

LEARN CHINESE WITH MNEMONICS

BEGINNER LEVEL

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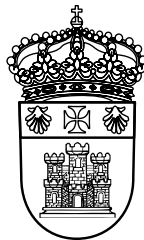


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DE BURGOS

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FIRST CHAPTER

第一章



1.1. INTRODUCTION

This method was designed to teach blind people how to learn Chinese. Special devices were added so that they could learn the characters by feeling them in relief on 3D-printed cards. After some methodological reflection, the idea emerged to apply it, with some modifications, to sighted individuals. Hence, the launch of this introduction to Chinese language learning with mnemonics.

We believe that the essence of Chinese lies in its writing system, specifically, its characters. It is essential to make this writing accessible to anyone who wishes to learn it, as it is the key to understanding the language and a significant part of Chinese culture. We have devised a way for anyone to easily recognise the characters by implementing various mnemonic strategies.

Let's start by describing the content of the book. This book consists of five chapters, each designed to provide comprehensive information on learning Chinese.

The first chapter addresses the teaching of tones, a highly relevant aspect of the Chinese language. The second chapter focuses on the pronunciation of consonants, some of which have similarities to English sounds, while others are unique and need to be learnt from scratch. Additionally, you will learn how to pronounce vowels and vowel groups.

The third chapter comprises a glossary of Chinese words, composed of one or more characters. Chinese characters are, of course, expressed orally. This pronunciation has been alphabetised to make it easier to learn the pronunciation (it is called *pinyin*). So, in this chapter, you will find the English word, its pronunciation in *pinyin* and the character(s) that make it up. Each Chinese word can have one or several characters, in the same way that English words have one syllable (monosyllabic words such as sun, bread, etc.) or several syllables (book, table, etc.). Currently, seventy per cent of Chinese words are polysyllabic, i.e. composed of several syllables (characters). And each syllable has a tone. Hence, to identify it, before each character, transformed into *pinyin*, you will have a number corresponding to the tone (1,2,3,4). A fascinating part of this chapter is that each word will have an explanation of the appearance of its characters and a mnemonic aid to help you recognise them.

In the fourth chapter, we present the basic rules of Chinese grammar, using the vocabulary you have already learnt to make the examples easier to understand.

The fifth chapter features a story called "The Bright White Bird" in English, pinyin and Chinese characters. This story integrates all the covered elements (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) allowing you to apply everything you have learnt previously together in the story.

1.2. LEARNING CHINESE

Welcome to the fantastic world of the Chinese language. We bring you this ancient language to make it more accessible to everyone who wants to learn it. We hope that you will enjoy learning it and that, at the end of this didactic work, you will be able to better understand the beautiful Chinese culture and be surprised by the beauty of its language. Chinese originated more than four thousand years ago, and it is one of the oldest and most widely spoken languages in the world today. There are many dialects, but the Chinese spoken by the majority of the population is *Hanyu*, a language that comes from the north and was used by two-thirds of the country and became the official language. The written language was composed of very complex traditional characters used by the elites. Later, in the 20th century, when the People's Republic of China was founded, to make language and education accessible, a variant of simplified characters was created and is used today. These characters and this written language are part of the culture, and, because of their relevance, it is important to know them. We know that this is a challenge for everyone, so we want to bring the characters as close as possible through mnemonic strategies. Characters are made up of strokes and look like small drawings. Each character is pronounced as a syllable (for example, the character for person is pronounced **ren** 🗣️) : 人, so what we will be working on throughout this book is the phonetic transcription, i.e. how these characters sound in our alphabet and the formation and understanding of the characters. The characters of Standard Chinese are transcribed through an orthographic alphabet using Latin letters to facilitate the learning of the characters. In reality, this is a support for the study of the language and never a replacement for the Chinese characters, which are the actual writing form of the language today. This system is known as *pinyin* ("spelling sounds") and is the most commonly used by all students at any stage of Chinese study. The title of the story you can read at the end is "The Bright White Bird" (又白又亮的鸟儿), and its transcription in pinyin is **4you 2bai 4you 4liang 0de 3niao0er** 🗣️).

1.2.1. Introduction to Chinese

The structure of the words bears some resemblance to our language. It is appropriate to think that each character can be equivalent to a syllable in English. As we pointed out before, in our language, the words we are going to see can be monosyllabic (ren 人: person) or with more syllables or characters in Chinese (polysyllabic as renmen 人们: people, persons). Each syllable (character) is composed of an initial part which will be a consonant and a final part (vowels, vowel groups and n or ng) which we will see a little later.





1.2.2. Tones


Chinese is a tonal language, so it is important to emphasise that each character (syllable) will always have a tone.

In fact, in our English language, we can observe this phonetic phenomenon in which the accentuation changes the meaning. For example, the word *présent* (noun or adjective): As a noun, it means a gift, and as an adjective, it indicates something that is present or in place. Example: "I received a *présent* for my birthday". / "She is *présent* at the meeting". The stress, i.e. the accentual force, falls on the syllable "pre" (*présent*). But *présent* (verb) means to offer, show or expose something. Example: "Tomorrow they will present the new project". In the same way, tones also provide meaning. An example can be *ba*, which if it has the first tone means eight (1ba) 八 and if it has the fourth tone, it means father (4ba) 爸. This is a very important aspect of the Chinese language, although we know that it is a challenge for anyone who decides to learn Chinese, practice makes perfect, so be patient and enjoy learning.

Tones are very important in Chinese. To help you memorise them, we thought it would be best to point out the tone just before each syllable. We will do this with a number. Since there are four tones (actually there are four plus a neutral tone in which the pronunciation is attenuated), we can place the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, before each syllable (the number 0 will serve to identify the light tone, sometimes called the “fifth tone” or “neutral tone”). In this way, you will know the pitch of the syllable just before reading it in *pinyin*, i.e. in the phonetic transcription. It may seem cumbersome, but all Chinese learners must learn the tone of each character. The number will appear in your mind, and you will immediately associate it with the tone. Tones are intrinsic to the Chinese language; they must be learned at the same time as the words are memorised. We believe that once you have internalised this way of constructing the syllables, there should be no problem.

After the explanation of the tones, you will hear three examples, which you can repeat aloud and practise.

- The first tone or level tone (1ma, 1tian, 1gao) . It is a high and constant sound (sound that is maintained in the pronunciation of the syllable or character) that sounds as if we were pronouncing the note “do” (C) of the musical scale. It will be represented by the number one.
- The second or rising tone (2ma, 2shei, 2cong) . It is a sound that rises rapidly from the middle register to a higher register as when we ask (what?). It is represented by the number two.
- The third tone or falling-rising tone (3ma, 3yu, 3duo) . It is a sound that starts high, goes down and then goes up again. We are going to represent it with the number three. Imagine that you receive a very surprising piece of news, and you answer with a “What?”.
- The fourth tone (4ma, 4wen, 4liang)  or descending tone. It starts high and goes down quickly. It is very emphatic, similar to the sound we pronounce when we stress a syllable in English (cigar: the pronunciation would be /sɪˈɡɑːr/, where the stress falls on the last syllable). We represent it with the number four.

Next, let’s listen to the four tones and get to know various meanings:  1ma (mother 妈), 2ma (hemp 麻), 3ma (horse 马), 4ma (quarrel 骂).

Interesting videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRaHXPdIV-4>

<https://yoyochinese.com/blog>

SECOND CHAPTER

第二章



Learning the sounds of Mandarin Chinese can feel like embarking on an exciting journey. Unlike the familiar sounds of English, Chinese presents unique tones and phonemes that may initially seem unfamiliar. But do not be discouraged, every new sound is an opportunity to expand your linguistic abilities. In this chapter, you will explore how these sounds work and how they can be compared to English to make them more accessible. By approaching each sound with curiosity and patience, you will discover that mastering Chinese pronunciation is achievable and rewarding. Let's dive in, step by step, and make the unfamiliar familiar together. With practice and dedication, you will soon be able to pronounce Mandarin confidently.



2.1. CHINESE PRONUNCIATION

In Mandarin Chinese, the structure of syllables is systematically divided into two primary components: the initial and the final. The initial refers to the consonant sound that appears at the beginning of the syllable, whereas the final encompasses the vowel sound, or a combination of vowels followed by either the nasal endings “-n” or “-ng”. These fundamental components are essential to understanding the phonological makeup of the language. Below, a comprehensive list of both initials and finals is provided, accompanied by essential guidelines for their correct articulation. In an effort to facilitate learning, approximations to English pronunciation are included where applicable. However, it is important to note that these comparisons are often imperfect due to the significant phonetic differences between English and Mandarin. As such, these approximations should be approached with caution. For learners seeking accuracy, it is advisable to consult a native speaker of Chinese to ensure proper pronunciation, as this is the most reliable way to master the subtle nuances inherent in the language.





2.1.1. Initials

A character (a syllable) is made up of an initial part which is a consonant and a final part which is usually a vowel, vowel group or vowel plus consonant n or ng. We are going to learn how to pronounce, first of all, the initial consonants (Po-Ching & Rimmington, 2006, pp. 2-3):



- f ㄈ, l ㄌ, m ㄇ, n ㄋ, s ㄙ, w ㄨ and y ㄩ. – similar to English,
- p ㄆ, t ㄊ and k ㄎ - pronounced with a slight puff of air, like the initials in *pop*, *top* and *cop*,
- h- like *ch* in the Scottish *loch*, with a little friction in the throat,
- b, ㄅ d ㄉ and g ㄍ - not voiced as in English, but closer to *p* in *spout*, *t* in *stout*, and *c* in *scout*, than to *b* in *bout*, *d* in *doubt* and *g* in *gout*,
- j ㄐ - like *j* in *jeep*,

- q  - like *ch* in *cheap*,
- x  - like *sh* in *sheep*,

The three above are pronounced with the lips spread as in a smile:






- ch  - like *ch* in *church*,
- sh  - like *sh* in *shirt*,
- zh  - like *j* in *judge*,
- r  - like *r* in *rung*,







The four above are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled back.

- c  like *ts* in *bits*,
- z  like *ds* in *bids* (but not voiced),

2.1.2. Finals:

We are going to learn how to pronounce the finals (Po-Ching & Rimmington, 2006, pp. 2-3):

- a- as in *father*,
- ai- as in *aisle*,
- an- as in *ran*,
- ang  - as in *rang*, with the *a* slightly lengthened as in *ah*,
- ao- like *ou* in *out*,
- e- as in *her*, *the*,
- ei- as in *eight*,
- en- as in *open*,
- eng  - like en + g,
- er- like *err*, but with the tongue curled back and the sound coming from the back of the throat,
- i- with initials b, d, j, l, m, n, p, q, t and x, as in *machine*, or like *ee* in *see* (but pronounced differently with other initials, see below),
- ia- *i* followed by *a*, like *ya* in *yard*,
- ian  - similar to *yen*,
- iang- *i* followed by *ang*,
- iao- *i* followed by *ao*, like *yow* in *yowl*,
- ie- like *ye* in *yes*,
- in- as in *thin*,
- ing  - as in *thing*,
- iong  - *i* merged with ong,

- iu- like *yo* in *yoga*,
- i- with initials c, r, s, z, ch, sh and zh, somewhat like *i* in *sir*, *bird* (but pronounced differently with other initials, see above),
- o- as in *more*,
- ou- as in *dough*, or like *oa* in *boat*,
- ong  - like *ung* in *lung*, but with lips rounded,
- u- as in *rule*, or like *oo* in *boot*,
- ua- *u* followed by *a*,
- uai- *u* followed by *ai* like *wi* in *wild*,
- uan- *u* followed by *an*,
- uang  - *u* followed by *ang* like *wang* in *twang*,
- ueng  - *u* followed by *eng*, which exists only with zero initial as *weng*,
- ui- *u* followed by *ei*, similar to *way*,
- un- *u* followed by *en*, like *uan* in *truant*,
- uo- *u* followed by *o*, similar to *war*,
- u/ü- with initial j, q and x (as u) and with initials l and n (as ü) like *i* in *machine*, pronounced with rounded lips, and similar to *u* in French *une* or *ü* in German *über*,
- uan  - u/ü  followed by *an*, only with initials j, q and x,
- ue or üe- with initials j, q and x (as ue) and with initials l and n (as üe), u/ü followed by *e* as above,
- un- u/ü  with *n*, like French *une*, only initials j, q and x.

Most finals can function without an initial consonant (commonly referred to as a zero initial). Finals starting with “i” (as in “machine”) and “u/ü” (similar to the French “une”) are typically represented in *pinyin* romanization by using *y* as the initial letter. Likewise, finals beginning with “u” are usually written with “w” as the initial letter (Po-Ching & Rimmington, 2006, p.4).

-i > yi	-ie > ye
-ia > ya	-in > yin
-ian > yan	-ing > ying
-iang > yang	-iong > yong

-iao > yao	-iao > yao
-u/ü > yu	-ue/üe > yue
-uan > yuan	-un > yun
-u > wu	-uang > wang
-ua > wa	-ui > wei
-uai > wai	-un > wen
-uan > wan	-uo > wo

As you reach the end of this pronunciation chapter, it is important to remember that mastering the sounds of Mandarin Chinese may seem challenging at first, but with consistent practice, it becomes more intuitive. A useful mnemonic trick is to associate the sound *ü* with the feeling of whistling. Try positioning your lips as if you are about to whistle, and you will find the sound comes naturally. This kind of mental association can help reinforce the correct pronunciation without overthinking.

Another effective strategy is to practice these sounds in front of a mirror. Watching the movement of your lips and tongue can help you better understand how to replicate them consistently. Additionally, do not be afraid to exaggerate the pronunciation at first, it is a great way to train your muscles to form the correct sounds. With time, you will be able to adjust the intensity and flow naturally into the tones.

Remember, learning a new language, especially one with such a different phonetic system, requires patience and perseverance. Celebrate small victories along the way, like mastering a difficult sound or feeling more confident with a particular tone. Every bit of progress is a step towards fluency. Stay committed, and soon the sounds that seemed difficult at the beginning will become second nature. You have got this, and you are well on your way to mastering Mandarin.

Interesting videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91RVKGKzRIA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTMQuoHOVDI>

THIRD CHAPTER

第三章



3.1. LADY WEI AND THE EIGHT FUNDAMENTAL STROKES

Originally, strokes were made by incisions; they were inscribed. Therefore, round shapes are not normally used, and later calligraphers applied this principle to ink, adding the concept of the theory of yin (dark, soft, smooth) and yang (light, strong, hard). Thus, the strokes can have a yang part, when the brush or burin is pressed and the stroke becomes thicker, and a *yin* part when the brush or burin is lifted and the stroke becomes thinner (in the chosen typeface you will notice this in a very attenuated way, but it is interesting to know a little about the history of the strokes). We must tell you that the strokes are the essential and smallest building blocks with which the characters are built. Each character contains a fixed number of strokes. In the Middle Ages, Lady Wei established the theory of the eight fundamental strokes: all characters are written with only eight essential strokes arranged in a certain order. With these eight strokes, all the characters are constructed. Of course, sometimes there will be one set of strokes, and sometimes others, thus creating a multitude of combinations that give rise to the different characters.

There are eight basic strokes, as we have just pointed out. The first, called “2heng”, is a horizontal line (—). Secondly, we have the stroke called “4shu” which is a vertical line (丨). The third stroke is called “3pie” (ㄚ): it starts on the right, descends, and curves to the left (as it looks like a “slash”, we will call it that for simplicity). The fourth stroke is called “4na” (ㄣ). It is the exact opposite of the previous one, as it starts at the top, weak and then goes down, curving to the right. It differs from the previous one in that it may have a small horizontal line at the top. We will refer to this fourth stroke as the “broom” because it resembles this cleaning article a little bit. The fifth stroke is called 2ti (ㄣ). It looks like a v; we will call it a “nail”. The sixth stroke is called “1gou” (┐) and is a vertical line joined by a horizontal line creating a 90-degree angle. It looks very much like the capital letter L. As it also resembles a “hook”, we will call it that. The seventh is called “2zhe” (ㄣ) and is a horizontal line that bends down slightly to the left; we will call it “bent”. And finally, the eighth is called 3dian (丶). It is as if you wrote a dot and then slid the pen to one side as we wrote it. We will call it a “dot”.

The strokes have the following writing order: first, horizontal before vertical, from left to right and from top to bottom, and when there are elements inside, the outline does not close until the inside is finished. It is quite important to know the number of strokes in a word because many dictionaries index characters by a number of strokes.

3.1.1. The structure of Chinese: strokes, radicals and characters

Chinese components are like small graphic structures that are built with recurring elements. In fact, some people have compared them to pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that we compose or decompose according to our needs. This idea that Chinese characters can be assembled and disassembled to obtain the pieces that make them up can help us to demystify their difficulty.

The basic elements, which make up any Chinese character, are called strokes, as we have just seen. These are the smallest structural components of any Chinese character. They do not have any meaning on their own, as they are actually those straight or curved lines (also dots) that we see in any writing. In fact, in a very generic way, we can speak of two main types of strokes: straight or curved lines and dots. Using the strokes we can build more complex pieces. For example, the character kou (口) 3kou (mouth) can be broken down as follows, into three strokes: a vertical stroke on the left, a combination of horizontal plus vertical on the right and, finally, a horizontal stroke at the bottom. This way of composing and decomposing into strokes applies to any Chinese character.

3.1.2. The six methods of character formation: radicals

Chinese characters are built through combinatorics. Although at first glance they may seem like gibberish, there are only six combinatorial methods of forming words:

The first is pictographic, i.e. the character resembles the thing depicted or part of the thing. For example, the pictogram 3kou (口) means opening, mouth and is made by writing a square of three strokes (vertical on the left, from which a horizontal stroke bends downwards and closes with a horizontal one) 口. Opening, mouth, resembles, in a way, the shape created by the character which is a square.

The second is ideographic, as they represent simple ideas by adding a stroke to the previous ones to emphasise the meaning of the idea. If in the previous case, a physical thing was highlighted, here, we focus on an idea. For example: 4xia 下 means below and is written with a horizontal stroke from which a vertical stroke comes down from the middle and a dot (3dian) is added to the right to mark that it means below or below 下.

At this point, it is necessary to explain the concept of a radical in the Chinese language. To help you understand, a radical is a simple character within a complex character. So, we are going to find characters (generally simplified) forming part of a character. As we say, these radicals (simple characters) are joined to others, forming a complex character. Most of the radicals are ideograms or simple pictograms that provide the meaning of the words. To help you understand better, here is an example: the word good 3hao 好 is an adjective and in Chinese, it is a monosyllable, meaning it consists of only one character. This character is made up of two radicals, the first one, located on the left is the ideogram of woman 女 (in this case, it is part of the character, but we can also find it alone, as a complete character, with the meaning of woman) and on the right is the radical that means child 子. A woman loving her child, and vice versa, is taken for something good, hence its meaning. Therefore, the third method of character formation is the union of two radicals (sometimes more) to create a new meaning; for example, the preposition “since” 2cong 从, is written by putting twice the radical of person (“slash” and “broom”).

The fourth way to form characters is when one part of the character, a radical, indicates the meaning of the word (what it means) and the other part of the character, the sound of the word. For example, eat 1chi 吃 is written on the left the radical “mouth”, “opening” 口 and on the right the character 3qi, a person above and below a “bent” with “hook” upwards giving it the sound “chi”. Thus, we know that its pronunciation is “chi” and that it has to do with the mouth (eating). Most Chinese characters are formed using this method. In this case, one of the radicals provides the meaning and the other the sound.

There are two other ways: borrowing and transfer. Old characters are used to produce new meanings or to imitate the sound of foreign or new words. But the most common ways of creating characters are the first four.

In summary, there are six methods of character creation. In the first, the character resembles the thing (pictographic); the second resembles the idea (ideographic); the third involves the union of two radicals to create a new one; the fourth is the union of two radicals in which one of them indicates the meaning and the other only the sound (pictophonetic) and the last two remaining methods are not very common, so we will focus on the previous ones.

Some people want everything immediately, but learning the Chinese language does not work that way. You need to take your time and relate well in the beginning, then everything will work automatically. If you take your time at the beginning, in the long run, everything will be much easier. Remember that the Chinese language comes from writing and not from the voice (the sound of the words changes over time, but the strokes do not, which is why Lady Wei called the eight essential strokes “eternal”). Perhaps that is why, from the beginning, they were carved into bone, bronze, wood or stone, so that anyone could learn them. Wise emperors engraved important texts onto stone so that everyone could have access to them (and, moreover, copy them without problems) and could feel their importance and the personality of the writer. In fact, among all the Chinese arts, calligraphy is considered the most important because it reflects the character of the person. Only the most relevant writings were engraved for posterity.

What we want to tell you is that the Chinese language is one of the most important languages in human history; moreover, it is quite fair, in fact, having an excellent memory or the best ear in the world, does not guarantee you to be the best (you were born with it); only hard, constant and muscular work (for them the brain is just another muscle, the most important thing is carried in the heart as you will see), will allow you to reach a high level of linguistic competence. This book is merely an introductory method, but if you think about it, it is also a training, like martial arts, only those who persevere and confront their challenges will achieve an acceptable level because they come to understand their weaknesses and frustrations. Ancient Chinese wisdom says that the person who knows his weaknesses is indestructible.

This section is dedicated to introducing the vocabulary that will be learnt and practised later on. First of all, it should be noted that each word (of one or more characters) is numbered and placed in alphabetical order. You will find the word in English, then in pinyin, i.e. in its Chinese pronunciation, and then the character(s). Remember that before each character in *pinyin*, you will have the number to know what tone it has. After that, there will be some grammatical information and an explanation of the character strokes with a mnemonic aid to make it easier to remember the meaning and form of the character.

You will see that many words can function in very different ways and can be noun and verb or adjective and adverb. Remember that it always depends on their position within a sentence, so if it is in the subject (at the beginning) or in the direct complement (at the end), it will be a noun; if it is preceded by a subject and followed by a direct complement, it will be a verb; if it is in front of a verb, it will be an adverb, and so on. We will say it several times, but in the Chinese language, it is the place a word occupies in the sentence (the syntax) that determines its grammatical function.

You will also notice that some characters have numbers to their right. This is the number or numbers where you can find the explanation of that character in this part of the book dedicated to Chinese vocabulary (if there is more than one number, you can find explanations in more than one place). For example, if we are explaining the adjective white, you will see the radical sun (because it is part of that character) and a number to the right of it. That number tells you where you will

find the explanation of the character sun in full or as part of other words. We do this so as not to be excessively redundant and so that you can join those threads that relate some words to others that we were talking about earlier.

3.2. VOCABULARY

In this section, we will introduce you to some common vocabulary in Chinese. Remember that you will find the words sorted by numbers and alphabetically. First, there will be the number, then the word in English, followed by the pronunciation of the word in *pinyin* and the character, as well as a mnemonic explanation so that you can recognise it.

- 3.1 Eight (1ba) 八. These are two lines that start parallel and move apart. The one on the left is the stroke “3pie” (“slash”) and the one on the right is the stroke “4na” (“broom”).
- 3.2 Catch, hold (3ba) 把. Pictophonetic. On the left, a “vertical line” with a “hook” crossed by two lines, the simplified hand radical gives us the meaning of the word, on the right the upper part of a capital b with a “hook” descending to the right gives us the sound “pa”. It is used to manipulate beings and things. For example, to write recipes. To help you remember, remember that we hold things in our hands.
- 3.3 White (2bai) 白. Adjective. Ideogram. Think of the “sun” character 日 (4ri:3. 82) which reminds us of the window, but this time you will find at the top a stroke which is as if it represented the handle of an already opened window through which the brightness of the day enters as the colour white.
- 3.4 No (4bu) 不. Adverb of negation of present and future. This character is made up of a “horizontal line” and three strokes going downwards. Some students are reminded of a jellyfish under water (the horizontal line is the water). To remember, keep in mind that whatever is under the sea (the horizontal line) seems not to exist now or ever, so we use it to deny the present and the future.
- 3.5 Eat (1chi) 吃. Verb. Pictophonetic. This character is made up of the radical “mouth” (3.53) on the left, which is a square representing an opening or mouth. The right part of the character is a radical marking the *chi* sound and is a simplified person at the top and at the bottom, a “hook”, as if it were an outstretched hand, as this part means “to beg”. But here it only brings sound. We eat with our mouth, that can help you to remember the meaning of this character. It always goes with a direct object; something is always eaten.
- 3.6 To go out (1chu) 出. Verb; symbolizes two mountains joined together, one above and one below (mountain 山). As you can see, the mountain symbol is duplicated; one at the top and one at the bottom. This symbol is formed by a “horizontal line” from which three vertical lines emerge, the middle one is longer and seems to represent the verticality of the mountain. In the past, if the emperor exiled you, you had to go beyond the mountains. The mountains emerge from the earth, so if we put it after a verb or an adjective (complement of the verb), it indicates that something emerges, comes out or is taken out.
- 3.7 To emerge (1chu0lai) 出来. Verb and complement of the verb. It can be the verb to emerge 出 (1chu) with the complement of the verb “to come”, “to approach” (0lai) 来 which, as we shall see below, is used to speak of the action or state of affairs approaching the speaker. Something arises and approaches us. Sometimes it comes after a verb or an adjective to indicate precisely that something arises and comes upon us. As “to come” (0lai 来) only indicates the direction of the predicate, it is used with a neutral tone. It is often

used with fluids, such as tears or water, which emerge from the unseen. The word “arise” in Chinese, as you have already seen, is composed of the character 1chu (exit: 3.6) 出 together with 0lai 来 which is a simple ideogram similar to the “wood” radical (3.124; 3.129) 木, crossed by a horizontal line at the top with one “3pie” (“slash”) and one “4na” (“broom”) underneath on either side of the vertical. The two “dots” in ancient times referred to two wheat plants. This meaning is borrowed from an ancient character. The horizontal line at the top seems to mean that the wheat will become a plant, that the plant will come, i.e. it will emerge.

- 3.8 To go out into the street or out of the house (1chu2men) 出门. Verb composed of the syllables “1chu” (to go out: 3.6) 出 and “2men” (door: 3.68) 门. In the old days, it was used to say that a woman got married because, in the past, married women went to live in their husband’s house and had to go out the door of their own house and enter their spouse’s house.
- 3.9 From (2cong) 从. Preposition. Ideogram composed of two radicals (pictograms). Like almost all Chinese prepositions, it can also be a verb (to follow something, to obey). It is written as one person (2ren:3.81) 人 behind another, i.e. with the person radical, followed by another person radical. As a preposition, we see that it indicates from where the movement or state of things in space or time begins.
- 3.10 Countryside (1cun) 村. Noun. Pictophonetic. It is composed of the radical “wood”, “plant” (4mu 木: 3.124; 3.129) on the left, which is a cross with two curved lines (“slash” and “broom”) resembling the roots of a tree (that is what it resembles), and on its right, a radical composed of a horizontal stroke through a hooked vertical and to which a “dot” is added below. It gives the sound “cun”. Houses in villages are built of wood, and it is normal for there to be trees there.
- 3.11 Large, adult (4da) 大. Adjective. Pictogram of a “person” 人 (3.81) with an additional horizontal stroke representing a person with open arms indicating that something is very big.
- 3.12 All (4da1jia) 大家. Bisyllabic pronoun. The first syllable is the character “4da” 大 (“big”:3.11) and the second syllable is the character “1jia” 家 (“family”: 3.43). The character for family is formed by the union of the radical roof at the top (a dot at the top followed by a “dot” and a fold at the bottom to signify the chimney and the eaves of the roof) with the piglet (below), a “horizontal line” from which three curves and a vertical “hook” to the left emerge, like little legs, and which ends with a “slash” and a “broom” to the right like a tail. Families raised a piglet for the New Year. As it is a plural pronoun, an adverb is usually used to indicate that things are plural. It is only used with people, as other beings do not raise piglets.
- 3.13 Storm (4da3yu) 大雨. Bisyllabic noun, composed of the character “big” (4da) 大 (3.11) and the character “rain” (3yu) 雨 (3.121). The latter is written with a horizontal stroke (the horizon) and with a container underneath (the clouds) composed of a left vertical stroke and one “bent” to the right downwards with a “hook”. Inside there are four “dots”: the raindrops. A vertical line from the horizon crosses the container with drops as if to mark the direction of the rainwater. The horizontal line at the top symbolises the sky and the square divided in half symbolises a window. While the four strokes inside the window would reflect the raindrops falling from the rain.

- 3.14 Worried (1dan1xin) 担心. Bisyllabic adjective. The first syllable or character (pictophonetic) is composed of the “left-hand” radical (3.2; 3.77) and the radical giving the sound “dan” which is a sun over the horizon. When it stands alone, it means “to carry”. The second syllable is the “heart”, but it has the meaning of “mind”, as it was thought that we kept memories and thoughts in the heart 心 (3.112). It is three little “dots” like drops of blood and a “hook” to catch the memories. The word seems to indicate that we carry something in our mind. There is a burden in our heart. And that fills us with worry.
- 3.15 But, nevertheless (4dan) 但. Conjunction (pictophonetic character). It is formed by the simplified “person” radical on the left (3.42; 3.71; 3.113; 3.130) and the radical which gives it the sound “dan” formed by a “sun” 日 (3.82) over the horizon (horizontal line). It means “but”, “however”, “therefore”, it functions as an adversative conjunction. The person is facing the sun, which is on the horizon, but, at that moment, it is getting dark. To remind you of this character, think that everything beautiful comes to an end, but nevertheless, it will be reborn again, like the sun that dips below the horizon and rises every morning in jubilation.
- 3.16 To arrive (4dao) 到. As a complement of the verb, it means that the action has a result and has reached the goal, which is derived from the meaning of “reaching”. When it functions as a verb, it means “to arrive”. It usually goes with a direct complement that indicates the place we have reached. It is a pictophonetic and relatively complex character. On the left, we have the radical “to arrive or to reach”, which is composed of a horizontal line on a line bent to the right in the shape of an arrow ending in a point. Below, a cross on a horizontal base 土 (the earth: 3.21; 3.99). On its right side, there is a vertical line and parallel to it another vertical line, this time, with a “hook” on the left: it is the simplified knife radical and provides the sound “dao”. To remember it, we will think that we are like an arrow that reaches the place where the archer, with his feet on the ground, has destined it, cutting the air like a knife.
- 3.17 Syntactic auxiliary (0de) 得. It marks complements of the verb. It is formed by the simplified “two-person” radical on the left (3.36), and on the right by the sound “de”: a sun above the horizon 日 (3.15; 3.82); and below the horizon, the character “inch”. It is used between verbs and adjectives to link complements of the verb expressing degree or result. It is often called a “two-person te” and is so called, alluding to the radical (persons) that makes it up.
- 3.18 Syntactic auxiliary (0de) 地. It marks circumstantial complements. It consists of the “ground” radical on the left 土 (cross on broad base: 3.21; 3.99) and on the right, the character meaning “also” 也 (3ye: 3.116; 3.94). When it is used as a syntactic auxiliary, it is used after a verb or adjective and functions as a suffix. In English, the suffix -ly is added to adjectives to form adverbs. For example, the adjective “kind” becomes the adverb “kindly”. These adverbs function as circumstantial complements.
- 3.19 Syntactic auxiliary (0de) 的. Marks complements of the noun. It is formed by the “white” radical on the left 白 (3.3). And on the right the “spoon” radical (2shao: a small leftward “cut” from which a horizontal bend descends ending in a “hook”, with a point inside the concavity). It is used after a description to make names or pronouns more explicit or to give value to them, forming nominal syntagms that function as complements to the noun, as it provides additional information. It is often called “white tea”, referring to the radical (white) that forms it.

- 3.20 Point, in point (3dian) 点. It can also function as a counter for (few) things or for slight states (“a little”). At the top of the character, there is a vertical stroke, from the middle of which a horizontal stroke goes to the right; underneath, the character “mouth” 口 (3.53) is written, from which four dots come out, which are the radical “fire” 火 (3.39), but simplified. To remember it, you can think of a word like “dot” having many dots underneath.
- 3.21 All (1dou) 都. Adverb. It is formed by the radical “ear” on the right (3.69; 3.70), similar to an open B. And on the left by a broad-based cross (earth) 土 crossed by a “slash” and with a “sun” 日 (3.82) at the bottom. Between the earth and the sun, we are all. This adverb forms plurals and also connotes “already”.
- 3.22 Much (1duo) 多. Adjective. It can also mean very much or of, when it functions as an adverb. It consists of two equal characters on top of each other. Each is composed of a “slash” to the left, with a “folded” below ending in a “slash” to the left and with a “dot” on the inside. Its original meaning was “of great quantity”.
- 3.23 Flower and cloud sorter (3duo) 朵. It is composed of the “wooden” radical below 木 (3.124; 3.129) and above by a “slash” from which a horizontal line starts at the top and descends on a “hook” upwards (tea-table: 3.66). The wood is linked to the flowers because they arise from the branches of trees that are made of wood and, moreover, are often placed on top of a tea table.
- 3.24 Two (4er) 二. Numeral. Two parallel horizontal strokes.
- 3.25 To fly (1fei) 飞. Verb. Composed of a horizontal line descending on a “hook” bent upwards. The horizontal line resembles the bird’s head, the “hook”, its little body and to its right, a “slash” and a “broom” resembles its two wings.
- 3.26 Tall (1gao) 高. Adjective. From top to bottom: a point, a horizon, a mouth or square opening 口 (3.53), a horizon and a “mouth” character in an unclosed container: a vertical line from which, from its upper part, comes a bend to the right which descends vertically and ends in a “hook” to the left. If two mouths are spoken at the same time, i.e. two people simultaneously, we speak loudly so that our voice stands out.
- 3.27 Glad (1gao4xing) 高兴. Bisyllabic adjective. The first syllable is the character “1gao” 高 (3.26) which, when it stands alone, means “high”. The second syllable is written with three “dots” on a horizontal line under which we add two dots to the left and right, like two legs. If we are happy, our spirits are high, and we dance with both legs.
- 3.28 Universal counter (4ge) 个. Compound of the character “person” 人 (3.81) with a vertical stroke between the legs. Human beings are universal because we are in the universe.
- 3.29 A, towards (3gei) 给. Preposition and complement of the verb. It can also mean the verb to give. It is formed by the radical “silk” on the left (two “bent” in the form of an arrow to the left one above the other with a horizontal line below), and on the right (from top to bottom) a “person” 人 (3.81), a horizontal stroke and the radical “mouth” 口 (3.53). It connotes distance, as in emails or letters. To remember, one person goes to another person to give him silk; and this second person asks for it with his mouth, i.e. he asks for it through speech.
- 3.30 Palace (1gong) 宫. Noun. Pictogram combining the radicals of a roof with a chimney (dot under which we write a dot followed by a “bend” going to the right and turning down: 3.43) and that of two mouths 口 (3.53), i.e. two squares (one on top of the other). It used to

be a musical note. Under the palace roof, there is always music and people singing, so they open their mouths to make beautiful sounds.

- 3.31 Work (1gong4zuo) 工作. Bisyllabic noun and verb. The first syllable is two parallel horizontal lines joined by a vertical one, it resembles an upright gym weight and, for us, symbolises “work” or “effort”. In the second, we find the simplified radical “person” (“slash” on a vertical line: 3.81) (the people are the ones who work), and another “slash” that rests on a sort of F with three horizontal sticks instead of two.
- 3.32 Beautiful (1guai) 乖. Adjective. It is made up of two radicals, the one of “thousand” (a “slash” above a cross) which is placed in the middle of the character. The other radical is the “north” radical, which is divided, half of the radical on the left (two horizontal lines and a vertical one) and the other half on the right (a vertical line with a “hook” raised to the right and with a “slash” in the middle that does not cross the vertical). It only applies to animals and small children. As a reminder, in the north, as everywhere, there are more than a thousand beautiful children.
- 3.33 Shout (3han) 喊. Verb. Pictophonetic. It is composed of the “mouth” radical 口 (3.53) on the left, and of the sound “xian” on the right, which is a horizontal line with an almost vertical “slash” on the left, crossed by an almost vertical “hook” on the right, which in turn is crossed by a “slash” to the left. In the space formed in the interior, there is a horizontal line over a mouth. It ends with a dot at the top right. There are two mouth radicals in this character which may help us to remember that it means to shout with the mouth.
- 3.34 Good (3hao) 好. Adjective. It also functions as an adverb and means “very”. It is an ideogram composed of “female” radical 女 (3nǚ: 3.73) on the left and “child” on the right 子. In ancient times it was pronounced differently, but nowadays the meanings of a mother with her child have been united, which is taken as a good thing. Hence its meaning.
- 3.35 And (2he) 和. Copulative conjunction. Also, the preposition “against” or “with”. Compound ideogram of the radical “plant” on the left: a “slash” on a tree or plant (3.10; 3.124; 3.129) and on the right, a “mouth” character 口 (3.53).
- 3.36 Very (3hen) 很. Adverb of degree. Pictophonetic. It is formed by the radical “two people” on the left (3.17), and on the right by the sound “hen”. A vertical stroke with a little “hook” to the right, a folding that emerges from its upper part, with an inner horizontal stroke and closed by another horizontal stroke. On the outer right-hand side are written a “slash” and a “broom”.
- 3.37 Flower (1hua) 花. Name. Pictophonetic. It is composed of the radical “grass” at the top (horizontal stroke crossed by two “dots”), and the sound “hua” below. Below, on the left, the simplified “person” character (3.42; 3.71; 3.113) and, on the right, a hook crossed by “hook”. The fact that a person picks herbs, i.e. flowers for someone, may help you to remember this.
- 3.38 Back (2hui) 回. Verb. Compound pictogram. A square with large strokes, a wall with another small square inside 口 (“mouth”: 3.53). It looks like a square inside a bigger square. Someone calls us (mouth) from inside to come back.
- 3.39 Fire (3huo) 火. Noun. Pictogram. This is the “person” character 人 (2ren:3.81) to which two dots are added, one on the left and one on the right. It looks like a person waving his arms as if frightened and calling for help by fire. When this character is simplified (it is a

- radical which is part of the character) it appears as four “dots” below the whole character (3.20).
- 3.40 Volcano (3huo1shan) 火山. Bisyllabic noun. The character “fire” 火 (3.39) is written as the first syllable and the character mountain 山 (3.84) is added as the second. The volcano is a mountain from which fire emerges.
- 3.41 Crater (3huo1shan3kou) 火山口. Trisyllabic noun. The first syllable is the character “3huo” (“fire”: 3.39) 火 and “mountain” (3.84) 山 is added as the second syllable and finally “3kou” (“mouth”: 3.53) 口. The crater is the mouth from which the fire comes out of the mountain.
- 3.42 Boy or boys (3huo0er) 伙儿. Noun. The first character is formed by the simplified “person” radical on the left (3.71; 3.113), on the right by the sound “huo” which is provided by the character “fire” 火 (3.39). The second character (0er) is formed by a vertical “slash” up and down to the left and a parallel vertical “hook” curving to the right. In this word, this second character 儿 functions as a colloquial suffix. It is a person who is called like fire because he is hot-blooded, as is the case with many young boys.
- 3.43 Household, close family (1jia) 家. Noun. The character family is formed by the radical “roof” at the top (a dot at the top followed by a “dot” and a “bend” at the bottom to signify the chimney and the eaves of the roof: 3.30) and below it is written the piggy, a horizontal line from which three curves and a “hook” emerge, like little paws and which ends with a “slash” and a “broom” on the right like a tail. The radical “roof” will help you to remember that this is a house or family, since, not so long ago, the family used to gather in the family house to slaughter the pig.
- 3.44 To see (4jian) 见. Verb. It can function as a complement of the verb taking the meaning of “to perceive something with the senses”. It consists of a vertical line and a line bent to the right forming a small space where we put a “slash” and “hook”. It is one thing to see and another to look, one thing to hear and another to listen. For this reason, it is used as a complement to sensory verbs.
- 3.45 To be called (4jiao) 叫. Verb. Also means “to call out”. In some parts of China, it can also be a preposition indicating whom the action or state of affairs affects. It is formed by a vertical “mouth” or “opening” on the left which gives it the sense of activity being performed with the mouth 口 (3.53), on the right side by a folded ‘L’ shaped stroke which joins the vertical stroke on its right. We always call, or are called, with the sound that comes out of the mouth which is the voice.
- 3.46 Today at night (1jin3wan) 今晚. Bisyllabic noun. The first syllable is made up (from top to bottom) of the “person” radical 人 (3.81) and a “dot” with a rotated seven. The second syllable or character is made up of the “sun” radical on the left 日 (3.82), and the “wan” sound on the right, meaning “evening” or “night” 晚 (3.100). It will help you to remember the meaning that the person sees when the sun sets in the evening.
- 3.47 To enter (4jin) 进. Verb. Can also be a complement of the verb connoting to put something in. Pictophonetic. It is formed by the schematization of the radical “go” or “walk” (3.48) on the left which is formed by a dot with a slightly curved line on the left from which a ‘broom’ emerges to the right like a foot which occupies the whole of the lower part. On the right, inside the character, is the radical of the sound “jing” formed by two parallel vertical strokes, a slash to the left and one vertical and two horizontal, parallel strokes that cross each other. It was the well radical. And the truth is that, when the lines cross each other,

you can touch that they leave an inner square that can symbolise a well. To remember the meaning, keep in mind that when someone walks towards a well, he has to be careful because he can get into it and enter the well.

- 3.48 Near (4jin) 近. Adjective. Pictophonetic. It is composed of the radical “go” or “walk” simplified on the left (3.47), and on the right of the sound “jin” formed by a backwards 7 and a T (formerly, an axe). It is clear that, if someone is walking to get his axe, he is approaching it.
- 3.49 Nine (3jiu) 九. First, the vertical stroke (“slash”) is placed, then the horizontal stroke across the top (2heng stroke) and finally the “hook” (the 1gou stroke) is placed, which comes from the right end of the “2heng” stroke.
- 3.50 Something happens quickly, easily and smoothly (4jiu) 就. Sometimes translated as “justly”. Adverb. Also, it can be a conjunction for distributive or consecutive coordinates (first....after;...., just after: “You read the text and then look in the dictionary”) or a nexus of a main sentence in causal subordinates (sentences with the nexus because: “She sings because she likes it”) or hypothetical (sentences beginning with the conjunction if: “If you come, we will go together”). It is a character combined by two pictograms, the one on the left, a “dot” on a horizontal line, which at the bottom has a mouth from which a vertical line goes downwards with a “hook” on the left flanked by two “dots”. It meant “high” and then “capital”. The one on the right is a horizontal line crossed by a vertical “slash” to the left with a “hook” below it to the right and a small dot at the top. The joint idea is to get to the top and then everything will be easy and downhill or that in the capital it is especially easy to do things.
- 3.51 Open (1kai) 开. It can also mean to light. Verb. As a complement of the verb, it means “to separate things”. Ideogram which is the simplification of two pictograms combined. It consists of two parallel horizontal lines, one at the top and one in the middle. From the upper horizontal line hang two vertical, parallel lines, plus the one on the left is a “slash” tending to the left. It resembles a door. In fact, it was originally a door 门 (3.68; 3.103) with two crosses inside as signifying the latch (the locks of antiquity). If you open a door, you separate it from the frame, perhaps that is why it retains these meanings, both opening and separating.
- 3.52 To look, to read (4kan) 看. Verb. Compound ideogram. It is formed by a “slash” to the left with three parallel horizontal strokes underneath crossed by an oblique slash to the left, forming the “hand” pictogram (the ancients wrote three-fingered hands), and underneath a square of three strokes with two horizontal strokes inside, which form the “eye” pictogram. To look properly, when it is sunny, we put our hands above our eyes, which is the meaning given by the combination of the two pictograms.
- 3.53 Entrance or exit mouth, opening (3kou) 口. Noun. Pictogram written with three strokes forming a square. A vertical one to the left, from the upper part of which a horizontal one to the right descends vertically. It is closed by a horizontal line at the bottom. Formerly, it represented an “open mouth” and is therefore often used with activities involving the mouth such as eating 吃 (3.5), calling someone 叫 (3.45), crying 哭 (3.54), asking 问 (3.103) or vomiting 吐 (3.99). In other cases, it indicates an entrance or exit opening as in crater 火山口 (3.41).
- 3.54 To cry (1ku) 哭. Verb. Pictogram combining the “mouth” radical (3.53) doubled at the top with a dot (looks like two little square eyes with a tear coming out of them) and dog 犬

at the bottom (horizontal across the person radical as in large; 大, 3.11). When we suffer, we howl and cry in pain like a poor wounded dog. Perhaps, therefore, the character mouth has been doubled.

- 3.55 Fast (4kuai) 快. Adjective. Pictophonetic. Radical of “mind-heart” (3.112) simplified on the left (vertical stroke flanked by two “dots”, the one on the left falling downwards and the one on the right on top in an inclined position) which endows it with meaning. On the right-hand side, a horizontal line bent downwards meets a horizontal line. Both are crossed by the simple radical of “person” 人 (3.81). It gives the sound “kuai” to the word. If we think about it, if time seems to us to be passing quickly, it has to do with our mind or our heart, because we feel the rhythm of events.
- 3.56 Coming (2lai) 来. This is a simple character (ideogram), similar to the “wooden” radical 木 (3.10; 3.124; 3.129), but, this time, it is crossed by a horizontal line at the top with two “dots” underneath on either side of the vertical 来. It has borrowed this meaning of “coming, approaching the speaker” from an old character meaning “wheat”. It is clear that if we approach and look at the wheat field we know when the seed time is coming. Perhaps that is why it is sometimes used as an adverb marking futures. Some people still see an ear of corn in this ideogram.
- 3.57 Syntactic auxiliary (0le) 了. If it comes after the verb or the adjective, it means that the action has already happened. If it comes at the end of the sentence, it is a modal auxiliary which shows that a change has taken place, and it is important to emphasise this (it connotes “already”). It gives a perfect (complete) aspect to the verb or adjective. A bent stroke from which a vertical stroke descends, ending in a “hook” on the left. We can imagine an inverted lowercase ‘L’, i.e. placed upside down.
- 3.58 Tears (4lei3shui) 泪水. Bisyllabic noun. The first syllable is an ideogram combining the meaning of two pictograms. On the left, the three water droplets, a radical that simplifies the character “water” (3.91) and on the right a square of three strokes with two horizontal strokes inside. This is the “eye” radical (3.52). Eye and water mean tears. The second is, directly, the “water” radical 水 (3.91) (vertical stroke ending in a “hook” to the left flanked by a bend to the left ending in a “slash” and a “slash” over a “broom” to the right). It is clear that tears are water coming out of the eyes. It tends to go with verbs with verb complement like 1chu0lai 出来 (3.7) which means to emerge or come out.
- 3.59 Plum tree (3li) 李. In addition to this tree, it can be a surname. Pictophonetic. Above the “tree/wood” radical 木 (which gives the meaning) and below, the “son” radical (“bent” which continues in vertical stroke with “hook” to the left crossed by a horizontal stroke) which gives the sound “zi” (子 son/son/child: 3.34). The emperors of the Tang dynasty in the late Middle Ages had this surname. It is very common nowadays. With the meaning of plum tree, it will help you to remember that the top is formed by the radical tree (plum tree) and that it is a person, someone’s son, who takes the fruit.
- 3.60 Within, inside (3li) 里. A positional noun meaning within or inside. But when it comes after a noun it has a neuter tone as it refers only to the interior of the thing named. Ideogram combining two pictograms. Above, a square 口 (3.53) divided by a vertical line crossing it at the bottom and an inner horizontal one, forming four small inner divisions (a square with a cross is the farm field), the vertical line is crossed at the bottom by a horizontal one and ends in a long horizontal base (“the earth” 土: 3.21; 3.99). If we combine the meanings of

farmland and earth, we get the meaning of “inside”, i.e. our own; the outside is the farmland of others.

- 3.61 Two/one pair of (3liang) 两. Cardinal numeral. Used to count two beings or things. It is written with a horizontal stroke above from which hang two people (“slash”, “broom”) who are tucked into the space created by a vertical stroke below from which comes a horizontal stroke to the right bent downwards ending in an inward hook. It is used to count, not to talk about the number two. That is why two people 人 are enclosed below the horizon, so that we do not make a mistake by over- or under-counting. It is similar to our “pair of”. For example, we usually say: “Give me that pair of shoes”. If we were to translate it into Chinese, we would use “3liang” to say “pair”.
- 3.62 Bright (4liang) 亮. Adjective. Above, a “dot” with a horizontal line below (simplified radical “head”: 3.50), below, a square (the “opening” or “mouth”: 口3.53). Below the mouth, a canopy (“dot” and horizontal “bent”) and below, the tea table (slashed, horizontal bent downwards ending in “hook” upwards: 3.23; 3.66). It resembles a tower full of lights in the capital, which is why it is so bright.
- 3.63 Six (4liu) 六. Numeral. This ideogram consists of a horizontal line with a dot above it. From the horizontal line come two diagonal “dots” downwards. As it resembles the “large” character 大 (4th: 3.11), the way to tell it apart is to check that the diagonal strokes are not attached to the horizontal line. The horizon doubles the three dots and gives us six.
- 3.64 Mum (1ma0ma) 妈妈. Name. Pictophonetic. To the left of the first character is the radical “woman” 女 (3.34; 3.73) which gives the sense, i.e. meaning. To the right, the radical “horse” (马) which gives the sound “ma”. This character is repeated twice. These are the first words that a baby usually says because the “ma” sound is easy to make, you just have to open your lips and close them by bawling “aaaaaaaaa...”. The fact that we have the radical “woman” to the left of the character gives us the clue to know that it is “mum”, and we also have to remember the radical “horse”; we imagine mums combing their hair in a ponytail or mums who like to ride horses.
- 3.65 Syntactic auxiliary that expresses a question (0ma) 吗. A yes or no answer must be given and placed at the end of the sentence. Pictophonetic. On the left, the “mouth” 口 (3.53), on the right, the horse “ma” 马 which gives it the sound (a horizontal stroke “bent” downwards to the right describes the head, the left vertical stroke its back and the horizontal stroke bent downwards with a hooked end emerging from below the vertical line, its chest). A horizontal stroke inside the space created by this hooked end makes the paws. As this word does not mean anything (it only indicates that the sentence is interrogative, therefore, it resembles our question mark ‘?’), it goes in a soft tone.
- 3.66 Negation for the past (2mei) 没 and negation of existence “not having” (2mei3you) 没有 (3.119). It is composed on the left of the character “water” (3.91) simplified into three “dots” or drops. On the right, the character “tea table”: “slash” to the left (for the left of the table) from the top of which comes a horizontal stroke that bends downwards and ends in a “hook” upwards (for the right of the table). Underneath the table, the little bow signifying the right hand: 3.76; 3.120). If someone slaps it under the table, the water falls out and the tea making is over. Everything is splashed and the table is empty. Therefore, it is a denial of having and of things past.
- 3.67 Every (3mei) 每. Adverb. Pictophonetic. Above, the “person” radical simplified and placed horizontally (3.42; 3.71; 3.113; 3.129) and below the “mother” radical 母, a bend

which starts downwards and bends to the right (like an L) together with a bend which starts at the top of the previous one and turns downwards vertically ending in a “hook” and creating an interior space (the mother’s womb). A horizontal line divides the space in two and two “dots” are added (the nourishing breasts). Being a mother implies being able to give birth to people several times, hence mother and person together have to do with each of the beings that have been engendered.

- 3.68 Gate (2men) 门. Name. Pictogram. Formed by a “dot”, a vertical downward stroke and a line bent to the lower right and ending in a hook. It resembles the frame of a door, with its jambs and lintel 阂 (3.103).
- 3.69 Where (3nar) 哪儿. Pronoun. Pictophonetic. To the left of the first character the three-dash square meaning “mouth, opening” 口 (3.53) and to the right the character for “there” pronounced 4na 那 (3.70). The second character gives you the sound of the soft (0er) 儿, but it has no meaning. To know where something is, you have to open your mouth and ask where it is.
- 3.70 There (4na) 那. Demonstrative. It can also function as a pronoun and then it means “that one”. If it has a nexus function in causative subordinates it means “so”, “then”. Pictophonetic. On the right, the radical “mound” which is a sort of “unclosed B” at the bottom (also called “right ear”) and, on the left, a vertical “slash” crossed by two strokes and joined at the top to a downward bent ending in a “hook”. It resembles the moon 月 (3.76; 3.119), but here the inner strokes have been leftwards. It was the name of an ancient fief called “Na”. You have to put your ear when someone is far away, there, as far away as the moon or as far away as Na’s fief.
- 3.71 You (3ni) 你. Pronoun. Pictophonetic. On the left is the simplified “person” radical (3.42; 3.113; 3.129): diagonal stroke to the left from which a vertical stroke downwards. Next to it, there is a small roof (“dot”, “folded”); and below the roof is the “small” radical 小 (3.108) (a vertical hooked stroke with two dots at the sides). To remember this character, we can think that when we say “you” we mean the person who is with us, who can be a small child whom we shelter under the roof when it rains.
- 3.72 Bird (3niao0er) 鸟儿. Name. A pictogram describing a little bird. A “dot” (the crest) under which we write a horizontal-vertical “fold” to the right with a “hook” to the left with a “dot” inside it (the little head, with its beak and eyes). From the left of the “fold” comes down a vertical line that joins with a fold that ends in an inward “hook” similar to the one above, but larger (back, breast and legs); on the inside of this fold, we make a horizontal line to signify the wings. This is how the bird is drawn. In international Chinese, we add the character “er” (儿).
- 3.73 Woman (3nü2ren) 女人. Bisyllabic noun. Ideogram. On the left the pictogram for “female” 女: a bent stroke and a “slash” cross and are crossed by a horizontal stroke. It symbolised a kneeling woman with her hands folded and outstretched, offering something to the gods. The horizontal stroke resembles a tray, and the two intersecting oblique strokes the woman’s legs. If you do not add woman to person, it is not clear what sex she is, but it should be noted that we are all persons. The second syllable is “person” 人 (3.81) (“slash” and “broom”).
- 3.74 Oh! (0o) 哦. Onomatopoeia. Pictophonetic character. Formed by the radical “mouth, opening” on the left 口 (3.53) which gives it the sense of something done with the mouth

and, on the right, the sound “wo” which is given by the character of the first person singular pronoun: “I” 我 (3.104). I am surprised and say “oh!” with my mouth.

- 3.75 Fear (4pa) 怕. Verb. Pictophonetic character. On the left, the simplified form (3.55) of the “heart-mind” character (3.112): a vertical stroke with a “dot” on the left and a “dot” on the upper right (two drops of blood). On its right side is the pictogram referring to the colour “white” 白 (3.3) conformed by a dot downwards resting on the sun radical which gives it the sound “pai”. When we are frightened or afraid of something our face turns white and our heart stops.
- 3.76 Friend (2peng3you) 朋友. Bisyllabic noun. The first syllable used to be a pictogram, now this ideogram shows the concept of friend 朋 (friendship) and combines twice the “moon” radical 月 (3.119): a vertical left “slash” joined by a right downward bend ending in a “hook”. Inside, two horizontal strokes. The second syllable (友) is the combination of the stylised “right-hand” radical (a horizontal stroke crossed by a “slash”) and below it the right-hand character (a little bow: 3.119). To remind you of this, you can think that with friends you spend many nights together (two moons can remind you of this) and, moreover, friends lend each other a hand when they need it.
- 3.77 To put out (1pu4mie) 扑灭. Verb. The first syllable or character is pictophonetic, 扑 is composed of the stylized radical “hand” on its left side, (horizontal crossed by a vertical line with a “hook” on the left, itself crossed by a “nail”: 3.2), giving us the sense that it is something manual; and, on its right side, it has a vertical stroke from which a small line comes out on the right downwards and gives the sound “pu”. The syllable on the right 灭 is a character combining the meanings of “one, horizon” (horizontal line with “fire” 火 (3.39) below). A fire kills everything under the sky and above the horizon, but we can put it out by holding a hose with our hands.
- 3.78 Seven (1qi) 七. This number is simple. It is the “hook” stroke (the “1gou” stroke) which is crossed at the top by a horizontal stroke (the “2heng” stroke). To help you remember it, think of it as an upside-down seven or, also, the letter t.
- 3.79 To rise (3qi2lai) 起来. Functions as a verb and a complement of the verb. Bisyllabic word. The first syllable is composed of “ground” (土:3.18; 3.99) (a cross with a large base) which has below it the outline of a foot, a vertical line with a small dot sticking out (the ankle) and “slash” and “broom” together which look like the heel and instep. Together, they form the radical “go”; on the right, there is a curious “hook” formed by a bend from which a horizontal line starts, which in turn holds a “hook”. This part is pronounced “qi” and gives the sound. It means “to rise or to lift up”. The second syllable (lai) 来 is a simple ideogram similar to the “wooden” radical 木 (3.10, 3.124, 3.129), crossed by a horizontal line at the top with two “dots” underneath on either side of the vertical. The two “dots” in ancient times referred to two wheat plants. It has acquired this meaning by borrowing an ancient character. It seems to mean with the horizontal above that the wheat is a plant that emerges from the earth after being planted and that the plant will come out and rise up when it emerges from the earth.
- 3.80 To move away, to go away (4qu) 去. Verb. It can also appear after a verb (verb complement) something moves away from the speaker (in such a case, it would go without tone). This pictogram, in ancient times, represented a man coming out of an opening. Now, it is composed of a cross with a large base 土 (3.18; 3.99) (the earth, the ground) and a fold underneath with a dot on the right. It has also been said to be pictophonetic as the bottom part means the particular and “earth” and gives the sound. A good idea to remember what it

means is to think that we should walk, i.e. walk forward on the earth (the ground) in order to move away.

- 3.81 Person (2ren) 人. Pictogram consisting of a “slash” to the left from which a “broom” emerges. It resembles two legs. Sometimes, when it is part of a character, it appears simplified and is written with a slash and a vertical downward stroke, perhaps to take up less space. One way of talking about “all the people” is to repeat the pictogram and make it bisyllabic (2ren2ren) 人人. It is usually combined with other characters to talk about human activities. In its simplified form it can be written as one slash with a vertical stroke underneath (it usually goes to the left: 3.42; 3.71; 3.113; 3.129) or two slashes with a horizontal stroke underneath (two persons: 3.17; 3.36).
- 3.82 Day of the month (4ri) 日. Name. Pictogram representing the “sun” 日 and is like a “mouth” or “opening”, i.e. a square 口 (3.53), but with a horizontal stroke inside. It is reminiscent of a closed window through which the sun can be seen every day of the month. It can also be a square shape from which something emanates: the sun’s rays.
- 3.83 Three (1san) 三. Numeral. Three parallel horizontal strokes.
- 3.84 Mountain (1shan) 山. Name. A character formed by a horizontal line from which three parallel vertical lines emerge, symbolizing three mountains, the middle one being the highest.
- 3.85 On, above (4shang) 上. Noun of position. It can also be a complement of the verb and then means “upwards”. When it has the fourth tone (4shang), it is the verb “to go up”. This ideogram is constructed by a long vertical line going upwards; from this vertical line comes a small parallel stroke (to underline the most important part of the idea). Underneath it there is a horizontal base. The pupils remember this by extending the index finger upwards on the left hand and the big finger to the right.
- 3.86 Who (2shei) 谁. Interrogative pronoun: “Who is coming tonight?”. It can also function as a pronoun, and if so, it means “anyone”. It is pictophonetic, since on the left we have the two-stroke radical “to speak” (3.92). The simplified “person” radical in the middle. The last radical has four horizontal lines and a vertical one. As it has the radical “talk” and “person”, we will only use it to ask about rational beings or to refer to any person, that is to say, to all the people in the world.
- 3.87 Magical, wonderful (2shen2qi) 神奇. Adjective. Bisyllabic word. The first syllable is pictophonetic and is written with the simplified “recitative” or “altar” radical on the left, a dot below which is a curve ending in a “slash” on the left, with another dot on the right. Below, a vertical stroke. On the right, the stunted “sun” radical 日 (3.82) is crossed by a vertical stroke (giving it the sound “shen”). It has to do with the divine and the celestial. The second syllable 奇 is a pictogram composed of the pictograms of big 大 (3.11) at the top and the pictophonetic character “to be able to do something”, a horizontal stroke bent downwards ending in a “hook” and enclosing a mouth inside (because it also referred to singing, i.e. if one could sing at work) signifying the extraordinary. The marvellous is something great and extraordinary that seems to fall from the sky and leaves us open-mouthed.
- 3.88 What (2shen 0me) 什么. Interrogative pronoun: “What did you bring?”. It is also the pronoun “all”. The first syllable 什 combines the meanings of radical “person” on the left and ten 十 (3.90) on the right, which also means “all”. The second syllable 么 is a “slash” on a left-hand bend ending in a point. It is a very common suffix in interrogatives and not

so long ago it was pronounced “2mo”. The idea is that we ask about everything or refer to all things.

- 3.89 To be (4shi) 是. Verb. It is associative as it joins two meanings: “She is a teacher”. The upper part has the “sun” 日 on a horizontal line (“the horizon”: 3.15, 3.82) and below a vertical one with a mark on the right over a “slash” and a “broom”.
- 3.90 Ten (2shi) 十. Numeral. An ideogram resembling a cross, a vertical line crossed by a horizontal one. The ten resembles a compass indicating the cardinal points, so it is sometimes used as “all”.
- 3.91 Water (3shui) 水. This pictogram, which means “water”, is composed of a vertical line ending in a “hook” (the stream) and a line bent to the left ending in “slash” and two lines to the right (“slash” over “broom”) (the banks). In its simplified form it is written with three vertical “dots” like splashes of water and usually goes to the left of the character (3.58).
- 3.92 To say (1shuo) 说. Verb. Originally a pictophonetic character, consisting of a “dot” and a vertical stroke ending in “nail” (this is the simplified way of writing the character “speak”) and to the right two dots over a “mouth” 口 from which emerge a “slash” and a “hook”, like two legs. It means “to change” and gives the sound “shuo”, as this character can also be read “0shui”; it means “to persuade”, but we have not used it in this way. There are ancient grammarians who said that it is actually composed of two characters meaning “exchange” by putting together the meanings of the words “speak” and “exchange”. Sometimes, it goes with two direct complements, the first to say to whom we are saying something and the second to clarify what we are saying.
- 3.93 Four (4si) 四. Numeral. This ideogram is an opening written as a square to which two strokes (“slash” and “hook”) are added on the inside, descending from the top (two is half of four). In ancient times, it was four horizontal stripes, but people cheated with the two and the three, so it was decided to enclose two lines in a four-sided square space while keeping the symbolism of four.
- 3.94 They (1ta0men) 他们. Third person pronoun. This character combines the meanings: it has on the left the simplified “person” character (person radical) (small diagonal line from which a vertical line emerges: 3.42; 3.71; 3.113; 3.129) and on the right, a hooked stroke cut by a vertical stroke and a “hook” 也. This character formerly implied affirmation (now it means the word “also”: 3.116). Therefore, we use it to affirm the existence of another like us. If it appears alone, it means “he” 他. A variation is “she” 她: this word has on the left the character of woman 女 (3.73) and on the right it is the same as above. The pronunciation is the same for “he” or “she”, although, as can be seen, it is spelt differently. The second syllable 们 is used to mark the plural of beings: this character has on the left the radical of “person” and on the right the character of “door” 门 (3.68) which gives it the sound “men”, it functions as a suffix which is added to the first syllable (both with pronouns and some nouns). As its function is syntactic, it does not carry tone.
- 3.95 Ello (1ta) 它. Pronoun for animals, beings and things. Above, a “dot” on a “dot” and a bent means a “roof”, below a tool which in ancient times was a kind of spoon and which later came to mean a dagger 匕, since it is a “hook” to which a dot has been put on the right side as if to mark the edge or perhaps the hollow. In any case, it refers to things and beings that are eaten or cut under a roof. People are not eaten and should not be cut, so it is never applied to human beings.

- 3.96 Heaven (1tian) 天. Noun. It is a compound pictogram which is written the character meaning “big” 大 (3.11) and a horizontal line is placed on the top which symbolises the sky or the horizon. It can also mean “day”.
- 3.97 Temple (2ting 2tai) 亭台. Bisyllabic noun. The first syllable or character 亭 consists of a dot on a horizontal line below which there is a “mouth” 凵; below, a little roof and a horizontal from which a vertical downward stroke ending in a “hook”. The syllable itself is a stylised representation of these beautiful buildings that the Chinese put in parks and green areas for people’s enjoyment. The second 台 is the simplified pictogram of the base or step of something: above a bent with a “dot” and below a square hollow 口 in the earth. The temples are raised on a square base as is the celestial vault on the earth.
- 3.98 Equal, similar (2tong) 同. Verb, adjective and adverb. We have used it as an adjective (“4bu2tong”: not like, i.e. different 不同). It is a very old character and is made up of a combination of characters that have different meanings, and all together make a new one. There is an unclosed square at the bottom, from which there is a “bend” to the right that goes down in a “hook”. Inside, there is a horizontal stroke, the number “one” 一 (3.117) and a “mouth” 口 (3.53). To remind you of the meaning, you can imagine that they are all inside a square and speak as one mouth; this symbolises that they say the same thing; that is, they say something the same or similar, like the meaning of the character.
- 3.99 To spit, to expel, to vomit (4tu) 吐. Verb. It is pictophonetic. On the left is the little square signifying the “mouth” 口 (3.53) and on the right the broad-based cross giving the sound “tu” and signifying “earth” 土 (3.21; 3.60; 3.99). From the mouth come out liquids which fall to the earth. There are people who have the bad habit of spitting on the earth, i.e. on the ground.
- 3.100 Rabbit (4tu0zi) 兔子. Bisyllabic noun. Pictogram. It is the stylised form of the image of a rabbit. The character on the left 兔 is composed at the top by a “slash” with a “bend” (the little face), and below it a square divided in two (the ears) from which a “slash” and a “hook” (the little legs) emerge, to which a dot is added on the right (the tail). The second character 子 (a bend with a hook at the bottom crossed by a horizontal line) here means nothing and has no tone, it is a suffix used to differentiate it from the sound of other monosyllabic words that may sound the same. Rabbits have big ears and being very curious, they listen to everything.
- 3.101 Evening, night (3wan0shang) 晚上. Bisyllabic noun. The first syllable 晚 is pictophonemic and is composed on the left of the radical “sun” 日 (3.82). Regarding the right part of this first syllable or character, it is like a son with a hat with ears and gives the sound “wan” which also means “to go away”. It is very similar to the “rabbit” character 兔 (3.100), but without the “dot” that makes the tail. The second syllable 上 is an ideogram which we have seen in number “3.85”, and which has to do with going up and starting. When the sun rises upwards it is no longer night but day.
- 3.102 King or prince (2wang) 王. Noun. This word is made up of three horizontal lines crossed in the middle by a vertical line. Each horizontal line may symbolise a stairway leading to heaven, since kings were considered to be sons of the gods.
- 3.103 To ask (4wen) 问. This character is formed by “door” 门 (3.68): a point from which a horizontal line descends (the left jamb) and from which a horizontal line bent downwards and ending in a hook (the lintel and the right jamb). Inside the door, there is a square 口 (“mouth”: 3.53). It symbolises that, to enter somewhere, you must ask permission. And

also, that asking a question is the door to knowledge and to being able to talk about what you know.

- 3.104 I (3wo) 我. Pronoun. This pictophonetic character is complex and is composed on the left side by the radical “hand” (3.2; 3.77): a “slash” followed by a horizontal stroke and a “nail” which crosses the vertical line with a “hook” on the left that goes down from “slash”. On its right side, it has the radical old “axe of command” which is composed of a horizontal line that crosses a hook to the right which in turn is crossed by another “slash” and has a “dot” (a drop of blood) on its upper right side. Over time the horizontal strokes of the two parts were joined into a single stroke.
- 3.105 Five (3wu) 五. Number. It is very similar to the king character 王 (2wang: 3.102), but the middle horizontal line and the lower horizontal line are joined at the right end to form a small square.
- 3.106 Gustar (3xilhuan) 喜欢. Bisyllabic verb. The first syllable is a very old word in the Chinese language and an amulet meaning happiness (at weddings it is customary to decorate the house with two 喜 together (喜喜) to make the couple happy). This character 喜 is composed of a cross with a small base at the top 士 followed by a square 口 (“mouth” or “opening”: 3.53) at the bottom with two dots and a horizontal line. Formerly, it was a person with his two hands beating a drum. Below the whole, another square 口 (“mouth”) was added, as if to make it clear that he also sings for joy. The second syllable 欢 is pictophonetic, consisting of the right hand as a radical placed on the left (3.120) and of a “slash” with a fold under which there is a person (“slash”, “brom”) which gives the sound “huan”. Alone, means joyful, perhaps, that is why it is a person waving his hand. The two together are happiness and joy, that is why they mean “to like”. It is always necessary to put a direct complement behind it because we all like something or someone.
- 3.107 To go down or fall (4xia) 下. Verb. It can also be the noun for the position “below”. When it comes after a verb or an adjective (complement of the verb) it usually indicates that things are done or happen downwards. In cases where it follows a position noun, it is pronounced with a neutral tone (0xia). This ideogram is formed inversely to the character up, that is to say, in this character which means to go down or to fall, there is a horizontal line, but from this, there is a vertical line that descends downwards; on the other hand, in the character up 上 (3shang), it goes upwards. Again, there is a “dot” that emerges from the horizontal line
- 3.108 Small, young (3xiao) 小. Adjective. This character is a pictogram and is composed of a long vertical line in the centre with a “hook” on the left and two slanted “dots” on either side. The central vertical line would represent a person, and the lateral one would represent his arms falling down, trying to make himself smaller. This would be the opposite of the large character 大 (4da:3.11) in which the arms were spread wide. In ancient times they were three little points like grains of sand.
- 3.109 To be careful or cautious (3xiao1xin) 小心. Verb and adjective. This word is composed of two characters: “small” (3xiao: 3.108) 小 and “heart-mind” (1xin:3.112) 心. The Chinese thought that the heart would shrink in a situation of danger, when we should be wary of what might come our way. We have all experienced this feeling.
- 3.110 To laugh (4xiao) 笑. Verb. Above, simplified radical for “bamboo” (3.129) (“slash” with a horizontal line and a small “broom”, similar to two letters k). Previously, the radical for “bamboo” also referred to the flutes made from this plant. Underneath, it has the sound

- “iao” which is provided by a character that is similar to “big” 大 (3.11) (horizontal line crossing “slash” and “broom” with a “slash” at the top). The music of the bamboo flute cheers people up and makes them laugh.
- 3.111 To write (3xie) 写. Verb. At the top, it has a dot and a folded line which can be like a roof without a chimney and, at the bottom, a vertical line from which a folded line with a “hook” descends to the left. In the gaps it leaves there are two horizontal lines, one in the upper right and one in the lower left. The lower part gives the sound “xi”. Some pupils say that it is written under cover, or under cover and that the vertical lines tell us how it is done: from top to bottom and from left to right. The little “hook” is to remind us to review the lines we have written at the end. It is very important to put a direct complement after it to make it clear what we are writing.
- 3.112 Heart and mind (1xin) 心. Name. It is a character composed of four independent strokes, one in the middle and the other three surrounding it at the top. The longest and most curved central stroke represents the edge of the heart or a “hook” for catching memories. And the top three “dots” symbolise three splashing drops of blood. It is often used to talk about mental activity because the Chinese, like us, when they remember something or someone, they have it in their heart. In its simplified form it is a vertical line with a dot on the left and a dot on the right above oriented horizontally (3.14).
- 3.113 To rest (1xiu0xi) 休息. Intransitive bisyllabic verb. The first syllable or character 休 is two combined pictograms; on the left, the simplified “person” (“slash” from which a vertical stroke descends: 3.42; 3.71; 3.94) and on the right the wood resembling a tree 木 (3.10; 3.56; 3.124, 3.129). A person leaning against a tree is resting. The second syllable 息 is composed of a “dot” falling on a three-dashed square (“opening”) with two horizontal lines inside. Underneath, it has the simplified “heart” or “mind” radical 心 (3.112) and, if it stands alone, it means to breathe. When someone rests, he leans on some wood and breathes in relief, which stops his heart from beating so hard.
- 3.114 To smoke (1yan) 烟. Name. It is composed of the character “fire” 火 (3huo: 3.39) on the left (a person with two dots on the sides) and by the character for “cause or motive” on the right which is the character for “big” 大 (a person with open arms (3.11) enclosed in a square space). Fire is the cause of smoke and, unfortunately, people are the cause of fire that produces smoke when it is intentional.
- 3.115 To will, to have to (4yao) 要. In this book, we use it as a verb (it can also be a noun, adjective and conjunction). At the top, there is a horizontal line from which two vertical lines descend and go into an “opening” or “mouth” 口. It is a simplification of the character “mortar”. Underneath, it has the radical “woman” 女 (a folded line crossed by a “slash” with a horizontal line superimposed on it: 3.73). It is a pictogram of a woman holding a mortar. A woman working hard because she wants to. It usually puts the prayer in relation to a future of will and work.
- 3.116 Also (3ye) 也. Adverb. It can mean everything as well and also can function as a conjunction for compound sentences. It is formed by a “bent” which ends in a “hook” and is crossed by an upward hook and a vertical line (3.18; 3.94). So many hooks seem to join things or qualities together, and so it is used to say that several subjects share the same things. Sometimes it seems to mean the adverb “all”, and if we put a negation behind it, it means nothing at all.

- 3.117 One (1yi) 一. It is a horizontal line which means unity. Some people think it is the horizon because there is only one horizon. The two 二 is two horizontal lines and the three 三 is three parallel lines.
- 3.118 Together (4yi3qi) 一起. Bisyllabic adverb. The first syllable or character 一 is the number “one” (3.117) and the second 起 is composed of the ground 土 (3.60; 399) (a cross with a large base) which has below it the outline of a foot, a vertical line with a small “dot” protruding (the ankle) and “slash” and “broom” together which look like the heel and instep. Together they form the radical “go”. On the right side there is a curious “hook” formed by a bend from which a horizontal line starts and which, in turn, holds a hook. This part is pronounced “qi” and gives the sound. The second syllable actually means “to rise or rise” (3.79). If several people want to go somewhere, they get up and stand up at the same time, it means they are together.
- 3.119 To have (3you) 有. Verb. It consists of a horizontal line crossed by “slash”. Below it is a small box composed of a vertical line and a folded line ending in a “hook” with two horizontal lines inside it, which is the synthetic version of the right hand. This was the pictogram for the “moon” 月 and “meat” (3.70; 3.76). And flesh, in Chinese, precisely, is pronounced “4rou” which gives it part of its sound. One might think that a hand holds flesh because it is the hand of someone who has it. To some students, it looks like the moon rising below the horizon as if indicating that there is something under the sky.
- 3.120 And (4you) 又. Conjunction for copulative coordinates. For example: “He is tall and handsome”, “It was a bright and clear day”. It should be noted that it can also be the adverb “repeat” if it comes before a verb. It is composed of two strokes, a folded one that starts horizontally and ends in “slash” and a “broom” that crosses it. Generally, it indicates the coexistence of two states of affairs or two actions which may or may not be contradictory, but which happen at the same time. It is the stylised form of the right hand, but to many pupils it reminds them of a bow. It may appear even more simplified in words as a horizontal line crossed by a “slash” (3.76).
- 3.121 Rain (3yu) 雨. This character has a horizontal stripe at the top from which a long vertical line runs through a square that is not closed at the bottom. In the spaces divided by the vertical line there are four small “dots”. The horizontal line at the top resembles the horizon and the square divided in half resembles a window. While the four dots inside the window would reflect the water droplets falling from the rain (3.12).
- 3.122 In (4zai) 在. Preposition. It can function as an adverb (to say that something is happening and has not finished, imperfect aspect), as a verb “to be” and it can also be a complement of the verb indicating the place where the action takes place. It is formed by a horizontal line which is crossed by a “slash” which, in turn, is crossed by a vertical line, forming a kind of stall or shelter. Underneath, it bears a cross with a large base (a horizontal line underneath) which signifies the earth 土 (3.18; 3.21; 3.99). It is like a shelter in the earth where beings and things are. But it does not always indicate the place where something is, it can also indicate the time when something happened or that something is happening. This refuge on earth is used to locate actions, the state of things or beings.
- 3.123 To fight, to struggle (4zhan4dou) 战斗. Bisyllabic and intransitive verb. it needs a preposition to know who or what is being fought against. The first syllable 战 is pictophonetic, has on the right the radical “halberd” (a spear-like weapon) and is written as a “hook” crossed by a horizontal line (the hilt) and crossed by “slash”. On the upper right-

hand side, there is a “dot”, like a drop of blood. On the left, it has a vertical line from which a small horizontal line emerges and below it, a square □ (“opening” or “mouth”: 3.53). This part gives the sound “zhan” to the syllable. The second syllable 斗 is a word composed of a cross 十 (the ten) with two “dots” at the top left, and two more drops of blood. It comes from a pictogram which represented a “weapon” as a sickle with a hilt, but it is so simplified that only the hilt and the drops of blood it caused are discernible.

- 3.124 Rama (1zhi) 枝. Noun. Sometimes the counter for flowers which are attached to the stem. Pictophonetic. The left radical is the “wooden” 木 (remember it looks like a tree: 3.10) and on the right is a cross on a “bent” with “slash” crossed by “broom”, this part endows it with the sound “zhi”.
- 3.125 Classifier for animals (birds, generally) and some utensils (1zhi) 只. It is composed by the combination of three strokes at the top which is closed by a last stroke forming a square □ (“opening” or “mouth”: 3.53) and by the number eight below 八 (a separate “slash” and a “broom”). Some grammarians think that it comes from the pictogram of an ancient vessel, a bowl with legs where animals were cooked, perhaps, therefore, used with edible animals such as chickens.
- 3.126 Centre (1zhong) 中. Name. This character is formed by a small rectangle crossed in the middle by a vertical line. To help you remember its meaning, think of the small rectangle as symbolising an area and the vertical line passing through the centre. If it follows a noun denoting position, it is pronounced with a neutral tone (0zhong).
- 3.127 Week (1zhou) 周. Noun. This character is formed by a rectangle without the bottom side (it looks like a door); inside it, there are two parts. At the top, a small cross with a base 土 (“the earth”: 3.99) and at the bottom, a small square □ (represents the “mouth”: 3.53). From this, the days of the week are formed. Monday (1zhou 1yi) 周一: this character is formed by “week” 周 (1zhou), followed by the character “one” 一 (1yi). Tuesday 周二 (1zhou 4er): “week” 周 (1zhou), followed by the character “two” 二 (4er), and so on until Saturday 周六 (1zhou 4liu). As you can see, the days of the week are formed by placing the character week plus the corresponding number (except for Sunday, which we are going to see).
- 3.128 Sunday (1zhou 4ri) 周日. This character is formed by “week” (3.127) 周, plus the character “sun” 日 (3.79). The sun character is a pictogram and is an aperture (square) with a horizontal line inside. Formerly, it was a circle with a dot inside. It is like an opening from which light emanates from inside. You may remember this character because Sunday is the day of the “sun”, i.e. it is the day of the week when you can go out to enjoy the sun and nature because you have free time.
- 3.129 Bamboo Forest (2zhu 2lin) 竹林. Name. In the old days, the left radical 竹 was the pictogram of two shoots emerging from the ground with their branches. Nowadays, it is written as two people (“slash” and “broom”) from which hang a vertical stroke (left) and a vertical one with a “hook” (right). Bamboo is a plant that allows humans to build furniture, houses and tools. In addition, its shoots are edible. When simplified, it looks like two letters K, as you can see in the character, seen above, which means to laugh (3.110). The second syllable (2lin) 林, “forest”, is composed of two trees 木 (4mu: 3.10), a horizontal stripe representing the horizon and a vertical line crossing it, which would be the trunk. From the crossing, two diagonal lines go downwards, one on the left “slashed”, the other on the right “broom” with respect to the trunk, representing the roots.

- 3.130 To remain, to dwell (4zhu) 住. Verb. It is composed of the simplified “person” radical (“slash” and below it a vertical stroke: 3. 113;3.42; 3.71;3.94), and to the right the “lord”, “master” or “owner” (3zhu) which gives it the sound, and it is none other than the character of king to which is placed on the upper line a dot 王 (3.102). To remind you, you can think that, in ancient times, the person stayed or lived close to the owner of the land, who was often the king. This word often has complements to the verb which indicates where one dwells or stays.
- 3.131 Classifier of large and immobile things (4zuo) 座. E.g. mountains, buildings, cities, etc. At the top there is a “dot” and below it a horizontal line with a “slash” to the left. Formerly, it represented a building next to a slope and has the sense of “coarse or extensive”. Below is the character “sit” 坐 composed of two people on the sides of a cross with a horizontal base 土 (earth: 3.99) which gives the sound “zuo”. This word can be used as a noun to talk about seats or pedestals. Here we use it to mean things with a large base, seated and therefore immobile.
- 3.132 To make food (4zuo4fan) 做饭. Bisyllabic verb with direct complement. The first syllable 做 has two parts: on the left is the simplified “person” radical (3.42, 3.71) and, on the right, the sound “gu” composed of a cross 十 (the number ten: 3.90) and a square below 口 (a “mouth” or “opening”: 3.51) with the radical “mark” or “sign” to the right of the whole. This part of the word has to do with intentions, i.e. people do something for a reason. Regarding the second character, it refers to food 饭, composed of the radical food 饣 which looks like a person with a bent leg on top of a vertical line with a hook (it is the simplified version of a character with a person and the good below). On the right side of this character, two “slashes” over a “bent” with “broom” give it the sound “fan”. Literally, it means “cooked rice” because in southern China it is the staple food and in ancient times it was so important that it was used to pay officials. Therefore, “1chi4fan” means “to eat something” in a general sense.

Interesting videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwaGb4dUTw4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lIQG-0D4lY&list=PL2XCSJb70LeMc9RCMVcMcUoq3gSyVUx3-&index=2>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8jpkUGlqKg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5JwNZjlWBY&t=1416s>

FOURTH CHAPTER

第四章



This chapter will be devoted to the basics of grammar:

4.1. PRONOUNS

It is very important to memorise the Chinese pronouns and their characters because in Chinese they are constantly used, as there is no conjugation like in our language and the only way to know who is speaking is to always place the personal pronoun. We will show you again the pronouns as they have been presented in the vocabulary section:

- I 我 3wo 🗣️;
- you 你 3ni 🗣️;
- he/she/it 他/她/它 1ta 🗣️;
- we 我们 3wo0men;
- you 你们 3ni0men;
- they 他们 1ta0men 🗣️.

Interrogative pronouns are also essential for obtaining information or for making broad generalisations:

- **Who** - 谁 (2shei)
- **What** - 什么 (2shen0me)
- **Where** - 哪儿 (3nar)
- **When** - 什么时候 (2shen0me 2shi4hou)
- **Why** - 为什么 (4wei2shen0me)
- **How** - 怎么 (3zen0me)
- **Which** - 哪 (3na)

Examples:

- Hello, my white bird is not here. Its name is Xiaobai, have you seen it?
- Yes, I have seen a white bird.
- Where?
- 🗣️ 3ni3hao, 3wo0de 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le. 1ta 4jiao 3xiao2bai, 3ni 4kan4jian 1ta 0le 0ma?
- 4shi0de, 3wo 4kan4jian 4yi1zhi 2bai3niao.
- 4zai 3na0er?

- 你好, 我的白鸟不见了。它叫小白, 你看见它了吗
- 是的, 我看见一只白鸟。
- 在哪儿?

4.2. NOUNS

Nouns in Chinese have no article and also no number (singular or plural). If it is very important, we can use certain words (prefixes and suffixes) to emphasise them, but it is usually the context that provides the information. Nouns refer, according to Chinese grammar, to a person or thing. Chinese nouns, when preceded by a numeral, must necessarily be combined with a classifier. So, whenever we use a numeral to count a noun, we have to place the corresponding classifier between the numeral and the noun. We will focus on classifiers later on. Thus, the noun **2ren** (人), combined with the numeral one (一) **1yi**, forms in Chinese the structure: numeral + classifier + noun: **yi ge ren** (一个人). To indicate the plural of certain nouns, you have to use the suffix **men** 们, placed just after the noun you want to make plural. There are other ways of indicating plurals.

4.3. ADJECTIVES

Chinese adjectives predicate without the need for the verb to be. For example, in English we would say “James is clever”, but in Chinese, we would join James and clever without the need for the verb to be. On the other hand, you should know that adjectives in Chinese express situations or processes that the subject is going through, or they describe or evaluate the subject (**2shen2qi0de3niao** 神奇的鸟, “The wonderful bird”). Occasionally, they will apply to beings other than the subject and will need prepositions (**1gen3wo1sheng4qi** 跟我生气: “Angry with me”). When adjectives describe or evaluate nouns and pronouns, they are placed like possessives, before the noun or pronoun. If they are monosyllables, they are placed just before the noun. If there are two adjectives together, they have an adverb of degree. If it is polysyllabic or repeated, it is usually placed **0de** 的 before the noun or pronoun.

Examples:

- They are two very good boys.
- **1ta0men 4shi 3liang0ge 3hen 3hao 0de 2xiao 3huo0er.**
- 他们是两个很好的小伙儿。
- A large white bird flies out of the crater.
- **1yi1zhi 4da4da 0de 2bai3niao 2cong 3huo1shan3kou 1zhong1fei 1chu2lai.**
- 一只大大的白鸟从火山口中飞出来。
- Tears of joy.
- **1gao4xing 0de 4lei3shui.**
- 高兴的泪水。

It is quite common to find several verbs or adjectives in a row. They will be placed according to the order of things, first the modal verbs (those expressing possibility, permission, obligation, desire, repulsion, etc.), then what happens first, and then the consequences, situations or actions

later in time. Thus, we say: “I want to go by bus to the shop to buy food for dinner” and not “I want to go to the shop by bus...”. First, we want to, then, we get on the bus, then, we go, later, we buy, and finally, we make dinner.

It is important to note that certain words can function as a verb, preposition or adverb depending on their place in the sentence. We already know that the place in the sentence is fundamental in deciding what its function is.

4.4. TENSE

There are several ways of expressing tense in Chinese, whether present, past or future. One of the most commonly used is to use temporal expressions to contextualise the action (verb) or the situation (adjective) or the exact data (nominal groups). That is, always use a circumstantial complement of time. For example:

Examples:

- They work on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
- 他们 每周一、周二、周三、周四和周五 工作。
- In the evening, they go to the mountains and rest in the bamboo forest.
- 晚上, 他们上山, 在竹林里休息。

However, as they do not have conjugation as we do, they do not have temporality, mood or aspect in themselves, so to express them we must also use auxiliary words, adverbs or complements of the verb and, in this way, indicate whether we are speaking in the past, present or future; whether the action or situation has finished or continues, whether it really occurs (indicative) or may or may not occur (subjunctive, conditional), whether it has been satisfactory for the speaker, whether it occurs often or exceptionally, etc.

4.5. CLASSIFIERS

One of the clearest differences between Chinese and English is that Chinese uses classifiers, also called counters. A classifier is a word (character) that is placed in front of nouns and points out some characteristics of this noun, as well as telling us the quantity. The classifier must always come after a number because it serves to count, to indicate the number of units of a thing and, above all, to classify the nouns (to show characteristics of the set to which they belong). For example: 4ge 个 (universal) 1zhi 只 (birds and animals) 4zuo 座 (buildings and mountains, large and immobile things), 3duo 朵 (flowers, clouds). The most commonly used classifier and the one we will encounter most often is the classifier 4ge 个, which, as we pointed out, is the universal classifier. An example that can help us to understand this concept is to think that in English we also use something similar to classifiers. For example, we say: “Give me a piece of cake”. Give me a (number) piece (shape/classifier) of cake.

Classifiers are words that cannot stand alone; they must always be used alongside other words. Typically, they follow a number and come before a noun. For instance, in the phrase “one person”, you would say “2yi 4ge 2ren” (一个人) in Chinese.

Examples:

- Da Li gives a flower to XiaoWang.
- 🗣️ 4da3li 3gei 3xiao2wang 4yi 3duo 1hua.
- 大李给小王一朵花。

- They live under a high mountain.
- 🗣️ 1ta0men 4zhu 4zai 2yi 4zuo 1gao1shan 4xia.
- 他们住在一座高山下。

- Their white bird is gone!
- 🗣️ 1ta0men 0de 4yi1zhi 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le!
- 他们的一只白鸟不见了!

They can function as pronouns if we are clear about the context. In the same way that in English, if we know we are talking about cakes, we will only say “two pieces”, if we are talking about wolves “a pack”. In any case, you have to know the context well.

4.6. VERBS

In Chinese, as in English, verbs do not have morphological endings, so the personal pronoun must be included: I buy (3wo 3mai, 我买), you buy (3ni 3mai, 你买), he buys (1ta 3mai, 他买), we buy (3wo0men 3mai 我们买), you (plural) buy (3ni0men 3mai, 你们买), they buy (1ta0men 3mai, 他们买). However, it is important to recognize that the Chinese verb system differs from ours in certain respects. In particular, Chinese uses specific particles added immediately after the verb to indicate aspect. There are three key aspectual particles in Chinese: 0le (了), 4zai (在), and 4guo (过). These particles are placed after the unchanging form of the verb and denote the aspect of the action.

The first and most complex of these is the particle 0le (了), which, when attached to a verb, indicates the perfective aspect, meaning that the action has been completed (though it does not necessarily refer to the past, as is often assumed). Therefore, “le” does not necessarily mark an action in the past, but indicates that the action has been completed, regardless of when it occurred. For example, 我吃了 (3wo 1chi 0le) means “I have finished eating”.

The aspectual particle 4zai (在) signals that the action of the verb is ongoing, or that its effects persist even if the action itself has ended. For example, “I am eating” (3wo 4zai 1chi) (indicating the action is still in progress) would be: 我在吃。

The particle guo (过) primarily marks the experiential aspect, indicating that the action has occurred at least once before. For example, “I have seen this movie” would be expressed as 3wo 4kan4guo 4zhe 4bu 4dian3ying (我看过这部电影).

Now, let’s look at some frequently used auxiliary verbs. The verb 4hui (会) indicates the ability to do something due to prior learning or training: “I can speak German” (3wo 4hui 1shou 2de3yu, 我会说德语).

The auxiliary verb “2neng” (能) refers to an objective ability or the possibility of doing something, provided the circumstances allow: “He can drive” (1ta 2neng 1kai1che, 他能开车).

The auxiliary verb “3ke3yi” (可以) can, in some contexts, imply permission: “May I smoke?” (3wo 3ke3yi 1xi1yan 0ma, 我可以吸烟吗).

The verb “1ying1gai” (应该) indicates obligation or expectation based on common sense or experience: “It is cold; you should wear more clothes” (1tian 3hen 3leng, 3ni 1ying1gai 1duo 1chuan 3dian 1yi0fu, 天气很冷, 你应该多穿点衣服).

The verb “4yao” (要), another commonly used auxiliary in colloquial Chinese, expresses the desire to do something: “I want to sleep” (3wo 4yao 4shui4jiao, 我要觉). Finally, the verb 3xiang (想) is also used to express desire: “I want a dog” (3wo 3xiang 3yang 2tiao 3gou, 我想养条狗).

4.7. ADVERBS

Chinese uses a great many adverbs. Their position is immediately before the verb, adjective or preposition (we will see this later), and they not only provide essential information about the context of the sentence, its existence, its tense (present, past or future), its aspect (perfect or imperfect; whether the action has finished or not), or whether the subject is singular or plural or its degree, but they also serve to form compound sentences (together with nexuses or conjunctions). Thus, for example, if we negate with 4bu 不, we will negate present tenses or futures, while if we negate with 2mei 没 or 2mei3you 没有 (not to have), we will negate past tenses. Another feature is that they can express obligation or prohibition without using verbs.

Examples:

- They are all afraid.
- 4da1jia 1dou 4pa 0le.
- 大家都怕了。
- All people cry.
- 2ren2ren 1dou 1ku 0le.
- 人人都哭了。
- 1dou (3.20) 都 makes plurals and connotes “already”.

4.8. PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions convey ideas related to time, place, direction, reason, manner, comparison, and more. As a word class, they share several traits with our prepositions: they cannot stand alone, be duplicated, or take aspectual particles like 0le 了. Most of them require a noun or pronoun to pair with, serving as adverbial adjuncts, complements, or attributes. Since many Chinese prepositions originally derive from verbs, it is common for some to function that way within sentences. Prepositions like 4zai 在 (in) or 3gei 给 (with) can act as either prepositions or verbs, meaning “to be in” or “to give” when used as verbs, respectively. In general, they express the circumstances of the action and also on whom the action or state of affairs falls. They are obligatory when we use intransitive verbs or adjectives in which things happen to others and are accompanied by groups of words (syntagmas). They always come before the verb and after adverbs. For example, if we are going to negate the sentence, we will put the negation before the preposition and not before the verb.

Examples:

- A big white bird flies out of the crater.
- 🗣️ 4yi1zhi 4da4da 0de 2bai3niao 2cong 3huo1shan3kou 1zhong1fei 1chu2lai.
- 一只大大的白鸟从火山口中飞出来。
- The white bird fights against the volcano.
- 🗣️ 4na1zhi 4da4da 0de 2bai3niao 2he 3huo1shan 4zhan4dou.
- 那只大大的白鸟和火山战斗。

4.9. ONOMATOPOEIAS

Transcribe the sound made by some being. They are quite important in Chinese poetry and songs (e.g. the “Mulan Song”). They often form sentences without verbs or adjectives and are usually complex characters.

For example:

Examples:

- ‘Oh’.
- 🗣️ 0o.
- 哦。

4.10. WORDS WITHOUT GRAMMATICAL MEANING

Auxiliary words. As a general rule, it should be noted that they have a neutral tone. They are words which have no meaning, but are used to:

- Mark sentence elements (noun complements 0de 🗣️ 的, circumstantial complements 0de 🗣️ 地 and verb complements 0de 🗣️ 得).
- The aspect of the sentence when they follow the verb or adjective (了 if it has happened: 0le 🗣️ 了).
- The mood of the sentence when they go at the end:
 - 0le 🗣️ 了, a change has occurred or is going to occur.
 - 0de 🗣️ 的, if we provide additional information about an aspect of what has happened.
 - 0ne 呢, the action or state of affairs is being completed, or we are surprised by the action.
 - 0ma 🗣️ 吗, if it is a question mark.
 - 0ba 吧, if it is a command, suggestion or the confirmation of a command, etc.
- Marking syntactic elements of the sentence:
 - -. Complements of the verb:
 - It flies very fast.
 - 🗣️ 1ta 1fei 0de 4kuai 2ji 0le.

- 它飞得快极了。

–. Circumstantial complements

The families come out of their houses shouting.

🔊 1jia1jia1dou 4da 3han 4da 4jiao 0de 1chu2men.

家家都大喊大叫地出门。

–. Complements of the name:

- That is our white bird.
- 🔊 4na 4shi 3wo0men 0de 3niao0er.
- 那是我们的的鸟儿

e) Marking the verbal aspect

–. Complete (action finished or completed):

- The storm put out the volcano.
- 🔊 4da3yu 1pu4mie 0le 3huo1shan.
- 大雨扑灭了了火山。

f) Marking the mood of the sentence:

–. Change (a change occurs, in the case we are going to see, the bird changes from being to not being):

- Hello, my white bird is not here.
- 🔊 - 3wo0de 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le.
- 我的白鸟不见了。

–. Interrogation:

- “Have you seen it?”
- 🔊 - 3ni 4kan4jian 1ta 0le 0ma.
- 你看见它了吗。

–. Statement of fact:

- Yes.
- 🔊 - 4shi0de.
- 是的。

–. Example of modal auxiliaries:

We use the adjective 3hao 🔊 好, “good”:

- If we add 0ba which endows it with imperative character we will say: 3hao0ba 好吧, “well, I do”, expressing obedience.

- If we add the auxiliary of change and full aspect 0le 了, we say (3.33) 3hao 好 0le 了, “that’s enough!”, expressing anger.
- If we add the auxiliary (3.63) 0ma 吗 which marks interrogatives, we say 3hao 0ma, “is it okay?”, seeking the speaker’s opinion.
- If we use the auxiliary 0ne 呢, which reinforces the assertion, we say 3hao0ne 好呢, “is it good!”, expressing some enthusiasm.
- If we use the auxiliary 0de 的 which connotes past, we pronounce 3hao 0de 好的, “it is well”, expressing that it has indeed happened well.

4.11. NEXUSES AND CONJUNCTIONS

These indicate that we are dealing with compound sentences; coordinated or subordinate. They are frequently accompanied by adverbs.

For example, they are often accompanied by adverbs:

–. Coordinated:

- The bird is white and bright.
- 3niao0er 4you 2bai 4you 4liang.
- 鸟儿又白又亮。

–. Subordinate:

- But they are tears of joy.
- 4dan 4daljia 1dou 4shi 1gao4xing 0de 4lei3shui.
- 但大家都是高兴的泪水。

4.12. SENTENCE ORDER, SYNTAX

In Chinese it is essential to know the position of the word in the sentence. Although the Chinese morphology we have seen may seem a bit strange and different, its grammar is easy, as it is the position that determines whether a word is a verb, a preposition, an adverb, or an auxiliary. This is why it is often called a syntactic language.

4.12.1. Subject

It is usually placed at the beginning of the sentence. It is not usually omitted except in existential sentences or in cases where it is very clear. It can be made up of nominal sentence groups, nouns, pronouns, predicates, and whole sentences, but the main thing is that it is at the beginning of the sentence. In some (rare) cases, it can be preceded by a circumstantial complement (of time or a prepositional phrase) if it is of vital importance to begin with a nuance or when.

Examples:

- Da Li and XiaoWang are friends.
- 4da3li 2he 3xiao2wang 4shi 2peng3you.
- 大李和小王是朋友。

- At night, they go to the mountains and rest in the bamboo forest.
- 🗣️ 3wan0shang, 1ta0men 4shang1shan, 4zai 2zhu2lin 3li 1xiu0xi.
- 晚上, 他们上山, 在竹林里休息。
- Tonight is different (here “tonight” is the subject).
- 🗣️ 1jin 3wan 4bu2tong.
- 今晚不同。

4.12.2. Noun complement or genitive

It always precedes the noun or pronoun, i.e. it comes before it. Possessives are a case of the noun complement. They are used to describe or value the noun. They function in much the same way as in English.

4.12.3. Noun complement + noun

They can go to determine nouns in the subject, direct complement, circumstantial complement or in the complement of the verb.

4.12.4. Noun complement in the subject

Example:

- That big bird in the sky blows out a lot of water.
- 🗣️ 4na3zhi 4da3niao 4zai 1tian0shang 3tu 1chu 0le 4da3shui.
- 那只大鸟在天上吐出了大水。

4.12.5. Noun complement in the direct object

Example:

- But they are tears of joy.
- 🗣️ 4dan 4da1jia 1dou 4shi 1gao4xing 0de 4lei3shui.
- 但大家都是高兴的泪水。

4.12.6. Noun complement in the verb complement

Example:

- They live under a high mountain.
- 🗣️ 1ta0men 4zhu 4zai 2yi 4zuo 1gao1shan 0xia.
- 他们住在一座高山下。

4.12.7. Circumstantial Complement

Gives fundamental information about the context of the sentence, the time, manner, place, its voluntary or obligatory character, its truthfulness, falsity, etc. They always come before verbs,

adjectives, prepositions or sentence groups with a predicate function. It is important to remember that they always come before the predicate.

Examples:

- Families come out of their homes screaming.
- 🗣️ 1jia1jia 1dou 4da 3han 4da 4jiao 0de 1chu2men.
- 家家都大喊大叫地出门。
- At night, they go to the mountains.
- 🗣️ 3wan0shang, 1ta0men 4shang1shan.
- 晚上, 他们上山。
- That big bird in the sky is spewing out a lot of water.
- 🗣️ 4na3zhi 4da3niao 4zai 1tian 0shang 3tu 1chu 0le 4da3shui.
- 那只大鸟在天上吐出了大水。

4.12.8. Predicate or predicate nucleus

It can be a verb or an adjective, but also a nominal group or noun phrase, as when we say in English: “Today, 18 January” (1jin1tian 1yi 4yue 2shi1ba 4hao), 今天, 一月十八号。

Example:

- It's daytime.
- 🗣️ 2bai1tian0le.
- 白天了。

4.12.9. Verb complement

It goes right after the verb or adjective and gives information about whether it has been possible, the number of times it has happened, the duration in time of the predicate, how it has happened, etc. Sometimes, they have a very poetic character and are quite common in exaggerations and euphemisms. You have to be careful because, in some places, they are called “supplement”, but in Chinese, the supplement is a circumstantial complement and goes in front of the predicate, never behind it.

Examples:

- A large white bird flies out of the crater.
- 🗣️ 4yi1zhi 4da4da 0de 2bai3niao 2cong 3huo1shan3kou 1zhong 1fei 1chu2lai
- 一只大大的白鸟从火山口中飞出来。
- I saw a white bird.
- 🗣️ 3wo 4kan 4jian 4yi1zhi 2bai3niao.
- 我看见一只白鸟。

- The bird comes down.
- 🗣️ 4na1zhi 3niao1fei 4xia.
- 那只鸟飞下。
- The bird gets up again.
- 🗣️ 4na1zhi 3niao 4you 1fei 3qi2lai0le.
- 那只鸟又飞起来了。

4.12.10. Direct complement

At the end of the sentence, after the complement of the verb; if there is one, it indicates who or what the action is about. Chinese grammarians do not consider the indirect complement as an element of the sentence (for them, it is always a direct complement or a circumstantial complement), so we can sometimes speak of two direct complements:

Example:

- Da Li gives a flower to XiaoWang.
- 🗣️ 4da3li 3gei 3xiao2wang4yi3duo 1hua.
- 大李给小王一朵花

As a general rule, people come first and then things. In some cases, the direct complement can be placed at the beginning of the sentence or before the verb (as in the case of sentences of manipulation or transformation of objects), but these are exceptional cases. Two direct complements:

Examples:

- The two friends go out and ask a woman: "Hello, my white bird is not here. His name is Xiaobai, have you seen him?".
- 🗣️ 3liang4ge2peng3you1chu2men,4wen:3nü2ren: "3ni3hao, 3wo0de 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le. 1ta 4jiao 3xiao2bai, 3ni 4kan4jian 1ta 0le 0ma".
- 两个朋友出门, 问女人: "你好, 我的白鸟不见了。它叫小白, 你看见它了吗".
- Da Li gives a flower to XiaoWang.
- 🗣️ 4da3li 3gei 3xiao2wang 4yi3duo 1hua.
- 大李给小王一朵花。

4.12.11. The verb to be means existence and affirmation

They do not have a copula function as in English and do not need to be used before adjectives unless we want to give special connotations. As a general rule, we will use them to express existence.

Example:

- There is fire on the mountain.
- 🗣️ 1shan3li 3you 3huo.
- 山里有火。

Interesting videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvRonogpgKw&list=PLKOUVoZGWfShsiJcd03cmabtzbT_2MwXd

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FIFTH CHAPTER

第五章



This story contains the grammar points and vocabulary we have taught above. It will be the place where you can observe the language as a whole. The story is simple, but it includes all the appropriate grammar and vocabulary items already given above. You will listen to the narration of this story in native voices. You will also have the story written in English so that you can fully understand its meaning. It will be followed by a poem allowing you to appreciate the tonal harmony of the Chinese language.

THE BRIGHT WHITE BIRD

🔊 4you 2bai 4you 4liang 0de 3niao0er

又白又亮的鸟儿

Da Li and Xiao Wang are friends. They are two very good boys. They live under a high mountain. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays they work. On Saturdays and Sundays, they like to cook and eat together. Da Li gives a flower to Xiao Wang. In the evening, they go to the mountains and rest in the bamboo forest.

🔊 4da3li 2he 3xiao2wang 4shi 2peng3you.1ta0men 4shi 3liang4ge 3hen 3hao 0de 2xiao3huo0er.1ta0men 4zhu 4zai 2yi4zuo 1gao1shan4xia.1ta0men 3mei 1zhou1yi 1zhou4er 1zhou1san 1zhou4si 2he 1zhou3wu 1gong4zuo.1zhou4liu 2he 1zhou4ri 1ta0men 3xi1huan 4zai 4yi3qi 4zuo4fan 2he 1chi4fan.4da3li 3gei 3xiao2wang 4yi3duo 1hua.3wan0shang, 1ta0men 4shang1shan, 4zai 2zhu2lin3li 1xiu0xi.

大李和小王是朋友。他们是两个很好的小伙儿。他们住在一座高山下。他们每周一、周二、周三、周四和周五工作。周六和周日他们喜欢在一起做饭和吃饭。大李给小王一朵花。晚上, 他们上山, 在竹林里休息。

Tonight is different. Da Li and Xiao Wang are worried - their white bird is missing! The two friends go out and ask a woman:

🔊 1jin3wan 4bu2tong.4da3li 2he 3xiao2wang 1dou 3hen 1dan1xin.1ta0men 0de 4yi1zhi 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le! 3liang4ge 2peng3you 1chu2men, 4wen 3nü2ren:

今晚不同。大李和小王都很担心。他们的一只白鸟不见了! 两个朋友出门, 问女人:

- Hello, my white bird is not here. Its name is Xiaobai, have you seen it?
- Oh, yes, I've seen a white bird.
- Where?
- I saw a white bird in the sky. Be careful, there is fire on the mountain.

- ㊦) 2ni3hao, 3wo0de 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le. 1ta 4jiao 3xiao2bai, 3ni 4kan4jian 1ta 0le 0ma?
- 0o, 4shi0de, 3wo 4kan4jian 4yi1zhi 2bai3niao.
- 4zai 3na0er?
- 3wo 4kan4jian 1tian0shang 3you 1zhi 2bai3niao. 3ni0men 1duo 3xiao1xin! 1shan3li 3you 3huo.
- 你好, 我的白鸟不见了。它叫小白, 你看见它了吗?
- 哦, 是的, 我看见一只白鸟。
- 在哪儿?
- 我看见天上有只白鸟。你们多小心! 山里有火。

The fire is very big. It is a volcano. Families come out of their houses screaming. The fire is close. Everyone is saying: "Fire!"

㊦) 3huo 3hen4da. 4shi 2yi4ge 3huo1shan. 1jia1jia 1dou 4da 3han 4da 4jiao 0de 1chu2men. 4da3huo 3hen 4jin! 4da1jia 1dou 1shuo: 4da 3huo!

火很大。是一个火山。家家都大喊大叫地出门。大火很近! 大家都说: 大火!

A huge bird flies out of the crater. The bird is white and shiny. It flies very fast. The white bird fights against the volcano. The bird comes down, everyone is afraid. The bird gets up again, all the people cry.

㊦) 4yi1zhi 4da4da 0de 3niao 2cong 3huo1shan3kou1zhong 1fei1chu2lai. 3niao0er 4you 2bai 4you 4liang. 1ta 1fei 0de 4kuai 2ji 0le. 4na1zhi 4da4da 0de 2bai3niao 2he 3huo1shan 4zhan4dou. 4na 1zhi 3niao 1fei4xia, 4da1jia 1dou 4pa 0le. 4na 1zhi 3niao 4you 1fei 3qi2lai 0le, 2ren2ren 1dou 1ku 0le.

一只大大的鸟从火山口中飞出来。鸟儿又白又亮。它飞得快极了。那只大大的白鸟和火山战斗。那只鸟飞下, 大家都怕了。那只鸟又飞起来了, 人人都哭了。

But they are tears of joy. The big white bird in the sky is spewing out a lot of water. The storm extinguished the volcano. Da Li and Xiao Wang see the bird and say: "It is our bird". They all laugh.

㊦) 4dan 4da1jia 1dou 4shi 1gao4xing 0de 4lei3shui. 4na3zhi 4da3niao 4zai 1tian0shang 3tu 1chu 0le 4da3shui. 4da3yu 1pu4mie 0le 3huo1shan. 4da3li 2he 3xiao2wang 4kan 4dao 0le 4na1zhi 3niao, "4na 4shi 3wo0men 0de 3niao0er", 4da1jia 1dou 4xiao 0le.

但大家都是高兴的泪水。那只大鸟在天上吐出了大水。大雨扑灭了火山。大李和小王看到了那只鸟, "那是我们的鸟儿", 大家都笑了。

It is daytime. Tomorrow will be a public holiday.

㊦) 2bai1tian 0le. 2ming1tian 4shi 2jie4ri.

白天了。明天是节日。

In China, there is the palace. The king lives in the palace.

4zai 1zhong2guo 3you 2wang 1gong.2guo2wang 4zhu 4zai 2wang 1gong 3li.

在中国有王宫, 国王住在王宫里

The queen has a bright white bird. It is the prodigious bird.

3nǚ2wang 3you 4yī1zhī 4yóu 2bái 4yóu 4liàng 0de 3niǎo, 4nà4shì 4yī1zhī 2shén2qí 0de 3niǎo0er.

女王有一只又白又亮的鸟, 那是一只神奇的鸟儿。

THE BRIGHT WHITE BIRD

The bright white bird. Da Li and Xiao Wang are friends. They are two very good boys. They live under a high mountain. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays they work. On Saturdays and Sundays, they like to cook and eat together. Da Li gives a flower to Xiao Wang. In the evening, they go to the mountains and rest in the bamboo forest.

Tonight is different. Da Li and Xiao Wang are worried, their white bird is gone! The two friends go out and ask a woman:

- Hello, my white bird is missing. Its name is Xiaobai, have you seen it?
- Oh, yes, I have seen a white bird.
- Where?
- I saw a white bird in the sky. Be careful, there is fire on the mountain.

The fire is very big. It is a volcano. Families come out of their houses screaming. The fire is near. Everyone says: Fire!

A huge bird flies out of the crater. The bird is white and shiny. It flies very fast. The white bird fights against the volcano. The bird comes down, everyone is afraid. The bird gets up again, all the people cry.

But they are tears of joy. The big white bird in the sky blows out a lot of water. The storm extinguished the volcano. Da Li and Xiao Wang see the bird and say: 'It is our bird'. They all laugh.

It is daytime. Tomorrow is a holiday. In China, there is the palace. The king lives in the palace. The queen has a bright white bird. It is the prodigious bird.

THE BRIGHT WHITE BIRD

🔊 4you 2bai 4you 4liang 0de 3niaoer

🔊 4you 2bai 4you 4liang 0de 3niaoer. 4da3li 2he 3xiao2wang 4shi 2peng3you. 1ta0men 4shi 3liang4ge 3hen 3hao 0de 2xiao3huo0er. 1ta0men 4zhu 4zai 2yi4zuo 1gao1shan4xia. 1ta0men 3mei 1zhou1yi 1zhou4er 1zhou1san 1zhou4si 2he 1zhou3wu 1gong4zuo. 1zhou4liu 2he 1zhou4ri 1ta0men 3xi1huan 4zai 4yi3qi 4zuo4fan 2he 1chi4fan. 4da3li 3gei 3xiao2wang 4yi3duo 1hua. 3wan0shang, 1ta0men 4shang1shan, 4zai 2zhu2lin3li 1xiu0xi.

1jin3wan 4bu2tong. 4da3li 2he 3xiao2wang 1dou 3hen 1dan1xin. 1ta0men 0de 4yi1zhi 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le! 3liang4ge 2peng3you 1chu2men, 4wen 3nū2ren:

- 2ni3hao, 3wo0de 2bai3niao 2bu4jian 0le. 1ta 4jiao 3xiao2bai, 3ni 4kan4jian 1ta 0le 0ma?
- 0o, 4shi0de, 3wo 4kan4jian 4yi1zhi 2bai3niao.
- 4zai 3na0er?
- 3wo 4kan4jian 1tian0shang 3you 1zhi 2bai3niao. 3ni0men 1duo 3xiao1xin! 1shan3li 3you 3huo.

3huo 3hen4da. 4shi 2yi4ge 3huo1shan. 1jia1jia 1dou 4da 3han 4da 4jiao 0de 1chu2men. 4da3huo 3hen 4jin! 4da1jia 1dou 1shuo: 4da3huo!

4yi1zhi 4da4da 0de 3niao 2cong 3huo1shan3kou1zhong 1fei1chu2lai. 3niao0er 4you 2bai 4you 4liang. 1ta 1fei de 4kuai 2ji 0le. 4na1zhi 4da4da 0de 2bai3niao 2he 3huo1shan 4zhan4dou. 4na 1zhi 3niao 1fei4xia, 4da1jia 1dou 4pa 0le. 4na 1zhi 3niao 4you 1fei 3qi2lai 0le, 2ren2ren 1dou 1ku 0le.

4dan 4da1jia 1dou 4shi 1gao4xing 0de 4lei3shui. 4na3zhi 4da3niao 4zai 1tian0shang 3tu 1chu 0le 4da3shui. 4da3yu 1pu4mie 0le 3huo1shan. 4da3li 2he 3xiao2wang 4kan 4dao 0le 4na1zhi 3niao, “4na 4shi 3wo0men 0de 3niao0er”, 4da1jia 1dou 4xiao 0le.

2bai1tian 0le. 2ming1tian 4shi 2jie4ri.

4zai 1zhong2guo 3you 2wang 1gong. 2guo2wang 4zhu 4zai 2wang 1gong 3li. 3nū 2wang 3you 4yi1zhi 4you 2bai 4you 4liang 0de 3niao, 4na4shi 4yi1zhi 2shen2qi 0de 3niao0er.

THE BRIGHT WHITE BIRD

又白又亮的鸟儿大李和小王是朋友。他们两个很好的小伙儿。他们住在一座高山下。他们每周一、周二、周三、周四和周五都工作。周六和周日他们喜欢在一起做饭和吃饭。大李给小王一朵花。晚上，他们上山，在竹林里休息。

今晚不同。大李和小王都很担心。他们的一只白鸟不见了！两个朋友出门，问女人：

- 你好，我的白鸟不见了。它叫小白，你看见它了吗
- 哦，是的，我看见一只白鸟。
- 在哪儿
- 我看见天上有只白鸟。你们多小心！山里有火

火很大。是一个火山。家家都大喊大叫地出门。大火很近！大家都说：大火！

一只大大的鸟从火山口中飞出来。鸟儿又白又亮。它飞得快极了。那只大大的白鸟和火山战斗。那只鸟飞下，大家都怕了。那只鸟又飞起来了，人人都哭了。

但大家都是高兴的泪水。那只大鸟在天上吐出了大水。大雨扑灭了火山。大李和小王看到了那只鸟，“那是我们的鸟儿”，大家都笑了。

白天了。明天是节日。

在中国有王宫, 国王住在王宫里。女王有一只又白又亮的鸟, 那是一只神奇的鸟儿。

SONG POETRY

With this poetry from the Song period (960-1279) you can appreciate the tonal harmony of the Chinese language:

🔊 Song to the mountain people (1shan1cun3yong2huai)

《山村咏怀》4Shào1Yōng (1011-1077)

One goes two or three miles away, smoke from four or five hamlets.

2yi 4qu 2er 1san 3li, 1yan 1cun 4si 3wu 1jia.

一去二三里, 烟村四五家。

Six or seven temples, eight, nine or ten branches in Bloom

2ting 2tai 4liu 1qi 4zuo, 1ba 3jiu 2shi 1zhi 1hua.

亭台六七座, 八九十枝花。

Interesting videos:

<https://duchinese.net/blog/category/chinese-culture/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=may2s9j4RLk>

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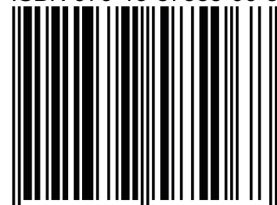
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