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 elections

選 = 選擇 (xuan ze = select-pick) = choose/chosen/choice. 選民 (xuan min) can mean “chosen-people” (as in "God’s chosen people") or “choosing-people” i.e. voters.

選舉 (xuan ju = select-raise/nominate) = elections. To 競選 (jing xuan = compete-select) means running/competing for office. 競選人 (jing xuan ren = compete-person = candidates), unless they 退選 (tui xuan = retreat-election = withdraw), either 當選 (dang xuan = get-elected = win election) or 落選 (luo xuan = fall-elected = lose election).

選手 (xuan shou = picked-hand/candidate) means contestants, e.g. 游泳選手 (you yong xuan shou = swimming athletes in contest). 世界小姐選美 (shi jie xiao jie xuan mei = world-boundary-little-sister-elect-beauty = world miss contest beauty) is Miss World Contest.

Pronunciation: xuan (Putonghua, 3rd tone), suen (Cantonese 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: choose, select, elect, election, contest

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