

Prepositions

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

— “about, regarding, as for”

(guānyú) flags the **topic** a sentence is about — “about, regarding, as for.” Used this way it opens the sentence, setting the subject up before you say anything about it: “*As for* X, ...”.

Structure: + Topic ,

{zh: |guān yú|as for / |Zhōng guó|Chinese / |lì shǐ|history / |wǒ|I / |zhī dào|know / |de / |bù duō|not much / 。 }

As for Chinese history, I don't know much.

{zh: |guān yú|as for / |nǐ|your / |de / |jiàn yì|suggestion / , |lǎo bǎn|the boss / |hái|still / |zài / |kǎo lǜ|considering it / 。 }

As for your suggestion, the boss is still thinking it over.

Remember: + topic = a **headline** at the front of the sentence (“Regarding X, ...”). It can't sit mid-sentence like English “about.”

Watch out

- Many English “about”s are **baked into the Chinese verb** — say (“talk about your job”), not

... ... — “not until”

(zhídào) means “all the way until (a point).” Pair it with and you get the emphatic “**not until** X did Y happen” — the is what stamps on the “and that’s surprisingly late.”

Structure: + Time / Event , Subject + + Verb

{zh: |zhí dào|not until / |shí èr diǎn bàn|half past twelve / , |wǒ|I / |cái|only then / |zuò wán|finished / |zuò yè|the homework / 。 }

I didn't finish my homework until half past twelve.

{zh: |tā|he / |zhí dào|not until / |yī shēng|the doctor / |lái|came / |le / , |cái|only then / |fàng xīn|relaxed / 。 }

He didn't relax until the doctor came.

Remember: sets the **deadline**, delivers the “**finally / only then.**” Drop the and you lose the “annoyingly late” punch.

Watch out

- The subject may also go before :

— “towards, to (and sometimes from)”

(xiàng) aims an action **towards** a person or direction — no actual movement required (, “smile at him”). The twist English speakers must memorise: a few verbs that take “**from**” in English use (“toward”) in Chinese — ... (“borrow *from*”), ... (“learn *from*”).

Structure: + Direction / Person + Verb

{zh: |xiàng / |qián|forward / |kàn|look / 。 }

Look ahead.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |bì xū|must / |xiàng|to / |tā|him / |dào qiàn|apologise / ! }

You must apologise to him!

{zh: |wǒ|I / |bù|don't / |xǐ huan|like / |xiàng|from / |péng you|friends / |jiè qián|borrowing money / 。 }

I don't like borrowing money from friends.

Remember: = an **arrow** pointing at someone. Even “learn / borrow **from**” is framed as aiming *toward* the source in Chinese: (“learn toward the teacher”).

Watch out

- Use it with verbs of facing or directing: (“walk forward”), (“turn to me for help”).