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 drugs

迷 = lose sight/focus/aim: 迷糊 (mi hu = confuse-gruel = sight/mind blurred), 迷惘 (mi wang = confused-dispirited), 迷失 (mi shi = lose direction/aim). We 迷路 (mi lu = lose-path/way) in 迷宫 (mi gong = confuse-palace = maze). Beautiful women are 迷人 (mi ren = cast-spell/infatuate-people = charming/captivating).

迷藥 (mi yao = blur/faint-drug) = dope. 幻覺 (huan jue = hallucination-sense) = hallucinations. Hallucinogens are 致幻劑 (zhi huan ji = cause-hallucination-dose) = 迷幻藥 (mi huan yao = confuse-hallucination-drugs = psychedelic drugs). Pop-art uses 迷彩 (mi cai = confuse-multi-color = psychedelic colors).

迷信 (mi xin = confuse-believe) means superstition/superstitious. 歌迷 (ge mi = song-infatuated = music-fans), 影迷 (ying mi = electric-shadow/movie-infatuated = movie-fans) worship idols.

by Diana Yue