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.


車站 (che zhan = car/vehicle-stops) include 巴士站 (ba shi zhan = “bus”-transliterated-stop = bus-stops), 小巴站 (xiao ba zhan = small-bus-stop = mini-bus stops), 火車站 (huo che zhan = fire-car-stop = train stations), 地鐵站 (di tie zhan = underground-railway-stops). Sometimes people 排長龍 (pai chang long = line-long-dragon = form long queues) at 的士站 (di xhi zhan = “taxi”-transliterated-stop = taxi stands).

Before Lunar New Year 廣州站 (Guangzhou zhan = Guangzhou Train Terminal) is packed with home-bound migrant workers.

by Diana Yue