1.9 Surnames and pronouns

王	李	毛	周	白	林
4+0	4+3	4+0	2+6	5+0	4+4
Wáng	Lǐ	Máo	Zhōu	Bái	Lín
king	*plum*	*fine hair*	*circle*	*white*	*woods*

The characters used for these six surnames also represent words whose meanings (written in italics above) are only very tangentially related to their surname functions.

姓	她	他	也
3+5	3+3	2+3	1+2
xìng	tā	tā	yě
surname\<d>	she; her	he; him	also; too

Notes

姓 xìng 'surname\<d>' and 她 tā 'she; her' both have 女 (which is used to write nǔ 'female') as 'radical'. (Early forms of 女 are said to depict a woman crouching or kneeling.) In 姓, 女 is combined with 生 shēng 'be born', suggesting a notion such as 'children are born of woman and given a surname'. 她 was created in relatively recent times as a counterpart to 他 (a contrast not represented in the spoken language). The right element of 他 and 她 was originally distinct from the graph, 也, used to write the word yě 'too; also'; the modern identity is fortuitous, probably a result of scribal confusion. Now it causes confusion for modern students of the language.

1.9.1 Read aloud, beginning with 1 (and citing the number):

三	她姓毛。	七	他也姓周。
五	他姓李。	二	她姓王。
一	她姓白。	十	她也姓白。
八	他也姓林。	四	她姓林。
九	她也姓毛。	六	他姓周。

Exercise 4.
a) The following list is out of numerical order. Read it in order, and following the information given, read out the surname and the birthday (<u>shēngrì</u>), along the following lines:

"Dì-yī ge: <Tā> xìng Wáng; <shēngrì ne:> yījiǔbā'èr nián, yíyuè sì rì"

六：　　　王；1946 年 8 月 23 日
八：　　　李；1981 年 6 月 8 日
三：　　　毛；1979 年 10 月 29 日
九：　　　周；1966 年 2 月 30 日
十：　　　白；1961 年 10 月 2 日
十一：　　林；1942 年 8 月 17 日
二：　　　毛；1983 年 4 月 14 日
一：　　　王；1982 年 1 月 4 日
十二：　　周；1976 年 11 月 21 日
四：　　　白；1959 年 9 月 21 日
七：　　　林；1967 年 3 月 16 日
五：　　　李；1951 年 11 月 7 日

b) The table can also provide data for a conversation along the following lines:

Cue: Dì-yī ge ne?
Response: Dì-yī ge: Xìng Wáng; shēngrì: yī-jiǔ-bā-èr nián, yíyuè sì hào.

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1.10 More pronouns and function words

我　你　們　不　嗎　呢
4+3 ~ 1+6　2+5　2+8　1+3　3+9~10　3+5

们　　　吗
2+3　　　3+3

wǒ　　　nǐ　　　men　　　bu　　　ma　　　ne
I; me　　you　　COLLECTIVE　NEG　　Q　　NE

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Notes

a) 我 , 你, and 们/們, like the other graphs used for pronouns (他 and 她) are compound, though only one of the parts of 我 can still be represented independently in the modern language; 我's right hand element is the graph 戈 gē 'spear' (looking more like a harpoon with its barbed tip down). Both 你 and 们/們 have a left hand element that is a vertical version of the graph 人 'person', known as rénzìpáng 'person at the side' (or 'the person radical'). Their right hand elements, 尔 and 门/門, also appear independently (cf. next item).

b) 门/門, originally a representation of a door with two leaves, is a radical in some characters (eg traditional 開 'start; open') and a phonetic in others, including 们/ 們 men and 问/問 wèn 'ask' (cf. qǐngwèn 'excuse me').

c) The graph 不 is said to derive from a drawing of a bird that originally served to represent another word. It was borrowed to write bu not because of its form, but because of similarity of sound (just as '4' could be used for its sound to write '4get' in 'rebus' writing).

d) Set §1.9 is the first to include graphs that have both a simplified and traditional forms: 们/們 and 吗/嗎. The simplified graphs are both based on traditional calligraphic forms, and they retain an holistic resemblance to the traditional form even though the two share only a few strokes in common.

e) 吗/嗎 underwent a similar process to 不. The graph 马/馬 mǎ 'horse', was 'borrowed' for its sound to represent the toneless question particle (ma), but (unlike the case of 不) the new function was explicitly signaled by the addition of the graph 口 (kǒu 'mouth; entrance', but here suggesting 'colloquial') to form the compound character 吗/嗎. Cf. 妈/媽 mā, the informal word for 'mother', also making use of 马/馬, marked for its new meaning by the addition of the graph 女 'woman; female'. 馬 is written with 9 strokes by some, 10 by others.

1.10.1 Reading

1. 他姓王。我也姓王。

2. 你也姓毛吗？/不，我姓王。

3. 他姓李吗？/不，他姓林。

4. 我姓王，他姓林，你呢？

5. 我姓周，他姓林，你姓王。

6. 我姓王，她姓白，你呢？

7. 我姓周，她姓林，你姓白吗？

8. 不，我姓林，你姓白吗？

9. 你们呢？他们呢？/我姓周，他们呢：他姓白，他姓李，她姓林。