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 foreign countries

文
Pronunciation: wen (Putonghua, 2nd tone), man (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: language, writing

語文 (yu wen = speech-writing) = language. 漢語 (han yu = Han speech/language = language of the Han race) = 中文 (zhong wen = Chinese language).

外語 (wai yu = outside-speech) = 外文 (wai wen = outside-language) = foreign languages: English (英語 ying yu = England-transliterated-language), Spanish (西語 xi yu = Spain-transliterated-language), Arabic (阿拉伯語 a la bo yu = Arabia-transliterated-language).

Students of 外語系 (wai yu xi = foreign-languages-department) study 文化 (wen hua = language-transform = culture), 文學 (wen xue = writing-study = literature) of different 文明 (wen ming = language-enlightenment = civilizations), and practice 翻譯 (fan yi = overturn-translate = translation), 傳譯 (chuan yi = transmit-translate = oral interpretation).

by Diana Yue