The Chinese Language Demystified
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By

Zhengming Du
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SERIES INTRODUCTION

China, a country of appealing mysteries.

The Chinese nation, a nation intermittently strong and weak, honorable and infamous, awake and asleep, with a history of five millennia at the shortest, though probably longer, has experienced the highest stages of ancient civilization in the most prosperous dynasties of the world, and made indelible contributions to the advance of human societies. As the world’s biggest nation, the Chinese people account for approximately a quarter of the whole population on Earth.

As a standing member of the UN Security Council, China exerts enormous influence on international affairs. Economically speaking, it is the world’s largest consumer market and human resource reservoir, as well as the largest base of processing industries.

Over the recent three decades, China’s opening up to the world has brought about an unprecedented level of contact with people from all other countries, resulting in great advancements in Chinese society and a drastic growth of its economy, which have drawn even greater attention from the world.

As was the case in the past when China was in its prime, again, the world finds it impossible to overlook China and its people.

However, for its many sufferings in pre-modern and modern history – social unrest and setbacks, natural disasters and social misfortunes – for a long time, China has remained relatively backward, listed as a “developing country” of the world. For the same reasons, the Chinese people and their civilization have been neglected in the developed countries, and to many people in the West, what is now known of China remains what it was 30 or 50 years ago.

In view of the above conditions, we hereby present to our readers these brand new Chinese Way books with the aim of helping those who are interested in all things Chinese to learn about the people and their social life, and ultimately to discover “the last hidden world” and the nation that is once more on the rise in the Orient, so as to more effectively communicate with Chinese people in all walks of life.
Within this series, there are five books, respectively on the language, folk culture, rites and rituals, traditional food, and traditional physical exercises of the Chinese people. Drawing upon vast resources from libraries and internet materials, these books are all written from the special perspectives of the writers themselves, and infused with their individual insights. What’s more, the style of the language may also be interesting to Western English readers because the writers are all native Chinese themselves who teach English in higher institutions of education in China. This means that their English language may smack of some “Chinese flavor,” somewhat different to that of the native English writers, but pleasantly readable nevertheless after minor revisions by native English speakers.

The Chinese Language Demystified by the undersigned chief-editor of this series begins with a general introduction of various “Chinese languages,” languages of different Chinese ethnic groups as well as the majority Han people. The relation between Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects is also explained with fair clarity. Through reading the introduction, you will learn why Mandarin Chinese has become “the Common Language” (Putonghua) of the nation, how Chinese written characters evolved into the present form, and what differences exist between the classic and modern language, and between the formal written style and informal speech. In addition, the systems of Mandarin Chinese Pinyin and Tones are introduced in detail to serve as a threshold for exploring the contents of the book.

After the introduction are six chapters elaborating on the distinctive features of Mandarin Chinese, respectively in terms of its phonology, tones, morphology and syntax. In each chapter, typical and practically usable examples are provided, along with annotations of the tones and translations in order to help readers learn with ease. Finally, the book is rounded up with a seventh chapter summarizing the most prominent features to reinforce what the readers have read.

Chinese Rites and Rituals is co-authored by Ge Feng (冯鸽) and Zhengming Du (杜争鸣), professors of Chinese at the Northwest University and English at Soochow University respectively. The English translation has been done by Jieting Huang (黄洁婷) and Yinji Jiang (蒋茵佶), who are both English lecturers at Suzhou Vocational University. The book comprises an overall introduction of the Chinese ritual systems and the related social norms and customs. The first part begins with an elaboration of the central Chinese concept Li (礼), which carries a wide range of connotations including not only rites and rituals, but also what are
The contents are divided into two parts, with the first part on traditional rites and rituals and the second on the modern practice. Actually, all possible aspects, which are appropriate for consideration under the general title of Li, are touched upon, from individual social conduct to state rules. With the understanding that Li is a matter of great importance in Chinese culture, we believe this book is of special value for those who wish to learn about the Chinese society and the Chinese way of thinking and life.

In *Chinese Food for Life Care*, authored by Hua Yang (杨婳) and Wen Guo (郭雯), lecturers of English at the Soochow University of Science and Technology, readers are expected to learn about the traditional Chinese way of eating, and find their opinions as regards the choices of food in various situations. They will also familiarize themselves with a great variety of traditionally consumed Chinese food items, and learn to understand why some items are more popular than others in China, as well as why the Chinese people generally believe “food and medicine are of the same origin.” It is our hope that the detailed accounts of the properties of different food items will serve as useful references for making decisions on what one should choose to eat according to his or her own physical conditions.

*Traditional Chinese Exercises* is written by Jianmei Qu (曲建梅) and her daughter Xinqing Wang (王新清), respectively an associate professor of English at Yantai University and an MA student of English at Shandong University.

The book begins with a brief account of the basic knowledge of Chinese physical exercises and health care, a short history of the development of various methods of traditional physical exercises, such as Taijiquan and Qigong, the basic theories concerning their efficacy and mechanisms, and the methods generally adopted in practice. Then, in the following chapters, the concrete procedures of exercises are presented, all well illustrated with clear pictures to aid the practitioner. In addition, traditionally practiced supporting “minor exercises” including various methods of self-massage are also introduced at length. It is our belief that the explanations and illustrations not only make interesting reading, but also help in practice.

*Traditional Chinese Folk Customs* is written by Huawen Fang (方华文), my colleague at Soochow University. Its first draft translation was completed by Weihua Zhang (张伟华), associate professor of English at
Wuxi Institute of Arts and Technology. At the request of the writer and the publisher, I gladly sign my name as a co-translator after reading and revising the manuscript. This book projects to the readers a changing and kaleidoscopic view of Chinese social phenomena seen in different areas and ethnic communities, in both ancient times and the present. Although it is understandably difficult for the writers to account for how much or to what extent the old customs have lasted to date, we can well assume that quite a lot have, though possibly in somewhat changed forms. At any rate, they should have some ineluctable impact on the contemporary Chinese way of life. In addition, with the growing consciousness of the importance of protecting traditional culture, some wholesome folkways that had once fallen to the verge of extinction are now being recovered, while others are still often found in Chinese literary works even if they have fallen out of date. Thus, reading about them should be rewarding, and as I hope, it could also be enjoyable.

On the whole, the five titles in these Chinese Way books form a kind of knowledge pool for readers interested in Chinese society, the people, and their way of thinking and social behavior. I believe they will be of very practical use for those who are presently working in China, or considering a visit or some time staying there. For readers of Chinese literature, the contents should also be worth reading because they provide knowledge of the social and cultural background to aid understanding.

I feel obliged to acknowledge the help of many who have given me very good suggestions as regards the contents of the books. First, I am grateful to Professor Xiaoming Tian (田晓明), Vice President of Soochow University and an open-minded scholar in arts and education who has seen the meaningfulness of these books and urged me to carry on. Then, for making the plan more concrete and practical, I feel indebted to Mr. Jinhui Deng (邓锦辉) and Mr. Lei Zheng (郑磊), editors of China Intercontinental Press, for providing many insightful suggestions. Last but not the least, my gratitude goes to Mr. Mingming Chen (陈明明), vice-chairman of the Translators Association of China and an ex-ambassador of China to New Zealand and Sweden, for he has been a constant source of encouragement in any of my endeavors of translation and writing.

July 5th, 2015
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Hanyu, the language of the Chinese Han people, is imprinted with the spirit of the nation’s civilization, culture, and five millennia of history. It is interwoven into the style of thinking and the lives of the people.

As a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, Hanyu displays distinctive features of its own when brought into contrast with languages of other families.

A very unique tonal language and the only one of its type in the world’s major languages, Hanyu, or what is tacitly taken to be “the Chinese language”, bears distinct musical qualities with the melodious features in its four tones (or more in some dialects). Such musical qualities can be found in full expression in Chinese poetry.

The various written forms and changeful calligraphy of the language could rival paintings with their artistic richness and could match up with Chinese poetry perfectly as masterpiece treasures, displayed in many galleries and museums of the world. Among all the major forms of written human languages (as represented by all the official languages of the UN), Chinese is the only one featuring pictographic characters.

As a natural human language, Chinese (Mandarin) is used by the largest number of speakers as their mother tongue—approximately a quarter of the world’s population. In addition, with China being a member of the UN Security Council, it plays a leading role in international affairs.

The Chinese language also finds wide application for its high communicational efficiency. In our information era, it stands along with English as one of the two most frequently appearing languages on the internet. Despite the complex strokes and slow speed in traditional forms of hand writing (which led China to adopt simplified Chinese written forms), oral expression of the language shows high efficiency, for each single syllable may be equivalent in function to a word in expressing some message. What’s more, it has been proven that the speed of computer keyboard input of Chinese exceeds that of English, and for a sufficiently trained master hand, the speed can keep up approximately with the speed of natural speech.
Historically, Chinese had influenced many languages, with Japanese taking on the greatest influence. Besides the large amount of Chinese words (including words in Chinese dialects) in spoken Japanese, there are several thousand Chinese characters in its written vocabulary. In fact, the different kana signs of Japanese words are also largely evolved from various written forms of Chinese characters. Similar direct impacts can be seen in the development of Korean and Vietnamese, in which traces of Chinese can be easily detected in spite of the changes that have taken places through their language system reforms in the past decades.

Of course, considering the longstanding of cultural exchange between China and the West, and the language contact involved during the course of this, it is also no wonder that some loan words of Chinese origin can be found in some Indo-European languages like English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

For the above reasons, the world finds it impossible to overlook the Chinese language. In addition, in a context featuring ever-growing global economic integration and cultural plurality, along with China’s economic development over the past three decades, an increasing number of people in the world have realized the significance of learning the Chinese language—a language of a quarter of the world’s population—and are eager to master it for direct communication with the Chinese people. As a result, Chinese language education is now enjoying a tremendous boom across continents, developing with sustained momentum. Statistics collected by the responsible department of China’s Ministry of Education show some significant facts: over 30 million people worldwide have attempted somehow to learned Chinese in the last decade; 100 countries with more than 2,500 universities and colleges offer Chinese courses; a rising number of elementary and high schools and various training institutions also teach Chinese. An estimate based on the growth in the past decade suggests that there may be over 100 million Chinese learners worldwide by 2015.

For many Westerners, however, the Chinese language system is an abstruse web of strange stokes. Written Chinese defies spelling and has little to do with its pronunciation; the nonexistence of inflexions, the shortage of indications of case, gender, singular/plural differences, the seemingly obscure grammatical structure and the lack of rigid formal logics all contribute to make it an almost formidable challenge for many people learning it as a foreign language. Therefore, it is quite understandable that many people and even some organizations have listed it as one of the world’s most difficult languages.
This book on the Chinese language is an attempt to help readers keep pace with the time and tide of China’s international development. I hope it will unveil the mystery of this seemingly esoteric language that is nevertheless used as the first language by the largest nation of the world. In the meantime, and based on the understanding that a language represents a way of seeing the world, I also expect that the contents will help readers learn about the Chinese people’s innermost thought about the objective world.

The book begins with a general introduction of the essential notion of “the Chinese language(s)”, and then sets about unveiling the mystery of Mandarin Chinese from Chapters Two to Six. In particular, the introduction provides some basic knowledge of the languages used in China or by the Chinese people, including Mandarin and non-Mandarin languages, Chinese dialects, their relations and user populations. Chapters Two and Three respectively present the fundamentals of the phonology and tonal systems. And through Chapters Four to Six, structure rules of words, phrases, and sentences are introduced. Finally, a final summary of the prominent features of the language is made in Chapter Seven, so that readers will find it easy to keep a firm grip on the knowledge that they have acquired so far through reading.

I hope, and of course believe, that reading this book will be an exciting and meaningful adventure.

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ANNOTATION ABBREVIATIONS

AD: adverb
AS: aspect particle (着，了，过)
CC: coordinating conjunction
CD: cardinal number
CS: subordinating conjunction
DEC: de as complementizer or a nominalizer (的)
DEG: de as a genitive marker and an associative marker (的)
DER: resultative de (得)
DEV: manner de (地)
FI: free interpretation
IJ: interjection
MW: measure word
OD: ordinal number
P: preposition
PN: pronoun
SFP: sentence-final particle (吗，吧，呢，呀，啊，哪)
VA: predicative adjective
VE: existential and possessive verb
Verb: VV
WFW: word-for-word translation
CHAPTER ONE
AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

Languages of the Han Chinese and Chinese Ethnic Groups

Hanyu, or the language of the Han nationality, commonly known as Mandarin Chinese, is certainly the language that is generally used by the Chinese people. Its standard form is also called Putonghua, Guoyu, or Huayu, respectively in Mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. But it is not the only language used by all Chinese people. This is because China is a big country with 55 ethnic minorities, and most of them have their own languages. Chinese linguists generally agree that the total number of languages used by China’s ethnic groups is over 80, with some ethnic groups using more than one language. Among these different languages, 30 have written forms. In terms of language genealogy, they are categorized into five different families: Sino-Tibetan, Altai, Austro-Asiatic, Austronesian and Indo-European.

Therefore, the phrase “Chinese Language” should in fact have a plural form. When used in the singular form, it only means the language originally belonging to the Han people (hence called Hanyu), which has been adopted as the common language used across ethnic boundaries. Among all the ethnic groups of China, some have adopted the Han people’s language, with their own languages becoming extinct, such as the Hui and Manchurian people (respectively accounting for 9.8 million and 10.6 million of the population). Others use both Hanyu and their own languages.

The Chinese central government’s language policy is to promote the use of Standard Chinese (or Standard Mandarin) as the national language. In the meantime, however, the policy also encourages the protection of ethnic languages. According to Article 8 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, “all the nationalities shall have the freedom to use and develop their own
spoken and written languages”. As a result, most preliminary and secondary schools in China’s ethnic minority areas practice bilingual education in both Mandarin Chinese and their own languages, with the former for public communication across ethnic boundaries and the latter for regional and community activities.

In spite of the great number of ethnic languages across the country, 91.59% of the Chinese population are Han people, while the ethnic population only accounts for 8.41% of the whole nation (according to the fifth Population Census of China in 2000). So it is evident that Hanyu has a prevailing influence in use. From the statistics of a survey on the language conditions in mainland China (not including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) carried out from 1999 to 2004, it can be seen that the percentage of people who can use Standard Mandarin (Putonghua) is 53.06%, while the percentage of people who can use a dialect of Hanyu is 86.38%. In contrast, only 5.46% of the population uses ethnic languages. This means that about a third of the whole ethnic population no longer have their own language. As for the remaining two thirds or so, a larger part can use Hanyu or a dialect of it along with an ethnic language.

For the above reasons, the word Hanyu is tacitly taken as the language of the Chinese people. Its standard form, as the national language of the People’s Republic of China, is called Putonghua (or Standard Mandarin). In fact, Putonghua is based only on the Beijing sub-dialect of the Northern Dialect (or Guanhua), though it is used nationally.

**Mandarin, Putonghua and Chinese Dialects**

In the Chinese word “Putonghua”, “Putong” means “common” or “general”, while “Hua” refers to the spoken language, speech or simply “tongue”. So Putonghua is taken as the generally adopted spoken Chinese language used across geographical and ethnic boundaries, as well as the common language spoken or understood among Chinese emigrants abroad. However, it neither necessarily substitutes for the various ethnic languages of the nation nor for the various dialects of the Chinese Han people which are used in different areas across the country.

The classification of the Chinese dialects spoken across the vast land of the country is actually a very complicated matter that remains controversial even today, with different periods in history having different standards and actual results of classification. However, the most influential two models that are generally accepted at the present time are respectively the “seven categories classification” and the “ten categories classification”.
The former includes 1) Guanhua (also called the Northern Dialect), 2) Wuyu, 3) Ganyu, 4) Xiangyu, 5) Minyu, 6) Kejiahua, and 7) Yueyu. The latter model adds three dialects to the former, namely, 8) Jinyu, 9) Huiyu, and 10) Pinghua.

The following diagraph may largely represent the general situation of the Chinese language or languages.

1. Guanhua (Mandarin)

Guanhua is unique in that its status as a dialect is not so much based on its geographically determined features as on sociological ones. In fact, the word originally means “official tongue”, and thus refers to the standard language used in the officialdom of civil service. Therefore, with the transfer of the political and cultural center of the country time and again in history, it has also undergone changes from one dialect to another. For instance, the official language named Guanhua of the Ming Dynasty
(1368-1644) was the Nanjing dialect, but in the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911), it gradually adopted the Beijing dialect as its basis, which has kept its status as such to the present day, serving as the foundation of Standard Mandarin (Putonghua). Although Guanhua has also been called “the Northern Dialect”, it is actually used in a much more extensive area of the country, not really limited to the northern part in geographical terms. Areas using Guanhua also include the southwest, the south central region and the central part of the country, actually covering the whole or some parts of provinces such as Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, and Jiangsu.

As for the sub-classifications of Guanhua, there used to be four major categories (before 1987), named after their geographical situation: the northern, northwestern, southwestern, and the Jianghuai (the Yangtze, Changjiang and Huai River reaches). Then the Maps of Chinese Languages, published in 1987 in the mainland, re-classified Guanhua into eight categories according to finer regional differences and distinctive features in pronunciation, which include the varieties of Guanhua in 1) Beijing (i.e. Putonghua or Standard Mandarin), 2) the Northeast, 3) Liaojiao (Liaoning and Eastern Shandong), 4) Jilu (Hebei and Western Shandong), 5) Zhongyuan (the Middle Plain), 6) Lanyin (Lanzhou and Yinchuan Area), 7) Jianghuai, and 8) the Southwest. At present, this classification has been adopted in most academic publications in China’s mainland.

The regional varieties of Guanhua (Mandarin) have evolved through a long course of interaction between the official language and different dialects. Although various Guanhua forms may share common grammatical structures and a larger part of the vocabulary, and thus stand very close in condition to the official written language, they nevertheless have many minor differences in speech, most strikingly in the tones.

In all varieties of Chinese, Guanhua (Mandarin) is by far the most widely spread, used by the most people—nearly one billion—which accounts for well over 70% of the Chinese population.

The varied influences of regional dialects taken by the official Guanhua in different areas have certainly brought the distinctive features of its subcategories. However, these features are not so striking as to make understanding between them impossible. This is why it actually stands out as an independent category against all other distinctively different major dialects.

The following table gives a general description of the other major dialects of the Chinese language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialects</th>
<th>Users (10 thousand)</th>
<th>Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wu 吳語</td>
<td>7379</td>
<td>Dialects Users (ten thousand): Areas south of Jiangsu, south of Anhui, Shanghai, most parts of Zhejiang, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min 闽語</td>
<td>7500</td>
<td>Fujian, Hainan, east of Guangdong, Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kejia 客家话</td>
<td>4200</td>
<td>North and east of Guangdong, west of Fujian, south of Jiangxi, southeast of Guangxi, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yue 粤語</td>
<td>5882</td>
<td>With Guangzhou as the center, used in larger parts of Guangdong and Guangxi, Hong Kong, Macau and overseas Chinese towns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin 晋语</td>
<td>6305</td>
<td>Most parts of Shanxi and northern part of Shanxi, western part of Hebei, northwest of Henan, and southern part of Inner Mongolia, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gan 赣语</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>Most parts of Jiangxi, southeastern part of Hunan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang 湘语</td>
<td>3637</td>
<td>Most parts of Hunan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui 徽语</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>Southern part of Anhui, and bordering areas between Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Jiangsu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping 平话</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>Parts of Jiangxi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Notes:** 1) Both “yu” and “hua” mean the spoken language, but the former is more formal. 2) The above names are all given after the formal short appellations of the central areas, with Kejia as an exception. 3) Yue Dialect and Kejia Dialect are more commonly known in English as Cantonese and Hakka.

### 2. Major Chinese Dialects: Their Users and Areas

In fact, the Chinese people hold a view quite unlike that of the Europeans as regards the relation between the language of a nation and its dialects. For one thing, a dialect in a European country will be taken as a language variety with certain regional features in pronunciation and some vocabulary items, different from those in another variety of the same language, but not so different as to make understanding impossible. However, when the Chinese people use the same word, “dialect”, it often means that the language variety is hard for people outside the dialect area
to understand. Actually, some linguists even believe that Chinese dialects differ from one another as greatly as completely different languages in the Indo-European language family (such as English and German). Therefore, it remains a very controversial issue even today as to whether the Chinese language should be regarded as a language family or just one language with regional dialects.

However, the grounds for the majority of Chinese linguists to regard all major Chinese dialects as one language instead of a language family are solid enough. That is, the different varieties of spoken Chinese all share the same unified writing system, no matter how little intelligibility there is between them when actually spoken. And it is indeed sometimes seen that people of different Chinese dialect zones do communicate with the aid of writing if one or both sides cannot speak or understand the Standard Mandarin.

The central Chinese government’s language policy is to promote the use of Standard Mandarin (Putonghua) while advocating the equal rights of ethnic languages and protecting regional dialects. As a result, a great many of the population in Chinese dialect regions are actually bilingual or even multi-lingual, using both Putonghua and at least one dialect. In many
regions, local radio and TV stations usually run some programs in both Putonghua and the regional dialects, so as to cater to different needs. Most Chinese people who live in big cities use a dialect in the family or the neighborhood, but shift to Putonghua when at work, in school or in other public situations. Regrettably, there is not yet a report to date on the percentage of people making such regular “code shifts” in the population. There is quite a large proportion of people, however, who can understand Putonghua broadcast on radio and TV stations, but they don’t actually speak it themselves.

In Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Singapore, most people who have received tertiary education can actually use or understand three languages: the local Chinese dialect, English and Putonghua.

**Classic Chinese and Modern Chinese**

The Chinese Language, like all other languages of the world, has developed and changed throughout history. Given China’s 4,000 years of civilized history marked by the use of written signs to record the spoken language, one may imagine how great the language change might be. Classic Chinese, a term used relatively in opposition to Modern Chinese, refers to the language of the Chinese people in ancient times. The division line between Classic Chinese and Modern Chinese is generally taken to be 1919, the year when the “May 4th Movement” broke out, which directly ushered in the all-round cultural renovation under the name of the “New Cultural Movement” and the language reform of the “Baihuawen Movement” (also known as the Vernacular Language Movement). Classic Chinese is strikingly different from Modern Chinese, particularly in that it uses every character to its full extent and so is extremely concise. It is tacitly understood as the written form of the ancient Chinese (called “Wenyan”) because no authentic records of the ancient spoken language are available. In fact, not many contemporary Chinese people can fully understand Classic Chinese that is hundreds of years old, except for highly educated scholars and those with a special interest in it. On the other hand, however, the relation between Classic and Modern Chinese is one of source and branch, and thus the latter has kept many of the former’s qualities in terms of phonology, vocabulary and structure. These traces are most apparent in a great deal of idioms used in the more formal style of modern Chinese writing, but may also be found in the informal speeches of some dialects.
Of course, the Chinese language of the ancients also had its spoken forms, besides the formal Wenyan writing. It is known from historical records that the difference between the two was very great, with the written style much more compact and concise. Therefore, the real ancient Chinese language is actually regarded to have two distinct systems, one referred to as Wenyanwen, and the other called Gubaihua (literally the formal written text and vernacular speech respectively). The first is based on the strictly written texts of the Qin (221-206 BC) and Pre-Qin periods about two thousand years ago, which have been preserved mainly in stele inscriptions, reduplicated and imitated through history with little change in the style, such as those classic texts represented by *The Book of Songs* (*Shi*), *Collection of Ancient Texts* (*Shu*), *The Rites* (*Li*), *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, Lao Zi, *The Analects of Confucius*, Xun Zi, etc. Needless to say, this category also includes texts of the later periods that followed the style of the Qin and Pre-Qin texts, like that in the poetry and songs of the West Han (206 BC-25 AD) and East Han (25-220) dynasties, and the essays of the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1127) dynasties. The other category contains the written records of the more informal speech that evolved through the Wei and Jin periods, such as *Essays and Criticism* (*Shishuo Xinyu*), the Buddhist song scripts (*Bianwen*) of the Tang Dynasty, Zen Quotations, and the written records of the orally told stories of the Yuan (1206-1368), Ming and Qing dynasties. This category has more in common with Modern Chinese.

Of the two categories, only the former is considered as the orthodox texts which are used in Classic Chinese courses for college students in China, for the simple reason that it is relatively more formal and representative, and was used for keeping serious records of Chinese history.

Modern Chinese developed mainly on the basis of the ancient Chinese Baihua (of the latter category), but at the same time, it has also inherited some traits of the formal Wenyan written style. Besides, what is considered as “modern” in China often implies some relation with the more developed countries of the West. That is to say that modern Chinese has also more or less taken on features not only in the direct relation between its written and spoken forms but also in a relatively rigid grammatical conception behind it, which is more or less related to that of the English. This is because the first Chinese work on grammar was almost entirely constructed with reference to the grammars of Latin and French. Although this first grammar book was born in 1883, before the birth of Modern Chinese, it nevertheless laid the first corner stone for the modernization of Chinese, which soon began to take place.
Apart from a closer relation between the written texts and the spoken language, Modern Chinese features the following aspects in contrast to Classic Chinese:

1) Having a grammatical frame that is systematically similar to that of the Western languages, like English and French;
2) Longer sentences with definite punctuation marks borrowed from the Western languages;
3) More two-syllable (or two-character) words and multi-syllable words (characters);
4) Relatively more stable parts of speech and of words. If learning the Chinese language is for the purpose of communicating with contemporary Chinese people, the learner should of course learn Modern Chinese. And for the needs of daily conversation with possibly most Chinese speakers, the Standard Mandarin, Putonghua, should be learned first.

The Speech and Writing of Modern Chinese

The May 4th Movement in 1919 ushered in a period of great cultural reform in China, of which the most important event concerning language reform in particular is the so-called “Baihuawen Movement” (or “Vernacular Chinese Movement”) calling for “unification of speech and writing”. Since then, the orthodox Wenyan written style of Classic Chinese has gradually fallen away because of its detachment from the spoken language, and the educated Chinese began “to write down what is actually spoken”. However, this “unification of speech and writing” is set in the socio-cultural context of the time in which the two were greatly different. Actually, differences exist to a greater or lesser extent between the spoken and written forms of all languages, modern or classic, which are sometimes called stylistic variations. To professional linguists, it is often simply a matter of scale, and not of polar contrast. In the case of Modern Chinese, such differences may still be striking at times, for there are definitely a great many language phenomena that are peculiar to only one of the two forms or styles.

The following is a short list of the major differences:

1) Some characters are pronounced differently;
2) Some characters are pronounced with different tones and stresses;
3) Some words are used only in informal speech, and others only in written text; 
4) Some structures or sentence patterns are used only in the spoken language, and some may be particular to the written text; 
5) Spoken Chinese tends to use simple words and shorter or incomplete sentences, as in other languages.

Apart from these differences, the two styles nevertheless also share a great deal of common language features. Not all that is written is in the written language style by nature, and not all that is spoken belongs to the spoken style, simply for the reason that speech can be written down and text can be spoken. Therefore, learning Chinese by starting with the spoken words and sentences that are used daily is still very beneficial for learning to read the Chinese of the more formal writing. As a matter of fact, although there are some learners who began learning Chinese directly with the texts of the very formal written-style language, most of them still begin with everyday spoken Chinese and usually find it relatively easy.

**Chinese Characters and Their Changes**

Although the origin of human languages is difficult to trace, the beginning of writing may be relatively clear, at least for some languages that are supported with more evidence that has been found in archaeological excavations. As for the origin of Chinese characters in particular, this is also frequently told as legends and thus just taken as such rather than hard facts. Among various sayings, such as “tie knots”, the “eight diagrams”, and “picture”, the legendary story about Cang Jie inventing the characters is most wide-spread and often appears in many books. According to historical records, Cang Jie was said to be the grand scribe of the legendary Yellow Emperor, the supposed foremost ancestor of the Chinese Han people. And it was said that the creation of the Chinese characters was such a shocking event that “the heaven rained grains and ghosts cried at night” while he was making them. As seen in history books, the tale about Cang Jie became well known during the period of the Qin and Han dynasties (which spanned from 221BC to 220AD).

Given the immense amount of time that has passed, it is just a matter of course that all efforts by past historians in trying to find the truth about Cang Jie have been largely fruitless due to the lack of proof. What researchers nowadays generally agree is that the name of Cang Jie may well have been given to a person who only worked at sorting out and
standardizing the characters that had been created and used earlier by a group of people, simply for the reason that the whole writing system of such a complicated language as Chinese could hardly be “made” overnight by a single individual and directly accepted by the whole society. More reasonably, the “creation” of Chinese characters would have been the result of collective efforts, through a long period of trial and improvement. Through research, modern specialists have found that one way the ancestors of the Chinese people used to record events was to tie knots in a rope, and
another way, which was used later, was to use sharp tools to inscribe signs on stone or to engrave them on pottery clay. Archeological findings have exposed such inscribed signs on Neolithic pottery shards in Banpo Village in Shaanxi Province, which dates back to over 6,000 years ago. Seeing apparent similarities between these signs and the later Chinese characters, now researchers generally believe that they are most probably the very roots of Chinese characters.

Over time, the Chinese characters created by the ancient people have undergone a continuous course of change, and the result is that, except for specialists, contemporary readers generally no longer understand many of the ancient characters. However, since the unification of the country by the Qin Dynasty in 221-206 BC, Chinese characters gradually became stabilized, looking more like those being used today. Moreover, there is one thing that has remained unchanged throughout history, and that is the use of more or less the same strokes in writing the characters.

The evolution of the writing of Chinese characters through history is usually summarized into the following stages:

1. **Oracle Bone Script (甲骨文, jia³gu³wen²)**

   This type of writing is literally translated as “shell-bone script”. It is so named because it was found inscribed on oracle bones made of turtle shells or other animal bones and used in divination in the Shang Dynasty (about 16-11 centuries BC). It is thought to be the earliest system of writing Chinese characters that was later to gradually evolve into the modern forms.

2. **Bronze Script (金文, jin¹wen²)**

   So called because it is characteristic of the inscriptions on bronze artifacts such as zhong bells and ding tripod cauldrons, of which a great number have been unearthed from the Shang and Zhou (1046-256 BC) dynasties and even later, spanning a vast amount of time, covering over two thousand years. In comparison with the Oracle Bone Script, the characters in this writing style are more detached from primitive pictographs, more stable, and generally more regular.
3. Seal Script (篆书, zhuan⁴shu¹)

The literal translation of the Chinese name zhuànshu is “engraved decorative writing”, because by the time this name was coined in the Han dynasty, its use had been reduced from general use in earlier times to decorative inscriptions and seals.

This style of writing evolved gradually out of the bronze script of the Zhou dynasty, and came into wide use during the Warring States Period.
Then, the different forms of the characters were unified in the Qin dynasty after Qin Shihuang unified China in 221 BC.

There are two subcategories of the seal script, the Large or Great Seal script (大篆 da\(^4\)zhuan\(^4\); Japanese daiten), and the Small Seal Script (小篆 xiao\(^3\)zhuan\(^4\)). The latter developed later but had greater influence, and thus is sometimes simply referred to as the seal script, if comparison between the two is not in question.

Most people today cannot read the seal script, except a few characters, so its use is largely confined to the fields of seals and calligraphy studies.

In contrast to the large seal script, the small seal script is not only more stabilized in formation but is also less rectangular and more square, thus assuming greater similarities to the modern characters.

4. **Official Script (also called Clerical Script, 隶书, li\(^4\)shu\(^1\))**

The official script is generally believed to have evolved as a distinctive writing style in the Qin dynasty on the basis of the unification and standardization of the various forms of seal script used in the Warring States. It became dominant in the Han dynasty and remained in use through the Wèi-Jìn periods (220-420). Highly legible to modern readers, it is still used for artistic flavor in a variety of functional applications such as headlines, signboards and advertisements. Compared with the preceding seal script, it has a highly rectilinear structure, a feature shared with the modern standard (or regular) script. However, in contrast with the tall-to-square modern script, it tends to be square-to-wide, and often has a pronounced, wavelike flaring of isolated major strokes, especially a dominant rightward or downward diagonal stroke.

5. **Standard Script (also called Regular Script, 楷书, kai\(^3\)shu\(^1\))**

Standard script or regular script is called kaishu in Chinese. It first appeared in the Wei Dynasty (200-265 CE), matured stylistically around the 7th century in the Tang Dynasty, and is still most commonly used in modern writings and publications. In appearance, it looks tall-to-square in contrast to the preceding Official Script and is also faster to write.

To see the differences and the gradual evolution of the above styles, we can take the character for “horse” as an example to illustrate:
Of the above, the Standard (or Regular) style is nowadays generally used in printing and computer processing of Chinese. It is also a term used in opposition to the two faster handwriting styles called “running style” (行书, xing1 shu1) and the “cursive style” (草书, cao3 shu1) when talking about the art of calligraphy.

In nature, the Chinese character is a single sign unit consisting of some basic strokes. It is used as a word or part of a word. The simplest Chinese character has only one stroke, “一” meaning “one” and pronounced as “yi” (similar to the first part of “yeast”, without pronouncing “st”). Though created by and thus belonging to the Chinese people, the characters are nevertheless not confined in use to China alone, but also appear sometimes in oriental languages such as Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese, respectively called “kanji”, “hanja” and “hán tu”.

Unlike the Western alphabetic languages that combine letters into syllables and words, the Chinese “builds up” characters by combining strokes. No matter whether more or fewer strokes are used to make up a character, they are supposed to follow the right order in writing, and are summarized into eight fundamental steps in spite of all possible minor changes. These are the dot, horizontal, turning, vertical, hook, right-upward, right-downward, and the left-downward. A representative Chinese character that uses all these eight strokes is “永” (read as “yong” and meaning “forever”). The following is an illustration of this character’s stroke order:
1. From top to bottom (从上到下)
2. From left to right (从左到右)
3. Horizontal before vertical (先横后竖)
4. Left-downward before right-downward (先撇后捺)

Of course some characters contain many more strokes than this one, and so there are certainly more rules to the correct stroke order, such as:

5. Outside before inside in Surround-from-Upper-Right structure (从外到内)
6. Inside before outside in Surround-from-Below structure (从内到外)
7. Inside before bottom enclosing (先里头后封口)
8. Center verticals before outside “wings” (先中间后两边)
9. Crossing strokes last (相交笔画后写)
10. Left vertical before enclosing (先左竖后封口)
11. Top or upper-left dots first (点在上边或左上先写)
12. Inside or upper-right dots last (点在右上或里边后写)

The handwriting of Chinese characters has always been considered as the art of calligraphy, using the brush as a tradition rather than the pen, although nowadays the so called “hard-pen calligraphy” is also considered a branch of the art and a brush is seldom used except for the sake of art itself or for special needs like inscriptions, signboards, titles or names that are large in shape and limited in the number of characters.

Chinese calligraphy, the handwriting of Chinese characters, has developed into a special art through thousands of years of continuous practice by the Chinese people. Accompanying painting and poetry, it is cherished by the whole Chinese nation and many people in the world as an extremely valuable cultural treasure, with its masterpieces exhibited in the most famous museums of the world. This is basically because the seemingly simple strokes can engender unlimited possible changes and styles in actual writing. In calligraphy, the saying “Style is the man” is indeed to the point.
Preface to At the Orchid Pavilion, a masterpiece of Chinese calligraphy

There are 47,035 Chinese characters in Kangxi Dictionary, the most prestigious Chinese dictionary compiled during the period 1710 and 1716 under the order of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty. However, the great number of characters in this dictionary should not deter learners, for the simple reason that the contemporary Chinese people on average uses only 3,000 to 4,000 of them, and that’s already adequate for reading. Most of the old characters have either gone out of use or are used very rarely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of Dictionary</th>
<th>Number of Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Shuowen Jiezi</td>
<td>9,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>543?</td>
<td>Yupian</td>
<td>16,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601</td>
<td>Qieyun</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1011</td>
<td>Guangyun</td>
<td>26,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1039</td>
<td>Jiyun</td>
<td>53,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1615</td>
<td>Zihui</td>
<td>33,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1716</td>
<td>Kangxi Zidian</td>
<td>47,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Zhonghua Da Zidian</td>
<td>48,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Hanyu Da Zidian</td>
<td>54,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Zhonghua Zihai</td>
<td>85,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Yiti Zidian</td>
<td>106,230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name of Dictionary</th>
<th>Number of Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Dai Kan-Wa jiten</td>
<td>50,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Han-Han Dae Sajeon</td>
<td>53,667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the Chinese character should not be understood as an exact equivalent to the English “word”, because one character can be a word, and two, three, or more can also make a word, and there are also a limited number of characters that can only be used as a part of a word. In fact, the division line between Chinese characters and words are not always apparently clear-cut. With the limited number of three to four thousand characters in their daily communication, the Chinese people can make many more words. In this sense, a Chinese character in a multi-character word may be understood as being equivalent to the “root” or “affix” of an English word (though a single character may also function as a word). In most cases, it is not difficult to guess at the meaning of a word consisting of two or more characters that the learner has already learned. In learning Chinese, Chinese children usually begin with reading and writing the Chinese characters, along with the aid of Pinyin, a Romanized system of phonetic signs (literally meaning “spelling sound”).

The “sound” or pronunciation of a character usually needs at least two letters to spell out, although there are a few characters that need only one (namely those pronouncing “a”, “o”, and “e”). The letters used in Pinyin are the same as those in the English alphabet, with only the letter “v” left out and the letter “ü” added.

6. Traditional Character and Simplified Character

In spite of the continuous efforts to unify and standardize Chinese characters in history, there have always been different ways of writing. And one major division is between the “simplified” and “traditional” styles, especially for some complicated characters that traditionally contain many strokes. The simplified style is now generally used in mainland China, while the traditional style is used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and other places like Singapore and Malaysia. This difference is largely due to a series of Chinese character simplification movements that have been carried out in the People’s Republic of China since the 1950s.

However, it should be noted that the difference between the two forms does not exist in all Chinese characters, because there are a great number of characters that are not so complicated as to need simplification. The simplified character forms were created by reducing the number of strokes of only those characters that contain too many strokes for fast and convenient hand-writing. Therefore, the two systems still have a considerable proportion of characters in common. And although some simplified characters look different from the traditional ones, the two still
use some basic strokes and so their relation may be guessed from the same contours, especially when used in collocation with other characters to form words. This means that Chinese people using the two different systems in mainland China and overseas can still read each other’s writing.

Here in this book, the simplified system is adopted for two reasons: one is that the learner won’t have to remember too many strokes for some characters when it comes to writing, and the other is that the simplified forms are used by a much greater proportion of Chinese people. After all, this is not a matter of great seriousness, because in computer input, the two styles can be converted automatically.

**The Pinyin and the Computer Input of Chinese Characters**

1. The Pinyin System

The fact that the writing system of Mandarin Chinese has developed from its beginning on the basis of ideographic signs and not alphabetic letters means that its words cannot be directly pronounced according to how it is written. In ancient times, the Chinese people used the pronunciations of known characters to learn new ones, or in other words, by “cutting rhymes” of known characters and applying them to those to be learned. However, this method is not easy to use and does not work directly for foreign learners. Therefore, quite a number of systems have been developed in modern times for the purpose of instructing Chinese pronunciation, such as Gwoyeu Romatzyh of 1928, Latinxua Sin Wenz of 1931, and Zhuyin diacritic markings of 1928.

Among all the systems that have been worked out so far for annotating the pronunciation of Chinese characters, Hanyu Pinyin (literally “Chinese Spelling Sound”), called Pinyin for short, is currently the most commonly used Romanization system. Developed by the special government committee concerned with language reform affairs in the People’s Republic of China, the system was first brought into use in 1958 for teaching Chinese pronunciation in the elementary schools and improving the literacy rate among adults. Since then, it has superseded older
Romanization systems such as Wade-Giles (1859; modified 1892) and Chinese Postal Map Romanization, and has replaced Zhuyin as the method of Chinese phonetic instruction in mainland China. It continued to be used for nearly 25 years before the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) adopted it as the international standard in 1982. Then the United Nations followed suit in 1986. Up to the present day, this system has also been accepted by the government of Singapore, the United States’ Library of Congress, the American Library Association, and many other international organizations. Since January 1, 2009, it has been accepted as the official Romanization system in Taiwan. Now, actually, all of the Chinese language schools of the world use this system to teach foreign learners the standard pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese and to spell Chinese names in foreign publications. Besides, it is also most widely used to enter Chinese characters into computers, cell phones and electronic handsets.

Like English, the Romanized Pinyin system also uses 26 letters as its basis, of which 24 are exactly the same as those in the English alphabet. The English letter “v” is never used and a new letter “ü” has been added (and for this reason, “v” on a computer keyboard is used for keying in “ü”). All the letters in Pinyin are classified into two major categories, namely the “initials” and the “finals”, which are in some sense similar to the categories of the English “consonants” and “vowels” but are actually of a different nature. Some individual letters in each of the two categories may also combine with some other letters in the same category to form complex initial or final sounds (such as “ch, sh, zh” in the initials and “ao, ou, an, ang, en, eng, ong” in the finals). The literal meanings of these two categories are respectively “voice letters” and “rhyme letters” (Sheng-mu and Yun-mu). Compared with English, the most important difference lies in the fact that all of the Chinese initial letters are placed only at the beginning of a syllable except the nasal “n” and “m”, while the “finals”, as the name suggests, are usually placed at the end, following the “initials” to make up syllables (although some may also be independently used as syllables). This feature largely determines the nature of Mandarin Chinese as an “open-syllable language” like Italian or Japanese. But different from Japanese and Italian, each syllable in Chinese is the pronunciation of a character.

The greatest distinctive feature of Mandarin Chinese, however, is not its open syllable quality, but that it is a tonal language. This means that Chinese words or characters all have tones related with meanings, and different tones of the same pronunciation (same Pinyin spelling) give
different characters or words. The tones are not usually marked unless for those at the very beginning of learning, and they may well cause misunderstanding if used wrongly. Therefore, in learning Mandarin Chinese, a foreign beginner is strongly advised to learn the tone as an essential part of every character. In this sense, we should say that learning Mandarin Chinese is like learning songs. The Chinese tonal system will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the Pinyin system, the pronunciation of most of the letters is predictable according to their pronunciations in English, but there are pitfalls too. Those letters with entirely different pronunciations are limited in number and are not difficult to remember. They include “c”, “ch”, “j”, “q”, “r”, “sh”, “x”, “z” and “zh”, which will be explained in the following chapter.

2. Computer Input of Chinese Characters

Dozens of methods for entering Chinese characters into computers have been developed since the inception of the information age, but the Pinyin input method is so far the most widely used of all, in spite of the fact that some other methods may be faster. This is mainly because every Chinese individual with just an elementary education background has learned Pinyin and can directly put it into use for entering Chinese characters, while other methods usually call for more training. For foreign learners of Mandarin Chinese, the Pinyin input method is also relatively easy because of its direct relation with the alphabetic system and the same keys on a standard keyboard. After keying in a Pinyin spelling, the user just needs to tap on the “Space” or “Enter” keys to instantly convert it into Chinese characters. As for “ü”, the only missing letter on the keyboard, it is assigned to the key for “v”, which is the only missing letter in the Pinyin system.

However, beginners may still face some difficulties in using Pinyin for entering Chinese characters. One of the problems results from the fact that Mandarin Chinese is rich in homophones. That is to say, quite a few different Chinese characters may use the same Pinyin spelling. For some words’ pronunciations, there can be dozens. And all these homophonic characters will appear on an input menu bar for character selection when keying in the same string of Pinyin letters. Then, one still has to select the right character from these choices. This indeed seems troublesome. Fortunately, the number of single-character words is in fact very small in Modern Mandarin Chinese, and words of two, three, four or even more
characters are usually keyed in as a string, which may completely eliminate the possibility of homophones or limit its number to just a few. So, homophones will not pose as big a problem as we may expect. Besides, with the greatly improved intelligence of the Pinyin input tool that automatically arranges the selection order of homophonic characters on the basis of the user’s own frequency of word use, the speed of character input is greatly raised. In fact, even sentences could be entered in a string nowadays, often at a faster rate than entering English sentences translated from Chinese. Therefore, for many people, the Pinyin input system is not only the most convenient tool but also one of the fastest methods for entering Chinese characters.

Another problem for beginners or their teachers is caused by the tones that may need to be annotated in textbooks. Since the tone marks in the Pinyin system are not set in a standard keyboard, additional operations are necessary. As a rule, the tone mark is placed on the top of the “final-sound” letter (or the first “final-sound letter” in case there are two or three in combination). To solve this problem, the input tool makers have designed a “soft keyboard” in the input system containing those marked letters. This is of course time-consuming, but once you are through the
very beginning period, there will be no need to use it any more, for Pinyin itself is only a tool for learning Chinese pronunciation, and not an active written language system in its own right.

Apart from various keyboard input methods, handwriting recognition and voice recognition systems are also developing fast and may be used more widely in the future.

Among the various systems based on the structures of Chinese characters, the Wubi Input Method (Five-Stroke Input Method) is by far the most influential because it does not involve selection from homophonic characters and thus features high-speed and exactness. However, this method is still far less popular than the Pinyin system, and its use is mostly limited to professional typists, for the simple reason that it requires a considerable amount of training to master and persistent practice to remain skillful.
CHAPTER TWO

THE PHONOLOGY OF MANDARIN CHINESE

Classification and Representation of Pinyin Sounds

As mentioned in the Introduction, Pinyin is a Romanized letter spelling system that was created with close reference to Western languages like English, and is used for annotating the pronunciation of Chinese characters. And like English, Pinyin also uses 26 letters (as signs to represent pronunciation), but there are two points that differ from the English alphabet: the letter “v” does not exist and there is an additional letter “ü”. A Chinese syllable—the pronunciation of a Chinese character—is usually composed of two parts, the initial sound and the final sound, and so all Pinyin letters are largely classified into two major categories in accordance, although there are several special cases of the so-called “semi-initials” (“y”, “w”) and “semi-finals” (“i”, “u”). That is to say, the initial and final letters are combined (“spelt”) to form syllables (the sounds of characters in Mandarin Chinese). In both categories, there are some basic single-letter sounds and sounds of two or more letters. Most Pinyin letters are pronounced with great similarity to English. There are many possibilities of combinations but not all are realized, because some sounds that are possible in Pinyin spellings do not exist in Standard Mandarin, although they may be used in one Chinese dialect or another. In the following, we will introduce the different categories, with some brief descriptions in reference to English.

Simple Initials

This category refers to those single-letter initial sounds. There are 18 such letters for these sounds in the Pinyin system, listed in the following table according to their positions and features of articulation:
In comparison to the English consonant letters, this list has left out “w” and “y”, because they are respectively pronounced the same way as the final letters “u” and “i” (see below), and thus considered as “semi-initials” that are already contained in the latter two. The consonant letter “v” does not exist in Standard Mandarin Chinese, and so the key for this letter on the keyboard is used for the additional Pinyin letter “ü”.

The articulations of these simple final sounds are explained in the following tables, with reference to the English comparables:

### Group 1 Labial: sounds made with the lips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>similar</td>
<td>The name of the sign itself is pronounced with an additional coda “o” that sounds like the British pronunciation of “or”. This coda is dropped when it is followed by all other sounds except “o” itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Group 2 Alveolar: formed with the tip of the tongue against the bony ridge behind the upper front teeth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>similar</td>
<td>The name of each letter is pronounced with a coda “e” that sounds like the vowel in British “work”. This coda is dropped when it is followed by all other sounds except “e” itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Group 3 Velar:** formed with the back of the tongue close to or touching the soft part of the roof of the mouth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Similar to their English counterparts but pronounced with the final sound “e” when standing as a pinyin sign.</td>
<td>As in Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group 4 Palatal:** formed with the back and middle of the tongue close to or touching the roof of the mouth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>As English “j” in “jeep” but with tongue tip pressed against the back of the upper teeth.</td>
<td>Each is pronounced with vibration of the vocal cords and a coda “i” (which sounds like the vowel in “bee”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>As English “ch” in “cheer” but with tongue tip pressed against the back of the upper teeth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>As English “sh” in “sheet” but with tongue tip pressed against the back of the upper teeth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group 5 Dental Sibilant:** formed with the tip of the tongue close to or touching the back of the upper front teeth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>Similar to “ds” in English, as in “cards”.</td>
<td>As in English. Each is harshly voiced with vibration of the vocal cord. When followed by “i”, the pronunciation is not changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Similar to “ts” in English, as in “meets”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>As in English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group 6 Retroflex:** formed with the tongue curled back so that it touches (or almost touches) the hard part of the roof of the mouth

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beginning r</td>
<td>Similar to the consonant “ʒ” as in “leisure”, “vision” or in the French name “Jean”, but with the tip of the tongue tilt up or curled back a little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ending r</td>
<td>When it follows a final sound (as a special case of “Erhua”, or retroflex) at the end, it is similar to the American English retroflex as in “are”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes 1) The front position “r” is a harshly voiced affricative with vibration of the vocal cord.
2) When followed by “i” (ri), the pronunciation is unchanged.
3) When attached to the end of a syllable, it is very similar to the American English “r” as in “are” and “or”. It can also be attached to nasal finals, in which case the previous nasal coda is then not pronounced. For example, when attached to the syllable “ba”, it reads like “bar” in American English; and when attached to “ban” or “ben”, it changes the sounds to “bar” or “ber” (as in English “bird”). This phenomenon is called “Er-hua” in Chinese

## Compound Initials

There are three Pinyin signs for initial sounds that are represented by combining two initial letters: “zh”, “ch”, and “sh”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zh</td>
<td>Similar to the English consonant in “jewels” and “George”.</td>
<td>Also considered as retroflex, but the tip of tongue is curled up as much as in the retroflex “r”. And they are all pronounced with harsh vibration of the vocal cord. When followed by the final sound “i” to make up Pinyin syllables, the pronunciation is not changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch</td>
<td>Similar to the English consonant in “church” and “chain”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh</td>
<td>Similar to the English consonant in “wash” and “shower”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Notes:**
Although there is another compound Pinyin sign made up of two initial letters, namely “n+g”, it is a nasal ending of final sounds and not a compound initial sign, with exactly the same function as in English (like “sing” and “wrong”). While “n” attached to a syllable changes it to a front nasal sound, “ng” makes a back nasal sound.

## Simple Finals

The remaining Pinyin letters are all for final sounds. One letter is a simple final and a combination of two or more letters is a compound final. In addition to the English vowel letters, there is a new one, “ü”, in Pinyin. So there are 6 simple final letters in Pinyin: a, o, e, i, u, ü.
a: Similar to the vowel “a” in “far” and “father” in British English.
o: Similar to vowel in “saw” and “more” in British English.
e: Similar to the vowel in “bird” and “sir” in British English.

The position of articulation of “e” is more to the middle in the mouth, as in American English.

i / yi: Similar to the vowel in “eat” and “east”, but it begins with the consonant “y” as in “yes”. “Yi” is used when there is no other initial letter before “i”. However, it is not pronounced when preceded by “c”, “s”, or “ch”, “sh”, “zh” and “r”.

u / wu: As the English word “woo” or the vowel in “too”. It contains both the English consonant /w/ and vowel /u:/.

ü / yu: Similar to the German “ü” or the French “u”. Sliding from “y” as in the English “yes” to “you” and stopping just before “ou” will produce this sound. In the above, “y” and “i” in fact have exactly the same pronunciation, with “y” treated as a “semi-initial” and “i” is treated as a “semi-final”. And as “w” is treated as a “semi-initial”, “u” is treated as a “semi-final”. When there is no initial letter preceding, it is written as “yu” to stand as a syllable.

**Compound Finals**

There are quite a few combinations of two or three final sound letters in Pinyin, and they can largely be classified into two types, namely “nasal finals” and “oral finals”.

1. **Compound Oral Finals**

There are 13 final sounds in this group: ai, ao, ei, ia, iao, ie, iou, ou, ua, uai, üe, uei, uo. And their articulations are explained below.
ai: Similar to the vowel in “high” and “bike”.
ao: Similar to the vowel in “how” and “now”.
ei: Similar to the vowel in “may” and “say”.

ia / ya: Begin by pronouncing “y” as in “yes” and slide to “a” as in British “are”, without the retroflex “r”. The spelling “ya” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

iao / yao: The combination of the beginning consonant in “yes” and the vowel in “how”. The spelling “yao” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

ie / ye: Similar to the English “ye”, as in “yes”. The spelling “ye” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

iu / you: It could have been represented as “iou” or “yiou”, but these are not used. It is a slide from “y” as in “yes” to the “o” in “go”. The Pinyin spelling “you” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

ou: As the vowel in “go” and “so”.

ua / wa: Similar to the American “what” without “h” and “t”, but more like the French vowel in “quoi”. The English spelling of this sound might be “wah”.

The spelling “wa” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

uai / wai: Similar to the English word “why”. The spelling “wai” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

ue / üe / yue: It is a slide from Pinyin “ü” (German “ü” or the French “u”) to the vowel “ê”. In the syllables “jue”, “que”, “xue” and “yue”, this “ü” is written as “u”. The spelling “yue” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

ui / wei: It could have been represented as “uei” or “wuei”, but these are not used. Similar to the sound in “wait”. It is spelt “wei” when it stands as an independent syllable.

uo / wo: Similar to the British English “war” (without retroflex). The spelling “wo” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.
2. Compound Nasal Finals

When a single final or any one of the above compound finals is followed by “n” or “ng”, the sound becomes nasal; that is, pronounced through the nose as well as with the mouth. Those ending with “n” are referred to as “front nasal finals”, and those ending with “ng” are “back nasal finals”. There are many possible combinations in this category, but Standard Mandarin doesn’t have all the possibilities realized. That is to say, some combinations don’t exist. There are all together 16 compound nasal finals in Pinyin, with 8 as front nasal finials and the other 8 as back nasal finals.

**Front nasal sounds** (as the coda in the English words “son” and “sin”) include 8 compound finals: an, en, ian, in, un, uan, ün, üan

- an: This “a” is as described above (pronounced like the British “are”, without retroflex “r”). To pronounce “an”, you just let air out through the nose. Keep your mouth open as big as when you pronounce “are” to avoid confusing it with the English article “an”.

en: Similar to the pronunciation of “earn” in British English, but its position of articulation is more to the front in the mouth as in American English. Don’t pronounce the retroflex “r”.

ian / yan: Pinyin “y” + “an”. It is a slide from the consonant “y” as in “yes” to Pinyin “an” as described above. The spelling “yan” is used when there is no initial sound at the beginning.

in / yin: Similar to the English preposition “in”, but begin with “y” as in “yes”. The spelling “yin” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

uan / wan: Pinyin “u” + “an” (could have been written as “wuan”, although this is not used). In “juan”, “quan”, “xuan” and “yuan”, the “u” is pronounced as “ü”. The spelling “wan” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

üan / yuan: Pinyin “ü” + “an”. However, “an” is affected by “ü” and thus is more like the vowel in “man” and “ban”. It occurs only in the syllables “juan”, “quan”, “xuan” and “yuan”, and in other combinations, the sound is “u” (“wu”) but not really “ü”.

un / wen: Pinyin “w” + “en”, as described above. The spelling “un” is used if the syllable begins with a different initial other than “w”. It could have been written as “wuen”, but this is not used. When there is no initial consonant, this sound is spelled “wen” as one syllable.

ün / yun: Pinyin “ü” + “n”. It occurs only in the syllables “jun”, “qun”, “xun” and “yun”. In other combinations, the sound is “u” (“wu”) but not really “ü”. When there is no other preceding initial, it is written as “yun” as an independent syllable.

**Back nasal sounds**

As in the English words “song” and “sing”, they include 8 compound finals: ang, ong, eng, iang, iong, ing, uang, and ueng.

ang: This “a” is as described above, followed by a “ng” sound. It sounds like the preposition “on” in American English, or “song” without “s”.

eng: This “e” is as described above, followed by the nasal “ng” sound. When you let air out through the back of your nose as you pronounce the vowel in British “urb” or “work”, you get the right Pinyin “eng”.

iang / yang: Pinyin “y” + “ang”, similar to the American pronunciation of “young”. The spelling “yang” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

ing / ying: As in English (“sing”). The spelling “ying” is used when there is no consonant at the beginning of a syllable.
**Iong / Yong:** Pinyin “y” + “u” + “ng”. The “o” is affected by “y” (i) and so sounds similar to the vowel in “too”. The spelling “yong” is used when there is no consonant at the beginning.

**Ongh:** Pinyin “o” + “ng”, pronounced by letting air out through the back of your nose as you pronounce “o” as described above (similar to the vowel in “saw” and “more” in British English).

**Uang / Wang:** English “w” + Pinyin “ang”. The spelling “wang” is used when it stands as an independent syllable.

**Ueng / Weng:** The spelling “ueng” is not used but it might indicate the pronunciation. This sound is pronounced as the English “w” + Pinyin “eng”.

**Summary: All Pinyin Sounds**

To make a summary of all the initial and final Pinyin sounds that we have so far described, we can say that many Pinyin representations are similar to those spellings in English, and some others are not hard to infer because the rules by which they are formed are similar. We only need to pay special attention to those sounds that are distinctively different from English. The special points to bear in mind are as follows.

1) The Pinyin system largely uses the same letters as the English alphabet to represent sounds of Chinese characters, as English and many other languages use IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) to annotate the pronunciation of words. Although IPA may also be used by Chinese scholars and language teachers in their work, it is nevertheless not commonly used in Chinese dictionaries. So the function of the Pinyin system in teaching and learning Chinese is similar to that of IPA in teaching and learning English.

2) The Pinyin system is strictly rule-governed, for the word “Pinyin” itself literally means “spelling sounds”, or “putting sounds together”. The general principle guiding Pinyin is to begin with the initial sounds and naturally slide to the final sounds. So theoretically each initial sound might be combined with each final sound, and this would make the possibilities of Chinese pronunciation very great. However, many such possibilities are not realized in Standard Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) even though they may be heard in one Chinese dialect or another.

3) In nature, Pinyin initial sounds are like English consonants, while final sounds have a similar function as English vowels. However, the two should not be simply taken as exact equivalents, for the status of Mandarin Chinese as an open-syllable language determines that its consonants are
not used at the end of words (characters). The two categories of “initials” and “finals” are generally clear-cut. But there are five sounds that are somewhat ambivalent, “y”, “w”, “i”, “u” and “ü”, of which the first two might be classified in the group of initials, though they are pronounced exactly the same as the finals (or “semi-finals”) “i” and “u” respectively, and the last one “ü” contains the sound “y” (i) in the beginning of its articulation although it is classified as a final. These special points lead to the rule that any Pinyin syllable (for a character) beginning with “i” or “u” or “ü” is to be written with an additional “y” or “w” in front, with “y” to lead “i” or “ü” and “w” to lead “u”, just to make them look right.

4) With the above rule, most Pinyin syllables are written in the form of “initial” + “final”. But there are also syllables that begin with final sounds, and these mainly include those using “a”, “o”, and “e”. However, the number of such syllables in Chinese is limited to just a few.

5) To people who speak or have learned English, the Pinyin system is not difficult to command because well over half of the letters are pronounced similarly, and one only has to remember the rather limited number of letters that are pronounced with drastic differences. There are merely 7 such letters and another one that is not used in English but in German: j, q, x, z, c, r, zh, ü.

6) The last point to note is that all initial signs (letters) are in fact pronounced differently when they stand just as names of Pinyin signs, different from when they are used in combinations. That is, each of them takes a coda. For the first 11 initials (b, p, m, f, d, t, n, l, g, k, h), the sound of Pinyin “e” (pronounced as the vowel in the British “worker”) is added. For “j, q, x”, the Pinyin “i” is used as a coda (pronounced similarly to the English “ea” in “eat” but beginning with “y” as in “yes”). And for “r, zh, ch, sh”, a nondescript buzzing ending sound produced by hard vibration of the vocal cord follows. And this is also one point that makes Pinyin initials differ from the English consonants.

To conclude, we can say that Pinyin has in its system 21 initials, 6 simple finals, 13 oral compound finals, and 16 nasal finals, all listed in the following table.
21 initials  |  b, p, m, f, d, t, n, l, g, k, h, j, q, x, z, c, s, r, zh, ch, sh 
6 simple finals |  a, e, i, o, u, ü 
13 compound finals |  ai, ao, ei, ia, iao, ie, iou, ou, ua, uai, üe, uei, uo 
16 nasal finals  |  8 front nasals  |  an, en, ian, in, uan, un, üan, ün 
6 back nasals |  ang, eng, iang, ing, iong, ong, uang, ueng 

**Special Notes:**
“y” and “w” are usually not listed as initials (but as “semi-initials”), for they are pronounced as the finals “i” and “u” respectively.
The letter “v” does not exist in Pinyin system, and its keyboard position is used for “ü”.

All syllables in Standard Mandarin can be represented by these sounds or their combinations, but not all possible combinations are actually used, although some may heard in dialects. Now we can make a complete table of the used syllables that can be “spelt” from the above table.

### Special Cases: Sound Change (Sandhi)

“Sandhi”, a word from Sanskrit, originally means “join”. In the analysis of spoken language, it refers to the change in pronunciation of some sounds which occurs when they are spoken in connection with other sounds. In Mandarin Chinese, a language with tones, this kind of change can be observed in both pronunciation and tones. Here we will first introduce the change of pronunciation and leave the tonal change to the next chapter which exclusively and systematically deals with tones.

There are mainly two categories of sound sandhi in the pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese, namely the change of “a” (啊) and the so-called Er-Hua change. The first occurs when “啊” is preceded by a syllable with an ending that can influence its pronunciation, and the second emerges in syllables followed by and thus influenced by the retroflex “r” (written as “er” in full, which indicates the pronunciation of the character “ㄦ”). Such changes are seen below, with their tones marked with superscript numbers and the light tone left unmarked.
1. Change of “a” (啊)

The exclamatory “啊” (represented in Pinyin as the final sound sign “a”) has no substantial meaning except to show a strong emotion. It is subject to the influences of certain other preceding sounds, particularly the nasal sound and a few final sounds that may merge with it.

The Nasal Change of “a” (啊)

A. From “a” (啊) to “na” (哪)

“啊” is naturally changed into “哪” (na) when following a syllable ending with the nasal sound “n”.

- 天啊 Tian¹ a → 天哪 tian na: Heaven [IJ]
- 山啊 Shan¹ a → 山哪 shan na: Mountain [IJ]
- 神啊 Shen² a → 神哪 shen na: God/Angel [IJ]
- 心啊 Xin¹ a → 心哪 xin na: Heart [IJ]
- 云啊 Yun² a → 云哪 yun na: Cloud [IJ]

B. From “a” (啊) to “(n) ga” (嘎)

As in English, Mandarin Chinese not only has the front nasal ending “n” but also the back nasal ending “ng”. For instance, there are “chan” and “chang”, “shen” and “sheng”, etc. which may be representations of different homophonic characters or characters of the same pronunciation but different tones. While “n” is called the “front nasal sound”, “ng” is called the “back nasal sound”, which can also influence the immediately following “啊”, such as the following:

- 唱啊 Chang⁴ a → 唱啊/唱 (n)ga: Sing [IJ]
- 听啊 Ting¹ a → 听啊/听 (n)ga: Listen [IJ]
- 冲啊 Chong¹ a → 冲 (n)ga (冲啊/冲): Charge/Attack [IJ]
- 想啊 Xiang³ a → 想 (n)ga (想啊/想): Think [IJ]
- 升啊 Sheng¹ a → 升 (n)ga (升啊/升): Raise [IJ]

However, it should be specially noted that the Pinyin representation of “ng” does not exist as an initial sign and the pronunciation of “嘎” is always written as “ga” in Chinese dictionaries. In written text, the
character “啊” usually remains unchanged, even if there is a sound sandhi that actually changes it into “nga”.

**The Non-Nasal Sound Sandhi of “a”**

This category includes the cases in which the exclamatory word “a” is influenced by other preceding sounds than the nasal ones and thus changed to other non-nasal sounds. There are two cases as such in Mandarin Chinese, namely the “ya” (呀) and “wa” (哇).

**A. From “a” (啊) to “ya (呀)”**

When a sound preceding the exclamation word “a” is ended with a coda of “i”, it influences “a” and changes it to “ya” (呀). For example:

- 谁啊 Shui² a→誰呀 shui ya: Who (is it?) [IJ]
- 你啊 Ni³ a→你呀 ni ya: You [IJ]
- 来啊 Lai² a→來呀 lai ya: Come (on) [IJ]
- 对啊 Dui⁴ a→對呀 dui ya: Correct [IJ]

**B. From “a” (啊) to “wa (哇)”**

When a sound preceding the exclamation word “a” is ended with a coda of “u” or “o”, it influences “a” and changes it to “wa” (哇).

- 好啊 Hao³ a→好哇 hao wa: Good [IJ]
- 走啊 Zou³ a→走哇 zou wa: Go [IJ]

However, with the influence of the preceding “u” or “o”, the following “a” can also be changed to “ya” (呀). In this case, the sound “y” serves to separate the two syllables, or rather to avoid sound change as a direct result of sandhi.

**2. “Er-Hua” Sound Sandhi**

In the analysis of Mandarin Chinese pronunciation, the term “er-hua” refers to the phenomenon or process in which an ordinary final sound comes to merge with a directly succeeding “er” (ㄜ) and is changed into a sound with a retroflex ending. This may be simply considered as a process of “retroflexation”, comparable to the case when the word “worker” in
British English is changed to American English pronunciation. However, the Mandarin Chinese Er-Hua phenomenon is more complicated than the English retroflexion, because many more sounds can go through this process and result in greater changes, even including some words with nasal ending “n” and “ng”.

“Er” (ㄜ) is usually spelt in short as “r” after the preceding final sound, and then the two syllables are changed into one with a retroflex ending “r”. The meaning of “er” is hard to define but may function to make the speech colloquial, informal, or it may mean something small and/or lovable. For example, there may be cases in which we can choose to use “Er-hua” or not, as in “men” (ㄇㄣ). But then there may also be a subtle difference: when “Er-hua” is used (with “ㄇㄣ” changed to “ㄇㄥㄕ”), it usually refers to a small door and not the door of a big gate. In the following, we provide a list of such examples (the superscript numbers indicate the tones, which will be introduced in the next chapter).

1. a/an/ai+er → a’r

When a syllable ending with the final sound “a”, “an” or “ai” is followed by “er” (ㄜ), the two merge and become one sound that is pronounced like the American English “are”. In the latter two cases, the nasal “n” or “i” is lost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Tones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>那儿</td>
<td>na^4+er → na’r (there)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>法儿</td>
<td>fa^3+er → fa’r (way, method)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>花儿</td>
<td>hua^3+er → hua’r (flower)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>马儿</td>
<td>ma^3+er → ma’r (horse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>半儿</td>
<td>ban^4+er → ba’r (half)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>点儿</td>
<td>dian^3+er → dian’r (dot, small point, a little)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>官儿</td>
<td>guan^1+er → guan’r (official position or title in the government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>袋儿</td>
<td>gai^4+er → gai’r (a pouch or bag)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>孩儿</td>
<td>hai^2+er → hai’r (child)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>块儿</td>
<td>kuai^4+er → kuai’r (a block, a cubic piece, quarter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. o/uo +er → o’r

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Tones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>朵儿</td>
<td>duo^3 → duo’r ([MW] of a flower)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>活儿</td>
<td>huo^2 → huo’r (chore, a piece of work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>末儿</td>
<td>mo^4 → mo’r (powder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>窝儿</td>
<td>wo^1 → wo’r (den, [MW] a den (of), a sunk in part in a surface)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. e/en/eng/ei+er → e’r

- 车儿 che¹+er → che’r (vehicle)
- 本儿 ben³+er → be’r (a copy of a book, a stack of paper)
- 乐儿 le⁴+er → le’r (something fun, something interesting)
- 哥儿 ge¹+er → ge’r (a brother or a good fellow)
- 盒儿 he²+er → he’r (a case or small box)
- 这儿 zhe⁴+er → zhe’r (here)
- 被儿 bei⁴+er → be’r (quilt, cover of the bed)
- 分儿 fen¹+er → fe’r (point(s) on a scale or as a measure)
- 灯儿 deng¹+er → de’r (lamp)
- 声儿 sheng¹+er → she’r (sound, voice)

4. u/ui/un/ü/ün+er → u’r

- 忽儿 hu¹+er → hu’r (a wink of time, suddenly)
- 兔儿 tu⁴+er → tu’r (rabbit, hare)
- 腿儿 tuì³+er → tu’r (leg)
- 穗儿 sui⁴+er → suì’r (ear of a plant such as that of wheat)
- 会儿 huì³+er → huì’r (a while, a moment)
- 棍儿 gun⁴+er → gu’r (a stick)
- 鱼儿 yú²+er → yu’r (fish)
- 曲儿 qu₃+er → qu’r (a tune or a piece of music)
- 群儿 qún²+er → qu’r (a group)

   (Note: the italicized “i” in the above is almost lost but can still be felt.)

5. i/in/ing +er → (y)i’r

- 鼻儿 bi¹+er → bi’r (nose)
- 皮儿 pí²+er → pí’r (skin, surface)
- 词儿 cí²+er → cí’r (word)
- 侄儿 zhi²+er → zhí’r (nephew on father’s side)
- 瓶儿 píng²+er → píng’r (bottle, flask)
- 丁儿 díng¹+er → díng’r (a nail)
- 信儿 xìn²+er → xìn’r (message)
- 影儿 yǐng³+er → yǐng’r (shadow)

   As can be observed, some sounds are lost naturally in the process of Er-Hua, such as the nasal coda and those sounds indicated by the italics in the above.
It should be noted in particular that the use of Er-hua sound in informal speech is on the whole highly arbitrary and hard to systematize. Therefore, learners of Mandarin may run a high risk if taking it as a fast rule and adding “er” at the end of any character. Even for the items listed in the above table, it may only be applied to one particular meaning of the character if it has more than one interpretation. For example, the character “活” (huo) can only have Er-hua when it means “a piece of work”, and not when it means “(to) live”; “对” (dui) can have an Er-hua ending only when it means “a pair”, and not when it means “correct”; “眼” usually does not have Er-hua when it means the eye of a person or any animal. However, learners should not be discouraged by this, for the phenomenon of Er-hua, in spite of the arbitrary choices, is still a natural process for ease and speed, and so one will learn it as a matter of course when he comes to read or speak Chinese more fluently.
Tones and Meaning in Mandarin Chinese

As mentioned in the introduction of this book, the concept of Mandarin Chinese tones is much more complex than that of the intonation of English, in that the different tones of the same pronunciation in Chinese indicate different characters and thus different meanings. Although it is usually said that there are four basic tones in Putonghua, the standard form of Mandarin Chinese, there in fact exists a fifth one, traditionally called “the neutral tone”, which is not considered as a distinctively marked tone because it is unstressed, short, and pitchless. The four basic tones are now usually indicated by a number from 1 to 4.

These different tones and the possibilities of their combination in words, phrases and sentences give the Chinese language greater musicality than can be felt in all other non-tonal languages. Ranking from the unstressed light tone to the one at the highest pitch, the scale of tones in Mandarin Putonghua can be said to have five degrees. Their qualities may well be explained with reference to the five musical notes in a sol-fa syllable. If we set the pitch of the first tone at the note of “sol”, the other tones would be scaled down in pitch correspondingly, with the second, third and fourth changing and the light tone positioned at the bottom. They could be as described in the chart on the left.

1st tone: high-pitched, level and steady like “so”.

2nd tone: as rising from the middle “mi” to the “so” note.

3rd tone: down from “re” to “do” and then rising to “fa”.

4th tone: falling from the top “so” to the bottom “do”.

Light (Neutral) tone: lighted at the bottom position of “do”.
The four tones are usually marked on the top of the first letter of the final sign in the Pinyin syllable, respectively with -, /, v, and \. For example, the syllable “ba” has its four tones represented as “bā, bá, bà, and bà”. The light tone is usually not marked.

However, the tone marks as illustrated above and used in many Chinese language course books cannot be directly keyed into the computer. For this reason, they are now often seen indicated directly by the corresponding number in superscript. Take the tones of the syllable “ba”, the first to fourth are respectively represented as ba₁, ba₂, ba₃, and ba⁴. As for the “light tone”, it is either left unmarked or marked with the superscript number 0. Here in this book, we will not mark it.

**For convenience, we adopt the relatively simple method of superscript numbers hereafter throughout this book.**

Given the variations of tone changes in words, phrases and clauses, it is obvious that completely learning the Pinyin system and thus being able to “spell the sounds” of all the possible syllables takes you only about halfway in learning the Chinese phonology. A foreign learner usually finds it difficult because neither the Pinyin spellings nor the tone marks are given in normal written texts except in the very beginners’ course books. Besides, tones are highly arbitrary too, showing no rules as to any relation to the meanings of words or their parts of speech. Each character’s “assigned” tone is simply to be learned along with the pronunciation, just as the gender of the French noun is learned together with the word itself. Misuse of the tones may completely change the meaning of a word or a sentence, or simply make the utterance difficult to understand if not completely incomprehensible. Actually, Chinese characters (syllables in Pinyin representation) are rich in homophones, and the tonal differences in speech function to disambiguate the meanings of many homophonic words from one another.

In the following, we will just take the changes of meaning in different tones of the same pronunciations. The first group contains the numbers 1 to 10, and the second contains the pronouns.

**1. Group I: Homophones of Numbers**

1. yi₁ — one

yi₁ 1) 衣 clothes, garment; 2) 依 lean on, rely on, as per
yi₂ 1) 移 move, transfer; 2) 嫣 Aunt (mother’s younger sister)
yi³ 1) 以 with, by means of, because of, in order to; 2) 乙 secondary, another
yi⁴ 1) 意 meaning, idea, intention or will, hint; 2) 义 meaning, justice, righteousness; 3) 易 easy; change, barter

2. er⁴ 二, two

er¹ (no character in Putonghua)
er² 儿 son, child, youth; also a suffix of a noun (usually meaning something small or lovable)
er³ 1) 而 (a structural function word) but, and, so that, to; 2) 耳 ear, only, just;

3. san¹ 三, three

san² (no match in Standard Mandarin)
san³ 1) 散 loose, come lose, scattered; 2) 伞 umbrella
san⁴ 散 disperse, distribute, spread, dispel

4. si⁴ 四, Four

si¹ 1) 思 think, miss; 2) 丝 silk
si² (no character in Standard Mandarin)
si³ 死 die, be dead, death
si⁴ 似 alike, similar, look like

5. wu³ 五, Five

wu¹ 1) 屋 house; 2) 乌 black
wu² 1) 无 without, nil, non-existent; 2) 吴 a family name
wu³ 1) 舞 dance, wave (verb); 2) 武 military, martial, force
wu⁴ 1) 物 material, material object, matter; 2) 务 business (to do as a duty);
3) 雾 fog

6. liu⁴ 六, Six

liu¹ 溜 slide, slip away
liu² 1) 留 stay, leave behind; 2) 流 flow, stream; 3) 刘 a family name
liu³ 柳 willow (tree), a family name
Chapter Three

liu⁴ 2) 遛 go on a leisure walk or run, take (an animal) for a walk or run

7. qi¹ 七, Seven

qi¹ 1) 妻 wife; 2) 期 period, term; 3) 漆 paint, lacquer; 4) 欺 cheat, take advantage of
qi² 1) 其 that, this; of this, of that; 2) 奇 strange, wonder; 3) 齐 even or ordered; 4) 骑 straddle on (as on a horse) 5) 旗 flag or banner; 6) 棋 chess
qi³ 1) 起 rise, get up, start; 2) 乜 a rhetorical question marker; 3) 企 plan to do, attempt to do
qi⁴ 1) 气 gas, air, annoy, smell; 2) 汽 steam, aqueous vapour; 3) 器 a tool or container; 4) 弃 give up

8. ba¹ 八, Eight

ba² 拔 pull up, lift, pick
ba³ 把 (grammar) function word that changes the position of an object to the front of the verb; hold, grasp, a handle of something; a measure word
ba⁴ 1) 爸 father; 2) 霸 dominate, tyrant

9. jiu³ 九, Nine

jiu¹ 纠 entangle, correct;
jiu² (no character in Standard Mandarin)
jiu³ 1) 久 long in time; 2) 酒 wine
jiu⁴ 1) 舅 uncle on the mother’s side; 2) 就 a functional adverb; 3) 旧 old, past, used; 4) 救 rescue, save

10. shì² 十, Ten

shì¹ 1) 湿 wet, watery; 2) 诗 poem, poetry; 3) 师 master, teacher, mentor
shì² 1) 时 time, occasion; 2) 实 solid, filled, actual; 3) 食 food; eat
shì³ 1) 史 history; 2) 室 room, cell; 3) 使 cause (something to happen)
shì⁴ 1) 是 is, yes; 2) 事 a thing to do, business; 3) 试 try, test; 4) 市 city, municipality, market place
2. Group II: Homophones of Pronouns

1. \( \text{wo}^3 \) 我 I, me

\( \text{wo}^1 \) 1) 窝 den (usually of animal); 2) 涡 whirl of water
\( \text{wo}^2 \) (no character in Standard Mandarin)
\( \text{wo}^4 \) 1) 握 grasp, take hold; 2) 卧 (of a person) lie down, (of an animal) crouch

2. \( \text{ni}^3 \) 你 You

\( \text{ni}^1 \) 1) 妮 girl, lass, a nun (of a temple)
\( \text{ni}^2 \) 1) 泥 mud, paste; 2) 伲 a family name
\( \text{ni}^3 \) 拟 make (especially by imitation), plan, draw up (a draft)
\( \text{ni}^4 \) 1) 逆 contrary, go against; 2) 腻 (too) oily, be bored with too much of something

3. \( \text{ta}^1 \) 他 (male), 她 (female), 它 (non-personal)

\( \text{ta}^2 \) (no character in Standard Mandarin)
\( \text{ta}^3 \) 塔 tower, pagoda
\( \text{ta}^4 \) 踏 stamp (with feet), step on
\( \text{zhe}^4 \) 这 this
\( \text{na}^4 \) 那 that

The plural forms of pronouns

The plural forms of the three pronouns are constructed simply by adding the suffixes “们” (men) and “些” (xie) to the singular pronouns, respectively for the personal and deictic pronouns. As a suffix, both the characters are usually pronounced with their original tones changed to the light tone, or kept when especially emphasizing the plural meaning.

我们 wo\(^3\)men we, us
我闷 wo\(^3\)men\(^4\) (a sentence) I feel suffocated/sullen.
你们 ni\(^3\)men you (plural)
我闷 ni\(^3\)men\(^4\) (a sentence) You feel suffocated/sullen.
他们 ta\(^1\)men they, them
他闷 ta\(^1\)men\(^4\) (a sentence) He feels suffocated/sullen.
Change of Tones in Context

As there are possible sound changes resulting from the sound context, there may also be some changes in the tones of Chinese that are caused by the tones of the preceding or succeeding words. This kind of change occurs when the original tones of two directly connected words are hard to keep in the fast and natural flow of speech, or in other words, when one tone affects another in the natural flow of speech. Mandarin Chinese is rich in tone sandhi, regardless of the general rule that a certain tone is usually fixed for every character’s pronunciation. For people who have already learned Chinese to such a level as to be able to speak it with some fluency, the change of tones in context may come naturally, for the phenomenon itself is rooted in the fact that sounds and tones are all used with the least effort, without break. For beginners, however, it is certainly necessary to learn and remember the basic rules that govern the changes.

We can classify tone changes in Mandarin Chinese into two major categories by feature, the Stress Contrast Change and the Affected Change. The former category mainly includes the changes from other tones to the unstressed light tone (also called the “neutral tone”), so that the stressed syllables in the same words are made more prominent. And the latter category covers the changes that occur because of the direct influence of the preceding or following syllable’s tones.

1. Stress Contrast Change

In the case of two-character words, the tone of the second character will tend to be changed into a light tone to set off the importance of the first character’s meaning. This kind of change is found in two kinds of combinations: 1) the second character is a repetition of the first; 2) it is complementary in meaning to the first or has no particular meaning but is only used as an ending suffix of a two-character word.

Group I: Repetition Light Tone

A. Verbs

Verbs in Chinese can usually be repeated, making the action a particular one at that time or giving them very subtle additional nuances of meaning, such as “for now”, “for a while”, “take time to do”, etc. In such
situations, the tone in the repeated character is habitually changed into the light tone.

谢谢 xie⁴ xie Thank you; thanks  
歇歇 xie¹ xie Take a rest  
听听 ting¹ ting Listen for a while  
说说 shuo⁴ shuo Take time to tell/say/explain  
看看 kan⁴ kan Have/Take a look  
读读 du² du Take time to read  
写写 xie³ xie Take time to write  
学学 xue² xue Take time to learn  
想想 xiang³ xiang Think over for a while  
试试 shi⁴ shi Have a try  
玩玩 wan² wan Take some time to play  
坐坐 zuo⁴ zuo Sit for a while  
走走 zou³ zou Take some time for a walk  
等等 deng² deng Wait for a while; and so on

Special Notes: 1) All of the above can have “一” (yi) inserted in between the repetition except 谢谢, and when this happens, a change of tone can also occur in “一” (see the following section). 2) In the 3rd tone repetition, the first syllable is to be changed to the 2nd according to another rule (see the following section). These 3rd tones are printed in italics.

B. Nouns

Nouns in Chinese may be repeated, with basically no change in the meaning except adding a nuance of informal style or intimacy, especially in appellations. In such cases, the repeating is changed to a light tone.

爷爷 ye² ye Grandpa  
奶奶 nai³ nai Grandma  
爸爸 ba⁴ ba Daddy, Dad  
妈妈 ma¹ ma Mom  
伯伯 bo² bo Elder Uncle (on father’s side)  
叔叔 shu² shu Younger Uncle (on father’s side)  
婶婶 shen³ shen Younger aunt (on father’s side)  
姑姑 gu¹ gu Aunt (on father’s side)  
舅舅 jiu² jiu Uncle (on mother’s side)  
哥哥 ge¹ ge Elder brother  
姐姐 jie³ jie Elder sister
Special Notes: The third tone repetition rule that changes the first syllable’s tone to the second doesn’t apply to this group of words (as seen in “奶奶”, “婶婶” and “姐姐”), simply because the second syllable does not have any additional meaning.

Exceptions to Repetition Light Tone

1. Plurality Repetition of Nouns

When the same noun character is repeated for reasons of plurality, to mean “every” or “all” (with the repeated character functioning in effect as the English plural form), there is no change of tone except for third tone repetition.

人人 ren²ren² Every person, everyone
个个 ge⁴ge² Everyone (person or thing), one after another
条条 tiao³tia⁴ Every line (of things that may be measured by length)
路路 lu⁴lu⁴ Every road, every way, one way after another
一一 yi¹yi¹ Every one, one by one, one after another
家家 jia¹jia¹ Every family (household)
户户 hu⁴hu⁴ Every house(hold)
男男 nan²nan² Every male
女女 nv³nv³ Every female
老老 lao³lao³ Every elderly person
少少 shao⁴shao⁴ Every young person
分分 fen¹fen¹ Every minute, every point (of time or scale)
秒秒 miao³miao³ Every second (of time)
刻刻 ke⁴ke⁴ Every quarter of an hour
事事 shi¹shi⁴ Everything (to do), every piece of work
处处 chu⁴chu⁴ Everywhere, one place and another, here and there
天天 tian¹tian¹ Every day, day after day
日日 ri¹ri⁴ Every day (daytime), day after day
夜夜 ye⁴ye⁴ Every night, night after night
月月 yue⁴yue⁴ Every month
年年 nian³nian² Every year, year in year out
2. Enforced Repetition of Adjectives

Adjective characters can also be repeated as a way of enforcing the expression. In this case, the second syllable will also keep its original tone, except those subject to the 3rd tone repetition rule. The following lists such examples.

红红 hong^2hong^2 fairly red, quite red
黑黑 hei^1hei^1 fairly black, quite black
白白 bai^2bai^2 fairly white, quite white (but also an adverb meaning “without result” or “in vain”)
清清 qing^1qing^1 rather clear, lucid
清清白白 qing^1qing^1bai^2bai^2 figuratively used for “innocent”, “sinless”
大大 da4da^4 fairly big or large (also an adverb meaning “greatly”)
小小 xiao^3xiao^3 fairly small
大大小小 da^4da^4xiao^3xiao^3 of various sizes
高高 gao^1gao^1 fairly tall or high
低低 di^1di^1 fairly low
高高低低 gao^1gao^1di^1di^1 of various heights
长长 chang^2chang^2 fairly long
短短 duan^3duan^3 fairly short
长长短短 chang^2chang^2duan^3duan^3 of various lengths
甜甜 tian^2tian^2 fairly sweet (of taste)
酸酸 suan^1suan^1 fairly sour (of taste)
酸酸甜甜 suan^1suan^1 tian^2tian^2 sour and sweet

Special Notes: In the 3rd-tone repetition, the first syllable is changed to the second tone, thus making the pattern 2nd tone + light tone.

Group II: Complementary Light Tone

A. Verbs

A verb character can be followed by a complementary character indicating its direction, aspect or tense, etc. And in such cases, the original tone of the complementary character tends to be changed to the light tone. In the following, the original tones of the second characters will habitually be changed.

进来 jin^4lai^2 come in
进去 jin^4qu^4 go in
出来 chu^1lai^2 come out
出去 chu¹ qu⁴ go out
回来 hui² lai² come back
回去 hui² qu⁴ go back
过来 guo⁴ lai² come over, come here
过去 guo⁴ qu⁴ go over, go there
上来 shang⁴ lai² come up, come up here
上去 shang⁴ qu⁴ go up, go up there
来过 lai² guo⁴ have been (once came) here
去过 qu⁴ guo⁴ have been (once went) there
说过 shuo¹ guo⁴ have said (once said)
想过 xiang³ guo⁴ have thought (once thought)
上去 shang⁴ qu⁴ go up, go up there
下来 xia⁴ lai² come down, come down here
下去 xia⁴ qu⁴ go down, go down there

Special Notes: “过去” is a special case because it can serve as an adverb of time meaning “in the past” and a verb meaning “go over”. In this case, there is no change in the tone.

B. Nouns

If the second character in a two-character noun is considered as complementary in meaning to the first (or as a suffix), it is also pronounced in the light tone.

父亲 fu⁴ qin¹ father
母亲 mu³ qin¹ mother
儿子 er² zi³ son
孙子 sun¹ zi³ grandson
孙女 sun¹ nv³ grand-daughter
媳妇 xi² fu⁴ wife
朋友 peng² you³ friend
先生 xian¹ sheng¹ Sir; Mr.; gentleman; husband
丈夫 zhang⁴ fu¹ husband
夫人 fu¹ ren² (your) wife
学生 xue² sheng¹ student
徒弟 tu² di⁴ apprentice
衣服 yi¹ fu² clothes, garment
房子 fang² zi³ house, apartment
桌子 zhuo¹ zi³ table, desk
帽子 mao⁴ zi³ hat
鞋子 xie²zi³ shoe
箱子 xiang¹zi³ box
盒子 he²zi³ case

Special Notes: The Chinese “子” can be either in the third or the light tone but there is a difference in meaning: When in the third tone, it is usually a content word meaning “son”, and in the light tone, it is a complementary ending as a suffix. Therefore, in “父子” (fu⁴zi³, father and son) and “母子” (mu³zi³, mother and son), the second tone is unchanged, because the relation of the two characters is contrastive and not complementary.

2. Affected Change

The affected change usually occurs most frequently in three situations: 1) 3rd tone combinations; 2) number “yi” combinations “一”; and 3) negation “bu” combinations. The basic rules are exemplified with some most frequently used words and phrases in the following.

The Third Tone Change

Rule 1: 3rd tone+3rd →2nd tone+3rd tone

When two characters of a word are both in the 3rd tone, the first one is changed to the second tone for easy flow of speech.

打扰 darao excuse me (for my interference).
好懂 haodong easy to understand, easily understood.
很好 henhao very good
几点 jidian what time (is it?)
可以 keyi can, may, permitted or allowed to
口语 kouyu oral language, spoken (style)
老板 laoban boss, employer
理解 lijie understand, comprehend
哪里 nali where, what place
水果 shuiguo fruit
所以 suyi therefore; as a result; for this reason, etc.
永远 yongyuan forever, for good, eternal
友好 youhao friendly
语法 yufa grammar, rules of language structure
早点 zaodian dim sum for breakfast, breakfast

**Special Notes:** In cases of three-character words, it is the first of the two more closely related in meaning that is changed into the second tone. For example, in either 老板好 (the boss is good) or 好老板 (good boss), it is the tone of “老” that is changed to the 2nd tone, because “老板” is a word.

**Rule 2:** 3rd tone + Non-3rd tone → short 3rd tone + original tone or → original 3rd tone + light tone

A 3rd tone followed by any tone other than the 3rd tone could have two possibilities in the change according to different stresses: 1) when the meaning of the second character is emphasized, the 3rd tone is changed to a short third tone (also called “half third tone”, italicized), one that falls from a low level but does not rise much, thus sounding like the light tone; 2) when the meaning of the first character itself is emphasized, its tone is unchanged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd tone + another tone</th>
<th>Change in tone and emphasis (in bold type)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我们 wo³men²</td>
<td><strong>我们 wo³men²</strong> We (not I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你们 ni³men²</td>
<td><strong>你们 ni³men²</strong> You, plural (not singular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你妈 ni³ma¹</td>
<td><strong>你妈 ni³ma¹</strong> Your <strong>mother</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我爸 wo³ba⁴</td>
<td><strong>我爸 wo³ba⁴</strong> My <strong>father</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number “Yi” Change**

The word “yi” is in its original 1st tone when used as the numeral 1 or as a word ending. In all other cases, a change may occur, following different rules.
Rule 1. Unchanged “Yi” in Numbers

- 十 yi¹shi²——ten
- 百 yi¹bai³——one hundred
- 千 yi¹qian¹——one thousand
- 万 yi¹wan⁴——ten thousand
- 亿 yi¹yi⁴——a hundred million
- 第 di⁴yi¹——No.1, the first
- 唯 wei²yi¹——the only one
- 单 dan¹yi¹——singular, single
- 统 tong³yi¹——unify, unified
- 十 shi²yi¹——eleven

Rule 2. “Yi” is changed to the 2nd tone when preceding a 4th tone.

- 个 yi²ge⁴——one (single person or thing)
- 次 yi²ci⁴——one time, once
- 共 yi²gong⁴——all together
- 看 yi²kan⁴——take a look
- 份 yi²fen⁴——one (quota of something, a document or some printed matter)
- 再 yi²zai⁴——time and again, repeatedly
- 切 yi²qie⁴——everything
- 定 yi²ding⁴——certainly, sure
- 去 yi²qu⁴——once one goes, once gone, if goes
- 件 yi²jian⁴——a piece (one plus measure word)
- 类 yi²lei⁴——a (or the same) category, a (or the same) kind
- 下 yi²xia⁴——at once, one time, instantly
- 位 yi²wei⁴——one person
- 路 yi²lu⁴——all along the way (on a journey)

Rule 3. When “yi” precedes any non-4th tone, it is spoken in the 4th tone.

- 听 yi⁴ting¹——as one listens
- 说 yi⁴shuo¹——as one talks/speaks/says
- 想 yi⁴xiang³——as one thinks
- 来 yi⁴lai²——as one comes, upon one’s arrival
- 走 yi⁴zou³——as one goes/leaves
- 读 yi⁴du²——as one reads
- 一般 yi⁴ban¹——generally, usually, on average
Rule 4. When “yi” falls in between a repetition of the 2nd tone, it is changed to the 4th tone. In this case, the repeated one tends to change into a light tone, but not necessarily.

- 读一读 du² yi4du² —— read (for a while)
- 学一学 xue² yi4xue² —— study, learn (for a while)
- 玩一玩 wan² yi4wan² —— play (for a while)
- 尝一尝 chang² yi4chang² —— have a taste (as a try)
- 谈一谈 tan² yi4tan² —— talk about, discuss (for a time)
- 聊一聊 liao² yi4liao² —— chat (for a time)

Rule 5. The least-effort principle: When “yi” falls in between a non-2nd tone repetition, it is influenced by the repetition and usually sounds like a light tone or a weakened 4th tone. However, in a 3rd tone repetition, it would sound more like a (weak) 4th tone. The only principle is to connect the phrase naturally with ease. Therefore, the tone of “yi” is left unmarked in the following.

- 听一听 ting¹ yiting¹ —— listen for a while
- 说一说 shuo¹ yishuo¹ —— give an account, try to say it
- 写一写 xie³ yixie³ —— write for a while, or try to write
- 练一练 lian⁴ yilian⁴ —— have an exercise, drill
- 看一看 kan⁴ yikan⁴ —— have a look
- 想一想 xiang³ yixiang³ —— give a thought
- 试一试 shi⁴ yishi⁴ —— have a try
- 做一做 zuo⁴ yizuo⁴ —— make, do
- 坐一坐 zuo⁴ yizuo⁴ —— sit for a while
- 走一走 zou³ yizou⁴ —— take some time to walk or go around

Special Notes: This verbal structure with “yi” repetition is different from the single verb character in that it gives a nuance of meaning that can be understood as “for the time being”, “for a while, “take a little time to do it”, or the like, indicating an informal manner. However, in direct repetition without “yi”, the second syllable is changed to the light tone (refer to stress contrast change in the previous part).
Negation “Bu” Change

Rule 1: The word “bu” (不, no/not) is in the 4th tone, but when followed by another 4th tone, it becomes the 2nd tone.

- 不是 bu²shi⁴——no/not, wrong
- 不对 bu²dui⁴——not correct/right
- 不错 bu²cuo⁴——not wrong, correct
- 不在 bu²zai⁴——not in, not here (in context)
- 不再 bu²zai⁴——no more, not again
- 不太 bu²taï⁴——not too..., not very...
- 不会 bu²hui⁴——not able, don’t know how, will not
- 不到 bu²dao⁴——not (up) to; don’t go to
- 不去 bu²qu⁴——do not go (to a place)
- 不看 bu²kan⁴——do not look/see

Rule 2: “bu” (不, no/not) between a repetition tends to be a weakened and so sounds like a light tone, but it can be influenced by the tone of the repeated word, and its actual tone depends on the least effort in the natural flow of speech. So, their tones are not marked in the following short questions.

- 是不是 shi⁴bushi⁴——Yes or No? Isn’t it?
- 好不好 hao³buhao⁴——Good or Not? Ok?
- 对不对 dui⁴budui⁴——Right or Wrong? Is it Right?
- 行不行 xing³buxing²——Ok or Not?
- 在不在 zai⁴buzai⁴——In or Not? (Be) There or Not?
- 来不来 lai²bulai²——Come or Not?
- 去不去 qu⁴buqu⁴——Go or Not?
- 学不学 xue²buxue²——Learn or Not?
- 讲不讲 jiang³bujiang³——Speak or Not?
- 听不听 ting¹buting¹——Listen or Not?
- 说不说 shuo¹bushuo¹——Say (speak) or Not?

Special Notes: When the verb is meant to be in the perfect aspect, the character “没” (mei) is used in this structure instead of “不”, but this usually doesn’t apply to those that are not action verbs.
Light Tone Suffix in Orientation Words

The tone of a character serving as the suffix of a word is usually changed to the light tone. This is in accordance to the stress contrast principle and can be best illustrated by the suffixes in orientation words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>前 qian2</td>
<td>面 mian4</td>
<td>“前” means “(in) front”, “forward”, “before”; the literal meanings of “面”, “部”, “边” and “方” are respectively “face (aspect)”, “part”, “side”, and “square”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>后 hou4</td>
<td>部 bu4</td>
<td>“后” means “back”, “rear”. “上, 下, 左, 右” respectively refer to “up/above, down/below, left, right”. “东, 西, 南, 北” respectively refer to “east, west, south, north”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>上 shang4</td>
<td>边 bian1</td>
<td>(All of the above are actually read in the light tone in the words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下 xia4</td>
<td>方 fang1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>左 zuo3</td>
<td>右 hou4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>东 dong1</td>
<td>西 xi1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>南 nan2</td>
<td>北 bei3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>里 li3</td>
<td>面</td>
<td>“里” and “外” respectively means “inside, internal/interior” and “outside, external/exterior”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>外 wai4</td>
<td>边</td>
<td>头 tou2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>外 wai4</td>
<td>部</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>内 nei3</td>
<td>面</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>背 bei4</td>
<td>部</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中 zhong1</td>
<td>部间</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special Notes:
1) For “左” (left) and “右” (right), the suffix 手 (shou3, meaning the hand) can also be used.
2) No suffixes are used for “内” other than “部”.
3) “后面” a synonym, is a special case and so the rule doesn’t apply.
4) “中方”, which means “the Chinese part”, is not a localizer.

In spite of the “natural changes” so far exemplified, the tone sandhi phenomena are on the whole limited in number. They can be simply learned by imitation of Mandarin native speakers’ speech. However, what the learner should bear in mind
is that many changes of the tones are largely decided by the phonological context and sometimes by the relative importance of a syllable’s meaning. The syllable (or character) that is stressed according to its relatively emphasized meaning would often keep its original tone only if it does not become difficult to say under the influence of other tones in the context. Therefore, the overall principle of tone change may be summarized as “context determined” and “least effort”.

**Summary**

The change of tones in Chinese words and sentences seem to be extremely difficult for beginners whose native language is non-tonal, but it may not be so as a matter of fact, because many such changes will come naturally in the flow of a multi-syllable word or phrase if it is to be pronounced with the least effort. For instance, the most frequently observed change of the first syllable (character) of a combination with third-tone repetition is simply hard to avoid, for otherwise there would be a long pause, so as to separate the word (repetition) and cut the natural flow.

On the other hand, understanding the meaning of some basic Chinese words can also help to make learning easy. For example, if the learner knows that a two-character word is formed by a root and a suffix, he or she will find it natural and necessary to apply the stress contrast rule and change the suffix to the light tone.
CHAPTER FOUR

CHINESE WORDS AND PHRASES

Word Structures

One of the most distinctive features of Mandarin Chinese is the complex relation between the morpheme (the smallest language unit carrying meaning), character, word, and phrase. For one thing, a Chinese morpheme is usually represented in one character (or one syllable) which may be a word itself or just a part of a word. That is to say: a word may consist of one, two, or more characters; and although a word can usually be decomposed into its components or basic elements, there are cases in which several characters are taken together as one morpheme that refuses analysis of its constructs. The special case of one morpheme in more than one character is more often seen in such special terms as names of places and people, loaned words from other languages, and colloquial words that have come into use in standard Mandarin Putonghua.

Except for the above special cases, most Chinese morphemes are single syllables that correspond to characters in number. In terms of word formation, Modern Chinese has many more disyllabic words (or words made up of two characters) than Classic Chinese, so much so that the old conception of Chinese as a “monosyllabic language” is now regarded as mistaken. For this reason, it is important to know that there is a difference between a Chinese character or morpheme (zi 4 字) and word (ci 2 词), with the possibility that a certain number of characters or morphemes may well represent a different number of words. The great number of Chinese words that are composed of two, three, four or even more characters may make the language seemingly formidable to a beginner, because all words, regardless of how many characters are contained in each, are not separated by spaces in the written text! However, one should not be intimidated by this. The fact is, if you have only learned the most basic characters, which will not exceed a few hundred, it will be fairly easy to tell which characters can be considered as words, because the limited number of
basic words or characters are used at an extremely high frequency and can function as markers of division.

There are certainly different perspectives in the analysis of Chinese words, as well as the standards for classifying them. In terms of the form and structure, we can largely classify them into five categories: 1) single-morpheme words of one character, 2) single-morpheme words of two or more characters, 3) words of repeated characters, 4) affixed words, and 5) compound words. And according to their differences in parts of speech or grammatical functions, they can be classified into much more detailed categories, with partial similarities to those in English and some distinctive features of their own.

1. Single-Morpheme Words of One Character

Compared with disyllabic (or two-character) words, there are only a small number of single-morpheme words of one character in Modern Chinese. However, some of these words play an essential role in the structure of the language and should be learned at the very outset of the course. The following is a list of such examples.


是 shì⁴
an affirmative function word used between the subject and its complement of a sentence. The basic meaning is “yes”, “right”. It is related with the English copula BE but is different in that it is not as indispensable as the English link verb unless when making an assertion, carrying a strong affirmative meaning or making an emphasis.

我是 shì⁴ wǒ³  It IS me.
我是老师。wǒ³ shì⁴ láo³ shī¹ I’m a teacher.
我是在这儿。wǒ³ shì⁴ zài⁴ zhè⁴ I AM here.
Compare: 我在这儿。I’m here.

不 bù⁴
an adverb used for negation, meaning “not” or “no”.
不是 bù³ shì⁴, No; It’s not right; It’s not that.
不是我 bù² shì⁴ wǒ³, It’s not me.
(Note: In “bù² shì⁴”, the second tone of “bù” is an affected change from the original fourth tone.)

在 zài⁴
a Chinese function word like the English prepositions “in”, “at”, “on”, etc., used for designating time, place or a scope. It may also be used as a verb, meaning “exist (in)”, “alive”, “be located (in, at, on)” etc. Besides, it can also serve as a function word making the continuous tense. For example,

你在哪儿? nǐ³ zài⁴ nàr³? Where are you?
——我在家。wǒ³ zài⁴ jiā¹ I’m in my home.
——我在办公室。wǒ³ zài⁴ bàn⁴ gōng¹ shì⁴ I’m in (the) office.
你在干什么? nǐ³ zài⁴ gàn⁴ shén² méi²? What are you doing?
——我在吃饭。wǒ³ zài⁴ chī¹ fàn⁴ I’m eating.

有 yǒu³
the Chinese possessive and existential verb that is equivalent to the English “have” and “there is”, but without changes in form.

我有个女儿。wǒ³ yǒu³ ge⁴ nǚ¹ rě² I have a daughter.
楼里有洗手间。lóu² lǐ³ yǒu³ xǐ¹ shǒu¹ jiān¹ There is a washroom in the building.

的 de (in the light tone)
called the possessive de, a functional particle serving several functions:

1) as a possessive link word as the English “of”, but unlike English,
it is placed before the possessed; 2) as a suffix that marks the proceeding word as a modifier; 3) for emphasis or affirmation.

**Special Notes:** this same word may also be pronounced “di⁴”, meaning “target” or “goal”. This usage is mainly found in Classic Chinese or idiomatical expressions that come from classical texts. For example, “目的” (mu⁴di⁴), literally the “eye target”, means the purpose or intention of something.

你的目的是什么? Ni³ de mu⁴di⁴ shi⁴ shen²me?
What’s your purpose/intention? (What are you up to?)

**地 de (in the light tone)**
called “the adverbial de”, a functional particle used after an adjective to make it function as an adverb before the verb or verb phrase, as the English “-ly” changes an adjective into an adverb.

他默默地走了。Ta¹mo⁴mo⁴de zou³le He silently left.
他生气地说。Ta¹sheng¹qi¹de shuo¹ He said angrily.

**Special Notes:** this same character may also be pronounced “di⁴”, and if so, it will have several meanings, such as “earth”, “land” or “ground”. For instance, 地主 (di⁴zhu³, landowner, landlord), 房地产 (fang²di⁴chan³, real estate), 地价 (di⁴jia⁴, price of land).

**得 de (in the light tone)**
called “the complement de”, a functional particle used before an adjective word or phrase to make it serve as a complement.

我起床很早。Wo²qi³chuang² hen²zao³ I get up very early.
学生把地板拖得很干净。Xue²sheng¹ ba³ di³ban³ tuo¹de hen³ gan¹jing⁴
The students mopped the floor very clean.
你汉语讲得很好。Ni³ han⁴yu³ jiang³de hen² hao³
You speak Chinese very well.

**Special Notes:** this same character may also be pronounced in the second tone (de²), and if so, it will mean “get”, “obtain” or “acquire”. For instance, 得到 (de²dao⁴, obtain), 取得 (qu³de², achieve, get), 赢得 (ying⁴de², win).

**和 he²**
a connective used to link two nouns or nominal phrases, of which a more formal written alternative is “与” (yu³).
我和他是同事。Wo³ he² ta¹ shi⁴ tong² shi⁴. He and I are colleagues.

你有笔和纸吗？Ni³ you² bi³ he² zhi³ ma¹? Do you have a pen and paper?

啥 sha²
a pronoun functioning as the English “what” but used more informally, especially in spoken Chinese in contrast to the formal two-character word “什么”(shen² me).

你干啥? Ni³ gan⁴ sha²? What do you (want to) do? (What are you up to?)

这是啥? Zhe⁴ shi⁴ sha²? What is this?

咋 za³
a pronoun mainly functioning as the English “how” but can also mean “why”, used informally in colloquial spoken Chinese as an alternative to the formal words “如何”(ru² he²), “怎么”(zen³ me) or “怎 (么) 样”(zen³ me yang⁴).

咋办? Za³ ban⁴? How (should it be done)?

他咋没来? Ta¹ za³ mei² lai²? Why hasn’t he come?

为 wei⁴
a preposition similar in effect to the English “for…”, “for the purpose (reason)…”, “for the sake of…” or “(in order) to…”. It is often used with the auxiliary “了” following it.

他为学汉语来中国。Ta¹ wei⁴ xue² han⁴ yu¹ lai² zhong¹ guo²
He comes to China to learn Chinese.

为了你, 她放弃了工作。Wei⁴ le ni³, ta¹ fang⁴ qi⁴ le gong¹ zuo⁴
For your sake, she has given up her job.

要 yao⁴
a basic verb or modal verb with quite a few possible meanings, including “will, want, need, demand, ask (to do), be asked to, have to”, etc., depending on the specific context.

我要工作。Wo³ yao⁴ gong¹ zuo⁴
I want a job (I want to work/I have to work)

老板要我会后留下。Lao² ban³ yao⁴ wo³ hui² hou⁴ liu² xia⁴
The boss asks (asked) me to stay after the meeting.

经理要出国。Jing¹ li³ yao⁴ chu¹ guo²
The manager will go abroad.
用 yong⁴
a basic word serving both the functions of a verb and preposition, meaning “use”, “by means of…”, “with…(as a tool)”.
我能用筷子吃饭。wo³ nen² yong⁴ kuai⁴ zi chfan⁴
I can use chopsticks to eat. (I can eat with chopsticks.)
请用汉语说。qing³ yong⁴ han⁴ yu³ shuo¹
Please say it (speak) in Chinese.

zhong¹
a spatial-temporal word meaning “middle”, “center”, “in the middle/center”, “inside”, or “in between”. It is often used in location with “在” to form the structure “在...中”. When it is used before a word that suggests an action or process, it serves as a continuous tense mark.
鱼在水中游。yu² zai⁴ shui³ zhong¹ you²
Fish swim in water.
营业中, 欢迎。ying² ye⁴ zhong¹, huan¹ ying²
In Business. Welcome.

2. Single-Morpheme Words of More than One Characters

The single-morpheme words of more than one character all have fixed meanings that cannot be analyzed in terms of the relation between their component characters. These words have three major origins: 1) colloquialism or dialect, 2) loan words from foreign or ethnic languages; 3) proper names. The following are some examples.

Group I: Words of colloquialism or dialects

什么 shen² me, (interrogative word) “what”
仿佛 fang³ fu², (adverb) “(looks) as if”, “seem”, “appear (to be)”
犹豫 you³ yu⁴, (verb) hesitate
荒唐 huang¹ tang², (adjective) absurd, unreasonable
啰嗦 luo¹ suo, Circumlocution or unnecessary repetition in one’s speech
疙瘩 Ge¹ da, a knot, a lump (especially grown on the skin)
Chinese Words and Phrases

Group II: Loan words from foreign or ethnic languages

巧克力 Qiao³ke¹li⁴, chocolate
肯德基 Ken³de²ji¹, KFC
麦当劳 Mai⁴dang¹lao², McDonald
可口可乐 Ke³kou³ke³le⁴ (changed to Ke²kou³ke³le⁴), coke cola
雪碧 xue²bi⁴, Sprite (drink)
咖啡 ka¹fei¹, coffee
葡萄 Pu²tao, grape

Group III: Proper names

奥巴马 Ao⁴ba¹ma³, Obama
克林顿 Ke⁴lin²dun⁴, Clinton (name of former US president)
西雅图 Xi¹ya³tu², Seattle
纽约 Niu³yue¹, New York
乌鲁木齐 Wu¹lu³mu⁴qi², Urumqi
香格里拉 Xiang¹ge²li³la¹, Shangri-La

3. Words of Character Repetition

A. Nouns

哥哥 ge¹ge, elder brother
个个 ge⁴ge⁴, each one, everybody
人人 ren²ren², every person
一一 yi¹yi¹, each one, one by one
家家 jia¹jia¹, every household/family
家家户户 jia¹hu²hu², every household/house
山山水水 shan¹shan¹shui²shui³, every mountain/hill and river/lake, the landscape of mountains and waters

B. Adjectives

红红 hong²hong², reddish, pinkish, rather red or pink
花花绿绿 hua¹hua¹lv⁴lv⁴, colorful, of various colors
高高 gao¹gao¹, fairly high, rather tall
高高低低 gao¹gao¹di¹di¹, high or low, of various height
大大小小 da⁴da⁴xiao²xiao³, of various sizes, big and small
长长短短  chuang²chuang²duan²duan³, of various lengths, long and short
高高兴兴  gao¹gao¹xing⁴xing⁴, very happy, very delightful
漂漂亮亮  piao⁴piao⁴liang⁴liang⁴, very pretty or beautiful
干干净净  gan¹gan¹jing⁴jing⁴, very clear
清清楚楚  qing¹qing¹chu²chu³, very clear, transparent, very obvious

C. Verbs

来来往往  lai²lai²wang²wang³, come and go very frequently or incessantly
进进出出  jin⁴jin⁴chu¹chu¹, come in and go out frequently or incessantly
吃吃喝喝  chi¹chi¹he¹he¹, indulge in eating and drinking, carouse
打打闹闹  da³da³nao⁴nao⁴, fight in jest or for fun; boisterous; fight with each other now and then
考虑考虑  kao³lv⁴kao³lv⁴, (take time to) consider, give some thought to
研究研究  yan²jiu¹yan²jiu¹, (take time to) study, give some thought to
学习学习  xue²xi²xue²xi², (take time to) study or learn
休息休息  xiu¹xixiu¹xi, (take some time to) have a rest

"people mountain people sea"
D. Adverbs

常常 chang²chang², often, time and time
日日夜夜 ri³ri³ye⁴ye⁴, every day and night
刚刚 gang¹gang¹, (a temporal adverb) just (have done or begin to do something)
渐渐 jian³jian⁴, gradually, bit by bit
慢慢 man⁴man⁴, slowly, gradually
稳稳 wen³wen³, firmly, steadily
深深 shen¹shen¹, deeply
牢牢 lao²lao², tightly or firm and fast
认认真真 ren⁴ren⁴zhen¹zhen¹, very seriously or carefully
上上下下 shang⁴shang⁴xia⁴xia⁴, upside and downside, high and low

4. Affixed Words

Suffixed Words

我们 wo³men, we/us
儿子 er²zi, son
胖子 pang⁴zi, a fat person
筷子 kuai³zi, chopsticks
帽子 mao⁴zi, hat, cap
鞋子 xie²zi, shoe(s)
狮子 shi¹zi, lion
木头 mu⁴tou, a chunk of wood
石头 shi⁴tou, a stone

Prefixed Words

阿哥 a¹ge¹, (elder) brother (especially used for endearment)
阿妹 a¹mei⁴, (younger) sister (especially used for endearment)
老大 lao³da⁴, the eldest child (usually boy), the head of a group, boss
老二 lao³er⁴, the second child (usually boy), the second boss
老爷 lao³ye², lord, master, patron of a group
老王 lao³wang², (literally) Old Wang, in which Wang is a surname and Lao is used to show respect to the senior
小李 xiao³li², (literally) Little Li, in which Li is a surname and Xiao is used to show affection to the young
第一 di⁴yi¹, the first, primary
第二 di⁴er⁴, the second
5. Compound Words

In comparison with other kinds of words, compound words probably comprise the largest part of the Chinese vocabulary and also contain the longest words in the language. However, they are not as difficult to learn as may be expected because their meanings can often be deduced from their component characters. A very apparent problem with Chinese compound words is that the division line between them as separate words is often hard to draw. Though Chinese grammaticians have set up some standards for separating words from word groups, lexicographers nevertheless often list them together as word entries in dictionaries. What should be known to a learner of Chinese is the different ways of making up a compound word, such as A) coordination, B) subordination, C) structuring, and E) abbreviation. These are exemplified in the following.

A) Coordination

A word with two characters that have similar or related meanings, they are considered to be formed through coordinated combination. There are three kinds of such a combination:

**Synonym Coordination:**

**Verbs of Synonym Coordination**

- 开始 kai¹shi³, start, begin
- 休息 xiu¹xi⁴, (take) a rest
- 喜欢 xi³huan¹, be fund of, like, prefer
- 想要 xiang³yao⁴, want, desire
- 打算 da³suan⁴, intend, plan
- 计算 ji⁴suan⁴, calculate
- 计划 ji⁴hua⁴, make a plan (for)
- 制造 zhi¹zao⁴, manufacture, make

**Nouns of Synonym Coordination**

- 意义 yi⁴yi⁴, significance, meaning
- 声音 sheng¹yin¹, voice, sound
- 历史 li³shi³, history
- 群众 qun²zhong⁴, the common people, the masses
- 人民 ren²min², the people (of a country)
Adjectives of Synonym Coordination

根本 gen¹ben³, the essential, root
新鲜 xin¹xian¹, new and fresh
完整 wan²zheng³, wholly, complete
重要 zhong⁴yao⁴, important
健康 jian⁴kang¹, health, healthy
奇怪 qi²guai⁴, bizarre, strange, odd
缓慢 huan³man⁴, slow and gradual

Adverbs of Synonym Coordination

立即 li³ji⁴, immediately, at once
迅速 xun⁴su⁴, very quickly
私自 zi⁴si¹, in private, without permission of the boss or leader
比较 bi³jiao⁴, comparatively
稍微 shao¹wei¹, slightly, a little

Antonym Coordination

大小 da⁴xiao³, size
多少 du⁴shao³, number, amount
开关 kai¹guan¹, switch
东西 dong¹xi, anything that may be bought, sold or used. However, if the second character is pronounced in the original first tone instead of the light tone, it literally means “east and west”.
矛盾 mao²dun⁴, contradiction or dilemma (deduced from the literal meaning of “spear and shield”)
是非 shi⁴fei¹, a matter of right or wrong, something in dispute or gossip
买卖 mai³mai⁴, buy and sell, trade, commercial business, business transaction
反正 fan³zheng⁴, upside or downside, after all, anyway
左右 zuo³you⁴, left and right, approximately, about,
前后 qian³hou⁴, before and after, about (the time of)
早晚 zao³wan³, morning and evening, sooner/earlier or later
Parallel Coordination

千里 qian¹ wan⁴, an adverb that
刚才 gang¹ cai², a short time ago, just now
高大 gao¹ da⁴, high and great, towering, (of a person) tall
安静 an¹ jing⁴, peaceful and quiet, silent
热闹 re⁴ nao⁴, lively and bustling, full of activities
简易 jian³ yi⁴, simple and easy
可能 ke³ neng², perhaps, maybe, possibly
音乐 yin¹ yue⁴, music
老大难 lao² da⁴ nan², old big and difficult (problem)

B) Subordination

When the word has one character holding the central meaning while another or more are attached to make it more specific, concrete or exact, the word is made up by subordination. Long or short, the words in this category have either a one-to-one relation or multiple relations. Although it is sometimes difficult to draw a clear-cut line between words and word groups, it is obvious that a great number of Chinese words are composed of two and three characters, while most words of four characters or more are called phrases or word groups.

One-To-One Subordination

A great number of Chinese words are formed with two characters, with one subordinated in meaning to the other.

手机 shou³ ji¹, mobile phone, cell phone
火车 huo³ che¹, locomotive train
白酒 bai² jiu³, strong spirit, high-alcohol drink
食物 shi² wu², food, edibles
新房 xin¹ fang², new house (apartment)
鲜红 xian¹ hong³, bright red, scarlet red
最初 zui¹ chu¹, initial(ly), at the very beginning
最后 zui⁴ hou⁴, ultimately, at last, in the end
Multiple-Character subordination

Since most Chinese characters can also stand as words, the distinction between words and word groups is often not clear-cut. However, regardless of this fuzziness of distinction, the rules of composition are the same. For instance, in three-character words, the first word of one or two characters is usually subordinate to the second “central” word or character. In the following subordinate relations, the organization is either of 1 plus 2 characters or 2 plus 1 characters.

One plus two characters:

- 新中国 xin¹ zhong¹ guo², New China (usually referring to PRC)
- 大家庭 da⁴ jia¹ ting², big family
- 老教授 lao³ jiao⁴ shou⁴, old (senior) professor
- 三居室 san¹ yu¹ shi⁴, three-room apartment/suite
- 红房子 hong² fang² zi, red house
- 小姑娘 xiao³ gu¹ niang, little girl, young girl

Two plus one characters:

- 会议室 hui⁴ yi⁴ shi⁴, conference room
- 接待室 jie¹ dai¹shi⁴, reception room
- 询问处 xun² wen⁴ chu⁴, information room, place for inquiry
- 火车站 huo² che¹ zhan⁴, train station
- 图书馆 tu² shu¹ guan³, library
- 红绿灯 hong² lv³ deng¹, traffic lights
- 中文书 zhong¹ wen² shu¹, Chinese book
- 计算机 ji¹ suan¹ ji¹, computer

C) Structuring

When the component characters in the word are grammatically structured as in a sentence, it is formed by way of structuring. That is to say, the grammatical relations in the structure are similar to those in sentences and may be classified into five kinds in accordance, namely the subject-predicate, verb-object, verb-compliment, adverb-verb and adverb-adjective.
Subject-Predicate Structuring

In this group, the first component character is a noun and what follows may be a verb or an adjective. There may also be three-character words in the structure of Subject + Verb + Object or that of Subject + Verb + Complement. Some of these words can stand as sentences when used independently.

人造 ren²zao⁴, man-made, artificial
天然 tian¹ran², natural, naturally formed
地震 di⁴zheng⁴, earthquake
光照 guang¹zhao⁴, light
日晒 ri⁴shai⁴, sun-tan(ned)
年轻 nian²qing¹, young
头痛 tou²tong², headache
胆小 dan³xiao³, timid in disposition

Verb-Object Structuring

In Chinese, a verb and its object may also be taken together as a word.

吃饭 chi¹fan⁴, eat the meal
喝茶 he¹cha², drinking tea, a tea gathering
读书 du²shu¹, read
写字 xie³zi⁴, write
说话 shuo¹hua⁴, speak, talk
弹琴 tan²qin², play(ing) a stringed instrument, like the Guqin zither, piano, etc.
打字 da³zi⁴, typing
上班 shang³ban¹, go(ing) to work, (go) on a shift at work
下课 xia⁴ke⁴, dismiss a class, say that a class is over
见面 jian⁴mian⁴, meet (a person)

Verb-Complement Structuring

The complement of a verb adds additional meaning to it, such as the result or effect, orientation/direction, tense, etc. This kind of structure can usually be taken in whole as a verb.
站住 zhan⁴zhu⁴, stand still
进来 jin⁴lai², come in
出去 chu¹qu⁴, go out
收到 shou¹dao⁴, have received
发出 fa¹chu¹, send out, have sent out
穿过 chuan¹guo⁴, go through, piece through
飞起 fei¹qi³, fly up
离开 li²kai¹, go away, leave
坐下 zuo⁴xia², sit down, be seated
学会 xue²hui⁴, learn (well), become capable of
听懂 ting⁴dong³, hear and understand
想起 xiang²qi³, think of, recollect, remember
提高 ti³gao¹, raise up, heighten, improve

**Adverb-Verb Structuring**

Since Chinese does not have inflexion in the form of words to mark the functional change, the difference between adverbs and adjectives has to be determined by whether the modified word is a verb itself. If it is a verb, the preceding modifier is of course understood to be adverb, even if it is originally defined as an adjective. This is the case with the following:

前进 qian²jin⁴, advance, charge forward
快来 kuai⁴lai², come quickly
远走 yuan³zou³, going on a long journey, go far away
高飞 gao¹fei¹, fly high up
深入 shen¹ru⁴, go deep into, explore the inner part of
实行 shi²xing², put in practice, bring into effect

**Adverb-Adjective Structuring**

When there is a verbal or adjectival character modified by another character, the structure can be considered as belonging to this category. The modifying character in front is then used to function as an adverb regardless of its original part of speech. This kind of structuring can also be considered as subordination from another perspective (see above).

非常 fei¹chang², extraordinarily, extremely
最高 zuì³gao⁴, highest, of ultimate height
极大 ji²da⁴, extremely great (large)
不良 bu'liang², not good, bad
较少 jiao⁴shao³, comparatively few, fewer
很多 hen³duo¹, very much or of very great number
太少 tai⁴shao³, too little or too few

D) Abbreviation

Direct Shortcutting
清华——清华大学 qing¹huá²da⁴xué², Tsinghua University
复旦——复旦大学 fu⁴dan⁴da⁴xué², Fudan University
肯德基——肯德基炸鸡 ken³de²ji¹zha²ji¹, KFC
别克——别克汽车 bie²ke⁴qi⁴che¹, Buick (brand of automobile)

Acronym Making
中共——中国共产党 zhòng¹guó²gōng⁴chǎn²dǎng³, The Communist Party of China
北大——北京大学 bei³jīng¹da⁴xué², Peking (Beijing) University
外文系——外国语言文学系 wài guó yǔ yán²wén²xué²xì⁴, Foreign Language Department
科技——科学技术 ke¹xué²ji¹shì⁴, science and technology
文教——文化教育 wén²huà⁴jiào⁴yù⁴, culture and education

Content Words and Function Words

As in other languages, there are content words and function words in Chinese, respectively referring to those words that have actual references and meanings by themselves, and those that only play a complementary or structural role but don’t carry any substantial and concrete meaning. The former include all nouns and pronouns, verbs, adjectives, numerals, and words denoting time and space, while the latter can refer to prepositions, connectives auxiliaries, and some adverbs. However, the fact that Chinese does not have morphological inflection like Indo-European languages makes it difficult to classify the part of speech that words occupy by using their forms. Then, what is more reasonable is to understand them according to their distinctive structural functions and fields of meaning. All content words are classified into two broad categories, namely substantive words and predicate words, of which the latter is further divided into different groups. The accepted classification is given in the following table.
**Substantive Words**

Substantive words in Chinese may also be called nominal words because they all point to something material or conceptual, and not to some process, action or change. In this sense, they resemble English nouns or noun phrases in nature and are determined by their structural function as the subject or object of a sentence. Under this general term of substantive words, there are various subcategories adopted by different grammaticians, resulting from different points of view. Here, we would like to make the matter simple and more readily understandable to learners by classifying substantive words into five kinds, which are 1) Common Nouns; 2) Locatives (or Locative Nouns); 3) Spatial-Temporal Addictives; 4) Number-Measure Words; and 5) Pronouns. We will provide some examples for each subcategory in the following:

**1. Common Nouns**

Common nouns refer to materials, animals, plants, people or things as well as concepts.

- 人 ren², man, person, people, human being
- 茶叶 cha²ye⁴, tea leaves
Common nouns in Chinese are very similar to their English counterparts. They can be countable or uncountable, collective or abstract. They also include proper nouns. The distinctive feature in terms of their grammatical functions is that they can not only serve as the subject and object of the sentence but also as all other functions. They can usually be qualified by a preceding number plus a measure word.

2. Locative Nouns

The Chinese names of places are considered as a special kind of noun because they can perform a different kind of grammatical function.

北京 Bezj1, Beijing (formerly Peking)
西安 Xi1an1, Xi’an
九寨沟 Jiuzhai4gou1, Jiuzhai Valley
人民路 Ren2min2lu4, Renmin Road
中关村 Zhong1guan1cun1, Zhong Guan Cun
天安门广场 Tian3an1men2 Guang3chang3, Tiananmen Square
郑州火车站 Zheng4zhou1huo3che1zhan4, Zhengzhou railway station

What deserves special attention is that locative nouns may also be “borrowed” from other nouns which function as a place in the context. In this case, we call them temporary or functional locatives. The most distinctive feature of locative nouns is not merely the capitalized initial letter in the place name, but the possibility of their collocations with certain words that make it clear they are referring to places. In particular, these locative nouns can be replaced by “这里 (zhe4li)” or “那里 (na4li)” in declarative sentences and by “哪里 (na3li)” in interrogative sentences (referring respectively to “here”, “there” and “where”). In addition, they can also be preceded by place-related prepositions like “在 (zai4)”, “到
(dao⁴”), and “往 (wang³)”. So, in the following examples, the underlined common nouns are considered to be locatives in terms of their functions.

**Examples of Temporary Locative Nouns**

你在哪里？Ni³ zai⁴ na³li³? Where are you?
——我在邮局。Wo³ zai⁴ you⁵ju³. I’m in the post office.

他去哪里？Ta¹ qu⁴ na³li³? Where is he going?
——他到公司。Ta¹ qu⁴ gong¹si¹. He is going to the company.

我在公交车上 Wo³ zai⁴ gong¹jiao¹che¹shang⁴ I’m on the bus.

公交车去哪里？Gong¹jiao¹che¹ wang³ na³li³ qu⁴? Where is the bus going?
——去火车站。Wang³huo³che¹zhan⁴. To the railway station.

洗手间在哪里？Xi³shou¹jian¹ zai⁴ na³li³? Where is the washroom?
——在那里。Zai⁴ na³li³. Over there.

**3. Spatial-Temporal Nouns: Examples**

饭后 fan⁴hou⁴, after the meal
房前 fang²qian², in the front of the house, in front of the house
桌上 zhou¹shang⁴, on the desk, on the table
室内 shi³nei³, in the room
门外 men²wai⁴, outside of the door
城南 cheng²nan², southern part of the town
市北 shìběi², northern part of the city
中间 zhōng¹jiān¹, the middle or central part

4. Number-Measure Words

As in many other languages, Chinese numbers can be used directly before a noun as its quantitative modifier. However, it is perhaps more frequently seen that following the number and preceding the noun is a word that functions as the noun’s unit of measure, called the measure word. And the number and the measure word as a set is called number-measure word.

As for measure words, they are applied to nouns that denote objects, people, and actions or processes, or in other words, to “measure” or count them. According to their origins of formation, these words can be classified largely into three types: standard, custom and temporary.

Standard Measure Words

The measure words under this caption refer to units of measure that are established as a national or international standard. The most frequently used are as follows:

元 yuan² basic unit of RMB
角 jiǎo³ a 10th of one 元
尺 chǐ³ the Chinese measure for length, 1/3 of a meter
寸 cùn⁴ a 10th of one 尺
丈 zhāng⁴ a unit of length (31/3 meters)
米 mǐ³ meter
厘米 lǐ²mǐ³ centimeter
里 lǐ³ the Chinese mile (half a kilometer)
公里 gōng¹lǐ³ kilometer
亩 mǔ³ a unit of area (0.0667 hectares)
公顷 gōng¹qǐng³ hectares
公斤 gōng¹jīn¹ kilogram
分 fēn¹ minute
秒 miǎo³ second

There are also occasions when two standard measure words are used together to form a compound measure word for measuring something that contains two correlated factors, such as the following:
Custom Measure Words

Custom measure words are generally related to the shape or some characteristic of the objects, people or actions to which they are applied, but on the whole, they are to a great extent arbitrary and conventionally set, without too much rationale.

The more frequently seen measure words of this kind are listed as follows, along with their illustrative usages.

A. For People

个 ge⁴, the most frequently used measure word for both people and things considered as individuals

一个人 yi¹ ge⁴ ren², one person

三个姑娘 san¹ ge⁴ gu¹ niang, three girls

名 ming², for counting people in formal situations such as meetings or classes

一名同学 yi¹ ming² tong² xue², one classmate

位 wei⁴ for counting people in formal situations, like “名”, but showing more respect

五位领导 wu³ wei⁴ ling³ dao³, five leaders

Special Notes: “位” and “名” are used only for titles or professions and not directly before “人”, which requires the measure word “个”.

B. For objects

件 jian⁴ objects or business, like the English “piece”

一件礼物 yi¹ jian⁴ li³ wu⁴, one gift

一件事 yi¹ jian⁴ shi⁴, a piece of work, a thing (to do or tell)

座 zuo⁴ for things standing high or sitting still

一座山 yi¹ zuo⁴ shan¹, one mountain
一 座 楼 房 yi¹ zuo⁴ lou² fang², one (storey) building
台 tai⁴ things to be mounted or installed, or with a stage
— 台 电 视 yi¹ tai² dian⁴ shi⁴, one TV set
— 台 戏 yi¹ tai² xi⁴, an opera (being or to be staged)
把 ba³, for counting something with a handle or easily taken by hand
— 把 刀 yi¹ ba³ dao¹, a knife
— 把 扇 子 yi¹ ba³ shan⁴ zi, a hand fan
d 打 tiao², for something long in shape
— 条 裤 子 yi¹ tiao² ku⁴ zi, a pair of trousers
本 ben³ for a copy of a book
— 本 书 yi¹ ben³ shu¹, a book
— 本 杂 志 yi¹ ben³ za² zhi⁴, a magazine
张 zhang¹ for something thin and can be spread out
— 张 纸 yi¹ zhang¹ zhi³, a sheet/piece of paper
— 张 照 片 yi¹ zhang¹ zhao⁴ pian¹, a (photographic) picture
片 pian⁴, for something that can be seen as spread out on a surface
— 片 水 yi¹ pian⁴ shui³, a body of water
— 片 树 叶 yi¹ pian⁴ shu¹ ye¹, a leaf
篇 pian¹ for something that can be seen as a piece of texture
— 篇 文 章 yi¹ pian¹ wen² zhang¹, an article (/a text of article)
根 gen¹ for something thin and long
— 根 蜡 烛 yi¹ gen¹ la⁴ zhu², a candle
— 根 铁 丝 yi¹ gen¹ tie³ si¹, a length of iron wire
架 jia¹ for something that has a frame or can been seen as having one,
— 架 飞 机 yi¹ jia⁴ fei¹ ji¹, an aircraft
只 zhi¹ for a small animal, especially birds
— 只 鸟 liang³ zhi¹ niao³, two birds
— 只 狗 yi¹ zhi¹ gou³, a dog
支 zhi¹ for something thin and long
— 支 笔 yi¹ zhi¹ bi³, a pen or writing brush
— 支 香 烟 yi¹ zhi¹ xiang¹ yan¹, a cigarette
头 tou¹ for some animals or beasts
— 头 猪 yi¹ tou² zhu¹, a pig
— 头 牛 yi¹ tou² niu², an ox or cow
— 头 老 虎 yi¹ tou² lao³ hu³, a tiger
棵 ke² for a tree or other plant
— 棵 果 树 yi¹ ke¹ guo³ shu⁴, an apple tree
— 棵 草 yi¹ ke¹ cao³, a blade of grass
颗 ke¹ for a small piece of a solid thing
一顆糖 yi\textsuperscript{1}ke\textsuperscript{1}tang\textsuperscript{2}, a piece of candy or cube of sugar
一顆花生 yi\textsuperscript{1}ke\textsuperscript{1}hua\textsuperscript{1}sheng\textsuperscript{1}, a peanut
粒 li\textsuperscript{4} for a small grain
一粒米饭 yi\textsuperscript{1}li\textsuperscript{4}mi\textsuperscript{3}fan\textsuperscript{4}, a grain of rice
块 kuai\textsuperscript{4} for a cubic, solid piece or a quarter of something
一块蛋糕 yi\textsuperscript{1}kuai\textsuperscript{4}dan\textsuperscript{4}gao\textsuperscript{1}, a piece of cake
朵 duo\textsuperscript{3} for flowers or something comparable to flowers
一朵花 yi\textsuperscript{1}duo\textsuperscript{3}hua\textsuperscript{1}, a flower
盏 zhan\textsuperscript{5} for lamps and lights
一盏灯 yi\textsuperscript{1}zhan\textsuperscript{3}deng\textsuperscript{1}, a lamp, an oil lamp

C. For actions or processes

The custom measure words listed above all apply to objects or people, but there is another kind of measure word that is related to actions or processes, such as the following:

次 ci\textsuperscript{4} for counting the times of an action
做一、两次 zuo\textsuperscript{4}yi\textsuperscript{1}liang\textsuperscript{3}ci\textsuperscript{4}, do something once or twice
遍 bian\textsuperscript{4} for counting an action that may take some time to go through
读一遍 du\textsuperscript{2}yi\textsuperscript{1}bian\textsuperscript{4}, read through once
下 xia\textsuperscript{4} for a short or instant action
看一下 kan\textsuperscript{4} yi\textsuperscript{1}xia\textsuperscript{4}, have a look
打一下 da\textsuperscript{3}yi\textsuperscript{1}xia\textsuperscript{4}, strike (hit) once
回 hui\textsuperscript{2} for an action or process that can have rounds
打一回球 da\textsuperscript{3}yi\textsuperscript{1}hui\textsuperscript{2}qiu\textsuperscript{2}, play a round of ball game
场 chang\textsuperscript{3} for an action that takes a site
一场比赛 yi\textsuperscript{4}chang\textsuperscript{3}bi\textsuperscript{3}sai\textsuperscript{4}, a round of a competition or race
看一场电影 kan\textsuperscript{4} yi\textsuperscript{1}chang\textsuperscript{3}dian\textsuperscript{4}ying\textsuperscript{3}, see a movie
趟 tang\textsuperscript{4} for a walk, trip, visit, etc.
一趟旅游 yi\textsuperscript{1}tang\textsuperscript{4}lv\textsuperscript{3}you\textsuperscript{2}, a tour or travel
去两趟 qu\textsuperscript{4}liang\textsuperscript{3}tang\textsuperscript{4}, go (to a place) twice
番 fan\textsuperscript{1} for an action taking a little time
三番五次 san\textsuperscript{1}fan\textsuperscript{1}wu\textsuperscript{3}ci\textsuperscript{4}, quite a few times
阵 zhen\textsuperscript{4} for a process that goes through periods or spells
一阵锣鼓 yi\textsuperscript{1}zhen\textsuperscript{4}luo\textsuperscript{2}gu\textsuperscript{3}, a spell of gongs and drums
一阵笑声 yi\textsuperscript{1}zhen\textsuperscript{4}xiao\textsuperscript{3}sheng\textsuperscript{1}, a spell of laughter

Measure words are of particular importance in Chinese, for although there are cases where they may be omitted, the more regular practice is to
use them along with the number words and nouns in the general structure: number + measure word + the measured object.

For instance, 一个人 (yī gè rén, one/a person) is used more often than simply 一人. As for some things, the use of measure word is indispensable, such as in “一块蛋糕” and “一瓶酒”.

Measure words in Chinese have three large groups, individual, collective, and category measure words.

According to the way of “measuring”, individual measure words can be classified into three categories: 1) container measure words; 2) standard measure words, and 3) featured measure words. The last category, featured measure words, can have two basic kinds, one for objects or people, and the other for actions or processes.

**Individual Measure Word: Classification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Collective</th>
<th>For “measuring” something with its container as a measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td></td>
<td>For “measuring” something with a standard measure unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Featured</td>
<td></td>
<td>The first kind is for “measuring” objects or people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The second kind is for “measuring” actions or processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container</td>
<td></td>
<td>For “measuring” collective things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td></td>
<td>For “measuring” things with their categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Temporary Measure Words**

Temporary measure words refer to ordinary nouns that are expediently used as measure words according to the way in which the “measured” objects or things exist or their distinctive features. These words may originally refer to containers, or a spots or place, or give some point to the features of the referred noun. We can simply group them into two different subcategories: container-spot measure words and featured measure words.
1) container-spot measure words

This type of measure word is temporarily “borrowed” from nouns that refer to containers containing the objects or the spots where they exist.

- 一/杯/茶 yi¹bei¹cha², a cup of tea
- 一/壶/水 yi¹hu²shui³, a bottle/kettle of water
- 一/锅/饭 yi¹guo¹fan⁴, a (cooking) pot of meal
- 一/瓶/酒 yi¹ping²jiu³, a bottle of wine
- 一/包/烟 yi¹bao¹yan¹, a package of cigarettes
- 一/碗/汤 yi¹wan⁵tang¹, a bowl of soup
- 一/车/货 yi¹che¹huo⁴, a car or truck of goods
- 一/箱/衣/服 yi¹xiang¹yi¹fu, a box of clothes
- 一/间/客/人 yi¹fang²jian¹ke⁴ren², a room of guests
- 一/床/被/褥 yi¹chuang²bei¹ru³, a bed of cushions and quilts
- 一/地/板/书 yi¹di⁴ban³shu¹, a floor of books
- 一/处/好/风/景 yi¹chu¹hao³feng¹jing³, a place of good sights (landscape)

2) Featured measure words

Featured measure words are grouped as an independent kind of the temporary measure words according to the prominent features in the relation between the original nouns used as a measure words and the objects or things being measured.

- 一/手/技/术 yi¹shou³ji¹shu⁴, (a hand of techniques) good skills
- 一/脸/灰/尘 yi¹lian¹hui¹chen², (a face of dust) a face covered with dust
- 一/头/白/发 yi¹tou²bai²fa⁴, (a head of white hair) a head with all white hair
- 一/脚/好/球 yi¹jiao³hao³qiu², (a foot of good ball) a good kick of the football
- 一/口/普通/话 yi¹kou³pu³tong¹hua⁴, (a mouth of Putonghua) speaking Putonghua well
- 一/身/制/服 yi¹shen¹zhi¹fu², (a body of uniform) in uniform
- 一/身/功/夫 yi¹shen¹gong¹fu, (a body of Kungfu) full of Kungfu
- 一/肚/子/委/屈 yi¹du⁴ziwei³qu¹, (a belly of wrong suffering/grievance) full of grievance, bearing a deep grudge
- 一/笔/好/书/法 yi¹bi³hao³shu¹fa³, (a writing brush of good calligraphy) very skillful in calligraphy
Collective and Category Measure Words

Apart from measure words that apply to things that exist as individuals, there are other two kinds of measure words that are used for things or people that exist in collectives or understood as standing for a kind or a category, respectively called collective measure words and category measure words.

Collective Measure Words

对duì⁴, pair, couple
一对双胞胎yī duì⁴ shuāng¹ bāo¹ tai¹, a couple of twins
双shuāng¹ pair, couple, it is used for things
一双鞋yī shuāng¹ xié², a pair of shoes
副fù⁴, a flat thing that can be spread out and hung up
一 副对联 yi1fu4dui4lian2, a couplet of writing
组 zu3, a group, set
五人一组 wu3ren2yi1zu3, a group of five, five in a group
群 quan2, for things or people that are gathered in a group or cluster
一群 people yi1quan2ren2 a crowd of people, a gathering of people
套 tao4, set, suit
一套衣服 yi1tao4yi1fu2 a suit
批 pi1 batch, lot (of products)
一批羊毛 yi1pi1yang2mao2 a lot of wool
打 da3 dozen
一打鸡蛋 yi1da3ji1dan4 a dozen eggs
窝 wo1 brood
一窝鸡仔 yi1wo1ji1zai3 a brood of chicks
帮 bang1 gang, band
一帮土匪 yi1bang2tu3fei3 a band of gangsters
系列 xi4lie4, series
一系列书 yi1xi4lie4 a series of books

Category Measure Words
种 zhong3 used for things that can have kinds, species, etc.
一种人 yi1zhong3ren1 a kind of people
类 lei4 types
一类产品 yi1lei4 chan3pin3 a kind/type of product
样 yang4 style, kind (but also can be an alternative to the individual measure word “件”, especially in informal speech)
两样礼品 liang3yang4 li3pin3, two kinds of gifts (two gifts of different kinds)

5. Pronouns

There are largely three kinds of pronouns in Chinese: 1) personal, 2) demonstrative, and 3) interrogative pronouns. The first include all variations of the first, second and third person pronouns; the second contains a larger group of pronouns that indicate people, things, time, place and actions; the third has all the words that are used like the English question pronouns (what, when, where, why, which and how).
Personal Pronouns

Although there are quite a few Chinese personal pronouns, a little more than those in English, they are mostly based on three morphemes, wo³, ni³, and ta¹, which respectively indicate the singular first, second and third person. There are no differences in the grammatical case, and the plural form is formed with the suffix morpheme 们 (men, usually pronounced in the light tone). Other variations such as in gender are seen only in writing, and a few additional alternative changes occur only in the first person and are far less frequently used in formal situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person</strong></td>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我 wo³ I, me</td>
<td>俺 an³ I, me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我们 wo³men² we/us</td>
<td>咱们 zan²men² we/us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>大家 da⁴jia¹ we/us</td>
<td>大伙儿 da⁴huo³r we/us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person</strong></td>
<td>free</td>
<td>你们 ni³men² you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>你 ni³³ you</td>
<td>您 nin² you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third</strong></td>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person</strong></td>
<td>Non-Human</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>他 ta¹ he/him</td>
<td>她 ta¹ she/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>它 ta¹ it</td>
<td>他们 ta¹men they/them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>她们 ta¹men they/m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>它 ta¹men they/the m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Notes:**
1. Reflexive pronouns are formed by adding the reflexive suffix “自己 zi⁴ji³” (self) to the above
2. Possessive pronouns are formed by adding the possessive suffix “的 de” to the above
3. The first person singular also has a very informal word, “俺 an³”
4. Variations in gender may also be found in traditional writing, such as “牠” for the animal in the third person and “妳” for the second person feminine, but they have gone out of use in simplified writing.
Demonstrative Pronouns

Chinese demonstrative pronouns function as deictic words, as the English “this/these” and “that/those”. There are only two basic words such as this which are used frequently in Modern Chinese, namely “这 zhe⁴” and “那 na⁴”, though other words like “彼”, “此”, “其” are also seen in classic or formal texts. Both “这 zhe⁴” and “那 na⁴” can take the suffix “些 xie¹” and become plural, and both can be used to serve the same function as the English determiner “the”.

Nominal Demonstrative Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>这 zhe⁴ this</th>
<th>那 na⁴ that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To things or people</td>
<td>这事-shi⁴ this work/business 这东西-dong¹xi this thing/object 这人-ren² this person</td>
<td>那事-shi⁴ that work/business 那东西-dong¹xi that thing/object 那人-ren² that person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To place</td>
<td>这里-li³ this place 这儿-er⁴ here 这地方-di⁴fang this place</td>
<td>那里-li³ that place 那儿-er⁴ there 那地方-di⁴fang that place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To time</td>
<td>这时候-shi⁴hou this time 这会儿-hui’r this moment/time</td>
<td>那时候-shi⁴hou that time 那会儿-hui’r that moment/time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special Notes:
1) The suffix “些” can be attached to “这” or “那” in all of the above except when followed by “会儿”, which is mainly used in informal speech.
2) When followed by the number word “一 yi⁴”, the pronunciations of “这” and “那” may change into “zhei⁴” and “nei⁴”, with “yi⁴” either pronounced or omitted.

Non-Nominal Pronouns

Non-nominal pronouns are used to substitute for the verbal, adjectival or adverbial constructs of a sentence or clause.
### Interrogative Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>person</td>
<td>谁 shuí²/shei², 哪位 na³'wei⁴</td>
<td>who or whom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>什么 shèn²'me, 嘿 sha²</td>
<td>what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>哪里 na³'li³, 哪儿 na'r³</td>
<td>where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>何时 he²'shi² (formal), 什么时候 shèn²'me shí²'hou</td>
<td>when, what time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number/amount</td>
<td>几 ji³, 多少 duó¹'shào³</td>
<td>how many/much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>way/manner</td>
<td>怎么 zen³'me, 怎样 zen³'yang⁴, 怎么样 zen³'meyang⁴</td>
<td>how, in what way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Notes:** Although “么” in “什么” can by pronounced in the light tone, it is often changed into the second tone (rising tone as in English) for reinforcing the interrogative.

### Predicate Words

Predicate words are used in contrast relation with substantive words. They include all adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, and are normally used to give the quality changes, actions or processes of the substantive words.
1. Adjectives

As in English, Chinese adjectives form the part of speech that is used to modify a noun or other substantive word, by describing qualities of the denoted entity, stating its limits or features, or distinguishing it from others in nature.

Functionally, Chinese adjectives have basically the following uses:

1) They are positioned before a noun to modify it (with “的, de” or not);
2) They may directly follow the subject or object as its complement (and with the subject, they make up a complete sentence);
3) They can be modified by an adverb of degree or negation (such as “很” and “不”, which respectively mean “very” and “not”);
4) They can form the question structure of “…不…”, such as “好不好”, “贵不贵”, “对不对” (respectively meaning “good or not”, “expensive or not”, “right or not”).

Adjectives as noun modifiers

Adjectives in Chinese can be one-character words or multi-character words. In actual use, they may directly take the functional suffix word “的”, just as other words like nouns and verbs do. However, whether to take it or not is often a matter of convention, highly dependent on the number of characters.

One-Character Adjectives

One-character adjectives modifying one-character nouns are usually used without the possessive function word “的”, for they tend to be considered together with the modified single-character nouns as one word of a nominal nature. And for the same reason, they do not take an adverb of degree before it.

大事 da⁴shì⁴ Important event
小狗 xiǎo⁵gǒu³ Puppy/doggie
高个 gāo¹di¹ People who are tall
低分 di¹fēn¹ Low marks/grade
好人 hǎo³rén² Nice man
新书 xīn¹shū¹ New/current book
Chapter Four

Special Notes: When the adjective is modified by an adverb of degree like “很” (hen³, meaning “very”), it is necessary to use “的”, thus making up the structure of “很 + Adjective + 的 + Noun”, which is now considered as a word group rather than a word. For instance, you can say “很大的事”, but not “很大事”. This is because in this case “很大的” is taken as a more closely connected construct.

Two-Character Adjectives

Adjectives of two characters may or may not take “的” and can be modified by an adverb of degree. Just as with the two-character adjectives, “的” is indispensable when there is an adverb of degree. Whatever the case, the structure is customarily considered as a noun phrase and not a word.

重要 (的) 事情 zhong⁴yao⁴de shi⁴qing important thing
美好 (的) 生活 mei⁴hao³ de sheng¹huo³ nice life
知心 (的) 朋友 zhi¹xin¹ de peng²you³ bosom friend
优秀 (的) 学生 you¹xiu⁴ de xue²sheng¹ excellent student
便宜 (的) 东西 pian²yi⁴ de dong¹xi cheap thing
美丽 (的) 姑娘 mei³li³ de gu¹niang beautiful girl
漂亮 (的) 衣服 piao⁴liang⁴ de yi¹fu nice clothes
英俊 (的) 小伙 ying¹jun⁴ de xiao³huo³ smart-looking boy
正确 (的) 答案 zheng⁴que⁴ de da²an⁴ correct answer

Special Notes: All the underlined adjectives can be modified by an adverb of degree, and in that case the function word “的” becomes indispensable.

Multiple-Character Adjectives

Adjectives of more than two characters will most probably contain a character repetition, always with “的” as a function word. However, adverbs are no longer used, because the repetition itself already indicates a high degree (functioning as “very”).

红通通的太阳 hong²tong¹tong² de tai⁴yang red sun
白茫茫的雪 bai²mang²mang² de xue³ white snow
Adjectives used as complement

When adjectives are used after a subject as a complement, a sentence is in fact made, even if it may only have two characters. This is because Chinese sentences in Subject Complement structure don’t necessarily need a link verb as in English. Determiners of subject nouns are usually dispensable, for the references are dependent on the context in Chinese. The adjective words in the following are underlined and serve as complements

你好! ni¹ hao³ (You good) Hello! How do you do!
我忙 wo³ mang² (I busy) I’m busy.
人多 ren² duo¹ (People many) There are many people.
路远 lu⁴ yuan³ (Road/journey far) The road/journey is long.
力大 li⁴ da⁴ (Strength big) The strength is great.
月圆 yue⁴ yuan² The moon is round (full).
花红 hua¹ hong² The flower is red.

Special Notes:
1) Since there is no need in Chinese to use a link verb as in English between the subject and the adjectival complement to make a sentence, the words can in fact also be considered as the shortest sentences.
2) When “是” is used after the subject character, the adjective must be followed by “的” and the structure is certainly a sentence of an affirmative judgment.
3) Deictic determiners like “这” (this) and “那” (that) do not necessarily always have to be used before the subject noun in order for the reference of a noun phrase in Chinese to be understood in the context.
4) All the adjectives can be modified by an adverb of degree, such as “很”.

Adjectives modified by adverbs

When an adverb is used to modify an adjective, the two are usually taken as a single unit, and then the function character “的” is used before
the modified noun. The most frequently used adverbs of degree are “很”, “极” (or “极其” ji2 qi2), “十分” and “非常”.

非常红的花 fei1 chang2 hong2 de hua1 very red flowers
很好的人 hen3 hao3 de ren2 very nice person
很新的书 hen3 xin1 de shu1 very new book
极绿的叶 ji2 lv4 de ye4 very green leaves
极其重大的事件 ji2 qi2 zhong4 da4 de shi4 jian4 extremely important event
十分满意的成果 shi2 fen1 man3 yi4 de jie2 guo3 satisfying outcome/results
十分新鲜的菜 shi2 fen1 xin1 xian1 de cai4 very fresh vegetables

2. Verbs

Chinese verbs can be divided into two groups, static verbs and motive verbs, according to whether they involve an action or change, or go through a process. Static verbs only give a state of existence or relation between the subject and the predicate, and do not result in a change, while motive verbs will make a change, and go through a process.

2.1 Static Verbs

Although the number of words that belong to static words and judgment verbs are limited in number, they are used so frequently that every learner of Chinese on any course is supposed to learn them from the very outset. The uses of this group of words are shown in the following.

Uses of Static Verbs:

是 shi4
It is used as the English link verb “be” but has a strong sense of “Yes” or “Right.” Since link verbs are not indispensable between a subject in Chinese and its complement, it is called a Judgment Verb and not a Link Verb. Therefore, it should not be understood as an exact equivalent of the English link verb “(to) be”.

这/那是什么 Zhe4/Na4 shi4 shen2 me? What is this/that?
——那是古琴。Na4 shi4 gu3 qin2. —That’s Guqin, the ancient Chinese zither.
我是 (一个) 老师。Wo3 shi4 (yi1 ge4) lao3 shi1. I’m a teacher.
你是教汉语的吗？Ni³ shì⁴ jiào¹ hàn⁴ yù³ de ma¹？Are you a teacher of Chinese?
——是。Shì⁴ —Yes.
不是，我是学英文的。Bu² shì⁴，wǒ⁴ xué² yīng² wen⁴ de。No. I’m a teacher of English.
这本书是你的吗？Zhè⁴ běn³ shū¹ shì⁴ nǐ³ de ma¹？Is this book yours?
——是。Shì⁴ —Yes.

**Special Notes:** “的” following a verb or verb phrase makes it function as a noun phrase. This is an important structure in Chinese.

有 you³
It can mean both “have” and “exist” (see below). When used to begin a phrase or sentence, the meaning may be understood as empty from the perspective of English, as in examples 1 and 2 in the following:

有一天……，You³ yī² tiān¹ … One day…
有一个人……，You³ yī³ ge⁴ ren² … There is someone…/One person…
这里有人吗？Zhè⁴ lǐ³ nǐ³ ren² ma？Is there anybody (in) here?
我有几个朋友。Wǒ³ yǒu³ jié³ ge⁴ péng² you³。I have a few friends.
我家有五口人。Wǒ³ jiā¹ yǒu³ wǔ³ kǒu³ ren²。There are five people in my family.
那里有一座房子。Na\(^4\)li\(^3\) you\(^3\) yi\(^2\)zuo\(^4\) fang\(^2\)zi. There is a house in that place.

网上有很多资料。Wang\(^3\)shang\(^4\) you\(^3\) hen\(^3\) duo\(^1\)zi\(^1\)liao\(^4\). There are a lot of references on the net.

哪里有洗手间？——Na\(^3\)li\(^3\) you\(^3\) xi\(^3\)shou\(^3\)jian\(^1\)? Where is the WC?

那里有。—Na\(^4\)li\(^3\) you\(^3\). There is one.

你有时间吗？Ni\(^3\) you\(^3\) shi\(^2\)jian\(^1\) ma\(^1\)? Do you have (the) time?

——有。—you\(^3\). Yes.

在 zai\(^4\)

Exist or occur in a place, time, process, or in doing something. It can also function simply as a preposition before a word denoting time or place.

你在哪儿？Ni\(^3\) zai\(^4\)nar\(^3\)? Where are you?

我在公司。Wo\(^3\)zai\(^4\)gong\(^1\)si\(^1\). I'm in the company.

他在做什么？Ta\(^1\) zai\(^4\) zuo\(^4\) shen\(^2\)me? What is he doing?

他在学习。Ta\(^1\) zai\(^4\) xue\(^2\)xi\(^2\). He is studying.

在哪里学什么？Zai\(^4\) na\(^3\)li\(^3\) xue\(^2\)shen\(^2\)me? Where is he studying there?

你呢？Ni\(^3\)ne\(^1\)? And what about you?

我在学校学英语。Wo\(^3\) zai\(^4\) xue\(^2\)xiao\(^4\) xue\(^2\) ying\(^1\)yu\(^3\). I’m studying English at school.

你什么时候在线？Ni\(^3\) shen\(^2\)me shi\(^2\)hou zai\(^4\)xian\(^4\)? When are you online?

晚上。Wan\(^3\)shang\(^4\). In the evening.

你在哪里上网？Ni\(^3\) zai\(^4\) na\(^3\)li\(^3\) shang\(^4\)wang\(^3\)? Where do you get on the net?

在办公室。Zai\(^4\) ban\(^4\)gong\(^1\)shi\(^4\). In the office.

存在 cun\(^2\)zai\(^4\)

It means “exist” or “there is (are)” . However, this word does not denote a possessive relation as “有” does.

存在决定意识。Cun\(^2\)zai\(^4\) jue\(^2\)ding\(^4\) yi\(^4\)shi. Existence determines consciousness.

鬼不存在。Gui\(^3\) bu\(^4\) cun\(^2\)zai\(^4\).

Ghosts do not exist.

这里不存在问题。Zhe\(^4\)li bu\(^4\) cun\(^2\)zai\(^4\) wen\(^4\)ti\(^2\).

There is no problem in here (or with this).

Special Notes: This static verb may be ambiguous to beginner learners because it may also be a phrase of two characters in the form of “verb (存) + preposition (在)” in which 存 means “keep” or “save” and 在 is a preposition giving the place. For instance:
Money is kept (deposited) in the bank.

Resemble, be similar to, comparable to
The daughter looks like her mother.
The son very much takes after his father.
I want to be as excellent as you.
Do (or make) it as I do.
It looks like it will rain.

These properties belong to me.
Victory belongs to us.
This island belongs to China.
He belongs to “the other type” (a freak).

2.2 Motive Verbs

All motive verbs are associated in meaning with an action or process of physical or mental change. In Chinese, they can be divided not only into the two categories of transitive and intransitive groups, but also into two groups which we respectively call Closed Verbs and Open Verbs. If a verb cannot be followed directly by another verb or verb phrase, it is called a Closed Verb; and when it can, it is called an Open Verb. In analysis, it is seen that closed verbs are “closed” because of two reasons: 1) they usually already contain a V+O or V+C structure in the characters used (and thus also understood as constructs), and 2) they will need specifically defined objects or complements to form a V+O or V+C structure. In contrast, open verbs do not have a given object character or complement character, and what may follow is thus an “open choice” that may include both nouns and
verbs. This distinction is in fact more important than that between the conventional intransitive and transitive verbs, and calls for special attention from learners.

**Closed Verbs**

A closed verb is very often a two-character structure containing a verb character and an object or complement character. There are two types of internal relations in the characters making up this kind of verb; that is, V+O and V+C, as introduced in the section on “compound words” in the first part of this chapter. In terms of collocation, closed verbs all have or need object words with specific meanings of a limited semantic field.

It should be noted that two-character verbs of this type are often considered as structures, especially in closer analysis or in analysis of classic Chinese.

**Verb Character+Object Character**

- 吃饭 chi1 fan4 eat (a meal)
- 睡觉 shui4 jiao4 sleep
- 唱歌 chang4 ge1 sing (songs)
- 跳舞 tiao4 wu3 dance
- 打字 da3 zi4 type (key in)
- 理发 li3 fa4 have a haircut
- 踢球 ti1 qiu2 play (or kick a) football
- 抽烟 chou1 yan1 smoke (a cigarette/cigarettes)
- 喝酒 he1 jiu3 drink wine (alcohol)
- 炒菜 chao3 cai4 cook dish (dishes)

**Verb Character+Complement Character**

- 吃饱 chi1 bao3 eat enough
- 洗清 xi3 qing1 wash clean
- 看重 kan4 zhong4 regard highly
- 选出 xuan3 chu1 pick out (choose)
- 认清 ren4 qing1 recognize clearly
- 打败 da3 bai4 defeat, win over
- 得到 de2 dao4 abstain, get
- 拿出 na2 chu1 take out, produce
Open Verbs

This group of verbs generally has a wide choice of objects, including both nouns or noun phrases and verbs or verb phrases. They include all the verbs that are traditionally regarded as “modal verbs” and/or “auxiliary verbs”, as well as some more verbs that can directly take verbs and verb phrases as objects. With this capacity, they can all begin a series of verbal phrases which we call “verbal chain”. The words or phrases serving as objects of this type of verb may be single verbs or verbal phrases. In the following, the open verbs are underlined.

去买东西 qu\4^4mai\3dong\1xi go shopping
要去买东西 yao\4qu\4mai\3dong\1xi need (have to) go shopping
来上课 lai\2 shang\4ke4 come for class
开始学习 kai\1shi\3 xue\2xi\2 begin study
继续工作 ji\4xu\4 gong\1zuo\4 continue work
结束讨论 jie\2shu\4 tao\3lun\4 finish discussion
应该学习 ying\1gai\1 should learn
能说汉语 neng\2shuo\1 han\4yu\3 can (be able to) speak Chinese
会写字 hui\4xie\3 han\4zi4 can (be able to) write Chinese characters
敢干 gan\3gan\4 dare to do (it)
想找工作 xiang\3zhao\3 gong\1zuo\4 want to find a job
值得考虑 zhi\2de2 kao\3lv4 be worth consideration
可以接受 ke\3yi\3 jie\1shou\4 may accept, be acceptable
喜欢交朋友 xi\3huan\1 jiao\1peng\2you\3 like to make friends
讨厌说假话 tao\3yan\4 shuo\1jia\3hua4 hate telling lies
同意参加比赛 tong\2yi\4 can\1biai1 bi3sai4 agree to participate in the competition
反对进行试验 fan\3dui\4 jin\4xing\2 shi\4yan\4 be opposed to conducting the test
支持参加 zhi\1chi\2 support participating
打算旅游 da\3suan\4 intend to travel (plan a tour)

3. Adverbs

Adverbs are normally used before a verb as its modifier, adding various aspects of meaning to it or changing the meaning. There are basically five kinds of adverbs in Chinese, classified in terms of their fields of meaning. They include those related with the negative, degree, time and frequency, scope, manner and mood.
Negative Adverbs

不 bu⁴, no, not
没 mei², not (have), not (existent)
没有 mei²you³, not (have), not (existent)
不必 bu³bi⁴, not necessary or compulsory
不一定 bu⁴yi²ding⁴, not certain(ly)
未 wei⁴ formal or classic, not (have), not (existent)
不妨 bu⁴fang², not unwillingly

Adverbs of Degree

很 hen³, very, quite
极 (其) ji² (qi³), extremely
十分 shi²fen¹, very
非常 fei\textsuperscript{1}chang\textsuperscript{2}, extraordinarily, very
特别 te\textsuperscript{4}bie\textsuperscript{2}, especially
尤其 you\textsuperscript{2}qi\textsuperscript{2}, especially, particularly
更 (加) geng\textsuperscript{4} (jia\textsuperscript{1}), increasingly, more
越 yue\textsuperscript{4}, more, even more
越来越 yue\textsuperscript{4}lai\textsuperscript{2}yue\textsuperscript{4}, more and more, increasingly
太 tai\textsuperscript{4}, too, too much
怪 guai\textsuperscript{4}, rather too, fairly
挺 t\textsuperscript{3}, fairly, rather
真 zhen\textsuperscript{1}, very, truly
多么 duo\textsuperscript{1}me, how (exclamation)
这么多 zhe\textsuperscript{4}me, so much, so
(比) 较 (bi\textsuperscript{3}) jiao\textsuperscript{4}, comparatively
稍微 shao\textsuperscript{1}wei\textsuperscript{1}, slightly
过于 guo\textsuperscript{4}yu\textsuperscript{2}, too much

Adverbs of Time and Frequency

刚 (刚) gang\textsuperscript{1} (gang), just now
刚才 gang\textsuperscript{1}cai\textsuperscript{2}, just now
才 cai\textsuperscript{2}, just only
已经 yi\textsuperscript{3} (jing\textsuperscript{1}), already
曾经 ceng\textsuperscript{2} (jing\textsuperscript{1}), once (have)
马上 ma\textsuperscript{3}shang\textsuperscript{4}, soon, in a short time
立刻 li\textsuperscript{4}ke\textsuperscript{4}, immediately
又 you\textsuperscript{4}, again, once more
再 (次) zai\textsuperscript{4} (ci\textsuperscript{4}), once more, repeatedly
还 hai\textsuperscript{2}, still more
重 (新) chong\textsuperscript{2} (xin\textsuperscript{1}), once again
随时 sui\textsuperscript{2}shi\textsuperscript{2}, at any time
忽然 hu\textsuperscript{1}ran\textsuperscript{2}, suddenly
偶然 ou\textsuperscript{3}ran\textsuperscript{2}, seldom
偶尔 ou\textsuperscript{3}er\textsuperscript{3}, seldom
老 lao\textsuperscript{3}, always, habitually
总 zong\textsuperscript{3}, always, ever
一直 yi\textsuperscript{4}zhi\textsuperscript{2}, all along, always
仍旧 reng\textsuperscript{2}jiu\textsuperscript{4} still as in the past
Adverbs of Scope

全/全部 quan²/quan²bu⁴, all, altogether, entirely
完全 wan²quan², completely, entirely
都/全都 dou¹/quan²dou¹, all, altogether, entirely
总/总共 zong³/zong³gong⁴, altogether, in sum
共/一共 gong⁴/yi²gong⁴, in sum, altogether
仅/仅仅 jin³/jin³jìn³, only, merely
光 guang¹, only, merely, alone
单 dan¹, only, solely
净 jing⁴, in net, all
才 cai², only, merely
统统 tong³/tong³, all together, all in all
大约 sa⁴yue¹, approximately, about
大概 da’gai⁴, approximately, roughly
大致 da⁴zhi⁴, largely, basically, about
基本 Ji¹ben³, fundamentally, basically

Adverbs of Mood and Mode

亲自 qin¹zi⁴, personally, in person
互相 hu⁴xiang¹, mutually, to each other
直接 zhi²jie¹, directly, immediately
间接 jian³jie¹, indirectly
相继 xiang¹ji⁴, in succession, one after another
赶紧 gan³jin³, urgently, quickly
恰恰 qia⁴qia⁴, just right
恰巧 qia⁴qiao³, just right
幸亏 xing⁴kui¹, luckily (especially out of expectation)
果然 guo³ran², sure enough, as expected
究竟 jiu¹jing⁴, actually, after all
简直 jian³zhi², simply, virtually, hardly
反正 fan³zheng⁴, after all, any (either) way
或许 huo⁴xu³, perhaps, possibly
也许 ye³xu³, perhaps, possibly
绝对 jue²dui⁴, absolutely
Function Words

Function words in Chinese do not have substantial meaning by themselves but play such important roles as linking words in phrases or word groups, indicating the relation between them, marking grammatical structures or giving exclamations.

1. Connectives

Connective words serve as links between words, phrases and sentences. Besides, they can also give indications of logical relations between the components that are thus connected. There are basically three kinds of connectives in Chinese, classified in terms of their different functions; that is, Coordinating, Subordinating and Textual Connectives.

Group I. Coordinating Connectives

Coordinating connectives may be single-character or two-character words, used between words and phrases that are equal in grammatical value or importance.

和 he², and, with
跟 gen¹, with, and, following
同 tong², and, with
与 yu³, and, with
及 ji², and, as well as
而且 er³qie³, and also
或 ( 者 ) huo⁴ ( zhe³ ), or
并 ( 且 ) bing⁴ ( qie³ ), and also
既... 又 ji⁴... you⁴..., not only... but also...
又... 又... you⁴... you⁴, also... and also...
不但... 而且... bu²dan⁴... er³qie³, not only... but also...
不是... 就是, bu²shi⁴... jiu⁴shi⁴, if not... then...

Group II. Subordinating Connectives

Subordinating connectives are link words that are used between two clauses of a sentence, in which one may be considered as functioning like the English main clause and the other like a sub-clause. Since Chinese words don’t have inflectional changes showing the grammatical relations
between words, these connectives assume a greater importance than connectives in English.

Because..., (so)...

Although..., nevertheless...

Although..., nevertheless...

If..., then...

Even if..., still...

Only when..., will...

If..., then...

The two parts in coordinated relation are usually separated with a comma, and in compact sentences in which the comma is not used (see the next chapter) the second connective alone is adequate.

Group III. Textual Connectives

The connectives in this group can be used either between clauses or sentences to serve as textual links, indicating other logical relations therein rather than those that can simply be understood in terms of grammatical coordination and subordination within complex sentences.

即 ji², that is, ie.

例如/如 li⁴ru²/ ru², for example (for instance)

比如 bi³ru², for example (for instance)

于是 yu²shi⁴, therefore, so (that)

这样 zhe⁴yang⁴, so, by so doing

这样一来 zhe⁴yang⁴ yi⁴lai², by so doing

其实 qi²shi², in fact, actually

换言之 huan⁴yan²zhi¹, in other words

总之 zong³zhi¹, to conclude, in conclusion

由此可见 you²ci³ ke³jian⁴, so it can be seen

2. Prepositions

在 zai⁴, in/on/at (a time, place, or scope)

从 cong², from, starting from

由 you², from, starting from
3. Auxiliaries

Chinese auxiliaries are those grammatical function words that go together with substantive or predicate words to add specific aspects of meaning to them, such as the tense or mood. They have two basic groups, namely the structural auxiliaries and sentence-final particles.
的 de, 1) a link between the modifying and modified nominal constructs; 2) a possessive function word; 3) an affirmative function word used at the end of a sentence in collocation with a preceding “是”.

得 de, a function word between a verbal construct and its complement.

地 de, a function word between adverbial and verbal constructs.

着 zhe, a continuous aspect marker.

了 le, a perfect aspect and past tense marker.

过 guo⁴, a perfect aspect marker.

把 ba³, a fronted object marker.

起来 qi³lai², a verb complement that can be called “progressive inceptive”, giving the additional meaning of “starting and going”, or “as you/we start to do something”, or “as you/we come to do something”.

下去 xia⁴qu⁴, a verb complement of the “progressive”, suggesting continuation of the action of the preceding verb. It gives the additional meaning of “go on”, or “continue”, or “as you/we go on or continue to do something”.

下来 xia⁴lai², a verb complement of the “conclusive”, suggesting that the action of the preceding verb is coming to the end.

上去 shang⁴qu⁴, a verb complement with similar meaning to that of “起来” as noted above.

4. Sentence-Final Particles

吗 ma¹, question mark.

呢 ne¹, marker of inquiry, question, or a mood of uncertainty, but also may be used at the end of an affirmative sentence.

吧 ba, marker of the mood of suggestion, conjecture or need for advice.

啊 a, an exclamatory particle with the same effect as English but can be used directly in the final position of a sentence.

嘛 ma, marker indicating self-affirmation or emphasis of a point.

呀 ya, marker of assurance or a reminder. It can also have the same function as “嘛”.

啦 la, marker of the perfect aspect that is actually formed up from “了” plus “啊”, thus showing the aspect with an exclamation.

哇 wa, an exclamatory particle equal in effect to “啊”, used especially when the preceding final sound is “u”.

Special Notes: Except for “吗” and “呢”, which are pronounced in the first tone, all the other particles are usually in the light tone.
5. Onomatopoeia

- 🚫🚫 ha1ha1, mimic of laughter
- 📧ifax1wu1, of weeping
- 🚫🚫 pa1pa1, of sounds of patting
- 🚫🚫 dong1dong1, of drums or large bells and similar sounds
- 🚫🚫 peng1peng1, of sounds of jumping
- 🚫🚫 hua1hua1, of splashing sounds
- 🚫🚫 pu1tong1, of plopping sounds
- 🚫🚫 ding1dang1, of sounds of small bells
- 🚫🚫 wang4wang4, of a dog’s barks
- 🚫🚫 zhi1zhi1, of squeezing sounds
- 🚫🚫 ding1ding1dang1dang1, continuous sounds of small bells or similar sounds
- 🚫🚫 ji1ji1zha1zha, of chirrups of small birds like sparrows, also used for chattering between women and children.

Word Groups

A Chinese word with two or more characters can combine with other words to form a word group, serving as a part of a sentence, and the construction rules are in some aspects similar to those of compound words as introduced in the previous section on word structure. Such word groups often function as the subject or predicate of the sentence and thus make it longer. More importantly, some of them may often be used as sentences with construct omissions, especially in conversations.

There are basically nine kinds of constructions in Chinese word groups, of which the first five are the same as those in compound words.

1. Coordination

In the construction of word groups that belong to the coordination type, the coordinated constructs are equal in status and function. There may be a connective word in between the constructs, but in Chinese, its use is often dispensable. In the following, the coordinated parts are indicated with a slash, an underlined connective word, or with a pause mark “、“.

- 小李和小张 Xiao³ Li³ he² Xiao³ Zhang¹ Little Zhang and Little Li (in which “little” means “young”, to show affection)
- 英语和汉语 ying¹yu³ he³han¹yu⁴, English and Chinese
2. Subordination

In a word group of subordination, one word is lower in grammatical status than the other which carries the "central" meaning. Such word groups usually have nouns, verbs and adjectives as the "central words" and their respective modifiers as subordinating components.

Nominal Subordination

A nominal subordination has a central noun modified by a modifier, with or without “的” as a marker. In the following, the modifier is underlined.

1) 中国北京 zhong1 guo2 bei3 jing1 China’s Beijing/Beijing, China
2) 美丽的山河 mei3 li4 de1 shan1 he2 beautiful mountains and rivers (landscape)
3) 我的汉语 wo3 de1 han4 yu3 my Chinese
4) 汉语语法 han4 yu3 fa3 Chinese grammar
5) 体育运动 ti2 yu4 yun4 dong4 physical sports
6) 电脑硬盘 dian4 nao3 ying4 pan2 computer hard disk
7) 手机号码 shou3 ji1 hao4 ma3 cellphone number
8) 图书馆一楼 tu2 shu1 guan3 yi1 lou2 library’s first floor

Adjective Subordination

An adjective subordination has an adjective modified by an adverb. The modifying adverb in the following is underlined.
1) 真好 zhên¹ hào³ really good  
2) 太糟糕 tài⁴ zào¹ gào¹ too bad  
3) 很聪明 hěn³ cong¹ míng² very intelligent  
4) 特别贵 té⁴ bie² guì⁴ extremely expensive  
5) 非常有趣 fēi¹ chāng² què⁴ qù very interesting  
6) 万分感激 wàn⁴ fèn¹ gàn³ jí¹ extremely grateful  
7) 十分激动 shí² fèn¹ jí¹ dǒng⁴ very excited

**Verbal Subordination**

A verbal subordination has a verb modified by an adverb, and the modifying adverb in the following is underlined.

1) 互相帮助 huà⁴ xiāng¹ bāng¹ zuò help each other  
2) 普遍提高 pǔ³ biàn² tí² gào¹ generally improve  
3) 十分喜欢 shí² fèn¹ xiǎn³ huān¹ like very much  
4) 完全同意 wán² quān² tóng² yí⁴ completely agree  
5) 认真考虑 rèn⁴ zhĕn¹ kào³ lí³ very much consider  
6) 仔细分析 zǐ³ xì³ fēn¹ xī¹ carefully analyze  
7) 反复练习 fǎn³ fù³ liàn³ xí² exercise over and over again  
8) 不断提高 bù² duàn⁴ tí³ gào¹ make progress continuously
3. Subject-Predicate Construction

The word group in this construction contains a nominal component functioning as the subject and an adjective or verb as the predicate, and thus can usually be considered as a complete sentence when used independently (for there is no need to use anything like the English link verb). In the following, the subjects are in bold characters.

1) 身体健康 shen1ti3 jian4kang1
Body/Physique healthy: healthy body

2) 身材高大 shen1cai2 gao1da4
Physique tall: have/having a tall physique

3) 家庭幸福 jia1ting2 xing4fu2
Family happy: have/having a happy family

4) 心情愉快 xin1qing2 yu4kuai4
Mood delightful: have/having a delightful mood

5) 兴趣广泛 xing4qu4 guang3fan4
Interest wide: have/having a wide range of interests

6) 工作认真 gong1zuo4 ren4zhen1
Work serious: have/having a serious attitude towards work

7) 交通方便 jiao1tong1 fang1bian4
Traffic communication convenient: have/having good traffic facilities

8) 价钱优惠 jia4qian2 you1hui4
Price favorable: have/having a favorable price

4. Verb-Object Construction

Just as a word can be made up by two characters in which the first is a transitive verb and the second its object, a word group can also be made in the same way, which may contain two or more words. In the following examples, the verb is underlined.

1) 热爱艺术 re4ai4 yi4shu
ardent love arts: have (having) an ardent love of arts

2) 开始上课 kai1sh3 shang4ke4
begin (to) take/have class: start a class

3) 提高产量 ti3gao1 chan3liang4
raise production (raise output): increase production (increase output)

4) 增加收入 zeng1jia1 shou1ru4
increase income
5. Verb-Complement Construction

When the predicate verb is followed by a complementary component indicating the grammatical tense, orientation, effect, result, degree, etc., the word group forming the predicate is then in verb-complement construction. In the following, the predicate word group is underlined. It should also be noted that there is often a “得” used before the complement that indicates the result. In the following examples, the verb is underlined.

1) 想明白 xiang^3 ming^2 bai^2 see clearly through thinking
2) 看清楚 kan^4 qing^1 chu^3 see clearly
3) 读几遍 du^2 jian^4 read several times
4) 玩得痛快 wan^2 de tong^4 kuai^4 to have fun to one’s heart’s content
5) 说得对 ni^1 shuo^1 de dui^4 say correctly (say exactly)
6) 吃得好 chi^1 de hao^3 eat well
7) 站起来 zhan^4 qi^3 lai^2 stand up
8) 干起来 gan^4 qi^3 lai begin to do
9) 学下去 xue^4 xia^3 qu^4 continue to learn

6. Adjective-Complement Construction

Just like verbs, adjectives can also have a complement directly following it or led by “得”. In the following, the adjectives are underlined.

1) 大极了。da^4 ji^2 le big extremely: extremely big
2) 多得很。duo^2 de hen^3 many very: very much (many)
3) 兴奋万分。xing^4 fen^4 wan^4 fen^1 excited extremely: extremely excited
4) 富起来。fu^4 qi^3 lai^2 rich up: become rich
5) 胖起来。pang^4 qi^3 lai^2 fat up: become fat
6) 瘦下去。shou^4 xia^3 qu^4 thin down: become thin
7) 少得可怜。shao³de ke³lian² little poor: so little (in quantity) as to be pitiable
8) 小得看不见。xiao³ de kan⁴bu²jian⁴ too small to see
9) 红得像苹果。hong² de xiang⁴ ping²guo³ as red as an apple
10) 大胆得惊人。da⁴dan³ de jing³ren² so bold as to be surprising, surprisingly bold

7. Appositive Construction

The construction is usually composed of two words (although there may be more than two) that are referring to the same thing or person. In the following, the division between the two parts is indicated by a slash.

1) 我们/俩 wo³men¹/liang³, we two
2) 他们/学生 ta²men¹/xue²sheng¹, they students
3) 政治家/邓小平 zheng⁴zhi⁴jia¹/deng⁴xiao³ping², statesman Deng Xiaoping
4) 小说/《石头记》xiao³shuo¹/shi¹tou² ji⁴, Story of the Stone/Jia¹ novel family
5) 首都/北京 shou³du¹/bei³jing¹, capital Beijing

8. Verbal Chain Construction

If verbal constructs follow one another in a string, the structure is considered as a verbal chain construction, regardless of whether or not the constructs contain objects. The division between the verbal constructs is indicated with a slash in the following.

1) 发邮件/通知 fa¹you²jian⁴/tong¹zhi¹ send email inform: send an email (or emails) to inform
2) 打电话/找人 da³dian⁴hua⁴/zhao³ren² call find somebody: make a telephone call to find somebody
3) 到中国/学习 dao⁴zhong¹guo²/xue²xi² come China study: come to China to study
4) 去欧洲/旅游 qu⁴ou¹zhou¹/lv³you² go Europe travel: go to Europe to sightsee
5) 来这里/参观 lai²zhe⁴li²/can¹guan¹ come here visit: come here for a visit
6) 回家/休息 hui²jia¹/xiu¹xi¹ go home rest: go home to have a rest
9. Pivot Construction

The pivot construction is traditionally called “兼语式” (jian1yu3shi4) by some Chinese grammaticians, which means that there is a central noun in between two verbal components that serves the double function of being both the object of the preceding verb and the subject of what follows. There may also be several “pivot” words in a phrase or sentence. In the following examples, the central noun serving the double function is underlined.

1) 有人敲门 you3ren2qiao1men2 have people knock the door: there is someone knocking at the door.
2) 请你说 qing2ni2shuo1 invite you speak: you speak please.
3) 听我说 ting1wo3shuo1 listen me speak: listen to me
4) 让你看 rang4ni1kan4 let you look: let you look
5) 称赞中国好 cheng¹ zan⁴ zhong¹ guo² hao³ praise China good: praise that China is good
6) 有人找我教汉语。 You³ ren² zha³ wo³ jiao¹ han⁴ yu³ Someone find me teach Chinese: Someone asked me to teach Chinese.
7) 听我说汉语。 ting¹ wo³ shuo¹ han⁴ yu³ zen³ me¹ xue² Listen me talk Chinese how learn: Listen to me as I tell you how to learn Chinese.
8) 老板让我请客户稍等。 Lao³ ban³ rang⁴ wo³ qing² ke⁴ hu⁴ shao¹ deng³ Boss let me ask customers wait: the boss asked me to tell the customer to wait a moment.
The Chinese language is drastically different from English not only in phonological and morphological terms, but also in terms of sentence structure. Let’s first take the example of sentence subjects. It is not unusual to find that they can often be left out, or otherwise, they can not only be nouns or pronouns but also other parts of speech. And the parts of speech featuring the same words can often change in different sentences according to their actual functions. As regards the relation between the subject and predicate, there is often nothing to mark where the division line is because verbs including link verbs are not indispensable. What’s more, omission of prepositions and connective words is also natural. These peculiarities may make the relations between words, phrases and sentences appear rather blurred to Indo-European language natives. In the following, we will see the distinctive features of Chinese sentence structures from all of these important aspects.

Sentence Components and Word Order

Although a Chinese sentence may be composed of the same components as English—the subject, predicate, verb, object, adverb, and complement—these components can be different in some aspects. In fact, there are no very strict rules as regards the grammatical functions that can be served by the different parts of speech. Generally speaking, the grammatical function of a word or word group and its relation with other words or word groups is mainly decided by the word order of the sentence. For example:

1) 发展需要科技。 (fa1'zhan3 xu1'yao4 ke1'ji4)
develop need science technology: Development needs science and technology.
2) 发展科技需要...
   develop science technology need... The development of science and technology needs...
3) 需要发展科技。
   need develop science technology: There is the need to develop science and technology
4) 需要科技发展。
   Need science technology develop: It’s necessary for science and technology to develop.
5) 科技需要发展。
   Science technology need develop: Science and technology should develop.
6) 科技发展需要...
   Science technology need...: The development of science and technology needs...

In these sentences, the grammatical functions of the three words are listed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>发展 develop</th>
<th>需要 need</th>
<th>科技 science and technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Predicate verb</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Part of subject</td>
<td>Predicate verb</td>
<td>part of subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>part of object</td>
<td>Predicate verb</td>
<td>part of object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Complement</td>
<td>Predicate verb</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Predicate verb</td>
<td>subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) a</td>
<td>Predicate verb</td>
<td>Part of subject</td>
<td>part of subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) b</td>
<td>Part of NN phrase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, the meaning of a sentence and the actual grammatical function that a word can play will highly depend on the word order, which may seem rather arbitrary and subjectively understood by the Chinese people. This can sometimes give a puzzling play of sentence variations and changes in meaning, as exemplified with the following six characters:

小 xiao³ 羊 yang² 山 shan¹ 上 shang⁴ 吃 chi¹ 草 cao³

The possibilities of the sentences made using these characters are:
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1) 小羊山上吃草 (the above order)
The little lamb eats grass on the hill.
2) 小羊上山吃草
The little lamb goes up the hill to eat grass.
3) 小羊吃山上草
The little lamb eats grass grown on the hill.
4) 小羊吃草上山
The little lamb, to eat grass, goes up the hill.
5) 小山上羊吃草
On the small hill the sheep eats grass.
6) 羊上小山吃草
The sheep goes up the little hill to eat grass.
7) 羊上山吃小草
The sheep goes up the hill to eat small grass.
8) 羊吃山上小草
The sheep eats small grass grown on the hill.
9) 羊吃小山上草
The sheep eats the grass on the small hill.
10) 羊小山上吃草
The sheep is small and it eats grass on the hill.
11) 羊山上吃小草
The sheep, on the hill, eats small grass.
12) 上山小羊吃草
Going up the hill, the small lamb eats grass.

13) 上山羊吃小草
Going up the hill, the sheep eats small grass.
14) 上山吃草羊小
To go up the hill to eat grass, the sheep is (too) small.
15) 山上小羊吃草
On the hill, the little lamb eats grass.
16) 山上小草羊吃
The little grass on the hill is eaten by the sheep.
17) 吃草小羊上山
To eat grass, the little lamb goes up the hill.

Given that the singular or plural forms of nouns are not indicated but are to be understood in context, we can imagine what other changes and English interpretations may be reasonable too!
In fact, the order changes do not only determine how to explain the relations between words that function as the subject, predicate or the object, but can also have a great impact on the changes of meaning in adjectives and adverbs. Let’s take, for example, four characters that translate into three English words:

大 big/large  
不 no/not  
一样 the same or identical

It is said that a doctor has used these words to answer a lady who asks what the results of a breast augmentation may be. He gives four possibilities as follows:

大不一样 quite different from before  
不大一样 not quite the same (as normal)  
一样不大 the same as before  
不一样大 not the same size (on two sides!)

Although foreign learners may find it hard to understand, the interpretations taken as tacit understanding are very natural to native
speakers. That is, while many words can function both as adjectives and adverbs, the one in the fronted position will be taken as an adverb that modifies the succeeding ones, which in the succession are understood as adjectives. If the words in the front position cannot be explained as adjectives, they will be seen as conditions of the sentence. Such changes can be illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Word Order and Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quite/very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一样</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(the) same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is (or will be) very different

| 不 |
| not |
| 大 |
| very/quite |
| 一样 |
| (the) same |

It is (will not be) quite (the) same

| 一样 |
| As the same (/before) |
| 不 |
| not |
| 大 |
| big |

Same as before, it is (or will be) small.

| 不 |
| Not |
| 一样 |
| (the) same |
| 大 |
| bigness (cup size) |

The two sides are not (will not be) the same in size

The Sentence Subject

Like other grammatical components, Chinese sentence subjects can take various forms. Nouns, verbs and adjective or phrases of whatever “part of speech” can be the sentence subject, except from adverbs. In addition, what is normally taken as the object of a verb in English can also be considered as the subject in Chinese, provided that it takes the initial position and serves as the topic of an utterance. That is to say, the Chinese sentence subject is rather about the theme or topic, and not merely the agent of an action, though the theme and grammatical subject may often coincide in one word or phrase. Therefore, we consider Chinese sentence subjects as having two broad categories, grammatical subjects and thematic subjects. Of these two, only the first coincides with the subject of
English sentences, and the second are further divided into several kinds. Examples of these cases are provided in the following, with the English interpretations in both the original Chinese literal wording and a free rendition. The words used as subjects are represented in bold letters for special attention.

1. Grammatical Subjects

Basically same as in English, the subjects in this group of sentences are served by nominal words like nouns and pronouns. However, it should be noted that in Chinese they may not take a verb. And in the case when there is a sentence verb, there is no change in the form in its form for grammatical “agreement” as in English.

1) 我学汉语。Wo³ xue² han⁴yu³.
WF: I learn Mandarin Chinese.
FI: I learn Mandarin Chinese.
2) 我有信心。Wo² you³ xin⁴xin¹.
I have confidence: I have the confidence.
3) 他是我 (的) 朋友。Ta¹ shi⁴ wo³ de peng²you.
WF: He is I (DEG) friend.
FI: He is my friend.
4) 汉语其实不难。Han⁴yu³ qi²shi² bu⁴ nan².
Chinese actually not difficult.
5) 这本书很好。Zhe⁴ ben³ shu¹ hen³hao³.
WF: This [MW] book very good.
FI: This book is very good.
6) 我爱艺术和运动。Wo³ ai⁴ yi¹shu⁴ he² yun⁴dong⁴.
WF: I love art and movement.
FI: I love art and physical exercise.

Special Notes: Sentences 4) and 5) have no verbs, just as in the most frequently used greeting “你好” (How do you do?). What directly follow the subjects in these two sentences are adjective components. The adjective “难” in 4) is modified by two adverbs, “其实” and “不”; and the adjective “好” in 5) is modified by the adjective “很”.
2. Thematic Subjects of Fronted Components

The subjects in this group are usually not the agents or actors of the sentence verbs, but what may be considered as the fronted objects, complements, or other components of the sentence if translated into English. In Chinese, they are understood as the topic words of what is commented on or described in the predicate.

1) 这个我知道。Zhe\(^4\)ge\(^4\) wo\(^3\) zhi\(^1\)dao\(^4\).
FWF: This I know.
FI: I know this/This is what I know.

2) 他已经告诉了。Ta\(^1\) wo\(^3\) yi\(^3\)jing\(^1\) gao\(^4\)su\(^4\) le.
FWF: He I already told.
FI: I have already told him.

3) 数学我觉得很难。Shu\(^4\)xue\(^2\) wo\(^3\) jue\(^2\)de hen\(^3\) nan\(^2\).
FWF: Math I feel very difficult.
FI: I find math very difficult.

4) 饭我没吃。Fan\(^4\) wo\(^3\) mei\(^2\) chi\(^1\).
FWF: Meal I not eat.
FI: I haven’t eaten (the meal).

5) 这件事要商量。Zhe\(^4\) jian\(^4\) shi\(^4\) yao\(^4\) shang\(^1\)liang.
FWF: This matter wants discussion.
FI: This is a matter that deserves discussion.

6) 这间屋子我做卧室。Zhe\(^4\) jian\(^1\) wu\(^1\)zi wo\(^3\) zuo\(^4\) wo\(^4\)shi\(^4\).
FWF: This [MW] room I make bedroom.
FI: I use this room as my bedroom.

7) 那个人我跟他通过电话。Na\(^4\)ge\(^4\) ren\(^2\) wo\(^3\) gen\(^1\) ta\(^1\) tong\(^1\) guo\(^4\) dian\(^4\)hua\(^4\).
FI: I have talked with that person on the phone.

8) 这事你可以写一部小说。Zhe\(^4\)shi\(^4\) ni\(^3\) ke\(^3\)yi\(^3\) xie\(^3\) yi\(^2\)bu\(^4\) xiao\(^3\)shuo\(^1\).
FWF: This matter you may write one [MW] novel.
FI: You may consider writing a novel about this.

3. Detached Thematic Subjects

In Chinese, there are cases when the sentence subject is “detached” from the predicate in meaning, usually because something to be understood according to the context is omitted. We call this case the context-depending detachment or simply detached thematic subject.
Highly dependent on the context, the relations between the subjects and the predicates in meaning may be difficult to specify when the situation is not given, and so the free translation provided for each of the following examples is just one of the possibilities.

1) **我是米饭，不是馒头。** Wo³ shi⁴ mi³ fan⁴, bu² shi⁴ man² tou.
   WFW: I am rice, not mantou (steamed bread).
   FI: For me, it’s rice, and not mantou.

2) **她是中文系。** Ta¹ shi⁴ zhong¹ wen² xi¹.
   WFW: She is Chinese Literature Department.
   FI: She is in (with, from) the Chinese Literature Department. For her, it’s the Chinese Literature Department.

3) **你是汉字吗？** Ni³ shi² han⁴ zi⁴ ma?
   WFW: You are Chinese character [SFP]?
   FI: For you, is it Chinese characters (that bother you, etc.)?

4) **他是这件衣服。** Ta¹ shi⁴ zhe⁴ jian⁴ yi¹ fu.
   WFW: He is this piece of garment.
   FI: For him, it’s this piece of garment.
5) 我们公司是软件。Wōmen gōngsī shì ruānjìan.
WFW: We company is software.
FI: Our company is in the software business.

4. Spatial-Temporal Thematic Subjects

A spatial-temporal component in the Chinese sentence can serve the function of subject, although it may also function as an adverbial component as in English. This is because in Chinese, the concept of time and space can be the theme or topic of a discourse. The difference between the subject and adverbial functions is not always easy to tell, but there is a general principle: when the sentence has no other subject and the spatial-temporal entity is understood as what is being talked about, it is the subject of the sentence.

1) 今天是星期天。Jīntiān shì xīngqītiān.
WFW: Today is Sunday.
FI: Today is Sunday (It is Sunday today).
2) 现在是8点。Xíanzài shì bā diǎn.
WFW: Now is 8 hour (point).
FI: It’s 8 o’clock now.
3) 上午有课。Shàngwǔ yǒu kè.
WFW: Morning has class.
FI: There are classes (there is a class) in the morning.
4) 秋天凉快。Qiūtiān liángkuài.
WFW: Autumn cool.
FI: It is cool in the Autumn.
5) 这几天很热。Zhèjiětiān hěn rè.
WFW: These several days very hot.
FI: It’s hot these days.
6) 南方雨多。Nánfāng yǔduō.
WFW: South (quarter) rain much.
FI: Rainfall is heavy in the south.
7) 这里经济发达。Zhèlǐ jīngjì fādà.
WFW: This place economy developed.
FI: This area is economically developed.
8) 办公室里有人。Bāogōngshì lǐ yǒu rén.
WFW: Office inside have person.
FI: There is someone in the office.
5. Verbal Thematic Subjects

A verbal component in the form of a single verb itself or with its adverb, object or complementary word(s) may also serve as the sentence subject. In such cases, it is understood as the English verbal component in the gerund or infinitive form.

1) 說容易。Shuo³ qi³ rong² yi.
WFW: Talk up easy.
FI: It’s easy to say it.
2) 这样学很好。Zhe⁴ yang⁴ xue² hen³ hao³.
WFW: So learn very good.
FI: It’s good to learn this way.
3) 喝酒我不行。He¹ jiu³ wo³ bu⁴ xing².
WFW: Drink wine I no go.
FI: As for drinking, I’m no good.
4) 学语言有趣。Xue² yu³ yan² wo³ you³ qu⁴.
WFW: Learn language interesting.
FI: It is interesting to learn a language.
5) 去见他是对的。Qu⁴ jian¹ ta¹ shi⁴ dui⁴ de.
WFW: Go see him is right [fn].
FI: It’s right to go to see (meet) him
6) 有知识最重要。You³ zhi¹ shi zui⁴ zhong⁴ yao⁴.
WFW: Have knowledge most important.
FI: To have knowledge is of the first importance.
7) 开车不能大意。Kai¹ che¹ bu⁴ neng² da⁴ yi.
WFW: Drive vehicle not can careless.
FI: When driving, one can’t be careless.

6. Adjective Thematic Subjects

Adjectives can serve as the sentence subject directly, for in Chinese there is no inflectional means (like “-ness”) to change them into nouns indicating quality.

1) 红的鲜艳。Hong² de xian¹ yan⁴.
WFW: Red bright.
FI: The red color looks bright.
2) 干干净净好。Gan‘ gan‘ jing‘ jing‘ hao\(^3\).
WFW: Clean good.
FI: It is good to be clean.
3) 便宜不一定好。Pian‘ yi bu‘ yi‘ ding‘ hao\(^3\).
WFW: Cheap not certain(ly) good.
FI: Cheap things may not be good.
4) 大一点儿舒服。Da\(^4\) yi\(^4\) dian\(^3\) shu‘ fu.
WFW: Big a little comfortable.
FI: It is comfortable to have it a little larger.
WFW: Excellent not easy.
FI: It is not easy to be excellent.

7. Sentence Thematic Subjects

Since in Chinese there is no clause marker like “that” and “which”, a sentence can directly function as the subject of a more complicated sentence.

1) 我学汉语是刚开始。Wo\(^3\) xue\(^2\) han‘ yu‘ shi‘ gang\(^1\) kai‘ shi‘.
WFW: I learn Mandarin is just begin.
FI: I’m just a beginner in learning Mandarin.
2) 他说我很聪明不对。Ta\(^1\) shuo\(^1\) wo\(^3\) hen\(^3\) cong\(^1\) ming\(^2\) bu‘ dui‘.
WFW: He say I very intelligent not right.
FI: He is not correct in saying that I am very intelligent.
3) 我这样说不是客气。Wo\(^3\) zhe‘ yang‘ shuo\(^1\) bu‘ shi‘ ke‘ qi.
WFW: I so say not-be polite.
FI: I’m not saying this to be polite.
4) 游客来参观是好事情。You\(^2\) ke‘ lai‘ can‘ guan‘ shi‘ hao\(^3\) shi‘ qing.
WFW: Tourist come visit is good thing.
FI: It is good to have tourists coming to visit.

8. Ranked Thematic Subjects

In cases when several nouns or noun phrases follow one another in a word group and serve the function of the sentence subject, they usually have different ranks in terms of their semantic relations, with the foregoing word higher in semantic rank than the succeeding one, having a broader sense than it, or taking it as a part. We call these kinds of subjects ranked thematic subjects. It should be specially noted, however, that although
here we take these directly connected word groups as ranked thematic subjects, they are often understood as having one central subject word modified by preceding words. Their internal relations are simply decided by the word order and ranks. Besides, given that the Chinese sentence is topic-prominent instead of subject-prominent, some traditional grammaticians may only take the first word that is highest in rank as the sentence subject and all the rest as the predicate.

1) 他身材高大。Ta\textsuperscript{1} shen\textsuperscript{1}cai\textsuperscript{2} gao\textsuperscript{1} da\textsuperscript{4}. 
WFW: He physique great. 
FI: He is tall.
2) 我衣服纽扣掉了。Wo\textsuperscript{3} yi\textsuperscript{1}fu niu\textsuperscript{3}kou\textsuperscript{4} diao\textsuperscript{4}le. 
WFW: I jacket (My jacket) button drop [AS]. 
FI: A button came off my jacket.
3) 这棵树叶子颜色黄了。Zhe\textsuperscript{4} ke\textsuperscript{1} shu\textsuperscript{4} ye\textsuperscript{4}zi yan\textsuperscript{2}se\textsuperscript{4} huang\textsuperscript{2} le. 
WFW: This [MW] tree leave color yellow [AP]. 
FI: The color of the leaves on this tree has turned yellow.
4) 公园树林里面有个亭子。Gong\textsuperscript{1}yuan\textsuperscript{2} shu\textsuperscript{4}lin\textsuperscript{2} li\textsuperscript{3}mian you\textsuperscript{3}ge\textsuperscript{4} ting\textsuperscript{2}zi. 
WFW: Public park woods inside have [MW] pavilion. 
FI: There is a pavilion in the woods of the public park.
5) 我们家房子卧室大。Wo\textsuperscript{3}men jia\textsuperscript{1} fang\textsuperscript{2}zi wo\textsuperscript{4}shi\textsuperscript{4} da\textsuperscript{4}. 
WFW: We home (family) house bedroom big. 
FI: The bedroom of our family home is big.
6) 新办公室桌椅还没有。Xin\textsuperscript{1} ban\textsuperscript{4}gong\textsuperscript{1}shi\textsuperscript{4} zhuo\textsuperscript{1}yi\textsuperscript{3} hai\textsuperscript{2} mei\textsuperscript{2}you\textsuperscript{3}. 
WFW: New office room desk chair still not have. 
FI: The new office room is not yet furnished with desks and chairs.
7) 我们厂一半是中国人 Wo\textsuperscript{3}men chang\textsuperscript{3} yi\textsuperscript{2}ban\textsuperscript{4} shi\textsuperscript{4} zhong\textsuperscript{1}guo\textsuperscript{2} ren\textsuperscript{2}. 
WFW: We factory (Our factory) one half is Chinese. 
FI: Half of the people at our factory are Chinese.

There are also sentences in which more than one lower-ranked subject in coordinated relation is separated by each of their own objects or complements. In other words, there may be cases in which more than one subject-predicate structure follows the top-rank subject, such as the following.

8) 这商品物美价廉。Zhe\textsuperscript{4} shang\textsuperscript{1}pin\textsuperscript{3} wu\textsuperscript{4} mei\textsuperscript{3} jia\textsuperscript{4} lian\textsuperscript{2}. 
WFW: This merchandise thing nice price cheap. 
FI: This piece of merchandise has a nice quality and low price.
9) 我国人多地少。Wo³ guo² ren² duo¹ di⁴ shao³.
WFW: I country (Our country) people many land little.
FI: Our country is densely populated on relatively limited land.

It should be specially noted, however, that in the case of separated ranks of subjects, the normal syntactic analysis would take only the first top-rank word as the sentence subject, with the rest considered as the predicate.

9. Absent Thematic Subjects

As important as the theme- or topic-related subjects are in Chinese, they may be omitted if the meaning can be deduced from other words in the sentence or the context, and are thus considered unnecessary, as in the following examples. This is because a Chinese sentence, unlike English, does not need an expletive word to fill a syntactic vacancy.

1) 好！Hao³!
WFW: Good!
FI: (It is) Good!
2) 请进。Qing³jin⁴.
WFW: Please enter.
FI: Come in (Go in), please.
3) 有人! You³ ren²!
WFW: Have (There be) person.
FI: There is someone here (there).
4) 就是他。Jiu⁴ shi⁴ ta¹.
WFW: Just is/be him.
FI: It's him.
5) 下雨了。Xia⁴ yu³ le.
WFW: (Fall) Rain [SFP].
FI: It's raining.
6) 已经是春天了。Yi³jing¹ shi⁴ chun¹tian¹ le.
WFW: Already is spring [SFP].
FI: It's already spring.

Special Note: The word “了” at the end is a sentence-final particle [SFP] that functions as an aspect marker [AP].
The Sentence Predicate

The predicate, one of the two main component parts of a sentence in traditional grammar, can take various forms in Chinese, simple or complicated. It has some distinctive features that differ from English, such as the omission of the verb, the use of a series of verbs (or verbal chain) and the “verb+object+verb” structure (or “pivot structure”). It should also be noted that Chinese verbs don’t change in form but take certain other words to express the differences in tense and aspect.

1. Nominal Predicate

The nominal predicate is a special phenomenon in contrast to the English sentence structure, for it directly follows the subject without any verbs, although verbs could be inserted, with little significant changes in the meaning.

1) 今天阴天。Jin¹tian¹ yin¹tian¹.
   WFW: Today overcast.
   FI: It’s overcast today.
2) 明天国庆节。Ming²tian¹ guo²qing⁴jie².
   WFW: Tomorrow National Day.
   FI: Tomorrow will be National Day.
3) 他祖籍山东。Ta¹ zu³ji² Shan¹dong¹.
   WFW: He family origin Shandong.
   FI: His family is from Shandong.
4) 我儿子 12 岁。Wo³ er²zi shi² er⁴ sui⁴.
   WFW: I son (My son) 12 year.
   FI: My son is 12 years old.
5) 小张直性子。Xiao³ zhang¹ zhi²xing⁴zi.
   WFW: Little Zhang straight-forward character.
   FI: Little Zhang has a straight-forward character.
6) 一公斤 5 块钱。Yi¹ gong¹jin¹ wu³ kuai² qian².
   WFW: One kilo five Yuan.
   FI: One kilo (of it) for five Yuan.
7) 上班时间 8 点。Shang⁴ban¹ shi²jian¹ ba¹ dian³.
   WFW: Work time (Go to work time) 8 o’clock.
   FI: Work begins at 8 o’clock.
8) 毛泽东, 湖南人。Mao² ze² dong¹, hu²nan² ren².
WFW: Mao Tse-Dong (Mao Zedong), Hunan man (person)
Fl: Mao Tse-Dong (Mao Zedong) is from Hunan.

**Special Notes:** In all of the above, the judgment verb “是” could be inserted, which may add a strong affirmative or differentiating tone to its meaning.

### 2. Adjective Predicate

An adjective immediately following the subject makes up the adjective predicate of the sentence.

1) 我高兴。Wo³ gao¹xing⁴.
WFW: I (Me) glad.
Fl: I'm glad.
2) 中国伟大。Zhong¹ guo²wei³ da⁴.
WFW: China great.
Fl: China is great.
3) 汉语难。Han⁴yu³ nan².
WFW: Mandarin difficult.
Fl: Mandarin is difficult.
4) 你真好。Ni³ zhen¹ hao³.
WFW: You really (very) good.
Fl: You are really (very) good.

The judging verb “是” may be used between the subject and the adjective in all of the above sentences, and if this is done, it would make a little difference to the meaning, giving more emphasis to the assertive tone as if denying a disagreement. Besides, it is often used in collocation with “的” to form a “是-的” structure (see below).

The adjective component can be used in a comparative construction marked by “比 (bi³)” or “比...更 (geng⁴)”. In the latter case, “比” is considered as a preposition ([P]) and “更” as an adverb, and the structure “比...更” is adverbial in nature, qualifying the adjective.

5) 他比我 (更) 高兴。Ta⁴ bi¹ wo⁴ geng⁴ gao⁴xing⁴.
WFW: He [P] I (more) glad.
Fl: He is gladder than me.
6) 中国比美国 (更) 大。Zhong¹ guo² bi³ mei³ guo² (geng⁴) da⁴.
Fl: China is (even) bigger than the US.
7) 汉语比英语（更）难。Han⁴yu³ bi³ ying¹yu³ (geng⁴) nan².  
WFW: Mandarin [P] English (more) difficult.  
FI: Mandarin is (even) more difficult than English.

The comparative construction can have a lower-rank subject that is related in one aspect of the sentence subject.

8) 他比我身体更好。Ta¹ bi³ wo³ shen¹ti³ geng⁴ hao³.  
WFW: He [P] I physique more good.  
FI: He has a better physique (health) than me.

9) 中国比美国面积大。Zhong¹guo² bi³ mei³guo² mian⁴ji da⁴.  
FI: China has a bigger territory than the US.

10) 汉语比英语语法更难。Han⁴yu³ bi³ ying¹yu³ yu³fa³ geng⁴nan².  
WFW: Mandarin [P] English grammar more difficult.  
FI: Mandarin (Chinese) grammar is more difficult than that of English.

The relation between the two subjects at different ranks makes it possible to put them together. So the above three examples may also be changed into the following.

11) 他身体比我更好。Ta¹ (de) shen¹ti³ bi³ wo³ geng⁴ hao³.  
12) 中国面积比美国大。Zhong¹guo² (de) mian⁴ji bi³ mei³guo² da⁴.  
13) 汉语语法比英语更难。Han⁴yu³ (de) yu³fa³ bi³ ying¹yu³ geng⁴nan².

Special Notes: A genitive “de” (的) can be used between the two different ranks of subject words in the above three examples without changing the meaning.

As a general rule, the adjective predicate can take its modifying adverb in front and a complement construct at the end. The former is illustrated in examples 1) to 5) and the latter in 6) and 8) in the following examples.

1) 主人很友好。Zhu³ren² hen³ you³hao³.  
WFW: Host very friendly.  
FI: The host is very friendly.

2) 你的朋友真聪明。Ni³ de peng²you zhen¹ cong¹ming.  
WFW: Your friend really intelligent.  
FI: Your friend is really intelligent.
3) 你的想法不错。Ni³ de xiang³ fa³ bu² cuo⁴.
WFW: Your idea (think-way) not bad.
FI: You’ve got a good idea.
4) 西藏太远。Xi¹ zang⁴ tai⁴ yuan³.
WFW: Tibet too far.
FI: Tibet is too far.
5) 这东西挺贵的。Zhe⁴ dong¹ xi ting³ gui⁴ de.
WFW: This article rather expensive.
FI: This article is rather expensive.
6) 他高兴极了。Ta¹ gao¹ xing⁴ ji² le.
WFW: He glad extreme [SFP/AS].
FI: He is extremely glad.
7) 我的身体好多了。Wo³ de shen¹ ti³ hao³ duo¹ le.
WFW: My body good much [SFP/AS].
FI: I’m physically much better.

3. Verbal Predicate

With at least one verb, a verbal predicate of a Chinese sentence may be very much like that in English. For instance, it can have a sentence verb that may be simple or complex, transitive or intransitive, or be modified by an adverb in front and/or followed by an object or complement component. However, it can also be drastically different from English, for it can have several verbs following one another directly or indirectly, without any morphological changes in them to indicate their grammatical relations, not even to show what is considered as the sentence verb. In the latter case, a great deal of what is to be reasonably understood will depend on the verb’s order in the chain.

Tense and Aspect of the Verbal Predicate

Since Chinese verbs don’t have morphological changes for tense and aspect like the inflectional variations in English, the related concept of the action or process in the sentence predicate is expressed in additional words that collocate with the verbs, such as certain time-related nouns, adverbs and/or auxiliary words performing a structural function (ref. Auxiliaries, Chapter Four). For instance, “现在”, “过去” and “将来” or “今天”, “昨天”, and “明天” (respectively meaning the present, past, future or today, yesterday and tomorrow) are used to express temporal notions. And structural auxiliaries like “在”, “正在”, “着”, “了”, “过” give the verbs
additional meanings as expressed in the English continuous or perfect aspects. These words are used in similar ways as those describing the manner, degree, effect, direction, etc. of the action or process, and help make the meaning of the sentence predicate more specified and complete.

The Continuous Aspect

There are four words that are used most frequently in modern Chinese to mark the continuous aspects: 在 (zai⁴), 正 (zheng⁴), 正在 (zheng⁴zai⁴), and 着 (zhe).

在 (zai⁴) is usually a preposition, but when used before a verb, it serves as an adverb, performing the function of the aspect marker -ING suffix as in English.

正 (zheng⁴) is an alternative to 在 when used before a verb as an adverb. (It usually means the “right (position)” or “regular (shape)” as an adjective.)

正在 (zheng⁴zai⁴), another alternative to 正 and 在, but is more formal and serious than the other two.

着 (zhe) in the unmarked light tone is similar in meaning to the above three words but different in its position in the predicate, for it is not placed before the verb as an adverb, but after it as a complementary component, like the English present continuous tense suffix “-ing”. In Chinese, it is regarded as an auxiliary word, a unit of grammatical structure rather than a word ending.

It should be noted that while the first three are alternatives to one another, the last word 着 can be used at the same time in collocation with any of the others.

Examples of the Continuous Aspect

1) 你在 (/正/正在) 干什么? Ni³ zai⁴ (zheng⁴/ zheng⁴zai⁴) gan⁴shen²me?

WFW: You [AD] do what?

FI: What are you doing?

2) 我在 (/正/正在) 听音乐。Wo³ zai⁴ (zheng⁴/zheng⁴zai⁴) ting¹ yin¹yue⁴.

WFW: I (me) listen music.

FI: I’m listening to music.

3) 现在我正 (/在) 工作。Xian⁴ zai⁴ wo³ zheng⁴ (zai⁴) gong¹zuo⁴.

WFW: Now I (me) [AD] work.

FI: I’m working.
4) 那时我正在 (/正/在) 洗澡。Na⁴ shi² wo³ zheng⁴zai⁴ (zheng⁴/zai⁴) xiao³ zao³.  
WFW: That time I (me) [AD] bath.  
FI: I was in the bath at that time.

5) 你在 (/正/在) 学习吗? Ni³ zai⁴ (zheng⁴/zai⁴) xue³/xi² ma?  
WFW: You [AD] learn (study) [aux]?
FI: Are you studying?

6) 我正 (/在/在) 找你呢。Wo³ zheng⁴ (zai⁴/zai⁴) zhao³ ni³ ne.  
WFW: I (me) [AD] search you [aux].
FI: I'm just looking for you.

7) 他们正在考虑以后的工作。Ta¹men zheng⁴ (zai⁴/zai⁴) zhao³ ni³ ne.  
WFW: They [AD] consider later [aux] work (job).
FI: They are considering their work in future.

8) 我正 (/在/在) 等你。Wo³ zheng⁴ (zai⁴/zai⁴) deng³ ni³.  
WFW: I [AD] wait you.
FI: I'm waiting for you.

9) 孩子们在 (/正/在) 玩游戏。Hai²zimen zheng⁴ (zheng⁴/zai⁴) wan²you²/xi⁴.  
WFW: Children [AD] play game.
FI: The children are playing their game.

10) 我正在 (/在/在) 上班。Wo³ zheng⁴zai⁴ (zai⁴/zheng⁴) shang⁴ban¹.  
WFW: I [AD] work (shift).
FI: I'm working (on my shift).

In all of the above examples, the actual tenses can depend on the specific context and time words used. Therefore, when there are no time words used, the continuous aspect will be tacitly understood as the present tense.

The word “着” can be used after the verb independently or along with any one of the above three, without changing the meaning.

1) 你在 (/正/在) 干(着)什么? Ni³ zai⁴ (zheng⁴/zai⁴) gan⁴/zhe shen²/me?  
What are you doing?

2) 我在 (/正/在) 听着音乐。Wo³ zai⁴ (zheng⁴/zai⁴) ting¹/zhe yin¹/yue⁴.  
I’m listening to music.

3) 现在我正 (/在) 工作着。Xian⁴ zai⁴ wo³ zheng⁴ (zai⁴) gong¹/zuo⁴ zhe.  
I’m working now.
4) 他们在 (/ 正 / 正在) 想着以后的工作。Ta1men zai^4 (zheng^4/zheng^4zai^4) xiang^3zhe yi^3hou^4 de gong^1zuo^4.
They are thinking about their future work.

5) 孩子们在 (/ 正 / 正在) 玩着游戏。Hai^2zimen zai^4 (zheng^4/zheng^4zai^4) wan^2zhe you^2xi^4.
The children are playing their game.

Although the three alternative adverbs are often optional as shown above, there are also cases when only one of them—“在”—is used, and that is when there is yet another adverb in front.

1) 你还在做那个工作吗? Ni^3 hai^2zai^4 zuo^4 na^4ge gong^1zuo^4 ma?
Are you still doing that work?

2) 孩子还在外面玩。Hai^2zi hai^2 zai^4 wai^4mian wan^2.
The children are still playing outside.

3) 我也在学中文。Wo^3 ye^3 zai^4 xue^2zhong^1wen^2.
I’m learning Chinese too.

4) 我们仍然在学习汉字。Wo^3men reng^2ran^2 zai^4 xue^2xi^2 han^4zi^4.
We are still learning Chinese characters.

5) 我就在听着。Wo^3 jiu^4zai^4 ting^1zhe.
I’m listening right now.

6) 孩子没在玩。Hai^2zi mei^2 zai^4 wan^2.
The children are not playing.

7) 他一直在等你。Ta^1 yi^4zhi^2 zai^4 deng^3ni^3.
He has been waiting for you all along.

In the above, the additional adverbs are respectively as follows:

还 (hai^2): still (as before, also)
也 (ye^3): also, too
仍然 (reng^2ran^2): still (as before, also)
就 (jiu^4): right, just
没 (mei^2): not (have not)
一直 (yi^4zhi^2): all along (always)

When expressing the negation, a negative word is used before “在 + verb”, which may be “没”, “没有” or “不”. Of the three negative words, “没” and “没有” can be used with “在” or without it when the continuous aspect is known from the context; but “不” is always used along with “在” for otherwise it may not be in the continuous aspect. Sometimes, “不是” is used as an alternative to “不”, making the tone more assertive as if clearing away doubts.
8) 孩子们没 (在) 玩。Hai²zimen mei² (zai⁴) wan².
Or: 孩子们没有玩。
The children are not playing.

**Special Note:** “没有” is also used for the perfect aspect, in which case “在” is left out and the above is understood as “The children have not played”.

9) 孩子们不 (是) 在玩。Hai²zimen bu² (shi⁴) zai⁴ wan².
The children are not playing.

10) 我没 (在) 学中文。Wo³ mei² (zai⁴) xue² zhong¹wen². I have not studied Chinese. (If 在 is used, the meaning is “I’m not/ I was not studying in Chinese”)
11) 我不 (是) 在学中文。Wo³ bu² (shi⁴) zai⁴ xue² zhong¹wen². I’m not learning Chinese.

In sentences 8) and 10), both “没” and “在” can be used. But when only “没” is used, it will indicate a perfect aspect, meaning “I have not learned Chinese.

12) 他不 (是) 在等你。Ta¹ bu² (shi⁴) zai⁴ deng³ ni³.
He is not waiting for you.

**The Perfect Aspect**

There are only two basic auxiliary words in modern Chinese that grammatically function for the perfect aspect, and they are 过 (guo⁴) and 了 (le). The word 过 is changed to a function word from the verb meaning “pass” or “cross”, while the function of “了” comes from the original verb meaning “finish” or “end”. Both words can be used independently or in collocation with each other in the sentence predicate. In the latter case, it is always “过” that takes the first place, and the position of “了” is habitually arbitrary, either before or after the object of the verb if it is transitive.

**Special Note:** “了” can also be a sentence-final particle ([SFP]) instead of an aspect marker ([AS]).

**Examples of the Perfect Aspect**

For the same perfect aspect, there are several possibilities in using the aspect words “过” and “了”. These are exemplified in the following.
1) I have already made the telephone call.
   a. 我打过了电话。Wo³ da³guó le dìan⁴hua⁴.
   b. 我打过电话。
   c. 我打电话了。
   d. 我打了电话。

2) Have you had your meal?
   a. 你吃过了饭吗? Ni³ chī³guó³le fàn⁴ ma?
   b. 你吃过饭吗?
   c. 你吃饭了吗?
   d. 你吃过饭了吗?

Special Notes: When “过” is used independently without collocation of “了”, it may actually mean “ever done something”, and the meaning also depends on the context. For instance, “Have you ever seen a UFO?” would be “你看过 UFO 吗?”

3) I have told her about this matter.
   a. 这件事我告诉她了。Zhè³jiàn⁴shì wo³ gào⁴su¹ guó³ ta¹ le.
   b. 这件事我告诉她了。
   c. 这件事我告诉过她。
   d. 这件事我告诉过她了。

4) I have heard of your name.
   a. 我听说了您的名字。Wo³ tīng¹shuò¹ le nín² de míng²zi.
   b. 我听说您的名字了。
   c. 我听说过您的名字。
   d. 我听说过您的名字了。

5) I have learned (studied) this word
   a. 我学了这个词。Wo³ xué²le zhé⁴ge⁴ cí².
   b. 我学这个词了。
   c. 我学过这个词了。
   d. 我学过了这个词。

6) We have met each other.
   a. 我们见面了。Wo³men jiàn⁴miàn⁴ le.
   b. 我们见了面。
   c. 我们见过面了。
   d. 我们见过了面。

However, with some verbs, “过” or “过了” can make the meaning different from when only “了” is used. This is exemplified in the following sentences.
Differences between “过” and “了”

1) 他来过。Ta¹ lai² guo⁴ le.
He has been here. (He is not here now.)
2) 他来了。
He has come. (He is here now.)
3) 孩子睡过觉了。Hai² zi shui⁴ guo⁴ jiao⁴ le.
The kid has slept. (He or she is awake now.)
4) 孩子睡觉了。(He or she is asleep now.)
The kid has gone to sleep.

At the same time, some tense-related adverbs can also be used before the verb to indicate the perfect aspect, such as “已经/已 (yi³ jing¹/yi³)” and “曾经/曾 (ceng² jing¹/ceng²)”, respectively meaning “already” and “have the experience of”. While the two-character words are generally used in modern Chinese, the single-character words are mainly used in serious formal written text. The difference is that “已经” can be used together with the auxiliary “了”, but “曾经” cannot.

5) 我已经打过 (了) 电话。Wo³ da³ guo⁴ (le) dian⁴ hua⁴.
I have already made the telephone call.
6) 我曾 (曾经) 打过电话。Wo³ ceng² jing¹ (/ceng²) da³ guo⁴ dian⁴ hua⁴.
I once made the telephone call.
Expressions of the Tense

As stated earlier, the tenses of Chinese predicates are indicated with time-related words used in collocation with the verbs or verb phrases. These words may be nouns or adverbs indicating the past, present or future. Let’s take the English sentence “I check my e-mail” as an example to see the various changes of tense in Chinese.

I check my e-mail.
1) Simple Present
我检查我的邮件。Wo³ jian³ cha² wo³ de you² jian⁴. I check my e-mail.
2) Simple Past
我昨天 8 点检查了我的邮件。
I checked my e-mail at 8 o’clock yesterday.
3) Future Simple
I will check my e-mail at 8 o’clock tomorrow.

4) Past Progressive

I was checking my e-mail at 8 o’clock yesterday.

5) Present Progressive

I’m checking my e-mail now.

6) Future Progressive

I will be checking my e-mail at 8 o’clock tomorrow.

7) Past Perfect Simple

I checked my e-mail by 8 o’clock yesterday.

8) Present Perfect Simple

I have already checked my e-mail (now).

9) Future Perfect

I will have checked my e-mail by 8 o’clock tomorrow.

10) Past Perfect Progressive

I had already checked my e-mail by 8 o’clock yesterday.

11) Present Perfect Progressive

I have already checked many of my e-mails by now.

12) Future Perfect Progressive

I will have been checking my e-mail for ten minutes by 8 o’clock.

Tense-Related Adverbs and Nouns

Since Chinese tenses are usually indicated by time-related adverbs and nouns, it is important to know these words. The most frequently used are illustrated in the following examples underlined. The position of these words can be either before the sentence subject or after it.

1) 刚才他发了一封邮件。 (他刚才……) Gang¹cai² ta¹ fa¹le yi¹feng¹ you²jian⁴.

Just now, he sent out an e-mail.
2) 这位总统曾经访问中国。 Zhe⁴wei⁴ zong³tong³ ceng²jing¹ fang³wen⁴ zhong¹guo².
This (The) President once visited China.
3) 我马上过来。Wo³ ma³shang⁴ guo⁴laì.
I will come over right now (immediately).

Special Notes: The word “邮件” is now tacitly taken as “e-mail” (电子邮件), although it can also refer to traditional mail.

4) 以前他没有学习过中文。 (他以前……) Yi³qian² ta¹ mei²you³ zhong¹wen². (Ta yiqian…)
He has had no experience of learning Chinese before.
5) 过去我打篮球。(我过去……) Guo⁴qu⁴ wo³ da³ lan²qiu².
I have had the experience of playing basketball (in the past).
6) 那时我还在学校学习。(我那时……) Na⁴shi² wo³ hai²zai⁴ xue²xiao⁴ xue²xi².
I was studying in the school at that time.
7) 当时我没有笔记本电脑。 (我当时……) Dang¹shi² wo³ mei²you³ bi³ji⁳ben³ dian⁴nao³.
I didn’t have a laptop then (at that time)
8) 那会儿我在洗澡。Na⁴ hui⁴ er wo³ zai⁴ xi³zao³.
During that time, I was taking a bath.
9) 我以后会告诉你的。(以后我…)... Wo³ yi³hou⁴ hui⁴ gao⁴su⁴ ni³ de.
I’ll tell you later.
10) 他即将出国旅游。Ta¹ ji³jiang¹ chu¹guo² lv³you².
He will soon go abroad on a sightseeing tour.

Questions and Negations

Questions

There are basically three ways to convert a sentence to a Yes/No question. The first is to add the question word “吗” at the end of the sentence; the second is to make up a tag-question with the repetition of the verb “是” and “吗” added to the end of the sentence; and the third is to use a question structure in which the negative adverb “不” or “没 (有)” is inserted in a repetition of the verb or its preceding auxiliary verb. Among them, the Chinese tag-question is very much like the English, often indicating a presumption of the questioner.
Did he send an email just now?
1) 刚才他发了一封邮件吗? Gang\textsuperscript{1}cai\textsuperscript{2} ta\textsuperscript{1} fa\textsuperscript{1} le yi\textsuperscript{4}feng\textsuperscript{1} you\textsuperscript{2}jian\textsuperscript{4} ma\textsuperscript{1}?
2) 刚才他发了一封邮件, 是吗 (/是吗)?
3) 刚才他是不是发了一封邮件?

Has this president ever visited China?
1) 这位总统访问过中国吗? Zhe\textsuperscript{4}wei\textsuperscript{4} zong\textsuperscript{3}tong\textsuperscript{3} fang\textsuperscript{3}wen\textsuperscript{4} guo\textsuperscript{4} zhong\textsuperscript{1}guo\textsuperscript{2} ma\textsuperscript{1}?
2) 这位总统是不是曾经访问中国? Zhe\textsuperscript{4}wei\textsuperscript{4} zong\textsuperscript{3}tong\textsuperscript{3} shi\textsuperscript{4}bu\textsuperscript{2}shi\textsuperscript{4} ceng\textsuperscript{2}jing\textsuperscript{1} fang\textsuperscript{3}wen\textsuperscript{4} zhong\textsuperscript{1}guo\textsuperscript{2}?

Special Notes: The adverb “曾经” here is not repeated, but the meaning can be expressed with the auxiliary “过”.

3) 这位总统曾经访问中国? 是吗 (/不是吗)? Zhe\textsuperscript{4}wei\textsuperscript{4} zong\textsuperscript{3}tong\textsuperscript{3} ceng\textsuperscript{2}jing\textsuperscript{1} fang\textsuperscript{3}wen\textsuperscript{4} zhong\textsuperscript{1}guo\textsuperscript{2}? Shi\textsuperscript{4}ma\textsuperscript{1}? (bu\textsuperscript{2}shi\textsuperscript{4}ma\textsuperscript{1})?

Will he go to Beijing?
1) 他去 (/要去) 北京吗? Ta\textsuperscript{1} qu\textsuperscript{4} (yao\textsuperscript{4}qu\textsuperscript{4}) Bei\textsuperscript{3}jing\textsuperscript{1} ma\textsuperscript{1}?
2) 他去不去 (/要不要去) 北京?
3) 他是不是去北京?

Has he been in Beijing?
1) 他去过北京吗?
2) 他去过北京, 是吗 (/不是吗)?
3) 他有没有去过北京?
4) 他去没去过北京?
5) 他是不是去过北京?

Does Mr. Wang play basketball?
1) 王先生打篮球吗? Wang\textsuperscript{2}xian\textsuperscript{1}sheng da\textsuperscript{3} lan\textsuperscript{2}qiu\textsuperscript{2} ma\textsuperscript{1}?
2) 王先生打篮球, 是吗 (/不是吗)?
3) 王先生打不打篮球?
4) 王先生是不是打篮球?

Have you had your breakfast?
1) 你吃过早饭了吗? Ni\textsuperscript{3} chi\textsuperscript{1}guo\textsuperscript{4} zao\textsuperscript{3}fan\textsuperscript{4} le ma\textsuperscript{1}?
2) 你吃过早饭了, 是吗 (/不是吗)?
3) 你吃过没吃过早饭?
4) 你吃没吃过早饭?

\textbf{Special Note:} The functional word “有” is also used in some areas in China as a perfect tense marker, but it is not traditionally considered as a standard expression, such as the following examples marked with a ※ to show they deviate from the standard.
Verbal Chain Predicate

If the predicate of the sentence is a word group formed by a series of verbs or verb phrases (as described in Chapter Four), it is considered as a verbal chain predicate, in which a transitive verb can also have its own object.

1) 客人们坐下休息。Ke⁴ren²men zuo⁴xia⁴ xiu¹xi¹.
   WFW: Guests sit down rest.
   FI: The guests sat down to have a rest.
2) 学生站起来发言。Xue²sheng¹ zhan⁴qi³lai² fa¹yan².
   WFW: Student stand up make speech.
   FI: The student stood up to speak.
3) 我发邮件通知他。Wo³ fa¹you²jian⁴ tong¹zhi¹ta¹.
   WFW: I send email inform him.
   FI: I will send an email to inform him.
4) 有人打电话找你。You³ren² da³ dian⁴hua⁴ zhao³ni³.
   WFW: Have man make telephone look-for you.
   FI: There is someone calling for you on the phone.
5) 我们来中国学习汉语。Wo³men lai²zhong¹guo²xue²xi²han⁴yu³.
   WFW: We come China study Mandarin.
   FI: We have come to China to study Mandarin.
6) 我们计划去欧洲旅游。Wo³men ji⁴hua⁴qu¹zhou¹lv³you².
   WFW: We plan go Europe travel.
   FI: We plan to travel to Europe.
7) 他发短信告诉我了。Ta¹fa¹duan³xin⁴gao⁴su⁴wo³le.
   WFW: He send short message tell me [AS].
   FI: He has informed me by sending a cell phone text message.

Pivot-construction Predicate

In the verbal chain as described above, the object of the predicate verb of the first part of a sentence is taken to be the subject of the running-on sentence and takes another predicate verb. Therefore, the predicate part is a sentence itself, and the noun or pronoun in the middle that has the double
The pivot construction predicate can also contain more than one “pivot” word or it can continue to take a verbal chain construction, and thus become more complicated.

8) 我请他找人修理电脑。Wo⁴ qing⁴ ta⁴ zhao⁴ ren⁴ xiu⁴ li⁴ dian⁴ nao⁴.  
WFW: I (Me) invite he (ask) person (man) fix computer.  
FI: I’ll ask him to find someone to fix the computer.

9) 他通知我发邮件让同事都来。Ta¹ tong¹ zhi¹ wo³ fa¹ you² jian⁴ rang⁴ tong² shi² dou¹ lai².  
WFW: He inform I (me) send email let colleagues all come.  
FI: He told me to send an email to ask all our colleagues to come.

10) 老板让我请客户稍等。Lao³ ban³ rang⁴ wo³ qing³ ke⁴ hu⁴ shao¹ deng³.  
WFW: Boss let me (I) ask customer little-while wait.  
FI: The boss asked me to let the customer wait a for a moment.
Double-Object Predicate

The double-Object Predicate is similar in some aspects to its English counterpart but different in others. Basically it can be classified into the following groups:

Give-And-Get Category

This category largely corresponds to the English pattern of “give/present somebody something”.

1) 我们送了他一件礼物。Wo³men song⁴ le ta¹ yi²jìan⁴ li³wu⁴.
WF: We sent him (him) one [MW] gift.
FI: We gave/presented him a gift.
2) 他还了小李十块钱。Ta¹ huan² le xiao³ li³ shi³kuai⁴qian².
WF: He return [AS] Little Li 10 Yuan.
FI: He has returned 10 Yuan to Xiao Li.
3) 那个房地产公司卖给我一所房子。Na⁴ge⁴ fang²di¹chan³ gong¹si¹ mai⁴ ge³ wo³ yi¹suo³ fang²zi.
FI: That real estate company sold me a house.
4) 我买了他们一所房子。Wo³ mai³le ta¹men yi¹suo³ fang²zi.
FI: I (have) purchased a house from them.
5) 有人拿走了我一张邮票。You³ ren² na² le wo³ yi¹zhang¹ you²piao⁴.
WF: Have (There is) man (person) take [AS] I one [MW] stamp.
FI: Someone has taken (away) a stamp of mine.
6) 我想问你一个问题。Wo³ xiang³ wen⁴ni³ yi²ge⁴ wen⁴ti².
WF: I want ask you one [MW] question.
FI: I want to ask you a question (I have a question to ask you).
7) 老师可以放你三天假。Lao⁴shi¹ ke⁴yi¹ fang³ ni¹ tian³jia⁴.
WF: Teacher can release you three day leave (off-work)
FI: The teacher can let you have three days off.

Naming-And-Calling Category

This category includes the pattern of verbs used to address somebody or naming something with a specific title or label.
1) 我们都称他活字典。Wo men dou cheng ta huo zi dian.
WFW: We all call he (him) living dictionary.
FI: We all called him a living dictionary.

2) 有人骂他大傻瓜。You ren ma ta da sha gua.
WFW: Have (There be) man (person) scold he (him) big fool.
FI: Someone has scolded him for being a big fool.

3) 人们称他专家。Ren men cheng ta zhuang jia.
WFW: People call him specialist.
FI: They call him a specialist.

4) 他们都叫我老杜。Ta men dou jiao wo lao du.
WFW: They all call (name/address) I (me) Old Du.
FI: They all call me Old Du.

Para-Object Category

When a construct is positioned in the sentence as a direct object but does not actually serve this function, it may be called a para-object, such as the underlined words in the following examples which give times and frequency.

1) 你等我一会儿。Ni deng wo yi hui er.
WFW: You wait I (me) a while
FI: Please wait for me a while.

2) 那个人来过一次。Na ge ren lai guo yi ci.
WFW: That person (man) come [AS] one time [MW].
FI: He has been here once.

3) 他吃了父母一辈子。Ta chi le fu mu yi bei zi.
WFW: He eat [AS] parent one whole life [MW].
FI: He has lived on his parents all his life.

4) 老师批评了他几句。Lao shi pi ping le ta ji ju.
WFW: Teacher criticize [AS] he several sentence (word) [MW].
FI: The teacher said a few words criticizing him.

5) 我叫了他一声。Wo jiao le ta yi sheng.
WFW: I call [AS] he one voice [MW].
FI: I called him once.

Special Notes: It should be noted that the word 叫 only partly and loosely corresponds to the English word “call”, and so if you call somebody by telephone, you have to make it clear by using “打电话”—to make a telephone call, or a call by telephone. In Chinese, the structure would then become a verbal chain:
6) 打电话叫我一下。Da³dian⁴hua⁴ jiao⁴ wo³ yi²xia.
WFW: Make (literally “beat”) telephone call me once.
FI: Give me a call.

**Predicate of Ba-Fronted Object**

The word “把” (ba³) is used to mark the front-position object in a sentence.

1) 我把那本书借给同学了。Wo⁴ ba⁴ na⁴ ben⁴ jie⁴ gei⁴ tong⁴xue⁴ le.
FI: I have lent that book to my classmate.

2) 我们把他称作活字典。Wo³men ba³ ta¹ cheng¹ zuo⁴ huo² zi³dian³.
WFW: We [BA] he call (name) living dictionary.
FI: We called him a living dictionary.

3) 他已经在把钱还给我了。Ta¹ yi³jing¹ ba³ qian² huan² gei³ wo³ le.
WFW: He already [BA] money return [P] I (me) [AS/SFP].
FI: He has already returned the money to me.

4) 我把钥匙留在房间里了。Wo³ ba³ yao⁴shi liu² zai² fang²jian¹ le.
FI: I have left the key in the room.

5) 他们把会议室打扫干净了。Ta¹men ba³ hui⁴yi⁴shi⁴ da³sao³ gan¹jing le.
WFW: We [BA] meeting room sweep clean [AS/SFP].
FI: We have cleaned up the room.

6) 我把这本书读完了。Wo³ ba³ zhe⁴ ben³ shu¹ du² wan² le.
FI: I have read this book through.

7) 他们把我当贵宾。Ta¹men ba³ wo³ dang¹ gui⁴bin¹.
WFW: They [BA] I (me) regard dear guest.
FI: They regard me as a distinguished guest.

**The Passive Predicate**

The Chinese passive voice ([PS]) is formed with the logical object in front of the verb to serve as the grammatical sentence subject, as in English. A single character word functioning as a preposition is used to link the sentence subject and agent of the action, but no link verb like the English “(to) be” is necessary. The preposition has basically the same semantic function as the English preposition “by”, and here are the four
most frequently used ones in this passive-voice structure: “被”, “让”, “叫”, and “给”. They are largely interchangeable and only differ slightly in the degree of formalness, with the first two being more formal than the latter two.

1) 杯子被我打破了。Bei\(1\)zi bei\(4\) wo\(3\) da\(3\) po\(4\) le.
   WFW: Cup [PS] I (me) break [AS].
   The glass (cup) was broken by me.
2) 他被老师叫去了。Ta\(1\) bei\(4\) lao\(3\)shi\(1\) jiao\(4\) qu\(4\) le.
   WFW: He [PS] teacher called away [AS].
   He is called away by the teacher.
3) 小偷让警察抓住了。Xiao\(3\)tou\(1\) rang\(4\) jing\(3\)cha\(2\) zhua\(1\) zhu\(4\) le.
   WFW: Thief [PS] police capture [AS].
   The thief is arrested by the police.
4) 我的词典被同学借走了。Wo\(3\)de ci\(2\)dian\(3\) bei\(4\) tong\(2\)xue\(2\) jie\(4\) zou\(3\) le.
   WFW: My dictionary [PS] classmate borrow away [AS].
   My dictionary is borrowed by a classmate.
5) 他让父亲骂了一顿。Ta\(1\) rang\(4\) fu\(4\)qin ma\(4\) le yi\(2\) dun\(4\).
   WFW: He [PS] father scold [AS] [MW].
   He was scolded by his father.
6) 那段历史被改写了。Na\(4\) duan\(4\) li\(4\)shi\(3\) bei\(4\) gai\(3\) xie\(3\) le.
   That period of history has been re-written (distorted).
7) 他给人骗了。Ta\(1\) gei\(3\) ren\(2\) pian\(4\) le.
   WFW: He [PS] man (people) cheat [AS].
   He is cheated (taken in).
8) 传统正被改变。Chuan\(2\)tong\(3\) zheng\(4\) bei\(4\) gai\(3\)bian\(4\).
   WFW: Tradition [AD] [PS] change.
   The tradition is being changed.
9) 客人被带到了休息室。Ke\(4\)ren\(2\) bei\(4\) dai\(4\) dao\(4\) le xiu\(1\)xi\(1\)shi\(4\).
   WFW: Guest(s) [PS] bring to [AS] repose room.
   The guest is taken to the refreshment room.

Special Notes: the passive-voice structure and passive meaning
It should be specially noted that in some Chinese sentences, there is the difference
between the above four words used in the passive structure and words that express
the passive meaning but don’t make the passive structure. In the former case, it is
only verbs that are led directly by these words, while in the latter case, what
follows look like verbs but actually function as nouns and can be preceded by “的”,
although this is often omitted. We call the words used in the latter case “patient
words” (or recipients) instead of passive markers. However, sentences using such
words can be translated into the passive voice if necessary. In the following examples, such words are in bold type.

1) 他遭到了父亲 (的) 责骂。Ta¹ zao¹ dao⁴ le fu⁴ qin (de) ze² ma⁴.
He was scolded by his father.
2) 她受到了老师 (的) 批评。Ta¹ shou⁴ dao⁴ le lao³ shi¹ (de) pi¹ ping².
She suffered the teacher’s criticism (...was criticized...).
3) 我得到了朋友 (的) 支持。Wo³ de² dao⁴ le peng² you³ (de) zhi¹ chi³.
WFW: I get [AS] friend(s) [DEG] support.
I got my friend’s (or friends’) support (...was supported...).
4) 他的论文受到了同事 (的) 好评。Ta¹ de lun⁴ wen² shou⁴ dao⁴ le tong² shi⁴ (de) hao³ ping².
WFW: His thesis encounter (get) [AS] colleague(s) [DEG] good comment.
His thesis has been well-appraised by his colleague(s).
5) 学生受到了老师 (的) 鼓励。Xue² sheng¹ shou⁴ dao⁴ le lao³ shi¹ (de) gu³ li⁴.
WFW: Student(s) get [AS] teacher [DEG] encourage(ment).
The student(s) has (have) been encouraged by the teacher.
6) 敌军遭受了严厉的打击。Di² jun¹ zao¹ shou⁴ le yan² li⁴ de da³ ji¹.
WFW: Enemy force(s) suffer [AS] harsh [DEG] attack(s).
The enemy force(s) suffered harsh attack(s).

Shi-De Construction

Shi-De construction refers to a special kind of predicate that is formed with the collocation of the judging word “是” (shi) and the auxiliary word “的” (de), thus assuming the pattern of “是...的”. There are basically two kinds of such a structure: one with the adjective word or phrase in between the two words, and the other with the verb or verbal phrase in between, respectively illustrated in the following.

Adjective De-Structure

1) 他是很勤奋的。Ta¹ shi¹ hen³ qin² fen⁴ de.
He is very diligent.
Verbal De-Structure

1) 来的都是客。Lai² de dou¹ shi⁴ ke⁴
All who come are guests (meaning all visitors are welcome).
2) 你是来留学的吗? Ni³ shi⁴ lai² liu² xue² de ma?
Are you here (Have you come) as an overseas student?
3) 他是来学汉语的吗? Ta¹ shi⁴ lai² xue² han⁴ yu³ de ma?
Is he (Has he come) here to study Mandarin?
4) 我是从美国来的。Wo³ shi⁴ cong² mei³ guo² lai² de.
I’m from (I come from) the US.
5) 您是乘飞机来的吗? Nin² shi⁴ cheng² fei¹ ji¹ lai² de ma?
Have you come by plane?
6) 语言是必须学好的。Yu³ yan² shi⁴ bi⁴ xue¹ xue² hao³ de.
A language must be learned well.
7) 这本书是他借给我的。Zhe⁴ ben³ shu¹ shi⁴ ta¹ jie⁴ gei³ wo³ de.
This [MW] book is what he lent to me.
8) 说到 (的) 是要能做到的。Shuo¹ dao⁴ (de) shi⁴ yao⁴ zuo⁴ dao⁴ de.
What is said should be done.
9) 这些东西不是卖的。Zhe⁴ xie¹ dong¹ xi bu² shi⁴ mai⁴ de.
These things are not for sale.

Special Notes
1) The construction carries a stronger affirmative tone than the same sentence without “是” and “的”. For this reason, it is usually employed for clarifying doubts or tacit questions.
2) A reply to an interrogative sentence using this construction is either “是的” or “不是的”.

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CHAPTER SIX

COMPLEX SENTENCES AND COMPACT SENTENCES

Differences between the Complex Sentence and Simple Sentence

With the topic-prominent feature of Chinese sentences, the frequent use of the comma between word groups and clauses, omission of sentence subjects, and paratactic sentence structure, it is often hard to draw the division line between single sentences and complex ones in Chinese. Even to date, there are controversial points of view among scholars of the Chinese language. However, there are some general distinctive points that most Chinese linguists agree on, such as the following:

1. Difference One

A complex sentence (CS) has two or more subject + predicate structures, while a simple sentence (SS) has only one, even though its subject or predicate can be a combination of more than one words or word groups.

1) 小李是学生，小张也是学生。(CS) Xiao³li³ shi⁴ wo³ xue²sheng¹, xiao³ zhang¹ ye³ shi⁴ xue²sheng¹. Xiao Li is a student, and so is Xiao Zhang.
2) 小李和小张都是学生。(SS) Xiao³li³ he² xiao³zhang¹ dou¹ shi⁴ xue²sheng¹. Xiao Li and Xiao Zhang are both students.
3) 风停了，雨也停了。(CS) Feng¹ ting² le, yu³ ye³ ting² le. The wind ceased, and so did the rain.
4) 风和雨都停了。(SS) Feng¹ he² yu³ dou¹ ting² le. The wind and rain both ceased.
5) 王老师在上海，赵老师在北京。(CS) Wang² lao³shi¹ zai⁴ shang⁴hai³, zhao⁴
lao⁴ shi⁴ zai⁴ Bei⁴ jing⁴.  
Teacher Wang is in Shanghai, and Teacher Zhao is in Beijing.  
6) 王老师、赵老师分别在上海和北京。 (SS) Wang² lao³ shi¹  
zhaò⁴ lao³ shi¹  
fen² bie² zai⁴ shang⁴ hai³ he² Bei³ jing¹.  
Teacher Wang and Teacher Zhao are respectively in Shanghai and  
Beijing.  
7) 你学汉语，我学汉语，他也学汉语。 (CS) Ni³ xue² han⁴ yu³, wo³  
xue² han⁴ yu³, ta¹ ye³ xue² han⁴ yu³.  
You learn Mandarin, I learn Mandarin, and so does he.  
8) 你、我、他都学汉语。 (SS) Ni³ wo³ ta¹ dou¹ xue³ han⁴ yu³.  
You, he and I all learn Mandarin.  
9) 时间是金钱，时间是生命。 (CS) Shi² jian¹ shi⁴ jin¹ qian², shi² jian¹  
shí⁴ sheng¹ ming⁴.  
Time is money; time is life.  
10) 时间是金钱和生命。 (SS) Shi² jian¹ shi⁴ jin¹ qian² he² sheng¹ ming⁴.  
Time is (means) money and life.  
11) 我有两本词典，一本是英中词典，一本是中英词典。 (CS) Wo³  
you² liang² ben³ ci² dian³, yi¹ ben³ shì⁴ yìng¹ zhong¹ ci² dian³, yi¹ ben³  
shì⁴ zhong¹ yìng¹ ci² dian³.  
I have two dictionaries, one is English-Chinese and the other is  
Chinese-English.  
12) 我的两本词典，一本是英中词典，一本是中英词典。  
Of my two dictionaries, one is English-Chinese and the other is  
Chinese-English.  

In the above, examples marked with odd numbers are all considered to  
be complex sentences, while those marked with even numbers are taken as  
simple ones. Sentences 1), 3) and 5) all have two subject-predicate  
structures, and sentence 7) has three. Sentence 9) also has two subject-  
predicate structures in spite of the repetition of the subject word. Sentence  
8) has one subject made of three personal pronouns in the sentence.  
Sentence 10) has one predicate made of two words. Sentence 11) has three  
clauses, and sentence 12) has one subject served by a noun phrase (我的两  
本词典).  

2. Difference Two  
A complex sentence has two or more sentence predicates separated  
with a pause in speech or a comma in writing, while a simple sentence has
only one predicate, even if it contains the same verbs or verbal phrases as the complex sentence. In the former case, the subject of the latter clause is considered to be omitted in the context, and in the latter, the verbs or verb phrases are regarded as word groups in the same clause.

1) 他离开家乡，去了国外。 (CS) Ta¹ li²kai¹ jia¹xiang¹, qu⁴ le guo²wai⁴.
He left his homeland, and went abroad.
2) 他离开家乡去了国外。 (SS)
He left home for abroad.
3) 我知道他，很聪明。 (CS) Wo³ zhi¹dao⁴ ta¹ hen³ cong¹ming².
I know him, he is very intelligent.
4) 我知道他很聪明。 (SS)
I know he is very intelligent.

5) 他教我们汉语，教得很好。 (CS) Ta¹ jiao¹ wo³men han⁴yu³, jiao¹ de hen³ hao³.
He teaches us Mandarin, and does it very well.
6) 他教我们汉语教得很好。 (SS)
He taught us Mandarin very well.
7) 学生打扫了教室，打扫得很干净。 (CS) Xue²sheng¹ da³sao³ le jiao⁴shi⁴, da³sao³ de hen³ gan¹jing⁴.
The students have cleaned the classroom, and made it very clean.
8) 学生打扫教室打扫得很干净。 (SS)
The students have done a good job cleaning the classroom.

In the above examples, those with clauses separated by a comma are considered to be complex sentences because the clauses are understood as independent predicates with the repetition of subjects in the succeeding clauses omitted. Therefore, it is obvious that the punctuation mark plays a deciding role in the above examples. And what in modern Chinese is different from English is that there is a special punctuation mark called “the pause mark”, which is used mainly in between a series of items. The part separated with this mark in a sentence is considered as a single item in a list and hence the sentence is taken as a simple one. The following example can demonstrate this difference more clearly.

She is generous and beautiful.
9) 她大方漂亮。 (SS) Ta¹ da⁴fang piao⁴liang.
10) 她大方，漂亮。 (SS)
11) 她大方，漂亮。（CS）
12) 她大方；漂亮。（CS）

Here it should be noted that sentences 9) and 10) are considered to be simple ones while sentences 11) and 12) are taken as complex ones.

3. Difference Three

In a complex sentence, a construct separated by a comma cannot be taken within the other clause as its grammatical component, while in a simple sentence there is a main verb (such as “说” and “认为” in sentences 1, 3 and 6) that governs all separated components.

1) 妈妈说：时间到了，你该起床了。 (SS) Ma¹ma shuo¹: shi’jian¹ dao⁴ le, ni³ gai¹ qi’chuang² le.
Mother said, “It’s time, for you to get up”.
2) 时间到了，你该起床了。 (CS)
It’s time, and you ought to get up.
3) 老师告诉我说，“因为你努力，所以你取得了好成绩。” (SS)
Lao³ shí¹ gāo⁴ su⁴ wò³ shuò¹, “yīn³ wèi² nǐ³ lì⁴, suǒ³ yī³ nǐ³ qu³ dé² le hào³ chéng² jì⁴”.
The teacher told me, “because you worked hard, you have got good results.”

4) 因为你努力，所以你取得了好成绩。（CS）
Because you worked hard, you have got good results.

5) 我认为，学习汉语要先学好声调，声调是口语的基础。（SS）
Wǒ³ rén⁴ wèi², xué² hàn⁴ yǔ³ yáo⁴ xiàn¹ xuè² hào³ shēng¹ diào⁴,
shēng¹ diào⁴ shí⁴ kòu³ yú³ de jǐ¹ chu³.
I believe that in learning Mandarin, one should first learn the tones well, for it is the basics of the spoken language.

6) 学习汉语要先学好声调，声调是口语的基础。（CS）
I believe that in learning Mandarin, one should first learn the tones well, for it is the basics of the spoken language.

In the above examples, the odd numbers are regarded as simple sentences, while the even numbers are complex ones.

### 4. Difference Four

A complex sentence in formal writing or speech is often made up with function words giving the relations between the clauses. However, since many such Chinese words can be used either as prepositions or connectives, it is therefore important to distinguish simple sentences using prepositions that are same as the connectives in complex sentences. The basic standard for discriminating the two is: prepositions in simple sentences are followed by nouns or noun phrases, while connectives in complex sentences are followed by verb phrases. Therefore, the examples with odd numbers in the following are simple sentences, and those with even numbers are complex ones.

1) 为了家庭，他工作很努力。（SS）
Wèi³ le jīn² tíng², tā¹ gōng¹ zuò⁴ hén³ nǚ³ lì³.
For the sake of his family, he works very hard.

2) 为了维持家庭生活，他工作很努力。（CS）
For maintaining (To maintain) family subsistence, he works very hard.
Complex Sentences and Connectives

The clause connectives such as “为了”, “由于”, “因为” and “除了” in the above are frequently used as complex sentence markers, especially in more formal writing or speech, although there is certainly a crossing of the formal and informal styles. What’s more, these connectives may often be used in collocation with other words to form fixed structures. Therefore, learning to use the connectives in the right collocation is usually understood as the basics for making complex sentences, especially in formal writing. In the following, we provide more examples of the use of such connectives, which make explicit the different relations of the clauses.
1. Conditions

There are quite a few connectives used in complex Chinese sentences to indicate conditional clauses. However, since Chinese does not have morphological changes in general to show the grammatical functions of verbs, understanding whether the conditions are subjunctive or not often depends on the context. There are basically three kinds of conditional sentences in Chinese, respectively listed as follows.

A. Positive Conditionals: if ..., then....

如果 ru²guo³... 就 jiu³...; 只要 zh³iyao⁴... 就...; 只有 zh³you³... 才 caí²...
既然 ji¹ran²... 就 jiu³...; 万一 wan⁴yi¹... 就...; 要是 yao⁴shi⁴... 就...
1) 如果下雨，运动会就推迟。Ru²guo³ xia⁴yu³, yun⁴dong¹hui⁴ jiu⁴ tuí¹chi².
   If it rains, the sports meet will be put off.
2) 如果电脑出现故障，你就找他帮忙。Ru²guo³ dian⁴nao³ chu¹xian⁴ gu⁴zhang⁴, ni³ jiu⁴ zhao³ ta¹ bang¹mang².
   In case the computer is faulty, you can ask him for help.
3) 我下周只要有空，就一定过来看你。Wo³ xia⁴zhou¹ zhi³yao⁴ you³ kong⁴, jiu⁴ yi²ding⁴ guo³laí² kan⁴ ni³.
   I will certainly come over to see you next week if I am free.
4) 只有在收到你的确认以后，我才能签订合同。Zhi³you³ zai⁴ shou¹ dao⁴ ni³ de que¹ren⁴ yi³hou⁴, wo³ caí² neng² qian¹ding⁴ he² tong.
   Only after receiving your confirmation can I sign the contract.
5) 既然这东西并不那么便宜，那我就不买了。Ji¹ran² zhe⁴ dong¹xi bing⁴ bu² na‘me pian²yi, na³ wo³ jiu⁴ bu¹ mai³ le.
   If this thing is not so cheap, I will not buy it.
6) 万一出现紧急情况，就从这里出去。Wan⁴yi¹ chu¹xian⁴ jin³ji² qing²kuang⁴, jiu⁴ cong² zhe³li³ chu¹qu⁴.
   In case there should be some emergency, you (we) could get out from here.

B. Concessive Conditionals: even if ..., still...

即使 ji²shi³... 也 ye³...; 就算 jiu⁴suan⁴... 也...
1) 老师讲的他即使没有完全理解，也都记住了。Lao³shi¹ jiang³de ta¹ ji²shi³ mei²you³ wan²quan² li³jie³, ye³ dou¹ jì zhu⁴ le.
What the teacher has said is all learned by heart, even if it is not fully understood.

2) 即使遇到很大的困难, 你也要坚持下去。 Ji³shí³ yu⁴ dao⁴ hen³ da⁴ de kun⁴ nan², ni³ yé³ yao⁴ jian¹ chi² xia⁴ qu⁴.

Whatever great difficulty you encounter, you should hold on.

3) 即使会长不能来, 我们也要开会。 Ji³shí³ hui⁴ zhang³ bu⁴ neng² lai², wo³men ye³ yao⁴ kai¹ hui⁴.

Even if the president cannot spare time to come, the meeting will still be held.

4) 就算我们有很多钱, 那也不能浪费。 Jiù⁴ suàn⁴ wo³men you³ hen³ duo¹ qian², na⁴ yé³ bu⁴ neng² lan⁴ fei⁴.

However rich we are, we cannot waste.

C. Excluding Conditionals: whatever ..., still ....

无论 wùlùn⁴ ... 都 dòu¹ ... ; 不管 bù guān³ ... 都 ...  
1) 无论是谁, 都要遵守交通规则。 Wu² lùn⁴ shì⁴ shuì², dòu¹ yào⁴ zun¹ shòu¹ jiao¹ tong¹ guì¹ ze².

Whoever it is, he has to follow traffic rules.

2) 无论做什么事情, 都要尽量做好。 Wu² lùn⁴ zuò⁴ shén² me shì⁴ qìng⁴, dòu¹ yào⁴ jìn⁴ liáng⁴ zuò⁴ hǎo³.

Whatever work you (we) do, you (we) must try to do it well.

3) 无论天气怎么样, 活动都会照常进行。 Wu² lùn⁴ tian¹ qì⁴ zen³ me yáng⁴, huo² dong⁴ dòu¹ hui⁴ zhào¹ cháng² jìn⁴ xíng².

Whatever the weather conditions, the activity will be held as scheduled.

4) 不管在哪里, 我都要把汉字学好。 Bù guān³ zài¹ na³ lǐ¹, wo⁴ dòu¹ yào⁴ bǎ³ hàn⁴ zi³ xue² hào³.

However hard it is, I will learn Chinese characters well.

5) 不管谁来借, 我都不给。 Bù guān³ shuì² lai² jie⁴, wo³ dòu¹ bu⁴ gei³.

Whoever comes to borrow, I will not lend.

2. Reason-Result and Cause-Effect

There are quite a few connectives showing the reason-result or cause-effect relations between the clauses in complex sentences, similar in meaning to the English “because” and “therefore”. However, unlike these two English words, which do not appear in the same sentence at once, the Chinese connectives can be used either in collocation with each other or
singularly, or they may even be completely omitted, especially in less formal speech. The most frequently used ones are as follows:

**because, for the reason, therefore, so**

因为 yin^1 wei^2...; 由于 you^2 yu^2...; 所以 suo^3 yi^3...; 因而 yin^1 er^3...; 因此 yin^1 ci^3...

1) 因为老师生病了，所以明天我们停课。Yin^1 wei^2 lao^3 shi^1 sheng^1 bing^4 le, suo^3 yi^3 ming^2 tian^1 wo^3 men ting^1 ke^4.

Because the teacher is ill, our classes tomorrow are cancelled.

2) 由于长期劳累，他生病了。You^2 yu^2 chang^2 qi^1 lao^2 lei^4, ta^1 sheng^1 bing^4 le.

As a result of long-term fatigue, he has fallen ill.

3) 因为钱不够，所以他没有买那台电脑。Yin^1 wei^2 qian^2 bu^2 gou^4, suo^3 yi^3 ta^1 mei^2 you^2 mai^3 na^4 tai^2 dian^4 nao^3.

Because of a cash shortage, he didn’t buy that computer.

4) 由于突然停电，他电脑里的文件丢了。You^2 yu^2 tu^1 ran^2 ting^2 dian^4, ta^1 dian^4 nao^3 li^3 de wen^2 jian^4 diu^1 le.

Because of a sudden power-off, the file on his computer is lost.

5) 明天有台风，运动会因此(/因而)推迟。Ming^2 tian^1 you^3 tai^2 feng^1, yun^4 dong^4 hui^1 yin^1 ci^3 (yin^1 er^3) tui^1 chi^2.

There will be a typhoon, and so the sports meet will be put off.

### 3. Turn of Meaning

To indicate the turn of meaning in a complex sentence, Chinese also has words like the English “although” and “but”. However, it should be noted that Chinese allows the use of both such words at once in the same sentence, although one of them can also be omitted. The following show some examples.

**although, even though; b) but, however**

a) 虽然 sui^1 ran^2...; 尽管 jin^3 guan^3...

b) 但是 dan^4 shi^4...; 可是 ke^3 shi^4...; 还是 hai^2 shi^4...; 仍然 reng^2 ran^2...; 却 que^4...

1) 他们兄弟两人虽然长得很像，但是性格不同。Ta^1 men xiong^1 di^4 liang^3 ren^2 sui^1 ran^2 zhang^3 de hen^3 xiang^4, dan^4 shi^4 xing^4 ge^2 bu^4 tong^2.

The two brothers look like one another, but they are different in character.
2) I have received your e-mail, but haven’t found time to reply.

3) This laptop is big in size, but it’s very light in weight.

4) In spite of the bad weather, the sports meet is being held on time.

4. Furthering of Degree

not only... b) but also...
不但...; 不仅...; 不光 (/只)...
而且 er² qie³...; 还 hai²...
1) He not only speaks English, but also French and Japanese.
2) He not only speaks Putonghua well, but also writes Chinese characters beautifully.
3) We (you) should not only say it well, but also do it well.
4) To learn a language it is not only necessary to learn speaking, but also reading and writing.

5. Choice Selection

A. Definite Selection

better than...; rather than...
与其 yu⁴ qi²...不如 bu⁴ ru²...; 宁可 ning⁴ ke³...也 ye³...
1) You should not only speak English, but also write Chinese characters beautifully.
It is better to get on the internet and check emails than wasting time here for nothing.

2) 我与其饿着肚子，不如先随便吃点什么。Wo³ yu³ qi² e⁴ zhe du⁴ zi, bu⁴ ru² xian¹ sui² bian⁴ chi¹ dian³ shen² me.

I’d rather take the liberty to have anything to eat rather than go hungry.

3) 小李宁可给我发邮件，也不愿意打电话通知我。Xiao³ li³ ning⁴ ke³ gei³ wo³ fa¹ you² jian⁴, ye³ bu² yuan⁴ yi⁴ da³ dian⁶ hua⁴ tong⁴ zhi¹ wo³.

Little Li would rather send an email to me than inform me by phone.

B. Indefinite Selection

… or…; if…, (then)…

或者 huo⁴ zhe³ …或者…; 不是 bu² shi⁴ …就是 jiu⁴ shi⁴ …; 是 shi⁴ …还是 hai² shi⁴ …; 也许 ye³ xu³ …也许

1) 或者你去找她，或者她来找你。Huo⁴ zhe³ ni³ qu³ zhao³ ta¹, huo⁴ zhe³ ta¹ lai² zhao³ ni³.

You may go and find her, or wait for her to come and find you.

2) 我或者去找工作，或者准备考研究生。Wo³ huo⁴ zhe³ qu⁴ zhao³ gong³ zuo⁴, huo⁴ zhe³ zhen³ bei⁴ kao³ jiu¹ sheng¹.

I will either go to find a job, or prepare for tests for graduate studies.

3) 不是把老虎打死，就是被老虎吃掉。Zhe⁴ shi³ hou² de ta⁴, bu² shi⁴ ba³ lao³ hu³ da⁴ si³, jiu⁴ shi⁴ bei⁴ lao³ hu³ chi¹ diao⁴.

Now if he doesn’t kill the tiger, he will be eaten by it.

4) 你是自己一个人去，还是和他们一起去？Ni³ shi⁴ zi¹ ji³ yi² ge⁴ ren² qu¹, hai² shi⁴ he² ta¹ men yi³ qi³ qu⁴?

Are you going alone or together with them?

5) 他没有来，也许生病了，也许家里有急事。Ta¹ mei² you³ lai², ye³ xu³ sheng¹ bing⁴ le, ye³ xu³ jia¹ li³ you³ ji² shi⁴.

He hasn’t come, perhaps because of illness, or some emergency at home.

6. Contrast Relation

Not…, but…

不(是) Bu² (shi⁴ )…而(是) er² (shi⁴ )…; 不 bu⁴ …反而 fan³ er³ …

1) 他不是要去美国，而是要去加拿大。Ta¹ bu² shi⁴ yao⁴ qu⁴ mei³ guo², er² shi⁴ yao⁴ qu⁴ jia¹ na² da².

He is not to go to the US, but to Canada.

2) 赵先生的太太不是护士，而是医生。Zhao⁴ xian¹ sheng de tai⁴ tai bu² shi⁴ hu⁴ shi, er² shi⁴ yi¹ sheng¹.
Mr. Zhao’s wife is not a nurse, but a doctor.

3) 我们不是说空话，而是要采取行动。Wo³men bu²shi⁴ shuo¹ kong¹ hua⁴, er³ shi⁴ yao⁴ cai³qu³ xing²dong⁴.
We are not saying empty words, but will take action.

4) 小王不是不想买车，而是没有那么多钱。Xiao³wang² bu²shi⁴ bu⁴ xiang³ mai³ qi⁴che¹, er² shi⁴ mei²you³ na⁴me duo¹ qian².
Little Wang is not unwilling to buy a car, but he doesn’t have that money.

7. Juxtaposed Relation

…and…; both…; …as well as…
既 (/又) ji¹ (/you⁴)…又…; 既(不) ji⁴ (bu⁴)…又(不) you⁴ (bu⁴)…; 既是 ji¹shì⁴…又
是…; 也 ye⁴…也…; 一边 yi⁴bian⁴…一边…; 一方面 yi⁴fang¹ mian⁴…另
ling⁴一方面…;
有时 yo³shì²…有时…; 一会儿 yi¹ huí⁴…一会儿…
1) 这个东西既好看, 又实用。Zhe⁴ ge¹ dong¹xi⁴ ji⁴ hao³ kan⁴, you⁴ shì² yong⁴.
This thing is both good-looking and utilizable.

2) 这孩子既聪明，又很喜欢读书。zhe⁴ hai²zi⁴ ji¹ cong¹ming, you⁴ hén³ xi³huan¹ du²shu¹.
Teacher Qian’s child is clever, and very fond of reading.

3) 很多女生既不喜欢地理，又不喜欢历史。Hen³ duo¹ nv³sheng¹ ji⁴ bu⁴ xi³huan¹ di³ting⁴; you⁴ bu⁴ xi³huan¹ li³shì³.
Many girl students in our class like neither geography nor history.

4) 马先生既是我的老师，又是我的好朋友。Ma³ xian¹sheng⁴ ji⁴ shì¹ wo³ de lao³ shì¹, you⁴ shì³ wo³ de hao³ peng²you.
Mr. Ma is both my teacher and a good friend.

5) 他(也)讲西班牙语，也讲葡萄牙语。Ta¹ (ye³) jiang³ xi¹ban¹ya² yu³, ye⁴ jiang³ pu²tao²ya² yu³.
He speaks both Spanish and Portuguese.

6) 孙博士一边听音乐，一边在网上查资料。Sun¹ bo²shi⁴ yi⁴bian¹ ting¹ yin¹yue⁴, yi⁴bian¹ zai⁴ wang³ shang³ cha² zì¹liao⁴.
Dr. Sun listens to music while browsing the net for (reference) materials.

7) 吸烟一方面损害自己的健康，一方面损害别人的健康。Xι¹ yán¹ yi⁴fang¹ mian⁴ sun³ hai⁴ zì⁴ji³ de jian⁴ kang¹, yi⁴fang¹ mian⁴ sun³ hai⁴ bie²ren² de jian⁴ kang¹.
Smoking harms one’s own health as well as others.
8) 我周末有时开车，有时步行。Wǒ3 niù3 shì2 kāi1 chē1, niù3 shì2 bu4 xīng4.
At weekends, I sometime drive out to enjoy the landscape, and sometimes go to the library to read.
9) 小孩一会儿跑过来，一会儿跑过去。Xiao3 hai² yì³ huì² pào³ guò³ lái², yì³ huì² pào³ guò³ qu⁴.
The child now runs up, now runs down.

8. Consecutive Sequence
(at) first…, then/later; …then…
(首) 先 (shǒu³) xiàn¹... 然后 ran² hòu⁴...; 先 xiàn¹... 再 zài⁴...; 刚 gang¹... 就 jiù⁴...;
一 yī¹... 就 jiù⁴...; 最初 (zhì chū¹) zuì⁴ chū¹ (zhì chū¹)... 后来 hòu⁴ lái²...; 开始

1) 首先我们首先听一听这段录音，然后口译。Shǒu³ xiàn¹ wǒ³ men shǒu³ xiàn¹ tíng⁴ yì⁴ tíng⁴ zhé⁴ duān⁴ yìn⁴, ran² hòu⁴ kòu³ yì⁴.
First, we’ll listen to this part of the recording, and then do interpretation based on the notes.
2) 他先把手上的东西放下，再拿钥匙开门。Tā¹ xiàn¹ ba³ shǒu³ shāng⁴ de dòng¹ xi fāng⁴ xià⁴, zài⁴ ná² yào⁴ shì kāi¹ men².
He first put the things in his hands down on the floor, and then took out the key to open the door.
3) 上课铃声刚响，老师就开始考试了。Shàng⁴ ke⁴ líng² shēng¹ gāng¹ xiāng³, lǎo³ shí¹ jiù² kāi¹ shí³ kǎo³ shí⁴ le.
No sooner had the bell rung for class than the teacher began the test.
4) 我一开电脑，就发现原来你早就给我写了邮件。Wǒ³ yì³ kāi¹ dìàn⁴ nǎo³, jiù² fān xiàn³ yuán² lái² nì³ zào³ jíu³ yuè³ wǒ³ xìé³ le niǎo³ jǐn³.
As soon as I started the computer, I found that you had already written me the email earlier.
5) 他一离开公司，就直接开车去了飞机场。Tā¹ yì³ lí² kāi¹ gōng¹ sì¹, jíu² zhí² jiè¹ kāi¹ chē¹ qu⁴ le fēi¹ jī¹ chǎng³.
He left the company and immediately drove to the airport.
6) 最初他说可以把那本书借给我，后来又说书找不见了。Zuì⁴ chū¹ tā¹ shuō¹ ke³ yì³ bā³ nà³ běn³ shū¹ jìe³ gei³ wǒ³, hòu⁴ lái² yǒu⁴ shuō¹ shū¹ zhào³ bu² jiàn⁴ le.
He first said he could lend me the book, but later said that it could not be found.
Compact Sentences

From the above section, we know that a complex sentence usually has a pause between the two clauses, marked by punctuation in writing. However, it should not be understood that this pause and/or punctuation is not indispensable. And when two clauses are linked directly without pause and/or punctuation, the complex sentence is changed into a compact one, which is in form a simple sentence but still expresses the same meaning of the original complex sentence. Usually, compact sentences can also have some link words directly inserted in the middle, but they may be somewhat different and simpler than those connectives in complex sentences, which would usually be understood as adverbs when used in sentences other than compact ones.

Examples of Change from Complex Sentences into Simple Sentences

1) 如果你想说，那就说吧。Ru² guo³ ni³ xiang³ shuo¹, na⁴ jiu⁴ shuo¹ ba
   →如果你想说，那就说吧。
   If you want to speak, just go on.
2) 这件事情不管我怎么说，也说不清。Zhe⁴ jian⁴ shi⁴ qing bu⁴ guan³
   wo³ zen³ me shuo¹, ye³ shuo¹ bu⁴ qing¹.
   →这件事我说也说不清。
   As for this matter, I couldn’t explain clearly anyway.
3) 我吃了这东西以后，还想吃。Wo³ chi¹ le zhe⁴ dong¹ xi³ yi¹ hou⁴, hai²
   xiang³ chi¹
   →我吃了这东西还想吃。
   After eating this stuff, I still want to have more.
4) 你的房间大，而且也很亮。Ni³ de fang¹ jian¹ da⁴, er³ qie³ ye³ hen³
   piao⁴ liang
   →你的房间又大又亮。
   Your office is big and bright.
5) 你无论什么时候想来的话，都可以来。Ni³ wu² lun⁴ shen² me
   shi² hou⁴ xiang³ lai² dehua⁴, dou¹ ke³ yi³ lai²
   →你什么时候想来都可以 (来)。
   You can come whenever you want to.
6) 他常常工作到半夜，然后才休息。Ta¹ chang² chang² gong¹ zuo⁴
    dao² ban⁴ ye¹, ran² hou⁴ cai² xiu¹ xi
    →他常常工作到半夜才休息。
    He often works till midnight before taking a rest.
In the above six examples, each has a word serving as the internal link between the two parts, which in the complex sentence would be considered as two clauses. These six words (就, 也, 还, 又, 都, 才) are actually most frequently used as connectives in compact sentences although in other cases they just serve as adverbs. In the following, we will provide more examples of their uses.

**Compact Sentence Connectives**

The words serving the function of connections in compact sentences are usually one-character words originally serving the function of adverbs in regular sentences. The following six are generally known as the most frequently used: 就, 也, 还, 又, 都, and 才. The usage of these words is illustrated in the following.

1. 就 jiu⁴

1) 我们说干就干吧！Wo³ men shuo² gan⁴ jiu⁴ gan⁴ ba  
If we say we’ll do it, then let’s do it right now!
2) 你愿意卖我就愿意买。Ni³ yuan⁴ yi⁴ mai³ wo³ jiu⁴ yuan⁴ yi⁴ mai³  
If you will sell, I will buy.
3) 你问了他他就知道了。Ni³ wen⁴ le ta¹ jiu⁴ zhi¹ dao⁴ le  
If you had asked him, you would have known.
4) 你不说就没有人知道。Ni³ bu⁴ shuo¹ jiu⁴ mei² you³ ren² zhi¹ dao⁴  
If it is not said, it will not be known.
5) 他来我就走。Ta¹ lai² wo³ jiu⁴ zou³  
If he comes, I will leave.
6) 谁不听话就不给谁吃。Shui² bu⁴ ting¹ hua⁴ jiu⁴ bu⁴ gei³ shui² chi¹  
If anyone doesn’t listen, I will not let him (her) eat.

2. 也 ye³

1) 广东话怎么说也说不好。Guang³ dong¹ hua⁴ wo³ zen³ me shuo¹ ye shuo¹ bu⁴ hao³  
Somehow I can never speak Cantonese well.
2) 篮球我打也打不好。Lan² qiú² wo³ da⁴ ye da³ bu⁴ hao³  
I cannot play basketball well anyway.
3) 犯了错误也不要紧。Fan⁴ le cuo⁴ wu⁴ ye bu² yao⁴ jin³  
It doesn’t matter if you have made a mistake.
4) 再怎么说也不能就这样。Zai⁴ zen³ me shuo¹ ye bu⁴ neng² jiu⁴ zhe⁴ yang⁴
Under whatever circumstances, you cannot do so.
5) 她爱女儿也爱丈夫。Ta¹ ai⁴ nu³ er² ye ai⁴ zhang⁴ fu
She loves her daughter as well as her husband.
6) 我怎么也不生气。Wo³ zen³ me ye³ bu⁴ sheng¹ qi⁴
I won’t get angry under whatever circumstances.

3. 还 hai²

1) 我上完课还要做作业。Wo³ shang⁴ wan² ke⁴ hai² yao⁴ zuo⁴ ye⁴
After the class, I have yet to do the assignment.
2) 他看了还想看。Ta¹ kan⁴ le hai² xiang³ kan⁴
After seeing it once, he wants to see it a second time.
3) 我懂还问你？Wo² dong³ hai² wen⁴ ni³
If I understand, why do I ask you?
4) 你别错了还不承认。Ni³ bie² cui² le hai² bu⁴ cheng² ren⁴
You refuse to admit you are wrong.
5) 你这么晚还不睡觉？Ni³ zhe⁴ me wan³ hai² bu² shui⁴
It’s so late and you still won’t go to bed?
6) 你在中国还没有去过长城？Ni³ zai⁴ zhong¹ guo² hai² mei² you³ qu⁴ guo² chang² cheng²
You are in China and still haven’t been to the Great Wall?
7) 你有钱还怕买不到？Ni³ you³ qian² hai² pa³ mai³ bu² dao⁴
You have the money and still fear you can’t get it?

4. 又 you⁴

1) 她既大方又漂亮。Ta¹ ji⁴ da⁴ fang¹ you⁴ piao⁴ liang
She is as generous as she is pretty.
2) 这东西又贵又不实用。Zhe⁴ dong¹ xi you gui⁴ you⁴ bu⁴ shi² yong⁴
This thing is expensive and not of practical use.
3) 我们老师又讲汉语又讲英语。Wo³ shen² lao³ shi¹ you⁴ jiang³ han⁴ yu⁴ you⁴ jiang³ ying¹ yu³
Our teacher speaks Chinese as well as English.
4) 她丈夫刚出门又回来了。Ta¹ zhang⁴ fu gang¹ chu¹ men² you⁴ hui² lai le  
No sooner had her husband gone out than he returned.  
5) 现在他又没钱又没工作。Xian⁴ zai⁴ ta¹ you⁴ mei² qian² you⁴ mei² gong¹ zuo⁴  
Now he has neither money nor a job.  
6) 他们在一起又说又笑。Ta¹ men zai⁴ yi⁴ qi³ you⁴ shuo¹ you⁴ xiao⁴  
They talk and laugh while together.

5. 都 dou¹

1) 重要不重要都要做好。Zhong⁴ yao⁴ bu⁴ zhong⁴ yao⁴ dou¹ yao⁴ zuo⁴ hao³  
Important or not, it should be done well.  
2) 是遗憾是后悔都过去了。Shi⁴ yi² han⁴ shi⁴ hou⁴ hui³ dou¹ guo⁴ qu le  
A sorrow or regret, it’s over after all.  
3) 你走都走不动，还想跑步？Ni³ zou³ dou¹ zou³ bu² dong⁴, hai² xiang³ pao³ bu⁴  
You could not even walk, and you still want to run?  
4) 我现在忙都忙不过来。Wo³ xian⁴ zai⁴ mang² dou¹ mang² bu⁴ guo⁴ lai²  
Now I’m so busy and have no way out.  
5) 做都做了，后悔也没有用。Zuo⁴ dou¹ zuo⁴ le, hou⁴ hui³ ye³ mei² you³ yong⁴  
It’s done after all, and regret can’t help to change it.  
6) 怎么说他都不过分。Zen³ me shuo¹ ta¹ dou¹ bu² guo⁴ fen⁴  
Whatever you (we) say about him is not too much.  
7) 这样卖给谁谁都觉得便宜。Zhe⁴ yang⁴ mai³ gei³ shui² shui² dou¹ jue² de pian² yi⁴  
Selling it at such a price to anyone will make him think it’s cheap.

6. 才 cai²

1) 勤奋工作才能有成就。Qin² fen⁴ gong¹ zuo⁴ cai² neng² you³ cheng² jiu⁴  
Only through diligence can you (we/one) make achievements.  
2) 听懂了才能翻译。Ting¹ dong³ le cai² neng² fan¹ yi⁴  
Only after understanding can you (we/one) interpret.
3) 有钱才能买。You can only buy (it) when you have money.
4) 有灵感才能写出好诗。Only with inspiration can you work out good poems.
5) 坐飞机才能及时赶到。Only by air can you (we/one) arrive in time.
6) 我们收到银行确认才能发货。We can deliver the goods only on receiving the bank’s confirmation.
7) 我看了半天才看懂。I read (looked at) it for quite a while and only then did I understand it.

**Special Notes:** In fact, the line between compact sentences and simple ones is not always easy to draw. There are certainly overlaps between the two that still give rise to debate among Chinese grammaticians.

**Omission of Connectives in Compact Sentences**

In spite of the importance of connectives in compact sentences, they can be omitted, more often in an informal style but also in cases that are common to both the formal and informal language. This may make the comprehension of the exact meaning more dependent on the particular context. The following show some examples:

1) 你不 (就) 没人知道。No-one will know if you don’t tell.
2) 他来 (就) 走。If he comes, I will leave.
3) 犯了错误 (也) 不要紧。It doesn’t matter if you (anyone) have (has) made a mistake.
4) 我们死 (也) 不投降。We would rather die than surrender.
5) 你不要 (还) 找事。Don’t you look for (make) trouble for nothing.
6) 下雨 (就) 不上班。If it rains, we (you) don’t work.
7) 铃响 (后 /就) 上课。Class will begin when the bell rings.
怎么老是你？
“How old are you?”
(How can it always be you!)
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY:
FEATURES OF MANDARIN CHINESE

Taking a general review of what has been made apparent as distinctive features of Mandarin Chinese, we may come to the conclusion that it is, to a great extent, different from the English language in many aspects, phonological, morphological and syntactical. It is needless to say that there should also be great differences on the discourse or textual level. However, until we comprehend those differences in the sentences, we cannot really understand those in the text or discourse. To make a summary of the most prominent differences of this seemingly mysterious language, I will highlight the following seven distinctive features.

Feature One: Musicality in Words, Phrases and Sentences

Being the only major language of the world that is tonal—using tones in addition to pronunciation to express meaning—Chinese is certainly and naturally musical in nature, rich in all possible changes of tangible poetic rhythm and meter even in everyday speech. Learners who find its grammar difficult can feel the pleasure of enjoying the language by taking it as music. Apart from the diverse patterns of rises and falls and the various pitches in the tone patterns, the majority of double-character (-syllable) words, accompanied by frequent use of four-character (-syllable) phrases, all contribute to the sonorous and rhythmic speech using Chinese vocabulary.

Let’s take first, for example, the double-character (-syllable) words to see how they are often formed for musical rhythm rather than out of the necessity to express meaning, especially in speech when in contrast to classic or very formal writing. The fact is that double-character (-syllable) words are usually preferred, as exemplified in the following:
1. An additional single-syllable (-character) word tends to be added to the other as prefix or suffix, even if the meaning remains basically unchanged.

Using Suffix to Form Double-Syllable (-Character) Words

- 石 shì², stone: 石头 shí²tou
- 木 mù⁴, wood: 木头 mù⁴tou
- 母 mù³, mother: 母亲 mù³qín¹
- 父 fù⁴, father: 父亲 fù⁴qín
- 儿 ér³, son: 儿子 ér²zi
- 妻 qí¹, wife: 妻子 qí¹zi
- 儿 hái², child: 孩子 hái²zi
- 桌 zhuō¹, desk or table: 桌子 zhuō¹zi
- 椅 yǐ³, chair: 椅子 yǐ³zi
- 钉 dīng¹, nail: 钉子 dīng¹zi
- 筷 kuài⁴, chopstick(s): 筷子 kuài⁴zi
- 屋 wū¹, hut, dwelling: 屋子 wū¹zi
- 爸 bà⁴, father: 阿爸 ā¹ba, 老爸 lào³ba⁴
- 妈 mā¹, mother: 阿妈 ā¹ma¹, 老妈 lào³ma¹
- 女 nú³, daughter: 女儿 nú³er²
- 天 tiān¹, sky, heaven: 天空 tiān¹kong¹/天上 tiān¹shàng²
- 地 dì¹, sky, heaven: 空中 kōng¹zhōng¹/地上 dì¹zhāng²
- 海 hǎi³, sea: 海洋 hǎi³yánɡ²
- 日 rì°, daytime: 白天 bái²zhānɡ²
- 晚 wǎn³, evening, late in evening: 晚上 wǎn³shàng⁴, 晚夜 wǎn³yè⁴
- 田 tián², field: 田野 tián²di⁴
- 树 shù⁴—tree 树木, 树林 shù⁴mù⁴

2. Between synonyms of words or phrase with two syllables (characters) and those with three or more syllables (characters), the former are more frequently used.

- 大儿子 dà⁴ér²zi, elder/eldest son: 老大 lào³da¹
- 二儿子 èr³ér²zi, second son: 老二 lào³ér³
- 三舅爸/叔叔 sān³jiù⁴jiù/shū¹shū: the third uncle: 三舅 sān³jiù⁴
- 四川菜 sì³chuán¹cài⁴, Sichuan dish(es): 川菜 chuán¹cài⁴
- 广东菜 guǎng³dōng¹cài⁴, Cantonese dish(es): 粤菜 yuè⁴cài⁴
  (粤 is the short form of 广东)
- 你和我 ni³he²wo³, you and me: 你我 ni²wo³
- 黑与白 hēi¹yu³bái², black and white: 黑白 hēi¹bái²
Summary: Features of Mandarin Chinese

桌子和椅子 zhuo1zi he 2 yi3zi, desk(s)/table(s) and chair(s) 桌椅 zhuo1yi3

上面和下面 shang4mian4 he 2 xia4mian4, up(side) and down(side): 上下 shang4 xia4

左面和右面 zuo3mian4 he 2 you4mian4, left and right: 左右 zuo3 you4

碗和筷子 wan3 he 2 kuai4zi, bowl(s) and chopsticks: 碗筷 wan3 kuai4

彩色电视机 cai3 se4 dian4 shi4 ji1, color TV: 彩电 cai3 dian4

北京大学 bei3 jing1 da4 xue2, Beijing (Peking) University: 北大 bei3 da4

国家图书馆 guo2 tu2 shu1 guan3, National Library: 国图 guo2 tu2

文学、历史 wen2 xue, li4 shi3, literature and history: 文史 wen2 shi3

物理、化学 wu4 li, hua4 xue2, physics and chemistry: 理化 li3 hua4

高峰会议 gao1 feng1 hui4 yi3, summit meeting: 峰会 feng1 hui4

长距离赛跑 chang2 ju4 li2 sai4 pao3, long-distance running (race): 长跑 chang2 pao3

入学考试 da4 xue2 ru4 xue2 kao3 shi4, College/University Matriculation Examination: 大考 da4 kao3

移动电话 yi2 dong4 dian4 hua4, mobile (cell) phone: 手机 shou3 ji1

市内电话 shi4 nei4 dian4 hua4, city (local) call: 市话

长途电话 chang2 tu2 dian4 hua4, long-distance call: 长话 chang2 hua4

对外贸易 dui4 wai4 mao4 yi3, foreign trade: 外贸 wai4 mao4

家用电器 jia1 yong4 dian4 qi4, household electrical (appliances): 家电 jia1 dian4

中国国际旅行社 zhong1 guo2 guo2 ji1 lv3 xing2 she4, China International Travel Service: 国旅 guo2 lv3

3. A single-syllable (-character) word may repeat itself to become a word of two syllables

爸 ba4, father: 爸爸 ba4 ba
妈 ma1, mother: 妈妈 ma1 ma

爷/祖父 ye2 zu3 fu4, grandpa: 爷爷 ye2 ye
奶/祖母 nai3 zu3 mu3, grandma: 奶奶 nai3 nai

叔/舅舅 shu1 ji4, uncle on father’s/mother’s side: 叔叔/舅舅 shu1 shu1 ji4 ji4

伯 bo2, elder uncle on father’s side: 伯伯 bo2 bo

姑 gu1, aunt on father’s side: 姑姑 gu1 gu

哥 ge1, elder brother: 哥哥 ge1 ge

姐 jie3, elder sister: 姐姐 jie3 jie

妹 mei4, younger sister: 妹妹 mei4 mei

弟 di4, younger brother: 弟弟 di4 di
4. Between two expressions of basically the same meaning, the one with two syllables (characters) may be preferred, often for both rhythmic effects and a more specified meaning.

- 好 hao³, good: 不错 bu² cuo⁴, not bad
- 好 hao³, good: 很好 hen³ hao³, very good
- 错 cuo⁴, wrong: 不对 bu² duì⁴, not correct
- 坏 huài⁴, bad: 糟糕 zào¹ gāo¹, bad or ruined
- 来 lái², come: 过来 guò⁴ lái², come over
- 去 qu⁴, go: 过去 guò⁴ qu⁴, go over
- 忘 wàng⁴, forget: 忘记 wàng⁴ jì⁴, forget
- 跑 pào³, run: 跑步 pào³ bu⁴

**Special Notes:** While the majority of Chinese words have two characters, phrases or words of three or four characters are intermittently inserted into sentences for variety of expression and to avoid monotony. It should also be noted that some very influential Chinese works of literature have been exclusively written in three characters and four characters.

**Feature Two: Repetition of Characters and Words for Special Effect**

As seen in Chapter Three, the repetition of characters and words is a prominent feature of Chinese, which is employed for special semantic and grammatical functions such as differences in plurality, duration or other nuances in the language or style, as well as for prosodic effects. Actually, a character or a word in any part of speech may be repeated for a special function, except pronouns.

**Noun Repetition: for plurality or variety**

- 人人 ren² ren², every man, every person, all people
- 时时 shì¹ shì⁴, time and time, very often, now and then
- 事事 shì¹ shì⁴, every piece of work, everything to do, everything
- 处处 chǔ¹ chǔ⁴, from place to place, everywhere
- 家家 jiā¹ jiā¹, every household, every family
家庭，每家每户，every household, every family, every homestead or house
山山水水，每座山（山）和水，every mountain (hill) and patch of water, the whole landscape
日夜，日夜夜夜，every day and night, day and night, all time

Measure Word Repetition: for plurality

一件件礼物，一件件礼物，one gift after another, every gift
t一本书一本书，一本书一本书，one book after another, every book
t一条条大路，一条条大路，one road after another, all roads
一座座楼房，一座座楼房，one building after another, every building
一场场电影，一场场电影，one movie after another, one visit to the cinema after another
一次次尝试，一次次尝试，one try after another, many trials
一阵阵笑声，一阵阵笑声，one fit of laughter after another, fits of laughter

Verb Repetition: for duration, time of action and the related sense

看看书，来看书，(take some time to) read, read for a while
聊聊聊天，聊聊天，(take some time to) chat, chat for a while
吃吃饭饭，吃吃饭饭，(indulge in) eating and drinking, lead a loose life
玩玩扑克，玩玩扑克，play poker (sometimes), (take time to) play poker
听听音乐，听听音乐，(take time to) listen to/enjoy music
学学外语，学学外语，(take some time to) learn the (a) foreign language
学习学习汉语，学习学习汉语，(take some time to) learn Mandarin Chinese
考虑考虑这事，考虑考虑这事，(take some time to) consider/think over this matter.

Adjective Repetition: for reinforcement of degree, emphasis or variety

好好地，好好地，a very good child
红红的花，红红的花，fairly red flower, very red flower
小小的礼物，小小的礼物，rather small (meager) gift
高高低低的楼房  gao¹gao¹di¹di¹de lou²fang², buildings of various heights
大大小小的事情  da⁴da⁴xiao³xiao³de shi⁴qing, businesses of all different kinds
花花绿绿的衣服  hua¹hua¹lv⁴lv⁴de yi¹fu, bright and colorful clothes
仔仔细细的人  zi³zi³xi⁴xi⁴de ren², very meticulous person
认认真真的态度  ren¹ren¹zhen¹zhen¹de tai⁴du⁴, quite serious attitude

Adverb Repetition: for reinforcement of degree or emphasis

好好说 hao³hao³ shuo¹, speak with serous (good) mood
慢慢走 man⁴man⁴ zou³, walk slowly (often used to show concern to the other when parting)
快快跑 kuaì⁴kuaì⁴ pao³, run quickly
常常来 chang²chang²lai², come often
牢牢抓住 lao²lao² zhu¹zhu⁴, grasp firmly
刚刚离开 gang¹gang¹ li²kai¹, have just left
渐渐长大 jian⁴jian⁴zhang³da⁴, gradually/eventually grow up
早早起床 zao³zao³ qi¹chuang², get up early
急急匆匆地走 cong¹cong¹de zou³, walk hastily
马马虎虎地做 ma³ma³hu¹hu¹de zuo⁴, do something carelessly

Feature Three: Binary Organization and Topic-Prominence

Binary organization, one of the most frequently occurring phenomena in Chinese, is observed on all language levels, covering word formation, and the structures of phrases, word groups and sentences. This means that a language unit on whatever level would tend to be organized in two parts and would therefore be analyzed as such. With this tendency, the greatest number of words are composed of two characters; a phrase or word group usually has a central construct as the modified and a peripheral construct as the modifier, and most sentences are formed with the subject construct giving the theme or topic and the predicate construct giving the so-called rheme or comment.
Let’s take the sentence level. Although Chinese sentences certainly have the basic structural patterns like those of English, such as SV, SVO, SVC, etc., the most prominent Chinese sentence pattern is nevertheless one with the binary organization of Subject+Predicate, with the object and complement understood as being part of the predicate (comment). This tendency also explains why the English construct of Adjective+Noun is often translated into the sentence structure of Subject+Predicate in Chinese. The following examples serve to show this conversion, with the division line between Chinese sentence subject and predicate marked by a slash.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English Chinese Literal Rendition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a good book.</td>
<td>这本书/很好</td>
<td>This book very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a large country.</td>
<td>这个国家/很大</td>
<td>This country very large.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is a good singer.</td>
<td>他/唱歌很好</td>
<td>He sing very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is a tall man.</td>
<td>他/身材高大</td>
<td>He physical figure tall.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feature Four: Left-Branching Structure

The left-branching structure is also called “open-head structure”, which means that the sentence will tend to take additional constructs at the head for expansion, such as modifiers and qualifiers. This can be demonstrated by the following process of adding modifiers of the single-character word “书” (shu¹, book).

一 本书 yi⁴ben³shu¹
一本新书 yi⁴ben³xin¹shu¹
我的一本新书 wo³ de yi⁴ben³xin¹shu¹
I [DER] one [M] new book
A new book of mine
我买的一本新书 wo³ mai³de yi⁴ben³xin¹shu¹
A new book that I bought
我昨天买的一本新书 wo³ zuo²tian¹mai³de yi⁴ben³xin¹shu¹
I yesterday buy [DEC] one [M] new book
A new book of mine that I bought yesterday
我昨天在那里买的一本新书 wo³ zuo²tian¹zai⁴na⁴li³mai³de yi⁴ben³xin¹shu¹
A new book of mine that I bought there yesterday

Feature Five: Free Grammatical Functions of Parts of Speech

In Chinese, the grammatical function that a word can have is usually not bound by its part of speech. Actually, there are no strict rules in Chinese that require correspondence between the parts of speech of words and grammatical functions, with the only exception being adverbs (which are used only to modify adjectives and verbs in the predicate). The possibilities of different parts of speech serving various functions are as illustrated in the following table, with what is possible and not respectively marked with “+” and “−”.
Let’s take, for example, a noun, a verb and an adjective and see the multiple grammatical functions that they can possibly serve in different sentences.

1) **Noun 睛天 qìng²tian¹, fine day**

Subject: 睛天好。A fine day is good.
Predicate: 今天晴天。Today is a fine day.
Object: 这些天没有晴天。These days have no fine days.
Attributive: 晴天 (的) 时间。Time of a fine day (or fine days).
Adverbial: 晴天比赛。The match (race/competition) will be held on a fine day.
Complement: 明天是晴天。Tomorrow is (will be) a fine day.

2) **Verb 进行 jìn⁴xíng², proceed, go on, conduct**

Subject: 进行顺利 The process is smooth.
Predicate: 工作进行顺利。Work proceeds smoothly.
Object: 我们继续进行。We (will) continue to proceed.
Attributive: 进行的)速度 The speed of proceeding.
Adverbial: (no function)
Complement (of subject): 关键是进行。The key is (in) proceeding.
Complement (of object): 使工作进行 Make work proceed.

3) **Adjective 大 da⁴, big, great, large**

Subject: 大就是好。A big size is good (quality, etc.).
Predicate: 房间大得很。The room is very large.
Object: 我喜欢大。I like big things (size).
Attributive: 大孩子 Big child.
Adverbial: 我们大吃一顿。We eat (ate) to our hearts’ content.
Complement (of object): 把孩子养大 Bring the child (children) up.

**Feature Six: Dispensable or Omittable Sentence Subject**

Different from a typical English sentence in which the subject is usually not dispensable, a Chinese sentence may or may not require a subject to make it complete. There are two cases in such a situation: A) it can be omitted, and B) it is considered as unnecessary.

A. Omission of the Sentence Subject

他来了吗？——来了。
Has he come? – Yes(, he has).
你吃了吗？——吃了。
Have you eaten? – Yes(, I have).

B. Lack of a Sentence Subject

下雨了。
It is raining.
几点了？——8点了。
What time is it? – It’s 8 o’clock.

**Feature Seven: Rich in Parallel Structures**

Parallel structures are often found at all levels of Chinese words, phrases and sentences. On the level of words, Chinese is rich in two-character words in which one character is parallel to the other in meaning (see Chapter Three), and on the sentence level, two clauses may often be used together in parallel relation, with one setting off the meaning of the other by way of contrast or comparison.

种瓜得瓜，种豆得豆。zhòng⁴ guā¹ de² guā, zhòng⁴ dòu⁴ de² dòu⁴
Plant melons, and you get melons; plant beans and you get beans.
(One will reap what one has planted.)

路遥知马力，日久见人心。lù yáo² zhī² lì⁴, rì jiǔ³ jiàn⁴ xīn¹
A long road tells the strength of a horse, and a long time tells the heart of a man. (You will get to know the heart of a person through time.)

一回生二回熟。yī huí² shēng¹, èr huí² shú²
Once a stranger, and twice an acquaintance. (People will get to know each other through contact.)
Feature Eight: Rich Hyperboles and Exaggeration

The tendency to use means of exaggeration for expressing strong emotion is also a frequently observed phenomenon in Chinese. For this reason, not every character or word should be taken at face value, especially in literary writing. The reader of Chinese should be aware that the words are often used only to express the emotions of the writer. The following examples serve to show this tendency:

寸土寸金 cun⁴tu³ cun⁴jin¹
Each cun (Chinese inch) of land is equal to a cun of gold ingot.

倾盆大雨 qing¹pen² da⁴yu³
Rain like it is pouring from a basin.

鹅毛大雪 e²mao² da⁴xue³
Big snow(flakes) like geese feather(s).

他暴跳如雷。ta¹ bao⁴tiao⁴ ru²lei²
He (has) got into a fit of anger like thunder.

我半天没有读懂。wo³ ban⁴tian¹ mei²you³ du²dong³
I could not understand after reading for half a day.

我们俩真是千载难逢! wo³men² zhen¹shi⁴qian¹zai²nan²feng¹
It is really hard for us two to meet even once in a thousand years!

By no means regarded as exhaustive, the above features are nevertheless the most frequently observed on the lexical and sentence level.
Other features may include the paratactic structure, lack of conjunctions, imprecise number use, etc. These we believe readers will gradually get to know better as they go on learning the language.