

WEN-HUA TENG

# THE ACCURATE USE OF CHINESE

Practical Sentence Structures  
and Word Usage for  
English Speakers

ROUTLEDGE



Cover image: © 45RPM / Getty Images

First published 2022

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Title: The accurate use of Chinese: practical sentence structures and word usage for English speakers / Wen-Hua Teng.

Description: Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2022. |

Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021028605 (print) | LCCN 2021028606 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780367456085 (hardback) | ISBN 9780367456092 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781003024347 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Chinese language—Textbooks for foreign speakers—English. |

Chinese language—Grammar. | Mandarin dialects—Grammar.

Classification: LCC PL1111 .T46 2022 (print) | LCC PL1111 (ebook) |

DDC 495.182/421—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021028605>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021028606>

ISBN: 978-0-367-45608-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-45609-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-02434-7 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003024347

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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## Introduction

This book is primarily written for English-speaking learners of Chinese who wish to improve their writing or speaking accuracy. They are either native speakers of English or those who learn Chinese via English. In my 35 years of teaching Chinese in an American university, I have observed over and over again that students at the same learning stage tend to commit similar errors, many of which can be traced back to structures or expressions in English. This is hardly surprising, since the majority of the students are native speakers of English. For those whose native languages are not English, their perception of Chinese is invariably shaped in many ways by English – the language of instruction. It is safe to assume that English plays a significant role in my students' effort to learn Chinese.

When learning a foreign language, adult learners carry with them a set of language “habits” which they have formed from acquiring their native languages. As a result, consciously or subconsciously juxtaposing and comparing the two languages becomes a normal and nearly inevitable part of the learning process. The common phenomenon that certain grammar structures or language rules appear to be easier (or more difficult) to learn than certain others can, to a fairly large extent, be attributed to the similarities or differences between the two languages. This is especially true for learners of beginning through pre-advanced levels, due to the fact that their exposure to the target language is as yet limited.

On the one hand, comparing the two languages provides learners with a stepping stone to explore a new and unfamiliar language. On the other hand, it can cause confusion and thus become a source of errors; this often happens when learners are unable to distinguish the two languages where the linguistic features are dissimilar. Therefore, those who are able to develop a keener perception about the differences between the two languages tend to make fewer errors and thus become more successful in learning the new language. This book aims to help English-speaking learners of Chinese develop such perceptions, which ultimately lead them to more accurate output by preventing certain errors.

As the title of the book aptly suggests, the main goal is to promote the accurate production (writing or speaking) of Chinese sentences and expressions. For this reason, in all the examples provided in this book, English sentences precede their Chinese counterparts. It is a more active approach than what is usually adopted by traditional learning resources, which tend to focus on perception or comprehension (e.g., reading) of Chinese sentences or texts. Furthermore, since linguistic accuracy cannot be detached from contexts, examples illustrating the proper or correct use of a grammar pattern or even a single vocabulary word do not appear as isolated sentences; instead, they are given in a string of sentences, as a dialogue or in a specific scenario. To highlight the importance of context is an effective

way for learners to understand how to balance accuracy and appropriateness – two of the essential requirements for successful communication.

The two unique features that separate this book from many other learning resources are (1) how the topics of discussions are selected or organized; and (2) comparisons or contrasts between English and Chinese are the main theme of the contents. There are three parts; the first two parts aim to counteract two types of errors stemming from the influence of English – negative transfer and under-differentiation; the third part is a collection of common errors and explanations as to how to correct these errors. While this book in no way implies that interference from English is the only source of errors, the goal is to help learners eliminate as many as possible errors that do originate from the negative impact of English. In short, proactive error prevention is the basis for the accurate use of the language.

Part I focuses on sentence patterns, but the choice of topics is not based on Chinese grammar structures; instead, it contains information and language rules that are not covered, not explicitly explained, or are scattered in various parts in standard textbooks. A systematic presentation of such information can give learners a clearer understanding as to how the Chinese sentence patterns function in actual use. For example, Chapter 1 examines the complicated patterns of the simple word “because.” An English-speaking learner, without being aware of the correct word order required in a more complicated sentence with “because,” is apt to resort to the strategy of a direct word-for-word translation (negative transfer) from English into Chinese, resulting in an error or even incomprehensibility of the utterance. In other words, topics included in this part can offer learners a fresh and broader perspective from which to view the Chinese grammar system, and help them steer away from the possible negative influence from English.

Part II comprises twelve basic yet extremely important English words in everyday use. On the surface, it seems a very small number of words; but actually, there are close to 100 Chinese words or expression discussed in this part since each of these words has multiple Chinese counterparts – a major source of confusion that leads to errors. When attempting to use the Chinese equivalent to one of these English words, a learner faces the challenge of choosing the correct one among several that share the same English word. Being unable to differentiate the various Chinese counterparts to one English word (under-differentiation) frequently becomes a hindrance to successful communication. This part targets errors caused by under-differentiation or oversimplification in word usage; in particular, it can help learners who already possess reasonably strong grammar competence raise their overall proficiency level speedily and effectively.

Part III includes 275 items, each of which contains an error, such as an incorrect word order, an inappropriate expression or an improper choice of vocabulary. All of these are common errors and mainly are the result of interference from English. While learners are known to

make multiple errors in one single utterance, errors included in this part are dealt with on an individual basis. In other words, this part seeks to help learners improve their accuracy by avoiding one error at a time.

Although this book is written for current and future learners of Chinese, it is also a homage to the thousands of students I have taught in the past 35 years. It is their effort to overcome the obstacles they encountered during their learning processes that inspired me to write this book. I hope that future learners can benefit from their predecessors' errors by not repeating them, and can thus navigate the Chinese language system more smoothly and efficiently. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to David Munton, my husband and informant, who answered numerous questions from me about English uses and expressions. My gratitude also goes to Louise Peterken, my production editor, who, with her patience and professionalism, guided me through the process to the completion of the book.

**Part I**  
**Sentence patterns**



## 1 How to use *because* in Chinese

DOI: 10.4324/9781003024347-2

It is perhaps reasonable to assume that 因为 (*yīnwèi*: “because”) is a word that is in nearly every learner’s vocabulary. Learners are often urged to keep in mind that 因为 and 所以 (*suǒyǐ*) should be considered a conjunctive pair and thus used together. However, this section focuses on discussing patterns and expressions that go beyond the basic notion of 因为 . . . 所以 . . . as a conjunctive pair.

There are a number of patterns and expressions in English that include the word “because” without an obvious need or place for 所以 in their Chinese counterparts. When attempting to produce such a sentence in Chinese, English speaking learners frequently become confused about the proper word order and would resort to directly transferring the English components word-for-word into Chinese. The result is often incorrect, inappropriate, or even incomprehensible Chinese sentences.

It should be noted that there are other words that have the same (or similar) meanings, functions and grammar features as 因为 . . . 所以 . . .; for example, 由于 . . . 因此 . . . (*yóuyú* . . . *yīncǐ*) is considered a more formal expression than 因为 . . . 所以; also, sometimes, instead of 所以, the word 结果 (*jiéguǒ*: as the result; consequently) is used. Rules on 因为 . . . 所以 . . . can be applied to these equivalent words. Discussions below will use 因为 and 所以 in examples.

1 因为 and 所以 are a conjunctive pair used to describe the relationship between the cause (or reason) and the effect. Since to pair “because” and “so” is considered grammatically incorrect in English, English speakers tend to omit 所以 once 因为 is used.

The proper use of **the subject** in the 因为 . . . 所以 . . . pattern merits attention since it is not always the same as how it is used in its English counterpart.

1a When the subject is a pronoun, it should not be repeated in the main clause (the 所以 clause).

Because I had forgotten to bring my wallet, I did not have money to buy lunch today.

**因为我**今天忘了带皮夹，所以Ø (Do not use 我 again.) 没有钱买午饭。

*Yīnwèi wǒ jīntiān wàng le dài píjiá, suǒyǐ méiyǒu qián mǎi wǔfàn.*

or 我今天**因为**忘了带皮夹，所以Ø . . . (The subject and 因为 can be reversed in order.)

or 今天**我因为**忘了带皮夹，所以Ø . . .

Because he has been too busy, he often goes home late at night.

**他因为** (or **因为他**) 太忙了, 所以常常很晚才回家。

*Tā yīnwèi tài máng le, suǒyǐ chángcháng hěn wǎn cái huí jiā.*

1b When the **因为** clause and the **所以** clause do not have the same subject, the subject in the **因为** clause does not have the option of appearing at the beginning of the sentence; that is, the sentence should start with **因为**.

I asked my girlfriend why she had refused to meet with me lately; she said that, because her father did not like me, she wanted to break up with me.

我问我女朋友为什么最近总是不跟我见面, 她说**因为她爸爸**不喜欢我, 所以**她想跟我**分手。

*Wǒ wèn wǒ nǚ péngyǒu wèi shénme zuìjìn zǒngshì bù gēn wǒ jiànmiàn, tā shuō yīnwèi tā bàba bù xǐhuān wǒ, suǒyǐ tā xiǎng gēn wǒ fēnshǒu.*

(Do not say **她爸爸**因为不喜欢我, 所以她想跟我分手. But it is correct to say **她爸爸**因为不喜欢我, 所以要她跟我分手 since this sentence has only one subject – **她爸爸**.)

2 There are several patterns in which **因为** and **所以** are **not used together** in spite of the fact that relationship between the reason/cause and effect is clearly present.

2a When the main clause (describing the effect) appears before the **因为** clause, there is only **因为** without **所以**. In this case, a **comma** must be used before **因为**. The sentence is considered inappropriate or even incorrect if the comma is omitted. Since to use a comma in the comparable English sentence is often considered inappropriate or even incorrect, English speakers tend to omit it in the Chinese sentence.

In recent months, Zhang Daming has been going running every day because he wants to participate in a Marathon race next year.

这几个月来, 张大明天天去跑步, **因为他**明年想参加马拉松。

*Zhè jǐ ge yuè lái, Zhāng Dàmíng tiān tiān qù pǎobù, yīnwèi tā míngnián xiǎng cānjiā Mǎlāsōng.*

It should be noted that **the subject should be repeated** when the **因为** clause appears after the main clause.

Tomorrow our company CEO is having a dinner party at a steak house; but I don't plan to go because I am a vegetarian.

明天我们公司的总裁在牛排馆请客, 可是**我不**打算去, 因为**我** (我 is repeated.) 是吃素的。

(or... 可是**因为**我是吃素的, **所以**  $\emptyset$ 不打算去。)

Míngtiān wǒmen gōngsī de zǒngcái zài niúpái guǎn qǐngkè, kěshì wǒ bù dǎsuàn qù, yīnwèi wǒ shì chī sù de.

2b A sentence can have 所以 without 因为. It is easy to understand such a sentence since 所以 can be interpreted as “therefore” or another similar English word.

Gao Dazhong’s girlfriend has broken up with him, so (= therefore,) he has been in a low mood lately (he has been depressed).

高大中的女朋友跟他分手了，所以他最近心情很低落。

Gāo Dàzhōng de nǚ péngyǒu gēn tā fēnshǒu le, suǒyǐ tā zuìjìn xīnqíng hěn dīluò.

Note that the same subject should not be repeated.

I have a headache today; so (= therefore,) I have decided to take a day off and rest at home. 今天我头疼，所以决定请假一天，在家休息。

Jīntiān wǒ tóu téng, suǒyǐ juédìng qǐngjià yī tiān, zài jiā xiūxi.

2c When answering a 为什么 (wèi shénme: why) question, it would be redundant to use 所以. In this case, the answer should start with 因为, not the subject.

Teacher: Wang Dazhong, why were you absent yesterday?

Wang: Because I was not feeling well.

老师: 王大中, 你昨天为什么没有来上课?

Lǎoshī: Wáng Dàzhōng, nǐ zuótiān wèi shénme méiyǒu lái shàngkè?

王: 因为我身体不舒服 (redundant: 所以没有来上课)。

Wáng: Yīnwèi wǒ shēntǐ bù shūfù.

2d When the effect (due to a certain reason) is **in context**, the expression is 是因为. In other words, it implies “the reason why . . . is because. . .” Simply using 因为 is not correct, but is an extremely **common error** made by English speakers.

Gao: How strange! Yesterday our CEO had a dinner party at a steak house; how come neither Wang Zhong nor Zhang Ming went?

(Note: The fact that neither Wang nor Zhang went to the party is **in context** once Gao has pointed it out.)

Lin: (The reason why) Wang Zhong did not go (is) because he does not eat meat; (the reason why) Zhang Ming did not go (is) because he had resigned the day before.

高: 奇怪! 昨天总裁在牛排馆请客, 王中和张明怎么都没有去?

Gāo: Qíguài! Zuótiān zǒngcái zài niúpái guǎn qǐngke, Wáng Zhōng hé Zhāng Míng zěnmē dōu méiyǒu qù?

林: 王中没有去是因为他不吃肉; 张明没有去是因为他前天辞职了。

Lín: Wáng Zhōng méiyǒu qù shì yīnwèi tā bù chī ròu; Zhāng Míng méiyǒu qù shì yīnwèi tā qiántiān cízhí le.

2e In casual speech, 是因为 is sometimes simply 是. Such an expression may be confusing to learners since, without 因为, the relationship between cause/reason and effect is not obvious. **Context** thus plays an important role in this pattern. This use of 是 merits special attention because it is common in daily speech.

(Scenario: Both Li Peng and Wang You major in engineering; their Chinese teacher asked them why they were taking the Chinese class. 学中文 is now in context.)

Li Peng said that he studied Chinese **because** he wanted to please his parents; and Wang You said that he studied Chinese **because** he hoped to get a good job in the future.

李朋说他学中文是要让爸妈高兴; 王有说, 他学中文是希望以后能找到好工作。

Lǐ Péng shuō tā xué Zhōngwén shì yào ràng bà mā gāoxìng, Wáng Yǒu shuō, tā xué Zhōngwén shì xīwàng yǐhòu néng zhǎodào hǎo gōngzuò.

(It is inappropriate to directly translate the English pattern into 李朋说他学中文因为要让爸妈高兴 or 王有说他学中文因为希望以后能找到好工作.)

3 There is a specific pattern in which **所以** appears before **因为**. In this pattern, 所以 is used to mean “the reason why;” therefore, it is a variation of the 是因为 pattern discussed above (2d). In addition, an optional word 之 (zhī) is often used. The pattern is “Subject (之) 所以 . . . 是因为 . . .” What follows 所以 must be **in context**. This pattern makes the utterance sound more formal. In addition, 因此 cannot be used to replace 所以 in this pattern.

Zhang: Why is Li Ming not going abroad to study anymore (as he planned to)? Did he not receive admissions?

Lin: He has decided not to go because he did not receive any scholarship. (Since Xiao Li's not going abroad is in context once Zhang mentions it, the Chinese sentence should be “the reason why he is not going is because he did not receive any scholarship.”)

张: 李明为什么不去外国留学了? 他没有申请到入学许可吗?

Zhāng: Lǐ Míng wèi shénme bú qù wàiguó liúxué le? Tā méiyǒu shēnqǐng dào rùxué xǔkě ma?

林: 他(之) 所以决定不去留学是因为没有申请到奖学金。(It is inappropriate to say 他决定不去, 因为没有申请到奖学金.)

*Lín: Tā zhī suǒyǐ juéding búqù liúxué shì yīnwéi méiyǒu shēnqǐng dào jiǎngxuéjīn.*

4 The phrase “**just because**” in English has at least two Chinese counterparts depending on how it is used in the English sentence. Learners should be aware that relying on word-for-word translation from English into Chinese most likely will result in incomprehensibility.

4a The word 因为 is **not used** in the pattern “**just because . . . does not mean. . .**” This expression typically means a certain situation does **not necessarily** guarantee a (seemingly obvious) conclusion. As such, **不见得** (bu jiande) or **不一定** (bù yīdìng) is the proper expression in Chinese. **未必** (wèibì) has the same meaning as **不见得** and is a more formal word.

Just because a book is a best seller does not mean that it is a good book.

畅销书不见得 (or 未必) 都是好书。 (Best-selling books are not necessarily good books.)

*Chàngxiāo shū bú jiànde (wèibì) dōu shì hǎo shū.*

Just because something is the most expensive does not mean that it is the best.

最贵的不见得是最好的。

*Zuì guì de bú jiànde shì zuì hǎo de.*

Just because someone is rich does not mean that they are happy.

有钱人不见得都很快乐。

*Yǒuqián rén bú jiànde dōu hěn kuàilè.*

4b Note that the above examples show **general statements**, meaning that the subject in each sentence is generic, not definite. When the subject is **definite**, the Chinese sentence can be interpreted slightly different; that is, **even if** something is true, it may not be reason enough for something else to be true as well. As such, **就算 . . . 也 . . .** is the more appropriate expression in Chinese, and “to mean” can be translated as **表示** (*biǎoshì*: to indicate). The implication of **就算** is to show a concession – acknowledging a point in an argument.

Just because she is a good cook does not mean that she will be a good wife.

就算他是你爸爸也不表示他能逼你做你不愿意做的事。

*Jiùsuàn tā huì zuòcài yě bú (jiànde) biǎoshì tā huì shì yī ge hǎo qīzi.*

= Even if she is a good cook, this does not (necessarily) indicate that she will be a good wife.

Just because he is your father does not mean that he can force you to do things you are not willing to do.

**就算他是你爸爸也不表示他能逼你做你不愿意做的事。**

*Jiùsuàn tā shì nǐ bàba yě bù biǎoshì tā néng bī nǐ zuò nǐ bú yuànyì zuò de shì.*

4c “Subject + 因为 . . . 就 + verb” is a pattern that implies “**just because**” in English, but it has a vastly different meaning from the English pattern described above. 就 implies the reason for an event or situation to take place is insufficient or is not justifiable; hence “**just because**.” It can be replaced with 而 when such an implication is not intended.

Examples below will use either 就 or 而 to illustrate the word order of this pattern. For example,

Mrs. Wang wants to divorce her husband **just because** he has lost money in business dealings.

(This sentence implies that the reason is not justifiable.)

**王太太因为丈夫做生意亏了钱就要跟他离婚。**

*Wáng tàitai yīnwèi zhàngfū zuò shēngyì kuī le qián jiù yào gēn tā líhūn.*

Note that when the subject for the 因为 clause is the same as the subject of the sentence, it should not be repeated.

Mrs. Wang has decided to divorce her husband **because she** no longer loves him.

**王太太因为不再爱她的丈夫而决定跟他离婚。**

*Wáng tàitai yīnwèi bú zài ài tāde zhàngfū ér juédìng gēn tā líhūn.*

Word orders between English and Chinese sentences are very dissimilar, which is a major cause for errors.

Learners must keep three rules in mind: (i) the sentence should start with the subject of the sentence, **not 因为**; (ii) if the 因为 clause (that indicates the reason) has the same subject as the sentence, it should **not** be repeated, e.g. the second example above; (iii) due to the difference in word order in English and Chinese, the locations for the **noun and the pronoun** should be **reversed** if necessary. For example, it is highly inappropriate in Chinese

to say 王太太**因为他**做生意亏了**钱就要跟丈夫**离婚 or 王太太**因为** ∅不再爱**他而**决定跟她的丈夫离婚。

Note that both of the above two examples can be converted into 因为 . . . 所以 . . . without altering the meanings of the sentences; however, the connotation of “just” (insufficient or unjustifiable reason) might be lost. For this reason, sometimes it is necessary to adopt this pattern in order to fully convey one’s message.

**因为**王先生做生意亏了**钱**，**所以**王太太要跟他离婚。（“Just because” is not conveyed.）

*Yīnwèi Wáng xiānsheng zuò shēngyì kuī le qián, suǒyǐ Wáng tàitai yào gēn tā lǐhūn.*

王太太**因为**不再爱她丈夫，**所以**决定跟他离婚。

*Wáng Tàitai yīnwèi bú zài ài tā zhàngfū, suǒyǐ juéding gēn tā lǐhūn.*

4d Learners often become confused about the Chinese word order when the event or situation in the main sentence is a **negative** sentence; for example, the following three English sentences have similar word orders, but their Chinese counterparts do not. The main concern is where to position the word **从来不** (*cónglái bù*: never) in Chinese.

- (i) Li Ming is **never** late for class **just because** he lives far away from campus. (cannot be 因为 . . . 所以. “Because he lives far away, he is never late” is not a logical sentence.)
- (ii) Zhang Peng is **never** late for class **because** he lives close to campus. (can be 因为 . . . 所以 . . .)
- (iii) Gao You is **never** on time **just because** he lives close to campus. (cannot be 因为 . . . 所以 . . .)

The respective Chinese sentences are

- (i) 李明**从来不**因为住得离学校很远**就**迟到。 *Lǐ Míng cónglái bù yīnwèi zhù de lí xuéxiào hěn yuǎn jiù chídào.*
- (ii) 张朋**因为**住得离学校很近**而****从来不**迟到。（= 张朋因为住得离学校很近，所以**从来不**迟到。） *Zhāng Péng yīnwèi zhù de lí xuéxiào hěn jìn ér cónglái bù chídào.*
- (iii) 高友**从来不**因为住得离学校很近**就**准时来上课。 *Gāo Yǒu cónglái bù yīnwèi zhù de lí xuéxiào hěn jìn jiù zhǔnshí lái shàngkè.*

A rule of thumb is to have the negative word **不** before **因为** if the sentence **cannot** be converted into one with 因为 . . . 所以 . . . e.g., the first and the third examples above. More examples follow.

Don't give up trying **just because** you feel it is too difficult.

**不要**因为觉得太难**就**放弃努力。

*Búyào yīnwèi juéde tài nán jiù fàngqì nǚlì.*

You should **not** look down on him **just because** he has no money.

**你**不应该**因为**他没钱**就**看不起他。

*Nǐ bù yīnggāi yīnwèi tā méi qián jiù kàn bù qǐ tā.*

We **cannot** criticize other people **just because** we disagree with their opinions.

**我们**不能**因为**跟别人意见不同**就**批评他们。

*Wǒmen bù néng yīnwèi gēn biérén yìjiàn bù tóng jiù pīpíng tāmen.*

Mr. Wang never speaks his true opinions because he is afraid of offending other people.

However, Mr. Li never refrains from (= **不**) speaking his true opinions just because he is afraid of offending other people.

王先生**因为**怕得罪人而**从来**不说真心话； (= 王先生因为怕得罪人， 所以从来不说真心话；)

而李先生**从来**不**因为**怕得罪人就不说真心话 (cannot be converted into 因为..所以..).

*Wáng xiānsheng yīnwèi pà dézuì rén ér cónglái bù shuō zhēnxīn huà; ér Lǐ xiānsheng cónglái bù yīnwèi pà dézuì rén jiù bù shuō zhēnxīn huà.*

(Scenario: Both boys live in a society where parents **tend to** pamper their only son, who gets to enjoy many pleasures in life. But the Wang family is well-off, whereas the Li family is poor.)

Wang Xiaoming **does not** have any vexations because he is an only son; however, Li Xiaozhong **does not** enjoy any pleasures in life because he is an only son.

(The 王小明 sentence can be converted into 因为 . . . 所以 . . . ; the 李小中 sentence cannot.)

王小明**因为**是独生子而**没有**任何烦恼； 李小中却**不因为**是独生子而**享受**到生活里的任何乐趣。

*Wáng Xiǎomíng yīnwèi shì dúshēngzǐ ér méiyǒu rènhé fánǎo; Lǐ Xiǎozhōng què bù yīnwèi shì dúshēngzǐ ér xiǎngshòu dào shēnghuó lǐ de rènhé lèqù.*

4e “Subject + **not** verb + **because** . . .” is an English pattern that may be ambiguous in meaning. Because of the possible ambiguity, its Chinese counterparts show sentences of



two different word orders. It is essential to take the context into consideration before constructing the Chinese sentences.

For example, the sentence “I did not marry him because he was from a wealthy family” has two interpretations depending on whether I have actually married him.

(i) I did not marry him (the reason being his family is wealthy): 我因为他的家庭很富裕而**没有**嫁给他。 (can be converted into 因为 . . . 所以 . . .) *Wǒ yīnwèi tāde jiāting hěn fùyù ér méiyǒu jià gěi tā.* = 因为他的家庭很富裕，所以我没有嫁给他。

(ii) I did marry him (not because his family was wealthy, but because I truly loved him): **我不是**因为他的家庭富裕而嫁给他， (cannot be converted into 因为 . . . 所以 . . .) **而是**因为我真心爱他。 *Wǒ bù shì yīnwèi tāde jiāting fùyù er jià gěi tā, ér shì yīnwèi wǒ zhēnxīn ài tā.*

是 in the second sentence above is necessary, because it implies “not because . . . but because. . . (the 不是 . . . 而是 . . . pattern; see 4f below). More examples follow. The ambiguity of the English sentence illustrates **the significance of context** in the use of the Chinese language.

I did not tell the truth because I wanted to hurt him.

(i) I wanted to hurt him, so I **lied**. 我因为想伤害他而**没有**说实话。 (can be converted into 因为 . . . 所以 . . .) *Wǒ yīnwèi xiǎng shānghài tā ér méiyǒu shuō shíhuà.*

(ii) I **told the truth** (because it's the right thing to do,) **not because** I wanted to hurt him. **我不是**因为想伤害他而**说了**实话。 *Wǒ bú shì yīnwèi xiǎng shānghài tā ér shuō le shíhuà.*

The following sentences in English have similar structures but different meanings. Their Chinese counterparts have different word orders and structures depending on the meanings.

I did not go to his wedding because I did not like him. (I did not go to his wedding.)

我因为不喜欢他而**没有去**参加他的婚礼。 (can be converted into 因为 . . . 所以 . . .)

*Wǒ yīnwèi bù xǐhuān tā ér méiyǒu qù cānjiā tāde hūnlǐ.*

I did not go to his wedding because I liked him. (I went to his wedding for a different reason than liking him.)

**我不是**因为喜欢他而**去**参加了他的婚礼。

Wǒ bú shì yīnwèi xǐhuān tā ér qù cānjiā le tāde hūnlǐ.

I did not skip his wedding because I did not like him. (I did not go to his wedding.)

我不是因为不喜欢他而没有去参加他的婚礼。

Wǒ bú shì yīnwèi bù xǐhuān tā ér méiyǒu qù cānjiā tāde hūnlǐ.

4f Note that in the three examples above, a verb is between “did not” and “because” (e.g., I did not **go** because. . .) There is another pattern that is the negative of 是因为 discussed earlier. (See 2d above.) This pattern corresponds to “**not because**” (without a verb between “not” and “because”) in English.

Because this pattern in Chinese is used when an event or situation is already **in context**, 是 is necessary; however, English speakers often omit 是 since its equivalent is not always present in English. The pattern is “event/situation in context + **不是因为** + reason.”

A: How come you did not eat the beef noodles I made? Did you worry it might be spicy?

B: I didn't eat it **not because** I worried it might be spicy, but because I am a vegetarian.

A : 我做的牛肉面，你怎么没有吃呢？你怕辣吗？（没有吃 is now in context.）  
Wǒ zuò de niúròu miàn, nǐ zěnméi méiyǒu chī ne? Nǐ pà là ma?

B : 我（没有吃）**不是因为**怕辣，（**而**）**是因为**我是吃素的。 Wǒ (méiyǒu chī) bú shì yīnwèi pà là, ér shì yīnwèi wǒ shì chī sù de.

Thus, several of the examples in 4e above can have the word orders rearranged and meanings expanded by providing the actual reason. Note that a **comma** can be used after the main sentence (that indicates the context).

I did **not** marry him **because** his family was wealthy.

= I married him **not because** his family was wealthy, (but because I truly loved him.)

我嫁给他不是因为他的家庭富裕，（而是因为我真心爱他）。

Wǒ jià gěi tā bú shì yīnwèi tāde jiā tíng fù yù, (ér shì yīnwèi wǒ zhēn xīn ài tā.)

I did **not** tell the truth **because** I wanted to hurt him.

= I told the truth **not because** I wanted to hurt him, (but because I no longer wanted to lie.)

我说了实话不是因为想伤害他，（而是因为我再说谎了）。

*Wǒ shuō le shíhuà bú shì yīnwèi xiǎng shānghài tā, (ér shì yīnwèi wǒ bù xiǎng zài shuōhuǎng le.)*

I did **not** go to his wedding **because** I liked him.

= I went to his wedding **not because** I liked him, (but because he was my boss.)

我去参加了他的婚礼， (note this comma) 不是因为我喜欢他， (而是因为他是我的老板。)

*Wǒ qù cānjiā le tāde hūnlǐ, bú shì yīnwèi wǒ xǐhuān tā, (ér shì yīnwèi tā shì wǒde lǎobǎn.)*

I did **not** skip his wedding **because** I did not like him.

I did not go to his wedding **not because** I did not like him, (but because I was sick that day.)

我没有去参加他的婚礼， (note this comma) 不是因为我不喜欢他， (而是因为我那天病了。)

*Wǒ méiyǒu qù cānjiā tāde hūnlǐ, bú shì yīnwèi wǒ bù xǐhuān tā, (ér shì yīnwèi wǒ nà tiān bìng le.)*

The above examples demonstrate the significant role contexts play in the Chinese communication.

## 2 Complex sentences

DOI: 10.4324/9781003024347-3

A complex sentence contains a main (a.k.a. independent) clause and a subordinate (a.k.a. dependent) clause. The relationship between the two clauses is manifested by a conjunction.

For example, “when I called her, she was eating dinner” is a complex sentence. “When I called her” is the subordinate clause, and “she was eating dinner” is the main clause. “When” is the conjunction. The main clause can appear before the subordinate clause; (“she was eating dinner when I called her.”)

Structurally, a complex sentence in Chinese has several differences from one in English. This section outlines these differences and discusses a unique type of Chinese complex sentences called “contracted sentences.”

1 The subordinate clause in Chinese should always appear before the main clause, while flexibility is allowed in English.

When I called her, she was eating dinner. = She was eating dinner when I called her. 我给她打电话的时候，她正在吃晚饭。

*Wǒ gěi tā dǎ diànhuà de shíhòu, tā zhèng zài chī wǎnfàn.*

(Do not say 她正在吃晚饭我给她打电话的时候。)

Students were chatting with one another before the teacher entered the classroom.

老师进教室以前，学生都在互相聊天。

*Lǎoshī jìn jiàoshì yǐqián, xuéshēng dōu zài hùxiāng liáotiān.*

2 In Chinese, a **conjunctive pair** (two words) connects the two clauses in most complex sentences. English speaking learners often leave out the second word in a conjunctive pair when constructing a complex sentence in Chinese because it is not used in English.

2a In the following two sentences, **所以** (*suǒyǐ*) and **可是** (*kěshì*) do not have counterparts in English; as such, leaving them out from the Chinese sentences is a quite common error made by English-speaking learners.

Because my fiancée does not like Li Ming, I did not invite him to my wedding.

**因为我**未婚妻不喜欢李明，**所以**我没有请他来参加我的婚礼。(因为 and 所以 is a conjunctive pair; 所以 is necessary.)

*Yīnwèi wǒ wèihūn qī bù xīhuān Lǐ Míng, suǒyǐ wǒ méiyǒu qǐng tā lái cānjiā wǒde hūnlǐ.*

Although today's weather is nice, I do not feel like going out.

**虽然**今天的天气不错，**可是** (or **但是**) 我不想出去。(可是/但是 is required.)

*Suīrán jīntiān de tiānqì bú cuò, kěshì (or dànshì) wǒ bù xiǎng chūqù.*

2b The second word in a conjunctive pair is typically an **adverb**; **所以** and **可是** are two notable exceptions because they are not adverbs. It must be kept in mind that an adverb should not be placed before the subject.

Although the Wang family is wealthy, Xiao Wang is very frugal.

虽然王家很有钱，**可是**小王**却**非常节省。(= 可是小王非常节省。= 小王却非常节省。)

*Suīrán Wáng jiā hěn yǒuqián, kěshì Xiǎo Wáng què fēicháng jiéshěng.*

(Do not say **却**小王非常节省 because **却** is an adverb; **可是** is a conjunction, and should appear before the subject 小王.)

(Scenario: My boyfriend asks me if I will go on a picnic with him tomorrow. I say:)

I will go with you if it does not rain tomorrow.

**要是**明天不下雨，**我就**跟你去。(要是...就... is the conjunctive pair.)

*Yàoshì míngtiān bù xià yǔ, wǒ jiù gēn nǐ qù.*

(Avoid these errors in the main sentence: (i) 我跟你去; (ii) 就我跟你去.)

2c When the adverb in a conjunctive pair (the second word in the pair) does not convey an obvious meaning in the sentence, learners are apt to omit it, resulting in an error. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that a conjunctive pair is used in most Chinese complex sentences.

No matter what I said, he would not change his mind.

**无论**我说什么，**他都不**肯改变主义。(无论...都... is the conjunctive pair. 都 is required.)

*Wúlùn wǒ shuō shénme, tā dōu bù kěn gǎibiàn zhǔyì.*

(Scenario: Anna's friend is trying to dissuade her from marrying Zhang Peng by saying that her parents would probably oppose to their marriage. But Anna is adamant; she says:)

Even if they oppose, I will marry Zhang Peng.

**就算**他们反对，**我也**要跟张朋结婚。

*Jiùsuàn tāmen fǎnduì, wǒ yě yào gēn Zhāng Péng jiéhūn.*

2d The subject in the subordinate clause can appear at the beginning of the sentence (before the conjunction). But this rule does not apply to the main clause. The subject in the main clause should appear after the conjunction (e.g., **可是**, **所以**).

Although Xiaozhong's performance in school has had huge improvement lately, his father still is not satisfied (not happy about his grades).

最近小中的**成绩虽然**有了很大的进步，**可是他爸爸**还是觉得不满意。(可是 is a conjunction; 还是 is an adverb.)

*Zuìjìn Xiǎozhōng de chéngjī suīrán yǒu le hěn dà de jìnbù, kěshì tā bàba háishi bù mǎnyì.*

If you don't listen to your mother, your father will not allow you to watch TV.

**你要是**不听妈妈的话，**那爸爸**就会不让你看电视。(那 and 就 both mean "then." 那是 a conjunction; 就 is an adverb.)

*Nǐ yàoshì bù tīng māma de huà, nà bàba jiù huì bú ràng nǐ kàn diànshì.*

However, **因为** . . . **所以** . . . might be an exception to this rule because the subject of the **因为** clause typically appears after **因为** when the **因为** clause and the **所以** clause have different subjects. (See the section on the use of "because" for more information about **因为**.)

Because Mrs. Wang has constantly felt depressed lately, her family are extremely worried about her.

**因为王太太**最近总是觉得很郁闷，**所以她的家人**都非常为她担心。

*Yīnwèi Wáng tàitai zuìjìn zǒngshì juéde hěn yùmèn, suǒyǐ tāde jiā rén dōu fēicháng wèi tā dānxīn.*

3 When the subordinate clause and the main clause refer to **the same subject**, there are at least four possible patterns (in terms of the use of the subject).

3a The subject should only appear once in Chinese. By contrast, each clause in a complex sentence in English has a subject.

Repeating the subject in a complex sentence in Chinese results in awkward (or even erroneous) Chinese sentences, particularly when the subject is a **pronoun**.

He worked at a bank for forty years before he retired.

他退休以前 ( , ) 在银行工作了四十年。

*Tā tuìxiū yǐqián, zài yínháng gōngzuò le sìshí nián.*

(Do not say 他退休以前, 他在银行工作了四十年.)

My mother often drinks a glass of milk before she goes to bed.

我妈妈上床睡觉以前 ( , ) 常常喝一杯牛奶。

*Wǒ māma shàng chuáng shuìjiào yǐqián, chángcháng hē yī bēi niúǎi.*

(我妈妈上床睡觉以前, 她常常喝一杯牛奶 sounds awkward and should be avoided.)

When the subject is a pronoun, it should be used only once, and it can appear in either the main clause or the subordinate clause.

Since (Given the fact that) you are not feeling well, you should not have come to work today.

既然你不舒服, 今天就不应该来上班。(既然...就... is the conjunctive pair.)

*Jìrán nǐ bù shūfú, jīntiān jiù bù yīnggāi lái shàngbān.*

= 既然不舒服, 今天你就不应该来上班。

3b The subject can be repeated if a pronoun is used after a **proper noun** (e.g., a person's name). The proper noun should be in the subordinate clause, and the pronoun, in the main clause. This is because, in Chinese, a pronoun cannot appear before the proper noun it (pronoun) replaces.

Wang Daming is always generous to his friends **even though** he does not have much money.

尽管王大明没有什么钱, **可是(他)** 对朋友总是很大方。

Jǐnguǎn Wáng Dàmíng meiyǒu shenme qián, kěshi (tā) duì pengyǒu zǒngshì hěn dàfāng. (It is incorrect to say 尽管他没有什么钱, 可是王大明对朋友总是很大方。)

Li Zhong has not received a pay raise in two years because he does not work hard enough.

因为李中工作不够努力, 所以**(他)** 已经两年没有加薪了。

*Yīnwèi Lǐ Zhōng gōngzuò bù gòu nǔlì, suǒyǐ (tā) yǐjīng liǎng nián méiyǒu jiāxīn le.*

3c The subject can appear before the conjunction in the subordinate clause. In this pattern, the main sentence usually does not have a subject.

Although Mr. Li is in his seventies, he has no plan to retire.

**李先生虽然已经七十多岁了，可是 Ø (or 却) 还没有退休的打算。**

*Lǐ xiānsheng suīrán yǐjīng qīshí duō suì le, kěshì (or què) hái méiyǒu tuìxiū de dǎsuàn.*

(can be **虽然李先生已经七十多岁了，可是他却没有退休的打算。**)

Although Mr. Zhang is only in his fifties, he has decided to retire early because he has health issues. (This sentence has two conjunctive pairs, **虽然...可是...** and **因为...所以...**)

**张先生虽然才五十多岁，可是(他)因为身体不好，所以决定提早退休。**

*Zhāng xiānsheng suīrán cái wǔshí duō suì, kěshì (tā) yīnwèi shēntǐ bù hǎo, suǒyǐ juéding tízǎo tuìxiū.*

3d When the second word in a conjunctive pair is **an adverb**, the subject should appear at the beginning of the sentence and should be used only once.

Anyone can succeed as long as he is willing to work hard.

**任何人只要肯努力就一定能成功。**

*Rèn hé rén zhǐyào kěn nǔlì jiù yīdìng néng chénggōng.*

(Do not say **只要任何人肯努力就一定能成功.**)

Li Zhong pays no attention to details no matter what he is doing.

**李中不管做什么事都不注意细节。**

*Lǐ Zhōng bùguǎn zuò shénme shì dōu bù zhùyì xìjié.*

(Do not say **不管李中做什么事都不注意细节.**)

In the following sentence, the subordinate clause and the main clause have **different subjects**; the subject of the subordinate clause **小李** can appear either before or after **不管**.

Li Daming's parents always have objections no matter what he wants to do.

**李大明不管想做什么，他爸妈都总是反对。**

(can be **不管李大明想做什么，他爸妈都总是反对.**)



Lǐ Dàmíng bùguǎn xiǎng zuò shénme, tā bànmā dōu zǒngshì fǎnduì.

4 In Chinese, a complex sentence can be (and often is) constructed in ways that it gives the appearance of being one or two simple sentences. Such a unique structure is called a “**contracted sentence**.” It is formed by **omitting the first word** in a conjunctive pair.

Furthermore, the comma that is used to separate the subordinate clause and the main clause is typically not used.

Because the first word in a conjunctive pair usually has a clear meaning that indicates the relationship between the subordinate clause and the main clause, the absence of it (as well as the comma) often causes a learner to be unable to accurately interpret the meaning of the sentence. When writing or speaking, learners also tend to avoid this pattern, which is actually preferred by the Chinese in daily speech due to its conciseness.

What follows is the patterns of some of the most commonly used contracted sentences. When interpreting or constructing a contracted sentence, learners must keep in mind that (i) the subordinate clause (even without the conjunction) is before the main clause, and that (ii) the same subject should not be repeated.

4a 以后 (yǐhòu: after) can be omitted when the perfective aspect particle 了 (implying the completion of an action) is used. Keep in mind that **了 as a perfective aspect particle immediately follows the verb**, not a noun. In other words, the perfective aspect particle 了 gives the clue that 以后 is implied.

The main clause often has an adverb such as 就 (implying “immediately”), 才 (implying a delayed action), etc. If neither 就 nor 才 is necessary, the main clause should have **another word before the verb**. Otherwise, the utterance may sound awkward at times.

(Scenario: Wang had a party at home a few days ago. Li asks him what he and his guests did.)

Wang: We chatted and listened to music after dinner (after we ate dinner).

王：吃了饭，我们聊天、听音乐。

Wáng: Chī le fàn, wǒmen liáotiān, tīng yīnyuè. (我们吃了饭，聊天、听音乐 sounds awkward because there is nothing before the verb 聊 in the main clause.)

Son: When are we going to eat (dinner)?

Mother: You go take a shower first. We will eat **right after** you have taken a shower.

Father: Go take the shower now. After we eat, I have to go back to the office to do some more work.

儿子：我们什么时候吃饭？

*Ērzi: Wōmen shénme shíhòu chī fàn?*

妈妈：你先去洗澡；你**洗了**澡我们就**吃**。(Do not say 洗澡了 because 澡 is a noun.)

*Māma: Nǐ xiān qù xǐzǎo; nǐ xǐ le zǎo wōmen jiù chī.*

爸爸：你快去洗。**吃了**饭我得回公司加班。(Do not say 吃饭了.)

*Bàba: Nǐ kuài qù xǐ. Chī le fàn wǒ děi huí gōngsī jiā bān.*

(Scenario: Anna is going to marry a Chinese man. They will move to China after getting married. She does not know how to speak Chinese.)

Anna plans to start learning Chinese **after** she has arrived in China.

安娜打算**到了**中国**才**开始学中文。(The subject should be used only once.)

*Ānnà dǎsuàn dào le Zhōngguó cái kāishǐ xué Zhōngwén.*

I only realized that I had forgotten to bring my cellphone today after I had got on the bus.

今天我**上了**公车**才**发现忘记带手机了。(Do not use 我 before 才发现.)

*Jīntiān wǒ shàng le gōngchē cái fāxiàn wàngjì dài shǒujī le.*

A perfective aspect particle 了 is not used when the verb is followed by a **complement of result**. In English, the conjunction is “when,” but it is 以后 in Chinese.

What do you want to be when you have grown up?

你长大**(以后)**要做什么？(长 is the verb; 大 is the complement.)

*Nǐ zhǎng dà (yǐhòu) yào zuò shénme?*

Son: Can I go out with my friends?

Mother: You can go only when your homework is done.

儿子：我可不可以跟朋友出去玩？

*Ērzi: Wǒ kě bù kěyǐ gēn péngyǒu chū qù wán?*

妈妈：功课写好才能去。(好 is the result of 写.)

*Māma: Gōngkè xiě hǎo cái néng qù.*

4b 以前 (yǐqián: before) can be omitted when the sentence implies that an event **already** took place **before** the occurrence of another event. The pattern is “**没有 + verb + 就 + verb.**”

She cried before she even opened her (to speak).

她**还没有**开口**就**哭了。

*Tā hái méiyǒu kāi kǒu jiù kū le.*

Mother: Xiaozhong, how come you (already) went to bed **before** you took a shower? Get up and go take a shower. You can only go to bed **after** you have taken a shower.

Xiaozhong: Who says I did not take a shower? I (already) took one before we ate dinner.

妈妈：小中，你怎么**没有**洗澡**就**上床睡觉了？起床去洗澡，**洗了澡**才可以睡觉。

*Māma: Xiǎozhōng, nǐ zěnméi méiyǒu xǐzǎo jiù shàng chuáng shuìjiào le? Qǐchuáng qù xǐ le zǎo cái kěyǐshuìjiào*

小中：谁说我没有洗澡？今天我**还没有**吃饭**就**洗了。

*Xiǎozhōng: Shéi/shuí shuō wǒ méiyǒu xǐzǎo? Jīntiān wǒ hái méiyǒu chīfàn jiù xǐ le.*

不到, instead of 没有, is used when there is no action (no verb) in the “before” phrase.

How come you are (already) home before it's 7:00?

今天你怎么**不到**七点**就**回家了？

*Jīntiān nǐ zěnméi bú dào qī diǎn jiù huí jiā le?*

This year it has (already) started to snow before November.

今年还**不到**十一月**就**开始下雪了。

*Jīnnián hái bú dào shíyī yuè jiù kāishǐ xià xuě le.*

4c 如果/要是 (núguǒ/yàoshi) . . . 就 . . . and 既然 (jìrán) . . . 就 . . . structures can appear without 如果/要是 or 既然, resulting in the appearance of one or two simple sentences. Learners who are not aware that such a structure is actually a complex sentence often cannot accurately interpret the meaning.

(Scenario: Wang asks Zhang if he plans to go to a company event next week.)

Zhang: I will go if I am not busy. How about you?

Wang: I feel that this type of event is most boring. So I won't go if I don't have to go.

Zhang: I don't know many people. If you don't go, nobody will talk to me.

Wang: Alright. I'll go if you go.

张：不忙**就去**。你呢？

*Zhāng: Bù máng jiù qù. Nǐ ne?*

王：我觉得这种活动最没有意思，所以我能不去**就不去**。

张：我认识的人不多，你不去**就没有人**跟我说话了。

*Wáng: Wǒ juéde zhè zhǒng huódòng zuì méiyǒu yìsi, suǒyǐ wǒ néng bú qù bú qù.*

*Zhāng: Wǒ rènshí de rén bù duō, nǐ bù qù jiù méiyǒu rén gēn wǒ shuō huà le.*

王：好吧！你去我**就去**。

*Wáng: Hǎ! ba! Nǐ qù wǒ jiù qù.*

(Scenario: At dinner, Xiaozhong eats very little; he says he has no appetite today.)

Mother: Don't eat **since (or if)** you have no appetite. Eat later **when** you are hungry.

妈妈：吃不下**就别**吃了；**饿了再吃**。(The subject 你 is omitted in both sentences because this is casual speech.)

*Māma: Chī bú xiá jiù bié chī le; è le zài chī*

It is possible for this pattern to not even have the adverb **就**, making it particularly difficult for learners to comprehend the meaning of the sentence. This pattern is used in very casual speech or a fixed expression, such as a proverb. Learners should approach such a structure from the perspective of a **complex sentence** and closely observe the **context** in order to accurately interpret the message.

There are only three days for this discount event. If you want to buy it, you have to hurry. 这个折扣活动只有三天，**要买要快哦**！（**哦** serves the function of reminding listeners of something in a very casual manner; it is not grammatically required.）

*Zhè ge zhékòu huódòng zhǐ yǒu sān tiān, yào mǎi yào kuài o!*

If the family is in harmony, everything (literally, ten thousand things) will prosper.

家和万事兴。

*Jiā hé wàn shì xīng.*

If there is no wind, there will be no waves; if there is no fire, there will be no smoke.

无风不起浪，无火不生烟。(Extended meaning: Every phenomenon has its cause.)

*Wú fēng bù qǐ làng; wú huǒ bù shēng yān.*

(Scenario: Anna cannot decide whether to order a certain dish from the menu because she is worried that it may not be good. Her dinner companion urges her to try.)

If you don't try it, you won't know. After (once) you've tried it, you will know.

不试不知道，试了就知道。

*Bú shì bù zhīdào, shì le jiù zhīdào.*

4d 就是/即使 (*jiùshì/jíshì*) . . . 也 . . . means “even if.” Because the surface meaning of 也 is “also” (without any specific context), learners often are unable to comprehend the contracted pattern (i.e., only 也 without 就是) of this structure or misinterpret it.

(Scenario: A daughter has told her mother she is not going to eat dinner because she wants to lose weight.)

Mother: Even if you want to lose weight, you have to eat something!

妈妈：减肥也得吃东西啊！（啊 serves the function of giving the utterance a matter-of-fact tone; it is not grammatically required.)

*Māma: Jiǎnféi yě děi chī dōngxi a!*

(Scenario: Wang tells Li that Zhang asked him for a loan, but he didn't have any money to loan him.)

Li: Don't loan him any money even if you had it. He is extremely unreliable.

Wang: He is my best friend. If I had had the money, I would definitely have loaned him some. It would be OK even if he does not return it to me.

李：你有钱也别借他，他非常不可靠。

*Lǐ: Nǐ yǒu qián yě bié jiè tā, tā fēicháng bù kěkào.*

王：他是我最好的朋友，我有钱就一定借他，他不还我也没关系。

*Wáng: Tā shì wǒ zuì hǎo de péngyǒu, wǒ yǒu qián jiù yīdìng huì jiè tā, tā bù huán wǒ yě méi guānxi.*

(Scenario: After a woman has shown off an expensive-looking new handbag to two of her friends, they are commenting on the bag behind her back.)

A: It must be very expensive. (Even) if it does not cost 10000, it would cost 5000.

B: Such an ugly bag! Even if it were 300, I would not buy it.

A: 一定很贵，不要一万也要五千。 *Yīdìng hěn guì, bú yào yī wàn yě yào wǔ qiān.*

B: 这么丑的包包！三百我也不买。 *Zhème chǒu de bāobāo, sān bǎi wǒ yě bù mǎi.*

4e 无论 (*wúlùn*: no matter) must be followed by a question (with an interrogative pronoun or an affirmative-negative question). When 无论 is omitted from the “无论 + question + 都 + verb” pattern, the presence of the question word can be baffling to learners. And the surface meaning of 都 (both; all) further confuses many.

In addition, when the main clause is negative, either 也 or 都 can be used.

Learners should be careful not to be distracted by the interrogative pronouns (or the affirmative-negative question) and misinterpret the utterance as a question.

(Scenario: A couple are looking to buy a new car. The husband sees one that he likes very much. But his wife does not think they can afford that car.)

Wife: Do you have any idea (do you know) how expensive this car is?

Husband: I will buy it no matter how expensive it is. (Compare: I will buy it even if it is expensive.)

妻子: 你知道这辆车多贵吗?

*Qīzi: Nǐ zhīdào zhè liàng chē duō guì ma?*

丈夫: 多贵我都要买。 (Compare: 贵我也要买。)

*Zhàngfū: Duō guì wǒ dōu yào mǎi.*

No matter how I implored him, he was not willing to help me.

我怎么求他，他也 (or 都) 不愿意帮助我。 (也 can be used because 不愿意 is negative.)

*Wǒ zěnmē qiú tā, tā yě (or dōu) bú yuànyì bāngzhù wǒ.*

A: Do you know where I can buy that bestselling book?

B: That book has long been sold out. You won't be able to get it anywhere (literally, no matter where you go).

A: 你知不知道哪里可以买到那本畅销书? *Nǐ zhī bù zhīdào nǎlǐ kěyǐ mǎi dào nà běn chàngxiāo shū? Nà běn shū zǎo jiù mài wán le, nǐ qù nǎlǐ yě (or dōu) mǎi bú dào le.*

B: 那本书早就卖完了, 你去哪里也 (or 都) 买不到了。

(Scenario: A company is going to send Mr. Wang overseas to work, but he does not want to go. Four managers, Li, Zhang, Gao and Chen, are discussing the situation.)

Each of the four statements represents a different pattern of the contracted sentence. 都, 也, 就, and 了 play the key roles in the accurate interpretation of these sentences.

Li: (No matter) whether he wants to go or not, he has to go.

Zhang: I agree. Even if he does not want to go, he has to go

Gao: Since he does not want to go, let's send someone else.

Chen: That place is so good. He probably won't want to come back once (when) he's there.

李: 他不想去都得去。(无论 is omitted.)

*Lǐ: Tā xiǎng bù xiǎng qù dōu děi qù.*

张: 我同意! 他不想去也得去。(即使/就算 is omitted.)

*Zhāng: Wǒ tóngyì! Tā bù xiǎng qù yě děi qù.*

高: 他不想去就派别人去吧! (既然 is omitted.)

*Gāo: Tā bù xiǎng qù jiù pài biérén qù ba!*

陈: 那个地方那么好, 他去了可能就不想回来了。(以后 is omitted.)

*Chén: Nà ge dìfāng nàme hǎo, tā qù le kěnéng jiù bù xiǎng huí lái le.*

### 3 Contrasts and contradictions

DOI: 10.4324/9781003024347-4

In communications and narratives, presenting contrasts or contradictions in Chinese requires both linguistic and contextual elements. The linguistic element refers to vocabulary words and language rules about using such words, whereas the contextual element refers to connotations that can only be interpreted based on the situation in which an utterance is made.

This section provides a list of commonly used words or phrases in Chinese that show contrasts or contradictions. The focus is on how to use these expressions correctly and properly, rather than a translation of them from English to Chinese.

1 "But" is the most common contrast conjunction; all learners are probably familiar with its Chinese counterpart 可是 (*késhì*) or 但是 (*dànshì*). In writing, 但是 is sometimes shortened into 但, whereas 可是 is shortened into 可 occasionally and strictly in the most casual speech. Other Chinese words such as 然而 (*rán'ér*) and 不过 (*búguò*), etc. have the same meaning. 然而 is perhaps the most formal among all these words.

虽然 (*suīrán*: although/though) and 但是/可是 are considered a conjunctive pair; once 虽然 is used, 但是/可是 is nearly always required. (See 2 below for variations.) On the other hand, 但是/可是 can be used without 虽然. It should be noted that English words such as yet, however, nevertheless, nonetheless, etc. can also be translated into 但是/可是.

Although Wang Dazhong is ill-tempered, he is (, nonetheless,) popular.

虽然王大中脾气很坏，可是他人缘很好。

*Suīrán Wáng Dàzhōng píqì hěn huài, kěshì tā rényuán hěn hǎo.*

Li Ming's learning ability is quite good, but his grades are bad because he is not hardworking.

李明学习能力很不错，但(是)成绩很差，因为他不努力。

*Lǐ Míng xuéxí nénglì hěn bú cuò, dàn(shì) chéngjī hěn chà, yīnwèi tā bù nǔlì.*

This essay is quite well-written, but there are too many incorrect characters, so the score is low.

(虽然)这篇文章写得不错，不过错字太多，所以分数不高。

*(Suīrán) zhè piān wénzhāng xiě de bú cuò, búguò cuò zì tài duō, suǒyǐ fēnshù bù gāo.*



All my classmates said that this test was too hard; (but contrary to what others might expect to be my opinion since I am in the same class,) I felt it was rather easy.

同学们都说这次考试非常难，我**倒**觉得挺容易的。

*Tóngxué men dōu shuō zhè cì kǎoshì fēicháng nán, wǒ dǎo juéde tǐng róngyì de.*

These headphones are inexpensive, but the sound quality is not bad, (contrary to what one might expect of such cheap headphones.)

这付耳机很便宜，可是音质**倒**不错。

*Zhè fù ěrjī hěn piányí, kěshì yīnzhī dǎo bú cuò.*

Although Mr. Wang is tremendously wealthy, his son Wang Xiaoming does not flaunt his wealth like other “wealthy second generation” does.

虽然王先生是一个大富翁，他的儿子王小明**倒**不像其他富二代那样挥霍浪费。

*Suīrán Wáng xiānsheng shì yī ge dà fùwēng, tāde érzi Wáng Xiǎomíng dǎo bú xiàng qítā fù èr dài nà yàng huīhuò làngfèi.*

(Connotation: Most people expect Wang Xiaoming to be an extravagant spender.)

4 而 is a conjunction. One of its main functions is to show **comparisons** or **contrasts** between two situations.

4a The word “**whereas**” can be considered its English counterpart.

Mr. Wang is almost 60 years old, whereas Mrs. Wang is only in her 30s.

王先生已经快六十岁了，**而**王太太才三十多岁。

*Wáng xiānsheng yǐjīng kuài liùshí suì le, ér Wáng tàitai cái sānshí duō suì.*

**却** can be used along with 而 to indicate a **contradiction** between two situations. 而 is a conjunction; 却 is an adverb.

Mr. Li has to have meat for every meal, whereas Mrs. Li is a vegetarian. (There is a contradiction.)

李先生每餐一定要吃肉，**而**李太太**却**是一个素食者。

*Lǐ xiānsheng měi cān yīdìng yào chī ròu, ér Lǐ tàitai què shì yī ge sùshí zhě.*

An optional adverb 则 (*zé*) can be used along with 而 if a contrast (but **not a contradiction**) exists between two situations.

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