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 meetings

議 Pronunciation: yi (Putonghua, 4th tone), yì (Cantonese, 5th tone) Basic meaning: discuss

In 會議 (hui yi = gathering-discuss = meetings), members debate 議題 (yi ti = discussion-topics). Politicians 議政 (yi zheng = discuss/participate-in-politics). War-torn nations 議和 (yi he = discuss-harmony = negotiate truce/peace).

美國國會 (Mei Guo guo hui = “America”-transliterated-state-gathering = the United States Congress) has 參議院 (can yi yuan = join-discuss-court = Senate), 眾議院 (zhong yi yuan = many-discuss-court = House of Representatives). 議員 (yi yuan = discuss-members = congressmen) propose 動議 (dong yi = move-discuss = motions), 投票 (tou piao = cast-votes), reach 決議 (jue yi = decide-discuss = decisions).

爭議性 (zheng yi xing = fight-discuss-nature = arguable/controversial) social issues often get public's 非議 (fei yi = negative-discuss = derision/denunciation).

by Diana Yue