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 drugs


中醫 (Zhong yi = Chinese-medicine/doctor)s’ principle is固本培元 (gu ben pei yuan = firm-up-fundamentals-nurture-essence = strengthen body’s basics). Patients drink 中藥 (Zhong yao = Chinese-medicine = 草藥 cao yao = grass/herbal-medicine) concoctions, rub 藥酒 (yao jiu = medicine-soaked-liquor) on wounds/swellings.

良藥苦口 (liang yao ku kou = good-medicine-bitter-mouth) means good advice is unpleasant/hard to swallow.

by Diana Yue