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 news reportage

聞 = 耳 (er = ear) + 門 (men = door) = hear/heard. 聞知 (wen zhi = hear-know) means knowing from heard sources. After 聞道 (wen dao = hear~Word/truth), truth-seekers are enlightened/converted.

出爐新聞 (chu lu xin wen = out-from~oven~news) means last-minute news. 聞人 (wen ren = heard-about/news-persons = celebrities) make 頭條新聞 (tou tiao xin wen = head-line-news). 風聞 (feng wen = wind-heard) = gossip. 傳聞證供 (chuan wen zheng gong = pass-around-heard~proof~supply/confess) = hearsay evidence.

Well-travelled/well-exposed people are 見聞廣博 (jian wen guang bo = see-hear~broad-expansive = know many things over the world). When we meet VIPs for the first time, we say “久聞大名!” (jiu wen da ming = “long-heard-your-big-name!”)

by Diana Yue