

Unit 7: Is Chinese Difficult?

Part I: Listen and Learn

1.

Wǒ shì Zhōngguó rén, shì cóng Shànghǎi lái de.
I am Chinese and I am from Shanghai.
我是中國人，是從上海來的。

Wǒ huì shuō Zhōngwén, yě huì shuō Yīngyǔ hé Éǔ.
I can speak Chinese. I also can speak English and Russian.
我會說中文，也會說英語和俄語。

Yīngyǔ bú tài nán, Éǔ bǐjiào nán.
English is not very difficult. Russian is comparatively difficult.
英語不太難，俄語比較難。

2.

Zhè shì Wáng xiānsheng hé Wáng Tàitai.
This is Mr. and Mrs. Wang.
這是王先生和王太太。

Tāmen dōu shì cóng Běijīng lái de.
They both came from Beijing.
他們都是從北京來的。

Xiànzài zài Měiguó niàn shū.
Now they study in the U.S.
現在在美國念書。

Tāmen zhù zài Washington.
They live in Washington.
他們住在 Washington。

Tāmen bú tài huì shuō Yīngyǔ, xiànzài zài xué Yīngwén.
They cannot speak English well. They are learning English now.
他們不太會說英語，現在在學英文。

Tāmen juéde Yīngwén hěn nán.
They feel that English is very difficult.
他們覺得英文很難。

3.

A: John, nǐ Zhōngwén shuō de búcuò.

A: John, you speak Chinese very well.

A: John, 你中文說得不錯。

B: Nǎlǐ, bù xíng, bù xíng. Wǒ xiànzài zài xué Zhōngwén.

B: Oh, no, not well yet. I am learning Chinese now.

B: 哪裡，不行，不行。我現在在學中文。

A: Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén nán bu nán?

A: Do you think that Chinese is difficult or not?

A: 你覺得中文難不難？

B: Wǒ juéde Zhōngwén kǒuyǔ bú tài nán, xiě zì bǐjiào nán.

B: I feel that spoken Chinese is not that difficult, writing characters is relatively difficult.

B: 我覺得中文口語不太難，寫字比較難。

A: Nǐ hái huì shuō shénme wàiyǔ?

A: What other foreign languages can you speak?

A: 你還會說什麼外語？

B: Wǒ hái huì shuō Fáyǔ¹.

B: I can also speak French.

B: 我還會說法語。

A: Fáyǔ nán bu nán?

A: Is French difficult?

A: 法語難不難？

B: Bú tài nán, méiyǒu Zhōngwén nán.

B: Not really, not as difficult as Chinese.

B: 不太難，沒有中文難。

¹ The original form is Fǎyǔ. The third tone in Fǎ changes to the second tone before another third tone in a connected speech.

4.

A: Xiè lǎoshī, nǐ Yīngyǔ shuō de zhēn hǎo.
A: Prof. Xie, you speak really good English.
A: 謝老師，你英語說得真好。

B: Nǎlǐ, māmāhūhū.
B: Oh, just so-so.
B: 哪裡，馬馬虎虎。

A: Nǐ Yīngyǔ shì zài nǎlǐ xué de?
A: Where did you learn your English?
A: 你英語是在哪裡學的？

B: Wǒ shì zài Shànghǎi xué de.
B: I learned it in Shanghai.
B: 我是在上海學的。

A: Nǐ de lǎoshī shì Měiguó rén ba?
A: I guess your instructors are American.
A: 你的老師是美國吧？

B: Búshì. Yǒude shì Měiguó rén, yǒude shì Zhōngguó rén.
B: No. Some are Americans, some are Chinese.
B: 不是。有的是美國人，有的是中國人。

A: Měiguó lǎoshī shì cóng nǎlǐ lái de?
A: Where are American instructors from?
A: 美國老師是從哪裡來的？

B: Yǒu de shì cóng Pittsburgh lái de, yǒu de shì cóng Seattle lái de. Wǒmen hái yǒu Yīngguó lái de lǎoshī.
B: Some came from Pittsburgh. Some came from Seattle. We also have professors who came from England.
B: 有的是從 Pittsburgh 來的，有的是從 Seattle 來的。我們還有英國來的老師。

5.

A: John, nǐ xiànzài Zhōngwén shuō de hěn hǎo.

A: John, you speak very good Chinese now.

A: John,你現在中文說得很好。

B: Nǎlǐ, hái bù xíng. Wǒ zhǐ huì shuō yìdiǎr Zhōngwén.

B: No, not good yet. I can only speak a little Chinese.

B: 哪裡，還不行。我只會說一點兒中文。

A: Rènshi bu rènshi Zhōngguó zì?

A: Do you read Chinese characters?

A: 認識不認識中國字？

B: B?rènshi, wǒ zhǐ huì shuō. Wǒ huì xiě Pīnyīn.

B: No, I don't. I can speak only. I can write Pinyin.

B: 不認識，我只會說。我會寫拼音。

A: Nǐ de lǎoshī shì bu shì Zhōngguó rén?

A: Is your teacher Chinese?

A: 你的老師是不是中國人？

B: Shìde, tā shì Zhōngguó rén, shì cóng Shànghǎi lái de.

B: Yes, he is Chinese and he came from Shanghai.

B: 是的，他是中國人，是從上海來的。

A: Tā jiāo de hǎo bu hǎo?

A: How does he teach?

A: 他教得好不好？

B: Tā jiāo de hěn hǎo.

B: He teaches very well.

B: 他教得很好。

Part II. Utterances and Notes

- 'hé' means 'and'. Pay attention: 'hé' in Chinese joins two noun phrases only. It is not like English which can join two sentences.
- 'tài' means 'too'. 'bú tài nán' means 'not too difficult'. In the sentence 'tāmen bú tài huì shuō Yīngyǔ', 'bú tài huì' means that they can speak, but not that well.
- 'niàn shū' literally means 'to read books'.
- 'bù xíng' is also a response to the compliment. Literal meaning is 'it doesn't work'.
- 'méiyóu Zhōngwén nán' means 'not difficult compared to Chinese'.
- 'Nǐ Yīngyǔ shì zài nǎlǐ xué de' means 'Where did you learn ...?' 'shì...de' construction is often used to indicate what happened when and where. In a similar way you can say:
'Wǒ shì zài Shànghǎi chūshēng de.' (I was born in Shanghai)
'Wǒ shì cóng Shànghǎi lái de.' (I came from Shanghai)
- 'Yīngguó lái de lǎoshī' -- the teachers who came from England. This construction is similar to a English relative clause. In English, the clause is attached to the right of a noun. In Chinese it is always attached to the left of a noun. This is an important feature in Chinese.
- 'de' in 'tā jiāo de hǎo bu hǎo?' is a grammatical particle. This pattern is used to express the degree or extent.
- The difference between 'yě' and 'hái'. Study the following sentences and try to find out the difference:

Wǒ huì shuō Yīngyǔ, yě huì shuō Éyǔ.
(I can speak English. I also can speak Russian.)

Wǒ huì shuō Yīngyǔ, hái huì shuō Éyǔ.
(I can speak English. In addition, I also can speak Russian.)

Wǒ huì shuō Éyǔ. Tā yě huì shuō Éyǔ.
(I can speak Russian. He also can speak Russian.)

Part III: New Sentence Modules

1. ...is (very, relatively, not too, not as) difficult (as)...

Yīngyǔ Zhōngwén Déyǔ Rìyǔ	hěn bǐjiào bútài méiyǒu Éyǔ nàme	nán
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2. It is ... that (where)...

Wǒ Yīngyǔ Tā Zhōngwén Tā Tā	shì	zài nǎlǐ xué zài Měiguó xué zài Shànghǎi chūshēng (to be born) cóng Shànghǎi lái	de
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Part IV: Practice Makes Perfect

How to say the following phrases? Please speak out!

to speak foreign languages, to learn Russian, to learn a foreign language,
 (am, is, are) learning Russian, a foreign language,
 do not speak Chinese very well,
 to speak Chinese very well
 very difficult, relatively difficult, not too difficult, not as difficult as English,
 spoken Chinese, spoken English, spoken Russian
 to recognize Chinese characters, to write Chinese characters,
 some are Chinese, some are Americans,
 to teach well, to speak well, to write well

Answer the following questions based on your own situation. Please be sure to give real answers.

Nǐ huì bu huì shuō Zhōngwén?
 Nǐ huì bu huì xiě Zhōngguó zì?
 Nǐ rènshi bu rènshi Zhōngguó zì?
 Nǐ hái huì shuō shénme wàiyǔ?
 Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén nán bu nán?
 Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén kǒuyǔ nán bu nán?
 Nǐ jué de xiě Zhōngguó zì nán bu nán?
 Nǐ Zhōngwén shì zài nǎlǐ xué de?
 Nǐ de lǎoshī shì Zhōngguó rén ma?
 Tā shì nǎlǐ rén?
 Tā shì cóng nǎlǐ lái de?
 Tā jiāo de hǎo bu hǎo?
 Nǐ Zhōngwén shuō de hén hǎo.

- ◆ If you need a word which you don't know how to say, please ask by saying: '... Zhōngwén zénme shuō?' . For example: 'nurse' Zhōngwén zénme shuō?' The answer would be: 'nurse' Zhōngwén shì 'hùshi'.

Now try to say something about your study of Chinese.

Please tell a Chinese friend that you are learning Chinese now. You can speak a little Chinese now. You don't read and write Chinese (use 'bù rènshi...', 'yě bù huì xiě...'). You feel that spoken Chinese is not that difficult. Writing characters is very difficult. You also feel (yě juéde) that Chinese is not as difficult as Russian. Tell your friend what foreign languages you can speak. Also tell him that your Chinese instructor is a Chinese and he is from Shanghai. He lives in Davis now. His wife also works in Davis. She is also a teacher. He has a son and he works in Ohio. He teaches very well.