

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

訛

Putonghua pronunciation: e 2

Cantonese pronunciation: *ngoh 4*

Meanings: distorted, false, falsify, misrepresentation, rumour

訛 (radical 言 *yan2*, word/speech) means incorrect/false words. 訛音 (*e2 yin1* = incorrect-sound) = wrong/distorted pronunciation. 訛字 (*e2 zi4* = incorrect-written-character) = wrongly-written or mis-typed/mis-printed word. 訛誤 (*e2 wu4* = incorrect-mistake) = inaccurate writing/record.

Crooks 綁架 (*bang3 jia4* = bind-carry = kidnap) victim, 訛詐 (*e2 zha4* = false-deceive = blackmail) victim's family for 贖金 (*shu2 jin1* = redemption-gold/money = ransom). 核訛詐 (*he2 e2 zha4* = nuclear-false-deceive) means blackmailing other countries by threatening to use nuclear force.

訛傳 (*e2 chuan* = incorrect-communicate) means spreading incorrect/false information. 訛譯 (*e2 yi4* = incorrect-translation) may result in 以訛傳訛 (*yi3 e2 chuan2 e2* = with~ false-communicate~false = incorrectly spreading an incorrect message), i.e. departing further and further from the original story/message.