LEARNING CHINESE
A FOUNDATION COURSE IN MANDARIN

in four parts

I. Units 1-4 / Chars 1-3

II. Units 5-7 / Chars 4-6

III. Units 8-10 / Chars 7

IV. Units 11-12 / Menu supplement

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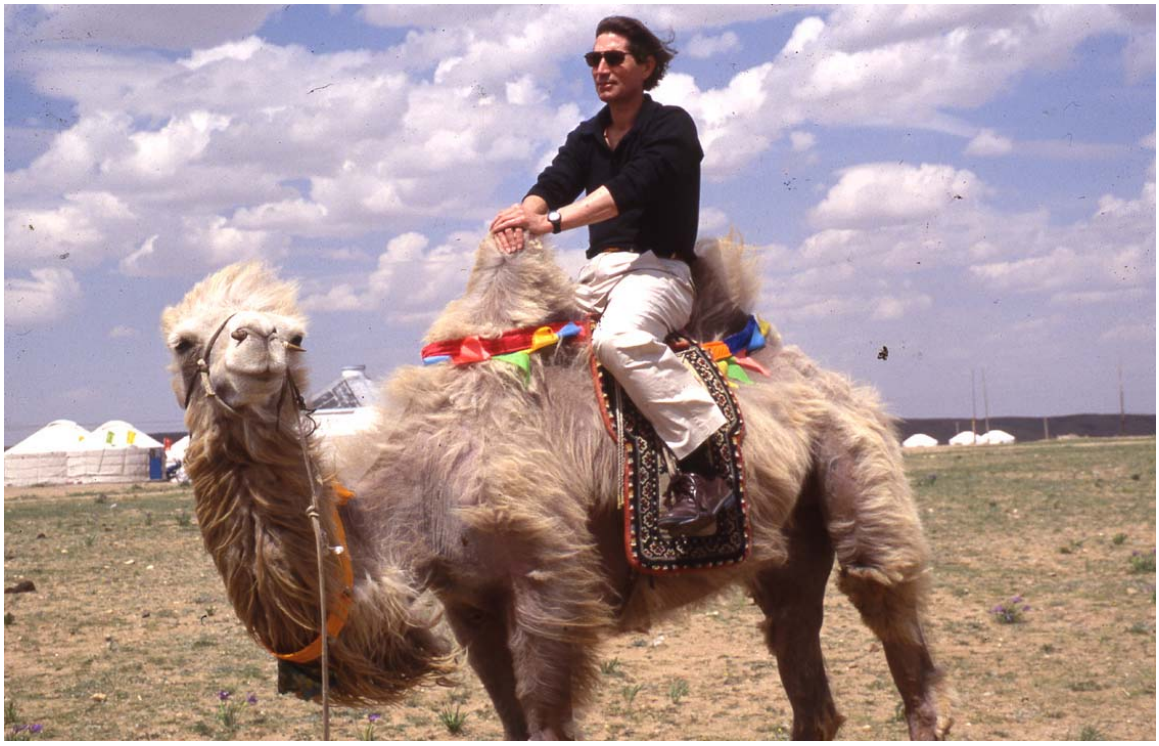

Yǒngwǎng zhíqián (‘bravely go forwards’)

'Onwards and upwards!’

The author gratefully acknowledges initial support from The Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning.

Genesis and acknowledgements

Drafts for the first few lessons of *Learning Chinese: A Foundation Course in Mandarin* started to appear as long as six years ago, and since that time it has been completely revamped at least twice, and then additionally revised or re-ordered two or three times. The resulting work has been used in near final form for several years in the beginning and intermediate courses of MIT's regular Chinese language program, and over the past few years, has been made available to the public through MIT's OpenCourseWare. (Chinese IV, the last segment, goes online in April 2007.)

It is not exaggeration to say that everyone associated with MIT's Chinese language program over the last five or six years has contributed in some way to the final product. Students and teachers have gamely put up with earlier versions, some of them appearing just-in-time, with no small number of typos and errors. It helped to be writing in the new millennium, when pinyin and character material could be produced electronically with proper formatting and illustrations, then easily revised and delivered to students from course websites. It also helped to be at an institution where there was enthusiasm for novelty and experimentation.

My colleagues in the Chinese language program throughout the years that this book was being developed have been Tong Chen (陈彤), who started at MIT when I began there ten years ago, and Jin Zhang (张锦), who joined our small group a few years later. Tong Chen provided the raw text for many of the conversations and narratives in the later units of the book: conversation 9.3 on bargaining for example, the recipe in 11.5, and the long narratives on kinship, the Chinese school system, and on his hometown, Tianjin, all in Unit 12. He also contributed much of the background information and the first version of the long dialogue in the supplementary Menu lesson.

Jin Zhang provided the stroke-order appendices at the end of every character lesson, and both she and Tong Chen, in addition to proving raw material, also helped to improve almost all of the Chinese texts, thought up apt examples, noted mistakes in the Chinese, and made suggestions on the basis of their broad language teaching experience. Min-min Liang (梁敏敏), who had taught with us briefly before rejoining the program as the book neared completion, not only edited some of the later material, but scrupulously reported errors and typos in the late units as she used them to teach Chinese IV. And Amy Liang (梁爱萍), who attended a good number of the classes when the new materials were being used, joined me for tea for many afternoons at 'Au Bon Pain' so that I could grill her for examples and check on usage.

Thanks also go to: Li Yongyan (李咏燕) from Nanjing, and later, City University of Hong Kong, for gathering examples of nursery rhymes, jingles and light verse from her friends for use in the Rhymes and Rhythms section of each Unit; and to Jordan Gilliland, who as an undergraduate and graduate student at MIT, developed the multifaceted flashCube program that, among its many functions, has allowed students to test themselves on the material in *Learning Chinese.*

Finally, I must acknowledge the people who made this enterprise possible in the first place, the teachers who covered the same ground as *Learning Chinese* when I was an undergraduate student at Columbia University and gave me my foundation in Mandarin: Chih Ping C. Sobelman (蘇張之丙) and Roger Yeu (樂亦平).

Where friends and colleagues have provided dialogue or narrative material for the book, I have tried to remember to acknowledge them by name. Even though I did not always take their advice, and frequently injected my own idiosyncratic views into the final product, their willingness to assist and discuss issues has made the book much better than it would otherwise have been.

Enrollments in Chinese classes increased regularly over the years I taught Chinese at MIT, so that I am unlikely to be able to recall the names of all those students who deserve to be noted for contributions over and above the normal enthusiasm and resilience that almost all my students have brought to the task of learning Chinese. So at the risk of omitting a few names, let me cite Kevin A. McComber, who carefully checked through a number of units and provided useful feedback, and Justin M. Paluska and Erwan M. Mazarico who over the course of several semesters, regularly sent me lists of typos and other infelicities that they noted in their perusal of the materials.

After teaching Chinese for so long and – in the time honored fashion of language teachers -- preparing supplementary materials for fine textbooks written by others, I decided it was time to write my own so that I could indulge my own preferences. The result is this book. My hope is that there will be pleasure in it for both students and their teachers.

子曰，知之者，不如好之者， 好之者不如乐之者。

Zǐ yuē, zhī zhī zhě, bùrú hào zhī zhě, hào zhī zhě bùrú lè zhī zhě!

The Master [Confucius] said:

‘Knowing it is not as good as love for it; love for it is not as good as delight in it.’

Preface

The essential features of *Learning Chinese: A Foundation Course in Mandarin.*

Learning Chinese can be divided into four parts: Units 1-4 with Character lessons 1-3; Units 5-7 with Character lessons 4-6; Units 8-10 with Character lesson 7; and Units 11 and 12. The Character lessons at the point where students can read sufficiently well to make use of graded readers of the sort already available. In addition, there is a chapter that provides some general background to the language, a preliminary lesson on the sounds and their transcription, and an appendix on the Chinese menu. Ten essential features of the book are listed below:

1. It is for a diverse audience.
The book is intended for a diverse audience, specialist and non-specialist alike. But it is particularly conceived for the latter group, for whom language courses are the major source of knowledge of China as well as Chinese. Such students need a course that not only guides them towards basic conversational and literary skills, but also stimulates their curiosity about the linguistic setting of the language and the geography, history and culture of the lands where it is spoken. On completing *Learning Chinese*, students will have a solid foundation for further study of the language, whether in a specialized program of Chinese studies, or in conjunction with work or further study in a Chinese speaking country.

2. It has a discursive style, with content woven into units.
The textbook proceeds discursively, with content organized in units that are made up of a dozen or more topics. A unit (including the character portion) may take three weeks or longer to complete. This approach makes it possible to introduce a wealth of interconnected material that can form the basis of engaging conversations and interesting narratives. So, for example, the final unit of Part 1 introduces (among other things) time phrases, names and titles, introductions and subjects of study. These are practiced piecemeal in the early classes; but later, they are woven together along the lines of the culminating dialogue of that unit (in which a Chinese businessman strikes up a conversation with an overseas student on a bus in Sichuan). Within each lesson, topics are selected so students can build up a conversational repertoire that can be practiced, personalized, and extended from lesson to lesson.

3. It is intellectually stimulating.
The textbook is exuberant rather than restrained. Its Chinese content is current and lively, with subjects that range from ordering food to bargaining, from visiting temples to discussing conditions in Tibet. It is also larded with quotations, rhymes, popular culture, linguistic information, and historical and geographical notes. It is intended to be an intellectually stimulating resource for both students and teachers alike.

4. Its contents are easily transformed into classroom activities.
The selection and ordering of topics is based on the author's experience learning and teaching Chinese over several decades. It is guided by what the beginning student is likely to encounter in and out of the classroom setting, as well as by the need to provide a broad foundation of grammatical, lexical and cultural information for future work in Chinese. It mixes practical topics, such as providing biographical information, buying train tickets, or giving toasts, with topics of general interest, such as geography, regional languages and brand names. Such topics are easily enriched with online materials (such as satellite maps, photographs, video clips and advertisements); they are also easy to transform into effective classroom activities.

5. It can be used for self-instruction.
With occasional help from a Chinese speaker, particularly in the early stages, *Learning Chinese* can serve as a manual for self-instruction. It introduces the language systematically; it has extensive explanations about grammar and usage, as well as suggestions about how to learn the material; it provides a pathway for the inductive learning of characters; it comes with the *flashCube* learning and testing program (see #10); and it can be accessed electronically, with a selection of audio files and other materials from MIT's Opencourseware.

6. Its character lessons can be omitted or used independently.
Chinese is learned more effectively when the enormous task of learning to read in characters is separated from the task of learning the sounds, lexicon, grammar and usage of the language. Because *Learning Chinese* separates character reading from other aspects of learning the language, students who wish to study or review the colloquial language without reference to characters can ignore the character components; while those with sufficient grammatical knowledge can study the character material alone.

7. It emphasizes reading skills over writing; it teaches simplified and traditional characters simultaneously.
The character lessons focus on learning to read in characters. Writing is encouraged for its aesthetic qualities, and as a way to draw attention to the distinguishing features of characters; so is word processing, which makes use of character recognition skills. But the emphasis is on reading. Rather than selecting one character set as primary (or offering separate versions of character material), both the traditional and the simplified are introduced simultaneously. Given the fact that the majority of characters have either only one form or very similar forms, learning to read both is quite feasible. For writing purposes, however, students should probably choose one or the other as their primary medium.

8. It uses an inductive approach to promote character reading.
The character lessons are placed at the end of each unit so that, for the most part, the language represented by the characters is already familiar. Within the lessons, characters are exemplified first in compounds and phrases, then in sentences, dialogues, and narratives, as well as in data sets that present information in tabular form. The approach is inductive. It attempts to provide enough context at each step to make reading possible, and to thereby ease the process of familiarization and discourage studying from isolated lists.

9. It accommodates supplementary material.
Learning Chinese is envisioned as the foundation text for a sequence of Chinese language courses, but although it is comprehensive in its coverage, it can easily accommodate traditional or online supplements of the kind that teachers use to enrich a course and make it their own. Nowadays, such materials range from podcasts for listening and blogs for reading to voice-over-IP telephony for actual conversation. These tools can enrich the learning environment but their effectiveness still depends on a strong foundation of linguistic and cultural knowledge.

10. It is accompanied by a learning/testing program called flashCube.
Assistance in internalizing lesson material is provided by way of a computer program called *flashCube*, developed by Jordan Gilliland while a student at MIT. As the name suggests, *flashCube* delivers through the medium of the computer what has traditionally been provided by tools such as flashcards, vocabulary and phrase notebooks, and tape recorders. *flashCube* stores, in a compact and convenient format, much of the Chinese material presented in the book, and allows learners to test themselves into and out of spoken or written Chinese. At their own convenience learners can test themselves on words, phrases, or sentences, randomly or in sequence, until they are familiar with them. The classroom can then be reserved for more naturalistic practice, for fine tuning, and for dealing with special difficulties. *flashCube* comes with a host of other useful functions that allow the creation of individualized data bases, or instant access to web-based encyclopedic information.

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Dà tóu, dà tóu; Tū tóu, tū tóu
Sānlúnchē, pǎo+de kuài

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Chars 3 (24 pp); *character sheets (7 pp)*

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Xīnnián dào, xīnnián dào
Èrlóu sānlóu, chǎngzhǎng shūjì

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Jiāngjiě, Jiāngjiě, hǎo Jiāngjiě
Dǒng Cúnruì, shíjǐ suì
Yuèliang zǒu, wǒ yě zǒu

Chars 5 (22 pp); *character sheets (8 pp)*

5.0 Review
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6.12 Highlights
6.12.1 Focus of class practice Ex. 11

6.13 Rhymes and rhythms

Néng hē yì jīn, hē bā liǎng
Chóng, chóng chóng, chóng fēi

Appendix: Chinese historical periods

Chars 6 (24 pp); *character sheets (7 pp)*

6.0 Review
a) Dialogue
b) Distinguishing characters
c) Comments (in fántǐzì)

6.1 Set 1
6.1.1 Compounds and phrases
6.1.2 Reading Ex. 1

6.2 Set 2
6.2.1 Compounds and phrases
6.2.2 Reading Ex. 2

6.3 Set 3
6.3.1 Compounds and phrases
6.3.2 Reading Ex. 3

6.4 Set 4
6.4.1 Compounds and phrases
6.4.2 Reading

6.5 A tale of filial piety

6.6 Traditional characters (reading)

6.7 Animal radicals

6.8 On the street #6

Unit 7 (40 pp)

7.1 Verb Combos (1)
7.1.1 Imminence
7.1.2 Phase complements
7.1.3 Motion verbs
7.1.4 Returning Ex. 1

7.2 Connecting sentences
7.2.1 Yīnwèi 'because'
7.2.2 Suīrán 'although'
7.2.3 Yàoshi 'if' Ex. 2
7.2.4 Dialogue: If…

7.3 Speaking languages
7.3.1 Forms with huà
7.3.2 Compounds with wén
7.3.2 Forms with yǔ
7.3.4 English
7.3.5 Chinese
7.3.6 Exclamations Ex. 3a,b

7.4 Dialogue: Language abilities
7.4.1 Yǒurén 'some people' and similar expressions

7.5 Dialogue: Tea and coffee Ex. 4

7.6 Alone or with others; conveyances
7.6.1 Accompaniment
a) Together with
b) Alone

7.6.2 Le or guo > shi…de
7.6.3 Ways of traveling
7.6.4 Time words

7.7 Cái 'not until' Ex. 5

7.8 Duration
7.8.1 Units of time
7.8.2 Duration in context Ex. 6

7.9 More le-patterns
7.9.1 Continuing action
a) Restrictive adverbs suppress final le

7.9.2 Enduring states
a) Interchanges involving enduring states
b) Options
c) Typical verbs Ex. 7

7.10 Weather
7.10.1 Seasons
7.10.2 China's weather patterns
7.10.3 Weather
7.10.4 Rain and precipitation
7.10.5 Sun and wind
7.10.6 Temperature and humidity
7.10.7 Yòu…yòu 'both … and' Ex. 8

7.11 Dialogue: Talking about the weather

7.12 Co-verbs (2)

7.13 A letter home Ex. 9

7.14 Pronunciation practice

7.15 Highlights

7.16 Rhymes and rhythms

Dúshū rú dāng nú
Xiǎo huāmāo, shàng xuéxiào

Appendix 1: Question words

(Part 3)

Chars 7 (28 pp)

7.0 Review
1. Answer the questions (i, ii, iii)
2. Focus on tones
3. Compose characters from constituents (i, ii)
4. Dialogue

7.1 Set 1, with notes
- 7.1.1 Compounds and phrases
- 7.1.2 Comment-response
- 7.1.3 Reading traditional characters

7.2 Set 2, with notes
- 7.2.1 Compounds and phrases
- 7.2.2 Comment-response

7.3 Mao Zedong's youth, with glossary
- 7.3.1 Questions – in traditional characters

7.4 Set 3, with notes
- 7.4.1 Compounds and phrases
- 7.4.2 'Sleeping on ice to procure fresh carp', with glossary

7.5 Set 4: Weather terms, with notes
- 7.5.1 Compounds and phrases
- 7.5.2 Dialogues (traditional characters)
- 7.5.3 Weather reports (simplified characters) [a, b, c]

7.6 On the street #7
- 7.6.1 Support or oppose
- 7.6.2 More shop signs

CODA

Unit 8 (55 pp)

8.1 Temporal and logical sequence Ex. 1a,b

8.2 Sports
- 8.2.1 List of sports Ex. 2

8.3 Comparison

8.3.1 Non-comparatives
8.3.2 Comparison
8.3.3 Another perspective: 'not as…'
a) Méi<you>…<nàme>; b) Bù rú'not as'
c) Comparatives with V+de: Ex. 3a,b

8.4 Cities, population
8.4.1 Zuì 'most; very'
8.4.2 Approximately
8.4.3 Large numbers Ex. 4a,b
8.4.4 Talking about size of cities, population

8.5 Bargaining
8.5.1 At the fruit stand
8.5.2 Tastes and flavors
8.5.3 Adding or subtracting amounts
8.5.4 Cuisines Ex. 5
8.5.5 Banquets and toasts

8.6 Dialogue: In the store
8.6.1 Shì<qing> 'things'

8.7 Regional languages: dialogue and narrative
8.7.1 Chinese regional languages

8.8 A narrative about Lin Mei
8.8.1 A note on 'old' Ex. 6

8.9 Jobs
8.9.1 Version 1
8.9.2 Version 2

8.10 V+le revisited
8.10.1 Sequence of events
8.10.2 V-le with quantified objects
8.10.3 Other cases of V-le Ex. 7

8.11 Dialogue: What did you do yesterday? Ex. 8

8.12 Verb Combos (2)
8.12.1 Directional complements Ex. 9
8.12.2 Forgetting and remembering
a) Forgetting; b) Remembering; c) In song
8.12.3 I haven't slept for two days!

8.13 Measure words revisited
8.13.1 List Ex. 10

8.14 Aspirations Ex. 11

8.15 Highlights

8.16 Rhymes and rhythms

a) Shùnkǒuliūr; b) About the moon; c) A never-ending story

Appendix: Additional Measure Words

Unit 9 (47 pp)

9.1 More modification
9.1.1 Other vocabulary Ex. 1
9.1.2 Dialogue: Who's in the photo?

9.2 Clothes
9.2.1 Describing people in terms of their clothes

9.3 Bargaining, the way the Chinese might do it.

9.4 Setting the stage: Verb-zhe
9.4.1 Verbs involving configuration or bodily attitudes
9.4.2 Doors and windows Ex. 2a,b
a) Item V-zhe; b) Existence: Location V-zhe item;
c) Location: Person Location V-zhe <ne>; d) V-zhe V
e) V-zhe in imperatives; f) Negation

9.4.3 Ongoing acts versus persisting states
9.4.4 Perspectives Ex. 3
9.4.5 At the temple

9.5 Colors

9.6 Dialogue: buying a seal

9.7 The BA (把) construction
9.7.1 Making tea Ex. 4

9.8 Verb Combos (3) Ex. 5
9.8.1 Position of objects
9.8.2 More verb complements
a) Zhù b) Kāi c) Shàng and xià d) Zǒu

9.8.3 Specialized forms
a) Qǐ b) liǎo c) Semantic extensions Ex. 6

9.9 Peking Duck

9.10 Stand a little closer
9.10.1 Getting home (dialogue) Ex. 7

9.11 Destination and goal: VERB + dào, zài or gěi
a) Dào b) Zài c) Gěi. Ex. 8

9.12 Wáng Xuéyīng (bio) Ex. 9

9.13 Patterns with duì

9.14 Interjections

9.15 On apologies

9.16 Highlights

9.17 Rhymes and rhythms
1. Xīnnián láidào
2. Rhymed advice for healthy living
3. 东方红 Dōngfāng Hóng

UNIT 10 (47 pp)

10.1 Feeling ill
10.1.1 A note on traditional Chinese medicine (Zhōngyī) Ex. 1

10.2 More on indefinites
10.2.1 Complete exclusion or inclusion
10.2.2 Virtual exclusion or inclusion
10.2.3 Lián…dōu/yě 'even'
10.2.4 Paired indefinites. Ex. 2

10.3 Verb Reduplication

10.4 An interview with your teacher

10.5 Minor Constructions
10.5.1 Chúle … yǐwài
10.5.2 Yuèlái yuè (SV) 'more and more SV'
10.5.3 'Ought' and 'must' Ex. 3

10.6 Xiēhòuyǔ, a form of word play

10.7 Religion

10.8 Verb Combos (4)
10.8.1 –xiàlai
10.8.2 – chūlai
10.8.3 Moving out

10.9 Transformations (with chéng) Ex. 4

10.10 Bèi 'by'
10.10.1. Other options: gěi, jiào, ràng
10.10.2 What happened?
10.10.3 Dialogue Ex. 5

10.11 Seeking opinions: a dialogue

10.12 Smoking: a narrative Ex. 6
10.12.1 Smoking: a dialogue

10.13 Driving: a narrative Ex. 7

10.14 Vivid SVs (of the form SVxx)

10.15 Communication tools: a narrative Ex. 8

10.16 Waiting and rushing

10.17 Telephoning
10.17.1 Leaving a message

10.18 Chinese etiquette: a dialogue
10.18.1 Gifts

10.19 Highlights Ex. 9

10.20 Rhymes and rhythms

Appendix 1: Body parts

(Part 4)

UNIT 11 (33 pp)

11.1 *Constructions with yi 'one'*
11.1.2 yī + VERBS
11.1.3 yī + NOUNS

11.2 *Places to see in Beijing (a dialogue)* Ex. 1

11.3 *Requests* Ex. 2
11.3.1 Mild requests
11.3.2 More imposing requests
11.3.3 Requests with implied criticism; complaints

11.4 *A geography lesson* Ex. 3a,b,c

11.5 *Following a recipe* Ex. 4

11.6 *Xuéxí Hànzì* Ex. 5a,b,c,d

11.7 *Australia* Ex. 6a,b

11.8 *To Yangzhou by way of Zhenjiang* Ex. 7

11.9 *Confrontation (1)*

11.10 *Rhymes and rhythms*

UNIT 12 (35 pp)

12.1 *Taking photographs* Ex. 1

12.2 *Mei Taide: the story* Ex. 2a,b,c

12.3 *The Tian'anmen incident* Ex. 3

12.4 *Kinship* Ex. 4a,b,c

12.5 *Death* Ex. 5

12.6 *The Chinese school system* Ex. 6a,b

12.7 *Life in Tianjin* Ex. 7a, b

12.8 Manner adverbials
12.8.1 Reduplication and the adverbial marker -*de*
12.8.2 Manner adverbials versus predicate complements
12.8.3 The three *'de's'*
12.4 A vivid event (dialogue)

12.9 Confrontation (2) (dialogue)
12.9.1 Expletives and swearwords
12.9.2 Dialogue

12.10 The Northwind and the Sun.

The Chinese Menu (Zhōngguó càidān) (23 pp)

Part I: Preliminaries

1. Types of Chinese food

2. The names of dishes

3. Some specialized menu terms

4. The 8 Chinese cuisines (bā ge càixì)

5. Methods of cooking (pēngtiáo fàngfǎ)

6. Spices and seasonings (zuóliào)

7. Ways of cutting (qiēfǎ)

8. Tools (gōngjù), with example sentences

9. Usage (shuōfǎ)

Part II: Dialogue in a Restaurant

1. Character version

2. Pinyin version

Part III. Sample menu items

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