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A Little Bit of Language Can Go a Long Way!



Lesson 1: Thank You!

谢谢你。Xiè xie nǐ.

LESSON NOTES

Today's lesson covered a phrase there is no excuse not bring with you to China. In Chinese there are several ways to express ones gratitude; however by far the most common phrase used to express ones thanks is xiè xie (Thank you.). This is undoubtedly the phrase of gratitude you will here the most throughout your journeys, and conveniently the easiest to pronounce.

As Chinese is a tonal language, it is important to correctly pronounce the tones, as an incorrect pronunciation of a tone can change the meaning of a word and in turn, the meaning of the phrase. In the case of xiè xie, however, the phrase is used so frequency that it is likely no matter how badly you mispronounce the tones, this expression of gratitude will be understood. The tones for xiè xie are 4th and no tone respectively. Chinese characters have meanings, and the character 谢 (xiè) means thanks, to thank. As the phrase Xiè xie. consists of two of the same characters, it literally means, "Thank(s), thank(s)." However, it is translated as "Thank you."

Xiè xie nǐ. (Thank you.), or the politer version Xiè xie nin. (Thank you.[formal]), are common variations of the phrase Xiè xie. (Thank you.). In both of these phrases xiè xie is followed by the word for you, nǐ (you) or the politer version nín (you, formal). The literal meaning of these phrases are closer to their English counterpart "Thank you." as both phrases includes the word you.

Another polite way to express one's gratitude is the phrase, Duō xiè. (Thank you so much.) which literally means "Many thanks." or "A lot of thanks." The components of this sentence are duō (many) and xiè (to thank). Literally many thanks, but translated as "Thank you very much." The tones for this phrase are the 1st tone, the flat tone, and 4th tone, the falling tone, respectively.

Finally there is a phrase that expresses one's utmost gratitude. This phrase is Wǒ hěn gǎn xiè. (Thank you so much.) which literally means "I very feel thanks." but is translated as "Thank you so much." This phrase is reserved for very special occasions, such as when someone does something extremely kind or particularly helpful.

As mentioned previously, the tones in Chinese are extremely important. In the phrase Wǒ hěn gǎn xiè. (Thank you so much.) The first three characters in this sentence are 3rd tone, the rising falling tone. When there are two consecutive 3rd tones, the first 3rd tone changes to the 2nd tone, the rising tone, while the second 3rd tone remains 3rd tone.

For example, the word wǒ (I, me) is 3rd tone; the word hěn (very) is also 3rd tone. However, when combined to form the phrase wǒ hěn, the first 3rd tone becomes a second tone.

Wǒ hěn -> Wó hěn

In the case of Wǒ hěn gǎn xiè. (Thank you so much.) there are 3 consecutive 3rd tones! While there are exceptions to the following rule and linguistics may take issue with this, for this particular point in your studies the following rule of thumb should suffice.

When there are 3 or more consecutive 3rd tones, change each 3rd tone preceding the final 3rd tone into a 2nd tone.

The phrase Wǒ hěn gǎn xiè. (Thank you so much.) is pronounced, Wó hén gǎn xiè. Notice that the first two 3rd tones are pronounced as 2nd tones.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
谢谢。	Xiè xiè.	Thank you.
多谢。	Duō xiè.	Thanks a lot. Thank you very much.
我很感谢。	Wǒ hěn gǎn xiè.	I am very thankful. Thank you so much.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
谢	xiè	thanks, to thank
多	duō	many
我	wǒ	I, me
很	hěn	very, a lot
感	gǎn	to feel
您	nín	you (formal)

QUICK TIP

The gesture for thank you in Chinese is to cover one's right hand with the left, and raise them chest or head high while bowing one's head.

QUICK TIP 2

When in a dining situation, the waiter or waitress will often pour beverages for the patrons. A commonly used way of expressing gratitude for this action is to tap the table with one's index and middle fingers. This gesture, often repeated several times, and expresses the receiver's gratitude as well as that notion "that is enough of what is being poured."