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 soccer

球 = ball/sphere. 地球 (di qiu = land-sphere) = planet Earth.

In Chinese sports language, 足球 (zu qiu = foot-ball = soccer), 篮球 (lan qiu = basket-ball), 排球 (pai qiu = row-ball = volleyball) are 大球 (da qiu = big-balls), 乒乓 (ping pang = ping-pong = table-tennis), 羽毛球 (yu mao qiu = feather-fur-ball = badminton) are 小球 (xiao qiu = small-balls).

球壇盛事 (qiu tan sheng shi = ball-altar/platform-grand-event) means great happening on the soccer scene. 球王 (qiu wang = ball-king = king of soccer), e.g. Pele, has many 球迷 (qiu mi = ball-infatuated = fans). Hong Kong people say 波 (bo = transliterated-ball) for 球: 赌波 (du bo = gamble-ball) = soccer betting.

by Diana Yue