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.

This week: Words about friendship

助 (Putonghua, 4th tone), joh (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: help


助戰 (zhu zhan = help-battle) means helping one side to fight, 助威 (zhu wei = help-power) means championing it by waving/shouting. 援助 (yuan zhu = aid-help) means monetary/tangible help, e.g. 經濟援助 (jing ji yuan zhu = economic aid).

拔苗助長 (ba miao zhu zhang = pull-young-shoot-help-grow) means promoting a person or expanding a plan prematurely, foolishly believing good results will ensue.

by Diana Yue