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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each zi is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged
2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high
3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high
4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest

To pronounce each zi below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about romantic love

悦
Putonghua pronunciation: yüe4
Cantonese pronunciation: yuet6
Meanings: fondness, pleasure, gladness

悦 (radical ⼒ = 心 xin1, heart) = 愉悦 (yü2 yüe4 = glad-pleased = cheerfulness), 喜悦 (xi3 yüe4 = joy-happiness). 悅耳 (yüe4 er3 = please-ears) = nice-sounding. 悅目 (yüe4 mu4 = please-eyes) = nice-looking. 不悦 (bu4 yüe4 = not-pleased) = dismayed. 大悦 (da4 yüe4 = big-pleasure) = highly pleased.

和顏悦色 (he2 yan2 yüe4 se1 = mild-countenance-pleasant-expression) = warm/kind expression. Loser 心悅誠服 (xin1 yüe4 cheng2 fu2 = heart-glad-honestly-accept = sincerely admires winner’s superiority). King 寵悅 (chong3 yüe4 = favors/dotes-on-loves) concubine, 悅納 (yüe4 na4 = gladly-accepts) her suggestions.

Couple 兩情相悅 (liang3 qing2 xiang1 yüe4 = two-feeling-mutually-love = love each other), do things to 取悦 (qu3 yüe4 = achieve-pleasure = please) each other.

by Diana Yue