

The Common Morpheme Pool for the Hanzi Circle

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Abstract

This paper takes a linguistic viewpoint and argues for the promotion of common terminologies of the Confucian-Hanzi (Kanji, Hanja) Circle based on Chinese characters. Since China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Singapore, as well as the dialectal regions within China may all face the need of coining new words using Hanzi or Hanzi-transformed phonetic scripts, such as Japanese Kana, Korean Hanguk or Vietnamese Romanized script, instead of simply transliterating English words directly and thus complicating their own morphophonemic inventory, we should try to tackle the issue by surveying the productive morphemes used in these languages. To establish such a common morpheme pool for these languages is a step towards deeper collaboration for cultural exchange and more effective foreign language learning among these countries. The resulting common morpheme pool can serve as an open source for these languages to introduce new terms and to learn from each other. If people can have access through the internet or other sources to competing alternative forms for the same terms in other countries, experts in the field can make their own judgments and decide on the optimal forms to use. From history, we can see that it is not always the case that the Chinese terms were prevalent. The Chinese-coined terms gave way to Japanese ones after the Japanese went through the Meiji Restoration. As terminologists, we just want to make sure that a fair game of terminology choice is played and the winner is time and reason, and after all, the

peoples. To carry the issue beyond the present proposal, English morphemes (including Greek, Latin, French and German roots) which serve as the dominant language of science and technology may in the long run be considered as a larger common morpheme pool for coining terms. The future will present internationally transparent terminologies across the national boundaries.

Keywords: Confucian-Hanzi circle, common morpheme pool, open source, time and reason, English morphemes