20) yi 咦
Yí, nǐ shénme shìhòu lái de? 咦，你什么时候来的？(Why, when did you get here?) — surprise.

21) yo 哟
Yo, nǐ wàng le? 哟，你忘了？(Did you forget?) — mild surprise;
Yo, nǐ cǎi wǒ de jiǎo le. 哟，你踩我的脚了。 (Ow! You stepped on my foot!) — pain, displeasure.

22) you 呦
You, huār zěnme sǐ le. 呦，花儿怎么死了。（How come the flower’s died?) — surprise.

9.5 Onomatopoeic Words

Onomatopoeic words imitate the sounds of the natural world, or use meaningless syllables to evoke a certain spirit or mood. They most often function as adverbial phrases, modifying verbs or adjectives, but they can also fulfill other functions within the sentence. A few examples of usage follow. (The quotation marks enclosing the onomatopoeic element are optional, being used purely for visual effect.)

Yǔ huāhuá de xià. 雨哗哗地下。（The rain pattered down.）— adverbial;
Tā de liǎn “shuò” de hóng le. 她的脸“唰”地红了。(Her face went red in an instant.) — adverbial;
Shān shāng chuánlái “pengpeng” de qíngshēng. 山上传来“砰砰”的枪声。（The “ping” of gunfire floated down from the hilltop.）— attributive;
Xiǎo Wáng hulūle liǎng shēng, yòu hūn mì guòqu le. 小王“呼—451—
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噜”了两声，又昏迷过去了。（Xiao Wang made an indistinct noise and then fell unconscious once more.）—predicate;

Mén bèi tā qiǎo de dongdongdong de. 门被他敲得咚咚咚的。（His knocking rattled on the door.）—complement.

Onomatopoeic words may be divided into two subgroups. The first type consists of words that originate in classical Chinese, and which have been passed down through written records. These forms are generally limited in use to literary language. As they possess fixed Chinese character forms, it is allowable to mark them with tones when writing in HP. A few examples of this type:

liúshuǐ chánchán 流水潺潺 (the babble of flowing water);
shūshēng lónglóng 书声琅琅 (the sound of reading aloud);
mó dāo huǒhuǒ 磨刀霍霍 (the rasping sound of a knife being sharpened).

The second type of onomatopoeic words originate in modern spoken Chinese and lack fixed Chinese character forms. It is often difficult or impossible to fix their tones, and for this reason they are never marked with tones in HP. In the examples throughout this section, it is easy to distinguish the two types of onomatopoeic words by observing which are marked with tones and which are not.

The forms onomatopoeic words in Putonghua take on is a topic worthy of discussion here. They are very similar in form to adjectives (see Chapter 6); this similarity has led many grammatologists to classify them as concrete rather than function words. The different forms of onomatopoeic words are introduced below, along with an explanation of their written forms.
1) Simple

All monosyllabic onomatopoeic words are simple in form. Among the many examples of this form are: pa 嗡 (bang), peng 砰 (bong, thump), hong 轰 (boom), shuo 嘿 (swish), ca 嘎 (screech), and dong 咚 (rat-tat-tat). Some of these words can be stretched out for auditory effect: to express this lengthening in writing, a dash is added after the syllable:

Du ——, qidi xiōng le. 嘟——，汽笛响了。(Toot went the steam whistle.);

Dà gōngji, o --- o ——tī. 大公鸡，喔——喔——啼。(The rooster crowed cock—a—doodle—do.).

Simple onomatopoeic words, like simple adjectives, include a number of disyllabic forms. These include alliterative and vowel-rhymed forms (compare Chapter 6, Section 6).

Alliterative (both syllables use the same initial):
- dingdong 叮咚 (tinkling sound of jade or of flowing water);
- dida 滴答 (“tick—tock”; sound of a clock ticking);
- pingpang 兵乓 (sound of objects striking each other);
- pipa 嘭啪 (sound of cracking, slapping, or patting).

Vowel-rhymed (both syllables use the same final):
- kacha 嘭嚓 (sound of cracking or snapping);
- huala 哗啦 (sound of crashing, or of flowing water);
- hulu 呼噜 (sound of snoring);
- honglong 轰隆 (sound of rumbling);
- kuanglang 噗啷 (sound of crashing or banging).
danglong 当啷 (sound of clanging).

**Other:**
putōng 扑通 (sound of heavy objects landing);
puchī 噗嗤 (sound of tittering, or of escaping gas);
ciliu 刺溜 (sound of something sliding, or whistling by);
gōzhī 喔吱 (sound of something creaking under a heavy weight).

2) Reduplicated

**AA form**
huahuā 哗哗 (sound of water or rain);
huhu 呼呼 (sound of wind);
wawa 哇哇 (sound of calling or crying);
dōngdōng 哗哗 (sound of beating drums);
wāngwāng 汪汪 (sound of a dog barking);
miaomiao 喵喵 (sound of a cat meowing);
jījī 嘀嘀 (sound of insects buzzing or chirping);
zīzī 咻咻 (sound of a mouse squeaking);
gūgu 咕咕 (sound of a pigeon cooing);
wēngwēng 哼哼 (sound of bees or flies buzzing);
gāgā 嘎嘎 (sound of a duck quacking);
hōhō 哈哈 (sound of laughter);
heihei 嘿嘿 (sound of bitter or sardonic laughter);
xīxī 嘻嘻 (sound of giggling);
gegé 格格 (sound of guffawing).

Onomatopoeic words of the form AA may be used as components in forming words belonging to other parts of speech, as:
bengbeng 噗噗 + chē 车 (car) → bengbengchē 噗噗车 (a small three-wheeled automobile);
hohohohoho + jing 鏡 (mirror) → hohojing 哈哈鏡 (distorting mirror, funhouse mirror);
guoguoguogu + jiao 叫 (to call, shout) → guaguqiao 呱呱叫 (A— one, excellent).

There are, however, not many examples of this type of construction.

**AAA form.**

Any onomatopoeic word that can take the form AA can also take this form (adjectives, on the other hand, never take this form):

huhuhuhua 哗哗哗 (sound of rain falling);
wongwongwong旺汪汪 (sound of a dog barking);
hohohohohoho 哈哈哈 (sound of laughter).

**ABB form.**

This form is composed of a disyllabic word whose second syllable is reduplicated:

hualalala 哗啦啦 (sound of wind or flowing water);
honglonglong 轰隆隆 (sound of rumbling);
gululu 叽噜噜 (sound of drinking water, or of objects rolling);
dilingling 铃铃铃 (sound of a telephone ringing).

**AAB form.**

This form is composed of a disyllabic word whose first syllable is reduplicated:

dingdingdang 吱吱当 (sound of metal or porcelain objects striking each other);

pingpingpong 兢兲 (sound of objects striking each other).

**AABB form.**

For clarity, a hyphen is used to separate AA from BB:
pipi—papa 噼噼啪啪 (sound of patting or slapping);
didi—dada 滴滴答答 (sound of a clock ticking);
pingping—pangpang 兵兵乓乓 (sound of objects striking each other);
jiji—gugu 嘀嘀咕咕 (sound of whispering);
jiji—zhazho 叽叽喳喳 (sound of birds chirping).

**ABAB form.**

In this form, the two AB’s are separated by a space:

huolu huolu 哗啦哗啦 (sound of rain or wind);
dido dido 嘀嗒嘀嗒 (sound of a clock ticking);
putong putong 扑通扑通 (sound of thumping or splashing).

3) **Onomatopoeic words formed with affixes**

Onomatopoeic words of four syllables are formed by using a disyllabic word for the first and third syllables, using the infix *li* 里 as the second syllable, and adding a fourth syllable which begins with “1” and has the same final as the third syllable. Thus the overall form is Ali—BC, with a hyphen separating the two halves for the sake of clarity:

pili—polo 嘀里啪啦 (sound of cracking or slapping) — from pipa 嘀啪;
pingli—ponglong 兵里乓啷 (sound of objects striking each other) — from pingpang 兵乓;
jili—gulu 叽里咕噜 (sound of whispering) — from jigu 叽咕;
jili—guola 叽里呱啦 (sound of chattering) — from jigua 叽呱.
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Yǐn Bīnyōng, Hàn yǔ Pīnyīn hé Zhèngcífǎ
尹斌庸, 汉语拼音和正词法
尹斌庸, 漢語拼音和正詞法

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