

## Unit 9

### Reading C

A simplified system of writing was introduced and promoted as the common written language to replace many traditional characters in the 1950s. More than five decades later, simplified characters remain the standard writing system in the mainland of China, while Chinese elsewhere — especially in Taiwan and Hong Kong — continue to use traditional characters.

Here, several experts are invited to voice their opinions.

20 世纪 50 年代，一种简化的书写系统被引入并推广为通用书面语言，以取代许多传统汉字。五十多年后，简体字仍然是中国大陆的标准书写系统，而其他地区的中文——特别是在台湾和香港——继续使用繁体字。

在此，邀请几位专家发表他们的意见。

### The Chinese Language: Ever Evolving 《汉语：不断演变》

#### The Utopian Ideal in Writing

1 The utopian impulses behind standardization and simplification of a living language are always understandable. Increased literacy, administrative efficiency, and ease of communication are laudable goals. But those impulses can also strip a language of its wit, whimsy, and play, not to mention its capacity to accommodate new concepts and usages.

一种活的语言在标准化和简化背后的乌托邦式冲动总是可以理解的。提高识字率、行政效率以及沟通的便利性是值得称赞的目标。但是这些冲动也可能剥夺一种语言的机智、奇思妙想和趣味性，更不用说它容纳新概念和新用法的能力了。

2 Traditional characters and simplified characters never were two separate and autonomous language systems — they have always existed on a continuum. Many simplified characters are adaptations from common usage in Chinese cursive script; on the other hand, the inability to read traditional characters is to close oneself off to much of the Chinese cultural legacy — its history and arts — before the 1950s.

繁体字和简体字从来不是两个独立且自主的语言系统，它们始终存在于一个连续体中。许多简体字是从中国草书的常见用法中演变而来；另一方面，不能阅读繁体字就等于将自己与 20 世纪 50 年代之前的大部分中国文化遗产——其历史和艺术——隔绝开来。

3 Since I grew up in Taiwan, where reading and writing in traditional characters is the norm, simplified characters were a novelty and a bit of a challenge, and perhaps, something to be sniffed at. But when my first job after college led me to Beijing to work as a literary translator, I spent the first week furtively consulting a little manual of “Simplified/Traditional Character Conversion” before I became fully comfortable with the new system, including learning to write my name in a way that was comprehensible to desk clerks. The experience taught me the follies of being a cultural purist.

因为我在台湾长大，在那里读写繁体字是常态，所以简体字对我来说是新鲜事物，有点挑战，甚至可能有点让人不屑。但是大学毕业后我的第一份工作让我来到北京担任文学翻译，在我完全适应新的书写系统之前，我在第一周偷偷查阅一本小小的《简繁体转换手册》，包括学会以一种前台工作人员能看懂的方式书写我的名字。这段经历让我明白了做一个文化纯粹

主义者是多么愚蠢。

4 Given the increasing flow of published and online materials among the mainland China, Taiwan Province, and the overseas Chinese diasporas, a literate reader must have the ability to code-switch. Thus, the answer is not either/or, but - annoyingly for policy makers - both.

鉴于中国大陆、中国台湾地区以及海外华人侨民之间出版和在线材料的交流日益增多，有文化的读者必须具备代码转换的能力。因此，答案不是二选一，而是——这对政策制定者来说可能很烦人——两者都要。

#### Elitism vs. Populism

5 Simplifying traditional Chinese characters was a linguistic democratization and one of China's most successful progressive programs in the 1950s. The majority of the population was lifted out of illiteracy.

简化繁体字是语言的民主化进程，也是 20 世纪 50 年代中国最成功的进步举措之一。大部分人由此摆脱了文盲状态。

6 Literacy had long remained a privilege and a source of power wielded by the elitist few. With the characters made easier to learn, the key to knowledge embedded in written texts was handed to a wide population.

长期以来，识字一直是少数精英阶层的特权和权力来源。随着汉字变得更容易学习，书面文本中蕴含的知识钥匙被交到了广大民众手中。

7 A clash between traditional and simplified characters comes down to elitism vs. populism. A recent poll conducted by Sohu. com on whether to reinstate the traditional characters shows that more netizens oppose it. Behind the elitism/populism divide is the opposition between an archaistic nostalgia toward the illusory“purer” traditional Chinese literacy and a pragmatic and forward-looking modern drive. (Both Singapore and Malaysia, with sizable Chinese populations, also adopted simplified characters decades ago. )

繁体字与简体字之间的冲突归根结底是精英主义与平民主义之间的冲突。搜狐网最近进行的一项关于是否恢复繁体字的民意调查显示，更多的网民反对恢复繁体字。在精英主义与平民主义的分歧背后，是对虚幻的“更纯粹”繁体中文识字能力的复古怀旧与务实且具有前瞻性的现代驱动力之间的对立。（拥有大量华人人口的新加坡和马来西亚在几十年前也采用了简体字。）

8 Advocates for reinstating traditional characters exaggerate the break of the simplified system from the traditional orthography. Simplified characters still retain the basic structure of traditional ideographs. The structural continuity makes the switch between them easy and smooth, a skill any educated person can quickly acquire. Many of the simplified characters had been in existence for more than a millennium. Manuscripts unearthed from ancient tombs and medieval caves suggest that some simplified characters now used were already in currency then. The reform in the 1950s only officially legitimated these underground“outlaw”vernacular characters.

支持恢复繁体字的人夸大了简化字系统与传统正字法的割裂。简体字仍然保留了传统表意文字的基本结构。这种结构上的连续性使得两者之间的转换容易且顺畅，这是任何有文化的人都能迅速掌握的技能。许多简体字已经存在了一千多年。从古代墓葬和中世纪洞穴中出土的

手稿表明，现在使用的一些简体字在当时就已经流行了。20 世纪 50 年代的改革只是正式使这些地下的“非法”俗体字合法化了。

9 Aesthetic appeal is another argument made for reinstating traditional characters. Calligraphy, the quintessential aesthetic form of Chinese writing, in fact favors simplification. The running- and cursive-hand in Chinese calligraphy has always been the most radical form of simplifying characters. The six-stroke character xing (“行”, running), for instance, was reduced to a mere two vertical strokes in medieval calligraphic practice.

审美吸引力是支持恢复繁体字的另一个理由。书法，作为中国书写的典型审美形式，实际上有利于简化。中国书法中的行书和草书一直是简化汉字最激进的形式。例如，六笔画的“行”字在中世纪的书法实践中被简化为仅仅两竖。

10 It's true that computer keyboarding has now made the dreaded writing of multi-stroke-characters mostly moot. But why require schoolchildren to spend time and cognitive energy learning overly complicated ideographs in this age of information explosion, so vastly different from traditional society? Why not let them acquire the simplified form first, and if they desire, move on to master traditional characters? The first step is for efficiency; the second is for cultural refinement. That is why every society has the division of labor between bankers and poets.

的确，如今电脑键盘输入已经使得可怕的多笔画汉字书写在很大程度上变得没有实际意义。但是，在这个与传统社会截然不同的信息爆炸时代，为什么要让学生花费时间和认知精力去学习过于复杂的表意文字呢？为什么不让他们先掌握简化形式，然后如果他们愿意，可以再去掌握繁体字呢？第一步是为了效率；第二步是为了文化修养。这就是为什么每个社会都有银行家和诗人之间的分工。

#### The Chinese Canon, Diminished

11 Language is about cultural identity. This is especially true in the case of the written Chinese language, which has evolved for at least three millenniums and is now used by one and a half billion people worldwide.

语言关乎文化认同。对于中文书面语来说尤其如此，它已经演变了至少三千年，如今被全球十五亿人使用。

12 The advantage of traditional characters is that they offer a stronger and richer connection with the history of the Chinese language. The simplified writing system has reduced the variety and changed the nature of many character shapes, making it more difficult for people to access classical texts in their full richness.

繁体字的优势在于它们与中文的历史有着更紧密、更丰富的联系。简化后的书写系统减少了汉字的多样性并改变了许多汉字的形态特征，使得人们更难充分领略经典文本的丰富内涵。

13 This is more than an academic concern. Just as Shakespeare's plays and the language he used serve as a foundation for the English language, so are the canonical writings of Confucius, Lao Tzu and countless others who had exploited the full range and expression of the traditional characters.

这不仅仅是一个学术上的关切。正如莎士比亚的戏剧及其所用的语言是英语的基础一样，孔

子、老子以及无数运用了传统汉字的全部范围和表现力的其他人的经典著作也是如此。

14 Proponents of simplified characters say that simplified characters are easier to learn. But I have found no rigorous study that fully proves this. Moreover, some studies have shown that the simplification process, by warping the shapes of characters, can cause confusion in the meaning of characters.

简体字的支持者说简体字更容易学习。但我没有发现有严格的研究能完全证明这一点。此外，一些研究表明，简化的过程通过扭曲汉字的形状，可能会导致汉字意义的混乱。

15 In Taiwan and Hong Kong, school children have no trouble learning traditional characters, and those regions demonstrate some of the highest literacy rates in the world. Meanwhile, in recent decades, Taiwan has implemented policies that implicitly acknowledge the practical, cultural and aesthetic values of traditional Chinese: some traditional characters have been restored to use, and the government permits traditional characters in the practice of calligraphy.

在台湾和香港，学童学习繁体字毫无困难，这些地区展现出了世界上最高的识字率之一。同时，在近几十年来，台湾实施了一些政策，这些政策隐含地承认了繁体中文的实用、文化和审美价值：一些繁体字已被恢复使用，并且政府允许在书法实践中使用繁体字。

16 We should find ways to promote coexistence of both systems of writing.

我们应该找到促进两种书写系统共存的方法。

#### How a Computer Might Respond

17 The original rationale for simplification was to accelerate the learning process. But is this necessary today, given China's much improved economic and social conditions? There may be no easy answer.

简化的最初理由是加速学习过程。但在当今中国经济和社会条件有了很大改善的情况下，这还是必要的吗？也许没有一个简单的答案。

18 What's certain is that converting from the simplified characters, or jiantizi, to the traditional characters, fantizi, would be a huge task, affecting everything from school textbooks to government documents to online systems. Automation of that process would present serious technical challenges.

可以确定的是，从简体字转换为繁体字将是一项巨大的任务，会影响从学校教科书到政府文件再到在线系统的一切。这个过程的自动化将带来严峻的技术挑战。

19 The trouble stems from fundamental differences in the two character sets. The simplification process of the 1950s sometimes resulted in two different traditional characters becoming identical in simplified form. For instance, the traditional characters 發 ("develop") and 髮 ("hair") are both written as the simplified character, 发. When the software sees the latter, it must guess which of 發 and 髮 is intended. Typically the guess is made by analyzing context. Sometimes, the software can produce the occasional howler. A passage describing "loss of face" might be translated by the computer as loss of 麵 ("noodles") rather than loss of 面 ("face")!

问题源于这两种字符集的根本差异。20世纪50年代的简化过程有时会导致两个不同的繁体字在简化后形式相同。例如，繁体字“發”（“develop”，发展之意）和“髮”（“hair”，头发之

意)在简化后都写成“发”。当软件看到这个简化字时,它必须猜测到底是“發”还是“髮”的意思。通常是通过分析上下文来进行猜测。有时,软件可能会偶尔出现离谱的错误。一段描述“丢脸”的文字可能会被计算机翻译成“loss of noodles”(失去面条)而不是“loss of face”(丢脸)!

20 So while most of the process could be automated, especially with more fine tuning in the software, much work would need to be done by hand as well.

因此,虽然大部分过程可以实现自动化,尤其是随着软件的进一步微调,但仍有很多工作需要人工完成。