

Unit 2

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

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

Contents

2.1	Pronunciation	
2.2	Adverbs	
2.3	More SVs	<i>Exercise 1</i>
2.4	Nouns and modification	<i>Exercise 2</i>
2.5	Identity	<i>Exercise 3</i>
2.6	Names and titles	<i>Exercise 4</i>
2.7	Location and existence	<i>Exercise 5</i>
2.8	Miscellany	
2.9	Dialogue: at the airport	<i>Exercise 6</i>
2.10	Reflections: What have you learned?	
2.11	Pinyin notes and practice	<i>Exercise 7</i>
2.12	Summary	
2.13	Rhymes and rhythms	

2.1 Pronunciation

As before, to set the articulatory positions of your mouth and tongue for Chinese speech, contrast the following sets of Chinese and English words:

a)	lèi	lay	b)	lái	lie	c)	chū	chew
	méi	May		shāi	shy		shū	shoo
	zhèi	Jay		mài	my		shén	shun
	bēi	bay		pái	pie		zhuō	jaw
	péi	pay		bái	buy		zhōu	Joe
	fēi	Fay					shòu	show
d)	dízi	deeds	xízi	seeds				
	tóuzi	toads	qíci	cheats				
	luózi	lords	bǐci	beets (or beats)				

2.2 Adverbs

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

2.2.1 *Tài with le*

Tài, seen only in negative sentences in the first unit (bú tài le), is also common in positive sentences, where it is frequently found with a final le: Tài hǎo le. ‘Great!’; Tài jǐnzhāng le. ‘[I]’m real anxious!’; Tài nán le. ‘[It]’s too difficult!’ Le in this context conveys a sense of excess (cf. English ‘exceedingly’), and as such, can be regarded as a special case of the notion of ‘new situation’. Notice that negative sentences with tài often suggest moderation rather than excess, so do not attract final le in the same way: bú tài hǎo.

2.2.2 *Other adverbs*

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

dōu ‘all’	Tāmen dōu hěn è. Dōu duì. Dōu méi chī ne.	[They]’re all hungry. [They]’re all right. None [of them] has eaten [yet].
gèng ‘even more’	Xiànzài hěn lěng, kěshì yǐqián gèng lěng.	[It]’s cold now, but [it] was even colder before.
bǐjiào ‘quite’	Wǒ jīntiān bǐjiào máng. Zuótiān bǐjiào rè.	I’m fairly busy today. Yesterday was fairly warm.
zǒngshì ‘always’	Xuéshēng zǒngshì hěn máng hěn lèi; dànsī lǎoshī gèng máng gèng lèi.	Students are always busy and tired, but teachers are even more so.

2.2.3 *Intensifying or backing off*

a) *Fēicháng* ‘very; especially; unusually’

Rather than answering a *yes-no question* about a state with a neutral positive response (Nǐ lèi ma? / Hěn lèi.), you may want to intensify your answer. Fēicháng, an adverb whose literal meaning is ‘not-often’, is one of a number of options:

Jīntiān fēicháng rè!	[It]’s really hot today!
Fēicháng hǎo!	[It]’s unusually good!

b) *ADVs tǐng and mán ~ mǎn as intensifiers*

Some mention needs to be made here of two adverbs that are very common in certain phrases in colloquial speech. One is tǐng, whose core meaning is actually ‘straight; erect’, but which, as an ADV, carries the force of English ‘very’ or ‘really’. The other is mán, which has a variant in low tone, mǎn. The variants may reflect confusion between two different roots, one, mán, with a core meaning of ‘fierce’ and an adverbial meaning of ‘entirely; utterly’; and the other mǎn, with a core meaning of ‘full’, extended to ‘very; full’ in the adverbial position. The distinction may have been obscured in part by the fact that the two merge to mán when the low-tone rule applies in common phrases such as

mán hǎo. For whatever reason, they seem to be treated as synonymous in colloquial speech by many speakers.

Exclamations with mǎn or ǐng often occur with a final de (written with the same character as possessive de, 的, and sometimes referred to as *situational-de*):

Tǐng hǎo de.	Perfect; great!
Mán hǎo de.	[That]’s great!

Here are some common collocations, roughly glossed to convey the tone of the Chinese; mán is given in rising tone, but you may find that speakers from Taiwan and parts of southern China tend to say mǎn in contexts where the low tone is permitted.

Tǐng bú cuò de.	Not bad!
Tǐng shūfu.	[It]’s quite comfortable.
Tǐng yǒu yìsi de!	How interesting!
Mán hǎochī de!	[It]’s delicious!
Mán piàoliang.	[She]’s real attractive.
Mán bú cuò de!	[That]’s pretty darn good!
Mán bú zàihu.	[He] doesn’t give a damn. (‘to care; be concerned’)

c) *-jīle* ‘extremely’

Another option is the intensifying suffix -jīle, which follows SVs directly (and is therefore not an adverb). Jīle is a compound of jí ‘the extreme point’ or ‘axis’ (cf. Běijí ‘North Pole’), plus le. It is quite productive and can follow almost any SV to mean ‘extremely SV’.

Hǎo jíle!	Excellent!
Tiānqì rè jíle!	The weather’s extremely hot!

d) *Yǒu <yì>diǎnr* ‘kind of; a bit’

Rather than intensifying your answer, you may want to back off and answer ‘kind of; rather; a bit’. The construction is yǒu <yì>diǎnr + SV ‘(have a-bit SV)’, a phrase that appears in the adverbial slot and can be interpreted as a complex adverb. The yì of <yì>diǎnr is often elided (hence the < >). Taiwan and other southern Mandarin regions, where the final ‘r’ is not usual, say yǒu yìdiǎn SV, without the -r. Like the English ‘a bit’, this construction conveys some sort of inadequacy. So tā yǒu yìdiǎn gāo ‘he’s a bit tall’ suggests that his height is problematical. [Note the presence of yǒu ‘have’ 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

Summary of Adverbs (and other expressions of degree)

<i>ADV</i>	<i>~Eng equivalent</i>	<i>with SVs</i>	<i>with V_{act}</i>
bù	not	bú lèi	bú shàngbān
yě	too; also	yě hěn lèi	yě chī le
hái ~ háishi	still	hái hǎo háishi hěn lèi	hái méi zǒu ne
dōu	all	dōu hěn gāo	dōu shuìjiào le
yǐjīng	already		yǐjīng zǒu le
tài	very; too	tài máng le; bú tài máng	
hěn	very	hěn lèi	
tǐng, mǎn ~ mǎn	very; really	mǎn bú cuò	
gèng	even more	gèng rè	
bǐjiào ~ bǐjiào	rather; relatively	bǐjiào lěng	
zǒngshì	always	zǒngshì hěn máng	
fēicháng	extremely; very	fēicháng lěng	

<i>SPECIAL CONSTRUCTIONS</i>	<i>~Eng equivalent</i>	<i>with SVs</i>	<i>with V_{act}</i>
jíle	‘very; extremely’	hǎo jíle	
yǒu<yì> diǎn<r>	‘kind of; rather; a bit’	yǒu diǎnr guì	

2.2.4 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that conjoin linguistic units, either as equal partners, as in the case of ‘and’ or ‘but’ (called ‘coordinating conjunctions’), or in a skewed partnership, as in the case of ‘if’ and ‘because’ (called ‘subordinating conjunctions’). In Chinese, there is no word quite comparable to English ‘and’ that connects sentences; that function is often served by the adverb, yě:

Zuótiān wǒ bù shūfu, jīntiān yě bú tài hǎo. I wasn’t very well yesterday,
and [I]’m not too well today,
either.

Zuótiān hěn rè, jīntiān yě hěn rè. It was hot yesterday, and it’s
hot today, too.

As noted in §1.7.5, conjunctions kěshì and dànshì (the latter probably more common in non-northern regions) correspond to English ‘but’ or ‘however’. A third word, búguò, can also be mentioned here; though its range of meaning is broader than that of the other two, it has considerable overlap with them and can also often be translated as ‘but; however’.

Tāmen hái méi chīfàn, kěshì dōu bú è.	They haven't eaten, but they aren't hungry.
Wǒ chīfàn le, dànshi hái méi xǐzǎo.	I've eaten, but I haven't bathed yet.
Tā zǒu le, búguò jīntiān bú shàngbān.	She's left, but she's not going to work today.
<i>cf.</i> Tā zǒu le, búguò jīntiān méi shàngbān.	She's gone, but she didn't go to work today.

2.3 More SVs

Here are some additional SVs that can be incorporated in the patterns introduced in the first two units.

Of people

yán 'strict' lihai 'formidable; tough'

Of tasks

nán 'difficult' róngyì 'easy'

Of things

hǎochī 'nice
[to eat]' hǎotīng 'nice
[sounding]' guì 'expensive'

Of people or things

qīngchū 'clear' hǎokàn 'nice [looking]' piàoliang 'pretty'

qíguài 'strange; odd; surprising'

Of situations

xíng 'be okay; be satisfactory; [it'll] do'

Several of these SVs can be applied to people such as lǎoshī 'teachers' and xuésheng 'students'; others, as noted, are more like to apply to things such as Zhōngwén 'Chinese language' or dōngxi '[physical] things'.

2.3.1 Questions with zěnmeyàng 'how [is it]'

The question word zěnmeyàng (pronounced [zěmeyàng], without the first 'n') is used to ask questions corresponding to 'how is X'. Zěnmeyàng is also used as an informal greeting, rather like English 'how's it going'.

Jīntiān zěnmeyàng? How is [it] today?
Hěn rè. [It]'s hot.

Zhōngwén zěnmeyàng? How's Chinese [class]?
Hěn nán! Lǎoshī hěn yán. [It]'s difficult. The teacher's strict.

2.3.2 Examples

Lǎoshī zěnmeyàng? How's the teacher?
Hěn lìhài, tā fēicháng yán. [She]'s formidable; she's really strict.

Tā zěnmeyàng? Hěn lèi, shuǐjiào le.	How is he? [He]’s tired, [he]’s gone to bed.
Tāmen zěnmeyàng? Bù shūfu, méi shàngkè.	How are they doing? [They]’re not well, [they] weren’t in class.
Zhōngwén zěnmeyàng? Bù nán yě bù róngyì.	What’s Chinese like? [It]’s not difficult, nor is [it] easy.
Zěnmeyàng? Hǎochī ma? Hái kěyǐ. Guì bu guì? Bú tài guì, hái xíng.	How is [it]? Good? [It]’s okay. Is [it] expensive? Not too – [it]’s reasonable.
Tiānqì zěnmeyàng? Zuótiān fēicháng lěng, kěshì jīntiān hǎo le.	How’s the weather? Yesterday was very cold, but today’s okay.

2.3.3 Juéde ‘feel; think’

Zěnmeyàng may be combined with, or may elicit the verb juéde ‘feel; think’ to form a more specific question about internal states:

Xiànzài nǐ juéde zěnmeyàng?	How do you feel now?
Wǒ juéde bù shūfu.	I’m not feeling well.
Wǒ hěn jǐnzhāng.	I’m nervous.
Wǒ juéde hěn lèi.	I feel quite tired.
Hái xíng.	Okay.

2.3.4 Zěnmeyàng as a greeting

Responses to zěnmeyàng as an informal greeting include the following:

Zěnmeyàng?	Hái hǎo.	[I]’m fine.
	Hái xíng.	[I]’m okay. (still alright)
	Hái kěyǐ.	Passable. (still be+possible)
	Bú cuò.	Not bad. (not be+erroneous)
	Mǎma-hūhū.	So-so.
	Lǎo yàngzi.	The usual. (old way)

Notes

- Kěyǐ is a verb meaning ‘may; be acceptable’.
- Cuò is a SV meaning ‘be wrong; be mistaken’.
- Mǎma-hūhū is a complex SV that is formed by repetition of the parts of the SV mǎhu ‘be casual; careless’.

Exercise 1.

Perform a dialogue between the two students, Máo Dàwéi and Lǐ Lìsān, along the following lines:

Máo Dàwéi

Hi, Lìsān!

Tired. How about you?

No, I already ate.

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

But Japanese is even harder. They're both hard! ... Well, I must be off.

Okay, see you later.

Lǐ Lìsān

Hello, Dàwéi. How're you feeling today?

I'm a bit tired too – I still haven't eaten. How about you – hungry?

Was it good?

Very, they're formidable! Chinese is tough!

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

Okay, bye, take it easy.

2.4 Nouns and modification

This section begins with some additions to your repertoire of inanimate nouns. You will have a chance to practice these in context later in this unit as well as subsequently.

yàoshi	keys	yǎnjìng	glasses (eye-mirror)
shū	books	shūbāo	backpack (book-bundle)
hùzhào	passport	xié	shoes [xiézi in the South]
xíngli	luggage	<yǔ>sǎn	[rain]umbrella
bǐ	pen	bǐjìběn	notebook (pen-note-book)
qiānbǐ	pencil (lead-pen)	shǒujī	cell-phone (hand-machine)
màozi	cap; hat	xìnyòngkǎ	credit card (credit-card)
pínbāo	wallet (leather-pack)	dōngxi	[physical] things
tiānqì	weather (sky-air)	yīfu	clothes
bào<zhi>	newspaper (report-paper)	zìdiǎn	dictionary (character-records)
zìxíngchē	bike (self-go-vehicle)	chēzi	small vehicle; car
dānchē	bike (unit-vehicle)	qìchē	car; automobile

2.4.1 Measure-words

Nouns lead to the subject of 'measure-words'. In English, one can distinguish two kinds of nouns: those that can be counted directly, and those that can only be counted in terms of a container or amount.

countable
[can be counted directly]

book → 2 books
fish → 1 fish
pen → 3 pens

non-countable:
[counted by way of a container, amount, etc.]

wine → 10 bottles of wine
soup → 4 bowls of soup
tea → 5 cups of tea

It is true that wine, soup and tea can also be counted directly if the meaning is ‘varieties of’: 10 wines; 4 soups; 5 teas. But otherwise, such nouns need to be measured out. In Chinese (as well as in many other languages in the region, including Thai, Vietnamese and Burmese), all nouns can be considered non-countable, and are counted through the mediation of another noun-like word. [The vocabulary in these examples is only for illustration – it need not be internalized yet.]

shū → sì běn shū
book 2 spine book
2 books

jiǔ → shí píng jiǔ
wine 10 bottles wine
10 bottles of wine

yú → yì tiáo yú
fish 1 length fish
a fish

tāng → sì wǎn tāng
soup 4 bowls soup
4 bowls of soup

bǐ → sān zhī bǐ
pens 3 stub pen
3 pens

chá → sān bēi chá
tea 3 cup tea
3 cups of tea

Often a distinction is made between ‘measures’ and ‘classifiers’. The phrases on the right all involve measures, which serve to portion out a substance that is otherwise not naturally bound; all the examples are, in fact, liquids. Chinese often uses Measures where English would use them, as the examples show. Classifiers, on the other hand, are rare in English, though perhaps ‘block’ is an example, as in ‘block of apartments’. Classifiers serve to classify nouns along various physical dimensions. Tiáo for example is a classifier used typically for sinuous things, such as roads, rivers, and fish:

yì tiáo lù ‘a road’
sān tiáo hé ‘3 rivers’

liǎng tiáo yú ‘2 fish’
sì tiáo tuǐ ‘4 legs’

Interestingly, in many cases, the original impetus for a particular classifier has been obscured by cultural change. Items of news, for example, are still classified with tiáo (yì tiáo xīnwén ‘an item of news’) even though news is no longer delivered by way of a sinuous tickertape. The use of tiáo for watches may also be a relic of those days when people carried a fob watch on long, sinuous chains.

Rather than keep the notional distinction between classifiers and measures, both will be referred to as ‘Measure-words’, abbreviated as M’s. Before you encounter M’s in sentences, it will be useful to practice them in phrases. We begin with the default M, gè

(usually untuned). It appears with many personal nouns, including rén ‘person’ and xuésheng ‘student’. Note that when combined with an M, the number ‘two’ (but not a number ending in ‘two’, such as 12 or 22) is expressed as liǎng (‘pair’) rather than èr: liǎng ge ‘two [of them]’. And as that example shows, in context, the noun itself may be omitted.

Recall that the tone of yī ‘one’, level when counting or when clearly designating the number ‘1’, shifts to either falling or rising when yī is in conjunction with a following M. The basic tone of gè is falling (hence yí gè) and even though, as noted, gè is often toneless, it still elicits the shift before ‘losing’ its tone: yí gè.

The following sets can be recited regularly until familiar:

yí ge rén <i>1 person</i>	liǎng ge rén <i>2 people</i>	sān ge rén <i>3 people</i>	wǔ ge rén <i>5 people</i>	shí ge rén. <i>10 people</i>
yí ge xuésheng <i>1 student</i>		liǎng ge xuésheng <i>2 students</i>		sān ge xuésheng <i>3 students</i>
yí ge <i>1 of them</i>	liǎng ge <i>2 of them</i>	dì-yī ge <i>the 1st [one]</i>	dì-èr ge <i>the 2nd [one]</i>	dì-sān ge <i>the 3rd [one]</i>

The particle le following phrases like these (as in the main dialogue below) underscores the relevance of the ‘new situation’: Sì ge rén le. ‘So that’s 4 [people].’

Another particularly useful M is kuài ‘lump; chunk; piece’, which in the context of money (qián), means *yuan*, generally translated as ‘dollar’. The yuán is a unit of the currency known as rénmínbì [MB] ‘people’s currency’.

yí kuài qián	liǎng kuài qián	sān kuài qián	wǔ kuài qián	shí kuài qián
yí kuài	liǎng kuài	sān kuài	wǔ kuài	shí kuài

2.4.2 Possessive pronouns

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

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

These may combine with nouns, as follows:

wǒ de zìdiǎn	my dictionary
tā de hùzhào	her passport

wǒmen de xíngli	our luggage
wǒ de xié<zi>	my shoes
nǐ de dōngxi	your things

The possessive marker de may also link noun modifiers to other nouns:

xuésheng de shūbāo	students' bags
lǎoshī de shū	teachers' books
Zhāng lǎoshī de yǎnjìng	Professor Zhang's glasses
zuótiān de tiānqì	yesterday's weather
jīntiān de bào<zhi>	today's newspaper

2.4.3 Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns ('this' and 'that') and locational pronouns ('here' and 'there') are shown in the chart below. Examples in context will follow later in the unit.

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

Notes

- The forms, zhèi, nèi and něi, are generally found only in combination with a following M: zhè but zhèi ge 'this one'; nà but nèi ge 'that [one]'.
- On the Mainland, where both forms of the locational pronouns occur, the *r*-forms are more colloquial, the *lǐ*-forms, more formal. Non-northern speakers of Mandarin, who tend to eschew forms with the *r*-suffix, either merge the locational pronouns with the demonstratives, pronouncing zhèr as zhè, nàr as nà, and nǎr as nǎ, or [particularly in Taiwan] use zhèlǐ, nàlǐ and nǎlǐ (> nǎlǐ). Notice that in all cases, the distal forms differ from the question forms only in tone: nà / nǎ; nèi / něi, etc.
- Before a pause, nà is often used in an extended sense, translated in English as 'well; so; then; in that case':

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

Exercise 2.

Provide Chinese equivalents for the following phrases and sentences:

my wallet	3 teachers	their clothes
her glasses	2 people	the newspaper on July 4 th
his things	4 students	Prof. Zhang's passport
yesterday's paper	2 dollars	her bike

How's Liáng Zhìfǔ doing today? / She's better.
 How was the weather yesterday? / It was 'freezing' cold!

2.5 Identity

Statements such as 'Today's Monday' or 'I'm Oliver' or 'She's an engineer' involve identity or category. In English, the primary verb that serves to identify or categorize is 'be' (whose forms include 'is', 'are', 'was', etc.). In Chinese, the relationship is sometimes expressed by simple juxtaposition, with no explicit linking verb. Dates, for example, can be linked to days, as follows:

Jīntiān jiǔyuè bā hào.	Today's the 8 th of September.
Zuótiān qī hào.	Yesterday was the 7 th .
Míngtiān jiǔ hào.	Tomorrow's the 9 th .

But the addition of an adverb, such bu, requires a verb, and in such cases, shì [usually untoned] must be expressed:

Jīntiān bú shì bā hào, shì jiǔ hào.	It's not the 8th today, it's the 9th.
--	---------------------------------------

And an untoned shì can also be present in the positive sentences:

Jīntiān <shì> jiǔyuè shí hào.	Today's September 10 th .
Míngtiān <shì> Zhōngqiū Jié.	Tomorrow's the 'Mid-Autumn Festival'. [ie the 'Moon Festival']

Naming and other kinds of identification sometimes omit shì in fast speech, but more commonly it can be heard as a toneless whisper, 'sh'.

Tā shì Wáng Shuò, wǒ de lǎoshī.	He's Wang Shuo, my teacher.
Wǒmen shì xuésheng, tā shì lǎoshī.	We're students, he's a teacher.
Zhè shì jīntiān de bào.	This is today's paper.
Shì nǐ de yàoshi ma?	Are [these] your keys?
Bú shì wǒ de sǎn, shì tā de.	[That]'s not my umbrella, [it]'s his.
Tāmen dōu shì xuésheng.	They're all students.

But don't forget, shì is not required with SVs:

Xuésheng zǒngshì hěn lèi, duì bu duì?	The students are always tired, right?
--	---------------------------------------

2.5.1 Questions

Now we can introduce the question words shéi (or shuí) ‘who, whom’ and shénme ‘what’ (which, like zěnmé, is pronounced [shéme], without the ‘n’). Unlike English, where question words generally appear at the head of the sentence, in Chinese, they remain in the position of the information supplied in the answer. Note the differences in word order between the English sentences and the Chinese:

Tā shi shéi? <i>Tā shi wǒ de lǎoshī.</i>	Who’s that? <i>That’s my teacher.</i>
Nà shi shénme? <i>Nà shi wǒ de hùzhào.</i>	What’s that? <i>That’s my passport.</i>
<Shi> shéi de yàoshi? <Shi> wǒ de – xièxie.	Whose keys are [these]? <i>[They]’re mine – thanks.</i>
<Shi> shuí de xíngli? <Shi> wǒmen de.	Whose luggage? <i>It’s ours.</i>
Zhè shi shéi de? <i>Shi wǒ de.</i>	Whose is this? <i>It’s mine.</i>
Shéi shi dì-yī ge? <i>Tā shi dì-yī ge.</i> Dì-èr ge ne? <i>Tā shi dì-èr ge.</i>	Who is the first [one]? <i>He’s the first.</i> And the second? <i>She’s the second.</i>

2.5.2 Hedging your answer

Frequently, when asked about identity, the answer is less than certain, so you may want to hedge your reply with a word like hǎoxiàng ‘seems like (good-resemble)’. The following short interchanges involve trying to guess the contents of a series of wrapped packages by feeling them:

Dì-yī shi shénme? <i>Dì-yī hǎoxiàng shi yàoshi.</i>	What’s the first? <i>The first seems like keys.</i>
Zhè shi shénme? <i>Hǎoxiàng shi shū.</i>	What’s this? <i>Seems like a book.</i>
Nà, zhè shi shénme? <i>Hǎoxiàng shi xiézi.</i>	Well, what’s this? <i>Seems like shoes.</i>

2.5.3 Naming

Naming is also a form of identification. And in fact, if you were to go round the classroom naming all your tóngxué ‘classmates’, you could do so with the verb shì as follows:

Nà shì Máo Xiān'ān.	That's Mao Xian'an.
Nà shì Léi Hàn bó.	That's Lei Hanbo.
Nà shì Lǐ Dān.	That's Li Dan.
Nà hǎoxiàng shì Luó Zhìchéng.	Looks like that's Luo Zhicheng.
Nǐ shì bu shì Luó Zhìchéng?	Are you Luo Zhicheng?
Tā shì Léi Fēng!	He's Lei Feng.

Exercise 3.

Provide Chinese for the interchanges:

<i>Q</i>	<i>A</i>
Is it the 29 th today?	No, it's the 30 th .
Is this your umbrella?	No, that's Prof. Zhang's.
Who's first?	Seems like Wáng Jié is 1 st and Liú Guózhèng is 2 nd .
Are you all students?	Yes, we're all Prof. Wèi's students.
Is that your bike?	No, it's Léi Fēng's.

2.6 Names and titles

Names need not be introduced by shì. In some contexts more specialized verbs must be used. One you encountered in Unit 1: xìng 'be surnamed' (which also functions as a noun meaning 'surname'). Another is jiào 'to be named; to call'. But before we illustrate their use, we should add to the brief remarks about names and titles made in §1.6.1 and §1.9.1.

2.6.1 Names

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

Wèi Déli	Paul Wheatley
Táng Lìlì	Lily Tomlin
Máo Xiān'ān	Anne Mauboussin
Léi Hàn bó	Robert Leonhardt
Lǐ Dān	David Lippmann

Such names are indistinguishable from names of actual Chinese, such as these:

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

2.6.2 Xìng

Chinese names consist of a surname, or *xìng*, in initial position, followed by a given name or *míngzi*, literally ‘name-characters’. *Xìng* are usually – but not always – single syllables. As a verb, *xìng* is almost always used when asking for, or responding with, someone’s surname:

Tā xìng shénme?	What’s her surname?
Tā xìng Huáng.	She’s surnamed Huang.
Xìng Wáng?	Wang?
Bú shì xìng Wáng, tā xìng Huáng.	No, not Wang, she’s named Huang.

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

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

2.6.3 Jiào

In much of the English speaking world, where informality tends to be considered a virtue, the shift from surname to given name can proceed very quickly. However, in Chinese, address in a professional setting is likely to persist longer as *xìng* plus title. So under normal levels of politeness, you would question someone about their *xìng*, not about their *míngzi*. However, in the appropriate context, it is possible to seek someone’s full name (regardless of the number of syllables). In such cases, the verb jiào ‘be called’ is used. Jiào can take either the person or the word míngzi as its subject; and it takes as its object at least two syllables of a name, never a single syllable. Below are some options, first for Lǐ Xiāngjūn, a three-syllable name, then for Zhèng Hé, with only two.

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

2.6.4 *Asking and giving a name*

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

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

2.6.5 Titles

Here is a short selection of titles to add to lǎoshī. All of them follow a xìng, though some may be used alone under certain conditions. Xiānshēng ‘mister (first-born)’ is the generic title for adult males. In Taiwan, or overseas communities, xiǎojie ‘Miss; Ms (small older-sister)’ is quite a common title for unmarried women up to a certain age or, still with the woman’s xìng, even for young married women. In the same communities, married women can be addressed, with the husband’s xìng, as tàitai (etymologically related to tài, the adverb). The latter term is hardly ever used on the Mainland, and even xiǎojie is used much less there. On the Mainland, if no professional title (such as lǎoshī) is available, the options are to use full name or mingzi, or simply to avoid direct address completely.

Shīfu, literally ‘craftsman’, but often translated as ‘master’, has shifted in its usage in the last few decades, but traditionally, it has been used to address blue-collar workers (male or female). Finally, jīnglǐ ‘manager’, is a professional title for males or females, of the sort that might appear on a business card. Note the order *surname before title*:

surname	(given name)	title	
Wèi	<Bóyáng>	lǎoshī	Professor
Shí	<Jilóng>	xiānsheng	Mr.
Chén	<Yuè>	xiǎojie	Miss; Ms
Wáng	<Guóbǎo>	shīfu	‘master’
Zhōu	<Lǐ>	jīnglǐ	manager

2.6.6 Shì with names

As noted above, while surnames [alone] can only be introduced with the verb xìng, full names can be introduced by shì as well as jiào. In fact, unlike the other two verbs, shì can also introduce name and *title*. The shì option identifies one of a known group, and as such, is often appropriate to a classroom setting:

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

Nǐ shì bu shì Zhāng xiānsheng?	Are you Mr. Zhang?
Zhāng jīnglǐ, hǎo.	How are you, Manager Zhang?
Zhè shì Dù shīfu.	This is Master Du.
Wǒ shì Wáng lǎoshī; tāmen dōu shì wǒ de xuéshēng.	I’m Prof. Wang and these are my students.
Chén xiǎojie shì Běijīng rén.	Miss Chen is from Beijing.

Exercise 4.

a) Assuming you were an official of appropriate rank and eminence to address the question, write out how the following people might respond (in the modern world) to <Nín> guìxìng?

1. Hú Shì, (20th C. philosopher and reformer, graduate of Cornell University): Wǒ xìng Hú, jiào Hú Shì.
2. Sīmǎ Qiān (the Han dynasty historian):
3. Zhāng Xuéliáng (Manchurian warlord):
4. Hán Yù (Tang dynasty scholar):
5. Yáng Guìfēi (courtesan, from the late Tang dynasty):
6. Cūi Jiàn (rock musician):

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. I'm a teacher. | 2. Who's she? |
| 3. Her surname's Sòng, her full name's Sòng Měilíng. | 4. Hi, my name's Lǐ Dān. |
| 5. Who's he? / He's my teacher. | 6. That's Zhōu Lì. |
| 7. His surname's Chén, full name, Chén Bó. | 8. And him? / His surname's Xǔ, full name, Xǔ Xiān. |
| 11. This is master Wèi. | 12. Her name's Smith [Shǐmìsī]. |

2.7 Location and existence

In English, location is expressed with the same verb as identity (or category): the verb 'to be' (is, am, are, etc.). Chinese, however, uses entirely different verbs. Identity is signaled by shì; location, by zài 'be at':

I D	Tā shì xuésheng.	She's a student.
LOC	Tā zài Běijīng.	She's in Beijing.

2.7.1 Some Chinese place names

China is called Zhōngguó, often given the literal gloss of 'middle kingdom', a name which goes back to the time when it designated the ruling principality among the many that owed it fealty. The Chinese are then Zhōngguó rén 'Chinese-people'.

Administrative units of the People's Republic include provinces (省 shěng), prefectures (地 dì), counties (县 xiàn), townships (乡 xiāng) and villages (村 cūn). Of these, the county (xiàn) is the unit with the longest historical continuity, dating back some 2500 years. In modern mainland China the highest, or provincial level contains 33 divisions: 22 provinces (with Taiwan considered a 23rd), 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities, which are cities ruled by the central government (Běijīng, Shànghǎi, Tiānjīn and Chóngqīng), and 2 special autonomous districts (Hong Kong [Xiāng Gǎng] and Macau [Àomén]).

Taiwan, which administers the island of Táiwān, the Pescadores Islands (Pēnghú), as well as 13 small, scattered offshore islands, has a slightly different administrative structure. It has two centrally administered cities, Taipei (Táiběi) and the south-western city of Kaohsiung (Gāoxióng).

The chart below lists important cities. They can be located in terms of their province (using the verb zài), or in terms of their proximity to another place (using the lí pattern that follows in §2.7.2).

<i>Quadrant</i>	<i>The city of:</i>	<i>is in</i>	<i>the province (shěng) of:</i>
NW	Xīníng	zài	Qīnghǎi <shěng>.
NW	Wūlǔmùqí		Xīnjiāng.
N	Hūhéhàotè		*Nèiménggǔ.
NE	Shěnyáng		Liáoníng.
NE	Chángchūn		Jílín.
NE	Hā'ěrbīn		Hēilóngjiāng.
W	Lāsà		*Xīzàng.
C	Xī'ān		Shǎnxī.
E	Nánjīng		Jiāngsū .
E	Guǎngzhōu		Guǎngdōng.
SW	Guilín		*Guǎngxī.
SW	Chéngdū		Sìchuān.
SW	Kūnmíng		Yúnnán.

Notes

- The asterisks (*) before Nèiménggǔ ‘Inner Mongolia’, Xīzàng ‘Tibet’ and Guǎngxī indicate that they are autonomous regions, zìzhìqū, not shěng.
- Shěnyáng was formerly called by its Manchu name, Mukden.
- The names of two provinces are distinguished only by tone: Shānxī ‘mountains-west’ (which is west of the province of Shāndōng ‘mountains-east’), and Shǎnxī (‘pass-west’) – sometimes romanized as ‘Shaanxi’ or ‘Shenhsi’ to distinguish it, which is west again of Shānxī.

2.7.2 Proximity

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

Place-1	lí place-2	proximity
Běijīng	lí Guǎngzhōu	hěn yuǎn / hěn jìn.
<i>Beijing</i>	<i>from Canton</i>	<i>very far / close.</i>

Usage

Tiānjīn lí Běijīng bǐjiào jìn.	Tiānjīn's quite close to Běijīng.
Xī'an zài Shānxī, lí Běijīng bǐjiào yuǎn.	Xī'an's in Shānxī, quite far from Beijing.
Xīníng lí Chéngdū hěn jìn ma? <i>Bú jìn; Xīníng lí Lánzhōu hěn jìn.</i>	Is Xining near Chengdu? <i>No, it's not; it's close to Lanzhou.</i>
Xī'an lí Běijīng hěn yuǎn, dànshì Xīníng gèng yuǎn.	Xī'an is far from Běijīng, but Xining is even farther.



http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_administrative.png

2.7.3 Zài 'be+at'

In certain contexts, zài may appear without a [following] object, typically when it means 'be at home', or as a euphemism for 'be alive': tā bú zài 'he's not at home' or 'he's passed away' (the latter meaning more often with le, bú zài le, since that is likely to be news). Otherwise, zài is followed by words or phrases that are locations. But just what constitutes a location is not always obvious. Place names are locations as the examples in §2.7.1 show. So are the locational pronouns:

zài	zhèr ~ zhèlǐ	‘here’
	nàr ~ nàlǐ	‘there’
	nǎr ~ nǎlǐ	‘where’

Otherwise, most nouns need to be followed by one of a number of position words, such as shàng ‘on’ or lǐ ‘in’, before they can be locations and thereby act as objects to zài:

zài	fēijī shàng	on the plane
zài	shūbāo lǐ	in [my] bookbag

However, some common words for places do not always require following position words like shàng or lǐ. Sometimes additional position words are optional; sometimes they add a slight nuance of difference.

zài	jiā <lǐ>	at home
	cāntīng <lǐ>	in the cafeteria
	jīchǎng	at the airport

Before pronouns can act as objects of zài, they need support from one of the locational pronouns, such as zhèr ~ zhèlǐ: zài wǒ zhèr, literally ‘at me here’; zài tā nàr ‘at her there’. English actually expresses the notion more naturally with the verb ‘have’:

Qǐngwèn, jīntiān de bào zài nǎr ~ nǎlǐ? <i>Zài wǒ zhèr ~ zhèlǐ.</i> Xíngli ne? <i>Xíngli zài tā nàr.</i>	Excuse me, where’s today’s paper? <i>I have it.</i> And the luggage? <i>He has the luggage.</i>
--	--

2.7.4 Zài as a main verb; zài as a co-verb

Zài may be used as a main verb (as in §2.7.1 and below), but it can also introduce a location and appear prior to another verb, in which case it is called a co-verb in Chinese grammatical tradition (CV).

a) Examples of zài as a main verb

Qǐngwèn, Mǎ lǎoshī zài ma? <i>Mǎ lǎoshī xiànzài zài Yúnnán.</i>	Excuse me, is Prof. Ma here? <i>Prof. Ma is currently in Yunnan.</i>
Yàoshi zài nǎr? <i>Zài nàr. / Zài tā nàr.</i>	Where are the keys? <i>[They]’re over there. / She has [them].</i>
Nánjīng lí Héfēi bú tài yuǎn, kěshì Nánjīng zài Jiāngsū, Héfēi zài Ānhuī.	Nanjing’s not far from Hefei, but Nanjing’s in Jiangsu, [and] Hefei’s in Anhui.

Wǒ de hùzhào zài nǐ nàr ma?
Bú zài wǒ zhèr! Do you have my passport?
I don't have [it].

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

b) Zài as a co-verb

Co-verbs are like verbs in allowing direct modification by adverbs, but they frequently correspond to prepositions in English.

Xuésheng zhǒngshì zài cāntīng
 chīfàn. Students always eat in the cafeteria.

Wǒmen zài fēijī shàng shuìjiào le. We slept on the plane.

Zài jiā lǐ chīfàn bǐjiào hǎo. It's better to eat at home.

In such cases, the *zài*-phrase expresses the location of an action. Later, you will see that *zài*-phrases also follow certain verbs (where *zài* is usually untoned): shēng zai Běijīng 'born in Beijing'.

2.7.5 *The verb yǒu 'have'*

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

<i>Possession</i>	Wǒ yǒu sān ge hùzhào.	I have 3 passports.
	Wǒ méiyǒu sǎn.	I don't have an umbrella.
	Xuéshēng dōu yǒu zìdiǎn.	The students all have dictionaries.
<i>Existence</i>	Wǒ méiyǒu xíngli.	I don't have any baggage.
	Nánjīng méiyǒu dìtiě.	There's no underground railway in Nanjing.
	Chēzi lǐ yǒu yīfu, yě yǒu shūbāo.	There are clothes and bookbags in the car.

Summary

<i>Identity; category</i>	(bú) shì	Nà shì jīntiān de bào. Tā shì lǎoshī.	is	That's today's paper. She's a teacher.
<i>Location</i>	(bú) zài	Chéngdū zài Sìchuān.	is (in etc.)	Chengdu's in Sichuan.
<i>Existence</i>	(méi)you	Xī'ān méiyǒu jīchǎng.	[there] is /are	There's no airport in Xi'an.
<i>Possession</i>	(méi)you	Wǒ méiyǒu hùzhào.	have	I don't have a passport.
<i>Proximity</i>	lí...(bú) jìn / (bù) yuǎn	Tiānjīn lí Běijīng bù yuǎn.	is close to / is far from	Tianjin's close to Beijing.

Exercise 5.

Render the following short exchanges in idiomatic Chinese. [Hint: Chinese would probably not make use of the verb yǒu 'have' in the A and C -dialogues.]

	Jiǎ		Yī
A.	-Where's the paper please? -No, today's. -You had it earlier.		-Yesterday's? -Sorry, I don't have it. -But I don't have it now.
B.	-Have you eaten yet? -Oh, you've already eaten! -Is your dorm far from here?		-I have. -Yes, in the dorm. -It's kind of far.
C.	-Whose bookbag? -Is it Lǐ Dān's? -Is it 'young' Liú's? -Then it's Sūn Hào's.		-Not mine, I don't have a bookbag. -No, I have Li Dan's. -No, he's not up yet. -Is it?

2.8 Miscellany

2.8.1 Welcome

The dialogue at the end of this unit contains an expression used for welcoming someone to a place. Explicit welcomes are probably more likely to be seen written on signs in shops than spoken, but they are not out of place with foreigners. The verbs are huānyíng 'welcome' and lái 'come'. With the verb lái, destinations (rather than locations *per se*) can follow directly without any equivalent to the English preposition 'to': lái Běijīng, lái Guǎngzhōu. Notice that in English, the people being welcomed ('you') are not mentioned, while in Chinese, they are (nǐmen):

Huānyíng nǐmen lái Chéngdū! Welcome to Chengdu.

In Chinese settings, explicit thanks are usually reserved for favors that go beyond the expected. But given the airport context, an expression of gratitude as a response to the welcome is not inappropriate. This one involves the verbs xiè ‘to thank’ – frequently repeated as xièxiè – and the verb, jiē ‘to meet; join’. The order is like that of English, but Chinese eschews connective words like ‘to’ and ‘for’. (‘Thank you for coming to meet us’ appears in Chinese as simply ‘thank you come meet us’.)

Xièxiè nǐmen lái jiē wǒmen. Thanks for coming to meet us.

In China, shops and other business establishments often have a formal expression of welcome written near the entrance. This expression is: 欢迎光临 huānyíng guānglín, or xièxiè guānglín (both with the preferred four syllables). Guānglín, literally ‘illustrious presence’, is a fancy word for ‘guest’ or ‘visitor’. Sometimes, especially at openings or sales, ‘welcome hostesses’ (huānyíng xiǎojiē), stationed at the shop entrance wearing red costumes, will welcome or thank you with the same phrases.



Huānyíng nǐmen! [JKW 2003]

2.8.2 Particles

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

Lěng a!	[Wow, it]’s cold!
Máng a!	Busy, huh?!
Shéi a?	[Knock, knock.] Who [is it]?

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

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

2.8.3 Praise

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

Zhōngwén shuō+de hěn hǎo.	[You] speak Chinese very well.
~ jiǎng+de hěn hǎo.	

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

Shuō+de bù hǎo	[I] speak very poorly.
~ jiǎng+de bù hǎo.	

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

Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ, shuō+de bù hǎo.	Nah, I speak rather badly.
~ jiǎng+de bù hǎo.	

When you see more examples, you will find that nothing can intervene in the combination shuō+de. So if Zhōngwén (or Hànyǔ) is mentioned, it cannot directly follow shuō, but needs to be cited first, as shown in the examples above. Since Chinese are so gracious about praising one's feeble efforts to speak their language, it is good to get used to this interchange early. For now, though, practice it only as it appears, and only with the verb shuō and its southern Mandarin counterpart, jiǎng.

2.9 Dialogue: at the airport

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

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

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| Dw | Nín hǎo, wǒ shì Máo Dàwéi. | How are you, I'm Mao Dawei. |
| W. | O, Máo Dàwéi, wǒ shì Wáng lǎoshī. | Oh, Mao Dawei, I'm Prof. Wang. |
| An | Wáng lǎoshī, nín hǎo! Wǒ shì Lǐ Ānnà. | Prof. Wang, how are you? I'm Li Anna. |
| W. | Lǐ Ānnà, nǐ hǎo. | Li Anna, how are you? |
| Ym | Wáng lǎoshī, wǒ shì Xiǎolín Yóuměi. | Professor Wang, I'm Xiaolin Youmei. |
| W. | Xiǎolín Yóuměi, nǐ hǎo.
Hǎo, sān ge rén le. | Xiaolin Youmei, hi. Okay, [that's] 3. |
| Ym | Hái yǒu tā – tā xìng Kǒng, jiào Kǒng Měi. | [pointing] And her too -- her name is Kong, she's called Kong Mei. |
| W. | Hǎo, Kǒng Měi, nǐ hǎo!
Sì ge rén le. Nǐ ne? | Fine, how are you Kong Mei? [That's] 4 then. And [who are] you? |
| Jf | Wǒ shì Bái Jiéfēi. | I'm Bai Jiefei. |

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| W. | Bái Jiéfēi, nǐ hǎo....
Nà hǎo, huānyíng nǐmen lái Běijīng! | Bai Jiefei, hi....
Okay, then, welcome to Beijing! |
| All | Xièxie, xièxie nǐmen lái jiē wǒmen. | Thanks; thank you for coming to meet us. |
| W. | Zhè shì Gāo shīfu. | This is Mr. Gao. |
| All | Gāo shīfu, nín hǎo. | Mr. Gao, how are you? |

Gāo	Èi, nǐmen hǎo, nǐmen hǎo. Zhōngwén shuō+de hěn hǎo!	Ah, how are you, how are you? [You] speak Chinese very well!
All	Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ, shuō+de bù hǎo!	Nah, we don't speak very well.

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

W.	Nà hǎo, wǒmen zǒu ba. Shàng chē ba.	Fine, let's go then. All aboard!
X.	Hǎo, hǎo.	Okay.
W.	Jīntiān yǒu diǎnr rè, nǐmen rè ma?	[Aboard the minibus.] [It]'s kind of hot today; are you hot?
X.	Bù, bú rè, hái hǎo. Wǒmen dōu hěn shūfu.	No, [we]'re not, [we]'re fine. We're all comfortable.
W.	Xíngli, hùzhào, sǎn dōu yǒu ma?	[You] have [your] bags, [your] passports, umbrellas?
X.	Dōu yǒu, dōu yǒu, xièxie.	[We] have them all, thanks.
W.	Hǎo, nà wǒmen zǒu ba.	Fine, so... let's go then!
X.	Běijīng hěn yuǎn ma?	Is Beijing far?
W.	Bù, lí zhèr bù yuǎn – hěn jìn!	No, it's not far from here – quite close!

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

Exercise 6.

a) *Translate the following*

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

b) *Comment that*

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

2.9.1 Airports and airlines

China has invested heavily in infrastructure projects in the last few decades, including the construction of new airports (jīchǎng) and the reconstruction of old ones. An airport said to be the world's largest is due to be completed near Beijing in time for the 2008 Olympics. Some of the better known airports are Capital (Shǒudū) in Beijing, Báiyún ('white clouds') in Canton, and Hóngqiáo (the old airport) and Pǔdōng (the new) in Shanghai – the last two both named after districts. Pǔdōng, which like so many of the new airports is far out of town, is served by a German-built mag-lev (magnetic levitation) train (officially called a cíxuán-fúchē 'magnet-suspend float-vehicle', but colloquially

referred to as a diàncíchē ‘electromagnetic-vehicle’). It reaches a top speed of 430 kilometers an hour during its 7-8 minute run between the airport and its city terminus at an outlying subway station.

Airlines are proliferating and consolidating in China. ‘Airline’ is hángkōng gōngsī, literally ‘aviation company’. Here is a list of some of the larger Chinese airlines for you to practice saying:

Zhōngguó Hángkōng Gōngsī	Air China
Zhōngguó Dōngfāng Hángkōng Gōngsī	China Eastern Airlines
Zhōngguó Běifāng Hángkōng Gōngsī	China Northern Airlines
Zhōngguó Xīběi Hángkōng Gōngsī	China Northwest Airlines
Zhōngguó Nánfāng Hángkōng Gōngsī	China Southern Airlines
Zhōngguó Xīnán Hángkōng Gōngsī	China Southwest Airlines
Xīnjiāng Hángkōng Gōngsī	Xinjiang Airlines
Yúnnán Hángkōng Gōngsī	Yunnan Airlines
Gǎnglóng Hángkōng Gōngsī	Dragonair [Hong Kong-dragon...]



Arriving at Xīníng, the capital of Qīnghǎi. [JKW 2005]

2.10 Reflections: What have you learned?

2.10.1 Words

Short words predominate. Most, but not all, Chinese words longer than a syllable are, historically at least, compounds: lǎoshī ‘old-teacher’ (with ‘old’ having the respectful connotations of ‘venerable’); xǐzǎo ‘wash-bathe’; hǎoxiàng ‘good-likeness’.

2.10.2 Meaning

In learning a foreign language, particularly a language that is linguistically and culturally distant from one’s native tongue, you quickly learn about the difficulties of translation. This is true for sentences as well as words. Hái hǎo, for example, as a response to Lèi bu

lèi? is composed of two words which, in other contexts, mean ‘still’ and ‘be+good’. But ‘still good’ does not make sense as a translation. ‘Not too’ or ‘no, I’m fine’ are closer to the Chinese sense, *a fact we can only know from understanding how the Chinese functions in its context, then seeking an English expression that serves the same function* (or has the same meaning in the context). As translators will tell you, this can be difficult to do, and in some cases nearly impossible without extensive circumlocution.

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

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

2.11 Pinyin notes and practice

2.11.1 Toneless syllables

As you have observed, not all syllables in Mandarin have a tone, eg: the second syllables in xínglǐ and máng ma. In this respect, Mandarin contrasts with some of the regional languages such as Cantonese, in which most syllables are toned. There are several types of toneless syllable (called qīngshēng ‘light-tone’) in standard Mandarin:

- (i) Particles such as ma, ne and ba never appear with a full tone, and so we can only write them with qīngshēng.
- (ii) Many words show qīngshēng in the final syllable: shūfu ‘comfortable’, or wǒmen ‘we; us’. On the evidence of compounds and other relatable expressions, these toneless syllables often turn out to have fully toned versions: shūfu has an adverbial form, shūshufúfú in which final fú appears with a rising tone. But dictionaries list words such as wǒmen and shūfu without tone on the second syllable, and we will do the same.
- (iii) Certain words (syllables) are toned in some contexts, toneless in others: bú lèi (with bú toned) but hǎo bu hǎo (with bú toneless). We will follow pronunciation in such cases, writing the tone in citation in contexts where it is pronounced, but omitting it in appropriate grammatical contexts.

- (iv) Finally, the incidence of *qīngshēng* varies with the rate and formality of speech as well as the region (with the northeast being particularly susceptible to toneless syllables). Thus in fast speech, jīntiān ‘today’ may be pronounced jīntian, without tone on tian. In these cases, we will still write the full tone, using current dictionaries as our guide.

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

a) Writing changed tones

In this text, we do not write the changed tone for combinations of low tones; we write hěn hǎo, and apply the rule. This accords with the standard rules for writing pinyin entries in dictionaries or in continuous text. We do make an exception in writing the changed tones for bù and yì, however: bù gāo but bú lèi; yì zhāng but yí ge.

2.11.2 A pinyin quirk

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

2.11.3 Tone combos (the next 6)

Recall the prototype examples of the six sets of tone combos presented in Unit 1: lǎoshī hái hǎo, zàijiàn, bú rè, hěn máng, bù gāo. Now we add six more combos – the first three all beginning with level-toned syllables – for a total of 12 of the 15.

7	8	9
Kūnmíng	jīchǎng	chīfàn
Zhōngwén	Wēiruǎn (Microsoft)	qī hào
huānyíng	Qīnghǎi	tiānqì
10	11	12
Héféi	qǐngwèn	zìdiǎn
Yúnnán	hǎokàn	dìtiě (underground train)
tóngxué (classmate)	yǎnjìng	Hànyǔ

Exercise 7.

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

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

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

ti	ta	dang		dou	dao
ci	ca	zang	si	zou	zao
ch!i	ch!a	zhang	shi	zhou	zhao
qi	qia	jiang	xi	jiu	jiao

2.12 Summary

tài...le	Tài máng le. (Bú tài máng.)
Adverbs	Zǒngshì hěn máng hěn lèi; gèng máng; yǒu yìdiǎnr lěng; etc.
SVs	Hěn nán; Bù hǎochī; Hěn lìhai.
Zěnmeyàng	Jīntiān zěnmeyàng? Nǐ juéde zěnmeyàng?
Nouns	yàoshi, xíngli, dōngxi, zìxíngchē, etc.
M-words	èrshí ge <xuéshēng>; sān kuài <qián>
DE	wǒ de zìdiǎn; zuótiān de bào
Demonstr.	zhè ~ zhèi; zhèr ~ zhèlǐ
Identity	Jīntiān qī hào; Dōu shì wǒ de xuéshēng.
QWs	shéi, shénme, nǎr ~ nǎlǐ, guìxíng, zěnmeyàng
Naming	Tā xìng Zhāng, jiào Zhāng Démíng; tā shì Zhāng Démíng.
Titles	Wèi lǎoshī; Gāo shīfu; Zhōu jīnglǐ
Location	Xíngli dōu zài zhèr; Dōu zài wǒ zhèr.
Loc'n with V	Wǒmen zài fēijī shàng chī le.
Proximity	Tiānjīn lí Běijīng hěn jìn.
Possession	Wǒ méiyǒu xíngli.
Existence	Nánjīng méiyǒu dìtiě.
Welcome	Huānyíng nǐmen lái Běijīng. / Xièxie nǐmen lái jiē wǒmen.
PTs	Shàngchē ba.
Praise	Zhōngwén shuō+de hěn hǎo! / Nǎlǐ, nǎlǐ, shuō+de bù hǎo.
Airports	Zhōngguó Hángkōng Gōngsī; jīchǎng; guónèi, guójì
Qīngshēng	xíngli; zǒu ba

2.13 Rhymes and rhythms

First a short rhyme that gives you practice with M-words: zhī (written with a different character from the zhī used with bǐ ‘pen’) is the M for animals such as chickens (yì zhī jī) and, as below, frogs; zhāng is a M for flat things such as tickets, tables, maps, lawns, as well as mouths; tiáo is a M for sinuous objects. Yǎnjīng ‘eye’ is tonally distinct from yǎnjìng ‘glasses’; eyes are counted by way of the default M, *ge*. Dàshēng, literally ‘big-sound’, is ‘loud’; xiǎoshēng is the opposite.

Yì zhī qīngwā

Yì zhī qīngwā, yì zhāng zuǐ,
liǎng ge yǎnjīng, sì tiáo tuǐ.

one frog, one mouth
two eyes, four legs.

Nǐ shuō:

Shuō dàshēng yìdiǎnr:

Shuō xiǎoshēng yìdiǎnr:

You say it:

Say it louder:

Say it softer:

Dà jiǎo

Dà jiǎo dà, dà jiǎo dà,

yīntiān xià yǔ bú hàipà;

dà jiǎo hǎo, dà jiǎo hǎo,

yīntiān xià yǔ shuāibùdǎo.

Big feet big, big feet big,

cloudy fall+rain not fear;

big feet good, big feet good,

cloudy fall rain slip-not-fall.

Nursery rhyme (colloquial)

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

Ràokǒulìng ‘tongue twisters’

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

Māma qí mǎ, mǎ màn, māma mà mǎ.

媽媽騎馬，馬慢，媽媽罵馬。

Mum rides horse, horse slow, mum scolds horse.

Niūniu qiān niú, niú nìng, niūniu niǔ niú.

妞妞牽牛，牛倏，妞妞扭牛。

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

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

Resource: Learning Chinese: A Foundation Course in Mandarin
Dr. Julian K. Wheatley

The following may not correspond to a particular course on MIT OpenCourseWare, but has been provided by the author as an individual learning resource.

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.