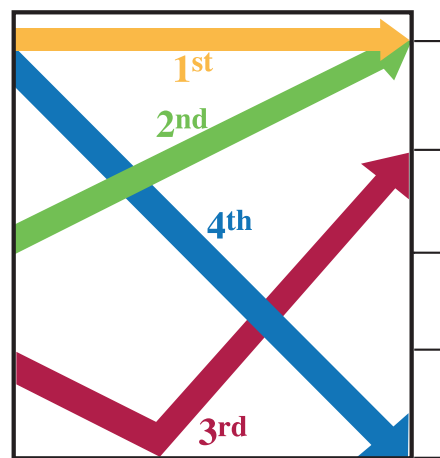


LESSON 1

1

Chinese is “Out of This World!”

Imagine a world where just by changing the tone of your voice you form a completely different word. A world where saying the exact same word, only with a different tone, you change the meaning from “mother,” to “hemp,” to “horse,” and then “scold.” Welcome, my friend, to the world of Mandarin!



There are four main tones in Mandarin and a fifth neutral tone. The above graph shows the tonal patterns of each of the four main tones. You will see in this book, and anywhere *pinyin* is used, the tone number of each word (morpheme) indicated above the main vowel using the following tone marks as seen for the morpheme “ma”:

1st tone = mā **2nd tone** = má **3rd tone** = mǎ **4th tone** = mà

The neutral tone has no tone mark. Here is how each tone basically should sound:

1st tone: This is a high even tone. It sounds like someone holding a steady high note while singing.

2nd tone: This is a rising tone. It sounds almost like the tone of voice we use when asking “huh?”.

3rd tone: This is a low dipping tone. Similar to saying “blah” in English when bored, only the sound goes lower in Chinese.

4th tone: This is a sharp falling tone. This sounds similar to when someone yells sharply “Hey!”, as in “Hey, stop that!”.

The neutral tone: This is said with no marked intonation.

Chit-Chat CHINESE

1

Now let's listen to the four main tones on your audio CD (🎧 1-1).

mā
(mother)

má
(hemp)

mǎ
(horse)

mà
(scold)

Now that you have learned about tones, let's get rolling with the sounds in Mandarin.



Pronunciation Plaza

– The place you come to practice sounds and tones

(Go to 🎧 1-1 to hear:)

Tone Practice

Let's first focus on practicing those four tones!

Note: The English meanings are given below each sound. However, many of the sounds require another character to complete their meaning. When you see “(-----)” this means there is no common word for that particular tone.

bā
(eight)

bá
(to pull out)

bǎ
(target)

bà
(father)

pā
(to lie)

pá
(to crawl)

pǎ
(-----)

pà
(to fear)

dā
(to put up)

dá
(to answer)

dǎ
(to hit)

dà
(big)

tā
(he / she / it)

tá
(-----)

tǎ
(tower)

tà
(to step on)

nā
(a surname)

ná
(to take)

nǎ
(where)

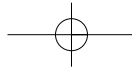
nà
(that)

lā
(to pull)

lá
(to slash)

lǎ
(-----)

là
(spicy)



Pinyin Practice

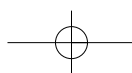
Below is a chart of the sounds we will cover in this lesson, with the initials highlighted in and the finals highlighted in :

1

a					
	a	ai	ao	an	ang
b	ba	bai	bao	ban	bang
p	pa	pai	pao	pan	pang
m	ma	mai	mao	man	mang
f	fa			fan	fang
d	da	dai	dao	dan	dang
t	ta	tai	tao	tan	tang
n	na	nai	nao	nan	nang
l	la	lai	lao	lan	lang


Sound Differentiation Practice

bā (eight)	bái (white)	bǎo (full)	bàn (half)	bāng (to help)
pā (to lie)	pái (a row)	pǎo (to run)	pàn (to judge)	pāng (torrential)
mā (mother)	mái (to bury)	mǎo (mao)	màn (slow)	māng (bull)
fā (to issue)	fàn (meal)	fāng (square)		
dā (to put up)	dái (-----)	dǎo (to topple)	dàn (but)	dāng (to act as)
tā (he / she / it)	tái (terrace)	tǎo (to demand)	tàn (sigh)	tāng (soup)
nā (a surname)	nái (-----)	nǎo (brain)	nàn (disaster)	nāng (muttering)
lā (to pull)	lái (to come)	lǎo (old)	làn (rotten)	lāng (‘bang’)



1

Auditory Exercise

Listen to the following sounds in  1-2 and write the correct *pinyin* spelling and tones below. See **Appendix IV** for correct answers.

Note: You should expect the first few lessons of auditory transliteration to be challenging and you should use your answer key as an aide. This is meant as an auditory exercise not a test. It is a training ground for your ears and your future receptive ability to distinguish Mandarin sounds and tones.

Part One: Tone Differentiation

Listen to each sound and write down which of the four main tones you hear.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____
9. _____ 10. _____

Part Two: Sounds Differentiation

Listen to each sound and write down the correct *pinyin* spelling.

11. _____ 12. _____ 13. _____ 14. _____
15. _____ 16. _____ 17. _____ 18. _____
19. _____ 20. _____

**Word Workshop**

– *The place you come to learn new words and phrases*

(Go to  1-3 to hear:)

Personal Pronouns

我
wǒ
(I)

你
nǐ
(you)

他/她/它
tā
(he / she / it)

我们	你们	他们/她们/它们
wǒmen*	nǐmen*	tāmen*
(we)	(you all)	(they)

* Adding the word “men” (们) to pronouns or nouns pluralizes them.

“To be”

This verb, as with all Chinese verbs, does not need to be conjugated. It remains the same no matter to whom or what it is attached as well as whether it is regarding the past, present or future.

是	不	不是
shì	bù	bú* shì
(to be)	(not)	(is not / are not / was not, etc.)

*We'll explain this change of tone in Lesson Three.

我是	你是	他是/她是/它是
wǒ shì	nǐ shì	tā shì
(I am)	(you are)	(he / she / it is)

我们是	你们是	他们是/她们是/它们是
wǒmen shì	nǐmen shì	tāmen shì
(we are)	(you [all] are)	(they are)

Countries (see Appendix V for a wider list of countries)

中国	美国	英国
Zhōngguó	Měiguó	Yīngguó
(China)	(the U.S.A.)	(England, Britain)
(LIT: middle, country)	(LIT: beautiful, country)	(LIT: for sound)
法国	德国	日本
Fǎguó	Déguó	Rìběn
(France)	(Germany)	(Japan)
(LIT: for sound)	(LIT: for sound)	(LIT: sun, origin)

Chit-Chat CHINESE

1

Nationalities

Nationality names are as easy as pie; just add the following word and you've got it:

人

rén

(person)

Here is how it works:

中国人

Zhōngguórén

(Chinese)

(LIT: China, person)

美国人

Měiguórén

(American)

(LIT: the U.S., person)

英国人

Yīngguórén

(English)

(LIT: England, person)

法国人

Fǎguórén

(French)

(LIT: French, person)

德国人

Déguórén

(German)

(LIT: German, person)

日本人

Rìběnrén

(Japanese)

(LIT: Japanese, person)

Languages

Another set of words simple to form with your building blocks: just add “wén” after the first country word (morpheme):

文

wén

(language, culture, writing)

中文

Zhōngwén

(Chinese)

英文

Yīngwén

(English)

法文

Fǎwén

(French)

德文

Déwén

(German)

日文

Rìwén

(Japanese)

Classroom Words

Now, let's give you a few words to communicate with your teacher. (If you are studying on your own, feel free to talk to yourself.) Please note, in the classroom setting you should always call your teacher by the title “teacher (“lǎoshī”).” You can also add their last name, so if your teacher's last name is “Wáng,” you should call him or her “Wáng lǎoshī,” with his or her surname first.

老师	学生
lǎoshī	xuésheng
(teacher)	(student)
(LIT: old, master)	(LIT: study, being)

懂	不懂
dǒng	bù dǒng
(understand)	(not understand)

谢谢	不客气
xièxie	bú kèqi
(thank you)	(you're welcome)
	(LIT: [no need], politeness)



Grammar Grove

– The place you come to learn about structure

Word order

The word order in Chinese for describing nationalities is not different from English: Subject + to be (“shì”) + nationality. Just remember, you do not need to conjugate the verb “to be”; leave it as it is and go on your merry way, like so:

我是美国人。	
Wǒ shì Měiguórén.	= I am American.

你是中国人。	
Nǐ shì Zhōngguórén.	= You are Chinese.

我们是法国人。	
Wǒmen shì Fǎguórén.	= We are French.

他是日本人。	
Tā shì Rìběnrén.	= He is Japanese.

他们是德国人。	
Tāmen shì Déguórén.	= They are German.

Chit-Chat CHINESE

1

Questioning

To ask a question just make a statement and add the word “ma (吗)” at the end. This word means nothing except to function as an out loud question mark. When you hear that at the end of a phrase, you know you are being asked a question.

There is no one word in Chinese for “yes” or “no.” Instead the verb, adjective, adverb or other central part to the question is repeated to answer in the affirmative. To answer in the negative you use the word “bù (not)” before this central word. To clarify what that means, I will demonstrate how this works with English words:

Affirmative

Q: Are you American?

A: Am.

Q: Do you like China?

A: Like.

Q: Do you know Chinese?

A: Know.

Negative

Q: Are you American?

A: Not am.

Q: Do you like China?

A: Not like.

Q: Do you know Chinese?

A: Not know.

Now let's look at that in Chinese:

你是美国人吗?
Q: Nǐ shì Měiguórén ma?
(LIT: You are American + ma)

= Are you American?

是。
A: Shì.
(LIT: to be)

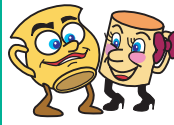
= Yes.

他是中国人吗?
Q: Tā shì Zhōngguó rén ma?
(LIT: He is Chinese + ma)

= Is he Chinese?

不是。
A: Bú shì.
(LIT: not, to be)

= No.



Chit-Chat Café

– The place you come to practice speaking

1

Module 1.1 - (🎧 1-4) / English translation on Page 18

Picture this: “Bob” took four weeks of Mandarin lessons and is now in China.

“Lili” bumps into him in Tiananmen Square, Beijing.

Lili: Nǐ shì Měiguórén ma?	Lili: 你是美国人吗?
Bob: Shì. Nǐ shì Zhōngguórén ma?	Bob: 是。你是中国人吗?
Lili: Shì. Nǐ shì lǎoshī ma?	Lili: 是。你是老师吗?
Bob: Bú shì. Wǒ shì xuésheng. Nǐ shì lǎoshī ma?	Bob: 不是。我是学生。 你是老师吗?
Lili: Shì. Wǒ shì lǎoshī.	Lili: 是。我是老师。
Bob: Nǐ shì Zhōngwén lǎoshī ma?	Bob: 你是中文老师吗?
Lili: Bú shì. Wǒ shì Yīngwén lǎoshī.	Lili: 不是。我是英文老师。
Bob: Nǐ dǒng Yīngwén!	Bob: 你懂英文!
Lili: Wǒ dǒng Yīngwén. Nǐ dǒng Zhōngwén ma?	Lili: 我懂英文。你懂 中文吗?
Bob: Wǒ dǒng.	Bob: 我懂。

Chit-Chat Practice 1.1

Answer the following questions out loud, then in writing for homework. Be sure to answer in full sentences as in the example (answers in **Appendix IV**.)

Example:

Lili 是中国人吗?

是。她是中国人。

Q: Lili shì Zhōngguórén ma?

A: Shì. Tā shì Zhōngguórén.

1.

Bob 是中国人吗?

Q: Bob shì Zhōngguórén ma?

A: _____

1

2.

Lili 是美国人吗?

Q: Lili shì Měiguórén ma?

A: _____

3.

Bob 是学生吗?

Q: Bob shì xuésheng ma?

A: _____

4.

Lili 是学生吗?

Q: Lili shì xuésheng ma?

A: _____

5.

Lili 是英文老师吗?

Q: Lili shì Yīngwén lǎoshī ma?

A: _____

6.

Lili 懂英文吗?

Q: Lili dǒng Yīngwén ma?

A: _____

7.

Bob 懂中文吗?

Q: Bob dǒng Zhōngwén ma?

A: _____



Word Workshop

– The place you come to learn new words and phrases

(Go to  1-5 to hear:)

Greetings

你好

nǐ hǎo

(hello)

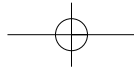
(LIT: you, good)

你好吗?

Nǐ hǎo ma?

(How are you?)

(LIT: you, good, ?)



1

好	很好	不好	马马虎虎
hǎo	hěn hǎo*	bù hǎo	mǎmahūhū
(good)	(very good)	(not good)	(so so)
			(LIT: horse, horse, tiger, tiger)

我很好。

Wǒ hěn hǎo.

(I am good. / I am fine.)

* Even though “hěn hǎo” means very good, it is more common to use this to answer the question of “How are you?”, just as we would use “fine.”

你叫什么名字?	我叫_____。	你呢?
Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?	Wǒ jiào _____.	Nǐ ne?
(What is your name?)	(My name is _____.)	(And you?)
(LIT: you, called, what, name)	(LIT: I, called, _____)	

再见

zàijiàn

(goodbye)

(LIT: again, see)

Possessive Pronouns

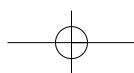
我的	你的	他的/她的/它的
wǒ de	nǐ de	tā de
(my)	(your)	(his / her / its)
我们的	你们的	他们的/她们的/它们的
wǒmen de	nǐmen de	tāmen de
(our)	(your [plural])	(their)

Expressions

哇!

Wā!

(Wow!)



Chit-Chat CHINESE

1

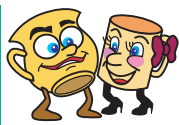
哪里哪里

nǎli nǎli*

(not so, not so)

(LIT: where?, where?)

* It's best not to accept a compliment in Chinese. Otherwise you may "lose face" by appearing too confident or arrogant. Instead, deny the compliment with the above expression "Nǎli nǎli."



Chit-Chat Café

– The place you come to practice speaking

Module 1.2 - (🎧 1-6) / English translation on Page 18

Picture this: "Jen" is taking Chinese classes at the local university. She meets "Xiaomei" in a park in Chinatown.

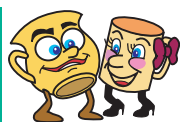
Jen: Nǐ shì Zhōngguó rén ma?	Jen: 你是中国人吗?
Xiaomei: Shì. Wā, nǐ de Zhōngwén hěn hǎo!	Xiaomei: 是。哇，你的中文很好!
Jen: Nǎli nǎli. Wǒ de Zhōngwén bù hǎo.	Jen: 哪里哪里。我的中文不好。
Xiaomei: Nǐ shì Zhōngwén xuésheng ma?	Xiaomei: 你是中文学生吗?
Jen: Shì. Nǐ shì lǎoshī ma?	Jen: 是。你是老师吗?
Xiaomei: Bú shì.	Xiaomei: 不是。
(time lapse)	(过一会儿)
Jen: Zàijiàn.	Jen: 再见。
Xiaomei: Zàijiàn.	Xiaomei: 再见。

Chit-Chat Practice 1.2

Fill in the question that should go with these answers (answers in **Appendix IV**). First try the exercise orally, then in writing.

Example:

- Q: Xiǎoměi shì Zhōngguó rén
ma?
1. _____
- A: Shì. Xiǎoměi shì Zhōngguó rén.
- 是。小美是中国人。
- Q: _____
2. _____
- A: Shì. Jēn shì Zhōngwén xuésheng.
- 是。Jen 是中文学生。
- Q: _____
3. _____
- A: Bú shì. Xiǎoměi bú shì lǎoshī.
- 不是。小美不是老师。
- Q: _____
- A: Hǎo. Jēn de Zhōngwén hěn hǎo.
- 好。Jen 的中文很好。



Chit-Chat Café

– The place you come to practice speaking

Module 1.3 - (1-7) / English translation on Page 19

Picture this: “Peter” spent a summer in China. Now back in the U.S., he introduces himself to a Chinese coworker, “Wang Bo.”

Peter: Nǐ hǎo ma?	Peter: 你好吗?
Wang Bo: Wǒ hěn hǎo, xièxie. Nǐ ne?	Wang Bo: 我很好, 谢谢。 你呢?
Peter: Wǒ hěn hǎo, xièxie.	Peter: 我很好, 谢谢。
Wang Bo: Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?	Wang Bo: 你叫什么名字?
Peter: Wǒ jiào Peter. Nǐ ne?	Peter: 我叫Peter。你呢?

Chit-Chat CHINESE

1

Wang Bo: Wǒ jiào Wáng Bō. Nǐ de Zhōngwén hěn hǎo!

Wang Bo: 我叫王波。你的中文很好!

Peter: Nǎli nǎli. Nǐ de Yīngwén hěn hǎo!

Peter: 哪里哪里。你的英文很好!

Wang Bo: Wǒ de Yīngwén bù hǎo.
(time lapse)

Wang Bo: 我的英文不好。
(过一会儿)

Peter: Zàijiàn.

Peter: 再见。

Wang Bo: Zàijiàn.

Wang Bo: 再见。

Chit-Chat Practice 1.3

Answer the following questions about yourself. You can find example answers to these questions in **Appendix IV**.

1.

你好吗?

Q: Nǐ hǎo ma?

A: _____

2.

你叫什么名字?

Q: Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?

A: _____

3.

你是美国人吗?

Q: Nǐ shì Měiguórén ma?

A: _____

4.

你是中国人吗?

Q: Nǐ shì Zhōngguó rén ma?

A: _____

5.

你是学生吗?

Q: Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?

A: _____

6.

你的英文好吗?

Q: Nǐ de Yīngwén hǎo ma?

A: _____

7.

你的中文好吗?

Q: Nǐ de Zhōngwén hǎo ma?

A: _____



Grammar Grove

– The place you come to learn about structure

KISS = “Keep It Simple, Stupid.”

Think of us poor westerners conjugating verbs for each different pronoun and tense, and sprinkling our language with articles, such as “the” and “a,” and using different prepositions after different verbs. While Chinese speakers glide through their linguistic life with little or no need for any of the above. Here is some of what you will not have to worry about with Chinese:

No verb conjugation — Chinese verbs only have one form, no matter what noun or pronoun you use or time the event takes place. So, verbs remain the same whether you are discussing today, yesterday or tomorrow. Time is indicated using a time word such as “tomorrow,” “soon,” or “2 years ago.” Here is how the structure works (written out in English words, so you get the picture):

- I tomorrow go store.
- I yesterday ride bike.
- I now work.

There are no articles — As you can see from the above sentences, there is also no need for “the” or “a.”

Prepositions are used less — Prepositions do exist, but are not nearly as prevalent as in western languages. Have a look at this sentence written in English, then with English words with Chinese grammar:

- **English:** She looks **at the** dog.
- **Mock Chinese:** She look dog.

Pronouns remain the same — Pronouns remain the same whether they are direct or indirect. For example, “wǒ” means “I” and “me,” “tā” means “he” and “him,” etc.

1



Culture Corner

– *The place you come to learn more than just language*

入境随俗

rù jìng suí sú

“When in a new environment, do as the locals do.”

Chinese saying

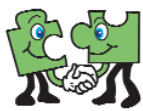
Meeting and greeting

Now that you can do the meet and greet in Chinese, it's important to know some cultural aspects to your first interactions. In particular, how should you greet someone? Is it with a bow, a handshake or nothing at all?

- **Bowing?** — This is not nearly as common or formal in China as it is in Japan. The Chinese reserve bowing for very formal situations such as being in the presence of a high authority (e.g. a high government official), when worshipping a deity, or for certain funeral rites. You may notice an abbreviated kind of bow from time to time, or just a gentle lowering of the head to show respect, without actually bending from the waist.
- **Shaking hands?** — Although the Chinese do not traditionally shake hands when meeting, this has changed in the last couple of decades. With greater contact with the west, more and more Chinese will shake hands when meeting a foreigner (but not as common amongst themselves). Generally in the urban centers, if you are non-Asian and are meeting someone Chinese they may, out of courtesy for western culture, extend a hand. Minimally most will know what to do if you are the one who extends a hand. Shaking hands will tend to take place only when meeting, and a wave will suffice when saying goodbye. If you are doing business in Asia, it is best to assume all business people are familiar with the common international practice of shaking hands when meeting and when saying goodbye.
- **Just stand there?** — If you are not in an urban center, and / or are meeting someone elderly, likely the person will not be accustomed to shaking hands. Smiling and slightly nodding your head is enough.

- **How about a kiss on the cheek?** — There is a simple answer to this question: “NO!”. This is not common practice and most people will not be familiar or comfortable with this western tradition, whether it be the European two-kisses when meeting and when saying goodbye or the American single kiss on the cheek when saying goodbye. Hold off on your smooches.

Just as with any new person you meet, no matter the nationality, you should tap into your EQ (emotional quotient) and try to read what the person is accustomed to. Chinese people travel and live all over the world, you may, by chance, meet someone who lived in France for years, or the U.S. Generally, anytime you are abroad and in doubt of the customs, let the other person take the lead: If a hand extends, shake it; if a head is lowered, lower yours too; if a kiss is offered, offer one back. Just mirror back the locals' behavior and you can't go wrong.



Advice Alcove

– *The place you come to learn how to learn*

师傅领进门，修行在个人

shīfu lǐngìn mén, xiūxíng zài gèrén

“The teacher opens the door, but you must enter on your own.”

Chinese proverb

Although memorizing is out of fashion when it comes to learning languages, do not underestimate the importance of doing just that when learning a non-Latin based language. Memorizing means knowing the material “like the back of your hand,” not just being able to recall with some thought. When learning a Latin-based language, it is easier for us to learn through context and educated guessing. Non-Latin based languages, you have got to start from scratch. This means initially putting some of these new and strange sounds to memory. Here are some ideas on how to do it:

1st: Make Flashcards — Buy index cards, or even fold and tear regular printer paper (8 pieces per sheet). Write the English word or sentence on one side and the Chinese on the other.

2nd: Memorize until “the cows come home” — This means when you hold up a flashcard and cannot produce the word or sentence, either in Chinese or English, within one second, it should go into the “NOT KNOW” pile. You should be able to do this both ways: English to Chinese, and Chinese to English. If it takes you longer than one second, you don't have the speed for regular conversation.

Chit-Chat CHINESE

1

3rd: Consistently memorize — Put aside 15 minutes or more every day to simply memorize your vocabulary and sentences.

Chinese will sound strange to you at first. Memorization helps you get past this “alien” feeling. Later on, you will not need to memorize as much; you will have the basic sounds and tools to incorporate new words and phrases without rote memorization.

English Translation

Module 1.1

Lili:	Are you American?
Bob:	Yes. Are you Chinese?
Lili:	Yes. Are you a teacher?
Bob:	No. I am a student. Are you a teacher?
Lili:	Yes. I am a teacher.
Bob:	Are you a Chinese teacher?
Lili:	No. I am an English teacher.
Bob:	You understand English!
Lili:	Yes, I understand English. Do you understand Chinese?
Bob:	Yes, I understand.

Module 1.2

Jen:	Are you Chinese?
Xiaomei:	Yes. Wow, your Chinese is very good!
Jen:	Not so. My Chinese is not good.
Xiaomei:	Are you a student of Chinese?
Jen:	Yes. Are you a teacher?
Xiaomei:	No.
<i>(time lapse)</i>	
Jen:	Goodbye.
Xiaomei:	Goodbye.

Module 1.3

Peter:	How are you?
Wang Bo:	I am very good. Thank you. And you?
Peter:	I am very good. Thank you.
Wang Bo:	What is your name?
Peter:	My name is Peter. And you?
Wang Bo:	My name is Wang Bo. Your Chinese is very good!
Peter:	Not so, not so. Your English is very good.
Wang Bo:	My English is not good.
<i>(time lapse)</i>	
Peter:	Goodbye.
Wang Bo:	Goodbye.



NOTE