CHIN1010 Elementary Chinese I
Reflection Prompts by Ran Zhao
Originally appeared on https://pages.shanti.virginia.edu/CHIN_1010_Zhao_2014/reflections/
you can also see students’ reflections on this site.

Reflection 1
I was short on time, so I just announced the assignment in class. But I posted my
own reflection of the first week of class as an example/prompt for my students.

赵老师: reflection #1 9/4
I have had a very good start this semester. Students are not dropping my classes despite
of the amount of work I asked them to do. And the energy level in class has been high.
Students seem to like each other to form lively and healthy group dynamics. As always I
often find myself torn between getting quieter students speak up and respecting their
introvert personality. Every student should get equal amount of speaking/practice time in
class. Yet if I only ask students who raise their hands, those who don't volunteer will not
get enough practice and will probably speak up even less. I hope the next week will some
breakthrough on this front.

Although I have built in time for review after Lesson 3. It's probably worth it to try next
year giving at least one more day for the Introduction chapter. That will push Lesson 1
into Week 3 and the course has to wait till Week 4 or even Week 5 to get into auto-pilot,
but the benefit of making the workload more manageable may worth the structural
inconvenience. With one more hour or even two, I'll be able to cover the slide on the 20
tone combinations and allow the students to learn 10 radicals at a time and finish all 40 of
the radicals before starting Lesson 1. The primary consideration to move faster to get into
Lesson 1, however, is to learn the structural words so students can start having
conversations and hence real communications as soon as possible.

My personal goal for this year is to improve students' tones. So far I'm doing a great job
correcting students even during students' presentations. It is so much easier just to let go
of the tone errors, but I guess the only way to significantly improve students' tones is
through close monitoring. I'm also happy that this year's students are so good at accepting
corrections without being stressed too much. And it's so encouraging to see all of them
apparently trying their best to pronounce the tones correctly. I'm pretty optimistic about
giving my students good tones.

Outside the classroom, we (me and Yitna and the ASCIT staff) are making good progress
in developing the "Speak Good Chinese" tool to incorporate natural speech into its tone
trainer. We've made the PC version work and is waiting for a bug to be cleared out for
Mac. I'm very excited about the potential of this tool! We are hoping to be able to release
it during our first review week if not earlier. And I really enjoyed collaborating with other
colleagues from all over the university, from whom I've learned so much. Collaboration
has made many projects much more enjoyable or even possible at all. I'm reaping the
many benefits of reaching out and connecting with my colleagues and I hope help
students to realize the importance of reaching out and growing in and as a community.
This seems a semester starting off with highly motivated students and great potentials. Despite of some technical glitches and seemingly endless housing-keeping necessities such as going through policies and grading procedures, etc., I'm totally loving coming to my classes and working with these kids so far.

Reflection 2 due 9/14

Please focus on your study method/tips for this reflection. How you have (or not) adapted to the workload. What your strengths and weaknesses seem to be. How you have found ways to address your own weaknesses. In terms of self-discovery, have you been surprised by yourself in any way? You do not have to answer each of these questions one by one. These questions are just meant to give you a general idea what I want your reflection to focus on. Please feel free to reflect on any other aspects if you would like to.

Reflection 3 Focusing on Listening Comprehension/Class participation

I didn’t give an elaborate prompt for this reflection other than the post title, but I provided a summary/comment after I read all the students’ reflections:

So far the most shared sentiment is Lesson 3 is so hard, the most difficult week so far. Good news, everyone: it is not the most difficult lesson/week so far, it is the most difficult lesson/week the whole semester! So you’ve all survived it. The rest of the semester will only be easier. This past week was tough because of the combination of complex vocab/grammar (many of us are not even good with numbers, dates, time, in English) and your lack of experience in learning Chinese (it's only the 4th week, and you have so little related old knowledge at your disposal to embrace new ways of conceptualizing grammar and formulating ideas in Chinese). Our future lessons, however, cover fewer new words in each dialogue. And by the time you encounter really complex grammar/vocab again down the road, you'll be much more experienced then and therefore ready to tackle those challenges. The knowledge and skills you've acquired and accumulated will help you learn any new knowledge readily and more easily. So congratulations on toughing through the hardest week already. I hope you are not too disappointed about this though :-) I will try my best to keep the thrill alive! 大家加油！

Reflection 4 Are you ready for the new chapter?

I'm sure everybody is just happy that the test is over! From your orals alone, Laoshi is quite happy about your performance/progress. Of course there is always
room for improvement, but the key is you need to make sure you are always getting better. For this reflection, I would like you to reflect upon your past week of review and consolidation effort. What have proven to be effective to help you cement what you have acquired and thus helped you do well in the test? What areas you found you still need to further work on? What resources have you taken advantage of? (the tone trainer, laoshi's extra office hours, character videos, chat room, Chinese corner/friend, working with peers, etc.) Are they useful and do you have any recommendations? Are you proud of what you have achieved and are you ready for and excited about the new chapter next week? Again, feel free to reflect on any other aspects if you would like to. And last but not least, enjoy your weekend!

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Reflection 5 On Working Smart

As all your other courses pick up steam and you are swamped with so many obligations like midterms, papers, etc., it's important to pause and think how we can work more efficiently. Let's use this opportunity to reflect on your time management efforts and share time-saving tips. Is Chinese still taking the most of your study time? Have you managed to reduce your study time within 2 hours each day on average? How can you spend less time and yet maintain the level of achievement you are happy with. Are you doing any busy work, which does not necessarily contribute to your learning? Does Laoshi give you any busy work that you don't think is helpful for you? If you don't feel comfortable complaining about anything here, Laoshi has opened up the anonymous feedback on collab. And remember you can always email Laoshi and/or come to my office hours if you have any concerns.

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P.S. Laoshi did read ALL of your reflections, but I only commented on your reflections as much as I could. I usually start leaving a comment whenever I see a new post. But when my family get into the thickness of weekend activities (usually for my kids), I only get to read your reflections rather than having time to comment on them.

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Reflection 6 Half-semester Self evaluation

Can't believe we are already half through this semester! and I'm so proud of your progress. Look how well you did for today's skits! Laoshi will feature some really good ones on our blog when i get a chance during this long 周末。Stay tuned...

For this reflection, I would like you to have a general reflection without being
constrained with any particular aspect/focus. But I'd like you to refer yourself using 2nd person "you" (instead of "I") and/or 3rd person (e.g. Emily). If you find it difficult to understand this approach, it's something like writing a letter to yourself. Scientists have found that people tend to use a more encouraging and positive tone when they step out of and then speak back to themselves. I do find we tend to be ourselves' harshest critic. So this time, try to give yourself a pat on the back and start your reflection with something like "Emma, I really think you did a great job in....."

Enjoy your Reading (resting) Days!

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Reflection 7 Your Chinese Moment

Most of you did so well in your oral interview today or yesterday. Your average score is 18/20 or 90%, and that's when I worked hard to catch your mistakes. So congratulations! We still have a couple of students struggling with listening and speaking though. I encourage you to take advantage of the tutoring sessions offered by our 中国朋友。A new tutoring schedule is at Collab-->Resources. Do check out 什么时候、在哪儿你可以跟谁练习说中文。

For this reflection I would like you to focus on the past review test, what you (you think) have done well and what you could have done better. In addition/instead, you can share with us any Chinese-related experience or anecdote in your life. It can be an aha moment when you all of sudden or finally realized how to pronounce a tone, use a word/grammar, or remember a character. It can also be an interesting encounter with a native speaker, a cultural shock in a Chinese restaurant or event, a new understanding of the Chinese culture while 看中国电影 or听中文歌。

As always, feel free to include anything else you'd like to reflect on or any resources/tools you found that could benefit all of us.

Last but not least, have a great weekend. You deserve some good rest and fun! 周末快乐！

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Reflection 8 Optional

这个星期的 reflection is optional. But I encourage those who hasn't done reflections for a while take this opportunity to give Laoshi and yourself an update. If you do want to pause and think about the past week anyways, I'd like you to focus on how to sustain your excitement and level of efforts now that you've entered the last month of your semester. While tests and papers and projects start
all coming at you simultaneously, time management becomes critical. What do you plan to do to stay on top of things and finish strong? How do you still keep that bar high when you're so attempted to just get things done?

Reflection 9 (By now students can understand my prompts in Chinese!)

因为老师知道你们现在都很忙，所以第九篇回想可以写，也可以不写。

如果你不写的话，你可以用这个时间复习，准备下下个星期的考试。也可以开始准备你的学期末的小电影。老师知道有的同学已经写好了小电影。

不过，如果你有时间想写一点儿东西的话，你可以写这个星期你怎么学中文了。你觉得中文容易一点儿了吗？你也可以告诉大家你看到什么有意思的、有用的东西可以帮我们学中文。

你可以用英文写，也可以用中文写。

最后祝大家有一个很好的周末！

Reflection 10 Final Reflection due by the end of the semester. Theme: Change

大家好！For some reason, laoshi's post didn't come up successfully so here is it again.

This will be your final reflection. I would like you to reflect on this whole journey of learning Chinese this semester. Because we still have two more weeks, you may want to wait till after our movie screenings. But I do encourage you start thinking about it now. Educators often say "the ultimate goal of learning is to change mind". I also in my syllabus opening verse said "Chinese will change your life" (rather tacky, 我知道....). So let's all reflect on this "change". What has changed? not just in terms of your Chinese, but also about things you can use in other aspects of your life.除了中文以外，你还学了什么？Have learning Chinese and this class and the learning community we build via chat room and blog/walls in any way helped you grow as a language learner, a professional in your future field of study, and as a person in general? And how that might affect your coming years at uva and beyond?

And of course as always, include anything else that is meaningful for you.