

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

化

Putonghua pronunciation: *hua* 4

Cantonese pronunciation: *fa* 3

Meanings: melt, change, dissolve, disintegrate, convert, transform

化 = transform/convert. Women 化妝 (*hua4 zhuang1* = transform/wear-make-up). Peacemaker 化解 (*hua4 ji3* = dissolve~ untie) quarrels. Monk 點化 (*dian3 hua4* = point~convert = en-lightens) truth-seeker. Teachers 春風化雨 (*chun1 feng1 hua4 yu3* = spring~wind-changes-into~rain = teach/move/enlighten students), spread 教化 (*jiao4 hua4* = teaching~transformation = culture).

Ice 溶化 (*rong2 hua4* = melt~change). Rocks 風化 (*feng1 hua4* = are wind-disintegrate/eroded). 火化 (*huo3 hua4* = fire-disintegrate) = cremation. 化石 (*hua4 shi2* = transformed-stone) = fossil. Planets/landscapes/organisms are 造化之工 (*zao4 hua4 zhi1 gong1* = creation-transformation~'s-work = works of Creation/Nature).

Translator who attains 化境 (*hua4 jing4* = transformation~realm = supreme art) doesn't distinguish 同化 (*tong2 hua4* = same-transformed = domestication), 異化 (*yi4 hua4* = alien~transformed = foreignization) approaches.