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## Undergraduate assignment feedback form

**(to be completed by marker)**

|                                                                                                  |                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| <i>Module Code:</i> SIHE 4001<br><br><i>Module title:</i> An Introduction to Chinese Philology I | <i>Student number:</i><br>2304056 |
| <i>For completion by marker:</i><br><i>Comments:</i>                                             |                                   |

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# **A discussion on the meanings of 喜 *xǐ* (joyful) and its celebratory double (囍 *xǐ* double joy)**

Module code: SIHE 4001

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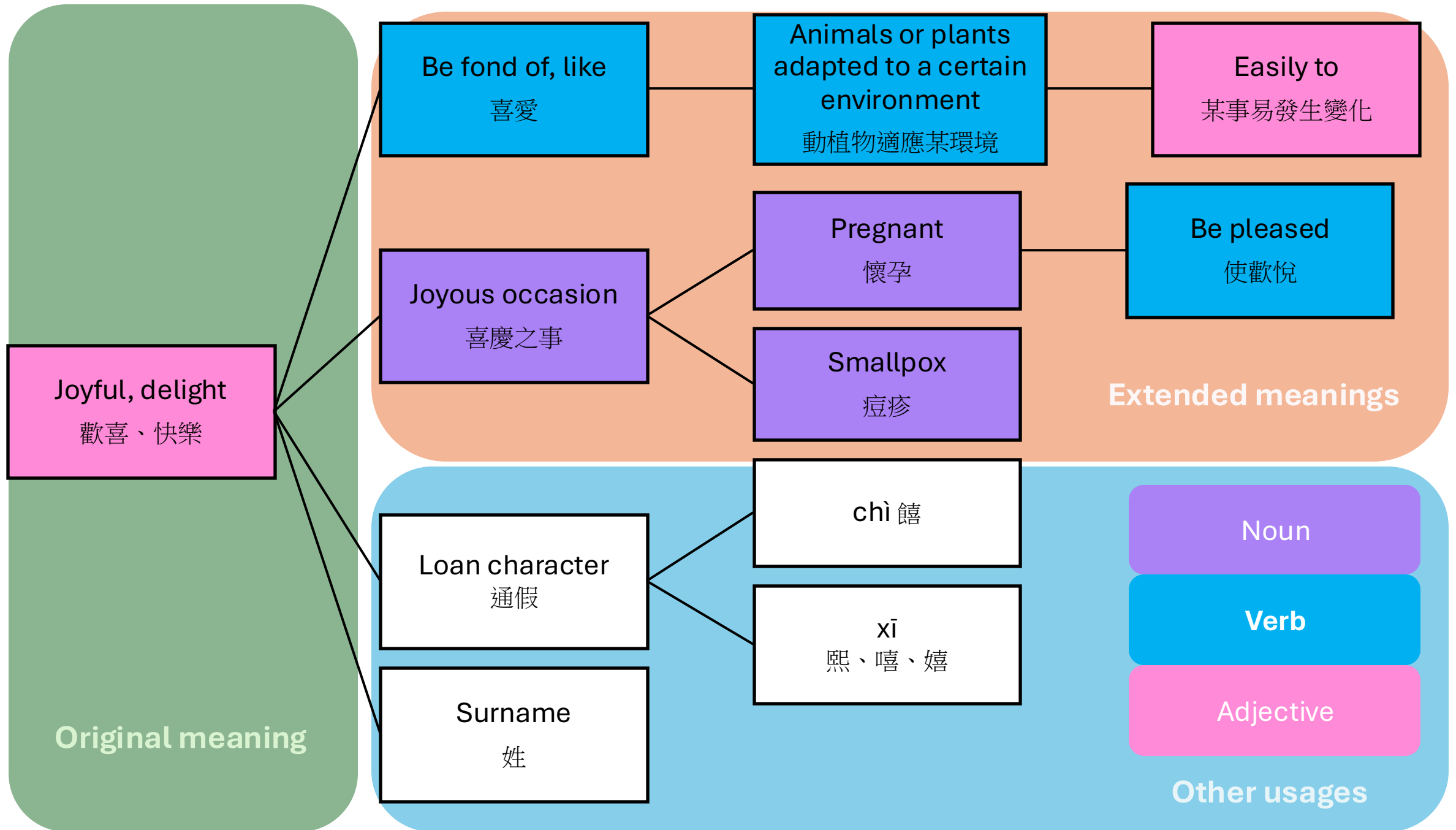
Student ID number: 2304056

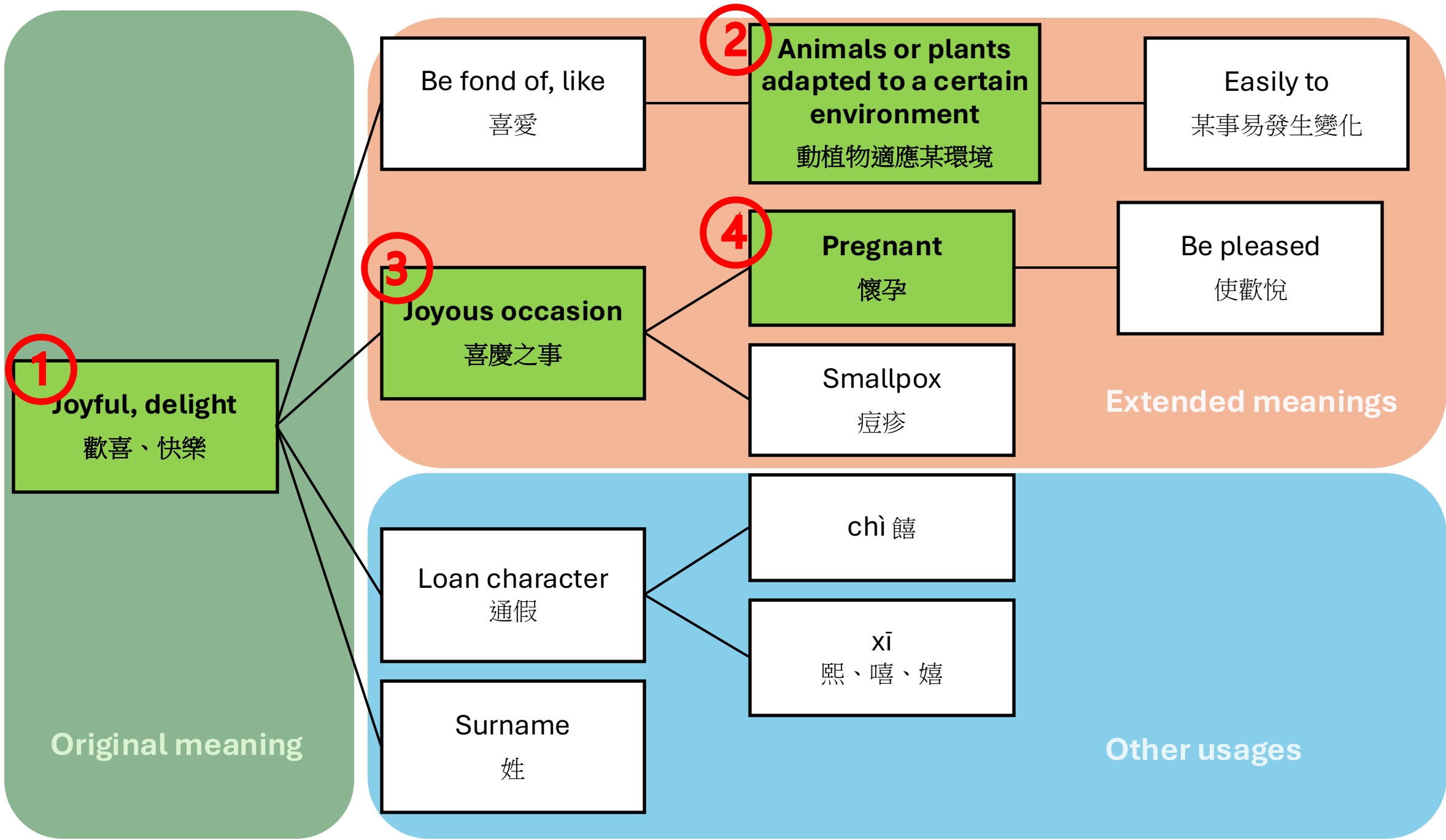
Date: 7 May 2025



## Brief review regarding the definition of character 喜 *xǐ* (joyful)

- Dual interpretive possibilities:
  1. An associative compound representing joy expressed through drumming.
  2. An ideograph where the abstract concept of joy of drumming is distilled through the semantic abstraction function of 口 *kǒu* (mouth) from 壺 *gǔ* (drum).
- Commonality: joyful, delight







## 1.1 Original meaning: Joyful, delight

- Commonly used in ancient Chinese Classics

*Analects (lunyu 論語): 5/5*

*Mencius (mengzi 孟子): 13/13*

The Master said, “You must not be ignorant of the age of your father and mother. For one thing, it is a cause for **joy**; for another, a cause for fear.”

(*Analects* 4.21, Trans. Burton)

子曰：「父母之年，不可不知也。一則以**喜**，一則以懼。」



## 1.2 Extended meaning: Animals or plants adapted to a certain environment

喜陽 *xǐyáng* (sun-loving)

喜陰 *xǐyīn* (shade-loving)

喜濕 *xǐshī* (moisture-loving)

Sunflowers are **sun-loving** plants.

向日葵是**喜陽**的植物。

### 1.3 Extended meaning: Joyous occasions

[Two-character description] + 之 *zhī* (of) + 喜 *xǐ* (joyous occasion)

| Chinese idioms | Pinyin                 | Translations                                                                     |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 喬遷之喜           | <i>qiáoqiān zhīxǐ</i>  | <b>The joyous occasion of</b> relocation<br>(house moving and work promotion)    |
| 弄璋之喜           | <i>nòngzhāng zhīxǐ</i> | <b>The joyous occasion of</b> holding jade<br>(birth of a son)                   |
| 弄瓦之喜           | <i>nòngwǎ zhīxǐ</i>    | <b>The joyous occasion of</b> playing spindle<br>(birth of a daughter)           |
| 夢熊之喜           | <i>mèngxióng zhīxǐ</i> | <b>The joyous occasion of</b> dreaming of a bear<br>(birth of a son)             |
| 出閣之喜           | <i>chūgé zhīxǐ</i>     | <b>The joyous occasion of</b> leaving the bridal chamber<br>(daughter's wedding) |

喬遷之喜 *qiáoqiān zhīxǐ*

(The joyous occasion of relocation)

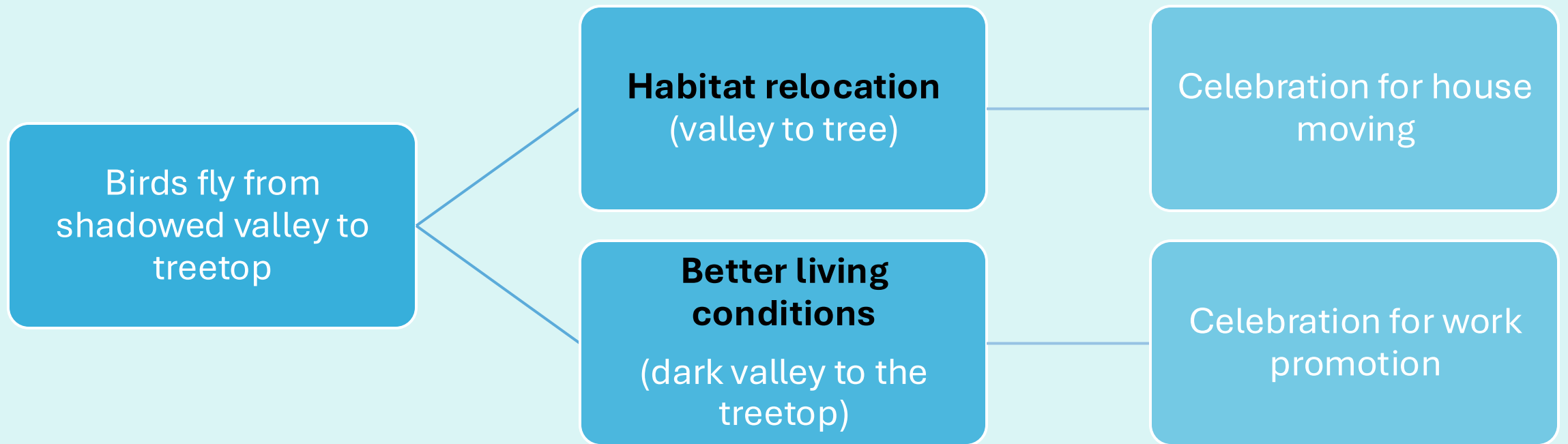
- A celebration phrase, mostly used in congratulation for house moving and work promotion.
- **Origin:** the *Book of Odes* (*shijing* 詩經)

“The trees fall with a ding-ding sound;  
The birds sing with a ying-ying call.

**From the shadowed valley, one takes flight,  
Alighting upon the tallest tree.”**

(伐木丁丁，鳥鳴嚶嚶。出自幽谷，遷于喬木。)





## 喬遷之喜 *qiáoqiān zhīxǐ*

### (The joyous occasion of relocation)

- A celebration phrase, mostly used in congratulation for house moving and work promotion.
- **Origin:** the *Book of Odes* (*shijing* 詩經)

“The trees fall with a ding-ding sound;

The birds sing with a ying-ying call.

From the shadowed valley, one takes flight,

Alighting upon the tallest tree.

There it perches, singing, singing still—

Seeking an answer from a friend left in the dark valley.”

(伐木丁丁，鳥鳴嚶嚶。出自幽谷，遷于喬木。嚶其鳴矣，求其友聲。)



## 1.4 Extended meaning: Pregnant (euphemism)



有喜 yǒuxǐ (expecting a baby/  
having joy)

喜脈 xǐmài (pregnant pulse/  
joyful pulse)



囍 xǐ  
(double joy)



## 2. Discuss the lexical status of derived “double *xǐ*”

### *2.1 Initial Considerations for Lexical Status*

Satisfy the three fundamental criteria of Chinese characters:

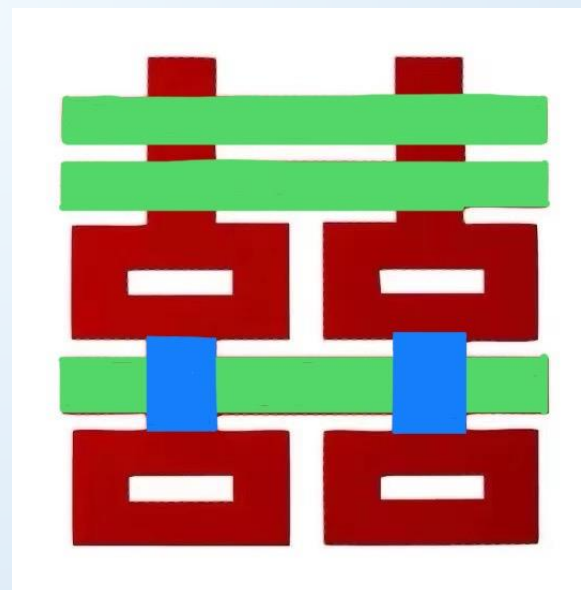
1. **Form:** It possesses an independent form
2. **Sound:** It retains the pronunciation *xǐ*
3. **Meaning:** It conveys “double joy”

## 2.2 Three Key Arguments Against Lexical Status

### 1. Structural Incompatibility with Reduplicative Compounds

Reduplicative associative compounds (*tongti huiyi zi* 同體會意字) are formed by combining **identical characters** which have an independent form, sound, and meaning.

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 林 (木)             | 炎 (火)            |
| <i>lín</i> forest | <i>yán</i> flame |



|                      |
|----------------------|
| 囍 (喜)                |
| <i>xǐ</i> double joy |

## 2. Failure to Integrate into the Linguistic System

Authentic Chinese characters enter the Chinese language system through:

A) regarded as a word by itself (common in Classical Chinese)

B) regarded as a morpheme to form a word with other morphemes (modern usage)

A) 喜怒不形於色 *xǐnù bù xíngyú sè* (did not show **joy** or anger in facial expression)

囍怒不形於色 (ungrammatical)

B) 喜事 *xǐshì* (**joyous** occasion)

囍事 (ungrammatical)

Break 囍 into 雙喜 *shuāngxǐ* (double happiness)

Example: 雙喜臨門 *shuāngxǐ línmén* (two happy events arrive)

### **3. Restricted to Non-Linguistic Domains**

Double xǐ's usage is confined to:

- Folk art (paper-cutting, embroidery)
- Visual symbolism (auspicious motifs)

Unlike true characters, it serves decorative rather than communicative functions, appearing exclusively in non-linguistic contexts.

### 2.3 Conclusion: A Cultural Monogram

- Non-standard formation
- Linguistic dysfunction
- Extra-textual application



Definition of monogram: By leveraging specific structural features of Chinese characters, two or more characters are conjoined in varying orientations to form an inseparable, unified character-composite pattern.

Example: 招財進寶 *zhāocái jìnbǎo* (wealth attracting and treasures entering)

### 3. Conclusion

1. Analysed the original and three extended meanings of 喜 xǐ (joyful).
2. Examined 囍 xǐ (double xi) is a monogram instead of a lexical Chinese character.
3. Personal connection



THANK YOU FOR  
LISTENING

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## Appendix One (Occurrences of 喜 in the *Analects* and *Mencius*)

| Number | Book and chapter number of the <i>Analects</i> | Original passages and English translation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | 4.21                                           | <p>The Master said, You must not be ignorant of the age of your father and mother! For one thing, it is a cause for <b>joy</b>; for another, a cause for fear.</p> <p>子曰：「父母之年，不可不知也。一則以<b>喜</b>，一則以懼。」</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2      | 5.7                                            | <p>The Master said, The Way does not go forward—I'll get on a raft and set out to sea! And the one who will go with me will be You (Zilu), will it not? When Zilu heard this, he was <b>delighted</b>.</p> <p>子曰：「道不行，乘桴浮于海。從我者其由與？」子路聞之<b>喜</b>。</p>                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3      | 5.19                                           | <p>Zizhang asked, saying, Ziwen, the prime minister of Chu, served three times as prime minister but showed no sign of <b>delight</b>, and three times was dismissed from the post but showed no sign of resentment. As former prime minister, he invariably reported to the new prime minister on affairs of state. What do you think of this?</p> <p>子張問曰：「令尹子文三仕為令尹，無<b>喜</b>色；三已之，無慍色。舊令尹之政，必以告新令尹。何如？」</p> |

|   |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | 16.13 | <p>Afterward Chen Gang, <b>delighted</b>, said, I asked one question and learned three things. I learned about the Odes, I learned about rites, and I learned that the gentleman maintains a certain distance in relations with his son.</p> <p>陳亢退而<b>喜</b>曰：「問一得三，聞詩，聞禮，又聞君子之遠其子也。」</p> |
| 5 | 19.19 | <p>Master Zeng said, Those in high places have lost the Way, and the common people have long been without guidance. When you uncover the facts of a case, be sorrowful and compassionate, never <b>pleased</b> with yourself.</p> <p>曾子曰：「上失其道，民散久矣。如得其情，則哀矜而勿<b>喜</b>。」</p>              |

| Number | Book and chapter number of <i>Mencius</i> | Original passages and English translation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | 1B.1                                      | <p>Now suppose the king is making music here. Hearing the echoes of the king's bells and drums and the sounds of his pipes and flutes, the people, joyfully and with <b>delighted</b> countenances, all tell one another, 'Our king must be quite free of illness, for if he were ill, how would he be able to make music?'</p> <p>今王鼓樂於此，百姓聞王鐘鼓之聲，管籥之音，舉欣欣然有喜色而相告曰：『吾王庶幾無疾病與？何以能鼓樂也？』</p>                 |
| 2      |                                           | <p>Now suppose the king is going hunting here. Hearing the sounds of the king's carriages and horses and seeing the beauty of the plumage and banners, the people, joyfully and with <b>delighted</b> countenances, all tell one another, 'Our king must be quite free of illness, for if he were ill, how would he be able to go hunting?'</p> <p>今王田獵於此，百姓聞王車馬之音，見羽旄之美，舉欣欣然有喜色而相告曰『吾王庶幾無疾病與？何以能田獵也？』</p> |

|   |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | 1B.9  | <p>If one is going to build a hall, one will surely ask the master carpenter to obtain large trees. When the master carpenter has obtained large trees, the king will be <b>pleased</b> and will find him equal to the task.</p> <p>為巨室，則必使工師求大木。工師得大木。則王<b>喜</b>，以為能勝其任也。</p>           |
| 4 | 2A.8  | <p>Zilu, when told that he had made a mistake, was <b>happy</b>.</p> <p>子路，人告之以有過則<b>喜</b>。</p>                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 5 | 2B.10 | <p>In the past, I wanted to see you but could not.</p> <p>Then, to my great <b>delight</b>, I got to serve with you in the same court.</p> <p>前日願見而不可得，得侍，同朝甚<b>喜</b>。</p>                                                                                                               |
| 6 | 5A.1  | <p>Wan Zhang said, “When his father and mother love him, he should be <b>glad</b> and never forget them. If his father and mother hate him, ‘though he may suffer, he should not be aggrieved.’<sup>2</sup> Was Shun then aggrieved?”</p> <p>萬章曰：「父母愛之，<b>喜</b>而不忘；父母惡之，勞而不怨。然則舜怨乎？」</p> |

|    |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7  | 5A.2  | <p>Mencius said, “How could he not have known? When Xiang was anxious, he, too, was anxious, and when Xiang was <b>glad</b>, he too was <b>glad</b>.</p> <p>曰：「奚而不知也？象憂亦憂，象喜亦喜。」</p>            |
| 8  |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9  | 5A.2  | <p>“Then was Shun just pretending to be <b>glad</b>?”</p> <p>曰：「然則舜偽喜者與？」</p>                                                                                                                   |
| 10 | 5A.2  | <p>Xiang came in the way that brotherly love should have impelled him to do, and therefore Shun believed him and was <b>glad</b>. In what way was he pretending?</p> <p>彼以愛兄之道來，故誠信而喜之，奚偽焉？</p> |
| 11 | 6B.5  | <p>Wu Luzi was <b>happy</b> and said, “I have gotten an opening.”</p> <p>屋廬子喜曰：「連得閒矣。」</p>                                                                                                      |
| 12 | 6B.13 | <p>Mencius said, “When I heard of this, I was so <b>delighted</b> that I could not sleep.”</p> <p>孟子曰：「吾聞之，喜而不寐。」</p>                                                                           |
| 13 | 6B.13 | <p>“Why, then, were you so <b>delighted</b> that you could not sleep?”</p> <p>「然則奚為喜而不寐？」</p>                                                                                                   |