

Unit 8: I Understand Chinese

Part I: Listen and Learn

1.

Wǒ shì Zhōngguó rén,
I am a Chinese.
我是中国人，

huì shuō Zhōngguó huà,
(I) can speak Chinese.
会说中国话，

yě huì shuō Yīngyǔ.
(I) also can speak English.
也会说英语。

Wǒ tīng de dǒng Yīngyǔ.
I can understand English.
我听得懂英语。

Wǒ hái huì shuō yìdiǎr Rìyǔ,
I also can speak a little Japanese.
我还会说一点儿日语。

Kěshì wǒ Rìyǔ shuō de bú tài hǎo.
but I don't speak it very well.
可是我日语说得不太好。

Yàoshì shuō de tài kuài, wǒ jiù tīng bu dǒng.
If (someone) speaks too fast, then I don't understand.
要是说得太快，我就听不懂。

2.

John shì Měiguó rén.
John is an American.
John 是美国人。

Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén.
He can speak Chinese.
他会说中文。

Tā Zhōngwén shuō de bú tài kuài,
He doesn't speak Chinese very fast.
他中文说得不太快，

kěshì shuō de bú cuǒ, hěn liúli.
But he speaks very well, very fluently.
可是说得不错，很流利。

Fāyīn hěn biāozhǔn.
(His) pronunciation is very good (standard).
发音很标准。

Xiànzài tā hái zài xué Zhōngwén, yīnwèi tā xiǎng dào Zhōngguó qù.
Now he is still learning Chinese, because he wants to go to China.
现在他还在学中文，因为他想到中国去。

Tā xiǎng dào Zhōngguó qù zuò shēngyì.
He wants to go to China and do business (there).
他想到中国去作生意。

3.

A: Nǐ huì shuō shénme wàiyǔ?
A: What foreign languages can you speak?
A: 你会说什么外语？

B: Wǒ huì shuō yìdiǎr Fáyǔ, kěshì shuō de bù¹ hǎo.
B: I can speak a little French, but I can't speak it well.
B: 我会说一点儿法语，可是说得不好。

A: Fǎguó rén shuō huà, nǐ tīng de dǒng ma?
A: (When) French people speak, do you understand?
A: 法国人说话，你听得懂吗？

B: Yàoshi shuō de màn, wǒ tīng de dǒng,
B: If (they) speak slowly, I understand.
B: 要是说得慢，我听得懂，

¹ bù (not) is the original form. It becomes bú before a four tone as in búhuì.

B: shuō de kuài, jiù tīng bù dǒng.
 B: (if they) speak fast, then (I) don't understand.
 B: 说得快，就听不懂。

A: Fáyǔ, 'How do you do?' zénme shuō?
 A: (In) French, how do you say 'How do you do?'
 A: 法语 'How do you do?' 怎么说？

B: 'How do you do?' Fáyǔ shì 'Bonjour.'
 B: 'How do you do?' (in) French is 'Bonjour.'
 B: 'How do you do?' 法语是 'Bonjour.'

A: Nǐ de fāyīn hěn biāozhǔn.
 A: Your pronunciation is very good (standard).
 A: 你的发音很标准。

B: Nǎlǐ, shuō de hái bù hǎo.
 B: No, I don't speak it well yet.
 B: 哪里，说得还不好。

4.

A: Nǐ huì shuō Zhōngwén ma?
 A: Do you speak Chinese?
 A: 你会说中文吗？

B: Huì shuō yìdiǎr, bú tài hǎo.
 B: (I) can speak a little, but not very well.
 B: 会说一点儿，不太好。

A: Nǎlǐ, nǐ shuō de hěn hǎo, hěn biāozhǔn.
 A: You speak it very well, (the pronunciation is) very good.
 A: 哪里，你说得很好，很标准。

B: Bùxíng bùxíng. Hěn duō huà hái tīng bu dǒng.
 B: Not really. (I) still can't understand many words.
 B: 不行不行。很多话还听不懂。

A: Wǒ shuō huà nǐ tīng de dǒng ma?
 A: Do you understand what I am saying?
 A: 我说话你听得懂吗？

B: Nǐ shuō de màn, wǒ dǒng, yàoshì shuō de kuài, jiù bú tài dǒng.

B: You speak slowly, I understand. If (you) speak fast, then (I) don't understand.

B: 你说得慢，我懂，要是说得快，就不太懂。

A: Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén nán bu nán?

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

A: 你觉得中文难不难？

B: Duìbuqǐ, wǒ méi tīng dǒng, qǐng nǐ zài shuō yíbiàn, hǎo bu hǎo?

B: I am sorry, I didn't understand. Please say it once more, OK?

B: 对不起，我没听懂，请你再说一遍，好不好？

A: Wǒ shuō Zhōngwén nán bu nán?

A: I said: 'Is Chinese difficult?'

A: 我说中文难不难？

B: Kǒuyǔ bú tài nán. Xiě zì hěn nán.

B: Spoken Chinese is not too difficult, writing characters is very difficult.

B: 口语不太难。写字很难。

5.

A: Nǐ rènshi bu rènshi Zhōngguó zì?

A: Do you read (recognize) Chinese characters?

A: 你认识不认识中国字？

B: Wǒ zhǐ rènshi jǐ ge Zhōngguó zì, Zhōngguó zì tài nán xiě.

B: I only recognize some Chinese characters. Chinese characters are too hard to write.

B: 我只认识几个中国字，中国字太难写。

A: Shìde, hěn nán, hěn duō. Zhè ge zì nǐ rènshi ma?

A: Yes, very hard. (there are) many (characters). (Do you) recognize this character?

A: 是的，很难，很多。这个字你认识吗？

B: Zhè ge shì 'hǎo'.

B: This one is 'good'.

B: 这个是“好”。

A: Nà ge ne?

A: How about that one?

A: 那个呢？

B: *Bú rènshi. Shì shénme zì?*

B: No, (I) don't understand. What character is it?

B: 不认识。是什么字？

A: *Zhè ge zì shì 'guó', 'guójiā' de 'guó'.*

A: This character is 'guó', 'guó' as in 'guójiā'.

A: 这个字是"国", "国家"的"国"。

B: *Duibuqǐ, 'guójiā' shì shénme yìsi?*

B: Excuse me, what does 'guójiā' mean?

B: 对不起, "国家"是什么意思？

A: *'guójiā' jiù shì 'country' de yìsi.*

A: 'guójiā' means 'country'.

A: "国家"是'country'的意思。

B: *Duibuqǐ, nǐ shuō de tài kuài, wǒ méi tīng dǒng, qǐng nǐ zài shuō yíbiàn.*

B: Sorry, you speak too fast. I didn't understand. Please say it one more time.

B: 对不起, 你说得太快, 我没听懂, 请你再说一遍。

A: *Wǒ shuō zhè ge zì shì 'guó', 'guójiā' de 'guó'. Yīngwén shì 'country' de yìsi.*

A: I said: " this character is 'guó', 'guó' as in 'guójiā. (In) English it means 'country'.

A: 我说这个字是"国", "国家"的"国"。英文是'country'的意思。

B: *Xièxie.*

B: Thank you.

B: 谢谢。

A: *Bú kèqi.*

A: Not at all.

A: 不客气。

Part II: Utterances and Notes

- Hànyǔ, Zhōngwén are synonyms.
- 'tīng de dǒng' is a 'V (de) resultative' pattern which can be used to express the ability. There is no counterpart in English. It means: listen and understand. So 'tīng bu dǒng' means that although someone listened, he can't understand.
- 'kěshì' means 'but'
- 'yàoshì...jiù...' is a pair of conjunction words which indicates the condition: If... then...

Examples:

Yàoshì tā shuō de kuài, wǒ jiù tīng bu dǒng.
If he speaks fast, then I can't understand.

Yàoshì tā shuō de màn, wǒ jiù tīng de dǒng.
If he speaks slowly, then I can understand.

- 'hái' in 'Tā hái zài xué Zhōngwén.' means an event is still going on: He is still learning Chinese. Note that 'hái' may mean different things in different contexts. In 'Nálǐ, shuō de hái bù hǎo', 'hái' means 'not yet'.
- 'jǐ' in 'Wǒ zhǐ rènshi jǐ ge zì.' means several, some, e.g. jǐ ge rén (several people), jǐ ge zì (several characters).
- Tā xiǎng dào Zhōngguó qù zuò shēngyì. Pay attention to this construction: dào ... qù

Examples:

dào New York qù	go to New York
dào Fǎguó qù	go to France

- Pay attention to the difference among the following phrases:

tīng bu dǒng	can't understand
tīng de dǒng	can understand
méi tīng dǒng	didn't understand

- '...shì ... de yìsi' means: ... is the meaning of ...

Examples:

hǎo shì good de yìsi ('hǎo' means good)
bù hǎo shì bad de yìsi ('bù hǎo' means bad)

Part III: New Sentence Modules

1. I (don't) speak X language very well, fast...

Wǒ	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Zhōngwén Yīngyǔ Fáyǔ Riyǔ </div>	shuō de	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> màn bú tài kuài hěn kuài tài kuài bú tài hǎo bù hǎo bú cuò hěn biāozhǔn² hěn liúli </div>
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2. My pronunciation in X language is ...

Wǒ de	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Zhōngwén Yīngyǔ Fáyǔ Riyǔ </div>	fāyīn	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> fāyīn hěn biāozhǔn fāyīn bú tài hǎo bú tài biāozhǔn </div>
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3. If... then...

Yàoshi	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> nǐ shuō de màn Zhōngguó rén shuō de kuài </div>	wǒ jiù	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> tīng de dòng tīng bu dòng bù dòng bú tài dòng </div>
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4. Because he plans to ...

yīnwèi tā xiǎng dào	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Zhōngguó Riběn Fǎguó Shànghǎi </div>	qù	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> zuò shēngyì xué Zhōngwén gōngzuò </div>
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² 'shuō de hěn biāozhǔn' means that one speaks with a good pronunciation, without any accents.

5. I am sorry, I didn't... Could you please say it again?

Duì bu qǐ

wǒ méi yǒu tīng dǒng wǒ bù dǒng wǒ bú tài huì shuō Zhōngwén

qǐng nǐ zài shuō yíbiàn, hǎo bu hǎo?

6. How to say in...? What does ...mean?

XXX

Zhōngwén Yīngwén Fáyǔ

zénme shuō? shì shénme yìsi? shì de yìsi
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Part IV: Practice Makes Perfect

How to say the following phrases? Please speak out!

can listen and understand, listen and cannot understand
 speak very well, do not speak very well
 speak very fluently, do not speak very fluently
 speak very fast, do not speak very fast
 speak very slowly, do not speak very slowly
 speak too fast, speak too slowly
 pronunciation is very good, pronunciation is not very good
 want to go to China, want to go to Japan, want to go to California, want to go to Shanghai
 want to go to China to study Chinese, want to go to Beijing to do business
 if... then..., if speak slowly, then understand, if speak too fast, then don't understand
 how to say ...
 how to say ... in English, how to say ... in Chinese
 to feel, difficult or not,
 do you feel that Chinese is difficult or not
 do you feel that Japanese is difficult or not
 do you feel that Russian is difficult or not
 please say it again
 to recognize, do not recognize, do not recognize Chinese characters
 difficult to write, difficult to speak, difficult to learn
 what's the meaning?
 it is the meaning of ...

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

Nǐ huì shuō Zhōngwén ma?
 Wǒ shuō Zhōngwén, nǐ tīng de dòng ma?
 Yào shì wǒ shuō de hěn kuài, nǐ tīng de dòng tīng bu dòng?
 Nǐ Zhōngwén shuō de hěn biāozhǔn.
 Nǐ rènshi bu rènshi Zhōngguó zì?
 Nǐ huì bu huì xiě Zhōngguó zì?
 Zhèi ge zì nǐ rènshi bu rènshi?
 Zhōngguó zì nán bu nán xiě?
 Zhōngguó zì hěn duō ma?
 Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén nán bu nán?
 Nǐ xiǎng dào Zhōngguó qù ma?
 Nǐ xiǎng dào Zhōngguó qù zuò shénme?
 Nǐ hái huì shuō shénme wàiyǔ?
 Zài jiàn, ... yǔ zénme shuō?
 Duì bu qǐ, qǐng nǐ zài shuō yíbiàn.
 'Guójiā', Yīngwén shì shénme yìsi?

'Good bye' Zhōngwén zénme shuō?

Now try to say something more about your study of Chinese.

Please tell a Chinese friend what your name is, where you work. Tell him that you are learning Chinese now. You want to go to China to do business. Now you can speak a little Chinese. Some words you don't understand yet. If Chinese people speak too fast, you don't understand. You only know (recognize) some characters, but you don't write (use 'zhǐ rènshi jǐ ge zì, kěshì bù huì xiě...'). You feel that spoken Chinese is not that difficult. Characters are too difficult. There are too many characters. You also feel (yě juéde) that spoken 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.