



# An Introduction to Learning The Chinese Language

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# Introduction

For many years now, the world has been insisting that everyone should speak English. But across the world, countries have provided their young with initiatives to learn other languages also. Yet in recent months, Americans have now come to realize that there is now a need for people to be able to speak languages that are more specialized. Certainly the fact is that one language which many schools are now considering including within their curriculums, not just in the USA, but around the world, is Chinese.

Presently, 1.3 billion people speak Chinese around the world, and of this, 885 million speak Mandarin (the official language of China), which also happens to be the most dominant dialect. Currently in the USA, only 24,000 students (Grades 7 through to 12) are actually studying this language, but their numbers are growing steadily.

However, the biggest problem that many educators in the US are facing when it comes to expanding their Chinese programs, is finding people who are actually qualified to teach it. There are only a few Universities in the USA which offer programs to allow people to train and gain their teacher's certification in teaching the Chinese language. One University (George Mason) included a program which would allow people to gain their teacher's certificate for teaching Mandarin, and a total of 2 people enrolled on the course. This is where exchange courses come in useful, and are very critical in helping ensure that this language, along with Arabic, can be taught in US schools.

However for those that are interested in learning the Chinese language, you will find it can be very difficult. So you need to be prepared to spend a good deal of your spare time, as you will find it will take some time to learn. However, through this book, we hope to provide you with some useful information that will help you to learn Chinese.

# Chapter 1 –

## **Some Simple Facts Regarding the Chinese Language**

Today, the most standard form of Chinese that is spoken is known as Standard Mandarin, which is based on a dialect spoken in Beijing. It is also the official language now used by the people of China, as well as those in Taiwan, and one of 4 official languages spoken by those people from Singapore.

Also, you will find that this language has now become one of the six official languages used by the United Nations.

Another standard language that is spoken by Hong Kong and Macau, which are also part of China, is Standard Cantonese.

But in this book, we will be looking closely at how to learn Standard Mandarin.

Most of the dialects now spoken by the Chinese people will often consist of words spoken by their ancestors, back when China was made up of various different ethnic groups.

It was only after these groups had come together under the Chinese empire, that they started to unite the languages that they spoke.

However, as the Chinese use a standard formal written language, no matter what dialect they speak, people will often regard these dialects as being equal. But, in fact, they are like any other country, their own individuals; they just use a standardized form of writing.

It was during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that Beijing Mandarin became the more standard form of Chinese language to be used. But it was at this time many Chinese did speak variations of Mandarin, though they were very limited.

However, things changed when the education system in China was based on Standard Mandarin, and was to be used as the language for carrying out instructions. Today, nearly every person in mainland China speaks Mandarin.

It is important to note that the various different dialects of spoken Chinese use tones. Some areas of China (in the North) will only use as many as 3 tones, while in Southern China, they can use between 6 or 10 tones as they speak.

Today, more and more people are looking to learn Mandarin in the Western hemisphere of the world. Up until about 10 years ago, it was proving to be extremely difficult to find someone who could teach others this language.

Today, there are quite a number of schools across the US, and across the rest of the world, where this language is now being taught.

Back in 1991 there were only 2,000 people taking China's official Chinese language proficiency test, and this figure had risen to 117,660 by 2005. In fact, the Ministry of Education in China believe

that there are over 30 million people around the world who are learning Mandarin.

## **Chapter 2 –**

# **Ways to Learn the Chinese Language**

If, like many others, you have wanted to learn a language which is unique and not one that many people are familiar with, then why not consider learning Chinese? Below we provide you with some easy tips which can help you to learn a language, which is becoming increasingly essential in modern life.

First, you need to look at the best way that You learn any subject. Are you someone who learns a language best when they rewrite phrases that they have heard? Or are you someone who finds it much easier to learn a language by rereading things over and over again?

You may find it much easier to learn the language if you either speak it out loud yourself, or hear someone else speaking it for you. But if you are unsure, then try practicing each technique that has been mentioned above, and you will soon see which of them will help you most to remember what you are learning more effectively.

Rewriting each phrase or word on to a page of a book will definitely help, as this means that you have something that you can refer back to if you are having problems.

It is also essential that you learn the 4 different tones that the Chinese people use when they speak. Each tone will be drawn over the word that is spoken in order to give it a different form of pronunciation.

The first tone that the Chinese people use is high but flat. This means that the voice stays flat and should not either rise or dip in any way.

The second tone that the Chinese use is a rising tone, and the person's voice should rise as they speak.

The third tone is known as the dipping tone, and when a word is spoken it will go up and then dip.

While the fourth tone used when speaking Chinese is the lowering tone. When used, this makes the word being spoken sound manlier.

The best way of learning how the tones sound is through listening to a native speaker, as for many, actually getting an idea of what they should sound like simply by reading text is extremely difficult.

There are various ways that you can learn to speak Chinese, and below are some ways that you may want to try.

1. In order to learn more phrases, you should try and get hold of a copy of "How to Learn Mandarin". This you can easily do either through your local bookstore, or online through such sites as Amazon.
2. Get hold of some CD's which you can then play while driving your car, or while relaxing at home.

3. If you are able to, and your local School or College are offering them, then take part in an introductory course to learning Chinese. This is probably one of the best ways to not only gain confidence in speaking the language, but also help to ensure that you pronounce the words and tones correctly. By doing such a course, a person will be able to have a solid foundation for then learning the language on their own.
  
4. Another way of helping yourself to learn the language more effectively is by using flashcards, which can be extremely helpful. However, when using this system, it is also important that you practice each word that you learn by using it in sentences.

When it actually comes to learning any language, and not just Chinese, persistence is the key. Say you have learned something, then you should not stop studying it or repeating what you have learned, otherwise you will find that you will forget it.

Certainly practice is essential when it comes to learning any language, but you should not practice too much, or else you will find that you also begin to forget what you have already learned. Overdoing the studying will simply add too much information to the brain, causing some of what was learned to be dumped to make space for the new information (this relates to short term and long term memory).

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