

1 Lesson 二

Wednesday 24/10/2018

1.1 Culture

Since the open doors policy of the 80s/90s and the acceptance of large numbers of western visitors to China, discourse is becoming more polite. Historically, it would have been normal to generally ignore people outwith one's close social circle. Thus it would have been seen as odd to greet a stranger in the street, but this is now becoming more acceptable.

Be careful in some translations to be aware of subtle implications. For example, 请 (invite; please) can imply when inviting friends or colleagues that the invitation is all-inclusive and at the generosity of the inviting host. Thus to invite a group to dinner can be an expensive business.

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1.2 New Words

1.3 Question Styles and Word Order

The word 也 (also)¹ is used at the beginning of sentences. Thus, 'too student I am' in place of 'I am also a student' or 'I am a student too' in English.

Questions can be asked in a number of ways, using question particles (ne, ma), question words (how, what, when, why, where), using an implicit style (statement, opposite) or by convention as an interpretation (you good). Note again the advice from lesson one.

Word order in general is subject adverb adjective where the (adverb adjective) form a predicate pair and in many statements no verb is required. This is in contrast to typical western phrasing of subject verb object where the (verb object) form the predicate. Thus : 'you are well' can become simply 'you well?' but usually the Chinese will throw in an adjective such as '好 (very)' not as a superlative but just bolstering the (adverb adjective) predicate. Thus more typically, 我很好 in place of 我好. In the negative, also such as 我不好.

Note that it would be considered foreign and unusual to actually use the classic greeting (你好马) with strangers since there is an implied relationship yet to be established before one would enquire as to the well being of another.

1.4 Numbers

The numbers 0–10 were introduced as below, as well as a single hand based counting system. For radio code, a variant of the number one which are phonetically distinct from the number seven (otherwise phonetically similar) is sometimes used for clarity. As an exercise, the class exchanged phone numbers to practice. Each numeral has a character, but roman numeric notation is often used, especially for longer numbers.

零	零	líng	Bunched fist	Zero
一	一	yī	Index finger	One
二	二	èr	Index plus middle fingers V	Two
三	三	sān	Thumb and index make circle, remaining three fingers up.	Three
四	四	sì	All fingers	Four
五	五	wǔ	All fingers plus thumb	Five
六	六	liù	Thumb plus pinkie	Six
七	七	qī	Thumb touching index plus middle	Seven
八	八	bā	Thumb and index form an L	Eight
九	九	jiǔ	Hook index finger	Nine
十	十	shí	As zero, or cross both index fingers as per the character	Ten

1.5 Chinese Characters

Historically, pictographs with a nominal derivation from a small sketch. e.g. 山 looks like a mountain. Formed from a range of standard strokes and dots which are grouped into component parts with semantics forming full characters (words) then joined into multiple characters to give phrases.

Stroke order, with a few exceptions

1. Top to bottom
2. Left to right

¹Note that the character 也 also forms part of the word 他 with the addition of the person or man radical, hence he.

- Horizontal before vertical, except bottom lines closing
- Frame before contents
- Middle before sides
- Secondary dots last

Chinese school exam questions would expect a candidate to be able to answer: 'which is the 4th stroke when forming the character 五'?

Learning : always use the same stroke order. Find mental imagery to help understand the characters. Recognise the key radical components (214).

Compound characters build meaning. Note that in combination, the parts scale so that all characters always occupy one box of space. e.g. By combining 日 (rì2, sun) and 月 (yuè4, moon) we get 明 (míng2, bright). Other combinations, noting that the logically combined characters often get aggregated into a new form include

木木 林	木木 林	mù mù lín	Radical for tree repeated twice.	forest, grove
人木 休	人木 休	rén mù xiū	Person + wood = lean on tree	rest.
女字 好	女字 好	nǚ zǐ hǎo	Female + son = good life	good, well
人人 从	人人 从	rén rén cóng	Person + person = follow	follow
人人人 众	人人人 众	rén rén rén zhòng	person+person+person = crowd	crowd

Narratives in the memory.

It is critical to learn the characters. Even the 56 stroke character 𠂇! The 214 base radicals help to understand, and are a key in some dictionaries.

1.6 Example Phrases

To be fully transcribed as an exercise :

你	nǐ	you	you
对不起我来晚了	duìbuqǐwǒ lái wǎn le	Excuse me I come late past-particle.	Sorry I am late.
请坐	qǐng zuò	Please sit.	Please sit.
你怎么样	nǐ zěnmeyáng	You how are things?	How are you?
你呢	nǐ ne	You repeat-question-particle	And you?
你忙不忙	nǐ máng bù máng	You busy not busy.	Are you busy?
不忙你忙	bù máng nǐ máng	You busy not busy.	You're busy? (really/rhetorical)
你好	nǐ hǎo ma	You good question-particle	Are you well?

1.7 Homework

Learn the characters for 1-10 plus basic greetings and pronouns to be tested in dictation (see also the week by week dictation PDF from these writeups).

Oral homework : be ready to use the greetings II vocabulary to have basic sentences in class.

1.8 IP/Copyright

In respect of the content, Dr. Wendy Che, and to an extent yet to be determined, her employer, the University of Oxford Language Center.

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