New Year (gift) money

and also:

- 两点 | liàng diǎn | zhōng two o’clock
- 三块 | sān kuài | qián three yuan

This trisyllabic rhythm for established words may supersede a word’s underlying semantic structure. For example:

- 手风琴 | shǒufēng | qín whereas the semantic structure is accordion (lit. hand organ)
- 电扇 | diànfēng | shàn electric fan
- 高速 | gāosù | dù high speed

As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 18, the particle de usually marks longer attributives.
There is much evidence of newly coined words following this trisyllabic pattern:

| XxX | 系列 | 舞 | xiliè | wǔ | sequence dancing |
| XxX | 肥皂 | 剧 | fèizào | jù | soap opera |
| XxX | 小人 | 书 | xiǎorén | shū | picture (story) book |
| XxX | 电饭 | 锅 | diànfàn | guō | electric cooker |

26.3 ECHOING PATTERNS OF RHYTHM

Language conventions are of course regularly ignored if a specific effect or style is required and the rules of rhythmic patterning are no exception. However, if non-standard cadence is introduced, it is usually echoed by a similarly non-standard pattern to ease the deviation for the listener’s ear. For instance, take the following sentence:

Xx | X | xXx | Xx | (X | Xx | X) | Xx | Xx | Xx
临睡 | 前 | 我弟弟 | 总是 | (翻 | 故事 | 书) | 折腾 | 一番 | 才睡。
lin shui | qian | wo dide | zongshi | (fan | gushi | shu) | zheteng | yi fan | cai shui
(lit. on the point of sleep | before | my younger brother | always | finger through | story | book | dilly-dally | one mw:occasion | only then sleep)
When he goes to bed, my younger brother never goes to sleep until he has glanced through a storybook and dilly-dallied for a while.

Obviously, the rhythmic pattern X | Xx | X (i.e. fan | gushi | shu) in the middle of the utterance disregards the trochaic principle, and as a result, the sentence sounds not only awkward but also incomplete. However, if an echoing phrase with a similar rhythm is introduced, the sentence becomes acceptable:

Xx | X | xXx | Xx | (X | Xx | X) | Xx | Xx | Xx
临睡 | 前 | 我弟弟 | 总是 | (翻 | 故事 | 书) | (玩 | 玩具 | 熊) | 折腾 | 一番 | 才睡。
lin shui | qian | wo dide | zongshi | (fan | gushi | shu) | (wan | wanju | xióng) | zheteeng | yi fan | cai shui
(lit. on the point of sleep | before | my younger brother | always | finger through | story | book | play with | toy | bear | dilly-dally | one mw:occasion | only then sleep)
When he goes to bed, my younger brother never goes to sleep until he has glanced through a storybook, played with his toy bear, and dilly-dallied for a while.

This manipulation of unfamiliar rhythms, in fact, provides a refreshing variety to trochaic regularity, and can breathe life into the flow of the prose rhythm.

If a particular rhythmic pattern is used in a sequence, it is unusual for it to be followed by another sequence with a different rhythm, especially when there is
also a semantic affinity between the two sequences. For example, take the following:

\[
\text{xXx | Xx | Xx | Xx | xXx}
\]

*我一路走去，心情舒畅，很振奋。

\[
\text{wǒ yī lù | zǒu qù | xīnqíng | shūchàng | hěn zhènfèn}
\]
(lit. I whole way walk-go, mood carefree, very enthused)
All along the way, I was in a carefree mood and very enthused.

Here the cadence of the final sequence xXx, which is closely related semantically to the previous sequence XxXx, undermines the rhythmic consistency and makes the sentence jar on the ear.

However, the problem disappears if the sentence is reworded with an echoing pattern:

\[
\text{xXx | Xx | Xx | xXx | xXx}
\]

*我一路走去，心情很舒畅，很振奋。

\[
\text{wǒ yī lù | zǒu qù | xīnqíng | hěn shūchàng | hěn zhènfèn}
\]
All along the way my mood was carefree and enthused.

or:

\[
\text{xXx | Xx | Xx | Xx | Xx | Xx}
\]

*我一路走去，心情舒畅，精神振奋。

\[
\text{wǒ yī lù zǒu qù | xīnqíng shūchàng | jǐngshén zhènfèn}
\]
All along the way my mood was carefree and my spirits enthused.

26.4 EXPANDING, CONDENSING AND PADDING TO GET INTO THE APPROPRIATE RHYTHM

It is plain that the Chinese speaker is concerned with rhythm as well as grammar and collocation. To achieve rhythmic balance he or she will expand or condense the individual items in an utterance. Compare the following two sentences:

(a) \[
\text{Xx | Xx | Xx | Xx | X | Xx | Xxx}
\]

*如果 | 能够 | 见到 | 您的 | 话， | 那就 | 太好了。

\[
\text{rúguǒ | nénggòu | jiàn dào | nín de | huà | nà jiù | tài hǎo le}
\]
If (I/we) can meet you, that will be splendid.

(b) \[
\text{Xx | Xx | xXx | Xx}
\]

*如能 | 见您 | 将十分 | 荣幸。

\[
\text{rú néng | jiàn nín | jiàng shífēn | róngxìng}
\]
If (I/we) can meet you, (we) will be extremely honoured.
In (a) (expanded) the initial disyllabic 能够 nénggòu ‘can’, especially after 如果 rúguǒ ‘if’, inevitably leads on to the two syllable verb 见到 jiàndào ‘meet’, with the object 您 nín ‘you’ (polite) linking in convenient rhythm with the end-clause conditional marker 的话 de huà. In (b) (condensed), on the other hand, the trochaic stress pattern has to be reformulated to take account of the use of the monosyllabic words 如 rú ‘if’, 能 néng ‘can’, 见 jiàn ‘to see’, 您 nín ‘you’ (polite). In both of them, whether disyllabic or monosyllabic, the underlying pattern of stress is maintained.

In addition to generating expansion and condensation of utterances, rhythmic requirements can also lead to the introduction of padding words. Consider the following pair of sentences, which both mean ‘Let’s go and have a drink tonight’:

(a) Xx | Xx | Xx | Xx
咱们 | 今晚去 | 喝杯 | 酒吧。
zánmen | jīnwǎn qù | hē bēi | jiǔ ba
(lit. we | this evening go | drink (one) mw:glass | beer ba)

(b) Xx | Xx | Xx
咱们 | 今晚去 | 喝它 | 一杯。
zánmen | jīnwǎn qù | hē tā | yī bēi
(lit. we | this evening go | drink it | one mw:glass)

In the first sentence, the numeral — yī ‘one’ is omitted before a glass bēi ‘glass’ in the standard way to achieve a trochaic rhythm. In the second, the numeral — yī ‘one’ is retained, and to avoid the clash of two consecutive accented syllables, the meaningless padding word 它 tā is introduced to complete the trochaic rhythm with the verb 喝 hē ‘to drink’.
Chinese syntactic constructions, as we have seen, are not merely governed by syntactic rules, but are subject to lexical and prosodic requirements as well. Only when all the conventions of syntax, collocation and prosody are taken into account can one decide if a particular construction is grammatical or not. These grammatical structures then provide the basis on which stylistically varying constructions may be built.

Communication, as we know, does not involve syntax alone; it also needs to exploit ranges of style to be completely effective. Stylistic considerations are, therefore, an important flourish added to the melody of syntax, and without these considerations, syntax is unlikely to break out of its prosaic limits and turn language into literature or poetry.

If we analyse the main stylistic features in Chinese syntactic construction, it is possible to identify two determining factors: one presentational and the other rhetorical, which separate or combine to provide qualities of tone and rhythm. They are both, of course, particularly characteristic of literary writing.

In order to give clear illustrations of these stylistic features, we have selected below examples of writing from the works of modern Chinese authors who make conscious use of the poetic dimensions of prose. In each case the quotation is set out vertically on a section-by-section basis.

27.1 THE PRESENTATIONAL FACTOR

Presentational needs, which are predominantly found in the realm of description, lead to the configuration of syntactic structures in order to exploit features like repetition, to register different focuses and emphases, and simply to display variety of expression.

The following are commonly used stylistic configurations:
27.1.1 LAYERED OR SEQUENTIAL IMAGES

(a) S S S ... P (multi-subject structure)

S 她那毛茸茸的头发，
   tā nà máorōngrōng de tóufa
   Her downy hair,

S 她那被雨水和眼泪冲没了的脂粉，
   tā nà bèi yǔshuǐ hé yǎnlèi chōngmó le de zhīfěn
   her make-up washed away by rain and tears,

S 有着一只尖削的鼻子和一张微瘪的嘴的脸,
   yǒu zhe yī zhī jiānxué de bízi hé yī zhǎng wěi bié de zuī de huáng liǎn
   her pale face with its pointed nose and wizened mouth,

S 她那蜷缩着的单薄的身体，
   tā nà quánshōu zhe de dānbó de shěntǐ
   her thin, bent frame/body

S 以及她的假笑，
   yǐjí tā de jiǎ xiào
   and her false smile

S 她的不大耐烦的声口，
   tā de bù dà nàifán de shēng kǒu
   her somewhat impatient tone

P 都在引起他的不满。
   dōu zài yǐnqǐ tā de bùmǎn
   All made him resentful.

Sha Ding 沙汀, yī ge qiūtiān de wǎnshàng
   一个秋天的晚上, One Autumn Night

Here the cumulative impact of the sequence of subjects is enhanced by the variety of attributes - adjective, phrase, clause - that the language allows.

(b) S P, P, P ... (multi-predicate structure)

S 他 tā
   He

P 拿着一把点燃的香 ná zhe yī bǎ diànhǎn de xiāng
   holding a bunch of lighted incense(-sticks)

P 从长阶的左端走过来，
   cóng chángjiē de zuǒduān zǒu guólai
   walked over from the left side of the staircase,
P 跨过那两尺高的专和小孩的腿为难的门坎 kuà guò nèi liǎng chī gāo de zhuān hé xiǎohái de tuǐ wéinán de ménkǎn stepped over the two-foot-high threshold, which purposely caused problems for children,

P 走进堂屋去， zǒu jìn tánwǔ qù walked into the hall,

P 在所有的神龛的香炉中插上一炷香， zài suǒyǒu de shénkān qián de xiānglú zhōng chā shàng yī zhù xiāng and stuck an incense-stick into each of the incense burners in front of the ancestral shrines,

P 然后虔诚地敲响了那圆圆的碗形的铜罄。 ránhòu qiánchéng de qiāo xiàng le nà yuányuán de wǎnxìng de tóngqìng and afterwards piously struck/sounded the round, bowl-like brass bell.

He Qifang 何其芳, làoren 老人, An Old Man

This description is built on a series of verbal phrases in the predicate. Their syntactic structures differ from one to the next, and these distinctions add to the sense of precision in the actions of the man involved.

27.1.2 REITERATION FOR CUMULATIVE EFFECT

In these two quotations, the writers again seek to build up a picture through repeating the elements that are linked syntactically and semantically.

(a) AX, BX, CX . . .

S AX 茉莉的香, mòlì de xiāng The fragrance of jasmine,

BX 白兰花的香, báilánhuā de xiāng (the fragrance) of white orchid,

CX 脂粉的香, zhīfēn de xiāng (the fragrance) of cosmetics,

DX 沙衣裳的香 . . . shā yīshāng de xiāng (the fragrance) of silk robes,

EX 微波泛溢出甜的暗香, wēibō fàn yì chū tián de ànxiāng and a hint of sweet fragrance issuing from the ripples
In the above quotation, for example, by repeating the two key words 香 xiāng ‘fragrance’ and 荡 dàng ‘to bob up and down or move from side to side’ in similar constructions, the author recreates the atmosphere and sensation of a personal experience.

(b) AX, AY, AZ . . .

S 他 tā
He

P 深信 shēnxīn
firmly believed

S 理想的人生 lǐxiǎng de rénshēng
an ideal life

P AX 必须有爱， bìxū yǒu ài
must have love,

AY 必须有美， bìxū yǒu měi
must have beauty,

AZ 必须有自由， bìxū yǒu zìyóu
must have freedom.

S 他 tā
He

P 深信 shēnxīn
firmly believed
27.1.3 FACTORISATION

In factorisation, the author tries to get across his message in small similarly constructed segments of language, one after another, in order to achieve maximum impact.

(a) A (X, Y, Z)

S 我 wǒ
I

P A 和 hé
with

X 那些谦卑的菜蔬， nèixiē qiānbēi de càishū
those humble vegetables,

Y 那些高大的果树， nèixiē gāodà de guǒshù
those lofty fruit trees,

Z 那些开着美丽的花的草木 nèixiē kāi zhe měilì de huā de cǎomù
those plants with beautiful blossoms,

一块儿生活着。 yī kuài shēnghuó zhe
was living together.

He Qifang 何其芳, làoren 老人, An Old Man

---

1 China’s leading poet of the 1920s and 1930s who was killed in a plane crash.
(b) A (X, Y, Z)

P X 在睡眠减少的长长夜里，
zhài shuìmián jiǎnshǎo de chángcháng de yè lǐ
In long nights of reduced sleep,

X' 在荧荧的油灯下，zhài yíngyíng de yóudēng xià
under a glimmering oil lamp,

S 我 wǒ
I

P Y 迟缓地，chíhuǎn de
slowly

Y' 详细地 xiángxì de
minutely

Z 回忆着 huíyì zhe
recollected

Z' 而且写着 érqiě xiě zhe
and wrote

O 我自己的一生的故事... wǒ zìjǐ de yīshēng de gùshì
the story of my life.

He Qifang 何其芳, làoren 老人, An Old Man

27.1.4 PARALLEL MATCHING

In parallel matching, what the author seeks to achieve is to present closely connected ideas in consecutive and similar structures, so that they come across more forcibly.

(a) AX, BY, CZ...

这榆树在院子的西北角上，zhè yúshù zài yuánzi de xībēi jiǎo shàng
This elm tree was in the northwest corner of the garden.

A 来了风，lái le fēng
when the wind blew,

X 这榆树先啸；zhè yúshù xiān xiào
This elm tree whistled;
来了雨，lái le yǔ  
when it rained,

这榆树先就冒烟了。zhè yúshù xiān jiù mào yān le  
This elm tree gave off steam;

太阳一出来， tài yáng yī chū lái  
as soon as the sun came out,

大榆树的叶子就发光了， dà yúshù de yè zǐ jiù fāguāng le  
This elm tree’s leaves shone

它们闪烁得和沙滩上的蚌壳一样了。 
tāmen shǎnshuò de hé shātān shàng de bàngké yíyàng le  
(and) they glittered like clam shells on the sand.

Xiao Hong 肖红, hūlánhé zhuàn  
呼兰河传, Story of the Hulan River

(b) (A, B, C) (X, Y, Z)

A 虽同是灯船， suī tóng shì dēngchuán  
Though it was also a light vessel,

B 虽同是秦淮， suī tóng shì qínhuái  
though it was the same Qinhuaí (River),

C 虽同是我们： suī tóng shì wǒmen  
though it was still us,

X 却是灯影淡了， què shì dēngyǐng dàn le  
yet the shadow from the light grew weaker,

Y 河水静了， héshuǐ jìng le 
the river water went quiet,

Z 我们倦了， wǒmen juàn le  
(and) we grew tired.

- 况且月儿将上了。 kuàngqí yuè rì jiāng shàng le  
Moreover the moon was about to rise.

Yu Pingbo 俞平伯, jiāngshēng dēngyǐng lì de qínhuái hé  
桨声灯影里的秦淮河, Qinhuaí River with its Lights and Oars
27.1.5 INVERSION: ATTRIBUTIVES OR ADVERBIALS AFTER THEIR HEADWORDS

Authors use inversion, which undermines linguistic expectations, as a means to attract the attention of their readers.

荷塘四面，hétáng simiàn
All round the lotus pond

长着许多树，zhāng zhe xūduō shù
were growing numerous trees,

attributive: 萧瑟郁郁的。wěngwěngyùyù de
lush and luxuriant.

Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, lǜ 绿 Green

我用手拍着你，wǒ yòng shǒu pāi zhe nǐ
I patted you with my hand

捋摩着你，fūmó zhe nǐ
stroked you

adverbial: 如同一个十二三岁的小姑娘。
rútóng yī ge shí’ér sān suì de xiǎo gūniáng
like a 12- or 13-year-old girl.

Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, hétáng yuèsè 荷塘月色,
Moonlight Over the Lotus Pond

27.2 THE RHETORICAL FACTOR

When elegance merges with forcefulness, the resulting structures display features such as balance, symmetry, crescendo and regularity and variety of rhythm and cadence.

27.2.1 COUPLING: XY, XY

X 我爱热闹，wǒ ài rènào
I like bustle

Y 也爱冷静；yě ài lěngjìng
and (I) like calm too;
X 我若能裁你为带，wǒ ruò néng cái nǐ wéi dài
If I could cut you and make you into a girdle,

Y 我将赠给那轻盈的舞女；wǒ jiāng zèng gěi nà qīngyíng de wǔnǚ
I would give (it) to that slim and graceful dancing girl,

Z 她必临风飘举了。tā bì néng línfēng piāojù le
(and) she would surely rise in the breeze;

X 我若能把你为眼，wǒ ruò néng nǐ wéi yǎn
If I could ladle you out and make you into an eye

Y 我将赠给那善歌的盲妹；wǒ jiāng zèng gěi nà shànghē de mángmèi
I would give (it) to that blind girl with the beautiful voice,

Z 她必明眸善睐了。tā bì míngmóu shàn lài le
(and) she would certainly have bright eyes and a good gaze.

Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, lǜ 绿, Green

Aphorisms, of course, have their obvious rhythms and parallels:

X 玉不琢，yù bù zhuó
If jade is not carved,

Y 不成器。bù chéng qì
(it) does not make a piece.

X 明枪易躲，míngqiāng yì duǒ
Guns in the open are easy to avoid;

Y 暗箭难防。àn jiàn nán fáng
hidden arrows are hard to defend against.

X 只要功夫深，zhǐyào gōngfū shēn
If (you) work hard,
Y 铁杵磨成针。 tiěchǔ móchéng zhēn  
(you) can grind an iron rod into a needle.

X 世上无难事， shìshàng wú nánshì  
There is nothing difficult in the world

Y 只怕有心人。 zhīpà yǒuxīn rén  
provided there are people with will.

(Aphorisms)

27.2.2 PROGRESSION: XY, XY, XY . . .

我问他为什么带芭蕉扇， wǒ wèn tā wèishénme dài bājiāoshàn  
I asked him why he had brought a palm-leaf fan.

他回答说， tā huídá shuō  
He replied saying

这东西妙用无穷： zhè dōngxi miàoyòng wúqióng  
this thing has endless magical uses:

X 热的时候 rè de shíhòu  
when (it’s) hot,

Y 扇风， shān fēng  
it fans (up) a breeze;

X 太阳大的时候 tàiyáng dà de shíhòu  
when the sun is beating down,

Y 遮荫， zhē yīn  
(it) gives shade;

X 下雨的时候 xià yǔ de shíhòu  
when it rains,

Y 代伞， dài sǎn  
(it) acts as an umbrella;

X 休息的时候 xiūxi de shíhòu  
when it’s time to rest,
(it) serves as a cushion (to sit on).

它好像是济公活佛的芭蕉扇。zhè hāobì jīgōng huófó de bājiāoshàn
It is exactly like the Living Buddha’s palm-leaf fan.

Feng Zikai 丰子恺, lúshān miànmù 庐山面目,
The True Face of (Mount) Lushan

27.2.3 ECHOING

Echoing may often be achieved through word-for-word repetition:

远处，yuǎnchù
In the distance

有一条小瀑布，yǒu yī tiáo xiǎo pùbù
there’s a small waterfall

哗哗哗，huāhuāhuā
gurgling, gurgling

日夜不停地往下流，riè bùtíng de wǎng xià liú
night and day without cease it flows down,

往下流。wǎng xià liú
flows down.

Liu Zhen 刘真, chángcháng de liúshuǐ
长长的流水, A Long Stream

他见过许多少男少女，tā jiàn guò xǔduō shào nán shào nǚ
He had seen very many young men and women,

有的是在笑，yǒu de shì zài xiào
some smiling,

E 笑得那样痴呆，xiào de nèiyàng chīdāi
smiling in that stupid manner;

有的哭，yǒu de kū
others weeping,
E 哭得又那样失态。kū de yòu nèiyàng shītài
weeping too in that unmannerly way.

Feng Zhi 冯至, sàinàhé pàn de wúmíng shàonǚ 塞纳河畔的无名少女,
Unknown Girls by the Seine

It can also, as the following aphorisms demonstrate, bring together for contrast
expressions of similar construction:

远亲 yuǎnqīn
A distant relative

不如 bùrú
is not as good as

E 近邻。jìnlíng
a close neighbour.

言有尽 yán yǒu jìn
Words are limited,

而 ér
but

E 意无穷。yì wúqióng
the meaning is infinite.

(Aphorisms)

27.2.4 ALTERNATION: LONG AND SHORT SENTENCES

short 没有风。méiyǒu fēng
There was no wind.

long 门前池中的残荷梗 mén qián chí zhōng de cánhégěng
The remaining lotus stems in the pool in front of the gate

时时忽然急剧地动摇起来，shí shí hūrán jíjù de dònggyáo qǐlái
would from time to time suddenly begin to shake rapidly

接着便有如鲤鱼的活泼地跳跃 jiēzhe biàn yǒurú liyú de huópo de
tiàoyuè
and then flapping vigorously like live carps

划破了死一样平静的水面。huà pò le sǐ yìyàng píngjìng de shuǐmiàn
and break the death-like calm of the water’s surface.

Mao Dun 茅盾, wù 雾, Mist
short 志摩走了。zhìmò zòu le
(Xu) Zhimo has gone.

long 我们这个世界里 wǒmen zhèi ge shìjiè lǐ
In this world of ours.

被带走了不少云彩。bèi dài zòu le bùshāo yúncǎi
many colourful clouds have been carried off.

long 他在我们这些朋友之中，tā zài wǒmen zhèxiē péngyou zhīzhōng
He amongst these friends of ours

真是一片可爱的云彩， zhēnshì yī piàn kě'ài de yúncǎi
was truly a lovable cloud,

永远是温暖的颜色，yǒngyuán shì wēnnuǎn de yánse
always a warm colour,

永远是美的花样，yǒngyuán shì měi de huàyàng
always a beautiful pattern,

永远是可爱。yǒngyuán shì kè'ài
always lovable.

Hu Shi 胡适，dào xúzhimò 悼徐志摩, In Memory of Xu Zhimo

27.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Syntax establishes general rules regarding the relationships between component elements in sentential construction, and any stereotypical sentence will therefore conform to these rules. However, as we have seen throughout this book, the actual realisations of these stereotypical patterns take diverse forms. Such diversity stems not only from varied communicative objectives, but also from different linguistic foci, emphases, contexts and intentions. These differences in turn entail differing organising principles: contextual, functional, focal, presentational and rhetorical.

In this book, variations that are contextual (e.g. abbreviations and omissions), functional (e.g. statements vs questions, narrative vs expository), and focal (e.g. emphatic sentences with 是 shì) have been covered in all our discussions of syntax proper. Presentational and rhetorical variations, being more of a stylistic nature, were therefore dealt with here in this last chapter with the hope that it may give some additional insight into how Chinese writers exploit and manipulate their language.

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