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Sanders/Fundamental Spoken Chinese

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CHAPTER 1

Pronunciation and Romanization



Day 1: Introduction

The pronunciation of any foreign language will include some sounds that are just like English sounds, some sounds that are similar to but not quite the same as English sounds, as well as others that are totally alien to English. Mandarin Chinese is no exception. You will discover that beyond the well-known challenges of tone and a few consonants and vowels, there is actually a lot about Mandarin pronunciation that is easy for native English speakers to master. While it may be difficult to attain nativelylike pronunciation, with a bit of hard work and application, you can expect to have little difficulty with the basic pronunciation within a relatively short period of time.

One further point should be made about paying attention to accurate pronunciation: within the Chinese cultural context a non-native speaker with excellent pronunciation but modest fluency will generally be held in higher esteem by native speakers than one with a high level of fluency but a strong foreign accent.

To assist you in learning proper pronunciation, an entire week is devoted to pronunciation and romanization. The romanization used in this textbook—Hànyǔ Pīnyīn—was initially devised by linguists in China in the 1950s to assist native speakers of dialects other than Mandarin to more accurately pronounce Standard Mandarin. Other romanizations and symbolic systems of indicating Mandarin pronunciation do exist, each with its own strengths and weaknesses, and each with its

share of enthusiastic supporters. However, there is no objective evidence to date to suggest that any one of these is more effective in teaching proper pronunciation than any of the others. The reason Hànyǔ Pīnyīn is used here is simply that it is the official romanization of China.

When first learning Hànyǔ Pīnyīn, it is helpful to keep three general principles in mind:

1. The relationship between any letter and any sound is arbitrary. The very same letter can represent one sound in English and another sound in Chinese.
2. The same letter or combination of letters can sometimes be pronounced in more than one way in the same language. English has many such examples, e.g., *ough* as used in “tough,” “though,” “through,” and “bough.”
3. The pronunciation of a particular spelling combination does not always sound the way it looks. Again, English has many such examples, e.g. the *igh* in “sigh” or the *psy* in “psychology.”

Traditionally, the Chinese syllable is divided into two parts—the initial consonant and the final. Every Chinese syllable begins with a consonant, called the *initial* or *initial consonant*, and everything else remaining in that syllable beyond the initial consonant is called the *final*.

Altogether, Mandarin has 22 initial consonants (including something linguists call the *zero initial*, which means nothing more than that there is no consonant in syllable-initial position) and 36 different finals. They can be combined to form 411 acceptable syllables. Superimposed on top of each of these different syllables is tone. Tone in Chinese is called *lexical tone* because with a change in tone, the very same syllable becomes a completely different word. Altogether Mandarin has four different lexical tones. For a native Mandarin speaker, then, the differences in both sound and meaning among *mā* “mother,” *má* “hemp,” *mǎ* “horse,” and *mà* “to scold or curse” are just as striking as those among “pet,” “pit,” “put,” and “pat” are for a native English speaker.

Day 2: Initials/Finals/Tones (1)

Today you will learn eleven easy initial consonants, nine easy finals, and the four tones as used in isolated syllables.

Initials	Finals	Tones
b-	-a	tone 1
p-	-ai	tone 2
m-	-ao	tone 3
f-	-an	tone 4
d-	-ang	
t-	-i (after b-, p-, m-, d-, t-, n-, and l-)	
n-	-ei	

Initials	Finals	Tones
l-	-ong	
g-		
k-		
h-		

Initials

1. *b-*, *p-*, *m-*, *f-*, *g-*, and *k-* are pronounced almost the same way they are pronounced in English. When pronouncing *p-* and *k-*, be certain that each is accompanied by a strong puff of air.
2. Chinese *h-* is pronounced just a little bit differently from an English *h-*. Chinese *h-* is accompanied by a slight amount of friction in the throat.
3. *d-*, *t-*, *n-*, and *l-* are pronounced slightly differently from the way they are pronounced in English. In English the tip of your tongue touches just behind the ridge behind your upper teeth; in Chinese the tip of your tongue touches the interface between your upper teeth and the ridge behind them. As with *p-* and *k-* above, a strong puff of air should accompany your pronunciation of *t-*.

Finals

- a*: In all but two cases the letter *a* should always be pronounced as if you were being asked by the doctor to say “ahh.” This is true for the letter *a* regardless of whether it constitutes the entire final (i.e., *-a*) or the final contains other vowels and/or consonants in combination with *a* (e.g., *-ai*, *-iao*, or *-an*).
- i*: In all cases except after *zh-*, *ch-*, *sh-*, *r-*, *z-*, *c-*, and *s-*, *-i* is pronounced like the *ee* in “see.” If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then this *-i* should be rewritten as *yi*. When the tone mark is placed above the letter *i*—i.e., in the case of the four finals *-i*, *-ui*, *-in*, and *-ing*—then the tone mark itself replaces the dot above the *i*.
- ai*: The pronunciation of final *-ai* closely resembles the English pronunciation of “eye.” You should be certain that the *-i* part of the final is pronounced just as loudly as the *-a* part. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*.
- ao*: The pronunciation of final *-ao* closely resembles the *ow* in “how.” Also, you must be certain that the *-o* part of the final is pronounced just as loudly as the *-a* part. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*.
- an*: The *-a* should resemble the sound you are asked to make when the doctor sticks a tongue depressor into your mouth in order to look at your throat (i.e., “ahh”). The pronunciation of the final *-n* should be more emphatic than in English.
- ang*: The *-a* should resemble the sound you are asked to make when the doctor sticks a tongue depressor into your mouth in order to look at your throat (i.e., “ahh”). The pronunciation of Chinese *-ng* is much softer than that of English *-ng*.
- ei*: The sound *-ei* is pronounced just like the *ei* of “eight.” You should also be certain that the *-i*

part of the final is pronounced just as loudly as the *-e* part. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-e*.

-ong: The *-o* in *-ong* is pronounced like the *-oo-* in “book.” The pronunciation of Chinese *-ng* is much softer than that of English *-ng*. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-o*.

Tones

Initially the four tones of Mandarin might sound quite similar to you. However, by the end of just one hour of class you should be able to hear the differences among them. By the end of another one or two days you ought to be able to create the differences in your own pronunciation, but only for single syllables spoken in isolation. The real challenge will come when syllables are strung together to form words, phrases, and sentences. Getting the tone right for each syllable in a longer string of syllables is something you will have to pay particular attention to for a longer period of time.

A considerable amount of misunderstanding exists about Mandarin tones. In particular, many first-time learners are told how easy it is to utter something unintended by failing to use the correct tone, for instance, to blurt out “I came here on a fat chicken” when what you really intend to say is “I came here by airplane.” In actuality, you will not be able to be misunderstood that clearly until much later, once you are finally able to produce natural and authentic Mandarin tonal contours on a consistent basis. Before that time, before you learn how to consistently produce tonal contours that sound clear and authentic, you are more likely to sound garbled, creating things with the equivalent clarity of “Ah keem har by futpleen.” In other words, in the beginning, your problem will likely be the use of tones that are not recognizable to native speakers and that you yourself are not able to repeat on a consistent basis. Under your primitive control of tones, the listener will be forced to filter out the distracting noise and make an educated guess as to what you are really trying to say. To help you get to the stage as quickly as possible where real Mandarin tones are coming out of your mouth on command, a word about how tone in Chinese is produced and how it is best represented is in order.

Tone in Chinese is formed by controlling the pitch of your voice to form a distinctive pitch contour. By maintaining or changing your pitch over the entire duration of the syllable, you are able to control the pitch contour for that syllable. To make your tones sound as natural as possible, keep the following two points in mind:

1. Each tone has a fixed, underlying contour such as *level*, *rising*, or *falling*.
2. There are no fixed frequencies for these contours, however. Just how high or how low the frequency of a particular tone should be will vary on the basis of individual voice type, rate of speech, and emotional state at the time the syllable is spoken.

A tone contour is best characterized in terms of its starting point and end point within a speaker’s normal voice range. For several decades Chinese linguists have been using a convention to indicate fixed, underlying tonal contours. Based on a relative scale of 1 through 5, with 1 indicating the low point of a person’s normal pitch range and 5 indicating the high point, it is possible to describe any level, rising, or falling contour in terms of its starting point and its end point. A high, level tone is thus represented as 55, while a full falling tone is represented as 51. For tones that dip or peak, a midpoint is added in addi-

tion to a starting point and an end point. A tone that starts low, goes down even farther, and then rises to a point somewhere around the midlevel of a person's normal pitch range would be written as 213. Using this system we can now look at the four underlying contours of Mandarin.

tone 1	high level	55	mā	“mother”
tone 2	mid rising	35	má	“hemp”
tone 3	low falling	21(3)	mǎ	“horse”
tone 4	high falling	51	mà	“to scold/curse”

Traditionally, the Mandarin tone 3 contour is portrayed as being 213. However, this contour is only used for individual tone 3 syllables spoken in isolation or spoken directly before a pause. The rest of the time, when the tone 3 syllable is directly followed by another syllable (i.e., in the vast majority of cases that a tone 3 syllable is spoken), a 21 contour is normally used. This tone 3 contour is nothing more than a low, creaky voice. Additionally, in Taiwan, many native speakers no longer use the 213 contour at all, even when the tone 3 syllable is spoken in isolation. Finally, it has been observed that when tone 3 is taught as having an underlying 213 contour, many students experience long-term difficulty discriminating that contour from the tone 2 contour (35). However, it has been reported that this problem is largely avoided when tone 3 is instead taught as having an underlying 21 contour. For all of these reasons, tone 3 in isolation is taught here as having a 21 contour. What happens to this contour when it is followed either by silence or by another tone 3 syllable is taught tomorrow.

EXERCISES (1)

1. Add the correct initial according to the sounds your instructor makes:

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| a. _____ī | “to kick” | b. _____āng | “to help” | c. _____ān | “to be dry” |
| d. _____áo | “peach” | e. _____ài | “to bring” | f. _____ēi | “black” |
| g. _____ǎ | “to hit” | h. _____àn | “to see” | i. _____āo | “knife” |
| j. _____àng | “to be fat” | k. _____ī | “to be low” | l. _____óng | “dragon” |

2. Place the proper tone mark over the vowel:

- | | | | | | |
|---------|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------|--------------|
| a. ba | “to pull out” | b. pai | “to send somebody” | c. mao | “cat” |
| d. dang | “political party” | e. bi | “pen” | f. ti | “body” |
| g. la | “to pull” | h. nai | “to endure” | i. tong | “be painful” |
| j. dan | “to be weak (in taste or color)” | | | | |

3. Read each of the following syllables out loud:

- | | | |
|---------|--------|--------|
| a. dāng | b. nào | c. bǎi |
| d. fá | e. lì | f. táo |
| g. fǎng | h. mǐ | i. pán |
| j. māo | | |

4. Add the correct final according to the sounds your instructor makes, together with the correct tone marks:

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| a. b_____ | “to be full” | b. p_____ | “to run” |
| c. m_____ | “harvested, uncooked rice” | d. f_____ | “cooked rice” |
| e. d_____ | “unharvested rice” | f. p_____ | “skin” |
| g. t_____ | “to be scalding hot” | h. h_____ | “to drink” |
| i. n_____ | “to be difficult” | j. l_____ | “to be old” |
| k. b_____ | “to be white” | l. m_____ | “mother” |
| m. l_____ | “dragon” | n. p_____ | “fear” |

5. Write out the correct Hànyǔ Pīnyīn spelling for each of the syllables you hear, placing the correct tone mark over the correct letter:

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------|----------|---------------|
| a. _____ | “to place” | b. _____ | “inside” |
| c. _____ | “100” | d. _____ | “mud” |
| e. _____ | “wolf” | f. _____ | “charcoal” |
| g. _____ | “body hair” | h. _____ | “he; she; it” |
| i. _____ | “egg” | j. _____ | “to crawl” |
| k. _____ | “understand” | l. _____ | “black” |

Day 3: Initials/Finals/Tones (2)

Today, after reviewing material introduced yesterday, you will learn seven more initials and sixteen more finals. You will also be exposed to two-syllable compounds and expressions, thus initiating your training in the processing of more than one tone in sequence. Through two-syllable compounds and expressions you will learn about the tone change that takes place when two or more tone 3 syllables occur together. Finally, through disyllabic compounds you will learn about the *neutral tone*.

Initials	Finals	Tones
zh-	-i (after zh-, ch-, shi, and r-)	tone 3 (21 > 213)
ch-	-ie/ye	tone 3 + tone 3
sh-	-ia/ya	tone 4 + tone 4
r-	-iang/yang	neutral tone
j-	-iao/yao	
q-	-in/yin	

Initials	Finals	Tones
x-	-ing/ying	
	-u/wu (<i>not</i> after j-, q-, or x-)	
	-iong/yong	
	-ua/wa	
	-uai/wai	
	-uan/wan	
	-uang/wang (<i>not</i> after j-, q-, or x-)	
	-o	
	-uo/wo	
	-ou	

Initials

1. The initial series *zh-*, *ch-*, *sh-*, and *r-* is pronounced by pulling back your tongue fairly far and lightly touching the roof of your mouth with the tip. The Chinese name for this series—*juǎnshé yīn*, “curled tongue sounds”—causes many native speakers to believe mistakenly that you should somehow curl your tongue back in order make these sounds. It is nearly physically impossible to do this, let alone to talk at the same time. Therefore, even if you or a native speaker were capable of doing so, the resultant noise would bear little resemblance to proper *zh-*, *ch-*, *sh-*, and *r-* sounds.

The default pronunciations of *zh-*, *ch-*, and *sh-* (i.e., when no particular final is assumed and the way your teacher is likely to first practice them today) sound quite a bit like the *ger* of “germ,” the *chur* of “church,” and like “shirt” respectively. These default pronunciations are spelled as *zhi*, *chi*, and *shi*. There really is no close English equivalent to *r-*. The only provision that you will have to make in the pronunciation of all four initials is that you pull back your tongue farther than you would in English and, with lips flat, softly touch the roof of your mouth with your tongue tip. When pronouncing *ch-*, be sure that it is accompanied by a strong puff of air.

2. The series *j-*, *q-*, and *x-* is pronounced by touching the tip of your tongue directly behind your lower front teeth and then putting the blade of your tongue just behind the ridge behind your upper teeth. A flow of air is then pushed through between your tongue blade and the upper, front part of your mouth where it is touching. Also, as you pronounce each of these three initials, make certain that your lips are pulled widely apart and are tight, as if you were making a forced smile. When pronouncing *q-*, be sure that it is accompanied by a strong puff of air.

The default pronunciations of *j-*, *q-*, and *x-* (i.e., when no particular final is assumed and the way your teacher is likely to first practice them today) sound quite a bit like the *jee* of “jeep,” the *chee* of “cheese,” and the *shee* of “sheep,” and are spelled as *ji*, *qi*, and *xi* respectively.

A WORD OF CAUTION

Some native English speakers experience problems distinguishing the *zh-*, *ch-*, and *sh-* initials from the *j-*, *q-*, and *x-* initials, both when they listen to them and when they pronounce them. This is especially true for the following contrastive pairs:

zhā	zhǎo	zhòu	zhǎng	zhōng
jiā	jiǎo	jiù	jiǎng	jiōng
chà	chāo	chóu	chǎng	chóng
qià	qiāo	qiǔ	qiǎng	qióng
shā	sháo	shǒu	shàng	zhèi
xiā	xiáo	xiǔ	xiàng	jiè

There are a few precautions you can take to minimize the difficulties you are likely to encounter maintaining a clear distinction between the two members of each pair:

1. Remember your respective tongue positions for each of the six initials. When you pronounce *j-*, *q-*, and *x-*, resist any temptation from English to place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Instead, place the tip of your tongue directly against the back of your lower teeth.
2. Note that in each of the pairs above *j-*, *q-*, and *x-* are always directly followed by an *-ee* sound, represented by an *i*. To maximize the distinction between *j-*, *q-*, *x-* and *zh-*, *chi-*, *sh-*, you should overemphasize the pronunciation of the *-i*, especially during the first few weeks of class. The best way to do this is to overemphasize the pronunciations of *-ia*, *-iao*, *-iu*, *-iang*, and *-ie* as *-eeya*, *-eeyao*, *-eeyou*, *-eeyang*, *-eeyong*, and *-eeye* respectively.

Finals

-i: (after *zh-*, *ch-*, *sh-*, and *r-*) The pronunciation of *-i* after these four initials sounds very much like an *r*. Importantly, unlike the normal pronunciation of vowels, its pronunciation involves no movement of the tongue beyond what is necessary to pronounce the initial consonant that immediately precedes it. In the case of *zhi*, *chi*, and *shi*, the pronunciation of *-i* consists of a nominal release of your tongue tip from the roof of your mouth. In the case of *ri*, your tongue does not move at all.

-ie/ye: The pronunciation of *-ie* resembles the pronunciation of the *ye* of “yes.” The tone mark is always placed atop the *-e*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ie* should be rewritten as *ye*.

-ia/ya: The pronunciation of *-ia* resembles the pronunciation of the *ya* of “yacht.” The tone mark is

always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ia* should be rewritten as *ya*.

-iang/yang: The pronunciation of *-ia* resembles the pronunciation of the *ya* of “yacht,” while the pronunciation of Chinese *-ng* is softer than in English, and the tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-iang* should be rewritten as *yang*.

-iao/yao: The pronunciation of *-iao* resembles the pronunciation of the *yow* of “yowl.” The *-o* should be pronounced just as loudly as the *-i* and *-a* portions of the final. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-iao* should be rewritten as *yao*.

-in/yin: The *-i* in *-in* should be pronounced much like the *een* in “seen,” not the *in* in “bin.” The pronunciation of the *-n* should be more emphatic than in English. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-in* should be rewritten as *yin*. When writing the tone mark, remember that it actually replaces the dot above the *-i*.

-ing/ying: The *-i* in *-ing* should be pronounced like the *ee* in “see.” The pronunciation of Chinese *-ng* is softer than in English. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ing* should be rewritten as *ying*. When writing the tone mark, remember that it actually replaces the dot above the *-i*.

-iong/yong: The *-o* in *-iong* resembles the *-oo-* in “book.” The pronunciation of Chinese *-ng* is much softer than that of English *-ng*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-iong* should be rewritten as *yong*.

-u/wu: (but *not* after *j-*, *q-*, or *x-*) The pronunciation of this final resembles the pronunciation of the *oo* in “ooze,” only your lips should be more puckered and tighter, as if you have just eaten something very sour. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-u* should be rewritten as *wu*. How to pronounce *u* when it follows *j-*, *q-*, or *x-* is treated in Day 4 under *ü/yu*.

-ua/wa: *-ua* is pronounced like the *wa* of “waddle” in most varieties of American English. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ua* should be rewritten as *wa*.

-uai/wai: *-uai* is pronounced like the *wi* of “wine.” You should also be certain that the *-i* part of the final is pronounced just as loudly as the *-u* and *-a* parts. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-uai* should be rewritten as *wai*.

-uan/wan: *-uan* should be pronounced like the *wan* in “wand,” only you must make certain that the pronunciation of the *-n* is more emphatic than in English. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-uan* should be rewritten as *wan*.

-uang/wang: *-uan* rhymes with “pong” in “ping pong,” though the pronunciation of Chinese *-ng* is softer than in English. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-uang* should be rewritten as *wang*.

- o: (written only after *b-*, *p-*, *m-*, and *f-*) From a language-learning perspective there is little justification for writing this final as a single *-o* instead of as the double-letter final *-uo*, whose pronunciation is described directly below.
- uo/wo: Most varieties of American English do not have a pronunciation that matches the phonetic value of *-o/uo*. New York City English does have a sound that comes close, the *o* of “coffee.” The International Phonetic Alphabet represents the pronunciation of this vowel with the symbol ɔ . The tone mark is always placed above the *-o*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-uo* should be rewritten as *wo*. Many English speakers exhibit a tendency to pronounce this final incorrectly as English “woe.” This brings new meaning to the English expression “Woe is me.”
- ou: The pronunciation of *-ou* is similar to “owe,” only your lips should be more puckered and tighter, as if you have just eaten something very sour. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-o*.

A WORD OF EXTREME CAUTION

Many native English speakers regularly confuse *-uo* and *-ou*, especially during the first few weeks of class. The key to keeping them apart in your own speech is to remember that

1. *-u* is always pronounced with your lips rounded, only your lips should be more puckered and tighter, as if you have just eaten something very sour.
2. *-o* is always pronounced with your lips wider apart and more relaxed than for *-u*. Therefore, *-ou* and *-uo* can be distinguished from one another on the basis of what your lips are doing over the transition of each final.
3. For *-ou* you start out with your lips relaxed, only to have them pucker slightly and become tighter by the end.
4. For *-uo* you start out with puckered lips, which become less taut and wider apart by the end of the syllable.

Tones

1. Tone 3: 21 > 213. As the very last syllable before a pause or before the end of an utterance, a tone 3 syllable is pronounced with a 213 contour rather than with a 21 contour, e.g., *bù hǎo*, “no good”; *hēi mǎ*, “black horse.”
2. Tone 3 + Tone 3 = Tone 2 + Tone 3. You have thus far learned that the phonetic value of a tone 3 contour is usually 21, though it can sometimes be 213. However, if a tone 3 syllable is immedi-

ately followed by another tone 3 syllable, then that first tone 3 syllable is instead pronounced as a tone 2 syllable (i.e., the 21 contour changes into a 35 contour).

hǎo <21> “good” + mǎ <21> “horse” = háo <35> mǎ <21> “good horse”

In strings of three or more tone 3 syllables, the likelihood that all but the last syllable will change to tone 2 is determined by two important factors—the speed at which the person is talking and whether there would be a pause between one tone 3 syllable and the next. The faster a person speaks, the greater the likelihood is that all but the final tone 3 syllable will change into tone 2. Likewise, any pause between one tone 3 syllable and the next will interrupt tone change, so that the tone 3 syllable immediately before the pause will no longer be affected by the tone 3 syllable that immediately follows the pause.

Wǒ <21> “I” + xiǎng <21> “want” + mǎi <21> “buy” + hǎo <21> “good” + mǎ <21> “horse”

In very rapid speech, all but the last syllable would be pronounced with second tones.

Wó xiáng mǎi háo mǎ.

I'd like to buy a good horse.

However, it is also possible to pause at certain points along the sentence, yielding examples like

Wǒ, (pause) xiáng mǎi háo mǎ.

Me, I'd like to buy a good horse.

Wó xiǎng, (pause) mǎi háo mǎ.

What I'm thinking is . . . to buy a good horse.

Wó xiáng mǎi, (pause) háo mǎ.

What I'd like to buy . . . is a good horse.

3. Tone 4 + Tone 4. When two tone 4 syllables come together to form a bisyllabic compound, the duration of the first syllable is shortened slightly and its contour changes from 51 to 53.

dàgài “probably”

diànhuà “telephone”

diànshì “television”

4. Neutral tone. Strictly speaking, neutral tone is not like the four regular tones of Mandarin—it does not have an underlying contour and rarely is its usage crucial to the meaning of a word. However, the presence of neutral tone is very common in Beijing speech, and neutral tones are normally used in Mandarin with all grammatical function words regardless of where in China one is. Furthermore, to the ears of northern speakers, a person who consistently fails to use neutral tones when it is possible to use them sounds like someone very much outside of his or her natural linguistic element. Therefore neutral tones are important to learn properly.

Neutral tone is a phenomenon created by contrasting the loudness and duration of pronunciation of one syllable with that of the syllable that immediately precedes it. The preceding syl-

lable is always relatively longer and louder, while the neutral syllable that follows it is briefer and softer. Because the pronunciation of the neutral tone is finished nearly as soon as it begins, one cannot easily speak of a distinctive starting point and a distinctive end point. Rather, it is better to think of each instance as a single blip that, depending on various factors, lies somewhere along the 1 to 5 scale used to describe the starting and end points of the four tones. Exactly where along that 1 to 5 scale a particular blip should lie is determined by the tone of the immediately preceding syllable.

<i>Syllable 1 (full tone)</i>		+	<i>Syllable 2 (neutral tone)</i>		<i>Example</i>
tone 1 (55)			half-low (2)		hēi de “black one”
tone 2 (35)			middle (3)		hóng de “red one”
tone 3 (21)			half-high (4)		ǎi de “short one”
tone 4 (51)			low (1)		dà de “big one”

Sometimes the tone of the last syllable in a word is optionally neutral, e.g., the *huān* of *xǐ.huān*, “like (to).” That is, it is possible to pronounce it either as *xǐhuān* or as *xǐhuan*. In this textbook we borrow a convention used in another respected system of romanization, Gwoyeu Romatzyh, and place a “.” directly in front of an optionally neutral tone syllable and additionally write the full tone mark over the proper letter of that syllable.

EXERCISES (2)

1. Read out loud each of the following disyllabic words:

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| a. fàngqi | b. qiēduàn | c. chuāndà |
| d. rèn píng | e. jiāodǐ | f. chōukòng |
| g. zhuóshǒu | h. shàng rèn | i. ránshāo |
| j. qǐzhòu | | |

2. Add the correct initial to each member of the two-syllable word:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| a. ____īng ____ǐ | “manager” | b. ____áng ____uǎn | “length” |
| c. ____ǎn ____íng | “emotion” | d. ____ǎo ____ì | “exam” |
| e. ____í ____uài | “strange” | f. ____ā ____īn | “pronunciation” |
| g. ____ān ____ǎo | “guarantee” | h. ____iǎo ____uō | “fictional writing” |
| i. ____iǎ ____uāng | “to pretend” | j. ____ī ____uài | “a cricket” |

3. Place the correct tone mark over the proper letter of each syllable:

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| a. li fa | “to get a haircut” | b. li fa | “to legislate” |
| c. kan shu | “to read” | d. kan shu | “to chop trees” |
| e. guo jie | “to cross the street” | f. guo jie | “to celebrate a holiday” |
| g. xi wan | “to wash dishes” | h. xi wan | “to finish washing” |
| i. laoshi | “teacher” | j. laoshi | “honest” |

4. Add the correct final to each part of the two-syllable word together with the correct tone mark:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| a. b_____ sh_____ | “to indicate” | b. j_____ j_____ | “economy” |
| c. sh_____ l_____ | “to consult” | d. x_____ h_____ | “joke” |
| e. q_____ k_____ | “situation” | f. l_____ t_____ | “camel” |
| g. F_____ j_____ | “Buddhism” | h. Y_____ g_____ | “England” |
| i. b_____ k_____ | “to contain” | j. s_____ j_____ | “the world” |

5. Read out loud each of the following words containing a neutral-tone syllable:

- | | | | |
|------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|
| a. wàitou | “outside” | b. zhīdao | “to know (a fact)” |
| c. xiáojie | “young lady” | d. dìdi | “younger brother” |
| e. chī de | “food” | f. xǐhuan | “to like (to)” |
| g. píqi | “disposition” | h. gàosu | “to inform” |
| i. jiějie | “older sister” | j. bōli | “glass” |

6. Read out loud each of the following words that contain two tone 4 syllables:

- | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|
| a. jìlù | “to keep minutes” | b. dàgài | “probably” |
| c. rìbào | “daily paper” | d. pàomò | “foam” |
| e. fàn bìng | “to have a relapse” | f. ruòshì | “if” |
| g. qiènuò | “overcautious” | h. mìnglìng | “command” |
| i. guàlì | “wall calendar” | j. qìngzhù | “to celebrate” |

7. Write out the correct Hànyǔ Pīnyīn spelling for each of the words you hear, placing the correct tone marks over the correct letters:

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------|----------|------------|
| a. _____ | “vacation” | b. _____ | “goldfish” |
| c. _____ | “cashew” | d. _____ | “size” |
| e. _____ | “get on bed” | f. _____ | “nature” |
| g. _____ | “ambition” | h. _____ | “rashly” |
| i. _____ | “roast duck” | j. _____ | “power” |

Day 4: Initials/Finals (3)

Today you will learn the last three Mandarin initials. You will also learn eleven more finals.

Initials	Finals	Other
z-	-i (after z-, c-, and s- only)	apostrophes
c-	-e	phrases
s-	-en	
	-eng	
	-er	
	-ü/yu	
	-üe/yue	
	-üan/yuan	
	-ian/yan	
	-ün/yun	

Initials

1. *s-* is pronounced exactly as it is pronounced in English.
2. *z-* and *c-* are notoriously difficult for native English speakers to pronounce. *z-* sounds like the *ds* in “hands,” while *c-* should sound just like the *ts* in “hats.” However, because no English syllable starts off with either sound, some English speakers tend to pronounce Mandarin *z-* as either a *d-* or an English *z-*, and pronounce Mandarin *c-* as either a *t-* or an *s-*.

There is one exercise using the two Mandarin syllables *za* and *ca* that might help you to feel more comfortable pronouncing *z-* and *c-* in a proper fashion. For *za*, try saying the English phrase “hands off,” making sure to hold the *-n-* for a moment before proceeding with the rest. The resulting second syllable, minus the final *-f*, should approximate the correct pronunciation of Mandarin *za*. In the case of *ca*, try saying “hats off,” pausing at *-a-* and holding it for a moment before continuing on with the second syllable. Once you feel comfortable with this exercise, you are ready to try pronouncing *z-* and *c-* in combination with finals other than *-a*.

Finals

- i:* (after *z-*, *c-*, and *s-*) There really is no close English equivalent to this *-i* sound. Its pronunciation is intimately tied to the pronunciation of *z-*, *c-*, and *s-*. Therefore, the best way to start your pronunciation of this particular *-i* is through your pronunciation of Mandarin *z-*, *c-*, and *s-*. That is, place the tip area of your tongue firmly upon the ridge behind your upper teeth and close your mouth almost to the point where your upper teeth are touching your lower teeth and your upper lip is touching your lower lip. The front part of your tongue will

be pushed toward the upper, front part of your mouth as a result. Then, as you are pronouncing *z-*, *c-*, and *s-*, pull the tip of your tongue ever so slightly away from where it is touching.

- e*: The single letter *e* as a final is pronounced by tightening the muscles in the back of one's throat. Its pronunciation is fairly similar to the “ugh” one would say in English upon being served a particularly disgusting food item or if suddenly hit with full force in the solar plexus.
- en*: *-en* is usually pronounced just like the *un* in “under,” only you must make certain to pronounce the *-n* more emphatically than you would in English.
- eng*: Final *-eng* rhymes with “rung.” However, the pronunciation of Chinese *-ng* is softer than in English.
- er*: Final *-er* sounds very much like a barking sea lion, with heavy emphasis on the final *-r*. To pronounce that final *-r*, your tongue should be very high and very far back in your mouth.

This syllable sometimes functions as a suffix, in which case, the vowel *e* is dropped, both when pronounced and when written, leaving only the final *-r*, e.g., *wánr*, *diànyǐngr*, *nǎr*. However, when that final *-r* is immediately preceded by an *n* or *ng*, those two sounds are dropped in pronunciation but remain in the Pinyin spelling.

- ü*/*yu*: English does not have the *ü* sound but French does. Many English speakers have trouble distinguishing it from the more familiar *-u*. If you are having trouble making this sound, try starting out by pronouncing *-ee* and then, without moving your tongue at all, slowly pucker your lips. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ü* should be rewritten as *yu*.

Please note that with the exception of the two initials *n-* and *l-*, no other initial can combine with both a *-ü*-type final *and* a *-u*-type final. Only *-ü*-type finals (as opposed to *-u*-type finals) can combine with *j-*, *q-*, *x-*, or *y-*. Therefore, after those four initials *-ü*-type finals are written as an ordinary *-u*. Anyone seeing such a combination automatically knows that the *-u* must really be pronounced as an *-ü*.

- üe*/*yue*: See *-ü* above for the pronunciation of *-üe*. The *-e* sounds like the *e* in “end” and always takes the tone mark. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-üe* should be rewritten as *yue*.

With the exception of the two initials *n-* and *l-*, no other initial can combine with both a *-ü*-type final *and* with a *-u*-type final. Only *-ü*-type finals (as opposed to *-u*-type finals) can combine with *j-*, *q-*, *x-*, or *y-*. Therefore, after those four initials *-üe* is written as an ordinary *-ue*. Anyone seeing such a combination knows that the *-u* must really be pronounced as *-ü*.

- ün*/*yun*: See *-ü* above for the pronunciation of the vowel in final *-ün*. The tone mark is always placed above the *-ü*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ün* should be rewritten as *yun*.
- üan*/*yuan*: See *-ü* above for the pronunciation of that vowel in final *-üan*. The trick in mastering this and the final immediately following this one is to remember that *-a* is *not* pronounced the way it looks. Instead, it should be pronounced much like the *e* in “end,” making sure as well that the *-n* is pronounced more emphatically than in English. The tone mark is always

placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ü an* should be rewritten as *yan*.

Again, please note that with the exception of the two initials *n-* and *l-*, no other initial can combine with both a *-ü*-type final *and* a *-u*-type final. Only *-ü*-type finals (as opposed to *-u*-type finals) can combine with *j-*, *q-*, *x-*, or *y-*. Therefore, after those four initials *-üan* is written with an ordinary *-u*. Anyone seeing such a combination automatically knows that the *-u* must really be pronounced as *-ü*.

-ian/yan: The trick in mastering *-ian*, like *-üan*, is to remember that *-a* is *not* pronounced the way it looks. Instead, it should be pronounced much like the *e* in “end,” making sure as well that the *-n* is pronounced more emphatically than in English. The tone mark is always placed atop the *-a*. If there is no preceding consonant—i.e., there is a zero initial—then *-ian* should be rewritten as *yan*.

Where Is the Syllable Border?

Ordinarily it is possible to join together the spelling of two syllables to form a single word without causing any confusion. However, sometimes when two syllables are joined together the resultant spelling conceals the existence or proper location of the syllable boundary. One example of this potential problem is Xi’an (*xī* “west” + *ān* “peace”), a Chinese city. If it is spelled as “Xian” without an intervening apostrophe, it is possible to interpret the word as the single syllable *xiān*, “first,” rather than the double-syllable combination *xī* “west” + *ān* “peace.” Strictly speaking, an apostrophe should only be used when two different but equally legitimate Mandarin syllables are possible (disregarding tone). In practice, however, an apostrophe is sometimes used when a syllable boundary is unclear, even though the alternative pronunciation is in fact not possible in Mandarin. An example is Tian’anmen, “Gate of Heavenly Peace,” which might be mistakenly parsed as *Tia + nan + men*, even though *tia* is not a possible syllable in Mandarin.

Some Useful Expressions

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Tóngxuémén hǎo. | A formal greeting from a teacher to two or more students, or from one student to two or more of his or her classmates. |
| 2. Lǎoshī hǎo. | A greeting from students to their teacher. |
| 3. Xiànzài shàng kè. | “Class is starting.” |
| 4. Xiànzài xià kè. | “Class is finished.” |
| 5. Qǐng zuò (xià). | “Please have a seat; please sit down.” |
| 6. Qǐng nǐ shuō màn yìdiǎnr. | “Please speak a bit slower.” |
| 7. Qǐng nǐ dà shēng shuō. | “Please speak loudly.” |
| 8. Qǐng nǐ zài shuō yí biàn. | “Please say it again.” |
| 9. Qǐng nǐ zài xiě yí biàn. | “Please write it again.” |
| 10. Dǒng bù dǒng? | “Do you understand?” |
| 11. Míngbai ma? | “Do you understand?” |
| 12. Míngbai le ma? | “Do you get it now?” |
| 13. Yǒu méi.yǒu wèntí? | “Any questions?” |

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 14. XXX, <u>Hànyǔ</u> zěnmě shuō? | “How do you say XXX in Chinese?” |
| 15. XXX, <u>Yīngyǔ</u> zěnmě shuō? | “How do you say XXX in English?” |
| 16. XXX shì shénme yìsi? | “What does XXX mean?” |
| 17. Qǐng tīng wǒ shuō. | “Please listen to me say it.” |
| 18. Qǐng tīng wǒ niàn. | “Please listen to me read it.” |
| 19. Qǐng gēn wǒ shuō. | “Please repeat what I say.” |
| 20. Qǐng gēn wǒ niàn. | “Please repeat what I read out loud.” |
| 21. Qǐng bǎ shǒujī guān.shàng. | “Please turn off your cell phone.” |

Day 5: Finals *-iu*, *-ui*, *-un*

Today you will learn the three remaining Mandarin finals. None of these finals is pronounced as one would guess it should be pronounced on the basis of its spelling. You will also practice making contrasts in pronunciation between pairs of sounds that are frequently troublesome for native English speakers to distinguish.

New Finals	Troublesome Distinctions
-iu/you	-ü versus -u
-ui/wei	-un versus -ün
-un/wen	-ei versus -ie
	-ou versus -uo
	rè versus rì versus èr

Finals

-iu/you: Final *-iu* is pronounced like the *yo* in “yoke.” You must be certain to maintain the same loudness of voice throughout the entire duration of the final.

When this final combines with *j*-, *q*-, or *x*-—i.e., when the spelling is *-iu*—then the tone mark is always placed atop the *-u*. When there is no preceding consonant—i.e., when there is a zero initial—then this final should be spelled *you* and the tone mark placed above the *-o*.

-ui/wei: Final *-ui* is pronounced like English “way.” You must be certain to maintain the same loudness of voice throughout the entire duration of the final.

When this final combines with an initial other than zero—i.e., when the spelling is *-ui*—then the tone mark is always placed atop the *-i*. When there is no preceding consonant—i.e., when there is a zero initial—then this final should be spelled *wei*, with the tone mark placed above the *-e*.

-un/wen: Final *-un* is pronounced with the sound of *-oo-* in “book” stuck between a *w-* and an *-n*. When there is no preceding consonant—i.e., when there is a zero initial—then this should be spelled as *wen*.

Day 6: General Review and Classroom Expressions

Today your teacher will review key points of Mandarin pronunciation and the system of romanization used to represent this pronunciation. Included below is a fuller list of useful classroom expressions that can help you to solidify what you have learned during this first week of study.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Tóngxuémén hǎo. | A formal greeting from a teacher to two or more students, or from one student to two or more of his or her classmates. |
| 2. Lǎoshī hǎo. | A greeting from students to their teacher. |
| 3. Xiànzài shàng kè. | “Class is starting.” |
| 4. Xiànzài xià kè. | “Class is finished.” |
| 5. Qǐng zuò (xià). | “Please have a seat; please sit down.” |
| 6. Qǐng nǐ shuō màn yìdiǎnr. | “Please speak a bit slower.” |
| 7. Qǐng nǐ dà shēng shuō. | “Please speak loudly.” |
| 8. Qǐng nǐ zài shuō yí biàn. | “Please say it again.” |
| 9. Qǐng nǐ zài xiě yí biàn. | “Please write it again.” |
| 10. Qǐng huídá wèntí. | “Please answer the question.” |
| 11. Dǒng bù dǒng? | “Do you understand?” |
| 12. Míngbai ma? | “Do you understand?” |
| 13. Míngbai le ma? | “Do you get it now?” |
| 14. Yǒu méi.yǒu wèntí? | “Any questions?” |
| 15. XXX, <u>Hànyǔ</u> zěnmē shuō? | “How do you say XXX in Chinese?” |
| 16. XXX, <u>Yīngyǔ</u> zěnmē shuō? | “How do you say XXX in English?” |
| 17. XXX shì shénme yìsi? | “What does XXX mean?” |
| 18. Qǐng kàn lǎoshī. | “Please watch me.” (said by teacher) |
| 19. Qǐng kàn túpiàn. | “Please look at the picture.” |
| 20. Qǐng tīng wǒ shuō. | “Please listen to me say it.” |
| 21. Qǐng tīng wǒ niàn. | “Please listen to me read it.” |
| 22. Qǐng gēn wǒ shuō. | “Please repeat what I say.” |
| 23. Qǐng gēn wǒ niàn. | “Please repeat what I read out loud.” |
| 24. Qǐng gēn wǒ xiě. | “Please copy what I write.” |
| 25. Qǐng bǎ shū fāndào XXX yè. | “Please turn to page XXX.” |
| 26. Qǐng bǎ shū hé.shàng. | “Please close your books.” |
| 27. Qǐng bǔ yào kàn shū. | “Please don’t look at your books.” |
| 28. Xiànzài tīngxiě. | “Time for dictation.” |
| 29. Qǐng jǔ shǒu. | “Please raise your hand.” |
| 30. Qǐng bǎ shǒujī guān.shàng. | “Please turn off your cell phone.” |