

STANDARD CHINESE: A MODULAR APPROACH

STUDENT TEXT AND WORKBOOK

MODULE 7: SOCIETY

Before starting Unit 1 of this module, you should have completed core modules 1 through 6 and the optional modules Personal Welfare, Restaurant, and Hotel.

May 1981

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Roberta S. Barry and Thomas E. Madden



## PREFACE

Standard Chinese: A Modular Approach originated in an interagency conference held at the Foreign Service Institute in August 1973 to address the need generally felt in the U.S. Government language training community for improving and updating Chinese materials to reflect current usage in Beijing and Taipei.

The conference resolved to develop materials which were flexible enough in form and content to meet the requirements of a wide range of government agencies and academic institutions.

A Project Board was established consisting of representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency Language Learning Center, the Defense Language Institute, the State Department's Foreign Service Institute, the Cryptologic School of the National Security Agency, and the U.S. Office of Education, later joined by the Canadian Forces Foreign Language School. The representatives have included Arthur T. McNeill, John Hopkins, and John Boag (CIA); Colonel John F. Elder III, Joseph C. Hutchinson, Ivy Gibian, and Major Bernard Muller-Thym (DLI); James R. Frith and John B. Ratliff III (FSI); Kazuo Shitama (NSA); Richard T. Thompson and Julia Petrov (OE); and Lieutenant Colonel George Kozoriz (CFFLS).

The Project Board set up the Chinese Core Curriculum Project in 1974 in space provided at the Foreign Service Institute. Each of the six U.S. and Canadian government agencies provided funds and other assistance.

Gerard P. Kok was appointed project coordinator, and a planning council was formed consisting of Mr. Kok, Frances Li of the Defense Language Institute, Patricia O'Connor of the University of Texas, Earl M. Rickerson of the Language Learning Center, and James Wrenn of Brown University. In the fall of 1977, Lucille A. Barale was appointed deputy project coordinator. David W. Dellinger of the Language Learning Center and Charles R. Sheehan of the Foreign Service Institute also served on the planning council and contributed material to the project. The planning council drew up the original overall design for the materials and met regularly to review their development.

Writers for the first half of the materials were John H.T. Harvey, Lucille A. Barale, and Roberta S. Barry, who worked in close cooperation with the planning council and with the Chinese staff of the Foreign Service Institute. Mr. Harvey developed the instructional formats of the comprehension and production self-study materials, and also designed the communication-based classroom activities and wrote the teacher's guides. Lucille A. Barale and Roberta S. Barry wrote the tape scripts and the student text. By 1978 Thomas E. Madden and Susan C. Pola had joined the staff. Led by Ms. Barale, they have worked as a team to produce the materials subsequent to Module 6.

All Chinese language material was prepared or selected by Chuan O. Chao, Ying-chi Chen, Hsiao-jung Chi, Eva Diao, Jan Hu, Tsung-mi Li, and Yunhui C. Yang, assisted for part of the time by Chieh-fang Ou Lee, Ying-ming Chen, and Joseph Yu Hsu Wang. Anna Affholder, Mei-li Chen, and Henry Khuo helped in the preparation of a preliminary corpus of dialogues.

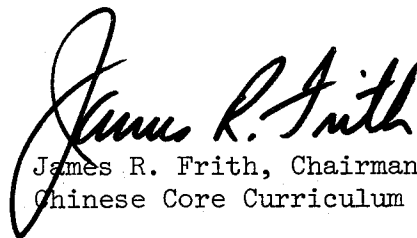
Administrative assistance was provided at various times by Vincent Basciano, Lisa A. Bowden, Jill W. Ellis, Donna Fong, Renee T.C. Liang, Thomas E. Madden, Susan C. Pola, and Kathleen Strype.

The production of tape recordings was directed by Jose M. Ramirez of the Foreign Service Institute Recording Studio. The Chinese script was voiced by Ms. Chao, Ms. Chen, Mr. Chen, Ms. Diao, Ms. Hu, Mr. Khuo, Mr. Li, and Ms. Yang. The English script was read by Ms. Barale, Ms. Barry, Mr. Basciano, Ms. Ellis, Ms. Pola, and Ms. Strype.

The graphics were produced by John McClelland of the Foreign Service Institute Audio-Visual Staff, under the general supervision of Joseph A. Sadote, Chief of Audio-Visual.

Standard Chinese: A Modular Approach was field-tested with the cooperation of Brown University; the Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center; the Foreign Service Institute; the Language Learning Center; the United States Air Force Academy; the University of Illinois; and the University of Virginia.

Colonel Samuel L. Stapleton and Colonel Thomas G. Foster, Commandants of the Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center, authorized the DLIFLC support necessary for preparation of this edition of the course materials.



James R. Frith, Chairman  
Chinese Core Curriculum Project Board

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## INTRODUCTION

### SECTION 1: TO THE STUDENT

With the Society module, you are taking a step up to a new level of expression in Chinese. Up till now, you have been dealing with relatively short sentences about concrete situations. In this module, you will start to encounter longer sentences and more abstract statements. The transition will take some time, but you can make it easier on yourself by developing methodical ways of approaching the new material in each unit. The following suggestions may help.

Keep in mind from here on in that the two skills you will continue to work on, production and comprehension, are no longer expected to stay at approximately the same level. It is natural for your ability to understand what others say to increase more rapidly than your ability to express your own thoughts. As you work through the Society module, bear in mind that, while you are asked to understand all the dialogues, you are required to be able to produce only a limited part of the language you will hear. This is specified in the module objectives, the unit vocabulary lists, and the introductions to the units.

#### How to Use the Book

Each unit of this book presents quite a bit of new information--much more than anyone can master in a few days' time. This is because information has also been included simply for comparison or for your future reference. This is what you should master in each unit:

- (1) The new grammar listed in the introduction for each unit.
- (2) The basic meanings of each vocabulary item. (Related meanings may be given in the reference notes for purposes of comparison, but you are not required to remember them.)
- (3) The cultural background information discussed in some reference notes and contained in each unit's review dialogue.

You may find it helpful to read through the reference notes three times. On the first time through, read only the notes on cultural background. The second time, go through the notes that explain new grammatical structures. The third time, read only the notes on the meanings and usage of new words. For review, test yourself on the example sentences in the notes by covering the Chinese column and trying to translate the English column into Chinese. Check your answer immediately.

### How to Use the Tapes

Starting with Module 7, there will be only two thirty-minute tapes per unit, instead of five.

Tape 1 introduces the material on the Reference List, giving you a chance to learn to understand these sentences and to practice saying them. Tape 1 replaces both the C-1 and P-1 tapes which you used in Modules 1 through 6.

You will find that the Tape 1 is denser in content and faster paced than either the C-1 or P-1 tapes. The number of new vocabulary items in each unit has been increased from 20-25 to 30-35. You will also notice that the sentences have increased in length. Since you must learn to understand as well as say these sentences from a single tape, you may find that you need to rewind the tape and review the presentation of each sentence several times. In addition, explanations which were formerly found on the C-1 and P-1 tapes are now found only in the Reference Notes.

Tape 2 replaces the C-2 and P-2 tapes. Each Tape 2 will start off with a review of the sentences from the Reference List. This will be followed by three exercise dialogues. You should listen to each dialogue until you understand it thoroughly. The workbook which accompanies Tape 2 describes the setting of the conversation and provides you with the new vocabulary you need to understand it. (You are not required to learn these additional vocabulary items.) The workbook also contains questions about each dialogue, for which you will need to prepare answers in Chinese. Your teacher will ask you to answer these and other questions about the conversation in class.

When you listen to the recorded dialogues, aim only for comprehension of the ideas. Whether or not you can repeat the sentences word for word is not critical. Since they are in colloquial style, the dialogues sometimes contain phrasing which you are not expected to be able to imitate at this stage, yet with a little effort (it is expected to take repeated listenings), you will understand.

## SECTION 2: TO THE TEACHER

The format of the core modules from this point on differs considerably from those preceding, and teaching methods should be adapted to the requirements of this new format. Below are a few suggestions on how to use this and subsequent core modules.

How to Use the Reference Notes

The reference notes in Society include grammatical explanations, discussions of the usage of new words, and some cultural background information. They are called "reference" notes for a reason: they are here for the student's present and future reference. They are not intended as material for classroom study or discussion, for in these later modules, as in the first six, the bulk of classroom time should be spent in the actual use of Chinese. The thoroughness of the notes is intended to relieve you of the need to give lectures on grammar and usage and allow you to devote most of your time with students to live practice of the language. You should familiarize yourself with the content of the notes so that when students pose questions on word usage or a new structure, you can simply refer them to the relevant note.

The copiousness of example sentences in the notes has a double purpose. First, along with the idiomatic English translations, they show the versatility of the vocabulary items they introduce; at this level of study, a single English translation can seldom fully do justice to the range of nuances expressed by a Chinese word. Second, students can use the example sentences at home for translation practice, either Chinese-English or English-Chinese, using a strip of paper to cover the target-language column and then checking their answer for immediate reinforcement.

How to Use the Exercise Dialogues

The three exercise dialogues in each unit (exercises 2, 3, and 4) present completely different situations and characters from the unit review dialogue, but include the same new vocabulary and structures. They provide extra listening comprehension practice at normal conversational speed, an area which should receive increased attention from both student and teacher beginning with this module.

The language of many of the exercise dialogues is very colloquial and thus a change from the style of the preceding modules. At this stage, students must accustom themselves to hearing everyday Chinese, and if given ample practice, their comprehension will improve quickly. But bear in mind that students are not expected to be able to produce sentences in this colloquial style, only to understand them.

The taped exercises 2, 3, and 4, are to be listened to outside of class as many times as is necessary for the student to answer the questions in the workbook section. In class, the teacher should ask the questions, rephrased in Chinese, and have students answer from their notes or, preferably, from

memory. If students bring up questions on colloquialisms contained in the dialogues at this time, handle them quickly; avoid digressions on expressions which are not required for production. The point of this activity is for the students to talk--to practice saying the new words and structures of the unit.

### Further Classroom Activities

(1) Use the subjects discussed in the dialogues as points of departure for class discussions in which the teacher takes the part of the Chinese who wants to understand American society and the American students try to explain their ways of thinking and doing things. Depending on class size, the level of the students, and individual students' competitiveness or reticence, these conversations will need to be more or less structured. If necessary in order to maintain the flow of ideas or to keep a small number of students from dominating the discussion, everyone can be asked to outline possible answers before coming to class, or the teacher may prepare an outline for the students.

(2) Students can be asked to tell the story of the review dialogue or an exercise dialogue in their own words. This can be done by the whole class together; if one student omits an important point in the story, another student can remind him of it or supply it himself.

(3) Have students pick out from the reference list and the dialogues certain sentences which serve a particular communicative function. The Chinese material in this book is especially suited to this type of exercise because of the colloquial tone of the dialogues and the range of emotions and linguistic functions displayed within them. For example, the students may be asked to find a sentence that conveys enthusiasm toward an idea, one that conveys tentativeness when asking a question about a delicate subject, or one that conveys a desire to be helpful. Using the sentences thus found as take-off points, the teacher can then ask the students to come up with other sentences with the same linguistic function, or ask them to change elements of the sentence to vary its function.

For example, Unit 1 of Society presents some sentences (in the reference list and dialogues) that can be used as responses to proposals:

Wǒ kǎolǚ kǎolǚ.	I'll think it over. (non-committal)
Fēicháng hǎo.	Great. (enthusiastic)
Nà wǒmen shuōhǎo le . . .	Then we've agreed . . . (decisive)
Jiù zhèiyang.	It's settled. (decisive)

Students can be asked to add to this list sentences expressing a wider range of responses to a proposal, e.g., flat rejection (Bù xíng!), scandalization (Nà zěnmē kēyī a!), lukewarm acceptance (Kěyǐ . . . or Yě hǎo), indecisiveness (M . . . or Nà, wǒ hái děi xiǎngyixiǎng or Zài shuō ba), etc. If you make up supplementary exercises, you may find it effective to base them on the communicative functions of sentences contained in each unit. A list of these functions will be found in each unit's introduction.

(4) If the teacher and students find that the new grammar needs to be separately discussed in class, such sessions should be confined to a review of the essential new structures, as listed in each unit's introduction.

Review

The two review tapes consist simply of exercises requiring the students to translate the reference list sentences for Units 1 to 4 and 5 to 8, respectively. The original order of the sentences in the text has been scrambled. The first section of each tape is translation from Chinese to English, the second from English to Chinese.

Because material introduced in this module is frequently repeated in subsequent lessons, regular review will not be as important as in the earlier modules, where the situational nature of the lessons means that some vocabulary introduced in order to handle one kind of situation occurs in that one module only. However, if desired, one of each unit's exercise dialogues can be reserved for review: have students listen to only two instead of all three exercise dialogues while doing the unit, and then return to the third dialogue several units later to brush up on the vocabulary and structures.

## TAPES FOR MODULE 7 (SOC)

Unit 1: SOC 1.1, SOC 1.2  
 Unit 2: SOC 2.1, SOC 2.2  
 Unit 3: SOC 3.1, SOC 3.2  
 Unit 4: SOC 4.1, SOC 4.2  
 Unit 5: SOC 5.1, SOC 5.2  
 Unit 6: SOC 6.1, SOC 6.2  
 Unit 7: SOC 7.1, SOC 7.2  
 Unit 8: SOC 8.1, SOC 8.2

Review Tapes: SOC Review 1-4, Tape 1 (Chinese to English)  
 SOC Review 1-4, Tape 2 (English to Chinese)  
 SOC Review 5-8, Tape 1 (Chinese to English)  
 SOC Review 5-8, Tape 2 (English to Chinese)

MODULE 7: SOCIETY

The Society Module (SOC) will provide you with the linguistic skills and cultural background information you need to visit a Chinese family, discuss some aspects of family life and society, to find out how someone's family fits into the pattern of traditional Chinese society, and how it reflects the changes of modern society.

Before starting this module, you must take and pass the MTG Criterion Test. In addition, it is assumed that by this point you will have already completed the optional modules Personal Welfare, Restaurant, and Hotel; vocabulary from these modules is now considered taught.

The SOC Criterion Test will focus largely on this module, but material from the first six core modules and associated resource modules is also included.

OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this module, you should be able to

1. Give the English equivalent for any Chinese sentence in the SOC Reference Lists.
2. Say any Chinese sentence in the SOC Reference Lists when cued with its English equivalent.
3. Ask someone about the size of his family, which family members live at home, and where other family members live and why.
4. Use the rules of Chinese etiquette in social visits: the proper times for visiting; the custom of offering refreshments to visitors and the type of response expected from the visitor; and some polite ways to end a social visit.
5. Discuss the status, duties, and responsibilities of sons in the traditional Chinese family.
6. Discuss the different relationships within the Chinese family, especially those between parents and children, and between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.
7. Explain why the large (extended) family was the ideal pattern in traditional Chinese society.

SOC, Objectives

8. Use the proper terms for referring to your own or someone else's children, and understand the terms for addressing one's children directly; use the terms for paternal grandparents; use the terms for the parents of one's friend.
9. Understand why early marriage was a common practice in traditional China.
10. Discuss the effects of the development of industry and business on traditional Chinese society.
11. Discuss the concept of filial obedience.
12. Compare the position of women in Chinese society before and after the founding of the People's Republic of China.
13. Discuss traditional marriage arrangements in China and the roles women were placed in as a result. Understand the government's policy toward marriage after 1949 and the actual changes that have occurred.
14. Explain and defend some of your personal views on topics such as equality of the sexes, the status of women, living together, marriage, parent-child relationships, care of the elderly, the effects of political and economic conditions on society, crime, and drug abuse.

UNIT 1

Travel Plans

INTRODUCTION

Grammar Topics Covered in This Unit

1. The pattern (Verb) de shi....
2. Phrases with guānyú, "concerning," "about."
3. The directional ending -lái.
4. The auxiliary verb huì, "might," "be likely to," "will."
5. The sentence marker -de, "that's the way the situation is."

Functional Language Contained in This Unit

1. Offering a visitor something to drink.
2. Responding to an offer of something to drink.
3. Concluding a social visit.
4. Telling someone you can't take the time to explain something but will talk about it later.
5. Presenting a suggestion or proposal to do something.
6. Responding to a suggestion or proposal to do something.



Unit 1, Reference List

1. A: Jīntiān wǒ jièdao yìběn  
hǎo xiǎoshuō. Today I borrowed a good  
novel (from someone).
- B: Shénme xiǎoshuō, ràng ni  
zènme gāoxìng? What novel is it that  
makes you so happy?
2. A: Zhèiběn xiǎoshuō xiěde shì  
dàlùde qíngkuàng. This novel is about the  
situation on the mainland.
- B: Guānyú dàlùde? Jiè gěi wǒ  
kànkàn xíng bu xíng? About the mainland? How about  
lending it to me to read?
3. A: Xiàge xuéqī nǐ xiǎng  
yánjiū shénme? What are you going to do  
research on next semester?
- B: Hái shì lǎo wèntí: Zhōng-  
guóde zhèngzhì qíngkuàng. It's still the same old topic: the  
political situation in China.
4. A: Zuótiān Xiǎo Míng gěi tā  
nǚpéngyou xiě xìn, xiěde  
hǎo cháng! Yesterday Xiǎo Míng wrote a  
letter to his girl friend,  
and it was really long!
- B: Niánqīng rén zǒng shì niánqīng  
rén. Wǒ niánqīngde shíhou  
yě shì zhèiyang, nǐ wàng le? Young people are always young people.  
When I was young I was like that  
too, have you forgotten?
5. A: Shǔjiàde shíhou, nǐ xiǎng  
dào nǎr qu wǎnrwanr? Where do you want to go  
over summer vacation?
- B: Wǒ xiǎng dào Yàzhōu  
jǐge guójiā qu kànkàn. I'd like to go visit a few  
countries in Asia.
6. A: Zěnme, nǐ xiǎng yánjiū  
Yàzhōude wénhuà chuántǒng? Oh? Do you want to do research  
on Asia's cultural tradition?
- B: Bù néng shuō yánjiū. Wǒ  
zhǐ shì xiǎng qù kànkàn  
nàlǐde shèhuì qíngkuàng. It can't be called research. I  
just want to go have a look at  
the social situation there.
7. A: Lǎo Wáng, wǒ jīntiān gǎnjué  
hěn bu shūfu. Lǎo Wáng, I feel awful today.
- B: Kuài zuòxia, wǒ qù gěi ni  
dào bēi chá lai. Sit down and I'll go pour you  
a cup of tea.

8. A: Nǐ qùde nèige dìfang zhèngzhi, jīngjī fāngmiànde qíngxíng zěnmeyàng?  
B: Jǐjù huà shuōbugīngchū, yǒu shíjiān wǒ zài gēn nǐ mànmanr shuō ba.
- What was the political and economic situation like where you went?  
I can't explain it clearly in just a few sentences; when I have time I'll tell you all about it.
9. A: Yánjiū Zhōngguó xiànzài de wèntí yídìng dēi dōngde Zhōngguó lìshǐ.  
B: Nǐ shuōde zhèiyidiǎn hěn yào jǐn, wǒ kǎolǔ kǎolǔ.
- To study the problems of China now, you have to understand Chinese history.  
This point of yours is very important; I'll think it over.
10. A: Nǐ zài Zhōngguó zhù liǎngnián, yídìng huì xué hǎo Zhōngwénde.  
B: Shì a, yìfāngmiàn kényi xué hǎo Zhōngwén, yìfāngmiàn yě kényi duō zhīdao yidiǎnr Zhōngguóde shìqíng.
- If you live in China for two years, you're sure to learn Chinese very well.  
Yes, on the one hand I can learn Chinese well, and on the other hand I can find out more things about China.

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED VOCABULARY

11. yìbiān(r)...yìbiān(r)      doing...while doing...
12. yímiàn...yímiàn...      doing...while doing...

## VOCABULARY

cháng chuántǒng	to be long tradition, traditional
dàlù dào -diǎn dǒngde	mainland, continent to pour point to understand, to grasp, to know
-fāngmiàn (-fāngmian)	aspect, side, area, respect
gǎnjué	feeling, sensation; to feel, to perceive
guānyú	as to, with regard to, concerning, about
guójiā	country, state, nation; national
huì	might, be likely to, will
jiè jièdao -jù	to borrow; to lend to successfully borrow sentence; (counter for sentences or utterances, often followed by <u>huà</u> , "speech")
kǎolǚ	to consider, to think about
mànmǎnr (mànmàn)	slowly; gradually, by and by; taking one's time; in all details
niánqīng	to be young
qíngkuàng	situation, circumstances, condition, state of affairs
qíngxing	situation, circumstances, condition, state of affairs
ràng	to make (someone a certain way)
shèhuì shǔjià shuōbuqīngchu	society, social summer vacation can't explain clearly
wénhuà	culture
xiǎoshuō (-)xuéqī	fiction, novel semester, term (of school)
yánjiū (yánjiu, yánjiù)	to study (in detail), to do research on; research
Yàzhōu (Yǎzhōu)	Asia

yìbiān(r)...yìbiān(r)...  
yìfāngmiàn..., yìfāngmiàn...

doing...while doing...  
on the one hand..., on the other hand;  
for one thing..., for another...;  
doing...while doing...  
doing...while doing...

yímiàn(r)...yímiàn(r)...

zhèngzhì  
zǒng

politics, political affairs; political  
always; inevitably, without exception,  
after all, in any case

zuòxià

to sit down

Unit 1, Reference Notes

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. A: Jīntiān wǒ jièdao yìběn hǎo xiǎoshuō. | Today I borrowed a good novel (from someone). |
| B: Shénme xiǎoshuō, ràng nǐ zènme gāoxìng?  | What novel is it that makes you so happy?     |

Notes on No. 1

jiè: "to borrow" [Also "to lend," see Notes on No. 2.]

Wǒ dào túshūguǎn qù jiè shū.	I'm going to the library to borrow [take out] some books.
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For "from," use gēn or xiàng<sup>o</sup> for people and cóng for place names like the library.

Wǒ méi dài qián, xiǎng gēn (xiàng) Níngníng qù jiè.	I didn't bring any money. I want to go borrow some from Níngníng.
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Wǒ cóng túshūguǎn jièle yìběn Zhōngguó lìshǐ shū.	I borrowed a Chinese history book from the library.
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Cóng can only be followed by a person if the person is made into a place name, for example by the addition of nèr (nàli):

Wǒ cóng tā nèr jièle wǔkuài qián.	I borrowed five dollars from him.
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For people, you may also use the common pattern wèn...jiè..., literally "ask...borrow...":

Wǒ wèn ta jièle yìběn shū.	I borrowed a book from him.
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Wǒ bù hǎo yìsi wèn biérén jiè qián.	I'm too embarrassed to borrow money from other people.
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jièdao: The ending -dào expresses that the borrowing results in the thing being obtained. You learned -dào and the similar Běijīng -zhào in the verb jièdao/jiēzhao, "to receive," in the Meeting module.

You need to know not only what the ending -dào means, but also when to use it and when not to. This can't be summed up in one neat formula, but you will see from the following examples that -dào is used when there was a question of not being able to get the thing. Jiè by itself does not necessarily imply obtaining, so you can use it in situations when you tried to borrow something but couldn't get it.

Wǒ gēn tā jièle yìběn zìdiǎn.	I borrowed a dictionary from him.
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<sup>o</sup>Xiàng is used more in written style.

Wǒ qù jièguo, kěshi méi jièdào.

I went and tried to borrow it, but I didn't get it.

A: Nǐ cóng túshūguǎn jièdao nèiběn Měiguó lìshǐ shū le ma?

Did you get that American history book out of the library?

B: Méiyǒu, dōu jièchugu le. Dàgài xià Xīngqīyī cái néng jièdào.

No, they had all been taken out. I probably won't be able to (borrow and) get it until next Monday.

Jiè may have certain other directional or resultative endings. Here are examples.

Zài zhèr kàn kēyì, bù néng jièchugu.

You can read it here, but you can't take it out.

Tā bǎ wǒde chē jièqu le.

He borrowed my car (and took it away).

Tā bǎ nèiběn shū jièzǒu le.

He borrowed that book (and took it away).

Wǒ cóng tā nèr jièlai wǔkuài qián.

I borrowed five dollars from him.

ràng: "to make" someone a certain way, or "to cause" someone to become a certain way. When used this way, ràng is followed by a person and an adjectival verb. You learned ràng as "to let" in the Welfare module: Ràng wǒ kànkan nǐde hùzhào, "Let me see your passport." [Ràng can also mean "to have," "to tell," or "to make" someone do something.]

Tā shuōde huà ràng wǒ hěn shēng-qì.

What he said made me very angry.

Tā nàme bú kèqì ràng tā péngyou hěn bù hǎo yìsi.

He embarrassed his friend by being so rude.

Shénme xiǎoshuō?--ràng ni zhème gāoxìng: There is a pause after the question shénme xiǎoshuō, and the rest of the sentence, ràng ni zhème gāoxìng, is like an afterthought. Compare these examples:

Zhèi shì shénme kāfēi?--zhème hǎo hē.

What kind of coffee is this? It's so good.

Zhèi jiù shì nǐ mǎide chē?--zènme nánkàn!

So this is the car you bought? It's so ugly!

Nǐ xǐhuan shùxué a?--nàme méi yìsi!

You like math?--such a boring thing!

2. A: Zhèiběn xiǎoshuō xiěde shì dàlùde qíngkuàng. This novel is about the situation on the mainland.
- B: Guānyú dàlùde? Jiè gěi wǒ kànkan xíng bu xíng? About the mainland? How about lending it to me to read?

Notes on No. 2

xiě: This verb which you learned as "to write" is also one of several ways that "about" is expressed in Chinese. When used with this meaning, xiě usually appears in the (Verb) de shi construction discussed immediately below.

xiěde shi: This structure, (Verb) de shi, is a major structure of Chinese, so pay extra attention! Use (Verb) de shi when the verb is not new information and you want to focus instead on the identity of the thing talked about. The pattern itself makes an equational sentence, that is, an A EQUALS B sentence:

A	IS	B
VERB de	shi	B
Tā zuòde	shi	báicài.

"What he's making is cabbage."

In sentence 2A, the verb xiě is not new information because any novel must "be written about" something. The object dàlùde qíngkuàng is new information which is focused on.

- A: Nǐ zài Jiāzhōu Dàxué niànde shì shénme? What is it that you study at the University of California?
- B: Wǒ niànde shì jīngjìxué. It's economics.
- Zhèige diànyǐng jiǎngde shì yige Zhōngguó rén qù Měiguó wánde shì. This film is about a Chinese going to America to visit.
- Gāngcái nǐ jiàode shì shénme? Shi fàn háishi miàn? What did you order just now? Rice or noodles?
- Nǐ xiànzài shuōde shì wǒ háishi tā? Is the person you're talking about now me or him?
- Tā hěn xǐhuan kàn shū, kěshi tā kànde dōu shì yìxiē méi yìside xiǎoshuō. He likes to read, but all he reads are stupid novels.

dàlù: "continent, mainland" Zhōngguó dàlù is "mainland China," which may also be called dàlù for short just as we say "the mainland".

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Other ways are by using the verb jiǎng, "to talk about," as in Zhèiběn shū jiǎng shénme?, "What is this book about?"; and guānyú (see the note in this section).

qíngkuàng: "situation, circumstances, state of affairs, condition" Used much more frequently in Chinese than any single one of these translations is used in English. Sometimes the Chinese language uses qíngkuàng when in English we would just say "things" or "the way things are."

Nǐde qíngkuàng gēn tāde chàbuduō. You and he are in about the same situation.

Wǒ dìdìde jīngjī qíngkuàng bú tài hǎo. My younger brother's financial situation isn't too good.

Nà shì sìshínián qiánde shì, xiànzài qíngkuàng bù tóng le. That was forty years ago. Now things are different.

A: Nǐ néng bu néng gěi wǒ jiǎng-jiang nǐ zài dàlùde qíngkuàng? Could you tell me about the way things were for you on the mainland?  
B: Nǐde yìsi shì wǒ zìjǐde qíngkuàng ma? Do you mean my own situation?

Sometimes qíngkuàng means the "picture" about a place (especially an organization); in such cases it may not be necessary to translate it literally.

Tā gěi wǒmen jièshaole tāmen xuéxiàode qíngkuàng. He gave us a presentation (briefing) on their school. (E.g., what grades, how many students and teachers, what subjects are taught, etc.)

Wǒ bú tài shúxī Měidàsīde qíngkuàng. I'm not too familiar with (the way things are at) the Department of American and Oceanic Affairs.

guānyú: "with regard to, concerning" The phrase guānyú dàlùde means literally "one concerning the mainland." Guānyú is rather formal. In everyday speech, the idea of "about" is more often expressed in other ways<sup>7</sup>, but guānyú is often used in formal contexts.

Guānyú is a prepositional verb, which means it is followed by a noun (its object) and is related to the main verb. It is not the best behaved of prepositional verbs, however. Guānyú does not occur where you would normally expect to find a prepositional verb phrase (before the verb, e.g., dào Zhōngguo qù). Nor does guānyú occur in a sentence the way "about" does in English. "About" phrases in English are free to occur after the verb, e.g., "talk about Chinese history," "think about your problem." A guānyú phrase (that is, guānyú and its object) can only occur in the following places in the sentence:

<sup>7</sup>Other ways include using the verbs jiǎng and xiě (see Notes on No. 2). For example, if I am watching a T.V. program and you walk into the room and want to ask, "What's this about?" the most "everyday" way would be Jiǎng shénme de? (actually an abbreviated form of Zhèige jiémù [program] shì jiǎng shénme de?). It would sound stilted to use guānyú in such an informal situation. You see another example of how "about" is expressed in Chinese on the next page under number (3) in the little dialogue: "About what?" is Shénme diànyǐng?



