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

新 = new: 新年 (xin nian = news-year), 新月 (xin yue = new-moon = crescent moon), 新生 (xin sheng = new-life = born again), 新疆 (xin-jiang = new-territory = China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region). 全新 (quan xin = complete-new) means brand new. 新闻 (xin wen = new-hear/heard) means news, 舊聞 (jiu wen = old-hear/heard) means stale news.

通訊社 (tong xun she = through-message-societies = news agencies) hire 新聞記者 (xin wen ji zhe = news-record-person = reporters) to 跑新聞 (pao xin wen = run-news = move around to cover news).

The short-lived 百日維新 (bai ri wei xin = hundred-days-maintain-new = Hundred Days’s Reform, 1989) failed to save the ailing Qing Dynasty from collapse.

by Diana Yue