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 housing markets

供 = 供應 (gong ying = supply-respond) = supply. Reservoirs 供水 (gong shui = supply-water), dams 供电 (gong dian = supply-electricity). Goods suppliers = 供应商 (gong ying shang = supply-merchants/companies). Witnesses 作供 (zuo gong = act/do-supply = give evidence).


Middleclass people 供房 (gong fang = pay-installments-house = pay housing mortgage), 供車 (gong che = pay-installments-car = pay car mortgage) by 月供 (yue gong = monthly-installments). Unemployed, they 斷供 (duan gong = stop/break-pay-installments = default mortgage).

by Diana Yue