

中文

Not as hard as it looks: Reflections on Changing
Approaches to Learning Mandarin Chinese as a Second
Language

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‘Traditional’ Approach

“Traditionally, pupils learn Chinese characters by repeatedly copying them until they can reproduce their form and pronunciation from memory...The process takes many years and is perceived by pupils as laborious and boring.”
(Tse et al 2007.)

What do you need to learn?

- Pronunciation
- Meaning(s)
- Tone
- Stroke order
- Recognition





Character: 中 文

Pinyin/tones: zhōng wén

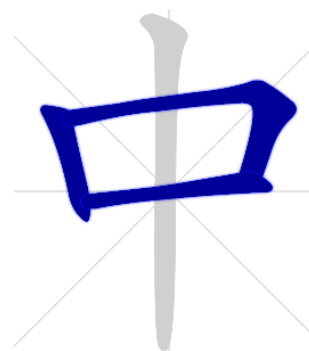
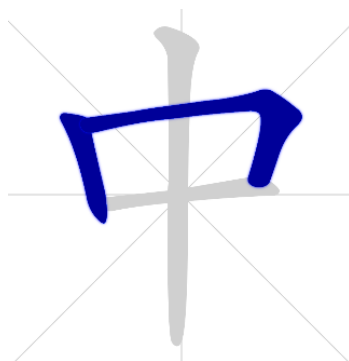
Meaning: Chinese Language

Tones

中文 (Zhong1 wen2)

mā	má	mǎ	mà
妈	麻	马	骂
mother	numb	horse	scold
			
First tone	second tone	third tone	fourth tone
(flat)	(going up)	(down and up)	(going down)

Stroke Order (for 中文)



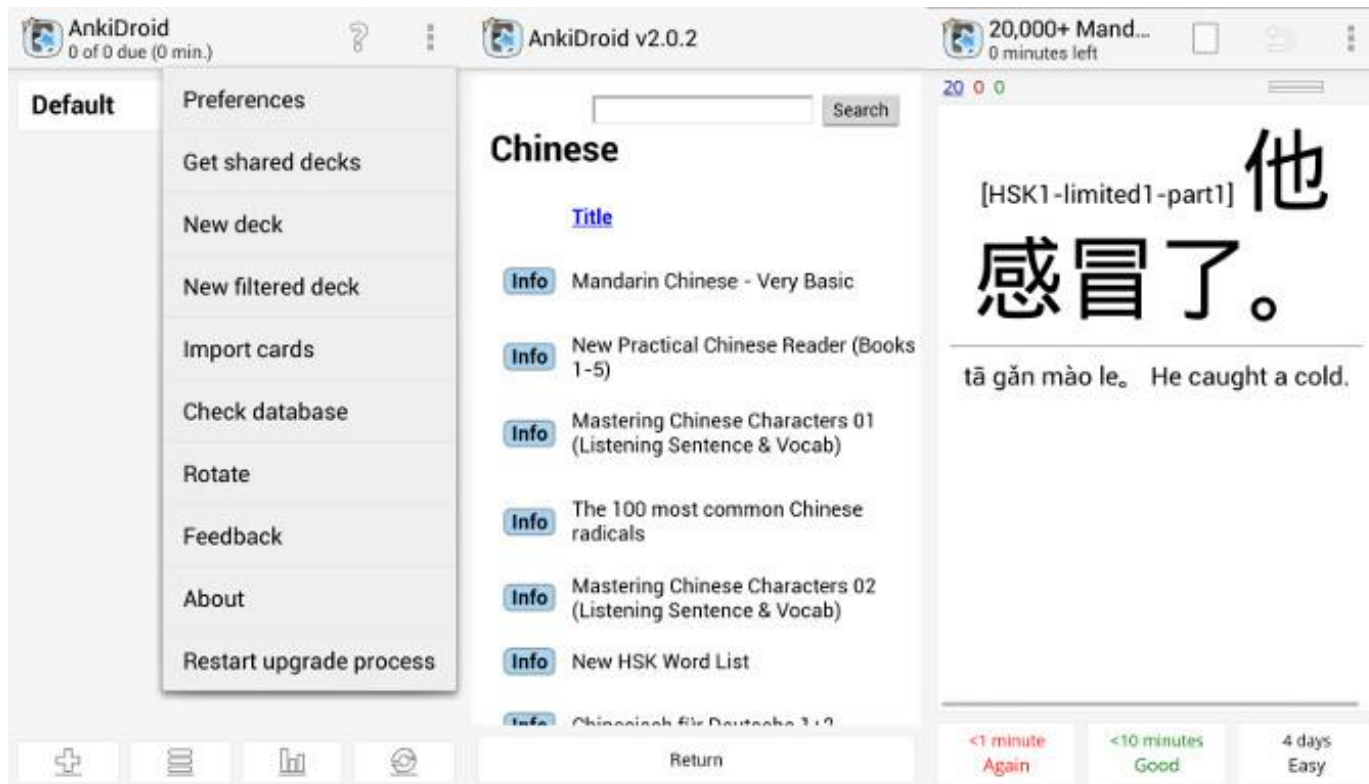
Writing

第一级			第三册			第十课		
qí	qí	qí	qí	qí	qí			
奇	一 ナ ㄆ ㄊ ㄆ ㄆ ㄆ 奇 奇 奇	奇	奇	奇				
shí	shí							
石	一 ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 石 石 石 石 石							
zhù	zhù	zhù	zhù	zhù				
著	一 一 ㄆ ㄆ ㄆ ㄆ 著 著 著 著 著	著	著	著				
qū	qū	qū	qū	qū				
区	一 ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 区 区 区							
guài	guài	guài	guài	guài				
怪	一 一 ㄆ ㄆ ㄆ ㄆ 怪 怪 怪 怪 怪	怪	怪	怪				
fēi	fēi	fēi	fēi	fēi				
非	一 ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 非 非 非 非	非	非	非				
qù	qù	qù	qù	qù				
趣	一 一 ㄆ ㄆ ㄆ ㄆ 趣 趣 趣 趣 趣	趣	趣	趣				
dǐng	dǐng	dǐng	dǐng	dǐng				
顶	一 ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 顶 顶 顶 顶	顶	顶	顶				
pán	pán	pán	pán	pán				
盘	一 ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 盘 盘 盘 盘 盘	盘	盘	盘				
fēng	fēng	fēng	fēng	fēng				
峰	一 ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 峰 峰 峰 峰 峰	峰	峰	峰				
hǎi	hǎi	hǎi	hǎi	hǎi				
海	一 ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 海 海 海 海 海	海	海	海				

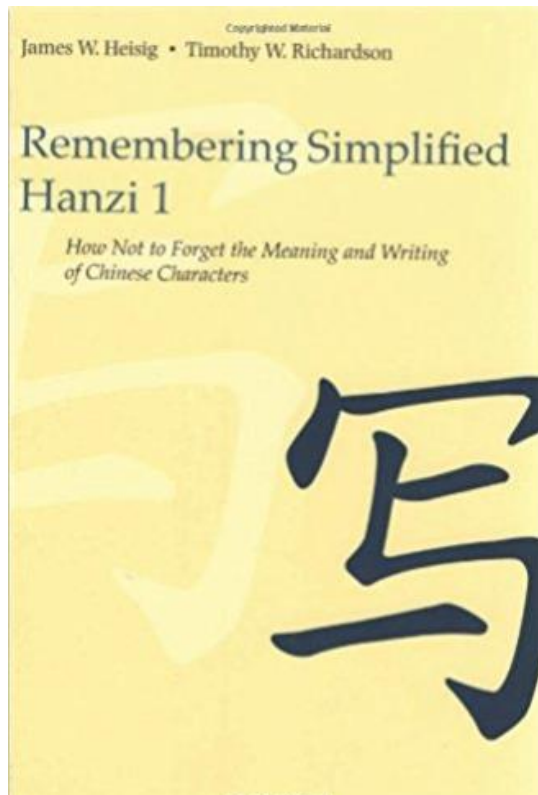
Repetition, repetition, repetition...

Is there another way?

New technology to support traditional pedagogy



Use of mnemonics

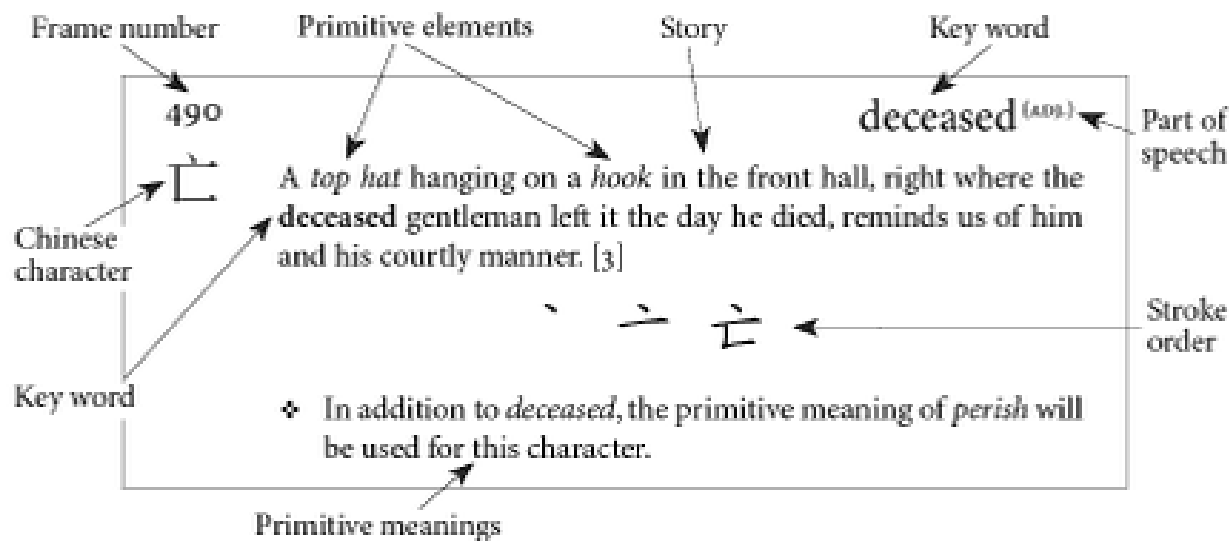


“The connection between constituent parts of a written *Hanzi* and their representative scenes or objects creates a mnemonic device” (Han 2017).

Associating component parts of a Chinese character with a narrative which can be combined to construct the overall meaning.

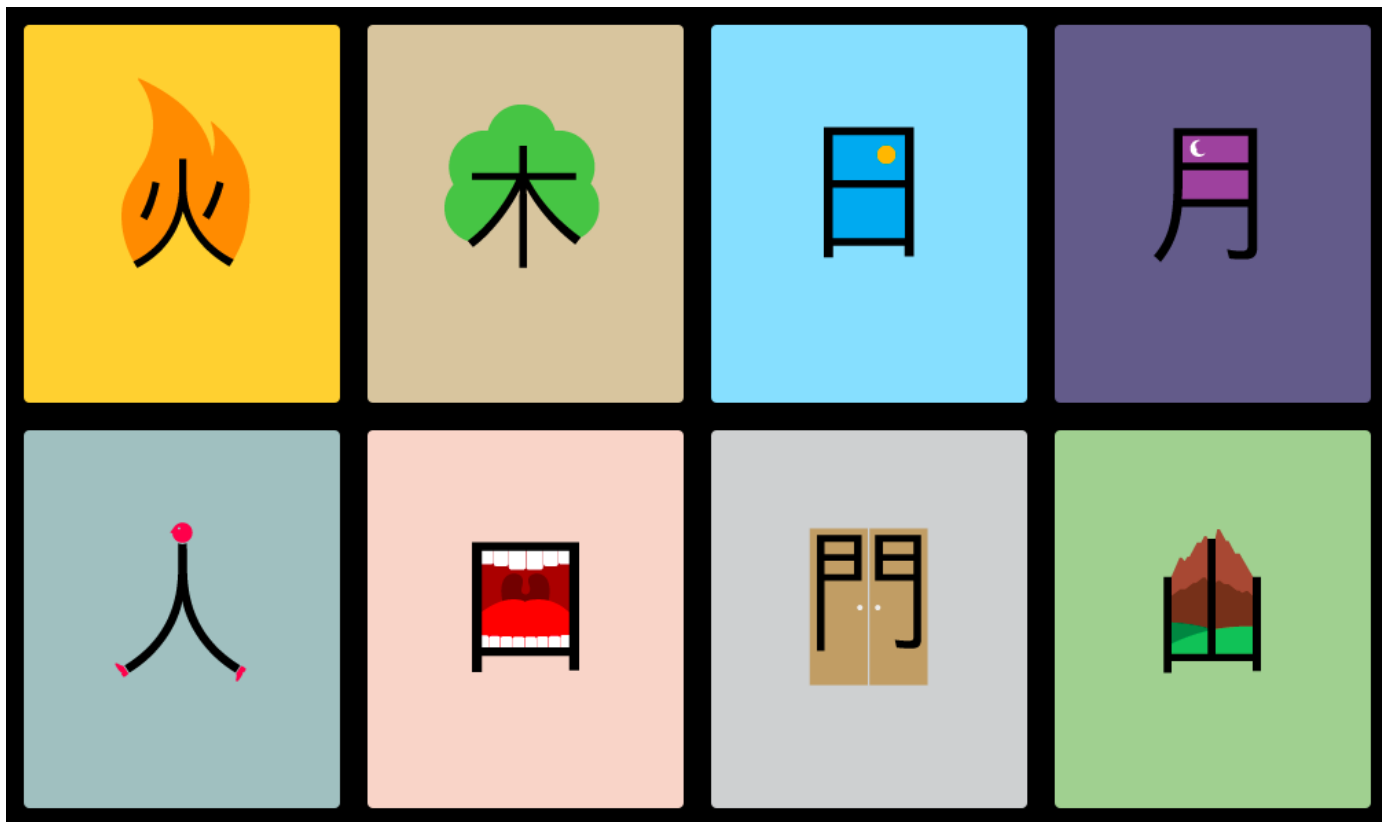
These narratives are drawn both from the etymology of the character or invented to meet individual need.

Heisig's mnemonic approach



Heisig, J.W. and Richardson, T.W., 2009. Remembering Simplified Hanzi 1.

Different ways of learning characters



Gamification

“Ninchanese brings you the best of technology and gamification, through a well-shaped learning curriculum and bite-sized stages that will take you to a beginner to a fluent level in Chinese.”



Gamification through 'text based adventures'



<https://wordswing.com/select>

这个城市完全变了。你不知道发生了什么，可能是因为环境问题，也可能是因为人们之间的争斗，或者别的原因，这个城市和以前完全不一样了。 ▶



当下情况 ▶

📍 你的家 ▶

你很健康。 ▶

Score: 0


你有： ▶

(20) 空气罐 ▶

(1) 小电灯 ▶

(1) 指南针 ▶

(1) 防毒面具 ▶

 Enable audio-only mode. ?

完全

完全

wánquán

complete; whole; totally; entirely

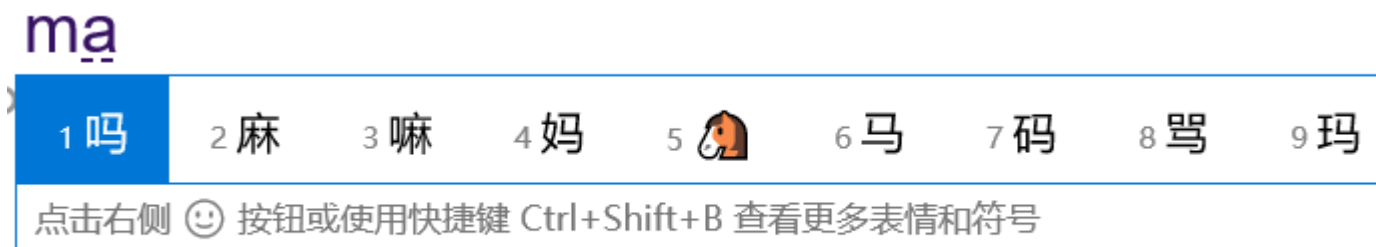
Where have you seen this?

You have seen 完全 at least 1 place

这个城市完全变了。你不知道发生了什么，可能是因为环境问题，也可能是因为人们之间的争斗，或者别的原因，这个城市和以前完全不一样了。

Shortcuts

Without necessarily knowing how to write with a pen, it is possible to write Chinese competently using a computer or tablet as this simply relies on knowing the pronunciation and recognising the appropriate character rather than remembering the stroke order.



Since you can type, it kills the main difficulty of Chinese language...

my American friends believe that he [my Chinese friend] clearly doesn't master English, because he can't write. But when it's about Chinese, suddenly it seems like ability to write is not part of mastering a language anymore, especially for many new students...kind of strange double standard.

Your turn...

The eBay logo is displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are colored as follows: 'e' is red, 'b' is blue, 'a' is yellow, and 'y' is green. The letters are closely spaced and have a slight shadow effect.

www.ebay.co.uk



You have just asked for 1 cup of coffee in mandarin Chinese.

一杯咖啡
Yībēi kāfēi



References:

Chineasy <https://www.chineasy.com/>

Han, J. 2017. *Post-Lingual Chinese Language Learning*, Palgrave Studies in Teaching and Learning Chinese

Heisig, J.W. and Richardson, T.W., 2009. *Remembering Simplified Hanzi 1*.

Ninchanese <https://ninchanese.com/>

Tse, S.K., Marton, F., Ki, W.W. and Loh, E.K.Y., 2007. An integrative perceptual approach for teaching Chinese characters. *Instructional Science*, 35(5), pp.375-406.

Wordswing *Unlimited, personalized Chinese practice* <https://wordswing.com/>