4.7 Studying and working

4.7.1 Vocabulary

N zhuānyè a major [PRC]; a specialty; a discipline	N or V zhǔxiū a major; to major in [Tw]	V+O dúshū study; attend school	V+O niànshū read; study [Tw]	V xuéxí to study; to learn; emulate [PRC]	V xué study; learn; imitate
V+O shàngxué attend-school attend school; go to school	V+O kāixué begin-school start school	V gōngzuò a job; to work; have a job	V+O gànhuór do-livlihood to be doing s/t, to work [PRC]		_

In later units, you will discover that the difference between a two-syllable verb such as <u>xuéxí</u> or <u>gōngzuò</u> and a verb + object (V+O) such as <u>gànhuór</u> or <u>bìyè</u> is that the latter combination is much less stable. With V+O constructions, the O can be detached from the verb: <u>Gàn shénme huó ne</u>? 'What's [he] doing?'

4.7.2 Major; specialization

A major subject of study, or a specialization, is <u>zhuānyè</u> 'special-study' or, particularly in Taiwan, <u>zhuxiū</u> 'main-study'; the latter is also a verb, 'to specialize; to major'.

Nĭ de zhuānyè / zhŭxiū shi shénme?	What's your specialty/major?
Shi wùlĭ(xué).	Physics.
Shi yīnyuè(xué).	Music

4.7.3 To study

There are a number of verbs used for studying and learning, with differences in usage between the Mainland and Taiwan.

a) One set includes the verbs <u>xué</u> and <u>xuéxí</u> 'study; learn', the latter rarely used in Taiwan. <u>Xuéxí</u> is often used for the *activity* of studying (often expressed as <u>niànshū</u> in Taiwan).

Dàjiā dōu zài năr?	Where is everyone?
Dōu zài túshūguăn xuéxí ~ niànshū; míngtiān yŏu kǎoshì.	They're in the library studying; there's a test tomorrow.

But in many contexts, both the single and [except in Taiwan] the disyllabic form are both possible:

Xuésheng dōu yīnggāi xué<xí> Students should all study foreign

wàiyŭ, bú duì ma? languages, no?

Ng, dōu yīnggāi xué! Yes, they should!

However, <u>xué</u> is preferred in the following examples (both of which translate 'learn' rather than 'study'):

Zhōngwén hĕn nán xué ba. Chinese must be tough to learn. Yǒu diǎnr nán, kĕshì fēicháng yǒu yìsi. It is a bit, but it's fascinating!

Tā hěn cōngmíng, xué+de hěn kuài. She's quite bright -- [she] learns fast.

b) Xuéxí also means 'emulate', with the model, usually introduced by xiàng 'towards':

Xiàng Léi Fēng xuéxí! 'Learn from Lei Feng (Emulate Lei Feng)'. [Lei Feng is a well-known labor hero from the 1960s.]

c) When the question 'what are you studying' is not about what you *happen* to be studying at that moment, but rather what field of study you are committed to, then the question (and answer) is usually cast as a nominalization, ie 'you be one [de] who studies what'. (cf. Nǐ <shi> shǔ shénme de? in §4.6.3.)

Q Nǐ shì xué shénme de? What are you studying? A Wo shi xué wùlĭxué de. I'm studying physics.

4.7.4 Zài + verb 'action in progress'

Talking about being in school versus working often leads to comments that express ongoing action, such as: 'she's still in school' or 'he's working now'. So here we take a brief detour to consider how to express action in progress in Chinese.

It turns out that <u>zài</u> 'be at' not only occurs with noun objects to form location phrases (<u>zài bàngōngshì</u> 'in the office'; <u>zài wàitou</u> 'outside') and post-verbal phrases (<u>tā shēng zài Sūzhōu</u>), but it occurs in the adverb position, before a verb, to emphasize 'action in progress' – often in conjunction with a final <u>ne</u>, which suggests a level of immediacy and engagement.

Tā chī zǎofàn le ma? Has she eaten?

Hái méi ne, tā hái zài xǐzǎo ne. No, not yet; she's still showering.

Zhāng Héng zài năr? Where's Zhang Heng? Tā zài kànbào ne. He's reading the paper.

Duìbuqĭ, wŏ hái zài chīfàn ne. Sorry, I'm still eating. Nĭ <zài> chī shénme ne? What are you eating?

Zhōu Shuǎng qĭlai le ma? Is Zhou Shuang up?

Hái méi ne, tā hái zài shuìjiào ne. No, not yet, he's still sleeping.

Ongoing action need not always be explicitly marked with <u>zài</u>; sometimes the final ne suffices to suggest that the action is in progress:

Nǐ chī shénme ne? What are you eating?

Chī kǒuxiāngtáng ne. Chewing gum ('mouth-fragrant-

candy')

Nǐ kàn shénme ne? What are you reading? Kàn Shìjiè Bēi de xiāoxi ne! An article on the World Cup.

4.7.5 Studying; being in school

Studying in the sense of being in school (or college) is expressed by one of a set of words that includes the synonymous verb+object compounds, <u>dúshū</u> and <u>niànshū</u>, literally 'be studying (study books)'. The two overlap with <u>shàngxué</u>, also a verb+object, which has the sense of 'being in school; studying' as well as 'starting school' – at the beginning of the day. In the following interchange, all three V+Os are acceptable:

Jiă	Nĭ mèimei duō dà le?	How old is your sister?
Yĭ	Èrshíqī	27.
Jiă	Tā hái zài dúshū ma?	Is she still in school?
Yĭ	Duì, tā hái zài dúshū, shi dàxué de xuésheng, zài Qīnghuá Dàxué xué yīxué de.	Yes, she is, she's a university student, studying medicine at Tsinghua University.

However, in the following interchange, where the sense is 'go to school; begin school for the day', <u>shàngxué</u> is more likely:

Měitiān jǐ diǎn <qù> shàngxué? What time does [he] go to school? *Tā měitiān qī diǎn bàn qù shàngxué. He goes to school every day at 7:30.*

'To begin the term at a school (or university)' is <u>kāixué</u> (the <u>kāi</u> of <u>kāihuì</u> 'hold/attend a meeting' or <u>kāichē</u> 'drive [a vehicle]'):

Women jiŭyuè èr hào kāixué. We start classes on September 2nd. *Zhōngguó xuésheng yĕ shi jiŭ Chinese students start in September, too. vuèfen kāixué*.

O, Zhōngguó dàxué yĕ shi	Oh, Chinese universities also begin in
jiŭyuèfèn kāixué ma?	September?
Shì de.	That's right!

4.7.6 Work

Students graduate and get jobs. In which case, the interchange in the previous section might read:

	Jiă	Nĭ mèimei duō dà le?	How old is your sister?
	Yĭ	Èrshiqī	27.
	Jiă	Tā hái zài dúshū ma?	Is she still in school?
	Yĭ	Tā bìyè le, tā gōngzuò le.	She's graduated, she's working.
	Jiă	Shénme gōngzuò?	What sort of job?
	Yĭ	Tā shi gǎo diànnǎo de.	She does computing.
Note			
	gǎo	a verb with a broad range of meaning: 'do; make; manage; deal with; set up; pick up; etc.	

Other examples

Jiă	Tā zài shénme dìfang gōngzuò?	Where does he work?
Υĭ	Tā zài băoxiăn gōngsī gōngzuò.	He works in an insurance company
Jiă	Nĭ zhǎo shéi?	Who are you looking for?
Jia	INI ZHAO SHCI!	who are you looking for!
Υĭ	Zhăo xiăo Féng – Féng Xiăoquán.	Young Feng – Feng Xiaoquan.
Jiă	Tā zài gànhuó ne, zài cāngkù.	He's working, in the warehouse.
Υĭ	Zhème wăn, hái zài gànhuó ne?	So late [and] he's still at work?
Jiă	Ng, tā shìr ~ shìqing tài duō le!	Yup, he's got too much [to do].

4.7.7 College and department

Establishing a person's department $(\underline{x}\underline{i})$ or school or university $(\underline{d}\underline{a}\underline{x}\underline{u}\underline{e})$ makes use of the question word $\underline{n}\underline{e}\underline{i}$ $(\underline{n}\underline{a})$ and the general M $\underline{g}\underline{e}\underline{e}$: $\underline{n}\underline{e}\underline{i}$ $\underline{g}\underline{e}$ $\underline{x}\underline{i}\underline{e}$; $\underline{n}\underline{e}\underline{i}$ $\underline{g}\underline{e}$ \underline{g} \underline{g}

Nǐ shi zài něi ge dàxué?	Which university are you at?
Nǐ shi zài nĕi ge xì?	Which department are you in?

The other does not use <u>zài</u>, but rather, the nominalizing pattern but with <u>shi</u> and final <u>de</u>, along the lines of the earlier statements of a major: <u>wǒ shi xué wùlǐ de</u> 'I study physics.'

Nǐ shi nĕi ge dàxué de? Which is your university? Nǐ shi nĕi ge xì de? Which is your department?

So, for example:

Jiă. Qĭngwèn, nĭ shi nĕi ge dàxué de? Which university are you at?

Yǐ. Wǒ shi Běijīng Dàxué de. I'm at Peking University [sic].

Jiă. O, Běi Dà; nà nĭ shi xué Oh, Bei Da; so what are you

shénme de? studying?

Yǐ. Wǒ shi xué guǎnlǐxué de. I'm studying management.

Jiǎ Zài něi ge xì? In which department?

Yǐ Zài Jīngji xì. Economics.

Exercise 4.

Explain: that you are [years old];

that you're at [university / school]; that you're an [grad / undergrad];

that you're a [grade-level] student there;

that your major is [...];

that you're in the department of [...];

that you are taking [number] of subjects this semester; [list]

that you have [number] of classes today;

that you have classes today at [time] and [time]; that you have classes everyday except Wednesday.

that you were born and grew up in Chengdu, but now you live in Nanjing.