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

賽 = 比賽 (bi sai = compare-compete) means match/race. 英超聯賽 (ying chao lian sai = “Eng”-transliterated-united-league-matches) means the English Premier League.

賽果 (sai guo = match-results) of 世界盃 (shi jie bei = world-territory-cup = World Cup) and 欧洲盃 (ou zhou bei = “Eu”-transliterated-continent-cup = European Cup) 決賽 (jue sai = decide-match = finals) make international headlines.

球證 (qiu zheng = ball-witness = referees/refs) punish 犯規 (fan gui = violate-rule = fouls) by giving 角球 (jiao qiu = corner-ball = corners) or 十二碼 (shi er ma = ten-two-yards = twelve yards penalty kicks) while fans 喝采 (he cai = shout-cheer = cheer) or 喝倒采 (he dao cai = shout-reverse-cheer = boo).

Pronunciation: sai (Putonghua, 4\textsuperscript{th} tone), choi (Cantonese 4\textsuperscript{th} tone).
Basic meaning: compete, match.

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