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 banquets

賓 = 賓客 (bin ke = guest-visitor) = guest. 賓主 (bin zhu = guest-host) = guest and host. 賓館 (bin guan = guest-house) means hotel. 西賓 (xi bin = west-guest) means a private teacher/assistant lodging with the host family.

迎賓 (ying bin = welcome-guests) are receptionists at a party. 貴賓 (gui bin = elevated-status-guests) means honored guests. 主賓 (zhu bin = main-guest) = principal guest. 陪客 (pei ke = accompanying-guests) are additional guests invited to enliven conversation, atmosphere etc. 賓至如歸 (bin zhi ru gui = guests-arrive-like-returning-home) describes a successful reception which makes guests feel very much at home.

相敬如賓 (xiang jing ru bin = mutually-respect-like-guests) describes a model couple’s loving respect for each other.

by Diana Yue