Mandarin Chinese\textsuperscript{1,2}

- member of the \textit{Sinitic} branch of the \textit{Sino-Tibetan} language family
- spoken by about 845,500,000 people (www.ethnologue.com, based on more recent data than Lyovin)
- spoken by 70\% of people who speak a Chinese dialect
- not always mutually intelligible with other dialects of Chinese
- standard language of China (based on Mandarin of Beijing (previously called Peking)); though Hong Kong remains a notable exception (uses Cantonese dialect)
- When no dialect is specified, the term ‘Chinese’ is used to refer to Mandarin Chinese.
- written with Chinese characters (now Simplified Chinese); also uses \textit{Pinyin} system for Romanization
- had a large influence on neighbors, including exportation of writing system
  i. Japanese continues to use Chinese characters (\textit{kanji}) together with the Hiragana syllabary. Many \textit{kanji} have been altered in form, meaning and/or pronunciation, and other \textit{kanji} have been created in Japanese.
  ii. Korean occasionally uses Chinese characters (\textit{hanja}), though it is becoming increasingly uncommon. Some newspapers continue to write the names of (some) countries, Asian politicians (us. heads of state) in \textit{hanja}. Academic terms are occasionally included in \textit{hanja} (or English) alongside the Korean script. Most Korean names can be written in \textit{hanja}, but this is not done on a daily basis.
  iii. Vietnamese used to use Chinese characters (\textit{chữ nho}), and sometimes modified Chinese characters specific to Vietnamese (\textit{chữ nôm}). A Romanization of Vietnamese became official in 1910, and today it is used exclusively.

\textsuperscript{1} Most unmarked examples below are from Lyovin (1997).
\textsuperscript{2} Examples are given not in IPA notation, but rather using the Pinyin Romanization, as found in sources.
Chinese Dialects/Languages

(source: http://www.asiana.com/images/dialects.gif)
Breakdown of Mandarin Dialects

Mandarin is made up of the Northern, Northwestern, Southwestern and Eastern (Jianghuai) dialect groups. The Eastern group, while not represented above, corresponds roughly to the ‘River’ group.
Phonetics/Phonology

- most morphemes are monosyllabic
- morphemes are frequently combined to form compound words
- most words are disyllabic (http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/chinese/aspect/bimorphemicwords.html)
- all syllables have tone

Syllable structure

\[(C) (G) V (N/G) + \text{Tone}\]

C = consonant
G = glide
V = vowel
N = nasal consonant

Tones

(see sources below to listen to the words)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Character</th>
<th>Tone symbol</th>
<th>Tone description</th>
<th>English gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>媽</td>
<td>媽</td>
<td>high level</td>
<td>'mother'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>麻</td>
<td>麻</td>
<td>high rising</td>
<td>'hemp'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>馬</td>
<td>馬</td>
<td>low falling rising</td>
<td>'horse'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>罵</td>
<td>罵</td>
<td>high falling</td>
<td>'scold'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: http://www.uiowa.edu/~linguist/faculty/beckman/lotw01/mantone.html)
(pitch tracks at: http://www.uiowa.edu/~linguist/faculty/beckman/lotw01/manpitch.html)

- number, type of tones differ from one dialect to another; compare Mandarin (above) to Cháozhōu (below).

Table 41.4: Cháozhōu Tones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isolation tones</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>53</th>
<th>213</th>
<th>55</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination tones</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(combo tones = tone when followed by another syllable)
Consonant Inventory (syllable-initial position)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labio-dental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Alveo-palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plosive</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plosive</td>
<td>p&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>t&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fricative</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>ʂ</td>
<td>z&lt;sub&gt;r&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>ɕ</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affricate</td>
<td>ʦ</td>
<td>tʂ</td>
<td>tɕ&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>tɕ&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>tɕ&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liquid</td>
<td></td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In syllable-final position, only the consonants [n] and [ŋ] appear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labio-dental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Alveo-palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ŋ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Chinese also contains the following glides: /j, ɥ, w/ (corresponding to vowels /i, y, u/, respectively)

**Example of Mandarin Chinese**

Morphology/Syntax

- Chinese is largely an *isolating* language.
- Because of the lack of markers of grammatical relations, word order is quite strict in Chinese.
- Chinese makes little use of derivational affixes; thus, the same form has different functions depending on its position.

Wǒ xià shā. Shān xià yǒu rén.
1sg down mountain mountain down exist person(s)
‘I descend the mountain.’ ‘There are people below the mountain.’
(Lyovin 1997:134)

- no marking for case or gender; number generally not marked
- no pronouns to distinguish gender

\( tā \) = ‘he, she, it’

- **inclusive/exclusive ‘we’** have separate forms

wōmen = ‘we’ (excluding addressee)
zámen = ‘we’ (including addressee)

- Chinese must use **classifiers** to count nouns; in a sense, all nouns are noncount nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Korean</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zhī</td>
<td>caru</td>
<td>hon (pon/bon)</td>
<td>classifier for pencils (among other things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wèi</td>
<td>pun</td>
<td>mei</td>
<td>polite classifier for human beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ge</td>
<td>mjną́n</td>
<td>nin</td>
<td>ordinary classifier for people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ge</td>
<td>ke</td>
<td>ko</td>
<td>general classifier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Different classify objects in different ways; the above classifiers are not likely completely equivalent from one language to the other, either.*

yī zhī qiānbfí
one CL pencil
‘one pencil’

sān wèi kèrén
three CL guest
‘three guests’ (polite)

nèi ge rén
that CL person
‘that person’
• Chinese makes wide use of **compounding** to form new words

  - fēijī = lit. ‘fly engine’ = ‘airplane’
  - biànyāqī = lit. ‘change (electric) pressure implement’ = ‘transformer’
  - fādiànjī = lit. ‘emit electricity engine’ = ‘electric generator’

  (cf. English ‘telephone’ = lit. ‘far sound’)

• **Adjectives** are a subclass of verbs in Chinese; i.e., it is not as easy to split them into different syntactic categories in Chinese as it is in English. (examples from Comrie 1990:826-827)

  mǎlǐ hěn cōngming
  Molly very intelligent
  ‘Molly is very intelligent.’
  (note that a copular verb ‘be’ is not used for adjectives in Chinese)

  [kāixīn de] rén   [chī ròu de] rén
  happy de person    eat meat de person
  ‘people [who are happy]’  ‘people [who eat meat]’

• Chinese verbs have **no inflection** (e.g. for subject/object agreement, tense, mood, aspect or voice). Some of these can be marked using separate lexical items.³

  ➢ Tense
  - marked by time words (e.g. tomorrow, yesterday, before)

    Míngtiān wǒ qù kàn diànyīng.
    tomorrow 1sg go look movie
    ‘I will go to see a movie tomorrow.’

  - marked by perfective marker (indicates completed action)

    Wǒ chī fàn le.
    1sg eat cooked.rice PRF
    ‘I ate rice.’

  - future often indicated by yào ‘want’ or xiǎng ‘think’
    (‘want’ is used to express the future in many languages; over time, it can become grammaticalized to obtain only a future tense meaning; e.g., English ‘will’ originally meant ‘want’; cf. German **wollen** ‘to want’)

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³ The words ‘tense, mood, voice’ are typically only used when they are marked by inflection on verbs; thus, I used them below for comparison’s sake only.
• **Aspect**
  - *le* marks the perfective aspect, which marks a completed action (example above)

• **Voice**
  - An *adversative passive* can be formed using the verb *bèi* ‘to suffer’

  (active)
  Tāmén kànjian le wǒ
  they see PRF 1sg
  ‘They saw me.’

  (passive)
  Wǒ bèi tāmén kànjian le.
  I suffer they see PRF
  ‘I was seen by them (and this somehow affects me negatively).’

• **Mood**
  - E.g. yes/no questions are marked with the question particle *ma*

  Nǐ qù ma
  you go Q
  ‘Are you going?’

- **The verb ‘be’** is translated into several verbs in Chinese.
  
  Wǒ shì xuéshēng.
  I be student.
  ‘I am a student.’ (‘be’ used as a copula verb)

  Wǒ zài jiā.
  1sg be.at home
  ‘I am at home.’ (‘be’ used as a locative verb)

  Yōu rén zài ménkǒur.
  exist person be.at door
  ‘There is a person at the door.’ (‘be’ used as an existential verb)
• **Resultative** constructions can be made by placing two (appropriate) verbs next to each other.

Tā xià sī le wǒ.
3sg frighten die PRF 1sg
‘He frightened me to death.’

Tā bǎ wǒ mà kū le
3sg ba 1sg scold cry PRF
‘S/he scolded me so much that I cried.’
(Comrie 1990:818)

(typical English resultatives: I shot him dead. / I hammered the metal flat.)

• **Reduplication** (examples from Comrie 1990:821)

  ➢ of verbs indicates the action being done ‘a little bit’

  nǐ shuō-shuo neǐ jiàn shì
2sg speak-speak that CL matter
‘Speak a little about that matter!’
(note that the tone changes on the reduplicated form here)

  ➢ of some adjectives indicates intensity

  hóng ‘red’ hóng-hóng ‘vividly red’

  ➢ of manner adjectives creates adverbs (with addition of *de*)

  tā màn-màn-de pāo
3sg slow-slow-de run
‘S/he runs slowly.’

• **wh-questions** are formed by leaving the question word in the position of the questioned element

  tā zhāo shéi
3sg look.for who
‘Who is s/he looking for?’

  shéi zhāo tā
who look.for 3sg
‘Who is looking for him/her?’
Recommended resources:

http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/chinese/aspect/Chinesefiles.html

References:
