

Practical Chinese Lesson

Let Gubo and Palanka, stars of a slightly dated textbook for foreigners, show you the joys of Chinese language study.



You may have noticed that the language environment you thought you were going to have when you came to China simply 不存在 - bù cún zài (doesn't exist). Try as you may to learn Chinese, your progress will inevitably be thwarted by 方言 fāng yán (dialects), 口音 kǒu yīn (accents), and English-speaking Chinese people who think that all foreigners are walking talking English dictionaries. Even if you already speak Chinese and are simply hoping to improve your language skills, you may feel like you've reached a plateau. The Comrade is sympathetic with the plight of his "foreign friends," and that's why I've prepared Chinese 101 (Practical Chinese), a course designed to cover useful Chinese words and phrases that you're sure to hear and use on a daily basis.

Lesson One: Being Ignored

Gubo is with his Chinese friend Wang. Wang introduces Gubo to his friend Zhang.

Wang: 小张给你介绍我的朋友古泊 - Xiǎo Zhāng gěi nǐ jiè shào wǒ de péngyou Gǔbó (Zhang, let me introduce you to my friend Gǔbó)

Zhang: 他会不会说普通话 - Tā huì bú huì shuō pǔtōnghuà

huà? (Does he speak Mandarin?)

Wang: 会 - Huì (Yes)

Zhang: 他是哪个国家的人 - Tr shì nǐ ge guó jia de rén? (Where is he from?)

Wang: 非洲 - Fēi Zhōu (Africa)

Zhang: 他吃得惯咱们中国菜吗 - Tr chī de guàn zán men Zhōng Guó cài ma?" (Does he eat Chinese food?)

Wang: 吃得惯 - Chī de guàn" (Yes)

Conversation about Gubo continues between Zhang and Wang

Lesson Two: Answering the Phone

Phone rings. Palanka picks up.

Palanka: 喂 - Wèi (Hello?)

Mystery Caller: 喂 - Wèi (Hello?)

Palanka: 你是谁? - Nǐ shì nǐ?" (Who is this?)

Mystery Caller: 你猜猜看 - Nǐ cái cái kàn" (Try to guess)

Palanka: 我听不出来 - Wǒ tīng bù chū lái" (I can't tell)

Mystery Caller: 我不告诉你 - Wǒ bú gào sù nǐ" (I won't tell you!)

Palanka: 你是谁 - Nǐ shì shuí?" (Who are you?)

Mystery Caller: 你真不知道吗 - Nǐ zhēn bú zhī dào ma?" (You don't know?)

This conversation continues indefinitely until either/both parties become exasperated.

Lesson Three: "It's For Your Safety"

Part I

Gubo and his Chinese girlfriend walk hand-in-hand into Gubo's dorm building. The 服务员 - fú wù yuàn (attendant) on duty looks up from her newspaper.

Fuwuyuan: 登记吧 - Dǎng jì ba!!!" (Sign in!!!)

Gubo: 但是他天天来这儿 - Dàn shì tā tiān tiān lái zhèr"
(But she comes here every day)

Fuwuyuan: 我们这儿有规定 - W(men zhèr y(u guǎn dīng" (We have rules here)

Gubo: 他为什么每次来都要登记呢 - Tā wèi shén me měi cì lái dōu yào dǎng jì ne? (Why does she have to sign in every time she comes here?)

Fuwuyuan: 为了您的安全 - Wèi le nín de ān quán (For your safety)

Part II

Palanka is buying a ticket for admission to the Forbidden City. Noticing that there is a "Chinese price" and a significantly higher "foreign price", she becomes puzzled

Palanka: 为什么外国人的票那么贵 - Wèi shén me wàiguó rén de piào nà me guì? (Why are foreigners' tickets so expensive?)

Fuwuyuan: 为了您的安全 - Wèi le nín de ān quán (For your safety)

Part III

Gubo has just checked into his hotel. The fuwuyuan

brings him to his room and unlocks the door for him.

Gubo: 我的钥匙 - W(de yào shì ne? (What about my key?)

Fuwuyuan: 我们不给客人钥匙 - W(men bú g, i kè rén yào shì (We don't give the key to the guests)

Gubo: 为什么 - Wèi shén me?" (Why?)

Fuwuyuan: 为了您的安全 - Wèi le n\$ de rn quán (For your safety)

Lesson Four: Comparisons

Gubo and Palanka are having a conversation with Lao Liu, one of their Chinese friends.

Lao Liu: 古泊你的中文说得比 Palanka 好 - GŪbó, n\$de zhǎng wén shuǎde b\$Palanka hǎo" (Gubo, your Chinese is better than Palanka's)

Gubo (awkward and embarrassed): 那里，那里 - Nǐ, nǎli" (No, no)

Lao Liu: 但是你们都没有哪个加拿大人说得好 - Dàn shì n\$men dǎu méi y(u n, i gè Jīnádà rén shuǎde hǎo (But none of you are as good as that Canadian guy)

Lesson Five: Checking Into a Five-Star Hotel

Fuwuyuan: "Hello, sir. May I help you?"

Palanka: 你们有空房间吗 - N\$men y(u kǎng fáng jìnrǎmp? (Do you have any empty rooms?)

Fuwuyuan: "Yes, we do ma'am. Would you like to check in now?"

Palanka: 对不起，我不会英语。我是说法语的 - Duì bu qǐ wǒ bú huì Yīng yǔ Wǒ shì shuō fǎ yǔ de (I'm sorry, I don't speak English. I speak French)

Fuwuyuan: (continuing in English) "Sorry ma'am, I don't speak French."

Palanka: 我听不懂。请说中文 - Wǒ tīng bù dǒng. Qǐng shuō Zhōng wén" (I don't understand. Please speak Chinese)

Fuwuyuan: 你要什么呀 - Nǐ yào shén me ya?! (Well, whaddaya want?!)

Lesson Six: Answering Questions With Questions

Part I

Gubo: 请问厕所在哪儿 - Qǐng wèn, cè suǒ zài nǎr?" (Excuse me, where is the bathroom?)

Person being asked: 小便大便 - Xiǎo biàn dà biàn? (Are you peeing or taking a dump?)

Part II

Palanka (calling Gubo on the phone): 请转以下古泊 - Qǐng zhuǎn yǐ xià Gǔ bō (Please get me Gubo)

Operator: 你是哪里 - Nǐ shì nǎlǐ? (Who are you?)

Palanka: 他在吗 - Tā zài ma? (Is he there?)

Operator: 你有什么事儿 - Nǐ yǒu shén me shìr? (What do you want to talk to him about?)

Lesson Seven: Mei you

Part I

Gubo is at the local State store trying to buy a light

bulb.

Gubo: 你们有电灯泡 - Nǐmen yǒu diàndēng pào ma?
(Do you have lightbulbs?)

Fuwuyuan: 没有 - Méi yǒu (No)

Part II

Palanka is at a local Chinese restaurant.

Palanka: 请来一个蛋炒饭 - Qǐng lǎi yí gè dàn chǎo fàn
(Please bring an order of fried rice)

Fuwuyuan: 没有饭 - Méi yǒu fàn (We have no rice)

Palanka: 怎么可能没有米饭 - Zěn me kě, néng méi yǒu mǐ fàn ne?
(How can you not have rice?)

Fuwuyuan (ignoring the question): 你要什么呀 - Nǐ yào shén me ya?
(What do you want?)

Part III

Gubo is at the New China bookstore looking for the official "Little Red Chinese-English, English-Chinese Dictionary"

Gubo: 你们有英汉汉英词典吗 - Nǐmen yǒu Yīng-Hàn Hàn-Yīng cídiǎn ma?
(Do you have English-Chinese, Chinese-English dictionaries?)

Fuwuyuan: 没有 - Méi yǒu (No)

Lesson Eight: Coming Home Late and Waking Up the Guard to Open the Door

Once again, Gubo and Palanka have returned to their

dormitory past curfew. The door is locked and the guard is sound asleep. They knock on the door until the guard finally wakes up.

Palanka: 对不起先生 - Duì bu qǐ xiān shēng (Sorry, sir)

Gubo: 不好意思 - Bù hǎo yì si (We really feel bad)

Guard crawls out of his "bed" (two chairs put together facing each other) and stumbles to the door without a word.

Palanka: 不会再发生这个事儿 - Bú huì zài fā shēng zhèi gè shìr (This won't happen again)

Guard, still half asleep, fumbles with the lock until the door opens.

Gubo: 谢谢您 - Xiè xiè nǐ (Thank you)

Palanka: 晚安 - Wǎn ān (Good night)

Guard closes the door and goes back to sleep.