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 elections

政 (zheng)  
Pronunciation: zheng (Putonghua, 4th tone), jing (Cantonese 3rd tone)  
Basic meaning: rule, politics

政 = 政治 (zheng zhi = rule-control) = politics. 政權 (zheng quan = rule-authority) = regime. 政府 (zheng fu = rule-house) = government. 政策 (zheng ce = rule-strategy) = policy. 財政 (cai zheng = money-control) means finance. 德政 (de zheng = virtue-rule) means an appreciated administrative measure, e.g. a tax-cut.

從政 (cong zheng = follow-politics) means enter politics. 政壇 (zheng tan = politics-altar) = the political arena. 政黨 (zheng dang) = political party. Politicians are 政客 (zheng ke = politics-figures).

政治手腕 (zheng zhi shou wan = politics-hand-wrist) means a politician’s manipulative skills. 政治化 (zheng zhi hua = politics-transform) means become politicized.

政變 (zheng bian = rule-change) means a coup d'état.

by Diana Yue