



鴻恩閣

Chinese Language & Culture

As seen in the translation industry

Introduction

Prior to one of the most important celebrations in Asia - the Lunar New Year, we decided to share our next piece of extraordinary information with you. We have chosen a country quite famous for itself with rich traditions, interesting history and at the same time very different from the modern western world.

In our small e-book, we've combined something famous, something small, and a bit of professional advice. We are glad to introduce to you our Chinese Language & Culture week. Welcome to our world!

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(Global Marketing Manager)





Paper cutting

The art of paper cutting is one of the most intricate arts with paper we've ever seen. It is oftentimes called **chuāng huā** (窗花), **window flowers** or **window paper-cuts** as it was used to decorate windows and doors, so the light can shine through the cutout and create wondrous effects. They are usually made of red paper and symbolize luck and happiness.

About Chinese Fonts

When it comes to Chinese language, we don't need to quote numbers and statistics to convince someone that it's one of the most widely used languages in the world. Everyone knows that. It's a beautiful and fascinating language, and it looks so different than most western languages that we're used to.

How many kinds of Chinese are there?

As we know, Chinese can be written with two different sets of characters—*Traditional* and *Simplified*. Both have character shapes that are roughly square, and each character has a monospaced square width, which forms clean grids no matter the direction the text is typed in.

Simplified Chinese is mostly used in Mainland China, and it's been the official writing system there since 1954, while

Traditional Chinese was used prior to 1954. Traditional Chinese is still used widely in Chinatowns outside of China, as well as in Hong-Kong, Taiwan and Macau, where it's the official written language. In Mainland China, it's used only in extremely formal cases. You can also find Traditional Chinese in other languages that have developed with influence from ancient Chinese.

Writing Chinese language

Historically, Chinese was set vertically and was being read from top to bottom and from right to left. However, in the 50s — alongside the introduction of Simplified Chinese — it became standard to write in the Western style, from left to right and from top to bottom.

Nowadays, Chinese text is mostly read from left to right, the





same as English. Because of the square monospaced nature of the characters, it works equally well both horizontally and vertically. This means that in artistic contexts, where blocks of texts are relatively short (like book covers, logos and signage), it's ok to get creative when it comes to how you layout characters without losing too much readability.

Another significant characteristic of Chinese typography is the enormous variety of characters that are available. Without any exaggeration, there are literally thousands of them! The smallest standard Chinese font contains 6763 characters. A typical Chinese font file is usually at least 5MB in size and some of them can be over 20MB, which is problematic if you need it loaded on a website. That's the reason it takes so much time and effort to create a Chinese font, and it's also why Chinese fonts rarely have a variety of weights — unlike their European counterparts, which often have as many as five different weights.

Chinese fonts

The two basic groups of Chinese fonts are songti (宋体), which you could think about as the Chinese serif, and heiti (黑体)—the Chinese version of sans serif, respectively. Additionally, there are decorative brush script fonts called kaiti (楷体).

Songti (宋体)

If one type of font had to be chosen to represent Chinese typography, it would be the songti type. Early songti scripts were in use as far back as the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), when Chinese woodblock printing was in its golden age.

Due to the grain of the wood in the woodblocks, which ran horizontally, horizontal lines were easy to produce and could be made thinner. Vertical lines, which ran counter to the wood grain, were prone to breakage during carving, and thus had to be made thicker. In addition, because the end points of the horizontal lines were easily worn away, flourishes were added to make them thicker, so they'd last longer. This is how songti—the Chinese serif characterized by perfectly straight horizontal strokes, wider verticals, and classy but regimented flourishes—was born.

The font Zhongyi Songti (中易宋体), or commonly known in English as SimSun, and its predecessor, New Songti (NSimsun 新宋体) is the Times New Roman of Simplified Chinese, made popular due to its out-of-the-box inclusion in Windows XP. The Simsun love affair continued until very recently: it was still the default Simplified Chinese input font in Windows 7 systems. Ask a Chinese web designer what

makes an interface look “Chinese”, and you’ll often get a chuckle alongside the answer “SimSun, 12pt” — that should give you an idea of how widely this font was used.

Examples for Songti fonts: SimSun, FZCuSong, NSimsun



Heiti (黑体)

The other major classification is the heiti, similar to “sans-serif”. Heiti fonts are a relatively modern invention although they were seen emerging in commercial press around the early 1900’s.

SimHei was the standard sans-serif to SimSun’s serif. Recently, Microsoft Yahei has started to replace SimHei as the preferred standard in web layouts, but there are still a couple of compatibility issues: MS YaHei was introduced in Windows Vista, but the number of machines still running Windows XP in China, even in 2020, would blow your mind.

So while everyone’s pretty tired of looking at SimHei, we haven’t quite reached the point where people are willing to give it up completely just yet.

Yuanti (圆体) is typically considered a subclass of Heiti (sans-serif). It’s more of a search tag than a font type — the Chinese word yuan means “round”, and that’s exactly what these are: sans-serif fonts with soft curves at the corners. Yuanti is popular in modern corporate collateral and advertising materials. There are no web-standard fonts here either.

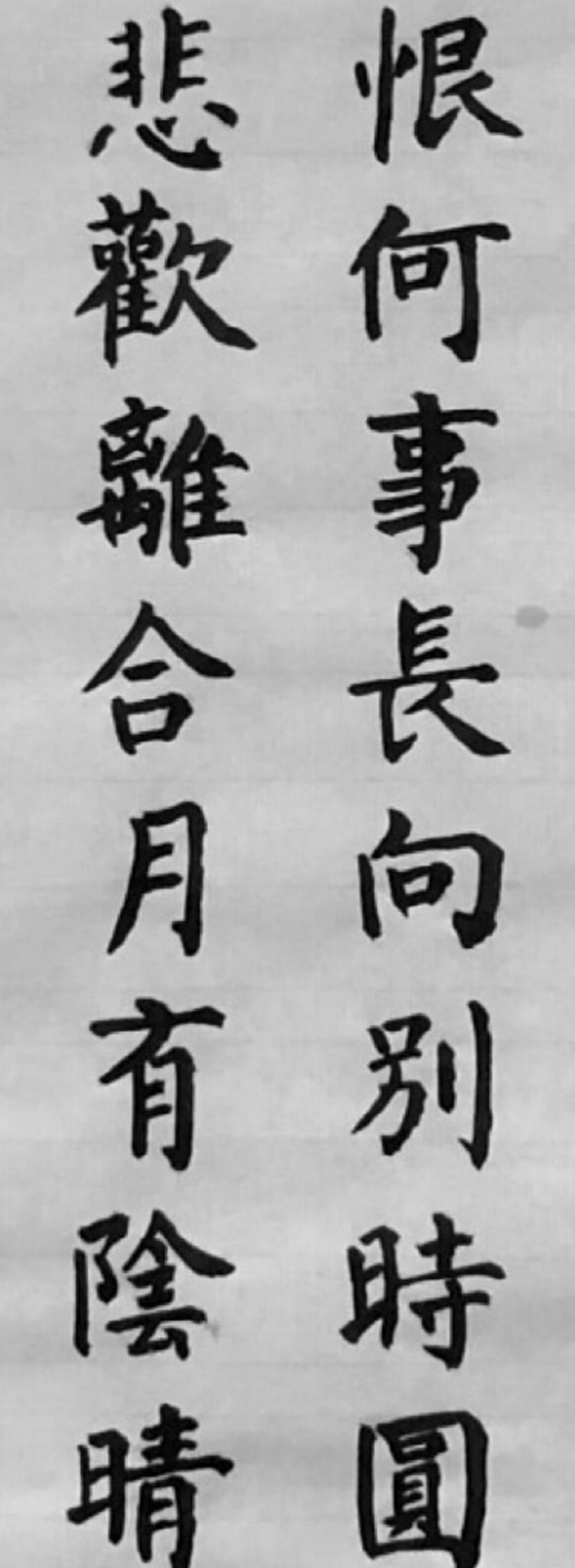
Examples for Heiti fonts: SimHei, Microsoft Yahei, Source Han Sans/Noto Sans, Yuehei, Shanghei



Kaiti (楷体)

A kaiti font takes the shape of basic brush script lettering—or so called *regular brush*. A Kaiti font is still not a novelty font because it never gets overly flowery, yet it is constructed within certain parameters while maintaining an upright structure.





Examples for Keiti fonts: Kaiti (or Biao Kaiti), FZKai, Adobe Kaiti Standard



Which fonts should you use?

We compiled a couple of convenient lists of fonts to choose from, according to your particular needs.

The most popular Chinese web-safe fonts:

1. Heiti fonts:

- Hiragino Sans GB (冬青黑体简体中文)
- Microsoft Yahei (微软雅黑)
- Simhei (黑体)

2. Songti fonts:

- Simsun (宋体)

(most screens are still non-Retina, so it's much safer for designers to use Heiti fonts)

Chinese fonts for free commercial use:

- 方正黑体 FZHei-Bo1S
- 方正书宋 FZShuSong-Zo1S
- 方正仿宋 FZFangSong-Zo2S
- 方正楷体 FZKai-Zo3S

If you need a universal multi-purpose font (especially for multi-language tasks):

Source Han Sans

It's a sans-serif gothic typeface family, created by Adobe and Google. It was also released by Google (under the **Noto** fonts project) as Noto Sans CJK. What makes this font so special is the fact that Source Hans Sans has 65,535 characters and 7 different weights (ExtraLight, Light, Normal, Regular, Medium, Bold, and Heavy), and it provides a consistent and systematic style for Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Things get even better — it's open-source!



A curious fact about this font: Despite having a *Regular* weight, it also has a *Normal* weight. The reason for that is the optical illusion that makes the font look bolder when used on a dark background. So, the Regular is for light backgrounds and the Normal is for dark ones. Neat, eh?

Mixing Chinese and Western texts

Designers sometimes face the challenge of working with a mix of languages. That is especially common in places such as Hong Kong, where both Chinese and English are considered official languages.

It's strongly recommended to add a space between Chinese and English, because English naturally has a space between

words, while Chinese does not. Chinese also has larger spaces between each characters, compared to English letters. Ideally, there should be treated kerning between Chinese characters and English letters. Luckily, both Adobe InDesign and Microsoft Word offer options on how to do that.

The current trend

As we mentioned earlier, it takes a lot of effort to create a Chinese font. Fortunately, a lot of big Chinese brands—such as Alibaba, Xiaomi, Tencent, Vivo, and Oppo—are developing their own fonts for marketing purposes. Hopefully, that will lead to a greater variety of Chinese fonts in the future.





Beijing opera

One of the true cultural treasures of China is the Beijing Opera (Chinese: 京剧; pinyin: Jīngjù) which is a remarkable combination of music, mime, vocal performance and even acrobatics. We've chosen a few more interesting facts about it:

- The genre has four main role types *sheng* (gentlemen), *dan* (women), *jing* (rough men), and *chou* (clowns) which is combined with intricate and ornate costumes contrary to the very basic stage decor.
- The main accent of the performance is always the actors and the skills of the performers are estimated by the grace and beauty of their movements.
- A curious thing is that in the Beijing opera, aside from the historical and folklore repertoire in recent years there are also operas that reflect modern, contemporary life.
- The English term for the opera is *Peking Opera*, however in recent days it is more popular as Beijing Opera, which is the contemporary version of the prior one.

E-commerce in China – a mission possible through localization

The e-commerce sector in the world, and particularly in Asia, is expanding at a rapid rate, raking in millions and billions in revenue. China is the world's biggest e-commerce country with a very well-developed industry. With Amazon seeking stakes in some of China and south-east Asia's e-commerce markets, as well as other western players seeking to gain a foothold in China and Asia as a whole, it's critical to have a well-developed business strategy and one of these is relying on stable, reliable and quality localization services. E-commerce is about to develop even more when such a wide variety of businesses are going virtual. Chinese e-commerce, in particular, is home to some of the world's largest e-commerce giants and it's certainly an attractive market worth exploring. There are some things we can advise entrepreneurs to consider when making such a move.

1. Research and find your niche

The Chinese e-commerce market is not only limited to large cities like Beijing and Shanghai. It's moving to rural areas as well with same-day or even next-day deliveries being possible. Moreover, there's a strong demand for a wide range of consumer products, ranging from cosmetics, apparel, items for the home, appliances, electronics, and others. When entering the Chinese or south-east Asian markets, consider which niche you're targeting. What products do you have to offer? Which market segment are you aiming to develop? Research into your niche will be a crucial starting point for developing your e-commerce business there.

2. Tackle legislation carefully

Legislation is something that no company can go around and circumvent. It is simply a given fact and knowing its





requirements and stipulations is a critical starting point. In particular, with the rise in Chinese e-commerce giants, your business will need to take into account whether you need to bring your products to mainland China, whether there will be cross-border trade and the subsequent import legislation that this will entail, the method of delivery, website regulations, etc. For this, you will need a solid translation partner to help you meet these legislative requirements.

3. Be ready to go mobile first

In May 2015, Indian e-retailer, Myntra.com decided to opt for a mobile-only platform based on the fact that mobile drives around 70% of sales. This type of move can be smart, but it really depends on your market as you don't want to lose out on even a small percentage of potential customers by not offering them a desktop experience. In China, for example, mobile is an increasingly dominant way of shopping and your business should be prepared to go mobile-first. As you consider developing your mobile app, you will need a localization partner who you can rely on to ensure that your marketing message is conveyed as effectively as possible. The same is true for any marketing campaigns you have, in-app descriptions, and importantly, reviews. Reviews are gold for your audience and correctly translated reviews could go a long way to offering you a higher potential for sales.

4. Consider rural areas and low internet penetration there

The rural market in China remains largely untapped. This is mainly owing to the low Internet penetration there. But just because the internet penetration is low does not mean that it is non-existent and that you shouldn't be ready to cater to this type of clientele. What this will translate into is a readjusted service offering that might entail your business needing to be able to offer hand-on delivery as well as in-person payments or cash-on-delivery. This is especially the case if your business offers tangible and material products.

5. Localize, localize, localize

The last piece of advice we can offer when creating your business strategy for expansion into China and south-east Asia is to localize. You need to carefully analyze your target audience and make sure you speak its language. Japan's Rakuten is one example of an Asian e-commerce giant which is trying to enter western markets by ensuring that all internal and external communication is done in English. However, such Englishnization might result in the wrong message being conveyed due to incorrect translations. The importance of translation and localization for e-commerce is crucial as it will enable you to not only speak your audience's language but cater your message to speak to them, ultimately reaching more customers. In addition, you may make use of

modern machine translation (MT) but do so with a touch of professional polishing through MTPE – Machine Translation Post-Editing.

Conclusion

Shopee, Lazada, JD Worldwide, and TMall Global are just some of the e-commerce giants in China and south-east Asia which are taking the continent by storm. Research indicates that there is significant potential for e-commerce growth in south-east Asia as well as China and tailoring your message to the local market through effective localization will be a critical step. In this blog post, we outlined five different factors for you to consider when taking your business to China and Asia. A potentially very profitable venture, you need to ensure that your marketing message is as effective as possible. You will also need a translation partner to figure out the legal framework within which you'll operate, and also adjust your product offering by going mobile in addition to offering your desktop clients a chance to shop from the comfort of their PCs. Lastly, catering to the Chinese rural population could be a significant untapped market that has enormous potential, and you may need to adjust your offering to suit cash-on-delivery needs due to financially underdeveloped or underserved potential clients.



Chinese New Year 2021 – Year of the Ox



The Ox is the second animal in the Chinese zodiac animals. In terms of Yin and yang (阴阳 / yīn yáng), it is considered to be the yang.

On Feb 12, 2021 is the Spring Festival (春节 / chūn jié) and it is forbidden to clean or sweep on this day or you might end up sweeping your good fortune.

So leave the broomstick today and enjoy some recreational activities...



Cheongsam

Now let us talk a bit in Chinese here: cheongsam (US: /tʃɔːŋ'sɑːm/) also known as qipao (/ˈtʃiːpaʊ/) is a special type of dress with Manchu origin :).

In other words an intriguing beautiful simple and ornate traditional chinese dress that is the embodiment of the words classy and elegant.

The original qipao, however, had a completely different style. It was meant to cover most of the body and could be referred to as baggy clothing.

The modern version of the dress became popular after 1920 and remains so till nowadays. We are showing you a fine example of a modern cheongsam in all its glory.

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