

Comparing similar conjunctions

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

vs — “or” in questions vs statements

This is the single most-tested “or” distinction in Chinese, so make it automatic. Both words mean “or” and present a choice, but they split by **sentence type**: offers the choice in a **question** (you’re asking someone to pick); lists alternatives in a **statement** (you’re just telling).

{zh: |nǐ|you / |hē|drink / |chá|tea / |hái shì|or / |kā fēi|coffee / ? }

Do you want tea or coffee?

{zh: |chá|tea / |huò zhě|or / |kā fēi|coffee / |dōu|either / |xíng|is fine / 。 }

Tea or coffee — either’s fine.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |bù|don’t / |zhī dào|know / |tā|he / |zhī chí|supports / |hái shì|or / |fǎn duì|opposes / 。 }

I don’t know whether he’s for or against.

Remember: ? → , . → . Asking someone to choose takes ; stating open options takes . And a *hidden* question — “I don’t know whether A or B” — still counts as a question inside, so it keeps .

Watch out

- That embedded-question case (.....) trips people up — there’s no question mark, but the choice is still being *asked*, so stays.