

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.

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 translation

譯

Putonghua pronunciation: *yi* 4

Cantonese pronunciation: *yik* 6

Meanings: translate

翻 (*fan1*) = 翻轉 (*fan1 zhuan3*) = turnover/overtake. GDP 翻一番 (*fan1 yi1 fan1* = turnover~one-time = doubles). 翻案 (*fan1 an4* = turnover~file/case) = overturn judgment/verdict. Liberation makes poor peasants 翻身 (*fan1 shen1* = turnover~body = rise/stand upright, gain stature/dignity).

翻譯 (*fan1 yi4* = turnover~translate) = translate: 口譯 (*kou3 yi4* = mouth/oral-translation), 筆譯 (*bi3 yi4* = pen/written~translation). 翻譯家 (*fan1 yi4 jia1* = translation~master) = renowned translator of intellectual writings. Diplomats need 翻譯員 (*fan1 yi4 yuan2* = translate~person = translators/interpreters). Conferences hire 同聲傳譯 (*tong2 sheng1 chuan2 yi4* = same-sound~convey~translate = simultaneous interpreters). Confucian classics' English translations are 漢譯英 (*han4 yi4 ying1* = Han-Chinese~translated-into~"Eng"lish-transliterated).

Encrypted messages need 破譯 (*po4 yi4* = break~translate = decoding).