A Hong Kong diver who cheated death by “jaws” has become an Internet sensation as a video of his hair-raising experience got over 18 million hits.

The diver was in a protective cage underwater during a shark-watching trip off Mexico when a great white, lured by bait, smashed through the metal bars into the cage. Only when a crew member opened the top door of the cage did the shark escape through it. The diver was unhurt but clearly shaken.

When someone has a narrow escape, we call it “虎口餘生” (hu3 kou3 yu2 sheng1). “虎” (hu3) is “a tiger,” “口” (kou3) “mouth,” “餘” (yu2) “spare,” “remaining” and “生” (sheng1) “to live,” “living,” “life.” “餘生” (yu2 sheng1), as a term, means survival. Literally, “虎口餘生” (hu3 kou3 yu2 sheng1) is “life spared from a tiger’s mouth,” “to escape from the mouth of a tiger.”

If one manages to escape from a tiger, it is a close call, a lucky escape. So “虎口餘生” (hu3 kou3 yu2 sheng1), figuratively, means to have a narrow escape.

For the diver, the mouth he has escaped from was that of a shark, so strictly speaking, his was a case of “鯊口餘生” (sha1 kou3 yu2 sheng1), “鯊” (sha1) being a shark.

But using the idiom “虎口餘生” (hu3 kou3 yu2 sheng1) is appropriate, as the mouth of a tiger is an analogy for any deadly situation and the idiom refers to narrow escapes in general.

Terms containing the character “生” (sheng1) include:

- 生活 (sheng1 huo2) – life; existence; livelihood
- 生存 (sheng1 cun2) – to exist; to subsist
- 生產 (sheng1 chan3) – to produce; to breed
- 生日 (sheng1 ri4) – a birthday; a date of birth