

Notes On How Words Are Lined-Up:

One of the most helpful things for learning Chinese / English grammar is to compare how the two languages “line up” words in sentences.

In simple sentences sometimes words line up word for word:

I	like	chocolate.
I	like	chocolate.
Wǒ	xǐhuan	qiǎokēli.
我	喜欢	巧克力。

Other times the sentences essentially match other than an English word that is not used in Chinese, (usually a helping verb or a preposition) and always the article, “the” (because there is no “the” in Chinese) and generally the articles “a”, “an” --- although once in a while the word “yī” as in “yíge” (or whatever the measure word is, for example it is “yī píng” below) is used for “a” or “an”.

He	is	such		a handsome man!
He	is	(such)		(a) handsome man!
Tā	shì		gè	měinánzi!
他	是		个	美男子！

We	need	a	pitcher	of	beer.
We	need	a	pitcher	(of)	beer.
Wǒmen	xūyào	yī	píng		píjiǔ.
我们	需要	一	瓶		啤酒。

(Americans of course are very prone to using “yī” all the time in making Chinese sentences. Don’t! Chinese grammar restricts overuse of certain words. “Yī” is one of these.)

Sometimes in either language words are added (but usually in Chinese). The word, “ma?”, for example, is commonly added to the end of a sentence to ask a question:

Want	breakfast?	
Want	breakfast	yes / no?
Yào	zǎofàn	ma?
要	早饭	吗？

Measure words are almost always (but there are exceptions) required for adjectives and nouns that number something:

This		book	is	mine.	
This		book	is	mine. Chinese-Grammar-To-English Line
Zhè	<u>běn</u>	shū	shì	wǒde.	
这	本	书	是	我的。	

(Incidentally, measure words are easily identified because there are no words above them in the Chinese-Grammar-To-English Line. For example, the word “běn” (in the above sentence) is the measure word for books. Once in the while in the CourseBook there are “ba” constructions and a couple of other things that are not identified. Most of the time however when a word is not identified it is a measure word which follows a quantifying word, such as “this,” or a number word such as “five”, “5”).

Sometimes only a couple words are turned around. Sometimes (but not always) when this happens we line the two words up as if there were no differences. We expect you to differentiate the inverse condition, realizing that the Pinyin and Hanzi words are correctly lined up --- but not the English words:

Happy birthday!	=	Shēngrì kuàile!	生日快乐!
Happy		birthday!	
<u>Birthday</u>		<u>happy!</u>	
Shēngrì		kuàile!	
生日		快乐!	

Some sentences however are totally different. Sometimes almost completely reversed! These can be identified in the English-Grammar Line (**bold** print line) because they have not completely been lined-up, or sometimes not at all:

I come from San Francisco, California.			 English-Grammar Line
I	from	California,	San Francisco	come.
Wǒ	cóng	Jiāzhōu,	Jiùjīnshān	lái de.
我	从	加州,	旧金山	来的。