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

傳 = pass on. 傳統 (chuan tong = pass-on-centralized-core) = tradition. 遺傳 (yi chuan = leave-behind-pass-on) = hereditary. 傳染病 (chuan ran bing = pass-on-dye/contract-illness) = epidemic. Basketball players 傳球 (chuan qiu = pass-ball): 傳來 (chuan lai = pass-to-here), 傳去 (chuan qu = pass-to-there).

民間傳說 (min jian chuan shuo = people-among-pass-on-sayings) mean folklores and legends. Vivid portraits 傳神 (chuan shen = pass-on-spirit = capture life-like expression). Skills/crafts/kung-fu need 傳人 (chuan ren = pass-on-person = followers/disciples), otherwise they will 失傳 (shi chuan = lose-pass-on = no longer remembered/practiced).

Couriers 傳遞 (chuan di = pass-on-deliver) documents/parcels. 傳真機 (chuan zhen ji = pass-on-authentic-machine) = fax machine. 傳理學 (chuan li xue = pass-on-rationale-study) = communication studies.

by Diana Yue