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 Japanese Invasion

抗 (kang4)
Cantonese pronunciation: kong3
Meanings: object, counter, resist, oppose


壓迫 (ya1 po1 = press-force = oppression) triggers 反抗 (fan3 kang4 = revolt-resistance). Dissidents 抗議 (kang4 yi4 = object-discuss = voice objection). Rebels 違抗 (wei2 kang4 = disobey-resist = disobey) commander, launch 對抗 (dui4 kang4 = face/oppose-resist = challenge/opposition).

During 八年抗戰 (ba1 nian2 kang4 zhan4 = eight-years-resistance-war = War of Resistance, 1937-1945), China 抗日 (kang4 Ri4 = fought-Japan). During 抗美援朝 (kang4 Mei3 yüan2 Chao2 = resist-A“mer”rica-transliterated-aid-Chaoxian/Korea = Korean War, 1950-1953), China supported North Korea.

by Diana Yue