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.

Commodities have 價錢 (jia qian = price-money = marked price), 市價 (shi jia = market-price). Sellers and buyers 討價還價 (tao jia huan jia = ask-price-return-price = haggle).

Recession makes companies’ 股價 (gu jia = stock-prices) and 市場指數 (shi chang zhi shu = market-place-point-number = market index) plunge. Stores launch 大減價 (da jian jia = big-reduce-price = big sales). Speculators buy houses at 拍賣價 (pai mai jia = bang-sell-price = auction price).

Frugal people appreciate 價廉物美 (jia lian wu mei = price-cheap-object-beautiful/good) products. Depending on your 價值觀 (jia zhi guan = price-worth-view = opinion on values), 無價之寶 (wu jia zhi bao = no-price-’s-treasure) can mean priceless gems/rarities or health/love.

This week: Words about housing markets

價 Pronunciation: jia (Putonghua, 4th tone), ga (Cantonese, 3rd tone) Basic meaning: price

by Diana Yue