

Jimmy Du's Essential Chinese

Jimmy Du's Essential Chinese:
Jimmy Du's Natural Language Works

By

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**CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

Jimmy Du's Essential Chinese: *Jimmy Du's Natural Language Works*,
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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO JIMMY DU'S ESSENTIAL CHINESE OF JIMMY DU NATURAL LANGUAGE WORKS

This is a specially designed self-teaching course to help you master Mandarin Chinese in the shortest time possible. We promise you will naturally “pick it up” if you just spend a little time following this course while relaxing at home, taking a walk, commuting to work or travelling. You don’t have to sit in a classroom, consult the dictionary, study grammar or do any written exercises. This least-effort principle is based on the understanding that we human beings all have an innate aptitude for picking up any human language, native or foreign. All you have to do is keep learning what you can immediately understand, imitate, and put to use. The least effort means the highest efficiency. For this reason, we have provided easy-to-understand explanations and translations of everything in the text. The text contents are arranged in a natural order beginning from the most essential words, phrases and short sentences, all carefully selected so that they will not only serve as a basis for you to expand your vocabulary, but also help you learn the nature of Chinese language and how it works. On this solid foundation, you will find no difficulty in developing your comprehension of more complicated structures and, ultimately, your fluency.

OK! Let’s begin!

Preparation: Chinese Pinyin Spelling and Pronunciation

Standard Mandarin Chinese is also called Putonghua, which means “common speech”. As you come to learn it, you actually may not encounter as much difficulty as you expected because the letters used in Chinese Pinyin for spelling words are the same as those used in English, with only one exception: the letter “ü”. This “ü” is written as the letter “u” but with two dots on the top as in German. In computer input with

Pinyin software the key used for it is “v”, a letter which by coincidence is not used in Chinese Pinyin spelling.

Chinese Pinyin letters have two categories, the initials and finals. The initials are the same as the English consonant letters, and the finals use the English vowel letters. The two are usually combined to spell a word. This means that Chinese is basically an open-syllable language in which words will end with a vowel sound, as in Italian or Japanese.

There are only three exceptions to this general rule. They are the nasal sound letters n and ng and the retroflex sound r. Since many Pinyin letters are pronounced very much like those in English, we only have to make a few notes on those exceptions that are essentially different.

Let's first go through the six basic finals.

Letter a, a – a

Letter o, o – o

Letter e, e – e

Letter i, i-- i

Letter u, u– u

Letter u with two dots on the top, ü –ü

Now we can try some examples of Pinyin by combining each of them with an initial letter. Let's pick out letter o and letter e for example.

b, o, bo

p, o, po

m, o, mo

f, o, fo

d, e, de

t, e, te

n, e, ne

l, e, le

g, e, ge

k, e, ke

h, e, he

We can see that these initial letters have the same pronunciation as the English consonant letters. However, since Chinese is an open-syllable language, they will end with the additional vowel sound of o or e even if they stand alone just as Pinyin letter names.

Ok. Now let's come to some initials that are somewhat different from their English counterpart letters.

Letter z, z – z. *It is pronounced as “ds” as in the English “beds” or “words”.*

Letter c, c –c. *It is pronounced as “ts” as in “its” or “let’s”.*

Letter s, s –s. *It has the same pronunciation as in English, just as in “speak” or “say”.*

Listen and repeat. And pay attention to the ending of these letters as open syllables.

z, z – z.

c, c –c.

s, s –s.

Letter j, j – j. *It is pronounced somewhat like the English “g” in “Jesus” or “jeep”*

Letter q, q. *It is pronounced somewhat like the English beginning consonant in “cheese” or “cheap”.*

Letter x, x. *It is pronounced similar to the beginning consonant as in the English “sheep”.*

However, what is special in the pronunciation of these three letters—j, q, x-- is that they are actually articulated between the teeth and the tongue tip. Let’s listen again.

Letters j, q, x, j (i), q (i), x (i)

Now let’s learn to pronounce the letter r in Pinyin, r--r. It has two different pronunciations. As a Pinyin initial it is pronounced as in “pleasure” or “measure”; but when placed at the end of a vowel sound, it is the same with the American English retroflex, as in “worker” or “marker”. This is an exception to the rule that consonants will generally be in the initial position. Now listen and repeat.

Letter r in the initial position, r – r

Letter r in the end position (as an exception to the rule that only vowels are used to end a syllable in Chinese), r – r (er)

Ok. Let’s go on.

Letter w, w – w, pronounced somewhat as in English “woo” or “wool” but with the beginning consonant bearing more friction of the lips.

Letter y, y –y, pronounced similar to that in the English “yeast” in fermentation.

Now we see that these two Pinyin initial letters are pronounced exactly as other two final letters that are counterparts of the English letters u and i. For this reason, when we spell a word in pinyin that has either w or u, or either y or i, both letters will be written.

Ok. Now we have learned the basic single letters, let’s have a review to make sure we remember them. Listen to repeat.

a, a – a
o, o – o
e, e – e
i, i – i
u – u
u with two dots on the top, ü –ü.
z, z – z
c, c –c
s, s –s
j, j – j
q, q – q
x, x – x
b or b-o, bo
p or p-o, po
m or m-o, mo
f or f-o, fo
d or d-e, de
t or t-e, te
n or n-e, ne
l or l -e, le
g or g-e, ge
k or k-e, ke
h or h-e, he
r in the initial position, r – r
r in the end position, r – r
y, or i, or yi, yi –yi
w, or u, or wu, wu– w

Apart from these single letters that may be a little difficult in Pinyin pronunciation, there are also a few combinations that deserve our attention. Let's listen and repeat three such combinations in the initial position.

combination of c and h, ch
combination of s and h, sh
combination of z and h, zh – zh

Of these three the first two are comparable to their English counterparts but in Pinyin they are pronounced with the tongue tip curled up.

ch – ch; sh – sh.

The Pinyin combination of z and h doesn't exist in English. It is somewhat like the consonant sound in the English names "George" and "Joe" but pronounced in Chinese with the tip of tongue drawn back and curled up. Now, let's listen again and repeat.

z and h, zh – zh

c and h, ch – ch

s and h, sh – sh

To some people, these three combinations may be confusing with three single-letter initials that are counterparts of j, q and x in English. Let's compare them.

j and z-h combination: j – j; zhi -zhi

q and c-h combination: q – q; ch --chi

x and s-h combination: x –x; sh –sh

Have you noticed the differences? Yes. When you pronounce the single-letter initials j, q, x, your tongue is kept close to the lower teeth; but when you pronounce the combinations zh, ch and sh (zh, ch, sh), you have your tongue curled up. Let's listen to the three pairs together and repeat.

single finals j, q, and x – j, q, x

combinations z-h, c-h and sh –zh, ch, sh

There is one special rule to note about using the single initial letters j, q, x in spelling. That is, when they are spelt with another final sound, there will always be an extra letter inserted in between. This is the letter i, pronounced as yi in Pinyin. Here are a few examples.

j plus a will be jia - jia

q plus a will be qia -qia

x plus a will be xia -xia

We should note that when the final letter e (counterpart of English e) follows these three initials, its pronunciation is changed and will become somewhat like the English "e" as in "yes" or "check".

j plus e is spelt as jie, pronounced similar to that in the English name "Jeff": jie

q plus e is spelt as qie, pronounced similar to that in the English word “check”: qie

x plus e is spelt as xie, pronounced similar to the first part of the English word “sheer”: xie

However, in pronouncing these three pinyin sounds, you should start with the tip of the tongue more closely pressing the teeth than in English “Jeff, check and sheer”. Listen once more.

jie, qie, xie

All right! So far we have learned almost all the Pinyin sounds that can possibly pose a challenge to foreign learners. Although there are also different final letter combinations, they are nevertheless much easier to imitate because they are generally similar to the English diphthongs and triphthongs.

If you can remember all that we have learned, you can now immediately put them to use as you go on to Lesson 1. If you don’t, you’d better go through it once more.

LESSON 1

你好(NIHAO) AND 再见(ZAIJIAN): THE MUSICAL CHINESE TONES

As we know, Chinese is by nature a tonal language, in which the meaning of any word is not only determined by its pronunciation but also by its tone. In fact, there are many homophones in Chinese --- words with same pronunciations -- and misuse of the tones may cause misunderstanding. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the right tones in spoken Chinese as you learn the pronunciation, just as if you were learning to sing.

Let's now listen to the most common Chinese greetings. As you listen, pay attention to the ups and downs in the tones and try to repeat.

Hello Or How do you do (informal speech) 你好 nǐ³ hao³

Hello Or How do you do (formal speech) 您好 nín² hao³

And when you leave a friend you say --

Good-bye 再见 zai⁴ jian⁴

The musical pattern of 你好 and 您好 is rising up, then dipping down and rising a little again. And the pattern of the tones in 再见 is a repetition of a falling tone.

In Mandarin Chinese, there are four tones that are pitched plus one unstressed. We simply call them the first, second, third, fourth and the light tone. The four pitched tones are marked in writing with their corresponding numbers in superscript. The light tone is just like any unstressed syllable in English. It is either left unmarked or marked by a "zero" in superscript.

Of the four pitched tones, we have now learned three, the second tone in 您, the third tone in 你 and 好, and the fourth tone in each syllable of 再见. Now let's take two words of the remaining first tone.

1. he or she, and him or her 他/她 ta¹.

This pronoun has two different written characters for the masculine and the feminine respectively but does not differ in pronunciation.

2. the interrogative sentence final 吗— 吗 ma¹. It is a function word used at the end of a phrase or sentence to change it into a question.

To speakers of English and other languages that are not tonal, probably the third tone is the most difficult. Let's listen to it in the first person pronoun.

I or me, 我 wo³ —我 wo³

Since the Chinese word for any form of the English link verb BE is 是 (shi⁴), we simply say the following.

I am 我是 wo³ shi⁴ —wo³ shi⁴

You are 你是 ni³ shi⁴ —ni³ shi⁴

He is or she is 他/她是 ta¹ shi⁴ —ta¹ shi⁴

Remember this third person pronoun TA (他/她) has the same pronunciation for both the masculine and the feminine although two different characters are used for the two genders.

In Chinese, sentence subjects are not always necessary. So we can reverse the word order of the above and say the following as complete sentences.

It's me 是我 shi⁴ wo³ —shi⁴ wo³

It's you 是你 shi⁴ ni³ —shi⁴ ni³

It's he or it's her 是他/她 shi⁴ ta¹ —shi⁴ ta¹

To make a negation, we simply say--

Not or no 不 bu⁴ --不 bu⁴

I'm not 我不是 wo³ bu² shi⁴

You are not 你不是 ni³ bu² shi⁴

He is not or she is not 他/她不是 ta¹ bu² shi⁴

*It should be noted that in the phrase 不是 **bu² shi⁴**), the original fourth tone of the negation word 不 is changed into the second tone, simply for the sake of natural and easy articulation. If this negation word is used independently, the original fourth-tone should be kept. So let's listen again—*

No. It's not me 不, 不是我 **bu⁴, bu² shi⁴ wo³—bu² shi⁴ wo³**

No. It's not you 不, 不是你 **bu⁴, bu² shi⁴ ni³—bu², shi⁴ ni³**

No. It's not him or it's not her 不, 不是他/她 **bu⁴, bu² shi⁴ ta¹—bu⁴, bu² shi⁴ ta¹**

In fact, the function of Chinese 是 is not exactly the same with the English link verb BE, for it does not only serve as a link between the grammatical subject and predicate of the sentence but is also a word of affirmation itself. As such, it can also mean YES, OK or RIGHT. Let's listen to the following.

Is it or is it right? 是吗? **shi⁴ ma¹**

Yes. 是。 **shi⁴**

Isn't it or isn't it right? 不是吗? **Bu² shi⁴ ma¹**

No. It isn't. 不, 不是。 **Bu⁴, bu² shi⁴**

Are you Mr. Wang? 你是王先生吗? **Ni³ shi⁴ wang² xian¹sheng¹ ma¹**

No. I'm not him. 不, 我不是他。 **Bu⁴, wo³ bu² shi⁴ ta¹**

I'm not Mr. Wang. 我不是王先生。 **Wo³ bu²shi Wang² xian¹sheng¹**

I am; he is not. 我是, 他不是。 **Wo³ shi⁴. Ta¹ bu² shi⁴.**

He is; I'm not. 他是, 我不是。 **Ta¹ shi⁴, wo³ bu² shi⁴.**

It is me, not him. 是我, 不是他。 **Shi⁴ wo³, bu² shi⁴ ta¹.**

It is he, not I. 是他, 不是我。 **Shi⁴ ta¹, bu² shi⁴ wo³.**

Ok! We know that the Chinese tones are generally fixed, one tone for each syllable—that is to say, for each single character. However, there are occasional changes because tones may influence one another in the natural flow of speech. For instance, in a word or phrase of two third tones, the first will be changed into the second tone if you speak naturally fast. Now, listen to the simple Chinese greeting again and see this for yourself. It is read twice, first separately and then as connected speech.

How do you do! 你(ni³), 好(hao³): 你好 ni²hao³

Therefore, although the two words of the 2nd person pronouns 你 and 您 differ in tones, the difference no longer exists when they are followed by the 3rd tone word 好. Let's listen.

Formal greeting: How do you do! 您好! nin²hao³

Casual greeting: How do you do! 你好 ni²hao³

Let's listen to some two-character combinations that repeat the third tone. They are read twice, first separately and then in combination.

very good, very well 很 hen³, 好 hao³ --很好 hen²hao³

I think 我 wo³, 想 xiang³ – 我想 wo²xiang³

you and me 你 ni³, 我 wo³ – 你我 ni²wo³

you think 你 ni³, 想 xiang³ 你想 ni²xiang³

In Chinese, there are many two-character words in which both characters are in the third tone but in actual use the first one is changed to the second. Let's listen and repeat.

where or which place 哪 na³, 里 li³ --哪里 na²li³

may or can 可 ke³, 以 yi³ --可以 ke²yi³

OK! Then what if more than two third tones follow one another? The answer is: it is usually the first character of the more closely related two that is changed. Let's just listen to some examples.

I'm very well, or I'm very good 我很好 wo³ hen² hao³

I very much want or miss, I really want or miss 我很想 wo³ hen² xiang³

I want to write 我想写。 wo³ xiang² xie³

I miss you 我想你。 wo³ xiang² ni³

I miss you very much 我很想你 wo³ hen² xiang² ni³

For practice, let's now go through all the basic tones as we learn more Chinese words. Please try to repeat without changing the tones.

*The first tone*hear or listen 听 ting¹——听 ting¹speak or say 说 shuo¹——说 shuo¹hear people say, or it is heard 听说 ting¹ shuo¹He or she 他/她 ta¹——他/她 ta¹He or she hear them say, or he or she hear that...他/她听说-- ta¹ ting¹ shuo¹Listen to him or her say, or hear him or her say 听他/她说 ting¹ ta¹ shuo¹*The second tone*you (the polite form) 您 nin²——您 nin²come 来 lai²——来 lai²read 读 du²——读 du²learn 学 xue²——学 xue²You come to read, or you please read 您来读 nin² lai² du²You come to learn, or you please learn 您来学 nin² lai² xue²*The third tone*you 你 ni³——你 ni³I or me 我 wo³——我 wo³good, or well 好 hao³——好 hao³write 写 xie³——写 xie³

Here again we should know that the tone change of the first syllable in two connected third-tone word is natural for easy flow of speech. And so, you don't have to bother about this. All you need to do is speak naturally fast with the least effort.

How do you do 你好 ni² hao³——你好 ni² hao³You and me 你我 ni² wo³——你我 ni² wo³You write 你写 ni² xie³——你写 ni² xie³*The fourth tone*again, or once more 再 zai⁴——再 zai⁴see or meet 见 jian⁴——见 jian⁴good-bye 再见 zai⁴ jian⁴look 看 kan⁴——看 kan⁴

look again 再看 zai⁴kan⁴

see, or look and see 看见 kan⁴jian⁴

As we see, the single-character words 看 and 见 respectively mean “look” and “see”. And when they are used together as a two-character word, the meaning is “see”.

All right! Now we have learned the four basic tones, all we need to do is to practice them as we go on to the next lesson.

LESSON 2

听听说说 LISTENING AND SPEAKING: THE MUSICAL CHINESE TONES (2)

In this lesson, we will continue to consolidate our foundation in using all possible musical patterns of Chinese; we'll learn two other things that make the Chinese language even more musical, that is, the use of word repetition and the light tone.

When the same word is repeated, there is usually some additional nuance of meaning, depending on the function of the word. For example, if a verb is repeated, the additional meaning is to keep doing it for a while or give it a try. Let's listen and repeat.

1st tone repetition

listen for a while or give it a try 听听 ting¹ ting¹

speak for a while or give it a try 说说 shuo¹ shuo¹

listen and speak for a while 听听说说 ting¹ ting shuo¹ shuo¹

2nd tone repetition

read for a while or give it a try 读读 du² du²

learn for a while 学学 xue² xue²

read and learn for a while 读读、学学 du²du², xue²xue²

3rd tone repetition, with the first syllable naturally changed to the 2nd tone.

think for a while 想想 xiang² xiang³

write for a while 写写 xie² xie³

think and write for a while 想想写写 xiang² xiang³ xie² xie³

4th tone repetition

take a look. 看看。 kan⁴ kan⁴

go and have a look 去看看 qu⁴ kan⁴ kan⁴

go and have a look again 再去看看 zai⁴ qu⁴ kan⁴ kan⁴

In the above repetitions, the Chinese word for “one” – “一”(yī) could be put in the middle without changing the meaning. So you could also say—

listen for a while or just for a try. 听一听。tīng¹ yī⁴ tīng¹
 read for a while or just for a try. 读一读。dú² yī⁴ dú²
 think for a while or just for a try. 想一想。xiǎng³ yī⁴ xiǎng³
 take a look. 看一看。kàn⁴ yī² kàn⁴

All right. Let's do more practice.

You (polite form) come and learn for a short while or give it a try
 您来学学 nín² lái² xué² xué²

You (polite form) read 您读 nín² dú²

You (polite form) come and read or you are to read 您来读 nín² lái² dú²

Goodbye, literally again see 再见 zài⁴ jiàn⁴

Look and see, or simply see 看见 kàn⁴ jiàn⁴

Look again, literally again look 再看 zài⁴ kàn⁴

Since tones may influence one another in connected speech or occasionally change for special emphasis, the first-tone word “一”(yī) inserted in the verb repetitions are sometimes changed according to the tone of the repeated word. But you don't have to worry about this, because you will tend to get the right tone if you just make the least effort when speaking. So let's listen again. And as you listen and repeat, pay attention to the tone changes of the word 一(yī).

listen for a while or just for a try. 听一听。tīng¹ yī⁴ tīng¹
 read for a while or just for a try. 读一读。dú² yī⁴ dú²
 think for a while or just for a try. 想一想。xiǎng³ yī⁴ xiǎng³
 take a look. 看一看。kàn⁴ yī² kàn⁴

Besides these action verbs, the third-tone 好 which we have learned in the greeting “你好” may be repeated as well, and the repetition means “seriously” or “well”. It actually has two different tone patterns, determined by whether it is used in formal speech or informal speech. So, let's listen and repeat.

listen seriously and well (formal) 好好听 hao² hao³ ting¹
 listen seriously and well (informal) 好好(儿)听 hao³ hao³ r² ting¹
 speak seriously and well (formal) 好好说 hao² hao³ shuo¹
 speak seriously and well (informal) 好好(儿)说 hao³ hao² r² shuo¹
 read seriously and well (formal) 好好读 hao² hao³ du²
 read seriously and well (informal) 好好(儿)读 hao³ hao² r² du²

Ok! Now after learning so much of repetitions of single-character or single-syllable words, we should know that the two-character words can also be repeated. Here are a few examples.

learn or study 学习 xue²xi²
 learn or study for a while 学习学习 xue²xi² xue²xi²
 consider or think 考虑 kao³lv⁴
 take time to consider or think for a while 考虑考虑 kao³lv⁴ kao³lv⁴
 take a rest 休息 xiu¹xi
 take some rest or rest for a while! 休息休息! xiu¹xi xiu¹xi
 take a real good rest! 好好休息休息! hao²hao³ xiu¹xi xiu¹xi

In the above words, the second character is a synonym or complementary to the first in meaning, so the whole two-character words are repeated as a whole, with the second pronounced in the light tone or the original tone, depending on whether it is formal or informal. If the relation between the two single characters is coordinating or contrasting, then each character is repeated separately and the original tones are kept unchanged. For example –

listen and read 听读 ting¹ du²
 listen and read for a while 听听读读 ting¹ ting¹ du² du²
 read and write 读写 du² xie³
 read and write for a while 读读写写 du² du² xie² xie³
 eat and drink 吃喝 chi¹ he¹
 keep eating and drinking, indulge in food and comfort 吃吃喝喝 chi¹ chi¹ he¹ he¹
 talk and laugh, make jokes and be merry 说笑 shuo¹ xiao⁴
 enjoy talking with friends and be happy 说说笑笑 shuo¹ shuo¹ xiao⁴ xiao⁴
 play and be merry 玩乐 wan² le⁴

enjoy pleasures 玩玩乐乐 wan² wan² le⁴ le⁴
 pretty, nice or beautiful 漂亮 piao⁴ liang⁴
 very pretty, nice or beautiful 漂漂亮亮 piao⁴ piao⁴ liang⁴ liang⁴
 serious or seriously 认真 ren⁴ zhen¹
 very seriously 认认真真 ren⁴ ren⁴ zhen¹ zhen¹

All right! From the above we see how repetitions contribute to the musicality of the Chinese language. In fact, not only verbs can be repeated, but also nouns, adjectives and adverbs. However, when words of different parts of speech are repeated, the change of meaning is also different.

Let's first learn repetitions of some nouns that are related with time.

day (informal) 天 tian¹

day by day, every day (informal) 天天 tian¹ tian¹

day (formal) 日 ri⁴

day by day, every day (formal) 日日 ri⁴ ri⁴

night (formal) 夜 ye⁴

night by night, every night 夜夜 ye⁴ ye⁴

all days and nights, all time 日日夜夜 ri⁴ ri⁴ ye⁴ ye⁴

time, hour 时 shi²

time and again, now and then 时时 shi² shi²

a quarter of an hour 刻 ke⁴ ke⁴

every quarter of an hour 刻刻 ke⁴ ke⁴

every now and then, often, 时时刻刻 shi² shi² ke⁴ ke⁴

month 月 yue⁴

every month 月月 yue⁴ yue⁴

year 年 nian²

every year 年年 nian² nian²

each year and each month, all time 年年月月 nian² nian² yue⁴ yue⁴

Ok! These are repetitions of time words. The following are some words related with people.

person, man 人 ren²

each person, everybody 人人 ren² ren²

family, home or house 家 jia¹

every family, all families 家家 jia¹ jia¹

male and female 男女 nan² nv³

all males and females, all the people 男男女女 nan² nan² nv³ nv³

mountain and water, the landscape 山水 shan¹ shui³

all mountains and waters 山山水水 shan¹ shan¹ shui³ shui³

street and alley 街巷 jie¹ xiang⁴

all streets and alleys, the whole town 街街巷巷 jie¹ jie¹ xiang⁴ xiang⁴

Next, let's see some repetitions of words that can be used as adjectives and adverbs.

big, large 大 da⁴

quite big, considerably large 大大的 da⁴ da⁴ de

small, 小 xiao⁴

quite small 小小的 xiao² xiao³ de

of big and small, of various sizes 大大小小的 da⁴ da⁴ xiao² xiao³ de

long 长 chang²

quite long 长长的 chang² chang² de

short 短 duan²

quite short 短短的 duan² duan³ de

long and short, of various lengths 长短长短的 chang² chang² duan² duan³ de

tall, high 高 gao¹

low, short 低 di¹

of various heights 高高低低 gao¹ gao¹ di¹ di¹

red 红 hong²

quite red, fairly red 红红的 hong² hong² de

green 绿 lv⁴

quite green, fairly green 绿绿的 lv⁴ lv⁴ de

of various colors, colorful 红红绿绿 hong² hong² lv⁴ lv⁴ de

blue 蓝 lan²

quite blue, fairly blue 蓝蓝的 lan² lan² de

yellow or brown 黄 huang²

quite yellow or brown 黄黄的 huang² huang² de

often 常 chang²

quite often, very frequently 常常 chang² chang²

fast, quick 快 kuai⁴

quite fast, fairly quick 快快 kuai⁴ kuai⁴

quite slow, taking one's time (in doing something) 慢慢 man⁴ man⁴

now quick, now slow; at different speed 快快慢慢 kuai⁴ kuai⁴ man⁴ man⁴

clear, easy to see or understand 清楚 qing¹ chu³

very clear and easy to see or understand 清清楚楚 qing¹ qing¹ chu² chu³

clean 干净 gan¹ jing⁴

very clean 干干净净 gan¹ gan¹ jing⁴ jing⁴

orderly, in good order 整齐 zheng³ qi²

in very good order 整整齐齐 zheng² zheng³ qi² qi²

Very good! We have now learned many words as well as their repletion's. You can practice a few times to get used to the interesting play of Chinese tones in actual use. However, we should know that not every word in Chinese can be repeated, and so it is still necessary to learn from native speakers what words actually can be.

LESSON 3

我们，你们，他们：

PERSONAL PRONOUNS AND THE LIGHT TONE

In this lesson, we will learn more about the musicality of Mandarin language song through the use of the light tone and word repetition. The light tone is also called the neutral tone. It is easier to learn than other pitched tones simply because it is just like any unstressed syllable in English. Characters using the light tone are usually those that serve the function of word suffixes or particles that only have a complementary meaning. Let's first take the plural suffix of personal pronouns for example.

the plural suffix of personal pronouns 们 men²

As we hear, this character is pronounced in the second tone ---that is, the rising tone. However, it is often changed into the unstressed light tone in natural speech if the plurality is not emphasized. Let's listen.

I or me 我 wo³

we or us 我们 wo³ men²—我们 wo³men

you (singular) 你 ni³

you (plural) 你们 ni³men²—你们 ni³men

he or she 他/她 ta¹

they or them 他们 ta¹men²—他们 ta¹men

When the plural meaning is especially emphasized in contrast to the singular, the original second tone of 们(men²) is kept unchanged. For example——

It's me, not us. 是我，不是我们 shi⁴ wo³, bu² shi⁴ wo³men²

It's you in singular, not you in plural. 是你，不是你们 shi⁴ ni³, bu² shi⁴ ni³men²

In Chinese, this suffix can also be added to a noun referring to people. Please listen and repeat.

person or man 人 ren²
people 人们 ren²men
male, man 男人 nan²ren
men 男人们 nan²renmen
female, woman 女人 nv³ren²
women 女人们 nv³ren²men
friend 朋友 peng² you
friends 朋友们 peng²youmen
child 孩子 hai²zi
children 孩子们 hai²zimen

As we hear, the light tone is actually not only used in the plural suffix 们 in the above, but also in the second syllable of the two-character or two-syllable words. This often happens when the second character is only a synonym of the first or is only complementary in meaning.

So let's listen again.

people 人们 ren²men
male, man 男人 nan²ren
men 男人们 nan²renmen
female, woman 女人 nv³ren²
women 女人们 nv³ren²men
friend 朋友 peng² you
friends 朋友们 peng² you³men
child 孩子 hai²zi
children 孩子们 hai²zimen

The single character word 子(zi) which is originally pronounced in the third tone is also changed to the light tone since it's used as a suffix. For example ---

son 儿子 er²zi
grandson 孙子 sun¹zi
wife 妻子 qi¹zi

Now let's change them into the plural by adding the personal plural marker 们 men

sons 儿子们 er²zimen
 孙子们 sun¹zimen
 妻子们 qi¹zimen
 children 孩子们 hai²zimen

Apart from the suffixes, the repetition of the same noun words is also changed into the light tone because the repetition adds no meaning. Let's listen and repeat.

dad 爸爸 ba⁴ba
 mom 妈妈 ma¹ma
 elder sister 姐姐 jie³jie
 younger sister 妹妹 mei⁴mei
 elder brother 哥哥 ge¹ge
 younger brother 弟弟 di⁴di
 grandpa 爷爷 ye²ye
 granny 奶奶 nai³nai
 uncle on mother's side 舅舅 jiu⁴jiu
 younger uncle on father's side 叔叔 shu¹shu
 elder uncle on father's side 伯伯 bo²bo
 aunt on father's side 姑姑 gu¹gu

Ok. Now let's learn another frequently used light-tone word, the possessive marker and nominalizer.

my or mine 我的 wo³de
 my father 我的爸爸 wo³de ba⁴ba
 my wife 我的妻子 wo³de qi¹zi
 your or yours (singular) 你的 ni³de——
 your mother 你的妈妈 ni³de ma¹ma
 yours or your (plural) 你们的 ni³men²de
 yours or your (plural) grandpa 你们的爷爷 ni³men²de ye²ye
 his or her or hers 他/她的 ta¹de——
 his elder sister 他的姐姐 ta¹de jie³jie
 his, her or hers 他/她的 ta¹de ——

her elder brother 他/她的哥哥 ta¹ de ge¹ge
 their children 他们的孩子 ta¹men de hai²zi
 our or ours 我们的 wo³men²de
 our friends 我们的朋友 wo³men de peng²you
 the children's 孩子们的 hai²zimen de
 the children's uncle on mother's side 孩子们的舅舅 hai²zimen de
 jiu⁴jiu

Now let's practice the musical Chinese tones with more easy phrases using 的 (de)

his father's 他的爸爸的 ta¹ de ba⁴ba de
 his mother's 他的妈妈的 ta¹ de ma¹ma de
 my grandpa's or of my grandpa's 我的爷爷的 wo³ de ye²ye de
 my elder sister's or of my elder sister 我的姐姐的 wo³ de jie³ji de
 my elder brother's 我的哥哥的 wo³ de ge¹ge de
 my younger brother's 我的弟弟的 wo³ de di⁴di de
 your elder sister's 你的姐姐的 ni³ de jie³jie de
 your younger sister's 你的妹妹的 ni³ de mei⁴mei de
 your sister's 你的姐妹的 ni³ de jie³mei⁴ de
 her boyfriend's 她的男朋友的 ta¹ de nan²peng²you³ de
 his girlfriend's 他的女朋友的 ta¹ de nv³peng²you³ de
 our company's 我们的公司的 wo³men² de gong¹si¹ de
 your factory's 你们的工厂的 ni³men² de gong¹chang³ de

We should also know that the possessive marker 的(de) is not always necessary. For instance, in all the above phrases the first 的 can be omitted. So let's have a review of them and leave out the first one.

his father's 他爸爸的 ta¹ ba⁴ba de
 his mother's 他妈妈的 ta¹ ma¹ma de
 my grandpa's or of my grandpa's 我爷爷的 wo³ ye²ye de
 my elder sister's or of my elder sister 我姐姐的 wo³ jie³jie de
 my elder brother's 我哥哥的 wo³ ge¹ge de
 my younger brother's 我弟弟的 wo³ di⁴di de
 your elder sister's 你姐姐的 ni³ jie³jie de
 your younger sister's 你妹妹的 ni³ mei⁴mei de

your sister's 你姐妹的 **ni³ jie³ mei⁴ de**
 her boyfriend's 她男朋友的 **ta¹ nan² peng² you³ de**
 his girlfriend's 他女朋友的 **ta¹ nv³ peng² you³ de**
 our company's 我们公司的 **wo³ men² gong¹ si¹ de**
 your factory's 你们工厂的 **ni³ men² gong¹ chang³ de**

The next thing to learn about the word 的(de) is its function as a nominalizer. This is to say, when it is used after a verb, the verb is changed into a noun phrase.

what is heard, or listened to 听的 **ting¹ de**——
 what is said or spoken 说的 **shuo¹ de**——
 what is being thought about 想的 **xiang³ de**
 what is read 读的 **du² de**——
 what is learned 学的 **xue² de**——
 what or who has come 来的 **lai² de**
 what is written 写的 **xie³ de**——
 what is looked at 看的 **kan⁴ de**
 what is seen or what is met with 见的 **jian⁴ de**
 what is seen 看见的 **kan⁴ jian⁴ de**
 what is done or made 做的 **zuo⁴ de**

Let's do more practice of the tones using a subject word we have learned. Listen and repeat.

what mother says or said 妈妈说的 **ma¹ ma shuo¹ de**
 what grandma listens to or has heard 奶奶听的 **nai³ nai ting¹ de**
 what grandpa thinks or thought. 爷爷想的 **ye² ye xiang³ de**
 what father's younger brother writes or wrote 叔叔写的 **shu¹ shu xie² de**
 what the younger brother learns or learned 弟弟学的 **di⁴ di xue² de**
 what the younger sister reads or has read 妹妹读的 **mei⁴ mei du² de**
 what the elder brother looks at or looked at 哥哥看的 **ge¹ ge kan⁴ de**
 what the elder sister sees or has seen 姐姐见的 **jie³ jie jian⁴ de** or 姐
 姐看见的 **jie³ jie kan⁴ jian⁴ de**
 what we make or do, or what we have made or done 我们做的 **wo³ men² zuo⁴ de**

Another important use of the light tone is with the past or perfect tense marker 了(le). Let's listen and repeat.

said or have said 说了 shuo¹ le——

heard or have heard 听了 ting¹ le——

read or have read 读了 du² le——

learned or have learned 学了 xue² le——

came or have come 来了 lai² le——

became good or have become good, It's OK now 好了 hao³ le——

wrote or have written 写了 xie³ le——

looked or have looked 看了 kan⁴ le——

saw or have seen; met or have met 见了 jian⁴ le——

saw or have seen 看见了 kan⁴ jian⁴ le

did, made or have done or have made 做了 zuo⁴ le——