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 sleep

(radical氵 = 水 shui = water)

灌 Pronunciation: guan (Putonghua, 4th tone), goon (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: inject liquid, irrigate

灌 = 灌下 (guan xia = force-pour-down/into): 灌水 (guan shui = pour/force-water down throat/hole).
Soil/plants need 澆灌 (jiao guan = sprinkle-pour = watering). Farmlands need 灌溉 (guan gai = pour-irrigate = irrigation).

Drivers should 全神灌注 (quan shen guan zhu = whole-spirit/attention-pour-inject = fully concentrate) when driving. Teachers 灌輸 (guan shu = pour-convey) knowledge/ideas to students. 灌頂 (guan ding = pour-water-head-top) = Buddhist baptism ceremony for blessing converts.

灌腸 (guan chang = force-pour-into-intestine) = enema. 灌醉 (guan zui = force-drink-wine~ intoxicate) means pressing someone to drink wine/liquor till he/she is drunk. Girls charm men by 灌迷湯 (guan mi tang = pour-charm-soup = saying complimentary/ luring words). 灌湯餃 (guan tang jiao = pour-broth-dumpling) are dumplings sealed with broth.

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