

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

僑

Pronunciation: *qiao* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *kiu* (Cantonese 4th tone)

Basic meaning: foreign residents, diaspora

僑 = 僑民 (*qiao min* = foreign-resident~people). 外僑 (*wai qiao* = outside~foreign-residents) = foreigners living outside their own countries: 美僑 (*mei qiao* = America-transliterated~foreign-resident) = Americans living abroad. 撤僑 (*che qiao* = withdraw~foreign-resident) means deporting foreign residents, usually before outbreak of war.

華僑 (*hua qiao* = Chinese~foreign-residents) = overseas Chinese = the Chinese diaspora. 同胞 (*tong bao* = same~afterbirth/cell) = kin/compatriot, so 僑胞 (*qiao bao* = foreign-resident~kin/compatriots) = “overseas compatriots”. 僑匯 (*qiao hui* = foreign-resident~transfer) means money sent home by overseas Chinese.

Many 第二代 (*di er dai* = the~two/second-generation = Japanese “nisei” 二世 *er shi*) foreign residents 歸化 (*gui hua* = return~transform) = 入籍 (*ru ji* = enter~nationality) = become naturalized citizens of their resident country.