

We Type, We Sing, We Write, We Conquer --

Explore a Unique Language the Unique Way

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I am not Julius Caesar, and this is not my story, but a unique approach for the readers to explore my native language which used to be one of the most challenging in the world. Chinese used to be intimidating, but not anymore. With Microsoft Windows, Word, and the Internet access one can treat Chinese as an extension of English and utilize it like a breeze from anywhere. I estimate, if the members of a family work together, it will take two to three hours to work through this article hands-on and enjoy a lot of fun.

There were three things about Chinese which made the language stand out: 1) Chinese was picturesque -- which is still true; 2) Chinese was musical – which is still true; and 3) Chinese was intimidating – which is no longer true. I will explain each of these in the following:

Chinese is Picturesque: Type It Up

An example: 瘟疫流行期間，乘客必須戴口罩。

The example's meaning in English: During the pandemic, the passengers are required to wear a facemask.

The example spelled out with intonations:

wēn yì liúxíng qī jiān chéng kè bì xū dài kǒuzhào
瘟疫 流行 期間 ， 乘客 必須 戴 口罩 。

wenyi liuxing qijian , chengke bixu dai kouzhao.

[pandemic] [prevail] [period] [passenger(s)] [must] [wear] [facemask]

The focus is not to study the grammar of the language. One can look at the word-by-word translations and grasp the meaning of the whole sentence almost instantly. Chinese speakers are not particular in the grammatical aspects such as “prepositions”, “plurals or singulars”, “definite or indefinite articles”, or “tenses”. Opposite to many other languages where there are a lot of rules, Chinese has few rules. It is a language in which the speakers enjoy a lot of freedom.

In order to prepare the Microsoft Windows to allow English-Chinese word-processing, do the following:

- Go to “Setting”;
- Select “Time and Language”;
- Select “Language”;
- Select “Add a preferred language”;
- Go down the list and select “Chinese (Simplified, China)”;
- Go to “Microsoft Pinyin”;
- Go to “Options”;
- Go to “General”;
- Go down to “Choose a character set”;
- Select “Traditional Chinese”;

- Go all the way back and exit “Setting”.

Now, you are ready to do English-Chinese word-processing:

- Activate Microsoft Word or similar word-processing programs that reside in the Windows.
- Click on the “EN” in the lower right corner of your computer screen, and you will have a pop-up as in the following picture. This is where you switch between “English-Chinese” depending on which language you want the text to appear in.



- When you select “EN” or “CH”, the pop-up will disappear and you are ready to type in the desired language.
- Practice with the above example.

To show the superscripts of your typing:

- Hit “Home” while you are in Microsoft Word.
- Highlight the Chinese text that you want to have the superscripts shown.



- Click on that symbol in the upper part of your computer screen as shown at the center of the above picture.
- Experiment with the options of alignment, offset, and size, and you will have the superscripts shown above your typing in the desired manner.
- Adjust the spacing in the sentences to obtain the best results.

As the readers can see, instead of having to learn thousands after thousands of Chinese characters, one is able to process Chinese with the twenty-six alphabets used in English. That is why I mentioned in the beginning that Chinese is no longer intimidating.

Chinese is Musical: Sing It Out

When one speaks in any of the Chinese dialects, he or she is actually “singing.” Speakers of other languages do the same thing, only that the musical characteristics are not as pronounced as in the Chinese dialects. To look at it from the opposite angle: while one is singing, he or she “lets the music in the song override the music in the language.” But with the music of the song taken away, the music that is inherited in the lyrics shows up – that is the same as if one recites the lyrics instead of singing them.

sì shēng

Traditionally, Chinese has “four tones” (四聲). Put more accurately, they are the “patterns of tone changes” or “intonations.” When Julie Andrews sings in the movie “Do-Re-Mi” and when she reaches that “la”-note, that is the tone one wants to maintain while doing the 1st Intonation in Mandarin. With that established, the remaining will follow:

1 st Intonation	2 nd Intonation	3 rd Intonation	4 th Intonation
-	´	ˇ	ˋ
“la” (in one beat)	“fa-so-la” (in one beat)	“mi-do-mi” (in one beat)	“do-si-la-so” (in one beat)
píng Level (平)	shàng Rising (上)	qù Lowering-Rising (去)	rù Falling (入)
fēi 非	cháng 常	kě 可	ài 愛
fēi 飛	qín 禽	zǒu 走	shòu 獸

To visualize, one can move his or her hand to indicate the rising, falling, and other patterns of the tone changes. Please

practice with the examples above $fēi\ cháng\ kě\ ài$ 非 常 可 愛, meaning “very lovely” and $fēi\ qín\ zǒu\ shòu$ 飛 禽 走 獸 “birds and beasts.”
[To make it simple, pronounce ‘e’ at the end of a syllable as ‘er’; pronounce ‘q’ as ‘ch’.]

[A tone reflects the frequency at which the sound waves vibrate. The higher the tone, the faster the sound waves vibrate. In physics, it is also called a “pitch”.]

Some more examples the readers can immediately practice and utilize are in the following. Please practice. **[I have enlarged the superscripts so they are shown more clearly.]**

mā mā wǒ ài nǐ bà bà gē ge dì dì jiě jiě
 媽 媽 , 我 愛 妳 。 [Mom, I love you.] 爸 爸 [Dad]; 哥 哥 [elder brother]; 弟 弟 [younger brother]; 姐 姐 [elder
 mèi mèi péng yǒu xiè xiè nǐ duì bù qǐ
 sister]; 妹 妹 [younger sister]; 朋 友 [friend]; 謝 謝 你 [Thank you] **[pronounce ‘x’ as ‘sh’]**; 對 不 起 [Excuse
 bào qiàn qǐng nǐ bāng máng wǒ yī xià qǐng wèn nǐ
 me]; 抱 歉 [I am sorry]; 請 你 幫 忙 我 一 下 [Please help me a little bit]; 請 問 你 [Can you please
 jǐng chá jú zài nǎ lǐ
 tell me]; 警 察 局 在 哪 裏 ? [Where is the police station?]

[Before going any further, if a reader is serious about continuing to learn Chinese, he or she should ASAP verify that his/her pronunciations are correct by consulting a friend, a teacher, or an expert. A mistake will be very difficult to overcome once imprinted into one’s DNA.][Even a quick consultation with the clerk at a Chinese takeout will do.]

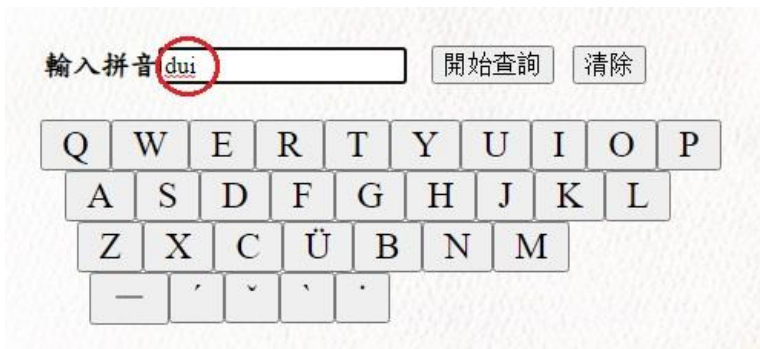
Places where I have inserted notes in this article are where a mistake is likely to occur. Where there is no note, simply follow the rules in English and it will work just fine. **The notes are shown in bold and in Italic. And there are not many.**

Lastly, before I let the readers go, I have one more thing to share. This “one thing” is a skill which will enable a learner to become a real expert.

Chinese Characters are Constructed Orderly: Write It Down

Let us use the expression $duì\ bù\ qǐ$ 對 不 起 as an example, I will show you how each character should be properly constructed.

■ Log onto “stroke-order.learningweb.moe.edu.tw” **[Thanks to the Ministry of Education, the Republic of China]**



pīn yīn chá xún

- Select 拼音查詢 (search with pinyin)

kāi shǐ chá xún

- Type in “dui” as on the above left and hit 開始查詢 (Begin to search)
- Chinese characters will show up. Select the desired character (as shown in the picture on above right)

quán bǐ shùn tí shì

- Select 全筆順提示 to show the entire sequence the character is

written

- Follow the sequence (as shown on the right) to practice writing that character in the proper order
- Repeat the same process to practice writing other characters

Conclusions

I have laid out the landscape which encompasses what learning Chinese will be like. I have also on purpose simulated the process as a 3-stroke-engine [Type It Up -- Sing It Out – Write It Down] to show that learning this beautiful language is a straight-forward and never-ending process.

This article is intended to introduce the Chinese language to the general public. In it, I have made sure that as long as Microsoft Windows, Word, and the Internet access are available, the entire article can be worked hands-on from anywhere.

Classes and books abound which cater to anyone who wants to further seriously study Chinese as a second language. I do want to call the readers to attention that in Taiwan, the Bopomofo (注音符號系統) spelling system is used instead of the pinyin system as seen in this article, which is widely used

internationally; on the other hand, in Mainland China, the simplified characters (簡體字) are used instead of the traditional characters. I stick to the traditional ones because the computer has made the simplification unnecessary.

Also, for those who are interested in writing Chinese in the traditional way, there are two options: 1) use water-color paint and brushes; or 2) use water-color paint and traditional Chinese writing brushes. Practicing writing on the back side of used copy paper will be fine.

對

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十一
十二
十三
十四
十五
十六
十七
十八
十九
二十

I will not immediately recommend using the full array of traditional Chinese writing tools. They are there for the professionals, and the ink is so black that it will mess up the writing desk almost instantly. Wait for the moment to come to you. You will know when it comes. As an encouragement, let me share with you the fact that I used to have the worst handwriting in the universe, and now I am ok.

Good luck and have fun to ya'al!



Lincoln says in the last two sentences shown in the above picture 我化敵為友，就毀滅了敵人，不是嗎？
[When I made my enemies my friends, I also destroyed my enemies. Didn't I?]

Visit:

http://texanlovestories.mathisacommonlanguage.com/PDFFiles_/WeType.pdf

and share this unique language.