

## Unit 4

### Get Talking!

#### Cast:

- Missionary Li Wei
- Teacher Zhang Dong
- Mr. Ahmet
- Students from Islamistan

#### Scene 4.1. Missionary Li Wei in Restaurant.

**Missionary Li Wei:** When Mr. Ahmet and other people from Islamistan discovered that we served “halal” food at our restaurant they started coming on a regular basis. This gave me all kinds of opportunities to practice my language. I would lay awake at night trying to dream up ways in which I could practice speaking their language with them.

I never forgot that the best way to learn a language was to become childlike. So I thought of different childlike ways to practice. I noticed that Baby Bao was always asking questions like, “What’s this” and “What’s that”.

At our next language lesson I asked Mr. Ahmet to teach me some simple questions I could use with our guests. Soon I was asking them things like, “What did you do yesterday?”, “What do you plan to do tomorrow?”, “Please tell me about your family.” “Where do you live? “Do you like it there?” “Why or why not?” Some of the Muslims were students, and I could ask them things like, “What do you hope to do when you finish studying?”, “What do you like to do with your free time?”, and other simple questions like that.

As I started asking question, the students would start asking me questions as well, so I had to come up with some answers. I had Mr. Ahmet help me memorize simple answers to their questions. They would ask me about myself, my family, my work. I started keeping a running list of ideas I could ask Mr. Ahmet to teach me. After some weeks I even worked out with Mr. Ahmet a simple little “fill in the blanks” prayer I could use to bless people. It was very simple, something like this:

“Thank you Lord for your grace and love  
Thank you too, Lord, for \_\_\_\_\_ (this day/my friend Mr. Ahmet/the food, etc.)  
I/we pray that you will bless us and help us \_\_\_\_\_ (in our work/to serve  
you/worship you) today  
Please forgive us our sins in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

As I got to know more and more of their language, I learned to add more and more appropriate phrases to my prayer.

One day I noticed that I was making simple statements to Mr. Ahmet in the course of our language lessons, but did so in Chinese. It dawned on me that I should memorize the statements I kept using in his language. So I learned to say things like:

- “Let’s read this lesson. You read first and I’ll say it after you.”
- “Let’s practice these sentences.”
- “Say it again.”
- “I don’t want to learn/study/do this right now.”
- “Please help me with these words”
- “Please speak/talk more slowly”
- “Please write it down (for me). I want to learn/study it later”
- “Please repeat”, “Please pronounce this word (for me)”
- “What does it mean?”
- “Please translate this word for me”
- “Please show me”
- “Please give me an example”
- “Please correct me”.

In these ways I started using as much as possible of the language with both my language helper, Mr. Ahmet, and with other people from Islamistan whom I got to know.

## **Fade and Cut**

### **Scene 4.2. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** Missionary Li Wei discovered some important things pertaining to language learning. First of all, like a child, he learned the importance of asking simple questions. The questions he asked were excellent for beginner language learners. Remember, he asked things like, “What did you do yesterday?”, “What do you plan to do tomorrow?”, “Tell me about your family”, “Where do you live?”, “Do you like it there? Why or why not?” What do you study? What do you hope to do when you finish studying?”, “What do you like to do with your free time?”.

Asking questions continues as an important part of language learning, even when you are past the beginner stages. Can you think of questions which intermediate and more advanced learners might ask? I’m going to break you into two groups. Group 1 brainstorms questions intermediate language learners might be able to ask, while Group 2 brainstorms questions more advanced language learners might be able to ask.

## **Cut**

### **Scene 4.3. Students, broken into 2 groups, brainstorm suitable questions**

*Group 1: Camera focuses on different students as they come up with the following:*

- “What did you do yesterday, from the time you got up to when you went to bed?”
- “Why did you choose to study \_\_\_\_\_?”
- “What would you like to be doing five years from now?”
- “Tell me about a time when you traveled somewhere.”
- “Please tell me about your favourite restaurant.”
- “What kind of books do you like?” “Please tell me about your favourite book.”
- “Please tell me about your favourite movie.”
- “Please tell me about your favourite store.”
- “Please tell me about your best friend.”
- “Please tell me about an important moment in your life.”
- “Please tell me about your mom.”
- “Please tell me about your dad.”
- “Please tell me about your brother (or sister or cousin or etc.).”
- “What kind of movies do you like?”

*Camera pans to Group 2 and focuses on different students as they come up with the following:*

- “Please use a lot of detail and tell me what you did yesterday between (for example) 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.”
- “What qualities (or characteristics or traits) do you like in a friend?”
- “What was your childhood like?”
- “What is your first memory?”
- “Please tell me about the happiest day of your life.”
- “How important is religion in your life? Why?”
- “How important is politics in your life? Why?”
- “What is your opinion about (some major world event going on)?”
- “In your opinion, what makes life worth living?”
- “What is the biggest mistake that you have ever made?”
- “What is your most embarrassing moment?”
- “What is something you really want to learn to do before you die?”
- “What is the worst job you’ve ever done for money?”
- “Where do you think you will be five years from now? Doing what?”
- “How would your life change if you had to do without TV?”
- “Tell me about someone special in your life.”
- “Are you anxious to get married?” Why (not?)”
- “What kind of social events do you enjoy?”
- “What kinds of problems do you face?”
- “Who is someone you’re always glad to see?”
- “If you found \$250 dollars on the street, how would you spend it?”
- “What are you currently saving money for?”
- “When you are all alone, where do you go?”
- “What sports do you enjoy playing/watching?”
- “Tell me about something really scary that has happened to you.”

- “Would you consider marrying someone of a different cultural background?”
- “What are your favourite foods?”
- “If you could ask any one question from any 10 people who ever lived, what particular question would you ask those particular people?”
- “What is something you would hate to lose?”
- “Do you believe in life after death?”
- “What kind of baby would you like?” (physical characteristics, gender, looks, personality)
- “In what areas would you want your child to excel?” (sports, music, art, dance, science, humanities, business/trade)
- “What profession would you want your child to have?”
- “How would you feel if science could prolong life to 175 years?”
- “Imagine that you could invite any 10 historical people over for dinner. Whom would you invite, and whom would you seat next to who? Why?” (e.g.: Adam, Buddha, Aristotle, Castro, Einstein, Eve, Freud, Hitler, Jesus Christ, Lenin, Mao, Michelangelo, Mohammed, Napoleon, Sadat, Shakespeare, Stalin, etc.
- “Imagine you were born in 1900 and lived to 2000. You would have seen amazing changes in the course of your life: who could have predicted in 1900 that by 1969 people would be walking on the moon? What do you think will be the biggest changes in the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What do you think will be the biggest changes in the course of your lifetime? Will the world be a better or worse place for those changes?”
- “Imagine were sentenced to spend the rest of your life on an uninhabited island in the Pacific, where the weather is mild. You were allowed to take 10 items with you. What would you take? Why?”
- Go over maps of each other’s countries and discuss the different areas, cities, industries, rivers, peoples. Discuss where the cheap places are to go on vacation.
- Find out about your Language Helpers favorite subjects, hobbies, extended families (sketch family tree), background, jobs, friendship, religion, politics. Find out what his/her least favourite subject is (don’t push that area!)

**Cut**

#### **Scene 4.4. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** Those are all excellent ideas, though some of the advanced ideas are very advanced! It will take a while for you to get up to that level! Note too that some of these should only be used with speakers of the same sex. People in Islamistan can be very conservative when it comes to people of the opposite sex relating to each other!

Remember to record your question and your language helper or national friend’s answer. That way you can go over it again and again, learning new vocabulary. Remember, don’t move too fast! The key to learning language is lots of comprehensible input! You’ve got

to be able to understand something of the sentence if your brain is to create meanings for the words you don't understand.

It also helps the brain if you can group your questions into related types of information. Related types of information, as you may recall, are called "semantic realms". You could, for instance, create some little memorized dialogues pertaining to meeting people. Here are a number of examples:

**Scene 4.5. Basic dialogues appear on screen. Voiceover by teacher Zhang Dong**

**1. Basic Greetings**

Hello.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

What is your name?

I'm happy to meet you.

Where do you live?

I live over there.

I must be going now.

Good-bye.

**2. Basic Greetings/Invitation**

Hi (to someone across the way).

I live next door. We just moved in.

I came over to meet you.

We are new here.

Come over sometime.

Please come for dinner. What do you like?

Do you have any food restrictions?

Come about 7:00.

**3. Basic Hospitality**

Greeting (when you open the door).

Please come in.

Please sit down.

Please have some tea.

Thank you for coming.

Please come back again.

**4. Basic Question & Answer (1)**

What are you doing?

I'm studying/working/playing.

When will you be done? In about 2 hours.

When are you going home? Later today.

How long will you be here?

Till noon.

### 5. Basic Question & Answer (2)

When did you come here?

(I came here) in April.

How long will you stay here?

(I'll stay) about 3 months.

Do you like living here?

Yes, I like it very much.

### 6. Basic Question & Answer (3)

Where are you going?

(I'm going) to the market.

How long will you be gone?

(I'll be gone) about 1 hour.

Can I go with you?

Sure! Come on! Let's go!

**Cut**

### Scene 4.6. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** As your language improves, start memorizing texts about yourself, your background, family, work, testimony, etc. Keep a running list of ideas. Memorize these texts to use them with your Language Helper and your new friends.

Another thing that Missionary Li Wei discovered were Power Tools. He didn't call them that, but that's what we call all the words, phrases and sentences which you find yourself using repeatedly with people who are helping you learn the language. These include: 1) instructions to your language helper, 2) asking language learning related questions, 3) talking about your level of ability, 4) conveying your desire and commitment to learn the language.

Experience has shown that if the language helper speaks your native language, the learner will tend to convey the "language learning messages" in his own language, not the target language. Don't you be guilty of this! Like Missionary Li Wei did, learn to give these and other recurring messages in the language itself. Here are some more, beside the one's missionary Li Wei told you. Write down others as you find yourself using them.

*(Sentences appear on screen as teacher Zhang Dong says them)*

- "How do you say (e.g.), 'I forgot', 'Wait for me', 'Wait a minute', 'That's mine', etc., in your language?"
- "How do you pronounce this word?"
- "How do you spell/write this word?"
- "What does this word mean?" OR "What does that mean?"

- “What is the name of this?” OR “What is this called?”
- “What is this used for?”
- “What is this action called?” (i.e., you first ask this question, then do an action, like bow, stretch, yawn, shake head, sneeze, cross legs, etc.)
- “May I ask you a question?”
- “Is it correct to say \_\_\_\_\_.” OR “Can I say this: \_\_\_\_\_?”
- “What is the correct way to say it?”
- “Do you understand?”

Here are some stock statements you will use with respect to recording. Remember, recording key parts of time spent with you language helper is very important. It enables you to go over it again and again later. Here are a few examples:

- “Let’s record these sentences.”
- “Try to read it as though you were saying it to someone.” OR “Try to say it as naturally as possible.”
- “Please say/read each sentences three times.”
- “Please pause so I can repeat it each time” OR “Watch me. I will signal when to read the next one.” OR “Read each one when I point to it.”

Here are some phrases you need to learn that enable you to express your ability and aspirations in the language:

- “I don’t know (or can’t speak) very much \_\_\_\_\_ yet.”
- “I’m sorry, I don’t understand (yet).”
- “I understand what you are saying, but I can’t (yet) answer in \_\_\_\_\_.” OR “I don’t know how to answer it yet”.
- “I need an interpreter.”
- “I understand most of this, but not all of it.”
- “I have to go now. Thanks for your help.”
- “I wish I could speak \_\_\_\_\_ better.”
- “My \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited, but I’m trying to learn more every day.”
- “I want to tell you something in \_\_\_\_\_, but I don’t know the words yet, so I have to tell you in Chinese. Do you understand Chinese?”
- “I’ll try to find out and tell you tomorrow.”
- “\_\_\_\_\_ is very difficult for me.”

And lastly, here are different phrases and sentences you need to learn that establish yourself as a language learner:

- “I want to learn \_\_\_\_\_ (or your language)”
- “May I practice speaking \_\_\_\_\_ with you?”
- “Can you help me for a few minutes?”
- “May I come back and visit tomorrow?”
- “May I tell you what I learned today/yesterday?”
- “Please talk to me in \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Cut**

**Scene 4.7. Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** Before we finish class today let me give you a simple exercise you can do with your language helpers. It's called "True/false Comprehension". It works like this: Have your helper make true or false statements about particular domains, and you respond by saying "true" or "false".

Take, for example, this room and its contents. I'm going to make statements about this room, and you have to respond with "true" or "false":

*Teacher Zhang Dong makes the statement in Chinese, students look around (camera pan) and respond with "true" or "false":*

"There are 3 chairs in that corner." (true or false)

"The light is off." (true or false)

"There is nothing on this table." (true or false)

"There are 4 books over there." (true or false)

"Not all the windows are open." (true or false)

You simply have to use your imagination to come up with different realms you can do this True/false Comprehension exercise with. Here is another example: The Weather:

"It is not cloudy today." (true or false)

"The sun is shining." (true or false)

"It didn't rain yesterday." (true or false)

"It was very cold this morning." (true or false)

You can have your Language Helper make statements about your family and family activities:

"You have 3 children." (true or false)

"All your children are in school." (true or false)

"Your wife went to the market." (true or false)

"Nobody is sick today." (true or false)

Or you can have your Language Helper make statements about life in general to which you respond. For instance:

Days/Dates: "Today is Saturday." (true or false)

Clock time: "It's 3:30 p.m." (true or false)

"Yesterday was a holiday." (true or false)

"You read the paper this morning." (true or false)



“We did not have soup for lunch.” (true or false

You can also vary the activity by turning it around. Once you’ve learned the basic statements you can try to make true/false statements. Then ask your helper to quickly re-state what you tried to say, and then say ‘true or false’.

You may have to remind your helper that it is not the purpose of this exercise to stump you but to give you listening and learning practice. If you are answering incorrectly more than a quarter of the time, have your helper make the statements easier. On the other hand, if you get them all, ask him to try to stump you. That will really challenge your comprehension ability!

## **Fade and Cut**

### **Scene 4.8. Things learned in this lesson**

*Scroll by on screen. Voiceover: Teacher Zhang Dong*

- Learning to ask simple questions is a good way to get people to give you comprehensible input. Asking questions continues as an important part of language learning, even when you are past the beginner stages.
- You may not be able to ask questions of people from the other sex. Muslim people can be very conservative when it comes to people of the opposite sex relating to each other!
- It helps the brain if you can group your questions into related types of information.
- Start memorizing texts about yourself, your background, family, work, testimony, so you can answer the questions back!
- Power Tools are all the words, phrases and sentences which you find yourself using repeatedly in your language learning process. These include instructions to your language helper, asking language learning related questions, talking about your level of ability, and conveying your desire and commitment to learn the language.
- In the “True/false Comprehension Technique” your Language Helper make true or false statements about particular domains, and you respond by saying “true” or “false”.