

Lesson 7

Mín yǐ shí wéi tiān
people take eating as heaven

*The chief pleasure of ordinary people is eating.
Modern saying, Classical style*

The pattern yǐ...wéi ‘to take ... to be...’ (the yǐ of kěyǐ, and the wéi of yīnwei) is a Classical Chinese pattern that has survived to the modern language, eg: yǐ jiǎntǐzì wéi zhǔ ‘take simplified characters as basic; regard simplified characters as basic’. The two verbs yǐ...wéi have also coalesced into a single modern verb, yǐwéi, meaning ‘to consider [erroneously] that; feel that’: Wǒ yǐwéi tā shì Zhōngguó rén, kěshì tā yuánlái shì Tàiguó lái de. ‘I thought he was Chinese, but as it turned out, he’s from Thailand’.

I. Duration

In earlier lessons there have been many examples of ‘time when’: jīntiān xiàwǔ; sān diǎn zhōng; shàng kè de shíhou. But though there have been some examples of phrases that involve duration (sān tiān, liǎng nián), there have been no examples of duration in sentences. This section will introduce some sentence patterns that involve duration.

1. Units of time

Not all measure words have associated nouns. Words for units of time, for example, vary: nián ‘year’ and tiān ‘day’ are both measure words (without the possibility of a following noun); on the other hand, lǐbài/xīngqī, yuè (meaning a duration, not the name of a month) and zhōngtou ‘hour [colloquial]’ are nouns, and require the measure word gè. Xiǎoshí, another word for ‘hours’, is variable, sometimes said with gè, sometimes not.

nián:	yì nián, liǎng nián, sān nián, sì nián
yuè:	yí ge yuè, liǎng ge yuè, sān ge yuè, sì ge yuè
lǐbài:	yí ge lǐbài, liǎng ge lǐbài, sān ge lǐbài, sì ge lǐbài
xīngqī:	yí ge xīngqī, liǎng ge xīngqī, sān ge xīngqī, sì ge xīngqī
tiān:	yì tiān, liǎng tiān, sān tiān, sì tiān
zhōngtou	yí ge zhōngtou, liǎng ge zhōngtou
xiǎoshí	yí <ge> xiǎoshí, liǎng <ge> xiǎoshí

Contrast the following:

<i>Time-when</i>		<i>Duration</i>	
liǎng diǎn zhōng	2 o'clock	liǎng ge zhōngtou	2 hours
Liùyuè sān hào	June 3rd	sān tiān	3 days

Qīyuè	July	qí ge yuè	7 months
yījiǔjiǔsì nián	1994	jiǔ nián	9 years
sān diǎn shíwǔ fēn	3:15	shíwǔ fēn <zhōng>	15 minutes

2. Duration in context

While *time-when* phrases are placed prior to their associated verbs (liù diǎn chī wǎnfàn; shí diǎn shàng kè), duration phrases are placed directly after them: qù yì nián ‘to go for a year’; kàn yí ge zhōngtōu ‘watch for an hour’; xué yì nián ‘study for a year’. Objects cannot intrude between the verb and the duration and must either be mentioned earlier (as with the verb+DE construction), or must be placed after the duration: kàn yì xiǎoshí diànshì ‘watch an hour’s TV’. In fact, objects often do not need to be mentioned, and so for the sake of presentation, they will be avoided in this lesson.

a) Modes of transport

zǒulù ‘walk’	zuò chē	‘by car’
zuò ‘sit; by’	zuò [gōnggòng] qìchē	‘by [public] bus’
kāichē ‘drive’	zuò fēijī	‘by plane’
	zuò huǒchē	‘by train’

Notes

- a) Taxis are now called dí in most parts of China, based on the Hong Kong Cantonese word that was itself a version of English ‘taxi’. (It is usually written with the character 的, more commonly pronounced de.) So ‘to take a taxi’ is dǎ dí; ‘to go by taxi’ is dǎ dí qu.
- b) Huǒchē is literally ‘fire-vehicle’, an image that is found in many languages.

b) Examples dialogues

Nǐ zhù zài nǎr?	Where do you live?
Zài Lúwān.	In Luwan [a district of Shanghai].
Zěnmē lái shàng bān?	How do you get to work?
Zuò qìchē.	By bus.
Yào jǐ fēn zhōng?	How many minutes does it take?
Dàgài sānshí fēn.	About 30 minutes.
Nǐ zěnmē lái shàng kè?	How do you get to class?
Wǒ píngcháng zǒulù lái shàng kè.	Normally I walk to class.
Yào jǐ fēn zhōng?	How long does it take?
Shí fēn zhōng.	10 minutes.
Shí fēn zhōng, bú cuò.	10 minutes, not bad.
Míngtiān qù Lìjiāng ma?	[You’re] going to Lijiang tomorrow?
Shì, míngtiān zǎoshàng.	Yes, tomorrow morning.
Zěnmē qu?	How are you going?
Zuò fēijī qu.	[We’re] going by plane.

Yào jǐ ge xiǎoshí?	How many hours does it take?
Chàbuduō yí ge bàn xiǎoshí.	About an hour and a half.
Qù jǐ tiān?	How many days are you going for?
Sān tiān, lǐbàisi huílái.	3 days, [we'll] be back on Thursday.

3. Times

There are also measures that substitute not for nouns but for verbal events – these are called verbal measures, and they also follow the verb, eg cì ‘instance; time [viewed as a point]’ and biàn ‘occasion; time [viewed as a process]’ – cf. zài shuō yí biàn; wǒ qù guo yí cì.

‘one time, etc.’	yí cì, liǎng cì, sān cì, wǔ cì
‘the first time, etc.’	dì-yī cì, dì-èr cì, dì-sān cì, dì-wǔ cì
‘once through, etc.’	yí biàn, liǎng biàn, sān biàn.
Qǐng zài shuō yí biàn.	Say it again, please.
Wǒ qù guo yí cì.	I’ve been [there] once.
Wǒ chī guo hǎo jǐ cì.	I’ve eaten it lots of times.
Wǒ kàn guo liǎng cì.	I’ve seen it twice.

4. Huílái ‘return [back here]’; huíqù ‘return [back there]’; huíjiā ‘go home’

Here, mostly for review, are some example sentences containing compounds that incorporate huí ‘return’. Note the use of the *shi-de* pattern in certain cases.

Nǐ shì shénme shíhou qù de?	When did you go [there]?
Shénme shíhou huílái de?	When did [you] come back?
Wǒmen lǐbàiyī dǎsuàn qù Sūzhōu, lǐbàì’èr huílái.	We’re planning to go to Suzhou on Monday, [and we’ll] be back on Tuesday.
Tāmen shì 1991 nián lái de, 1995 nián huíqù de.	They came in 1991 and went back in 1995.
Nǐmen shénme shíhou huílái? Nǐ huíqù guo ma?	When are you coming back? Have you ever been back [there]?
Tā shíbā suì lái de Měiguó. Cóng méi huíqù guo.	She came to the US at 18. She’s never been back.

Exercise 1. Compose conversational along the following lines:

1. Tomorrow's your meeting, right? [kāi huì]
That's right, from 9 to 6.
How are you getting [there]?
I'm driving.
How long will that take?
About 40 minutes. I'll leave at 8.
When will you be back?
About 8 in the evening.
2. Were you born in the US or in China?
I was born in China.
When did you come to Boston?
In 1998.
Have you been back?
I've been back once.
When was that?
2001.

II. More le patterns

The subject of duration leads quite naturally to some additional patterns involving the ubiquitous particle, le. Recall that earlier you saw that le was interpreted differently according to whether it was associated with a state, or an action. The clearest cases involved SVs on the one hand (bú è le 'no longer hungry') and V_{act} on the other (chīfàn le 'have eaten'). It was also noted (more for future reference than for current needs) that with V_{act} in positive sentences, the position of le depended on the nature of the object: as a rule of thumb, quantified objects followed le (qù le yí tàng Cháng Chéng), while non-quantified or plain objects preceded it (qù Cháng Chéng le). These facts remain relevant for the new patterns that relate to duration.

1. Vocabulary

hěn jiǔ [for] a long time	bù jiǔ not long	duō jiǔ how long?	duō cháng shíjiān how long a time?
bìyè VO complete-enterprise to graduate	jiéhūn VO tie-marriage to get married		

Note

a) Cf. the expression hǎojiǔ bú jiàn, which seems to have given rise to the pidginized grammar of the English expression 'long time no see'. You might note that in this expression the duration (hǎojiǔ) precedes the verb (bú jiàn); in

Chinese, the time over which something has NOT happened, as it turns out, regularly precedes the verb.

b) Both biyè and jiéhūn are combinations of verb and objects (VO), which means that unlike, say, xǐzǎo or rènshi, other elements can intervene between them.

2. Two new *le* patterns

a) Enduring states

If you ask friends how long they have known each other, or how long they have been married, you are asking about an enduring state. They met or married at some point in the past, and an amount of time has elapsed since. You can envision the situation as follows:

event*-----→|le <enduring state, eg: knowing him; being married>

Chinese states the event, adds the duration and closes with a final le, which suggests a connection with the present -- ‘to now’. Note that the duration phrase does not follow a verb as such, but a proposition (nǐ rènshi tā; nǐmen jiéhūn).

Nǐ rènshi tā jǐ nián le?
Sān sì nián <le>.

How long have you known him?
3 or 4 years.

Nǐmen jiéhūn duō jiǔ le?
Èrshí nián <le>.

How long have you been married?
20 years.

Note

A connection with the present, once established with a final le, may persist even without repetition of le, hence the <> in the responses above and below.

b) Continuous action

When visitors to your Chinese class ask how long you have been studying the language – as visitors are wont to do – they are asking about *continuous action*. The assumption (supported by the English tense with *-ing*) is that you began studying at some time in the past, and your study since, if not continuous, has followed stage by stage. The situation can be envisioned as follows:

event* le ~~~~~→|le <continuous action, eg: studying, living>

Chinese signals continuous action through the present with two le's, one directly after the verb and the other at the foot of the sentence (after the duration phrase). We will not attempt to rationalize the two le's except to note that such sentences inevitably involve quantified objects (in the form of duration phrases) as well as a link with the present.

Nǐ xué le jǐ nián le?
Liǎng nián <le>.

How long have you been studying [Chinese]?
Two years.

Nǐ děng le duō jiǔ le? How long have you been waiting?
Bàn ge xiǎoshí <le>. *A half hour.*

Sometimes, situations that are objectively very similar can be viewed either as enduring states or as continuous actions. The choice of English tense reflects the difference.

Wǒ zài Xī'ān sān nián le.	I have been in Xi'an for 3 years. [enduring state]
Wǒ zhù zài Xī'ān sān nián le.	I have lived in Xi'an 3 years. [enduring state]
Wǒ zài Xī'ān zhù le sān nián le.	I have been living in Xi'an for 3 years. [continuous action]

In all three cases, the final le signals that the speaker wishes to convey he is still in Xi'an; without the final le, the statements would be about past events: 'I was in; I lived in....'

While it is useful to have a visual image of the difference between enduring states and continuous actions, it is also useful to keep track of particular verbs associated with each type. The following verbs tend to be associated with enduring states:

jiéhūn	Nǐmen jiéhūn jǐ nián le?
biyè	Nǐ biyè jǐ nián le?
rènshi	Nǐ rènshi tā duō jiǔ le?
zài	Nǐmen zài Běijīng duō cháng shíjiān le?

Continuous actions involve the large set of action verbs, including:

xué	Nǐ xué le jǐ nián le?
děng	Nǐ děng le duō jiǔ le?
zhù	Nǐ zài Shànghǎi zhù le duō cháng shíjiān le?
gōngzuò	Nǐ zài nàr gōngzuò le jǐ nián le?

3. Enduring states

a) Examples

- | | |
|---|---|
| i) Nǐ shì nǐ nián lái de?
<i>1997 nián.</i>
Na, nǐ yǐjīng zài zhèr liù nián le!
<i>Shì a, liù nián le.</i> | When did you come [here]?
<i>[It was] in 1997.</i>
So you've been here 6 yrs [to now] already!
<i>Yes, six years [to now].</i> |
| ii) Nǐ zài Huáshèngdùn jǐ nián le?
<i>Sān nián le. 2000 nián lái de!</i> | How many years in Washington [to now]?
<i>Three years [to now]. I came in 2000.</i> |
| iii) Nǐ zhù zài zhèr jǐ nián le?
<i>Shí nián le.</i> | How long have you lived here [to now]?
<i>Ten years [to now].</i> |

- iv) Qǐng wèn, nǐ shì jǐ niánjí de xuéshēng? May I ask what year you are?
Sān niánjí de. A junior.
 O, nǐ zài Běi Dà yǐjīng sān nián le. Oh, so you've been at Peking University 3
 years [to now] already.
Shì, sān nián le. Yes, three years [to now].
- v) Nǐ rènshi tā jǐ nián le? How long have you known her [to now].
Yǐjīng èrshí nián le. 20 years [to now] already.
- vi) Nǐ zài Zhōngguó jǐ nián le? How long have you been in China [to now]?
Sān nián le. 3 years [to now].
- vii) Nǐ zài Zhōngguó jǐ nián? How long were you in China [then]?
Sān nián. 3 years [then].

The significance of final *le* in the pattern is clear from the last two examples, (vi) and (vii). With *le*, the sentence is cued to the present; without it, it refers to time spent [there] in the past. So the sense of the final *le* is 'so far' or 'to now':

Wǒ zài Zhōngguó liù ge yuè le. *culmination > to now*

b) Another view

When yǐjīng is added to the enduring state pattern, it may be placed in one of two positions:

Wǒ yǐjīng zài zhèr yì nián le. I've been here a year already.
 Wǒ zài zhèr yǐjīng yì nián le.

The second possibility makes it appear that yǐjīng, unlike most [proper] adverbs, need not always be attached to a following adverb. However, it also turns out that many speakers place yǒu 'have' before the duration phrase, providing a rationale for the otherwise anomalous position of yǐjīng (and other adverbs).

Wǒ zài Zhōngguó yǐjīng <yǒu> I've already been in China 6 months.
 liù ge yuè le.

This suggest that the structure of such sentences is:

[Wǒ zài Zhōngguó] [yǐjīng <yǒu> liù ge yuè le.]
 subject predicate

[My being in China] [is six months long already.]

4. Continuous actions

Zhōngwén shuō+de hěn hǎo! Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ. Xué le jǐ nián le. Xué le liǎng nián le. Zhēn liǎobuqǐ!	You speak Chinese very well. Nah! How long have [you] been studying [it]? I've been studying [it] for two years. [That'] really marvelous!
Nǐ zài nǐ ge dānwèi gōngzuò? Zài yóujú. Zài nàr gōngzuò le jǐ nián le? Hěn jiǔ le – shí duō nián <le>.	Where do you work? In the post office. How long have you worked there? A long time – over 10 years.

Notes

Multiples of 10 are frequently followed by duō: shí duō nián 'more than 10 years'; èrshí duō kuài qián 'more than \$20'; yībǎi duō ge xuéshēng 'over 100 students'.

a) 'Only' and constraints on final le

One last point on the subject of *double-le* and continuous action: when asked how long you have been studying Chinese, you will naturally want to answer with a restrictive adverb, such as zhǐ 'only'. It turns out that while the English keeps the same tense in question and answer (have been studying), in Chinese, restrictive adverbs such as zhǐ 'only' [as well as gāng 'just', gāngcái 'a short while ago' and cái in its meaning of 'only'] seem to circumscribe the verbal event in such a way as to be incompatible with the final *le* (as indicated by the * below).

Zhōngwén wǒ zhǐ xué le I've only been studying Chinese for 6 months.
bàn nián *le.

Wǒ cái xué le yì nián *le. I've only been studying for a year.

Fortunately, the two new *le-functions* that have been introduced in this lesson, as well as those encountered earlier, are all frequent in the everyday exchanges that you are likely to encounter in your first year of learning Chinese, and your teacher or your friends should make sure to ask them daily so that the choice of le (rather than *shi-de* or *guo*, say), and the position of le become second nature.

Exercise 2. Compose dialogues along the following lines:

1. You write characters very well;
how long have you been studying?
About 2 years.
Have you ever been to China?
Yes, twice, last year I was in Nanjing for 2 months.

2. How long have you been in Chengdu?
Only three weeks, I got here in June.
 How long are you staying?
I'm leaving on September 1st.
3. How long have you been studying [Chinese].
A year.
 Only a year and you speak so well!
*Well, I have lots of opportunities to speak
 nowadays, but I still don't speak very well!*

III. Connecting Sentences

Conjunctions like kěshì, dànshì, and yīnwèi show logical relations between clauses:

Wǒmen bù néng xiūxi, yīnwèi
 hái yǒu hěn duō gōngkè.

We can't rest because we still have lots
 of homework.

When the subordinate clause (eg the yīnwèi clause) is placed first, the logical connection is often marked in the second clause as well. Here, we examine three such sets of paired connectors.

1. Yīnwèi...suǒyǐ 'because...so'

Yīnwèi is paired with suǒyǐ, whose literal meaning is 'so' or 'therefore'; but in many cases, it has no explicit correspondence in an English translation. In the Chinese (unlike English), when only one of the two connectors is present, it is more likely to be the second, eg suǒyǐ rather than yīnwèi.

<Yīnwèi> tiānqì hěn rè suǒyǐ
 wǒmen dōu hěn lèi.

Because the weather is so hot we're
 all tired.

Generally, conjunctions like yīnwèi and suǒyǐ precede the subject (yīnwèi tiānqì). But where a single subject persists through the sentence, then it may precede yīnwèi:

Tāmen yīnwei qián bú gòu suǒyǐ
 bù néng mǎi hěn duō dōngxì.

They can't buy a lot of things because they
 don't have much money.

2. Suīrán...kěshì / dànshì 'although'

Roughly the same conditions apply to the pair suīrán ... kěshì 'although...but'. And again, while English requires only the single conjunction 'although', Chinese often omits suīrán, leaving the only explicit signal in the second clause.

<Suīrán> fùmǔ shì Zhōngguó rén, dànshì
 tā méi qù guo Zhōngguó.

Although her parents are Chinese, she
 hasn't been to China.

Tā <suīrán> hěn è kěshì bù xiǎng chīfàn. Although he's hungry he doesn't want to eat.

3. Yàoshi...jiù

The pair yàoshi ... jiù 'if...then' is a little different from the previous two pairs. In the first place, jiù is an adverb and, unlike suǒyǐ or kěshì, has to be placed directly before a verb (or another adverb). In addition, jiù is more likely to be omitted (with slight change of nuance) than suǒyǐ or kěshì.

Yàoshi qián bú gòu, nǐmen jiù yòng xìnyòngkǎ. If [you] don't have enough money [cash], you can use a credit card.

Nǐ yàoshi méi diànnǎo kěyǐ qù wǎngbā fā email. If you don't have a computer, you can go to an internet cafe to send email.

A slightly more formal alternative for yàoshi is rúguǒ:

Rúguǒ nǐ bù xiǎng qù, nà jiù ràng wǒ qù. If you don't want to go, then let me go.

The conditional clause can also be implied either by the presence of jiù alone, or by the context:

<Yàoshi> tiānqì bù hǎo, bù néng qù. [If] the weather's bad, [we] won't be able to go.

<Yàoshi> méi qián jiù yòng xìnyòngkǎ. [If you] don't have any money, use a credit card.

Both yàoshi and rúguǒ can be buttressed by the phrase de huà, placed at the end of the clause. (Huà means 'word; speech'; the notion of de huà is similar to English 'let's say', or simply 'say', used as a conditional in sentences such as 'say it rains...then we meet inside'.)

Yàoshi nǐ yǒu diànnǎo de huà, wǒ zhèlǐ yǒu yí ge Zhōngwén ruǎnjiàn. If you [happen to] have a computer, I have some Chinese software here.

Bù néng qù de huà, jiù dǎ ge diànhuà ba! If [by chance] you can't go, then why don't you phone.

Exercise 3. Choose a pair of words and conjoin the following sentences:

1. Mài kè Qiáodān shì ge dǎlánqiú de. Tā bù zěnme ('so') gāo.
2. Tā hěn lèi. Tā bù néng gōngzuò.
3. Tā bú ràng ('let') wǒ kàn diànshì ('TV'). Wǒ bú ràng tā tīng yīnyuè. ('listen to music')

4. Zhōngwén kè hěn nán. Zhōngwén kè hěn yǒuyisi.

5. Xuéshēng hěn duō. Lǎoshī hěn gāoxìng.

6. Nǐ hē tài duō kāfēi. Nǐ yídìng hěn jǐnzhāng.

IV. Backing off; intensifying

1. Backing off

Rather than answering a *yes-no question* about a state with a clear positive response (Nǐ lèi ma? Hěn lèi!) you may want to back off a bit and answer ‘quite’ or ‘a bit’. The construction is yǒu <yì>diǎnr + SV ‘have a-bit SV’ – the yì is often elided, as shown by the <>. Taiwan and other southern Mandarin regions, which have an aversion to the final ‘r’ sound, say yǒu yìdiǎn SV. [Note the presence of yǒu in the Chinese, with no direct correspondence in the English equivalent!]

Wǒ jīntiān yǒu (yì)diǎnr máng.	I’m kind of busy today.
Jīntiān yǒu (yì)diǎnr rè.	It’s rather hot today.
Wǒmen yǒu (yì)diǎnr è.	We’re a bit hungry.
Xiàtiān yǒu (yì)diǎnr mēnrè.	Summer’s a bit humid.
Tā yǒu (yì)diǎnr guài!	(S)he’s a bit weird.
Xī’ān, qiūtiān yǒu (yì)diǎnr lěng.	[In] Xi’an, autumns are a bit cold.
Nǐ yǒu diǎnr xiàng nǐ lǎopo.	You look a bit like your wife.

This use of yìdiǎnr needs to be contrasted with yìdiǎnr used without yǒu, in expressions such as: wǒ zhǐ huì shuō yìdiǎnr ‘I only speak a little’. Both constructions can be seen in sentences such as the following:

Wǒ yǒu diǎnr lèi -- hěn xiǎng hē diǎnr kāfēi.	I’m a bit tired -- I’d like to have some coffee.
Wǒmen yǒu diǎnr è -- yào chī yìdiǎnr dōngxī!	We’re a rather hungry -- [we’] like something to eat.

2. Intensifying

Conversely, instead of backing off, or answering moderately, you may want to intensify your answer. There are a number of options, most of them operating from the adverb slot: fēicháng, literally ‘not-often’ means ‘extremely’:

Jīntiān fēicháng mēnrè! It’s extremely muggy today.

Adverbs tǐng ‘quite; very’ and mán ‘very; quite’ (but root meaning ‘fierce’) are more colloquial. Expressions with mán or tǐng often show a final de (sometimes called *situational-de*, still written as 的):

Mǎn hǎo de.	Great!
Mǎn bú cùo de.	Terrific!
Mǎn shūfu de.	[It']s really comfortable.

Tǐng hǎo de!	Great!
Tǐng lěng de.	Freezing!
Tǐng yǒu yìsi de!	Interesting!

Another intensifier is the suffix -jǐle, a compound of jǐ ‘the extreme point’ or ‘axis’ (cf. Běijí ‘North Pole’), plus le (cf. the le associated with tài). Jǐle is quite productive and can follow almost any SV to mean ‘very SV’.

Hǎo jǐle!	Excellent!
Tiānqì rè jǐle!	The weather’s extremely hot!
Hǎochī jǐle!	Delicious!

V. More on DE

We have seen de used in a variety of contexts: wǒ de, zuótiān de, IBM de (as well as in the *shi-de* pattern). Where English uses an adjectival phrase, the order is more or less the same in the two languages:

zhèi yàng de tiānqì	this kind of weather
bù hǎokàn de fēngjǐng	ugly landscape
bù yán de lǎoshī	teachers who aren’t strict
hěn cōngmíng de xuéshēng	smart students

But where English uses a that-phrase (or who-phrase) the order of elements in the two languages is different:

Kàn bào de nèige rén shì shéi?	Who’s the person reading the paper?
Dǎ lánqiú de shì wǒ gēge.	My brother’s the one playing basketball.
Qù jiē xuéshēng de shì Mǎ Róng.	Ma Rong’s the one who’s gone to pick up the students.
Dǎ diànhuà de shì wǒ de lǎoshī.	My teacher’s the one on the phone.
Wánr diànnǎo de shì tóngxué.	The person playing with the computer is a classmate.

Exercise 4. Either identify, or ask the identity of:

1. The woman [nǚde or more formally nǚshì] reading the paper.
2. The man drinking coffee.
3. The students playing basketball.
4. The girl looking at the map.

VI. Weather

1. The seasons

Though not all parts of China enjoy four seasons, most parts do, and Chinese recognizes four seasons (sìgè jìjié or sìjì). Names for seasons end with –tiān.

dōngtiān	winter
chūntiān [ch!-oo-n]	spring
xiàtiān	summer
qiūtiān [qiū rhymes with liù, jiù]	autumn; fall

Examples

Běijīng, xiàtiān hěn rè,
dōngtiān hěn lěng. Beijing[‘s] summer is hot,
[and] winter’s cold.

Guǎngdōng, dōngtiān bù lěng,
xiàtiān hěn mēnrè. [In] Canton, the winter’s aren’t
cold, the summers are hot and humid.

Tiānjīn, chūntiān hěn shūfu,
qiūtiān yě bú cuò. Tianjin’s comfortable in spring
[and] autumns not bad either.

Kūnmíng tiānqì fēicháng hǎo,
sìjì rúchūn Kunming’s weather’s great -
four seasons like spring.

Notes

The weather in Kūnmíng, and Yúnnán in general, is conventionally described with two expressions: sìjì rúchūn ‘4-seasons like-spring’; and sìjì fēnmíng ‘4-seasons divide-clear’, ie ‘having four distinct seasons’. Yunnan’s is also conventionally described as having lántiān báiyún ‘blue-skies white-clouds’.

2. China’s weather patterns

China’s geographical configuration, with a vast continental mass to its west and a large body of water to the east results in high pressure air masses over Mongolia in the winter (cold air contracts and becomes denser) and lower pressure ones over the ocean (which retains heat longer). As the continental land mass heats up through the spring, the high pressure is relieved (as air expands) while the air over the ocean (water heats more slowly) remains relatively higher density. These pressure differentials give rise to the monsoons (jìfēng in Chinese, ‘season-wind’): the winter monsoon bringing cold, dry air from the north and northwest, resulting in cold and windy winters in the Beijing region, but little snow. The summer monsoon brings warm, moist air from the ocean and gives rise to heavy fogs along the northeastern coasts.

The effect of the two monsoons is mitigated by mountain ranges, which protect the south from the cold dry winter monsoon, and the north – and to some degree the northeast - from the moisture of the summer one. Rainfall in Beijing (in the northeast) varies considerably from year to year, but is heaviest in July and August. Southern

regions, south of the Jīnlíng mountain range (which runs south of the Yellow River, south of Xī'an), have heavier rainfall, much of it between May and October. South of the Nánlíng range (which runs along the northern boundary of Canton province) the weather is subtropical, with no real winter season. On the Tibetan plateau, on the other hand, the winters are long and summer virtually nonexistent.

3. Weather

The ordinary word for weather is tiānqì, composed of 'sky' plus 'qì'. The root qì was noted earlier (Lesson 2 A.5), where it was encountered in the word kèqì 'be polite'. It is an important concept in Chinese physiology and medicine, and is familiar to English speakers as the first syllable in the word qìgōng, the name of a system of breathing exercises. Qì is sometimes translated as 'spirit' or 'essence'. It appears in a range of words having to do with weather (tiānqì, qìhòu 'climate') and mood (qìfēn 'ambiance' and shēngqì 'get angry' – ie 'give rise to qì').

Jīntiān tiānqì zěnmeyàng?	What's the weather like today?
Zuótiān tiānqì bú cuò.	The weather's not bad today.
Bōshìdùn tiānqì hái kěyǐ!	The weather in Boston is okay.
Lúndūn tiānqì bù lěng yě bú rè.	The weather in London's neither too hot, nor too cold.

4. Rain and precipitation

Corresponding to English 'it's raining', Chinese has xià yǔ, literally 'falls rain'. English provides an 'ambient' subject ['it'] and treats rain as a verb. Chinese, on the other hand, represents the same notion with a verb of motion, xià, and a noun, yǔ – the latter placed after the verb. Other kinds of precipitation follow the same pattern: xià xuě '(fall snow) to snow', xià wù '(fall fog) to be foggy'.

Nǐ kàn, xià yǔ le!	Look, it's raining.
Běijīng cóng liùyuè dào bāyuè chángcháng xià yǔ.	From June to August, it often rains in Beijing.
Dōngtiān hěn lěng, dànshì bù cháng xià xuě.	The winters are cold, but it rarely snows.
Yào xià yǔ ma?	Is it going to rain?
Jiùjīnshān cháng xià wù.	It's often foggy in SF.
Xià yǔ le méiyǒu?	Is it raining? [Has it started to rain?]
Méiyǒu, hái hǎo!	No, it's fine. [No, it hasn't, it's still fine.]

Notes:

- Paradoxically – given the fact that Chinese frequently omits subject pronouns where English requires them - English 'look' (beckoning someone) is often rendered *with* the subject pronoun in Chinese: Nǐ kàn.
- The final le 'new situation' in the first example suggests either that (a) it is just starting to rain, or (b) the speaker is just becoming aware that it is raining.
- Yào 'want' but in this context 'will; be about to'.

5. Sun and wind

Weather reports often mention the sun tàiyang, literally ‘the great yang’ – yáng being the male counterpart to yīn, the female polarity. [While there is a regional word, tàiyīn ‘the great yin’ for ‘moon’, the standard word does not incorporate yīn; rather it is composed of yuè ‘moon’ – familiar to you as the word for ‘month’ – and liàng ‘light’: yuèliàng.] Weather reports use tàiyang in the slightly extended meaning of ‘sunlight’ or ‘sunshine’, but the word yángguāng is more specifically ‘sunlight; sunshine’.

Wind is fēng. The semantic spread of the word fēng is interesting. It incorporates notions such as ‘landscape’ (fēngjǐng ‘scenery’, as well as the geomantic practice known as fēngshuǐ), ‘personal bearing’ (yǒu fēngdù ‘have poise’), ‘style’ (fēngliú ‘notorious’, with the positive tone of ‘renowned’ for men, and the negative tone of ‘common’ for women), ‘custom’ (fēngsú ‘social customs’) and ‘taste’ (fēngwèi ‘flavor’). The wind is said to ‘blow’: guā fēng le ‘it’s windy (blows wind)’.

Nánjīng, měitiān dōu hǎn rè kěshì kàn bujiàn tàiyáng. It’s hot every day in Nanjing, but you can’t see the sun.

Běijīng chūntiān fēng hǎn dà, tǔ hǎn duō. In the spring in Beijing, it’s windy and there’s a lot of dust.

Zuótiān tiānqì bú tài hǎo - fēng tài dà le! The weather wasn’t very good yesterday – too much wind.

6. Hot and humid; dry

Winter temperatures in China show vast variation between north and south: thus the mean temperature in January for Beijing in the northeast is $-4.6\text{C} / 23.7\text{F}$ and for Canton in the southeast is $13.5\text{C} / 56.3\text{F}$. But mean summer temperatures in north and south differ rather little. The mean average in July in Beijing is $26.0\text{C} / 78.8\text{F}$, in Canton, it is $28.3\text{C} / 82.9\text{F}$. Temperature (wēndù) is expressed in dù ‘degrees’ Celsius (Shèshì), as opposed to Fahrenheit (Huáshì). In the summer, most of the heavily populated parts of China are hot and humid, or ‘muggy’: mēnrè, literally ‘stuffy and hot’, or cháoshī ‘moist; damp’. The opposite is gānzào ‘dry; arid’ (and in other contexts, ‘dull; uninteresting’).

Guǎngzhōu hǎn mēnrè, báitiān sānshí dù, yèlǐ èrshíwǔ dù! Canton (city)’s very humid – 30 in the daytime, 25 at night!

Shèshì 23 dù shì Huáshì 73 dù ba. 23C is 73F, right?

Wēndù shì duōshao? What’s the temperature?

Wǒ zuì bù xǐhuan mēnrè chǎoshī de tiānqì. I hate hot and humid weather.

7. Yòu...yòu...(又...又)

Yòu, with falling tone has a core meaning of ‘once again’, but yòu reiterated before a pair of verbs – more commonly SVs – often translates as ‘both...and’ or, simply, ‘and’:

Yòu kuài yòu shūfu.	[It’]s fast and comfortable.
Yòu lèi yòu jǐnzhāng.	Tired and anxious.
Yòu lèi yòu è.	Tired and hungry.
Yòu mēn yòu rè.	Hot and humid.

Exercise 5.

1) Written weather reports

Weather reports in Chinese newspapers are usually limited to a brief description of the skies, the wind velocity and the high and low temperatures. The language is concise rather than colloquial, but otherwise fairly straightforward. Here are some examples, transcribed in pinyin and with added glosses. The first is from a newspaper sold in Nanjing called *Yángzi Wǎnbào* (‘Yangtze Evening News’); the Arabic numbers are in the original. The second is taken, slightly edited, from the internet.

(a) *Yángzi Wǎnbào*, 1999 nián, 7 yuè, 26 hào (unedited)

Nánjīng shìqū tiānqì: jīntiān xiàwǔ dào yèlǐ duō yún,
Nánjīng city-region afternoon to night many clouds

míngtiān báitiān duō yún zhuǎn yīn yǒu zhènyǔ,
tomorrow daytime becoming overcast have showers

piān dōng fēng 4-5 jí, wēndù 33 C – 25 C.
towards east wind temp.

(b) Internet, 1999 nián 10 yuè 25 rì (edited slightly)

Běijīng: duō yún zhuǎn qíng, piān xī fēng 3 jí, wēndù 20-24.
many clouds becoming clear towards west wind temp

Glossary:

yún	‘clouds’	zhuǎn	‘to turn’
yīn	‘overcast’	qíng	‘clear’
zhènyǔ	‘a shower of rain’	yǔtiān	‘rain day’
yīntiān	‘overcast sky’	qíngtiān	‘clear sky’

2) Weather in Mainland cities

Below is a chart that shows the weather in the main Mainland (Dàlù) cities. From it, you can read off temperature, cloud and rain conditions. The temperatures, of course, you can

characterize as lěng or rè etc. The other conditions (zhuǎn yīn, duō yún etc.) will sound like what they are - weather report language; but in the context, that is acceptable.

Dàlù Tiānqì

Guǎng- zhōu*	Fú- zhōu	Kūn- míng	Hàn- kǒu	Háng- zhōu	Shàng- hǎi	Nán- jīng	Běi- jīng	Tiān- jīn	Xī- 'ān	Kāi- fēng	Shěn- yáng
duō yún	zhuǎn yīn	zhèn- yǔ	yǔ- tiān	duō yún	yǔ- tiān	zhuǎn qíng	duō yún	zhuǎn yīn	yīn- tiān	qíng- tiān	yǔ- tiān
31 27	35 26	22 19	25 23	33 25	30 24	25 23	27 20	26 18	28 22	30 22	25 20

Notes

A large number of Mainland cities have zhōu as their second syllable: Sūzhōu, Hángzhōu, Xúzhōu, Lánzhōu, Fúzhōu, Chángzhōu, Yángzhōu, Guǎngzhōu, Gǎnzhōu etc. In old China, zhōu was an administrative unit, and the various cities that retain this syllable were once provincial centers.

VII. Dialogue

Jiǎ is a student from abroad, studying in China for the summer. *Yǐ* is from Beijing.

Jiǎ	Ng, jīntiān yǒu diǎnr rè, shì ma?	Hm, it's a bit hot today, isn't it?
Yǐ	<i>Shì, Běijīng xiàtiān dōu shì zhèi yàngr, yòu rè yòu mēn. Qiūtiān chūntiān bǐjiào hǎo. Dōngtiān lěng, kěshì bù cháng xià xuě.</i>	<i>Yes, summer in Beijing is always like this, hot and muggy. Spring and autumn are better. Winter's cold, but it doesn't snow much.</i>
Jiǎ	Hěn rè, kěshì kàn bu jiàn tàiyang. Zhèi-yàng de tiānqì, nǐmen zěnme shuō ne?	It's hot, but you can't see the sun. How do you describe this kind of weather?
Yǐ	<i>Hm, zěnme shuō...yǒu diǎnr huīmēngmēng-de. Yě kěyǐ shuō wùmēngmēng-de.</i>	<i>Hm, how do [we] say it...it's a bit overcast; or we can say it's a bit hazy.</i>
Jiǎ	Kàn bu jiàn tàiyang, kěshì yǒu yángguāng, shì bu shì?	You can't see the sun, but there's sunlight, isn't there?
Yǐ	<i>Ng, xiàtiān dōu shì zhèi yàngr! Nǐ jiàqī dāsuan zuò shénme?</i>	<i>Yeh, summers are always like that. What are you planning to do over the break?</i>
Jiǎ	Wǒmen dào Kūnmíng qu.	We're going to Kunming.

Yī	<i>Kūnmíng, aiya, hěn yuǎn.</i>	<i>Kunming, wow, [that]'s far.</i>
Jiǎ	Wǒmen qù Kūnmíng yīnwèi tīngshuō Kūnmíng tiānqì hěn hǎo, bù zěnmē rè!	We're going to Kunming because [we] hear the weather's nice [there], [it]'s not so hot!
Yī	<i>Wǒmen cháng shuō Kūnmíng tiānqì dōu shì chūntiān - sìjì rúchūn. Kōngqì yě hěn hǎo. Shì yīnwèi dìfāng hěn gāo - liǎngqiān mǐ gāo!</i>	<i>We often say [it'] always spring in Kunming - 4 seasons like spring. And the air's nice, because the place is high [up] - [it]'s 2000 m. high.</i>
Jiǎ	Liǎngqiān mǐ, nà jiùshì liùqiān chǐ. Shì hěn gāo! Tiānqì huì bú huì tài liáng?	2000 meters, that's 6000 feet. That is high. Will the weather [there] be too cool?
Yī	<i>Yèlǐ yǒu diǎnr liáng, kěshì báitiān dōu hěn hǎo. Cóng liúyuè dào bāyuè cháng xià yǔ, kěshì tàiyang yě hěn duō.</i>	<i>Nights are a bit cool, but days are fine. From July to August, it often rains, but there's also a lot of sun.</i>
Jiǎ	Kūnmíng dōngtiān zěnmeyàng?	How are the winters in Kunming?
Yī	<i>Dōngtiān yǒu diǎnr lěng, kěshì bú shì tài lěng, háishi hěn shūfu.</i>	<i>Winters are a bit cool, but not too cold, [they']re still comfortable.</i>
Jiǎ	Nǐ qù guo ma?	Have you [ever] been?
Yī	<i>Qù guo, wǒ shūshu zhù zài Kūnmíng.</i>	<i>I have, my uncle lives in Kunming.</i>
Jiǎ	Nǐ shūshu?	Your uncle?
Yī	<i>Shì, wǒ bàba de dìdi.</i>	<i>Yes, my father's younger brother.</i>
Jiǎ	Nà nǐ ne, jiàqī nǐ dǎsuàn zuò shénme?	And you, what are you thinking of doing over the break?
Yī	<i>Wǒ bú zuò shénme, wǒ huì zài zhèr, xiūxi xiūxi.</i>	<i>I'm not doing anything [in particular], I'll be here, resting.</i>
Jiǎ	Nà yě hǎo.	That's good too!

Notes

- a) Kàn bu jiàn: another in the class of expression also represented by shuāi bu dǎo, and tīng bu dǒng. The meaning is 'cannot see' (rather than just 'doesn't see').
b) Huī mēng mēng-de; wù mēng mēng-de. In both cases, the tone on *mengmeng*

varies; some say mēngmēng (as in the dialogue), others say méngméng. You can check to see what tone your friends use. There is uncertainty about how best to describe the kind of bright and hazy skies that dominate much of eastern and northeastern China during the summer months. Huīmēngmēng-de suggests ‘overcast’ (huī ‘grey’); wùmēngmēng-de suggests ‘hazy’ (wù ‘fog’). Neither quite describes a sky that is just obscure, but the search for the right word can provide some interesting conversational opportunities for you.

c) Bù zěnme rè ‘not so hot’, making use of the indefinite function of zěnme; cf. bù zěnme gāo, bù zěnme shūfu.

d) Kōngqì ‘empty-air’, ie ‘the air; atmosphere’.

e) Chinese uses the metric system, eg mǐ ‘meter’, gōnglǐ ‘kilometer’.

f) Shì hěn gāo, with shì providing emphasis, ‘it is the case that’.

g) Huì zài zhèr, with huì here in the sense of ‘likely to; going to’.

VIII. A Narrative

The following is a letter from a student studying in China to a friend back home. It incorporates vocabulary and sentence patterns from the first seven lessons, and also introduces a few dozen new words, which are underlined in the text and glossed in the notes that follow. Once you have practiced reading the passage aloud so that you can read it with fluency and feeling, you should translate it carefully, making sure that you have accounted for everything in the Chinese and that the English reads naturally. Once you are satisfied with your translation, use it to back-translate into Chinese and see if you can learn to retell ‘the story’.

-----:-----

Qīn’ài de -----:

Nǐ hǎo, wǒ xiànzài zài Běijīng! Fēijī shàng bú cuò, kàn le liǎng ge diànyǐng, tīng le hěn duō yīnyuè. Suīrán yǒu yìdiǎnr yuǎn, kěshì hěn yǒuyìsi. Wǒ shì yíyuè shíhào dào de. Běijīng Dàxué de Kǒng lǎoshī lái jiē wǒ. Wǒ zhù de sùshè zài Běijīng Dàxué, lí shàng kè de dìfang bù yuǎn. Sùshè hěn dà, yǒu liù qī ge dàlóu. Kěshì zhǐ yǒu wàiguó rén néng zhù zài nàr; yǒu Ōuzhōurén, Měiguó rén, Riběnrén, yě yǒu Hánguó rén. Suīrán tāmen dōu dòng Yīngwén, kěshì shuō+de bú tài hǎo, suǒyǐ wǒmen zài yìqǐ píngcháng dōu shuō Zhōngwén. Kàn nàme duō wàiguó rén dōu zài nàr shuō Zhōngwén, Zhōngguó rén juéde hěn qíguài. Běi Dà de Zhōngguó xuéshēng yě yào gēn wǒmen shuō Yīngwén, suǒyǐ wǒmen shuōhuà de shíhou, tāmen gēn wǒmen shuō Yīngwén, wǒmen gen tamen shuō Zhōngwén. Báitiān wǒmen dōu zài wàitou shàng kè, chīfàn, zuò gōngkè, kěshì wǎnshàng huí sùshè. Zhōumò, wǒmen qù chéng lǐ pào zài kāfēiguǎn, lěngyǐndiàn, xiǎochīdiàn. Běijīng chéng lǐ hěn rènao, wǒ hěn xǐhuān.

Běijīng dōngtiān shì cóng shíyī yuè dào èryuè. Fēicháng lěng, fēng yě hěn dà, kěshì bù cháng xià xuě. Jīntiān shì qíngtiān, língxià wǔ dù, nà jiùshì Huáshì 23 dù. Yǒu diǎnr lěng méi guānxi; wǒ yǒu yí jiàn mián’ǎo – nà shì Zhōngguó rén chuān de yīfu; wǒ yě yǒu yí dǐng Měnggǔ màozi! Hěn nuǎnhuó! Zhōngguó péngyou dōu shuō wǒ xiàng ge qībāshí niándài de Zhōngguó rén. Tāmen bǐjiào xǐhuān chuān yǔróngfú (‘down-filled coat’).

Xiàge xīngqī yīnwèi shì Xīn Nián, suǒyǐ Zhōngguó tóngxué dōu yào huíjiā guònián. Chūn Jié (jiùshì xià ge xīngqīliù), Lín lǎoshī qǐng wǒmen qù tā shūshu de jiā chīfàn. Tā shūshu shì Zhōngguó hěn yǒumíng de chúshī, zài Běijīng Dàfàndiàn gōngzuò. Wǒmen shàngge xīngqī shì zài nàr rènshi tā de. Tā zhù zài Wángfǔjǐng, Běijīng zuì rēnao de dàjiē. Tā shuō yǐjīng zài nàr 25 nián le, suīrán yǒu diǎnr chǎo, kěshì tā bù xiǎng zhù biéde dìfang.

Nà, wǒ zài Běijīng yǐjīng sān ge xīngqī le, juéde hěn hǎo wánr. Háiméi qù guo Cháng Chéng, kěshì wǒ hé tóngxué dǎsuàn èryuè qù nàr. Wǒmen èryuè yíhào yào kāi xué le. Wǒ dǎsuàn shàng sān mén kè, měitiān yǒu sān sì táng. Bān bú dà, dōu shì xiǎobān, suǒyǐ shuō Zhōngwén de jīhuì hěn duō ya. Tīngshuō zuòyè bù shǎo, měi ge xīngqī dēi tīng lùyīn, xuéxí hěn duō Hànzì. Nà wǒ zhǐ hǎo hǎohǎo xuéxí tiāntiān xiàng shàng.

Zhù nǐ xīnnián kuàilè!

Nǐ de péngyou -----.

2004.1.18

Vocabulary

Qīn’ài de _____	‘Dear.... (intimate-love)’
sùshè	‘dormitory’
zài yìqǐ	‘together (be+at together)’
qíguài	SV ‘strange’
gēn wǒmen	‘with; to us’, <i>positioned before</i> verbs such as <u>shuō</u> , <u>jiǎng</u>
pào (zài)	‘hang out’; <u>pào</u> ’s original meaning of ‘steep; brew’ – as of tea – has a colloquial extension, meaning ‘to dawdle; hang around’. In some common phrases, it appears without <u>zài</u> : <u>pào jiǔguǎnr</u> ‘hang out at bars’, <u>pào wǎngbā</u> ‘hang out at netcafes’.

qíngtiān	N. ‘clear skies’. Note the usage: <u>Shì qíngtiān</u> ; <u>shì yīntiān</u> .
mián’ǎo	‘Chinese padded jacket (cotton-jacket)’; M <u>jiàn</u> for clothes.
chuān	‘wear’ (clothes, but not accessories such as hats, belts, ties).
Měnggǔ màozi	‘Mongolian hat’; M <u>dǐng</u> for hats.
nuǎnhuó!	‘be hot; feel hot’ [of people, or weather]
qībāshí	= qīshí, bāshí
niándài	‘era; decade’, as in <u>bāshí niándài</u> ‘the 80s’.
Xīn Nián	‘New Year’
guònián	‘pass the new year’
Chūn Jié	‘The Spring Festival’, ie the Lunar New Year
chúshī	‘a cook; chef (kitchen-teacher)’
fàndiàn	‘hotel’. Fancy hotels in China were apparently associated with fine food, hence <u>fàn-diàn</u> . Despite its etymology, <u>fàndiàn</u> does not usually mean ‘restaurant’; nor is it used as a generic for ‘hotel’ (as in the question ‘could you direct me to a good hotel’), but appears in hotel names.
Běijīng Dàfàndiàn	considered the first modern hotel in Beijing – an interesting example of Soviet grand style. It was built in the 50s to house foreign guests, and enlarged with a new wing in 1974, when it still towered over the low buildings of the area just east of Tian’anmen Square in central Beijing.
Wángfǔjǐng	literally ‘prince’s residence well’, the name of one of Beijing’s best know streets.
dàjiē	‘avenue (big-street)’
chǎo	‘be noisy’
Chángchéng	‘The Great Wall (long wall)’, often known as the <u>Wànlǐ Chángchéng</u> ‘10,000-li long-wall’.
bān	used as a noun here, rather than a M
jīhuì	‘opportunity’
měi ge	‘every; each’, cf. <u>měitiān</u> ‘everyday’
lùyīn	‘a tape recording; to make a tape recording (record-sound)’
zhǐ hǎo	‘can only; have no choice but to; have to (only good)’
zhù	‘wish; to extend blessings etc.’ (homophonous with ‘live’)
kuàilè!	‘happiness’
Nǐ de péngyou _____	the normal signoff for personal letters; also <u>nǐ de tóngxué</u> etc.
2004.1.18	Note that Chinese writes dates in converging order: Y/M/D

The phrase hǎohǎo xuéxí tiāntiān xiàng shàng is said to have been spoken by Mao Zedong, and often appears on school walls to urge children to work hard. Hǎohǎo is an adverbial (formed from the repetition of the SV) and can be translated as ‘properly; well’; xiàng shàng means literally ‘towards above’, in otherwords, ‘make progress’.

Exercise 6. Translate:

1. Although the dorm's residents are foreigners, there are still lots of opportunities to speak Chinese. How come [you ask]? It's because we spend our days out, talking to Chinese students.
2. I came to Nanjing in November 2002, and now it's December 2003, so I've been here for a year. I work at the Grand Hotel (Gǔ Nándū Fàndiàn), and I live there too, on the 16th floor. It's a bit noisy, but it's very comfortable.
3. We have class every morning from 9 to noon, but only 4 days a week. On Wednesday, we don't have any classes, so we go into Nanjing to walk about and see interesting places in town.

IX. Miscellany

1. Finding out how to address someone

Frequently, in talking to someone with status, it may not be clear what form of address is appropriate. At such times a direct inquiry will help, using the verb chēnghu 'call or address', or as is appropriate in this context, 'be called; be addressed':

- Jiǎ. Qǐng wèn, nín zěnmē chēnghu? Excuse me, sir/madame, how should you be addressed?
Yǐ Nǐmen jiào wǒ Yáng lǎoshī jiù hǎo le. It's fine if you call me Yang laoshi.

2. Xiǎo, Lǎo and Dà prefixed to names

a) Good friends may address one another with the friendly appellatives xiǎo '(small) young', lǎo 'old', and occasionally, dà 'big', placed before a surname. In addition, families will (more in the northeast than south) sometimes use xiǎo, and occasionally dà in front of the last syllable of a *given name*. Here are some examples:

full name	sex	informal	intimate	with title (formal)
Bái Sùzhēn	fem.	xiǎo Bái	xiǎo Zhēn	Bái lǎoshī
Zhāng Dàmíng	male	lǎo Zhāng	xiǎo Míng	Zhāng jīnglǐ
Liáng Àimín	fem.	xiǎo Liáng	xiǎo Mín	Liáng zhǔrèn
Wáng Zhìzhì	male	dà Wáng	dà Zhì	Wáng xiānshēng

The choice of xiǎo, lǎo or dà depends on a number of factors, including age, physical appearance, and personality. Older males, and occasionally, older females can be referred to as lǎo + surname: lǎo Wáng; lǎo Wèi. Younger males and females may be called xiǎo + surname or, among family, xiǎo + last syllable of míngzi: xiǎo Máo; xiǎo Míng; xiǎo Zhēn. And a tall person, particularly to distinguish him from another (shorter) person with the same surname, may be called dà: dà Chén, dà Bái. But foreigners should be wary of using such appellatives, and use name + title, full name, or míngzi when

addressing Chinese unless explicitly told to use a more informal or intimate form by a Chinese friend.

3. Interjections

Interjections are conventionalized carriers of emotion, typically providing context for a following sentence; cf. English: aha (recognition), yikes (surprise and fear), whoopee (happiness). Interjections sometimes employ sounds outside the regular linguistic system, such as the English alveolar clicks, conventionally spelled *tsk tsk* or *tut tut* (disapproval).

Few textbooks – or grammars of Chinese – have much to say about interjections. However, they are quite frequent in informal speech, and need to be considered. A good place to look for them in written form is comics and advertisements (though you will have to conduct a survey of native speakers to see how the interjections are actually pronounced). Here is an example from the label of a bottle of a popular brand of fruit drink:

Shuǐjīng Pútáo – (嗯) hǎo hē!
'Crystal Grape, -- (ng, mm?), delicious!'

The character 嗯 contains the 'phonetic element' 恩 ēn, but the interjection is probably pronounced mm in this context.

Though they may occur elsewhere, interjections in Chinese are more frequent in initial position – or rather, prior position; though they often have a fixed intonation, it is not quite the same as the pitch and contour of the regular tones. The following list is tentative; as you observe Chinese speaking, you can add or amend it.

Ā	<i>Mild interest;</i> Ā, hěn yǒu yìsi.
Á	<i>Surprise</i> Á, yòu lái le! 'What – you again?'
Āi	<i>resignation; darn; alas</i> Āi, zhēn kǎixī.
Āiyā	<i>wonder; wow!</i>
Āiyō ~ yō	<i>surprise; discomfort; yikes!</i>
Hà	<i>satisfaction; Ha!</i>
Hài	<i>regret</i>
Hēi	<i>impatience; say; hey</i>

Ng ~ M ~ uhn (falling)	weak assent; acknowledgement; uh huh
Ó	<i>surprise</i> ; huh?
Q<i>	<i>contempt</i> ; for shame!
Wei	hello [telephoning; calling to someone]
Yí	<i>surprise</i> ; what?

4. Examples of ‘vivid SVs’ of the form *XYY-de*

In the last few lessons, you have seen vivid adjectives formed from SV roots and repeated syllables: huáliūliū-de; huīmēngmēng-de. At this stage, rather than trying to incorporate them in sentences, it is easier to let them stand as isolated comments: huáliūliū-de ‘they’re slimy’; huīmēngmēng-de ‘it’s overcast’. The list below gives you a sense of the variety and tone of these vivid SVs. They are compounds of monosyllabic SVs and repeated syllable (often level toned, sometimes rising), many of which do not occur outside these expressions. Primary stress is on the last syllable: húaliūLIŪ-de. The final *de* (的) is difficult to relate to others. In many cases, the added syllables do not occur outside the vivid expression. Vivid SVs of this type cannot be modified by ‘adverbs of degree’ such as hěn or tài.

cháohūhū-de	(cháo ‘damp’)	damp; clammy
hēiyōuyōu-de	(hēi ‘black’)	jet black [of hair, soil]
huīliūliū-de	(huī ‘grey’)	gloomy [mood] skies)
làsīsī-de	(là ‘peppery hot’)	hot; peppery [food]
lètàotáo-de	(lè, cf. kuàilè ‘happy’)	happy [of children; life]
lěngbīngbīng-de	(lěng + bīng ‘ice’)	icy cold [of iron, facial expressions]
luànhōnghōng-de	(luàn ‘chaotic’)	tumultuous
míngguāngguāng-de	(míng)	gleaming [metal]
rètēngtēng(~téng)-de	(rè)	steaming hot [of buns, noodles]
rèhūhū-de	(rè)	piping hot [of a stove, heater]
rèhōnghōng-de	(rè)	very warm; boiling [of weather]
kōngdàngdàng-de	(kōng ‘empty’)	empty; deserted [of station, mall]
xiāngpēnpēn-de	(xiāng ‘fragrant’)	sweet smelling; savory; appetizing

XI. Pronunciation and pinyin

1. Tones:

a	b	c	d
Gāo ma?	Hěn gāo.	Bù gāo.	Gāo bu gāo?
Nán ma?	Hěn nán.	Bù nán.	Nán bu nán?
Hǎo ma?	Hěn hǎo.	Bù hǎo.	Lěng bu lěng?
Lèi ma?	Hěn lèi.	Bú lèi.	Lèi bu lèi?
e	f	g	
Zhēn gāo.	Zhēn bù gāo.	Bú tài gāo.	
Zhēn nán.	Zhēn bù máng.	Bú tài máng	
Zhēn lěng.	Zhēn bù hǎo.	Bú tài hǎo.	
Zhēn tàng.	Zhēn bú è.	Bú tài rè.	

2. Phrases for pronunciation practice

Here are some words and phrases (many of them, signs) that you have not encountered before. Meanings are provided only to satisfy curiosity. With your developing knowledge of pinyin, you can try reading them aloud:

jūzhùqū	‘residential district (reside-live-district)’
zhíxiáshì	‘(direct-jurisdiction-city)’; a city that is ruled directly by the central government, eg <u>Běijīng</u> , <u>Tiānjīn(g)</u> and <u>Chóngqìng</u> in present-day China. Cf. Washington D.C.
jiāotōng shūniǔ	‘communication or transportation hub (communication pivot)’, eg Zhèngzhōu.
sīfǎjú	‘(judiciary bureau)’
ānquán tōngdào	‘emergency route (safety route)’
jǐnjí chūkǒu	‘emergency exit (emergency exit)’
shāngwù-zhōngxīn	‘business-center’
gòuwù-zhōngxīn	‘shopping center (buying-center)’
qǐngwù xīyān	‘No smoking please (request-don’t draw+in-smoke)’
yíngyè shíjiān	‘business hours (operation hours)’

xiǎoxīn ménxì ‘Mind the gap (careful door-crevice)’

3. Pronunciation practice with some colloquial words with the r-suffix:

gòujìn	‘strong [in taste]; too much! (sufficient-strength)’
húzuǐ	‘spout [of a kettle] (kettle-mouth)’
xiǎoqǔ	‘a popular ditty; song (little-tune)’
xiǎopiàor	‘banknote of low value (little-bill)’
dònghuàpiànr	‘cartoon (move-drawing-film)’
pūgaijuǎnr	‘bed roll; bed kit (bedclothes-roll)’
chǒujuér	‘clown’
nǚjuér	‘actress’

XI. Class focus

A week has 7 days, a month has 4 weeks....

When did you come to Beijing? So you’ve been here 5 years.

Where do you work? How do you get to work? What do you do when it rains?

How long have you been studying [Chinese]? Only one year – you speak so well!

She was born in China, but...

If you don’t have a computer, you can...

I’m not going to class today because....

I’m a bit hungry so I’d like to have a bit to eat.

Who’s the woman reading the paper?

Seasons, weather, skies, temperature, wind and rain, height, day versus night.

How to you describe the sky – it’s not overcast, but you can’t see the sun.

XII. Rhymes

1. A schoolboy's ~ girl's lament

Dúshū rú dāng nú, jiàn shī rú jiàn hǔ Qín huáng shāobújìn, shǐ wǒ yì shēng kǔ!	study-books like be slave see teacher like see tiger Qin emperor burn-not-exhaust make me one life bitter!
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Notes

- a) Rú is a more formal equivalent to xiàng 'resemble'.
- b) Shāobujìn has the same form as duìbuqǐ or kànbujiàn.
- c) Shǐ 'to cause to'.

The Qín dynasty (Qín cháo), 221-206 BC, grew from a small state in the west of what is now China into a powerful kingdom that eventually united the smaller Chinese states and created the first imperial dynasty ruled by King Zhèng. The King styled himself Shǐ Huángdì 'First Emperor' and aided by his minister, Lǐ Sī, consolidated his power through ruthless but effective political measures. These include the notorious (and no doubt exaggerated) 'burning of books (shāo shū)' – the event referred to in the penultimate line of the rhyme. Under Shǐ Huángdì, walls built earlier to keep out non-Han peoples from the north were connected to make the original 'Long Wall' (Cháng Chéng) – along a different route from the one seen today.

2. And another animal up to his tricks:

Huā māo 'tabby cat'

Xiǎo huāmāo, shàng xuéxiào, lǎoshī jiǎng kè, tā shuìjiào: yí ge ěrduo tīng, yí ge ěrduo mào, nǐ shuō kěxiào bù kěxiào?	little tabby-cat, attend school teacher give lesson, (s)he sleeps one ear listens, one ear blocked you say funny or not?
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Notes

Kěxiào 'funny'; cf. kě'ài 'lovable' and kěpà 'fearsome'.