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: $1 = \text{diacritical mark} \rightarrow \text{pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged}$

2nd tone: $2 = \text{diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high}$

3rd tone: $3 = \text{diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high}$

4th tone: $4 = \text{diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest}$

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 Japanese Invasion**

**侵**

Putonghua pronunciation: qín
Cantonese pronunciation: chäm
Meanings: intrude, invade, bully

侵 = intrude/invade/bully. 侵佔 (qín zhan⁴ = intrude-occupy) = misappropriate/rob. 侵權 (qín qūan² = intrude-right) = tort. 性侵犯 (xing⁴ qín¹ fān⁴ = sex-invade-offend) = sexual assault.

In WWII, 德意志 (De² Yi⁴ Zhi⁴ = “Deutsch”-transliterated = 德國 De² Guo² = Germany), 意大利 (Yì⁴ Da⁴ Li⁴ = “Italy”-transliterated), 日本 (Ri⁴ Ben³ = Japan) launched 軍事侵略 (jūn¹ shì⁴ qín¹ lǜe⁴ = army-affairs-invade-loot = military invasions).

日軍 (Ri⁴ jūn¹ = Japanese-army) 入侵 (ri⁴ qín¹ = entered-invaded) China, helped by 漢奸 (Han⁴ jian¹ = Han-Chinese-wicked = Chinese collaborators). Chinese army 撤退 (ce⁴ tuì⁴ = yield-retreat = retreated). Refugees left 淪陷區 (lún² xian² qū¹ = drowned-fallen-region = Japanese-occupied areas/cities), 逃難 (tao² nan⁴ = fled-disaster/persecution).

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