

Tips from an American on on driving in Taiwan

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Although I have been a passenger in a car many times, I thank my lucky stars that I have never had to be the person behind the wheel in Taiwan. But if you decide you want to give it a shot, you might want to pick up [some driving tips from an American who spent time in Taiwan as an English teacher](#), part of his [Teaching English in Taiwan](#) site. My conclusion is simply that one should merely avoid driving entirely. The text is largely disconnected from the pictures, but that's okay. The pictures just bring back memories of Taiwan in both its scenic and not-so-scenic glory.

In the section on [learning Chinese](#), he remarks:

Most foreigners go through a difficult phase after they know some Chinese, in which they think they are speaking Chinese, but actually, because their tones are unclear, they are speaking gibberish which the locals literally cannot understand. ...

You will know that your Chinese tones have arrived when you hear another foreigner speaking during this phase of her learning, and you discover that you can't understand a word they are saying.

I guess that's good news for me, as my sense for Mandarin tones didn't take long to develop (having grown up with a tonal language, albeit a different one). Too bad my vocabulary and grammar are still effectively nonexistent. Although I can pronounce each of the tones, I often just plain forget which tone a word is in! (My cousin lent me some textbooks that use a different system of representing tones: Instead of treating the tone as an add-on, it incorporates it into the spelling of the word. Words therefore have no superscripts or accent marks. This may actually stick, I'll have to try it out and see.)

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