

**MANDARIN CHINESE**  
**A Functional Reference Grammar**

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*and*  
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# *Contents*

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Preface to the Paperback Edition	xiii
Preface	xvii
Conventions Used in Examples	xix
Abbreviations	xxiii
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The Chinese Language Family	2
1.2 The Phonology of Mandarin	3
1.2.1 Initials	3
1.2.2 Finals	6
1.2.3 Tones	6
1.2.4 Phonetic Effects of the Retroflex Suffix	9
<b>2 Typological Description</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 The Structural Complexity of Words: Mandarin as an Isolating Language	10
2.1.1 Morphemes Occurring with Nouns	11
2.1.2 Morphemes Occurring with Verbs	12
2.2 Monosyllabicity: The Number of Syllables per Word	13
2.3 Topic Prominence	15
2.4 Word Order	16
2.4.1 The Word Order Typology	16
2.4.2 Word Order in Mandarin	19

<b>3 Word Structure</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1 Morphological Processes	28
3.1.1 Reduplication	28
3.1.2 Affixation	36
3.2 Compounds	45
3.2.1 The Meaning of Compounds	46
3.2.2 Nominal Compounds	48
3.2.3 Verbal Compounds	54
3.2.4 Subject-Predicate Compounds	70
3.2.5 Verb-Object Compounds	73
3.2.6 Antonymous Adjectives Forming Nominal Compounds	81
3.2.7 Minor Types of Compounds	81
<b>4 Simple Declarative Sentences</b>	<b>85</b>
4.1 Topic and Subject	85
4.1.1 Characterization of Topic	85
4.1.2 Characterization of Subject	87
4.1.3 Comparison of Topic and Subject	87
4.1.4 <i>Double-Subject Sentences</i>	92
4.1.5 Comparison with Chao's Analysis	93
4.1.6 Time and Locative Phrases	94
4.1.7 Further Examples	95
4.1.8 Topic as a Discourse Element	100
4.1.9 Topic and Coreference in Discourse	102
4.2 The Noun Phrase	103
4.2.1 Classifier Phrases/Measure Phrases	104
4.2.2 Associative Phrases	113
4.2.3 Modifying Phrases	116
4.2.4 The Order of Elements in a Noun Phrase	124
4.2.5 Definiteness and Referentiality	126
4.2.6 Pronouns	132
4.2.7 Reflexives	137
4.3 The Verb Phrase	139
4.3.1 Types of Verb Phrases	141



<b>5 Auxiliary Verbs</b>	<b>172</b>
5.1 Auxiliary Verb versus Verb	172
5.2 Auxiliary Verb versus Adverb	181
5.3 List of Auxiliary Verbs	182
<b>6 Aspect</b>	<b>184</b>
6.1 The Perfective Aspect	185
6.1.1 Where to Use <i>-le</i> : A Bounded Event	185
6.1.2 Where Not to Use <i>-le</i>	202
6.1.3 <i>-le</i> in Imperatives	207
6.1.4 <i>-le</i> Does Not Mean Past Tense	213
6.1.5 <i>-le</i> Does Not Mean Completion	215
6.1.6 Summary	216
6.2 The Durative Aspect	217
6.2.1 Semantic Types of Verbs and the Durative Aspect Markers <i>-zhe</i> and <i>zài</i>	217
6.2.2 Complex Sentences with the Durative Aspect Marker <i>-zhe</i>	223
6.3 The Experiential Aspect	226
6.4 The Delimitative Aspect	232
6.5 Summary	236
<b>7 Sentence-Final Particles</b>	<b>238</b>
7.1 <i>le</i>	238
7.1.1 The Communicative Function of <i>le</i>	240
7.1.2 Where Not to Use <i>le</i>	290
7.1.3 Perfective <i>-le</i> versus CRS <i>le</i>	296
7.2 <i>ne</i>	300
7.3 <i>ba</i>	307
7.4 <i>ou</i>	311
7.5 <i>a/ya</i>	313
7.6 Conclusion	317

<b>8 Adverbs</b>	<b>319</b>
8.1 Movable Adverbs	320
8.1.1 Movable Adverbs of Time	320
8.1.2 Movable Adverbs of Attitude	321
8.2 Nonmovable Adverbs	322
8.2.1 Manner Adverbs	322
8.2.2 Nonmanner Adverbs	328
8.3 Negation and Adverbs	340
8.3.1 Negation and Movable Adverbs	340
8.3.2 Negation and Nonmovable Adverbs	342
8.4 Adverbs and the <i>bǎ</i> Construction	349
8.5 Quantity Adverbial Phrases	352
<b>9 Coverbs/Prepositions</b>	<b>355</b>
9.1 The Function of Coverbs	356
9.1.1 Occurrence with Aspect Markers	360
9.1.2 Coverbs That Can Function as Verbs	362
9.2 Representative List of Coverbs	367
<b>10 Indirect Objects and Benefactives</b>	<b>370</b>
10.1 <i>gěi</i> Obligatory	374
10.2 <i>gěi</i> Optional	375
10.3 <i>gěi</i> Forbidden	377
10.4 Apparent Indirect Objects	379
10.5 Explanation for the Indirect Object Facts	383
10.6 Benefactive Noun Phrases, and Preverbal Indirect Object	385
10.7 Other Functions of <i>gěi</i>	388
<b>11 Locative and Directional Phrases</b>	<b>390</b>
11.1 Locative Phrases	390
11.1.1 The Structure of Locative Phrases	390
11.1.2 The Position of the Locative Phrase in the Sentence	397
11.2 Directional Phrases with <i>dao</i> 'to'	409

<b>12 Negation</b>	<b>415</b>
12.1 The Position and Scope of Negative Particles	417
12.2 The Functions of <i>bu</i> and <i>méi(yǒu)</i>	421
12.2.1 Variation in the Meaning of Sentences with <i>bu</i>	421
12.2.2 Types of Verb Phrases	424
12.2.3 Resultative Verb Compounds	426
12.3 <i>méi(yǒu)</i> Is Not a Past Tense Negative Particle	428
12.4 Negation and Aspect	430
12.5 Negating Some Element other than a Simple Verb Phrase	438
12.6 Summary	440
<b>13 Verb Copying</b>	<b>442</b>
13.1 Where Verb Copying Occurs	442
13.2 Grammatical Properties of the Verb-Copying Construction	447
<b>14 The Imperative</b>	<b>451</b>
<b>15 The <i>bǎ</i> Construction</b>	<b>463</b>
15.1 The <i>bǎ</i> Noun Phrase	465
15.2 Disposal	466
15.3 <i>bǎ</i> Sentences without a Subject	480
15.4 <i>bǎ</i> . . . <i>gěi</i>	482
15.5 When to Use the <i>bǎ</i> Construction	482
<b>16 The <i>bèi</i> Construction</b>	<b>492</b>
16.1 Use and Function	493
16.1.1 Adversity	493
16.1.2 Disposal	501
16.2 Structural Properties	503
16.2.1 Indirect Object Adversely Affected	504
16.2.2 The <i>bèi</i> Noun Phrase Can Be Inanimate	504
16.3 <i>bǎ</i> and <i>bèi</i>	505
16.4 Variant Forms	506

<b>17 Presentative Sentences</b>	509
17.1 Existential and Positional Verbs	510
17.2 Verbs of Motion	517
<b>18 Questions</b>	520
18.1 The Four Types of Questions	520
18.2 Question-Word Questions	522
18.2.1 Question Words in Questions	522
18.2.2 Question Words as Indefinite Pronouns	527
18.3 Disjunctive Questions	531
18.3.1 Questions with Constituents Connected by <i>haishi</i>	532
18.3.2 A-not-A Questions	535
18.4 Tag Questions	546
18.5 Particle Questions	547
18.6 Differences between A-Not-A Questions and Particle Questions	548
18.7 Questions Serving as Subjects or Direct Objects of a Verb	554
18.8 Answers to Questions	557
<b>19 Comparison</b>	564
19.1 Comparative Constructions	564
19.1.1 Dimension	568
19.1.2 Subject/Topic and the Standard of Comparison	569
19.2 Superlatives	571
<b>20 Nominalization</b>	575
20.1 A Nominalization Functioning as a Noun Phrase	576
20.2 Nominalizations Modifying a Head Noun	579
20.2.1 Relative Clause Constructions	579
20.2.2 A Nominalization Serving as the Complement to an Abstract Head Noun	585
20.3 The <i>shi . . . de</i> Construction	587

<b>21 Serial Verb Constructions</b>	<b>594</b>
21.1 Two or More Separate Events	595
21.2 One Verb Phrase/Clause Is the Subject or Direct Object of Another	598
21.2.1 The Second Verb Phrase/Clause Is the Direct Object of the First Verb	598
21.2.2 The First Verb Phrase/Clause Is the Subject of the Second Verb	603
21.2.3 The Clause That Is a Subject or Direct Object is a Question	606
21.3 Pivotal Constructions	607
21.4 Descriptive Clauses	611
21.4.1 Realis Descriptive Clauses	611
21.4.2 Irrealis Descriptive Clauses	618
21.5 Summary	620
<b>22 The Complex Stative Construction</b>	<b>623</b>
22.1 Inferred meanings	623
22.1.1 Manner Inferred	623
22.1.2 Extent Inferred	626
22.1.3 Either Manner or Extent Inferred	627
22.2 General Structural Properties	628
<b>23 Sentence Linking</b>	<b>631</b>
23.1 Forward Linking	632
23.1.1 Forward Linking with a Linking Element	633
23.1.2 Forward Linking without a Linking Element	641
23.1.3 The Semantics of Conditionals	646
23.2 Backward Linking	651
23.2.1 Adverbial Backward-Linking Elements in Clause-Initial Position	653
23.2.2 Nonmovable Adverbs as Backward- Linking Elements	655

<b>24 Pronouns in Discourse</b>	<b>657</b>
24.1 Zero Pronouns	657
24.2 Pronouns	662
24.3 Syntactic Constraints on Zero Pronouns	675
References	677
Index	683

## *Preface to the Paperback Edition*

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In the Preface to the hardback edition, we wrote: "It is in the hope that our effort may spur others on to further discoveries in the study of Chinese that we offer our analyses here." In the intervening years, there have been many cogent and useful debates of the ideas and analyses put forth in the book, and much valuable work on the grammar of Chinese has appeared. We are not rewriting the grammar in the light of this new research at the present time, but we do wish to acknowledge some of the relevant discussion.

We are grateful to Professor James McCawley for a lengthy and careful discussion of many points raised in his seminar on the structure of Chinese, which used *Mandarin Chinese* as a textbook. We are also grateful to Marie-Claude Paris,<sup>1</sup> Zhang Zhanyi,<sup>2</sup> and Paul Yang<sup>3</sup> for their insightful reviews commenting on various issues addressed in *Mandarin Chinese*.

The relevant literature on Chinese grammar which has appeared since our book went to press has been too extensive for us to list here. Six general studies, however, should be mentioned: Helen T. Lin's *Essential Grammar for Modern Chinese* (Boston: Cheng and Tsui, 1981), Beverly Hong's *Situational Chinese* (Beijing: New World, 1983), Chauncey Chu's *A Reference Grammar of Mandarin Chinese for English Native Speakers* (New York: Peter Lang, 1983), Shou-hsin Teng's *Readings in Chinese Transformational Syntax* (Taipei: Crane, 1985), and Jerry Norman's *Chinese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). In addition, a number of excellent articles have appeared in *Language, Studies in Language, Journal of Chinese Linguistics, Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association, Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale, Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages*, and *Zhongguo Yuwen*.

*Mandarin Chinese* emphasizes the study of grammar in its normal discourse context. Some of the research mentioned above also takes this perspective, and at least one recent work shows very clearly how the choice of anaphor type, discussed in chapter 24, can be shown to be highly determined by the structure of the discourse in which the anaphors are used.<sup>4</sup> We ourselves are continuing to probe Chinese grammar from a discourse perspective, and we look forward to more studies along these lines.

Since some of the discussion of *Mandarin Chinese* has centered on the status of the examples we use, a comment on that point is in order. As is well known, Mandarin is a lingua franca, used by millions of speakers not only as a first language but also as a second language in much of China as well as among Chinese people abroad. As such, it is a language in which wide variation in usage is tolerated, since speakers all know that a number of languages and dialects influence the form of Mandarin. In such a situation, as we noted in the Preface to the 1981 hardback edition, it is to be expected that not all the examples we have used will seem equally "natural" to all speakers. Though Li is a native speaker of Mandarin, and all the examples are natural to him, some will sound strange to other ears. But every example in this book was either taken directly from a conversation in which we participated or checked with other native speakers for "naturalness"; each is therefore a possible utterance which some speaker might use or has used.

More important, certain utterances which are unnatural in some discourse contexts are perfectly natural in others. If a native speaker is asked to decide whether an utterance is "acceptable," the answer may depend on whether the respondent can place the utterance in an appropriate discourse context. In languages that have inflectual morphology, the "acceptability" of a given utterance taken in isolation may be easier to judge. For example, the English utterance "Sara lack confidence" is easily judged "unacceptable" independent of context because the verb is not properly inflected. But in languages such as Chinese, which has essentially no inflection, the notion of "acceptability" is much more controversial in most cases, particularly when the utterance is judged apart from its context. In general, then, the issue is whether an utterance is appropriate in a given context, at least for some speakers, not whether it is "acceptable" in isolation.

In anticipation of dispute over the appropriateness of some of our sample utterances, we provided a large number of examples to illustrate our analysis of each construction in *Mandarin Chinese*. Our approach was designed to reduce the inclination to complain that an analysis is not supported because this or that example doesn't sound quite "natural."

The paperback edition of *Mandarin Chinese* will greatly expand the accessibility of this book, especially for students. We reiterate our hope that it will



continue to stimulate others to contribute to a deeper understanding of the grammar of this fascinating language.

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October 1988

1. *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale* 11, no. 2 (Dec. 1982).
2. *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association* 19, no. 2 (May 1983).
3. *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 3 (1983).
4. Chen Ping, *Referent Introducing and Tracking in Chinese Narrative*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986).



## *Preface*

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The aim of this reference grammar is to provide, for the first time, a description of Mandarin in functional terms. We attempt as much as possible to discuss the structural properties of sentences in the language in terms of the pragmatic situations in which they are used, that is, with an eye toward their entire communicative context. It is our conviction that only in terms of these functional factors can the grammar of a language be understood.

This grammar is explicitly designed for students and teachers of Mandarin, who are not necessarily linguists. Thus, we have tried to minimize the use of technical linguistic terminology, and those terms that do occur in the book are carefully defined. On the other hand, most of the analyses in this book are original. It is our hope, then, that linguists who are interested in a functional approach to the study of language will also find this book useful. We have attempted to present the empirical facts of Mandarin faithfully, describe the steps of our reasoning concisely, state the generalizations we arrive at clearly, and, whenever possible, provide a functional explanation of these generalizations. Needless to say, a grammar of any language is bound to be incomplete, and ours is no exception. It is in the hope that our effort may spur others on to further discoveries in the study of Chinese that we offer our analyses here.

It is worth noting that the written language in China is a heterogeneous mixture of the classical tradition based on the written literature before the twentieth century and modern colloquial Mandarin speech. Since the promulgation of Putonghua in mainland China, there has been a noticeable reduction of the classical component in most of the written material produced in the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, a "classical" phrase or usage still makes its appearance here and there. We wish to make it clear that the classical language is not included in the scope of our analyses.

We are indebted to the work of a number of linguists and scholars who have contributed to the study of the Chinese language. Some of our examples are drawn from their writings, and some of our ideas can be traced either directly or indirectly to our predecessors and contemporaries in the study of Mandarin. To all of them, we owe our gratitude. Where we have drawn on their ideas, we have acknowledged this in the notes to each chapter, but we have not attempted to document the sources of our examples, which come largely from conversations in which we have participated and from our own knowledge of the language, as well as from the writings of other linguists and scholars.

The preparation of this grammar has been partially supported by a U.S. Office of Education grant, OEG-G007701660, 1977–1979, and by the University of California, Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. We are grateful to Phoebe Bissell, Donna Childers, Lila Margolis, and Nancy Warfield for their clerical assistance, to Li Ming-ming, Chang Hsiang-wen, Peter Pan, Wu Yenna, and R. McMillan Thompson for their help in discussing many of our examples with us, and to Wu Yenna, Barbara Fox, and R. McMillan Thompson for reading and commenting on the manuscript.

## *Conventions Used in Examples*

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1. (x): x is an optional element.
2.  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} x \\ y \end{array} \right\}$  : either x or y.
3. \*: an utterance that is either structurally or semantically unacceptable to native speakers.
4. \*(x): to be acceptable the example must include x.
5. (\*x): to be acceptable the example must not include x.
6. ?: an utterance that is odd but not necessarily unacceptable.
7. Glosses and translations:
  - a. Each Mandarin example has two lines of English below it. In the line immediately below the Mandarin example, we have attempted to gloss each Mandarin element with the clearest and most literal English equivalent possible. In the second line we offer a translation of the whole utterance into idiomatic English, attempting to preserve the “flavor” of the Mandarin utterance as much as we can.
  - b. Mandarin elements may often have more than one possible English gloss. In cases where the choice of gloss is context sensitive, we have used the gloss appropriate to the given context. For example, *duō* can be

glossed either as 'much' or as 'many'; in a sentence such as

- (i)      tā      yǒu      hěn      duō      shū  
           s/he    exist    very    many    book

S/He has a lot of books.

*duō* would be glossed as 'many' because it occurs with *shū* 'book', whereas in a sentence such as

- (ii)     tā     yǒu     hěn     duō     qián  
           3sg    exist    very    much    money

S/He has a lot of money.

*duō* would be glossed as 'much' because it occurs with *qián* 'money'.

- c. Mandarin nouns in general do not indicate singularity versus plurality. We gloss all Mandarin nouns as singular nouns in English.
- d. Mandarin has no grammatical category of *tense*, which means that many examples could be translated as either past or present tense in English. Rather than offering both possibilities for each such example, we have chosen arbitrarily to give either a past or a present tense translation. In each case, the discussion within which the examples are presented should make it clear whether a given construction could equally well be translated with an English present or past tense or whether the translation given is the only one it could have.
- e. Mandarin pronouns make no distinction between masculine and feminine. We have glossed *tā* as '3sg' and translated it as 's/he'.
- f. We have adopted the usage that is now conventional in linguistic scholarship of colons in glosses where it takes more than one English word to gloss a given Mandarin word. For example:

- (i)      yīdiǎn  
           a:little

- (ii)     háoxiē  
           a:lot

8. Pinyin: the transcription system we use is *pīnyīn* (literally 'spell sound'), the official romanization system of the People's Republic of China, which is

also the most widely used system in the media and scholarly writings on Chinese in the West (see the Introduction):

- a. Syllables whose basic tone is third tone are given the third-tone diacritic even in environments where the third tone would change to second tone by tone sandhi. So, for example, we represent a word such as *xiǎo-niǎo* 'small bird, birdie' with two third tones, whereas in normal pronunciation, the tones should be *xiáo-niǎo*, reflecting the application of the tone sandhi rule changing a third tone to a second tone before a third tone.
- b. There are two types of neutral-tone syllables (see the Introduction). Syllables of the first type always have the neutral tone, such as the aspect markers *-zhe*, *-le*, *-guo*, and the sentence-final particles *le*, *ne*, *ba*, and so forth; these are simply represented with no tone mark at all. Syllables of the second type, however, may vary between a full-tone pronunciation and a neutral-tone pronunciation. This variation may depend either on dialect differences or on the type of sentence in which the syllable occurs. The best example of variation due to dialect differences involves the pronunciation of the second syllable of many disyllabic words. For example, the word for 'clothes' is pronounced as *yīfu*, with the second syllable having a neutral tone, by some speakers and as *yífú*, where the second syllable has a full tone, by other speakers, including most of those whose speech is influenced by Min and Yue languages. We have been arbitrary in representing such words: sometimes they are written with their full tone and sometimes with no tone mark. An example illustrating the influence of the sentence context in determining whether a syllable is pronounced with a full tone or a neutral tone is the variation in the pronunciation of *shì* 'be'. In a simple copula sentence, for instance, *shì* normally has no tone:

- (i)      wó      shì      Zhāngsān  
          I      be      Zhangsan

I am Zhangsan.

As a marker of affirmation, however, *shì* is typically pronounced with its full falling tone:

- (ii)      wó      shì      xǐhuān      chī      Zhōngguó      fān  
          I      be      like      eat      China      food

It's true that I like to eat Chinese food.

We represent syllables such as these with their full tones, with the understanding that in some contexts they will be destressed and have a neutral tone.

- c. Exceptions to the generalization given just above are *bu* 'not' and *yi* 'one': not only can the pronunciation of these two syllables vary between a full tone and a neutral tone, but each has *different* full tones, depending on the tone of the syllable that follows. For the description of this variation for *bu* and *yi*, see Chao (1968:568). We have chosen not to mark these two syllables with tone diacritics, with the understanding that their pronunciation varies according to the sentences in which they occur.
9. Hyphens: We have attempted to be consistent in using hyphens between syllables in a Mandarin word only when each syllable has an independent meaning or use. Exceptions to this convention occur only in the chapter on compounds, where the structures of compound words are being analyzed. An example illustrating our use of hyphens is *chūbǎn* 'publish'. Although *chū* means 'put forth' and *bǎn* means 'board', we write *chūbǎn* as one word with no hyphen because the meaning 'publish' no longer has anything to do with 'put forth' and 'board'. Similarly, a word such as *xuéxiào* 'school' is written without a hyphen because, although *xué* 'learn, study' may occur independently, *xiào* 'school' may not. A word like *kàn-jiàn* 'see-perceive', on the other hand, is written with a hyphen because the two parts can function independently. It is impossible to be totally consistent on this matter, but we have tried to follow this principle to the best of our ability.
10. ~: This is a symbol used to gloss an undefinable object of a verb-object compound. An example is *bāng-máng* 'help-~ = to help'. The second syllable *máng* functions as an object of the verb *bāng* 'help'; but *máng* does not have any independent semantic content within the compound *bāng-máng*.



## Abbreviations

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ABBREVIATION	TERM	WHERE INTRODUCED, DISCUSSED, AND DEFINED
ASSOC	associative ( <i>-de</i> )	4.2.2
BA	<i>bǎ</i>	15
BEI	<i>bèi</i>	16
CL	classifier	4.2.1
COMP	comparative	19
CRS	Currently Relevant State ( <i>le</i> )	7.1
CSC	complex stative construction ( <i>de</i> )	22
D.O.	direct object	4.3.1.B
DUR	durative aspect ( <i>-zhe, zài</i> )	6.2
EXP	experiential aspect ( <i>-guo</i> )	6.3
FW	Friendly Warning ( <i>ou</i> )	7.4
GEN	genitive ( <i>-de</i> )	4.2.2
I.O.	indirect object	10
NOM	nominalizer ( <i>de</i> )	20
NP	noun phrase	4.2
ORD	ordinalizer ( <i>di-</i> )	3.1.2A
PFV	perfective aspect ( <i>-le</i> )	6.1
PL	plural ( <i>-men, -xie</i> )	3.1.2.C, 4.2.1
Q	question ( <i>ma</i> )	18.5
REx	Response to Expectation ( <i>ne</i> )	7.2
RF	Reduce Forcefulness ( <i>a/ya</i> )	7.5
RVC	resultative verb compound	3.2.3.A
SA	Solicit Agreement ( <i>ba</i> )	7.3
3sg	third person singular pronoun	



## CHAPTER 1

# *Introduction*

---

The word *Mandarin* denoting the major dialect family of China is an established linguistic term in the West. In popular as well as linguistic usage, the term also represents the speech of Beijing, which for centuries has been recognized as the standard language of China because of the political and cultural significance of that city. China did not officially establish a common language for the nation until 1955, however, when the government of the People's Republic of China proclaimed a national language embodying the pronunciation of the Beijing dialect, the grammar of northern Mandarin, and the vocabulary of modern vernacular literature. This national language has since been known as *Pǔtōnghuà*, which means the 'common language'. The style and vocabulary of Putonghua aim at being close to the language of workers and farmers. During the early fifties, Taiwan also adopted the policy of promoting a uniform language based on the Beijing dialect; in Taiwan it is called *Guóyǔ*, literally 'national language'. Our term *Mandarin* is meant to include both Putonghua and Guoyu.

Since both Putonghua and Guoyu are based on the Beijing dialect, they are quite similar except in certain areas of vocabulary, which can be attributed in part to the political differences between the mainland and Taiwan. On the other hand, both Putonghua and Guoyu are far from being "uniform," for China has a large population spread over a vast geographical area, and consequently numerous other dialects inevitably influence and affect the versions of Putonghua and Guoyu spoken by people from different regions. Thus, a truly uniform language in a country such as China can exist only in theory, not in reality. This is not to downplay the success of Putonghua and Guoyu in facilitating communication among speakers of mutually unintelligible Chinese dialects and in promoting universal education. Nevertheless, it is important for us to point out that when one speaks of

“the language” of China, one refers merely to an ideal, and that there will always be some variation between “the Mandarin language” of one person and “the Mandarin language” of another person. What we are attempting to describe and explain in this book is a Mandarin language that is as devoid of the idiosyncracies of individual speakers as possible. We intend the generalizations and explanations offered in this book to be applicable to the speech of all speakers of Putonghua and Guoyu, even if some of the illustrative examples may strike some readers as slightly odd. *Each example that is not marked with an asterisk (\*) is something that could be or has been said by at least some speakers of Mandarin.*

Whenever a generalization or an explanation may be affected by dialectal interference, we try to point it out. Since the dialect situation in China is complex, we will briefly describe it here.

### 1.1 The Chinese Language Family

It is traditional to speak of the different varieties of Chinese as “dialects,” even though they may be different from one another to the point of being mutually unintelligible.<sup>1</sup> It is often pointed out, for example, that Cantonese and Mandarin differ from each other roughly as the Romance “languages” Portuguese and Rumanian do. On the one hand, because Portuguese and Rumanian are spoken in different countries, they are referred to as different “languages.” On the other hand, because Cantonese and Mandarin are spoken in the same country, they are called different “dialects.” We will continue the tradition and refer to them as dialects.

The classification of the varieties of Chinese into dialects is based primarily on a comparison of their sound structure. The classification into seven major dialect groups as shown in table 1.1 is now generally accepted (see Egerod [1967]). The map shows the geographical spread and the locales of the representatives of the different dialect groups, as well as some major cities in China.

The greatest variations in terms of phonology, syntax, and vocabulary occur in the southern region of the country. The dialects of the Mandarin group, divided into four subgroups, not only can claim the largest percentage of China’s population, but also have a higher degree of mutual intelligibility.

The Chinese language family is genetically classified as an independent branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The other major branches of the Sino-Tibetan language family are Tibetan, the languages of Tibet; Lolo-Burmese, the languages of Burma and scattered areas in Southern China, Southeast Asia, and the Tibetan borderland; and Karen, the languages of lower Burma and the southern border region between Thailand and Burma. Thus, geographically, the Sino-Tibetan languages are spoken in East Asia and Southeast Asia, with Chinese covering most of the East Asian mainland.

TABLE 1.1  
THE SEVEN MAJOR DIALECT GROUPS IN CHINESE

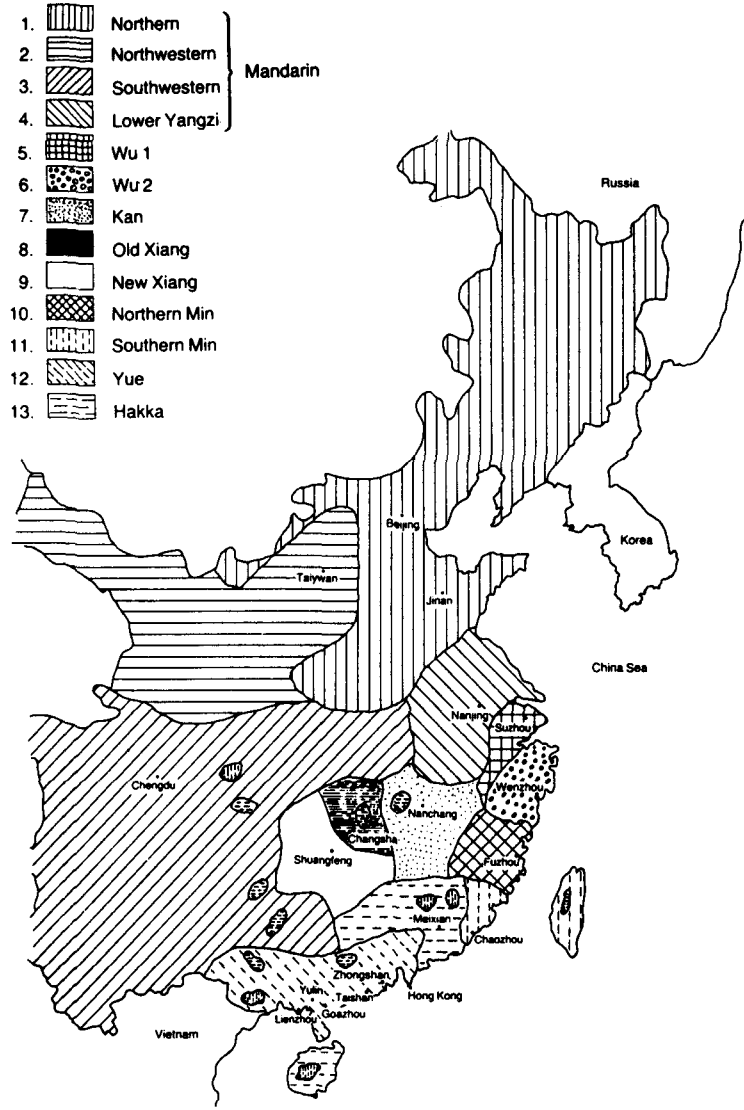
	DIALECT FAMILIES	REPRESENTATIVE LOCALE	PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION
Mandarin	Northern	Běijīng	70
	Northwestern	Tàiyuán	
	Southwestern	Chéngdū	
	Lower Yangzi	Nánjīng	
Wú	I	Sūzhōu	8.4
	II	Wēnzhōu	
Xiāng	Old	Shuāngfēng	5
	New	Chángshā	
Gàn		Nánchāng	2.4
Hakka		Méixiàn	4
Mǐn	Northern	Fúzhōu	1.5
	Southern	Cháozhōu	
Yuè	Yuè-hǎi	Zhōngshān	5
	Qīn-lián	Liánzhōu	
	Gāo-léi	Gāozhōu	
	Sì-yì	Táishān	
	Guèi-nán	Yùlín	

## 1.2 The Phonology of Mandarin

Following the traditional approach to the phonological description of Chinese, we will present the structure of the Mandarin syllable in terms of the initials, the finals, and the tones.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.2.1 Initials

The *initial* represents the consonantal beginning of a syllable. Since Mandarin does not have consonant clusters (sequences of consonants), the consonantal beginning of a syllable can only be a single consonant. There are, however, Mandarin syllables that do not have any initial consonant. For those syllables the tradition is to describe their initials as “zero.” The initials of Mandarin are provided in table 1.2 in terms of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and Pinyin, the national phonetic alphabet adopted in China. Including the zero initial, Mandarin has twenty-two initials.



Chinese Dialect Map

TABLE 1.2  
INITIALS

MANNER OF ARTICULATION PLACE OF ARTICULATION	UNASPIRATED STOPS		ASPIRATED STOPS		UNASPIRATED AFFRICATES		ASPIRATED AFFRICATES		NASALS		FRICATIVES		VOICED CONTINUANTS	
	IPA	Pinyin	IPA	Pinyin	IPA	Pinyin	IPA	Pinyin	IPA	Pinyin	IPA	Pinyin	IPA	Pinyin
Bilabials	p	b	p <sup>h</sup>	p					m	m				
Labio-dentals											f	f		
Dental-alveolars	t	d	t <sup>h</sup>	t	ts	z	ts <sup>h</sup>	c	n	n	s	s	l	l
Retroflexes					tʂ	ʒh	tʂ <sup>h</sup>	ch			ʂ	sh	ʒ	r
Palatals					tʃ	j	tʃ <sup>h</sup>	q			ç	x		
Velars	k	g	k <sup>h</sup>	k							x	h		

### 1.2.2 Finals

The *final* is the part of the syllable excluding the initial. There are thirty-seven finals in Mandarin, and they are listed in table 1.3 in IPA symbols. The rules showing the correspondences between the IPA vowels and the Pinyin vowels are shown in table 1.4.

TABLE 1.3  
FINALS

ㄟ, ㄟ, ㄟ	A	ə	o		ai	ei	au	ou	an	ən	aŋ	əŋ	
i	iA			ie			iau	iou	ien	in	iaŋ	iŋ	
u	uA		uo		uai	uei			uan	uən	uaŋ	uŋ	uəŋ
y				ye					yen	yn			

The velar nasal, [ŋ], occurs only as part of a final, never as an initial. In Pinyin, it is represented by *ng*. The finals, as can be seen from table 1.4, are composed mainly of vowels. The only two consonants that occur in a Mandarin syllable final are the velar nasal, [ŋ], and the alveolar nasal, [n], and these may occur only at the end of a final.

### 1.2.3 Tones

The tone system of Mandarin is relatively simple in comparison with those of the southern Chinese dialect groups. There are four tones in Mandarin. Each tone may be described as a relative, contrastive pitch pattern associated with a syllable. The four tones are shown in table 1.5. The symbols in the second column from the right are known as *tone letters*, devised by Y.R. Chao. They provide a simplified time-pitch graph of the voice. The vertical line on the right serves as a reference for pitch height. The time-pitch graph is drawn from left to right so that the point farthest to the left on the graph represents the initial point of the tone, and the graph always ends at the vertical line serving as the reference of pitch height. The number represents the pitch register according to a scale of five levels, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Thus the 55 number means the pitch register of the syllable remains at level 5 throughout, whereas the 214 number indicates that the pitch register of the syllable begins at level 2, lowers to level 1, and then rises to level 4. If we take the syllable *yi* in Mandarin and place the four tones on it, we obtain a paradigm of four different morphemes, as shown in the far-right column in table 1.5. The four tones are indicated by four diacritic marks in Pinyin, as illustrated in the examples.



TABLE 1.4  
CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN IPA AND PINYIN VOWELS

IPA VOWEL SYMBOLS	PINYIN SYMBOLS	CONTEXT	EXAMPLES
[A]	a	all	lā = [lĀ] 'pull'
[a]		all	bān = [pān] 'move'
[ɛ]		between { [i] } and [n] { [y] }	lián = [lién] 'connect' yuǎn = [yĕn] 'far'
[o]	o	all	mó = [mó] 'grind'
[u]		before [ŋ] or after [a]	lóng = [lŋŋ] 'dragon' láo = [láu] 'toil'
[y]	e	all	lè = [lĕ] 'happy'
[ɛ]		before [i]	léi = [léi] 'thunder'
[ɛ]		after [i] or [y]	liè = [liè] 'arrange in order' lüè = [lyè] 'vile'
[ə]		before [h] or [ŋ]	gēn = [kĕn] 'root' gēng = [kĕŋ] 'till'
[ɛ]	er	all	ér = [ɛ] 'son'
[e]	ϕ	after [Cu]	duì = [tuèi] 'correct'
[ə]	ϕ	after [Cu]	dūn = [tuĕn] 'squat'
[i]	i	with any initial except zero	lí = [li] 'depart'
[ɿ]		after [tʂ], [tʂʰ], [ʂ], [ɿ]	shī = [ʂĭ] 'poetry'
[ɿ]		after [ts], [tsʰ], [s]	sī = [sĭ] 'think' [ct] = [tsʰĭ] 'female'
[u]	u	with any initial except zero	lú = [lú] 'stove'
[y]		after [tʂ], [tʂʰ], [ʂ]	xū = [ʂŭ] 'false' qù = [tʂʰŭ] 'go'
[y]	ü	after [n] and [l]	lú = [ly] 'donkey' nǚ = [ny] 'daughter'
[y]	yu	after zero initial	yú = [jú] 'fish' yuán = [yĕn] 'garden'
[i]	y	after zero initial but not in isolation	yào = [iäu] 'want'
[i]	yi	in isolation	yī = [i] 'one'
[u]	w	after zero initial but not in isolation	wén = [uĕn] 'smell'
[u]	wu	in isolation	wū = [ü] 'five'

TABLE 1.5  
TONES

TO NE	DESCRIPTION	PITCH	GRAPH	EXAMPLE
1	high level	55	┌	yī 'clothes'
2	high rising	35	↗	yí 'to suspect'
3	dipping/falling-rising	214	↘↗	yǐ 'chair'
4	high falling	51	↘	yì 'meaning'

One of the most interesting phenomena involving tones in the Chinese dialects is called *tone sandhi*.<sup>3</sup> Tone sandhi may be described as the change of tones when syllables are juxtaposed. To put it differently, a syllable has one of the tones in the language when it stands alone, but the same syllable may take on a different tone without a change in meaning when it is followed by another syllable. The most important tone sandhi rules in Mandarin involve the third tone.

(i) *Tone sandhi rule 1*: When a third-tone syllable is followed by a syllable with any tone other than another third tone, the third-tone syllable changes to a low-tone syllable with the pitch contour 21. For example, *mǎ* 'horse' has the third tone in isolation, but when it is followed by another syllable such as *chē* 'vehicle', the sequence is pronounced with the following tone sequence: ┌ 21

(ii) *Tone sandhi rule 2*: When a third-tone syllable is followed by another third-tone syllable, the first one changes into a second tone. For example, *gǎn* 'to chase' and *guǐ* 'demon' both have third tones. When they are in sequence, *gǎn guǐ* 'to exorcise demons', *gǎn* is changed from third tone to second tone.

Another tone sandhi rule in Mandarin involves the second tone, which changes into the first tone when it is preceded by either the first or the second tone and followed by any one of the four tones.

(iii) *Tone sandhi rule 3*: When a second-tone syllable is preceded by either a first tone or second-tone syllable and followed by a syllable with any one of the four tones, it changes into the first tone. For example:

(1)    ˩    ˩    ˨˨  
          shéi   lái   chī ?    →    shéi   lái   chī ?  
          who   come   eat            who   come   eat

Who'll come to eat?

(2)    ㄩ   ㄥ   ㄥ                    ㄩ   ㄥ   ㄥ  
          sǎn nián - ji                sǎn nián - ji  
          three year - grade        three year - grade

third grade

The spelling in our examples, however, will not reflect the application of any of these tone sandhi rules.

If a syllable has a weak stress or is unstressed, it loses its contrastive, relative pitch and therefore does not have one of the four tones described above. In such a case, the syllable is said to have a *neutral tone*. According to Chao (1968:36), the pitch of the neutral tone is:

- | half-low after first tone: *ta-de* 'he-GEN = his'
- | middle after second tone: *hóng-de* 'red-NOM = red one'
- | half-high after third tone: *wǒ-de* 'I-GEN = my'
- | low after fourth tone: *lǜ-de* 'green-NOM = green one'

Suffixes and grammatical particles typically have a neutral tone. In Pinyin, a syllable with a neutral tone receives no diacritic mark.

#### 1.2.4 Phonetic Effects of the Retroflex Suffix

The addition of the suffix *-er* involves a set of complicated changes in the final of the root morpheme. We will not state these rules here; a detailed listing of all the finals with the retroflex suffix can be found in Chao (1968:47–50). The use of the retroflex suffix is common among natives of Beijing. It is rare, however, among speakers of Putonghua or Guoyu from other locales. In most instances, the retroflex suffix, even when it is used, has become purely an articulatory feature without any semantic significance.

#### Notes

1. For a more detailed discussion of the Chinese language family and its cultural setting, see Forrest (1948) and Li and Thompson (1979c).
2. For detailed treatments, see Chao (1968:18–56), Lyovin (1972), and Cheng (1973).
3. For further discussion, see Cheng (1973), Howie (1976), and Zee (1980).

## CHAPTER 2

# *Typological Description*

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There are many respects in which languages of the world are alike: for example, they all have ways of expressing denial (negation), existence, and causation, of asking questions, of modifying nouns and verbs, and of combining simple sentences into complex ones; yet at the same time there are many interesting ways in which languages differ from one another. Both the similarities and the differences are important, because an understanding of both tells us what a language is, what it can be like, what properties it must have, and what properties it need not have. The study of these similarities and differences is known as *language typology*.

In this chapter we will examine the position of Mandarin with respect to four typological parameters that are especially revealing of the basic structure of Mandarin as compared with those of other languages. These four parameters are:

1. The structural complexity of words
2. The number of syllables per word
3. The basic orientation of the sentence: "topic" versus "subject"
4. Word order

### **2.1 The Structural Complexity of Words: Mandarin as an Isolating Language**

When any of the Chinese dialects, including Mandarin, is compared to nearly any other language, one of the most obvious features to emerge is the relative simplicity of the words of Chinese. That is, a typical word is not made up of component parts, called *morphemes*, but is, rather, a single morpheme. In Mandarin, there are a great number of compound words that are equivalent to such

compounds as *gas mask* and *wool sweater* in English. Some Chinese dialects, though, do not even have a great number of compounds. In short, there is very little morphological complexity in any of the Chinese languages. This is not to say there is none; in fact, chapter 3 concerns itself with some of the ways Mandarin combines morphemes into words. When we compare the relatively rich inventory of suffixes and prefixes found in languages such as Latin, Turkish, Ojibwa, and even English, however, it is clear that Mandarin is quite striking in its general lack of complexity in word formation. Such a language has been referred to as an *isolating* language, a language in which it is generally true that each word consists of just one morpheme and cannot be further analyzed into component parts.

For the sake of comparison, let us consider some of the types of morphemes that many languages have which are not found in Mandarin.

### 2.1.1 Morphemes Occurring with Nouns

#### A. Case Markers

Many languages have morphemes that signal the grammatical function the noun has in the sentence: subject, direct object, indirect object, adverb, and so on. In Turkish, for instance, the underlined suffixes added to the word *ev*- 'house' signal the grammatical function of the word in a sentence as follows:

- (1) *ev*        subject  
       *ev-i*     direct object  
       *ev-e*     direction ('to the house')  
       *ev-in*    possessive ('of the house')  
       *ev-de*    location ('in the house')

In Mandarin, of course, such functions are generally expressed by means of word order and prepositions.

#### B. Number Markers

Languages often mark nouns for a singular/plural (or singular/dual/plural) distinction, as in the English *cow/cows*. In most such languages, it is obligatory to make this distinction; but the category of number is not at all a necessary one, as shown by the fact that Mandarin does not need to mark it. For instance, *shū* can refer to either 'book' or 'books' in Mandarin. Significantly, if the concept of plurality is expressed in Mandarin, it is typically expressed by a separate word, such as *yíxiē* 'some', or *xǔduō* 'many', and involves no morphological complexity

within a word. The one place where Mandarin must mark plurality is with pronouns; the suffix *-men* serves this function:

(2) <u>tā</u>	's/he'	<u>tā-men</u>	'they'
<u>nǐ</u>	'you'	<u>nǐ-men</u>	'you (plural)'
<u>wǒ</u>	'I'	<u>wǒ-men</u>	'we'

This same suffix *-men* may occasionally be found to express plurality with nouns referring to people, as in *háizi-men* (see section 3.1.2.C.2 of chapter 3) 'child-PL = children' or *kèren-men* 'guest-PL = guests', but its use with nouns is very rare.

### 2.1.2 Morphemes Occurring with Verbs

#### A. Agreement Markers

Many languages mark verbs morphologically to agree with the noun class into which the subject or direct object falls. This agreement usually indicates whether the subject or the direct object is first person, second person, or third person, singular or plural. For example, in Turkish, the verb meaning 'saw' is *gördü* if the subject is third person singular ('he', 'John', 'the girl', etc.) and *gördü-ler* if the subject is third person plural ('they', 'the Johnsons', 'the boys', etc.). In Swahili the verb may have agreement morphemes for both the subject and the direct object, as shown in the following example:

(3)	agreement				agreement				
	Hamisi	<u>a</u>	—	me	—	<u>ki</u>	—	leta	chakula
	Hamisi			past				buy	food

Hamisi has bought food.

Agreement may serve several functions in a language, including the function of highlighting certain properties of subjects or direct objects. Again, some of these functions are taken over by various other devices in Mandarin, such as word order.

#### B. Tense and Aspect Markers

Most languages have morphemes for signaling the time of a reported event relative to the time of speaking (tense) or the duration or completion of a reported event relative to other events (aspect), as in the English sentences in (4), where the *a* sentence is in the present tense and progressive aspect, and the *b* sentence is in the past tense.

- (4) a. I am walk – ing  
 b. I walk – ed

As we will show below in chapter 6, Mandarin has no markers for tense, though it does have aspect morphemes, including:

- (5) -le      ‘perfective’  
-guo      ‘experienced action’  
-zhe      ‘durative’

To sum up, we can state that Mandarin does not manifest a high degree of morphological complexity in terms of the types of grammatical morphemes which we have discussed and illustrated. The richness of a language with respect to these types of morphemes, called *inflectional* morphemes, is what determines whether a language is classified as isolating.

It should be noted, however, that there are other types of morphological combinations languages can manifest. One of those is compounding, and here Mandarin is relatively rich. We will take up the formation of compounds in detail in chapter 3.

## 2.2 Monosyllabicity: The Number of Syllables per Word

The Chinese dialects are sometimes referred to as *monosyllabic*, meaning that the vast majority of words are one syllable in length.<sup>1</sup> The question is: Is this an accurate typological characterization of Mandarin?

In order to answer this question, clearly we must first resolve the question of what constitutes a *word* in Mandarin. If ‘word’ is equated with ‘character’ in the writing system, then Mandarin can be claimed to be rigidly monosyllabic, since each character corresponds to only one syllable in the spoken language. Tying the notion of word to a written symbol is, however, somewhat arbitrary. A word should be a unit in the spoken language characterized by syntactic and semantic independence and integrity. Thus polysyllabic forms such as the following will constitute single words even though they are written with two or three characters. Some of the words in (6) can be broken into morphemes, however, and some cannot (see chapter 3):

- (6) xuéxiào      ‘school’  
qíézi          ‘eggplant’  
yóuqī          ‘paint’

<u>pútáo</u>	'grape'
<u>túshūguǎn</u>	'library'
<u>kěshi</u>	'but'
<u>jiàodù</u>	'proofread'
<u>fāmíng</u>	'invent'
<u>liánhé</u>	'join'

Although classical Chinese appears to have been a monosyllabic language, modern Mandarin is no longer monosyllabic. Indeed, Mandarin has a very large number of polysyllabic words. There are several reasons why we adopt this point of view regarding the notion of word.

First of all, cross-linguistically, defining a word in Mandarin according to its syntactic and semantic independence and integrity is more in line with the way "word" is viewed in other languages and not so narrowly tied to the Chinese writing system.

Second, pedagogically, this position tends to be in accord with the perception of most people attempting to learn the Mandarin language. For example, on learning the Mandarin form for 'fruit', *shuǐguǒ*, the English-speaking student is likely to think of it as a single word rather than as two words. Further, the standard textbooks and dictionaries of Mandarin assume the position we are taking by romanizing such forms as those given in (6) as single words. To give an idea of the proportion of such words in the vocabulary, we found that on ten random pages in F. F. Wang's *Mandarin Chinese Dictionary* (1967), a dictionary of spoken Mandarin, out of a total of 129 entries, 87, or 67 percent, are entered as polysyllabic words with no spaces or hyphens between the syllables. This suggests that well over half of the forms he takes to be words are polysyllabic.

Third, historically, the position we are taking allows us to explain why Mandarin has the highest proportion of polysyllabic words of all the Chinese dialects. The explanation concerns the fact that the ancestor language of the modern Chinese dialects was a monosyllabic language. Because of phonological changes that have taken place, most extensively in Mandarin but much less extensively in the southern dialects, many formerly distinct syllables have become homophonous in Mandarin. Thus, where Cantonese, for example, still has a distinction between *yiu* 'want' and *yeuhk* 'medicine', Mandarin has only the single form *yào*. The threat of too many homophonous syllables has forced the language to increase dramatically the proportion of polysyllabic words, principally by means of the compounding processes discussed in chapter 3.

Because of considerations of typology, pedagogy, and history, then, we suggest that Mandarin is not "monosyllabic." This is not to say that there will be 100 percent agreement among speakers or even certainty on the part of one speaker as to



whether a given form, such as *kàn-jiàn* 'see', for example, should be regarded as one word or two; there are such questionable cases in every language, and perhaps more of them in Mandarin because of the nature of compounding. This issue is discussed in more depth in section 3.2 of chapter 3.

### 2.3 Topic Prominence

One of the most striking features of Mandarin sentence structure, and one that sets Mandarin apart from many other languages, is that in addition to the grammatical relations of "subject" and "direct object," the description of Mandarin must also include the element "topic." Because of the importance of "topic" in the grammar of Mandarin, it can be termed a *topic-prominent* language.

Basically, the topic of a sentence is what the sentence is about. It always comes first in the sentence, and it always refers to something about which the speaker assumes the person listening to the utterance has some knowledge, as in the following examples:

- (7) Zhāngsān wǒ yǐjīng jiàn — guo le  
 张三 I already see — EXP CRS

Zhangsan, I've already seen (him).

- (8) zhèi — kē shù yèzi hěn dà  
 this — CL tree leaf very big

This tree, (its) leaves are very big.

Furthermore, a topic can always optionally be followed by a pause in speech, which serves to set the topic, that which is being talked about, apart from the rest of the sentence. What distinguishes topic from subject is that the subject must always have a direct semantic relationship with the verb as the one that performs the action or exists in the state named by the verb, but the topic need not. Looking again at examples (7) and (8), we can see that they both have subjects in addition to their topics: the subject in (7), the one who does the seeing, is *wǒ* 'I', while the subject in (8), the one that is very big, is *yèzi* 'leaf'. The topic need not have this kind of direct semantic relationship with the verb.

Topics and subjects are further discussed in section 4.1 of chapter 4. Here, we will simply point out that topic-prominent sentence structure is a significant typological feature of Mandarin in terms of which it can be compared to other languages, such as English. Nearly all English sentences must have a subject, and the subject is easy to identify in an English sentence, since it typically occurs right

before the verb and the verb agrees with it in number:

(9) a. That guy has money.

b. Those guys have money.

In Mandarin, on the other hand, the concept of subject seems to be less significant, while the concept of topic appears to be quite crucial in explaining the structure of ordinary sentences in the language. The subject is not marked by position, by agreement, or by any case marker, and, in fact, in ordinary conversation, the subject may be missing altogether, as in examples (10) and (11):

(10)	zuótiān	niàn	–	le	liǎng	–	ge
	yesterday	read	–	PFV	two	–	CL
		zhōngtōu	–	de	shū		
		hour	–	GEN	book		

Yesterday, (I) read for two hours.

(11)	hǎo	lěng	a
	very	cold	RF

(It's) very cold.

Both the one who did the reading in (10) and what it is that is cold in (11) are inferred from the context, but do not need to be expressed syntactically by subjects, as they do in English.

The third feature, then, that characterizes Mandarin typologically is its topic prominence, that is, the fact that the notion “topic” is crucial in explaining how Mandarin sentence structure works.

## 2.4 Word Order

### 2.4.1 The Word-Order Typology

Languages of the world have been shown by Greenberg (1963a) to fall into three main groups with respect to the order of the verb and the nouns in a simple

sentence: given a simple transitive sentence with a subject and a direct object, then, the verb can occur before both the subject and the direct object, between them, or after them both. Since in the vast majority of languages the subject comes before the object,<sup>2</sup> we can represent these three basic word-order types in a simple way as: *VSO*, *SVO*, and *SOV*. Thus, for example, a language in which the typical word order for most sentences is to have the verb at the end would be an *SOV*, or verb-final, language. Japanese is such a language, since sentences such as the following are the norm:

- (12) John     —     ga     hon     —     o     kaita  
       John     —     TOPIC book     —             wrote

John wrote a book.

This is not to say that other word orders cannot occur in Japanese, only that putting the verb at the end of a sentence is typical and characteristic of that language. By the same token, one can state that English is an *SVO* language, in which the verb typically follows the subject and precedes the object, as in this example:

- (13) John wrote a book.

The significance of Greenberg's word-order typology, however, goes far beyond just establishing the relative order of nouns and verbs. He also shows that, to a very large extent, the order of the verb with respect to the direct object correlates with the order of certain other elements; the most important of these correlations can be phrased as follows:

(i) *Greenberg's word-order correlation*: The order of the verb and the direct object tends to correlate with the order of modified element and modifying element in the following way: (a) If the direct object *follows* the verb then modifiers of the nouns tend to *follow* the noun and modifiers of the verb tend to *follow* the verb. And conversely: (b) If the object *precedes* the verb then modifiers of the noun tend to *precede* the noun and modifiers of the verb tend to *precede* the verb. That is, the order of all types of modifiers in relation to their heads (the words they modify) follows the same order as that of the verb and its direct object.

Thus, to take just one example, in Japanese the order of direct object and verb is *OV*; accordingly, we would expect adverbs to precede the verbs they modify. And

this is exactly what happens, as illustrated by the preverbal position of *Tokyo-de* 'in Tokyo' in the following sentence:

(14)	John	-	wa	Tokyo	-	de	Mary	-
	John	-	TOPIC	Tokyo	-	in	Mary	-
			ni	at	-	ta		
	I.O.		meet	-		PAST		

John met Mary in Tokyo.

In English, on the other hand, where the object follows the verb, the adverbial phrase *in Tokyo* also follows the verb, as can be seen in the English translation of (14) just above.

In addition to the principle regarding modifiers and heads, Greenberg shows that a number of other features tend to correlate with the relative position of verb and object. These correlations are summarized in table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1  
FEATURES THAT CORRELATE WITH THE RELATIVE POSITION OF VERB AND OBJECT

VO LANGUAGES	OV LANGUAGES
Head Modifier Verb/Adverb Noun/Adjective <sup>1</sup> Noun/Relative Clause Noun/Possessive <sup>2</sup> ('of the box')	Modifier/Head Adverb/Verb Adjective/Noun Relative Clause/Noun Possessive/Noun
Other correlations Auxiliary/Verb ('can', 'have') Preposition/Noun No sentence-final question particle	Verb/Auxiliary Noun/Postposition <sup>3</sup> Sentence-final question particle

1. English is an exception with respect to this correlation, since adjectives regularly precede the noun, as in *bumpy road*.
2. English is also a partial exception to this correlation in that, in general, possessives follow the head in a construction with an inanimate possessor, as in:

(i) the corner of the box

but precede it in a construction with an animate possessor, as in:

(ii) the boy's box

3. A *postposition* in an OV language may be a case suffix (see section 2.1), or it may signal the same kinds of semantic relationships as do prepositions in VO languages, namely, location, possession, direction, and the like.

### 2.4.2 Word Order in Mandarin

Mandarin is not an easy language to classify in terms of word order, for three reasons. We will mention these reasons here and then discuss each one in more detail below.

First, the notion of subject is not a structurally well-defined one in the grammar of Mandarin.

A second and closely related fact is that the order in which basic words and phrases occur is governed to a large extent by considerations of meaning rather than of grammatical functions. This means that sentences with verbs at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end can be found in Mandarin. Languages that are relatively easy to characterize in Greenberg's terms are always those in which word order is determined primarily on strictly grammatical grounds (i.e., independent of principles of meaning), such as French and Turkish.

Third, whether it is taken to be verb medial or verb final, Mandarin is inconsistent with respect to the features that *correlate with* VO or OV order according to Greenberg's typological scheme. For example, sample texts reveal a greater number of VO than OV sentences, yet modifiers must precede their heads, which is an OV feature.

Let us now examine in more detail each of these three problems in determining word order for Mandarin.

The first problem has to do with the fact that Mandarin is a language in which 'subject' is not a structurally definable notion. In fact, as is pointed out in section 2.3 of this chapter, it seems sensible to regard Mandarin as a topic-prominent rather than a subject-prominent language, since the basic structure of sentences can be more insightfully described in terms of the topic-comment relation rather than in terms of the subject-predicate relation. Consider again a typical sentence containing both a topic and a subject:

- (15)    nèi    —    kuài    tián    wǒmen    jiā    —    féi  
           that — piece field we add — fertilizer

That field (topic), we fertilize.

In this sentence, according to the criteria discussed in section 2.3 above, the topic is *nèi-kuài tián* 'that field', the subject is *wǒmen* 'we', and the verb *jiā-féi* 'fertilize' is a verb-object compound (see section 3.2.5 of chapter 3), in which the object component, *féi* 'fertilizer', cannot occur independently as a word (the independent word for 'fertilizer' is *féiliào*). The point for the present discussion is that in a language in which such sentences are part of the repertory of basic sentence types,

clearly it is no simple matter to determine the basic word order according to Greenberg's criteria: the verb, which is a verb-object compound, is preceded by two nouns, but neither the label SOV nor OSV characterizes sentences like (15). Indeed, the first noun, *nèi-kuài tián* 'that field', cannot occur after the verb, *jiā-féi* 'fertilize', although the English translation suggests that they are in a verb-object relation. Thus, the first problem stems from the fact that the word-order typology cannot accommodate the notion of topic as part of a structural description of sentences.

A second problem in determining the basic word order for Mandarin is the related fact that it is primarily factors of meaning (i. e., *semantic* factors) rather than grammatical ones which determine the order of major constituents with respect to the verb. Thus, preverbal position is a signal for definiteness for topics, subjects, and objects, that is, for whether these topics, subjects, and objects are already known to both the speaker and the hearer. In addition, pre- and postverbal position signals a meaning difference for certain adverbial expressions.

Let us briefly illustrate these two points. First, we have said that definiteness (see section 4.2.5 of chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of definiteness) is partially signaled by preverbal position for topics, subjects, and objects. Since topics (as in [15]) may not be indefinite, they are always preverbal, but subjects and objects may appear on either side of the verb. Looking at subjects first, we find that presentative sentences (see chapter 17) allow postverbal subjects, as in (16)*b*:

(16) *a.*    rén      lái      LE<sup>3</sup>  
          person   come   PFV/CRS

The person(s) has/have come.

*b.*      lái      –      le      rén      le  
          come      –      PFV   person   CRS

Some person(s) has/have come.

Sentence (16) *a* can best be interpreted as 'The person(s) whom you and I are expecting has/have come'. In other words, the preverbal subject is interpreted as *definite* (known to both the speaker and the hearer), while the postverbal subject of (16) *b* is interpreted as *indefinite* (not known to the hearer at least; hence 'some person[s]').

Roughly the same is true of objects. In (17) *a* it can be seen that the unmarked postverbal object may be taken as indefinite, while any of the three possible

preverbal positions renders it definite, as in (17) *b-d*.<sup>4</sup>

(17) *a.*    wǒ      zài      mǎi      shū      le  
           I      DUR    buy      book    CRS

I am buying a book.

*b.*    wǒ      bà      shū      mǎi      LE  
           I      BA    book    buy      PFV/CRS

I bought the book.

*c.*    shū      wǒ      mǎi      LE  
       book    I      buy      PFV/CRS

The book, I bought it (topic/contrastive).

*d.*    wǒ      shū      mǎi      LE  
           I      book    buy      PFV/CRS

I bought the book (contrastive).

(See section 4.3.1.B of chapter 4 for further discussion of these preverbal orders.)

Second, to illustrate the semantic difference between pre- and postverbal position for adverbial expressions, we can examine time phrases and locative phrases.<sup>5</sup>

#### A. Time Phrases

Preverbal time phrases tend to signal punctual time, while postverbal time phrases tend to signal durative time (see chapter 8 on adverbs). The following sentences illustrate this semantic tendency:

(18) *a.*    wǒ      sān      —      diǎnzhōng  
           I      three    —      o'clock  
                   kāi      —      huì  
                   hold     —      meeting

I have a meeting at three o'clock.

b. \*wǒ      kāi      -      huì      sān      -  
       I        hold      -      meeting      three      -

diǎnzhōng  
 o'clock

(19) a. wǒ      shuì      -      le      sān      -  
       I        sleep      -      PFV      three      -

ge      zhōngtōu  
 CL        hour

I slept for three hours.

b. \*wǒ      sān      -      ge      zhōngtōu      shuì      LE  
       I        three      -      CL        hour        sleep      PFV/CRS

In (18), the compound verb, *kāi-huì* 'have a meeting', has a punctual meaning. Thus (18) *a*, in which the time phrase occurs preverbally, is acceptable, whereas (18) *b*, in which the same time phrase occurs postverbally, is unacceptable. In (19), in which the verb, *shuì* 'sleep', is durative, the opposite holds true: the postverbal time phrase is acceptable, but the preverbal one is not.

### B. Locative Phrases

In general, preverbal position signals location of actions, while postverbal position signals location of a person/thing as a result of the action (see chapter 11 on locative and directional phrases):

(20) a. tā      zài      zhuōzi      -      shàng      tiào  
       3sg      at      table      -      on      jump

S/He jumped (up and down) on the table.

b. tā      tiào      zài      zhuōzi      -      shàng  
       3sg      jump      at      table      -      on

S/He jumped onto the table.



c. tā      zài    zhuōzi    –    shang    xiě  
 3sg      at      table      –      on      write

S/He is writing (something) at the table.

d. tā      xiě      zài    zhuōzi    –    shang  
 3sg      write    at      table      –      on

S/He is writing (something) onto the table.

Sentences *a* and *c* of (20) show a locative phrase in the preverbal position, which indicates the location of the action. Sentences *b* and *d* show a locative phrase in the postverbal position, which indicates the location of a person/thing as a result of the action.

The preceding discussion illustrates how semantic factors influence the order of noun phrases with respect to the verb. Thus, “basic” word order is difficult to establish in Mandarin because of the association of meaning with constituent ordering.

Before leaving this point, however, let us see what happens if we select some criterion according to which we might try to pick either VO or OV order as basic for Mandarin. One such criterion, which most linguists would consider reasonable, might be the *basic* pragmatic value for subjects and objects, the basic value for subjects being definite, for objects, indefinite. According to this criterion, the basic word order for Mandarin will be SVO for sentences that have subjects and objects. Corroborating this observation are the facts that a sample text count yields more SVO than SOV sentences and that in most complex sentences the subject precedes the verb.

Unfortunately, we cannot be entirely happy even with the results of applying this criterion, because we must still face the third problem in determining a word order for Mandarin: according to Greenberg’s discussion, certain features should correlate with the order in which the direct object and verb occur. Mandarin can be seen to have some of the features of an SOV language and some of those of an SVO language, with more of the former than of the latter. Table 2.2 lists the SOV and SVO features of Mandarin. Here are some examples illustrating the SVO features:

(i) SVO sentences occur:

(21) wǒ    xǐhuān    tā  
       I      like      3sg

I like him/her.

TABLE 2.2  
SOV AND SVO FEATURES OF MANDARIN

SVO LANGUAGE FEATURES	SOV LANGUAGE FEATURES
VO sentences occur	OV sentences occur
prepositions exist	Prepositional phrases precede the V, except for time and place phrases (see above)
auxiliaries precede the V	Postpositions exist
complex sentences are almost always SVO	Relative clauses precede the head noun
	Genitive phrases precede the head noun
	Aspect markers follow the V
	Certain adverbials precede the V

## (ii) Prepositions exist:

- (22) tā      cóng      Zhōngguó      lái      le  
          3sg      from      China      come      CRS

S/He has come from China.

## (iii) Auxiliaries precede the V:

- (23) tā      néng      shuō      Zhōngguó      —      huà  
          3sg      can      speak      China      —      speech

S/He can speak Chinese.

## (iv) Complex sentences are almost always SVO:

- (24) wǒ      tīngshuō      nǐ      mǎi      —      le  
          I      hear      you      buy      —      PFV
- tā      —      de      shū      —      diàn  
          3sg      —      GEN      book      —      store

I heard that you bought his/her bookstore.

Example sentences illustrating each of the SOV features are:

(i) SOV sentences occur:

(25) Zhāngsān    bā    tā    mà    LE  
 Zhangsan    BA    3sg    scold    PFV/CRS

Zhangsan scolded him/her.

(ii) Prepositional phrases precede the V, and postpositions exist (if we consider locative particles to be postpositions):

(26) tā    zài    chúfáng    –    lǐ    chǎo    fàn  
 3sg    at    kitchen    –    in    fry    rice

S/He's frying rice in the kitchen.

(iii) Relative clauses precede the head noun (see chapter 20), and genitive phrases precede the head noun:

(27) huì    jiǎng    guóyǔ    de    nèi    –    ge  
 know    speak    Chinese    NOM    that    –    CL  
  
 xiǎohái    shì    wó    –    de    érzi  
 child    be    I    –    GEN    son

The child who knows how to speak Chinese is my son.

(iv) Aspect markers follow the V:

(28) wǒ    qù    –    guo    Táibèi  
 I    go    –    EXP    Taipei

I have been to Taipei.

(v) Certain adverbials precede the verb:

(29) tā    mǎn    bu    zàihu  
 3sg    completely    not    care

S/He is completely indifferent.

(30)    nǐ      màn-man-de      chī  
           you      slowly            eat

You eat slowly.

Mandarin, then, is a language that has many SVO features as well as many SOV features.

In work attempting to explain these facts, it has been noticed that, in fact, Mandarin has many more SOV features than any of the other Chinese dialects, which suggests that Mandarin, but not the other Chinese dialects, is gradually undergoing a change from being an SVO language to being an SOV language.<sup>6</sup> If Mandarin is indeed in the process of becoming an SOV language, this would then explain why it has both SVO as well as SOV characteristics. The implications of this gradual change for the grammar of present-day Mandarin will be noted at several points in this book.

We have discussed the word-order issue in detail because it is one of the most important typological parameters and because it has been such a useful parameter in characterizing some of the important differences between languages of the world—for instance, Japanese (verb final), Thai (verb medial), and Berber (verb initial). For the three reasons given above, however, we find that the question “What is the basic word order of Mandarin?” is a difficult one to answer. In other words, there are VSO languages, SVO languages, SOV languages, and languages for which no basic word order can be established. Mandarin appears to be in this last category. In determining that it does *not* fit neatly into the basic word-order categories, we have observed that in Mandarin, the positions of elements in a sentence interact with other features of the language, such as the notion of topic and the expression of definiteness and directionality, and we have noted that Mandarin may be undergoing a change from an SVO to an SOV word order.

In summary, we have seen that Mandarin can be described typologically according to four major criteria: it is an isolating but not a monosyllabic language; it is topic prominent; and it belongs to none of the standard word-order types that universal grammarians have discussed.

### Notes

1. For further discussion, see Rygaloff (1973:10-14).
2. It should be noted, however, that there are also languages whose basic word order has the subject following rather than preceding the object. Malagasy (VOS) is such an example.

3. For a discussion of *LE* and the glosses *PFV* and *CRS*, see chapters 6 and 7.
4. For more discussion, see Mullie (1932), Chao (1968:76), Li (1971), Tai (1973, 1978), Li and Thompson (1975*a*, 1978*a*), Teng (1975*a*, 1979*a*), and Light (1979).
5. For further discussion, see Tai (1973), Huang (1978), and Light (1979).
6. See, in particular, Li and Thompson (1974*a*, 1974*b*, and 1974*c*) and Hashimoto (1976).

## CHAPTER 3

# Word Structure

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### 3.1 Morphological Processes

Morphology concerns the internal structure of words.<sup>1</sup> The internal structure of words is described in terms of *morpheme*, referring to the smallest meaningful element in language. If a word consists of only one morpheme, its internal structure is merely a sequence of sounds (phonological segments), and the only relevant processes will be phonological. If, on the other hand, a word consists of two or more morphemes, the internal structure of the word becomes more complicated, and many interesting questions can be posed: What is the nature of the morphemes forming the word? Are they free (can they occur independently as a word), or are they bound (can they not occur independently as a word)? If they are not free, are they affixes (suffix, prefix, infix)? Do the morphemes change their phonological shapes (tones, segments) and meaning as they combine to form the word? It is obvious from these questions that Mandarin compounds such as *lā-cháng* 'pull-long = to lengthen by pulling', *fēng-chē* 'wind-vehicle = windmill', *rè-xīn* 'hot-heart = enthusiastic', *zǎo-wǎn* 'early-late = sooner or later' belong to the realm of morphology. Indeed, compounds constitute a broad and important area in the grammar of Mandarin. They will be treated in section 3.2. of this chapter. In this section, we will discuss two other morphological processes: reduplication and affixation.

#### 3.1.1 Reduplication

As a morphological process, *reduplication* means that a morpheme is repeated so that the original morpheme together with its repetition form a new word.<sup>2</sup> Such a new word is generally semantically and/or syntactically distinct from the original

morpheme. Let us illustrate with an example. In section 6.4 of chapter 6 on aspect, it is stated that a volitional verb may be reduplicated to signal delimitative aspect; that is, the reduplication of an action verb has the semantic effect of signaling that the actor is doing something ‘‘a little bit.’’ Thus, the meaning of a reduplicated action verb is often translated with ‘a little’.

- (1) *a.*    qǐng    nǐ    cháng    zhèi    –    ge    cài  
           please you taste this    –    CL    dish

Please taste this dish.

- b.*    qǐng    nǐ    cháng-chang    zhèi    –    ge    cài  
           please you taste-taste this    –    CL    dish

Please taste this dish a little.

A verb reduplicated usually remains a verb, and an adjective reduplicated usually remains an adjective. Phonologically, the only consistent effect of reduplication occurs with monosyllabic morphemes. When the reduplicated morpheme is monosyllabic, the second syllable takes a neutral tone. *Cháng-chang* ‘taste a little’ in sentence (1) *b* is an example.<sup>3</sup>

The various types of reduplication are presented in the following sections.

#### A. Reduplication of Volitional Verbs

As we have said, the semantic function of reduplicating the volitional verb in a sentence is to signal the actor’s doing something ‘‘a little bit.’’ Adjectival verbs (e.g., *róngyì* ‘easy’), resultative verb compounds (e.g., *dǎ-kū* ‘hit-cry = hit someone to cause that person to cry’) and nonvolitional verbs (e.g., *wàng* ‘forget’) do not undergo this delimitative aspect reduplication. For example,

- (2)    jiāo-jiao    ‘teach-teach = teach a little’  
       shuō-shuo    ‘say-say = say a little’  
       xiē-xie    ‘rest-rest = rest a little’  
       bèi-bei    ‘recite-recite = recite a little’  
       zōu-zou    ‘walk-walk = walk a little’  
       mó-mo    ‘grind-grind = grind a little’

In addition, when a monosyllabic volitional verb is reduplicated to signal the delimitative aspect, the morpheme *yí* ‘one’ may occur between the original monosyllabic volitional verb and its repetition without any change in meaning. Thus, the

forms in (2) may optionally occur with *yi*; for example, *jiāo-yi-jiāo* 'teach-one-teach = teach a little', *xiē-yi-xiē* 'rest-one-rest = rest a little', *zǒu-yi-zǒu* 'walk-one-walk = walk a little', and *mó-yi-mó* 'grind-one-grind = grind a little'. The phonological effect of the insertion of *yi* 'one' is that the repeated syllable has a full tone, whereas *yi* 'one' always has a neutral tone. The syntactic effect is that *yi* 'one' plus the repeated syllable function as a postverbal adverbial phrase (see section 6.4 of chapter 6 for further discussion).

Some disyllabic verbs can undergo reduplication, and some cannot. When a volitional verb is disyllabic, the reduplicated verb does not change phonologically; for instance,

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| (3) <u>qǐngjiào-qǐngjiào</u> | 'inquire-inquire = inquire a little' (polite)                                     |
| <u>tǎolùn-tǎolùn</u>         | 'discuss-discuss = discuss a little'  |
| <u>máfán-máfán</u>           | 'bother-bother (someone with something) = bother someone with something a little' |
| <u>pīpíng-pīpíng</u>         | 'criticize-criticize = criticize a little'  |
| <u>yánjiū-yánjiū</u>         | 'research-research = research a little'   |
| <u>zhùyì-zhùyì</u>           | 'pay attention=pay attention = pay a little attention'                            |
| <u>kǎolù-kǎolù</u>           | 'consider-consider = consider a little'   |

Even if a disyllabic verb can undergo reduplication, however, it usually cannot take *yi* 'one' with the reduplication. For instance, whereas *tǎolùn-tǎolùn* is acceptable, *\*tǎolùn-yi-tǎolùn* is not:

- |            |         |   |         |   |         |      |   |
|------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|------|---|
| (4) *wǒmen | tǎolùn  | — | yi      | — | tǎolùn  | zhèi | — |
| we         | discuss | — | one     | — | discuss | this | — |
|            | ge      |   | wèntí   |   |         |      |   |
|            | CL      |   | problem |   |         |      |   |

Let us consider some verbal notions that can be expressed by either a disyllabic verb or a monosyllabic verb: *wèn* 'ask'/'*xùnwèn* 'ask'; *zhǎo* 'find, look for'/'*xúnzhǎo* 'find, look for'; *mà* 'scold'/'*zhòumà* 'scold'. All of the monosyllabic forms can undergo reduplication to acquire the meaning of the delimitative aspect, but all of their disyllabic counterparts are odd under reduplication:

- |        |     |           |   |         |           |       |
|--------|-----|-----------|---|---------|-----------|-------|
| (5) a. | nǐ  | <u>mà</u> | — | (yi —)  | <u>ma</u> | tāmen |
|        | you | scold     | — | (one —) | scold     | they  |

You scold them a little.



b. \*nǐ zhòumà - zhòumà tāmen  
 you scold - scold they

(6) a. nǐ wèn - (yī -) wèn tā  
 you ask - (one -) ask 3sg

You ask him/her a little.

你问他/她？

b. \*nǐ xúnwèn - xúnwèn tā  
 you ask - ask 3sg

(7) a. wǒmen zhǎo - (yī -) zhao rén  
 we look:for - (one -) look:for person

We're looking for someone a little.

b. \*wǒmen xúnzhǎo - xúnzhǎo rén  
 we look:for - look:for person

If a volitional verb is a verb-object compound (see section 3.2.5 of this chapter) whose components are separable, then the reduplication involves only the first component—the verb of the verb-object compound—and the second syllable of the reduplicated monosyllabic verb takes on the neutral tone; for example,

- (8) shuì-jiào 'to sleep'; shuì-shuì-jiào 'sleep a little'  
dǎ-liè 'to hunt'; dǎ-da-liè 'hunt a little'<sup>3</sup>  
xī-zǎo 'to bathe'; xī-xī-zǎo 'bathe a little'  
tiào-wǔ 'to dance'; tiào-tiào-wǔ 'dance a little'  
jū-gōng 'to bow'; jū-ju-gōng 'bow a little'

If a volitional verb is a verb-object compound whose components are inseparable, then the entire compound must be reduplicated in order to be in the delimitative aspect: for instance,

- (9) xiǎo-xīn 'be careful'; xiǎo-xīn-xiǎo-xīn 'be careful a little'  
xiào-láo 'to serve'; xiào-láo-xiào-láo 'render a little service'  
bào-yuàn 'to bear grudge'; bào-yuàn-bào-yuàn 'bear a little grudge'  
ké-sòu 'to cough'; ké-sòu-ké-sòu 'cough a little'

## B. Reduplication of Adjectives

Adjectives can be reduplicated either as modifiers of nouns or as manner adverbs, which are modifiers of verbs. When an adjective is reduplicated as a noun modifier, the semantic effect is that the original meaning of the adjective becomes more vivid. Thus, the semantic difference between (10) *a* and (10) *b* is that (10) *b* offers a more vivid description of the noun:

- (10) *a.*    hóng        -        de        -        huā  
              red            -        NOM     -        flower

flowers that are red

- b.*    hóng        -        hong     -        de        -        huā  
              red            -        red        -        NOM     -        flower

flowers that are really red (more vivid description)

Manner adverbs can also be formed from reduplicated adjectives (see chapter 8 on adverbs):

- (11)    tā        màn-man-de    gǔn  
              3sg            slowly            roll

S/He rolled slowly.

- (12)    wǒmen    shū-shu-fù-fu-de    tǎng        zài        nàr  
              we            comfortably    lie        at        there

We lay there comfortably.

When an adjective is disyllabic, the reduplication strategy is to reduplicate each syllable independently, as in (13):

- |      |                |                |                          |                |
|------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| (13) | <u>shūfù</u>   | 'comfortable'  | <u>shū-shu-fù-fù</u>     | 'comfortable'  |
|      | <u>gānjìng</u> | 'clean'        | <u>gān-gan-jìng-jìng</u> | 'clean'        |
|      | <u>qīngchú</u> | 'clear'        | <u>qīng-qing-chú-chú</u> | 'clear'        |
|      | <u>hútú</u>    | 'muddleheaded' | <u>hú-hu-tú-tú</u>       | 'muddleheaded' |
|      | <u>kuàilè</u>  | 'happily'      | <u>kuài-kuai-lè-lè</u>   | 'happy'        |
|      | <u>zhěngqì</u> | 'orderly'      | <u>zhěng-zheng-qì-qì</u> | 'orderly'      |
|      | <u>pútōng</u>  | 'ordinary'     | <u>pú-pu-tōng-tōng</u>   | 'ordinary'     |

As these examples show, in this type of reduplication, the second syllable is unstressed and therefore takes on the neutral tone.

It should be noted that not all adjectives can undergo reduplication. There does not, however, appear to be any rule governing which adjectives can be reduplicated and which adjectives cannot. Let us look at some contrasting pairs of examples:

- (14) jiǎndān 'simple'; jiǎn-jian-dān-dān 'simple'  
fùzá 'complex'; \*fù-fu-zá-zá  
chéngshí 'honest'; chéng-cheng-shí-shí 'honest'  
jiǎohuá 'sly'; \*jiǎo-jiao-huá-huá  
pàng 'fat'; pàng-pang 'fat'  
shòu 'thin'; \*shòu-shou ?  
jìng 'quiet'; jìng-jing 'quiet'  
chǎo 'noisy'; \*chǎo-chao  
guījū 'well behaved'; guī-gui-jū-jū 'well behaved'  
yěmán 'barbarous'; \*yě-ye-mán-man  
yuán 'round'; yuán-yuan 'round'  
fāng 'square'; fāng-fang 'square'  
cháng 'long'; ??cháng-chang  
hóng 'red'; hóng-hong 'red'  
fěnhóng 'pink'; \*fěnf-fen-hóng-hóng  
píngfán 'commonplace'; píng-ping-fán-fán 'commonplace'  
zhòngyào 'important'; \*zhòng-zhong-yào-yào

In general, there are many more disyllabic adjectives than monosyllabic adjectives which cannot undergo reduplication. The following are some additional examples of disyllabic adjectives that cannot be reduplicated:

- (15) měilì 'beautiful'; \*měi-mei-lì-lì  
wēidà 'majestic'; \*wēi-wei-dà-dà  
chǒulòu 'ugly'; \*chǒu-chou-lòu-lòu  
féiwò 'fertile'; \*féi-fei-wò-wò  
xìnggǎn 'sexy'; \*xìng-xing-gǎn-gǎn  
jùtǐ 'concrete'; \*jù-ju-tǐ-tǐ  
chōuxiàng 'abstract'; \*chōu-chou-xiàng-xiàng  
jīběn 'basic'; \*jī-ji-běn-běn  
róngyì 'easy'; \*róng-rong-yì-yì  
kùnnán 'difficult'; \*kùn-kun-nán-nán  
yánzhòng 'serious, grave'; \*yán-yan-zhòng-zhòng  
fūqiǎn 'superficial'; \*fū-fu-qiǎn-qiǎn  
fāngbiàn 'convenient'; \*fāng-fang-biàn-biàn

yōuyǎ 'elegant'; \*yōu-you-yǎ-yǎ  
fǔbài 'corrupt'; \*fǔ-fu-bài-bài  
yúbèn 'stupid'; \*yú-yu-bèn-bèn  
xiánmíng 'sagacious'; \*xián-xian-míng-míng  
pínqióng 'impoverished'; \*pín-pin-qióng-qióng  
yǒushàn 'friendly'; \*yǒu-you-shàn-shàn  
tòumíng 'transparent'; \*tòu-tou-míng-míng  
gāncào 'arid'; \*gān-gan-cào-cào  
cháoshī 'humid'; \*cháo-chao-shī-shī  
xiǎnmíng 'obvious'; \*xiǎn-xian-míng-míng

### C. Reduplication of Measure Words

The reduplication of measure words (see section 4.2.1 of chapter 4) yields the meaning 'every'. For instance, *bàng* 'pound' is a measure word. When it is reduplicated, *bàng-bàng*, it means 'every pound', as in:

- (16) bàng-bàng      ròu      dōu      yào      chá  
 every pound      meat      all      want      examine

Every pound of meat needs to be examined.

Since most classifiers (again see section 4.2.1 of chapter 4) are measure words either historically or contemporaneously, most of them can be reduplicated to signify 'every'. For example:

- (17) a. tiáo-tiáo xīnwén 'every item of news' (where tiáo is the classifier for xīnwén 'news,' as in yì-tiáo xīnwén 'one item of news')
- b. gè-gè rén 'every person' (where gè is the classifier for rén 'person')
- c. fèn-fèn bàozi 'every newspaper' (where fèn is the classifier for bàozi 'newspaper')
- d. zuò-zuò shān 'every mountain' (where zuò is the classifier for shān 'mountain')
- e. jiàn-jian yīfu 'every dress' (where jiàn is the classifier for yīfu 'dress, clothes')
- f. kē-ke shù 'every tree' (where kē is the classifier for shù 'book')

- g. mén-mén pào 'every cannon' (where mén is the classifier for pào 'cannon')
- h. zhāng-zhāng zhǐ 'every sheet of paper' (where zhāng is the classifier for zhǐ 'paper')
- i. piān-piān wénzhāng 'every article' (where piān is the classifier for wénzhāng 'article [in a journal]')

The vast majority of monosyllabic measure words can be reduplicated to signify 'every', but polysyllabic measure words cannot undergo reduplication. For example, *gōnglǐ* 'kilometer', *jiǎnlún* 'gallon', *xīngqī* 'week', and *guànzǐ* 'jug' cannot be reduplicated.

There are also a few monosyllabic classifiers and measure words that cannot be reduplicated. For example, the measure words for time, *tiān* 'day' and *nián* 'year,' can be reduplicated, as in:

- (18) tiān-tiān 'every day'  
nián-nián 'every year'

but *yuè* 'month' and *miǎo* 'second' cannot be reduplicated:

- (19) \*yuè-yue  
 \*miǎo-miao

The reduplication of certain monosyllabic classifiers appears odd in some dialects but not in others. For instance, *zhī* is a classifier for certain animals, such as *jī* 'chicken'. In Mandarin (20) is odd, but its Cantonese counterpart is perfectly natural in Cantonese. Hence, it is possible that (20) might appear natural in certain Mandarin dialects also.

- (20) \*zhī-zhī jī 'every chicken'

#### D. Reduplication of Kinship Terms

A number of kinship terms involve reduplication; but the reduplicated morphemes in those kinship terms are mostly *bound* morphemes—morphemes that cannot occur as independent words. The only exceptions are *bà* 'father' and *mā* 'mother'. The kinship terms that are bound morphemes, however, may occur with other morphemes to form terms of address: for instance, *dà-jīě* 'big sister' can be a

term of address for one's elder sister, but the general term denoting an elder sister is a reduplicated form, *jiě-jie*. Those kinship terms that do not involve reduplication are bisyllabic, such as *zǔfù* 'paternal grandfather', *biǎogē* 'elder male first cousin', *biǎomèi* 'younger female first cousin', *tángdì* 'younger male first cousin from the paternal side', *zhínǚ* 'a brother's daughter', *nǚxū* 'son-in-law', *wàisheng* 'children of a sister', *sūnzi* 'grandson of male lineage', *jiěfu* 'husband of elder sister'.

The following are the reduplicated kinship terms:

(21) <u>bàba</u>	'father'	<u>mā-ma</u>	'mother'
<u>gē-ge</u>	'elder brother'	<u>dì-dì</u>	'younger brother'
<u>jiě-jie</u>	'elder sister'	<u>mèi-mei</u>	'younger sister'
<u>yé-ye</u>	'paternal grandpa'	<u>nǎi-nai</u>	'paternal grandma'
<u>bó-bo</u>	'elder brother of father'	<u>shú-shu</u>	'younger brother of father'
<u>gū-gu</u>	'paternal aunt'	<u>jiù-jiu</u>	'maternal uncle'
<u>lǎo-lao</u>	'maternal grandma'	<u>gōng-gong</u>	'husband's father'
<u>pó-po</u>	'husband's mother'		

#### E. Miscellaneous Reduplicated Terms

Some of the reduplicated terms presented here do not exist without the reduplication—for example, *máomao yǔ* does not have a counterpart in *\*máoyǔ*—and some of them are onomatopoeic terms, such as *dīngdang-dīngdang*:

(22) <u>línglingsuìsùi de dōngxì</u>	'odds and ends'
<u>máomao yǔ</u>	'drizzle'
<u>lěng bingbing</u>	'cold as ice'
<u>dīngdang-dīngdang</u>	'sound of ringing bells'
<u>bēngbeng cuì</u>	'crackling crisp'
<u>gāng-gang</u>	'just now'
<u>piān-pian</u>	'in a prejudiced or determined manner'
<u>cháng-chang</u>	'often'

#### 3.1.2 Affixation

*Affixes* are bound morphemes that are added to other morphemes to form larger units. Often affixes are grammatical morphemes indicating number, aspect, and so on. Compared to Indo-European languages, Mandarin has few affixes. The scarcity of affixes in Mandarin accounts for one of the earliest observed typological characteristics of the language—that Mandarin is an isolating language (see chapter 2). Of the three types of affixes—prefixes, suffixes, and infixes—prefixes and infixes are extremely rare in Mandarin, while suffixes are slightly more numerous.

## A. Prefixes

An affix that precedes the morpheme to which it is added is called a *prefix*. There are only a few prefixes in Mandarin:

A.1 *lǎo-/xiǎo-*

*Lǎo-* and *xiǎo-* are typically prefixed to people's surnames to form nicknames. When *lǎo-* and *xiǎo-* are added to a surname, say, *Zhāng*, to yield *lǎo-Zhāng* and *xiǎo-Zhāng*, they have a slightly different connotation, particularly when they are contrasted against each other. Both are used as nicknames signaling familiarity, but *lǎo-Zhāng*, at least for some speakers, is a slightly more respectful term than *xiǎo-Zhāng*. This subtle connotative nuance can be attributed to the adjectival words *lǎo* 'old' and *xiǎo* 'small, young' from which the prefixes *lǎo-* and *xiǎo-* are derived. *Lǎo-* can also be added to the numbers ranging from two to ten to indicate the order of seniority, usually among children in a family: for example, *lǎo-èr* 'number two', *lǎo-wú* 'number five'. Number one, however, is signaled by *lǎo-dà*, where *dà* means 'big'.<sup>4</sup>

A.2 *dì-*

This prefix is added to numerals to form ordinal numbers—for example, *dì-yī* 'first', *dì-liù* 'sixth', *dì-yi-wàn* 'ten thousandth'. It is glossed as *ORD* in examples.

A.3 *chū-*

This prefix is added to the numerals one to ten to denote the first ten days of a lunar month—for instance, *chū-èr* 'the second', *chū-shí* 'the tenth'. *Chū-yī*, *chū-èr*, *chū-sān* containing the numeral *yī* 'one', *èr* 'two', *sān* 'three' can, however, also denote the first year, the second year, and the third year of secondary education, equivalent to the seventh grade, the eighth grade, and the ninth grade in the United States.

There are a number of words that can be viewed either as compounds or as words containing a prefix. We have chosen to present them as the latter.

A.4 *kě-*

*Kě-* occurs with a number of verbs to form adjectives. Its meaning may be described as '-able', as in these examples:

(23) <u>kě-ài</u>	'lovable'	<u>ài</u>	'to love'
<u>kě-xiào</u>	'laughable'	<u>xiào</u>	'to laugh'
<u>kě-kào</u>	'dependable'	<u>kào</u>	'to depend'

<u>kě-kǒu</u>	'palatable'	<u>kǒu</u>	'mouth'
<u>kě-néng</u>	'possible'	<u>néng</u>	'can'
<u>kě-xìn</u>	'credible'	<u>xìn</u>	'believe'
<u>kě-chī</u>	'edible'	<u>chī</u>	'eat'
<u>kě-pà</u>	'dreadful'	<u>pà</u>	'fear'

Some of the verbs to which *kě-* is prefixed are no longer free morphemes, and the meanings of these terms have become idiomatic. Thus, *kě* in these idioms is a prefix only in the etymological sense:

- (24) kě-xí 'unfortunately'  
kě-jiàn 'it is evident that'  
kě-lián 'pitiable, pity'

#### A.5 *hǎo-/nán-*

*Hǎo-* and *nán-* as prefixes have opposite meanings. As independent morphemes, *hǎo* means 'good, well', and *nán* means 'hard, difficult'. As prefixes, they may each be added to the same set of verbs to form adjectives. Here are some examples:

- (25) hǎo-kàn 'good-look = pretty', kàn 'look'  
nán-kàn 'hard-look = ugly'  
hǎo-wén 'good-smell = fragrant', wén 'smell'  
nán-wén 'hard-smell = smelly'  
hǎo-tīng 'good-listen = euphonious', tīng 'listen'  
nán-tīng 'hard-listen = cacophonous'  
hǎo-shòu 'good-sustain = comfortable', shòu 'sustain'  
nán-shòu 'hard-sustain = miserable'  
hǎo-shuō 'good-say = easy to say', shuō 'say'  
nán-shuō 'hard-say = hard to say'  
hǎo-yòng 'good-use = easy to use', yòng 'use'  
nán-yòng 'hard-use = hard to use'  
hǎo-chī 'good-eat = delicious', chī 'eat'  
nán-chī 'hard-eat = unpalatable'

#### B. Infixes

An *infix* is a bound morpheme that is inserted within a word to form another word. The only forms that could be considered infixes in Mandarin occur with



resultative verb compounds. They are *-de-* 'obtain' and *-bu-* 'not' and are traditionally called *potential infixes* of the resultative verb compound because of the meaning of the compound when the infix is present, as in (26):

- (26) shuō - de - qīngchū 'say-obtain-clear = can say clearly'  
shuō - bu - qīngchū 'say-not-clear = cannot say clearly'

The resultative verb compound is treated in detail in section 3.2.3 of this chapter.

### C. Suffixes

An affix that follows the morpheme to which it is added is called a *suffix*. Mandarin has more suffixes than either prefixes or infixes. The most frequently occurring suffixes are the aspect markers, *-le* 'perfective', *-zhe* 'durative', *-guo* 'experiential'. The aspect markers, discussed in detail in chapter 6, are an important and intricate area of the Mandarin grammar. Other grammatical morphemes that occur as suffixes are the possessive (genitive) marker *-de* (glossed as *GEN*), presented in section 4.2 of chapter 4, and the manner adverb marker *-de*, discussed in section 8.2.1 of chapter 8. In this section we will discuss suffixes other than the aforementioned grammatical morphemes.

#### C.1 *-er*

The retroflex suffix, *-er*, is the only nonsyllabic suffix in Mandarin. It merges with the syllable preceding it to form a new syllable ending in the retroflex sound, as in these examples:

- (27) niǎo + er:      niǎor 'bird'  
gēn + er:        gēr 'root'  
guǐ + er:        guǐr 'ghost'

The rules governing the phonology of the merging of the retroflex suffix with the preceding syllable are presented in detail in *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese* by Y. R. Chao (1968). The range and frequency of occurrence of the retroflex suffix varies from dialect to dialect within the Mandarin dialect family. It is most prominent in the dialect of Běijīng.

Etymologically, *-er* was a diminutive suffix for nouns; but it has lost its semantic content in modern Mandarin, and its distribution in the Běijīng dialect has been extended to other parts of speech, including some place words, time words, verbs,

and classifier/measure words, as a purely phonological phenomenon. For instance:

(28) Place words:	<u>zhèr</u> 'here'
	<u>nàr</u> 'there'
Verbs:	<u>wár</u> 'to play'
	<u>huór</u> 'to be angry'
Time words:	<u>jīr</u> 'today'
	<u>miér</u> 'tomorrow'
Classifier/measure words:	<u>bér</u> 'classifier for books, notebooks, albums, and so forth'
	<u>piàr</u> 'a slice, a flake'

Basically, the retroflex suffix remains a nominal suffix as it once was when it served as a diminutive suffix. It occurs freely with monosyllabic nouns, less freely with compound nouns. Today, its usage in both Putonghua, the national language of the People's Republic of China, and in the Mandarin spoken in Taiwan is far less common than its usage in the Běijīng dialect described in Chao (1968) and the major textbooks.

#### C.2 *-men*

The suffix *-men* is pronounced with neutral tone and is restricted to human nouns and pronouns only.<sup>5</sup> When a human noun takes on this suffix, it becomes a plural noun. It is entirely optional and would generally be used only when there is some reason to emphasize the plurality of the noun. For example:

(29) <u>lǎoshī-men</u>	'teachers'
<u>xuéshēng-men</u>	'students'
<u>péngyǒu-men</u>	'friends'
<u>tóngbào-men</u>	'fellow countrymen'
<u>xiōngdì-men</u>	'brothers'
<u>jiěmèi-men</u>	'sisters'

A monosyllabic human noun does not take this plural suffix. Thus, the following examples are unacceptable:

(30) * <u>zéi-men</u>	'thieves'
* <u>guān-men</u>	'officials'
* <u>bīng-men</u>	'soldiers'

The suffix *-men* also occurs as a plural marker with pronouns:

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| (31) <u>wǒ-men</u> | 'I-plural = we'      |
| <u>nǐ-men</u>      | 'you-plural'         |
| <u>tā-men</u>      | 's/he-plural = they' |

### C.3 *-xué*

*-Xué* is the Mandarin counterpart of the English suffix '-ology', as in *zoology*, *psychology*, and the like:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| (32) <u>dòngwù-xué</u> | 'animal-ology = zoology'  |
| <u>xīnlǐ-xué</u>       | 'psychology:(of someone)-ology = psychology<br>(as a discipline)' |
| <u>shēngwù-xué</u>     | 'living:things-ology = biology'                                   |
| <u>dìzhǐ-xué</u>       | 'earth:property-ology = geology'                                  |
| <u>shèhuì-xué</u>      | 'society-ology = sociology'                                       |
| <u>wùlǐ-xué</u>        | 'matter:principle-ology = physics'                                |
| <u>huà-xué</u>         | 'transform-ology = chemistry'                                     |
| <u>lìshǐ-xué</u>       | 'history: (of something)-ology = history (as a<br>discipline)'    |
| <u>zhíwù-xué</u>       | 'plant-ology = botany'  |
| <u>yǔyán-xué</u>       | 'language-ology = linguistics'                                    |
| <u>wén-xué</u>         | 'literature-ology = the study of literature'                      |
| <u>yī-xué</u>          | 'remedy-ology = the study of medicine'                            |
| <u>zhé-xué</u>         | 'philosophy-ology = philosophy (as a discipline)'                 |
| <u>fǎ-xué</u>          | 'law-ology = law (as a discipline)'                               |
| <u>jīngjì-xué</u>      | 'economy-ology = economics'                                       |
| <u>gōngchéng-xué</u>   | 'engineering-ology = the study of engineering'                    |

### C.4 *-jiā*

The suffix *-jiā* is equivalent to the English suffix '-ist'. For example:

- |                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| (33) <u>kēxué-jīā</u> | 'science-ist = scientist'   |
| <u>wùlǐxué-jīā</u>    | 'physics-ist = physicist'   |
| <u>yùndòng-jīā</u>    | 'athletics-ist = athlete'   |
| <u>lǐlùn-jīā</u>      | 'theory-ist = theorist'     |
| <u>zhèngzhì-jīā</u>   | 'politics-ist = politician' |
| <u>zuò-jīā</u>        | 'create-ist = writer'       |
| <u>xiǎoshuō-jīā</u>   | 'novel-ist = novelist'      |

C.5 *-huà*

The suffix *-huà* creates verbs from nouns and adjectives. It is semantically equivalent to the English suffix ‘-ize’.

(34) <u>yǎng-huà</u>	‘oxygen-ize = oxidize’
<u>Měi-huà</u>	‘American-ize = Americanize’
<u>gōngyè-huà</u>	‘industry-ize = industrialize’
<u>jīxiè-huà</u>	‘machinery-ize = mechanize’
<u>tóng-huà</u>	‘similar-ize = assimilate’
<u>è-huà</u>	‘undesirable-ize = deteriorate’
<u>fǔ-huà</u>	‘corrupt-ize = to become corrupt’
<u>měi-huà</u>	‘beautiful-ize = beautify’
<u>yāng-huà</u>	‘Western-ize = Westernize’

There are two other syllables we must mention here because they appear to be suffixes, even though they are not really suffixes anymore in present-day Mandarin.

C.6 *-zi*

Etymologically, *-zi* was a suffix derived from *zǐ* ‘child’. It can no longer be used productively. It always has the neutral tone, and it constitutes the obligatory second syllable of a large number of nouns when they occur as independent words. Those nouns that must take *-zi* as their second syllable do not constitute a semantic class or a category of words which can be described in any other fashion. Thus, speakers of Mandarin must memorize this group of nouns that obligatorily cooccur with *-zi*. Here are some examples:

(35) <u>tīzi</u>	‘ladder’	<u>chúzi</u>	‘cook’
<u>guǐzi</u>	‘ghosts (derogatory name for Caucasians)’	<u>húzi</u>	‘beard’
<u>érzi</u>	‘son’	<u>dèngzi</u>	‘stool’
<u>làzi</u>	‘hot pepper’	<u>lúzi</u>	‘stove’
<u>zhuōzi</u>	‘table’	<u>kuàizi</u>	‘chopstick’
<u>shūzi</u>	‘comb’	<u>wàzi</u>	‘sock’
<u>kùzi</u>	‘pants’	<u>màozi</u>	‘hat’
<u>yǐzi</u>	‘chair’	<u>tíngzi</u>	‘pavilion, kiosk’
<u>dīngzi</u>	‘nail’	<u>bāozi</u>	‘a round dumpling’
<u>jiǎozi</u>	‘elongated dumpling’	<u>piǎnzi</u>	‘swindler’
		<u>lūzi</u>	‘donkey’

<u>jiàzi</u>	'a frame, a scaffold'	<u>shīzi</u>	'lion'
<u>hóuzi</u>	'monkey'	<u>xiāngzi</u>	'chest, suitcase'
<u>diānzi</u>	'cushion'	<u>qiánzi</u>	'plier'
<u>píngzi</u>	'vase, bottle'	<u>hézi</u>	'box'
<u>chuízi</u>	'hammer'	<u>fēngzi</u>	'lunatic, schizophrenic'
<u>běnzì</u>	'notebook'	<u>wūzi</u>	'room'
<u>tùzi</u>	'rabbit'	<u>yínzi</u>	'silver'
<u>dùzi</u>	'abdomen'	<u>júzi</u>	'orange'
<u>táozi</u>	'peach'	<u>dāizi</u>	'a retarded person'
<u>yuànzì</u>	'courtyard'	<u>pánzi</u>	'tray, plate'
<u>liàozi</u>	'yardage of cloth'		

C.7 -*tou*

Another neutral-tone syllable that is a suffix only in the historical sense, *-tou*, occurs in modern Mandarin with a number of nouns that are bound morphemes. Again, these nouns with their historical suffix *-tou* must be learned by speakers of Mandarin. The following are some examples:

(36)	<u>mántou</u>	'Chinese bread'	<u>mùtou</u>	'wood'
	<u>gūtou</u>	'bone'	<u>pīntou</u>	'paramour'
	<u>lóngtou</u>	'faucet'	<u>shítou</u>	'stone'
	<u>yùtou</u>	'taro root'	<u>shétou</u>	'tongue'
	<u>niàntou</u>	'idea'	<u>pàitou</u>	'grand style'
	<u>hòutou</u>	'back'	<u>qiántou</u>	'front'
	<u>wàitou</u>	'outside'	<u>lītou</u>	'inside'
	<u>xiàtou</u>	'below'	<u>shàngtou</u>	'above'

There is a separate, productive usage of the suffix *-tou* with monosyllabic action verbs in the following context:

(37)	{	<u>yǒu</u>	}	action verb – <u>tu</u>
	{	exist		
	{	<u>méi (you)</u>	}	
	{	not exist		

{ It is worth V-ing. }

{ It is not worth V-ing. }

For example,

- (38) nàr yǒu shénme kàn - tou?  
 there exist what see - tou

What's worth seeing over there?

- (39) nèi - dùn fàn yǒu chī - tou  
 that - CL meal exist eat - tou

That meal is worth eating.

- (40) zhèi - zhǒng yīnyuè méi yǒu tīng - tou  
 this - kind music not exist hear - tou

This kind of music is not worth listening to.

It is reasonable to wonder why Mandarin should have so many nouns that possess the meaningless syllables *-zi* and *-tou*. Just as with parallel verb compounds (see section 3.2.3), the answer has to do with the history of the Chinese language. Briefly, in Mandarin, more than in any of the other dialects, tonal distinctions and final consonants have been lost, with the result that many single-syllable words that had been distinct at earlier stages of the language now would be homophones. The response to this impending massive homophony in Mandarin has been a strong tendency to develop disyllabic words. The existence of this large class of modern two-syllable words ending in the now-meaningless syllables *-zi* and *-tou* is one example of this tendency.

One interesting corollary of this historical fact is that many of the noun morphemes that must take *-zi* or *-tou* when they occur as independent words may drop these "suffixes" when they combine with another morpheme in a compound (see the discussion of compounds in section 3.2 of this chapter for many more examples):

- (41) mù to 'wood'  
 \*mù

but:

- mù - bǎn 'wooden board'  
mù - tàn 'charcoal'

- (42) háizi 'child'  
 \*hái
- but:
- xiǎo - hái 'small child'  
 nǚ - hái 'female child = girl'
- (43) xiézi 'shoe'  
 \*xié
- but:
- pí - xié 'leather shoe'  
 bù - xié 'cloth shoe'  
 tuō - xié 'remove shoes'

### 3.2 Compounds

Numerous studies of compounds in Mandarin Chinese are available. Two of the most extensive of these can be found in Chao (1968) and Lu (1965). There is, however, a great deal of disagreement over the definition of *compound*. The reason is that, no matter what criteria one picks, there is no clear demarcation between compounds and noncompounds. Chinese has very few incontrovertible polysyllabic morphemes, and most of those that do exist are borrowed from other languages—for example, *pútáo* 'grape', *núdié* 'butterfly', *bōli* 'glass', *méigui* 'rose'. Other than the few clear cases of polysyllabic morphemes, the polysyllabic words in Chinese are inevitably composed of several morphemes. The definition of a compound is made difficult by the following facts. Sometimes a component morpheme is from classical Chinese and no longer functions as a free morpheme in modern spoken Mandarin; for example, in *fōuzé* 'otherwise', the second part, *zé*, meaning 'then' in Classical Chinese, is no longer used in modern spoken Mandarin. Sometimes the meanings of the component morphemes are totally unrelated to the meaning of the entire word; for example, in *fēngliú* 'amorous', *fēng* is a morpheme meaning 'wind', and *liú* is a morpheme meaning 'flow'. Sometimes the meaning of a polysyllabic word can only indirectly be connected with the literal meanings of the component morphemes, as, for example, in *ròumá* 'flesh-numb = disgusting'. Sometimes the meaning of a polysyllabic word can only be metaphorically related to the meanings of its component morphemes, as in *xiǎoxīn* 'small-heart = be careful'. Fortunately, though, the definition of a compound is really not a crucial issue for students of Mandarin. It is important only to linguists analyzing the Mandarin lexicon because it serves to delimit the domain of their

studies. Thus, we may consider as compounds all polysyllabic units that have certain properties of single words and that can be analyzed into two or more meaningful elements, or morphemes, even if these morphemes cannot occur independently in modern Mandarin. According to this characterization, then, *kāi-guān* 'open-close = switch' is a compound because it is like a single word in that it refers to a single object. Similarly, *chōu-yān* 'extract-smoke' is a compound because it behaves like a single word in certain respects discussed below in section 3.2.5. The combination *hē tāng* 'drink soup', on the other hand, because it has none of the properties of a single word, is not considered a compound; it is, rather, a phrase consisting of a verb plus its direct object.

### 3.2.1 The Meanings of Compounds

Let us first examine the relatedness between the meaning of a compound and the meanings of its component morphemes.

The relatedness between the meaning of a compound and those of its components can vary from close to nonexistent. Although not all compounds are idiomatic in meaning, the situation concerning the meaning of compounds by and large parallels that of idioms. One factor that plays a role in the semantic relation between an idiom and its components is time. Idioms are continuously being formed. At the time of the formation of a new idiom, not only are the speakers aware of the literal and idiomatic senses of the term, but they also know the connection between them. As time moves on, this semantic connection begins to recede from the realm of the knowledge of the native speakers until, finally, it is totally lost. A good example in English is *understand*. The semantic relation between the compositional meaning of *under* and *stand*, on the one hand, and the idiomatic meaning, 'to comprehend', on the other, is no longer relevant to present-day speakers of English. For the English example *hit below the belt*, though, the relation between the literal meaning and the idiomatic meaning is still apparent to most speakers of English. In the case of Mandarin compounds, the time element is related to a speaker's knowledge of the classical language. A morpheme in a Mandarin compound may come from the classical language; if one is not familiar with the classical language, such a morpheme will be obsolete and, therefore, meaningless. For example, *qūzú* 'to chase' is composed of two morphemes from Classical Chinese, *qū* 'drive' and *zú* 'pursue', neither of which exists any longer as a morpheme in modern Mandarin. Thus, the problems concerning compounds in Mandarin are often related through the written language to Classical Chinese. Later on in this section we will examine the various types of compounds according to the semantic relations between their components. At this point, let us



look at some examples that exhibit various degrees of relatedness between the meaning of the compound and the meaning of its component morphemes.

(i) There may be no apparent semantic connection between the meaning of the compound and the meaning of its constituents in the modern language. Such compounds exhibit the highest degree of idiomaticity. Very few compounds in Mandarin, however, are of this type. Examples include:

(44) <u>fēng-liú</u>	'wind-flow = amorous'
<u>huā-shēng</u>	'flower-born = peanut'
<u>fēi-zào</u>	'fat-black = soap'
<u>dà-yì</u>	'great-idea = negligent'
<u>xīn-shuǐ</u>	'fuel-water = salary'
<u>xiǎo-shuō</u>	'small-talk = novel'
<u>dà-biàn</u>	'great-convenience = defecate/feces'
<u>shāng-fēng</u>	'hurt-wind = catch cold'

(ii) There may be a metaphorical, figurative, or inferential connection between the meaning of the compound and the meanings of its component parts.

(45) <u>máo-dùn</u>	'spear-shield = contradictory'
<u>shǒu-yìng</u>	'hand-hard = tough'
<u>kāi-guān</u>	'open-close = switch'
<u>xū-xīn</u>	'empty-mind = modest'
<u>rè-xīn</u>	'hot-heart = enthusiastic'
<u>diàn-yǐng</u>	'electric-image = movie'
<u>huǒ-chái</u>	'fire-firewood = match'
<u>tiān-qì</u>	'heaven-breath = weather'
<u>gōng-lù</u>	'public-way = highway'
<u>qīng-shì</u>	'light-look = look down upon'
<u>zhòng-shì</u>	'weighty-look = take as important'
<u>hòu-rén</u>	'late-people = posterity'
<u>rù-shén</u>	'enter-spirit = fascinated'

(iii) The meaning of the compound may be directly related or identical to the meanings of its components.

(46) <u>xǐ-zǎo</u>	'wash-bath = take a bath'
<u>gān-jìng</u>	'dry-clean = clean'
<u>fēi-jī</u>	'fly-machine = airplane'

<u>jìn-bù</u>	'advance-step = make progress'
<u>chéng-qiang</u>	'city-wall = city wall'
<u>chē-mǎ</u>	'vehicle-horse = traffic'
<u>yī-kào</u>	'lean-depend on = depend on'
<u>hū-xī</u>	'exhale-inhale = breathe'
<u>mǎn-zú</u>	'full-sufficient = be content'
<u>nián-qīng</u>	'year-light = youthful'
<u>dǎ-tīng</u>	'make-hear = inquire'
<u>zhī-dào</u>	'know-way = know'
<u>jiāng-lái</u>	'future-come = in the future'
<u>chéng-rèn</u>	'receive-recognize = admit'
<u>dēng-huǒ</u>	'lamp-fire = illumination'

We have provided three classes of compounds to illustrate the degree of relatedness between the meaning of a compound and the meanings of its parts, the first class illustrating the lowest degree, the third the highest. This classification is useful for the purpose of illustration; in reality, however, the degree of relatedness between the meaning of a compound and the meaning of its parts forms a continuum.

### 3.2.2 Nominal Compounds

The semantic relations between the constituents of nominal compounds cannot be exhaustively listed. In fact, among languages that use nominal compounds extensively, such as English, Afrikaans, and Mandarin, it is known that native speakers can create new ones in their speech whenever the speech context is appropriate, and the semantic relation between the constituents of the innovated nominal compounds—that is, the meaning of the nominal compounds—is heavily dependent on the speech context. For example, imagine a speech context in which you and your friend are eating hot dogs with mustard, and you notice a yellow spot on the shirt of your friend. You may say: "You've got a *mustard stain* on your shirt". The nominal compound *mustard stain*, then, means a stain caused by mustard. Consider another context: you and your friend are discussing plant diseases on a farm where, among other plants, mustard is being grown, and the green mustard plants have many black marks on them. In such a context, you may ask your friend: "What are we going to do about those *mustard stains*?" In this context, the compound *mustard stains* means the stains on the mustard plants. If nominal compounds can be created whenever the context is appropriate and if the semantic relations between the constituents cannot be exhaustively enumerated, one may ask the question: Why should anyone provide a list of the semantic relations between the constituents of compounds when such a list cannot in

principle ever be complete? The answer is that there are certain more prevalent semantic relations between the constituents of nominal compounds, and it is pedagogically and heuristically useful to describe them. One consequence of enumerating those prevalent semantic relations is that one sees that the same set of relations seem to hold for all languages utilizing productive nominal compounds.

In the following description of the most common semantic relations between the elements in a nominal compound,  $N_1$  will stand for the first noun in the compound, and  $N_2$  for the second.

(i)  $N_1$  denotes the place where  $N_2$  is located:

(47) <u>chuáng-dān</u> (zi)	'bed-sheet'
<u>mù-bēi</u>	'tomb-monument = tombstone'
<u>tái-dēng</u>	'table-lamp'
<u>tián-shǔ</u>	'field-mouse'
<u>bàngōngshì-zhuōzi</u>	'office-desk'
<u>kètīng-shāfa</u>	'living:room sofa'
<u>hé-mǎ</u>	'river-horse = hippopotamus'
<u>hǎi-gǒu</u>	'sea-dog = seal'

(ii)  $N_1$  denotes the place where  $N_2$  is applied:

(48) <u>chún-gāo</u>	'lip-ointment = lipstick'
<u>yǎn-yào</u>	'eye-medicine'
<u>zhǐjiā-yóu</u>	'nail-oil = nail polish'
<u>yá-gāo</u>	'tooth-paste'

(iii)  $N_2$  is used for  $N_1$ :

(49) <u>qiāng-dàn</u>	'gun-bullet = bullet'
<u>pào-dàn</u>	'artillery-bullet = artillery shell'
<u>yī-jiǎ</u> (zi)	'clothes-rack'
<u>dēng-zhào</u> (zi)	'lamp-shade'
<u>mǎ-fáng</u>	'horse-house = manger'
<u>bùgào-bǎn</u>	'bulletin-board'

(iv)  $N_2$  denotes a unit of  $N_1$ :

(50) <u>tiě-yuánzǐ</u>	'iron-atom'
<u>qīngqì-fēnzi</u>	'hydrogen-molecule'
<u>zhèngfǔ-jīguān</u>	'government-administrative:unit'

(v)  $N_2$  denotes a piece of equipment used in a sport,  $N_1$ :

- |                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (51) <u>pīngpāng-qíu</u> | 'Ping-Pong ball'                 |
| <u>lěiqiú-bàng(zi)</u>   | 'baseball-cudgel = baseball bat' |
| <u>wǎngqiú-pāi(zi)</u>   | 'tennis-racket'                  |
| <u>lánqiú-kuāng(zi)</u>  | 'basketball-hoop'                |

(vi)  $N_2$  denotes a protective device against  $N_1$ :

- |                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| (52) <u>yǔ-mào</u>     | 'rain-hat'                |
| <u>yǔ-yī</u>           | 'rain-clothes = raincoat' |
| <u>tàiyang-yǎnjìng</u> | 'sun-glasses'             |
| <u>dúqì-miànzhào</u>   | 'poison:gas mask'         |

(vii)  $N_2$  is caused by  $N_1$ :

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| (53) <u>yóu-jī</u> | 'oil-stain'            |
| <u>hàn-bān</u>     | 'sweat-spot = freckle' |
| <u>shuǐ-hén</u>    | 'water-mark'           |
| <u>dòu-chuāng</u>  | 'smallpox-pustules'    |

(viii)  $N_2$  denotes a container for  $N_1$ :

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| (54) <u>shū-bāo</u>   | 'book-container = satchel' |
| <u>jiǔ-bēi(zi)</u>    | 'wine-cup'                 |
| <u>mǐ-dài(zi)</u>     | 'rice-bag'                 |
| <u>nǎi-píng(zi)</u>   | 'milk-bottle'              |
| <u>chá-bēi</u>        | 'tea-cup'                  |
| <u>fàn-guō(zi)</u>    | 'rice-pot'                 |
| <u>lāxi-xiāng</u>     | 'trash-can'                |
| <u>bǐnggān-hé(zi)</u> | 'biscuit-box'              |

(ix)  $N_1$  and  $N_2$  are parallel:

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| (55) <u>huā-mù</u> | 'flower-tree = vegetation' |
| <u>jiā-xiāng</u>   | 'home-village = hometown'  |
| <u>guó-jiā</u>     | 'country-home = nation'    |
| <u>shuǐ-tǔ</u>     | 'water-earth = climate'    |
| <u>fù-mǔ</u>       | 'father-mother = parents'  |

<u>jūn-zhǔ</u>	'king-master = monarch'
<u>zǐ-nǚ</u>	'son-daughter = children'

(x)  $N_2$  denotes a product of  $N_1$ :

(56) <u>fēng-mì</u>	'bee-honey = honey'
<u>jī-dàn</u>	'chicken-egg'
<u>cán-sī</u>	'silkworm-silk'
<u>māo-fèn</u>	'cat-scat'
<u>fēng-là</u>	'bee-wax = beeswax'
<u>Xiānggāng-chūpǐn</u>	'Hong:Kong-product'

(xi)  $N_2$  is made of  $N_1$ :

(57) <u>dàlishí-dìbǎn</u>	'marble-floor'
<u>shízi-lù</u>	'pebble-road'
<u>cǎo-xié</u>	'straw-shoe'
<u>zhǐ-lǎohǔ</u>	'paper-tiger'
<u>mùtōu-zhuōzi</u>	'wood-table'
<u>tóng-xiàng</u>	'bronze-statue'
<u>mián-bèi</u>	'cotton-quilt'

(xii)  $N_2$  denotes a place where  $N_1$  is sold:

(58) <u>bǎihuò-gōngsī</u>	'hundred:merchandise-company = department store'
<u>fàn-guǎn</u>	'food-tavern = restaurant'
<u>túshū-guǎn</u>	'book-tavern = library'
<u>cài-chǎng</u>	'food-market'
<u>qìyóu-zhàn</u>	'gasoline-station'
<u>yào-diàn</u>	'drug-store'

(xiii)  $N_2$  denotes a disease of  $N_1$ :

(59) <u>yāo-bìng</u>	'kidney-disease'
<u>fèi-bìng</u>	'lung-disease = tuberculosis'
<u>cháng-yán</u>	'intestine-inflammation'
<u>pífū-zhēngzi</u>	'skin-rash'
<u>xīnzàng-bìng</u>	'heart-disease'

(xiv)  $N_1$  denotes the time for  $N_2$ :

(60) <u>chūn-tiān</u>	'spring-day = spring'
<u>xià-jì</u>	'summer-season = summer'
<u>chén-wù</u>	'morning-fog'
<u>qiū-yuè</u>	'autumn-moon'
<u>dōng-yè</u>	'winter-night'
<u>yè-xiào</u>	'night-school'

(xv)  $N_1$  is the source of energy of  $N_2$ :

(61) <u>diàn-dēng</u>	'electric-lamp'
<u>qì-chē</u>	'steam-vehicle = automobile'
<u>fēng-chē</u>	'wind-vehicle = windmill'
<u>yuánzǐ-néng</u>	'atom-energy = atomic energy'

(xvi)  $N_1$  is a metaphorical description of  $N_2$ :

(62) <u>gǒu-xióng</u>	'dog-bear = bear'
<u>lù-niǎo</u>	'deer-bird = cassowary'
<u>lóng-chuán</u>	'dragon-boat'
<u>shé-zhèng</u>	'snake-formation'
<u>hǔ-jiāng</u>	'tiger-general = brave general'
<u>guǐ-liǎn</u>	'ghost-face'

(xvii)  $N_2$  is a component of  $N_1$ :

(63) <u>qìchē-lúnzi</u>	'automobile-wheel'
<u>jiǎotāchē-lóngtōu</u>	'bicycle-handlebar'
<u>jī-máo</u>	'chicken-feather'
<u>niú-jǎo</u>	'bull-horn'
<u>fēijī-wěiba</u>	'airplane-tail'

(xviii)  $N_2$  is a source of  $N_1$ :

(64) <u>shuǐ-yuán</u>	'water-source'
<u>yán-jǐng</u>	'salt-well'
<u>méi-kuàng</u>	'coal-mine'
<u>yóu-jǐng</u>	'oil-well'

(xix)  $N_2$  is an employee or an officer of  $N_1$ :

(65) <u>dàxué-xiàozhǎng</u>	'university-president'
<u>yínháng-zǒngcái</u>	'bank-director'
<u>zhèngfǔ-guānyuán</u>	'government-official'
<u>gōngsī-jīnglǐ</u>	'company-manager'
<u>kōngjūn-zōngsīlǐng</u>	'air:force commander:in:chief'

(xx)  $N_1$  denotes a proper name for  $N_2$ , which may be a location, an organization, an institution, or a structure:

(66) <u>Běijīng-dàxué</u>	'Beijing-University'
<u>Shànghǎi-lù</u>	'Shanghai-Road'
<u>Yángzǐ-jīāng</u>	'Yangtze-River'
<u>Měiguó-guóhuì</u>	'America-Congress'

(xxi)  $N_2$  denotes a person who sells or delivers  $N_1$ :

(67) <u>yán-shāng</u>	'salt-merchant'
<u>bǎoxiǎn-dàilǐrén</u>	'insurance-agent'
<u>shuǐguō-xiǎofàn</u>	'fruit-peddler'

The above list of twenty-one types of nominal compounds by no means constitutes an exhaustive categorization; one can still think of nominal compounds that are not accounted for in the above listing. The important thing to note, though, is that the compounding process of linking noun and noun together to form a nominal compound having the effect of designating an object with a name is a productive and creative one. As we said before, the only constraint is a pragmatic one, and that is that the context must be appropriate for naming a certain object. These twenty-one semantic relations between the noun components of nominal compounds should assist us in our effort to understand the more commonly used nominal compounds. As we can see from the examples, some are highly idiomatic in the sense that the meaning of the compound is hardly related to the meanings of the component nouns; some are very literal in that the meaning of the compound clearly reflects the meanings of the component nouns. We have tried to pick some of the more nonidiomatic compounds as our examples in order to illustrate the productive aspect of these compounding processes.

One class of nominal compounds listed above which deserves some attention is class (ix), where the constituents are in a "parallel" relationship. This parallel

relationship may range from synonymy to some sort of vague semantic similarity such as both nouns referring to the same type of object. For example, *dào-zéi* 'robber thief' is a case of synonymy; *huā-mù* 'flower tree = vegetation' is a case where 'flower' and 'tree' may be described as the same type of object: both are plants commonly seen in gardens or in the countryside. The compounds in this class are the least productive. Each one must be memorized, and the creation of new parallel compounds is restricted, even when the meaning of the compound is practically literal, not idiomatic. In addition, a compound of this class is usually an irreversible compound: the order of the constituents is fixed. For example, *dào-zéi* 'robber thief' cannot be *\*zéi-dào*; *niú-mǎ* 'cattle-horse = livestock' cannot be *\*mǎ-niú*; *qián-cái* 'money wealth' cannot be *\*cái-qián*; *huā-mù* 'flower tree' cannot be *\*mù-huā*. To distinguish this class of fixed compounds from conjoined nouns, we observe that there is often a pause between conjoined nouns and that, furthermore, their order of appearance is free; for example, *zázhì, bàozhǐ* 'magazines and newspapers' and *bàozhǐ, zázhì* 'newspapers and magazines' are phrases of conjoined nouns and not compounds. The comma signals the possibility of a pause in speech, and there is no restriction in the relative order of the two nouns.

Finally, we should mention that there are also nominal compounds whose components belong to other parts of speech besides nouns. For example, *kāiguān* 'open-shut = switch' is a nominal compound composed of two verbs, *kāi* 'open' and *guān* 'shut'; *fēijī* 'airplane' has two constituents, one a verb, *fēi* 'to fly', and one a noun, *jī* 'machine'. Nominal compounds of this type, however, are predominantly idiomatic, and they usually do not represent the results of productive compounding processes.

### 3.2.3 Verbal Compounds

There are two basic semantic relations between the constituents of verb compounds. Hence, in terms of the semantic relations between the constituents, the vast majority of verb compounds can be classified into two types: the resultative verb compound and the parallel verb compound. Given the appropriate verb, one can freely create new resultative verb compounds and new parallel verb compounds. The resultative verb compounds are especially important in Mandarin, as they are widely used in both speech and writing; we will begin our presentation with them.

#### A. Resultative Verb Compounds

The *resultative verb compound*, or *RVC*, is always composed of two elements, although each element may be a compound itself.<sup>6</sup> A two-element verb compound is called a resultative verb compound if the second element signals some *result* of



the action or process conveyed by the first element. There are several different kinds of results that can be expressed by an RVC:

(i) Cause:

(68) wǒ    bā    chá    –    bēi    dǎ    –    pò    LE  
       I    BA    tea    –    cup    hit    –    broken    PFV/CRS

I broke the teacup.

(69)    tā        bǎ        mén        lā        –        kāi        LE  
       3sg     BA     door     pull     –     open    PFV/CRS

S/He pulled the door open.

(ii) Achievement:

(70)    wǒ        bǎ        nèi        –        ge        zì  
       I        BA        that     –        CL        character  
  
       xiě        –        qīngchū    LE  
       write     –        clear     PFV/CRS

I wrote that character clearly.

(71)    tā        mǎi     –        dào        –        le  
       3sg     buy     –        arrive    –        PFV  
  
       nèi     –        běn        zìdiǎn  
       that    –        CL        dictionary

S/he managed to buy that dictionary.

(iii) Direction:

(72)    tā        tiào     –        guò     –        qu        LE  
       3sg     jump    –        cross    –        go        PFV/CRS

S/He jumped across.

- (73) tāmen pǎo — chū — lái LE  
 they run — exit — come PFV/CRS

They came running out.

(iv) ‘Phase’:

- (74) tā — de qián yòng — wán LE  
 3sg — GEN money use — finish PFV/CRS

His/Her money is all used up.

- (75) bā diànshì guān — diào  
 BA TV close — away

Turn off the TV.

Because the directional and ‘phase’ types of RVCs have certain unique structural properties, they will be discussed separately below.

RVCs have several important characteristics. First, they can occur in the *potential* form. The potential form of an RVC involves the insertion of *-de-* ‘obtain’ or *-bu-* ‘not’ between the two constituents. The insertion of *-de-* has the effect of giving the compound an affirmative potential meaning, ‘can’, whereas the insertion of *-bu-* gives the compound a negative potential meaning, ‘cannot’. For example:

- (76) a. tā tiào — de — guò — qù  
 3sg jump — obtain — cross — go

S/He can jump across.

- b. tā tiào — bu — guò — qù  
 3sg jump — not — cross — go

S/He cannot jump across.

The English renditions of the Mandarin sentences (76) *a* and (76) *b* with the auxiliary verbs ‘can’ and ‘cannot’ do not completely convey the meanings of the Mandarin potential forms. The presence of the infix *-de-* in an RVC means that the action or process denoted by the first constituent of the compound *can* have the result denoted by the second constituent of the compound. The presence of the

negative infix *-bu-* signals that the action *cannot* have the result. Although we will use the glosses 'can' and 'can't', their actual meanings can perhaps be better conveyed by 'achievable' and 'unachievable'. Thus (76) *a* means that s/he jumps and can achieve getting across, and (76) *b* means that s/he jumps but fails to achieve getting across. This semantic property can be easily understood if we view the function of *-de-* and *-bu-* as similar to that of adverbial elements in Mandarin: the material that follows them is in their "scope" (see chapter 8 on adverbs). That is, just as with adverbs and with the negative particle, the meanings 'achievable' and 'unachievable' include the part of the RVC which follows the *-de-* or the *-bu-*, but not what precedes them. So it is only natural that (76) *a* conveys the idea of being able to get across by jumping and (76) *b* the idea of not being able to get across by jumping.<sup>7</sup>

Now that the semantic function of the scope of the adverblike elements *-de-* and *-bu-* is clear, we can see why the auxiliary verb *néng* 'can' may not always be interchangeable with *-de-* and *-bu-* in a resultative verb sentence.<sup>8</sup> To illustrate, let's look again at the potential forms in (76) *a* and *b*. These sentences explicitly mean that the subject initiates the action of jumping, but (76) *a* claims that, in addition to this, s/he is able to get across, while (76) *b* claims that, in spite of this, s/he is not able to get across. Thus it follows that if the subject has, let's say, a broken ankle and can't jump at all, then (76) *b* cannot be used to express this inability. Instead, *bu néng* 'can't' would have to be used:

(77)	tā	bu	néng	tiào	—	guò	—	qù
	3sg	not	can	jump	—	cross	—	go

S/He can't jump across (because s/he can't jump).

As Light (1977:35) puts it, to use an RVC, the agent must have initiated the primary action referred to by the compound, while the use of *néng* 'can' only suggests the possibility of initiating the action.

The second characteristic of the RVC is that, unlike most action verbs in Mandarin, which can be reduplicated to indicate delimitative aspect (see section 6.4 of chapter 6 on aspect), RVCs cannot be reduplicated. For example, we have *cháng* 'to taste', *cháng-chang* 'have a taste'; *huódòng* 'take action', *huódong-huódong* 'take some action'; but reduplicated RVCs are unacceptable: *\*lā-kāi-lā-kāi* 'pull-open—pull-open'; *\*tiào-guoqu-tiào-guoqu* 'jump-across—jump-across'. Once again, the fact that they cannot be reduplicated to indicate delimitative aspect is directly due to the fact that the primary communicative function of an RVC is to comment on whether the *result* of an action did or did not,

can or cannot, take place. Delimitative aspect has to do with doing an action ‘‘just a little bit’’ and is thus incompatible with any comment on its result.

The third characteristic of the RVC is that, except for directional verbs, as noted below, no aspect markers, measure words, or any elements other than the potential infix (-*de-* and -*bu-*) may intervene between the two constituents. This property of the RVC distinguishes it from the verb-object compound, which will be described in the next section.

#### A.1 Directional RVCs

Directional RVCs can be schematized as in (78):<sup>9</sup>

$$(78) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} V_1 & - & V_2 \\ \text{displacement} & & \text{direction} \end{array}$$

An example is sentence (73), repeated here:

$$(73) \quad \begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{tāmen} & \text{pǎo} & - & \text{chū} & - & \text{lái} & \text{LE} \\ \text{they} & \text{run} & - & \text{exit} & - & \text{come} & \text{PFV/CRS} \end{array}$$

They came running out.

The first verb of the compound, *pǎo* ‘run’, implies a displacement, and the second verb of the compound, which may itself be a compound, as *chū-lái* ‘come out’ is, signals the direction in which the subject moves as the result of the displacement.

Let us first discuss the displacement verb. The most obvious type of displacement verb is a verb signaling motion, such as *zǒu* ‘walk’, *pǎo* ‘run’, *liú* ‘flow’, *fēi* ‘fly’, *gǔn* ‘roll’. Another type of displacement verb is an action verb that inherently implies that the direct object undergoes a change of location: for example, *bān* ‘remove’, *rēng* ‘throw’, *sòng* ‘send, give’, *jì* ‘to mail’, *lǐng* ‘lead (to somewhere)’, *jǔ* ‘lift’, *tuī* ‘push’. A third type of displacement verb is an action verb that may cause the direct object to undergo displacement; for instance, *dā* ‘to hit, beat’ is not a verb that inherently implies displacement on the part of the direct object, but it is possible that the action of beating or hitting will cause the direct object to move. Thus, we have the RVC *dā-chū-lái* ‘hit-exit-come = hit someone so that s/he comes out’, or the resultative compound *dā-jìn-qù* ‘hit-enter-go = hit someone so that s/he goes in’.

As for the directional verb,  $V_2$ , of the RVCs represented by (78), it can be one of three types.

(i) The first type of directional verb includes *lái* ‘come’ and *qù* ‘go’. As

directional verbs in RVCs, *lái* 'come' means 'toward the speaker', and *qù* 'go' means 'away from the speaker'. For example, consider their occurrence in the following two sentences:

- (79) tā    sòng    –    lái    –    le    yì    –    ge  
          3sg    send    –    come    –    PFV    one    –    CL

xiāngzi  
 suitcase

S/He sent over (toward the speaker) a suitcase.

- (80) tā    ná    –    qù    –    le    liǎng    –    běn  
          3sg    bring    –    go    –    PFV    two    –    CL

shū  
 book

S/He took (away from the speaker) two books.

The directional RVC in sentence (79) is *sòng-lái*, where the first part, *sòng* 'send', is a displacement verb that inherently implies a displacement of the direct object, and the second part, *lái*, signals that the displacement is toward the speaker of the sentence. Similarly, the first part of the RVC in sentence (80), *ná* 'bring, take', is a displacement verb that signals a displacement of the direct object, and the second part of the compound signals that the displacement is away from the speaker of the sentence.

(ii) The second type of directional verb includes the following eight verbs, each of which has a directional meaning when it occurs in an RVC in addition to a verbal meaning when it occurs as an independent verb.<sup>10</sup> In (81) we indicate in the gloss first the independent meaning and then the directional meaning:

- (81) shàng            'ascend - up'  
       xià                'descend - down'  
       jìn                'enter - in'  
       chū                'exit - out'  
       qǐ                 'rise - up'  
       huí                'return - back'  
       guò                'cross - over'  
       kāi                'open - apart, away'

In glossing examples in this book, we will use the independent meaning.

The following sentences illustrate the use of these eight verbs as directional verbs in RVCs:

- (82) tā dài - shàng - le tā - de màozi  
3sg wear - ascend - PFV 3sg - GEN hat

S/He put on his/her hat.

- (83) wǒ fàng - xià wǒ - de shūbāo le  
I put - descend I - GEN satchel CRS

I laid down my satchel.

- (84) tā shuō - chū yī - ge bìmì le  
3sg speak - exit one - CL secret CRS

S/He told a secret.

- (85) wǒ shōu - huí wǒ - de qìchē le  
I gather - return I - GEN car CRS

I took back my car.

- (86) tā zǒu - jìn yī - ge qiú - chǎng le  
3sg walk - enter one - CL ball - park CRS

S/He walked into a ball park.

- (87) wǒ tí - qǐ nài - jian shì le  
I mention - rise that - CL matter CRS

I brought up that matter.

- (88) tā tiào - guò nài - tiáo hé le  
3sg jump - cross that - CL river CRS

S/He jumped over that river.

- (89) qǐng nǐ tuī — kāi zhèi — ge mén  
 please you push — open this — CL door

Please push this door open.

(iii) The third type of directional verb is formed with a type (ii) directional verb followed by a type (i) directional verb. Thus, if we take any type (ii) directional verb, say, *shàng* 'ascend', and combine it with either member of type (i), we obtain two new double directional verbs: *shàng-lái* 'ascend-come = up toward the speaker'; *shàng-qù* 'ascend-go = up away from the speaker'. Since there are eight members in type (ii) and two members in type (i), we have for this third type sixteen directional verbs. The semantic difference between members of this type and members of type (ii) is that this type of directional verb clarifies the direction of the motion with respect to the speaker, that is, whether it is toward or away from the speaker. For example, in sentence (90), because of the presence of *lái* 'come toward the speaker', we can infer that the speaker was located inside the structure Zhangsan was entering:

- (90) Zhāngsān zǒu — jìn — lái LE  
 Zhangsan walk — enter — come PFV/CRS

Zhangsan entered (toward the speaker).

Similarly, because of the presence of *qù* 'go away from the speaker', we can infer that the speaker of (91) was located outside the structure Zhangsan was entering:

- (91) Zhāngsān zǒu — jìn — qù LE  
 Zhangsan walk — enter — go PFV

Zhangsan entered (away from the speaker).

One member of this class may be used with verbs that do not indicate displacement in space, and that is *xià-qù* 'descend-go = down away from the speaker'. The nondisplacement verbs it can occur with in an RVC are all *durative*; that is, the verbal notion may endure for a period of time. When *xià-qù* occurs with such verbs in an RVC it has the meaning 'continue', which can be seen as a metaphoric





- b.  $V_1$  + type (ii) directional verb + direct object + type (i) directional verb, if it is *lái*

For example, take the RVC *duān-shàng-lái* 'serve-ascend-come': (96) *a* and *b* illustrate the two different separations of the constituents of this compound.

- (96) a.    tā    duān    –    le    yi    –    wǎn    tāng  
           3sg    serve    –    PFV    one    –    bowl    soup
- shàng    –    lái    le  
                   ascend    –    come    CRS

S/He served up a bowl of soup (toward the speaker).

- b.    tā    duān    –    shàng    yi    –    wǎn    tāng  
       3sg    serve    –    ascend    one    –    bowl    soup
- lái    le  
                   come    CRS

S/He served up a bowl of soup (toward the speaker).

- c.    tā    duān    –    shàng    –    lái    –    le    yi  
       3sg    serve    –    ascend    –    come    –    PFV    one
- wǎn    tāng  
                   –    bowl    soup

S/He served up a bowl of soup (toward the speaker).

With ordinary direct objects, if the type (i) directional verb is *qù*, however, then the (95) *b* option is not available:

- (97) a.    tāmen    gǎn    tā    chū    –    qù    le  
           they    chase    3sg    exit    –    go    CRS

They chased him/her out (away from the speaker).

- b.    \*tāmen    gǎn    –    chū    tā    qù    le  
       they    chase    –    exit    3sg    go    CRS

As far as we can ascertain, there is no semantic distinction between a directional RVC that is split by the direct object and one that is intact. Thus, for instance, sentences *a*, *b*, and *c* of (96) are synonymous. It should be obvious that when a directional RVC is split as in (96) *a*, the compound can no longer occur in the potential form, since it will be impossible to place the potential infixes *-de-* and *-bu-*. When an RVC is split as in schema (95) *b*, however, the compound may occur in the potential form; the potential infix will be placed between the displacement verb and the type (ii) directional verb:

- (98)  $t\bar{a}$   $du\bar{a}n$   $-$   $de$   $-$   $sh\grave{a}ng$   $y\dot{i}$   $-$   $w\grave{a}n$   $t\bar{a}ng$   $l\acute{a}i$   
 3sg serve  $-$  can  $-$  ascend one  $-$  bowl soup come

S/He can serve up one bowl of soup (toward the speaker).

Chao (1968) has observed that when the direct object of an RVC composed of a displacement verb and a type (i) or type (iii) directional verb indicates a place, the compound *must* be split. If the directional verb is of type (i), the locational object will obligatorily be placed between the displacement verb and the directional verb; if the directional verb is of type (iii), the compound must be split according to the format of (95) *b*. For example, consider, first, the RVC with a type (i) directional verb *sh\grave{a}ng-q\grave{u}* 'ascend-go' in sentences *a* and *b* of (99):

- (99) *a.*  $w\ddot{o}men$   $sh\grave{a}ng$   $sh\bar{a}n$   $q\grave{u}$   
 we ascend mountain go

Let's get up the mountain.

- b.* \* $w\ddot{o}men$   $sh\grave{a}ng$   $-$   $q\grave{u}$   $sh\bar{a}n$   
 we ascend  $-$  go mountain

In (99), the direct object, *sh\bar{a}n* 'mountain', is a place noun, and thus the compound, *sh\grave{a}ng-q\grave{u}*, must be split; when it is not split, the sentence, as illustrated by (99) *b*, is ungrammatical.

Consider next the RVC with a type (iii) directional verb *p\check{a}o-j\dot{i}n-q\grave{u}* 'run-enter-go' in sentences *a*, *b*, and *c* of (100):

- (100) *a.*  $t\bar{a}$   $p\check{a}o$   $-$   $j\dot{i}n$   $w\ddot{u}z\dot{i}$   $q\grave{u}$   $le$   
 3sg run  $-$  enter house go CRS

S/He ran into the house (away from the speaker).

b.	*tā	<u>pǎo</u>	wūzi	<u>jìn</u>	—	<u>qù</u>	le
	3sg	run	house	enter	—	go	CRS
c.	*tā	<u>pǎo</u>	—	<u>jìn</u>	—	<u>qù</u>	wūzi le
	3sg	run	—	enter	—	go	house CRS

In (100), the direct object, *wūzi* 'house', is again a place noun. The compound must be split according to the format of (95) *b*. Hence, (100) *a*, but neither (100) *b* nor (100) *c*, is acceptable.

### A.2 Phase RVCs

There are certain RVCs in which the second verb expresses something more like the *type* of action described by the first verb or the degree to which it is carried out than its result. For convenience, we will refer to these as *phase RVCs*. The following are different types of phase RVCs grouped together according to the second part, which expresses the phase of the action in the first verb.

(i) *-Wán* 'finish', which indicates the completion of an action:

(101)	<u>chàng-wán</u>	'sing-finish = finish singing'
	<u>niàn-wán</u>	'study-finish = finish studying'
	<u>nòng-wán</u>	'do-finish = finish doing'
	<u>tuō-wán</u>	'take off-finish = finish taking off'

(ii) *-Zhào* 'be on target':

(102)	<u>cāi-zhào</u>	'guess-be on target = guess right'
	<u>shuō-zhào</u>	'say-be on target = say (it) right'
	<u>yòng-zhào</u>	'use-be on target = get to use'
	<u>zhǎo-zhào</u>	'search-be on target = find'

(iii) *-Zhù* 'hold on':

(103)	<u>zhàn-zhù</u>	'stand-hold on = stand still'
	<u>zhuā-zhù</u>	'grab-hold on = grab onto'
	<u>tíng-zhù</u>	'stop-hold on = stop'
	<u>guǎn-zhù</u>	'control-hold on = control'
	<u>liú-zhù</u>	'keep-hold on = detain'

(iv) *-Dào*: The meaning of *-dào* in the following RVCs is derived from its independent verbal meaning 'arrive'. It can be vaguely described as 'reach, succeed' and thus has a meaning similar to the meaning of *-zháo* in (ii).

- |       |                  |  |
|-------|------------------|--|
| (104) | <u>kàn-dào</u>   | 'see-arrive = succeed in seeing'       |
|       | <u>zhǎo-dào</u>  | 'search-arrive = succeed in searching' |
|       | <u>mèng-dào</u>  | 'dream-arrive = dream of'              |
|       | <u>xiǎng-dào</u> | 'think-arrive = think of'              |

(v) *-Hǎo*: As an independent verb, *hǎo* means 'good'. As the second verb of an RVC, it has the meaning of 'completing the task signaled by the first verb', similar to but not identical with the meaning of *-wán* 'finish'.

- |       |                 |  |
|-------|-----------------|--|
| (105) | <u>xiě-hǎo</u>  | 'write-complete task = complete the task of writing'         |
|       | <u>zuò-hǎo</u>  | 'do-complete task = complete the task of doing'              |
|       | <u>tián-hǎo</u> | 'fill out-complete task = complete the task of filling out'  |
|       | <u>suàn-hǎo</u> | 'calculate-complete task = complete the task of calculating' |

### A.3 Metaphorical RVCs

This type of RVC involves a result,  $V_2$ , which is often used in a metaphorical sense. A  $V_2$  typically used in the metaphorical sense is *sǐ* 'dead', as for example, in:

- |       |               |                                     |
|-------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| (106) | <u>lèi-sǐ</u> | 'tire-dead = tire to death'         |
|       | <u>qì-sǐ</u>  | 'anger-dead = anger to death'       |
|       | <u>xià-sǐ</u> | 'frighten-dead = frighten to death' |

Whether these compounds convey their literal meanings or their metaphorical meanings depends on the pragmatic context, of course.

There is also a directional verb, *chū-lái* 'exit-come', which is used in a figurative sense, meaning 'find out', or 'come out', to form RVCs with verbs of inquiry, verbs of perception, or verbs of saying. With verbs of inquiry, we have, for example, such RVCs as:

- |       |                    |   |
|-------|--------------------|---|
| (107) | <u>wèn-chū-lái</u> | 'question-exit-come = find out by questioning'      |
|       | <u>chá-chū-lái</u> | 'investigate-exit-come = find out by investigating' |
|       | <u>sōu-chū-lái</u> | 'search-exit-come = find out by searching'          |

With verbs of perception, we have such RVCs as:

- (108) kàn-chū-lái 'see-exit-come = find out by looking'  
wén-chū-lái 'smell-exit-come = find out by smelling'  
xiǎng-chū-lái 'think-exit-come = find out by thinking'

With verbs of saying, we have such RVCs as:

- (109) shuō-chū-lái 'speak-exit-come = get something out by saying it'  
hǎn-chū-lái 'yell-exit-come = yell out'

#### A.4 RVCs Obligatorily in Potential Form

There are a few result verbs,  $V_2$ , whose presence in a RVC means that the compound can occur only in the potential form. These result verbs include the following:

(i) *-Guò* 'surpass', as in:

- (110) shuō-de-guò 'talk-can-surpass = can outtalk'  
dǎ-bu-guò 'fight-can't-surpass = can't outfight'  
pǎo-de-guò 'run-can-surpass = can outrun'  
chī-bu-guò 'eat-can't-surpass = can't outeat'

(ii) *-Qǐ* 'to afford', as in:

- (111) mǎi-de-qǐ 'buy-can-afford = can afford to buy'  
chī-bu-qǐ 'eat-can't-afford = cannot afford to eat'  
zhù-de-qǐ 'live-can-afford = can afford to live'  
chuān-bu-qǐ 'wear-can't-afford = cannot afford to wear'  
kàn-de-qǐ { 'see-can-afford = can afford to see' }  
                  { 'have regard for (someone)' }  
kàn-bu-qǐ { 'see-can't-afford = cannot afford to see' }  
                  { 'don't have any regard for (someone)' }

(iii) *-Liǎo*: This verb has lost the meaning of 'finish', which it had at an earlier stage of the language. It can combine with most verbs to form RVCs, but the resultative compounds formed with *-liǎo* must occur in the potential form, as in these examples:

- (112) gài-de-liǎo 'can cover'  
zuò-bu-liǎo 'cannot seat'

<u>cún-de-liào</u>	'can save (money, goods)'
<u>chī-bu-liào</u>	'cannot finish eating'

The major types of RVCs have been presented in this section. Our discussion, however, has by no means been exhaustive. There are a great many RVCs that must be learned one by one because their meaning cannot be derived from those of their constituents plus the relation between their components: for example, *kàn-kāi* 'see-open = be understanding, see the light'; *kǎo-qǔ* 'take an exam-obtain = be admitted (to a school)'; *ná-dìng* 'take-settle = make up one's mind'.

### B. Parallel Verb Compounds

*Parallel verb compounds* are similar in nature to *parallel nominal compounds*. The two verbs that constitute a parallel verb compound either are synonymous or signal the same type of predicative notions. Analogous to the parallel nominal compounds, the parallel verb compounds may be simply represented by this scheme:

(113)  $V_1 \quad V_2$

The vast majority of parallel verb compounds have developed as the Mandarin language, which once contained a predominance of monosyllabic words, has gained an ever-increasing number of polysyllabic words (see chapter 2 on typological description and the concluding paragraphs of the discussion of suffixes in section 3.1.2.C in this chapter). For example, the notion 'fortunate' was expressed by the monosyllabic word *xìng* at an earlier stage of the language; in modern Mandarin, this notion is expressed by the parallel compound *xìng-fú* 'fortunate-blessed = fortunate'. The notion 'celebrate' was formerly *qìng*, but is *qìng-zhù* 'celebrate-bless = celebrate' in modern Mandarin. In some instances, the monosyllabic word is in free variation with the compound. For example, *mǎi* 'buy' and *gòu-mǎi* 'buy-buy = buy' are interchangeable in modern Mandarin. Often the rhythm of the sentence may determine which form is preferred. For instance, (114) *a* and *b* are synonymous:

(114) *a.*    wǒ    -    de    gōngsī    gòu    -    mǎi    shāngpǐn  
                   I    -    GEN    company            buy            merchandise

My company buys merchandise.

b. wǒ — de gōngsī mǎi shāngpǐn  
 I — GEN company buy merchandise

My company buys merchandise.

The *a* sentence, with the compound *gòu-mǎi*, is stylistically preferred, perhaps partly because it preserves the rhythm of the sentence:

(115) / / / /

The constituents of most parallel verb compounds are of the same syntactic category—they may be both adjectival verbs, both action verbs, both verbs of perception, and so forth. There are a few exceptions, including *yǒng-gǎn* 'brave-dare = brave', *chéng-shóu* 'complete-ripe = mature', *piǎo-bái* 'bleach-white = bleach', *tān-wū* 'desire greedily-filthy = take graft'. As expected, the parallel verb compound itself shares the semantic and syntactic properties of its constituents: if the constituents are both adjectives, the compound is also adjectival, as in *měi-lì* 'beautiful-beautiful = beautiful', *píng-jìng* 'peaceful-quiet = peaceful and quiet'; if the constituents are transitive verbs, the compound is also a transitive verb, as is e.g., *píng-pàn* 'comment: on-judge = judge'. The following are some more examples of parallel verb compounds:

(i)  $V_1$  and  $V_2$  are synonymous or nearly synonymous:

(116)	<u>cí-shàn</u>	'benevolent'	<u>pí-fá</u>	'tired'
	<u>jiān-nán</u>	'difficult'	<u>pín-qióng</u>	'poor'
	<u>dān-dú</u>	'alone'	<u>hán-lěng</u>	'cold'
	<u>xū-wěi</u>	'fake'	<u>qí-guài</u>	'strange'
	<u>guài-qiǎo</u>	'clever'	<u>huī-huáng</u>	'luminous, splendid'
	<u>jiàn-zhú</u>	'build'	<u>jiǎn-chá</u>	'examine (something)'
	<u>qiǎn-yí</u>	'remove'	<u>mó-cā</u>	'rub'
	<u>yí-huò</u>	'suspect'	<u>bāng-zhù/fú-zhù</u>	'help'
	<u>guī-huí</u>	'return to'	<u>zhì-liáo</u>	'cure'
	<u>fáng-shòu</u>	'defend'	<u>chǒng-bài</u>	'worship'

(ii)  $V_1$  and  $V_2$  are similar in meaning:

(117)	<u>tòng-kǔ</u>	'painful-bitter = painful and bitter'
	<u>zhēn-què</u>	'real-certain = authentic'

<u>bēi-shāng</u>	'sad-hurt = grieved'
<u>pò-jiù</u>	'broken-old = broken and old (worn out)'
<u>yuán-huá</u>	'round-smooth = round and smooth'
<u>xián-míng</u>	'virtuous-enlightened = virtuous and enlightened'
<u>guǎng-dà</u>	'extensive-big = vast'
<u>piāo-liú</u>	'drift-flow = drift'
<u>xiǎn-yǎng</u>	'manifest-display = show off'
<u>fàng-qì</u>	'loosen-abandon = give up'
<u>fēn-sàn</u>	'separate-disperse = separate and disperse'
<u>fú-yǎng</u>	'support-care for = support and care for'
<u>tì-huàn</u>	'replace-change = replace'

### 3.2.4 Subject-Predicate Compounds

The *subject-predicate compound*, as its name suggests, is composed of two elements, whose relation is one in which the first element is the subject of the second verbal element.<sup>11</sup> Since a simple declarative sentence may also be composed of a subject followed by a verbal element, one may wonder how a subject-predicate compound is distinct from a subject-predicate sentence. There are several characteristics of the subject-predicate compound that make it distinct from a simple sentence. First, the compound is always a verb, although occasionally it may also serve as a noun. Second, a number of subject-predicate compounds have idiomatic meanings. Third, most of them contain at least one bound morpheme, that is, a morpheme that cannot occur in isolation as a word and must combine with some other morpheme to form a word. The major difference between a compound and a simple declarative sentence is, of course, the various syntactic properties that a sentence has. For example, we can negate a sentence by placing the negative morpheme between the subject and the predicate; we can form an A-not-A question by using the predicate as the A element; we can insert time adverbs between the subject and the predicate; and so forth. A compound, being a word, would not be able to undergo these processes. There are, however, certain subject-predicate compounds that can function either as compounds or as simple subject-predicate declarative sentences. For example, consider *tóu-téng* 'head-ache', which can function as a single adjectival verb; that is, we can view it as a compound on the basis of the following evidence.

(i) Like most stative verbs, it can be modified by an intensifier, such as *hěn* 'very':

(118)	Zhāngsān	<u>hěn</u>	tóu	—	téng
	Zhangsan	very	head	—	ache

Zhangsan has a severe headache.



(ii) Like the regular verb of a sentence, it can be negated:

- (119) Zhāngsān    bu    tóu    —    téng  
 Zhangsan    not    head    —    ache

Zhangsan doesn't have a headache.

(iii) Like the regular verb of a sentence, it can be modified by an adverb, such as *cháng-chang* 'often':

- (120) Zhāngsān    cháng    —    chang    tóu    —    téng  
 Zhangsan    often    head    —    ache

Zhangsan often has headaches.

(iv) Like the regular verb of a sentence, it can be the A element in an A-not-A question:

- (121) Zhāngsān    tóu    —    téng    bu    tóu    —    téng ?  
 Zhangsan    head    —    ache    not    head    —    ache

Does Zhangsan have a headache?

On the other hand, the same unit, *tóu téng* 'head ache', can also function as a simple declarative sentence in which the subject is the noun *tóu* 'head' and the predicate is the verb *téng* 'ache'. Parallel to the properties illustrated by sentences (118)–(121), we can show that *téng* 'ache' is the verb and *tóu* 'head' the subject with sentences (122)–(125):

(i) *Téng* is modified by the intensifier *hěn* 'very':

- (122) tóu    hěn    téng  
 head    very    ache

(My) head aches a lot.

(ii) *Téng* is negated:

- (123) tóu    bu    téng  
 head    not    ache

(My) head doesn't ache.

(iii) *Téng* is modified by an adverb, such as *cháng-chang* 'often':

(124)	tóu	<u>cnáng</u>	—	<u>chang</u>	<u>téng</u>
	head		often		ache

(My) head often aches.

(iv) *Téng* serves as the A element in an A-not-A question:

(125)	tóu	<u>téng</u>	bu	<u>téng</u> ?
	head	ache	not	ache

Does (your) head ache?

There are only a few subject-predicate compounds that can also function as simple declarative sentences. Obviously, the constituents of those compounds that can are not bound morphemes. Examples other than *tóu-téng* 'head-ache' include *tóu-hūn* 'head-dizzy' and *yǎn-huā* 'eye-fuzzy = fuzzy visioned'.

An examination of the subject-predicate compound yields the observation that the predicate constituent is in most cases an adjectival verb. Only a few cases of action verbs serving as the predicate constituent can be found; for example, in *bīng-biàn* 'soldier-rebel = to mutiny', *biàn* is an action verb; in *qì-chuǎn* 'breath-pant = have asthma', *chuǎn* is an action verb; in *dì-zhèn* 'earth-quake = to have an earthquake', *zhèn* is an action verb. The majority of subject-predicate compounds, which are composed of a subject and a stative predicate, are stative verbs; and, in general, those subject-predicate compounds that are composed of a subject and an action verb also function as action verbs.

The following are examples of subject-predicate compounds:

(126)	<u>zuǐ-yìng</u>	'mouth-hard = argumentative'
	<u>yǎn-hóng</u>	'eye-red = covetous'
	<u>liǎn-nèn</u>	'face-tender = bashful'
	<u>shǒu-jǐn</u>	'hand-tight = stingy'
	<u>shǒu-qín</u>	'hand-diligent = diligent (in manual work)'
	<u>shǒu-dú</u>	'hand-poisonous = vicious'
	<u>xīn-suān</u>	'heart-sore = distressed'
	<u>xīn-ruǎn</u>	'heart-soft = softhearted'
	<u>dǎn-hán</u>	'gall-cold = fearful'
	<u>dǎn-xiǎo</u>	'gall-small = cowardly'
	<u>dǎn-dà</u>	'gall-big = brave'
	<u>mìng-kǔ</u>	'life-bitter = unfortunate'

<u>xìng-jí</u>	'temper-anxious = impatient'
<u>nián-qīng</u>	'age-light = young'
<u>shēng-zhāng</u>	'noise—open up = to make noise (about it)'

### 3.2.5 Verb-Object Compounds

The *verb-object compound*, as its name indicates, is composed of two constituents having the syntactic relation of a verb and its direct object.<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of verb-object compounds are verbs. Like the subject-predicate compound, which must be distinguished from subject-predicate sentences, the verb-object compound forces us to establish criteria for distinguishing verb-object compounds from verb-object phrases. There are several conditions under which a verb-object construction is classified as a compound in traditional Chinese grammar (see Chao [1968:415]). Any one of these properties will render a verb-object construction a compound:

1. One or both of the constituents being bound morphemes
2. Idiomaticity of the meaning of the entire unit
3. Inseparability or limited separability of the constituents

For example, *gé-mìng* 'remove the mandate—life = revolution' satisfies all three conditions. First, *gé* is a bound morpheme. Second, the meaning of the construction is idiomatic, that is, it is not derivable from the meaning of the constituents. Third, the construction is inseparable, that is, nothing may intervene between the constituents. To take another example, in *shāng-fēng* 'hurt-wind = catch cold', neither of the constituents are bound, but the meaning of the entire unit is idiomatic, and there is limited separability of the two constituents: thus one could modify the second constituent, *fēng*, with *dà* 'big' and produce the construction:

(127) shāng-dà-fēng 'hurt-big-wind = catch a bad cold'

One could also put a perfective aspect marker such as *-le* after the first constituent, *shēng*:

(128) shāng-le-fēng 'caught cold'

We cannot, however, place the second constituent in the sentence-initial position as a topic, as we can the syntactic direct object of a verb:

(129) a. \*fēng,      shāng      LE  
              wind,      hurt      PFV/CRS

b. xiāzi, zhuā – dào le  
 shrimp, catch – succeed CRS

The shrimp, (I) have caught it.

Consider a third example, *shuì-jào* 'sleep-sleep = sleep'; the second constituent is a *bound morpheme*, which occurs only in this compound. The meaning of *shuì-jào* is synonymous with *shuì*, which occurs freely as a verb. There is practically no constraint on the separability of the two constituents, though. In other words, syntactically, the compound *shuì-jào* behaves completely like a phrase composed of a verb and an object. For instance, the second constituent, like the object of a verb in a sentence, can be modified:

(130) shuì – yì – jiào  
 sleep – one – sleep

Take a nap.

(131) shuì – le sān – ge zhōngtóu de jiào  
 sleep – PFV three – CL hour NOM sleep

(I) slept for three hours.

The first constituent, like the verb in a sentence, can take an aspect marker:

(132) wǒ shuì – le – jiào le  
 I sleep – PFV – sleep CRS

I've slept.

The second constituent can be placed in the sentence-initial position, usually when it is modified, to become a topic:

(133) zhèi yì jiào, shuì de zhēn hǎo  
 this one sleep sleep CSC real well

I had a real good sleep.

The three examples of verb-object compounds given above illustrate that the verb-object compounds do not form a uniform group with respect to the three

properties stated earlier. We know that idiomaticity of compounds is always a matter of degree. (The issue of idiomaticity is also discussed above in section 3.2.2 on nominal compounds.) The examples show that even the inseparability of the constituents varies among the verb-object compounds. Some, a small minority, are completely inseparable. These are usually highly idiomatic, and their constituents are bound. The vast majority of verb-object compounds allow their constituents to be separated. In general, separation of the constituents of verb-object compounds may be classified as one of the following types.

(i) Separation by an aspect marker:

- (134) Zhāngsān    bì    -    le    -    yè    le  
 Zhangsan    finish    -    PFV    -    instruction    CRS

Zhangsan has graduated. (bì-yè 'finish-instruction = graduate')

- (135)    tā        hái        méi        lì        -    guo    -    fǎ  
           3sg       still        not        arrange    -    EXP    -    hair

S/He still hasn't ever had a haircut. (lì-fǎ 'arrange-hair = have a haircut')

(ii) Separation by a measure phrase:

- (136)    tā    gěi    wǒ    xíng    -    le    yí    -    ge    lì  
           3sg    to    I        perform    -    PFV    one    -    CL    salutation

S/He saluted me once. (xíng-lì 'perform-salutation = salute')

- (137)    wǒ        kòu    -    le    liǎng    -    ge    tóu  
           I        knock    -    PFV    two    -    CL    head

I kowtowed twice. (kòu-tóu 'knock-head = kowtow')

- (138)    tā        liú    -    guo    yí    -    cì    bīng  
           3sg       glide    -    EXP    one    -    time    ice

S/He skated once. (liú-bīng 'glide-ice = skate')

(iii) Separation by other modifiers of the object constituent:

- (139)    nǐ        bié    shēng    tā        -        de        qì  
           you     don't    grow    3sg       -        GEN    anger

Don't be angry with him/her! (shēng-qì 'grow-anger = be angry')

- (140)    tā        yòu    sù        shénme    kǔ?  
           3sg     again    tell     what     bitterness

What is s/he complaining about? (sù-kǔ 'tell-bitterness = complain')

(iv) Placing the object constituent of the compound in a position preceding the verb constituent:

- (141)    tā        lián    wǔ        dōu        bu        tiào  
           3sg     even    dance    all        not        dance

S/He won't even dance. (tiào-wǔ 'dance-dance = to dance')

- (142)    zhèi     -        ge        huǎng    wǒmen    bu        néng    shuō  
           this    -        CL        lie        we        not        can     say

This lie we cannot tell. (shuō-huǎng 'say-lie = to lie')

In general, (iv) represents the most drastic type of separation of the constituents of a verb-object compound. Consequently, many verb-object compounds cannot undergo the (iv) type of separation.

Since there is no general principle to tell us which verb-object compounds can undergo what sort of separation processes, the separability of each verb-object compound will have to be learned individually. We have said, however, that most of the verb-object compounds can undergo separation of their constituents, and we have also noted that (iv), placing the object constituent in front of the verb constituent, is not widely applicable. Thus, we can state that, by and large, verb-object compounds may undergo separation processes (i), (ii), and (iii).

Another important characteristic shared by the vast majority of verb-object compounds is that they don't take a direct object. Of course, a great number of verb-object compounds function as intransitive verbs; they would not be expected to take a direct object. Even when they have what might appear to a speaker of

English to be transitivelike meanings, though, they usually don't take a direct object. Here are some examples:

(143)	<u>kāi-dāo</u>	'open-knife = operate on'
	<u>xiào-láo</u>	'render-effort = serve'
	<u>mǎn-yì</u>	'full-sentiment = be satisfied with'
	<u>zhào-xiàng</u>	'reflect-image = photograph'
	<u>xíng-lǐ</u>	'perform-salutation = salute'
	<u>jié-hūn</u>	'tie-marriage = marry'
	<u>kāi-wánxiào</u>	'make-joke = joke with, make fun of'

What would be the direct object of the English equivalents of these verb-object compounds appears in Mandarin either as a benefactive phrase (with *gěi*) or in a coverb phrase (see chapter 10 for benefactives and chapter 9 for coverbs). In each of the following three sentences, we see a benefactive noun phrase marked by the benefactive marker *gěi* 'to, for' with a verb-object compound verb that has an apparently transitive meaning:

(144)	yīshēng	<u>gěi</u>	<u>tā</u>	<u>kāi-dāo</u>
	doctor	to	3sg	operate

The doctor operated on him/her.

(145)	wǒ	<u>gěi</u>	<u>tā</u>	<u>zhào-xiàng</u>
	I	to	3sg	photograph

I photographed him/her.

(146)	wǒ	<u>gěi</u>	<u>tā</u>	<u>xíng-lǐ</u>
	I	to	3sg	salute

I saluted him/her.

In these sentences, (147)–(149), we find a coverb phrase:

(147)	wǒ	<u>gēn</u>	<u>tā</u>	<u>jié-hūn</u>
	I	with	3sg	marry

I'll marry him/her.

(148) wǒ      duì    tā      xiào-láo  
 I            to        3sg      serve

I served him/her.

(149) wǒ      gēn    tā      kāi-wánxiào  
 I            with    3sg      joke

I am joking with him/her.

Another way to express what might be taken to be the direct object of *some* verb-object compounds with transitive meanings is to use a possessive phrase before the object constituent. Here are two illustrations:

(150) wǒ      kāi    tā      —      de      wánxiào  
 I            make    3sg      —      GEN      joke

I made fun of him/her.

(151) wǒ      bāng    tā      —      de      máng  
 I            help    3sg      —      GEN      ~

I helped him/her. (bāng-máng 'help- ~ = to help')

Some examples of other verb-object compounds that allow what could be understood as their direct object to be expressed as a possessive phrase before the object constituent are: *chī-dòufu* 'eat-bean:curd = to tease', *chī-cù* 'eat-vinegar = to be jealous of', *shòu-zuì* 'receive-retribution = suffer, be wronged'.

(152) tā      chī    wǒ      —      de      dòufu  
 3sg        eat      I            —      GEN      bean:curd

S/He is teasing me.

(153) nǐ      chī    tā      —      de      cù  
 you        eat      3sg      —      GEN      vinegar

You are jealous of him/her.



There are a few verb-object compounds with transitive meanings which do take a direct object—for example, *guān-xīn* 'involve-heart = be concerned about', *huái-yí* 'harbor-doubt = be suspicious of', *zhù-yì* 'fix-attention = pay attention to', *chū-bǎn* 'issue-edition' = publish, *tí-yì* 'suggest-proposal = propose', *dé-zuì* 'obtain-offense = offend', as in:

- (154) wǒ      hěn      guānxīn      tā  
           I      very      concerned      3sg

I am very concerned about him/her.

- (155) tā              zhùyì              nèi      —      jiàn      shì  
           3sg      pay:attention      that      —      CL      matter

S/He is paying attention to that matter.

At the beginning of this section, we noted that the vast majority of verb-object compounds function as verbs. There are also some verb-object compounds that function as nouns and adverbs. Here are some examples:

(i) Verb-object compounds as nouns:

- (156) dāng-jú              'be at-situation = authority'  
       dōng-shì              'arrange-affair = member of board'  
       dāng-chāi              'be at-order = messenger'  
       lǐng-shì              'lead-affair = consul (in foreign service)'  
       chǎo-fàn              'fry-rice = fried rice'  
       xíng-zhèng              'execute-policy = administration'  
       zhēn-tóu              'rest-head = pillow'

(ii) Verb-object compounds as adverbs:

- (157) dāng-shí              'be at-time = at the time'  
       zhào-cháng              'follow-normal = as usual'  
       dào-dǐ              'reach-bottom = in the end'  
       zhào-yàng              'follow-pattern = likewise'  
       zhuǎn-yǎn              'turn-eye = instantly'

The following sentences illustrate the use of these adverbs:

- (158) wǒmen    zhào-cháng    gōngzuò  
           we            as:usual            work

We work as usual.

- (159)    tā        dāng — shí        bu        zài        Měiguó  
           3sg            at:the:time        not        at        America

At the time s/he was not in America.

- (160)    nǐ        dào — dī        yào        shénme?  
           you            in:the:end        want        what

What do you want in the end?

We will sum up this section on the verb-object compound with a historical note. We have observed that idiomaticity and separability of the verb-object compound cannot be predicted on a regular basis. Some verb-object compounds are highly idiomatic; some, less idiomatic; some, not very idiomatic. Similarly, some verb-object compounds are completely inseparable; some are separable to a certain degree; others are almost like a regular verb-plus-object phrase in terms of separability. In other words, for both idiomaticity of meaning and separability of constituents, the behavior of verb-object compounds forms a continuum, with any specific compound falling at some point on the continuum. This continuum can be seen as a result of the fact that verb-object compounds are historically formed from verb-plus-object phrases: that is, certain verb-plus-object phrases have fused together through time to become compounds either as the verb or the object or both have lost their independent free morpheme status, or as the construction developed idiomatic meaning. Since such fusing processes in a language are never abrupt but are instead gradual, occurring over a long period of time as a verb-plus-object phrase develops into a completely fused word that is inseparable and completely idiomatic in meaning (such as *dān-xīn* 'bear-heart = to worry'), different verb-object compounds may be at different points along this path. The result of this historical process at any given time is a continuum. We have seen many examples exhibiting different degrees of idiomaticity in meaning and different degrees of separability of their constituents. What is reflected here as a continuum with regard to the two properties of verb-object compounds in Mandarin is a general phenomenon in all languages: all aspects and structures of a language change in time, and

while structural change from one type to another is always time-consuming, not all members of one structural type undergoing a change march shoulder to shoulder in their rate of change.

### 3.2.6 Antonymous Adjectives Forming Nominal Compounds

The semantic relation between the adjectives in this class of compounds is one of antonymy. The compound formed by two antonymous adjectives is, however, a noun, and the meaning of this noun is a quality whose bipolar extremes are signaled by the two adjectival constituents.

$$(161) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} V_1 & \sim & V_2 \\ \text{adjective} & & \text{adjective} \end{array}$$

$V_1$  and  $V_2$  are antonyms, and the combination is a noun.

The following examples are illustrations:

(162) <u>hǎo-huài</u>	'good-bad = quality'
<u>dà-xiǎo</u>	'big-small = size'
<u>cháng-duǎn</u>	'long-short = length'
<u>lěng-rè</u>	'cold-hot = temperature'
<u>gāo-ǎi</u>	'tall-short = height'
<u>kuài-màn</u>	'fast-slow = speed'
<u>hòu-báo</u>	'thick-thin = thickness'
<u>zhēn-jǎ</u>	'true-false = truthfulness'

It is obvious from the above examples that the antonymous compounds always have the constituent indicating the positive pole preceding the constituent indicating the negative pole. This convention for the ordering of the constituents of these compounds is irreversible.

### 3.2.7 Minor Types of Compounds

In this chapter, we have presented all the major types of compounds in Mandarin Chinese: nominal compounds composed of nouns, resultative verb compounds, parallel verb compounds, antonymous adjective compounds functioning as nouns, subject-predicate compounds, and verb-object compounds. There are a small number of other compounds in Mandarin which don't belong to any of these major types. We will now cite some examples for each of these minor types.

## (i) Adjective-noun compound:

(163) <u>xiāng-cài</u>	'fragrant-vegetable = coriander (plant)'
<u>xiāng-shuǐ</u>	'fragrant-water = perfume'
<u>rè-xīn</u>	'hot-heart = enthusiastic'
<u>chòu-dòufu</u>	'smelly-bean:curd = fermented bean curd'
<u>xū-xīn</u>	'empty-heart = modest'
<u>huáng-yóu</u>	'yellow-oil = butter'
<u>dà-mén</u>	'big-door = main door'
<u>dà-yān</u>	'great-smoke = opium'
<u>dà-yì</u>	'big-idea = negligent'
<u>gāo-zú</u>	'high-foot = student (honorific)'
<u>měi-shù</u>	'beautiful-art = fine art'
<u>xiǎo-zhàng</u>	'small-account = tip'
<u>xiǎo-biàn</u>	'minor-convenience = urinate, urinate'

## (ii) Adverb compounds:

(164) <u>fǎn-zhèng</u>	'reverse-right = anyway'
<u>gāng-cái</u>	'just-just = just now'
<u>gēn-běn</u>	'root-root = fundamentally, utterly'
<u>xiàng-lái</u>	'toward-come = ever'
<u>zuǒ-yòu</u>	'left-right = approximately'
<u>zǎo-wǎn</u>	'early-late = sooner or later'

(iii) Noun – measure word/classifier compounds (a generalization one can make about these compounds is that they always indicate a collective or plural noun):

(165) <u>bù-pī</u>	'clothes-yardage = material'
<u>mǎ-pī</u>	'horse-classifier = horses'
<u>shū-běn</u>	'book-classifier = books'
<u>chuán-zhī</u>	'boat-classifier = boats'
<u>yín-liǎng</u>	'silver-tael = quantity of silver'
<u>dēng-zhǎn</u>	'lamp-classifier = lamps'

(iv) Noun-verb compounds (not to be confused with subject-predicate compounds):

(166) <u>qiāng-bì</u>	'gun-kill = execute by gunfire'
<u>fēng-xíng</u>	'wind-go = be in fashion'

<u>kǒu-shì</u>	'mouth-exam = oral examination'
<u>lì-yòng</u>	'profit-use = exploit'
<u>bù-xíng</u>	'step-go = walk'

## (v) Adverb-verb compounds:

(167) <u>zì-dòng</u>	'self-move = automatic'
<u>zì-zhì</u>	'self-govern = autonomous (government)'
<u>zì-shā</u>	'self-kill = commit suicide'
<u>hòu-rén</u>	'after-people = posterity'
<u>hòu-shì</u>	'after-affair = funeral affairs'
<u>xiān-tiān</u>	'first-nature = natural endowment'

The vast majority of these minor types of compounds are idioms, as shown by the glosses and the meanings given in the above examples. It is only for the purpose of analysis and illustration that we are presenting them as compounds composed of two separate parts. One who is learning Mandarin will have to memorize all of these compounds and their meanings individually and independent of the nature of their composition.

**Notes**

1. Much of the discussion in this chapter is adapted from Lu (1965), Chao (1968), Kratochvil (1968), and unpublished work of Benjamin T'sou.
2. For this section, we have benefited from some ideas in unpublished work of Tsang Chui-lim. For further discussion, see also Wang (1947).
3. If the monosyllabic morpheme has the third tone, then the tone sandhi rule applies even though the second syllable of the reduplicated word has the neutral tone, and the third tone of the first syllable becomes a second tone (see the Introduction for a discussion of tone sandhi), though, as stated there, we do not represent that sandhi in our Pinyin.
4. *Lǎo* occurs in a few animal terms, such as *lǎohǔ* 'tiger', *lǎoshu* 'mouse, rat', *lǎoyīng* 'eagle, hawk'. In these terms, however, *lǎo* has no independent meaning at all. Historically, the *lǎo* in these terms may be derived from the prefix *lǎo-*, but in the present-day language, the *lǎo* in these terms is no longer a separate morpheme and therefore not functioning as a prefix. Each of these terms is a single morpheme in contemporary Mandarin.
5. It has been reported, however, that some dialects allow the suffix *-men* to occur with nonhuman nouns, including inanimate nouns.
6. For an extensive taxonomic discussion of RVCs, the reader is referred to Chao (1968) and Cartier (1972) and the references cited therein. For an informative discussion of RVCs from a pedagogical point of view, see Light (1977). Our discussion also owes much to Lu (1977) and Teng (1977).

7. Certain RVCs appear to be unable to occur in the potential form, such as:

(i) a.     $\begin{array}{cccccc} \text{tā} & \text{è} & - & \text{bìng} & \text{le} \\ \text{3sg} & \text{hungry} & - & \text{sick} & \text{CRS} \end{array}$

S/He got sick from hunger.

b.     $\begin{array}{cccccc} ?\text{tā} & \text{è} & - & \text{de} & - & \text{bìng} \\ \text{3sg} & \text{hungry} & - & \text{can} & - & \text{sick} \end{array}$

(?S/He can get sick from hunger.)

(ii) a.     $\begin{array}{cccccc} \text{wō} & \text{zǒu} & - & \text{lèi} & \text{le} \\ \text{I} & \text{walk} & - & \text{tired} & \text{CRS} \end{array}$

I got tired from walking.

b.     $\begin{array}{cccccc} ?\text{wō} & \text{zǒu} & - & \text{bu} & - & \text{lèi} \\ \text{I} & \text{walk} & - & \text{can't} & - & \text{tired} \end{array}$

(?I can't get tired from walking.)

Such RVCs should not, however, be viewed as exceptions to the general rule that RVCs can occur in the potential form; rather, the sentences seem strange because the meanings 'achievable' and 'unachievable' of *-de-* and *-bu-* imply some effort on the part of the subject, and people do not generally make an effort to achieve such negative results as getting sick or tired.

8. This discussion is adapted from Light (1977).
9. For discussions of directional verbs, see Lin (1977) and Lu (1977).
10. Chao (1968:461) gives a ninth member of this class of directional verbs, *lǒng* 'gather together'; but *lǒng* occurs only in a few idiomatic compounds that do not have any of the properties of the RVCs: for example, *kào-lǒng* 'lean to the Communist side', *lā-lǒng* 'to make political allies'.
11. For further discussion, see Teng (1974b).
12. In writing this section we have found Ch'i (1974) helpful.

## CHAPTER 4

# *Simple Declarative Sentences*

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By *simple sentence* we mean any sentence that has just one verb in it. By contrast, sentences with more than one verb are called *complex sentences*—several types of complex sentences are discussed in chapters 20–24.

In this chapter, we will introduce the basic properties of simple declarative sentences in Mandarin by discussing the elements that comprise them. These elements include the topic, the subject, the noun phrase, and the verb phrase.

### 4.1 Topic and Subject

In chapter 2 the topic-prominent nature of Mandarin sentences was discussed as a feature that distinguishes Mandarin typologically from many other languages. In this section, the concepts of topic and subject will be presented in more detail.

#### 4.1.1 Characterization of Topic

What is a topic? In chapter 2 the topic was characterized as what the sentence is about. Although it may be an intuitive matter to determine all of the implications of “what the sentence is about,” this is essentially a correct characterization. Another way of talking about “what the sentence is about” is to say that a topic sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the topic always refers either to something that the hearer already knows about—that is, it is *definite*—or to a class of entities—that is, it is *generic* (see section 4.2.5 of this chapter for a discussion of definite and generic noun phrases).

Whereas in English nouns are usually marked by articles, which signal whether they are definite or indefinite, in Mandarin this distinction does not need to be





cursory survey of Mandarin speech suggests that they are not commonly used at all. There are also dialect variations in terms of the acceptability of some of the topic markers given in sentence (4).

A topic, then, is typically a noun phrase (or a verb phrase) that names what the sentence is about, is definite or generic, occurs in sentence-initial position, and may be followed by a pause or a pause particle.

#### 4.1.2 Characterization of Subject

The *subject* of a sentence in Mandarin is the noun phrase that has a “doing” or “being” relationship with the verb in that sentence. The precise nature of this relationship depends on the semantic makeup of the verb. In fact, each verb requires a specific type of noun phrase to be its subject in a simple sentence. For example, in English a verb such as *elapse* requires a temporal noun phrase as its subject, that is, a noun phrase that expresses a time period; a verb such as *breathe* requires an animate noun phrase as its subject, that is, a noun phrase that refers to something that has life; and a verb such as *happen* requires an abstract noun phrase as its subject, that is, a noun phrase that refers to something other than material objects. Thus the underlined noun phrases in the following sentences are subjects:

- (5) wǒ      xǐhuan      chī      píngguǒ  
       I        like        eat        apple

I like to eat apples.

- (6) Zhāngsān      dǎ      wǒ      le  
       Zhangsan      hit        I        CRS

Zhangsan hit me.

- (7) nèi      —      suǒ      fángzi      hǎo      guì  
       that      —      CL      house      very      expensive

That house is very expensive.

The one doing the liking in (5) is *wǒ* ‘I’, the one doing the hitting in (6) is *Zhāngsān*, and the thing being expensive in (7) is *nèi-suǒ fángzi* ‘that house’.

#### 4.1.3 Comparison of Topic and Subject

On the basis of the above characterizations of topics and subjects, we can see how these two elements are actually used in simple declarative sentences.<sup>5</sup> Sub-

jects and topics are most easily distinguished in sentences that contain one of each, so we will begin with those.

#### A. Sentences with Both Subject and Topic

Let us look at sentence (2) again:

(2) nèi — zhī gǒu wǒ yǐjīng kàn — guo le  
 that — CL dog I already see — EXP CRS

That dog I have already seen.

In this sentence we can identify the topic as *nèi-zhī gǒu* 'that dog', since it tells what the sentence is about, it is definite, it occurs in sentence-initial position, and it could be followed by a pause particle. It is not the subject, however, since it has no "doing" or "being" relationship with the verb *kàn* 'see'. Instead, the noun that has such a relationship with *kàn* 'see' is *wǒ* 'I'. Sentence (2), then, has both a topic (*nèi-zhī gǒu* 'that dog') and a subject (*wǒ* 'I').

#### B. Sentences in Which the Subject and the Topic Are Identical

In many sentences the topic noun phrase is the same as the subject noun phrase. Let us look at (5) again:

(5) wǒ xǐhuān chī píngguǒ  
 I like eat apple

I like to eat apples.

In this sentence *wǒ* 'I' is the *subject*, since it is in a "doing" relationship with the verb *xǐhuān* 'like'. It is also, however, the *topic* of the sentence, since it satisfies all the conditions for being the topic as well as for being the subject: it is definite, it is what the sentence is about, and it can be followed by a pause.

#### C. Sentences with No Subject

There are many sentences in Mandarin which have a topic but not a subject. In those sentences, the subject is understood. Consider sentence (8):

(8) nèi — bēn shū chūbān LE  
 that — CL book publish PFV/CRS

That book, (someone) has published it.

In (8), *nèi-běn shū* 'that book' is clearly the topic; but it is not the subject because it is not in a "doing" relationship with the verb *chūbǎn* 'publish'. In other words, the book does not publish itself; someone or some institution publishes it. Often sentences such as (8) have been given a passive translation in English, such as 'That book has been published'. Whereas a translator has the freedom to choose any construction in the target language that provides, in his/her opinion, an appropriate rendition of the meaning of the sentence in the source language, it is important to be aware that Mandarin sentences such as (8) are not passive constructions. They are simply topic-comment constructions in which the subject of the verb is not present. Some other examples to (8) are given below:

- (9) a. fángzi zào - hǎo LE  
house build - finish PFV/CRS

The house, (someone) has finished building it.

- b. yīfu tāng - wán LE  
cloth iron - finish PFV/CRS

The clothing, (someone) has finished ironing it.

- c. fān zhǔ - jiāo - le yidiǎn  
rice cook - burnt - PFV a:bit

The rice, (we) burned it a little bit.

- d. zhèi - ge tínmù zuì hǎo buyào  
this - CL topic most good don't  
tí - chū - lái  
bring:up - exit - come

This topic, (you'd) better not bring it up.

#### D. Sentences with No Topic

There are two types of sentences with no topic. One type of sentence is without a topic because the topic is understood from the communicative context in which the

sentence occurs (see section 24.1 of chapter 24). Such sentences typically occur as answers to questions:

(10) A:    nǐ    kàn    —    guo    Lisi    méiyǒu ?  
           you    see    —    EXP    Lisi    not

Have you seen Lisi?

B:    méi    kàn    —    guo  
       not    see    —    EXP

(I) haven't.

In (10), B's answer does not need to contain the subject/topic *wǒ* 'I' because it was just referred to by *nǐ* 'you' in the preceding question, and, in Mandarin, topics that are understood usually do not need to be expressed. Consider another example:

(11) A:    júzi    huài    le    ma ?  
           orange spoiled CRS    Q

Are the oranges spoiled?

B:    huài    le  
       spoiled CRS

(They) are spoiled.

Again, neither *júzi* 'orange' nor a pronoun referring to it need be mentioned in B's response to A because it is understood from the context. Another such example would be the case of an imperative, or command (see chapter 14). In a command, it is always understood that the subject/topic is the hearer, so, again, it need not appear in the sentence.

(12)    jìn    —    lái  
           in    —    come

Come in!

The second type of sentence without a topic is one in which no noun phrase is definite or generic, or in which the definite or generic noun phrase is not what the

sentence is about. In such sentences, the subject is usually an indefinite noun phrase, which cannot occur in sentence-initial position and cannot be a topic. Instead, the indefinite subject noun phrase must be placed after the verb. These sentences are called *presentative sentences* because they are structured to “present” the indefinite noun phrase in discourse. They are discussed in detail in chapter 17. In the following examples, the indefinite subjects are underlined:

- (13) jìn – lái – le      yī – ge rén  
 enter – come – PFV    one – CL person

A person came in.

- (14) yǒu rén zài dā – diànhuà  
 exist person DUR hit – telephone  
 gěi Zhāngsān  
 to Zhangsan

Someone is making a phone call to Zhangsan.

- (15) xià yǔ le  
 descend rain CRS

It's raining.

In (13), the one who is doing the entering is *yī-ge rén* ‘a person’. It is clearly the subject of the verb *jìn-lái* ‘enter-come = come in’, but is not the topic because it is neither definite nor generic, nor is it in sentence-initial position. It introduces a previously unknown entity into the discourse. In (14), *rén* ‘person’ is the subject of the verb *dā-diànhuà* ‘hit-telephone’, but it is not the topic because it is preceded by the existential verb *yǒu* ‘exist’.

Sentence (14) also contains a definite noun, *Zhāngsān*, but it is not the topic because it is not what the sentence is about. In (15), *yǔ* ‘rain’ is the subject of the verb *xià* ‘descend’. Since (15) represents the only way to express the thought ‘It’s raining’ in Mandarin, the fact that *yǔ* ‘rain’ is the subject of the verb *xià* ‘descend’ is often overlooked. Observe that in (16), *nèi-chǎng yǔ* ‘that-CL rain = that rain’ is

both the subject and the topic of the sentence with the verb *xià* 'descend':

- (16) nèi - chǎng yǔ xià - de hěn dà  
that - CL rain descend - CSC very big

That rain came down hard.

Topics and subjects, then, can be distinguished on the basis of whether the noun has a "doing" or "being" relationship with the verb; in sentences such as (2), both a topic noun phrase and a subject noun phrase can be identified, while in sentences such as (5)–(7), one noun phrase plays both the topic and the subject role. In other sentences, such as (8) and (9), only a topic but not a subject exists, and in still other sentences, such as (13)–(15), only a subject but not a topic exists.

#### 4.1.4 Double-Subject Sentences

One type of sentence containing both a topic and a subject deserves special mention, the *double-subject sentence*, of which the following are examples.<sup>6</sup> In these examples, the topic is underlined twice and the subject once:

- (17) xiàng bízi cháng  
elephant nose long

{Elephants' noses are long.}  
{Elephants have long noses.}

- (18) Zhāngsān nǚ - péngyǒu duō  
Zhangsan girl - friend many

Zhangsan has lots of girlfriends.

- (19) zhèi - ge nǚhái yǎnjīng hěn dà  
that - CL girl eye very big

{This girl's eyes are very big.}  
{This girl has very big eyes.}

- (20) wū - ge píngguǒ liǎng - ge huài le  
five - CL apple two - CL spoil CRS

(Of) the five apples, two are spoiled.

- (21) zhèi - bān xuéshēng tā zài cōngmíng  
 this - class student 3sg most intelligent

(In) that class of students, s/he is the most intelligent.

- (22) jiājù jiù - de hǎo  
 furniture old - NOM good

Furniture, old is <sup>better</sup> good.

Sentences like (17)–(22) have been called double-subject constructions because earlier investigators, not thinking about such a notion as “topic,” analyzed such sentences as having two subjects, as shown in (23):

- (23) xiàng      bīzi              cháng  
 elephant      nose              long
- Subject                      Predicate
- Subject                      Predicate

With the concept of topic, however, we can see that these sentences are just a subset of topic-comment sentences in which there happens to be a particular semantic relationship between the topic and the subject, which we may call *part-whole*. That is, in all the sentences that one might call double-subject constructions, the topic is the *whole* of which the subject is a *part*. Thus, in (17)–(19) above, the subject is *possessed* by the topic, while in (20)–(22), the topic names a class and the subject names a *subset* of that class.

Double-subject constructions, then, involve topics and subjects in a part-whole relationship with each other, but in every other respect they are just like all the other topic-comment sentences being considered: the topic is the definite noun phrase that is what the sentence is about, and the subject is the noun phrase in a “doing” or “being” relationship with the verb.

#### 4.1.5 Comparison with Chao’s Analysis

In his *Grammar*, Chao (1968:67-104) discusses the notions of subject and topic, but he arrives at a different labeling system from the one being adopted here. Because of the importance of his *Grammar*, a brief comparison of the two approaches might be useful to readers who wish to consult both his work and this one.

Chao's discussion makes it clear that he does not distinguish between topic and subject. For him, most Mandarin sentences consist of a subject (the first noun phrase) and a predicate (the rest of the sentence), but the *meaning or function* of "subject" and "predicate" is "topic" and "comment," respectively. That is, Chao views "topic," not as a grammatical entity distinct from "subject," but, rather, as a way to talk about the meaning that the subject noun phrase conveys.

The problem with this approach is that if the first noun phrase in the sentence is the subject, which has the meaning or function of topic, there can be no distinction between topic and subject. So in a sentence like (24),

- (24) nèi    -    kē    shù    yèzi    hěn    dà  
       that    -    CL    tree    leaf    very    big

That tree, (its) leaves are very big.

Chao would call *nèi-kē shù* 'that tree' the *main subject* (which has a topic meaning) and *yèzi* 'leaf' the *minor subject*.

In contrast, we consider topic and subject to be two different types of notions. Although given noun phrase may serve as both the topic and the subject in certain sentences, the notions need to be kept distinct for two reasons. First, only by recognizing the role of topic in Mandarin sentences can we appreciate Mandarin as a topic-prominent language and the importance of topic prominence as a typological criterion for classifying languages according to their differences and similarities. Second, only by recognizing topics in Mandarin sentences can we come to understand the role that topics play in discourse, as discussed below in sections 4.1.8 and 4.1.9.

#### 4.1.6 Time and Locative Phrases

We have said that topics must occur in sentence-initial position. There are, however, two other types of elements that often occur in sentence-initial position: time phrases and locative phrases. Should these be considered topics as well? We think they should. Here are some examples, the first three of time phrases, the last three of locative phrases:

- (25) zuótiān    xuě    xià    de    hěn    ·jīn  
       yesterday    snow    descend    CSC    very    incessant

Yesterday it snowed incessantly.



- (26) nèi - nián tā hěn jǐnzhāng  
 that - year 3sg very anxious

That year s/he was very anxious.

- (27) shàng - ge yuè tiānqì fēichang mèn  
 last - CL month weather extremely humid

Last month the weather was extremely humid.

- (28) qiáng - shang pá - zhe hěn duō bìhú  
 wall - on climb - DUR very many salamander

The wall has a lot of salamanders crawling on it.

- (29) xìnfēng - lǐ zhuāng - bu - jìn  
 envelope - in fit - can't - enter  
zhèi - xiē zhàopiàn  
 this - several photo

These photos won't fit in this envelope.

- (30) zài Táiběi kényi chī de hěn hǎo  
 at Taipei can eat CSC very good

(In) Taipei one can eat really well.

The reason these sentence-initial time and locative phrases are considered to be topics is simply that they have all the properties of topics: they set the frame within which the rest of the sentence is presented, they are definite, referring to places and times about which the hearer already knows, and they may be followed by a pause particle.

#### 4.1.7 Further Examples

In order to have a firm grasp of the topic-comment structure in Mandarin, it is important for one to understand the openness of the relationship between the topic and the comment. As long as the comment expresses something about the topic in the perception of the speaker and the hearer, the sentence will be meaningful. In the

following section, further examples are presented to illustrate the topic-comment relation:

- (31) miàn      wǒ      zuì      xǐhuān      chī      là      de  
noodle      I      most      like      eat      spicy      NOM

Noodles, I like to eat spicy ones the best.

- (32) zhèi      -      jian      shì      nǐ      bu      néng  
this      -      CL      matter      you      not      can  
  
guāng      máfan      yì      -      ge      rén  
only      bother      one      -      CL      person

This matter, you can't deal with it by bothering only one person.

- (33) nèi      -      zhōng      dòuzi      yì      -      jīn  
that      -      kind      bean      one      -      catty  
  
sān      -      shí      kuài      qián  
three      -      ten      dollar      money

That kind of bean, one catty is thirty dollars.

- (34) nèi      -      chang      huǒ      xìngkuī      xiāofang      -      duì  
that      -      CL      fire      fortunate      fire      -      brigade  
  
lái      de      kuài  
come      CSC      fast

That fire, fortunately the fire brigade came quickly.

- (35) lán      -      qiú      wǒ      dǎ      de      bu      tài      hǎo  
basket      -      ball      I      play      CSC      not      too      good

Basketball I don't play too well.

- (36) zhèi      -      běn xiǎoshuō      Zhāngsān      kàn      -      wán      le  
this      -      CL      novel      Zhangsan      read      -      finish      CRS

This novel, Zhangsan has finished it.

- (37) lù - shang de shé wǒ xiǎng shì  
 road - on NOM snake I think be  
 bu huì yǎo rén de  
 not likely bite person NOM

The snake on the road, I think it won't bite people.

- (38) nèi - ge háizi (tā - de) yīfu dōu pò le  
 that - CL child (3sg - GEN) clothes all torn CRS

That child, his/her clothes are all torn.

- (39) lúzi - lǐ de huǒ wǒ ràng tā  
 stove - in NOM fire I let 3sg  
 zìjǐ miè - diào  
 self extinguish - off

The fire in the stove, I'll let it go out by itself.

- (40) dàxué xiànzài duōbàn shì nán - nǚ  
 university now most be boy - girl  
 tóng xiào  
 one school

Universities, most are coeducational these days.

- (41) bào - shang de xiāoxi, shìjiè - shang  
 paper - on NOM news world - on ?  
 de qíngxíng hěn bu hǎo  
 NOM situation very not good

(According to) the news in the paper, the situation in the world is really not good.

- (42) zhèi - ge dōngxi míngzi jiào "diànshì"  
 this - CL thing name call television

This thing is called a "television."

- (43) hūnyīn de shì wǒ zìjǐ zuò — zhǔ  
 marriage NOM affair I self act — master

The matter of marriage, I'll be my own boss.

Sometimes the topic can be a verb or a verb phrase functioning as a noun phrase:

- (44) zhù , Táiběi zuì fāngbiàn; chī, háishi Xiānggǎng hào  
 live Taipei most convenient eat still Hong Kong good

Housing, Taipei is most convenient; eating, Hong Kong is still better.

- (45) dào Měiguó liúxué zhèngfǔ zǎo guīdìng  
 to America study:abroad government early stipulate  
 — le bànfǎ  
 — PFV procedure

(For) studying abroad in the United States, the government long ago set up procedural regulations.

- (46) tiāntiān mǎi cài , wǒ zhēn bu zhīdào  
 every:day buy food I really not know  
 gāi mǎi shénme hǎo  
 should buy what good

Buying food every day, I really don't know what to buy that's good.

- (47) chū — qu hē chá wǒ qǐng nǐ  
 exit — go drink tea I invite you

Going out for tea, I'll invite (treat) you.

Sometimes, an entire clause can be the topic:

- (48) lishǐ - xī kǎi - huì wǒ kěyǐ  
 history - department hold - meeting I can  
 gēn Lìsì tí - yī - tí  
 with Lisi mention - one - mention

(When) the history department has its meeting, I can mention(it) to Lisi.

- (49) Zhāngsān míngtiān qù Měiguó wǒ juéde hěn qíguài  
 Zhangsan tomorrow go America I feel very strange

Zhangsan's going to the United States tomorrow, I feel is very strange.

Notice that in sentences like (44)–(49), in which either a verb phrase or an entire clause is functioning as topic, the same conditions for topic hold as when a simple noun phrase is the topic: the phrase or clause tells what the sentence is about or sets a frame for the sentence, the phrase or clause can be followed by a topic particle, and the phrase or clause must refer to information that is already known to both the hearer and the speaker. For example, a sentence like (49) could not be used unless the hearer already knew about the fact that Zhangsan was going to America the next day.

Sometimes the topic may be found, not at the beginning of the entire sentence, but at the beginning of the clause of which it is a part (see chapters 21 and 23):

- (50) wǒ xiǎng nèi - jian yīfu wǒ chuān -  
 I think that - CL clothes I wear -  
 qǐ - lái hěn hǎo - kàn  
 rise - come very good - look

I think that outfit looks very good on me.

- (51) wǒ hěn bǎo le , suǒyǐ júzi wǒ bu chī le  
 I very full CRS so orange I not eat CRS

I'm very full, so the orange I'm not going to eat.

Sentence (50) is a complex sentence whose subordinate clause has a topic and a subject. Whether a subordinate clause of a complex sentence can have a topic that is distinct from the subject depends on the main verb of the complex sentence. In general, only verbs of saying (such as *shuō* 'say', *tīyì* 'suggest') and verbs of mental activity (such as *juéde* 'feel', *xiǎng* 'think') allow a subordinate clause with a topic distinct from the subject. Sentence (51) involves sentence linking or conjunction, *suǒyǐ* 'so' being the link between the two clauses; the second clause contains both a topic and a subject.

#### 4.1.8 Topic as a Discourse Element

As we have mentioned, there are several important reasons for distinguishing topic from subject.<sup>7</sup> One is that they behave differently in individual sentences. Even more significant, however, is the fact that the topic is essentially a discourse element and functions in a special way in the discourse. By *discourse*, we mean the context in which a given sentence occurs, whether it is a conversation, a paragraph, a story, or some other kind of language situation.

##### A. The Preceding Discourse

One of the functions of the topic with respect to the preceding discourse is simply to relate the material in the sentence of which it is a part to some preceding sentence. Here is a conversational example:

(52) A.    wǒ        zài        Xīnguó    xuéxiào    jiāoshū  
              I         at         Xinguo    school     teach

I teach at Xinguo School.

B.    ou! Xīnguó xuéxiào ,    nàr    yǒu    yī    –    wèi  
      Oh! Xīnguo school    there    exist    one    –    CL

Zhāng Xiānsheng    nǐ    rènshi    bu    rènshi ?  
Zhang    Mr.    you    know    not    know

Oh! Xinguo School, do you know a Mr. Zhang there?

The topic in B's utterance is 'Xinguo school', which clearly picks up on what A had just said. It is in this sense, then, that topics function in discourse to relate one sentence to a preceding one.

Another function of topics in a discourse is to introduce a *subtopic*—an idea that is related to, but slightly different from, what has been discussed. For example, if A and B have been discussing an upcoming move, getting a loan, signing papers, and when the move will take place, B could say to A:

- (53) xīn de dìfang lí zhèlǐ yuǎn bu yuǎn ?  
 new NOM place from here far not far

Is the new place far from here?

In this case, *xīn de dìfang* 'the new place' is the topic (and the subject); although it has not been explicitly mentioned in the speech situation prior to the uttering of (53), it has been implicit in the discussion of moving and thus qualifies as already known to both the hearer and the speaker.

Finally, a third way in which topics relate to the previous discourse is in reintroducing a topic that had been mentioned earlier but then dropped. So, for example, if A and B in the conversational situation described for sentence (53) have finished talking about the new house and the move and have gone on to other matters, A could return to the first idea by saying:

- (54) nà xīn fángzi ( wǒ xiǎng ) nǐ kàn —  
 that new house ( I think ) you see —  
 le yíding hěn xǐhuān  
 PFV certainly very like

As for that new house, I think that once you've seen it, you'll certainly like it.

In English, reintroduced topics are typically marked with the expression *as for*, as shown in the translation of (54).

### B. The Following Discourse

One way in which topics interact with material that follows is through **contrast**; that is, when a speaker wants to contrast two items, s/he places them as the topics of contrasting sentences. Here is an example:

- (55) yīfu xīn de hǎo ; péngyǒu jiù de hǎo  
 clothes new NOM good friend old NOM good

Clothes, new ones are good; friends, old ones are good.

## 4.1.9 Topic and Coreference in Discourse

Consider (56), a short excerpt from a story:

(56) John went to college in California. He majored in linguistics.

The underlined subjects of the two sentences in (56) are said to be *coreferential* because they refer to the same person. In general, any two noun phrases having identical reference are coreferential. In English, when two coreferential noun phrases occur in two consecutive but separate sentences, the coreferential noun phrase in the second sentence is normally represented by a pronoun, as shown in (56). In Mandarin, however, normally the coreferential noun phrase in the second sentence is not mentioned, although it may also be present as a pronoun (see chapter 24 on pronouns in discourse). Sentence (57) is the most natural Mandarin counterpart of (56):

(57) Zhāngsān shì zài Jiāzhou niàn de  
 Zhangsan be at California study NOM  
 dàxué zhuānxiū yǔyánxué  
 college major linguistics

Zhangsan went to college in California. (He) majored in linguistics.

An important discourse property of the topic in Mandarin is that when the topic and subject are distinct, the topic has priority over the subject in determining the reference of a missing noun phrase in the sentence that follows. Let us illustrate with example (58):

(58) nèi — kē shù yèzi dà ; (suōyǐ) wǒ  
 that — CL tree leaf big (so) I  
 bu xǐhuān \_\_\_\_\_  
 not like

That tree, the leaves are big; (so) I don't like it.

The missing noun phrase in the second sentence of (58) is the direct object of the verb, *xǐhuān* 'like'. It can only be understood to refer to the topic of the preceding sentence, *nèi-kē shù* 'that tree', and not to its subject, *yèzi* 'leaf'.



Consider another example, (59):

(59)	<u>nèi</u>	—	<u>kuài</u>	<u>tián</u>		<u>dàozi</u>	zhǎng	de	hěn
	that	—	piece	land		rice	grow	CSC	very
			<u>dà</u>	; (suǒyì) _____		hěn	zhíqián		
			big	(so)		very	valuable		

That piece of land (topic), rice grows very big; (so) it (the land) is very valuable.

Here the missing noun phrase in the second sentence of (59) is the subject of the verb, *zhíqián* '(is) valuable'. Again, it refers to the topic, *nèi-kuài tián* 'that piece of land', and not to the subject, *dàozi* 'rice', of the preceding sentence.

The reason that the topic has priority over the subject in determining coreference in successive clauses is the discourse nature of the topic. The topic being what the sentence is about, it is normal for several sentences to be saying something about the same thing, or to share the topic. Thus a topic can easily extend its scope across sentence boundaries. On the other hand, when a subject is not simultaneously a topic, its role is likely to be restricted to the sentence in which it occurs. It is important to note that the verb of the second sentence in (58), *xīhuān* 'like', occurring in an isolated sentence, is a verb that semantically could have either the topic of the first sentence, *nèi-kē shù* 'that tree', or the subject of the first sentence, *yèzi* 'leaf', as its direct object. Similarly, the verb of the second sentence in (59), *zhíqián* '(is) valuable', occurring in an isolated sentence, could in principle have either the topic of the first sentence, *nèi-kuài tián* 'that field', or the subject of the first sentence, *dàozi* 'rice', as its subject. Since, however, the missing noun phrases in (58) and (59) are interpreted as coreferential only to the topic and not to the subject in the preceding sentence, we know that the meanings of (58) and (59) result from the topic's having priority over the subject in determining coreference.

#### 4.2 The Noun Phrase

A noun phrase can be characterized in terms of its function as well as its form. A noun phrase functions to label something, which can be a person, a thing, a class of things, an activity, an event, or an abstract quality or concept. A noun phrase can therefore occur with a verb in a sentence as a topic, subject, direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition. Of course, a noun phrase can also be used in any



e. nèi — tiáo niú  
that — CL cow

that cow

f. zhèi — jǐ — mén pào  
this — few — CL cannon

these few cannons

g. nèi — liù — běn shū  
that — six — CL book

those six books

h. zhěng — ge fángzi  
whole — CL house

the whole house

The choice of classifier is determined by the noun. Mandarin has several dozen classifiers, most of which can be found in Chao (1968:sec. 7.9). We will refer to the combination of demonstrative and/or number or quantifier plus the classifier as the *classifier phrase*. Thus, in (60) *a*, *sān-ge*, *c*, *jī-jian*, *f*, *zhèi-jī-mén*, *g*, *nèi-liù-běn*, are all classifier phrases.

If the noun itself denotes a measure, it does not take a classifier; examples include: *kuài* 'piece', *lǐ*, 'mile', *jīn*, 'tael', *liǎng* 'ounce', *chǐ* 'foot', and *tiān* 'day'; thus the *a* phrases in (61) and (62) are acceptable, but the *b* phrases are not:<sup>9</sup>

(61) a. sān tiān  
three day

three days

b. \*sān — ge tiān  
three — CL day

(62) a. bā kuài  
eight piece

eight pieces

- b. \*bā     —     ge     kuài  
       eight   —     CL     piece

In fact, not only does a measure word generally not take a classifier, but a measure word can *be* a classifier. In each of the examples in (63)–(68), the first phrase shows a measure word functioning as a noun without a classifier, and the second phrase shows the same measure word functioning as a classifier with another noun.

- (63) a. shí     bàng  
       ten     pound

ten pounds

- b. shí     bàng     ròu  
       ten     pound     meat

ten pounds of meat

- (64) a. liù     lǐ  
       six     mile

six miles

- b. liù     lǐ     lù  
       six     mile     road

six miles of road

- (65) a. yī     —     bǎi     liǎng  
       one   —     hundred ounce

100 ounces

- b. yī     —     bǎi     liǎng     yínzi  
       one   —     hundred ounce     silver

100 ounces of silver

- (66) a. wǔ     —     shí     chī  
       five   —     ten     foot

fifty feet

b. wū      –      shí      chǐ      bù  
      five      –      ten      foot      cloth

fifty feet of cloth

(67) a. nèi      jīn  
      that      tael

that tael

b. nèi      jīn      yáng      –      ròu  
      that      tael      lamb      –      meat

that tael of lamb

(68) a. sān      jiālún  
      three      gallon

three gallons

b. sān      jiālún      qìyóu  
      three      gallon      gasoline

three gallons of gasoline

The measure words provided in (63)–(68) indicate standards for length, weight, area, or volume. Measure words can also indicate aggregates or containers, however, as in these examples:

(i) Aggregate measures:

(69) a. yī      qún      yáng  
      one      flock      sheep

a flock of sheep

b. nèi      duī      lāxi  
      that      pile      garbage

that pile of garbage

c.      jǐ      héng      guǒ      -      shù  
          {how:many}      row      fruit      -      tree  
          {a:few}

{how many}  
 {a few} rows of fruit trees

d.      zhèi      shí      duì      yīngwǔ  
          this      ten      pair      parrot

these ten pairs of parrots

e.      qī      dǎ      jīdàn  
          seven      dozen      egg

seven dozen eggs

f.      zhěng      chuàn      zhūzi  
          whole      string      pearl

the/a whole string of pearls

g.      yī      tào      jiājù  
          one      set      furniture

a set of furniture

h.      liǎng      zhuō      kè  
          two      table      guest

two (banquet) tables of guests

i.      zhèi      bān      xuésheng  
          this      class      student

this class of students

(ii) Container measures:

(70) a. wu      –      shí      píng      yóu  
          five      –      ten      bottle      oil

fifty bottles of oil

b.    bā      –      shí      –      sì      bēi      jiǔ  
          eight      –      ten      –      four      glass      wine

eighty-four glasses of wine

c.    zhèi      liǎng      xiāng      júzi  
          this      two      box      orange

these two cases of oranges

d.    zhěng      hé      táng  
          whole      box      candy

the/a whole box of candy

e.    yī      guō      fàn  
          one      pot      rice

a pot of rice

f.    jǐ      gāng      cù  
       {how:many}      vat      vinegar  
       {a:few}      }

{how many}      vats of vinegar  
   {a few}      }

When the noun is abstract, the measure classifier may also be abstract:

- (71)            jǐ                    jù                    huà  
                   {how:many}                    sentence            speech  
                   { a:few }
- {how many}                    sentences (literally 'how many/a few sentences  
                   { a few }                    of speech')

Another type of measure word is one that denotes an instance or occurrence of an event. *Chǎng*, which literally means 'arena', can be used in this way, as in (72):

- (72) a.        nèi            –        chǎng        qiú        hěn        jǐnzhāng  
                   that            –            CL            ball        very        tense

That ball game was very tense.

- b.        nèi            –        chǎng        huǒ        méi        rén        sǐ  
                   that            –            CL            fire        not        person    die

In that fire no one died.

- c.        zuótiān        yǒu        yī            –        chǎng        diànyǐng  
                   yesterday    exist        one            –            CL            movie

Yesterday there was a movie.

Other examples of measure classifiers indicating an instance or occurrence of an event are given in (73)–(75), where the classifiers at issue are underlined:

- (73) nèi        –        pán        qí        tā        xià        de        hěn        hǎo  
                   that        –            CL        chess    3sg    descend    CSC        very        good

That game of chess s/he played very well.\*

- (74) tāmen    jìn xíng    –        le        jǐ        –        cì        huìtán  
                   they        hold        –        PFV    a:few    –            time        talk

They held several talks.

\*Cf. *pánzi* 'tray', *xià-qí* 'play chess'.



- (75) dào Xīnjiāpō yī tiān yǒu jǐ — bān fēijī ?  
 to Singapore one day exist how:many — trip plane

How many flights a day are there to Singapore?

Another type of measure word includes nouns denoting either body parts or enclosed areas. They typically occur with *yī* 'one' with a special meaning, 'a \_\_\_\_\_ful of'. Examples of this type of measure word are presented in (76):

- (76) a. liǎn 'face'

yī liǎn huī  
 one face dust

a faceful of dust

- b. tóu 'head'

yī tóu bái fā  
 one head white hair

a headful of white hair

- c. wūzi 'house'

yī wūzi zéi  
 one house thief

a houseful of thieves

- d. dì 'ground, floor'

yī dì miànfěn  
 one floor flour

a floorful of flour

e. dùzi 'stomach'

yi	<u>dùzi</u>	qì
one	stomach	anger

a stomachful of grievance

The most frequently used classifier in Mandarin is *-ge*. It is gradually becoming the general classifier and replacing the more specialized ones. For example, the 'proper' classifier for *cài* 'a course of food' is *-dào*, as in *nèi-dào cài* 'that course of food'; the 'proper' classifier for *dàpào* 'artillery piece' is *-mén*, as in *zhèi-mén dàpào* 'this artillery piece'; however, many native speakers of Mandarin have replaced *-dào*, *-mén*, and others with the general classifier, *-ge*. For these speakers, *nèi-ge cài* 'that course of food' and *zhèi-ge dàpào* 'this artillery piece' are perfectly acceptable.

On the other hand, many nouns still require special classifiers. By and large, which nouns occur with which classifier must be memorized, though there is a slight amount of regularity with respect to the meanings of groups of nouns taking the same classifier. For instance, the class of nouns that require the classifier *-tiáo* includes many that refer to elongated objects, such as *shé* 'snake', *shéngzi* 'rope', *lù* 'road', *hé* 'river', *yiba* 'tail', *yú* 'fish', as well as most four-legged mammals. Such nouns as *xīnwén* 'news', *fǎlǜ* 'law', however, also require the classifier *-tiáo*, whereas nouns referring to such elongated objects as *máobǐ* 'brush-pen', and *jiàn* 'arrow' take a different classifier, *-zhī*.

Finally, there is a classifier that signals plurality, *-xiē*, which occurs with the numeral *yi* 'one' to mean 'several' or with the demonstratives *nèi* 'that', *zhèi* 'this', and *něi* 'which', as follows:

(77) a.	yi	—	<u>xiē</u>	wánjù
	one	—	PL	toy

some toys

b.	něi	—	<u>xiē</u>	dōngxi
	which	—	PL	thing

which things

- c.    nèi        –        xiē      kǒuhào  
       that       –        PL      slogan

those slogans

#### 4.2.2 Associative Phrases

*Associative phrase* denotes a type of modification where two noun phrases (NPs) are linked by the particle *-de*. The first noun phrase together with the particle *-de* is the associative phrase. The second noun phrase is the head noun being modified, as schematized in (78):

- (78)        NP    –    de                    NP  
               associative phrase                    head noun

The name *associative phrase* indicates that two noun phrases are “associated” or “connected” in some way; the precise meaning of the association or connection is determined entirely by the meanings of the two noun phrases involved. One very important associative meaning is that of possession. Thus, one type of associative phrase is the possessive, or genitive, phrase:

- (79) a.    wǒ        –        de      chènshān  
               I         –        GEN     shirt

my shirt

- b.    tāmen    –        de      jiā  
       they    –        GEN     home

their home

- c.    tùzi        –        de      ěrduō  
       rabbit    –        GEN     ear

(a) rabbit’s ear

We gloss the *-de* of the genitive/possessive phrase as *GEN*. Here, of course, the meanings of the two noun phrases in each example make the concept of possession

the most natural connection between them. Many other types of semantic association between two noun phrases are also possible, however. In each of the following examples, the semantic nature of the association follows from the meanings of the two noun phrases involved. We gloss this broader associative meaning as *ASSOC* 'associative':

- (80) a. Zhōngguó – de rénkǒu  
China – ASSOC population

China's population

- b. nèi – ge fàndiàn – de cài  
that – CL restaurant – ASSOC food

the food of that restaurant

- c. xuéxiào – de jiào – yuán  
school – ASSOC teach – personnel

school's teaching staff

- d. kēxué – de fāzhǎn  
science – ASSOC development

the development of science

- e. chènshān – de kòuzi  
shirt – ASSOC button

the buttons on (the) shirt

- f. Táiwān – huà – de yǔfǎ  
Taiwan – speech – ASSOC grammar

(the) grammar of Taiwanese

- g. nèi – ge zì – de yìsi  
that – CL word – ASSOC meaning

the meaning of that word

h. chénggōng - de xīwàng  
 success - ASSOC hope

hopes for success

i. yèwǎn - de tiānkōng  
 night - ASSOC sky

the nighttime sky

j. jiàokēshū - ( de ) shōujù  
 textbook - ASSOC receipt

a receipt for the textbook

The *-de* of an associative phrase signaling a possessive/genitive relation can be omitted when the possessive/genitive relation is between two human relatives and the noun in the associative phrase is a personal pronoun. For example, the *-de* in the underlined associative phrase can be omitted in (81):

(81) a. wǒ bu xǐhuan nǐ (-de) mèimei  
 I not like you (-GEN) younger:sister

I don't like your younger sister.

b. Zhāngsān xiàng tā (-de) māma  
 Zhangsan resemble 3sg (-GEN) mother

Zhangsan looks like his mother.

c. wǒ zuótiān pèngjian wǒ (-de) shúshu  
 I yesterday encounter I (-GEN) uncle (paternal)

I ran into my uncle yesterday.



- (85)    nà        shì        wǒ        gěi        nǐ        de        shū  
           that        be        I        give        you        NOM        book

That's the book I gave you.

The most important semantic function of a relative clause is to clarify further the reference of the head noun.

### B. Attributive Adjectives

An adjective functions attributively (as opposed to predicatively, described in A.1 of section 4.3.1 of this chapter) when it modifies a noun in a noun phrase.<sup>11</sup> A modifying phrase, then, may consist of just an attributive adjective, as illustrated by the underlined phrases in the following examples:

- (86)    tā        shì        yì        —        gè        hǎo        rén  
           3sg        be        one        —        CL        good        person

S/he is a good person.

- (87)    guó        —        lì        dàxué        xuéfèi  
           country — establish university tuition  
  
           bǐjiào        piányi  
           relatively cheap

At the national universities tuition is relatively low.

- (88)    tāmen    yòng        de        dōu        shì        tiānrán    yánsè  
           they        use        NOM        all        be        natural    color

They use only natural colors.

- (89)    bié        shuō        jiǎ        huà  
           don't        say        false        speech

Don't make false statements.

Some adjectives can appear either in a relative clause (that is, with the nominalizer *de*) or as a simple attributive adjective (that is, without the *de*), as shown in (90)–(94):

(90) *a.*    hóng        de        huā  
              red        NOM    flower

a flower that is red

*b.*    hóng        huā  
              red        flower

a red flower

(91) *a.*        yìng        de        xiàngpí  
                  hard        NOM    rubber

rubber that is hard

*b.*    yìng        xiàngpí  
              hard        rubber

hard rubber

(92) *a.*        yuán        de        zhuōzi  
                  round        NOM    table

a table that is round

*b.*    yuán        zhuōzi  
              round        table

a round table

(93) *a.*        jiù                de        shǒushi  
                  old (used)        NOM    jewelry

jewelry that is secondhand



b. jiù shǒushi  
old (used) jewelry

used jewelry

(94) a. xiǎo de júzi  
small NOM orange

an orange that is small

b. xiǎo júzi  
small orange

a small orange

In general, adjectives that modify a noun without the particle *de* tend to be more closely knit with the noun. The consequence is that the adjective-plus-noun phrase tends to acquire the feature of being a *name* for a category of entities. The relative clause usage of adjectives, on the other hand, always has the function of further clarifying or delineating the reference of the head noun.

What determines when a name is called for, of course, concerns our perception and categorization of entities in the world. If a type of entity is likely to be perceived as an integral and relevant category by speakers of Mandarin, then they are more disposed toward giving a name to that category of entities. As a general rule, the more people are disposed toward naming a category of entities, the more they are likely to refer to that category of objects by using the formula *adjective + noun*, where the adjective specifies the type of entity referred to by the noun. For example, it is perfectly natural to perceive red flowers as a category and quite reasonable to name a group of flowers according to their color; hence, we have *hóng huā* 'red flower' where *de* is absent. On the other hand, it is less likely that we should perceive "comfortable chairs" as a relevant category of items in our world, and therefore we are not likely to name such a group of entities. Thus, *\*shūfu yǐzi* 'comfortable chair' is not acceptable, and the use of *de* after *shūfu* 'comfortable' is obligatory.

For some examples, the naming effect of an adjective-plus-noun phrase is more obvious. Consider (95):

(95) a. hútú de jiàoshòu  
muddleheaded NOM professor

a professor who is muddleheaded

b.        hútú        jiàoshòu  
           muddleheaded    professor

{ a muddleheaded professor }  
 { Professor Muddleheaded }

In (95) *b*, one of the possible interpretations, 'Professor Muddleheaded', is a name for a certain professor who is widely known for being muddleheaded. One can imagine such a usage in a cartoon or a humorous story. There are, of course, many phrases composed of adjective plus noun which have become idiomatized as names, such as, for example,

(96) *a.*    huáng    —    dòu  
           yellow    —    bean

soybean

*b.*    xiǎo    —    māoxióng  
           small    —    panda

lesser panda

*c.*    xiāng    —    yān  
           fragrant    —    smoke

cigarette

*d.*    gān    —    liáng  
           dry    —    food

precooked staple food

*e.*    lěng    —    zhàn  
           cold    —    war

cold war

Whereas some adjectives can modify a noun either with or without the particle *de*, a large number of adjectives can modify a noun only with the nominalizing particle *de*. First, all reduplicated adjectives, which acquire a more vivid

descriptive force as a result of the reduplication (see section 3.1.1 of chapter 3), must occur with *de*. For example:

(97) a. hóng — hong de huā  
red — red NOM flower

a red flower

b. \*hóng — hong huā  
red — red flower

(98) a. gān-gan-jìng-jìng de xiézi  
clean NOM shoe

clean shoes\*

b. \*gān-gan-jìng-jìng xiézi  
clean shoe

Aside from reduplicated adjectives, there are many regular adjectives that cannot modify noun without *de*. Sentences (99)–(104) are examples:

(99) a. shūfu de yǐzi  
comfortable NOM chair

a comfortable chair

b. \*shūfu yǐzi  
comfortable chair

(100) a. piàoliang de nǚ — háizi  
beautiful NOM female — child

a beautiful girl

b. \*piàoliang nǚ — háizi  
beautiful female — child

\*Cf. *gānjìng* 'clean'.

(101) a. *róngyì de wèntí*  
 easy NOM problem

an easy problem

b. \**róngyì wèntí*  
 easy problem

(102) a. *pàng de rén*  
 fat NOM person

fat people

b. \**pàng rén*  
 fat person

(103) a. *gāo de nán - háizi*  
 tall! NOM male - child

a tall boy

b. \**gāo nán - háizi*  
 tall male - child

(104) a. *fùzá de xiànxàng*  
 complex NOM phenomenon

a complex phenomenon

b. \**fùzá xiànxàng*  
 complex phenomenon

In addition to whether the adjective-plus-noun combination forms a useful name, another factor that plays a role in determining whether an adjective may modify a noun without the particle *de* concerns literary style. If the head noun is more literary and has a closer affinity to written Classical Chinese, then a modifying adjective is more likely to be able to occur without the nominalization particle *de*. For example, consider the adjective *zhòngyào* 'important'. Sentence (105) *b* shows that it cannot occur without *de* when it modifies the noun *rén* 'person'; but

(105) *c* shows that it can occur without *de* when it modifies the noun *rénwù* 'personage', which is a literary term that has its origin in Classical Chinese writings:

(105) *a.* zhòngyào      de      rén  
           important    NOM    person

an important person

*b.* \*zhòngyào      rén  
       important      person

*c.* zhòngyào      rénwù  
       important      personage

an important person

As another example, consider the adjective *gāo* 'tall'. In (103) we showed that *gāo* must take *de* when it modifies *nán-háizi* 'male-child = boy'. We can generalize this claim by stating that *gāo* must occur with *de* when it modifies most animate nouns: *boy, girl, man, woman, people*, and so forth. In (106), though, we see that *gāo* occurs without *de*, and the head noun it modifies is *hàn* 'adult male'. The reason is that *hàn* is a literary term from Classical Chinese:

(106) gāo              hàn  
       tall             adult:male

a tall male

The reason behind the absence of *de* when an adjective modifies a literary noun phrase from Classical Chinese is that in Classical Chinese adjectives never occur with *de* when they modify noun phrases. Thus (106) and (105) *c* represent Classical Chinese grammar operating in modern Mandarin.

In summary, there is no rule that can predict when an adjective modifying a noun may occur without the nominalization particle *de*. There are two factors that may serve as useful guidelines, but they are by no means rules that can be rigidly applied.

#### 4.2.4 The Order of Elements in a Noun Phrase

It was stated at the beginning of the section on noun phrases that all the elements in a noun phrase except the noun are optional. If more than one of these elements appears, however, their order is fixed according to one of the following schemas:

- (107) *a.* associative phrase + classifier/measure phrase + relative clause + adjective + noun  
*b.* associative phrase + relative clause + classifier/measure phrase + adjective + noun<sup>12</sup>

Here are some examples illustrating these patterns:

- (108) *a.*  $\frac{w\ddot{o} \quad - \quad de}{I \quad - \quad GEN} \quad \frac{n\grave{e}i \quad - \quad ge}{that \quad - \quad CL} \quad \frac{h\ddot{a}o \quad p\acute{e}ngy\ddot{o}u}{good \quad friend}$

that good friend of mine

- b.*  $\frac{n\grave{e}i \quad - \quad ge}{that \quad - \quad CL} \quad \frac{zu\grave{o} \quad m\check{a}im\check{a}i \quad de}{do \quad business \quad NOM} \quad r\acute{e}n$  person

that person who is in business

- c.*  $\frac{zu\grave{o} \quad m\check{a}im\check{a}i \quad de}{do \quad business \quad NOM} \quad \frac{n\grave{e}i \quad - \quad ge}{that \quad - \quad CL} \quad r\acute{e}n$  person

that person who is in business

- d.*  $\frac{w\ddot{o} \quad - \quad de}{I \quad - \quad GEN} \quad \frac{n\grave{e}i \quad - \quad ge}{that \quad - \quad CL}$

$\frac{zh\grave{u} \quad z\check{a}i \quad M\check{e}igu\acute{o} \quad de}{live \quad at \quad America \quad NOM} \quad \frac{h\ddot{a}o \quad p\acute{e}ngy\ddot{o}u}{good \quad friend}$

that good friend of mine who lives in the United States

- e.*  $\frac{n\check{i}men \quad x\acute{u}x\grave{u}xi\grave{a}o \quad - \quad de}{you:PL \quad school \quad - \quad ASSOC} \quad \frac{n\grave{e}i \quad - \quad w\grave{e}i \quad c\acute{o}ng}{that \quad - \quad CL \quad from}$

$\frac{Zh\ddot{o}nggu\acute{o} \quad l\check{a}i \quad de}{China \quad come \quad NOM} \quad k\check{e}x\acute{u}eji\check{a}$  scientist

that scientist at your school who came from China

f.	wǒ	—	de	zhù	zāi	Měiguó
	I	—	GEN	live	at	America
			de	nèi	—	ge
			NOM	that	—	CL
						péngyou
						friend

that friend of mine who lives in the United States.

g.	nimen	xuéxiào	—	de	cóng	Zhōngguó
	you:PL	school	—	ASSOC	from	China
		lái	de	nèi	—	wèi
		come	NOM	that	—	CL
						kēxuéjiā
						scientist

that scientist at your school who came from China

As a rule, such long and complex noun phrases as those shown in (108) *d–g* are not commonly used.

Examples such as those in (80) *b* and *g* might appear to be counterexamples to the ordering schemas shown in (107); these two examples were:

(80) <i>b.</i>	nèi	—	ge	fàndiàn	—	de	cài
	that	—	CL	restaurant	—	ASSOC	food

the food of that restaurant

g.	nèi	—	ge	zì	—	de	yìsi
	that	—	CL	word	—	ASSOC	meaning

the meaning of that word

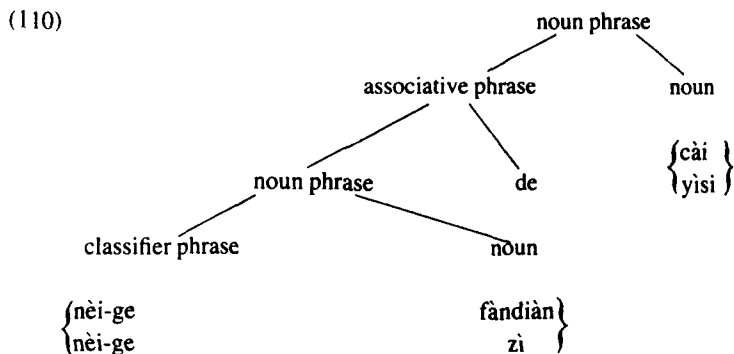
The order of elements in (80) *b* and *g* is:

(109) classifier phrase + associative phrase + noun

whereas, according to the schemas in (107), an associative phrase must always precede a classifier phrase.

The reason that the phrases in (80) *b* and *g* do not actually violate the schemas in (107) is that the latter describe the order of elements in a noun phrase when each of these elements is understood to be directly related to the head noun, the noun

farthest to the right. The classifier phrases in (80) *b* and *g*, however, go with the nouns next to them and not with the head nouns. In other words, *nèi-ge* 'that' in (80) *b* goes with *fāndiàn* 'restaurant', not with *cài* 'food', and in (80) *g* it goes with *zì* 'word', not with *yìsì* 'meaning'. These relationships can be represented in the form of a diagram:



#### 4.2.5 Definiteness and Referentiality

The notions “definite noun phrase” and “indefinite noun phrase” were briefly introduced in chapter 2.<sup>13</sup> In order to understand how these notions are manifested in Mandarin grammar, we must first examine the notion of reference. Noun phrases may be either referential or nonreferential. A noun phrase is referential when it is used to refer to an entity. This entity may be physical or conceptual, real or hypothetical, singular or plural. The underlined noun phrases in the following sentences are all referential because they are being used to refer to, or name, some entity:

- (111) Zhāngsān shì wǒ — de péngyǒu  
 Zhangsan be I — GEN friend

Zhangsan is my friend.

- (112) mén — kǒu zuò — zhe yī —  
 door — mouth sit — DUR one —  
 ge nǚ — háizi  
 CL female — child

In the doorway was sitting a girl.



- (113) zhèi - tiáo xiāngjiāo wǒ chī - bu - xià  
 this - CL banana I eat - can't - descend

This banana I can't eat.

- (114) māma bu xǐhuān nǐ - de nán - péngyǒu  
 mother not like you - GEN male - friend

Mother doesn't like your boyfriend.

- (115) tā yǒu yī - ge fāngfǎ zhuàn - qián  
 3sg exist one - CL method earn - money

S/He has an idea for making money.

- (116) qǐng nǐ bǎ zhèi - xiē píngzi fàng  
 please you BA this - PL bottle put  
 zai lóushàng  
 at upstairs

Please put these bottles upstairs.

- (117) na bèi gèi tā gài - shàng  
 take blanket to 3sg cover - ascend  
 a

Cover him/her with the blanket.

Noun phrases may also be used *nonreferentially*. For example, in sentence (118),

- (118) Xīnměi shì gōngchéngshī  
 Xinmei be engineer

Xinmei is an engineer.

the noun phrase *gōngchéngshī* 'engineer' is not being used to refer to any particular person. Instead it denotes a quality in terms of which the referential noun phrase *Xīnměi* can be described.

Similarly, the object component of a verb-object compound (see section 3.2.5, chapter 3) is generally nonreferential, as in (119):

(119) wǒ      bu      huì      chàng      –      gē  
           I      not      know:how      sing      –      song

I don't know how to sing.

Here the noun gē 'song' is being used, not to refer to any particular song, but rather to name the kind of thing that one sings. In sentence (115) just above, qián 'money' is also nonreferential; no particular money is being referred to.

There are other examples of nonreferential noun phrases. For instance, the first noun in a noun-noun compound typically is nonreferential because it functions to provide a description of the second noun in the compound rather than to refer to some particular entity, as in these examples:

(120)	<u>yángmáo</u> -kùzi	'wool-pants'
	<u>yǔ-yī</u>	'rain-coat'
	<u>fēng</u> -chē	'wind-vehicle = windmill'
	<u>fēijī</u> -lúnzi	'airplane-wheel'
	<u>húli</u> -pí	'fox-pelt'

Objects of verbs are often used nonreferentially, as illustrated by the underlined nouns (121):

(121) a.      nèi      –      ge      shāngrén      mài      shuǐguǒ  
           that      –      CL      merchant      sell      fruit

That merchant sells fruit.

b.      tāmen      tōu      zìxíngchē  
           they      steal      bicycle

They steal bicycles.

c.      wǒmen      zhòng      huāshēng  
           we      grow      peanut

We grow peanuts.

Similarly, noun phrases within the scope of the negative particle (see chapter 12 for a discussion of the scope of negation) may be used nonreferentially:

(122) a. wō méi jiàn — guo qíngyú  
I not see — EXP whale

I have never seen a whale.

b. tā bu xǐhuan yāzi  
3sg not like duck

S/He does not like ducks.

c. wǒ méi yǒu qiānbǐ  
I not exist pencil

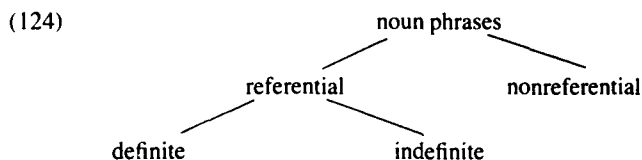
I don't have a pencil.

Finally, a noun phrase with no classifier phrase occurring either in topic position or after *bǎ* or *bèi* (see chapters 15 and 16) may also be used nonreferentially if it denotes a class of entities rather than any specific member(s) in that class. When they occur in these positions, nonreferential noun phrases denoting a class of entities are sometimes called *generic*. Here is an example of a generic noun phrase in topic position:

(123) māo xǐhuān hē niú — nǎi  
cat like drink cow — milk

Cats like to drink milk.

Only noun phrases that are referential can be definite or indefinite. In other words, the question of definiteness does not arise for nonreferential noun phrases. This situation can be represented as in (124):



Definite and indefinite noun phrases, then, are both referential. They differ in that a definite noun phrase refers to an entity that the speaker believes is known to the hearer, while an indefinite noun phrase refers to an entity about which the speaker believes the hearer does not already know.

How are these distinctions marked in Mandarin grammar? First, as examples (121)–(123) show, nonreferential noun phrases never take classifier phrases. This fact alone cannot serve to identify nonreferential noun phrases, since sometimes a referential noun phrase also occurs with no classifier phrase (such as *bèi* ‘blanket’ in example [117] above). It does mean, however, that if a noun phrase *has* a classifier phrase, it must be a referential noun phrase. If that classifier phrase includes a demonstrative, then the noun phrase is necessarily definite, since the demonstrative serves to point out known entities. Thus, noun phrases such as the following are always definite:

(125) a. zhèi     –     ge     rén  
          this     –     CL    person

this person

b. nèi     –     xiē    yǐzi  
      that    –     PL    chair

those chairs

c. zhèi     –     duō    huā  
      this     –     CL    flower

this flower

d. nèi     –     zhāng   zhǐ  
      that    –     CL    paper

that sheet of paper

If, on the other hand, a classifier phrase includes a numeral but no demonstrative, then it is necessarily indefinite:

(126) a. yī     –     kē     shù  
          one    –     CL    tree

a tree



to function as 'the' if it is not stressed, and the numeral *yí* 'one', if it is not stressed, is beginning to function as 'a'. For example:

(129) a.    nǐ    rènshi    bu    rènshi    nèi    -    ge    rén ?  
                  you    know    not    know    that    -    CL    person

Do you know { the } person?  
    { that }

b.    tā    mǎi    -    le    yí    -    ge    màozi  
          3sg    buy    -    PFV    one    -    CL    hat

S/He bought { a } hat.  
    { one }

#### 4.2.6 Pronouns

In Mandarin, pronouns constitute a special class of noun phrase in two respects. First, a Mandarin pronoun always refers to an entity whose identity is already established at the time the pronoun is used. In narrative, for instance, the third person pronoun, *tā* 'she/he/it', refers to an entity whose identity is already established by a regular noun phrase that has occurred earlier. In this case, the third person pronoun and the regular noun phrase are said to be *coreferential*—they refer to the same entity in the world—and the noun phrase always precedes the coreferential pronoun, as in this example:

(130)    qù    -    nián    lái    -    le    yí    -    ge    Fǎguó  
                  last    -    year    come    -    PFV    one    -    CL    France

rén ,    tā    huì  
          person    3sg    know:how

xiě    Zhōngguó    zì  
          write    China    character

Last year a French person came. S/He can write Chinese.

In (130), *tā*, the third person pronoun of the second sentence, is coreferential with *yí-ge Fǎguó rén* 'a French person' of the first sentence. In chapter 24, the role of

pronouns in discourse is discussed in detail. What is to be noted here is the inherent referential property of pronouns, which sets them apart from other noun phrases.

The second respect in which Mandarin pronouns constitute a special class of noun phrases is the fact that pronouns do not allow any modifier, whether the modifier is a classifier/measure phrase, an associative phrase, or a modifying phrase. For example, the *b* constructions in (131)–(134) are all ungrammatical:

(i) Classifier/measure phrase:

(131) *a.* yī        –        gè        rén  
          one        –        CL      person

one person

*b.* \*yī        –        gè        tā        ?  
          one        –        CL      3sg

(ii) Associative phrase:

(132) *a.* xuéshù    –        jiè        –        de        rén  
          scholarship –        world –        ASSOC person

people in academia

*b.* \*xuéshù    –        jiè        –        de        tā  
          scholarship –        world –        ASSOC 3sg

(iii) Modifying phrase:

(133) *a.* huài        rén  
          bad      person

*b.* \*huài        tā  
          bad      3sg

(134) *a.* chūmíng    de        rén  
          famous    NOM    person

a famous person

*b.* \*chūmíng    de        tā        ?  
          famous    NOM    3sg

When one is appraising or evaluating oneself, however, it is possible to modify the first person pronoun:

- (135) kēlián de wǒ  
 pitiful NOM I  
 Poor me!

Since Mandarin does not have inflection, conjugation, or case markers, the pronominal system is relatively simple:

- |       |       |                     |
|-------|-------|---------------------|
| (136) | wǒ    | 'I/me'              |
|       | nǐ    | 'you (sg)'          |
|       | tā    | 'he/she/it/him/her' |
|       | wǒmen | 'we/us'             |
|       | nǐmen | 'you (plural)'      |
|       | tāmen | 'they/them'         |

The Mandarin pronouns refer primarily to persons. The third person pronouns are rarely used to refer to animals and even more rarely to refer to inanimate entities, though such uses do occur because of the influence of English. In general, a third person pronoun is used to refer to an inanimate entity only when the absence of a pronoun or other noun phrase would render the construction ungrammatical. For example, as an answer to the question in (137) *a*, only *b*, without the pronoun, is appropriate; *c*, with the pronoun, is not. Here the context allows the absence of the pronoun without impairing the grammaticality of the sentence in *b*:

- (137) *a.* nǐ xǐhuān nèi — běn shū ma?  
 you like that — CL book Q

Do you like that book?

- b.* wǒ xǐhuān  
 I like

I like it.

- c.* ??wǒ xǐhuān tā  
 I like it



On the other hand, consider (138), in which the pronoun occurs in an associative phrase (see section 4.2.2 of this chapter). For the associative phrase to be grammatical, it must contain a pronoun or a noun phrase preceding the associative particle, *-de*. The third person singular pronoun, *tā*, here refers to the inanimate noun phrase *Hélán* ‘Holland’ in the preceding sentence.

- (138) Hélán    dìfāng    fēicháng    xiǎo    wǒmen    zhīdao    tā    –  
 Holland    place    unusually    small    we    know    3sg    –  
                   de    jīngjì    wèntí    bu    jiǎndān  
                   ASSOC economy problem    not    simple

Holland is a small country. We know its economic problems are not simple.

Similarly, the *bǎ* construction requires a noun phrase after *bǎ*; the third person singular pronoun in (139) refers to the inanimate noun *huà* ‘painting’:

- (139) guà    huà    –    de    dīngzi    diào    le ,    wǒ  
 hang    painting    –    ASSOC    nail    fall    CRS    I  
                   děi    bǎ    tā    guà    –    hǎo  
                   must    BA    3sg    hang    –    good

The nail for hanging the painting has fallen out; I have to hang it right.

As a general rule, the third person pronoun, *tā*, serving as a topic or as a topic that also functions as a subject does not refer to an inanimate entity. Thus, in (140) *tā* preferably refers to a person; it may refer to an animal, but it cannot refer to an inanimate object, such as, say, a painting:

- (140) tā    hěn    hǎo    –    kàn  
 3sg    very    good    –    look

S/He is very good-looking.

In the older Beijing dialect, the second person singular pronoun, *nǐ*, has a polite form, *nín*. It may be used between people who are not well acquainted. Its usage, however, is not widespread, even in present-day Beijing.

The question words *shéi* 'who', *shénme* 'what', and *nǎr/nǎli* 'where' are often called *interrogative pronouns* because they "stand for" an unknown noun phrase in a question. For example:

- (141) a. shéi      zài      xǐzǎo ?  
          who      DUR      bathe

Who is bathing?

- b.     nǐ      mài      shénme ?  
      you      sell      what

What do you sell?

- c.     Zhāngsān      zhù      zài      nǎr ?  
      Zhangsan      live      at      where

Where does Zhangsan live?

The questions illustrated in (141) are called *question-word questions*; they are discussed in more detail in chapter 18 on questions.

Finally, we should mention that the possessive pronouns in Mandarin are composed simply of the pronouns and the genitive particle, *-de*. In other words, possessive pronouns do not have special independent forms. For example,

- (142) a.     wǒ      -      de      pídài  
          I      -      GEN      belt

my belt

- b.     tāmen      -      de      shǒubiǎo  
      they      -      GEN      watch

their watch

- c.     nǐ      -      de      kùzi  
      you      -      GEN      pants

your pants

## 4.2.7 Reflexives

The Mandarin reflexive morpheme, roughly meaning 'self', is *zìjǐ*. It can be used in two ways. First, it can function as a reflexive pronoun, in which case it occurs in the verb phrase in any position where a noun phrase could occur and may optionally be preceded by a pronoun that is coreferential with the subject of the sentence:

(i) Direct object:

(143)	Lǐsì	zài	zébèi	(tā)	<u>zìjǐ</u>
	Lisi	DUR	blame	(3sg)	self

Lisi is blaming himself.

(ii) Indirect object:

(144)	tā	gěi	(tā)	<u>zìjǐ</u>	xiě	–	le	yi
	3sg	to	(3sg)	self	write	–	PFV	one
		–	fēng	xìn				
		–	CL	letter				

S/He wrote himself/herself a letter.

(iii) Coverb object:

(145)	wǒ	gēn	(wǒ)	<u>zìjǐ</u>	shēngqì
	I	with	(I)	self	angry

I'm angry with myself.

(iv) Possessor in a possessive phrase:

(146)	wǒ	chuān	(wǒ)	<u>zìjǐ</u>	–	de	yīfu
	I	wear	(I)	self	–	GEN	clothing

I wear my own clothing.

In sentences like (143)–(146), the (pronoun-plus)-*zìjǐ* sequence functions solely as a reflexive pronoun: that is, it simply signals that its referent is coreferential with that of the subject in the same clause.

The second way in which *zìjǐ* can be used is in an adverblike capacity. In this function it occurs before the verb phrase and serves to contrast oneself with others. Here are two examples:

- (147) wǒ      buzhībujéde      zìjǐ      yě      zuò      yùndòng      le  
I      unconsciously      self      also      do      exercise      CRS

I am unconsciously also doing exercises myself (i.e., others were doing it before, and now I too am doing it).

- (148) Zhāngsān      zìjǐ      shāo      cài  
Zhangsan      self      cook      food

Zhangsan cooks food himself (as opposed to anyone else cooking for him).

In this usage, the subject may be missing if it is understood from the context or from previous mention. For instance, in the following examples, the subject noun phrase can be optionally absent:

- (149) tā      zǒng      juéde      (tā)      zìjǐ      tài      shīyì  
3sg      always      feel      (3sg)      self      too      dissatisfied

S/He always felt that s/he himself/herself was too dissatisfied (as opposed to the others, who were content).

- (150) (nǐ)      zìjǐ      zuò      gōngkè  
(you)      self      do      homework

You do the homework yourself (as opposed to anyone doing it for you).

- (151) tā      zhīdao      (tā)      zìjǐ      zuò      cuò      shì      le  
3sg      know      (3sg)      self      do      wrong      affair      CRS

S/He knew that s/he had done something wrong.

In complex sentences with more than one verb phrase, *zìjǐ* can occur either before the first verb phrase or before the second one. The contrast between self and others which *zìjǐ* expresses is always understood with respect to the verb immedi-

ately following *ziji*. Thus, the following sentences convey quite different messages:

(152) wō      zìjǐ      yào      qù  
           I        self      want      go

I myself want to go (i.e., no one else is making me go; it is I who want to go).

(153) wǒ      yào      zìjǐ      qù  
           I        want      self      go

I want to go by myself (i.e., I want myself to be the one to go; no one else should go).

Finally, *ziji* can be used to express a general truth in the form of a proverb. In such cases it means something like 'one' and generally occurs with another *ziji* later in the sentence, with which it is coreferential. The general message is 'If one does X, then that same one can also do Y'. Here is an example:

(154) zìjǐ      zhuàn      qián      zìjǐ      huā  
           self      earn      money      self      spend

If one earns money, then one can spend it.

*Ziji*, then, can function either as a reflexive pronoun in a verb phrase to signal coreferentiality with the subject noun phrase of the sentence, or as an adverb to signal a contrast between the 'self' in question and others who could be involved. When *ziji* functions as an adverb, it always occurs after the subject and before the verb phrase.

#### 4.3 The Verb Phrase

The *verb phrase* of a sentence in any language is that part of the simple sentence of which the nucleus is the verb. Verbs describe events, actions, states, processes (change of states), and experiences, and verbs presuppose the presence of noun phrases that refer to the participants in those events. The type and number of participants for each verb are determined to a large extent by the meaning of that verb. In addition, there are a number of grammatical elements denoting certain

semantic concepts which tend to appear with the verb in most languages: these are tense, aspect, modals, and negation (Mandarin has aspect but not tense, and Mandarin modals are auxiliary verbs; see chapters 6, 12, and 5 on aspect, negation, and auxiliary verbs, respectively). Aside from the verb, which is the nucleus, a verb phrase includes those grammatical elements that occur with the verb as well as most of the noun phrases that refer to the participants in the event denoted by the verb. What is excluded from the verb phrase is the subject and/or the topic. In the following examples the verb phrases are underlined:

(155) wō      shì      tā      bàba  
I        be      3sg    father

I am his/her father.

(156) děng      yíxià  
wait      a:bit

Wait a minute.

(157) tā      kàn      –      le      sān      –      běn      shū  
3sg    read    –      PFV    three   –      CL    book

S/He read three books.

(158) Zhāngsān      huì      shuō      Zhōngguó      huà  
Zhangsan      can      speak      China      speech

Zhangsan can speak Chinese.

(159) wǒ      bu      yào      miànbāo  
I        not    want    bread

I don't want bread.

(160) zhèi      –      kē      shù      yèzi      hěn      hǎo      –      kàn  
this      –      CL    tree    leaves    very    good    –      look

This tree (topic), its leaves are very pretty.

A common term referring to the function of a verb phrase is *predicate*. A predicate, however, is not necessarily a verb phrase. For instance, it can be a noun

phrase that has the same function as a verb phrase has. The noun phrase *wōmen-de lǎoshī* 'our teacher' in (161) is an example of such a predicate:

- (161) Zhāngsān wōmen – de lǎoshī  
 Zhāngsān we – GEN teacher

Zhangsan (is) our teacher.

Thus, the word *predicate* is a functional term in opposition with the functional term *subject*.

In the following presentation we will discuss the different types of verb phrases.

#### 4.3.1 Types of Verb Phrases

Verb phrases are classified according to whether they have no object, one object, or two objects. According to this classification, the types of verb phrases found in Mandarin are by and large the same as those found in other languages:

- A. Intransitive (no object)
  - 1. Adjectival
  - 2. Copula
  - 3. Others
- B. Transitive (one direct object)
- C. Ditransitive (one direct object and one indirect object)

##### A. Intransitive Verb Phrases

An *intransitive verb phrase* has an intransitive verb as its nucleus. Thus, an intransitive verb phrase may be classified according to whether its nucleus is (1) an adjectival verb, (2) the copula, or (3) neither of these.

##### A.1. Adjectival Verbs

*Adjectives* denote qualities or properties that we ascribe to entities.<sup>14</sup> They may be divided into two semantic groups: scalar and absolute. *Scalar adjectives* describe relative qualities, which may be attributed to an entity to a greater or lesser extent, such as *gāo* 'tall', *pàng* 'fat', *ānjìng* 'peaceful and quiet', *měilì* 'beautiful'. *Absolute adjectives*, on the other hand, denote a property that cannot be calibrated in degrees: an entity either has or does not have the property. Some examples of absolute adjectives are *cuò* 'wrong', *kōng* 'empty', *guǎn-rè* 'boiling

X

hot', *cāngbái* 'pale white', *yuán* 'round', *bīng-liáng* 'ice-cold'. The most important structural difference between the scalar adjectives and the absolute adjectives is that only the former, not the latter, can appear in the comparative construction (see chapter 19 on the comparative construction), as in:

- (162) a. Zhāngsān    bǐ    tā    pàng  
 Zhangsan    COMP    3sg    fat

Zhangsan is fatter than s/he is.

- b. zhèr    bǐ    nàr    ānjìng  
 here    COMP    there    quiet

Here is more quiet than there.

- c. \*zhèi    –    ge    píngzi    bǐ    nèi    –    ge  
 this    –    CL    bottle    compare    that    –    CL

píngzi    kōng  
 bottle    empty

- d. \*Zhāngsān    bǐ    Lìsì    cuò  
 Zhangsan    compare    Lisi    wrong

As the term *adjectival verb* suggests, the vast majority of adjectives may function as verbs in Mandarin. That is, they may be the nucleus of a verb phrase, as in (163) and (164), where they are followed by a sentence-final particle:

- (163) Zhāngsān    pàng    le  
 Zhangsan    fat    CRS

Zhangsan has gotten fat.

- (164) jiǔ    –    píng    kōng    le  
 wine    –    bottle    empty    CRS

The wine bottle has become empty.



They can also be negated by the negative particles *bu* or *méi(yǒu)*, just as verbs can be:

- (165) Zhāngsān    bu    pàng  
 Zhangsan    not    fat

Zhangsan is not fat.

- (166) jiǔ    –    píng    méi    kōng  
 wine    –    bottle    not    empty

The wine bottle has not become empty.

The scalar adjectives can occur as the sole element of a verb phrase:

- (167)    tā    pàng  
          3sg    fat

S/He is fat.

More often than not, however, a scalar adjective occurring as the sole element of a verb phrase will take on the adverbial modifier *hěn* 'very', as in (168):

- (168) a.    tā    hěn    pàng  
          s/he    very    fat

{ S/He is very fat. }  
 { S/He is fat. }

- b.    nèi    –    ge    guójiā    hěn    mínzhǔ  
       that    –    CL    country    very    democratic

{ That country is very democratic. }  
 { That country is democratic. }

There are two points concerning the usage of *hěn* 'very' that are worth noting. First, if *hěn* is not heavily stressed, its meaning 'very' may be bleached. Thus (168) *a* and *b* are ambiguous. One of the interpretations involves *hěn* with its full-fledged meaning of 'very', while the other involves a semantically bleached *hěn*,

which adds no intensive meaning to the sentence. A second point about *hěn* is that it may occur with certain absolute (nonscalar) adjectives also. Thus, although *bīng-liáng* 'ice-cold' and *jiǎ* 'fake' are absolute adjectives that do not occur with *hěn*, the absolute adjectives *duì* 'correct' and *yuán* 'round' can occur with *hěn*:

- (169) a. \*zhèi — bēi shuǐ hěn bīng — liáng  
 this — cup water very ice — cold
- b. \*zhèi — jù huà hěn jiǎ  
 this — CL utterance very fake
- c. nèi — ge pánzi hěn yuán  
 that — CL bowl very round

That bowl is very round.

- d. tā shuō de hěn duì  
 3sg speak NOM very correct

What s/he says is quite correct.

For the most part, those adjectives that can occur as the sole element of a verb phrase are scalar adjectives; most absolute adjectives do not occur as the sole element of a verb phrase, though there are some exceptions. For example:

- (170) a. zhèi hú shuǐ guǎn — rè  
 this kettle water boiling — hot

This kettle of water is boiling hot.

- b. jīntiān tiān — sè cāng — bái  
 today sky — color pale — white

Today, the sky is pale white.

- c. nèi wǎn fàn bīng — liáng  
 that bowl rice ice — cold

That bowl of rice is ice-cold.

- d.    nǐ        duì  
       you     correct

You are right.

Those absolute adjectives that cannot occur as the sole element of a verb phrase may be nominalized with the particle *de* to occur in the verb phrase of a copula sentence:

- (171) a.    nèi        –        fēng    xìn    shì    jiǎ    de  
           that       –        CL     letter   be    fake    NOM

That letter is fake.

- b.    \*nèi        –        fēng    xìn    jiǎ  
       that       –        CL     letter   fake

In general, the absolute adjectives that cannot occur as the sole element of a verb phrase may also not occur with the sentence-final *le* or with the negative particle:

- (172) a.    \*nèi        –        fēng    xìn    jiǎ    le  
           that       –        CL     letter   fake    CRS
- b.    \*nèi        –        fēng    xìn    bu    jiǎ  
           that       –        CL     letter   not    fake

Here are examples of three other adjectives that behave identically: they cannot occur as the sole element in a verb phrase or with a sentence-final particle *le* or a negative particle, but must be nominalized if they are to serve as predicates:

- (173) a.    zhèi        –        tiáo    kùzi    shì    xiàchéng    de  
           this       –        CL     pants   be    ready:made   NOM

This pair of pants is ready-made.

- b.    \*zhèi        –        tiáo    kùzi    xiàchéng  
       this       –        CL     pants   ready:made
- c.    \*zhèi        –        tiáo    kùzi    xiàchéng    le  
       that       –        CL     pants   ready:made   CRS

- d. \*zhèi – tiáo kùzi bu xiàchéng  
 this – CL pants not ready:made
- (174) a. nèi – ge dàxué shì guó –  
 that – CL university be nation –  
 li de  
 establish NOM

*That university is a national university.*

- b. \*nèi – ge dàxué guó – li  
 that – CL university nation – establish
- c. \*nèi – ge dàxué guó – li le  
 that – CL university nation – establish CRS
- d. \*nèi – ge dàxué bu guó – li  
 that – CL university not nation – establish
- (175) a. zhèi – zhōng shāngpǐn shì shàngděng de  
 this – type merchandise be high:quality NOM

*This type of merchandise is high quality.*

- b. \*zhèi – zhōng shāngpǐn shàngděng  
 this – type merchandise high:quality
- c. \*zhèi – zhōng shāngpǐn shàngděng le  
 this – type merchandise high:quality CRS
- d. \*zhèi – zhōng shāngpǐn bu shàngděng  
 this – type merchandise not high:quality

Certain adjectival verbs can take a clause or a verb phrase as their subject. In the examples in (176), the clause or verb phrase serving as a subject is underlined:

- (176) a. nǐ bu qù hǎo  
 you not go good

*It's fine for you not to go.*

- b. zhèi — ge biǎo huài le zhēn kěxī  
 this — CL watch broken CRS real regrettable

It is really regrettable that this watch has broken.

- c. zài nàlǐ mǎi dōngxi hěn máfan  
 at there buy thing very troublesome

It is a lot of trouble to shop there.

If an adjectival verb allows an abstract noun phrase (one that refers to an abstract rather than a concrete entity in the world) to be its subject, it will also take a clause or a verb phrase as its subject. For instance, all of the adjectival verbs in (176) can also take abstract noun phrases as their subjects:

- (177) a. nǐ — de zhùyì hěn hǎo  
 you — GEN idea very good

Your idea is very good.

- b. zhèi — jiàn shì hěn kěxī  
 this — CL matter very regrettable

This matter is very regrettable.

- c. nèi — ge shōuxù hěn máfan  
 that — CL procedure very troublesome

That procedure is very troublesome.

Since sentences of the type illustrated in (176) involve more than one verb, they are presented and discussed in more detail in chapter 21 on serial verb constructions.

## A.2 Copula

The copula verb in Mandarin is *shì* 'be'.<sup>15</sup> It has several characteristics that make it distinct from other verbs.



The auxiliary verbs that can occur with the copula are: *yīnggāi/yīngdāng/gāi* 'should', *děi/bìxū/bìyào/bìděi* 'must'. For example,

- (181) a. Zhāngsān yīnggāi shì yī - ge zhéxuéjiā  
 Zhangsan should be one - CL philosopher

Zhangsan should be a philosopher.

- b. Zhāngsān bìděi shì yī - ge yǔyánxuéjiā  
 Zhangsan must be one - CL linguist

Zhangsan must be a linguist.

There are three types of constructions that employ the copula as their verb: (1) simple copula sentences; (2) special affirmative sentences; and (3) presentative sentences.

#### A.2.1 Simple Copula Sentences

A *simple copula sentence* typically contains a referential subject noun phrase linked to a nonreferential noun phrase by the copula verb. The verb phrase of the sentence is composed of the copula and the nonreferential noun phrase. This nonreferential noun phrase serves to characterize or identify the referent of the subject noun phrase, and the copula verb serves as a link between the two. Thus, the nonreferential noun phrase following the copula is not an object of the copula verb, and the verb phrase of the simple copula sentence is intransitive. Here are some examples:

- (182) tā shì wǒ - de hǎo péngyǒu  
 3sg be I - GEN good friend

S/He is my good friend.

- (183) tā fùqin shì wàijiāo bùzhǎng  
 3sg father be foreign:affair minister

His/Her father is the foreign minister.

- (184) wō zài xīhuān de shì Shànghǎi cài  
 I most like NOM be Shanghai dish

What I like the most is Shanghai food.

An interesting phenomenon characterizes the use of *shì* in simple copula sentences: it can occur in sentences that cannot be understood in their literal sense. These have been called “illogical” copula sentences by some Chinese grammarians.<sup>17</sup> For example:

- (185) wǒ shì chǎo – fān  
 I  $\wedge$  be fry – rice

I am (the one with) the fried rice.

- (186) nǐ bàba jiù (shì) nǐ yī – ge érzi  
 you father just be you one – CL son

Your father is (= has) only you as his son.

- (187) tā shì yī – piàn rè – xīn  
 3sg be one – expanse hot – heart

S/He is (= can be characterized as having) a lot of enthusiasm.

Sentences like (185)–(187) must be used in appropriate contexts, of course; (185) might be used, for example, in a restaurant if one wanted to remind the waiter what one had ordered. The literal meanings of these sentences are clearly not what the sentences are intended to convey—(185), for example, does not mean ‘I am fried rice’. Thus, the Mandarin copula verb allows a very loose linkage or connection between the referential subject noun phrase and the nonreferential noun phrase following the copula. The information in the speech context, then, serves to clarify the precise nature of this linkage. This means that, depending on the context, a sentence like (188) could convey that I voted for Lisi, that I am a member of his group, that he is my favorite of the singers we are discussing, and similar meanings, as well as the literal meaning ‘I am Lisi’.

- (188) wǒ shì Lìsì  
 I  $\wedge$  be Lisi



## A.2.2 The Copula as a Marker of Special Affirmation

The copula *shì* can also be used to mean 'It is true that . . . ' or 'It is that . . . ' with respect to a statement already mentioned in the conversation. For example, consider the following minimal pair:

(189) a.    tā      méi      qián  
              3sg   not:exist   money

S/He doesn't have any money.

b.      tā      shì      méi      qián<sup>18</sup>  
           3sg      be      not:exist   money

It's true that s/he doesn't have any money.

As suggested by our translations, (189) a, without *shì*, is essentially neutral and could be used in volunteering information or in answering a question; (189) b, with *shì*, on the other hand, could be used only to affirm what had been said earlier or what had been suspected or inferred by the speaker and the hearer. In the construction exemplified by (189) b, the *shì* remains a linking verb, as it is in the simple copula sentence. In this case, though, the copula is not linking the subject noun phrase and a nonreferential noun phrase: rather, it is linking the subject noun phrase and a full verb phrase that may include a negative particle, an auxiliary verb, and a manner adverb. If *shì* in (189) b is seen as a linking verb, then (189) b must be regarded as a complex sentence, for it contains more than one verb. Because constructions such as (189) b are essentially copula sentences, however, we choose to present them in this section of the book.

Let us examine some examples of discourse in which sentences with the *shì* signaling special affirmation might occur. Such examples illustrate the important point that sentences with the *shì* signaling special affirmation always affirm a statement in the preceding or following discourse.

(190) A:    wǒ      xiǎng      tā      hěn      qióng ,      suóyǐ      bu  
              I      think      3sg      very      poor      therefore      not  
  
                  kěn      shàng      guǎnzi  
                  willing      ascend      restaurant

I think s/he is poor. That's why s/he is not willing to go to restaurants.

B: duì , tā shì méi qián , kěshi tā  
 right 3sg be not:exist money but 3sg  
 hěn yǒu zhìqì  
 very exist pride

Right, s/he doesn't have any money, but s/he is very proud.

(191) (reluctant child telling on his/her brother in response to mother's suspicion that the brother has not bought any books)

tā shì méi mǎi shū  
 3sg be not buy books

(Well,) it's true that he didn't buy books.

(192) (commenting to a friend who wonders why the child is still up at 11:30 P.M. even though s/he is going on an outing the next day)

tā míngtiān shì dì — yī cì qù lǚxíng  
 3sg tomorrow be ORD — one time go outing

kěshi tā shuì — bu — zhào —  
 but 3sg sleep — can't — succeed —

jiào  
 sleep

It's true that tomorrow s/he's going on an outing for the first time, but s/he can't get to sleep.

(193) (in a restaurant after some confusion as to who can eat what)

wǒ shì bu chī là de , tā shì  
 I be not eat hot NOM 3sg be

shénme dōu kěyǐ chī  
 what all can eat

It's that I can't eat hot food, and s/he can eat anything.

The usage of the copula to signal special affirmation is not confined to linking a subject noun phrase with a full verb phrase that has been mentioned in earlier discourse. The copula can be placed before an entire sentence referring to some information mentioned earlier in the discourse. In such a case, it conveys the message 'It's that . . .'. The following sentences will illustrate:

- (194) (to a friend who is upset because the speaker says s/he can't go out for a snack)

bu	shì	wǒ	bu	yào	lái ,	shì	tā
not	be	I	not	want	come	be	3sg
bu	ràng	wǒ	lái				
not	let	I	come				

It's not that I don't want to come, it's that s/he won't let me come.

- (195) (to someone who questions the noise)

shì	wo	zài	nàr	dǎ	gǔ
be	I	at	there	hit	drum

It's that I've been playing drums over there.

With heavy stress on a word (call it *X*) following the copula *shì* in sentences such as (194) or (195), the sentences then convey the meaning:

- (196) It is X      { that }  
                                  { who }

For example, with heavy stress on *wǒ* 'I' of (195), the sentence has the following meaning:

- (197) It's *I* who's been playing drums over there.

On the other hand, if the heavy stress falls on *gǔ* 'drum', then (195) has the meaning:

- (198) It's *drums* that I've been playing over there.



- (204) míngtiān shì wǒ — de shēngri  
tomorrow be I — GEN birthday

It is my birthday tomorrow.

- (205) dào chù dōu shì yě huā  
everywhere all be wild flower

There are wild flowers everywhere.

- (206) xià — ge yuè shì shìjiè — yùndòng  
next — CL month be world — sport  
— dà — huì  
— big — meeting

It's the Olympics next month.

Presentative sentences are discussed in detail in chapter 17. The contrast between the presentative sentences with the copula, shown in (203)–(206), and their counterparts with the existential verb *yǒu* is discussed in section 17.1 of chapter 17.

### A.3. Other Intransitive Verbs

This category of intransitive verbs includes every intransitive verb that is neither an adjectival verb nor the copula. These intransitive verb phrases may contain a coverb phrase (see chapter 9) or an adverbial phrase (see chapter 8). Here are some examples, with the intransitive verb underlined:

- (207) tā shuì zài shāfa — shang  
3sg sleep at sofa — on

S/He sleeps on the sofa.

- (208) wǒmen měi — tiān qī — diǎnzhōng  
we each — day seven — o'clock  
qǐ — lái  
rise — come

We get up every day at seven o'clock.

- (209) wǒ gēn tā hé - bu - lái  
I with 3sg can't: get:along

I can't get along with him/her.

- (210) Zhāngsān níng - nián , dào zhèlǐ lái  
Zhangsan next - year to here come

Next year Zhangsan will come here.

A large number of these intransitive verbs signify motion: for example, *fēi* 'fly', *pá* 'crawl', *liú* 'float', *pǎo* 'run', *dǎo* 'collapse', *dòng* 'move', *zǒu* 'walk', *zhuǎn* 'revolve', *dǎdǒu* 'shake, tremble', *shàngqù* 'ascend', *xiàqù* 'descend'.

- (211) niǎor zài kōng - zhōng fēi  
bird at sky - middle fly

The birds are flying in the sky.

- (212) Zhāngsān zài dì - shàng pá  
Zhangsan at ground - on crawl

Zhangsan is crawling on the ground.

Other members of this third category of intransitive verb include, for instance, *kū* 'cry', *xiào* 'laugh', *tiàowǔ* 'dance', *zuò* 'sit', *zhù* 'live', *tàng* 'lie down', *xiūxi* 'rest', *kāishǐ* 'begin', *chūxiàn* 'appear', *táo* 'escape', *jiào* 'yell', and *wán* 'finish'. Here are some examples in sentences:

- (213) Zhāngsān zài kū  
Zhangsan DUR cry

Zhangsan is crying.

- (214) diànyǐng kāishǐ le  
movie begin CRS

The movie has begun.



- (220) tā bu huì pīn ní — de míngzi  
 3sg not know:how spell you — GEN name

S/He doesn't know how to spell your name.

In most languages of the world, certain transitive verbs may occur without a direct object. In Mandarin, transitive verb phrases without a direct object are particularly common because of zero anaphora: where in English, for instance, an entity in the world is referred to by a pronoun, in Mandarin such an entity is simply understood without the presence of a pronoun (see chapter 24 on pronouns in discourse). The absence of a direct object in a transitive verb phrase, however, does not change the transitive nature of the verb involved. In such a case, the direct object is implied, as here:

- (221) wǒ chī — le  
 I eat — PFV

I have eaten (it).

- (222) tā mǎi — le  
 3sg buy — PFV

S/He has bought (it).

- (223) wǒ dā — le  
 I hit — PFV

I have hit (him/her).

Certain verbs, which are not to be confused with transitive verbs whose direct objects are implied, may function either as transitive verbs or intransitive verbs.<sup>19</sup> In the following examples, the *a* sentences are intransitive, and each *b* sentence, which contains the same verb as that of the corresponding *a* sentence, is transitive. The direct object of the transitive verb in each *b* sentence is underlined:

- (224) a. bié xiào  
 don't laugh

Don't laugh.



b. bié xiào wó  
don't laugh I

Don't laugh at me.

(225) a. tā hěn tān  
3sg very greedy ↗

S/He's very greedy.

b. tā hěn tān nǐ - de qián-cái  
3sg very greedy you - GEN wealth

S/He's very greedy for your wealth.

(226) a. wǒ hěn dāngxīn  
I very careful

I am very careful.

b. wǒ hěn dāngxīn wǒ - de shēntǐ  
I very careful I - GEN body

I am very careful about my health.

### B.1 Positions for the Direct Object

In all of the above examples, the direct object occurs *immediately after the verb*. Depending on the context, however, it can occur in other positions as well: it can be the topic in sentence-initial position, whether or not the subject is expressed; it can occur with the particle *bǎ* before the verb; and it can also occur before the verb without *bǎ*. Let's look at each of these possibilities.

#### B.1.1 Direct Object as Topic

In our discussion of topic above in section 4.1 of this chapter, we saw several examples of sentences in which the direct object was the topic. For example,

(227) gǒu wǒ bu xǐhuān  
dog I not like

Dogs, I don't like.





their child is watching television instead of studying. In this case the second parent's expectation would be that the child should be studying, and the SOV form is used to contradict this expectation.

Let's look at some more examples. Suppose that someone in a group has just proposed that the group go out to eat; one might counter the expectation created by this proposal and say (237), which means that the group should stay home:

(237) kěshì    Lìsì    fàn    dōu    zhǔ    –    hǎo    le  
          but    Lìsì    / food    all    cook    –    finish    CRS

But Lisi has already cooked food.

Another example of this type: if one is urged to drop a course in school, s/he can say:

(238) kěshì    wǒ    shū    yǐjīng    mǎi    le  
          but    I    / book    already    buy    CRS

But I've already bought the books.

If someone wants Zhangsan to drive some people to a party in his car, you might respond with (239):

(239) Zhāngsān    qìchē    shì    yǒu ,    kěshì    bu  
          Zhangsan    car    be    have    but    not  
                          huì    –    kāi  
                          know:how    –    drive

Zhangsan has a car all right, but he doesn't know how to drive.

Similarly, if someone asks you what type of sweets you would like for dessert, s/he has expressed the expectation that you want *some* kind of sweets. You can counter this expectation by saying:

(240) wǒ    tián    de    dōu    bu    xǐhuān  
          I    sweet    NOM    all    not    like

I don't like sweet things.

Finally, if there is a discussion of why a certain friend hasn't married, and one person thinks it's due to the friend's lack of money, s/he might say:

- (241) tā    fángzi    yě    méi    yǒu ,    chēzi    yě    méi  
          3sg    house    also    not    exist    car    also    not
- yǒu ,    zhíyè    yě    méi    yǒu ,    zěnmē    huì  
          exist    job    also    not    exist    how    likely
- yǒu    rén    yào    jià ?  
          exist    person    want    marry

He doesn't have a house, he doesn't have a car, and he hasn't found any work—how could anyone want to marry him?

These examples illustrate that the SOV form is restricted to those situations that are contrary to expectations. Given this pragmatic function of the SOV form, we can see that certain sentences will seem strange in the SOV form because it is hard to imagine a contrary-to-expectation situation in which such sentences could be used. For example, running into a friend can be reported by using the SOV sentence of (242) *a*, but (242) *b* is odd because it would be hard to imagine circumstances in which one would want to convey the idea that meeting a friend would be unexpected:

- (242) *a.*    wǒ    pèngjian    péngyǒu    le  
          I    run:into    friend    CRS

I ran into a friend.

- b.*    ?wǒ    péngyǒu    pèngjian    LE  
          I    friend    run:into    PFV/CRS

(I ran into a friend.)

In this section we have seen that direct objects, in addition to occurring in "neutral" position after the verb, can occur in three preverbal positions: they can be topics at the beginning of the sentence, they can occur before the verb with *bǎ*, and they can occur before the verb without *bǎ* in sentences that counter expectations already existing in the speech context. Not surprisingly, we see that these

different word orders are not just “different ways of saying the same thing,” but are ways of achieving quite different communicative goals.

### B.2 Transitive Verbs Whose Direct Objects are Clauses or Verb Phrases

Certain transitive verbs allow their direct objects to be clauses or verb phrases. Such sentences are examples of serial verb constructions, since they have more than one verb, and will be discussed at greater length in the chapter on serial verbs (chapter 21). A general rule is that if a transitive verb can take an abstract noun as its direct object, it can also take a sentence or a verb phrase as its direct object. Here are some examples in which the direct object of each *a* sentence refers to an abstract notion and the direct object of each *b* sentence is a clause or verb phrase:

(243) *a.*    wō    zhīdao    nèi    -    jian    shì  
               I    know    that    -    CL    matter

I know that affair.

*b.*    wō    zhīdao    nǐ    shì    tā    gēge  
               I    know    you    be    3sg    older:brother

I know you are his/her older brother.

(244) *a.*    wō    pà    chōuxiàng    de    gàiniàn  
               I    fear    abstract    NOM    concept

I'm afraid of abstract concepts.

*b.*    wǒ    pà    tā    bu    lái  
               I    fear    3sg    not    come

I'm afraid s/he won't come.

(245) *a.*    wǒ    méi    xiǎngdào    zhèi    -    ge    fāngfǎ  
               I    not    realize    this    -    CL    method

I did not think of this method.

*b.*    wǒ    méi    xiǎngdào    nǐ    zhù    zài    Nīuyue  
               I    not    realize    you    live    at    New York

I didn't realize you lived in New York.

## B.3 Verb-Object Compounds

Verb-object compounds are presented in detail in chapter 3. What we want to discuss briefly here is a syntactic property of verb-object compounds which is relevant to the types of transitive predicates we have talked about so far. Certain verb-object compounds are fused lexical units. They no longer retain properties of the syntactic structure *verb + object*, and their meanings are also highly idiomatic: for example, (1) *dānxīn* 'worry'; literally, *dān* means 'to bear', and *xīn* means 'heart'; (2) *dézui* 'offend'; literally, *dé* means 'get', and *zui* means 'offense'; and (3) *zhùyì* 'pay attention'; literally, *zhù* means 'pour', and *yì* means 'intention'. Certain of these fused verb-object compounds function as transitive verbs, as the sentences below illustrate.

- (246) wō hěn dānxīn zhè — jiàn shì  
I very worry this — CL matter

I am very worried about this matter.

- (247) tā dézui wǒ le  
3sg offend I CRS

S/He offended me.

- (248) wǒ zhùyì wǒ — de jiā — shì  
I pay:attention I — GEN family — affair

I pay attention to my family affairs.

There are also fused verb-object compounds that function as intransitive verbs: for example, (1) *kāixīn* 'happy'; literally, *kāi* means 'open', and *xīn* means 'heart'; and (2) *shīwàng* 'be disappointed'; literally, *shī* means 'lose', and *wàng* means 'hope'.

- (249) wǒ hěn kāixīn  
I very happy

I am very happy.

- (250) wǒ hěn shīwàng  
I very disappointed

I am very disappointed.

The fused verb-object compounds present no complication. Each of them is a lexical unit with a meaning that differs from the sum of the meanings of the parts. In other words, each fused verb-object compound is a word. It may be a transitive or intransitive verb, as we have seen from the examples above; it may also be a noun or adverb. The verb-object compounds that do present some complications are the ones that retain some of the syntactic properties of the verb-plus-object construction. In other words, the “object” component of the compound still behaves as an object in many ways, although not completely. For example, consider *chūmíng* ‘famous’; literally, *chū* means ‘emerge’, and *míng* means ‘name’. On the one hand, *chūmíng* functions as a lexical unit with an adjectival meaning. For instance, it can be modified by the intensifier, *hěn* ‘very’, and it can take on the intensifying suffix *-jí* ‘extremely’:

(251) tā hěn chūmíng  
3sg very famous

S/He is very famous.

(252) tā chūmíng – jí le  
3sg famous – extremely CRS

S/He is extremely famous.

On the other hand, the object *míng* can be modified in many ways as if it were a syntactic object of the verb *chū*, and the verb *chū* may take on an aspect marker as if it were an independent verb.

(253) tā chū – le dà míng le  
3sg emerge – PFV big name CRS

S/He became very famous.

The complication, then, is this: the compound *chūmíng* appears at once both as a lexical unit and as a verb-plus-object construction. Furthermore, different compounds may exhibit the properties of a lexical unit or of a verb-plus-object construction to different degrees. This is one area of Mandarin grammar which requires a great deal of item-by-item memorization.



## C. Ditransitive Verb Phrases

*Ditransitive verb phrases* are those whose verbs have meanings that require two objects, one of which is the direct object and the other the indirect object. In the following examples, the direct object is underlined once and the indirect object twice:

(254) wǒ      sòng      tā      yì      —      jiàn      lǐwù  
           I        give      3sg      one      —      CL      gift

I gave him/her a gift.

(255) wǒ      jì      —      le      yì      —      fēng      xìn      gěi      ta  
           I        mail      —      PFV      one      —      CL      letter      to      3sg

I mailed a letter to him/her.

(256) tā        gěi      wǒ      dǎ      —      diànhuà  
           3sg      to        me      hit      —      telephone

S/He telephoned me.

These examples illustrate the different forms in which ditransitive sentences can occur. They are described in detail in the chapter on indirect objects (chapter 10).

## Notes

1. See Chafe (1976) for a discussion of this point.
2. There are three types of exceptions to this statement. One, pointed out to us by Chauncey Chu, is exemplified by a sentence such as:

(i) yì      —      ge      rén      jiu      gòu      le  
       one      —      CL      person      then      enough      CRS

One person will be enough.

in which the numeral *yì* refers not to some particular indefinite (i.e., unknown) entity, but rather to the abstract quantity (i.e., one) desired. The second type of exception is illustrated by a sentence such as:

(ii) yì      —      tiáo      tuǐ      duàn      le  
       one      —      CL      leg      broken      CRS

One of its legs is broken.

Here the underlined noun phrase is also not indefinite, but refers to something that is *part* of an entity already known by the hearer. It can therefore be considered a definite noun phrase. A similar example is (iii), cited in Li and Thompson (1975a:175):

(iii)	<u>yi</u>	—	<u>ge</u>	nóngfu	shuō ,	“wǒ	xiǎng	—
	one	—	CL	peasant	say	I	think	—
			chu	yi	—	ge	bànfā	le”
			exit	one	—	CL	way	CRS

One of the peasants said, ‘I’ve thought of a way.’

The third type of exception occurs when *yi*- is interpreted as ‘each’, as in:

(iv)	<u>yi</u>	—	<u>ge</u>	rén	chī	yi	—	kǒu
	one	—	CL	person	eat	one	—	mouth

Each person gets one mouthful.

3. Adapted from the discussion in Tsac (1977:86 ff.). See chapter 7 for the use of these particles as sentence-final particles.
4. When a topic is not a noun phrase but a verb phrase, it may be marked by *a*, *me*, *ne*, or *ba*. While *a*, *me*, and *ne* can also occur with noun phrase topics, however, *ba* may occur only with verb phrase topics. Here are some examples:

(i)	hē	jiǔ	{	<u>a</u>	yě	kényī
				<u>me</u>		
				<u>ne</u>		
				<u>ba</u>		
	drink	wine			also	fine

As for drinking wine, it is also fine.

(ii)	chàng	—	gē	{	<u>a</u>	méi	shénme	xìngqù
					<u>me</u>			
					<u>ne</u>			
					<u>ba</u>			
	sing	—	song			not	have any	interest

As for singing, (I) don’t have any interest.

(iii)	qù	{	<u>a</u>	buhǎoyisi ;	bu	qù	{	<u>a</u>	yòu	bu	kāixīn
			<u>me</u>					<u>me</u>			
			<u>ne</u>					<u>ne</u>			
			<u>ba</u>					<u>ba</u>			
	go			embarrassed	not	go			also	not	happy

As for going, (I) am embarrassed; as for not going, (I) am also unhappy.

5. For a more extensive linguistic discussion of topic and subject in Mandarin, see Li and Thompson (1976) and Tsao (1977).
6. For a more extensive linguistic treatment of double-subject sentences, see Teng (1974*b*).
7. This discussion is adapted from Tsao (1977:chap. 6).
8. For further discussion of classifiers, see Alleton (1973:47–52) and Rygaloff (1973:67–82).
9. There are a few nouns denoting measures of time which do require classifiers: these include *yuè* 'month', *xīngqī* 'week', and *zhōngtōu* 'hour'. For instance, 'two months' is *liǎng-ge yuè*, not \**liǎng yuè*; 'that week' is *nèi-ge xīngqī*, not \**nèi xīngqī*; and 'a few hours' is *jǐ-ge zhōngtōu*, not \**jǐ zhōngtōu*.
10. It is important to note that in order to test whether the particle *-de* of an associative phrase can be omitted, one must place the phrase with the noun it modifies in the direct object position after the verb in a sentence. If the associative phrase is placed in sentence-initial position, it may sound acceptable without the *-de*, but in that case it is structurally a topic and no longer an associative phrase. The sentences in (i) and (ii) illustrate this point:

(i) a. 

<u>Zhāngsān</u>	nǚ	—	<u>péngyou</u>	hěn	piàoliang
Zhangsan	girl	—	friend	very	beautiful

Zhangsan (topic), (his) girlfriend is very beautiful.

b. 

wǒ	xǐhuān	<u>Zhāngsān</u>	—	de	nǚ	—	<u>péngyou</u>
I	like	Zhangsan	—	GEN	girl	—	friend

I like Zhangsan's girlfriend.

c. 

*wǒ	xǐhuān	<u>Zhāngsān</u>	nǚ	—	<u>péngyou</u>
I	like	Zhangsan	girl	—	friend

(ii) a. 

<u>nǐ</u>	<u>tóufa</u>	hěn	luàn
you	hair	very	messy

You (topic), your hair is very messy.

b. 

wǒ	xǐhuān	nǐ	—	de	<u>tóufa</u>
I	like	you	—	GEN	hair

I like your hair.

c. 

*wǒ	xǐhuān	<u>nǐ</u>	<u>tóufa</u>
I	like	you	hair

Sentence (i) *a* is a topic-comment construction in which *Zhāngsān* is the topic and *nǚpéngyou* 'girlfriend' is the subject. Sentence (i) *b* contains an associative phrase modifying the noun *nǚpéngyou* 'girlfriend' in the object position. Sentence (i) *c* differs from (i) *b* only in that the *-de* of the associative phrase is omitted, and we see that it is



b. shì      –      le      jiù      suàn      –      le  
       be        –      PFV      then      let:go      –      PFV

When it's OK, then let it go.

In the second example, *shì* is functioning more as an adjective meaning 'be OK' than as a copula. The first example is troublesome to most native speakers: it can be understood, but it sounds forced.

17. See especially Chu (1970:129 ff.), as well as Hashimoto (1969a) and references that she cites.
18. Our underlining here is meant to draw attention to the morpheme *shì* 'be' and not to indicate special stress. This *shì*, of course, can be stressed (see the discussion below) in certain emphatic situations, but in none of our examples does it have to be.
19. This point is attributable to Huang (1966).



(ii) An auxiliary verb may be negated:

(2)	tā	<u>bu</u>	<u>néng</u>	chàng	—	gē
	3sg	not	can	sing	—	song

S/He can't sing.

Auxiliary verbs differ from verbs, however, with respect to the following six properties:

(i) An auxiliary verb must co-occur with a verb (or an “understood” verb). For example, (3) is incomplete and can be used only in a context in which a verb representing what s/he can do is understood:

(3)	tā	<u>néng</u>
	3sg	can

S/He can.

(ii) An auxiliary verb does not take aspect markers:

(4)	*tā	néng	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{-le} \\ \text{-guo} \\ \text{-zhe} \end{array} \right\}$	chàng	—	gē
	3sg	can	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{-PFV} \\ \text{-EXP} \\ \text{-DUR} \end{array} \right\}$	sing	—	song

(iii) An auxiliary verb cannot be modified by intensifiers, such as *hěn* ‘very’ or *gèng* ‘even more’:<sup>2</sup>

(5)	tā	*	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{hěn} \\ \text{gèng} \end{array} \right\}$	néng	chàng	—	gē
	3sg		$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{very} \\ \text{even:more} \end{array} \right\}$	can	sing	—	song

(iv) An auxiliary verb cannot be nominalized (see chapter 20 on nominalization):

(6)	*tā	<u>shi</u>	<u>néng</u>	<u>de</u>
	3sg	be	can	NOM

(v) An auxiliary verb cannot occur before the subject:

- (7) \*néng    tā    chàng    –    gē  
          can    3sg    sing    –    song

(vi) An auxiliary verb cannot take a direct object:<sup>3</sup>

- (8) \*tā    néng    nèi    –    jian    shì  
          3sg    can    that    –    CL    job

Let us now consider some of the candidates for auxiliary verb status which have been included in earlier treatments of auxiliaries.<sup>4</sup> In each case, the form in question can be shown to be a verb and not an auxiliary verb by one of the criteria mentioned above.

First, consider *yào* 'want'. In a sentence such as (9), *yào* is clearly a verb and not an auxiliary verb, since it takes a direct object:

- (9) wǒ    yào    yī    –    gē    píngguǒ  
       I    want    one    –    CL    apple

I want an apple.

In a sentence like (10), however, *yào* occurs with another verb and thus looks like an auxiliary:

- (10) wǒ    yào    xǐzǎo  
       I    want    bathe

I want to bathe.

Even if we assume for the sake of argument that one morpheme can belong to more than one category, a close look at the semantics of *yào* suggests that this would not be the correct analysis of *yào* and that its status as a verb is not challenged by sentences such as (10). The meaning of *yào* requires a participant (the subject) who does the wanting and another participant (the direct object) that signals what is wanted. The only difference between sentences (9) and (10) is a difference in the nature of what is wanted by the subject. In (9), what is wanted is a concrete entity, but in (10), what is wanted is an event. To clarify this point further, observe that (10) exactly parallels (11):



- (11) wǒ      yào      tā      xǐzǎo  
          I      want      3sg      bathe

I want him/her to bathe.

The difference between (10) and (11) is that in (10), since the person who will bathe is the same person who 'wants', it is not necessary to restate the subject of 'bathe'. In other words, sentences (9), (10), and (11) all have the same main verb, *yào* 'want', which, because of its inherent meaning, takes a subject and a direct object. The direct object, though, may vary. In (9), it is a concrete noun, but in (10) and (11) it is an event; in (10), this event may be described as *wǒ xǐzǎo* 'I bathe', and in (11), this event may be described as *tā xǐzǎo* 's/he bathes'. In (10) the subject of *xǐzǎo* is understood, however, because it is identical with the subject of the main verb, *yào* 'want'.

With an auxiliary verb, on the other hand, it is easy to show that the verb phrase that follows it is *not* an event direct object, since that verb phrase can never have a subject different from the subject of the auxiliary verb itself:

- (12) wǒ      néng      xǐzǎo  
          I      can      bathe

I can bathe.

- (13) \*wǒ      néng      tā      xǐzǎo  
          I      can      3sg      bathe\*

Sentence (10) has another interpretation in which *yào* has the meaning of 'immediately' or 'in the immediate future'. Given this meaning of *yào*, sentence (10) can mean 'I am going to bathe.' This meaning of *yào*, however, is also not sufficient to make it an auxiliary verb. *Yào* meaning 'in the immediate future' has none of the properties of auxiliary verbs. For example, in A-not-A questions with *yào* as the A- element, *yào* can only mean 'want' and not 'in the immediate future':

- (14) nǐ      yào      bu      yào      xǐzǎo      ?  
          you      want      not      want      bathe

Do you want to bathe?

\*Cf. sentence (11).

Similarly, the abbreviated sentence

- (15) wǒ yào  
I want

can only mean 'I want to' but not 'I am going to'. Finally, if we negate a sentence containing *yào*, *yào* again will have the meaning 'want' but not the meaning 'in the immediate future'.

- (16) wǒ bu yào xǐzǎo  
I not want bathe

I don't want to bathe.

我不要洗澡

In the sense of 'in the immediate future', then, *yào* seems to be functioning like an adverb, since it has no verbal properties at all. (Adverbs are described in chapter 8.)

There are other verbs that may appear to be auxiliaries but fail to be in the same way as *yào* does. Some examples are *qíngyuàn* 'wish, prefer'; *jìxù* 'continue'; *xūyào* 'need'; *xīwàng* 'hope'; *xiǎng* 'miss'; *biǎoshì* 'express'.

Notice that *qíngyuàn* 'wish, prefer' and *xīwàng* 'hope' differ from *yào* 'want' in that they *always* require their direct object to be an event. As with *yào*, however, the fact that the event can be an entire clause with its own subject, as illustrated by the *a* sentences in (17) and (18), shows that this event is indeed the direct object of the underlined verb and not the main verb to which the underlined form is an auxiliary:

- (17) a. wǒ qíngyuàn tā zuò zǒngtǒng  
I prefer 3sg serve president

I prefer him/her to be the president.

- b. wǒ qíngyuàn zuò zǒngtǒng  
I prefer serve president

I prefer to be the president.

- c. \*wǒ qíngyuàn bīngjīlíng  
I prefer ice:cream

- (18) a. wǒ xīwàng tā qù Zhōngguó  
I hope 3sg go China

I hope s/he will go to China.

- b. wǒ xīwàng qù Zhōngguó  
I hope go China

I hope to go to China.

- c. \*wǒ xīwàng Zhōngguó  
I hope China

The verb *xiǎng* 'think' looks like it could be an auxiliary verb in a sentence such as this:

- (19) wǒ xiǎng hē jiǔ  
I think drink wine

{ I think I'll drink some wine. }  
{ I miss drinking wine. } X

Once again, however, just as with the verbs we have been discussing, *xiǎng* functions as a verb; like *yào*, it can take either a simple direct object or an event as its direct object:

- (20) wǒ xiǎng tā  
I think 3sg

{ I think about him/her. }  
{ I miss him/her. }

- (21) wǒ xiǎng tā hěn kāixīn  
I think 3sg very happy

I think s/he is very happy.

The difference between *xiǎng* 'think' and *yào* 'want' is simply that when *xiǎng* occurs with a simple direct object or an event direct object whose subject is the

same as the subject of *xiǎng* itself, it takes on another possible meaning, that of 'to miss', as illustrated in (19) and (20). This meaning of *xiǎng*, however, is naturally inferred from the basic meaning 'think' according to the type of direct object with which it occurs.

*Jìxù* 'continue', *xūyào* 'need', and *biǎoshì* 'express' are similar to *xiǎng* 'think'. In the following pairs of sentences, the *a* sentence in each pair has a direct object that is a noun, and the *b* sentence has a direct object that is an event. The verbs in *a* and *b* in each pair of sentences are syntactically and semantically identical:

- (22) *a.* wǒmen jìxù tā — de gōngzuò  
we continue 3sg — GEN work

We continue his/her work.

- b.* wǒmen jìxù gōngzuò  
we continue work

We continue to work.

- (23) *a.* wǒmen xūyào fēijī  
We need airplane

We need airplanes.

- b.* wǒmen xūyào jiāshǐ fēijī  
we need pilot airplane

We need to pilot airplanes.

- (24) *a.* wǒmen biǎoshì wǒmen — de qínggǎn  
we express we — GEN feeling

We express our feelings.

- b.* wǒmen biǎoshì zàncheng tā — de yìjiàn  
we express approve 3sg — GEN suggestion

We indicated that we approved his/her suggestion.

There is another type of verb that has been mistaken as an auxiliary verb; an example is *kěnéng* 'possible, likely'. Its occurrence in such sentences as (25) is responsible for its being classified as an auxiliary verb:

- (25) tā kěnéng qù Měiguó  
3sg possible go America

It's likely that s/he'll go to America.

*Kěnéng* is, however, an adjectival verb similar to *róngyi* 'easy', *nán* 'difficult':

- (26) nèi – ge wènti { róngyi } jiějué  
that – CL problem { nán } solve  
{ easy }  
{ difficult }

It's { easy }  
{ difficult } to solve that problem.

First of all, notice that since *kěnéng*, *róngyi*, and *nán* are adjectival verbs, they may be modified by the intensifiers *hěn* 'very' and *gèng* 'even more':

- (27) tā hěn kěnéng qù Měiguó  
3sg very likely go America

It is very likely that s/he'll go to America.

- (28) nèi – ge wènti hěn { róngyi } jiějué  
that – CL problem very { nán } solve  
{ easy }  
{ difficult }

It is very { easy }  
{ difficult } to solve that problem.

- (29) tā gèng kěnéng qù Měiguó  
3sg even:more likely go America

It's even more likely that s/he'll go to America.



clause as its subject (see section 21.2.2 of chapter 21). Thus, semantically, (25) specifies that the event *tā qù Měiguó* 's/he will go to America' is 'very likely'. Similarly, the adjectival verbs in (26) are *róngyì* 'easy' and *nán* 'difficult', their semantic subject being the clause *jiějué nàige wèntí* 'solve that problem'.

## 5.2 Auxiliary Verb versus Adverb

Adverbs occur in prepredicate position, just as auxiliary verbs do:

- (36)    *tā*        *dàgài*        *chī*        *sān*        —        *wǎn*        *fan*  
           3sg    approximately    eat        three        —        bowl        rice

S/He eats approximately three bowls of rice.

- (37)    *tā*        *yídìng*        *lái*  
           3sg    definitely    come

S/He will definitely come.

- (38)    *tā*        *kuài(yào)*        *lái*        *le*  
           3sg    soon        come        CRS

S/He will soon come.

Such adverbs differ from auxiliary verbs primarily in that they lack verblike properties. Consider a true auxiliary verb, such as *néng* 'can'. Although it must occur with a full-fledged verb, it may occur along with the subject in a context in which the verb is understood, as we indicated earlier—for instance, in an answer to a yes-no question:

- (39) A:    *nǐ*        *néng*        *lái*        *ma?*  
           you        can        come        Q

Can you come?

- B:        *wǒ*        *néng*  
           I        can

I can.

On the other hand, there is no context in which an adverb may occur alone with the subject of a verb:

(40) A:    nǐ     yíding     lái     ma ?  
          you    definitely   come     Q

Will you definitely come?

B:     \*wǒ     yíding  
       I       definitely

The reason for this distinction is the presence of verbal properties in the auxiliary, which reflects a semantic relationship between the subject of the sentence and the auxiliary. No such semantic relationship exists, though, between the subject of a sentence and an adverb.

Another important distinction between auxiliary verbs and adverbs is the fact that an auxiliary verb possesses the verbal property of being able to serve as the A element in A-not-A questions, as shown by (41):

(41)    nǐ     néng    bu    néng    lái ?  
          you    can     not    can     come

Can you come?

An adverb, on the other hand, does not have this verbal property, as shown in (42):

(42)    \*nǐ     yíding    bu    yíding    lái ?  
          you    definitely   not    definitely   come

The same principles used in showing *yíding* to be a false auxiliary verb can be applied to other adverbs as well to show that they are not auxiliary verbs.

### 5.3 List of Auxiliary Verbs

The criteria we have discussed allow us to designate the following commonly used forms as auxiliary verbs:

(43) yīnggāi, yīngdang, gāi     'ought to, should'  
      néng, nénggòu, huì, kěyi    'be able to'  
      néng, kěyi                    'has permission to'



<u>gǎn</u>	'dare'
<u>kěn</u>	'be willing to'
<u>děi</u> , <u>bìxū</u> , <u>bìyào</u> , <u>bìděi</u>	'must, ought to'
<u>huì</u>	'will, know how'

As we pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, in attempting to determine whether a certain grammatical category exists in a given language, it is necessary to show that a group of morphemes possesses a set of properties not shared by any other group of morphemes in the language. Auxiliary verbs occur in the same position within a sentence where certain verbs and adverbs can occur, but they have particular distributional properties not shared by members of either of these two classes.

### Notes

1. This chapter incorporates some of the discussion of auxiliaries in Chao (1968:731 ff.).
2. A sentence such as

(i)	tā	<u>hěn</u>	huì	shuō	—	huà
	3sg	very	know:how	say	—	speech

S/He is very eloquent.

appears to be a counterexample. In this sentence, however, *huì shuō-huà* is an idiom for 'eloquent', as indicated by the translation. In general, *huì* behaves like all other auxiliary verbs in not allowing *hěn* or *gèng*:

(ii)	* tā	{ <u>hěn</u> }	huì	yóuyǒng
	3sg	{ <u>gèng</u> }	know:how	swim
		{ very }		
		{ even:more }		

3. On this point, we disagree with Chao (1968:731), who says: "Auxiliary verbs take other verbs or verbal expressions as objects instead of substantives." Note also that this point does not imply that all verbs can take objects. If a verb takes an object, however, we can be sure that it is a full-fledged verb, not an auxiliary verb.
4. For example, see Chao (1968:731 ff.), Teng (1975a:74–78), d'Andrea (1978), and Alleton (1977).

## CHAPTER 6

# *Aspect*

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The verbal category presented in this chapter expresses what linguists call *aspect*, that is, different ways of viewing a situation. The category of aspect is very different from that of tense: a marker of *tense* relates the time of the occurrence of the situation to the time that situation is brought up in speech. In English, for example, we have past tense, as in

(1) I proposed a toast.

where the suffix *-ed* signals that the act of proposing took place before the time of speaking. Mandarin has no markers of tense. The language does not use verb affixes to signal the relation between the time of the occurrence of the situation and the time that situation is brought up in speech.

Aspect, on the other hand, refers, not to the time relation between a situation and the moment of its being mentioned in speech, but, rather, to how the situation itself is being viewed with respect to its own internal makeup.<sup>1</sup> To take an example, first let's look at an English sentence:

(2) Rosco was reading when I came in.

Here, two events are expressed in past tense. The first verbal complex, *was reading*, however, differs strikingly from the second verbal complex, *came in*, in terms of the way the two situations are viewed. The second verbal complex presents the totality of the situation referred to (the speaker's coming in) without reference to its internal temporal constituency; the entire situation is viewed as a single, unanalyzable whole. When a language has special verbal forms to indicate

this viewing of an event in its entirety, we say that that form expresses *perfective* aspect. In Mandarin, the marker for perfective aspect is *-le*, but perfective aspect can also be expressed by a “perfectivizing expression” (see section 6.1).

The first verbal complex in (2), *was reading*, on the other hand, does not present the situation of Rosco’s reading in its entirety, but instead makes explicit reference to the internal makeup of “reading”, presenting it as ongoing, referring neither to its beginning nor its end, but to its duration. Verbal markers signaling this ongoing-duration aspect constitute one type of the aspect, referred to as *imperfective*, which we might call *durative*. In Mandarin, the imperfective durative markers are *zài* and *-zhe* (see section 6.2).

In addition to *-le*, *zài*, and *-zhe*, there is a fourth verbal aspect marker in Mandarin, *-guo*, which is an *experiential* aspect, indicating that a situation has been experienced (see section 6.3).

Finally, there is a *delimitative aspect* category that is expressed, not by a particular morpheme, but by the reduplication of the verb (see section 6.4).

The verbal aspects in Mandarin, then, are:

1. Perfective: *-le* and perfectivizing expressions
2. Imperfective (durative): *zài*, *-zhe*
3. Experiential: *-guo*
4. Delimitative: reduplication of verb

Let’s look at each of these verbal aspects in more detail.

## 6.1 The Perfective Aspect

Any description of the verbal aspect marker *-le* must begin with the caveat that it is important to keep the perfective aspect distinct from the sentence-final particle *le* (which is written without the hyphen in this book). The sentence-final particle *le* and sentences containing both *-le* and *le* are described in chapter 7.

### 6.1.1 Where to Use *-le*: A Bounded Event

We have said that the verbal aspect suffix *-le* expresses *perfectivity*, that is, it indicates that an event is being viewed in its entirety or as a whole. An event is viewed in its entirety if it is *bounded* temporally, spatially, or conceptually. There are essentially four ways in which an event can be bounded:

- A. By being a quantified event
- B. By being a definite or specific event

- C. By being inherently bounded because of the meaning of the verb  
 D. By being the first event in a sequence

We will discuss each of these in turn.

A. A Quantified Event

An event can be viewed as bounded when temporal, spatial, or conceptual limits are placed on it. What this means grammatically is that a verb typically will occur with *-le* if the event signaled by the verb is limited by overt phrases naming the extent to which that event occurred, the amount of time it took, or the number of times it happened. For example:

- (3) tā shuì - le sān - ge zhōngtóu  
 3sg sleep - PFV three - CL hour

S/He slept for three hours.

- (4) wǒ zài nàli zhù - le  
 I at there live - PFV  
liǎng - ge yuè  
 two - CL month

I lived there for two months.

- (5) yǐjīng rěn - le zhème duō  
 already endure - PFV that many  
nián, wǒ huì zài rěn - xiàqu  
 year I likely more endure - continue

I have already tolerated it for so many years, I can go on tolerating it.

- (6) diàn - dēng liàng - (le hěn) duō (e  
 electric - light bright - PFV very , much

The electric light got a lot brighter.

- (7) wǒ      bǎ      gǒu      dǎ      -      le      yí      dùn  
 I      BA      dog      hit      -      PFV      one      time

I gave the dog a beating.

- (8) wǒ      bǎ      mén      tī      -      le      sān      jiǎo  
 I      BA      door      kick      -      PFV      three      foot

I gave the door three kicks.

- (9) dírén      wàng      hòu      chètùì      -      le  
 enemy      toward      back      retreat      -      PFV

èr      -      shí      lǐ  
 two      -      ten      mile

The enemy fell back twenty miles.

- (10) nǐ      gāo      -      le      yídiǎn  
 you      tall      -      PFV      a:little

You've gotten taller.

- (11) tā      zuótiān      lái      de      wǎn      -      le      yídiǎn  
 3sg      yesterday      come      NOM      late      -      PFV      a:little

Yesterday s/he came a little late.

- (12) jīntiān      gǔpiào      hángshì      dī      -      le      yídiǎn  
 today      stock      market      lower      -      PFV      a:little

The stock market fell slightly today.

Sometimes the quantified event is a state whose limits are set by a phrase expressing the extent to which the subject is in that state. Sentences (13) and (14) illustrate these bounded states:

- (13) zhèi – ge dìfang bu cuò ,  
 this – CL place not bad  
 jiùshi chǎo – le yidiǎn  
 just noisy – PFV a:little

This place is not bad, it's just a little noisy.

- (14) tā niánji bǐ wǒ dà – (le)  
 3sg age COMP I great – PFV  
 jǐ – shí suì  
 several – ten years

S/He is older than I by a few decades.

The following two examples can each have two interpretations, depending on whether the adjective describes a process or a state:

- (15) a. (discussing how a friend has changed since his/her last visit)

tā pàng – le yidiǎn  
 3sg fat – PFV a:little

S/He's gotten a little fatter.

- b. (talking about candidates for a volleyball team)

tā pàng – le yidiǎn  
 3sg fat – PFV a:little

S/He's a little (too) fat.

- (16) a. (talking about a laundry mishap)

chènshān xiǎo – le sān cùn  
 shirt small – PFV three inch

The shirt got smaller (i.e., shrank) by three inches.



- (20) tā jīntiān mǎi - le hěn duō shū  
 3sg today buy - PFV very many book

S/He bought a lot of books today.

- (21) tā zài miànbāo - shang mǒ - le  
 3sg at bread - on spread - PFV  
 yídiǎn (niú) - yóu  
 a:little cattle - oil

S/He spread a little butter on the bread.

- (22) wǒ fá - le tā wǔ kuài qián  
 I fine - PFV 3sg five dollar money

I fined him/her five dollars.

- (23) tāmen fā - le wǔ - shí -  
 they issue - PFV five - ten -  
 ge qǐngtiē  
 CL invitation

They sent out fifty invitations.

- (24) zhèi huǐ kǎoshì wǒ dé - le  
 this time exam I obtain - PFV  
 bā - shí fēn  
 eight - ten point

I got eighty points on this exam.

- (25) qiáng - shang guà - le  
 wall - on hang - PFV  
 yī - fú huà  
 one - CL painting

A painting { was hung }  
 { had been hung } on the wall.



Sentence (26) is an interesting and typical example with *-le* in which the amount of time spent is expressed grammatically by a quantification of the object component of the verb-object compound *tán-tiān* 'discuss-universe = chat' (see section 3.2.5 of chapter 3 on verb-object compounds):

(26)	wǒmen	tán	-	<u>le</u>	<u>yi</u>	<u>yè</u>	
	we	discuss	-	PFV	one	night	
		-	de	<u>tiān</u>			
		-	ASSOC	universe			

We talked all night.

What these examples show is that it is perfectly normal to use *-le* where the message being communicated has to do with bounding an event by naming a specific quantity of the direct object. It is crucial, however, to notice that *speakers can differ* in their judgment about how much a quantified direct object serves to bound an event. For example, take a sentence such as (27):

(27)	tā	jiā	yǎng	-	<u>le</u>	<u>yi</u>	-	<u>ge</u>
	3sg	home	raise	-	PFV	one	-	CL
		<u>hěn</u>	<u>kě</u>	-	<u>ài</u>	de	<u>xiǎo</u>	<u>māo</u>
		very	can	-	love	NOM	small	cat

His/Her family had a very lovable little cat.

Some native speakers feel that *-le* is not necessary; in other words, they don't feel strongly that the quantified direct object, *yi-ge hěn kě-ài de xiǎo māo* 'a very lovable little cat', renders the event bounded. Some native speakers feel that when *-le* is used, (27) represents the beginning of a sequence of utterances about the small cat; in other words, they view the event as bounded, not because of the quantified direct object, but because it is the first in a sequence. Of course, many native speakers feel that sentence (27) is fine as it stands; they view the event as bounded simply because of the presence of the quantified direct object.

A recent experiment makes this point nicely.<sup>2</sup> A story containing sentence (28) was presented to sixty-two native Mandarin speakers. The author of the story had

written the sentence with the *-le*, but only one-third of the subjects thought the *-le* was necessary:

- (28)    hūrán            zǔfù            xū            –    le    yi    kǒu    qì  
           suddenly    grandfather    heave    –    PFV    one    mouth    air

Suddenly, grandpa heaved a sigh.

What this example shows is that speakers can have different views about how bounded an event is, and this will determine whether they decide to use *-le* in certain situations. Those who would use the *-le* in sentence (28) feel that it is important to the message conveyed by the sentence that what grandpa gave was *one* sigh, while those who wouldn't use *-le* here feel that the fact that he sighed is more important than the sigh itself.

#### B. Definite or Specific Event

An event will also often qualify as bounded if the direct object is understood as a definite noun phrase (see section 4.2.5 of chapter 4 for a discussion of definiteness). Once again, the decision to use *-le* depends on the extent to which the event is judged by the individual speaker to be bounded. Here is an example showing various types of definite direct objects:

(i) Name:

- (29)    wǒ            pèng            –    dào            –    (le)            Lín    Huì  
           I            bump            –    arrive            –    PFV            Lin    Hui

I ran into Lin Hui (where the important information in the context is whom I ran into).

(ii) Pronoun:

- (30)    nǐ            huǐ            –    le            nǐ            zìjǐ  
           you            ruin            –    PFV            you            self

You destroyed yourself.

(iii) Genitive modifier:

(31) tā      ráo      -      le      tā      -      de  
 3sg      spare      -      PFV      3sg      -      GEN

dírén      le  
 enemy      CRS

S/He spared his/her enemy.

(iv) Demonstrative Modifier:

(32) wǒ      xiǎng      -      chu      -      lai      -      (le)  
 I      think      -      exit      -      come      -      PFV

nèi      -      ge      zì  
 that      -      CL      character

I remembered that character.

(v) Relative clause modifier:

(33) A:      nǐ      zěnmē      zhīdào      Shànghǎi      yǒu      yī  
             you      how      know      Shanghai      exist      one

            -      qiān      -      wàn      rén ?  
             -      thousand      -      ten:thousand      person

How do you know Shanghai has ten million people?

B:      yīnwèi      wǒ      kàn      -      le      xīn  
             because      I      see      -      PFV      new

chūbǎn      de      zīliào  
             publish      NOM      material

Because I looked at the newly published figures.

(vi) Noun phrase with *bā*:

(34) tā      bā    chē    mài    –    le  
          3sg      BA      car      sell    –      PFV

S/He sold the car.

Here is an example from Spanos (1977:45), which shows another way in which *-le* signals the specificity of an event.

(35) tā      wèn    wǒ      zuótiān      wǎnshang      zuò      (-le)      shénme?  
          3sg      ask      I      yesterday      evening      do      -PFV      what?

S/He asked me what I did last night.

In this sentence, out of thirty-nine speakers asked, only seven thought the *-le* should be there, while thirty-two felt it should not. Once again, though, speakers' judgments on this question depend crucially on the nature of the message they imagine the sentence is conveying. With *-le* the event is viewed as bounded and thus as specific; the subject of the sentence, *tā* 's/he', was asking for a specific list of activities in which the speaker of the sentence engaged, as if *tā* were a nurse in charge of making sure the speaker didn't do too much. Since this is a rather unusual speech context, it is no wonder that only seven people out of 39 thought *-le* should be used. Without *-le*, on the other hand, the sentence is quite neutral and implies that *tā* was just making casual conversation. Since this latter case corresponds to a very natural situation, it is reasonable that the majority of speakers would think of this as the most natural context for the sentence and would judge that it should have no *-le*.

As another illustration of the same point, we might contrast (36) *a* and *b*:

(36) *a.*      tā      xiě      –      cuò      –      le      nèi  
          3sg      write      –      wrong      –      PFV      that  
               –      ge      zì  
               –      CL      character

S/He wrote that character wrong.

					那		
b.	tā	xiě	–	cuò	nèi	–	ge
	3sg	write	–	wrong	that	–	CL
		zì		le			
		character		CRS			

S/He has written that character wrong (as I thought s/he would).

Sentence (36) *a*, with *-le*, would be used in a context in which *nèi-ge zì* ‘that character’ was being singled out, for example, because it is being contrasted with another character that s/he wrote correctly. Sentence (36) *b*, without the perfective *-le*, on the other hand, would be used in a context in which what is important is not *nèi-ge zì* ‘that character’ as opposed to some other character, but the current relevance of the fact that s/he wrote the character wrong. Our translation suggests one of the possible ways in which this state of affairs might be currently relevant (see chapter 7 for more discussion on current relevance and the sentence-final particle *le*).

The fact that speakers do not agree on matters like this is often frustrating to people trying to learn Mandarin and to linguists trying to analyze Mandarin, who wish that a hard-and-fast ‘rule’ could be stated. It is important to realize, however, that there *is* a rule, but that this rule depends on what the speaker judges to be the significant information the sentence is conveying in the context in which it is used. The reason that speakers disagree when they are presented with sentences in isolation is because they have to imagine what the real conversational situation might be, and they might come to different conclusions on this point. The rule that they actually use in talking to each other is simply this: When the overall conversation makes it important to emphasize the information in the definite direct object, either because one wants to go on to talk about it or because it contrasts with some other possible item that could have been mentioned, *-le* must be used.

### C. Verbs with Inherent Bounded Meaning

Some verbs represent specific, bounded events by virtue of their meaning. One such verb is *sǐ* ‘die’, which has its end point built into its meaning. Another such verb is *wàng* ‘forget’:

(37)	tā	qù	–	nián	<u>sǐ</u>	–	le
	3sg	last	–	year	die	–	PFV

S/He died last year.

- (38) wǒ wàng — le tā — de dìzhǐ  
 I forget — PFV 3sg — GEN address

I forgot his/her address.

We should notice that the inclusion of the end point in the meaning of such verbs as *sǐ* 'die' and *wàng* 'forget' is an idiosyncrasy of Mandarin Chinese, not a universal feature of all languages of the world. For example, the English verb 'die' does not have the end point of dying included in its meaning, and therefore it is possible to use the verb in a durative aspect, as shown in (39):

- (39) S/He is dying.

Because of the inclusion of the end point of dying in the meaning of the Mandarin verb *sǐ* 'die', however, it cannot occur in the durative aspect; thus sentence (40), the Mandarin counterpart of sentence (39), is unacceptable:

- (40) \*tā sǐ — zhe  
 3sg die — DUR

For the same reasons, the English verb 'forget' may, but its Mandarin counterpart, *wàng*, may not occur in the durative aspect, as shown by the acceptable English sentence (41) and the unacceptable Mandarin sentence (42):

- (41) S/He is forgetting his/her French.

- (42) \*tā wàng — zhe tā — de Fǎwén  
 3sg forget — DUR 3sg — GEN French

Because they are inherently bounded, then, verbs such as *sǐ* 'die' and *wàng* 'forget' generally occur with the perfective aspect marker *-le*. An exception to this generalization is the use of such verbs to describe a situation that is not part of reality, called the *irrealis mode*. Irrealis mode in English is typically conveyed by the infinitive verb phrase following such verbs as *want*, *like*, *prefer*, *hope*, *expect*, and so forth; (43) is an example:

- (43) S/He { wanted } to die  
 { wants }

The Mandarin counterpart of (43) is this:

- (44) tā yào sǐ<sup>3</sup>  
 3sg want die
- S/He { wanted } to die  
           { wants }

In (44) *sǐ* is in the irrealis mode. Irrealis verbs in general do not occur with the perfective aspect marker *-le* because they are not describing events viewed in their entirety.

Further examples in which the inherent meaning of the verb specifies its own end point are given in sentences (45)–(49). The verbs in these sentences generally occur with *-le*, except when they are used in the irrealis mode.

- (45) tā shuì — zhào — le ma?  
 '3sg sleep — succeed — PFV Q

Did s/he fall asleep?

- (46) huǒ miè — le  
 fire go:out — PFV

The fire went out.

- (47) gài zi diào — le  
 lid fall:off — PFV

The lid fell off.

- (48) zhèi — ge yǐ zi huài — le  
 this — CL chair broken — PFV

This chair broke.

- (49) zhà dàn zhà — le  
 bomb explode — PFV

The bomb exploded.

## D. First Event in a Sequence

Sometimes an event is bounded by being the first event in a sequence, where what is important is that after one event has taken place, another one happens or a new state materializes. In such cases, the first event is of interest as an unanalyzed whole; the speaker signals that its occurrence is *bounded* by the subsequent event. In these instances *-le* is used, and the sentence can often be translated with 'after', 'when', or 'now that' in English.

(50) wǒ chī — wán — le nǐ chī  
 I eat — finish — PFV you eat

After I have finished eating, then you eat.

(51) wǒ kàn — wán — le bào ,  
 I read — finish — PFV paper  
 jiu shuì  
 then sleep

When I finish reading the paper, I will go to sleep.

(52) tā shuō de hěn qiǎomiào ,  
 3sg say CSC very skillful  
 ràng rén tīng —  
 let person hear —  
le bu huì shēngqì  
 PFV not likely angry

S/He talks very skillfully so that when people hear him/her they don't get angry.

(53) zěnmē pèng — le bēizi yě bu hē ?  
 how bump — PFV glasses also not drink

How come after you have touched glasses, you still don't drink?



- (54) chū - le zhèi - ge  
 exit - PFV this - CL
- jiǎnchá - shì , wàitou jiu  
 examination - room outside then
- yǒu yínháng guìtai  
 exist bank counter

When you go out of this customs room, just outside there is a bank counter.

- (55) yǒu - le nèi - ge  
 exist - PFV that - CL
- rìguāng - dēng , chúfáng  
 sun:light - lamp kitchen
- jiu liàng duō le  
 then bright much CRS

Now that (they) have that fluorescent light, the kitchen is much brighter.

- (56) tā kāi - le mén , nǐ jiu  
 3sg open - PFV door you then
- jìn - qu  
 enter - go

{ When } s/he opens the door, you go in.  
 { If }

- (57) wǒ pào - (le) chá hē  
 I brew - (PFV) tea drink

I made some tea to drink.



another clause, as in (61), or where it occurs with *le*, signaling ‘‘currently relevant state’’, as in (62):

- (61) wǒ      lǐ      –      le      fǎ      jiu      qù      sànbù  
          I      cut      –      PFV      hair      then      go      take:walk

I will take a walk as soon as I finish my haircut.

- (62) wó      lǐ      –      le      fǎ      le  
          I      cut      –      PFV      hair      CRS

I (have) had a haircut.

Sometimes, in the right context, an adverbial expression can serve the function of bounding the event. For example, in a situation in which the issue is *when* s/he got a haircut, sentence (63) could be used; similarly, if it is known that s/he got rich, but the issue is *where*, then sentence (64) would be appropriate:

- (63) tā      zǎoshang      lǐ      –      le      fǎ  
       3sg      morning      cut      –      PFV      hair

S/He got a haircut in the morning.

- (64) tā      zài      Jiāzhōu      fā      –      le      cái  
       3sg      at      California      issue      –      PFV      wealth

S/He got rich in California.

The important point to be drawn from this discussion is that understanding the grammar of a sentence always involves understanding how that sentence relates to the context in which it occurs. In this case, it is clear that a sentence describing an event never occurs in a vacuum, but is always embedded in some larger conversation or discourse context. Whether a sentence expresses a bounded event depends to a great extent on the nature of the conversation of which that sentence is a part.

So far we have seen that the conditions for the use of *-le* are quite straightforward: *-le* is used when the event described by a sentence is perfective, which means that the event is bounded, and an event is bounded (1) if its temporal or spatial limits are specified, (2) if it signals a specific event and its direct object is

definite, (3) if boundedness is inherent in the meaning of the verb of the sentence, or (4) if it is followed by another event.

For a clear understanding of the function of *-le*, it is equally important that we be aware of where *-le* cannot be used. The following section is devoted to this issue.

### 6.1.2 Where Not to Use *-le*

#### A. Semantic Conditions for *-le* Not Fulfilled

First, *-le* is never used with verbs expressing states that do not represent bounded events:

- (65) wǒ xǐhuān (\*-le) mùguā  
I like -PFV papaya

I like papaya.

- (66) tā xìng (\*-le) Wú  
3sg surname -PFV Wu

S/He is named Wu.

- (67) nèi — ge dìfang hěn ānjìng (\*-le)  
that — CL place very quiet -PFV

That place is very quiet.

- (68) wǒ shì (\*-le) nǐ — de gēge  
I be -PFV you — GEN older:brother

I am your older brother.

For the same reason, *-le* does not occur with verbs denoting ongoing actions:

- (69) tā shǒu — lǐ ná — zhe  
3sg hand — in hold — DUR

(\*-le) shū  
-PFV book

S/He is holding a book in his hand.

- (70) tā zài liú (\*-le) húzi  
 3sg DUR keep -PFV beard

He is growing a beard.

In other words, perfective *-le* is incompatible with the durative aspect markers *zài* and *he* (see section 6.2 of this chapter) because the meanings of perfective (bounded) and durative (unbounded) aspect are incompatible.

Perfective *-le* is also incompatible with habitual or repeated events, since these are not bounded events viewed as a whole. For example, (71) and (72), signaling habitual events, are not acceptable with *-le*:

- (71) tā tiān – tiān huí – qu (\*-le)  
 3sg day – day return – go -PFV

S/He goes back every day.

- (72) tā píngcháng mǎi (\*-le) hěn duō shū  
 3sg usually buy -PFV very many book

S/He usually bought a lot of books.

Nor do we find *-le* with “potential” forms of resultative verb compounds (see section 3.2.3 of chapter 3 for discussion of these compounds). Because these forms refer to general states of ability or inability rather than to events viewed in their entirety, *-le* is not compatible with the potential forms. Thus, sentences (73)–(76), which contain resultative verb compounds with a potential infix, are unacceptable with *-le*:

- (73) tā yā – bu – zhù (\*-le) xuéshēng  
 3sg press – can't – hold:on -PFV student

S/He can't suppress the students.

- (74) wǒ lā – bu – kāi (\*-le) mén  
 I pull – can't – open -PFV door

I can't pull the door open.

- (75)    nī      kàn    –    de    –    jiàn    (\*-le)  
           you    see    –    can    –    perceive –PFV
- tā      –    de    liǎn    ma ?  
           3sg    –    GEN    face    Q

Can you see his/her face?

- (76)    wǒ      jiǎng    –    de    –    guò    (\*-le)    tā  
           I        talk    –    can    –    pass    -PFV    3sg

I can outtalk him/her.

Perfective *-le* is also incompatible with the experiential aspect suffix *-guo* (see section 6.3 of this chapter for discussion of this point), as the following sentences show:<sup>4</sup>

- (77)    wǒ      chī      –    guo    –    (\*-le)    bāla  
           I        eat      –    EXP    –    -PFV    guava

I have eaten guava before.

- (78)    tā      qù      –    guo    (\*-le)    Xiānggǎng  
           3sg    go      –    EXP    -PFV    Hong Kong

S/He has been to Hong Kong.

Finally, *-le* in general does not occur in negative sentences.<sup>5</sup> Compare the *a* and *b* forms of the following pairs:

- (79) a.    zhǐ      mài    –    guāng    –    le  
           paper    sell    –    gone    –    PFV

The paper was sold out.

- b.    zhǐ      méi    mài    –    guāng    (\*-le)  
       paper    not    sell    –    gone    -PFV

The paper wasn't all sold out.

(80) a. tā bō - cuò - le / hàomǎ  
 3sg dial - wrong - PFV number

S/He dialed the wrong number.

b. tā méi bō - cuò (\*-le) hàomǎ  
 3sg not dial - wrong -PFV number

S/He didn't dial the wrong number.

(81) a. tā mǎi - le nèi sān  
 3sg sell - PFV that three  
 - zhī jī  
 - CL chicken

S/He sold those three chickens.

b. tā bu mǎi (\*-le) nèi sān  
 3sg not sell -PFV that three  
 - zhī jī  
 - CL chicken

S/He wouldn't sell those three chickens.

It is easy to see why *-le* does not occur in negative sentences: the meaning of negative sentences—that some event does not take place or that some state of affairs does not obtain—is incompatible with the meaning of *-le*, which is to signal a bounded event. An event that does not occur, of course, cannot in general be bounded (but see section 6.1.3 of this chapter for *-le* in negative imperatives; also see chapter 12 for further discussion of negation and aspect.)

#### B. A Perfectivizing Expression Takes the Place of *-le*

Often the conditions for the use of perfective *-le* would appear to be satisfied, and yet no *-le* appears. For example, (82)–(85) are four sentences expressing

bounded events viewed in their entirety, yet none has *-le*:

- (82) tā cóng fángzi – lí zǒu  
 3sg from house – in walk
- dào Zhāngsān nàr  
 to Zhangsan there

S/He walked from his/her house over to Zhangsan's place.

- (83) wǒ bǎ shǒubiāo fàng zài chōuti – lí  
 I BA watch put at drawer – in

I put the watch in the drawer.

- (84) wǒ jì gěi tā yī – fēng xìn  
 I mail to 3sg one – CL letter

I sent him/her a letter.

- (85) wǒ xiào de zhàn – bu  
 I laugh CSC stand – can't
- qǐ – lái  
 – rise – come

I laughed so hard that I couldn't stand up.

Why do these sentences have no *-le*? The answer is that each contains *another* element that does the job of “perfectivizing” the verb. That is, each of the underlined morphemes or phrases in the above sentences serves to perform the same function that *-le* does, namely, to signal that the event is to be viewed as a complete whole. In (82)–(84), the perfectivizing expressions are the directional phrase *dào Zhāngsān nàr* ‘to Zhangsan's place’, the locative phrase *zài chōuti-lí* ‘in the drawer’, and the indirect object phrase *gěi-tā* ‘to him/her’, which put boundaries on the events of walking, putting, and sending by specifying their spatial limits. In (85) the perfectivizing expression is the complex stative phrase *de*



*chàn-bu-qǐ-lái* 'so much that I couldn't stand up' (see chapter 22), which bounds the event of laughing by naming the extent to which it happened.

### 6.1.3 *-le* in Imperatives

Most of the time, imperatives do not have *-le*. The following examples of imperatives, for instance, do not have *-le*:

- (86) ná nǐ – de wàiyī  
take you – GEN coat

Get your coat!

- (87) nǐ shāo zhèi dùn fàn  
you cook this time food

You make the meal!

- (88) dì gěi wǒ nèi – ge tiáogēng  
hand to I that – CL spoon

Hand me that spoon!

*-Le* can, however, be used in imperatives when there is some urgency about the action taking place, especially when something is to be disposed of or gotten rid of; (89)–(90) are examples:

- (89) yān – le nèi – ge yào –  
swallow – PFV that – CL medicine –  
wánzi  
pill

Swallow that pill!

- (90) hē – le nèi bēi yào  
drink – PFV that cup medicine

Drink that cup of medicine

Sometimes *-le* contrasts with the resultative verb ending *-diào* 'off' in an imperative, where *-le* expresses more urgency. For example:

(91) a. (neutral)

guān	—	<u>diào</u>	tā
turn:off	—	off	3sg

Turn it off (e.g., the radio).

b. (very irritated)

guān	—	<u>le</u>	tā
turn:off	—	PFV	3sg

Get rid of that noise (e.g., on the radio)!

(92) a. (neutral)

cā	—	<u>diào</u>	tā
erase	—	off	3sg

Erase it.

b. (with urgency)

cā	—	<u>le</u>	tā
erase	—	PFV	3sg

Get rid of it (e.g., what's on the blackboard)!

(93) a. (neutral)

tuō	—	<u>diào</u>	tā
take:off	—	off	3sg

Take it off (e.g., your ring—I want to try it on).

## b. (with intensity)

tuō	–	<u>le</u>	tā
take:off	–	PFV	3sg

Take it off (e.g., your ring—I believe that you should never wear it again)!

## (94) a. (neutral)

dào	–	<u>diào</u>	tā
pour	–	off	3sg

Pour it out.

## b. (with intensity)

dào	–	<u>le</u>	tā
pour	–	PFV	3sg

Pour it out (once and for all and be done with it)!

The *-le* in these examples always correlates with a message in which it is the end point of an action that is important. When an action is to go on for a while, then no *-le* is used, and the verb may be reduplicated (see section 6.4 below):

## (95) (taking a picture)

xiào	–	yi	–	xiào	(*-le)
smile	–	one	–	smile	-PFV

Smile a little!

Here is a pair of examples which illustrates this point. If someone wants you to open the door and leave it open, s/he could say:

(96)	kāi	–	<u>kāi</u>	mén
	open	–	open	door

Open the door a little!

If, however, the speaker wants you to get a bottle of soda open once and for all, then s/he might say:

- (97)    kǎi        –        le        tā  
           open        –        PFV        3sg

Open it!

In negative imperatives, with *bié* 'don't', it is also normal not to find *-le*, as (98)–(100) show:

- (98)    bié        guān        mén  
           don't     close        door

Don't close the door.

- (99)    bié        jiā        jiàngyóu  
           don't     add        soy:sauce

Don't add        { the }  
                           { any }        soy sauce.

- (100)    bié        dào        chá  
           don't     pour        tea

Don't pour tea.

There is one type of situation in which *-le* must be used in a negative imperative, though, and that is when the imperative is a *warning* to the listener. Sentences (101)–(103) are examples:

- (101)    bié        pèng        –        le        lúzi  
           don't     touch        –        PFV        stove

Don't touch the stove!

- (102)    bié        zhuàng     –        le        gǒu  
           don't     run:into    –        PFV        dog

Don't run into the dog!

- (103) bié tūn – le gútou  
 don't swallow – PFV bone

Don't swallow the bone!

The contrast can be seen clearly if we look at pairs of negative imperatives with and without *-le*:

- (104) a. bié qiān – míng  
 don't sign – name

(You) don't (need to) sign your name.

- b. bié qiān – le míng  
 don't sign – PFV name

Don't sign your name (I'm warning you)!

Sentence (104) *b* means 'Watch it, something bad will happen if you sign your name', but (104) *a* isn't a warning. The case is similar in this pair:

- (105) a. bié xuǎn nèi – táng kè  
 don't select that – CL course

Don't take that course (I wouldn't bother if I were you).

- b. bié xuǎn – le nèi – táng kè  
 don't select – PFV that – CL course

Don't take that course (you'll be sorry if you do).

*by mistake, inadvertently*

Now, why is it that *-le* has the effect of making the negative imperative into a warning? The reason has to do with the sequencing function of *-le*, which we discussed above in section D of 6.1. An event in a negative imperative by itself is not a likely candidate for a bounded, or *perfective*, event, since the speaker is actually urging that it *not* happen. Therefore, we should expect never to find *-le* in negative imperatives. When *-le* does occur, however, we know that because the event can't be bounded in and of itself, it must be bounded by a following event,

which may or may not be expressed. Thus, to take (105) *b*, for example, a possible following clause, which could either be expressed or assumed, is provided in (106):

(106)	bié	xuǎn	—	<u>le</u>	nèi	—	táng	kè,
	don't	select	—	PFV	that	—	CL	course
		nǐ	yòu	gēn	—	bu	—	shàng
		you	again	keep	—	can't	—	ascend

Don't take that course; you won't be able to keep up again.

The same is true for all the other examples of *bié* imperatives with *-le*: they are always incomplete and must be understood in terms of a following clause, either assumed or actually present, giving the adverse consequences if the warning in the *bié* clause is not heeded. In many cases, the negative consequences are obvious enough that they don't need to be mentioned, as in the earlier example (101):

(101)	bié	pèng	—	<u>le</u>	lúzi
	don't	touch	—	PFV	stove

Don't touch the stove!

Here, since the natural setting would be one in which the stove is too hot to touch, it would generally be unnecessary to add in a following clause the information that the hearer would be burned otherwise. The implication is still 'or else . . .', but the hearer can fill in the rest. When it is not as clear why the warning is being given, then the following clause becomes more necessary. For example, if the warning is not to answer the phone, the reasons might not be clear. In such a case, the following clause specifying the consequence is more likely to occur:

(107)	bié	jīe	—	le	diànhuà ,	burán	nǐ
	don't	answer	—	PFV	telephone	otherwise	you
		yòu	yào	shēngqì			
		again	will	angry			

Don't answer the phone; otherwise you'll get angry again.

We see, then, that the use of *-le* in warnings follows naturally from its use to signal the first event in a sequence. The second event that serves to bound the first

one is often understood and therefore not explicitly stated in a natural speech context.

#### 6.1.4 *-le* Does Not Mean Past Tense

By now we have seen a number of examples showing that *-le* does not signal past tense. To recapitulate, we find *-le* in such non-past perfective sentences as imperatives:

(108) hē      -      le      tā  
 drink      -      PFV      3sg

Drink it.

(109) bié      dā      -      pò      -      le      bēizi  
 don't      hit      -      broken      -      PFV      glass

Don't break the glass.

in sentences indicating simple futures:

(110) míngtiān      wō      jiu      kāichú      -      le      tā  
 tomorrow      I      then      expel      -      PFV      3sg

I'll expel him/her tomorrow!

and in future or conditional sequence-of-action sentences:

(111) wǒ      chī      -      le      fàn      zài      zǒu  
 I      eat      -      PFV      rice      then      go

I'll go after I eat.

(112) tā      kāi      -      le      mén ,      nǐ      jiu  
 3sg      open      -      PFV      door      you      then  
          jìn      -      qu  
          enter      -      go

{When}  
 {If} s/he opens the door, you go in.

Furthermore, we know that many sentences expressing past events need not have any *-le*. For example, bounded events with perfectivizing expressions don't take *-le*:

- (113) zuótiān tā tiào zài chuáng — shang  
 yesterday 3sg jump at bed — on

Yesterday s/he jumped onto the bed.

- (114) tā bā ròu qiē — chéng xiǎo kuài  
 3sg BA meat cut — become small piece

S/He cut the meat into small pieces.

Events that are not explicitly bounded, however, also do not occur with *-le*, even if they refer to past time:

- (115) tāmen qiántiān jiào wǒ zài zhèlǐ děng  
 they day:before:yesterday tell I at here wait

The day before yesterday, they told me to wait here.

- (116) zuótiān yè — lǐ wǒ mèng  
 yesterday night — in I dream  
 — jiàn wǒ mǔqīn  
 — perceive I mother

Last night I dreamed about my mother.

- (117) nèi — běn shū shì wǒ xiě de  
 that — CL book be I write NOM

That book was written by me.

- (118) wǒ zǎo zhīdào yǒu yidiǎn bu duì  
 I early know exist a:little not right

I knew a long time ago that something was wrong.



(119) wǒmen dào bǎihuògōngsī qù mǎi dōngxi  
 we to department:store go buy thing

We went to the department store to buy some things.

(120) tā wèn wǒ nǐ niánqīng de shíhòu  
 3sg ask I you young NOM time  
 zài nǎlǐ niàn — shū  
 at where study — book

S/He asked me where you went to school when you were young.

Why is it, then, that sentences with *-le* so often seem to be referring to past time? The answer is simple: even though *-le* doesn't *mean* past tense, many perfective events reported in speech are events that occurred prior to the time of speaking. This means that there is a correlation between events in the past and the appearance of *-le*: ordinarily, unless the context makes it clear that a different time is being referred to, a perfective sentence with *-le* will be understood to refer to past time. On the other hand, it does not follow from this that past-time events must be perfective; only those past-time events that are bounded will occur with *-le*.

### 6.1.5 *-le* Does Not Mean Completion

It is equally important to recognize that *-le* cannot be characterized as expressing completion. Typically, of course, an action that is bounded is also complete, but *-le* need not necessarily signal completed action. For instance, consider sentence (121):

(121) qiáng — shang guà — le yì —  
 wall — on hang — PFV one —  
 fu huà  
 CL painting

On the wall hangs a painting.

As it is used in (121), the verb *guà* 'hang' does not signal an action. Rather, it describes a stative event concerning the painting. The English translation accurately depicts this stative usage of the verb *guà* 'hang' in (121). The event described by (121) is bounded by the quantifying phrase *yì-fu huà* 'one painting', and *-le* is

present in (121). There is, however, no sense of completion being conveyed by the sentence.

Let us consider another example clearly showing that *-le* does not mean completion:

(122)	tā	pǎo	–	le	liǎng	–
	3sg	run	–	PFV	two	–
		ge	zhōngtóu	le		
		CL	hour	CRS		

S/He has run for two hours.

In (122), both the perfective *-le* and the sentence final *le* (see chapter 7) occur. A sentence such as (122), with both the perfective *-le* and the sentence final *le*, conveys the message that the event is bounded (in this case, the time phrase also serves to bound the event), and the starting point of an action, in this case, *pǎo* 'run', occurs before the time of speech, but the end point of the action is left open. In other words, in (122), the action of running might have ended before the time of speech, or it might end at the time of speech, or it might end at some time after the time of speech. Only the total context in which (122) occurs can determine what is the precise end point of the action in time. It is obvious that if *-le* were to signal completed action, sentences such as (122) could not be indeterminate with regard to the end point of the action denoted by the verb.

### 6.1.6 Summary

We have seen that the function and the use of *-le* are not mysterious once it is understood as a perfective marker and once the notion of perfectivity is made clear. The perfective marker *-le* is used for events that are viewed as bounded because (1) the events are quantified, (2) the events are specific, (3) the verbs have inherently bounded meanings, or (4) there are following events. We have also seen that *-le* can be omitted in the presence of another perfectivizing expression and that in certain instances speakers may be expected to make different decisions as to whether an event is sufficiently bounded to require *-le*.

Learning to control *-le* is one of the most difficult tasks facing a European-language speaker attempting to master Mandarin, partly because European languages have no feature quite like it. This task is further complicated by an equally elusive sentence-final *le* 'CRS' (discussed in chapter 7). If we begin, however, by abandoning any attempt to equate *-le* with a grammatical category such as tense in English, concentrating instead on trying to grasp the semantic notions of per-

fectivity and boundedness, we will be making a good head start in this challenging task.

Let's turn now to the other aspect markers of Mandarin.

## 6.2 The Durative Aspect

In the introduction to this chapter, we said that durative markers signal the ongoing, or durative, nature of an event.<sup>6</sup> English uses the verb ending *-ing* together with the copula to express ongoing events, as in (123) and (124):

(123) She *is explaining* the grammar.

(124) He *was holding* the baby.

In Mandarin, there are two aspect markers that signal the durative nature of an event: the word *zài* and the suffix *-zhe*. The usage of the durative markers in a sentence depends on the meaning of the verb. In the following discussion we will correlate the occurrence of the durative markers with various semantic types of verbs.

### 6.2.1 Semantic Types of Verbs and the Durative Aspect Markers *-zhe*, *zài*

#### A. Activity Verbs.

As the name suggests, these verbs signal activity. The most apparent activity is, of course, an action, such as *pǎo* 'run', *dǎ* 'hit'. Action verbs constitute only a subset of activity verbs, however. There are other verbs, such as *xīnshǎng* 'appreciate', *kàn* 'read, look at', *yánjiū* 'research', and *xué* 'learn', which do not name actions but nevertheless represent activities. One way to describe activity verbs is that they generally signal the active participation and involvement of an animate subject in an event. Thus, such verbs as *pàng* 'fat', *yǒu qián* 'have money = rich', *shōudǎo* 'receive', *zhīdào* 'know', and *tīng-shuō* 'hear-say = hear (about some information)' are not activity verbs because they do not signal the active participation of an animate subject. For example, consider sentence (125):

(125) Zhāngsān shōudǎo – le yi – fēng xìn  
 Zhangsan receive – PFV one – CL letter

Zhangsan received a letter.

Although *Zhāngsān* is an animate subject of the verb *shōudǎo* 'receive', the sentence does not convey the message that *Zhāngsān* is actively participating in

some sort of activity. In fact, *Zhāngsān* in (125) is simply the passive receiver of a letter. Similarly, in (126):

- (126) *Zhāngsān*    *hěn*    *pàng*  
 Zhangsan    very    fat

Zhangsan is very fat.

the subject *Zhāngsān* is merely in a state that is described as ‘fat’; he is not actively participating in any activity.

Given ‘activity’ as a semantic characterization of a class of verbs, we can state the first rule concerning the use of the durative markers:

- (i) Only activity verbs can take *zài* to indicate the durative aspect.

The following sentences illustrate the rule stated in (i). Sentences (127)–(130) contain activity verbs and are well formed; but sentences (131)–(135), with nonactivity verbs, are unacceptable:

- (127) *Zhāngsān*    *zài*    *dǎ*    *Lìsì*<sup>7</sup>  
 Zhangsan    DUR    hit    Lisi

Zhangsan is hitting Lisi.

- (128)    *wǒ*    *zài*    *xīnshāng*    *Bèiduōfēn*    –    *de*    *yīnyuè*  
           I        DUR    appreciate    Beethoven    –    ASSOC    music

I am appreciating the music of Beethoven.

- (129) *Zhāngsān*    *zài*    *liàn*    *pǎo*  
 Zhangsan    DUR    practice    run

Zhangsan is practicing running.

- (130) *Lìsì*    *zài*    *jiěshì*    *wénfǎ*  
 Lisi        DUR    explain    grammar

Lisi is explaining the grammar.

- (131)    *\*tā*    *zài*    *pàng*  
           3sg    DUR    fat

- (132) \*wǒ      zài      zhīdào      nèi      –      jiàn      shì  
           I      DUR      know      that      –      CL      matter
- (133) \*Zhāngsān      zài      yǒu      qián  
           Zhangsan      DUR      exist      money
- (134) \*píngzi      zài      pò  
           bottle      DUR      broken
- (135) \*tā      zài      pèngjian      péngyou  
           3sg      DUR      run:into      friend

There are also dialects of Mandarin which employ *-zhe . . . ne* or *zài . . . -zhe . . . (ne)* to signal the durative aspect for an activity verb: for example,

- (136) a. Zhāngsān      dǎ      –      zhe      Lìsì      ne  
           Zhangsan      hit      –      DUR      Lisi      REEx

Zhangsan is hitting Lisi.

- b. Zhāngsān      zài      dǎ      –      ( zhe )      Lìsì      ( ne )  
           Zhangsan      DUR      hit      –      ( DUR )      Lisi      REEx

Zhangsan is hitting Lisi.

### B. Verbs of Posture

In Mandarin there is a class of verbs that denote postures or physical dispositions of an entity at a location, including *zuò* 'sit', *zhàn* 'stand', *dūn* 'squat', *xiē* 'rest', *guì* 'kneel', *tǎng* 'lie', *tíng* 'stop', and *shuì* 'sleep'. These verbs may occur with the durative aspect marker *-zhe* to signal the ongoing posture or physical disposition of an entity at a location. Sentences (137)–(141) will illustrate:

- (137) tā      zài      fāngzi      –      lǐ      zuò      –      zhe  
           3sg      at      house      –      in      sit      –      DUR

S/He is sitting in the house.

- (138) wǒ      zài      qiáng      –      shàng      zhàn      –      zhe  
           I      at      wall      –      on      stand      –      DUR

I am standing on the wall.

- (139) Lìsì zài kètīng – lì shuì -- zhe  
 Lisi at living:room – in sleep – DUR

Lisi is sleeping in the living room.

- (140) chēzi zài wàimian tíng – zhe  
 car at outside stop – DUR

The car is parked outside.

- (141) tā zài chuáng – shàng tǎng – zhe  
 3sg at bed – on lie – DUR

S/He is lying on the bed.

### C. Activity Verbs Signaling States Associated with Their Activity Meanings.

Consider the verb *ná* 'take'. It names an activity as it occurs in (142), and, as predicted by rule (i), it takes *zài* to express durativity:

- (142) tā zài ná bàozhǐ  
 3sg DUR take newspaper

S/He is {taking } newspapers.  
 {picking up }

On the other hand, *ná* could mean a state associated with the activity of 'taking', namely 'holding', as in (143); here durativity is expressed by the suffix *-zhe*:

- (143) tā ná – zhe liǎng – běn shū  
 3sg take – DUR two – CL book

S/He is holding two books.

Consider another example, *guà* 'hang', which may be an activity verb, as shown in the imperative sentence (144):

- (144) nǐ bǎ nèi – ge zhàopiàn guà zài zhèr  
 you BA that – CL photograph hang at here

Hang that photograph here.

The same verb, however, can also be used to name a state associated with the activity of hanging, as in (145):

- (145) qíáng    –    shàng    guà    –    zhe    yí    –  
           wall    –        on    hang    –     DUR    one    –  
                   ge    zhàopiàn  
                   CL    photograph

There is a photograph hanging on the wall.

A further example is the verb *chuān*, which can mean either 'put on' or 'be wearing'. With the former meaning, the verb is an activity verb, but with the latter meaning, the verb signals a state associated with the action 'put on'. The pair of sentences in (146) illustrates this semantic contrast:

- (146) a.    tā    zài    chuān    pí    –    xié  
               3sg    DÜR    put:on    leather    –    shoe

S/He is putting on his/her leather shoes.

- b.    tā    chuān    –    zhe    pí    –    xié  
       3sg    wear    –     DUR    leather    –    shoe

S/He is wearing his/her leather shoes.

In (146) *a*, the verb *chuān*, as an activity verb, takes *zài* as the durative aspect marker; in (146) *b*, *chuān* denotes a state and takes *-zhe* as the durative aspect marker.

We can now express a rule with regard to an activity verb that denotes a state associated with its activity meaning:

(ii) An activity verb that signals a state associated with its activity meaning takes *-zhe* as the durative aspect marker.

Here are some further examples of this stative usage of activity verbs:

- (147) zài    mén    –    kǒu    –    de    bōli    –  
           at    door    –    mouth    –    ASSOC    glass    –  
                   shàng    xiě    –    zhe    sì    –    ge    zì  
                   on    write    –     DUR    four    –    CL    character

On the glass in the doorway are written four characters.

(148) wǒ wèn tā qián dōu zài nǎlǐ gē - zhe  
 I ask 3sg money all at where put - DUR

I asked him/her where all his/her money had been put.

With regard to the rule stated in (ii), it should be pointed out that not all activity verbs can be used to denote a state. For example, *tiào* 'jump' is an action and is, therefore, an activity verb, but it cannot be used to describe a state. Thus (149) *a* is acceptable, but (149) *b* is not:

(149) *a.* Zhāngsān zài tiào  
 Zhangsan DUR jump

Zhangsan is jumping.

*b.* \*Zhāngsān tiào - zhe  
 Zhangsan jump - DUR

As is clear from the description in 6.2.1.B and the rule stated in (ii), the verbs that take *-zhe* as the durative aspect marker do not signal activity. On the other hand, not all nonactivity verbs can take the durative aspect marker *-zhe*. In fact, most of the nonactivity verbs cannot take any durative aspect marker. Thus examples (131)–(135) would be equally unacceptable if *zài* were replaced with the verbal suffix *-zhe*, as we can show by replacing *zài* with *-zhe* in (131):

(150) \*tā pàng - zhe  
 3sg fat - DUR

#### D. *-zhe* . . . *ne* as an Intensifier

There is another usage of *-zhe* which is distinct from the durative function of *-zhe* discussed here: it may function as an intensifier together with the sentence-final particle *ne*. For example,

(151) nèi - ge fángjiān hēi ~ zhe ne  
 that - CL room black ~ INT REx

That room is pretty dark.

The meaning of (151) makes it clear that *-zhe* in such a context does not signal duration. Sentences like (151), however, appear only in certain northern dialects of



Mandarin. In those dialects in which it occurs, *-zhe* as an intensifier may be suffixed to any adjectival verb.

### 6.2.2 Complex Sentences with the Durative Aspect Marker *-zhe*

Finally, the durative aspect marker *-zhe* can also be used in the first of two clauses to signal that one event provides a durative background for another event. For example, in sentence (152),

- (152) xiǎo      gǒu      yáo      —      zhe      wěiba      pǎo      le  
           small      dog      shake      —      DUR      tail      run      CRS

The small dog ran away wagging its tail.

the wagging of the tail is presented as the ongoing background to the running away.

The same can be said about these additional examples:

- (153) tā      guāng      —      zhe      jiǎo      shàng      —      kè  
           3sg      bare      —      DUR      foot      ascend      —      class

S/He goes to class barefooted.

- (154) tā      kǔ      —      zhe      pǎo      huí      jiā      qu      le  
           3sg      cry      —      DUR      run      return      home      go      CRS

S/He ran home crying.

- (155) nèi      —      zhāng      huà      dēi      dēng      —      zhe  
           that      —      CL      painting      must      step      —      DUR  
                   yǐzi      guà  
                   chair      hang

That painting, you have to stand on a chair to hang.

- (156) tā      nào      —      zhe      yào      mǎi      dàyī  
           3sg      fuss      —      DUR      want      buy      coat

S/He made a fuss about wanting to buy a coat.

(157)	tā	<u>xié</u>	—	<u>zhe</u>	yǎn	<u>xiào</u>	—	<u>zhe</u>
	3sg	slant	—	DUR	eye	smile	—	DUR
		kàn	wǒ					
		look	I					

Smiling, s/he looked at me out of the corner of his/her eye.

(158)	tā	<u>tāng</u>	—	<u>zhe</u>	kàn	bào
	3sg	lie	—	DUR	look	paper

S/He was lying down reading the newspaper.

In this construction *-zhe* can be used with many different types of verbs, not just those that take it in simple sentences. For example, the verb *tīng* 'listen' would normally take *zài* as its durative marker, since it is an activity verb:

(159)	tā	<u>zài</u>	tīng	shōuyīnjī
	3sg	DUR	listen	radio

S/He is listening to the radio.

When *tīng* provides the ongoing background for another event, though, it can occur with *-zhe*, as in:

(160)	tā	tīng	—	<u>zhe</u>	shōuyīnjī	shuì	—
	3sg	listen	—	DUR	radio	sleep	—
		zháo	LE				
		achieve	PFV/CRS				

S/He fell asleep listening to the radio.

In order for an event to be durative, however, it must extend over a certain period of time. Thus, verbs that describe instantaneous, nonrepeatable activities cannot occur as the durative-background verb:

(161)	*tā	<u>sǐ</u>	—	<u>zhe</u>	fā	—	shāo
	3sg	die	—	DUR	put:forth	—	fever
(162)	*Xīnměi	<u>diào</u>	—	<u>zhe</u>	qián	shēngqì	
	Xinmei	lose	—	DUR	money	angry	

Since there are two verbs in complex sentences with *-zhe*, we might expect that each could be negated, with the scope properties differing according to which verb the negative occurs with (see section 12.1 of chapter 12 for a discussion of the scope of negation). Indeed, sentences (163) and (164) show that this expectation is justified:

(163) tā      bu      tǎng      -      zhe      kàn      -      bào  
          3sg      not      lie      -      DUR      read      -      paper

S/He doesn't read the paper lying down.

(164) tā      bì      -      zhe      yǎn      bu      shuō      -      huà  
          3sg      close      -      DUR      eye      not      say      -      speech

S/He had his/her eyes closed, and s/he was not saying a word.

In (163), since the negative particle *bu* precedes the entire verb phrase, that entire verb phrase is what is being negated: the whole activity of reading the paper while lying down is what s/he doesn't do. In (164), on the other hand, it is 'not saying a word' that is stated against the background of his/her eyes being closed.

Here is a further example of each type of negation:

(165) wǒ      yìxiàng      bu      guāng      -      zhe      jiǎo      pǎo  
          I      always      not      bare      -      DUR      foot      run

I never run barefooted.

(166) tā      kū      -      zhe      bu      chī      -      fàn  
          3sg      cry      -      DUR      not      eat      -      food

S/He was crying and not eating.

Auxiliaries, on the other hand, normally occur before the *-zhe* verb in this construction, since it is generally the entire activity with its background which the speaker is claiming that the subject must, should, or is able to do. For example:

(167) tā      néng      qí      -      zhe      mǎ      shè      -      jiàn  
          3sg      can      ride      -      DUR      horse      shoot      -      arrow

S/He can shoot an arrow while riding a horse.

- (168) tā yīnggāi zuò — zhe dǎ — zì  
 3sg should sit — DUR hit — word

S/He should type sitting down.

### 6.3 The Experiential Aspect

The aspect suffix *-guo* means that an event has been *experienced* with respect to some reference time.<sup>8</sup> When the reference time is left unspecified, then *-guo* signals that the event has been experienced at least once at some indefinite time, which is usually the indefinite past:

- (169) wǒ chī — guo Riběn fàn  
 I eat — EXP Japan food

I've eaten Japanese food (before).

Negating a sentence with *-guo* denies that such an event has ever been experienced, and questioning it asks whether the event has ever been experienced:

- (170) wǒ méi chī — guo Riběn fàn  
 I not eat — EXP Japan food

I have never eaten Japanese food (before).

- (171) nǐ chī — guo Riběn fàn méiyǒu?  
 you eat — EXP Japan food not  
*Did eat*

Have you ever eaten Japanese food (before)?

Here are some further examples:

- (172) wǒ — de yá yě téng — guo  
 I — GEN tooth also hurt — EXP

*once*

My teeth have hurt before, too.

- (173) Zhāngsān jié — guo hūn méiyǒu?  
 Zhangsan marry — EXP marriage not

Has Zhangsan ever been married?

*Was*

- (174) wǒ shuāi - duàn - guo tuǐ  
 I fall - break - EXP leg

I fell and broke my leg once.

In other words, the focus of a sentence with *-guo* is not that an event has taken place, but that it has taken place at least once. The contrast between *-le* and *-guo* makes this distinction quite clear: the perfective *-le* signaling a bounded event typically conveys the message that the event took place, while *-guo* signals that an event has been experienced at least once. Consider the following examples as illustrations of this contrast:

- (175) a. tā dédào - le yī - <sup>项</sup>ge héping jiǎngjīn  
 3sg obtain - PFV one - CL peace prize  
*has*  
 S/He won a peace prize.

- b. tā dédào - guo yī - ge héping jiǎngjīn  
 3sg obtain - EXP one - CL peace prize  
*one* *won*  
 S/He has had the experience of winning a peace prize.

- (176) a. nǐ kàn - jian - (le) wǒ -  
 you see - perceive - (PFV) I -  
 de yǎnjìng ma ?  
 GEN glasses Q

Have you seen my glasses (recently, around here? I can't find them)?

- b. nǐ kàn - jian - guo wǒ -  
 you see - perceive - EXP I -  
 de yǎnjìng ma ?  
 GEN glasses Q  
*Did*  
 Have you ever seen my glasses?

(177) a. tā zài Rìběn zhù — le sì —  
 3sg at Japan live — PFV four —  
 ge yuè  
 CL month

S/He lived in Japan for four months.

b. tā zài Rìběn zhù — guo sì —  
 3sg at Japan live — EXP four —  
 ge yuè  
 CL month

*one*  
 S/He has had the experience of living in Japan for four months.

In the sentences with *-le*, the focus is on the event being viewed as a whole, which often leads to the inference that the event has already occurred, while in those with *-guo*, the focus is on whether the event has ever been experienced.

All the examples of *-guo* we have looked at so far have involved sentences with no reference time specified, and the translation of these sentences indicated that the event had been experienced at least once in the past, that is, prior to the time of speech. When a reference time is provided, then the focus of the sentence is on the event's having been experienced at least once with respect to that time. If there is no reference time specified or if the specified reference time is in the past, then the focus of the sentence with *-guo* is on the event's having been experienced at least once and *being over now*. The following two sentences convey similar messages, but the focus is different:

*去年*  
 (178) a. tā qùnián dào Zhōngguó qù — le  
 3sg last:year to China go — PFV

S/He went to China last year.

*去过*  
 b. tā qùnián dào Zhōngguó qù — guo  
 3sg last:year to China go — EXP

*had been*  
 S/He went to China last year.

The focus of sentence (178) *a* is simply on the fact that this event happened. Nothing is said about whether *s/he* is still there. Sentence (178) *b*, on the other hand, assumes that *s/he* went to China and claims that this took place at least once during last year and is now over; this is why *b*, but not *a*, implies that *s/he* is now back from China. The subject's return is not part of the *meaning* of *-guo*, but it is part of the *message* of the *-guo* sentence because we can infer it from the meaning of *-guo*: if something has been experienced, it is over.

The basic distinction helps in understanding a number of similar pairs. For example, consider (179):

(179) *a.* wǒ jīnnián xuǎn - le Wú Jiàoshòu  
 I this:year select - PFV Wu professor  
 - de kè  
 - GEN class

I { took } Professor Wu's class this year.  
 { am taking }  
 have taken

*b.* wǒ jīnnián xuǎn - guo Wú Jiàoshòu  
 I this:year select - EXP Wu professor  
 - de kè  
 - GEN class

took  
 I have taken Professor Wu's course this year.

The *a* sentence in this pair provides the news that the speaker enrolled in Professor Wu's class, which might still be going on. The *b* sentence, with *-guo*, assumes that the speaker was enrolled in the course and claims that the experience is now over.

Finally, we can see why sentence (180) expresses the message that he no longer loves Miss Huang:

(180) tā ài - guo Huáng Xiǎojiě  
 3sg love - EXP Huang Miss

He once loved Miss Huang.

Once more we infer that if something has been experienced, it is over.

Now that the experiential meaning of *-guo* and the normal inferences that follow from it are clear, we can easily understand certain restrictions on its use. First, *-guo* makes no sense with verbs naming events that are not repeatable:

- (181) \*tā sǐ – guo  
3sg die – EXP

(\*S/He has died before.)

- (182) \*tā lǎo – guo  
3sg old – EXP

(\*S/He has been old before.)

Comparing (181) and (182) to (183), we can see that (181) and (182) are unacceptable because 'death' and 'being old' are not repeatable, while (183) is acceptable because 'being fat' is repeatable.

- (183) tā pàng – guo  
3sg fat – EXP

S/He has been fat before.

Second, because a person cannot be ordered to "experience" something (though s/he can certainly be ordered to *do* something), imperatives with *-guo* typically make no sense:

- (184) \*hē – guo chá !  
drink – EXP tea

It is conceivable, however, that someone might comment that an event must be experienced *again*, so that we might hear an imperative sentence like:

- (185) zhèi – ge dēi cóng – xīn zuò – guo  
this – CL must from – new do – EXP

This has to be done once again.

Third, *-guo* is not used in a context in which the focus is on the simple fact that an event or a series of events occurred. These are contexts that call for a perfective



marker, such as *-le*, or a perfectivizing expression. For example:

- (186) zuótiān Zhāngsān lái shuō tā xǐhuan gǒu  
 yesterday Zhangsan come say 3sg like dog
- sùoyǐ wǒ jīntiān sòng { -le } tā  
 therefore I today give { \*-guo } 3sg  
 { -PFV }  
 { \*-EXP }
- yi - tiáo gǒu  
 one - CL dog

Yesterday Zhangsan came to say that he likes dogs, so today I gave him a dog.

- (187) wǒ jiějie qùnián jiéhūn , jīn - nián  
 I elder:sister last:year marry this - year
- shēng { -le } yi - ge háizi  
 give:birth { \*-guo } one - CL child  
 { -PFV }  
 { \*-EXP }

My elder sister got married last year, and this year she gave birth to a child.

- (188) wǒ zuótiān wǎnshàng kàn { -le } diànshì , féng { -le }  
 I yesterday evening watch { \*-guo } TV sew { \*-guo }  
 { -PFV } { \*-EXP }
- liǎng - shuāng wàzi jiu qù shuì  
 two - pair sock then go sleep
- jiào  
 - sleep

Last night I watched TV, sewed two pairs of socks, and went to bed.

To sum up, we can say that the aspect marker *-guo* serves to signal that an event has been experienced at least once. Because of this basic meaning, it is not used for events that cannot in principle happen more than once, it is not found in imperatives, nor does it occur in sentences whose focus is the simple fact that an event happened.

#### 6.4 The Delimitative Aspect

The *delimitative aspect* means doing an action ‘‘a little bit,’’ or for a short period of time.<sup>9</sup> This aspect is structurally represented by the reduplication of the verb (see section 3.1.1.A of chapter 3); this reduplication may optionally involve the morpheme *yi* ‘one’ between the verb and the reduplicated syllable, as shown in (189)–(195):

- (189) nǐ      shì      –      (yī-)      shì      kàn  
          you      try      –      (one-)      try      see

Try it a little and see.

- (190) zhèi      –      ge      huā      děi      yāng      –      (yī-)  
          this      –      CL      flower      must      cultivate      –      (one-)
- yāng      cái      huì      kāi  
 cultivate      only:then      will      open

This flower must be cultivated a little before it will bloom.

- (191) nǐ      xǐhuān      chàng      –      gē ,      nà      nǐ      jiù  
          you      like      sing      –      song      then      you      just
- chàng      –      (yī-)      chàng      ba !  
          sing      –      (one-)      sing      SA

You like to sing, so go ahead and sing a little!

- (192) nǐmen wèishenme bu xiān tāolùn – taolùn zhèi  
          you:PL      why      not      first      discuss      –      discuss      this
- ge      wèntí      ne ?  
          –      CL      problem      REx

Why don't you first discuss this problem a little?

- (193) tā    shuì    –    (yi-)    shuì    jiu    hào  
 3sg    sleep    –    (one-)    sleep    then    well

S/He will be well after sleeping a little.

- (194) tāmen    tīng    –    (yi-)    tīng    Bèiduōfēn    –    de  
 they    listen    –    (one-)    listen    Beethoven    –    ASSOC
- yīnyuè    jiù    xīhuān  
 music    then    like

After they listen to the music of Beethoven a little, they'll like it.

- (195) wǒ    wèn    –    (yi-)    wèn    zài    juéding  
 I    ask    –    (one-)    ask    then    decide

I'll decide after I inquire a little.

When *yi* 'one' is used in the reduplication, the *yi* plus the reduplicated syllable functions like a quantity adverbial of the type discussed in section 8.5 of chapter 8 on adverbs,<sup>10</sup> as in:

- (196) zhèi    –    běn    xiǎoshuō    wǒ    kàn    –    le    sān    cì  
 this    –    CL    novel    I    see    –    PFV    three    time

This novel I've read three times.

One intriguing piece of evidence suggesting that *yi* plus the reduplicated syllable does indeed function grammatically as a quantity adverbial is the fact that the perfective aspect marker *-le* may appear after the first verb in reduplication with *yi*, but not in reduplication without *yi*; for example:

- (197) a.    tā    shuì    –    le    –    yi    –    shuì  
           3sg    sleep    –    PFV    –    one    –    sleep

S/He slept a little.

- b.    \*tā    shuì    –    le    –    shuì  
       3sg    sleep    –    PFV    –    sleep

This difference between (197) *a* and (197) *b* exists because, as we observed in section 6.1.1, the perfective *-le* can occur with a verb whose meaning is bounded by quantified phrase, but does not occur with a verb whose meaning is not bounded at all.

Another piece of evidence in favor of viewing the *yi* plus the reduplicated syllable as an adverbial is that without the *yi*, the reduplicated syllable is normally destressed and receives a neutral tone, but with *yi*, though not shown in (189)–(195), the reduplicated syllable retains its normal stress and its full tone, as seen in (197) *a*. Since quantity adverbials are generally stressed and have their normal tones, this too suggests that the combination of *yi* plus reduplicated syllable is grammatically a quantity adverbial.

If the verb being reduplicated is one signaling an activity leading to a natural end point, such as *cāi* ‘guess’ or *māi* ‘buy’, the delimitative aspect may suggest ‘trying to (verb)’, as in the following example:

- (198)    *nǐ*      *cāi*      –      *yi*      –      *cāi*  
           you      guess    –      one      –      guess

You try to guess.

Since the meaning of the delimitative aspect involves doing something ‘‘a little bit,’’ several constraints on the types of verbs that may be reduplicated to indicate this aspect follow. First, the verb must be an activity verb. An activity verb may denote an action, as in *dā* ‘hit’, *zǒu* ‘walk’, *kàn* ‘look’, *tiào* ‘jump’, or it may imply activity of some sort, as in *xiǎoxīn* ‘be careful’. Thus, nonactivity verbs, such as *pàng* ‘fat’ and *yǒu* ‘exist’, cannot be reduplicated to show delimitative aspect:

- (199)    \**nǐ*      *pàng*      –      *pàng*  
           you      fat          –      fat

- (200)    \**wūzi*    –      *li*      *yǒu*    –      *you*    *yi*    –      *ge*    *hóuzi*  
           house –      in    exist    –      exist    one    –      CL monkey

Second, those activity verbs that can undergo reduplication for the delimitative aspect must be volitional verbs. We will define *volitional verbs* as those that under normal circumstances imply volition on the part of the subject. For example, consider the English verb *hit*. It implies volition under normal circumstances, although one can say, ‘‘I didn’t intend to hit him; it was an accident,’’ where the lack of volition is made clear. On the other hand, the verbs *forget* and *fall* are not

volitional, because under normal circumstances they imply a lack of volition. In other words, a volitional verb normally implies volition if the lack of volition is not explicitly stated, and a nonvolitional verb normally implies the lack of volition if there is no explicit statement to the contrary. Since the delimitative aspect means that the subject does something a little bit, it follows that only volitional verbs, that is, those expressing events over which one has some control, can be reduplicated to show delimitative aspect. Thus (201) is unacceptable because the verb is nonvolitional, whereas (202) is acceptable because the verb is volitional.

(201) \*nǐ wàng — wang tā  
 you forget — forget he

(202) nǐ wén — wen zhèi — duo huā  
 you smell — smell this — CL flower

Smell this flower a little.

Third, a resultative verb compound (see section 3.2.3 of chapter 3) cannot be reduplicated for delimitative aspect. This is because the function of a resultative verb compound is to signal that a given event leads to a certain result. The focus on the result of the event with these compounds is incompatible with the delimitative aspect meaning of doing something for a little while. Hence, the resultative verb compound cannot be reduplicated in the delimitative aspect. Sentence (203) is an illustration:

(203) \*nǐ dǎ — kai — dǎ — kai  
 you hit — open — hit — open

nèi — ge mén  
 that — CL door

Finally, the delimitative aspect is particularly likely to occur in requests, as in:

(204) qǐng nǐ bǎ mén kāi — (yī-) kai  
 please you BA door open — (one-) open

Please open the door.

(205)	nǐ	yào	kàn	—	(yī-)	kan
	you	want	read	—	(one-)	read
		zhèi	—	pian	wénzhāng	
		this	—	CL	article	

You should read this article.

When one wishes to soften a request so that it will not appear harsh, the delimitative aspect is a perfect device to use, since it reduces the ‘‘weight’’ of the request on the hearer by saying that the action can be done ‘‘just a little.’’

### 6.5 Summary

The functions of *-le*, *zài*, *-guo*, and reduplication have been presented here in terms of the concept of aspect, which signals how an event or situation is to be viewed. We can summarize our findings this way:

1. *-Le*: a bounded event viewed in its entirety.
2. *Zài*: an ongoing activity.
3. *-Zhe*: an ongoing posture or state resulting from an activity.
4. *-Guo*: an event viewed as having been experienced at least once.
5. Reduplication: an event viewed as happening a little bit.

### Notes

1. This discussion is adapted from the introduction to Comrie (1976), to which the reader is referred for further discussion of aspect in a number of languages. In writing this chapter, we have also taken examples and descriptions from the following sources: Baron (1970), Teng (1975a), Spanos (1977, 1979), Rohsenow (1978), G.-T. Chen (1979), Kwan-Terry (1979), and Chao (1968), except that we do not agree with Chao’s statement (p. 246) that *-le* expresses ‘‘completed action.’’ ‘‘Perfective,’’ as we will see, is not the same as ‘‘completed.’’ We have also benefited from discussion with R. McMillan Thompson, Paul Hopper, and Bernard Comrie.
2. See Spanos (1977, 1979) for extensive discussion of speakers’ variation in the use of *-le*. Example (28) is taken up in Spanos (1977:61–64).
3. If ‘*le*’ occurs at the end of this sentence, we have
 

(i)	tā	yào	sǐ	<u>le</u>
	3sg	want	die	CRS

S/He wants to die.

in which the sentence-final *le* signals the current relevance of the sentence in the discourse context. It should be clear that the verb *sǐ* ‘die’ in (i) is still in the irrealis mode, which is not affected by the presence of *le*.

4. Combinations of *-guo* and ‘‘*le*’’ do occur in sentence-final position, but these instances of ‘‘*le*’’ represent the use of the sentence-final *le*, not the perfective aspect *-le*. Here is a typical example of *-guo* together with the sentence-final *le*:

(i)	zhèi	–	piān	wénzhāng	wǒ	kàn
	this	–	CL	article	I	read
		–	<u>guo</u>	<u>le</u>		
		–	EXP	CRS		

I've read this article.

We have two ways of knowing that this ‘‘*le*’’ is the sentence-final CRS *le* and not the perfective aspect *-le*. One is that the sentence becomes unacceptable if the direct object is positioned after the verb:

(ii)	*wǒ	kàn	–	guo	le	zhèi
	I	read	–	EXP	CRS	this
		–	piān	wénzhāng		
		–	CL	article		

If the ‘‘*le*’’ in (i) were the aspect marker *-le*, then sentence (ii) would be just as acceptable as (i). The second piece of evidence is that the *le* in (i) adds precisely the meaning of current relevance to sentence (i) which we expect of the sentence-final *le* (again, see chapter 7 for a full discussion of the meaning of *le*).

5. There is one exception: *-le* can occur in negative imperatives; see section 6.1.3 of this chapter. Note also that, as with *-guo*, *bu* can occur with the sentence-final *le*, as in:

(i)	nà	wǒ	bu	qù	le
	in:that:case	I	not	go	CRS

In that case I'm not going to go. *any more*

Again, see chapter 7 for discussion.

6. This section contains a number of ideas inspired by the work of G.-T. Chen (1979), Marney (1977:38–52), Chu (1978), and Teng (1979b).
7. In this section, some example sentences are translated into English in the past tense and some in the present tense. It is crucial to remember that Mandarin makes no tense distinction and that any of these examples could be understood either way. For the sake of readability, we will arbitrarily choose either an English present or English past translation and not give both each time.
8. This section has benefited from comments and examples in Ma (1977).
9. This section contains ideas from Chao (1968), from Wang (1947), and from unpublished work of Chui Lim Tsang, to whom the term *delimitative aspect* is also due.
10. As pointed out by Chao (1968:312).

## CHAPTER 7

# *Sentence-Final Particles*

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Most particles that occur in sentence-final position also occur in other contexts serving different functions. Although this chapter will include a discussion of those other functions of the particles in question, its main thrust concerns the semantic and pragmatic functions of the particles that occur in sentence-final position.

There are six sentence-final particles:

(1) <u>le</u>	'Currently Relevant State'
<u>ne</u>	'Response to Expectation'
<u>ba</u>	'Solicit Agreement'
<u>ou</u>	'Friendly Warning'
<u>a/ya</u>	'Reduce Forcefulness'
<u>ma</u>	'Question'

All of them are destressed and have the neutral tone. They typically occur in speech or in writings that reflect or recount conversations. Their semantic and pragmatic functions are elusive, and linguists have had considerable difficulty in arriving at a general characterization of each of them. In the following, we will present these particles one by one, except for *ma*, which is treated in chapter 18 on questions.

### 7.1 *le*

The sentence-final particle *le* in Mandarin is special for two reasons.<sup>1</sup> First, it can co-occur with certain other particles, such as *a*, *ou*, and the question particle *ma*, all of which, if they occur, must follow *le*:



- (2) A: Lǎo Wáng yě shì xuéshēng ma ?  
 Old Wang also be student Q

Is Lao Wang also a student?

- B: tā dāngrán shì le a<sup>2</sup>  
 3sg of:course be CRS RF

Of course s/he is!

- (3) tā mǎi fángzi le ma ?  
 3sg buy house CRS Q

Did s/he buy a house?

- (4) wǒ gàosu tā nèi — jian  
 I tell 3sg that — CL  
 shì le ou  
 matter CRS FW

I told him/her about that matter.

Second, and more important, *le* is special because it is commonly used in ordinary conversation and at the same time is difficult for the student of Mandarin to master. It seems to appear in a great variety of speech situations with an equally great variety of semantic implications, and no one has yet succeeded in tying these usages of *le* together to arrive at a general statement of its semantic and pragmatic function in the language. We will try to do this here.

In this section, then, we will begin by discussing the communicative function of *le*, showing just what it contributes to messages; then we will show where *le* is not used; finally, we will examine situations where the sentence-final *le* is hard to distinguish from the perfective aspect suffix *-le* in sentence-final position. (Throughout this book we are using the hyphenated form *-le*, glossed 'PFV', to refer to the perfective aspect verbal suffix—see chapter 6—and the unhyphenated form *le*, glossed 'CRS', to refer to the sentence-final particle.)

### 7.1.1 The Communicative Function of *le*

The basic communicative function of *le* is to signal a 'Currently Relevant State' (abbreviated as CRS). What this means is that *le* claims that a *state of affairs has special current relevance with respect to some particular situation*.

Let's look at each part of "Currently Relevant State" in a little more detail, starting with "Currently." The *le* says that some state of affairs is *current* with respect to some particular situation. When no other situation is mentioned, then it is always assumed that the statement signaled by the sentence with the *le* is relevant to *now*, that is, to the situation of the speech context in which the speaker and hearer are engaged. This is by far the most common case.

If another situation is explicitly mentioned, then the statement signaled by the sentence with the *le* is claimed to be relevant to that particular situation. Let's look at some examples. If someone calls Ms. Liao, who is out, the person who answers the phone may say:

(5) tā chū — qù mǎi dōngxi le  
3sg exit — go buy thing CRS

She's gone shopping.

The *le* says that her having gone shopping is current with respect to some particular situation, and since no situation is explicitly mentioned, it is assumed that her having gone shopping is relevant to the present, that is, that she is out as of the present situation in which the telephone conversation is taking place. On the other hand, suppose two people are discussing whether Ms. Liao made a long-distance telephone call two days ago; in this situation one can say:

(6) nèi tiān tā chū — qu  
that day 3sg exit — go  
  
mǎi dōngxi le  
buy thing CRS

That day she went out shopping.

meaning that the state of her having gone shopping was relevant to the situation of 'that day' in the past. Here are two similar examples:

- (7) qián yī - ge xīngqī piào dōu  
 before one - CL week ticket all
- mài - guāng LE<sup>3</sup>  
 sell - gone PFV/CRS

Two weeks ago, the tickets were (i.e., had become) all sold out.

- (8) nèi - ge shíhòu juéde yǒu  
 that - CL time feel have
- yídiǎn è ( le )  
 a:little hungry ( CRS )

(We) felt (we had become) hungry at that time.

By the same token, if someone wants to see you next month, but you know that you will be in Japan at that time, you can say:

- (9) xià - ge yuè wǒ jiu  
 next - CL month I then
- zài Rìběn ( le )  
 at Japan ( CRS )

Next month I'll be in Japan.

Here the state of your being in Japan will be current in the situation specified by 'next month'.

In fact, the situation can even be hypothetical, and *le* will then relate the proposition signaled by the sentence to that hypothetical situation. For example, if you ask a Chinese if s/he is an American, s/he can say:

- (10) wǒ shì Měiguó rén jiu bu huì shuō  
 I be America person then not likely speak
- zhème zāo de Yīngwén le  
 such bad NOM English CRS

If I were an American, then I wouldn't be speaking such bad English.

Here, the *le* is claiming that under precisely the hypothetical conditions of the speaker's being an American, the state of his/her not speaking such bad English would hold (see chapter 23 on sentence-linking for a discussion of conditional sentences).

Now let's look at the examples presented so far from the point of view of "Relevance." This is a notion that is very much a matter of the context in which the *le* sentence occurs; *le* claims that some state of affairs signaled by the sentence is *relevant* for the speaker and the hearer, and it is assumed that they can infer from the context in just what ways it is relevant. In the situation we set up for sentence (5):

(5) tā chū – qu mǎi dōngxi le  
3sg exit – go buy thing CRS

She's gone shopping.

the state of her having gone shopping is clearly relevant to the caller's desire to talk with her: the caller can't do so, because she isn't here. Similarly, in discussing whether she made a phone call, the state of her having gone shopping in sentence (6) is *relevant* because, in this context, it establishes that she couldn't have made that phone call.

In exactly the same way, in the context of someone wanting to see you next month, sentence (9) is *relevant* because it claims that the state of your being in Japan will prevent that person from being able to see you, and in (10), the Chinese person's hypothetical statement about his/her bad English is relevant in denying your assumption that s/he is an American.

Here is a minimal pair that shows clearly the difference between a simple statement and the statement plus the information that it is relevant to something going on now. Sentence (11) *a* expresses a simple statement:

(11) a. zhèi – ge guā hěn tián  
this – CL melon very sweet

This melon is very sweet.

Sentence (11) *b*, with *le*, however, expresses much more:

b. zhèi – ge guā hěn tián le  
this – CL melon very sweet CRS

This melon is very sweet.

Though not conveyed by the English translation, (11) *b* means that the sweetness of the melon is relevant for the current situation. Thus, for example, one could say (11) *b* if one had guessed that the melon would be sweet and found upon eating it that it was indeed sweet, or if, conversely, one had guessed that it wouldn't be sweet, but discovered while tasting it that the guess was wrong. One could even say (11) *b* if one wanted to announce a new "discovery" of the sweetness of the melon or if one wanted the hearer to discover its sweetness.

Finally, one of the most frequently heard questions in the Mandarin-speaking world is:

- (12)    nī      chī      -      guo      fān      ( le )      méiyóu ?  
           you     eat     -     EXP     food    ( CRS )     not

Have you eaten?

Given the cultural concern for being generous to friends, the current relevance of this question in its natural context is obvious. The use of *le*, then, always includes the dimension of relevance.

The third concept contained in the definition of *le* is that of "State." This means that *le* always treats an event signaled by the sentence as a state of affairs and claims that that state is currently relevant to some situation. Let's use (5) once more as an illustration:

- (5)    tā      chū      -      qu      mǎi      dōngxi      le  
           she     exit     -      go      buy      thing      CRS

She's gone shopping.

The verb phrase *chū-qu mǎi dōngxi* 'go out to buy things' involves an action, but sentence (5), with *le*, is not talking about the *action* of her going out or buying. It concerns, rather, the *state* of her having gone shopping and its relevance to the present situation.

Here is a striking contrast that illustrates this difference: if someone wants to tell you what s/he did simply by describing an action, s/he will use a sentence like (13) *a*:

- (13) *a*    wǒ      hē      -      le      sān      bēi      kāfēi  
           I        drink    -      PFV    three    cup     coffee

I drank three cups of coffee.

Sentence (13) *b*, with *le*, expresses, on the other hand, something quite different:

*b.*    wō      hē      –      le      sān      bēi      kāfēi      le  
          I      drink      –      PFV      three      cup      coffee      CRS

I've drunk three cups of coffee. *duàn lǐng*

Sentence (13) *b* does *not* say simply that s/he drank three cups of coffee; that message is conveyed by (13) *a*. What (13) *b* says is that the state of his/her having drunk three cups of coffee is relevant to the current situation, because, let's say, you want the speaker to have another cup, and s/he's telling you why s/he shouldn't. Or s/he could say (13) *b* to show that s/he likes coffee, if you claim that s/he doesn't. Or s/he could simply be telling you that as of the present time, that is, *relevant to the present moment*, the number of cups of coffee s/he has consumed is three.

We've examined the three parts of the definition of *le*, 'Currently Relevant State'. Every occurrence of *le* expresses this function, but the way in which it does so is not always obvious and therefore must be studied carefully. What we find is that the situations in which *le* expresses CRS can be broadly grouped into five categories: that is, a sentence with *le* can convey CRS if the state of affairs it represents:

- A. Is a changed state *tiān qì biàn huà*
- X B. Corrects a wrong assumption
- C. Reports progress so far
- X D. Determines what will happen next
- X E. Is the speaker's total contribution to the conversation at that point

Each of these five categories represents a slightly different type of situation in which *le* indicates that a state of affairs signaled by the sentence is relevant. Once these five types of situations are understood, the use of *le* becomes a reasonably straightforward matter. Let's look at each of these five categories of situation in detail.

#### A. Change of State

One of the most common ways in which a state of affairs is relevant to the present situation is when that state of affairs represents a change from an earlier state.<sup>4</sup> This means that some state of affairs holds *now* which didn't hold before. In each case the relevance of the new state of affairs hinges on the fact that it is a change.

- (14) a. tā      zhīdao      nèi      –      ge      xiāoxi  
          3sg      know      that      –      CL      news

S/He knows about that piece of news.

- b. tā      zhīdao      nèi      –      ge      xiāoxi      le  
          3sg      know      that      –      CL      news      CRS

S/He knows about that piece of news now (s/he didn't before).

- (15) a. (in response to being asked whether one knows about a meeting)

wǒ      zhīdào  
 I      know

Yes, I know.

- b. The speaker, who went to the wrong room once before, has been reminded which room the meeting will be held in.)

wǒ      zhīdào      le  
 I      know      CRS

Now I know (i.e., I have learned).

- (16) a. tā      táo      –      de      –      chū      –      lái  
          3sg      escape      –      can      –      exit      –      come

S/He can escape.

- b. tā      táo      –      de      –      chū  
          3sg      escape      –      can      –      exit  
          –      lái      le  
          –      come      CRS

S/He can escape now (s/he couldn't before).

(17) a. (to a headwaiter who has asked how many people there are)

wōmen	èr	—	shí	—	sì	—	ge
we	two	—	ten	—	four	—	CL

There are twenty-four of us.

b. (one tour guide to another after the last tourist has finally climbed on the bus)

wōmen	èr	—	shí	—	sì	
we	two	—	ten	—	four	
		—	ge		<u>le</u>	
		—	CL		CRS	

Now there are twenty-four of us.

(18) a. wǒ yào qù  
I will go

I'm going to go. (a simple statement of intention)

b. wǒ yào qù le  
I will go CRS

I'm going now (i.e., you'd better hurry up if you want to come along).

Here are some further examples:

(19) yǐjīng sān — diǎn le  
already three — o'clock CRS

It's already three o'clock.

(20) xià yǔ le  
descend rain CRS

It's raining (now).



- (21) wǒ      lèi      le  
I      tired      CRS

I'm tired (now).

- (22) wǒ      dùzi      è      le  
I      stomach      hungry      CRS

I'm hungry (now).

- (23) wǒ      yá      téng      le  
I      tooth      hurt      CRS

My tooth aches (now).

- (24) tàiyáng      chū      -      lái      le      ma ?  
sun      exit      -      come      CRS      Q

Has the sun come out?

- (25) wǒmen      fàngqì      nèi      -      zhǒng      shóuduàn      le  
we      give:up      that      -      kind      tactic      CRS

We've given up that kind of tactic by now.

- (26) tā      xǐng      -      lái      le  
3sg      awaken      -      come      CRS

S/He's awake (now).

- (27) diànbào      fā      le      ma ?  
telegram      issue      CRS      Q

Has the telegram been sent?



B: (looking through a booklet of phone numbers and finally finding it)

yǒu     le ,     yǒu     le  
 exist   CRS   exist   CRS

(Now I) have it.

(32) (pointing out an old house near campus)

zhèi    –    dòng      lóu      xiànzài    yǐjīng    bō  
 this    –    CL     building    now      already   transfer  
  
           gěi      wǒmen    xuéxiào    yòng      le  
           to        we        school     use       CRS

This building has now been transferred to our school to use.

(33) tiān      hēi      le  
 sky      black   CRS

It's dark (now).

(34) nǐ      kǒu      kě      le      me ?  
 you     mouth    thirsty   CRS     Q

Are you thirsty (now)?

(35) tā      fā      –      shāo      le  
 3sg     put:forth    –      fever    CRS

S/He has a fever (now).

(36) tā      hǎo      le  
 3sg     good    CRS

S/He's well (now).

(37) dào    Zhōngshān    Lù      le  
 arrive   Zhongshan   Road   CRS

Here we are at Zhongshan Road.

(38) (directed at someone serving food or pouring drinks)

gòu      le!  
 enough    CRS

That's enough (now)!

(39)    wō      hái zi      yǒu      yī      –      gē  
          I      child      exist      one      –      CL

         yá      huō dòng      le  
          tooth      loose      CRS

My child has a loose tooth.

It will be noticed that many of our examples contain instances of *le* with adjectives (see section 4.3.1 of chapter 4 for a discussion of the category ‘‘adjective’’). A good general rule is this: whenever one wishes to describe a new, *changed* state, as opposed to a *general* or *habitual* state, with an adjective, *le* should be used to imply that the state is new or newly noticed. In the following examples, the *a* sentences all have adjectival predicates expressing general or habitual states, while the *b* sentences have adjectival predicates expressing new states:

(40) *a.*    tā      hěn      gāo  
          3sg      very      tall

S/He's tall.

*b.*      tā      gāo      le  
          3sg      tall      CRS

S/He's gotten tall.

(41) *a.*    zhèi      –      duǒ      huā      hěn      hóng  
          this      –      CL      flower      very      red

This flower is red.

b. zhèi — duō huā hóng le  
 this — CL flower red CRS

This flower is now red (i.e., has turned red).

(42) a. zhèi — ge dìfang hěn ānjìng  
 this — CL place very peaceful

This place is very peaceful.

b. zhèi — ge dìfang hěn ānjìng le  
 this — CL place very peaceful CRS

This place has become very peaceful.

(43) a. zhèi — ge guā hěn tián  
 this — CL melon very sweet

This melon is sweet.

b. zhèi — ge guā tián le  
 this — CL melon sweet CRS

This melon is sweet now (i.e., it's ready to eat).

When an adjective with an inherent end point as part of its meaning (see section 6.1.1 of chapter 6) is used to convey a change of state, we have a situation in which the “*le*” is a combination of the perfective *-le* and the CRS *le*. We discuss this “*le*”, which we indicate by capital letters (*LE*), below in section 7.1.3. Here are a few examples:

(44) bīng dōu huà LE  
 ice all melted PFV/CRS

The ice all melted.

(45) zhèi — ge yǐzi huài LE  
 this — CL chair broken PFV/CRS

This chair broke.

- (46) wǒ — de bēizi zhà LE  
 I — GEN cup cracked PFV/CRS

My cup cracked.

- (47) tā huáiyùn LE  
 3sg pregnant PFV/CRS

She got pregnant.

- (48) língzi sī — pò LE  
 collar tear — broken PFV/CRS

The collar tore.

- (49) zhèi — ge zì xiě —  
 this — CL character write —

cuò LE  
 wrong PFV/CRS

This character was written wrong.

- (50) píjiǔ hē — guāng LE  
 beer drink — gone PFV/CRS

The beer got drunk up.

- (51) wǒ bèi dòng — zhù LE  
 I BEI freeze — hold:on PFV/CRS

I got frozen in.

This “change of state” message is very common with negative sentences. Again, when no time reference is named in a negative sentence with *le*, the new, changed situation is assumed to be relevant with respect to the speech context in which the sentence is uttered. First we give some minimal pairs, and then some further illustrative examples:

- (52) (waiter after having been asked whether the restaurant has any guōtiē 'pot stickers')

a. méi yǒu  
not exist

No.

b. méi yǒu le  
not exist CRS

Not anymore (i.e., we've run out).

- (53) (to person serving food)

a. wǒ bù chī  
I not eat

I'm not going to eat.

b. wǒ bù chī le  
I not eat CRS

I'm not going to eat anymore (either I've had enough food, or I've changed my mind regarding whether I'll eat—i.e., my not eating is a new situation).

- (54) a. tā kàn — bù — jiàn rén  
3sg look — can't — perceive person

S/He can't see people.

b. tā kàn — bù — jiàn rén le  
3sg see — can't — perceive person CRS

S/He can't see people anymore.

- (55) a. wǒ bù zhèi — yàng shuō — huà  
I not this — way talk — speech

I don't talk this way.

- b. wǒ bu zhèi — yàng shuō  
 I not this — way talk  
 — huà le  
 — speech CRS

I don't talk this way anymore.

- (56) a. xìnfēng — lǐ zhuāng — bu —  
 envelope — in fit — can't —  
 xià zhèi — xiē zhàopiàn  
 descend this — PL photo

These photos won't fit in this envelope.

- b. xìnfēng — lǐ zhuāng — bu — xià  
 envelope — in fit — can't — descend  
 zhèi — xiē zhàopiàn le  
 this — PL photo CRS

There's no more room in this envelope into which to fit these photos.

- (57) shíhou bu zǎo le  
 time not early CRS

It's not early anymore (i.e., it's getting late).

- (58) wǒ shízài huó — bu — xiàqù le  
 I really live — can't — continue CRS

I can't go on living anymore.

- (59) kěxi tā bu zài cūn — lǐ le  
 pity 3sg not at village — in CRS

It's a pity that s/he's no longer in the village.



(60) (after some discussion as to whether addressee should go to America)

ou	yuánlái	nǐ	fùqīn	yào	nǐ	qù ,
Oh	it:turns:out	your	father	want	you	go
	nà	wǒmen	bu	bì	tǎolùn	zhèi
	in:that:case	we	not	need	discuss	this
	—	jiàn	shì	<u>le</u>		
	—	CL	matter	CRS		

Oh, it turns out your father wants you to go—in that case, we don't need to discuss this matter anymore.

(61)	tā	jīnshì	de	lián	tā	tàitai
	3sg	near:sighted	CSC	even	3sg	wife
	dōu	rèn	—	bu	—	
	all	recognize	—	can't	—	
	chū	—	lái	<u>le</u>		
	exit	—	come	CRS		

He's so nearsighted he can't even recognize his wife, anymore.

(62)	bié	míhuò	tā	<u>le</u>
	don't	bewitch	3sg	CRS

Don't bewitch him/her anymore.

(63)	bié	mí	—	lù	<u>le</u>
	don't	lose	—	road	CRS

Don't lose your way (this time).

All the examples we've seen so far illustrate the change of state in terms of the present time, the time of speaking. As we mentioned earlier, however, if the sentence refers to another time, say, general time, as in (64)–(66), or future, as in (67)–(69), then the change of state is relevant to that general or future time. The relationship between the general or future time mentioned in the sentence and the

changed situation is typically marked by *jiu*, as the examples illustrate:

- (64) wèidao wǒ dǒng kěshi shuō yíngyǎng ,  
 flavor I understand but talk nutrition  
 wǒ jiu wàiháng le  
 I then be:layperson CRS

About flavor. I'm knowledgeable, but when we talk about nutrition, then (things change, and) I'm just a layperson.

- (65) A: Gōngguān zěnmē <sup>走</sup> qù ?  
 Gongguan how go

How do you get to Gongguan?

- B: nǐ dā sān - hào chē zài Gōngguān  
 you take three - number vehicle at Gongguan  
 zhàn xià - chē jiu kěyǐ le  
 stop descend - vehicle then OK CRS

You take the number three bus, get off at the Gongguan stop, and then (under those conditions) you'll be there.

- (66) guò - le shàng - xià - bān  
 cross - PFV ascend - descend - work  
 de shíhou huōche jiu kōng le  
 NOM time train then empty CRS

Once rush hour is over, the train becomes empty.

- (67) shōuyīnjī guāngbō bu jiǔ jiānglái huòwù jiu  
 radio broadcast not long future merchandise then  
 yào guì yìdiǎn le  
 will expensive a:bit CRS

They say on the radio that in the near future things will be (i.e., have become) more expensive.

- (68) tāmen — de xuéxiào míngnián jiu yào  
 they — GEN school next:year then will
- zhāo nǚshēng le  
 recruit woman:student CRS

Next year (the changed state will be that) their school will be open to women students.

- (69) nǐ bǎ zhèi liǎng — ge jùzi huàn  
 you BA this two — CL sentence change
- yixià yìsi jiu qīngchǔ duō le  
 once meaning then clear much CRS

If you reverse these two sentences, (the changed situation will be that) the meaning will then be much clearer.

The changed situation can also be in the past; for example:

- (70) (describing an afternoon of walking)

wǒmen zǒu de hěn lèi le  
 we walk CSC very tired CRS

We had walked so much that we'd gotten very tired.

- (71) tā shēngmíng tā tuìchū nèi — ge  
 3sg announce 3sg withdraw that — CL
- zǔzhī le  
 organization CRS

S/He announced that s/he had withdrawn from that organization.

The same is true of negative sentences, in which *le* can refer to a changed situation at a general time, as in (72)–(74), or to a future time, as in (75) and (76).



Furthermore, as we would expect, with negatives, just as with affirmative sentences, the changed situation can be in the past:

- (77) qùnián fēijī chūshì zài qīfēi – de  
 last:year airplane have:accident at take:off – ASSOC
- bàn – ge zhōngtóu yīnèi hái yǒu  
 half – CL hour within still exist
- diànhuà , yìhòu jiù méi liánluò le  
 telephone after then not contact CRS

In last year's plane accident, for a half hour after takeoff there was still telephone contact, then (the changed situation was that) there was no more contact.

Sometimes the change is simply a realization on the part of the speaker, though not necessarily a change in the objective situation. Chao (1968:798), for example, points out that a sentence like

- (78) xià yǔ le  
 descend rain CRS  
*has started raining*  
 It's raining. *下雨呢*

can be used not only when it has just begun to rain but also when the speaker has just discovered that it is raining. Similarly, children often use *le* in commenting on something that has just come to their attention, as in (79):

- (79) (a three-year-old child who has just noticed the parrot in the zoo)

zhèi shì yīngwǔ le!  
 this be parrot CRS

This is a parrot!

Here are some further illustrations of the use of *le* for situations that are newly realized by the speaker:

- (80) (Two friends haven't seen each other for a long time; one asks the other where s/he has been.)

A: wō dào nánbù qù — le yī tàng  
I to south go — PFV one time

I took a trip to the south.

B: ou yuánlái nǐ dào nánbù qù — le ,  
Oh it:turns:out you to south go — PFV  
nánguài hǎo jiǔ méi kàn — jian  
no:wonder very long not see — perceive  
nǐ le  
you CRS

Oh, so you went to the south; no wonder I haven't seen you for a long time.

- (81) (concluding a lengthy discussion about whether the speaker would consent to give a speech to a group)

nǐ zhēn gěi wǒ yī — ge  
you really give I one — CL  
nántí le  
knotty:problem CRS

You've really given me a knotty problem!

- (82) (to a roommate who has just returned from class)

nǐ huí — lái le  
you return — come CRS

You've come back.

- (83) nī yào qù le !  
 you will go CRS

(I see, so) you're going after all (I'd thought you were still hanging around)!

- (84) (salesperson returning from looking for a smaller skirt)

cuìbuqǐ , zhèi shì zuì xiǎo de le  
 sorry this be most small NOM CRS

Sorry, (I find that) this is the smallest (we have).

It is easy to see that the realization may be expressing some annoyance or irritation if it has been hard to arrive at. Here is a minimal pair that makes the point:

- (85) a. (bus-ticket salesperson in answer to a question about whether s/he has tickets selling for ninety dollars)

yě yǒu ( de )  
 also have ( NOM )

(We) also have (them).

- b. (annoyed bus-ticket salesperson to a customer who is not making himself/herself clear in asking about the availability of the ninety-dollar tickets)

yě yǒu ( de le )  
 also have ( NOM CRS )

Oh yes, (we) also have those (why didn't you make yourself clear?)!

Note that explicit requests to be brought up to date about a certain person will typically elicit announcements of information new to the person making the request, and these, of course, always take *le*:

- (86) A. Zhāng Měiyīng zěnmē yàng ?  
 Zhang Meiyīng how way

How is Zhang Meiyīng?

B: a. tā zuò jiàoshòu le  
 3sg be professor CRS

She's become a professor.

b. tā bèi kāichú le  
 3sg BEI expelled CRS

She's been expelled (from school).

c. tā huí - guó le  
 3sg return - country CRS

She's gone back to her country.

d. tā jiéhūn le  
 3sg marry CRS

She's gotten married.

e. tā huáiyùn le  
 3sg pregnant CRS

She's gotten pregnant.

f. tā cízhí le  
 3sg quit CRS

She's quit.

g. tā shēnqǐng - bu - dào  
 3sg apply - can't - arrive

dàxué suǒyǐ jiu qù zuò -  
 university so then go do -

shì le  
 work CRS

She didn't get into the university, so she's taken a job.



<i>h.</i>	wǒ	zhěng	yī	nián	méi	kàn	—
	I	whole	one	year	not	see	—
		jiàn	tā	<u>le</u>			
		perceive	3sg	CRS			

I haven't seen her for a whole year.

What we can conclude from all these examples is that one set of circumstances under which *le* can signal a Currently Relevant State is when that state is *new* or *changed* either from the way it was before or from the way the speaker thought it was before.

#### B. Correcting a Wrong Assumption

Another common way in which a state of affairs becomes relevant to a particular situation is when that state of affairs is different from what the *hearer* has been assuming.

Consider, for example, a speech context in which A has told B that C made a phone call at a certain time, and B responds by saying:

(87)	nèi	—	ge	shíhòu	tā	chū	—	mén	le
	that	—	CL	time	3sg	exit	—	door	CRS

At that time s/he had gone out.

which is relevant in denying A's belief that C had made the call. Here is a minimal pair of sentences illustrating this point:

(88) *a.* (child pointing to soda)

wǒ	yào	hē
I	want	drink

I want to drink it. (neutral)

*b.* (child to mother, who does not think the child wants his/her soda)

wǒ	yào	hē	<u>le</u>
I	want	drink	CRS

(But) I want to drink it. (contradicting the mother's belief)

The following are some further examples:

- (89) (exasperated mother to her child, who has refused what s/he was given to drink and wants what the adults are drinking)

yíyàng de { le }  
 same NOM CRS

It's the same (i.e., you're wrong in thinking that what you have is different)!

- (90) (to a friend who has just asked if the speaker has seen a certain movie)

wǒ yǒu yī - ge yuè méi kàn diànyǐng le  
 I exist one - CL month not look movie CRS

I haven't seen a movie for a month (i.e., you're wrong in assuming that I've been keeping up with the latest films).

- (91) (telling someone about a meeting)

dìdiǎn zài qī - hào jiàoshì , jiàoshì  
 place at seven - number classroom classroom  
 wàibiān yǐjīng yǒu yī - ge  
 outside already exist one - CL  
 bùgào le  
 announcement CRS

The place is classroom number seven. Outside the classroom there is already an announcement (and you should have known that).

- (92) (to the accusation that the speaker has spent the afternoon sleeping)

wǒ kàn - le sān - běn shū le!  
 I look - PFV three - CL book CRS

(What do you mean?!) I have read three books!

(93) (talking about a certain author)

A: nǐ yīnggāi kàn , tā shū xiě de hǎo  
 you should look 3sg book write CSC good

You should take a look; s/he writes well.

B: wǒ kàn - guo tā hǎo jǐ -  
 I look - EXP 3sg very several -  
 běn shū le  
 CL book CRS

(But) I have read quite a few of his/her books (i.e., you're wrong to think I haven't).

(94) (consoling a friend who can't forget her ex-boyfriend)

tā wàngjì nǐ le !  
 3sg forget you CRS

(Please realize that) he's forgotten you (so quit thinking about it and get on with new things)!

(95) (to friends who want the speaker to go out for a late-night snack)

wǒ yào xiě wǒ - de bàogào le  
 I want write I - GEN report CRS

(But) I have to write my report (i.e., you are wrong in assuming I am free).

(96) (to a friend who has asked whether the speaker needs more money to pay the salesperson)

wǒ yǐjīng gěi tā liǎng - bǎi kuài  
 I already give 3sg two - hundred dollar  
 qián le  
 money CRS

(But) I already gave him/her \$200 (i.e., you were wrong in thinking that I hadn't paid enough).

- (97) (to a friend who has inquired solicitously whether the speaker wants anything to eat)

wǒ     chī     -     guo     le  
I     eat     -     EXP     CRS

(The new situation that you don't realize yet is that) I've already eaten (so no thanks).

- (98) (protesting to someone who doesn't believe that the speaker has had enough to drink)

wǒ     hē     -     le     sān     bēi     le  
I     drink     -     PFV     three     glass     CRS

(Look—I tell you) I've drunk three glasses!

- (99) (to the bus conductor, who has just urged the speaker to move away from the door)

zài     guò     liǎng     zhàn     wǒ     jiu     { yào }     xià  
further     cross     two     stop     I     then     { will }     descend

-     chē     le  
-     vehicle     CRS

After two more stops, I'm going to get off (so I'm not going to move away from the door).

- (100) (a busy waiter in a Taipei restaurant who has been asked repeatedly to bring more rice)

hǎo ,     hǎo ,     fàn     { jiu     mǎshàng }     le !  
good     good     rice     { then     immediately }     CRS

OK! OK! Rice will be coming up right away (already)!

- (101) A:     wǒ     xiǎng     zhǎo     fángzi     bān     -     jiā  
                 I     think     look:for     house     move     -     home

I think I'm going to find a new place to live.

B:    nī        bu        shì        mǎshàng    jiù        yào        huí  
       you        not        be        immediately then        will        return

      Ribèn    le        ma ?  
       Japan    CRS        Q

(But) aren't you going back to Japan right away?

(102) (son to mother who has been urging him to write to his aunt)

wǒ        míngtiān    jiù        xiě    { le }  
   I        tomorrow    then        write    { CRS }

(OK, OK.) I'll write tomorrow (i.e., you're wrong to think I'm never going to do it).

Finally, here are two conversations that nicely illustrate the use of *le* in signaling the relevance of a state of affairs to correct a wrong impression.

(103) (father to three-year-old daughter)

F:        yào        bu        yào        bàba    xǐ ?  
       want        not        want        daddy    wash

Do you want Daddy to wash (you)?

D:        bu        yào  
       not        want

No.

F:        yào        shéi ?  
       want        who

Whom do you want?

D:        māma  
       Mommy.

F:        māma    bu        xǐ        le  
       Mommy    not        wash    CRS

Mommy isn't going to wash you (though you thought she was).

- (104) (in a cartoon, Quacky the duck to the dog Scamp, who has asked why Quacky is sitting in the pond when he should be migrating south)

bu xíng , wǒ bèi dòng — zhù le  
 not OK I BEI freeze — hold:on CRS

I can't, I'm frozen in!

All the examples we have presented so far illustrate *le* sentences that are relevant to the current situation because they contradict an assumption that has been explicitly brought out in the preceding conversation. Sometimes, though, a *le* sentence can be relevant because it contradicts an assumption that has not been mentioned at all but that the speaker knows the hearer holds. Here is a particularly nice example from another newspaper cartoon:

- (105) (the dog Scamp calls out to his friend, Quacky the duck, who is flying past him supposedly migrating south)

hāi , Guā — guā ! nǐ wàng běifāng qù le !  
 hey Quack — quack you toward north go CRS

Hey, Quacky! You're going *north* (and not south, as you obviously are assuming)!

In the next example, also from a comic strip, Glorie Bee is contradicting a normal assumption between her and Goofy:

✓ (106) nǐ zuì hǎo bu yào lái kàn diànshì  
 you must good not will come look TV  
le , wǒ dé — le zhòng shāngfēng  
 CRS I get — PFV heavy cold

(Contrary to our usual practice,) you'd better not come over to watch TV (this time)—I caught a terrible cold.

Often, in reporting something unusual which has just happened, the speaker uses *le* because the state of affairs contradicts our normal expectations. For example, (107) is what a neighbor tells Zengshen's mother as s/he runs toward her:

- (107) Zēngshēn shā rén le ! 0β  
 Zengshen kill person CRS

Zengshen has killed someone!

Here are some other, equally illustrative examples:

- (108) wǒ zuótiān zuò - le yī - jiàn  
 I yesterday do - PFV one - CL  
 huài shì (le)  
 bad matter CRS

(I must tell you that) I did a bad thing yesterday (which you wouldn't expect).

- (109) (Two friends exchange pleasantries; A says s/he is fine but busy, and B responds.)

wǒ yěshi máng de yào sǐ , duì -  
 I also busy CSC want die right -  
 le , wǒ yào gàosu nǐ wǒmen jǐù yào  
 PFV I want tell you we soon  
 bān - jiā le 0β  
 move - home CRS

I am also terribly busy—say, I want to tell you that we're moving soon.

- (110) tā bǎ wǒ - de biǎo ná - zǒu le  
 3sg BA I - GEN watch take - away CRS

(Hey!) S/He took my watch!

- (111) (to friends as they are watching a television show)

tāmen yào zhuā tā le !  
 they will grab 3sg CRS

(Watch—you might not believe it, but the new situation is that) they're going to grab him/her.

Another example:

(119) (with reference to the speaker's project of having a dress made)

cáiféng	bǎ	xiùzi	jiǎn	—	duǎn	<u>le</u>	OB
dressmaker	BA	sleeve	cut	—	short	CRS	

The dressmaker cut the sleeves short (i.e., either s/he cut them too short, or s/he cut short sleeves when I wanted long ones).

Finally, here is a *minimal pair* that nicely illustrates this particular use of *le*:

(120) *a.* (discussing the personality of a character in a play, independent of the larger setting)

tā	tài	zìsī
3sg	too	selfish

S/He's too selfish.

*b.* (discussing a specific action of a character in relation to a series of ongoing events in a play)

tā	tài	zìsī	<u>le !</u>
3sg	too	selfish	CRS

S/He's being too selfish.

Sentences with *yòu* 'again' typically relate an event to another event and can be seen as expressing progress in an extensive project encompassing both events. Thus, sentences with *yòu* 'again' typically occur with *le*. For example, if one knows that a friend has been trying to quit smoking, one could report his/her backsliding with:

(121)	tā	<u>yòu</u>	chōu	—	yān	<u>le</u>
	3sg	again	extract	—	smoke	CRS

S/He's started to smoke again.



Or, if one cooperates with others in a regular project of doing laundry, one might say:

(122) jīntiān yòu gāi nǐ xǐ yīfu le OP  
 today again be:one's:turn you wash clothes CRS

Today it's your turn again to do the laundry.

Or, if the hearer knows that the overall issue is that the speaker has something to tell Zhangsan, the speaker can say (123) to the hearer:

(123) wǒ yòu wàngji gào su tā le OP  
 I again forget tell 3sg CRS

I forgot to tell him again.

Finally, to the child who continues to get his/her hands dirty, one can say:

(124) bié yòu nòng — zāng le  
 don't again make — dirty CRS

Don't get (them) dirty again.

One interesting situation in which *le* signals progress so far is with questions or suggestions between people who know something about each other or who are involved with each other. In such a situation the speaker is typically concerned with the hearer's progress as s/he moves through life, for example, or through the day's activities. Here are two striking minimal pairs illustrating this use of *le*:

(125) a. (neutral question, such as a bookstore clerk might pose to an unfamiliar student)

nǐ niàn gāo — zhōng ma ?  
 you study upper — middle Q

Are you in upper middle school?

b. (to a student whom one has known for a long time)

nǐ	niàn	gāo	—	zhōng	<u>le</u>	ma ?
you	study	upper	—	middle	CRS	Q

Are you in upper middle school?

(126) a. (school official registering children)

nǐ	jǐ	sui ?
you	how:many	year

How old are you?

b. (to friend's child at home)

nǐ	jǐ	sui	<u>le ?</u>
you	how:many	year	CRS

How old are you?

Because inquiries between people who know each other well typically reflect the speaker's concern with the hearer's progress, questions with *le* always seem more friendly, more involved, and more concerned than the same utterances without *le*, which seem relatively formal, cold, and indifferent. Here are some further examples:

(127) a. (random neutral question)

nǐ	zuótiān	wǎnshang	tīng	—	dào	léi
you	yesterday	evening	hear	—	arrive	thunder
	—	shēng	<u>ma ?</u>			
	—	sound	Q			

(Say,) did you (happen to) hear the thunder last night?

b. (to someone with whom the speaker has been discussing thunder)

nǐ      zuótiān      wǎnshang      tīng      -      dào      léi  
 you    yesterday    evening      hear      -      arrive    thunder

-      shēng      le      ma ?  
 -      sound      CRS      Q

(Well,) did you hear the thunder last night?

(128) a. (one business associate of Miss Hua's to another)

Huá      Xiǎojiě      xià      -      ge      yuè      yào  
 Hua      Miss      next      -      CL      month      will

xiūjià      ma ?  
 take:vacation      Q

Will Miss Hua take a vacation next month?

b. (one close friend of Miss Hua's to another)

Huá      Lìzhēn      xià      -      ge      yuè      yào  
 Hua      Lizhen      next      -      CL      month      will

xiūjià      le      ma ?  
 take:vacation      CRS      Q

Will Hua Lizhen (be able to) take her vacation next month (i.e., I know she was planning one, and I'm concerned to know whether she can go or not)?

Suggestions work in an analogous way: when the speaker is concerned with the progress to that point of the set of activities in which the hearer is engaged, *le* will be used.

- (129) *a.* (making casual conversation with a taxi driver about a political leader)

tā niánji duō dà ?  
3sg age how big

How old is s/he?

- b.* (in discussion about the ongoing career of a political leader)

tā niánji duō dà le ?  
3sg age how big CRS

How old is s/he (at this point)?

Here are some further examples:

- (130) *a.* (cold, almost as a command)

nī lèi le , nī kěyī qù shuì  
you tired CRS you can go sleep

You're tired (now), you can go to bed (i.e., you can be excused).

- b.* (solicitously, to a friend who seems sleepy)

nī lèi le , nī kěyī qù shuì le  
you tired CRS you can go sleep CRS

You're tired (now, if you want) you can go to bed (i.e., it's been a long day).

- (131) *a.* (to a teammate in a basketball game or a teacher to a student)

Xiǎo Lǐ , gāi nǐ  
Little Li be:one's:turn you

Little Li, it's your turn. (no "bigger project")

- b. (to a friend, as people are introducing themselves, or taking turns reading)

Xiǎo Lǐ , gāi nǐ le  
 Little Li be:one's:turn you CRS

Little Li, it's your turn (now).

- (132) a. (one business associate to another after scheduling a time to meet on the following day)

nà wǒmen míngtiān zài jiàn  
 in:that:case we tomorrow again perceive

Then we'll meet again tomorrow.

- b. (to a good friend or a lover)

nà wǒmen míngtiān zài jiàn le  
 in:that:case we tomorrow again perceive CRS

Then we'll meet again tomorrow (i.e., that's the situation at the moment with regard to our ongoing relationship).

- (133) a. (complaining to a companion as if the matter is very grave)

jìrán tāmen zhǐ mài qìshuǐ wǒmen jiù  
 since they only sell soft:drink we then

hē qìshuǐ  
 drink soft:drink

Since they sell only soft drinks, we will drink soft drinks.

b. (advising a companion about how to make the best of the situation)

jìrán	tāmen	zhǐ	mài	qìshuǐ	wǒmen
since	they	only	sell	soft:drink	we
	jiù	hē	qìshuǐ	<u>le</u>	
	then	drink	soft:drink	CRS	

Since they sell only soft drinks, (our best move at this point in our activities is just to) have soft drinks.

The use of *le* in sentences giving progress so far in a larger venture, project, or ongoing concern is another clear illustration of a state of affairs as being currently relevant: it is relevant in assessing how far we have come in the larger venture.

#### D. What Happens Next

Another class of contexts in which a state of affairs is relevant includes those in which that state of affairs *determines* what happens next. We considered sentence (115) earlier in a context in which the hearer had known that there was a clothes-washing project under way:

(115) wǒ      xǐ      -      hǎo      -      le      yīfu      le  
 I      wash      -      finish      -      PFV      clothes      CRS

I've finished washing the clothes.

That sentence, however, could just as well be currently relevant as a signal to the hearer that something else can happen now:

(134) wǒ      xǐ      -      hǎo      -      le      yīfu      le  
 I      wash      -      finish      -      PFV      clothes      CRS

I've finished washing the clothes { (so now: we can go to the movies  
 you can do your yoga in  
 the laundry room  
 I'm free to play chess with  
 you  
 etc.). }

Example (98), which we looked at earlier, can be viewed in the same way:

(98) wǒ hē – le sān bēi le !  
 I drink – PFV three glass CRS

(Look—I tell you) I've drunk three glasses (so: don't pour me any more quit saying gānbēi 'bottoms up' to me let's just talk now etc.)!

That is, the new situation announced in (98) can serve both to correct the false impression that the speaker needs more to drink and at the same time to make it clear that the state of affairs is relevant because it has some consequences for what the hearer should do next.

Here are three examples that demonstrate this double function very clearly:

(135) a. wǒ chī – guo mùguā  
 I eat – EXP papaya

I've eaten papaya (i.e., I've had the experience).

b. wǒ chī – guo mùguā le  
 I eat – EXP papaya CRS

I've had (my) papaya (so please don't keep asking me to have more papaya now).

(136) a. wǒmen qù – guo Disneyland  
 we go – EXP Disneyland

We've been to Disneyland (i.e., we've had the experience).

b. wǒmen qù – guo Disneyland le  
 we go – EXP Disneyland CRS

We've been to Disneyland (and that's why we don't want to go there with you this afternoon).





Here are some additional examples:

(140) wǒmen gāi zǒu le <sup>0b</sup>  
 we should leave CRS

We should go now { (so: get your coat  
 get ready to say good-bye  
 etc.). }

(141) (in a children's story, wolf to Mr. Dongguo)

lièrén zhū - lái le , ràng wǒ zài  
 hunter chase - come CRS let I at  
  
 nǐ - de kǒudài - lǐ duǒ  
 you - GEN pocket - in hide  
  
 yīhuìr ba  
 awhile SA

The hunter is chasing me, so let me hide in your pocket for a while, OK?

(142) kuài yào xià yǔ le <sup>0b</sup>  
 fast will descend rain CRS

It's about to rain { (so: what are we going to do?  
 take your umbrella  
 we can't go for our walk  
 etc.). }

(143) (pointing at the alarm clock)

kuài xiǎng le <sup>0b</sup>  
 fast sound CRS

It's about to ring { (so: shut it off  
 let's get up  
 etc.). }

- (144) fàn kuài pū ~ chū - lái le  
 food fast spread - exit - come CRS

(Hurry!) The rice is about to boil over { (so: take it off the fire  
 take the lid off  
 turn the fire down  
 etc.)! }

- (145) huǒchē kuài yào kāi le  
 train fast will operate CRS

The train's about to leave { (so: you'd better get on  
 here's your lunch  
 kiss me good-bye  
 etc.) }

Finally, here is an example from the first-person short story "Jing-jing de shēngri" [Jing-jing's birthday] by Chen Ruoxi (1976:4):

- (146) jìde shì nèi - nián jiǔ -  
 remember be that - year nine -  
 yuè - chū , wàizi ? cóng Sū  
 month - beginning husband from Jiangsu  
 - běi lái xìn , shuō tāmen  
 - north arrive letter say they  
 láodòng kuài jiéshù le  
 labor fast finish CRS

I remember it was at the beginning of September of that year, and my husband sent a letter from northern Jiangsu saying that their (period of) labor would soon be over.

Again, the relevance of this state of affairs in this story was that the husband would soon be able to come home.

It is appropriate to use *le*, then, whenever the state of affairs is relevant in determining what happens next.

## E. Closing a Statement

An interesting use of *le* in signaling the current relevance of a state of affairs is its function as a mark of *finality*. That is, for many *le* sentences in conversations, the *le* “completes” the sentence; without it, the sentence sounds incomplete, as if the speaker intends to say more. It is almost as though the *le* were functioning as a sentence-final punctuation marker.

Many sentences in conversation, however, do not have this marker. Why, then, do some sentences seem to need it in order to sound complete to speakers? The answer is that when a person tells about something that happened or mentions a state of affairs as his/her contribution to the conversation and not as a response to some question or comment from another person, s/he is required to use *le* to tell the hearer why the proposition has been introduced. The speaker using *le* in this way signals, “This is my contribution to the conversation.” Without *le*, the proposition would elicit an “And what about it?” response; it would need another clause, such as one beginning with ‘so’, ‘because’, or ‘but’, which would “validate” it by explicitly stating the purpose for which the speaker brought it up. In other words, *le* is required to tell the hearer that the proposition is relevant to the speech situation by being “newsworthy” in and of itself; it brings a statement into the current situation by tagging it as the speaker’s total contribution as of that moment.

Here are two examples, one with *le* and one without, to illustrate:

(147) A: (to child)

nǐ	wèishénme	dùzi	zhème	dà ?
you	why	abdomen	this	big

Why are you so big in the abdomen?

B:	wǒ	chī	de	tài	bǎo	X
	I	eat	CSC	too	full	

I am too full from eating.

(148) (to a friend, as an afterthought after a banquet)

wǒ	chī	de	tài	bǎo	<u>le</u>
I	eat	CSC	too	full	CRS

Let me tell you, I am too full from eating.

The contrast here is clear: as a response to a question, the relevance of the child's remark (147) is clear and needs no *le* to mark it, while the same utterance made in a context where it serves as an unsolicited comment, as in (148), must have the *le* to signal that the volunteered information is all the speaker has to contribute at the moment. Here is a precisely parallel example:

- (149) *a.* (to a friend who has asked why the speaker didn't choose a certain university)

yīnwei nàli xuéfèi tài guì  
because there tuition too expensive

The tuition is too high there. (neutral response)

- b.* (one student to another, standing in line to pay fees)

xuéfèi tài guì le!  
tuition too expensive CRS

(I tell you,) the tuition is (really) too high!

We can look at this function of *le* from a slightly different point of view. As we have seen, a sentence that answers a particular question may not need *le* because its relevance is perfectly obvious (unless, of course, *le* is required for expressing one of the other types of relevance we have considered). The same sentence functioning as a piece of volunteered information, on the other hand, may need *le* to "finish" it and to signal that it is the speaker's total contribution at the moment. In addition to answering a question, the sentence without the *le* can also function as background to some further information. For example, compare sentences (150) *a* and *b*:

- (150) (commenting on a mutual friend)

*a.* tā yǐjīng líkai Měiguó le  
3sg already leave America CRS

S/He's already left America.

b. tā yǐjīng líkai Měiguó ,  
3sg already leave America

{ (i) suǒyǐ tā bu - bì jiāo shuì }  
{ therefore 3sg not - need hand:over tax }

{ (ii) xiànzài zài Zhōngguó jiāo - shū }  
{ now at China teach - book }

S/He has already left America, { (i) so s/he doesn't have to pay }  
taxes.  
{ (ii) and (s/he is now teaching in }  
China. }

It is easy to see that (150) *a* is an example exactly like (148) and (149) *b*, and it ends with *le*, just as we would expect, since it completes the presentation of a state of affairs to the hearer. The very same sentence occurs in (150) *b*, but without the *le*; in this case it must be followed by another clause—it becomes the background to another piece of news.

Let us look at another example containing two contrasting sentences:

(151) a. wǒ zài nàlǐ zhù - le liǎng  
I at there live - PFV two  
- ge yuè le  
- CL month CRS

I've lived there for two months.

b. wǒ zài nàlǐ zhù - le liǎng }  
I at there live - CL two -  
ge yuè, kěshì hái bu tài xíguàn  
CL month but still not too used:to

I have lived there for two months, but I'm still not very used to it.

Similarly, the difference between *hǎo* 'good' and *hǎo le* 'good CRS' illustrates just this point. While *hǎo le* is an announcement of a new situation, *hǎo* can serve only as a response to a question or as background to another utterance:

- (152) (to friends who are arguing or announcing that something is over and done)

hǎo      le!  
good     CRS

{ That's it!  
Stop it!  
That's enough!  
It's done!  
It's over! }

- (153) A:    nǐ      hǎo      ma?  
          you     good     Q

How are you?

B:    hǎo  
      good

OK.

- (154) A: wǒmen    qù      hē      yì      bēi      kāfēi    ba  
          we      go     drink   one    glass    coffee   SA

Let's go get some coffee.

B:    hǎo  
      good

OK.

- (155) hǎo ,  
good
- |   |                         |   |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| { | (i) míngtiān    jiàn    | } |
|   | tomorrow    see         |   |
|   | (ii) wǒmen    zǒu    ba |   |
|   | we    leave    SA       |   |
|   | (iii) nǐ    shuō        |   |
|   | you    say              |   |
|   | etc.                    |   |
- 
- Good, {
- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| (i) see you tomorrow | } |
| (ii) let's go        |   |
| (iii) you decide     |   |
| etc.                 |   |

This usage of *le* can even be seen to function in “wrapping up” a story; here it signals the current relevance of the state of affairs represented by the last line in the story by signaling that the story is now over. The following example shows the end of a story:

- (156)    jiéguǒ    wǒmen    jiù    bān  
in:the:end    we    then    move
- huí    Zhōngguó    le  
return    China    CRS

In the end, we moved back to China.

There are three reasons why the use of *le* in conveying the speaker's feeling that the statement s/he has made is his/her contribution to the conversation is particularly important for the language learner to internalize and be conscious of. First, it is easy to miss this use of *le* as an instance of Currently Relevant State. That is, it is quite straightforward to view situations such as those involving change of state, correcting mistaken assumptions, progress to date, and determining what happens next as instances of Currently Relevant States, but it is somewhat more difficult to recognize the examples involving *le* signaling the end of the speaker's contribution as currently relevant. Their relevance to the current situation is, however, just as strong; as we shall see in a moment, *le* in these cases signals to the

hearer that the speaker is through with what s/he wanted to say, so that the hearer *can now say something* if s/he wants to. This kind of signal is obviously quite relevant to the flow of the conversation between two people.

The second reason why it is important to internalize this function of *le* is that as language learners, we frequently ask our teachers and friends how to say something. Very often the response contains a *le* because, unless the sentence denotes a general truth or a perfective event, it simply *isn't complete* with the *le*. For example, if you ask your Mandarin-speaking friend how to say 'S/He took off his/her coat', the answer is likely to be:

(157)	tā	bǎ	dàiyī	tuō	-	xia
	3sg	BA	coat	remove	-	descend
		-	lai	<u>le</u>		
		-	come	CRS		

S/He took off her/his coat.

As a language learner, you may wonder what that *le* is doing there, without realizing that to a Mandarin speaker, the sentence without the *le* sounds incomplete, as if more is going to be said, whereas with it the sentence sounds like a complete contribution to the conversation.

The third reason why it is important to internalize this use of *le* is that omitting it is probably the most common error made by nonnative speakers. Chinese people consistently comment that nonnative speakers do not use *le* where they should, and it is generally this finality *le* that is missing. This is perfectly natural, of course, since Western languages do not have any element that functions similarly in conversations, but it does mean that nonnative speakers must put some extra effort into becoming accustomed to hearing and using *le* to signal the end of one's contribution to a conversation.

One more important point: It is not that the sentences we have been considering in this subsection would be *ungrammatical* without *le*. Failing to use *le* in these contexts may cause uneasiness in our Mandarin-speaking conversational partners, but not of the type that English speakers feel when they hear someone say something like:

(158) \*I am living in Chicago three years.

Rather, such sentences as (147) *b* and (149) *a*, if they are not answering a question, are simply incomplete in that the hearer senses that the speaker has not yet finished



talking. The sentence is felt to have been left “hanging in mid air,” and the hearer is uncomfortable because, strictly speaking, it isn’t his/her turn to talk.

#### F. More Than One Use of *le*

Sometimes a sentence with *le* can be understood to be currently relevant in more than one of the five ways described above, depending on the context. For example, the sentence

(159)    *tā*     *jīn*     –     *lái*     *le*  
           3sg    enter     –     come    CRS

can be understood to be relevant to the current situation as a changed state, as in:

(i) S/He has come in.

or as an imminent state to which the hearer is supposed to respond in some way:

(ii) S/He’s coming in.

or as a correction of someone’s mistaken assumption that s/he isn’t coming in:

(iii) S/He *is* coming in.

Similarly,

(160)    *tā*     *hūn*     –     *dǎo*     *le*  
           3sg    faint     –     overturn    CRS

can be understood as relevant to the current situation in several ways. For example, if the speaker is reporting an earlier event as a piece of news, then *le* signals the end of that contribution, and the sentence would mean simply

(i) S/He fainted.

On the other hand, (160) could be used to describe a changed state as of the present moment, in which case it would mean

(ii) S/He has fainted.

The fact that such sentences, when looked at in isolation, can be understood in more than one way is not surprising, of course. The way *le* functions to signal CRS varies according to the conversation of which it is a part; which of the five types of CRS situations is being conveyed at any one time can always be determined from the context.

### G. Summary

What we have seen so far, then, is the various ways in which *le* can be used to signal a Currently Relevant State: (1) talking about a state that involves a change, (2) correcting a wrong assumption, (3) reporting progress so far, (4) alerting the hearer about what will happen next, and (5) tagging a comment to signal the end of a narrative or the end of the speaker's current contribution to the conversation. In each case *le* says that the *state* of affairs represented by the sentence to which it is attached is *currently relevant*, the exact ways in which it is relevant being a matter for the hearer to decide on the basis of his/her knowledge of the relationship between him/her and the speaker, of the situation in which they are interacting, and of the world at large.

#### 7.1.2 Where Not to Use *le*

Before we move on to discuss cases in which it is difficult to distinguish the perfective *-le* from the CRS *le*, we would like to complement our discussion of the contexts in which *le* is used with a survey of contexts in which *le* is *not* used. We hope in this way to help the reader understand as thoroughly as possible the five types of situations in which *le* should be used.

We have emphasized the current relevance property of the meaning of *le*. A review of the five types of situations in which a state of affairs is claimed to be relevant to a given time frame shows very quickly that they are heavily *conversational* situations. The time frame, as we have seen, may be present, past, or future, but the need to tag a state of affairs as relevant to that time frame typically arises only in conversation.

This means that *le* is generally not used in written expository or descriptive prose, and it is rare in formal spoken-language situations such as news reports, speeches, lectures, and proclamations. For example, in seven news stories randomly chosen from the pages of the February 23, 1979, issue of the *Southern California Chinese News Dispatch*, which is published by the Southern California Chinese Service Association, *le* does not occur once. In "A Twelve Point Proclamation by the Non-Nationalist Politicians in Taiwan" (1978), there isn't a single occurrence of *le*. Following the United States' recognition of the People's Republic of China, the same group of politicians issued another proclamation. Again, it does not contain any occurrence of *le*. In the Chinese news dispatch of the joint

communiqué by President Jimmy Carter and Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping on February 1, 1979, not one occurrence of *le* can be found.

Similarly, descriptive writing contains few, if any, occurrences of *le*. As an example, we randomly selected twenty pages from *Zhōngguó Lìshǐ Gàiyào* [Outline of Chinese history] by B. Z. Jian et al. (Beijing: Renming Chubanshi, 1956, pp. 1-5, 34-45, 51-55, and 84-86) for survey and found only one occurrence of *le*.

The low incidence of *le* in these types of discourse is easy to explain if one understands the function of *le* to be to signal that a given state of affairs is relevant to a particular time frame.

Of course, *le* can be found in written narratives and stories, where it serves to relate a state of affairs to the time at which the story took place, just as in conversational stories, as we saw above in (77). Here is another example from the first-person short story "Jing-jing de shēngrì" [Jing-jing's birthday] by Chen Ruoxi (1976:2):

- |       |      |       |        |           |       |           |
|-------|------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| (161) | nèi  | shí , | wǒ     | zhèng     | huái  | —         |
|       | that | time  | I      | precisely | bear  | —         |
|       |      | zhe   | lǎo    | —         | èr ,  | yījīng    |
|       |      | DUR   | number | —         | two   | already   |
|       |      | bā    | —      | ge        | yuè   | <u>le</u> |
|       |      | eight | —      | CL        | month | CRS       |

At that time, I was pregnant with my second child and was already eight months into the pregnancy.

Even within conversational language, however, there are several types of situations in which *le* is not used.

First, *le* is not used when the speaker is simply asserting a general truth in an ordinary conversation where no change is involved:

- |       |          |        |        |       |        |       |   |       |
|-------|----------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|---|-------|
| (162) | Zhōngguó | rén    | dōng , | nán , | xī ,   | běi   | — | de    |
|       | China    | person | east   | south | west   | north | — | ASSOC |
|       |          | kǒuwèi | dōu    | bu    | yíyàng |       |   |       |
|       |          | taste  | all    | not   | same   |       |   |       |

The tastes of Chinese people in the north, south, east, and west are all different.

- (163) tāmen zhǐ pīfā , bu língmài  
 they only sell:wholesale not sell:retail

They only sell wholesale, not retail.

- (164) tā tàitai – de xìngqíng hěn wēnróu  
 3sg wife – GEN disposition very gentle

His wife has a gentle disposition.

- (165) wǒ měi – tiān zǎoshang chī xīfān  
 I every – day morning eat rice:porridge

I eat rice porridge every morning.

- (166) tā chàng – gē chàng de bu cuò  
 3sg sing – song sing CSC not wrong

S/He sings not badly.

- (167) wǒ chángchang gēn tā xué quán  
 I often with 3sg learn boxing

I often study boxing with him/her.

Similarly, general states or ongoing situations involving no change are generally not described with *le*. For example:

- (168) gōngsī – de zhàngmù hěn qīngchu  
 company – ASSOC account very clear

The company's accounts were in good order.

- (169) tā shuō de gēn nǐ shuō  
 3sg say NOM and you say  
 de bu yiyàng  
 NOM not same

What he says and what you say are different.

- (170) nǐ – de nóngchǎng yǒu duōshǎo yīngmǔ ?  
 you – GEN farm exist how:many acre

How many acres does your farm have?

- (171) nèi – tiáo mǎlù shì wéi – zhe  
 that – CL road be surround – DUR  
 hú – biān zǒu  
 lake – side go

The road goes around the lake.

- (172) tā niē – zhe yídiǎn yán  
 3sg hold:between:fingers – DUR a:little salt

S/He was holding a pinch of salt between his/her fingers.

- (173) tā zài shuì – jiào  
 3sg DUR sleep – sleep

S/He's sleeping.

Another type of situation in which *le* is not found is a simple assertion of an event that happened in the past. Here the perfective verbal suffix *-le* would be used if the event named were a perfective one (see section 6.1 of chapter 6), but the CRS *le* would not be called for:

- (174) wǒ shuō kěyǐ  
 I say can

I said it was OK.

- (175) wǒ zuótiān kǎo – le liǎng  
 I yesterday take:test – PFV two  
 – táng shì  
 – class exam

I had two exams yesterday.

- (176) tā shōuxià – le wǒ gěi  
 3sg accept – PFV I give  
 tā de qián  
 3sg NOM money

S/He accepted the money I gave him/her.

- (177) wēndù jiàng de hěn kuài  
 temperature drop CSC very fast  
*is dropping*  
 The temperature dropped very quickly.

- (178) wǒ yì xià chē , jiù guò – lái  
 I once descend car then cross – come  
 – (le) yì – ge jīngchá  
 – (PFV) one – CL police:officer

As soon as I got out of the car, a police officer came over.

Normally, sentences expressing an event or situation in the future, requests, suggestions, and commands also occur without *le*:

- (179) wǒ suǒ zhīdào de dōu gàosu nǐ ( )  
 I all know NOM all tell you

I'll tell you what I know about it.

- (180) wǒ míngtiān huí – lái  
 I tomorrow return – come

I'll be back tomorrow.

- (181) nǐ kàn huì xià yǔ ma ?  
 you see likely descend rain Q

Do you think it'll rain?

- (182) wǒmen guò tiān – qiáo ba  
 we cross sky – bridge SA

Let's cross the overhead bridge.

- (183) wǒ yíding jìnliàng zǎo yídiǎn  
 I certainly try early a:little  
 zuò – wán  
 do – finish

I'll certainly try to finish a little sooner.

- (184) zhèi – ge yá yào bá ( )  
 this – CL tooth want pull

This tooth needs to be pulled.

- (185) wǒmen yào yī – pán pàocài  
 we want one – plate pickled:vegetable

We want a plate of pickled vegetables.

- (186) bǎ cài – dān dì gěi wǒ  
 BA dish – list hand to I

Hand me the menu.

Thus, in the contexts we've given for these sentences, that is, in talking about simple general truths, ongoing states, past and future events, and commands, suggestions, and requests, *where no Currently Relevant State is involved*, *le* will not be used. This doesn't mean, of course, that *le* can't be used with any of the sentences that we've used as examples (162)–(186); it can be if one can imagine an appropriate context, but then it will always imply current relevance in one of the five ways discussed under section 7.1.1 above.

### 7.1.3 Perfective *-le* versus CRS *le*

As long as ‘*le*’ occurs at the end of a sentence after any word other than a verb, it is easy to be sure that it is the CRS *le*, as in (187):

(187) tāmen yào zhuā tā ( le )  
 they will grab 3sg CRS

They're going to grab him/her.

Sometimes, however, when a ‘*le*’ comes after a verb at the end of a sentence, it is difficult to determine whether it is the perfective verb suffix *-le* (see section 6.1 of chapter 6) or the CRS sentence-final particle *le*. Here we will try to show how the context helps us to know which ‘*le*’ is which.

The first step in sorting out which ‘*le*’ is involved is to see what the possibilities are. In any given sentence with a postverbal ‘*le*’ at the end of the sentence, there are exactly three possibilities:

(i) It could be *le*, in which case the sentences must have a *current relevance* meaning.

(ii) It could be *-le*, in which case the sentence must have a *perfective* meaning.

(iii) Since the combination *-le le* never occurs phonologically, ‘*le*’ could have the function of both *-le* and *le*, in which case the sentence must have the meaning of a *perfective* event that is a *Currently Relevant State*.

Let's look at each of these possibilities one at a time. In case (i), the *le* is simply the CRS *le*, where there is no perfective meaning possible. To illustrate this situation we must find examples of states that are not perfective, that is, not bounded, and that are claimed to be currently relevant. Sentences expressing imminent states to which some reaction is expected (see section 7.1.1 above) provide good illustrations:

(188) Xiǎo Huáng kuài yào lái le!  
 Little Huang fast will come CRS

Little Huang is coming!

(189) huōchē mǎshàng jiù kāi ( le )  
 train immediately soon leave CRS

The train is leaving immediately.



Another illustration is provided by sentence (190):

(190) wǒ      bú      jìn      —      lái      ( le )  
          I      not      enter      —      come      ( CRS )

I'm not coming in.

Sentence (190), being a negative sentence, does not represent a bounded event, but it would represent a currently relevant state if it were used, say, to correct your mistaken assumption that I was coming in (see section 7.1.1.B above). Finally, sentence (191) illustrates the currently relevant state of a nonperfective but changed state:

(191) guò      —      le      shàng      —      xià      —      bān  
          cross      —      PFV      ascend      —      descend      —      work  
  
          de      shíhou      gōnggòng      —      qìchē      jiu  
          NOM      time      public      —      car      then  
  
          kōng      le  
          empty      CRS

Once rush hour is over, the buses will be empty.

Finally, sentences such as the following are also good examples of sentence-final "le" that is purely the CRS *le*:

(192) wǒ      xǐng      —      ( guò      —      lái )      le  
          I      wake      —      ( cross      —      come )      CRS

I woke up.

(193) tā      bǎ      huà      sī      —      ( diào )      le  
          3sg      BA      painting      tear      —      ( off )      CRS

S/He tore up the painting.

(194) tā      bǎ      xìn      chāi      —      ( kāi )      le  
          3sg      BA      letter      open      —      ( open )      CRS

S/He opened the letter.

Each of the preceding three sentences is an example of the situation we discussed above in section 7.1.1.E, where *le* is needed to close out the remark and signal current relevance by tagging it as the speaker's whole contribution to the conversation. In each of these, and in similar sentences, omitting the *le* would be possible only if something more were going to be said.

In sentences expressing Currently Relevant States which are not bounded in any way, then, a postverbal sentence-final '*le*' is always the CRS *le*.

Turning next to case (ii), we want to consider instances in which a sentence-final '*le*' can be only the perfective *-le*. Since perfective *-le* is used for signaling bounded events, a sentence-final '*le*' can be just the perfective *-le* only with verbs that have an end point as part of their inherent meaning, such as *miè* 'extinguish' and *sǐ* 'die' (see section 6.1.1.C of chapter 6 for a discussion of these cases). In each of these examples, we are assuming a context in which the speaker is not claiming current relevance (if s/he is, then we have an instance of case [iii], which we will discuss next).

(195) zhàdàn      bào      –      le  
           bomb      explode      –      PFV

The bomb exploded.

(196) huǒ      zuótiān      wǎnshang      miè      –      le  
           fire      yesterday      evening      go:out      –      PFV

The fire went out last night.

(197) tā      1969      sǐ      –      le  
           3sg      1969      die      –      PFV

S/He died in 1969.

When the verb at the end of the sentence has an end point as part of its inherent meaning, the event is bounded, and if the sentence is not being used to convey a Currently Relevant State, the sentence-final '*le*' is quite clearly the perfective *-le*.

Let us look now at case (iii), the case in which a sentence-final '*le*' is actually both the perfective *-le* and the CRS *le*. In these cases the capital-letter form *LE* is used to signal that it has the function of both *-le* and *le*. In other words, phonologically *-le le* is always manifested by the syllable '*le*,' as pointed out by Chao (1968:247), and we will represent it by *LE* in order to distinguish it functionally from *-le* and from *le*.

To find examples of this phenomenon, all we have to do is take the perfective

examples of case (ii) and use them in situations in which current relevance is implied.

For example, let's consider (195) in a context in which the speaker is signaling that this is his/her contribution to the conversation. Then both current relevance and perfectivity are implied, and we have (198):

(198) zhàdàn      bào      LE  
 bomb      explode      PFV/CRS

The bomb exploded (and that is what I have to say).

If we add a specific time phrase to (195), the perfective meaning of 'le' will be more prominent, as in (199):

(199) zhàdàn      jiǔ – diǎnzhōng      bào      –      le  
 bomb      nine – o'clock      explode      –      PFV

The bomb exploded at nine o'clock.

On the other hand, we could make 'le' have only the CRS function by adding the word *yǐjīng* 'already', which is typically used in the description of states:

(200) zhàdàn      yǐjīng      bào      le  
 bomb      already      explode      CRS

The bomb has already exploded.

Exactly the same point can be made with the sentence:

(201) huǒ      miè      'le'  
 fire      extinguish

In its simple perfective interpretation, 'le' is *-le*, and the sentence means:

(i) The fire went out.

A time phrase makes this interpretation stronger, as in (196) above:

(196) huǒ      zuótiān      wǎnshang      miè      –      le  
 fire      yesterday      evening      extinguish      –      PFV

The fire went out last night.

In its most natural CRS interpretation, “*le*” is the particle *le* signaling that the extinction of the fire is relevant to the current speech situation, and sentence (201) means:

(ii) The fire has gone out.

Again, *yījīng* ‘already’ brings out this interpretation more clearly:

(202) huǒ yījīng miè le  
fire already extinguish CRS

The fire has already gone out.

Finally, (201) may also express both Currently Relevant State and perfectivity simultaneously. In that case, “*le*” is *LE*, and (196) has the meaning:

(iii) ‘The fire went out, and that’s what I am telling you.

What we have seen, then, is that sentences with a verb at the end followed by a “*le*” can be analyzed in at least one of the following three ways:

(i) When the sentence expresses Currently Relevant State alone, it can be interpreted as *le*.

(ii) When the sentence expresses perfectivity alone, it can be interpreted as *-le*.

(iii) When the sentence expresses *both* Currently Relevant State and perfectivity, it can be interpreted as *LE* (i.e., *-le le*). The fact that the perfective suffix *-le* and the CRS *le* are pronounced the same way and the fact that a single *LE* is actually the way *-le le* is pronounced initially makes such sentences difficult to analyze. In most instances, though, a clear understanding of the different functions of the perfective suffix *-le* and the CRS particle *le* allows us to sort out which is which when they occur at the end of the sentence.

## 7.2 *ne*

### 7.2.1 *ne* as ‘Response to Expectation’

As the final particle of a declarative sentence, *ne* has the semantic function of pointing out to the hearer that the information conveyed by the sentence is the speaker’s response to some claim, expectation, or belief on the part of the hearer. We will gloss it as ‘Response to Expectation’, or REx. On the basis of its semantic function, this particle has the effect of calling on the hearer to pay particular attention to the information conveyed by the sentence because it is a response to the hearer’s claim, expectation, or belief. Let us examine a contrastive pair of declarative sentences with and without the sentence-final particle *ne*.

(203) *a.* tāmen yǒu sān – tiáo niú  
 they exist three – CL cattle

They have three cattle.

*b.* tāmen yǒu sān – tiáo niú ne  
 they exist three – CL cattle REx

They have three cattle.

The complete information conveyed by the *b* sentence can be paraphrased as in (204):

(204) Listen, they have three cattle.

That is to say, the presence of *ne* in (203) *b* calls the hearer's attention to the information in the sentence by telling him/her that this is what the speaker wishes to say in connection with the hearer's previous claim. On the other hand, sentence (203) *a* is completely neutral in terms of the pragmatic function of the sentence. It merely states the fact that 'they have three cattle'. Thus, one would imagine sentence (203) *a* but not (203) *b* to be appropriate in an official report, whereas one can imagine a variety of speech contexts in which (203) *b* would be appropriate and (203) *a*, while perhaps not inappropriate, would not convey the additional semantic nuance that (203) *b* does. For example, one context for which (203) *b* would be a perfect response would be one in which A has just stated that 'they' don't have any money and are very poor, and B then challenges A's claim, ending the challenge with (203) *b*. In such a context, (203) *a*, though acceptable, would not be as effective in concluding the challenge as (203) *b* would. Thus, the information conveyed by (203) *b* is significant in connection with what the hearer has just said in that it contradicts the hearer's expectation. Of course, a contradiction is not the only situation in which the information conveyed by (203) *b* would be significant in connection with the hearer's claim or expectation. For example, another speech context for (203) *b* could be that A had been describing how rich these people are; B could then utter (203) *b* in support of A's claim. In this context, (203) *b* would be more appropriate if the adverb *hái* 'even, still, also' were placed in front of the verb *yǒu* 'exist' so that the complete meaning of the sentence would be: 'You know, they even have three cattle.'

Let us examine the four semantic functions attributed by Chao (1968:802–804) to *ne*. First, Chao claims that *ne* describes ‘‘continued state,’’ as in (205):

- (205) Zhāngsān shuō – zhe huà ne  
 Zhangsan speak – DUR utterance REx

Zhangsan is speaking (to someone).

The second meaning of *ne*, according to Chao, is ‘as much as’, which he calls ‘‘assertion of an equaling degree.’’

- (206) yǒu yì bǎi chǐ ne  
 exist one hundred feet REx

It’s as much as one hundred feet.

Third, according to Chao, *ne* depicts ‘‘interest in additional information,’’ as in:

- (207) tāmen hái mài gǔ qín ne  
 they also sell ancient zither REx

They also sell ancient zithers.

Finally, Chao claims that *ne* has the meaning of ‘mind you’, that is, it provides a mild warning, as in:

- (208) zhèi dào hěn wéixiǎn ne  
 this actually very dangerous REx

This is rather dangerous, mind you.

Chao’s observation that the particle *ne* in (206) ‘‘strengthens’’ the assertion of equaling degree is in accord with the semantic function we ascribe to *ne*. The meaning Chao gives for *ne* in sentence (208), ‘mind you’, also corresponds closely to what we have suggested is the function of *ne*, namely, to call the hearer’s attention to the relevance of the information conveyed by the sentence in connection with the hearer’s claim or expectation. The continued-state meaning of (205) is conveyed, however, not by *ne*, but by the durative aspect marker *-zhe* (see section 6.2 of chapter 6). In order to understand the semantic function of *ne* in (205), let’s consider a context in which it would be likely to be uttered. Suppose

that someone wishes to go into Zhangsan's office to see him and is presented with sentence (205) in response to his/her request. The *ne* in (205) is then calling to the visitor's attention that, contrary to his/her expectation, Zhangsan is unable to see him/her.

The total message conveyed by (207) can be described as:

(209) You will be interested in knowing that they also sell ancient zithers.

Let's think of an appropriate context for (207): Suppose the speaker and his/her friends are visiting a musical instrument shop. One friend makes the discovery that the shop carries some exotic instruments, at which point the speaker responds with (207). Again, *ne* in (207) indicates that in response to the friend's discovery, the speaker is calling the friend's attention to the message conveyed by the sentence. Let's contrast (207) with (210), which does not contain *ne*:

(210) tāmen hái mài gǔ qín  
 they also sell ancient zither

They also sell ancient zithers.

The difference between (210) and (207) is that (207), with *ne*, can be uttered only as a *response* to an earlier comment, while (210) could be a neutral piece of information offered, say, as a continuation of something the speaker himself/herself has just said.

Since any declarative sentence may serve the purpose of conveying significant information in connection with the hearer's claim or expectation, as long as the speech context is appropriate, *ne* can occur with any declarative sentence. The following sentences will illustrate:

(211) (in response to a person's remark that the speaker doesn't have anything to worry about anymore)

wǒ hái dēi xiě yī piān lùnwén ne  
 I still must write one CL dissertation REx

I still have to write a dissertation.

- (212) (in response to a person's observation that a friend does not appear to be too disturbed by an accident)

tā hěn kāixīn ne  
3sg very happy/ REx

S/He is very happy.

- (213) (in response to someone's remark that the speaker should engage in physical exercise)

wǒmen yào dǎ wǎngqiú ne  
we want hit tennis REx

We want to play tennis.

- (214) (in a discussion about the fact that Zhangsan is a frequent traveler)

Zhāngsān mǎi fēijī piào qù Zhōngguó ne  
Zhangsan buy airplane ticket go China REx

Zhangsan bought a plane ticket to go to China.

- (215) (in response to a relative's complaint that the boy or girl is not making money)

tā hái shì yī - ge xiǎo - hái zi ne  
3sg still one - CL small - child REx

S/He is still a kid.

When we speak of the hearer's claim, expectation, or belief, we should be aware that a speaker can assume unilaterally that a hearer has a claim, an expectation, or a belief. For example, consider (207) again. Someone could utter (207) in a musical instruments shop even though none of his/her companions has said anything if s/he unilaterally assumes that the companions believe the shop doesn't carry anything exotic.

Given the function of *ne*, it follows that it will not occur with declarative sentences that are not being used in a speech situation. In other words, *ne* is a strictly conversational particle that requires at least two conversationalists, since the function of *ne* is to bring the hearer's attention to the significance of the



information conveyed by the sentence in connection with the hearer's claim, expectation, or belief. Thus, we don't find *ne* in scientific reports or in expository writings. Similarly, *ne* normally does not occur in a presentative sentence, which typically serves to initiate a conversation. For instance, (216) is odd when it is used as a presentative sentence initiating a conversation:

- (216) ?yǒu yì — gè rén yào jìn —  
 exist one — CL person want enter —  
 lai ne  
 come RE<sub>x</sub>

There is a person who wants to come in.

### 7.2.2 *ne* as a Question Particle

Unlike *ma* (see chapter 18), *ne* cannot by itself turn a declarative sentence into a question, as is illustrated by the sentences in (217):

- (217) a. nǐ hǎo ma?  
 you well Q  
 Are you well?  
 b. \*nǐ hǎo ne?  
 you well RE<sub>x</sub>

Instead, *ne* as a question particle occurs with A-not-A questions, question-word questions, and truncated questions consisting of only one noun. Let us illustrate each of the three contexts with examples.

- (218) nǐ xǐhuan bu xǐhuan tā ne?  
 you like not like 3sg RE<sub>x</sub>

(In that case,) do you like him/her?

- (219) tā yào chī shénme ne?  
 3sg want eat what RE<sub>x</sub>

(In that case,) what does s/he want to eat?

(220) A:    tā      míngtiān      qù      xuéxiào  
              3sg    tomorrow      go      school

Tomorrow s/he'll go to school.

B:    nǐ      ne ?  
        you    REx

And how about you?

The semantic function of *ne* in the declarative sentence is carried over here to its use in the questions. That is, *ne* remains a particle with the meaning 'This is what I say in connection with your previous claim, expectation, or belief'. Of course, in the case of questions, the precise meaning of *ne* will be: 'In connection with your claim or expectation, let me find out . . .'. Thus, the English translations for questions (218) and (219) contain the preamble 'in that case', meaning 'with respect to what you have just said, let me ask you . . .'.

The message described by such a preamble is clearly shown by the truncated question ending in *ne* illustrated by (220). In (220), when B says 'And how about you?', it is clearly in reference to what A has just said: 'Tomorrow s/he'll go to school'.

Again, like declarative sentences with *ne*, questions with *ne* are not used to initiate discourse unless the hearer's claim, expectation, or belief is assumed or already in the air. Similarly, questions with *ne* are like declarative sentences with *ne* in that they are unlikely to be found in scientific reports or expository writings, because of the conversational nature of the function of *ne*.

*Ne* and *ma* are in complementary distribution as sentence-final particles for questions. *Ma*, unlike *ne*, is a plain question marker and does not occur with A-not-A questions, question-word questions, and truncated questions, as shown in sentences (221)–(223):

(221) \*nǐ    xǐhuan    bu    xǐhuan    tā    ma ?  
           you    like    not    like    3sg    Q

(222) \*tā    yào    chī    shénme    ma ?  
           3sg    want    eat    what    Q

(223) A:    tā      míngtiān      qù      xuéxiào  
              3sg    tomorrow      go      school

Tomorrow s/he'll go to school.

B: \*nǐ    ma ?  
       you    Q

On the other hand, in *ma* questions, *ne* cannot be substituted for *ma*, as shown in (217) *a* and *b* above and in (224) *a* and *b*:

(224) *a.*    nǐ    kāixīn    ma ?  
               you    happy    Q

Are you happy?

*b.*    \*nǐ    kāixīn    ne ?  
       you    happy    REx

(Are you happy?)

The reason that *ma* does not occur with A-not-A questions or question-word questions is obvious. Both types of questions already contain the information that the construction is a question. Thus, there is no need for the presence of *ma*, whose sole function is to mark an utterance as a question. As for the truncated questions, they must take *ne*, not *ma*, because they are always uttered only in response to what the hearer believes or has just said.

### 7.3 *ba*

The semantic function of *ba* can be best described as equivalent to that of the ‘‘Don’t you think so?’’ or ‘‘Wouldn’t you agree?’’ type of question that is tagged onto a statement in English. Thus, *ba* has the effect of soliciting the approval or agreement of the hearer with respect to the statement to which *ba* is attached; we gloss it ‘Solicit Agreement’ (SA). This is why *ba* often occurs as the marker for first person plural commands (see chapter 14 on imperatives). For example:

(225) wǒmen    zǒu    ba  
       we        go        SA

Let’s go!

(226)    qǐ        –        lái        ba  
           rise    –        come    SA

Let’s get up!

When the subject of a command is the inclusive ‘‘we’’ (i.e., including the speaker), and the sentence-final particle *ba* signals the speaker’s desire to solicit approval or agreement with respect to the information conveyed by the sentence, the ‘let’s . . .’ meaning follows naturally.

The semantic function of *ba* also explains why *ba* is described as an ‘‘advisative’’ particle by Chao (1968:807). When the subject of a sentence is the second person and *ba* occurs as the sentence-final particle, signaling a solicitation of approval/agreement from the hearer with regard to the information contained in the sentence, it follows that the total effect of the sentence is one of advice. For example:

(227)    nǐ      hē      shuǐ      ba  
          you    drink    water    SA

Why don’t you drink some water?

(228)    nǐ      xiǎng      ~      yi      –      xiǎng      ba  
          you    think      ~      one      –      think    SA

Why don’t you think about it a little?

When the subject of a sentence is the first person, it is easy to see the semantic function of *ba* by contrasting a sentence ending in *ba* and the same sentence without the *ba*. For example:

(229) a.    wǒ      hē      bàn      bēi  
          I      drink    half    glass

I’ll drink half a glass.

b.    wǒ      hē      bàn      bēi      ba  
          I      drink    half    glass    SA

I’ll drink half a glass, OK?

Sentence (229) a functions as a neutral statement. For instance, it can be an answer to a question such as:

- (230)    nǐ        hē        duōshǎo ?  
           you      drink    how:much

How much do you want to drink?

Sentence (229) *b*, on the other hand, would be used only in a context in which the speaker had some reason to request the hearer to agree that half a glass would be an acceptable amount to drink. For example, if the speaker was being repeatedly toasted at a banquet, s/he could utter (229) *b* as a plea to be given only half a glass to down this time.

Consider another contrasting pair:

- (231) *a.*    tā        bu        huì        zuò        zhè        –        yàng        –  
               3sg      not      will      do        this      –        manner    –  
                                   de        shì  
                                   ASSOC    thing

S/He wouldn't do such things.

- b.*        tā        bu        huì        zuò        zhè        –        yàng        –  
               3sg      not      will      do        this      –        manner    –  
                                   de        shì        ba  
                                   ASSOC    thing     SA

S/He wouldn't do such things, don't you agree?

Here we might imagine a context in which two people are discussing whether Zhangsan has done something he shouldn't have done. If the person who is defending Zhangsan is angry, then only (231) *a* is an appropriate form for his/her defense to take. Under these circumstances, (231) *b*, which attempts to solicit agreement from the hearer, would not be used: its accommodating and conciliatory tone would be incompatible with the anger of the person defending Zhangsan.

The function of soliciting agreement which we have described for *ba* is clearly comparable to the function of a tag question, which seeks confirmation of a

statement (see chapter 18, section 18.4). Thus (232) *a* and *b* convey similar messages:

(232) *a.*    tā    hěn    hǎo    –    kàn    ba  
                  3sg    very    good    –    look    SA

S/He is very good looking, don't you agree?

*b.*    tā    hěn    hǎo    –    kàn,    duì    bu    duì ?  
                  3sg    very    good    –    look    right    not    right

S/He is very good looking, isn't s/he?

It is not surprising, then, that in general *ba* cannot be added to an utterance that is already marked as a question, as shown by the unacceptability of the sentences in (233):

(233) *a.*    \*tā    hǎo    –    kàn    bu    hǎo    –    kàn    ba ?  
                  3sg    good    –    look    not    good    –    look    SA

*b.*    \*shéi    hē    jiǔ    ba ?  
                  who    drink    wine    SA

*c.*    \*nǐ    hǎo    ma    ba ?  
                  you    good    Q    SA

The reason that *ba* cannot occur with question-word questions, A-not-A questions, and *ma* questions is straightforward: since these types of questions are already marked as questions whose function is to request certain types of information, in general they cannot be converted into a sentence type that requests the hearer to agree to some statement. Chao (1968:807) gives an interesting counterexample: (234) is a question-word question with *ba*:

(234)    nǐ    dàodī    yào    shénme    ba ?  
                  you    ultimately    want    what    SA

Tell me, what do you want?

Let us first contrast (234) with (235). Whereas (234) is acceptable, appears unacceptable:

(235) \*tā      yào      shénme      ba ?  
           3sg      want      what      SA

The difference between (234) and (235) is, first, that the subject in (234) is 'you', while in (235) it is *tā* 's/he'; and, second, that the adverb *dàodì* 'at last' is present in (234) but not in (235). Both of these points have to do with context in which (234) might be used. The most natural context in which this sentence might occur is one in which two people are quarreling, and one finally (234) in exasperation; the translation given in (236) gives an idea of the message conveyed by (234):

(236) OK, don't you think you should let me know what in world you want?

which clearly makes use of the function of *ba*, namely, soliciting agreement from the hearer that s/he should make his/her wishes clear. When the subject of the question is *tā* 's/he', however, as in (235), it is much more difficult to think of an analogous context in which the speaker requests the hearer to agree: *someone else* should make his/her wishes clear, as suggested in (237):

(237) OK, don't you think you should let me know what in world s/he wants?

#### 7.4 *ou*

The semantic function of *ou* can best be described as that of a friendly warning showing concern and caring on the part of the speaker. It signals the message 'Let me warn you or tell you in a friendly way'; we gloss it 'Friendly Wg', or *FW*. Chao (1968) correctly characterizes *ou* as a 'warning reminder'; it also has the connotation of friendliness, showing that the speaker is concerned. It is often used to soften a command, in which situation it converts the command into a concerned warning, as in sentences (238)–(240):

(238) xiǎoxīn      ou  
           careful      FW

Be careful, OK?

- (239) yào zuò gōngkè ou  
 must do homework FW

Listen, you'd better do your homework.

- (240) bié shēngqì ou  
 don't angry FW

Say, don't get angry, OK!

Another type of sentence that often can serve as a warning is the conditional sentence (see section 23.1.3 of chapter 23). Thus *ou* often occurs with conditionals. For example:

- (241) nǐ bu lái tā jiu shāng - xīn ou  
 you not come 3sg then wound - heart FW

Let me tell you, if you don't come, s/he'll be hurt.

- (242) rúguo tā qù Měiguó wǒ jiu mà tā ou  
 if 3sg go America I then scold 3sg FW

Let me tell you, if s/he goes to America, I'll scold him/her.

- (243) nǐ chī duō le jiu dùzi téng ou  
 you eat much CRS then abdomen hurt FW

Let me tell you, if you eat too much, you'll have a stomachache.

Because of the semantic nature of *ou*, it is commonly found in the speech of an adult addressing a child. Similarly, because of the implication of concern and care on the part of the speaker, *ou* will not occur in the speech of an adversary or in impersonal speech or writing. Thus, for instance, it is perfectly imaginable for a parent to warn a naughty child by saying:

- (244) wǒ yào dǎ nǐ ou  
 I will hit you FW

Let me tell you, (if you do this,) I will hit you.



On the other hand, though, it would be unimaginable or comical for one fighter to say (244) to another in a boxing ring or in a gang fight, because in these types of situations there is a lack of care and concern.

### 7.5 *a/ya*

*A/ya* performs the function of reducing the forcefulness of the message conveyed by the sentence; it is glossed as 'Reduced Forcefulness', or *RF*. Thus when *a/ya* is placed after an A-not-A question or a question-word question, it has the semantic effect of softening the query, in much the same way that the English preambles 'excuse me', 'by the way', and 'to change the subject' do, as observed by Chao (1968:804). The following examples illustrate A-not-A questions and question-word questions with the particle *a/ya*:<sup>7</sup>

- (245) shéi a/ya ?  
who RF

Who is it?

- (246) nǐ qù nǎr a/ya ?  
you go where RF

Where are you going?

- (247) nǐ xǐhuan bu xǐhuan zhèi — ge chēzi a/ya ?  
you like not like this — CL car RF

Do you like this car?

- (248) nǐ xiǎng bu xiǎng tā a/ya ?  
you think not think 3sg RF

Do you miss her/him?

When one contrasts the questions (245)–(248) and the same questions without the final particle *a/ya*, the first impression one has is that the questions with the particle are much softer and thus tend to suggest kindness on the part of the speaker. This effect, of course, is derived from the meaning of *a/ya*, which reduces the forcefulness of the message conveyed by the utterance.

Chao (1968) gives ten different meanings of *a/ya*, only some of which concern *a/ya* as sentence-final particle; here we will deal exclusively with *a/ya* as a sentence-final particle. Closer examination shows that most of those meanings can be understood on the basis of the meaning of the sentence to which *a/ya* is attached. In other words, most of those various meanings should not be attributed to *a/ya*. We have considered questions. Let us now examine the other meanings Chao attributes to *a/ya*.

(i) "Confirmation question": In Mandarin one can seek confirmation simply by using a question intonation. Thus, if A thinks B has said that s/he will come here, and wishes to get a confirmation, A can ask either (249), which is a declarative sentence with rising intonation, or (250), which uses the sentence-final particle *a/ya*:

(249)    nǐ      lái ?  
          you    come

Are you coming?

(250)    nǐ      lái      a ?  
          you    come     RF

Are you coming?

Both (249) and (250) are confirmation questions in the context given for them. Contrasting them reveals that (250) is less forceful and more endearing or more polite than (249). Hence, *a* in (250) performs the function of reducing the force of the question, but it does not by itself signal that the question is a confirmation question.

(ii) "Vocative particle": Chao has correctly observed that uttering a name with the particle *a/ya* has a less blunt effect than a direct address without any particle. "Vocative" is not, however, the function or the meaning of *a/ya*. Both (251) *a* and (251) *b* are vocative because they directly address the hearer; the difference is that (251) *b* is less blunt or more friendly.

(251) *a.*    Zhāngsān!

*b.*    Zhāngsān a/ya!

(iii) "Commands": *A/ya* occurs with commands. Again, however, it is not the function of *a/ya* to signal that the utterance is a command. Rather, the utterance

itself signals that it is a command, and *a/ya* has the usual function of reducing the forcefulness of the command. For example, if we take the utterance in (249) and change the intonation from a question intonation (rising) to a command intonation (falling), we have the command:

(252)    nī      lái !  
          you    come

You come here!

If the particle *a/ya* is added to (252) to form (253),

(253)    nī      lái    a/ya  
          you    come    RF

You come here.

then sentence (253) conveys the message that it is more of a suggestion or an encouragement than a command. This is because *a/ya* has the function of reducing the forcefulness of the utterance.

Another pair of examples is:

(254) *a.*    chī      –      fān !  
              eat      –      food

Eat!

*b.*    chī      –      fān    a/ya  
       eat      –      food    RF

Eat, OK?!

Sentence (254) *b* is a much more friendly command than (254) *a*. One can imagine (254) *a* being used by a marine sergeant addressing the recruits in a mess hall. In such a context, it would be strange for the marine sergeant to use (254) *b*, as marine sergeants are notorious for being harsh martinets. On the other hand, one can imagine a context in which a concerned parent is urging his/her child to eat. Such a context would be perfect for (254) *b* but inappropriate for (254) *a*.

(iv) ‘‘Impatient statement’’: *A/ya* may occur with an utterance that signals

impatience. Once again, however, it is not *a/ya* but the utterance itself that conveys the message that the speaker is impatient. *A/ya* functions merely to reduce the force of the message, as can be illustrated by the following pair of sentences. Sentence (255) is an example of Chao's (1968:805); let's contrast it with (256):

(255) wō                    bìng                    méi zuò – cuò    a/ya  
          I                    on:the:contrary       not do – wrong    RF

On the contrary, I didn't do wrong.

(256) wǒ                    bìng                    méi zuò – cuò  
          I                    on:the:contrary       not do – wrong

On the contrary, I didn't do wrong.

Both (255) and (256) can be used to convey the message that the speaker is impatient. What suggests impatience in these sentences is the negative meaning of each statement and the use of the adverb *bìng* 'on the contrary'.

There is also, however, a difference between the total message conveyed by (255) and that conveyed by (256): (255) is the more conciliatory, less belligerent statement. One can imagine (255) being uttered in a dispute between two friends or relatives. An appropriate situation for the use of (256), on the other hand, would be one in which two people are arguing in a courtroom; for example, (256), but not (255), could be said by an unfriendly witness to the lawyer.

(v) 'Warning': *A/ya* may occur in a sentence that serves as a warning. Again, *a/ya* does not make an utterance into a warning. Consider this example provided by Chao (1968:805):

(257) zhèi – ge rén – de huà shì  
          this – CL person – GEN speech be  
          kào – bu – zhù de a  
          rely – can't – hold:on NOM RF

This person's words are unreliable.

The warning message of (257) is inferred from the literal meaning of the sentence, namely, 'This person's words are unreliable'. Let us contrast (257) with (258), in which *a* is not used:

(258)	zhèi	—	ge	rén	—	de	huà	shì
	this	—	CL	person	—	GEN	speech	be
			kào	—	bu	—	zhù	de
			rely	—	can't	—	hold:on	NOM

This person's words are unreliable.

Both (257) and (258) are warnings because both have the same basic meaning; but (258), without the sentence-final particle *a/ya*, is more urgent, more official, and more detached than (257). If a military intelligence chief is briefing subordinates about a certain informant, (258) will be appropriate, but (257), with *a/ya*, will be awkward. On the other hand, (257) would be appropriate as avuncular advice warning a young person not to trust 'this person's words'. Thus, *a/ya* again has the function that was described at the beginning of this section: to reduce the forcefulness of the message conveyed by the utterance.

## 7.6 Conclusion

Traditional Chinese grammar refers to the sentence-final particles as *yǔqì cí* 'mood words'; this term aptly suggests that the function of these sentence-final particles is to relate to the conversational context in various ways the utterance to which they are attached and to indicate how this utterance is to be taken by the hearer.

## Notes

1. Discussions with the following people have helped to shape the presentation in this section: Dale Elliott, Mary Erbaugh, Huang Shuan-fan, Robert McCoard, Claudia Ross, George Spanos, and R. McMillan Thompson. We have also adapted some ideas from Chao (1968) and Spanos (1977, 1979). Nearly all the examples in this chapter have been taken from actual conversations. For a more technical discussion of the ideas presented here, see Li, Thompson, and Thompson (forthcoming).
2. In speech *le* and *a* typically merge into *la*.
3. In sentences that end with a verb plus a "le," it is sometimes difficult to tell whether this "le" is the perfective verbal suffix *-le* (see chapter 6) or the CRS sentence-final particle *le*. We consider the "le" in sentence (7) to be a combination of the two forms of "le," which we will write as *LE*. This combination of the two forms is discussed in section 7.1.3 of this chapter.
4. In fact, this change-of-state meaning, which is actually just one of the functions of *le*, has been taken as its only meaning by most grammarians, who ignore its other functions altogether; Chao (1968) and Spanos (1977, 1979) are exceptions.

5. See section 6.1 of chapter 6 for discussion of the perfective *-le*. In the context given for (112), it implies that more poems are to be memorized, but, of course, this is not a necessary implication of such “double *LE*” sentences, as example (108) above clearly shows.
6. This is the class of *le* examples which is sometimes referred to as expressing *imminent action*. This is not a very helpful term, unfortunately, since many sentences that express imminent actions do not have to take *le* simply because they do not involve announcement of a new situation, such as:

(i) wǒ      qù      huàn      yìxiē      qián  
 I        go      change    some    money

I'm going to go change some money.

(ii) wǒ      qù      pào      yìxiē      chá  
 I        go      brew    some    tea

I'm going to go make some tea.

(iii) wǒ      hē      yì      bēi      kāfēi  
 I        drink    one    glass    coffee

I'll have a cup of coffee.

7. The distinction between *a* and *ya* is a matter of which dialect of Mandarin one speaks.

## CHAPTER 8

# Adverbs

---

Adverbs in Mandarin typically occur after the subject or after the topic if there is no subject (see section 4.1 of chapter 4 for a discussion of topic and subject).<sup>1</sup> For example:

- (1) Zhāngsān gāng lái  
Zhangsan just come

Zhangsan has just arrived.

- (2) Zhāngsān tài gāo  
Zhangsan too tall

Zhangsan is too tall.

- (3) Zhāngsān zhēn cōngmíng  
Zhangsan truly smart

Zhangsan is really smart.

- (4) Zhāngsān cháng(chang) tiàowǔ  
Zhangsan frequently dance

Zhangsan dances frequently.

- (5) píngguō Zhāngsān zhǐ mǎi – le yī – gè  
 apple Zhangsan only buy – PFV one – CL

Apples, Zhangsan bought only one.

When a sentence contains both an adverb and an auxiliary verb, the adverb always precedes the auxiliary verb. In other words, the adverb remains immediately after the subject, as here:

- (6) Zhāngsān yīdìng néng tiàowǔ  
 Zhangsan definitely can dance

Zhangsan definitely can dance.

In this chapter, we will discuss several types of adverbs, which can be classified as follows:

1. Movable adverbs, which occur either at the beginning of the sentence or after the topic or subject, and modify the entire sentence
  - a. time adverbs
  - b. attitude adverbs
2. Nonmovable adverbs, which occur only after the topic or subject
  - a. manner adverbs
  - b. nonmanner adverbs
3. Postverbal adverbials, which occur only after the verb and signal frequency or duration

## 8.1 Movable Adverbs

Certain adverbs may occur not only after the topic of a sentence but also in sentence-initial position, that is, preceding the topic. These adverbs are often called *movable adverbs*, meaning that they may occur either before or after the topic or subject of a sentence. One of the major functional characteristics of the movable adverbs is that they are *sentential* adverbs, in the sense that they provide a semantic frame within which the event described by the sentence occurs. The frame may be time related, as signaled by such adverbs as *míngtiān* 'tomorrow', or attitudinal, as signaled by such adverbs as *xiǎnrán* 'obviously'.

### 8.1.1 Movable Adverbs of Time

The first subgroup of movable adverbs is the set of *time adverbs*, including *jīntiān* 'today', *qùnián* 'last year', *jiānglái* '(in the) future', *jīnlái* 'recently',



*xiànzài* 'now', *xiàwǔ* '(in the) afternoon', *zànshí* 'temporarily', *sān-diǎnzhōng* '(at) three o'clock', *gāng(gang)* 'just now'. For example:

- (7) a. jīntiān    wǒ    bu    shūfu  
           today    I    not    comfortable

Today I don't feel well.

- b.    wǒ    jīntiān    bu    shūfu  
       I    today    not    comfortable

Today I don't feel well.

- (8) a.    zànshí    wǒ    zhù    zài    zhèr  
           temporarily    I    live    at    here

Temporarily I live here.

- b.    wǒ    zànshí    zhù    zài    zhèr  
       I    temporarily    live    at    here

Temporarily I live here.

These time adverbs clearly function as sentential adverbs; they typically signal the time at which or during which the entire event described by the sentence occurs. In this respect they contrast with a semantically similar set of adverbs, such as *yǐjīng* 'already' or *chángcháng* 'frequently', which are associated with the verb rather than with the entire sentence.

### 8.1.2 Movable Adverbs of Attitude

The other subset of movable adverbs are *attitude adverbs*, those that denote the speaker's attitude toward or evaluation of the event expressed by the sentence. For example, consider the adverb *xiǎnrán* 'obviously' in (9):

- (9) a.    xiǎnrán    Zhāngsān    bu    gāoxìng  
           obviously    Zhangsan    not    happy

Obviously, Zhangsan is not happy.

- b. Zhāngsān xiǎnrán bu gāoxìng  
 Zhangsan obviously not happy

Obviously, Zhangsan is not happy.

What (9) *a* and *b* express is that it is obvious *to the speaker* of the sentence that Zhangsan is not happy. Thus the adverb *xiǎnrán* 'obvious' in (9) conveys information concerning the attitude of the *speaker* of the sentence. In contrast, consider the nonmovable manner adverb *jìng-jìng-de* 'quietly' in (10):

- (10) tā            jìng-jìng-de        zuò        zài        nàr  
          3sg            quietly            sit        at        there

Quietly, s/he sat there.

As (10) shows, *jìng-jìng-de* 'quietly' has nothing to do with the evaluation of the *speaker*, but rather describes the manner in which the subject, *tā* 's/he', behaved. Other attitude adverbs include: *yěxǔ* 'perhaps', *dàgài (dàyuè)* 'more or less', *xìngkuī* 'fortunately', *nándào* 'Is it conceivable . . . ?', *jiùjìng* 'after all, in the end', *dāngrán* 'of course', *tūrán (hūrán)* 'suddenly', *yuánlai (běnlai)* 'originally', *qíshì* 'in fact', and *fānzhèng (héngshù, hǎodāi)* 'in any case', as well as some of the sentence-linking adverbs discussed in chapter 23.

## 8.2 Nonmovable Adverbs

As we have indicated above, the vast majority of adverbs in Mandarin are nonmovable adverbs: that is, they occur only in the position immediately following the subject or topic and before the verb. Two main groups of nonmovable adverbs may be established: manner adverbs and nonmanner adverbs. We will discuss them separately in this section.

### 8.2.1 Manner Adverbs

*Manner adverbs*, as the name indicates, modify the verb phrase by signaling the manner in which the action of the verb phrase is carried out. With a few exceptions, such as *gùyì* 'on purpose', manner adverbs are derived from adjectives. The process by which an adjective becomes an adverb involves the addition of the suffix *-de* and, for many adjectives, reduplication as well. For example, the adjective

*kuài* 'quick' can be transformed into an adverb, as in (11) through reduplication and the addition of the suffix *-de*:

- (11)    *tā*        *kuài-kuài-de*    *zǒu*  
           3sg        quickly        walk

S/He walked quickly.

When the adjective is disyllabic, the strategy of reduplicate to reduplicate each syllable independently, as in *kuài-kuài-lè-lè-de* 'happily *kuàilè* 'happy', *shū-shū-fú-fú-de* 'comfortably' from *shūfu* 'comfortable'. Further discussion on reduplication, see section 3.1.1. of chapter 3.)<sup>2</sup>

Many currently used manner adverbs are derived from adjectives that have recently come into Mandarin as a result of the influence of Indo-European languages. Most of these adjectives can be made into adverbs simply by the addition of the suffix *-de* without reduplication, as in *xīng*:*xīngfèn-de* 'excitedly'; *zìxì* 'meticulous': *zìxì-de* 'meticulously'; *kǎi* 'happy': *kuàilè-de* 'happily'; *jiǎndān* 'simple': *jiǎndān-de* 'simply'; *zhèndìng*:*zhèndìng-de* 'calmly'.

Semantically, manner adverbs in general describe the manner in which the subject carries out an activity. Here are some examples:

- (12)    *tā*        *xīngfèn-de*    *pǎo*    —        —        *lái*  
           3sg        excitedly        run    —        —        come

S/He excitedly ran in.

- (13)    *tā*        *jìng-jìng-de*    *tǎng*    *zài*        —        *shàng*  
           3sg        quietly        lie    at        {        —        on

S/He quietly lay on the grass.

- (14)    *wǒ*        *yánli-de*        *zébèi*    *tā*  
           I        sternly        reproach    3sg

I sternly reproached him/her.

A special problem arises, however, when manner adverbs occur in *bèi* sentences (see chapter 16).<sup>3</sup> Let us briefly describe the *bèi* construction here:

- (15) noun phrase<sub>1</sub>      *bèi*      noun phrase<sub>2</sub>      verb

In this schema, the first noun phrase, in sentence-initial position, is typically the direct object, *bèi* or one of its variants is the passive marker, and the second noun phrase is the agent, as in:

- (16) Zhāngsān      *bèi*      Lìsì      pīping      LE  
        Zhangsan      BEI      Lisi      criticize PFV/CRS

Zhangsan was criticized by Lisi.

For convenience, we will refer to the first noun phrase as *NP*<sub>1</sub> and to the second noun phrase, the *bèi* noun phrase, as *NP*<sub>2</sub>. Since adverbs normally occur immediately after the first noun phrase, which is usually the subject, we expect them to be placed immediately after *NP*<sub>1</sub> in the passive construction. This is indeed true with most adverbs, as in (17) and (18):

- (17) Zhāngsān      yǐjīng      *bèi*      Lìsì      pīping      LE  
        Zhangsan      already      BEI      Lisi      criticize PFV/CRS

Zhangsan has already been criticized by Lisi.

- (18) Zhāngsān      zuótiān      *bèi*      Lìsì      pīping      LE  
        Zhangsan      yesterday      BEI      Lisi      criticize PFV/CRS

Yesterday, Zhangsan was criticized by Lisi.

Many manner adverbs, however, have meanings that can modify an action only with regard to the *agent*. We call these manner adverbs *agent-oriented adverbs*. Some examples of agent-oriented adverbs are: *gōngpíng-de* 'fairly, justly', *yánli-de* 'sternly', *jiāoào-de* 'arrogantly', *yǒu-limào-de* 'politely', *zhèndìng-de* 'calmly', *cánrěn-de* 'cruelly', *yěmán-de* 'savagely'. These agent-oriented manner adverbs cannot be placed immediately after *NP*<sub>1</sub>, the regular adverbial position, in a passive sentence; for example, (19) is unacceptable:

- (19) \*Zhāngsān gōngpíng-de bèi Lìsì pīping LE  
 Zhangsan justly BEI Lisi criticize PFV/CRS

Instead, the agent-oriented adverb must be placed immediately after NP<sub>2</sub>, the agent, as in:

- (20) Zhāngsān bèi Lìsì gōngpíng-de pīping LE  
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi justly criticize PFV/CRS

Zhangsan was justly criticized by Lisi.

The reason for this distributional property of agent-oriented adverbs is straightforward: since the agent-oriented adverb comments on the agent, not the direct object, it should follow the agent instead of the direct object.

Manner adverbs whose meanings do not necessarily comment on the agent, on the other hand, may occur either immediately after NP<sub>1</sub> or after NP<sub>2</sub> in the *bèi* construction. As we might expect, though, there is a meaning difference: the manner adverb that is not expressly agent oriented describes whichever noun phrase it immediately follows. As an example, consider the adverb *gāo-gāo-xìng-xìng-de* 'happily', as in (21):

- (21) a. Zhāngsān gāo-gāo-xìng-xìng-de bèi Lìsì kuājiāng  
 Zhangsan happily BEI Lisi praise  
 — le yi dùn  
 — PFV one time

Zhangsan was happy in being praised by Lisi.

- b. Zhāngsān bèi Lìsì gāo-gāo-xìng-xìng-de kuājiāng  
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi happily praise  
 — le yi dùn  
 — PFV one time

Zhangsan was praised in a happy way by Lisi.

As our English translations suggest (though somewhat inadequately), in (21) *a*, 'happily' refers to Zhangsan, whereas in (21) *b*, 'happily' refers to Lisi. Another such example is *kōng-shǒu* 'empty-handed':

- (22) *a*. Zhāngsān kōng - shǒu bèi Lìsì zhífú LE  
 Zhangsan empty - hand BEI Lisi subdued PFV/CRS

Zhangsan, empty-handed, was subdued by Lisi.

- b*. Zhāngsān bèi Lìsì kōng - shǒu zhífú LE  
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi empty - hand subdue PFV/CRS

Zhangsan was subdued by Lisi empty-handedly.

Again, the understanding of precisely who is empty-handed changes according to the position of the manner adverb *kōng-shǒu*, which is not agent oriented. Other examples of non-agent-oriented manner adverbs are: *mǎn-tóu-dà-hàn-de* literally 'full-head-big-sweat', meaning 'covered with perspiration'; *zìyóu-zìzài-de* 'non-chalantly'; *xiū-xiū-de* 'bashfully'; *hūn-tóu-hūn-nǎo-de* literally 'faint-head-faint-brain', meaning 'muddleheadedly'; *jiāoji-de* 'anxiously'; and *mè-mè-de* 'quietly'.

Similarly, adverbial clauses formed with the durative aspect marker *-zhe* (see section 6.2.2 of chapter 6) behave in exactly the same way in passives as do agent-oriented adverbs: which noun they refer to depends on their position. The meaning contrast is quite clear here:

- (23) *a*. Zhāngsān guāng - zhe jiǎo bèi Lìsì tī  
 Zhangsan bare - DUR foot BEI Lisi kick  
 - shāng LE  
 - injure PFV/CRS

Zhangsan, barefooted, was kicked to the point of injury by Lisi.

- b*. Zhāngsān bèi Lìsì guāng - zhe jiǎo  
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi bare - DUR foot  
 tī - shāng LE  
 kick - injure PFV/CRS

Zhangsan was kicked to the point of injury by Lisi, who was barefooted.

There are, however, certain other manner adverbs that may occur either after NP<sub>1</sub>, the direct object, or after NP<sub>2</sub>, the agent, but that *always* comment on NP<sub>1</sub>, the *direct object*. These adverbs include, for example, *bu-zhī-bu-jué-de* ‘unknowingly’, *bàn-shēng-bàn-sǐ-de* ‘half-dead’, *huó-shēng-shēng-de* ‘alive’:

(24) a.	Zhāngsān	<u>bu-zhī-bu-jué-de</u>	bèi	Lìsì	gǎn	—
	Zhangsan	unknowingly	BEI	Lisi	chase	—
		shàng	—	qù	LE	
		ascend	—	go	PFV/CRS	

Zhangsan, unknowingly, was surpassed by Lisi.

b.	Zhāngsān	bèi	Lìsì	<u>bu-zhī-bu-jué-de</u>	gǎn	—
	Zhangsan	BEI	Lisi	unknowingly	chase	—
		shàng	—	qù	LE	
		ascend	—	go	PFV/CRS	

Zhangsan, unknowingly, was surpassed by Lisi.

In both (24) *a* and (24) *b*, the adverb *bu-zhī-bu-jué-de* ‘unknowingly’ describes the direct object, *Zhāngsān*, but cannot describe the agent, *Lìsì*. The reason for this is simply that in the “real” world on which language comments, it is much more likely that if one person is doing something to another, the one who can be unknowing is the direct object rather than the agent.

In passive sentences, then, the meaning of the manner adverb determines both what position it can take and whether it can be understood to describe the agent or the direct object.

In present-day Mandarin, again because of the influence of Indo-European languages, particularly English, certain manner adverbs can also be derived from abstract nouns—for example, *kēxué-de* ‘scientifically’ from *kēxué* ‘science’, *chuàngzào-xìng-de* ‘creatively’ from *chuàngzào-xìng* ‘creativity’, *juédìng-xìng-de* ‘decisively’ from *juédìng-xìng* ‘decisiveness’:

(25)	wǒmen	<u>kēxué-de</u>	yánjiū	nèi	—	ge	wèntí
	we	scientifically	research	that	—	CL	problem

We will research that problem scientifically.

- (26) wǒmen chuàngzào-xìng-de jiějué nèi - ge wèntí  
 we creatively solve that - CL problem

We will solve that problem creatively.

Onomatopoeic adverbs constitute another class of manner adverbs. They are formed in imitation of the natural sounds associated with various actions.

- (27) nèi - ge zhōng dīngdāng-dīngdāng-de xiǎng  
 that - CL bell make:noise

That bell makes noise in a dingdong-dingdong manner.

As a general rule, onomatopoeic manner adverbs take the suffix *-de*. Occasionally, though, *-de* may be optionally deleted, as in this example:

- (28) tā pècā diē - le yì jiāo  
 3sg fall - PFV a fall

S/He fell down with a thud.

### 8.2.2 Nonmanner Adverbs

The class of nonmovable *nonmanner adverbs* includes such forms as *yìjīng* 'already', *yìzhí* 'straight', *cháng* 'often', and *zǎo* 'early', as in:

- (29) tā yìjīng zǒu le  
 3sg already leave CRS

S/He's already left.

Because of certain interesting semantic properties, we have chosen to discuss the following members of this class in slightly greater detail: *yě* 'also', *zài* 'again', *jiù* 'only', immediately, emphatic, thereupon (then)', *zhǐ* 'only', *hěn* 'very', *cái* 'just now, only then', *dōu* 'all', *háì* 'still', and *yòu* 'again'.<sup>4</sup>



A. *yòu* and *zài*

*Zài* 'again' refers to events that have not yet happened, whereas *yòu* 'again' applies either to past or to present events. The following sample sentences will illustrate:

- (30) a. tā      yòu      chī      le  
           3sg      again      eat      CRS      他又不是小孩子

S/He is eating again.

- b. tā      zuótiān      yòu      chī      le  
       3sg      yesterday      again      eat      CRS

S/He ate again yesterday.

- c. \*tā      míngtiān      yòu      chī      le      到明天你又要吃  
       3sg      tomorrow      again      eat      CRS

Sentence (30) *c* is ungrammatical because the presence of *míngtiān* 'tomorrow' indicates an event that has not yet occurred. On the other hand, *zài* 'again' can never be used to refer to events that have occurred or are occurring. Thus, (31) *a* is unacceptable:

- (31) a. \*tā      zuótiān      zài      chī  
           3sg      yesterday      again      eat

- b. tā      míngtiān      zài      chī  
       3sg      tomorrow      again      eat

S/He'll eat again tomorrow.

*Zài* 'again' can occur in commands (the imperative construction), where the action is in the future with respect to the time of the utterance:

- (32) (nǐ)      zài      chī !  
       (you)      again      eat

(You) eat again!

Again, the precise meaning of *jiù* in a sentence must be determined on the basis of contextual factors.

### C. *zhī*

*Zhī* unambiguously means 'only'. Since it is a predicate-modifying adverb in Mandarin, it modifies solely the entire predicate phrase, as does *jiù* 'only'; for example:

- (40) wǒmen zhī yào kāfēi  
 we only want coffee

We only want coffee.

That is, it can never modify a noun phrase alone, as 'only' can in English. Thus, while sentence (41) *a* is acceptable English, its Mandarin equivalent, (41) *b*, is not acceptable:

- (41) *a*. Only passengers can board the ship.

- b*. \*zhī zuò chuán de kěyǐ shàng chuán  
 only ride boat NOM can ascend boat

### D. *cái*

*Cái* basically has two meanings: 'just now' and 'only then'. In the first meaning, 'just now', it is synonymous with the adverb *gāng*:

- (42) wǒ cái dào  
 I just arrive

I've just arrived.

In the second meaning of *cái*, 'only then', it must refer back to some element specifying a time or a set of conditions under which the predicate with *cái* holds true. This element can be a word or a phrase earlier in the same clause, as in:

- (43) wǒ míngtiān cái zǒu ne  
 I tomorrow only:then leave REx

I'm not leaving until tomorrow.

- (44) zuì yǒu qián de rén cái néng  
 most exist money NOM person only:then can  
 mǎi zhèi — zhǒng cíqì  
 buy this — kind porcelain

Only the most wealthy can buy this kind of porcelain.

The element specifying the time or conditions under which the predicate holds can also be located in a previous clause. For example:

- (45) wǒ zuótiān lái kàn nǐ , tā cái  
 I yesterday come see you 3sg only:then X  
 bu gāoxìng  
 not happy

I came to see you yesterday; only then did s/he become unhappy.

- (46) wǒ dào — le nàr cái niàn  
 I arrive — PFV there only:then study  
 — shū  
 — book

I studied only after I arrived there.

- (47) yǒu liǎng — ge rén cái bān  
 exist two — CL person only:then move  
 — de — dòng  
 — can move

Only if we have two people can we move it.

E. *hái, yě*

*Hái* has three meanings: 'still/even', 'also', and 'moderately'. Sentences (48)–(50) illustrate *hái* meaning 'still':

- (48) wǒmen hái bu zhīdào  
we still not know

We still don't know.

- (49) tāmen bǐ wǒmen hái qióng  
they COMP we still poor

They are even poorer than we are.

- (50) nǐmen hái yào qù ma ?  
you:PL still want go Q

Do you still want to go?

In this meaning, *hái* may optionally take on the copula verb:

- (51) tā hái (-shì) xihuan Lìsì  
3sg still (-be) like Lisi

S/He still likes Lisi.

An important distinction must be made between *hái* meaning 'also' and *yě* meaning 'also'. In the case of *hái*, the meaning 'also' is applied to the predicate, not the subject, whereas in the case of *yě*, the meaning 'also' is applied to the subject, not the predicate. For example:

- (52) tā hái mǎi — le yī — ge huāpíng  
3sg also buy — PFV one — CL vase

S/He also bought a vase (in addition to buying some other things).

- (53) tā yě mǎi — le yī — ge huāpíng  
3sg also buy — PFV one — CL vase

S/He (in addition to some other people) also bought a vase.

Other examples of *hái* meaning 'also' are these:

- (54) zhèibiān hái yǒu méiguì  
 here also exist rose

There are also some roses over here.

- (55) nǐ hái yǒu duōshǎo qián ?  
 you also exist how:much money

How much more money do you have?

Examples of *hái* meaning 'moderately' include:

- (56) zhèi — ge bànfǎ hái kěyǐ  
 this — CL method moderately OK

This method is fairly good.

- (57) A: nǐ zhù de dìfang zěnmē — yàng ?  
 you live NOM place how — way

How is the place (where) you're living?

- B: hái hǎo  
 moderately good

It's not <sup>too</sup> bad.

- (58) tā hái nénggàn  
 3sg moderately talented

S/He is moderately talented.

#### F. *dōu*, *lián* . . . *dōu/yě*

*Dōu* 'all' is unique among the adverbs in Mandarin: it can refer only to a preceding noun phrase, and this noun phrase is generally the topic or the subject.<sup>5</sup>

In (59) *dōu* 'all' refers to the topic, and in (60) it refers to the subject:

(59) zhèi    –    xie    háizi    wǒ    dōu    xīhuān  
       this    –    PL    child    I    all    like

I like all these children.

(60) zhèi    –    ge    háizi    wǒmen    dōu    xīhuān  
       this    –    CL    child    we    all    like

We all like this child.

That is, in (59) it is *all of the children* whom I like, while in (60), it is *all of us* who like the child. In each of these sentences, since *dōu* 'all' can refer only to a preceding plural noun phrase, the interpretation given is the only one possible. If both the topic and the subject were plural, then we would predict that the *dōu* could refer to either one, and this is indeed true—such sentences have three interpretations:

(61) zhèi    –    xie    háizi    wǒmen    dōu    xīhuān  
       this    –    PL    child    we    all    like

- (i) Dōu refers to the topic: 'We like all these children'.  
 (ii) Dōu refers to the subject: 'We all like these children'.  
 (iii) Dōu refers to both: 'We all like all these children'.

Sentences (59)–(61) illustrate that *dōu* can refer to any semantically eligible preceding noun phrase. What *dōu* cannot do is refer to a noun phrase *after* it:

(62) a.    wǒ    xīhuān    zhèi    –    xiē    háizi  
           I    like    this    –    PL    child

I like these children.

b.    \*wǒ    dōu    xīhuān    zhèi    –    xiē    háizi  
       I    all    like    this    –    PL    child

(I like all these children.)\*

\*Cf. example (59).

地都哭了  
都怪你

If the noun phrase referred to by *dōu* denotes two referents, then *dōu* can be translated as 'both':

- (63) zhèi    -    zhī    niǎo    gēn    nèi    -    zhī  
this       -       CL       bird     and       that     -       CL
- niǎo    dōu    shì    wǒ    -    de  
             bird    all     be    I     -    GEN

This bird and that bird are both mine.

Of course, *dōu* 'all' can also be used to refer to all of one thing or to a mass noun:

- (64) jīntiān    -    de    bàozhǐ    wǒ    dōu    kàn    le  
today       -    ASSOC    paper    I       all       read    CRS

I have read all of today's paper.

- (65) píjiǔ    dōu    hē    -    guāng    le  
beer       all    drink    -    gone    CRS

The beer has all been drunk up.

In our definition of nonmovable adverbs, we said that they must occur after the subject (if there is one) or after the topic (if there is no subject) and before the verb. This means that in most sentences there will be just one position in which the *dōu* will occur. In sentences with certain kinds of coverb phrases (see chapter 9), however, which also occur after the subject or topic and before the verb, *dōu* could come either before or after the coverb phrase. When this happens, there is a meaning difference: *dōu* refers to the plural noun phrase immediately preceding it. Here are two examples:

- (66) wǒmen    bǎ    zhèi    -    xiē    shū    dōu    sòng  
we       BA    this    -    PL    book    all    give
- gěi    wǒmen    -    de    péngyǒu  
             to    we       -    GEN    friend

We gave all the books to our friend.

- (67) wōmen dōu bǎ zhèi — běn shū sòng  
 we all BA this — CL book give  
gěi lǎoshī  
 to teacher

We all gave this book to the teacher.

The *lián . . . dōu/yě* construction singles out one part of the sentence with the meaning 'even'. It is formed by putting the particle *lián* before the element being singled out. This element must occur at some point in the sentence before *dōu* (or *yě*, which is interchangeable with *dōu*), but not necessarily immediately before it. For example,

- (68) lián tā dōu shēngqì  
 even 3sg all angry

Even s/he is angry.

- (69) a. wǒ lián tā dōu bu xìhuan  
 I even 3sg all not like

I don't even like him/her.

- b. lián tā wǒ dōu bu xìhuan  
 even 3sg I all not like

I don't even like him/her.

In (69) *a lián tā* 'even him/her' occurs after the subject, and in (69) *b* it occurs before the subject; the meanings are the same.

The element being singled out by *lián* can be a verb phrase or a coverb phrase:

- (70) tā lián dǎ — zì dōu bu huì  
 3sg even hit — character all not know:how

S/He doesn't even know how to type.



- (71) tā    lián    gēn    tā    nǚér    dōu    bu    shuō  
 3sg    even    with    3sg    daughter    all    not    speak
- huà  
 —    speech

S/He doesn't even speak to his/her daughter.

G. *hěn*

The adverb *hěn* 'very' is most frequently found preceding an adjectival verb, as in:

- (72) tā    hěn    gāo  
 3sg    very    tall

S/He is very tall.

Certain verb-object compounds are adjectival because of their idiomatic meaning. Such compounds can be modified by *hěn* as long as they function as adjectival verbs, as in these examples:

- (73) a. tā    hěn    yǒu    —    qián  
 3sg    very    exist    —    money

S/He is very rich.

- b. nèi    —    jiàn    gǔdǒng    hěn    yǒu    —    jiàzhí  
 that    —    CL    antique    very    exist    —    value

That antique piece is very valuable.

- c. zhèi    —    ge    rén    hěn    yǒu    —    quán  
 this    —    CL    person    very    exist    —    power

This person is very powerful.

Other than adjectival verbs, certain experiential verbs are the only ones that can take the adverbial modifier *hěn*. These experiential verbs constitute a semantic

class of verbs whose function it is to signal the mental disposition of an animate being. Here are some examples:

(74) tā      hěn      xiǎng      wǒ  
3sg      very      miss      I

S/He misses me a lot.

(75) wǒ      hěn      pà      gǒu  
I      very      afraid      dog

I am very afraid of dogs.

(76) wǒmen      hěn      zhùzhòng      cáigàn  
we      very      emphasize      competence

We put a lot of emphasis on competence.

In spoken Mandarin, the adverb *hěn* occurring with an adjectival verb usually loses its semantic content when it is de-stressed. In such a case, we say its meaning is *bleached*. Thus, for example, (72) can simply mean:

*mono / 11ab*  
(77) S/He is tall.

### 8.3 Negation and Adverbs

Although negation is discussed in depth in chapter 12, it should be noted here that the negative particles *bu* and *méi(yǒu)* typically occur immediately after the topic or subject of a sentence and are themselves adverbs. In this section, we will confine our discussion of negation to its interaction with other adverbs.

#### 8.3.1 Negation and Movable Adverbs

In languages of the world, the *scope* of an element such as a negative particle or an adverb is that portion of the sentence which is semantically *affected* by that element. We can say that the material that is semantically affected by a certain element is in the semantic *domain* of that element. In general, the material in the scope of a given element is the material *following* that element. Thus, the scope of

the negative particle is typically the predicate, which is that portion of the sentence following it:

- (78) Zhāngsān bu xǐhuan Lìsì  
 Zhangsan not like Lisi

Zhangsan does not like Lisi.

In other words, in (78) *bu* 'not' serves to negate *xǐhuan Lìsì* 'like Lisi'; it does not negate *Zhāngsān*.

Now, since movable adverbs are sentential adverbs in the sense that they provide a semantic frame for the sentence, we do not expect negation to include the movable adverb in its scope. In fact, since negation typically negates the predicate, we should expect to find the entire negative sentence or predicate in the scope of the movable adverb. Since the movable adverb does not fall in the scope of the negative particle, it is natural, then, that the *movable adverb should precede, not follow, the negative particle*. This is confirmed by the fact that (79) *a* and *b* are acceptable, but (79) *c* is not. The movable adverb is *yǒu-(de)-shíhòu* 'sometimes':

- (79) a. yǒu – (de) – shíhòu Zhāngsān bu  
 exist – (NOM) – time Zhangsan not  
 xǐhuan Lìsì  
 like Lisi

Sometimes Zhangsan does not like Lisi.

- b. Zhāngsān yǒu – (de) – shíhòu bu xǐhuan Lìsì  
 Zhangsan exist – (NOM) – time not like Lisi

Zhangsan sometimes does not like Lisi.

- c. \*Zhāngsān bu yǒu – (de) – shíhòu  
 Zhangsan not exist – (NOM) – time  
 xǐhuan Lìsì  
 like Lisi

Examples (80) and (81) also show that a movable (i.e., sentence) adverb cannot be in the scope of the negative, but must have the entire negative sentence or predicate in its scope:

- (80) a. yìqián wǒ bu chōu – yān  
 formerly I not extract – smoke

Formerly I didn't smoke.

- b. wǒ yìqián bu chōu – yān  
 I formerly not extract – smoke

Formerly I didn't smoke.

- c. \*wǒ bu yìqián chōu – yān  
 I not formerly extract – smoke

- (81) a. xiàwǔ wǒ bu zuò – shì  
 afternoon I not do – work

I don't work in the afternoon.

- b. wǒ xiàwǔ bu zuò – shì  
 I afternoon not do – work

I don't work in the afternoon.

- ✓ c. \*wǒ bu xiàwǔ zuò – shì  
 I not afternoon do – work

### 8.3.2 Negation and Nonmovable Adverbs

The interaction between negation and nonmovable adverbs, as we might expect, has to do with the meaning of the adverb in question and the scope of the adverb and the negative particle. The general rule is that when the negative has the adverb in its scope, then the order is:

(82) . . . Negative Adverb . . .

and when the adverb has the negative in its scope, then the order is:

## (83) . . . Adverb Negative . . .

In other words, whichever element includes the other in its scope comes first. For example, consider (84):

- (84) a.    tā        zìxì-de        zuò        -        shì  
              3sg        meticulously    do        -        work

S/He works meticulously.

- b.    tā        bu        zìxì-de        zuò        -        shì  
              3sg        not        meticulously    do        -        work

S/He does not work meticulously.

- c.    \*tā        zìxì-de        bu        zuò        -        shì  
              3sg        meticulously    not        do        -        work

The meaning of *zìxì-de* 'meticulously' allows us to express the idea of 'doing an action but not in a meticulous way'. This is what (84) *b* means, and it is a perfectly acceptable sentence. We can think of the sentence as expressing the idea 'It is not meticulously that s/he works'. The meaning of *zìxì-de* does not, however, allow the possibility that one can be meticulous about *not* doing something. One can be *cautious* or *careful* not to do something, but not *meticulous*. *Zìxì-de* can describe only how an action is performed. This is why (84) *c* is not an acceptable sentence. What we have just said is simply another way of stating this general principle: Because of its meaning, *zìxì-de* 'meticulously' can be in the scope of *bu*, but it cannot have *bu* in its scope.

Most agent-oriented adverbs behave as does *zìxì-de* 'meticulously'. If they allow the negative particle at all, it must precede the adverb:

- (85) a.    wǒmen    cánrén-de        kǎowèn        tā  
              we        cruelly        interrogate    3sg

We interrogated him/her cruelly.

- b.    wǒmen    bu        cánrén-de        kǎowèn        tā<sup>6</sup>  
              we        not        cruelly        interrogate    3sg

We do not interrogate him/her cruelly.

c. \*wōmen cánrěn-de bu kāowèn tā  
 we cruelly not interrogate 3sg

(86) a. wōmen yěmán-de duìdài tā  
 we savagely treat 3sg

We treated him/her savagely.

b. wōmen bu yěmán-de duìdài tā<sup>7</sup>  
 we not savagely treat 3sg

We did not treat him/her savagely.

c. \*wōmen yěmán-de bu duìdài tā  
 we savagely not treat 3sg

The reason for the unacceptability of (85) *c* and (86) *c* is the same as we gave above for (84) *c*: it is not possible to be *cruel* or *savage* about *not* doing something, about an action that does *not* take place.<sup>8</sup>

Onomatopoeic adverbs obey exactly the same principle. Onomatopoeic adverbs, as we said above, imitate the natural sound associated with the action named by the predicate. For instance,

(87) dà yǔ huālālā-de dào — xià — lái  
 big rain pour — descend — come

Heavy rain poured down with the sound ‘‘hualala.’’

Since the onomatopoeic adverb denotes the sound associated with the action predicate, we do not expect to negate the predicate without including the adverb in the scope of negation. That is, we can talk about the rain falling without making a ‘‘hualala’’ sound:

(88) dà yǔ méiyǒu huālālā-de dào —  
 big rain not pour —  
 xià — lái  
 descend — come

The heavy rain did not pour down with the sound ‘‘hualala.’’

but it does not make sense to talk about the rain making such a sound if it did not fall at all!

(89)	* <u>dà</u>	yǔ	<u>huālālā-de</u>	<u>méiyóu</u>	dào	–
	big	rain		not	pour	–
		xià	–	lái		
		descend	–	come		

Now let's look at an example of exactly the opposite type. The negative particle must follow the adverb *háí* 'still':

(90) a.	tā	<u>háí</u>	xǐhuan	Zhōngguó	cài
	3sg	still	like	China	dish

S/He still likes Chinese dishes.

b.	* <u>tā</u>	<u>bu</u>	<u>háí</u>	xǐhuan	Zhōngguó	cài
	3sg	not	still	like	China	dish

c.	tā	<u>háí</u>	<u>bu</u>	xǐhuan	Zhōngguó	cài
	3sg	still	not	like	China	dish

S/He still does not like Chinese dishes.

Here the meaning of the adverb *háí* 'still' is that some state of affairs which is true at the present time also used to be true previously; that state of affairs can be either affirmative, as in (90) *a*, or negative, as in (90) *c*. The message conveyed by (90) *c* is 'It is still the case that s/he does not like Chinese dishes'. It does not make any sense, however, for it to be 'not still' that s/he likes Chinese dishes, so (90) *b* is not acceptable. Hence, *háí* can have *bu* in its scope, but *bu* cannot have *háí* in its scope.

The nonmovable adverbs expressing time-related meanings which we discussed in section 8.2.2 above behave in exactly the same way as *háí*. These adverbs include *gāngāng* 'just now', *yǐjīng* 'already', *jiù* 'then, thereupon', *cái* 'just now, only then'. For example:

(91) a.	tā	<u>gāngāng</u>	<u>bu</u>	shuō	–	huà
	3sg	just:now	not	speak	–	speech

S/He has shut up just now.

- b. \*tā    bu    gānggang    shuō    –    huà  
 3sg    not    just:now    speak    –    speech
- (92) a. tā    yǐjīng    bu    zuò    huài    shì    le  
 3sg    already    not    do    bad    deed    CRS

S/He has already stopped doing bad deeds.

- b. \*tā    bu    yǐjīng    zuò    huài    shì    le  
 3sg    not    already    do    bad    deed    CRS
- (93) a. wǒ    jiù    bu    zǒu    le  
 I    then    not    leave    CRS

Then I won't go.

- b. \*wǒ    bu    jiù    zǒu    le  
 I    not    then    leave    CRS

Each of these adverbs includes as part of its meaning the idea of 'as of a certain time': *gānggang* means 'as of a moment ago', *yǐjīng* means 'as of the present (unexpectedly)', and *jiù* means 'as of some previous event (mentioned in the discourse)'. While it makes sense, just as we suggested for *hái* 'still', to talk of some event or state being true or not being true as of a certain time, it doesn't make sense to talk about an event being true but not as of a certain time. The idea of 'as of a certain time' must have the entire rest of the sentence in its scope.

Some nonmovable adverbs allow both possibilities: that is, they both precede and follow the negative particle. For example, consider (94):

- (94) a. tā    chángchang    hē    jiǔ  
 3sg    frequently    drink    wine

S/He frequently drinks wine.

- b. tā    bu    chángchang    hē    jiǔ  
 3sg    not    frequently    drink    wine

S/He does not frequently drink wine.



c. tā      chángchang      bu      hē      jiǔ  
 3sg      frequently      not      drink      wine

S/He frequently does not drink.

In (94) *b*, the adverb *chángchang* is in the scope of the negative particle *bu*, whereas in *c*, the negative particle *bu* is in the scope of the adverb *chángchang*. It just happens that ‘not frequently drink wine’ is essentially equivalent to ‘frequently not drink wine’. We can demonstrate the difference in meaning between the two orders, *negative + nonmovable adverb* and *nonmovable adverb + negative*, more clearly by citing another example, *gùyì* ‘deliberately’, as in:

95 a. tā      gùyì      hē      jiǔ  
 3sg      deliberately      drink      wine

S/He drinks wine deliberately.

b. tā      bu      gùyì      hē      jiǔ  
 3sg      not      deliberately      drink      wine

S/He does not deliberately drink wine.

c. tā      gùyì      bu      hē      jiǔ  
 3sg      deliberately      not      drink      wine

S/He deliberately doesn’t drink wine.

The difference in meaning between (95) *b* and (95) *c* is clear: in *b*, s/he drinks but *not deliberately*, whereas in *c*, s/he is deliberate in *not drinking*. The difference in position correlates precisely with the difference in scope.

Many other nonmovable manner adverbs (with some exceptions to be discussed later) behave in the same way as *gùyì* ‘deliberately’: they allow the negative particle to occur either before them or after them, with a concomitant meaning difference. Another example is *gānxīn-qíngyuàn-de* ‘willingly’, as in:

(96) a. tā      bu      gānxīn-qíngyuàn-de      chàng      –      gē  
 3sg      not      willingly      sing      –      song

S/He does not willingly sing.



- (99)      nǐ      bu      hái      zuò      —      shì      ma ?  
             you      not      still      do      —      work      Q

Isn't it true that you still work?

#### 8.4 Adverbs and the *bǎ* Construction

The *bǎ* construction (see chapter 15) has the following structure:

- (100) noun phrase      bǎ      noun phrase      verb

In the *bǎ* construction, the direct-object noun phrase is marked by the coverb *bǎ* and precedes the verb. Let's examine the behavior of adverbs in the *bǎ* construction. Movable adverbs, whether they are time adverbs or attitude adverbs, as we would expect, occur in sentence-initial position or in postsubject/topic position in the *bǎ* construction, just as they do in other sentences. Time adverbs, however, unlike attitude adverbs, can also occur *after* the *bǎ* phrase; so (101) *c* is acceptable, but (102) *c* is not:

- (101) a.      zuótiān      wǒ      bǎ      chēzi      mài      le  
                  yesterday      I      BA      car      sell      CRS

I sold the car yesterday.

- b.      wǒ      zuótiān      bǎ      chēzi      mài      le  
             I      yesterday      BA      car      sell      CRS

I sold the car yesterday.

- c.      wǒ      bǎ      chēzi      zuótiān      mài      le      ↷  
             I      BA      car      yesterday      sell      CRS

I sold the car yesterday.

- (102) a.      xiǎnrán      tā      bǎ      Lìsì      gǎn      —      chū  
                  evidently      3sg      BA      Lisi      chase      —      exit  
                  —      qu      le  
                  —      go      CRS

S/He evidently chased Lisi out.

b.	tā	<u>xiǎnrán</u>	<u>bǎ</u>	<u>Lǐsì</u>	gǎn	–	chū
	3sg	evidently	BA	Lisi	chase	–	exit
		–	qu	le			
		–	go	CRS			

S/He evidently chased Lisi out.

7	c.	*tā	<u>bǎ</u>	<u>Lǐsì</u>	<u>xiǎnrán</u>	gǎn	–	chū
'		3sg	BA	Lisi	evidently	chase	–	exit
			–	qu	le			
			–	go	CRS			

Nonmovable adverbs were defined above as those occurring after the subject and before the verb. In a *bǎ* construction, though, there are *two* positions that are after the subject and before the verb, namely, before the *bǎ* phrase and after it, as indicated in the following schema:

(103) noun phrase    \_\_\_\_\_    bǎ    noun phrase    \_\_\_\_\_    verb

It should follow, then, that nonmovable adverbs, which may not occur in sentence-initial position, can occur in either of the two preverbal positions in a *bǎ* sentence with no change in meaning, and this is indeed true. Here are some examples:

(i) Agent-oriented manner adverb:

(104) a.	wó	<u>bǎ</u>	<u>tā</u>	<u>yánli-de</u>	mà	–
	I	BA	3sg	sternly	scold	–
		le	yi	dùn		
		PFV	one	time		

I sternly scolded him/her once.

b.	wó	<u>yánli-de</u>	<u>bǎ</u>	<u>tā</u>	mà	–
	I	sternly	BA	3sg	scold	–
		le	yi	dùn		
		PFV	one	time		

I sternly scolded him/her once.

## (ii) Non-agent-oriented manner adverb:

(105) a. wǒ bā tā cánkùi-de mà - le yi dùn 7  
 I BA 3sg ashamedly scold - PFV one time

I "ashamedly" scolded him/her once.

b. wǒ cánkùi-de bā tā mà - 7  
 I ashamedly BA 3sg scold -  
 le yi dùn  
 PFV one time

I "ashamedly" scolded him/her once.

(106) a. wǒ bā nèi - běn  
 I BA that - CL  
shū gānxīn-qíngyuàn-de mài le 7  
 book willingly sell CRS

I willingly sold that book.

b. wǒ gānxīn-qíngyuàn-de bā nèi -  
 I willingly BA that -  
běn shū mài le  
 CL book sell CRS

I willingly sold that book.

## (iii) Nonmovable nonmanner adverb:

(107) a. wǒ zài bā tā mà } yi dùn  
 I again BA 3sg scold one time

I will scold him/her once again.

b. wǒ bā tā zài mà } yi dùn  
 I BA 3sg again scold one time

I will scold him/her once again.

(iv) Onomatopoeic adverb:

(108) a. wǒ pàde bā tā dǎ - le yī zhǎng  
 I BA 3sg hit - PFV one palm

I hit him/her with my hand with a sound "pade."

b. wǒ bā tā pàde dǎ - le yī zhǎng  
 I BA 3sg hit - PFV one palm

I hit him/her with my hand with a sound "pade."

On the other hand, there are adverbs that are not manner adverbs but may change the meaning of the *bā* sentence, depending on the position of the adverb. For instance, *yě* 'also', because of its meaning, is an adverb of this type.

(109) a. wǒ yě bā tā qǐng - lái le  
 I also BA 3sg invite - come CRS

I also invited him/her to come.

b. wǒ bā tā yě qǐng - lái le  
 I BA 3sg also invite - come CRS

I invited him/her to come also.

In (109) a, the implication is that someone else invited him/her as I did, whereas in b, the implication is that I invited someone else in addition to him/her.

In *bā* sentences, then, with the exception of certain adverbs, such as *yě* 'also', a nonmovable adverb can occur either before or after the *bā* phrase with no change in meaning.

### 8.5 Quantity Adverbial Phrases

*Quantity adverbial phrases* are made up of more than one word, which is why they are called adverbial phrases rather than adverbs. These phrases specify the extent or duration of an activity and must occur after the verb. They consist of a number, a classifier (if one is required),<sup>9</sup> and a noun. Here are some examples:

- (110) tā zǒu - le shí fēnzhōng le  
 3sg leave - PFV ten minute CRS

S/He's been gone ten minutes.

- (111) tā shuì - le sān - ge  
 3sg sleep - PFV three - CL  
zhōngtóu le  
 hour CRS

S/He has slept for three hours.

- (112) tā zhǎo - le liǎng cì le  
 3sg search - PFV two time CRS

S/He has already searched twice.

The underlined forms in these three examples are obvious cases of quantity adverbial phrases, specifying the number of times some action was done or the length of time some event took place. The underlined phrases in the following examples may not appear to be adverbial phrases in the same way, but, upon inspection, it is obvious that in both form and function they are identical to (110)–(112):

- (113) tā bā wǒ tī - le yī jiǎo  
 3sg BA I kick - PFV one foot

S/He kicked me once.

- (114) tā bǎ wǒ yǎo - le yī kǒu  
 3sg BA I bite - PFV one mouth

S/He bit me once.

- (115) wǒ bǎ tā dā - le sān quán  
 I BA 3sg hit - PFV three punch

I hit him/her with three punches.

(116)	<u>nèi</u>	–	<u>ge</u>	<u>dìfang</u>	<u>wǒ</u>	<u>yǐjīng</u>	<u>pǎo</u>	–
	that	–	CL	place	I	already	run	–
			<u>le</u>	<u>hǎo</u>	<u>jǐ</u>	<u>tàng</u>	<u>le</u>	
			PFV	good	several	time	CRS	

I've already made quite a few trips to that place.

There are two unusual features characterizing the underlined phrases in (113)–(116): first, they involve meanings that are idiomatic and therefore must be learned individually (*yī jiǎo* 'one foot', for example, does not go with any verb except *tī* 'kick'); second, nouns such as *jiǎo* 'foot' and *kǒu* 'mouth' are typically used with classifiers, but in these expressions they occur without classifiers. Because of these two properties, Chao (1968:313) calls them "cognate objects." Functionally, however, they are not objects; in (114), for instance, what was bitten was not *yī kǒu* 'one mouth', but rather *wǒ* 'I', so the direct object in (114) is *wǒ* 'I'. Instead, these forms specify the extent or duration of an activity and function as adverbial phrases, just as those in (110)–(112) do, and should be classified that way.

### Notes

1. Tai (1973) gives a broad discussion of various types of adverbial elements, including prepositional phrases, and their interactions with each other and with various parts of the verb phrase. We have also taken some ideas from Mei (1972).
2. Manner adverbs derived from monosyllabic adjectives, such as *kuài* 'quick', *màn* 'slow', and *hǎo* 'good', may optionally appear unreduplicated and/or without the suffix *-de* in imperatives (see chapter 14), as in:

(i)	<u>kuài</u>	–	<u>kuài</u>	chī
	quick	–	quick	eat

Eat quickly.

(ii)	<u>màn</u>	zòu
	slow	leave

Leave slowly. (a formal leave-taking expression)

Not all adverbs composed of reduplicated syllables are derived from adjectives. A number of monosyllabic adverbs may themselves optionally appear in a reduplicated form without any change in meaning, such as *cháng/cháng-chang* 'frequently', *piān/piānpian* 'deliberately', *gāng/gānggang* 'just now'. These adverbs are different from those derived from adjectives in that they do not take the suffix *-de*.



3. This discussion owes much to Hashimoto (1971*b*).
4. Of these, the following seven are described in detail in Alleton (1972): *dōu*, *yě*, *yòu*, *zài*, *hái*, *cái*, and *jiù*.
5. Our description of *dōu* 'all' has taken several points from Alleton (1972:51 ff.); on the *lián* . . . *dōu/yě* 'even' construction, see Paris (1979*b*).
6. Since many of the agent-oriented manner adverbs are modern innovations, their acceptance by native speakers as part of their natural speech varies from case to case and from speaker to speaker; by and large, native speakers know that these adverbs occur in journalistic writing, and they tend to accept them and use them in their speech, although some conservative speakers may find them odd.
7. See n. 6.
8. One can, of course, cruelly *refuse* to do something, but that would require the use of a verb explicitly meaning 'refuse'.
9. Some time nouns, such as *nián* 'year' and *tiān* 'day', as well as certain other nouns found in quantity adverbial phrases, do not take classifiers (see chapter 4, section 4.2.1).

## CHAPTER 9

# Coverbs/Prepositions

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### 9.1 The Function of Coverbs

The term coverb refers to a class of morphemes in Mandarin which includes such words as *gēn* 'with', *cóng* 'from', *cháo* 'facing', *yán* 'along', *lí* 'be apart from', and the like, as well as forms that figure prominently in certain grammatical constructions, such as *zài* 'at', used in locative constructions (see chapter 11), *bā*, the marker of the *bā* construction (see chapter 15), *bǐ*, the comparative morpheme (see chapter 19), *bèi*, the marker of the passive construction (see chapter 16), and certain uses of *gěi*, the marker of benefactive and indirect object constructions (see chapter 10).<sup>1</sup> A more complete list can be found in table 9.1 at the end of this chapter.

The coverb introduces a noun phrase,<sup>2</sup> and the phrase formed by the coverb plus the noun phrase generally precedes the main verb and follows the subject or topic:

- (1)  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{subject} \\ \text{topic} \end{array} \right\} \text{ coverb + noun phrase } \text{ verb } \text{ (noun phrase)}$

The following are examples:

- (2) wǒ      yào      gēn      tā      shuō      -      huà  
I      want      with      3sg      talk      -      speech

I want to talk with him/her.

- (3) nǐ cóng nǎr lái ?  
you from where come

Where have you come from?

- (4) tā cháo dōng zhàn — zhe  
3sg face east stand — DUR

S/He is standing facing east.

- (5) wǒ jiā lí gōngyuán bu yuǎn  
I home apart:from park not far

My home is not far from the park.

- (6) wǒmen àn tā — de yìsī bàn  
we according:to 3sg — GEN idea do

We'll do it according to his/her ideas.

- (7) wàng nán kàn  
toward south look

Look toward the south.

- (8) nǐ tì wǒ mǎi piào ba  
you instead:of I buy ticket SA

You buy the tickets instead of me, OK?

- (9) rénmin dàibiào yīnggāi yóu  
people representative should be:up:to  
rénmin lái xuǎn  
people come elect

It should be up to the people to elect their own representatives.

- (10) wō      duì(yu)      zhèi      –      jiàn      shì  
          I      toward      this      –      CL      matter
- méi      yǒu      yìjian  
                          not      exist      opinion

I have no opinion about this matter.

- (11) tā      zài      hòu      –      yuán      –      lǐ  
        3sg      at      back      –      yard      –      in
- niàn      –      shū  
                          study      –      book

S/He's studying in the backyard.

- (12) tā      bǎ      shū      fàng      –      xià  
        3sg      BA      book      put      –      descend
- lái      le  
                          –      come      CRS

S/He put the books down.

- (13) wǒ      bèi      tā      zhuī      –      le      sān      tiān  
        I      BEI      3sg      chase      –      PFV      three      days

I was chased by him/her for three days.

- (14) māma      gěi      wǒ      zuò      jiāozi  
          mother      for      I      make      dumpling

Mother made dumplings for me.

There are certain coverbs that need not precede the main verb; the most important of these are *zài* 'at' and *dào* 'to', which are discussed in chapter 11 on locative and directional phrases, and *gěi* 'to', which is discussed in chapter 10 on indirect objects and benefactives. As is pointed out in those chapters, under certain conditions each of these three coverbs can occur after the verb:

- (15) wò zhù zài Qīngdǎo  
I live at Qingdao

I live in Qingdao.

- (16) niàn dào dì - wǔ háng  
read to ORD - five line

Read to the fifth line.

- (17) bā nèi - ge bēi ǐ dì gěi wǒ  
BA that - CL cup hand to I

Hand me that cup!

There are also a few coverbs that may occur with their nouns in sentence-initial position. For example:

- (18) guānyu guó - wài - de  
as to country - outside - ASSOC
- qíngxíng tā yídiǎn dōu  
situation 3sg a:little all
- bu shúxi  
not familiar

As to conditions abroad, s/he really knows nothing.

- (19) zhìyu kè - wài - de  
as to class - outside - ASSOC
- huódòng tāmen bu guǎn  
activity they not concerned

As to extracurricular activities, they are not concerned with them.

An atypical coverb is *chúle* . . . (*yìwài*) 'except'. It is atypical because it involves an optional part, *yìwài*, that comes at the end of the noun phrase introduced by the first part of the coverb *chúle*. Sentence (20) is an example:

(20)	<u>chúle</u>	tā	( <u>yìwài</u> ),	nǐmen	dōu	zhàn
	except	3sg		you	all	stand
		—	qǐ	—	lái	
		—	rise	—	come	

Except for him/her, all of you stand up!

Coverbs function as *prepositions*: a coverb and its noun form a phrase that modifies the verb of the sentence. A coverb phrase, therefore, must always occur in a sentence with a verb. If the Mandarin coverbs are essentially prepositions, why, then, are they called coverbs rather than prepositions? The answer is simply that the class of coverbs contains words that are partly like verbs and partly like prepositions; the traditional term *coverb* was coined to avoid labeling them either verbs or prepositions.<sup>4</sup> They have this mixed status because most of these present-day coverbs used to be verbs at earlier stages of the language, and many of them still have characteristics of verbs and can be used as verbs that have similar meanings. For example, the coverb *bǎ* was once a verb meaning 'hold, take'; *duì* 'to, toward' was once a verb meaning 'face'; and *gēn* 'with' was once a verb meaning 'follow'.

Their verbal origin accounts for a number of properties of the present-day coverbs. In particular, some of them are more like verbs, and some are more like prepositions, because in their historical transition from verbs to prepositions, some of these morphemes have progressed farther than others.

Let us consider two properties that show the verbal nature of coverbs.

### 9.1.1 Occurrence with Aspect Markers

That some coverbs can occur with verbal aspect markers (see chapter 6) is explained by the fact that they used to be verbs: a coverb that can take an aspect marker has progressed less far along the historical route from verb to preposition than one that cannot.

A. *-zhe*

A number of coverbs can optionally occur with the durative verbal suffix *-zhe* (see section 6.2 of chapter 6 for further discussion of the durative aspect).<sup>3</sup> Some of these are given below:

(21)	<u>àn</u>	'according to'	<u>nì</u>	'against'
	<u>chòng</u>	'facing'	<u>píng</u>	'according to'
	<u>cháo</u>	'facing'	<u>shùn</u>	'along'
	<u>duì</u>	'toward'	<u>xiàng</u>	'facing'
	<u>wàng</u>	'toward'	<u>wèi</u>	'for the sake of'
	<u>yán</u>	'along'	<u>āi</u>	'adjacent to'

As an illustration, consider the following sentences. For many speakers, the coverb may occur either with or without *-zhe*, with no change in meaning:

(22)	wōmen	děi	<u>àn</u>	(-zhe)	fǎlǜ	bàn
	we	must	according:to	(-DUR)	law	do

We must do it according to the law.

(23)	tāmen	<u>wàng</u>	(-zhe)	<u>chuán</u>	-	shang
	they	toward	(-DUR)	boat	-	on
		<u>fāng</u>	-	<u>qiāng</u>		
		fire	-	gun		

They fired at the boat.

In fact, according to Chao (1968:763), some coverbs, such as *yán* 'along', must carry the *-zhe* suffix, except for certain fused phrases in which it is optional, such as *yán hǎi* 'along the sea (coast)' and *yán jiāng* 'along the river'. An example of this coverb occurring with *-zhe* is:

(24)	qiānshuǐtǐng	<u>yán</u>	-	<u>zhe</u>	hǎi
	submarine	along	-	DUR	sea
		-	<u>àn</u>	màn-màn-de	zǒu
		-	coast	slowly	go

The submarine coasted along the shore.

Many coverbs, on the other hand, cannot take *-zhe*:

- |      |     |             |   |            |       |       |        |       |
|------|-----|-------------|---|------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| (25) | *wǒ | <u>cóng</u> | — | <u>zhe</u> | nàr   | zǒu   |        |       |
|      | I   | from        | — | DUR        | there | leave |        |       |
| (26) | *tā | <u>zài</u>  | — | <u>zhe</u> | jiā   | shuì  | —      | jiào  |
|      | 3sg | at          | — | DUR        | home  | sleep | —      | sleep |
| (27) | *wǒ | <u>gěi</u>  | — | <u>zhe</u> | tā    | xiě   | xìn    |       |
|      | I   | to          | — | DUR        | 3sg   | write | letter |       |

There are two differences between the use of *-zhe* with true verbs and its occurrence with coverbs. First, the list of coverbs that can take *-zhe* must be memorized; *-zhe* cannot be added freely to just any coverb. Second, *-zhe*, when it occurs with these coverbs, has no durative meaning, as it has when it occurs as an aspect marker with a true verb. That is why some coverbs may occur either with or without *-zhe*, with no change in meaning, as in (22) and (23).

#### B. *-le*

A few coverbs can occur with *-le*, including *wèi* 'for':

- |      |    |            |       |           |       |     |       |
|------|----|------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----|-------|
| (28) | wǒ | <u>wèi</u> | —     | <u>le</u> | nǐ    | yì  | yè    |
|      | I  | for        | —     | PFV       | you   | one | night |
|      |    | méi        | shuì  | —         | jiào  |     |       |
|      |    | not        | sleep | —         | sleep |     |       |

For you I stayed awake a whole night.

The second syllable *le* in the atypical coverb *chūle* . . . (*yìwài*) 'except' is also originally the perfective aspect marker. Its presence in *chūle*, though, is obligatory, and it is no longer clear for either *wèile* or *chūle* that the second syllable still bears the function of the perfective aspect.

### 9.1.2 Coverbs That Can Also Function as Verbs

A second respect in which coverbs form a mixed class is that many of them can also be used as verbs in the present-day language. In a small number of cases, the coverb has a different meaning when it is used as a verb. Consider the following



examples. In the *a* sentences, the coverb functions as a coverb, and in the *b* sentences, as a verb.

(i) Coverb has the same meaning when used as a verb:

- (29) *a.*    *tā*    cháo    *nán*    *bài*  
           3sg    facing    south    worship

S/He worships facing south.

- b.*    *tā*    –    *de*    *wūzi*    cháo    *hǎi*  
           3sg    –    GEN    room    face    sea

His/Her room faces the sea.

- (30) *a.*    *wǒmen*    *cháng*    dào    *Niūyuē*    *qù*  
           we    often    go    New York    go

We often go to New York.

- b.*    *wǒmen*    *jǐ*    –    *diǎnzhōng*    dào    *Niūyuē* ?  
           we    how:many    –    o'clock    arrive    New York:

What time do we arrive in New York?

(ii) Coverb has a different meaning when used as a verb:

- (31) *a.*    *wǒmen*    àn <sup>32</sup>    *tā*    –    *de*    *yìsi*    *bàn*    *ba* !  
           we    according:to    3sg    –    GEN    idea    do    SA

Let's do it according to his/her ideas.

- b.*    *yǒu*    *rén*    àn    *mén*    –    *lǐng*  
           exist    person    press    door    –    bell

Someone is ringing the doorbell.

- (32) *a.*    *tā*    *yòu*    gēn    *wǒ*    *jiè*    *qián*  
           3sg    again    with    I    borrow    money

S/He again borrowed money from me.

b. jǐngchá gēn – le tā sān tiān le  
 police follow – PFV 3sg three day CRS

The police have followed him/her for three days.

(iii) Coverb has no verbal use:

(33) a. nǐ dēi cóng gè fāngmiàn kàn  
 you must from every angle look

You must look at it from every angle.

b. \*nǐ dēi cóng zhèr  
 you must from here

(34) a. bié hé wǒ kāiwánxiào  
 don't with I joke

Don't joke with me.

b. \*bié hé wǒ  
 don't with I

Once again, the difference among these three types of coverbs with regard to whether they have verbal uses is to be expected, given that some coverbs have become more like prepositions than others. In this case, we see that certain coverbs have not diverged far from their verbal origins, in that they can still be employed as verbs as well. Other coverbs have become more independent: they cannot be used as verbs (except in some cases in a compound; for example, corresponding to the coverb *cóng* 'from', there is the verb *suícóng* 'to follow').

The question that now arises is this: Given that many coverbs can be used as verbs, and given that it is common for verbs to occur together in the same sentence (see chapter 21 on serial verb constructions), how can we be sure, when we see a verblike item in a sentence with another verb, whether it is actually a verb or a coverb?

The answer to this question is that an element is considered to be a coverb if it

occurs in at least some contexts where it could not be a verb. Let's consider some examples.

To begin, we might look at a coverb that fits the criterion absolutely: *bèi*, which cannot be a verb in *any* context. The marker of an agent in a passive sentence (see chapter 16), *bèi* can occur in a sentence such as:

- (35) wǒ      bèi      māma      pīping      LE  
          I      BEI      mother      criticize      PFV/CRS

I was criticized by mother.

*Bèi* must be a coverb because it can never be a verb. In particular, it cannot occur in a sentence with no other verb:

- (36) \*wǒ      bèi      māma  
          I      BEI      mother

*Bèi* and other coverbs such as *bǎ* and *cóng* 'from', which can never be used as verbs, are easy to identify as coverbs. They are the most prepositionlike members of the coverb class.

Now, though, consider such forms as *zài* 'at', *gěi* 'to, for', and *dào* 'to'. These coverbs *can* function as verbs, as the following sentences show:

- (37) Lǐsì      zài      hǎi      –      biān  
          Lisi      at      ocean      –      side

Lisi is by the ocean.

- (38) bàba      gěi      wǒ      qián  
          papa      give      I      money

Papa gives me money.

- (39) wǒmen      dào      –      le      Xiānggǎng  
          we      arrive      –      PFV      Hong Kong

We have arrived in Hong Kong.

They also qualify as coverbs, however, because they can each be used in sentences in which they need not have their verbal meanings. For example, consider *zài* 'at' in sentence (40):

(40)	tā	<u>zài</u>	guō	—	li	fàng	shuǐ
	3sg	at	pot	—	in	put	water

S/He put water in the pot.

In this interpretation of (40), *zài* is not a verb, because it does not have the verbal meaning of 'be in'. That is, this interpretation of (40) does not involve *tā* 's/he' being in the pot. It is possible for *zài* in (40) to be a verb; in that case the sentence would be an example of a serial verb construction, with the somewhat unnatural interpretation 'S/He was in the pot and was putting water (somewhere)'. The point is that *zài* qualifies as a coverb precisely because there are sentences like (40) in which it need not have its verbal meaning.

Similarly, *gěi* in (41) can't be a verb, because here it has the meaning 'for' and not its verbal meaning 'give':

(41)	wō	<u>gěi</u>	nǐ	dào	chá
	I	for	you	pour	tea

I'll pour you some tea.

*Dào* in (42) is also not a verb, because it does not have its verbal meaning 'arrive':

(42)	tā	<u>dào</u>	Lúndūn	qù	le
	3sg	to	London	go	CRS

S/He has gone to London.

As with *zài* in (40), it is possible for *dào* in (42) to have its verbal meaning 'arrive'; in this case the sentence would also be a serial verb construction with the meaning 'S/He arrived in London and went (somewhere)'.

To be a coverb, then, an element must occur in at least some contexts in which it cannot have its verbal meaning, where it must be counted as having a nonverbal

(that is, prepositional) function. The examples in (40)–(42) illustrate three forms that can be proved to be coverbs by this criterion. To round out the picture, let's examine one case that the criterion clearly indicates does *not* have coverb status. Consider *yòng* 'use': *yòng* obviously has a verbal function, since it can be used as the only verb in a sentence:

- (43) tāmen    bu        huì        yòng        kuàizi  
           they    not    know:how    use    chopstick

They don't know how to use chopsticks.

When it appears with another verb, though, speakers of English might think it has a coverb function, since it *could* be translated into English with the preposition 'with':

- (44) wǒ        yòng        máobǐ    xiě        zì  
           I        use        brush    write    character

{ I use a brush to write characters. }  
 { I write characters with a brush. }

Here, however, even though *yòng* in (44) could be translated into English with the preposition 'with', in Mandarin there exists essentially no difference in the interpretation of the verb *yòng* in (43) and in (44). There is, therefore, by our criterion, no reason to consider it anything but a verb.

The criterion, then, does provide a clear distinction between coverbs and verbs: a coverb must occur in some contexts where it cannot be interpreted as a verb. Thus *bèi*, *bǎ*, and *cóng* 'from', which can never be interpreted as verbs, as well as *zài* 'at', *gēi* 'to, for', and *dào* 'to', which sometimes cannot be interpreted as verbs, can be considered to be coverbs. On the other hand, *yòng* 'use' is always interpretable with its verbal meaning and so does not qualify as a coverb.

## 9.2 A List of Coverbs

Table 9.1 lists some of the more commonly used coverbs in Mandarin as well as their corresponding glosses.

TABLE 9.1  
REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF COVERBS

PREPOSITION	ROUGH GLOSS	GLOSS OF PRESENT-DAY USE AS VERB	GLOSS OF OLDER VERBAL ANCESTOR (IF DIFFERENT FROM PRESENT-DAY VERB)
āi 挨	next to	be next to	
àn 按	according to	press	
bǎ 把	(direct object marker)		take, hold
bèi 被	(agent marker)		receive
bèn 奔	toward	go to	
bǐ 比	compare	compare	
bùjǐ 不及	not as	ji = reach	
bùrú 不如	not as	ru = follow	
cháo 朝	facing	face	have audience with the emperor
chèn 乘 <sup>趁</sup>	take advantage of		ride
chéng 乘	by (e.g., the dozen)	form	
chéng 乘	take advantage of	ride on	
chòng 冲	facing	face	
chúle 除	except, besides	remove	
cóng 从	from		follow
dǎ 打	from	hit	
dàiti 代替	in place of	take the place of	
dāng 当	in front of	serve as	
dào 到	to (a place)	arrive	
duì 对	to	face	
duì (yu) 对 (于)	concerning, with regard to	face	face toward
gěi 给	for, by	give	
gēn 跟	with	follow	
gēn 跟	at	be at	
guān 管	call (used with jiào)	control, manage	
guānyu 关于	concerning, with regard to		
guī 归	(agent marker)	put away	
hàn 混	with		mix
hé 合	with		mix
jiāng 将	(= bǎ [literary])	checkmate	
jiào 叫	(agent marker)	call	
jiě 解	from	untie, relieve	
jǐn 紧	take first, limit oneself to	let someone go first	
jiù 就	take advantage of		go
jiù 就	with (food or drink)	go with (food or drink)	
(gèn) jù 据	according to		
kào 靠	depend on	lean against	
lí 离	separated from		keep distance

TABLE 9.1 (Continued)  
REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF COVERBS

PREPOSITION	ROUGH GLOSS	GLOSS OF PRESENT-DAY USE AS VERB	GLOSS OF OLDER VERBAL ANCESTOR (IF DIFFERENT FROM PRESENT-DAY VERB)
<i>lùn</i> 论	by (some unit measure)		evaluate
<i>ni</i> 逆	against	be opposed to	meet, welcome
<i>píng</i> 凭	depend on, according to	depend on	
<i>qǐ</i> 起	from (a time, place)	rise	
<i>shǐ</i> 使	use, with	cause	
<i>shòu</i> 受	(agent marker)	receive	
<i>shùn</i> 顺	along	follow	
<i>tì</i> 替	in place of	substitute for	
<i>tóng</i> 同	with	be the same	
<i>wàng</i> 望	facing	face	
<i>wǎng</i> 往	toward		go
<i>wèi</i> 为	for	be for the sake of	
<i>xiàng</i> 象	like	be like	
<i>xiàng</i> 向	facing	face	
<i>yán</i> 沿	along	follow along	
<i>yī</i> 依	according to	agree with	
( <i>yī</i> ) <i>zhào</i> 照	according to	zhào = reflect	
<i>yóu</i> 由	from, be up to		follow
<i>yú</i> 与	to, for		be at
<i>zhiyu</i> 至于	concerning, with regard to		

### Notes

1. This chapter is adapted from our papers, Li and Thompson (1974a, 1974b, 1974d), where the documentation for some of the points we make is given, and from Chao (1968), Cartier (1970), Huang (1974a, 1978), and Chang (1977). For a very detailed discussion of prepositions in Chinese as well as in other languages, the reader is referred to Hagege (1975).
2. The only coverb that may occur without a following noun phrase is *bèi*, the marker of the passive (see chapter 16 for discussion).
3. See Simon (1958) and Huang (1974a) for further discussion of this point.
4. The traditional Chinese term is *fù dòngcí* 'subordinate verb', introduced in Wang (1947).

## CHAPTER 10

### *Indirect Objects and Benefactives*

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A number of verbs can take two objects, a direct object and an indirect object.<sup>1</sup> In the discussion of types of verb phrases in section 4.3.1 of chapter 4, we refer to such verbs as ditransitive. As the names *direct object* and *indirect object* suggest, the semantic relationship between a verb and its direct object is more direct, tighter, and closer than the semantic relationship between a verb and its indirect object. Thus, if the verb is an action verb taking both a direct object and an indirect object, the direct object generally represents what is being transferred as a result of the action, and the indirect object denotes who is being affected by the action. For example:

(1) wǒ      rēng      -      le      nèi kuài ròu      gěi      tā  
I      toss      -      PFV      that piece meat      to      3sg

是它吗?      向      扔      肉      给      他

-      D.O.      I.O.

I tossed that piece of meat to him/her.

In (1), the direct object (= D.O.) is *nèi kuài ròu* 'that piece of meat', and the indirect object (= I.O.) is *tā* 's/he'. The tighter semantic bond between *nèi kuài ròu* 'that piece of meat' and the verb *rēng* 'throw, toss' should be apparent. A useful diagnostic aid for distinguishing the direct object from the indirect object of a transitive action verb is the *bā* construction (see chapter 15). Only the direct object but not the indirect object of a transitive action verb may serve as the noun phrase introduced by the coverb *bā*. Using sentence (1) as our point of reference, we would expect that the direct object *nèi kuài ròu* 'that piece of meat' but not the



indirect object *tā* 's/he' can be the *bǎ* noun phrase. Sentences (2) and (3) confirm our expectation.

- (2) wǒ    bǎ    nèi kuài ròu    rēng    gěi    tā  
 I    BA    that piece meat    toss    to    3sg

I tossed that piece of meat to him/her.

- (3) \*wǒ    bǎ    tā    rēng    -    le    nèi    kuài    ròu  
 I    BA    3sg    toss    -    PFV    that    piece    meat

An important characteristic of the indirect object is that it is always either an animate noun denoting a human being or an animal, or the name of a societal institution, such as *yīyuàn* 'hospital'. Although there is no such constraint on the direct object in terms of semantic types of nouns, when a direct object and an indirect object cooccur, it is typically the case that the direct object is *inanimate* and the indirect object is *animate*. There are in general two orders in which the direct object and the indirect object can occur. Observe that in sentence (1), repeated here, the direct object, *nèi kuài ròu* 'that piece of meat', precedes the indirect object, *tā* 's/he', and, furthermore, the indirect object *tā* 's/he' is marked by the preceding coverb *gěi* 'to'.

- (1) wǒ    rēng    -    le    nèi    kuài    ròu    gěi    tā  
 I    toss    -    PFV    that    piece    meat    to    3sg
- D.O.
I.O.

I tossed that piece of meat to him/her.

Sentence (1) has an alternative form, shown in (4):

- (4) wǒ    rēng    gěi    tā    nèi    kuài    ròu<sup>2</sup>  
 I    toss    to    3sg    that    piece    meat
- I.O.
D.O.

I tossed that piece of meat to him/her.

In (4), the indirect object marked by *gěi* 'to' precedes the direct object.

Thus, sentences (1) and (4) show that the positions of the direct object and indirect objects can be reversed. Two significant points may be made about this reversal. First, there is a slight functional difference between sentences in which the direct object precedes the indirect object, *direct object + indirect object*, and those in which the direct object follows the indirect object, *indirect object + direct object*, in the sense that they are used in different speech contexts. If the speech context is such that the direct object but not the indirect object is a piece of information that has already been mentioned, then the order *direct object + indirect object* is used. On the other hand, if in the speech context the indirect object but not the direct object is a piece of information that has already been mentioned, then the order *indirect object + direct object* is used.<sup>3</sup> Let us consider an example. Suppose Zhangsan stated that he had had a piece of meat and a cake in the kitchen, and he demanded of Lisi what had happened to them. In this speech context, sentence (5) *a* but not (5) *b* would be appropriate as Lisi's response.

(5) a.    wǒ    rēng    -    le    nèi    kuài    ròu    gěi  
           I        toss    -    PFV    that    piece    meat    go

          我把(那块) I.O.

          wǒ    -    de    gǒu ,    sòng    -    le  
           I    -    GEN    dog    give    -    PFV

          把蛋糕 D.O.

nèi    -    ge    dàngāo    gěi }  
           that    -    CL    cake    to

          I.O.

          nǐ    -    (de) péngyou  
           you    -    GEN    friend

I threw that piece of meat to my dog and gave that cake to your friend.

I.O.

b.    wǒ      rēng      gěi      wǒ      -      de      gǒu  
       I      throw    to      I      -      GEN    dog

D.O.

    nèi      kuài      ròu ,      sòng      gěi  
     that      piece    meat      give      to

I.O.

    nǐ      -      de      péngyou  
     you    -      GEN    friend

D.O.

    nèi      -      ge      dàngāo  
     that    -      CL    cake

I threw that piece of meat to my dog and gave that cake to your friend.

On the other hand, if we had a different speech context in which Zhangsan asked Lisi what had been done about the hungry dog and the hungry friend, sentence (5) *b* but not (5) *a* would be an appropriate response from Lisi.

The second point to be noted about the variation in the order of the indirect object and direct object is that when the indirect object comes after the direct object, as in (1), the particle *gěi* 'to' must be used. Compare (1) to (6), which is unacceptable.

(1)    wǒ      rēng      -      le      nèi      kuài      ròu      gěi      tā  
       I      toss      -      PFV    that    piece    meat      to      3sg

I tossed that piece of meat to him/her.

(6)    \*wǒ      rēng      -      le      nèi      kuài      ròu      tā  
       I      toss      -      PFV    that    piece    meat      3sg

Sentence (6) is unacceptable because, just as in English, if the indirect object is not immediately following the verb, it must be marked as an indirect object by a preposition/coverb:

(7) \*I tossed that piece of meat him.

On the other hand, when the indirect object precedes the direct object, some verbs require the presence of *gěi*, 'to', some verbs allow it optionally, and other verbs cannot have *gěi* at all.<sup>4</sup> Let's consider each of these three classes of verbs in turn.

### 10.1 *gěi* Obligatory

Some of the verbs that require *gěi* before an indirect object are:

(8)	<u>dì</u>	'bring to'	<u>xiě</u>	'write'
	<u>fēn</u>	'allocate'	<u>zū</u>	'rent to'
	<u>ná, dài</u>	'bring to'	<u>liú</u>	'keep, save'
	<u>jì</u>	'mail'	<u>dǎ (diànhuà)</u>	'telephone'
	⊗ <u>jiāo</u>	'deliver, hand in'	<u>tī</u>	'kick'
	<u>mài</u>	'sell'	<u>bān</u>	'move'
	<u>diū, rēng</u>	'toss, throw'	<u>tuī</u>	'push'
	✗ <u>shū</u>	'lose'		

The following sentences are illustrations:

(9) a. tā      dài      –      le      yi      bāo      táng  
3sg   bring   –      PFV   one   bag   candy

gěi   Zhāngsān  
to   Zhangsan

S/He brought a bag of candy to Zhangsan.

b. tā      dài      gěi   Zhāngsān   yi      bāo      táng  
3sg   bring   to   Zhangsan   one   bag   candy

S/He brought a bag of candy to Zhangsan.

c. \*tā      dài      –      le      Zhāngsān   yi      bāo      táng  
3sg   bring   –      PFV   Zhangsan   one   bag   candy

- (10) a. wǒ shū — le yī kuài qián gěi tā  
 I lose — PFV one dollar money to 3sg

I lost a dollar to him/her.

- b. wǒ shū gěi tā yī kuài qián  
 I lose to 3sg one dollar money

I lost one dollar to him/her.

- \*wǒ shū — le tā yī kuài qián  
 I lose — PFV 3sg one dollar money

- (11) a. wǒ bān — le yī — ge zhuōzi  
 I move — PFV one — CL table  
gěi tā  
 to 3sg

I moved a table over to him/her.

- b. wǒ bān gěi tā yī — ge zhuōzi  
 I move to 3sg one — CL table

I moved a table over to him/her.

- c. \*wǒ bān — le tā yī — ge zhuōzi  
 I move — PFV 3sg one — CL table

In (9)–(11), the *c* sentences are ungrammatical because the coverb *gěi* is absent before the indirect object.

## 10.2 *gěi* Optional

Examples of verbs with which one may but is not required to use *gěi* before an indirect object are:

- |      |            |          |      |                        |
|------|------------|----------|------|------------------------|
| (12) | sòng, zèng | 'give'   | nuán | 'return'               |
|      | jiāo       | 'teach'  | péi  | 'compensate, pay back' |
|      | shāng, cì  | 'bestow' | fù   | 'pay'                  |
|      | jiā        | 'add on' | xǔ   | 'promise to give'      |
|      | chuán      | 'pass'   | jiè  | 'lend'                 |

The following sentences illustrate the characteristics of sentences with these verbs:

- (13) a. wō sòng - le yi píng jiǔ gěi tā  
 I give - PFV one bottle wine to 3sg

I gave a bottle of wine to him/her.

- b. wō sòng gěi tā yi píng jiǔ  
 I give to 3sg one bottle wine

I gave a bottle of wine to him/her.

- c. wǒ sòng - le tā yi píng jiǔ  
 I give - PFV 3sg one bottle wine

I gave a bottle of wine to him/her.

- (14) a. tā huán - le yi wǎn ròu  
 3sg return - PFV one bowl meat  
gěi nǐ  
 to you

S/He returned a bowl of meat to you.

- b. tā huán gěi nǐ yi wǎn ròu  
 3sg return to you one bowl meat

S/He returned a bowl of meat to you.

- c. tā huán - le nǐ yi wǎn ròu  
 3sg return - PFV you one bowl meat

S/He returned a bowl of meat to you.

- (15) a. wǒ fù - le liǎng - bǎi  
 I pay - PFV two hundred  
 kuài qián gěi tā  
 dollar money to 3sg

I paid \$200 to him/her.

b. wǒ fù gěi tā liǎng — bǎi  
 I pay to 3sg two — hundred  
 kuài qián  
 dollar money

I paid \$200 to him/her.

c. wǒ fù — le tā liǎng —  
 I pay — PFV 3sg two —  
 bǎi kuài qián  
 hundred dollar money

I paid \$200 to him/her.

(16) a. wǒ jiè — le yī liǎng yínzi  
 I lend — PFV one ounce silver  
gěi tā  
 to 3sg

I lent one ounce of silver to him/her.

b. wǒ jiè gěi tā yī liǎng yínzi  
 I lend to 3sg one ounce silver

I lent one ounce of silver to him/her.

c. wǒ jiè — le tā yī liǎng yínzi  
 I lend — PFV 3sg one ounce silver  
 borrow

I lent one ounce of silver to him/her.

The above examples clearly show the optional nature of *gěi* with this class of verbs.

### 10.3 *gěi* Forbidden

The class of verbs that may not take *gěi* before an indirect object differs from the first two classes in two ways. Verbs in this class not only cannot have the particle

*gěi*, but they also require the indirect object to precede the direct object.<sup>5</sup> Here are some such verbs:

(17)	<u>gěi</u>	'give'	<u>tōu</u>	'steal'
	✓ <u>gàosu</u>	'tell'	<u>qǐngjiào</u>	'ask for enlightenment'
	<u>dāyìng</u>	'promise'	<u>yíng</u>	'win'
	<u>huídá</u>	'answer'	<u>qiǎng</u>	'rob'
	<u>wèn</u>	'ask'	<u>duó</u>	'snatch'

The following examples serve to illustrate the characteristics of sentences containing verbs of this class:

- (18) a. \*wǒ wèn — le jǐ — ge  
 I ask — PFV several — CL
- wèntí gěi tā  
 problem to 3sg
- b. \*wǒ wèn gěi tā jǐ — ge wèntí  
 I ask to 3sg several — CL problem
- c. wǒ wèn — le tā jǐ —  
 I ask — PFV 3sg several —
- ge wèntí  
 CL problem

I asked him/her several questions.

- (19) a. \*tā qiǎng — le liǎng —  
 3sg rob — PFV two —
- wàn kuài qián gěi yínháng<sup>6</sup>  
 ten:thousand dollar money to bank
- b. \*tā qiǎng gěi yínháng liǎng —  
 3sg rob to bank two —
- wàn kuài qián  
 ten:thousand dollar money



c.	tā	qiǎng	—	le	yínháng	liǎng	
	3sg	rob	—	PFV	bank	two	
		—	wàn	kuài	qián		
		—	ten:thousand	dollar	money		

S/He robbed \$20,000 from the bank.

In certain Mandarin dialects, the verbs *chī* 'eat' and *hē* 'drink' can be used in the sense of 'eat off of' and 'drink off of', in which cases they take both a direct and an indirect object. For example:

(20)	wǒ	chī	—	le	tā	sān	—	ge
	I	eat	—	PFV	3sg	three	—	CL
		yuè	—	de	fàn			
		month	—	ASSOC	food			

I ate off of him/her for three months (i.e., at his/her expense).

(21)	tā	hē	—	le	nǐ	wǔ	píng	jiǔ
	3sg	drink	—	PFV	you	five	bottle	wine

S/He drank five bottles of wine off of you (i.e., at your expense).

In the usage exemplified in (20) and (21), *chī* 'eat off of' and *hē* 'drink off of' belong to this third class of verbs that take both a direct object and an indirect object with no *gěi*.

#### 10.4 Apparent Indirect Objects

Not all verbs that appear to be followed by two objects are actually examples of indirect object verbs. Let us look at two such examples. The verbs *fá* 'fine, penalize, punish' and *piàn* 'swindle, cheat' might be thought to be included in this category of verbs that require the indirect object to precede the direct object and that cannot take the particle *gěi*. Sentences such as (22) and (23) seem to provide evidence for this classification:

(22)	tā	fá	—	le	Zhāngsān	sì	—
	3sg	fine	—	PFV	Zhangsan	four	—
		shí	kuài	qián			
		ten	dollar	money			

S/He fined Zhangsan \$40.

(23)	tā	piàn	—	le	Zhāngsān	sì	—
	3sg	cheat	—	PFV	Zhangsan	four	—
		shí	kuài	qián			
		ten	dollar	money			

S/He cheated Zhangsan out of \$40.

On the other hand, it is far from clear that the noun phrase *Zhāngsān* in (22) and (23) is an indirect object. In fact, there is evidence suggesting that it is the *direct* object of the verbs *fá* 'fine' and *piàn* 'cheat'. Let us look at the facts. First, all the verbs in the three classes we have discussed so far allow the direct object to occur alone with them. For example:

(24)	wǒ	shū	—	le	<u>yī</u>	<u>kuài</u>	<u>qián</u>
	I	lose	—	PFV	one	dollar	money

I lost a dollar.

(25)	tā	huán	—	le	<u>yī</u>	<u>wǎn</u>	<u>ròu</u>
	3sg	return	—	PFV	one	bowl	meat

S/He returned a bowl of meat.

(26)	wǒ	huída	—	le	<u>jǐ</u>	—	<u>ge</u>	<u>wèntí</u>
	I	answer	—	PFV	several	—	CL	question

I answered several questions.

With *fá* 'fine' in (27) and *piàn* 'cheat' in (28), however, we find that only *Zhāngsān* but not *sìshí kuài qián* 'forty dollars' may occur alone:

- (27) a. tā fá – le Zhāngsān le  
 3sg fine – PFV Zhangsan CRS

S/He fined Zhangsan.

- b. \*tā fá – le sì – shí  
 3sg fine – PFV four – ten

kuài qián le  
 dollar money CRS

- (28) a. tā piàn – le Zhāngsān le  
 3sg cheat – PFV Zhangsan CRS

S/He cheated Zhangsan.

- b. \*tā piàn – le sì – shí  
 3sg cheat – PFV four – ten

kuài qián le?  
 dollar money CRS

Second, of all the verbs that take a direct object and indirect object, some may occur in the *bǎ* construction with the direct object as the *bǎ* noun phrase, and some may not occur in the *bǎ* construction, but, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, none may occur in the *bǎ* construction with the *indirect* object as the *bǎ* noun phrase:

- (29) \*wǒ bǎ tā shū – le yī  
 I BA 3sg lose – PFV one

kuài qián  
 dollar money

- (30) \*tā bǎ nǐ liú – le yī  
 3sg BA you keep – PFV one

wǎn ròu  
 bowl meat

(31)	*wō	bā	<u>tā</u>	huída	–	le	jǐ
	I	BA	3sg	answer	–	PFV	several
		–	ge	wèntí			
		–	CL	question			

Again, the verbs *fá* 'fine, penalize' and *piàn* 'cheat' are exceptions. Taking (22) and (23) as a reference point, we see that *Zhāngsān* but not *sìshí kuài qián* 'forty dollars' may occur as the *bā* noun phrase.

(32) a.	tā	<u>bā</u>	<u>Zhāngsān</u>	fá	–	le
	3sg	BA	Zhangsan	fine	–	PFV
		(sì	–	shí	kuài	qián)
		(four	–	ten	dollar	money)

S/He fined Zhangsan (\$40).

b.	*tā	<u>bā</u>	<u>sì</u>	–	<u>shí</u>	<u>kuài</u>	<u>qián</u>
	3sg	BA	four	–	ten	dollar	money
		fá	–	le	Zhāngsān		
		fine	–	PFV	Zhangsan		

(33) a.	tā	<u>bā</u>	<u>Zhāngsān</u>	piàn	–	le
	3sg	BA	Zhangsan	cheat	–	PFV
		(sì	–	shí	kuài	qián)
		(four	–	ten	dollar	money)

S/He cheated Zhangsan (out of \$40).

b.	*tā	<u>bā</u>	<u>sì</u>	–	<u>shí</u>	<u>kuài</u>	<u>qián</u>
	3sg	BA	four	–	ten	dollar	money
		piàn	–	le	Zhāngsān		
		cheat	–	PFV	Zhangsan		

Thus the claim that verbs such as *fá* 'fine, penalize, punish' in (22), and *piàn* 'cheat' in (23) take an indirect object is suspect. In fact, the structures of sen-

tences (22) and (23) appear to parallel that of sentence (34):

(34)	tā	tī	—	le	Zhāngsān	liǎng	jiǎo
	3sg	kick	—	PFV	Zhangsan	two	foot

S/He dealt Zhangsan two kicks.

If our analysis of (22) and (23) is correct, then *Zhāngsān* is the *direct* object of the verbs *fā* 'fine' and *piàn* 'cheat', and *sìshí kuài qián* 'forty dollars' functions as a quantity adverbial denoting the *extent* of the actions of fining and cheating, just as *liǎng jiǎo* 'two kicks' denotes the extent of the action *tī* 'kick' in (34) (see section 8.5 of chapter 8 for a discussion of such quantity adverbials). *Fā* 'fine' and *piàn* 'cheat', then, although they look like verbs that take an indirect object, can be shown to be ordinary transitive verbs taking a direct object and a quantity adverbial phrase.

### 10.5 Explanation for the Indirect Object Facts

We have seen that verbs taking both a direct object and an indirect object fall into three classes according to the presence of *gěi* when the indirect object precedes the direct object. In this section, we will try to explain the reasons for this classification.

First, the meaning of *gěi* plays a crucial role in the behavior of the verbs that take both a direct object and an indirect object. As a verb, *gěi* means 'give'. Let us analyze the meaning 'give' by examining this English sentence:

(35) Mary gave John a book.

The verb 'give' signals a *transaction*. It requires a *source* from which the transaction originates, a *goal* at which the transaction terminates, and an *entity* that is transferred. In (35) the subject of the sentence, *Mary*, is the source, the indirect object, *John*, is the goal, and the direct object, *a book*, is the entity being transferred. Now, the meaning of the coverb *gěi* 'to' is closely related to the meaning of the verb *gěi* 'give'. Thus coverb *gěi* 'to' must occur with a verb denoting some sort of transaction. This transaction may be concrete, as in *rēng* 'throw, toss', or abstract, as in *jiāo* 'teach'. The semantic function of the coverb *gěi* is to mark the goal of the transaction named by the verb.

With this fact about *gěi* in mind, let us examine the verbs with obligatory *gěi* (section 10.1) and with optional *gěi* (section 10.2). Both of these classes of verbs involve transactions in which the subject is the source and the indirect object the

goal. From this semantic fact we can predict the presence of *gěi* to mark the indirect object as the goal of the transaction. The only question, then, is why it is that the verbs in the first group obligatorily require *gěi*, while the verbs in the second group may dispense with *gěi* when the indirect object precedes the direct object. Unfortunately, to this question there is at present no satisfactory answer. Which verbs require *gěi* and which verbs allow it optionally is something that simply has to be learned for each verb.

When we examine the third class of verbs, those that do *not* allow the presence of *gěi* and that require the indirect object to precede the direct object (section 10.3), however, we find that these verbs fall into three groups, and for each group there is a reason why *gěi* is disallowed. The first group consists simply of the verb *gěi* 'give' itself. It seems reasonable to suggest that the reason *gěi* 'give' does not allow the coverb *gěi* is partially a historical one: the coverb *gěi* is historically derived from the verb *gěi*, so there is no historical basis for the two to co-occur. The second group of verbs in this class consists of *gāosu* 'tell', *dāying* 'promise', *huídá* 'answer', *wèn* 'ask'. All these are verbs of linguistic communication—words are being spoken, but, in a strict sense, there is no transaction taking place. This explains why they do not occur with *gěi*, whose literal function is to mark goals in transactions. The last group of verbs in this class includes the following verbs:

(36) <u>tōu</u>	'steal'
<u>qǐngjiào</u>	'ask for enlightenment'
<u>yíng</u>	'win'
<u>qiāng</u>	'rob'
<u>duó</u>	'snatch'

It is easy to see that all of these verbs involve, not transacting *to*, but deprivation *from* the indirect object. Another way of stating this is to say that the *subject* rather than the indirect object of the sentence is the *goal*, and the *indirect object*, from whom or which something is being taken, is the *source*. Since nothing is transferred to the indirect object in the transaction, it is clear why indirect objects with these verbs may not be preceded by *gěi*.

We mentioned above another requirement of this third class of verbs: the indirect object must immediately follow the verb. That is, sentence (6), which is repeated here, is not acceptable.

(6)	*wǒ	rēng	—	le	nèi	kuài	ròu	<u>tā</u>
	I	toss	—	PFV	that	piece	meat	3sg

Why does the indirect object have to follow the verb immediately if it is a member of this third class of verbs taking indirect objects? The answer has to do with the fact that these indirect objects are not preceded by the coverb *gěi*. As we saw above, if an indirect object does not immediately follow the verb, it must be preceded by *gěi*; but since these verbs never occur with *gěi*, the indirect object may never appear in any position other than immediately after the verb.

### 10.6 Benefactive Noun Phrases and Preverbal Indirect Objects

A benefactive noun phrase in a sentence typically refers to the one indirectly affected by the activity signaled by the verb of the sentence. In Mandarin, a benefactive noun phrase is marked with either *wèi* or *gěi*, both of which may be translated as 'for'; *wèi*, the more archaic form, is unrestricted in its usage, while *gěi*, the more innovative form, is restricted to certain verbs only. Marked with one of these two coverbs, the benefactive noun phrase precedes the verb. For example:

- (37) tā      gěi      wǒ      zào      —      le      yī      —  
          3sg      for      I      build      —      PFV      one      —  
               dòng      fángzi  
               CL      house

S/He built a house for me.

- (38) tā      wèi      wǒ      niàn      —      shū  
          3sg      for      I      study      —      book

S/He studies for me.

- (39) tā      gěi      wǒ      tiāo      —      le      liù      —  
          3sg      for      me      select      —      PFV      six      —  
               jiàn      dàyī  
               CL      coat

S/He chose six coats for me.

- (40) tā      wèi      wǒ      chàng      —      gē  
          3sg      for      me      sing      —      song

S/He sang for me.

- (41) tā      gěi xuésheng      jiěshi      wénfǎ  
 3sg      for      student      explain      grammar

S/He explained the grammar for the students.

- (42) tā      gěi wǒ      zhǎo      –      le      bu  
 3sg      for      me      make      –      PFV      not

shǎo      máfan  
 little      trouble

{S/He made a lot of trouble for me.}  
 {S/He gave me a lot of trouble.}

- (43) tā      gěi Lǐsì      hèxǐ  
 3sg      for      Lisi      congratulate

S/He congratulated Lisi.

- (44) Zhāng yīshēng      gěi Lǐsì      kàn      –      bìng  
 Zhang      doctor      for      Lisi      see      –      illness

Doctor Zhang is treating Lisi.

- (45) wǒ      gěi nǐ      dàoqiàn  
 I      for      you      apologize

I apologize to you.

Now, since the benefactive noun phrase precedes the verb and the indirect object follows the verb in a sentence, they should be easily distinguishable, although *gěi* may be involved in both cases. This is, however, not exactly the case in modern Mandarin: the indirect object marked by *gěi* has begun to appear in the preverbal position. This is a manifestation of the general structural change that is pushing the language toward the verb-final type, discussed in section 2.4.2 of chapter 2, for more than a millennium, Mandarin has been moving toward a preferred word order in which noun phrases occur before rather than after the verb. The appearance of the indirect object in the preverbal position, however, is confined to only a few verbs, such as *xiě* 'write', *mǎi* 'buy', *liú* 'keep, save', *dǎ* (*diànhuà*) 'telephone',



*sòng* 'give', *jiā* 'add on', all belonging to the first two groups of verbs discussed above in 10.1 and 10.2, that is, to those groups for which *gěi* is either obligatory or optional. Hence, sentence (46) *a* can also be expressed as (46) *b* with no change in meaning:

(46) a. 送给他

	wǒ	sòng	—	le	yi	—	běn
	I	give	—	PFV	one	—	CL
		shū		<u>gěi</u>	<u>tā</u>		
		book		to	3sg		

I gave a book to him/her.

b.

	wǒ	<u>gěi</u>	<u>tā</u>	sòng	—	le	yi
	I	to	3sg	give	—	PFV	one
		—	běn	shū			
		—	CL	book			

I gave him/her a book.

For (46) *a*, a benefactive interpretation is possible but not preferable ('I gave a book [to someone] for him'), but with some verbs, sentences with preverbal *gěi* phrases are quite natural with either an indirect object or a benefactive interpretation. For example,

(47) 我给他写信

	wǒ	<u>gěi</u>	<u>tā</u>	xiě	—	le	yi	—
	I	{to}	3sg	write	—	PFV	one	—
		{for}						
		fēng	xìn					
		CL	letter					

I wrote a letter 
 {to}  
 }  
 (for)
  him/her.

For those verbs that do not yet allow the indirect object in the preverbal position, such as *jì* 'mail', the semantic contrast between the benefactive preverbal *gěi*

phrase and the indirect object postverbal *gěi* phrase is clear:

(48) a. (benefactive)

wǒ	<u>gěi</u>	tā	jì	-	le	yì	-
I	for	3sg	mail	-	PFV	one	-
	fēng	xìn					
	CL	letter					

I mailed a letter for him/her.

b. (indirect object)

wǒ	jì	-	le	yì	-	fēng	xìn
I	mail	-	PFV	one	-	CL	letter
	<u>gěi</u>	tā					
	to	3sg					

I mailed a letter to him/her.

### 10.7 Other Functions of *gěi*

In this section, we will briefly mention those usages of *gěi* in which it introduces neither an indirect object nor a benefactive noun phrase.

The first construction involving a preverbal *gěi* phrase whose noun phrase is neither an indirect object nor a benefactive involves the verbs *kàn* 'see' and *tīng* 'hear', usages in which it conveys a special meaning of 'allow to see' and 'allow to hear'. For example:

(49)	<u>qǐng</u>	nǐ	gěi	wǒ	kàn	nèi	-
	please	you	to	I	look	that	-
		běn	shū				
		CL	book				

Please let me look at that book.

- (50) wǒ chàng — gē gěi nǐ tīng  
I sing — song to you hear

I'll sing for you to hear.

The second *gěi* construction that is neither an indirect object nor a benefactive construction is found in sentences where *gěi* functions as a passive marker, like *bèi*, as in (51). This function is discussed further in chapter 16.

- (51) wǒ gěi tā piàn — le  
I 3sg cheat — PFV

I was cheated by him/her.

### Notes

1. For this chapter, we have taken some ideas from Mei (1972:144–148) and Teng (1975a:149–154).
2. The reason why the perfective *-le* appears in sentence (1) but not in sentences (2) and (4) is that the *gěi* phrase acts as a perfectivizing expression (see chapter 6, section 6.1.2.B).
3. For a general cross-linguistic discussion of this principle, see Givón (1979a:chap. 4).
4. This insight is due to Chao (1968:317–319), though we disagree with him slightly on the categorization of certain verbs; see section 10.4.
5. One may pose the question: How do you use the verbs in this class if the speech context is one in which the direct object but not the indirect object has just been mentioned, since the direct object of these verbs cannot precede the indirect object? The answer is that you make the direct object into the topic of the sentence, as in:

- (i) 

D.O.								
nèi	kuài	ròu	wǒ	gěi	—	le	wǒ	
that	piece	meat	I	give	—	PFV	I	
	—	de	gǒu					
	—	GEN	dog					

That piece of meat (topic) I gave to my dog.

6. It should be noted that (19) *a* is acceptable if *gěi* is interpreted as the verb 'to give'; the sentence, then, becomes a serial verb construction (see chapter 21). As a serial verb construction, (19) *a* has the meaning 'S/He stole \$20,000 to give to the bank'.
7. To some native speakers of Mandarin, this sentence is acceptable with the meaning 'He got \$40 by cheating'.

## CHAPTER 11

# *Locative and Directional Phrases*

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### 11.1 Locative Phrases

In this section on locative phrases, we will first examine the internal structure of the locative phrase and then discuss the semantic implications of the position of the locative phrase in the sentence.<sup>1</sup>

#### 11.1.1 The Structure of the Locative Phrase

The locative phrase has the following structure:

- (1) zài noun phrase – (locative particle)  
'at'

The underlined portions of (2) and (3) give examples of locative phrases:

- (2) tāmen <sup>^</sup> zài fángzi – hòumian xiūli diànshìjī  
they at house – behind repair television

They repair televisions behind their house.

- (3) wǒ <sup>^</sup> bǎ qiānbǐ chā zài píngzi – lītou  
I BA pencil insert at vase – in

I put the pencils in the vase.

## A. The Locative Particle

The locative particle that follows the noun phrase, as illustrated in examples (2) and (3), specifies a spatial relationship. Table 11.1 shows the forms of the various locative particles. The locative particles *wài* 'outside', *qián* 'in front of', *hòu* 'in back of', and *páng* 'beside' are rarely used by themselves, but normally occur with one of the suffixes *-bian*, *-mian*, *-tou*, as shown in (4)–(7):

(4) a. zài huāyuán – qiánmian  
at garden – front

in front of the garden

b. \*zài huāyuán – qián  
at garden – front

(5) a. zài xuéxiào – wàibian  
at school – outside

outside of school

TABLE 11.1  
LOCATIVE PARTICLES

LOCATIVE PARTICLES				Gloss
<i>shàng</i>	<i>shàngbian</i>	<i>shàngmian</i>	<i>shàngtou</i>	'on top of, above'
<i>xià/díxia</i>	<i>xiàbian</i>	<i>xiàmian</i>	<i>xiàtou</i>	'under, below'
<i>lǐ</i>	<i>lǐbian</i>	<i>lǐmian</i>	<i>lǐtou</i>	'in, inside'
<i>wài</i>	<i>wàibian</i>	<i>wàimian</i>	<i>wàitou</i>	'outside'
<i>qián</i>	<i>qiánbian</i>	<i>qiánmian</i>	<i>qiántou</i>	'in front of'
<i>hòu</i>	<i>hòubian</i>	<i>hòumian</i>	<i>hòutou</i>	'in back of, behind'
<i>páng</i>	<i>pángbian</i>			'beside'
<i>zhōngjian/dǎngzhōng</i>				'in the center of'
	<i>zuǒbian</i>	<i>zuǒmian</i>		'left of'
	<i>yòubian</i>	<i>yòumian</i>		'right of'
<i>dōngbu</i>	<i>dōngbian</i>			'east of'
<i>nánbu</i>	<i>nánbian</i>			'south of'
<i>xību</i>	<i>xībian</i>			'west of'
<i>běibu</i>	<i>běibian</i>			'north of'
<i>zhèr/zhèli</i>	<i>zhèbian</i>	<i>zhèmian</i>		'this side of'
<i>nàr/nàli</i>	<i>nàbian</i>	<i>nàmian</i>		'that side of'

- 校
- b. \*zài xuéxiào – wài  
at school – outside
- (6) a. zài shùlín – hòumian  
at forest – behind  
behind the forest
- 后
- b. \*zài shùlín – hòu  
at forest – behind
- (7) a. zài fángzi – pángbian  
at house – beside  
beside the house
- 对
- b. \*zài fángzi – páng  
at house – beside

To account for the unacceptability of the *b* phrases, we note that in chapter 2, it was pointed out that modern Mandarin has been moving away from the monosyllabic characteristics of classical Chinese; in other words, morphemes in modern Mandarin words tend to be disyllabic. For those nouns that have both a monosyllabic and a disyllabic form in modern Mandarin, it is often the case that the *monosyllabic* form may take the *monosyllabic* locative particle, *wài*, *qián*, *hòu*, or *páng*, but the *disyllabic* form must take the *disyllabic* locative particle, which is composed of the locative morpheme with one of the suffixes *-bian*, *-mian*, or *-tou*, as can be seen in (8) and (9) below. The monosyllabic forms *chéng* 'city' and *shān* 'hill' can occur with both the monosyllabic and the disyllabic locative particles, as shown in the *a* and *b* examples of (8) and (9), but the disyllabic forms *chéngzi* 'city' and *shānzi* 'hill' can occur only with the disyllabic locative particles, as shown in the *c* and *d* examples of (8) and (9) which parallel (4)–(7) above.

- (8) a. zài chéng – wài  
at city – outside  
outside the city
- b. zài chéng – wàibian  
at city – outside  
outside the city

- c. \*zài chéngzi — wài  
 at city — outside
- d. zài chéngzi — wàibian  
 at city — outside

outside the city

- (9) a. zài shān — hòu  
 at hill — back

behind the hill

- b. zài shān — hòubian  
 at hill — back

behind the hill

- c. \*zài shānzi — hòu  
 at hill — back

- d. zài shānzi — hòubian  
 at hill — back

behind the hill

The direction words *dōng* 'east', *nán* 'south', *xī* 'west', and *běi* 'north', which, together with the suffix *-bian*, occur as locative particles, may be combined to form *dōng-nán* 'east-south = southeast', *dōng-běi* 'east-north = northeast', *xī-nán* 'west-south = southwest' and *xī-běi* 'west-north = northwest'. Note that in these combinations *dōng* 'east' and *xī* 'west' always precede *nán* 'south' and *běi* 'north'. The reverse order will be unacceptable: *\*nán-xī* 'south-west', *\*běi-dōng* 'north-east'.

The locative particle is not used when the noun phrase in the locative phrase is a place name, as in *Sānfānshì* 'city of San Francisco', *Hélan* 'Holland' and *Běijīng* 'Beijing', as illustrated in (10):

- (10) tā zhù zài Zhōngshān lù  
 3sg live at Zhongshan Road

S/He lives on Zhongshan Road.

When the locative phrase occurs before the verb, certain nouns need no locative particle. These nouns usually refer to familiar places, including rooms, buildings, organizations, and institutions, such as *xuéxiào* 'school', *fānguǎn* 'restaurant', *jiā* 'home', *chúfāng* 'kitchen', *fàntīng* 'dining room', *shūfāng* 'study', *jiàotáng* 'church', *yóuzhèngjú* 'post office', *yīyuàn* 'hospital', *jīngchájú* 'police station', *chēzhàn* 'station', and *fēijīchǎng* 'airport'. The phrases in (11)–(12) show that nouns of this type may occur in a locative phrase without a locative particle only if the locative phrase precedes the verb. If the locative phrase follows the verb, these nouns must take the locative particle:

- (11) a. zài jiàotáng – li guì – zhe  
           at church – in kneel – DUR

kneeling in the church

- b. zài jiàotáng guì – zhe  
    at church kneel – DUR

kneeling in the church

- c. \*guì <sup>个</sup> zài jiàotáng  
    kneel at church

- d. guì zài jiàotáng – li  
    kneel at church – in

kneeling in the church

- (12) a. zài jīngchájú – li shuì  
           at police:station – in sleep

sleep in the police station

- b. zài jīngchájú shuì  
    at police:station sleep

sleep in the police station

- c. \*shuì zài jīngchájú  
    sleep at police:station



d. shuì      zài      jǐngchájù      —      li  
 sleep      at      police:station      —      in

sleep in the police station

A few nouns other than place names which do not take the locative particle are *biéchu* 'elsewhere', *dàochu/gèchu* 'everywhere', *jīnchū* 'nearby place', *yuǎnchū* 'distant place'. These few nouns all end in the bound morpheme *-chu*, which means 'place, locality'. For example:

(13) tā      zhù      zài      biéchu  
 3sg      live      at      elsewhere

S/He lives somewhere else.

Finally, we note that all the locative particles, except the monosyllabic ones, may occur without a preceding noun phrase. In such cases, the noun phrase is understood from context. For example, if one says

(14) wàimian      hǎo      lěng      a  
 outside      very      cold      RF

It's really cold outside.

it is assumed that *wàimian* 'outside' refers to outside of wherever the speaker is. Similarly, with the sentence

(15) pángbian      dōu      zāng      le  
 side      all      dirty      CRS

The side is all dirty.

what it is whose side is dirty would be clear from context. And for a sentence such as

(16) nánbu      xiàtiān      hěn      mèn  
 south      summer      very      muggy

In the south, it's very muggy in the summer.

the context would make it clear what place *nánbu* is to the south of.

## B. The Locative Coverb

The coverb *zài* 'at' introduces the locative phrase (see chapter 9 on coverbs). It is obligatory except in those presentative constructions (see chapter 17) where a locative phrase is in sentence-initial position; in presentative sentences, *zài* 'at' is in general optional, as (17)–(19) illustrate:

- (17) (zài) wūzi – li yǒu sān  
 (at) house – in exist three

*usually omitted*

– ge rén  
 – CL person

In the house, there are three people.

- (18) (zài) qiáng – shang guà – zhe  
 (at) wall – on hang – DUR  
 yi – fu huà  
 one – CL painting

On the wall hangs a painting.

- (19) (zài) shān – shang xià –  
 (at) mountain – on descend –  
 zhe dà yǔ ne  
 DUR big rain REx

It's raining hard on the mountain.

If, however, the presentative sentence contains an activity verb understood in a stative sense, as in (20)

- (20) zhuōzi – shàng duī – le  
 table – on pile – PFV  
 hěn duō shū  
 very many book

A lot of books are piled on the table.

the occurrence of the coverb *zài* 'at' at the beginning of the locative phrase changes the meaning: the sentence is no longer serving a presentative function, and the activity verb is no longer understood in a stative sense. Sentence (21) illustrates these points:

(21)	<u>zài</u>	zhuōzi	—	shàng	duī	—	le
	at	table	—	on	pile	—	PFV
		hěn	duō	shū			
		very	many	book			

(Someone) piled a lot of books on the table.

As indicated by the translation, (21) functions to name an activity, where the agent of the activity is understood from the context, whereas (20) describes a state and has the function of presenting the noun phrase 'a lot of books' into the discourse.

If a locative phrase follows a verb, on the other hand, it must be introduced by *zài* 'at',<sup>2</sup> as shown in (22):

(22)	wǒ	bǎ	tā	—	de	míngzi
	I	BA	3sg	—	GEN	name
		xiě	*(zài)	xìnfēng	—	shàng
		write	at	envelope	—	on

I wrote his/her name on the envelope.

### 11.1.2 The Position of the Locative Phrase in the Sentence

As we have seen, the locative phrase either precedes or follows the verb in a sentence. We can represent the two orderings thus:

(23) a.	<u>(zài) noun phrase</u>	—	<u>locative particle</u>	verb
b.	verb	<u>zài noun phrase</u>	—	<u>locative particle</u>

For example,

(24)	tā	zài	kètīng	—	lǐ	tiàowǔ
	3sg	at	living:room	—	in	dance

S/He is dancing in the living room.

- (25) qìchē    tíng    zài    lù    —    zhōngjiān  
          car    stop    at    road    —    center

The car stopped in the middle of the road.

The single factor that determines whether the locative phrase occurs before or after the verb is the meaning of the verb. The generalization for preverbal locative phrases can be stated as in (i):

(i) Preverbal locative phrases: Any verb naming an event or state that can occur at some location can take a preverbal locative phrase specifying the general location at which that event or state occurs. Sentences (26) and (27) are good examples of preverbal locative phrases naming the general location of the event or state:

- (26) tā        zài    Xīzàng        xù mù        ?  
       3sg        at        Tibet        do:animal:husbandry

S/He does (i. e., is engaged in) animal husbandry in Tibet.

- (27) tā        zài    chuáng    —    shàng    shuì  
       3sg        at        bed        —    on        sleep

S/He sleeps on the bed.

Since nearly any event or state can have a location, most verbs allow a preverbal locative phrase. Relatively few verbs, however, allow a postverbal locative phrase. In fact, there are just four classes of verbs that do. We will discuss each of these four classes in turn.

#### A. Verbs of Displacement

A *verb of displacement* (Vdi) is an action verb whose meaning includes the *local* displacement of either the subject (in the case of an intransitive verb) or the direct object (in the case of a transitive verb). Verbs of the class Vdi include:

- |           |              |     |                 |
|-----------|--------------|-----|-----------------|
| (28) tiào | 'jump'       | dǎo | 'fall'          |
| rēng      | 'toss'       | xià | 'drop'          |
| tuī       | 'push'       | dié | 'fall'          |
| diào      | 'drop, fall' | liú | 'flow'          |
| bō        | 'sprinkle'   | pá  | 'crawl'         |
| shuāi     | 'fall, trip' | mō  | 'spread, smear' |

Any resultative verb compound whose second element is *dǎo*, such as *tī-dǎo* 'kick-fall'.

Verbs of displacement allow both preverbal and postverbal locative phrases, but there is a meaning difference correlating with this positional difference: the preverbal locative phrase signals the general location where the action takes place, as predicted by generalization (i), while the postverbal locative phrase specifies the location of the subject (in the case of an intransitive verb) or the direct object (in the case of a transitive verb) *as a result* of the displacement.

Consider the following examples, which illustrate the contrast between the postverbal locative phrase and the preverbal locative phrase when the verb belongs to the category Vdi:

(29) a.    tā        zài    zhuōzi    –    shang    tiào  
              3sg     at        table     –        on        jump

S/He is on the table jumping.

b.        tā        tiào    zài    zhuōzi    –    shang  
              3sg     jump    at        table     –        on

S/He jumped onto the table.

In (29) *a*, the locative phrase, occurring before the verb, denotes the general location of the action 'jump'; that is, (29) *a* means that s/he is jumping up and down on the top of the table. In (29) *b*, on the other hand, the locative phrase occurs after the verb *tiào* 'jump'. Since 'jump' is an action that may result in locally displacing the subject, the postverbal locative phrase names the location of the subject as a *result* of the action. Sentences (30) *a* and *b* are another pair of contrasting sentences with a verb from the category Vdi which illustrates the distinct semantic functions of the preverbal and postverbal locative phrases. In this pair of sentences, the verb is transitive (a resultative verb compound), so this time it is the *direct object* of the verb which is displaced within the immediate vicinity of the action:

(30) a.    wǒ        zài    shāfa    –    shang    bǎ    tā  
              I        at        sofa     –        on        BA     3sg

              tuī     –        dǎo     LE  
              push   –        fall    PFV/CRS

On the sofa, I pushed him/her down.



So far we have seen that for action verbs of type Vdi, where a subject or a direct object is locally displaced, postverbal locative phrases express the new location of the subject or the direct object as a result of the local displacement.

### B. Verbs of Posture

*Verbs of posture* (Vpo) depict the posture of an entity, which is typically an animate being. This class includes such verbs as:

(33)	<u>zhàn</u>	'stand'	<u>zuò</u>	'sit'
	<u>shuì</u>	'sleep'	<u>tǎng</u>	'lie down'
	<u>pā</u>	'crouch'	<u>guì</u>	'kneel'
	<u>dūn</u>	'squat'	<u>yī</u>	'lean on'
	<u>fó</u>	'float'	<u>zhù</u>	'have residence'
	<u>tíng</u>	'stop'	<u>piāo</u>	'float'

With verbs of posture, both preverbal and postverbal locative phrases can be used. Since in the case of these verbs there is no difference between naming the general location where the event occurs (which is the function of a preverbal locative phrase, as we saw in the generalization stated in [i]) and naming the place where the subject assumes a certain posture (which is what the postverbal locative phrase does when it occurs with these verbs), there is essentially no difference between the meanings of the preverbal and the postverbal locative phrases with verbs of this class. Thus, the *a* and *b* forms of (34)–(37) are synonymous:

(34) a.	<u>tā</u>	<u>zài</u>	<u>wū</u>	–	<u>yán</u>	–	<u>xià</u>
	3sg	at	house	–	eaves	–	under
		zhàn	–	zhe			
		stand	–	DUR			<u>区别</u>

S/He is standing under the eaves.

b.	<u>tā</u>	<u>zhàn</u>	<u>zài</u>	<u>wū</u>	–	<u>yán</u>	–	<u>xià</u>	没完
	3sg	stand	at	house	–	eaves	–	under	

S/He is standing under the eaves.

(35) a.	<u>tā</u>	<u>zài</u>	<u>chuáng</u>	–	<u>shang</u>	<u>shuì</u>
	3sg	at	bed	–	on	sleep

S/He sleeps on the bed.

b. tā shuì zài chuáng — shang  
3sg sleep at bed — on

S/He sleeps on the bed.

(36) a. tā zài dì — shang guì — zhe  
3sg at ground — on kneel — DUR

S/He is kneeling on the ground.

b. tā guì zài dì — shang  
3sg kneel at ground — on

S/He is kneeling on the ground.

(37) a. tā zài zhuōzi — shang pā — zhe  
3sg at table — on crouch — DUR

S/He is crouching on the table.

b. tā pā zài zhuōzi — shang  
3sg crouch at table — on

S/He is crouching on the table.

Verbs of this class also share the property of taking *-zhe* as the durative aspect marker (see section 6.2.1 of chapter 6 on aspect), as illustrated by the *a* sentences of (34)–(37).

Among all of the verbs of posture, only the verb *tíng* ‘stop, park’ usually takes an inanimate subject, as in:

(38) chēzi tíng zài mén — wài  
car stop at door — out

The car is parked outside of the door.

Thus *tíng* as a member of the class *V<sub>po</sub>* depicts posture in a metaphorical sense. Similarly, *zhù* ‘live, reside’ is a verb of posture in the metaphorical sense. *Zhù* is a posture only with regard to the overall disposition of the person(s) to whom the subject noun phrase refers.



## C. Verbs of Appearing

The verbs in this class behave identically to those in class V<sub>po</sub>. The difference between them is simply that *verbs of appearing* (V<sub>ap</sub>) signal an appearing or disappearing of the subject. Examples of verbs of this type include:

(39) <u>fāshēng</u>	'happen, occur'
<u>chūxiàn</u>	'appear'
(chū)shēng	'be born'
<u>shēngzhǎng</u>	'grow up'
<u>zhǎngdà</u>	'grow up'
<u>chǎnshēng</u>	'occur'
<u>sǐ</u>	'die'
<u>xiāoshī</u>	'disappear'

As with verbs of posture, since there is no difference between naming the general location where the event occurs and the location of the appearance or disappearance of the subject, sentences with verbs of appearing have the same meaning with preverbal locative phrases as they do with postverbal locative phrases, as seen in the following examples:

- (40) a. nèi — zhǒng shì kěnéng zài Shànghǎi fāshēng  
 that — sort event possible at Shanghai happen

That sort of event may happen in Shanghai.

- b. nèi — zhǒng shì kěnéng fāshēng zài Shànghǎi  
 that — sort event possible happen at Shanghai

That sort of event may happen in Shanghai.

- (41) a. Zhāngsān zì — yòu zài Běijīng shēngzhǎng  
 Zhangsan since — youth at Beijing grow:up

Zhangsan grew up in Beijing from the time he was young.

- b. Zhāngsān zì — yòu shēngzhǎng zài Běijīng ✕  
 Zhangsan since — youth grow:up at Beijing

Zhangsan grew up in Beijing from the time he was young.

(42) a. tā qíngyuàn zài yīyuàn - li sǐ  
 3sg willing at hospital - in die

S/He is willing to die in the hospital.

b. tā qíngyuàn sǐ zài yīyuàn - li  
 3sg willing die at hospital - in

S/He is willing to die in the hospital.

So far, we have seen that while nearly any verb allows a preverbal locative phrase specifying where the event or state it names takes place, only certain classes of verbs allow postverbal locative phrases. The last class of verbs to be considered is exceptional in an interesting way.

#### D. Verbs of Placement

*Verbs of placement* (Vpl) name actions that place the direct object in a certain location. The verbs in this class differ in a subtle but important way from those in class Vdi: sentences using verbs of displacement involve *movement*, or *displacement*, from one location to another, whereas sentences employing verbs of placement involve the subject placing the direct object somewhere *but do not specify where it started out*. Examples of verbs in the class Vpl include:

(43) fāng	'put, place'	cáng	'hide'
zhòng	'plant'	xiě	'write'
huà	'draw, paint'	chāo	'copy'
tǔ	'expectorate'	yìn	'print'
kè	'carve, sculpt'	jiànli	'establish'
sǎ	'spill'		

Class Vpl is an exception to the pattern exhibited by all the other verb classes we have considered: with verbs of placement, *both* the preverbal locative phrase and the postverbal locative phrase can specify the location where the direct object is placed. Hence the *a* and *b* sentences of (44)–(46) are semantically equivalent:

(44) a. wǒ zài shūjià - shàng fāng zázhi  
 I at bookcase - on place magazine

I put the magazine on the bookcase.

b. wǒ bǎ zázhì fāng zài shūjià — shàng  
 I BA magazine place at bookcase — on

I put the magazine on the bookcase.

(45) a. wǒ zài guìzi — li cáng jiǔ  
 I at cabinet — in hide liquor

I hid the liquor in the cabinet.

b. wǒ bǎ jiǔ cáng zài guìzi — li  
 I BA liquor hide at cabinet — in

I hid the liquor in the cabinet.

(46) a. wǒ zài wǒ — de běnzi — shàng  
 I at I — GEN notebook — on  
 huà yī — ge lǎohǔ  
 draw one — CL tiger

I drew a tiger in my notebook.

b. wǒ bǎ yī — ge lǎohǔ huà zài  
 I BA one — CL tiger draw at  
 wǒ — de běnzi — shàng  
 I — GEN notebook — on

I drew a tiger in my notebook.

(For the reason why the *b* sentences of (44)–(46) are expressed with *bǎ*, see the discussion of rule (ii) in section 11.1.2.E just below.)

What we see, then, is that the Vpl class is the only class of verbs with which a preverbal locative phrase does *not* have to convey the general location where the event occurs, but can instead name the place where the direct object ends up as a result of the action of the verb. A verb of placement, of course, *may* take a preverbal locative phrase specifying the general location of the action, as in (47); the point is that it does not have to.

(47)	wǒ I	zài at	shū study	—	fáng room	—	li in	bǎ BA
		yi one	— —	ge CL	lǎohǔ tiger	huà draw		
		zài at	wǒ I	—	de GEN	běnzi notebook		
		—	shang on					

In the study, I drew a tiger in my notebook.

If we compare (46) *a* with (47), it is clear that in the former, the preverbal locative phrase specifies the location where the direct object *lǎohǔ* 'tiger' is placed as a result of drawing, while in the latter, the preverbal locative phrase simply specifies the place where the drawing is happening, according to the generalization stated in (i).

We have seen that, while most verbs take preverbal locative phrases, only certain verbs allow postverbal locative phrases. With verbs of local displacement, a postverbal locative phrase signals the place to which the actor or direct object is displaced. With verbs of posture and appearance, however, because of their "stationary" meanings, both preverbal and postverbal locative phrases may be used for the location of the posture or appearance, and there is no difference in meaning between them. Finally, with verbs of placement, both preverbal and postverbal locative phrases may also be used, but for this class of verbs alone, the preverbal locative phrase can signal either the general location of the action or the location where the direct object is placed.

#### E. The Postverbal Locative Phrase Must Immediately Follow the Verb

In addition to the restrictions relating to classes of verbs, however, there exists another interesting condition on the postverbal locative phrase, which we can express as (ii):

(ii) The postverbal locative phrase must *immediately* follow the verb. Condition (ii) accounts for the fact that (48) is unacceptable:

(48)	*wǒ I	<u>cáng</u> hide	bǎo precious	—	shí stone	<u>zài</u> at
		<u>xiāngzi</u> chest	— —	—	<u>li</u> in	

Here, since the direct object comes right after the verb, separating the verb from its postverbal locative phrase, the sentence is ungrammatical. In order to ensure that the postverbal locative phrase immediately follows the verb, either the *bā* structure (see chapter 15), which places the direct object before the verb, must be employed, or the verb must appear twice (see chapter 13 on verb copying):

(49)	wǒ I	<u>bā</u> BA	bǎo precious	—	shí stone	<u>cáng</u> hide
		<u>zài</u> at	<u>xiāngzi</u> chest	— —	<u>li</u> in	

I hide the precious stone in a chest.

(50)	wǒ I	<u>cáng</u> hide	bǎo precious	—	shí stone	<u>cáng</u> hide
		<u>zài</u> at	<u>xiāngzi</u> chest	— —	<u>li</u> in	

I hide the precious stone in a chest.

According to rule (ii), then, the following sequence of elements is ungrammatical:

(51)	*noun phrase subject	verb	<u>noun phrase</u> object	—	<u>zài noun phrase</u> locative phrase	— locative particle
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Rule (ii) explains why the *b* sentences in examples (30) and (44)–(46) above had to be in the form of a *bā* construction. In fact, however, generalization (ii) extends beyond rendering sentences having the form of (51) ungrammatical. If a verb is a compound composed of a verb and an object *morphologically* (see section 3.2.3 of chapter 3), the locative phrase cannot even occur after the verb compound. A good

example illustrating this extended constraint involves the verb-object compound *shui-jiao* 'sleep', as opposed to the noncompound verb *shui* 'sleep'. The two verbs are semantically equivalent, but only the noncompound verb, *shui*, not the verb-object compound, can take a postverbal locative phrase:

- (52) a.    *tā*    *shuì*    *zài*    *chuáng*    –    *shang*  
           3sg    sleep    at        bed        –        on

S/He sleeps in bed.

- b.    \**tā*    *shuì*    –    *jiao*    *zài*    *chuáng*    –    *shang*  
           3sg    sleep    –    sleep    at        bed        –        on

Consider another example, the compound *dǎ-zuò* 'sit in meditation': *dǎ-zuò* is a lexical compound whose meaning is idiomatic, that is, not the amalgamation of the meanings of the two component parts. This compound, however, has the morphological composition of *verb* + *object*. According to its meaning, *dǎ-zuò* should belong to the category of verbs of posture, which allow a postverbal locative phrase. It does not take a postverbal locative phrase, though, because of its internal syntactic composition, *verb* + *object*.

- (53)    \**tā*            *dǎ - zuò*  
           3sg        sit:in:meditation
- zài*            *dì*            –    *shang*  
           at            ground        –        on

It is easy to show that what is wrong with (52) *b* and (53) is not that their verbs are disyllabic verbs. *Jiànli* 'establish', for example, is a disyllabic verb that belongs to the class Vpl. Sentence (54) shows that it takes a postverbal locative phrase:

- (54)    *tāmen*    *bǎ*    *shǒudū*    *jiànli*    *zài*    *běibian*  
           they    BA    capital    establish    at    north

They established the capital in the north.

As we would expect from generalization (ii), the locative phrase must immediately follow the verb *jiànli* 'establish'. Sentence (55) is ungrammatical because rule (ii) is not satisfied:

- (55) \*tāmen      jiànli      shǒudū      zài      běibian  
                  they      establish      capital      at      north

Generalization (ii), then, forbids the occurrence of a locative phrase after any direct object, even when that direct object is part of a verb-object compound. Postverbal locative phrases must directly follow the verb itself.<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion, we observe that the locative phrase may occur in either the preverbal position or the postverbal position. In the preverbal position, it has a general locational meaning and is essentially unconstrained with respect to the verbs with which it can occur; accordingly, the preverbal locative phrase is called *zhuàngyǔ* 'adverbial' by Chinese grammarians.

Postverbal locative phrases, on the other hand, are restricted to certain types of verbs, just as direct objects are, and are designated by the term *bǔyǔ*, 'complement', which is also used for objects, in traditional Chinese grammar. This distinction between these two grammatical terms captures the difference between the relatively free preverbal locative phrase and the more tightly restricted postverbal locative phrase in terms of semantic "intimacy." The four classes of verbs allowing a postverbal locative are: (1) the displacement verbs, which result in locally displacing the subject (in the case of an intransitive verb) or the direct object (in the case of a transitive verb); (2) the verbs of posture; (3) the verbs of appearance; and (4) the placement verbs. In addition, the postverbal locative phrase must occur immediately after the verb; in other words, if a verb takes a postverbal locative phrase, there must be no intervening element, not even the object noun in a verb-object compound, between the verb and the postverbal locative phrase. Locative phrases thus provide a good example of the interaction between the position of an expression vis-à-vis the verb and its semantic interpretation.

## 11.2 Directional Phrases with *dào* 'to'

Direction toward which a motion is aimed can be expressed by phrases beginning with any of the coverbs *xiàng*, *wǎng/wàng*, or *dào*, all meaning roughly 'to, toward'. Because *xiàng* and *wǎng/wàng* behave like ordinary coverbs and generally occur only preverbally, they are included in chapter 9 on coverbs. *Dào*, on the other hand, parallels *zài* in certain respects. Hence it is presented here in this chapter.

We will define a *directional phrase* as consisting of the coverb *dào* 'to', a noun phrase, and an optional locative particle, as schematized in (58):

- (56) dào      noun phrase      –      (locative particle)  
                  'to'

The conditions for the occurrence of the locative particle at the end of the directional phrase are exactly the same as those for the occurrence of locative phrases: the locative particle is usually omitted with place names and with nouns referring to familiar places.

Like locative phrases, directional phrases can also occur both preverbally and postverbally. Furthermore, as with *zài* phrases, the *dào* phrase in preverbal position is essentially unconstrained. For most verbs, a directional phrase in preverbal position means simply that the subject moves to a destination where the event named by the verb takes place. For example:

- (57) tāmen      dào      gōngyuán      niàn      -      shū  
           they      to            park            read      -      book

They went to the park {and studied.  
   {to study. }

- (58) tā      měi      -      tiān      dào      cǎochǎng      pǎo  
           3sg      each      -      day      to            field            run

Every day s/he goes to the field {and runs.  
   {to run. }

In postverbal position, however, the directional phrase is tightly constrained by the meaning of the verb: it can occur only with verbs involving destination, and it signals that the action named by the verb is carried out to the destination named by the directional phrase. Here are some examples:

- (59) nǐ      xiān      niàn      dào / dì      -      sān      háng  
           you      first      read      to      ORD      -      three      line

First read up to the third line.

- (60) wǒmen      fēi      dào / Shànghǎi      le  
           we      fly      to      Shanghai      CRS

We flew to Shanghai.

- (61) tā      pǎo      dào / cǎochǎng      le  
           3sg      run      to      field      CRS

S/He ran to the field.



- (62) bā qìchē kāi dào hòumian qù  
 BA car drive to back go

Drive the car around to the back.

Directional phrases are subject to generalization (ii) just as locative phrases are: both directional and locative phrases, if postverbal, must immediately follow the verb. Thus sentence (59) above, for example, could not be expressed with the directional phrase after a direct object, as (63) shows:

- (63) \*nǐ <sup>送 - 信</sup> xiān niàn wǒ - de xìn  
 you first read I - GEN letter  
 dào dì - sān háng  
 to ORD - three line

On the other hand, (64) appears to be a counterexample to our claim that a directional phrase must immediately follow the verb.

- (64) wǒmen kāi qìchē dào Xiānggǎng <sup>到</sup>  
 we drive car to Hong Kong

We drove a car to Hong Kong.

In (64), however, *dào* is serving as a verb with the meaning 'arrive', and (64) is a serial verb construction. To show that *dào* is a verb in (64), we cite sentence (65), in which *dào* occurs with the perfective aspect marker *-le*, signaling that *dào* 'arrive' is to be viewed in the perfective aspect:

- (65) wǒmen kāi qìchē dào - le Xiānggǎng  
 we drive car arrive - PFV Hong Kong  
 yǐhòu jiù xiūxi  
 after then rest

We will rest after we arrive in Hong Kong by car.

As a coverb introducing a directional phrase, *dào* cannot take an aspect marker of any kind. The conclusion, then, is that directional phrases, which are introduced by the coverb *dào*, obey generalization (ii) and must directly follow the verb. A *dào* that follows a direct object is not the coverb *dào*, but the verb *dào* in a serial verb

construction (see chapter 9 on coverbs for further discussion of this point).

There are two motion verbs that behave in a special way with respect to directional phrases. These two verbs are *lái* 'come' and *qù* 'go', whose meanings include the idea of a destination point.<sup>4</sup> That is, unlike the cases of *fēi* 'fly' or *pá* 'crawl', where the flying or the crawling can occur without a destination being reached, *lái* and *qù* can be used only when reaching a destination is implied.

As in English, *lái* is used when the arrival point is where the speaker is, and *qù* is used when the arrival point is away from the speaker.<sup>5</sup> When *lái* is used without naming the arrival point, it is always assumed to be simply where the speaker is:

- (66) Zhāngsān lái le  
Zhangsan come CRS

Zhangsan is coming here.

The first unusual fact about *lái* and *qù* with directional phrases is that these two motion verbs can generally be added at the end of any sentence with a directional phrase in it to specify whether the destination is away from or toward the speaker. Sentences (60) and (61), then, repeated here as (67) *a* and (68) *a*, could just as well be said with *lái* or *qù* ([67] *b* and [68] *b*):

- (67) *a.* wōmen fēi dào Shànghǎi le  
we fly to Shanghai CRS

We flew to Shanghai.

- b.* wōmen fēi dào Shànghǎi {qù} le  
we fly to Shanghai {lái} CRS  
{go} CRS  
{come}

We flew to Shanghai {(away from speaker).}  
{(toward speaker).}

- (68) *a.* tā pǎo dào cǎochǎng le  
3sg run arrive field CRS

S/He ran to the field.

b.	tā	pǎo	dào	cǎochǎng	{ qù }	le
					{ lái }	
	3sg	run	to	field	{ go }	CRS
					{ come }	

S/He ran to the field { (away from speaker) }  
 { (toward speaker). }

The second compelling fact about *lái* 'come' and *qù* 'go' with directional phrases is that a directional phrase used with one of these verbs as the only verb in the sentence will always be understood to refer to the destination, whether it occurs preverbally or postverbally:

(69) a.	tāmen	dào	wàibian	qù	—	le
	they	to	outside	go	—	PFV

They went outside.

b.	tāmen	qù	dào	wàibian <sup>6</sup>	?
	they	go	to	outside	,

They went outside.

(70) a.	tā	dào	wōmen	xuéxiào	lái	—	le
	3sg	arrive	we	school	come	—	PFV

S/He came to our school.

b.	tā	lái	dào	wōmen	xuéxiào
	3sg	come	arrive	we	school

S/He came to our school.

Directional phrases, in sum, are similar to locative phrases in most respects: both directional and locative phrases are relatively unconstrained in their interpretation when they occur preverbally and are more restricted by the meaning of the verb when they occur postverbally. Directional phrases differ from locative phrases in their behavior with *lái* 'come' and *qù* 'go', however, because of the destination component in the meanings of these two verbs

## Notes

1. This chapter draws on some of the ideas found in Chao (1968), Tai (1973), Teng (1975b), Peyraube (1977), and Huang (1978), as well as in unpublished work by Charles A. Liu.
2. There is one exception to this generalization: when one location is being contrasted with another, *zài* 'at' may be omitted for verbs of posture (see section 11.1.2.B of this chapter), such as *shuì*, as in:

(i) wǒ      shuì      shāfa      –      nǐ      shuì      dìbǎn  
       I      sleep      sofa      –      you      sleep      floor

I'll sleep on the sofa, and you sleep on the floor.

3. A sentence such as the following might be considered a counterexample:

(i) Qīng      –      cháo      jiàn      –      dū      zài      Běijīng  
       Qing      –      dynasty      establish      –      capital      at      Beijing

The Qing dynasty established its capital at Beijing.

This sentence appears to be a counterexample because the verb *jiàn-dū* 'establish capital' belongs to the class Vpl, which allows a postverbal locative phrase, and *dū* 'capital' is an object following the verb *jiàn* 'establish'. Sentence (i) is not, however, a real counterexample to generalization (ii); rather, it reflects the classical Chinese syntax in which a locative phrase typically does follow the object of a transitive verb. What makes it appear as a counterexample to generalization (ii) is the use of the modern Chinese morpheme *zài* instead of its classical Chinese counterpart, *yù*.

4. For further discussion of *lái* and *qù*, see Lin (1977).
5. Unlike the English *go*, however, *qù* always implies an arrival point, so that messages such as 'we're going' or 'he went' must be communicated with the verb *zǒu* 'leave, go' in Mandarin.
6. For the omission of the PFV aspect marker with locative and directional phrases, see section 6.1.2.B of chapter 6 on aspect.

## CHAPTER 12

# Negation

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There are four negative forms in common use in Mandarin: *bu*, *bié*, *méi*, and *méi(yǒu)*.<sup>1</sup> The most general and neutral form of negation is *bu*, as in:

- (1) tā      bu      shì      Zhōngguó      rén  
3sg      not      be      China      person

S/He is not Chinese.

- (2) wǒ      bu      jìde      tā  
I      not      remember      3sg

I don't remember him/her.

- (3) nǐ      bu      gēn      wǒ      zǒu      ba ?  
you      not      with      I      go      SA

You're not going with me, right?

The negative marker used in imperatives is *bié* 'don't' (see chapter 14 on imperatives):

- (4) bié      guān      mén !  
don't      close      door

Don't close the door.

- (5) \*bu      guān      mén !  
not      close      door

(unacceptable as a command)

When the verb of a sentence is *yǒu* (see chapter 17 on existential sentences), the form of the negative must be *méi*, and *yǒu* can be optionally deleted, as in (6) and (8):

- (6) méi      (yǒu)      rén      zài      wàimian  
not      exist      person      at      outside

There's no one outside.

- (7) \*bu      yǒu      rén      zài      wàimian  
not      exist      person      at      outside

- (8) wǒ      méi      (yǒu)      qián  
I      not      exist      money

I don't have any money.

- (9) \*wǒ      bu      yǒu      qián  
I      not      exist      money

*Yǒu* can also occur as part of an adjective, as in *yǒu-yìsī* 'interesting' (literally 'exist-idea'). In such a case, the negative remains *méi*, and *yǒu* may be optionally deleted:

- (10) zhèi      -      ge      gùshi      hěn      méi      (yǒu)      -      yìsī  
this      -      CL      story      very      not      exist      -      idea

This story is not very interesting.

Since *yǒu* can be omitted in (6), (8), and (10), the negative form *méi* itself must be able to carry both the meaning of negation and the meaning of the existential *yǒu* in those sentences. This is an unusual characteristic of *méi* as a negative form.

The form *méi(yǒu)* also appears in sentences expressing comparison of "inferiority" (see chapter 19), as in:

- (11) wǒ      méi(yǒu)      tā      nème      pàng  
          I                not           3sg        that        fat

I'm not as fat as s/he is.

*Méi yǒu* in the sense of 'not exist' can be used in some dialects to deny what someone else has stated or implied. For example, if A and B are discussing A's cooking lessons, B can say:

- (12)      nà            nǐ      xiànzài      hěn      huì      zuò      fàn      ba ?  
          in:that:case    you    now    very    know:how    make    food    SA

In that case, now you must really know how to cook, right?

To deny the claim implicit in B's comment, A could say:

- (13)      méi      yǒu  
          not      exist

Besides appearing in sentences expressing comparison of "inferiority," the negative particle *méi(yǒu)*, that is, *méi* with or without *yǒu*, negates the completion of an event. An example is (14); we shall have more to say about this form in section 12.2 below.

- (14)      wǒ      méi(yǒu)      kànjian      nǐ  
          I                not            see            you

I didn't see you.

We will refer to *bu*, *bié*, *méi*, and *méi(yǒu)* as *negative particles*; since *bié* is discussed in chapter 14, in the rest of this chapter we shall be concerned primarily with *bu*, *méi*, and *méi(yǒu)*.

### 12.1 The Position and Scope of Negative Particles

In general, negative particles follow the subject and precede the verb phrase:

- (15)      tā      bu      niàn      –      shū  
          3sg      not      study      –      book

S/He does not study.

- (16) tā      méi(yǒu)      kāi      mén  
          3sg            not            open      door

S/He didn't open the door.

If a subject occurs in the first position of a sentence, the negative can be said to occur in the second position. The negative, therefore, generally precedes the verb phrase no matter what the verb phrase is composed of. The following examples provide verb phrases containing a manner adverb (chapter 8, section 8.2.1), an auxiliary verb (chapter 5), and a coverb phrase (chapter 9):

- (17) tā      bu      màn-màn-de      qí      jiǎotāchē  
          3sg            not            slowly      ride      bicycle

S/He does not ride a bike slowly.

- (18) tā      bu      kěn      zuò      —      xià      —      lái  
          3sg            not            willing      sit      —      descend      —      come

S/He is not willing to sit down.

- (19) wǒmen      bu      xiàng      xībiar      fēi  
          we            not            toward      west      fly

We don't fly to the west.

Conversely, the subject may be complex; but the negative always follows the subject. For example, the subject may be a clause (see section 21.2.1 of chapter 21):

- (20) wǒmen      zài      zhèr      zuò      shēngyì      bu      róngyì  
          we            at            here      do      business      not      easy

It is not easy for us to do business here.

The semantic effect of the general rule that the negative particle follows the subject and precedes the verb phrase is that the verb phrase is in the *scope* of the negative. In other words, the verb phrase, the part of the sentence which *follows* the negative particle, is what is being denied by the negative particle.



When the sentence contains an adverb, however, whether the negative precedes the adverb or the adverb precedes the negative depends entirely on scope. If the adverb has the negative in its scope, then it precedes the negative; if the negative has the adverb in its scope, then it precedes the adverb. This generalization is discussed and illustrated in detail in chapter 8; here we will just give a few examples.

(i) Adverb precedes the negative:

- (21) tā    míngtiān    bu    shàng    –    xué  
3sg    tomorrow    not    ascend    –    school

Tomorrow s/he won't attend school.

- (22) tā    yěxǔ    bu    xūyào    bǎobīao  
3sg    perhaps    not    need    bodyguard

Perhaps s/he does not need bodyguards.

(ii) Adverb follows the negative:

- (23) tā    bu    màn-màn-de    qí    jiāotāchē  
3sg    not    slowly    ride    bicycle

S/He doesn't ride a bike slowly.

- (24) tā    bu    zìxì-de    zuò    –    shì  
3sg    not    meticulously    do    –    work

S/He does not work meticulously.

(iii) Either order possible, depending on scope:

- (25) a    tā    hūn-tóu-hūn-nǎo-de    méi    yòng    máobī  
3sg    muddleheadedly    not    use    brush
- xiě                      zì  
write                      character

S/He muddleheadedly failed to use a brush to write the characters.

b. tā      bu      hūn-tóu-hūn-nǎo-de      zuò      –      shì  
      3sg      not      muddleheadedly      do      –      work

S/He does not work in a muddleheaded manner.

(26) a. tā      gùyì      bu      shuō      –      huà  
      3sg      deliberately      not      talk      –      word

S/He is deliberately not talking.

b. tā      bu      gùyì      zuò      huài      shì  
      3sg      not      deliberately      do      bad      deed

S/He does not deliberately do bad things.

(27) a. tā      yīdìng      bu      lái  
      3sg      definitely      not      come

S/He is definitely not coming.

b. tā      bu      yīdìng      lái  
      3sg      not      definitely      come

S/He is not definitely coming.

(28) a. tā      tiāntiān      bu      xǐzǎo  
      3sg      daily      not      bathe

Every day s/he does not bathe.

b. tā      bu      tiāntiān      xǐzǎo  
      3sg      not      daily      bathe

S/He does not bathe every day.

Similarly, with certain auxiliary verbs (see chapter 5) either the negative could be in the scope of the auxiliary or vice versa; consider the two possibilities with the negative particle and the auxiliary *néng* 'can'. The more usual situation is for the negative particle to include the auxiliary in the scope of what is being negated, as in (18) above and (29):

(29) wǒ      bu      néng      qù  
          I        not        can        go

I cannot go.

If 'not go' is what the subject can do, however, then the other order is appropriate:

(30) wǒ      néng      bu      qu  
          I        can        not       go

I'm capable of not going.

In fact, with auxiliary verbs, it is even possible to negate both the auxiliary and the main verb, as in (31):

(31) wǒ      bu      néng      bu      qù  
          I        not        can        not       go

I am not capable of not going.

We see, then, that the general position of a negative particle is before the verb phrase and that the variations in the position of the negative particle can be explained entirely in terms of the scope of the negative particle with respect to certain adverbs and auxiliary verbs.

## 12.2 The Functions of *bu* and *méi(yǒu)*

The difference between *bu* and *méi(yǒu)* is a purely functional one: *bu* provides a neutral negation, and *méi(yǒu)* negates the completion of an event. A number of provocative facts can be explained in terms of this difference.

### 12.2.1 Variation in the Meanings of Sentences with *bu*

If the central difference between *bu* and *méi(yǒu)* is, as we have stated, whether completion is involved, then it stands to reason that there might be different ways in which *bu* can express negation of an event without denying that the event is completed, depending on the meaning of the verb.

The most straightforward cases are those involving stative verbs and adjectives, where *bu* simply denies the existence of the state.

- (32) tā      bu      cōngmíng  
3sg      not      intelligent

S/He { is } not intelligent.<sup>2</sup>  
      { was }

- (33) wǒmen    bu    zhīdào    tā      zài      nǎr  
      we      not      know    3sg      at      where

{ We don't know where s/he is. }  
{ We didn't know where s/he was. }

- (34) tā      bu      shì      xiào      –      zhǎng  
3sg      not      be      school    –      chief

S/He { is } not the principal.  
      { was }

With such verbs, *méi(yǒu)* is not possible:

- (35) \*tā      méi(yǒu)      cōngmíng  
3sg      not      intelligent

- (36) \*wǒmén méi(yǒu)    zhīdào    tā      zài      nǎr  
      we      not      know    3sg      at      where

- (37) \*tā      méi(yǒu)      shì      xiào      –      zhǎng  
3sg      not      be      school    –      chief

Similarly, auxiliary verbs, which are always stative, are negated with *bu* and not by *méi(yǒu)*:

- (38) a. tā      bu      huì      yóuyǒng  
3sg      not      know:how    swim

S/He doesn't know how to swim.

- b. \*tā      méi(yǒu)      huì      yóuyǒng  
3sg      not      know:how    swim

Now, however, let's consider activity predicates over which the subject has some control, as in (39):

- (39) tā        hē        jiǔ  
          3sg        drink       wine

S/He drinks wine.

The negative version, (40), with *bu*,

- (40) tā        bu        hē        jiǔ  
          3sg        not        drink       wine

{ S/He does not drink wine. }  
 { S/He refuses to drink wine. }  
 { S/He refused to drink wine. }        X

cannot mean that *s/he didn't* drink wine, since if that were the intended meaning, *méi(yǒu)* instead of *bu* would have to have been used. Therefore, (40) can only mean that *s/he doesn't* drink wine. The extended idea of 'refusing to' is the natural inference from the fact that if someone does not do something over which *s/he* has control, *s/he* is generally unwilling to do it. Here are some similar examples:

- (41) tā        bu        chī        -        fàn  
          3sg        not        eat        -        food

{ S/He won't eat. }  
 { S/He wouldn't eat. }

- (42) wǒ        bu        mài        nèi        -        ge        píngzi  
          I        not        sell        that        -        CL        vase

{ I'm not selling that vase. }  
 { I won't sell that vase. }  
 { I wouldn't sell that vase. }

- (43) tā        bu        gēn        wǒ        jiǎng        -        huà  
          3sg        not        with        I        speak        -        speech

{ S/He won't talk to me. }  
 { S/He wouldn't talk to me. }

Some of the preceding examples point to another fact concerning the function of *bu*: it can negate verb phrases that refer to events in the past as easily as it can those referring to events in the present. This means that, in the appropriate contexts, sentences (32)–(34) and (40)–(43) could be translated into English with a past tense, as indicated by the two translations given. For example, if one wishes to deny that at some period in the past a certain person was not the principal, (34), which is repeated here, would be the form to use:

(34)	tā	<u>bu</u>	shì	xiào	–	zhǎng
	3sg	not	be	school	–	chief

S/He was not the principal.

The other examples in (32)–(34) and (40)–(43) are entirely analogous.

Thus, the fact that sentences with *bu* sometimes mean simple denial (for states) and sometimes mean refusal, referring to either past time or present time, follows directly from the fact that the basic function of *bu* is negation that does *not* involve completion, regardless of the time frame.

### 12.2.2 Types of Verb Phrases

Given that *méi(yǒu)*, but not *bu*, is used to deny the completion of an event, we would expect that some verbs could take only one of the two and some could take either one of the two. This is indeed true. Just above, in examples (35)–(37), we saw some verbs that could not be used with *méi(yǒu)*, since their meanings involve no notion of completion.

There are, however, no verbs that cannot be used with *bu*. It has been claimed<sup>3</sup> that process verbs, verbs whose meanings signal processes or change of states, cannot take *bu*. The fact is that sentences such as (44) *b* and (45) *b*, which involve *bu* and process verbs, are appropriate only in unusual circumstances, and because it is difficult to think of such circumstances, they have been regarded as unacceptable sentences. A context in which (44) *b* would be perfectly natural could be, for example, if the speaker has been shooting at a person repeatedly but the victim remains alive; (44) *b* then has the effect of saying, 'S/He refuses to die', just as in (40)–(43), where the meaning 'refuse to' is inferred. Similarly, an appropriate context for (45) *b* could be one in which the speaker has been trying to sink the boat to no avail and finally utters this line in exasperation.

- (44) a. tā      méi(yǒu)      sǐ  
3sg      not      die

{S/He hasn't died.}  
{S/He didn't die. }

- b. tā      bu      sǐ  
3sg      not      die

S/He {refuses}  
{won't } die.

- (45) a. nèi      –      ge      chuán      méi(yǒu)      chén  
that      –      CL      boat      not      sink

{That boat hasn't sunk.}  
{That boat didn't sink. }

- b. nèi      –      ge      chuán      bu      chén  
that      –      CL      boat      not      sink

That boat won't sink.

Here are some further examples of verbs that can be negated either way, with a predictable meaning difference:

- (46) a. wǒ      bu      pàng  
I      not      fat

I am not fat.

- b. wǒ      méi(yǒu)      pàng  
I      not      fat

I have not gotten fat.

- (47) a. tā      bu      mài      nèi      –      ge      píngzi  
3sg      not      sell      that      –      CL      vase

S/He refused to sell that vase.

b. tā      méi(yǒu)      mài      nèi      –      ge      píngzi  
      3sg      not      sell      that      –      CL      vase

S/He didn't sell that vase.

(48) a. tā      bu      xiào  
      3sg      not      smile

S/He won't smile.

b. tā      méi(yǒu)      xiào  
      3sg      not      smile

S/He didn't smile.

(49) a. tāmen      bu      guān      chuānghu  
      they      not      close      window

They won't close the window.

b. tāmen      méi(yǒu)      guān      chuānghu  
      they      not      close      window

They didn't close the window.

Which verbs are negated with *bu*, which with *méi(yǒu)*, and which with both is, as we have come to expect, entirely a matter of the compatibility between the meanings of those verbs and the specific functions of *bu* and *méi(yǒu)*.

### 12.2.3 Resultative Verb Compounds

Resultative verb compounds are discussed in detail in chapter 3.<sup>4</sup> In very general terms, a verb in this class consists of two verbs together, one referring to an action, the other to a result, as in:

(50) wǒ      bǎ      bàogào      xiě      –      wán      LE  
      I      BA      report      write      –      finish      PFV/CRS

I finished writing the report.



One of the defining characteristics of this type of compound is that it can occur in the *potential form*, that is, it can occur with either a *-de-* 'can' or a *-bu-* 'can't' between the two parts of the compound, as in:

(51) a.    tā      tiào    –    de    –    guò    –    qu  
          3sg    jump    –    can    –    cross    –    go

S/He can jump across.

b.      tā      tiào    –    bu    –    guò    –    qu  
          3sg    jump    –    can't    –    cross    –    go

S/He cannot jump across.

What this means for our discussion of negation is that resultative verb compounds have two ways of being negated, depending on whether or not the completion of the action is being denied. If the completion of the action is being denied, that is, if the event did not occur, then *méi(yǒu)* must be used:

(52) a.    tā      méi(yǒu)    tiào    –    guò    –    qu  
          3sg      not      jump    –    cross    –    go

S/He didn't jump across.

In the negative potential form, (51) *b*, however, the *-bu-* simply denies the existence of the resulting state, in this case the state of being 'across'. It is important to emphasize that the contrast between the functions of *bu* and *méi(yǒu)* here is exactly the same as it is in all the other sentences we have considered. The 'can't' interpretation of the *-bu-* form in resultative verb compounds is again an inference, the most natural inference from the juxtaposition of an action verb that is carried out and the denial of the result: if someone carries out an action, but the intended resulting state does not exist, then we naturally infer that s/he *cannot* accomplish that result. To see this distinction even more clearly, let's look at another pair:

(53) a.    wǒ      méi(yǒu)    kàn    –    jian    nǐ  
          I      not      look    –    perceive    you

I didn't see you.

b.    wǒ    kàn    –    bu    –    jiàn    nǐ  
       I    look    –    not    –    perceive    you

I can't see you.

As our translations suggest, sentence (53) *a*, with *méi(yǒu)*, denies the completion of 'looking to perception', while (53) *b*, with *-bu-*, denies the state of perceiving, though the looking may be going on; clearly, 'looking' without 'perceiving' is 'not being able to see'.

We see, then, that the two ways in which resultative verb compounds are negated can be understood in terms of the function of *bu* as the general negative marker and the function of *méi(yǒu)* as the denial of completion.

We have considered the position of the negative particles, their scope, and the basic functional difference between *bu* and *méi(yǒu)*. Now we take up three other facts about negation.

### 12.3 *méi(yǒu)* Is Not a Past Tense Negative Particle

We have seen that *méi(yǒu)* means noncompletion. Now, the most frequent situation involving noncompletion of an event or an action is one that occurs in the past, which accounts for the prevalent use of the past tense in the English translation of Mandarin sentences containing *méi(yǒu)*, as in (54):

(54)    wǒ    méi(yǒu)    xǐzǎo  
       I    not    bathe

I didn't bathe.

It is important to observe, however, that "noncompletion" is not the semantic equivalent of "past-tense negation." To demonstrate conclusively that *méi(yǒu)* is not past-tense negation, we cite sentences (55) *a* and *b*, which involve the past and a negative state: (55) *a* employs the negative particle *bu*, and the sentence is well formed; (55) *b* employs *méi(yǒu)*, and it is ill formed:

(55) *a.*    yǐqián    zhèi    –    ge    dìfang    bu    qióng  
           in:the:past    this    –    CL    place    not    poor

In the past, this place was not poor.

*b.*    \*yǐqián    zhèi    –    ge    dìfang    méi    qióng  
       in:the:past    this    –    CL    place    not    poor

Sentence (55) *a* shows that *bu* can be used in a sentence expressing a state in the past. We can also show *méi(yǒu)* functioning to express noncompletion of an action in future time, as in (56) and (57):

- (56) míngnián zhèi — ge shíhou nǐ  
 next:year this — CL time you  
 hái méi(yǒu) biyè ne  
 still not graduate REx

By this time next year, you still won't have graduated.

- (57) nǐ xiǎng — yī — xiǎng , dào míngnián  
 you think — one — think arrive next:year  
 zhèi — ge shíhou wǒ hái méi(yǒu)  
 this — CL time I still not  
 chī — guo píngguǒ ne  
 eat — EXP apple REx

Think about it a minute; by this time next year, I still won't have eaten apples.

There is, however, one restricted case of *méi(yǒu)* being used to indicate what appears to be past tense; this is the occurrence of *méi(yǒu)* with the durative *-zhe*, as in (58):<sup>5</sup>

- (58) tā méi(yǒu) ná — zhe shū ne  
 3sg not hold — DUR book REx

S/He wasn't holding books.

where the more normal negation would be with *bú shì* 'it isn't/wasn't the case that' (see section 12.5 below):

- (59) tā bu shì ná — zhe shū ne  
 3sg not be hold — DUR book REx

It's not true that s/he was holding books.

Since *méi(yǒu)* in (58) does not seem to have anything to do with completion and would be used by a speaker only in a sentence referring to a situation in the past, it does appear that this instance qualifies as an extension of the typical use of *méi(yǒu)* marking noncompletion to negation of past events. This usage, however, at least for the time being, remains exceptional.

Thus we see that although sentences with *méi(yǒu)* are often translated as past-tense forms in English, this is simply because most of the time a completed event involves completion before the time of speaking. The examples in this section, though, show clearly that *méi(yǒu)* is not a past-time negative particle, because (1) *bu* can be used to express past-time negation, and (2) *méi(yǒu)* can be used to express non-past-time negation. The difference is, rather, one of completion versus noncompletion.

#### 12.4 Negation and Aspect

In chapter 6 on aspect, we point out that the perfective aspect marker *-le* cannot occur in negative sentences. Here we examine the interaction between negation and aspect in more detail.<sup>6</sup>

First, as we just mentioned, a verb with the perfective *-le* cannot be negated with either *bu* or *méi(yǒu)*.<sup>7</sup> The reason is clear: *-le* signals a *bounded* event, and an event that does not occur cannot be bounded.

- |      |     |            |       |   |           |      |           |        |
|------|-----|------------|-------|---|-----------|------|-----------|--------|
| (60) | *tā | <u>bu</u>  | chī   | — | <u>le</u> | nèi  | kuài      | dàngāo |
|      | 3sg | not        | eat   | — | PFV       | that | piece     | cake   |
|      |     |            |       |   |           |      |           |        |
| (61) | *wǒ | <u>méi</u> | xiě   | — | cuò       | —    | <u>le</u> |        |
|      | I   | not        | write | — | wrong     | —    | PFV       |        |
|      |     |            | nèi   | — | ge        |      | zì        |        |
|      |     |            | that  | — | CL        |      | character |        |

What this means is that an affirmative *-le* sentence and its negative counterpart have quite different forms. Consider (62)–(63):

- |      |    |       |   |       |   |           |           |
|------|----|-------|---|-------|---|-----------|-----------|
| (62) | wǒ | xiě   | — | cuò   | — | <u>le</u> | nèi       |
|      | I  | write | — | wrong | — | PFV       | that      |
|      |    |       | — | ge    |   |           | zì        |
|      |    |       | — | CL    |   |           | character |

I wrote that character wrong.



occurs in preverbal position. Here are examples from Cantonese and Taiwanese to illustrate:

(66) (Cantonese)

keuih	<u>yauh</u>	sihk	faahn
3sg	PFV	eat	food

S/He ate.

(67) (Taiwanese)

i	<u>u</u>	chia	peng
3sg	PFV	eat	food

S/He ate.

What this means is that when speakers of these southern languages speak Mandarin, they are likely to use *yǒu* in questions and answers as if it were also the perfective aspect marker in Mandarin. Instead of (64), then, a southern speaker is likely to say in Mandarin:

(68)	A	not A			
wǒ	<u>yǒu</u>	<u>méiyǒu</u>	xiě	—	cuò
I		not	write	—	wrong
	nèi	—	ge	zì ?	
	that	—	CL	character	

Did I write that character wrong?

with *yǒu* being treated as the first element in the verb phrase; or they may even say it this way:

- (69)
- |    |                   |       |   |       |      |   |              |
|----|-------------------|-------|---|-------|------|---|--------------|
|    | A                 |       |   |       |      |   |              |
|    | ~~~~~             |       |   |       |      |   |              |
| wǒ | <u>yǒu</u>        | xiě   | - | cuò   | nèi  | - | ge zì        |
| I  |                   | write | - | wrong | that | - | CL character |
|    | not A             |       |   |       |      |   |              |
|    | ~~~~~             |       |   |       |      |   |              |
|    | <u>méi(yǒu)</u> ? |       |   |       |      |   |              |
|    | not               |       |   |       |      |   |              |

Did I write that character wrong?

which treats *yǒu xiě-cuò nèige zì* 'wrote that character wrong' as the A part of the question and *méiyǒu* as the not-A part. In fact, for these speakers, a possible affirmative answer to these questions is:

- (70) (nǐ) yǒu xiě - cuò  
(you) write - wrong

(You) wrote (it) wrong.

The point here is that for southern speakers of Mandarin, the use of *méiyǒu* as the negative of a verb with *-le* has extended to using *yǒu* as the *affirmative* of *méiyǒu* in questions and answers to questions,<sup>8</sup> because that is the way it is said in the southern Chinese dialects.

The significance of the way southerners speak Mandarin is that, for reasons having to do with recent political developments in China, many southerners nowadays speak Mandarin with northerners, and this means that even northerners are changing their speech under the influence of these southern speakers. This is most strikingly obvious in Taiwan and Singapore, but it is also true of southern China and Hong Kong as well. If we consider only Mandarin speakers of the north, then, the question form

- (71) subject verb - le méiyǒu ?

(as exemplified in [64] above) is the only possible form for a perfective sentence, and all the other sentences in which *yǒu* appears as a perfective marker will sound strange. Among speakers who are influenced by the Mandarin of southern Chinese,

though, sentences with *yǒu* as the perfective marker are coming to be used more and more.

Because the negation of a sentence with the perfective aspect *-le* seems to involve the presence of *méi(yǒu)* and the absence of *-le*, as illustrated by (72) *a* and *b*, many grammarians have assumed that *méi(yǒu)* is the negative form of the perfective aspect marker *-le*.<sup>9</sup>

- (72) *a.* háizi sī — pò — le nèi  
 child tear — broken — PFV that  
 把 — běn zázhi  
 — CL magazine

The child tore up that magazine.

- b.* háizi méi(yǒu) sī — pò nèi —  
 child not tear — broken that —  
 běn zázhi  
 CL magazine

The child didn't tear up that magazine.

Rather than saying that *méi(yǒu)* in such sentences as (72) *b* is the negative form of *-le*, though, it makes sense for us to say that since *méi(yǒu)* is the denial of completion, and since *-le* signals a bounded event, they are simply semantically incompatible and cannot co-occur.

There are several reasons for not viewing *méi(yǒu)* as the negative version of *-le*. First, *-le* cannot co-occur with the experiential aspect marker *-guo*, as discussed in chapter 6. *Méi(yǒu)* can, however, occur with *-guo*:

- (73) tā méi(yǒu) qù — guo Zhōngguó  
 3sg not go — EXP China

S/He hasn't been to China.

If *méi(yǒu)* were the negative form of *-le*, then there would be no way to explain why *méi(yǒu)* can occur in sentences in which *-le* cannot occur.

A second reason for not considering *méi(yǒu)* to be the negative form of *-le* is



that with certain predicates, when *-le* signals that an event is bounded by a following event, as in (74)

- (74) tā hē - <sup>完</sup>le jiǔ yǐhòu , wǒ jiu  
 3sg drink - PFV wine after I then
- gēn tā shuō - huà  
 with 3sg talk - speech

After s/he drinks, I'll talk to him/her.

we negate the clause with *-le*, not by the particle *méi(yǒu)*, but by the particle *bu*. X  
 The unacceptability of sentence (75) a and the acceptability of sentence (75) b illustrate this point:

- (75) a. \*tā méi(yǒu) hē jiǔ yǐhòu , wǒ jiu  
 3sg not drink wine after I then
- gēn tā shuō - huà  
 with 3sg talk - speech
- b. tā bu hē jiǔ yǐhòu , wǒ jiu X  
 3sg not drink wine after I then
- gēn tā shuō - huà  
 with 3sg talk - speech

After s/he stops drinking, I'll talk to him/her.

Third, there are a number of verbs that do not occur with *-le* because they do not signal bounded events. Here are two examples:

- (76) wǒ tīngshuō (\*-le) tā <sup>这婚</sup>lìhūn LE ✓  
 I hear (\*-PFV) 3sg divorce PFV/CRS

I hear that s/he got divorced.

- (77) wǒ zhūzhāng (\*-le) nimen jīntiān wǎnshàng xiūxi  
 I advocate (\*-PFV) you:PL today evening rest

I suggest that you all rest this evening.

Both of these verbs can be negated with *méi(yǒu)*, however:

(78) wǒ méi(yǒu) tīngshuō tā lǐhūn LE  
 I not hear 3sg divorce PFV/CRS

I didn't hear that s/he got divorced.

(79) wǒ méi(yǒu) zhǔzhāng nǐmen jīntiān wǎnshàng xiūxi  
 I not advocate you:PL today evening rest

I didn't suggest that you all rest this evening.

If *méi(yǒu)* could occur only as the negative of the perfective *-le*, then it would be difficult to explain how sentences such as (78) and (79) could occur, since there are no corresponding affirmative versions with *-le*.

Rather than being the negative form of the perfective *-le*, then, *méi(yǒu)*, it seems clear, is simply the negation of completion of an event. It cannot be used to negate the completion of an event whose *boundedness* is asserted by the perfective *-le*, and this is why it never co-occurs with *-le*.

The experiential aspect marker *-guo*, on the other hand, has nothing to do with bounding and so is not incompatible with *méi(yǒu)*:

(80) wǒ méi(yǒu) zuò — guo fēijī  
 I not sit — EXP airplane

I haven't been on an airplane yet.

Sentence (80) simply asserts that the event of my having had the experience of traveling in an airplane has not been completed. A *-guo* sentence is not compatible with *bu*, though: the only way to deny that one has had a certain experience is to say that that experience *has not taken place*, that is, with *méi(yǒu)*. Hence, (81) is unacceptable:

(81) \*wǒ bu zuò — guo fēijī  
 I not sit — EXP airplane

The durative-action aspect marker *zai* is compatible with *bu*, but not with *méi(yǒu)*:

- (82) a.    tā      bu      zài      shuì      –      jiào  
              3sg      not      at      sleep      –      sleep

S/He isn't sleeping.

- b.    \*tā      méi(yǒu)      zài      shuì      –      jiào  
              3sg      not      DUR      sleep      –      sleep

Again, the reason is semantic: if an activity is ongoing, then there is no question of its having been completed, so *méi(yǒu)* is impossible to use. The only way to negate an ongoing activity is to use *bu*, the neutral negative marker.

The durative-state aspect marker *-zhe* marks a state associated with some activity:

- (83)    tā      hái      liú      –      zhe      húzi      ne  
              3sg      still      grow      –      DUR      beard      REx

He still has a beard.

- (84)    qiáng      –      shang      guà      –      zhe      yí      –  
              wall      –      on      hang      –      DUR      one      –  
                          fu      huà  
                          CL      painting

There's a painting hanging on the wall.

Now the most obvious way to express the denial of a state is to negate the existence of that state, which is simply done by negating the existential verb *yǒu* 'exist' with *méi*. Thus, (85) and (86) are the natural negative versions of (83) and (84), respectively:

- (85)    tā      méi      yǒu      liú      húzi  
              3sg      not      exist      grow      beard

He doesn't have a beard.

- (86)    qiáng      –      shang      méi      yǒu      guà      huà  
              wall      –      on      not      exist      hang      painting

There isn't any painting on the wall.

To summarize, we find that the following affirmative-negative correspondences hold for sentences containing one of the four aspect markers:

(87)	( <u>affirmative</u> )		( <u>negative</u> )
a.	verb – <u>le</u>		<u>méi(yǒu)</u> verb
	PFV		not
b.	<u>zài</u> verb		<u>bu</u> <u>zài</u> verb
	DUR		not DUR
c.	verb – <u>zhe</u>		<u>méi</u> <u>yǒu</u>
	DUR		not exist
d.	verb – <u>guo</u>		<u>méi(yǒu)</u> verb – <u>guo</u>
	EXP		not EXP

### 12.5 Negating Some Element other than a Simple Verb Phrase

For negating an ordinary verb phrase, one of the four negative particles we have considered in this chapter will be used. Sometimes, however, we want to express denial of what someone else has said or implied. For these purposes, *bu* plus *shi* 'be' is used, the effect being to say, 'It is not the case that . . .' (see chapter 4 for a discussion of *shi* 'it is the case that').

Here are some examples; in each case the sentence suggests a denial or contradiction of what someone else has said or implied.

(88)	tā	<u>bú</u>	<u>shì</u>	guāng	–	zhe	jiǎo	shàng
	3sg	not	be	bare	–	DUR	foot	ascend
			–	kè				
			–	class				

It's not the case that s/he goes to class barefooted.

(89)	wǒ	<u>bú</u>	<u>shì</u>	yě	mǎi	xīn	fángzi
	I	not	be	also	buy	new	house

It's not true that I am also buying a new house.

- (90) qiáng — shang bú shì guà — zhe  
 wall — on not be hang — DUR
- yi — fu huà  
 one — CL painting

It is not true that there is a painting hanging on the wall.

- (91) tā bú shì bǎ Zhāngsān dài —  
 3sg not be BA Zhangsan bring —
- jìn — lái  
 enter — come

It is not true that s/he brought in Zhangsan.

- (92) tā bú shì bèi Wángèr mà  
 3sg not be BEI Wanger scold

It is not true that s/he was scolded by Wanger.

- (93) tā bú shì yǒu yi — ge  
 3sg not be exist one — CL
- mèimei hěn xǐhuan Lìsì  
 younger:sister very like Lisi

It is not true that s/he has a younger sister who happens to like Lisi.

Because the function of *bú shì* is to express denial, it is usually stressed, whereas *bu* in other negative sentences tends to be unstressed. We should note that since any statement can be denied, all declarative constructions, regardless of their syntactic structure, may take on *bú shì* to serve as a denial. This point is illustrated by the above examples.

Another usage of *bú shì* is to negate a noun phrase. In such a case, it is the negative counterpart of an affirmative construction that has the noun phrase marked

by the affirmative *shì* (again, see chapter 4 on this use of *shì*). Let us illustrate with the following examples:

(94) a. shì      tā      gěi      wǒ      táng      chī  
          be      3sg      give      I      candy      eat

It is s/he who gives me candy to eat!

b. bú shì      tā      gěi      wǒ      táng      chī  
          not      be      3sg      give      I      candy      eat

It isn't s/he who gives me candy to eat!

(95) bú shì      Zhāngsān      wǒ      bu      xǐhuan ,      shì      Lǐsì  
          not      be      Zhangsan      I      not      like      be      Lisi

It is not Zhangsan whom I don't like, it is Lisi!

It is clear in (94) *a* that it is already assumed that someone gives the speaker candy to eat. The information conveyed by (94) *a* is that, given this presupposition, *tā* 's/he' is the culprit. Thus, in (94) *b*, it is assumed that someone gives the speaker candy to eat, but *tā* 's/he' is *not* the one. In (95), the direct object noun phrase *Zhāngsān* is negated with *bú shì* to contrast it with the direct object noun phrase marked with the affirmative *shì*, *Lǐsì*.

## 12.6 Summary

There are four negative particles in Mandarin, and their meanings can be represented as follows:

1. *Bu*: negation
2. *Méi(yǒu)*: noncompletion
3. *Bié*: negative imperative
4. *Méi*: negative of *yǒu*

We have seen that the position of the negative particle in the sentence depends on what is in its scope and that the functional difference between *bu* and *méi(yǒu)* explains a number of facts about their occurrence with various types of verbs and aspects. In addition, explicit denial is conveyed by the expression *bú shì* 'not be = it is not true that . . .', and *bú shì* also functions as the negation of a noun marked by *shì*.

## Notes

1. In this chapter, we have drawn on some ideas in Shih (1966), Rygaloff (1973:111–114), and Teng (1973, 1974c).
2. The past-tense translation will be discussed immediately below.
3. See Teng (1974a, 1975a).
4. This section adapts some points from Light (1977).
5. Not all native speakers of Mandarin feel comfortable with this sentence. The origin of such a type of construction may be the interaction of Mandarin with other Chinese dialects.
6. For this section, we have drawn on Teng (1973).
7. If the sentence containing the perfective aspect marker *-le* has as its main verb the affirmative *shi* 'be' (see section 4.3.1 of chapter 4), then, as in (i), that *shi* can be negated with *bu* (see section 12.5 below); our point is that a perfective verb itself cannot be negated.

(i)	tā	<u>bu</u>	shì	mài	–	le	tā	–
	3sg	not	be	sell	–	PFV	3sg	–
			de	chē				
			GEN	vehicle				

It's not the case that s/he sold his/her car. (an explicit refutation of the claim *tā mài-le tā-de chē* 's/he sold his/her car')

8. This southern usage extends even to other nonassertive environments besides questions and their answers, as pointed out to us by J. Edmonson. Thus southern speakers can say

(i)	jiǎru	tā	<u>yǒu</u>	chī	tā	jiu
	if	3sg		eat	3sg	then
		bu	huì	shēng	–	bìng
		not	likely	put:forth	–	sickness

If s/he'd eaten, s/he wouldn't have gotten sick.

while northerners would say

(ii)	jiǎrú	tā	<u>chī</u>	–	le	...
	if	3sg	eat	–	PFV	

If s/he had eaten, . . .

9. See, for example, Wang (1965) and Chao (1968:439).

occurs in preverbal position. Here are examples from Cantonese and Taiwanese to illustrate:

(66) (Cantonese)

keuih	<u>yauh</u>	sihk	faahn
3sg	PFV	eat	food

S/He ate.

(67) (Taiwanese)

i	<u>u</u>	chia	peng
3sg	PFV	eat	food

S/He ate.

What this means is that when speakers of these southern languages speak Mandarin, they are likely to use *yǒu* in questions and answers as if it were also the perfective aspect marker in Mandarin. Instead of (64), then, a southern speaker is likely to say in Mandarin:

(68)	A	not A			
wǒ	<u>yǒu</u>	<u>méiyǒu</u>	xiě	—	cuò
I		not	write	—	wrong
	nèi	—	ge		zì ?
	that	—	CL		character

Did I write that character wrong?

with *yǒu* being treated as the first element in the verb phrase; or they may even say it this way:



- (69)
- |                          |   |       |   |       |      |   |    |           |                          |
|--------------------------|---|-------|---|-------|------|---|----|-----------|--------------------------|
|                          | A   |       |   |       |      |   |    |           |                          |
| wǒ                       | <u>yǒu</u>  | xiě   | - | cuò   | nèi  | - | ge | zì        |                          |
| I                        |   | write | - | wrong | that | - | CL | character |                          |
|                          | not A   |       |   |       |      |   |    |           |                          |
|                          | <table style="border: none; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> <u>méi(yǒu)</u> ?<br/>           not         </td> </tr> </table> |       |   |       |      |   |    |           | <u>méi(yǒu)</u> ?<br>not |
| <u>méi(yǒu)</u> ?<br>not |   |       |   |       |      |   |    |           |                          |

Did I write that character wrong?

which treats *yǒu xiě-cuò nèige zì* 'wrote that character wrong' as the A part of the question and *méiyǒu* as the not-A part. In fact, for these speakers, a possible affirmative answer to these questions is:

- (70) (nǐ) yǒu xiě - cuò  
 (you) write - wrong

(You) wrote (it) wrong.

The point here is that for southern speakers of Mandarin, the use of *méiyǒu* as the negative of a verb with *-le* has extended to using *yǒu* as the *affirmative* of *méiyǒu* in questions and answers to questions,<sup>8</sup> because that is the way it is said in the southern Chinese dialects.

The significance of the way southerners speak Mandarin is that, for reasons having to do with recent political developments in China, many southerners nowadays speak Mandarin with northerners, and this means that even northerners are changing their speech under the influence of these southern speakers. This is most strikingly obvious in Taiwan and Singapore, but it is also true of southern China and Hong Kong as well. If we consider only Mandarin speakers of the north, then, the question form

- (71) subject verb - le méiyǒu ?

(as exemplified in [64] above) is the only possible form for a perfective sentence, and all the other sentences in which *yǒu* appears as a perfective marker will sound strange. Among speakers who are influenced by the Mandarin of southern Chinese,

though, sentences with *yǒu* as the perfective marker are coming to be used more and more.

Because the negation of a sentence with the perfective aspect *-le* seems to involve the presence of *méi(yǒu)* and the absence of *-le*, as illustrated by (72) *a* and *b*, many grammarians have assumed that *méi(yǒu)* is the negative form of the perfective aspect marker *-le*.<sup>9</sup>

(72) <i>a.</i>	háizi child	sī tear	— —	pò broken	— —	le PFV	nèi that
	把	—	—	běn CL	—	zázhì magazine	

The child tore up that magazine.

<i>b.</i>	háizi child	<u>méi(yǒu)</u> not	— —	sī tear	— —	pò broken	nèi that	— —
		běn CL	—	zázhì magazine	—			

The child didn't tear up that magazine.

Rather than saying that *méi(yǒu)* in such sentences as (72) *b* is the negative form of *-le*, though, it makes sense for us to say that since *méi(yǒu)* is the denial of completion, and since *-le* signals a bounded event, they are simply semantically incompatible and cannot co-occur.

There are several reasons for not viewing *méi(yǒu)* as the negative version of *-le*. First, *-le* cannot co-occur with the experiential aspect marker *-guo*, as discussed in chapter 6. *Méi(yǒu)* can, however, occur with *-guo*:

(73)	tā 3sg	<u>méi(yǒu)</u> not	— —	qù go	— —	guo EXP	Zhōngguó China
------	-----------	------------------------	--------	----------	--------	------------	-------------------

S/He hasn't been to China.

If *méi(yǒu)* were the negative form of *-le*, then there would be no way to explain why *méi(yǒu)* can occur in sentences in which *-le* cannot occur.

A second reason for not considering *méi(yǒu)* to be the negative form of *-le* is

that with certain predicates, when *-le* signals that an event is bounded by a following event, as in (74)

(74)	tā	hē	–	<u>le</u>	jiǔ	yǐhòu ,	wǒ	jiù
	3sg	drink	–	PFV	wine	after	I	then
		gēn	tā	shuō	–	huà		
		with	3sg	talk	–	speech		

After s/he drinks, I'll talk to him/her.

we negate the clause with *-le*, not by the particle *méi(yǒu)*, but by the particle *bu*. The unacceptability of sentence (75) *a* and the acceptability of sentence (75) *b* illustrate this point:

(75) a.	*tā	<u>méi(yǒu)</u>	hē	jiǔ	yǐhòu ,	wǒ	jiù
	3sg	not	drink	wine	after	I	then
		gēn	tā	shuō	–	huà	
		with	3sg	talk	–	speech	
					}		
b.	tā	<u>bu</u>	hē	jiǔ	yǐhòu ,	wǒ	jiù
	3sg	not	drink	wine	after	I	then
		gēn	tā	shuō	–	huà	
		with	3sg	talk	–	speech	

After s/he stops drinking, I'll talk to him/her.

Third, there are a number of verbs that do not occur with *-le* because they do not signal bounded events. Here are two examples:

(76)	wǒ	tīngshuō	( <u>*-le</u> )	tā	líhūn	LE
	I	hear	( <u>*-PFV</u> )	3sg	divorce	PFV/CRS

I hear that s/he got divorced.

(77)	wǒ	zhūzhāng	( <u>*-le</u> )	nimen	jīntian	wǎnshang	xiūxi
	I	advocate	( <u>*-PFV</u> )	you:PL	today	evening	rest

I suggest that you all rest this evening.

Both of these verbs can be negated with *méi(yǒu)*, however:

(78) wǒ méi(yǒu) tīngshuō tā lǐhūn LE  
 I not hear 3sg divorce PFV/CRS

I didn't hear that s/he got divorced.

(79) wǒ méi(yǒu) zhǔzhāng nimen jīntiān wǎnshàng xiūxi  
 I not advocate you:PL today evening rest

I didn't suggest that you all rest this evening.

If *méi(yǒu)* could occur only as the negative of the perfective *-le*, then it would be difficult to explain how sentences such as (78) and (79) could occur, since there are no corresponding affirmative versions with *-le*.

Rather than being the negative form of the perfective *-le*, then, *méi(yǒu)*, it seems clear, is simply the negation of completion of an event. It cannot be used to negate the completion of an event whose *boundedness* is asserted by the perfective *-le*, and this is why it never co-occurs with *-le*.

The experiential aspect marker *-guo*, on the other hand, has nothing to do with bounding and so is not incompatible with *méi(yǒu)*:

(80) wǒ méi(yǒu) zuò — guo fēijī  
 I not sit — EXP airplane

I haven't been on an airplane yet.

Sentence (80) simply asserts that the event of my having had the experience of traveling in an airplane has not been completed. A *-guo* sentence is not compatible with *bu*, though: the only way to deny that one has had a certain experience is to say that that experience *has not taken place*, that is, with *méi(yǒu)*. Hence, (81) is unacceptable:

(81) \*wǒ bu zuò — guo fēijī  
 I not sit — EXP airplane

The durative-action aspect marker *zai* is compatible with *bu*, but not with *méi(yǒu)*:

- (82) a.    tā        bu        zài        shuì        -        jiào  
              3sg        not        at        sleep       -        sleep

S/He isn't sleeping.

- b.    \*tā        méi(yǒu)        zài        shuì        -        jiào  
              3sg        not        DUR        sleep       -        sleep

Again, the reason is semantic: if an activity is ongoing, then there is no question of its having been completed, so *méi(yǒu)* is impossible to use. The only way to negate an ongoing activity is to use *bu*, the neutral negative marker.

The durative-state aspect marker *-zhe* marks a state associated with some activity:

- (83)    tā        hái        liú        -        zhe        húzi        ne  
              3sg        still        grow        -        DUR        beard       REx

He still has a beard.

- (84)    qiáng        -        shang        guà        -        zhe        yí        -  
              wall        -        on        hang        -        DUR        one        -  
  
              fu        huà  
              CL        painting

There's a painting hanging on the wall.

Now the most obvious way to express the denial of a state is to negate the existence of that state, which is simply done by negating the existential verb *yǒu* 'exist' with *méi*. Thus, (85) and (86) are the natural negative versions of (83) and (84), respectively:

- (85)    tā        méi        yǒu        liú        húzi  
              3sg        not        exist        grow        beard

He doesn't have a beard.

- (86)    qiáng        -        shang        méi        yǒu        guà        huà  
              wall        -        on        not        exist        hang        painting

There isn't any painting on the wall.

To summarize, we find that the following affirmative-negative correspondences hold for sentences containing one of the four aspect markers:

(87)	(affirmative)		(negative)
a.	verb - <u>le</u>		<u>méi(yǒu)</u> verb
	PFV		not
b.	<u>zài</u> verb		<u>bu</u> <u>zài</u> verb
	DUR		not DUR
c.	verb - <u>zhe</u>		<u>méi</u> <u>yǒu</u>
	DUR		not exist
d.	verb - <u>guo</u>		<u>méi(yǒu)</u> verb - <u>guo</u>
	EXP		not EXP

### 12.5 Negating Some Element other than a Simple Verb Phrase

For negating an ordinary verb phrase, one of the four negative particles we have considered in this chapter will be used. Sometimes, however, we want to express denial of what someone else has said or implied. For these purposes, *bu* plus *shi* 'be' is used, the effect being to say, 'It is not the case that . . .' (see chapter 4 for a discussion of *shi* 'it is the case that').

Here are some examples; in each case the sentence suggests a denial or contradiction of what someone else has said or implied.

(88)	tā	<u>bú</u>	<u>shì</u>	guāng	-	zhe	jiǎo	shàng
	3sg	not	be	bare	-	DUR	foot	ascend
		-	kè					
		-	class					

It's not the case that s/he goes to class barefooted.

(89)	wǒ	<u>bú</u>	<u>shì</u>	yě	mǎi	xīn	fángzi
	I	not	be	also	buy	new	house

It's not true that I am also buying a new house.

- (90) qíáng — shang bú shì guà — zhe  
 wall — on not be hang — DUR
- yi — fu huà  
 one — CL painting

It is not true that there is a painting hanging on the wall.

- (91) tā bú shì bá Zhāngsān dài —  
 3sg not be BA Zhangsan bring —
- jìn — lái  
 enter — come

It is not true that s/he brought in Zhangsan.

- (92) tā bú shì bèi Wángèr mà  
 3sg not be BEI Wanger scold

It is not true that s/he was scolded by Wanger.

- (93) tā bú shì yǒu yi — ge  
 3sg not be exist one — CL
- mèimei hěn xǐhuan Lìsì  
 younger:sister very like Lisi

It is not true that s/he has a younger sister who happens to like Lisi.

Because the function of *bú shì* is to express denial, it is usually stressed, whereas *bu* in other negative sentences tends to be unstressed. We should note that since any statement can be denied, all declarative constructions, regardless of their syntactic structure, may take on *bú shì* to serve as a denial. This point is illustrated by the above examples.

Another usage of *bú shì* is to negate a noun phrase. In such a case, it is the negative counterpart of an affirmative construction that has the noun phrase marked

by the affirmative *shì* (again, see chapter 4 on this use of *shì*). Let us illustrate with the following examples:

(94) a. shì      tā      gěi      wǒ      táng      chī  
          be      3sg      give      I      candy      eat

It is s/he who gives me candy to eat!

b. bú shì      tā      gěi      wǒ      táng      chī  
          not      be      3sg      give      I      candy      eat

It isn't s/he who gives me candy to eat!

(95) bú shì Zhāngsān wǒ bu xǐhuan , shì Lìsì  
          not      be      Zhangsan      I      not      like      be      Lisi

It is not Zhangsan whom I don't like, it is Lisi!

It is clear in (94) a that it is already assumed that someone gives the speaker candy to eat. The information conveyed by (94) a is that, given this presupposition, *tā* 's/he' is the culprit. Thus, in (94) b, it is assumed that someone gives the speaker candy to eat, but *tā* 's/he' is *not* the one. In (95), the direct object noun phrase *Zhāngsān* is negated with *bú shì* to contrast it with the direct object noun phrase marked with the affirmative *shì*, *Lìsì*.

## 12.6 Summary

There are four negative particles in Mandarin, and their meanings can be represented as follows:

1. *Bu*: negation
2. *Méi(yǒu)*: noncompletion
3. *Bié*: negative imperative
4. *Méi*: negative of *yǒu*

We have seen that the position of the negative particle in the sentence depends on what is in its scope and that the functional difference between *bu* and *méi(yǒu)* explains a number of facts about their occurrence with various types of verbs and aspects. In addition, explicit denial is conveyed by the expression *bú shì* 'not be = it is not true that . . .', and *bú shì* also functions as the negation of a noun marked by *shì*.



## Notes

1. In this chapter, we have drawn on some ideas in Shih (1966), Rygaloff (1973:111–114), and Teng (1973, 1974c).
2. The past-tense translation will be discussed immediately below.
3. See Teng (1974a, 1975a).
4. This section adapts some points from Light (1977).
5. Not all native speakers of Mandarin feel comfortable with this sentence. The origin of such a type of construction may be the interaction of Mandarin with other Chinese dialects.
6. For this section, we have drawn on Teng (1973).
7. If the sentence containing the perfective aspect marker *-le* has as its main verb the affirmative *shì* 'be' (see section 4.3.1 of chapter 4), then, as in (i), that *shì* can be negated with *bu* (see section 12.5 below); our point is that a perfective verb itself cannot be negated.

(i)	tā	<u>bu</u>	shì	mài	–	le	tā	–
	3sg	not	be	sell	–	PFV	3sg	–
			de	chē				
			GEN	vehicle				

It's not the case that s/he sold his/her car. (an explicit refutation of the claim *tā mài-le tā-de chē* 's/he sold his/her car')

8. This southern usage extends even to other nonassertive environments besides questions and their answers, as pointed out to us by J. Edmonson. Thus southern speakers can say

(i)	jiǎru	tā	<u>yǒu</u>	chī	,	tā	jiu
	if	3sg		eat		3sg	then
		bu	huì	shēng	–	bìng	
		not	likely	put:forth	–	sickness	

If s/he'd eaten, s/he wouldn't have gotten sick.

while northerners would say

(ii)	jiǎrú	tā	<u>chī</u>	–	le	,	...
	if	3sg	eat	–	PFV		

If s/he had eaten, . . .

9. See, for example, Wang (1965) and Chao (1968:439).



b. wǒ      shuì      -      jiào      shuì      -      le  
 I      sleep      -      sleep      sleep      -      PFV

wǔ      -      ge      zhōngtóu  
             five      -      CL      hour

I slept for five hours.

(4) a. \*wǒ      pāi      -      (le)      -      shǒu      liǎng      cì  
 I      clap      -      PFV      -      hand      two      time

b. wǒ      pāi      -      shǒu      pāi      -      le  
 I      clap      -      hand      clap      -      PFV

liǎng      cì  
             two      time

I clapped (my) hands twice.

(ii) Complex stative construction (see chapter 22):

(5) a. \*tā      niàn      -      shū      (de      hěn)      kuài  
 3sg      read      -      book      CSC      very      fast

b. tā      niàn      -      shū      niàn      de      hěn      kuài  
 3sg      read      -      book      read      CSC      very      fast

S/He reads very quickly.

(6) a. \*tā      jiǎng      gùshi      de      wǒmen  
 3sg      tell      story      CSC      we

dōu      mèn      le  
 all      bored      CRS

b. tā      jiǎng      gùshi      jiǎng      de      wǒmen  
 3sg      tell      story      tell      CSC      we

dōu      mèn      le      厌烦  
 all      bored      CRS

S/He told stories until we were all bored.

(iii) Locative Phrase (see section 11.1 of chapter 11):

- (7) a. \*bàba guà màozi zai yī  
 papa hang hat at clothes
- jiàzi — shang  
 — rack — on
- b. bàba guà màozi guà zai yī  
 papa hang hat hang at clothes
- jiàzi — shang  
 — rack — on
- 把帽子挂在衣架上

Papa hangs hats on the clothes rack.

(iv) Directional phrase (see section 11.2 of chapter 11):

- (8) a. \*wōmen zǒu — (lù) dào shìchǎng le  
 we walk — road to market CRS
- b. wōmen zǒu — (lù) zǒu dào shìchǎng le  
 we walk — road walk to market CRS

We walked to the market.

There are two constraints on verb copying. First, with the last three types of adverbial elements exemplified just above—the complex stative construction, the locative phrase, and the directional phrase—verb copying is obligatory. With the first type, the quantity adverbial phrase, however, as in (3) and (4), verb copying is generally not used when the direct object is referential (see section 4.2.5 of chapter 4) and animate or definite. Therefore, while (3) *a* above, repeated here, and (9) *a* below are unacceptable, sentence 9 *b*, whose direct object is the animate pronoun *tā* 's/he', is fine:

- (3) a. \*wǒ shuì — (le) — jiào wǔ  
 I sleep — PFV — sleep five
- ge zhōngtóu  
 — CL hour
- 我不睡五个小时



animate direct object is referential. In the former case, but not in the latter case, verb copying is necessary:

- (11) a. \*tā      dā      –      le      rén      liǎng      cì  
           3sg      hit      –      PFV      person      two      time
- b.      tā      dā      –      le      yī      –      gè  
           3sg      hit      –      PFV      one      –      CL
- rén      liǎng      cì  
                     person      two      time

S/He hit a person twice.

In (11) *a*, the direct object of the verb is the nonreferential *rén* 'person'. In (11) *b*, however, the direct object, *yī-gè rén* 'one-CL person', is referential, denoting as it does a certain person.

The above examples show that if the direct object is referential and if, furthermore, it is either animate or definite, verb copying is not needed.

The second constraint on verb copying is that it is used only when one of the above types of adverbial phrases follows the direct object. Other types of elements can follow the direct object without occasioning this verb-copying process. For example, in a serial verb construction (see chapter 21), many different types of predicates can follow a verb and its direct object without giving rise to verb copying. In sentence (12), for instance, the first clause, *tā zǒu-lù* 's/he walks', is the subject of the verb phrase *hěn kuài* 'very fast'; here *zǒu* 'walk' is not copied:

- (12)      tā      zǒu      –      lù      hěn      kuài  
           3sg      walk      –      road      very      fast

S/He walks very fast.

The following examples are all serial verb constructions. In each case the second verb phrase, which follows the first verb and its direct object, is underlined; in none of them is there any verb copying of the first verb.

- (13)      zài      zhèr      tíng      chē      fàn      fǎ  
           at      here      stop      vehicle      violate      law

It is against the law to park here.

- (14) tā zhǎo rén bāng tā  
3sg seek person help 3sg

S/He is looking for someone to help him/her.

- (15) wǒ yào Zhāngsān qù kàn yīshēng  
I want Zhangsan go see doctor

I want Zhangsan to see a doctor.

- (16) tāmen gāo géming jiù guó  
they make revolution save country

They make revolution in order to save their country.

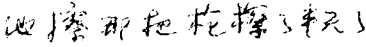
### 13.2 Grammatical Properties of the Verb-Copying Construction

The verb-copying construction schematized previously

- (2) (subject) verb direct object verb adverbial element

has several grammatical properties.

First, as we have mentioned above, verb copying is usually not needed when the direct object is referential and animate or definite. Conversely, when verb copying occurs, the direct object is typically, though not necessarily, nonreferential. Thus, the direct objects of the *b* sentences in examples (3)–(7) are all nonreferential. Let us recall (7) *b*:

- (7) *b*.  guà màozi guà zài yī  
papa hang hat hang at clothes  
  
— jiàzi — shang  
— rack — on

Papa hangs hats on the clothes rack.

In (7) *b*, *màozi* 'hat' is nonreferential; the sentence can be describing only what

Papa does with hats in general. To refer to a specific hat, the *bǎ* construction would have to be used (see chapter 15):

- |      |      |           |       |      |       |         |  |
|------|------|-----------|-------|------|-------|---------|--|
| (17) | bàba | <u>bǎ</u> | màozi | guà  | zài   | yī      |  |
|      | papa | BA        | hat   | hang | at    | clothes |  |
|      |      | –         | jiàzi | –    | shang |         |  |
|      |      | –         | rack  | –    | on    |         |  |

Papa hangs his hat on the clothes rack.

Second, the first occurrence of the verb in (2) typically does not take any aspect marker. For example, if the perfective *-le* or the experiential *-guo* is added to the first verb in (3) *b* and (4) *b*, the results are unacceptable:

- |      |     |       |       |      |    |          |       |   |
|------|-----|-------|-------|------|----|----------|-------|---|
| (18) | *wǒ | shuì  | –     | le   | –  | jiào     | shuì  | – |
|      | I   | sleep | –     | PFV  | –  | sleep    | sleep | – |
|      |     | le    | wǔ    | –    | ge | zhōngtóu |       |   |
|      |     | PFV   | five  | –    | CL | hour     |       |   |
| (19) | *wǒ | pāi   | –     | guo  | –  | shǒu     | pāi   | – |
|      | I   | clap  | –     | EXP  | –  | hand     | clap  | – |
|      |     | le    | liǎng | cì   |    |          |       |   |
|      |     | PFV   | two   | time |    |          |       |   |

Third, the negative of schema (2) involves placing the negative particle before the second verb, not before the first verb:

- (20) (subject) verb direct object neg verb adverbial element

For instance, the negative of (4) *b* is (21) *a*, not (21) *b*:

- |         |    |      |   |      |            |      |       |      |
|---------|----|------|---|------|------------|------|-------|------|
| (21) a. | wǒ | pāi  | – | shǒu | <u>méi</u> | pāi  | liǎng | cì   |
|         | I  | clap | – | hand | not        | clap | two   | time |

I didn't clap (my) hands twice.



b. ? \*wǒ méi pāi – shǒu pāi liǎng cì  
 I not clap – hand clap two time

Similarly, the negative of (7) *b* is (22) *a*, not (22) *b*:

(22) a. bàba guà màozi bu guà zài  
 papa hang hat not hang at  
 yī – jiàzi – shang  
 clothes – rack – on

Papa does not hang hats on the clothes rack.

b. \*bàba bu guà màozi guà zài  
 papa not hang hat hang at  
 yī – jiàzi – shang  
 clothes – rack – on

Fourth, certain adverbs, such as *zhǐ* 'only', *háizhì* 'still', also, moderately', and *yě* 'also', can occur only before the second occurrence and not before the first occurrence of the verb in (2). For example:

(23) a. wǒ qí mǎ zhǐ qí – le  
 I ride horse only ride – PFV  
 bàn – ge zhōngtóu  
 half – CL hour

I rode horses for only half an hour.

b. \*wǒ zhǐ qí mǎ qí – le  
 I only ride horse ride – PFV  
 bàn – ge zhōngtóu  
 half – CL hour

(24) a.	tā	xiě	xiǎoshuō	<u>hái</u>	xiě
	3sg	write	novel	moderately	write
		de	bu	–	cuò
		CSC	not	–	bad

S/He is not bad at writing novels.

b. ?	*tā	<u>hái</u>	xiě	xiǎoshuō	xiě
	3sg	moderately	write	novel	write
		de	bu	–	cuò
		CSC	not	–	bad

(25) a.	wǒ	hē	jiǔ	<u>yě</u>	hē	–
	I	drink	wine	also	drink	–
		le	sān	bēi		
		PFV	three	glass		

I also drank three glasses of wine.

b. ?	*wǒ	<u>yě</u>	hē	jiǔ	hē	–
	I	also	drink	wine	drink	–
		le	sān	bēi		
		PFV	three	glass		

All of the grammatical properties of the verb-copying construction described above suggest that the constituent consisting of the first verb plus the direct object behaves as a “frozen” unit in the sense that it is not subject to any grammatical modification. Thus, the direct object is typically nonreferential; the verb does not take any aspect markers; and the entire unit must be outside of the scope of negation and certain adverbial elements. (For the notion of scope, see chapter 12 on negation.)

## CHAPTER 14

# *The Imperative*

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The grammatical term *imperative* generally refers to the form of a sentence expressing a command.<sup>1</sup> The dividing line between commands and noncommands, however, is not a clear one. For one thing, in normal social interaction, it is often desirable to avoid giving direct orders. Hence all languages have ways of softening commands to make them more like requests or suggestions. Furthermore, because commands involve judgments about what people should and shouldn't do, we find that the grammatical elements occurring in imperatives addressed to the listener also occur in sentences with first person (I, we) and third person (he, she, they) subjects as well. Let us look at some of the properties of imperative sentences in more detail.

We will begin with commands addressed to the listener. To get our listener to do something, in Mandarin, as in any other language, we can say just a verb phrase, or we can use a sentence with a *nǐ* or *nǐmen* 'you' or 'you (plural)' subject:

- (1) chī  
eat

Eat!

- (2) guāi  
good

Be good! (referring to the behavior of children)

- (3) kuài yídiǎn  
fast a:little

A little faster!

- (4) guò — lái  
cross — come

Come here!

- (5) ná wǒ — de qiānbǐ lái  
take I — GEN pencil come

Bring my pencil!

- (6) màn-man-de kāi  
slowly drive

Drive slowly!

- (7) nǐ zuò zhèlǐ  
you sit here

Sit here!

- (8) nǐmen kuài qù shuì — jiào  
you:PL fast go sleep — sleep

Go to bed quickly (all of you)!

We can also say just a noun phrase in the right context, and it will have the force of a command. Typically, the context for such a command, as noted by Chao (1968), is one in which the noun phrase represents the thing or things desired by the speaker:

- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> (7) (9) yī bēi chá  
one glass tea

A glass of tea.

- (10) nèi liǎng — bǎ dāo  
 X that two — CL knife

Those two knives.

To soften a command, one of the verbs *qǐng* 'invite', *láojià* 'trouble you', or *máfan* 'to trouble' is often used with the force of 'please' at the beginning of the sentence. For example:

- (11) láojià nǐ bǎ zhèi — fu huà  
 please you BA this — CL painting  
 guà zài wòfáng — li  
 hang at bedroom — in

Please hang this painting in the bedroom.

- (12) qǐng shàng — zuò  
 please ascend — seat

Please take your seat.

- (13) máfan nǐ lái chá ?  
 please you come tea

Please bring tea.

- (14) qǐng ( nǐ ) yòng cài  
 please ( you ) use food

Please eat.

In softening a command, *qǐng* is the most commonly used of these verbs. There is no constraint on its usage in a command, and the second person pronoun, *nǐ* 'you' or *nǐmen* 'you (plural)', in a command beginning with *qǐng* remains optional, as in a regular command without *qǐng*. The uses of *láojià* and *máfan* are more constrained than that of *qǐng*. They are typically used to soften a command requesting the addressee to do something that benefits someone other than the

addressee himself/herself. Thus, (15) is odd because under normal circumstances eating benefits only the eater, that is, the addressee:

- (15) { ?láojià }      nǐ      yòng      cài  
           { ?máfan }  
           please      you      use      food

Please eat.

Under normal circumstances, in fact, (15) would sound facetious or sarcastic.

Another feature of *máfan* is that it requires the presence of the second person pronoun, *nǐ/nǐmen* 'you/you (plural)', denoting the addressee. For example, if the addressee pronoun in (13) is left out, the resulting sentence is unacceptable:

- (16) \*máfan      lái      chá  
           please      come      tea

The reason for this property of *máfan* is that it has not completely acquired the meaning of 'please', as *qǐng* has. *Máfan* functions in imperative sentences as it does in declarative sentences: it is a pivotal verb meaning 'to trouble'. A pivotal verb cannot exist without its direct object, which also serves as the subject of the following verb (see section 21.2 of chapter 21 for pivotal constructions).

*Qǐng* signaling 'please' in a command also differs from *máfan* and *láojià* in that it may occur before as well as after the addressee *nǐ/nǐmen* 'you/you (plural)'. For example:

- 你 请 坐  
 (17)      nǐ      qǐng      zuò  
           you      please      sit

Please sit down.

- (18)      nǐ      qǐng      hē      jiǔ  
           ?      you      please      drink      wine

Please drink some wine.

- (19)      nǐ      qǐng      xiān      zǒu  
           ?      you      please      first      go

Please go first.

This positioning of *qǐng* after the addressee in (17)–(19) is another sign of the semantic shift of *qǐng* away from the pivotal verb meaning 'to invite' toward the polite imperative marker 'please' in imperative constructions.

Negative imperatives are expressed with the negative particle *bié* 'don't', which functions exclusively as a negative imperative particle. In other words, it is used only in imperative constructions. Like the other negative particles, *bu* and *méi(yǒu)*, the negative imperative particle occurs after the subject and before the verb. For example:

- (20) bié      dòng  
don't    move

Don't move!

- (21)    nǐ      bié      dǎ      rén  
         you    don't    hit    person

Don't hit anyone!

- (22)    \*tā      bié      dǔ      –      qián  
         3sg    don't    gamble –    money

Sentence (22) is unacceptable because it has a third person subject and is therefore not a command. Thus, it is incompatible with the occurrence of *bié*.<sup>2</sup>

If the negative imperative particle is used in a sentence with a first person plural pronoun as the subject, then the command is of the form 'Let's not . . .'. For example:

- (23)    wǒmen      bié      shuō      –      huà  
         we      don't    talk      –      speech

Let's not talk!

Negative imperatives can also be expressed with such constructions as *bu-yào* 'don't', *bu-bì* 'not necessary', and *bu-yòng* 'not use', all of which involve the negative particle *bu* 'not'. *Bu-yào* literally means 'not-want'. When used in a command, *bu-yào* 'not-want' has the force of 'don't', as shown in (24):

- (24)    nǐ      bu – yào      zhèi      –      yang      jiào      → 别  
         you    not – want    this    –    manner    shout

Don't shout like this.

The following sentences are some examples with *bu-bi* and *bu-yòng*:

- (25) nǐ      bu      —      bì      tiàowǔ  
 you      not      —      necessary      dance

You don't <sup>have</sup> need to dance.

- (26) bu      —      bì      tuō      xié      le  
 not      —      necessary      remove      shoe      CRS

(You) don't need to take off (your) shoes.

- (27) nǐ      bu      —      yòng      kèqǐ  
 you      not      —      use      polite

You don't need to be polite.

- (28) bu      —      yòng      shēnqǐng  
 not      —      use      apply

(You) don't need to apply.

In certain northern Mandarin dialects, *bu-yòng* may be contracted to *bèng*:

- (29) nǐ      bèng      rèn      —      shū  
 you      not:use      concede      —      defeat

You don't need to concede defeat.

An important distinction between *bié* on the one hand and *bu-yòng/bu-bi* on the other is that the former is only a negative imperative particle, whereas the latter are compounds composed of the negative particle *bu* and either the verb *yòng* 'use', or the bound adjective *bì* 'necessary'. Thus, *bu-yòng* and *bu-bi* but not *bié* may occur in declarative sentences or questions. For example:

- (30) tā      bu      —      yòng      shàngbān      ma ?  
 3sg      not      —      use      work      Q

Doesn't s/he need to go to work?



- (31) tā      bu    -      bì      piàn      rén  
       3sg      not    -    necessary    deceive    people

S/He need not deceive people.

Correlated with this distinction between *bié* and *bu-yòng/bu-bì* is the fact that only *bié* but not *bu-yòng/bu-bì* may co-occur with the polite imperative marker *qǐng* 'please'. Hence, (32) is well formed, but (33) and (34) are ungrammatical:

- (32) qǐng    nǐ      bié    shēngqì  
       please    you    don't    angry

Please don't be angry.

- (33) \*qǐng    nǐ      bu    -      yòng    gào      tā  
       please    you    not    -    use    sue      3sg

(Please, you don't need to sue him/her.)

- (34) \*qǐng    nǐ      bu    -      bì      zháojí  
       please    you    not    -    necessary    anxious

(Please, you don't need to be anxious.)

The reason for the incongruity between the polite imperative form and the expressions *bu-yòng/bu-bì* is that sentences involving such expressions are not true direct commands, as the English translations of sentences (25)–(28) indicate. A sentence such as (25), meaning 'You don't need to dance', is only an indirect command. Strictly speaking, it is a statement. The imperative meaning of such a statement is inferred, not inherent. On the other hand, both *bié* 'don't' and *qǐng* 'please' have inherent imperative meaning. That's why *bié* 'don't' but not *bu-yòng/bu-bì* may co-occur with *qǐng* 'please'.

What is the status of *bu-yào*? We have noted that *bu-yào* literally means 'not-want'. If we place *bu-yào* in a sentence with a third person subject, then it can have only its literal meaning, as in

- (35) tā      bu      yào      chī      miàn  
       3sg      not    want    eat      noodle

S/He doesn't want to eat noodles.



- (39) wǒ     —     de     yìsī     shì     nǐ  
 I     —     GEN     opinion     be     you
- bié     shuō     Zhōngwén  
 don't   speak    Chinese

*My opinion*  
 My opinion is that you shouldn't speak Chinese.

- (40) tā   mìnglìng   wǒ   bié   dǎ   —   lánqiú  
 3sg   order     I   don't   play   —   basketball

She ordered me not to play basketball.

- (41) wǒ     shuō     tā     bié     tài     jǐnzhāng  
 I     say     3sg   don't   too     tense

I say s/he shouldn't be too tense.

There is a condition controlling the occurrence of *bié* in the clause serving as the direct object: the main verb must be a verb of ordering, such as *mìnglìng* 'order', *jiào* 'direct', or a verb such as *zhǔzhāng* 'advocate', *rènwei* 'feel', *xiǎng* 'think', which express a judgment or an opinion on the part of the subject, or a verb of saying, such as *shuō* 'say', *gàosu* 'tell'. The main verb can also be the copula *shì* 'be', as in (39), as long as the subject noun phrase signals an order, an opinion, or something advocated or said. To illustrate these conditions, let's consider the verb *zhīdao* 'know', which does not express a command or a judgment on the part of the subject and is not a verb of saying. If the direct object clause of *zhīdao* 'know' contains *bié*, clearly the sentence will be unacceptable:

- (42) \*wǒ   zhīdao   tā   bié   chū   —   guó  
 I   know   3sg   don't   exit   —   country

There are good reasons for these conditions: first, verbs of ordering specify that the following clause is a command, so it is natural that the negative imperative particle, *bié*, should be allowed to occur. The verbs of judgment have a mild imperative force, making it possible for their object clause to be a command. This accounts for the occurrence of *bié* in the object clauses of those verbs. The verbs of saying

together with their complements are a form of indirect speech; that is, the complements themselves represent speech utterances. The semantic content of such verbs is rather neutral: such verbs allow any utterance, including commands, to occur as their clause objects (see section 21.2.1 of chapter 21 for further discussion). Finally, the copula as it is used in (39) is a linking verb. As long as the elements linked by the copula are compatible, the sentence will be appropriate. Thus, if the object of the copula is a command, the subject must signal a command, a judgment, or a saying.

In a similar way we can account for the *bié* 'don't' in (43) *a* and *b*:

(43) *a.*     $\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{tā} & \text{zuì} & - & \text{hǎo} & \text{bié} & \text{hē} & \text{jiǔ} \\ \text{3sg} & \text{most} & - & \text{good} & \text{don't} & \text{drink} & \text{wine} \end{array}$

It's best for him/her not to drink wine.

*b.*     $\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{zuì} & - & \text{hǎo} & \text{tā} & \text{bié} & \text{hē} & \text{jiǔ} \\ \text{most} & - & \text{good} & \text{3sg} & \text{don't} & \text{drink} & \text{wine} \end{array}$

It's best for him/her not to drink wine.

The unacceptability of sentence (44) shows that the imperative quality of (43) *a* and *b* depends on the adverb *zui-hǎo* 'most-good':

(44)     $\begin{array}{cccc} *tā & bié & hē & jiǔ \\ \text{3sg} & \text{don't} & \text{drink} & \text{wine} \end{array}$

*Zui-hǎo* is a sentential adverb in the sense that it sets a semantic frame for the rest of the sentence (see section 8.1 of chapter 8 on adverbs). The meaning of such an adverb makes it very clear that the sentence represents a judgment/suggestion on the part of the speaker; that is, it performs the same function as the verbs of judgment, signaling that the following clause is a judgment/suggestion.

Finally, we should return to the first person plural command, which was discussed earlier in this chapter in the context of the negative imperative particle, *bié* 'don't'. We have seen that a negative first person command employs the negative imperative particle, *bié*; but we have not yet mentioned the affirmative first person command; 'Let's . . .'. The affirmative first person command typically

uses the sentence-final particle, *ba*, which has the effect of soliciting agreement (see chapter 7). For example:

- (45) wōmen qǐ — lái ba  
we rise — come SA

Let's get up. *shall we*

- (46) wōmen zōu ba  
we go SA

Let's go.

- (47) wōmen niàn Zhōngwén ba  
we study Chinese SA

Let's study Chinese.

The sentence-final particle *ba* also may optionally occur in an ordinary second-person command, as in

- (48) nǐ shuì — jiào ba  
you sleep — sleep SA *will you*

Go to bed, OK?

- (49) nǐ zōu — zhe qiáo ba  
you go — DUR see SA

Why don't you see as you go along, OK?

As a marker soliciting agreement, the sentence-final particle *ba* has the effect of softening the imperative force in the second person command.

To summarize this chapter on imperatives, we have seen that imperatives can be ordinary second person commands, in which case they can occur with such softening elements as *qǐng*, *lǎojià*, *máfan*, and the sentence-final particle *ba*, or they can be first person plural commands, which convey the idea of 'Let's . . .', in

which case they generally occur with the sentence-final particle *ba*. Negative imperatives must occur with one of the special negative imperative particles *bié*, *bu-yào*, *bu-bì*, or *bu-yòng*. Finally, we have seen that imperatives, like other sentence types, can occur as the objects to certain verbs as well as with adverbs whose meanings involve ordering, saying, or judging.

### Notes

1. This chapter has taken some ideas from Hashimoto (1969*b*; 1971*a*:77–81).
2. This is not to claim that a sentence with a third person subject can never take the negative imperative particle *bié*. See the analysis of examples (38)–(43) in this chapter.

CHAPTER 15

## The *bǎ* Construction

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The *bǎ* construction is a much-discussed topic in the grammar of Mandarin.<sup>1</sup> From a structural point of view, the *bǎ* construction is straightforward; in general, the direct object is placed immediately after *bǎ* and before the verb:

- (1) subject    bǎ direct object    verb

Somewhat less easy to specify are what kinds of direct objects and what kinds of verbs occur in this construction, what can precede and follow the verbs, and what communicative function the construction serves. Examples (2)–(10) illustrate a variety of *bǎ* sentences. The *bǎ* noun phrase in each sentence is underlined:

- (2) kuài    yídiǎn    bǎ    zhèi    kuài    ròu    nǎ    —    zǒu  
fast    a:little    BA    this    piece    meat    take    —    go

Take this piece of meat away quickly!

- (3)    nǐ    bǎ    tā    —    de    yìsi    jiǎng    —  
you    BA    3sg    —    GEN    meaning    talk    —  
  
chū    —    lái    le  
exit    —    come    CRS

You have explained what s/he meant.





15.1 The *bā* Noun Phrase

The noun phrase following *bā*, which we will call the *bā* noun phrase, is generally *definite* or *generic*. (For a discussion of definite and generic, see section 4.2.5 of chapter 4). The *bā* noun phrase in sentence (2) above is a definite noun phrase with a demonstrative *zhèi* 'this'; those in (3)–(4) are definite noun phrases with possessor phrases; that in (9) is a generic noun phrase, referring to a class, *yán* 'salt'; and those in (5)–(8) and (10) are definite noun phrases with no marker of definiteness at all. What all these *bā* noun phrases share is that they are understood to refer to something about which the speaker believes the hearer knows; (6), for example, can be appropriately used only if the speaker believes that his/her listener knows what chair is being talked about. Similarly, for (7) to make sense, the speaker has to believe that the hearer knows what three books are being referred to.

In (9) the referent of *yán* 'salt' is generic. In other words, *yán* in sentence (9) does not refer to some salt or to any specific salt the hearer and the speaker know about; it refers to the type of entity called 'salt'. The speaker can assume that the hearer knows about the existence of 'salt' as a generic class of entity. For sentence (8) to be appropriately used, the hearer must know what delimits the set of items referred to by the pronoun *shénme-dōu* 'everything'. For example, it could be 'everything' in the refrigerator or 'everything' in the kitchen.

Sometimes, however, the *bā* noun phrase need only refer to something particular that the speaker has in mind but about which the hearer does not necessarily know. In such a case, the *bā* noun phrase is indefinite. Though such sentences are rare in actual speech, one should be aware that they can occur. Sentences (11)–(12) are examples:

- (11) wǒ      bā      yī      –      jiàn      shì      wàng      LE  
       I      BA      one      –      CL      matter      forget      PFV/CRS

I forgot something (i.e., something in particular).

- (12) yǒu      rén      bā      yī      –      gè      zì  
       exist      person      BA      one      –      CL      character
- cā      –      diào      LE  
       erase      –      off      PFV/CRS

Someone erased a (particular) character.

In general, however, when an object is indefinite, even though it refers to a specific entity, it cannot occur in a *bā* sentence, as the following examples show:

- (13) a.    tā      mǎi    -    le      yī    -    liàng    chēzi  
           3sg    buy    -    PFV    one    -    CL     car

S/He bought a car.

- b.    \*tā      bǎ      yī    -    liàng    chēzi    mǎi    -    le  
           3sg    BA    one    -    CL     car     buy    -    PFV

- (14) a.    tā      shā    -    le      liǎng    -    ge      rén  
           3sg    kill    -    PFV    two    -    CL     person

S/He killed two people.

- b.  \*tā      bǎ      liǎng    -    ge      rén    shā    LE  
           3sg    BA    two    -    CL     person    kill    PFV/CRS

We can see, then, that *bā* noun phrases are generally either definite or generic, that is, noun phrases whose referents are known by both speaker and hearer, though sometimes we find a *bā* noun phrase whose referent is a specific entity that the speaker has in mind but about which the hearer does not know.

### 15.2 Disposal

Grammarians studying *bā* sentences in Mandarin and written Chinese have been especially concerned with the question of why sentences such as those in (i) are acceptable, while sentences such as those in (ii) are unacceptable:

(i) Acceptable:

- (15) wō      bǎ      chá    -    bēi    nòng    -    pò      LE  
           I     BA    tea    -    cup    make    -    broken PFV/CRS

I broke the teacup.

- (16)    tā      bǎ      biāoyǔ    tiē      zài      qiáng    -      shàng  
           3sg    BA    slogan    paste    at      wall    -      on

S/He posted the slogan on the wall.

- (17)    nǐ      bǎ      kùzi    chuān    —    shang  
          you    BA    pants    wear    —    ascend

Put on your pants!

- (18)    bǎ      diànshì    guān    —    diào  
          BA    TV    close    —    off

Turn off the TV!

- (19)    wǒ      bǎ      jùzi    xiě      de      tài      cháng      le  
          I      BA    sentence    write    CSC    too    long    CRS

I wrote the sentences too long.

- (20)    tā      bǎ      gǔ      dǎ      de      wǒ      shuì      —  
          3sg    BA    drum    hit    CSC    I    sleep    —  
          bu      —      zháo      le  
          can't    —    attain    CRS

S/He played the drums so that I couldn't sleep.

(ii) Unacceptable:

- (21)    \*tā      bǎ      xiǎo      māo      ài  
          3sg    BA    small    cat    love

(S/He loves the kitten.)

- (22)    \*tā      bǎ      nǐ      xiǎng  
          3sg    BA    you    miss

(S/He misses you.)

- (23)    \*wǒ      bǎ      nèi      —      jiàn      shìqing      liǎojiě  
          I      BA    that    —    CL    matter    understand

(I understand that matter.)

- (24) \*tā      bǎ      Zhāngsān   kàn      –      dào      LE  
          3sg      BA      Zhangsan   see      –      arrive   PFV/CRS

(S/He was able to see Zhangsan.)

- (25) \*tā      bǎ      gē      chàng      LE  
          3sg      BA      song      sing      PFV/CRS ✓

(S/He sang the song.)

- (26) \*táo      –      shù      bā      huā      kāi      le  
          peach      –      tree      BA      flower   bloom   CRS

(The peach trees are blooming.)

The question, of course, is: What is wrong with the sentences in (ii)? All of them involve definite *bā* noun phrases, and yet they remain ungrammatical. The essential clue to an explanation of the ungrammaticality of these sentences is provided by the Chinese grammarian Wang Li, who called the *bā* construction the ‘disposal’ form.<sup>2</sup> In his words: ‘The disposal form states how a person is handled, manipulated, or dealt with; how something is disposed of; or how an affair is conducted’ (translation by Li [1974:200–201]). We will follow Wang Li in using the term *disposal* to refer to this set of concepts; roughly, disposal has to do with what *happens to* the direct object. Now, when we apply this characterization of disposal to the analysis of the preceding examples, it becomes obvious that the concept of disposal is exactly what the sentences in (ii) are missing: they do not describe how an entity is handled or dealt with—or, in other words, disposed of. The first three, (21)–(23), contain verbs of emotion, *ài* ‘love’ and *xiǎng* ‘miss’, and a verb of cognition, *liǎojiě* ‘understand’; none of these verbs affect their direct objects in the sense of disposal. Similarly, the verb *kàn-dào* ‘able to see’ in (24) is a simple perception verb, again implying no manipulation of or even attention to the direct object. Finally, the verbs *chàng* ‘sing’ and *kāi* ‘bloom’ in (25) and (26) are verbs whose meanings imply, not dealing with or handling their direct objects, but creating them: it is part of the *definition* of a song that it be sung and of a flower that it blooms, so sentences (25) and (26) do not convey any meaningful information about *what has happened* to the song or the flower.

The idea of disposal can also be inferred or understood in an implicit way. For example, while sentence (21), with *ài* ‘love’ as the verb, is not acceptable because ‘love’ does not carry the sense of disposal, sentence (27), which also uses the verb *ài* ‘love’, is perfectly acceptable:

- (27) tā bā xiǎo māo ài de yào sǐ  
 3sg BA small cat love CSC want die

S/He loves the kitten so much that s/he wants to die.

The difference between (21) and (27) is that an expression has been added in (27). Notice that the verb of (27), *ài* 'love', is identical to the verb of (21). As far as the meaning of the *verb* is concerned, then, (27) has no more or less a sense of disposal than (21) does. The added expression *yào sǐ* 'want to die', however, hyperbolically creates an image that such intense love must have some effect on the 'small cat'. Thus, the disposal idea in (27) is not explicitly stated by the verb. The fact that the 'small cat' is dealt with in some sense is merely implied by the verb together with the added expression. An *implication* of disposal is, therefore, sufficient to warrant the use of the *bā* construction.

Let us consider another example. Recall (22), which is unacceptable because the verb, *xiǎng* 'miss', lacks the sense of disposal. On the other hand, though, (28), employing the same verb, is well formed:

- (28) tā bā nǐ xiǎng de fàn dōu bu  
 3sg BA you miss CSC food even not  
  
 kěn chī  
 willing eat

S/He misses you so much that s/he won't even eat his/her meals.

Again, the difference between (28) and (22) is the presence of an added expression, which greatly exaggerates the degree of his/her missing you. It is as if one cannot help thinking that you are affected in some way when s/he misses you to such an extent that s/he can't even eat.

Sentences (29)–(31) are further examples of implied disposal:

- (29) wǒ bǎ tā hèn – tòu le  
 I BA 3sg hate – through CRS

I hate him/her so!

- (30) tā bā nèi – jiàn shìqìng liǎojiě de  
 3sg BA that – CL matter understand CSC
- hěn tòuchè  
 very thorough

S/He understands that matter very thoroughly.

- (31) tā zhōngyú bā zhèi yī tiān pànwàng  
 3sg finally BA this one day hope
- dào LE  
 – arrive PFV/CRS

Finally this day has arrived through his/her hoping.

In (31), what is implied is that his/her hoping is so intense that it has made this day become real.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the general pattern for *bā* sentences is to put the direct object of the verb (see section 4.3.1.B for a discussion of direct objects) immediately after *bā*. In all of the examples so far, the *bā* noun phrase has been the direct object. There is another pattern, however, which can be schematized like this:

- (32) subject bā object<sub>1</sub> verb object<sub>2</sub>

This pattern schematizes what Lü (1948) called the “retained object” (*bāo-liú bīn-yǔ*) construction. Consider sentence (33):

- (33) wǒ bā tā bǎng – le  
 I BA 3sg tie:up – PFV
- liǎng – zhi jiǎo  
 two – CL foot

I tied up his/her two feet. (Literally: What I did to him/her was to tie up his/her two feet.)

Notice that in (33) the direct object of *bǎng* ‘tie up’ is *liǎng-zhi jiǎo* ‘two feet’. Nevertheless, *tā* ‘s/he’ is the noun that follows *bā*. The property of disposal, however, clearly is still the key to the interpretation of this sentence, as is suggested

by its literal translation: 'What I *did to him/her* was to tie up his/her two feet'. Thus, the referent of the *bā* noun phrase, *tā* 's/he', is the one affected by the action, the one to which something *happens*, although the grammatical direct object of the verb, *bang* 'tie up', in (33) is *liǎng-zhī jiǎo* 'two feet'. Sentences (34)–(39), where the two objects are underlined, provide further illustration of this use of the *bā* construction:

- (34) wǒ      bā      júzi      bō      –      le      pí  
           I      BA      orange      peel      –      PFV      skin

I peeled the orange. (Literally: What I did to the orange was to peel its skin.)

- (35) wǒ      bā      tā      érzi      huàn      –      le      xìngmíng  
           I      BA      3sg      son      change      –      PFV      name

I changed his/her son's name. (Literally: What I did to his/her son was to change his name.)

- (36) tā      bā      táizi      dǎ      –      le      là  
           3sg      BA      table      apply      –      PFV      wax

S/He waxed the table. (Literally: What s/he did to the table was to apply wax to it.)

- (37) wǒ      bā      bìlú      shēng      –      le      huǒ  
           I      BA      fireplace      start      –      PFV      fire

I started a fire in the fireplace. (Literally: What I did to the fireplace was to start a fire.)

- (38) tā      bā      huǒ      jiā      –      le      yì-diǎn      yóu  
           3sg      BA      fire      add:on      –      PFV      a:little      oil

S/He added a little oil to the fire. (Literally: What s/he did to the fire was to add a little oil.)

- (39) wǒ      bā      mén      shàng      –      le      suǒ  
           I      BA      door      ascend      –      PFV      lock

I locked the door. (Literally: What I did to the door was to bolt the lock.)

The more literal translations of sentences (34)–(39) clearly render the sense of disposal of the referent of the *bā* noun phrase. It has been observed that sentences of this type often show a possessive relationship between the *bā* noun phrase and the direct object of the verb, as in sentences (33)–(35). This possessive relationship, however, is not structurally specified, but rather is inferred, and it is not a necessary inference for the construction schematized by (32), as shown in (36)–(39).

Related to the type of *bā* sentences shown immediately above are those in which the *bā* noun phrase has a *part-whole relation* with the direct object of the verb. For example:

- (40) wǒ    bā    píngguǒ    chī    –    le    sān    –    ge  
       ?    I    BA    apple    eat    –    PFV    three    –    CL

I ate three of the apples.

- (41)    tā        bā        nèi    píng    jiǔ        hē        –        le  
           3sg     BA        that    bottle   wine    drink    –        PFV
- yi        –        bàn  
           one        –        half

S/He drank half of that bottle of wine.

- (42) wǒ        bā        bìmi    xièlòu    –        le        bu    shǎo  
       I        BA        secret    leak        –        PFV'    not    little

I leaked quite a bit of the secret.

The *bā* noun phrase in each of these sentences denotes a definite direct object with a fixed quantity, and the direct object of the verb refers to a part of that fixed quantity.

We have seen that the notion of disposal allows us to understand why some *bā* sentences are acceptable and some unacceptable. Let us further examine the nature of the *bā* construction with respect to the disposal notion.

First, we see that it accounts for why we never find *bā* with verbs such as *yǒu* 'exist', *xiàng* 'resemble', *xìng* 'be surnamed': these verbs never involve or imply anything happening to their direct objects.<sup>3</sup>

- (43) \*wǒ        bā        shū        yǒu  
       I        BA        book        exist

(I have the book.)



- (44) \*tā      bā      bàba      xiàng  
       3sg      ba      father      resemble

(S/He resembles his/her father.)

- (45) \*tā      bā      Wáng      xìng  
       3sg      BA      Wang      be surnamed

(S/He is surnamed Wang.)

- (46) \*wǒ      bā      tā      xiàng      lǎohǔ  
       I      BA      3sg      resemble      tiger

(What I did to him/her was to resemble a tiger.)

- (47) \*tā      bā      bàba      xiàng      de      yì      –      mó  
       3sg      BA      father      resemble      CSC      one      –      mold
- yì      –      yàng  
                          –      one      –      manner

(S/He resembles his/her father to the extent they are exactly the same.)

Second, the notion of disposal does not require purpose. In other words, the subject of a *bā* sentence may be an inanimate entity or some unspecified force or situation (see the next section, 15.3, for more discussion), or it may carry out an action accidentally.

- (48) (inanimate subject)

dà      shuǐ      bā      qiáo      chōng      –      zòu      LE  
       big      water      BA      bridge      wash      –      go      PFV/CRS

The flood washed away the bridge.

## (49) (unspecified situation as subject)

hǎoxiàng	yòu	yào	xià	yǔ ,	bā	wǒ
appears	again	will	descend	rain	BA	I
	qì	—	sǐ	LE		
	angry	—	die	PFV/CRS		

It appears that it's going to rain again, and that makes me so angry!

## (50) (accidental mental activity)

tā	cōng-cong-máng-mang-de	bā	pínbāo	wàng	LE
3sg	hurriedly	BA	wallet	forget	PFV/CF

*not disposal*

S/He was in a hurry and forgot his/her wallet.

## (51) (accidental action)

háizi	bu	xiǎoxīn	bā	huā	—	píng
child	not	careful	BA	flower	—	vase
	nòng	—	pò	LE		
	make	—	broken	PFV/CRS		

The child accidentally broke the vase.

The above examples make it clear that disposal does not have to be purposeful; things can happen to entities without there being any willful action on the part of an instigator.

Third, disposal does not necessarily imply that the object is physically affected. This is most easily seen in cases where the *bā* noun phrase refers to something abstract, which cannot have something “happen” to it physically, as in (11) and (30) above. Still, such sentences do convey how that abstract thing has been dealt with. Here are two further instances:

- (52) tā      bǎ      nèi      –      ge      wèntí      xiǎng      –  
 3sg      BA      that      –      CL      problem      think      –
- le      hěn      jiǔ  
 PFV      very      long

S/He thought about that problem for a long time.

- (53) lǚxíng      de      shíhòu ,      tā      yào      bǎ      lù      –  
 travel      NOM      time      3sg      want      BA      road      –
- shàng      –      de      fēngjǐng      huà      –  
 on      –      ASSOC      scenery      draw      –
- xià      –      lái  
 descend      –      come

While s/he traveled, s/he wanted to draw pictures of the scenery along the way.

Sentence (53) is an interesting example: what happens to the scenery is nothing that affects *it* in any way, but rather that it gets translated into two-dimensional form onto the art paper. Sentence (54) displays similar characteristics:

- (54) nǐ      zuì      hǎo      bǎ      nǐ      –      de      yìsi  
 you      most      good      BA      you      –      GEN      meaning
- shuō      –      chū      –      lái  
 say      –      exit      –      come

You'd best say what you have in mind.

A fourth point about disposal is that it accounts for why *bǎ* is commonly used in imperatives: an imperative is a command to a listener to do something, and if a direct object known to the speaker and the hearer is involved, the listener is commanded to do something *to* the entity referred to by that direct object. The





<i>e.</i>	*tā	bǎ	nèi	–	ge	xiāngzi
	3sg	BA	that	–	CL	chest
		xǐ	–	bu	–	gānjing
		wash	–	can't	–	clean

(S/He can't wash that chest clean.)

Sentences *a*, *b*, and *e* appear to be conveying similar messages, and sentences *c* and *d* seem to convey the same message. The unacceptability of *d* and *e* show, however, that *bǎ* is incompatible with the potential form of the resultative verb. Why?

As discussed in section 3.2.3 of chapter 3, sentences with the modal *néng* 'can' and with the potential forms of resultative verbs do not convey the same messages. *Néng* 'can' refers to the overall possibility of an event's taking place with respect to the subject's capabilities, but the potential form of a resultative verb compound refers to the success or failure of an action in achieving the result. Thus, in the case of (59) *a*, s/he may or may not have tried to wash the chest, but it is the speaker's judgment that s/he does not have the know-how to wash it clean. In such a case there is no problem in using *bǎ*, since (59) *a* claims that with respect to disposing of the box by washing it clean, s/he can't do it.

In the case of (59) *b*, on the other hand, the information being conveyed is that s/he cannot clean that box by washing it—in other words, that the action of 'washing' fails to achieve the result, which is 'clean'. Similarly, (59) *c* conveys the message that the action of 'washing' *can* achieve the result 'clean'. Thus, in both *b* and *c*, where the potential form of the resultative compound is used, the focus of the sentence is on the success or failure of *achieving a result* through an action, not on the action itself, which must bear the disposal meaning with respect to its object. This renders the meaning of the potential forms of resultative verbs incompatible with the meaning of the *bǎ* construction, which focuses on the disposal nature of the action verb.

Finally, the notion of disposal explains the fact that the negation of the *bǎ* construction involves placing the negative particle *bu* or *méi(yǒu)* 'not' immediately before *bǎ* rather than immediately before the verb. Structurally, the placement of the negative particle in the *bǎ* construction may be represented by the schema in (60):

(60) subject bu/méi(yǒu) bǎ direct object verb

The question that arises from the position of the negative particle in the *bǎ* construction is: Why isn't the negative particle placed immediately before the

verb—the order is shown in (61)—as it is in the negation of a non-*bǎ* sentence?

(61) \*subject *bǎ* direct object bu/méi(yǒu) verb

Let us answer this question by examining two examples:

(62) *a.* wǒmen méi *bǎ* Zhāngsān qǐng – lái  
 we not BA Zhangsan invite – come  
*succeedi in*  
 We didn't invite Zhangsan over.

*b.* \*wǒmen *bǎ* Zhāngsān méi qǐng – lái  
 we BA Zhangsan not invite – come

In (62) *a*, the negative particle precedes *bǎ*. Thus the entire predicate lies in the scope of negation (see chapter 12 on negation for a discussion of scope). Given the scope of negation in (62) *a*, its meaning is something like this: 'It is not true that we invited Zhangsan over'. Now, let us look at (62) *b*. In (62) *b* the negative particle precedes only the verb; thus, only the verb lies in the scope of the negation. If we can represent the disposal function of the *bǎ* sentence by the paraphrase 'what we did to Zhangsan was . . .', then (62) *b* is trying to convey the message: 'What we did to Zhangsan was to not invite him over'; but such a message is nonsensical.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, the *bǎ* construction signals how the referent of the *bǎ* noun phrase is dealt with as a result of the event named by the verb; on the other hand, the negation immediately preceding the verb signals that the event named by the verb does not occur. Thus, there exists an obvious inconsistency, and it is this inconsistency that renders (62) *b* ungrammatical.

Certain linguists have noted some apparent counterexamples to the principle that the negative particle must be placed before *bǎ* in the *bǎ* construction. Sentences in which a negative particle can follow the *bǎ* noun phrase are just those in which the combination *negative* + *verb* itself signals something happening to the direct object; in such cases, the inconsistency mentioned above in our discussion of (62) *b* disappears. For example:

(63) tā *bǎ* wǒ (yidiǎn dōu) bu fàng  
 3sg BA I a:little even not place  
 zài xīn – shàng  
 at heart – on

S/He didn't have me on his/her mind at all.

In (63), the phrase *bu fàng zài xīn-shang* ‘not place at heart’ has the idiomatic meaning of ‘slighting’. Thus what (63) really means is that ‘what s/he did to me was to slight me’, and the disposal notion of the *bǎ* construction is not contravened by the negation of the verb *fàng* ‘to place’. Few negative-plus-verb expressions can represent some sort of action or happening of the type shown in (63), and most of those that do have idiomatic meanings.

### 15.3 *bǎ* Sentences without a Subject

A *bǎ* sentence may be without a subject when the subject refers to either a noun phrase or a proposition that is understood from the context. If the understood subject refers to a noun phrase, it is simply a case of a zero pronoun (see chapter 24). In this section we will present some examples of *bǎ* sentences whose understood subjects refer to propositions. In (64)–(67) the proposition to which the understood subject of the *bǎ* sentence refers is given:

(64)	wǒ	cóng	mén	–	kǒu	chū	–
	I	from	door	–	mouth	exit	–
	lai ,	<u>bǎ</u>	<u>Wángèr</u>	<u>xià</u>	–	<u>le</u>	
	come	BA	Wanger	frighten	–	PFV	
		<u>yī</u>	–	<u>tiào</u>			
		one	–	jump			

I came through the door, (and that) gave Wanger a scare.

(65)	zuótiān	Lìsì	lái	–	le ,	bǎ
	yesterday	Lisi	come	–	PFV	BA
		<u>Wángèr</u>	<u>gāoxìng</u>	<u>de</u>	<u>shǒu</u>	–
		Wanger	happy	CSC	hand	–
		<u>wǔ</u>	–	<u>zú</u>	–	<u>dǎo</u>
		dance	–	foot	–	jump

Yesterday Lisi came, (and that) made Wanger so happy that he was capering about.



- (66) wǒ zài nàr jiǎng gùshi , bǎ  
 I at there tell story BA
- tā xiào de dùzi dōu  
 3sg laugh CSC belly all
- téng le  
 hurt CRS

I was telling a story there, (and that) made him/her laugh so much that his/her belly hurt.

- (67) zuótiān wǒmen qīng - kè , bǎ  
 yesterday we invite - guest BA
- ?  
tā chī de dùzi dōu  
 3sg eat CSC belly all
- zhàng le  
 bloat CRS

Yesterday we treated (everyone, and that) made him/her eat so much that his/her belly was all bloated.

Sometimes the proposition is understood and need not have been explicitly expressed. For example, if we are discussing the way a friend has treated you, you can simply say:

- (68) bǎ wǒ qì - sǐ LE!  
 BA I angry - die PFV/CRS

It made me so mad!

Similarly, if one has been at a dull meeting until 8:00 P.M., one can exclaim:

- (69) bǎ wǒ è de yào - mìng!  
 BA I hungry CSC want - life

It's made me so hungry I could die!

15.4 *bǎ* . . . *gěi*

A variant form of the *bǎ* construction involves the occurrence of the particle *gěi* immediately before the verb, as shown in (70):

(70) subject    bǎ    direct object    gěi    verb

Sentences (71)–(73) are illustrations:

(71) wǒ    bǎ    tā    –    de    tóu    gěi  
 I    BA    3sg    –    GEN    head    GEI  
  
       niǔ    –    guò    –    lai    LE  
       twist    –    cross    –    come    PFV/CRS

I twisted his/her head around.

(72) tā    bǎ    nèi    –    ge    rén    gěi  
 3sg    BA    that    –    CL    person    GEI  
  
       hài    –    kǔ    LE  
       hurt    –    bitter    PFV/CRS

S/He hurt that person badly.

(73) wǒ    bǎ    dàoyī    gěi    tàng    –    hào    LE  
 I    BA    coat    GEI    iron    –    done    PFV/CRS

I ironed the coat.

The addition of *gěi* before the verb has the effect of strengthening the disposal function of the *bǎ* construction. *Gěi* is not an obligatory element; (71)–(73) would be well-formed sentences without it. This variant form of the *bǎ* construction occurs fairly frequently, however. According to Wang Huan's survey of one short story, one-fifth of the *bǎ* constructions (four out of twenty) involve the use of *gěi*.<sup>5</sup>

15.5 When to Use the *bǎ* Construction

Putting together what we have described so far, we can cite two conditions under which it is appropriate to express a message in the form of a *bǎ* sentence.

(i) The *bǎ* noun phrase is *definite, specific, or generic*. In most cases, the *bǎ* noun phrase is the direct object of the verb; but it may also be a noun phrase directly affected by the disposal event signaled by the verb plus the direct object (e.g., [33]–[39]).

(ii) The message involves *disposal*, something happening to the entity referred to by the *bǎ* noun phrase.

These two conditions still leave a certain amount of flexibility, though; after all, in some instances a message could be expressed either by a *bǎ* sentence or in the non-*bǎ* form, as in (74):

(74) a. wǒ yǐjīng mài — le wǒ  
 I already sell — PFV I  
 — de qìchē  
 — GEN car

I already sold my car.

b. wǒ yǐjīng bǎ wǒ — de  
 I already BA I — de  
 qìchē mài LE  
 car sell PFV/CRS

I already sold my car.

What is the rule of thumb for deciding when to use *bǎ*? The decision is a relative one: the *more* a sentence fulfills conditions (i) and (ii), the *more likely* it is to appear in the form of a *bǎ* construction. Thus, while (74) a could be used simply to report on an event, (74) b would be more likely to be used in a discussion about what has happened to the speaker's car.

Similarly, suppose that you want to ask your friend to chop the onions for a dish you're making. If the onions are in the refrigerator or otherwise can't be seen, you might well use the non-*bǎ* form in your request:

(75) a. qǐng nǐ qiē — qiē cōng  
 please you cut — cut onion  
 葱根些

Please cut up the onions.

If, however, the onions stand out more in the speech context—for instance, if they

are being pointed at or being held in your hand—it is more likely that the *bā* form would be used:

<i>b.</i>	qǐng	nǐ	bā	(zhèi)	–	xiē
	please	you	BA	(this)	–	PL)
		cōng	qiē	–		qiē
		onion	cut	–		cut

Please cut up (these) onions.

To take another example, if someone wants you to open the door, s/he can say either (76) *a* or (76) *b*:

(76) <i>a.</i>	qǐng	nǐ	lā	–	kāi	mén
	please	you	pull	–	open	door

Please open the door.

<i>b.</i>	qǐng	nǐ	bā	mén	lā	–	kāi
	please	you	BA	door	pull	–	open

Please open the door.

The second sentence, with *bā*, implies that the door is more obvious in the speech context and more immediate to our discussion. In other words, the more prominent the referent of the direct object is, the more appropriate it is to use a *bā* noun phrase to refer to it.

The second condition on the use of *bā*, the disposal condition, works in exactly the same way: the more the verb elaborates or specifies how the direct object is being handled or dealt with, the more appropriate it is to use *bā*. Looking once again at the pair (74) *a* and *b*, we see that, although the *bā* noun phrase is definite, the verb, *mài* 'buy', is minimally specified with regard to the disposal of the direct object *mài* LE 'sell PFV/CRS'.

(74) <i>a.</i>	wǒ	yǐjīng	mài	–	le	wǒ
	I	already	sell	–	PFV	I
		–	de			qìchē
		–	GEN			car

I already sold my car.

b. wǒ yǐjīng bǎ wǒ – de  
 I already BA I – GEN  
 qìchē mài LE  
 car sell PFV/CRS

I already sold my car.

If, however, more information about the disposal of the car, such as *-diào* 'off', is added to the verb, the *bǎ* version will be preferred:

(77) a. wǒ yǐjīng bǎ wǒ – de qìchē  
 I already BA I – GEN car  
 mài – diào le  
 sell – off CRS

I already sold off my car.

b. wǒ yǐjīng mài – diào wǒ –  
 I already sell – off I –  
 de qìchē le  
 GEN car CRS

I already sold off my car.

And if we specify the disposal in even more detail, the non-*bǎ* form becomes unnatural, and only the *bǎ* form can be used:

(78) a. wǒ yǐjīng bǎ wǒ – de qìchē  
 I already BA I – GEN car  
 mài gěi wǒ – de biǎogē ✓  
 sell to I – GEN paternal:cousin

I already sold my car to my paternal cousin.

b.	? wō	yǐjīng	mài	wō	—	de	qìchē
	I	already	sell	I	—	GEN	car
		gěi	wǒ	—	de	biāogē	
		to	I	—	GEN	paternal:cousin	

Let's look at another example. If we want to describe someone holding a bag of laundry, either the non-*bā* or the *bā* form can be used, since 'holding' does not strongly indicate disposal:

(79) a.	tā	bào	—	zhe	zāng	yīfu
	3sg	hold	—	DUR	dirty	clothes

S/He was holding dirty laundry.

					ㄊ ㄊ ㄩ ㄩ		
b.	tā	bā	zāng	yīfu	bào	—	zhe
	3sg	BA	dirty	clothes	hold	—	DUR

S/He was holding the dirty laundry.

If, however, we change from 'holding' to 'picking up', using the resultative verb compound *bào-qǐ-lái* 'hold-rise-come', then the *bā* sentence immediately becomes the preferred form, since the message now conveys a much stronger sense of disposal of the laundry:

(80) a.	tā	bā	zāng	yīfu	bào	—
	3sg	BA	dirty	clothes	hold	—
		qǐ	—	lái	le	
		rise	—	come	CRS	

He picked up the dirty laundry.

b.	?tā	bào	—	qǐ	—	lái
	3sg	hold	—	rise	—	come
		zāng	yīfu	le		
		dirty	clothes	CRS		

What we see, then, is that the less the message involves the prominence or the disposal of the object, the more likely the sentence is to be expressed in the non-*bǎ* form. We can express this generalization by means of a continuum:

<i>bǎ</i> impossible	<i>bǎ</i> unlikely	<i>bǎ</i> likely	<i>bǎ</i> obligatory
indefinite or nonreferential object no disposal		definite and highly prominent object strong disposal	

We've seen examples of each point on this continuum. Starting at the left, we have examples such as (43) and (45), where the object is neither referential nor disposed of:

(43) \*wǒ     bǎ     shū     yǒu  
      I     BA     book     have

(I have books.)

(45) \*wǒ     bǎ     Wáng     xìng  
      I     BA     Wang     be:surnamed

(I am surnamed Wang.)

A little farther to the right along the continuum, we could place such examples as (81)–(83), which involve weak disposal and definite direct objects that are not highly prominent:

(81) tā     bǎ     shǒubiǎo     kàn     –     yī     –     kàn  
      3sg     BA     watch     see     –     one     –     see

S/He took a look at the watch.

(82) tā     bǎ     wǒ     lā     –     zhe  
      3sg     BA     I     pull     –     DUR

S/He was pulling at me.

(83)	wǒ	bǎ	qián	gěi	tā	le
	I	BA	money	<u>give</u>	<u>3sg</u>	CRS

I gave him/her the money.

Farther to the right along the continuum, where *bǎ* becomes more likely, are sentences with a *bǎ* noun marked by a demonstrative, which indicates that the *bǎ* noun is definite and highly prominent, or with resultative verb compounds (see section 3.2.3 of chapter 3), which elaborate the nature of the disposal of the *bǎ* noun:

(84)	kuài	yídiǎn	bǎ	zhèi	—	ge
	fast	a:little	BA	this	—	CL
		ròu	<u>ná</u>	—	<u>zōu</u>	
		meat	take	—	away	

Quickly take this meat away!

(85)	wǒmen	bǎ	nèi	liǎng	—	ge
	we	BA	that	two	—	CL
		yǐzi	<u>bān</u>	—	<u>jìn</u>	—
		chair	move	—	enter	—
		<u>lái</u>	LE			
		come	PFV/CRS			

We moved those two chairs in.

Finally, at the extreme right of the continuum are sentences with highly prominent objects and a strong sense of disposal:



- (86) bié      bā      nǐ      –      de      péngyǒu  
 don't    BA      you      –      GEN    friend
- dài      dào      lóushàng      qù  
                  take    to      upstairs    go

Don't take your friend upstairs.

- (87) wǒ      bā      dùzi      suō      –      le      liǎng      cùn  
       I      BA    stomach    contract    –      PFV    two      inch

I contracted (my) stomach two inches.

- (88) tā      bā      zhǐ      –      mén      tī      –  
       3sg    BA    paper    –      door    kick    –
- le      yī      –      ge      dòng  
                  PFV    one    –      CL    hole

S/He kicked a hole in the paper door.

Looking at *bā* sentences in this way, as resulting from the interaction of the prominence of the *bā* noun and the degree of disposal in the message, we can see a number of facts about the distribution of *bā* sentences in actual use become clear.

First, it is understandable why some grammarians and textbook writers have thought that the verb in a *bā* sentence cannot stand alone, but must be either preceded by some adverb or followed by some element, such as a perfective, directional, or resultative verb suffix or a complex stative clause. The reason that *bā* sentences always have verbs with those elements preceding or following them is that such elements serve to elaborate the nature of disposal.

Even more interesting is the question of what it is that can precede or follow the verb in a *bā* sentence. For example, we have seen that both the durative *-zhe* (see section 6.2 of chapter 6) and reduplicated verb morphemes signaling the delimitative aspect (see section 6.4 of chapter 6) can follow the verb in a *bā* construction, as in sentences (75) *b* and (79) *b* above. Neither the reduplication nor the durative suffix, however, enhances the disposal nature of the verb very much. This implies



**Notes**

1. For this chapter we have incorporated ideas from Wang (1947), Lü (1948), Wang (1957), Hashimoto (1971*a*), Li (1971, 1977), Cheung (1973), Huang (1974*b*), Li (1974), and Teng (1975*a*), as well as from unpublished work by Lin Shuang-fu and Mei Kuang.
2. In Mandarin, 'disposal form' is *chūzhi shì* (see Wang [1947:160 ff.]). See also chapter 16 on the passive for more discussion of disposal.
3. In fact, strictly speaking, *shū* 'book' in sentence (43) is not a direct object at all (see chapter 7 on existential verbs).
4. Although the English sentence 'What we did to Zhangsan was to not invite him over' can convey a meaningful message when 'not invite him over' is inferred as a punishment, the disposal sense of the Mandarin *bǎ* sentence does not allow such an inference.
5. See Wang (1957:39).
6. This unpublished study was carried out by Grant Goodall.

## CHAPTER 16

# *The bèi Construction*

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The term *passive* in Mandarin is generally applied to sentences containing the coverb *bèi* with the following linear arrangement (where NP = noun phrase):<sup>1</sup>

(1) NP<sub>1</sub>    bèi    NP<sub>2</sub>    verb

For example:

(2)    tā        bèi        jiějie    mà        LE  
      3sg        BEI    elder:sister    scold    PFV/CRS

S/He was scolded by (his/her) older sister.

This type of construction has the direct object noun phrase, that is, the thing or person affected by the action of the verb, in sentence-initial position. This direct object noun phrase is followed by the passive coverb *bèi*, which introduces the agent of the action. We will call this the *bèi noun phrase*. The verb occurs in sentence-final position, as it does in the *bā* construction. Thus, in sentence (2), the first noun phrase, *tā* 's/he', is the direct object of the verb *mà* 'scold'; the *bèi* noun, *jiějie* 'older sister', is the agent, the one who did the scolding.

Schema (1), however, is not the only form in which the passive construction can occur. There are a number of variations. One important variation of (1) occurs when the agent, NP<sub>2</sub>, is not present:

(3) NP<sub>1</sub>    bèi    verb

## THE *bèi* CONSTRUCTION

For example:

- (4) tā      bèi      mà      LE  
      3sg     BEI     scold   PFV/CRS

S/He was scolded.

- (5) wǒ      bèi      qiǎng      LE  
      I        BEI      rob        PFV/CRS

I was robbed.

We will present other variations of (1) later in this chapter. At this point, the two forms of the *bèi* passive construction represented by (1) and (3) will be the focus of our discussion. First we will talk about their use and function in Mandarin, and then we will discuss their grammatical characteristics.

### 16.1 Use and Function

#### 16.1.1 Adversity

The *bèi* passive in Mandarin, like those of Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai, and other Asian languages, is used essentially to express an *adverse* situation, one in which something unfortunate has happened. For instance:

- (6) jiǎozi      bèi      (gǒu)      chī      ~      diào      LE  
      dumplings BEI     (dog)     eat        -      down    PFV/CRS

The dumplings got eaten up (by the dog).

- (7) qiáo      bèi      (dà      -      shuǐ)      chōng      -  
      bridge BEI     (big     -      water)    wash      -  
  
      zǒu      LE  
      away    PFV/CRS

The bridge got washed away (by the flood).

- (8) tā bèi (gōngsì) chēzhí LE  
3sg BEI (company) fire PFV/CRS

S/He was fired (by his/her company).

- (9) nèi - zhi niǎo bèi wō - de  
that - CL bird BEI I - GEN  
érzi fàng - zǒu LE  
son release - away PFV/CRS

That bird was let go by my son.

- (10) wǒ - de biǎo bèi tōu - diao le  
I - GEN watch BEI steal - away CRS

My watch has been stolen.

- (11) nǐ wèishenme bèi pǔ le  
you why BEI arrest CRS

Why have you been arrested?

- (12) língzi bèi tā sī - pò LE  
collar BEI 3sg tear - broken PFV/CRS

The collar was torn by him/her.

- (13) qióng rén cháng bèi dìzhū yā - pò  
poor person often BEI landlord oppress

The poor are often oppressed by the landlords.

- (14) hái zi bèi fùqin mà de bu zhīdào zěnmē  
child BEI father scold CSC not know how  
bàn LE  
do PFV/CRS

The child was scolded by the father to such an extent that s/he didn't know what to do.

- (15) tā chángchang bèi tā tàitai dǎ  
3sg often BEI 3sg wife beat

He is often beaten by his wife.

- (16) tā yuànyì bèi rén xiào  
3sg willing BEI person laugh

S/He is willing to be laughed at by people.

Once it is recognized that the major use of the *bèi* construction is to signal adversity, a number of interesting facts can be explained.

First of all, it has often been noted that the message carried by passive sentences with verbs of perception or cognition is unfortunate or pejorative, whereas the meanings of their verbs are neutral. Consider such verbs of perception or cognition as *kànjian* 'see', *fāxiàn* 'discover', and *tīng-dào* 'hear-arrive = able to hear'. They do not convey pejorative meaning by themselves or in nonpassive sentences, such as these:

- (17) wǒ kànjian nǐ le  
I see you CRS

I saw you.

- (18) Dǎ-ěr-wén fāxiàn - le jìnhuà - lùn  
Darwin discover - PFV evolution - theory

Darwin developed the theory of evolution.

- (19) wǒ tīng - dào - le yǔzhòu de wéiyǔ  
I hear - arrive - PFV universe GEN murmur

I heard the murmur of the universe.

The *bèi* constructions containing such verbs, however, have implications of adversity. Thus, (20) implies that Zhangsan shouldn't have been seen or didn't want to be seen, (21) implies that 'that matter' has a pejorative aspect to it, or

should not have been found out, and (22) suggests that 'our conversation' should not have been heard:

- (20) Zhāngsān    bèi    rén    kànjian    le  
 Zhangsan    BEI    person    see    CRS

Zhangsan was seen by people.

- (21) nèi    -    jian    shì    bèi    tā    fāxiàn    le  
 that    -    CL    matter    BEI    3sg    discover    CRS

That matter was discovered by him/her.

- (22) wǒmen    -    de    huà    bèi    tīng    -    dào    le  
 we    -    GEN    speech    BEI    hear    -    arrive    CRS

Our conversation was overheard.

Second, it has been observed by practically all Chinese grammarians that the number of *bèi* constructions that do not express adversity is increasing, particularly in the written language of modern China. This increase in the nonadversity usage of the *bèi* constructions in modern Chinese is clearly due to the influence of the Indo-European languages, especially English. In fact, Chao calls such nonadversity *bèi* sentences "translatese." He states that "recently, from translating foreign passive verbs, 'by', or some equivalent in the Western language, is mechanically equated to *bèi* and applied to verbs of favorable meanings" (Chao [1968:703]). Elsewhere he explains that

a Chinese translator . . . uses a preposition *bèi* 'by' whenever he sees a passive voice in the original verb, forgetting that Chinese verbs have no voice. . . . Once this sort of thing is done often enough, it gets to be written in originals, even where no translation is involved. . . . Such "translatese" is still unpalatable to most people and no one talks in that way yet, but it is already common in scientific writing, in newspapers, and in schools. [Chao (1970:155)]

According to another observer (Kierman [1969:74–75]),<sup>2</sup>

a markedly increased use of the passive has perhaps been one of the striking syntactic trends in the development of Modern Chinese. . . . There has been a great deal of translation from foreign languages into Chinese during the past half century, including a perfect flood of Marxist material, which the Soviets translated and sold far below cost and which had a profound and continuing impact upon Chinese intelligentsia. The great majority of the translators were hacks, equipped with neither any real linguistic







<i>b.</i>	*tā	shuō	de	huà	bèi	rén	–	ren
	3sg	say	NOM	speech	BEI	person	–	person
		dōu	dǒng					
		all	understand					

As shown by the above examples, the *b* sentences in (26)–(29), which are the *bèi* sentences, are unacceptable because they do not convey a message of adversity. The *a* sentences in (26)–(29), which are normally considered the equivalents of the English passive sentence in translation either from English to Mandarin or vice versa, are topic-comment constructions in which the direct object of the verb is serving as the topic. In other words, when one wishes to say something about the direct object of the verb in Mandarin, one simply makes the direct object into a topic. Thus, the topic prominence of Mandarin together with the restriction of the *bèi* construction to adverse messages combine to reduce the usage of the passive in the language. Any student of Chinese who is also familiar with an Indo-European language will notice that the passive construction is much more rare in Mandarin speech and writing than in the speech and writing of the Indo-European languages.

Another situation in which English uses a passive and Mandarin does not is when the focus is on the agent of the transitive action verb. For example, if one is discussing a novel and wishes to make it clear that his/her mother is the author, one may choose a passive construction in English to convey the message, as in (30):

(30) This novel was written by my mother.

The Mandarin counterpart of (30) will be (31) *a*, a *shì* . . . *de* construction (see section 20.3 of chapter 20 on the *shì* . . . *de* construction), but not (31) *b*, a *bèi* passive construction. Sentence (31) *b* is unacceptable because ‘writing a novel’, in general, does not have any pejorative implication, though, as was pointed out above, such sentences as (25) can be found in ‘translatese’:

(31) <i>a.</i>	zhèi	–	běn	xiǎoshuō	shì	wǒ	mǔqīn
	this	–	CL	novel	be	I	mother
			xiě	de			
			write	NOM			

This novel was written by my mother.

- b. \*zhèi — běn xiǎoshuō bèi wǒ mǔqīn  
 this — CL novel BEI I mother  
 xiě LE  
 write PFV/CRS

Sentences (32)–(34) provide some more examples, similar to (31), in which the Mandarin equivalent of an English passive is a *shì* . . . *de* construction:

- (32) a. zhèi — ge fángzi shì Zhāngsān shèjì de  
 this — CL house be Zhangsan design NOM

This house was designed by Zhangsan.

- b. \*zhèi — ge fángzi bèi Zhāngsān shèjì LE  
 this — CL house BEI Zhangsan design PFV/CRS

- (33) a. zhèi — ge zhèngcè shì tā tuījiàn de  
 this — CL policy be 3sg recommend NOM

This policy was recommended by him/her.

- b. \*zhèi — ge zhèngcè bèi tā tuījiàn LE  
 this — CL policy BEI 3sg recommend PFV/CRS

- (34) a. nèi — fu huà shì tā huà de  
 that — CL painting be 3sg paint NOM

That painting was painted by him.

- b. \*nèi — fu huà bèi tā huà LE  
 that — CL painting BEI 3sg paint PFV/CRS

The above examples illustrate that in Mandarin, it is the *shì* . . . *de* construction, not the *bèi* construction, which serves the function of placing the agent noun phrase in focus when the topic of the sentence is the direct object.

## 16.1.2 Disposal

In addition to adversity, the *bèi* construction also expresses disposal in the same manner as the *bǎ* construction does (see chapter 15 on the *bǎ* construction). That is, the *bèi* sentence describes an event in which an entity or person is dealt with, handled, or manipulated in some way. This is why, just as with the *bǎ* construction, *bèi* is not found with verbs that do not signal disposal, even if they have adverse meaning. The following sentences are, thus, unacceptable:

- (35) \*Lǐsì    bèi    tā    hèn    –    le  
           Lisi    BEI    3sg    hate    –    PFV

(Lisi was hated by him/her.)

- (36) \*tā        bèi        qì        –        le  
           3sg        BEI        anger        –        PFV

(S/He was angered.)

- (37) \*wǒ        bèi        tā        tǎoyàn    –        le  
           I        BEI        3sg    be:sick:of    –        PFV

(S/He was sick of me.)

Since the *bèi* passive conveys the notion of disposal precisely as the *bǎ* construction does, our description of the disposal function of the *bǎ* constructions is applicable as well to the *bèi* passive, which, of course, has the added function of signaling adversity. We will therefore not repeat that description here. Instead, we will provide a brief summary and examples of the main points concerning the notion of disposal as they apply to the *bèi* construction. For the details, the reader is referred to chapter 15 on the *bǎ* construction.

(i) Just as with *bǎ*, the *bèi* construction allows the affected entity to be a noun phrase other than the direct object:

- (38) wǒ        bèi        tā        bāng    –        le    yī    –    zhī    tú  
           I        BEI        3sg    tie        –        PFV    one    –    CL    leg

I had one leg tied up by him/her.

(ii) The *bèi* construction, like the *bū* construction, allows implied disposal, as in (39) which contains a complex stative construction clause (see chapter 22):

(39) wǒ   bèi   tā   qì   de   tóu   dōu   hūn   le  
       I   BEI   3sg   anger   CSC   head   all   dizzy   CRS

I was angered by him/her to such an extent that my head got dizzy.

(iii) The disposal nature of the *bèi* construction, as with *bū*, is incompatible with the potential infixes, whether positive or negative, of resultative verb compounds (see section 3.2.3 of chapter 3 on resultative verb compounds). For example:

(40) \*wǒ   bèi   tā   dǎ   –   de   –   sǐ  
       I   BEI   3sg   beat   –   can   –   die

(I can be beaten to death by him/her.)

(41) \*nèi   –   ge   yǐzi   bèi   tā   nòng   –  
       that   –   CL   chair   BEI   3sg   make   –  
       bu   –   pò  
       can't   –   broken

(That chair can't be broken by him/her.)

(iv) The disposal nature of the *bèi* sentence is incompatible with the negation of the verb only—that is, placing the negative particle, *bu/méi(yǒu)*, immediately in front of the verb so that only the verb lies in the scope of the negation (see chapter 12 on the scope of negation). The negative of a *bèi* sentence is formed by the placement of the negative particle in front of *bèi*, just as the negative particle is placed before *bū* in a *bū* sentence:

(42) a. \*wǒ   bèi   tā   méi   pīpíng  
       I   BEI   3sg   not   criticize  
       b. wǒ   méi   bèi   tā   pīpíng  
       I   not   BEI   3sg   criticize

I wasn't criticized by him/her.

There is one notable difference between the *bū* construction and the *bèi* construction with regard to their shared disposal meaning: while the *bū* construction occurs freely as a command, the *bèi* construction cannot serve as a command except when it is negated with the negative imperative particle, *bié*. The reason is one of semantic incompatibility, in spite of the fact that the disposal meaning is generally conducive to the expression of commands. Recall that the first noun phrase of the passive construction is the direct object, not the agent, of the verb signaling disposal, whereas the first noun phrase of the *bū* construction is the agent of the verb signaling disposal. It makes sense to command the agent to carry out an action with a disposal meaning; but it is senseless to command the direct object with respect to the disposal action, because s/he or it has no control over the action. On the other hand, a command can be formed from a *bèi* sentence by the addition of the negative imperative particle, because commanding someone not to be the receiver of an action is tantamount to commanding him/her to do something to avoid an adverse experience. The following sentences are illustrations of this principle:

- (43) a. \*(nǐ)      bèi      māo      zhuā      –      le  
           (you)      BEI      cat      scratch      –      PFV

(be scratched by the cat)

- b. (nǐ)      bié      bèi      māo      zhuā      –      le  
       you      don't      BEI      cat      scratch      –      PFV

Don't get scratched by the cat.

So far we have shown that the passive construction with the particle *bèi* can best be understood in terms of its function of signaling adversity and disposal. We will next examine the structural properties of this construction.

## 16.2 Structural Properties

Several of the structural properties of the *bèi* construction have already been discussed in the preceding section, where its disposal meaning was presented. One of these structural properties concerns negation; another deals with the use of passive as a command. In chapter 8 on adverbs, the interaction between manner adverbs and the passive construction is described. The following structural properties of the *bèi* passive have not yet been mentioned, however.

### 16.2.1 Indirect Object Adversely Affected

The indirect object (see chapter 10) can represent the one adversely affected in a *bèi* sentence. Example (44) is a nonpassive sentence in which *wǒ* 'I' is the indirect object:

- (44) tāmen wèn – le wǒ xǔduō wèntí  
 they ask – PFV I many questions

They asked me many questions.

The passive counterpart of (44) is (45), in which *wǒ* 'I' is adversely affected:

- (45) wǒ bèi tāmen wèn – le xǔduō wèntí  
 I BEI they ask – PFV many question

I was asked many questions by them (as a harassment).

Very few verbs that take both an indirect object and a direct object can occur in the *bèi* construction with the indirect object being adversely affected, however. The reason is that most of the verbs taking a direct and an indirect object cannot have an adverse meaning either explicitly or implicitly. A few other verbs that do occur in passive sentences with the adversely affected indirect object include *tōu* 'steal', *qiǎng* 'rob', *duó* 'snatch', *yíng* 'win'. Here is an example with *tōu* 'steal':

- (46) tā bèi péngyǒu tōu – le qián  
 3sg BEI friend steal – PFV money

S/He was robbed of (his/her) money by a friend.

### 16.2.2 The *bèi* Noun Phrase Can Be Inanimate

The noun phrase immediately following *bèi* cannot refer to something that is being used by a person or an animate being to carry out an action; in other words, the *bèi* noun phrase cannot be an instrument noun phrase:<sup>3</sup>

- (47) \*mén bèi yàoshi dǎ – kāi LE  
 door BEI key make – open PFV/CRS

Inanimate noun phrases that can effect action on their own can occur as *bèi* noun phrases in the passive construction, however, as long as an adverse situation can be



inferred. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon:

- (48) qìqiú      bèi      fēng      chuī      –      zòu      LE  
 balloon      BEI      wind      blow      –      away      PFV/CRS

The balloon was blown away by the wind.

- (49) bōli      bèi      huò      shāo      –      huà      LE  
 glass      BEI      fire      burn      –      melted      PFV/CRS

The glass was melted by the fire.

- (50) nài      –      jian      yīfu      bèi      shuǐ  
 that      –      CL      clothing      BEI      water  
  
 chōng      –      zōu      LE  
 wash      –      away      PFV/CRS

That dress was washed away by the water.

- (51) wūdǐng      bèi      xuě      gài      –      zhu      LE  
 roof      BEI      snow      cover      –      firm      PFV/CRS

The roof was covered by snow.

### 16.3 *bǎ* and *bèi*

*Bǎ* and *bèi* can occur in the same sentence (see chapter 15 for a discussion of *bǎ*):

- (52) wǒ      bèi      tā      bǎ      wǒ      –      de  
 I      BEI      3sg      BA      I      –      GEN  
  
 dáziǐ      dá      –      pò      LE  
 typewriter      hit      –      broken      PFV/CRS

What happened to me was that my typewriter was broken by him/her.

As this example illustrates, the *bǎ* noun phrase must occur after the *bèi* noun phrase, and this is for a logical reason: the one who disposes of the typewriter is the

agent (*tā* 's/he' in [52]), not the one affected (*wǒ* 'I' in [52]). Therefore, the agent, which is the *bèi* noun phrase, not the one affected, is the one that immediately precedes the *bā* noun phrase.

#### 16.4 Variant Forms

At the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned the existence of variant forms of (1):

- (1)      NP<sub>1</sub>              bèi      NP<sub>2</sub>      verb  
            direct object                      agent

One important variant form was already pointed out in (3), where the agent noun phrase is absent:

- (3)      NP<sub>1</sub>              bèi      verb  
            direct object

The most common variant forms involve substituting *bèi* with *gěi*, *jiào*, *ràng*. Thus (53) is well formed with any of the four passive markers:

- (53) wǒ       $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{bèi} \\ \text{gěi} \\ \text{jiào} \\ \text{ràng} \end{array} \right\}$       tā      tōu      -      le      liǎng      kuài      qián  
            I                                      3sg      steal      -      PFV      two      dollar      money

I had two dollars stolen by him/her.

Which of the four passive markers is preferred seems to depend on what dialect of Mandarin is being spoken. A distinction can be made, however, between *bèi* on the one hand and the last three markers in (53) on the other. *Bèi* has no meaning of its own. In other words, it is a function word, or a grammatical word. It has no meaning other than the function of occurring in the passive construction. The other three words, *gěi*, *jiào*, and *ràng*, besides being able to serve in the passive construction, are content words with independent meanings. *Gěi* is a verb meaning 'give', and it can also serve as the benefactive marker by immediately preceding the indirect object; *jiào* is a verb meaning 'call, be named, order'; and *ràng* is a verb

meaning 'let, allow'. Hence, when *bèi* is used in a sequence such as

(54) NP bèi (NP) verb

the sentence unambiguously signals a passive construction. If, however, *gěi*, *jiào*, or *ràng* is used in place of *bèi* in (54), the sentence represented by the pattern given in (54) may be ambiguous. For example, (53) with *jiào* could mean, 'I told him/her to steal two dollars'; with *gěi*, it could mean, 'I stole two dollars for him/her'; with *ràng*, it could mean, 'I allowed him/her to steal two dollars'.

*jiào* and *ràng* also differ from *bèi* in that the former two cannot occur as a replacement for *bèi* in (3), where the agent noun phrase is absent. Thus, (55) is unacceptable:

(55) \*wǒ { jiào } tōu - le liǎng kuài qián  
           I { ràng } steal - PFV two dollar money

(I was stolen two dollars.)

Speakers differ as to whether *gěi* may serve as a variant of *bèi* in pattern (3), where the agent is absent:

(56) ??wǒ gěi tōu - le liǎng kuài qián  
           I steal - PFV two dollar money

I was stolen two dollars.

Two other variants of (1) involve the use of *jiào* . . . *gěi* and *ràng* . . . *gěi* in the following form:

(57) NP<sub>1</sub> { jiào } NP<sub>2</sub> gěi verb  
           { ràng }

The following examples illustrate (57):

(58) Qín cháo { jiào } Hàn cháo gěi miè LE<sub>1</sub>  
           Qin dynasty { ràng } Han dynasty overthrow PFV/CRS

The Qin dynasty was overthrown by the Han dynasty.

- (59) tā { jiào } dí - bīng gěi shā LE  
           { ràng }  
       3sg enemy - soldier kill PFV/CRS

S/He was killed by the enemy soldier.

- (60) fángzi { ràng } tā gěi shāo LE  
           { jiào }  
       house 3sg burn PFV/CRS

The house was burned by him/her.

The occurrence of *gěi* in addition to *jiào/ràng* in a sentence having the form of (57) seems to strengthen the disposal function of the construction. It is, therefore, not surprising that this *gěi* may also occur in the *bǎ* construction for the same function (see chapter 15 on the *bǎ* construction):

- (61) tā bǎ nǐmen - de qiánchéng  
       3sg BA you:PL - GEN future  
  
       gěi dānwù LE  
           ruin PFV/CRS

S/He ruined your future.

### Notes

1. This chapter has benefited greatly from ideas found in Wang (1957), Chu (1973), and in (unpublished) lectures given by Stephen Wallace ("Adversative Passives") and Timothy Light ("Actively Passive").
2. Kierman in turn credits these ideas to Paul Kratochvil. The comments in brackets have been added by us.
3. There isn't a grammatical category of instrument noun phrase in Mandarin. If a noun phrase is to denote an instrument, it is expressed grammatically as the direct object of the verb, *yòng* 'use', as in:

- (i) tā yòng yàoshi kāi mén  
       3sg use key open door

{ S/He opens doors with keys. }  
 { S/He uses keys to open doors. }

## CHAPTER 17

# *Presentative Sentences*

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A *presentative sentence* performs the function of introducing into a discourse a noun phrase naming an entity. There are two ways in which this can happen: either the entity being introduced by this noun phrase can be claimed to exist or be located somewhere, as in (1), or it can be introduced by a verb of motion, as in (2):

- (1) chéng    -    li    yǒu    gōngyuán  
city    --    in    exist    park

There are parks in the city.

- (2) lái    -    le    yī    -    ge    kèrén  
come    -    PFV    one    -    CL    guest

Here comes a guest.

In most languages of the world, the noun phrase naming the entity being presented in a presentative sentence is indefinite. It represents new information, information that the speaker assumes the hearer does not have at the time, and it typically occurs after the main verb of the presentative sentence. These two properties are true of the noun phrase being presented by the Mandarin presentative sentence as well: in fact, since sentence-initial position is the position for topics in Mandarin, and since noun phrases introduced for the first time into discourse cannot be topics (see chapter 4, section 4.1.1), it is clear why a presented noun phrase must follow the main verb of the presentative sentence. Let's consider in greater detail the two ways in which a noun phrase can be presented.

## 17.1 Existential and Positional Verbs

An *existential sentence* is one that contains the existential verb *yǒu* or a verb of posture (see chapter 11, section 11.1.2.B), such as *zuò* 'sit', *tāng* 'lie', or *piāo* 'float', describing where something has been put or placed, as its main verb.<sup>1</sup> Existential sentences always signal the existence of the referent of a noun phrase, usually at some place, which we can call the *locus*. As with all presentative sentences, the noun phrase naming what exists comes immediately after the existential verb. The following are existential sentences with the verb *yǒu*; the locus is underlined twice, and the presented noun phrase is underlined once:

- (3) (zài) yuànzi - li yǒu yi  
 at yard - in exist one
- zhī gǒu  
 — CL dog

There's a dog in the yard.

- (4) (zài) chōuti - lǐ yǒu hěn duō yóupiào  
 at drawer - in exist very many stamps

There are lots of stamps in the drawer.

- (5) yǒu yi - ge rén zài  
 exist one - CL person at
- wàimian jiào - mén  
 outside call - door

There's someone outside knocking at the door.

The above examples show that a presentative sentence with an existential verb may have either one of the two following forms:

- (6) a. existential verb + presented noun phrase + zài 'at'  
 + locus (verb phrase)
- b. (zài 'at') + locus + existential verb + presented noun phrase  
 + (verb phrase)

In both patterns, the presented noun phrase directly follows the existential verb, but in (6) *a* the locus follows the presented noun phrase and is introduced by the locative particle, *zài*, while in (6) *b*, the locus is in sentence-initial position. Sentences (3) and (4) are in the *b* form, and sentence (5) is in the *a* form. We may change the structure of (3) and (4) to *a* and the structure of (5) to *b*, as in the following:

- (7) 

<u>yǒu</u>	<u>yī</u>	—	<u>zhī</u>	<u>gǒu</u>	<u>zài</u>
exist	one	—	CL	dog	at

<u>yuànzi</u>	—	<u>lǐ</u>
yard	—	in

There is a dog in the yard.

- (8) 

<u>yǒu</u>	<u>hěn</u>	<u>duō</u>	<u>yóupiào</u>	<u>zài</u>
exist	very	many	stamp	at

<u>chōuti</u>	—	<u>lǐ</u>
drawer	—	in

There are lots of stamps in the drawer.

- (9) 

<u>(zài)</u>	<u>wàimian</u>	<u>yǒu</u>	<u>yī</u>	—	<u>ge</u>
at	outside	exist	one	—	CL

<u>rén</u>	<u>jiào</u>	—	<u>mén</u>
person	call	—	door

There's someone outside knocking at the door.

There is a pragmatic difference between the pattern illustrated in (6) *a* and that represented in (6) *b*. In (6) *b*, the locus, occurring in sentence-initial position, must be definite in the sense that its existence must have already been established in the discourse context either linguistically or extralinguistically. It is in (6) *b*, but not in (6) *a*, that the locus takes on the function of a topic. For example, as an answer to question (10), (3), but not (7), is appropriate.

- (10) 

<u>yuànzi</u>	—	<u>lǐ</u>	<u>zènme</u>	<u>zhème</u>	<u>chǎo ?</u>
yard	—	in	how	so	noisy

How come it is so noisy in the yard?

The reason that (3) but not (7) is an appropriate answer to (10) is that question (10) has already established the noun *yuànzi-li* 'in the yard' as the topic and (3), but not (7), uses the same noun phrase as the topic. (See section 4.1.6 of chapter 4 for a discussion of locative phrases as topics.)

Sentences such as (5) and (9) constitute a special subtype of existential presentative sentences because they contain two verbs (here, *yǒu* 'exist' and *jiào-mén* 'knock at the door'). These sentences are termed *realis descriptive clause sentences* and, because they contain two verbs, are discussed in section 21.4.1 of chapter 21 on serial verb constructions.

Sentences (3)–(5) and (7)–(9) exemplified the use of the existential verb *yǒu* in existential presentative sentences. The following sentences illustrate the use of positional verbs in existential presentative sentences. Notice that these positional verbs can be followed by an aspect marker (see chapter 6) and that the locus always precedes the verb of posture in sentence-initial position. Again, the locus is underlined twice and that which exists is underlined once in the following examples:

- (11) bōli – shang xiě – zhe  
 glass – on write – DUR
- sì – ge zì  
 four – CL character

On the glass are written four characters.

- (12) zhuōzi – shang fàng – le  
 table – on put – PFV
- hěn duō qiānbǐ  
 very many pencil

There are a lot of pencils on the table.

- (13) shuǐ – lǐ piāo – zhe  
 water – in float – DUR
- yī kuài mùtóu  
 one piece wood

A piece of wood is floating in the water.





In most languages of the world, the same verb expresses both possession and existence, just as in Mandarin. We will refer to all these *yǒu* sentences as *existential* and will continue to gloss the verb *yǒu* as 'exist', even when it would translate into English as 'have'.

We have said that the existential verb in Mandarin is *yǒu*. It is also possible, however, to express existence with the copula verb *shì*.<sup>2</sup> Observe the following contrasting pairs:

- (17) a. wàimian yǒu yī — zhī gǒu  
outside exist one — CL dog

There's a dog outside.

- b. wàimian shì yī — zhī gǒu  
outside be one — CL dog

What's outside is a dog.

- (18) a. chōuti — li yǒu nǐ — de yàoshi  
drawer — in exist you — GEN key

Your keys are in the drawer.

- b. chōuti — li shì nǐ — de yàoshi  
drawer — in be you — GEN key

What's in the drawer are your keys.

- (19) a. qiánmian yǒu yī — ge huāyuán  
in:front exist one — CL garden

In front there's a garden.

- b. qiánmian shì yī — ge huāyuán  
in:front be one — CL garden

What's in front is a garden.

What determines the choice of *yǒu* 'exist' or *shì* 'be' in these existential sentences? As the translations suggest, there is a difference in their meanings. In

the discussion of copula sentences (see A.2 in section 4.3.1 of chapter 4), it was pointed out that copula sentences serve to identify or characterize the referent of the subject noun phrase. In the *b* sentences in examples (17)–(19) above, then, the presented noun phrase is identifying or characterizing the locus; in order for this to happen, the speaker must believe not only that the listener already knows about the locus but that s/he has some reason to be interested in it and in what it is or what it has or what it looks like. The *a* sentences, on the other hand, are simply predicating the existence of the presented noun phrase at some locus in which the listener need not have had any interest.

This means, of course, that the two sentence types should be found in different kinds of speech contexts. For example, one would use (19) *b* to characterize or identify 'in front' with 'garden'. This could be either because all there is in front is a garden (*characterizing*), or because the speaker is aware the hearer knows that something is in front and wishes to tell the hearer what it is (*identifying*). Sentence (19) *a*, on the other hand, would not be appropriate under either of these circumstances, but could be used, for instance, as part of a description of a new house.

One way to understand the difference between the two sentence types is to consider their respective question counterparts:

- (20) lǐmian    yǒu    shénme ?  
inside    exist    what

What's inside?

- (21) lǐmian    shì    shénme ?  
inside    be    what

What is it that's inside?

The first question, with *yǒu*, does not necessarily imply that there is something inside. A possible and appropriate answer to (20) is: ✓

- (22) lǐmian    shénme    dōu    méi    yǒu  
inside    what    all    not    exist

There's nothing inside.

The second question with *shì*, however, presupposes that something is inside. Thus (22) is not an appropriate answer to (21).

Consider a speech context in which one is touring a factory and notices a great deal of noise coming from the frontmost building. It would be inappropriate for one to pose question (23), which employs *yǒu*. Question (24), which employs *shì*, would be preferable because the speech situation implies that the inquirer not only has a vested interest in the source of the noise but also presumes that there is something in front.

- (23) qiánmian yǒu shénme ?  
in front exist what

What's in front?

- (24) qiánmian shì shénme ?  
in front be what

What is it that's in front?

*presupposition*

Imagine next, as a situation where *shì* would be inappropriate and *yǒu* would be preferred, that two people are trying to get from one yard to another at night. One could announce that s/he had found a gate by saying (25), where *zhèli* 'here' gives the location of *mén* 'gate', but the same sentence with *shì*, (26), would be odd for the speaker to use, because the hearer has no reason to expect that something exists at the locus *zhèli* 'here'.

- (25) zhèli yǒu mén  
here exist gate

Here's a gate.

- (26) zhèli shì mén  
here be gate

What's here is a gate.

To sum up, we can state that the existential verb *yǒu* as well as verbs of posture can be found in presentative sentences that predicate the existence of something at a certain locus. Now we'll look at presentative sentences in which something is introduced by a motion verb.

## 17.2 Verbs of Motion

The other way in which entities can be introduced into discourse is by means of a verb signaling motion. Typically in such a situation there is no locus named, but, as with the presentative sentences containing the existential verb or verbs of posture, the noun phrase being presented occurs immediately after the verb (the presented noun phrase is underlined once in the following examples):

- (27) chū - lái - le      yī - ge kèrén  
 exit - come - PFV    one - CL    guest

A guest has come out.

- (28) táo - le      sān - zhī yáng  
 escape - PFV    three - CL    sheep

Three sheep escaped.

- (29) dào - le      yī - pī huò  
 arrive - PFV    one - batch merchandise

A shipment of merchandise has arrived.

- (30) wǒmen - de wǎnhuì zhǐ lái - le  
 we - GEN party only come - PFV

Zhāngsān gēn Lìsì  
 Zhangsan and Lisi

Only Zhangsan and Lisi came to our party.

The verbs of motion in presentative sentences are generally intransitive verbs, as the preceding examples show. In these sentences, the entity involved in the motion is the presented noun phrase, and the presentative noun phrase follows the verb. Not all intransitive verbs of motion, however, allow the noun phrase signaling the entity involved in the motion to be in the postverbal position, as the examples in (31) show (here the verbs of motion are underlined):

- (31) a. \*tiào - le      yī - ge xīshuài  
 jump - PFV    one - CL    cricket

- b. \*gūn – le yi – ge rén  
roll – PFV one – CL person
- c. \*pá – le yi – ge lǎohǔ  
climb – PFV one – CL tiger
- d. \*fēi – le yi – ge niǎo  
fly – PFV one – CL bird
- e. \*dǒu – le yi – ge rén  
shake – PFV one – CL person

In order for these verbs to occur in presentative constructions where the presentative noun phrase refers to the entity in motion, the existential verb *yǒu* must be used, and the construction then becomes a serial verb construction, since two verbs are involved. For example, consider the intransitive verb of motion *dǒu* 'shake, tremble'; (32) is a presentative sentence with both the existential verb *yǒu* and the intransitive verb of motion *dǒu* 'shake, tremble':

- (32) yǒu (yi – ge) rén dǒu – le  
exist one – CL person shake – PFV

There was one person who shook.

The intransitive verbs of motion which do allow the noun phrase signaling the entity in motion to occur postverbally include *zǒu* 'leave', *chū* 'exit', *qù* 'go', *lái* 'come', *dǎo* 'topple', *qǐ* 'arise', *dào* 'arrive', *tǎo* 'escape', and all of the type (iii) directional verbs (see A. 1 of section 3.2.3 in chapter 3). Here are some examples of presentative sentences with type (iii) directional verbs:

- (33) a. shàng – lái – le sān – ge rén  
ascend – come – PFV three – CL person

Three people came up.

- b. huí – qù – le wǔ –  
return – go – PFV five –  
bǎi – ge rén  
hundred – CL person

Five hundred people returned.

c. jīn - lái - le    yī - ge  
 enter - come - PFV    one - CL

dà - pàngzi  
 big - fat:person

A very fat person came in.

Finally, an intransitive verb of motion which forms a compound with either *lái* 'come', *qù* 'go', or a type (iii) directional compound always allows the noun phrase signaling the entity in motion to occur postverbally. Thus, example (31) *d* shows that *fēi* 'fly' does not allow the noun phrase signaling the entity in motion to occur after the verb, but *fēi-chū-lái* 'fly-exit-come = fly out' does, as in (34):

(34) fēi - chū - lái - le  
 fly - exit - come - PFV

yī - ge wénzi  
 one - CL mosquito

A mosquito flew out.

### Notes

1. For more discussion of existential predicates, see Rygaloff (1973:chap. 8), Chu (1970), Teng (1979a), Hou (1979:chap. 3.3).
2. Some of the ideas on *shì* and *yǒu* discussed here are adapted from Chao (1948:153), Rygaloff (1973:191 ff.), and Van Valin (1975).

## CHAPTER 18

# Questions

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### 18.1 The Four Types of Questions

It is always possible to turn a declarative statement into a question by using a slightly rising intonation pattern. In context, it is generally easy to identify such a question; for example, if A and B have been talking about whether A is going to go somewhere, and B says to A

(1)    nǐ        qù  
         you      go

with a slightly rising intonation, A will typically take this as a question and not a statement or a command.

There are also, however, four grammatical devices that explicitly mark an utterance as a question. It is these four devices that will be discussed in the rest of this chapter.

The first device is the *question-word question*, in which the presence of a question word causes the construction to be a question. Question words in a language are the semantic equivalents of such English words as *who*, *what*, *where*, *which*, and so forth. An example in Mandarin is (2):

(2)    shéi      qù ?  
         who      go

Who'll go?



In the second device, the *disjunctive question*, the respondent is presented with a choice between two options. One type of disjunctive question is composed simply of two declarative sentences joined together by the morpheme *háishi* 'or'; for example:

- (3)    nǐ      qù      háishi      tā      lái ?  
          you      go                    or            3sg      come

Will you go, or will s/he come?

We call each such sentence a *clause* when two or more of them combine to make a larger sentence. The two options presented to the respondent in (3) are clearly the two declarative clauses connected by the morpheme *háishi* 'or'. The answer is either (4) *a* or (4) *b*:

- (4) *a.*    wǒ      qù  
               I      go

I'll go.

- b.*      tā      lái  
             3sg      come

S/He'll come.

The *tag question*, the third question-signaling device, is composed of a statement followed by an A-not-A form, such as *duì bu duì* 'right not right', *hǎo bu hǎo* 'good not good', *xíng bu xíng* 'OK not OK', *shì bu shì* 'be not be'.

The final device, called the *particle question*, is signaled by the presence of the question particle *ma* in sentence-final position, as in

- (5)    nǐ      hǎo      ma ?  
          you      well      Q

How are you? (Literally: Are you well?)

## 13.2 Question-Word Questions

## 18.2.1 Question Words in Questions

The following is a list of the most commonly used question words in Mandarin:

(6) <u>shéi</u>	'who'	<u>nǎr, nǎlì</u>	'where'
<u>shénme</u>	'what'	<u>něi-CL</u>	'which one'
<u>zěnmē</u>	'how, why'	<u>něi-xiē</u>	'which ones'
<u>zěnmē-yàng</u>	'how'	<u>gànmá</u>	'what for'
<u>wèishénme</u>	'for what = why'		
<u>duō</u>	'how'		
<u>duōshǎo</u>	'how much, how many'		
<u>jǐ-CL</u>	'how many'		

In what follows, we will discuss and illustrate the use of each of these question words.

In general, question words occur in the same position in the sentence as do nonquestion words that have the same grammatical function. For example, consider *shéi* 'who' and *shénme* 'what' in the following sentences:

- (7) shéi qǐng Zhāngsān chī — fàn ?  
 who invite Zhangsan eat — food

Who invited Zhangsan to eat?

- (8) nǐ qǐng shéi chī — fàn ?  
 you invite who eat — food

Whom did you invite to eat?

- (9) shénme shì ài ?  
 what be love

What is love?

- (10) nǐmen zuò shénme ?  
 you do what

What are you doing?

In (7), the question word *shéi* 'who' is the subject of the first verb and therefore occurs before the verb, as a subject usually does. In (8), however, the question word, *shéi*, 'who', is a pivotal noun (see section 21.3 of chapter 21), serving both as the direct object of the first verb and as the subject of the second verb; hence, it is placed just where a pivotal noun occurs, after the first verb but before the second verb. Similarly, *shénme* in (9), as the subject of *shì* 'be', occurs before it, while in (10) it is the direct object and so occurs postverbally.

In (9) and (10), *shénme* serves as a full-fledged noun, but it may also modify a head noun in a noun phrase. Examples (11) and (12) illustrate this usage of *shénme*:

- (11) tā shì nǐ — de shénme rén ?  
 3sg be you — GEN what person  
 How is s/he related to you?

- (12) shénme dōngxi zhème xiāng ?  
 what thing this fragrant

What kind of thing is this fragrant?

Sentence (13) shows that *zěnme* occurs in the adverbial position, namely, before the verb, and is ambiguous, meaning either 'how' or 'why':

- (13) nǐ zěnme xiě xiǎoshuō ?  
 you {how} write novel  
       {why}

{How do you write novels?} How come  
 {Why do you write novels?}

Sentence (14) shows that *zěnme* meaning 'why' may also occur in sentence-initial position:

- (14) zěnme nǐ bu qù shàng — kè ?  
       why you not go ascend — class

Why aren't you attending your class?

We can explain its position in both (13) and (14) in terms of these two meanings. 'How' and 'why' are both adverbial notions, but 'how' is a manner adverbial

notion, pertaining to the manner in which the action of the verb is carried out, while 'why' is a sentential adverbial notion, requesting the respondent to provide a semantic frame for the entire sentence (see section 8.1 of chapter 8 on adverbs). Since sentential adverbs may occur either in sentence-initial position or in the 'regular' preverbal adverbial position, but manner adverbs can occur only before the verb, *zěnmě* unambiguously means 'why' when it occurs in sentence-initial position, as in (14), but it can mean either 'how' or 'why' in (13).

The question word *zěnmě-yàng* is an unambiguous variant of *zěnmě*, meaning 'how'. The suffix, *-yàng*, means 'manner'. Its presence rules out the other meaning, 'why', of *zěnmě*. If *zěnmě* in (13) is replaced by *zěnmě-yàng*, the question is unambiguous:

- (15)    nǐ    zěnmě    -    yàng    xiě    xiǎoshuō ?  
           you    how       -    manner   write    novel

How do you write novels?

*Duō*, another adverbial question word, means 'how' in the sense of 'to what extent'. It is found with adjectives and adverbs expressing properties that can be true to varying degrees (the same ones, in fact, that can be compared in a comparative sentence—see chapter 19):

- (16)    tā        duō    gāo ?  
           3sg      how      tall

How tall is s/he?

- (17)    tā        duō    zǎo    shàng    -    bān ?  
           3sg      how      early   ascend   -    work

How early does s/he go to work?

*Wèishénme* is another sentence adverb question word. It means 'why', literally *wèi* 'for' plus *shénme* 'what'. Examples (18) and (19) show that, as expected, it too can occur in either of the two positions where sentence adverbs can appear:

- (18) wèishénme    tā        bu    kāixīn ?  
           why        3sg    not    happy

Why is s/he not happy?

- (19) tā wèishénme mà wō - de dìdi ?  
 3sg why scold I - GEN younger:brother

Why did s/he scold my younger brother?

*Gànmá* is another word for 'what for'. Unlike *wèishénme*, however, because of its derivation from the verb phrase *gàn shénme* 'do what', it can occur as if it were a verb phrase in a serial verb construction, either before or after the "other" verb phrase:

- (20) a. nǐ dài shǒudiàntǒng gànmá ?  
 you bring flashlight what:for

What did you bring a flashlight for?

- b. nǐ gànmá dài shǒudiàntǒng ?  
 you what:for bring flashlight

What did you bring a flashlight for?

The forms *nǎr/nǎli* 'where' are location question words and can occur wherever a locative noun phrase can occur:

- (21) tā zài nǎr zuò - shì ?  
 3sg at where do - work

Where does s/he work?

- (22) nǎr mài chǎo - miàn ?  
 where sell fry - noodle

What place sells fried noodles?

- (23) nǐ qù nǎr ?  
 you go where

Where are you going?

There is no special question word meaning 'when' in Mandarin. The usual expression for 'when' is *shénme shíhou* 'what time', as in:

- (24) tā      shénme shíhou      lái ?  
3sg      what      time      come

When will s/he come?

One may also use the expression *jǐ-diǎnzhōng* 'how:many-o'clock = at what hour':

- (25) tā      jǐ      -      diǎnzhōng      lái ?  
3sg      how:many      -      o'clock      come

At what hour will s/he come?

*Jǐ-diǎnzhōng* 'what time' demands a specific time, whereas *shénme shíhou* 'when' does not. Thus (26) is a reasonable answer for (24), but not for (25):

- (26) tā      xiàwǔ      lái  
3sg      afternoon      come

S/He will come in the afternoon.

An answer to (25) must specify the hour. Consequently, the expression *jǐ-diǎnzhōng* is also used when one asks for the time:

- (27) qǐng      wèn      xiànzai      jǐ      -      diǎnzhōng ?  
please      ask      now      how:many      -      o'clock

May I ask, what is the time now?

The question words *duōshǎo* 'how many, how much', *jǐ-CL* 'how many', *něi-CL* 'which', and *něi-xiē* 'which-PL' usually modify the head noun in a noun phrase. In the cases of *něi-CL* 'which' and *jǐ-CL* 'how many', *CL* stands for the classifier that is appropriate for the noun that follows. These sentences serve as illustrations:

- (28) nǐ yǒu duōshǎo qián ?  
 you exist how:much money

How much money do you have?

- (29) nǐ dài - lái - le duōshǎo rén ?  
 you bring - come - PFV how:many people

How many people did you bring?

- (30) nǐ mǎi - le jǐ - ge ézi ?  
 you buy - PFV how:many - CL goose

How many geese did you buy?

- (31) nǐ shuō něi - zhī bǐ hǎo ?  
 you say which - CL pen good

Which pen do you say is good?

- (32) nǐ xǐhuan něi - xiē niǎo ?  
 you like which - PL bird

Which birds do you like?

### 18.2.2 Question Words as Indefinite Pronouns

We have seen above that question words may be nominal or adverbial, or they may modify a head noun in a noun phrase. The nominal question words, however, may also function as indefinite pronouns denoting such notions as 'whoever', 'whatever', 'wherever', 'anyone', 'anything'. In this section, we will discuss the use of question words as indefinite pronouns in Mandarin.

#### A. *shéi* 'whoever'

- (33) shéi zuì - le jiu fá shí  
 whoever drink - PFV then fine ten  
 kuài qián  
 dollar money

Whoever gets drunk will be fined ten dollars.

- (34) shéi yào hē jiǔ zhǐ yào fù  
 whoever want drink then only need pay  
 liǎng kuài qián  
 two dollar money

Whoever wants to drink has to pay only two dollars.

- (35) jīngchá yào zhuā shéi jiu zhuā shéi  
 police want arrest whoever then arrest whoever

The police will arrest whomever they want to arrest.

As (33)–(35) show, it is the context that determines when the question word *shéi* is used as a question word and when it is used as an indefinite pronoun. The first clause containing *shéi* in each of the sentences (33)–(35) could be used independently as a question. In each of the above sentences, however, the clause containing *shéi* is accompanied by another clause. An important characteristic of (33)–(35) is that both clauses in each sentence refer to the indefinite pronoun. In (33), the understood direct object of the verb *fá* ‘fine, penalize’ in the second clause is coreferential with the indefinite pronoun of the first clause. In (34), the understood subject of the verb *yào* ‘want’ in the second clause is coreferential with the indefinite pronoun of the first clause. In (35) the indefinite pronoun *shéi* occurs simply as the direct object of both clauses.

B. *shéi-dōu/shéi-yě* ‘everyone, anyone’

- (36) tā shéi-dōu bu xìnren  
 3sg everyone not trust

{S/He distrusts everyone. }  
 {S/He doesn't trust anyone. }

- (37) shéi-dōu yào mǎi piányi dōngxi  
 everyone want buy inexpensive goods

Everyone wants to buy inexpensive goods.



- (38) tā    shéi-dōu    yào    kǎowèn  
       3sg    everyone    want    interrogate

S/He wants to interrogate everyone.

- (39) wǒ    shéi-yě    bu    rènshi  
       I    everyone    not    recognize

I don't know anyone.

The two expressions, *shéi-dōu* and *shéi-yě*, are interchangeable. *Shéi* in these two expressions again stands for a nonspecific person. *Dōu* is the quantifier 'all', whose scope includes only the noun immediately preceding it (see section 8.2.2.F of chapter 8). *Yě* is an adverb meaning 'even' or 'also' (again, see section 8.2.2.F of chapter 8), and it, too, includes in its scope only the noun immediately preceding it.

In English, *anyone* is the negative counterpart of *everyone*. In other words, given an affirmative sentence containing *everyone*, such as (40):

- (40) I like everyone.

the normal negative counterpart would be:

- (41) I don't like anyone.

In Mandarin, though, there is no such variation; *shéi-dōu/shéi-yě* can be used in both negative and affirmative contexts, as here:

- (42) wǒ    shéi-dōu    xǐhuan  
       I    everyone    like

I like everyone.

- (43) wǒ    shéi-dōu    bu    xǐhuan  
       I    everyone    not    like

I don't like anyone.

An important property of *shéi-dōu/shéi-yě*, as shown in (36), (38), and (39), is that *they are positioned before the verb* even when they are the direct objects of their verbs. The reason for this property of *shéi-dōu/shéi-yě* is straightforward. The second component of these expressions is one of the adverbs *dōu* 'all' and *yě* 'even', which, as adverbs, occur only in preverbal position. Since they include only the noun phrase immediately preceding them in their scope, the first component, *shéi*, is forced to occur preverbally too.

The behavior of *shénme* in the following two sections, 18.2.2.C and 18.2.2.D, and the explanations for its behavior precisely parallel our description of *shéi* in sections 18.2.2.A and 18.2.2.B, respectively, so rather than repeating the description, we will merely provide examples for illustration purposes.

C. *shénme* 'whatever'

- (44) shénme hào wǒmen jiu sòng qù bówùguǎn  
 whatever good we then send go museum

Whatever is good we will send to the museum.

- (45) nǐ xiǎng chī shénme jiu mǎi shénme  
 you desire eat whatever then buy whatever

(You can) buy whatever you desire to eat.

- (46) nǐ gěi tā shénme tā jiu yòng shénme  
 you give 3sg whatever 3sg then use whatever

S/He will use whatever you give him/her.

D. *shénme-dōu/shénme-yě* 'everything, anything'

- (47) wǒ shénme-yě bu pà  
 I everything not afraid

I am not afraid of anything.

- (48) zhèr shénme-dōu guì  
 here everything expensive

Everything is expensive here.

- (49) shénme-dōu xíng  
 everything OK

Anything will do!

E. *nār* 'wherever', *nār-dōu* 'everywhere'

What has been said of *shéi* and *shénme* above applies exactly to *nār* 'where'. Hence, in (50) *nār* denotes 'wherever':

- (50) nār tiānqì hǎo wǒmen jiu qù nār  
 wherever climate good we then go wherever

We will go wherever the climate is good.

In (51), *nār-dōu* signifies 'everywhere':

- (51) zhè jǐ tiān nār-dōu xià - yǔ  
 this few day everywhere descend - rain

These few days, it is raining everywhere.

### 18.3 Disjunctive Questions

Disjunctive questions with or without the morpheme *háishi* 'or' always present an either-or choice to the respondent. Two types of disjunctive questions exist. First, there are those composed of at least two constituents connected by *háishi* 'or', as in sentence (3), where the two disjoined constituents are declarative clauses:

- (3) nǐ qù háishi tā lái ?  
 you go or 3sg come

Will you go, or will s/he come?

The second category of disjunctive questions consists of an affirmative sentence followed by its negative counterpart, usually without *háishi* 'or'. This type of question is traditionally called the *A-not-A question*, where 'not' stands for one of the negative particles *bu* or *méi(yǒu)*. For example:

(52)    nǐ      qù      bu      qù ?  
          you      go      not      go

Will you go?

Let's consider each of these two types of disjunctive questions in turn.

### 18.3.1 Questions with Constituents Connected by *háishi*

This category of questions explicitly presents the respondent with a choice of two or more possible answers. The possible answers in each such question are connected by *háishi* 'or', and each possible answer may be called a *constituent*. The syntactic nature of the connected constituents may vary from question to question, but all such constituents within a question are of the same syntactic type. We have seen that in sentence (3) the connected constituents are clauses. Let's look at some other examples; the connected constituents are underlined in each sentence.

In (53) and (54), the constituents connected by the morpheme *háishi* are verb phrases. In (53), each verb phrase involves a verb and a direct object, whereas in (54) each verb phrase is a simple intransitive verb:

(53)    nǐ      mài      bàozhǐ      háishi      kāi      jīchéngchē ?  
          you      sell      newspaper      or      drive      taxi

Do you sell newspapers, or do you drive taxis?

(54)    nǐ      zòu      háishi      pǎo ?  
          you      walk      or      run

Will you walk, or will you run?

In (55), the connected constituents are the direct objects, in (56), the subjects, and in (57), the verbs:

- (55) nī mǎi zhèi - ge háishi nèi - ge ?  
 you buy this - CL or that - CL

Will you buy this one, or will you buy that one?

- (56) Zhāngsān háishi Lisi jiǎng - huà ?  
 Zhangsan or Lisi talk - speech

Is Zhangsan talking, or is Lisi talking?

- (57) nī chǎo háishi zhēng zhèi - ge qīngcài ?  
 you fry or steam this - CL vegetable

Do you fry or steam this vegetable?

Notice the difference between the connected constituents in (57) and those in (53) and (54): what is connected in (53) and (54) are the entire verb phrases, but what is connected in (57) are merely the verbs. In (58), the coverb phrases (see chapter 9) are connected by *háishi*; in (59), the adverbs (see chapter 8) are connected; in (60), it is the nominalized adjectives (see chapter 20) serving as the direct objects:

- (58) tā zài zhèr háishi (zài) nàr zhù ?  
 3sg at here or (at) there reside

Does s/he live here or there?

- (59) tā jīntian háishi míngtian lái ?  
 3sg today or tomorrow come

Is s/he coming today or tomorrow?

- (60) nèi - běn - shū shì hóng de  
 that - CL - book is red NOM

háishi bái de ?  
 or white NOM

Is that book red or white?



We have implied that the number of *disjoined constituents* in this category of disjunctive questions may exceed two. Theoretically, there is no limit on the number of disjoined constituents, but practically, two is the most common number. In principle, each additional constituent could take on an additional conjunctive particle *háishi*. In the case of more than two disjoined constituents, however, speakers generally delete all occurrences of the disjunctive marker *háishi* preceding the last one, as in (64) *b*:

- (64) a. tā jīntian háishi míngtian háishi hòutian lái ?  
 3sg today or tomorrow or day:after:tomorrow come

Is s/he coming today, or tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow?

- b. tā jīntian , míngtian , háishi hòutian lái ?  
 3sg today tomorrow or day:after:tomorrow come

Is s/he coming today, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow?

### 18.3.2 A-not-A Questions

The A-not-A question, as we have stated earlier, is a type of disjunctive question. The choice presented to the respondent is the choice between an affirmative sentence and its negative counterpart. *Háishi* 'or' can be used, but it is generally omitted.

In the formation of an A-not-A question, the general rule is to put the affirmative and then the negative version of the sentence together. For example, if one wants to ask whether *tā* 's/he' is at home, one takes the affirmative sentence:

- (65) tā zài jiā  
 3sg at home

S/He is at home.

and the negative sentence:

- (66) tā bu zài jiā  
 3sg not at home

S/He is not at home.

and puts them together, deleting the subject in the second clause:

(67)    tā        zài        jiā        bu        zài        jiā ?  
         3sg        at        home     not        at        home

Is s/he at home?

In addition to the obligatory deletion of the second subject, speakers also have the option of deleting the other repeated material in either clause except for the verb or the auxiliary; in general this material is deleted to avoid unnecessary repetition. For example, we could simplify (67) by deleting one of the words *jiā* 'home' to form either (68) or (69):

(68)    tā        zài        bu        zài        jiā ?  
         3sg        at        not        at        home

Is s/he at home?

(69)    tā        zài        jiā        bu        zài ?  
         3sg        at        home     not        at

Is s/he at home?

Although (67), (68), and (69) are all acceptable, the form illustrated by (68) is the preferred one.

The following general rule allows us to account for the form of all A-not-A questions:

(i) The affirmative and its negative counterpart (see chapter 12 on negation) are juxtaposed, the second subject must be deleted, and the repeated elements to the right of the first verb may be (and usually are) deleted.

There are three facts that constrain the way in which the deletion of repeated elements can take place: (a) in general, elements forming a semantic unit must be deleted together; (b) for Mandarin influenced by southern dialects, with a disyllabic verb or an auxiliary, deletion in the first clause may even include the second syllable of that verb or auxiliary; and (c) if the negative particle precedes any element other than a verb or an auxiliary, then deletion generally does not occur.

To illustrate, let us consider an A-not-A question in its full form and then see what can be deleted:



- (70)    nǐ    xǐhuān    tā    -    de    chènshān    (háishi)  
           you    like    3sg    -    GEN    shirt    or
- bu    xǐhuān    tā    -    de    chènshān ?  
           not    like    3sg    -    GEN    shirt

Do you like his/her shirt?

Fact (a) says that elements forming a semantic unit must be deleted together. We can illustrate this by showing that since *tā-de chènshān* 'his/her shirt' forms a semantic unit, we couldn't delete just *chènshān* 'shirt' or just *tā-de* 'his/her', so (71)–(74) are all unacceptable:

- (71)    \*nǐ    xǐhuān    tā    -    de    (háishi)    bu    xǐhuān  
           you    like    3sg    -    GEN    or    not    like
- tā    -    de    chènshān ?  
           3sg    -    GEN    shirt
- (72)    \*nǐ    xǐhuān    tā    -    de    chènshān (háishi)    bu  
           you    like    3sg    -    GEN    shirt    or    not
- xǐhuān    tā    -    de ?  
           like    3sg    -    GEN
- (73)    \*nǐ    xǐhuān    chènshān    (háishi)    bu    xǐhuān    tā    -  
           you    like    shirt    or    not    like    3sg    -
- de    chènshān ?  
           GEN    shirt
- (74)    \*nǐ    xǐhuān    tā    -    de    chènshān (háishi)    bu  
           you    like    3sg    -    GEN    shirt    or    not
- xǐhuān    chènshān ?  
           like    shirt

Instead, if any deletion takes place, *tā-de chènshān* 'his/her shirt' must be deleted as a unit:

- (75)    nǐ    xǐhuān    bu    xǐhuān    tā    —    de    chènshān ?  
           you    like    not    like    3sg    —    GEN    shirt

Do you like his/her shirt?

- (76)    nǐ    xǐhuān    tā    —    de    chènshān    bu    xǐhuān ?  
           you    like    3sg    —    GEN    shirt    not    like

Do you like his/her shirt?

According to fact (b), deletion in the first clause of an A-not-A question may even include deletion of the second syllable of the verb. To illustrate fact (b), let's look again at (70). If the deletion of repeated elements takes place in the first clause, then in Mandarin influenced by southern dialects—for instance, the Mandarin spoken in Taiwan—that deletion can include the *-huān* part of *xǐhuān* 'like':

- (77)    nǐ    xǐ-    bu    xǐhuān    tā    —    de    chènshān ?  
           you    like    not    like    3sg    —    GEN    shirt

Do you like his/her shirt?

Deletion of the second syllable of a disyllabic verb or auxiliary can take place only in the *first* clause of an A-not-A question and only when all the following material in that clause is also deleted. Consequently, (78) and (79) are unacceptable, even in Mandarin influenced by southern dialects:

- (78)    \*nǐ    xǐ-    tā    —    de    chènshān    bu    xǐhuān ?  
           you    like    3sg    —    GEN    shirt    not    like
- (79)    \*nǐ    xǐhuān    tā    —    de    chènshān    bu    xǐ- ?  
           you    like    3sg    —    GEN    shirt    not    like

A-not-A questions in which the second syllable of the verb or auxiliary in the first clause is deleted are extremely common in this kind of Mandarin. Here are three more examples in their shortened forms:



Another example would be a sentence in which the negative element precedes a coverb, such as *bā* (see chapter 15), as in:

(86) tā      bu      bā      qián      gěi      wō  
          3sg      not      BA      money      give      I

S/He won't give me the money.

Since fact (c) says that we cannot perform any deletion in an A-not-A question if the negative in the second clause precedes an element other than a verb or an auxiliary, the A-not-A question formed with (86) as its second clause would be (87), but not (88) or (89):

(87) tā      bā      qián      gěi      wō      (háishi)      bu      bā  
          3sg      BA      money      give      I      or      not      BA

qián      gěi      wō ?  
          money      give      I

Will s/he give me the money?

(88) \*tā      bā      qián      (háishi)      bu      bā      qián  
          3sg      BA      money      or      not      BA      money

gěi      wō ?  
          give      I

(89) \*tā      bā      qián      gěi      wō      (háishi)      bu  
          3sg      BA      money      give      I      or      not

bā      qián ?  
          BA      money

These examples clearly show that deletions in general cannot occur in A-not-A questions where the negative particle in the second clause precedes any element besides a verb or an auxiliary. This does not mean, however, that the long versions illustrated in (83) and (87) are the only ways to express these questions. It is always possible to add the copula verb *shi* 'be' (see A.2.2 in section 4.3.1 of chapter 4) and make an A-not-A question with it, and in the case of sentences such as (83) and (87) this is a particularly attractive option:

(90) tā      shì      bù      shì      màn-màn-de      pǎo ?  
       3sg      be      not      be      slowly      run

Is it the case that s/he runs slowly?

(91) tā      shì      bù      shì      bǎ      qián      gěi      wǒ ?  
       3sg      be      not      be      BA      money      give      I

Is it the case that s/he'll give me the money?

As discussed in chapter 4 and as indicated by our translations, sentences containing the copula *shì* are used only in certain situations, namely, when the proposition has already been brought up in the conversation. Now, sentences with adverbs and prepositional phrases often fall into this category; that is, for example, a sentence like (83) is typically used when both speaker and hearer know that s/he runs and the speaker simply wants to question whether s/he does it slowly. Consequently, questions with adverbs and prepositional phrases are ideal candidates for the alternative version with the copula *shì* 'be', as in (90); this is why a *shì bù shì* question is an especially useful alternative for questions such as (83) and (87).

The three facts given above, then, account for the way in which deletions of repeated material can occur in A-not-A questions. For the rest of our discussion, we will present our examples in their normal form, with the repeated elements already deleted.

Returning to the structure of the A-not-A question form in general, the rule given above in (i) suggests that the form of an A-not-A question is determined by the way negation works (again, for a discussion of negation, see chapter 12). For example, the negative counterpart of a sentence with an auxiliary verb is one in which the negative particle precedes the auxiliary and not the main verb:

(92) tā      huì      dǎ      –      lánqiú  
       3sg      know:how      hit      –      basketball

S/He knows how to play basketball.

(93) tā      bù      huì      dǎ      –      lánqiú  
       3sg      not      know:how      hit      –      basketball

S/He doesn't know how to play basketball.

- (94) \*tā huì bu dǎ - lánqiú  
 3sg know:how not hit - basketball

Thus, it follows that the A-not-A question composed of (92) and (93) must also have *bu* preceding the auxiliary and not the main verb; with deletion of repeated material, then, we get (95), but not (96):

- (95) tā huì bu huì dǎ - lánqiú ?  
 3sg know:how not know:how hit basketball

Does s/he know how to play basketball?

- (96) \*tā huì dǎ bu dǎ lánqiú ?  
 3sg know:how play not hit - basketball

Similarly, since the negative counterpart of the coverb sentence (97) is (98), not (99),

- (97) tā duì nǐ hǎo  
 3sg to you good

S/He is good to you.

- (98) tā duì nǐ bu hǎo  
 3sg to you not good

S/He is not good to you.

- (99) ? \*tā bu duì nǐ hǎo  
 3sg not to you good

Then the A-not-A question form corresponding to (97) is (100) and not (101):

- (100) tā duì nǐ hǎo bu hǎo ?  
 3sg to you good not good

Is s/he good to you?

QUESTIONS

(101) 7 \*tā      duì      bu      duì      nǐ      hǎo ?  
          3sg      to      not      to      you      good

Finally, let's illustrate this same point with a pair of serial verb sentences (see chapter 21):

(102)    tā      zhīdao      wǒ      zài      Xiānggǎng  
          3sg      know      I      at      Hong Kong

S/He knows that I am in Hong Kong.

(103) tāmen      jìn      dàxué      yǒu      wèntí  
          they      enter      university      exist      problem

There are problems for them in getting into a university.

The negative versions of these sentences are (104) and (105), with the negative particle preceding the verb that takes the underlined clause as its direct object ([104]) or subject ([105]):

(104)    tā      bu      zhīdao      wǒ      zài      Xiānggǎng  
          3sg      not      know      I      at      Hong Kong

S/He does not know that I am in Hong Kong.

(105) tāmen      jìn      dàxué      méi      yǒu      wèntí  
          they      enter      university      not      exist      problem

There are not problems for them in getting into a university.

The A-not-A questions combining the affirmative and negative versions, then, would be:

(106)    tā      zhīdao      bu      zhīdao      wǒ      zài      Xiānggǎng ?  
          3sg      know      not      know      I      at      Hong Kong

Does s/he know that I am in Hong Kong?

- (107) tāmen jìn dàxué yǒu méi yǒu wèntí ?  
 they enter university exist not exist problem

Are there problems for them in getting into a university?

With respect to A-not-A questions, the behavior of the negative particle *méi* (*yǒu*), which denies completion, deserves special mention. Let's illustrate with a sentence containing the perfective aspect marker *-le*:

- (108) tā mǎi - le nèi - ge fángzi  
 3sg buy - PFV that - CL house

S/He bought that house.

The negative counterpart of this sentence is one with the negative particle *méi(yǒu)*, which denies completion:

- (109) tā méi(yǒu) mǎi nèi - ge fángzi  
 3sg not buy that - CL house

S/He didn't buy that house.

When we put these two together, we get (110):

- (110) tā mǎi - le nèi - ge fángzi  
 3sg buy - PFV that - CL house
- méi(yǒu) (mǎi nèi - ge fángzi) ?  
 not (buy that - CL house)

Did s/he buy that house?

In Mandarin influenced by southern dialects, however, as pointed out in the discussion in section 12.4 of chapter 12, a possible variant of (108) is (111), in which the perfective marker *yǒu* occurs instead of the northern Mandarin *-le*:

- (111) ~~tā~~ yǒu mǎi nèi - ge fángzi  
 3sg buy that - CL house

S/He bought that house.



With the affirmative variant (111) and the negative version (109), of course, we can form the A-not-A question (112):

- (112) tā <sup>买过</sup> yǒu méi yǒu mǎi nèi - ge fángzi ?  
 3sg            not            buy    that    -    CL    house

Did s/he buy that house?

And for many speakers of Mandarin, (112) is a perfectly acceptable alternative to (110), even for those who find the affirmative sentence (111) odd.

In exactly the same way, both sentences (114) and (115) are possible A-not-A question counterparts to (113), with the experiential aspect marker *-guo* (see section 6.3 of chapter 6), but (115) is more acceptable to speakers of Mandarin influenced by southern dialects than to northern speakers:

- (113) tā        hē        -        guo    píjiǔ  
 3sg        drink    -        EXP    beer

S/He has drunk beer before.

- (114) tā        hē        -        guo    píjiǔ    méi(yǒu)  
 3sg        drink    -        EXP    beer        not
- (hē        -        guo    píjiǔ) ?  
 (drink    -        EXP    beer)

Has s/he drunk beer before?

- (115) tā        <sup>喝过</sup> yǒu méi yǒu        hē        -        guo    píjiǔ ?  
 3sg                            not            drink    -        EXP    beer

Has s/he drunk beer before?

To conclude our discussion of A-not-A questions, the examples we have considered illustrate the point that the structural properties of A-not-A questions can be predicted from, first, the facts concerning the deletion of repeated elements, and second, the behavior of negation.

## 18.4 Tag Questions

A statement can become a question by the addition of a short A-not-A question form of certain verbs as a tag to that statement. The most common tags are the ones illustrated in (116)–(119):

- (116) nǐmen shì jiǔ — diǎnzhōng kāi —  
 you:PL be nine — o'clock open —  
 mén de , duì bu duì ?  
 door NOM right not right

You opened at nine o'clock, right?

- (117) wǒmen qù chī shuǐguǒ , hǎo bu hǎo ?  
 we go eat fruit good not good

Let's go eat some fruit, OK?

- (118) gāi nǐ kāi — chē ,  
 be:one's:turn you drive — vehicle  
 xíng bu xíng ?  
 OK not OK

It's your turn to drive, OK?

- (119) tā zài gēng — tián , shì bu shì ?  
 3sg DUR plow — field be not be

S/He is plowing the field, right?

Tag questions are functionally different from the other types of Mandarin questions in that they serve to seek confirmation of the statement that occurs before the tag. In the case of (119), for example, the speaker is requesting the respondent to confirm this statement:

- (120) tā zài gēng — tián  
 3sg DUR plow — field

S/He is plowing the field.



discussed in detail in sections 7.2.1 and 7.3 of chapter 7; here we will simply present an example of each:

- (125) (After Wanger says he was unhappy with the decision, Lisi asks him this.)

Zhāngsān    ne ?  
Zhangsan    REx

How about Zhangsan?

- (126)    tā        hěn    kāixīn    ba  
          3sg     very    happy    SA

S/He is happy, isn't s/he?

For the remainder of this chapter, however, the term *particle question* will be used interchangeably with *ma question*.

### 18.6 Differences between A-Not-A Questions and Particle Questions

Of the four types of questions we have discussed in this chapter, one of them, the question-word type, can be functionally characterized as a request for specific information. The tag questions are seeking only confirmation. The other two, the A-not-A type and the particle type, on the other hand, are functionally similar in seeking an answer that confirms or denies the proposition in the question. What, then, is the difference between the two types of questions? In other words, when is an A-not-A question used, and when is a particle question used?<sup>1</sup>

To answer this question, let's consider two conversational examples together with their speech contexts. In the first example, imagine that A and B have met and exchanged greetings. The conversation in (127) then unfolds:

- (127) A:    nǐ     hǎoxiàng    shòu    —    le     yidiǎn  
          you     seem     thin     —    PFV    a:little

You seem to have lost some weight.



with him, you are surprised that he is having an apple for dessert; in other words, what he is doing goes against your assumption. Puzzled, you ask the question:

(129)    nǐ        chī        píngguo    mā ?  
          you        eat        apple        Q

Do you eat apples?

A question such as (129) is perfectly normal in this situation. Again, however, if it were in the A-not-A form, it would seem strange:

(130)    ??nǐ        chī        bu        chī        píngguo ?  
          you        eat        not        eat        apple

Do you eat apples?

What is clearly brought out by these examples is that if the speech situation is in conflict with the speaker's assumption and s/he wishes to ask a question to clarify the conflict, the A-not-A form cannot be used for the question. In (128), the context is one in which B's assumption, that s/he has not lost weight, conflicts with the speech situation in which A has asserted that B *has* lost weight. Wishing then to ask questions to clarify the conflict, B can pose the questions only in the particle form and not in the A-not-A form.

At this point, we can make a general statement about the use of these two types of questions:

(ii) The A-not-A question is used only in a *neutral context*, whereas the particle-question may be used in a *neutral* or a *nonneutral context*.<sup>2</sup> A neutral context is one in which the questioner has no assumptions concerning the proposition that is being questioned and wishes to know whether it is true. Whenever the questioner brings to the speech situation an assumption about either the truth or the falsity of the proposition s/he is asking about, then that context is nonneutral with respect to that question.

Since principle (ii) states that the particle question may be used in either a neutral or a nonneutral context, it implies that in a neutral context one may use either a particle question or an A-not-A question to seek confirmation or negation of a proposition. That this is indeed correct is shown by the fact that, for example, as a greeting, one may use either the particle question:

(131)    (nǐ)        hǎo        mā ?  
          (you)        good        Q

How are you?

or the A-not-A question:

(132) (nǐ) hǎo bu hǎo ?  
 (you) good not good

How are you?

The *a* and *b* sentences of the following examples are also equivalent in the contexts given:

(133) (Before preparing dinner for a guest, the speaker wishes to find out whether the guest drinks wine.)

a. nǐ hē jiǔ ma ?  
 you drink wine Q

Do you drink wine?

b. nǐ hē bu hē jiǔ ?  
 you drink not drink wine

Do you drink wine?

(134) (After seeing a movie with a friend, the speaker wishes to find out whether the friend liked the movie.)

a. nǐ xǐhuan bu xǐhuan zhèi  
 you like not like this  
 — ge diànyǐng ?  
 — CL movie

Did you like this movie?

b. nǐ xǐhuan zhèi — ge diànyǐng ma ?  
 you like this — CL movie Q

Did you like this movie?

The speech contexts described for (133) and (134) are neutral, and since the two question forms are interchangeable in neutral contexts, either one can be used. In

contrast, the contexts for (127) and (129) involved a conflict with the questioner's assumptions. In these two cases, then, only the *ma* question could be used.

In the light of this distinction, we can consider one further example:

(135) ??nǐ      xìng      bu      xìng      Lǐ ?  
           you      surname      not      surname      Li

Do you have the surname Li?

This sentence seems strange even apart from any specific context. Why should this be so? Let us examine (135) in detail: the sentence inquires whether the hearer has the surname *Lǐ*. The most natural situation for making such an inquiry is that the questioner already has some inkling that the hearer's surname is *Lǐ* and wishes to confirm that assumption; the most natural reason for seeking confirmation is that the context offers conflicting information. In other words, the most normal situation in which question (135) might arise is precisely a *nonneutral* context. Since (135) is in the A-not-A form, principle (ii) predicts that it cannot be used in such a context.

In order to make (135) appropriate, we would have to conjure up an unusual speech context, such as this one: imagine a kidnap situation in which for some reason the kidnapper has tried to force the victim to take on the surname *Lǐ*. After pressuring the victim for some time, the kidnapper wishes to find out whether the victim has indeed adopted the surname *Lǐ*:

(136) nǐ      xìng      bu      xìng      Lǐ ?  
           you      surname      not      surname      Li

Do you have the surname Li?

Sentence (136) could be used in this context because here there is no conflict between the speech context and any assumptions on the part of the questioner.

As additional confirmation of this distinction, let's look at rhetorical questions. The person asking a rhetorical question is not genuinely seeking an answer to it because s/he already knows the answer. This means that, by definition, rhetorical questions are cases of the speaker bringing an assumption to the speech situation. That is, the context for a rhetorical question is never a neutral one. The principle stated in (ii), then, correctly predicts that only the *ma* form can be used for rhetorical questions in Mandarin.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the contexts provided, in (137) the assumption concerns the falsity of the proposition, while in (138) the assumption







(143)	wō	chá	—	chū	—	lai
	I	investigate	—	exit	—	come
		—	le	tā	zhuàn	—
		—	PFV	3sg	earn	—
		le	duōshǎo	qián		
		PFV	how:much	money		

I found out how much money s/he makes.

(144)	<u>shénme</u>	rén	zuò	<u>zǒngtǒng</u>	shì
	what	person	serve:as	president	be
		yi	—	jian	hěn
		one	—	CL	very
		zhòngyào	de	shì	
		important	NOM	matter	

Who serves as president is a very important matter.

Disjunctive questions can also be subjects or direct objects of another verb phrase. In the following examples, (145) and (146) contain ordinary disjunctive questions, while (147) and (148) have A-not-A questions. Again, the disjunctive question serving as the subject or direct object is underlined.

(145)	wō	bu	xiǎode	<u>shì</u>	tā	<u>qù</u>
	I	not	know	be	3sg	go
		<u>háishi</u>	nǐ	<u>qù</u>		
		or	you	go		

I don't know whether it's the case that s/he's going or you're going.

(146)	<u>nǐ</u>	jìn	dàxué	<u>háishi</u>	<u>zuò</u>
	you	enter	university	or	do
		<u>shēngyì</u>	méi	yǒu	guānxi
		business	not	exist	relevance

It doesn't matter whether you go to the university or do business.

- (147) wō bu zhīdao tā lái bu lái  
 I not know 3sg come not come

I don't know whether s/he is coming or not.

- (148) tā kěyi bu kěyi chū  
 3sg have:permission not have:permission exit  
 — qu shi yi  
 — go be one  
 — ge wènti  
 — CL problem

Whether s/he can go out is a problem.

These examples show that both question-word questions and disjunctive questions can occur as the subject or direct object of a verb phrase. Particle questions, however, cannot. Contrast (149) and (150):

- (149) nimen lái bu lái méi yǒu guānxi  
 you:PL come not come not exist relevance

It doesn't matter whether or not you (plural) come.

- (150) \*nimen lái ma méi yǒu guānxi  
 you:PL come Q not exist relevance

In (149) an A-not-A question serves as the subject of the verb phrase *méi yǒu guānxi* 'not have relevance'. Example (150) shows that the same question in its particle question form cannot serve as the subject of another verb phrase. Examples (151) and (152) show that the same is true of questions serving as direct objects:

- (151) nī bu zhīdao tā lái bu lái  
 you not know 3sg come not come

You don't know whether or not s/he's coming.



b.  $\frac{wǔ}{\text{five}} - \frac{diǎnzhōng}{\text{o'clock}}$

Five o'clock.

(156) A:  $\frac{tā}{\text{3sg}} \frac{gēn}{\text{with}} \frac{shéi}{\text{who}} \frac{niàn}{\text{study}} - \frac{shū}{\text{book}}?$

Who does s/he study with?

B:  $\left( \frac{gēn}{\text{with}} \right) \frac{Lǐsì}{\text{Lisi}} \left( \frac{niàn}{\text{study}} - \frac{shū}{\text{book}} \right)$

S/He studies with Lisi.

The answers to disjunctive and particle questions, however, are slightly more complex. Let's consider disjunctive questions first. Disjunctive questions present a choice to the listener. The natural response, then, is one of the options named in the question:

(157) A:  $\frac{nèi}{\text{that}} - \frac{běn}{\text{CL}} \frac{shū}{\text{book}} \frac{shì}{\text{be}} \frac{hóng}{\text{red}}$   
 $\frac{de}{\text{NOM}} \frac{háishi}{\text{or}} \frac{bái}{\text{white}} \frac{de}{\text{NOM}}?$

Is that book red or white?

B:  $\left( \frac{shì}{\text{be}} \right) \frac{hóng}{\text{red}} \frac{de}{\text{NOM}}$

(It's) red.

(158) A:  $\frac{tā}{\text{3sg}} \frac{jīntian}{\text{today}}, \frac{míngtiān}{\text{tomorrow}}, \frac{háishi}{\text{or}}$   
 $\frac{hòutiān}{\text{day:after:tomorrow}} \frac{lái}{\text{come}}?$

Is s/he coming today, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow?

B: (tā) jīntian (lái)  
3sg today come

S/He's coming today.

Similarly, if the disjunction is of the A-not-A form, the natural answer is to choose either "A" or "not A." This also applies to tag questions, since they contain a tag in the A-not-A form:

(159) A: nǐ yào bu yào chī júzi ?  
you want not want eat orange

Do you want to eat an orange?

B: bu yào , xièxie  
not want thank

No thanks.

(160) A: tā màn-màn-de pǎo háishi bu  
3sg slowly run or not  
màn-màn-de pǎo ?  
slowly run

Does s/he run slowly?

B: (tā) màn-màn-de pǎo  
3sg slowly run

(S/He) runs slowly.

(161) A: nǐ hē bu hē jiǔ ?  
you drink not drink wine

Do you drink wine?

B: (wǒ) hē (jiǔ)  
I drink wine

Yes.

- (162) A:    nǐ      yǒu      gāi      xǐ      de  
                  you      exist      should      wash      NOM
- yīfu ,      duì      bù      duì ?  
    clothes      right      not      right

**You have some clothes that need to be washed, right?**

B:    duì  
       right

Right.

These examples show that to answer a disjunctive question of any type, including tag questions, the respondent chooses one of the options presented in the question, which s/he may then elaborate on, as illustrated in (159).

With a particle question, however, there are often several possible types of answers. Let's consider them in terms of a specific example. If the speaker asks the question in (163), the respondent can answer affirmatively with (164) *a*, *b*, or *c*, or negatively with (165) *a*, *b*, or *c*:

- (163)    nǐ      xìng      Lǐ      ma ?  
                  you      surname      Li      Q

Are you named Li?

- (164) *a.*    (wǒ)      xìng      Lǐ  
                  I      surname      Li

Yes.

- b.*    shì      (de)  
       be      NOM

Yes.

- c.*    duì  
       right

That's right.



(165) a. bu (xìng) Li  
 not surname Li

No.

b. bu shì (de)  
 not be NOM

No.

c. bu duì  
 not right

That's not right.

The *a* responses in (164) and (165) show that a particle question can be answered with the verb phrase named in the question or its negative counterpart. The *b* responses, however, show that a particle question can also be answered with *shì (de)* or *bu shì (de)* even if the questions themselves do not contain any *shì*. *Shì (de)* and *bu shì (de)* say, in effect, 'it is the case' and 'it is not the case', respectively. The *c* answers show that *duì* 'right' and *bu duì* 'not right' can also serve as answers to particle questions. The *b* and *c* answers, though, clearly cannot be responses to disjunctive questions of any type because a disjunctive question presents a choice. The double asterisk (\*\*) in the examples below indicates that the answers cannot occur with the question given:

(166) A: nǐ qù hái shì tā qù ?  
 you go or 3sg go

Are you going, or is s/he going?

B: \*\*shì (de)  
 be NOM

Yes.

C: \*\*duì  
 right

That's right.

(167) A: nǐ yào bu yào dǎ qiáo — pái ?  
 you want not want hit bridge — card

Do you want to play bridge?

B: \*\*bu shì (de)  
 not be NOM

No.

C: \*\*bu duì  
 not right

That's not right.

Given the meanings of *shì (de)* and *bu shì (de)* as 'it is the case' and 'it is not the case', respectively, and of *duì* and *bu duì* as 'that's right' and 'that's not right', respectively, we can also understand how these answers are used in response to *negative* particle questions.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, since an A-not-A question presents a neutral choice between an affirmative and its negative counterpart, the only way to express a negative question is with a question particle. As in English, negative questions are generally used when the situation causes us to question an earlier assumption. For example, if A knew that B goes to class every day at 9 A.M. and one morning finds B heading for the beach at that hour, s/he would say:

(168) nǐ bu shàng — kè ma ?  
 you not ascend — class Q

Aren't you going to class (i.e., I had assumed you would, since you generally do)?

To such a negative question, the affirmative responses in (172) *a* and *b* both affirm that 'it is the case' or 'it is right' that B is *not* going to class:

(169) a. shì (de) <sup>ㄝ</sup>  
 be NOM

It is the case.

*b.*    *duì*  
right

That's right.

The negative responses in (170) *a* and *b*, on the other hand, would say that 'it is *not* the case' or 'it is *not* right' that B is not going to class.

(170) *a.*    *bu*    *shì*    (de)  
                 not    be    NOM

It's not the case.

*b.*    *bu*    *duì*  
         not    right

That's not right.

In other words, in Mandarin, the answer to a particle question affirms or denies the statement to which the *ma* is added, regardless of whether that statement itself is affirmative or negative.

### Notes

1. This section is adapted from Li and Thompson (1979*b*).
2. The nonneutrality of particle questions is mentioned by Chao (1968:800), Hashimoto (1971*a*:16), and Rygaloff (1973:54).
3. This point is due to Rygaloff (1973:54).
4. See also the discussion of negative questions in section 7 of this chapter.
5. This discussion is adapted from Chao (1968) and Elliott (1965).

## CHAPTER 19

# Comparison

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### 19.1 Comparative Constructions

Comparative sentences in any language always involve comparing two things along some dimension. There are three types of relationships these two compared items can have to each other. With respect to the dimension along which they are being compared, one compared thing can be (1) *more* than the other (*superiority*); (2) *less* than the other (*inferiority*); or (3) the *same* as the other (*equality*). The basic pattern for all of these three sentence types in Mandarin is this:

(1) X    comparison word    Y (adverb)    dimension

What this formula says is that to express a comparative message in Mandarin, one must state the subject or topic (X), the item to which that subject or topic is compared (Y), and the predicate, which names the dimension along which the comparison is being made. The comparison morphemes for each of the three kinds of comparison are, first, *superiority*: *bǐ* (literally 'compare with'), as in (2):

(2)    tā            bǐ            nǐ            gāo  
         3sg        compare        you        tall  
         他        大 于        你  
         S/He is taller than you are.

second, *inferiority*: *méi(yǒu)* ('not') . . . (*nème*), *bùrú* (literally 'not as') . . . (*nème*), as in (3):

## COMPARISON

- (3)  $\begin{matrix} \text{不, 比} \\ \text{tā} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{méi(yǒu)} \\ \text{bùrú} \end{array} \right\} \end{matrix}$     nǐ    (nème)    gāo
- 3sg     $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{not} \\ \text{not:as} \end{array} \right\}$     you    (that)    tall

S/He is not as tall as you are.

and, third, *equality*: *gēn* . . . *yíyàng* (literally 'with . . . same'), as in (4):

- (4)  $\begin{matrix} \text{跟} \\ \text{tā} \quad \text{gēn} \quad \text{nǐ} \quad \text{yíyàng} \quad \text{gāo} \\ \text{3sg} \quad \text{with} \quad \text{you} \quad \text{same} \quad \text{tall} \end{matrix}$

S/He is as tall as you are.

Here are some examples illustrating various types of elements that can be compared: in (5)–(14) below, we will not gloss the comparison morphemes.

- (5)  $\begin{matrix} \text{比, 比, 比} \\ \text{tā} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{bǐ} \\ \text{méi(yǒu)/bùrú} \\ \text{gēn} \end{array} \right\} \end{matrix}$     nǐ     $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{(nème)} \\ \text{yíyàng} \end{array} \right\}$     dǎnxiǎo
- 3sg    you    timid

S/He is  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{more timid than} \\ \text{not as timid as} \\ \text{as timid as} \end{array} \right\}$  you are.

- (6)  $\begin{matrix} \text{tā} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{bǐ} \\ \text{méi(yǒu)/bùrú} \\ \text{gēn} \end{array} \right\} \end{matrix}$     nǐ     $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{(nème)} \\ \text{yíyàng} \end{array} \right\}$     像    xǐhuān    Zhāngsān
- 3sg    you    like    Zhangsan

S/He  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{likes} \\ \text{doesn't like} \\ \text{likes} \end{array} \right\}$  Zhangsan  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{more than} \\ \text{as much as} \\ \text{as much as} \end{array} \right\}$  you do.

- (7) tā { bǐ  
méi(yǒu)/bùrú  
gēn } wǒ { (nème)  
yíyàng } zǎo lái   lái   lái  
3sg I   来得比战争 early come

S/He { arrived earlier than  
didn't arrive as early as  
arrived as early as } I did.

- (8) qù { bǐ  
méi(yǒu)/bùrú  
gēn } bu qù { (nème)  
yíyàng } hǎo  
go not go good

Going is { better than  
not as good as  
as good as } not going.

跑得比你快 / 比你跑得快

- (9) Zhāngsān ( pǎo de { bǐ  
méi(yǒu)/bùrú  
gēn } nǐ  
Zhangsan run CSC you  
(pǎo de) { (nème)  
yíyàng } kuài  
(run CSC) fast

Zhangsan { runs faster than  
doesn't run as fast as  
runs as fast as } you do.

- (10) wǒ { bǐ  
méi(yǒu)/bùrú  
gēn } zuótiān { (nème)  
yíyàng } shūfu  
I yesterday comfortable

I { feel better than } (I did) yesterday.  
 { don't feel as good as }  
 { feel as good as }

(11) tā { bǐ } wǒ { (nème) } wǎn  
 { méi(yǒu)/bùrú } { yíyàng }

3sg I late

吃 饭 比 我 晚

chī - fàn

eat - food

S/He eats { later than } I do.  
 { not as late as }  
 { as late as }

(12) xiàng <sup>象 子 比 熊 长</sup> { bǐ } xióng bizi { (nème) } cháng  
 { méi(yǒu)/bùrú } { yíyàng }

elephant bear nose long

Elephants { have longer noses than } bears.  
 { don't have noses as long as (those of) }  
 { have noses as long as (those of) }

(13) jīntiān { bǐ } zuótiān { (nème) } rè  
 { méi(yǒu)/bùrú } { yíyàng }

today yesterday hot

Today is { hotter than } yesterday.  
 { not as hot as }  
 { as hot as }





verb, such as *pǎo-guò-lái* 'run over here', then, it is semantically unacceptable for such a verb to occur in a comparative construction:

(16) \**tā*    *hěn*    *pǎo*    -    *guò*    -    *lái*  
 3sg    very    run    -    cross    -    come

(17) \**tā*    *bǐ*    *wǒ*    *pǎo*    -    *guò*    -    *lái*  
 3sg    COMP    I    run    -    cross    -    come

Similarly, since one cannot be at home to a certain extent, a nonactivity predicate, such as *zài jiā* 'be at home', can neither be modified by *hěn* nor appear in a comparative construction:

(18) \**tā*    *hěn*    *zài*    *jiā*  
 3sg    very    at    home

(19) \**tā*    *bǐ*    *wǒ*    *zài*    *jiā*  
 3sg    COMP    I    at    home

### 19.1.2 Subject/Topic and the Standard of Comparison

The second important feature of comparative constructions has to do with the nature of X and Y in formula (1), which is repeated here:

(1) X    comparison word    Y    (adverb)    dimension

The generalization about X and Y is that X must be the subject or the topic (see section 4.1 of chapter 4) of the verb phrase that expresses the dimension, and Y must be understood as the standard of comparison.

This generalization has several implications. First, nothing but subjects and topics can be compared. Thus, for example, direct objects cannot be compared at all, since, no matter where the direct object is placed, the sentence will not fit the formula. Thus, to express 'I like dogs better than cats', none of these sentences is acceptable:

(20) a. \**wǒ*    *xǐhuān*    *gǒu*    *bǐ*    *māo*  
 I    like    dog    COMP    cat

b. \**wǒ*    *gǒu*    *bǐ*    *māo*    *xǐhuān*  
 I    dog    COMP    cat    like

c. \*gòu      bǐ      māo      wó      xīhuān  
          dog   COMP   cat      I      like

The idea, to be expressible, must be stated in such a way that it conforms to the conditions given above. We can do this by comparing 'my liking of dogs' to 'my liking of cats' along the dimension *duō* 'much' with a complex stative construction (see chapter 22):

(21) *猫跟狗比, 我更喜欢狗。  
       我喜歡貓超過喜歡狗*

(21)	wǒ	xīhuān	gòu	bǐ	wó	xīhuān	māo	xīhuān
	I	like	dog	COMP	I	like	cat	like
			de	duō				much
			CSC	much				

I like dogs better than cats.

Similarly, coverb phrases cannot be compared. Again, a sentence comparing such phrases is not acceptable:

(22) \*wǒ      xīhuān      zài      chízi      -      li      bǐ      zài  
          I      like      at      pool      -      in      COMP      at

	hǎi	-	li	yóuyǒng
	ocean	-	in	swim

(I like to swim in the pool more than in the ocean.)

This sentence is unacceptable because the compared phrase *zài chízi-li* 'in the pool' is not the subject, and *yóuyǒng* 'swim' is not the verb for the compared phrase. Again, a complex stative construction, as given in (23), is needed to express in Mandarin the idea 'I like to swim in the pool more than in the ocean':

*跟在海里游泳相比, 我更喜欢在游泳池里游泳。*

(23) wǒ      xīhuān      zài      chízi      -      li      yóuyǒng      bǐ  
          I      like      at      pool      -      in      swim      COMP

*在海里游泳和在游泳池里游泳, 我更喜欢在游泳池里游泳超过*

	wǒ	xīhuān	zài	hǎi	-	li	yóuyǒng
	I	like	at	ocean	-	in	swim
			xīhuān	de	duō		
			like	CSC	much		

I like to swim in the pool more than in the ocean.

The grammatical generalization for the structure of comparative sentences, then, is:

(i) What is being compared in Mandarin must be stated grammatically in terms of the subject or the topic, and the verb phrase must characterize the dimension along which the comparison is being made.

Sometimes the comparative relationship between the terms X and Y is not directly specified, but must be *inferred*. For example, in the sentence

(24) wō      bǐ      zuótiān      shūfu  
           I      COMP      yesterday      comfortable

I feel better than I did yesterday.

where X is wō 'I' and Y is zuótiān 'yesterday', although wō 'I' is the subject of the verb *shūfu* 'feel good', we are of course not directly comparing wō 'I' and zuótiān 'yesterday'. Rather, what we understand from this sentence is that 'I today' am feeling better than 'I yesterday'. That is, speakers of Mandarin must sometimes infer what makes sense from a comparative sentence in which X and Y are not directly comparable. This kind of inferring is typical of everyday communication in any language.

A similar example requiring one to infer what is being compared is a sentence such as (9) above. If that sentence occurs with *bǐ* 'compare' and without the second occurrence of *pào de* in parentheses, it looks like this:

(25) Zhāngsān      pǎo      de      bǐ      nǐ      kuài  
           Zhangsan      run      CSC      COMP      you      fast

Zhangsan runs faster than you do.

In (25), X is Zhāngsān pǎo de 'Zhangsan running' and Y is nǐ 'you'. Once again, though, a speaker of Mandarin would understand that sentence (25) is not comparing 'Zhangsan running' with 'you', but comparing 'Zhangsan running' with 'you *running*'. This second *pào de* 'running' after nǐ simply does not have to be explicitly mentioned in the sentence, although it may be, as sentence (9) illustrates.

## 19.2 Superlative

The superlative of a measurable verb phrase is expressed by the adverb *zuì* 'most' placed immediately before the verb or the measurable adverb of the verb phrase. If the measurable verb phrase is composed of an adjectival verb, *dìng*

定

'most' may be used in place of *zui*. Sentences (26)–(33) provide some examples of the superlative:

- (26) zhèi — tiáo wéijīn — zui hǎo  
 this — CL scarf most good

This scarf is the best.

- (27) nèi — ge xióng dīng piàoliàng  
 that — CL bear most pretty

That bear is the prettiest.

- (28) zhèi — jiàn shì zui máfan  
 this — CL matter most troublesome

This matter is the most troublesome.

- (29) jīntiān dīng lěng  
 today most cold

Today is the coldest.

- (30) wǒ zui ài xiǎo dòngwù  
 I most love small animal

I love small animals the most.

- (31) wǒ zui xīnshāng gējù  
 I most appreciate opera

I appreciate operas the most.

- (32) tā zui wǎn qǐ — 起床最晚  
 3sg most late rise — bed

S/He is the latest to get out of bed.

- (33) nǐ      zuì      zǎo      xué      Zhōngwén  
 ↗ you      most      early      learn      Chinese

You are the first to learn Chinese.

The verbs in (26)–(29) are all adjectival verbs. They can occur with either *zuì* or *dīng*. The verb phrases of (30) and (31) contain transitive nonactivity verbs, and the verbs in (32) and (33) are modified by measurable adverbs. For verb phrases such as those in (30)–(33), *zuì* is preferable to *dīng*. In certain Mandarin dialects, however, *zuì* and *dīng* are interchangeable, even in those verb phrases.

Just as in English, *zuì* can be used together with *yi* 'one' plus a classifier with the nonabsolute meaning 'a most':

- (34) tā      shì      yī      –      ge      zuì      zhòngyào  
 3sg      be      ↗ one      –      CL      most      important
- de      lǐngdǎo      rényuán  
 NOM      lead      personnel

S/He is a most important leader.

- (35) zhèi      shì      yī      –      jiàn      zuì      tóu      –  
 this      be      one      –      CL      most      head      –
- téng      de      shì  
 hurt      NOM      matter

This is a most headache-causing matter.

It is important to note that (34) and (35) do not convey the messages of (36) and (37):

(36) S/He is one of the most important leaders.

(37) This is one of the most headache-causing matters.

The sentences that directly express (36) and (37) are given below:

- (38) tā      shì      zuì      zhòngyào      de      lǐngdǎo  
       3sg      be      most      important      NOM      lead
- rén yuán      zhī yī  
                  personnel      one:of

S/He is one of the most important leaders.

- (39) zhèi      shì      zuì      tóu      –      téng  
       this      be      most      head      –      hurt
- de      shì      zhī yī  
                  NOM      matter      one:of

This is one of the most headache-causing matters.

## Nominalization

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Every language has *grammatical* processes by which a verb, a verb phrase, a sentence, or a portion of a sentence including the verb can function as a noun phrase. These *grammatical* processes are called *nominalization*. Different languages, of course, may employ different strategies for nominalization. In Mandarin, nominalization involves placing the particle *de* after a verb, a verb phrase, a sentence, or a portion of a sentence including the verb.<sup>1</sup> In examples (1)–(3), the nominalization has been underlined:

- (1) zhèi zhǒng zhíwù kěyǐ dāng — zuò  
 this type plant can take — be

chī de  
 eat NOM ↘

(One) can take this type of plant as food.

- (2) zhòng shuǐguǒ de hěn nán guòhuó  
 grow fruit NOM ↘ very difficult make:living

It is difficult for fruit growers to make a living.<sup>2</sup>

- (3) wǒmen hézuò de wèntí hěn jiǎndān  
 we cooperate NOM problem very simple

The problem concerning our cooperation is very simple.

In sentence (1), the verb, *chī* 'eat', is nominalized; in (2) what is nominalized is the verb phrase, *zhòng shuǐguǒ* 'grow fruit'; and in (3) a sentence, *wǒmen hézuò* 'we cooperate', is nominalized. Notice that in (3), the nominalized sentence, *wǒmen hézuò de*, immediately precedes the noun, *wèntí* 'problem'. The relation between the nominalized sentence and the following noun can be described as one of *modifier head noun*, where the head noun is *wèntí* 'problem' and the nominalized sentence serves as a modifier. Thus, as (1)–(3) illustrate, a nominalization can function either as a noun phrase ([1], [2]) or as a modifier of another noun ([3]). In the following sections, we will consider both of these functions, as well as a third one: the use of a nominalization after the copula verb *shì* (the *shì . . . de* construction).

### 20.1 A Nominalization Functioning as a Noun Phrase

Sentences (1) and (2) above provide examples of nominalizations functioning as noun phrases. Let us add to these two examples sentence (4):

(4)    nǐ        mèi        yǒu        wǒ    xǐhuān    de  
          you       not        exist     I       like     NOM    入

You don't have what I like.

What is nominalized in (4) is neither a verb phrase nor a sentence, but a part of a sentence consisting of a subject, *wǒ* 'I', and a transitive verb, *xǐhuān* 'like'. The direct object of the transitive verb, *xǐhuān*, is absent. Now, how do we know that the nominalized verb *chī de* 'eat NOM' in (1) should be interpreted as 'food (what is for eating)', but not as 'the one who eats'? How do we determine that the meaning of *zhòng shuǐguǒ de* 'grow fruit NOM' in (2) is 'fruit grower' and that the meaning of *wǒ xǐhuān de* 'I like NOM' in (4) is 'what I like'?

Let us lead up to a general answer to this question by again considering examples (2) and (4). The verb of the nominalized verb phrase in (2) is *zhòng* 'grow, plant'. *Zhòng* is a transitive verb, which means that it is always understood in terms of two participants, either overtly specified or else understood; in this case, the two participants are a subject, someone who does the planting, and a direct object, that which is planted. In the nominalization in (2), we see that the direct object is specified as *shuǐguǒ* 'fruit', but that the subject, who is doing the planting, is not specified. And now we notice that the interpretation of the nominalized verb phrase is precisely 'the fruit growers', that is, the ones who do the planting.



Similarly, in (4), the nominalized verb, *xīhuān* 'like', is also a transitive verb whose meaning again includes two participants: someone who does the liking and what is liked. In the nominalized phrase in (4), however, the one who does the liking is specified (*wǒ* 'I'), but what is liked is not, and here the nominalized phrase *wǒ xīhuān de* 'I like NOM' refers to what is liked.

With this analysis of the interpretation of these nominalizations, a pattern begins to emerge, which we can express in (i) and (ii):

(i) To be used alone as a noun phrase, a nominalization must contain a verb with at least one of its participants unspecified.

(ii) If there is only one participant unspecified, then the referent of the nominalization is the same as that of the missing participant.

The generalization provided in (i) and (ii), however, does not account for the meaning of the nominalized verb in (1). Here is sentence (1) again:

(1)	zhèi	zhǒng	zhǐwù	kěyǐ	dāng	—	zuò
	this	type	plant	can	take	—	be
		<u>chī</u>	<u>de</u>				
		eat	NOM				

(One) can take this type of plant as food.

Like *zhǒng* 'plant' and *xīhuān* 'like', the nominalized verb in (1), *chī* 'eat', is also a transitive verb, which implies that its meaning requires two participants—a subject, the one who does the eating, and a direct object, what it is that is eaten. This time, however, both participants are unspecified. The nominalized verb, *chī de* 'eat NOM', however, has the meaning 'food = what is to be eaten', and not 'the eaters'. This example suggests that a supplement to the generalizations (i) and (ii) is needed. The supplemental rule is stated in (iii):

(iii) If both the subject and direct object participants are unspecified in a nominalization, then that nominalization will generally be understood to have the same referent as the unspecified *direct object* participant of that verb.

In (1), then, the unspecified direct object participant of the verb *chī* 'eat' is 'what is eaten', and the nominalization *chī de* 'eat NOM' refers to that participant.

We can extend our consideration of generalizations (i)–(iii) to verbs that not only have subject and direct object participants but also inherently have indirect object participants as well (see chapter 10 for a discussion of indirect objects). For example, the meaning of the verb *mài* 'sell' requires the existence of three

participants, either overtly specified or understood: the seller, the buyer, and the entity for sale. The simple sentence (5) serves as an illustration:

- (5) Zhāngsān   mại   –   le   yì   –   jià  
 Zhangsan   sell   –   PFV   one   –   CL  
  
                   fēijī   gěi   Lìsì  
                   airplane   to   Lisi

Zhangsan sold an airplane to Lisi.

In (5), *Zhāngsān*, the subject noun phrase, is the seller; *Lìsì*, the indirect object noun phrase, is the buyer; and *fēijī* 'airplane', the direct object noun phrase, represents the entity for sale. Often the buyer is unspecified in a simple sentence involving the verb *mài* 'sell'. When the buyer is unspecified, it is either because the speaker and the hearer already know who the buyer is or because the speaker does not think that specifying the buyer is important. In other words, when the buyer is unspecified in a simple sentence, it is a matter of communicative strategy.

Having established that the verb *mài* 'sell' inherently has three participants, we will now consider various nominalizations involving *mài* as the verb:

- (6) mài de   bù   rú   chū   –   zū   de   hǎo  
 sell   NOM \ not   as   exit   –   rent ^   NOM   good

What is for sale is not as good as what is for rent.

- (7) wǒ mại de   shì   Zhōngguó   huò  
 I   sell   NOM ^   be   China   product

What I sell is Chinese merchandise.

- (8) mài gěi Lìsì de   shì   zuì   guì   de  
 sell   to   Lisi   NOM ^   be   most   expensive   NOM

What is sold to Lisi is the most expensive.

- (9) mài qìchē de   dàbàn   dōu   shì   hǎo   rén  
 sell   car   NOM ^   majority   all   be   good   person

Car sellers are mostly good people.

The principle given in (iii), that nominalizations with an unspecified direct object generally refer to the referent of that direct object, correctly accounts for the interpretation of sentence (8): the nominalization in (8) refers to what is sold. In (9), on the other hand, the direct object participant, *qìchē* 'car', is specified, but the subject—the seller—and the indirect object—the buyer—are unspecified. In this case, the nominalization refers to the seller, that is, the subject participant, but it cannot refer to the buyer, the indirect object participant. In sentence (7), both the direct object and the indirect object are unspecified, and in sentence (6), all three participants, the subject, the direct object, and the indirect object, are unspecified. Nevertheless the nominalizations in (6) and (7) refer to the direct object, namely, what is sold. It turns out, then, that the rule we need to supply in addition to (iii) in order to account for sentences (6), (7), and (9) is simply this:

(iv) A nominalization used alone as a noun phrase never refers to the indirect object participant.

The nominalization in (10) illustrates rule (iv): (10) is ungrammatical because the only unspecified participant of the verb in the nominalization is the indirect object.

(10)    \*wǒ      mài      qìchē      de  
          I        sell      car        NOM

Structurally, then, a nominalization functioning as a noun phrase consists of a portion of a sentence including the verb, followed by the particle *de*, where one of the participants normally associated with that verb is missing. The interpretation of the nominalization is governed by principles (i)–(iii), specifying to which of the missing participants the nominalization is understood to refer.

## 20.2 Nominalizations Modifying a Head Noun

A nominalization can also serve to modify a following noun; in such a construction the noun being modified is called the *head noun*. There are two types of constructions involving a nominalization modifying a head noun. Both have the form *nominalization* + *head noun*. One can be called a relative clause construction, while the other involves a complement to an abstract head noun.<sup>3</sup> We will discuss each of them separately.

### 20.2.1 Relative Clause Constructions

A *relative clause* in any language is a clause that restricts the reference of the head noun. A nominalization can be called a relative clause if the head noun that it



Now, though, let's suppose that the relative clause contains a verb with more than one unspecified participant. In such a case, the interpretation depends on what the head noun is. Consider a nominalization such as *pīping de* 'criticize NOM', which consists of the transitive verb *pīping* 'criticize', whose meaning requires two participants, one who gives the criticism, and one who receives it. Since under normal circumstances both of these participants must be human, if a relative clause contains a verb such as *pīping* 'criticize' with neither of its participants specified, and this clause modifies a head noun referring to a human being, such as *rén* 'person', the head noun could refer to *either* of these two participants; in other words, it would be ambiguous, as shown in (13):

- (13) zuótiān    pīping    de    rén    dōu  
 yesterday    criticize    NOM    person    all
- bu            zài        zhèlǐ  
 not            at         here

{ The people who criticized (others) yesterday are all not here. }  
 { The people whom (others) criticized yesterday are all not here. }

Now consider another transitive verb, *yíng* 'win (in an argument or a bet)'. This time, the meaning of the verb requires a subject participant who must be human, the one who wins, and a direct object participant that is normally inanimate, such as *qián* 'money'.

Now, if *yíng* occurs in a relative clause with both of these participants unspecified, the semantic properties of the head noun will determine the interpretation of the construction *relative clause + head noun*. Let's look at examples (14) and (15):

- (14) jīntiān    yíng    de    qián    fù    fáng    —    zū  
 today        win    NOM    money    pay    house    —    rent

The money (we) won today goes to pay the rent.

- (15) jīntiān    yíng    de    rén    yùnqì    hǎo  
 today        win    NOM    person    luck    good

The people who won today had good luck.

In (14), the head noun, *qián* 'money', cannot refer to the missing subject participant, 'the ones who won', since 'money' can't do the winning; it can, however,

refer to 'what was won'. The result is the meaning 'the money that (we) won today' for the relative-clause-plus-head-noun construction. In (15), on the other hand, the meaning of the head noun, *rén* 'people', allows it to refer to 'the ones who won'; hence the relative-clause-plus-head-noun construction in (15) would normally be interpreted as 'the people who won today'. Imagine, though, a circumstance in which the stakes at a gambling event are people. In such a context, sentence (15) would be, like (13), ambiguous, its other interpretation being 'The people whom (we) won today had good luck'.

So far we have been considering relative clauses in which either the subject or the direct object participant is missing from the nominalization. It is quite possible, however, for the head noun to refer to some other participant involved in the situation named by the relative clause, such as an instrument used, the location or time at which the event happened, or even the reason for which or the method by which it occurred. Here are some examples.

(i) Instrument:

- (16) xiūli shuǐ — guǎnzi de jùzi  
 repair water — pipe NOM saw

the saw with which to repair the water pipe

- (17) wǒ xiě xìn de máobǐ  
 I write letter NOM brush:pen

the brush pen I write letters with

(ii) Location:

- (18) Zhāngsān huà huà de fángjiān  
 Zhangsan paint painting NOM room

the room where Zhangsan does his painting

- (19) dēngshān duì pá Ximālāyǎ  
 mountaineering team climb Himalaya  
 shān de lùxiàn  
 mountain NOM path

the path by which the mountaineering team climbed the Himalayas

(iii) Time:

- (20) liàn zúqiú de jìjié  
 practice soccer NOM season

the season when one practices soccer

- (21) wǒmen xiǎo de shíhou  
 we small NOM time

the time when we were small (young)

(iv) Reason:

- (22) wǒ lái zhèr de yuángù  
 I come here NOM reason

the reason why I came here.

(v) Method:

- (23) pǎshǒu tōu dōngxī de fāngfǎ  
 pickpocket steal thing NOM method

the method by which pickpockets steal things

- (24) wǒmen duìfu Sūlián de shǒuduàn  
 we deal:with Soviet:Union NOM tactic

the tactics that we use in dealing with the Soviet Union

In each of the above examples, the head noun refers to something in the nominalization. In (16), for instance, the head noun *jùzi* 'saw' refers to what one uses to repair the pipe with, while in (24), the head noun *shǒuduàn* 'tactic' refers to what we use to deal with the Soviet Union. Similarly, *fāngjiān* in (18) refers to where Zhangsan paints.

In certain positions in the relative clause, a participant may not be unspecified, but must be represented by one of the pronouns in (25) in order for the head noun to refer to it.





(iii) The pivot<sup>1</sup> noun phrase position (see chapter 21):

(30) nǐ qǐng  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{*(tā)} \\ \text{3sg} \end{array} \right)$  hē jiǔ de jiàoshòu  
 you invite drink liquor NOM professor

the professor whom you invited to drink

(31) wǒ quàn  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{*(tā)} \\ \text{3sg} \end{array} \right)$  chū -  
 I advise exit -

guó de cānyiyuán  
 country NOM congressperson

the congressperson whom I advised to leave the country.

(iv) The locative noun phrase position after *zài*:

(32) Zhāngsān zài  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{*(nàr)} \\ \text{there} \end{array} \right)$  zhǎng -  
 Zhangsan at there grow -

dà de cūnzi  
 big NOM village

the village where Zhangsan grew up

The relative clauses illustrated by (26)–(32) are marginal constructions in that they are rarely found in either speech or writing. Although they are not unacceptable, they appear awkward to many speakers of Mandarin.

To sum up our discussion of the relative clause, we observe that a relative clause construction always consists of a nominalization, and it always modifies a head noun by virtue of the fact that the head noun refers to some entity involved in the situation that is described by the relative clause.

### 20.2.2 A Nominalization Serving as the Complement to an Abstract Head Noun

In sharp contrast to the relative clause constructions we have just been considering, the most important characteristic of this noun complement construction is that the head noun is always abstract and does not refer to *any* entity, specified or unspecified, in the modifying clause. We have seen one example in sentence (3).

Here is (3) again, followed by some further examples of head nouns and their complements, with the head noun underlined:

- (3) wǒmen hézuò de wèntí hěn jiǎndān  
 we cooperate NOM problem very simple

The problem concerning our cooperation is very simple.

- (33) tāmen qù Měiguó xué yī  
 they go America study medicine  
 de yìjiàn  
 NOM opinion

the opinion that they should go to America to study medicine.

- (34) wǒmen xiū - huì de tiyì  
 we adjourn - meeting NOM motion

the motion that we adjourn the meeting

- (35) wǒmen zū fángzi de shì  
 we rent house NOM matter

the matter concerning our renting a house

- (36) Měiguó zǒngtǒng cízhí de xīnwén  
 America president resign NOM news

the news that the president of the United States has resigned

In all these examples, the head noun is abstract and does not refer to any entity in the preceding nominalization. Rather, the nominalization modifies the head noun by specifying its "content." Thus, in (3), for example, the "content" of the problem is our cooperation.

The difference between the relative clause construction and the noun complement construction, then, is that in the former the head noun refers to something in the preceding nominalization, while in the latter it does not. In terms of this difference we can show how the two apparently similar constructions can be understood quite differently.

Let's illustrate with a pair of contrasting examples whose head noun is the same abstract noun, *yìjiàn* 'opinion':

- (37) wō     tí     -     chū     -     lái     de     yìjiàn  
       I     raise -     exit -     come    NOM    opinion

the opinion that I put forth

- (38) fǎn            É            de            yìjiàn  
       oppose      Russia      NOM        opinion

the opinion that (we/someone) should oppose Russia

The phrase in (37) is a relative clause construction. The head noun *yìjiàn* 'opinion' refers to the unspecified direct object participant of *tí-chū-lái* 'put forth', in the preceding nominalization, namely, 'what I put forth'. The phrase in (38), on the other hand, is a noun complement construction. Here the head noun refers to nothing in the preceding nominalization. Instead, that nominalization names the content of the opinion, namely, that we/someone should oppose Russia.

### 20.3 The *shì* . . . *de* Construction

The *shì* . . . *de* construction is a special sentence type in which a nominalization is used. Structurally, it consists of a subject followed by the copula verb *shì* 'be' followed by a nominalization, as schematized in (39):

- (39) subject    shì    nominalization<sup>5</sup>

Sentences such as (40) and (41) are examples:

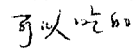
- (40) tā        shì        zuótiān    lái        de  
       3sg      bc        yesterday    come    NOM

The situation is that s/he came yesterday.<sup>6</sup>

- (41) wǒmen    shì        cóng    Riběn    zǒu        de  
       we        be        from    Japan    go        NOM

The situation is that we left from Japan.

There are several features of this construction which set it apart from other sentences that superficially have the form of (39), such as (42):

- (42)  $\begin{array}{cccccc} \text{b\bar{a}l\bar{a}} & \text{sh\bar{i}} & \text{ch\bar{i}} & - & \text{de} \\ \text{guava} & \text{be} & \text{eat} & - & \text{NOM} \end{array}$
-   
 Guavas are { to be eaten. }  
                   { for eating. }

First, in a *shì* . . . *de* construction, the subject of the sentence must be the same as the missing subject participant in the nominalization. Thus, in (40), *tā* 's/he' is the same as the subject of *zuótiān lái de* 'yesterday came NOM', namely, the one who came yesterday'.

Second, the *shì* . . . *de* construction contains an adverbial word or phrase or an auxiliary verb giving the circumstances of the event in the nominalization. In (40), for example, *zuótiān* 'yesterday' names the temporal circumstances of the event in the nominalization.

Third, the *shì* 'be' in this type of construction can always be omitted—so sentence (43), without the *shì*, is an alternate form of (40) above:

- (43)  $\begin{array}{cccc} \text{t\bar{a}} & \text{zuóti\bar{a}n} & \text{lái} & \text{(de)} \\ \text{3sg} & \text{yesterday} & \text{come} & \text{NOM} \end{array}$

The situation is that s/he came yesterday.

Because the *shì* 'be' can always be omitted, from this point on we will put it in parentheses to indicate that it is optional.

Fourth, when a direct object occurs in the nominalization of the *shì* . . . *de* construction, an interesting reversal can take place: a sentence of the form

- (44) noun phrase shì 'be' verb direct object de

can occur with the direct object and the *de* in the opposite order:

- (45) noun phrase shì 'be' verb de direct object

For example, a sentence such as

- (46) a. tāmen (shì) bā – diǎnzhōng  
 they be eight – o'clock  
 kāi mén de  
 open door NOM

The situation is that they opened at eight o'clock.

where the *de* follows the object, *mén* 'door', as in pattern (44), has an alternate form:

- (46) b. tāmen (shì) bā – diǎnzhōng  
 they be eight – o'clock  
 kāi de mén  
 open NOM door

The situation is that they opened at eight o'clock.

where *de* precedes the direct object, *mén* 'door', as in pattern (45). Examples (46) *a* and *b* are essentially equivalent, and it makes little difference which one is used.

What the textbooks typically tell us about the meaning of these *shì* . . . *de* constructions is that the material between the *shì* and *de* is somehow being "emphasized," that the *shì* . . . *de* construction emphasizes the circumstances of the action. We can refine this idea of emphasis by showing that the *shì* . . . *de* construction serves to *characterize or explain a situation by affirming or denying some supposition*, as opposed to simply reporting an event.<sup>7</sup>

Let's contrast a pair of sentences for illustration:

- (40) tā (shì) zuótiān lái de  
 3sg be yesterday come NOM

The situation is that s/he came yesterday.

(47) tā      zuótiān      lái      LE  
 3sg      yesterday      come      PFV/CRS

S/He came yesterday.

The important functional difference between (40) and (47) is that (47) describes an action, whereas (40) explains a situation. The best way to illustrate this difference is to see which sentence constitutes an appropriate answer to certain questions. Consider the question in (48):

(48) Why couldn't s/he speak English?

This question demands an explanation of a situation, but not a report of an event. Only (40), the *shì . . . de* construction, but not (47), can be used in an appropriate answer to question (48):

(49) yīnwèi      tā      (shì)      zuótiān      lái      de  
 because      3sg      be      yesterday      come      NOM

才, 刚

Because the situation is that s/he came yesterday.

On the other hand, consider this question:

(50) Has s/he arrived yet?

Question (50) demands information as to whether a certain event has occurred. Only the report of this event, but not the explanation of a situation, constitutes an appropriate answer to (50). Thus, (47), not (40), is an appropriate answer to (50):

(47) tā      zuótiān      lái      LE  
 3sg      yesterday      come      PFV/CRS

到

他已经来了。  
 S/He came yesterday.

In general, the *shì . . . de* construction affirms or denies some assumption that is already in the air by clarifying what the situation is with respect to that assumption. For instance, in order for question (48) to be appropriate in a discourse, an assumption to the effect that 's/he couldn't speak English' must already be in the air. Sentence (49) then affirms that assumption by clarifying the situation with respect to it.

As another example, consider (51):

(51) (person on telephone to shipping company)

wǒmen	bu	shì	gōngsī ,	wǒmen
we	not	be	company	we
		shì	sīrén	de
		be	private	NOM

We're not a company—the situation is that we're private.

A natural context for this sentence would be one in which the shipping-company officer has just asked what kind of company the speaker represents. To explain the situation, the speaker uses the *shì . . . de* sentence (51) to deny the assumption that s/he is part of a company.

Let's consider another example.

(52)	wǒ	(shì)	gēn	nǐ	kāiwánxiào	de
	I	be	with	you	joke	NOM

The situation is that I'm joking with you.

(53)	wǒ	gēn	nǐ	kāiwánxiào
	I	with	you	joke

I am joking with you.

Sentence (53) would be an appropriate answer to a question such as (54):

(54) What's happening?

An appropriate context for (52), the *shì . . . de* construction, on the other hand, would be this: suppose that the speaker has made a statement as a joke, and the hearer, not knowing that the statement was a joke, is troubled by it and asks if the statement was correct. The speaker then utters (52) to deny that the statement was to be taken seriously, because (52) is suitable for reassuring the hearer that the situation they are in is merely a joking one.

Here are two more contrasting pairs as illustrations.

- (55) wōmen (shì) bu huì qīfu  
 we be not likely bully  
 nimen de  
 you(PL) NOM

The situation is that we aren't going to bully you.

- (56) wōmen bu huì qīfu nimen  
 we not likely bully you(PL)

We aren't going to bully you.

An appropriate context for (55) is one in which there is an assumption that the speakers might bully the hearers, and (55) denies the assumption by characterizing the entire situation as nonthreatening. Thus, the tone of (55) is more reassuring than that of (56). Sentence (56), on the other hand, is a neutral negative statement that could be, for instance, part of a proclamation made by an occupation force. It does not offer any *explanation* of the situation.

- (57) zhèi — ge rén hěn wángù ,  
 this — CL person very stubborn  
 wōmen (shì) shuō — bu  
 we be talk — can't  
 — fú tā de  
 — convince 3sg NOM

This person is very stubborn; the situation is that we can't convince him/her.

- (58) zhèi — ge rén hěn wángù , wōmen shuō  
 this — CL person very stubborn we talk  
 — bu — fú tā  
 — can't — convince 3sg

This person is very stubborn. We can't convince him/her.

The first impression a native speaker has about the functional difference between the *shì . . . de* construction of (57) and its non-*shì . . . de* variant, (58), is that the



former is much more final than the latter in saying, 'We can't convince him/her'. In other words, (57) conveys the message that the speaker is sure to the point of being resigned to the fact that this person cannot be convinced. Sentence (58), however, does not imply such a message. This difference in the messages conveyed by the two sentences is again inferred from the general functional difference between the *shì* . . . *de* construction and its non-*shì* . . . *de* variant. The most natural context in which (57) would be used is one in which the issue of convincing the person had already been raised. In this situation, there would be an assumption that s/he could be convinced, and (57) would be used to clarify the situation with respect to that assumption; it explains that, contrary to the assumption, s/he can't be convinced, and so it sounds definitive: the question has been raised, and the answer is no. Sentence (58), on the other hand, states that the speaker cannot convince him/her, but does not characterize the situation with respect to any question or any assumption. The most likely context in which (58) would be used is not one in which the issue of convincing him/her had been discussed, but one in which the speaker is simply making a report about a mission. Thus, with normal intonation, it does not have the final definitive tone of (57).

### Notes

1. There are other functions of *de* in Mandarin. See section 4.2.2 of chapter 4 on associative phrases, section 3.2.2 of chapter 3 on resultative verb compounds, section 8.2.1 of chapter 8 on manner adverbs, and chapter 22 on complex stative constructions.
2. In Mandarin, neither nouns nor nominalizations are marked for number. We have arbitrarily chosen either a singular or a plural interpretation for each of our examples rather than offering both options each time.
3. For further discussion, see Paris (1977).
4. There is another construction that is sometimes translated into English with a relative clause but bears no structural resemblance to the Mandarin relative clause construction we are discussing in this chapter. This construction is a type of serial verb sentence that is discussed and contrasted with the relative clause in section 21.4 of chapter 21:

(i)	tā	yǒu	yī	—	ge	mèimei	huì	jiǎng
	3sg	exist	one	—	CL	sister	know	speak
			Ménggǔ			huà		
			Mongolia			speech		

S/He has a sister who knows how to speak Mongolian.

5. We have taken this idea from Paris (1979a).
6. The reason for this strange translation will be explained shortly.
7. We are grateful to Huang Shuan-fan for discussion of this point.

## CHAPTER 21

# *Serial Verb Constructions*

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We will use the term *serial verb construction* to refer to a sentence that contains two or more verb phrases or clauses juxtaposed without any marker indicating what the relationship is between them.<sup>1</sup> What this means is that in Mandarin there are many sentences that all have the same form, namely, this (where NP = noun phrase, V = verb, and the NPs in parentheses are all optional):

(1) (NP) V (NP) (NP) V (NP)

but that convey different types of messages because of the meanings of the verbs involved and the relationships that are understood to hold between them. That is, the property they all share is that the verb phrases in the serial verb construction always refer to events or states of affairs which are understood to be related as *parts of one* overall event or state of affairs. The exact way in which they are related varies according to the meanings of the verbs in these verb phrases.

We can divide the types of meanings conveyed by serial verb constructions into four groups:

1. Two or more separate events
2. One verb phrase or clause serving as the subject or direct object of another verb
3. Pivotal constructions
4. Descriptive clauses

Let's look at them one by one.

### 21.1 Two or More Separate Events

One of the most obvious messages conveyed by the juxtaposition of two verb phrases or clauses is that of two separate events. As we mentioned just above, the verb phrases or clauses in a serial verb construction describe events that are always understood to be related in some way. In this type of serial verb construction, the two separate events may be understood to be related in one or more of the following four ways:

- (i) Consecutive: One event occurs after the other.
- (ii) Purpose: The first event is done for the purpose of achieving the second.
- (iii) Alternating: The subject alternates between two actions.
- (iv) Circumstance: The first verb phrase describes the circumstances under which the event in the second verb phrase or clause occurs.

*Coordinating*

Many sentences in this group can be understood in more than one way. In the examples below, we give the most natural translation(s) and put a (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) after the translation to indicate which of the four relationships it represents. The verb phrases in each example are underlined.

- (2) wǒ      mǎi      piào      jìn      -      qù  
 I      buy      ticket      enter      -      go

{ I bought a ticket and went in. (i) }  
 { I bought a ticket to go in. (ii) }  
 i V

- (3) tā      tiān      -      tiān      chàng      -      gē      xiě      -      xìn  
 3sg      day      -      day      sing      -      sing      write      -      letter

Everyday s/he sings songs and writes letters. (i), (iii)

- (4) tā      shàng      -      lóu      shuì      -      jiào  
 3sg      ascend      -      stairs      sleep      -      sleep

S/He's going upstairs to sleep. (ii)

- (5) hē diǎn jiū zhuàng — zhuàng dānzi  
 drink a:little wine strengthen — strengthen gall:bladder

{ Drink a little wine, and it will give you courage. (i) }  
 { Drink a little wine to give yourself courage. (ii) }  
 { Get some courage by drinking a little wine. (iv) }  
 (i), (ii), (iv) are marked with an X.

- (6) wǒmen yīnggai xiǎoxīn bu shēng — bìng  
 we should be:careful not produce — sickness

We should be careful not to get sick. ((ii), (iv))  
 (iv) is marked with an X.

- (7) wǒ dìdi kāi — chē chū —  
 I younger:brother drive — car exit —

shì LE  
 affair PFV/CRS

My younger brother had an accident while driving. ((i), (iv))  
 (i), (iv) are marked with an X.

- (8) wǒ zhù zài zhèr gēn tāmen dā — jiáodào  
 I live at here with they hit — interaction

{ I live here and have contact with them. ((i), (iv)) }  
 { I live here in order to have contact with them. (ii) }  
 (i), (ii), (iv) are marked with an X.

- (9) wǒmen zuò huǒchē qù hǎo ba ?  
 we sit train go good SA

Let's go by train, shall we? ((ii), (iv))  
 (ii), (iv) are marked with an X.

- (10) tā qí mǎ chōu — yān  
 3sg ride horse extract — smoke

*rides horse and smokes*

{ S/He rode a horse and smoked. ((i), (iii)) }  
 { S/He rode a horse in order to smoke. (ii) }  
 { S/He rode a horse while smoking. (iv) }  
 (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) are marked with an X.

- (11) wǒmen kāi — huì kǎolǜ nèi — ge wèntí  
 we hold — meeting consider that — CL problem

We'll hold a meeting to consider that problem. ((ii), [iv])

- (12) tā zǒu — lái zǒu — qù  
 3sg walk — come walk — go

S/He walked back and forth. (iii)

- (13) tāmen yòng shǒu chī — fàn  
 they use hand eat — food

They eat with their hands. (iv)

- (14) wǒ yī — ge rén wǎnshàng chū —  
 I one — CL person evening exit —

qu hěn hàipà  
 go very scared

I'm scared to go out alone at night. (iv)

- (15) tā niàn — shū xīn hěn zhuān  
 3sg study — book heart very engrossed

When s/he's studying, s/he's very engrossed. (iv)

- (16) nèi — ge lǎoshī shuō —  
 that — CL teacher say —

huà ài zhuān-wén  
 word love overuse:literary:words

That teacher loves to flaunt literary words when s/he talks. (iv)

In all of these examples, the meanings of the individual verb phrases determine which of the semantic relationships given in (i)–(iv) are possible, and the speech context determines which of these is most likely.

In the type of serial verb construction we are about to consider next, the two verb phrases are *even more tightly bound to each other in that one of them is the subject or direct object of the other*. Let's consider the ways in which this can happen.

## 21.2 One Verb Phrase/Clause Is the Subject or Direct Object of Another

### 21.2.1 The Second Verb Phrase/Clause Is the Direct Object of the First Verb

In this type of serial verb construction, the meaning of the first verb allows it to be followed by a direct object that is a verb phrase or a clause.<sup>2</sup> For example, the verb *yào* 'want' can be followed by a single verb phrase, as in (17), or by a whole clause, as in (18):

- (17) wǒ yào shàng - jiē  
I want ascend - street

I want to go out.

- (18) wǒ yào tā guò - lái  
I want 3sg cross - come

I want him/her to come over here.

Here are some further examples. The verb whose meaning allows it to take a verb phrase or clause as a direct object is underlined twice, and the verb phrase or clause that is functioning as its direct object is underlined once.

- (19) tā fǒurèn tā zuò - cuò le  
3sg deny 3sg do - wrong CRS

S/He denies that s/he was wrong.

- (20) tā qíngyuàn tā - de háizi niàn - shū  
3sg prefer 3sg - GEN child study - book

S/He prefers his/her children to study.

- (21) tā zhǐ zhuāng bu zhīdào  
 3sg only pretend not know

S/He's only pretending not to know.

- (22) wǒ pànwàng nǐ kuài yídiǎn bìyè  
 I hope you soon a:little graduate

I hope you'll graduate a bit sooner.

- (23) wǒ kǒngpà nǐ lái bújǐ  
 I fear you can't:make:it:in:time

I'm afraid you can't make it in time.

- (24) wǒ yīwei nǐ xìng Hòu  
 I mistakenly:thought you surname Hou

I mistakenly thought your surname was Hou.

- (25) wǒ méi xiǎng - dào nǐ zhù zài Nánjīng  
 I not think - arrive you live at Nanjing

I didn't realize you lived in Nanjing.

- (26) wǒ jiānchí wǒ méi fàn - fǎ  
 I insist I not violate - law

I insist that I didn't violate any law.

- (27) wǒ xíguàn zǎodiǎn chī de  
 I be:accustomed breakfast eat CSC

fēicháng shǎo  
 extremely little

I'm used to eating very little for breakfast.

- (28) tā mèngxiǎng zuò yīngxióng  
 3sg dream serve:as hero

S/He dreamed that s/he would be a hero.

- (29) tā hěn jiǎngjiù chuān yīfu  
 3sg very particular wear clothes

S/He's very particular about his/her clothes.

- (30) wǒmen jìnzhǐ chōu - yān  
 we prohibit extract - smoke

We prohibit smoking.

In sentences of this type, the meaning of the first verb determines the type of verb phrase or clause that functions as its direct object, just as we would expect given that the meaning of a verb always determines the type of object it may take. For instance, just as the direct object of the verb *hē* 'drink' must be a liquid, the direct object of the verb *gǎndào* 'feel' must be a verb phrase:

- (31) wǒ gǎndào hěn cánkui  
 I feel very embarrassed

I feel very embarrassed.

The verb *juéde*, which can also be translated 'feel', however, has a broader meaning, including not only 'feel' as an emotion but also 'think that'. Therefore, while *juéde* can be used in a sentence like (32), it can also be used with an entire clause as its direct object, as in (33) *a*, which *gǎndào* cannot do:

- (32) wǒ juéde hěn cánkui  
 I feel very embarrassed

I feel very ashamed.

- (33) *a.* wǒ juéde nǐ bu yīnggāi qù  
 I feel you not should go

I think that you shouldn't go.



b. \*wǒ    gǎndào    nǐ    bu    yīnggāi    qù  
 I        feel        you    not    should    go

In a similar way, the meaning of the first verb imposes certain interpretations on the clause or verb phrase that is its direct object. Let's compare the meaning of the clause

(34) wǒmen    dōu    qù    chī    jiǎozi  
       we        all    go    eat    dumpling

We'll all go eat dumplings.

when it is the direct object of *tíyì* 'suggest' and when it is the direct object of *méi xiǎng-dào* 'didn't realize':

(35) tā        tíyì    wǒmen    dōu    qù    chī    jiǎozi  
       3sg    suggest    we        all        go        eat    dumplings

S/He suggested that we all go eat dumplings.

(36) tā        méi    xiǎng    —    dào    wǒmen    dōu  
       3sg    not    think    —    arrive    we        all

      ^        qù    chī    jiǎozi        ^  
           go    eat    dumplings

S/He didn't realize that we'd all gone to eat dumplings.

It is easy to see that, although the underlined objects in sentences (35) and (36) are exactly the same in form, because of the meaning of *tíyì* 'suggest', (35) leaves quite open the question of whether we went to eat dumplings, while (36), because of the meaning of *méi xiǎng-dào* 'didn't realize', carries the implication that we did go to eat dumplings.

With verbs of saying, the verb-phrase or clause direct object can report the words that were spoken. Such constructions can be called *indirect discourse*. A feature of the serial verb construction expressing indirect discourse in Mandarin is the



### 21.2.2 The First Verb Phrase/Clause Is the Subject of the Second Verb

In this type of serial verb construction, the meaning of the second verb allows it to occur with a clause or a verb phrase as its subject.<sup>3</sup> In the following examples, as before, the verb whose meaning allows it to take a clause or verb phrase as its subject is underlined twice, and the clause or verb phrase itself is underlined once:

- (42) dà shēng niàn kèwén kěyǐ bāngzhù fāyīn  
big voice read lesson can help pronunciation

Reading the lesson aloud can help one's pronunciation.

- (43) xué Méngǔ – huà hěn bu róngyì  
study Mongolia – speech very not easy

It is not easy to learn Mongolian.

- (44) zài zhèlǐ tíng chē fān – fǎ  
at here stop vehicle violate – law

It is against the law to park here.

- (45) zuò Zhōngguó cài tài máfan le  
make China dish too troublesome CRS

Chinese cooking is too much trouble.

- (46) wū – ge rén zuò yī  
five – CL person sit one  
– jià mótochē zhēn wéixiǎn  
– CL motorcycle real dangerous

It's really dangerous for five people to ride one motorcycle.

- (47) nǐ niàn – shū hěn yǒu  
you study – book very exist  
– chéngjiù ba  
– accomplishment SA

Your studying is going well, right?

- (48) māma chuān duǎn qúnzi bu hǎo - kàn  
 mother wear short skirt not good - look

Mother doesn't look good in short skirts.

- (49) tā bu chī xīguā tài kēxī le  
 3sg not eat watermelon too sad CRS

It's too bad s/he doesn't eat watermelon.

- (50) nimen chū - qu hǎo  
 you:PL exit - go good

It would be good if you'd go outside.

- (51) tā kǎo dì - yī míng  
 3sg take:exam ORD - one name  
tài hǎo le  
 too good CRS

It's terrific that s/he got the top honor in the exam.

- (52) tā duìdai shénme rén dōu hěn gōngjìng  
 3sg treat what person all very respectful

S/He treats everyone very respectfully.

Certain verbs that take a clause or a verb phrase as their subjects have the following curious property: these verbs can also occur in second position, directly following the subject or topic of the clause or in first position, preceding the verb phrase. In each of the following examples, the *a* and *b* forms have roughly the same meaning and can be considered to be optional variants; the verb taking a verb phrase or a clause as its subject, together with its modifiers, is underlined twice:

- (53) *a.* wǒmen jiàn - miàn hěn nán - dé  
 we meet - face very hard - obtain

It is rare that we see each other.

- b. wǒmen      hěn nán - dé      jiàn - miàn  
       we        very hard - obtain meet - face

It's rare that we see each other.

- (54) a. jiějué zhèi - ge wèntí      hěn róngyì  
       solve this - CL problem very easy

It is very easy to solve this problem.

- b. zhèi - ge wèntí      hěn róngyì jiějué  
       this - CL problem very easy solve

It's very easy to solve this problem.

- (55) a. zhǎo gōngzuò      bu tài róngyì  
       seek work not too easy

It is not very easy to find work.

- b. bu tài róngyì      zhǎo gōngzuò  
       not too easy seek work

It's not very easy to find work.

- (56) a. qù Guìlín      bu kěnéng  
       go Guilin not possible

It is not possible to go to Guilin.

- b. bu kěnéng      qù Guìlín  
       not possible go Guilin

It's not possible to go to Guilin.

Can a sentence contain both a clausal subject and a clausal direct object? Here is an example to show that it can:

(57) tā sòng nǐ dōngxi      bǐng      bu  
 3sg   give   you   thing   on:the:contrary   not

biǎoshì      tā      ài      nǐ  
 express   3sg   love   you

His/Her giving you things does *not* indicate that s/he loves you.

### 21.2.3 The Clause That Is a Subject or Direct Object Is a Question

Questions can occur as either subjects or direct objects of another verb phrase, just as declarative clauses can. Here is an example of each type:

(58) (subject)

tā huì bu huì shuō Tái  
 3sg know:how not know:how speak Taiwan

—      yǔ      méi      guānxi  
 —      language not relevance

Whether s/he can or cannot speak Taiwanese is irrelevant.

(59) (direct object)

tāmen bu xiǎode shéi bǎ diàn  
 they not know who BA electricity

—      dēng guān diào      LE  
 —      light close off PFV/CRS

They don't know who turned off the light.

Further discussion of questions serving as subjects or direct objects can be found in chapter 18.

In section 21.2, we have considered serial verb constructions in which one verb phrase or clause is the subject or direct object of another verb. Let us now move on to the third type of serial verb construction.



## (ii) Group II:

- (66) wō yuánliàng nī sī - huài -  
 I forgive you tear - ruin -  
 le wō - de shū  
 PFV I - GEN book

I forgive you for tearing up my book.

- (67) xiǎo háizi xiào tā shì yī  
 small child laugh 3sg be one  
 - ge dà pàngzi  
 - CL big fatso

The children laugh at him/her for being a big fatso.

- (68) wǒ gōngxī tā kǎo -  
 I congratulate 3sg take:exam -  
 jìn Tái - Dà  
 enter Taiwan - University

I congratulated him/her on passing the entrance exam to Taiwan University.

- (69) tā pīping wǒ bu yònggōng  
 3sg criticize I not industrious

S/He criticized me for not being industrious.

The difference between groups I and II is a semantic one: the meaning of the first verb in each of the sentences in group I determines that the event expressed by the second verb is *unrealized*, that is, an event that *might happen*, while the first verb in each of the sentences in group II determines that the event expressed by the second verb is *realized*, or real as far as the subject of the first verb is concerned.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the group I sentence (61), for example,



- (61) wǒ      quàn      tā      niàn      yī  
 I      advise      3sg      study      medicine

I advised him/her to study medicine.

the event *tā niàn yī* 's/he study medicine' is unrealized. This interpretation of being unrealized is entirely due to the meaning of the verb *quàn* 'advise': we can't advise someone to do something that we know is already a reality. In the group II sentence (70), on the other hand,

- (70) tā      pīping      wǒ      bu      yònggōng  
 3sg      criticize      I      not      industrious

S/He criticized me for not being industrious.

the event *wǒ bu yònggōng* 'I not industrious' is a reality, at least as far as the subject *tā* 's/he' is concerned. Once again, this interpretation follows from the meaning of *pīping* 'criticize': we can't criticize someone for something unless we believe that that something is a reality.

The contrast between an unrealized and a realized interpretation can be illustrated by a minimal pair in which only the first verbs are different. Consider (71) *a* and *b*:

- (71) *a.* (group I)

tā      mìnglìng      wǒ      bāng      jiějie      -      de      máng  
 3sg      order      I      help      older:sister      -      GEN      ~

S/He ordered me to help older sister.

- b.* (group II)

ta      xièxie      wǒ      bāng      jiějie      -      de      máng  
 3sg      thank      I      help      older:sister      -      GEN      ~

S/He thanked me for helping older sister.

Both sentences contain the clause *wǒ bāng jiějie-de máng* 'I help older sister', and in both sentences *wǒ* 'I' is the pivotal noun phrase, functioning at once as the direct

object of the first verb and as the subject of the second. The interpretation of this clause differs, however: in (71) *a*, 'helping older sister' is unrealized; it is a potential event that the speaker is being ordered to do. In (71) *b*, though, 'helping older sister' has already happened, at least in the mind of *tā* 's/he', who is thanking the speaker for doing it. The difference between the meaning of *mìnglìng* 'order' and that of *xièxie* 'thank' is precisely what causes this difference in the interpretation of the proposition that follows them.

Another interesting point about the first verbs in the sentences in group I: For the ones that have meanings related to giving commands or making suggestions, the clauses that follow are actually imperatives (see chapter 14 on imperatives). This can be demonstrated in two ways. First, this clause can occur with the word *qǐng* 'please', which is only used with imperatives:

(72)	tā	jiào	wǒmen	qǐng	shǎo
	3sg	tell	we	please	little
		shuō	—	huà	
		speak	—	speech	

S/He told us please not to talk too much.

/ Second, if the clause is negative, then the imperative negatives *bié* or *bu-yào* 'don't' must be used:

(73) a.	tā	quàn	wǒmen	bié	zǒu
	3sg	advise	we	don't	leave

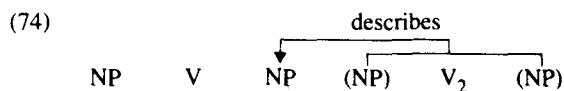
S/He advised us not to leave.

b.	*tā	quàn	wǒmen	bu	zǒu
	3sg	advise	we	not	leave

Clearly, the fact that the clauses following the first verb in certain of the sentences under group I have imperative or suggestive meanings is once again directly related to the meaning of those verbs.

### 21.4 Descriptive Clauses

The *descriptive clause* construction involves a transitive verb whose direct object is “described” by a following clause, as schematized in (74):



There are two types of descriptive clause constructions, which we will consider separately.

#### 21.4.1 Realis Descriptive Clauses

This type of descriptive clause construction has the following properties: (1) the direct object of the first verb is always indefinite, and (2) the second clause provides an incidental description of this indefinite direct object.<sup>6</sup> This construction is a type of presentative sentence in that its function in discourse is to present or introduce a noun phrase to be described (see chapter 17 on presentative sentences).

In the following examples, we have underlined the descriptive clause once and the indefinite noun phrase it describes twice:

(75) tā yǒu yī ge mèimei  
 3sg exist one - CL younger:sister

hěn xǐhuān kàn diànyǐng  
 very like see movie

S/He has a younger sister who likes to see movies.

(76) wǒ pèng - dào - le yī  
 I meet - arrive - PFV one

- ge wàiguó - rén  
 - CL foreign - person

huì shuō Zhōngguó - huà  
 know:how speak China - speech

I met a foreigner who can speak Chinese.

- (77) wǒ      dǎ      –      pò      –      le  
 I      hit      –      broken      –      PFV
- yī      –      gē      chá      –  
 one      –      CL      tea      –
- bēi      hěn      zhíqián  
 cup      very      valuable

I broke a teacup that is very valuable.

- (78) tā      chǎo      –      le      yī      –      gē      cài  
 3sg      fry      –      PFV      one      –      CL      dish
- wǒ      hěn      xǐhuān      chī  
 I      very      like      eat

S/He cooked a dish that I very much enjoyed eating.

The function of the serial verb construction with a realis descriptive clause is to introduce a new referent into the conversation and add some information about it. It is called a *realis* descriptive clause because the description provided by the second clause is *realized*; it is in the here and now of the “real world,” as opposed to the *irrealis* descriptive clause, shown in (79), which adds hypothetical or projected information about the noun phrase of the first clause.

- (79) wǒ      zhǎo      yī      –      gē      rén  
 I      seek      one      –      CL      person
- bāng      –      máng  
 help      –      ~

I’m looking for someone to help (me).

Irrealis descriptive clause sentences are discussed in the following section, 21.4.2.

Semantically, the serial verb construction might appear to be rather similar to a relative clause construction (see section 20.2.1 of chapter 20), and in fact both types of constructions can be given the same English translation. The following examples are the relative clause analogues of (75)–(78), with the relative clauses underlined:

- (80) tā yǒu yī - ge hěn xǐhuān  
 3sg exist one - CL very like
- kàn diànyǐng de mèimei  
 see movie NOM younger:sister

S/He has a younger sister who likes to see movies.

- (81) wǒ pèng - dào - le  
 I meet - arrive - PFV
- yī - ge huì shuō  
 one - CL know:how speak
- Zhōngguó - huà de wàiguó  
 China - speech NOM foreign
- rén  
 - person

I met a foreigner who can speak Chinese.

- (82) wǒ dǎ - pò - le  
 I hit - broken - PFV
- yī - ge hěn zhíqián  
 one - CL very valuable
- de chá - bēi  
 NOM tea - cup

I broke a teacup that is very valuable.

- (83) tā chǎo - le yī - ge  
 3sg fry - PFV one - CL
- wǒ hěn xǐhuān chī de cài  
 I very like eat NOM dish

S/He cooked a dish that I very much enjoyed eating.

The manner in which the realis descriptive clause and the relative clause provide information about the noun phrases they are describing, however, is different in a subtle but significant way: the message conveyed by the realis descriptive clause is that the property it names is entirely incidental, while the message conveyed by the relative clause is that there is a preestablished class of such items. By *preestablished* we mean that the item with the property in question is assumed or has already come up at some point in discussions between the speaker and the hearer; they can be said to have tacitly agreed on the existence of a class of items with this property. To see this more clearly, consider the minimal-pair examples (84) *a* and *b*, where just the realis descriptive clause and the relative clause are underlined:

(84) *a.* (descriptive clause)

wǒ	mǎi	—	le	yi	—	jiàn
I	buy	—	PFV	one	—	CL
$\text{yīfu} \wedge \frac{\text{tài} \quad \text{dà}}{\text{too} \quad \text{big}}$						
outfit						

I bought an outfit that turned out to be too big.

*b.* (relative clause)

wǒ	mǎi	—	le	yi	—	jiàn
I	buy	—	PFV	one	—	CL
$\frac{\text{tài} \quad \text{dà} \quad \text{de}}{\text{too} \quad \text{big} \quad \text{NOM}} \quad \text{yīfu}$						
outfit						

I bought an outfit that was too big.

Both sentences assert that the outfit bought by the speaker was too big, but in (84) *a*, it simply happened or turned out to be too big, whereas for (84) *b* to be appropriate, the hearer and the speaker would have to have been discussing clothes that were too big, or the hearer would have to have known that the speaker was especially looking for an outfit that was too big. This is what we mean by saying that the relative clause sentence, but not the realis descriptive clause sentence, assumes that there is a preestablished class of such items, tacitly agreed upon by speaker and hearer; in this example, the agreed-upon class is the class of clothes that are too big.

For another example, consider sentences (85) *a* and *b*:

(85) *a*. (descriptive clause)

tā	yǎng	–	le	yi	–	tiáo
3sg	raise	–	PFV	one	–	CL
	gǒu	wǒ	yào	mǎi		
	dog	I	want	buy	^	

S/He has raised a dog, and I want to buy it.

*b*. (relative clause)

tā	yǎng	–	le	yi	–	tiáo
3sg	raise	–	PFV	one	–	CL
	wǒ	yào	mǎi	de	gǒu	
	I	want	buy	NOM	dog	

S/He has raised one of those dogs I want to buy.

The realis descriptive clause sentence, (85) *a*, asserts that s/he has raised a dog and that, as it happens, the speaker wants to buy it. The relative clause sentence, (85) *b*, on the other hand, claims that there exists, for the speaker and hearer, an understood class of dogs consisting of the dogs the speaker wants to buy, and s/he just happens to have raised such a dog.

The four pairs of examples we gave at the beginning of this section, (75)–(78) and (80)–(83), work in the same way. For example, we can best understand the difference between sentences (77) and (82) by translating them as follows:

(77)	wó	dā	–	pò	–	le
	I	hit	–	broken	–	PFV
		yi	–	ge	chá	–
		one	–	CL	tea	–
	bēi	hěn	zhíqíán			
	cup	very	valuable			

I broke a teacup that happened to be very valuable.

(82)	wǒ	dā	-	pò	-	le
	I	hit	-	broken	-	PFV
		yi	-	ge	<u>hěn</u>	<u>zhíqián</u>
		one	-	CL	very	valuable
		<u>de</u>		chá	-	bēi
		NOM		tea	-	cup

I broke one of those very valuable teacups.

As further confirmation of this distinction, we would predict that the realis descriptive clause is a more appropriate construction than the relative clause for expressing a specific, incidental description that is unlikely to describe a preestablished class of entities. Sentences (86) *a* and *b* bear out this prediction:

(86) *a.* (descriptive clause)

nèibiān	yǒu	yi	-	kē	shù	<u>wǒ</u>
there	exist	one	-	CL	tree	I
	<u>yào</u>	<u>kàn</u>	-	yi	-	<u>kàn</u>
	want	look	-	one	-	look

Over there is a tree I want to take a look at.

*b.* (relative clause)

?nèibiān	yǒu	yi	-	kē	<u>wǒ</u>	<u>yào</u>	<u>kàn</u>
there	exist	one	-	CL	I	want	look
	-	yi	-	kàn	de	shù	
	-	one	-	look	NOM	tree	

Over there is one of the trees I want to take a look at.

The clause *wǒ yào kàn-yi-kàn* 'I want to take a look at' describes a specific and incidental event. In normal contexts, it is highly unlikely that the speaker and hearer would have agreed on a class of trees consisting of 'the trees I want to take a



look at'. Therefore, the relative clause sentence, (86) *b*, is odd, but the descriptive clause sentence, (86) *a*, is perfectly plausible.

The contrast between the relative clause sentences (86) *b* and (87) further illustrates this point.

(87) (relative clause)

nèibiān	yǒu	yī	—	běn	wǒ
there	exist	one	—	CL	I
	<u>yào</u>	<u>yánjiū</u>	<u>de</u>	shū	
	want	study	NOM	book	

Over there is one of those books I want to study.

Unlike (86) *b*, sentence (87) is perfectly natural, because it is quite ordinary for one to be in a context (particularly among students and teachers) in which the existence of a class of books consisting of 'the books I want to study' is assumed by the participants of a discourse.

The structural property of descriptive clause sentences which accounts for their meaning of an incidental description, as opposed to the established-class meaning of relative clauses, is this: a realis descriptive clause sentence is actually no different from two sentences juxtaposed together, except that it is pronounced with one single intonation contour. Compare (75), for example, with (88), which is a sequence of two sentences:

(88)	tā	yǒu	yī	—	ge	mèimei ,
	3sg	exist	one	—	CL	younger:sister
		<u>hěn</u>	xǐhuan	kàn	diànyǐng	
		very	like	see	movie	

S/He has a younger sister. (She) likes to see movies.

(75)	tā	yǒu	yī	—	ge	mèimei
	3sg	exist	one	—	CL	younger:sister
		hěn	xǐhuan	kàn	diànyǐng	
		very	like	see	movie	

S/He has a younger sister who likes to see movies.



- (91) wǒ yǒu qián mǎi shū  
I exist money buy book

I have money for buying books.

- (92) tā gěi - le wǒ yi wǎn  
3sg give - PFV I one bowl  
  
tāng hē  
soup drink

S/He gave me a bowl of soup to drink.

- (93) wǒ yǒu yīfu xǐ  
I exist clothes wash

I have clothes to wash.

- (94) wǒ měi - (yǒu) shíjiān hē chá  
I not - (exist) time drink tea

I don't have time to drink tea.

- (95) wǒ méi fázi duì lǎobǎn jiàodài  
I not way to boss report:back

I have no way to report back to the boss.

- (96) gěi zhèi - ge rén  
give this - CL person  
  
pái yi - ge  
arrange one - CL  
  
shíjiān chóngxīn jiǎnchá!  
time repeat examination

Schedule a retest for this person!

- (97) zhèi    –    ge    cài    tài    xián  
 this    –    CL    dish    too    salty
- le ,    měi    rén    chī  
 CRS    not    person    eat

This dish is too salty; there won't be anyone who will eat it.

- (98) tā    mǎi    nèi    –    běn    shū  
 3sg    buy    that    –    CL    book
- gěi    nǐ    kàn  
 to    you    look

S/He is buying that book for you to read.

- (99) tāmen    xūyào    jiǎzi    jiā    hétáo  
 they    need    pliers    crack    walnuts

They need pliers with which to crack the walnuts.

### 21.5 Summary

We have seen that all serial verb constructions have the form given in (1) at the beginning of the chapter:

- (1) (NP)    V    (NP)    (NP)    V    (NP)

That is, there are at least two verbs (and various numbers of noun phrases) that are concatenated to express one overall event or state of affairs. The fascinating thing about these constructions is that although all of them have the same form, namely, that represented in (1), with no markers of any kind to signal how the two verb phrases are to be related to each other, speakers interpret them in different ways according to the meanings of their verbs. The interpretations are these:

#### 1. Two separate events

- (i) Consecutive: One event occurs after the other.
- (ii) Purpose: The first event is done for the purpose of achieving the second.
- (iii) Alternating: The subject alternates between two actions.

- (iv) Circumstance: The first verb phrase describes the circumstances under which the event in the second verb phrase or clause occurs.
2. (i) One verb phrase/clause is the direct object of the other verb.
  - (ii) One verb phrase/clause is the subject of the other verb.
  3. Pivotal constructions
  4. Descriptive clauses
    - (i) Realis descriptive clauses.
    - (ii) Irrealis descriptive clauses.

In each case, we have seen precisely how the various components of the meanings of the verbs determine the type of interpretation accorded to the entire serial verb construction.

### Notes

1. For this section, we have drawn on Simon (1958), Tang (1972), Chan (1974), and Teng (1975a, 1975b), as well as some unpublished work of Teng Shou-hsin. For more discussion, see also our papers, Li and Thompson (1975b, 1978a, and 1978b).
2. For ease of presentation, we are assuming that clausal direct objects always follow their verbs and that clausal subjects always precede their verbs, since this is typically the case. The order can be reversed, however, as (i) and (ii) show:
  - (i) (Clausal direct object preceding its verb; the clausal object is underlined.)

kàn	něi	—	ge	diànyǐng	wǒmen
see	which	—	CL	movie	we
	hái	méi	juéding		
	still	not	decide		

Which movie to see, we still haven't decided.

- (ii) (Clausal subject following its verb; the clausal subject is underlined.)

kěxī	tā	zài	kāi	—	dāo
pitiful	3sg	DUR	open	—	knife

It's a pity that s/he is having an operation.

3. See n. 2 above.
4. We take the term *pivotal construction* from Chao (1968). See his discussion in section 2.13, pages 124–129, as well as Simon (1958:571–573).

5. The distinction being discussed here is also applicable in a limited sense to those serial verb constructions in which the second verb phrase or clause is the direct object of the first verb, though only a few verbs taking a verb phrase or a clause as a direct object require the event expressed by the second verb phrase or clause to be unrealized. These verbs include *yào* 'want', *xiǎng* 'wish', *xǐhuan* 'like'. For example, in the sentence

- (i) wǒ { yào } Zhāngsān zhù zài zhèr  
       { xiǎng }  
       { xǐhuan }  
       I { want } Zhangsan live at here  
        { wish }  
        { like }
- I { want } Zhangsan to live here.  
    { wish }  
    { like }

the event expressed by the direct object clause *Zhāngsān zhù zài zhèr* 'Zhangsan live at here' is necessarily unrealized. Contrast (i) with (ii):

- (ii) wǒ tīng — shuō Zhāngsān zhù zài zhèr  
       I hear — say Zhangsan live at here

I hear Zhangsan is living here.

In (ii), the event expressed by the same object clause, *Zhāngsān zhù zài zhèr* 'Zhangsan live at here', can be either realized or unrealized. The first verb in (ii), *tīng-shuō* 'hear-say', does not have any requirement as to whether the event expressed by the object clause is realized or unrealized.

6. This type of construction is also mentioned in Tai (1978:291–293).



- (3) tā dáyìng de bǐjiào miánqiǎng  
 3sg accept CSC relatively forced

S/He was rather reluctant to accept.

- (4) tā zǒu de hěn màn  
 3sg walk CSC very slow

S/He walks very slowly.

- (5) wǒmen shuì de hěn hǎo  
 we sleep CSC very good

We slept very well.

- (6) tā zǒu de fēicháng zǎo  
 3sg leave CSC extremely early

S/He left really early.

- (7) tā zhàn de hěn wěn  
 3sg stands CSC very steady

S/He stands very steadily.

- (8) tā chuān de hěn piàoliang  
 3sg dress CSC very beautiful

She dressed very beautifully.

Before considering the other inferred meanings for the complex stative constructions, we must digress very briefly to consider the functional difference between the manner adverbs discussed in chapter 8 on adverbs and the complex stative constructions with manner interpretations. Let's look at a minimal pair:

- (9) (manner adverb)  
 nǐ kuài(kuài-de) pǎo  
 you quickly run

Run quickly!



(10) (complex stative construction)

nǐ      pǎo      de      hěn      kuài  
 you      run      CSC      very      quick

You {run} very quickly.  
           {ran}

The difference is that the manner adverb sentence always refers to an *action*, while the complex stative construction always refers to a *state of affairs*. This is because the assertion in a complex stative construction is always the *stative* clause or verb phrase. Sentence (10) then, refers to your running being quick, either in general or at some particular time. In other words, (10) is a comment on the hearer's speed. Since it is stative, it cannot be a command. Sentence (9), on the other hand, refers to an action and is therefore a command.

Related to this difference is another characteristic of the complex stative construction: the event named in the first clause must be one that has already come up in the discussion or one that is "in the air." For example, if one says

(5) wǒmen    shuì      de      hěn      hǎo  
       we      sleep    CSC      very      good

We slept very well.

it must be the case either that someone has mentioned or asked the speaker about how well s/he and his/her friends slept or else that people are greeting each other the first thing in the morning. In either case, the event named in the first clause is already understood at the time sentence (5) is uttered. The same can be said about the event expressed by the first clause, *nǐ pǎo* 'you run', of (10). Sentence (9), on the other hand, does not represent an event that has already been mentioned or is "in the air." From these facts, it follows that only the manner adverb sentence can be used to answer a question such as that in (11) A, since the question does not imply that "his/her running" is already known:

(11) A : tā      zài      zuò      shénme ?  
           3sg    DUR    do      what

What is s/he doing?

B: tā      zài      màn-màn-de      pǎo  
       3sg    DUR      slowly              run

S/He is running slowly.

The complex stative construction, as in (12), cannot be used to answer the question in (11) A, because the function of (12) is to comment on the slowness of his/her running, something like 'When s/he runs/ran, it is/was very slow', whereas the question in (11) A asks, 'What is s/he doing?'

(12) tā pǎo de hěn màn  
3sg run CSC very slow

S/He  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{runs} \\ \text{ran} \end{array} \right\}$  very slowly.

### 22.1.2 Extent Inferred

The inferred relationship between the two parts of a complex stative construction can also be one of *extent*; that is, the event in the first clause is done to such an extent that the result is the state expressed by the stative clause or verb phrase. Here are some examples, again with the stative verb phrase—this time interpreted as expressing extent—underlined:

(13) tā xiào — de zhàn — bu —  
3sg laugh — CSC stand — can't —

qǐ — lái  
rise — come

S/He laughed so much that s/he couldn't stand up.

(14) tā jiāo de lèi le  
3sg teach CSC tired CRS

S/He taught so much that s/he is tired.

(15) wǒ kū de yǎnjing dōu hóng le  
I cry CSC eye all red CRS

I cried so much that my eyes got all red.

(16) tā xiào de wōmen dōu buhāoyìsi  
3sg laugh CSC we all embarrassed

S/He laughed so much that we all got embarrassed.

- (17) xiǎo hái zhǎng de wǒ bu rènshi le  
 small child grow CSC I not recognize CRS

The child has grown so much that I don't recognize him/her.

- (18) tā gāoxìng de shuì — bu — zhào  
 3sg happy CSC sleep — can't — succeed  
 — jiào  
 — sleep

S/He is so happy that s/he can't sleep.

- (19) nǐmen zuò — wén bu yào bà  
 you:PL do — composition not want BA  
 jùzi xiě de tài cháng  
 sentence write CSC too long

When you write essays, don't make the sentence too long.

- (20) wǒ è de fā — huāng  
 I hungry CSC produce — panic

I'm so hungry that I'm going crazy.

### 22.1.3 Either Manner or Extent Inferred

As we might expect, certain combinations of verb phrases in a complex stative construction allow either a manner or an extent inference. In examples (21) and (22), the (i) translation reflects the manner inference, while the (ii) translation reflects the extent inference:

- (21) wǒmen chī de hěn kāixīn  
 we eat CSC very happy

{(i) We ate very happily.  
 (ii) We ate to the point of being very happy.}

- (22) tā kǔ de hěn shāng -- xīn  
 3sg cry CSC very hurt -- heart

{(i) S/He cried very sadly.  
 (ii) S/He cried to the point of being very sad.}

## 22.2 General Structural Properties

One of the most striking structural properties of the complex stative construction manifests itself when the verb in the first clause is a transitive one with a direct object (see section 4.3.1 of chapter 4 on types of verbs). If the first clause contains a transitive verb and its direct object, the verb must be ‘copied’ before the CSC *de*. In the following examples the two instances of the copied verb have been underlined twice:

- (23) tā shuō Taiguó - huà (shuō de)  
 3sg speak Thailand speech (speak CSC)  
 他泰语说得流利  
fēichang liúli  
 extremely fluent

S/He speaks Thai very fluently.

- (24) māma xī yīfu xī de hěn gānjìng  
 mother wash clothes wash CSC very clean

Mother washed the clothes very clean.

- (25) tā qiē yú (qiē de) hěn zìxì  
 3sg cut fish (cut CSC) very meticulous

S/He cut the fish very carefully.

For further discussion of verb copying, see chapter 13.

Negatives and auxiliaries behave differently with respect to their position in a complex stative construction. If a complex stative construction contains a negative particle, it will occur before the stative verb phrase, never before the verb phrase of the first clause:

- (26) a. tā kǎo – shì kǎo de bu hǎo  
 3sg take – exam take CSC not good

S/He did not do well on the exam.

- b. \*tā bu kǎo – shì kǎo de hǎo  
 3sg not take – exam take CSC good

- c. \*tā kǎo – shì bu kǎo de hǎo  
 3sg take – exam not take CSC good

The position of the negative particle is predictable in terms of the scope of negative particles (discussed in section 12.1 of chapter 12): what follows the negative particle is what is being denied. The message in (26) is that the performance on the exam was not *good*, but not that *tā* 's/he' did not *take* the exam; thus, the negative particle *bu* must precede *hǎo* 'good', not *kǎo-shì* 'take the exam'.

Auxiliaries, on the other hand, in general can occur only before the first verb of the complex stative construction, as in:

- (27) a. tā ( néng ) tiào de hěn gāo  
 3sg ( can ) jump CSC very high

S/He can jump very high.

- b. \*tā tiào de néng hěn gāo  
 3sg jump CSC can very high

There is, however, at least one auxiliary verb, *yīnggāi* 'should', which can occur in several positions in the complex stative construction:

- (28) a. nǐ yīnggāi fā – yīn fā –  
 you should produce – sound produce –  
 de hěn qīngchū  
 CSC very clear

You should pronounce very clearly.



## CHAPTER 23

# *Sentence Linking*

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Even though it is sometimes useful to consider a single sentence in isolation in order to analyze its grammatical structure, in actual language use sentences occur in larger contexts, as part of dialogues, monologues, and conversations (as well as written paragraphs). In general, sentences spoken in close succession by one speaker or by several speakers will be related; otherwise, communication will break down. Often, however, the relationship is not made explicit; two sentences may simply be juxtaposed. For example, consider the two sentences in (1):

- (1) wǒ      hěn      xǐhuān      chī      běifāng      cài ,      chī  
I      very      like      eat      northern      food      eat
- Guǎngdōng      cài      juéde      méi      yǒu      wèidào  
Canton      food      feel      not      exist      flavor

I really like northern food; when I eat Cantonese food I feel it has no flavor.

These two sentences are obviously related in theme: they are both asserting something about the speaker's culinary tastes. No explicit relationship needs to be signaled in such cases. Sometimes, though, the speaker intends a sentence to be related to another one in a particular sense. In this chapter, we consider some of the ways in which Mandarin allows its speakers to link their sentences, either to other sentences, or, in some cases, to sentences uttered by their conversational partners.<sup>1</sup>

When a sentence is part of a larger sentence, it is called a *clause*. In the linking constructions to be considered in this chapter, we will refer to any sentence that is linked to another sentence as a clause.

There are essentially two kinds of linking: forward linking and backward linking. With *forward linking* we must talk about sentences containing at least two clauses, because the first clause is always dependent on the second clause for its meaning to be complete. With *backward linking*, on the other hand, the clause the speaker says is dependent on the previous clause for its meaning to be complete. Normally this previous clause is spoken by the same person, but in some cases it could be spoken by someone else engaged in the conversation.

In many sentences composed of two linked clauses, as we shall see, each of the two constituent clauses contains a linking element, the first clause having a forward-linking element and the second one a backward-linking element. For example, in the following sentence, each of the two underlined forms signals dependence of its clause on the other clause:

- (2) tā (suírán) méi qián, kěshì tā háishi  
 3sg although not money but 3sg still  
 hěn kāngkǎi  
 very generous

Although s/he has no money, s/he's still very generous.

We will discuss the two types of linking separately.

### 23.1 Forward Linking

With forward linking, as we have said, one clause is dependent on the following one. This dependence may be established in one of two ways, either by a specific linking element or by the speaker's intention. For example, in a sentence like

- (3) C<sub>1</sub> C<sub>2</sub>  
 jiǎorú xià yǔ, wǒmen jiù zài wūlǐ chī - fàn  
 if descend rain we then at indoors eat - food

If it rains, we'll eat indoors.

clause 1 (C<sub>1</sub>) contains the forward-linking element *jiǎorú* 'if', whose function is to signal the dependence of C<sub>1</sub> on C<sub>2</sub> (clause 2) for its message to be complete.



The other kind of dependence is established by what we have called the speaker's intention. Here's an example:

(4)

$C_1$	$C_2$	不可替换
bàba    qù ,	wǒ    gēn    tā    qù	
father    go	I    with    3sg    go	

If father goes, I'll go with him.

又名叫天明

With this type of dependence,  $C_1$  has no explicit forward-linking word. In fact, in some contexts it could stand by itself and mean 'father is going', but in the context in which it precedes another clause,  $C_2$ , it is dependent for its meaning on  $C_2$  because of the speaker's intention.

Let's look at each type of forward linking in detail.

### 23.1.1 Forward Linking with a Linking Element

There are three kinds of forward-linking elements:

- A. Forward-linking elements in clause-final position
- B. Adverbial forward-linking elements
  - 1. Movable forward-linking elements—can be positioned both after the topic/subject and in clause-initial position
  - 2. Nonmovable forward-linking elements—must be positioned either after the topic/subject or in clause-initial position
- C. Perfective aspect

#### A. Forward-Linking Elements in Clause-Final Position

These kinds of linking elements come at the end of  $C_1$ , the first clause. The six most important ones are:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| (5) <u>de huà</u> | 'if'   |
| <u>de shíhòu</u>  | 'NOM time = when, while'   |
| <u>yǐhòu</u>      | 'after'  |
| <u>yǐqián</u>     | 'before'   |
| <u>ne, me</u>     | pause particles (see section 4.1.1 of chapter 4 for a discussion of pause particles) |
- ?

Here is an example of each:

- (6) nǐ yǒu qián de huà , jiu bu huì  
 you exist money if then not likely  
 有了没有? xiàng wǒ jiè qián (le) *change in situation*  
 toward I borrow money CRS

If you had money, you wouldn't have to borrow money from me.

- (7) tā xiǎo de shíhòu , méi rén zhàogu tā  
 3sg small time not person care:for 3sg

When s/he was small, there was no one to take care of him/her.

- (8) xià - kè yìhòu , wǒ jiu qù yóuyǒng  
 descend - class after I then go swim

After I get out of class, I go swimming.

- (9) shàng - kè yǐqián , wǒ xiān hē  
 ascend - class before I first drink  
 yì bēi chá  
 one cup tea

Before going to class, I first drink a cup of tea.

- (10) tā lái zhèr ne , wǒ xiǎng yě kěyǐ  
 3sg come here topic I think also can

As for his/her coming here, I think it's OK.

- (11) tā bu niàn - shū me , wǒ jiu  
 3sg not study - book topic I then  
 bu yǎng tā  
 not support 3sg

If s/he doesn't study, I won't support him/her.

B. Adverbial Forward-Linking Elements

One group of adverbial forward-linking elements are of the movable-adverb type discussed in chapter 8. That is, they can occur either in sentence-initial position or after the subject or topic. The most important of these are: 什么条件下?

(12)	<u>fēidàn</u>	不但	'not only'	还, 而且, 也
	<u>búdàn</u>			
	<u>rúguò</u>	如果	'if'	
	<u>jiārú</u>			
	<u>jiāshì</u>			
	<u>yàoshi</u>			
	<u>chúfēi</u>		'unless'	否则
	<u>jìshì</u>	即使	'even if'	也
	<u>jiùshì</u>			
	<u>yàobùshì</u>		'if not that ...'	就
	<u>suīrán</u>		'although'	可是
	<u>yīnwèi</u>	因为	'because'	所以
	<u>yóuyú</u>			
	<u>wúlùn</u>	无论	'no matter whether'	也, 都
	<u>búlùn</u>			
	<u>jìrán</u>	既然	'since'	那就
	<u>jìshì</u>			
	<u>zhìyào</u>		'if only, as long as'	就

Here are a few examples:

(13)	tā	<u>búdàn</u>	huì	chàng	-	gē ,	<u>hái</u>
	3sg	not:only	know:how	sing	-	song	also
			huì	tiào	-	wǔ	
			know:how	dance	-	ballet	dance

Not only can s/he sing, s/he also can do ballet.

- (14) yàoshi jīntiān fàng - jià jiu hào le  
 if today let:go - holiday then good CRS

*if only*

If today were a holiday, that would be good.

- (15) chūfēi wǒmen hěn máng women yíding lái  
 unless we very busy we certainly come

*除非*

kàn nǐ  
 see you

Unless we're busy, we'll certainly come to see you.

- (16) jiùshì zhème piányi tā hai bu mǎi ne  
 even(if) this cheap 3sg still not buy REX

*though*  
 Even if it's this cheap s/he still won't buy it.

- (17) huǒchē yàobùshì tài màn, wǒ zǎo jiu  
 train if:not:that too slow I early then  
 dào le  
 arrive CRS

If it weren't that trains are so slow, I would have arrived a long time ago.

- (18) wǒ suīrán hěn xǐhuān, kěshì méi qián  
 I although very like but not money

Although I like (it) very much, I have no money.

- (19) yīnwèi tiān hēi le, suǒyǐ wǒ méi  
 because sky black CRS so I not

chū - qu  
 exit - go

Because it had gotten dark, I didn't go out.

- (20) wúlùn tā lái bu lái , wǒmen yào  
 no:matter 3sg come not come we want  
 zǒu le  
 go CRS

No matter whether or not s/he comes, we have to leave.

- (21) nǐ jìrán bu xìn , nǐ zìjǐ qù kàn ba  
 you since not believe you self go see SA

Since you don't believe it, go look for yourself.

- (22) zhìyào wǒ nénggòu , wǒ yíding hěn lèyì  
 as:long:as I can I certainly very glad  
 bāng nǐ máng  
 help you ~

As long as I can, I'll certainly be glad to help you.

We should note that the majority of these forward-linking movable adverbs require the occurrence of a backward-linking element in the clause that follows. The most common pairings of these linking elements are shown in (23):

- |  |                     |                              |                  |
|--|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| (23) <u>búdàn</u>                            | 'not only'          | {<br>érqiě<br>yě<br>hái<br>} | 'also'           |
| {<br>rúguò<br>jiārú<br>jiāshì<br>yàoshì<br>} | 'if'                | {<br>jiù<br>yě<br>}          | 'then'<br>'also' |
| {<br>jìshǐ<br>jiùshì<br>}                    | 'even if'           | {<br>yě<br>hái<br>}          | 'still'          |
| <u>yàobùshì</u>                              | 'if not that . . .' | jiù                          | 'then'           |





The following sentences illustrate these nonmovable forward-linking adverbs.

- (31) jìshì      tā      bu      lái ,      wǒmen      yě  
 even:if      3sg      not      come      we      still
- dēi      kāi      -      huì  
                     must      hold      -      meeting

Even if s/he does not come, we still have to hold the meeting.

- (32) chúfēi      nǐ      gěi      wǒ      nài      -  
 unless      you      give      I      that      -
- běn      shū ,      wǒ      bu      xuǎn  
                     CL      book      I      not      select
- nài      -      mén      kè  
                     that      -      CL      course

Unless you give me that book, I won't take that course.

- (33) zhǐyǒu      tā      zhīchí      zhè      -      ge  
 only:if      3sg      support      this      -      CL
- jiànyì ,      wǒmen      cái      néng      chénggōng  
                     proposal      we      then      can      succeed

Only if s/he supports this proposal can we succeed.

### C. Perfective Aspect

Another forward-linking device is the use of the perfective aspect suffix *-le* with an unquantified direct object. As we pointed out in chapter 6, *-le* can be used only with bounded events, so that when it occurs in a clause with an unquantified direct object, it must be bounded by a clause signaling another event. For example:

- (34) tā      chuān      -      shàng      -      le      dàyī ,  
          3sg      wear      -      ascend      -      PFV      coat
- jiu      chū      -      qu      sànbù  
                     then      exit      -      go      promenade

S/He put on his/her coat and went out for a stroll.





The underlined clause,  $C_1$ , in (36) contains no explicit forward-linking element, which means that it is not dependent on  $C_2$  in any formal way; that is, in other contexts  $C_1$  could stand by itself to mean 'Human beings live in this world'. The relationship between  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  in (36) is not signaled by any overt element, but rather is inferred by the hearer from the knowledge s/he has of the world, the content of the two clauses in the sentence, and what has been under discussion up to that point. Since this relationship is inferred, any one of several messages are possible for the sentence as a whole, as indicated by the choices we suggest in our translations. Here are some further examples;  $C_1$ , which is underlined in each sentence, has no linking element:

- (37) nī bù xiāngxìn, wǒ zuò gěi nǐ kàn  
 you not believe I do to you see

If you don't believe it, I'll do it for you to see.

- (38) wǒ shì nǐ de péngyou,  
 I be you GEN friend

cái gàosu nǐ zhèi  
 only:then tell you this

jiàn shì  
 CL matter

It's only because I'm your friend that I'm telling you about this matter

- (39) wǒ shuō kěyǐ, jiù kěyǐ  
 I say can then can

{If } I say it's OK, then it's OK.  
 {Once } X

- (40) wǒ sǐ le, nǐ zuì  
 I die PFV you most

hǎo zài jià  
 good again marry

{If } X I die, you'd better marry again.  
 {When }

(41) méi - yǒu tāmen , jiu méi -  
 not - exist they then not -

yǒu zhèi - ge gōngsī  
 exist this - CL company

*Without:*  
 { If it weren't for } them, we wouldn't have this company.  
 { If we didn't have }  
 { If they didn't exist, this company wouldn't exist. }

(42) nimen bu zuò - gōng , wǒmen  
 you:PL not do - work we

bu fù - qián  
 not pay - money

If you don't work, we don't pay.

(43) wǒ yǒu shíjiān , yíding lái kàn nǐ  
 I exist time definitely come see you

{ When } I have time, I'll definitely come to see you.  
 { If }

(44) wǒ yǒu qián , jiu kěyǐ mǎi  
 I exist money then can buy

hǎo de diànshì - jī  
 good NOM television - machine

If I had money, I could buy a good TV.

We have shown that the first clause in sentences like (37)–(44) exhibits forward linking without an overt linking element. The second clause, either by the message it conveys or by an explicit backward-linking element, is what determines the

interpretation of the first clause. To see this point clearly, let's contrast (45) with (46):

(45)	$\frac{w\bar{o}}{I}$	$\frac{\Delta}{\text{be}}$	$\frac{sh\grave{i}}{America}$	$\frac{M\grave{e}igu\acute{o}}{person}$	$\frac{r\acute{e}n,}{\text{then}}$	
			$\frac{bu}{\text{not}}$	$\frac{hu\grave{i}}{\text{will}}$	$\frac{shu\bar{o}}{\text{speak}}$	$\frac{zh\grave{e}r\acute{e}}{\text{this}}$
			$\frac{z\bar{a}o}{\text{rotten}}$	$\frac{de}{\text{NOM}}$	$\frac{Y\bar{i}ngw\acute{e}n}{\text{English}}$	$\frac{\textcircled{?}}{\text{?}}$

If I were an American, then I wouldn't be speaking such bad English.

(46)	$\frac{w\bar{o}}{I}$	$\frac{sh\grave{i}}{\text{be}}$	$\frac{M\grave{e}igu\acute{o}}{America}$	$\frac{r\acute{e}n,}{\text{person}}$	$\frac{su\bar{o}y\check{i}}{\text{so}}$	$\frac{\textcircled{w\bar{o}}}{I}$
			$\frac{x\bar{u}y\grave{a}o}{\text{need}}$	$\frac{h\grave{u}zh\grave{a}o}{\text{passport}}$	$\frac{q\grave{u}}{\text{go}}$	$\frac{S\bar{u}l\acute{i}an}{\text{Soviet:Union}}$

I am an American, so I need a passport to go to the Soviet Union.

As we can see, the underlined  $C_1$  in these two examples is identical, yet in (45) it is interpreted to mean that I am *not* an American, while in (46) it is interpreted to mean that I *am* an American, just as it would if it were used by itself, say, in response to a question. The difference, of course, is in the inferences that can be drawn from the second clause in each of these examples. The second clause in (45) contains the backward-linking element *jiu*, which, as we shall see in the next section, can serve to shift the preceding clause into the hypothetical mode. Sentence (46), on the other hand, contains the backward-linking element *suōyǐ*, whose meaning does not force any shift from the normal assumption that  $C_1$  is an assertion of a true state of affairs.

Another type of forward linking without the use of an overt linking element is found in sentences in which  $C_1$  contains a question word. As pointed out in chapter 18, question words can be used as indefinite pronouns marking a dependent relationship between two clauses:

- (47) shéi zuì - le , (jiu) fá 谁/也 △  
 who drunk - PFV (then) fine  
 shí kuài qián  
 ten dollar money

Whoever gets drunk will be fined ten dollars.

- (48) nǐ gěi tā shénme , tā (jiu) yòng shénme  
 you give 3sg what 3sg (then) use what

S/He will use whatever you give him/her.

- (49) nǐ shuō jǐ - diǎnzhōng  
 you say how:many - o'clock  
 wǒmen jiu jǐ -  
 we then how:many -  
 diǎnzhōng zǒu  
 o'clock leave

We will leave at whatever time you say.

In examples such as these, exactly as in the ones preceding them, the underlined  $C_1$  does not contain any element that explicitly signals its relationship to  $C_2$ , and  $C_1$  could stand on its own as a normal question, as in:

- (50) shéi zuì - le ?  
 who drink - PFV

Who got drunk?

The fact that  $C_1$  is not interpreted as a question in (47) is due entirely to its dependence on  $C_2$ , which determines that the question word will be interpreted as an indefinite pronoun.

Forward linking in a clause without an explicit linking element is accomplished, then, by the speaker's intention to follow it with another clause in terms of which the material in the first clause can be appropriately understood.

### 23.1.3 The Semantics of Conditionals

One type of forward-linking construction deserves special mention. This is the conditional sentence, one that sets the conditions under which another proposition would be true.<sup>3</sup> In English, conditions are typically introduced by *if* or *unless*, but in Mandarin, as we have seen, the conditional clause may be introduced by a forward-linking adverb that signals “conditional,” as in example (3) at the beginning of this chapter, or it may be expressed by forward linking with no linking element, as we saw in (4), (37), and (42).

There are essentially three important types of messages that conditional sentences can express. With illustrations drawn from English, these are:

(i) Reality—a conditional relation between two propositions referring to the so-called real world:

- (51) If you heat water to 100 degrees, it boils.
- (52) If you step on the brakes, the car slows down.
- (53) If the sun comes out, we can go to the beach.
- (54) If you finish this chapter, I'll take you out to dinner.
- (55) If you can't swim, you'd better not go in the water.

(ii) Imaginative—expressing a proposition about an unreal or imagined situation, one that diverges from the real world:

(a) Hypothetical—what could be true in some imaginary world:

- (56) If I saw the queen, I'd bow (*I could imagine seeing the queen*).
- (57) If we moved, we could have a garden (*I could imagine moving*).
- (58) If I were your father, I'd kick you out (*I could imagine being your father*).

(b) Counterfactual—what *could* have been true but *was not*:

- (59) If you'd taken algebra, you would know this formula (*but you didn't take algebra*).

- (60) If you'd listened to me, you wouldn't have suffered (but you *didn't* listen to me).

English makes grammatical distinctions among these three types of conditionals in the auxiliary verbs and tense and aspect markers they can or must take, but Mandarin has no such grammatical distinctions. Which type of message is conveyed by a Mandarin conditional construction is inferred by the hearer from the proposition in the second clause and from his/her knowledge of the world and of the context in which the sentence is being used. For example, clause (61) can be the C<sub>1</sub> for all three types of conditionals, as shown in (62):

- (61) rúguō nǐ kàn - dào wǒ mèimei, ...  
if you see - arrive I younger:sister

- (62) 

rúguō	nǐ	kàn	-	dào
if	you	see	-	arrive

wǒ mèimei, nǐ yíding  
I younger:sister you certainly

zhīdào tā huáiyùn le  
know 3sg pregnant CRS

如果看到，就会知道

Reality: If you see my younger sister, you'll certainly know that she is pregnant.

Imaginative hypothetical: If you saw my younger sister, you'd know she was pregnant (I *could imagine* your seeing her).

Imaginative counterfactual: If you had seen my younger sister, you would have known that she was pregnant (you *didn't* see her).

如果看到，就一定知道，如果看到了，就该知道

Although English makes a clear distinction among these three types of conditionals, it should be obvious that it is not necessary to do so, because the interpretation of the sentence is always closely related to the context in which it is spoken; the reality interpretation of sentence (62), for example, would be appropriate in a discussion of plans according to which the hearer actually expects to see the speaker's sister. The hypothetical interpretation of (62) would be the natural one in a conversation in which the speaker and the hearer are imagining whether the hearer could tell that the speaker's sister was pregnant by looking at her. Both the

speaker and the hearer know that the hearer has not yet seen her but that it is within the realm of potential possibility. The counterfactual interpretation of (62), on the other hand, would be the one inferred in a conversation in which both the speaker and the hearer know that whenever the hearer has had a chance to see the speaker's sister, the hearer has not succeeded in seeing her; taking that fact as the starting assumption, of course, allows only the counterfactual interpretation of (62).

The three interpretations for (62) listed above make it clear, then, that although there are no grammatical markings in Mandarin to signal overtly which of these three types of conditionals is intended, there is no confusion because what is meant is clear from the context.

Let's now look at each of the three sorts of conditionals in more detail.

#### A. Reality

These conditionals express a relationship between two propositions in the real world; the second clause may make an assertion, a prediction, or a suggestion, or it may give a command or ask a question. Here are some examples:

- (63) yàoshi nǐ bu huì yóuyǒng, nǐ bu  
 if you not know:how swim you not  
 yīnggāi qù huá chuán  
 should go row boat

If you can't swim, you shouldn't go rowing.

- (64) rúguǒ nǐ kàn - dào wǒ mèimei, gēn  
 if you see - arrive I younger:sister with  
 tā dā (yī) - ge zhāohu  
 3sg hit (one) - CL greeting

If you see my younger sister, say hello to her.

- (65) rúguǒ yǒu cǎihóng chūxiàn, wǒmen jiù  
 if exist rainbow appear we then  
 zhào - xia - lái  
 photograph - descend - come

If a rainbow appears, let's take a picture of it.



- (66) jiāshǐ míngtiān xià - yǔ, wǒ jiū  
 if tomorrow descend - rain I then  
 bu shàng - bān le  
 not ascend - work CRS

If it's raining tomorrow, I won't go to work.

- (67) rúguǒ nǐ xǐhuān chī táozi, nǐ yíding  
 if you like eat peach you certainly  
 yě xǐhuān zhèi - gē shuǐguǒ  
 also like this - CL fruit

If you like peaches, you'll love this fruit.

When no linking element is present, there may be no formal distinction between a 'when' and an 'if' interpretation. A sentence presented earlier, (40), was one example:

- (40) wǒ sǐ - le, nǐ zuì hǎo zài jià  
 I die - PFV you most good again marry

{ If ~~X~~ } I die, you'd better marry again.  
 { When }

Here is another:

- (68) tā kāi - le mén, nǐ jiū jìn  
 3sg open - PFV door you then enter  
 - qu  
 - go

{ If ~~X~~ } s/he opens the door, you go in.  
 { When }

### B. Imaginative

Imaginative conditionals, as we have said, are those used by a speaker who imagines a set of circumstances and then asks a question or makes an assertion

based on this assumption. An imaginative conditional can have either a hypothetical or a counterfactual interpretation. As we've stated before, it is the context in which the sentence is used that determines the interpretation of the sentence. For example, consider (69):

- (69) <sup>当时 / 刚才</sup>  
 rúguō nǐ gēi qìchē zhuàng - dào, <sup>了</sup>  
 if you BEI car hit - fall:over  
 万 -  
 wǒmen zěnmē bàn ?  
 we how do

Hypothetical: If you were hit by a car, how would we manage (I *could imagine* you being hit by a car)?

Counterfactual: If you had been hit by a car, how would we have managed (you *weren't* hit by a car)?

The hypothetical interpretation would be appropriate, for example, as a response by a concerned family member to the announcement that someone has decided to deliver newspapers by riding a motorcycle in a congested urban area. The counterfactual interpretation, on the other hand, would be appropriate if a parent were admonishing a child who had just crossed the street without looking for oncoming traffic.

Here are three additional examples of sentences that can be interpreted either as hypothetical or counterfactual conditionals, depending on the context:

- (70) <sup>当时 / 那时</sup>  
 jiārú nǐ tīng - le wǒ - de  
 if you listen - PFV I - GEN  
 huà, jiu bu huì chīkǔ le  
 speech then not likely suffer CRS

Hypothetical: If you listened to me, you would not suffer (I *could imagine* you listening to me).

Counterfactual: If you had listened to me, you wouldn't have suffered (you *didn't* listen to me).

- (71) 把 做完  
 jiǎrú wǒ yùbei - le gōngkè, lǎoshī jiu  
 if I prepare - PFV homework teacher then  
 bu huì mā wǒ }  
 not likely scold I }

Hypothetical: If I did my homework, the teacher wouldn't scold me (I *could imagine* doing my homework).

Counterfactual: If I had done my homework, the teacher wouldn't have scolded me (I *didn't* do my homework).

- (72) jiǎrú wǒ shì nǐ fùqin, wǒ zǎo jiu  
 if I be you father I early then  
 bǎ nǐ gǎn - chū - qù  
 BA you chase - exit - go  
 le  
 CRS

X Hypothetical: If I were your father, I'd kick you out (I *could imagine* being your father).

Counterfactual: If I had been your father, I would have kicked you out (I *wasn't* your father).

In this section we have isolated three types of messages for conditional sentences: reality, imaginative hypothetical, and imaginative counterfactual. The message that is actually conveyed by a given sentence depends crucially on the context in which it is used. In particular, the context involves the knowledge about the situation which the speaker and the hearer share.

### 23.2 Backward Linking

With backward linking, a clause is linked to the preceding clause. Unlike forward linking, however, where a speaker intends a relationship between a pair of clauses uttered by himself/herself, with certain linking elements, backward-linking clauses can be linked either to the speaker's own previous clause or to a clause that someone else has just said. *Kěshì* 'but' is such a backward-linking

element. For example, in (73) one person uses *kěshi* 'but' to link his/her second clause with his/her own first clause:

(73)	wō	běnlái	xiǎng	zǎo	yidiǎn	lái,	<u>kěshi</u>
	I	originally	think	early	a:little	come	but
		(wō)	méi	gǎn	-	shàng	gōnggòng
		I	not	chase	-	ascend	public
			-	qìchē			
			-	automobile			

I had originally intended to come earlier, but I didn't catch the bus.

In (74), on the other hand, speaker B uses *kěshi* 'but' to link his/her proposition to what speaker A had just said:

(74) A:	wǒ	yào	dá	tā	-	de	chēzi
	I	want	ride	3sg	-	GEN	vehicle
		qù	xuéxiào				
		go	school				

I want to ride in his/her car to go to school.

B:	<u>kěshi</u>	tā	-	de	chēzi	méi	yǒu
	but	3sg	-	GEN	vehicle	not	exist
		qìyóu	le				
		gasoline	CRS				

But his/her car is out of gas.

Backward linking can be accomplished without any linking element, as we have seen in examples (36), (42), and (43), which contain neither forward-linking nor backward-linking elements. Backward linking can also, however, be expressed by adverbial elements in clause-initial position or by nonmovable adverbs. In what follows we will discuss two types of backward-linking elements separately.

### 23.2.1 Adverbial Backward-Linking Elements in Clause-Initial Position

Adverbial backward-linking elements must occur at the beginning of their clause. With the exception of *háishi* 'or', which can be used only in questions, adverbial backward linking can link a clause either to the speaker's own previous clause or to a clause someone else has just said. The most important adverbial backward-linking elements are these:

(75)	$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{bìngqiě} \\ \text{érqiě} \end{array} \right\}$	'moreover'
	$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{kěshi} \\ \text{jiànshi} \\ \text{búguò} \\ \text{ránér} \end{array} \right\}$	'but, nevertheless, however' <sup>4</sup>
	<i>háishi</i>	'or' (exclusive, used only in questions)
	$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{huòshi} \\ \text{huòzhě} \\ \text{huòzheshi} \end{array} \right\}$	'or' (inclusive)
	<i>wéideshì</i>	'in order to'
	<i>shěngde</i>	'so as to avoid' ✓
	<i>suǒyì</i>	'so'
	<i>yīnwèi</i>	'because' (can also occur as a forward-linking element: see example [19])

Here are some examples.

(76)	<i>zhèi</i>	—	<i>dòng</i>	<i>lóu</i>	<i>hěn</i>	<i>dà</i>	,	<i>bìngqiě</i>
	this	—	CL	building	very	big		moreover
			<i>hěn</i>	<i>yǒumíng</i>				
			very	famous				

This building is very big, and it's also very famous.

(77) (discussing a friend's qualifications to organize a skit)

A: wó juéde tā hěn nénggàn  
I feel 3sg very capable

I feel s/he is very capable.

B: érqiě tā hěn yǒu yǎn — xiǎ  
moreover 3sg very exist act — play

de jīngyàn  
NOM experience

Moreover, s/he has a lot of acting experience.

(78) tā hěn bèn , búguò kǎo — shàng  
3sg very stupid but exam — ascend

dàxué le  
university CRS

S/He's very stupid, but s/he passed the university entrance exam.

(79) nǐ yào wǒ bāng nǐ háishi yào  
you want I help you or want

zìjǐ zuò ?  
self do

Do you want me to help you, or do you want to do it yourself?

(80) wǒmen zài zhèlǐ chī huòzhe chī fāndiàn  
we at here eat or eat restaurant  
下馆子  
上饭馆

dōu xíng  
all OK

We can either eat here or eat out.

- (81) tā qù Xiānggāng wèideshì xué Guāngdōng - huà  
 3sg go Hong Kong in:order:to study Canton - speech

S/He went to Hong Kong in order to study Cantonese.

- (82) nǐ kěyǐ yòng wǒ - de zìdiǎn , shèngde  
 you can use I - GEN dictionary in:order:to:avoid

nǐ mǎi le  
 you buy CRS

You can use my dictionary, and then you won't have to buy one.

- (83) zhù sùshè bǐjiào róngyì , yīnwei xuéxiào gài -  
 live dormitory relatively easy because school build -

le hěn duō xīn de sùshè  
 PFV very many new (NOM) dormitory 楼

It's easy to live in the dorm because the school has built a lot of new dorms.

### 23.2.2 Nonmovable Adverbs as Backward-Linking Elements

A few nonmovable adverbs (see section 8.2 of chapter 8), which occur immediately after the topic of clause, can also serve as backward-linking elements. Unlike most of the adverbial backward-linking elements in clause-initial position, the nonmovable adverbs that can function as backward-linking elements relate a clause only to the speaker's own previous clause, not to a clause that someone else has said. The most common backward-linking adverb is *jiù* 'then'. It is used in a number of examples in this chapter, including (3), (6), (8), (39), (41), and (45). Another nonmovable adverb that can function as a backward-linking element is *cái* 'only then', as in (84):

- (84) tā juǎn - le tóufǎ cái piàoliang  
 3sg curl - PFV hair only:then pretty

It's only when she curls her hair that she is pretty.

The third nonmovable adverb that can function as a backward-linking element is *dào* 'nonetheless'.<sup>5</sup>

(85) tā yidiǎn dōu bu cōngmíng , dào  
 3sg a:little all not intelligent nonetheless

hui <sup>B</sup> tīng — huà  
 know:how listen — speech

S/He is not at all intelligent, but (s/he) knows how to be obedient.

In addition to the three nonmovable adverbs given above, there are four that occur as the second identical member of a correlative pair: *yòu*, *yě*, *yuè*, and *yībiān*. For examples of these, see (25)–(28) above.

### Notes

1. Some of the ideas for this chapter have been taken from Shaffer (1966), Chao (1968:sect. 2.2), and Tseng (1977), and from some unpublished research by Richard Te-lee Ch'i.
2. The semantics of conditional sentences deserve a special discussion; see section 23.1.3 below.
3. On the semantics of conditionals we have taken ideas from Schachter (1971).
4. There are slight differences in the kinds of contrast these words can be used to signal. For a discussion of the first three, see Ross (1978:201 ff.).
5. On *cái* and *dào*, see Tsao (1976).



## CHAPTER 24



# *Pronouns in Discourse*

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### 24.1 Zero Pronouns

As we have indicated in chapters 2 and 4, a salient feature of Mandarin grammar is the fact that noun phrases that are understood from context do not need to be specified. Many languages have this property—for example, most American Indian languages, Japanese, and Korean—but it is sometimes difficult for speakers of Indo-European languages to grasp because the use of pronouns is so much more common in Indo-European languages, especially in English. ✓

Let's consider some examples. If the speaker is talking about how s/he spent the weekend, s/he might say:

- (1) Lù Wényì gēn wǒ qù huá — chuán ,   
Lu Wenyi with I go row — boat
-  diào — le yì — ge zhōngtóu yú  
' catch — PFV one — CL hour fish

Lu Wenyi and I went rowing, and (we) fished for an hour.

In response, the hearer could say:

- (2) \_\_\_\_\_ diào — zhào — le \_\_\_\_\_ ma ?  
catch — succeed — PFV Q

Did (you) catch (anything)?



B: gěi wǒ \_\_\_\_\_  
 give I

Give (them) to me.

The preceding zero pronoun examples have involved referents that are understood from having been mentioned in the discourse. Another situation in which a referent is understood is when it is "general," or nonspecific; English uses *you* or *they* (or, more formally, *one*) in this function. Here are some examples:

(5) diào - yú \_\_\_\_\_ bu néng zháoji  
 catch - fish not can impatient

When (you) go fishing (you) can't be impatient.

这个操场的鱼能钓吗?

(6) zhèi - ge hú \_\_\_\_\_ kěyī bu kěyī  
 this - CL lake can not can

这个地方的湖水能滑冰吗?

huá - bīng?  
 skate - ice

Can (one) skate on this lake?

(7) Xīnhuá Lù \_\_\_\_\_ gài - le hǎo  
 Xinhua Road build - PFV very

duō xīn gōngyù  
 many new apartment:buildings

On Xinhua Road, (they)'ve built a lot of new apartment buildings.

(8) \_\_\_\_\_ yòu xiū lù le  
 again repair road CRS

(They)'re fixing the road again.

One common situation in which noun phrases are unspecified is the *topic chain* (see section 4.1.8 of chapter 4 on topics), where a referent is referred to in the first clause, and then there follow several more clauses talking about the same referent but not overtly mentioning that referent. One very short example of the *topic chain* can be seen in (1) above, where the topic of the second clause is unspecified

because it refers to the topic of the first clause. Here is another, slightly longer, example:

(9) A: <sup>我们</sup> wǒmen dāsuan zuò shénme ne?  
 we plan do what REx

What shall we plan to do?

B: ~~我们~~ xià — chē yìhòu , — xiān  
 descend — vehicle after first

dào Dàhuá Fàndiàn , — xiūxi yíhuìr ,  
 arrive Dahua Hotel rest a:while

— chī — le wǔ —  
 eat — PFV afternoon —

fàn , jiù — qù kāi —  
 food then go open —

huì , sǎn — le huì , —  
 meeting adjourn — PFV meeting

méi shì le , — kěyǐ dào  
 not matter CRS can to

hú — biān kàn — kàn  
 lake — side see — see

huòzhě — <sup>租</sup> gū <sup>一</sup> yì — ge  
 or hire one — CL

chuán huá — hua  
 boat row — row

After (we) get off the train, (we)'ll go to the Dahua Hotel first and rest a while. After (we) eat lunch, (we)'ll attend the meeting. When the meeting ends, (we) have nothing to do, so (we) can go to the lake to look around, or (we) can rent a boat to row.

While the topic chain is a common situation exhibiting unspecified noun phrases, the zero pronoun, of course, does not always have to refer to the *topic* of



The topic at the beginning of (11) is *wǒ* 'I'. The sense of the passage makes it clear that it was *I* (\_\_\_\_\_) who requested the hotel to reserve a room, and it was *they* (\_\_\_\_\_) who didn't get back to *wǒ* 'I'.

## 24.2 Pronouns

Pronouns often do occur in Mandarin conversation (see section 4.2.6 of chapter 4 for a discussion of pronouns); the question to be raised in the context of this chapter, of course, is this: If either a pronoun or a zero pronoun can occur, how does a speaker decide which is appropriate? While there exists no airtight, absolute answer to this question, a general guideline having to do with *highlighting* can be followed. That is, it is not enough just to say that whenever the referent can be understood or figured out, a zero pronoun can be used, because there are times when it would be quite obvious what the referent for a given pronoun would be if it were omitted, and yet it must be used. Let's consider an example. If one is describing a scene in which a gentleman had come into a room, one might say:

(12)	wàibian	jìn	-	lái	-	le	yi
	outside	enter	-	come	-	PFV	one
		-	ge	rén	_____	liǎng	-
		-	CL	person		two	-
		ge	hóng	yǎnjing ,	yi	-	fù
		CL	red	eye	one	-	CL
	dà	yuán	liǎn ,	_____	dài	-	-
	big	round	face		wear	-	-
	zhe	yi	-	ge	xiǎo	màozi ,	
	DUR	one	-	CL	small	hat	
	<u>tā</u>	xìng	Xià				
	3sg	surname	Xia				

From outside came a person. (He) had two red eyes (and) one big round face, and (he) was wearing a small hat. He had the surname Xia.

In this discourse, the topic is the same from beginning to end, yet only the last clause contains a *tā* 'he'. Why? What is significant about this last clause is that it

conveys a type of information that is unexpected in light of the information conveyed by the preceding clauses. All the other clauses in this passage describe the man as he appeared, while the final clause provides a piece of background information, something that is not connected with his appearance, as the clauses preceding it are. In this clause, then, but not in the others, we find the pronoun *tā*, highlighting the fact that the speaker has switched from describing his appearance to providing the background information concerning his name.

Here is an example of a different type, where a series of clauses offering descriptions precedes a clause referring to an action. Now, the action clause is the unexpected one, and it has the pronoun *tā* 'he':

- (13) Bái Xiānsheng zài kètīng — lì dēng  
 Bai Mr. at living room — in wait
- Lìsì , \_\_\_\_\_ dài — zhe yǎnjīng ,  
 Lisi \_\_\_\_\_ wear — DUR glasses
- zài nàr kàn bàozhǐ , \_\_\_\_\_ hàoxiàng ?  
 at there read newspaper \_\_\_\_\_ seem
- yǒu diǎn bu — nàifán , tā  
 have a:little not — patient 3sg
- shuō : “ . . . . ”  
 say “ . . . . ”

Mr. Bai was waiting for Lisi in the living room. (He) was wearing glasses and reading a newspaper there. (He) seemed to be a bit impatient. He said: “. . . .”

In this example, all the clauses except the last one describe Mr. Bai's appearance, setting the scene in which he was waiting for Lisi. Then, in the last clause, an action ('He said . . .') is expressed, and here, even though it is obvious who the referent is, the *tā* cannot be omitted, because the sentence provides an unexpected type of information in the context of a series of clauses portraying Mr. Bai, and it is necessary to highlight the fact that the referent has not changed.

The role of highlighting can be seen even more clearly in the use of the first and second person pronouns. In general, a zero pronoun is used when there is no reason to highlight the reference to the speaker or the hearer, while the pronouns *wǒ/women* 'I/we' or *nǐ/nǐmen* 'you/you all' are used when there is some reason to





*b* would be appropriate if it is breakfast time and A wants to know what is for dinner so that s/he can decide what to pack for lunch, or if A and B are shopping for groceries at noon and A wants to know B's plans for dinner so that s/he can decide how many tomatoes to buy. In this situation, the pronoun serves to clarify the fact that it is indeed 'we' whose dinner plans are being referred to, since in this context, removed from the meal time and/or place, the referent of the zero pronoun might not be clear.

Let us look at another example involving questions. A clerk in a shop, upon seeing a customer, will say:

- (16) \_\_\_\_\_ yào shénme ?  
                   want        what

What do you want?

Once again, the question is entirely expected in the shop situation, there is no reason to highlight the reference to the hearer, and the pronoun would not be used. The question with the pronoun,

- (17) nǐ yào shénme ?  
       you    want     what

What do you want?

however, would be used by the clerk, for example, to single out a specific shopper from a group of people, to address a revered older person, or as a request for clarification of the shopper's intentions.

Notice that, depending on the context and the people involved, the question with *nǐ* can sound either more concerned and friendly or more abrupt and rude. With (17), for example, if the shopkeeper uses it while waiting on a revered older person, then it sounds more concerned and friendly than (16), the question without *nǐ*. If the shopkeeper uses it to ask for clarification of the shopper's intentions, though, it can sound more rude and abrupt than (16). What this means is that the real difference between using and not using the pronoun is basically not a matter of such attitudes as greater or lesser friendliness or abruptness, but is, rather, a matter of the principle of highlighting, which we have been stressing, and it is this principle that allows differences in attitude to be expressed, depending on the situation. Of course, the abruptness or politeness accompanying such questions as (17) is also communicated through intonation, facial expression, volume, pitch of voice, and similar factors.

As a final example, consider a physician giving a medical examination to a patient. After the first one or two queries, the questions that the physician poses are likely to contain no subject pronoun referring to the hearer, once again because there is no reason to highlight the fact that the hearer is the one to whom the physician is referring. For example:

- (18) a. nǐ yǒu méi yǒu hài - guo fèi bìng ?  
 you exist not exist - suffer - EXP lung disease

Have you ever had tuberculosis?

- b. \_\_\_\_\_ yǒu méi yǒu shòu - guo shāng ?  
 exist not exist receive - EXP wound

Have (you) ever been wounded?

- c. \_\_\_\_\_ yǎnjīng shì bu shì zhèngcháng ?  
 eye be not be normal

Are (your) eyes normal?

- d. \_\_\_\_\_ cháng - wèi yǒu méi yǒu máobìng ?  
 intestine - stomach exist not exist problem

Do (you) have digestive problems?

- e. \_\_\_\_\_ hóulǒng téng bu téng ?  
 throat hurt not hurt

Does (your) throat hurt?

- f. \_\_\_\_\_ tīngjué zěnmē - yàng ?  
 hearing how - manner

How is (your) hearing?

If pronouns are used in questions in which the referent is being highlighted, then it follows that, in general, ordinary information-seeking questions *will* contain pronouns in most contexts, since the context is neutral with regard to what the referent of the pronoun might be. This is, in fact, the case; it is difficult to imagine

contexts in which questions such as the following will not have their pronouns:

- (19) nǐ xiǎode bu xiǎode tā yǒu shénme bìng?  
 you know not know 3sg exist what sickness

Do you know what his/her illness is?

- (20) nǐ tīng shénme?  
 you listen what

What are you listening to?

- (21) nǐ chuān jǐ — hào xié?  
 you wear how:many — number shoe

What size shoe do you wear?

- (22) nǐ xǐhuān bu xǐhuān Bèiduōfēn — de  
 you like not like Beethoven — GEN

yīnyuè?  
 music

Do you like the music of Beethoven?

That is, since questions such as these are in no way expected in most contexts, the use of the pronoun highlights the fact that the subject of the question is indeed the hearer himself/herself. Thus, we would predict that if we could find a context in which there was no need to highlight the referent of the pronoun, the pronoun could be omitted. Taking (22) as an example, we suggest a context such as the following: after A and B have been listening to Beethoven for an hour, A could ask B question (23), which is (22) without the pronoun *nǐ* 'you':

- (23) \_\_\_\_\_ xǐhuān bu xǐhuān Bèiduōfēn — de  
 like not like Beethoven — GEN

yīnyuè?  
 music

Do (you) like Beethoven's music?

Turning now to the occurrence of pronouns in *answers* to questions, we find the same principle at work: a first person pronoun is unusual in an answer to a question when it simply provides the information requested in the question, since there is generally no reason to highlight reference to oneself in answering a question. Thus, in exchanges such as the following, the answers would be highly unlikely to have the pronoun *wǒ* 'I':

- (24) A:    nǐ    xǐhuān    bu    xǐhuān    xīguā ?  
           you    like        not    like    watermelon

Do you like watermelon?

- B: \_\_\_\_\_ bu    xǐhuān \_\_\_\_\_  
                   not    like

(I) don't like (it).

- (25) A:    nǐ    jīntiān    hǎo    yīdiǎn    le    méiyǒu ?  
           you    today    good    a:little    CRS    not

Are you a little better today?

- B: \_\_\_\_\_ hǎo    de    duō    le  
                   good    (CSC)    much    CRS

(I) am much better.

- (26) A:    tā    jīntiān    xiàwǔ    gěi    nǐ    de    nèi  
           3sg    today    afternoon    give    you    NOM    that
- fēn    bàozhǐ    nǐ    kàn    —  
                   —    CL    newspaper    you    read    —
- wán    le    ma ?  
                   finish    CRS    Q

Have you finished reading the newspaper s/he gave you this afternoon?

B: \_\_\_\_\_ kàn      -      wán      \_\_\_\_\_ le  
                  read      -      finish      CRS

(I)'ve read (it).

A contrast between zero pronoun and pronoun is possible, however, in other question-answer pairs. Consider the following: if A is at the station and needs to catch a train, s/he may ask B, a stranger, when the next train leaves:

(27) A:    xià      -      yī      -      bān    huǒchē   shénme  
                  next      -      one      -      CL      train      what

   shíhòu    kāi ?  
    time      leave

When does the next train leave?

B: *a.*    \_\_\_\_\_    bu    xiāode  
    not    know

(I) don't know.

*b.*    wǒ      bu    xiāode  
                  I      not    know

I don't know.

The *a* answer, without the pronoun, is a simple, neutral response to the question. The *b* answer, with the pronoun, on the other hand, suggests that while *I* do not know, perhaps someone else does, and A should ask somebody else. Because it opens up this possibility, its message is somewhat softer and less abrupt than that of the *a* response; we again stress, however, that the less abrupt and softer effect is strictly a secondary feature derived from the fact that the speaker is highlighting reference to himself/herself.

Here is a similar example illustrating the contrast.

(28) A:    tā      kànjian    nǐ      méiyǒu ?  
                  3sg      see      you      not

Did s/he see you?









- (31) \_\_\_\_\_ bié pèng \_\_\_\_\_ !  
 don't touch

Don't touch (it)!

In this context, such a command would be perfectly normal, and there would be no reason to use the subject pronoun *nǐ* 'you'. If it were used, it would imply that the hearer was being singled out and contrasted with others who might not be given the same warning, which is clearly not what is intended in this setting:

- (32) nǐ bié pèng \_\_\_\_\_ !  
 you don't touch

Don't you touch (it)!

Similarly, if A sees that B's shoes are soaked, s/he could say:

- (33) \_\_\_\_\_ kuài qù huàn xiézi , \_\_\_\_\_ bié  
 quick go change shoe don't  
 gǎnmào le  
 catch:cold CRS

Hurry and go change your shoes—don't catch cold.

The command is normal and perfunctory in this setting; again, there would be no reason to use the pronoun.

What we have said so far provides a basis for understanding why first person pronouns are rarely omitted in statements that initiate conversation: at the beginning of a conversation, there are no assumptions about what the subject of the sentence is. Thus, if A wants to initiate a conversation by saying that s/he has a headache, it will be inappropriate for him/her to use the *a* form of (34); the *b* form, rather, is the appropriate one:

- (34) *a.* \_\_\_\_\_ tóu — téng  
 head — ache

(I) have a headache.



**24.3 Syntactic Constraints on Zero Pronouns**

We have analyzed the discourse factors that determine the use of a zero pronoun or a pronoun in the preceding sections. The occurrence of a pronoun can, however, be required by the syntactic structure of a sentence. In other words, there are two syntactic environments in which a zero pronoun is not allowed, regardless of the discourse factors. First, the noun phrase occurring immediately after a coverb cannot be a zero pronoun (see chapter 9 for a discussion of coverbs). For example, (39)–(42) are unacceptable because the noun phrase occurring after the coverb in each sentence is a zero pronoun:

- (39) \*wǒ gēn \_\_\_\_\_ xué Yīngwén  
I with learn English
- (40) \*tā bǎ \_\_\_\_\_ dài – lái LE  
3sg BA bring – come CRS/PFV
- (41) \*nǐ cóng \_\_\_\_\_ zǒu ?  
you from leave
- (42) \*Zhangsan gěi \_\_\_\_\_ xiū shuǐ – guǎnzi  
Zhangsan for repair water – pipe

Second, the pivotal noun phrase in a serial verb construction cannot be a zero pronoun (see section 21.3 of chapter 21 on the pivotal construction). Sentences (43) and (44) are unacceptable because the pivotal noun phrase is a zero pronoun:

- ✓(43) \*tā mìnglìng \_\_\_\_\_ yòng dāozi  
3sg order use knife
- (44) \*wǒ quàn \_\_\_\_\_ bié hē jiǔ  
I urge not drink wine

**Note**

1. This chapter has benefited from some comments made by James Tai and Talmy Givón. For much more detailed discussions of pronouns in discourse, see Li and Thompson (1979a) and Tai (1978).



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**Notes on References**

CAAAL = *Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages*

CLAO = *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale*

JCL = *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*

JCLTA = *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers' Association*

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## Index

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- a/ya. *See* Reduce Forcefulness  
Absolute adjective, 141–147  
Accusative construction. *See* bǎ  
Activity verb, 217–219, 220–222, 234  
negation and, 423  
Adjectival verb, 38, 117–123, 124, 141–147  
absolute, 141–147  
attributive, 117–123, 124  
change-of-state meaning with le, 250–252  
in complex stative construction, 623–624  
with hén ‘very’, 339–340  
manner adverb formed from, 322–326  
mistaken as auxiliary, 179–181  
negation of, 421–422  
reduplication of, 32–34  
scalar, 141–147  
Adjective. *See* Adjectival verb  
Adjective clause. *See* Relative clause  
Adjective-noun compound, 82  
Adverb, 181–182, 319–355  
agent-oriented, 324–326, 343–344, 350  
attitude, 321–322, 460  
bǎ and, 349–352  
backward-linking, 653–656  
forward-linking, 635–640  
manner, 32, 322–328, 342–345, 347–348, 523–525, 624–626  
movable, 320–322, 340–342, 349–350, 460, 523–525, 635–638  
negation and, 342–349  
nonmovable, 322–340, 342–349, 350–352, 449–450, 638–640, 655–656  
onomatopoeic, 36, 328, 344–345, 352  
sentence-linking, 635–640, 653–656  
sentential, 320–322, 340–342, 349–350, 460, 523–525  
time, 320–321  
in verb-copying construction, 449–450  
Adverb compound, 82  
Adverbial clause, 631–656  
cause, 602, 635–638, 641–642  
concessive, 635–640  
conditional, 633–640, 646–651  
reason, 635–640, 653–655  
temporal, 633–634, 640–643  
Adverbial complement construction. *See* Complex stative construction  
Adverb-verb compound, 83  
Adversative conjunction (‘but’), 653–654  
Adversity, 493–505  
Advice, 308  
Advisative particle (ba), 307–311  
Affirmation, shì in, 151–154, 540–541

- Affixation, 36–45
- Agent  
 manner adverbs and, 324–326, 343–344, 350  
 in passive sentences, 492, 499–500, 503–506
- Agent-oriented adverb, 324–326, 343–344, 350
- Alternating events clause, 595–597
- Anaphora. *See* Pronoun
- Animate noun phrase, 444–446
- A-not-A question, 535–545  
a with, 313  
 answers to, 559–560  
 auxiliary verb in, 172  
bǎ in, 310  
ne with, 305–307  
 compared with particle question, 548–554  
 as tag, 546
- Answers to question, 557–563  
 pronouns in, 668–670
- Antecedent. *See* Pronoun
- Appearing, verbs of, 403–404
- Article. *See* Demonstrative
- Aspect, 12–13, 184–237  
 delimitative, 29–31, 57–58, 232–236, 489–490  
 durative, 202–203, 217–226, 436–437, 489  
 experiential, 204, 226–232, 436  
 negation and, 430–438  
 perfective, 185–217, 270, 296–300, 430–436, 490, 640–641  
 in verb-copying construction, 448
- Aspect marker  
 coverbs and, 360–362
- Associative phrase, 113–116, 124–126
- Attitude adverb, 320–322
- Auxiliary verb, 172–183  
 adverb and, 320  
 in complex sentence with -zhe, 225–226  
 in complex stative construction, 627–628  
 negation and, 420–421  
 versus adverb, 181–182  
 versus verb, 172–181
- ba. *See* Solicit Agreement
- bǎ, 463–491, 501–503  
 adverbs and, 349–352  
bèi and, 505–508  
 and gěi, 482  
 with indirect object, 370–371, 381–382
- Backward linking, 651–656
- Backward linking element, 653–656
- bèi, 365, 492–508  
 adverbs and, 324–327  
bǎ and, 505–508
- Benefactive noun phrase, 385–388
- béng, 456
- bǐ. *See* Comparative construction
- bié, 455–461, 503
- Bounded. *See* Perfective aspect
- bu. *See* Negation  
 compared with méi(yǒu), 421–426
- bùrú, 564–571
- cái, 332–333
- Case marker, 11
- Causative, 602. *See also* Resultative verb compound
- Cause and effect. *See* Resultative verb compound; Cause clause
- Cause clause, 602, 635–638, 641–642
- Change of state (le), 244–263, 289
- Chinese language family, 2–3
- Circumstance clause, 595–598
- Circumstantial phrase. *See* Coverb phrase
- Classical Chinese, 45, 46, 122–123
- Classifier, 104–113  
 in compounds, 82  
 reduplication of, 34–35
- Classifier phrase, 104–113, 124–126, 130–132
- Clause, 531–532, 594–595, 631
- Cleft sentence. *See* Shì, as affirmation
- Cognate object. *See* Quantity adverbial phrase
- Comitative. *See* Coverb
- Command. *See* Imperative
- Comparative construction, 142, 416–417, 564–571
- Comparison. *See* Comparative construction

- Complementation. *See* Sentential subject;  
Sentential object
- Complement to abstract noun, 585–587
- Completion, 65  
-le and, 215–216
- Complex sentence  
adverbial clause, 631–656  
complex stative construction, 206–207,  
443, 570, 623–630  
disjunction, 654  
disjunctive question, 531–545, 555–  
556, 558–560  
with indefinite pronouns, 527–531,  
644–645  
indirect question, 554–557, 606  
with -le, 198–201  
nominalization, 145–146, 575–593  
relative clause, 116–117, 124–125,  
579–585, 612–618  
sentence linking, 331, 333, 631–656  
sentential object, 458–460, 555–557,  
598–602  
sentential subject, 555–557, 603–606  
serial verb construction, 446–447,  
458–460, 594–622  
with -zhe, 223–226
- Complex stative construction, 206–207,  
443, 570, 623–630
- Compound, 44–45, 46–81  
adjective-noun, 82  
adverb, 82  
adverb-verb, 83  
meanings of, 46–48  
nominal, 48–54  
noun-verb, 82–83  
parallel, 53–54, 68–70  
resultative verb, 38–39, 54–68, 235,  
426–428, 476–478, 488, 502  
subject-predicate, 70–73  
verbal, 54–81  
verb-object, 31, 73–81, 165–166,  
407–409
- Compound sentence. *See* Sentence linking
- Concessive clause, 635–640
- Concessive conditional clause, 635–640
- Conditional clause, 633–640, 646–651  
concessive, 635–640  
counterfactual, 646–648, 649–651  
hypothetical, 646–648, 649–651  
imaginative, 646–648, 649–651  
reality, 646–649
- Conditional sentence, 312, 646–651
- Confirmation question, 314
- Conjunction. *See* Sentence linking
- Connective. *See* Forward linking element;  
Backward linking element
- Consecutive events clause, 198–202,  
595–597, 633–634, 640–641
- Content question. *See* Question-word  
question
- Co-ordination. *See* Sentence linking
- Copula, 147–155, 514–516. *See also* shi
- Coreferential noun phrase, 102–103,  
137–139
- Correlative conjunction. *See* Paired con-  
nective
- Counterfactual conditional clause, 646–  
648, 649–651
- Coverb, 356–369  
pronoun with, 583–585, 675
- Coverb phrase, 337–339, 356–358, 570
- Currently Relevant State (le), 238–300
- dào, 363, 366. *See also* Directional phrase
- Dative. *See* Indirect object
- de (in complex stative construction), 623
- de (nominalizing particle), 118–123, 575.  
*See also* shi . . . de construction
- de (in associative phrase), 113–116
- de (to form manner adverbs), 322–323
- Definite noun phrase, 20–21, 85–86,  
126–132, 192–195, 444–446,  
465–466, 483–488
- Degrees of comparison. *See* Comparative  
construction
- Deletion. *See* Zero anaphora  
of repeated material in A-not-A question,  
536–541
- Delimitative aspect, 232–236  
bá and, 489–490  
reduplication to signal, 29–31  
resultative verb compound and, 57–58
- Demonstrative, 104, 130–132

- Dependent clause*, *See* Sentence linking  
 Derivation, 28–45  
 Descriptive clause, 512, 611–620  
 Descriptive verb, *See* Adjectival verb  
 Determiner. *See* Demonstrative  
 Dialect, 2–3  
 Dimension (in comparative construction), 564, 568–569  
 Directional phrase, 400, 409–413  
   as perfectivizing expression, 206  
   with verb copying, 444  
*Directional resultative verb compound*, 58–65  
 Directional verb, 58–65, 518–519  
 Direction word, 393  
 Direct object, 157–166, 174–178  
   with bǎ, 463–491  
   with bèi, 324–327, 492  
   in comparative construction, 569–570  
   with descriptive clause, 611  
   with directional resultative verb compounds, 58–65  
   compared with indirect object, 370–374  
   with locative verb, 398–401, 404–409  
   with perfective aspect, 186–195, 200–201  
   in pivotal construction, 607  
   sentential, 598–602  
   in shì . . . de construction, 588–589  
   with verb copying, 442–450  
 Discourse, 100  
   pronouns in, 657–675  
   topics in, 100–103  
 Disjunction, 654. *See also* Disjunctive question  
 Disjunctive question, 531–545, 555–556  
   answers to, 558–560  
 Displacement verb, 58, 398–401  
 Disposal, 466–480, 483–490, 501–503  
 Ditransitive verb. *See* Indirect object  
dǒu, 335–339, 528–531  
 Double nominative. *See* Double subject sentence  
 Double object. *See* Indirect object  
 Double subject sentence, 92–93  
 Duration phrase, 21–22  
 Durative aspect (zài, -zhe), 202–203, 217–226, 326  
   bǎ and, 489  
   negation and, 436–437  
 Embedded clause. *See* Complex sentence  
 Embedded object. *See* Sentential object  
 Embedded subject. *See* Sentential subject  
 Executive construction. *See* bǎ  
 Existential sentence, 510–516  
 Existential verb, 510–516  
*Experiential aspect (-guo)*, 204, 226–232  
   negation and, 436  
 Experiential verb, 339–340  
 Extent construction. *See* Complex stative construction  
 Final (syllable), 6  
 Focus construction, 151–154  
 Forward linking, 632–651  
 Forward-linking element, 633–641  
   movable, 635–638  
   nonmovable, 638–640  
 Friendly Warning (ou), 311–313  
 Future, 175–176, 280–282  
gèi, 365–366, 370–389. *See also* Indirect object; Benefactive noun phrase  
   with bǎ, 482  
   as substitute for bèi, 506–508  
 Generic noun phrase, 86–87, 129, 465, 483  
 Genitive, 113–116, 136  
 Goal. *See* Directional phrase  
 Greenberg, Joseph, 16–19  
guóyǔ ('national language'), 1  
 Habitual event, 203. *See also* Durative aspect  
hái, 334–335  
háishi (disjunctive marker), 532–535, 653–654  
 'have' sentence, 513–514  
 Head noun, 104, 113, 116–117, 125–126, 579–587

- hěn, 143–144, 339–340, 568–569  
 Hypothetical conditional clause, 646–648, 649–651
- Identification. *See* Copula
- Idiomacity of compounds, 46–48, 53–54, 73–75
- Imaginative conditional clause, 646–648, 649–651
- Imminent action with le, 278–282
- Imperative, 451–462  
a with, 314–315  
bā in, 475–476  
bèi in, 503  
 first-person, 307–308, 458, 460–461  
-guo in, 230  
-le in, 207–213  
 negative, 210–213, 415–416, 455–460, 503  
 in pivotal construction, 610  
 pronouns in, 672–673
- Imperfective aspect, 185. *See also* Durative aspect
- Inchoative. *See* Currently Relevant State
- Indefinite noun phrase, 20–21, 85–86, 126–132, 444–445, 465–466, 487, 509, 611
- Indefinite pronouns, 527–531, 644–645
- Indirect command, 610
- Indirect discourse, 601–602
- Indirect object, 206, 370–389  
 in passive sentence, 504
- Indirect question, 554–557, 606
- Indirect quotation, 601–602
- Indirect speech, 601–602
- Infix, 38–39
- Initial (syllable), 3–5
- Instrument noun phrase, 367, 504
- Intensifier  
hěn, 143–144, 339–340  
-zhe, 222–223
- Interrogative. *See* Question
- Intransitive verb, 141–157. *See also* Presentative sentence
- Irrealis descriptive clause, 618–620
- Isolating language, 10–13, 36
- jiào in passive sentence, 506–508
- jiù, 256, 258, 331–332, 655
- Juxtaposition of clauses. *See* Sentence linking
- Kinship terms, 35–36
- lái, 58–65, 412–413
- Language versus dialect, 2–3
- láojià, 453–454
- le. *See* Currently Relevant State
- LE (-le le), 296–300
- le. *See* Perfective aspect  
 with coverbs, 362
- lián . . . dōu/yě, 338–339
- Linking. *See* Sentence linking
- Linking element  
 backward, 653–656  
 forward, 633–641
- Location, 390–414, 509–516
- Locative coverb (zài), 396–397
- Locative particle, 365–366, 391–396, 510–511
- Locative phrase, 22–23, 390–409  
 as perfectivizing expression, 206  
 as topic, 94–95  
 with verb copying, 444
- Locus in existential sentence, 510–516
- ma. *See* Particle question
- ma question. *See* Particle question
- Mandarin, 1–3
- Manner adverb, 32, 322–328, 342–345, 347–348, 523–524, 624–626
- Manner clause, 623–626
- Measure complement. *See* Quantity adverbial phrase
- Measure phrase, 104–112, 124–126
- Measure word, 34–35, 104–112
- méi(yǒu). *See* Negation  
 in A-not-A question, 544–545  
 compared with bu, 421–426  
 in comparative construction, 564
- Meteorological expression, 91–92
- Modal. *See* Auxiliary verb

- Modifying phrase, 116–126  
 Monosyllabicity, 13–15, 35, 68, 392–393  
 Mood particle. *See* Sentence-final particle  
 Morpheme, 10–13, 28  
 Morphology, 28–84  
 Motion verb, 517–519  
 Movable adverb, 320–322, 523–525  
     attitude, 321–322  
     **bá** and, 349–350  
     forward-linking, 635–638  
     negation and, 340–342  
     time, 320–321
- ne. *See* Response to Expectation  
 Negation, 415–441  
     and A-not-A question, 535–546  
     adverb and, 340–349  
     and aspect, 430–438  
     of auxiliary, 173  
     with **bá**, 478–480  
     with **bèi**, 502–503  
     in complex sentences with **-zhe**, 225  
     in complex stative construction, 628–629  
     in imperative, 210–213, 415–416, 455–460, 503  
     le and, 252–255, 257–259  
     **-le** and, 204–205, 210–213  
     in question, 562–563  
     in resultative verb compound, 56–57, 426–428  
     in verb-copying construction, 448–449  
 Negative particle, 415–430  
**néng**, 57, 477–478  
 Neutral tone, 9, 29  
 Nominal compound, 48–54  
 Nominalization, 145–146, 575–593. *See also* Sentential object; Sentential subject  
 Nonactivity verb, 234, 569  
 Nonmanner adverb, 328–340  
 Nonmovable adverb, 322–340  
     **bá** and, 350–352  
     backward-linking, 655–656  
     forward-linking, 638–640  
     negation and, 342–349  
     and verb copying, 449–450  
 Nonreferential noun phrase, 127–130, 149, 447–448  
 Noun complement, 585–587  
 Noun phrase, 103–139  
     negation of, 439–440  
     nominalization functioning as, 576–579  
 Noun phrase complement, 579–587  
 Noun phrase as modifier, 579–587  
 Noun-verb compound, 82–83  
 Number. *See* Numeral; Plural noun phrase  
 Numeral, 37, 104–105
- Object. *See* Direct object; Indirect object of verb-object compound, 73–76  
 Object complement, 598–602  
 Onomatopoeic adverb, 36, 328, 344–345, 352  
 Ordinal numeral, 37  
ou. *See* Friendly Warning
- Paired connective, 637–640  
 Parallel compound, 53–54, 68–70  
 Parataxis. *See* Sentence linking; Serial verb construction  
 Particle question, 547–548  
     compared with A-not-A question, 548–554  
     answers to, 560–563  
     using **ba**, 309–311  
     using **ne**, 305–307  
 Partitive. *See* Retained object construction  
 Part-whole relation, 93, 472  
 Passive, 492–508  
     adverbs and, 324–327  
 Past tense, 185  
     **-le** is not, 213–215  
     **méi(yòu)** is not, 428–430  
 Pause particle, 86–87, 633–634  
 Perfective aspect (**-le**), 185–217, 270  
     with **bá**, 490  
     compared with Currently Relevant State **le**, 296–300  
     in forward linking, 640–641  
     negation of, 430–436  
 Perfectivizing expression, 205–207



- Personal pronoun. *See* Pronoun  
 Pivotal construction, 454, 607–610, 675  
 Pivotal noun phrase, 607, 675  
 Place. *See* Locative phrase  
 Place name in locative phrase, 393  
 Placement verb, 404–406  
 Plural, 11–12, 40–41, 112–113, 336  
 Positional verb, 510–516  
 Possessive, 113–116, 136  
 Possessive sentence, 513–514  
 Possibility. *See* Auxiliary verb; Potential form of resultative verb compound  
 Postposition. *See* Locative particle  
 Posture verb, 219–220, 401–402, 510  
 Post-verbal subject, 20, 509–519  
 Potential form of resultative verb complement, 38–39, 56–57, 64, 67–68, 427–428  
     **bǎ** and, 476–478  
     **bèi** and, 502  
     **-le** and, 203–204  
 Predicate, 94, 140–141  
 Predicate adjective. *See* Adjectival verb  
 Prefix, 37–38  
 Preposition. *See* Coverb  
 Presentative sentence, 20, 91, 154–155, 396–397, 509–519  
 Pre-transitive marker. *See* **bǎ**  
 Pre-verbal direct object, 20–21, 159–164  
 Progressive. *See* Durative aspect  
 Pronoun, 40–41, 132–136, 137  
     in discourse, 657–675  
     indefinite, 527–531, 644–645  
     interrogative, 136, 522–531  
     in relative clause, 583–585  
     versus zero, 662–675  
 Purpose clause, 595–597  
Pǔtōnghuà ('common language'), 1–2  
  
qīng, 453–455  
qu, 58–65, 412–413  
Quantifier, 104. *See also* dōu  
 Quantity adverbial phrase, 21–22, 233–234, 352–354, 379–383, 442–443, 444–445  
 Question, 238–239, 305–307, 309–311, 313–314, 520–563  
     confirmation, 314  
     indirect, 554–557, 606  
     pronoun in, 663–667  
 Question particle  
     **a**, 313  
     **ma**, 238–239, 305–307, 547–554  
     **ne**, 305–307  
 Question word, 522–531, 644–645  
 Question-word question, 305–306, 310–311, 313, 522–531, 554–555  
     answers to, 557–558  
 Quotation, indirect, 601–602  
  
ràng, 506–508  
 Realis descriptive clause, 512, 611–618  
 Reality conditional clause, 646–649  
 Realized event, 608–610, 622 n. 5  
 Reason clause, 635–640, 653–655  
 Reduce Forcefulness (a/ya), 238–239, 313–317  
 Reduplication, 28–36, 209–210, 232–236  
 Referential noun phrase, 126–132, 149, 444–446, 447–448, 487  
 Reflexive, 137–139  
 Relative clause, 116–117, 124–125, 579–585, 612–618  
 Request, 235–236  
 Response to Expectation (ne), 300–307  
 Result clause, 653–655  
 Resultative verb compound, 54–68, 235, 488  
     negation and, 426–428  
     potential form of, 38–39, 56–57, 64, 67–68, 203–204, 427–428, 476–478, 502  
 Retained object construction, 470–472  
 Retroflex suffix, 9, 39–40  
 Rhetorical question, 552–553  
  
 Scalar adjective, 141–147  
 Scope of negation, 340–349, 417–421  
 Sentence-final particle, 238–318  
 Sentence complement, 598–610  
 Sentence linking, 331, 333, 631–656

- Sentence-linking adverb, 331, 333, 635–640, 653–656
- Sentential adverb. *See* Movable adverb
- Sentential object, 458–460, 555–557, 598–602
- Sentential subject, 555–557, 603–606
- Separability  
   of directional resultative verb compounds, 62–65  
   of verb-object compound, 73–76
- Sequential events clause. *See* Consecutive events clause
- Serial verb construction, 446–447, 458–460, 594–622
- shì*, 147–155  
   of affirmation, 151–154, 540–541  
   in denial, 438–440  
   existential, 514–516  
   versus *yǒu*, 514–516
- shì* . . . *de* construction, 499–500, 587–593
- Simple sentence, 85
- Sino-Tibetan, 2
- Solicit Agreement (*bà*), 307–311, 461
- SOV language, 17–26
- SOV sentence form, 161–164
- Spatial relationship. *See* Locative phrase
- Speaker-oriented adverb. *See* Attitude adverb
- Standard of comparison, 569–571
- Stative verb, 170 n. 14, 421–422. *See also* Adjectival verb
- Stress and neutral tone, 9
- Subject, 15–16, 19–20, 87–94, 140–141, 480–481, 569–571, 603–606
- Subject complement, 603–606
- Subjectless sentence, 88–89
- Subject-predicate compound, 70–73
- Subordinate clause. *See* Complex sentence
- Subordinating conjunction. *See* Linking element
- Substantive clause. *See* Nominalization
- Sub-topic, 101
- Suffix, 39–45
- Suggestion, 275, 308, 315, 610
- Superlative, 571–574
- SVO language, 17–26
- SVO sentence form, 161–164
- Tag question, 546, 557  
   answers to, 559–560  
   *See also* Solicit Agreement
- Telescoping verb. *See* Pivotal construction
- Temporal adverb, 320–321
- Temporal clause, 633–634, 640–643
- Tense, 12, 184, 213–215, 428–430
- Tentative aspect. *See* Delimitative aspect
- Time adverb, 320–321
- Time phrase, 21–22, 94–95
- Time spent. *See* Duration phrase
- Time when. *See* Time phrase
- Tone, 6–9
- Tone sandhi, 8–9
- Topic, 15–16, 19–20, 85–103, 509, 511–512, 569–571, 659–662  
   direct object as, 159–160, 499
- Topic chain, 659–660
- Topic marker, 86–87
- Topic prominence, 15–16, 94, 499
- tōu*, 43–44, 391
- Transitive verb, 157–166
- ‘‘Translate,’’ 496–497
- Translation, 496–497
- Typology of language, 10–27
- Unrealized event, 608–610, 618–620, 622 n. 5
- Verb, 139–140  
   activity, 217–219, 220–222, 234, 423  
   adjectival (*see* Adjectival verb)  
   of appearing, 403–404  
   copula, 147–155, 514–516  
   directional, 58–65, 518–519  
   displacement, 58, 398–401  
   ditransitive (*see* Indirect object)  
   existential, 510–516  
   experiential, 339–340  
   intransitive, 141–157  
   motion, 517–519  
   nonactivity verb, 234, 569  
   placement, 404–406

- positional, 510–516  
 posture, 219–220, 401–402, 510  
 of saying, 601–602  
 transitive, 157–166  
 volitional, 29–31, 234–235  
 Verbal compound, 54–81  
 Verb copying, 442–450, 628  
 Verb-object compound, 31, 73–81, 165–166, 407–409  
 Verb phrase, 139–167  
 V-not-V question. *See* A-not-A question  
 Volitional verb, 29–31, 234–235  
  
 Warning, 210–213, 311–313, 316–317  
 Weather expression, 91–92  
 Word, 13–15  
 Work order, 16–26  
  
ya. *See* Reduced Forcefulness  
yè, 334, 338, 528–531  
  
 Yes-no question. *See* A-not-A question;  
     Particle question  
yòng, 367  
yǒu, 510–516  
     negation and, 416–417, 421–438  
     as perfective aspect marker, 431–434,  
     544–545  
yòu, 272–273, 329–331  
  
zài ('again'), 329–331  
zài (durative aspect). *See* Durative aspect  
zài (locative particle), 365–366, 391–396, 510–511  
 Zero anaphora, 102–103, 618, 657–675  
 Zero pronoun, 102–103, 618, 657–675  
 -zhe. *See* Durative aspect  
     with coverbs, 361–362  
zhǐ, 332  
 -zì, 42–43  
zuì. *See* Superlative