
BEGINNING CHINESE

Second Revised Edition

JOHN DeFRANCIS



初級漢語課本

Chūjī Hànyǔ Kèběn

This second revised edition preserves the popular features of the first revision while adding new material aimed at updating the text and drawing attention to variants in linguistic usage.

In *pīnyīn* romanization, the text is an introduction to spoken Mandarin, the most widely used Chinese dialect. Based on a vocabulary of some 600 items, the lessons include pronunciation drills, dialogues, sentence-building exercises, pattern drills, substitution tables, and a variety of games and other learning aids. There are also special memorization exercises and a combined glossary-index.

A special feature of this edition is a series of Supplementary Lessons drawing attention to recent language changes in the People's Republic of China and contrasting variant usages in the various situations Western students are likely to encounter.

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Beginning Chinese, *Second revised edition*

Character Text for Beginning Chinese, *Second edition*

Beginning Chinese Reader (Parts I and II), *Second edition*

Intermediate Chinese

Character Text for Intermediate Chinese

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Advanced Chinese

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Annotated Quotations from Chairman Mao

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CHINESE

by John DeFrancis

with the assistance of

Yung Teng Chia-yee

SECOND REVISED EDITION

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TO KAY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the first edition of this book I was happy to acknowledge my indebtedness for the help and guidance of two men, Leonard Bloomfield and George A. Kennedy. Although both of these scholars are now no longer living, their influence persists, and I should like to record my continued indebtedness to them both in this revised edition.

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J. De F.

Madison, Connecticut
March 1963

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John DeFrancis

Honolulu, Hawaii
January 1976

PREFACE TO SECOND REVISED EDITION

The old saying "When in Rome do as the Romans do," which implies adjusting our behavior to whatever is appropriate to a given situation, if not taken too literally can be said to apply to the area of language as well as to other areas of human activity. It suggests that while we may not be able, or may not desire, to conform completely to the speech habits of people we may encounter, we should at the very least be aware that language usage varies. This is true within a single language as well as between different languages. There are different ways of saying (or writing) things—sometimes by different speakers in the same situation, sometimes by the same speaker in different situations.

As native speakers of a language, such as English, we are quite accustomed to attuning our ears and sometimes our tongues to variant forms of expression. Old friends may familiarly greet each other with "Hi!" but people who do not know each other well are likely to use a more formal greeting such as "How do you do?" An Eastern shopper requests a bag for his groceries, a mid-Westerner a sack. An American's "elevator" is an Englishman's "lift." "Sign here" and "Please put your signature here" are only partially identical since it is possible to think of situations where one would be more appropriate than the other. Yesterday's slang is today's oddity; today's will doubtless undergo the same transformation a few years hence. What some view as "America's generous financial contributions" may be denounced by others as "Yankee imperialism's silver bullets." As the last example especially makes clear, such different usages have a significance beyond the words themselves in that they suggest to us something about when and where and by whom a particular form might be used.

The Chinese language, spoken by over 800,000,000 people in the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese communities, is even more varied and unstable than English. In particular, the extensive changes that have taken place in Chinese society since the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949 have sparked changes in the Chinese language itself. While the basic features of the language have remained the same, so that Professor John McCoy is undoubtedly correct in saying that 98% of the language is identical everywhere,* some changes have taken place in the areas of pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and situational settings in which language usage occurs.

This new edition of Beginning Chinese has been prepared to take account of some of these changes. This has been done chiefly by the addition of twenty-four Supplementary Lessons paralleling those in the original text. In addition, some errors in the original text have been corrected and some improvements have been made in it without disturbing the basic content or approach, since these remain valid and continue to receive wide approval from students and teachers of Chinese.**

*Paper presented at annual meeting of Chinese Language Teachers Association on November 29, 1975.

**Among the improvements is the use of the enumerative comma. (See Beginning Chinese Reader, p. 13).

In the area of pronunciation, the attempt to promote Pǔtōnghuà 'Common Speech' in the People's Republic is leading toward lesser use of the r-ending typical of the Peking dialect. However, Common Speech is a hybrid norm, and Peking pronunciation remains quite acceptable as one variant of modern standard Chinese. Therefore in the original text I have retained the r-ending while showing its optional nature by enclosing it in parentheses in the vocabulary, as in the case of diànyǐng(r) 'movie,' but in the Supplementary Lessons I have emphasized non-r forms. This actually involves only four words out of 600-odd items in the text.

In the area of vocabulary, some ten items in the original text have been displaced by new usages in the People's Republic. A similar number are in competition with new usages and it is not yet clear which will eventually win out (or whether both will continue indefinitely to be used together). All of these changes are discussed in the Notes of the Supplementary Lessons and are drilled in the accompanying Exercises.

In the area of grammatical constructions, it so happens that none of the usages in the original text has been displaced by new structures.

In the area of situational changes, these also are noted and drilled in the Supplementary Lessons. They include such items as the new social relations and their effect on forms of address (Lesson 1), the merging of theory and practice as reflected in the new term for "to study" (Lesson 8), and the elimination of tipping (Lesson 21). In general there has been a decrease in stereotyped forms of politeness. In some cases, however, older forms have simply been replaced by other equivalents. In other cases the actual situation is confused by the tendency, especially marked in some PRC language-teaching materials, to reflect not actual usage but what the government aspires to have as ordinary usage. For example, the official attempts to broaden the use of the polite pronoun nín 'you' and to get people to call each other "Comrade" instead of using titles of rank or position are by no means universally accepted.

The new usages can be most clearly understood and most efficiently learned if they are contrasted with the older usages, especially since these "older" usages are still very much alive among Chinese outside the mainland of China and will be found in written materials that are still widely read. Students in the United States, and even in countries like France, which have had longer and closer contacts with the People's Republic, will have more occasion to speak to Chinese outside of China than in it. Most of these Chinese will be accustomed to the earlier uses of language. Hence students need to learn both the People's Republic and non-People's Republic forms and to use whichever is appropriate in the situations in which they find themselves. For example, students should not offer a tip to a waiter in the People's Republic of China, but they should not fail to do so to one in Taiwan or outside China. They may ask about someone's àirén 'lover' in the People's Republic but run the risk of getting their faces slapped if they use it in a conversation outside the mainland of China. Moreover, while students can limit what they say, they cannot limit what other speakers will say to them, or what they may encounter in reading, so they must acquire at least a passive command of variant forms of expression.

In order to cope with the present reality in which there are variant forms of Chinese all of which are valid and worth learning and yet are more or less distinctive, the new material has been placed in Supplementary Lessons so that teachers and students can choose whether to emphasize one or the other. Some things may be learned actively, others passively. As an aid to active

mastery the new material in the Supplementary Lessons has for the most part been presented in the form of short dialogues or narratives that can be memorized.

A further reason for adopting the procedure noted here of leaving the original lessons basically intact and adding new material relevant to the People's Republic as Supplementary Lessons is in order to make the companion volume Character Text for Beginning Chinese even more useful as a reading text. Although not primarily designed for this purpose, the character version has been widely used as reading text by those who, with good pedagogical reasons, believe that it is useful to study in written form what one has already learned in spoken form. I believe strongly that foreign students must acquire a mastery of both regular and simplified characters, and that this is most efficiently accomplished by learning the regular first and the simplified second. Therefore in Character Text for Beginning Chinese the original content is presented, appropriately, in regular characters and the new material is presented, also appropriately, in simplified characters.*

One of the primary aims of these revisions is to impress on students that Chinese, like English and all other languages, uses different forms of expressions in different situations. Students must be prepared to encounter these varieties of linguistic usage, perhaps even among their own teachers, and must attempt to sharpen their command of the language by noting the sociolinguistic significance of these variations. Only thus can students progress from mechanical mastery of linguistic forms to a sensitive awareness of Chinese culture as embodied in its language.**

*This procedure has also been adopted in my Beginning Chinese Reader, a text specifically planned to accompany Beginning Chinese as a basic reading text. In the revision of this text the original division between regular and simplified characters has been preserved, but the material in simplified characters has been revised to bring the content more in line with usage in the People's Republic.

**For amplification of some of the remarks made in this Introduction see my "Sociolinguistic Aspects of Chinese Language Teaching Materials," Journal of Chinese Linguistics 3.2/3 (May-September 1975).

INTRODUCTION

TO THE READER

The study of a language generally requires the cooperative effort of at least three people: the textbook writer, the teacher, and the student. In my capacity as the first of these three I should like to address a few remarks to you, whether teacher or student, in the hope that they will help toward a more efficient utilization of this book.

My aim in writing this Chinese textbook has been to provide material that can be used at both the high-school and college levels. Its suitability will be apparent if we compare and contrast the needs of students at both levels.

One major point of similarity is that all students, of whatever age and whatever objective (whether a speaking or a reading knowledge), should start with spoken Chinese. Hence this book is primarily oriented toward helping you speak the language.

A second point of similarity is that high-school and college students have—in somewhat varying degrees, to be sure—the ability to absorb a systematic program of language study, as against the more informal approach of elementary grades with their emphasis on songs, stories, and limited subjects of conversation. In line with this, I have provided fairly extensive notes and explanations of the material. Nor have I hesitated to use a few technical terms. Actually these terms are minimal, amounting to far less than the technical terminology found in an introductory ninth-grade algebra text. In any case, technical expressions and explanations should not occupy too much of the teacher's and student's time. If a note or explanation is too hard to understand, ignore it. Don't waste time talking about Chinese when you should be talking Chinese. Much more important than the notes and explanations are the extensive drills concentrating on specific points of pronunciation or grammar. Provision of these drills reflects my confidence in the ability of high-school and college students alike to benefit from such structured material.

It may be true, however, that high-school students need more drill and review than older students. I have written the book with this requirement in mind. Units I-IV each consist of six lessons. The first five lessons of each unit introduce new material. Within each lesson, the new material should be studied first in the Sentence Build-Ups, various Pattern Drills, and Substitution Tables and then, in effect, reviewed at the end by means of the dialogues and various other exercises. The sixth and final lesson in each unit is a thoroughgoing review which introduces nothing new. Still further drill is provided in the tape recordings which accompany the text.

Extensive though this material is, it is not excessive. It is hard to conceive of too much drill material for students at any level. Extensive practice is the only road to fluency in a language; and after all, it is fluency—not agonizing translation à la Latin as traditionally taught—which should be the objective in studying a living language.

It is important to note that the relatively great size of this book is not due to any large amount of material. As a matter of fact, the vocabulary entries total less than 600, a comparatively small figure, and the structural patterns are by no means exhaustive. It is repetition and review which account for the bulk. With regard to the amount of material presented, it is a sobering thought

that the Dialogues, which constitute the heart of the material and the basis for the extended drills in each lesson, represent less than one hour of actual speech, and that the entire Chinese contents of the book can be spoken by a native Chinese in just a few hours.

A major difference between college and high-school students is the fact that more is usually expected of the former than of the latter. Partly this is a matter of curricular programming which permits greater concentration on fewer subjects. Partly it is a matter of relative maturity. It is doubtful, however, whether there is any substantial difference in language ability on the part of the two groups, and if there is, it may well lie with those in the younger age bracket. Nevertheless, it is probably true that the two groups cannot proceed at the same pace. In view of this, I have attempted to make the book as flexible as possible so that it can be adapted to programs varying from two or three hours a week to intensive full-time courses. Some college programs may be able to complete all the material in a semester of intensive study, some semi-intensive high-school classes may be able to cover it all in one year, and others may be able to cover between eighteen and twenty-four lessons. The latter would probably be normal for high-school classes which have available no more than the usual four clock hours or less of classroom time per week. In any case, the emphasis, particularly at the beginning, should be on quality rather than quantity. Better to study a little well than a lot badly.

Another possible difference between high-school and college students is that the latter can more easily put up with material presented in a dull and humorless manner. Although there is much unavoidable drudgery in repetitive drills, a language text doesn't have to be dull, and I have attempted to enliven this one a bit by throwing in an occasional game, illustration, or other type of material that would be entertaining as well as instructive. College students who feel above this sort of thing can simply ignore it.

Partly as entertainment, partly with a serious end in view, I have provided two lessons introducing Chinese characters. These lessons can be studied either after completion of the rest of the material, or simultaneously with the first lesson. In the latter case, study of the characters should not distract us from the primary objective of mastering the speech sounds of Chinese. At this stage of our study, characters should be taken as a dessert, perhaps as an appetizer, but certainly not as the main course. At a later stage, the separate volume entitled Character Text for Beginning Chinese—though designed primarily as an aid for native Chinese teachers—can also be used for further character study.

The kind of spoken Chinese which we are studying here is the Peking dialect. This bears about the same relationship to other kinds of Chinese as Parisian French has to other varieties of French. It is understood by more people than any other language in the world. Apart from introducing you to the largest speech community, it also opens the gate to the largest continuous civilization the world has ever seen.

Chinese is thus an important as well as a fascinating language. But it is not an easy one for speakers of English. In this book, I have not glossed over the difficulties but have attempted to meet them head on. By so doing I hope to have done my part in easing the task of the teacher in presenting the Chinese language and that of the student in mastering it.

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Man spoke long before he wrote. Writing was invented only after hundreds of thousands of years in which the sole means of communication, other than gestures, was speech; only over the past few thousand years have various systems of writing, ranging from pictographic to alphabetic, been devised. It is well to remember that even today only about half of the world's 4,000 or so languages have been reduced to writing.

The early creators of writing systems were, of course, not trained in the science of language. We cannot therefore assume that the systems they created accurately represented the languages they spoke. Furthermore, in the later evolution of these languages, what with shifts in pronunciation and other changes, the writing systems became even less reliable as indicators of the spoken word.

Changes have taken place in even so short a period as three hundred odd years in English, as is obvious to any reader of Shakespeare's plays. That English writing does a poor job of representing the sounds of the language is also well known, and is caricatured by such jokes as the one about 'fish' being spelled ghoti: gh as in tough, o as in women, and ti as in nation. It is plain that speech and writing cannot be mechanically equated.

The trouble is that the two things are commonly equated, especially when the term 'language' is loosely used in reference to both. Instead, it is preferable to adopt the practice of reserving 'language' as a term synonymous with 'speech.' This is the practice among linguists—that is, scholars engaged in the scientific study of language, not (as the term is often used) persons who speak a number of languages, more properly termed polyglots.

If we use 'language' to mean only 'speech,' then, we will avoid—or at least use with clearer understanding—such expressions as 'spoken language,' which is redundant, and 'written language,' which is a contradiction in terms. We will also avoid the confusion which results from uncritically using 'language' in reference to both speech and writing. This lack of discrimination leads to muddled ideas about the nature of language, which in turn leads to a confused approach to the teaching and learning of language.

The confusion in connection with Chinese is especially great because the term 'Chinese,' like the term 'language,' is used in more than one meaning. There is a widely held but quite erroneous idea that Chinese speak entirely in words of one syllable, that their language is ambiguous, and that they often have to resort to writing to make themselves understood. The confusion can also be illustrated by the following dialogue:

A: I hear you've begun to study Chinese.

B: Yes.

A: It's a tough language, isn't it?

B: Sure is.

A: What's this Chinese character mean?

B: I don't know.

A: I thought you said you were studying Chinese.

B: I mean I'm learning how to speak Chinese.

Here A uses a catch-all expression 'Chinese' in the meaning of 'Chinese writing' and assumes that to study the Chinese language is to study Chinese writing.

Linguists are unanimously agreed, however, that since language is speech, to study a language is to study the speech of a given community. Even if the ultimate and main objective is to read, this objective is most quickly and most

efficiently reached by starting with speech. Such an approach is all the more necessary in the case of Chinese. The traditional Chinese system of writing has been from the beginning an exceedingly poor device for indicating the sounds of the language. Today the gap between writing and speech is greater in China than in any other country in the world.

In view of all this, it is not desirable to start the study of Chinese with the traditional script. We begin instead by representing Chinese speech with an alphabetic system, called pīnyīn 'spelling,' which is widely used on the mainland of China. This orthography is the basis of education in the first few years of elementary school. It is also used in a variety of ways in dictionaries, journals, and other publications. Our use of the system provides not only a serviceable pedagogical tool but also an introduction to a great deal of material published in China.

It is likely that this orthography will have wider and wider application in the future in view of the current attempt to promote a single national language in China. In this connection it is worth noting that the catch-all term 'Chinese,' which we saw above was ambiguous because it failed to distinguish between speech and writing, also leads to confusion even when the term is applied only to speech. There are in fact many forms of speech in China, often called 'dialects'; and the situation is further confused by the fact that some so-called dialects of Chinese are as far apart as English is from Dutch, or Italian from Spanish.

Of the approximately two-thirds of a billion people who speak Chinese, some three-fourths of them speak Mandarin Chinese and the remainder speak mutually unintelligible forms of Chinese. The non-Mandarin 'dialects,' which include Cantonese, Wu (Shanghai), Hakka, Amoy-Swatow, and Foochow, are spoken by about 150,000,000 people. Mandarin Chinese, spoken by about half a billion people, is not intelligible to the rest of the population unless it has been learned as another language. Mandarin Chinese is subdivided into a number of genuine dialects—that is, mutually intelligible variants. Of these, the most important is the Peking dialect. An approximation of this dialect has for many years been the socially most acceptable form of speech.

The Peking dialect is the basis of what is being promoted in China as the standard national language. It is this dialect which is used here in beginning the study of Chinese.

THE SOUNDS OF CHINESE

1. Syllable Structure

The syllable in Chinese is made up of three parts: an initial, a final, and a tone. For example, in mǎ the m represents the initial, a the final, and ˇ the tone.

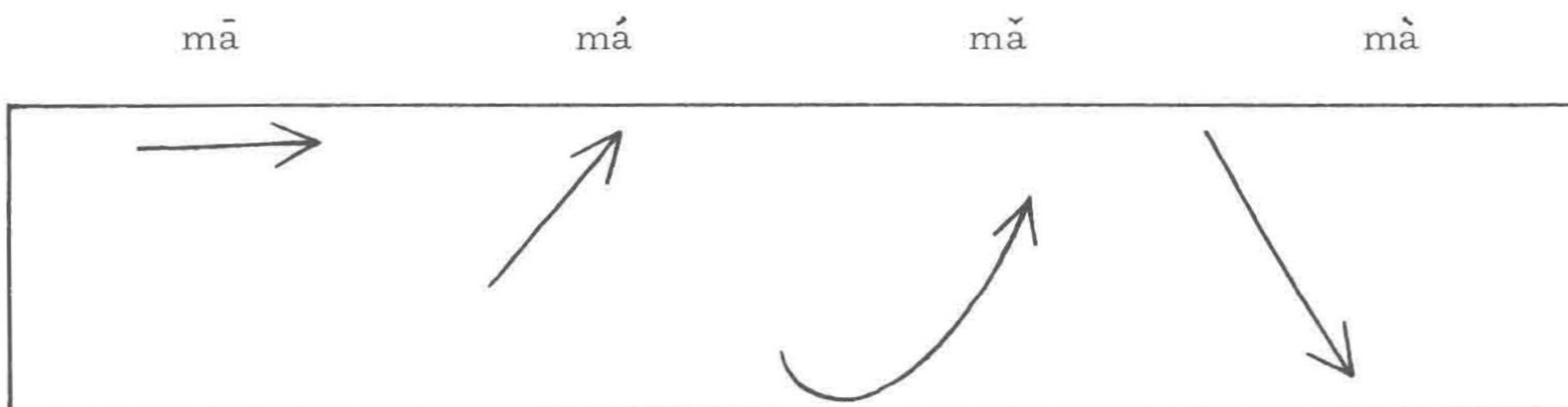
2. Tones

Although tones are a distinctive feature of Chinese, we have something akin to them in English. Thus the word 'yes' can convey many different shades of meaning according to just how it is uttered. Rudy Vallée once presented a radio skit in which he demonstrated a dozen or more ways of saying 'yes.' Varying his intonation, he expressed anger by 'Yes!', inquiry by 'Yes?', doubt

by 'Y-e-s,' and so on, concluding the catalogue with the Sweet Young Thing's 'No.'

What makes Chinese tones unlike the expressive intonation of English is that they are an integral part of a syllable and help to distinguish quite different words, in much the same way as the vowels a and u do in English hat and hut. Thus Chinese mā means 'mother,' while mǎ means 'horse.'

There are four basic tones in the Peking dialect. The accompanying Tone Chart demonstrates these, in relation to the range of a speaker's voice.



TONE CHART

The first tone starts near the top of a speaker's voice range and continues on that level until the end. The second tone starts at mid-range and rises rapidly to the top of the range. The third tone starts below mid-range, dips to the lowest pitch, and rises above mid-range. The fourth tone starts near the top of the range and falls very rapidly toward the bottom.

The four tones are represented by the following marks:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. first tone, high level: | mā 'mother' |
| 2. second tone, high rising: | má 'hemp' |
| 3. third tone, low dipping: | mǎ 'horse' |
| 4. fourth tone, high falling: | mà 'scold' |

The tone mark is placed over a vowel letter. If there are three vowels in a syllable, it is written over the middle vowel. If there are two vowels, it is placed over the first, unless this is i or u:

āi, āo, ēi, ōu iā, iē, iū uā, uē, uī, uō

3. Simple Initials

The following are the simple initials:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| b | like the <u>p</u> in <u>spy</u> (not like the <u>b</u> in <u>buy</u> ; see description below) |
| p | as in <u>pie</u> , but with a much stronger aspiration, as described below |
| m | as in <u>might</u> |
| f | as in <u>fight</u> |
| d | like the <u>t</u> in <u>sty</u> (not like the <u>d</u> in <u>die</u>) |
| t | as in <u>tie</u> , but with a much stronger aspiration |
| n | as in <u>night</u> |
| l | as in <u>light</u> |
| g | like the <u>k</u> in <u>sky</u> (not like the <u>g</u> in <u>guy</u>) |
| k | as in <u>kite</u> , but with a much stronger aspiration |
| h | like the <u>ch</u> in German <u>nach</u> —that is, much rougher than English <u>h</u> |

No two languages have the same speech sounds, and one of the first tasks of the language learner is to discover in what ways he must modify the pronunciation patterns of his native language in order to reproduce words in the new

language—perfectly if possible, but in any event enough like the original to be understood. The new speech sounds do not “come naturally”; they must be learned and practiced.

Of the simple initials listed above, for example, six require special attention; they are like English sounds in some respects but different in others. These are the so-called STOP SOUNDS, represented by these pairs of letters:

b	p
d	t
g	k

The Chinese sounds represented by b, d, g differ from the corresponding English sounds (as in bay, day, gay) in this way: they are VOICELESS, which means they are not accompanied by voice sound, or vibration of the vocal cords. (You can hear this vibration as a loud buzzing if you pronounce “zzzzz” while pressing your hands over your ears. Now pronounce “sssss” and notice the absence of buzzing or “voicing”; s is a voiceless sound, while z is VOICED.)

Chinese b, d, g, then, are unlike English b, d, g in that they are voiceless. They are not, however, identical with English p, t, k. When English speakers say p, t, k (often spelled “c”) at the beginning of words, our speech habits force us to pronounce them with a puff of breath (ASPIRATION) after them: you can feel this by holding the back of your hand to your lips while you pronounce pare, tear, care.

After “s” at the beginning of words, however, we pronounce p, t, k without aspiration: test this with your hand to your lips while you say spare, stare, scare. Now try out the contrast more strikingly by pronouncing pare, spare; tear, stare; care, scare. (The louder you speak, the more noticeable the difference.)

We say, then, that Chinese b is like the p sound of spy (unaspirated and voiceless) rather than like the b of buy (also unaspirated; but voiced). Similarly, Chinese d and g resemble the unaspirated, voiceless t and k sounds of sty and sky. Where English has three separate sounds in the b-p range, Chinese has only two, and similarly for d-t and g-k:

	<u>Aspirated</u>	<u>Unaspirated</u>	<u>Voiced</u>
English	<u>p</u> as in <u>pie</u>	<u>p</u> as in <u>spy</u>	<u>b</u> as in <u>buy</u>
Chinese	<u>p</u> as in <u>pie</u> (represented by <u>p</u>)	<u>p</u> as in <u>spy</u> (represented by <u>b</u>)	[no equivalent]
English	<u>t</u> as in <u>tie</u>	<u>t</u> as in <u>sty</u>	<u>d</u> as in <u>die</u>
Chinese	<u>t</u> as in <u>tie</u> (represented by <u>t</u>)	<u>t</u> as in <u>sty</u> (represented by <u>d</u>)	[no equivalent]
English	<u>k</u> as in <u>kite</u>	<u>k</u> as in <u>sky</u>	<u>g</u> as in <u>guy</u>
Chinese	<u>k</u> as in <u>kite</u> (represented by <u>k</u>)	<u>k</u> as in <u>sky</u> (represented by <u>g</u>)	[no equivalent]

The aspirated consonants of Chinese (represented by p, t, k) differ from their English counterparts (as in pie, tie, kite) mainly in that the aspiration is much stronger in Chinese. Hold a lighted match a few inches from your lips while saying pie. If you can make the flame go out, you are saying a good Chinese p sound.

4. Group-a Finals

a	as in <u>father</u>
an	between the <u>an</u> in <u>can</u> and the <u>on</u> in <u>con</u>
ang	<u>a</u> as in <u>father</u> and <u>ng</u> as in <u>sing</u>
ai	as in <u>aisle</u>
ao	like the <u>au</u> 's in <u>sauerkraut</u>