

## 第一课 Dì-yī kè

## Lesson 1

名不正则言不顺，言不顺 则事不成

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

Name not proper then words not effective, words not effective then things won't succeed.

On the 'rectification of names'.

Confucius, *Analects*. Classical Chinese.

## 1.1 General features of Chinese texts

- 1.1.1 *Size* Regardless of complexity, characters are matched in overall size, fitting into an imaginary rectangle along the lines indicated in the following example (in simplified characters). For this reason, characters are also called fāngkuàizì 'squared writing'.

上海天气很热 ○ Shànghǎi tiānqì hěn rè.

- 1.1.2 *Spacing* Characters are evenly spaced regardless of whether they represent whole words or components of words. Compare the character version of the sentence above and the pinyin version. Though the convention is not always consistently followed, pinyin places spaces between words rather than syllables. Characters are evenly spaced, regardless of word boundaries.

- 1.1.3 *Punctuation* Modern Chinese written material makes use of punctuation conventions that are similar in form to those of English, though not always identical in function:

Periods, full stops: traditionally '。', but nowadays also '.'

Commas: '，' and '、', the latter for lists (enumeration)

Quotes: traditionally 「 - 」 or 《 》, but nowadays also ' ' and “ ”

Proper names: usually unmarked, though in a few texts, indicated by wavy underline. There is nothing comparable to a capital letter in Chinese.

*Other punctuation will be noted as encountered.*

- 1.1.4 *Direction* Traditionally, Chinese has been written downwards, from right column to left. Major writing reforms instituted in the 1950s in the PRC not only formalized a set of simplified characters (see next item) but required them to be written horizontally, from left to right, like modern European languages. As a result, Chinese texts now come in two basic formats. Material originating in Taiwan and traditional overseas communities, or

on the Mainland prior to the reforms, is written with traditional characters that are – with a few exceptions such as in headlines and on forms – arranged vertically (top to bottom and right to left). Material originating in the Mainland, in Singapore (again, with some exceptions for religious or special genres) and in some overseas communities, after the reforms of the 1950s, is written with simplified characters arranged horizontally, left to right.

(Chinese has provided the model for most of the scripts that write vertically – at least in East Asia. Vertical writing is still the norm in Japan, coexisting with horizontal writing. Other scripts of the region, such as Mongolian, whose writing system derives ultimately from an Indian prototype, have also followed the traditional Chinese format.)

## 1.2 The form of characters

Characters are the primary unit for writing Chinese. Just as English letters may have several forms (eg g /g, a/a) and styles (eg *italic*), so Chinese characters also have various realizations. Some styles that developed in early historical periods survive to this day in special functions. Seals, for example, are still often inscribed in the ‘seal script’, first developed during the Qin dynasty (3<sup>rd</sup> C. BCE). Other impressionistic, running scripts, developed by calligraphers, are still used in handwriting and art. Advertisements and shop signs may stretch or contort graphs for their own design purposes. *Manga* style comics animate onomatopoeic characters – characters that represent sound – in idiosyncratic ways. Putting such variants aside, it is estimated that the number of characters appearing in modern texts is about 6-7000 (cf. Hannas 1997, pp 130-33, and particularly table 3). Though it is far fewer than the number cited in the largest historical dictionaries, which include characters from all historical periods, it is still a disturbingly large number.

### 1.2.1 Radicals and phonetics

There are ameliorating factors that make the Chinese writing system more learnable than it might otherwise be. One of the most significant is the fact that characters have elements in common; not just a selection of strokes, but also larger constituents. Between 2/3 and 3/4 of common characters (cf. DeFrancis 1984, p. 110 and *passim*) consist of two elements, both of which can also stand alone as characters in their own right. Historically, these elements are either roots, in which case they are called ‘phonetics’, or classifiers, in which case they are called (paradoxically) ‘radicals’. Thus, 忘 *wàng* ‘forget’ contains 亡 as phonetic and 心 as classifier; 語 *yǔ* ‘language’ has 吾 and 言. The significance of the terms phonetic and classifier will be discussed in a later unit. For now, it is enough to know that the basic graphs are components of a large number of compound graphs: 亡 appears in 忙 and 氓, for example; 心 in 志 and 忠; 言 in 謝 and 說; 吾 in 悟 and 晤. Even this set of component graphs numbers in the high hundreds, but familiarity with them allows many characters to be learned as a pairing of higher order constituents rather than a composite of strokes.

### 1.2.2 Simplified characters

Chinese policy makers have also tried to make the writing system more learnable by introducing the Chinese equivalent of spelling reform, which takes the form of reducing the number of strokes in complicated characters: 國 becomes 国; 邊 becomes 边. The two sets are usually called ‘traditional’ and ‘simplified’ in English, *fántǐzì* (‘complicated-body-characters’) and *jiǎntǐzì* (‘simple-body-characters’) in Chinese.

For almost 2000 years in China, serious genres of writing were written in the *kǎishū* script (‘model writing’) that first appeared in the early centuries of the first millennium. In the 1950s, the Mainland government, seeking to increase literacy, formalized a set of simplified characters to replace many of the more complicated of the traditional forms. Many of these simplified characters were based on calligraphic and other styles in earlier use; but others were novel graphs that followed traditional patterns of character creation.

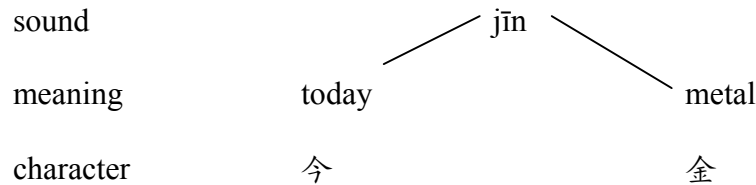
For the learner, this simplification is a mixed blessing – and possibly no blessing at all. For while it ostensibly makes writing characters simpler, it also made them less redundant for reading: 樂 and 東 (used to write the words for ‘music’ and ‘east’, respectively) are quite distinct in the traditional set; but their simplified versions, 乐 and 东, are easy to confuse. Moreover, Chinese communities did not all agree on the new reforms. The simplified set, along with horizontal writing, was officially adopted by the PRC in the late 1950s and (for most purposes) by Singapore in the 1960s. But Taiwan, most overseas Chinese communities and, until its return to the PRC, Hong Kong, retained the traditional set of characters as their standard, along with vertical writing.

*Jiǎntǐzì* and *fántǐzì* should not be thought of as two writing systems, for not only are there many characters with only one form (也 yě, 很 hěn, 好 hǎo, etc), but of those that have two forms, the vast majority exhibit only minor, regular differences, eg: 说/說, 饭/飯. What remain are perhaps 3 dozen relatively common characters with distinctively divergent forms, such as: 这/這, 买/買. Careful inspection reveals that even they often have elements in common. For native Chinese readers, the two systems represent only a minor inconvenience, rather like the difference between capital and small letters in the Roman alphabet, though on a larger scale. Learners generally focus on one system for writing, but soon get used to reading in both.

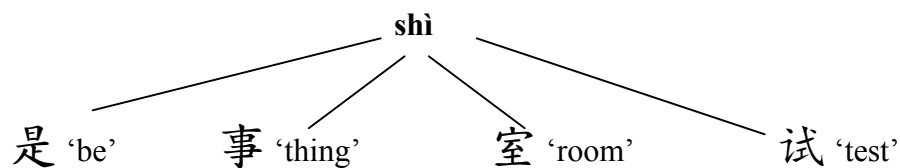
## 1.3 Function

As noted earlier, characters represent not just syllables, but syllables of particular words (whole words or parts of words). In other words, characters generally function as logograms – signs for words. Though they can be adapted to the task of representing syllables (irrespective of meaning), as when they are used to transliterate foreign personal and place names, when they serve this function they are seen as characters with their meanings suppressed (or at least, dimmed), eg: 意大利 Yìdàlì ‘Italy’, with the meanings ‘intention-big-gain’ suppressed.

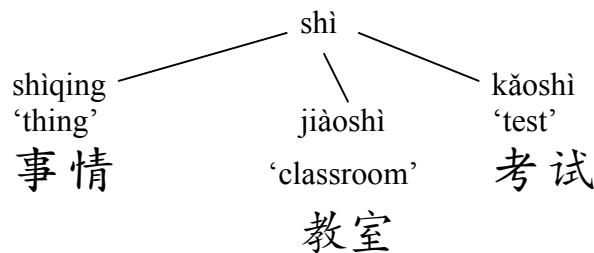
In practice, different words with identical sound (homophones) will usually be written with different characters.



Such homophony is common in Chinese at the syllable level (as the *shi*-story, described in the preliminary chapter, illustrated). Here, for example, are some common words or word parts all pronounced shì (on falling tone):



But except for high-frequency words (such as 是 shì ‘be’), *words* in Mandarin are usually *compound*, consisting of several syllables: 事情 shìqíng ‘things’; 教室 jiàoshì ‘classroom’; 考试 kǎoshì ‘examination’. At the level of the word, homophony is far rarer. In Chinese language word-processing where the input is in *pinyin*, typing shìqíng and kaoshi (most input systems do not require tones) will elicit at most only two or three options, and since most word processors organize options by frequency, in practice, this means that the characters for shìqíng and kaoshi will often be produced on the first try.



## 1.4 Writing

### 1.4.1 Writing in the age of word processors

Just as in English it is possible to read well without being able to spell every word from memory, so in Chinese it is possible to read without being able to write every character from memory. And in fact, with the advent of Chinese word processing, it is even possible to write without being able to produce every character from memory, too; for in a typical word processing program, the two steps in composing a character text are, first, to input *pinyin* and, second, to confirm – by reading – the output character, or if necessary, to select a correct one from a set of homonyms (ordered by frequency).

There is, nevertheless, still a strong case to be made for the beginning student learning to write characters by hand. First of all, there is the aesthetic experience. In the Chinese world, calligraphy – beautiful writing, writing beautifully – is valued not only as art, but also as moral training. Even if your handwriting never reaches gallery quality, the tactile experience and discipline of using a writing implement on paper (or even on a tablet computer) is valuable. Writing also serves a pedagogical function: it forces you to pay attention to details. Characters are often distinguished by no more than a single stroke:

|           |       |         |        |      |       |
|-----------|-------|---------|--------|------|-------|
| 4 strokes | 天     | 夭       | 夫      | 犬    | 太     |
|           | tiān  | yāo     | fū     | quǎn | tài   |
|           | sky   | goblin  | person | dog  | grand |
|           |       |         |        |      |       |
| 5 strokes | 白     | 申       | 田      | 甲    | 由     |
|           | bái   | shēn    | tián   | jiǎ  | yóu   |
|           | white | explain | field  | ‘A’  | from  |

Learning to write characters does not mean learning to write all characters encountered from memory, for the immense amount of time it takes to internalize the graphs inevitably takes away from the learning of vocabulary, usage and grammatical structure. This course adopts the practice of introducing material in pinyin rather exuberantly, then dosing out a subset to be read in characters. The balance of writing to reading is something to be decided by a teacher. In my view, at least in the early lessons, students should not only be able to read character material with confidence, but they should be able to write most of it if not from memory, then with no more than an occasional glance at a model. The goal is to learn the principles of writing so that any character can be reproduced by copying; and to internalize a smaller set that can be written from memory (though not necessarily in the context of an examination). These will provide a core of representative graphs and frequently encountered characters for future calligraphic endeavors.

### 1.4.2 Principles of drawing characters

Strokes are called bǐhuà(r) in Chinese. Stroke order (bǐshùn) is important for aesthetic reasons – characters often do not look right if the stroke order is not followed. Following correct stroke order also helps learning, for in addition to visual memory for characters, people develop a useful tactile memory for them by following a consistent stroke order.

#### a) Form

There are usually said to be eight basic strokes plus a number of composites. They are shown below, with names for each stroke and examples of characters that contain them.

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <u>héng</u> ‘horizontal’                         | 一 | <u>shù</u> ‘vertical’                               | 十 |
|  |   |   |   |
| <u>piě</u> ‘cast aside’ ie<br>leftwards slanting | 人 | <u>nà</u> ‘pressing down’<br>ie rightwards slanting | 入 |

|  |         |                                      |     |
|--|---------|--------------------------------------|-----|
| <u>tiǎo</u> ‘poking up’ ie<br>rightward rising | 冷 把     | <u>diǎn</u> ‘dot’                    | 小 熱 |
| <u>gōu</u> ‘hook’<br>[four variants, shown]    | 小 心 弋 买 | <u>zhé</u> ‘bend’<br>[many variants] | 马 凸 |

Composite strokes can be analyzed in terms of these eight, eg ‘horizontal plus leftwards slant’.

### b) Direction

In most cases, strokes are falling (or horizontal); only one of the eight primary strokes rises – the one called tiǎo.

### c) Order

The general rules for the ordering of strokes are given below. These rules are not detailed enough to generate word order for you, but they will help you to make sense of the order, and to recall it more easily once you have encountered it. Begin here by drawing the characters shown below as you contemplate each of the rules, and recite the names of the strokes:

|  |      |                      |   |
|--|------|----------------------|---|
| i) Horizontal ( <u>héng</u> ) before vertical ( <u>shù</u> ):  | shí  | 10                   | 十 |
| ii) Except a closing <u>héng</u> is often postponed till last:   | wáng | king; <i>surname</i> | 王 |
|  | tǔ   | soil                 | 土 |
| iii) Left stroke before right:<br>(eg <u>piě</u> before <u>nà</u> )  | bā   | 8                    | 八 |
|  | rén  | person               | 人 |
|  | mù   | wood                 | 木 |
| iv) Top before bottom:   | sān  | 3                    | 三 |
|  | yán  | speech               | 言 |
| v) Left constituent before right:<br>(eg 土 before 也)   | dì   | place                | 地 |
| vi) Boxes are drawn in 3 strokes:<br>the left vertical, then top and right,<br>ending with bottom (left to right): | kǒu  | mouth                | 口 |

vii) Frame before innards:

yuè moon; month 月

guó country 国

viii) Frames are closed last, after innards:

sì 4 四

rì sun; day 日

tián field 田

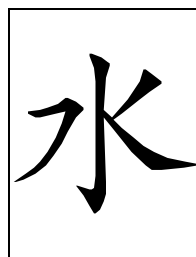
ix) For symmetrical parts, dominant

precedes minor:

xiǎo small 小

**d) Two illustrative characters**

Because of the symmetry of its form as well as the gravity of its meaning, the character that represents the root yǒng, whose basic meaning is ‘everlasting’, is often used as an illustration of the 8 basic strokes. Actually, yǒng is composed of only 5 strokes, but some of the 5 can illustrate several strokes simultaneously. Also cited, on the right, is the more common character for shuǐ, ‘water’, which is similar in form.

yǒng  
eternalshuǐ  
water

Find out the way these characters are written from a teacher (or from your flashCube links), then see if you can follow the analysis of yǒng into the 8 basic strokes by overlaying each stroke in the following set in red ink:

diǎn   héng   zhé   gōu   tiǎo   piě   piě   nà

永 永 永 永 永 永 永 永

dot

horiz'l bend  
top mid

hook

rise  
top leftfall left  
bottom left,  
top rightfall right  
bottom right

## 1.5 Presentation of characters

a) Each character is introduced in large format, with number of strokes, pronunciation and a general meaning indicated below it. Since most words are compound in Mandarin, characters generally represent parts of compounds rather than words as such. Sometimes combinational or historical information can suggest a general meaning for a particular character/syllable: 明天 ‘bright + day’ for míngtiān ‘tomorrow’. But in cases where a particular character/syllable has no independent form, it may not be possible to give a reliable meaning: 昨天 ‘? + day’ for zuótiān ‘yesterday’ (cf. ‘yester+day’ in English). In such cases, if a general meaning can be inferred from other combinations, it is given in parentheses.

b) For characters with two forms, a simplified and a traditional, both forms are given, with the traditional form above and the simplified form below.

c) Because of the difficulty of indicating the order of strokes without providing hand-drawn characters, students are asked to seek information on stroke-order from teachers or from internet links.

Some indication of the constituency of characters, as well as the number of strokes needed to draw them, is provided by the two numbers underneath each large format character. The first number is the number of strokes of the radical assigned to the character. The second number gives the strokes that remain in addition to the radical. The sum of the two numbers is the total number of strokes. Where the second number is 0 (eg 长 4+0 / 長 8+0), the character is itself a radical. In some cases, characters that have only one form have been assigned a different radical in the simplified set from that of the traditional; 弟 dì ‘younger brother’, for example, is assigned the radical 弓 in the traditional set (ie 3+4), but 人 (the first two strokes) in the simplified (ie 2+5). In such cases, both numbers are given, with the traditional radical assignment first.

d) Separate reading materials are provided for both traditional and simplified characters. The former would normally be written vertically, but for reasons of practicality, they too are presented in horizontal format.

e) Occasionally, new characters which have not been formally introduced in the character lessons are included in texts on the assumption that they can be identified from the context. Such material is underlined.

f) Writing exercises may be done by hand, or on a word-processor. Teachers may differ on policy about whether to write simplified, traditional or both. One position is to allow learners to choose one or the other, but to require consistency – no switching within a text just to avoid complicated characters! Regardless of writing choice, learners should learn to read both types.

g) Because written language serves different functions from spoken, it is not surprising to find some material specialized for written functions. In Chinese, this includes particular words, grammatical patterns, and most frequently, the use of truncated compounds (eg 已



alone, rather than the full compound, 已經 yǐjīng ‘already’). Such forms will be noted as encountered.

### Approach

In studying the characters, the following approach is recommended:

Scan the **large format** characters and the analysis and **notes** that follow them to prime yourself for the type of material that will follow;

then remind yourself of the words and phrases that contain the new characters by trying to read the section entitled **phrases**, checking your pronunciation against the pinyin that is shown below;

making use of context, do the **readings** until fluent;

finally, do the **exercises**, and practice writing the characters until familiar.

## 1.6 Numbers

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

### Notes

The graphs for 1–3 are obviously representational. The near left-right symmetry of the graphs for 4, 6, 8, and 10 is not entirely coincident. 四 seems to have represented a whole easily divided into two parts; 六’s earlier form looked very like that of 四 (with 六’s two legs matching the two inner strokes of 四). 八 (to be distinguished from 人 rén ‘person’ and 入 rù ‘enter’) is also said to have represented the notion of division (into two fours), and 十 represented a unity of the four directions and the center. Lower multiples of 10 are sometimes represented as unit characters: 廿 ‘20’ and 卅 ‘30’. However, they are still read as if written 二十 and 三十.

**Exercise 1.**

a) 九九乘法表 jiǔjiǔ chéngfǎbiǎo ‘9 [x] 9 multiplication-table’

Read the following multiplications tables aloud. [When the product is only a single digit, the rhythm is preserved by adding 得 dé ‘gets’; for similar reasons, the teens are recited as yīshí’èr, etc. rather than just shí’èr.]

|               |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 一三 <u>得</u> 三 | 一五 <u>得</u> 五 | 一九 <u>得</u> 九 |
| 二三 <u>得</u> 六 | 二五 <u>得</u> 十 | 二九一十八         |
| 三三 <u>得</u> 九 | 三五一十五         | 三九二十七         |
| 四三 <u>一十二</u> | 四五二十          | 四九三十六         |
| 五三 <u>一十五</u> | 五五二十五         | 五九四十五         |
| 六三 <u>一十八</u> | 六五三十          | 六九五十四         |
| 七三 <u>二十一</u> | 七五三十五         | 七九六十三         |
| 八三 <u>二十四</u> | 八五四十          | 八九七十二         |
| 九三 <u>二十七</u> | 九五四十五         | 九九八十一         |

b) Telephone numbers:

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

电话 / 電話 diànhuà ‘telephone’

手机 / 手機 shǒujī ‘mobile’

1. 六五九六 二九一八

一三五 0 一七五 一四四三

2. 四二七九 九四一五

一三九 三六二九 六九六四

3. 五四二七 九四一五

一三九 二0三八 五八八二

4. 五一六八 七二一九

一三0 二四六七 九九八五

5. 八二二0 七四二六

一三五 一四四三 六四八八

6. 二三八七 二七六二

0二九 二六六三 四一0九

## 1.7 Dates

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

年 月 日 (號/号)

|      |       |     |      |
|------|-------|-----|------|
| 1+5  | 4+0   | 4+0 | 3+2  |
| nián | yuè   | rì  | hào  |
| year | month | day | date |

### Notes

The characters used for yuè and rì are representational, being squared off versions of what were originally drawings of the moon and sun. Nián, on the other hand, is not obviously representational, so you might need to construct a nonsense etymology, such as: ‘A year contains four seasons; the first stroke (piě) stands for the winter, the three horizontal strokes (héng) are the growing and harvesting seasons (spring, summer and autumn); the short fourth stroke (nà) marks the harvest, and the vertical (shù) representing the continuity of the year – beginning with spring.’ However, note that the short nà stroke on the 3<sup>rd</sup> horizontal is drawn before the lowest horizontal, presumably following the stroke order principle of closing stroke last.

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

1999 年 7 月 26 日  
2002 年 2 月 11 日  
1998 年 5 月 7 日

Interestingly, it is often the traditional, ‘lunar calendar’ dates that are written out in full, with the numbers also represented in Chinese characters. The Chinese lunar calendar consists of 12 months of 29 to 30 days, plus intercalary months inserted every few years to make up the difference. The lunar new year begins some weeks after the solar one. Lunar years are counted in cycles of 60, which exhausts all combinations of a set of 10 ‘stems’ and 12 ‘branches’ (ie 1-1, 1-2 ... 1-11, 1-12, 2-1 ... 10-12, for a total of 60). Though the first lunar month has a special name, the rest are all written with yuè; rì is usually left out of lunar dates. The correspondence is as follows:

|                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| International dating: | 1999 年 7 月 26 日 |
| Traditional Chinese:  | 己卯 年七月二十六       |
|                       | jǐ-mǎo          |

Most newspaper banners give dates in both forms. But even in traditional dates, zero ling is usually written as 〇 rather than with its complicated character, 零.

### Exercise 2.

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

一九四九年 十月 一日

一九二一年 七月 一日

一九一九年 五月 四日

一九八九年 六月 四日

一九四五年 八月 十五日

一九一一年 十月 十日

b) Now, in the spaces provided, write the following dates in Chinese:

November 23, 1949

April 18, 2003

February 15, 1994

October 19, 2001

### 1.8 Days

今天

2+2    3+1  
jīntiān  
today

昨天

4+5  
zuótiān  
yesterday

明天

4+4  
míngtiān  
tomorrow

### Notes

a) It is useful to distinguish simplex characters from compound. The latter contain parts that can themselves be simplex characters: for example, 明 míng ‘bright’ is composed of the two graphs 日 rì ‘sun’ (or ‘day’) and 月 yuè ‘moon’ (or ‘month’). While more common characters are often simplex, the vast majority

are compound. The form of simplex graphs can often be said to be representational and thereby rationalized by non-linguistic reference (eg 日 originated as a representation of the sun, 月 yuè, of the moon). Graphic elements are compounded, however, not to form new representations, but typically, to combine linguistic elements of sound and meaning (cf. Units 2 and 3).

b) 天 tiān has the root meaning of ‘sky; day’, and it is said to be based on a drawing that represented the sky above the earth. 明 míng, [apparently] composed of the characters for ‘sun’ and ‘moon’, appears in compounds with the meaning ‘bright’, so think of ‘a bright tomorrow’. 今 jīn- and 昨 zuó- are both compound, the latter combining the semantic 日 rì ‘sun’ with the phonetic 乍 zhà.

### Exercise 3.

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

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

## 1.9 Surnames and pronouns

王 李 毛 周 白 林

|             |             |                  |               |              |              |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 4+0         | 4+3         | 4+0              | 2+6           | 5+0          | 4+4          |
| Wáng        | Lǐ          | Máo              | Zhōu          | Bái          | Lín          |
| <i>king</i> | <i>plum</i> | <i>fine hair</i> | <i>circle</i> | <i>white</i> | <i>woods</i> |

The characters used for these six surnames also represent words whose meanings (written in italics above) are only very tangentially related to their surname functions.

姓

3+5  
xìng  
surname<d>

她

3+3  
tā  
she; her

他

2+3  
tā  
he; him

也

1+2  
yě  
also; too

*Notes*

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

**1.9.1 Read aloud, beginning with 1 (and citing the number):**

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

**Exercise 4.**

a) The following list is out of numerical order. Read it in order, and following the information given, read out the surname and the birthday (shēngrì), along the following lines:

“Dì-yī ge: <Tā> xìng Wáng; <shēngrì ne:> yījiǔbā’èr nián, yíyuè sì rì”

|    |                    |
|----|--------------------|
| 六： | 王；1946 年 8 月 23 日  |
| 八： | 李；1981 年 6 月 8 日   |
| 三： | 毛；1979 年 10 月 29 日 |

|     |               |
|-----|---------------|
| 九：  | 周；1966年2月30日  |
| 十：  | 白；1961年10月2日  |
| 十一： | 林；1942年8月17日  |
| 二：  | 毛；1983年4月14日  |
| 一：  | 王；1982年1月4日   |
| 十二： | 周；1976年11月21日 |
| 四：  | 白；1959年9月21日  |
| 七：  | 林；1967年3月16日  |
| 五：  | 李；1951年11月7日  |

b) The table can also provide data for a conversation along the following lines:

Cue: Dì-yī ge ne?

Response: Dì-yī ge: Xīng Wáng; shēng rì: yī-jiǔ-bā-èr nián, yíyuè sì hào.

### 1.10 More pronouns and function words

我 你 們 不 嗎 呢

4+3 ~ 1+6

2+5

2+8

1+3

3+9~10

3+5

们 吗

wǒ  
I; me

nǐ  
you

2+3

men

COLLECTIVE

bu

NEG

3+3

ma

Q

ne

NE

#### Notes

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

- b) 门/門, originally a representation of a door with two leaves, is a radical in some characters (eg traditional 開 ‘start; open’) and a phonetic in others, including 们/們 mén and 问/問 wèn ‘ask’ (cf. qǐngwèn ‘excuse me’).
- c) The graph 不 is said to derive from a drawing of a bird that originally served to represent another word. It was borrowed to write bù not because of its form, but because of similarity of sound (just as ‘4’ could be used for its sound to write ‘4get’ in ‘rebus’ writing).
- d) Set §1.9 is the first to include graphs that have both a simplified and traditional forms: 们/們 and 吗/嗎. The simplified graphs are both based on traditional calligraphic forms, and they retain an holistic resemblance to the traditional form even though the two share only a few strokes in common.
- e) 吗/嗎 underwent a similar process to 不. The graph 马/馬 mǎ ‘horse’, was ‘borrowed’ for its sound to represent the toneless question particle (ma), but (unlike the case of 不) the new function was explicitly signaled by the addition of the graph 口 (kǒu ‘mouth; entrance’, but here suggesting ‘colloquial’) to form the compound character 吗/嗎. Cf. 妈/媽 mā, the informal word for ‘mother’, also making use of 马/馬, marked for its new meaning by the addition of the graph 女 ‘woman; female’. 馬 is written with 9 strokes by some, 10 by others.

### 1.10.1 Reading

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

### 1.11 SVs and associated function words

好 累 忙 冷 很

3+3  
hǎo  
be good

6+5  
lèi  
tired

3+3  
máng  
busy

2+5  
lěng  
cold

3+6  
hěn  
very



還 餓 熱 了 太

3+13

8+7

4+11

1+1

3+1

还 饿 热

3+4

3+7

4+6

hái

è

rè

le

tài

still

hungry

hot

LE

too; very  
(grand)

## Notes

a) SVs: 好 is composed of the female-radical, 女, and 子 zǐ ‘child’ (the latter without phonetic function); often explained as the paradigm of a ‘good relationship’. 累 shows 田 ‘field’ above and the radical derived from the graph used for ‘silk’ below: ‘a heavy and *tiring* burden for such as slender base’. 忙, with heart radical (a compressed and truncated version of 心) and 亡 wáng as a phonetic element, can be compared to 忘 wàng ‘forget’ with the same elements configured vertically. 饿/餓 is composed of the food radical and the element 我 wǒ, chosen for its sound value. 冷, has two strokes (diǎn and tiáo) on the left forming the so-called ‘ice radical’, found in a few graphs such as 冰 bīng ‘ice’. The right hand element of 冷 is 令 lìng, a ‘phonetic element’ also found in 零 líng ‘zero’. The four strokes at the base of 热/熱 rè are a form of the ‘fire-radical’ which, in its independent form, is written 火.

b) ADVs: The graph 很 hěn ‘very’ is composed of 彳 as radical and 艮 gèn as phonetic (cf. 恨 hèn, 狠 hěn, 跟 gēn). 太 tài ‘great’ is 大 dà ‘big’ with the extra dot. The graph 还/還 is also used for the word huán ‘to give back’, which is probably the meaning that inspired the traditional graph. The simplified version substitutes 不 not for its sound or meaning, but for its general shape which serves to represent the complicated right-hand element. (Cf. 环/环 huán ‘a ring; surround’.)

c) 了 should be distinguished from 子 zǐ. In the traditional set, the radical assigned to 了 is the second stroke, the vertical hook; but in the simplified set, it is the first stroke, whose uncontrorted form is 乙, a radical also assigned to 也.

### 1.11.1 Covering the pinyin, check your pronunciation of the following phrases:

#### a) Jiǎntǐzì 'simplified set'

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

#### b) Fántǐzì (including graphs that have only one form)

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

### 1.11.2 Reading

甲

乙

- 1。 今天很忙也很累。  
昨天还好，不太忙，也不太累。

昨天呢？

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2。 你们饿不饿？<br>我呢，我很饿。     | 不饿，还好！你呢？                    |
| 3。 今天很热！                 | 昨天也很热！                       |
| 4。 今天冷了。<br>昨天不太冷，还好。    | 昨天呢？                         |
| 5。 我们很热。<br>Ng, 我们也很累。   | 我也很热！很热也很累！                  |
| 6。 饿吗？<br>不累，还好。<br>不饿了。 | 不太饿。我很累。你呢？<br>饿不饿？<br>我也不饿。 |

## 1.12 Action verbs and associated function words

|                     |                          |               |               |                  |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| 吃                   | 飯                        | 已經            | 課             | 班                |
| 3+3                 | 8+4                      | 3+0           | 6+7           | 7+8              |
|                     | 饭                        | 经             | 课             |                  |
| chī                 | 3+4<br>fàn               | 3+5<br>yǐjīng | 2+8<br>kè     | bān              |
| eat                 | rice; food;<br>meals     | already       | class; lesson | (a shift; class) |
| 上                   | 下                        | 沒/没           | 有             |                  |
| 1+2<br>shàng        | 1+2<br>xià               | 3+4<br>méi    | 1+5<br>yǒu    |                  |
| on; upper;<br>go up | under; lower;<br>go down | [not]         | have          |                  |

- a) 吃 is a compound of 口 kǒu ‘mouth’ and the element 乞, pronounced qǐ on its own. It suggests ‘mouth, teeth and tongue’. 饭/飯 is a compound of the food radical (whose independent form is 食) and phonetic 反 fǎn. Hint: ‘customer on the left with a cap on, with FOOD on the right behind a sneeze shield’. 课/課 contains the speech radical (言 in its independent form) and 果 guǒ (meaning ‘fruit’) as an imperfect phonetic element. Hint: ‘board on an easel in a *classroom*’.
- b) Contrast 己 yǐ with 已 jǐ, 巳 sì, and 乙 yǐ.
- c) The right hand side of the traditional graph, 經, is said to derive from the drawing of a loom used to represent the root meaning of jīng, ie ‘warp [of a loom]’. From the movements and result of weaving, the word derives meanings such as ‘pass through’ or ‘regulate’ as well as ‘classic texts’ [cf. English ‘text’ and ‘textile’]. The etymological meaning of the compound 已经 is harder to see, but probably derives from a notion of ‘completing the task’.
- d) 没 (whose traditional form, 沒, is only slightly different) has a version of the water radical on the left (three strokes in contrast to the two of 冷) and an element pronounce shū on the right (with 4 strokes). The graph is also used for the word mò ‘submerge’, which probably explains the presence of the water radical.

### 1.12.1 Phrases

#### a) Jiǎntǐzì ‘simplified set’

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

## b) Fántǐzì 'traditional set':

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

## 1.12.2 Reading

## a) Jiǎntǐzì

甲

- 1。 吃了嗎？  
還沒，我不餓。

- 2。 吃了沒有？  
沒有，我不餓。

- 3。 你吃飯了嗎？  
我已經吃了。

- 4。 今天好不好？  
吃飯了嗎？  
我也已經吃了。

- 5。 他們走了沒有？  
哦，上課了。

- 6。 他吃了沒有？  
他不餓嗎？

- 7。 他們已經上課了嗎？  
哦，沒吃飯呢。

- 8。 明天有沒有課？  
二號呢？

乙

- 吃了。你呢？

- 還沒，你呢。  
我也不餓，今天太熱了。

- 還沒。你呢？

- 還好。  
吃飯了。你呢？

- 已經走了，上課了。

- 沒有，太忙了。  
不餓，還好。

- 還沒，他們還沒有吃飯呢。  
沒有。

- 沒有，明天十月一號。一號  
沒課。  
二號有，三號也有。

## b) Fántǐzì

甲：我今天很累！

乙：吃飯了嗎？

還沒呢，太忙了。

餓嗎？

很餓。你呢？

我不餓，已經吃了。

李白呢，他已經上課了嗎？

他今天很忙，沒有上課。

你熱嗎？

熱！？我不熱，昨天很熱  
今天好了。

昨天很熱，今天也很熱。

今天還好，不熱。

## Exercise 5. Fill in the blanks:

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

## Notes

可是 kěshì 'but'

是 shì 'be the case'

### 1.13 On the streets

This section appears regularly in the lessons to introduce you to words and phrases commonly seen on signs, notices, shop fronts and billboards across China (as well as in Chinese communities across the world). Though notes and annotations are still provided for them, the focus is on recognizing the combinations rather than writing them.

入口

rùkǒu  
enter opening  
entrance

出口

chūkǒu  
exit opening  
exit

雨水

yǔshuǐ  
rainwater  
[on manhole covers]

有限公司

yǒuxiàn gōngsī  
have-limit company  
CO.LTD.

銀行

銀行

yínháng  
silver-shop  
bank

#### Notes

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



**Don't!** [JKW 2002]

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