

l i t t l e

Sight Words

*a five-level program for
Chinese Young Learners*

T h i s

y e l l o w

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Introduction

Chinese language has a logographic orthography system, which means “characters as a basic writing unit possess a number of strokes that are packed into a square shape” (Tan et al., 2001, p. 836). English letters, however, represent phonemes that can be strung together to make words; individual letters themselves do not have assigned meaning like individual Chinese characters or morphemes. This means that “regular or quasi-regular grapheme-phoneme conversions that exist in all alphabetic languages (e.g., the letter b is pronounced /b/) are impossible in Chinese” (Plaut et al., 1996; Tan & Perfetti, 1998 as cited in Tan et al., 2001, p. 836).

Learner familiarity with Chinese orthography, then, suggests that a sight words course is a product worth developing because it focuses on a targeted English reading skill that may be easier for Chinese learners to grasp.

篮球
lánqiú

bas-ket-ball



Sight Words Background

Sight words are words learners should memorize that *may* not follow any phonics rules. They are also usually high frequency words, or words with which learners will interact often as they read and develop other pre-literacy skills. Knowing sight words helps learners read faster and more fluently, because they do not need to linger on sight words and try to break the words into individual sounds (Sight Words, 2021).

C	V	C
d	a	d
n	e	t
l	i	p
m	o	m
g	u	m

CVC stands for **c**onsonant
vowel **c**onsonant.



These words are easy to break
down and build up!

Sight Words

of here again
pull
said put is
four about

A large, stylized blue outline of a human eye, positioned centrally within the sight words box.

Program Description

Over five levels, the Sight Words course will cover the first 250 sight words—from pre-kindergarten through third grade—based on the popular Dolch sight words lists (Sight Words, 2021). The first two levels of this course (~100 words) launched at the end of the first quarter of 2021, with the final three levels set to launch by the end of the second quarter (June 2021). This course has been designed as a remediation course for early and young learners who struggle with the content of their primary curriculum line.

Sight Words Level	# of Sight Words	Grade in Chinese School	CEFR/Pearson GSE Level	Student Age
1	41	Grades 1-2	Pre-A1	4-6 years
2	51	Grades 2-4	Pre-A1/A1	5-7 years
3	41	Grades 3-4	A1	6-8 years
4	46	Grades 3+	A2	7-9 years
5	41	Grades 3+	A2/A2+	8-10 years

Entry Level Concordance for Young Learners

Scope & Sequence

Below is a snapshot of the basic scope and sequence for SW Level 1, Unit 1.

Level	Unit	Unit Theme	Lesson	Lesson Theme	Sight Words
1	1	At the Park	1	Colorful Animals	a, and, blue, is, red, this, yellow
1	1		2	Time to Play	I, can, down, jump, play, the, up, we
1	1		3	Hide & Seek	find, help, here, it, look, me, see, where
1	1		4	N/A *AI lesson	review of 1-3

Level 1 Unit 1 Objectives—Students Will Be Able To (SWBAT)

1. identify clusters of sight words in isolation and in phrases (23 sight words in unit 1);
2. recognize recycled sight words over subsequent lessons through interactive activities;
3. build sentences using sight words and scaffolded content knowledge; and
4. read or follow-along with unit chants and readers.

Aligned to CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.3.C: Read common high-frequency words by sight (CCSS Initiative, 2021)

Basic Scope and Sequence for Sight Words Level 1, Unit 1

**The AI lesson is a review of content from lessons 1-3*

Course Components

Pre-class

Listen & Repeat

In-class

PPTs

Songs & Chants 

Interactive
Tasks*

Post-class

Quiz
(multiple choice)

Flashcard PDFs

Reader PDFs*



At the Park 1

Sight Words Level 1.1



By Julie McGeorge

Level Details

Each level of the sight words course includes eight lessons, divided over two units: lessons one through three and five through seven of each unit will consist of synchronous, one-to-one lessons lasting 25 minutes.

Lessons four and eight will be synchronous, one-to-four review lessons with a pre-recorded AI teacher lasting 25 minutes.

Each lesson will focus on five to ten sight words used in a variety of grammatical structures, supported by images representing assumed content knowledge based on alignment with the appropriate CEFR level (based on Pearson's Global Scale of English, or GSE).

5 Levels

1 Level=2 Units

1 Unit=4 Lessons

**1 Lesson=
25 minutes**

5-10 sight words

Unit 1 Sight Words

Unit Details

Sight words are introduced over the course of each lesson. Sight words introduced in lesson 1 are bolded at right.

These words are combined with assumed knowledge from CEFR/Pearson GSE, based on the entry point outlined in slide 5.

a, **and**, **blue**,
can, down,
find, help, here,
I, **is**, it, jump,
look, me, play,
red, see, the,
this, up, we,
where, **yellow**

Unit Details


Together with assumed knowledge (included as images), the words and images form meaningful sentences and help shape the unit and lesson themes. For Unit 1: At the Park, the Lesson 1 theme is "Colorful Animals."

This is a red  **.**

The language progresses in Lesson 2, "Time to Play,"

The blue  **jump down.**

before culminating in Lesson 3 "Hide & Seek," all oriented in different scenes at a park. Each lesson includes recycled language from the previous lesson(s).

I see it! I see the blue and yellow  **.**

a, and, blue,
can, down,
find, help, here,
I, **is,** it, jump,
look, me, play,
red, see, the,
this, up, we,
where, **yellow**

Lesson Details

As part of their pre-class activities, learners practice listening to and recording themselves saying each sight word that will be previewed in the lesson.

The in-class components are a series of 25-35 lesson slides. Lessons are organized so they begin and end with a song or chant warm-up/cool-down. Each set of sight words is broken into two groups. There is dedicated input of the vocabulary words, a drag and drop task, listening tasks, and reading tasks. The goal is to build toward an I do/we do/you do approach, or a gradual release of responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2013). This same sequence is repeated twice before learners are given extension opportunities that prepare them for independent work outside class.

See the sample sequence on the following slide.

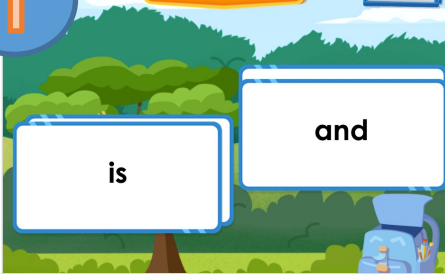


Lesson Flow

1

Let's learn! Aa

is and




Listen and repeat the words, spell them using kinesthetic arm/finger movements, drag to the backpack.

2

Let's learn! Aa

this and is



Drag the word to the appropriate word shape (tall/small/fall letters)

3

What do you see? Aa

This is a red and blue



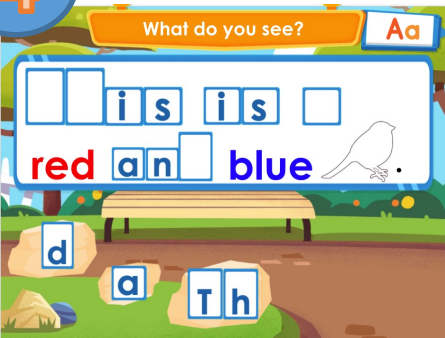
Listen as teacher models putting first and second groups of words together in a sentence.

4

What do you see? Aa

red an blue

d a Th



Drag the missing letters to the correct letter shape boxes.

5

Let's learn! Aa

This is a _____

blue yellow

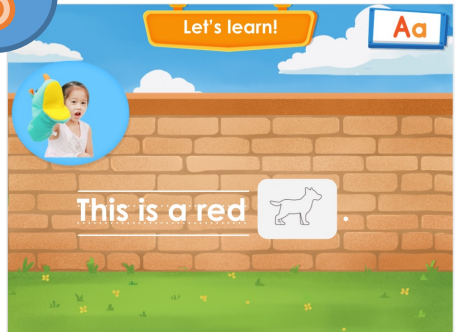


Listen to the audio, and drag the correct word to the blank. Read the completed sentence.

6

Let's learn! Aa

This is a red

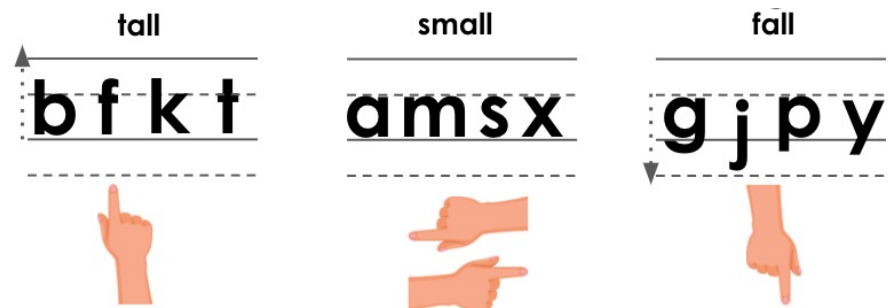


Read the sentence independently or with assistance from Teacher.

Principled Eclecticism: A Pluralistic Approach

Mayer explains “the promise of multimedia learning is that teachers can tap the power of visual and verbal forms of expression in the service of promoting student understanding” (Mayer, 2003, p. 127). The variation Mayer describes is echoed by Bednar et al. (1992), who maintain the importance of a foundation based on “the widest array of research and theory” (p. 17). In English Language Teaching (ELT), this is referred to as “principled eclecticism” (Mellow, 2002). Principled eclecticism suggests using different approaches, as necessary.

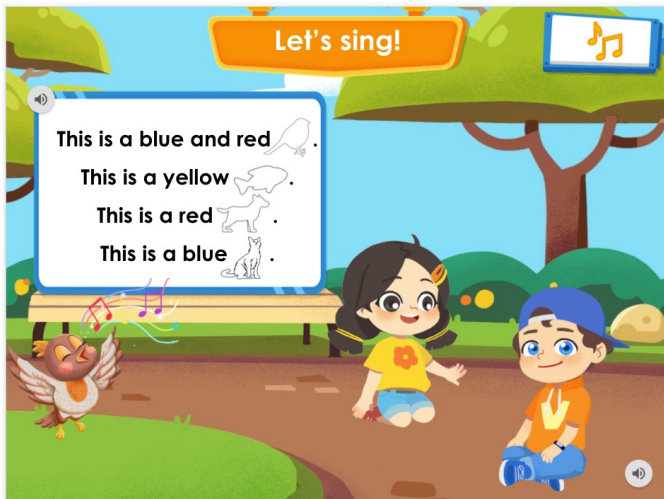
Sight words are often abstract and require learners to identify them and move quickly as they read. This means there are elements of an audiolingual approach, or rote memorization, as content input. Audiolingualism is archaic if used as a standalone approach, especially for young learners. With a pluralistic approach using principled eclecticism, however, it is appropriate to have sections of the lesson that focus on presenting content that should be memorized. The words are illustrated in a very visual way by showing whole words and letters as images composed of tall, small, and fall letter. This should help aid in memorization.



Motivation Considerations

Acknowledging diverse approaches and diverse learners highlights the challenges that come with sparking motivation.

When developing educational materials for early and young learners, there is the propensity to “equate motivation with entertainment and fun” or assuming “truly motivated [learners] will be smiling and having fun” (Keller & Litchfield, 2002, pp. 86-87). However, there is a difference between being entertained and “captur[ing] [student] interest” (p. 92). The sight words course tries to capitalize on diverse needs and motivations of learners, and this is reflected in the suite of value-add components offered in the program (e.g., songs and chants, readers); these components not only have a solid pedagogical foundation, but they also are appealing to potential (students and parents as) customers.



Unit 1 Theme: “At the Park”
Lesson 1 Theme: “Colorful Animals”



Design Principles

On the face of it, the sight words course material is eye-catching and young learner-friendly, especially given the effort to make sight words more appealing, as discussed throughout, but a deeper dive into the content and course structure reveals the intentional design decisions, made both in terms of the content itself and in terms of how the content is delivered and received (by teacher and by learner). Mayer (2017) describes the “Emotional Design Principle” or the principle that “[p]eople learn better when onscreen characters display appealing colors, shapes, and human-like facial expressions.” To that end, the characters that many online tutoring companies use are a mix of children and friendly creatures; the VIPKid mascot is a small, lovable dinosaur (appropriately named “Dino”) who regularly interacts with child characters Mike and Meg. This is no different in the sight words course, but in the course, these characters interact with sight words or in scenarios related to the given sight words context.

Promoting Language Recall

Finally, Mayer further identifies an important distinction between “remembering and understanding” (2009, p. 19). This is especially relevant for a sight words context, because there is a tangible goal in mind of students being able to identify 250 sight words over the course of an entire program (five levels).

If learners do not have opportunities to use the language beyond a 25-minute lesson, there is little chance they will retain the information, and the point of a remediation sight words course will be moot.

In addition to a defined number of sight words per lesson, recycled language must intentionally be accounted for. For example, in lesson 2, the lesson 2 sight words are introduced, while lesson 1 sight words are recycled in, as appropriate. For lesson 3, sight words from lessons 1-2 are recycled and folded in alongside new lesson 3 sight words. This will make it easier to draft the readers moving forward (more sight words allow for more unique reader scenarios), but it also means some of the lesser recycled sight words need to be accounted for, in pre- and post-class materials.

This is a red  **.**

The **blue**   **jump down.**

I see it! **I see the blue and**
yellow  **.**

**Recycled words
circled**

Project Plan

Timelines, deliverables, and contributors have shifted dramatically since the initial conversations about the Sight Words course, though launch times have remained the same. The changes are highlighted below.

Event	Original	Change	Details
MVP0 (Level 1, Unit 1, Lessons 1-3)	March 2021	Mid-March through early April 2021	Materials originally created by US team; design and focus changed on 4/5 (see MVP1 details)
MVP1	April 2021	April 20-30, 2021	Original lesson design was abandoned in favor of an approach that focuses on games
Launch Levels 1-2	ASAP post-MVP1	May 14, 2021	The US team will revise lessons to be less instructional and more gamified. The Beijing team will be responsible for “beautifying” lessons and adding games.
Launch Levels 3-5	June 21, 2021	June 11, 2021	Originally the US team was going to have teachers generate content (TGC). As of 4/6, it is unclear which levels the US team will oversee and which levels (if any) will use TGC. As of 4/6, the US team is responsible for basic PPT frameworks, scope and sequence, songs, chants, and readers.

The changes outlined above resulted in a significant amount of re-work, which upended any initial cost projections. Without knowing the full extent of re-work, it is unclear (at this moment) how to conduct an accurate cost analysis.

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