Chinese Aspectual Particle *le*

A Comprehensive Guide

汉语动态助词“了”：一了百了

Chungeng Zhu

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Foreword

The biggest challenge of Chinese grammar for students and instructors of Mandarin is arguably how to cope with the protean particle *le* (了). Is it one morpheme or more than one morpheme? What are its origins? What are its functions? Does it indicate tense? Aspect? Mode? Something else? Does it only have one pronunciation? It is clear that, right from the outset, the learner of Mandarin is confronted with a host of imponderables, and the teacher is stymied by how to present this superficially monolithic particle to his or her students in the most efficient way while not needlessly confusing them with extraneous ideas and superfluous information.

Many great (and some not so great) linguists have tackled *le*, both as a linguistic topic and as a pedagogical subject. Countless dissertations, theses, and articles have been published on *le*, but they almost always focus on one facet of this enigmatic particle or on a closely related group of features concerning it. One of the most distinctive qualities of *Chinese Aspectual Particle le: A Comprehensive Guide* is its unswerving determination to achieve complete comprehensiveness in covering the quintessential particle *le*, as is signaled by the subtitle.

The author, Chungeng Zhu, has had long experience in the classroom, so he is familiar with the types of problems and difficulties that English-speaking students face when striving to master the complexities of Mandarin grammar. With that in mind, he coauthored *A Chinese Grammar for English Speakers*, which has been very successful in helping learners come to grips with the grammatical system as a whole. Having finished that task, he then conceived of an entire book devoted to *le* as the linchpin for advanced studies of Chinese grammar.

In the course of this extensive volume, the author leaves few *le* stones unturned. He basically breaks *le* down into le_1 and le_2, the former signifying perfective aspect and the latter change of state. The first part of the book concentrates on the former and the second part on the latter. A separate chapter demonstrates how le_1 and le_2 complement each other. The final chapter deals

with the lexicalization of *le*, which shows how modern lexemes have been formed on the foundation of *le*.

One of the most outstanding characteristics of *Chinese Aspectual Particle le: A Comprehensive Guide* is the author's method for presenting all example sentences. He gives first the sentence(s) in Chinese characters, then the transcription in Hanyu Pinyin (the official romanization of the People's Republic of China), followed by the English translation. The illustrative sentences are apt, and the English translations are accurate and made with an eye to conveying the grammatical issues at play. What pleases me most of all, however, and what is missing from many textbooks and guidebooks for the study of Sinitic languages, including Mandarin, is the inclusion of the Hanyu Pinyin transcription.

The author takes Hanyu Pinyin very seriously, and I commend him for that. He has relied on the official "Basic Rules for Hanyu Pinyin Orthography" (Hànyǔ Pīnyīn zhèngcífǎ jīběn guīzé 汉语拼音正词法基本规则) promulgated by the Commission for Pinyin Orthography of the State Language Commission of the PRC. These rules are readily available in the back of all bilingual Chinese dictionaries in the ABC Series published by the University of Hawai'i Press. The author has repeatedly checked the transcriptions of the Chinese sentences to ensure the greatest possible accuracy.

I cannot emphasize too strongly how important it is to have reliable Hanyu Pinyin transcriptions for all proper nouns, titles, illustrative sentences, and cited texts in Chinese characters. In the first place, there is no guesswork or ambiguity about how to pronounce the Chinese characters, and students do not have to waste time looking up the readings of characters, some of which can be highly refractory.

In addition to the ten chapters of the book that present the diverse roles of *le* in modern Mandarin grammar, there is a straightforward Preface that provides a lucid exposition of the practical aims of the volume and an illuminating Introduction that offers insightful comparative remarks regarding English and other Indo-European languages vis-à-vis Sinitic languages (the author is cognizant of this theme throughout the book), a succinct overview of aspect in Chinese, and a sketch of the development of *le* throughout history, tracing the grammatization of *le* to the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 CE) and demonstrating how it evolved from a verb into an aspectual particle, with precise quotations from relevant texts along the way. The Introduction concludes with a conceptual approach that puts le_1 and le_2 in the context of their use in Mandarin.

The layout of the book is designed to make it easy for the reader to detect the fine nuances of the various applications of *le*, with shaded headings and colored type for salient items. Aside from the Hanyu Pinyin romanizations that I have highlighted above, another unusual distinguishing feature of this

volume is that the hundreds of example sentences are interesting in their own right. They are not, as is often the case with many language textbooks, dreary and dull and boring. Rather, they offer the prospect for learning a considerable amount of valuable knowledge about the intersection of Western and Eastern culture. In other words, with his example sentences, the author is not merely concerned with conveying some grammatical point, but he also takes delight in presenting to his readers materials that are edifying and stimulating.

The Bibliography at the end of the volume affords evidence of the substantial scholarly resources upon which the author has drawn in the development of this impressive volume.

Everyone involved in the study and teaching of Mandarin can be grateful to Chungeng Zhu for having written *Chinese Aspectual Particle le: A Comprehensive Guide*. On the surface, it may seem as though he was only writing an esoteric, virtuoso tome on a two-stroke character (了). As one is drawn through its captivating pages, however, one soon realizes that what he has achieved is nothing less than the ample explication of one of the thorniest conundrums in Chinese linguistics—how to understand *le*.

Victor H. Mair
University of Pennsylvania

Preface

Chinese has no verb conjugation; it relies on aspectual particles to express how an action or state relates to the flow of time. This use of aspectual particles is perhaps the single most significant difference between Chinese and Indo-European languages. Of the Chinese aspectual particles, 了 is the one most frequently used; it is notoriously elusive for non-native speakers to grasp. This book presents a systematic analysis and detailed illustrations of the usages of 了. It attempts to assist non-native speakers, particularly English speakers, in overcoming this major obstacle to learning Chinese.

了 occupies a special place in modern Chinese. 了 is easy to write, consisting of just two strokes, but its seeming simplicity is deceptive. 了, as an aspectual particle, is derived from the verb 了, which means *to end* or *to complete*. Grammarians today still differ on whether there is one 了 capable of multiple functions, or two, three, or more 了. The elusiveness of 了 lies in its erratic usages. 了, placed after the verb, signifies a completed action; but various factors, such as its relation to the verb, its interaction with certain elements of a sentence, its use in discourse, or sheer idiomatic usages, can determine when it is obligatory, incompatible, or optional. One may draw general rules about its usages, but there are exceptions, and it is not always easy to explain why it can or cannot be used in certain situations. In addition, 了 is used at the end of a sentence to indicate a change of state, and thus it concomitantly functions as a modal particle and may convey various moods or attitudes of the speaker toward what is being said. It is hard to tease out its ways of expressing different moods or feelings because so much depends on the context in which it is used. In short, it is challenging to get to the bottom of 了, so much so that some grammarians compare 了 to Goldbach's conjecture, one of the oldest and best-known unsolved problems in number theory.

This book, instead of being a theoretical study, is a pragmatic guide to the usage of 了 for those studying Chinese as a second language. Complex and intangible as it may be, 了 does not affect native speakers of Chinese who intuitively know how to use it. But the Chinese way of using aspectual

grammatical aspects is unfamiliar territory to English speakers, who are accustomed to using inflections to express actions in relation to time and state. They may easily take the post-verb 了 as an indicator of the past tense and view the sentence-final 了 as a marker equivalent to the present perfect in English. 了 is admittedly often rendered into the past tense or the present perfect tense, but it does not perform in the same manner, nor does it express exactly the same meaning as its English counterparts—not to mention a whole host of issues surrounding its usages that have no parallel in English and are only pertinent to Chinese. Thus, while presenting a systematic analysis and detailed illustrations of the usages of 了, this book takes into full account the challenges English speakers encounter in learning Chinese. It draws ample comparisons between Chinese and English so the reader can see the usage of 了 in perspective. It features a wealth of illustrative sentences that demonstrate the use of 了 in various situations and contains a wide range of vocabulary and abundant cultural information. It aims to develop both a thorough understanding and an intuitive grasp of the usage of 了.

This book is primarily intended for English-speaking college students who have reached the advanced level or above in their study of Chinese as a second language (college seniors or graduate students who major in Chinese). It can serve as a main text or a supplemental text for a course in advanced Chinese grammar or as a reference book for an upper-level Chinese course. It tries to meet students' needs and avoids jargon; all illustrations are accompanied by Pinyin and translations. This book also aims to be useful to instructors of Chinese. It is pedagogically handy when teaching and answering students' many questions about the usage of 了, and some individual chapters may be selected as reading assignments. Finally, scholars and specialists may also take an interest in this book, which offers some new interpretations about the usage of 了, particularly about how "了$_2$" is used as both an aspectual particle and a modal particle, and about its use in discourse. The author is grateful to all those who use this book and hopes they will find it helpful.

Chungeng Zhu
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Introduction

This book is devoted to one word: 了. Of all the words in modern Chinese, 了 is arguably the most indispensable in Chinese as a system of language. Chinese verbs are not conjugated; they rely on aspectual particles to describe the state of action. Among aspectual particles, 了 has the critical role of signifying the occurrence and the completion of actions and a change of state, which, in importance, is like the past tense and the present perfect tense in English. As background information for our discussion of 了, let us first define some grammatical terms and have a brief overview of the transformation of 了 and its basic functions in modern Chinese.

English tense and aspect

Tense and aspect are often mentioned together, but they are two different concepts. The word *tense* comes from the Latin word *tempus* meaning *time*. It refers to the absolute location of an action or event in time, which, in English, is expressed by the inflection of verbs, also known as conjugation. English has two tenses: the present and the past.

Lily likes Chinese literature.
丽丽喜欢中国文学。
Lìli xǐhuan Zhōngguó wénxué.

Lily liked drawing in high school.
在高中的时候，丽丽喜欢绘画。
Zài gāozhōng de shíhou, Lìli xǐhuan huìhuà.

These two sentences, through verb inflection, express what Lily likes at the present, and what she used to like in the past. Verb inflection is sufficient to indicate the time of action. English, strictly speaking, has two tenses; it has no future tense. Future time is rendered by means of modal auxiliaries or semi-auxiliaries, or by simple present or progressive forms.

The word *aspect* comes from the Latin word *aspectus*, meaning *seeing*, *looking*, and *appearance*. Aspect refers to how an action or event is viewed with respect to the flow of time rather than to its actual location in time. It describes the structure of an action or an event, either completed or in progress. English has two primary aspects: the perfective and the progressive. Aspect is expressed by the combination of an auxiliary and a verb.

Lily has read many of Shakespeare's plays.
丽丽读了很多莎士比亚的剧作。
Lìli dúle hěn duō Shāshìbǐyà de jùzuò.

Lily is now reading *A Winter's Tale*.
丽丽在读《一个冬天的故事》。
Lìli zài dú 《Yí Ge Dōngtiān de Gùshi》.

In the first sentence, *has* is an auxiliary and *read* is the verb; the sentence denotes that the action has been completed recently or at the time of speaking. In the second sentence, *is* is an auxiliary and *reading* is the verb; the sentence shows the duration of an action. In English, tense can be expressed by the inflection of verbs alone, but aspect always includes tense.

Chinese aspects

The traditional Chinese approach to language is lexical, focusing on the study of words instead of grammar. Aspect is a new area of study in Chinese. The first Chinese grammar, in the modern sense of the word, was Ma Jianzhong's *Mashi Wentong* 《马氏文通》, published in 1889. In this work, Ma attempted to give a systematic account of classical Chinese grammar based on the Latin model. One distinctive characteristic of Chinese, Ma noted, is that it relies on 助词 (auxiliary words) to indicate the temporal composition of actions, while Greek and Latin are inflectional.

Since the publication of Ma's book, Chinese grammarians have tried to draw a grammar of modern Chinese through reference to Western languages. It is generally agreed that Chinese has no tense but has aspects; certain words, known as aspectual particles or aspectual markers, can express the state of an action. But grammarians differ on what should be counted or included as aspects in Chinese. Wang Li, a preeminent scholar, identified seven aspects, which he called 情貌. Lü Shuxiang, another leading scholar, singled out more than a dozen aspects, which he called 动相. Li and Thompson recognized four aspects in Chinese. No consensus about Chinese aspects has been reached.

As Chinese is rapidly becoming a global language, an account of Chinese aspects is needed. The Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) lists five aspects in

Chinese: the perfective, the transformative, the experiential, the durative, and the progressive. This book endorses this classification; here is an illustration of each of them.

他读了一个小时的《诗经》。

Tā dúle yí ge xiǎoshí de《Shījīng》.

He read *The Book of Songs* for an hour.

他读完《诗经》了。

Tā dúwán《Shījīng》le.

He has finished reading *The Book of Songs*.

他读过《诗经》。

Tā dúguo《Shījīng》.

He has read *The Book of Songs*.

他一边读着《诗经》, 一边听音乐。

Tā yìbiān dúzhe《Shījīng》, yìbiān tīng yīnyuè.

He is reading *The Book of Songs* while listening to music.

他在读《诗经》。

Tā zài dú《Shījīng》.

He is reading *The Book of Songs*.

These five aspects are respectively expressed by the aspectual particles 了, 过, 着, and 在. (Two of these five aspects are conveyed by 了.) Some of these aspects do not have counterparts in English; others can be translated into certain English tenses though they are not the same. One critical difference that sets Chinese aspects apart from English tenses is that Chinese aspects do not locate the action in time.

Grammatization of 了

Grammatization refers to the process by which a content word becomes a function word. For example, in Old English, *willan* is a content word that means *to want*, but in Modern English it becomes the auxiliary word *will*. In Chinese, grammatization is called 虚化, which literally means that something has lost the real physical matter of which it consists. Nouns and verbs stand for objects and actions, and they are counted solid words (实词). Prepositions and conjunctions represent the relation between things or link two things, and they are called empty words (虚词). Many Chinese prepositions are derived from verbs; some of them, such as 给 and 跟, still function as both verbs and prepositions.

了 epitomizes grammatization in Chinese. In the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 CE), 了 began to be used as a verb, meaning *to end*, *to complete*, *to settle*, such as 终了 (to end) and 了结 (to settle). Here are three examples of 了 used as a verb—from *Book of the Later Han* (《后汉书》), *Jinshu Fu Xuan Zhuan* (《晋书·傅玄传》), and the Tang poet Li Yu.

人远则难绥，事总则难了。

Rén yuǎn zé nán suí, shì zǒng zé nán liǎo.

It is difficult to pacify the people afar and to solve a whole host of issues.

生子痴，了官事，官事未易了也。

Shēng zǐ chī, liǎo guānshì, guānshì wèi yì liǎo yě.

If you have a child with disabilities, you are free from government service, but you cannot easily avoid it.

春花秋月何时了？往事知多少！

Chūnhuā-qiūyuè hé shí liǎo? Wǎngshì zhī duōshǎo!

When will spring flowers and the autumn moon end? So many memories!

"难了" means *difficult to solve*; 了 is a verb that means *to end*. "了官事" means *to end* or to *exempt from* doing government service; "未易了" means that which cannot be easily changed. The third example, a famous line, means that the time of spring flowers and the autumn moon is beautiful, but it is transitory. The poet, who was to die by order of the emperor, lamented the destruction of his country.

During the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), 了 began to be used as a complement. In the *Collection of Dunhuang Bianwenjí* (《敦煌变文集》), 了 was often employed after the main verb (verb + le) or after the object (verb + object + le) to indicate a completed action or event.

一人死了，何时再生？

Yì rén sǐ le, hé shí zàishēng?

After a person is dead, when will he be reborn?

夫人闻了，犹自悲伤。

Fūrén wén le, yóuzì bēishāng.

Upon hearing it, the lady still feels sad.

子胥解梦了，见吴王嗔之，遂从殿上褰衣而下。

Zǐxū jiě mèng liǎo, jiàn Wúwáng chēn zhī, suí cóng diàn shang qiān yī ér xià.

Zixu interpreted the dream, which, he noticed, angered the King of Wu; then Zixu lifted his robe as he walked away from the palace.

目连剔除须发了，将身便即入深山。

Mùlián tīchú xūfā liǎo, jiāng shēn biàn jí rù shēnshān.

Mulian shaved his beard and hair, and then left for the deep mountain.

In these sentences, 了 does not serve as the main verb but indicates that the action expressed by the verb has occurred or is completed, which is similar to how 了 is used as an aspectual particle. But one cannot say definitively that 了, at that point, was already an aspectual particle, because within "verb + le" construction, 了 can be a verb serving as a complement.

Towards the end of the Tang dynasty, 了 began to appear in "verb + le + object" form, which is the form of the perfective aspect today. In the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), 了 was very commonly used in "verb + le + object" construction, which means 了 had completed its change from a verb to an aspectual marker.

林花谢了春红，太匆匆。

Lín huā xièle chūn hóng, tài cōngcōng.

Flowers in the woods have shed their rosy spring color, in too much of a rush.

如此春来春又去，白了人头。

Rúcǐ chūn lái chūn yòu qù, báiliǎo réntóu.

Each spring thus comes and goes; my hair turns white.

是年华山崩倒，压了八十里人家。

Shì nián Huá Shān bēngdǎo, yāle bāshí lǐ rénjiā.

This year the landslide of Mount Hua buried the houses within eighty *li*.

"林花谢了春红," a line from Li Yu, is one of the few cases of "verb + le + object" form that can be found in the Tang dynasty. The other two examples are from the Song poet Ouyang Xiu, and from *Quotations of Beijian* (《北涧语录》). In these examples, 了 is an aspectual particle modifying the preceding verb or adjective. During the Southern Song dynasty, 了 was also used (verb + le + object + le) as a construction to denote a change of state, which is how the transformative aspect is formed today.

While 了 has gained a new identity as an aspectual particle, it has been continually used as a verb. In Chinese, aspectual particles, like many prepositions, are derived from verbs and can still function as verbs. Here is an example of 了 used as a verb from *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (《红楼梦》) published in 1791.

可知世上万般，好便是了，了便是好。若不了，便不好；若要好，须是了。

Kě zhī shìshàng wànbān, hǎo biàn shì liǎo, liǎo biàn shì hǎo; ruò bù liǎo, biàn bù hǎo, ruò yào hǎo, xū shì liǎo.

You should know that, for all things in this world, the good is the end, and the end is the good. If it does not end, it is not the good; if it is the good, it must end.

This statement is the Daoist's elaboration of *The Song of the Good and the End* (《好了歌》). 好 refers to the state of transcendence or enlightenment; 了 is a verb that means *to end*: one has to give up or be free from all worldly pursuits or desires, such as fame or wealth, before one can be truly enlightened.

Today 了 is primarily used as an aspectual particle; it is used as a full verb in some limited situations, typically about settling something.

这个案子已经了了。

Zhège ànzi yǐjīng liǎo le.

This case has already been settled.

In this sentence, the first 了 (pronounced liǎo) is a full verb; the second 了 (pronounced le) is an aspectual particle. You may also find the use of 了 as a verb in some proverbs or fixed expressions, such as 一了百了 (one ends, all end), 没完没了 (endless), 一走了之 (end something by walking away), and 敷衍了事 (do something in a perfunctory manner).

Modern identity of 了

了 is ubiquitous in Chinese today and is used in various ways, which raises the question of whether there is just one 了 with multifunctions or several 了 that each exist as a separate entity. In grammatical functions, we may generally categorize 了 into "了$_1$" and "了$_2$," which respectively form the perfective and the transformative aspects in Chinese.

(1) "了$_1$"

"了$_1$" forms the perfective aspect that denotes the occurrence or the completion of an action. For convenience's sake, we may simply say that "了$_1$" indicates a completed action. "了$_1$" is positioned between the verb (or some adjectives) and its object, so it is known as verbal-了 (词尾了).

哥伦布发现了美洲大陆。

Gēlúnbù fāxiànle Měizhōu dàlù.

Columbus discovered America.

五月花号到达了新英格兰。

Wǔyuèhuāhào dàodále Xīnyīnggélán.

The *Mayflower* arrived in New England.

杰斐逊起草了《独立宣言》。

Jiéfěixùn qǐcǎole《Dúlì Xuānyán》.

Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence.

《自我之歌》代表了一种美国精神。

《Zìwǒ zhī Gē》dàibiǎole yì zhǒng Měiguó jīngshén.

The Song of Myself represents the American spirit.

In the first three sentences, "了₁" indicates completed actions. In the fourth sentence, "了₁" denotes that the action has occurred. "了₁" does not show the internal structure of an action, nor does it locate the action in time, which differs from English tenses. "了₁" cannot occur with verbs that denote state rather than action.

"了₁" as an aspectual marker can also serve as a complement. In Chinese, verbs often take another verb or adjective as a complement, indicating the direction or the result of an action. The verb 掉, which literally means *to fall* or *drop*, often serves as a complement of certain verbs that express the idea of *being disposed of* or *getting rid of*. "了₁" can replace 掉 as a complement when occurring with those verbs.

曹操若想统一天下，必要灭了东吴。

Cáo Cāo ruò xiǎng tǒngyī tiānxià, bìyào mièle Dōngwú.

If Cao Cao wants to unify the country, he must destroy the Kingdom of Wu.

在鸿门宴上，项羽没杀了刘帮，结果放虎归山。

Zài Hóngményàn shang, Xiàng Yǔ méi shāle Liú Bāng, jiéguǒ fànghǔ-guīshān.

At the Hongmen Banquet, Xiang Yu did not kill Liu Bang, and thus he set a tiger free to return to the mountains.

In these two sentences, "了₁" is used as a complement that means 掉 (get rid of). "了₁" as an aspectual particle denotes a completed action and cannot be used in negation. But "了₁," serving as a complement, can be used in negation, as in 没杀了 (did not kill), and it can refer to an action that has not occurred yet or did not occur.

(2) "了₂"

"了₂" is positioned at the end of a sentence, which forms the transformative aspect. In a sense, "了₂" also denotes completed actions, but "了₂," known as the sentence-final 了(句尾了), modifies the entire sentence rather than just the verb. It is used to express a change of state and can be placed at the end of almost all sentences to indicate a new state of affairs.

刘备要攻打东吴了。

Liú Bèi yào gōngdǎ Dōngwú le.

Liu Bei is going to attack the Kingdom of Wu.

林冲被迫上梁山了。

Lín Chōng bèipò shàng Liáng Shān le.

Lin Chong was compelled to join the Liangshan Mountain rebels.

她爱读古典小说了。

Tā ài dú gǔdiǎn xiǎoshuō le.

She is fond of reading the classical novels now.

他的新剧本获奖了。

Tā de xīn jùběn huò jiǎng le.

His new play has won an award.

"了₂" signifies a change of state; it can also denote a specific state of things associated with the change. "刘备要攻打东吴了" denotes an imminent change of state. "她喜欢读古典小说了" means "She likes reading classical novels *now*," which she did not like in the past. "他的新剧本获奖" needs "了₂" to tell it has happened.

"了₂" has been known as a modal particle (语气助词), but it is more appropriate to say that it is an aspectual particle and concomitantly a modal particle. When talking about a change of state, particularly when emphasizing a new state, one may also express one's feelings, emotions, or attitude toward the change. Depending on the semantics of the sentence, "了₂" may convey various kinds of sentiments.

我登上泰山了！

Wǒ dēngshàng Tài Shān le!

I have made it to the top of Tai Mountain!

龙卷风来了！

Lóngjuǎnfēng lái le!

The tornado is coming!

你千万不要跟他交往了！

Nǐ qiānwàn búyào gēn tā jiāowǎng le!

Be sure to end your relationship with him!

《白鲸》堪称美国文学上的史诗了！

《Báijīng》 kānchēng Měiguó wénxué shang de shǐshī le!

Moby Dick can be called an epic of American literature!

In all these sentences, "了$_2$" is at once an aspectual and a modal particle. "我登上泰山" simply means "I climb to the top of the Tai Mountain," but "我登上泰山了" denotes a change of state and can simultaneously express excitement, satisfaction, or pride. "龙卷风来了" may convey fright or panic. "你千万不要跟他交往了" carries a tone of concern for the listener. "《白鲸》堪称美国文学上的 史诗了" expresses a feeling of personal belief or confidence. "了$_2$" is critical in denoting the state of things in these statements and, at the same time, it articulates the speaker's moods or attitude to what is said.

Finally, "了$_2$" is also endowed with the ability to close a statement in discourse. The use of "了$_2$" at the sentence level can differ from its use in discourse. "了$_2$" is derived from the verb that means *to complete* or *to end*. This verbal meaning, which "了$_2$" has retained, enables it to draw an end to a unit of discourse. For example, here is a passage from *Cao Gui on War* (《曹刿论战》) in modern Chinese.

> 作战靠勇气。第一次击鼓能振作士兵的勇气，第二次击鼓士兵的勇气就开始低落，第三次击鼓士兵的勇气就耗尽了。
>
> Zuòzhàn kào yǒngqì. Dì-yī cì jīgǔ néng zhènzuò shìbīng de yǒngqì, dì-èr cì jīgǔ shìbīng de yǒngqì jiù kāishǐ dīluò, dì-sān cì jīgǔ shìbīng de yǒngqì jiù hàojìn le.
>
> What matters in a battle is courage. When the drums beat the first time, the morale of the troops surges; when they beat the second time, the morale of the troops sinks lower; when they beat the third time, the morale of the troops is drained.

This passage, consisting of two sentences, deals with the topic of courage or morale on the battlefield, which forms a discourse unit. "了$_2$" is not used till the end of the discourse unit is reached. In this case, "了$_2$" would be placed at the end of "第二次击鼓士兵的勇气就开始低落" if that was the end of this discourse unit.

(3) "了$_1$" and "了$_2$"

"了$_1$" and "了$_2$" each perform their functions, but they can be used jointly to show that something started in the past, has continued up till now, and may go on into the future, which, to some extent, is equivalent to the present perfect progressive tense in English.

> 她在电话上讲了三个小时了。
>
> Tā zài diànhuà shang jiǎngle sān ge xiǎoshí le.
>
> She has been talking on the phone for three hours now.

> 他读《战争与和平》读了一个月了。
>
> Tā dú 《Zhànzhēng yǔ Hépíng》 dúle yí ge yuè le.
>
> He has been reading *War and Peace* for a month now.

鲁滨逊独自在一个无人居住的岛上生活了二十八年了。

Lǔbīnxùn dúzì zài yí ge wú rén jūzhù de dǎo shang shēnghuóle èrshíbā nián le.

Robinson has been living all alone on an uninhabited island for twenty-eight years now.

These three sentences all emphasize duration, the amount of time that an action has been taking place. In English, there is a difference between the present perfect progressive tense and the past perfect progressive tense. The joint use of "了₁" and "了₂" does not locate an action in time; the point of reference is not necessarily the present moment.

Lexicalization of "X 了"

Lexicalization is a process of adding new words to a language's lexicon. As an aspectual particle, "了₁" is unique in having formed quite a few "X 了" words, such as 好了, 行了, 得了, 完了, 算了, and 罢了. Some of these words have been accepted as one word in recent years; others have not yet made their way into dictionaries. These words are used in spoken language, and some are colloquial or regional.

"了₁" post-modifies verbs and adjectives to indicate a completed action. In referring to something known to the listener, the speaker may just use "X 了" instead of repeating the whole sentence. For example, if one asks "晚饭你准备好了吗？" (Is the dinner ready?), the other may simply answer 好了 (Yes). It is through this kind of abbreviation or clipping that "X 了" words gradually came into being. These "X 了" words are typically used as discourse markers.

好了，我们明天再谈这个问题。

Hǎole, wǒmen míngtiān zài tán zhège wèntí.

Okay, we will discuss this issue tomorrow.

行了，这件事我们就这样定了。

Xíngle, zhè jiàn shì wǒmen jiù zhèyàng dìng le.

Okay. Let's call it a deal.

得了，你就别再跟我瞎掰扯了。

Déle, nǐ jiù bié zài gēn wǒ xiā bāiche le.

Okay. Please stop this senseless argument with me.

好了, 行了, and 得了 are discourse markers that are used to organize or set the direction of the conversation. There are subtle semantic differences among them. The basic meaning of 行 is passable; 行了 means something has turned out fine or has met one's expectation. Each of their meanings also

depends on what is said and the tone in which it is said. One may say them in a tone of satisfaction, impatience, or anger.

"X了" words also function as modal particles, which are placed at the end of a sentence. As modal particles, they do not change the truth value of the statement, but they can express the speaker's feelings or attitude about what is said.

他唯利是图，你给他五百块钱完了。

Tā wéilì-shìtú, nǐ gěi tā wǔbǎi kuài qián wánle.

All he cares about is profits; give him five hundred dollars and get it over with.

我们就住在这儿吧，凑合一夜算了。

Wǒmen jiù zhùzài zhèr ba, còuhe yí yè suànle.

Let us stay here; we can make do with this for one night.

别把他的话当真，他只是吓唬你罢了。

Bié bǎ tā de huà dàngzhēn, tā zhǐshì xiàhu nǐ bàle.

Don't take his words seriously; he just wants to frighten you.

完了, 罢了, 算了 are modal particles. In these sentences, 完了 shows the feeling that one should get rid of something quickly so one will not be bothered by it. 算了 conveys a tone that one does not care too much about something. 罢了 expresses the view that one shouldn't take something too seriously. The basic meaning of each "X了" modal particle comes from the combined meanings of its two components.

Design and organization

This book consists of 10 chapters. Chapters 1 through 3 focus on "了$_1$" that forms the perfective aspect. These three chapters explicate and illustrate the usages of "了$_1$": when it is obligatory, incompatible, and optional. Chapters 4 and 5 respectively compare "了$_1$" with 过 and 着, two other major aspectual particles, specifically focusing on when "了$_1$" can be used interchangeably with them.

Chapters 6 through 8 concentrate on "了$_2$." Chapter 6 examines how "了$_2$" functions as an aspectual particle that forms the transformative aspect. Chapter 7 demonstrates how "了$_2$" is simultaneously also a modal particle. Chapter 8 shows the use of "了$_2$" in discourse, which in some ways differs from its performance at the sentence level. Chapter 9 elucidates the joint use of "了$_1$" and "了$_2$."

Finally, Chapter 10 shows the lexicalization of 了 by illustrating in detail the usages of some common and newly created "X了" words that have been added to the Chinese lexicon in modern Chinese.

"了₁": Optional

"了₁" can be optional: you may choose to keep or delete "了₁" in some sentences that express a completed action. Some of these are simple sentences that, in and of themselves, can denote a completed action; others are some compound sentences that can indicate a completed action through contextual information. In all these cases, there are conditions for "了₁" to be optional. Here is a sentence of double-object construction.

她送(了)我一朵红红的玫瑰。

Tā sòng (le) wǒ yì duǒ hónghóng de méigui.

She sent me a red, red rose.

Grammatically, this sentence uses "了₁" to convey a completed action, but it can still convey completed action if you drop "了₁." However, "了₁" is optional in this sentence for two reasons. First, the numeral-measure word 一朵 specifies the object and makes it into a bounded noun; otherwise, "了₁" is still needed. Second, this sentence is composed of double objects; suppose it is "她买了一朵红玫瑰" (She bought a red rose); then "了₁" is required despite a specific object.

The ellipsis of "了₁" occurs most in compound sentences. In English, we use past-tense verbs for actions that have already occurred; in Chinese, it can be redundant and verbose to add "了₁" to each verb that denotes a completed action in a sentence. You may also elide "了₁" in compound sentences under certain conditions. Let us look at a sentence that describes how Edna ends her life in Chopin's *Awakening*.

她站(了)起来，脱下(了)衣服，赤身向大海的深处走去。

Tā zhàn (le) qilai, tuōxià (le) yīfu, chìshēn xiàng dàhǎi de shēnchù zǒuqu.

She stood up, took off her clothes, and walked naked into the deep ocean.

In the first two clauses, "了₁" can be omitted because the verbs 站 and 脱 each have 起来 and 下 as a directional complement and because the following clause demonstrates that they denote completed actions. If the verb 脱

did not have 下 as a complement, you could not drop "了₁." Stylistically, this sentence sounds wordy and choppy with "了₁" repeated but is concise and smooth after its removal.

The optional use of "了₁," seldom discussed in grammar books, only applies to some sentence constructions, and it may require certain collocations, the narrative mode, or contextual information. It can be a matter of formal and informal usages or convention: it may sound acceptable in one case but not in another for the same sentence construction. You may also add "了₁" to some sentence patterns, where, as a rule, "了₁" is not required. Knowing when "了₁" is optional can help you write effectively. Now let us explore all those *unwritten rules* about its optional use.

3.1 "了₁" in simple sentences
3.2 "了₁" in compound sentences
3.3 "了₁" and the narrative mode
3.4 "了₁": Choice and preference

3.1 "了₁" in simple sentences

A simple sentence contains only one independent clause, in which "了₁" is generally needed to indicate a completed action. However, in some simple sentences, it is common and generally acceptable to omit "了₁." In some other simple sentences, "了₁" can be omitted, but it may not sound proper without context. Now let us visit these sentences.

3.1.1 Verb-complement of direction and result

In Chinese, many verbs can be postmodified by another verb or an adjective to show the direction or the result of the action. The verb-complement, in a way, is like English prepositional or phrasal verbs, such as *find out*, *cut short*, or *put straight*. Here are two examples of directional and resultative complements.

[1] 笼子里跑出来了一只吃人的老虎。
     Lóngzi li pǎo chulai le yì zhī chī rén de lǎohǔ.
     A man-eating tiger escaped from the cage.

[2] 她看透了他的虚伪，尝尽了世态炎凉。
     Tā kàntòule tā de xūwěi, chángjìnle shìtài-yánliáng.
     She saw through his hypocrisy and fully experienced the fickleness of human relationships.

In [1], 出来 is a compound directional complement of the verb 跑, which shows the direction of the action. In [2], 透 is a complement of 看, and 尽 is a complement of 尝, and they describe the result of the action.

In a simple sentence, the verb that has a directional or resultative complement still needs "了₁" to indicate a completed action, just as the prepositional or phrasal verbs need to be in the past to refer to past action.

[3] 那位受害者走出了心理阴影。
    Nà wèi shòuhàizhě zǒuchule xīnlǐ yīyǐng.
    That victim has gotten over the psychological trauma.

[4] 学生们吃腻了学校餐厅的饭。
    Xuéshengmen chīnìle xuéxiào cāntīng de fàn.
    Students are fed up with the school cafeteria food.

In [3], 出 is a directional complement of 走; in [4], 腻 is a resultative complement of 吃. Both need "了₁" to denote a completed action.

But in a simple sentence in which the verb has a directional or resultative complement, "了₁" can be optional if the object is modified by a numeral-measure word. Compare these two sentences.

Required: 他寄来了杂志。
          Tā jìlaile zázhì.
          He sent some magazines.

Optional: 他寄来 (了) 一本杂志。
          Tā jìlai (le) yì běn zázhì.
          He sent a magazine.

In these two sentences, the verb 寄 has the directional verb 来 as a complement; both refer to a completed action. But you may drop "了₁" in the second sentence because of the presence of the numeral-measure word 一本 that makes the object specific. Thus, when the verb-complement occurs with a specific object, a bounded noun, "了₁" can be optional.

Required: 考试时他看错了题。
          Kǎoshì shí tā kàncuòle tí.
          He misread questions in the exam.

Optional: 考试时他看错 (了) 一道题。
          Kǎoshì shí tā kàncuò (le) yí dào tí.
          He misread a question in the exam.

In addition to numeral-measure words, indefinite measure words, such as 一些 and 一点, can specify the object. Thus "了₁" is optional in the following sentences.

[5]　她碰到 (了) 两位大学时追过她的同学。

　　Tā pèngdào (le) liǎng wèi dàxué shí zhuīguo tā de tóngxué.

　　She came across two classmates who pursued her in college.

[6]　阿波罗宇航员带回来(了)一些月球岩石标本。

　　Ābōluó yǔhángyuán dài huilai (le) yìxiē yuèqiú yánshí biāoběn.

　　Apollo astronauts brought back some moon rock samples.

[7]　学校制订出 (了) 一套新的停车规则。

　　Xuéxiào zhìdìng chu (le) yí tào xīn de tíngchē guīzé.

　　The school has drawn up a new policy about parking.

[8]　律师提出 (了) 些与本案没有关系的问题。

　　Lǜshī tíchū (le) xiē yǔ běn àn méiyǒu guānxi de wèntí.

　　The lawyer raised some questions that are irrelevant to the current case.

The numeral and the measure word always jointly modify a noun. But when the numeral is *one*, people sometimes drop it and keep only the measure word, which still means *one* and is common in spoken language.

[9]　昨夜她梦见 (了) 个帅哥。

　　Zuó yè tā mèngjiàn (le) ge shuàigē.

　　Last night she dreamed of a handsome young man.

[10]　天上掉下 (了) 个林妹妹 。

　　Tiānshàng diàoxia (le) ge Lín mèimei.

　　A sister, Lin, appeared out of the blue.

Some Chinese disyllabic verbs consist of a verb-complement relationship. For example, 看见 (see) is one word, but it is composed of 看 and 见. 看 means *to look*, and 见 means *to see*. Thus, 看见 functions like a verb with a complement, and you may drop "了₁" if the object is modified by a numeral-measure word.

[11]　我看见 (了) 一只过街老鼠。

　　Wǒ kànjiàn (le) yì zhī guòjiē lǎoshǔ.

　　I saw a mouse running across the street.

[12]　她得到 (了) 一个出风头的机会。

　　Tā dédào (le) yí ge chū fēngtou de jīhuì.

　　She got an opportunity to show off.

Other disyllabic verbs that contain a verb-complement relationship include 打开 (open), 打破 (break), 获得 (obtain), 取得 (acquire), 形成 (form), 遇到 (come across), and 组成 (compose).

"了₂" as a Modal Particle

In English, grammatical mood is expressed through verbal inflections, and there are three moods. The indicative is used to make a statement of fact or to ask a question; the imperative is used to give commands or to make requests; the subjunctive mood is used to express unreality, hypotheses, and wishes.

In Chinese, grammatical mood is unrelated to verb forms; instead, mood is partly formed by modal particles (语气词) that may express the emotions, feelings, or attitudes of speakers about what is said. Modal particles are placed at the end of a sentence. There are quite a few of them in Chinese; "了₂" is one of the six basic modal particles.

"了₂" denotes a change of state; it can also convey one's mood or state of mind. It is thus at once both an aspectual particle and a modal particle. For example, here is a famous victory statement Julius Caesar sent to the Roman Senate after he defeated Pharnaces' forces in 47 BCE.

> 我来了，我看见了，我征服了。
> Wǒ lái le, wǒ kànjiàn le, wǒ zhēngfú le.
> *Veni, vidi, vici* (I came; I saw; I conquered.)

Veni, *vidi*, and *vici* are three Latin verbs in first person perfect tense forms that express feelings of great pride and the loftiness of the conqueror. For the Chinese version of this statement, "了₂" by fulfilling its grammatical function of denoting a change of state, conveys the same sentiments; without "了₂" it cannot express such a state of mind.

"了₂" can express various sentiments, but "了₂" in and of itself, does not denote any particular feeling or emotion. The moods "了₂" conveys come from its capacity to materialize what is said (change of state); it also matters how something is said and the context in which it is said. For example, a gossipy grandparent may talk thus about the neighbor's unmarried daughter:

> 张家的女儿三十五岁了。
> Zhāng jiā de nǚ'ér sānshíwǔ suì le.

The Zhangs' daughter is thirty-five years old now.

Without "了₂" this is a plain statement of a fact, but "了₂" highlights that she is *now* already thirty-five. Given the Chinese cultural tradition, the speaker may insinuate that the neighbor's daughter is still unmarried, that she still has not found the one she loves, or that she is picky. In a different circumstance, the speaker might mean how fast time goes. By indicating a change of state, "了₂" can express various sentiments or have different implications.

"了₂" as a modal particle is difficult to grasp, but what it conveys is inseparable from its role as an aspectual particle, and this connection may serve as a key to mastering its usage.

7.1 "了₂": Soften the tone
7.2 "了₂" in the declarative mood
7.3 "了₂" in the exclamatory mood
7.4 "了₂" in the interrogative mood

7.1 "了₂": Soften the tone

When speaking with others, your tone of voice can matter as much as what is said. "了₂" can make your tone sound less harsh, critical, or strident; it can add a tone of concern, care, or affection. Now let us see how "了₂" can soften the tone in various situations.

7.1.1 Time to do something

Imperative sentences give orders and commands, and they inherently sound authoritative, harsh, or intense. "了₂" can soften the tone of imperative sentences; instead of commanding someone to do something, "了₂" can indicate that something ought to be done or that it is time to do something.

起床了，别误了校车。
Qǐchuáng le, bié wùle xiàochē.
It is time to get up; don't miss the school bus.

"起床！" is a command that sounds harsh, impatient, or even angry, but "起床了" softens the tone and expresses care or concern for someone. "了₂" softens the tone in the following imperatives.

[1] 吃饭了，再不来饭就凉了。
     Chī fàn le, zài bù lái fàn jiù liáng le.
     It is time to eat, or the food will get cold.

[2] 睡觉了，早睡早起身体好。

Shuìjiào le, zǎo shuì zǎo qǐ shēntǐ hǎo.

It is time to go to bed. Early to bed and early to rise make for good health.

[3] 上课了，请把手机关掉。

Shàngkè le, qǐng bǎ shǒujī guāndiào.

It is time to start the class. Please turn off your cell phone.

[4] 上车了，我们又得上路了。

Shàng chē le, wǒmen yòu děi shànglù le.

Please get on the bus. We've got to be on the road again.

[5] 快一点儿了，他们都登机了。

Kuài yìdiǎnr le, tāmen dōu dēng jī le.

Hurry up. They have boarded the plane.

Without "了₂" some of the above imperative sentences may sound authoritative, harsh, or rude.

7.1.2 Time to stop doing something

In the negative imperative, "了₂" also softens the tone and makes commands sound more like advice. It asks one to stop doing something.

你别再娇惯她了，这对她不好。

Nǐ bié zài jiāoguàn tā le, zhè duì tā bù hǎo.

Don't pamper her anymore; that is no good for her.

"你别再娇惯她" is straightforward and harsh, but "了₂" softens the tone, so that it sounds more like advice than an admonition. "了₂" is optional in the following sentences.

[6] 您可甭听他的了，他没正经的。

Nín kě béng tīng tā de le, tā méi zhèngjǐng de.

Please don't listen to him anymore. He is never serious.

[7] 你不要跟他争了，他从不认错。

Nǐ búyào gēn tā zhēng le, tā cóng bú rèncuò.

Please don't argue with him anymore; he never admits he's wrong.

[8] 你千万不能再去了，那非常危险。

Nǐ qiānwàn bù néng zài qù le, nà fēicháng wēixiǎn.

You should never go there again; it is very dangerous there.

[9] 你别装了，其实你什么都知道。

Nǐ bié zhuāng le, qíshí nǐ shénme dōu zhīdào.

Don't play the innocent. In fact, you know everything.

[10] 你不用担心了，这是板上钉钉的事了。

Nǐ búyòng dānxīn le, zhè shì bǎnshàng-dìngdīng de shì le.

Don't worry about this; it is cast in stone.

In [10], "板上钉钉" literally means that the nail has been driven into the wood, which is used to assure someone that something has been settled and is not subject to change.

7.1.3 Offering consolation

When you console people in distress or who are suffering, you may use "了₂" to convey a gentle, comforting, or assuring tone. Compare these two sentences.

很快就有消息。

Hěn kuài jiù yǒu xiāoxi.

There will be news soon.

很快就有消息了。

Hěn kuài jiù yǒu xiāoxi le.

You will hear something soon.

"很快就有消息" is a plain statement; "很快就有消息了" sounds more personal and assuring. In the following sentences, "了₂" carries a tone that indicates a change will take place soon, or that something is no longer an issue to be concerned about.

[11] 就到了。下了高速公路就是。

Jiù dào le. Xiàle gāosù gōnglù jiù shì.

We are getting there; it is right off the highway.

[12] 吃了这片药，一会儿就好了。

Chīle zhè piàn yào, yíhuǐr jiù hǎo le.

Take this tablet and you will be fine soon.

[13] 这不是问题了，你会如愿以偿。

Zhè bú shì wèntí le, nǐ huì rúyuànyǐcháng.

This is no longer a problem. You will get your wish.

[14] 饭马上就好了，我知道你饿了。

Lexicalization of "X 了"

All languages change over time; a case in point is 了, which changed from standing for an action to having a grammatical function. This change is known as *grammatization* (虚化). While serving as an aspectual marker, 了 gradually merged with some words it modifies, and they formed some new words. This merging is called *lexicalization* (词汇化), adding more words to the lexicon of a language.

好了 is a good example of lexicalization. 好 often serves as the complement of a verb, such as "晚饭做好了" (The dinner is prepared). In this sentence, 好 and 了 are two words; 了 is an aspectual particle, indicating that something is completed. Since the Qing dynasty, particularly since the May Fourth Movement (1919), this collocation of 好 and 了 began to be used as one word in the sense that something is *all set*, *ready*, or *done*.

> 好了，我该说的都说了，你自己决定吧。
>
> Hǎole, wǒ gāi shuō de dōu shuō le, nǐ zìjǐ juédìng ba.
>
> OK, I have said all I should say; you make your decision.

In this sentence, 好了 is a discourse marker; its role is to organize or direct the direction of the conversation, and it is independent from the syntax of the sentence. In addition, 好了, as one word, began to be used as a modal particle.

> 你算什么？你去告我好了，我才不在乎呢。
>
> Nǐ suàn shénme? Nǐ qù gào wǒ hǎole, wǒ cái bú zàihu ne.
>
> Who do you think you are? Go and sue me; I do not care.

This 好了, like other modal particles, is positioned at the end of a clause or sentence. It doesn't change the truth value of the statement (the sentence is complete without it), but it can express the speaker's emotion or attitude about what is being said.

In this chapter, we will examine six commonly used words that have 了 as a component resulting from lexicalization (we call them "X了" words).

They are counted as one word when used in certain ways; most of them made their entry into dictionaries in recent years. They are almost exclusively used in spoken language and can express various emotions and attitudes based on their original meanings and the context in which they are used. Some of them are synonyms, but there are nuances among them. As a non-native speaker, it is a proof of your competence in Chinese to use them appropriately.

10.1 好了
10.2 行了
10.3 算了
10.4 罢了
10.5 完了
10.6 得了

10.1 好了

The adjective 好 means *good*, something positive or desirable in nature. It often occurs with 了 to indicate a change of state or situation—something is good now or has turned out well.

他的病好了。

Tā de bìng hǎo le.

He has recovered from his illness.

琳达跟大伟好了。

Líndá gēn Dàwěi hǎo le.

Linda is David's girlfriend now.

In these two sentences, 好 and 了 are two separate words; 好 is the predicate (which we call the subject complement in English).

好 is also frequently used as a resultative complement of the verb, and it can be modified by 了 to denote that something is *done*, *finished*, or *ready*.

感恩节的火鸡烤好了。我盼着你来。

Gǎn'ēn Jié de huǒjī kǎohǎo le. Wǒ pànzhe nǐ lái.

The Thanksgiving turkey has been roasted. I look forward to your coming.

我们不是说好了吗？你为什么变卦？

Wǒmen bú shì shuōhǎo le ma? Nǐ wèishénme biànguà?

Didn't we make a deal? Why have you changed your mind?

In the above examples, 好 and 了 are also two words. But in speech, to the question "火鸡烤好了吗?" (Is the turkey ready?), one may simply answer "好了" (Yes). It is from such a short reply that 好 and 了 gradually became one word.

Lexicographers are cautious about granting "X了" words the status of one word. 好了 was not accepted as one word until the sixth edition of the *Dictionary of Modern Chinese* in 2012, and it is counted as one word only when used as a discourse marker and a modal particle.

10.1.1 好了 as a discourse marker

A discourse marker is often at the beginning of a sentence and is syntax-independent. 好了, as a discourse marker, is used to preface your response to a topic in discourse. It is based on 好 in the sense that something is done or ready.

First, 好了 is used to express your relief, joy, or satisfaction with something that turns out to be satisfying, pleasant, or successful.

[1] 好了，有你跟他去我就放心了。他不成熟。
     Hǎole, yǒu nǐ gēn tā qù wǒ jiù fàngxīn le. Tā bù chéngshú.
     Good, I feel very relieved that you will go with him. He is immature.

[2] 好了，他总算毕业了，他不能再依靠父母了。
     Hǎole, tā zǒngsuàn bìyè le, tā bù néng zài yīkào fùmǔ le.
     Good, he finally has graduated; he cannot depend on his parents any more.

[3] 好了，他们同意我们的条件了，你不必担心了。
     Hǎole, tāmen tóngyì wǒmen de tiáojiàn le, nǐ búbì dānxīn le.
     Good, they have agreed to our conditions; you can relax now.

Second, 好了 is used to express that you have accepted something or have agreed to do something; sometimes you may do it unwillingly (不情愿) or with reservation.

[4] 好了，我们就这样定了，你不能两者兼得。
     Hǎole, wǒmen jiù zhèyàng dìng le, nǐ bù néng liǎngzhě-jiāndé.
     OK, that's settled. You cannot have it both ways.

[5] 好了，我可以为你说情，不过这是最后一次。
     Hǎole, wǒ kěyǐ wèi nǐ shuōqíng, búguò zhè shì zuìhòu yí cì.
     All right, I will speak for you, but this is the last time.

[6] 好了，既然你们都同意，咱们就这样做吧。

Hǎole, jìrán nǐmen dōu tóngyì, zánmen jiù zhèyàng zuò ba.

OK, since you all agree, let us do it this way.

Third, 好了 is used to express impatience or anger. You may have had enough of something and not want to hear about it anymore. For this usage, 好了 may be repeated.

[7] 好了，好了，我不想听了，你真烦死我了！

Hǎole, hǎole, wǒ bù xiǎng tīng le, nǐ zhēn fánsǐ wǒ le!

Enough! I do not want to hear it any more. You've bored me to death!

[8] 好了，别抱怨了。抱怨解决不了问题。

Hǎole, bié bàoyuàn le. Bàoyuàn jiějué bù liǎo wèntí.

OK, stop complaining! Complaining cannot solve the problem.

[9] 好了，你不要再跟他交往了，你要接受教训。

Hǎole, nǐ búyào zài gēn tā jiāowǎng le, nǐ yào jiēshòu jiàoxun.

Listen! End your relationship with him; you should learn a lesson from it.

Fourth, 好了 can be used sarcastically; it may express bitterness, resentment, regret, self-pity, and self-justification regarding a loss or failure.

[10] 好了，你现在满意了吧？你太贪婪了。

Hǎole, nǐ xiànzài mǎnyì le ba? Nǐ tài tānlán le.

Well, are you satisfied now? You are too greedy.

[11] 好了，我们彻底完蛋了，都是听了你的过。

Hǎole, wǒmen chèdǐ wándàn le, dōu shì tīngle nǐ de guo.

Too bad, we are done for; it is all because we listened to you.

[12] 好了，我们赔了夫人又折兵，我们无计可施了。

Hǎole, wǒmen péi le fūrén yòu zhé bīng, wǒmen wújì-kěshī le.

Well, we have thrown good money after bad. There is nothing more we can do.

In [12], "赔了夫人又折兵" is a proverb that comes from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. It literally means to lose both a wife and soldiers—to pay a double penalty.

10.1.2 好了 as a modal particle

The modal particle, positioned at the end of a sentence, has no referential meaning; the sentence is complete without it. It is used to convey emotions,

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Note: The numbers refer to sections.