

Translating language & Transcribing spoken Chinese



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I am trying to **translate some Chinese characters into English**, but my translation does not make sense!

Individual Chinese characters can mean many different things.

You need to look at the context and the whole text to choose the best translation.





Here are **two strategies** that you can use when translating characters in a Chinese text:

- Recognise the features of the text type (e.g. headings or key information)
- Consider **the context of the text** to help you (e.g. who, what, when, where).

Let's take a closer look at these translating strategies.

Recognising features of the text type



How can the features of a text type help me translate a text?

Well, if you can recognise particular **features in a text**, such as :-

headings or key information,

it could help you to make the best choice when translating.



Considering the context



When translating a text, consider the context to help you understand it.

Context means **the circumstances that relate to the text** such as:

- who
- what
- when
- where.



Look at the text below.

What type of text is it? headings or key information

What is the context? who, what, when, where.

北京第一小学食堂菜谱

	星期一	星期二	星期三	星期四	星期五
主食	米饭 包子	馒头 饺子	米饭 牛肉面	馒头 饺子	炒饭 牛肉面
素菜	炒芹菜	炒白菜	炒四季豆	三鲜豆腐	炸茄子
肉	炖牛肉	辣鸡丁	红烧肉	炒牛肉	菠萝古老肉
汤	绿豆汤	冬瓜汤	鸡蛋汤	豆腐汤	白菜汤
水果	桔子	香蕉	苹果	梨	西瓜



It is a weekly menu for a Chinese school cafeteria.
Did you identify these features of the text type?

Headings- Days of the week

Context – (What: a school in Beijing)

Context – (What: Categories)

Key information: Food names

北京第一小学食堂菜谱

	星期一	星期二	星期三	星期四	星期五
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水果	桔子	香蕉	苹果	梨	西瓜



bāo zi

From the weekly menu, you can see the food 包子.

How would you translate 包子 into English?

bāo

包 has many meanings.



shū bāo

Do you remember seeing 书包 (school bag) in the learning object *Introductory spoken text: What is school life?*



bāo

Other meanings for 包 are *to wrap, bun or packet*

hōng bāo

(as in 红包 red packet).



Think about the features of the context - a school menu. Which of these translations is the most appropriate? School bag? Or a bun?

Because the text type is a Chinese school lunch menu and the word 包 appears in the area where we name the dishes, I think that **bun is the best translation.**

Do you agree?



The first day of Wilson.



Jīn tiān wǒ men bān yǒu yī wèi ào dà lì yà xīn tóng xué.

今天我们班有一位澳大利亚新同学。

Today our class has a new student from Australia.



The first day of Wilson.



Tā jiào Wilson. Dà jīā gú zhǎng huān yíng!

他叫Wilson。大家鼓掌欢迎!

His name is Wilson. We clap our hands to welcome him.



The first day of Wilson.



Wǒ shì liù yī bān de bān zhǔ rèn.

我是六一班的班主任。

I am the classroom teacher of class 6-1.



The first day of Wilson.



Wǒ xīng shǐ. Wǒ jiào yīng yǔ

我姓史。我教英语。

My surname is Shi. I teach English.




Back



Replay



Next

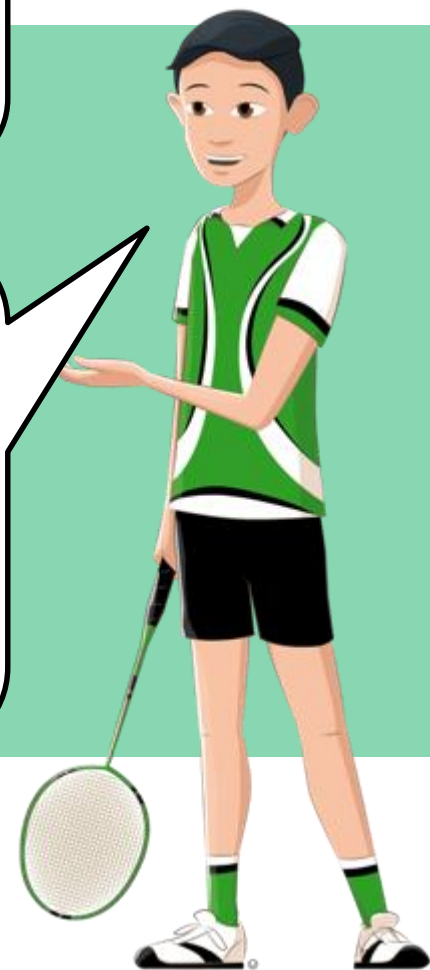


Hey Gao Ming, when the teacher introduced herself, she said something that sounded like 'washing'. What did she say?

Oh! It's not 'washing', it is

‘我姓……’ (wǒ xìng ...)

It means 'My surname is ...'.





It might be hard for you to hear the difference, but the 'sh' sound in Chinese is quite different from the 'x' sound.

How do you tell the difference between the sounds 'sh' and 'x'?



Discriminating between sounds



Let me show you an example of each sound.
Listen to the audio *Shi and xi* and see if you
can hear the difference.

'sh'

时 (shí)

'x'

习 (xí)

Now listen to the audio of the words below.

Which word starts with 'sh'?

Which word starts with 'x'?

Character	Pinyin transcription
少	__ǎo
小	__iǎo



Does your transcription look like this?

Character	Pinyin transcription
少	shǎo
小	xiǎo



Transcribing spoken sentences



Let's transcribe this sentence from the learning object *Introductory spoken text: What is school life?* into Pinyin.

Can you figure out when to write 'sh' and when to write 'x'?

Sentence	Pinyin transcription
Zhè jiù shì wǒ men de xué xiào 这就是我们的学校。	





Does your transcription look like this?

Sentence

Pinyin transcription

这就是我们的学校。

Zhè jiù shì wǒ men de
xué xiào.

Reflection

想一想



What **words in English** can you think of that have **similar sounds** even though they are written differently?

Summary

When **translating**, remember to:

- think about **the text type**
- consider **the context of the text**
- ask yourself, **‘how would this text be said/written in my language?’**

When **transcribing spoke Chinese** into PinYin, remember to:

- **Discriminating between sounds.**
For example the sound of “sh” and “x”.

