

Character Builder

您好嗎？

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.

This week: Words about foreign countries

Pronunciation: *wen* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *man* (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: language, writing

語文 (*yu wen* = speech~writing) = language. 漢語 (*han yu* = Han speech/language = language of the Han race) = 中文 (*zhong wen* = Chinese language).

外語 (*wai yu* = outside~speech) = 外文 (*wai wen* = outside-language) = foreign languages: English (英語 *ying yu* = England-transliterated-language), Spanish (西語 *xi yu* = Spain-transliterated-language), Arabic (阿拉伯語 *a la bo yu* = Arabia-transliterated-language).

Students of 外語系 (*wai yu xi* = foreign-languages~department) study 文化 (*wen hua* = language~transform = culture), 文學 (*wen xue* = writing~study = literature) of different 文明 (*wen ming* = language~enlightenment = civilizations), and practice 翻譯 (*fan yi* = overturn~translate = translation), 傳譯 (*chuan yi* = transmit~translate = oral interpretation).

by Diana Yue