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 recessions

失 (shi) Pronunciation: shi (Putonghua, 1st tone), sat (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: lose, loss

失 = lose: 失望 (shi wang = lose-prospect = disappointed), 失明 (shi ming = lose-brightness/sight = go blind), 失職 (shi zhi = fail-post/duties = err in work), 失蹤 (shi zong = lose-trail = disappear).

In recession, the stock market 失守 (shi shou = lose/fail-defense = drops dramatically). Speculators/thieves 失手 (shi shou = lose-hand = get caught). Banks 信心大失 (xin xin da shi = believe-heart-big-lose = confidence drops dramatically), causing 信贷崩溃 (xin dai beng kui = confidence-lending-break-disrupt = credit crunch).

Stockholders 患得患失 (huan de huan shi = fear~gain-fear~loss = feel unsure/uneasy = don’t know how to go forward).

by Diana Yue