

Unit 7

Mǎn zhāo sǔn, qiān shòu yì.
 ‘Pride incurs loss, humility attracts benefit.’
Traditional saying, Classical Chinese.

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7.1 Verb Combos (1)

In Chinese, verbs often come in pairs, with the second verb completing or otherwise elaborating the meaning of the first. Since such pairs are going to be a subject of prominence, we give them the catchy label of ‘verb combos’. The second verb of the pair we will call by its traditional label of a ‘verb complement’.

One particularly productive category of verb combos involves an action and a result: tīngdǒng ‘listen-comprehend > understand [something heard]’; kànjiàn ‘look-perceive > see’; zuòwán ‘do-complete > finish doing’; chībǎo ‘eat-full > eat one’s fill’; kàncuò ‘look-mistake > misread’; dǎsǐ ‘hit-die > beat to death’. Such pairings often produce a cascade of relatable meanings, many of them expressed as independent verbs in English. Here, for example, are combinations based on kàn ‘see’: kàndào ‘to manage to see’, kàncuò ‘to mistake [something seen]’, kànjiàn ‘see’, kàndǒng ‘understand [visually]’, kànguān ‘be used to seeing’, kànwán ‘finish reading’, etc. Associated nouns (that in English terms, would be called objects) often appear before the verbs: Dì-liù kè yǐjīng xuéwán le. ‘[We]’ve already finished studying lesson 6.’

Action-result verb combos have an important feature, one which has already been encountered in earlier units. With the insertion of de [得] (positive) or bu (negative), they can be turned into ‘potential verb combos’ (cf. §5.8.2b), which convey the possibility or impossibility of the result:

Rìyǔ nǐ tīngdedǒng ma?
Wǒ tīngbudǒng.

Do you understand Japanese?
No, I don't.

You may wonder what the potential combo adds beyond the verb néng ‘be able’, which is already available. And in fact, néng may appear, redundantly, with potential verb combos: Néng tīngdedǒng ma? / Néng tīngdǒng yìdiǎnr. But while néng is common with single verbs (bù néng qù), the potential pattern is preferred for verb combos.

A few dozen verbs are particularly common as second members of verb combos, and some of these are very versatile, able to follow large numbers of verbs. Wán for example, with the general meaning of ‘finish’, combines with most action verbs to mean ‘finish V-ing’: zuòwán, xiěwán, shuōwán, dǎwán, chīwán, kǎowán, bànwán, tīngwán, etc. Since verb combos are a large topic, they will be introduced incrementally. In this unit, we will introduce some ‘phase complements’, such as wán ‘finish’; and some directional complements, such as jìnlái ‘come in [here]’.

7.1.1 Imminence

First, a short digression to take up the expression of imminence that will prove useful as a response to verb combos with wán ‘finish’. In China, when a train approaches a station that it is going to stop at, you will often hear the staff shout out the name of the place, followed by kuài <yào> dào le (‘quick <will> arrive LE’): Shíjiāzhuāng kuài <yào> dào le! ‘Almost at Shijiazhuang [in Hebei]!’ The combination of kuài or kuài yào with a final le conveys the notion of ‘about to; soon’:

Kuài xiàkè le.	Class is almost done!
Kuài yào shàngxué le.	School is about to begin.
Tā kuài sānshí suì le.	She’s almost 30.
Kuài sān diǎn le.	It’s almost 3 o’clock.

7.1.2 Phase complements

The following examples contain verb combos in the potential form only when they are particularly apt. The topic of potential verb combos will be taken up again in the next unit.

a) Wán (完), as noted above, may combine with most activity verbs to mean ‘finish doing...’

Jīntiān de bàopǐ jǐng kànwán le ma? <i>Kànwán le.</i>	Have you finished today’s paper? <i>Yes, I have.</i>
Gōngkè yǐjīng zuòwán le méiyǒu? <i>Hái zài zuò ne.</i>	Have [you] finished [your] hwk? <i>I’m still doing [it].</i>
Nǐmen kǎowán le méiyǒu? <i>Kuài kǎowán le.</i>	Are you done with the exam? <i>Almost.</i>

Shuōwán le méiyóu?
Hái méi ne, hái yǒu yí jù huà!

Has [he] finished talking?
Not yet, one more sentence!

Dǎwán le ma?
Méiyóu, hái méi shuōwán.

Are you done [with the phone]?
Not yet, I'm still talking.

b) Dào, with verbs that involve locomotion, introduces a destination: bāndào 'move to'; zǒudào 'walk to'; kāidào 'drive to' (cf. §5.9.5). But with other verbs, dào has the meaning of 'succeed in; manage to':

Xiézi, wǒ yǐjīng mǎidào le.
Yào duōshao qián?

I've already purchased the shoes.
How much were they?

Nǐ yào wǒ zuò de, wǒ yíding huì zuòdào.
Nǐ shàng cì yě shì zhème shuō!
Kěshì zhè cì yíding zuòdedào!

What you want me to do, I can
certainly manage to do.
You said that last time.
But this time I'll do it for sure!

Zuótiān méi kàndào tā.
Tā shì bu shì yíjīng zǒu le?

I didn't see her yesterday.
Is it the case that she's left already?

Zhǎodào le méiyóu?
Hái zài zhǎo ne.

Did [you] find [it]?
[I] 'm still looking.

Shuōdào, zuòdào!

No sooner said than done!

c) Zhào. The root meaning of zhào is 'touch; reach'. As a verb complement it has a meaning very similar to that of dào, ie 'succeed in; manage to'; and in fact, with many verbs, dào often substitutes for it. Examples:

Hùzhào zhǎozhào ~ zhǎodào le ma?
Zhǎozhào ~ zhǎodào le. Xiètiān xièdì!

Did you manage to find [your]
passport?
I did – thank god!

Zài Měiguó mǎidezhào ~ mǎidedào
hǎishēn ma?
Yěxǔ zài Tāngrénjiē néng mǎidezhào ~
mǎidedào.

Can you buy sea cucumbers in the
US?
I guess you can in Chinatown.

Zuótiān wǎnshàng hěn rè, wǒ
shuìbuzhào jiào!
Nǐ yǒu méiyóu kōngtiáo?

It was hot last night, I couldn't
sleep.
Do you have airconditioning?

d) Hǎo, like wán, indicates completion, but as the core meaning of ‘be well’ suggests, it has an added sense of ‘properly; adequately; ready’:

Fàn yǐjīng zuòhǎo le.
Hǎo, wǒmen lái le!

The food’s ready.
Okay, we’re on our way!

Zuótiān wǎnshàng wǒ méi shuìhǎo.
Nà nǐ yīnggāi qù xiūxi xiūxi.

I didn’t sleep well last night.
Well, you should go and rest.

Gōngkè zuòhǎo le méiyǒu?
Chàbuduō le!

Have you done your homework properly?
Just about!

Nǐ xiézi chuānhǎo le ma?
Wǒ chuānbuhǎo.

Have you got your shoes on?
I can’t get them on [properly].

e) Bǎo ‘be full’ is found mainly with the verbs chī and hē. At the end of a meal, Chinese will ask you if you’ve eaten enough; the answer is always positive, of course.

Nǐ chībǎo le ma?
Chībǎo le, xièxie.

Have you had enough?
Yes, thanks.

f) Cuò as a complement indicates ‘mistakenly’: kàncuò; tīngcuò; xiěcuò, dǎcuò.

Nǐ nài ge zì xiěcuò le.
Nà, yīnggāi zěnméi xiě ne?

You’ve written that character incorrectly.
So how should it be written?

O, duìbuqǐ, wǒ rènkuò rén le; wǒ
yǐwéi nǐ shì wǒ de yí ge tóngxué.
Méi guānxi.

Oh, sorry, I mistook you [for s/o else];
I thought you were a friend of mine.
No matter.

Notes

a) Rènshi is reduced to rèn in verb combos: rèncuò.

b) Yǐwéi ‘take to be the case; think [mistakenly] that’; contrast with xiǎng.

7.1.3 Motion verbs

Verbs of directed motion, such as shàng ‘move up’ and xià ‘move down’, jìn ‘enter’ and chū ‘exit’, guò ‘cross over’, and huí ‘return’ combine with untuned lái or qù to indicate direction towards or away from the speaker, respectively.

shàng	shànglai shàngqu	come up [here] go up [there]
xià	xiàlai xiàqu	come down [here] go down [there]
jìn	jìnlai jìnqu	come in [here] go in [there]
chū	chūlai chūqu	come out [here] go out [there]
guò	guòlai guòqu	come over [here] go over [there]
huí	huílai huíqu	come back [here] go back [there]

At this point, we will keep the contexts very simple and focus on getting used to the combinations. Note the use of the final particles a as a signal of heartiness and ba to signal a suggestion in some of the following examples.

In the elevator

Shàngqu a! Liù lóu. Up we go! 6th floor.
Xiàqu a! Yì lóu. Down we go! 1st floor.

Looking down the stairs

Shànglai ba. Come on up [here].
Xiàqu ba. Go on down [there].

Looking up the stairs

Xiàlai a. Come on down [here].
Shàngqu a! Go on up [there]!

Note

Except in Hong Kong where the first floor is the one above the ground floor (following British practice), yìlóu is the entrance floor in China. Basements are very rare there, but if they do exist, they are usually called dìxiàshì ‘ground-below-room’ (cf. jiàoshì ‘classroom’ [falling toned jiào] and bàngōngshì ‘office’.)

In the room

Jìnlai ba. Why don’t you come in.
Chūqu ba. Why don’t you go out.

Outside the room

Jìnqu ba. Why don’t you go in.
Chūlai ba. Why don’t you come out.

Guòlai ba. Come on over [here].
Guòqu ba. Go on over [there].

7.1.4 Returning

Nǐ shì shénme shíhou qù de?

Bāyuèfēn qù de.

Shénme shíhou huílái de?

Shíyīyuè.

When did you go [there]?

In August.

When did [you] come back?

November.

Wǒmen lǐbàiyī dǎsuàn qù Sūzhōu,
lǐbài'èr huílái.

We're planning to go to Suzhou
on Monday, [and we'll] be back on
Tuesday.

Tāmen shì 1991 nián lái de,
1995 nián huíqu de.

They came in 1991 and went back in
1995.

Nǐ huíqù-guó ma?

Have you [ever] been back [there]?

Tā shíbā suì lái de Měiguó,
cóng méi huíqù-guó.

She came to the US at 18,
she's never been back.

When a place other than 'home' is mentioned, it is usually placed after huí and before lái or qù:

Nǐ shénme shíhou huí sùshè qu?

When are you going back to the
dorm?

Nǐ shénme shíhou huí Běijīng lai?

When are you coming back to
Beijing?

Return home, however, is expressed as huíjiā:

Jīntiān jīdiǎn huíjiā?

Dàgài sān sì diǎn, xià-le kè yǐhòu.

When are [you] going home today?

*About 3 or 4 o'clock, after I get out
of class.*

Exercise 1

Use appropriate gestures as you ask people to 'take a look':

1.
Qǐng guòlai kànkàn ba.
Guòqu kànkàn ba.

2.
Qǐng shànglai kànkàn ba.
Shàngqu kànkàn ba.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3.
Qǐng xiàlai kànkàn ba.
Xiàqu kànkàn ba. | 4.
Qǐng jìnlai kànkàn ba.
Jinqu kànkàn ba. |
| 5.
Qǐng chūlai kànkàn ba.
Chūqu kànkàn ba. | 6.
Qǐng huílai kànkàn ba.
Huíqu kànkàn ba. |

7.2 Connecting Sentences

In earlier units, you have encountered a category of words called conjunctions, that show logical relations between clauses. Examples include kěshì, dànshì, yīnwèi and suǒyǐ:

Wǒmen bù néng xiūxi, yīnwèi hái yǒu hěn duō gōngkè.	We can't rest because we still have lots of homework.
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When the subordinate clause (eg the yīnwèi clause) is placed first, the logical connection is often marked in the second clause as well (generally by another conjunction, but also by adverbs). §7.2 examines three such sets of paired connectors.

7.2.1 Yīnwèi 'because'

Yīnwèi is paired with suǒyǐ, the latter meaning 'so' or 'therefore' but often better untranslated in English. In the Chinese (unlike English), when only one of the two connectors is present, it is more likely to be the second, ie suǒyǐ rather than yīnwèi.

<Yīnwèi> tiānqì hěn rè suǒyǐ wǒmen dōu hěn lèi.	Because the weather's hot, we're all quite tired.
<Yīnwèi> xiàxuě, suǒyǐ Wèi lǎoshī bù néng huílai.	Prof. Wei can't get back because it's snowing.

Generally, conjunctions like yīnwèi and suǒyǐ precede the subject (yīnwèi tiānqì...). But where a single subject persists through the sentence, ie when the whole sentence acts as a comment on the initial topic, then the subject may precede yīnwèi:

Tāmen [yīnwei qián bú gòu suǒyǐ bù néng mǎi hěn duō dōngxì].	They can't buy a lot of things because they don't have enough money.
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7.2.2 Suīrán 'although'

Roughly the same conditions apply to the pair suīrán ... kěshì 'although...[but]'. And again, while English requires only the single conjunction 'although', Chinese often omits suīrán, leaving the only explicit signal in the second clause.

<Suīrán> fùmǔ shì Zhōngguó rén, dànshì tā méi qù-guo Zhōngguó.	Although her parents are Chinese, she hasn't been to China.
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Suīrán dōngxī dōu hěn guì, kěshì nǐ kàn,
háishi yǒu hěn duō rén yào mǎi. Although everything's expensive [there],
look – there are still lots of people buying.

Tā suīrán gèzi bù gāo, kěshì tā lánqiú
dǎ+de bú cuò. Although he's not tall, he's quite good
at basketball.

7.2.3 Yàoshi 'if'

The pair yàoshi ~ rúguǒ ...jiù 'if...then' is a little different from the previous two pairs. In the first place, jiù is an adverb and, unlike suǒyǐ or kěshì, has to be placed directly before a verb (or another adverb). In addition, jiù (often toneless) is more likely to be omitted (with slight change of nuance) than yàoshi (or rúguǒ).

Yàoshi qián bú gòu, nǐmen jiù yòng
xìnyòngkǎ. If [you] don't have enough money [cash],
you can use a credit card.

Nǐ yàoshi méi diànnǎo, kěyǐ qù wǎngbā
fā email. If you don't have a computer, you can go
to an internet cafe to send email.

Notes

gòu	'be enough'; <u>qián bú gòu</u> 'not enough money'; <u>gòu le, gòu le</u> 'that's enough – fine'.
xìnyòngkǎ	'credit-card'.
diànnǎo	'computer (electric-brain)'; also <u>jìsuànjī</u> 'calculator; computer (compute-machine)'.
wǎngbā	'internet café (net-bar)'; cf. <u>shàngwǎng</u> 'access the net'.
fā email	'send email'.

Rúguǒ is a slightly more formal alternative to yàoshi:

Rúguǒ nǐ bù xiǎng qù,
nà wǒ yě bù xiǎng qù. If you don't want to go, then I don't
want to go either.

Both yàoshi and rúguǒ can be buttressed by the phrase de huà, placed at the foot of the clause – the huà of shuōhuà. The notion behind de huà is similar to English 'let's say', or simply 'say', used as a conditional in sentences such as 'say it rains...then we meet inside'.

Yàoshi nǐ yǒu diànnǎo de huà,
wǒ zhèlǐ yǒu Zhōngwén ruǎnjiàn. If you [happen to] have a computer,
I have some Chinese software here.

Bù néng qù de huà, jiù dǎ ge
diànhuà ba! If [by chance] you can't go, then why don't
you phone.

Connecting clauses

<yīnwèi>	suǒyǐ	because...
<suīrán>	kěshì dànshì búguò	although ...
yàoshi ... <de huà> rúguǒ ...<de huà>	<jiu> <jiu>	if...

Exercise 2.

Choose a pair of words to conjoin the following sentences:

1. Mài kè Qiáodān shì ge dǎlánqiú de. Tā bù zěnmē ('so') gāo.
2. Tā hěn lèi. Tā bù néng gōngzuò.
3. Tā bú ràng ('let') wǒ kàn diànshì. Wǒ bú ràng tā tīng yīnyuè.
4. Zhōngwén kè hěn nán. Zhōngwén kè hěn yǒuyìsì.
5. Xuéshēng hěn duō. Lǎoshī hěn gāoxìng.
6. Méiyǒu bīngxiāng ('icebox'). Bù néng mǎi bīngjílín.
7. Tā shì zài Zhōngguó shēng de, zài Zhōngguó zhǎngdà de. Tā chībùguàn Zhōngguó cài.
8. Tā zài Hélán de shíhòu cháng chī Zhōngguó cài. Tā chīdegùàn Zhōngguó cài.
9. Tā měitiān zǎoshàng dōu hē kāfēi. Tā háishi zǒng xiǎng shuìjiào.

7.2.4 If...

The following conversation is, obviously, rather tongue-in-cheek, but it does give you a chance to practice 'conditionals'. Jiǎ is the straightman, Yǐ, the joker!

Jiǎ Wǒmen mǎi yì tǒng bīngjílín, Let's buy a carton of ice-cream, okay?
hǎo bu hǎo?

Yǐ Nà bù xíng! No, we can't do that!

Yàoshi mǎi bīngjílín, wǒmen If [we] buy ice cream, [we] won't have
jiu méi qián mǎi cài le! any money to buy food!

<Yàoshi> méi qián mǎi cài jiu méi If [we] don't have money for food,
dōngxi chī <le>. [we] won't have anything to eat.

<Yàoshi> méi dōngxi chī, If [we] don't have anything to eat,
wǒmen jiu méiyǒu jìnrg <le>. we won't have any energy.

<Yàoshi> méiyǒu jìnrg, wǒmen If [we] don't have any energy, we
jiu bù néng gōngzuò <le>. won't be able to work.

	<Yàoshi> bù néng gōngzuò, jiù gèng méi qián le.	If [we] can't work, [we]'ll have even less money!
Jiǎ	Dé le, dé le; nǐ bié shuō le – méiwán-méiliǎo.	Enough already! Don't say anymore – it's endless.

Notes

<yàoshi>	<u>Yàoshi</u> (or <u>rúguǒ</u>) may be omitted once the pattern is established. Similarly, once the pattern with 'new situation' <u>le</u> is established (<u>jiù méi qián mǎi cài le</u>), <u>le</u> might not reappear until the culminating sentence (<u>gèng méi qián le</u>).
méiyǒu jìn	Or <u>méiyǒu jīngshén</u> ('vigor, energy'); cf. <u>hěn yǒushén</u> 'lively'.
dé le	This is the <u>dé</u> seen in the beginning of the multiplication table (<u>yī sān dé sān</u> etc.), where it means 'gets'; <u>dé le</u> , then, means '[I]'ve got [it]', and by implication, '[That]'ll do'.

méiwán-méiliǎo, literally 'not-finished not-complete'.

7.3 Speaking Languages

Language names are, for the most part, formed by the addition of bound nouns (such as huà 'words; talk; language' or yǔ 'language') to country names, or to the first syllable of country names: Rìběn > Rìběnhuà; Rìběn > Rìyǔ. General terms for 'foreign language' are formed in the same way:

wàiguóhuà	'foreign [spoken] languages'
wàiyǔ	'foreign languages'; <u>biéde wàiyǔ</u> 'other foreign languages'

7.3.1 Forms with huà

Huà 'speech' combines with full country names to form names of languages. These terms refer to the spoken language, typically forming objects of verbs such as shuō and jiǎng 'speak'.

Rìběnhuà	Yìdàlihuà	Yìnníhuà	'Indonesian'
Fǎguóhuà	Tàiguóhuà	Yuènnánhuà	'Vietnamese'
Déguóhuà	Yìndùhuà	Mǐndiànhuà	'Burmese'

7.3.2 Compounds with wén

Wén 'written language' or 'language' in general, combines with either the first syllable of country names that end in guó (Zhōngguó > Zhōngwén), or with the full name of transliterated names (Yìdàlì > Yìdàlìwén) to form names of languages. The wén-forms occur as objects to verbs such as xué 'study', as well as with speaking verbs, such as shuō and jiǎng.

Rìwén	Yìdàliwén	
Fǎwén	Hánwén	‘Korean’
Déwén	Yìnníwén	
Yīngwén	Zhōngwén	

Not all languages have a version with wén; there is no word *Tàiwén* for Thai, for example, nor *Yuènnánwén* for Vietnamese. Instead, the yǔ-forms are used.

7.3.3 Forms with yǔ

The addition of yǔ (from yǔyán ‘language’) to the first syllable of country names in guó (Fǎguó > Fǎyǔ, Rìběn > Rìyǔ), otherwise to full names (Yìdàlì > Yìdàliyǔ), is quite regular, with the exception of Hànyǔ for ‘Chinese’ (which uses the word for ethnic Chinese, Hàn).

Éyǔ	Yìdàliyǔ	
Rìyǔ	Hányǔ	‘Korean’ (<i>Tw</i>)
	Cháoxiǎnyǔ	‘Korean’ (<i>PRC</i>)
Fǎyǔ	Tàiyǔ	‘Thai’
Yīngyǔ	Táiyǔ	‘Taiwanese’

7.3.4 English

Because English is not just the language of England, the term *Yīngguóhuà* is not generally used for ‘spoken English’. For similar reasons, the term *Měiguóhuà* is not used either. The following are the more usual expressions for ‘English language’:

Yīngyǔ	Tā bú huì jiǎng Yīngyǔ.
Yīngwén	Zhōngwén, Yīngwén dōu huì – zhēn liǎobuqǐ!

The distinction between British English and American English is formally expressed as Yīngshì de Yīngwén versus Měishì de Yīngwén (with shì meaning ‘style’ or ‘type’).

7.3.5 Chinese

The various names for the Chinese language differ according to country, or have different nuances:

Pǔtōnghuà	‘ordinary language’, the Mainland name for Mandarin.
Guóyǔ	‘national language’, the Taiwan name for Mandarin, also heard in most overseas communities.
Huáyǔ	‘language of the <i>Hua</i> ’. <u>Huá</u> is another ancient name for the Chinese. <u>Huáyǔ</u> is the word used in Singapore for Mandarin.

Hànyǔ ‘language of the Han people’. This word is used for Chinese language in general (including regional and historical varieties) on both the Mainland and Taiwan.

7.3.6 Exclamations:

Even in a foreign language, you may have the urge to express an emotional reaction to an incident or situation. This is difficult territory, but below are some phrases for consideration. Some express pleasure at seeing something unusual, such as an athletic feat (zhēn liǎobuqǐ); some register disgust (zhēn ěxin) or impatience (tǎoyàn). Still others show sympathy for the misfortune of others (zhēn kǎixī). The plus or minus indicates, roughly, whether the response is positive or negative. The general caveat about not relying too much on translation across languages holds even more strongly for phrases of this nature. The learner should make use of these phrases warily, and observe the contexts of their use.

Zhēn liǎobuqǐ!	(+)	Amazing! Extraordinary! Outstanding!
Zhēn bùdeliǎo!	(+)	Amazing!
Bùdeliǎo!	(-)	How awful! Shocking! Crikey!
Liǎobudé!	(-)	Awful; terrible; outrageous!
Hǎo/hěn lihai!	(+)	Pretty amazing! [<i>hǎo</i> here like <i>hěn</i>]
	(-)	Formidable!
Zhēn zāogāo!	(-)	Too bad! What a pity!
Zhēn dǎoméi!	(-)	What bad luck! Shucks!
Zhēn kǎixī!	(-)	What a pity!
Zhēn kělián!	(-)	How sad!
Tǎoyàn!	(-)	What a nuisance! What a pain!
Máfan!	(-)	What a lot of trouble! Bother!
Zhēn ěxin!	(-)	How nauseating! Yeuch!
Bù hǎo yìsi!	(-)	How embarrassing! I’m sorry! My apologies!

Notes

- Unmodified, bùdeliǎo is a common response to something negative; if modified by zhēn, it conveys amazement.
- Many of these expressions function in contexts other than exclamations. For example, both bùdeliǎo and liǎobudé, mediated by +de, can also act as intensifiers with SVs: Hǎo+de bùdeliǎo; gāoxìng+de liǎobudé. Liǎobudé can function as a modifier in a phrase like yí jiàn liǎobudé de dà shì ‘a matter of utmost importance’ – where it does not sound particularly negative.

Exercise 3. Provide Chinese paraphrases:*a) Review of yìdiǎn<r>.*

1. He's a bit gruff.
2. Things are rather expensive here.
3. Have some ice-cream!
4. I only speak a little Chinese.
5. Have some Chinese tea.

b)

1. Amazing! She speaks three foreign languages!
2. If you are planning to work in Taiwan, then you should learn traditional characters as well.
3. It was so embarrassing! I invited them to dinner but couldn't find the restaurant.
4. Oh, what a pain! I left my passport in the dorm, so I'll have to go back and fetch it.
5. Yeuch! This toilet's filthy! And there's no toilet paper! What can we do? (wèishēngzhǐ 'sanitary paper')

7.4 Dialogue: Language abilities

Yǐ is a foreign female student in China studying Chinese; Jiǎ is a middle-aged woman that she's just been introduced to. Yǐ is making an effort to be modest and deferential.

Jiǎ.	Nǐ Pǔtōnghuà shuō+de hěn biāozhǔn!	You speak Mandarin very properly!
Yǐ.	Nǎlǐ nǎlǐ, nǐ guòjiǎng le.	Naah, you're 'too nice'.
Jiǎ	Nà, nǐ néng rènshi Hànzì ma? Néng xiě ma?	So, can you read Chinese characters? Can you write?
Yǐ.	Néng rènshi jǐ bǎi ge zì; yě néng xiě, kěshì xiě+de bù hǎo.	I can read a few hundred characters; and I can write, but I don't write well.
Jiǎ	Duì a, Zhōngwén, tīng shuō bǐjiào róngyì, kěshì dú xiě hěn nán.	That's right; with Chinese, listening and speaking are relatively easy, but reading and writing are hard.
Yǐ	Kě bú shì ma!	You said it! ('Isn't [that] really the case!')
Jiǎ	Nǐ hái huì shuō biéde wàiyǔ ma?	Do you speak any other foreign languages?
Yǐ	Wǒ yě huì shuō yìdiǎn Rìběn huà.	I speak a little Japanese as well.
Jiǎ	O, Zhōngguó huà, Rìběn huà dōu huì shuō! Zhēn liǎobùqǐ!	Oh, (you speak) Chinese and Japanese; that's amazing!

Yǐ. A, mǎmahūhū, dōu shuō+de bú tài hǎo. Well, so-so, I don't speak them very well.

Notes

nǐ Pǔtōnghuà... Nǐ de Pǔtōnghuà is also possible, but Chinese prefer the topic-comment construction in this context, ie 'as for you, [your] Mandarin is...'

biāozhǔn SV 'standard'. Chinese often praise your language for being 'standard', meaning that you speak with the correct pronunciation, ie the one taught in schools and heard in the media.

guòjiǎng 'praise too much; flatter (exceed-speak)'. The phrase is a rather more formal response to flattery than nǎlǐ, and can be used when a person of higher status offers praise. The following le can be treated as part of the expression.

rènshi Hànzì In Chinese, the *ability* to read is treated differently from the *act* of reading; the former is often expressed as rènshi Hànzì, while the latter usually kànshū.

tīng shuō dú xiě kě bú shì ma. This is a set way for talking about the four skills. Kě (in its written form) is the same kě as in kěyǐ and kěshì, but here it is an ADV, meaning 'really; indeed; surely' (cf. Kě bié wàng le 'Make sure you don't forget!'). A more literal translation of kě bú shì ma would be 'isn't that just the case!'

7.4.1 Yǒu rén 'some people' and similar expressions

It is useful to be able to answer *yes-no* questions such as Zhōngguó rén xǐhuan hē kāfēi ma? with nuance, rather than simply 'yes' or 'no'. For this, the phrase yǒu rén 'there are people [who]; some people' is useful.

Yuèbǐng, yǒu rén xǐhuan, Some people like mooncakes, some
yǒu rén bù xǐhuan. don't.

Sìshēng, yǒu rén shuō+de hěn [With] the four tones, some say them
biāozhǔn, yǒu rén shuō+de bú accurately, some don't.
tài biāozhǔn.

Yǒu shíhou or yǒu de shíhou 'sometimes; at times' is used in much the same way:

Yīnyuè ne, yǒu shíhou wǒ tīng Sometimes I listen to rock and roll,
yáogǔnyuè, yǒu shíhou tīng and sometimes I listen to classical music.
gǔdiǎn yīnyuè.

When the meaning is 'some members of a particular group', then yǒude 'some [of them]' is used; notice the topic-comment order in the next two examples.

Wǒmen bān de xuésheng, yǒude
shì běnkēshēng, yǒude shì
yánjiūshēng.

Some of the students in our class are
undergraduates, some are graduates.

Sìchuān, yǒude dìfāng hěn gāo,
yǒude hěn dī.

Some parts of Sichuan are high, some
are very low.

7.5 Dialogue: Tea and coffee

Yǐ is a Chinese student and Jiǎ is a foreigner:

Jiǎ Ài, jīntiān yǒu diǎn(r) lěng.

Gosh, it's a bit cold today.

Yǐ Hē <yì>diǎn(r) chá ba.

Have some tea!

Jiǎ Hǎo, xièxie.

Fine, thanks.

Yǐ Nimen Měiguó rén bǐjiào xǐhuan
hē kāfēi, duì ma?

You Americans prefer to drink coffee,
am [I] right?

Jiǎ Bù yíding, yǒu rén xǐhuan, yǒu rén
bù xǐhuan. Yǒu rén shuō kāfēi duì
shēntǐ bù hǎo. Wǒ ne, wǒ zǎoshàng
hē kāfēi, xiàwǔ hē chá. Bù hē kāfēi,
wǒ méi jīngshen, dànshì hē tài duō,
bù néng shuǐjiào.

Not necessarily, some do and some don't.
Some say coffee's not good for you. As
for myself, I drink coffee in the morning
[and] tea in the afternoon. [If] I don't
have coffee, I can't wake up ('not+have
energy') but [if I] have too much, [I] can't
sleep.

Yǐ Yào bu yào fàng niúǎi?
Fàng táng ma?

Do you want milk? Do you take sugar?

Jiǎ Bú yòng le, bú yòng le. Hē kāfēi,
wǒ fàng niúǎi, yě fàng táng,
dànshì hē chá, wǒ píngcháng
bù fàng biéde dōngxì.

No thanks. [When I] have coffee,
I add milk and sugar as well,
but [when I] drink tea, I don't
usually add anything.

Yǐ Wǒmen hē chá yǒu diǎnr xiàng
nimen hē shuǐ yíyàng, shénme
shíhou dōu xíng. Zài Zhōngguó
bù néng bù hē chá!

[When] we drink tea [it]'s a bit like you
drinking water, [you] can drink it anytime.
In China, you can't not drink tea!

Jiǎ Nà Zhōngguó rén bù hē chá hē
shénme?

So [when] Chinese don't drink tea
what do they drink?

- Yī *Nà hěn nán shuō. Yěxǔ bù hē chá hē* *That's difficult to say. I guess [if we]*
 dòujiāng. Huòzhě qìshuǐ. Xiànzài *don't drink tea, we drink soybean milk.*
 nǚháizi hěn duō ài hē niúǎi, *Or soda. [And] nowadays, women generally*
 rè niúǎi. *like to drink milk – hot milk.*
- Jiǎ Ài, wǒ zuì bù xǐhuān hē rè niúǎi! Gosh, I really don't like hot milk!
- Yī *Dànshi duì shēntǐ hǎo, duì ma?* *But [it]'s good for you, right? Good*
 Duì pífu hǎo. *for the skin.*
- Jiǎ *Hěn qíguài, Zhōngguó rén xiànzài* *[It]'s strange, nowadays Chinese drink*
 hē niúǎi chī miànbāo, Měiguó rén *milk and eat bread, Americans eat rice*
 chī báifàn, hē chá. Zěnmē shuō – *and drink tea. How do [you] say it -*
 shì 'guójìhuà'! *[it]'s 'internationalization'!*
- Yī *Huòzhě 'quánqíuhuà'.* *Or 'globalization'.*
- Jiǎ O, quánqíuhuà – hěn yǒu yìsi! Aha, 'globalization' – interesting!

Notes

- duì 'be facing; be correct; right'; cf. duìbuqǐ. Duì, in association with a stative verb, can also have a coverb function roughly equivalent to 'to' or 'for': duì shēntǐ bù hǎo 'not good for the body; not good for [you]'. Notice the different word orders in the two languages.
- jīngshen N 'energy; vigor'; also an SV meaning 'animated'
- fàng V 'put; place'
- Shénme shíhou Literally 'whatever time all okay'. This is an additional
- dōu xíng example of the indefinite function of question words.
- nǚháizi Also nǚháir 'girl (female-child)', but often used in the sense of 'young woman'. The ordinary word for 'woman' is nǚrén (parallel to nánrén 'men'), but just as 'woman' in American usage used to be avoided in favor of euphemisms such as 'lady' (cf. 'lady's room'), so Chinese tend to use nǚde rather than nǚrén for 'women'. Shàonián 'young-years' is 'a youth'. Another word, gūniang, is sometimes used for 'young women' in poetic language or popular songs. Below are the first two lines of a popular folk song, originally from Taiwan, but now well known throughout the Chinese speaking world:

Ālǐ Shān de gūniang měi rú shuǐ ya,
Ali Mountain's girls are beautiful like water
 Ālǐ Shān de shàonián zhuàng rú shān.
Ali Mtn's boys are strong as mountains.

- ài 'love', but on the Mainland, ài overlaps with xǐhuan 'like'.

guójìhuà ‘internationalization (international-ize)’; quánqíúhuà ‘globalization (complete-world-ize)’. In modern Chinese, huà ‘change’ has come to have a word forming function, as a suffix added to SVs and nouns to form verbs and nouns, much like –ize or –ation in English. Cf. xiàndàihuà ‘modern-ize’; sì ge xiàndàihuà ‘the four modernizations’.

Exercise 4.

Rearrange the jumbled phrases below into presentable sentences.

1. huì / xiě / bù yídìng / Pǔtōnghuà / de rén / shuō / néng / Hànzì
2. hěn duō / lèi / kǎoshì / tā / jīntiān / suǒyǐ / yǒu diǎnr / yīnwèi / yǒu
3. niú'nǎi / yǒurén / yǐqián / hē / hěn shǎo / xiànzài / bù hē / yǒurén / Zhōngguó rén / hē / kěshì
4. bù yídìng / Fǎguóhuà / tīngdedǒng / Yìdàlihuà / huì / de rén / jiǎng
5. Yīngwén de / bù duō / huì shuō / hěn shǎo / yě / Yīngguó / Yīngguó rén / dànshì / bù yuǎn / huì shuō / lí / Fǎguó / Fǎguó rén / Fǎguóhuà de
6. Zhōngguó rén / dànshì / fùmǔ / tā / bú shì / yíyàng / Zhōngguó rén zhēn hǎo / Zhōngwén / tā de / xiàng
7. kāfēi / chá / kěshì / hē / yǒurén / xǐhuān / yǐqián / zhǐ / xiànzài / Zhōngguó rén / bù xǐhuān / hē / hē / yě xǐhuān / kāfēi

7.6 Alone or with others; conveyances

7.6.1 Accompaniment

a) Together with.

In §5.12, it was noted that coordination (typically expressed by ‘and’ in English) was often left implicit in the Chinese (chá kāfēi dōu xíng), but that with nouns or noun-phrases, coordination could be expressed explicitly with gēn (or, more formally, with hé):

Wǒ gēn tā shì tóngxué.

She and I are classmates.

Xīnjiāpō gēn Yīnní, shéi yíng le?

Singapore and Indonesia – who won?

Gēn (or hé) also commonly occurs with the phrases yíkuàir (literally ‘one-lump’) or yìqǐ ‘together; as a group’:

gēn tā yìqǐ qù

to go [together] with him/her

gēn tā yíkuàir qù

Usage

Yìqǐ qù, xíng ma?	Would it be okay to go together?
Wǒmen yíkuàir qù cāntīng chīfàn, hǎo bu hǎo?	Why don't we go together and have a meal at the cafeteria?
Gēn wǒmen yíkuàir qù, hǎo bu hǎo?	How about going with us?
Chīguo fàn le ma?	Have you eaten?
Hái méi ne.	Not yet.
Lái gēn wǒmen yìqǐ chī ba.	Come and eat with us.
Hǎo, xièxie.	Okay, thanks.

b) Alone

'Alone' in the question 'did you go alone' is often expressed in Chinese as yí ge rén:

1	Nǐ yí ge rén qù ma?	Are you going alone?
	Shì, yí ge rén qù.	Yes, alone.
	Nǐ yí ge rén qù hěn bù róngyì ba.	It's not easy going alone is it?
	Méi guānxi, wǒ xíguàn le.	It's okay, I'm used to it.
2	Tā měitiān dōu yí ge rén zài cāntīng chī zhōngfàn.	Everyday she eats lunch all by her- self in the cafeteria.
	Wǒ yě měitiān dōu yí ge rén zài cāntīng chīfàn.	I eat on my own in the cafeteria everyday too.
	Nà, nǐ wèishénme bù gēn tā yìqǐ chī ne?	Well, why don't you eat with her?
	Yīnwèi wǒmen chīfàn de shíjiān bù yíyàng.	Because we eat at different times.

7.6.2 Le or guo > shi...de.

As noted in Unit 6, the *shi...de* construction is often set up by a question about a previous event, containing guo, or le. Here are some typical examples:

	甲	乙
1.	Chī le ma?	Chī le, zài jiā lǐ chī de.
	Zìjǐ zuò de ma?	Bù, shì mǎi de.
	Hǎochī ma?	Māmāhūhū.

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 2. | Chī le ma?
Sùshè yǒu cāntīng ma?
O, zìjǐ zuò de, yíding hěn hǎochī. | Chī le, zài sùshè chī de.
Méiyǒu; shì wǒ zìjǐ zuò de.
Hái kěyǐ. |
| 3. | Chī le méi?
Gēn shéi yìqǐ qù de?
Xià cì, nǐ xiān lái zhǎo wǒ ba. | Chī le, zài xiǎochīdiàn chī de.
Yí ge rén qù de.
Hǎo, wǒ huì lái zhǎo nǐ. |
| 4. | Rènshi tā ma?
Shì ma?
Xiǎoxué a? | Dāngrán, rènshi tā hěn jiǔ le.
Shì, wǒmen shì zài xiǎoxué rènshi de.
Shì, wǒmen shì zài Tiānjīn yìqǐ shàng de xuéxiào. |
| 5. | Nǐ qù-guo Zhōngguó méiyǒu?
Něi nián qù de?
Yí ge rén qù de ma? | Qù-guo.
Qù nián qù de.
Bù, gēn péngyou yìqǐ qù de. |

Notes

zìjǐ	Pronoun '[one]self'; <u>zìjǐ zuò de [cài]</u> ; <u>zìjǐ mǎi de</u>
hěn jiǔ	'very long+time'; cf. <u>hǎo jiǔ bú jiàn</u> 'long time no see'
xiǎochīdiàn	'snack bar; lunch room'

7.6.3 Ways of traveling

Conveyances and other means of transportation are often expressed by phrases placed before the verb, in the position of adverbs. Here are some examples:

zǒulù	kāichē	dǎ dí	qí zìxíngchē	qí mǎ
walk-road	drive-car	take taxi	straddle bicycle	
walk	drive	take a taxi	ride a bicycle	ride a horse

zuò fēijī	zuò huǒchē	zuò chuán	zuò gōnggòng-qìchē
sit airplane	sit fire-vehicle	sit boat	sit public-car
fly; take a plane	take a train	go by boat	take a bus

A note on word formation

As the examples ending in chē 'vehicle' show, Chinese often forms compounds by taking a generic base noun and adding specifying nouns to it: qìchē 'gas-vehicle > car; automobile'; huǒchē 'fire-vehicle > train'. In the same way, types of shoes are formed by adding nouns to the generic xié: bīngxié 'skates (ice-shoes)'; gāogēn<r>xié '(high-heel-shoes)'; qiúxié 'tennis shoes (ball-shoes)'; huǒjiàn-píxié 'rocket shoes (fire-arrow leather-shoes)'. The last are sharp looking shoes with pointed toes that were specifically banned in China in the Mao era.

Notes

- zǒu ‘leave; go’, but in combination with lù ‘road’, ‘walk’.
 dǎ dī Formerly a Cantonese term, with dí derived ultimately from English ‘taxi’, but now the colloquial expression for ‘take a taxi’ in Mandarin.
 qí ‘straddle; ride’.
 bikes There are three terms for bicycle: zìxíngchē ‘self-move-vehicle’; dānchē ‘unit-vehicle’, and jiǎotàchē ‘foot-press-vehicle’ (the last 2 more in Tw).
 zuò The word occurs as a full verb in qǐng zuò, and as a CV in zuò fēijī.



Zánmen dǎ ge dí qu, hǎo bu hǎo? [Kunming, JKW 1997]

Usage

Nǐ shì zěnmē qù Zhōngguó de?
Dāngrán shì zuò fēijī qù de.

How did you go to China?
Naturally, I flew.

Nǐ shì zuò chuán qù de háishi zuò
 huǒchē qù de?
Zuò huǒchē qù de. Chuán tài màn le.

Did you go by ship or by train?
By train. Boat's too slow.

Nǐ píngcháng zěnmē lái shàngkè?
*Wǒ píngcháng zǒulù lái, búguò
 jīntiān yīnwèi xià yǔ suǒyǐ wǒ
 shì kāichē lái de.*

How do you usually get to class?
*Usually, I walk, but today, because
 it's raining, I drove.*

7.6.4 Time words

In earlier units, you have encountered a number of time words, so here we enlarge the repertoire and present them in a synoptic table. Recall that, unlike in English, time words precede their associated verbs. Notice that the time words at the extremes – nián and tiān – form compounds, while those between form phrases with shàng or xià + gè.

<i>before</i>	<i>past</i>	<i>now</i>	<i>future</i>	<i>after</i>
qiánnián	qùnián shàng ge lǐbài shàng ge xīngqī shàng ge yuè	jīnnián zhèi ge lǐbài zhèi ge xīngqī zhèi ge yuè	míngnián xià ge lǐbài xià ge xīngqī xià ge yuè	hòunián hòutiān
qiántiān	zuótiān	jīntiān	míngtiān	

Note

Liǎng nián <yǐ>qián ‘two years ago’ can often substitute for qiánnián ‘the year before last’. The former, however, is not necessarily referenced to the present and could, for example, mean ‘two years before then’. The same for qiántiān and the expressions with hòu: hòutiān ‘the day after tomorrow’ and liǎng tiān <yǐ>hòu ‘two days from now/then’.

7.7 Cái ADV ‘not until’

Cái is a common adverb, but its usage is sometimes confused by the fact that it generally corresponds to a negative in English, ‘not until’:

Tāmen shì shénme shíhou qù de?	When did they go?
Qùnián bāyuèfēn qù de.	Last August.
Shénme shíhou huílái de?	When did they get back?
Zuótiān cái huílái de.	[They] didn’t get back until yesterday.

Notice the order of sentence elements: the conditions (often a time) first, then cái in the normal position of an adverb before the associated verb, then the result. If cái is defined as ‘then and only then’ rather than as ‘not until’, it will be easier to position correctly in the Chinese sentence:

Tā [sān diǎn zhōng] cái zǒu.
She [3:00] then-and-only-then leave.
She’s not leaving until 3:00.

Usage

Qǐngwèn, nǐ jǐ diǎn xiàkè? Jīntiān yǒu kǎoshì, sān diǎn bàn cái xiàkè.	May I ask when you get out of class? There’s an exam today, [so] we won’t get out till 3:30.
Nǐmen píngcháng jǐ diǎn shuìjiào? Píngcháng wǎnshang liǎng sān diǎn cái shuìjiào.	What time do you usually go to bed? [We] don’t usually go to bed until 2 or 3 in the morning.

Tā jiù diǎn bàn cái lái de, tài wǎn le! She didn't get here till 9:30, too late!
 Méi guānxi, míngtiān yě xíng. Never mind, tomorrow's okay too.

Tāmen hái zài, míngtiān cái zǒu. They're still here, [they]'re not going
 'til tomorrow.
 O, wǒ yǐwéi tāmen yǐjīng zǒu le. Oh, I thought [incorrectly] they'd already
 left.

Nǐ shénme shíhòu huíjiā? When are you going home?
 Wǒ chēle fàn yǐhòu cái huíjiā. I'm not going home until I've had a meal.

Exercise 5. Paraphrase in Chinese:

1. Explain that she has a test today so she's not going home till 5:00.
2. Tell them that he doesn't go to bed till he finishes his homework. (zuòwán 'do-finish')
3. Explain that you won't be going home till tomorrow.
4. Explain that you didn't know until now that she understood Chinese.

7.8 Duration

In earlier lessons there have been many examples of 'time when' phrases: jīntiān xiàwǔ; sān diǎn zhōng; shàngkè de shíhòu. But though there have been some examples of phrases that involve duration (sān tiān, liǎng nián), there have been no examples of duration in sentences. This section will introduce some sentence patterns that involve duration.

7.8.1 Units of time

Tiān and nián (which rhyme and form the extremes of the four) are themselves Measures, so they are counted directly: yì tiān, liǎng nián. Yuè and lǐbài/xīngqī, on the other hand, are nouns, counted by gè. (Yuè, directly preceded by numbers, forms the names of the months: yíyuè, èryuè etc.)

Q	Yì nián yǒu duōshao tiān?	How many days in a year?
	Yí ge yuè yǒu jǐ ge xīngqī?	How many weeks in a month?
	Yì nián yǒu jǐ ge lǐbài?	How many weeks in a year?
	Yí ge xīngqī yǒu jǐ tiān?	How many days in a week?
	Yì nián yǒu jǐ ge yuè?	How many months in a year?
	Yí ge yuè yǒu duōshao tiān?	How many days in a month?
A	Yì nián yǒu sānbǎi liùshíwǔ tiān;	A year has 365 days in it;
	yí ge yuè yǒu sì ge xīngqī;	a month has 4 weeks in it;
	yì nián yǒu wǔshí'èr ge lǐbài;	a year has 52 weeks;
	yí ge xīngqī yǒu qī tiān;	a week has 7 days in it;
	yì nián yǒu shí'èr ge yuè;	a year has 12 months;
	yí ge yuè yǒu sānshí tiān huòzhě sānshíyì tiān.	a month has either 30 or 31 days in it.

‘Hour’ is expressed as either zhōngtōu (originally ‘bell; chime’) or xiǎoshí ‘small-time’. The first is consistently counted with gè, but the latter is variable, sometimes counted with gè, sometimes not.

zhōngtōu	yí ge zhōngtōu, liǎng ge zhōngtōu
xiǎoshí	yí <ge> xiǎoshí, liǎng <ge> xiǎoshí

It is important not to confuse zhōng ‘o’clock’ with zhōngtōu (and xiǎoshí) ‘hours’, or other cases of time-when and duration:

<i>Time-when</i>		<i>Duration</i>	
liǎng diǎn zhōng	2 o’clock	liǎng ge zhōngtōu liǎng <ge> xiǎoshí	2 hours
liùyuè sān hào	June 3rd	sān tiān	3 days
qīyuè	July	qī ge yuè	7 months
yījiǔjiǔsì nián	1994	jiǔ nián	9 years
sān diǎn shíwǔ fēn	3:15	shíwǔ fēn <zhōng>	15 minutes

7.8.2 Duration in context

While *time-when* phrases are placed prior to their associated verbs (liù diǎn chī wǎnfàn; shí diǎn shàngkè), duration phrases are placed directly after them: qù yì nián ‘to go for a year’; kàn yí ge zhōngtōu ‘watch for an hour’; xué yì nián ‘study for a year’. Objects cannot intrude between the verb and the duration and must either be mentioned earlier (as with the verb+DE construction), or must be placed after the duration: kàn yì xiǎoshí <de> diànshì ‘watch an hour’s TV’ (which is homologous in structure to the English). In fact, objects often do not need to be mentioned, and so for the sake of presentation, they will be avoided in this lesson.

Usage

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Nǐ zhù zai nǎr? | Where do you live? |
| Zài Lúwān. | In Luwan [a district of Shanghai]. |
| Zěnmé lái shàngbān? | How do you get [here] to work? |
| Zuò qìchē. | By car. |
| Yào jǐ fēn zhōng? | How many minutes does it take? |
| Dàgài sānshí fēn. | About 30 minutes. |
| 2. Míngtiān qù Lìjiāng ma? | [You]’re going to Lijiang tomorrow? |
| Shì, míngtiān zǎoshàng. | Yes, tomorrow morning. |
| Zěnmé qù? | How are you going? |
| Zuò fēijī qu. | [We]’re going by plane. |

Yào jǐ ge xiǎoshí? How many hours does it take?
Chàbuduō yí ge bàn xiǎoshí. About an hour and a half.
 Qù jǐ tiān? How many days are you going for?
Sān tiān, lǐbàisì huílái. 3 days, [we]’ll be back on Thursday.

Exercise 6.

Compose a conversation along the following lines:

Tomorrow’s your meeting, right? [kāihuì]
That’s right, from 9 to 6 – 9 hours altogether.
 How are you getting [there]?
I’m driving.
 How long will that take?
About 40 minutes. I’ll leave at about 8.
 When will you be back?
About 8 in the evening.
 So 12 hours in all.

7.9 More le patterns

The subject of duration leads quite naturally to some additional patterns involving the ubiquitous particle, le. Recall that earlier you saw that le was interpreted differently according to whether it was associated with a state or an action. The clearest cases involved SVs on the one hand (bú è le ‘no longer hungry’) and V_{act} on the other (chīfàn le ‘have eaten’). It was also noted that le sometimes attached directly to the verb rather than to the sentence; thus, xià-le kè jiù huíjiā, where going home was conditional on getting out of class; and qù-le yí tàng Cháng Chéng, with a ‘quantified’ object. These facts remain relevant for the new patterns that relate to duration.

Some vocabulary relevant to duration

hěn jiǔ <i>[for] a long time</i>	bù jiǔ <i>not long</i>	duō jiǔ <i>how long</i>	duō cháng shíjiān <i>how long a time</i>
bìyè VO complete-enterprise <i>to graduate</i>	jiéhūn VO tie-marriage <i>to get married</i>	jiāoshū VO teach-books <i>teach</i>	děng <i>wait</i>

Note

Jiéhūn, like jiāoshū and shuìjiào, are combinations of verb and object (VO), which means that unlike, say, rènshi which is a two-syllable verb, elements can intervene between the syllables. Bìyè, it turns out, is interpreted by some speakers as a two-syllable verb, by others as a verb + object.

7.9.1 Continuing action

When people ask you how long you have been studying Chinese, they are asking about *action that has continued over a period of time*. The assumption (signaled by the *ing* form of the verb in English) is that you began studying at some time in the past, and your study since, if not continuous, has followed stage by stage right up to the present. The situation can be envisioned as a start followed by a wavy line connecting with the current time, typically the present:

| V_{act} -le ~~~~~→| le <continuing action, eg: studying, walking>

The onset is signaled by le after the verb; and the connection with current time is signaled by the final le. The order is *V-le duration le*:

Nǐ xué-le jǐ nián le? <i>Liǎng nián <le>.</i>	How many years have you been studying? <i>Two years <so far>.</i>
Nǐ yǐjīng zǒu-le jǐ ge xiǎoshí le? <i>Sān ge xiǎoshí <le>.</i>	How long have you been walking so far? <i>Three hours <so far>.</i>
Nǐ děng-le duō jiǔ le? <i>Bàn ge xiǎoshí <le>.</i>	How long have you been waiting? <i>A half hour <so far>.</i>
Nǐ zài nǐ ge dānwèi gōngzuò? <i>Zài yóujú.</i>	Which unit do you work in? <i>In the post office.</i>
Zài nàr gōngzuò-le jǐ nián le? <i>Hěn jiǔ le – shí duō nián <le>.</i>	How long have you worked there? <i>A long time – over 10 years.</i>

Notes

a) Multiples of 10 (shí, sānshí, liǎngbǎi, etc.) are frequently followed by duō to express ‘more than; over’: shí duō nián ‘more than 10 years’; èrshí duō kuài qián ‘more than \$20’; yìbǎi duō ge xuéshēng ‘over 100 students’.

b) In the responses in the examples above, the final le is sometimes left out, presumably because once a context has been established, speakers do not feel the need to reiterate the notion of ‘so far’.

Objects that appear *cannot* intrude between the verb (or verb-le) and the [following] duration phrase. Instead, an object is often mentioned earlier (with or without the verb):

xué Zhōngwén >	study Chinese >
Nǐ Zhōngwén xué-le jǐ nián le?	How long have you been studying Chinese?
jiāoshū >	teach (‘teach-books’) >
Tā jiāoshū jiāo-le èrshí duō nián le.	He’s been teaching for over 20 years.

děng tā >

Wǒ děng tā yǐjīng děng-le
yí ge xiǎoshí le.

wait for him >

I've been waiting for him for an hour
already.**a) Restrictive adverbs suppress final le**

One caveat: When asked how long you have been studying Chinese, you will often want to answer with a restrictive adverb such as zhǐ 'only' – 'only six months', for example. It turns out that while the English keeps the same form of the verb in both question and answer (have been studying), in Chinese, restrictive adverbs such as zhǐ 'only' [as well as gāng 'just', gāngcái 'a short while ago' and cái, when it means 'only'] seem to circumscribe the verbal event in such a way as to be incompatible with the final *le* (as indicated by the * below). Here, to illustrate the point, is a typical dialogue:

Nǐ Zhōngwén jiǎng+de hěn hǎo!
Xué-le jǐ nián le?You speak Chinese very well! How
many years have you been studying [it]?

Zhǐ xué-le bàn nián *le.

[I] 've only been studying half a year.

Zhǐ xué-le bàn nián jiù shuō+de
nàme hǎo, zhēn liǎobuqǐ!Only been studying half a year and
you speak so well – that's amazing!**7.9.2 Enduring states**

If you ask friends how long they have known each other, or how long it has been since they graduated from college, you are asking about *enduring states*. By contrast to continuing action, enduring states involve an event (a marriage, an introduction, or a graduation, for instance) that defines a new state that persists through a stretch of time. You can envision the situation as a point followed by a straight line:

event* ----->|le

<enduring states: eg: knowing him;
being married; being somewhere>

The event will be expressed by a verb with associated subjects or objects: jiéhūn 'marry (tie-wedding)'; biyè 'graduate (complete-enterprise)'; zài Zhōngguó. Elapsed time will be expressed as a duration phrase, optionally introduced by yǒu 'have': <yǒu> sān nián; <yǒu> yí ge zhōngtōu; and the connection with current time will be signaled by a final le (However, the presence of a restrictive adverb such as zhǐ 'only' cancels the final le, as it did in zhǐ xuéle bàn nián.)

Tā jiéhūn <yǒu> èrshí duō nián le.

He's been married over 20 years
[so far].

Wǒ biyè yǐjīng <yǒu> liǎng nián le.

I graduated (have been graduated)
for two years already [so far].

Tāmen zài Běijīng <yǒu> liù ge yuè le.	They've been in Beijing for 6 months [so far].
Nǐ rènshi tā <yǒu> duōcháng shíjiān le?	How long have you known him [so far]?
Wǒmen zài Běijīng zhǐ yǒu liǎng ge yuè *le.	We've only been in Beijing for two months.

Yǒu is optional, as indicated, though it may be more often expressed in southern Mandarin, or when an adverb such as yǐjīng is present (as in the second example above). Yǐjīng, interestingly, can appear before yǒu, before the duration phrase if yǒu is omitted, and also before zài:

Wǒ zài zhèr yǐjīng yǒu yì nián le.	I've been here for a year already.
Wǒ zài zhèr yǐjīng yì nián le.	I've been here a year already.
Wǒ yǐjīng zài zhèr yì nián le.	I've already been here a year.

a) Interchanges involving enduring states

i) Nǐ shì nǐ nián lái de? 1997 nián. Na, nǐ yǐjīng zài zhèr liù nián le. Shì a, liù nián le.	When did you come [here]? [It was] in 1997. So you've already been here 6 yrs [so far]. Yes, six years [so far].
ii) Nǐ zài Huáshèngdùn yǒu jǐ nián le? Sān nián le. 2000 nián lái de.	How many years in Washington [so far]? Three years [so far]. I came in 2000.
iii) Nǐ zhù zài zhèr jǐ nián le? Shí nián le.	How long have you lived here [so far]? Ten years [so far].
iv) Qǐngwèn, nǐ shì jǐ niánjí de xuésheng? Sān niánjí de. O, nǐ zài Běi Dà yǐjīng yǒu sān nián le. Shì, yǒu sān nián le.	May I ask what year you are? A junior. Oh, so you've been at Peking University 3 years [so far] already. Yes, it's been three years [so far].
v) Nǐ rènshi tā jǐ nián le? Yǐjīng èrshí duō nián le.	How long have you known her? More than 20 years already.
vi) Nǐ zài Zhōngguó jǐ nián le? Sān nián le.	How long have you been in China [so far]? 3 years [so far].

vii) Nǐ zài Zhōngguó jǐ nián?
Sān nián.

How long were you in China [then]?
3 years [then].

The significance of final *le* in the pattern is clear from the last two examples, (vi) and (vii). With *le*, the sentence is cued to the present; without it, it refers to time spent [there] in the past. So the sense of the final *le* is ‘so far’ or ‘to now’.

b) Options

Sometimes, situations that are objectively very similar can be viewed either as enduring states or as continuing actions. The different forms of the English verb in the following examples – ‘have lived’ versus ‘have been living’ – reflect the same difference:

Wǒ zài Xī'ān <yǒu> sān nián le.	I have been in Xi'an for 3 years. [enduring state]
Wǒ zhù zài Xī'ān <yǒu> sān nián le.	I have lived in Xi'an 3 years. [enduring state]
Wǒ zài Xī'ān zhù-le sān nián le.	I have been living in Xi'an for 3 years. [continuing action]
Wǒ xué Zhōngwén <yǒu> sān nián le.	I've studied Chinese for 3 years.
Wǒ Zhōngwén xué-le sān nián le.	I've been studying Chinese for 3 years.

c) Typical verbs

While it is true that many events can be presented as enduring states or continuing actions, certain verbs are, because of their meaning, predisposed to one pattern or the other. The following verbs, for example, because they involve events that define a new state, are associated with the enduring state pattern:

jiéhūn	Nǐmen jiéhūn <yǒu> jǐ nián le?
bìyè	Nǐ bìyè <yǒu> jǐ nián le?
rènshi	Nǐ rènshi tā <yǒu> duō jiǔ le?
zài	Nǐmen zài Běijīng <yǒu> duō cháng shíjiān le?

Continuing actions involve the large set of action verbs, including:

xué	Nǐ xué-le jǐ nián le?
děng	Nǐ děng-le duō jiǔ le?
zhù	Nǐ zài Shànghǎi zhù-le duō cháng shíjiān le?
gōngzuò	Nǐ zài nàr gōngzuò-le jǐ nián le?

Fortunately, the two new *le-functions* that have been introduced in §7.9, as well as those encountered earlier, are all frequent in the everyday exchanges that you are likely to

encounter in your first year of learning Chinese. Your teachers or your friends can make sure to use examples of them daily so that the choice of le versus guo or shi...de, on the one hand, or of one le versus two on the other, becomes close to second nature.

Exercise 7

Compose dialogues along the following lines:

1. You write characters very well; how long have you been studying?
About 2 years.
 Have you ever been to China?
Yes, I have; last year I was in Nanjing for 2 months.
2. How long have you been in Chengdu?
Only three weeks, I got here in June.
 How long are you staying?
I'm leaving on September 1st.
3. How long have you been studying [Chinese]?
A year.
 Only a year and you speak so well!
You're too kind! I really don't speak well at all!
4. How long have you known him?
For ages – over 20 years!
 Where did you meet?
We met at a bus stop [gōngòng-qìchē zhàn] in HK.

7.10 Weather

7.10.1 The seasons

Though not all parts of China enjoy four seasons, most parts do, and Chinese recognize four seasons (sìgè jìjié or more concisely, sìjì). Names for seasons end with -tiān.

chūntiān	spring
xiàtiān	summer
qiūtiān	autumn; fall
dōngtiān	winter

Examples

Běijīng, xiàtiān hǎn rè, dōngtiān hǎn lěng.	[In] Beijing, summers are hot, winters, cold.
Guǎngdōng, dōngtiān bù lěng, kěshi xiàtiān hǎn mēnrè.	[In] Canton, the winter's aren't cold but the summers are 'hot and humid'.

Kūnmíng tiānqì fēicháng hǎo,
sìjì-rúchūn.

Kunming's weather's great –
'four seasons like spring'.

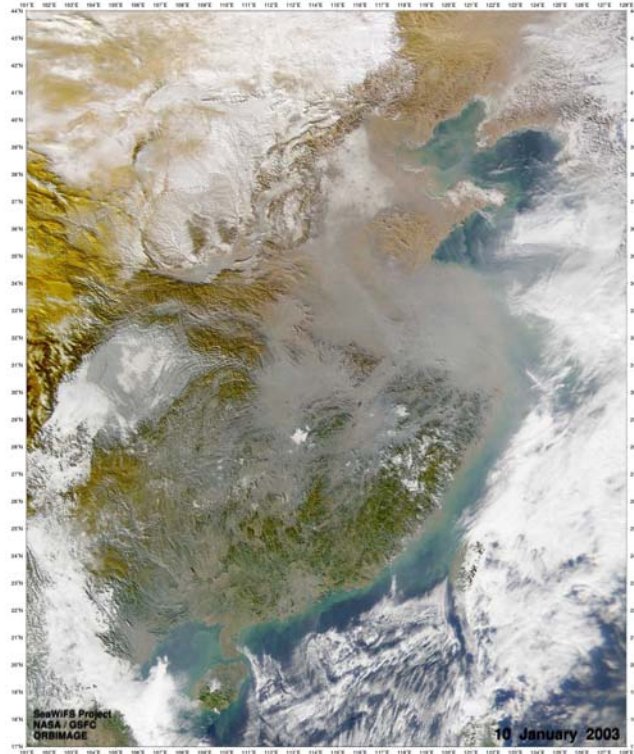
Notes

The weather in Kūnmíng, and Yúnnán in general, is conventionally described as having sìjì-rúchūn '4-seasons like-spring', or sìjì-fēnmíng '4-seasons divide-clear', ie 'having four distinct seasons' (though the latter can also apply to other places in China). Yúnnán is also conventionally described as having lántiān-báiyún 'blue-skies white-clouds'.

7.10.2 China's weather patterns

China's geographical configuration, with a vast continental mass to its west and a large body of water to the east, results in winters with cold air masses of high pressure over Mongolia and warmer air masses of lower pressure over the ocean (which retains heat longer). As the continental land mass heats up through the spring, the high pressure over Mongolia is relieved (as air expands), while the air over the ocean remains relatively more dense (water heats more slowly). These pressure differentials (high to low) give rise to the winds known as monsoons (jìfēng in Chinese, 'season-wind'). The winter monsoon brings cold, dry air from the north and northwest, resulting in cold and windy winters in the Beijing region, but little snow. The summer monsoon brings warm, moist air from the ocean that gives rise to heavy fogs along the northeastern coasts, and humid weather inland.

The effect of the two monsoons is mitigated by mountain ranges, which protect the south from the cold dry winter monsoon, and the north, and to some degree the northeast as well, from the moisture of the summer one. Rainfall in Beijing (in the north) varies considerably from year to year, but is heaviest in July and August. Southern regions, south of the Jīnlíng mountain range (which runs south of Xī'an, south of the Yellow River), have heavier rainfall, much of it between May and October. South of the Nánlíng range (which runs along the northern boundary of Canton province) the weather is subtropical, with no real winter season. On the Tibetan plateau, on the other hand, the winters are long and summer virtually nonexistent.



Satellite photograph, showing summer haze over China.

7.10.3 'Weather'

The ordinary word for weather is tiānqì, composed of 'sky' plus 'qì'. The root qì was noted earlier, when it was encountered in the word kèqì 'be polite'. It is an important concept in Chinese physiology and medicine, and is familiar to English speakers as the first syllable in the word qìgōng, the name of the traditional system of breathing exercises that has become known in the West. Qì is sometimes translated as 'spirit' or 'essence'. It appears in a range of words having to do with weather (tiānqì, qìhòu 'climate'), mood (qìfēn 'ambiance', qìpài 'flair; design'), and breath or air (qìduǎn 'to gasp for breath', shēngqì 'get angry', qìqiú 'balloon').

Jīntiān tiānqì zěnmeyàng?

What's the weather like today?

Lúndūn tiānqì bù lěng yě bú rè.

The weather in London's neither [too] hot, nor [too] cold.

Zhōngguó běifāng de tiānqì bǐjiào gānzào, bù cháng xiàxuě, fēng hěn dà. Nánfāng de tiānqì bǐjiào cháoshī, chángcháng xiàyǔ.

The weather in the north of China is quite dry, it doesn't often snow, [and] it's windy. The weather in the south is more humid [and] it rains a lot.

[rather formal]

Zhōngguó běifāng de qìhòu hěn gānzào, yǔ shǎo shuǐ shǎo. Nánfāng shīrùn, yǔshuǐ-chōngpèi.

The northern climate is dry, with little precipitation; the climate in the south is moist, with abundant rainfall.

7.10.4 Rain and precipitation

Corresponding to English ‘it’s raining’, Chinese has xià yǔ, literally ‘falls rain’. English provides an ‘ambient’ subject, ‘it’, and treats rain as a verb. Chinese, on the other hand, represents the same notion with a verb of motion, xià, and a noun, yǔ, the latter treated as an object of the verb. Other kinds of precipitation follow the same pattern: xià xuě ‘to snow (fall snow)’, xià wù ‘to be foggy (fall fog)’.

- | | |
|--|---|
| i. Nǐ kàn, xià yǔ le / xià xuě le! | Look, it’s raining /snowing! |
| ii. Zuótiān xià yǔ le ma? / Xià le. | Did it rain yesterday? / Yes, it did. |
| iii. Zuótiān xià-le yìdiǎnr xuě. | It snowed a bit yesterday. |
| iv. Jiùjīnshān cháng xià wù. | It’s often foggy in San Francisco. |
| v. Běijīng cóng liù yuè dào bā yuè cháng cháng xià yǔ. | From June to August, it often rains in Beijing. |
| vi. Dōngtiān shì hěn lěng, dàn shì bù cháng xià xuě. | The winters <i>are</i> quite cold, but it rarely snows. |
| vii. Wàitou zài xià dà yǔ. | It’s raining heavily outside [right now]. |

In cases involving amount, the V+de construction is often used:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| viii Zuótiān yǔ xià+de hěn dà. | Yesterday, it rained heavily. |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|

Notes

- i) Paradoxically, given the fact that Chinese frequently omits subject pronouns where English requires them, the equivalent of English ‘look’, used to beckon someone, is usually rendered *with* the subject pronoun in Chinese: Nǐ kàn.
- i, ii) The final le in (i) suggests either that it is just starting to rain, or that the speaker is just becoming aware that it is raining. In (ii), le reflects the end of an earlier phase (associated with V_{act}).
- iii) The position of le in (iii), right after the verb xià, is conditioned by the quantified object, yìdiǎnr.
- vi) shì hěn lěng, with full tone on shì: ‘it IS cold [to be sure, but...]
- vii) zài + V, because the snowing is ongoing.

7.10.5 Sun and wind

Weather reports often mention the sun tàiyang, literally ‘the great yang’, yáng being the male counterpart to yīn, the female polarity. [While there is a regional word, tàiyīn ‘the great yin’ for ‘moon’, the standard word does not incorporate yīn; rather it is composed of yuè ‘moon’ – familiar to you as the word for ‘month’ – and liàng ‘light’: yuèliàng.] Weather reports use tàiyang in the slightly extended meaning of ‘sunlight’ or ‘sunshine’, but the word yángguāng is more specifically ‘sunlight; sunshine’.

Wind is fēng. The semantic spread of the word fēng is interesting. It appears in compounds related to ‘landscape’ (fēngjǐng ‘scenery’, as well as the geomantic practice known as fēngshuǐ), to personal bearing (yǒu fēngdù ‘have poise’), to style (fēngliú ‘notorious’, with the positive tone of ‘renowned’ for men, and the negative tone of ‘common’ for women), to custom (fēngsú ‘social customs’) and to taste (fēngwèi ‘flavor’). The wind is said ‘to be big’ (fēng hěn dà), or ‘to blow’ (guā fēng le ‘it’s windy (blows wind)’; fēng guā+de hěn lihai ‘the wind’s blowing fiercely’).

Nánjīng, měitiān dōu hěn rè kěshì kànbujiàn tàiyáng.	It’s hot every day in Nanjing, but you can’t see the sun.
---	--

Běijīng chūntiān fēng hěn dà, tǔ hěn duō.	In the spring in Beijing, it’s windy and there’s a lot of dust.
--	--

Zuótiān tiānqì bú tài hǎo – fēng tài dà le.	The weather wasn’t very good yesterday – too much wind.
--	--

7.10.6 Temperature and humidity

Winter temperatures in China show vast variation between north and south. The mean temperature in January for Beijing in the northeast is -4.6°C / 23.7°F and for Canton in the southeast is 13.5°C / 56.3°F . But mean *summer* temperatures in north and south differ rather little. The mean average in July in Beijing is 26.0°C / 78.8°F , while in Canton, it is 28.3°C / 82.9°F . Temperature (wēndù) is expressed in dù ‘degrees’ Celsius (Shèshì), rather than Fahrenheit (Huáshì). In the summer, most of the heavily populated parts of China are hot and humid, or ‘muggy’: mēnrè, literally ‘stuffy and hot’, or cháoshī ‘moist; damp’. The opposite is gānzào ‘dry; arid’ (and in other contexts, ‘dull; uninteresting’).

Guǎngzhōu hěn mēnrè, báitiān sānshí dù, yèlǐ èrshíwǔ dù!	Canton (city)’s very humid, 30° in the daytime, 25° at night!
---	--

Shèshì 23 dù shì Huáshì 73 dù ba?	23°C is 73°F , right?
-----------------------------------	---

Wēndù shì duōshao?	What’s the temperature?
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Wǒ zuì bù xǐhuan mēnrè cháoshī de tiānqì.	I hate hot and humid weather.
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7.10.7 Yòu...yòu...(又...又)

Yòu, with falling tone has a core meaning of ‘once again’, but yòu reiterated before a pair of verbs – more commonly SVs – often translates as ‘both...and’ or, simply, ‘and’:

Yòu kuài yòu shūfu.	[It]’s fast and comfortable.
Yòu lèi yòu jǐnzhang.	Tired and anxious.
Yòu mēn yòu rè.	Hot and humid.

Exercise 8.**1) Written weather reports**

Weather reports in Chinese newspapers are usually limited to a brief description of the skies, the wind velocity and the high and low temperatures. The language is concise rather than colloquial, but otherwise fairly straightforward. Here are some examples, transcribed in pinyin and with added glosses. The first is from a newspaper sold in Nanjing called *Yángzǐ Wǎnbào* ('Yangtze Evening News'); the Arabic numbers are in the original. The second is taken, slightly edited, from the internet.

(a) *Yángzǐ Wǎnbào*, 1999 nián, 7 yuè, 26 hào [unedited]

Nánjīng shìqū tiānqì: jīntiān xiàwǔ dào yèlǐ duōyún,
Nánjīng city-region afternoon to night cloudy

míngtiān báitiān duōyún zhuǎn yīn yǒu zhènyǔ,
tomorrow daytime becoming overcast have showers

piān dōng fēng 4-5 jí, wēndù 33° C – 25° C.
towards east wind 4-5 level, temperature

(b) *Internet*, 1999 nián 10 yuè 25 rì

Běijīng: duōyún zhuǎn qíng, piān xī fēng 3 jí, wēndù 20° - 24°.
many-clouds becoming clear towards west wind 3 level temp

Glossary:

duōyún	cloudy	zhuǎn	to turn
yīn	overcast	qíng	clear
zhènyǔ	a shower of rain	yǔtiān	rain day
yīntiān	overcast sky	qíngtiān	clear sky

2) Weather in Mainland cities

Below is a chart that shows the weather in the main Mainland (Dàlù) cities. From it, you can read off temperature, cloud and rain conditions. The temperatures, of course, you can characterize as lěng or rè etc. The other conditions (zhuǎn yīn, duōyún etc.) will sound like what they are – weather report language; but in the context, that is acceptable.

Dàlù Tiānqì

Guǎng- zhōu*	Fú- zhōu	Kūn- míng	Hàn- kǒu	Háng- zhōu	Shàng- hǎi	Nán- jīng	Běi- jīng	Tiān- jīn	Xī- 'ān	Kāi- fēng	Shěn- yáng
duō- yún	zhuǎn yīn	zhèn- yǔ	yǔ- tiān	duō- yún	yǔ- tiān	zhuǎn qíng	duō- yún	zhuǎn yīn	yīn- tiān	qíng- tiān	yǔ- tiān
31	35	22	25	33	30	25	27	26	28	30	25
27	26	19	23	25	24	23	20	18	22	22	20

Notes

A large number of Mainland cities have zhōu as their second syllable: Sūzhōu, Hángzhōu, Xúzhōu, Lánzhōu, Fúzhōu, Chángzhōu, Yángzhōu, Guǎngzhōu, Gànzhōu etc. In old China, zhōu was an important administrative unit.



Clouds over one of the Sān Tǎ ‘3 Pagodas’ in Dàlǐ, Yúnnán. [JKW 1993]

7.11 Dialogue: Talking about weather.

Jiǎ is a student from abroad, studying in China for the summer. Yǐ is from Nanjing.

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| Jiǎ | Jīntiān yǒu diǎnr rè, shì ma? | It’s a bit hot today, isn’t it? |
| Yǐ | Duì, Nánjīng xiàtiān dōu shì zhèi yàng, yòu rè yòu mēn. Chūntiān qiūtiān bǐjiào hǎo. | Yeah, summers in Nanjing are always like this, hot and muggy. Spring and autumn are better. |
| Jiǎ | Suīrán hěn rè, kěshì měitiān dōu kànbujiàn tàiyang! Zhèi yàng de tiānqì, nǐmen zěnme shuō ne? | Although it’s hot, you never see the sun. How do you talk about this kind of weather? |
| Yǐ | Ng, zěnme shuō ne...yěxǔ kěyǐ shuō yǒu diǎnr huīméngméng-de. Yě kěyǐ shuō wùméngméng-de. | Yeah, what do we say? Perhaps [we] can say it’s a bit ‘gray’; or [we] can say ‘misty’. |
| Jiǎ | O, huīméngméng-de; huòzhe wùméngméng-de. | Oh, ‘grey’; or ‘misty’. |
| Yǐ | Shì. | That’s right. |
| Jiǎ | Huīméngméng-de yǒu ge huī zì, shì ‘yīntiān’ de yìsi, duì ma? Wùméngméng-de yǒu ge wù zì, shì ‘yǒu wù’ de yìsi. | Huīméngméng has the word ‘grey’ in it, meaning ‘overcast’, right? Wùméngméng has ‘mist’ in it, |

	Kěshì zhèlǐ de tiānqì, yángguāng hěn qiáng, jiùshì kànbujiàn tàiyang. Yǒu méiyǒu língwài yí ge cí?	meaning ‘misty’. But the weather here is bright, it’s just that you can’t see the sun! Is there another word?
Yǐ	Ng, wǒ míngbai nǐ de yìsi. Yǒu diǎnr nán shuō. Wǒ xiànzài xiǎngbùchūlai hái yǒu shénme shuōfǎ. Yǐhòu zài gàosu nǐ, hǎo bu hǎo?	Yeah, I see what you mean. It’s difficult to say. I can’t think what other expression there is right now. I’ll tell you later, okay?
Jiǎ	Hǎo, xièxie nǐ. Cíhuì hěn bù róngyì!	Okay, thanks. Words are tough!
Yǐ	Shì. Duì le, nǐ jiàqī dǎsuàn zuò shénme?	Right. Well, so, what are you planning to do over the break?
Jiǎ	Wǒmen yào qù Kūnmíng.	We’re off to Kunming.
Yǐ	Kūnmíng, aiya, hěn yuǎn.	Kunming, wow, [that]’s far.
Jiǎ	Wǒmen qù Kūnmíng yīnwèi nàr de tiānqì bǐjiào liángkuài, bù zěnmē rè!	We’re off to Km. ‘cos the weather’s cooler there – it’s not so hot!
Yǐ	Wǒmen cháng shuō Kūnmíng sèjì de tiānqì dōu xiàng chūntiān yíyàng – sèjì-rúchūn! Kōngqì yě hěn hǎo, yīnwèi hěn gāo – chàbuduō liǎngqiān mǐ gāo!	We often say every season in Km is like spring – ‘four seasons like spring’. And the air’s nice, because it’s high – about 2000 m!
Jiǎ	Liǎngqiān mǐ a, nà jiùshì liùqiān duō yīngchǐ. Shì hěn gāo! Tiānqì huì bu huì tài liáng?	2000m! That’s over 6000 Eng. feet. [That] IS high! Will the weather [there] be too cool?
Yǐ	Yèlǐ yǒu diǎnr liáng, kěshì báitiān dōu hěn hǎo. Cóng liúyuè dào bāyuè cháng xiàyuǎ, kěshì tàiyang yě hěn duō.	Nights are a bit cool, but days are fine. From July to August, it often rains, but there’s also a lot of sun.
Jiǎ	Kūnmíng dōngtiān zěnmeyàng?	How are the winters in Kunming?
Yǐ	Dōngtiān yǒu diǎnr lěng, kěshì bú shì tài lěng.	Winters are a bit cool, but not too cold.
Jiǎ	Nà nǐ ne, jiàqī nǐ dǎsuàn zuò shénme?	And you, what are you thinking of doing over the break?
Yǐ	Wǒ bú zuò shénme, wǒ huì zài zhèr, xiūxi xiūxi.	I’m not doing anything [in particular], I’ll be here, resting.
Jiǎ	Nà yě hǎo!	That’s good too!

- Notes*
- a) Huīméngméng-de; wùméngméng-de. In both cases, the tone on *mengmeng* varies; some say méngméng (as in the dialogue), others say mēngmēng. You can check to see what tone your friends use. There is uncertainty about how best to describe the kind of bright and hazy skies that dominate much of eastern China during the summer months. Huīméngméng-de, built around the root huī 'grey' suggests 'overcast'; wùméngméng-de, with wù meaning 'fog; mist' suggests misty. Neither quite describes a sky that is just obscure – what in English might be called hazy or 'glary'. In fact, the most appropriate description may simply be hěn mēn, which suggests not just muggy, but oppressive. But the search for the right word can provide some interesting conversational opportunities for you.
 - b) Lìngwài, 'additional; another', typically followed by a number expression: língwài yí ge wèntí 'an additional question'. Cf. biéde 'other; another', which is followed by a noun: biéde wèntí 'other questions'.
 - c) Cí 'word', as opposed to zì 'character'. Cíhuì 'words; vocabulary'.
 - d) -chūlai, seen as a verb combo in 7.1, can also appear as a suffix to verbs of perception and cognition, meaning, literally, 'figure out by V'ing': xiǎngbuchūlai 'cannot think up', kàndechūlai 'can recognize', etc.
 - e) V + fǎ 'way of V'ing': shuōfǎ 'way of speaking'; kànfǎ 'point of view'; bànfǎ 'way of dealing with [s/t]', etc.
 - f) Liáng 'cool; cold'; liángkuài 'pleasantly cool'
 - g) Bù zěnmē rè 'not so hot', making use of the indefinite function of zěnmē; cf. bù zěnmē gāo, bù zěnmē shūfu.
 - h) Kōngqì 'empty-air', ie 'the air; atmosphere'.
 - i) Chinese use the metric system, eg mǐ 'meter', gōnglǐ 'kilometer'. Traditional non-metric measures are sometimes prefixed with yīng 'English' to distinguish them from traditional Chinese measures: yīngchǐ 'feet'; yīnglǐ 'miles'.
 - j) Shì hěn gāo, with shì providing confirmation, 'it is the case that'.
 - k) Huì zài zhèr, with huì here in the sense of 'likely to; going to'.



Zhènjiāng, xiàtiān hěn mēn! [JKW 1996]

7.12 Coverbs (2)

In Unit 5, it was noted that gěi could function both as a verb (a main verb or one of a verb in series), meaning ‘give’, and a coverb (CV) meaning ‘for [the benefit of]’. In the latter case, it was placed before an associated verb, introducing the person who benefits from the verbal event: Wǒ gěi tā mǎi dōngxī, tā gěi wǒ zuòfàn. Now we introduce two other CVs, gēn and duì.

(a) Gēn’s root meaning is ‘follow’. It was first encountered not as a verb, but as a conjunction, in phrases such as lǎoshī gēn xuésheng. Then earlier in this unit, it appeared in the phrase gēn ...yìqǐ: Gēn péngyou yìqǐ qù de ‘I went [there] with friends’. In both those cases, it can be replaced by the slightly more formal hé. However, gēn also appears in association with certain verbs of communication and learning, where it often corresponds to English ‘with; to’ and where it is not synonymous with hé. This is its CV function. Here are some prototypical examples:

Nǐ gēn shéi xué Zhōngwén? <i>Gēn Zhāng lǎoshī.</i>	Who do you study Chinese with? <i>With Prof. Zhang.</i>
Tā gēn wǒ shuō:	He said to me:
Gēn nǐ yào wǔ kuài, hǎo bu hao? <i>Kěyǐ, shí kuài yě kěyǐ.</i>	Okay to borrow \$5 from you? (‘...need’) <i>Sure; you can [borrow] \$10 if you want.</i>

(b) Duì’s root meaning is ‘to face; be correct’, and it appears in expressions such as duìbuqǐ ‘sorry (face-not-worthy)’ and duìmiàn ‘opposite’ (zài huǒchēzhàn<de>duìmiàn). It may also function as a CV, subordinated to following SVs:

Yǒu rén shuō niúnǎi duì shēntǐ hěn hǎo. <i>Tīngshuō duì pífū tèbié hǎo.</i>	Some say that milk is good for you. <i>I’ve heard it’s particularly good for the skin.</i>
Lǎoshī dōu hěn yán. <i>Kěshì duì xuésheng yě hěn hǎo.</i> Shì de!	The teachers are strict. <i>But they’re good to their students.</i> [That]’s true!
Tāmen duì Zhōngguó fāngyán yǒu ~ gǎn xìngqu. <i>Něi xiē fāngyán?</i> Guǎngdōng huà, Shànghǎi huà.	They’re interested in Chinese regional languages. <i>Which ones?</i> Cantonese and Shanghainese.

Note

Gǎn xìngqu, literally ‘feel interest’ and the alternative, yǒu xìngqu ‘have interest’, require the object of interest to be introduced with duì. Yǒu in the latter expression takes its regular negative, hence méiyǒu xìngqu.

Suīrán tā de zhuānyè shì huàxué,
kěshì tā shuō duì huàxué měiyǒu
xìngqù; xiànzài hěn xiǎng xué
yǔyánxué!

Although she's majoring in chemistry,
she says she's not interested in it; now
she wants to study linguistics.

7.13 A letter home

The following is a letter from a student studying in China to a friend back home. It incorporates vocabulary and sentence patterns from the first seven units, and also introduces a few dozen new words, which are glossed in the notes that follow. Once you have practiced reading the passage aloud so that you can read it with fluency and feeling, you should translate it carefully, making sure that you have accounted for everything in the Chinese and that the English reads naturally. Once you are satisfied with your translation, use it to back-translate into Chinese and see if you can learn to retell 'the story' with fluency.

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Qīn'ài de Zhāng Yīng:

Nǐ hǎo. Wǒ xiànzài zài Běijīng! Fēijī shàng bú cuò, kàn-le liǎng ge diànyǐng, tīng-le hěn duō yīnyuè. Suīrán hěn yuǎn, yǒu yìdiǎnr bù shūfu, kěshì hěn yǒuyìsi. Wǒ shì èryuè yí hào dào de. Běijīng Dàxué de Kǒng lǎoshī lái jiē wǒ. Wǒ zhù de sùshè zài Běijīng Dàxué, lí shàngkè de dìfāng bù yuǎn. Sùshè hěn dà, yǒu liù qī ge dàlóu. Kěshì zhǐ yǒu wàiguórén néng zhù zài nàr; yǒu Ōuzhōu rén, Měiguó rén, Riběn rén, yě yǒu Hánguó rén. Suīrán tāmen dōu dǒng Yīngwén, kěshì yīnwèi yǒude tóngxué shuō+de bú tài hǎo, suǒyǐ wǒmen zài yìqǐ píngcháng dōu shuō Zhōngwén, hěn shǎo shuō Yīngwén. Kàn nàme duō wàiguórén dōu zài nàr shuō Zhōngwén, Zhōngguó rén juéde hěn qíguài. Běi Dà de Zhōngguó xuéshēng yě yào gēn wǒmen shuō Yīngwén, suǒyǐ wǒmen shuōhuà de shíhou, tāmen gēn wǒmen shuō Yīngwén, wǒmen gēn tāmen shuō Zhōngwén. Báitiān wǒmen dōu chūqu shàngkè, chīfàn, zuò gōngkè, kěshì wǎnshàng huí sùshè lai. Zhōumò, wǒmen qù chéng lǐ pào zài kāfēiguǎnr, lěngyǐndiàn, xiǎochīdiàn. Běijīng chéng lǐ hěn rènao, wǒ hěn xǐhuān.

Běijīng dōngtiān shì cóng shíyī yuè dào èryuè. Fēicháng lěng, fēng yě hěn dà, kěshì bù cháng xiàxuě. Jīntiān shì qíngtiān, língxià wǔ dù, nà jiùshì Huáshì 23 dù. Yǒu diǎnr lěng méi guānxi; wǒ yǒu yí jiàn mián'ǎo – nà shì Zhōngguó rén chuān de yīfu. Wǒ yě yǒu yì dǐng Měnggǔ màozi! Hěn nuǎnhuó! Zhōngguó péngyou dōu shuō wǒ xiàng ge qībāshí niándài de Zhōngguó rén yíyàng. Tāmen bǐjiào xǐhuān chuān yǔróngfú.

Xià ge xīngqī yīnwèi shì Chūn Jié (jiùshi wàiguó rén shuō de Zhōngguó xīnnián), suǒyǐ Zhōngguó tóngxué dōu yào huíjiā guònián. Chūn Jié (jiùshi xià ge xīngqī), Lín lǎoshī qǐng wǒmen qù tā shūshu de jiā chīfàn. Tā shūshu shì Zhōngguó hěn yǒumíng de chúshī, zài Běijīng Dàfàndiàn gōngzuò. Wǒmen shì shàng ge xīngqī zài nàr rènshi tā de. Tā 60 duō suì, kěshì shēntǐ hěn hǎo, zhǎng+de hěn zhuàng, rén yě hěn hǎo. Tā zhù zài Wángfǔjǐng, Běijīng zuì rènào de dàjiē. Tā shuō zài nàr yǐjīng 25 nián le, suīrán yǒu diǎnr chǎo, kěshì tā bù xiǎng zhù biéde dìfang.

Nà, wǒ zài Běijīng yǐjīng sān ge xīngqī le, juéde hěn hǎo wánr. Hái méi qù-guo Cháng Chéng. Yīnwèi měitiān dōu hěn máng xuéxí Hànyǔ, suǒyǐ yěxǔ děi dēng fāngjià de shíhou cái néng qù biéde dìfang. Wǒ zhèi ge xuéqī shàng sì mén kè, měitiān dōu yǒu sān sì jié. Bān bú dà, dōu shì xiǎobān, suǒyǐ shuō Zhōngwén de jīhuì hěn duō ya. Zuòyè bù shǎo, měi ge xīngqī děi tīng lùyīn, xuéxí hěn duō Hànzì. Nà, wǒ zhǐ hǎo ‘hǎohǎo xuéxí tiāntiān xiàng shàng’.

Zhù nǐ xīnnián kuàilè!

Nǐ de péngyou, Kǒng Měi.

2004.1.17

Notes

Qīn'ài de _____	‘Dear... (intimate-love)’
Ōuzhōu	‘Europe’; cf. <u>Yàzhōu</u> , <u>Àozhōu</u> , <u>Běi Měizhōu</u> , <u>Nán Měizhōu</u> .
lěngyǐndiàn,	‘cold-drinks-shop’
pào <zai>	‘hang out’; <u>pào</u> ’s original meaning of ‘steep; brew’ – as of tea – has a colloquial extension, meaning ‘to dawdle; hang around’. In some common phrases, it appears without zai: <u>pào jiǔguǎn</u> ‘hang out at bars’, <u>pào wǎngbā</u> ‘hang out at net-cafes’.
rènao	SV ‘lively; buzzing with excitement’
mián’ǎo	‘Chinese padded jacket (cotton-jacket)’; M <u>jiàn</u> for clothes.
chuān	‘wear’ (clothes, but not accessories such as hats, belts, ties).
Měnggǔ màozi	‘Mongolian hat’; M <u>dǐng</u> for hats.
nuǎnhuó	‘be warm; feel warm’ [of people, or weather]
qībāshí	= qīshí, bāshí
niándài	‘era; decade’, as in <u>bāshí niándài</u> ‘the 80s’.
yǔróngfú	‘down-filled-coat’
Xīn Nián	‘New Year’
guònián	‘pass the new year’
Chūn Jié	‘The Spring Festival’, ie the Lunar New Year
chúshī	‘a cook; chef (kitchen-teacher)’

fàndiàn	‘hotel’. Fancy hotels in China were apparently associated with fine food, hence <u>fàndiàn</u> or <u>dàfàndiàn</u> . Despite its etymology, <u>fàndiàn</u> does not usually mean ‘restaurant’ (except in some regional usage); nor is it used as a generic (as in the question ‘could you direct me to a good hotel’). It is more common in hotel names.
Běijīng Dàfàndiàn	considered the first modern hotel in Beijing, it is an interesting example of Soviet grand style. It was built in the 50s to house foreign guests, and enlarged with a new wing in 1974, when it still towered over the low buildings of the area just east of Tian’anmen Square in central Beijing.
Wángfǔjǐng	literally ‘prince’s residence well’; the name of one of Beijing’s best known commercial streets.
dàjiē	‘avenue (big-street)’
chǎo	‘be noisy’
fàngjià	‘have time off; take a holiday (put-leave of absence)’
Cháng Chéng	‘The Great Wall (long wall)’, often known as the <u>Wàn lǐ Cháng Chéng</u> ‘10,000-li long-wall’.
jīhuì	‘opportunity’
lùyīn	‘a tape recording (record-sound)’; also VO ‘to make a recording’
zhǐ hǎo	‘can only; have no choice but to; have to (only good)’
zhù	‘wish; to extend blessings etc.’ (homophonous but not, of course, synonymous with <u>zhù</u> ‘live’).
kuàilè	‘happiness’
Nǐ de péngyou _____	the normal sign-off for personal letters; also <u>nǐ de tóngxué</u> , etc.
2004.1.17	Note the contracting order: year-month-day.

The phrase hǎohǎo xuéxí, tiāntiān xiàng shàng is said to have been spoken by (or perhaps repeated by) Mao Zedong, and often appears on school walls to urge children to work hard. Hǎohǎo is an adverbial (formed from the repetition of the SV) and can be translated as ‘properly; well’; xiàng shàng, with CV xiàng, means literally ‘towards above’, in other words, ‘make progress’: ‘Study hard and do well!’

Exercise 9.

Paraphrase in Chinese:

1. Although the dorm’s residents are foreigners, there are still lots of opportunities to speak Chinese. We spend our days out, talking to Chinese students, and we don’t come home until quite late.
2. I came to Nanjing in November 2002, and now it’s December 2003, so I’ve been living here for a year. I work at the Grand Hotel (Gǔ Nándū Fàndiàn), and I live there too, on the 16th floor. It’s a bit noisy, but it’s very comfortable.
3. We have class every morning from 9 to noon, but only 4 days a week. On Wednesday, we don’t have any classes, so we often take the bus into town and shop and visit interesting places.

7.14 Pronunciation practice

Here are three sets of phrases to practice reading aloud. The first set consists of miscellaneous phrases and signs, the second, of disyllabic words with the r-suffix, and the third, of titles of well-known Chinese films.

Miscellany

jūzhùqū	‘residential district (reside-live-district)’
zhíxiáshì	‘(direct-jurisdiction-city)’; a city that is ruled directly by the central government
jiāotōng-shūniǔ	‘communication or transportation hub (communication-pivot)’
sīfǎjú	‘(judiciary-bureau)’
ānquán-tōngdào	‘emergency route (safety-route)’
jǐnjí-chūkǒu	‘emergency exit (emergency-exit)’
shāngwù-zhōngxīn	‘business-center’
gòuwù-zhōngxīn	‘shopping center (buy-things=center)’
Qǐng wù xīyān.	‘No smoking please (request don’t draw+in-smoke).’
yíngyè shíjiān	‘business hours (operation hours)’
Xiǎoxīn ménxì.	‘Mind the gap (careful door-crevice).’

Colloquial words with the r-suffix:

huāpíng	[huāpíng]	‘vase (flower-bottle)’
húzuǐ	[húzuǐ]	‘spout [of a kettle] (kettle-mouth)’
xiǎoqǔ	[xiǎoqǔ]	‘a popular ditty; song (little-tune)’
dònghuàpiānr	[dònghuàpiānr]	‘cartoon (move-drawing-film)’
pūgaijuǎnr	[pūgaijuǎnr]	‘bed roll; bed kit (bedclothes-roll)’
chǒujuér	[chǒujuér]	‘clown’
dànhuáng	[dànhuá ⁿ]	‘egg-yolk’

Film titles

Literal translations of those films whose English title is not close to the Chinese are marked *. You can add to the list by asking Chinese friends about films that have been popular in China or Taiwan.

Huáng Tǔdì	Yellow Earth	1984
Hēipào Shìjiàn	Black Cannon Incident	1986
Hóng Gāoliang	Red Sorghum	1987
Dàhóng Dēnglóng Gāogāo Guà	Raise the Red Lantern	1992
Qīujú Dǎ Guānsi (*QJ Sues’)	The Story of Qiu Ju	1992
Ximèng Rénsēng (*Theater-dream Human-life)	The Puppetmaster	1993
Bàwáng Biéjī (*The Conqueror Leaves his Consort)	Farewell My Concubine	1993
Lán Fēngzheng	Blue Kite	1993
Huózhe	To Live	1994
Wòhǔ Cánglóng	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	2000

Huāyàng de Niánhuá (*Flower-like DE Age)	In the Mood for Love	2000
Hé Nǐ Zài Yìqǐ	Together	2002
Yīngxióng	Hero	2002
Shímian Máifu (*10-sides Ambush)	House of Flying Daggers	2005

7.15 Highlights

About to	Kuài xiàkè le.
V-wán	Jīntiān de gōngkè hái méi zuòwán.
V-dào	Zuótiān méi kàndào nǐ.
V-zháo	Wǎnshàng hěn rè, shuǐbuzháo jiào!
V-hǎo	Fàn yǐjīng zuòhǎo le.
V-bǎo	Chībǎo le, chībǎo le.
V-cuò	Nèi ge zì hǎoxiàng xiěcuò le.
Cái	Tā 1997 nián cái huílai de.
Come back	Nǐ shénme shíhou huí sùshè lai?
V-lai/qu	Qǐng guòlai kànkān ba.
Because	Yīnwei tiānqì hěn rè, suǒyǐ wǒmen dōu hěn lèi.
Although	Suīrán fùmǔ shì Zhōngguó rén, dànshì tā méi qù guo Zhōngguó.
If	Nǐ yàoshi méi diànnǎo, kěyǐ qù wǎngbā fā email.
If	Rúguǒ nǐ bù xiǎng qù, nà wǒ yě bù xiǎng qù.
Say you ...	Bù néng qù de huà, jiù dǎ ge diànhuà ba.
Exclamations	Zhēn liǎobuqǐ!
Other lgs	Nǐ hái huì shuō biéde wàiyǔ ma?
Some	Bù yíding, yǒurén xǐhuan, yǒurén bù xǐhuan.
Put	Yào bu yào fàng niúnǎi?
Together	Gēn wǒmen yíkuàir ~ yìqǐ qù, hǎo bu hǎo?
Alone	Yí ge rén qù ma? ('Are you....?')
Self	Zìjǐ zuò de ma?
Time / Dur'n	liǎng diǎn zhōng / liǎng ge zhōngtōu
Duration	Huǐjiā yào jǐ fēn zhōng?
Cont's action	Zhōngwén xué-le jǐ nián le?
Restr. adv	Zhǐ xué-le sān ge yuè.
Endur. states	Wǒ rènshi tā yǐjīng yǒu èrshí duō nián le.
Degrees	Shèshì 23 dù shì Huáshì 73 dù ba.
Yòu...yòu...	Yòu kuài yòu shūfu.
Gēn as CV	Nǐ gēn shuí ~ shéi xué Zhōngwén?
Dui as a CV	Tā zhǐ duì diànnǎo gǎn xìngqù.

7.16 Rhymes and Rhythms

1. A schoolboy's ~ girl's lament

Dúshū rú dāng nú,
jiàn shī rú jiàn hǔ,
Qín huáng shāobujìn,
shǐ wǒ yì shēng kǔ!

Study-books like be slave,
see teacher like see tiger,
Qin emperor burn-not-exhaust,
make me one life bitter!

Notes

- a) Rú is a more formal equivalent of xiàng 'resemble'.
- b) Shāobujìn is a verb combo in the potential form.
- c) Shǐ 'to cause to'.

The Qín dynasty (Qín cháo), 221-206 BC, grew from a small state in the west of what is now China into a powerful kingdom that eventually united the smaller Chinese states and created the first imperial dynasty ruled by King Zhèng. The King styled himself Shǐ Huángdì 'First Emperor' and aided by his minister, Lǐ Sī, consolidated his power through ruthless but effective political measures. These include the notorious (and probably exaggerated) 'burning of books (shāo shū)', the event referred to in the penultimate line of the rhyme. Under Shǐ Huángdì, walls built earlier to keep out non-Han peoples from the north were connected to make the original 'Long Wall' (Cháng Chéng) – along a different route from the one seen today.

2. And another animal up to his tricks:

Huā māo 'tabby cat'

Xiǎo huāmāo, shàng xuéxiào,
lǎoshī jiǎng kè, tā shuìjiào:
yí ge ěrduo tīng, yí ge ěrduo mào,
nǐ shuō kěxiào bù kěxiào?

little tabby-cat, attend school
teacher give lesson, (s)he sleeps
one ear listens, one ear blocked
you say funny or not?

Notes

Kěxiào 'funny'; cf. kě'ài 'lovable' and kěpà 'fearsome'.

Appendix: Question words

You have, by now, encountered most of the important question words of Chinese. You have also seen several cases of question words as indefinites. Here is a review:

shéi or shuí? ‘who(m)’

Nà shi shéi?	Who’s that?
Nǐ de lǎoshī shi shéi?	Who’s your teacher?
Shéi shi nǐ de lǎoshī?	Who (of these people) is your teacher?
Wèn shéi?	Who<m> are [you] asking?

Cf. Tā shi shénme rén (‘what person’) usually means ‘what is s/he to you’, and can be answered: Tā shi wǒ de lǎoshī; tā shi wǒ shūshu.

indef Nǐ wèn shéi? > Wǒ bú wèn shéi.

shénme ‘what’

Shénme kǎoshì?	What test?
Tā xìng shénme?	What’s her surname?
Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?	What’s your name?
Máng shénme ne?	What’re you busy doing?
Nǐ shuō shénme?	What did you say? What are you saying?

shénme dìfang ‘what place; where’

Nǐ shi shénme dìfang rén? Where’re you from?

shénme shíhou ‘what time; when’

Nǐ shénme shíhou zǒu? When are you going/leaving?

Shénme has a fairly common regional, colloquial alternative, *shá*, which is probably a telescoped version of *shénme*:

Tā gàn shá qù? = Tā gàn shénme qù?

Nǐ shi shá dìfang rén? = Nǐ shi shénme dìfang rén?

indef Nǐ xiǎng chī shénme? > Bù xiǎng chī shénme.
Shénme shíhou zǒu? > Shénme shíhou dōu xíng.

něi, nǎ ‘which; what’

Nǐ shi něi wèi?	Who are you? / Who is it?
Tā shi něi/nǎ guó rén?	What’s her nationality?
Něi ge? / Nèi ge!	Which one? / That one!

nǎr (northern, colloquial), nǎlǐ (Taiwan neutral, Mainland formal) ‘where’

Nǐ qù nǎr ~ nǎlǐ? Nǐ dào nǎr qù?	Where are you going?
Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ.	‘Oh, you can’t mean it!’

indef Nǐ qù nǎr? / Nǐ dào nǎr qu? Wǒ bú qù nǎr. / Wǒ bú dào nǎr qu.

zěnmē ‘how; in what way’

Zěnmeyàng?

How’re [you] doing? / How’s [it] going?

Zěnmē bàn?

What can be done about [it]?

Zěnmē shuō?

How do [you] say it?

Nǐ zěnmē qù?

How do [you] go [there]?

Zhōngwén, zěnmē shuō?

How’s [it] said [in] Chinese?

indef Duō yuǎn?

Bù zěnmē yuǎn, hěn jìn.

duōshao ‘how many; how much’

Nǐ de diànhuà shì duōshao?

What’s your phone number?

Yīgòng yǒu duōshao?

How many do [you] have all together?

Duōshao qián?

How much money?

indef Yǒu duōshao péngyou?

Méiyǒu duōshao, zhǐ yǒu liǎng sān ge.

jǐ ‘how many; how much’ [expecting relatively few]

Jǐ niánjí?

Which level (year)?

Jǐ hào?

What day; what number?

Jǐ ge?

How many?

Lǐbàijǐ?

What day of the week?

Cantonese influenced Mandarin:

Tā jǐshí qù KL?

When’s he going to KL?

indef Xīzàng yǒu jǐ ge dàchéng?
(Xīzàng ‘Tibet’; dàchéng ‘cities’)

Méiyǒu jǐ ge, zhǐ yǒu yī liǎng ge.

jǐ has an additional meaning of ‘several’:

Xīzàng yǒu jǐ ge dàchéng.

There are a couple of large cities in Tibet.

duō ‘to what degree; how’

Qǐngwèn, niánjì duō dà <le>?

May [I] ask what [your] age is?

Tā duō gāo?

How tall is she?

*duōjiǔ**how long*

Nǐ xué le duō jiǔ le?

How long have you been studying?

*duōcháng shíjiān**how long*Tāmen zài Xīníng yǐjīng duōcháng
shíjiān le?

How long have they been in Xining?

wèishénme ‘why; how come’

Nǐ wèishénme hěn máng?

How come you’re so busy?

Hěn lèi a? Wèishénme?

You’re tired. How come?

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Resource: Learning Chinese: A Foundation Course in Mandarin
Dr. Julian K. Wheatley

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