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, 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 passive waiting

Putonghua pronunciation: zhu1
Cantonese pronunciation: jue1
Meanings: stump, stem, plant, plant's roots above ground

桂 (radical 木 mu4, wood/tree) means mature plant, its exposed roots, or its stub/stump/stem/trunk.

桂 is also 量詞 (liang4 ci2 = quantity/measure-word/unit used before noun to indicate noun's nature/shape. Example: 桂 in 桂香 (yi1 zhu1 song1= a-plant-pine = a pine-tree), 條 (tiao2, line) in 條河 (yi1 tiao2 he2 = a-line-river = a river), 座 (zuo4, block) in 座座山 (san1 zuo4 shan1 = two-blocks-hills = two hills), 塊 (kuai4, piece) in 桂塊 (yi1 kuai4 di4 = a-piece-of-land), 頭 (tou2, head) in 十頭牛 (shi2 tou2 niu2 = ten-heads-of-cattle).

Verb 桂連 (zhu1 lian2 = plant-roots-connect) means involve unfavourably. Treason convict 桂連九族 (zhu1 lian2 jiu3 zu2 = plant-roots-connect-nine-clans = brings blame/punishment on his entire extended family).

by Diana Yue