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 dancing

姿 (radical 女 nu = woman)
Pronunciation: zi (Putonghua, 1st tone), ji (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: pose, poise, posture

姿 = 姿勢 (zi shi = pose-attitude) = posture: 坐姿 (zuo zi = sitting-posture), 站姿 (zhan zi = standing-posture). Knights show 英姿 (ying zi = heroic/dashing-posture) on horseback. Swimmers demonstrate various 泳姿 (yong zi = swimming-movements).

姿容 (zi rong = poise-visage) = 姿色 (zi se = poise-color) = women's looks. Handsome men/women have 風姿 (feng zi = wind-pose = impressive air/carryage). Waltzing couples show off 舞步 (wu bu = dancing-steps), 翩翩舞姿 (pian pian wu zi = flutter-flutter-dance-gestures/movements = light/float dance movements).

Models/actors/politicians 擺姿態 (bai zi tai = pose-posture-attitude = do poses, put up attitudes). Hedonists want life to be 多姿多彩 (duo zi duo cai = many-gestures-many-colors = full of variety).

by Diana Yue