

Lesson 2

Yù bù zhuó, bù chéng qì.
jade not carve, not become implement

A sayings, in classical style, conveying the importance of discipline and perseverance in achieving success. The root meaning of qì (器) is a vessel, ie something that can be put to use. Its extended meanings include ‘utensils’, and ‘talent’.

I. Expanding SV material

1. Adverbs

In the first lesson, you were introduced to a number of words that are classed ‘adverbs’: hěn, bù, yě and hái or háishi. It is difficult to characterize the general function of adverbs beyond rather abstract notions like ‘degree’, ‘amount’, or ‘manner’; but they can be defined positionally as words that are placed before, and are semantically linked to, a following verb or other adverb.

Tài, seen only in negative sentences in the first lesson (bú tài le), is common in positive sentences as well, where it is frequently found with a final le: Tài hǎo le ‘Great’; Tài jǐnzhāng le ‘[I]’m real anxious’; Tài nán le ‘[It]’s too difficult’. Le in this context conveys a sense of excess (cf. English ‘exceedingly’), and as such, can be regarded as a special case of the notion of ‘new situation’.

Below are examples of some additional common adverbs: dōu ‘all’, gèng ‘even more’, bǐjiào (pronounced bǐjiào by some) ‘rather; quite; fairly’, and zǒngshì ‘always’.

Adverbs

dōu ‘all’	Tāmen dōu hěn è. Dōu bù hǎo.	[They]’re all hungry. None [of them] is well.
gèng ‘even more’	Zuótiān hěn lěng, jīntiān gèng lěng.	It was cold yesterday, [and] it’s even colder today.
bǐjiào ‘quite’	Wǒ jīntiān bǐjiào máng. Zuótiān bǐjiào rè.	I’m fairly busy today. Yesterday was fairly warm.
zǒngshì ‘always’	Wèi lǎoshī zǒngshì hěn máng hěn lèi.	Prof. Wei is always busy and tired.

2. Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that conjoin linguistic units, either as equal partners, as in the case of ‘and’ or ‘but’ (called ‘coordinating conjunctions’), or in a skewed partnership, as

in the case of ‘if’ and ‘because’ (called ‘subordinating conjunctions’). In Chinese, there is no word quite comparable to English ‘and’ that connects sentences; that function is often served by the adverb, yě:

Zuótiān wǒ bù shūfu, jīntiān yě bú tài hǎo.	I wasn’t very well yesterday, and [I]’m not too well today, either.
Zuótiān hǎn rè, jīntiān yě hǎn rè.	It was hot yesterday, and it’s hot today, too.

The conjunctions kěshì and dànshì (the latter more used in southern Mandarin) correspond to English ‘but’ or ‘however’. A third word, búguò, can also be mentioned here; though its range of meaning is broader, it has considerable overlap with the other two, and can often be translated as ‘but; however’.

Tāmen hái méi chīfàn, kěshì dōu bú è.	They haven’t eaten, but they aren’t hungry.
Wǒ chīfàn le, kěshì hái méi xǐzǎo.	I’ve eaten, but I haven’t bathed yet.
Tā zǒu le, búguò jīntiān bú shàng bān.	She’s left, but she’s not going to work today.

3. More SVs

Here are some additional SVs. They can be incorporated into the patterns introduced in the first two lessons.

Of people:

yán	‘strict’	lihai	‘formidable; tough [of people]’
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Of tasks:

nán	‘difficult’	róngyi	‘easy’
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Of things:

hǎochī	‘nice [to eat]’	hǎotīng	‘nice [sounding]’	guì	‘expensive’
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Of people or things:

qīngchu	‘clear’	hǎokàn	‘nice looking; nice’
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Several of these SVs can be applied to people, such as lǎoshī ‘teachers’ and xuéshēng ‘students’; others, as noted, are more likely to apply to things, such as Zhōngwén ‘Chinese language’ or Rìwén ‘Japanese language’.

4. Examples

Zhōngwén lǎoshī dōu hěn yán ba.	The Chinese teachers are all strict, I take it.
Bù dōu hěn yán. Búguò Riběnlǎoshī	Not all of them. But the Japanese teachers
dōu hěn yán. Tāmen gèng yán.	are all strict. They’re more strict.

Zhōngwén hěn nán ba.
Bù nán yě bù róngyì.

Chinese must be difficult.
It's not difficult, nor is it easy.

Hǎochī ma?
Hái kěyǐ.
Guì bu guì?
Bú tài guì, hái xíng.

[It'] good?
[It'] okay.
Is it expensive?
Not too – it's reasonable.

Qīngchu le ma?
Qīngchu le.

Is [it] clear now?
[It] is.

Exercise 1.

Perform a dialogue along the following lines:

Máo Dàwéi

Lǐ Lìsān

Hi, Lìsān!

Hello, Dàwéi.

Busy?

Very, and tired too!

Students are always busy,
and tired! Have you eaten?

Not yet; I've showered, but I haven't eaten yet.

You hungry?

I am! And you – have you eaten yet?

I ate in the 'cafeteria'.

Was it good?

It was okay. How're your
teachers? Strict?

Very, they're formidable! Chinese is difficult.

But Japanese is even harder.

They're both hard! ... Well, I must be off.

Okay, see you later.

Okay, bye.

II. New subjects

1. Some nouns

This section begins with some additions to your repertoire of inanimate nouns:

yàoshi

'keys'

shū

'books'

hùzhào

'passport'

xié

'shoes' [xiézi in southern regions]

xíngli

'luggage'

<yǔ>sǎn

'[rain-]umbrella'

shūbāo

'[book]bag'

yǎnjìng

'glasses [eye-mirror]'

2. Measure Words

In English, things – or rather, nouns – can sometimes be counted directly (one person; two things; three airplanes) and sometimes only by way of a counter (three pieces of luggage; four head – or heads - of lettuce). In Chinese, the first category is not found; all nouns require a counter, called a ‘measure word’ when counted (abbreviated herein as M). To get used to Ms, we will begin with gè (usually untoned), the M that has the most general application, and recite simple phrases. When combined with a M, the number ‘two’ is expressed as liǎng (‘pair’) rather than èr. In context, the noun itself may be omitted, as in the second set.

yí ge rén	liǎng ge rén	sān ge rén	wǔ ge rén	shí ge rén.
1 person	2 people	3 people	5 people	10 people
yí ge	liǎng ge	sān ge	wǔ ge	shí ge
1 of them	2 of them	3 of them	5 of them	10 of them

The particle le following phrases like these (as in the dialogue below) is categorized as *new situation-le*: sì ge rén le ‘that’s 4 then’.

Recall that the tone of yī ‘one’, level when counting, shifts to either falling or rising when yī is in conjunction with a following word (eg an M). The basic tone of -gè is falling, hence yí gè (and even though, as noted, -gè is often toneless when followed by a noun, it still elicits the shift before losing its tone: yí ge).

3. Possessive pronouns

In English, possessive pronouns have quite a complicated relationship to ordinary pronouns (eg ‘my’ but ‘mine’), but in Chinese, they are formed in a perfectly regular fashion by the addition of the ‘possessive marker’, de: wǒ ‘I’ > wǒ de ‘my; mine’. The full system is shown below:

wǒ de	wǒmen de	my; mine	our; ours
nǐ de	nǐmen de	your; yours	your; yours [plural]
tā de	tāmen de	his; her; hers	their; theirs

These combine with nouns, as follows:

wǒ de yàoshi	my keys
tā de hùzhào	her passport
wǒmen de xíngli	our luggage
lǎoshī de shū	teachers’ book
wǒ de xié<zi>	my shoes
xuéshēng de shūbāo	students’ bags
nǐ de sǎn	your umbrella
Zhāng lǎoshī de yǎnjìng	Professor Zhang’s glasses

4. Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns ('this' and 'that') and the 'locational pronouns' ('here' and 'there') are shown in the chart below:

<i>proximate</i>	<i>distal</i>	<i>question</i>
zhè [zhèi] 'this'	nà [nèi] 'that'	nǎ [něi] 'which'
zhèr ~ zhèlǐ 'here'	nàr ~ nàlǐ 'there'	nǎr ~ nǎlǐ 'where'

Notes on the table:

a) The forms in brackets, zhèi, nèi and něi, are generally found only in combinations such as zhèi ge this one. For the locationals, Taiwan Mandarin generally eschews the forms with -r in favor of zhèlǐ, nàlǐ and nǎlǐ. On the Mainland, where both forms occur, the -r forms are more colloquial, the -lǐ forms, more formal. Notice that the distal forms differ from the question forms only in tone!

b) Before a pause, nà is often used in an extended sense, usually translated in English 'well; so; then; in that case':

Nà, wǒmen zǒu ba. Well, shall we go? (well, we leave BA)
Nà, nǐ de xíngli ne? So how about your luggage then?

III. Identity

1) Shì 'be'

The verb shì serves to identify or categorize – much like the verb 'be' in English.

Tā shì Wáng Shuò, wǒ de lǎoshī. He's Wang Shuo, my teacher.

Wǒmen shì xuéshēng, tā shì lǎoshī. We're students, he's a teacher.

Now we can introduce the question words shéi (or shuí) 'who, whom' and shénme 'what' (pronounced *shéme*). Unlike English, where question words generally initiate the sentence, in Chinese, they remain in the position of the answer:

Who's that? Tā shì shéi?
That's my teacher. Tā shì wǒ de lǎoshī.

What's that? Nà shì shénme?
That's my passport. Nà shì wǒ de hùzhào.

Other examples

<Shì> shéi de yàoshi? Whose keys are [these]?

<Shì> wǒ de – xièxie. [They']re mine – thanks.

<Shì> shuí de xíngli? Whose luggage?
<Shì> wǒmen de. It's ours.

Zhè shì shéi de? Whose is this?
Shì wǒ de. It's mine.

Shéi shì dì-yī? Who is first?
Tā shì dì-yī. He's first.
Dì-èr ne? And second?
Tā shì dì-èr. She's second.

Frequently, when asked about identity, the answer is uncertain. So you can hedge your response with the expression hǎoxiàng 'seems like'. The following short interchanges involve trying to guess the contents of a series of wrapped packages:

Dì-yī shì shénme? What's the first?
Dì-yī hǎoxiàng shì yàoshi. The first seems like keys.

Zhè shì shénme? What's this?
Hǎoxiàng shì shū. Seems like a book.

Nà, zhè shì shénme? Well, what's this?
Hǎoxiàng shì xié. Seems like shoes.

2. Questioning names

Some common English names are directly transliterated into Chinese: Yuēhàn Shǐmìsī 'John Smith', keeping the English word order of given name before surname. But students of Chinese are usually given Chinese names, based on their own (either their surnames if they have enough syllables, or their full names), and these conform to Chinese types of two or three syllables. In such cases, Chinese word order, with surname before given, is followed. (In all but the first example below, English surnames are reduced to single syllables in the Chinese, as shown by the highlighting.)

Wèi Déli	Wheatley
Táng Lìlì	Lily Tomlin
Máo Xiān'ān	Anne Mauboussin
Lǐ Dān	David Lippmann

These names are indistinguishable from names of Chinese, such as these:

Cuī Lín	Kāng Yòuwéi	Yuán Shào	Zhèng Chénggōng
Zhèng Hé	Máo Qíling	Wáng Lì	Bái Sùzhēn

a) Xìng

Chinese names consist of a surname, or *xìng*, in initial position, followed by a given name or *míngzi*. *Xìng* are usually – but not always – single syllables. Xìng is a verb as well as a noun, and should always be used when asking for, or responding with, someone's surname:

Tā xìng shénme?	What's her surname?
Tā xìng Huáng.	She's surnamed Huang.
Xìng Wáng?	Wang?
Bù, tā xìng Huáng?	No, Huang.

When addressing someone directly, the honorific expression guìxìng 'worthy-surname' (cf. guì 'expensive') – with or without a pronoun – is usual:

<Nín> guìxìng?	May [I] ask your surname [please]?
Wǒ xìng Wèi.	I'm surnamed Wei.

b) Jiào

In much of the English speaking world, where informality tends to be considered a virtue, the shift from surname to given name can proceed very quickly. However, in Chinese, address in a professional setting is more likely to persist for a while as *xìng* plus title, or as full name (*xìng* + *míngzi*). So under normal levels of politeness, you would question someone about their *xìng*, not about their *míngzi*. However, on occasions when it is appropriate to ask about someone's full name, or given name (eg when questioning children, or asking about the name of someone who is not present), then the verb jiào 'be named' is used. Here are some options, first for Lǐ Xiāngjūn, then for Zhèng Hé:

Q	A
Tā jiào shénme míngzi?	Tā jiào <Lǐ> Xiāngjūn.
Tā de míngzi jiào shénme?	Tā <de míngzi> jiào <Lǐ> Xiāngjūn.
Tā de míngzi jiào shénme?	Tā de míngzi jiào Zhèng Hé.
Tā jiào shénme míngzi?	Tā jiào Zhèng Hé.

c) *Asking and giving a name*

Typically, in face-to-face interaction, one asks politely for a surname, and in many cases, the response will be just a surname. However, where the status is more or less matched, once the surname is provided, it is often followed by the full name, and this is a good model for the foreign student to copy:

<Nín> guìxìng?
[Bái Sùzhēn] Wǒ xìng Bái, jiào Bái Sùzhēn.
[Xǔ Xiān] Wǒ xìng Xǔ, jiào Xǔ Xiān.

d) Shì with names

While surnames (alone) can only be introduced with xìng, full names or name plus title can be introduced by shì and well as jiào. In fact, unlike the other two verbs, shì can also introduce name and title. The shì option identifies one of a known group, and as such, is often appropriate to a classroom setting:

Tā shì Lǐ Guānghuī; tā shì Wáng Shuò; tā shì Táng Bīn; wǒ shì Wèi Jiǔ'ān.
Dì-yī shì Xiāo Míngzuǒ, dì-èr shì Lǐ Míng, dì-sān shì Xiè Jìng.

Exercise 2.

a) Take on the names provided in parentheses and introduce yourself:

1. [Chén Zhìpéng]
2. [Zōu Lì]
3. [Téng Qiūyún]
4. [Máo Wénlóng]
5. [Léi Hànbó]
6. [Wáng Lì]

b) Translate the following, being careful to follow Chinese word order.

1. I'm a teacher.
2. Who's she?
3. Her surname's Sòng, her full name's Sòng Měilíng.
4. Hi, my name's Lǐ Dān.
5. Who's he?
6. He's my teacher.
7. That's Zhōu Lǐ.
8. This is Yáng Qiànyí.
9. His surname's Chén, full name Chén Bó.
10. And him? / His surname's Xǔ, full name, Xǔ Xiān.

3. Titles

Titles are used much more frequently in Chinese than in (modern) English. It has already been noted that teachers of all kinds can be addressed as lǎoshī. Other titles are like lǎoshī in being always placed after the xìng (or occasionally, after the full name). A broader range of titles will be considered in lesson 4, along with ordinary female titles, corresponding to English Ms, Miss and Mrs., whose usage is in flux and needs to be discussed more fully.

Here is a short selection of titles to add to lǎoshī. Xiānshēng ('first-born') is the usual title for adult males. Shīfu (literally 'craftsman', but often translated as 'master') has shifted in its usage in the last few decades, but traditionally, it has been used to address blue-collar workers. And jīnglǐ 'manager', a professional title (of the sort that might appear on a business card) applies to males or females.

Order of elements

surname	(given name)	title	
Wèi	(Bóyáng)	lǎoshī	Professor
Shí	(Jilóng)	xiānshēng	Mr.
Wáng	(Guóbǎo)	shīfu	'master'
Zhōu	(Lǐ)	jīnglǐ	manager

Usage

Nǐ shì bù shì Zhāng xiānshēng?
Zhè shì Dù shīfu.
Wǒ shì Wáng lǎoshī; tāmen dōu shì wǒ de xuéshēng.
Zhào xiānshēng zuótiān bù shūfu, kěshì jīntiān hǎo le.
Zhōu jīnglǐ zǒngshì hěn máng hěn lèi!

Exercise 3.

Translate the following:

1. This is Prof. Zhang.
2. Who's that (~ he)? / That (~ he)'s Mr. Chen.
3. Master Zhao, how are you?
4. His full name's Zhào Qíqīng.
5. Professor Chén, how are you?
6. This is master Wèi.
7. Her names Smith, but she seems to be Chinese. [Zhōngguó rén]

IV. Location

1. Some Chinese place names

The city of:

Nánjīng
Xī'ān
Guǎngzhōu
Chéngdū
Kūnmíng
Xīníng

in the province of:

Jiāngsū
Shǎnxī
Guǎngdōng
Sìchuān
Yúnnán
Qīnghǎi

Four of the largest cities in China, Běijīng, Shànghǎi, Tiānjīn [usually pronounced Tiānjīng] and Chóngqìng, are under the jurisdiction of the central government, and so even though some of them are surrounded by a single province, strictly speaking they are not part of those provinces.

2. Proximity

Relative proximity of one place to another can be expressed by the following construction, involving the word lí '[away] from', and the SVs jìn 'be close' and yuǎn 'be far'. Notice the difference in word order from English.

Place-1	lí place-2	hěn jìn / yuǎn.
Běijīng	lí Guǎngzhōu	hěn yuǎn.

Examples

Tiānjīn lí Běijīng bǐjiào jìn.	Tiānjīn's quite close to Beijing.
Xī'ān lí Běijīng hěn yuǎn.	Xi'an's far from Beijing.
Xīníng lí Chéngdū hěn jìn ma?	Is Xining near Chengdu?
Xī'ān lí Běijīng hěn yuǎn, dànshì Xīníng gèng yuǎn.	Xi'an is far from Beijing, but Xining is even farther.

3. Zài 'be+at'

a) Zài as a main verb:

Zài 'be+at' can act as the main verb of a sentence, followed by words such as zhèr ~ zhèlǐ or nàr ~ nàlǐ, or by place names that can act as locations:

Yàoshi zài nǎr? Zài nàr.	Where are [the] keys? Over there.
Wǒmen de xiézi ne? Dōu zài zhèr!	And our shoes? [They']re here.
Kūnmíng zài Yúnnán; Chéngdū zài Sìchuān; Guǎngzhōu zài Guǎngdōng.	Kunming's in Yunnan; Chengdu's in Sichuan; Canton's in Guangdong.
Nánjīng lí Héféi bú tài yuǎn, kěshì Nánjīng zài Jiāngsū, Héféi zài Ānhuī.	Nanjing's not far from Hefei, but Nanjing's in Jiangsu, [and] Hefei's in Anhui.

Some nouns require modification before they can act as place names. Pronouns, for example, need to be followed by zhèr 'here' or nàr 'there' before then can follow zài. English expresses the notion rather differently, using the verb 'have':

Bào zài nǎr? Bào zài wǒ zhèr.	Where's the newspaper? I have it. ('paper be+at me here')
Yàoshi ne? Zài tā nàr.	And the keys? She has [them]. ('be+at her there')
Wǒ de hùzhào zài nǐ nàr ma? Bú zài wǒ zhèr!	Do you have my passport? I don't have [it].

In other cases, a locational noun is added to provide locational detail. The full set of locational nouns will be presented over the course of several later lessons.

Nǐ de xíngli zài nǎr? Where are your bags?
Hái zài fēijī shàng. [They']re still on the airplane.

b) Zài in conjunction with other verbs

While on the topic of zài phrases, it is worth mentioning that they can also occur in conjunction with either a following verb (to express location) or an immediately preceding verb (to express resulting position):

Wǒmen zài fēijī shàng chī le. We ate on the airplane.
Wǒ shēng zài Chéngdū - zài I was born in Chengdu - in
Sìchuān. Sichuan.

Additional examples will appear in later lessons, after appropriate vocabulary has been introduced.

c) *Welcome*

The dialogue at the end of this lesson contains an expression of welcome to a place. Explicit welcomes are probably more likely to be seen written on posters than spoken, but they are not out of place with foreigners. The verbs are huānyíng ‘welcome’ and lái ‘come’. Places as destinations (rather than locations *per se*) are placed directly after verbs of motion, such as lái: lái Běijīng, lái Guǎngzhōu. Notice that in English, the people being welcomed (‘you’) are not mentioned, while in Chinese, they are (nǐmen):

Huānyíng nǐmen lái Chéngdū! Welcome to Chengdu.
Xièxiè.

A full response to words of welcome involve expression of gratitude, with the verb xiè ‘to thank’ – frequently repeated as xièxiè – and the verb, jiē ‘to meet; join’: xièxiè nǐmen lái jiē wǒmen. The order is like that of English, but Chinese eschews the connective words like ‘to’ and ‘for’. (‘Thank you for coming to meet us’ appears in Chinese as simply ‘thank you come meet us’.)

V. Miscellany

1. The verb yǒu ‘have’

The verb yǒu, with an irregular negative méiyǒu or simply méi, was encountered in the previous lesson as the negative counterpart of le with action verbs: Chīfàn le méiyǒu? Used alone, as a main verb, it conveys possession and existence:

Possession Wǒ méiyǒu xíngli. I don’t have any luggage.
Tāmen méiyǒu lǎoshī. They don’t have a teacher.

Existence

Méiyǒu xíngli.
Nánjīng méiyǒu dìtiě.

There's no baggage.
There's no underground railway in
Nanjing.

2. *Particles*

In addition to ma and ne, there are two other common final particles which have been encountered in the first two lessons. One is a, which among its diverse functions, gives a hearty tone to statements or exclamations, and which slightly softens the abruptness of questions:

Lěng a!	[Wow, it's cold!
Máng a!	Busy, huh?!
Shéi a?	<i>On hearing a knock:</i> Who [is it]?

The other is ba, which is associated with *suggestion* or *consensus*:

Zǒu ba.	Let's go.
Nà hǎo ba.	That's fine then.
Shàng chē ba.	Let's board the bus.

3. *Praise*

Chinese will praise your efforts to speak their language (which, as noted above, can be called Zhōngwén), and will typically make use of an expression involving the verb shuō 'speak' (or jiǎng in southern Mandarin) followed by the particle +de. If you wonder whether this +de is the same as the possessive de introduced earlier in this lesson (II-3), the answer is that it is not. This +de is followed by SV expressions (eg an adverb plus a SV); the other is either followed by a noun (wǒ de shūbāo) or has the potential to be followed by a noun (wǒ de [shūbāo]). Were meaning and distribution not sufficient evidence for positing two different de's, we should cite the fact that they are also written with different characters, 的 and 得, respectively. So in order to make the distinction clear (and prepare you for writing different characters), we write the former as de and the latter as +de. You should do the same.

Zhōngwén shuō+de hěn hǎo. [~ jiǎng+de hěn hǎo.]

To which you respond, modestly, that in fact you don't speak at all well:

Shuō+de bù hǎo. (jiǎng+de)

The latter can be preceded by the expression nǎlǐ (often repeated), which is the ordinary word for 'where' but which is also used to deflect praise, as if questioning its basis:

Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ, shuō+de bù hǎo. (jiǎng+de)

When you see more examples (in lesson 5), you will find that nothing can intervene in the combination shuō+de. So if Zhōngwén is mentioned, it cannot directly

follow shuō, but needs to be mentioned first, as shown in the example above. Since Chinese are so gracious about praising one's feeble efforts to speak their language, it is good to get used to this interchange early. For now, practice it only as it appears, and only with the verb shuō and its southern Mandarin counterpart, jiǎng.

VI. First Dialogue

Given the need to restrict vocabulary and structures, the following dialogue cannot be regarded as completely natural, but it serves as a good model for some of the material that has been introduced in the first two lessons.

Situation: Professor Wáng (W) has come to the airport with a university driver to meet half a dozen international students who are arriving in China to continue their study of Chinese. The students all have Chinese names as well as their regular ones. One of them (Dàwéi [Dw]) spots Wáng lǎoshī holding a sign and walks over to introduce himself; some of the others follow and introduce themselves too:

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| Dw | Nín hǎo, wǒ shì Máo Dàwéi. | How are you, I'm Mao Dawei. |
| W. | O, Máo Dàwéi, wǒ shì Wáng lǎoshī. | Oh, Mao Dawei, I'm Prof. Wang. |
| An | Wáng lǎoshī, nín hǎo! Wǒ shì Lǐ Ānnà. | Prof. Wang, how are you? I'm Li Anna. |
| W. | Lǐ Ānnà, nǐ hǎo. | Li Anna, how are you? |
| Ym | Wáng lǎoshī, wǒ shì Xiǎolín Yóuměi. | Professor Wang, I'm Xiaolin Youmei. |
| W. | Xiǎolín Yóuměi, nǐ hǎo.
Hǎo, sān ge rén le. | Xiaolin Youmei, hi. Okay, [that's] 3.
(fine, 3 GE people LE [new situation]) |
| Ym | Hái yǒu tā – tā xìng Kǒng, jiào Kǒng Měi. | [pointing] And her too -- her name is Kong, she's called Kong Mei. |
| W. | Hǎo, Kǒng Měi, nǐ hǎo!
Sì ge rén le. Nǐ ne? | Fine, how are you Kong Mei? [That's] 4 then. And [who are] you? |
| Jf | Wǒ shì Bái Jiéfēi. | I'm Bai Jiefei. |
-
- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| W. | Bái Jiéfēi, nǐ hǎo....
Nà hǎo, huānyíng nǐmen lái Běijīng! | Bai Jiefei, hi....
That's fine, welcome to Beijing! |
| All | Xièxie, xièxie nǐmen lái jiē wǒmen. | Thanks; thank you for coming to meet us. |

W.	<i>Zhè shì Gāo shīfu.</i>	<i>This is Mr. Gao.</i>
All	Gāo shīfu, nín hǎo.	Mr. Gao, how are you?
Gāo	Èi, nǐmen hǎo, nǐmen hǎo. Zhōngwén shuō+de hěn hǎo!	Ah, how are you, how are you? [You] speak Chinese very well!
All	Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ, shuō+de bù hǎo!	Nah, we don't speak very well.

W.	<i>Nǐmen hěn lèi ba.</i>	<i>You're probably tired.</i>
X.	Bù, bú tài lèi, hái hǎo.	No, not too, [we']re okay.
W.	<i>È ma? Chīfàn le ma?</i>	<i>Are[you] hungry? Have [you] eaten a meal?</i>
X..	Bú è, zài fēijī shàng chī le.	No, [we']re not, [we] ate on the airplane.
W.	<i>Nà, nǐmen de xíngli ne?</i>	<i>And your bags?</i>
X.	Zài zhè: yī, èr, sān, sì, wǔ, liù. Dōu zài zhèr.	[They']re here: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. [They']re all here.

W.	<i>Nà hǎo, wǒmen zǒu ba. Shàng chē ba.</i>	<i>Fine, let's go then. All aboard! (That be+good, we leave BA. Get+on vehicle BA.)</i>
X.	Hǎo, hǎo.	Okay.
W.	<i>Jīntiān hěn rè, nǐmen rè ma?</i>	<i>[Aboard the minibus.] It's hot today, are you hot?</i>
X.	Bù, bú rè, hái hǎo. Wǒmen dōu hěn shūfu.	No, [we']re not, [we']re fine. We're all comfortable.
W.	<i>Xíngli, hùzhào, sǎn dōu yǒu ma?</i>	<i>You have your bags, your passports, umbrellas?</i>
X.	Dōu yǒu, dōu yǒu, xièxie.	[We] have them all, thanks.
W.	<i>Hǎo, nà wǒmen zǒu ba.</i>	<i>Fine, okay, let's go!</i>
X.	Běijīng hěn yuǎn ma?	Is Beijing far?

W. *Bù, lí zhèr bù yuǎn – hěn jìn!* No, it's not far from here – quite close!

This first conversation is quite ambitious. All its vocabulary is fairly new, of course, and it also introduces quite a few grammatical patterns and features. But a bold beginning has the advantage of giving you interesting material to work with from the start. To make it more manageable, it is divided into four sections. The first involves collecting all the people; the second, with welcoming them; the third, with finding out how they are; and the fourth, with getting to the minibus to drive to Beijing. Get familiar with the scenario first, then visualize the conversation. You should be able to re-enact it more or less as presented before trying it out with a partner in class.

Exercise 4.

a) *Translate the following*

1. Okay, that's three people.
2. Who's the first person? The second?
3. That's it then, I'm off.
4. It's late, I should be going.
5. We've all eaten, we ate on the plane.
6. We're not hungry, we're fine.
7. Welcome to MIT.
8. Thanks for coming to meet us.
9. That's it then, see you tomorrow.
10. Okay, bye, take it easy.
11. How about you – you thirsty?
12. That looks like my umbrella.

b) *Comment that:*

1. you haven't eaten yet.
2. they haven't left yet.
3. she hasn't had her shower yet.
4. he hasn't got out of class yet.
5. they haven't gone to work yet.
6. you haven't read the day's paper yet.
7. you were tired yesterday, but today you're fine.
8. you're not nervous anymore.
9. you were cold on the plane, but you're fine now.

VII. Reflections: What have you learned?

1. Words

Short words predominate. It will turn out that most - but not all - Chinese words longer than a syllable are, historically at least, compounds: lǎoshī 'old-teacher' (with 'old' having the respectful connotations of 'venerable'); xǐzǎo 'wash-bathe'; hǎoxiàng 'good-likeness'.

2. Meaning

In learning a foreign language, particularly a language that is linguistically and culturally distant from one's native tongue, you quickly learn about the difficulties of translation. This is true for sentences as well as words. Hái hǎo, for example, as a response to lèi bu lèi, is composed of two words which, in other contexts, mean 'still' and 'be+good'. But 'still good' does not make sense as a translation. 'Not too' or 'no, I'm fine' are closer to the Chinese sense, *a fact we can only know from understanding how the Chinese functions in its context, then seeking an English expression that serves the same function* (or has the same meaning in the context). As translators will tell you, this can be difficult to do, and in some cases nearly impossible without extensive circumlocution.

For learners, it is not enough to know the meaning of the sentence in context; learners want, and need to understand the role of sentence parts – words – in the formation of that meaning. One reason for this is that word meanings – or glosses, being more abstract, are more stable. 'Good' (or 'be good') is abstracted from the meaning of the word in specific contexts (where it may be translated variously as 'be well', 'be okay', 'hello', etc.) That is why in addition to citing a meaning appropriate to the context, word meanings are also provided in parentheses: eg: Hái hǎo '[I]m okay. (still be+good)'

Providing word-for-word meanings serves another purpose. It takes us into the world of the foreign language and reveals conceptual differences that help to define the other culture. The fact that chīfàn 'have a meal' (and, by extension, in other contexts 'make a living') is composed of chī 'eat' and fàn 'cooked rice', reveals the role of that staple in the Chinese diet. (It is a moot point whether translators should try to capture that fact by translating chīfàn as 'eat-rice' rather than simply 'eat' or 'have a meal'. What do you think?)

VIII. PINYIN

1. Toneless syllables

As you have observed, not all syllables in Mandarin have a tone, eg: the second syllables in xínglǐ and máng ma. This is in contrast to regional languages such as Cantonese, in which toneless syllables are less prominent. There are several types of toneless syllable (described as qīngshēng 'light-tone') in standard Mandarin:

- (i) Particles such as ma, ne and ba never appear with a full tone, and so we can only write them with qīngshēng.
- (ii) Many words show qīngshēng in the final syllable: shūfu 'comfortable,' or wǒmen 'we; us.' On the evidence of compounds and other relatable expressions, these toneless syllables often turn out to have fully toned versions: shūfu has an adverbial form, shūshufúfú in which final fú appears with a rising tone. But dictionaries list words such as wǒmen and shūfu without tone on the second syllable, and we will do the same.

- (iii) Certain words (syllables) are toned in some contexts, toneless in others: bú lèi (with bu toned) but hǎo bu hǎo (with bu toneless). We will follow pronunciation in such cases, writing the tone in citation in contexts where it is pronounced, but omitting it in appropriate grammatical contexts.
- (iv) Finally, the incidence of *qīngshēng* varies with the rate and formality of speech as well as the region (with the northeast being particularly susceptible to toneless syllables). Thus in fast speech, jīntiān ‘today’ may be pronounced jīntian – without tone on tian. In these cases, we will still write the full tone, using current dictionaries as our guide.

For students’ purposes, the general rule is: you are always safe in writing the word in its lexical, careful, slow speech form, e.g.: wǒmen, shūfu, hǎo bù hǎo, jīntiān.

a) Should changed tones be indicated when you write pinyin?

In this text, we do not write the changed tone for combinations of low tones; we write hěn hǎo, and apply the rule. This accords with the standard rules for writing pinyin entries in dictionaries or in continuous text. We do make an exception in writing the changed tones for bu and yi, however: bù gāo but bú lèi; yì zhāng but yí gè. The reason for this inconsistency is simply that it seems to work best for students.

2. A pinyin quirk

Standard pinyin writes shénme, zěnmé (‘how’) and zánmen (‘we [inclusive]’), all with a medial ‘n’ that is not reflected in the pronunciation. This compares to other systems of transcription, such as Yale which writes *shéme*, National Romanization, which writes *sherme* (with the ‘r’ representing the rising tone), and Zhuyin Fuhao which writes ㄕㄣˇ ㄇㄛˊ, ie *she me* - none of them with an internal ‘n’. The reason pinyin writes a silent *-n* in these words has to do with the characters that represent them. The first syllable of shénme, zěnmé and zánmen are written with characters that are, in other contexts, pronounced shèn (with falling tone), zěn and zán respectively. While one is tempted to rectify the system and simply write shéme (or shémme), zěme (or zěmme) and zámen in conformity with actual pronunciations, pinyin is now regarded as a standard transliteration in the Chinese speaking world and we should accept it as it is - if for no other reason than the fact that reference materials as well as computer input systems are based on it.

Exercise 5.

a) Place the tone marks over the following words. (You may need to review the appropriate part of the lesson on sounds and symbols.)

level tone	jie	qiao	nao	jiu	cui
low	zei	pou	shao	xiao	bie
rising	xue	bei	tuó	zhui	liao

b) Now focus on the problematical initials – those found on lines 3,4,5 of our initial chart. Assign a tone, and read down:

ti	ta	dang		dou	dao
ci	ca	zang	si	zou	zao
chi	cha	zhang	shi	zhou	zhao
qi	qia	jiang	xi	jiu	jia

IX. Rhymes

Dà jiǎo

Dà jiǎo dà, dà jiǎo dà, yīntiān xià yǔ bú hàipà.	Big feet big, big feet big, cloudy rainy not fear.
Dà jiǎo hǎo, dà jiǎo hǎo, yīntiān xià yǔ shuāibùdǎo.	big feet good, big feet good, cloudy rainy slip-not-fall.

‘Big feet’ in contrast to
bound feet, presumably.

*Nursery rhyme;
colloquial.*

Ràokǒuling ‘tongue twisters’

[Traditional] characters are included to show how the phonetic components of Chinese characters provide visual support for these well known tongue twisters.

Māma qí mǎ, mǎ màn, māma mà mǎ.
媽媽騎馬，馬慢，媽媽罵馬。

Mum rides horse, horse slow, mum scolds horse.

Niūniu qiān niú, niú nìng, niūniu niǔ niú.
妞妞牽牛，牛佞，妞妞扭牛。

Little-girl leads ox, ox cunning, little-girl wrenches ox.

