

## Unit 14

### More Things You Can Do

**Cast:**

- Missionary Li Wei
- Teacher Zhang Dong
- 4-5 students
- Mr. Ahmet
- Taxi Driver

**Scene 14.1. Missionary Li Wei is taking photographs of Mr Ahmet, his language helper**

**Missionary Li Wei speaking in a loud voice in Chinese as he acts out each step of taking a photograph:**

1. I find a suitable object
2. I take my camera out of its case
3. I check the settings
4. I point the camera at the object, you.
5. I tell you to move left, right, forward or backward
6. I ask you to smile
7. I take the picture
8. I look at the result

**Mr. Ahmet:** Good, now go through every step again, only this time in English!

**Missionary Li Wei acts it out again several times, repeating the instructions in English.**

1. I find a suitable object
2. I take my camera out of its case
3. I check the settings
4. I point the camera at the object, you.
5. I tell you to move left, right, forward or backward
6. I ask you to smile
7. I take the picture
8. I look at the result

**Mr. Ahmet:** OK, now try doing this in the future tense.

**Missionary Li Wei:**

1. I'm going to find a suitable object
2. I'm going to take my camera out of its case
3. I'm going to check the settings
4. I'm going to point the camera at the object, you.

5. I'm going to tell you to move left, right, forward or backward
6. I'm going to ask you to smile
7. I'm going to take the picture
8. I'm going look at the result

## **Fade and Cut**

### **Scene 14.2. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** Missionary Li Wei demonstrated something called the Series Method. It is a very useful method to learn a series of related words. The fact that the words in the series are related to the same task helps you in memorizing them.

Doing the series method is easy. Get your Language Helper to tell you the steps involved in doing something that you already know how to do. For example, get your tutor to tell you how to make a cup of tea. Ideally you have learned your first 1,000 words and thus already know the words for teapot, teabag, sugar, spoon, water, stove, match, light, etc.

Next you ask your tutor to tell you the steps involved in making a cup of tea, while you record it. You should be able to follow what your tutor says because you already know the main vocabulary, but most likely there will be some words you won't understand the first time. Aim to be exposed to stuff of which you understand 75-80%.

Then go through the recording with your tutor and note of every word you don't understand along with its meaning. After that, listen to the recording several times until you understand everything in the text without having to refer to your notes. Once you understand everything, the text is in your comprehensible corpus and you can put it in a "to be reviewed every once in a while" stack.

Notice the focus on comprehension. At this point worry about learning to understand the text. Later on you can practice telling your tutor how to make tea, but for now don't spend much time memorizing your new vocabulary or sentence structure. Because you're not taking up a lot of time memorizing, you will instead be able to elicit and learn to understand many different Series Method recordings from your tutor. Here are just a few ideas to get you started.

- How to make a cup of coffee/tea
- How to dress a baby
- How to start a car
- How to lock/unlock a door with a key
- How to record someone using a tape recorder
- How to change a diaper
- How to make fruit salad
- How to cook a national dish
- How to make a bed
- How to brush your teeth

- How to get from your house to the store (or anywhere else for that matter)
- How to use a pay phone
- How to wash a car
- How to wash the dishes
- How to find a good TV show to watch

So far I've only listed solo activities; that is, none of the above involve any dialogue or discussion in order to get the task done. However, most things we do in life involve interaction. It is easy to develop a list pertaining to those situations as well:

- How to pay an electric bill
- How to buy stamps to mail a letter
- How to take a bus somewhere
- How to rent a car
- How to make a phone call
- How to apply for a residence permit
- How to apply for a job
- How to host a guest in your home
- What you do when you enter a home you are visiting for the first time

The series technique is also one of the best ways to practice learning various tenses (e.g., past, present, future) and pronouns (e.g., I, we, he, they). This is a much more productive way to practice verb conjugations than just trying to memorize them out of context. Your mind is much more engaged if you recite a whole series with one pronoun and one tense and then the same series with another pronoun and another tense. For example, here is a simple series technique in three ways about starting a car:

<b>Command</b>	<b>He-Past</b>	<b>I-Future</b>
Open the car door.	He opened the car door.	I'm gonna open the car door.
Get in.	He got in.	I'm gonna get in.
Close the door.	He closed the door.	I'm gonna close the door.
Start the car.	He started the car.	I'm gonna start the car.
Drive away.	He drove away.	I'm gonna drive away.

The series technique is also a good way to aid culture learning by using it to describe the way people there do certain things. For example you can get your language helper to teach you, step by step, the typical things people do for a particular holiday. Once you've learned that series, you can say to someone, "Let me see if I can tell you how people here celebrate this holiday. Please correct me if I'm wrong." After you've tried to say it to someone you can ask, "Now you say it, please".

### **Fade and Cut**

**Scene 14.3. Missionary Li Wei carrying on a little conversation in English with a taxi driver. They are talking about the weather and what Missionary Li Wei likes about the host country.**

**Face and Cut**

**Scene 14.4. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** The Dialogue Generation Technique builds on the Series Method. With Dialogue Generation you ask your language helper to record typical interactions between two people in different situations, with the difficulty or complexity of the dialogue aimed at your ability level.

For example, ask your language helper to record several simple, typical interactions between a taxi driver and a passenger. The key is to get several such dialogues recorded. If you just get one dialogue, it's likely that the way people respond to you will be different than in your dialogue. However, by getting your language helper to record several different impromptu dialogues on the same topic, you're more likely to be exposed to "real language" like you'll also hear when you are in "real life" situations. Plus, by getting several dialogues you'll be learning to understand and ultimately produce more vocabulary.

Note also that these dialogues should be geared toward your ability level, so that more advanced learners can have their tutors create more advanced dialogues. In fact, as a beginning, intermediate, and an advanced learner you can use exactly the same topics to get dialogues with differing levels of complexity.

For example, with a taxi driver and passenger the easiest dialogues could revolve around basic taxi use: greeting the driver, telling him where to go, paying him, and saying good-bye. The next level of difficulty could include the passenger giving directions to the driver as well as small talk between the driver and the passenger, about the weather or whatever else taxi drivers and passengers chat about wherever you live. An even more advanced level of dialogue could have the driver and passenger arguing about the fare because the driver didn't reset the meter when they began. And so on. This is the same development that you'll see in your speaking ability. Simple first, then more complex, step-by-step.

**Fade and Cut**

**Scene 14.5. Missionary Li Wei practicing number dictation with Mr. Ahmet (see scene 14.6 for details)**

**Fade and Cut**

#### **Scene 14.6. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** Number are very important to learn soon and well. You need them to tell time, to bargain, to figure out prices and exchange rates, etc. The Number Dictation method helps get the number system into your mind.

Have cards filled with numbers, times, currency, etc. Get your Language Helper to dictate these to you. This will enable you to gain mastery over the way numbers are used. You can make currency cards (\$2.65; \$9.05; etc.) and clock time cards (10:45; 4:30, etc.).

Drill them until you've got them mastered.

#### **Fade and Cut**

#### **Scene 14.7. Missionary Li Wei practicing inter-language reading on his own (see scene 8 for details)**

#### **Fade and Cut**

#### **Scene 14.8. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** Missionary Li Wei is demonstrating something called Inter-Language Reading. Basically, you simply read and compare back-and-forth things in the target language something you are well-acquainted with in your mother tongue. It will help you sense how they express certain ideas. You could, for instance, buy a translation of a novel and compare the two. Or, even better, compare a passage in your Chinese Bible with a Bible in your target language.

Try other different reading techniques as well. For instance, you might try to

- Read a recipe and underline the instruction words.
- Re-order a set of jumbled instructions for a scientific experiment
- Have you Language Helper cut up a text or jumble a poem and try to put it in the right order.
- Read the description of a how machine, like a washing machine, works.
- Read comic books

As you are reading along, keep a list of complex sentences that intrigue you because of their construction. Try to create other sentences that follow that same format; that is, that express ideas using the same grammatical construction. In doing this, you will be practicing complex grammatical patterns in a way that focuses as much on content as it does on form. This becomes a content-based approach to grammar.

You can also select a simple sentence and then investigate what happens to the sentence (i.e., how it changes) when it becomes negative, a question, a command, a different person/tense, etc. That helps to internalize basic word order.

### **Fade and Cut**

#### **Scene 14.9. Mr Ahmet dictating something to Li Wei**

### **Face and Cut**

#### **Scene 14.10. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** There are different ways to practice writing and learning different writing styles.

Different types of things require different levels of writing skills. Filling out an application form, for instance, is a different skill than writing a letter. Both are different from writing a sermon. A sermon which is meant to be spoken afterwards utilizes a different style from a piece of composition which is meant to be read.

Try practicing different types of writing techniques. Try doing dictation, composition and translation. Dictation is by far the easiest, since you just write what you hear. Composition involves expressing your thoughts on paper. Translation transfers thoughts from one language to another, forcing you to look for equivalent idioms and ways of saying things.

### **Fade and Cut**

#### **Scene 14.11. Missionary Li Wei and Mr. Ahmet doing the Record and Compare technique (see below)**

### **Fade and Cut**

#### **Scene 14.12. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** This time missionary Li Wei is practicing the record and compare technique. He is recording himself in tandem with his language helper. He then listens and re-listens many times in order to compare his consonants, vowels, intonation, etc., with those of his helper.

Focus on areas that cause miscommunication, like things that sound “funny” to your language helper, or things that give him or her ‘hurt-ears’. As soon as possible, pick out

the consonants and vowels that are troublesome for you. Get these in various contexts (word-initial, word-final, after consonant, in contrast to other sounds, etc.). Then systematically drill them with your language helper.

## **Fade and Cut**

### **Scene 14.13. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class teaching the Tone Pattern Drill**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** The Tone Pattern Drill Technique is for those of you learning tonal languages, in which the meaning of a word is determined as much by its tone-pattern as by its phonetic make-up.

With the Tone Pattern Drill technique, you compare utterances to decide their pitch by substituting them into a constant environment (a "frame"). By keeping the same frame, you will be better able to tell when the substitutions items change pitch. After the patterns are distinguishable, you produce them. This will enable you:

- To recognize, initially within a controlled environment, the tone patterns
- To be able to produce words using the correct tone patterns

You set up the tone pattern drill before your language helpers comes like this:

- Select a frame (i.e., a fixed sentence pattern) which will stay the same as you change the substitution items.
- Make a list of words that you want to practice to determine their tone pattern.
- Make sure substitution items are of the same class (all nouns, for instance, or all adjectives), so they will fit into the same frame.
- Arrange the substitution items into groups with the same number of syllables, and as much as possible with the same syllable pattern.

When your language helper shows up explain what you want to do.

- Have the Language helper say each item in the frame several times. You may have to go through the list several times before you can clearly hear the pitch, and determine its level.
- Regroup the substitution items into groups with the same tone patterns and go through each group again in the frame for another check on consistency. Regroup again if necessary.
- Check the groups by substituting them into a different frame: one with a different pitch pattern from the first frame.
- Record the Language Helper saying the substitution items and frames, one stress pattern group at a time.
- After your session use the recording to practice the items until you feel comfortable with them.

Let me give you an example. You make a list of words you need to practice to determine their tone pattern: spider, snake, squirrel, buffalo, lion, antelope, crocodile, lizard, and hippopotamus. (This example is given in English, even though it is not a tonal language, for ease of understanding.)

1. Decide on the frame: "The man killed a ... yesterday."
2. Explain to the Language Helper what you want to do.
3. Have the Language Helper say each item within the frame several times.
4. Have him or her repeat the following another time, since you had a hard time determining their tone the first couple of times: snake, crocodile, lizard.
5. Regroup the items according to their tone pattern.
6. Group 1. maybe: buffalo, lion, crocodile, hippopotamus
7. Group 2. maybe: squirrel, snake, antelope
8. Group 3. maybe: spider, lizard
9. Go through each group again, checking for consistency.
10. Recheck the tone groups by substituting them into a different frame: "A ... played on the rocks."
11. Record the Language Helper saying the groups within the frames, one at a time.
12. Use the recording to practice several times until you feel comfortable with the tone patterns.

## **Fade and Cut**

### **Scene 14.14. Things learned in this lesson**

- The Series Technique.
- The Dialogue Generation Technique
- The Record and Compare Technique
- The Number Dictation Technique
- Various other reading techniques
- To collect complex sentences you figure out later with your language helper
- To select simple sentences and experiment what happens to them when you turn them into negatives, questions, commands, etc.
- To practice different writing techniques
- Tone pattern drills