Learn a Chinese Phrase

Supplementary Learner’s Guide

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Detroit, Michigan
The Learn a Chinese Phrase video series has been produced with the idea that if a phrase is fun or amusing, the learner will be more likely to remember it. Although many phrases we introduce may be memorable, as language instructors we realize that learners must ultimately utilize and regenerate the words and structures within these phrases if they are to become proficient in the language. In essence, we are drawing learners from the enticing (i.e. “sugar coated”) metaphorical phrase to the mechanics of learning individual words, their usage, and their potential expansion.

Verbs in one language seldom correspond perfectly with their alleged counterparts in another language. The verb “to know” in English, for example, is generally translated into Chinese as “zhī dào” when it means “to know a fact” or “to know a person by reputation”, but as “rèn shì” when it refers to “better knowing” or “meeting a person for the first time.” Because of these obvious linguistic differences and potential pitfalls, we have taken considerable pains to demonstrate as simply and as clearly as possible how targeted verbs should and should not be used.

Nouns, though less subject to change between languages (a rose is a rose is a rose!), generally offer a platform for vocabulary expansion in Chinese. Given the lack of cognates between Chinese and English, any chance to expand one’s vocabulary by easy association should be seized! Thus, when the noun “niú” is introduced as the Chinese word for “cow,” for example, we show the learner that several important compound words also include “niú”, such as “niú pái” (“steak” or literally “cow ribs”), “niú ròu” (“beef” or literally “cow meat”), “niú nǎi” (“milk” or literally “cow milk”), and “niú pí” (“leather” or literally “cow skin”).

Of course, we realize that learning a language is an arduous and often uncomfortable process. We are also aware that in the quest to acquire a primary language, children crave comfort and repetition. With these two concepts in mind, we have placed a special emphasis on creating a highly consistent, visually pleasing, and unintimidating layout that will be of special help to visual learners. Our goal, thus, is to teach simple and concise lessons where possible, rather than to be highly thorough or exhaustive. Additionally, we understand that like a children’s book, a language study guide should be inviting and reviewed on a frequent basis!

It may be important to briefly address the question “Why idioms?” In addition to the assertion that they are fun, interesting, and a window on culture, it is critical to note that the majority of any given language is metaphorical or non-literal. Beyond ordering food, asking for directions and simple negotiation, there is a never-ending world of culturally-based metaphors and idioms to be encountered in daily conversation. This highly important aspect of language cannot be ignored.

In sum, we hope that our Learn a Chinese Phrase videos, supplementary videos, and Supplementary Learner’s Guide will help provide Chinese language learners not only with phrases to pepper their conversations and amuse their Chinese-speaking friends, but with multiple platforms on which they can build their vocabulary and generate new sentences, which is so very critical in the language learning process!
Learn a Chinese Phrase

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Learn a Chinese Phrase

暗恋

Tá ànliàn nàge nǚhái.

Example: 他暗恋那个女孩儿。

àn
暗 adj. dark; dim

Tā chuānzhe yì tiáo àn hóng de qúnzi.
她穿着一条暗红的裙子。

She is wearing a dark red dress.

Zhè ge fángjiān de dēng tài àn le.
这个房间的灯太暗了。

This room’s light is too dark.

ànhào
暗号
secret code or signal
lit: secret number

Qǐng shuō chū ànhào.
请说出暗号。

Please state the secret code.

ànqì
暗器
hidden/concealed weapon

Tā dàizhe ànqì.
他带着暗器。

He is carrying concealed

liàn
恋 v. to love; to long for

Tāmen liànài le.
他们恋爱了。

They are in love.

Tā hěn liànjiù.
他很恋旧。

He is sentimental/nostalgic.

Tā shì gè liànjiā de rén.
他是个恋家的人。

He is a family (focused) person.

Cultural Note:

In mainland China: 爱人 (àirén) generally refers to one’s spouse; 恋人 (liànrén) generally refers to a boyfriend or a girlfriend.
Wearing Small Shoes

“Wear small shoes” is a phrase in Chinese that means to be in the dog house. It can also mean to give someone a hard time or make their life difficult.

**Example:**

Wǒ de tài tài gěi wǒ chuān xiǎoxié.

我 的 太 太 给 我 穿 小 鞋。

**chuān**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>chūn zài chuān yīfu.</th>
<th>He is putting on his clothes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tā chuānzhe yī tiáo jiǔ niúzǎikù.</td>
<td>She is wearing an old pair of jeans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā zài chuān yīfu.</td>
<td>He is putting on his clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā chuān guò rénqún.</td>
<td>She passed through the crowd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**chuān guò**

v. to pass through

**xié**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>píxié</th>
<th>leather shoes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tuōxié</td>
<td>slipper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gāogēnxié</td>
<td>high heels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liángxié</td>
<td>sandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dòngdongxié</td>
<td>Crocs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yùndòng xié</td>
<td>sport shoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**zhī shuāng**

mw. 只, 双

**Video**
**Wind by the Ear**

"In One Ear and Out the Other"

Wǒ bǎ tàitai de huà dāng ěr páng fēng.

**Example:** 我把太太的话当耳旁风。

páng

旁 n. side

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lù páng</th>
<th>pángmén</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>路旁</td>
<td>旁门</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tā zhànzài lù páng. 他站在路旁。

He is standing at the road side.

Tā cóng pángmén zǒu jìn lái. 他从旁门走进来。

He walks in through the side door.

pángtīng

旁听

attend/audit as a visitor

Wǒ pángtīng tā de kè. 我旁听他的课。

I sit in on his class.

pángguān

旁观

stand by

Alice hé Nolan zài dǎjià, Melinda zài pángguān. Alice和Nolan在打架，Melinda在旁观。

Alice and Nolan are fighting, Melinda is standing by.

fēng

风 n. wind

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>wēifēng</th>
<th>yí zhèn/yì gǔ wēifēng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>微风</td>
<td>一阵/一股微风</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breeze</td>
<td>a breeze</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dáfēng</th>
<th>yí zhèn/yì gǔ dáfēng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>大风</td>
<td>一阵/一股大风</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gale</td>
<td>a gale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lóngjuǎnfēng</th>
<th>yí zhèn/yì gǔ lóngjuǎnfēng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>龙卷风</td>
<td>一阵/一股龙卷风</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tornado</td>
<td>a tornado</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>táifēng</th>
<th>yízhèn/yì chǎng táifēng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>台风</td>
<td>一阵/一场台风</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typhoon</td>
<td>a typhoon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10,000 Fans

**wàn rén mí**
万人迷

“Extremely Popular Person”

Nolan 是个万人迷。

**Example:** Nolan 是个万人迷。

wàn
万
num. ten thousand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>liǎng wàn yuán</th>
<th>Fángzū shì liǎng wàn yuán.</th>
<th>房租是两万元。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>两万元</td>
<td>20,000 RMB.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 yuan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liǎng wàn jiǔ qiān rén</td>
<td>Wēi‘ēn zhōuli dàxué yǒu 29,000 míng xuéshēng.</td>
<td>伟恩州立大学有29,000名学生。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>两万九千人</td>
<td>Wayne State University has 29,000 students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29,000 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liù shí qī wǔ qiān rén</td>
<td>Dǐtèlǜ yǒu 675,000 rén.</td>
<td>底特律有675,000人。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>六十七万五千人</td>
<td>Detroit has 675,000 people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>675,000 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

mí
迷人
adj. attracting; charming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bàngqiú mí</th>
<th>baseball fan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>棒球迷</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jīngjù mí</td>
<td>Beijing opera fan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>京剧迷</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gānlànqiú mí</td>
<td>(American) football fan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>橄榄球迷</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gōngfu diànyǐng mí</td>
<td>Kung fu movie fan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>功夫电影迷</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

mirén
迷人
adj. attracting; charming

| jǐngsè mírén | The scenery charms people./ |
|--------------| The scenery is charming. |
| 景色迷人     |                          |

Tā de wēixiào hěn mírén.
她的微笑很迷人。

Her smile is very charming.
**Fallen into Soup Chicken**

"A Drowned Rat"

Nǐ xiǎng yí gè luò tāng jī.

*Example:* 你像一个落汤鸡。

- **luò**  落 v. to fall; to drop
- **tāng** 汤 n. soup  mw: 碗
- **jī** 鸡

- **mǐtāng** 米汤  *rice broth*
- **ròutāng** 肉汤  *meat soup*
- **dòufu tāng** 豆腐汤  *tofu soup*
- **jídàn tāng** 鸡蛋汤  *egg drop soup*

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**Cultural Note:**

“汤 (tāng)” vs. “羹 (gēng)”

“汤” refers to a thin, broth-based soup; “羹” refers to a thicker soup, generally containing starch.

- **Fēijī ānquán jiàngluò le.** 飞机安全降落了。  
  The airplane landed safely.

- **Cháo zhǎng cháo luò.** 潮涨潮落。  
  The tide rises and falls.

- **Tàiyáng luòshān le.** 太阳落山了。  
  The sun set behind the mountain.
bāo diànhuà zhōu
煲电话粥
Cooking Telephone Cereal
To Have a Long Telephone Conversation

Sofíá zài bāo diànhuà zhōu.
Example:  Sofíá 在煲电话粥。

bāo
煲
v. to cook over long period of
time (simmer)

zhōu
粥
n. porridge; gruel; congee
mw: 碗

wǎn

bǎizhōu
白粥
plain gruel

shūcài zhōu
蔬菜粥
vegetable congee

hǎixiān zhōu
海鲜粥
seafood congee

Cultural Note:
The Chinese dish commonly
known as hotpot is translated
“huoguo” or literally fire pot.

Bao usually refers to an earthen
container, in which food is pre-
pared and also frequently
served. The closest English
equivalent to “bao” would be
“casserole.”
Picking Bones Out of Eggs

“Nitpick”

Nǐ zài jīdàn lǐ tiāo gǔtou.

Example: 你在鸡蛋里挑骨头。

Tā tiāo chū làn píngguǒ. He picks out the rotten apples.

Tā tiāo chū yúcì. He picks out the fish bones.

Tā tiāo chū làn píngguǒ. He picks out the rotten apples.

Cóng zhè xiē chènyī zhōng tiāo liǎng jiàn. From these shirts, please choose two.

Wǒ xiǎng tiāo yì zhāng zuì hǎo de huà. I want to select the best painting.
**pèng dīngzi**  
碰钉子  
*Bumping into a Nail*  
“Getting Rejected” “Getting Shot Down”

Wǒ pèng dīngzi le.  
我碰钉子了。

**Example:** 我碰钉子了。

**pèng**  
碰  
v. physically touch or bump

Tā bǎ shuǐpíng pèng fān le.  
他把水瓶碰翻了。  
*He knocked the bottle over.*

Wǒ de tóu pèng dào mén shàng le.  
我的头碰到门上了。  
*I bumped my head on the door.*

**dìng**  
钉  
n. nail; peg; tack  
mw: 枚

**tú dīng**  
图钉  
pushpin/thumbtack

**dàtóu dīng**  
大头钉  
common nail  
lit: large-headed nail

**díngshū dīng**  
订书钉  
staple

**luòsī dīng**  
螺丝钉  
screw  
lit: screw nail

**pèng**  
碰  
v. meet; encounter; “run into”

Wǒ zài jiē shàng pèng dào yī gè péngyǒu.  
我在街上碰到一个朋友。  
*I ran into a friend on the street.*

Tā pèng dào máfan le.  
他碰到麻烦了。  
*He ran into trouble.*

**dīng**  
钉  
v. nail; pin; follow

Tā zài dìng dīngzi.  
他在钉钉子。  
*He is pounding a nail.*

Tā bǎ dìtú dīng zài qiáng shàng.  
他把地图钉在墙上。  
*He pins the map on the wall.*

Tā bǎ tōngzhī dīng zài bùgàolán shàng.  
她把通知钉在布告栏上。  
*She tacked the notice on the bulletin board.*
### Eating a Duck Egg

**"Getting a Goose Egg" “Getting a Zero” “Getting Shut Out”**

**Wǒ kǎoshì chī le yādàn.**

**Example:** 我考试吃了鸭蛋。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yā</th>
<th>dàn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>鸭</td>
<td>蛋</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dàn</th>
<th>n. egg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>egg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| jīdàn | chicken egg |
| جيدين |
| 鸡蛋 |

| édàn | goose egg |
| عدان |
| 鹅蛋 |

| niǎodàn | bird egg |
| 尼鸭蛋 |
| 鸟蛋 |

| dàn'gāo | cake |
| 厕高 |
| 蛋糕 |

| dànzhǎng | scrambled eggs |
| 厕掌 |
| 煎蛋 |

| shuǐzhǔdàn | boiled eggs |
| 水煮蛋 |
| 蛋汤 |

| jiāndàn | scrambled eggs |
| 增蛋 |
| 煎蛋 |

| dànghú | egg yolk |
| 厕弧 |
| 蛋黄 |

| dàn'pái | egg yolk |
| 厕牌 |
| 蛋清 |

| dàn'ké | egg white |
| 厕壳 |
| 蛋壳 |

| yāròu | duck meat |
| 厕肉 |
| 鸭肉 |

| xiǎoyā | duckling |
| 小鸭 |
| 小鸭 |

| yāyā | wild duck |
| 喜鸭 |
| 野鸭 |

| yāzhǎng | duck feet |
| 喜掌 |
| 鸭掌 |

| yāzhān | duck soup |
| 喜蘸 |
| 鸭汤 |

| yāshémào | cap |
| 喜膝帽 |
| 鸭舌帽 |

| yāzuǐshòu | platypus |
| 喜嘴兽 |
| 鸭嘴兽 |
diū sān là sì

丢三落四

Nǐ zǒngshì diū sān là sì.

Example: 你总是丢三落四。

**diū**

丢  v. lose something concrete

Wǒ de yàoshi diū le.
我的钥匙丢了。

Tā bǎ zhǐ diū jìn fèizhǐ lǒu.
他把纸丢进废纸篓。

Wǒ de yǎnjìng diū le.
我的眼镜丢了。

Tā bǎ wǒ de huà diū zài nǎo hòu.
她把我的话丢在脑后。

Wǒ de qiánbāo diū le.
我的钱包丢了。

Wǒ bǎ zāng yīfu diū jìn yīwù lán.
我把脏衣服丢进衣物篮。

**là**

落  v. forget; leave a object behind

bǎ + O + là + zài + place

把 + O + 落 + 在 + place

Wǒ bǎ zuòyè là zài jiā lǐ le.
我把作业落在家里了。

Tā là zài wǒmen de hòumiàn.
他落在我们的后面。

Wǒ bǎ hùzhào là zài xuéxiào le.
我把护照落在学校了。

Tā là le yí gè xīngqī de kè.
他落了一个星期的课。

Wǒ bǎ shǒujī là zài bàngōngshì le.
我把手机落在办公室了。

Tā là le yī gè xīngqī de kè.
He is a whole week behind with his lessons.