

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 recessions

倒

Pronunciation: *dao* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *do* (Cantonese, 2nd tone)

Basic meaning: downwards, backwards, reverse, fall

倒 means down/back/reverse: 倒水 (*dao shui* = pour~water), 跌倒 (*die dao* = slip~fall), 倒下 (*dao xia* = fall~down), 打倒 (*da dao* = beat~down = defeat). 時光倒流 (*shi guang dao liu* = time~light~reverse~flow) means going back in time. 開倒車 (*kai dao che* = drive~backward~car) describes regressive ideas/policies.

In 經濟倒退 (*jing ji dao tui* = planning~irrigation~reverse~retreat = economic recession), banks/businesses 倒閉 (*dao bi* = collapse~close), CEOs 倒台 (*dao tai* = collapse~stage = fall from power), stockholders 倒霉 (*dao mei* = fall~mildew/rot = have ill-luck).

Liars 顛倒黑白 (*dian dao hei bai* = reverse~black~white = distort truths/facts). 不倒翁 (*bu dao weng* = the toy: “no~topple~old-man”) symbolizes political figures who keep bouncing back into power.

by Diana Yue