

Preface

To the Instructor

As you well know, the Chinese language is often perceived as more difficult to learn than other foreign languages. Many find Chinese characters, in particular, to be intimidating because they look more like pictures than the writing systems to which most students are accustomed. Combine that with the use of tones and unfamiliar grammatical structures, and many students give up before even giving it a try. While some perceptions of Chinese language learning are true, most of them are overgeneralized, as evidenced by the many English speakers who have learned Chinese very well. What is their secret?

When I taught Chinese to college freshmen at the Ohio State University in the mid-90s, I had great fun interacting with my students. They showed genuine interest in communicating with one another while completing tasks such as meeting new friends, asking for directions, bargaining at the market, and ordering food in a Chinese restaurant. This level of enthusiasm toward learning about Chinese culture through the study of the Chinese language has inspired me to create a better way to teach Chinese to college students in the U.S.

Whether Chinese can be learned well or not depends on three crucial factors: the textbook program, the teaching methodology, and the instructor. An appropriate, high-quality textbook is the fundamental factor that will either help engage students or cause them to lose interest in the learning process.

I have had great opportunities to interact with learners of Chinese around the world, and to familiarize myself with Chinese curricula and Chinese textbooks available on the market while working in several capacities, including as Associate Provost for International Initiatives and Professor of Applied Linguistics at Georgia State University, former Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Arizona, Vice President of International Society of Chinese Language Teaching (ISCLT), and Senior Advisor of the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban). In my experience, many textbooks are designed specifically for international students studying Chinese in the Chinese context. Some materials are of superb quality, but are too difficult for beginners studying Chinese in a non-Chinese context. Some are very easy to use, but focus too much on grammar and pattern drills and too little on communication and culture. An ideal textbook, in my mind, should be designed to harmonize the following key elements critical in learning Chinese as a foreign language:

- linking language with culture
- balancing forms with meaning
- developing literacy skills through both oral and written Chinese

Equally important is the fact that the textbook must be interesting, engaging, and entertaining for both students and instructors.

Access Chinese is designed to blend the above three elements while making learning fun. In *Access Chinese*, students will experience Chinese language and culture through a dual story line about twins Bill and Jenny. During their freshman year, both siblings are learning Chinese – Bill in China, and Jenny in the U.S. These two contexts depict different but authentic learning environments where language and culture are intertwined, at the same time controlling the level of difficulty of grammar and vocabulary as well as providing sufficient communicative tasks and activities. In this way, *Access Chinese* presents students with contemporary Chinese language and life, provides a practical communicative context for learners, and controls the level of difficulty while still providing the linguistic information necessary to be successful Chinese language learners.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my team for working tirelessly on this project over the past several years. First and foremost, I am thankful to the lead member of the team, Wei Huiping, whose expertise, experience and extraordinary work ethic have been instrumental to the quality of the series. I am equally grateful to Kang Yan and Chong Yifan for their trust and belief in me and their great effort and conscientious work on different portions of this project since its inception. I would also like to thank Senior Sponsoring Editor Katie Crouch and Development Editor Jenni Kirk from McGraw-Hill Higher Education for their vision and enthusiasm in supporting *Access Chinese* and for holding the highest standard throughout its development. Likewise, I am extremely grateful to Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) supervisors and editors Man Xingyuan, Ding Ning, Li Yang, Deng Xiaojin, and Xie Danling, among others, for their great coordination and editorial work. I am also grateful to Peng Donglin, Zhou Wei, and Zhou Fei for their great support and assistance at the early stages of this project. Last but not least, I am indebted to Chyi Chung of Northwestern University as well as the rest of our enthusiastic reviewers for their thoughtful and detailed notes and suggestions, and for making numerous constructive comments in the process of textbook development based on their years of college-level Chinese teaching experience in Chinese in the U.S.

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Without their support, encouragement, and constructive criticism, this textbook would not be what it is today.

It is my sincere hope that *Access Chinese* will provide you and your students with the tools you need in order to truly experience Chinese language and culture.

Good luck, and have fun!

Jun Liu
Lead Author

Introduction

Framework

Access Chinese is designed for beginners of Chinese as a second or foreign language. While the primary audience is college-level beginning Chinese learners in North America, this program also targets high school students and adult learners in non-Chinese contexts. The goal of *Access Chinese* is to help learners gradually develop communicative competence through integrative training of language elements (pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar) and linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in a graded series.

Key Features

In *Access Chinese*, contextualized grammar, communicative practice, and engaging cultural information are all intertwined, creating a learning environment appropriate for successful language acquisition as well as an opportunity to explore cultural contexts.

The storyline throughout the *Access Chinese* serves to engage students and to link the content throughout the series. Each episode provides the context for practical functions designed specifically for communication. Cultural themes are imbedded in each episode, along with a *Cultural Interchange* section that further explains cultural elements and teaches communication strategies. The grammar explanations are brief and aimed toward production in both written and oral Chinese. Each of these sections is accompanied by a number of practice activities.

Chinese and Global Content

Access Chinese deals with contemporary topics that are of high interest and relevance to students and teachers around the world. The topics have been selected to reflect both global perspectives and local contexts in order to stimulate cross-cultural awareness and discussion. The storyline of *Access Chinese* weaves together the experiences of learning Chinese in China and America, covering basic topics such as greetings, food, and sports, as well as more in-depth topics like foreign study partners, movie stars and online interaction. Students will also learn intercultural communication through the story.

Scalable Vocabulary

In order to avoid overwhelming learners, the words and expressions in *Access Chinese* are divided in three groups as follows:

1. *Required Words and Expressions* are intended for oral and written comprehension and communication. These are typically words and expressions frequently used in oral and written communication.
2. *Expanded Words and Expressions* are meant for comprehension and oral communication. They are considered common words and expressions frequently used in oral communication.
3. *Suggested Words and Expressions* are meant for comprehension only.

Online Learning Center

The Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/accesschinese) provides students with additional activities created for use with *Access Chinese*. In addition, student and instructor resources will be posted on the Online Learning Center, including the Instructor's Manual and .mp3 files for the textbook and workbook audio programs.

Unit Structure

Unit Opener

The *Unit Opener* provides a summary of the information covered in the unit's two episodes. In addition, you will find a list of the communicative functions, grammar points, and cultural topics to be covered in the unit, in order to orient students in their learning process and give them a clear expectation of what is to come.

Episodes

The two *Episodes* in each unit follow the storylines surrounding a set of twins—Bill and Jenny—who are both learning Chinese. In Unit 1, Bill goes to China for a one-year Chinese language program, while his twin sister, Jenny, learns Chinese in the U.S. Given their distinctly different learning environments, Bill and Jenny experience different challenges in learning the language, but they both find the learning very rewarding.

These short episodes introduce new grammar in a communicative context, present functional expressions, and reflect authentic Chinese culture and social etiquette.

The color-coded *Required Words and Expressions* and *Expanded Words and Expressions* boxes, provide a guide to the vocabulary presented in context, with English definitions and additional explanation as needed.

Activities

Individual, pair, and group activities, as well as whole class and role-play activities are included throughout the program, providing ample opportunities for practice in the classroom.

Sentence Patterns and Communicative Practice

Sentence Patterns is the first of two grammar presentations in each unit. This section focuses on introducing sentence patterns commonly used in real communication. The presentation of the sentence pattern is typically followed by communicative activities that range from more controlled to more open-ended practice.

Expanded Functions

Each *Episode* is followed by one or two expansions on functional usage, such as *Saying Hello* or *Time*. A variety of real-life materials and activities enable students to put into practice what they have learned.

Cultural Interchange

Cultural Interchange highlights major cultural differences in communication, for example, the practices of gift giving or accepting a compliment. These cultural topics are meant to raise cultural awareness and encourage adaptation, and are related to the contents of *Episodes 1* and *2* of each unit.

Grammar Kit

The *Grammar Kit* presents the new grammar of each unit, including three or more highlighted grammar structures with English explanations and examples of sentence usage. Grammar is placed at the end of each unit as a point of reference and language-learning tool rather than a main focus of study. Rather, students should concentrate on learning by doing, which can be achieved with the help of the numerous opportunities provided in the episodes and activities throughout *Access Chinese*.

Pronunciation Tips

This section gives suggestions to deal with pronunciation difficulties common among non-native Chinese speakers.

Writing Chinese Characters

Writing Chinese Characters encourages students to improve their writing skills by

providing guidance on stroke order, character practice, and the evolution of Chinese characters.

Integrative Practice

The unit-culminating *Integrative Practice* section provides four skills practice, including activities for listening, speaking, reading and writing, all aligned with the themes of the unit.

Word List

A **Word list** appears at the end of each unit, including all of the *Required Words and Expressions*, *Expanded Words and Expressions*, and *Suggested Words and Expressions* presented in the unit.

Along with the previously outlined sections of the text, the following smaller features are scattered throughout the units to further enrich students' experience in learning the Chinese language:

- **Break Time** boxes introduce the basic strokes in Chinese character writing, outlining the steps necessary to write basic simplified Chinese characters, as well as pronunciation training like poems, tongue twisters and so on.
- **Cultural Boxes** give students extra support regarding cultural elements that appear within activities.
- **Tips** and **Notes** give background information, helpful word analysis and some useful grammar details.

Supplements

Workbook

Each book in *Access Chinese* has a companion workbook that aims at providing learners with sufficient practice activities, and tasks to strengthen the learning of materials in the textbook. Both language knowledge and communication abilities are taken into consideration in the design of workbook.

The main types of practice in the workbook include: Pronunciation practice, writing characters, grammar and vocabulary practice, and communicative tasks, as well as interview and discovery tasks. Every unit ends with a self-assessment tool that is designed to boost students' self-confidence in learning Chinese.

Online Supplements

For the Instructor

The Instructor's Edition of the Online Learning Center includes materials for instructors such as methodological suggestions, additional grammar explanations, guidance on cultural information, suggested additional activities or tasks, audio scripts, and guidance on testing and continuous assessment.

For the Student

The Online Learning Center provides a variety of reading, writing, and spelling exercises to reinforce grammar and vocabulary taught in *Access Chinese*. In addition to these activities, the complete audio program to accompany the *Access Chinese* textbook and workbook, can also be found on the Online Learning Center, and is easily downloadable for use on the student's computer or mp3 player.