

# Chinese

## *An Essential Grammar*

*Third edition*

**Yip Po-Ching  
and Don Rimmington**

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
The Chinese language	1
Mandarin pronunciation	2
Initials	2
Finals	3
Tones	4
The Chinese vocabulary	5
<b>Part I Nouns</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction	8
1 Nouns	9
1.1 Noun features	9
1.2 Proper nouns	10
1.3 Common nouns	12
1.3.1 The plural suffix <b>-men</b>	13
1.3.2 Nouns and definite or indefinite reference	13
1.4 Nouns and conjunctions	14
1.5 Common nouns: countability	14
2 Numerals and nouns	15
2.1 Cardinal numbers	15
2.1.1 Two forms of the number two	16
2.2 Ordinal numbers	16
2.3 'Half'	17
2.4 Fractions, percentages, decimals, multiples and 'every'	17
2.5 Approximation	18

3	Measures for nouns	20
3.1	Measures and <b>gè</b>	20
3.2	Other measure words	22
3.3	Abstract nouns	27
3.4	Material nouns	27
3.5	Collective nouns	28
3.6	Relationship between measures and nouns	28
4	Pronouns	29
4.1	Personal pronouns	29
4.2	Possessive pronouns	32
4.3	Demonstrative pronouns	33
4.4	Interrogative pronouns	34
4.5	Other pronouns	36
4.6	Pronouns and conjunctions	38
5	Adjectives and attributives	39
5.1	Attributives	39
5.2	Adjectives as attributives	39
5.2.1	Monosyllabic adjectives	39
5.2.2	Polysyllabic adjectives and <b>de</b>	40
5.2.3	Disyllabic adjectives and <b>de</b>	40
5.3	Nominal attributives	41
5.3.1	Nominal attributives and <b>de</b>	41
5.4	Prepositional and postpositional phrases as attributives	41
5.5	Verbal phrases or clauses as attributives	42
5.6	The order of sequential attributives	43
5.7	Demonstrative and numeral phrases with other attributives	43
5.8	Possessive pronouns and other attributives	44
5.9	<b>Èr</b> between adjectives	45
5.10	Omission of the noun following an attributive	45
5.11	Attributives in word-formation	45

## **Part II Verbs 47**

	Introduction	47
6	Adjectival and nominal predicates; the verb <b>shì</b>	48
6.1	Adjectival predicates	48
6.2	Adjectival predicates and the verb 'to be'	48
6.2.1	Adjectival predicates and degree adverbs	48
6.2.2	Adjectival predicates in the negative	49
6.2.3	Adjectival predicates followed by verbs	50

6.3	Non-gradable adjectives as attributives	51
6.3.1	Attributives of shape, colour or material	51
6.4	Nominal and pronominal predicates	52
6.4.1	Verbs resembling <b>shì</b>	54
6.4.2	Nominal predicates without a copula	54
6.5	The copula <b>shì</b> in its negative form	55
7	The verb <b>yǒu</b> ; comparisons	55
7.1	The functions of <b>yǒu</b>	55
7.1.1	<b>Yǒu</b> indicating possession	55
7.1.2	<b>Méi</b> as negative of <b>yǒu</b>	56
7.1.3	<b>Yǒu</b> indicating change or development	56
7.1.4	<b>Yǒu</b> forming idiomatic expressions	57
7.1.5	<b>Yǒu</b> introducing adjectival predicates	59
7.2	Comparison	59
7.2.1	Emphatic or specific comparison	60
7.2.2	Negative comparison	61
7.2.3	Comparison: equivalence or similarity	62
7.3	Comparatives and superlatives	63
8	Verbs and aspect markers	64
8.1	Action, state and dative verbs	64
8.2	Action verbs	64
8.3	Aspect markers	65
8.3.1	<b>Le</b>	65
8.3.2	<b>Guo</b>	67
8.3.3	<b>Zài</b>	69
8.3.4	<b>Zhe</b>	71
8.4	State verbs	72
8.5	Dative verbs	73
8.5.1	Dative verbs relating to spoken activity	74
8.5.2	Dative verbs and aspect markers	74
8.6	Causative verbs	75
8.7	Imperatives	76
8.7.1	Polite requests	78
8.7.2	Imperatives and aspect markers	78
9	Motion verbs and direction indicators	78
9.1	Motion verbs and simple direction indicators	78
9.2	Motion verbs and compound direction indicators	81
9.3	Motion verbs with metaphorical meaning	84
9.4	Direction indicators with specific meanings	85
10	Verbs and time	86
10.1	Time expressions	86

10.2	Point of time expressions	87
10.2.1	Detailed time expressions	91
10.3	Point-of-time expressions incorporating verbal phrases	91
10.4	Imprecise points of time	92
10.5	Indefinite points of time	94
10.6	Frequency expressions with <b>měi</b>	95
10.7	Time expressions in existence sentences	95
10.7.1	Time expressions in emergence or disappearance sentences	96
11	Verbs and location	97
11.1	Location expressions	97
11.2	<b>Zài</b> and postpositional phrases	97
11.2.1	Disyllabic postpositions	98
11.2.2	Disyllabic postpositions as location pronouns	100
11.3	Simple location sentences	100
11.4	Location phrases modifying main verbs	101
11.5	Location phrases in existence sentences	103
11.5.1	<b>Shì</b> in existence sentences	104
11.5.2	<b>Zhe</b> in existence sentences	105
11.6	<b>Le</b> in emergence or disappearance sentences	106
11.7	Order of sequence of time and location phrases	107
12	Verbs: duration and frequency	107
12.1	Duration expressions	107
12.1.1	Duration expressions and noun objects	108
12.1.2	Repetition of the verb in a noun-object-duration structure	109
12.1.3	Duration expressions and pronoun objects	110
12.1.4	Duration expressions in dative construction	110
12.1.5	Duration expressions and definite reference	110
12.2	Brief duration	111
12.2.1	Brief duration and instrumental objects	112
12.3	Frequency expressions	113
13	Verbs and complements	114
13.1	Complements	114
13.2	Complements of result	115
13.3	Potential complements	118
13.3.1	Potential complements using direction indicators	119
13.3.2	Metaphorical meanings of potential complements	120
13.4	Complements of manner and of consequential state	121
13.4.1	Modification of complement of manner	121
13.4.2	Complement of consequential state	122

13.4.3	Complements of manner or consequential state with a 'verb + object' verb	123
13.4.4	Adjectival complements of manner in comparisons	123
13.4.5	Complement-of-manner comparison with a 'verb + object' verb	124
13.5	Complement of location or destination	125
13.6	Degree complements	126
14	Verbs and adverbials	127
14.1	Adverbials of manner	127
14.1.1	Monosyllabic adjectives as adverbials of manner	128
14.1.2	Adverbials of manner with marked verbs	129
14.1.3	Adverbials of manner with unmarked verbs	129
14.1.4	Monosyllabic adverbial modifiers without <b>de</b>	129
14.1.5	Particular types of adverbials of manner	130
14.2	Attitudinal adverbial expressions	131
14.3	Referential adverbs	132
14.4	Referential adverbs with negatives	137
14.5	Order of sequence of referential adverbs	138
14.6	Order of adverbials in sequence	138
15	Modal and similar verbs	139
15.1	Modal, attitudinal and intentional verbs	139
15.2	Modal verbs	140
15.2.1	Modal verbs and adverbs of degree	145
15.2.2	Modal verbs and comparison	146
15.3	Attitudinal verbs	146
15.3.1	<b>Wǎngle</b> and <b>jǐde</b>	147
15.3.2	<b>Gāoxìng</b>	148
15.4	Intentional verbs	148
15.4.1	Negation of intentional verbs	149
<b>Part III Sentences</b>		<b>151</b>
	Introduction	151
16	Statements and the sentence particle <b>le</b>	152
16.1	<b>Le</b> as a sentence particle	152
16.2	Functions of sentence <b>le</b>	153
16.2.1	Summing-up function of <b>le</b>	154
16.2.2	<b>Le</b> as both sentence particle and aspect marker	155
16.3	Cases where sentence <b>le</b> is not used	156
16.4	Ultimate versatility of sentence <b>le</b>	159

17	Questions	160
17.1	Question-word questions	160
17.1.1	<b>Zěnmeyàng</b>	164
17.1.2	<b>Duō</b> in questions	165
17.1.3	<b>Ne</b> in questions	168
17.2	General questions with <b>ma</b>	168
17.3	Surmise questions with <b>ba</b>	171
17.4	Affirmative-negative questions	172
17.5	Alternative questions with <b>háishì</b>	174
17.6	Tags indicating suggestion	175
17.7	Tags seeking confirmation	176
17.8	Rhetorical questions	176
18	Subject and predicate; topic and comment	177
18.1	Dual patterning of sentence structures	177
18.2	Subject-predicate sentences	177
18.3	Topic-comment sentences	180
18.3.1	Further ways to form topic-comment sentences	182
18.4	Topic   subject-predicate sentences	182
18.4.1	Notional passive sentences	183
18.5	Subject   topic-comment sentences	184
18.6	A verbal or sentential construction beginning an utterance	185
19	Prepositions and coverbs	186
19.1	Coverbs	186
19.1.1	Coverbs of place and time	187
19.1.2	Coverbs of methods and means	190
19.1.3	Coverbs of human exchange and service	191
19.1.4	Coverbs of reference	193
19.1.5	Coverbs and comparison	193
19.2	Disyllabic prepositions	193
20	<b>Bǎ</b> and <b>bèi</b> constructions	195
20.1	The <b>bǎ</b> construction	195
20.1.1	The <b>bǎ</b> construction and complements	197
20.1.2	<b>Le</b> and <b>zhe</b> as complements in <b>bǎ</b> sentences	199
20.1.3	<b>Bǎ</b> and resultative complements	199
20.1.4	<b>Nòng</b> and <b>gǎo</b> in <b>bǎ</b> sentences	200
20.1.5	Negative <b>bǎ</b> sentences	201
20.1.6	<b>Bǎ</b> and modal verbs	201
20.1.7	<b>Bǎ</b> and indefinite reference	202
20.2	The <b>bèi</b> construction	203
20.2.1	<b>Ràng</b> and <b>jiào</b>	204

20.2.2	The <b>bèi</b> construction with an agent	204
20.2.3	Negative <b>bèi</b> sentences	204
20.3	The <b>bèi</b> construction versus the notional passives	205
21	Serial constructions	206
21.1	General features of serial constructions	206
21.2	Semantic varieties in serial constructions	206
21.3	Adjectives or state verbs in serial constructions	210
21.4	Dative constructions	211
21.5	Causative constructions	211
21.5.1	<b>Qǐng</b> in a causative construction	213
21.5.2	Extended causative constructions	214
21.6	Extended serial constructions	215
22	Emphasis and the intensifier <b>shì</b>	215
22.1	<b>Shì</b> as an intensifier	215
22.2	The <b>shì</b> ... <b>de</b> construction	216
22.2.1	Subject and object emphasis in <b>shì</b> ... <b>de</b> sentences	218
22.2.2	<b>Shì</b> ... <b>de</b> construction and <b>bù</b>	219
22.3	<b>Shì</b> without <b>de</b> for progression and projection	220
22.3.1	Contexts for <b>shì</b> (without <b>de</b> ) sentences	220
22.3.2	<b>Shì</b> and comparison	221
22.3.3	<b>Shì</b> and negation	221
22.4	<b>Shì</b> and topic-comment sentences	222
22.4.1	<b>Shì</b> implying reservation	222
22.4.2	'Verb/adjective + <b>shì</b> + verb/adjective' implying reservation	223
22.5	Repetition and emphasis	223
23	Abbreviation and omission	224
23.1	Three types of abbreviation	224
23.2	Conventional abbreviations as subjectless sentences	224
23.3	Contextual abbreviation	228
23.4	Cotextual omissions	229
23.4.1	Cotextual omissions and headwords	229
23.4.2	Cotextual omissions in answers	229
23.4.3	Contextual/cotextual omissions in extended passages	230
24	Composite sentences: conjunctions and conjunctives	230
24.1	Types of composite sentence	230
24.2	Conjunctions and conjunctives	231
24.2.1	Meanings and functions of composite sentences	233
24.2.2	Paired conjunctives	243



## Contents

24.3	Composite sentences as parallel structures	243
24.4	Verbs taking object clauses	245
25	Exclamations and interjections; appositions; and apostrophes	246
25.1	Exclamations	246
25.1.1	Exclamations with <i>tài</i>	247
25.1.2	Question-word questions as exclamations	248
25.2	Interjections	248
25.2.1	Tone variations in interjections	249
25.3	Appositions	250
25.4	People being addressed [apostrophe]	251
<b>Part IV Paragraphs</b>		<b>252</b>
Introduction		252
26.1	A diary	253
26.2	A letter	257
26.3	A dialogue	260
26.4	A welcome speech	263
26.5	A description	266
26.6	An explanatory piece of writing	268
26.7	An argumentative piece of writing	271
<b>Part V Speech habits: meaning and form</b>		<b>275</b>
Introduction		275
27.1	Universal, contextual or cotextual omissions and abbreviations	276
27.1.1	Sentence patterns (1)	276
27.1.2	Sentence patterns (2)	277
27.2	Sentence extension following paragraph patterns	279
27.3	Further features of sentence extension	281
27.3.1	Sentences enlarged or extended by illustration or exemplification	282
27.3.2	Sentences extended by reasoning	282
27.3.3	Sentences extended by detailing or amplification	283
27.3.4	Sentences extended by result or purpose	284

<b>Part VI Writing conventions: classical quadrisyllabic patterns or idioms</b>	<b>287</b>
Introduction	287
28.1 An overview of four-character or quadrisyllabic idioms	287
28.1.1 The distinction between quadrisyllabic patterns and quadrisyllabic idioms	288
28.1.2 The internal structure of quadrisyllabic idioms	288
28.2 Quadrisyllabic idioms at work	292
28.3 How quadrisyllabic idioms mix comfortably with other rhythms in writing	294
<b>Part VII Contemporary developments in Chinese: new syntactic and lexical tendencies</b>	<b>297</b>
Introduction	297
29 Contemporary linguistic developments	297
29.1 New syntactic tendencies	297
29.1.1 Shift of word classes	297
29.1.2 Extensive use of (pseudo-)suffixes or (pseudo-)prefixes	298
29.1.3 Multi-syllabic coinages on 'attributive + headword' syntactic pattern	300
29.2 New ways of lexicalisation	301
29.2.1 Direct borrowings	301
29.2.2 Semantic/phonetic calques (total or partial)	302
29.2.3 Intra-language transliterations	302
29.2.4 Internet neologisms	303
29.2.5 Neologisms occurring in conversational exchanges	303
29.2.6 Abbreviations from quadrisyllabic idioms	306
<b>Glossary of grammatical terms</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>312</b>