



Dreaming in Chinese: Mandarin Lessons In Life, Love, And Language

Deborah Fallows

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Deborah Fallows has spent a lot of her life learning languages and traveling around the world. But nothing prepared her for the surprises of learning Mandarin, China's most common language, or the intensity of living in Shanghai and Beijing. Over time, she realized that her struggles and triumphs in studying learning the language of her adopted home provided small clues to deciphering behavior and habits of its people, and its culture's conundrums. As her skill with Mandarin increased, bits of the language - a word, a phrase, an oddity of grammar - became windows into understanding romance, humor, protocol, relationships, and the overflowing humanity of modern China.

Fallows learned, for example, that the abrupt, blunt way of speaking which Chinese people sometimes use isn't rudeness, but is, in fact a way to acknowledge and honor the closeness between two friends. She learned that English speakers' trouble with hearing or saying tones-the variations in inflection that can change a word's meaning-is matched by Chinese speakers' inability *not* to hear tones, or to even take a guess at understanding what might have been meant when foreigners misuse them.

Dreaming in Chinese is the story of what Deborah Fallows discovered about the Chinese language, and how that helped her make sense of what had at first seemed like the chaos and contradiction of everyday life in China.

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