

Character Builder

您好學？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about One Belt One Road

Putonghua pronunciation: *shang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *seung1*

Meaning: trade, commerce, negotiate, businessman

商 (radical 口 *kou3*, mouth) means 商議 (*shang1 yi4* = negotiate-discuss), 商貿 (*shang1 mao4* = business-and-trading), 商人 (*shang1 ren2* = business-men = merchants).

Countries develop 工商業 (*gong1 shang1 ye4* = industry-trade-profession = industries and commerce), 通商 (*tong1 shang1* = through-commerce = trade among themselves), import/import 商品 (*shang1 pin3* = commercial-goods). 儒商 (*ru2 shang1* = scholar-businessman) means businessman with refined education/tastes.

Many countries see 商機 (*shang1 ji1* = business-opportunities) in China's 21st-century 一帶一路 (*yi1 dai4 yi1 lu4* = One-Belt-One-Road = Belt and Road Initiative, abbr. OBOR): 陸上絲路 (*lu4 shang4 si1 lu4* = land-based-silk-road = Silk Road Economic Belt, abbr. SREB), 海上絲路 (*hai3 shang4 si1 lu4* = sea-based-silk-road, abbr. Maritime Silk Route, MSR).

by Diana Yue