12. 3 r— Suffixed Syllables

In Section 2.1 we introduced the retroflex vowel er. Certain words in Putonghua, most of them nouns, can take this retroflex
as a suffix. The addition of er to a word can indicate the small size of the object named, the speaker’s affection or intimacy toward it, or a euphemistic tone. Phonetically, what happens when er becomes a suffix is that it drops its e and becomes simply r: this r is hooked onto a syllable of the word in question, which is then called an r-suffixed syllable. In this way huǒ (flower) plus er becomes huōr, niǎo (bird) plus er becomes niǎor, and so on.

In writing, the r-suffix is indicated by simply adding an r onto the existing syllable, as can be seen in the left-hand column below. In speech, however, the addition of r causes all sorts of changes in pronunciation, different for each different syllable it hooks up with. See the list below for a detailed presentation of the pronunciation of each type of r-suffixed syllable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written form</th>
<th>Actual pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>−ar (mǎr, horse)</td>
<td>−ar (mǎr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−air (gǎir, lid)</td>
<td>−ar (gǎr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−anr (pánr, plate)</td>
<td>−ar (pǎr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−aor (bōor, bundle)</td>
<td>−aor (bōor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−angr (gǎngr, jar)</td>
<td>−ǎr(gǎr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−or (mòr, dust)</td>
<td>−or (mòr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−our (hóur, monkey)</td>
<td>−our (hóur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−ongr (chóngr, insect)</td>
<td>−ōr(chór)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−er (gēr, song)</td>
<td>−er (gēr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−eir (bèir, back)</td>
<td>−er (bèr)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chinese Romanization: Pronunciation and Orthography

- enr (ménr, door)                   -er (mér)
- engr (dēngr, lamp)                -ēr(dēr)
- ir * (zír, Chinese character)     -er (zèr)
- ir (mír, rice)                    -ier (míer)
- iar (xiór, box)                   -iar (xiór)
- ier (díér, saucer)                -ier (díér)
- iaor (niǒor, bird)                -iaor (niǒor)
- iur (qíúr, ball)                  -iour (qíóur)
- ianr (díónr, bit)                 -iar (díór)
- iângr (qiângr, tune)              -iâr(qiâr)
- inr (xínr, core)                  -ier (xíer)
- ingr (línr, bell)                 -iēr(liēr)
- iongr (xióngr, bear)               -iōr(xiōr)
- ur (tūr, rabbit)                  -ur (tūr)
- uar (huōr, flower)                -uar (huōr)
- uor (huôr, work)                  -uor (huôr)
- uair (kuôir, piece)               -uar (kuôr)
- uir (shuír, water)                -uer (shuír)
- uanr (wânr, to play)              -uar (wâr)
- uangr (kuângr, basket)            -uâr(kuâr)
- unr (lúnr, wheel)                 -uer (lûér)
- ūr (qûr, song)                    -uer (qûer)

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13. Vowel Constructions with ŭ:
űe, ŭan, and ŭn

13. 1 Pronunciation
There are three vowel constuctions in Putonghua that begin with ŭ: one all-vowel construction, ŭe, and the two vowel–nasal constructions ŭan and ŭn. Their pronunciations are discussed below.

űe  First form the simple vowel ŭ, and then add e onto it. This e, however, is not the simple vowel we encountered early on; it is the same e as that of -ie in Section 11.1, similar to the “e” of English “bed”. e is the main vowel of ŭe, and carries the tone marker. Practice reading: ŭē, ŭé, ŭě, ŭè.

űan  First form ŭ, and then add onto it the nasal construc-
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