18th Oct 2017

In today's lesson we how to ask about nationality:

The question word: 哪

nǎ

means 'which' so the question: 'Where are you from?' Or 'What's your nationality?' is rendered as "You are which country person?" 你是哪国人

nǐ shì nǎ guó rén?

When you use a 'question word' in a question (for example 'where', 'when', 'which' why, how? Etc) you don't add 'ma' （吗） at the end.

This is also true if you use an 'or' question – ie: do you want this one or that one?

The word for 'or' in this context is: 还是   háishì

We learnt the character: 文 (wén) which means language so now we can talk about 中文 and 英文 - (zhōngwén and yīngwén) Chinese and English (language)

On the subject of language we talked about Simplified and Traditional characters – simplified being the form mainly used in mainland China (and what you're learning with me).

I explained that characters can be divided into 3 types:

1) Ones which are made up of just one radical – which indicates the meaning – such as:

女 (woman nǚ) and 人 (person/people)

2) Then there are characters which are made of more than one

component which together illustrate meaning, such as: 国

(country) (guó) made up of 'enclosure' and 'imperial jade'

Or 好 (hǎo) (made up of 'woman' and 'child')

3) Then finally there are characters where one component indicates meaning and another component indicates (or hints at) pronunciation. An example would be: 红 (red)

Here the first component means 'silk', giving a clue to meaning, and the second component is the
'phonetic' – 'gong' which hints at the pronunciation of the character which is: hóng

Another example would be the character 认 (rèn) which is found in the 'word' 认识 (rènshí)– meaning 'to know' or 'to recognise'.

Remember the expression:

认识你很高兴   (Pleased to meet you)

Here the first component indicates that it is something to do with speech or language, the second component hints at the pronunciation 'ren'

To talk about day and date we need two more characters (both very important 'radicals'.

月 yue = month or moon

日 rì = sun or day

1949 年 10 月 1 日 (on the principal of largest to smallest so the year comes first)

day 年 nián = year

We also learnt the names of some countries:

Countries – vocab

英国 yīng guó

中国 zhōng guó

美国 měi guó

日本 rì běn

法国 fǎ guó

加拿大 jiā ná dà

Homework

Try to read the following out loud, thinking about the tones and pronunciation. Then translate into English:

你是美国人吗？

她是日本人

你的英文不好

美国人很好

他是哪国人？

中国很大

你的英文很好

他是日本人还是中国人？