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 translation

Putonghua pronunciation: you 4
Cantonese pronunciation: yau 5
Meanings: guide, advise, entice, attract, lure, tempt, seduce

誘 = 引誘 (yin3 you4 = lead/guide-lure) = attract/tempt. Perfume has 誘人 (you4 ren2 = attractive/luring) fragrance. 誘惑 (you4 hua4 = lure-fascinate = temptation) is hard to resist. Teachers 謹謹善誘 (chun2 chun2 shan4 you4 = sincerely-sincerely-good/kind-advise = patiently teach/advise students to be good).

Poetry 誘發 (you4 fa1 = attract-start = stimulates) imagination.

Contents/style of original poem 誘導 (you4 dao3 = guide/prompt-steer) translator as he translates.

Fisherman/hunter uses 誘餌 (you4 er3 = attract-food = bait/decoy) to 誘捕 (you4 bu3 = lure-catch) prey. Crooks 誘騙 (you4 pian4 = lure-deceive),誘拐 (you4 gui1 = lure-kidnap),誘姦 (you4 jian1 = lure-rape) young girls. Triad gangsters 威逼利誘 (wei1 bi3 li4 you4 = force-pressurize-benefit-lure = threaten and bribe) accomplices.

by Diana Yue