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 policemen


Policemen 捕賊 (zhuo zei = catch-thieves/thugs). If thugs 拘捕 (ju bu = refuse/dodge-arrest) and escape, police issue 拘捕令 (ju bu ling = take-arrest-order = arrest warrant), 追捕 (zui bu = hunt/chase-to-catch) them.

欲擒故縱 (yu qin gu zong = desire-capture-deliberately-release = to capture, first let go) is a smart tactic. 螳螂捕蟬, 黃雀在後 (tang lang bu chan, huang que zai hou = praying-mantis-hunts-cicada, yellow-bird-is/lurks-behind) describes the big-hunts-small power game among animals/humans/states.

by Diana Yue