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 sleep

床 = bottom/seat: 河床 (he chuang = river-bed), 海床 (hai chuang = sea-bed), 牙床 (ya chuang = tooth-bed = gums).

床 = 榻 (ta) = bed: 床褥 (chuang ru = bed-mattresses), 床單 (chuang dan = bed-sheets), patients’ 病榻 (bing ta = sick-bed). Cantonese 碌架床 (lu jia chuang) = bunk bed, 吊床 (diao chuang = hang-bed) = hammock. Poor people live/sleep in 床位 (chuang wei = bed-units), not rooms/apartments.

In X-movies sex stars perform 床上戯 (chuang shang xi = bed-on-drama = sex scenes), 叫床 (jiao chuang = scream-bed = pant/scream/moan/groan when having sex). Couples sometimes 床頭打架床尾和 (chuang tou da jia chuang wei he = bed-head-hit-fight-bed-tail-harmony = quarrel then quickly make peace).

Pronunciation: chuang (Putonghua, 2nd tone), chong (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: bottom, bed

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