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Chapter 12
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The information on names is based on a survey published in the 香港星島日報 xiānggǎng xīng dǎo rìbào (Hong Kong and Singapore Daily News) in 2002 and reported in 大参考总 dà cān kāo zǒng (VIP Reference) vol. 1640, July 28, 2002.

Chapter 50

Claudia Ross and Jing-heng Sheng Ma
Introduction

This book is divided into two sections: ‘Structures’ and ‘Situations and functions.’

Part A ‘Structures’ is a concise grammar of Mandarin Chinese organized in the familiar and traditional way, providing an overview of the Chinese writing system and describing the major features of Mandarin grammar. This section should be used for reference when you want to know something about a form or structure. For example, if you want to review the structure of the noun phrase, or how to form numbers, or the structure of the passive form, you should consult this section.

Part B ‘Situations and functions’ is organized in terms of how to do things with language, and it is the longer of the two sections. For example, if you want to know how to address someone, how to say ‘no,’ how to make comparisons, or how to apologize, you should consult this section.

Often, the same ground is covered in both parts of this book, although the emphasis is different in each section. Related sections are linked by cross-referencing, indicated by arrows in the margin of the page directing you to another section. Related functions are also cross-referenced throughout the book. You should always follow the cross-reference links so that you have a complete picture of the expression that you are exploring and can use it correctly and accurately.

Topics covered in this book are listed in the table of contents and in the index, and you should use them to help you find words and topics quickly and easily. Notice that the index is an alphabetical listing that includes keywords in English and in Pinyin romanization. For example, if you want to know how to indicate that you have had an experience in the past you can look in the index for the English expression ‘experiential aspect’ or for the word guò (过/過).

In this book, we use traditional grammatical terms to explain the structures of Mandarin. The terms are presented in the glossary at the beginning of this book. Once you are familiar with the grammatical terms you will find them helpful in understanding the grammar and in expressing yourself accurately.

We hope that you will find this book useful and informative. We look forward to learning how you use the book, and to receiving your suggestions on how it can be improved.

Claudia Ross and Jing-heng Sheng Ma
How to use this book

This book brings together two different types of resources to help you to understand Mandarin Chinese. They are presented in two parts: Part A: ‘Structures’ and Part B: ‘Situations and functions.’

When you want to review some aspect of Mandarin grammar such as how to describe a noun or where to put the prepositional phrase in a sentence, you should consult Part A. On the other hand, when you want to know how to apologize, or how to address someone, or how to emphasize something, you should consult Part B. Some topics are covered in more than one chapter of the book. For example, the verb suffix 过/過 guò is included in ‘Structures’ in Chapters 11, 13, and 17, and also in ‘Situations and functions’ in Chapter 37, ‘Indicating completion and talking about the past.’ Arrows in the left-hand margin of each page indicate additional sections of the book in which a topic is discussed. You should follow the cross-references and read everything about the topic that you are exploring in order to get a full picture of its structure and functions.

Some topics can be expressed differently depending upon the level of formality in a specific situation. Where appropriate, we have indicated the level of formality associated with expressions. See, for example, ‘Prepositions and prepositional phrases’ (Chapter 14, section 14.2.8) and ‘Greetings and goodbyes’ (Chapter 24, section 24.3).

This book provides the most common ways of expressing the major structures and functions in Mandarin. Native speakers of Mandarin differ in their use of some expressions, and we have tried to note standard variations. In your study of Mandarin, you will come across structures and expressions that are not included in this book. You should add them to your repertoire as you continue to strengthen your language skills.

To help you to consolidate your overall knowledge of Chinese, we begin this book with a brief overview of Mandarin pronunciation and an introduction to the Chinese writing system. For a more detailed coverage of pronunciation, consult a beginning level Mandarin textbook. For more information about the Chinese writing system, consult the references cited in the Acknowledgments.

Claudia Ross and Jing-heng Sheng Ma
Adverbs

Adverbs are words that precede and modify a verb or verb phrase.

他们都很忙。
他們都很忙。
Tāmen dōu hěn máng.
They are all very busy.

弟弟已经回家了。
弟弟已經回家了。
Dìdi yǐjing huí jiā le.
Younger brother already went home.

Sentence adverbs occur at the beginning of a sentence and indicate the relationship of information in a conversation or written text.

他们小的时候，父母照顾他们。后来，父母老了，该是孩子照顾父母了。
他們小的時候，父母照顧他們。後來，父母老了，該是孩子照顧父母了。
Háizi xiǎo de shíhou, fùmǔ zhàogù tāmen. Hòulái, fùmǔ lǎo le, gāi shì háizi zhàogù fùmǔ le.
When children are young, parents take care of them. Afterwards, when the parents are old, the children should take care of the parents.

Classifiers

Classifiers are words that occur after a number and/or specifier and before a noun. Some grammars refer to classifiers as ‘measure words.’ Classifiers often need not be translated into English.

一杯水
那本书
这两个人
yī bēi shuǐ
nà běn shū
zhè liǎng gè rén
one [glass of] water
that [volume of] book
these two [classifier] people

Clauses

Clauses are dependent sentences, that is, sentences that occur within a larger sentence.

Some verbs take clauses as their objects:

她说她今天很忙。
她說她今天很忙。
Tā shuō tā jīntiān hěn máng.
She said she is very busy today.
GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

我知道他没有钱。
我知道他沒有錢。
Wǒ zhīdào tā méi yǒu qián.
I know he doesn’t have any money.

Clauses may also serve as subjects:

她昨天跟你说话并不表示她愿意当你的女朋友。
她昨天跟你說話並不表示她願意當你的女朋友。
Tā zuótiān gēn nǐ shuō huà bìng bù biǎoshì tā yuàn yì dāng nǐ de nǚ péngyou.
(The fact that) she spoke with you yesterday does not mean that she is willing to be your girlfriend.

Complements

Some Mandarin grammars distinguish a class of verb complements, words or phrases that follow the verb and augment its meaning in some way. Included in the class of verb complements are result complements, potential complements, directional complements, manner complements, and degree complements. These various verb complements participate in different grammatical structures and perform different communication functions, and we therefore do not group them together in this book. Complements of result and direction participate in the same kinds of grammatical structures, and we discuss them in Chapters 18 and 19, along with their potential forms. We also discuss complements of result along with other structures that function to indicate result in Chapter 32. Complements of degree function as intensifiers for adjectival verbs, and we discuss them in Chapter 10. Complements of manner function to indicate the way that actions are performed, and we discuss them in Chapter 31. Here are the sections of this book in which each complement is included.

Result complements

► 18, 32.1

Directional complements

► 19, 48.8

Potential complements

► 18.6, 19.5, 32.2

Degree complements

► 10.3

Manner complements

► 31.3

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that connect two nouns or noun phrases to form a noun phrase.

妈妈和爸爸都会说中国话。
媽媽和爸爸都會說中國話。
Māma hé bāba dōu huì shuō Zhōngguó huà.
Mom and Dad can both speak Chinese.

► 16

Demonstratives see Specifiers and demonstratives

Direct objects see Objects
### Final particles

Final particles are syllables that occur at the end of the sentence and indicate a speech act or speaker perspective.

- 我们吃饭吧！
  - 我們吃飯吧！
  - *Wǒmen chī fàn ba!*
  - Let’s eat! (suggestion)

- 我得走了。再不走就晚咯。
  - *Wǒ děi zǒu le. Zài bù zǒu jiù wǎn lo.*
  - I'd better go now. If I don't go, I will be late. (obviousness)

#### 28.1.1, 28.5, 34.3, 38.1, 56.2

### Grammatical particles

Grammatical particles are syllables that convey grammatical meaning, for example 的 de (noun modification), 得 de (postverbal adverbial modification), 地 de (preverbal adverbial modification), 了 le (completed action), 着/著 zhe (duration).

#### 9, 31, 37, 39

### Indirect objects

See Objects

### Intensifiers

Intensifiers are words that precede and modify stative verbs, adjectival verbs, and modal verbs.

- 我很喜欢他。
  - 我很喜歡他。
  - Nǐ zěn hǎo wàinián
dú
  - *Wǒ hěn xǐhuan tā.*
  - I like him a lot.

- 那本书太贵了。
  - 那本書太貴了。
  - 那本書太貴了。
  - *Nà běn shū tài gui le.*
  - That book is too expensive.

- 你真会跳舞。
  - 你真會跳舞。
  - *Nǐ zhēn huì tiào wǔ.*
  - You can really dance.

#### 10.3, 11.2, 12.6.3

### Nouns

Nouns are words that can be directly preceded by a specifier and/or number + classifier.

- 一本书
  - yī běn shū
  - one book

- 那本书
  - nà běn shū
  - that book

### Noun phrases

Noun phrases are nouns and their modifiers.

#### 9

### Numbers

Number words.

#### 6

### Objects

There are two different types of objects, *direct* and *indirect*.

The direct object is generally the noun phrase affected by or created by the action of the verb. The direct object generally follows the verb, though it may also be topicalized (see Topics).
Glossary of Grammatical Terms

我每天在图书馆看书。
Wǒ měitiān zài túshūguǎn kàn shū.
I read books in the library every day.

我和他一起吃饭。
Wǒ hé tā yīqǐ chī fàn.
I ate with him.

The indirect object refers to the recipient of the object noun phrase. In Mandarin, only a small number of verbs take a direct and indirect object. These include 给/給 gěi ‘give’ and 送 sòng ‘present as a gift.’ In all cases, the indirect object precedes the direct object.

我不要给他钱。
Wǒ bù yào gěi tā qián.
I don’t want to give him money.

For most verbs, the recipient is expressed as the object of a preposition and not as an indirect object.

我给她写了一封信。
Wǒ gěi tā xiě le yī fēng xìn.
I wrote her a letter. (I wrote a letter to her.)

Predicates

The predicate of a sentence includes a verb and any object(s) or complements of the verb. It may also include negation, adverbs, prepositional phrases, and phrases that indicate time when, duration, or frequency.

Prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases consist of a preposition and its following noun phrase. In Mandarin, the prepositional phrase typically precedes the verb phrase.

我在家吃饭。
Wǒ zài jiā chī fàn.
I eat at home.

他跳到床上。
Tā tiào dào chuáng shàng.
He jumped onto the bed.

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that indicate the relationship of a noun phrase to a verb, for example

在 zài ‘at,’ 到 dào ‘to,’ 给/給 gěi ‘to/for,’ 替 tì ‘for.’
## Pronouns

Pronouns are words that take the place of a noun or noun phrase.

| 王明是学生。 | 他是学生。 |
| Wáng Míng shì xuéshēng. | Tā shì xuéshēng. |

| 不认识那两个人。 | 不认识他们。 |
| Wǒ bù rènshi nà liǎng gè rén. | Wǒ bù rènshi tāmen. |

| 我不認識兩個人。 | 我不認識他們。 |

| 那个孩子,脾气很坏。 | 那個孩子,脾氣很壞。 |
| Nàge háizi, píqi hěn huài. | Nàge háizi, píqi hěn huài. |

| 这本书很有意思。 | 這本書很有意思。 |
| Zhè běn shū hěn yǒu yìsi. | Zhè běn shū hěn yōu yìsi. |

| 这是中箋毛筆。 | 這是中國毛筆。 |

## Sentences

Normally, a full sentence includes a subject and a predicate. The sentence may begin with a topic.

\[
\text{topic + subject + predicate} \\
\text{那个孩子,脾气很坏。} \\
\text{Nàge háizi, píqi hěn huài.} \\
\text{That child has a bad temper. (lit. ‘That child, the temper is bad.’)}
\]

### Specifiers and demonstratives

Specifiers are words that translate as ‘this/these’ or ‘that/those’ and describe a noun.

| 这本书很有意思。 | 這本書很有意思。 |
| Zhè běn shū hěn yǒu yìsi. | Zhè běn shū hěn yōu yìsi. |

| 这是中箋毛筆。 | 這是中國毛筆。 |

These same words, when used to ‘point’ to an object, are ‘demonstratives.’

| 这是中国毛笔。 | 這是中國毛筆。 |

| 这是中箋毛筆。 | 這是中國毛筆。 |

## Subjects

The subject is the noun or noun phrase about which information is provided in the predicate. In Mandarin, the subject of a sentence occurs before the verb phrase. It can be omitted if it is understood from the overall context of the sentence. Typically, a subject is omitted if it is identical in reference to the subject of the preceding sentence.

| 我看了电影。 | ( ) 看了九点钟就回家了。 |
| Wǒ kàn le diànyǐng. ( ) jiǔdiǎn zhōng jiù huí jiā le. |

| 我看了电影。 | ( ) 看了九点钟就回家了。 |
| Wǒ kàn le diànyǐng. ( ) jiǔdiǎn zhōng jiù huí jiā le. |

| I saw a movie. At nine o’clock I returned home. |
| I saw a movie. At nine o’clock I returned home. |
Topics

Generally speaking, the topic is the noun or noun phrase that the sentence, paragraph, or narrative is about. The topic occurs at the beginning of a sentence, and is often distinct from the subject.

中国菜, 我特别喜欢吃家常豆腐。

Zhōngguó cài, wǒ tèbié xǐhuan chī jiācháng dòufu.

(As for) Chinese food, I especially like to eat homestyle beancurd.

In Mandarin, the object of the verb may sometimes occur in ‘topic’ position, at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject.

羊肉, 我不太喜欢吃。

Yángròu, wǒ bù tài xǐhuan chī.

Mutton, I don’t particularly like to eat (it).

A sentence need not begin with a topic.

Verbs

Verbs are words that can be directly negated, or modified by an adverb, or that can serve as the ‘yes’ answer to yes–no questions. Verbs are the main word in the predicate, and a Mandarin sentence must include a verb. Verbs that take one or more objects are called transitive, and verbs that do not take an object are called intransitive. Mandarin has the following types of verbs.

Adjectival verbs

Adjectival verbs are verbs that can be translated as adjectives in English, for example 大 dà ‘big,’ 好 hǎo ‘good,’ 贵/貴 guì ‘expensive.’ Adjectival verbs are usually intransitive. Note that adjectival verbs do not occur with 是 shì ‘be.’

Say this Not this

他很高。*他很高。

Tā hěn gāo. Tā shì hěn gāo.

He is very tall.

Stative verbs

(a) Stative verbs are verbs that express states, for example 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuan ‘like,’ 像 xiàng ‘resemble.’

我喜欢他。

Wǒ xiǎohuan tā.

I like him.

(b) Stative verbs are linking verbs, for example 是 shì ‘be,’ 姓 xìng ‘be family named,’ 有 yǒu ‘have, exist.’

她有很多朋友。

Tā yǒu hěn duō péngyou.

She has many friends.
Glossary of Grammatical Terms

Modal verbs
Modal verbs are verbs that express ability, permission, or obligation, for example 会/會 hui ‘can’ (mentally able), 能 néng ‘can’ (physically able), 可以 kěyǐ ‘may’ (have permission), 得 děi ‘must/have to.’ Modal verbs can serve as the one word answer to yes–no questions, but in complete sentences they are always followed by a verb phrase complement.

Action verbs
Action verbs are verbs that refer to events. There are two kinds of action verbs:

- Open-ended action verbs express open-ended actions, such as 跑 pǎo ‘run,’ 写/寫 xiě ‘write,’ and 听/聽 tīng ‘listen.’ Most open-ended action verbs in Mandarin are transitive.
- Change-of-state action verbs express actions that refer to a change of state and have no duration, such as 坐 zuò ‘sit (down),’ 忘 wàng ‘forget,’ and 放 fāng ‘put (down), place.’

Verb complements (see Complements)

Verb phrases
The verb phrase includes the modal verb, the verb, and any objects of the verb. (See also Predicates)

Verb Preposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>给/給</td>
<td>gěi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>到</td>
<td>dào</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在</td>
<td>zài</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A note on grammatical categories and grammatical category shift
In Mandarin, a word may belong to more than one grammatical category. For example, some words may serve as both a verb and a preposition.

他每天看电视。  他每天看電視。
Tā měitiān kàn diànshì.  He watches television every day.

爸爸给我钱。  爸爸給我錢。
Bàba gěi wǒ qián.  Dad gives me money.

他会开车。  他會開車。
Tā huì kāi chē.  He can drive (a car).

我请你吃晚饭。  我請你吃晚飯。
Wǒ qǐng nǐ chī wǎnfàn.  I invite you to eat dinner.
GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Out of context, it is not possible to say whether the word 给/給 gěi or 到 dào or 在 zài is a preposition or a verb. However, in the context of a sentence or phrase, the category of the word is clear:

Preposition

我想到中国去。
我想到中國去。
Wǒ xiǎng dào Zhōngguó qù.
I want to China go
I want to go to China.

Verb

你什么时候到？
你甚麼時候到？
Nǐ shénme shíhòu dào?
When are you arriving?

Some textbooks and grammars provide special labels for words that can function as more than one category of word. For example, the label ‘coverb’ is used in many textbooks for words that can be both prepositions and verbs.

14.3
A note on Chinese characters

Certain traditional characters have more than one standard form. Here are some examples. This book uses the characters in the first column. An overview of the origin, structure, and systems of Chinese characters is presented in Chapter 3.

裏 裡  lǐ
著 着  zhè
叫 叫  jiào
為 爲  wèi

In addition, the word zuò when used as the verb ‘do’ can be written as 做 or 作. This book uses the form 做. In compounds such as 工作 gōngzuò ‘work,’ zuò is written as 作.
Part A

Structures
1

Overview of pronunciation and Pinyin romanization

1.1 The Mandarin syllable

The syllable in Mandarin Chinese can be made up of three parts: an initial consonant, a final, and a tone. For example, the syllable má 麻 is made up of the initial m, the final a, and the rising tone [ˊ]. Syllables need not have an initial consonant. The syllable è 饿/餓 is made up of the final e and the falling tone [ˋ]. In addition, a syllable may lack a tone. Syllables that do not have a tone are referred to as having neutral tone.

This section presents a brief overview of the initials, finals, and tones of Mandarin. Initials and finals are presented in Pinyin romanization. For a guide to their pronunciation, please consult a beginning level Mandarin textbook.

1.1.1 Initials

The Mandarin initials are presented here in the traditional recitation order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of sound</th>
<th>Initial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 bilabial</td>
<td>b   p   m   f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 alveolar</td>
<td>d   t   n   l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 velar</td>
<td>g   k   h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 palatal</td>
<td>j   q   x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 retroflex</td>
<td>zh  ch  sh  r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 alveolar affricate/fricative</td>
<td>z   c   s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.2 Finals

Finals are listed by initial vowel.

- a finals: a an ang ai ao
- o/e finals: o e en eng ei ou ong er
- u finals: u ua uo uai ui uan un uang ueng
- i finals: i ia iao ie iu ian in iang ing iong
- ü finals: ü üe üan ün

1.1.3 Tones

Tone is the pitch contour of the syllable. Mandarin has four contour tones and a neutral tone. In most romanization systems of Mandarin, the tone is indicated by a diacritic over a vowel, or as a number following the syllable.
The following chart illustrates the contour of the four Mandarin tones when a syllable is spoken in isolation, that is, when it is neither preceded nor followed by another syllable.

1. level pitch  
2. rising pitch  
3. falling-rising pitch  
4. falling pitch

The contour of a tone may change depending upon the following syllable. This is often called tone sandhi. Tone change is typically not indicated in the Pinyin spelling of words.

The third tone is the only tone that changes independent of the meaning of the syllable.

When a third tone occurs before another third tone, it is pronounced as a rising (second) tone.

\[3 + 3 \rightarrow 2 + 3\]

\[\text{hěn hǎo} \rightarrow \text{hén hǎo} \text{很好 very good}\]

When a third tone occurs before any other tone, it is pronounced as a low tone. This low tone is often called a half third tone.

\[\text{mǎi shū} \rightarrow \text{mai shū} \text{买书/買書 buy books}\]

Tone is an inherent part of the Mandarin syllable, and Mandarin uses tones to distinguish meaning in the same way that the choice of a consonant or a vowel distinguishes meaning. Notice how tone determines the meaning of the following syllable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mā (ma1) 妈/媽</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>má (ma2) 麻</td>
<td>numb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>mǎ (ma3) 马/馬</td>
<td>horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>mà (ma4) 骂/罵</td>
<td>scold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>ma (ma5) 吗/嗎</td>
<td>question particle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pinyin romanization**

Mandarin is written with Chinese characters, but characters do not provide consistent information about pronunciation. Therefore, Mandarin is typically studied via a transcription. Many transcription systems have been devised for Mandarin Chinese in China and in the West. Most of these are based on the Roman alphabet, and are therefore termed ‘romanization’ systems. In 1958, the People’s Republic of China established *Hanyu Pinyin* (usually referred to as Pinyin) as its standard romanization system. Because of the widespread use of this system of Pinyin in Chinese language teaching around the world, it is used to transcribe the Chinese words in this book.

**Placement of tone mark in Pinyin**

If a final includes three vowels, or two vowels and a final consonant, the tone mark is written over the second vowel:

\[\text{kuài huán biān qióng}\]

If a final includes two vowels and no final consonant, the tone mark is placed over the first vowel, unless the first vowel is i or u:

\[\text{āi áo ěi òu iā ié iǔ uà ué uǐ uò}\]
Some additional Pinyin conventions

- ‘u’ after the initials j, q, and x is pronounced ü but is written as u.
- When ‘i’ and ‘ü’ begin a syllable, they are written as yi and yu.
- When ‘u’ begins a syllable, it is written as wu.
- In two-syllable words, when the boundary between syllables is not clear from the Pinyin spelling and more than one interpretation of the boundary is possible, an apostrophe is used to separate the syllables. For example, if the second syllable begins with a vowel, an apostrophe is used: Xi’an 西安 vs. xiān 先.