An Examination of the Syntactic and Semantic Characteristics of Shàng and Xià in Mandarin

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Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated this thesis is my own work.

A. Scott

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February 1989
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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, who was amazed that anyone could write so much about only two ‘words’.
Abstract

This thesis examines some of the major aspects of the semantic and syntactic characteristics of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in Mandarin Chinese. One of their basic meanings relates to the vertical dimension, both ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ being involved in the indication of vertical direction and position. It is seen that this vertical dimension can extend into the realms of quantity, status, sequencing and time. The use of vertical terms in these extended areas is found in other languages, such as English, suggesting that there may some perceptual, cognitive and/or experiential bases for such extensions. The very productive use of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in sequencing and time in Mandarin is noted and it is suggested that this may be related to the importance of hierarchical relations Chinese culture.

The grammatical functions of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ are also examined. As verb complements the two morphemes are involved in marking perfectivity. This seems to be due as much to the fact that they are directionals, thus involving concepts such as goal and source, as to their specific vertical meanings. Comparisons are made with the use of spatial terms as aspectual markers in other languages. The role of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as place word markers is also considered.

The thesis looks at the grammatical status of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’, and notes the relationship between this and their inherent semantic meanings. ‘Shàng’ is identified as the unmarked member of the pair and is also the morpheme which, when acting as a localiser, appears to have gone further along the path from lexical to grammatical material since in some cases it seems to have little semantic content and just serves a grammatical function.
Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine some of the major aspects of the syntactic and semantic characteristics and behaviour of 'shàng' and 'xià' in Mandarin Chinese. It will be seen from the discussion that these morphemes are widely used in the language. In the absence of much morphological marking in Mandarin, the allocation of morphemes to one part of speech or another is based on function in the clause and relative position with respect to other elements. 'Shàng' and 'xià' have multiple class membership. They can occur in verbal and nominal constructions. In these constructions their meaning and function depend not only on their position but also on whether they are free words or are combined with other morphemes to form polysyllabic words. The first two chapters will examine their syntactic and semantic behaviour as verbal elements and Chapters Three and Four will look at some aspects of their behaviour in nominal constructions.

A basic meaning associated with 'shàng' relates to movement or location up or upward, while 'xià' relates to movement or location down or downward. There are many extended meanings however and we will examine the major ones to see if and how they relate to vertical movement or location. We will also note whether these semantic extensions are peculiar to Mandarin or whether they are found in other languages. Of particular interest will be the relation between vertical direction and position and temporal relations, both with respect to sequencing and aspecktual notions such as progression, inception and completion. The extensive use of vertical terms in spatial and temporal ordering in Mandarin and the relation between this and status and value judgements is also considered and a possible connection between these inter-relationships and Chinese cultural values is suggested.

Also examined will be the change in semantic load which seems to have occurred in some uses of the morphemes, particularly 'shàng'. It will be shown that this loss of meaning content can be accompanied by a change in grammatical status, the morphemes becoming dependent on other lexical items and assuming a largely grammatical function.

1. The language

Mandarin is the major Chinese dialect in the People's Republic of China (PRC), being the first language of about 70% of the population. It also forms the basis of the official national languages of the PRC and of Taiwan, which are based on the pronunciation of the Beijing dialect and the grammar of Northern Mandarin to which the Beijing dialect belongs. Informants were all native speakers of Northern Mandarin, and had been brought up and/or lived a substantial part of their lives in Beijing itself. Use of informants from the same area was an
attempt to minimise the influence of other Chinese languages/dialects on the usage of, and judgements on the usage of, 'shàng' and 'xià' in Mandarin. While the national language is based on Mandarin, a standard national language is still largely an ideal and the norm is still weak (Kratochvil, 1968 p19ff). There can be wide variations according to the first language/dialects of its speakers.

2. The language examples

Many of the language examples used were taken from, or based on, examples found in two modern plays, Fēngliú Dìànjīa [The Smart Innkeeper] (Zhāng, 1986) and Juànliàn [A Sentimental Attachment] (Zhái and Wáng, 1987) Other examples came from Situational Chinese (Hong, 1983) and from the informants themselves. Other sources have been noted in the text.

The examples have been transliterated into pinyin which is the romanised form of writing adopted in the PRC. I have deviated from the convention of not using hyphens to separate the morphemes of compound words where the morpheme involved is 'shàng' or 'xià' since these are the morphemes of particular interest. The tones marked on morphemes reflect the citation form. Tone sandhi and variations of tone found in unstressed situations have been ignored unless they are of particular relevance to the discussion. It should be noted however that in normal speech the realisation of the tones can vary, often depending on the stress pattern within the word or phrase. In addition to this variation some syllables (e.g. some suffixes) are never stressed in normal speech. These are called 'atomic' and have been left unmarked.

Each example has a morpheme by morpheme gloss under the pinyin text, followed by a free English translation. Grammatical terms and morphemes have usually been glossed with an abbreviation and a list of these is given below. Nouns are not normally marked for number in Mandarin so they have been glossed in the singular. Verbs do not indicate person, gender, number, tense or mood and have been glossed with their simple uninflected form. Pronouns are not marked for gender and the third person pronoun, glossed as '3sg', is translated as s/he in the free translation unless the gender is clear from the context. In general where an example is taken from context, the gloss applicable to that particular context has been used, with an explanatory comment if necessary. An asterisk '*' before an example shows that the sentence is unacceptable. A question mark '?' before an example indicates that there is some doubt about its syntactic or semantic acceptability. Following the convention used in Li and Thompson (1981), *(x)* indicates that to be acceptable the item inside the brackets must be included.
### 3. Abbreviations for the glossing of grammatical terms and morphemes

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>direct object marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>classifier or measure word</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>currently relevant state</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>subordinating particle which indicates nominal subordination including that of the possessive. If no NP follows DE, the ‘- de’ complex has substantive value.</td>
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<td>DEG</td>
<td>marker of complement of degree, ‘de’.</td>
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<td>DUR</td>
<td>durative marker</td>
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<td>FUT</td>
<td>future</td>
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<td>NEG</td>
<td>negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>PART</td>
<td>sentence final particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER</td>
<td>perfective marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POT</td>
<td>potential complement, the syntactic exponent in the positive being ‘de’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>question marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUB</td>
<td>subordinating particle ‘zhi’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCC</td>
<td>verb complement compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>verb complement in a VCC</td>
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Chapter 1
Main Verb

Both ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ can occur as the main verb in a sentence. There is a range of meanings associated with these two verbs and a number of the principal ones will be examined in this chapter. It will be seen that the verbs seem to be intransitive when they denote change of location, though they can be used causatively. When ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ do not indicate change of location they appear to act transitively.

1.1. Shàng - Change of Location

1.1.1. Movement upwards

One of the principal meanings of ‘shàng’ is associated with ‘movement in an upward direction’. In the first three examples below, ‘shàng’ denotes some definite upward movement, while in the following three ((4) to (6)) upward movement is only implied.

(1) māo shàng shù
    cat SHANG tree
    The cat is climbing the tree.

(2) xiān qu Xiéqùyuán, chū-lái
    first go Garden:of:Harmonious:Interest out-come
    jiù kěyǐ shàng shān le
    then can SHANG mountain CRS
    First (we) should go to the Garden of Harmonious Interest, and from there go up the mountain.

(3) shàng lóu
    SHANG floor(storey)
    (To) go upstairs.

(4) tā shàng chǎng
    3sg SHANG stage
    S/he mounts/enters the stage.
(5) shàng àn
  *SHANG* shore/bank
  (To) go ashore.

(6) tāmen shàng le chē
  *they* *SHANG PER* car
  They got into the car.

Upward movement can be implied in (4) since stages are often raised so one needs to step or climb up onto them. In relation to sentence (5), boats are often below the level of the river bank so one would go up when getting out of a boat. ‘Chē’ in (6) really means ‘vehicle’ though is now normally understood as ‘car’ if not otherwise modified. Getting into a cart or similar vehicle would entail climbing up into the vehicle. Getting into a car and going onto a stage could also be seen as involving contact of some sort.

1.1.2. Extension of the idea of ‘movement upwards’

‘Shàng’ can also be used in an extended sense to indicate movement ‘upwards’ with respect to status and increase in amount/quantity.¹

  a) Status

(7) tā shàng le chējīān
  *3sg* *SHANG PER* workshop
  S/he has gone to (work in) the workshop.

Example (7) could also mean ‘S/he has gone to the workshop’ with no implication of any upward movement. This is because another meaning of ‘shàng’ is ‘movement towards’, with no vertical dimension involved (see section 1.1.3 below). In context however a change of situation to a higher status can be implied. In this case (7) would indicate that the new position in the workshop was seen as an improvement over a previous job.

(8) Tā shàng de zhēn kuài
  *3sg* *SHANG DEG* really fast
  S/he has risen (in position/status) very quickly.

Example (8) would need to be in context to be understood as the above. For example one could be talking about someone who has rapidly gained promotion.

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¹These uses could be called ‘metaphorical’, but the idea of ‘extended meaning’ is preferred since metaphor can be thought of as pertaining when “two unlike notions are implicitly related, to suggest an identity between them” (Crystal, 1987 p70). The use of vertical terms in relation to status and quantity (and time, as will be discussed later) seems to have a more basic relation to human perception and cognition than the term ‘metaphor’ might suggest.
b) Increase

(9) jǐn jià xiàidié hòu, zài yě shàng bù
gold price fall after, again also SHANG NEG
lái le
come PER
When the price of gold falls, it will never increase again.

1.1.3. Little if any implication of upward movement

‘Shàng’ can also denote ‘movement towards’ with little or no implication of vertical direction. This can be seen in the following

(10) wǒ shàng Guǎngzhōu
I SHANG Guangzhou(Canton)
I’m going to Guangzhou.

(11) nǐ shàng nǎr?
you SHANG where?
Where are you going?

(12) wǒ shàng diànyǐngyuàn
I SHANG cinema
I’m going to the cinema.

(13) míntiān shàng Gùyuánzhèn mǎi cǎi
tomorrow SHANG place:name buy colour
diàn
television
Tomorrow (I) am going to Guyuanzhen to buy a colour television.

1.1.4. To apply/to put on

‘Shàng’ can also be used causatively, the object of the verb being caused to move towards (and possibly onto) some location².

(14) zuòtiān wǒ gēi wǒ de xié shàng yǒu
yesterday I to I DE shoe SHANG oil
Yesterday I polished my shoes.

---

²Subject and object are here taken to be more or less equivalent to A and O (Dixon 1979) and refer to the two participants in a two participant clause. Subject also refers to the NP argument of a one place predicate. As it is often not easy to identify whether a particular verb is a one place predicate, or a two place predicate with an argument omitted (for example see (16)) these terms are used for convenience only and they make no claims about semantic roles or grammatical relations in Mandarin.
1.2. Shàng - No necessary change of location

‘Shàng’ can denote the beginning of an involvement, or some involvement, in an activity. There is no necessary indication of either change of location (of subject or object) or any vertical direction. Examples of these meanings are given in the sentences below.

(15) ěrzi shàng le nǐmen dài
son SHANG PER your(pl) team
(My) son has joined your team.

(16) hái yǒu jǐ fēnzhōng cái shàng kè
still have several minute then SHANG class
ne
PART

There are still a few minutes before class starts - or 'before (we) start class'\(^3\).

The phrase ‘shàng kè’ has several interpretations according to context. It can mean ‘start class’, ‘attend class’ or ‘conduct a class’. There is therefore potential ambiguity as to whether one is the teacher or the student. This is somewhat analogous to the situation in English where ‘I’m taking a class’ can mean that the speaker is the teacher or one of the students. The constant associated with the meaning of the verb ‘shàng’ in (15) and (16) is ‘being engaged in’ the activity.

The idea of beginning an involvement in an activity can be seen in sentence (16) above and in (17) and (18) below.

(17) míngtiān jiù lái shàng bān
tomorrow then come SHANG work
Tomorrow come and start work then.

(18) shàng dàxué de shōuxū yǐjīng bān le
SHANG university DE procedure already do PER
Procedures for going to (i.e. entering/enrolling at) university have been completed.

1.3. Xià - Change of location

1.3.1. Movement downwards

When it denotes change of location ‘xià’ usually indicates movement downwards. This can be seen in the following. In examples (22) to (25) this downward direction is only implied.

\(^3\)PART = sentence final particle which here is interpreted as "indicating obvious facts" (Hong, 1983, p227).
(19) tā xià le shān méi yǒu?
3sg XIA PER mountain NEG have
Has she descended the mountain or not?

(20) tāmén cóng zuān tái shāng xià lái
3pl from drill platform on XIA come
They came down from the drilling platform.

(21) jiù yào xià yǔ le
just FUT XIA rain PER
It’s going to rain (or ‘rain will fall’).

(22) tā xià chāng
3sg XIA stage
S/he leaves/goes down off the stage.

(23) o, dào le, xià chē ba
oh arrive PER XIA car PART
Oh, (we’)ve arrived, let’s get out of the car4.

The reasons for considering that examples (22) and (23) imply downward direction follow from the points made about ‘stages’ and ‘vehicles’ in relation to (4) and (6) above. Just as ‘shāng chāng’ and ‘shāng chē’ can be seen to involve contact, ‘xià chāng’ and ‘xià chē’ can involve the idea of dissociation.

(24) wǒ gěi nǐ xià le wàn miàntiáo
I for you XIA PER bowl noodles
I have cooked a bowl of noodles for you.

The idea of movement down is presumed in (24) since to cook noodles one must put them down into boiling water.

‘Xià’ is also used as the verb to translate ‘lay’ (eggs) and ‘give birth’ (relating to animals) - see (25) below. Both these activities imply the idea of downward movement.

(25) ... lǎo mù jī nǎ tiān xià dān, luòluò nǎ
... old hen which day XIA egg, donkey which
tiān xià jū, wǒ dōu zhīdào
day XIA foal, I all know
day XIA foal, I all know
... which day the old hen will lay an egg, which day the donkey will have a foal, I know it all.

4Sentence final particle (PART) conveys the idea of a suggestion.
1.3.2. Extension of the idea of ‘downward movement’

In an analogous way to ‘shàng’ in section 1.1.2 above, the meaning of ‘xià’ can be extended to ‘movement downwards’ in status or quantity. For example:

a) Status

(26) rénmín yǐjǐng xià di gānhú le
people already XIA field work CRS
The people have already gone to the fields to work.

While we have taken ‘xià’ to be an independent verb in this sentence, ‘xiàdi’ can be analysed as a verb-object compound rather than a free verb plus object. It is often difficult to draw a firm dividing line between morphology and syntax (and thus to distinguish a compound word from a phrase) in Mandarin. "Most [verb-object constructions] are recurrent dimorphemic constructions functioning as single words in some contexts and as constructions of two words in others" (Kratochvil, 1968 p97).

(27) tā xià nóngcūn le
3sg XIA countryside CRS
S/he has gone to the country.

Despite the efforts of the propaganda machine during the Cultural Revolution when young people from the cities were encouraged to go to the country to work, the countryside and work in the fields is still generally regarded as having low status.

(28) tā xià le chéjiān
3sg XIA PER workshop
He has gone to the workshop.

(28) can be used when someone has gone to work in the workshop, and this represents a demotion (e.g. from a white collar job) or when someone who works in a higher level job has just gone to visit the workshop for some reason.

(29) cúnzhāng xià líng
village:head XIA order
The village head gave the order.

Here again ‘xiàlíng’ could be analysed as a verb-object compound rather than a free verb followed by an object.

(30) nǐ de dùīzhāng gěi wǒ xià le zuìhòu
you DE team:leader to I XIA le last
tóngdí
official:note
Your team leader has sent me a final ultimatum.

In sentences (29) and (30) there may not be any actual change of location since orders and ultimata can be given orally. However it can be seen that the order and official notes are considered to be transmitted downwards from a higher authority. Similar examples are found in English where, for example, decisions can be handed down from higher authorities.
b) Decrease

(31) tā de tǐwèn xià bù lái
3sg DE temperature XIA NEG come
His/her temperature won’t come down.

(32) wùjià shàngzhǎng hòu, zài yě xià
commodity:price rise after, again also XIA
bù lái le
NEG come PER
When the prices of commodities go up, they never come down again.

1.3.3. To take away/take off

In A Chinese English Dictionary (1985) the following sentences are given.

(33) chuán shàng de huo hái méi yǒu xià-wán
boat on DE goods still NEG have XIA-finish
The cargo has not been unloaded yet.

(34) xià zhuāng
XIA costume
Remove theatrical costume (and makeup).

In these examples ‘xià’ is used causatively and its object is caused to become dissociated from something. This use of xià as a main verb does not, however, seem to be common in spoken Mandarin. The verb ‘xiè’ - ‘to remove’ is preferred to transmit the meaning in (33) as in:

(35) xiè huo
remove/unload goods
(To) unload goods.

The usual word for ‘take off’ with respect to clothing is ‘tūo’. Sentence (34) is very limited in use and a specific context is needed to interpret it. In isolation it was understood by one informant as a modifier-modified construction meaning ‘lower part of a suit’ - where ‘xià’ is taken as a modifier meaning ‘lower part’.

1.4. Xià - No necessary change of location

‘Xià’ can also be used in relation to the ceasing of an activity. This can be thought of as a kind of dissociation, in this case from an activity rather than from a location. In the following there is no necessary change of location and no indication of vertical direction.

(36) xià kè
XIA class
Finish class.
I am most annoyed when I finish (my) shift. After work there is nothing to do.

The above are the opposite of ‘shàng’ in sentences (16) and (17).

1.5. Summary

The range of meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ seen in the sentences above can be summarised as follows (in this summary the notion of direction upward and downward will be taken in the broadest sense - that is it will include extended uses).

Shàng
- Movement upwards
- Movement towards + upwards
- Movement towards, no vertical direction implied
- To make contact
- To begin to be involved in an activity
- To be involved in an activity

Xià
- Movement downwards
- Movement towards + downwards
- Movement off or out of (dissociation)
- To cease, or become dissociated from, an activity

Both verbs can indicate movement towards a location. ‘Shàng’ however can indicate movement towards something without implying any necessary vertical direction while ‘xià’ usually indicates some sort of downward direction. As ‘shàng’ can neutralise with respect to vertical direction it would seem to be the unmarked member of the pair. While both can indicate towards, it can be seen from the above that in most cases ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ usually carry opposite meanings. This potential for an overlap of meaning will however prove significant in explaining the behaviour of the two morphemes in the next chapter.

The various meanings of each verb are by no means clearly differentiated from each other and they can co-occur and re-inforce one another. Take the meanings of ‘shàng’ in section 1.1 for example. Movement upwards may or may not be involved in examples (4) to (7). The idea of ‘contact’ is involved in many of the meanings connected with ‘shàng’, while ‘dissociation’ is associated with several of the meanings denoted by ‘xià’.
1.6. Path, goal and source

Direction can be said to involve three main components, direction towards somewhere/something, (goal); direction away from somewhere/something, (source); and path along which the movement takes place. From the examples in 1.1 it can be seen that 'shàng' can involve path (e.g. (1) and (2)) and goal (e.g. (3) to (7)). ‘Xià’, in addition to path (e.g. (19)) and goal (e.g. (26) to (28)) can also indicate source, for example in (22) and (23).

A goal may not only be moved towards but attained, leading to the idea of contact. Movement away from a source may lead to separation and hence dissociation. Thus contact and dissociation can be viewed as an extension of movement in relation to goal and source respectively.

Attainment of a goal and separation from a source can also be interpreted as achieving some result. Where actual movement with respect to goal or source is involved the result is usually a position. Where there is no movement a resultant condition can be indicated. Resultant position or condition can therefore be associated with the ideas of goal and source on the one hand and contact and dissociation on the other. If related to the idea of goal, contact will be involved (see a) below). If resultant position/condition relate to a source, dissociation will be involved (see b) below).

a) GOAL

+ MOVEMENT

Action Resultant position
He mounts/enters the stage. He is on the stage. (shàng)
She gets into the car. She is in the car. (shàng)
They have gone to the country They are in the country (xià)

NO NECESSARY MOVEMENT

Action Resultant condition
We started class We are taking part in class (shàng)

b) SOURCE

+ MOVEMENT

Action Resultant position
She left the stage. She is off/not on the stage (xià)
NO NECESSARY MOVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Resultant condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We stopped work</td>
<td>We are not working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xià)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aspectual function associated with morphemes which denote resultant position or condition will be examined in chapter 2.

1.7. The relation between ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ and the deictic verbs ‘lái’ - come and ‘qu’ - go

The vertical directions upwards and downwards are absolute, that is to say they do not depend on the position of the participants in the speech event. Thus sentence (1) repeated below could be uttered if the speaker is under the tree looking up, or if s/he is speaking from the window of a block of flats which is above the level of the tree.

(38) mǎo shàng shù
    cat  SHANG tree
    The cat is climbing the tree.

Similarly in sentence (19), repeated below, one cannot tell if the questioner is on the mountain or not.

(39) tā xià le shān méi yǒu?
    3sg XIA PER mountain NEG have?
    Has she descended the mountain or not?

To specify the direction of the action with respect to the speaker and/or the addressee one can use ‘lái’ - come or ‘qu’ - go.

Thus:

(40) tāmen shàng shān lái le
    they  SHANG mountain come PER
    They came up the mountain.

(speaker and/or addressee is on the mountain)

(41) tāmen shàng shān qù le
    they  SHANG mountain go PER
    They went up the mountain.

(speaker and/or addressee is at a lower level than the mountain)

An example of a deictic verb with ‘xià’ can be seen in sentence (20) above.

It is nearly always possible to add the appropriate deictic verb to a sentence with ‘shàng’ or ‘xià’ where these indicate some change of location. For example sentence (10) could be written...
Similarly, ‘qù’ could be added sentence finally to (11) and (12) above.

Where it has lost its ‘+ vertical direction’ component, for example in sentences (11) and (12) ‘shàng’ could be analysed as a co-verb or a preposition (Chao 1968, p757). In such an analysis the deictic would be taken as the main verb. ‘Shàng’ is rarely listed as a co-verb however (for example it is not included in the 58 ‘most commonly used’ co-verbs listed in Li and Thompson (1981 p367-369) nor by Chang (1977) in his analysis of co-verbs. The alternative analysis will be adopted here, i.e. that ‘shàng’ is the main verb and ‘qù’ is a directional verb complement (see the next chapter for a description of verb complements).

‘Lái’ and ‘qù’ are not always connected with actual movement towards or away from the speaker and/or addressee. This is seen in sentences (9), (31) and (32) above. Further discussion of the extended uses of ‘lái’ and ‘qù’ and the interrelations of these and ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ will follow in the next chapter.
Chapter 2

Verb Complement Compounds

2.1. Introduction to verb complement compounds

'Shang' and 'xia' are found as the second member of verb-verb constructions which are usually referred to as 'verb complement compounds' (Chao, 1968 p435ff; Li and Thompson, 1981 p54ff). Basically a verb complement compound (hereafter VCC) is a sequence of at least two verbs with the form

\[ \text{VERB}_1 - \text{VERB}_2 \]

It is usually accepted that V₁ is the main verb and that V₂ is subordinate¹. V₂ has therefore been referred to as the ‘verb complement’ (hereafter VC) and we will use this term to refer to ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ when they occur as the second member of the VCC.

As noted in Chapter 1 it is often difficult to differentiate a compound word from a phrase in Mandarin but in the case of a VCC it would seem that we are dealing with a compound since none of the verbal elements can function independently with respect to aspect markers or noun arguments (Hopper and Thompson, 1984 p736)². A VCC can also usually have ‘de’ or ‘bu’ inserted between V₁ and the VC. This indicates the possibility or impossibility of the state of affairs indicated by the VC leading from the action or process denoted by V₁. This ‘potential complement’ construction is possible with most VCCs (if semantically feasible) and has been taken as a diagnostic structural test for a VCC (Thompson 1973, p361). Potential complements will be looked at in some detail below. Semantically a VCC represents one event and the VC generally expresses some result or extension of the meaning of the V₁.

Verb complement compounds are usually divided on semantic grounds into at least two groups. These are RESULT VCC³ and DIRECTIONAL VCC.

¹See however Teng (1977) who puts forward the idea that in certain VCCs, V₂ is in fact the main verb.

²Of course some elements that make up a VCC can function as independent verbs in their own right when they are not in a compound construction (take ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ for example).

³Li and Thompson (1981, pp54,55) call this subgroup CAUSE VCCs since they consider that all VCCs signal "some result of the action or process conveyed by the V₁."
2.1.1. Result

The VC indicates the result of the action or event encoded by V₁. For example:

(43)  
\[ \text{tā bā mén lā-kāi le} \]
\[ 3sg \ BA \ \text{door pull:open PER/CRS} \]
S/he pulled the door open.

**Action** pull the door  **Result** door open

2.1.2. Directional

VC indicates the direction of motion indicated by V₁. For example:

(44)  
\[ \text{tā zài tǐzì shàng pá-shàng pá-xià} \]
\[ 3sg \ at \ ladder \ on \ climb:SHANG \ climb:XIA \]
S/he climbed up and down the ladder.

**Action** climb  **Direction** up and down

2.1.3. Achievement and phase

Two other subgroups of VCCs which are sometimes mentioned in the literature are ACHIEVEMENT and PHASE. Examples of these given in Li and Thompson (1981 pp55,56) are

a) Achievement

(45)  
\[ \text{tā mǎi-dào le nèi běn zìdiàn} \]
\[ 3sg \ \text{buy:arrive PER that CL dictionary} \]
S/he managed to buy that dictionary.

As an independent verb ‘dào’ means ‘to arrive’.

b) Phase

(46)  
\[ \text{bā diànshì guān-diào} \]
\[ BA \ \text{television close:away} \]
Turn off the TV.

As an independent verb ‘diào’ means ‘to fall’ or ‘to lose’.

PHASE VCs relate to "the type of action described by the first verb or the degree to which it is carried out" (Li and Thompson, 1981 p65). Since ‘achievement of V₁’ could also be said to describe a degree to which V₁ is carried out one can see the potentiality for overlap between this and the phase category. In fact Li and Thompson (1981, p66) give examples of phase VCs which are of the same form and similar meaning to (45) above, categorised by them as an achievement VCC, for example:

(47)  
\[ \text{zhāo-dào} \]
\[ search-arrive \]
Succeed in searching.
2.1.4. Potential complements

The sentences above can appear in the potential form with the insertion of 'de' (related to the independent verb 'de' - to get or to obtain) or the negative 'bu' between V₁ and the VC\(^4\). This gives sentences with the following forms and meanings:

**Result**

(48) **tā lā-de-kāi mén**

3sg pull-POT-open door

S/he can pull the door open.

(49) **tā lā-bu-kāi mén**

3sg pull-NEG-open door

S/he cannot pull the door open.

**Direction**

(50) **tā zài tǐzi shàng pá-de-shàng**

3sg at ladder on climb-POT-SHANG

pá-de-xià

climb-POT-XIA

S/he can climb up and down the ladder.

(51) **tā zài tǐzi shàng pá-bu-shàng**

3sg at ladder on climb-NEG-SHANG

pá-bu-xià

climb-NEG-XIA

S/he cannot climb up and down the ladder.

**Achievement/phase**

(52) **tā mǎi-bu-dào nei bèn zìdiān**

3sg buy-NEG-arrive that CL dictionary

S/he could not manage to buy that dictionary.

(53) **wǒ guān-bu-diào diànhū**

I close-NEG-away television

I cannot switch off the television.

In general the potential complement relates to the possibility of achieving the action/process denoted by the V₁.

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\(^4\)Since a ‘bā’ object must be the focus of attention in a sentence it is incompatible with the potential complement, where attention is focussed on the circumstances which affect the achievement or otherwise of V₁. Thus ‘*tā bā mén lā-bu-kāi’ is ungrammatical whereas ‘tā lā-bu-kāi mén’ is quite acceptable (meaning - ‘S/he cannot pull the door open’).
We will now look at some of the main meanings related to ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as verb complements.

2.2. Change of location of subject and/or object

2.2.1. Some movement in vertical direction

We have seen that one of the basic meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as independent verbs relates to movement in a vertical direction. As VCs they can also indicate direction, the manner of movement usually being denoted by V₁. When used in this way ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ clearly fall into the directional VCC category. A number of examples of directional VCCs involving ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ are given below.

(54) Sōng Bào dé jí máng bēn-shàng le
Song Bāodē(name) in:a:hurry run-SHANG PER zuàn tǎi
drilling platform
Song Baode ran quickly up (onto) the drilling platform.

(55) Tā zài tī zi shàng pá-shàng pá-xià
3sg at ladder on climb-SHANG climb-XIA
S/he climbed up and down the ladder.

In the above the subject moves, and ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ show the direction of this movement.

(56) Huán huàn fāng-xià diàn huà
slowly put-XIA telephone
(He) slowly put down the telephone.

In (56) the object moves. In (57) both the subject and object move. ‘Xià’ shows the direction.

(57) Rèn men bā shǎoshāng dé zhī dāoyuán tái-xià jīng jià
men BA wounded director carry-XIA derrick
The men carried the wounded director down (from) the derrick.
2.2.2. Vertical direction may be implied

As when acting as main verbs there are some cases where vertical direction is only implied, for example:

(58) Tao Hong zhui-shang chang lai  
(person’s name) follow-SHANG stage come  
Tao Hong follows (him) onto the stage.

(59) ta pao-xia chang qu  
3sg run-XIA stage go  
He ran off the stage.

Compare these to examples (4) and (22) in Chapter 1. As noted there, a stage can be thought of as being raised up hence the implication of vertical direction when entering or leaving.

(60) kuai, ba ni de che tu-xia-lai  
quick BA you DE car push-XIA-come  
Quickly, push your car off (the road).

Example (60) could be said when your car has broken down on the road. The implication of vertical direction comes from the fact that (at least in the countryside) the level of the road is usually higher than the land on either side.

As in Chapter 1, one can see the relation between going (up) onto some location and ‘contact’, and going (down) off some location and ‘dissociation’.

2.2.3. Extended senses of vertical direction

Again, ‘shang’ and ‘xia’ can be used in extended senses relating to status and increase/decrease in quantity or amount. Examples of such meanings in VCCs are:

a) Status

(61) wo ba wo de bao-gao jiao-shang-qu le  
I BA I DE report hand:over-SHANG-go PER  
I have handed in my report (to someone in authority).

(62) xie-wan le qing ba juanzi  
write-finish PER please BA examination:paper  
hand:over-SHANG-come  
(When you) have finished the examination paper please hand it in (the teacher is speaking).
(63) lǎoshī bā zuòyèběr fā-xià-lái le
teacher BA homework:book distribute-XIA-come PER
The teacher gave (back my) homework book (the student is speaking).

In (61) and (62) ‘shàng’ is used because the object of the verb has been, or will be, handed in to someone in authority. In (63) the reverse holds, the use of ‘xià’ indicating that the teacher has a higher status than the speaker.

b) Increase/decrease

(64) wēndū jiàng-xià-lái le
temperature fall-XIA-come PER
The temperature has come down.

(65) wēndū shēng-shàng-lái le
temperature rise-SHANG-come PER
The temperature has risen.

2.2.4. Vertical direction involved but the direction is already inherent in the meaning of the V₁

Apart from sentences (64) and (65), the V₁ in the above examples has no inherent direction associated with it. The V₁ denotes movement of the subject and/or object and any vertical direction is indicated by ‘shàng’ or ‘xià’. It is therefore possible for a V₁ to have either ‘shàng’ or ‘xià’ as a VC. For example

a) wǒ pāo-shàng-qù ‘I ran up’
I run-SHANG-go

b) wǒ pāo-xià-qù ‘I ran down’
I run-XIA-go

These then differ from the following group

(66) diào-xià yī ge xiǎo běnzi
drop fall-XIA one CL small notebook
(He) drops a small notebook.

(67) Sòng Bāodé dī-xià le tóu
(person’s name) hang:down-XIA PER head
Song Baode hung his head.

(68) wǒ yǐjīng zài zhè lǐ zhā-xià le
I already at here in take:root-XIA PER
gen
(zhāgēn=take:root)
I have already established myself here.
In the above there is no choice between ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’. Since the main verb implies downward direction only ‘xià’ is possible. With ‘shēng’ - ‘rise’ (example (65)), on the other hand, only ‘shàng’ is possible.

2.3. Contact

It was argued in Chapter 1 that the notion of ‘contact’ can follow from the idea of movement with respect to a goal. In the following examples it can be seen that ‘shàng’ as a VC can carry or reinforce the idea of contact.

(69) tā gěi wǒ gài-shàng yóu mián-āo
3sg for I cover-SHANG oil padded-jacket
He covered me with a padded jacket.

(70) kuài, chuān-shàng yīfu
quick put:on-SHANG clothes
Quick, get dressed.

(71) kuài, bà mén guān-shàng
quick, BA door close-SHANG
Quick, close the door.

(72) qǐng dàjiā bà ěrjī dài-shàng
please everybody BA earphone put:on-SHANG
Everybody please put on your earphones.

(73) Sōng Bāódé pèng-shàng Jīn Yùxiāng de
(person’s name) touch-SHANG (persons name) DE
mùguāng
eye
Song Baode met Jin Yuxiang’s eye.5

(74) wǒ zhūi-shàng le tā
I pursue-SHANG PER 3sg
I caught up with him.

In the above examples there is a difference in the semantic load carried by ‘shàng’. This seems to depend on whether or not the V₁ itself inherently implies that some sort of contact will result if the action denoted is carried to completion. This is clearly shown by the fact that ‘shàng’ can be replaced by the perfective marker ‘le’ in (69) and omitted in (70) and (71) with

5The verb ‘pèng’ denotes touch or bump. The compound ‘pèng-shàng’ means ‘bump (or run) into’. Depending on context this can mean either ‘collide with’ or ‘meet with a person/situation’ (note the correlation with English where ‘bump into’ can also have two meanings as in ‘guess who I bumped into yesterday!’).
no apparent change in propositional meaning. In these cases ‘shâng’ is not supplying the ‘contact’ meaning, just reinforcing it. In (74) however omission of ‘shâng’ will not indicate that the pursuit led to contact. This example could also be included in section 2.5 below. Since achievement of the action ‘pursue’ logically would lead to some ‘contact’ (if one is pursuing someone one presumably wants to catch them) it has however been included here.

2.4. Dissociation

As noted in Chapter 1 ‘xiào’ can be associated with the idea of movement away from a source. Where ‘xiào’ is associated with some ‘movement away’ in section 2.2 above this can be related to movement downwards. In the following there is little indication of any vertical direction, but ‘dissociation’ is clearly involved.

(75) tâ tuô-xiào le yîfu
3sg take:off-XIA PER clothes
S/he got undressed (or took off his/her clothes).

(76) wô bâ nî zhè ge èrduo piên-xiào-lâi
I BA you this CL ear slice-XIA-come
I will slice off your ear.

(77) duô-xiào jiû ping
take:by:force-XIA liquor bottle
(He) snatches the bottle of liquor (from someone).

(78) biê là-xiào dînxî
don't leave:behind-XIA thing
Don't leave anything behind.

Just as the semantic load of ‘shâng’ in 2.3 can vary depending on the meaning of the V1, so can the semantic load of ‘xiào’. ‘Xiào’ can be omitted in (75) with no apparent change of propositional meaning but in (77) substitution of the perfective ‘le’ for ‘xiào’ could lead to some uncertainty as to whether the bottle was successfully wrested from its possessor or whether it was just ‘snatched at’. Likewise in (76), ‘piên’ just means ‘slice’, but with the VC ‘xiào-lâi’ it indicates ‘slice off’. In (75) ‘xiào’ reinforces the dissociation meaning inherent in ‘tuô’ while in (76) and (77) it carries the meaning itself.

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6Note however that if ‘shâng’ is omitted the object can not usually be placed in front of the verb with the BA marker. It has to follow the verb. This syntactic difference is significant in respect to the grammatical function of VCCs (see section 2.10.2 below).

7‘Lâ’ also appears to be related to the ideas ‘drop’ and ‘fall’ (as in ‘fall behind in one’s work’) since the character used to write it has the alternative pronunciation ‘lîo’ which means ‘fall’, ‘drop’ (as in ‘drop something on the ground’), ‘lower’ and ‘go down’. The VC used with this verb would again therefore be ‘xiào’ rather than ‘shâng’ because of the link with downward direction.
2.5. Result of V1 achieved

The examples in sections 2.3 and 2.4 can be looked at from another perspective. While semantically the VCs are very different, 'shàng' being involved with contact and 'xià' with dissociation, grammatically they could be said to carrying out the same function, i.e. they focus on the resultant position or condition that would pertain if the action/process denoted by V₁ was carried to completion. In this section we will focus on this function of the VC.

2.5.1. Shàng as VC

(79) tā ài-shàng Xiàng xiàng le
3sg love-SHANG (person's name) CRS
He has fallen in love with Xiàng xiàng.

(80) tā kǎo-shàng le yánjūshēng yuàn
3sg take:exam-SHANG PER graduate school
S/he passed the exam for graduate school.

Without the ‘shàng’ this sentence would mean ‘S/he took the exam for graduate school’ - i.e. one would not know whether s/he passed or not.

(81) Wǒ méi yǒu dǐng-shàng piào
I NEG have book-SHANG ticket
I haven’t/couldn’t book(ed) the ticket.

Without ‘shàng’ (81) would mean ‘I didn’t book a ticket’. One would not know if the subject had tried to book one or not. The presence of ‘shàng’ however indicates that the subject tried but didn’t succeed.

In none of the above can ‘xià’ be used as the VC. What meaning/s of ‘shàng’, not found in ‘xià’, are being utilised in these cases? To answer this question we need to take a closer look at the meanings denoted by the above VCCs.

‘Ài-shàng’ in (79) is usually taken to refer to the first stages of loving someone, so contrasts with ‘tà ài Xiàng xiàng’, which means ‘He loves Xiàng xiàng’. He may have been in love for some time. There is therefore some connection with the idea ‘beginning to be involved’, one of the meanings related to ‘shàng’ noted in Chapter 1. To one informant the VCC also implied more involvement than the same verb without the ‘shàng’. This ‘involvement’ could be connected to the ‘contact’ meaning of ‘shàng’.

In (80) there is also a possible link with ‘beginning’ or ‘becoming involved’ since ‘shàng’ is often used where the successful examinee will begin something (e.g. a graduate course) as a result of passing the examination. Informants agreed that one does not ‘kǎo-shàng’ TOEFL (the English test widely taken in the PRC to qualify for entry to universities overseas in English-

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8Of course VCCs can be used to refer to events which have not been achieved but the implication is that achievement was or or will be actively attempted.
speaking countries). This could be because TOEFL is only one of the many hurdles that need to be overcome if one wants to study abroad. In itself, passing TOEFL does not constitute achievement of any final goal. There could also be a link between ‘shàng’ and high status since passing examinations was the key to success and to gaining a good position for much of China’s history. Finally, ‘shàng’ can also indicate ‘difficulty of achievement of V’ (cf (81) - booking tickets is notoriously difficult in the PRC). This will be explored further in 2.8.4 below.

2.5.2. Xià as VC

(82) zài tóngyì kuài shìtòu shàng hé miào qián
at same CL rock on and temple front
pái-xià tóngyàng de zhàopìàn
take-XIA same DE photograph

On the same rock and in front of the same temple (they) take the same kind of photographs.

‘Xià’ can be omitted in the above and the sentence will still be grammatical. Its presence however seems to emphasise that the photographs are taken, i.e. the VC focusses on the completion of the activity.

(83) zànmen jùbàn shígē bìsài de shì jiù
we hold poetry competition DE matter then
zhènme dìng-xià(-lái)
this decide-XIA(-come)

The matter of our poetry competition has been decided this way.

(84) yào jīn yǒu tíng-xià(-lái)
FUT enter then stop-XIA(-come)

(He) was just going to enter but then (he) stopped.

‘Shàng’ cannot be used as the VC in any of the three above. Presumably then, some meaning/s encoded in ‘xià’, not found in ‘shàng’ are being exploited in these VCCs. Lin (1977, pp56,62) notes a relation between ‘xià’ as a VC and ‘stabilisation of state of affairs’. In physical terms movement downwards is bounded, since it is usually stopped by some surface, for example the surface of the earth. (Up on the other hand is unbounded). Having reached the lowest point movement could be expected to stop. Stabilisation could also fit in with the extended downward sense of ‘xià’ where a decrease in amount is indicated. A decrease in activity or movement would lead to a stable state of affairs. There might also be a connection between this and dissociation, in this case dissociation from an activity. It is interesting that other meanings for the character used to write ‘dìng’, which in (83) means ‘decide’, are given as

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9Passing TOEFL can be expressed by ‘tā tōng-guò le TOEFL’ (tōng=pass).

10In (83) and (84) ‘lái’ seems to be an optional second element in the VC (indicated by parentheses). Its function seems to be to reinforce the idea of the action being viewed from its endpoint (see section 2.8.3.2 below).
‘calm; stable’ or ‘fixed; settled; established’ (A Chinese English Dictionary, 1985). Such meanings would also be compatible with a VC related to the idea ‘stabilisation of a state of affairs’.

There may also be a connection between ‘xià’ in (83) and ‘inwardness’ (see 2.8.4.2) since deciding is an internal activity.

**Accommodate/have capacity**

An interesting use of ‘xià’ as a VCC (usually in the potential form) is where it not only focusses on the outcome of carrying V₁ through to completion but also indicates the circumstances determining why the action or process indicated by V₁ can or cannot be achieved. The usual interpretation of the VCC relates to whether or not there is sufficient room for the event to take place. For example:

(85) zhènme duō yángrái zhuāng-de-xià ma?
so many cabbage load-POT-XIÀ Q
(There are) so many cabbages, can (you) fit them all (on your cart)? or Can (your cart) accommodate so many cabbages?

(86) huiyìshì lǐ de rén tài duō le,
meeting:hall in DE person too many CRS
zuò-bú-xià le
sit-NEG-XIÀ CRS
There are too many people in the meeting hall; there is no room (for us) to sit.

(87) nǐ néng bù néng bā tāmen dōu
you can NEG can BA them all
zhào-xià(-lái)?
photograph-XIÀ(-come)
Can you photograph them all (i.e. can you get them all in the photograph?)

(88) yī cì zhǐ néng róng-xià yī ge rén
one time only can hold-XIÀ one CL person
Only one person at a time can be accommodated.

One might think that it is the context in (85) and (86) which provides some of the ‘accommodate/capacity’ meaning. It appears to be the potential construction itself however since, given the construction ‘zuò-bu-xià’, a context such as that in (86) will usually be be given to explicate its meaning.

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11 Note also the English ‘calm down’, ‘settle down’.

12 Informants differed on the permissibility of ‘lái’ as the second element of the VC.

13 This example is rather exceptional since ‘róng’ itself means hold/permit. With this particular verb ‘xià’ can be omitted and the meaning will be much the same. This is not the case with the other examples.
2.6. To continue the action/process denoted by \( V_1 \)

One meaning associated with VCCs involving 'xià' which does not focus on the attainment of a result, is found in the construction '\( V_1 \)-xià-qu'. This can denote 'to go on \( V_1 \)ing' or 'to continue to \( V_1 \)'. Examples are:

\( (89) \) nǐ zhè yàng pàng-xià-qu yào zǒu bù dòng le
\( \text{you this way fat-XIA-go FUT walk NEG move PER} \)
If you go on getting fat like that you won't be able to move\(^{14}\).

\( (90) \) nǐ hái yào zài huāngtǎn shàng yědì
\( \text{you still must at wasteland on wilderness in} \)
zhù-xià-qu
\( \text{live-XIA-go} \)
You must go on living in this deserted wasteland, in this wilderness.

\( (91) \) tā shuō-xià-qu
\( \text{3sg speak-XIA-go} \)
He goes on speaking.

2.7. Previous analyses

How have previous examinations of VCCs dealt with the range of meanings of 'shàng' and 'xià' described above? Chao (1968) classifies all '\( V_1 \)-shàng/xià' compounds as directional VCCs on structural rather than semantic grounds\(^{15}\). Li and Thompson (1981 p58ff) put 'shàng' and 'xià' VCs into the directional VCC category, which they classify as a subgroup of resultative verb complements. They do this on semantic grounds, characterising the \( V_1 \) in directional VCCs as 'displacement' verbs. The VC then shows the direction in which the object or subject moves as a result of the displacement. The only exception to this as far as 'shàng' and 'xià' are concerned is the "metaphoric extension of [the] directional meaning [of 'xià-qu'] into the domain of time" (ibid p61,62). Thompson (1973) suggests that some productive lexical rules can account for the formation of some VCCs, the most notable for the purposes of our discussion being:

\begin{align*}
& \text{a) } V_{\text{motion}} + V_{\text{direction}} \rightarrow [V - V]_{RV} \\
& \text{b) } V + \text{-xiàqu 'continue'} \rightarrow [V - \text{xiàqu}]_{RV}
\end{align*}

\( (RV = \text{resultative verb compound}) \)

All these analyses either state or imply that non-directional meanings of 'shàng' and 'xià'

\(^{14}\)This example is taken from Halliday, 1956 p220.

\(^{15}\)He says that directional VCs are normally in the neutral tone (unlike ordinary complements of result), and also notes that they do not require the perfective suffix 'le' as regularly as 'ordinary complements' (Chao, 1968 p459). Despite this structural definition the very fact that the subgroups are labelled 'resultative' and 'directional' suggests some semantic orientation (this point was made by Lu (1977 p279)).
in VCCs (apart from ‘xià-qù’) cannot be derived from the sum of the meanings of their constituents and must therefore be listed separately in the lexicon and learnt individually by the language learner.

Teng (1977) and Lin (1977) look in some detail at the non-directional meanings of basically directional verbs, including ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’. Teng points out the predictable meanings of VCCs with ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as VCs when their ‘contact’ and ‘dissociation’ meanings are taken into account. In addition to this, Lin considers the relation between ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ and source and goal and notes that in postverbal position both can refer to the achievement of a state of affairs. Both Teng and Lin also note that ‘xià’ can mark something coming into the ‘realm’ of the speaker or the subject (see 2.8.4.2 for further discussion of this point).

Following on from this previous work, we will look at the main factors which contribute in a systematic way to the meaning of VCCs containing ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as the V₂. This will then provide further information about the meanings and functions of these two morphemes.

2.8. Factors influencing the meanings of verb complements compounds

2.8.1. The meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as main verbs

The major meanings of these verbs were discussed in Chapter One (summarised on page 13). From the examples above it can be seen that all of these can be found when ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ are acting as VCs.

2.8.2. The nature of V₁

V₁ denotes change of location of subject and/or object

When a V₁ denotes movement and no direction is specified, ‘shàng’ can indicate direction upwards, often towards somewhere or something. With a similar V₁ ‘xià’ usually indicates direction down and/or away from somewhere or something. Where ‘lái’ or ‘qu’ occur as the second member of the VC they usually have a deictic meaning (see 2.8.3 below).

There are exceptions to the above. For example ‘zhūf-shàng’ in (74) -‘pursue-shàng’ does not mean ‘pursue upwards’ but means ‘caught’ i.e. ‘shàng’ relates to achievement or resultant condition rather than direction. Contrast this same ‘verb-shàng’ combination with the deictic ‘lái’ in (58). This is not to say that the presence of ‘lái’ or ‘qu’ guarantees that ‘shàng’ or ‘xià’ will have a directional meaning. While pāo-xià-qù usually means ‘run downwards away from the speaker’ in the right context it can also mean ‘keep on running’ (cf section 2.6).

If V₁ denotes not only movement but a direction upwards or downwards then ‘shàng’ can be used with the former and ‘xià’ with the latter.
V₁ denotes ‘contact’ or ‘dissociation’

Both ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ can give information about the extent to which the action/process denoted by V₁ is carried out. A V₁ which denotes an action or process that leads to the subject or object coming into contact with something could be expected to have ‘shàng’ as the VC signalling that this situation of contact has been achieved. With such verbs, ‘xià’ could only be used as a VC with an idiomatic meaning. It could not signify ‘contact achieved’. Take the verb ‘zhuàng’ - ‘to load’ for example.

(92) wǒ zhuàng-shàng yángbáicài jiù zǒu
I load-SHANG cabbage then go
I will load the cabbages then go (cf English ‘load up’).

Here one could not have ‘*zhuàng-xià’ to indicate intention to achieve the loading process. It is however possible to have ‘xià’ as a VC with the idiomatic ‘accommodate’ meaning, as seen in (85) above, repeated here.

(93) zhènme duō yángbáicài zhuàng-de-xià ma?
so many cabbage load-POT-XIA Q
(There are) so many cabbages, can (you) fit them all (on your cart)? or Can (your cart) accommodate so many cabbages?

Where V₁ implies dissociation, achievement of the action/process denoted will entail complete dissociation of subject or object from something. ‘Xià’, because of its own inherent meaning, will reinforce this achievement. For example in (76) above, repeated here

(94) wǒ bā nǐ zhè ge èrduo piàn-xià-lái
I BA you this CL ear slice-XIA-come
I will slice off your ear.

Other examples are given in section 2.4 above. ‘Shàng’ would not be appropriate in such cases.

V₁ is a durative verb

Where V₁ denotes an action or process that can be sustained over time then the VC ‘xià-qu’ can denote continuation of the action etc. into the future (see sections 2.6 above and 2.8.3.3 and 2.8.4.3 below).

2.8.3. Interaction with ‘lái’ and ‘qu’ as the second element in a VC.

It can be seen from the examples in this chapter that ‘lái’ and ‘qù’ commonly occur as the second element of a VC. As main verbs these mean ‘come’ and ‘go’ respectively and they have been glossed as such in the VCCs. A closer look at their functions in VCCs shows that they do not always have these motional meanings. Just like ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ they can have extended meanings and these inter-relate with the various meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in quite

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16 ‘Shàng’ is not the only VC which can indicate ‘contact’ for example ‘dǎo’, related to the verb ‘arrive’ and ‘zhào’ related to the verb ‘touch’ can have a similar meaning. See the discussion in section 2.10.2 below.

17 Again there are other verbs which can act as VCs to denote dissociation (for example ‘diǎo’ - related to the verb ‘fall/lose’ - see section 2.10.2 below).
complicated ways. Some of the major meanings of lai’ and ‘qu’ in VCCs, as they relate to our discussion of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’, will be looked at below.

2.8.3.1. Deictic use

As when acting as independent verbs, directional ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as VCs are not deictic. Sentence (55), repeated below would be expressed in the same way whether the speaker was reporting an event s/he had seen from ground level or from the top of a tall building well above the person climbing the ladder.

(95) Tā zài tǐzi shàng pá-shàng pá-xià
3sg at ladder on climb-SHANG climb-XIA
S/he climbed up and down the ladder.

As discussed in Chapter 1, a deictic component can be added by the use of the verbs ‘lai’ - come and ‘qu’ - go. These occur as the second element of the VC. For example:

(96) tā bā kèrén qǐng-shàng-lái le
3sg BA guest invite-SHANG-come PER
S/he invited the guest to come up.

(97) tā bā kèrén qǐng-shàng-qu le
3sg BA guest invite-SHANG-go PER
S/he invited the guest to go up.

In (96) ‘shàng-lái’ indicates direction up towards the ‘inviter’ who must be higher than the guest at the time of speaking. In (97) ‘shàng-qu’ indicates direction up away from the speaker indicating that the ‘inviter’ was at a point lower than the location to which the guest was invited.

With extended senses of vertical direction (see section 2.2.3 above) ‘qu’ and ‘lai’ can also have a deictic meaning (for example in (61) and (62)). In the former the report moves away from the speaker, in the latter it moves towards the speaker.

When V₁ denotes movement ‘lai’ and ‘qu’, as VCs, are likely to have their deictic meaning.

2.8.3.2. Result of outcome of action emphasised (‘lai’ only)

In (64) and (65), repeated below, ‘lai’ does not relate to the position of the speaker or the addressee, rather it emphasises the completed outcome of the action.

(98) wēndù jiàng-xià-lái le
temperature fall-XIA-come PER
The temperature has come down.

(99) wēndù shēng-shàng-lái le
temperature rise-SHANG-come PER
The temperature has risen.
One might therefore expect ‘lái’ to be common as the second element of a VC which denotes the successful attainment of the action/process denoted by V₁. This can be seen in sections 2.4 and 2.5.2 above. It seems more common for ‘lái’ to co-occur with ‘xià’. A possible explanation for this will be discussed in 2.8.4.2 below.

With stative verbs ‘lái’ can also indicate an endpoint\(^{18}\). Examples are:

(100) dùnshì jìng-xià-lái
     quickly be:quiet-XIA-come
Silence quickly fell.

(101) dèngguān jiànjiàngè àn le xià-lái
     stage:lighting gradually be:dark PER XIA-come
The stage lighting gradually dims.

The complex VC ‘xià-lái’ here indicates that the state changes through time, usually to some endpoint (which is often achieved at the time of speaking)\(^{19}\). The speaker is thus the ‘goal’ reference point for spatial ‘lái’ and for temporal ‘lái’ (Huang, 1977, p14).

With stative verbs ‘xià’ seems to have two main meanings. One relates to ‘decrease’ and the other to ‘passage through time’. The latter is also seen with the VC ‘xià-qù’ construction (see below). The idea of ‘decrease’ can be seen by comparing the following:

jing-xià-lái      ‘become quiet’
be:quiet-XIA-come

nào-qǐ-lái      ‘become noisy’
be:noisy-rise-come

One cannot have:

* nào-xià-lái

It appears that noise is seen as increasing while quietness is a reduction in noise level (note the English translation of (100) ‘silence fell’).

Similarly, ‘xià’ in the following is associated with ‘decrease’.

pāng-qǐ-lái      ‘get fat’
fat-rise-come

One cannot usually have:

* pāng-xià-lái
fat-XIA-come

But the following is quite acceptable since some ‘decrease’ is involved.

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\(^{18}\)The V₁ of VCCs are usually characterised as action or process verbs (Li and Thompson, 1981 pp54,55; Chu, 1983 p28). Chao (1968 p144) however notes that V₁ can be almost any verb, including ‘adjectives’.

\(^{19}\)It has been suggested that ‘lái’ may indicate entry into a normal state while ‘qù’ indicates a departure from this state (Huang, 1977 p10).
2.8.3.3. Action or state continues into the future (‘qu’)

The construction ‘xià-qu’ was considered above (section 2.6). There it was seen to carry the meaning ‘to continue the action/process denoted by V1’. While ‘xià-lái’ as a VC, can have a temporal meaning denoting passage through time to some endpoint (often the time of speaking), ‘xià-qu’ usually relates to passage through time from time of speaking into the future. In the latter there is no endpoint indicated. It thus seems that ‘lái’ indicates an endpoint (position of speaker in time or space) while ‘qu’ does not. Interestingly ‘qu’ in modern Mandarin denotes a goal. For example:

(102) wǒ qu Běijīng  
I go Beijing  
I am going to Beijing.

There is evidence that this meaning has been borrowed from other dialects and that in ancient Chinese ‘qu’ meant ‘go away from’ (Chao, 1976 p197). It therefore did not indicate a goal. The VC ‘xià-qu’ seems to have preserved this older meaning. If ‘lái’ indicates ‘goal’ and ‘qu’ indicates an absence of endpoint then this seems to leave ‘xià’ as the bearer of the ‘passage through time’ idea (see section 2.8.4.3 below).

2.8.4. Extended meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as VCs

As both ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ can indicate the extent to which V1 is achieved one might expect that some verbs could allow either ‘shàng’ or ‘xià’ to occur as a complement. This is in fact found and some examples are given below. All relate to the achievement of V1 but signal differences, sometimes quite subtle and difficult to pinpoint, relating to how or why this achievement does or doesn’t occur. Since the variables in these examples are ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ one can presume that any differences in meaning result from the different semantic content of these VCs.

‘He’ - ‘to drink’

(103) wǒ hé le píjiǔ  
I drink PER beer  
I drank some beer.

(104) wǒ hé-xià le píjiǔ  
I drink-XIA PER beer  
I drank (some) beer.

(105) wǒ hé-shàng le píjiǔ  
I drink-SHANG PER beer  
I drank some SHANG beer/I managed to drink some beer.

(103) is the unmarked reporting of an event. (104) signals that there was something notable
about the event, for example that it was the first time that the subject had drunk beer. The VCC with 'shàng' in (105) also denotes that the event had special significance. Contexts given for the utterance of this sentence were ‘I couldn’t drink any beer before because there wasn’t any available’, ‘I managed to get some beer’ and, ‘I had the opportunity to drink some beer’. If there is a common thread between these meanings it seems to be related to the idea that some external reason had prevented the event from taking place before. With ‘xià’ however there is no reason to suppose that beer wasn’t available before, it is just that the subject had not tried it.

(106)  wǒ hē-bu-xià pǐjiǔ
I drink-NEG-XIA beer
I can’t drink any more beer.

(107)  wǒ hē-bu-shàng pǐjiǔ
I drink-NEG-SHANG beer
I can’t drink beer.

Contexts for uttering (106) were given as ‘I can’t because I’ve had enough’, ‘there is too much to drink’ and ‘I’ll fall asleep if I do’. These can be linked to the meaning ‘accommodate/have capacity for’ (see section 2.5.2). It might also be said that they all relate to internal reasons for inability to drink. In (107) the implication is that ‘I can’t because I don’t have the opportunity’ - there isn’t any beer available for example. It therefore appears to be a simple negation of (105) and again relates to an external obstacle.

The above can be compared to (108) below which has no particular overtones other than a simple negative statement indicating that the speaker is not in the habit of drinking beer.

(108)  wǒ bù hē pǐjiǔ
I NEG drink beer
I don’t drink beer.

‘Chī’ - ‘to eat’

(109)  zhènme zǎo le,  nǐ chī-de-xià fàn ma?
so early PER, you eat-POT-XIA rice Q
It’s so early. Can you eat anything (i.e. can you accommodate more food - aren’t you still full from the last meal?)

(110)  zhènme wǎn le,  nǐ hái chī-de-shàng fàn
how late PER, you still eat-POT-SHANG rice ma?
Q
It’s so late. Can you still eat (i.e. is it still possible - for example is the dining room still open?)

Here again a difference may be seen between internal and external factors.

With the verbs ‘eat’ and ‘drink’, the negative potential complement with ‘xià’ is not
limited to being unable to eat/drink because there is not enough room (i.e. the eater/drinker has already consumed as much as possible). As noted in 2.5.2 insufficient space is the most common implication of the construction. With eat and drink however one can be unable to eat or drink for other reasons. For example if one is sick or the weather is too hot. This is shown in the below.

(111) tiān rè-qǐ-lái jiù chī-bu-xià fān le
day hot-rise-come then eat-NEG-XIA rice PER
When it gets hot one can't eat.

While it is the weather which is hot, the above can still be linked to an internal state, caused by the heat, which prevents an individual eating.

With the verbs 'eat' and 'drink' there is also the possibility that 'xià' as a VC has some downward directional meaning since food and drink go down when one eats or drinks. In English one can also have 'drink it down'20. In the following examples, with the verb ‘mǎi’ - 'buy' there seems to be no vertical direction involved with either of the VCs.

‘Mǎi’ - 'to buy'.

(112) wǒ mǎi le fāngzi
I buy PER house
I bought a house.

(113) wǒ mǎi-xià le fāngzi
I buy-XIA PER house
I bought a house.

(114) wǒ mǎi-shāng le fāngzi
I buy-SHANG PER house
I bought a house/ I managed to buy a house.

Sentence (112) is unmarked in that it accords no particular importance to the event. It merely states a fact. (113) emphasises the purchase for some reason. Possible contexts given for its utterance were ‘it was expensive’, ‘other people wanted to buy it’. An example of ‘mǎi-xià’ from a specific context is

(115) wǒ chū-lái yī tāng jiù xiǎng mǎi-xià
I go:out-come one time then think buy-XIA
ji’ tiān de, shēngde tiāntiān wàng
several day DE avoid every:day towards
wài pào
outside run
Whenever I come out I want to buy enough to last for several days, it saves me from having to come here every day.

20 Of course English also has the expressions 'drink up' and 'eat up'. As in Mandarin these seem more related to aspect than to direction.
Here the special reason for emphasising the ‘buying’ is made explicit.

(114) can be translated with ‘I managed to buy a house’ - it emphasises the difficulty of the purchase. There also seems to be some idea that most people would find such a purchase difficult; the difficulty is not specific to the individual.

In the negative potential complement a difference between internal and external reasons for the inability to buy also seems to be shown. One can also see some relation between the VCC with ‘xià’ and the ‘accommodate/no capacity’ meaning discussed in 2.5.2.

(116) wǒ mǎi-bu-xià fāngzi
I buy-NEG-XIA house
I can’t buy a house (contexts given - I do not have enough money, too many people want to buy houses).

(117) wǒ mǎi-bu-shàng fāngzi
I buy-NEG-SHANG house
I can’t buy a house (context given ‘there are none for sale’).

From the examples above we can suggest the following additional meanings associated with ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as VCs.

2.8.4.1. ‘Shàng’ and difficulty

It seems that ‘shàng’ can indicate a difficulty outside the control of the subject. This fits in with the observation above (section 2.5.1) where it was noted that ‘shàng’ could imply some difficulty in achieving the outcome of the action/process denoted by V₁. There may be a connection with the physical fact that it is usually more difficult to go upwards than downwards. What is more this difficulty is not restricted to any one individual but is generally encountered by everyone.

2.8.4.2. ‘Xià’ and inwardness

In the discussion of ‘eat’, ‘drink’ and ‘buy’ above it was noted that ‘xià’ seemed to be associated with the idea that some inwardly related factor/s determined whether an action could be successfully accomplished or not. It has been mentioned in the literature that ‘xià’ (together with ‘lái’) indicates that the outcome or achievement of an event comes or has come into the ‘realm’ of the speaker (Lin, 1977 pp 56-63; Teng, 1977 p7; Huang, 1977 p13). ‘Realm’ is defined in terms of the speaker’s area of interest or concern and/or the speaker’s consciousness or awareness. It is easy to see why ‘lái’ should denote entry into this realm, related as it is to movement towards the speaker. But what is the connection between ‘xià’ and ‘towards the speaker’? One plausible explanation relates to the meaning of ‘low status’ that ‘xià’ can denote. Until the early part of this century it was common for people to use very self-deprecating terms in relation to themselves when they were speaking with others. ‘Zài-xià’ (literally ‘at-under’)


was a common term used to denote the first person. It would therefore not be surprising to find this reflected elsewhere in the language. The use of ‘xia’ in some VCCs would fit in with this idea.

2.8.4.3. ‘Xia’ and movement through time

The common element in the VCs ‘xia-qua’ and ‘xia-lai’, where these denote ‘continuation of an action or state into the future’ and ‘change of state through time’ respectively, (see sections 2.8.3.2 and 2.8.3.3) is ‘xia’. The connection between ‘xia-qua’ as a VC and ‘continuative’ is mentioned in the literature as a somehow natural extension from the literal directional reading (Li and Thompson, 1981 p61,62; Huang, 1977 p13). However they give no indication of why this particular extension should be found. Teng (1977 p21) is one of the few to link this construction with a far more general correlation between spatial and temporal uses of ‘xia’. This will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.9. Summary of complement meanings

The main meanings of ‘shang’ as a VC

- Upward direction (including extended senses)
- Contact
- Achievement of V₁
- To attempt and/or manage to do V₁ (often over external difficulty)
- To become and/or be involved in

Main meanings of ‘xia’ as a VC

- Downward direction
- Dissociation
- Achievement of V₁
- To have the capacity to achieve V₁ (often an internal capacity)
- Movement through time (with deictic verbs)
- Stabilisation of a state of affairs

As when used as main verbs several senses may co-incide and reinforce one another in a single sentence. For example the idea of ‘upward direction’, ‘contact’ and ‘attainment of goal’ can all be present in a sentence like:

(118) qifen-de gua-shang baohua-jf

furiously hang-SHANG field:telephone

(He) hung up the field telephone in a fury.

As in English ‘hang up’ may indicate direction and/or completion of an activity. Other examples of meaning overlap were discussed in section 2.5. The relation between the notion of

contact and dissociation on the one hand and of achievement of the action of $V_1$ on the other has been pointed out in sections 2.3 and 2.4 above.

Which of the possible meanings of 'shàng' and 'xià' as VCs are understood depends on many factors including

- the nature and meaning of the $V_1$
- the presence and meaning of 'lái' or 'qù' as the second element in the VC
- the interaction of these with the various meanings associated with the morphemes 'shàng' and 'xià' discussed above

This would seem to give some systematic basis for looking at the meanings of various VCCs involving 'shàng' and 'xià'. This is not to claim that the meaning of every VCC can be derived from the sum of its parts. Some constructions, for example those related to 'accommodation/capacity' in section 2.5.2, seem to have acquired a specialised idiomatic meaning. Others have become lexicalised (see for example 'pèng-shàng' in example (73) and the related footnote on page 23). Context also plays an important part in the interpretation of VCCs. For example it would determine whether a motion verb + 'xià-qù', like 'páo-xià-qù' should be interpreted as 'running down in a direction away from the speaker' or 'keep on running'.

2.10. Syntactic behaviour and grammatical function

From an analysis of the various meanings associated with 'shàng' and 'xià' as VCs it would seem that they fit best into either the 'directional' or the 'phase' category of VCCs. As directional VCs they indicate the direction of the motion denoted by the $V_1$. As phase VCs they relate to the degree to which the action denoted by the $V_1$ is carried out.

Lu (1977, p311) gives the following example where 'shàng' could be analysed as a result VC.

(119) ta bā kèrén qǐng-shàng-qù le
 3sg BA guest invite-SHANG-go PER
S/he invited the guest to go up and the guest did.

In this example the event denoted by the $V_1$ is 'invite' and the result of this event is that 'the guest went up'. Lu does not consider this sufficient cause to abandon the distinction between directional and result VCCs. The existence of such sentences however shows that the dividing line between the various subtypes of VCCs is by no means completely clearcut.

Despite this example, most VCCs containing 'shàng' or 'xià' can be assigned to either the directional or the phase category, though here again there can be overlaps between the two as

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22 The overlap between 'phase' and 'achievement' VCCs has been noted in 2.1.3. They will be treated as one group in this discussion and referred to as 'phase'.

noted in 2.9 above.  

2.10.1. Syntactic features

If there are different categories of VCC one might expect some difference in syntactic behaviour between the groups. One difference often noted, for example in Li and Thompson (1981 p62-65) and Henne et al (1977 p183) is that, where a directional VCC has a VC made up of two elements (e.g. ‘shàng-qù’ or ‘xià-lái’) a direct object can often be placed within the VCC without any apparent change of meaning. One can therefore have:

(120) bā bāogào jiāo-shàng-qù
     BA report hand:in-SHANG-go
     Hand in the report.

(121) jiāo bāogào shàng-qù
     hand:over report SHANG-go
     Hand in the report.

(cf example (61) above)

With a non-directional VCC however, insertion of an object, where this is possible, will usually change the syntactic status of the constituents, and hence, the meaning of the sentence.

(122) bā chē tīng-xià-lái
     Ba car stop-XIA-come
     Stop the car.

Compare the meaning of (122) with

(123) tīng chē xià-lái
     stop car XIA-come
     Stop the car and get out.

In (123) ‘xià’ is not taken to be a part of a VCC but acts as a full independent verb. Two actions are therefore involved rather than the one in sentence (122).

Where a locational goal is expressed in a sentence with a directional VCC this must split the VCC and be placed between the two elements of the VC (see (58) and (59) above for examples).

Chao (1968 p436) notes a difference in stress pattern between resultative VCCs on the one hand, which normally have the main stress on the complement, and directional and phase on the

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23Some grammars, for example Henne et al (1977) do not differentiate between result and phase VCCs. They include all under ‘result’. This thesis treats them separately since it does seem to be a significant difference between them. With a result VCC, the VC can indicate practically any logical result of the action denoted by the V₁. The VC (often a state) results because of the action of V₁. Take for example, ‘dā-pō’ - hit:broken = ‘break’. As a result of this action something is broken. With a phase VCC, for example ‘mài-shāng’ - buy:SHANG - ‘buy/manage to buy’ one cannot say that ‘shāng’ is the result of V₁, it relates to the achievement of the goal of the V₁ and the circumstances which surround this. Chao (1968) also notes a structural difference between result and phase VCCs (see below).
other which have unstressed complements and are often in the 'neutral' tone.\textsuperscript{24} Kratochvil (1967) gives a detailed account of the relation between stress and tone in Mandarin. Relevant to the discussion here is his description of the variable realisation of unstressed final syllables. These can vary from a situation where the four tones can be distinguished from each other by pitch and length to a situation where all four have little loudness, lack distinctive pitch contour and are very short in duration. Syllables in the lower part of this range are called 'atonic' or are said to have 'neutral tone'. From our observations of the tonal realisation of 'shàng' and 'xià' as VCs it seemed that the degree of this realisation depended on whether they were considered by the informants to be particularly important semantically. If so, they tended to be pronounced with a distinct fourth tone (which is the tone associated with these morphemes when they are acting as main verbs). To come to any firm conclusions about the relationship between the degree of tonal realisation and semantic content however the tonal values of the VCs would need to be quantified and correlated with their various meanings.

2.10.2. Grammatical function

In general, a free action verb in Mandarin, i.e. one occurring without any aspect marker, indicates 'habitual action' or 'near future action' (Chao, 1968 p220). Chu (1976, p50) observes that action verbs do not presuppose any active attempt to carry out, or to carry through to completion, the action/process denoted by the verb. When compounded with a VC however the meaning of the action verb changes and the resulting VCC can indicate active attempt, actual performance and/or attainment of goal. One grammatical function of VCCs would therefore seem to be related to changing an unbounded event to a bounded one, i.e. they have an aspectual function. Another function ascribed to VCCs relates to transitivity. "An intransitive verb of action often becomes a transitive verb by being compounded with a resultative complement" (Chao, 1968, p674). These two observations may not be unrelated.

If we consider the non-directional meanings of 'shàng' and 'xià' VCs (leaving aside for the moment the special case of 'V₄-xià-qu' as described in section 2.6) it seems that the focus of the VC is on the resultant condition that would pertain if the action/process denoted by the V₄ was carried through to completion. That is to say, the VC focuses on the achievement of the action/process denoted by V₄. The event may not have been achieved since VCCs can be used in questions, negatives, and imperatives (see for example sentences (71), (78), (81) and (87)), but nevertheless the event could be said to be viewed from its endpoint. It is thus bounded rather than open ended. This obviously relates to aspect, in this case, perfectivity (Li and Thompson, 1981 p185). Perfectivity is often taken to indicate that a situation is seen as a single unanalysable whole. However this "'totality' view of perfectivity ... is not equally adequate for all language-specific categories that it has been applied to" (Dahl, 1985, p74). In Mandarin perfectivity does not necessarily mean that the event is seen as a whole with no regard to internal structure (see for example the sentences in section 2.8.3.2 above).

\textsuperscript{24}Except in the potential form, when directional VCs 'recover' their full tone (Chao, 1968 p436).
The viewing of an action from its endpoint implies greater effect on any object involved (Hopper and Thompson, 1980 p252). In Mandarin an object (usually bearing the patient or theme role) can be marked with the co-verb ‘bā’ (and occurs pre-verbally) if it is affected by the action of the verb, if it is the focus of attention and if it is identifiable.25 Objects marked with ‘bā’ are extremely common with VCCs. A number of the examples above show the construction (for example (46), (57), (60), (61), (71), (72), and (76)).

Perfectivity, affected object and identifiable object are all criteria listed by Hopper and Thompson (1980 pp251,252) which mark highly transitive clause types. Thus the link between the two grammatical functions noted by Chao and Chu above.

Even when they have a directional meaning (i.e. in directional VCCs), ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ could still be thought of as bounding the event denoted by V₁, though in this case spatially rather than conceptually. Directional VCCs emphasise what happens to the NP that undergoes movement (the theme) and the focus of attention is on change of position rather than, or in addition to, change of state. Where the theme is the object it is commonly found in preverbal position with the ‘bā’ construction. Even in directional VCCs then, the complement construction could be said to have an affect on the perfectivity of the event described.

When they seem to have little semantic load (see sections 2.2.4, 2.3 and 2.4 above) ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ nevertheless play a grammatical role by focussing on the achievement of the V₁.

Other VCs can perform the same grammatical function, i.e. bounding an event by focussing on its achievement. Since they have different origins and are related to different lexical items however, each VC will tend to carry with it different semantic implications. Section 2.8.4 gives examples where either ‘shàng’ or ‘xià’ can be used as VCs with the same V₁s. Both relate to achievement of the V₁ but have different semantic overtones. Other VCs can also be used. For example ‘dào’, related to a verb meaning ‘arrive’ can indicate ‘achievement with difficulty’ (see sentence (45) which seems to have much the same meaning as ‘mǎi-shàng’ i.e. ‘manage to buy’). ‘Dào’, related to a verb meaning ‘fall’ or ‘lose’ can also indicate ‘dissociation’ and can be used as the VC in all the examples in section 2.4 above except for (78). However where ‘shàng’ indicates ‘beginning’ or ‘contact’ ‘dào’ cannot usually be substituted as the VC (thus *‘ài-dào’ - ‘fall in love’, *chuān-dào’ - ‘put on/wear’). In a similar way ‘dào’ cannot be substituted for ‘xià’ where this means ‘stabilisation of state of affairs’ (thus *‘ding-dào’ - ‘decide’). Interestingly there can be an overlap between ‘dào’ and ‘shàng’ as VCs. Both can be used with the verb ‘guān’, when it means ‘switch off’. Thus example (46) above seems to have the same meaning as (124) below.

(124) bā diānshí guān-shàng

BA television close-SHANG

Switch off the television.

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25Following Chafe (1976, p39) ‘identifiable’ is taken to mean “I assume you already know this referent” and “I assume you can pick out from all the referents that might be categorised this way, the one I have in mind”. It thus covers both definite and generic referents.
However when ‘guān-shàng’ means ‘close’ as in (71) above ‘guān-diāo’ cannot be used.

(125) *kuài, bā mén guān-diāo

quick BA door close-DIAO

This is presumably because here some idea of ‘contact’ is required and ‘diāo’ does not encode this.

VCs in Mandarin are not just markers of perfectivity however. One must not forget the construction ‘V₁-xià-qù’ (section 2.6). If anything this marks continuative aspect. The link is not a neat one between directionals and perfectivity but a wider one linking directionals and aspect.

### 2.11. Cross-linguistic comparisons

The use of spatial terms to indicate perfectivity is not restricted to Mandarin. Bybee (1987 p19) gives examples of many languages, including Slavic languages, Georgian, Margi (a Chadic language) and Mokilese (an Eastern Oceanic language) in which “adpositional grammatical morphemes, comparable to English ‘up’, ‘down’, ‘over’ .... pair with verbs to create a sense of completion or ... ‘attainment of a limit’”. She refers to such morphemes as ‘bounders’. Of particular interest are the characteristics ascribed to this type of perfective marker which differ from those of perfectives which develop from other sources. These differences include:

- different verbs take different bounders,
- the bounders add meaning other than perfectivity
- bounders emphasise that a limit has been attained but not necessarily that the event is seen as an unanalysable whole
- the event is not restricted to the past

There are striking parallels between these observations and those relating to ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ (and other VCs) in Mandarin.

There are also similarities between VCCs and phrasal verbs in English. “The notion of resultant condition is essential to phrasal verbs ..... [and] resultant condition implies perfectivity” (Bolinger, 1971 p96). Bolinger also notes that particles in phrasal verbs can lose their directional meaning, “most especially ‘up’ [and] have in some cases traded their full resultative meanings for the main meaning of ‘result achieved’” (ibid p96). In the case of ‘up’ Bolinger suggests that the modification of a directional to a perfective meaning is largely due to the direction of most physical acts of completion and to “closing a gap between the eye of the viewer and the thing viewed; when a glass is filled, the level moves up toward the eye of the viewer; when a flow is suddenly checked, the level rises” (Bolinger, 1971, p98) (emphasis added).

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26 This was true of my Beijing informants. Some speakers from other dialect areas of China, who speak the national language as a second language, accepted ‘guān-diāo’ in sentence (125).

27 For a detailed discussion of the meanings of various VCs see Teng (1977).

28 For example, “after something is fixed up it is not up, and after it has been brought about, it is not about” (Bolinger, 1971 p96).
mine). It is interesting that this introduces the idea of movement *towards*. English 'up', like 'shàng' in Mandarin, can thus indicate movement towards a goal. Likewise 'down' in English "may refer not necessarily to downward motion but to widening a gap" (ibid p99). This is reminiscent of the 'dissociation' meaning of 'xià' in Mandarin.

In an analogous way to VCCs in Mandarin, English phrasal verbs are not just markers of perfectivity. Some can indicate 'continuation', for example 'go on', 'keep on' while others, like 'grind out', 'spin out' "tend to be iterative" (Bolinger, 1971, p97).

2.12. The process of grammaticalization

In cross-linguistic studies it has been suggested that morphemes related to locative notions are likely lexical sources for grammatical morphemes which combine with verbs to indicate 'a sense of completion' or 'attainment of limit' (Bybee, 1987 p19). We have seen that 'shàng' and 'xià', particularly as phase VCs, fulfil grammatical functions related to aspect, especially perfectivity. Taking the idea of a continuum from lexical to grammatical form and function (Bybee 1987, p2; Heine, 1988) 'shàng' and 'xià' as phase VCs would seem to be situated somewhere towards the middle of such a continuum since they display some characteristics of both lexical and grammatical morphemes. In addition to marking perfectivity they usually add some meaning, this often being related to the various meanings denoted by 'shàng' and 'xià' in environments other than VCs. They are thus not just grammatical markers. On the other hand they have many of the characteristics associated with grammatical morphemes. They clearly fulfil a grammatical function, are members of a closed class, are sometimes redundant in context, are usually unstressed, and can lose their distinctive tonal value.

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29Also seen in English expressions such as 'He walked up and asked.....', 'He went up and said.....', where 'to X' can be inserted after the 'up' - 'He walked up to X and asked ...' etc.
Chapter 3

Spatial Location

‘Shàng’ and ‘xià’ are found in nominal constructions where they relate not to direction but to location. This location can be in space or time but in this chapter we will concentrate on the spatial, the temporal being discussed in Chapter 4.

3.1. Localisers

3.1.1. Monosyllabic shàng and xià

The monosyllabic localisers ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ are not normally free morphemes but are bound to the preceding noun. For example:

(126) zài zhōuzi-shàng
      at  table-SHANG
      On the table.

(127) zài zhōuzi-xià
      at  table-XIÀ
      Under the table.

In such constructions ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ have been called ‘localisers’ (Chao, 1968 p620), ‘locative particles’ (Li and Thompson, 1981 p391) and ‘localiser suffixes’ (Henne et al, 1977 p19). We will use the term localiser here. Other localisers include ‘li’ - inside, ‘wài’ - outside, ‘qián’ - in front of/before and ‘hòu’ - behind/after. Localisers are usually translated into English with prepositions (see (126) and (127) above) but this does not necessarily indicate that their grammatical status is that of postpositions (the grammatical status of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as localisers will be discussed in section 3.6 below).

1 A form is free when it can occur alone as an utterance (including an answer to a question) and bound when it cannot (Chao, 1968 p155).
3.1.2. Complex localisers

These are formed from monosyllabic localisers in combination with another syllable, usually a suffix but which can also be a noun or another element like a preposition. The most frequent suffixes, as far as ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ are concerned, are:

- tou (related to a morpheme meaning ‘head/end’)
- bian (related to a morpheme meaning ‘side/border’)
- mian (related to a morpheme meaning ‘surface/face’)

These suffixes combine with ‘shàng’ to give ‘shàng-tou’, ‘shàng-bian’ and ‘shàng-mian’ and with ‘xià’ to give ‘xià-bian’, ‘xià’-mian’ and ‘xià-tou’, though the last one is not as common as the corresponding ‘shàng’ complex. Examples of sentences showing the various meanings associated with these complexes are given in the sentences below.

Other complex localisers are formed from constructions with nouns and prepositions:

- dí-xià ‘bottom/base - XIA’
- yī-shàng
- yī-xià

‘Yī’ is a preposition-like element glossed as ‘to the .... of’ (Chao, 1968 p525). It is related to the literary verb ‘yī’ - ‘take’ ‘use’.

Unlike monosyllabic localisers, all these complex forms can occur as free nouns. Starosta (1982) calls them ‘free relator nouns’. Examples of their usage and meanings are given below.

3.2. Meanings of the localisers and their compounds

The localisers ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ and their respective compounds can have a number of meanings. The major ones are listed below.

3.2.1. Shàng - locational

a) Some connection with vertical position

Sentences (128) to (134) show some relation to the idea of ‘upper’ position. In sentences (135) to (137) ‘shàng’ is translated with ‘on’. There is a relationship between ‘on’ and ‘top/upper-side’ which is described by Jackendoff (1983, p162) in the following terms: "the most salient place-function expressed by ‘on’ requires its reference object to have an upper surface".

Another meaning of English ‘on’ (and Mandarin ‘shàng’) relates to outer rather than upper surface (see sentence (137)). Jackendoff (1983, p162) uses the sentence ‘the fly on the ceiling’ to demonstrate this other meaning "in which the place function involves the outer (i.e. visible) surface of the reference object".

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2Note that none of these suffixes is marked for tone. The lack of distinctive tone is a characteristic of suffixes in Mandarin (another is having minimal semantic content).
At the top of

(128) shàng-mian yǒu shuōmíng  
SHANG-mian have explanation  
It’s written at the top (of the form).

In the context (128) was taken from, it was translated as ‘at the top of the form’. In isolation however it could mean ‘It’s written on the form’.

Above

(129) sān lóu yī-shàng zhù zhe yī xiē wài guó xuéshēng  
three storey above live DUR one some foreign students  
Foreign students live above the third floor³.

Over

(130) zhuōzi de shàng-mian yǒu dēng  
table DE SHANG-mian have light  
There is a light over the table⁴.

(131) zhuōzi-shàng yǒu dēng  
table-SHANG have light  
There is a light over the table.

(132) yī zhī niǎo cóng fāngzi shàng-mian fēi-guò-qu  
one CL bird through house SHANG-mian fly-VC le  
PER  
A bird flew over the house.

This could also be expressed using ‘shàng’ as ‘over’ as in

(133) yī zhī niǎo cóng fāngdīng-shàng fēi-guò-qu le  
one CL bird through roof-SHANG fly-VC PER  
A bird flew over the roof (of the house).

(134) yī zhī niǎo cóng fāng-shàng fēi-guò-qu le  
one CL bird through house-SHANG fly-VC PER  
A bird flew over the house.

³In a sentence like this, ‘yīshàng’ usually does not include the referent to the noun it follows. Compare this to (159) and (163) below.

⁴Some informants did not like this sentence, preferring (131), where ‘shàng’ translates ‘over’. Both (130) and (131) could also mean ‘There is a light on the table.’
On

(135) Eh! shelf-ŠANG NEG have
Strange, it’s not on the shelf!

(136) still use question Q? bald:head DE louse
Are you still asking questions? It’s as clear as a louse on a bald head (Similar to the English ‘It’s as plain as the nose on your face’).

(137) Look, there are three spiders on the door.

As can be seen from the above examples there is some ambiguity of meaning between ‘šàng’ and its related complex localiser constructions. This is because one form can have various meanings, for example ‘šàng-mian’ can mean:

• at the top of (see sentence (128))
• on (see the note under (128) and footnote 5)
• over (see sentences (130) and (132)).

The first two meanings describe a situation of contact while the third does not.

One meaning can also be expressed by using different constructions, for example ‘on’ can be expressed by:

5Once again ‘on’ could be expressed by ‘šàng-mian’ rather than ‘šàng’.
• ‘shàng-mian’ - (note under (128) and footnote 5)
• ‘shàng’ - (135) to (137).

Chao (1968, pp. 401, 620, 621) maintains that ‘N-shàng’ and ‘N-shàng-affix’ are more likely to mean ‘above N’ or ‘on top of N’ where the morpheme ‘shàng’ has its full tonal value. If it loses some of its tonal features he maintains that it is more likely to mean ‘on’. In our investigations it was clear that ‘shàng’, as a localiser, was often unstressed, but the tonal value seemed to be highly variable, even for the same tokens. The value appeared to vary within the range of tone shapes associated with unstressed final syllables (see page 40). A detailed quantitative study would be needed however before any conclusions could be made regarding the correlation between tonal value and meaning.

Where it is not clear from the context or the particular situation, and/or precision of location is important, there are various strategies available in the language for disambiguation. For example, take the case of the three spiders in the diagram above. To specify the spiders’ exact locations one could say of the bottom spider:

(138) zài mén de xià-mian yǒu yī ge
     at door DE XIA-mian have one CL
     There is one on the lower (part of the) door.

An alternative form given was

(139) zài mén de xià bàn bù yǒu yī ge
     at door DE XIA half part have one CL
     There is one on the lower half of the door.

For the middle spider one could say

(140) zài mén de shàng-mian yě yǒu yī ge
     at door DE SHANG-mian also have one CL
     There is also one on the upper (part of the) door.

Following the pattern in (139) the position of this spider can also be described as

(141) zài mén de shàng bán bù yǒu yī ge
     at door DE SHANG half part have one CL
     There is one on the upper half of the door. 6

The position of the topmost spider can be described as

(142) zài mén de dǐng-shàng hài yǒu yī ge
     at door DE top-SHANG also have one CL
     There is also one on the top of the door.

6 In (139) and (141) ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ are modifiers of the following nouns rather than localisers.
b) No connection with vertical position

At

(143) tā zài huì-shàng fāyán le ma?
3sg at meeting-SHANG make:speech PER Q
Did s/he speak at the meeting?7.

In

(144) shū-shàng yǒu xué-bu-wán de hànzi
book-SHANG have study-NEG-finish DE character
There are more than enough characters in this book to learn.

(145) kètáng-shàng tāmen shì péngyǒu,
classroom-SHANG they be friends,
kètáng-xià tāmen yě shì péngyǒu
classroom-XIA they also be friends
They are friends in class and out of class8.

Sentences like the above will be discussed in section 3.5 below when the functions of localisers are considered.

3.2.2. Shàng - non-locational

As far as NP is concerned/With respect to

(146) nǐ sī-xiǎng-shàng yāoqù jīnzhù
you (political)thought-SHANG require progress
You want to strive to improve your political thought, or ‘With respect to your political thought, you want to improve it’.

(147) zhè jiā lǚguǎn zài zhūsū-shàng tiáojiàn
this CL hotel at accommodation-SHANG condition
bù cuò, dānshì zài hūoshì-shàng tài chà
NEG bad, but at food-SHANG very poor
As far as the accommodation goes this hotel is not bad but as far as the food goes it is very poor.

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7Note that in this sentence ‘zài’ could be said to carry the ‘at’ meaning.

8Some informants preferred the forms ‘kè-shàng’ to ‘kètáng-shàng’ and ‘kè-xià’ to ‘kètáng-xià’.
As for appearance he is not bad, but as for ability and knowledge, he won’t do.

3.2.3. Xià - locational

a) Some relation to vertical position

On the lower part

This was seen in the description of the lowest spider on the door in (138), repeated here:

(149) zài mén de xià-mian yǒu yī ge

There is one on the lower (part of the) door.

Without an appropriate context this would usually be understood to mean ‘There is one under the door.’ Sentences (153) and (154) below are examples of ‘xià-mian’ being interpreted as ‘under’.

On the bottom

(150) píng di-xià xiě-zhe zán dui

Our team’s name is written on the bottom of the bottle.

Under

(151) di-xià yǒu shíyǒu

There is oil under the ground.

(152) lǚ kuì-xià yǒu yī shuāng míngliàng

Under the aluminium helmet were a pair of bright eyes.

(153) yī ge láoshū pāo dào zhuōzi xià-mian

A mouse ran under the table (and it is now located under the table).
A mouse ran under the table (en route to somewhere - it is now not under the table).

With verbs of motion, prepositions in English such as ‘under’ and ‘over’ can express path as well as destination\(^9\). In Mandarin it is the preposition\(^{10}\) and/or the nature of the main verb in the utterance which indicates whether one is dealing with a destination or a path. In (153) ‘dào’ - ‘to’ (related to the main verb ‘dào’ - ‘arrive’, ‘reach’) signals movement to the location marked by ‘xià-mian’. In (154) ‘cóng’ - through, together with the verb complement ‘guò’ (related to the main verb ‘guò’ which means ‘cross’ or ‘pass’) indicates a path. The same can be seen with ‘shàng’. In most of the sentences in section 3.2.1 a position is indicated (by the use of a preposition such as ‘zài’ - ‘at’ or the existential verb ‘yǒu’, for example) but in (132) the preposition ‘cóng’ and the verb complement ‘guò’ again indicate a path.

b) Possible connection with vertical position

**Off**

Given an appropriate context, ‘xià’ (and related complex localisers) can be used to mean ‘off’, usually meaning that something is ‘by the side of’ or ‘next to’, but not ‘on’, the NP associated with the localiser/localiser complex. In the following some relation to vertical position can be seen since the NP which the localiser relates the rest of the sentence to can be thought of as being higher than the surroundings (the idea that roads are considered to be higher than their surrounds was mentioned in Chapter 2).

(155) shān-xià yǒu yī piān cǎoyuán

*mountain-XIA have one CL prairie*

There is a prairie at the bottom of the hill (ie it is not on the hill, it’s off the hill)\(^{11}\).

(156) liányè gān dào shān dǐ-xià zhǎo

*that:very:night hurry to mountain bottom-XIA take CL photograph*

That same night we will hurry to the foot of the mountain and take (some) photographs.

Interestingly if ‘shānjiǎo’ - literally ‘mountain-foot’ is used in (156), ‘xià’ is still used to form the place word. Thus one has ‘dào shānjiǎo-xià’ - to the foot of the mountain, not *‘dào shānjiǎo-shàng’.

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\(^9\)Cf ‘place’ and ‘route’ (Jackendoff, 1983 pp161,165).

\(^{10}\)Or co-verb, depending on one’s analysis.

\(^{11}\)This example, together with examples (157) and (158) are based on examples from He (1988).
Sentence (157) requires a suitable context to be interpreted as the above. Although an implausible scenario, in isolation it would tend to be interpreted as ‘there is a broken down car under the highway’. This indicates that ‘under’ is the unmarked meaning of ‘xià-mian’.

c) No connection with vertical position

Out of

‘Xià’ can indicate ‘out of’ as shown in sentence (145) above, repeated below.

(158) kētāng-shàng tāmen shì péngyǒu,  
classroom-SHANG they be friends,  
kētāng-xià tāmen yě shì péngyǒu  
classroom-XIA they also be friends

They are friends in class and out of class.

This example is rather exceptional in that it is the only one found where ‘xià’ has no relation to vertical position. The meaning of ‘xià’ indicated in this example will therefore not be further discussed.

Examples (155) to (158) reflect the relation between ‘xià’ and ‘dissociation’ that has been noted in connection with verbal constructions in Chapters 1 and 2.

3.3. Extended meanings

There are various extensions of the meanings of the localisers ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’. Two of the most frequent are related to status and quantity. As in verbal constructions, ‘shàng’ relates to high status and ‘more’ in quantitative terms. ‘Xià’ relates to low status and ‘less’ in quantitative terms. The same correlations are found in English hence the spatial terms ‘above’ or ‘over’, and ‘under’ can often be used in the English translations of the sentences below.

12 ‘Gōnglú de pāng-biān’ - ‘highway DE side’ - ie ‘by the side of the highway’ would be a much more straight-forward way to express the situation in (157).
Status

(159) nà shì gěi chūjí yī-shàng gànbiú liú
that is for department:level over cadre keep
de DE
That is kept for cadres of Department level and above13.

(160) wǒ lèyi zài nǐ shǒu-xià gànhuò
I happy at you hand-XIA work
I am happy to work under your command14.

Quantity

(161) zài měiguó yǒu hěn duō bǎi wàn
at USA have very many hundred ten:thousand
yī-shàng de fùwèng
above DE man:of:wealth
There are lots of millionaires in the USA. (Literally ‘men with over one million dollars’).

(162) zhè liǎng xiǎo gōnggōng qíchē jī le
this CL small public bus squeeze CRS
wǔshí rén yī-shàng
fifty person over
Over/more than fifty people are squeezed into that small bus.

(163) sān suì yī-xià de értóng zài zhè jiān fāngzi lǐ
three year under DE child at this CL room in
Children under three are in this room15.

3.4. Lexicalised compounds

In most of the above examples the localisers are able to combine with a variety of NPs, that is they are productive. This productivity, together with the fact that localisers form a small closed class, is why they are often regarded as a distinct part of speech (Chao, 1968 p397). The meaning of the NP-localiser construction can be derived from the meaning of the constituent parts16. However, many ‘NP-shàng’ and ‘NP-xià’ constructions, where the ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’

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13In this sentence ‘yìshàng’ usually includes the NP which it follows (cf (129) above).
14Shǒu-xià’ is usually analysed as a compound construction - see section 3.4 below.
15It is not clear whether ‘yì-shàng’ here includes or excludes ‘three-year olds’.
16One of the meanings of the monosyllabic localiser ‘shàng’ is therefore considered to be ‘with respect to’ (Chao, 1968 p399).
seem to be acting as localisers, have become lexicalised compounds\textsuperscript{17}. Examples of these are given below (some relate to location in time rather than space). It can be seen that the degree of specialisation of the meanings differs between the compounds from the fairly transparent ‘wàn-shàng’ to the more opaque ‘mā-shàng’ (presumably the meaning of the latter derives from the fact that the horse was once the fastest form of transport and therefore its use implied something would be carried out swiftly).

**Shàng**

- mā-shàng  
  horse-\textit{SHANG}  
  ‘immediately/at once’

- zāo-shàng  
  early:\textit{morning}-\textit{SHANG}  
  ‘early morning’ (about 6am -9am)

- wàn-shàng  
  evening/\textit{night}-\textit{SHANG}  
  ‘(in the) evening/(at) night’

- shàng-tou/shàng-mian  
  the leadership, the authorities  
  above/\textit{over} etc

An example of the use of the last one above is:

(164) nǐ gěi shàng-tou tī cì yì jiàn  
  \textit{you for leadership make CL suggestion}  
  You can make your suggestions to the leadership.

**‘Xià’**

- shǒu-xià  
  hand-\textit{XIA}  
  ‘under the leadership/guidance, etc., of’  
  (see (160) above)

- sì-xià  
  four-\textit{XIA}  
  ‘everywhere’

- xiāng-xià  
  country-\textit{XIA}  
  ‘countryside/country/village’

- sī-xià  
  personal/private-\textit{XIA}  
  ‘in private/in secret’

- di-xià  
  ground-\textit{XIA}  
  ‘on the ground’

An example of the use of the last one above is:

(165) di-xià yǒu tài duō shù yè  
  \textit{ground-\textit{XIA} have too many tree leaf}  
  There are too many leaves on the ground.

This can be compared with (151), repeated below, where ‘xià’ is used productively and

\textsuperscript{17}This is particularly true of ‘xià’. Chao (1968 p398) goes so far as to say "compounds with ‘xià’ are always lexical and cannot be made up at will". From our investigations this would seem to be too extreme a view.
indicates ‘under’. 18

(166) dl-xià yóu shíyóu
ground-XIA have oil
There is oil under the ground.

3.5. Function

A noun must be a place word to follow certain prepositions (or co-verbs) such as ‘zài’ - ‘at’, ‘cóng’ - ‘through’ or ‘from’, ‘dào’ - ‘to’ or ‘towards’ and ‘wàng’ - ‘towards’; and to occur with certain verbs, such as the existential verb ‘yóu’. The semantic content of the noun may not be the determining factor in its classification as a place word "a morpheme that indicates a place in the physical world is not necessarily a place word, e.g. ‘jiē’ - street, ‘lóu’ - building ... etc. do not automatically qualify to be place words" (Chu, 1972 p87). In fact only certain proper nouns, with a geographical location of area as their referent (e.g. the names of countries, states, provinces and towns) are grammatically categorised as place words. Others need to occur in combination with a localiser to allow them to fit into the place word slot 19. The main functions of localisers are therefore:

1. To give information about the relative position of the NP which they follow. It is because of this function, which is a similar one to that performed by prepositions in English, that localisers are often able to be translated with prepositions.

2. To fulfil a grammatical function, allowing nouns to be classified as place words for grammatical purposes.

The second function seems to be the most important in the following examples. In these ‘shàng’ gives little information about relative position, but is necessary grammatically since the sentences would be unacceptable without it.

(167) nā-qí xiàncái shuāi dào Sòng Bāode
take-up pickle throw to (person’s name)
tóu*(-shàng)
head-SHANG
Taking up the pickles (he) throws (them) at Song Baode’s head.

(168) nǐmen bā wǒ cóng jǐngjià -* (shàng) rēng-xià-lái
you(pl) BA I from derrick-SHANG throw-VC
You can throw me down off the derrick.

See also example (143) above.

18 There is usually a difference in stress pattern between ‘dl-xià’ in (165) and that in (166). In (165) the realisation of the tone of ‘xià’ is likely to be at the lower end of the range of tone shapes associated with unstressed final syllables (i.e. it is likely to be ‘atonic’).

19 The distinction between proper nouns and common nouns is not the decisive one since the names of rivers, mountains and lakes need to combine with localisers with certain prepositions (Henne et al, 1977 p251) while, with a group of common nouns (including ‘xuéxiào’ - ‘school’, ‘kǎofēng’ - ‘living room’, ‘yǒuyú’ - post office, ‘táijīcháng’ - ‘airport’ and ‘túshūguǎn’ - ‘library’) the localiser is optional. In general however, most nouns seem to be classified grammatically as ‘-place’ and need a localiser to make them ‘+ place’.
It is not chance that it is ‘shàng’ which is the localiser in these sentences. While clearly denoting relative position when it carries a meaning related to vertical position (see section 3.2.1 a) above), ‘shàng’ often seems to carry little specific positional meaning (for example in sentences (143), (167) and (168)). In these cases it seems to serve a largely grammatical function. The locational meaning of ‘shàng’ can be so reduced that ‘ǐ’ - ‘inside’ can be substituted for it without much change of meaning. For example:

(169) shū-hū yǒu xué-bú-wān de hànzi

book-in have study-NEG-finish DE character

There are more than enough characters in this book to learn.

For most speakers this has much the same meaning as (144) above.

‘Xià’ on the other hand is much less likely to lose its specific positional meaning and usually involves some idea of ‘lower position’.

It therefore again seems that ‘shàng’ is the unmarked member of the ‘shàng’ ‘xià’ pair since it can neutralise with respect to vertical position.

3.6. Grammatical status of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as localisers

Complex localisers

Complex localisers are free words as shown by the fact that they can occur alone, as in:

(170) tā zài shàng-biān

3sg at above

S/he is up there (e.g. upstairs, up the hill).

When they occur with a preceding noun they are taken to be the head of the resulting NP-localiser construction (Starosta, 1985 p114). If they denote relative position but there is no preceding noun, this is recoverable from context (see example (128)). In a phrase, the relation with the preceding NP can be marked with the subordinating particle ‘de’, which indicates nominal subordination (see sentences (130) and (140)). This indicates that the complex localiser is the head of the phrase.20

Monosyllabic localisers

The grammatical status of monosyllabic localisers has been analysed in different ways. Chao (1968, p397) analyses them in much the same way as complex localisers i.e. they are the head of the construction. Therefore in ‘zhuōzi-shàng’ - on the table and ‘zhuōzi-xià’ - under the table, the localiser is the centre and ‘zhuōzi’ - table, is the attribute. Chao (1968, p283) therefore suggests that a more accurate translation of ‘zhuōzi-shàng’ and ‘zhuōzi-xià’ is ‘table-topside’ and ‘table-below’.

20While ‘de’ is said to be optional, for example (140) could be written ‘zài mén shàng-miàn yě yǒu yī ge’, there is a tendency for a phrase marked with ‘de’ to be interpreted as ‘over/above/on top of’, in preference to ‘on’. If there is no ‘de’ the construction could still be a phrase but there is a tendency for it to be understood as a compound. This fits in with the observation “the phrase form is more likely to be taken in a literal sense and the compound apt to be taken in extended senses” (Chao, 1968 p401). Chao takes ‘on’ to be an extended sense of ‘shàng’ and related complex localisers.
Henne et al (1977, p255) on the other hand take monosyllabic localisers to be suffixes. They are not free forms and cannot be separated from the preceding NP by ‘de’. Thus you can have:

(171) 一鼠一跑鼠桌-xia
one CL mouse run to table-XIA
A mouse ran under the table.

(172) 一鼠一跑鼠之后桌子 de xià-mian
one CL mouse run to table DE XIA-mian
A mouse ran under the table.

But the following is not acceptable

*一鼠一跑鼠之后桌子 de xià

Starosta (1982,1985) has two different analyses. In some cases he analyses the localiser in the same way as Chao, that is, as the head of the nominal construction. In others (particularly some instances of ‘shàng’ and ‘li’, as will be discussed in some detail below) he suggests they are inflexional suffixes.

Historically there is evidence that the monosyllabic localisers were free nouns. For example, they occurred with ‘zhì’, the subordinating particle which is the Classical Chinese equivalent of the modern ‘de’.

The following Classical Chinese example is taken from Norman (1988, p103):

(173) 帕兄 yuér shù zhì xià
(persons name) die at this tree SUB XIA
Pang Juan died under this tree.

Other examples of the use and meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as free nominals can be found in the etymological dictionary Ciyuán (1979), which gives ‘higher part/top’ as a basic meaning of ‘shàng’ and ‘bottom’ as a basic meaning of ‘xià’.

There is also synchronic evidence of the free substantive nature of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’. In literary style they can still occur with the subordinating particle ‘zhì’. For example:

(174) 帕之 de diwèi zài wǒ zhī shàng, gōngzuò
3sg DE position at I SUB SHANG, work
nèngli què zài wǒ zhī xià
ability but at I SUB XIA
His status is higher than mine but his ability is less.

Another literary example showing the nominal nature of localisers is:

21“Classical Chinese is a conventional way of referring to the written form of Old Chinese, the language in the period [770BC - 220 AD]” (Norman, 1988 p83). Most words were monosyllabic in Classical Chinese. It was only at the end of this period that examples of complex localisers were noted. Prior to this only monosyllabic forms were found (Norman, 1988 p117).
Above there is heaven but below are Suzhou and Hangzhou (cities renowned for their beautiful scenery)\(^\text{22}\).

In modern Mandarin monosyllabic ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ are also found following certain prepositions, for example ‘wàng’ - towards, as in the following:

(176) yóu rén zài xià-mian wàng shàng tuì

*have person at XIA-mian towards SHANG push*

There was someone underneath pushing up.

(177) Cuí Báihuā wèile wàng shàng

*Person’s name in:order:to towards SHANG*

pá, diào-chū sān líng duì

*climb, transfer-VC three zero team*

In order to go up in the world, Cui Baihua transferred out of Work Team ‘Three Zero’.

Note the extended sense of ‘shàng’ in sentence (177).

Compare these examples of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ with the following.

(178) zài yī ge xīn mǎi de yīzǐ-shàng

*at one CL new buy DE chair-SHANG*

On a newly bought chair.

(179) zuìjìn zài bāozhì hé guāngbō-shàng

*recently at newspaper and broadcast-SHANG*

Recently in the newspaper and on the radio ....

In (178) ‘shàng’ is acting excentrically since it adds a locational meaning to the whole phrase rather than just the noun to which it is attached. It cannot be the head of the construction. If it was, the position ‘on’ would be the newly bought thing, not the chair. It thus appears to be acting like a clitic. Starosta (1985, p125) suggests that we are here dealing with inflection since "in a rigorous grammatical framework ..... it is hard to see how an affix can be word-internal and phrase-external at the same time. However if [shàng] is inflectional the problem disappears: inflection which is marked on the head of a construction signals the presence of a feature which has the entire construction as its scope". Sentence (179) is another example of ‘shàng’ modifying the whole NP and not just the noun with which it is in construction.

Starosta maintains that only ‘shàng’ and ‘lǐ’ (inside) are able to take external modifiers, so only these two monosyllabic localisers have become re-interpreted as inflections. They are certainly more productive than other localisers and are very common. To give some idea of the frequency of the occurrence of ‘shàng’ and ‘lǐ’ in comparison with ‘xià’, a count of these three

\[^\text{22}\text{In colloquial speech one would use complex localisers like ‘shàngtōu’ and ‘xiàtōu’ in this sentence.}\]
localisers in twelve pages of the play Juànliàn [A Sentimental Attachment] (Zhāi and Wāng, 1987) gave the following results:

29 ‘NOUN-lì’
1 ‘lì-affix’
27 ‘NOUN-shàng’
3 ‘shàng-affix’
0 ‘NOUN-xià’
2 ‘xìa’
1 ‘xià-affix’

Of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’, the greater frequency of the former is due to the fact that it has a wider range of meanings than ‘xià’ (as noted above it is the unmarked member of the pair). Semantically it does not just relate to vertical position - it can have a more general locational meaning and in some cases seems to have very little positional meaning at all, serving a mainly grammatical function (see section 3.5 above). It also has the meaning ‘as far as NP is concerned/with respect to NP’ which has little apparent relation to position or location (see section 3.2.2 above). ‘Xià’ on the other hand always retains a locational meaning, usually related to ‘lower’ or, less frequently, to ‘off’.

Starosta’s distinction between ‘shàng’ and ‘lì’ and other localisers does not seem quite as neat as he implies. While all but one of the informants did not accept (180), preferring (181), there was less agreement about the acceptability of (182). While (183) was preferred, (182) was not totally rejected.

(180) ?zài yǐzì hé zhuōzí-xià
at chair and table-XIÀ
Under the chair and table.

(181) zài yǐzì hé zhuōzí de xià-bian
at chair and table DE XIA-bian
Under the chair and table.

(182) ?zài yī ge xīn mǎi de yǐzì-xià
at one CL new buy DE chair-XIÀ
Under a newly bought chair.

(183) zài yī ge xīn mǎi de yǐzì xià-bian
at one CL new buy DE chair XIA-mian
Under a newly bought chair.

It therefore appears that one cannot state categorically that only ‘shàng’ and ‘lì’ behave as
clitics. They are undoubtedly more frequent in this role, probably because of their generalised locative meaning related to 'on' and 'in' respectively. Other localisers have more specific meanings like 'under', 'in front of' and 'behind'. However from examples like (182) it seems that 'xià' can also act exocentrically. Such a situation could be expected if localisers are in fact in a state of change. Historical evidence (and some synchronic facts) show that they were once free nouns but most of them now occur as part of NPs. In certain situations they also seem to have been re-interpreted as inflections or clitics.

3.7. Summary

3.7.1. Semantic content of ‘shàng’ and xià as localisers

In this chapter we have seen that ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as localisers can vary in meaning and function. The following summarises the major meanings noted above. (In this summary the notion of vertical position will be taken in the broadest sense, i.e. it will include the extended uses related to status and quality).

Shàng

‘Shàng’ and its related complex localisers, can have the following meanings:

a) Definite connection with vertical position
   contact at the top of, on the upper part, on,
   no contact above, over, more

b) No necessary connection with vertical position
   contact at, in, on
   as far as NP is concerned, with respect to NP

Xià

‘Xià’ and its related complex localisers have meanings related to:

a) Definite connection with vertical position
   contact on the lower part, on the bottom
   no contact under, at/near the bottom of, less

b) Possible connection with vertical position
   dissociation off (not on)

If we take ‘upper position’ as a major component of the meaning of ‘shàng’, one can see the connection between this and the locational meanings which relate to vertical position. Upper position relates to ‘at the top’ and ‘on the upper part’, which also relates to ‘on the outer surface’. When used to describe a situation of non-contact upper position becomes associated with meanings related to ‘above’ and ‘over’.

Similarly, taking ‘lower’ position as a major component of the semantics of ‘xià’, this has become associated with meanings related to ‘on the bottom’ and ‘on the lower part’. When describing a situation of non-contact, lower position becomes associated with ‘under’ and ‘at/near the bottom of’.
Another meaning related to ‘xià’ seems to be ‘dissociation’ leading to meanings related to ‘off’ or ‘not on’. In most cases however there is still a relation to being in a lower position since there is usually an idea of ‘not being on something high’ (see the examples in section 3.2.3 b) above).

The extended meanings of the localisers noted in section 3.3 relate to vertical dimensions. In regard to status, ‘shàng’ relates to high position and ‘xià’ to low. In regard to quantity, ‘shàng’ relates to ‘more’ and ‘xià’ to ‘less’. If there is more of something the height of the pile or the level of the substance is typically higher than when there is less of it. These extended meanings provide further evidence that vertical position is a basic component of the meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’.

In addition to its meanings related to vertical position, ‘shàng’ can have a more general locational meaning (e.g. ‘in’, ‘at’). In some cases ‘shàng’ carries little specific locative meaning but serves a grammatical function. ‘Shàng’ can also have the non-locational and non-vertical meanings ‘as far as NP is concerned’ or ‘with respect to NP’.

### 3.7.2. Grammatical status

There is both synchronic and historical evidence that ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ were free words with nominal status whose meaning related to vertical position. In modern Mandarin however these monosyllabic localisers are usually not free forms but are found in a number of constructions including the following.

1. They are combined with another syllable, often a suffix, to form complex localisers.
2. They are combined with another morpheme in fixed lexical compounds.
3. They productively combine with a preceding noun, usually providing information about its relative position and fulfilling a grammatical function - i.e. they enable nouns to occur with certain prepositions and verbs which require their arguments to be place words.
4. They productively combine with a preceding noun, but have lost much of their semantic content and mainly function as a grammatical marker, fulfilling the grammatical function detailed in 3. above.

Of the two monosyllabic localisers ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ the latter seems to have retained more of its semantic content and thus has a more restricted occurrence in productive constructions than the former. ‘Shàng’ on the other hand often seems to carry little lexical meaning. It occurs with a wide range of nouns, is more frequent in occurrence and frequently acts mainly as a grammatical marker. It often behaves as a clitic and in these cases can no longer be considered as the head of the NP-localiser construction of which it is a part since, while still phonologically dependent on the preceding noun, it constitutes an immediate constituent with an entire phrase.
3.8. The process of grammaticalization

The change of grammatical status from free nominals to bound forms and the increasing importance of grammatical function, especially in the case of ‘shàng’ where we have seen that the semantic component can be much reduced, fits in with theoretical work (for example Svorou, 1986; Heine, 1988) which seeks to trace the evolution of grammatical morphemes which express locative notions from lexical sources. Data collected from a wide range of languages shows that nominals are a common source of locative expressions. One group of nouns which can develop into markers of locative relations are ‘object-part’ nouns such as ‘top’ and ‘front’ (Svorou, 1986 p523).

It has been suggested that a genitive construction is a preliminary stage in the grammaticalization of lexical forms (Svorou, 1986 p516,518; Heine, 1988 p28ff). In Mandarin localisers usually occur following an attributive noun, the relation to which can be marked by the particle ‘de’ in the case of complex localisers. ‘De’ is a subordinating particle which, amongst other types of nominal subordination, indicates the possessive. In the case of monosyllabic localisers no attributive marker is possible (except in literary style) but there is both historical and synchronic evidence that at an earlier stage in the language they were involved in possessive constructions.

Grammaticalization is accompanied by loss in "structural autonomy and meaning specificities, and by ..... phonological erosion" (Svorou, 1986 p516). We have seen in the case of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as localisers in modern Mandarin that they are usually bound forms, are often unstressed and can lose their distinctive tonal features. Further work would be needed however to measure this tonal variation and to correlate it with semantic content and grammatical function. Loss of semantic content has been noted particularly in respect to ‘shàng’, which is the member of the ‘shàng/xià’ pair which most frequently acts as a generalised locative marker and most clearly behaves as a clitic. ‘Shàng’ would thus seem to have gone further along the developmental path from lexical to grammatical morpheme both in terms of form and function.
Chapter 4
Temporal Location

4.1. Time words

Some examples of ‘shàng’ in time expressions were introduced in chapter 3 as examples of lexical compounds involving localisers. These were

- wǎn-shàng  ‘(in the) evening/(at) night’
  evening/night-SHANG
- zǎo-shàng  ‘(early) morning’ (about 6am to 9am)
  early:morning-SHANG
- mǎ-shàng  ‘immediately/at once’
  horse-SHANG

The first two are nominal constructions and relate to location in time. They are time words, structurally defined by Chao (1968 p533) and others in a similar way to place words, that is, they are defined on the basis of the fact that they can occur as the arguments of certain prepositions and verbs.

Compounds with a different structure involving ‘shàng’ and ‘xia’ are also included in the time word group. Examples are:

- shàng- wǔ  ‘morning’ (later than zǎo-shàng - about 9am to noon)
  SHANG-noon
- xià-wǔ  ‘afternoon’
  XIA-noon

In these compounds ‘shàng’ and ‘xia’ are modifiers. Given that ‘wǔ’ means ‘noon’ they appear to be related to the ideas ‘before’ and ‘after’ respectively. While they may be found in other constructions with this meaning they are not usually used productively to convey ‘before’ and ‘after’, though there is a link to their use in sequencing which will be examined below. Two other location words ‘qián’ - spatially ‘front’ and ‘hòu’ - spatially ‘behind’, and related compounds, are used. These will be considered further in sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.2.

Sentences showing the use of time words containing ‘shàng’ and ‘xia’ are

(184) wǎn-shàng yǒu diǎn kěsòu
  evening have little cough
  (I) cough a bit at night.
4.2. Sequence

When they indicate sequence 'shàng' and 'xià' often function as determiners. For example:

4.2.1. Next and last

(186) duìle, xià yī bān chē wǔdiǎnzhōng jiù kāi
    right, XIA one CL bus 5:0'clock then drive
    PER
  Right, the next bus leaves at 5 o'clock.

(187) shàng yī bān chē wǔdiǎnzhōng kāi-zǒu le
    SHANG one CL bus 5:0'clock drive-VC PER
  The last (i.e. previous) bus left at 5 o'clock.

(188) zhè shì tā shàng ge yuè lái de yī fēng
      this is 3sg SHANG CL month come DE one CL
      xīn
      letter
  This is the letter that came from her last month.

Sentences (186) to (188) indicate time relative to the time of speaking. When used with 'yuè' - month and 'xīng-qī' - week, this is the usual interpretation of 'shàng' and 'xià'. Thus

Yuè - 'month'

shàng ge yuè  'last month'
shàng-shàng ge yuè  'the month before last'
xià ge yuè  'next month'
xià-xià ge yuè  'the month after next' 1

Xīng-qī - 'week'

shàng (ge) xīng-qī  'last week'
shàng-shàng (ge) xīng-qī  'the week before last'

1 'Ge' is the classifier for 'yuè' - month and 'xīng-qī' - week. With 'xīng-qī' the classifier is often omitted, indicated by parentheses.
Examples of these in sentences are

(189) tā shàng xīng-qī gāng zǒu
3sg SHANG week just walk
She just left last week.

With ‘tiān’ - day and ‘nián’ - year, ‘next’ and ‘last’ are not usually indicated by ‘xià’ and ‘shàng’.\(^2\) The following are more usual.

míng-tiān (literally ‘bright-day’) ‘tomorrow’
míng-nián (‘bright-year’) ‘next year’
zuó-tiān (yesterday-day) ‘yesterday’
qù-nián (‘go-year’) ‘last year’

4.2.2. Serial ordering

Although not very common, ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ can relate to time relative to another event in an utterance rather than relative to the time of speaking. Thus

(190) dàxué biyè de xià yī nián wǒ méi
university graduate DE XIA one year I NEG
zhǎo-dào gōngzuò
find-VC work
The year after I graduated from university I didn’t find a job.

(191) hū nián de shàng yī nián shì shénme nián?
tiger year DE SHANG one year be what year?
What is the year before the year of the tiger?

More common in such cases however are ‘hòu’ - back and ‘qián’ - front, and related compounds. Thus sentence (192) is usually preferred to (190) and (193) to (191).

(192) dàxué biyè de hòu yī nián wǒ méi
university graduate DE BACK one year I NEG
zhǎo-dào gōngzuò
find-VC work
The year after I graduated from university I didn’t find a job.

(193) hū nián de qián yī nián shì shénme nián?
tiger year DE FRONT one year be what year?
What is the year before the year of the tiger?

\(^2\)Though it is possible in certain contexts to find ‘shàng yī nián’ - SHANG one year - ‘last year’ and ‘xià yī nián’ - XIA one year - ‘next year’. Some Wu dialects also use ‘shàng’ with ‘day’ to indicate ‘yesterday’.
Sequencing - in time

Chao (1968, p545) gives two alternative interpretations of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ when they occur as determiners with ‘xuéqī’ -semester. These are
a) shàng xuéqī
‘first term’ or ‘last (i.e. previous) term’

b) xià xuéqī
‘second term’ or ‘next term’

Chao says that the first reading of each is the more common interpretation, the second being more normal when a numeral and/or classifier is present. According to his analysis then,
c) below would be interpreted as ‘last term’ and d) as ‘next term’ (‘ge’ is the classifier for ‘term’).
c) shàng ge xuéqī
d) xià ge xuéqī

In fact however our informants considered ‘last’ and ‘next’ to be the unmarked meaning for all of these phrases (i.e. a) to d)). Some only allowed this interpretation.

It would seem from this evidence, together with the general preference shown for the use of ‘hòu’ and ‘qián’ in sentences (190) to (193), that ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in productive constructions are more closely identified with time relative to the time of speaking than with temporal sequencing which does not involve speaker deixis. They are therefore generally interpreted as indicating ‘last’ (i.e. ‘previous’) and ‘next’ respectively.

Sequencing - no necessary connection to time

In certain contexts where time is not involved, ‘shàng’ is commonly interpreted as ‘first’, and ‘xià’ as ‘second’ or ‘third’ (which ever is the final one). For example with books of two or three volumes, if there are two volumes one finds

| shàng cè | ‘first volume’ |
| xià cè | ‘second volume’ |

If there are three volumes one finds

| shàng cè | ‘first volume’ |
| zhōng cè | ‘middle or second volume’ |
| xià cè | ‘third volume’ |

Iconicity

In all the examples of compounds collected where ‘shàng’ occurs together with ‘xià’ the former always precedes the latter. Examples of some of these compounds are given below. This can be thought of as iconic since the meanings of ‘shàng’ - ‘first’ or ‘last’ (i.e. previous) and ‘xià’ - ‘second/third’ or ‘next’ appear to be reflected in the actual form of the compounds.

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3 First and second term can be unambiguously indicated (and are obligatorily used by those who do not recognise the meanings ‘first’ and ‘second’ in the above) by using ordinal numbers, ‘dì-yī’ - first and ‘dì-èr’ - second.

4 If there are more than three volumes this terminology is not used, ordinal numbers ‘dì-yī’ first, ‘dì-èr’ second etc. are used.
In English 'up' also usually precedes 'down'. For example

'He paced up and down the room.'

*He paced down and up the room.

See also the translation of (194) above.

4.3. The connection between vertical dimension and sequence

4.3.1. The writing system

One might think that the writing system is one possible source which relates 'up' with 'before' and 'down' with 'after'. Chinese used to be written vertically from top to bottom (and the vertical lines ran from right to left), but is now generally written from left to right in the same way as English is. This means that the top to bottom direction is still maintained since the horizontal lines of writing are begun at the top of the page. In both systems therefore one begins at the top and proceeds downwards.

In English one finds sentences such as:

'The above examples show that 'shang' can indicate 'last'.

'This will be discussed in more detail below'.

---

5 This example is taken from He, 1988 p5.

6 In English 'high' also usually precedes 'low' e.g. 'I searched high and low' and 'top' precedes 'bottom', as in 'She cleaned the house from top to bottom' and in example (197).
An example from Mandarin is

(198) shàng wén zhūyào fènxiă le ‘shàng’ hé ‘xià’ de yòngfā
SHANG writing main analyse PER SHANG and ‘xià’ DE usage

The above passage analysed the main usages of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’.

However the influence of the writing system should not be overestimated. The use of vertical terms in temporal sequencing is not restricted to the written environment in either Mandarin or English. Example (198) above can be either written or spoken in Mandarin, and in English one has terms such as ‘descendant’ and the less common ‘ascendant’, defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘one who precedes in genealogical order, an ancestor’. One can also say:

‘The tradition has been handed down from generation to generation’.

In Mandarin however the use of vertical terms in sequencing is far more common than in English. Note the English translations of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ and their related compounds in the following examples from spoken Mandarin.

(199) yī-shàng shì wǒ de yī diăn cūqiăn de kànfa,
above be I DE one little simple DE view,
qǐng tòngzhīmen pìpíng zhīzhèng
please comrades criticise point:out:errors

The preceding were my simple ideas. Please criticise them.

(200) wǒ xiān shuō dào zhèr, xià-miăn wǒ diānmíng
I first talk to here, XIA-mian I call:the:roll
I will stop here and call the roll next.

(201) wàng xià shuō
towards XIA talk
Go on (speaking) (Imperative).

(202) zài wàng xià jiāng
again towards XIA speak
Continue speaking. (Imperative).\(^7\)

In the above, (199) is rather formal while (200) to (202) are less so.

Note also the verbal examples from section 2.6 in Chapter 2, e.g. sentence (91), repeated below.

\(^7\)Note that in sentences (198) to (202) only in (198) is ‘shàng’ acting as a determiner, in (199) and (200) complex localisers are involved, while in (201) and (202) ‘xià’ is a nominal element which follows a preposition.
Underlying the use of vertical terms in relation to sequencing and time is a more fundamental link between spatial and temporal location. This will be discussed in the next section.

4.3.2. Location and time

"For a long time, linguists have noted that the spatial and temporal terms in English and other related languages overlap considerably." (Clark, H 1973 p48). Clark goes on to say that "on this evidence....it can be argued that the description of time in English is based on a quite specific spatial metaphor" (ibid p48). "Time...is not just expressed with an occasional spatial simile, but rather is based on a thoroughly systematic spatial metaphor, suggesting a complete cognitive system that space and time expressions have in common" (ibid p62) (emphasis mine). This seems closer to the claim that "temporal relations in language are locative in underlying structure" (Traugott, 1975 p213). This idea is also inherent in Wierzbicka's work, where temporal notions are expressed in terms of "world, become, part, think of," (Wierzbicka, 1980 p185) which are also used to define spatial notions ('become' being involved in notions of direction, distance and extension) (Wierzbicka, 1972 pp93ff).

a) Front and Back

The most common terms used to describe spatial and temporal location and orientation are related to 'front' and 'back'. In Mandarin 'qián' - front, and 'hòu' - back, and related complex localisers such as 'qián-biàn' and 'hòu-biàn', are used spatially and temporally. For example:

(204) zài zhuòzi hòu-biàn zhàn-zhe yī ge lǎoshī

at desk back stand-DUR one CL teacher

There is a teacher standing behind the desk.

(205) zài zhuòzi qián-biàn zhàn-zhe yī ge xuéshēng

at desk front stand-DUR one CL student

There is a student standing in front of the desk.

Examples of temporal use were given in sentences (192) and (193) and these are repeated below.

(206) dàxué biyè de hòu yī nián wò méi zhǎo-dào gōngzuò

university graduate DE BACK one year I NEG find-VC work

The year after I graduated from university I didn't find a job.
What is the year before the year of the tiger?

The complex localisers 'yì-qían' and 'yì-hòu' are very commonly used to refer to 'before' and 'after' respectively.

Before I came to Australia I was in China.

After graduating from university I entered graduate school.

‘Hòu’ is also used to indicate ‘the day after next’ and ‘the year after next’ (‘hòu-tiān’ and ‘hòu-nián’ respectively). ‘Qián’ is used in ‘The day before yesterday’ and ‘the year before last’ (‘qián-tiān’ and ‘qián-nián’ respectively).

These temporal uses of ‘front’ and ‘back’ seem to fit in with various ideas that have been put forward about people’s conceptual organisation of time (Clark, H 1973 p50; Traugott, 1975 p217ff ; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 pp41-45). These all involve a linear model which involves one or more of the following:

• ego is moving and time is stationary
• ego is looking forwards towards the future
• time is moving past ego from the future to the past

Thus one could construct diagrams like the following:

a) Moving ‘ego’

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{EGO} \\
\text{back} \quad \text{front}
\end{array}
\]

b) Moving time

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{EGO} \\
\text{front} \quad \text{back}
\end{array}
\]

Lakoff and Johnson (1980 p42) suggest that as time is considered to be moving it receives "a front-back orientation facing in the direction of motion".

While ethnographers have pointed out that "the one-way linear model of time .. is not universal" (Wierzbicka 1973 p619) it would seem from the linguistic evidence that the Chinese,

\footnote{yì’ it will be recalled is a preposition-like element glossed as ‘to the ..., of’ (Chao,1968, p525).}
like Western cultures, do conceive of time in this way. "The moving time metaphor seems to be the dominant conceptualization among the Chinese" (Huang 1977, p6). Examples taken to be evidence for the 'moving time' idea are:

(210) lái rì

*come day*

The coming days*

(211) qu-nián

*go-year*

Last year (literally 'go-year').

One also finds

(212) guò-qù

*cross/pass-go*

Past

(213) jiāng-lái

*be:going:to/about:to-come*

Future*

On the other hand "the movement metaphor can be taken the other way: regarding time as stable and the ego as being in motion" (Huang, 1977 p7). An example given to show this is:

(214) wǒmen yǐjīng jǐnrù èrshíyī shìjì

*we already enter twenty:one century*

We are entering the twenty-first century.

As ego is facing forwards, the future can be thought of as being 'in front' and if ego moves s/he 'enters' it.

One might wonder why 'hòu' does not refer to the past since this is 'behind' ego. In the diagram below (based on a similar premise to b) above) one can see that 'tomorrow' is in front of ego and from ego’s point of view, the day after tomorrow is behind it (thus Mandarin 'hòu' - behind).

```
TIME
front back

EGO
tomorrow the day after tomorrow
‘míng-tiān’ ‘hòu-tiān’
```

Similarly one might think that 'front' should refer to the future - being in front of ego.

---

9Similarly, lái nián, ‘come year’ - the coming year.

10It should be noted that this correlation between ‘lái’ (come) and future and qu (go) and past seems to be the opposite of that noted for these verbs as VCs in chapter 2. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

11In fact it can in some constructions e.g. in the English ‘In the days ahead’ and in Mandarin in example (214).
Looked at again from the point of view shown in diagram b) above one can see how ‘qián’ can refer to the past since it precedes ‘yesterday’.

Alternatively, if one thinks in terms of sequencing rather than past and future (as suggested in Traugott, 1975 p218) there is no real conflict between any of the possible schema for conceptualising time. What happens later is always behind what happens before. The future may be in front of ego but it happens after the past. The idea of events in sequence in time, either in front of us or in the past (whether or not they move past us or we move through them) seems to offer a logical explanation as to why ‘hòu’ can refer to the future and ‘qián’ to the past.12

b) Vertical expressions

The interesting thing in Mandarin however is the fairly widespread use in sequencing of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’, which are semantically connected to ideas of vertical direction and location. Three questions follow from this:

1. Why should vertical concepts be used in sequencing?
2. Why should ‘shàng’ be related to ‘previous/last’ and ‘xià’ ‘to next’?
3. Why should vertical terms be used more widely and frequently in Mandarin than in English?

Taking question one first, verticality is a natural dimension defined by the pull of gravity and the upright stance of human beings. This dimension and the natural plane of reference formed by ground level are "two perceptual invariants .. convenient to use ...when describing spatial relations" (Clark and Clark, 1977 p534). Other ‘natural’ dimensions are ‘right’ and ‘left’ and ‘front’ and ‘back’ (ibid p534).

‘Up’ and ‘down’ are asymmetrical because of the one-way pull of gravity and also, like ‘front’ and ‘back’, because of human biological characteristics. H. Clark (1973 p34) calls the upright position ‘canonical’ "since it is the position from which [man] carries out most important activities". "When people stand, the space in front of them and above the ground is optimal for perception by eye, ear and touch" (Clark and Clark, 1977 p535). Upward and forward are therefore assigned a positive value while downward and behind are negative ('positive' is here taken to mean the presence of something and 'negative' the absence, (Clark, H 1973 p33).

Time also seems to be considered asymmetrical, at least in English and Chinese, so it would seem appropriate for asymmetrical spatial terms to apply to time. The ‘natural’ dimensions 'front/back' and 'up/down' would seem to be good candidates for extension into the

12Wierzbicka (1973 p617) offers an alternative view of time where events are thought of as 'parts of worlds', 'world' being defined as 'everything at a particular time' or a 'one time-crossection of space-time'. 'Worlds' are not seem as following one another but one world 'becomes' a different world.
temporal sphere. If one uses one member of an asymmetrical pair of terms to refer to one facet of time e.g. ‘time after’ it would seem logical to use the other to refer to the opposite, in this case ‘time before’. It may not just be chance that the positive terms ‘qián’ - related to ‘front’ and ‘shàng’ - related to ‘up’ are used to indicate the same temporal concept while the corresponding negative terms both refer to the opposite.

Looking at the second question, why is ‘shàng’ related to ‘previous/last’ and ‘xià’ to ‘following/next’? Traugott (1975, p221) suggests that this relation between upward terms and previous time and downward terms and following time is typical of languages which use the vertical plane for sequencing. It is certainly true for both Mandarin and English. A perceptual basis may be that in people’s canonical position things/objects that are visible in front and above the ground are encountered first, while things further away arrive, or are reached, later.

Another link between the vertical plane and sequencing relates to the movement of the sun, which goes upwards from the horizon in the morning and downwards towards the horizon after noon. In cultures where sunrise is considered to be the beginning of the day and sunset the end, the link could be made between upward movement and ‘beginning’ and downward movement and ‘end’. In terms of sequence, the upward movement would precede the downward.13

The possible influence of the writing system has already been discussed.

There may also be a link with linguistic markedness. When children begin to acquire the notion of non-present “they first seem to acquire the notion of past, events they have already experienced, and a bit later the notion of future…” (Clark and Clark, 1977 p541). While ‘past’ is clearly marked with respect to ‘present’ it seems to be the least marked of the ‘non-present’ concepts. From the previous chapters it has been seen that ‘shàng’ is the unmarked term since it more commonly neutralises with respect to vertical direction or position. If ‘shàng’ is the unmarked form one might expect it to be easier to handle conceptually than ‘xià’, and therefore possibly acquired earlier. Perceptually there is evidence that children look at upper parts of figures in preference to the lower parts (Clark and Clark, 1977 p536). Certainly in English ‘‘up’ has been found to take less time to process than ‘down’ and the same has been found for ‘above’ and ‘below’, ‘in front of’ and ‘in back of’ ‘ahead of’ and ‘behind’...” (ibid p535). There may be some natural tendency to use unmarked spatial terms to refer to the first acquired and less marked non-present temporal concepts.

There is also a correlation with iconicity. It has already been noted that in compounds ‘shàng’ precedes ‘xià’ (and the same seems to hold for terms such as ‘up’ and ‘down’, ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ etc. in English). Tai (1985, p50) has claimed that a large number of word order rules in Chinese can be explained by adherence to the principle of temporal sequencing, stated as “the relative word order between two syntactic units is determined by the temporal order of the states which they represent in the conceptual world”. While noted in other languages (though usually

13In cultures where the day is considered to begin at dusk (day here relating to a period of 24 hours rather than the hours of daylight) there would be no necessary relation between sunrise and ‘beginning’ but sunset could still be seen as the ‘end’ of the day. In sequential terms moreover, afternoon could still be considered to ‘follow’ morning.
considerably affected by other considerations such as topic/comment and given/new information) Tai suggests this principle plays a significant role in Chinese grammar. This link between relative word order and temporal sequence and the fact that ‘shàng’ precedes ‘xià’ in compounds is another link between ‘shàng’ and previous time and ‘xià’ and later time. It is not clear whether this is a result of, or a contributing factor to, the sequencing meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’.

The third question may hinge on cultural differences between Chinese speakers and English speakers. While English does make use of vertical terms in relation to time (and in the same way - i.e. ‘down’ relates to later time and ‘up’ or ‘above’ to earlier time) it is by no means as systematic or as productive a use as is found in Mandarin. This could, of course, just be due to chance. However it is true that respect for the older generation and veneration of the past has traditionally played a very important role in Chinese culture. "All traditional Chinese reformers... from Confucius to Wang An-shih and even to Sun Yat-sen, showed a nostalgic feeling towards the golden age alleged to have existed in antiquity. For the Chinese, the millenium does not exist in the future but in the past" (Hsiung, 1969 p50). This contrasts with Western culture, which, while it may acknowledge that one can learn from the past, is usually characterised as being forward looking and future orientated.

In temporal sequencing we have seen that ‘shàng’ relates to ‘previous/last’ and ‘xià’ to ‘next/later’. We have also seen that ‘shàng’ is related to high status and high prestige, situations which appear to be respected while ‘xià’ relates to the opposite. These two terms can also directly denote ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ and ‘inferior’ respectively. This can be seen in the following compounds

a) With ‘dèng’ - ‘grade’

shàng-dèng ‘superior grade/first class’
zhōng-dèng ‘medium grade’
xià-dèng ‘low grade’

Sentence (215) shows an example of the use of the above.

(215) Tián Jí de shàng-dèng mǎ bǐ
(person’s name) DE SHANG-grade horse compare
Qí wàng de zhōng-dèng mǎ
Qi(name:of:State) Lord DE middle grade horse
pǎo de kuài
run DEG fast

Tian Ji’s first grade horse ran faster than the Lord of Qi’s medium grade horse.
b) With 'pín' - 'quality'

(216) yǒu yī ge shàng-pín de zìyàng zài

have one CL SHANG-quality DE printed:words at

hè-shàng

box-on

It has 'highest quality' printed on the box.14

c) With 'cè' - 'plan'

(217) nà shì shàng-cè

that be SHANG-plan

That is an excellent plan.

(218) nà shì xià-cè

that be XIA-plan

That is a poor plan.

'Shàng' also means 'good/excellent' in:

(219) nǐ zhè guà shì shǎo jiān de shàng

you this symbol be seldom see DE SHANG

guà ya

symbol PART

This symbol of yours is an excellent one which is rarely seen.

Since the past is seen as the golden age and the older generation have traditionally been admired it is possible that the link between 'shàng' and 'xià' in their temporal sense is systematically linked with their uses in relation to status and worth.

14Note that in this case, while 'inferior' quality is given in the dictionary as 'xià pín', 'ci' (second rate/inferior) pín' seems to be the usual expression in Mandarin.
Chapter 5
Summary and conclusion

5.1. Semantic content

We have looked at the meanings of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ across word classes and have also considered their semantic content when they are free lexical items and when they are combined with other elements in larger constructions. This approach has led to an overall view of the various meanings associated with these morphemes and allowed us to propose systemic links between them. It enables us to see that some meanings, which may have been identified in previous work in relation to one particular syntactic construction, have wider implications for the semantics of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’. For example, we suggest that the meanings related to time denoted by the verb complements ‘xià-qù’ and ‘xià-lái’ can be linked to a much more general correlation between ‘xià’ and sequencing and time which is more frequently documented in relation to nominal constructions (see section 5.1.1 d) below). We also connect the apparently idiomatic meaning of ‘xià’ as a VC ‘accommodate/have capacity’ with the idea of ‘inwardness’ which has also been associated with ‘xià’, and suggest this relates ultimately to the low status/position afforded to ‘ego’ in Chinese culture (see sections 5.1.1 b) and e) below).

When considering the extended meanings related to ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ we also looked at those which were expressed by directionals and/or vertical expressions in other languages, for example English. Where there were similarities we noted possible perceptual, cognitive and/or experiential bases for these. One particular difference between Mandarin and English is the extent to which vertical terms are used in sequencing in the two languages. We suggested that this difference could be, at least in part, culturally determined (see section 5.1.2 below).

5.1.1. Vertical meaning

One of the basic senses of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ relates to the vertical plane.

‘Shàng’ can denote:

• upward movement
• upward direction
• upward position, (e.g. on/at the top of, on the upper part, above, over)

‘Xià’ can denote:

• downward movement
• downward direction
• downward position (e.g. on/at/near the bottom of, on the lower part, under)

From these vertical meanings we have examined extensions into the following areas:
• quantity
• status
• value judgement
• sequencing
• difficulty
• aspect

Each of these extensions will be discussed in some detail below.

a) Quantity
In Chapter 1 (sections 1.1.2 and 1.3.2) and Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3) we looked at examples of ‘shàng’ in verbal constructions denoting increase in amount and ‘xià’ denoting decrease in amount. Other examples where ‘xià’ indicates decrease were found with stative verbs (Chapter 2, section 2.8.3.2). In nominal constructions ‘shàng’ can denote ‘more’ and ‘xià’, ‘less’ (see Chapter 3, section 3.3). The English translations of these examples show that English too can equate ‘going up’ with increase, and ‘over’ or ‘above’ with ‘more’, while ‘going down’ can indicate ‘decrease’ and ‘under’, ‘less’. This is not due to chance but seems to be based on human experience of the physical world where the more there is of a substance the higher its level tends to be. Conversely the less there is of a substance the lower its level. The semantics of a language could be expected to reflect this correlation.

Traugott (1975, p223) also notes a relationship with the numeration system. "The ‘higher’ numbers are the ‘larger’ numbers and express the relation ‘more than’".

b) Status
The link between high status and ‘shàng’ and low status and ‘xià’ was seen in both verbal and nominal occurrences of these two morphemes. (See Chapter 1, sections 1.1.2 and 1.3.2, Chapter 2 section 2.2.3 and Chapter 3 sections 3.3 and 3.4). While not as directly attributable to the physical world as the relation between ‘shàng’ and ‘more’ and ‘xià’ and ‘less’ seem to be, there is nevertheless some physical basis to the extension. Control, strength and power can be associated with bigger and taller individuals. Of course there is also a significant cultural component since the attributes that a society admires and respects may not correspond to strength and size. Actual physical ‘higher position’ often seems to be important in societies however, whatever it is that is held in respect (e.g. a god, a ruler) is frequently physically raised up above the level of lesser individuals by being placed on pedestals, daises etc.

It was also argued that the traditionally low status afforded to ‘ego’ in Chinese society could account for ‘xià’ as a VC denoting ‘inwardness’ and direction towards the ‘realm’ of the speaker (Chapter 2 section 2.8.4.2). In the same section are examples of ‘xià’ which reflect the low position of ‘ego’ (in terms of status) in nominal constructions.

c) Value judgement
It was seen in chapter 4 that ‘shàng’ can denote ‘good’ ‘excellent’ while ‘xià’ can mean ‘inferior’ or ‘low’ in the judgemental rather than the vertical sense.
d) Time

In Chapter 4 we discussed in some detail the roles of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in sequencing. It was argued that as determiners they most frequently related to time relative to some reference point, often the time of speaking. They thus often translate into English as ‘last’ (i.e. previous) and ‘next’ respectively. Where time was not involved in the sequencing ‘shàng’ could mean ‘first in a series’ (of two or three items) and ‘xià’ could indicate ‘second’ or ‘third’, depending on whether it was a series of two or three. In nominal compounds ‘shàng’ could also indicate ‘before’ and ‘xià’, ‘after’. In all these, ‘shàng’ always precedes ‘xià’. Chapter 4, section 4.3.2 b), lists a number of factors which seem to play a role in this extension of vertical direction and position into the realm of time. These factors include the following:

• The canonical upright position of people means that things in front and above the ground are encountered first

• The vertical plane and time can both be conceived of as being asymmetrical

• The unmarked term (‘shàng’ in Mandarin) comes to be used for the less marked of the non-present concepts (i.e. ‘past/previous)

• The upward movement of the sun in the sky in the morning and its downward movement in the evening

• The direction of writing

In Chapter 2 (sections 2.8.3.2 and 2.8.3.3) it was suggested that the link between ‘xià’ and later time could account for the meanings associated with the following VCCs:

• ‘V₁-xià-lái’, which denotes change of state (indicated by V₁) to some endpoint, often the time of speaking.

• ‘V₁-xià-qu’, which denotes that the action or state indicated by the V₁ continues on into the future.

It was argued that ‘xià’ was the element that indicated passage through time while ‘lái’ indicated ‘endpoint’ and ‘qu’ indicated ‘no endpoint’. Thus we can construct the following diagram

a)  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{T} \\
\text{I} \\
\text{M} \\
\text{E} \\
\end{array} \quad \xrightarrow{\text{ENDPOINT}} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{xià-lái} \\
\text{xià-qu} \\
\end{array}
\]

In Chapter 4 (see examples (210) to (213), page 71) it was noted that there seems to be a conflict between the temporal meaning of ‘lái’ and ‘qu’ in the above (where it could be argued that the former indicates movement through time from the past to the present and the latter from the present into the future) and their apparent temporal meaning in other constructions. As shown in the diagram below, ‘lái’ seems to relate to the future and ‘qu’ to the past.
b) TIME

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c c c}
\textit{‘qù-nián’} & EGO & \textit{‘lái ri’} \\
\textit{last year} & & \textit{the coming days} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

This apparent anomaly can be explained if it is accepted that in the case of the VCs (diagrammed in a) above) ‘lái’ and ‘qu’ are mainly functioning to mark aspect, by indicating ‘endpoint’ and ‘no endpoint’ respectively. It is ‘xià’ that is indicating temporal direction. In b) above however, ‘lái’ and ‘qu’ denote movement, and in this case are reflecting the concept that time moves past ego from front to back.

The same contrast between aspectual function and movement can be seen with ‘xià’ itself. When used perfectively it can denote ‘endpoint’ (completion of the action/process denoted by the V₁)\(^1\). When used temporally however, no endpoint is presumed, as is shown by its ability to co-occur with either ‘lái’ or ‘qu’ in the VCs above.

e) Difficulty

One meaning of ‘shàng’ as a VC, not noted in its occurrences as a main verb, was in relation to ‘difficulty’, often apparently due to an external obstacle (see Chapter 2 section 2.8.4.1). It was suggested that this could be due to the fact that going upwards (uphill, upstream for example) typically involves more physical effort than going downwards. On the other hand, ‘xià’, where it signals difficulty (see section 2.8.4 in Chapter 2) tends to involve some internal reason. This correlates with the relation between ‘xià’ and ‘ego’, noted in section 5.1.1 b) above. The apparently idiomatic meaning of ‘xià’ - ‘accommodate, have capacity’ (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.2 for examples) could also be related to the idea of inward.

f) Aspect

By aspect we refer to the way the internal temporal consistency of situations are viewed “for-example as unanalysable wholes; or as wholes with phases, particularly beginning, middle and end” (Traugott, 1978 p387). In Chapter 2 it was pointed out that there could be a relation between aspectual notions and vertical direction. Movement downwards can be said to be bounded, since it is usually ultimately stopped by some surface. Decrease, also related to ‘downward’, can be connected to the idea of decrease of activity or movement. It was suggested these two factors could play a part in explaining the use of ‘xià’ in VCs which denoted ‘stabilisation of state of affairs’ and/or ‘cessation of activity’. In English it seems that vertical movement ‘up’ is related to the direction of most physical acts of completion and this is a major factor in the perfective meaning of ‘up’ in phrasal verbs. In Mandarin however, the idea of resultant position/condition as a result of movement or direction with respect to a goal or source seems to be more significant. As this does not necessarily involve the vertical plane it will be discussed under sections 5.1.3 and 5.2.1 below.

\(^1\)This is discussed in more detail below.
We have seen that ‘shàng’ can denote
• high status
• good/excellent
• previous time
• first in a sequence
This group of extended meanings forms a coherent grouping from the Chinese cultural point of view. The use of ‘shàng’ to denote greater quantity would also fit in with this picture, since older people obviously have more years, and presumably more experience and wisdom, than the younger generation.

On the other hand ‘xià’ denotes the converse, that is
• low status
• low/poor (in value)
• later time
• second or third in a sequence
• smaller quantity

This fits in with the traditional idea that the younger generation is not of any significant worth or status.

It is may be just a coincidence that Mandarin uses vertical terms in sequencing and temporal relations more frequently and systematically than a language like English. However it is surely significant that this coincides with a different view of the source of inspiration for the society. For the Chinese it has been in the past while Western societies tend to be far more orientated towards the future.

Another major meaning associated with ‘shàng’ relates to ‘contact’. As a verbal element ‘shàng’ can indicate ‘make contact’ or ‘cause to make contact’ as a result of
• movement towards some location
• engagement in some activity
(see Chapters 1 and 2)

As a localiser, ‘shàng’ can also indicate a position of contact, either related to upper position or the more general ‘on’, ‘in’, or ‘at’ (see Chapter 3).

‘Xià’ can also indicate movement towards somewhere and also a position of contact (e.g. on the bottom, on the lower part), but unlike ‘shàng’ these meanings are always associated with, and often secondary to, xià’s vertically orientated meaning related to ‘downward’ or ‘low position’.

‘Xià’ can also be associated with the idea of ‘dissociation’. In verbal constructions ‘xià’ can indicate ‘dissociation’ or (more rarely) ‘cause to be dissociated from’ as a result of
- movement off, or away from, some location
- the cessation of some activity

(see Chapters 1 and 2)

As a localiser ‘xià’ can indicate a position of dissociation - ‘off’ (i.e. not on) though this often tends to have some relation to being in a lower position/location (see Chapter 3).

It was argued that ‘contact’ and ‘dissociation’ can be seen as extensions of the the idea of **goal** and **source** respectively, both of which relate to **direction**.

Where ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in verbal constructions involve movement, it was shown that both can relate to **goal**. Since goals can be attained if movement towards them is continued to its logical conclusion, one can then see the connection between goal and contact. Some occurrences of ‘xià’ denoting movement were however clearly seen to indicate **source** rather than goal (for example ‘xià ché’ - get out of a car). This then relates to the idea of ‘dissociation’.

Both ‘contact’ and ‘dissociation’ can indicate ‘resultant position’, either ‘on’ or ‘off’ some location. Where there is no necessary movement involved, the idea of goal and source was still seen to be relevant. In this case, attainment of goal would lead to ‘resultant condition’ rather than, or in addition to, ‘resultant position’. Dissociation from an activity could also lead to ‘resultant condition’ and would signal the ending and/or the end result of an action. Hence a further link between ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ as directionals and as aspectual markers.

### 5.2. Grammatical functions

#### 5.2.1. Aspectual function

As VCs denoting resultant position or condition ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’, particularly as phase VCs, focus on the ‘completion’ of the event/process denoted by the main verb in the VCC. The event is thus viewed from its endpoint, and can be said to be ‘bounded’. ‘Shàng’ and ‘xià’ are therefore involved in marking aspect, in this case, perfectivity.

From a cross-linguistic point of view it was noted that the perfective function of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in Mandarin was very similar to the functions of grammatical morphemes, described elsewhere as ‘bounders’ (Bybee, 1987), which are related to directionals in a variety of languages. There are also striking parallels with the particles in phrasal verbs in English where ‘up’ and ‘down’ (and other particles which can at times be used to translate ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in VCCs e.g. ‘over’, ‘out’, ‘off’, ‘on’) are used extensively and often mark perfectivity.

As with ‘shàng’ in Mandarin, ‘up’ in phrasal verbs in English can also indicate ‘inception’. Bolinger (1971, p101) suggests this can be subsumed under the heading of ‘perfectivity’ since one can think of it as making "an end of a beginning". This line of reasoning could also be applied to Mandarin, for example ‘ài-shàng’ - ‘fall in love’, could be seen as the end of the first part of a process, rather then the beginning of a longer one. Such a view would,  

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2 Examples given in Bolinger (1971, p100,101) include ‘We picked up where we had left off’ and ‘She took up dancing’.
however, miss a generalisation about an inherent meaning of the morpheme ‘shāng’. While both ‘shāng’ and ‘xià’ can mark perfectivity, only ‘shāng’ can indicate ‘inception’. In Mandarin this goes beyond the verbal occurrences of ‘shāng’. In nominal constructions for example, as described in Chapter 4, ‘shāng’ can indicate ‘first in a sequence’, ‘previous’ and ‘before’.

In the VC construction ‘xià-qù’ we suggested that ‘xià’ is not acting as an aspectual marker as such but indicates temporal direction (see the discussion in section 5.1.1 d) above). The two elements of the VC, taken together, denote the continuation of the action of the main verb into the future, hence the link with continuative aspect.

5.2.2. Transitivity

It was noted in chapter 2 that there is a relation between the use of VCCs and increased transitivity of the clause. Viewing an action from its endpoint implies greater affect on an object of the verb. This can be reflected syntactically in Mandarin since objects occurring with VCCs commonly occur in the BA construction (see chapter 2, section 2.10.2). To occur in this construction objects must be identifiable. These three things

- perfectivity
- affected object
- identifiable object

are all markers of highly transitive clause types (Hopper and Thompson, 1980).

5.2.3. Place word marker

In chapter 3 it was noted that most nouns in Mandarin need to be in a construction with a localiser to enable them to fill a ‘place word’ syntactic slot (i.e. to occur with certain prepositions and verbs which require a place word as an argument). As a localiser ‘shāng’ again seems to be the unmarked member of the ‘shāng’ ‘xià’ pair since it need not refer to any vertically orientated ‘upper’ position, being translatable as ‘on’, ‘at’ and ‘in’. ‘Xià’ on the other hand usually relates to lower position. In some cases ‘shāng’ seems to carry very little positional meaning at all (see section 3.5, Chapter 3), and seems to just serve a grammatical function, that is, it allows the NP to which it is attached to act as a place word.

5.3. Grammatical status

We have seen that ‘shāng’ and ‘xià’ can be free independent words. This is most common when they are acting as verbs (see Chapter 1) but can occur in some circumstances when they are acting as nouns (see Chapter 3).

They also occur in a wide variety of nominal and verbal constructions which can range from quite loose constructions separable by various elements, to inseparable lexicalised

3Though this can be seen to be ultimately related to ‘upper surface’ (Jackendoff, 1983 p162).
compounds. Examples of the former are the VCCs. Directional VCCs can have the object of the verb inserted between the main verb and the VC while nearly all VCs can be separated from the main verb by the potential markers ‘de’ and ‘bu’. Examples of lexicalised compounds, often with specialised meanings not derivable from the individual components, were given in Chapter 3 (section 3.4).

In some cases, for example when acting as localisers, ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ have been called suffixes\(^4\) (e.g. in Henne et al, 1977). A suffix in Mandarin is usually taken to be "an empty morpheme [i.e. one which has lost its lexical meaning], mostly in the neutral tone, which occurs at the end of a word and characterises its grammatical function" (Chao, 1968 p219). Chao (1968, p211) notes a positive correlation between empty morphemes and morphemes which are "frequent...unstressed [and] phonetically more neutral" while full morphemes [i.e. those with full lexical meaning] tend to be "infrequent .. stressed [and] clearly articulated". These characteristics are similar to those used by Bybee (1987) to differentiate between grammatical and lexical morphemes. How does one measure lexical meaning however? As Chao notes, meaningfulness, and thus the difference between ‘full’ and ‘empty’ morphemes, is a matter of degree.

The morphological status of ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’, as localisers and as other parts of speech where they are not free morphemes, is far from clear. They appear to be good examples of morphemes exhibiting different degrees of grammaticalization along a continuum from lexical material to grammatical markers. We have noted that as VCs and localisers they tend to be unstressed but their tone can vary within the range of tone shapes associated with unstressed final syllables from clearly differentiated fourth tone to neutral tone. As for meaning content we demonstrated that as VCs they could have clearly directional meanings (as directional VCs) and/or be involved in aspektual marking (as phase VCs), with some overlap being possible between the two. We detailed the variation of semantic load borne by ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’ in various VCCs (see for example Chapter 2, sections 2.3 and 2.4) but noted that even when they seem to have a mainly grammatical function, e.g. marking perfectivity, they do generally add some additional meaning to the VCC, which can often be linked to the semantic content of these morphemes in other constructions.

As a localiser ‘xià’ tends to retain more of its vertical direction/position meaning than ‘shàng’ (see Chapter 3). The latter, on the other hand, can range from denoting relative position clearly related to the vertical plane, through ‘on’ and more general positional meanings like ‘in’ and ‘at’, to occurrences where it seems to have little semantic content but just serves a grammatical function. In Chapter 3 it was suggested that monosyllabic localisers could be considered to still be in a state of change. They were free words (and can still occasionally function like this as nominals) but are now usually bound forms. ‘Shàng’, the unmarked member of the ‘shàng/xià’ pair has a much wider range of meanings than ‘xià’, many unrelated to the vertical dimension. It is also much more productive, is more frequent in occurrence (see for example the counts on page 59) and is the member of the pair which most clearly exhibits

\(^4\)Here we are referring to the monosyllabic localisers ‘shàng’ and ‘xià’, not their related complex localisers.
clitic status. It thus seems to be situated further along the evolutionary path from lexical material to grammatical marker in both functional and formal terms.
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