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 dieting

瘦子 (shou zi = thin-diminutive = skinny guys) are described as 瘦小 (shou xiao = thin-small), 高瘦 (gao shou = tall-lean), 瘦削 (shou que = thin-trimmed/chipped = skinny), 皮包骨 (pi bao gu = skin-wrap-bones = skinny/bony).

Sick/dieting people 消瘦 (xiao shou = diminish/reduce-thin = become thinner/emaciated). Girls eat only 瘦肉 (shou rou = lean-meat), try to 瘦身 (shou shen = thin-body = slim down), watch their 體重 (ti zhong = body-weight), envy others’ 瘦腰 (shou yao = slim-waist).

Financial tsunami forces 企業瘦身 (qi ye shou shen = standing-business-slim-down-body = enterprises to down-size). 瘦田無人耕 (shou tian wu ren geng = lean-field-no-person-till/cultivate) describes apparently low-potential/unprofitable areas which are neglected/unexplored in social development.

Pronunciation: shou (Putonghua, 4th tone), sau (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: thin, skinny, slim, lean