

# Reconstruction of Chinese Language and Philology: From the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

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**Abstract:** Chinese language and characters have been unique spiritual symbols, cultural imprint, and primary medium for achieving cultural self-confidence. Throughout the history, there have been theories of philology, phonology, exegetics, modern Western linguistics, cultural linguistics and other related theories except modern Chinese linguistics. While language is the root and source of cultural self-confidence, in the new era, it is urgent to promote the national standard language and the theoretical support of language. This paper highlights the significance of constructing the theoretical system of "Chinese philology", which lays a necessary theoretical foundation for the construction of cultural self-confidence.

## 1. Introduction

Chinese culture has undergone various changes in the continuous development of its history, and finally established its own unique cultural tradition. Meanwhile, China's unique Chinese character culture is also in an advantageous position regarding the cultural characteristics in the world's language system. From the history of the two thousand-year-old "Shutongwen" (unifying of the writing system) and the national conditions of numerous dialects, the linguistics that can truly reflect Chinese characteristics should be a theoretical system of integration and coordination of Chinese characters and languages dominated by Chinese characters. The article focuses on analyzing the problems and reasons for the reconstruction of the "Chinese Philology" system, and proposes solutions from two aspects: "interdisciplinary integration research, revealing the internal mechanism of language; vertical and horizontal comparison, grasping the general direction of pluralism".

## 2. Reconstructing "Chinese Philology" lays the foundation for cultural self-confidence

### 2.1. The significance of language and words to cultural self-confidence

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping has talked many times about his recognition and respect for Chinese traditional culture and the traditional ideological value system of the Chinese nation. At the celebration of the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi called on the whole party to strengthen cultural construction and promote "cultural self-confidence". "Cultural self-confidence" is a full affirmation and active practice of a nation, a country and a political party to its own cultural values, and firm confidence in the vitality of its culture.<sup>[1]</sup> "Cultural self-confidence" is not only the source of the strength of the country and the nation, but also the lasting driving force for the sustainable development of the country and the nation<sup>[2]</sup>.

Language is a cultural symbol. Language and culture go with each other and influence each other. The formation and development of the Chinese language reflects unparalleled energy in the construction of cultural self-confidence. Chinese culture is a unique and distinctive cultural system in the world. As early as the Yuan Dynasty, the Chinese nation became a world power, and that time can be called a peak in the history of world cultural development. Chinese culture is not only

national but also global. Among the various ancient civilizations in the world, the Chinese civilization is the only one in the world that is still full of vigor and vitality without interruption. The strong vitality of Chinese civilization, which is enduring and sustainable, is like an endless river, condensing the past and connecting the future of Chinese nation. The ancient Chinese, the medieval Chinese, the modern Chinese and the contemporary Chinese, which the Chinese culture relies on, have been interpreting the thinking of the Chinese nation and the culture behind the thinking in the long history.

## **2.2. Chinese language and characters are the foundation for the consolidation of the Chinese nation community**

Chinese language is the lifeblood of the Chinese nation. Faced with great changes unseen in a century, the Chinese State Council issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening the Work of Language and Writing in the New Era", which pointed out: "Language and characters are featured as being fundamental, holistic, social and national, and are related to the improvement of national quality and people's quality of life. Moreover, language career is strongly related to historical and cultural inheritance, economic and social development, and national unity, acting as an important support for the country's comprehensive strength, and an important role in the overall work of the party and the country. To strengthen the awareness of community of the Chinese nation and to build a powerful modern socialist country, it is important to "focus on popularizing and standardizing the use of the national common language, strengthening the construction of the rule of law in the language, promoting the standardization and informationization of the language, and scientifically protecting the languages of all ethnic groups." It can be said that it hits the pulse of the times and grasps the fundamentals, because "cultural self-confidence is a more crucial, deeper and more lasting force" <sup>[3]</sup>, and the national common language is the basic element and distinctive symbol of Chinese culture.

In view of this, Chinese philology is clearly an excellent DNA for cultural confidence. The reconstruction of the "Chinese Philology" system has fundamental and fundamental significance and value for the realization of Chinese cultural self-confidence.

## **3. Problems and reasons for the reconstruction of the "Chinese Philology" system**

### **3.1. The "Five failures" hindering the construction of the theoretical system of Chinese language and writing**

Over the past century, Chinese language theory has faced the challenge of cessation of ancient and modern and westernization. In 1898, Ma Shi Wen Tong, which imitated the grammar of Indo-European languages, created a precedent for the study of modern Chinese languages. Outstanding Chinese linguists such as Lu Shuxiang, Wang Li, and Zhu Dexi emerged, and made significant contributions to the integration with the world. Despite hundred years of practice, the "unacceptable" caused by copying Western linguistic theories has become increasingly apparent, resulting in such an embarrassing state: on the one hand, the state repeatedly emphasizes the "national common language", on the other hand, the articles published by the linguistics circle basically only talk about "language". In the academic field, the research is still "disconnected between ancient and modern Chinese studies, Mandarin and dialect studies, linguistics and philology, domestic research and international research, and basic research and applied research."<sup>[4]</sup>, each acting independently, without forming a joint force. The key reason is that China has "lack of its own theoretical system of linguistics and philology, and the entanglement between Chinese characters and Chinese has not been clarified" <sup>[5]</sup>, and Western linguistic theories are generally believed and popular in academic circles. In this era of great challenges and opportunities, if China wants to become a world power, it is even more urgent to create a systematic theory of Chinese linguistics that reflects Chinese wisdom to break through the shackles of western linguistics and truly gain the power of discourse.

### **3.2. Conceptual vagueness of language expression system**

When all things in the universe are reflected in the human cerebral cortex, various representations will be formed, and concepts will be accumulated. A certain concept will flow according to a certain logic to form ideology. The expression of individual ideology with the help of body movements is body language. Phonological expression is speech, and textual expression constitutes an article. Any community communication must rely on the group's agreed-upon concepts in order to communicate normally. However, at present, many domestic concepts about language expression system are very vague, and there is no consensus. The most commonly used concepts of "Yuyan" "Wenzi" "Yuwen" and "Zhongwen" are interpreted in different senses. For example, "Chinese International Education" versus "International Chinese Education", the connotation of "Hanyu" and "Zhongwen". What is the relationship between them? What is "Yuwen" and "Wenzi"? These tend to be unknown and vague.

In fact, "the Modern Chinese Dictionary" has clearly explained "Zhongwen" as: "Chinese language, especially the language of the Han nationality." Linguist Lu Shuxiang also clearly pointed out: "Learning a language is the foundation of learning everything."<sup>[6]</sup> The word "language" should refer to "spoken and written language". Is it synonymous with "Zhongwen"? But most of the academic circles only talk about "Yuyan". Does "Yuyan" include "Wenzi"? "Linguistics" "Chinese Studies" and "Chinese Minority Languages and Characters" can be found in the subject classification of the "National Social Science Fund Project Application Data Code Table", but not "Chinese characters"! What is even more puzzling is that neither "Zhongwen" nor "Yuwen" appear in the catalogues of disciplines, which leads to the confusion of researchers on "international Chinese education" and "Chinese education".

Such a situation is obviously not conducive to in-depth discussion and settlement of academic issues. Experts from all sides must be convened as soon as possible to seek common ground while reserving differences, clarify and standardize the concepts and categories commonly used in academia.<sup>[7]</sup> Only in this way can we truly pool academic wisdom, conduct in-depth research and analysis of problems, and form valuable Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions.

### **3.3. Looking back on history and drawing on innovations, it is inevitable to construct the study of Chinese language and characters.**

#### **3.3.1. The inheritance of Chinese characters making the diversified and unified Chinese nation continue to thrive**

Humans have gone through three stages of "Spoken Language, Written Language and Wenzhi", which are the natural sequences of the evolution of human communication ability.

The dual track development of Chinese has a history of more than 3,000 years, and the research on this has also formed philology, phonology and exegesis, focusing on the study of "philology" from the perspective of literature. Just like traditional Chinese medicine, it has its own set of research system. The core of this system is unique Chinese characters. Since the Qin Dynasty's "unifying of the writing system", through all dynastic changes, and even under the rule of nomadic peoples such as the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the Yuan Dynasty, and the Qing Dynasty, the country has not been divided, mainly due to the inheritance of the Chinese characters. It shows that the Chinese nation is a national polity in which multiple languages (including dialects) coexist with Chinese characters as the main information carrier.

#### **3.3.2. The Influence of Western Linguistic Views on Chinese Language and Characters**

After entering the industrial age, Chinese characters did not adapt well to mechanical typewriters. People once thought they were outdated and backward, so they accepted Saussure's point of view that "the object of linguistics is to study only spoken languages, not written characters"<sup>[8]</sup>, hoping to transform Chinese written language with the help of Western linguistics.

What is gratifying is that after entering the information age, the key problems of computer input and output of Chinese characters have been scientifically solved, and the multi-dimensional symbols of Chinese characters, which combine shape, sound and meaning, have shown new vitality.

In many aspects, such as recognition, input speed, space-time beauty, and word formation, Chinese characters have shown the advantages of surpassing the one-dimensional linear Western writing symbols. In the long history of human development, Chinese characters seem to have a short stalling in the mechanical age, or just a kick. "The computerization of Chinese characters may be the fastest, most successful, and most wonderful technology introduction in modern Chinese history." [9] It fully demonstrates the vitality of Chinese characters as the gene of Chinese culture.

Looking back on the development history of language, language symbols and characters, we are confident that Chinese characters are mature and intelligent characters that transcend symbols. Today's awakened "lions" must adhere to the concept of the unity of man and nature, which is in line with the nature law, and fully understand that words and language are two ways of expressing thoughts respectively, to fully tap the charm of Chinese character culture and unique functions, and to actively learn from the research methods of Western science. It is inevitable and imminent to apply the research methods of the ancient and modern languages to the study of ancient and modern languages, to inherit and innovate, and to construct a scientific system of modern Chinese and Chinese characters that connects ancient and modern times.

#### **4. Paths and Methods of Reconstructing the System of "Chinese Linguistic Philosophy"**

##### **4.1. Interdisciplinary research to reveal the internal mechanism of languages**

There exist complex relationships between languages and thoughts, words and senses. The mutual enlightenment and proof can be found in many areas of research such as modern brain science, neurolinguistics, biophysiology, zoology, anthropology, psychology and semiotics. It is necessary for us to break through the barriers of language ontology and the limitations of traditional Chinese educational theories, broaden disciplinary horizons, and utilize interdisciplinary wisdom to analyze and solve the fundamental principles of languages. We shall learn from the experiences and wisdom from oracle bone literature, traditional minor study, and cultural studies as soon as possible in order to explore the essential laws behind languages based on modern scientific methodology.

Scientists believe that "the human brain transmits information by means of brain waves of different frequencies, just like the command centers of radio and TV stations using radio waves to send information." Proved by experiments, modern technology has successfully controlled minds by transmitting such brain wave signals. Perhaps language is nothing but the expression of the ideas of this conceptual flow. Only with the assistance of modern technologies is it possible to finally reveal the reasons behind languages and ideas. This may serve as a breakthrough in Chinese linguistic philosophy in the future. We are able to correctly analyze and judge the relationships between ideas and languages based on an integrated structure of various human perceptions and brain.

Karl Marx said that "language is the direct reality of thoughts" and Mao Zedong said that "articles reflect the objective things". It demonstrates that both written and spoken languages express ideas. In fact, the thinking principles of all human beings are similar, but people grow up in different spaces and ethnic groups, and the expressions agreed by the community are diversified, resulting in different spoken and written languages. From this point of view, it is very debatable to translate Saussure's statement as "words are written symbols that record languages". [10]

##### **4.2. Vertical and horizontal comparison to grasp the general direction of multi-integration**

The history of human development has proved that people belong to social groups, and they like to gather and interconnect. This feature is inseparable from information communication, and it is the best choice to tend to a common used language. For more than 2,000 years, Han people with different dialects and from different regions need a common language to unite their people, and the fifty-six ethnic groups also need a common language to strengthen unity and build a community of shared future. The authority chose Chinese language as a necessary decree document even in the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368AD) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1911AD) when the nomads were leading the country. Furthermore, the Manchus was also integrated into the Chinese language and culture.

History has proved that Chinese characters and Chinese language play a leading role in the multi-integration pattern of the Chinese nation. Regretfully, China has not fully implemented the campaign of utilizing Chinese language. We could learn that people from different provinces still needed to communicate with translators and interpreters in Wenchuan earthquake rescue of 2008 and Wuhan anti-epidemic battle of 2020. In addition, most people may not know that there is a serious conflict between the "General Standardized Chinese Characters Table" of the State Language Commission and the national technical standard GB18030-2000 Chinese character computer encoding character set and the "two skins" dilemma, resulting in that the 20,902 Chinese characters in the word processing devices worldwide have to be dormant for a while."<sup>[11]</sup> The fundamental reason is that the linguistic field still generally upholds Western linguistics, and there is no Chinese philology that truly reflects the life of Chinese language, and there is no macro and national leadership in this aspect. The dilemma of the "opposing and fighting" between the information technology field and linguistic circle is very difficult. How can we truly implement the goal of "everyone can learn, can learn anywhere, and can learn from time to time" in international Chinese education? Once again, it is extremely necessary and urgent to strengthen the construction of Chinese scientific theory and help the popularization of the national common language.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the comparative study of the languages of various ethnic groups, to deepen the study of dialects, Chinese characters and Pinyin, to explore the similarities and differences among them and the laws behind, to summarize the experience of mutual reference and learning, and to help to implement the national general language promotion which is also very necessary and urgent.

A series of problems need to be solved urgently including in-depth comparative study of Chinese and foreign languages, using modern scientific and technological means to conduct comparative research on the brain mechanism of thinking in different languages, exploring the characteristics and principles of language and its reaction to ideological transmission, an especially the comparison of single-brain thinking linear foreign language and the dual-brain three-dimensional thinking Chinese to reveal the mechanism of thinking ability of Chinese characters, and then clarifying the philosophical outlook on Chinese characters, the cultural outlook on Chinese characters, and the scientific outlook on Chinese characters. In addition, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and other countries in the Chinese character culture circle have learned the lessons from the use and the abolition of Chinese characters. The experience and lessons of the past new character experiments and bilingual education in Xinjiang and the repeated discussions in Kazakhstan's character reform, etc. also have strong inspiration for us to construct the linguistics with Chinese characteristics. These are all worthwhile for us to strengthen the vertical and horizontal comparison research and sum up the experience of gain and loss.

## 5. Conclusion

Thoughts rely on language to express, and language leads to the source for thought. To build a sense of community of the Chinese nation, language education is the key channel. Huang Dekuan, a famous expert in philology, once exclaimed: "Based on the actual construction of Chinese characters and Chinese characters, the theoretical system of Chinese linguistics should be constructed. Attention should be paid to the integration of Chinese characters and Chinese studies." Xu Jialu raised the issue of the construction and application of Chinese philology, and called for philology to become a leading discipline.<sup>[12]</sup> Li Keqiang hoped that literature and history workers could better play the important role of worshipping literature and authenticating history, and he believed that "Chinese characters, as the carrier of cultural inheritance, have been carried on for thousands of years. Only by establishing a theoretical system of Chinese language and philology that conforms to the ontology of Chinese language as soon as possible can we promote the real reform of Chinese language education and international Chinese education, and solve Lv Shuxiang's inefficiency in contemporary language education,<sup>[13]</sup> to comprehensively improve the national quality.

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