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 weddings

娶 (qu) = 娶新娘 (qi xin niang = wed-bride) = 娶妻 (qu qi = wed-wife) = colloquially 娶老婆 (qu lao po = wed-old-grandma = wed-wife) = taking a wife.

When a son marries, parents 娶媳婦 (qu xi fu = take-daughter-in-law) = Cantonese 娶新抱 (qu xin bao = wed-new-embrace, where 新抱 also means daughter-in-law). 明媒正娶 (ming mei zheng qu = open-go-between-proper-wed) means marrying a woman by lawful ceremony. A divorcee/widower may 再娶 (zai qu = again-wed). In polygamous societies, men can 娶妾 (qu qie = take-concubine).

非卿不娶 (fei qing bu qu = not-thee-no-wed) is a promise: “Thee only will I wed”, 卿 (qing) being an archaic form for 妳 (ni = you-feminine).

Pronunciation: qu (Putonghua, 3rd tone), chui (Cantonese 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: take wife

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