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 thunderstorms

張

Pronunciation: zhang (Putonghua, 4th tone), jeung (Cantonese 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: rise, swell, surge

漲 shares its radical 氵 (= 水 shui = water) with other “watery” verbs: 游 (you = swim), 流 (liu = flow), 漂 (yong = gush), 漂 (qian = splash), 浸 (jin = soak/baptize), 漫 (man = spread over), 淹 (yan = drown).

潮漲 (chao zhang = tide-rise) = high tide, 潮退 (chao tui = tide-retreat) = low tide. 水位高漲 (shui wei gao zhang = water-position-high swell) = rising of water level. 物價高漲 (wu jia gao zhang = things-price-high-swell/surge) = soaring prices. 壓抑漲風 (ya yi zhang feng = press-suppress-rise-wind/trend) means suppressing the price rise.

水漲船高 (shui zhang chuan gao = water-swell-boat-high) means rise of A (e.g. labour costs) causes rise of B (e.g. building costs).

by Diana Yue