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 meetings

Pronunciation: hui (Putonghua, 4th tone), wooi (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: meeting, committee, society

Friends/lovers 相會 (xiang hui = mutual-meet = meet/see each other). New acquaintances say “幸會!” (xing hui = “fortunate/glad-to-meet-you!”) 行會 (hang hui = trade/profession-society = guilds), 商會 (shang hui = business-associations) have 會長 (hui zhang = society-head = president), 會員 (hui yuan = society-member = members).

PRC annually holds 兩會 (liang hui = two-meetings): 全國人民代表大會 (quan guo ren min dai biao da hui = entire-country-person-people-substitute-represent-big-meeting = National People’s Congress), 政治协商會議 (zheng zhi xie shang hui yi = political-administration-agree-discuss-meeting-discussion = Political Consultative Conference).

Executives 開會 (kai hui = open/start-meetings = attend meetings), complain about 文山會海 (wen shan hui hai = ritings/documents-mountain-meetings-sea = endless paperwork and meetings).

by Diana Yue