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 computers

Electricity: 電. Electrons are 電子 (dian zi = electricity-seed/son). Electronics is 電子學 (dian zi xue = electrons-study).

Electronic engineering (電子工程 dian zi gong cheng = electronic-technology-program) uses computers (計算機 ji suan ji = calculation-machines = 電腦 dian nao = electric-brains) to design programs (程式 cheng shi) to manipulate data (資料 zi liao = assets-materials). Mainframes = 大型機 (da xing ji = big-size-machines/computers). PCs = 個人電腦 (ge ren dian nao = single-person-computers).

桌上電腦 (zhuo shang dian nao = table-on-computers) = desktops, 手提電腦 (shou ti dian nao = hand-held-computers) = laptops. 電腦奇才 (dian nao qi cai = computer-strange/rare-talents) = computer wizard.

by Diana Yue