

Complete Lesson Transcript – Lesson 4 [English]

Hosts: Adam Menon / Kirin Yang

Adam: Hello everyone, my name is Adam.

Kirin: [Hello everyone](#) . [I'm Kirin](#) .

Adam: And welcome to lesson 4 of the ChineseLearnOnline.com podcast series teaching Mandarin Chinese. Today we're going to continue where we left off in lesson three talking about countries, nationalities and their languages. We're now going to try and put together what we know so far. We know how to say "I am" and we know how to say the names of a few countries. So with that in mind, how would you say "I am American"?

Kirin: [I am American](#) .

Adam: Good, I hope you got that right. Let's try another one. How would you say "Are you Chinese?"

Kirin: [Are you Chinese](#) ?

Adam: As you can see, adding the [question particle](#) at the end turns a statement into a question. Today, we're going to try and answer some yes or no questions. Now one big difference in Chinese is that there is no definitive word for "yes" or "no," so you have to follow a particular syntax when answering such questions. Now if you wanted to answer in the affirmative as in "Yes, I am Chinese," you would reply with:

Kirin: [Yes, I'm Chinese](#) .

Adam: Now, there are no new words there as you can see. We reply in affirmative by restating the verb in question – in this case it's the verb "to be" or [to be](#) . So the reply here means "Yes, I am Chinese." Let's try another one. Ask if I am Canadian.

Kirin: [Are you Canadian](#) ?

Adam: So if you wanted to reply "yes, I'm Canadian" you would say:

Kirin: [Yes, I'm Canadian](#) .

Adam: Now, we'll learn the word used for the negative, which is quite simply

Kirin: [Not](#)

Adam: which is a fourth tone.

Kirin: **not**

Adam: by adding **not** in front of a verb, you negate it. So let's ask the question "Are you British?"

Kirin: **Are you British ?**

Adam: To reply in the negative we'd say:

Kirin: **Am not . I'm not British .**

Adam: On our website, in the notes link for [lesson 4](#) you'll find several more examples using this structure. Let's now learn a couple of new verbs. The first one is...

Kirin: **To be able to .**

Adam: This is a fourth tone.

Kirin: **To be able to .**

Adam: Now the verb **to be able to** means "to be able to do something." We'll use it in a moment. The other verb I want to introduce is:

Kirin: **To speak .**

Adam: This is a first tone.

Kirin: **To speak .**

Adam: The verb **to speak** means "to speak." So putting these two verbs together, we get:

Kirin: **to be able to speak**

Adam: ...which means "to be able to speak." So with that in mind, can you guess what this next question means?

Kirin: **Can you speak Chinese ?**

Adam: Again?

Kirin: **Can you speak Chinese ?**

Adam: So by the **question particle** at the end, we know that it's a question. Now the literal meaning is "You can speak Chinese?" or simply "Can you speak Chinese?" Now knowing what we know about how we answer such questions how would you answer that question in the affirmative?

Kirin: **Able to . I can speak Chinese .**

Adam: And how would you reply "No, I can't speak Chinese"?

Kirin: **Can't . I can't speak Chinese .**

Adam: Now perhaps as beginners, your current answer to the question of "Can you speak Chinese?" may be "no," but we hope to change that over time. So to build up your confidence, perhaps you would like to answer with "I can speak a little." So how do we say "a little"?

Kirin: **A little .**

Adam: That's a first tone followed by a third tone.

Kirin: **A little .**

Adam: So how would you say "I can speak a little"?

Kirin: **I can speak a little .**

Adam: Great, so let's do some practice with the vocabulary we have learned so far. First, I'll ask you to translate the following from English to Chinese. Try this yourself before listening to the answer.

Are you Australian?

Kirin: **Are you Australian ?**

Adam: No, I am American.

Kirin: **Am not , I am American .**

Adam: Can you speak French?

Kirin: **Can you speak French ?**

Adam: No I can't. I can speak English.

Kirin: [Can't](#) . I can speak [English](#) .

Adam: Great, so hopefully you got all that. We'll now teach the possessive particle. We know how to say "I":

Kirin: [I](#) .

Adam: How do we say "my"?

Kirin: [My](#) .

Adam: So you can see how easy that is. Just add the neutral tone [possessive particle](#) and you get the possessive. Similarly, to say "your" we can say:

Kirin: [Your](#) .

Adam: Good, I think you can see how easy that is and how it extends to other pronouns. A more detailed list can be found in the notes link for Lesson 4 on our website. Now based on what you've learned, what do you think the following statement means?

Kirin: [Your Chinese is very good](#) .

Adam: This one may be a little tricky but if you look at the literal translation you should be able to figure it out. "Your Chinese speak's very good." Basically, that means "Your Chinese is very good." You could use that same construction to tell someone their English is very good too.

Now you may notice that the grammar of this sentence is different from English. Many times in Chinese, the subject is presented first, followed by what's special about it. So in English we might say "It's raining heavily today." In Chinese that would become "Today, rain falls heavily" or something like that. Don't worry too much about that at this point. Our goal is to give you more examples to get a better feel for the language rather than studying boring grammar rules that you're not likely to remember. As the course advances, the notes section of each lesson will summarize the highlights and grammar patterns of each lesson. So don't fright.

Now let's look at if you just wanted to tell someone "I'm sorry, my Chinese isn't very good." First, we need the word for "I'm sorry." It's actually the same word they use for "excuse me." And how do we say that, Kirin?

Kirin: [I'm sorry](#) / [Excuse me](#) .

Adam: So it's actually three characters. The first two are fourth tones and the last character is a third tone. However since this word is said a lot, and usually quite quickly,

the central character actually adopts a neutral tone, making it fourth, neutral and third tones.

Kirin: I'm sorry .

Adam: So that means "I'm sorry" or "excuse me."

Now to say "My Chinese isn't very good," you actually have all the vocabulary necessary to say that. Let's see if we can put it together.

Kirin: My Chinese isn't very good .

Adam: Again.

Kirin: My Chinese isn't very good .

Adam: So again, same structure as before – my Chinese, speak's not good.

Well, lots of new words and phrases today. Take a look at the summary on our vocabulary page, with beautiful Chinese characters and all. You can also find the detailed word for word transcript in the complete section. I know that this is the final lesson that features free premium tools for everyone. If you would like to continue with us and have these types of features for all lessons, then please consider a subscription. Then join us again for lesson 5!

Kirin: Goodbye .