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

嫁 (jia) = 嫁人 (jia ren = wed-person/husband) = colloquially 嫁老公 (jia lao gong = wed-old-grandpa = wed-husband) = marrying a husband.

聘禮 (ping li = state-claim-present) means gifts from 男家 (nan jia = man/groom’s-family) to 女家 (nu jia = woman/bride’s-family) prior to the wedding. 嫁妝 (jia zhuang = wed-make-up) means bride’s dowry. The bride’s parents 嫁女 (jia nu = marry-daughter) and get a 女婿 (nu shi = daughter-husband = son-in-law).

A wife who 嫁雞隨雞, 嫁狗隨狗 (jia ji sui ji, jia gou sui gou = marry-chicken-follow-chicken, marry-dog-follow-dog) totally accepts her husband’s choice of domicile/career. 嫁禍 (jia huo = marry/transfer-misfortune) describes a culprit who successfully makes suspicion fall on someone else.

by Diana Yue