

# SOME FIXED PATTERNS IN CHINESE

There are many fixed patterns in Chinese, like “□...□...”, “□...□...”, “□...□...”, “□...□...”, etc. They are used frequently in oral expressions, making the language more vivid and idiomatic.

## The characteristics of these patterns are as follows:

First, most of them are made of four characters and the structures of the two parts are the same. For example, “□□□□” “□□□□” “□□□□” “□□□□”, and so on.

Second, two characters in this kind of structure are the other two inserted characters may change, but not at random. The meaning of the inserted part must be related to the fixed part and follow the fixed sequence. For example, “□□□□”, “□□□□” and “□□□□” cannot be changed into “□□□□”, “□□□□” or “□□□□”.

Third, beside the literal meaning, most of these patterns imply tones and moods, mostly expressing a derogatory sense or dissatisfaction. For example, a wife cooked a dish specially for her husband, but the husband wasn't very interested in that dish. He didn't even bother to have a taste. Seeing this, the wife said “□□□□”.

The literal meaning is “you may eat or not eat, it's all right”. But the discontented mood is obvious. The pattern “□...□...” can form “□□□□” “□□□□” “□□□□” and so on. The two characters after the “□” and “□” are

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opposite in meaning. This pattern describes a kind of intermediate state or quality with a tone of detestation.

What we should pay attention to is that the same patterns may have different implications or grammatical structures. For example, in “□□□□” and “□□□□”, the pattern “□...□...” means “neither... nor...”; in “□□□□” and “□□□□”, it “describes” a moderate or “just right” condition. Neither have a derogatory sense. But in “□□□□” and “□□□□”, the pattern describes an unsatisfactory intermediate situation. The pattern of “□□□□” or “□□□□” is a reduced sentence of two clauses, which means “if not... then no...”, expressing an assumed relation.

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