

Learning Chinese Sample

汉语基础教材

Learning Chinese

A FOUNDATION COURSE IN MANDARIN

JULIAN K. WHEATLEY



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Learning Chinese comes with an extensive set of audio clips that serve as a personal guide to the Chinese language material in the book. These, as well as vocabulary lists (both Chinese-to-English and English-to-Chinese), keys to exercises, and other special features, can be found at the companion website yalebooks.com/wheatley.

汉语基础教材

PREFACE

A. Ten basic features of *Learning Chinese*

1. Provides instruction in spoken and written Mandarin; no prior background assumed.
2. Serves as a comprehensive resource for the foundation levels of Chinese language study. *Learning Chinese* (first year) and the forthcoming companion volume (second year) cover approximately 200 class hours.
3. Includes sample schedules for all 200 hours of class study.
4. Presents rich content (based on the author's own experience learning Chinese) that is presented incrementally and in detail, is carefully sequenced, and builds toward dialogues or narratives that recapitulate important content.
5. Includes a variety of exercises and audio materials for self-study. The companion website, yalebooks.com/wheatley, provides a full set of audio clips, as well as comprehensive vocabulary lists, exercise keys, and other features.
6. Contains content that is easily transformed into class activities, and easily supplemented by online or other materials.
7. Includes conversational lessons and character lessons that can be used separately or together.
8. Includes conversational and character lessons that are related but not identical to each other, and which can be interleaved.
9. Teaches reading with both the traditional (Taiwan) and simplified (Mainland) character sets.
10. Teaches characters inductively, by emphasizing reading in context as much as possible.

《汉语基础教材》：十个主要特点

- 一、 供零起点学生口语和书面语学习的汉语入门教材。
- 二、 这是一套综合性的基础教材。共两册，第一册是初级水平，第二册是中级水平，大约需要修读200个课时。
- 三、 本教材附有200个课时的课程进度表实例。
- 四、 作者根据自己的汉语学习经历，精心编排话题，并以循序渐进的方式逐步开展，每课最后还编排了一段对话或叙述以重现该课的重要话题。内容充实，层次分明。
- 五、 为自学者提供多样化的书面练习及录音资料(见 yalebooks.com/wheatley)。
- 六、 教材内容易转换成课堂活动，也便于通过网络或其他途径进行补充。
- 七、 会话教材与汉字教材可以分开使用，也可以相互配合使用。
- 八、 会话教材与汉字教材内容相关，但不互相依赖，自成体系。
- 九、 汉字教材以繁简汉字编写。
- 十、 识字教学采用归纳法，透过高重现率的篇章，使学习者能够在真实语境中自然学习。

B. Ten general principles for using *Learning Chinese*

1. Prepare before class, perform in class, and consolidate after class.
2. Move from simple to complex, from familiar to novel, and from rote to realistic.
3. Focus on typical interchanges, personalize them when possible, and compound them into longer conversations.
4. Recognize that Mandarin usage varies as much as English. Regard *Learning Chinese* as a guide, but accept additional input from teachers and your own observations.
5. Learn functional phrases rather than individual words; visualize interactions and match appropriate language; and act out scenarios from cues.
6. Distinguish character recognition from reading, and focus reading activities on comprehension.
7. Write characters to improve recognition ability, but utilize word processing programs to compose texts.

8. Consolidate conversational skills while studying the character units; consolidate character skills while studying the conversational units.
9. As much as possible, learn language in context rather than from lists. (But be mindful that lists can help with recall and review.)
10. Know the core, test the core (i.e., that practiced in class). For character material, test comprehension.

使用《汉语基础教材》的十个基本原则

- 一、 强调课前预习，课中练习以及课后复习。
- 二、 从简单到复杂，从陌生到熟悉，从机械操练到自然交际。
- 三、 先熟记典型的会话，再向个性化延伸，最后扩展为完整的会话。
- 四、 汉语表达同英语一样复杂多变，学生可将本教材作为用法指南使用，不仅应该听取老师的建议，自己也应勤于观察。
- 五、 与其只学习个别生词，不如学习如何使用词组，借助提示，摹拟实际交流情境，演练与之相匹配的表达方式。
- 六、 分清识字和阅读的不同，阅读活动最好以理解为主。
- 七、 通过书写汉字来提高辨认字形的能力，同时借助拼音输入软件来写作。
- 八、 学习汉字时，同时加强会话能力；学习会话时，同时加强汉字能力，互相促进。
- 九、 与其利用生字表、生词表学习，不如利用有上下文的课文学习。(生字表、生词表可用来回忆与复习。)
- 十、 掌握核心教材，测试核心教材。所谓核心教材指的是课堂教学中所使用的教材，至于汉字教材则主要用来测试理解能力。

汉语基础教材

INTRODUCTION

Goals and methods

The language

This is a course in Standard Chinese, a language that is often colloquially referred to as Mandarin. The origins of this language and its position in the Chinese-speaking world will be discussed below, in the section on linguistic background.

Variation

Given the geographic spread of Mandarin across the Chinese-speaking world, and its function as a lingua franca co-existing with regional and local languages, it is not surprising that it demonstrates a broad range of variation in pronunciation, word choice, grammar, and usage. Some speakers, by virtue of geographic origin or educational background, may claim to be arbiters of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Mandarin, particularly in matters of pronunciation, where the educated speech of Beijing is generally considered to be standard. However, when it comes to the pronunciation of individual words, word choice, particular nuances of meaning, grammatical organization of sentences, or linguistic usage, Chinese displays a range of variation comparable to, or perhaps greater than, that of English, and such variation is only likely to grow as contact with foreigners increases and the Chinese language spreads beyond the borders of China.

Learning Chinese recognizes a standard sound system for Mandarin (as represented in the pinyin system of romanization) but otherwise accepts a broad range of usage, much of it conditioned by social or geographic factors. Where particular usage can be labeled (as, for example, ‘Taiwan’ or ‘southern China’), it is. There may also be unlabeled linguistic material in *Learning Chinese* that is judged aberrant by teachers or other native speakers of the language. Such judgments should be noted, but they too may need to be revised as you continue to observe the language in its full richness, as it is actually spoken or written.

The audience

Though students who already have some ability in Chinese will, in many cases, find this course useful, it does not assume any prior background in the language. *Learning Chinese* is intended for a diverse audience, specialist and non-specialist alike, who need a course that not only guides them toward basic conversational and literary skills but also stimulates their curiosity about the linguistic setting of the language and the geography, history, and culture of the lands where it is spoken. *Learning Chinese* is intended to provide a solid foundation for further study of the language, whether in a specialized program of Chinese studies or in conjunction with work or further study in a Chinese-speaking environment.

A foundation

When you begin studying a language, a lot of time has to be spent familiarizing yourself with the ‘code’: the sounds, words, and organization of the language. There comes a point, after a year or two of (non-intensive) study, when you have acquired a critical mass of language material and, provided you remain observant and responsive to feedback, can start to learn effectively from direct interaction with native speakers. This is also the point at which the notion of immersion begins to make sense, and when going abroad to study the language in a completely immersive setting offers the maximum benefit. This textbook is designed to get you to that point. With the additional materials recommended within, it covers approximately 200 class hours—a year and a half to two years in a regular course of study.

Self-instruction

With help from a Chinese speaker, particularly in the early stages of language development, *Learning Chinese* can also serve as a manual for self-instruction. It introduces the language systematically; it has extensive explanations about usage, as well as suggestions about how to learn the material within; it provides a pathway for the inductive learning of both conversational and literary skills; and it comes with a selection of audio files and other materials that can be accessed electronically.

Goals summarized

Succinctly, the goals of *Learning Chinese* are: (a) a basic conversational competence, which means mastery of pronunciation and familiarity with a repertoire of useful conversational situations, including some, involving language and cultural issues, that allow you as a learner to explore topics of interest; (b) an understanding of the reading process and the properties of the character writing system so that you can begin to develop a reading competence by way of edited texts written in either the simplified or the traditional character set; (c) the ability to represent speech with the pinyin system of transcription, to write a selection of characters from one of the standard character sets, and to use reference materials, word processing, or other forms of electronic communication to continue to independently build language competence; and (d) a basic familiarity with those aspects of modern Chinese society and culture that specifically relate to language use.

Reaching the goals

You study a foreign language in order to learn how to converse with people of another culture, to read material written in the language of that culture, to be able to write the language down, to prepare spoken presentations, and, if you are very ambitious, to write letters, reports, or other forms of composition in that language. How should you proceed effectively to reach those goals? What should the focus of study be? The following is a brief attempt, in anticipation of a complete course of study, to answer these questions.

A. CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS When learning a foreign language, the conversational skills of listening and speaking are primary; the literary skills of reading and writing are secondary. In effect, conversational skills can be taught independently of reading and writing, but the latter are most effectively taught with reference to spoken language.

For the oral skills of speaking and listening, the objective—learning how to interact in context—is clear. If a colleague pokes his head in my office to ask, *Nǐmen yǒu sǎn ma?* (literally: ‘You-all have umbrella question’), I can interpret his request not as an inquiry about possessions—‘Do you own an umbrella?’—but as a request to borrow an umbrella—‘Can you lend me an umbrella?’—because I know it’s raining and he’s going to meet his wife. So I respond, without much thought: *Yǒu, yǒu, yào yòng ma?* ‘Sure, you want to use it?’ Almost before the words are out of my mouth, I realize—for various reasons that involve the likelihood of his making such a request—that it is more likely he’s asking if I need to borrow *his* umbrella: ‘Do you need an umbrella?’ Indeed, this is the case, for he then clarifies: *Bù, bù, wǒ pà nǐmen méiyǒu* ‘No, I was afraid you [all] didn’t have one.’

This example underscores the importance of situational context. Ultimately, it was context that led me to an interpretation of the speaker’s intentions. It was also context that allowed me to figure out that ‘You-all have umbrella question’ meant ‘Do you need an umbrella?’ For the learner, the situational context is clearest during personal interactions; in other words, in conversation. *Learning Chinese* focuses on conversation from the start, with you, the learner, as a participant as much as possible. Conversation also involves instant feedback and a degree of overlapping content, so that listening skills support speaking and vice versa.

In *Learning Chinese*, content is organized into units of a dozen or more topics, each of which takes several weeks to complete. You will proceed as if on a guided tour, being introduced to relevant material, practicing short interactions, proceeding in overlapping waves, and culminating in one or more extensive dialogues that knit the various parts of the unit into a cohesive whole. This approach makes it possible to introduce a wealth of interconnected material that can form the basis of engaging conversations and interesting narratives.

For example, Unit 4 presents (among other things) time phrases, names and titles, introductions, and subjects of study. These can be practiced piecemeal during introductory classes; later, they are woven into a dialogue involving a Chinese businessman striking up a conversation with an overseas student (such as yourself) on a bus in Sichuan province. Within each lesson, topics are selected so you can build up a conversational repertoire that can be personalized, practiced, and extended from lesson to lesson.

B. READING AND CHARACTERS During conversation, you are trying to apprehend the intentions of the speaker; so, too, in reading, you are trying to interpret the intentions of the author, who had to imagine an audience and transform the language into written code. In English, the written code is based on letters and various grammatical conventions; in Chinese, it is based on characters and a different set of grammatical conventions.

For the literate, reading Chinese feels like a seamless process of extracting meaning from text: characters evoke words (or parts of words) and words evoke images that blend into meanings. However, when you are learning to read a language like Chinese, the reading process tends to resolve itself into two phases: recognizing the characters (which is actually a process of matching ‘single-syllable’ characters to what are often polysyllabic words) and then reading for comprehension. Because learning to recognize characters is so difficult, the problems of comprehension (over and above basic recognition of characters) sometimes receive less attention than they deserve.

The character units in *Learning Chinese* are intended to address both issues. To ease the burden of learning to recognize characters, the texts are composed of words and grammatical patterns that are familiar from the core units; the texts are also composed so that new characters appear with enough frequency, and in a sufficient range of contexts, to make it possible to retain and recall them through the process of reading alone. In addition, to ensure that reading proceeds smoothly from character recognition to comprehension, most of the readings are embedded in question-and-answer or comment-and-response formats that provide clear contexts for understanding.

The goal of the reading instruction in *Learning Chinese* is to foster an understanding of the reading process and develop basic reading skills in students with little or no prior experience in Chinese so that they may make the transition to graded reading materials already in print, beginning with such well-tested classics as *The Lady in the Painting* and *Strange Tales in a Chinese Studio* (both published by Yale University Press).

C. COMPOSITION Of the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—the last (better called ‘composition’) is the most elusive, and after years of schooling, even native speakers often find written expression difficult. The problem stems from the lack of the sort of feedback that guides face-to-face interaction; not just linguistic features like stress and intonation, but facial expressions, gestural movements, and the physical context of the interaction, all of which help to monitor the communicative event. However, because writing persists, the good writer learns to tailor it to an imagined audience, providing more redundancy in the form of complete sentences, precise usage, and elaboration. This careful tailoring often depends on language intuition that only native speakers possess, and even the most fluent speakers of a learned language usually depend on native speakers to verify the accuracy of written work.

While learning to write well enough to serve even basic needs of written communication is a skill best left to higher levels of language learning, when conversational and reading skills are more advanced, composition can serve a useful purpose even at foundation levels. Because it is a productive skill, like speaking, composition can help with vocabulary growth, usage, grammar, and cohesion. In later units, *Learning Chinese* occasionally makes use of ‘guided compositions’, in which an outline of the content is given and the task is to incorporate it into a written text. Teachers may wish to add other written assignments, in the form of diary entries, biographical sketches, or personal letters (such as the one that appears in Unit 7).

Romanization versus characters

Even though written Chinese is generally a style of its own, rather different from spoken language, it is obviously possible to write out conversations and

other spoken material using characters. Dramatic plays and the dialogue sections of novels and language textbooks are among the genres that record spoken language in this way. However, as you know, while the Chinese script is an efficient and aesthetically pleasing writing system for native speakers of the language, it has disadvantages for learners who need a way of representing pronunciation and keeping track of language material during the learning process. *Learning Chinese* separates the study of the language in general from the study of characters in particular. Conversational material is presented in the standard, phonetically based notation of the Chinese-speaking world, called Hanyu Pinyin, ‘spelling the sounds of Chinese’. Utilizing Hanyu Pinyin for the core units ensures that the learning of spoken material is not conditioned by factors related to character acquisition; in effect, it means that dialogues and other spoken material can be more natural and extensive than would be possible if all the characters that represent them had to be learned at the same time.

Because *Learning Chinese* separates character reading (and writing) from other aspects of language learning, students who wish to study or review the spoken language without reference to characters can ignore, or postpone, the character units, while those with sufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge can alternatively study the character material alone.

Writing of characters

While learning to write, or reproduce characters, does help with recognition (and so, ultimately, with reading), it is not the case that you need to be able to write all characters from memory in order to be able to read them. A hint or two—the ‘heart’ sign in one character, a ‘phonetic’ element in another—will often be enough for the expectations arising from context to be confirmed. In recognition of this, the character material in *Learning Chinese* is organized primarily to develop reading skills. Information on how to write the graphs is included to draw attention to the general structure of characters, as well as to facilitate their reproduction. It is certainly useful to learn to write from memory a few hundred of the more common characters in order to absorb the general principles of character construction. It is also useful to be able to write personal information in characters so that you can sign in and sign out, fill out forms,

and jot down your contact information. Otherwise, like most Chinese themselves nowadays, the bulk of your writing will make use of Chinese language word processing, which involves selecting from a set of character options—in other words, character recognition, not production. Thus, *Learning Chinese* takes the position that learning to write characters from memory is not a primary goal at foundation levels.

The simplified and traditional character sets

Without the requirement that characters be written from memory, the existence of two sets of Chinese characters (the simplified set used on the Mainland and in Singapore, and the traditional set associated with Taiwan and many overseas communities) becomes much less problematical. Both sets can be introduced simultaneously. Students note the relationship between the two forms, learn to read both in context (though *Learning Chinese* places more emphasis on the simplified set), and select one to write. We recommend following the Mainland majority and learning to write the simplified set, which is generally based on well-established written variants. Individuals are free to choose, but should be aware that while formal examinations tend to offer versions of both, Mainland study programs expect their students to be able to read simplified characters.

From textbook to classroom

The selection and ordering of topics in *Learning Chinese* is based on my own experience learning and teaching Chinese over several decades. It is guided by what the beginning student is likely to encounter in and out of the classroom setting, as well as by the need to provide a broad foundation of grammatical, lexical, and cultural information for future work in Chinese. It mixes practical topics, such as providing biographical information, buying train tickets, or giving toasts, with topics of general interest, such as geography, regional languages ('dialects'), and brand names. Such topics are easily enriched with online materials such as satellite maps, photographs, video clips, and advertisements. They are also easy to transform into effective classroom activities.

The language learner as explorer

It is my belief that, given the enormity of the task of learning a new language (which I sometimes liken to repairing a car while driving it, or renovating your house while still living in it), it is helpful to be as interested in the new language as it is to be fascinated by the new culture—of which language is a part. Unfortunately, writing about language tends to be dry and unnecessarily technical. Until now, there has been no ‘Indiana Jones’ for linguists. In *Learning Chinese*, we have not only made the language the focus of some conversations and narratives, but we have also frequently gone out of the way to comment on the history, structure, and delightful quirks that are scattered across the linguistic terrain. In my own experience, one of the main topics of conversation with Chinese friends all over the world has been the language itself, whether it be regional accents, local usage, or the Chinese equivalent of ‘splat’. (Which is, incidentally, *biā*, a sound for which, officially at least, there is no character.) The other two common subjects of conversation are weather and, as you might expect, food; therefore, these two topics are also given some prominence in *Learning Chinese*.

Learning Chinese is exuberant rather than restrained. Its Chinese content is current and lively, with subjects that range from ordering food to bargaining, from religion to the Chinese school system. It is also larded with quotations, rhymes, popular culture, linguistic information, and historical and geographical notes. It is intended to be an intellectually stimulating resource for both students and teachers alike.

Basic geography

Names for China

The immediate source of the name ‘China’ is thought to be a Persian word¹, which appeared in European languages during the 16th or 17th century as a name for porcelain, that was then applied to the country from which the finest examples of that material came. If this is correct, then ‘China’ derives from ‘china’, not the other way around.

Another name, Cathay, now rather poetic in English but surviving as the regular name for the country in languages such as Russian ('Kitai'), as well as in the name of the Hong Kong–based airline Cathay Pacific, is said to derive from the name of the Khitan (or Qitan) Tartars, who formed the Liao dynasty in the north of China during the 10th century. The Liao dynasty was the first to make a capital in the region of modern Beijing.

The Chinese now call their country *Zhōngguó*, often translated as 'Middle Kingdom'. Originally, this name meant the central, or royal, state of the many that occupied the region prior to the Qin unification in 221 BCE. Other names were used before *Zhōngguó* became current. One of the earliest was *Huá* (or *Huáxià*, combining *Huá* with the name of the earliest dynasty, the *Xià*). *Huá*, combined with the *Zhōng* of *Zhōngguó*, appears in the modern official name of the country—as the following entries show.

The People's Republic of China (PRC)—*Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó*

The PRC is the political entity proclaimed by Mao Zedong when he gave the inaugural speech ('China has risen again') at the Gate of Heavenly Peace (*Tiān'ānmén*) in Beijing on October 1, 1949. The PRC also claims sovereignty over Taiwan and all other regions currently controlled by the government in Taipei.

The Republic of China (ROC)—*Zhōnghuá Mínguó*

The ROC was the name of the political entity established in 1912, after the fall of the Manchu Qing dynasty, which took place the previous year. The man most responsible for the founding of the Republic was Sun Yat-sen (*Sūn Yìxiān* in Mandarin), and for this, he has earned the epithet 'Father of the Country'. Although he was named provisional president in 1911, fears for the unity of the country led to the appointment of Yuan Shih-k'ai (*Yuán Shìkǎi*), an important military and diplomatic official under the Qing, as the first president of the Republic in 1912. In 1949, the president of the Republic, Chiang Kai-shek (*Jiǎng Jièshí*), fled with the government to Taiwan and maintained the name Republic of China as part of his claim to be the only legitimate government of the whole of China. De facto control, however, has been limited to the

island of Taiwan, clusters of islands in the Taiwan Straits, the ‘offshore islands’ of Quemoy (*Jīnmén*) and Matsu (*Mǎzǔ*) close to the mainland, and some minor islands in the South China Sea and to the east of Taiwan. In recent years, even in formal contexts (such as on recent postage stamps), ‘Taiwan’ sometimes takes the place of ‘Republic of China’ as a name for the political entity.

Taiwan—*Táiwān*

Taiwan is some 210 kilometers off the coast of eastern China’s Fujian province; its central mountains are just visible from the Fujian coast on a clear day. The Dutch colonized the island in the early 17th century, fighting off the Spanish, who had also established bases on the northern part of the island. The Dutch called the island Formosa, from the name *Ilha Formosa* ‘beautiful island’, given to it earlier by the Portuguese (who did not actually colonize it).

Taiwan’s earliest inhabitants spoke Austronesian languages unrelated to Chinese, and indigenous groups such as the Ami, Paiwan, and Bunan (who still speak non-Chinese languages) are descendents of those early Taiwan Austronesians. By the 13th century, Chinese speaking Hakka and Fukienese—regional Chinese languages—had established small communities on the island. These were joined by refugees from the Ming after the fall of that dynasty on the mainland. The Qing dynasty annexed Taiwan in 1683, making it a province. In 1895, Taiwan, along with nearby islands such as the Pescadores group (*Péngghú Lièdǎo*), was ceded to Japan as part of the settlement of the Sino-Japanese war. It remained a Japanese colony until 1945, when it was returned to the Republic of China.

Under the Nationalist government, Mandarin (*Guóyǔ*) was made the official language of the country, while Taiwanese (*Táiyǔ*), a form of Southern Min spoken by the majority of its population, was suppressed. In recent years, however, Taiwanese has undergone a resurgence in public life.

Hong Kong—*Xiāng Gǎng*

Hong Kong lies within the Cantonese-speaking region of southern China. The English name derives from the Cantonese pronunciation of the place, ‘Heung Gong’, which means ‘fragrant harbor’ (*Xiāng Gǎng* in Mandarin). Hong Kong

was formally ceded to the British in the Treaty of Nanking (*Nánjīng*), which was signed at the end of the Opium War in 1842 on a ship anchored in the Yangtze River, slightly to the east of Nanjing. The Kowloon Peninsula (*Jiǔlóng* ‘nine dragons’) was added in 1860 after the Second Opium War, and the New Territories (*Xīnjiè*), which includes islands and mainland territory, were leased to the British in 1898 for 99 years, making Hong Kong total slightly more than 1,000 square kilometers.

In 1984, well before the expiration of the New Territories lease, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Chairman Deng Xiaoping formulated the Sino-British Joint Declaration, an agreement for the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty. In 1990, the principle of ‘One Country, Two Systems’ [*Yī Guó, Liǎng Zhì*] was formulated: Hong Kong would retain its laws and a high degree of political autonomy for 50 years. At midnight on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region [*Tèbié Xíngzhèngqū*] of China, which guaranteed it autonomy within the PRC in all but foreign affairs and defense.

Historically, Hong Kong has been settled by a number of distinct Chinese groups. These include the Bendi (‘locals’), who emigrated during the Song dynasty (10th–13th century) after being driven from their homes in north China; the Tanka, fisherfolk who lived on boats and are thought by some to be the descendents of the non-Han Yue people; the Hokla, early immigrants from Fujian; the Hakka, who ended up mostly in less fertile parts of the New Territories; and numerous clans and people from nearby Cantonese-speaking regions, as well as other parts of China. Despite its small size, Hong Kong has more successfully preserved the traces of many traditional Chinese social forms and practices than have many other parts of the Chinese-speaking world.

Macau—*Àomén*

Sixty kilometers to the west of Hong Kong, across the Pearl River estuary, is *Àomén*, known in English as Macau. The Chinese and English names have different sources. *Àomén*, means, literally, ‘gate to the inlet’; but the Portuguese name, ‘Macao’ (English Macau), is said to derive from the name of a revered local temple, called ‘Maagok’ in Cantonese (*Māgē*), dedicated to Matsu, a goddess worshipped by fishermen and sailors².

The peninsula of Macau was settled by the Portuguese in 1557, and was administered by them for over 400 years, though the question of who held sovereignty was not resolved³ until 1999, when it reverted completely to Chinese territory. The two small islands of Coloane and Taipa were added to the territory in the middle of the 19th century, and later connected to the Macau peninsula by bridges. Recently, the islands have been joined by landfill, and the central portion has become the site of the Cotai Strip, envisioned as an Asian version of the Las Vegas strip—only larger. Macau is the only place in China where gambling is legal.

Chinese lands; Chinese overseas

Informally, the two Chinese political entities are often referred to as Mainland China (*Zhōngguó Dàlù*)—or simply ‘the Mainland’—and Taiwan, rather than the PRC and the ROC. The occasional need to talk about a single Chinese entity, consisting of the Chinese mainland plus Hong Kong and Taiwan, has recently given rise to a term, *Liǎng’àn Sāndì* (‘two-shores three-lands’).

Chinese who live outside the *Liǎng’àn Sāndì* can be classified as *Huáqiáo*, generally translated as ‘Overseas Chinese’. In its broadest sense, *Huáqiáo* can apply simply to ethnic Chinese living outside the *Liǎng’àn Sāndì*, regardless of how assimilated they are to local cultures. More typically, however, it has a narrower application, referring to Chinese who retain features of Chinese culture in their adopted homelands and who keep ties with the motherland. There is another term, *Huáyì* (‘Chinese-hem [of a robe]; frontier’) that is applied to ethnic Chinese born overseas, e.g., *Měiguó Huáyì* ‘Chinese Americans’, etc.

Nationalists and Communists

After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, it was customary to distinguish the two political entities by their only extant political parties, the Communist Party (*Gòngchǎndǎng*), abbreviated CCP, and the Nationalist Party (*Guómíndǎng*, or Kuomintang), the KMT. Hence, ‘the Communist government’, ‘the Nationalist leaders’, etc. Recent changes in Taiwan and on the Mainland make neither term appropriate. In 2000, the Nationalists lost to Chen Shui-bian and the Democratic Progressive Party, though they returned to power in 2008 with the

election of the KMT candidate, Ma Ying-jeou (*Mǎ Yīngjiǔ* in Mandarin). Meanwhile, on the Mainland, the Communist Party, though retaining its institutional position in the government, has become less of a dominating force in political life.



Liǎng'àn Sàndì

Peking, Beijing, and Peiping

One of the curious consequences of the political differences between the PRC and the ROC is that they have different names for the city formerly known to the English-speaking world as Peking. For the PRC, the capital is *Běijīng* ‘northern capital’, the city that has been the capital for all but brief periods since 1422, when Emperor Yong Le of the Ming dynasty moved the government north from *Nánjīng* ‘southern capital’. However, in 1927, the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek, having little real power in the north and under threat from the Japanese, made Nanjing their capital and restored the name *Běipíng* (Peiping) (‘northern-peace’) that the northern city possessed before becoming capital in

the 15th century. Officially, the Nationalists retained the name *Běipíng* even after the Japanese conquered the city of Nanjing, and continued to do so after Beijing reverted to the capital in 1949 under the PRC.

The spelling ‘Peking’ is probably a reflection of the Cantonese pronunciation of the name Beijing, in which the initial of the second syllable is pronounced with a hard ‘k’ sound. Representations of Cantonese pronunciation were often adopted by the British as official postal spellings (cf. Nanking for *Nánjīng* and Chungking for *Chóngqìng*). Though most foreigners now spell the name of the city, in Mandarin pinyin transcription, as Beijing, the old spelling and pronunciation survive to this day in certain proper names, such as Peking University (still the official English name of the institution) and Peking duck. The transcription, Beijing, is not without its problems either, since speakers who do not know the pinyin system tend to make the ‘j’ sound more foreign or exotic by giving it a French quality: [bay-zhìng]. As you will soon learn, the actual standard pronunciation is closer to [bay-džìng].

Linguistic background

Chinese

One of the consequences of the long duration of Chinese history is that the term ‘Chinese’ has come to have a wide range of applications. It can refer to the earliest records, written on oracle bones, and dated to the second millennium BCE. It can refer to the languages in the Sinitic branch—the ‘Sino’ of the Sino-Tibetan family—which includes not only the standard language but regional languages (‘dialects’) such as Cantonese and Hokkien. (In this sense, Chinese is to the modern Chinese languages as Romance is to the modern Latin languages French, Spanish, Italian, and so on.) Finally, in its most narrow sense, it can refer to the modern standard language, often called Mandarin by English speakers.

Mandarin and Chinese

When the Portuguese began to have extensive contact with China in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, they adapted the word ‘mandarin’ (itself adapted

to Portuguese from Indian and other sources) to refer to Chinese officials; hence modern meanings such as ‘powerful official; member of a powerful group’. They also used it for the language spoken by such officials, called *Guānhuà* in Chinese, ‘the speech of officials’. *Guānhuà* was the name given to specialized speaking practices, based on northern Chinese, which served as a lingua franca among officials and members of other educated classes who might come from different parts of China and speak mutually unintelligible Chinese in their home regions.

Guānhuà can be regarded as the precursor of the modern standard language. In English, the name ‘Mandarin’ has survived the transformation from specialized language to the modern standard, but the name *Guānhuà* has not. The Chinese term only survives in the specialized terminology of linguists, who use the term *Běifāng Guānhuà Tǐxì* ‘northern Guanhua system [of dialects]’ to refer to the northern dialect grouping that includes Mandarin and other distinct dialects now spoken over a vast stretch of territory in the north, west, and southwest of China. Western linguists often refer to this grouping as the Mandarin dialects, using ‘Mandarin’ in a generic sense. The Mandarin dialects stand in contrast to other dialect groupings, such as the Cantonese or Fujianese.

Strange as it may seem, the Chinese-speaking world has no single term for modern standard Chinese, or Mandarin. In the PRC, it is officially called *Pǔtōnghuà* (‘the common language’), a term with a legacy dating back to the early part of the 20th century; in Taiwan, it is called *Guóyǔ* (‘the national language’), a term dating to at least 1918; while in Singapore, it is called *Huáyǔ* (‘the language of the *Huá*’)—*Huá* being an ancient name for the Chinese people. In ordinary speech, other terms are often used: *Hànyǔ* (‘language of the Han’), for example, or *Zhōngwén* (‘Chinese-language’).

Mainlanders tend to find it strange that English speakers refer to the standard language as Mandarin. Norman (1988: 136) recommends using the term Standard Chinese or, when possible, just Chinese, and keeping Mandarin for the dialect grouping. In certain contexts, Chinese will suffice, but at times it will be ambiguous, for it does not rule out Cantonese, Shanghainese, and other so-called ‘dialects’. The longer term, Standard Chinese, is awkward, and assumes

that there is only one standard, which makes it difficult to talk about differences in, say, Taiwan and Mainland Mandarin. So, in *Learning Chinese*, if the simple term ‘Chinese’ is not sufficient, we fall back on the venerable term ‘Mandarin’, taking heart from the usage of such eminent Chinese as Yuen Ren Chao, who wrote a much-loved textbook called *Mandarin Primer* (1948), and more recently, Singapore’s Lee Kwan Yew, who wrote a volume describing his own study called *Keeping My Mandarin Alive* (2005).

The origins of spoken Mandarin

Historically, a majority of the Chinese population spoke regional or local languages and was illiterate. For them, there was no general medium of communication across regional lines. For the educated, *Guānhuà* served in a limited way as a spoken medium, while Classical Chinese, the language of administration, education, and high culture (see below), served as a written medium. By the 19th century, it was clear that the lack of a spoken norm that could serve the communicative needs of all classes across the country was a major obstacle to the modernization of China, and eventually efforts were made to identify a suitable medium and promote it as the standard. *Guānhuà* was an obvious candidate. However, by the 19th century, it had become strongly associated with the educated speech of Beijing, putting southerners at a disadvantage. Classical Chinese, though it had no regional bias, was a highly stylized written language with ancient roots that made it an unsuitable basis for a national spoken medium.

After various interesting, but completely impractical, attempts to establish a hybrid language to balance regional differences (particularly between north and south) the Chinese language planners settled on a northern strategy: promoting the pronunciation of the *educated speech* of the capital, Beijing, but incorporating material from a broad range of other sources as the basis of usage. Thus, words with wide distribution were adopted over northern or Beijing localisms, for example. The spoken standard also absorbed material from written sources that introduced words and phrasing from the important economic and cultural region of the Lower Yangtze Valley (*Shànghǎi* to *Nánjīng*) as well as words for modern concepts first coined in Japanese.

Norms and variation

Though both Taiwan and the PRC have always agreed on the educated Beijing standard for pronunciation, geographical distance, political separation, and cultural divergence have resulted in the emergence of two norms for spoken usage, as a comparison of dictionaries from Taiwan and the PRC will demonstrate. These differences, though still moderate in scope, extend from the pronunciation of particular words to grammar and usage.

Even within the emerging norms of Standard Chinese (Mainland and Taiwan versions), enormous variety exists at the local level. The case of Taiwan is illustrative. There, *Guóyǔ* (Mandarin) is not the first language of much of the population. The most common first language is *Táiyǔ* (Taiwanese), a Southern Min language that is very similar to the Southern Min spoken in the province of Fujian across the Taiwan Straits. (Until the success of the ‘Speak Mandarin’ movement, Southern Min was also the language of most Singapore Chinese; elsewhere in Southeast Asia, it remains an important language in Chinese communities.)

With so many in Taiwan speaking *Táiyǔ* as a first language, it is not surprising that the Mandarin spoken there is often influenced by the pronunciation, grammar, and usage of Taiwanese. The result is a unique Taiwanese Mandarin. The same phenomenon occurs elsewhere, of course, so that no matter where you are in China, Mandarin heard on the street will generally have local features. Native speakers quickly get used to these differences, just as English speakers get used to regional accents of English. Learners will typically find the variation disruptive, and they will need time and experience to adjust to it.

Though there are probably more and more Chinese who speak some variety of Mandarin as their first language, and whose speech is close to the appointed norms, it is still true that the majority of Chinese speak more than one variety of Chinese, and for many of them the standard speech represented in this textbook would be a second language. A few years ago, *USA Today* published statistics on the ‘world’s most common languages, ranked by population that uses each as a first language’. Mandarin was listed first, with 885 million speakers (followed by Spanish with 332 million and English with 322 million). The figure for Mandarin does not include those who speak Cantonese or one of the

other regional languages, but it must include a large number of speakers whose Chinese would be difficult to understand by someone familiar only with the Beijing standard.

When describing the best Chinese language, Chinese speakers tend to focus on pronunciation, praising it as *biāozhǔn* ‘standard’. For this reason, native Chinese speakers, who tend to be effusive in their praise in any case, will sometimes flatter a foreigner by saying he or she speaks the language better than they do. By ‘better’, they mean with a better approximation to the standard, educated accent. Apart from language classrooms, the most *biāozhǔn* Mandarin is heard on the broadcast media, in schools, and in the speech of young, educated urban Chinese.

Regional languages and minority languages

There are seven major dialect groupings of Chinese, including the geographically extensive Mandarin group (divided into southwestern, northwestern, and northern regions) mentioned earlier. Of the others, Cantonese (*Yuè*), Shanghainese (*Wú*), Fukienese or Hokkien (*Mǐn*), and Hakka (*Kèjiā*) are the best known. (*Yuè*, *Wú*, and *Mǐn* are Chinese linguistic designations, while Hokkien and Hakka are the regional pronunciations of the names *Fújiàn* and *Kèjiā*, respectively.) All represent groupings of diverse dialects thought to share a common origin. Even within each group, the varieties are not necessarily mutually intelligible. Cantonese, for example, includes dialects such as Hoisan (*Táishān*) which are quite distinct from the standard dialect.

In many respects, the dialect groupings of Chinese—represented by Cantonese, Shanghainese, Hakka, etc.—are different languages. They are not, after all, mutually intelligible, and they have their own standard speeches (Guangzhou for Cantonese, Suzhou for Shanghainese, etc.). In linguistic terms, they are often said to be comparable to Dutch and German or Spanish and Portuguese. However, unlike those European languages, the Chinese ‘dialects’ share a written language and identify with a common culture. Recently, the term ‘topolect’, a direct translation with Greek roots of the Chinese term *fāngyán* (‘place-language’), has gained currency as a more formal term for what are generally called ‘regional languages’ in this book. So we may speak of Canton-

ese as the standard language within the Cantonese (or *Yuè*) grouping, and varieties such as Hoisan (*Táishān*) as dialects within Cantonese.

Regional languages should be distinguished from the languages of the non-Chinese (non-Han) ethnic groups—such as the Mongolians, Tibetans, or Uighurs—that make up about 8–9 percent of the total population of China. There are 56 officially recognized ethnic minorities in China, almost all of them with their own languages or language groups.



A *Bái* couple in their finery, *Dàlǐ*,
Yúnnán (photograph by Jordan Gilliland)

Standard Written Chinese

Standard Written Chinese (or written Mandarin) is the language of composition, learned in school and used by all educated Chinese regardless of the particular variety or regional language that they speak. A Cantonese, for example, speaking Taishan Cantonese at home and in the neighborhood, speaking something closer to standard Cantonese when he or she goes to Guangzhou, and

speaking Cantonese-flavored Mandarin in certain formal or official situations, is taught to write a language that is different in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and usage from both Taishan and standard Cantonese. Even though he or she would read it aloud with Cantonese pronunciation, it would in fact be more easily relatable to Mandarin in lexicon, grammar, and in all respects *other than pronunciation*.

From Classical Chinese to modern written Chinese

Written language always differs from spoken, for it serves quite different functions. In the case of Chinese, the difference was, until the early part of the 20th century, extreme. Until then, most written communication, and almost all printed matter, was written in a language called *Wényán* ‘literary language’, and generally known in English as Classical Chinese. As noted earlier, it was this language that served as a medium of written communication for the literate classes, much as Latin served as a medium for communication among educated classes in medieval Europe.

Classical Chinese was unlikely ever to have been a close representation of a spoken language. It is thought to have had its roots in the language spoken some 2,500 years ago in northern China. That language, though still Chinese in the sense that it is ancestral to modern Chinese languages, would have differed quite significantly in sound, grammar, and vocabulary from any form of modern Chinese. Though Classical Chinese can be regarded as a different language from the modern, it was written in characters that have retained their basic shape to the present day, and these serve to preserve the connection between ancient and modern words whose pronunciation and grammatical context is radically different. While spelling differences (that reflect changes in pronunciation), as well a high degree of word replacement, make Old English texts almost completely opaque to modern readers, ancient Chinese texts continue to look familiar to Chinese readers despite the changes that have taken place in the intervening years. Educated Chinese can read them aloud in modern standard pronunciation, say, or in Cantonese or Hokkien. Without knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of Classical Chinese, they may not fully understand them, but enough words—and, indeed, sayings and phrases—

have survived to modern times to make the writings of Confucius (6th–5th century BCE) or the poems of Li Po (8th century CE) superficially accessible to the modern reader of Chinese.

Classical Chinese is still used for certain kinds of formal or ritual writing, much as Latin is used for diplomas and certain kinds of inscriptions in Western countries. It has also served as a source of words, quotations, allusions, and even style for the modern language, both written and spoken, but relatively few people read the classical language well, and only a few specialists are still able to write it fluently.

Since Classical Chinese was not based on an accessible spoken language, facility in composition required memorizing large samples to act as models. Once learned, the classical language would tend to channel expression in conservative directions. Citation was the main form of argument; balance and euphony were crucial elements of style. These features did not endear it to the modernizers, and they sought to replace it with a language closer to the modern spoken version. They had a precedent, for all through Chinese history there had in fact been genres of writing known as *Báihuà* (‘white—plain or vernacular—language’) that were rich in colloquial elements. Such genres were not highly regarded or considered worthy of being literary models, but they were well known as the medium of the popular Ming and Qing novels, such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* (also called the *The Story of Stone*), *Journey to the West* (also known as *Monkey King*), or the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Though it retained classical elements, *Báihuà* provided the early model for a more colloquial standard written language.

Because norms within the newly emerging written language varied, and led to problems of consistency and clarity, some advocated a return to Classical Chinese as the written standard. If it could have shed some of its stylistic affectations (such as the high value put on elaborate or archaic diction), Classical Chinese might have developed into a modern written norm much as Classical Arabic has become the written norm of the Arabic-speaking world. Classical Chinese, however, was too closely associated with conservatism and insularity at a time when China was looking to modernize. Nevertheless, a new written norm does not arise overnight, and for at least the first half of the 20th century,

a number of different styles across the range of classical to colloquial coexisted and vied for dominance. Following the revolution of 1949, written styles in Taiwan and the PRC diverged. In the PRC, political and other factors favored a more colloquial written style, whereas in Taiwan, the influence of classical styles has remained stronger.

Characters

The earliest extensive examples of written Chinese date from late in the second millennium BCE. These are the so-called oracle bone inscriptions (*jiǎgǔwén*), inscribed or painted on ox bones and the bottom plate (the carapace) of tortoise shells. This early writing made use of characters whose forms differed in appearance but can still be directly related to modern characters. During the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), the script was modified and standardized as part of the reform of government administration. The resulting style, known as the ‘little seal’ (*xiǎo zhuàn*), is still used on official seals (or ‘chops’). At first glance, little seal characters look quite unlike the modern versions, but a native reader can often discern the correspondences.

A script known as *lishū* came into extensive use during the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE). Individual strokes in the *lishū* style are described as having a ‘silkworm’s head and swallow’s tail’. It is still used occasionally for writing large characters. The modern script, the kind generally used for printed matter, is based on the *kǎishū* ‘model script’ that has been in use since before the period known as the Southern and Northern Dynasties (5th and 6th centuries). Other varieties of script were developed for handwriting (*xíngshū* ‘running script’) and calligraphy (*cǎoshū* ‘grass script’). Illustrations of the development of Chinese script can be found at websites such as Simon Ager’s ‘Omniglot’: www.omniglot.com/writing/chinese_evolution.htm.

Traditional and simplified characters

In the past, simpler and more complex versions of characters have often coexisted. In many cases, the more complicated were used for formal correspondence, and the simpler were used for personal communications. In the 1950s, however, as part of a program to promote literacy in the PRC, a set of simpler

characters, most of them based on attested forms, were promoted as a general standard for all printed matter. Singapore adopted the new forms for most purposes, but Taiwan, Hong Kong, and most overseas communities kept the traditional forms; as a result, both types of (formal) characters are now in use in the Chinese-speaking world. In English, they are usually referred to as ‘traditional’ and ‘simplified’. The two types are illustrated below, using the phrase *Zhōngguórè* ‘fascination with Chinese’ (‘middle-kingdom-hot’), roughly pronounced [joong-kwoh-ruh].

Traditional

Simplified

中國熱

中国热

*Zhōngguórè**Zhōngguórè*

The three characters cited illustrate the differences nicely. Many characters have only one form (like *zhōng*); many show slight differences (like *rè*); others (like *guó*) show significant differences but are easily relatable. Relatively few—no more than a few dozen—are completely different, and most of those are commonly encountered. So the differences between the two sets of characters are not as significant as might be imagined. A native speaker sees the relationship between the two fairly easily and, using context, moves from one to the other without much difficulty. Students generally write only one style, but they should be comfortable reading either.

Homophony

Characters represent syllable-length words (or rather, morphemes—the smallest meaningful units of language). Since, in Chinese, these units are short, the chance of homophony is relatively high, more so than in English. In English, words pronounced the same are often written the same, as is the case for the ‘pens’ of ‘pig pen’ and ‘ink pen’. It is also common in English for different words of identical pronunciation to be written differently, such as ‘to’, ‘too’, and ‘two’. Written Chinese is more comparable to the latter case: words with the same pronunciation but different (and unrelated) meanings are written

with different characters. A syllable such as *shi* can be written dozens of ways, depending on the meaning, as the Chinese linguist Yuen Ren Chao demonstrated in a tour de force whose title was:

施氏食獅史

Shī shì shí shī shǐ

(‘[Shi] clan eat lion story’)

‘The tale of how *Shī* of the *Shì* clan ate the lion.’

Chao’s tale continues for another 100 or so characters, all pronounced *shi* in one of the four tones. It is written in the very concise prose of Classical Chinese, which is normally read out with modern sound values; so while it is just intelligible as written language, it is completely unintelligible as spoken. However, written in modern Chinese, many of the words would be disyllabic (*shī* ‘lion’, for example, would be *shīzi*), and the result would probably be intelligible. However, Chao’s exercise makes the point nicely: characters represent words—units of sound and meaning—and letters represent sounds only.

Transcribing sound in characters

Characters are sometimes used only for their sound values, with the usual meanings ignored. In this way, Chinese characters can be used to transcribe foreign sounds. So, just as English speakers use Roman letters to write Chinese, Chinese speakers sometimes use Chinese characters to write English (or other languages). Here is an example from a very simple Chinese-English teaching manual from the Mainland (with Chinese written in simplified characters, and English written in the Romanized system of transcription that you will soon learn). See if you can figure out what English sentence is represented.

艾姆搜普利丝得吐斯衣油厄根。

Ài-mǔ sōu pǔ-lì-sī-dé tǔ sī-yī yóu è-gēn.

Characters are regularly used for their syllabic value, in this way, to transliterate personal names, names of places, and sounds: 莎士比亚 *Shāshìbǐyà* ‘Shakespeare’; 密西西比 *Mìxīxībǐ* ‘Mississippi’. Because characters can only be

used for syllabic units, the match is not usually as good as it would be in an alphabetic system, which can match a symbol to each consonant and vowel sound.

Pictograms, ideograms, logograms

Because some Chinese characters derive from attempts to represent objects pictorially, they are sometimes called ‘pictograms’. However, as you will see in the character units, the majority of modern characters do not derive directly from pictorial representations; even in those cases which do, changes in the form of graphs brought about by processes of standardization and writing reform over the centuries have generally obscured any representational origins. That is not to say that Chinese characters do not have certain aesthetic qualities that can be exploited in poetry and art; it is just that these qualities do not necessarily play a significant role in ordinary reading or writing.

Because the form of characters is not determined by sound, graphs can be borrowed for their meaning and given an entirely different pronunciation. So, for example, the character 山 *shān*, which originated as a representation of a mountain, can be borrowed into Japanese to represent ‘yama’, the Japanese word for ‘mountain’. (The same property is found in Arabic numerals: the graph ‘8’ is read ‘eight’ in English, ‘osiem’ in Polish, ‘tám’ in Vietnamese, and so on.) This property of characters, together with the pictorial origins of many of the simple graphs, has given rise to the notion that Chinese characters somehow represent meaning directly without the mediation of words, hence the term ‘ideogram’. This misconception is a result of viewing characters as single entities, outside of normal contexts. In running texts (in Chinese, Japanese, or even Classical Chinese), it is quite clear that readers have to identify words and contexts that are linguistic, not just in the realm of thought, in order to perceive meaning. Neither the term ‘pictogram’ nor ‘ideogram’ applies to Chinese characters.

Writing systems are better named according to the units that they encode. Thus, the English writing system basically encodes specific sounds (phonemes), though there are some word symbols as well (e.g., &, \$, %). Chinese basically encodes words, though characters may sometimes be called upon to represent

Selling New Year scrolls, *Táiběi*

syllables. Using technical names, English writing is primarily phonographic, and Chinese is primarily logographic.

Representing the sounds of Chinese

Alphabetic systems for writing Chinese date back at least to the 16th century. Most have made use of Roman letters, and are therefore called Romanizations (often written with a capital letter). We can illustrate some of the systems, using the compound word for ‘Chinese [spoken] language’:

Wade-Giles	Chūngkuó huà
Yale	Jūnggwó hwà
National Romanization	Jong-guo huah
Hànyǔ Pīnyīn	Zhōngguó huà
Zhùyīn Fúhào	ㄔㄨㄥˊ ㄍㄨㄛˊ ㄏㄨㄚˋ

The Wade-Giles system (named for its originator Thomas Wade, a professor of Chinese at Cambridge University at the turn of the 19th century, and Herbert

A. Giles, a consular officer and, later, Wade's successor at Cambridge who incorporated the system into his dictionary) was used for many years in library catalogues and in most English-language publications on China. It is known for distinguishing the plain initial consonants from the aspirated (*g* from *k*, *d* from *t*, etc., in the pinyin system) by use of an apostrophe: *kuo* versus *k'uo*, for example, or *chung* versus *ch'ung*. (This is phonetically quite sensible since both sounds are voiceless in Chinese.)

The Yale system grew out of work performed by the U.S. War Department during World War II and was used in the Yale textbook series, familiar to several generations of students of Chinese. As much as possible, it used the values of English letters to represent Chinese pronunciation, so it is the most transparent of all the Romanization systems (for speakers of English). National Romanization, a system that had official status in China during the 1930s, incorporates tone in the spelling (notice that there are no tone marks above the vowels), which makes it invaluable for learning and retaining tones. *Hànyǔ Pīnyīn* is the official system of the PRC and has been accepted by most of the rest of the world, including, recently, Taiwan.

Finally, *Zhùyīn Fúhào* ('indicating-sounds transcription'), the last of the systems illustrated, is colloquially called *Bopo mofo* after the first four letters of its alphabet. It has a longer history than pinyin, based on a system created in 1919 called *Zhùyīn Zimǔ* ('indicating-sounds alphabet') that was intended to serve as a full-fledged writing system. It was inspired by the Japanese 'kana' system, whose symbols derive from characters rather than Roman letters. *Bopo mofo* symbols have the advantage of appearing Chinese and not suggesting any particular English (or other language's) sound values. In Taiwan, children, as well as many foreign students, learn to read with materials in which *Bopo mofo* is written vertically to the right of corresponding characters to indicate pronunciation.

Hànyǔ Pīnyīn

Pīnyīn ('spelling the sound') was developed and officially adopted by the PRC in the 1950s, and it is now used in textbooks, dictionaries, reference sources, computer input systems, and on road and shop signs in Mainland China. In

recent years, some schools in China have been encouraging children at certain stages in their education to write essays in pinyin to improve composition and style, and it is not unlikely that its functions will continue to expand in the future.

It is sometimes claimed that pinyin (or any other such system of transcribing the sounds of Mandarin) cannot serve as a full-fledged writing system because the degree of homophony in Chinese is such that some reference to characters is necessary for disambiguation. This is certainly true in the case of the *shi* story cited earlier, and it might be true for Classical Chinese in general. However, it is certainly not true for texts written in colloquial styles. *Anything that can be understood in speech can be written and understood in pinyin.* Many people e-mail successfully in pinyin without even indicating the tones! The question is, using pinyin, how far one can stray from colloquial speech and still be understood. Written styles range from the relatively colloquial to the relatively classical, but if the latter can be understood when read aloud, then they can presumably be understood when written in pinyin.

百花齐放，百家争鸣

百花齊放，百家爭鳴

Bǎihuā qífàng, bǎijiā zhēngmíng!

‘Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend!’

(‘100-flowers together-blossom, 100-schools [of thought] contend’)

Key Terms

Peoples Republic of China (PRC)

The Mainland

The Republic of China (ROC)

Taiwan

Hong Kong (*Xiāng Gǎng*)

Běijīng (Peking)

Běipíng (Peiping)

Qīng (Manchu) dynasty (1644–1911)

Míng (Han) dynasty (1368–1644)

Yuán (Mongol) dynasty (1271–1368)

1842

1912

1949

Máo Zédōng

Chiang Kai-shek (*Jiǎng Jièshí*)

Sun Yat-sen (*Sūn Yìxiān*)

Chinese

Guānhuà (officials' language)

Mandarin

Guóyǔ (national language)

Pǔtōnghuà (ordinary language)

Standard Chinese

Classical Chinese (*Wényán*)

Báihuà (vernacular written Chinese)

Táiyǔ (Taiwanese Minnan)

Taiwanese Mandarin

Hànyǔ Pīnyīn

Wade-Giles

Zhùyīn Fúhào (*Bopo mofo*)

lingua franca

dialects

regional languages

Cantonese

Fujianese (Hokkien)

Kejia (Hakka)

Shanghainese

oracle bone inscriptions (*jiǎgǔwén*)

little seal characters (*xiǎozhuàn*)

model script (*kǎishū*)

traditional characters (*fántǐzì*)

simplified characters (*jiǎntǐzì*)

homophony

pictograms

ideograms

logograms

NOTES

1. Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, Harvard-Yenching Monograph Series 32, revised and enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 753.
2. B. V. Pires, “Origin and Early History of Macau”, in R. D. Cremer, ed., *Macau: City of Commerce and Culture* (Hong Kong: UEA Press, 2000), p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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In the Imperial Palace, *Běijīng*

SOUNDS AND SYMBOLS

The writer was required at school to read his lessons aloud sixty times; that was for reading books in his own language.

—Yuen Ren Chao, talking about himself in *Mandarin Primer* (Harvard University Press, 1961)

This lesson serves as an introduction to the pronunciation of standard Chinese (Mandarin) and to the Hanyu Pinyin transcription system ('pinyin'). Pinyin will represent pronunciation and be your written code for conversational or 'sayable' material in Chinese. This lesson introduces the whole system but pays particular attention to those elements that you will need in order to actually use the language in the next lesson, that is, tones, initials, and certain 'rhymes'. The units that follow this lesson will provide you with actual language (transcribed and, in many cases, recorded for you). You will be able to refer back to this lesson both to confirm information and to flesh out the system. As you proceed through the units, you will be learning to relate sound to symbol so that you can accurately read out and write down the Chinese language samples that you will be practicing.

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To learn to speak a language, you need to master its sounds. This is not easy. It requires changing habits of articulation that were deeply internalized during the first few years of your life and are now quite automatic. It also requires learning to pay attention to sounds that may have no particular importance in your native language but are crucially important in the new one. What is more, while you are establishing these new habits, you have to hold on to the old. Eventually, you will learn to switch between two systems, but while you are learning, there is bound to be interference from the first language (which will likely be English for most users of this book). In the early stages of language learning, recordings will help, but the critical role will be played by your teachers, who have advice, know the pitfalls, and can provide timely feedback.

As you learn Chinese, you need to be able to write down the new language, not simply in an ad hoc fashion, but in a way that allows you to have an unambiguous record of the pronunciation. As you know, Chinese has an aesthetically pleasing but mnemonically challenging character writing system. Even though many characters do offer phonetic hints to those who know where to look, they offer no information about pronunciation at all to the learner. To cite a particularly clear case: 木 is pronounced *mù*, 林 is *lín*, and 森 is *sēn*. The graphs are additive; the sounds are not. Of course, English is not completely reliable either; words like ‘lead’ can be pronounced [leed] or [led], and the three spellings ‘to,’ ‘too,’ ‘two’ all have the same sound. However, words written in an alphabetical system almost always provide some sort of phonetic hint that helps in the recovery of sound. (Exceptions in English would be signs such as + or & that offer no help to the uninitiated; they are, in fact, functionally like characters.)

The solution for the learner is a system of transcription that represents the sounds of Chinese with relatively few symbols and uses them consistently, so that—unlike English—words can be pronounced reliably. The Introduction (p. xlix) mentioned a number of such systems used for Chinese in the past, many of them with virtues. The official system, used for textbooks, for reference

works, on signs, and for computer input, is Hanyu Pinyin, which means, literally, ‘Chinese spelling of sounds’. It was developed in the mid-1950s in China, under the guidance of the venerable *Zhōu Yǒuguāng*, who, at the time of this writing, was still alive and working at the age of 103.



Běijīng metro station sign, including characters and pinyin (the latter without tones)

0.1 Syllable components

0.1.1 Sound versus symbol (letter)

From the start, it is important to make a distinction between sound and the representation of sound. In pinyin, for example, *jī* represents a sound like [jee] (with ‘level tone’), *qī* represents [chee]. Neither is hard (for English speakers) to imitate, but the way the latter is represented—with a ‘q’ (and no subsequent ‘u’)—is counterintuitive and difficult to remember at first. On the other hand, pinyin *r* represents a sound that, for many speakers of standard Chinese, is a blend of the ‘r’ of ‘run’ with the ‘s’ (pronounced [ʒ]) of ‘pleasure’ (or the ‘j’ of French *je*)—in other words, an ‘r’ with friction. This sound may be difficult for non-Chinese speakers to produce well, but associating it with the symbol ‘r’ is less problematical. So, as you learn pinyin, you may encounter problems of

pronunciation on the one hand, and problems of transcription on the other. It is important to keep the distinction clear.

0.1.2 The syllable

When introducing the sounds of standard Chinese, it is useful to begin with the syllable, a unit whose prominence is underscored by the one-character-per-syllable writing system. The *spoken* syllable in Chinese is traditionally analyzed in terms of an initial consonant sound and a rhyme, the latter being everything other than the initial. Chinese schoolchildren, when focusing on pronunciation, often read syllables (which are usually also meaningful units) in an exaggerated initial-rhyme division: tuh + ù = tù ‘hare’, luh + óng = lóng ‘dragon’, etc.

The *written* pinyin syllable (as opposed to the spoken syllable) can also be usefully analyzed in terms of an initial (C_i) and a rhyme. The rhyme, in turn, contains vowels (V), tones (T) written above the vowels, medials (M), and endings (E). Of these, only the vowel is always present (as, for example, in the sentence-final particle that is simply an untuned *a*). All possible pinyin syllables can be represented by the following formula (with V underlined as the only obligatory unit); there are so few options for M (medials) and E (endings) that they can be usefully listed in our formula.

<u>INITIAL</u>						RHyme
C _i	+	M	+	T	+	E
				<u>V</u>		
		i, u, ü		i, o (but o+o = ou) and n, ng		

Examples (which you need not know how to pronounce yet):

Vowel:	a
Vowel/Tone:	ā, è
Initial + Vowel/Tone:	tā, bǐ, kè, shū
Initial + Medial + Vowel/Tone:	xiè, zuò, duì, xué, jiù, nüé
Initial + Vowel/Tone + Ending:	lèi, hǎo, hěn, máng
Initial + Medial + Vowel/Tone + Ending:	jiāo, jiàn, jiǎng

There are 21 pinyin **initial consonants**. They are usually presented in a chart of representative syllables, arranged in rows and columns (see section 0.3.1). Whether the initials are written with a single consonant letter (*l, m, z*) or several (*sh, zh*), they all represent only one sound unit (or phoneme). Chinese has no initial clusters—consonant blends—of the sort represented by ‘cl’ or ‘sn’ in English.

There are six possible (written) **vowels**: *a, e, i, o, u*, and *ü* (the last a ‘rounded high front’ vowel, as in German *über* or the last vowel of French *déjà vu*). Vowels can be preceded by **medials** (*i, u, ü*) and followed by **endings**, two of which are written with vowel symbols (*i, o*) and two with consonants (*n, ng*). There is actually a third (written) vowel ending that can occur after the main vowel (in addition to *i* and *o*), and that is *u*. When the main vowel is *o*, the ending *o* is written *u* to avoid the misleading combination ‘oo’. Thus, to cite words from Unit 1, one finds *hǎo* and *lǎo* (both with *a+o*), but instead of ‘dōo’ or ‘zhōo’ (*o+o*), you get *dōu* and *zhōu* (both with *u*).

Notice that the inventory of consonant endings in Chinese is small—there are only *n* and *ng*. Regional languages, such as Cantonese, have more (*-p, -t, -m*, etc.). The English name of the Chinese frying pan, the ‘wok’, is derived from a Cantonese word with a final [k] sound; its standard Chinese counterpart, *guō*, lacks the final consonant. In historical terms, standard Chinese has lost most final consonants, while Cantonese has preserved them. Surnames often demonstrate this same distinction between the presence and absence of a final consonant in standard Chinese and Cantonese: Lu/Luk, Ye/Yip, for example (see Unit 4, Appendix 2 for more examples).

Tones are a particularly interesting feature of the Chinese sound system and will be discussed in more detail below. For now, we note that stressed syllables may have one of four possible tones, indicated by the use of diacritical marks written over the main vowel (V). Unstressed syllables, however, do not have tonal contrasts; their pitch is, for the most part, conditioned by that of surrounding syllables.

Because medials, vowels, and some endings are all written with vowel letters, pinyin rhymes may have strings of two or three vowel letters, such as: *iu, iao, uai*. This can be confusing, particularly with ‘opposites’ such as *iu/ui, ie/ei*, and

uo/ou, which represent quite different sounds. Later, there will be exercises that focus on such vowel combinations.

By convention, the tone mark is placed on the vowel proper, not on the medial or ending, as in: *lèi, jiāo, zuò*. As a rule of thumb, look to see if the first of two vowel letters is a possible medial. If it is, then the following vowel letter is the core vowel, which receives the tone mark; if it is not, then this first letter is the core vowel: *liè, zhǎo, xué, dōu, jiào*.

Exercise 1

Without trying to pronounce the syllables, place the tone marks provided over the correct letter of the pinyin representations.

xie (̀) jiang (ˇ) dui (̀) hao (ˇ) lian (ˇ) gui (̀) zhou (ˊ) qiao (̀)

One sound that is not shown in the syllable formula given above is the final ‘r’ sound. It is represented, not surprisingly, by *r* in pinyin, and is obligatory in a few words with the written *e*-vowel, such as *èr* ‘two’. In northern varieties of standard Chinese, a common word-building suffix, appearing mostly in nouns and favored by some speakers and regions more than others, is also represented by a final *r*: *diǎnr, huàr, bànr, huángr*. The final *r* often blends with the rest of the syllable according to rather complicated rules that will be discussed in detail in later lessons.

0.2 Tones

Words in Chinese are pronounced with a regular tonal contour, much like the stress patterns that distinguish the English verb ‘reCORD’ from the noun ‘REcord’. In Chinese, the word *lǎoshī* ‘teacher’, for example, is pronounced _{lao}shi (‘low’ followed by ‘high’). In English terms, this is like having to say TEACHER rather than teaCHER or TEACHER (with both syllables stressed) each time you say the word. The presence of tones in Chinese is often cited as another of those lurid features that make the language unique and difficult to learn; but

tones are, in fact, not unique to Chinese and probably no more difficult to learn than stress or intonation is for learners of English.

As noted earlier, there are four basic tones in Mandarin. This is far fewer than some of the regional Chinese languages. Cantonese, for example, is usually analyzed as having four tones on two levels, plus one, for a total of nine. Mandarin also differs from many of the regional languages in having a predilection for words with (non-initial) toneless syllables: *shūshu* ‘uncle’; *xíngli* ‘luggage’.

0.2.1 The four tones

It is difficult to learn to produce or even recognize tones from descriptions, though we will use the descriptive terms ‘high (and level)’, ‘rising’, ‘low’, and ‘falling’ as a way of referring to them. These terms are only suggestive of the actual shape of the tone, but they do underscore the symmetry of the system: a high and a low, a rising and a falling. In modern Chinese, though the tones have formal names (that can only be rationalized by reference to earlier stages of the language), it is common practice to refer to them numerically by using the numbers 1–4 (*yī, èr, sān, sì*) and the word for sound, *shēng* [shuhng]: *yīshēng, èrshēng, sānshēng, sìshēng*. (Toneless syllables are called *qīngshēng* ‘light-toned’.) In English, we can also refer to the tones as ‘first’, ‘second’, ‘third’, and ‘fourth’. As noted earlier, in pinyin, tones are indicated by marks placed over the main vowel letter.

Tones

ā	high	first	<i>yīshēng</i>
á	rising	second	<i>èrshēng</i>
ǎ	low	third	<i>sānshēng</i>
à	falling	fourth	<i>sìshēng</i>
a	context dependent		<i>qīngshēng</i>

0.2.2 Tone concepts

To learn to produce tones, it is useful to *conceive* of them in particular ways. The first tone, for example, which has a high and level contour, can be thought

of as **sung out**, because singing a syllable in English usually results in a sustained level pitch similar to the high tone. The second tone, which rises from mid-low to high, can be associated with **doubt** or **uncertainty**: ‘Did you say “tea”? “milk”? “Mao”? “Wang”?’ The third tone is the subject of the next paragraph, but the fourth tone, which falls from very high to low, can usefully be associated with **list final** intonation: ‘One, two, three (all rising), and *four!*’ For many people, the fourth tone contour is also associated with **certainty**: ‘I said “Wèi”’ or ‘It’s late.’

0.2.3 The low tone

You will notice that the pinyin symbol for the low tone is v-shaped, suggesting a contour that falls, then rises. In isolation, it does indeed fall and rise: *hǎo* ‘be good’; *wǒ* ‘I; me’; *jiǎng* ‘speak; explain’. In close conjunction with a following syllable (other than one with the same low tone, as shown below), it tends to have a low, non-rising pitch.

If you can find a Chinese speaker to model the following phrases (from Unit 1), try listening for the relatively low pitch in the low-toned syllable, *hěn* [huhn] ‘very; quite’, that appears at the beginning of the following phrases.

<i>hěn gāo</i>	‘tall’
<i>hěn máng</i>	‘busy’
<i>hěn lèi</i>	‘tired’

For most speakers, a low-toned syllable in the *second* position of a phrase will also stay low, without much of a rise. Again, if you can find a speaker to model the following phrases, see if you agree that the second syllable is primarily low.

<i>shūfǎ</i>	‘calligraphy’
<i>tuántǐ</i>	‘group’
<i>kànfǎ</i>	‘point of view’

For learners, regarding the third tone as ‘low’, before learning that it rises in certain contexts, produces better results than learning it as a falling-rising pitch and only canceling the final rise in certain contexts. So we will refer to

the third tone as ‘low’, and to produce it, you aim low and add the final rise only when the syllable is isolated.

o.2.4 Toneless syllables

Syllables in initial position in Mandarin almost always have one of the four tones, but those following a toned syllable can be toneless. In Chinese, such syllables have *qīngshēng* ‘the light tone’. In this respect, Mandarin contrasts with some regional Chinese languages such as Cantonese, in which almost all syllables are toned, regardless of their position in the word.

Mandarin toneless syllables are of two types: those which never have full tones and those which can have tones but may become toneless after a stressed syllable. The question particle, *ma*, is an example of the first: *Máng ma?* ‘Are [you] busy?’ The final *ma* never has a tone. Other common examples are the many compound words with iambic stress pattern such as *xíngli* ‘luggage’ and *shūfu* ‘to be comfortable’. The second type will be discussed in Unit 2, after you have examples to refer to.

o.2.5 The tone chart

The chart below uses twelve of the most common surnames to illustrate the four tones. In Chinese, the surname is the first component of the full name, not the last (e.g., *Lǐ* in *Lǐ Liánjié*—Jet Li’s Chinese name). In the chart, the four tones are characterized in terms of their pitch contours (high and level, rising, etc.) as well as by the four heuristic concepts (sung out, doubt, etc.) that will help you to produce them correctly.

TONE:	1	2	3	4
	<i>Zhōu</i>	<i>Wáng</i>	<i>Lǐ</i>	<i>Wèi</i>
	<i>Zhāng</i>	<i>Máo</i>	<i>Kǒng</i>	<i>Dù</i>
	<i>Gāo</i>	<i>Chén</i>	<i>Mǎ</i>	<i>Zhào</i>
Description:	high, level	rising	low (with rise)	falling
Concept:	sung out	doubt (?)	low	finality (!)

Exercise 2

The following short sentences consist of the pronoun *tā* ‘he; she’, the verb *xìng* [syng] ‘to be surnamed’, and one of the twelve surnames presented above. Keeping your tone concepts in mind and, ideally, with feedback from a Chinese speaker, focus on the different tones of the surnames while pronouncing the sentences.

Tā xìng Zhāng. ‘His/Her surname is Zhang.’
Tā xìng Máo.
Tā xìng Wèi.
Tā xìng Wáng.
Tā xìng Kǒng.
Tā xìng Zhōu.
Tā xìng Dù.
Tā xìng Gāo.
Tā xìng Mǎ.
Tā xìng Chén.
Tā xìng Zhào.
Tā xìng Lǐ.

o.2.6 An aside on the history of Chinese tones

Tone systems as complex as those of Chinese are a feature of dozens of languages spoken in China and adjoining regions of mainland Southeast Asia, including the national languages of Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam. One tends to think of tone as being primarily a matter of pitch—like notes in a song. Pitch is controlled by stretching or loosening the vocal chords in the throat, rather like what happens when you stretch or loosen the mouth of a balloon. Tone is often more than just pitch. Even in standard Chinese, it is also associated with length; the rising tone, for example, is noticeably shorter than the high, level tone. In Southeast Asian languages, such as standard Vietnamese and Burmese,



Special attention to the rising tone, *Chéngdū*

tone involves quality of voice as well as pitch (and length), so descriptions of tones may include terms like ‘breathy’ or ‘creaky’. The term ‘tone’, therefore, covers a complex set of features.

While tones may be a more or less permanent feature of the region, tone systems may appear, evolve, or even disappear within particular languages. Evidence from ancient Chinese rhyme tables and other sources indicates that the various Chinese tonal systems evolved from an earlier system which, like the current standard, also consisted of four tones. The modern Mandarin pronunciation of the names of the four ancient tones are: *píng* ‘level’, *shǎng* ‘rising’, *qù* ‘going’, and *rù* ‘entering’. The last was found only with checked syllables, those ending with stopped consonants such as ‘k’, ‘t’, and ‘p’, which, as noted earlier, are no longer found in Mandarin, but survive in Cantonese and other regional Chinese languages. This four-tone system evolved differently in dif-

ferent dialect groups. In standard Cantonese, for example, the four-tone system split into two sets of four tones each, with one set relatively higher than the other; an additional distinct tone derived from another split, providing a total of nine distinctive tones.

You may feel fortunate that the Mandarin dialects did not undergo the same development as Cantonese. In Mandarin, the ancient four-tone system remained as four tones, but they underwent a redistribution. Words with the *rù* tone, for example, are no longer a distinctive set in Mandarin; they have joined with words whose tones were originally *píng*, *shǎng*, or *qù*. The *rù*-toned words were distinguished mainly by the final stopped consonants ('p', 't', 'k'), and once those were lost, the *rù* tone was no longer distinct from the other three tones.

In another Mandarin development, *píng*-toned words split into two groups and formed two of the four modern tones, first tone (high and level) and second tone (rising), a development that is reflected in the names of those tones in modern Chinese, *yīnpíng* and *yángpíng*. *Yīnpíng* arose from *píng*-toned syllables with *yīn*—or voiced initial consonants; *yángpíng* arose from *píng*-toned syllables with *yáng*—or voiceless initials. So the modern tones that you find in the standard language, though still four in number, are neither pronounced the same way nor found on the same words as in the four-tone system that existed some 1,500 years ago.

A more detailed discussion of both the historical development of tone in Chinese and the tonal systems found in other varieties of Chinese can be found in books such as Norman (1988), listed at the end of the Introduction.

0.3 Initial consonants

First, note that many pinyin letters are pronounced similarly to their English equivalents; the *l* in *lǎo*, for example, is very like the English 'l', and the pinyin *f*, *s*, *n*, and *m* all have more or less the same values in Chinese and English scripts. Unfortunately, such cases are liable to make you think of English even when pinyin letters have values that are rather different. Below is a table of symbols that represent all possible initial consonants of Chinese. Following

Chinese custom, they are presented with a particular set of vowels and ordered from front of the mouth (labials) to back (velars and glottals).

0.3.1 The consonant chart

First, letters *w* and *y*, which do appear initially in pinyin (e.g., the numbers *wǔ* ‘five’ and *yī* ‘one’), are treated as special cases of medial *u* and *i*, respectively, in initial position. Thus, instead of ‘*ī*’, one finds *yī*; instead of ‘*ǔ*’, *wǔ*; instead of ‘*ǐě*’, *yě*; instead of ‘*uǒ*’, *wǒ*; etc. This will be discussed again in detail later.

Second, the vowels conventionally placed with the different classes of initials to make them pronounceable turn out to be some of those that have quite idiosyncratic values for speakers of English. Thus, the *o* in the first line of the table below is not pronounced like the English long vowel ‘*o*’ but more like the vowel sound in the word ‘*paw*’; the *e* in the second line is pronounced [uh]; the *i* in the third and fourth lines represents a continuation of the initial into a buzz (e.g., *zi* [dzz]; *zhi* [jrr]), but in the fifth line it represents the more expected [ee] (e.g., *ji* [jee]). The vowel sounds will be discussed in §0.4 below, but for now, you can use the hints provided in the far right column of the chart and imitate your teacher or the audio. You should learn to declaim (for sound) and write (for symbol) this table, line by line, as soon as possible: *bo po mo fo, de te ne le*, etc.

PLACE OF ARTICULATION		CONSONANT				VOWEL
		(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)	HINT
(1) lips		<i>bo</i>	<i>po</i>	<i>mo</i>	<i>fo</i>	[waw]
(2) tongue tip at teeth	^	<i>de</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>le</i>	[uh]
(3) flat tongue at teeth	—	<i>zi</i>	<i>ci</i>	<i>si</i>		[dsz/tsz/ssz] not [ee]
(4) tongue tip raised	!	<i>zhi</i>	<i>chi</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>ri</i>	[r], not [ee]
(5) spread lips	< >	<i>ji</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>xi</i>		[ee]
(6) back of tongue high		<i>ge</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>he</i>		[uh]

0.3.2 Notes on the consonant chart

COLUMNS I AND II In English, the distinction between sounds typically written ‘b’ and ‘p’ or ‘d’ and ‘t’ is usually said to be one of voicing (vocal chord vibration): with ‘b’ and ‘d’, voicing begins relatively earlier than with ‘p’ and ‘t’. However, in Chinese, the onset of voicing of the column I consonants is different from that of English. The sound represented by *b* in pinyin is actually between the English [b] and [p]; that represented by *d* is between the English [d] and [t], etc. This is why the Wade-Giles system of Romanization (mentioned in the Introduction) uses ‘p, p’ (i.e., p, p-apostrophe) rather than ‘b, p’ (T’aipei rather than *Taipei*). In phonetic terms, both *b* and *p* are voiceless in pinyin, but the first is unaspirated while the second is aspirated (that is, accompanied by a noticeable explosion of air). Being aware of this will help you to adjust to what you hear; in fact, the English letters ‘b’, ‘d’, and ‘g’ are not highly voiced by most speakers (compared to their equivalents in, say, French and Spanish), so if you pronounce them ‘lightly’ in Chinese, you will not have too strong an accent. Contrast: *bo/po*, *de/te*, *ge/ke*; and *zi/ci*, *zhi/chi*, *ji/qi*.

ROW 1 These consonants are ‘labials’, or those whose pronunciation involve the lips. The pinyin *o* (not *ou*) only appears after the labials (*bo po mo fo*) and is, for many English speakers, pronounced like [aw] in ‘paw’. Everywhere other than after labial consonants, the same sound is written *uo*. Thus *bo*, *po*, *mo*, and *fo* rhyme with *duo*, *tuo*, *nuo*, and *luo* (the latter set not shown in the table above). In other words, *o* by itself always equals *uo* (and never *ou*). Apparently, the creators of pinyin felt that, following labial initials, it was not necessary to indicate the labial onset with ‘u’. It will be important to keep the sound of *o/uo* separate from that of *ou*. The last (*ou*) rhymes with both syllables of the English exclamation ‘oh no’.

ROWS 3, 4, AND 5—THE CRUCIAL ROWS! With *z*, *c*, and *s* in row 3, the tongue is tense but flat and touching the back of the teeth near the gum line. The letter *i*, following row 3 initials, is *not* pronounced [ee]; it simply represents a continuation of the consonant sound. So, for *zi*, *ci*, and *si*, think [dzz], [tsz], and [ssz]

(as indicated in the far left column). English does not have consonant sounds comparable to the first two row 3 initials, *z* and *c*, except across root boundaries: *pads*, *cats*. In German and Russian, though, similar sounds do occur at the beginning of words, such as in German *zehn* [dz-] ‘ten’, or Russian *cená* [ts-] ‘price’. The latter example, also written with a ‘c’, demonstrates the Russian influence on the creators of pinyin.

With *zh*, *ch*, *sh*, and *r* in row 4, the tongue is pulled back and the tip is raised toward the roof of the mouth (on or near the rough area behind the teeth known as the alveolar ridge) in what is called a retroflex position. When preceding vowels without lip rounding (all but *o* or *u*), including *i* as in the table (*zhi*, etc.), the lips are tight and slightly spread, which allows teachers to see and hear whether the retroflex series is being pronounced correctly. As with the row 3 initials, the letter *i* in this position represents only a buzz. So, for *zhi*, *chi*, *shi*, and *ri*, think [jr], [chr], [shr], and [rr]. In English, an ‘r’ following a consonant will often produce the retroflex articulation of the tongue that is characteristic of the row 4 consonants. Another way to ensure that your tongue is in the correct position for those initials is to match *zh* to the ‘dr’ of ‘drill’, *ch* to the ‘tr’ of ‘trill’, *sh* to the ‘shr’ of ‘shrill’, and *r* to the ‘r’ of ‘rill’.

Finally, with *j*, *q*, and *x* of row 5, the tongue is positioned like the ‘yie’ in English ‘yield’. This time, the letter *i* is pronounced [ee], so for *ji*, *qi*, and *xi*, think [jyee], [chyee], and [syee]. Later, you will see that row 5 initials are followed only by the written vowels *i* and *u*. The first will always be pronounced [ee] in this context; the second will always be pronounced [ü]. Every time you encounter row 5 initials, think *i* is [ee] and *u* is [ü].

THE INITIAL *R* OF ROW 4 Pronunciation of the letter ‘r’ varies considerably among languages: the Scots trill their tongue tips; the Parisians flutter their uvulas; the Spanish flap their tongues; and the well-known American television interviewer, Barbara Walters, pronounces it like a cross between [r] and [w]. The Chinese *r* is different again; it has a little bit of a buzz to it. Like *zh*, *ch*, and *sh*, it is retroflex (with tongue pushed back and tip raised) so it resembles the initial sound of English ‘rill’ or ‘ridge’, but it also has friction like the ‘s’ in ‘pleasure’ (or French *je* ‘I’). You will observe considerable variation in the

quality of the Chinese *r*, depending on the following vowel and on the particular speaker. Examples: *rén*, *rè*, *rù*, *ràng*, *ruò*, *ròu*, *rì*.

Exercise 3

Try pronouncing the following syllables, randomly selected from the initials in rows 3, 4, and 5. Know your chart of initials before you try this!

<i>qī</i>	<i>sǐ</i>	<i>zhī</i>	<i>zì</i>	<i>jī</i>	<i>qī</i>	<i>sì</i>	<i>rì</i>	<i>chī</i>
<i>xī</i>	<i>shì</i>	<i>cì</i>	<i>zhǐ</i>	<i>qí</i>	<i>sī</i>	<i>chǐ</i>	<i>jí</i>	<i>xí</i>

Now try pronouncing these well-known Chinese names.

<i>Cí Xǐ</i> (last empress)	<i>Qí Báishí</i> (famous calligrapher)	<i>Lǐ Shízhēn</i> (16th-century herbalist from <i>Qizhou</i>)	<i>Qízhōu</i>	<i>Zhāng Zhǐyí</i> (actress)
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o.3.3 An expanded chart of initials

The conventional chart of initial consonants exhibits a rather restricted and idiosyncratic set of rhymes. We can make the chart more comprehensive by adding one or two lines to each row, as follows. (Unfortunately, because not all combinations of rhyme and tone are possible, this version of the chart requires you to shift tone in certain cases.)

	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
(1)	<i>bō</i> <i>bān</i>	<i>pō</i> <i>pān</i>	<i>mō</i> <i>mān</i>	<i>fō</i> <i>fān</i>
(2)	<i>dé</i> <i>duō</i> <i>dài</i>	<i>tè</i> <i>tuō</i> <i>tài</i>	<i>né</i> <i>nuó</i> <i>nài</i>	<i>lè</i> <i>luó</i> <i>lài</i>

	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
(3)	<i>zī</i> <i>zǎo</i>	<i>cī</i> <i>cǎo</i>	<i>sī</i> <i>sǎo</i>	
(4)	<i>zhī</i> <i>zhuō</i> <i>zhōu</i>	<i>chī</i> <i>chuō</i> <i>chōu</i>	<i>shī</i> <i>shuō</i> <i>shōu</i>	<i>rī</i> <i>ruò</i> <i>ròu</i>
(5)	<i>jī</i> <i>jù</i> <i>jiān</i>	<i>qī</i> <i>qù</i> <i>qiān</i>	<i>xī</i> <i>xù</i> <i>xiān</i>	
(6)	<i>gē</i> <i>gān</i>	<i>kē</i> <i>kān</i>	<i>hē</i> <i>hān</i>	

0.4 Rhymes

A table showing all possible rhymes follows below. It is too long and complicated to be quickly internalized like the chart of initials, but you can practice reading the rows aloud with the help of a Chinese speaker. You can also map your progress through the rhymes by circling syllables, or adding meaningful examples, as you learn new words.

The table is organized by main vowel (*a, e, i, o, u, ü*), and then within each vowel by medial (*i, u, and ü*) and final (*i, o/u, n, ng*). The penultimate column, marked ‘w/o C_i’ (i.e., ‘without initial consonant’), lists syllables that lack an initial consonant (with the rarer ones placed in parentheses) and thus begin with a (written) vowel or medial (the latter always represented with an initial *y* or *w*). The final column provides pronunciation hints. Asterisks (*) following certain row numbers indicate sets that require special attention. Final *r*, whose special properties were mentioned above, is treated separately.

		UNTONED EXAMPLES					W/O C ₁	PRONUNCIATION HINT	
The <i>a</i> rhymes	(1)	<i>a</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>cha</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>a</i>
	(2)	<i>a-i</i>	<i>tai</i>	<i>chai</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>mai</i>	<i>bai</i>	<i>zai</i>	<i>ai</i>
	(3)	<i>a-o</i>	<i>tao</i>	<i>chao</i>	<i>dao</i>	<i>pao</i>	<i>zao</i>	<i>rao</i>	<i>ao</i>
	(4)	<i>a-n</i>	<i>tan</i>	<i>ran</i>	<i>zhan</i>	<i>can</i>	<i>lan</i>	<i>pan</i>	<i>an</i>
	(5)	<i>a-ng</i>	<i>dang</i>	<i>sang</i>	<i>zhang</i>	<i>mang</i>	<i>lang</i>	<i>zang</i>	<i>ang</i>
	(6)	<i>i-a</i>	<i>jiu</i>	<i>qia</i>	<i>xia</i>				<i>ya</i>
	(7)	<i>i-a-o</i>	<i>jiao</i>	<i>qiao</i>	<i>xiao</i>				<i>yao</i>
	(8)*	<i>i-a-n</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>qian</i>	<i>xian</i>				<i>yan</i>
	(9)	<i>i-a-ng</i>	<i>jiang</i>	<i>qiang</i>	<i>xiang</i>				<i>yang</i>
	(10)	<i>u-a</i>	<i>hua</i>	<i>gua</i>	<i>zhua</i>	<i>shua</i>			<i>wa</i>
	(11)	<i>u-a-i</i>	<i>chuai</i>						<i>(wai)</i>
	(12)	<i>u-a-n</i>	<i>huan</i>	<i>guan</i>	<i>zhuang</i>	<i>shuan</i>	<i>cuan</i>		<i>wan</i>
	(13)	<i>u-a-ng</i>	<i>huang</i>	<i>guang</i>	<i>zhuang</i>	<i>shuang</i>	<i>shuang</i>		<i>wang</i>
The <i>e</i> rhymes	(14)	<i>e</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>che</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>le</i>		<i>e</i>
	(15)	<i>e-i</i>	<i>zhei</i>	<i>shei</i>	<i>lei</i>	<i>fei</i>	<i>bei</i>		<i>(ei)</i>
	(16)	<i>e-n</i>	<i>zhen</i>	<i>shen</i>	<i>fen</i>	<i>gen</i>	<i>men</i>		<i>en</i>
	(17)	<i>e-ng</i>	<i>leng</i>	<i>sheng</i>	<i>ceng</i>	<i>deng</i>	<i>zheng</i>		<i>(eng)</i>
	(18)	<i>i-e</i>	<i>jie</i>	<i>xie</i>	<i>lie</i>	<i>mie</i>			<i>ye</i>
	(19)*	<i>u-e</i>	<i>jue</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>xue</i>	<i>nüe</i>	<i>lüe</i>		<i>yue</i>

0.4.1 Notes on the *i* and *u* rhymes and C_i

Recall that, in the C_i chart presented earlier, the row 4 C_i (*zh, ch, sh, r*) are distinguished from the row 5 C_i (*j, q, x*) by position of the tongue. In terms of English sounds and spellings, the distinction between ‘j’, ‘ch’, and ‘sh’ depends upon tongue position—‘dr, tr, shr’ (*zhi, chi, shi*) versus the ‘y’ of ‘yield’ (*ji, qi, xi*). This difference, even if appreciated, seems, nonetheless, very slight. Indeed, it would be much more difficult to perceive if the vowels following these initial consonants were identically pronounced. But they never are!

Note that row 5 C_i initials (*j, q, x*) are *only* followed by the medial sounds (not the written letters) [ee] and [ü], written *i* and *u*, respectively. Here are some examples (which can be read with a level tone).

ji, jie, jian, qi, qie, qian, xi, xie, xian; ju, jue, jun, qu, que, qun, xu, xue, xun.

Row 3 and row 4 C_i , on the other hand, are *never* followed by the medial sounds [ee] or [ü].

zhi, zi, zhu, zu, zhan, zan, chi, ci, chu, cu, chan, chen, etc.

Because the creators of pinyin let *i* and *u* each represent two different sounds, this complementary distribution is obscured: the vowels of *ji* and *zhi* look alike, but they do not sound alike; the same is true for *ju* and *zhu*. Therefore, if you hear [chee], it must be written *qi*, for the sound [ee] never follows *ch*; if you hear [chang], it must be written *chang*, for *q* can only be followed by the sound [ee]. This may sound complicated—and it is—but there is plenty of practice to come, beginning with Exercise 4.

0.4.2 The value of the letter *e*

The value of *e* also violates the expectations of English speakers. It is pronounced [uh] in all contexts (*zé, dēng, chén*), except after a written *i* or *u*, when it is pronounced [eh] (*xiē, niē, xuē*), or before a written *i*, when it is pronounced [ay] as in the English word ‘way’ (*lèi, bèi, zéi*).

Exercise 4

The following syllables all contain the written vowels *i* and *u*. Practice reading them clearly, with a single tone. As with all the exercises in this lesson, repeat this procedure daily, thinking of the relationship between initial and rhyme, until you feel confident.

chi qi xie qu chu chun jia qin cu qu shun

qun shu ju ci xu zi zhu shi xi xia qu

Exercise 5

Practice reading the following syllables containing pinyin *e*.

chén wèi zhēn xiē bèn rén lèi rē bǐ jiè è lěng zéi chē bié

Now try pronouncing the following proper names, all of which contain pinyin *e*, *ei*, or *ie*.

<i>Zhōu Ēnlái</i> (premier)	<i>Máo Zédōng</i> (chairman)	<i>Jiǎng Jièshí</i> 'Chiang Kai-shek'	<i>Héběi</i> (province)
<i>Lǐ Dēnghuī</i> (former Taiwan president)	<i>Éméi shān</i> 'Emei Mountain'	<i>Lièníng</i> 'Lenin'	<i>Sòng Měilíng</i> (wife of Chiang Kai-shek)

o.4.3 The *o* rhymes: *ou* versus *uo/o*

On early encounters, it is easy to confuse pinyin rhymes that are spelled similarly, such as *ou* and *uo*. This can lead to some pronunciation problems that are very difficult to correct later, so you need to make sure you master them early. The rhyme *ou*, with the leading *o*, is pronounced like the name of the English letter 'o', rhyming with 'know'. The rhyme *uo*, on the other hand, with the trailing *o*, is pronounced like the vowel sound in 'paw'. However, as you

now know, after the row 1 C_i , uo is spelled o : bo , po , mo , and fo rhyme with duo , $tuó$, $nuó$, and $luó$.

Exercise 6

Try pronouncing these names and words that contain o .

<i>Bōlán</i> 'Poland'	<i>Sūzhōu</i> (city near Shanghai)	<i>Mòxīgē</i> 'Mexico'
<i>luòtuó</i> 'camel'	<i>Zhāng Yīmóu</i> (film director)	<i>Zhōu Ēnlái</i> (premier)
<i>luóbo</i> 'radish'	<i>Guō Mòruò</i> (20th-century writer)	<i>bōluó</i> 'pineapple'

Try pronouncing the following list of single syllables with o .

mōu tuō bō fō zhōu duō pò dōu zuò fōu luó ròu

0.4.4 The \ddot{u} rhymes

Section 0.4.1 (after the list of rhymes) makes the point that many of the \ddot{u} rhymes are revealed by the type of initial consonant. Following row 5 initials (j , q , x), u is always pronounced the same as \ddot{u} ; following any other initial, it is pronounced [oo]. This results in distinct pronunciations (with any particular tone) for: zhu/ju , chu/qu , and shu/xu , but similar pronunciations for pu , fu , du , ku , and hu . However, the sound [ü] also occurs after the initials n and l , as well as those of row 5. In these cases, \ddot{u} may contrast with u , and the difference has to be shown on the vowel, not on the initial. Examples include: $lù$ 'road' versus $lǜ$ 'green'; $nǚ$ 'crossbow' versus $nǚ$ 'female'. In addition to being a core vowel, \ddot{u} also occurs as a medial. Again, when it follows row 5 initials, it is written as u : $jué$, $quē$, $xuě$; but following l or n , it is written as \ddot{u} : $lüèzì$ 'abbreviation'; $nüèjǐ$ 'malaria'. In the latter cases, it is redundant, since there is no contrast between $\ddot{u}e$ and ue .

0.5 Miscellany

0.5.1 Tonal shifts

Before leaving the survey of sounds and notation, we need to return to the subject of tone, and take note of the phenomenon of tonal shifting (called ‘tone sandhi’ by linguists). It turns out that in certain contexts, Chinese tones undergo shifts from one to another. (In standard Chinese, the contexts where this occurs are very limited; in regional languages such as Hokkien, such shifts are much more pervasive, affecting almost every syllable.) We will mention these shifts here, and then practice producing them more systematically in later lessons.

0.5.2 Low-tone shift

If two low tones (tone 3) appear consecutively *in the same phrase*, the first tone is pronounced with a rising tone:

3 + 3	→	2 + 3
low + low	→	rising + low
hěn + hǎo	→	hén hǎo ‘good’
hěn + lěng	→	hén lěng ‘cold’
Lǐ + lǎoshī	→	Lí lǎoshī ‘Professor Lee’

It is, of course, possible to have three or more low tones in a row, but such cases will be considered later.

0.5.3 Two single-word shifts

There also exist a few more idiosyncratic shifts that involve only single words. The negative, *bu*, is usually pronounced with a falling tone except when it is followed by another falling tone, in which case it shifts and is pronounced with a rising tone: *bù hǎo* ‘not well’, but *bú lèi* ‘not tired’. In the latter case, the result is a trajectory like the sides of a mountain, up then down, and students in the past have kept track of this shift by calling it the ‘Fuji shift’ (after Mount Fuji, which is, of course, in Japan, not China). Below, *bu* is shown in combination with some adjectival verbs (called stative verbs in Chinese grammatical tradi-

tion); these sets (involving stative verbs from the conversational material in Unit 1) should be repeated regularly until fully internalized.

	<i>bù gāo</i>	‘not tall’
	<i>bù máng</i>	‘not busy’
	<i>bù hǎo</i>	‘not well’
Tone shift:	<i>bú lèi</i>	‘not tired’
	<i>bú è</i>	‘not hungry’
	<i>bú rè</i>	‘not hot’
	<i>bú cuò</i>	‘not bad’

Another single-word shift involves the numeral *yī* ‘one’. In counting, and in many compounds, it is level toned (*yīshēng*): *yī, èr, sān, sì* ‘one, two, three, four’. When *yī* is grammatically linked to a subsequent ‘measure word’, it adopts the same tonal shift as *bu*, rising before a falling tone (*yí fēn* ‘a copy’), but falling before any other tone (*yì bāo* ‘a pack’).

	<i>yì zhāng</i>	‘a [table]’
	<i>yì tiáo</i>	‘a [fish]’
	<i>yì běn</i>	‘a [book]’
But:	<i>yí fēn</i>	‘a copy [of a newspaper]’

Note that the low tone shift (*hěn + hǎo = hén hǎo*) applies to any word (or syllable) that fits the grammatical condition (located within a phrase); but the shift from falling to rising affects only a few words, most commonly *bu* and *yì*.

0.5.4 The apostrophe

In certain contexts, an apostrophe appears between the syllables of a compound written in pinyin: *Xī'ān* (a city in China); *hǎi'ōu* ‘seagull’; *chǒng'ài* ‘to dote on’. The apostrophe is used when a syllable beginning with a vowel letter (*a, e, o*) is preceded (without a space) by another syllable; in other words, where the syllable boundary is ambiguous. By convention, the apostrophe is only used when the trailing syllable begins with a vowel; a word like *yīngān*, with two potential syllable divisions (*yīn-gān, yīng-ān*), is always to be interpreted as *yīn+gān*, never *yīng+ān* (which would be *yīng'ān*).

0.5.5 Interaction of tone and intonation

You may wonder whether a tonal language like Chinese, in which pitch adheres to individual syllables (with some accommodation across syllables), permits intonational pitch movements of the sort associated with contrast, denial, correction, and other kinds of emotional speech in English: ‘That’s a HIGH tone?!’
Nà shì PÍNGshēng ma?

It turns out that Chinese (and other tonal languages) do have intonation contours, but rather than obliterating the word tones, they envelope them, exaggerating the pitch contours of key words, while narrowing the pitch contours of others. In the example above, *píng* is louder and its pitch rises to an exaggerated height, while the other syllables are diminished with shorter but nonetheless distinctive contours. You will have plenty of opportunities to practice superimposing intonation over tone as you work through the material in the core units.

People often ask about singing in tonal languages. Surely melody must obliterate word tone, or else you would have to choose your words to fit the melody and songs would resemble speech. The famous Chinese linguist Yuen Ren Chao (who provided the epigraph that began this lesson) considered this question in an article published in 1956 and concluded that, while the melodies of certain traditional song forms accounted for word tone, modern Chinese songs did not. Certainly, that is the way it appears. In the well-known folksong whose title translates as ‘The Couple Returning Home’ (夫妻双双把家还 *Fūqī shuāngshuāng bǎ jiā huán*), the first two lines begin with fourth-tone words (树 *shù* ‘tree’ and 绿 *lǜ* ‘green’), yet the first is distinctly high in the melody, and the second is distinctly low. However, it should be noted that Wong and Diehl (2008) reached a different conclusion for Cantonese, which has a richer tone system than standard Chinese.

0.6 Writing connected text in pinyin

Unlike earlier systems of Chinese phonetic notation, some of which were intended as full-fledged auxiliary writing systems that could co-exist with (or even replace) characters, pinyin was intended as an adjunct system to

indicate pronunciation and provide a means for alphabetical organization. For this reason, the rules and conventions for writing connected text in pinyin were not well defined at first. However, increasing use of computers for the input and production of text and in everyday communication, as well as the proliferation of contact between China and the rest of the world, has put a premium on the use of pinyin. Nowadays, in addition to its use in pedagogical materials such as this textbook, pinyin is widely used in e-mails, for word processing input, for Web and e-mail addresses, and to complement characters on advertisements, announcements, and menus (particularly those intended for an international audience in China and abroad).

In 1988, the State Language Commission issued a document with the translated title of “The Basic Rules for Hanyu Pinyin Orthography” and, with a few minor exceptions, this textbook conforms to those proposed rules. (The *ABC Chinese-English Dictionary*, cited at the end of the Introduction, contains a translation of this document as an appendix.) Only two general points need to be mentioned here. First, basic English punctuation practices hold. Sentences begin with capital letters, as do proper nouns, and they end with periods. Other punctuation marks are used more or less as they are in English.

Second, words, not syllables, are enclosed by spaces. Thus, ‘teacher’ is written *lǎoshī*, not *lǎo shī*. Characters, by contrast, which always represent syllable-length units, are evenly spaced regardless of word boundaries. Of course, defining what a word is can be problematic, but pinyin dictionaries or glossaries can usually be relied upon to make those decisions for us. Other conventions, such as the use of the hyphen, will be noted in this book when needed. When you write pinyin, it should follow this format:

Gémìng bú shì qǐngkè chīfàn.

‘Revolution isn’t [like] inviting guests over for a meal.’

(‘revolution not be invite-guests eat-meal’)

—Mao Zedong

Writing pinyin in this way makes it readable. In fact, when e-mailing characters is restricted by technical problems, pinyin is an acceptable substitute (even without tone marks) so long as the above orthographical conventions are observed, as in: *Geming bu shi qingke chifan.*



Tiējú Lane, *Kūnmíng* (now demolished): the sign reads *zhǐ shēng yíge hái zi hǎo* ‘just have one child’. Not only is the pinyin written without tones or word breaks, but *shēng* is written ‘shen’ and *ge* is written ‘gou’, unintentionally reflecting local pronunciation.

0.7 Recapitulation

This completes our survey of the sounds and transcription of Chinese. Already, you should be able to pronounce the names of Chinese people and places considerably better than the average television and radio newscaster or announcer. Exercise 7 reviews what you have covered in this lesson.

Exercise 7

Write out the formula for all possible pinyin syllables; list the medials; list the finals. Correctly place the tone marks given in the parentheses over each of the following syllables.

xue (‘) bei (-) sou (-) jie (‘) bie (‘) suo (ˇ)

List (or recite) twelve surnames, grouped by tone.

Write out the table of initial consonants. How many rows are there? Which rows are particularly problematic? What sounds can follow the row 5 initials? How are those sounds written in pinyin?

Pronounce the following sets of syllables, being careful to contrast each pair.

Tone 1: *qī/cī, xī/sī, jī/zī, qū/cū, xū/sū, jū/zū*

Tone 2: *zú/zhú, cí/chí, jí/zhí, xí/shí, shú/sú, qí/chí*

Tone 3: *zhě/lěi, gě/gěi, kě/fěi, chě/děi*

Tone 4: *biè/bèi, liè/lèi, miè/mèi, niè/nèi*

Tone 1: *pō/pōu, bō/duō, luō/lōu, tuō/pō, mō/luō, tuō/tōu*

Pronounce the following personal and place names.

<i>Zhōu Ēnlái</i> (premier)	<i>Máo Zédōng</i> (chairman)	<i>Jiǎng Jièshí</i> ‘Chiang Kai-shek’	<i>Cáo Yǔ</i> (20th-century playwright)
<i>Lǐ Dēnghuī</i> (former Taiwan president)	<i>Lǐ Xiāngjūn</i> (Ming dynasty beauty)	<i>Sòng Měilíng</i> (wife of Chiang)	<i>Wáng Zhìzhì</i> (basketball player)
<i>Dèng Xiǎopíng</i> (post-Mao leader)	<i>Zhū Róngjī</i> (premier)	<i>Lǐ Xiǎolóng</i> ‘Bruce Lee’	<i>Cáo Cāo</i> (Three Kingdoms period warlord)

<i>Běijīng</i> (capital)	<i>Xī'ān</i> (city in Shaanxi)	<i>Guǎngzhōu</i> (city in Guangdong)	<i>Zhèngzhōu</i> (city in Henan)
<i>Sìchuān</i> (province)	<i>Jiāngxī</i> (province)	<i>Chóngqìng</i> (city in western China)	<i>Chǔxióng</i> (city in Yunnan)

Apply the tone-change rules to the following phrases.

<i>hěn lěng</i> 'cold'	<i>bu gāo</i> 'not tall'	<i>lǎobǎn</i> 'boss'	<i>bu guì</i> 'cheap'	<i>lǎo Lǐ</i> 'old Lee'	<i>yì běn</i> 'one book'
<i>bu hǎo</i> 'not good'	<i>yǔsǎn</i> 'umbrella'	<i>bu duì</i> 'wrong'	<i>nǐ hǎo</i> 'hello'	<i>bu cuò</i> 'not bad'	<i>yì fēn</i> 'one copy'

Read aloud the sets listed below. Each set of three syllables follows the pattern 'rising, rising, falling', like the usual list intonation of English 'one, two, three', or 'boats, trains, planes'; *lá, wéi, jìn!* Note that in this exercise, not all syllables are actual Chinese words with the cited tone.

<i>lá</i>	<i>wéi</i>	<i>jìn!</i>
<i>láo</i>	<i>tái</i>	<i>dù!</i>
<i>sóu</i>	<i>sí</i>	<i>mìng!</i>
<i>zí</i>	<i>xiá</i>	<i>qìng!</i>
<i>ní</i>	<i>zhí</i>	<i>hòu!</i>
<i>lái</i>	<i>duó</i>	<i>zhèn!</i>
<i>fó</i>	<i>qí</i>	<i>cì!</i>
<i>xíng</i>	<i>cuó</i>	<i>shì!</i>
<i>móu</i>	<i>guó</i>	<i>shòu!</i>
<i>rén</i>	<i>béi</i>	<i>zhà!</i>

Coda

Chinese who studied English during the early years of the People's Republic of China can often remember their first English sentence, because in those days textbook material was polemical and didactic, and lesson content was carefully chosen for content and gravity. Let *your* first sentences also carry some weight and be appropriate for the endeavors you are about to begin.

種瓜得瓜，種豆得豆。

Zhòng guā dé guā, zhòng dòu dé dòu.

'[You] reap what you sow.'

('plant melon get melon, plant bean get bean')

不入虎穴，焉得虎子。

Bú rù hǔxué, yān dé hǔzǐ.

'Nothing ventured, nothing gained.'

('not enter tiger-lair, how get tiger-cub')

NOTES

a. *xīguā* 'watermelon'

b. *dòuzi* 'beans; peas'

c. *lǎohǔ* 'tiger'

Zàijiàn.

'Good-bye.' ('again-see')

Míngtiān jiàn.

'See you tomorrow!' ('tomorrow see')



Beijing road sign

THE CORE UNITS

Unit 1

Qiān lǐ zhī xíng shǐ yú zú xià.

‘A long journey begins with a single step.’

(‘1,000 mile journey begins with foot down’)

—Lǎozǐ

This is the first lesson in which you actually begin to use the language, starting with simple questions and responses about states (e.g., ‘Are you tired?’ / ‘Not very.’) and events (e.g., ‘Have you eaten?’ / ‘Yes, I have.’). In the course of presenting these simple interactions, you will be introduced to a range of verbs, pronouns, methods of asking ‘yes/no’ questions, and ways of answering affirmatively or negatively. You will also learn how to count, give dates, greet, and take your leave. In the first four units, you will be paying special attention to pronunciation and becoming more familiar with pinyin.

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1.1 Conventions

The previous lesson on sounds and symbols provided the first steps in learning to associate the pinyin transcription of Chinese language material with accurate pronunciation. The task will continue as you start to learn to converse by listening to conversational material while reading it in the pinyin script. However, in these early units, it will be all too easy to fall back into associations based on English spelling, and so, occasionally (as in the previous overview), Chinese cited in pinyin will be followed by phonetic hints in brackets, such as: *máng* [mahng] or *hěn* [huhn]. These are only intended to alert you to potential problems and remind you of what you have been hearing on the audio and from your teachers.

Where needed, you will be provided with an idiomatic English translation of Chinese material in addition to a word-for-word gloss in parentheses. The latter takes you deeper into the world of Chinese linguistic concepts and allows you to better understand how meanings are composed. The following conventions are used to make the presentation of this information as clear as possible.

Parentheses (. . .)	enclose literal meanings, e.g.: <i>Máng ma?</i> ('be+busy Q')
Plusses (+)	indicate both meanings combined in the Chinese word, e.g., <i>nín</i> ('you+POL'). Also used to distinguish, in certain cases, two particles, both pronounced <i>de</i> but written with different characters. See §2.8.3, e.g., <i>shuō+de hěn hǎo</i> .
Capitals (Q)	indicate grammatical notions, e.g., Q for 'question'; POL for 'polite'. In cases where there

	is no easy label for the notion, the Chinese word itself is cited in capitals, with a fuller explanation to appear later: <i>Nǐ ne?</i> ('you NE?')
Spaces ()	appear around words, e.g., <i>hěn hǎo</i> versus <i>shūfu</i> . Spaces are also used instead of + in glosses, e.g., <i>hǎochī</i> ('be good-eat') rather than ('be+good-eat')
Hyphens (-)	are used in standard pinyin transcription to link certain constituents, e.g., <i>dì-yī</i> 'first' or <i>mǎma-hūhū</i> 'so-so'. In the English glosses, hyphens indicate the meanings of the constituent parts of Chinese compounds: <i>hǎochī</i> ('be good-eat').
Brackets []	indicate pronouns and other material that is obligatorily expressed in one language but not in the other, e.g., <i>Máng ma?</i> 'Are [you] busy?' In definitions, brackets enclose notes on style or other relevant information, e.g., <i>bàng</i> 'be good; super' [colloquial]. Finally, brackets also enclose phonetic hints and other indications of pronunciation other than pinyin, e.g., <i>hěn</i> [huhn].
Angle brackets ⟨ ⟩	indicate optional material: ⟨ <i>Nǐ</i> ⟩ <i>lèi ma?</i> means that either <i>Nǐ lèi ma?</i> or <i>Lèi ma?</i> are both possible.
Tildes (~)	indicate variant(s).

1.2 Pronunciation

1.2.1 Word Pairs

To get your vocal organs ready to pronounce Chinese, it is useful to contrast the articulatory settings of Chinese and English by pronouncing pairs of words selected for their similarity of sound. Thus, *kǎo* 'to test' differs from English 'cow' not only in tone, but also in vowel quality.

(1)	<i>kǎo</i>	cow	(2)	<i>xìn</i>	sin	(3)	<i>shòu</i>	show
	<i>hǎo</i>	how		<i>qín</i>	chin		<i>zhōu</i>	Joe
	<i>nǎo</i>	now		<i>jīn</i>	gin		<i>sǒu</i>	so
	<i>chǎo</i>	chow[-time]		<i>xìn</i>	seen		<i>ròu</i>	row
	<i>sǎo</i>	sow['s ear]		<i>jīn</i>	Jean		<i>dōu</i>	[s]tow
	<i>bǎo</i>	[ship's] bow		<i>lín</i>	lean		<i>tóu</i>	toe
(4a)	<i>pō</i>	paw	(4b)	<i>duō</i>	[s]to[r]e	(5)	<i>bízi</i>	beads
	<i>bō</i>	bo[r]e		<i>tuō</i>	to[r]e		<i>lǐzi</i>	leads
	<i>mō</i>	mo[r]e		<i>luō</i>	law		<i>xízi</i>	seeds

1.2.2 Falling and level tones

Recall the chart of initials: *bo*, *po*, *mo*, *fo*, etc., and particularly rows 3, 4, and 5. Practice reading aloud the following syllable combinations with the falling tone (fourth tone). Note that they all contain the shifting *i* rhyme.

qi zi chi ri ci ji shi si xi zhi ci qi ji xi si chi

Hint: the best way to approach this task is to let the buzzing vowel (as in *zi* and *zhi*) be the default, and scan for the [ee] rhymes of row 5—*ji*, *qi*, and *xi*.

Now pronounce row 3 and 4 initials with the level tone (first tone), unless otherwise indicated, with the *ao*, *ou*, and *uo* rhymes.

chao shuo zao ròu zhuo zhao ruò shou rào suo cao
zuo zhou

1.3 Numbers (cardinal and ordinal)

This section contains information that can be practiced daily in class by counting or giving the day's date.

1.3.1 The numbers 1–10

<i>yī</i>	<i>èr</i>	<i>sān</i>	<i>sì</i>	<i>wǔ</i>	<i>liù</i>	<i>qī</i>	<i>bā</i>	<i>jiǔ</i>	<i>shí</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1.3.2 Beyond 10

Higher numbers are regularly formed around *shí* ‘ten’ (or multiples of ten), with following numbers additive (*shísān* ‘thirteen’, *shíqī* ‘seventeen’) and preceding numbers multiplicative (*sānshí* ‘thirty’, *qīshí* ‘seventy’).

<i>shíyī</i>	<i>shí'èr</i>	<i>shísì</i>	<i>èrshí</i>	<i>èrshíyī</i>	<i>èrshí'èr</i>	<i>èrshísì</i>	<i>sānshí</i>	<i>sānshíyī</i>
11	12	14	20	21	22	24	30	31

1.3.3 The ordinal numbers

Ordinals are formed with a prefix, *dì* (which, by pinyin convention, is attached to the following number with a hyphen).

<i>dì-yī</i>	<i>dì-èr</i>	<i>dì-sān</i>	<i>dì-sì</i>	<i>dì-wǔ</i>
‘first’	‘second’	‘third’	‘fourth’	‘fifth’

Later in the lesson, the ordinals can be practiced by class members reporting on order or placement; who is first, second, third, and so on: *Wǒ shì dì-yī*; *Wǒ shì dì-èr*; etc.

1.3.4 Dates

Dates are presented in ‘contracting’ order in Chinese, with year listed first (*nián* [nien]), then month (*yuè* [yu-eh]), and finally day (*hào* [how]). Years are usually presented as a string of digits (that may include *líng* ‘zero’) rather than as a single figure: *yī-jiǔ-jiǔ-liù nián* ‘1996’; *èr-líng-líng-sān nián* ‘2003’. Months are formed regularly with numerals: *yīyuè* ‘January’, *èryuè* ‘February’, *shí'èryuè* ‘December’.

<i>èrlínglíngsān nián bāyuè sān hào</i>	August 3, 2003
<i>yījiǔbāwǔ nián èryuè shíbā hào</i>	February 18, 1985

NOTES

a. Among northern Chinese, *yīyuè* often shows the *yī* tone shift when the month is followed by the day: *yíyuè sān hào*. With older speakers, the numbers *qī* ‘seven’ and *bā* ‘eight’, both level-toned words, sometimes adopt the same shift when used in dates (and in some other contexts) prior to a fourth-tone word: *qíyuè liù hào*; *bāyuè jiǔ hào*.

b. In the written language, *rì* ‘day’ (a much simpler character) is often used in place of *hào*. Thus, *bāyuè sān rì* (八月三日), which would be written and read out as such, would tend to be spoken as *bāyuè sān hào* (which, in turn, could be written verbatim as 八月三号).

1.3.5 The celestial stems

Just as English sometimes makes use of letters rather than numbers to indicate a sequence of items, so Chinese sometimes makes use of a closed set of words with fixed order known as *shígān* ‘the ten stems’ or *tiāngān* ‘the celestial stems’ for counting purposes. The ten stems have an interesting history, which will be discussed in greater detail along with information on the Chinese calendar in a later unit. For now, they will be used in much the same way that, in English, Roman numerals or letters of the alphabet are used to mark subsections of a text, or turns in a dialogue. The first four or five of the ten are much more common than the others, simply because they occur early in the sequence. (Chinese people will be impressed if you can recite all ten!)

The ten celestial stems (*tiāngān*)

<i>jiǎ</i>	<i>yǐ</i>	<i>bǐng</i>	<i>dīng</i>	<i>wù</i>	<i>jǐ</i>	<i>gēng</i>	<i>xīn</i>	<i>rén</i>	<i>guǐ</i>
甲	乙	丙	丁	戊	己	庚	辛	壬	癸
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J

1.4 Stative verbs

The verb is the heart of the Chinese sentence. Young urban speakers of Chinese may slip material from English or other languages into the noun position in a sentence (*Wǒ yǒu lab.* ‘I have a *lab.*’), and nouns with foreign origins, such as *jítā* ‘guitar’, have been incorporated into the language as a result of persistent contact with other cultures. Very rarely, however, does a foreign language influence the verb position in Chinese.

Some comparisons with English also reveal the centrality of the verb to the Chinese sentence scheme. In Chinese, where the context makes the participants clear, verbs do not need to be anchored with pronouns, as they do in English.

Jiǎ:	<i>Máng ma?</i>	‘Are [you] busy?’
Yǐ:	<i>Hěn máng.</i>	‘[Yes, I] am.’

In English, ‘am’ is not a possible response to the question ‘Are you busy?’ A pronoun is required, such as, ‘I am.’ However, in the English answer, the verb ‘to be busy’ does not need to be repeated: ‘I am’ rather than ‘I am busy.’ Chinese behaves oppositely from English, as our example shows. Pronouns are often *not* expressed when the context makes the reference clear. On the other hand, verbs tend to be *reiterated* in the answer. Moreover, in Chinese, there is no need to anticipate the verb with a confirmation (‘yes’) or denial (‘no’): *Shūfu ma?/Hěn shūfu.* ‘Are you comfortable?’/‘Yes, I am.’

1.4.1 Types of verbs

As you encounter words in Chinese, you will find that it is useful to categorize them into groups and subgroups (traditional parts of speech and their subclasses), such as nouns (including subtypes such as countable and non-countable), verbs (including subtypes such as transitive and intransitive), pronouns (including personal and demonstrative), and adverbs (including those of manner and degree). Such categories capture useful generalizations about how words behave. An adverb, for example, will always appear before a verb (or other adverb).

It is also useful to be able to talk about the components of a sentence: subjects, predicates, adverbials, modifiers, etc. A general schema for the sentence *Hěn máng* would be simply a predicate consisting of an adverb (*hěn*) and a verb (*máng*). It is not necessary to be adept at using the linguistic nomenclature, but it is useful to be able to understand the notion of classes of words and positions within sentence structure so that generalizations can be noted.

For Chinese verbs, it will be useful to distinguish a number of classes. In this lesson, we will focus on two. One resembles adjectives in English and many other languages: *hǎo* ‘be good’, *máng* ‘be busy’, *è* ‘be hungry’. As the English glosses show, these words do not require an additional form of the verb ‘to be’ (‘are, am, is’, etc.) when they are used as predicates in Chinese: *Lèi ma?/Hěn lèi.* ‘Are [you] tired?’ / ‘[I] am.’ The difference is shown by translating the

Chinese words as ‘be+tired’, ‘be+good’, etc. Because such words convey states rather than actions, they are called ‘stative verbs’, abbreviated as SV. Strictly speaking, SVs should always be glossed as ‘be+adjective’ (when they function as predicates), but once the notion is familiar, we will often fall back on the more convenient practice of glossing them with English adjectives: *máng* ‘busy’; *shūfu* ‘comfortable’.

Another general class of verbs involves actions: *chī* ‘to eat’; *xǐ* ‘to wash’; *zǒu* ‘to walk; leave’. These will simply be called action verbs, abbreviated V_{act} .

1.4.2 Questions and positive responses

You can begin by learning to ask questions with SVs and to give either positive or negative responses. Assuming that the context makes explicit (subject) pronouns unnecessary, then one way to ask ‘yes/no’ questions is to add the final question particle *ma* to the proposal.

<i>Hǎo ma?</i>	‘Are [you] well?’
<i>Máng ma?</i>	‘Is [she] busy?’
<i>Lèi ma?</i>	‘Are [you] tired?’
<i>È ma?</i>	‘Is [he] hungry?’
<i>Kě ma?</i>	‘Are [you] thirsty?’
<i>Jǐnzhāng ma?</i>	‘Are [they] nervous?’
<i>Shūfu ma?</i>	‘Are [you] comfortable?’
<i>Lěng ma?</i>	‘Are [you] cold?’
<i>Rè ma?</i>	‘Is [it] hot?’
<i>Gāo ma?</i>	‘Is [she] tall?’
<i>Duì ma?</i>	‘Is [it] correct?’

NOTES

- Lèi* rhymes with ‘say’; *duì* (and *wèi*) rhyme with ‘way’.
- è* [uh]; cf. *rè* [ruh] and *hěn* [huhn]
- jǐnzhāng* [jeen-j!ahng]; *shūfu* [sh!oofoo]—! reminds you to raise the tip of your tongue toward the roof of your mouth.

Positive responses repeat the verb, usually with an adverb. The default adverb, when no other is chosen, is *hěn* ‘very’. However, in contexts such as these, *hěn*

does little more than support the positive orientation of the sentence, and so is best left untranslated. SVs such as *duì* ‘correct’, which do not permit gradients, do not occur with degree adverbs such as *hěn*.

<i>Máng ma?</i>	<i>Hěn máng.</i> ‘[Yes, I] am.’
<i>Kě ma?</i>	<i>Hěn kě.</i> ‘[Yes, I] am.’ (Apply the tone rule!)
<i>Gāo ma?</i>	<i>Hěn gāo.</i> ‘[Yes, she] is.’
<i>Duì ma?</i>	<i>Duì.</i> ‘[Yes, it] is.’

Notice that, unlike English, where the typical positive answer indicates affirmation with ‘yes’ before going on to answer the question, Mandarin has only the direct answer.

1.4.3 Negative responses

Negative responses are usually formed with *bù* ‘not the case’. Recall that the tone is conditioned by that of the following syllable.

<i>Máng ma?</i>	<i>Bù máng.</i> ‘[No, I]’m not.’
<i>Kě ma?</i>	<i>Bù kě.</i> ‘[No, I]’m not.’
<i>Gāo ma?</i>	<i>Bù gāo.</i> ‘[No, she]’s not.’
<i>Duì ma?</i>	<i>Bú duì.</i> ‘[No, it]’s not.’

As with positive answers, Chinese has no direct equivalent to ‘no’, but simply offers a negated verb.

A less abrupt negative (but, again, not used with *duì*) is formed with *bú* (with tone shift) plus *tài* ‘too; very’.

<i>Hǎo ma?</i>	<i>Bú tài hǎo.</i> ‘[No,] not very.’
<i>Máng ma?</i>	<i>Bú tài máng.</i> ‘[No,] not too.’
<i>Lèi ma?</i>	<i>Bú tài lèi.</i>
<i>È ma?</i>	<i>Bú tài è.</i>

NOTE

Negative questions with *ma*, such as *Nǐ bú lèi ma?* ‘Aren’t you tired?’, will be dealt with in a later unit. While such questions are easy to form in Chinese, the responses follow patterns unfamiliar to speakers of English.

1.4.4 V-not-V questions

Another way to form ‘yes/no’ questions is to present the verb and its negative, as though offering both options. The negative, *bu*, in these constructions is often toneless in normal speech, for example: *hǎo bù hǎo* is usually pronounced *hǎo bu hǎo*, or even *hǎo bu hao*. While V-*ma* questions slightly presuppose an answer congruent with the question, that is, positive for positive questions, negative for negative questions, V-not-V questions are neutral. At this stage, you can regard the two as essentially equivalent.

<i>Rè ma?</i>	<i>Hěn rè.</i>
<i>Rè bu rè?</i>	<i>Hěn rè.</i>
<i>Lěng ma?</i>	<i>Bù lěng.</i>
<i>Lěng bu lěng?</i>	<i>Bú tài lěng.</i>
Other examples:	
<i>Duì bu duì?</i>	<i>Duì.</i>
<i>Hǎo bu hǎo?</i>	<i>Hěn hǎo.</i> (Apply the tone rule!)
<i>Máng bu máng?</i>	<i>Bù máng.</i>
<i>Lèi bu lèi?</i>	<i>Hěn lèi.</i>
<i>È bu è?</i>	<i>Bú tài è.</i>
<i>Kě bu kě?</i>	<i>Hěn kě.</i> (Apply the tone rule!)
<i>Lěng bu lěng?</i>	<i>Hěn lěng.</i> (Apply the tone rule!)
<i>Rè bu rè?</i>	<i>Bú tài rè.</i>
<i>Jǐn⟨zhāng⟩ bu jǐnzhāng?</i>	<i>Bù jǐnzhāng.</i>
<i>Shū⟨fu⟩ bu shūfu?</i>	<i>Bù shūfu.</i>

NOTE

With two-syllable SVs, the second syllable of the first, positive part of V-not-V questions often gets elided, as indicated by ⟨ ⟩ in the last two examples.

1.4.5 Three degrees of response

You can respond to the two kinds of ‘yes/no’ questions positively, neutrally, or negatively. The typical neutral response makes use of the adverb *hái* (or, before other adverbs, *háishi*) ‘still; yet’: *hái hǎo* ‘so-so; [I]’m okay (still okay)’.

Questions and responses involving SVs (*hǎo, máng, lèi, è, kě, lěng, rè, gāo, shūfu, jǐnzhāng, duì*)

YES/NO QUESTIONS		RESPONSES		
MA	V-NOT-V	+	○	—
Lèi ma?	Lèi bu lèi?	Hěn lèi.	Hái hǎo.	Bú lèi. Bú tài lèi.
Jǐnzhāng ma?	Jǐn bu jǐnzhāng?	Hěn jǐnzhāng.	Hái hǎo.	Bù jǐnzhāng. Bú tài jǐnzhāng.

1.5 Time and tense

1.5.1 Today, yesterday, and tomorrow

Speakers of English and other European languages take the verbal category of tense for granted: speaking of the past generally requires the past tense. For Chinese (as well as many other languages), this is not so. Time words, such as *jīntiān* ‘today’, *zuótiān* ‘yesterday’ (both of which share the root *tiān* ‘sky; day’), or dates, may be added to simple sentences containing SVs without any change to the form of the verb, or any other addition to the sentence.

Zuótiān lěng ma? ‘Was [it] cold yesterday?’	⟨Zuótiān⟩ bú tài lěng.
Zuótiān rè bu rè? ‘Was [it] hot yesterday?’	⟨Zuótiān⟩ hěn rè.
Zuótiān hěn máng ma? ‘Were [you] busy yesterday?’	⟨Zuótiān⟩ hěn máng.
Jīntiān lèi bu lèi? ‘Are [you] tired today?’	⟨Jīntiān⟩ hái hǎo.
Èrshíbā hào lěng ma? ‘Was it cold on the 28th?’	⟨Èrshíbā hào⟩ hěn lěng.

Note the differences in word order between the English and the Chinese in the previous examples.

Lěng ma? Hěn lěng.	Was it cold? It was cold.
Zuótiān lěng ma?	Was it cold yesterday?

The appearance of a time word such as *míngtiān* ‘tomorrow’ (or a date) can be sufficient to indicate that an event is certain to occur in the future—something that is also true of English.

Wǒ míngtiān hěn máng. ‘I’m busy tomorrow.’

However, at times, Chinese does require some additional acknowledgment of the fact that, unlike the past and present, the future is uncertain. Thus, in talking about future weather, the word *huì* ‘can; will; likely to’ is, in many cases, added to the statement of futurity: *Míngtiān huì hěn lěng ma?* / *Míngtiān bú huì tài lěng.* ‘Will [it] be cold tomorrow?’ / ‘No, tomorrow won’t be that cold.’ *Huì*, while it does correspond to the English ‘will’ in this example, is not actually as common as the latter. For the time being, you should be cautious about talking about future states.

1.5.2 *Le*: small word, big role

Rather than the static notion of past versus present (or, more accurately, past versus non-past), Chinese is more sensitive to a dynamic notion of ‘phase’ or ‘change’. For example, if a speaker wishes to underscore the relevance of a *new situation*, he or she can signal it by the addition of the sentence-final particle *le*.

Zuótiān bù shūfu, jīntiān hǎo le. ‘[I] didn’t feel well yesterday, but
[I]’m better today.’

In this case, the English has no word that can be said to correspond to the Chinese *le*. In other contexts, however, the sense of *le* might be conveyed by the use of words such as ‘become’, ‘now’, or ‘[not] anymore’.

An explicit contrast between an earlier situation (*zuótiān*) and a current one (*jīntiān*) typically triggers this use of *le*. But it is also possible to state the situation before and after *without* underscoring the change with a final *le*.

Zuótiān hěn lěng, jīntiān hěn rè. ‘Yesterday was cold; today’s quite
hot.’

Unlike tense in English, which appears under conditions that can be explicitly stated (including ‘time before the time of speaking’), ‘change of state’ is

more a question of interpretation. Sometimes the change will loom large in the mind of the speaker (or writer); sometimes it will not. Even notions such as ‘change of state’ or ‘new situation’ are only partial views of the overall function of *le* in Mandarin discourse. In §1.7.2 below, for example, you will see that, with V_{act} , *le* takes on a different complexion. Eventually, you will gain some insight into how the different functions of *le* relate, but at this point, it is best to proceed incrementally, distinguishing functions as they are encountered.

This is a good time to introduce some additional words that can signal prior and current time.

Earlier:

<i>yǐqián</i>	‘formerly; before; used to [be]’ (‘take as before’)
<i>cóngqián</i>	‘before; in the past’ (‘from-before’)
<i>běnlái</i>	‘originally; at first’ (‘root-come’)

Current:

<i>xiànzài</i>	‘now; at present’ (‘current-now’)
<i>zùijìn</i>	‘recently; lately’ (‘most-near’)
<i>mùqián</i>	‘at present; currently’ (‘eyes-before’)

Examples:

<i>Yǐqián hěn jǐnzhāng, xiànzài hǎo le.</i>	‘[I] was nervous before, but [I]’m okay now.’
<i>Xiànzài bú è le!</i>	‘[I]’m not hungry anymore!’
<i>Yǐqián bù shūfu.</i>	‘[It] used to be uncomfortable.’
<i>Jīntiān rè le!</i>	‘[It]’s gotten hot today!’
<i>Zuótiān hěn lèi, jīntiān hěn máng.</i>	‘Yesterday [I] was tired [and] today [I]’m busy!’
<i>Běnlái hěn máng, xiànzài hǎo le.</i>	‘[I] was busy at first, but [I]’m okay now.’
<i>Mùqián hěn lěng, hěn bù shūfu.</i>	‘[It]’s quite cold at present; [it] doesn’t feel very nice.’

Běnlái hěn lěng, zuìjìn rè le.	‘[It] used to be cold, but lately [it]’s hotter.’
Cóngqián wǒ bù shūfu, zuìjìn hái hǎo.	‘I wasn’t comfortable before, but recently [I]’ve been okay.’

NOTE

Observe that it is the *new situation* that is associated with *le*, not the original state. The presence of *le* generally cancels out the need for a supporting adverb, such as *hěn*.

1.6 Pronouns

As many of the examples above show, Chinese often manages to keep track of people (or things) relevant to a situation without the use of pronouns. However, pronouns are available where context alone might be insufficient, or where it might otherwise be more appropriate to use one. The set of personal pronouns in Chinese is relatively simple and regular. They are presented in the following table, with notes following.

	CHINESE PERSONAL PRONOUNS		ENGLISH PERSONAL PRONOUNS	
	SINGULAR	COLLECTIVE	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First person	wǒ	wǒmen	‘I; me’	‘we; us’
Second person	nǐ, nín	nǐmen	‘you, you [polite]’	‘you [all]’
Third person	tā	tāmen	‘he, she, [it]; him, her’	‘they; them’

NOTES

a. *Tā* tends to refer to people (or to animals being treated as if they were people) rather than to things. On those occasions when *tā* is used to refer to things, it is more common in object position, so it is more likely to occur in the Chinese equivalent of the sentence ‘put it away’ than in ‘it’s in the drawer’. Chinese sometimes uses a demonstrative (*zhè* ‘this’ or *nà* ‘that’) where English has ‘it’, but it often has no explicit correspondence at all.

b. The form *nínmen* ('you+POL-MEN') is rare, but does sometimes occur in letters or formal speech. The *-men* suffix (not usually toned, though sometimes cited in isolation with a rising tone) is most often found with pronouns, as shown. With nouns designating people, it can also occur as a 'collective': *lǎoshī* 'teacher', *lǎoshīmen* 'teachers'. Even in such cases, *-men* should not be thought of as a plural marker, for it never combines with numerals: *sān ge lǎoshī* 'three teachers'.

c. Mandarin speakers from Beijing and the northeast also make a distinction (found in many languages) between *wǒmen* 'we' (that collectively includes the speaker, addressee, and others) and *zán* or *zánmen* (pronounced 'zámen', as if without the first 'n') 'the two of us; we'. The latter includes the speaker and the person spoken to, but excludes others. For example: *Zánmen zǒu ba!* 'Let's leave [us, but not the others]', a phrase worth storing away as a prototype example for *zánmen*.

1.6.1 Names

Where the identification or status of a person requires more than a pronoun, Chinese has recourse to personal names or names and titles (cf. §1.9.1). Chinese students often refer to each other either by personal name (at least two syllables), or by surname (*xìng*) prefixed by a syllable such as *xiǎo* 'young'. Thus, *Liú Guózhèng* may be addressed by friends as *Guózhèng* or *xiǎo Liú*; *Lǐ Dān*, as *Lǐ Dān* (full name of two syllables) or *xiǎo Lǐ*.

1.6.2 The particle *ne* and the adverb *yě*

The particle *ne*, placed after subject nouns, has a number of uses. It may signal a pause for reflection, something particularly useful for learners.

<i>Zuótiān ne, zuótiān hǎn rè.</i>	'Yesterday . . . yesterday was hot.'
<i>Tā ne, tā hǎn jǐnzhāng.</i>	'[As for] him, he's quite anxious.'

The particle may also be used to signal follow-up questions. The response to a follow-up question often contains the adverb *yě* 'also; too; as well'. Recall that adverbs are placed before verbs (including SVs) or other adverbs (such as *bu*).

Jiǎ:	<i>Jīntiān lèi ma?</i>
Yǐ:	<i>Hǎn lèi, nǐ ne?</i>
Jiǎ:	<i>Wǒ yě hǎn lèi.</i>
Jiǎ:	<i>Jīntiān rè bu rè?</i>
Yǐ:	<i>Hǎn rè.</i>

Jiǎ: *Zuótiān ne?*
 Yǐ: *Zuótiān yě hěn rè.*

 Jiǎ: *Nǐ jīnzhāng ma?*
 Yǐ: *Bù jīnzhāng le. Nǐ ne?*
 Jiǎ: *Wǒ hái shì hěn jīnzhāng.*
 Yǐ: *Ng.*

 Jiǎ: *Xiǎo Wáng zuótiān bù shūfu.*
 Yǐ: *Jīntiān ne?*
 Jiǎ: *Jīntiān hǎo le.*
 Yǐ: *Ng.*

NOTES

a. *Háishi* ‘still’; cf. §I.7.1

b. Spoken Chinese makes use of a variety of interjections. *Ng* (with pronunciation ranging from a nasalized [uh] to [n]) is one of them. On the falling tone, it indicates agreement or, as in the above example, understanding.

Exercise 1

Write down and recite what you would say under the following circumstances; be prepared to shift roles.

1. Ask your classmate if he was busy yesterday.
2. Note that it's quite cold today.
3. Remark that it's gotten cold today.
4. Find out if young Li is nervous.
5. Respond that she is [nervous].
6. Say that you are too.
7. Say you didn't feel well yesterday.
8. Say that you're better now.
9. Tell your friend that you're not very hungry.

10. Tell her that you're okay today, but you were quite nervous before.
11. Ask your friend if she's thirsty [or not].
12. Find out if your classmate is comfortable.
13. Say that you're not hungry anymore.
14. Say that she was wrong.

1.7 Action verbs

While SVs attribute emotional or physical states to people or things, action verbs (V_{act}) involve actions, such as eating or going to class. V_{act} are often subdivided into 'transitive', those that generally presuppose an object ('read → a book'; 'eat → a meal'); and 'intransitive', those that do not presuppose an object ('walk'; 'kneel'). However, languages differ as to how this distinction is actually realized. In English, for example, when the verb 'to eat' means 'to eat a meal', there is the option of either not expressing an object ('When do we eat?'), or using the generic noun 'meal' ('We had a meal earlier').

Chinese adopts a different strategy. In comparable sentences, rather than not mentioning an object for lack of a particular one, Chinese provides a generic object like 'meal': *chīfàn* 'to eat; to have a meal'. The core meaning of *fàn* is 'cooked rice', but in conjunction with *chī*, it implies 'food' or 'meal'. When a particular kind of food is mentioned, *fàn* is replaced by specific words: *chī miàn* 'to eat noodles'; *chī báifàn* 'to eat [white] rice'; *chī bāozi* 'to eat dumplings'; *chī zǎodiǎn* 'to eat breakfast', etc.

Another case in which Chinese provides a generic object, where English has either an intransitive verb or one of a number of specific options, is *xǐzǎo* 'to bathe; to take a bath/shower'. *Xǐzǎo* is composed of the verb *xǐ* 'to wash' and *zǎo*, an element that no longer has independent status, but is treated like an object. While English uses an intransitive verb 'to bathe' or a specific object 'to take a bath', Chinese provides a generic object, *zǎo*. When a specific object is

needed, it substitutes for *zǎo*: *xǐ yīfu* ‘to wash clothes’; *xǐ liǎn* ‘to wash one’s face’; *xǐ shǒu* ‘to wash one’s hands’.

The following table gives verbs and verb + objects for events that tend to happen in the course of a day. (Polite inquiries about bathing are appropriate in tropical or sub-tropical climates.)

VERB	OBJECT	V-O
<i>zǒu</i> ‘to leave’		
<i>qǐlái</i> ‘to get up; to rise’		
<i>shuì</i> ‘to sleep’	<i>jiào</i> (bound form)	<i>shuìjiào</i> ‘to go to bed; to sleep’
<i>chī</i> ‘to eat’	<i>fān</i> ‘cooked rice’	<i>chīfān</i> ‘to eat; to have a [proper] meal’
<i>xǐ</i> ‘to wash’	<i>zǎo</i> (bound form)	<i>xǐzǎo</i> ‘to bathe; to take a bath,’ etc.
<i>kàn</i> ‘to look at’	<i>bào</i> ‘newspaper’	<i>kànbào</i> ‘to read the paper’
<i>shàng</i> ‘to ascend’	} <i>kè</i> ‘class’	<i>shàngkè</i> ‘to teach a class; to attend class’
<i>xià</i> ‘to descend’		<i>xiàkè</i> ‘to finish class; to get out of class’
<i>shàng</i> ‘to ascend’	} <i>bān</i> ‘job; shift’	<i>shàngbān</i> ‘to go to work; to start work’
<i>xià</i> ‘to descend’		<i>xiàbān</i> ‘to get out of work’

1.7.1 Negative statements

With V_{act} , the plain negative with *bu* usually indicates intention.

Wǒ bù zǒu. ‘I’m not leaving.’

Tāmen bù xǐzǎo. ‘They’re not going to bathe.’

Tā bù chī le. ‘He won’t eat anymore.’

Such declarations, while possible, are in fact more likely to be cast in some less abrupt form, using verbs such as *yào* ‘to want’ or *xiǎng* ‘to feel like; to think’. We will get to such verbs quite soon, but at this stage, rather than talking about intentions, we will focus on whether events have happened or not. In

such cases, the negation is formed with the negative of the verb *yǒu* ‘to have; to exist’. This is *méiyǒu*, or simply *méi*. (*Yǒu* is the one verb in Mandarin whose negative is not formed with *bù*—the one *irregular* verb, you could say.)

<i>Méi chīfàn.</i>	‘[We] didn’t eat; [we] haven’t eaten.’
<i>Méiyǒu xǐzǎo.</i>	‘[I] didn’t bathe; [I] haven’t bathed.’
<i>Méi shàngbān.</i>	‘[She] didn’t go to work; [she] hasn’t started work.’

Since the action verbs introduced in this lesson involve events that can be expected to take place regularly over the course of the day, the adverb *hái* (or *háishi* before other adverbs) ‘still; yet’ is common in negative answers. *Hái* (<*shi*>) is frequently accompanied by the sentence-final particle *ne*, which generally conveys a tone of immediacy or suspense (as well as being associated with follow-up questions, cf. §1.6.2).

<i>Hái méi chīfàn ne.</i>	‘[We] haven’t eaten yet.’
<i>Hái méiyǒu xǐzǎo ne.</i>	‘[I] haven’t bathed yet.’
<i>Hái méi shàngbān.</i>	‘[She] hasn’t started work yet.’

1.7.2 V_{act} with *le*

V_{act} may also appear with *le*. As noted in §1.5.2, *le* with SVs signals a change of state, or a newly relevant state: *jīntiān hǎo le*. With V_{act} , the function of *le* is more diffuse, or at least it seems so from a learner’s perspective. *Le* with V_{act} , much as it does with SVs, may signal a newly relevant situation or phase. But with V_{act} , the initiation or conclusion of the action may be of relevance.

Initiation:

<i>Zǒu le.</i>	‘[They]’re off.’
<i>Chīfàn le.</i>	‘[They]’ve started [eating].’
<i>Shàngkè le.</i>	‘Class is starting.’

Conclusion:

<i>Zǒu le.</i>	‘[They]’ve gone; [they] left.’
<i>Chīfàn le.</i>	‘[We]’ve eaten; [we] ate.’
<i>Shàngkè le.</i>	‘[They]’ve gone to class; [they] went to class.’

‘Conclusion’ may seem like another way of saying ‘past tense’, but there are reasons for avoiding any identification of *le* with [past] tense. You have already seen that, with SVs, the past situation is not that which is marked with *le*, but the current one: *Zuótiān bù shūfu, jīntiān hǎo le*. You will also see many other cases where past tense in English does not correspond to the presence of *le* in Chinese. More to the point: injecting the notion of past tense into our description of *le* suggests a static function quite at odds with that other, well-established dynamic function of *le*, to signal a particular relevance of an event to the current discourse—the story line that is being advanced.

For the time being, then, note that *le* has two faces: it signals the current relevancy of a new state or situation (in this case, *le* can appear with the negative *bù*).

<i>Lěng le.</i>	‘[It]’s gotten cold.’
<i>Bù lěng le.</i>	‘[It]’s not cold anymore.’
<i>Bù chī le.</i>	‘[They]’re not eating anymore.’

The particle *le* can also signal the current relevance of a completed event (in which case it is negated by *méi* ⟨*yǒu*⟩).

<i>Shàngkè le.</i>	‘Class is beginning; [they]’ve gone to class.’
<i>Hái méi(yǒu) shàngkè ne.</i>	‘[They] haven’t gone to class yet.’

Confusion about the several senses of *le* with V_{act} can often be resolved by the addition of an adverb, such as *yǐjīng* ‘already’.

<i>Tāmen yǐjīng zǒu le.</i>	‘They’ve already left.’
<i>Wǒ yǐjīng chīfàn le.</i>	‘I’ve already eaten.’
<i>Yǐjīng xiàbān le.</i>	‘[He]’s already quit [for the day].’

1.7.3 Questions

Actions can be questioned with the question particle *ma*.

<i>Chīfàn le ma?</i>	‘Have [you] eaten [a meal]?’
<i>Xǐzǎo le ma?</i>	‘Have [you] bathed?’
<i>Shàngbān le ma?</i>	‘Has [she] started work?’

Actions can also be questioned with the V-not-V pattern, with the negative option reduced to *méiyǒu* (or just *méi*).

Chīfàn le méi(yǒu)?
Xīzǎo le méi(yǒu)?
Shàngbān le méi(yǒu)?

1.7.4 Summary of *le* patterns

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
<i>Rè le.</i> 'It's gotten warm.'	<i>Bú rè le.</i> 'It's not warm anymore.'
<i>Chī le.</i> '[We]'ve started eating.'	<i>Wǒ bù chī le.</i> 'I'm not eating anymore.'
<i>〈Yǐjīng〉 zǒu le.</i> '[He]'s 〈already〉 left.'	<i>〈Hái〉 méi(yǒu) zǒu 〈ne〉.</i> '[She] hasn't left 〈yet〉.'
<i>Tāmen 〈yǐjīng〉 chīfàn le.</i> 'They've 〈already〉 eaten.'	<i>Tāmen hái méi(yǒu) chīfàn 〈ne〉.</i> 'They haven't eaten 〈yet〉.'

1.7.5 Mini-conversations

Sections 1.1–1.7 present a considerable amount of information. The best way to internalize it is to practice short dialogues built around questions. Here are some examples. (The near synonyms *kěshì* and *dànshì*, used in the following two conversations, are both comparable to English 'but'.)

DIALOGUE A

Jiǎ:	<i>Xīzǎo le ma?</i>	'Have [you] bathed?'
Yǐ:	<i>Xǐ le, kěshì hái méi chīfàn.</i>	'I have, but I haven't eaten yet.'
Jiǎ:	<i>È ma?</i>	'Hungry?'
Yǐ:	<i>Hěn è, nǐ ne?</i>	'Sure am; and you?'
Jiǎ:	<i>O, wǒ . . . wǒ yǐjīng chī le.</i>	'Oh, me . . . I've already eaten.'
Yǐ:	<i>Xiǎo Bì ne?</i>	'And young Bi?'
Jiǎ:	<i>Yǐjīng zǒu le, shàngbān le.</i>	'[She]'s gone, [she]'s at work.'
Yǐ:	<i>O, shàngbān le!</i>	'Oh, [she]'s gone to work!'

DIALOGUE B

Jiǎ:	<i>Jīntiān hǎn rè.</i>	‘It’s hot today.’
Yǐ:	<i>Ng, hǎn rè. Nǐ chīfàn le ma?</i>	‘Yeah, sure is. Have you eaten?’
Jiǎ:	<i>Hái méi, wǒ bú è.</i>	‘Not yet, I’m not hungry.’
Yǐ:	<i>Jǐnzhāng ma?</i>	‘Anxious?’
Jiǎ:	<i>Xiànzài hǎo le—dànshì yǐqián hǎn jǐnzhāng!</i>	‘[I]’m fine now—but I was before!’
Yǐ:	<i>Chén Bó yǐjīng zǒu le ma?</i>	‘Has Chen Bo already left?’
Jiǎ:	<i>Yǐjīng zǒu le, shàngkè qu le.</i>	‘Yes, he has, he’s gone to class.’

NOTE

Shàngkè qu le, with a toneless *qu* ‘go’ indicating motion away, is more idiomatic than just *shàngkè le*.

1.8 Conventional greetings

1.8.1 The addition of *guò* (untoned)

Questions about eating are often used ‘phatically’, to be sociable rather than to seek actual information. There are a number of variants on the basic *Chīfàn le ma* that may serve this purpose. A particularly common variation used with verbs that describe regularly occurring events (such as having meals and going to work) involves the addition of a post-verbal *guò* (usually untoned), whose root meaning is ‘to pass by, over, through’. *Guò* can occur in both the question and in responses (positive and negative), but it can also be dropped from the responses, as demonstrated below.

<i>Chīguo <fàn> le ma?</i>	{	<i>Chī<guo> le.</i>
		<i>Hái méi <chī<guo>> ne.</i>

1.8.2 Reductions

In context, utterances are likely to be reduced along the following lines: *méiyǒu* → *méi*; *chīfàn* → *chī* (however, *xǐzǎo* does not reduce to *xǐ*, since *xǐ* alone means

‘to wash’ rather than ‘to bathe’). Thus, the following are all possible—though the more elliptical questions are likely to produce more elliptical answers. (The English glosses for the responses only suggest the differences. Notice that, in English, forms of ‘have’ can substitute for ‘eat’ or ‘eat one’s meal’.)

<i>Chīfàn le ma?</i>	<i>Chīfàn le.</i> ‘I’ve eaten my meal.’
<i>Chīguo fàn le ma?</i>	<i>Chīguo fàn le.</i> ‘I’ve had my meal.’
<i>Chī le ma?</i>	<i>Chī le.</i> ‘I have.’
<i>Chīguo le ma?</i>	<i>Chīguo le.</i> ‘I’ve had it.’
<i>Chīfàn le méiyǒu?</i>	<i>Hái méi chī fàn ne.</i> ‘I haven’t eaten my meal yet.’
<i>Chīguo fàn le méiyǒu?</i>	<i>Hái méi chīguo ne.</i> ‘I haven’t had my meal yet.’
<i>Chīfàn le méi?</i>	<i>Hái méi chī ne.</i> ‘I haven’t eaten yet.’
<i>Chīguo fàn le méi?</i>	<i>Hái méi chīguo ne.</i> ‘I haven’t had it yet.’
<i>Chī le méi?</i>	{ <i>Hái méi ne.</i> ‘Not yet.’ <i>Méiyǒu.</i> ‘No.’ <i>Méi.</i> ‘No.’

Typical expanded and reduced forms of questions and answers

ENGLISH MEANING	EXPANDED FORM	REDUCED FORM
Done?	<i>Chīfàn le ma?</i>	<i>Chī le ma?</i>
Done?	<i>Chīguo fàn le ma?</i>	<i>Chīguo le ma?</i>
Done [or not]?	<i>Chīfàn le méiyǒu?</i>	<i>Chī le méi?</i>
Done [or not]?	<i>Chīguo fàn le méiyǒu?</i>	<i>Chīguo le méi?</i>
Done.	<i>Chīfàn le.</i>	<i>Chī le.</i>
Done.	<i>Chīguo fàn le.</i>	<i>Chī le.</i>
Not done.	<i>Méiyǒu chīfàn.</i>	<i>Méi chī.</i>

Exercise 2

Ask and answer as indicated.

1. Read the paper? / Not yet.
2. Started work? / Yes, I have.
3. They've gone? / No, not yet.
4. Was it cold? / No, not very.
5. Have [they] finished work yet? / Yes, [they] have.
6. [We]'re not nervous anymore. / [You] were yesterday.
7. [I]'ve eaten. / Are [you] still hungry?
8. Bathed? / Yes, it was nice [comfortable].
9. Are they out of class yet? / Not yet.
10. Thirsty? / Not anymore.
11. Hungry? / Not anymore, I've eaten.
12. Has class started? / Not yet.
13. Nervous? / I am now!
14. Young Wang's in bed? / Yes, he's already in bed.
15. Are they up? / Yes, but they haven't eaten yet.

What would you say? (Use pronouns where necessary.)

1. Ask your friend if she's eaten yet. (three different ways)
2. Announce that she's already left work [for the day].
3. Explain that it was cold yesterday, but that it's gotten hot today.
4. Announce that she hasn't gone to class yet.
5. Explain that they've bathed, but they haven't eaten.
6. Explain that you were all unwell yesterday, but today you're fine.
7. Explain that the first's already gone, but the second and third still haven't.
8. Explain that it was warm yesterday, and that it is today as well.

1.9 Greeting and taking leave

1.9.1 Names and titles

Because even perfunctory greetings tend to involve a name and title, you need to have some rudimentary information about forms of address before being introduced to the language of greeting and leave taking. Below are five common Chinese surnames, followed by a title which means, literally, ‘teacher’, and the SV *hǎo*, which in this context serves as a simple acknowledgment. *Lǎoshī*, which has no exact correspondence in English, can be applied to both males and females, as well as to all ranks of teachers.

<i>Zhāng lǎoshī hǎo.</i>	‘Hello, Professor Zhang.’
<i>Wáng lǎoshī hǎo.</i>	
<i>Lǐ lǎoshī hǎo.</i>	[with tone shift]
<i>Zhào lǎoshī hǎo.</i>	
<i>Chén lǎoshī hǎo.</i>	

1.9.2 Hello

Using specialized greetings such as ‘hi’ or *bonjour* to acknowledge or confirm the value of a relationship on every encounter is not a universal feature of cultures. The practice seems to have crept into Chinese relatively recently. Whereas in the past, people might have acknowledged your presence by asking where you were going or if you had eaten (that is, if they said anything at all to a stranger), urban Chinese today often make use of phrases like *nǐ hǎo* in ways similar to English ‘hi’ or ‘hello’. Most people would probably regard *nǐ hǎo* as the prototypical neutral greeting, but other options are listed below.

<i>Nǐ hǎo!</i>		‘Hi! Hello!’
<i>Nín hǎo!</i>	[deferential]	‘How do you do?’
<i>Hei!</i>	[exclamation]	‘Hey! Hi!’
<i>Hǎo!</i>		‘Hi! Hello!’
<i>Hǎo ma?</i>		‘You well?’
<i>Nǐ hǎo a!</i>	[informal]	‘How’re you doing?’
<i>Dàjiā hǎo.</i>	[to a group]	‘Hello, everyone.’ (‘big-family well’)

A version of ‘good morning’, based on the verb *zǎo* (‘be+early’), has been in common usage in Taiwan for some time and is now becoming more common on the Mainland as well.

<i>Zǎo!</i>	‘Morning!’ (‘be+early’)
<i>Zǎo ān.</i>	‘Good morning.’ (‘early peace’)
<i>Nǐ zǎo.</i>	
<i>Nín zǎo.</i>	

Expressions comparable to English ‘good afternoon’ or ‘good evening’ are also starting to be used in modern China. Thus, *xiàwǔ* ‘afternoon’ and *wǎnshàng* ‘evening’ are used in the expressions *xiàwǔ hǎo* ‘good afternoon’ and *wǎnshàng hǎo* ‘good evening’. *Wǎn ān* ‘good night’ (‘late peace’), used as a sign-off at the end of the day, has a longer pedigree and is now commonly used by staff in larger hotels, for example.

In general, greetings of the sort listed above are used more sparingly than their English counterparts. Colleagues or classmates passing each other, for example, are less likely to use a formulaic greeting such as *nǐ hǎo*, though relative cultural novelties such as fast food restaurants and toll booths may encourage broader use. In general, though, a greeting to someone of higher status should be preceded by a name, or a name and title (as in §1.9.1).

1.9.3 Good-bye

Many cultures have conventional phrases for taking leave. Often, blessings serve this purpose (e.g., ‘bye’, from ‘good-bye’, supposedly derived from the phrase ‘God be with you’). Below are several Chinese variations of ‘good-bye’, beginning with the standard, *zàijiàn* (‘again-see’).

<i>Zàijiàn.</i>	[neutral]	‘Good-bye.’ (‘again-see’)
<i>Yihuǐr ~ yíhuìr jiàn.</i>	[friendly]	‘See [you] soon.’ (‘awhile see’)
<i>Míngtiān jiàn.</i>	[neutral]	‘See [you] tomorrow.’ (‘tomorrow see’)
<i>Huíjiàn.</i>	[informal]	‘See [you] later; bye.’ (‘return-see’)

<i>Huítóu jiàn.</i>	[friendly]	‘See [you] shortly.’ (‘return-head see’)
<i>Màn zǒu.</i>	[friendly]	‘Take it easy.’ (‘slowly walk’)

NOTES

- The addition of final *r* to a written pinyin syllable represents a complex series of phonetic effects that will be considered more fully later. In the case of *yíhuǐr* ~ *yíhuìr*, the final *r* affects the quality of the preceding vowel, so that it is pronounced ‘*yíhuě* ~ *yíhuè*’ rather than ‘*yíhuǐr* ~ *yíhuìr*’. The usual prescription applies: listen to your teacher or to the audio.
- The alternate pronunciation *yíhuìr* may be more common in dialects found in southern China.
- Students and other urban youth of all kinds often end a series of farewells with the English-influenced expression *baibai*.
- As with greetings, when saying good-bye to an older person or a person of rank, it is normal to mention name and title first, e.g., *Wèi lǎoshī, zàijiàn*.

1.9.4 Bon voyage

This is a good time to familiarize yourself with a few phrases that are used to wish people well when they leave on a journey, or to greet them when they arrive. The most common expression for *bon voyage* is:

Yílù-píng’ān. (‘Whole-journey peaceful.’)

This expression applies to almost any journey, whether by air, ship, or bus. *Yílù-shùnfēng* (‘whole-journey favorable-wind’) has much the same meaning, but it is not used for journeys by air. Chinese people are generally superstitious about the effect of words, and many would usually deem it ill-advised to mention the word *fēng* ‘wind’ before a flight. Notice that both expressions contain four syllables, a favored configuration in the Chinese lexicon.

In greeting someone returning from a long journey, instead of the question ‘How was the flight/journey/voyage?’, Chinese people generally utter a variant of an expression that reflects the traditional discomforts of travel.

⟨*Lù shàng*⟩ *xīnkǔ ba?* ‘Tough journey, huh?’ (‘⟨road on⟩ bitter BA’)

An analysis of these expressions is provided above, but at this stage, they should simply be memorized (by repetition) and kept in storage for greeting visitors or seeing people off.



Yílù-píng'ān!

1.9.5 Smoothing the transitions

A. PRIOR TO ASKING A QUESTION In more formal situations, questions are often prefaced with the expression *qǐngwèn* ('request-ask'), idiomatically equivalent to 'may I ask' or 'excuse me'. *Qǐngwèn* may also be preceded by a name and title.

<i>Qǐngwèn, nǐ chīfàn le ma?</i>	'Excuse me, have you eaten?'
<i>Zhào lǎoshī, qǐngwèn, nín è bu è?</i>	'Professor Zhao, mind if I ask: are you hungry?'

Qǐng 'request; invite' also occurs in the common phrase *qǐng zuò* 'have a seat' ('invite sit') and the expression *qǐng jìn* 'won't you come in' ('invite enter').

B. PRIOR TO LEAVING In the normal course of events, a simple good-bye is often too abrupt for closing a conversation. One way to smooth the transition is to announce that you have to leave before you say good-bye. Here are four ways to accomplish this, all involving the verb *zǒu* ‘to leave; to go’. These expressions are complicated to analyze; some notes are provided below, but otherwise, they should be internalized as units.

<i>Hǎo, nà wǒ zǒu le.</i>	‘Okay, I’m off then.’ (‘okay, in+that+case, I leave LE’)
<i>Hei, wǒ gāi zǒu le.</i>	‘Say, I should be off.’ (‘hey, I should leave LE’)
<i>Hǎo, nà jiù zhè yàng ba, zǒu le.</i>	‘Okay then, that’s it, [I]’m off!’ (‘okay, in+that+case, then this-way BA, leave LE’)
<i>Bù zǎo le, wǒ gāi zǒu le.</i>	‘[It]’s late, I’d better be off.’ (‘not be+early LE, I should leave LE’)

NOTES

- a. *gāi* / *yīnggāi* ‘should; must’; *nà* ‘in that case; well; then’; *jiù* ‘then’; *ba* (particle associated with suggestions); *le* ([here] signals a new situation)
- b. Taking leave obviously involves a broad range of situations, including seeing someone off on a journey (which, in China, is an extremely important event). The four options included in this section are acceptable for closing an informal conversation.

1.10 Tones

1.10.1 Tone combos (the first six)

Tones are easier to perceive and assimilate in pairs. Four tones form sixteen possible combinations of two, but because of the previously discussed restriction on combinations of low tones ($3 + 3 = 2 + 3$), only fifteen pairs are distinctive. The six sets below are mostly comprised of words you have already encountered. They should be memorized so that they can be recited by number (typically as part of warm-up activities at the beginning of class): *dì-yī: lǎoshī, jǐnzhāng; dì-èr: xǐzǎo, hěn hǎo*, etc.

(1)	<i>lǎoshī</i> <i>jǐnzhāng</i>	(2)	<i>xǐzǎo</i> <i>hěn hǎo</i>	(3)	<i>zài jiàn</i> <i>kàn bào</i>
(4)	<i>bú rè</i> <i>bú lèi</i>	(5)	<i>hěn máng</i> <i>hěn nán</i>	(6)	<i>bù gāo</i> <i>shàng bān</i>

NOTE

hěn nán ‘difficult’

Tones in combination tend to accommodate each other to some degree, though not to the point of shifting to another tone. In the above sets, the most salient adjustment is probably that of 4 + 4 (*zài jiàn*), where the tone of the first syllable is not as steeply falling as that of the last. The first of the two is sometimes referred to as the ‘modified fourth tone’.

1.10.2 Tone lock

In these first weeks of learning Chinese, you may find yourself unable to pronounce a tone, even unable to mimic your teacher—a situation that might be called ‘tone lock’. Tone lock can occur for many reasons, but a common one for beginners is that you will often be tentative, and tentativeness in English is accompanied by a rising contour. This is fine if you are trying to say a name, such as *Wáng*, with rising tone. However, it won’t work if you want to say *Wèi*, with a falling tone. Other frustrating conditions may occur: you may hear rising as falling, and falling as rising (flip-flop); your falling tone may refuse to fall (‘fear of falling’), your level tone may refuse not to fall (‘fear of flying’). Regardless of the symptoms, the best cure is to take a figurative step back and make use of your tone concepts: level is ‘sung out’, rising is ‘doubtful’, low is ‘low’ (despite the contoured symbol), and falling is ‘final’ or ‘confident’.

1.10.3 The first ‘rule of three’

If you find that the tonal cues, ‘sung out’, ‘doubt’, ‘low’, and ‘final’ do not serve you well, there are others that have been used in the past. Walter C. Hillier, in his 1953 *English-Chinese Dictionary* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.), proposed ‘languid assertion’ for the first tone, ‘startled surprise’ for the second,

‘affectionate remonstrance’ for the third, and ‘abuse’ for the fourth. Whatever the label, the important point is to follow the rule of three: develop a concept for each tone, know what tone each word has, and monitor yourself when you speak.

1. Conceptualize the tones (‘sung out’, etc.).
2. Learn tones with each word (e.g., *hǎo* has a low tone).
3. Monitor your speech.

Exercise 3

Read out the following sets (recall your tone concepts).

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>dá</i> <i>dǎ</i> <i>dā</i> <i>dà</i> | 5. <i>bù</i> <i>bǔ</i> <i>bú</i> <i>bù</i> |
| 2. <i>kǒu</i> <i>kòu</i> <i>kōu</i> <i>kòu</i> | 6. <i>jīn</i> <i>jín</i> <i>jǐn</i> <i>jìn</i> |
| 3. <i>pán</i> <i>pàn</i> <i>pān</i> <i>pán</i> | 7. <i>guō</i> <i>guǒ</i> <i>guó</i> <i>guò</i> |
| 4. <i>wèi</i> <i>wěi</i> <i>wéi</i> <i>wēi</i> | 8. <i>hǎi</i> <i>hái</i> <i>hāi</i> <i>hài</i> |

Tone shifts: Read the following sequences aloud, and write the missing tones that indicate tone shifts.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>bu máng</i> <i>bu è</i> | 7. <i>yi tàò</i> <i>yi tiáo</i> |
| 2. <i>bu lèi</i> <i>bu shì</i> | 8. <i>yi kuài</i> <i>dì-yì</i> |
| 3. <i>bu jǐnzhāng</i> <i>bu kě</i> | 9. <i>yi wèi</i> <i>yi zhāng</i> |
| 4. <i>bu hǎo</i> <i>bu cuò</i> | 10. <i>yi běn</i> <i>yi kè</i> |
| 5. <i>hen hǎo</i> <i>hen máng</i> | 11. <i>hen zǎo</i> <i>hen wǎn</i> |
| 6. <i>hen lèi</i> <i>hen nán</i> | 12. <i>hai hǎo</i> <i>hen kě</i> |

NOTE

hěn wǎn ‘late’

Learners often feel the tones that are the most difficult to distinguish are the rising and the low. Here is a discrimination exercise that focuses on these two. In the disyllabic words below, the final syllables all contain

either a rising tone or a low tone. Have a Chinese speaker read each of them to you twice (from the characters); then see if you can correctly identify the missing tone in the pinyin versions of the words.

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| I. 英勇 | 2. 天才 | 3. 当年 | 4. 大米 | 5. 英语 |
| 6. 橡皮 | 7. 书法 | 8. 黑板 | 9. 加强 | 10. 冰球 |
| II. 号码 | 12. 重叠 | 13. 开展 | 14. 开头 | 15. 多余 |
| 16. 孙女 | 17. 天然 | 18. 跳舞 | 19. 构成 | 20. 思想 |

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| I. <i>yīngyǒng</i> | 2. <i>tiāncái</i> | 3. <i>dāngnián</i> | 4. <i>dàmi</i> | 5. <i>Yīngyǔ</i> |
| 6. <i>xiàngpí</i> | 7. <i>shūfǎ</i> | 8. <i>hēibǎn</i> | 9. <i>jiāqiáng</i> | 10. <i>bīngqiú</i> |
| II. <i>hàomǎ</i> | 12. <i>chóngdié</i> | 13. <i>kāizhǎn</i> | 14. <i>kāitōu</i> | 15. <i>duōyú</i> |
| 16. <i>sūnnǚ</i> | 17. <i>tiānrán</i> | 18. <i>tiàowǔ</i> | 19. <i>gòuchéng</i> | 20. <i>sīxiǎng</i> |

Practice reading out these syllables, all of which contain pinyin *o* as the main vowel.

<i>duō</i>	<i>dōu</i>	<i>fó</i>	<i>kuò</i>	<i>còu</i>	<i>zhōu</i>	<i>zhuō</i>	<i>zǒu</i>	<i>zuò</i>
<i>bó</i>	<i>guó</i>	<i>ruò</i>	<i>shòu</i>	<i>gòu</i>	<i>shuō</i>	<i>suǒ</i>	<i>pó</i>	<i>yǒu</i>

Read out the following syllables that contain the *ui* or *iu* rhymes.

<i>guì</i>	<i>shuí</i>	<i>ruì</i>	<i>chuī</i>	<i>zuì</i>	<i>duì</i>	(<i>wèi</i>)
<i>liú</i>	<i>niú</i>	<i>xiū</i>	<i>qiú</i>	<i>diū</i>	<i>jiǔ</i>	(<i>yǒu</i>)
<i>guǐ/jiǔ</i>		<i>liù/duì</i>		<i>cuì/qiú</i>		<i>liú/shuí</i>

1.11 Summary

MAIN PATTERNS

<i>Nǐ lèi ma?</i>	{	+	<i>Hěn lèi.</i>
		o	<i>Hái hǎo.</i>
		-	<i>Bú tài lèi.</i>

<i>Nǐ máng bu máng?</i>	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} + \\ \circ \\ - \end{array} \right.$	<i>Hěn máng.</i> <i>Hái hǎo.</i> <i>Bú tài máng.</i>
<i>Nǐ chīfàn le ma?</i>	+	<i>Chī le.</i>
<i>Nǐ chīfàn le méiyǒu?</i>	-	<i>Hái méi ne.</i>
<i>Nǐ chīguo fàn le ma?</i>	+	<i>Chī⟨guo⟩ le.</i>
<i>Nà, jiù zhè yàng ba.</i>		<i>Hǎo, jiù zhè yàng!</i>
<i>Zhāng lǎoshī hǎo.</i>		<i>Wáng Jié, zài jiàn.</i>

CONVERSATIONAL SCENARIOS

GREETINGS	→	DEVELOPMENT (QUESTIONS, ASSUMPTIONS, COMMENTS)	→	LEAVING
<i>Nǐ hǎo.</i>		<i>máng / lèi / rè / jǐnzhāng . . .</i>		<i>Hǎo, zài jiàn, míngtiān jiàn.</i>
<i>Wèi lǎoshī hǎo.</i>		<i>zuótiān / jīntiān / xiànzài . . .</i>		<i>Chén lǎoshī, zài jiàn.</i>
<i>Zǎo.</i>		<i>xǐzǎo / chīfàn / shàngkè / qǐlái . . . hěn / yǐjīng / hái méi / yě / bú tài Nǐ ne? / Xiǎo Zhōu ne?</i>		<i>Míngtiān jiàn. Màn zǒu.</i>

1.12 Rhymes and rhythms

Rote learning, very highly prized in traditional and even modern China, and highly valued at other times in our own past, is no longer generally considered a beneficial educational method in the West. Outside class, however, people still learn parts for plays and often recall song lyrics, advertising jingles, and slogans without much self-conscious effort. We will take advantage of these predilections by providing some suitable Chinese rhymed and rhythmic material at the end of each of the core units. This material ranges from doggerel to poetry, from jingles to nursery rhymes, and from satirical verse to songs and

poems. It has been selected for ease of recall, and eventually it will form a useful repertoire that can be tapped for information about pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical patterns. It also provides something to recite when you are asked to ‘say something in Chinese’ or when you are in China and are asked to sing or perform for an audience. Closer to home, you may be asked to atone for being late to class by reciting some short piece in front of your classmates.

The first rhyme—a nursery rhyme—tells the story of a young entrepreneur and his struggle to set up a business. The word-for-word gloss provided will guide you toward the meaning.

Dà dùzi

<i>Dà dùzi,</i>	(‘big tummy’)
<i>kāi pùzi,</i>	(‘open shop’)
<i>méi běnqián,</i>	(‘not+have, root-money’)
<i>dàng kùzi.</i>	(‘pawn trousers’)

The second—also a nursery rhyme—has a shifting rhythm but a more mundane subject matter: the tadpole, denizen of village ponds and urban drainage systems.

Xiǎo kēdǒu

<i>Xiǎo kēdǒu,</i>	(‘small tadpole’)
<i>shuǐ lǐ yóu,</i>	(‘water in swim’)
<i>xìxì de wěiba,</i>	(‘tiny DE tail’)
<i>dàdà de tóu.</i>	(‘big DE head’)

THE CHARACTER UNITS

Unit 8 第八課 DÌ-BĀ KÈ

名不正，则言不顺，言不顺，则事不成。

Míng bú zhèng, zé yán bú shùn, yán bú shùn, zé shì bù chéng.

(‘name not right then speech not clear, speech not clear then things not succeed’)

—On the Rectification of Names, from the *Analects* of Confucius.

This is the first of the character lessons, in which you are introduced to the Chinese writing system, the form and function of characters, the principles of handwriting, the approach to reading adopted by *Learning Chinese*, and the characters for numbers, dates, surnames, pronouns, verbs, and enough function words to allow for some readable content. This lesson presupposes familiarity with the material in at least Unit 1.

8.1 General features of Chinese texts

8.1.1 Size

Regardless of complexity, characters are uniform in overall size, fitting into an imaginary rectangle along the lines indicated in the following example (written with simplified characters). For this reason, characters are also called *fāngkuàizì* ‘squared writing’.

上海天气很热。 Shànghǎi tiānqì hěn rè.

8.1.2 Spacing

Compare the character and pinyin versions of the sentence above: though the convention is not always consistently followed, pinyin places spaces between

words rather than syllables. Characters, however, are evenly spaced, regardless of word boundaries.

8.1.3 Punctuation

Modern Chinese writing makes use of punctuation conventions that are similar in form to those of English, though not always identical in function.

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Periods, full stops: | ◦ / . | The former is traditionally used, but the latter is becoming more common. |
| Commas: | , / 、 | The latter is commonly used in lists separating enumerated items. |
| Quotes: | 「 . . . 」 / ‘ . . . ’ / “ . . . ” | The first type is traditionally used, but the others are also common. |
| Proper names: | | There is nothing comparable to a capital letter in Chinese. Proper names are usually unmarked, though, occasionally, they are indicated by a wavy underline. |
- Other punctuation will be noted as it is encountered.

8.1.4 Direction

Traditionally, Chinese has been written and read from top to bottom and from right to left. Major writing reforms instituted in the PRC during the 1950s not only formalized a set of simplified characters, but required them to be written horizontally, from left to right, like modern European languages. As a result, Chinese texts now come in two basic formats. Material originating in Taiwan and traditional overseas communities, or on the Mainland prior to the reforms, is written with traditional characters that are, with a few exceptions such as in headlines and on forms, arranged in vertical columns and read from right to

left. Material originating in the Mainland, in Singapore, and in some overseas communities subsequent to the reforms of the 1950s is written with simplified characters arranged in horizontal rows and read from left to right, just like English and countless other languages.

A number of other writing systems originally adopted the Chinese convention of vertical writing, though most of these have also since shifted to a primarily horizontal configuration. Japanese writing remains vertical for the most part. Korean shifted to mostly horizontal a few decades ago. The Classical Mongolian script, still seen on some of the buildings in the National Palace Museum in Beijing and elsewhere, was written vertically on the Chinese model, but with columns moving left to right, not right to left. Nowadays, Mongolian is mostly written in the Cyrillic (Russian) script, horizontally and left to right.

8.2 The form of characters

Characters are the primary unit for writing Chinese. Just as English letters have several forms (such as *g/g* and *a/a*) and styles (such as *italic* and **bold**), Chinese characters also have various realizations. Some styles that developed in early historical periods survive to this day in special functions. For example, the Chinese traditionally use ink impressions made by seals or ‘chops’, mostly square-shaped and made from various types of stone, in lieu of signatures on documents and items of value. The names and other characters on such seals are usually, even now, inscribed in a version of the character script known as the ‘seal script’ (*zhuànshū*), first developed during the Qin dynasty (3rd century BCE). Other scripts include the ‘grass script’ (*cǎoshū*) and the ‘running script’ (*xíngshū*), impressionistic versions of the standard script that are still used in handwriting and art. As in other scripts, advertisers and designers may also modify the look of characters in a variety of different ways for their own purposes. Putting such variants aside, it is estimated that the number of distinct characters appearing in modern texts is between 6,000 and 7,000. Fortunately, about half that number will suffice to read most

modern material, such as newspapers, academic writing, and popular novels. High total numbers of characters are to be found in the most comprehensive dictionaries, but these numbers are inflated by archaic characters and variants.

8.2.1 Radicals and phonetics

There are certain ameliorating factors that make the Chinese writing system more learnable than it might otherwise seem to be. One of the most significant is the fact that many characters have common constituents. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of common characters (cf. DeFrancis 1984, p. 110 and *passim*) consist of two elements, both of which can often also stand alone as characters in their own right. Historically, these elements were selected either for their sounds (hence the term ‘phonetic elements’, or simply ‘phonetics’), or for their meanings (making them semantic elements, commonly called ‘radicals’). Thus, 忘 *wàng* ‘to forget’ contains 亡 *wáng* as a phonetic element and 心 ‘heart’ as a radical; 語 *yǔ* ‘language’ is composed of 吾 *wú* and 言 ‘language’. The significance of phonetics and radicals will be discussed in a later section. For now, it is enough to know that a few hundred simple graphs are the building blocks for a large number of compound graphs: for example, 亡 appears in 忙 and 氓; 心 in 志 and 忠; 言 in 謝 and 說; 吾 in 悟 and 晤. These ‘root’ graphs number in the high hundreds, and familiarity with them allows many characters to be learned as a pairing of higher-order constituents (such as 中 + 心), rather than just a complex composite of strokes (忠).

8.2.2 Simplified characters

As noted in the introduction, Chinese policy makers tried to make the writing system easier to learn by introducing the Chinese equivalent of spelling reform, i.e., reducing the number of strokes in complicated characters. Thus, 國 becomes 国 and 邊 becomes 边, with the simplified version generally modeled on variants that had long been current in handwriting or calligraphy, but not in print. The two sets of characters are usually referred to in English as

‘traditional’ and ‘simplified’, and in Chinese as *fántǐzì* (‘complicated-body-characters’) and *jiǎntǐzì* (‘simple-body-characters’).

For you, the learner, this simplification is a mixed blessing; while it ostensibly made writing characters simpler, it also made characters less redundant for reading. For example, 樂 and 東 (‘music’ and ‘east’, respectively) are quite distinct as traditional characters, but their simplified versions—乐 and 东—are easier to confuse.

As noted in the Introduction, *jiǎntǐzì* and *fántǐzì* should not be thought of as two distinct writing systems; many characters retain only one form (也 *yě*, 很 *hěn*, 好 *hǎo*), and of those that have two forms, the vast majority exhibit only minor differences: 说 / 說, 饭 / 飯. There are perhaps only three dozen relatively common characters with quite divergent forms, such as 这 / 這 and 买 / 買. Careful inspection reveals that even these characters often have elements in common. For native Chinese readers, the two systems represent only a minor inconvenience, on par with the discrepancies between capital and lowercase letters in the Roman alphabet (though, admittedly, on a larger scale). Generally, learners focus on one system for writing, but soon get used to reading in both. In this text, both sets are introduced, but most of the readings are based on the simplified set that is standard for the 1.3 billion people on the Mainland. In most major sections of the character lessons, there is at least one sample text or exercise written in traditional characters.

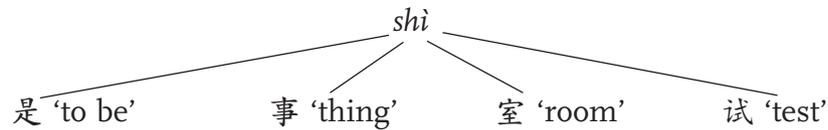
8.3 The function of characters

As noted in the Introduction, Chinese uses a system of writing that employs complex symbols (characters) to represent syllables of particular words, or syllables that constitute parts of particular words. For this reason, it is difficult to use Chinese characters to transcribe foreign names: ‘Italy’ can be incorporated into Chinese as *Yìdàlì* and written 意大利, but the usual meaning of the characters, ‘meaning-be big-benefit’ can only be dimmed by context, not completely suppressed.

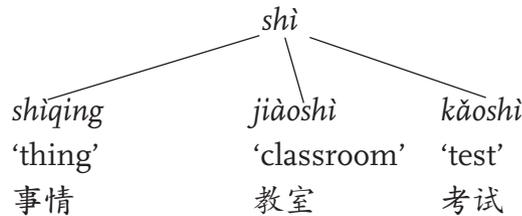
In Chinese, different words with identical sounds (homophones) will usually be written with different characters.



Such homophony is common in Chinese at the syllable level (as illustrated in the *shi* story, described in the Introduction). Here, for example, are common words or word parts that are all pronounced *shì*:



Except for certain high-frequency words (such as 是 *shì* ‘to be’), words in Mandarin are usually compound, consisting of several syllables: 事情 *shìqing* ‘things’; 教室 *jiàoshì* ‘classroom’; 考试 *kǎoshì* ‘examination’. At the level of words or compound words, homophony is relatively rare. In Chinese language word processing with pinyin input, typing ‘shiqing’ and ‘kaoshi’ (most input systems do not require tones) will elicit only a few options; and since most word-processing software organizes options by frequency, this usually means that the correct characters for *shìqing* and *kǎoshì* will often be produced on the first try.



8.4 Writing

As noted in the Introduction, one of the most important pedagogical functions of learning to write Chinese characters is that it draws your attention to detail.

Characters are often distinguished by no more than a single stroke, or just a change in the orientation of a single stroke.

4 strokes:	天	夭	夫	犬	太
	<i>tiān</i>	<i>yāo</i>	<i>fū</i>	<i>quǎn</i>	<i>tài</i>
	'sky'	'goblin'	'person'	'dog'	'grand'
5 strokes:	白	申	田	甲	由
	<i>bái</i>	<i>shēn</i>	<i>tián</i>	<i>jiǎ</i>	<i>yóu</i>
	'white'	'to explain'	'field'	'A'	'from'

For the learner, there are also aesthetic and practical reasons for being able to write characters, over and above the contribution that writing makes to reading. Reasonable goals at the beginning level are to learn the principles of writing so that any character can be reproduced by copying, and to learn to write from memory a selection of representative graphs that can serve as the basis for future calligraphic endeavors.

8.4.1 Principles of drawing characters

There are many good websites that deal with the writing of Chinese characters. Some not only present the general principles of writing, but also allow the viewer to select characters and watch them drawn in animation, stroke by stroke. In this section, we will try to sketch out the basic principles of writing Chinese characters without using special graphics or non-text insertions and leave readers to browse the specialized websites for additional helpful information. (Cf. for example, yellowbridge.com, and the useful links listed in the appropriate sections of the Chinese Language Teachers Association website: clta-us.org.)

Calligraphic strokes are called *bīhuà*⟨*r*⟩ in Chinese. Strokes are drawn with a more or less fixed order and direction that are ultimately derived from calligraphic practices. This stroke order (*bīshùn*) is considered important for both aesthetic and pedagogical reasons. Characters tend to look awkward if not drawn with the conventional order of strokes; and following the prescribed

stroke order develops a tactile memory for characters that can act in support of visual memory.

A. FORM Characters are usually said to be formed from eight basic strokes, but because two of the ‘basic’ strokes’ only appear appended to others (without the writing implement being lifted from the surface), they should really be regarded as basic components of strokes rather than actual strokes. All eight are illustrated below, with the names of each given on the far left. It is useful to be able to describe how a character is written by naming its strokes: *héng* + *shù* ‘horizontal + vertical’ for 十, *piě* + *nà* ‘slanting down to the left + slanting down to the right’ for 人. Chinese children often do this when they are learning to write, and we will do the same below when the general principles of stroke order are discussed.

To keep the presentation as clear as possible, the principles of drawing are illustrated by relatively simple characters. In most cases, it should be easy to identify the stroke in question.

The unitary strokes

NAME AND MEANING	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES IN CHARACTERS
<i>diǎn</i> ‘dot’	a very short stroke	小 热
<i>héng</i> ‘horizontal’	a horizontal stroke	三 大
<i>shù</i> ‘vertical’	a vertical stroke	十 中
<i>piě</i> ‘cast aside’	a stroke that slopes downwards to the left	人 仁
<i>nà</i> ‘press down’	a stroke that slopes downwards to the right	人 尺
<i>tí</i> ‘raise’	a stroke that rises from left to right	打 汉

Extensions with *gōu* ‘hook’ and *zhé* ‘bend’

NAME AND MEANING	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES IN CHARACTERS
<i>hénggōu</i> ‘horiz. + hook’	a horizontal stroke ending in a downwards hook	欠 买
<i>shùgōu</i> ‘vert. + hook’	a vertical stroke ending in a leftwards hook	小 水
<i>xiégōu</i> ‘slanted + hook’	a stroke that slants downwards to the right and ends in an upwards hook	氏 戈
<i>héngzhé</i> ‘horiz. + bend’	a stroke that begins horizontal then bends to near vertical	夂 书
<i>shùzhé</i> ‘vert. + bend’	an ‘L’ shaped stroke	世 凶

NOTES

- The stroke *xiégōu* ‘slant + hook’ is always so called even though *nàgōu* ‘slanting down to the right + hook’ also looks like a reasonable name for it.
- Sometimes a subcategory of the *piě* stroke, *duǎnpiě* ‘short + slanting down to the left’, is included in the list of basic strokes. Examples would be the top stroke of 𠂇 or the top-left stroke of 𠂇. Otherwise, these strokes are simply *piě*.
- There are in fact some miscellaneous strokes that cannot be usefully analyzed in terms of the eight basics, e.g. *wāngōu* ‘curved + hook’, that appears, for example, on the left-hand side of the character 狗.
- It is also quite common to combine three stroke components into a single stroke. The bottom stroke of 书 (shown above) consists of ‘*héngzhé* + *gōu*’, i.e. ‘horizontal with bend + hook’. In fact, in terms of frequency, bent strokes are more common with a final hook than without; cf. 儿, 也, 刁.

B. DIRECTION In most cases, strokes are falling or horizontal, and left to right. Only one of the six unitary strokes rises—the one called *tí* (seen in the lower-left strokes of the two sample characters, 打 and 汉); only one flows leftwards—*piě*.

C. ORDER Though some useful generalizations can be made about the ordering of strokes within a character, it is not possible to reduce stroke order to a set of rules that would allow you to predict how to write any character. What the general principles listed below will allow you to do is make sense of the order and more easily recall the order once you have learned it. (Note that stroke direction and stroke order for individual characters are illustrated in Appendix 1.)

1. Left before right, top before bottom, top left to bottom right:

八	<i>bā</i> ‘eight’	piě, nà
文	<i>wén</i> ‘design’	<i>diǎn</i> , <i>héng</i> , <i>piě</i> , <i>nà</i>
地	<i>dì</i> ‘place’	土 (slanted) then 也
三	<i>sān</i> ‘three’	(upper) <i>héng</i> , (middle) <i>héng</i> , (lower) <i>héng</i>
火	<i>huǒ</i> ‘fire’	<i>diǎn</i> , <i>piě</i> , (<i>duǎn</i>) <i>piě</i> , <i>nà</i>
早	<i>zǎo</i> ‘be early’	日 then 十

2. *Héng* ‘horizontal’ before *shù* ‘vertical’, except *héng* as a final base stroke is held until after the vertical:

	十	<i>shí</i> ‘ten’	<i>héng</i> , <i>shù</i>
	夫	<i>fū</i> ‘person’	<i>héng</i> , <i>héng</i> , <i>piě</i> , <i>nà</i>
But:	土	<i>tǔ</i> ‘soil’	<i>héng</i> , <i>shù</i> , <i>héng</i>
And:	王	<i>wáng</i> ‘king’	<i>héng</i> , <i>héng</i> , <i>shù</i> , <i>héng</i>

3. Squares are drawn in three strokes, beginning with *shù* at the left, continuing with a *héng zhé* ‘horizontal + bend’ (sometimes ending in a hook), and closing with a bottom *héng*. (However, for innards, cf. number 4.)

口	<i>kǒu</i> ‘mouth’	<i>shù</i> , <i>héngzhé</i> , <i>héng</i>
---	--------------------	---

4. Outer before inner, except that the stroke closing a rectangle is drawn last, after the innards are filled:

月	<i>yuè</i> ‘moon; month’	<i>piě</i> , <i>héngzhé</i> <i>gōu</i> , (top) <i>héng</i> , (bottom) <i>héng</i>
问	<i>wèn</i> ‘ask’	丨 first, then 口

But:	日	rì 'sun; day'	shù, héngzhéngōu, (middle) héng, (bottom) héng
And:	四	sì 'four'	shù, héngzhéngōu, piě, nà, héng

5. Dominant strokes or components may override the left-to-right tendency.

小	xiǎo 'small'	shù, (left) diǎn, (right) diǎn
示	shì 'show'	héng, héng, shùgōu, (left) diǎn, (right) diǎn
迷	mí 'enchanted'	米 then 辶

6. With *diǎn* strokes ('dots'), an upper left-hand *diǎn* tends to be the first stroke of the character, and an upper right or inside *diǎn* tends to be the last stroke of the character. Both cases conform to the general left-to-right order of strokes.

First:	为	wèi 'for'	diǎn, piě, héngzhéngōu, diǎn
	衣	yī 'clothes'	diǎn, héng, piě, shùgōu, piě, nà
Last:	玉	yù 'jade'	héng, héng, shù, héng, diǎn
	戈	gē 'spear'	héng, xiéngōu, piě, diǎn

8.5 Presentation of characters

The reading and writing lessons in *Learning Chinese* are organized on the general principle that characters are best learned by encountering them many times in texts rather than in lists. Before characters can be read, however, they need to be recognized; and to be recognized, key features need to be noticed. In these lessons, characters are introduced in a large size, with information about number of strokes, pronunciation, general meaning, and form. This information is intended to give the characters some individuality and provide traction for the reading process. Sometimes, knowledge about the actual history of the character may account for, and therefore help to remember, its form. In other cases, the actual history of the character may be less helpful than a fanciful account. The notes that follow the introduction of each set of characters contain both actual and fanciful etymologies. Students, in any case, often make up their own stories to account for the form of characters. What is important is to find a way to link the shape of the character to the word it represents so that reading can proceed.

In the later sections of this lesson, and in other lessons, readings begin with words and phrases (with pinyin confirmation), then continue with short interactions, longer dialogues, and, when possible, narratives and stories. Once you find that you can read the material with confidence, you can consolidate by learning to write the graphs. Focusing on individual graphs will draw your attention to slight differences and prepare you for encountering new combinations.

NOTES

- a. Since most words in Mandarin are compounds (of two or more syllables), characters generally represent parts of compounds rather than words as such. Sometimes combinational or historical information can suggest a general meaning for a single character in a compound: 明天 'bright' + 'day' for *míngtiān* 'tomorrow'. In cases where a particular character has no independent existence outside a compound, it may not be possible to give it a reliable meaning: 昨天 *zuótiān* '(? + day) yesterday'. (The same problem exists for the English word 'yesterday', which combines the word 'day' with the non-word 'yester'.) In such cases, if a general meaning can be inferred from other combinations, it will be placed in parentheses.
- b. For characters with two forms, simplified and traditional, both forms are given, with the traditional form above the simplified. The reason for this order is that the simplified generally derives from the traditional. Once past the initial introduction, however, the focus is more on the simplified set, and when both are cited, simplified precedes traditional.
- c. The order and direction of strokes for individual characters are provided in Appendix 1.
- d. It is not crucial to know which radical a particular graph is classified under, but it is useful to recognize the most common radicals. The system of paired numbers written beneath the large-format characters that provide the introduction to each set is a practical way of doing this. The first number represents the number of strokes for the character's radical. The second number represents the number of remaining strokes in the character. (Traditionally, Chinese dictionaries are organized in this way, first by radical, then by number of strokes.) The sum of these two numbers is the total number of strokes for the character. When the second number is zero (as for 长 4 + 0 / 長 8 + 0), the character is itself a radical. In some cases, characters that have only one form have been assigned a different radical in the simplified set from that of the traditional; for example, 弟 *dì* 'younger brother', for which there is no traditional-simplified distinction, is assigned the radical 弓 in the traditional set (3 + 4), but 廾 in the simplified set (2 + 5). In such cases, both numbers are given, with the traditional radical assignment first.

For the majority of cases, the numbering method makes it clear which element is the radical. However, when the radical is obscure, or the number of strokes for the radical happens to

equal the number of strokes that remain (as is the case for ‘six’ below—2 + 2), the numbers will not indicate the radical with certainty. Knowing the radical assigned to a character was more important when dictionaries were organized by radical rather than pronunciation, as they tend to be now. Nowadays, it is enough to know the more common radicals, and the numerical system used herein will suffice to bring those to light.

e. Traditional characters would normally be written vertically, but for reasons of practicality, they too are presented in horizontal format herein.

f. Occasionally, new characters which have not been formally introduced in the character lessons are included in texts on the assumption that they can be identified from the context. Such material is underlined. When context is insufficient, new material is glossed in notes that follow.

g. As noted in the Introduction, a sensible policy toward the two character sets is to read both but write simplified.

SUMMARY Scan the **large-format** characters and the analysis and **notes** that follow to try to find a connection between each character and the word that it represents.

Remind yourself of the words and phrases that contain the new characters by covering up the pinyin with a pencil and reading the **phrases** section (§8.12.1). Then uncover the pinyin and check.

Making use of context, do the **readings** until you have a clear comprehension of the passage while reading it aloud.

Finally, complete the **exercises**, practice writing the characters until familiar, and review.

8.6 Numbers

一	二	三	四	五
1 + 0	2 + 0	1 + 2	3 + 2	1 + 3
yī	èr	sān	sì	wǔ
六	七	八	九	十
2 + 2	1 + 1	2 + 0	1 + 1	2 + 0
liù	qī	bā	jiǔ	shí

NOTES

The characters for ‘one’, ‘two’, and ‘three’ are obviously representational. The near left-right symmetry of the characters for ‘four’, ‘six’, ‘eight’, and ‘ten’ is not entirely coincidental. 四 seems to have represented a whole easily divided into two parts; an earlier form of 六 looked very much like that of 四 (with the two lower ‘legs’ of 六 matching the two inner strokes of 四). 八 (distinguished from 人 *rén* ‘person’ and 入 *rù* ‘enter’) is also said to have represented the notion of division (into two groups of four); and 十 represented a unity of the four cardinal directions with the center. Smaller multiples of ten are occasionally represented as unit characters, especially where space is at a premium: 廿 ‘twenty’ and 卅 ‘thirty’. However, they are still read as if written 二十 and 三十.

Exercise 1

Practice reading the Chinese multiplication table.

The Chinese multiplication table is often called *jiǔjiǔ chéngfǎbiǎo* (九九乘法表) ‘nine nines multiplication table’ or the *jiǔjiǔ kǒujué* (九九口诀) ‘nine nines rhyme’ because in its traditional form it began with the nine-times table and descended to the one. Though nowadays it is usually recited upwards from one, it keeps another important feature of the traditional system in always reciting the smaller operand first: 3×7 , never 7×3 . In other words, the Chinese table has only half the entries of the standard American-British table. The six through nine-times tables given below illustrate. Note that when the product is only a single digit, the rhythm is preserved by adding 得 *dé* ‘gets’; for similar reasons, the teens are often recited as *yīshí’èr*, etc., rather than just *shí’èr*.

六	七	八	九
一六得六	一七得七	一八得八	一九得九
二六一十二	二七一十四	二八一十六	二九一十八
三六一十八	三七二十一	三八二十四	三九二十七
四六二十四	四七二十八	四八三十二	四九三十六
五六三十	五七三十五	五八四十	五九四十五
六六三十六	六七四十二	六八四十八	六九五十四
	七七四十九	七八五十六	七九六十三
		八八六十四	八九七十二
			九九八十一

Practice reading telephone numbers.

Although telephone numbers are often written out in Arabic numerals on business cards, they do appear as characters in other contexts, with the exception of *líng* ‘zero’, which is more often written ‘0’. Practice reading the following until you can do so fluently, with a good rhythm. Recall that, in the Mainland, ‘one’ in telephone numbers (as well as in other kinds of lists) is usually pronounced *yāo* rather than *yī*.

电话 / 電話		手机 / 手機		
<i>diànhuà</i> ‘telephone’		<i>shǒujī</i> ‘mobile phone’		
(1) 六五九六	二九一八	一三五	〇一七五	一四四三
(2) 四二七九	九四一五	一三九	三六二九	六九六四
(3) 五四二七	九四一五	一三九	二〇三八	五八八二
(4) 五一六八	七二一九	一三〇	二四六七	九九八五
(5) 八二二〇	七四二六	一三五	一四四三	六四八八
(6) 二三八七	二七六二	〇二九	二六六三	四一〇九

8.7 Dates

In Unit 1, you learned the components of dates: *nián* ‘year’, *yuè* ‘month’, and *rì/hào* ‘day’. It was also noted that dates, though spoken with *hào*, are usually written with *rì* ‘sun; day’.

年	月	日	(号/號)
1 + 5	4 + 〇	4 + 〇	(3 + 2) (6 + 7)
<i>nián</i>	<i>yuè</i>	<i>rì</i>	<i>hào</i>
‘year’	‘month’	‘day’	‘date’

NOTE

The characters used for *yuè* and *rì* are representational, being squared-off versions of what were originally drawings of the moon and sun, respectively. On the other hand, *nián* is not obviously representational, so you might need to construct a made-up etymology for it, such as: ‘A year contains four seasons; the first stroke (*piě*) stands for the winter, the three horizontal strokes

(*héng*) are the growing and harvesting seasons (spring, summer, and autumn); the short fourth stroke (*diǎn*) marks the harvest, and the long vertical stroke (*shù*) represents the continuity of the year.’ However, note that the short *diǎn* stroke on the third horizontal is drawn before the lowest horizontal, presumably following the stroke order principle of ‘closing stroke last’. 号/號 *hào* is placed in parentheses because it does not usually appear in written dates; its traditional form has 虎 ‘tiger’ as radical.

Dates are frequently written using Arabic numerals, as in these examples, which could be taken from the banners of Mainland newspapers.

1999年7月26日
2002年2月11日
1998年5月7日

Interestingly, the traditional, ‘lunar calendar’ dates are often written out in full, with the numbers also represented by characters. The Chinese lunar calendar consists of 12 months of 29 to 30 days, plus intercalary months inserted every few years to make up the difference. The lunar New Year usually begins several weeks after the solar New Year. Lunar years are counted in cycles of 60, which accounts for all possible combinations of a set of 10 ‘stems’ and 12 ‘branches’ (i.e., 1–1, 1–2... 1–11, 1–12, 2–1... 10–12, etc.). Though the first lunar month has a special name (*zhèngyuè*), the rest are all written with number + *yuè*, just like the solar calendar months; *rì* is usually left out of lunar dates. The correspondence is as follows:

International dating:	1999年7月26日
Traditional Chinese:	己卯年七月二十六
	<i>jǐ mǎo</i>

Most newspaper banners give dates in both forms. Even in traditional dates, *líng* ‘zero’ is usually written as 〇 rather than with its complicated character 零.

Exercise 2

The following are all significant dates in Chinese history. Practice reading them aloud, and see if you can discover (or recall) the event that took place on each date.

一九四九年 十月 一日 一九二一年 七月 一日
 一九一九年 五月 四日 一九八九年 六月 四日
 一九四五年 八月 十五日 一九一一年 十月 十日

In the spaces provided, write the following dates in Chinese.

November 23, 1949

April 18, 2003

February 15, 1994

October 19, 2001

8.8 Days

今天

2 + 2 1 + 3

jīntiān

'today'

昨天

4 + 5

zuótiān

'yesterday'

明天

4 + 4

míngtiān

'tomorrow'

NOTES

a. It is useful to distinguish simplex (non-compound) characters from compound. The latter contain parts that can themselves be characters: for example, 明 *míng* 'bright' is composed of the two graphs 日 *rì* 'sun; day' and 月 *yuè* 'moon; month'. While more common characters are often simplex, the vast majority are compound. The form of simplex graphs can often be classified as representational and thereby rationalized by a non-linguistic reference (e.g., 日 originated as a representation of the sun and 月 of the moon). Graphic elements are compounded, however, not to form new representations, but to combine linguistic elements of sound (phonetics) and meaning (radicals).

b. 天 *tiān* has the root meaning of 'sky; day', and it is said to be based on a drawing that represented the sky above Earth. 明 *míng* is composed of the characters for 'sun' and 'moon', and appears in compounds with the meaning 'bright' (cf. 'a bright tomorrow'). 昨 *zuó* is also a compound, combining the radical 日 *rì* 'sun' with the phonetic 乍 *zhà*.

Exercise 3

The list of days and dates below is out of order. Read the entries in numerical order, beginning with the numbers on the left. Though you would normally read the day out as *rì*, once you have read it, you can pass it on as information with *hào*: “*Dì-yī, míngtiān wǔyuè shí rì* (or *shí hào*).”

七:	今天	四月	二十日
三:	昨天	九月	十八日
六:	明天	三月	四日
二:	昨天	十二月	十七日
九:	今天	八月	二日
一:	明天	五月	十日
四:	今天	九月	二十五日
五:	明天	十一月	三十日
八:	昨天	六月	十四日
十:	今天	二月	九日

8.9 Surnames and pronouns

王	李	毛	周	白	林
4 + 0	4 + 3	4 + 0	2 + 6	5 + 0	4 + 4
wáng	lǐ	máo	zhōu	bái	lín
‘king’	‘plum’	‘fine hair’	‘circle’	‘white’	‘woods’

As shown, the characters that represent surnames also represent words with other meanings.

姓	她	他	也
3 + 5	3 + 3	2 + 3	1 + 2
xìng	tā	tā	yě
‘surname⟨d⟩’	‘she; her’	‘he; him’	‘also; too’

NOTE

姓 *xìng* ‘surname(d)’ and 她 *tā* ‘she; her’ both have 女 *nǚ* ‘female’ as a radical. (Early forms of 女 are said to depict a woman crouching or kneeling.) In 姓, 女 is combined with 生 *shēng* ‘to be born’, suggesting a notion such as ‘children are born of women and given a *surname*’. 她 was created in relatively recent times as a counterpart to 他 (a contrast not represented in the spoken language). The right element of 他 and 她 was originally distinct from the graph 也, used to write the word 也 *yě* ‘also; too’. The modern identity is fortuitous, probably a result of scribal confusion, and causes confusion for students of the language. You will need to pay special attention to the characters 他, 她, and 也.

Exercise 4

Read the following sentences aloud (paying attention to tones), beginning with ‘one’ (and citing the number).

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 三 她姓毛。 | 七 他也姓周。 |
| 五 他姓李。 | 二 她姓王。 |
| 一 她姓白。 | 十 她也姓白。 |
| 八 他也姓林。 | 四 她姓林。 |
| 九 她也姓毛。 | 六 他姓周。 |

The following list is out of numerical order. Read it in order, and read out the surname and birthday (*shēngri*), along the following lines.

- “*Dì-yī ge: <Tā> xìng Wáng; <shēngri ne:> yījiùbā’èr nián, yīyuè sì rì (or hào)*”
- | | |
|-----|---------------|
| 六： | 王；1946年8月23日 |
| 八： | 李；1981年6月8日 |
| 三： | 毛；1979年10月29日 |
| 九： | 周；1966年2月30日 |
| 十： | 白；1961年10月2日 |
| 十一： | 林；1942年8月17日 |
| 二： | 毛；1983年4月14日 |
| 一： | 王；1982年1月4日 |
| 十二： | 周；1976年11月21日 |

四： 白；1959年9月21日
 七： 林；1967年3月16日
 五： 李；1951年11月7日

Use the data in the previous table as the basis for a conversation along the following lines.

Cue: *Dì-yī ge ne?*

Response: *Dì-yī ge: Xīng Wáng; shēngri: yījiǔbā'èr nián, yīyuè sì hào.*

8.10 More pronouns and function words

我	你	們	不	嗎	呢
4 + 3 or 1 + 6	2 + 5	2 + 8	1 + 3	3 + 9	3 + 5
		們		嗎	
		2 + 3		3 + 3	
wǒ	nǐ	men	bù	ma	ne
'I; me'	'you'	COLLECTIVE	NEG	Q	NE

NOTES

a. 我, 你, and 们/們, like the other graphs used for pronouns (他 and 她) are compound, though only one of the parts of 我 can still be represented independently in the modern language—the right element is the graph 戈 *gē* 'spear' (looking more like a harpoon with its barbed tip down). Both 你 and 们/們 have a left element that is a vertical version of the graph 人 'person', known as *rénzìpáng* 'person at the side' (or the 'person radical'). The right elements, 尔 and 们/們, respectively, also appear independently (cf. next item).

b. 们/們 consists of the person radical plus 门/門 *mén* 'door', which is phonetic. 门/門 was originally a representation of a door with two leaves.

c. The graph 不, said to derive from a drawing of a bird, was borrowed to write *bù* not because of its form, but because of similarity of sound. A made-up etymology: '不 represents an arrow being shot at the ceiling—but *not* managing to pass through'.

d. The set in §8.10 is the first to include graphs that have both simplified and traditional forms: 们/們 and 吗/嗎. The simplified graphs are both based on traditional calligraphic forms, and they retain a holistic resemblance to the traditional form, even though the two share only a few strokes in common.

e. 吗/嗎 contains the graph 马/馬 *mǎ* ‘horse’ (originally a drawing of a horse) as a phonetic (in other words, used to indicate the similarity of its sound). The addition of 口 *kǒu* ‘mouth; entrance’ (but here suggesting ‘colloquial’) removes any ambiguity. Cf. 妈/媽 *mā*, the informal word for ‘mother’, which also makes use of 马/馬 as a phonetic with the graph 女 ‘woman; female’ to disambiguate.

8.10.1 Reading

1. 他姓王。我也姓王。
2. 你也姓毛吗？ / 不，我姓王。
3. 他姓李吗？ / 不，他姓林。
4. 我姓王，他姓林，你呢？
5. 我姓周，他姓林，你姓王。
6. 我姓王，她姓白，你呢？
7. 我姓周，她姓林，你姓白吗？
8. 不，我姓林，你姓白吗？
9. 你们呢？他们呢？ / 我姓周，他们呢：他姓白，他姓李，她姓林。

8.11 SVs and associated function words

好	累	忙	餓	冷
3 + 3	5 + 6	3 + 3	8 + 7	2 + 5
<i>hǎo</i>	<i>lèi</i>	<i>máng</i>	<i>è</i>	<i>lěng</i>
‘to be good’	‘tired’	‘busy’	‘hungry’	‘cold’
很	還	熱	太	了
3 + 6	3 + 13	4 + 11	3 + 1	1 + 1
<i>hěn</i>	<i>hái</i>	<i>rè</i>	<i>tài</i>	<i>le</i>
‘very’	‘still’	‘hot’	‘too; very’	LE
	还	热		
	3 + 4	4 + 6		
	<i>hái</i>	<i>rè</i>		
	‘still’	‘hot’		

NOTES

- a. SVs: 好 is composed of the female radical 女 and 子 zǐ ‘child’ (the latter without a phonetic function), often explained as the paradigm of a ‘good relationship’. 累 includes 田 tián ‘field’ above and the radical derived from the graph for ‘silk’ below: ‘a heavy and tiring burden for such a slender base’. 忙 combines the ‘heart radical’ (an elongated and truncated version of 心) and 亡 wáng as a phonetic element, and can be compared to 忘 wàng ‘to forget’ with the same elements configured vertically. 饿/餓 is composed of the element 饣/飠, known as the ‘food radical’, and the phonetic element 我 wǒ. 冷 includes two strokes (*diǎn* and *tí*) on the left, forming the so-called ‘ice radical’, found only in a few graphs such as 冰 bīng ‘ice’. The right element of 冷 is 令 lìng, a phonetic element also found in 零 líng ‘zero’. The four strokes at the base of 热/熱 are a form of the ‘fire radical’ which, in its independent form, is written 火.
- b. ADVs: The graph 很 is composed of the radical 彳 and the phonetic 艮 gèn (cf. 恨 hèn, 狠 hěn, 跟 gēn). 太 is 大 dà ‘big’ with an extra *diǎn*. The graph 还/還 is also used for the word huán ‘to give back’, which probably accounts for the presence of 辶 on the left, a radical associated with motion. The simplified version substitutes 不 not for its sound or meaning, but for its general shape, which serves to represent the complicated right-hand element.
- c. 了 should be distinguished from 子 zǐ. In the traditional set, the radical assigned to 了 is the second stroke, the vertical hook; but in the simplified set, it is the first stroke, whose uncontracted form is 乙, a radical also assigned to 也.

8.II.I Pronunciation practice

Cover the pinyin and check your pronunciation of the following phrases.

A. JIǎNTǐzì ‘SIMPLIFIED SET’

三月 sānyuè	今天 jīntiān	也好 yě hǎo	姓王 xìng Wáng	昨天 zuótiān	我们 wǒmen
很累 hěn lèi	不饿 bú è	不好 bù hǎo	明天 míngtiān	还好 hái hǎo	姓毛 xìng Máo
你们 nǐmen	九月 jiǔyuè	二十日 èrshí rì	姓林 xìng Lín	明年 míngnián	她们 tāmen
你呢 nǐ ne	他们 tāmen	八月 bāyuè	很忙 hěn máng	不太累 bú tài lèi	冷吗 lěng ma
不冷 bù lěng	很热 hěn rè	九十 jiǔshí	不饿了 bú è le	好不好 hǎo bu hǎo	冷了 lěng le

B. FÁNTǪZì (INCLUDING GRAPHS THAT HAVE ONLY ONE FORM)

他們	很熱	不冷了	很餓	明年	我們
tāmen	hěn rè	bù lěng le	hěn è	míngnián	wǒmen
不熱了	餓不餓	姓周	你們	冷嗎	太好
bú rè le	è bu è	xìng Zhōu	nǐmen	lěng ma	tài hǎo

8.II.2 Dialogue

甲： 今天很忙也很累。

乙： 昨天呢？

甲： 昨天还好，不太忙，也不太累。

甲： 你们饿不饿？

乙： 不饿，还好！你呢？

甲： 我呢，我很饿。

甲： 今天很热！

乙： 昨天也很热！

甲： 今天冷了。

乙： 昨天呢？

甲： 昨天不太冷，还好。

甲： 我们很热。

乙： 我也很热！很热也很累！

甲： 我们也很累。

甲： 饿吗？

乙： 不太饿。我很累。你呢？

甲： 不累，还好。

乙： 饿不饿？

甲： 不饿了。

乙： 我也不饿。

8.12 Action verbs and associated function words

吃	飯	已	經	課	班
3 + 3	8 + 4	3 + 0	6 + 7	7 + 8	4 + 6
	饭		经	课	
	3 + 4		3 + 5	2 + 8	
chī	fàn	yǐjīng	kè	bān	
'to eat'	'rice; food; meal'	'already'	'class; lesson'	'shift; class'	
上	下	沒 / 没	有		
1 + 2	1 + 2	3 + 4	1 + 5		
shàng	xià	méi	yǒu		
'on; upper; to go up'	'under; lower; to go down'	NEG	'to have'		

NOTES

a. 吃 is a compound of 口 *kǒu* 'mouth' and the element 乞, independently pronounced *qǐ*. Hint: 'resembles teeth and tongue, used to eat'. 饭/飯 is a compound of the 'food radical' (whose independent form is 食) and the phonetic 反 *fǎn*. Hint: 'customer on the left with a cap on, with food on the right behind a sneeze shield'. 课/課 contains the 'speech radical' (言 in its independent form) and 果 *guǒ* 'fruit' as an imperfect phonetic element whose original phonetic connection to 课/課 has weakened due to changes in pronunciation. Hint: 'board on an easel in a classroom'.

b. Distinguish 已 *yǐ* from 己 *jǐ*, 巳 *sì*, and 乙 *yǐ*.

c. The right side of the traditional graph 經 is said to derive from the drawing of a loom used to represent the root meaning of *jīng*, the 'warp [of a loom]'. From the movements and result of weaving, the word derives meanings such as 'to pass through' or 'to regulate' as well as 'classic texts' [cf. English 'text' and 'textile']. The etymological meaning of the compound 已經 is harder to see, but probably derives from a notion of 'to complete the task'.

d. The traditional 沒 has the same number of strokes as 没 in the simplified set, so they are placed together above to save space. Both have the water radical on the left (three strokes, two *diǎn* and a *tí*, in contrast to a *diǎn* plus *tí* in 冷). In the simplified graph, the right side of the traditional character has been replaced by the independently occurring element 殸. 没/沒 is also used for the word *mò* 'to submerge', which probably explains the presence of the water radical.

8.12.1 Phrases

A. *Jiǎntǐzì* 'SIMPLIFIED SET'

吃饭	吃了	还没	没有	你呢
<i>chīfàn</i>	<i>chī le</i>	<i>hái méi</i>	<i>méiyǒu</i>	<i>nǐ ne</i>
上课	已经	走了	下班	饭很好
<i>shàngkè</i>	<i>yǐjīng</i>	<i>zǒu le</i>	<i>xiàbān</i>	<i>fàn hěn hǎo</i>
没有了	上课	没课	明天	很累
<i>méiyǒu le</i>	<i>shàngkè</i>	<i>méi kè</i>	<i>míngtiān</i>	<i>hěn lèi</i>
上班	还没吃呢	已经吃了	走了没有	还没
<i>shàngbān</i>	<i>hái méi chī ne</i>	<i>yǐjīng chī le</i>	<i>zǒu le méiyǒu</i>	<i>hái méi</i>

B. *Fántǐzì* 'TRADITIONAL SET'

熱了	上課	還好	吃飯	已經走了
<i>rè le</i>	<i>shàngkè</i>	<i>hái hǎo</i>	<i>chīfàn</i>	<i>yǐjīng zǒu le</i>
明天沒課	不太餓	你們	不餓了	下課了
<i>míngtiān méi kè</i>	<i>bú tài è</i>	<i>nǐmen</i>	<i>bú è le</i>	<i>xiàkè le</i>

8.12.2 Reading

A. *Jiǎntǐzì*

- 甲: 吃了吗?
 乙: 吃了。你呢?
 甲: 还没, 我不饿。
- 甲: 吃了没有?
 乙: 还没, 你呢。
 甲: 没有, 我不饿。
 乙: 我也不饿, 今天太热了。
- 甲: 你吃饭了吗?
 乙: 还没。你呢?
 甲: 我已经吃了。

- 甲：今天好不好？
 乙：还好。
 甲：吃饭了吗？
 乙：吃了。你呢？
 甲：我也已经吃了。
- 甲：他们走了没有？
 乙：已经走了，上课了。
 甲：哦，上课了。
- 甲：他吃了没有？
 乙：没有，太忙了。
 甲：他不饿吗？
 乙：不饿，还好。
- 甲：他们已经上课了吗？
 乙：还没，他们还没有吃饭呢。
 甲：哦，没吃饭呢。
 乙：没有。
- 甲：明天有没有课？
 乙：没有，明天十月一号。一号没课。
 甲：二号呢？
 乙：二号有，三号也有。

B. FÁNTǪZÌ

- 甲：我今天很累！
 乙：吃饭了吗？
 甲：还没呢，太忙了。
 乙：饿吗？
 甲：很饿。你呢？
 乙：我不饿，已经吃了。
 甲：李白呢，他已经上课了吗？
 乙：他今天很忙，没有上课。
 甲：你热吗？

- 乙： 熱！？我不熱，昨天很熱今天好了。
 甲： 昨天很熱，今天也很熱。
 乙： 今天還好，不熱。

Exercise 5

Fill in the blanks.

1. 我___没吃饭呢，你呢？/我___经吃了。
2. 今天很好，不___也不冷。/___天也很好。
3. 昨天不___冷，还好。/昨天很好，可是今天热___。
4. 我姓林，她___姓林。/是吗？你们姓林？我也___林。
5. 我昨天很忙，今天也很___。/明天___？
6. 吃___了没有？/吃___。

NOTES

- a. 可是 *kěshì* 'but'
- b. 是 *shì* 'to be the case'

8.13 On the street #1

This section appears regularly in the lessons to introduce you to words and phrases commonly seen on signs, notices, shop fronts, and billboards across China (as well as in Chinese communities throughout the world).

入口

rùkǒu

'entrance'

('enter-opening')

出口

chūkǒu

'exit'

('exit-opening')

雨水

yǔshuǐ

[on manhole covers]

('rain-water')

有限公司

yǒuxiàn gōngsī
 ‘Co. Ltd.’
 (‘have-limit company’)

銀行 銀行

yínháng
 ‘bank’
 (‘silver-shop’)

NOTES

- Left leaning 入 has, in earlier notes, been contrasted with right leaning 人 *rén*, as well as with balanced 八 *bā*.
- 限 and 銀/银 are part of a phonetic set based on 艮 that includes 很 *hěn* ‘very’.
- 行 writes two (historically related) words: *háng*, with a number of meanings including ‘shop; firm; row’; and *xíng* ‘to go; to do; to be okay’ (as in 还行).



Ideograms