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 hiking


Feudal Chinese praised women’s 三寸金蓮 (san cun jin lian = three-inch-golden-lotus), painful result of 纏足 (chan zu = binding-feet). Now girls abandon 高跟鞋 (gao gen xie = high-heel-shoes) for 运动鞋 (yun dong xie = action/sports-shoes), 懶佬鞋 (lan lao xie = lazy-chap-shoes = loafers).

by Diana Yue