

Grammar

3.4. To Thank someone 謝謝 (xie4 xie)

To express appreciation, use 謝謝 (xie4 xie) thanks or 謝謝你 (您) (xie4 xie ni3 or nin2) thank you. Possible responses to the above phrases are: 不客氣 (bu4 ke4 qi4) literally “don’t be polite”, 不用謝 (bu4 yong4 xie4) literally “no need to say thanks”, or 不謝 (bu4 xie4) — all three phrases mean “you are welcome.”

3.5. To Apologize 對不起

The following pair shows you how to apologize and how to respond to an apology. Note: 對不起 (dui bu4 qi3) is only used when you did something wrong.

It is not used when you show sympathy or regret.

To apologize: 對不起。 (Dui4 bu4 qi3.) I am sorry.

To respond: 沒關係。 (Mei2 guan1 xi). That’s ok.

Cultural Knowledge: Forms of Address

先生 (xian1 sheng1) Mr., 太太 (tai4 tai) Mrs., and 小姐 (xiao3 jie3) Miss are popularly used as polite forms of address. When using these address forms together with the family name, the name precedes the title, instead of following it as in English. Examples are 王先生 (Wang2 xian1 sheng) 李小姐 (Li3 xiao3 jie3) or 張太太 (Zhang1 tai4 tai). But 太太 (tai4 tai) is not used very often to address people simply because it is difficult to determine if the person addressed is 結婚 (jie2 hun1) married or not. Even if the person addressed is married and both parties know this, she may still prefer to be addressed as 小姐 (xiao3 jie3). Another reason that 太太 (tai4 tai) is not often used in addressing contemporary Chinese women is that frequently they do not take their 丈夫 (zhang4 fu1) husband’s family name after marriage.

Note:

A more formal way of saying 太太 (tai4 tai) is 妻子 (qi1 zi).

A more formal way of saying 先生 (xian1 sheng) is 丈夫 (zhang4 fu1).

A less formal way of saying 太太 (tai4 tai) is 老婆 (lao3 po2).

A less formal way of saying 先生 (xian1 sheng) is 老公 (lao3 gong1).