

Unit 4

Hǔ sǐ liú pí, rén sǐ liú míng.
Tiger dies leaves skin, person dies leaves name!
Classical Chinese saying

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4.1 Tone contrasts

Practice the following tonal contrasts by reading the columns of paired words. Place a short pause between each member of the pairs so as to keep their tonal contours distinct.

a)	– versus /	b)	– versus \	c)	/ versus v
	cōng cóng cuō cuó		cū cù cūn cùn		chú chǔ chóu chǒu
	jiā jiá qiān qián		jiāng jiàng qī qì		jiáo jiǎo qíng qǐng
	tiān tián mō mó		tōng tòng niē niè		tú tǔ miáo miǎo
	xiā xiá shāo sháo		xiāng xiàng zāng zàng		shéng shěng zháo zhǎo

4.2 Existence and location

4.2.1 Places

fànguǎn<r> food-hall restaurant	tǐyùguǎn PE-hall gymnasium	túshūguǎn map-book-hall library	lǚguǎn travel-bldg hotel; hostel
shūdiàn book-shop bookstore	shāngdiàn trade-shop shop; store	fàndiàn food-shop hotel	xǐshǒujiān wash-hands-room lavatory
cèsuǒ lean-place toilet; WC	zhāodàisuǒ reception-place guest house	bàngōngshì do-work-room office	yínháng silver-comp. bank
dìtiě ground-iron underground train	huǒchēzhàn train-station train station	sùshè lodge-inn dormitory	cāntīng food-hall cafeteria

Notes

a) Several generic words for various kinds of buildings or rooms are to be found in last position in a number of these compounds: jiān; guǎn; suǒ; shì; diàn; etc. Because these forms only occur in compounds (at least in modern Mandarin), it is difficult to give them distinct meanings, so the [syllable] glosses provided above are only suggestive.

b) Cèsuǒ ('leaning-shed') is the standard word for 'toilet', and is often found on signs; xǐshǒujiān 'wash-hands-room' is the term commonly used in public buildings and hotels. (Cf. §4.2.4.)

c) In spoken language, fànguǎn<r> is often generic for restaurants, along with cānguǎn and càiguǎn (neither with the 'r' option). Dining halls or cafeterias at universities or businesses are often called cāntīng. However, other terms, including several that contain the word jiǔ 'wine', also appear in restaurant names. These include fānzhuāng 'food-place+of+business' (for large restaurants), jiǔjiā 'wine-house' and jiǔlóu 'wine-building' [the last two especially common in Hong Kong]. Words for hotel also vary. Lǚguǎn is generic for small, local hotels. Kèzhàn ('guest-shelter') is used for inns in picturesque regions such as Lijiang in northwest Yunnan. Large hotels of the sort deemed suitable for foreigners are often referred to as fàndiàn (which, as the name suggests, were originally known for their fancy restaurants). Chinese government offices, universities, and even businesses often have at their disposal zhāodàisuǒ 'hostels (reception-buildings)', with basic amenities, for official (non-paying) or other (paying) guests.

4.2.2 Locations

Earlier, in §2.7.3, you encountered a number of position words, like shàng 'on' and lǐ 'in', that could be attached to nouns to form location phrases to follow zài 'be at': zài fēijī shàng 'aboard the airplane', zài sùshè lǐ 'in the dormitory'.

When position words are used alone (directly after zài), with no reference noun, they have to appear in more substantial form, with suffixes miàn<r> ‘face; facet’, biān<r> ‘border; side’ or (more colloquially) tou (which, in its toned form, tóu, means ‘head’): zài fēijī shàng ‘on the airplane’, but zài shàngmian<r>, zài shàngbian<r>, or zài shàngtou, all ‘on top; above; on board’. The choice of the two-syllable position word is not ruled out by the presence of a reference noun. Rhythmic considerations play a role, with a single-syllable noun being more likely to attract a single-syllable position word; thus, jiā lǐ ‘in the house’ rather than jiā lǐtou, and shān shàng ‘on the hill’ rather than shān shàngtou. But that is a tendency rather than a hard and fast rule.

The repertoire of position words together with their possible suffixes is presented in the following table:

Position nouns

<i>combining form</i>	<i>rough meaning</i>	+ <i>mian</i> <r>	+ <i>tou</i>	+ <i>bian</i> <r>	<i>other</i>
shàng	on; above	shàngmian	shàngtou	shàngbianr	
xià	under; below	xiàmian	(xiàtou)	(xiàbianr)	dǐxia
qián	in front; before	qiánmian	qiántou	qiánbianr	
hòu	behind; after	hòumian	hòutou	hòubianr	
lǐ	in; inside	lǐmian	lǐtou	(lǐbianr)	nèi
wài	outside	wàimian	wàitou	wàibianr	
zuǒ	left			zuǒbianr	
yòu	right			yòubianr	
páng	next to; beside			pángbiānr	
dōng	east			dōngbianr	
nán	south			nánbianr	
xī	west			xībianr	
běi	north			běibianr	
	vicinity				fùjīn
	center; in the middle of				zhōngxīn

Notes

- Though dǐxia is more common than xiàmian and the other *xià*-combinations, this may be a product of the slight difference in meaning between xià ‘below’ or ‘lower’ and dǐxia ‘underneath’; thus, shān xià ‘at the foot of the mountains’ but chēzi dǐxia ‘underneath the car’.
- While lǐ and its compounds are used for ‘in; inside’, nèi (with no compound forms) usually has a more abstract sense of ‘within’: guónèi ‘within the country’ (versus guówài); shìnnèi ‘in town’ (versus shìwài).
- Biānr, untuned in most combinations, is fully toned in pángbiānr ‘next to; beside’.
- Zhōngxīn, literally ‘center (middle-heart)’, as in: shì zhōngxīn ‘in the middle of town’ or xuésheng zhōngxīn ‘student center’.

To begin with, you can focus on some combinations of noun and position noun that are particularly common. Here are some examples, along with some other phrases that can act as locations (after zài):

lóushàng bldg upper upstairs	lóuxià bldg-below downstairs	shānshàng mtn-on on the mtn	shísìhào lóu lǐ 14 number bldg in building #14	fùjìn attach-near in the vicinity
chénglǐ city-inside in town	chéngwài city-outside out of town	gébi separate-wall next door	shì zhōngxīn town-center city center	

4.2.3 Existence versus location

As noted in Unit 2, the verb yǒu indicates existence, as well as possession. Existential sentences (‘there is/are’) in Chinese have the order: *Location – yǒu – item*.

<i>location</i>	<i>yǒu</i>	<i>item</i>	
Zhèr ~ zhèlǐ	yǒu	diànhuà	ma?
<Zhèr ~ zhèlǐ>	méiyǒu	<diànhuà>	

Note that although zài is not usually present, the type of phrase that can constitute locations in this pattern are the same as those that typically follow zài, ie places (Běijīng), position words (qiántou, zuǒbianr) or combinations of noun and position words (jiā lǐ, shì zhōngxīn):

Shànghǎi yǒu dìtiě, kěshì Nánjīng méiyǒu.	There’s a metro in Shanghai, but not in Nanjing.
Zuǒbianr yǒu yí ge diànhuà.	There’s a phone on the left.
Huǒchēzhàn zài shì zhōngxīn ma? Fùjìn yǒu liǎng ge huǒchēzhàn: yí ge zài shì zhōngxīn, yí ge zài chéngwài.	Is the train station in the town center? There are 2 stations in the vicinity: one’s in town, one’s out of town.

In many cases, a question about existence will elicit a response *about location*. Location, as noted earlier, is conveyed by a pattern built around zài, with the thing to be located mentioned before the position noun: zài chéngwài ‘out of town’.

<i>item</i>	<i>zài</i>	<i>location</i>
Diànhuà	zài	nǎr?
<Diànhuà>	zài	lóushàng.

Usage

Zhèr yǒu xǐshǒujiān ma? Yǒu, xǐshǒujiān zài hòutou.	Is there a ‘lavatory’ here? Yes [there is]; the lavatory’s in the back.
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Qǐngwèn, yǒu méiyǒu cāntīng?
Yǒu, zài gébì.

Is there a cafeteria?
Yes, there is, [it]'s next door.

Wèi lǎoshī de bàngōngshì ne?
Zài lóushàng.

And [where's] Prof. Wei's office?
Upstairs.

Zhèr fùjìn yǒu fànguǎnr ma?
Yǒu, lí zhèr bù yuǎn.

Are there any restaurants around here?
There are, not far away.

Qǐngwèn, dìtiě zài nǎlǐ?
Dìtiě ne, dìtiě zài qiánmian –
bù yuǎn.

May I ask where the Metro is, please?
The Metro, the Metro's ahead – not far.



Qǐngwèn, dìtiě zài nǎlǐ? [JKW 2004]

Zhèr fùjìn yǒu cèsuǒ ma?
Lóuxià hǎoxiàng yǒu.

Is there a toilet around here?
Seems there's one downstairs.

Liúxuéshe sùshè zài nǎr?
Liúxuéshe sùshè zài Xuéshe
Zhōngxīn pángbiānr.

Where's the foreign student dorm?
The foreign student dorm is next to the
Student Center.

Shūdiàn zài nǎr?
Shūdiàn dōu zài chéng lǐ.

Where's the bookshop?
The bookshops are all in town.

Qǐngwèn, diànhuà zài nǎr?
Diànhuà ne, diànhuà zài nǎr,
zài zuǒbiānr.

May I ask where the phone is?
The phone's over there – on the
left.

Note

Liúxuéshēng, literally ‘remain-students’, are students studying abroad (‘overseas students’). At Chinese universities, they are frequently placed in a single dormitory or dormitory complex, often with better facilities.

4.2.4 Comfort stations

Traditionally, as expected from a society where the majority of people have been farmers and human waste has been an important fertilizer, Chinese have generally been less prone to create euphemisms about the waste products of the human body and the places where they are deposited. As noted above, the most common term nowadays for the latter is cèsuǒ. However, hotels and fancy restaurants are more prone to euphemisms such as xǐshǒujiān ‘lavatory (wash-hands-room)’ or guànxǐshì ‘bathroom’; and the urban middle classes, particularly in Taiwan and overseas communities might also use huàzhuāngjiān ‘powder room (make up-room)’ or wèishēngjiān ‘(hygiene-room)’. The latter is abbreviated in house listings, such as sānshì liǎngwèi or sānfáng liǎngwèi, both ‘3 rooms, 2 bathrooms’. Examples:

Qǐngwèn, cèsuǒ zài nǎr?
Zài hòubianr de yuànzi lǐ.

Where’s the toilet, please?
In the back yard.

Qǐngwèn, zhèr yǒu méiyǒu cèsuǒ?
Cèsuǒ ne, hǎoxiàng zài lóuxià.

Excuse me, is there a toilet [around] here?
A toilet...uhm, [I] believe it’s downstairs.

Qǐngwèn, zhèr yǒu xǐshǒujiān ma?
Xuésheng Zhōngxīn yǒu.

Excuse me, is there a lavatory here?
There’s one in the Student Center.

In the countryside, you are also likely to hear máofáng ‘outhouse (thatched-house)’. The actual item, the bowl – the commode – is mǎtǒng ‘horse-tub’ or gōngtǒng ‘public-tub’. The acts are sāniào ‘to piss (release urine)’, niàoniào ‘to urinate; piss’, or more euphemistically, xiǎobiàn, literally ‘small-convenience’, which can be a noun ‘urine’ as well as a verb ‘urinate; pee’. Its larger complement is, unsurprisingly, dàbiàn N ‘excrement’ or V ‘to defecate’. The less euphemistic version is lā shǐ ‘to shit (pull shit)’. While it is interesting to know the gritty details, as a novice, you should probably limit yourself to questions about location, of the kind illustrated above; if someone needs to know ‘what kind’, then xiǎobiàn and dàbiàn are appropriate: qù xiǎobiàn, qù dàbiàn.

4.2.5 Born, grow up and live

In examples seen so far, zài phrases have preceded their associated verbs: zài fēijī shàng chī le. However, such is not always the case. With verbs of shifting (such as fàng ‘put’), the zài-phrase appears after the verb (as a destination). And some verbs allow both pre- and post-verbal position of zài-phrases. This is true of the common verbs shēng ‘be born’, zhǎng ‘grow up’ and zhù ‘live; reside’. But because the pre-verbal position has grammatical consequences that will not be properly introduced until a later unit, here we will focus on the post-verbal position, that is quite appropriate for making some introductory biographical notes:

Tā shēng zài Běijīng, yě zhǎng
zài Běijīng, kěshì xiànzài zhù zài
Xī'ān.

She was born in Beijing and grew up in
Beijing, but now she lives in Xi'an.

Wǒ shēng zài Duōlúnduō, zhǎng
zài Niǔ Yuē, xiànzài zhù zài
Jiùjīnshān.

I was born in Toronto; I grew up in NY;
and now I live in SF.

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