Lesson Eleven

Page 198 #12: compare \textit{xiache} 下車 and \textit{shangche} 上車, to get off and onto a vehicle, with the city name Shanghai, to embark. Note that \textit{qiche} 汽車 (gas vehicle) is an adjective-noun compound, and so are \textit{huoche} 火車 and \textit{dianche} 电车, while \textit{xiache} 下車 and \textit{kaiche} 開車 are verb-object compounds. The phrase \textit{jichengche} 計程車 for taxi really means: count-journey car, the verb-object \textit{ji-}
\textit{cheng} 計程functions as an adjective modifying \textit{che}車. \textit{Chezhan}車站, train station, shows \textit{che} 車 in the first or adjective position, modifying the noun \textit{zhan} 站. The classical pronunciation of this graph, \textit{ju}, is still used when speaking of the piece used in Chinese chess (\textit{xiangqi} 象棋).

p. 201 #1 \textit{buguo} 不過 means: does not go beyond. This sets a limit to what has been said before, and in that sense means: but.

p. 204 The topic-comment structure is one of the oldest and most basic grammatical forms in Chinese. One way to conceptualize it is to imagine punctuation after the topic, either a colon or a question mark, as if #(1) should be translated: The plane ticket? Have you bought it? Or #(4): The homework? I prefer to do it in the library. (Prefer often works well as a translation for \textit{xihuan} 喜欢.) The topic-comment structure has two functions: it emphasizes a particular noun by putting it before the verb, and it also leaves more space after the verb for adding verb suffixes to make the verb more specific. In #(4) for example it would be clumsy to have to put \textit{gongke} 功課after the final \textit{zuo}做, but it would be OK to do so. With \textit{gongke} 功課 in front, the sentence has a bit more balance.

There is a sentence in the letter on p. 202, in the middle, which reads: \textit{zher de ren kaiche kaide henkuai}. 這兒的人開車開得很快。 When people here drive they drive pretty fast. \textit{Ren} 人 is the subject of the verb \textit{kai} 開. The compound \textit{kaiche} 開車 may be regarded as a topic, and the descriptive (or evaluating) phrase \textit{kaide henkuai} 開得很快 may be regarded as a comment. Literally, this comment means: he drives so that / with the result that (for \textit{de}得), [he goes] fast. Here the extra space after \textit{kaide} 開車 is essential, since there is no convenient place for the object \textit{che} 車 after the second \textit{kai}開. A more common mode of analysis is to treat \textit{kaiche} 開車, \textit{kai} 開 as a repeated verb, the first verb establishes an object of the action, the second describes the mode of the action.
One might compare Western languages’ use of the infinitive (i.e. undefined or unlimited by tense or person, I drove, he drives, etc.) with the wide array of defined forms. An English verb may have as many as seventy-five forms if one includes all tenses and persons (I, we, you, he, they).

One of the main problems in modern Chinese grammar is to distinguish the various kinds of verb+de+descriptive (or potential). Recall the apologetic I am sorry, duibuqi 對不起 and duideqi 對得起, able to show face or unable to show face. This phrase is the potential type not the descriptive type. Another example of the descriptive type: xiezi xiede henhao. He writes well < When he writes characters, he writes them well. (Compare this sentence with the last sentence on p. 207: each of the characters that Teacher Wang has written looks good.) Note that it is the position of xiezi 寫字 alone as topic that warrants such explanatory words in English as: When he writes, or: In his writing of characters. This shows that the topic position may require in English a prepositional phrase of time or place. The line of poetry that reads: snowy mountains visit friend, does not mean that the mountains go to visit someone, but rather that someone visits a friend passing through (or near) snowy mountains.

p. 200 4th sentence from end of dialogue: wo haishi zuo chuzuqiche ba. 我還是坐出租汽車吧。 In this sentence the phrase haishi 還是 suggests a choice made after considering alternatives, even if the alternatives have not actually been expressed. So preceding this sentence we can understand an implied question with haishi 還是 like this: haishi xian zuo qiche zaizuo dianche fangbian, haishi zuo chuzuqiche fangbian? 還是先坐汽車再坐電車方便，還是坐出租汽車方便？ Would it be more convenient to take bus and train or to ride in a taxi? Answer: wo haishi zuo chuzuqiche ba. 我還是坐出租自車吧。 I think I had better take a taxi. Thus òafter all ô often works as a translation for haishi 還是 in the answering sentence.

As you continue the study of Chinese, the two words to pay especial attention in modern grammar to are le 了 and de 得. Both are used in various ways as verb suffixes and a lot of care is needed to distinguish the uses.