Being a PM, I receive some orders from our clients who always forget to indicate which kind of Chinese for the target language. They just simply say “pls translate into Chinese.”. I always have to follow up “you need Simplified Chinese or Traditional Chinese, if it is traditional Chinese, is it Traditional Chinese in Taiwan or Hong Kong? “. Apparently, some client are confused by Simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese. Well, in this case, I would like to distinguish those two languages with more concrete aspects.

Simplified Chinese characters have been the standardized Chinese characters nominated in the Xiàndài Hànyǔ Chángyòng Zìbiǎo(现代汉语常用字典) for communication in Mainland China for decades. Together with traditional Chinese characters, there exist many standard character sets of the contemporary Chinese written language. The government of the People's Republic of China in Mainland China has promoted them for official use in printing ever since the 1950s and 1960s aiming to increase literacy.

Traditional Chinese characters are currently applied in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau regions. Overseas Chinese communities generally use traditional characters, while simplified characters are often favored among mainland Chinese immigrants.

Simplified character forms were made by decreasing the number of
strokes and simplifying the forms of a considerable percent of traditional Chinese characters. Some simplifications are based on popular cursive forms carrying graphic or phonetic simplifications of the traditional forms.

Some characters were simplified by implementing regular rules; for instance, by replacing all elements of a certain component with a simpler variant. Some characters were simplified irregularly, however, and some simplified characters are carrying an unlike and unpredictable form compared with traditional characters. Finally, many characters remain the same forms, so they are identical between the traditional and simplified Chinese orthographies.

Background and Origins

Although a large amount of the simplified Chinese characters used today are the result of the works moderated by the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the 1950s and 60s, character simplification predates the PRC's formation in 1949. Cursive written text almost always contains character simplification. Simplified forms used in print can trace to as early as the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC).

Lufei Kui, being one of the pioneer proponents of character simplification, proposed in 1909 that simplified characters should be adopted in education. In the years following the May Fourth Movement in 1919, many anti-imperialist Chinese intellectuals sought ways to modernise China.

Traditional culture and values such as Confucianism were challenged. shortly, people in the Movement began to state that the traditional Chinese writing system as an obstacle in modernising China and therefore proposed that a reform be initiated.
It was suggested that the Chinese writing system should be either simplified or fully abolished. Fu Sinian, a leader of the May Fourth Movement, regarded Chinese characters as the “writing of ox-demons and snake-gods” niúguǐ shéshén de wénzì (牛鬼蛇神的文字).

Lu Xun, a renowned Chinese author in the 20th century, stated that, “If Chinese characters are not destroyed, then China will die.” (漢字不滅,中國必亡。) Recent commentators have claimed that Chinese characters were blamed for the economic problems in China during that time.

In the 1930s and 1940s, discussions on character simplification brought up within the Kuomintang government, and a great deal of Chinese intellectuals and writers have long maintained that character simplification would help push literacy in China.

324 simplified characters gathered by Qian Xuantong were officially introduced in 1935 as the table of 1st batch simplified character (第一批簡體字表) and suspended in 1936. In many world languages, literacy has been promoted as a justification for spelling reforms.

The government of the People’s Republic of China released the first round of official character simplifications in two documents, the first in 1956 and the second in 1964. In the 1950s and 1960s, while confusion about simplified characters was still rampant, transitional characters that mixed simplified parts with yet-to-be simplified parts of characters together appeared briefly, then disappeared.

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