§1. Sentences with a descriptive adjective

For a simple sentence whose predicate is a descriptive adjective, such as ‘he is hungry’ or ‘the movie is interesting,’ Mandarin uses the structure shown in 1a.

1a Subj. + Adv. + DA

电影 [Subj.] 很 [Adv.] 有意思 [DA].

diànyìng hěn yǒuyìsi

‘The movie is very interesting.’

Similar to English adjectives, Mandarin descriptive adjectives describe states of being, such as 好 hǎo ‘good,’ or 新 xīn ‘new.’ Some textbooks therefore refer to them as stative verbs. A Mandarin sentence with a descriptive adjective, however, does not use the verb of being, 是 shì ‘be.’ E.g. 1a literally reads ‘movie very interesting.’

In sentences with a descriptive adjective, the adjectives are routinely preceded by an adverbial word/phrase, as 很 hěn ‘very’ in 1a, 非常 fēicháng ‘extraordinarily’ in 1b, or 越来越 yuèlái yuè ‘more and more’ in 1c. The suffix . . . jí le ‘extremely’ is the only adverbial word that follows a descriptive adjective, as shown in 1d, where it may be combined with another adverb 真 shēn ‘truly’ to form a frame around the DA for an even stronger emphasis on the adverbial force of the DA. Note that 真 shēn is the only adverb that may form such a frame with . . . jí le.

1b 张先生非常忙。

Zhāng xiānshēng fēicháng máng

‘Mr. Zhang is extraordinarily busy.’
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1c 张先生越来越忙。
Zhāng xiānshēng yuèlái yuè mánɡ
‘Mr. Zhang is getting more and more busy.’

1d 张先生 (真是) 忙极了。
Zhāng xiānshēng (zhēnshì) máng jí le
‘Mr. Zhang is (truly) extremely busy.’

Negation

The negation, either bù ‘not,’ as in 1e, or bù zěnme ‘not that . . . ’ as in 1f, also precedes the descriptive adjective. The negation usually replaces the adverbial word/phrase in the statement.

1e 张先生不忙。
Zhāng xiānshēng bù máng
‘Mr. Zhang is not busy.’

1f 张先生不怎么忙。
Zhāng xiānshēng bù zěnme máng
‘Mr. Zhang is not that busy.’

It is necessary to note that an unmodified descriptive adjective, such as mánɡ in 1g, implies comparison. Modified by an adverbial word or phrase, on the other hand, sentences such as 1b–f do not have a comparative sense, and merely offer a general statement.

1g 张先生忙。
Zhāng xiānshēng máng
‘Mr. Zhang (in comparison to someone else) is busy.’

The most common error is to use the verb of being, 是 shì ‘be,’ in an isolated, context-free sentence with a descriptive adjective, as in 1h. Sentences such as 1h could occur in oral conversations among native speakers, but only when they mean to stress the fact that Mr. Zhang is in fact really, truly busy (in response to some people’s view that he may not be busy). On the other hand, it is ill-formed with the verb ‘be’, shì, in an isolated comment with a descriptive adjective, such as in 1h. To correct the error, one simply uses an adverb to replace shì.

1h ✗ 张先生 *是忙。
Zhāng xiānshēng shì máng

☑ 张先生很/太忙。
Zhāng xiānshēng hěn/tài máng
‘Mr. Zhang is very/too busy.’
Another common error is to use more than one adverb to modify the same descriptive adjective. This mistake usually occurs when suffix . . . jí le ‘extremely’ already attaches to the descriptive adjective, as in error 1i, where another adverb hěn ‘very’ is also used. Remember, the only adverb that can pair with . . . jí le is zhēnshì ‘truly,’ as in the correction.

1i  ❌ 这个问题很难极了。
zhè-ge wèntí hěn nán jí le
‘This question is very extremely difficult.’
✓ 这个问题真是难极了。
zhè-ge wèntí zhēnshì nán jí le
‘This question is truly extremely difficult.’

For a simple sentence with a descriptive adjective, such as ‘the movie is interesting,’ the structure is: Subj. + Adv. + DA. The verb of being, 是 shì, is not used.

For related topics, see §§6, 7, and 47.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1. Translate into Chinese.
1  Chinese grammar is very easy.
2  All my friends are extremely tired, but I am not.
3  The weather is getting colder and colder.
4  Milk is not expensive.

§2. Sentences expressing location and existence

Two structures specify location or existence. One uses the location verb 在 zài ‘be (located) at’ in the structure: (specific) Subj. + 在 zài-location phrase; and the other uses the existence verb 有 yǒu ‘there is/are . . . ’ in the structure: location phrase + 有 yǒu.

The subject of the first pattern, where 在 zài is the verb, is a specific noun phrase. The term specific indicates that the subject noun (phrase) of this pattern possesses a definite reference, such as a particular person, place, or item, e.g. ‘my father’ and ‘the public library’ in 2a–b. A non-specific subject, such as ‘three fast-food restaurants’ in 2c, is unacceptable with this pattern.
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2a 我父亲在家。他刚从德国回来。

wǒ fùqin zài jiā, tā gāng cóng Déguó huílái
‘My father is home. He just came back from Germany.’

2b 公共图书馆在第一银行的对面。

gōnggòng túshūguǎn zài diyi yínháng de duìmian
‘The public library is across from the First Bank.’

2c *三个快餐店在第一银行的附近。

sān-ge kuàicāndiàn zài diyi yínháng de fùjīn
‘Three fast-food restaurants are near the First Bank.’

Mandarin expresses the idea of 2c in the second structure, where yǒu is the verb to describe the existence of a non-specific noun (phrase). This pattern is a close equivalent to the English structure ‘there is/are . . . .’ See 2d–e below. Note that a specific subject should not be used in the yǒu pattern. Thus the non-specific yí-ge gōnggòng túshūguǎn ‘a public library’ in 2e is fine, but the specific gōnggòng túshūguǎn ‘the public library’ in 2f is unacceptable.

2d 第一银行的附近有三个快餐店。

dīyī yínháng de fùjīn yǒu sān-ge kuàicāndiàn
‘There are three fast-food restaurants near the First Bank.’

2e 第一银行的对面有一个公共图书馆。

dīyī yínháng de duìmian yǒu yí-ge gōnggòng túshūguǎn
‘There is a public library across from the First Bank.’

2f *第一银行的对面有公共图书馆。

dīyī yínháng de duìmian yǒu *gōnggòng túshūguǎn
‘There is *the public library across from the First Bank.’

Negation

The negation for the zài pattern is bù, as in 2g; whereas the negation for the yǒu pattern is always méi, as in 2h.

2g 公共图书馆不在第一银行的对面。

gōnggòng túshūguǎn bú zài diyi yínháng de duìmian
‘The public library is not across from the First Bank.’

2h 这儿没有很多树。

zhè méiyǒu hěnduō shù
‘There are not many trees around here.’

The most common error is using a non-specific subject in the 在 zài structure, such as in 2i. This Mandarin sentence is unacceptable because
wǔ-tiáo-xīnwén ‘(any) five items of news’ is too general a subject for the verb zài. The 有 yǒu pattern serves this idea.

2i 五条新闻在今天的报上。

wǔ-tiáo-xīnwén zài jīntiān de bào-shang

‘Five items (of news) are in today’s paper.’

今天的报上有五条新闻。

jīntiān de bào-shang yǒu wǔ-tiáo-xīnwén

‘There are five items (of news) in today’s paper.’

The structure [location + 有 yǒu . . .] describes the existence of a non-specific noun phrase, equivalent to ‘there is/are . . .’. If a noun phrase is specific, it should be the subject of the pattern [Subj. + 在 zài-location].

For related topics, see §§37 and 49.

Exercises

EXERCISE 2. Translate into Chinese.

1  The month of June has 30 days.
2  There is a computer on the desk.
3  Are there six tennis courts near the dorms?
4  The teacher is not in her office.
5  The Yellow River is in northern China.
6  The children are in the park.

§3. When an activity’s location is specified

As explained in §2, 在 zài ‘be (located) at’ is the verb for the location of a specific subject, as in the sentence 北京在河北省 Běijīng zài Héběi shěng ‘Beijing is (located) in Hebei province.’ In a sentence where an activity, represented by an action verb, occurs at a location, such as ‘they play chess in the park,’ Mandarin uses pattern 3a, where zài is no longer the verb.

3a Subj. + 在 zài-location + VP

In this pattern zài and a place word form a location phrase 在 zài-location, modifying the main action verb. See examples 3b–d below.
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This pattern is a close equivalent to the English expression “someone does/is doing something in/at a certain place.” Note that unlike English, in Mandarin the 在-location phrase must come before the main action verb. And the adverbial word or phrase (if there is one), such as 常常 ‘often’ in 3c and 每天 ‘every day’ in 3d, appears before the 在 phrase.

3b 王先生在大学教书；王太太在银行工作。
Wáng xiānshēng 在大学教书; Wáng tài tài 在银行工作 ‘Mr. Wang teaches at the university; Mrs. Wang works in a bank.’

3c 她常常在超级市场买东西。
tā 常常 在超级市场 买东西 ‘She often shops at the supermarket.’

3d 他们每天下午在公园下棋。
tāmen 每天 下午 在公园  下棋 ‘They play chess in the park every afternoon.’

Negation

In this pattern the negation usually precedes the 在-location phrase to stress that the action does not, or not often, occur at the location specified. See example 3e.

3e 她不 (常) 在超级市场买东西。
tā 不 (常) 在超级市场 买东西 ‘She does not (often) shop at the supermarket.’

Note that while the activity itself could also be negated, as 没有买东西 ‘did not buy anything’ in 3f, using the regular negation 不 to stress directly on the verb could be awkward. Compare 3g with 3c and 3e.

3f 她在超级市场没有买东西。
tā 在超级市场 没有 买东西 ‘She didn’t buy anything (when she was) at the supermarket.’

3g ？她常常在超级市场不买东西。
tā 常常 在超级市场 不 买东西 ‘She is often at the supermarket but ?does not buy things.’

One common error is to place the 在 靠前 location phrase after the verb phrase, led by the English word order, while expressing the idea “someone does/is doing something in/at a certain place” in Mandarin. Sentences with this error, such as 3h, are unacceptable in Mandarin. 3h is a word-by-word translation of its English idea, hence producing a non-Mandarin structure. Remember: the pattern expressing such ideas should be: Subj. + 在 在-location + VP (3a).
In a sentence such as ‘she works at a bank,’ the location phrase ‘at a bank’ comes before the action verb. The structure is: Subj. + 在 zài-location + V/VP.

For related topics, see §§4 and 5.

Exercises

EXERCISE 3. Translate into Chinese.

1. The children play in the park every afternoon.
2. Many American students study languages abroad.
3. They planted flowers in the garden.
4. She likes to drink coffee at Starbucks.
5. We have our lunch at the student cafeteria.

§4. ‘Be there’ or ‘go there’:

[在 zài-location + VP] or
[去 qù location + VP]

As explained in §3, when an activity’s location is specified, the location phrase, introduced by 在 zài, appears before the main verb phrase. 4a shows this sentence pattern.

4a  
Subj. + (Adv. +) 在 zài-location + VP

They (often) eat at fast-food restaurants.

A pattern similar to this one is 4b, with the verb 去 qù ‘go’ preceding the location. In 4b, the location word after qù specifies the destination of the verb phrase that follows. Note in both 4a and 4b, the adverb (if there is one) appears before zài or qù.
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4b Subj. + (Adv. +) 去 qù location + VP
李太太（有的时候）去农贸市场买东西。
‘Mrs. Li (sometimes) goes to the farmers’ market to shop.’

Despite the similarity between 4a and 4b, they use different grammatical structures. 4a has one main verb phrase showing the idea that ‘someone does/is doing something in/at a certain place,’ whereas 4b uses two verb phrases in succession: the [qù + location] ‘go to a place’ and the second verb phrase that indicates the purpose or reason for going to that place.

4c 他毕业以后去中国工作。
tā bìyè yǐhòu qù Zhōngguó gōngzuò
‘After graduation, he will go to China to work.’

Negation

The negation 不 bù or 没 méi for pattern 4b usually stands before qù, emphasizing the negation of the motion. See examples 4d–e.

4d 他毕业以后不去中国工作。
tā bìyè yǐhòu bù qù Zhōngguó gōngzuò
‘After graduation, he will not go to China to work.’

4e 他毕业以后没去中国工作。
tā bìyè yǐhòu méi qù Zhōngguó gōngzuò
‘After graduation, he did not go to China to work.’

Using both 在 zài and 去 qù before the location, such as in 4f, is a common error.

4f 错误 我们今天下午*去 在大湖里游泳。
wǒmen jīntiān xiàwǔ qù zài dàhú lǐ yóuyǒng
‘This afternoon, we will go and be at the Big Lake swimming.’

Students need to understand that 在 zài means ‘be (located) at,’ whereas 去 qù means ‘to go.’ While the former indicates that someone or something is located at a given place, the latter involves a motion to some location. Consequently 在 zài and 去 qù never appear in the same sentence. 4f is erroneous because one may either go to swim at the lake, as in 4g, or be swimming at the lake, as in 4h, but cannot go to and be at the lake at the same time.

4g 我们今天下午去大湖游泳。
wǒmen jīntiān xiàwǔ qù dàhú yóuyǒng
‘This afternoon we will go to the Big Lake to swim.’
4h 我们今天下午在大湖里游泳。
wǒmen jīntiān xiàwǔ zài dàhú lǐ yóuyǒng
‘This afternoon we will be swimming at the Big Lake.’

[在 zài-location + VP] expresses the idea ‘do something in/at a certain place,’ whereas [去 qù location + VP] means ‘go to a place to do something.’ Thus zài ‘be at’ and qù ‘go’ cannot appear in the same sentence.

For related topics, see §§2, 3, and 5.

Exercises

EXERCISE 4. Translate into Chinese.
1 Many American students go to China to study Chinese.
2 Let’s go camping in the mountains.
3 I am going to the post office to mail a letter.
4 She often goes to her friend’s room to chat.
5 We didn’t go to the student cafeteria for lunch today.

§5. Basic word order of an extended
[Subj. + VP] sentence

While using adverbial phrases indicating time, location, and/or manner in a Mandarin [Subj. + VP] sentence, 5a shows the basic word order of the extended structure.

5a Subj. + Adv/time(-when) + 在 zài-location + VP + time(-spent)

Note that an adverb such as 常常 chángcháng ‘often,’ or 总是 zǒngshì ‘always,’ as well as the chronological time expression (time-when), such as 每天晚上 měitiān wǎnshāng ‘every evening,’ or 星期天 xīngqītiān ‘Sunday,’ stand before the 在 zài-location phrase; and in turn the zài-location stands before the main verb phrase of the sentence. On the other hand, the durational time expression (time-spent), i.e. the time indicating the length of the activity, stands after the main verb phrase.

The adverbial phrases in the structure 5a, namely, the adverb/time(-when), zài-location, and time(-spent), do not necessarily appear in every sentence. Yet whether there is one adverbial phrase as in 5b–e, two adverbial phrases as in 5f–h, or three as in 5i–j, the basic word order of the structure 5a should remain constant. See the following examples. The adverbial forms are
marked at the beginning of each example. Pay attention to the word order of adverbial phrases relevant to the main verb phrase.

5b  one adverbial phrase: Time(-when): ‘every Friday’
王家每星期五吃饺子。
王家每星期五吃饺子。
Wáng jiā měi xīngqīwǔ chī-jīǎozi
‘Wang’s family eats dumplings every Friday.’

5c  one adverbial phrase: Adverb: ‘often’
王家常常吃饺子。
Wáng jiā chángcháng chī-jīǎozi
‘Wang’s family often eats dumplings.’

5d  one adverbial phrase: Location: ‘(at) out’
王先生在外面吃午饭。
王先生在外面吃午饭。
Wáng xiānshēng zài wàimíng chī-wǔfàn
‘Mr. Wang has his lunch out.’

5e  one adverbial phrase: Time(-spent): ‘(eat lunch) for one hour’
王先生吃午饭吃一个小时。
王先生吃午饭吃一个小时。
Wáng xiānshēng chī-wǔfàn chī yí-ge xiǎoshí
‘Mr. Wang eats his lunch for one hour.’

5f  two adverbial phrases: Adverb: ‘often’; Location: ‘(at) out’
王先生常常在外面吃午饭。
王先生常常在外面吃午饭。
Wáng xiānshēng chángcháng zài wàimíng chī-wǔfàn
‘Mr. Wang often has his lunch out.’

5g  two adverbial phrases: Time(-when): ‘every day’; Time(-spent): ‘(eat lunch) for one hour’
王先生每天吃午饭吃一个小时。
王先生每天吃午饭吃一个小时。
Wáng xiānshēng mèitiān chī-wǔfàn chī yí-ge xiǎoshí
‘Every day Mr. Wang eats his lunch for one hour.’

5h  two adverbial phrases: Time(-when): ‘Wednesday afternoon’; Location: ‘at the supermarket’
王太太星期三下午在超级市场买菜。
王太太星期三下午在超级市场买菜。
Wáng tàitài xīngqīsān xiàwǔ zài chāojí shìchāng mǎi-cài
‘On Wednesday afternoons Mrs. Wang goes grocery shopping at the supermarket.’

5i  three adverbial phrases: Adverb: ‘always’; Time(-when): ‘after dinner’; Time(-spent): ‘(take a walk) for a half hour’
王先生王太太总是晚饭以后散半个钟头步。
王先生王太太总是晚饭以后散半个钟头步。
Wáng xiānshēng Wáng tàitài zōngshí wǎnfàn yíhòu sàn bàn-ge zhōngtóu bù
‘Mr. and Mrs. Wang always take a half-hour walk after dinner.’
three adverbial phrases: Time(-when): ‘every Tuesday’; Location: ‘at the university’; Time(-spent): ‘attend drawing class for three hours’

五太太星期二在大学上三个小时的绘画课。

Wáng tàitài měi xīngqī’ér zài dàxué shàng sān-ge xiāoshí (de) huìhuà kè
‘Every Tuesday Mrs. Wang attends a drawing class at the university for three hours.’

Similar to the problem in §3, common errors arise from the temptation to translate word-by-word from English. This procedure can lead to curious Mandarin sentences.

5k–l demonstrate such errors. The English translations indicate the ideas intended but not realized. These errors appear because the Mandarin word order differs from the English word order.

5k *她工作在学校餐厅每星期五下午四个小时。

tā gōngzuò zài xuéxiào cāntīng měi xīngqīwǔ xiàwǔ sì-ge xiǎoshí
‘She works at the school cafeteria every Friday afternoon for four hours.’

5l *我学习每天晚上在图书馆。

wǒ xuéxí měitiān wǎnshāng zài túshūguǎn
‘I study at the library every evening.’

EXERCISE 5. Put the parenthetical phrases where they belong in the sentences.

1 我和朋友喝咖啡。（在她家）
2 他们星期五在体育馆打球。（下午）
3 他们昨天吃晚饭。（吃了三个钟头）
4 小马在图书馆工作。（星期二晚上，四个小时）
5 小马每个星期工作。（在图书馆）
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6 我去年学了日文。（九个月的）
7 她在电影院看电影。（不常）
8 他们等我呢！（现在，在外面）

EXERCISE 6. Translate into Chinese.

1 That student worked in a supermarket last summer.
2 They usually have a one-hour lunch.
3 We have literature class on Tuesday evenings at 7:00.
4 Every spring they travel for three weeks.
5 She always gets on the train at that subway station.
6 My older sister taught one semester of English in China.

§6. **Structures of comparison (i): contrast, with 比 bǐ**

To contrast differences, as in the sentence ‘X is louder than Y,’ Mandarin uses the pattern with 比 bǐ ‘as compared with.’ The structure is: X + 比 bǐ + Y + DA. In this pattern, X precedes bǐ and possesses a comparative relationship, which is described by the descriptive adjective, with Y. The sentence is literally ‘X compared to Y is louder.’ Note that Y stands before the DA. See examples 6a–b.

6a 咖啡比茶贵。
   kāfēi bǐ chá guì
   ‘The coffee is more expensive than the tea.’

6b 这条街上的房子比邻街的老。
   zhèi-tiáo-jīe shàng de fángzi bǐ línjiē de lǎo
   ‘The houses on this street are older than those on the adjacent street.’

The two elements of the comparison, i.e. X and Y, can inhabit varied grammatical structures, such as nouns 咖啡 ‘coffee’ and 茶 ‘tea’ in 6a; or noun phrases such as zhèi-tiáo-jīe shàng de fángzi ‘the houses on this street’ and línjiē de ‘those on the adjacent street’ in 6b. They may also be in verb phrases such as shuō-zhōngwén ‘speak Chinese’ and xiě-hànzi ‘write Chinese characters,’ as in 6c.

6c 说中文比写汉字容易。
   shuō-zhōngwén bǐ xiě-hànzi róngyì
   ‘Speaking Chinese is easier than writing Chinese characters.’
**Negation**

While it is uncommon, the negation 不 bù can be put before 了 bǐ. Note that 不 bù stands before 了 bǐ but never before the descriptive adjective. See example 6d.

6d 说中文不比写汉字容易。

shuō-zhōngwén bù bǐ xiě-hànzi róngyì

‘Speaking Chinese is not easier than writing Chinese characters.’

**Degrees of comparison**

There are modifications in the 了 bǐ pattern that show degrees of comparison. An expression of measurement normally appears as the complement of the descriptive adjective, such as 一点儿 yìdiǎnr ‘a little’ to show a small difference; or -得多-de duō ‘much more’ to show a large difference. See examples 6e–f. The idea of ‘very’ or ‘very much’ in a comparison is never expressed by using the adverb 很 hěn ‘very’ before the DA, but by adding -de duō to the DA. The complement showing degrees of comparison may also be a specific measurement, such as ‘ten cents’ in 6g. Note that as the complement, the measurement phrase always follows the DA.

6e 手机比座机小一点儿。

shǒujī bǐ zuòjī xiǎo yìdiǎnr

‘The cell phone is a little smaller than the normal phone.’

6f 她的汽车比我的贵得多。

tāde qìchē bǐ wǒde guì-de duō

‘Her car is a great deal more expensive than mine.’

6g 咖啡比茶贵一毛钱。

kāfēi bǐ chá guì yì-máo qián

‘Coffee costs ten cents more than tea.’

Another modification involves adverbs of degree such as 多 duō ‘more’ (6h)/ 少 shǎo ‘less’, 早 zǎo ‘early’/晚 wǎn ‘late’ (6i). These words are used before the verb to indicate the comparative degree of an action. Note that in these cases, a specific measurement, such as 一-mén-kè ‘one course’ in 6h and 两-gè-zhōngtóu ‘two hours’ in 6i, is the complement of the verb; so it always follows the verb.

6h 张老师比林老师多教一门课。

Zhāng lǎoshī bǐ Lín lǎoshī duō jiāo yì-mén-kè

‘Teacher Zhang teaches one course more than Teacher Lin does.’
One common error is to use an adverbial word or phrase to modify the descriptive adjective, such as  
very' in 6j and ... extremely' in 6k. As mentioned in §1, only the unmodified descriptive adjectives in Mandarin imply comparison. In other words, only unmodified descriptive adjectives can appear in a comparative structure. A modified descriptive adjective is incompatible in the 比 bǐ pattern. Examples 6j–k therefore are ill-formed.

6j  
很多人认为吃菜比吃肉*很好。  
'hěn duō rén rènwéi chī-cài bǐ chī-ròu hěn hǎo  
'Many people believe that eating vegetables is *very better than eating meat.'

6k  
他认识的字比我多*极了。  
'tā rènshì de zì bǐ wǒ duō jí le  
'He recognizes many more characters than I do.'

Another error often occurs with the negation of the 比 bǐ pattern. Note that the negation 不 bù should precede the comparison word 比 bǐ. The negation never occurs before the descriptive adjective. The correct way to express 6l is given at 6d.

6l  
说中文比写汉字不容易。  
'shuō zhōngwén bǐ xiě-hànzì bù róngyì  
'Speaking Chinese, in comparison to writing Chinese characters, is not easy.'

Finally, the adverb of degree (cf. 6h–i) must appear before the verb, whereas the specific measurement is after the verb. 6m is unacceptable since the adverb 早 ‘early’ is put after the verb 来 ‘come.’

6m  
老师比学生*来早十分钟。  
lǎoshī bǐ xuéshēng lái zǎo shí-fènzhōng  
'The teacher came ten minutes earlier than the students did.'
The basic pattern is: X + 比 bǐ + Y + DA. Adverbs such as 很 hěn ‘very’ never appear in this structure. Degrees of comparison, such as 一点儿 yìdiǎnr ‘a little’ or -得多-de duō ‘much more’ follow the descriptive adjective.

For related topics, see §§7 and 8.

**Exercises**

**EXERCISE 7.** Use the words given to form comparative sentences.

**e.g.** 羊肉, 鸡肉, 一点儿, 贵, 比 ⇒ 羊肉比鸡肉贵一点儿.

1 日文语法, 中文语法, 复杂, 比
2 箱子, 书包, 重, 比
3 走路, 开车, 方便, 比
4 哥哥, 弟弟, 一点儿, 高, 比
5 北京, 承德, 得多, 大, 比
6 桔子, 苹果, 一块钱, 贵, 比
7 我的室友, 我, 一个钟头, 早起, 比
8 他, 我, 三本书, 多看, 比

§7. **Structures of comparison (ii): similarity**

There are three structures that describe similarity/equivalence in Mandarin.

First, to express general similarity between two elements, X and Y, Mandarin uses pattern 7a. The two components are linked by 跟 gēn or 和 hé ‘and’ and followed by the adjective 一样 yìyàng ‘identical, the same.’ See examples 7b–c.

7a X + 跟 gēn/和 hé + Y + 一样 yìyàng

7b 这个房间跟那个房间一样。
zhèi-ge fángjiān gēn nèi-ge fángjiān yìyàng
‘This room and that room are alike.’

7c 苹果跟桔子一样吗？
píngguǒ gēn júzi yìyàng ma
‘Are apples the same as oranges?’
Second, to express similarity in specific respects, such as size, length, distance, or other qualities, a descriptive adjective goes after yíyàng, as in pattern 7d. In this case, yíyàng functions as an adverb meaning 'equally.' See example 7e.

7d  X + 跟 gēn/和 hé + Y + 一样 yíyàng + DA

7e  我妹妹跟我一样高。
    wǒ mèimei gēn wǒ yíyàng gāo
    ‘My sister and I are the same height.’

Third, to express equivalence between X and Y, Mandarin uses the pattern 7f. Here the word yǒu indicates X's comparison to Y regarding the quality expressed by the descriptive adjective, such as guì ‘expensive’ in 7g. An adverb 这么 zhème or 那么 nème often precedes the DA. These adverbs are generally translated as ‘so’ or ‘as.’ Zhème ‘like this’ refers to something close by and nème ‘like that’ to something farther away. See example 7g.

7f  X + 有 yǒu + Y (+ 这么 zhème/那么 nème) + DA

7g  课本有字典那么贵。
    kèběn yǒu zìdiǎn nème guì
    ‘The textbook is as expensive as the dictionary.’

Negation

Negations for the above patterns of similarity/equivalence need clarification.

First, for patterns 7a and 7d, the negation 不 bù may precede either gēn or yíyàng with no difference in meaning, as shown in examples 7h–i below.

7h  我妹妹不跟我一样高。
    wǒ mèimei bù gēn wǒ yíyàng gāo
    ‘My sister and I are not the same height.’

7i  我妹妹跟我不一样高。
    wǒ mèimei gēn wǒ bù yíyàng gāo
    ‘My sister and I are not the same height.’

Second, pattern 7f is generally preferred in negating equivalence or similarity. In this pattern the negation 没 méi always stands before yǒu, indicating that X falls short of Y regarding the quality expressed by the descriptive adjective. See examples 7j–k.

7j  儿子有父亲那么高，可是没有父亲（那么）胖。
    érzi yǒu fùqin nème gāo, kěshì méi yǒu fùqín (nème) pàng
    ‘The son is as tall as the father, but not as chubby as the father.’
Simple sentences

7k  说中文没有写汉字 (这么) 难。
    shuō-zhōngwén méiyǒu xiě-hànzi (zhème) nán
    ‘Speaking Chinese is not as difficult as writing Chinese characters.’

Students often mistakenly put the negation 不 bù before the descriptive adjective when they mean to express the idea “X is not as . . . as Y.” A sentence such as 7l sounds rather awkward. As the translation shows, it does not express the intended idea but rather its opposite. As explained above, bù may either precede 跟 gèn or 一样 yìyàng, but does not appear before the DA. Or in this case, one may use the negative version of pattern 7f which is preferred in negating similarity.

7l  不你的电脑跟我的电脑一样不快。
    bù nǐde diànnǎo gèn wǒde diànnǎo yíyàng bù kuài
    ‘Your computer and my computer are the same: neither is fast.’
    (Intending to say: ‘Your computer and my computer are not equally fast.’)

☑  你的电脑跟我的电脑不一样快。
    nǐde diànnǎo gèn wǒde diànnǎo bù yìyàng kuài

☑  你的电脑没有我的电脑快。
    nǐde diànnǎo méiyǒu wǒde diànnǎo kuài
    ‘Your computer is not as fast as mine.’

Another common error is 7m, where the basic pattern, X + 比 bǐ + Y + DA, discussed in §6, is mixed with the negation of pattern 7f. As a result 7m does not convey any sensible meaning.

7m  不南方的冬天比北方的冬天没有那么冷。
    bù nánfāng de dōngtiān bǐ běifāng de dōngtiān méiyǒu nème lěng

☑  南方的冬天没有北方的冬天那么冷。
    nánfāng de dōngtiān méiyǒu běifāng de dōngtiān nème lěng
    ‘Winter in the south is not as cold as in the north.’

The three patterns of similarity/equivalence are 7a, 7d, and 7f. As explained in the text, follow the rules governing their negations.

For related topics, see §§6 and 8.

Exercises

EXERCISE 8. Use the words given to make sentences describing similarity/equivalence.
§8. Structures of comparison (iii): behavior

When two parties, X and Y, are compared in their performance of a certain action, as in the sentence ‘X swims faster than Y does’ or ‘X and Y are equally well-read,’ an action verb phrase needs to be added to any one of the three comparative patterns discussed in §6 and §7, repeated here as 8a–c.

8a  X + 比 bǐ + Y + DA
8b  X + 跟 gēn + Y + 一样 yíyàng + DA
8c  X + (没) 有 méi yǒu + Y (+ 这么 zhème/那么 nème) + DA

Generally the action verb phrase is a verb-object compound. In a comparative structure, this verb-object compound must be followed by a repeating verb plus an added -得 de in the repetition. The added verb phrase in a comparison then is: V-Obj. + V-得 de. For instance, example 8d contains the action 言语 zhòngwén ‘speak Chinese.’ In order to compare the abilities of party X and party Y to speak Chinese, one needs to use the phrase [V-Obj. + V-得 de]. In this case it is 言语 zhòngwén 言语-de.

Let us first consider pattern 8a. There are a few variations in this structure, as examples 8d–f illustrate. The duplicated form of [V-Obj. + V-得 de] may be before (as in 8d), after (8e), or split by [ 比 bǐ + Y] (8f). Note the descriptive
adjective, hǎo ‘good/well’ in this case, functioning as an adverb when the action verb phrase is added, always stands at the end of the comparison.

8d 她说中文说得比我好。

她 shuō zhōngwén shuō-de bǐ wǒ hǎo
‘She speaks Chinese better than I do.’

8e 她比我说中文说得好。

她 bǐ wǒ shuō zhōngwén shuō-de hǎo

8f 她说中文比我说得好。

她 shuō zhōngwén bǐ wǒ shuō-de hǎo

The modifications showing degrees of comparison used in the basic bǐ pattern also apply to the compared behaviors. They may be an expression of measure such as 一点儿 yìdiǎnr ‘a little’ to show a small difference; or -得多 -de duō ‘much more’ to show a large difference. See example 8g. Again, the measurement phrase always follows the descriptive adjective at the end of the comparison.

8g 她说中文说得比我好一点儿/得多。

她说中文说得比我好一点儿/得多。

‘She speaks Chinese a little/much better than I do.’

The various locations for the duplicated form [V-Obj. + V得 de] apply similarly to patterns 8b and 8c. Both are discussed in §7. In structure 8b, the duplicated form [V-Obj. + V得 de] may appear before (as in 8h), after (8i), or split by [跟 gēn + Y] (8j). In structure 8c, the duplicated form [V-Obj. + V得 de] may appear before (8k), after (8l), or split by [(没 méi] + Y] (8m). Note that the modifications showing different degrees of measurement in the 比 bǐ pattern do not apply in these two patterns.

8h 学生写字写得跟老师一样快。

学生写字写得跟老师一样快。

‘The student writes Chinese characters as fast as the teacher does.’

8i 学生跟老师写字写得一样快。

学生跟老师写字写得一样快。

8j 学生写字跟老师写得一样快。

学生写字跟老师写得一样快。

8k 我们看书看得没有他多。

我们看书看得没有他多。

‘We do not read as much as he does.’

8l 我们没有他看书看得多。

我们没有他看书看得多。

8m 我们看书没有他看得多。

我们看书没有他看得多。
Students sometimes skip the V-得 de part in these comparative patterns. Remember: the V-得 de must be used in compared behaviors. While the V-Obj. phrase may be omitted if it is clear from the context, the V-得 de part cannot. 8n is unacceptable in Mandarin.

8n  *我爸爸跟我妈妈做菜一样好。
wǒ bàba gēn wǒ māma zuò-cài yìyàng hǎo
‘My dad cooks as well as my mom.’

*我爸爸跟我妈妈做菜做得一样好。
wǒ bàba gēn wǒ māma zuò-cài zuò-de yìyàng hǎo

Another common error is to use an adverbial word or phrase such as ‘very’ (as in 8o) or ‘unusually’ (8p) to modify the descriptive adjective in a comparison. Again, only unmodified descriptive adjectives can be used in a comparative structure. Modified descriptive adjectives, such as those in 8o–p, are incompatible with any comparative structure. To correct these mistakes, one needs to remove the adverbs.

8o  老师说中文比学生说得*很快。
lǎoshī shuō-zhōngwén bǐ xuésheng shuō-de hěn kuài
‘The teacher speaks Chinese very faster than the students do.’

老师说中文比学生说得快。
lǎoshī shuō-zhōngwén bǐ xuésheng shuō-de kuài

8p  我的同学跟我考试考得*一样非常好。
wǒ de tóngxué gēn wǒ kǎo-shì kǎo-de yìyàng fēicháng hǎo
‘My classmate and I tested the same unusually well.’

我的同学跟我考试考得一样好。
wǒ de tóngxué gēn wǒ kǎo-shì kǎo-de yìyàng hǎo

When comparing two parties in their conduct of an action, use the structure: V-Obj. + V-得 de. You may add three variations on this structure to each of the comparative patterns 8a–c.

For related topics, see §§6, 7, and 45.

Exercises

EXERCISE 10. The duplicated form of the verb phrase has three patterns. Translate each sentence into Chinese, using all three patterns.

1  My mom sings much better than I do.
2  The younger brother runs as fast as the older brother does.
3  Adults do not sleep as much as children do.
EXERCISE 11 (§§6–8). Translate into Chinese.

1 He is three inches taller than his younger sister.
2 April is a little warmer than March.
3 His cell phone is as new as mine.
4 Shandong cuisine is not as spicy as Sichuan cuisine.
5 The daughter plays chess better than her father.
6 He eats as much as I do. But he is not as chubby as I am.

§9. The 把 bā construction (i):
its usage

The 把 bā construction has no direct equivalent in English. To illustrate its function, let us first compare the two ways, shown by 9a–b, of expressing ‘he has broken his tea cup’ in Mandarin.

9a The normal word order: Subj. + V + Obj.
他打破了他的茶杯
tā dǎ-pò-le tāde chábēi

9b The 把 bā construction: Subj. + 把-Obj. + V, where 把 bā transposes
the object to a position between the subject and the verb.
他把他的茶杯打破了
tā bā tāde chábēi dǎ-pò-le

While these two sentences, 9a–b, can be translated identically into English, their different emphases become apparent when one looks at the questions that 9a and 9b answer:

9a answers the question ‘What happened?’ ⇒ He broke his tea cup.
9b answers the question ‘What did he do to his tea cup?’ ⇒ He broke it.

The Chinese character 把 bā as a verb means ‘grasp; hold.’ The bā construction may be read literally as ‘Subj. grasps Obj. and does V (to/with it).’ The function of the bā structure 9b hence emphasizes the result: how the action affects the transposed object.

Based on this function, this construction has two constraints: i) The bā-Obj., which is also the object of the verb, must be a specific, i.e. definite, noun phrase, such as 他的茶杯 tāde chábēi ‘his tea cup,’ or 那本书 nèi-běn-shū ‘that book,’ etc. Quantified noun phrases, such as 一个茶杯 yī-ge-chábēi ‘one tea cup’ or 五本书 wǔ-běn-shū ‘five books,’ cannot be used as the bā-Obj. since quantified noun phrases are indefinite in Mandarin (see §37); ii) The verb of the bā construction must be a transitive action verb. Certain verbs
that express motion, emotion, cognition, or existence, such as those in 9c, are therefore incompatible with the bā construction.

9c Verbs that cannot be used in the bā construction
来 lái ‘come’; 去 qù ‘go’; 离开 líkāi ‘depart’; 喜欢 xǐhuān ‘like’; 怕 pà ‘fear’; 觉得 jué ‘feel’; 像 xiàng ‘resemble’; 知道 zhīdào ‘know’; 认识 rènshì ‘recognize’; 记得 jìde ‘remember’; 是 shì ‘be’; 在 zài ‘be at’; 有 yǒu ‘there is/are’

The bā construction is commonplace when:

9d the sentence contains a directional complement:
他们把书桌搬出去了。
tāmén bā shūzhuō bān-chūqu le
‘They moved the desk out.’

9e the verb takes both direct and indirect objects:
请你把信交给李先生。
qǐng nǐ bā xìn jiāo-gěi Lí xiānshēng
‘Please hand the letter to Mr. Li.’

9f both an object and a place word are used:
乘客把箱子放在行李架上。
chéngkè bā xiāngzi fàng-zài xínglijià shàng
‘Passengers put their suitcases on the luggage rack.’

9g–j are errors that misuse the bā construction. Their English translations note what the writers wanted to say. None of these ideas needs to use the bā construction.

9g 他把她的名字*知道了。
tā bā tāde míngzi zhīdào le
► Problem: zhīdào ‘know’ is a verb of cognition rather than action, which does not act upon the bā-Obj. tāde míngzi ‘her name.’

他知道了她的名字。
tā zhīdào le tāde míngzi
‘He has learned her name.’

9h  我*把看书觉得很有意思。
wǒ bā kàn-shū juéde hěn yōuyìsī
► Problems: i) kàn-shū ‘read (books)’ is a verb phrase which cannot be used as the bā-Obj.; ii) juéde ‘feel’ is a verb that shows emotions and here it indicates a predicate, juéde hěn yōuyìsī ‘feel interesting,’ which is a comment and does not directly act upon the bā-Obj.

我觉得看书很有意思。
wǒ juéde kàn-shū hěn yōuyìsī
‘I think reading is (very) interesting.’
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9i 我很累，想*把今天下午休息休息。
wǒ hěn lèi, xiǎng bǎ jīntiān xiàwǔ xiūxi xiūxi

► Problem: xiūxi xiūxi ‘rest a bit’ is an intransitive verb phrase that certainly
does not act upon the time word jīntiān xiàwǔ ‘this afternoon.’

✔ 我很累，今天下午想休息休息。
wǒ hěn lèi, jīntiān xiàwǔ xiǎng xiūxi xiūxi
‘I am tired. I want to rest a bit this afternoon.’

The problem in 9j is the indefinite bǎ-Obj. yī-ge píngguǒ ‘an/one apple.’ As
mentioned above, the bǎ-Obj. must have a definite/specific reference; and in
Mandarin quantified noun phrases are indefinite (see §37). A sentence of the
normal [Subj. + V + Obj.] word order is a more natural way.

9j 昨天我*把一个苹果吃了。
zuótiān wǒ bǎ yī-ge píngguǒ chī-le

✔ 昨天我吃了一个苹果。
zuótiān wǒ chī-le yī-ge píngguǒ
‘Yesterday I ate an apple.’

The verb of the bǎ construction must be a transitive action verb. Verbs
that express motion, emotion, cognition, or existence are incompatible
with this structure. The bǎ-Obj. cannot be a quantified noun phrase.

For related topics, see §§10, 11, and 37.

§10. The 把 bā construction (ii): other elements and the verb phrase

While the basic form of the bā construction is [Subj. + 把 bǎ-Obj. + V], 10a
elaborates the structure and shows that other possible elements, such as a
negation, auxiliary verb, adverb, or time phrase, should appear before the bǎ-
Obj. and that the verb in the bā construction ought to be a verb phrase.

10a Subj. + (Neg./Aux./Adv./time-when) + 把 bǎ-Obj. + VP

In this section, we analyze two structural details: i) the other elements that
appear immediately before the bǎ-Obj.; and ii) variations in the verb phrase.

First, these are the elements that, if necessary, appear immediately before
the bǎ-Obj.: negations 不 bù or 没 méi; auxiliary verbs such as 会 huì ‘will,’
能 néng ‘can,’ 应该 yīnggāi ‘should,’ or 想 xiǎng ‘think of’; adverbs such as
立刻 likè ‘immediately,’ 也 yě ‘also,’ 先 xiān ‘first,’ or 已经 yǐjīng ‘already’; and
chronological time words such as 下午两点 xiàwǔ liǎngdiǎn ‘2 p.m.,’ 星期天 xīngqītiān ‘Sunday,’ etc. See examples 10b–e.

10b 我不把事情办完，不能回家。
wǒ bù bā shìqīng bàn-wán, bù néng huí-jiā
‘If I don’t finish the work, I can’t go home.’

10c 你应该把他们送到机场。
nǐ yīnggāi bǎ tāmén sòng-dào jīchāng
‘You should escort them to the airport.’

10d 我先把事情办完，再回家。
wǒ xiān bā shìqīng bàn-wán, zài huí-jiā
‘I first finish the work; then I go home.’

10e 她今天上午把数据整理好了。
tā jīntiān shàngwǔ bǎ shùjù zhěnglǐ-hǎo le
‘She sorted out the data this morning.’

Next, let us consider the verb phrase variations. In the bā construction the main verb cannot stand alone. It must include other elements to form a VP. There are numerous VP variations. 10f–k are common examples of various elements that follow the main verb.

10f VP = V-RVC compound
老师没把这一章解释清楚。
lǎoshī méi bā zhēn-yī-zhāng jiěshì-qīngchu
‘The teacher didn’t explain this chapter clearly.’

10g VP = V-DVC compound
你可以把东西搬进来。
nǐ kěyǐ bā dōngxi bān-jīnlai
‘You may move your stuff in.’

10h VP = V + 在 zài-location
客人想把他们的车停在路边儿。
kèrén xiǎng bā tāmén-de chē tíng zài lùbiān
‘The guests want to park their cars on the side of the road.’

10i VP = V + 到 dào-location + 去 qù/来 lái
小王把朋友的自行车骑到学校去了。
Xiǎo Wáng bā péngyou-de zìxíngchē qí dào xuéxiào qù le
‘Little Wang rode his friend’s bicycle to school.’

10j VP = V + 给 gěi-indirect Obj.
我把功课交给老师了。
wǒ bā gōngkè jiào géi lǎoshī le
‘I handed my homework to the teacher.’
10k  VP = V + verb suffix 了 le
我把他的名字忘了。
wǒ bā tā de míngzi wàng le
‘I forgot his name.’

10l–n are common errors. In each case, the asterisk marks the specific problem. The idea that each of these sentences means to express is in parentheses.

10l  请你填一张表，把你的地址和姓名清楚。
qǐng nǐ tián yī-zhāng-biǎo, bā nǐ de dìzhī hé xìngmíng qīngchū
(‘Please fill out the form and write your name and address clearly.’)
► Problem: The main verb is missing. qīngchū ‘clear(ly)’ here is the RVC but not the main verb. The verb phrase needs to be a V-RVC:
xiě-qīngchū ‘write-clearly.’
✔ 请你填一张表，把你的地址和姓名写清楚。
qǐng nǐ tián yī-zhāng-biǎo, bā nǐ de dìzhī hé xìngmíng xiě-qīngchū

10m  她把她的车不想借给同学。
tā bā tā de chē bù xiǎng jiè-gěi tóng xué
(‘She doesn’t want to lend her car to her schoolmate.’)
► Problem: The negative auxiliary phrase bù xiǎng ‘not want’ is misplaced. It should appear before the bā-Obj., not before the main verb phrase jiè-gěi ‘lend to.’
✔ 她不想把她的车借给同学。
tā bù xiǎng bā tā de chē jiè-gěi tóng xué

10n  我把这个很难的问题回答不出来。
wǒ bā zhè-ge hěn-nán-de wèntí huídá-bù-chūlái
(‘I can’t answer this very difficult question.’)
► Problem: The bā construction does not take the potential form (see §44) as the verb phrase. In this case the negative potential form huídá-bù-chūlái ‘unable to answer’ stresses the impossibility of the action itself and does not affect the bā-Obj. To express the idea in parentheses, one needs to avoid the bā construction.
✔ 我回答不出来这个很难的问题。
wǒ huídá-bù-chūlái zhè-ge hěn-nán-de wèntí

A negation, auxiliary verb, adverb, or time phrase appears immediately before the 把 bā-Obj. The main verb cannot stand alone; it must appear in a verb phrase, as in 10f–k.

For related topics, see §§9, 11, 38, 41, 42, 43, and 44.
Exercises

EXERCISE 12 (§§9–10). If possible, rewrite the sentences using the 把 bā construction. (Note that some of them cannot be changed to the bā construction.)

1. 我卖了我的旧车。
2. 这个练习，你今天一定得做完。
3. 这件事，你告诉谁了？
4. 我觉得那个故事有趣极了。
5. 请你打开电视，好不好？
6. 我们今天玩儿得真高兴。
7. 如果有问题，请你举手来。
8. 你的功课，你明天交给老师吧。
9. 他去年大学毕业了。
10. 上课的笔记，我喜欢记在书上。
11. 所有的新影碟，他们都借走了。
12. 商店送来了老人买的东西。

EXERCISE 13. Translate into Chinese, using the 把 bā construction.

1. They don't want to open the window.
2. Please move the chairs out.
3. She has already forgotten my phone number.
4. You can't park (your car) here.
5. I saw the problem much too simply.
6. I didn't bring the computer back home.

§11. The passive construction

11a illustrates the structure of a passive sentence in Mandarin. In this structure, one of three prepositions, 被 bèi, 让 ràng, or 叫 jiào, indicates the passive voice. The subject of the sentence is the recipient of the action, or the thing acted upon, whereas the object of the preposition, which is optional for 被 bèi but obligatory for both 让 ràng and 叫 jiào, is the agent of the action. 11b–d are examples of the passive construction.

11a  Subject[recipient] + 被/让/叫-Obj[agent] + VP

11b  衣服被 (雨) 淋湿了。
yīfu bèi (yǔ) lín-shī le
‘The clothes are soaked (by the rain).’
The preposition bèi, regarded in most grammar books as the main passive marker, usually appears in more formal speech, whereas both ràng and jiào more frequently occur in colloquial speech. Another difference between bèi and ràng/jiào, as briefly mentioned earlier, is that when bèi is used, the agent of the action does not necessarily need to be clarified, while both ràng and jiào must take an object as the agent of the action. As shown in examples 11b–d, the agent yǔ ‘rain’ is optional in 11b, whereas both zéi ‘thief’ in 11c and lǎopo ‘wife’ in 11d are obligatory.

The passive construction has three features in common with the 把 bā construction. First, the verbs used in the passive construction are those that act upon the recipient. Verbs that do not act upon the recipient of the action, such as those that express motion, emotion, or existence, are incompatible with the passive construction (see examples in 9c). Second, the verb in the passive construction cannot stand alone; it must take other elements or complements to form a verb phrase. The passive construction employs the same set of verb phrase variations as the 把 bā construction (see examples 10f–k). These verb phrases indicate the result of the action upon the recipient. Third, as in the 把 bā construction, modifying words such as negations, auxiliary verbs, adverbs, and time phrases, as well as the adverb duōu ‘all,’ (see §51) appear before the prepositions bèi, ràng, or jiào. See examples 11e–g.

Grammarians often contend that the Mandarin passive construction typically refers to an unfortunate hardship suffered by the recipient of the
action. In reality, while the passive voice is much less common than the active voice, it is not limited to describing unfavorable events. One may apply the passive construction to a variety of situations. For instance, neither 11h nor 11i refers to an unfortunate event. However, since both contain an agent, the ideas of 11h and 11i can be easily expressed in the bèi construction.

11h  车子叫他洗得干干净净。
    chē zi jiào tā xi de gān gānjìng jìng
    ‘The car was washed really clean by him.’

11i  走丢了的孩子让警察找回来了。
    zǒu diū le de hái zi ràng jǐng chá zhǎo huí lái le
    ‘The lost child was brought back by the police.’

As a final note, one should bear in mind that in Mandarin the passive construction is much less common than in English. In other words, many English passive sentences, especially those where the agent of the action is not expressed, do not translate into the Mandarin passive construction marked by the preposition bèi. The active voice simplifies the sentence and the identification of agency.

The problem in 11j is that the agent of the action is missing after the preposition 让 ràng. Remember, if one chooses to use the preposition 让 ràng or 叫 jiào in a passive sentence, it must take an object as the agent of the action.

11j  这些字让写得很好看。
    zhè xiè zi ràng xiě de hěn hǎokàn
    ‘These characters were written very prettily.’

    这些字被写得很好看。
    zhè xiè zi bèi xiě de hěn hǎokàn

In 11k, the adverb 都 dōu ‘all’ should appear before the preposition 被 bèi, not after it.

11k  这些所有的书都被分了类。
    zhè xiè yǒu de shū bèi dōu fèn le lèi
    ‘All the books here were classified.’

    这些所有的书都被分了类。
    zhè xiè yǒu de shū bèi fèn le lèi

This construction shares three features with the 把 bā construction: i) the verb must be transitive; ii) the verb cannot stand alone; iii) modifying words appear before the prepositions 被 bèi, 让 ràng, or 叫 jiào. The object of the preposition is optional for bèi, but obligatory for both ràng and jiào.
For related topics, see §§9, 10, 38, and 51.

**Exercises**

EXERCISE 14. Rewrite the sentences in the passive construction.

1. 小偷偷了他的钱。
2. 孩子常常弄坏玩具。
3. 他把蛋糕吃了。
4. 我没有伞，雨把衣服都淋湿了。
5. 他已经把书还给图书馆了。
6. 小毛把房间打扫得很干净。

**Check your grammar**

Translate these sentences into Chinese, and then check to see that you have implemented the relevant grammar points. The parenthetical numbers and letters identify the pertinent subsections and examples.

1. Mr. Zhang is very busy. (§1h)
2. This question is extremely difficult. (§1i)
3. There are five items (of news) in today’s paper. (§2i)
4. I work at a burger joint. (§3h)
5. This afternoon we will go to the Big Lake to swim. (§4g)
6. This afternoon we will be swimming at the Big Lake. (§4h)
7. She works at the school cafeteria every Friday afternoon for four hours. (§5k)
8. I study at the library every evening. (§5l)
9. Many people believe that eating vegetables is better than eating meat. (§6j)
10. He recognizes many more characters than I do. (§6k)
11. Speaking Chinese is not easier than writing Chinese characters. (§6l)
12. The teacher came ten minutes earlier than the students did. (§6m)
13. Your computer and mine are not equally fast./Your computer is not as fast as mine. (§7l)
14. Winter in the south is not as cold as in the north. (§7m)
15. My dad cooks as well as my mom. (§8n)
16. The teacher speaks Chinese faster than the students do. (§8o)
17. My classmate and I tested equally well. (§8p)
18. He has learned her name. (§9g)
19. I think reading is (very) interesting. (§9h)
20. I am tired. I want to rest a bit this afternoon. (§9i)
21. Yesterday I ate an apple. (§9j)
30  Speed Up Your Chinese

22  Please fill out the form and write your name and address clearly. (§10l)
23  She doesn’t want to lend her car to her schoolmate. (§10m)
24  I can’t answer this very difficult question. (§10n)
25  These characters were written very prettily. (§11j)
26  All the books here were classified. (§11k)