

Comparing similar time words

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

vs vs — three kinds of “after / then”

All three brush against “after / then,” but each owns a different slot — so the trick is to match the situation to the word:

- — “after / from now on,” and it can point to the **future**: (“I want to start a company *someday*”).
- — “and then,” joining the **next step** in a sequence (any time frame):
, .
- — “later, afterwards,” narrating the **next thing that happened — in the past only**.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yǐ hòu|in future / |xiǎng|want to / |kāi|start / |gōng sī|a company / 。 }

I want to start a company someday.

{zh: |xiān|first / |chī fàn|eat / , |rán hòu|and then / |kàn|watch / |diàn yǐng|a film / 。 }

Eat first, and then watch a film.

{zh: |hòu lái|later / |tā|he / |qù|went / |lǐ / |Měi guó|the US / 。 }

Later he went to the US.

Remember: the quick test — **future** → , **next step** → , **past story** → . Only is locked to the past; can reach into the future, and chains steps in any time frame.

Watch out

- and can both translate as “later,” but only narrates what has **already** happened — never a future “then.”