

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 ECFA (Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement)



Putonghua pronunciation: *tai2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *toi4*

Meanings: Platform, short for Taiwan

台灣 (*Tai2 Wan1*) is a 省 (*sheng3*, province) of China. Portuguese sailors called it “Ilha Formosa” (transliterated as 福摩薩 *fu1 mo2 sa4*), meaning 美麗島 (*mei3 li4 dao3* = beautiful-lovely-island).

Taiwan was colony of 荷蘭 (*He2 Lan2* = “Holland”-transliterated) in 1624-1662 and 日本 (*Ri4 Ben3*, Japan’s kanji-name) in 1895-1945. In 1949 中華民國 (*Zhong1 Hua2 Min2 Guo2* = Middle-Flower~People~State = Republic of China, ROC), defeated by 中共 (*Zhong1 Gong4* = Chinese~Communists) on the Mainland, retreated to Taiwan.

US-backed ruling party 國民黨 (*guo2 min2 dang3* = State~People~Party = Chinese Republican Party = the Kuomintang/ KMT) confronted People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 台海風雲 (*tai2 hai3 feng1 yun2* = Taiwan~sea~winds~clouds = political storms/rows in the Taiwan Strait).

by Diana Yue