

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.
我是中国人，是从上海来的。

Wǒ huì shuō Zhōngwén, yě huì shuō Yīngyǔ hé Éǔ.
I can speak Chinese. I also can speak English and Russian.
我会说中文，也会说英语和俄语。

Yīngyǔ bú tài nán, Éǔ bǐjiào nán.
English is not very difficult. Russian is comparatively difficult.
英语不太难，俄语比较难。

2.

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

Tāmen dōu shì cóng Běijīng lái de.
They both came from Beijing.
他们都是从北京来的。

Xiànzài zài Měiguó niàn shū.
Now they study in the U.S.
现在在美国念书。

Tāmen zhù zài Washington.
They live in Washington.
他们住在 Washington。

Tāmen bú tài huì shuō Yīngyǔ, xiànzài zài xué Yīngwén.
They cannot speak English well. They are learning English now.
他们不太会说英语，现在在学英文。

Tāmen juéde Yīngwén hěn nán.
They feel that English is very difficult.
他们觉得英文很难。

3.

A: John, nǐ Zhōngwén shuō de búcuò.
A: John, you speak Chinese very well.
A: John, 你中文说得不错。

B: Nǎlǐ, bù xíng, bù xíng. Wǒ xiànzài zài xué Zhōngwén.
B: Oh, no, not well yet. I am learning Chinese now.
B: 哪里，不行，不行。我现在在学中文。

A: Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén nán bu nán?
A: Do you think that Chinese is difficult or not?
A: 你觉得中文难不难？

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: 我觉得中文口语不太难，写字比较难。

A: Nǐ hái huì shuō shénme wàiyǔ?
A: What other foreign languages can you speak?
A: 你还会说什么外语？

B: Wǒ hái huì shuō Fáyǔ¹.
B: I can also speak French.
B: 我还会说法语。

A: Fáyǔ nán bu nán?
A: Is French difficult?
A: 法语难不难？

B: Bú tài nán, méiyǒu Zhōngwén nán.
B: Not really, not as difficult as Chinese.
B: 不太难，没有中文难。

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: 谢老师，你英语说得真好。

B: Nǎlǐ, māmāhūhū.

B: Oh, just so-so.

B: 哪里，马马虎虎。

A: Nǐ Yīngyǔ shì zài nǎlǐ xué de?

A: Where did you learn your English?

A: 你英语是在哪里学的？

B: Wǒ shì zài Shànghǎi xué de.

B: I learned it in Shanghai.

B: 我是在上海学的。

A: Nǐ de lǎoshī shì Měiguó rén ba?

A: I guess your instructors are American.

A: 你的老师是美国吧？

B: Búshì. Yǒude shì Měiguó rén, yǒude shì Zhōngguó rén.

B: No. Some are Americans, some are Chinese.

B: 不是。有的是美国人，有的是中国人。

A: Měiguó lǎoshī shì cóng nǎlǐ lái de?

A: Where are American instructors from?

A: 美国老师是从哪里来的？

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: 有的是从 Pittsburgh 来的，有的是从 Seattle 来的。我们还有英国来的老师。

5.

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

A: John, you speak very good Chinese now.

A: John, 你现在中文说得很好。

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

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

B: 哪里，还不行。我只会说一点儿中文。

A: Rènshi bu rènshi Zhōngguó zì?

A: Do you read Chinese characters?

A: 认识不认识中国字？

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

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

B: 不认识，我只会说。我会写拼音。

A: Nǐ de lǎoshī shì bu shì Zhōngguó rén?

A: Is your teacher Chinese?

A: 你的老师是不是中国人？

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

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

B: 是的，他是中国人，是从上海来的。

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 Riyǔ	hěn bǐjiào bútài méiyǒu Éyǔ nàme	nán
------------------------------------	---	-----

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
--------------------------------------	-----	---	----

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 zěnme shuō?' . For example: 'nurse' Zhōngwén zěnme 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.