

Complete Lesson Transcript – Lesson 61 [Simplified]

Hosts: Adam Menon / Kirin Yang

Adam: ChineseLearnOnline.com Lesson 61: The Four Tones revisited.

Hello, and welcome to Lesson 61 of the ChineseLearnOnline.com podcast series teaching Mandarin Chinese. I'm your host Adam.

Kirin: 大家好。我是 Kirin。欢迎来到第六十一课。

Adam: Today's lesson also marks the beginning of level two of our series, which means a slight bump in the level of difficulty used here. Over the next little while we will try and convert more of the lesson teaching into Chinese bit by bit. As always though, transcripts and translations of everything we say here is available in the Premium section of our website.

We're going to begin level 2 by expanding on what was taught in level one. Now if we look back to our first ever lesson, that was on the four tones. There's also a fifth tone which we've come across, which is a neutral tone. By now, you've hopefully mastered the differences between these tones and are comfortable enough to start discussing them in Chinese, so that's what we'll do from here on. So Kirin, how do we say "The five tones" in Chinese?

Kirin: 五种声调。

Adam: So let's break that down. Five 种. You may remember, 种 from lesson 25 is a measure word meaning "kind" or "type." So that gives us five kind 声调 which is our first new word of the day and literally means "sound tone."

Kirin: 声调。

Adam: We'll come back to this in a moment. Now the five tones we talked about earlier in English are referred to in the same order as first, second, third, fourth and fifth tones in Chinese. So the first tone in Chinese is:

Kirin: 第一声。

Adam: The second tone is

Kirin: 第二声。

Adam: The third tone is

Kirin: 第三声。

Adam: And the fourth tone is

Kirin: 第四声。

Adam: So, hopefully, you get the hang of that. And lastly we have the neutral tone which is:

Kirin: 第五声。

Adam: Now in our course, we'll refer to the neutral tone as the fifth tone. But in Chinese, they call it the neutral tone which is 轻声。

So when learning Chinese you, of course, will come across new words from time to time and may need to know what tones are used. Now first, I need to make a distinction between

“word” and “characters.” In English, of course, words are broken down into letters of the alphabet. The Chinese language doesn’t use letters, of course, it uses Chinese characters. So some words may consist of one or more Chinese characters, each of which uses one of the five tones that we just talked about. So first Kirin, why don’t you tell us how you say “character” in Chinese.

Kirin: 字.

Adam: Again

Kirin: 字.

Adam: So if I wanted to know what tone a particular character used, how would I ask that?

Kirin: 这个字是哪一种声调?

Adam: Which literally means “this character is which kind tone?”

Kirin: 这个字是哪一种声调?

Adam: So I could start by asking:

Kirin: 字是哪一种声调?

Adam: And how would you answer that?

Kirin: 字是第四种声调.

Adam: So, hopefully, you see how that works. Let’s go back to 声调 which we learned today. This word can be broken down into two characters 声 and 调. So let me ask you:

Kirin: 声, 这个字是哪一种声调?

声是第一种声调.

Adam: So again, literally, she answered: 声 is first type of tone.

Kirin: 声是第一种声调.

Adam: Alright, and let me ask:

Kirin: 调, 这个字是哪一种声调?

调是第四种声调.

Adam: Great, so I hope you can get the hang of this.

Now, of course, many times one or more characters are combined to form a word. To keep things clear, we’ll separate them as we did with 声调. So Kirin why don’t you pick a word we’ve learned before and ask us what tones are used there.

Kirin: 好, 昨天, 昨是哪一声?

Adam: Great, so a little shorter form of that question. And how would we answer that?

Kirin: 昨是第二声.

Adam: So you can see the shorter form is used to answer this as well. Let’s try another one.

Kirin: 汉堡的汉是第几声?

Adam: So yet another way to ask this same question. 汉堡的汉 means the 汉 in 汉堡.

Kirin: 汉堡的汉是第几声?

Adam: 第几声? You may remember that 几 means “how many?” So the literal form of this question is the 汉 in 汉堡 is “which tone?” as in “which position number?”

Kirin: 汉堡的 汉 是第几声?

Adam: So how would you answer that?

Kirin: 汉 是第四声.

Adam: You can see more of these examples in the podcast review for this lesson. For now though, let’s review the vocabulary taught in today’s lesson.

Kirin: 五种声调.

Adam: The five tones.

Kirin: 第一声.

Adam: The first tone.

Kirin: 第二声.

Adam: The second tone.

Kirin: 第三声.

Adam: The third tone.

Kirin: 第四声.

Adam: The fourth tone.

Kirin: 第五声.

Adam: The fifth tone, or the neutral tone.

Kirin: 轻声.

Adam: Neutral tone.

Kirin: 第几声?

Adam: Which tone?

Kirin: 字.

Adam: Character.

So that’s the new vocabulary for you to study today. We’ll be adding more to this in our next lesson; so please join us for that.

As this is the first lesson of level two, some of the premium features are available for free to try out. So take a look that on our website and then decide whether or premium subscription suits you, then join us again next time for lesson 62.

Kirin: 再见.