

HAOHSIANG

American people, they usually have the myth that Chinese is a very difficult language to master which is true if you want to learn the four skills altogether. We are talking about listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

LIAO:

Chinese is difficult in the sense of Chinese characters. If you focus on just listening and speaking, the structure of Chinese language is the same as English. It's SVO language. So you say, I like you. As long as you know how do you say, I, like, and you individually, and you put together, it's, I like you.

So it's not Japanese. Japanese is SOV. So you have to say, I you like in Japanese. So again, if you just want to focus on listening and speaking, Chinese is not so difficult to master.

Most of the Chinese textbooks, they combine these four skills altogether. So a dialogue would be represented in Chinese characters. And reading Chinese characters is a big burden for beginners. And our curriculum here is our speaking and listening class, they have different units. And that is one of the reasons we would like to adopt these new materials at MIT. And the material is called *Basic Spoken Chinese* and *Basic Written Chinese*.

So the idea is it separates the speaking and listening from the reading and writing. So for the first two weeks, our curriculum here is that we focus on the speaking and listening. So students, they get a solid foundation of what Chinese sounds like. After two weeks, then we slowly introduce the reading and the writing part. And our pace here is our speaking and listening classes, they're always one week ahead of the reading and writing.

There are some good purposes for doing that. One of them is reading and writing will become review for the speaking and listening. So when students read, the materials is something you already know from speaking and listening. So their energy, their efforts, can be put entirely focused on decoding the characters. So they don't need to go through the process of, so what is meant by this word and by that word because they already learned this in the speaking and listening class.