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 Chinese cuisine

Pronunciation: fan (Putonghua, 4th tone), faan (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: cooked rice


Beggars 討飯 (tao fan = beg-for-rice/food).


by Diana Yue