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 motherhood**

乳 = 奶 (nai) = milk. 乳房 (ru fang = milk-room = breast) = vulgar 奶子 (nai zi = milk-diminutive = tits). Mammals are 哺乳動物 (bu ru dong wu = feed-breast/ milk-move-thing/animal). Women’s 雙乳 (shuang ru = pair-breasts) having 乳腺 (ru xian = milk-gland = mammary glands), 乳頭 (ru tou = breast-head = nipples) may develop 乳癌 (ru ai = breast-cancer).

Babies are fed 人奶 (ren nai = human-milk), 牛奶 (niu nai = cattle/cow-milk). Powdered milk is 奶粉 (nai fen = milk-powder), cream is 奶油 (nai you = milk-oil), cheese is 乳酪 (ru lao = milk-coagulation/paste).

Tea with milk is 奶茶 (nai cha = milk-tea), suckling pig is 乳豬 (ru zhu = milk-pig).

by Diana Yue