

# CHINESE AS THE EVOLVING GLOBAL LANGUAGE

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**Анотація:** У статті розглядається важливість китайської мови як всесвітньої. Проаналізовано розвиток китайської писемності та її особливості.

**Ключові слова:** китайські ієрогліфи, писемність, династія, піньгін, джонвен, стандартизація, спрощення, розвиток.

**Abstract:** The article considers Chinese as the world language, its specific characters and peculiarities.

**Keywords:** Chinese characters, writing system, dynasty, pinyin, zhuanwen, standardization, simplification, development.

## Introduction

The Chinese language is the oldest and the hardest one in the world. But despite this fact, this language keeps on being the most popular one to learn in the international community. A quarter of the population of the planet speaks this language. Chinese serves as the official language of the United Nations Organization. It is a unique language, it doesn't have letters and an alphabet, but there are characters, that illustrate the meaning of the sound, and call hanzi. The Chinese count 100000 characters. But in daily life, people use approximately 2000 characters.

## Statement of basic materials

None knows when Chinese characters appeared, but they started to thrive in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. The ones of the earliest characters were found on the bone and tortoiseshell, dating from the Shang (or Yin) dynasty (18<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century BC). But it already was the advanced system, that was similar to modern characters. By 1400 BC the language comprised 2500 to 3000 characters, which of the big part we can read nowadays. In the later time of the Shang dynasty and the early years of the Zhou dynasty, Chinese writing includes the guwen, which translate ancient figures. The main style of writing was Zhou wen in the time of the Zhou dynasty. But at the end of this dynasty, Zhou wen had degenerated to some extent. During the Qin period (221-207 BC), the Chinese script was standardized into its present form. The earliest characters in Chinese writing were essentially schematic pictures representing the objects or concepts they denoted. For example, the character for "man" resembled a standing figure, while the character for "woman" depicted a kneeling figure. This period marked a significant development in the evolution of Chinese writing, as it laid the foundation for the characters used in the language today.

Like a lot of languages, the Chinese language was impacted by foreign languages, especially Buddhism. Some 30000 words and phrases were added to the Chinese language. Commonly used words like "現在" (now), "未來" (future), "世界" (world), "因果" (cause-effect), "悲觀" (pessimism) all find their origins in Buddhism. The expansion of the Chinese lexicon in this manner has not only contributed to the accumulation of Chinese characters but has also enhanced the Chinese people's comprehension of the world from a renewed metaphysical or spiritual standpoint. Western cultural influence, particularly since the Qing Dynasty, has also become visible in the Chinese language. Words, such as "咖啡" (coffee), "邏輯" (logic), "維他命" (vitamin), "高爾夫" (golf), and scores of others are now being used in everyday life.

Over time, a phenomenon emerged in Chinese writing known as the simplification of characters, indicating a shift from complex to simpler forms. This trend intensified with the onset of the 20th century. There were also suggestions to eliminate Chinese writing, as some believed it hindered progress. Some scholars even proposed introducing Latin script to the Chinese language as an alternative to characters. However, in 1935, linguists developed schemes for simplified writing to promote literacy among the population.

Nevertheless, Latin script is present in the Chinese language. It serves as a transcription for reading characters and is known as Pinyin. In other words, Pinyin is the Chinese language written in the Latin alphabet. In 1605, the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci published the first known Chinese-to-Western text, titled Xizi Qiji (西字奇迹 Wonder of Western Writing). This system used the Roman alphabet to transcribe the Chinese language. The most widely used system is Wade-Giles Romanization. It was developed by Sir Thomas Wade in 1859 and later refined by Herbert Giles 1890s. In the 1950s, a group of Chinese linguists

began work on a new romanization system to increase literacy and even replace Chinese characters. The Pinyin system invented by linguist and sinologist Zhou Youguang was the most popular one. It was adopted and published by the Chinese government in 1958. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) adopted pinyin as an international standard in 1982, followed by the United Nations in 1986.

### Conclusion

Chinese characters have a rich history, much like the history of the great country itself. Despite the period of simplification that the Chinese language has undergone and continues to undergo, traditional characters are still used in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Despite the complexity of the language, with each passing year, an increasing number of people aspire to learn it.

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