

# Build Your Chinese: The VSN Prep Kit

Your complete guide to acing the  
Chinese SA on 5.12.2025.

This study deck was made for students,  
by students. We're VSN, and we've  
designed this toolkit to give you  
everything you need to build your  
confidence and master the basics for  
your exam. Let's get started!

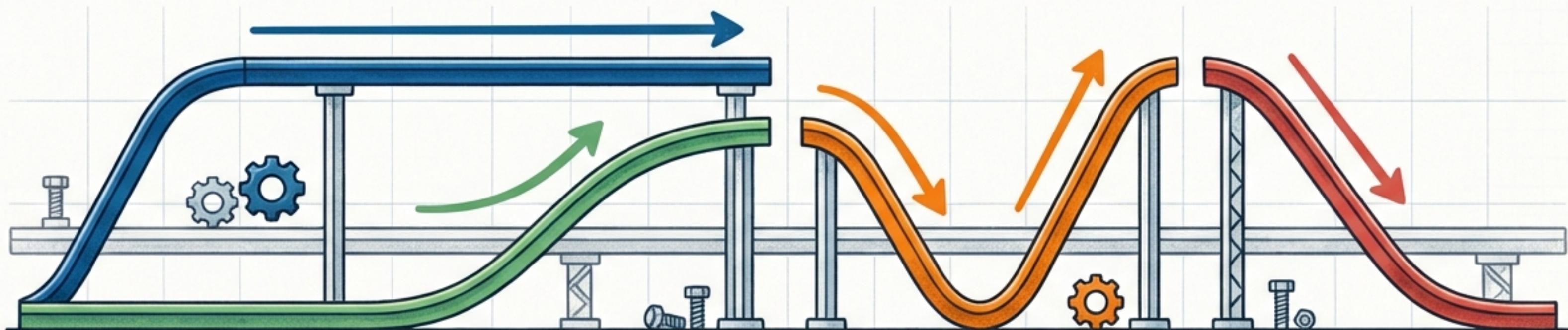


# Step 1: Laying the Foundation – The Music of Chinese



Think of tones as the music of Chinese. The same sound with a different tune can mean something completely different! Pinyin helps us read the sounds, and tone marks show us which tune to sing.

The Vocal Rollercoaster



**First Tone (píngdiào):**  
High and flat. `ā`

**Second Tone (shēngdiào):**  
Rising. Like 'Huh?' `á`

**Third Tone (shàngshēng):**  
Falling then rising. `ǎ`

**Fourth Tone (qùshēng):**  
Falling. Like 'Stop!' `à`

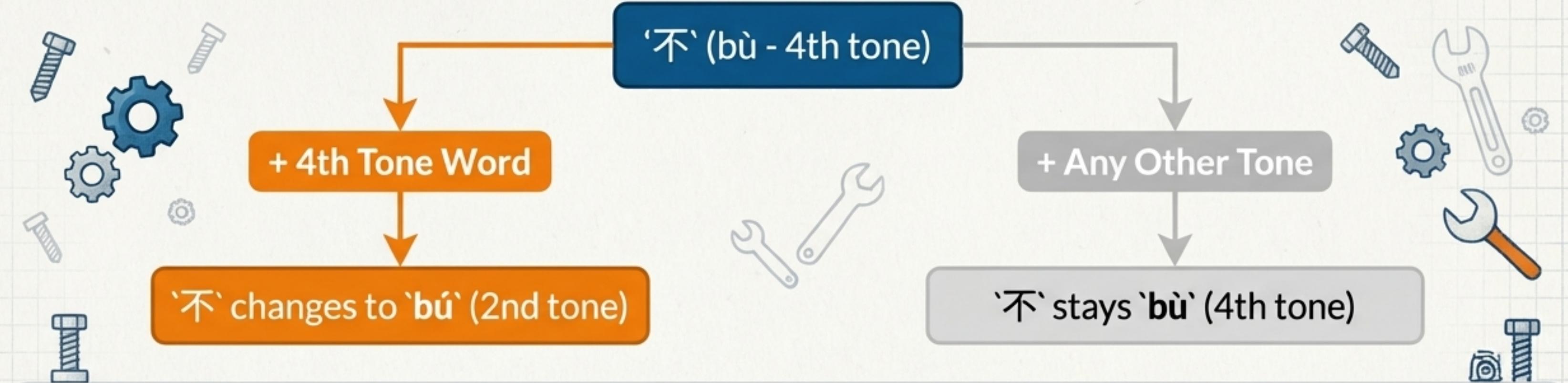


**Neutral Tone (qīngshēng):** Light and quick. A short, unstressed sound. (e.g., ma`)

# Your First Power Tool: The Smart Wrench 不



‘不’ (bù) means ‘not’. It’s a super useful tool, but it’s also smart! It changes its own sound to make sentences flow better. Here’s how it works.



**The Rule:** When ‘不’ (bù) comes before another 4th tone word, it cleverly changes to a 2nd tone (‘bú’).

‘bù’ (不) + ‘shì’ (是) → ‘bú shì’ (is not)

‘bù’ (不) + ‘lèi’ (累) → ‘bú lèi’ (not tired)

**In all other cases**, it stays as a 4th tone (‘bù’).

‘bù’ (不) + ‘hǎo’ (好) → ‘bù hǎo’ (not good)



# Part 1: Building the Entrance – How to Say Hello



## 你好 (Nǐ hǎo)

Hello (The standard, friendly hello to one person).



## 您好 (Nín hǎo)

Hello (A more polite version. Use this for teachers, elders, or people you want to show extra respect to!).



## 你们好 (Nǐmen hǎo)

Hello, everyone! (Use this when greeting a group of two or more people).



## 再见 (zàijiàn)

Goodbye.



# Who Are You Building With? Asking & Stating Names



- **To Ask:** 你叫什么名字? (Nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?) - “What is your name?”
- **To State:** 我叫... (Wǒ jiào...) - “My name is...”
- **Example:** 我叫王刚 (Wǒ jiào Wáng Gāng.)



## Builder's Tip:

In Chinese, the **family name** (surname) comes first! It's the most important part of your identity.

- **Surname:** 姓 (xìng)
- **Given Name:** 名 (míng)
- **Example:** For 王刚 (Wáng Gāng), the surname is 王 (Wáng).

# Your Toolbox: Essential People

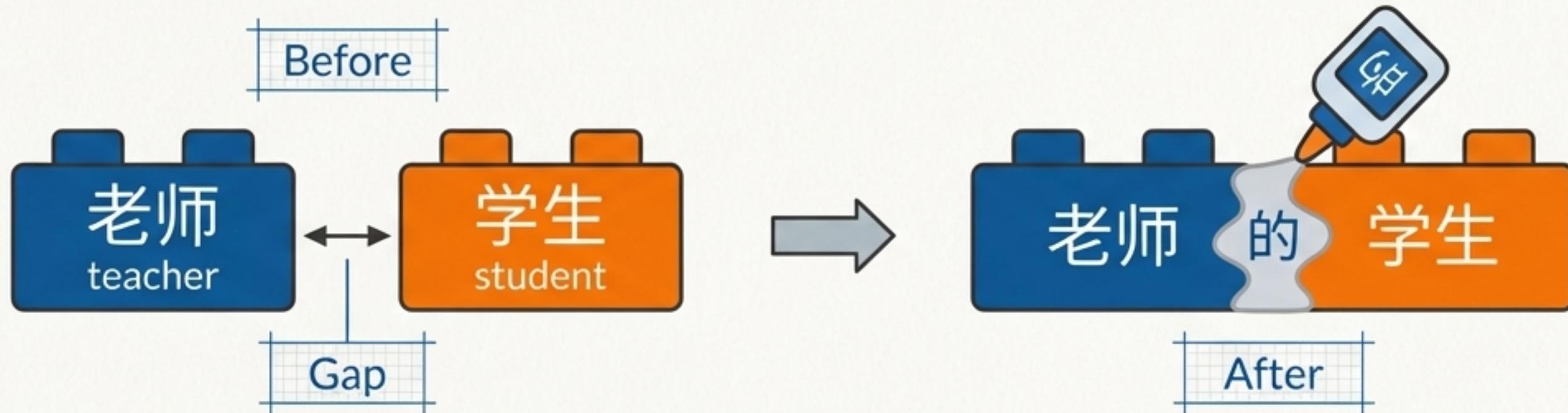
Stock your toolbox with these essential words for people you'll meet.





# The Magic Glue: Connecting Nouns with '的' (de)

How do you say something belongs to someone? You use the magic glue '的' (de)! It works just like "s" (apostrophe s) or 'of' in English to stick two words together.

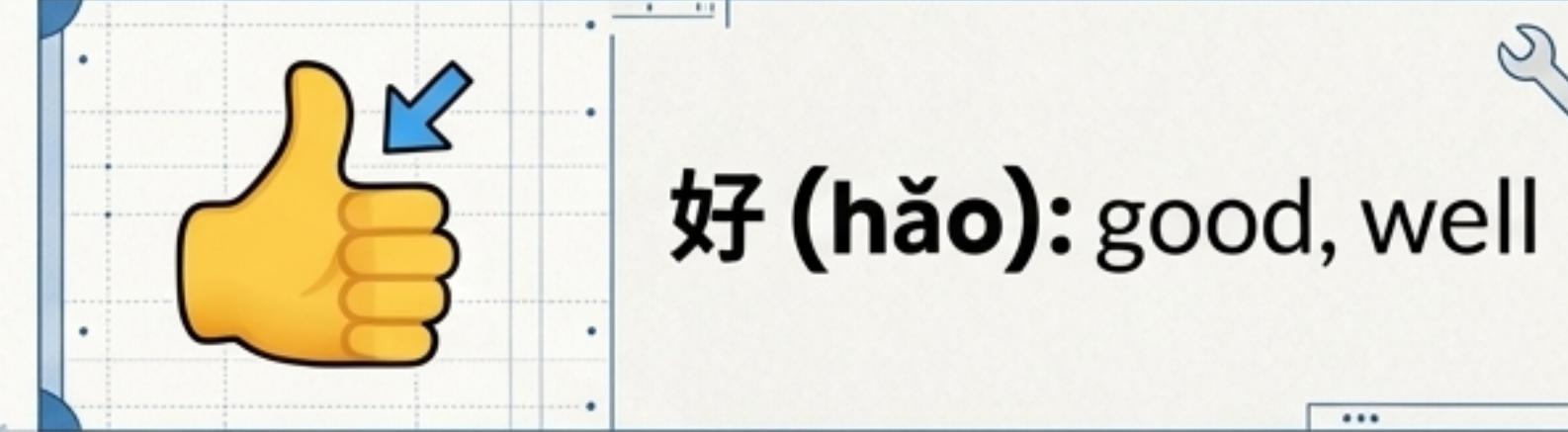


**Structure:** [Owner] + '的' + [Item/Person]

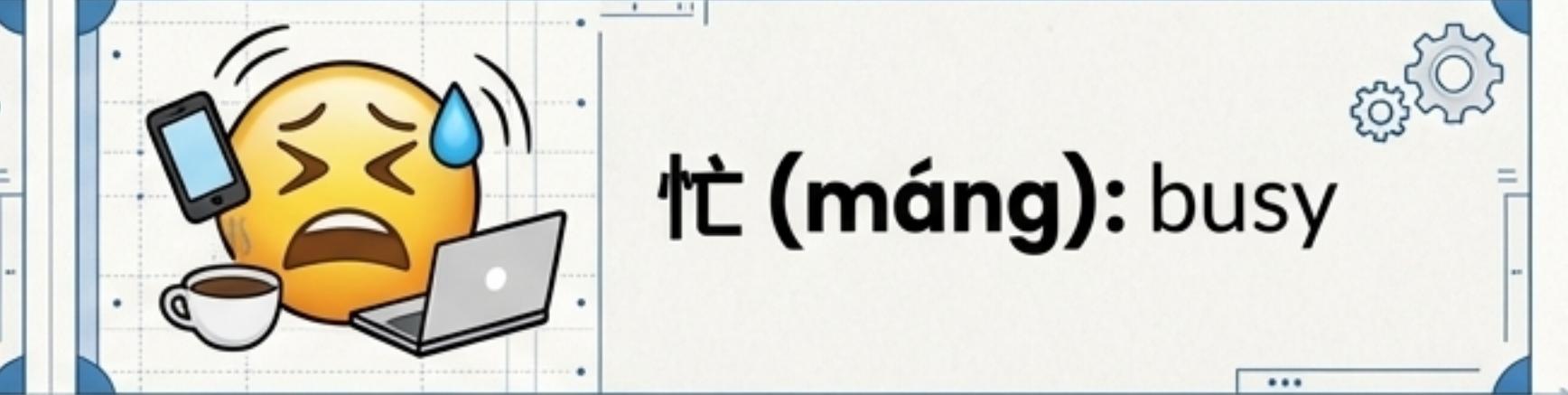
- ✿ 老师的**学生** (lǎoshī de xuésheng) - the teacher's student
- ✿ 你的**秘书** (nǐ de mìshū) - your secretary
- ✿ 我们的**老师** (wǒmen de lǎoshī) - our teacher
- ✿ 他的**朋友** (tā de péngyou) - his friend

## Part 2: Painting the Walls – Describing How You Feel

Let's add some color to our conversations with words that describe people and things.



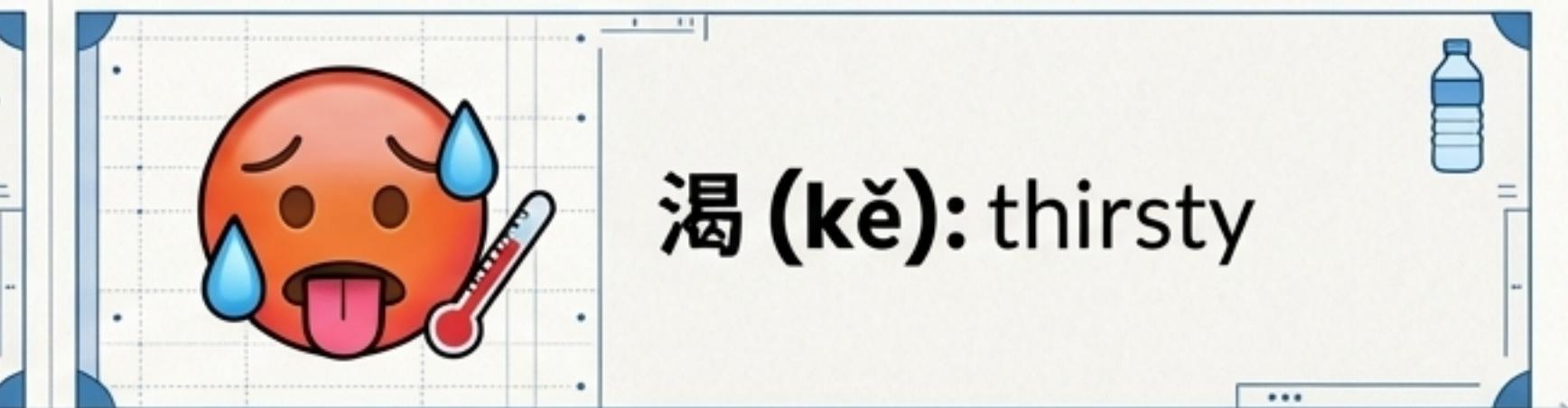
好 (hǎo): good, well



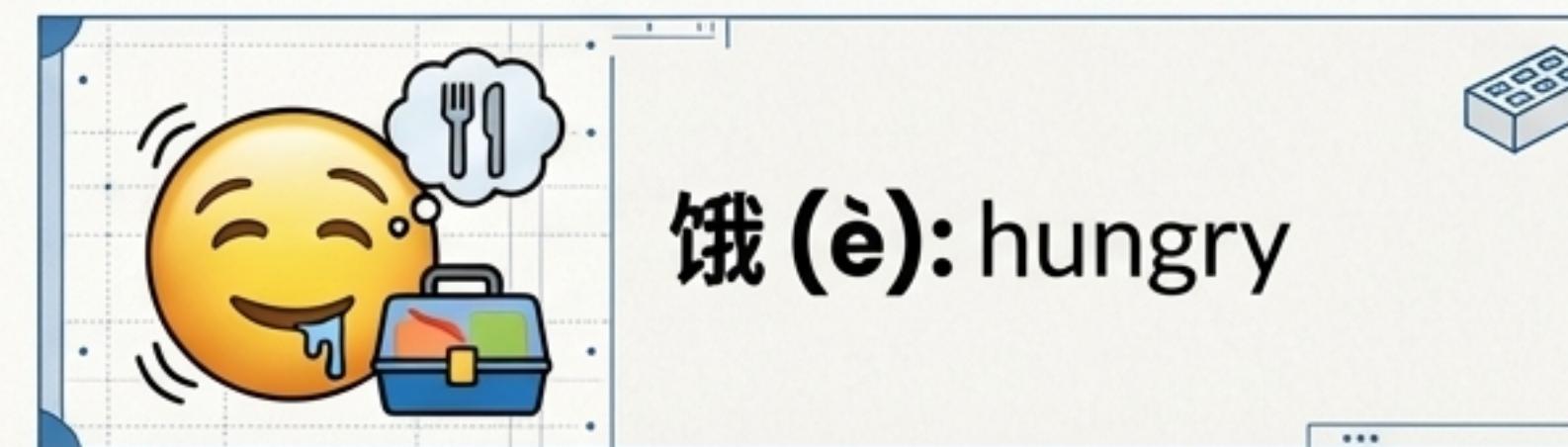
忙 (máng): busy



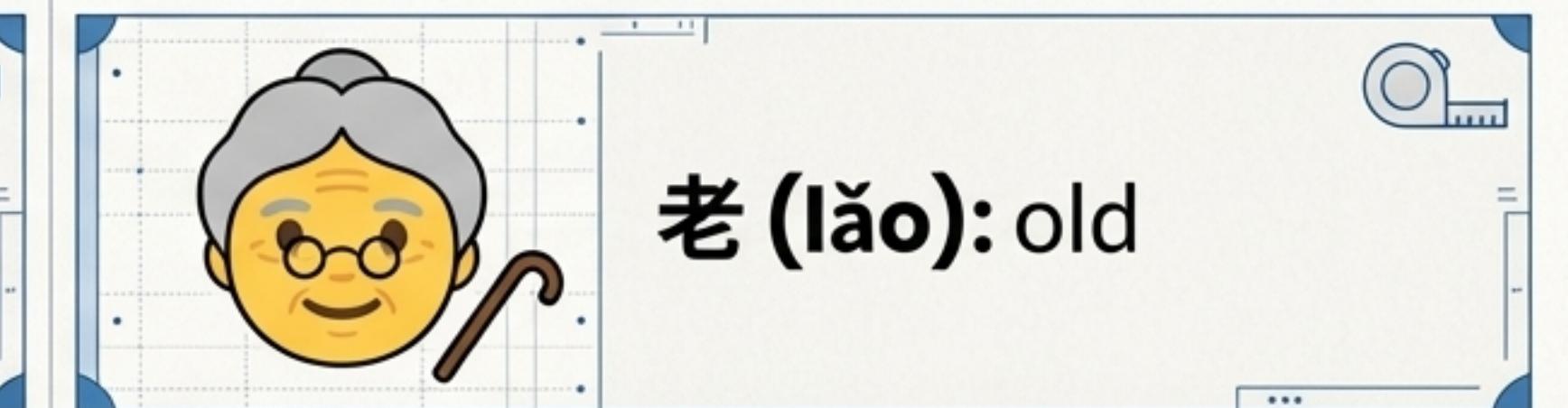
累 (lèi): tired



渴 (kě): thirsty



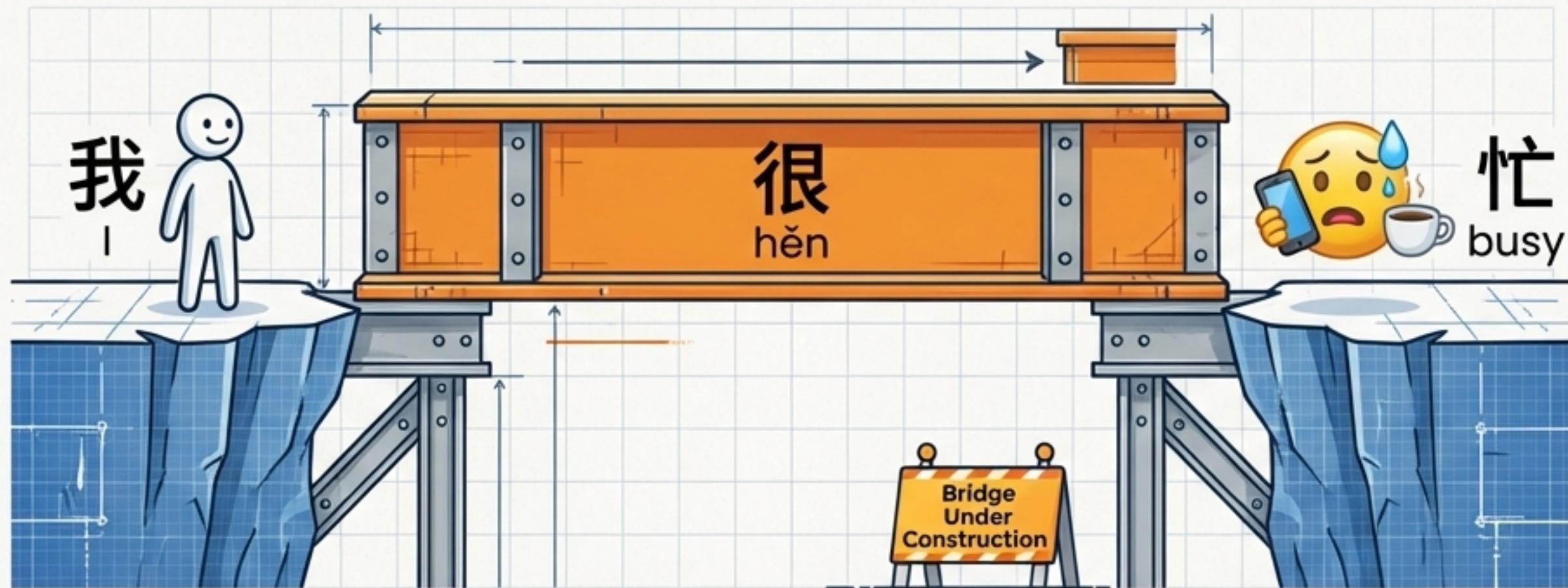
饿 (è): hungry



老 (lǎo): old

# The Sentence Bridge: Why We Use `很` (hěn)

This is a super important trick! In English, we say “I am busy.” In Chinese, you don’t use a word for “am” or “is” with adjectives. Instead, you build a bridge between the person and the feeling using `很` (hěn).



**Key Idea:** `很` often acts as a linker word, not just as “very”.

**Structure:** Subject + `很` + Adjective

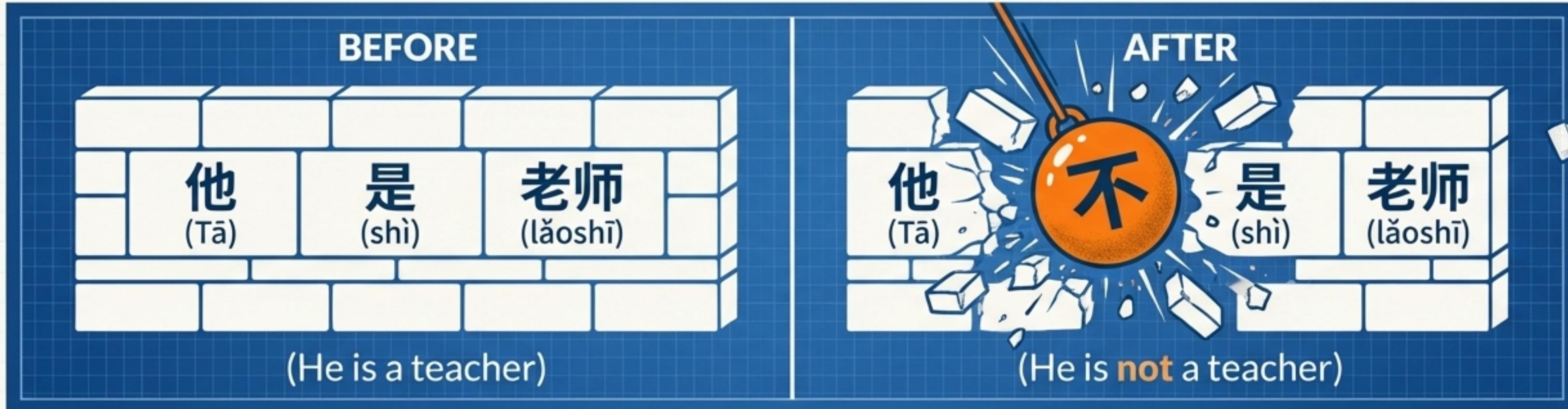
我 **很** 好。 (Wǒ hěn hǎo.) - I am fine.

他 **很** 忙。 (Tā hěn máng.) - He is busy.

他们 **很** 累。 (Tāmen hěn lèi.) - They are tired.

# The Wrecking Ball: How to Say 'Not' with '不'

Need to make a sentence negative? Just swing in the wrecking ball 不 (bù)! You place it right before the word you want to negate.



**Structure:** Subject + 不 + Verb/Adjective

- **Before:** 他很忙。 (Tā hěn máng.) – He is busy.
- **After:** 他**不**忙。 (Tā **bù** máng.) – He is **not** busy.



Remember our Power Tool? Watch it change tones before another 4th tone!  
**Example:** 我 bú 是 学生。 (Wǒ bú shì xuésheng.) – I am **not** a student.

# Blueprint for Success: Let's Build a Conversation! (Part 1)



你好！你叫什么名字？  
(Nǐ hǎo! Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?)

你好！我叫王刚，我姓王。  
认识你，我很高兴。

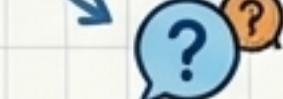


## Deconstruction

你好！你叫什么名字？



Greeting Brick

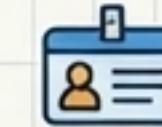


“Ask Name”  
Structure



## Deconstruction

我叫 我姓，我很高兴。



“State Name”  
Structure



“State Surname”  
Structure



‘很’ Adjective with  
Bridge

# Blueprint for Success: The Conversation Continues (Part 2)

## COMIC STRIP (CONTINUED)



### DECONSTRUCTION

我很高兴 -> Using the '很' Bridge to link "I" and "happy".

很

I Happy

### DECONSTRUCTION

...吗？ -> Yes/No Question Particle | 秘书 -> Vocab from Toolbox

秘书 -> Vocab from Toolbox

吗？

秘书

### DECONSTRUCTION

不 -> Negation | 我 bú shì 秘书 -> Wrecking Ball in action! Note the '不' tone change (highlighted in red). 学生 -> Vocab from Toolbox

我 不 是 bú shì 秘 书

学生

# The Workshop: Time to Practice Your Skills

Match the questions on the left with the best answers on the right.  
Grab your tools and get building!

## Questions

1. 你叫什么名字?  
(Nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?)
2. 你贵姓?  
(Nǐ guì xìng?)
3. 你是秘书吗?  
(Nǐ shì mìshū ma?)
4. 你是老师吗?  
(Nǐ shì lǎoshī ma?)

## Answers

- a) 我不是老师。  
(Wǒ bú shì lǎoshī.)
- b) 我姓王。  
(Wǒ xìng Wáng.)
- c) 我叫王刚。  
(Wǒ jiào Wáng Gāng.)
- d) 我是秘书。  
(Wǒ shì mìshū.)

Answer Key: 1-c, 2-b, 3-d, 4-a

# Advanced Blueprints: Translation Drills

Ready for a bigger challenge? Let's translate these ideas from English into Pinyin blueprints. (This exercise is adapted from the original German-English source material).

1. Our teacher
2. His friend is very busy.
3. The teacher's students are very tired.
4. The engineer's friends are not thirsty.

## Check Your Work

1. Wǒmen de lǎoshī
2. Tā de péngyou hěn máng.
3. Lǎoshī de xuésheng hěn lèi.
4. Gōngchéngshī de péngyou bú kě.

# Project Complete! You've Got the Keys.

Congratulations, builder! You've assembled the essential parts of a Chinese conversation. Always remember your key tools:

-  Tones are your foundation.
-  的 is your magic glue.
-  很 is your sentence bridge.
-  不 is your wrecking ball.



You have the blueprint for success. You're ready. Good luck on the SA!

