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 tea

器, with four 口 (kou = mouths/openings), means 具 (ju = utensils) and 盥 (ming = containers). Eyes/lungs are 器官 (qi guan = utensil-commander = body organs). Weapons are 兵器 (bing qi = soldier/army-instruments).

Museums display ancient 青銅器 (qing tong qi = green-bronze-utensil/container, e.g. 鼎 ding = three-legged bronze cooking vessels), 瓷器 (ci qi = porcelain-ware). 茶壺 (cha hu = tea-pot), 茶杯 (cha bei = tea-cup) are 茶器 (cha qi = tea-utensils). Ancient tombs contain 冥器 (ming qi = netherworld-utensils).

器重 (qi zhong = utensil-important) means giving someone great regard/responsibility. 不成器 (bu cheng qi = no-accomplish-utensil) describes a failed person. 大器晚成 (da qi wan cheng = big-utensil-night/late-accomplish) means achieving success later than others.

Pronunciation: qi (Putonghua, 4th tone), hei (Cantonese 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: utensil, instrument, container, ware

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