

Introduction (for the Student)

Communicating in Chinese, Listening and Speaking, focused on speaking Chinese. *Reading and Writing* will teach you, first, to understand pieces of simple written Chinese texts—signs, schedules, advertisements, hand-written notes, as well as transcriptions of simulated spoken discourse. It is important to remember that you **need not try to puzzle out every word of every text**. (You don't read every word of every text in your native language. When you receive a postcard, for example, chances are you read the interesting, relevant part—the message—and ignore the rest—the cancellation, where the postcard was printed, etc.) Instructions accompanying each text in this book will direct you to pieces of it that are appropriate or useful to you. While you are encouraged to skim through the remainder to see what you make of it, please focus on what you **can** understand and don't be discouraged by what you can't. When you arrive in a Chinese community and are faced with a pandemonium of character texts, you will need to be able to screen out what you can't understand and focus in on what you can, and try to extract a meaning, a message, from what you can decipher. Do begin developing this skill now, as you proceed through this book.

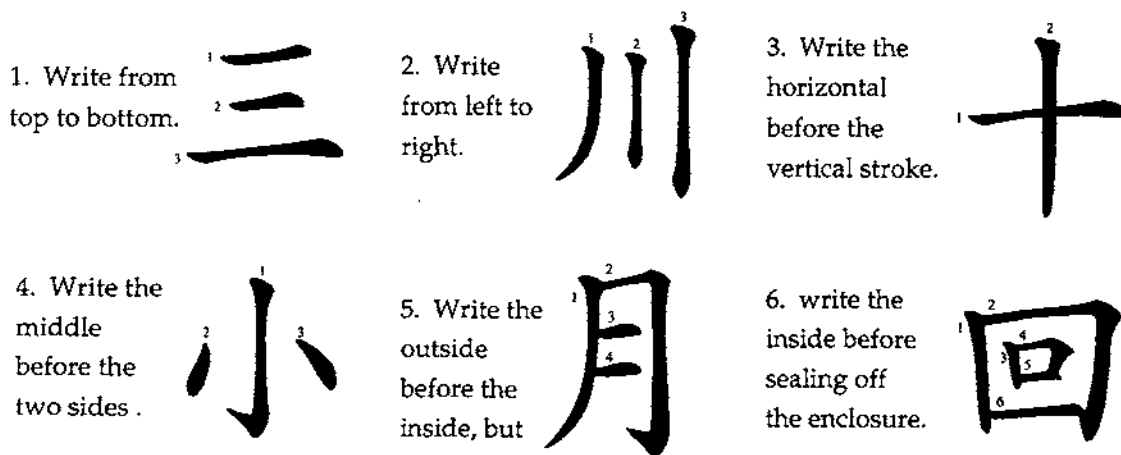
The second thing this reading and writing text will teach you is how to convey simple messages by writing Chinese. There are at least two parts to this process: one is to learn how to form basic characters and another is how to string them together in meaningful sequences, to express what you want to say. Whereas over 1,000 characters are introduced to you in various combinations and contexts **for reading recognition only**, this book will only teach you to **hand-write** some 300 characters. Using these basic characters, you will be able to fill in your personal information (name, address, telephone, age, gender, etc.) on forms, write simple notes to make or rearrange appointments, write brief statements concerning personal preferences in food, clothing, etc., and otherwise express your own meaning in simple interactions with Chinese people. You will also gain a rudimentary understanding of the characteristics of the Chinese script.

Following are further points to keep in mind.

- Beginning in the mid-1950s, the government of the People's Republic of China began to promulgate simplified versions of Chinese characters (说=说, 窝=写) in an effort to boost China's literacy rate. These **simplified** characters are currently in use in the PRC and Singapore, while Taiwan (the Republic of China), Hong Kong, and many overseas Chinese communities continue to use **traditional** characters. Given the level of interchange among all these Chinese locales, however, plus the fact that foreigners in contact with the Chinese will sooner or later have contact with both sides, this textbook teaches both forms for reading recognition. We therefore expect that you will learn to read both simplified and traditional character texts. For writing, however, we suggest that you pick either one form or the other (both are taught) and learn to write that form exclusively. Some students pick the simplified form for expediency, or because they expect to spend time in the PRC. Others pick traditional characters for their form and beauty, because they wish to communicate with relatives who write traditional characters, etc. Whichever you decide upon, try not to mix them up, at least not within the same note/letter/document!
- A "Prelude" and three "Interludes" in this book will focus your attention on components of Chinese characters. **Radicals** are meaning components—they generally succeed in giving you a hint of the meaning of the character, such as "of the plant kingdom," "relating to thought and emotion," and "relating to speech." There are a total of some 200 radicals in Chinese, of which some 50 are commonly used. For each character introduced for writing in this book, the radical is identified for your convenience. These are useful to learn to recognize for the future, when you may want to begin using Chinese diction-

aries. Similarly, a **phonetic** is a sound component, which will sometimes succeed in giving you a hint of how a character is pronounced. If you want to learn more about radicals, look in Chinese-English dictionaries such as *Mathew's Chinese English Dictionary. The Five Thousand Dictionary: Chinese-English* by Courtenay Hughes Fenn identifies both the radicals and the phonetics of 5,000 common Chinese characters, but is now out of print (you can try to locate a copy in a library).

•Stroke order (the order in which you write each stroke in a character) is indicated for writing characters by a number placed near the start point of each stroke. (However, it is expected that you will need writing help from a teacher as well.) **Do memorize stroke order**; it will help you read and write cursive script or use a dictionary in the future. Some simple hints about stroke order:



•Finally, a note about Chinese punctuation. You'll notice two types of commas in the renditions of discourse in this book: one is the usual comma separating two thoughts (,) and the other is the "enumerative comma" used when listing items (、). The following English passage illustrates (approximately) the use of both kinds, as well as of the Chinese period (。) .

I've been away , so I hope you'll forgive this late response . I'd like to order green , white , blue , and black banners for the reception , and to have them placed at the front entrance , over the podium , by the side entrance , and along the entire back wall . Thank you .

Remember, learning a new language takes you into a new culture. It brings you into contact with a new people. You can't hope to learn everything overnight (or even in a lifetime)! Be patient, be constant, enjoy what you are learning, ask lots of questions, go back over old lessons to see if you can pick up new insights, look ahead into new lessons to get a feel for what's coming, talk to your classmates to see if your understanding of the material is the same as theirs, seek out native speakers when you can to try out your skills, pick up a Chinese publication and skim through it for words, phrases, maybe even a sentence? you can decipher, play "what's this character" games with friends who know some Chinese, pass notes in Chinese in class, and keep in mind that you are communicating in the language of at least one-fifth of the world's population.

Introduction (for the Teacher)

Communicating in Chinese, Reading and Writing presents the reading and writing curriculum for an introductory course in standard Chinese. The vocabulary of written Chinese is in many cases different from spoken (yí kuài qián vs. yì yuán). Furthermore, what the student might need to say and decipher in speech in a given context is often not what s/he needs to read or to write in that same context. In shopping, for example, the student might require facility in the following:

Q: "Zhèi ge duōshǎo qián?" A: "Wǔ kuài liù máo qián."

However, s/he might benefit more from being able to comprehend texts such as 特價：五元 or 售票處 than from a written transcription of the spoken discourse. Thus, the listening/speaking and the reading/writing curricula are linked in terms of **context** (setting, topic) and **function** (what the students do in the given context), but might very well differ in terms of specific **content** (vocabulary items, sentence patterns), although a great deal of overlap exists as well.

The performance goals of this curriculum are keyed to the proficiency levels promulgated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Simplified proficiency level descriptions for reading and writing, based on ACTFL's generic and Chinese-specific descriptions, are as follows.

Reading

Novice Level Able to recognize isolated words and/or major phrases when supported by context.

Intermediate Level Able to read for instructional and informational purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions from simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs.

Advanced Level Able to comprehend main ideas and facts of connected descriptive or narrative prose, such as news items, short stories, personal correspondence and simple technical material written for the general reader.

Superior Level Able to read with nearly complete comprehension expository prose in a wide variety of texts, including those which treat unfamiliar topics and situations.

Writing

Novice Level Able to reproduce from memory some familiar words and phrases in character form, as well as recombinations of these.

Intermediate Level Able to meet a limited number of practical writing needs, such as supplying key personal information on simple forms and documents and writing short messages about personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events, and other topics grounded in personal experience.

Advanced Level Able to write routine social correspondence, cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature.

Superior Level Able to write most types of correspondence, such as memos as well as social and business letters, and short research papers and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields.

This curriculum aims to bring students to the **Intermediate** level in reading and writing. In reading, it seeks to develop the students' ability to puzzle out pieces of selected authentic texts relating to survival needs, and to identify key facts and some details in carefully written personal communication. In addition, students are led to puzzle through transcriptions of simple, simulated oral discourse based on the listening-speaking curriculum. For writing, it focuses on developing the student's ability to provide biodata on simple forms and write a variety of brief messages relating to daily, survival issues.

To achieve these ends, the curriculum utilizes a range of materials from a variety of sources. Forms, photographs of signs, menus, printed and handwritten notes, teacher-created simulated texts form the bulk of the volume. Some key characteristics resulting from the ways in which these texts are incorporated and developed into an identifiable curriculum are the following.

- The texts are representative of real language used in a variety of Chinese communities in the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the US. The content of some of these texts may strike some native-speaking Chinese as unorthodox or substandard—not worthy of appearing in a textbook. Since the materials are eclectic, they may also disturb some native speakers because they are to an extent “foreign” (from a different Chinese community) and therefore unfamiliar. And finally, materials that were selected because of their link to American culture (McDonald’s ads) and presumed therefore to appeal to the American learner may be panned by native Chinese for being “un-Chinese.”

Some egregious examples exhibiting the “flaws” listed above have been discarded. What remains are materials that I hope can be tolerated (if grudgingly) by most native speakers. They represent real rather than idealized language, and are therefore fair to present to students.

- Since the reading-writing curriculum (like the listening-speaking curriculum) is task-based, not all of every text needs to be decoded. Instructions direct the student’s attention towards that portion of the text that is either necessary to accomplish a task (“find out how much X costs”), or that teaches vocabulary that is useful and learnable at this point. The remainder of the text can (and should) simply be ignored. It is hoped that at least those bits of language receiving focus in each text (if not the whole text) are acceptable to all native speakers of Chinese.

- No matter whether students intend to deal with Hong Kong-Taiwan Chinese or with PRC-Singapore Chinese in the future, there is so much interchange among Chinese communities these days that they will need to be able to read both simplified and traditional forms of Chinese characters. This curriculum proceeds under the assumption, then, that students will learn both forms. Indeed, if both forms are taught simultaneously (for reading recognition only), the process is perhaps easier than if the students were to grow accustomed to one form alone, and then had to learn the other form under duress. For writing, it is assumed that students will be allowed to choose to write either one form or the other, preferably exclusively—at least they should not switch back and forth between simplified and traditional styles within the same document! Native Chinese generally write either one form or the other. Since most can read both forms (protestations notwithstanding), this does not generally constitute a problem.

- Transcriptions of simulated oral discourse are included to provide students exposure to texts of longer length than the excerpts of authentic documents that are suitable to their level. These transcriptions are therefore inauthentic by their very nature. This “inauthenticity” may be exacerbated by the fact that they were composed with the non-native learner in mind: to an extent the cultural norms of the target culture have purposely been compromised to accommodate the cultural realities of the learner’s native (presumed American/Western) culture. The dialogues are lively rather than staid (and safe) to give the learner an incentive to keep puzzling through unfamiliar characters. Although native speakers of Chinese have complained that these are not entirely representative of their speech styles (too direct, sometimes linguistically oversimplified), I hope that such infelicities can be tolerated in the interest of holding the student’s attention.

This volume is highly experimental, and therefore susceptible to some controversy. Fortunately, in this age of computers, corrections are painless. Perhaps future editions can rectify shortcomings found in this one. Your feedback is therefore welcome and solicited.