CHINESE: A COMPREHENSIVE GRAMMAR

Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington
# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements xiv  
List of Abbreviations xv  
Introduction xvi  

## 1 Nouns and Nominalisations  
1.1 Nouns and categorisation  
1.1.1 Common nouns 1  
1.1.2 Material nouns 3  
1.1.3 Collective nouns 4  
1.1.4 Abstract nouns 5  
1.1.5 Proper nouns 5  
1.1.6 Temporal and spatial nouns 6  
1.2 Nouns and reference 7  
1.2.1 Definite or indefinite/generic reference 7  
1.2.2 Exclusive reference 9  
1.3 Nouns and plurality 9  
1.4 Nouns and syntactic functions 11  
1.5 Nouns and semantic fields 13  
1.6 Nominalisations 16  

## 2 Numerals and Measures  
2.1 Digits, units and cardinal numbers 17  
2.2 Ordinals 19  
2.3 Enumeration 20  
2.4 Fractions, percentages and decimals 20  
2.4.1 Fractions 20  
2.4.2 Percentages 21  
2.4.3 Decimals 21  
2.5 Imprecise numbers, halves and multiples 22  
2.5.1 Imprecise numbers (约数 yuēshù) 22  
2.5.2 Halves 25  
2.5.3 Multiples 25  
2.6 Mathematical symbols and simple arithmetic equations 26  
2.7 The multiplication table 26  
2.8 Measure words 27  
2.8.1 Standard measures 27  
2.8.2 Classifying measures 32
2.9 Measure words and other attributives 41
2.10 Reduplication of measure words 43
2.11 Missing measure words 44
2.12 Disyllabic measure words 46
2.13 Compound measure words 46
2.14 Duration and frequency measures 46

3 Pronouns, Pronominals and Pro-words 47
3.1 Personal pronouns 47
3.2 Demonstrative pronouns 48
3.3 Interrogative pronouns 50
3.4 Indefinite pronouns 52
3.5 Enumerative pronouns 54
3.6 Pronominals 54
3.7 Pro-words 56

4 Adjectives as Attributives and Predicatives 58
4.1 Adjectives in Chinese 58
4.2 Qualifiers or quantifiers 59
4.3 Degree adverbs and complements 60
4.4 The descriptive indicator 的 de 62
4.5 Attributives and predicatives 65
  4.5.1 Adjectives and their functional capacity 65
  4.5.2 Attributive-only adjectives 67
  4.5.3 Predicative-only adjectives 68
4.6 Various inherent features of adjectives 69
  4.6.1 Gradable vs non-gradable 69
  4.6.2 Conditional vs unconditional 70
  4.6.3 Derivable vs non-derivable 70
  4.6.4 Reduplicable vs non-reduplicable 71
  4.6.5 Derogatory vs commendatory 72
4.7 Adjectives and valency 73
4.8 Adjectives and collocation 73
4.9 Adjectives and comparison 74

5 Attributives other than Adjectives 76
5.1 The different forms of attributive 77
  5.1.1 Nouns 77
  5.1.2 Verbs 78
  5.1.3 Clauses 78
  5.1.4 Prepositional or postpositional phrases with 的 de 78
  5.1.5 Numerals or demonstratives and measure words 79
  5.1.6 Pronouns 80
  5.1.7 Idioms 80
5.2 The sequencing of attributives 81
5.3 Combination, embedding and delaying 85
  5.3.1 Commas or conjunctions 85
  5.3.2 Longer attributives 86

6 Action Verbs 88
  6.1 Transitive and intransitive 89
  6.2 Dynamic and static differences 91
  6.3 Dative verbs 91
  6.4 Causative verbs 95
  6.5 Coverbs 98
  6.6 Agreement between the subject and its action verb predicate 99
  6.7 Agreement between an action verb and its object 101
  6.8 Action verbs: completion and continuation 102
    6.8.1 The completion aspect 102
    6.8.2 The continuation aspect 105
  6.9 Action verbs: manner described and experience explained 107
    6.9.1 Manner of existence with 着 zhe 107
    6.9.2 Persistent posture or continuous movement with 着 zhe 108
    6.9.3 Accompanying manner with 着 zhe 108
    6.9.4 Experience and 过 guo 109

7 Action Verbs and Time 112
  7.1 Point of time 112
  7.2 Duration 113
  7.3 Brief duration 116
  7.4 Frequency 118
  7.5 每 mei ‘every’ 120
  7.6 Other time expressions 120
  7.7 Negation and time reference 121
    7.7.1 Negative expository sentences 121
    7.7.2 Negative narrative sentences 122
    7.7.3 Negative descriptive sentences 123

8 Action Verbs and Locations 124
  8.1 Location expressions and position indicators 124
  8.2 在 zai with location expressions 126
  8.3 Location expressions as sentence terminators 127
  8.4 Location expressions as sentence beginners 129
  8.5 Direction indicators 131
    8.5.1 Simple direction indicators 来 lami ‘to come’ and 去 qu ‘to go’ 131
    8.5.2 Disyllabic direction indicators 132
    8.5.3 Direction indicators indicating meaning other than direction 134
  8.6 The destination indicator 到 dao ‘to arrive’ 136
9 Adverbials 138
  9.1 Restrictive adverbials 138
    9.1.1 Time expressions 138
    9.1.2 Monosyllabic referential adverbs 141
  9.2 Descriptive adverbials 143
  9.3 Initiator-orientated or action-oriented descriptive adverbials 145
  9.4 Omission of the descriptive marker 地 de 147
  9.5 Relative position of adverbials 148

10 Complements 150
  10.1 Resultative complements 150
    10.1.1 Adjectival resultative complements 150
    10.1.2 Verbal resultative complements 151
    10.1.3 Resultative complements in 把 bā, 被 bèi and notional passive constructions 152
    10.1.4 Resultative complements and intended/expected outcomes in imperative sentences 153
  10.2 Potential complements 153
    10.2.1 Adjectival potential complements 153
    10.2.2 Verbal potential complements 154
    10.2.3 Potential directional complements 154
    10.2.4 Figurative uses and other features of resultative complements 155
  10.3 Complements of manner and consequential state 155

11 Coverbs 159
  11.1 Peer characteristics 160
    11.1.1 Registral 160
    11.1.2 Collocational 160
    11.1.3 Governmental 161
    11.1.4 Prosodic 162
    11.1.5 Sequential 162
    11.1.6 Usage 163
  11.2 Semantic categories 163
    11.2.1 Direction and position 164
    11.2.2 Time 174
    11.2.3 With, for or by someone or something 180
    11.2.4 Instrument and vehicle 183
    11.2.5 By means of, in accordance with, etc. 185
    11.2.6 Grammatical operators 193
  11.3 Coverbal positions 196

12 把 bā Constructions 200
  12.1 The structural features of 把 bā construction 200
12.1.1 Definite-referenced object 201
12.1.2 The elements after the main verb 201
12.1.3 The main verb in a 把 bā construction 204
12.2 Intentionality in a 把 bā construction 205
12.3 把 bā construction and imperatives 206
12.4 A particular feature of 把 bā construction in evaluative sentences 207
12.5 把 bā versus 将 jiāng 208

13 The Passive Voice and 被 bèi Constructions 209
13.1 Three forms of passive 209
13.2 The notional passive 210
13.3 The formal passive 217
  13.3.1 Salient features 217
  13.3.2 Basic characteristics 218
  13.3.3 Imperatives 220
  13.3.4 Whole–part relationships 220
  13.3.5 A classical variant 221
13.4 The lexical passive 221

14 Chain Constructions 226
14.1 The first verb introducing a coverbal phrase that indicates location, etc. 226
14.2 The second verb indicating purpose 227
14.3 The first verb indicating reason or cause 232
14.4 The first verb expressing accompanying manner or circumstances 234
14.5 Consecutive actions 236
14.6 Simultaneous actions 240
14.7 An emphatic chain construction 240
14.8 An articulated chain construction 241

15 The Verb 是 shì 243
15.1 是 shì introducing a predicative 243
15.2 Predicatives with an optional 是 shì 247
15.3 是 shì indicating existence 248
15.4 是 shì expressing emphasis 250
15.5 是 shì assessing an overall situation 255
15.6 是 shì forming part of a connector 256
15.7 是 shì as a pivot 257

16 The Verb 有 yǒu 258
16.1 有 yǒu indicating possession 258
16.2 有 yǒu indicating existence 259
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Telescopic Constructions</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>Topic and sub-topic</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>Topic and subject</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>‘Subject + predicate’ as topic</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>‘(Subject) + predicate’ inserted between ‘topic’ and ‘comment’</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Narration, Description, Exposition and Evaluation</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>Narrative sentences</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>Descriptive sentences</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>Expository sentences</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.3.1</td>
<td>Topic–comment expository sentences</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.3.2</td>
<td>Subject–predicate expository sentences</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.3.3</td>
<td>Negation of expository sentences</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>Evaluative sentences</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.4.1</td>
<td>The modal verb evaluative</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.4.2</td>
<td>The modified adjective/complement evaluative</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>Comparisons between sentence types</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>Concluding remarks</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>le-Expository Sentences</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>Change or reversal of a previous situation</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>Subjective endorsement behind the objective explanation</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>Summing up after a series of actions</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>A rhythmic necessity for monosyllabic verbs or verbalised adjectives</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>Two or three functions in one</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>le-expository sentences and the four basic sentence types</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.6.1</td>
<td>Expository sentences</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.6.2</td>
<td>Narrative sentences</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.6.3</td>
<td>Descriptive sentences</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.6.4</td>
<td>Evaluative sentences</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Conjunctions and Conjunctives</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>Conjunctions that link words or phrases</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.1.1</td>
<td>The four conjunctions</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.1.2</td>
<td>而 ‘also’</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.1.3</td>
<td>并 bing ‘also’</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>Clausal conjunctions and conjunctives</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>Clausal conjunctions and conjunctives in semantic categories</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.1</td>
<td>Giving reasons: because, because of, therefore</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.2</td>
<td>Making inferences: since</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.3</td>
<td>Expressing supposition: if</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.4</td>
<td>Stating conditions: only if, only when</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.5</td>
<td>Offering concessions: though, although, yet</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.6</td>
<td>Defying setbacks: no matter</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.7</td>
<td>Clarifying time: when, as soon as, after, before, etc.</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.8</td>
<td>Indicating preference: would rather</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.9</td>
<td>Elucidating one’s purpose: in order to, so as to, so as not to</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.10</td>
<td>Encoding miscellaneous relational concepts: apart from, let alone, otherwise</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>Correlations and parallels</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>Zero connectives</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Interrogative Sentences</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>Yes–no questions</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>Surmise questions</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>Suggestions in the form of questions</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>Alternative questions</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>Affirmative–negative questions</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>Question-word questions</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>Follow-up queries with 吗 ne</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>Rhetorical questions</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>Exclamatory questions</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Imperatives and Exclamations</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>Verbs in imperatives restricted to voluntary actions</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>Imperatives: beginners and end-particles</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>Spoken and written requests</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>Interjections and exclamatory expressions</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>Exclamations: particles and degree adverbials or complements</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Abbreviations and Omissions</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>Abbreviations in answers to questions</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>Abbreviations in face-to-face exchanges</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>Abbreviations in comparisons</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>The hidden presence of the narrator in a narrative</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>Omissions in a discourse</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Prosodic Features</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>The overall rhythm of Chinese speech</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>Syntactic sequences and their underlying rhythm</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.2.1</td>
<td>‘Verb + object’ patterns</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.2.2</td>
<td>The ‘attributive + headword’ pattern</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>Echoing patterns of rhythm</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
26.4 Expanding, condensing and padding to get into the appropriate rhythm 390

27 Stylistic Considerations in Syntactic Constructions 392
27.1 The presentational factor 392
   27.1.1 Layered or sequential images 393
   27.1.2 Reiteration for cumulative effect 394
   27.1.3 Factorisation 396
   27.1.4 Parallel matching 397
   27.1.5 Inversion: attributives or adverbials after their headwords 399
27.2 The rhetorical factor 399
   27.2.1 Coupling: XY, XY 399
   27.2.2 Progression: XY, XY, XY . . . 401
   27.2.3 Echoing 402
   27.2.4 Alternation: long and short sentences 403
27.3 Concluding remarks 404

Bibliography 405
Index 408