WHAT IS AN ADJECTIVE?

1 An **ADJECTIVE** is a word that indicates a quality of a noun or pronoun.

> The book is *interesting.*
> | |
> noun   adjective
> described

> It was *expensive.*
> | |
> pronoun adjective
> described

10 Interrogative adjectives and demonstrative adjectives are addressed in separate chapters. In this chapter we will consider descriptive adjectives.

IN ENGLISH

A **DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVE** is a word that describes a quality of a noun or a pronoun.

> Wang Wei wrote an *interesting* poem.
> |
>   adjective describing the noun *poem*

> It is *pretty.*
> |
> adjective describing the pronoun *it*

20 Descriptive adjectives are divided into two groups depending on how they are connected to the noun they describe: attributive adjectives and predicate adjectives.

ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE — An attributive adjective is connected directly to the noun it describes and always precedes it.

> The *good* students came prepared.
> | |
> attributive   noun
> adjective   described

30
> The farmers bought a *new* tractor.
> | |
>   attributive   noun
>   adjective   described

PREDICATE ADJECTIVE — A predicate adjective is connected to the noun or pronoun it describes by a **STATIVE VERB** such as *to be, to feel, to look* (see p. 23 in *What is a Verb?*) and always comes after the noun or pronoun described.

The students are *good.*

     noun stative predicate
           verb   adjective

It looks *new.*

pron.   predicate
   stative adjective
    verb

IN CHINESE

As in English, a descriptive adjective can be identified as a predicate or an attributive adjective depending on the way the adjective is connected to the noun or pronoun it describes.

ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE — As in English, an attributive adjective precedes the noun that it describes. The pattern is the following: adjective + modification particle **de** + noun described.

Lánsè de zìxíngchē shì wǒ de.

lánsè = blue	**adjective**
de	**modification particle**
zìxíngchē = bicycle	**noun described**
shì = to be	
wǒ = I	
+ **de** possessive particle → my	

*The **blue bicycle** is mine.*

Dà de zìdiǎn zài zhuōzi shàng.

dà = big	**adjective**
de	**modification particle**
zìdiǎn = dictionary	**noun described**
zài = at	
zhuōzi = table	
shàng = on top	

*The **big dictionary** is on the table.*

PREDICATE ADJECTIVES — Unlike English where predicate adjectives follow stative verbs, Chinese predicate adjectives, known as **VERBAL ADJECTIVES**, function both as adjective and verb, thereby replacing the verb. Like English predicate adjectives, verbal adjectives come after the noun or pronoun described. The pattern is the following: pronoun/noun described + verbal adjective.

40

50

60

70

Tā hěn **piàoliàng.**
  tā = she   **pronoun described**
  hěn = very (see p. 82)
  piàoliàng = pretty   **verbal adjective**
*She **is pretty**.*
    |
verb replaced by adjective

Nà ge lǎoshī hěn **hǎo**.
  nà = that
  ge general classifier
  lǎoshī = teacher   **noun described**
  hěn = very (see p. 82)
  hǎo = good   **verbal adjective**
*That teacher **is good**.*
        |
    verb replaced adjective

CAREFUL — The verb **shì** *to be* is omitted in a Chinese sentence when it is followed by an adjective, but not when it is followed by a noun (see p. 30 in *What are the Uses of the Verb "to be"?).* Here is an example:

ENGLISH: *to be* + adjective → **CHINESE:** verbal adjective
  *This book bag **is heavy**.*
          |
        adjective
  Zhè ge shūbaō hěn **zhòng**.
    zhè = this
    ge general classifier
    shūbaō = book bag
    hěn = very (see p. 82)
    zhòng = heavy   **verbal adjective**

ENGLISH: *to be* + noun → **CHINESE: shì** + noun
  *Chen Rong **is an artist**.*
              |
            noun
  Chén Róng **shì** yī ge **yìshùjiā.**
    Chén Róng = Chen Rong
    shì = to be   **verb**
    yī = one
    ge general classifier
    yìshùjiā = artist   **noun**