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 agriculture

**農**

Pronunciation: *nong* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *nung* (Cantonese, 4<sup>th</sup> tone)

Basic meaning: peasant, farmer, agriculture

Ancient China 以農立國 (*yi nong li guo* = with-farming-establish-nation = the economic base is agriculture). Most people were 农工商 (*shi nong gong shang* = scholars-farmers-artsans-merchants). Famines caused 餓民革命 (*nong min ge ming* = farming-people-change-lives = peasants’ revolts). In Socialist China, 工農兵 (*gong nong bing* = workers-peasants-soldiers) represent the masses.


農業現代化 (*nong ye xian dai hua* = farming-industry-now-generation-transform = agricultural modernization) improves yields. However, 穀價傷農 (*gu jian shang nong* = rice-grains-cheap-hurt-farmers = slashed grain prices affect peasants’ earnings/livelihood).

by Diana Yue